

NAG HAMMADI &  
MANICHAEAN STUDIES

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Gnostica, Judaica,  
Catholica.  
Collected Essays of  
Gilles Quispel



Edited by  
JOHANNES VAN OORT

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Gnostica, Judaica, Catholica.  
Collected Essays of Gilles Quispel

# Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies

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Gnostica, Judaica, Catholica.  
Collected Essays of  
Gilles Quispel

Edited by  
Johannes van Oort

With additional Prefaces by  
April DeConick  
✧  
Jean-Pierre Mahé



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## CONTENTS

### PREFACES

Johannes van Oort	Preface .....	ix
April D. DeConick	Gnostic Letters from Bithoven .....	xv
Jean-Pierre Mahé	Gilles Quispel ou l'intériorité de la Gnose .....	xxiii

### PART I: GNOSTICA

Chapter One	Christliche Gnosis, jüdische Gnosis, hermetische Gnosis .....	3
Chapter Two	Coptic Gnostic Writings .....	37
Chapter Three	The Demiurge in the Apocryphon of John .....	43
Chapter Four	A Diatessaron Reading in a Latin Manichaean Codex .....	77
Chapter Five	The Diatessaron in Iceland and Norway .....	83
	Co-author: Andrea van Arkel-De Leeuw van Weenen	
Chapter Six	The Diatessaron of Romanos .....	85
Chapter Seven	A General Introduction to the Study of the Diatessaron of Tatian .....	93
Chapter Eight	Genius and Spirit .....	103
Chapter Nine	Gnosis als Erfahrung .....	119
Chapter Ten	Gnosis and Culture .....	141
Chapter Eleven	Gnosticism .....	155

Chapter Twelve	The <i>Gospel of Thomas</i> Revisited .....	175
Chapter Thirteen	The Gospel of Thomas and the Trial of Jesus .....	227
Chapter Fourteen	Das Hebräerevangelium im gnostischen Evangelium nach Maria .....	237
Chapter Fifteen	Hermann Hesse and Gnosis .....	243
Chapter Sixteen	Mani et la tradition évangélique des judéo-chrétiens .....	263
Chapter Seventeen	Marcion and the Text of the New Testament .....	271
Chapter Eighteen	Note sur “Basilide” .....	285
Chapter Nineteen	Origen and the Valentinian Gnosis .....	289
Chapter Twenty	Saint Augustin et l’Évangile selon Thomas .....	305
Chapter Twenty-One	Some remarks on the Gospel of Thomas .....	311
Chapter Twenty-Two	The Study of Encratism: A Historical Survey .....	329
Chapter Twenty-Three	Valentinian Gnosis and the Apocryphon of John .....	365
Chapter Twenty-Four	Valentinus and the Gnostikoi .....	381

## PART II: JUDAICA

Chapter Twenty-Five	African Christianity before Minucius Felix and Tertullian .....	389
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Chapter Twenty-Six	Ezekiel 1,26 in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosis .....	461
Chapter Twenty-Seven	The Fourth Gospel and the Judaic Gospel Tradition .....	475
Chapter Twenty-Eight	Jewish Christian Gospel Tradition .....	481
Chapter Twenty-Nine	Jewish Gnosis and Mandaeen Gnosticism. Some reflections on the Writing <i>Brontè</i> .....	487
Chapter Thirty	A Jewish Source of Minucius Felix .....	529
Chapter Thirty-One	Judaism and Gnosis .....	539
Chapter Thirty-Two	Jung and Pauli .....	567
Chapter Thirty-Three	Meristae .....	573
Chapter Thirty-Four	Plotinus and the Jewish Gnōstikoi .....	583
Chapter Thirty-Five	The Muslim Jesus .....	627

## PART III: CATHOLICA

Chapter Thirty-Six	African Christianity before Tertullian .....	665
Chapter Thirty-Seven	Anima naturaliter christiana .....	671
Chapter Thirty-Eight	An Apocryphal Variant in Macarius .....	679
Chapter Thirty-Nine	Apocalypticism and Gnosis from Job to Jan van Eyck .....	685
Chapter Forty	The Epistle to the Laodiceans: A Marcionite Forgery .....	689
Chapter Forty-One	Eros and Agape in the Gospel of John .....	695



Chapter Forty-Two	L'Extase de Saint Paul .....	699
Chapter Forty-Three	God is Love .....	715
Chapter Forty-Four	Gregory of Nyssa and Mysticism .....	733
Chapter Forty-Five	The Holy Spirit According to the Early Church .....	739
Chapter Forty-Six	The Holy Spirit as Woman in Apocalypse 12 .....	749
Chapter Forty-Seven	Johannesevangelium und Gnosis .....	753
Chapter Forty-Eight	Time and History in Catholic Christianity, especially Augustine .....	785
Chapter Forty-Nine	Utrecht and the Conversion of Germany. Liudger and the Gospel of Thomas .....	807

## PART IV: EPILOGUE

Chapter Fifty	Gnosis and the Future of Christian Religion .....	823
Index of Biblical Texts .....		833
Index of Other Ancient Texts .....		838
Index of Names and Subjects .....		856

## PREFACE

This book is not Gilles Quispel's first collection of essays. Fairly early in his long life, he had already two circumstantial collections in print. In the year 1974, the first volume *Gnostic Studies* was published by the Dutch Historical-Archaeological Institute in Istanbul. The book is comprised of thirteen long studies densely printed on more than 250 large pages. The following year a second volume, *Gnostic Studies II*, was published. It included nineteen essays. The twofold collection, consisting of nearly 600 pages, offered Quispel's views on the themes that had become the topics of his research: 'Valentinian Gnosis and the Jung Codex', 'the Jewish Origins of Gnosticism', 'the Gospel of Thomas and Jewish Christianity', and 'Gnosis and Modern Times'.

According to Quispel, fully-engaged or 'real' scholarship was like taking part in a tournament, with outflanking movements. At times he would attack his opponents severely, considering these fights necessary in the scholarly arena. So he preferred to speak of 'the brunt of the debate' or would declare the academic battle 'won'. Because of this mindset, Quispel would write with repetition and extensive *excursus*. He used to say, 'one has to repeat oneself when the opponent does not listen'. Or, like in the present book, 'I was contested, but my evidence says that I'm not refuted'.

\* \* \*

To a considerable degree the author's *curriculum vitae* and its vicissitudes show that a very unconventional scholar is behind this book as well. Gilles Quispel was born in Rotterdam on 30 May 1916. He grew up in nearby Kinderdijk, presently world-famous for its UNESCO protected dykes and water mills. No wonder when Quispel discussed nascent Roman Catholicism he would compare its measurements with the throwing up of three dykes in order to protect itself against the Gnostic currents. In his Dutch university lectures, and as a real insider, he even used to give each of these dykes its proper appellative: 'the guardian', 'the sleeper', and 'the dreamer'. During his school years at the municipal Gymnasium at Dordrecht (the famous Calvinist Dordt!), the broad-minded Dr P. Hendrix was his teacher in classics. Hendrix was also a specialist in Greek mysteries, as well as in the Gnostic Basilides

and Russian Orthodoxy. ‘Pjotr Iwanowitz’ Hendrix made an indelible impression upon the schoolboy Quispel. Later on, the same Hendrix would become one of his university professors and a lifelong friend and esteemed colleague. It should not be surprising that several of the mature studies in this book focus on Eleusis and other mystery cults, culminating in the far-reaching insight that the ancient concept of transformation through vision had its impact in Jewish and early Christian circles as well. Quispel concluded that ‘in 1 John 3:2 we have a classic example of the influence of Eleusis on primitive Christianity’.

Young Quispel first studied classical philology at Leiden University and then theology at the universities of Leiden and Groningen. During his years as a teacher of Greek and Latin at Gymnasia in Enschede (1941–1945) and Leiden (1945–1951), he engaged in a profound study of the historical developments of early Christianity. The first impressive result of his research was his *cum laude* dissertation defended at the University of Utrecht under the tutelage of H. Wagenvoort on 12 April 1943, shortly before the closing of the university during the Second World War. In this published dissertation on the sources of Tertullian’s *Adversus Marcionem* (*De bronnen van Tertullianus’ Adversus Marcionem*), Quispel *inter alia* made a number of incisive criticisms of Adolf von Harnack’s famous monograph on Marcion. Both Tertullian and, not least, the Gnostics attacked by him, remained Quispel’s lifelong concern. As a classicist by training, throughout his life, he managed to quote long passages from Greek or Latin authors by heart, including Tertullian’s often obscure Latin. Some of these quotes play an essential role in his final arguments in this book when he argues to still consider Valentinus a genuine Gnostic.

Immediately after the War, Quispel (along with Christine Mohrmann, and later Willem Cornelis van Unnik and Jan Hendrik Waszink) took the initiative to found the new scientific journal, *Vigiliae Christianae*. The goal of the journal was to further the contextual study of ‘early Christian life and language,’ which programmatically included Gnostic and similar currents. In its first issue, Quispel published his seminal essay ‘The original doctrine of Valentine’. In the course of the years, he contributed more than forty scientific articles (and a considerable amount of reviews) to this still flourishing periodical. A number of his final studies, sometimes slightly revised and in all cases supplemented, are incorporated in this book.

In 1948/49 Quispel was awarded a Bollingen Fellowship to study in Rome. There he met Erik Peterson, whom he considered to be his

most inspiring *praeceptor*—along with Gerardus van der Leeuw, Carl Gustav Jung, and Gershom Scholem. In private conversation Quispel more than once explained that Peterson, above all, inspired his best insights. Like Peterson, Quispel studied the phenomenon of Jewish Christianity, stressed the Jewish origins of Gnosticism and, moreover, considered Encratism to be an important current in early Christianity as, in particular, Chapter twenty-two of this volume testifies. It may be remarked in passing that, during his whole career, Quispel kept himself informed about Italian scholarship in the fields of his interest. In Chapter forty-one of this publication, he gives a lifelike description of an Italian professor. Quite similar to this scene, I once saw him in Naples engaged in a discussion with a group of young local scholars ‘like Socrates’. In fluent Italian, of course.

From 1951 until his retirement in 1983, Quispel was a Professor of the History of the Early Church at Utrecht University. Here he introduced generations of students (most of them ministerial candidates in the Dutch Reformed Church) to the many varieties of early Christianity. In 1964/65 he was a visiting Professor at Harvard University, and from 1969 until 1974 he was a visiting Professor of the Hellenistic Background of the New Testament at the Catholic University of Leuven. In Belgian Leuven, with its university as the most ancient *sedes sapientiae* of the undivided Netherlands, I frequently have met people who retained good memories (and similar anecdotes) of Quispel’s visiting lectures. In the Preface of his recent book *Ancient Gnosticism*, Birger Pearson provides us with one such fine reminiscence from the other side of the Atlantic: ‘During the academic year 1963–64, Professor Gilles Quispel of Utrecht was a visiting professor at Harvard. He gave a lecture course on Gnosticism and also led a small seminar of students who had some knowledge of Coptic. There were four of us, and Quispel led us through the Coptic text of the *Apocryphon of James*, one of the tractates in the ‘Jung Codex’ (Nag Hammadi Codex I,2). Since it was not yet published, we were obliged to hand back our copies of the text when the seminar was over. (That tractate was first published in 1968). I was ‘hooked’.’

During the last twenty years of his life, and apart from a wide range of other scientific studies most of which are included in this collection, Quispel authored and edited a considerable number of books in his Dutch native language: on Gnosis as the third component of the European cultural tradition; on the *Gospel of Thomas* and the Netherlands; on the Hermetic Gnosis in the course of the centuries; on Valentinus

and his *Gospel of Truth*; on the *Asclepius*; and on the *Gospel of Thomas*. His latest (in actual fact, his third) Dutch translation of the *Gospel of Thomas* has extensive and oftentimes new and startling elucidations. This thick book on *Thomas* reached a wide audience and was reprinted several times. Besides, two translations of ancient texts with comprehensive introductions and commentary were jointly authored with two of his former students: the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Cologne Mani Codex*.

The culmination of Quispel's scientific career and his last analyses are well documented in this, his final book. It testifies to most of the prominent themes of his scholarly work: the writings of the Nag Hammadi library; Tatian's *Diatessaron* and its influences; the *Hermetica*; Mani and Manichaeism; Jewish origins of Gnosticism; Gnosis and the future of Christianity. Moreover, it makes a number of his earlier publications (here mostly rubricated under the heading 'Catholica') available to the international community. To be sure, it was Quispel himself who insisted upon the inclusion of these publications in this book. Evidently he saw them as part and parcel of his professional evolution. From essays like 'Gregory of Nyssa and Mysticism', 'the Holy Spirit according to the Early Church', 'Time and History in Catholic Christianity' and 'African Christianity before Tertullian' (later elaborated into the major study 'African Christianity before Minucius Felix and Tertullian', which is nearly a monograph and included here as well) one gets a good impression of the themes Quispel was accustomed to present in his general Utrecht university lectures. In small doctoral seminars he lectured on Gnostic themes, on his beloved 'Macarius' and, in the late sixties and early seventies, on books like R.C. Zaehner's *Mysticism Sacred and Profane*. In the rather closed world of the theology faculties of his native country, he was a self-confessed maverick who, at an early stage, anticipated the change from mainstream dialectical theology to a new appreciation of religious experience.

It seems appropriate in this preface to make some remarks on a number of Quispel's other early publications as well. *Ptolemée, Lettre à Flora. Texte, traduction et introduction*, was published in the French series *Sources Chrétiennes* in 1949. Quispel's next international book was *Gnosis als Weltreligion* (Origo Verlag, Zürich 1951). Although he sometimes characterized this book as 'my youthful lapse', it nevertheless became one of his notable publications. Its thought-provoking title entered many expositions on Gnosis or Gnosticism, even though Quispel understood it to mainly illustrate how important the Gnostic movement—and the Gnosis of Valentinus in particular—had been during the first centuries

of the Christian Church. Yet its contents were suggestive, particularly regarding how important ‘the gnostic experience’ could be for today’s Christianity and how, in the course of the Church’s evolution, essential elements of primitive Christianity had been eliminated. In the final essay in this book, his ‘youthful work’ suddenly comes to the fore again, when Quispel states that the only hope for the Christian religion (and in particular for the Roman Catholic Church of the present pope Joseph Ratzinger, who seems to have read and appreciated the book) is ‘to integrate Gnosis and personal religious experience’.

As regards ‘religious experience’, Quispel learned much from Carl Gustav Jung. With this learning, he was able to disentangle and interpret the often very complicated Gnostic myths. In fact, *Gnosis als Weltreligion* emerged from a series of lectures at the Jung Institute in Zurich in order to interest Jung and his circle in the new Nag Hammadi finds. As a result of this interaction, the young Quispel could act as the official representative of the Jung Institute and buy, on 10 May 1952, the first codex of the Nag Hammadi collection. It was then baptized the Codex Jung. During the following years, Quispel was part of a team of scholars which included M. Malinine, H.-Ch. Puech and W. Till, and was supported by the Jung Institute. As part of that team, he co-edited the *Evangelium Veritatis*, and later the *editio princeps* of *De Resurrectione (Epistula ad Rheginum)*. With the additional input of R. Kasser and J. Zandee, the whole project was concluded with the edition of the *Epistula Jacobi Apocrypha* and the *Tractatus Tripartitus* (supplemented by the later discovery of *Oratio Pauli Apostoli* in the same codex) in exquisite folio volumes. Many of the results of this collaborative enterprise still resound in the present volume, including some of the ensuing polemics regarding the contested interpretation of the new texts.

In the meantime (after Quispel’s special intervention with the help of the Dutch Queen Juliana in Egypt in 1956) he published *The Gospel according to Thomas*, a collaborate work. Many editions (and many reprints) appeared in Dutch, French, and German. Following the publication of the text, Quispel laid down his most prominent interpretations of the *Gospel of Thomas* and its Syrian context in his 1967 monograph *Makarius, das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle*. The year 1975 saw the publication of a related book: *Tatian and the Gospel of Thomas. Studies in the History of the Western Diatessaron*. His research on *Thomas* and the *Diatessaron* has been pursued by his most eminent students. And thus, time and again, the contents of the present book show how

the master was willing to learn from his pupils, even if sometimes they contradicted him.

Of singular value in Quispel's *œuvre* was his publication, *The Secret Book of Revelation*. It appeared in 1979 both in English and Dutch and contains a remarkable interpretation of St. John's *Apocalypse* in which, among other things, Quispel's intimate knowledge of Jewish Christianity, Hellenistic Religions and Jungian psychology were employed. In the present book Chapters thirty-nine and forty-six testify to his enduring fascination with this curious last book of the Bible.

\* \* \*

Towards the end of the ninetieth year of his life, on 2 March 2006, Professor Gilles Quispel died rather unexpectedly in El Gouna in Egypt, after having paid a final visit to the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo. To a considerable degree the present book is the completion of his scientific testament. During his last years, he himself worked on this book, arranging the subsequent articles in three sections. Some of the studies included in this book have been more or less reworked by him, and some have been translated into English or German for the first time. As much as possible, references have been checked, bibliographical data supplemented and a number of redundant passages were eliminated. In the course of the years Dr Cis van Heertum of the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica in Amsterdam did a remarkable job furthering the publication of this book, as she did over the past decades when she prepared a number of Quispel's Dutch books for the press. Prof. Stephen Emmel was the first to accept this book for the *Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies*. Dr Jaap van Amersfoort, formerly one of Professor Quispel's closest collaborators at the University of Utrecht, kindly prepared the Indices. At Brill Wilma de Weert saw to the production of the present book. I wish to express my sincere thanks for their constant support. I also am deeply grateful for the support of Gilles Quispel's lifelong beloved spouse Lien de Langen, his four children and his son-in-law Drs Nico van der Kley.

Zeist/Utrecht, 6 October 2008

JOHANNES VAN OORT

## GNOSTIC LETTERS FROM BILTHOVEN

Early in December 1993, Professor Gilles Quispel flew from the Netherlands to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor as one of the examiners of the dissertation I had written on the *Gospel of Thomas*. The defense was a formal event with a panel of examiners seated facing me like judges in a courtroom, and well-wishers behind me. Professor Quispel reserved his comments for last. He spoke with a deep slow cadence in the manner of a seasoned orator, saying how much he appreciated my work and how much he had learned from it himself. “But,” he said, “I am not a member of her committee to appoint her as professor, but to seek arguments with her.”

After the formal confirmation of my doctorate that afternoon, the entire group—faculty, students, and family—retired to a private brunch. During this reception, Professor Quispel and I sat together and talked. I asked him what it had been like for him to have discovered the *Gospel of Thomas* in the Coptic Museum, to have been one of the first people to have read it in over sixteen-hundred years. He told me, “Imagine it. We didn’t know what we had.”

\* \* \*

I came to know Professor Quispel over a period of many years when we corresponded my mail. I still have the dozens of letters that he sent me during that time, all written carefully by hand in blue ink with a fountain pen. The first correspondence that I have is dated February 15, 1989, addressed to Professor Jarl Fossum who had been Professor Quispel’s student and who then was my teacher. It opens, “I write this letter in English so that Ms. de konick can read it, although her name is Dutch like so many names in Michigan.” I recall being amused at the time with the misspelling of my name. But I have since learned from my family that de konick was the original spelling. When my great-grandparents moved from Belgium to Canada, my great-grandfather anglo-sized the spelling as was customary among European immigrants at the time. Professor Quispel, being Dutch, must have known this and was invoking our common ancestry as a shared bond.

After this first correspondence, we began to write each other directly about our research. His epistolary remarks were consistent with his



academic writing: learned, careful, targeted, and concise. He was never afraid to speak his mind to me, to remark when he thought I was wrong and to commend when he thought I was right. He taught me the difference between an immature and mature argument, and helped me to season my research. He taught me how to think like a scholar, to be mindful of the details while never forgetting the bigger picture. He took on mentoring me even when I did not dare to ask.

He always was insistent that I consider carefully the “*Sitz im Leben*” of the materials I was working on, whether it was the *Gospel of Thomas* or the *Gospel of Philip*. From the first letter he wrote to me, this theme was prominent. He writes about an article I had sent for critique, “I miss the *Sitz im Leben*: the encratite Gospel of Thomas uses a Jewish Christian source, because it was written in Edessa. The whole issue of Encratism should be mentioned.” Taking his advice, I delved into the subject of early Christian encratism. This investigation opened up a whole religious world to me, which previously I had paid no attention to. Professor Quispel urged me to study carefully the third book of Clement’s *Stromateis*. What I learned spurred me on to write a paper on saying 27 of the Gospel of Thomas, “Fasting from the World,” and to take very seriously the historical presence of early Christians who chose extreme lifestyles of abstinence, even viewing marriage as a sinful state.

Professor Quispel often ruminated in his letters whether the opponents of Paul in the Pastoral letters were encratic Alexandrian Jewish Christians who were “somehow behind ‘Thomas’” (May 26, 1994). He was convinced (as am I) that “Alexandria got its Christianity from Jerusalem,” that “Alexandrian Christianity has mystical roots in Palestine” (October 9, 1995). He thought that Galatians 3:28 was learned by Paul from Apollos who was an encratic Jewish Christian who moved from Alexandria to Ephesus. In this way, encratism was brought to Asia Minor and Crete, and was addressed by the authors of the Pastoral letters. Saying 22 in the *Gospel of Thomas*, he writes, “proves that these same Encratites came from Alexandria to Edessa” (February 11, 1994).

Over the years, we had many conversations about the *Gospel of Thomas*, a gospel whose mystery we both were devoted to solving. When I wrote my dissertation, which became my first book (*Seek to See Him*, Leiden, 1996), I struggled with locating the gospel historically. Professor Quispel was highly critical of this fact, and insisted that I address its history. I responded to him very honestly that I could not write about that which I did not yet know. Although I was confident that the gospel

had been influenced by an encratic form of Jewish Christianity and Hermetism as he himself had demonstrated, I was less confident that the text was a compilation of two or three sources as he believed. I had not worked out for myself the derivation of the traditions and how they came to be written in this gospel.

So, in 1998, I began to work on a solution to the problem after a student of mine asked me why the gospel contained a saying condemning circumcision while at the same time a saying that revered James the leader of the Jerusalem Church. A good question indeed! As I worked out the problem, Professor Quispel provided me feedback. He chided me again and again to either “reconcile your views with mine or refute me” (February 24, 2002). Eventually I developed the theory of the gospel as a rolling corpus which I laid out in two companion volumes (*Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas*, London, 2005; *The Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation*, London, 2006). Although Professor Quispel and I did not correspond after the publication of the first volume because of his untimely death, I was delighted that I was able to dedicate the book to “my *Großdoktorvater*, Gilles Quispel,” and to know that he had received a copy before his death.

In the end, my work in these companion volumes confirmed much of what Professor Quispel had previously argued about *Thomas*’ tradition history. It is a gospel connected to the Jewish Christian mission from Jerusalem. It represents an encratic form of Christianity centered in Edessa with historical connections with Alexandria. But his source-critical picture, I refuted, instead explaining the gospel as a product of ancient rhetorical culture. It was not a gospel completely independent of the synoptics, but a text that began as a smaller kernel of old apocalyptic sayings which was transported to Edessa by missionaries of the Jerusalem Church. Over the years, the text was adapted to the Syrian Christian environment and altered to reflect the crises experienced by that Church. Over time, the eschatological materials were de-emphasized in favor of a mystical theology that appears to be a precursor of Eastern Orthodoxy. In this process, some of the older sayings with canonical parallels underwent a process of canonical adaptation, as versions of Jesus’ sayings preserved in the canonical gospels rose to pre-eminence and circulated in Syria. In its final form, the *Gospel of Thomas* is an encratic collection of Jesus’ sayings, a product of Aramaic and then Syrian Christianity.

Professor Quispel began to appreciate the Muslim Jesus toward the end of his life, a Jesus which he thought showed “familiarity with

Thomas.” He writes that “it gives me great satisfaction and it makes me appreciate Islam, which sees Jesus as a prophet, the word of God and the spirit of God”. Islam “has preserved much of Jesus’ revelation and spirit.” He came to understand that “Islam is a reformation of Judaic Christianity” (February 24, 2002). Almost desperately he wrote following 9–11, “Please no war against Islam, no crusade, but brotherly love” (February 24, 2002).

\* \* \*

Professor Quispel was fascinated by encratic Christianity and understood it to be a product of Jewish Christianity. But he was quick to note that there was another Jewish Christian current that must be distinguished from it. It was a current that fed into the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature whose proponents “are all for marriage” (May 4, 1993). He thought it was essential to “distinguish ascetic Hellenistic Jewish Christianity of Alexandria from pro-marriage Judaic Christianity of the Pseudo-Clementines” (February 11, 1994).

I began to track this pro-marriage trajectory that Professor Quispel had noted and, as he did, I found it emerging quite strongly in Valentinian Gnosis. This led me to a series of articles on the sacraments and the mystery of marriage in Valentinianism, two of which were published by *Vigiliae Christianae* and the third in a volume on erotic esotericism edited by Wouter Hanegraaff and Jeffrey Kripal. He was very convinced by my work on the *Gospel of Philip* and Valentinianism. “If you are right,” he wrote, “it means that the Valentinian [tradition] is the only one of the Christian traditions which says that sensuality is necessary for your spiritual development. The record of Christianity is poor: only Gnosis, Mysticism and Pietism left room for feminine sexuality. For the rest, all men accepted Augustine’s view that sexuality was sin.” Male and female had been separated and *eros* had entered the garden (February 24, 2002). However, Professor Quispel writes, “according to Valentinus, love restores the original androgyny.” He continues, “Valentinus is very near to Hermetism and Alexandrian spirituality” (January 13, 2001). He remarked that the “Egyptian religion was very erotic. Their gods always had both a phallus and a vulva. Jews in Alexandria must have picked that up.” This concept, he thought, Valentinus knew because “when you say that god is Depth and Silence, then of necessity you see intercourse as a reflexion of divine syzygy. Even Paul says something of the kind. Christ left his Mother (the Holy Ghost) to marry his bride, the Church, so that man should love his wife. Cabbalism, based

on the same presuppositions, led to the parallelism with Valentinus” (April 20, 2001).

He was captivated with the inscription of the gravestone of Flavia Sophe, especially the first epigraph, since it proved to him that the Valentinians in Rome adored their spouses and enjoyed the matrimonial bed. He translated the endearing reference to Sophe, “my dear relative and bedwoman, Sophe (σύννοιμε σύννευνε Σοφί μου)” (January 13, 2001) which I honor in this translation of the epigraph:

Yearning for the fatherly light, my dear relative and bedwoman,  
Sophe,  
In the ablutions of Christ, anointed with immortal holy oil,  
You have sought eagerly to gaze upon the divine faces of the Aeons,  
Upon the great Angel of the Great Counsel, the true Son,  
You have gone [to] the bridal chamber and ascended to the [...] [  
[...] fatherly and [...]  
(Epigraph 1 of the stele; *CIG* 4:9595a).

Professor Quispel entertained the idea that the “bridal chamber” was part of Jewish Christian baptism. It was, in his opinion, the moment during baptism when the Guardian Angel or Holy Spirit unites with the person. The Flavia Sophe inscription proved to him that the Valentinians connected baptism and bridal chamber, although the ritual referred to on this gravestone appears to have been an *apolytrōsis* ritual performed at death. Professor Quispel understood this to reflect a change in practice from earlier Valentinianism when the angelic encounter did not wait until death, but was effected when the angel, the Holy Spirit, was conveyed in the initiatory baptism as the *Gospel of Philip* suggests (October 7, 1998).

Professor Quispel, in the last years of his life, had noticed a passage from Tertullian’s *Scorpiace* X,I, (Reifferscheid, Wissowa, *CCL* 2, 1087) which cemented this concept for him. It is a passage that had gone unnoticed by previous scholars, but is extremely important because Tertullian attributes at least the names of the authorities to Valentinus’ own teaching. Professor Quispel translates the passage:

When first the souls have left the bodies after death and in every floor of the seven heavens have been inspected by the archonts to establish if they can be admitted, and when they have been asked the secret passwords which are in use among these heretics, then they have to make their confession in a face-to-face encounter with the real authorities, their true man, namely the Theleti, the Acineti, and the Abascanti, as Valentinus calls them.

He was keen to point out to me that Valentinus taught about “the guardian angels that wait at the entrance of the pleroma, the Beloved Bridegrooms (*Theleti*) and the Immovable Ones (*Acineti*) and the Ones beyond magic spells (*Abascanti*).” He said that these angels “recognize us because they are our *veri homines* (true man).” This means that the teaching about the soul’s post-mortem ascent passed the guardians of the planets and her face-to-face encounter with her true Self at the door to the pleroma must be traced back to Valentinus himself (February 14, 2002).

He thought that Valentinus was “much more radical than Ptolemaeus who appreciated everything psychic—nascent Catholicism,” he writes. He thought that Valentinus was critical of the demiurge in much the same way that the author of the *Apocryphon of John* is critical of Ialdabaoth. Valentinus was a Gnostic who taught more than one god. He proved this by quoting Tertullian in his work *Against Praxeas* 3,6: “*plures (dei) secundum Valentinus et Prodicus*,” which he thought should be translated, “more than one god, according to men like Valentinus and Prodicus.” Prodicus was an Alexandrian like Valentinus and a leader of a Gnostic group according to Clement (*Stromateis* III,4,30). So Professor Quispel famously wrote, “The question mark behind Valentinus gnosticus can be deleted” (*VC* 55, 2001, p. 440). By studying carefully the sources, he was convinced that “there is a way from the *Apocryphon of John* to Valentinus, from Valentinus to Ptolemaeus and Heracleon, and from Heracleon to Origenes” (April 20, 2001).

He felt very strongly about the Jewish Christian origins of the Valentinian tradition. Since Clement of Alexandria in the *Excerpts of Theodotus* 10 develops a tradition about the *protoktistoi*, the first created angels who always behold the face of the Father, Professor Quispel wondered if this was originally Pantaeus’ teaching. If so, he thought that passages from the *Excerpts* provided “an excellent parallel for Valentinus” and showed that “Valentinus was, just like Pantaeus, a presbyter of the Church of Alexandria and, like Pantaeus, continued the traditions of the Jewish (Christian) presbyters there” (October 4, 1998).

In the last few years before his death, Professor Quispel and I began to have a conversation about Gnosticism and Egypt. I related to him my experience in the tombs of the Valley of the Kings, that, when I entered my first tomb, I was shocked to the core. Here I was faced with Gnosticism painted in brilliant colors on the walls. Although I was going into the underworld, the Gnostic ascent journey was mapped on the walls around me. Professor Quispel responds, “I needed eighty years

to see that Hermetism and Gnosticism have an Egyptian background” (March 16, 2001). Professor Quispel explained this connection between the Egyptian journey to the underworld and Gnostic ascent through the heavens as an inversion of religious concepts, of transposing the underworld into the air. He began to talk about a second-century shroud from Saqqara on which the deceased person was shown standing in front of the door to the Hall of Absolute Truth (Doxiades, *Mysterious Fayum Portraits*, New York, 1995, p. 21). The deceased is holding in his hands a scroll containing magical formulae. He uses the scroll to prove his innocence and proclaims knowledge of all of the names of the gods he must pass by before he can enter the realm of bliss. When heaven became the post-mortem destiny of the soul, Professor Quispel said, this imagery was transposed to those realms, a transposition that Virgil himself made in the *Aeneis*, book IV (March 2, 2001). Professor Quispel recognized that the underworld journey of the soul had become a heavenly flight to the door of the pleroma, where the true Self waited to embrace its twin.

\* \* \*

I return to the gravestone of Sophe, which I rescribe and dedicate to Professor Quispel:

May 30, 1916 to March 2, 2006

Gilles Quispel did not have a typical end to his life.

He died, yet he lives; he sees a truly immortal light.

He really is living among the living, and is dead to the dead.

Gaia, why are you astonished by this dead body? Are you terrified?

(a modification of Epigraph 2 of the stele; *CIG* 4:9595a).

April D. DeConick  
Rice University, Houston



## GILLES QUISPTEL OU L'INTÉRIORITÉ DE LA GNOSE

J'écrivis ma première lettre à Gilles Quispel à l'automne 1968. J'avais lu en néerlandais sa thèse sur Tertullien; il me répondit en français – qu'il parlait avec tant d'élégance – m'ouvrant tout à la fois son cœur et son trésor. Si je devais résumer l'enseignement le plus précieux qu'il m'ait transmis, je dirais d'un mot: «l'intériorité de la gnose», ou ce qui revient au même: «la supériorité de l'imagination sur la raison».

C'est en vain que nous discoupons du Premier Père et du Demiurge, de l'Hebdomade et de l'Ogdoade, de la création de l'Homme et de la genèse du monde, si nous nous figurons que tous ces êtres existent à l'extérieur de nous. Ce que nous sommes vraiment n'a rien à voir avec le corps à trois dimensions. Nous ne sommes pas le corps et nous ne sommes pas non plus à l'intérieur de lui, puisque nous concevons aussi l'espace où il se trouve. Il n'existe donc rien d'extérieur à notre essence. Rien ne serait intelligible, si nous n'en avions pas en nous les principes.

C'est pourquoi «celui qui se connaît lui-même connaît le Tout», comme nous l'expliquait Gilles Quispel à Québec en 1978: il citait alors *l'Évangile* et le *Livre de Thomas*, le *Poimandrès* et les *Définitions d'Hermès Trismégiste à Asclépius*, dont je lui avais adressé ma première traduction. Mais pour se connaître soi-même, il faut dépasser la raison et «se comprendre en intellect». Car la rationalité du logos est inséparable du discours: enchaînement sans fin de paroles sonores (même quand on les pense en soi-même), qui entraînent la dispersion de l'esprit.

C'est ainsi que Sophia se serait épuisée en vaines arguties pour connaître le Père, si elle n'avait été arrêtée par Limite. Or Limite, qui met fin au mouvement et à la dispersion, est une fonction de l'Intellect, stable et inébranlable. L'Intellect n'a pas besoin de bouger, puisqu'il embrasse tout d'un seul regard. C'est le rayonnement de la Source qui se mire dans sa propre lumière. Et, selon le jeu de mots hermétique cher à Gilles Quispel, cette lumière primordiale est en même temps le premier Homme immortel, devenu accidentellement mortel: *Phóos* ou *Phoós*. Tout dépend, comme l'écrit Zosime, si l'on accentue la première ou la seconde moitié de la lettre oméga.

Ce qui ressemble plus, en nous, à la lumière de l'Intellect, c'est l'imagination. Non pas celle que Sartre décrivait comme la faculté



de «déformer les images», mais cette intuition qui permit à Einstein de faire des «expériences de pensée». (Et avant lui Newton, fervent hermétiste, en contemplant la simple chute d'une pomme, avait eu l'intuition fulgurante de la gravitation universelle). L'imagination préside aux exercices spirituels qui nous aident à dépasser notre être individuel pour connaître le Tout. Quiconque réussit une fois ce passage en ressort différent de ce qu'il était précédemment. Selon Hermès, il est régénéré. Gilles Quispéel voyait dans cette transformation le terme de l'expérience gnostique, «Gnosis als Erfahrung».

Puisqu'il faut s'élever de l'existence ici-bas à l'immortalité intelligible, le premier signal qui s'adresse à notre être de chair est nécessairement esthétique. Tertullien se gaussait du pathos valentinien. Il le brocardait comme la mise en scène grotesque d'une tragédie ratée. Gilles Quispéel me rendit sensible à la poésie poignante des quelques fragments authentiques qui nous restent de Valentin: l'effroi des anges à la vue du prototype humain, la pitoyable déchéance de l'âme changée en auberge pour malotrus. Qui ne se laisse pas pénétrer d'émotion, avant même d'analyser ces textes, se condamne à ne pas les comprendre ou à manquer l'essentiel: «Gnosis and Culture», et Valentin comme directeur spirituel au même titre que Bouddha ou Epictète.

Sur l'origine du «germe spirituel» appelé à nous transformer, Gilles Quispéel aimait à citer le traité de Tertullien *Contre les Valentiniens* (27,2-3): «ce n'est pas un attribut naturel, mais un don gracieux, puisque Achamôth le fait pleuvoir d'en haut sur les âmes bonnes». Grand lecteur des Epîtres de Paul, Gilles Quispéel avait un sens aigu de ce qu'est la grâce: une pure libéralité, qui nous affranchit du déterminisme. Par conséquent la semence de l'Esprit n'a rien d'une molécule, d'un gène, d'un principe biologique agissant automatiquement (car elle cesserait alors d'être une grâce): c'est une virtualité qui ne devient effective que si elle est co-éduquée avec l'âme bonne. Pour que l'âme reste bonne et n'étouffe pas la semence, il faut d'abord la préserver du mal, autrement dit des vices dont Irénée de Lyon et les hérésiologues accusaient à tort les Valentiniens. Mais il faut également l'éveiller par l'intériorisation des mythes, et l'instruire de la voie des anciens.

Mieux que d'autres, Gilles Quispéel a su rendre compte de cet itinéraire psychagogique. Il a mis en lumière le rôle stimulateur des «questions» (*zêtêmata*) destinées à l'éveil des débutants, comme l'*Epître à Rhéginos* ou la *Lettre à Flora*. Sa longue fréquentation de Carl Gustav Jung lui fit concevoir la dimension archétypale du mythe de Sophia, emprunté aux «Gnostiques» et domestiqué par les Valentiniens (encore

que ni l'*Évangile de Vérité*, ni le *Traité Tripartite* ne semblent le connaître). Dans la mesure où elle atteint jusqu'au tréfonds de l'âme, la voie gnostique transcende forcément tous les cultes, elle est indifférente aux siècles, elle déborde les clivages religieux. Voilà pourquoi on peut également étudier l'*Évangile de Thomas*, «Herman Hesse and Gnosis» et «Apocalyptic and Gnosis from Job to Jan van Eyck».

En énonçant successivement «Christliche Gnosis, jüdische Gnosis, hermetische Gnosis», Gilles Quispel propose au lecteur occidental une sorte de trajectoire à la fois spatiale et chronologique : du plus proche au plus lointain, du temps réel aux âges mythologiques. D'un point de vue strictement documentaire, les textes attribués à Hermès Trismégiste sont plus récents que la Torah. Mais l'attestation de Thot est plus ancienne, et le mythe attribué par Platon (*Timée* 22b) au prêtre de Saïs fait de l'Égypte la source unique de toute la mémoire humaine.

Les écrits hermétiques nous invitent à remonter à l'âge primordial de la communion des hommes et des dieux. Les statues animées qui habitent les temples, entourées des offrandes et de la piété des Égyptiens, nous aident à remonter en imagination vers ces bienheureuses origines. Qui se prête à cet exercice n'en retire pas seulement une sorte de révélation universelle (ou de lumière naturelle) commune à toute l'humanité, il retrouve les grâces et les facultés du premier Homme sorti de l'Intellect divin.

Savant traducteur et commentateur de l'*Asclepius*, Gilles Quispel adhère à l'efficacité de ce mythe. Il y voyait, comme il me l'a dit quelquefois, la source profonde de la vraie tolérance – non pas indifférente, mais attentive à tous les cultes – qui fut le génie même des Provinces Unies. C'était là le Cratère où il se retrempait lui-même pour raviver sa propre intériorité. Hasard ou Providence, Osiris lui avait fixé rendez-vous sur le Nil.

Jean-Pierre Mahé  
Membre de l'Institut de France  
Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres



PART I

GNOSTICA



## CHAPTER ONE

### CHRISTLICHE GNOSIS, JÜDISCHE GNOSIS, HERMETISCHE GNOSIS\*

FERDINAND CHRISTIAN BAUR

Die Bibelkritik ist ein Wunder des menschlichen Geistes, zugleich aber auch eine destruktive Macht. Die fünf Bücher Mose sind fünfhundert bis tausend Jahre nach dem vermuteten Leben des Mose geschrieben. Erst dreißig bis vierzig Jahre nach dem Tod Jesu entstand das älteste der kirchlichen Evangelien, Markus. Der Jünger Johannes wurde 43 oder 44 n.Chr. zusammen mit seinem Bruder Jakobus vom König Agrippa enthauptet. Er kann unmöglich der Verfasser der Apokalypse oder des vierten Evangeliums sein. Die sogenannten Pastoralbriefe an Timotheus sind sicher nicht von Paulus, ebenso wenig wie "sein" Brief an die Epheser und "sein" Brief an die Kolosser. Dieser mitleidlose, unwiderlegliche Rationalismus hat die Kirchen von innen her unterhöhlt: zuerst im neunzehnten Jahrhundert in den Niederlanden die niederländische reformierte Kirche (Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk), danach seit dem letzten Weltkrieg die römisch-katholische Kirche, in letzter Zeit auch die dissidierenden Kirchen.

Einer der Väter der Bibelkritik war der deutsche Professor Ferdinand Christian Baur in Tübingen (1792–1860). Man kann nachträglich der Meinung sein, seine Kritik sei zu weit gegangen. So leugnete er zum Beispiel, dass Petrus, der "erste Papst", jemals in Rom gewesen sei. Unter dem Einfluss seines Freundes David Friedrich Strauß und dessen Kritik an der Zuverlässigkeit der Evangelien betrachtete er den historischen Christus als nicht mehr denn ein Symbol für die "von der Erde zum Himmel aufstrebende, mit Gott sich einigende Menschheit". Aber seine unerschrockene, vor nichts zurückweichende

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\* Revised edition of an article previously published in G. Quispel (Hrsg.), *Die hermetische Gnosis im Lauf der Jahrhunderte*, Haarlem und Birnbach 2000, 630–663 (= *De Hermetische Gnosis in de loop der eeuwen*, Baarn 1992 = Baarn 1996<sup>3</sup>). The article ultimately derives from a lecture delivered in 1990 in Amsterdam.

kritische Einstellung ist tatsächlich die einzig mögliche. In seinem Arbeitszimmer hing der scharfe Geruch unerbittlicher Wissenschaft. Umso sonderbarer ist es, dass er mit viel Verständnis und großer Achtung über die Gnosis schrieb, die man gegenwärtig so gern kritisiert, bevor man sie überhaupt studiert hat.

1831 erschien das sehr gelehrte und gediegene Werk Baur's über das manichäische Religionssystem. Alle damals verfügbaren Quellen unseres Wissen über den Manichäismus sind darin ausführlich und sachlich verarbeitet. Dem Leben Manis (216–277) schenkte Baur wenig Aufmerksamkeit, auch deshalb, weil damals wenig darüber bekannt war. Aber das dualistische System Manis wurde vollkommen ernstgenommen: Alle Gestalten dieser komplizierten Erzählung wurden behandelt. Wir Heutigen fassen den Manichäismus vor allem als mythische Projektion der Selbsterfahrung oder als Äußerung einer existentiellen Geworfenheit auf. Doch Baur war Hegelianer und glaubte, Gott sei ein Sein in Bewegung. Diesen Sachverhalt erkannte er im manichäischen System wieder, und damit hatte er recht.

Den Dualismus Manis führte Baur zurück auf die persische Religion des Ahuramazda und Ahriman. So groß waren seine Autorität und sein Einfluss, dass diese Auffassung heute immer noch gilt. Auch die Kirchenväter, Augustinus zum Beispiel, sagten, Mani sei "Perser" gewesen. Das stimmt aber nicht. Der *Kölner Mani-Kodex* beweist, dass Mani ein Jude war, der vom vierten bis zum fünfundzwanzigsten Lebensjahr in einer Gemeinschaft judenchristlicher Täufer lebte. Doch wird Baur's Ansicht trotzdem immer wiederholt.

Im Jahr 1835 veröffentlichte Ferdinand Christian Baur sein gewaltiges Werk: *Die christliche Gnosis*. Darin bespricht der Gelehrte alle Gnostiker, die damals aus den Kampfschriften der Kirchenväter gegen sie bekannt waren. Der Akzent liegt natürlich vor allem wieder auf den "Äonen", zu Recht als Momente in der Entwicklung des werdenden Gottes interpretiert. Den Ursprung der Gnosis suchte Baur damals schon, und mit gutem Grund, im liberalen Judentum Alexandrias.

Nach der ausführlichen, sympathisierenden Besprechung der antiken Gnosis macht Baur einen großen Sprung. Er beschreibt die Auffassungen des Schuhmachers aus Görlitz, Jakob Böhme (1575–1624), und dreier Denker, die stark von Böhme beeinflusst waren: Hegel, Schelling und Schleiermacher. Er verweist auf die großen Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen ihnen und den alten Gnostikern. Auch die genannten Denker gehören nach ihm zur christlichen Gnosis. Dieser

Standpunkt ist außerordentlich aufschlussreich. Wenn man den Nachdruck nicht auf ihre eventuelle Feindschaft gegen die Welt, sondern auf ihre spezifische Auffassung von Gott legt, zeigt sich, dass sie alle Gott als Sein in Bewegung betrachten. Gott braucht den Menschen, um seine Ziele zu erreichen. Auch Dichter wie Goethe und Novalis gehören in diesem Zusammenhang. Heidegger, der zwar das Elend lehrt, aber nicht die Erlösung daraus, gehört natürlich nicht dazu.

Wie konnte es geschehen, dass diese Erkenntnis Baur verlorengegangen ist? Wie konnte es geschehen, dass der jüdische Ursprung der Gnosis, von Baur ohne Zögern anerkannt, heute auf so viele Widerstände stößt? Mode, Laune, Eigensinn? Die Codices von Nag Hammadi enthalten verschiedene Dokumente der jüdischen Gnosis, deren wichtigste der *Brief des Eugnostos*, das *Apokryphon des Johannes* und die *Apokalypse des Adam* sind. Allen gnostischen Systemen – den Systemen im Altertum, dem Manichäismus und dem deutschen Idealismus – liegt die Idee zu Grunde, dass der Geist, Gott, sich durch die Welt bewegt, um zu sich selbst und zum Bewusstsein seines selbst zu kommen. Hegel sagte nichts Neues.

Baur gab seinem gewaltigen Buch den Untertitel: *Die christliche Religionsphilosophie in ihrer historischen Entwicklung*. Nach ihm waren die Gnostiker Philosophen, Denker. Darin können wir ihm nicht folgen. Die Psychologie des Unbewussten hat nachgewiesen, dass Träume heutiger Geisteskranker, aber auch ganz gewöhnlicher Menschen, teilweise frappierende Gemeinsamkeiten mit den Vorstellungen der Gnostiker aufweisen. Hier handelt es sich nicht um Ergebnisse des Denkens, sondern um aus unausgeloteten Tiefen der Seele aufsteigende Bilder. Das ist keine Philosophie, von Verstand und Vernunft entwickelt, sondern Mythologie. Die Gnostiker selbst sagten, ihr Mythos sei ihnen offenbart worden: Valentinus sah in einer Vision ein neugeborenes Kind; Mani begegnete seinem Zwillingsbruder: dem Selbst; Jakob Böhme schaute sich auf einem Zinngefäß spiegelndes Sonnenlicht.

Auch das ist befreiende Erkenntnis. Die Lehre Hegels gibt sich zwar vernünftig und zwingt ihre Dialektik mit verbaler Gewalt, oder überhaupt Gewalt, der Geschichte und der Menschheit auf. Doch in Wirklichkeit ist sie Mythologie, die uns viel über das Unbewusste ihrer Anhänger verrät, wenig jedoch über die Wahrheit.



## DIE KATHARER

Früher sprach niemand von den Katharern. Jetzt spricht jeder von ihnen. Ein Automobilclub organisiert sogar Touristenreisen entlang katharischer Sehenswürdigkeiten in Südfrankreich. Das ist alles gar nicht so schlecht. Denn wer die mittelalterliche Cité von Carcassonne besichtigt und sich der grimmigen Burg Montségur von Osten her genähert hat, begreift erst so richtig, welch eine blühende Kultur höfischer Minnedichter und unabhängiger Frauen, welch eine tolerante Religion im Süden Frankreichs damals vernichtet wurde.

Sicher, Frankreich gab es damals noch nicht. Vor der Eroberung Konstantinopels und des Balkans durch die Türken funktionierte die mediterrane Kultur rund ums alte Mittelmeer noch. Man fand Katharer vor allem in Katalonien, im Languedoc, in Norditalien, Bosnien, Bulgarien, Konstantinopel und in der Türkei. In den östlichen Gebieten hießen die Ketzler nicht Katharer (die Reinen), sondern Bogomilen (Gottesfreunde), aber was ihre Lehre betrifft, machte das fast keinen Unterschied.

Wer die Katharer verstehen will, muss zuerst den Schimpfnamen "mittelalterliche Manichäer" vergessen. Die Manichäer waren im ost-römischen Reich schon längst mit Stumpf und Stiel ausgerottet. Auch lehrten sie nicht, die Welt sei von einem niederen Welterschöpfer, dem Demiurgen, erschaffen. Das aber lehrten die Katharer. Außerdem darf man die Katharer keine Sekte nennen. Sie waren eine Gegenkirche, in Südfrankreich von ihrem Bischof Niketas von Konstantinopel im Jahre 1167 auf dem Konzil von St. Félix de Caraman bei Toulouse gegründet. Die Katharer waren auch keine Vorläufer der Reformation. Sie waren im Wesen antikatholisch: Die Reformation aber ist die reformierte Catholica. Viel eher dürften jene Recht haben, die die Katharer als Erben des echten, unverfälschten Urchristentums ansehen.

Jesus hatte gesagt: Selig sind die Friedensstifter, denn sie werden Kinder Gottes genannt werden.

Die Katharer waren friedliebend und gewaltlos. Niemals während all dieser Kriege und Verfolgungen hat ein Katharer einen Katholiken ermordet. So etwas wird ihnen zwar vorgeworfen, aber es ist nicht wahr. Am 14. Januar 1203 wurde ein Gesandter des Papstes, Pierre de Castelnau, von einem Unbekannten (!) bei der Stadt Saint-Gilles ermordet. Damit rechtfertigte der Papst seinen Kreuzzug gegen die Katharer.

1242 ermordete eine kleine Gruppe Ritter aus Montségur einige

Inquisitoren in Avignon. Das löste einen Aufstand in Okzitanien (dem Gebiet des Languedoc) aus, was schließlich zur Eroberung Montségurs (1244) und dem Ende der Katharer in Südfrankreich führte. Aber die Katharer selbst hatten mit alledem nichts zu tun und kämpften nicht mit. Noch in anderer Hinsicht waren die Katharer die Erben des Urchristentums: Ihre Führer, die *perfecti* (die Vollkommenen), im Unterschied zu den *credentes* (Gläubigen), waren unverheiratet. Wir können nicht glauben, dass das urchristlich sein soll, weil wir das Christentum immer noch mit Katholizismus und Protestantismus identifizieren. Der Katholizismus hat die Ehe immer geduldet, der Protestantismus sogar wertgeschätzt. Aber im Urchristentum war es anders. Der Verfasser der Pastoralbriefe an Timotheus und Titus im Neuen Testament, als welcher immer Paulus angesehen wird, bekämpft "jüdische Lehrer" in Asia (Türkei), die die Heirat verbieten und gebieten, sich bestimmter Speisen zu enthalten (1. Timotheus 2:3). Solche Menschen gab es also damals. Erst im vierten Jahrhundert hören wir, dass sie in Asia außerhalb der Kirche lebten: Sie wurden Enkratiten genannt, "enthaltame Asketen", weil sie nicht heirateten, nicht tranken und kein Fleisch aßen. Sollte es möglich sein, dass diese Katharer noch tausend Jahre später mit diesen Enkratiten zusammenhängen? Es ist durchaus wahrscheinlich.

In Edessa, das wohlbekannte Zentrum der aramäischen Kirche Mesopotamiens, waren die Enkratiten in der Mehrzahl. Wenn man Christ wurde, musste man bei der Taufe der Ehe abschwören. Man verzichtete auf allen Besitz und wanderte auf den Wegen des Herrn. Dieses Christentum war radikal: Es unterminierte Eigentum und Ehe, auch damals die Fundamente des Zusammenlebens. Damals starb man früh. Die Kindersterblichkeit war bestürzend hoch. Eigentlich hätte jeder Mann Säfte aus seinem Körper pressen müssen, um Kinder zu zeugen, und jede Frau ein jährliches Kindbett und einen frühen Tod riskieren müssen.

Die Enkratiten verwarfen die "Welt", die damalige Gesellschaft, und verlegten sich auf persönliche Heiligung. In diesem Milieu entstand im vierten Jahrhundert eine charismatische Bewegung, die größten Wert auf die individuelle Erfahrung des Geistes und fortwährendes Gebet legte. Man nannte sie Messalianer, Beter, und schloss sie auf Dauer aus der Kirche aus. Der größte Mystiker der Ostkirche, Makarios, gehörte zu ihnen oder war ihnen geistesverwandt. Messalianer verließen Haus, Eigentum und Frau und wanderten von einer Stadt zur anderen. Sie kamen auch nach Armenien, das so nahe bei Edessa und

Mesopotamien lag. Verschiedene byzantinische Schriftsteller berichten, die Lehre der Bogomilen in Bulgarien sei ein Gemisch aus paulikianischen (gnostischen) und messalianischen Ideen gewesen. Offensichtlich wurden dann beide Gruppen aus Armenien nach Bulgarien umgesiedelt, um die Hauptstadt Konstantinopel gegen die eindringenden Slawen zu verteidigen. Vielleicht sind so die Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen dem Glauben der Katharer und dem aramäischen Christentum historisch zu erklären:

- Die katharischen *perfecti* wanderten ehelos und in Armut umher, genau wie die Enkratiten und Messalianer.
- Nur die “Vollkommenen” wurden “Christen” genannt. So machte es auch Makarios.
- Die Kirche der Katharer bestand aus “Vollkommenen” und, dem Rang nach unter ihnen, “Gläubigen”. Die Messalianer unterschieden zwischen den “Vollkommenen” und den “Rechtsschaffenen”, die eben ihr Bestes taten.
- Der Enkratit Tatian hatte gelehrt, der Geist feiere Hochzeit mit der Seele. Der syrische Christ Aphraates (um 350) betrachtete den Geist als des Gläubigen Schutzengel, der vor Gott steht (6, 15). Nach Makarios ist der heilige Geist das Ebenbild des Gläubigen (12, 6). Und in dem berühmten Perlenlied (um 225, Edessa) ist der Geist das Ebenbild der Seele. Er bleibt im Himmel zurück, wenn sich die Seele auf die Erde begibt, und ist ihr Selbst, das ihr entgegenkommt, wenn sie nach oben zurückkehrt. Nach den Katharern war der Geist im Himmel geblieben, als die Seele fiel. Die Handauflegung bei der Taufe ohne Wasser (das *Consolamentum*) bewirkt die Ankunft des Geistes im Menschen. “Die Seele bleibt im Menschen, solange er lebt, aber der Geist kommt und geht und bleibt nicht immer im Menschen. So werden die Fantasie, die Träume, die Gedanken und alles, was mit den Gedanken zu tun hat, im Menschen vom Geist bewirkt. Durch die Seele lebt der Mensch bloß.”

Das sagt bei seinem Verhör der bekannte Katharer Pierre Maury. Es spricht alles dafür, dass die Katharer über die Messalianer und die aramäische Kirche mit dem Urchristentum zusammenhängen.

Vielleicht ist es so auch zu erklären, dass so viele Äußerungen der Katharer mit dem *Evangelium des Thomas* übereinstimmen, einer enkra-

titischen Schrift, die um 150 in Edessa entstand und von Makarios (um 350) ausführlich zitiert wird. Dafür einige Beispiele:

– Der letzte uns bekannte *perfectus* Südfrankreichs sagt:

Wenn Frauen in ihrer Sterbestunde das Ketzerkleid empfangen, werden sie in männliche Männer verwandelt und [...] in die Herrlichkeit des Paradieses aufgenommen.

Der bekannteste Spruch aus dem *Thomas-Evangelium*, Logion 114, lautet:

...Denn jede Frau, wenn sie sich männlich macht, wird in das Reich der Himmel eingehen.

– Die Katharer zitieren das Wort von der Lästerung des Geistes in ungebräuchlicher Form:

Wer *gegen den Vater* sündigt, wird verschont werden, und wer *gegen den Sohn* sündigt, ebenfalls, aber wer gegen den heiligen Geist sündigt, dem wird nicht vergeben werden.

Das kommt so in der Bibel nicht vor, wohl aber im *Thomas-Evangelium*, Logion 44:

Wer *gegen den Vater* lästert, dem wird vergeben werden; und wer *gegen den Sohn* lästert, dem wird vergeben werden. Wer aber den Heiligen Geist lästert, dem wird nicht vergeben werden, weder auf Erden noch im Himmel.

– Die Katharer kannten auch eine abweichende Form des Jesuswortes: “Denn wo zwei oder drei in meinem Namen versammelt sind, da bin ich mitten unter ihnen” (Matthäus 18:20). Sie sagten:

Wo *einer* Seiner Kleinen ist, ist Er mit ihm; wo zwei sind, ebenfalls, und wo drei sind, auf dieselbe Art.

Im *Thomas-Evangelium*, Logion 30, sagt Jesus:

Wo drei sind, da ist Gott.  
Wo zwei sind oder einer ist, da bin Ich mit ihm.

Es kann eigentlich kein Zweifel daran bestehen, dass die Katharer das *Thomas-Evangelium* gekannt haben, wahrscheinlich durch Vermittlung der Messalianer.

## KATHARER UND GNOSTIKER

Man ist sich im Allgemeinen darüber einig, dass der Glaube der Katharer eine Form der Gnosis war. Das könnte auch schwerlich anders sein: Sie lehrten nämlich, es gebe einen guten Gott und einen niedrigen Welterschöpfer, wie im Altertum Marcion, Valentinus und so viele andere. Aber hängen die Katharer auch von der antiken Gnosis ab? Gibt es einen historischen Zusammenhang mit ihr?

Die Manichäer kommen dabei, wie wir schon sahen, nicht in Betracht. Sie waren zwar Gnostiker, lehrten aber nicht, die Welt sei von einem bösen Schöpfer geschaffen.

Es gibt zwar zahllose deutliche Parallelen zwischen den Auffassungen der Katharer und denen vieler gnostischer Schulen des Altertums. Aber das beweist noch nichts. Gnosis kann in der Seele auch spontan entstehen.

Roelof van den Broek hat eine wichtige Entdeckung gemacht. Es war schon seit längerem ein Fragment des (judenchristlichen) *Evangeliums der Hebräer* bekannt, in dem stand, Maria, die Mutter Jesu, sei eine himmlische Macht, Michael genannt. Van den Broek fand nun heraus, dass dieses Fragment nicht echt sein kann und aus den Kreisen der Borborianer stammen muss (von *Borboros*, Schmutz, also "Schmutzfinken"). Sie wurden so genannt, weil sie sehr obszöne Rituale hatten. Ein anderer Name für sie war *Gnôstikoi*, die einzige Gruppe in der Antike, die sich so nannte. Früher lebten sie in Ägypten, Syrien und Asia (Türkei). Doch als sie dort von dem katholischen Kaiser Theodosius II. (408–450) verfolgt wurden, flohen sie zuerst nach Persien, später ins gebirgige, unzugängliche Armenien, Zufluchtsort vieler verfolgter Sekten. Im Mittelalter wurden dann viele Ketzler aus Armenien nach Bulgarien umgesiedelt, um das byzantinische Reich gegen die eindringenden slawischen Bulgaren zu beschützen. Dort vermittelten sie ihre Überzeugungen den Bogomilen, die um das Jahr 1000 in Erscheinung traten. So ist es zu erklären, dass auch in einer bogomilischen Schrift, der *Interrogatio Johannis* (das Gespräch des Johannes mit Christus) die Ansicht vorkommt, Maria sei keine wirkliche Frau gewesen, sondern ein himmlisches Wesen. Diese Schrift wurde von einem gewissen Nazarius, dem Bischof der katharischen Kirche von Concorezzo in Norditalien, aus Bulgarien in den Westen gebracht. Auch die Katharer glaubten, Maria sei ein Engel gewesen.

Was sind die *Gnôstikoi*? Sie bildeten eine jüdische Schule in Alexandria, die lehrte, der Gott des Alten Testaments, von ihnen

Jaldabaoth genannt, sei ein niederer Gott, weit unter dem Unbekannten Gott der geistigen Welt stehend. Allmählich übernahmen sie einige christliche Elemente. Die wichtigste Quelle für unser Wissen über sie ist das *Apokryphon des Johannes*, in seiner heute bekannten Form im zweiten Jahrhundert nach Christus entstanden. In dieser Schrift wird erzählt, wie der Schüler Johannes nach der Kreuzigung Jesu zum Ölberg geht. Dort offenbart ihm Christus den Unbekannten Gott, die Entstehung der geistigen Welt und die Geburt des Schöpfergottes. Dieser weiß nicht, dass der Unbekannte, unpersönliche Gott über ihm und seinen Dienern existiert und ruft aus: "Ich bin ein eifersüchtiger Gott, neben mir gibt es keinen anderen." Das ist eine Anspielung auf Jesaja 45:5, wo der Herr den Monotheismus proklamiert, ein Höhepunkt in der Geschichte Israels: "Ich bin der Herr und keiner sonst. Außer mir ist kein Gott."

Danach folgt im *Apokryphon des Johannes* eine ganz neuartige Auslegung der ersten Kapitel der Genesis. So wird erzählt, Kain und Abel seien keine Söhne Adams, sondern vom Teufel in Eva gezeugt. Das *Apokryphon des Johannes* ist eine sehr komplizierte, ja verwirrende Schrift. Zugleich ist es eine außerordentlich klare Schrift: Sie schildert den fortwährenden Kampf zwischen der Offenbarungsgestalt des Unbekannten Gottes, Barbelo oder Sophia genannt, und dem bösartigen Demiurgen um – oder gegen – die Bewusstwerdung der Menschheit.

Die *Interrogatio Johannis*, eine der wenigen authentischen Quellen über die Katharer, die also nicht von den Inquisitoren der römischen Kirche stammt, besitzt dieselbe Form und denselben Inhalt wie das *Apokryphon des Johannes*. Den Rahmen bildet ein Gespräch zwischen Johannes und Jesus beim Abendmahl. Auch hier offenbart Jesus die Entstehung der geistigen Welt, sowie den Fall Satans, der einst zunächst dem Thron Gottes saß und das Weltall regierte. Hinabgestiegen auf die Erde, schuf er die sichtbare Welt. Er erschien Eva in der Gestalt der Schlange und stillte seine Begierde mit ihr. Darum waren Kain und Abel Kinder des Teufels. "Und er sprach zu ihnen: Seht, ich bin euer Gott und es gibt keinen anderen Gott außer mir." Es gibt keine andere Schrift in der Antike oder im Mittelalter mit demselben Rahmen und demselben Thema. Deshalb scheint es mir evident zu sein, dass der Verfasser der *Interrogatio Johannis* das *Apokryphon des Johannes* gekannt haben muss. Und so bestätigt sich der Zusammenhang zwischen den Katharern und der Lehre der *Gnôstikoi*. Es kann kein Zweifel daran bestehen, dass die "Ketzer" in Südfrankreich die Erben der alexandrinischen Gnosis in

der ältesten uns bekannten Form sind, und dass ihnen, direkt oder indirekt, zwei der wichtigsten Schriften aus Nag Hammdi, das *Thomas-Evangelium* und das *Apokryphon des Johannes*, bekannt waren.

#### DER URSPRUNG DER KETZERISCHEN GNOSIS IN ALEXANDRIA

Die Gnosis ist in Alexandria entstanden, in den ersten Jahrhunderten vor unserer Zeitrechnung. Der jüdische Dichter Hesekiel, der Tragödiendichter, der im zweiten Jahrhundert vor Christus in Alexandria lebte, beschrieb in seinem Drama *Exodus* auf Griechisch einen Traum des Mose, wovon in der *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9, 29 des Eusebius von Cäsarea ein Fragment erhalten geblieben ist. Darin wird erzählt, Mose habe auf dem Gipfel des Sinai einen Thron geschaut. Darauf saß ein "Mensch" (griechisch: *ho phôs*, der Mensch) mit einer Krone auf dem Haupt und einem Zepter in der linken Hand. Dieser *Phôs* ist nicht Gott selbst, sondern dessen Herrlichkeit, *kabod*, nach dem Vorbild des Propheten Hesekiel (darüber später mehr). Dieser Gott in Menschengestalt winkte Mose mit der rechten Hand, sich dem Thron zu nähern. Er gab Mose ebenfalls eine Krone und forderte ihn auf, auf einem Thron neben dem eigentlichen Thron Platz zu nehmen. Darauf fiel das ganze Heer der Sterne auf die Knie, Mose zu Füßen, und erwies ihm göttliche Ehren. Mose ist Gott geworden, weil er Gott geschaut hat. Der alte Mysteriengedanke, schon in Eleusis lebendig, dass das Schauen der Gottheit den Menschen vergöttliche, wird hier in Alexandria, etwa zweihundert Jahre vor Christus, auf den Menschen Mose angewendet, eine unglaubliche Ketzerei.

Der Gnostiker Saturnilus (um 150, Antiochia) hat ebenfalls eine ursprüngliche Form des Mythos der Glorie Gottes bewahrt. In seinem System fehlt die Göttin (Sophia) noch völlig, wie im *Poimandres*. Er erzählt, diese sichtbare Welt sei von den sieben Erzengeln (den sieben Planeten) erschaffen worden. Dann offenbarte der Unbekannte Gott sein leuchtendes Bild (die Glorie oder *kabod* des himmlischen Adam). Die Welterschöpfer versuchten diesen *Anthrôpos* festzuhalten, doch gelang es ihnen nicht, weil er sofort wieder emporflog. Darauf formten diese Planetengeister einen menschlichen Körper, den irdischen Adam, nach dem Bild des himmlischen *Anthrôpos*. Doch dieses Geschöpf konnte sich nicht erheben und kroch wie ein Wurm

auf der Erde (eine Vorstellung, die bis zu den Katharern fortlebte). Da erbarmte sich der himmlische Lichtmensch des ohnmächtigen Erdenmenschen und sandte ihm den Lichtfunken, der ihn aufrichtete und lebendig machte. Dieser Funke eilt beim Tod zurück zu seinem Ursprung. Der Körper wird in seine Bestandteile aufgelöst.

Der *Anthrôpos* ist hier Idee und Urbild, der irdische Adam ist Abbild. Diese Lichtgestalt hatte in Alexandria verschiedene Namen: *Phôs*, Mensch oder *Anthrôpos*, Mensch, oder, mit einer Anspielung auf den hebräischen Adam, *Adamas*, der stählerne Mensch (vom griechischen *adamas*, Stahl), auch gelegentlich *Archanthrôpos*, Urmensch. Nur scheinbar rätselhaft ist *Pi-geradamas* im alexandrinischen *Apokryphon des Johannes* (II, 8, 34–35): “pi” ist im Koptischen der Artikel – also “der (berühmte) Geradamas”. Das scheint in der jüdischen Sekte der *Gnôstikoi* der gebräuchliche Name für die Herrlichkeit Gottes gewesen zu sein. Er wird nämlich auch verschiedene Male in den nichtchristlichen gnostischen Schriften, *Die drei Gebete des Seth* und *Zostrianos*, die in Nag Hammadi gefunden wurden, verwendet. *Geradamas* muss eine Abkürzung sein von *geraios Adam*, wörtlich: “der alte Adam”, der Urmensch. Die Manichäer des dritten Jahrhunderts nannten den Urmenschen im Syrischen: *Adam Qadmaia*, wörtlich: “der alte Adam”. In der mittelalterlichen Kabbala wird der Ausdruck *Adam Kadmon* auch als Andeutung für den *kabod* erwähnt. Offensichtlich haben die jüdischen *Gnôstikoi* Alexandrias in vorchristlicher Zeit den Ausdruck antizipiert und in holpriges Griechisch übersetzt. Die Vorstellung von einem Gott in Menschengestalt, der vom Propheten Hesekiel als erstem geschaut wurde, drang auch in die alexandrinische Freimaurerei des Hermes Trismegistos ein. Damals wie heute waren anscheinend viele Juden Mitglied der Loge.

Im *Poimandres* wird erzählt, wie ein göttlicher *Anthrôpos* aus der Höhe herniedersteigt, um zu “erschaffen”, sich in die Natur verliebt und fällt. Dieser *Anthrôpos* ist das Urbild, das im menschlichen Körper des irdischen Adam abgebildet wird. Der *Anthrôpos* ist *Eikôn*, Bild, Urbild, Gedanken-Bild (platonisch), doch dass der Körper und nicht die Seele Bildträger Gottes ist, ist typisch jüdisch. Im *Poimandres* sind die platonistische Idee vom Menschen, der Bildmythos von der “Gestalt mit dem Äußeren eines Menschen” aus Hesekiel 1, und die bekannte Erzählung aus der Genesis über die Erschaffung Adams aus Erde, miteinander verbunden.

Es scheint uns unmöglich zu sein, dass das Judentum jemals so ketzerische Gedanken hervorgebracht haben soll, wie sie sich im



*Poimandres* und im *Apokryphon des Johannes* finden. Aber mir sagte Gershom Scholem einst: "Der jüdische Geist ist zu allen Zeiten, doch insbesondere zu Beginn unserer Zeitrechnung, viel lebendiger gewesen, als ihr Gojim es euch vorstellen könnt."

### JÜDISCHE GNOSIS

*Morgenglanz der Ewigkeit,  
Licht vom unerschaffnen Lichte,  
schick uns diese Morgenzeit  
deine Strahlen zu Gesichte,  
und vertreib durch deine Macht  
unsere Nacht.*

Niederl. Gesangbuchlied 289  
(im ev.-luth. Gesangbuch Nr. 450)

In diesem schönen Gedicht ist die jüdische Gnosis von zweitausend Jahren zusammengefasst. Gott ist verborgen und unkenndbar, Ungrund, En Sof, wie die jüdische Kabbala sagt. Aber er strahlt ein Licht aus, das ungeschaffene Urlicht. Das ist seine Glorie (*kabod*).

Für den Dichter dieses Liedes, Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, war dieses Licht Jesus. Er war ein christlicher Kabbalist. Im Jahr 1677 veröffentlichte er im Verlag des Abraham Lichtenhaler zu Sulzbach seine umfangreiche und sehr gelehrte *Kabbala Denudata* (Die Kabbala enthüllt). Er war nicht der erste christliche Kabbalist und auch nicht der letzte. Das Auftreten des Rationalismus verdrängte dann das Interesse an der jüdischen *Kabbala* aus der christlichen Theologie. Sie flüchtete sich in die Kunst. Die Bücher des jüdischen Schriftstellers Isaac Bashevis Singer sind voll davon. Ebenso die Gemälde von Marc Chagall. Seine Darstellung des Besuches der drei Engel bei Abraham, die in seinem biblischen Museum in Nice hängt, ist so schön und fromm, dass sie mit der Ikone der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit von Andrej Rubljow in Moskau wetteifern kann. Martin Buber und Friedrich Weinreb haben auf ihre Weise Erzählungen über den Chasidismus in weiten Kreisen verbreitet. Doch dass auch dies eine Form von Gnosis ist, der letzte Ausläufer einer langen Geschichte, das lässt sich nur von Gershom Scholem lernen.

Ein großer, lebhafter, beweglicher Mann, dessen Augen plötzlich aufflammen können. Bei der ersten Begegnung etwas scheu, in großen Menschenmengen sogar verlegen, manchmal auch distanziert und in seinem Urteil über Kollegen unvorstellbar hart.

Das alles ändert sich schlagartig, wenn er als Redner hinter dem Katheder steht. An seiner Ironie erkennt man sofort den Berliner. Aber schon ist er im besten Zug und trägt seine Thesen vor, die er klar wie Kristall entwickelt. Seine Logik ist faszinierend und mitreißend, man versteht alles, was er sagt, auch wenn man es zum erstenmal hört.

Jetzt nähert er sich dem Kern seiner Darlegungen, der "heiligen Verbannung". Er ist ganz Feuer und Flamme, sein Publikum ist betroffen, ja bewegt. Es gibt Frauen, die drauf und dran sind, in Tränen auszubrechen, und doch ist kein Wort gefallen, das nicht wissenschaftlich wäre oder unter dem Niveau eines klaren spirituellen Gedankenganges läge. So etwas war möglich, weil dieser Mann sein Leben lang hart gearbeitet hatte und seinen Stoff vollständig beherrschte.

Ich habe das Vorrecht gehabt, im Lauf meines Lebens drei hochbegabten Menschen zu begegnen, denen ich viel zu verdanken habe: Gerardus van der Leeuw, Carl Gustav Jung und Gershom Scholem.

Van der Leeuw, Verfasser der *Phänomenologie der Religion*, könnte man als das Genie der Oberfläche charakterisieren. Mit empfindsamen Händen tastete er die Konturen der Religionen ab und versuchte so deren Wesen und ihre wesentlichen Unterschiede zu erspüren.

Jung dagegen war das Genie des Abgrundes, der seine Hörer immer wieder durch seine unbarmherzig richtigen Erkenntnisse schockierte und die Tiefen Satans auslotete.

Und Scholem war das Genie der Präzision. Er sagte kein Wort, das nicht zu verantworten war. Er untersuchte seine Texte mit größter Sorgfalt. In allem wollte er, wie er sagte, wissenschaftlich sein. Mit den Behauptungen der Kabbalisten, ihre Lehre sei uralte, machte er kurzen Prozess. Für okkulte Strömungen, in denen die Kabbalisten wie die Hermetik nach der Aufklärung untergetaucht waren, hatte er nur Verachtung übrig. Von einem "Quacksalber" wie Weinreb, aber auch von einem "Poseur" wie Buber hielt er nichts. Es war diese Präzision, die ihn dazu befähigte, zum erstenmal in der Geschichte eine Wissenschaft der jüdischen Gnosis zu entwerfen.

Gerhard Scholem, geboren am 5. Dezember 1897 in Berlin, war der Sohn wohlhabender Eltern, die national dachten, zum Schein dem jüdischen Glauben anhängen, in Wirklichkeit aber assimilierte Juden waren. Anfangs studierte er Mathematik und Philosophie (sein Leben lang blieb er Hegelianer). In diesen wilden Jahren war er ein *Radikalinski* mit anarchistischen Sympathien und pazifistischen Ideen. Er brach mit seinem Vater. Je deutlicher er sich seiner jüdischen Nationalität bewusst wurde, desto mehr interessierte er sich für jüdische Religion. Orthodox konnte er nicht werden: Auch später aß er mit Genuss

Schweinefleisch und arbeitete am Sabbat. Aber er glaubte, man könne die Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes nur verstehen, wenn man die jüdische Mystik – oder besser: Gnosis – kenne: die lehrte, dass Gott in der weiblichen Gestalt der *Schechina* (Gegenwärtigkeit) mit seinem Volk in Verbannung leide. Damit schloss er sich Hegels Auffassung an, dass Gott als Geist durch die Welt wandern muss, um zu sich selbst zu kommen.

Er studierte Kabbala (Überlieferung) in München und promovierte 1922 über einen kabbalistischen Text. Schon 1923 übersiedelte er mit seiner ersten Frau nach Jerusalem. Er war und blieb überzeugter Zionist. In Jerusalem kam er mit seit altersher dort existierenden kabbalistischen Gruppen in Berührung, die die alten Schriftsteller auf ihre Weise studierten. Sie übten die jüdische Gnosis in der Praxis aus. Sie gaben diese alten Schriften auch gelegentlich auf Hebräisch heraus, was den allwissenden deutschen Gelehrten jedoch unbekannt geblieben war. Diese Ausgaben waren unkritisch und unwissenschaftlich und litten unter unmöglich frühen Datierungen. Scholem sprach von diesen "Hasidim" immer mit Hochachtung. Aber er ging einen anderen Weg.

Aus seiner Heimat brachte er gründliches wissenschaftliches Denken, eine nichts scheuende Kritik und historische Einstellung mit. Er wollte die jüdische Gnosis als historische Erscheinung erforschen. Damit stand er damals ganz allein. Weder in Jerusalem noch in Deutschland hatte er Fachkollegen. Er sah sich vor die Aufgabe gestellt, dieses ganze Gebiet vom ersten Jahrhundert in Palästina bis zum achtzehnten Jahrhundert in Polen systematisch zu bearbeiten. Zwanzig Jahre verbrachte er damit. Die meisten Schriften der jüdischen Gnosis waren nicht oder nur unvollständig veröffentlicht und mussten in Handschriften an allen möglichen Orten untersucht werden. Außerdem musste man häufig erst feststellen, zu welcher Periode sie eigentlich gehörten – und vor allem, dass sie nicht uralt waren, wie sie vorgaben. Es mussten also erst einmal die Quellen für diese zweitausendjährige Geschichte entdeckt werden, bevor die Geschichte selbst geschrieben werden konnte. Das alles hat Scholem geleistet. Dabei legte er als Nationalist Wert auf die typisch biblischen und jüdischen Merkmale dieser Gnosis. Ihr Ausgangspunkt war zu allen Zeiten die Vision des Propheten Hesekiel gewesen. Dieser sah in der Verbannung im Jahr 594 in Babylonien die Glorie Gottes, eine Lichtgestalt auf einer Art Thronwagen. Und diese Gestalt besaß das Äußere eines Menschen. Dieser wurde in der Kabbala zum Adam

Qadmon (dem Urmenschen) mit seinen verschiedenen Aspekten: Äonen oder Prinzipien, die *sephiroth* genannt wurden. Auch darin hielten sich die jüdischen Gnostiker an die Bibel, dass auch in der höchsten Verzückung der Eingeweihte Mensch blieb und nicht vergöttlicht wurde. Die Kabbalisten hielten sogar an der großen Bewusstwerdung Israels fest, an der Einheit mit dem lebendigen Gott. Das Alte Testament verkündigt einen in sich bewegten Gott, ein Meer von Zorn und Erbarmen. Es gab zwar jüdische Philosophen, die das leugneten. Sie definierten Gott als einen unbewegten ersten Bewegten. Demgegenüber war die Bewegtheit Gottes, sein Leiden mit dem Volk in Verbannung, gerade der Aspekt, der die jüdischen Gnostiker am meisten fesselte. Sie beharrten darauf: "Und Er bewegt sich doch."

Im Jahre 1941 konnte Scholem die Ergebnisse seiner Forschungen in seinem klassischen Meisterwerk *Major Trends of Jewish Mysticism* (New York 1941) niederlegen. Scholem beherrschte das Deutsche wie kein anderer, das Hebräische schon etwas weniger gut und das Englische wie damals ein Deutscher, das heißt: schlecht. Als die Texte der englischen Vorträge, aus denen dieses Buch bestand, immer und immer noch nicht erscheinen wollten, sagte der Führer der amerikanischen Juden, Rabbi Wise: "They are still busy translating your book into English". Vielleicht ist darum auch der Titel falsch formuliert, mit Rücksicht auf ein amerikanisches Publikum, das nicht wusste, was Gnosis ist. Denn hier handelte es sich nicht um "Mysticism", sondern um "Gnosticism". Mystik geht nämlich zeitlos über alles Bildliche hinaus und in Gott auf. "Kein einziges Bild", sagt Johannes vom Kreuz. Gnosis erzählt im Gegensatz dazu eine lange Bildergeschichte. Sie ist, um Schelling zu zitieren, "erzählendes Denken". Eine Bildergeschichte also. Scholem wusste das sehr gut. Das Problem seines Lebens war, so sagte er mir einmal, der Ursprung der jüdischen Gnosis und ihr Verhältnis zur antiken Gnosis. Letztere stellte den persönlichen Gott des Alten Testaments dem Unbekannten Gott der religiösen Erfahrung gegenüber.

#### JÜDISCHE GNOSIS UND ANTIKE GNOSIS

Natürlich gab Scholem zu, dass es einen Unterschied zwischen der Religion Israels in biblischen Zeiten und der späteren jüdischen Gnosis gab. Denn darin ist Raum für alle möglichen Symbole und Begriffe, die im Monotheismus des Alten Testaments noch nicht oder nicht mehr existieren. Die Muttergestalt, die Begegnung mit dem

Selbst, die Seelenwanderung, das alles sind Dinge, die im Alten Testament nicht vorkommen. Die *Merkaba-Mystiker* der ersten Jahrhunderte steigen durch sieben himmlische Paläste empor, um schließlich zum Schauen der Glorie, des *kabod*, der Herrlichkeit Gottes zu kommen. Aber Hesekiel, ihr Vorbild, bleibt auf der Erde. Das ist ein Gegensatz zwischen der Religion des Alten Testaments und der „*Merkaba-Mystik*“.

Dagegen kennen die hellenistische Religion und die alte Gnosis sehr wohl die Himmelsreise der Seele, den sieben Planeten entlang bis zum *Plerôma*. Die Seelenwanderung, auch so eine unbiblische Auffassung, wird in der nichtchristlichen gnostischen Schrift *Zostrianos*, im *Corpus Hermeticum*, bei den *Gnôtikoi* des *Apokryphon des Johannes*, in der *Pistis Sophia*, von Basilides, Karpokrates, Mani, also eigentlich von allen Gnostikern, mit Ausnahme, soweit wir wissen, des Valentinus, gelehrt. Die Begegnung mit dem Selbst ist der Kern der Gnosis des Valentinus und Mani. Sophia wird von den Gnostikern als Mutter betrachtet. Das alles ist nicht alttestamentlich.

Doch glaubte Scholem mit Recht, die christliche Gnosis sei aus der jüdischen Gnosis entstanden. Er schrieb darüber in seinem sehr gelehrten Buch *Jewish Gnosticism* (1960). Darin suchte er nachzuweisen, dass die jüdische Gnosis sehr alt sei, und führte zu diesem Zweck das Paulus-Erlebnis einer Himmelfahrt bis zum dritten Himmel im Paradies an.

Und jetzt rächte es sich, dass Scholem in München nur ein Jahr Griechisch gelernt hatte und nicht viel von der hellenistischen Religion verstand. Er fühlte sich verunsichert, als koptisch-gnostische Schriften entdeckt wurden, die seine Auffassung zu bestätigen schienen. Außerdem war er gerade mit seinen Jugenderinnerungen, *Von Berlin nach Jerusalem*, beschäftigt und seinem Briefwechsel mit seinem Busenfreund, dem kommunistischen Morphinisten Walter Benjamin. Es drang nicht bis zu ihm durch, dass die neugefundene Schrift *Donner, der vollkommene Verstand* ein jüdischer Lobgesang auf Mutter Sophia war. Und es kam ihm nicht zu Bewusstsein, dass verschiedene Schriften aus Nag Hammadi, zum Beispiel der *Brief des Eugnostos*, vorchristliche jüdische Gnosis enthielten. Dadurch wurde ihm auch die enttäuschende Erkenntnis erspart, dass die jüdische Gnosis zwar in streng pharisäischen, nationalistischen, orthodoxen Kreisen als esoterische Weisheit für einige Auserwählte überliefert wurde, dass sie aber nur ein später Ableger der alexandrinischen liberalen, hellenistischen und ketzerischen Gnosis war.

Er war wie Mose, der vom Berg Nebo aus am diesseitigen Ufer des Jordan, genau gegenüber Jericho, das verheißene Land schaute, es aber nicht betrat.

#### HERMES, DREIMAL INKARNIERT

In der hermetischen Schrift *Die achte und die neunte Sphäre* ist Hermes ein Gott-Mensch: Er ist ein menschlicher König aus der Urzeit Ägyptens, zugleich die Verkörperung des Geistes, der Schritt für Schritt dem Einzuweihenden die Geheimnisse des Kosmos und der geistigen Welt offenbart. In den siebzehn Traktaten des *Corpus Hermeticum* kommt diese Vorstellung nicht mehr vor. Offensichtlich wurde diese Auffassung, ebenso wie die magischen Elemente, bei der Auswahl der Schriften entfernt. Von Hermes heißt es auch, er sei dreimal inkarniert gewesen. Das diente dazu, um seinen Titel "Der dreimal Größte" zu erklären. Das muss sich aber ein Grieche ausgedacht haben: Ein Ägypter wusste, Trismegistos bedeutete nur einfach "sehr groß". Auch diese Vorstellung ist im *Corpus Hermeticum* nicht erhalten geblieben. Doch Johannes von Damaskus (um 725) kannte sie noch.

Dieser große Denker der Ostkirche, Thomas von Aquin ebenbürtig, erzählt in seiner *Leidensgeschichte des Artemius*, wie Kaiser Julian Apostata bei seinem Aufenthalt in Antiochia 363 einen Märtyrer verspottete. Christus, so sagte der Kaiser, sei nach dem Glauben der Christen zweimal geboren (ewig aus dem Vater, und in der Zeit aus Maria). "Bei den Griechen aber gab es sehr weise Männer, die nicht nur zweimal, sondern sogar dreimal geboren waren, denn Hermes, der Trismegistos genannt wird, ist auch zum dritten Mal auf die Welt gekommen und sich seiner selbst bewusst geworden, wie seine heiligen, bewunderungswürdigen Bücher verkündigen, und wird deshalb der Trismegistos, der dreimal Große, genannt" (26).

Das stand also in hermetischen Schriften, die verloren gegangen sind. Wie Jean-Pierre Mahé zeigt,<sup>1</sup> wissen wir auf Grund eines Papyrusfundes, dass im Altertum noch ganz andere Sammlungen griechischer hermetischer Traktate existierten. Das wird von obiger Passage bestätigt. Soll nun diese Vorstellung besagen, dass der Geist in Hermes durch die

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<sup>1</sup> J.-P. Mahé, "Der Weg zur Unsterblichkeit", in: Quispel, *Die hermetische Gnosis im Lauf der Jahrhunderte*, 27–52.

Welt wandern müsse, um zum Bewusstsein seiner selbst zu kommen? Das wäre eine auffallende Parallele zu Hegel.

Nach Johannes Damascenus soll der Märtyrer in Antiochia dem Kaiser folgende Antwort gegeben haben:

Hermes, der von euch Trismegistos genannt wird, war ein ägyptischer Mann. Er wurde in ägyptischen Sitten aufgezogen, heiratete eine Frau und zeugte Kinder. Das älteste Kind nennt man Tat. Mit ihnen führt er Gespräche und ihm widmet er seine Abhandlungen, ebenso dem Asclepius... Ihm erklärt er auch seine Auffassung Gottes, die folgendermaßen lautet: Gott zu kennen ist schwer, aber ihn in Worte zu fassen, unmöglich. Denn Er ist dreifach, ein unerklärliches Wesen und eine Natur ohnegleichen bei den Sterblichen. Doch diejenigen, welche die Menschen Götter nennen: Darüber haben sich die Menschen viel Fiktives und Ausgedachtes aufgeladen. Und über die Ankunft Christi hat auch er [Hermes] eine dunkle Prophezeiung ausgesprochen, nicht aus sich selbst, sondern sie der Theologie der Hebräer entlehnend.

Der Verfasser der *Leidensgeschichte des Artemius* weiß noch, dass mehrere Traktate des Hermes sich an dessen (geistigen!) Sohn Tat wenden. Diese Traktate befinden sich auch im *Corpus Hermeticum*. Aber was Hermes zu Asclepius sagt, das steht nur in dem aus dem Griechischen übersetzten und im Lateinischen erhaltenen Buch, das *Asclepius* heißt.

Das Gespräch zwischen dem abtrünnigen Kaiser und dem Märtyrer hat niemals stattgefunden. Julian war nicht gut auf die Christen zu sprechen und war schon drauf und dran, sie zu verfolgen. Aber er kam im Krieg um, bevor es soweit war. Doch verglich er hellenische Weisheit mit christlichen Dogmen, um zu beweisen, um wie viel besser das Heidentum war als das Christentum. Auch ist wahrscheinlich, dass die Definition Gottes, wie sie in dieser Schrift gegeben wird, einer verlorengegangenen hermetischen Schrift entnommen ist. Gregor von Nazianz (*Homiliae* 28, 4) kennt sie ebenfalls und hat sie "einem der griechischen Theologen" (Hermes Trismegistos) entlehnt.<sup>2</sup> Das ist sehr wichtig, denn mit den Worten: "Gott zu kennen ist schwer, aber ihn in Worte zu fassen, unmöglich", ist der Unbekannte Gott gemeint, den man im Dunkeln erleben kann, über den sich aber nichts sagen lässt. Dieser Unbekannte Gott des Hermes Trisme-

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<sup>2</sup> J. Pépin, "Grégoire de Nazianze, lecteur de la littérature hermétique", *Vigiliae Christianae* 36 (1982) 251–260.

gistos hat die Gnosis und die katholische Mystik, zum Beispiel die Mystik des Dionysios Areopagita, stark beeinflusst.

Schließlich sei noch angemerkt, dass Julian Apostata in einem seiner Werke tatsächlich über den dreimal geborenen Hermes Trigenethlios sprach:

Von Hermes spreche ich, der zum dritten Mal in Ägypten verweilte.

Das wird uns von dem katholischen Kirchenvater Cyrill von Jerusalem in seiner Schrift gegen Julian (V) mitgeteilt.

Dieselbe Auffassung findet sich bei einem Philosophen namens Hermias, der in einem Kommentar zum *Phaidros* des Plato (94, 21) sagt:

Wie ja auch, das ist bekannt, von Hermes Trismegistos gesagt wird, er habe sich verschiedene Male in Ägypten aufgehalten und sei sich beim dritten Mal seiner selbst bewusst geworden, weshalb er Hermes Trismegistos genannt wird.

An anderer Stelle (168, 24) sagt derselbe Hermias:

Denn so wurde auch Hermes Trismegistos genannt, weil er dort dreimal ein philosophisches Leben geführt hat und beim dritten Mal zur Erkenntnis seiner selbst gekommen ist.

Es gibt nicht den geringsten Anlass anzunehmen, diese Vorstellung sei nachchristlich. In den hermetischen Kreisen Alexandrias lehrte man, der Gottmensch Hermes, Thot, Bringer der Offenbarung, habe sich dreimal in Ägypten inkarniert, bevor er zum Bewusstsein seiner selbst gekommen sei.

Diese Auffassung ging einer großen Zukunft entgegen.

#### SETH, DREIMAL INKARNIERT

Die Schriften mit den Titeln *Das Apokryphon des Johannes*, *Die Apokalypse des Adam* (an Seth gerichtet), *Die drei Stelen des Seth* und *Das Evangelium der Ägypter*, die bei Nag Hammadi aufgefunden wurden, sind außerordentlich wirr und schwer zu verstehen. Sie vergegenwärtigen eine vorchristliche, jüdische, alexandrinische Gnosis, die von den *Gnōstikoi* gelehrt wurde. Sie werden in der modernen Literatur auch gelegentlich "Sethianer" genannt, weil Seth in all diesen Schriften die Hauptrolle spielt.

Seth, nach dem Buch Genesis einer der drei Söhne Adams, ist der Erlöser, die Verkörperung des großen, unverderblichen, ewigen



Seth im *Plerôma*. Dieser letztere Seth ist wieder der geistige “Sohn des unverderblichen (Ur)Menschen *Adamas*”, die Herrlichkeit Gottes, die die Gestalt eines Menschen besitzt, Adam oder *Anthrôpos*. Der ursprüngliche Mythos der alexandrinischen *Gnôstikoi* ist auf zwei jüdische Legenden zurückzuführen:

- Kain war eigentlich nicht der Sohn Adams, sondern des Teufels, der Schlange aus dem Paradies, die Eva vergewaltigte.
- Die Nachkommen Seths sind die Söhne Gottes, worüber in Genesis 6 gesprochen wird.

Die *Gnôstikoi* waren außerdem über die jüdische Religion des persönlichen Gottes Jehova zum Unbekannten Gott hinausgelangt. So kamen sie zu schockierenden Auffassungen: Die Weltgeschichte ist ein fortwährendes Ringen zwischen der Weisheit, Sophia, und einem bösen Demiurgen um – oder gegen – die Bewusstwerdung der Menschheit. Deshalb gibt es zwei Arten von Menschen: den reinen, ungeschändeten Samen Seths und die Kinder Kains, die zur Begierde, zur Sünde und zum Bösen vorbestimmt sind.

Der Demiurg, ein böswilliger Engel, versucht fortwährend, die Kinder Seths zu unterdrücken und zu vernichten. Er schickt die Sintflut, lässt Feuer und Schwefel auf Sodom und Gomorrha regnen, und schließlich wird er die Welt in Flammen aufgehen lassen. Doch alle drei Male rettet Seth die Seinen aus der Not. Er erlöst die Kinder des Lichtes durch die Offenbarung der Gnosis.

Einige Zitate:

Er [der große Seth] erlebte *drei* Inkarnationen [*parousiai*], die ich vorhin schon erwähnt habe: bei der Sintflut, beim Brand [Sodoms] und beim Gericht über die Herrscher und Mächte dieser Welt.

(*Evangelium der Ägypter* 63)

Und noch einmal wird, nun zum dritten Mal, der Erklärer der Gnosis [Seth] in großer Herrlichkeit erscheinen. (*Apokalypse des Adam* 76, 8–11)

Eine ähnliche Periodisierung der Heilsgeschichte mit eschatologischer Perspektive findet sich auch im Evangelium des Lukas (17:26–30). Dort sagt Jesus:

Und wie es in den Tagen Noahs zugeht, wird es auch in den Tagen des Sohnes des Menschen sein: Sie aßen, sie tranken, sie heirateten, sie wurden verheiratet, bis zu dem Tag, da Noah in die Arche ging und die Sintflut kam und alle vertilgte.

Und so wie es in den Tagen Lots zugeht: Sie aßen, sie tranken, sie kauften, sie verkauften, sie pflanzten, sie bauten. An dem Tag aber, an dem Lot aus Sodom hinausging, regnete es Feuer und Schwefel vom Himmel und vertilgte alle.

Auf gleiche Weise wird es an dem Tag sein, da der Sohn des Menschen sich offenbart.

Offensichtlich existierte unter den Juden ein Stufenplan der Weltgeschichte: zuerst die Sintflut, danach der Untergang von Sodom und Gomorrhä und schließlich das Jüngste Gericht und ein Feuermeer, das der bestehenden Welt ein Ende macht. Dieses Schema kannten die jüdischen *Gnôstikoi* in Alexandria auch. Aber sie wussten ebenfalls noch von den periodischen Inkarnationen ihres Erlösers Seth. Das hatten sie anscheinend von Hermes Trismegistos übernommen.

Hermes offenbarte sich dreimal in Ägypten, wie Seth sich offenbarte in der Heilsgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes.

Die Offenbarung war aber immer noch auf ein Volk beschränkt.

#### SIMON MAGUS, DREIMAL INKARNIERT

Die Samariter wohnten am westlichen Jordanufer zwischen Judäa und Galiläa, in der Umgebung der Stadt Sichem, dem heutigen Nablus. Man schätzt, dass es halb so viel Samariter wie Judäer gab. Es gab zu Beginn unserer Zeitrechnung, noch vor der Eroberung Jerusalems im Jahr 70 n. Chr., über die ganze Welt verstreut ungefähr 10 Millionen Judäer, davon 6 Millionen im Römischen Reich. Dann muss es etwa fünf Millionen Samariter gegeben haben. Nur etwa 500.000 Judäer lebten in ihrer Heimat Judäa. Dann dürften ungefähr 200.000 Samariter in Samaria gelebt haben. Die Samariter waren die eigentlichen Israeliten, die Nachkommen des Nordreiches, Israel, das bei der Spaltung des Reiches Salomos um das Jahr 931 entstanden war. In diesem Israel lebten zehn der zwölf Stämme: Die Samariter waren die Nachkommen von einigen dieser zwölf Stämme. In der Bibel wird erzählt, sie seien Bastarde gewesen, von Heiden abstammend, die nach 721 aus Babylon herübergekommen waren (2. Könige 17).

Aber das waren nur wenige Einzelne, die zu Beginn unserer Zeitrechnung längst in der großen Menge der Israeliten aufgegangen waren. Heute gibt es noch so etwa fünfhundert Samariter.

Die Samariter besaßen eine Religion, welche eine Variante der jüdischen Religion darstellte. Sie akzeptierten nur die fünf ersten Bücher der Bibel, die so genannten Bücher Mose, und verwarfen die

Propheten Judäas. Zentrum ihrer Religion war der Berg Gerizim bei Sichem, nicht der Hügel Zion bei Jerusalem. Bis auf den heutigen Tag feiern sie ihr Passahfest auf dem Gerizim. Ihre Bibel und heiligen Bücher haben sich erhalten und sind übersetzt. Daraus ergibt sich, dass sie Mose hoch verehrten. Sie sagten, Mose sei mit dem Namen (JHWH) Gottes bekleidet gewesen, er sei der "Mann Gottes" gewesen, der mit seinem Zauberstab viele Wunder vollbracht habe. Ihm war auf dem Sinai nicht so sehr Gott selbst, als vielmehr dessen menschengestaltige Glorie offenbart worden. Diese wird in samaritanischen Quellen auch "große Kraft" genannt. Die Samariter lasen außerdem in Deuteronomium 18:15, dass einst ein Prophet wie Mose kommen würde:

Einen Propheten wie mich wird dir der Herr, dein Gott, erstehen lassen aus der Mitte deiner Brüder – auf den sollt ihr hören!

Daraus zogen sie den Schluss, es werde eine Art Messias kommen, der *taheb*, aber nicht so sehr ein nationaler Befreier, sondern der wahre Prophet, der die höchste Gnosis offenbart.

Der bedeutendste Samariter, der jemals gelebt hat, war Simon der Magier. Er kommt auch in der Bibel vor. Im achten Kapitel der Apostelgeschichte wird erzählt, dass in Jerusalem nach der Steinigung Stephanus' eine Verfolgung ausbrach: Die Hellenisten (griechisch sprechende Judenchristen) sahen sich gezwungen, Jerusalem zu verlassen. Die Hebräer (die Judenchristen aus Palästina, die aramäisch sprachen) und die Apostel blieben in Jerusalem.

Einer dieser griechisch sprechenden Hellenisten, Philippus, kam in eine Stadt des Landes Samaria, wahrscheinlich die Hauptstadt Sebaste, und verkündigte dort den Christus. Schon vor dieser Zeit war in dieser Stadt ein Zauberer aufgetreten, namens Simon. Alle, ohne Ausnahme, wurden seine Anhänger und nannten ihn "die große Kraft Gottes" (die große Kraft oder Glorie, die von Gott ausstrahlt). Doch Simon kam mit vielen anderen zum christlichen Glauben und ließ sich taufen. Als das in Jerusalem bekannt wurde, schickten die Apostel die Hebräer Petrus und Johannes, zu den Neubekehrten. Sie legten ihnen die Hände auf (eigentlich ein fester Bestandteil der Taufe), und da erst empfingen sie den heiligen Geist. Simon aber wollte diese Macht auch besitzen und bot den Aposteln Geld dafür. Petrus jedoch wies ihn mit den Worten ab:

Dein Geld fahre mit dir ins Verderben, weil du gemeint hast, die Gabe Gottes durch Geld erkaufen zu können. (*Apostelgeschichte* 8:20).

Simon wird hier als Zauberer geschildert.

Irenäus, Bischof von Lyon um 180 nach Christus, stellt Simon von Samaria in seinem Werk *Gegen die Ketzereien* (1, 23) als Gnostiker und Erzvater aller Ketzerei dar. Er erzählt dort, nach Auffassung dieser Ketzler habe einst eine weiblich Hypostase (die Weisheit oder der heilige Geist, hier aber der "erste Gedanke Gottes" genannt) die Engel und Mächte dieser Welt hervorgebracht, die dann ihrerseits die Welt erschufen. Diese Engel überwältigten Sophia, so dass sie seitdem von einem Körper in den anderen inkarnieren musste. Sie war einst Helena von Troja gewesen und verkörperte sich in den Zeiten des Simon in einer Prostituierten (aus Tyrus).

Simon war gekommen, um sie zu erlösen: Er war "die große Kraft Gottes". In der apokryphen *Apostelgeschichte des Petrus* wird dann noch erzählt, wie Simon in Rom über das Forum flog und von Petrus heruntergeholt wurde. Die Szene ist unzählige Male in Kirchen abgebildet worden.

Der Ausdruck "große Kraft" kommt in samaritanischen Schriften häufig vor. Das legt natürlich nahe, Simon vor dem Hintergrund der samaritanischen Religion zu sehen. Er wurde wie Mose als der vom Deuteronomium vorausgesagte Prophet angesehen, der Wunder wie Mose tun und die endgültige Offenbarung bringen würde. Darum kann Lukas in seiner *Apostelgeschichte* sagen, Simon sei ein Zauberer gewesen, und kann ihn Irenäus als einen Urgnostiker beschreiben.

Als wahrer Prophet nannte sich Simon "die große Kraft" oder sogar "der Name". Es gibt keine Hinweise darauf, dass er die fünf Bücher Mose nicht akzeptierte. Auf jeden Fall verwarf er, wie alle Samariter, die jüdischen Propheten.

Und offensichtlich betrachtete er sich, ein Israelit mit jüdischem Glauben, als die Inkarnation des Herrn.

Darüber geben katholische Quellen einigermaßen gefärbte Berichte. Irenäus sagt, Simon sei den Judäern als Sohn erschienen, bei den Samaritern als Vater herniedergestiegen und zu den übrigen Völkern als heiliger Geist gekommen. Dass Simon selbst diese trinitarische christliche Sprache gesprochen haben soll, ist höchst unwahrscheinlich.

Cyrrill von Jerusalem (um 350) formuliert es in seiner *Katechetischen Rede* (vi, 14) anders. Auch er verwendet christliche Terminologie,

behauptet aber, Simon sei zuerst auf dem Berg Sinai erschienen, später bei den Judäern als Jesus und schließlich in Samaria. Das scheint ursprünglich bedeutet zu haben, dass die Glorie des Herrn zuerst in Mose inkarniert war, danach in Jesus und schließlich, am Ende der Tage, in Simon. Das ist das Schema der dreifachen Inkarnation, das auch bei den Hermetikern und den vorchristlichen *Gnôstikoi* existierte.

Das würde dann bedeuten, dass Simon nicht der erste Gnostiker war und dass die Gnosis nicht in Samaria entstanden ist, sondern dass Simon und seine Anhänger von einer schon existierenden alexandrinischen Gnosis beeinflusst waren. Dann fällt ein anderes Licht auf eine Äußerung Simons über seinen sogenannten Flug über das Forum zu Rom:

Ihr Männer von Rom, ihr denkt jetzt, Petrus habe mich überwunden, weil er größere Macht hat, und schenkt ihm mehr Aufmerksamkeit als mir. Aber ihr täuscht euch: Denn morgen werde ich euch verlassen, euch, die ihr gottlos und ungläubig seid, und werde zu Gott emporfliegen, dessen Kraft ich bin, obgleich jetzt geschwächt. Während ihr gefallen seid, bin ich der Aufrechtstehende (ewig und unbeweglich vor Gott). Und ich steige empor zu meinem Vater und werde zu ihm sagen: "Sogar mich, Deinen Sohn, der der Aufrechtstehende ist, wollten sie herunterholen. Aber ich war nicht eins mit ihnen und *kehrte zu mir selbst zurück.*" (*Martyrium des Petrus* 3).

Der Christ, der diese Worte überlieferte, verstand sie nicht. Er glaubte, es gehe um einen bloßen Flug. Aber Simon, oder seine Anhänger, meinten etwas Anderes: Der wahre Prophet war nach seinem Gang durch die Heilsgeschichte als Inkarnation Gottes zu sich selbst gekommen und zum Himmel aufgefahren, wie Hermes Trismegistos.

#### DER WAHRE PROPHET DES JUDENCHRISTENTUMS

Die Nachfolger der Urgemeinde zu Jerusalem werden Judenchristen genannt. Unter ihnen gab es verschiedene Gruppen: Hebräer, Nazoräer, Elkesaiten. Die Hebräer wohnten in Alexandria. Sie hatten ein eigenes Evangelium, von dem einige Fragmente erhalten sind. Weiter ist wenig über sie bekannt.

Die Nazoräer lebten in Beröa, dem heutigen Aleppo in Syrien. Auch sie besaßen ein eigenes Evangelium, das *Evangelium der Nazoräer*. Einige Bruchstücke sind durch Eusebius von Cäsarea und Hieronymus überliefert. Sie scheinen die Nachfolger der Fraktion in der Jerusalemer

Gemeinde, die sich um Jakobus, den Jesus-Bruder, scharte, gewesen zu sein. Obwohl sie sich an das Gesetz hielten, waren sie nicht gegen den Apostel Paulus.

Die Elkesaiten lebten im heutigen Jordanien, Syrien, Libanon und Mesopotamien. Sie waren Anhänger eines judenchristlichen Propheten namens Elkesai. Gewiss ist, dass sie erklärte Gegner des Paulus waren. Ihre Auffassungen kennen wir aus den pseudo-clementinischen *Homiliae* und *Recognitiones*.

Diese beiden Bücher erzählen die Geschichte eines gewissen Clemens von Rom, der seine Eltern wiederfindet. In ihrer gegenwärtigen Form sind es katholische Schriften aus dem vierten Jahrhundert, worin judenchristliche Quellen aus dem zweiten Jahrhundert in Form von Streitgesprächen zwischen dem Apostel Petrus und dem Gnostiker Simon Magus verarbeitet sind.

Die oben erwähnten judenchristlichen Gruppen hatten sich trotz gegenseitiger Unterschiede das Erbe der Jerusalemer Urgemeinde bewahrt:

- Ihr Gott war der persönliche Gott des Alten Testaments, Ursprung von Gut und Böse. Satan war nach ihnen die linke Hand Gottes.
- Jesus war der Messias, der nationale Befreier des jüdischen Volkes, der am Passahfest auf den Zion in Jerusalem zurückkehren würde. Aber er war auch der Prophet wie Mose, der das neue Gesetz des Königreiches Gottes auf Erden verkündigen würde.
- Der heilige Geist wurde als Frau und Mutter dargestellt.

Alle Judenchristen standen dem Reichtum kritisch gegenüber und entschieden sich für freiwillige Armut: Sie nannten sich Ebioniten, Arme. Sie waren Befürworter der Ehe und beurteilten den Geschlechtstrieb positiv, weil, wie sie sagten, durch die Fortpflanzung "die Zahl der Auserwählten voll gemacht wird".

Einige Judenchristen glaubten, Jesus sei von einer Jungfrau geboren, andere betrachteten ihn als gewöhnlichen Menschen. Die Urgemeinde und sehr viele Judenchristen waren der Meinung, Jesus sei bei seiner Taufe im Jordan durch die Salbung mit dem heiligen Geist von Gott als Sohn adoptiert worden. Nur die Elkesaiten hatten eine etwas andere Vorstellung.

Elkesai war ein Judenchrist in Mesopotamien, der im Jahr 101 eine Offenbarung empfing. So jemanden nannte man damals einen Propheten. Elkesai schaute den Sohn, den Christus, in einer Gestalt

von ehrfurchtgebietender Größe. So wird in der Schrift *Shiur Qyama* der jüdischen Gnosis die Glorie, der *kabod*, beschrieben. Dieser Christus wird “in Gestalt einem Menschen gleich” (*androeikelôn*) dargestellt. Er wird also mit der “Gestalt wie das Äußere eines Menschen” identifiziert, die einst Hesekiel schaute. Neben ihm stand eine weibliche Gestalt, der heilige Geist. Das ist die älteste Darstellung der Trinität, die wir kennen.

Die himmlische Gestalt des Messias ist nach den *Pseudo-Clementinen* im ersten Menschen, Adam, inkarniert. Dieser wird deshalb “der wahre Prophet” genannt. Er ist den Erzvätern und Mose erschienen und in Jesus Mensch geworden. Er ist:

der wahre Prophet, der von Beginn der Welt an mit seinem Namen auch seine Gestalt verändert und durch die Weltgeschichte schreitet, bis er zu seiner Zeit, für seine Mühlen mit Erbarmung gesalbt, für immer Ruhe findet. (*Homilien* 3, 20, 2)

Die pseudo-clementinischen Schriften sind, wie erwähnt, katholisch bearbeitet worden: Sie lehren, erst müsse noch der Antichrist kommen, danach werde Jesus wiederkommen (2, 17, 2). Aber Elkesai selbst sah das anders. Zwar lehrte auch er, der wahre Prophet habe sich während der Heilsgeschichte immer wieder in verschiedenen Gestalten inkarniert, aber die letzte und entscheidende Inkarnation, so glaubte er, sei er selbst.

Hippolytus sagt darüber in seinem *Refutatio* 9, 14 folgendes:

Er [Elkesai] behauptet, Christus sei als gewöhnlicher Mensch geboren worden und sei damals nicht zum erstenmal von einer Jungfrau geboren worden, sondern schon früher und häufig, und werde auch noch einmal geboren werden; er sei schon früher erschienen und habe gelehrt, eine Geburt und Reinkarnation nach der anderen durchmachend.

Der Name dieses frühchristlichen Propheten war Elkesai, das bedeutet im Aramäischen: “die verborgene Kraft”. Das war eine gebräuchliche Bezeichnung für den *kabod*. Elkesai trug also seinen Namen, weil er sich als letzte Verkörperung der Glorie nach Jesus betrachtete. Auch glaubte er, er werde beim Jüngsten Gericht, das er offenbar sehr bald erwartete, als Anwalt der Seinen auftreten. Es ist von ihm der Ausspruch überliefert:

Ich bin Zeuge für euch am Tag des großen Gerichts. (*Epiphanius*, a.a.O., 19, 4, 3)

Das Jüngste Gericht stellte man sich als einen Prozess vor. Dabei brachte der Angeklagte einflussreiche Freunde oder Bekannte mit, die für ihn eintraten und seine Fürsprecher waren. In rabbinischen Quellen wird ein solcher Fürsprecher mit einem griechischen Lehnwort "Paraklet" genannt. Im ersten Brief des Johannes 2:1–2 wird auch Jesus als solcher "Paraklet" bezeichnet:

Und wenn jemand sündigt, haben wir einen Beistand [Paraklet] beim Vater, Jesus Christus, den Gerechten. Und er ist das Sühnopfer für unsere Sünden.

Weil Jesus sich für die Menschen geopfert hat, so ist die Vorstellung, tritt er im Prozess vor Gottes Thron als Anwalt für die Übertreter des Gesetzes gegenüber Satan auf, der die Menschen anklagt, und bewirkt durch seine Intervention den "Fremden Freispruch".

Im vierten Evangelium (16:7–11), dem des Johannes, ist der Paraklet der heilige Geist, der zur Gemeinde kommen wird, wenn Jesus nicht mehr da ist. Er überzeugt in seinem Plädoyer für die Gemeinde die Welt von ihrer Sünde, von der Unschuld Jesu und vom Urteil über Satan, der schon gerichtet ist. Nach dem vierten Evangelium ist der Paraklet nach dem Tod Jesu auf die Erde gekommen.

Elkesai hat, wie alle anderen Judenchristen, das Evangelium des Johannes nicht gekannt oder anerkannt. Er kann also die Auffassung, er sei der Fürsprecher der Gläubigen beim Jüngsten Gericht, nicht von dort entlehnt haben. Vielleicht war bei den Judenchristen ein Wort von Jesus über das Erscheinen des Parakleten in Umlauf, das jetzt auch im vierten Evangelium steht. Wir wissen es nicht.

Die Vorstellung, der wahre Prophet kehre in verschiedenen Perioden der Heilsgeschichte wieder und offenbare Geheimnisse, ist dem Alten Testament und dem Judentum fremd. Auch die anderen judenchristlichen Gruppen kannten sie, soweit wir wissen, nicht. Könnte Elkesai sie der jüdischen Gnosis entlehnt haben? Die *Gnōstikoi* lehrten, Seth habe sich dreimal inkarniert, Simon Magus verkündete, "die große Kraft" sei dem Mose auf dem Sinai, in Jesus in Judäa und in Simon von Samaria erschienen. Elkesai lehrte, der wahre Prophet habe sich in Adam, Jesus und ihm selbst inkarniert. Die *Pseudo-Clementinen* zeigen, dass Elkesais Anhänger vor allem die Gnosis des Simon Magus bekämpften. Und sie lebten im Gebiet jenseits des Jordan und in



Syrien, nahe bei Samaria. Es ist sehr wahrscheinlich, dass sie die Vorstellung von einer dreimaligen Inkarnation innerhalb der Heilsgeschichte Israels von Simon Magus, ihrem Erzfeind, übernommen haben. So wurden sie indirekt von der hermetischen Konzeption des Hermes Trigenethlios beeinflusst.

#### DIE WELTLEHRER NACH AUFFASSUNG MANIS

Die vergleichende Religionswissenschaft unterscheidet Nationalreligionen und Weltreligionen. Nationalreligionen sind, wie der Name schon sagt, zum Beispiel Judentum und Hinduismus. Als Weltreligionen, die also international sind, werden bezeichnet: Christentum, Islam, Buddhismus und – Manichäismus.

Der Manichäismus war eine gnostische Weltreligion. Zugleich war er wie der Nestorianismus eine aramäische christliche Kirche. Nestorianer waren die Thomas-Christen in Indien. Die Monophysiten waren nicht sehr zahlreich, aber es gibt sie noch. Die Manichäer sind in den letzten Jahrhunderten völlig ausgestorben.

Das Leben Manis, des Gründers dieser gnostischen Weltkirche, war damals schon besser bekannt als das Leben Buddhas, Zarathustras oder Jesu, die er als seine Vorläufer betrachtete. Heute wissen wir noch mehr darüber, dank des schon erwähnten *Mani-Kodex*. Dieses fast kleinste Buch der Welt, auf Griechisch geschrieben, aber aus dem Aramäischen übersetzt, ist eine Lebensbeschreibung Manis auf der Grundlage von Schülererinnerungen. Die wichtigste ist die Information, Mani sei in einer Kommunität von Judenchristen – Elkesaiten – in Südbabylonien aufgewachsen.

Mani wurde am 14. April 216 geboren. Sein Vater hieß Patek, seine Mutter Mirjam. Letzteres scheint darauf hinzuweisen, dass beide Eltern geborene Juden waren: Juden heirateten auch damals fast immer Jüdinnen. Erzählungen, Mani sei von parthischer und fürstlicher Abkunft, dürften manichäische Propaganda sein. Davon steht nichts im *Kölner Mani-Kodex*. Nicht selten in der Geschichte wurde dem Gründer einer Religion eine fürstliche Abkunft angedichtet. Auf jeden Fall wurde Mani Jude, als sein Vater der Sekte der Elkesaiten beitrug und seinen Sohn in diese Gemeinschaft mitnahm. Mani war damals vier Jahre alt. Möglicherweise in seinem zwölften, sicher im vierundzwanzigsten Lebensjahr offenbarte sich ihm sein "Zwilling", wie er das nannte, sein höheres Selbst, der heilige Geist, der ihm

die Wahrheit enthüllte. Es handelte sich zugleich um seinen persönlichen Schutzengel, der sich nach Auffassung der Juden dieser Tage im Himmel aufhielt.

Mani sagt über dieses Erlebnis im *Kölner Mani-Kodex*:

Ich erkannte ihn  
und sah ein, dass er mein Selbst war,  
von dem ich einst getrennt war.  
Und ich zeugte,  
dass er mein Selbst ist  
von dem ich geschieden war.

Seitdem war Mani davon überzeugt, dass der Paraklet, den Jesus im Johannes-Evangelium verheißen hatte, zu ihm herabgestiegen sei und durch ihn spreche. Er war jetzt selbst zum Propheten geworden, im altchristlichen Sinn eines Menschen, der der Gemeinde im Geist eine neue Offenbarung mitteilt. Auf Grund dieser Tatsache begann er das Judenchristentum zu kritisieren und legte durch seine Schriften die Grundlage für seine neue Religion.

Zugleich setzte er ungeheure missionarische Aktivitäten in Nordwestindien, Armenien und im ganzen gewaltigen persischen Reich in Gang. Noch zu seinen Lebzeiten wurden Missionare nach Syrien, Palästina und Ägypten gesandt. Auf Befehl eines neuen Schahs, Bahram I., wurde Mani gefangen genommen: Er starb in Fesseln am 26. Februar 277. Der Manichäismus war die meistverfolgte aller Religionen. Doch wurde er nach Manis Tod von seinen Anhängern vom Atlantischen bis zum Stillen Ozean verbreitet, auch in Gegenden, wo der Katholizismus niemals Anhänger bekam.

Im Westen wurde er nach einigen Jahrhunderten ausgerottet, sowohl im weströmischen als auch im byzantinischen Reich. Auch in Armenien blieben, soweit ich weiß, keine Spuren des Manichäismus erhalten. In Asien verliefen die Dinge anders. Bereits zu Lebzeiten des Gründers waren Abgesandte bis nach Samarkand vorgedrungen. Dort erfuhr die neue Religion eine Veränderung und wurde der Religion des Zoroaster, dem Mahayana-Buddhismus und dem Schamanismus, also den in Zentralasien herrschenden Religionen, angepasst. Ab 650 drang die "Religion des Lichtes" von Samarkand aus, die Seidenstraße entlang, in China ein. Dort hielt sie sich tausend Jahre, vielleicht noch länger. Sogar in ihrer angepassten Form blieb sie eine christozentrische Religion: Die chinesischen Manichäer verehrten Sien-yi, den Urmenschen und ewigen Christus, und Issu, den leidenden Jesus.

Der Gründer hatte im Wesentlichen nichts anderes gelehrt, aber der christliche Charakter seiner Kirche war ursprünglich noch viel deutlicher gewesen. Mani strebte in erster Linie eine Reformation des Judentums an, das ihm in seiner Jugend eingeimpft worden war. Seine Lehre war eine Reaktion darauf.

Die Elkesaiten lehrten, der Teufel sei die linke Hand Gottes, und aus der Hand Gottes empfangen die Menschen Gutes und Böses. In ihren Kreisen wurde Jesus das Wort zugeschrieben: "Es muss so sein [es ist Gottes Wille], dass das Böse geschieht." Ihnen zufolge hatte Jesus gesagt, kein Vogel fliege ins Netz ohne den Willen Gottes. Dagegen lehnte Mani – der nach der Überlieferung hinkte – sich auf. Er konnte nicht glauben, dass der gute Gott so etwas verursacht haben sollte. Er glaubte stattdessen, die Welt der Finsternis, Bosheit, Wollust und Widerwärtigkeit existiere ganz aus sich selbst. Allein in Manis Dasein und Schicksal liegt die Ursache für seinen Dualismus. Mit der Religion des Zarathustra, des Kampfes zwischen Licht und Finsternis, hat das zunächst nichts zu tun.

Die Judenten befürworteten die Ehe ausdrücklich und bejahten den Geschlechtstrieb sogar, im Gegensatz zu katholischen Christen, die das Eine wie das Andere nur duldeten. Die Begierden, die "unordentliche Begehrlichkeit", wie Manis griechische Anhänger (und Augustinus) das nannten, war etwas radikal Verkehrtes, Sündhaftes und Böses. Deshalb mussten die "Auserwählten" der Kirche Manis unverheiratet sein. Die "Hörer" dagegen durften alles: Ehe, Konkubinat, Geburtenbeschränkung – denn diese war besser als Fortpflanzung. Und auch Manis Lehre der Aufeinanderfolge der Weltlehrer war eine Reaktion auf das Judentum. Er nannte sich "Apostel Jesu Christi" und "Siegel der Propheten". Er war der Paraklet. Auch Elkesai nannte sich "Prophet" und "Zeuge" (Paraklet), der letzte in der Reihe der wahren Propheten.

Offensichtlich war Mani zu dem Schluss gekommen, nicht Elkesai, sondern er selbst sei der wahre Prophet, der letzte der Propheten und der Paraklet. Und er beschränkte sich dabei nicht auf die Heilsgeschichte Israels. Zarathustra und Buddha im Osten, Jesus im Westen hatten vor ihm die Wahrheit verkündigt. Es gab auch Berichte, dass Weise aus der Urzeit, Seth und Henoah und andere, ebenfalls echte Offenbarungen gebracht hatten. In den erhalten gebliebenen Schriften Manis werden aber nur Buddha, Zarathustra und Jesus

genannt. In dem Buch, das er für König Shapur verfasste und das deshalb *Shapurakan* heißt, schrieb er:

Die Gesandten Gottes hörten nicht auf, von Jahrhundert zu Jahrhundert die Weisheit und die guten Werke zu offenbaren. So wurden die Weisheit und die guten Werke in einer bestimmten Epoche von dem Gesandten, der der Buddha war, in die Gebiete Indiens verkündet, in einer anderen Epoche von Zarathustra in das Land Persien, in wieder einer anderen Epoche von Jesus in das Land des Westens. Am Ende stieg diese Offenbarung aus der Höhe herab und kam das Prophetenamt in dieser letzten Epoche durch mich zustande, den Gesandten des wahren Gottes in das Land Babel.

Buddha und Zarathustra sind Vorläufer Jesu, dessen Offenbarung von Mani richtig, das heißt gnostisch, ausgelegt wurde. Sie alle sind "vom Geist" (nous) inspiriert, der vom ewigen "Jesus, dem Lichtstrahl" ausgeht, dem Bringer der Uroffenbarung an Adam.

Frühere Offenbarungen waren national begrenzt. Jetzt war die Zeit für die universelle Gnosis angebrochen:

Er, der seine Kirche im Westen hatte, er und seine Kirche haben den Osten nicht erreicht. Er, der seine Kirche im Osten erwählte, ist nicht in den Westen gekommen. Aber meine Lehre der Hoffnung, meine Lehre wird in den Westen gehen und sie wird in den Osten gehen. Und sie werden die Stimme meiner Botschaft in allen Sprachen hören. Sie werden diese Botschaft in allen Städten verkündigen.

Zu diesen Weltlehrern gehörte auch Hermes Trismegistos. Der katholische, aramäisch schreibende Dichter Ephräm Syrus (*Prose Refutations* II, xcvi) erzählt von den Manichäern:

Sie sagen von Hermes in Ägypten und von Plato bei den Griechen und von Jesus, der in Judäa auftrat, es seien Herolde des Guten [Gott] in der Welt.

Und der Manichäer Faustus, den Augustinus so ausführlich zu widerlegen suchte, fragt sich, warum Heidenchristen an die Prophezeiungen der Propheten Israels glauben sollten. Die Voraussagen der Sibylle von Cumä (die apokryphen jüdischen und christlichen *Oracula Sibyllina*) oder des Hermes Trismegistos oder die Hymnen des Orpheus (in hellenistischer Zeit geschrieben) und anderer Propheten des Heidentums, die haben Wert für Heidenchristen:

Die Wahrsagungen der Sibylle in Bezug auf Christus oder des Hermes Trismegistos oder des Orpheus oder der übrigen Propheten

des Heidentums, die haben uns, die aus Heiden Christen geworden sind, schon früher zum Glauben geholfen. (Augustinus, *Contra Faustum* 13, 1)

Auch in der Urzeit, auch im Heidentum hat sich Gott geoffenbart. Buddha und Zarathustra gehören zur Vorbereitung des Evangeliums, ebenso gut wie Plato und Hermes Trismegistos. Der Manichäismus bezweckte eine Reform des Judenchristentums und ist eine Reaktion darauf.

Das führte zu einer Synthese von Buddhismus, Zoroastrianismus und gnostischem Christentum auf dem Boden des Evangeliums.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

In the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, found at Nag Hammadi in 1945, a female envoy of God descends three times in the history of mankind. In the hymn of the Logos at the beginning of the Fourth Gospel, the Logos (Christ) 1) created the world, 2) came to his own and 3) at last was made flesh: “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12).

It is tempting to suppose that the gnostic myth of a threefold salvific descent of Sophia as God’s agent into the world to redeem those who were able to realize their divine origins, as contained in the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, but also in the *Pronoia Hymn* from the long recension of the *Gnostic Apocryphon of John*, has influenced the Gospel. It has, however, been pointed out that such a pre-Christian myth of Sophia cannot be proved to have existed.<sup>3</sup>

It seems wiser to suppose that different and conflicting exegeses of the first chapter of Genesis are behind these writings. Unfortunately, such a threefold descent of a saviour cannot be constructed from the text of Genesis 1.

It is, however, certain that such a concept did occur in Hermetism and was adopted by Gnosticism. In the *Untitled Text* in the Bruce Codex, translated and annotated by Violet MacDermot (Leiden 1978, 254), which is the Jewish *Apocalypse of Messos* [= Enos, the son of Seth] the following passage occurs:

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<sup>3</sup> N.F. Denzey, “Genesis Tradition in Conflict?”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 55 (2001) 20–44.

Afterwards she [the Mother] cried out to the Endless Power, who *stands* near the hidden Aion of the Father, the Endless Power who is one of the great Powers of Glory, who is called among the Powers Trigenethlios, (which means) “the one who was born three times”, who is also called Trigenes and is called Harmes.

The parallels from Antiquity quoted in the preceding article prove that Harmes is no other than Hermes. Just as in the *Apocryphon of John* God is the king and Autogenes (or Anthropos) is his first servant who stands beside the throne (a Christian adaptation of the Jewish myth of the heavenly Anthropos or *kabod*), so here Hermes, identified with Anthropos, stands beside God’s throne. Thus, the three-fold manifestation of a Saviour is now attested for a Jewish Apocalypse. This tradition may be very old and even pre-Christian. It is thinkable that the concept of a threefold descent of God’s glory (*kabod*) to redeem mankind preceded the concept that the divine Logos intervened three times in the history of humanity.

It is possible that Mani received his idea of an on-going and progressive revelation in history from the Jewish sect of the *Gnôstikoi*. According to the *Cologne Mani Codex*, he knew the Apocalypse of Adam (31), the Apocalypse of Seth (33 = Allogenes, found near Nag Hammadi), the Apocalypse of Enos (35). Enos, son of Seth, is identical with Messos. His Apocalypse, the *Untitled Text* in the Bruce Codex, was among the writings of the *Gnôstikoi* mentioned by Porphyry in his *Life of Plotinus*. Moreover, Mani knew the Ethiopic Enoch, the *Apocalypse of Enoch*, as it was called in his biography (39).

Mani believed that not only Adam, Seth and Hermes, but Zarathustra and Buddha had been enlightened by the same Spirit as Jesus and Mani himself.

He was the first Christian we know of who admitted that also other religions were inspired and transmitted revelation. He may have derived his notion of Hermes as divine revealer from the *Apocalypse of Messos*, or Enos, and from the quoted passage about Hermes Trigenethlios.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### COPTIC Gnostic WRITINGS\*

The term “Coptic Gnostic writings” is a modern term invented by modern scholars to indicate arbitrarily all sorts of currents of Late Antiquity which stressed Gnosis, an intuitive knowledge of revealed mysteries. It ought, however, to be limited to writings of the group which called themselves Gnostics (e.g. those who authored the *Apocryphon of John*) and to products of thinkers like Basilides (Alexandria, ca. 120), Valentinus (ca. 150, Alexandria, Rome) and Marcion (Sinope, Rome, ca. 150), who were familiar with the concepts of the “Gnostics” and christianized them.

Original works rightly attributed to Gnosticism are all in Coptic, with the exception of the second-century Greek *Letter to Flora*, by a certain Ptolemaeus, preserved in the *Panarion* of Epiphanius. The oldest of the Coptic texts are the Codex Askewianus (containing two *Books of Jeu*) and the Codex Brucianus (with four books of the *Pistis Sophia*). Both are written in Sahidic, the dialect of Luxor, and were probably acquired there by the Scottish explorer James Bruce in the eighteenth century. They were most likely not translations, but written directly in Coptic. The *Pistis Sophia* amongst other things refers to Mary Magdalene’s authoritative interpretation of the Psalms, as if she were an early Christian prophetess, and she is criticized for this by Peter. This may reflect tensions in the local congregation of Luxor between a Gnostic faction, which had preserved the primitive office of prophet(ess), and a catholic faction, inspired by Rome, which favoured an episcopal Church Order.

In 1896 the German scholar Carl Schmidt announced the acquisition of a Coptic codex, *Papyrus Berolinensis 8502*, which was, however, left unpublished until 1955. It contains:

1. the crucial text of the so-called “Gnostics”, namely the *Apocryphon of John*, which notwithstanding its Christian title is originally a Jewish writing of Alexandrian origin and describes the Unknown God and the spiritual world, then continues to tell the story of

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\* Previously published in: *The Encyclopedia of Coptic*, Salt Lake City.



- the world and the history of mankind as a constant struggle between Wisdom that bestows freedom of the spirit and allows consciousness to grow, and Jaldabaoth, a foolish demiurge, who forbids men to eat from the tree of knowledge;
2. the *Gospel of Mary*, in which Mary Magdalene recounts her visionary experience of the risen Christ and is criticized by Peter;
  3. the *Sophia of Jesus*, a christianized version of the non-Christian *Letter of Eugnostos the Blessed*;
  4. a fragment of the *Acts of Peter* which are not gnostic at all, but ascetic and miraculous only, and beloved by Catholics. For this reason it may very well be possible that *Papyrus Berolinensis 8502* was written in the scriptorium of a Catholic monastery.

In the second half of the third century the great Gnostic Mani (216–277) sent his missionaries Papos and Thomas to Egypt where they settled in Lykopolis on the Nile above the Thebais in Middle Egypt. There they proselytized among the pupils of the Platonic philosopher Alexander of Lykopolis, who wrote a preserved treatise against them. There they also seem to have translated, or to have had translated, the Manichaean writings found at Medinet Madi in 1930–1931 (*Kephalaia*, *Psalms*, *Homilies* etc.), from East Aramaic into Sub-Achmic, the Coptic dialect of Lykopolis and surroundings.

In 1945, an Egyptian farmer of the Nag Hammadi region called Muhammad Ali al Samman found a jar containing a collection of some 13 codices, 52 writings in Coptic, falsely called a Gnostic Library. One of the codices, number II, ends with the typically monastic invocation: “Remember me, my brethren, in your prayers”. This alone is sufficient to suggest that these manuscripts were copied in one of the nearby recently founded Pachomian monasteries. It is not unthinkable that some old-fashioned monks valued these dear, pious books and indignantly left the monastery when archbishop Athanasius stressed the importance of the Canon (367) and the abbot urged them to surrender their precious treasures. Later, with increasing pressure, they would not have destroyed them, because they possessed an inherent quality of holiness, burying them carefully instead, just like Jews put devalued materials in a hidden place, a *geniza*. All other stories about the discovery are untrustworthy. Nor are all the writings Gnostic, rather they reflect the situation of the second-century Alexandrian Church and can be used to illustrate the history of Gnosticism, which is largely an Alexandrian phenomenon. Just as Athens is a symbol of Logos, reason, and Jerusalem a symbol of

Faith, so Alexandria is the cradle of the third component of the Western cultural tradition: Gnosis.

Gnosis, inner experience and imaginative thinking, which lived on in Manichaeism, was transmitted to the Cathars of Southern France through the intermediary of Armenian Paulicians and Messalians. It revived in the early seventeenth century with the experience of Jacob Boehme and survives in the ideas of Goethe and Hegel, William Blake and Ralph Waldo Emerson, Steiner and Jung.

At the beginning of our era, Alexandria was a crucible of Egyptian, Greek and Jewish lore. It was there that the Platonistic philosopher Eudorus (first century B.C.E.) had offered a religious optimistic interpretation of the Master, one irreconcilable with the tragic overtones of Plotinus (3rd century): God is Mind (not beyond Mind and thought); *God brings forth matter out of himself* (matter is no longer emanation, is not evil); ideas are thoughts of God (this is not to be found in Plato); one of these ideas is Man (something which Plato curiously denies in his *Parmenides* 130c). All this is relevant for subsequent Gnosticism. Especially the theme that the shining figure of Man is manifested as a prototype to the angels, who fashion the body of Adam, occurs time and again. It is not without reason that a fragment of Plato's *Republic* was found among the Nag Hammadi codices (VI, 5).

Of the approximately 10,000,000 Jews then living in the world, of which 6,000,000 in the Diaspora of the Roman Empire, and only 500,000 in Palestine), hundreds of thousands were living in Alexandria. Most of them were very different from their Law-abiding Palestinian counterparts, more liberal even than their compatriot Philo, the Alexandrian philosopher. Their religiosity may be found in the *Sophia Salomonis*, in the Roman Catholic Bible, and the Nag Hammadi Codex VI, 2, *Thunder: Perfect Mind* or *Brontè*, in which a godless goddess, Sophia, reveals her paradoxical nature.

In fact, Alexandrian Jews reveled in speculations about Sophia, whose relationship with wanton Astarte is but thinly veiled. Moreover, the fragments of the Alexandrian Jewish poet Ezekiel Tragicus reveal that, already in the second century B.C.E., there were certain circles in Alexandria which were prone to meditating on the "likeness like the appearance of a Man" of Ezekiel 1:26, until this day the main theme of Jewish mysticism. Some identified this "glory of God" with the idea of Man.

Gnostic Anthropos and Gnostic Sophia are of Jewish origin. There were of course also Egyptians, Copts, in Alexandria at the time. They, too, contributed to the rise of Gnosticism. According to Egyptian

religion, the Nile “originated from the tears of the sungod Re”, in other words, matter is an emanation of deity. So Valentinus could say that the world came into being from the tears and the smile of creative Wisdom, Sophia. The Egyptians spoke with incredible freedom about the sexual life of their gods. So did the Gnostics. According to the theology of Hermopolis, a Nile goose (“the Great Cackler”) laid her egg in the moor, from which the sungod was born, who functions as a demiurge arranging the world. In the same way the Orphics of Alexandria taught that their demiurge, Phanes, was born from the cosmic egg formed in chaos, and Basilides taught that the great Archon, Abraxas, came forth from the chaotic world seed. According to the Egyptians, the Godhead was androgynous, Father and Mother at the same time. The Gnostics, Valentinians and Manichaeans did not think differently.

Very much the same is to be found in the seventeen Hermetic writings, the products of a mystery community in Alexandria, a sort of Masonic Lodge, which numbered Greeks, Jews and Copts amongst its members. In the *Prayer of Thanksgiving*, now at last comprehensible owing to a fragment from Nag Hammadi (VI, 7), the female half of the androgynous God is invoked with the words: we know Thee, womb conceiving through the phallus of the Father. Much of the Egyptian influence on Gnosticism seems to have been exercised through the intermediate channel of the Hermetic Lodge. This encourages us to seek the origin of Gnosticism in this Alexandrian congregation at the beginning of the Christian era.

According to the thirteenth treatise of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Anthropos is born from the womb of spiritual Wisdom in silence, begotten by the sperm of God. This Anthropos, of course, is at the same time a personal figure, the likeness as the appearance of Adam of Ezekiel 1:26, and the idea of Man. According to the *Poimandres*, the first treatise of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, this Anthropos is brought forth by God in a process of parturition. This god Man desired to act as a demiurge, but fell in love with lower Nature, and took his dwelling in a body which nature had brought forth after the beautiful form of Man. We must suppose that some Jews of Alexandria had formed a Lodge of their own, a sort of B'nai Brith. For in Nag Hammadi, purely Jewish and completely non-Christian texts like the *Letter of Eugnostos the Blessed* (NH III, 3 and V, 1) have been found which amplify the concept that the eternal Son of God is Man. In the *Three Steles of Seth* (NH VII, 4) this divine Son of Father and

Mother is called Geradamus (Geraios Adamas or Primordial Man), who is none other than the Adam Qadmon of medieval Kabbalism.

This is the basic myth of the “Gnostics”, who produced the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NH II, 4), *On the Origin of the World* (NH II, 5) and many similar writings of Nag Hammadi. It lived on in the Manichaeian Trinity of Father, Mother, Archetypal Man.

The Christian Church of Alexandria of the first two centuries was pluriform and tolerant. According to a trustworthy tradition contained in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* (1, 9, 1) “a Hebrew man called Barnabas”, a Jewish Christian missionary from Jerusalem, had been the first to preach the gospel there. The legend that Marc, the interpreter of Peter, came from Rome to Alexandria, though not historical, proves that Rome later tried to cover up these heterodox origins and to impose its authoritarian, episcopal order. The Jewish Christian *Gospel of the Hebrews* was still discussed with some sympathy by Clement of Alexandria and Origen. *The Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles*, about the City of God (NH VI, 1), reveals the religiosity of this Jewish Christian faction. Moreover, there were Encratites, sexual teetotallers who abolished marriage and whose views can be found in the *Gospel of Thomas* (NH II, 2), the *Book of Thomas the Contender* (NH II, 7), and the *Exegesis of the Soul* (NH II, 6). Gentile, Hellenistic Christianity is evidenced by the *Sentences of Sextus* (NH XII, 1) and the *Teachings of Silvanus* (VII, 4). Catholicism, characterized by the Confession of Faith, the Canon and Monarchic Episcopacy, was a latecomer in Alexandria. Until it took over, Gnostic teachers like Basilides, Carpocrates and Valentinus could easily remain members of the Church. The first two taught reincarnation (like the “Gnostics” of the *Pistis Sophia*), all three were very free about sex (the influence of Egyptian religion and the local Hermetists). Carpocrates and Valentinus also taught that Christ had come to make man, spiritual man, conscious of his deepest Self. This is most impressively described in the *Gospel of Truth* (NH I, 3), a sermon given by Valentinus in Rome (ca. 140), and developed in a complicated, very “heretical” myth about Sophia who tries to penetrate into the Depth of the Godhead, falls and brings forth the world, yet is brought back to her origin by Christ, the divine Saviour. The implication was that only spiritual men could be saved.

The leaders of the Western school of Valentinianism, Ptolemaeus and Heracleon in Rome, took a more favourable view of rising Catholicism and the ordinary church-goer, whom they called “psychic”,

because he possessed only a soul and not a spirit. They thoroughly modified the system and even introduced the novel concept that evil is not a tragic concomitant of evolution, but a consequence of free will. Their views are attested in the *Tripartite Treatise* (NH I, 5) from the school of Heracleon, which describes at great length how the Logos (Sophia) has to pass through the Inferno of matter and paganism, via the Purgatorio of (Jewish) religion and ethics, to achieve the freedom of the spirit and complete consciousness owing to the coming of Christ. It thus prepares the way for Origenes who also stressed Gnosis for the elect and faith for the believers.

Gnosticism seems to have much in common with Neoplatonism and Catholicism: it preaches an Unknown and Unknowable God, rejects the world and aims at salvation. In fact it is not more pessimistic than Neoplatonism as far as matter and the visible world is concerned, and like Catholicism it rejects anthropomorphism. But when one looks closer, its distinctive feature is its concept of God. According to Valentinus, every man has a guardian angel or Self, who gives Gnosis to his counterpart, but also needs the man or woman, to whom he belongs, because he cannot enter the Pleroma, the spiritual world, without his other half. Mani teaches that every Manichaean has a Twin, who inspires him and leads him to the light, but at the same time Mani holds that the eternal Jesus suffers in matter and is to be redeemed by the Gnostic. Jacob Böhme said that God is an ocean of light and darkness, love and ire, who wants to become conscious in man.

The God of Gnosticism is Being in Movement.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### THE DEMIURGE IN THE APOCRYPHON OF JOHN\*

#### SUMMARY

*The very archaic Orphic myth of the demiurge Phanes, who broke the world egg and fashioned the heaven and the earth from the two halves of its shell, was perhaps already known to Plato when he wrote his *Timaeus* about the demiurge who makes the visible world, and certainly influenced the pre-Christian Jewish Gnostikoi in Alexandria, who produced the Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae and the Apocryphon of John, among others, and held that the creator of this world is malicious.*

In 1896, the distinguished Coptic scholar Carl Schmidt announced in the Proceedings of the Berlin Academy of Sciences (p. 839f.) the acquisition of a Coptic Gnostic Codex, *Papyrus Berolinensis 8502*, which contained among other writings the *Apocryphon of John*.

In the introduction to the first volume of the so-called Coptic Gnostic writings, a translation of the *Pistis Sophia*, the *Books Jeu* etc., of 1905, 9 years later, Schmidt promised that in a second volume the three still unpublished writings of the Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae, to wit the *Gospel according to Mary*, the *Apocryphon of John* and the *Sophia Jesu Christi*, were to follow.

As a provisional expedient Schmidt published in 1907 a comparison of the content of the *Apocryphon of John* with a chapter in the antiheretical writing of bishop Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses* I, 29, of which it was supposed to be the source.<sup>1</sup> The edition of the Coptic text, which was to precede the translation in the well-known series of Greek Christian authors (GCS), was almost ready in 1912; but as so often happens in cases of irresponsible delay in publication, a pipe broke in the cellar of the printing house in Leipzig, and destroyed the whole impression. All this, of course, was sheer coincidence.

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\* Previously published in R.McL. Wilson (ed.), *Nag Hammadi and Gnosis*, Leiden 1978, 1–33.

<sup>1</sup> C. Schmidt, in: *Philoktesia: Paul Kleinert zum 70. Geburtstag dargebracht*, Berlin 1907, 315–336.

Only shortly before his death on 17 April 1938 Schmidt started preparing an anastatic reprint after the proofs which he had preserved. After his death it turned out to be difficult to obtain his papers from his inheritance, which was in the hands of his family, Schmidt being a bachelor. In 1939 the Coptic text of the whole edition was printed in offset.

In the meantime Johannes Munck, of Aarhus, Denmark, had taken it upon himself to complete the edition, but soon abdicated. In 1941 Walter Till was charged with the same task and he indeed sent the manuscript ready for the press to the Berlin Academy. Unfortunately at that moment a war was going on, which prevented publication. Soon after the war Till understood that “a gnostic library in Coptic” had been discovered and that one of these codices, acquired by the Coptic Museum in 1946, contained two texts parallel to the Berlin manuscript. This again caused delay. In 1950 Dr. Pahor Labib most generously permitted Till to collate the Cairene manuscript and to publish the variants in the critical apparatus of his edition, which at last appeared in 1955.<sup>2</sup>

Nobody will ever say that Schmidt or Till suffered from the disease of unproductivity. And yet we must say that this long delay was extremely unfortunate, because Gnostic Studies might have taken a different turn if this text had been available at an early date. The debate on Gnostic origins would have been less fantastic and more firmly based upon the facts because, as we now see, the *Apocryphon of John* is a seminal and pivotal text in many respects. But very few people then saw its importance.

An exception should be made for two outstanding scholars, who in retrospect prove to be the great geniuses in our field, and who somehow saw that this text was basic and transmitted the then almost esoteric information that it contained to a younger generation. I speak of Erik Peterson and Henri-Charles Puech. Erik Peterson used to hide his keen insights behind an obscure and laborious style. Towards the end of his life he came to think, like Franz Overbeck before him, that Christianity is essentially and from the very beginning an ascetic, life-denying religion. As witnesses for this thesis he adduced the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, which according to

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<sup>2</sup> W.C. Till, *Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502*, Berlin 1955.

him were not so much Gnostic as Encratite, with a Jewish Christian background. He held that these Acts, especially the *Acts of Thomas*, but also Syriac Christianity in general and Manichaeism, were heavily influenced by the Encratite Assyrian and Syrian from Adiabene, Tatian. With this in mind he studied the Hamburg fragments of the *Acts of Paul*, which Carl Schmidt had published in 1936 but which had received very little attention from patristic scholars in the troubled years before, during and after the war.<sup>3</sup>

There Peterson found a remarkable depreciation of womanhood: "Woman, ruler of this world, mistress of much gold, citizen of great luxury, splendid in thy raiment, sit down on the floor and forget thy riches and thy beauty and thy finery".<sup>4</sup> This passage has many parallels in the other Acts and clearly shows how Encratite they all are. Somewhat further on in the same fragment we read how Paul prayed that his fetters might be broken from his hands. Thereupon there came a youth very comely in grace and loosed Paul's bonds, smiling as he did so. Peterson relates this to the—beautiful, smiling youth—of the *Acts of John* and similar concepts in other Acts. According to Peterson it is said in the same fragment that Paul left the prison to baptise a noble woman in the sea, a young man preceding him with a torch. This has a parallel in several passages of the *Acts of Thomas* (118, 119, 154, 157) and elsewhere.

All these passages seem to be allusions to the underlying idea that Christ is polymorphous and manifests himself either as a child, as a youth, or as an old man. This is the way Christ is described in the *Acts of Peter* 21:

Then Peter said to them: "Tell us what you saw". And they said: "We saw an old man, who had such a presence as we cannot describe to you"; but others said: "We saw a growing lad"; and others said: "We saw a boy who gently touched our eyes, and so our eyes were opened".

This remarkable Christology, so completely different from the *atreptōs* (unchanged) of Chalcedon, is said by Peterson to be explained by the theology of Tatian. As a matter of fact this Encratite teacher,

<sup>3</sup> E. Peterson, "Einige Bemerkungen zum Hamburger Papyrus-Fragment der Acta Pauli", *Vigiliae Christianae* 3 (1949) 142–162, and in: Peterson, *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis*, Rome, Freiburg and Vienna 1959, 183–208.

<sup>4</sup> E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* (transl. by R.Mcl. Wilson), vol. 2, London 1965, 370.



in his *Address to the Greeks* 26, asks his opponents why they divide time, saying that one part is past, and another present, and another future. As those who are sailing imagine in their ignorance, as the ship is borne along, that the hills are in motion, so the Greeks do not know that it is they who are passing along whereas in reality there is only immovable eternity, *Aiôn Hestós*, as long as the Creator wills it to exist.

Christ then in the Apocryphal Acts is the Aion, who manifests himself as child, youth and old man, as symbols of the future, the present and the past. In 1949, when he wrote this article, Peterson knew the preview of Schmidt about the *Apocryphon of John* and to at least one of his friends he mentioned the relation of the concept of Aion to the description of Christ in the Apocryphon. Obviously he did not dare to publish his great discovery, because Schmidt's translation is hesitating and deficient here.<sup>5</sup> Still in the reprint in his book of 1959 (p. 192, n. 36), published after Till's edition had appeared, he only says that the passage in the *Apocryphon of John*: "And lo, there was manifested to me a child. I however saw the appearance as an old man" is remarkable, but unfortunately difficult to interpret. If he had known the right translation, there is no doubt that he would have said what he thought already in 1949, that in the introduction of the *Apocryphon of John* also, as in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, Christ reveals himself as Aion in its threefold symbols of child, youth and old man. For we now know that this passage in the Berlin Codex contains a gap, in which the youth was mentioned, as transpires from the following translation of the same passage in the Nag Hammadi version of Codex II:

Immediately, as I thought this, the heavens opened and the whole creation gleamed in a light which came down from heaven and the whole world trembled. I was afraid and threw myself down, when I saw in the light a youth, who manifested himself to me. But when I saw the form of an old man who was great and when he changed his appearance so as to become a child at the same time and thus was one in many forms in the light and the forms revealed themselves one after the other, I wondered how he could be one in three forms (my translation).

This is very different from the text of the Berlin Codex and without any doubt the original version. The Berlin text, which does not mention

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<sup>5</sup> *Philotesia*, 317.

the child, contains a gap and is inferior here. Therefore Peterson could not know the text which confirmed his wonderful intuition.

Henri-Charles Puech, who was also familiar with Schmidt's preview at a time when nearly nobody knew it, was in a much more favourable position than Peterson, when he wrote about Aion in the *Apocryphon of John*, because he had the editions of Giversen and Krause at his disposal. He wrote with great learning and lucidity.<sup>6</sup> As a parallel to the threefold manifestation of Christ in the preface he adduces a passage from Photius, according to which Jesus appears to his disciples as νέος, πρεσβύτερος, παῖς.<sup>7</sup>

It may be that Photius alludes to lost parts of the Apocryphal Acts, but this concept is preserved in the *Acts of John* 88 and 89, where John reports that to James Christ manifested himself as a child, whereas to John he appeared as a comely and a fair man of a cheerful countenance or again as an old man having a head rather bald, but the beard thick and flowing.

Moreover, Puech discusses the above mentioned *Acts of Peter*, paralleled by the *Vita Abercii*, p. 22, in which three groups of old women, or three old women, see Christ respectively as an old man, a young man and a boy. More interesting is the Martyrdom of Peter and Paul.<sup>8</sup> There it is said that it is Simon the Magician who changes himself in form, in age, in sex, going through the metamorphoses of child, youth, old man. The same concept of eternity lies behind the expression Ἐστῶς, στάς, στήσόμενος applied to Simon. This seems to reveal an awareness of the fact that this view is not limited to Christianity. Such transformations should be considered as the expression of an extraordinary power and an adaptation to the different levels of spiritual capacity in the spectators. On the other hand it is clear that this Christology is conceived after the type of the Aion, in whom past, present and future coexist. Jesus here is a personification of Aion (the Modena relief of Phanes = Aion shows us that it was very common at that time to represent this eternal god in the shape of a beautiful young man of about thirty).

Puech quotes some Christian texts, among them Marco Polo, which tell us more or less clearly how the three kings from the East, who

<sup>6</sup> H.-Ch. Puech, in: *Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études*, 1966/67, 128–136.

<sup>7</sup> Photius, *Bibliotheca* 114, ed. by R. Henry, 11, Paris 1960, 85.

<sup>8</sup> *Martyrium Petri et Pauli* 14; Lipsius and Bonnet I, 130, 18–132, 8.

came to Bethlehem to adore Christ, saw the new born king according to their age, as a little child, a youth of thirty years old and an aged man. The source of this legend seems to be a Diègèsis (a report) of “things which happened” in Persia, written after the middle of the fifth century in Western Syria.

This material tends to show that the passage in the preface of the *Apocryphon of John* concerning the polymorphy of Christ reflects a well-known Christian view, wide-spread in the second century and perhaps even related to the theology of Tatian. This confirms the general opinion of scholars that this introduction was later added to an already existing writing and has nothing to do with the core of the myth, which is not Christian. It is for this reason that we find in this introduction a Jewish remark, which is also attested in another Christian writing. The Pharisee Arimanios accuses Jesus of having turned away his disciples from “the traditions of their fathers” (a typically Jewish expression). In the same way the Jewish highpriest Anianos in the more or less Messalian *Acts of Philip* (19 (14), Lipsius II, 2, 10) asks: “You do not think to turn us from the traditions of our fathers, do you?”. As Warren J. Blackstone has observed, what we have here are two products of a common tradition in which the classical Judaic opposition to Christianity was expressed by the claim that Jesus sought to turn the Jews from the traditions of their fathers.<sup>9</sup>

There is really nothing which prevents us assuming that this introduction was written by a Christian in order to christianize an already existing document which was completely alien to Christian views.

## II

These contributions of Peterson and Puech are important, because they focus our attention on the relationship of the *Apocryphon of John* with the concept of Aion. What they failed to see, and could hardly see at that time given the complex state of the text, is that the representation of the demiurge in this Apocryphon, which did belong to the very core of the myth, should also be linked with the views on Aion current in Hellenistic times.

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<sup>9</sup> W.J. Blackstone, “A Short Note on the Apocryphon Johannis”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 19 (1965) 163.

As a matter of fact, this is the thesis which I want to defend in this paper; or rather, to put it more precisely, as I see it, the image of the demiurge in the *Apocryphon of John* is moulded after the demiurge of Orphism, Phanes or Eros, who became Aion in Hellenistic times.

In order to discern this clearly, we must translate the somewhat different versions of the birth of the demiurge that have been transmitted to us. But because this story is so confused and so confusing, we will anticipate our results here and advise the impatient reader to continue with paragraph III.

The original version of the *Apocryphon of John* did tell that the demiurge had the face of a lion and the body of a serpent, but no longer related that this demiurge was born from matter below.

It is only from the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and the *Untitled Document*, also found at Nag Hammadi, that an older version can be reconstructed, according to which the demiurge originates from Chaos, and ascends to the highest region of this visible world. And this concept is known to us from older sources.

## A

In the twenty ninth chapter of his first book *Against the Heresies* Irenaeus summarises the principal doctrines of what he calls the Barbelognostics or rather: Gnostics (Barbelo is an interpolation).<sup>10</sup> It has been established that Irenaeus took this information from a version of the *Apocryphon of John*. This contains the story of the fall of Sophia, here also called Holy Spirit and Prunikos (the whore):

When she saw that all the rest had a consort, but she herself was without a partner, she sought for one, with whom she might unite; and when she did not find one she took it sorely, extended herself, and looked down into the lower regions, thinking to find a consort there. And when she found none she leapt forth, disgusted also because she had made the leap without the goodwill of the Father. Then, moved by simplicity and goodness, she generated a work in which was ignorance and audacity.

This work of hers they call the First Archon, the creator of this world. They relate that he stole from his mother a great power and departed from her into the lower regions, and made the firmament of heaven in which also they say he dwells.

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<sup>10</sup> I, 29, 4; Harvey 1, 225–226 (translation by R.McI. Wilson, in his translation of Werner Foerster, *Gnosis*, I, Oxford 1972, 104–105).

This is so similar to the original doctrine of Valentinus that the learned doctor must have been familiar with a version of this myth. Irenaeus must have used in this chapter a written source similar to the one used by the author of the *Apocryphon of John*. It has been supposed recently that Irenaeus found it among the works the Valentinians read as sources of their own system, though they were not strictly speaking Valentinian, and that this source indeed was non-Christian.<sup>11</sup> We might even say that it was known already to Valentinus himself, about 140 A.D.

And yet we may say that not even this version of the *Apocryphon of John* contains the oldest form of the myth. It is said here, not in the other versions, that *Sophia looks down to the lower parts of this world*.

This is an old theme. It is said that Dionysus was charmed by the Titans with a mirror. This mirror causes the fall of the soul. Dionysus is dispersed owing to this mirror. And Dionysus is sometimes identified with the world-soul.<sup>12</sup> This theme had been transferred from Dionysus to Sophia at an early date. In a fragment quoted by Basilides it is said that the Light (= Sophia) just felt a desire to gaze on the Darkness and threw a glance as it were through a mirror (the underlying idea is that the primeval waters of Chaos reflect the image of Sophia). This was only a reflection and a lustre, which they tore into pieces (like Dionysus). Therefore we find in this world only a similitude of the good.<sup>13</sup>

According to the *Paraphrasis of Shem* there was in the beginning Light and Darkness and the Spirit between them. Darkness did not know that there was something beyond her. She was covered with water and moved. The Spirit looked down and saw the water of Darkness. Thereupon the intellect of Darkness received an image (*eine*) of the Spirit, obviously mirrored in the waters of Chaos. This intellect of Darkness *arose* and illuminated the whole underworld (the demiurge ascends from Chaos). Then the Infinite Light manifested itself to the Spirit in the shape of Derdekeas, the child, the bearer of revelation (I, 26-4, 12). Later on, it is said, the light of the Spirit,

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<sup>11</sup> Ph. Perkins, "Irenaeus and the Gnostics", *Vigiliae Christianae* 30 (1976) 193-200, 200.

<sup>12</sup> R. Eisler, *Orphish-dionysische Mysteriengedanken in der christlichen Antike*, Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg 1922-23, Leipzig and Berlin 1925 (reprint Hildesheim 1966), 168 and 179.

<sup>13</sup> Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai* 67, 4-12 (Beeson 96-97).

which was in the womb (*physis*), from which the cosmos originated, was an image manifested in the shape of a serpent (*thèrion*) with many faces, which was curved below (15, 12–16). A comparison with Hippolytus, *Refutatio* V, 19, seems to show this is the demiurge.

From this we must conclude that in the primitive myth Sophia projected her image in the waters of Chaos, which reflected only a deficient likeness of her, the demiurge.<sup>14</sup> But in the version of Irenaeus we are only told that Sophia looked down, not that her image was mirrored by Chaos and produced the demiurge. On the contrary it is said that the demiurge is generated by Sophia above and comes down to create the world. That is not consistent.

## B

The idea that Sophia looks down into the abyss has completely disappeared in the Coptic version of the *Apocryphon of John* contained in the *Codex Berolinensis 8502*. It is there, however, that we find the *theriomorphic appearance of the demiurge*, though in a misleading form:

Sophia is said to have had a thought of her own. She wanted to reveal her image out of herself without the assent of her partner (*syzygos*). She brought forth because of her wantonness (*prounikon*). Her work came forth, incomplete and hateful in appearance, it did not resemble its mother.

He had the face (*ha*) of a serpent and the face (*ho*) of a lion. His eyes shone with fire. She cast him away from herself, out of those places, that none of the immortals might see him because she had borne him in ignorance. She put him on a throne in the clouds and called him Jaldabaoth. He is the first Archon, who drew a great power from his mother. He removed himself from her and turned away from the place in which he had been born and occupied another place in space, an aeon flaming with shining fire, in which he now dwells. And he united with the folly, *aponoiā*, which is in him (hence his name Saklas, fool). He brought forth the twelve angels of the Zodiac after the pattern of the incorruptible aeons and the seven angels of the planets (37, 16–39, 17; Till, 113–119).

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<sup>14</sup> In the *Hypostasis of the Archons* the demiurge, the work of Sophia, is an image of heaven. It takes *shape from matter* like an abortion and has the form of a lion (142, 7–23). It is not said that this image is a projection of Sophia's image in matter, but the demiurge is not generated by and from Sophia, as in the *Apocryphon of John*. In the *Untitled Document* (146, 13sqq.) an image emanates from Sophia, the curtain, which casts a shadow, chaos. Then Sophia manifests herself upon the matter of chaos. From the water an archon arises, with the likeness of a lion, androgynous, who is the demiurge. These seem to be variations of the original myth.

This demiurge is similar to the demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus* in that he creates after the prototypes of the spiritual world. There cannot be the slightest doubt that he originated from Sophia above and not from the matter of Chaos below. That he is theriomorphic cannot be a secondary element, though Irenaeus does not mention it. The version of the Berlin Codex is deficient and suggests that Jaldabaoth has two faces like the Roman deity Janus *bifrons*. This has been an obstacle for the right interpretation of this figure and has led to wrong translations. The parallel version of Codex III (14, 9–16, 18) from Nag Hammadi is no better. There too we read that Jaldabaoth had the face (*ha*) of a lion and the face (*ha*) of serpent.

### C

In Codex II (9, 25–10, 28) the version is rather different. There too we hear that Sophia conceived a thought from herself to manifest her image without her fellow. An imperfect thing was revealed from her, different from her in appearance. “But when she saw the being that she had wanted to bring forth, <that> he was of a different shape (typos), <the shape> of a serpent with the face of a lion <and that> his eyes were like burning lightning which flashes, she cast him away from her out of those places, in order that none of the immortal ones should see him, for she had created him in ignorance.”

She surrounded him with a cloud of light and placed his throne in the midst of it that nobody should see it. This is Jaldabaoth, the first Archon, who went down to bring forth the twelve and seven angels that dominate the world.

The version of Codex IV (15, 1–16, 6) is so mutilated that it is of no use for our purpose.

We have given a new translation of our own of the relevant passage, because we wanted to make it clear that Jaldabaoth is a monstrous figure with the body of a serpent and the head of a lion. The same representation is found very often in the first centuries of our era on amulets, called Chnoubis stones: they usually contain a thick-bodied snake with the head of a lion.<sup>15</sup> Abraxas too, the snake-legged god with the cock's head, is sometimes also represented with the head of a lion.<sup>16</sup> And this seems to put us on the right track. For

<sup>15</sup> Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets*, Ann Arbor 1950, 54.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. the forthcoming article “Hermann Hesse and Gnosis” in the Festschrift for Hans Jonas (this volume, Ch. 15).

Abraxas could have been moulded upon a much older iconographic type.

### III

I am referring to the well-known myth of the cosmic egg which, to put it in a simplified form, tells how heaven and earth were split by a demiurge originating from Chaos.

The playwright Aristophanes in his comedy *The Birds* tells us the story as follows:

There was Chaos at first, and Darkness, and Night, and Tartarus, vasty and dismal;  
 But the Earth was not there, nor the Sky nor the Air, till at length in the bosom abysmal  
 Of Darkness an egg, from the whirlwind conceived, was laid by the sable-plumed Night.  
 And out of that egg, as the seasons revolved, sprang Eros, the charming, the bright,  
 Brilliant and bold with his pinions of gold, like a whirlwind, refulgent and sparkling!  
 He hatched us, commingling in Tartarus wide, with Chaos, the murky, the darkling,  
 And brought us above, as the firstlings of love, and first to the light we ascended.  
 There was never a race of immortals at all, till Eros the universe blended;  
 Then all things commingling together in love, there arose the fair Earth and the Sky,  
 And the limitless Sea; and the race of the gods, the blessed, who never shall die.<sup>17</sup>

In order to put this myth in the right perspective and to show its relevance for the study of Gnosticism, I want to make a few general remarks.

It is not certain that all concerned are aware of the enormous changes in our views, which were and are being brought about by the rediscovery of the Mycenaean language and world, owing mainly to the exertions of Michael Ventris and John Chadwick,<sup>18</sup> combined with the data from Ras Shamra and the Canaanite civilisation in

<sup>17</sup> 693–702: translation by B.B. Rogers, *Loeb Classical Library* 179, 201.

<sup>18</sup> John Chadwick, *The Mycenaean World*, Cambridge 1976.



general. This has led the leading scholars in this field to underline the oriental elements in Greek religion, already integrated in the second millennium before Christ.<sup>19</sup>

Aphrodite is now thought to have been brought to Cyprus by the Phoenicians and from there to Cythera in the Peloponnese as early as in the time of the Achaeans, before the Dorian invasion. This then means that Aphrodite is nobody else than Astarte and Ishtar, the bellicose, androgynous love goddess of the Near East. But she received her immigration visa at a very early date and was a founding mother of the Greek nation.<sup>20</sup> Moreover it has been established recently that the classical phoenix myth was not derived from the Egyptian concept of the bird *bennu* and yet developed out of the wide-spread oriental conception of the bird of the sun. This sun-bird entered the Mycenaean culture from the Semitic world, via Phoenicia. It is in the newly deciphered Linear B tablets that we find the word *po-ni-ke*, the Phoenician bird, from which the word *phoenix* later developed.<sup>21</sup>

We must not reject *a limine* the possibility that the cosmogonic demiurge in the cosmic egg followed the same course. This demiurge was called Eros or Phanes, the lightning one. The cult of Eros seems to have been very old and very archaic indeed. According to Pausanias<sup>22</sup> he was venerated in Thespieae as a stone without any image, thus representing the phallus of men and animals and at the same time the lightning which brings rain and so fertility to the earth. Phanes is an adequate name for a cosmogonic deity: "let there be light". But how is it that Eros, a unifying force, actually divides heaven from earth? This could indicate that the myth of the cosmic egg is outlandish and has been linked up with Eros. And as a matter of fact, in Egypt a similar myth is attested in a text from the period of the 11th and 12th dynasty (2130–1780):

The august god *who is in his egg* has commanded that N N (the name of the proprietor of the coffin) breathes the air in the necropolis... N N has guarded this egg of *the Great Cackler*. (translation by J. Zandee)

<sup>19</sup> *Éléments Orientaux dans la Religion Grecque ancienne*, Colloque de Strasbourg 22–24 mai 1958, Paris 1960.

<sup>20</sup> H. Herter, "Die Ursprünge des Aphroditenkultus", *Éléments Orientaux*, 61–76, 63.

<sup>21</sup> R. van den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix according to Classical and Early Christian Tradition*, Leiden 1972, 397.

<sup>22</sup> 9, 27, 1, ed. by F. Spiro, III, 58.

The myth of the cosmic egg of the Great Cackler, J. Zandee tells me, originally was characteristic of Hermopolis. It told that a Nile goose (*smn*), one of the sacred animals of Amon, laid her egg in the moor. The sungod Re was born from this egg and the two halves of the shell were preserved in Hermopolis. He functions as a demiurge who creates and arranges the world.

Our late lamented friend Siegfried Morenz supposed as early as 1950, at a time when the Mycenaean world had not yet been rediscovered, that the Orphic concept of a cosmic egg had been borrowed from Egypt. He shows that of all the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean only the Egyptians, the Phoenicians and the Orphics, not the Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians, knew this mythologeme and that the Phoenicians borrowed it from the Egyptians.<sup>23</sup> In the light of the present evidence this seems even more plausible nowadays. Perhaps the idea in general is rather wide-spread. But that a demiurge springs from this egg, that, as far as I know, is not so common. Moreover Amon in this myth is the life-giving, divine, fertilising wind.

There is a possibility that this cosmogonic myth was also known to the Phoenicians. According to Damascius, *De primis principiis* 125, ter (Ruelle, 323) a certain Mochus described their cosmogony in the following way: first there was Aether and Aer, from which Oulomos originates. He is Olam, Eternity or Aion. Obviously he is androgynous, because it is through *selfbegetting* that first Choesōros and then an egg came into being. Choesōros opens this egg and so brings about heaven and earth, which originate from the two halves of the egg. Choesōros is the old Phoenician Koscher wa Chasis, the so-called Ugaritic Hephaistos, and is considered to be an *interpretatio ugaritica* of the Egyptian demiurge Ptah.<sup>24</sup>

Otto Eissfeldt has taught us to take these cosmogonic theories very seriously and has given us many reasons to suppose, after Ras Shamra, that they contain sometimes authentic and very old elements.<sup>25</sup> We should not dismiss such information out of hand, arrogantly supposing that without the blind forces of nature nothing moves in this

<sup>23</sup> S. Morenz, "Ägypten und die altorphanische Kosmogonie", in: *Aus Antike und Orient*, Festschrift Wilhelm Schubart zum 75. Geburtstag, Leipzig 1950, 64–111, 72.

<sup>24</sup> Morenz, in *Aus Antike und Orient*, 81.

<sup>25</sup> O. Eissfeldt, "Ugaritisches I", *ZDMG* 1944, 84–94, 84 (= Eissfeldt, *Kleine Schriften* II, Tübingen, 1963, 514–528).

world that is not Greek in its origin. It has become increasingly clear that many religious and philosophical views of the Greeks are rooted in Oriental soil. This is especially true of cosmogonic theories. It has been firmly established that the myth of the castration by Kronos of his father Ouranos is in its origin a cosmogonic representation of the splitting of heaven and earth, which lie upon each other. The prototype of this has been found in both Hittite and Canaanite religion.<sup>26</sup>

If we keep this in mind, we cannot fail to see the affinity of the Orphic myth with the Genesis story, especially if we read the latter with the eyes of Otto Eissfeldt:<sup>27</sup>

When God fashioned heaven and earth in the beginning—but the earth was waste and empty and darkness was upon the abyss and a mighty wind swept over the water—then God spoke: let there be light, and there was light.

So Phanes, the shining light, divides heaven and earth, and creates the universe. I do not see why this myth could not have been borrowed by the Mycenaeans from the Egyptians through the intermediary of the Phoenicians. And even if it should turn out to be more likely that it was brought forth by spontaneous generation among the Greeks, there cannot be the slightest doubt that this concept is very similar to its Egyptian and Phoenician counterpart.

Its importance is still enhanced if ὑπηνέμιον ᾠόν in Aristophanes has the specific meaning of “egg submitted to the winds” rather than “wind-egg”. Then the parallel with Egypt and Palestine would be more striking. The wind in myth is usually life-giving and fertilising and divine, especially in Egypt but perhaps also in the Genesis story of creation. Basilius of Caesarea has heard from a Syriac speaking exegete that *in Syriac, and in Hebrew* the Spirit was brooding (συνέθαλπε), and not hovering over the waters, like a bird that is sitting upon her eggs (*Hexaameron* II, 6). According to Basil this shows that the Spirit is demiurgic. This, by the way, shows that Basil, the founding father of the dogma of the Trinity, like his brother Gregory of Nyssa, learned from the Syrians that the Spirit is a mother. And if

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<sup>26</sup> O. Eissfeldt, “Phönikische und Griechische Kosmogonie”, *Éléments Orientaux*, 1–15.

<sup>27</sup> O. Eissfeldt, “Das Chaos in der Biblischen und in der Phönizischen Kosmogonie”, *Kleine Schriften* II, 258–262.

we keep in mind that in the religions of the world, and also in Israel, the wind is divine and generates life, his interpretation may be correct.<sup>28</sup> This then is the deeply mythological symbol from which the philosophical Eros of the Greeks originated. And its lasting mythical character, even in the lofty exaltations of Plato and Aristotle, will be obvious if we remember that love is a concomitant of the instinct of reproduction, caused or conditioned by physiological realities. It is a myth to say that the world loves God (Aristotle) or that Eros is an inclination towards Being (Plato). Discursive, analytical reasoning as often as not is based upon a powerful and thoroughly irrational symbol. In the latter there seems to be involved an unconscious wisdom, which fascinates reason and stimulates it to ponder upon the implications of the images. So philosophy turns out to be an evolved form of mythology, as mythology is an involved philosophy. A rationalization makes explicit the implications of unreason and suggests a semblance of rationality.

If we ask how the myth developed within Greek religion, as opposed to Greek philosophy, no certain answer can be given. There do exist certain Orphic cosmogonies under the names of Hieronymus and Hellanicus, transmitted by the Neoplatonic philosopher Damascius.<sup>29</sup> Nothing is known of these two men and their date. But even if they lived in Hellenistic times certain elements of the myth they transmit could be much older. This question is not really relevant for our purpose. Nevertheless I must confess that I am astonished to see the late dates that are sometimes proposed. Is this not hypercriticism that cannot be maintained after Ras Shamra and Linear B? How can one say that the representation of Time as a monstrous figure is necessarily late? On a shield of the 8th century from Crete a lion, a bull and a horned goat are represented: this is supposed to be Dionysus, the Bull, who tries to escape the Titans in this changing form.<sup>30</sup> And if it is true that as a rule theriomorphic Greek divinities are to be derived from the Near East (where this sort of religion is at home) is not such an influence more probable in the still

<sup>28</sup> Morenz, in: *Aus Antike und Orient*, 86.

<sup>29</sup> *De Principiis* 123 bis; O. Kern, *Orphicorum Fragmenta*, <sup>2</sup>Berlin 1963, 130–131 (fig. 54).

<sup>30</sup> Dionysus is also found in Linear B; see Chadwick, *o.c.*, 99–100. He was the bull of the labyrinth; cf. Ch. Picard, "La formation du polythéisme hellénique et les récents problèmes relatifs au linéaire B", *Éléments Orientaux*, 163–177.

rather barbarian Mycenaean Age than later? I do think that the Orphic myth of the demiurge in the cosmic egg is very archaic, even in Greece. It runs as follows:

In the beginning there was water and mud that finally was to harden into earth. Out of water and earth was born a *serpent* with the heads of a bull and a *lion* and in the middle the face of a god and wings on its shoulders. This is called endless Time, Chronos. Out of Time are born Aether and Chaos and Darkness. In them Chronos brought forth an egg. In this egg there was an androgynous god, with golden wings on his shoulders. Growing out of his sides he had heads of bulls. On his head he has an enormous serpent appearing with all sorts of animals. He is called in some documents Phanes, the shining one, and Eros. The coming into being of the universe is described in different ways. Sometimes it is said that at the birth of Phanes the misty gulf below and the aether were rent.<sup>31</sup> Sometimes it is said that the egg was broken, so that one half became heaven and the other half became earth.<sup>32</sup> But in any case Phanes is, according to Hieronymus and Hellanicus also, the “diataktor”, the arranger and demiurge of all things and the whole world.

Sometimes it is said that Phanes, like Chronos, has many heads, and roars like a bull and a fierce *lion*.<sup>33</sup> Obviously Phanes too has the head of a lion.

I cannot see why the main elements of this myth could not be Mycenaean. Orpheus himself is now held by at least one scholar to be an historical figure, who lived in the fifteenth century before Christ, an Aeolian from the Greek mainland, a bard and sorcerer, a sort of shaman.<sup>34</sup> And even if we are rightly critical of this extreme position, we should admit that the cosmology of the cosmic egg can be very primitive indeed. Nor should we doubt that at an early date people knew that time consists of present, past and future, obviously symbolised by the three heads of Chronos. I think I can adduce an argument to make it more probable that this view is old.

Some time ago, F.St. Kapsomenos announced the discovery of an Orphic papyrus at Derveni near Saloniki (not yet published in 1978 and not even in 2005). This is the oldest existing Greek papyrus

<sup>31</sup> Proclus, *In Plat. Rempubl.* II, 138, 18; Kern, 151 (fig. 72).

<sup>32</sup> Athenagoras, *Pro Christianis* 18; Kern, 137 (fig. 57).

<sup>33</sup> Proclus, *In Plat. Tim.* 30 c–d; Kern, 153 (fig. 79).

<sup>34</sup> R. Boehme, *Orpheus der Sanger und seine Zeit*, Bern and Munich 1970, 334 sqq.

(± 350 B.C.) and contains an allegorical interpretation of an Orphic poem of the sixth century. The interpretation is inspired by the pre-socratic philosophy, especially of Diogenes of Apollonia, and not by the great classical philosophers Plato and Aristotle or by the Stoics. This then proves that an Orphic theology, an analytical and rational exegesis of mythological images, did exist long before Hellenistic times. The poem is supposed to be of the 6th century. It contains the following line:

Ζεὺς κεφαλὴ, Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ' ἐκ πάντα τελεῖται.

This is of some importance. As we now see clearly, Plato alludes to this verse in *Laws* IV, 715 E–716 C, where he says that according to an old story God has the beginning and the end and the middle of all things. There is now no longer any doubt that this old story is the Orphic tradition. Nor can it be denied that the author of the Pseudo-Aristotelean writing *De Mundo* quotes the same Orphic verse. And we should admire the acumen of Ernst Diels, who with a reference to a scholiast replaced τέτυκται by the correct τελεῖται.<sup>35</sup>

That this text was known to Hellenistic Jews is proved by Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* VIII, 280 and *Contra Apionem* 11, 190, who alludes to the same formula.<sup>36</sup> When the author of the Apocalypse of John quotes God (21, 6) and Christ (22, 13) as having said: “I am...the beginning and the end”, this is an echo of the old Orphic saying, for which there is no parallel in rabbinic literature. As a matter of fact this is the only passage in the New Testament where we can prove with some certainty that the author was influenced, directly or indirectly, by Orphic lore.

However, the question arises whether this verse is not a rationalization of a still older Orphic concept according to which the all-god Chronos had *three symbolic faces*, representing past or beginning, present or middle, and future or end. It seems plausible that first there was the image, then the rationalization of the poem, then the

<sup>35</sup> H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, II, <sup>4</sup>Berlin 1922, 169: “Die Konjektur bestätigen die von Helmreich edierten Galenscholien (Handschr. Studien z. Gal. I Ansbacher Progr. 1910 S. 30 n. 37”).

<sup>36</sup> W.C. van Unnik, *Het godspredikaat “het begin en het einde” bij Flavius Josephus en in de Openbaring van Johannes* (Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks 39, 1), Amsterdam, Oxford and New York, 1976, 7–13.

philosophical interpretation of the myth in such writings as the commentary of the Derveni papyrus. All this, I guess, took place within the Orphic school of tradition in the course of the centuries. It is not relevant for our present research to establish whether or not Plato, as so often, was influenced by the Orphics when he described in his *Timaeus* the work of the demiurge, the creator of the visible world. In order to solve this problem, it would be necessary to establish whether Plato identifies the demiurge with the highest Good or rather considers him to be the active principle of reality. As far as I can see, no preliminary studies on this subject are available. Let it suffice to say here that the Neoplatonists identified Phanes with the Platonic demiurge, Zeus, who swallowed him. Proclus says this in so many words;<sup>37</sup> Proclus supposes in his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*<sup>38</sup> that Plato has followed Orpheus here (I will come back to this theme at the end of this paper).

There is, however, a philosophical exegesis of the Phanes myth, which shows no Platonic influences whatsoever, but is rather tinged with Stoic colours, which should be located in the Alexandria of the first century A.D., and is the missing link between the old Orphic views and the speculations of the Gnostics. It is the cosmology contained in the Pseudo-Clementine writings (*Homiliae* VI, 3–26; *Recognitiones* X, 30). In all text-books and studies of Orphism this text is mentioned and considered to be an important source for the study of this mysterious religion, but mostly it is attributed to Rufinus, who was only the translator of the Greek text of the *Recognitions*, a revision of the so-called “fundamental writing”, on which both the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions* are based. The results of critical research into the sources of the Pseudo-Clementine writings are not mentioned at all. And yet it is worth while to know that according to a plausible conjecture of W. Heinze this whole passage has been taken from a Jewish apology in the form of a dialogue between a Roman convert to Judaism and his former friend, the Alexandrian opponent of the Jews Apion, the self-same against whom Josephus wrote his well-known *Apology*.<sup>39</sup> In *Hom.* V, 29, 1 this Apion is called a hater of

<sup>37</sup> Proclus, *In Plat. Tim.* 39 E (Diehl III, 101) and *In Plat. Tim.* 28 C (Diehl I, 314).

<sup>38</sup> Proclus, *In Plat. Tim.* 28 C (Diehl I, 313); cf. E. Abel, *Orphica*, Leipzig and Prague 1885, 200: “cet Orphée que d'ailleurs Platon lui-même a suivi en d'autres écrits” (translation by A.J. Festugière, t. II, Paris 1967, 170).

<sup>39</sup> W. Heinze, *Der Klemensroman und seine griechischen Quellen* (TU 40, 2), Leipzig 1914.

the Jews and in *Hom.* IV, 6, 2 an Alexandrian, so that there can be no reasonable doubt that pseudo-Clement and Josephus are speaking about the same person.

Moreover, there are other passages on Eros than the one mentioned, which obviously also have been taken from the same source and are relevant for our subject. I add that it is here that we find important passages on *the spirit in matter* which could be helpful to explain the newly discovered *Paraphrasis of Shem* and other Gnostic writings. This certainly is an Alexandrian allegorical interpretation of the Orphic myth, very much like the Derveni papyrus and put into the mouth of the first century philosopher Apion.

It tells us that, according to Orpheus, in the beginning there was Chaos, neither darkness nor light, neither moist nor dry, neither hot nor cold but all things mixed together, one unformed mass. It brought forth a huge egg, in which the first elements were mixed up (σύγχυσις). Through a whirlpool which drew to itself the surrounding spirit the heaviest elements went down and formed a sort of a bubble. As a peacock's egg seems to have only one colour, while potentially it has in it all the colours of the bird that is to be, so this living egg produces many forms. By the skill of the indwelling divine spirit (πνεῦμα) an androgynous living creature was brought forth; this Orpheus calls Phanes, because, when he appeared, the universe shone forth through him. The cosmic egg was broken by Phanes, then he, who had been formed within it, came forth, as Orpheus says:

When the shell was broken of the capacious egg.

So by the mighty power of Phanes who appeared and came forth, the globe attained coherence and maintained order. Phanes himself took over the presidency, as it were, over the summit of heaven (ὡσπερ ἐπ' ἀκρωρείας οὐρανοῦ προκαθέζεται), there in ineffable mysteries illuminating the infinite Aion. So Phanes or Eros is, according to this same source, "the eldest of all the gods". For without Eros there can be no mingling or generation either of elements, or gods, or men, or irrational animals, or aught else. For we are all instruments of Eros. He, by means of us, is the fabricator of all that is begotten, the mind inhabiting our souls (V, 10).

This document shows us that the cosmogonic Eros, abandoned by Plato and ignored by the Stoics, continued to be celebrated in the Orphic school of Alexandria, even in the first century of our era. And if it is correct that the source of the Pseudo-Clementine writings



in this case was a Jewish apology written in Alexandria, then it would appear that these Orphic speculations were known to the Jews of Alexandria at that time and were so dangerous and influential that a refutation was needed.

It needs only to be said once, but I do not think it has been said before, that these views were known to Basilides the gnostic. In the report which Hippolytus transmits, *Refutatio* VII, 20–27, 13, we likewise find the view that the demiurge originates from Chaos.

When the firmament, which is above the heaven, was there, there bubbled up and was born out of the cosmic seed and the heap of the worldseed the Great Archon, the head of the world. When he had been born, he lifted himself up and soared and was wholly carried right up to the firmament (variously called Ogdoas and Akroreia) (23, 3, 4). This Great Archon is called Abrasax, a meaningless name which has the numerical value 365, like Mithras, thus indicating that he is a symbol of cyclic time, and therefore Aion (25, 4). The latter is not to be found in the Orphic source, but for the rest the concept, and also the imagery as well as the terminology are the same:

Or, to make plainer what they say, just as the egg of a variegated and many-coloured bird, such as a peacock or some other even more variegated and many-coloured species, although it is only single, yet has within it many shapes of multiform, multi-coloured, and heterogeneous things, so, says he, the non-existent seed deposited by the non-existent God has within it the multiform seed-mixture of the world (21, 5).

The common terminology is remarkable: 26, 1: σύγχυσις for Chaos, from which the demiurge is born. 26, 9 and 27, 10: ἀκρωρεία, the summit of this world, where the demiurge dwells.

Basilides was not the only gnostic who had in mind the myth of the cosmic egg when speaking about the creation of the world. According to the *Codex Brucianus* LII, 13ff. the Mother sets up the first begotten son who is the demiurge separating matter:

and he it is who separated all the matter, and in the way in which he spread himself over it—as it were a bird stretching forth its wings over its eggs—thus did the protogenitor to matter, and he raised up myriads upon myriads of species or races. When the matter was grown warm, the multitude of powers that belong to him were set free, and they grew in the manner of the grass, and they were divided according to races and according to species.

Basilides was a brilliant and profound Christian gnostic in Alexandria about 140 A.D. But it can be proven that this Orphic concept had been integrated already much earlier in a Jewish shade of Gnosis. Owing to the discoveries of Nag Hammadi we now possess the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and the *Untitled Document*. The first seems to be very near to Judaism, with no evidence of Christian influence, save for an occasional gloss and an editorial expansion. And yet this text is definitely gnostic. The *Untitled Document* or *On the Origins of the World*, if not based on the former writing, is in one way very similar to the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, with some Hellenistic additions, for instance on Eros. Christian elements are not prominent. Certain puns seem to show that the author was familiar with Hebrew and Western Aramaic and could have been a Jew living in Palestine, Syria, or Egypt.

In the *Hypostasis* it is said that the abyss is the mother of Samael, the blind ruler of this world, owing to Pistis Sophia: "he pursued it down to Chaos and *the Abyss, his mother*, at the instigation of Faith-Wisdom".<sup>40</sup> Later on in the same work we are told that Sophia who is called Pistis wished to accomplish a work alone without her mate. She projected her shadow into a certain region of space, which became matter. From this originated an androgynous being, an arrogant beast in the form of a lion, the demiurge: "Wisdom, who is called Faith, wanted to create something, alone without her consort; and her product was a celestial thing. A veil exists between the World above and the realms that are below; and Shadow came into being beneath the veil; and that Shadow became Matter; and that Shadow was projected apart. And what she had created became a product in the Matter, like an aborted foetus. And it assumed a plastic form molded out of Shadow, and became an arrogant beast resembling a lion. It was androgynous, as I have already said, *because it was from Matter that it derived*."<sup>41</sup>

The *Untitled Document* tells very much the same story, but with interesting details: Sophia projects her image upon (*hidzjn*) the matter of Chaos. Thereupon an Archon arises from the water with the outward appearance of a lion, an androgynous creature who is destined

<sup>40</sup> 135, 6–9; translation by B. Layton, in: *Harvard Theological Review* 1974, 351–425, 396; cf. R.A. Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, Berlin 1970, 21.

<sup>41</sup> 142, 5–19; Layton, 414–416; Bullard, 35.

to rule over matter. Therefore Sophia appeals to him to ascend to the higher places of the universe, where she dwells. Therefore his esoteric name is Jaldabaoth, whereas the perfect call him Ariel, because he has the appearance of a lion.<sup>42</sup> He is the demiurge, called Samael, or Jaldabaoth, or Sakla the Fool. He reigns over the visible world. But Pistis Sophia predicts from the very beginning that he will return in the end *to the abyss, which is his mother*.<sup>43</sup>

Gershom Scholem, the third genius in this field, more specifically the genius of precision, has taught us that some of us were wrong when they believed that Jaldabaoth means “son of chaos”, because the Aramaic word *bahutha* in the sense of chaos only existed in the imagination of the author of a well-known dictionary.<sup>44</sup> This is a pity because this name would suit the demiurge risen from chaos to a nicety. And perhaps the author of the *Untitled Document* did not know Aramaic and also supposed as we did once, that *baoth* had something to do with *tohuwabohu*, one of the few Hebrew words that everybody knows.

In the *Apocryphon of John* the view that the demiurge originates from chaos is not clearly defined. It would seem there that it is rather Sophia who produces the demiurge from herself. The concept of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and of the *Untitled Document* seems to be more primitive. It would seem then that the Orphic view of the demiurge was integrated into Jewish Gnosticism even before the redaction of the myth contained in the original *Apocryphon of John*. Perhaps iconography can help us to determine where this happened.

Phanes is represented with the mask of a *lion's* head on his breast, while from his sides the heads of a ram and a buck are budding forth: his body is encircled by a snake. This type was accepted by the Mithras mysteries, to indicate Aion, the new year, and Mithras, whose numerical value is 365. Sometimes he is also identified with Jao Adonai, the creator of the Hebrews. His hieratic attitude indicates Egyptian origin. The same is true of the monstrous figure with the head of a lion, which symbolises Time, Chronos, in Mithraism; Alexandrian origin of this type is probable.

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<sup>42</sup> 147, 23–148, 26; A. Böhlig and Pahor Labib, *Die koptisch-gnostische Schrift ohne Titel aus Codex II von Nag Hammadi*, Berlin 1962, 40–42.

<sup>43</sup> 151, 24–28; Böhlig, 48.

<sup>44</sup> G. Scholem, “Jaldabaoth Reconsidered”, *Mélanges d'histoire des religions*, offerts à Henri-Charles Puech, Paris 1974, 405–421, 408.

There are good reasons for supposing that the figurative representation of Abraxas, with the head of a cock (or a lion) and serpentine legs, is to be located in the same town. It was among the Egyptians that according to Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1, 20, Aion had an image of an animal with three heads, a lion (present), wolf (past), dog (future), linked by an encircling *serpent*.<sup>45</sup>

It seems plausible that both Mithraic Time and Abraxas were Alexandrian variations of and inspired by the old figure of Orphic Chronos, the serpent with the head of a lion, a bull and a god. But then the theriomorphic representation of Jaldabaoth, serpent with lion's head, could easily be Egyptian and Alexandrian. It is virtually certain that the Orphic interpretation of Phanes-Eros the demiurge was known to the Jews of Alexandria. Then both the concept as such and its symbolic representation would prompt the suggestion that it was in Alexandria that these astonishing views were formulated for the first time.

#### IV

In the *Untitled Document* the demiurge has the name of the archangel Ariel, which means "the lion of God". Probably this angel was chosen because traditionally the demiurge has the face of a lion. But for our purposes it is sufficient to observe that the demiurge is an angel.

In the *Sophia Jesu Christi*, in additions to its source, the *Letter of Eugnostos*, Jaldabaoth the almighty ruler of Chaos is called "the great angel" (121, 12). In Mandaeism the real name of the demiurge is Gabriel the Messenger, who goes under the cover of the outlandish designation Ptahil.<sup>46</sup> This seems to indicate that the Orphic concept we discussed has been integrated into a Judaic system of reference in which creation was no longer attributed to God himself but rather to one of his angels or more particularly to "the Angel", namely "the Angel of the Lord".

<sup>45</sup> See the article mentioned in note 16.

<sup>46</sup> "Jewish Gnosis and Mandaean Gnosticism", in: J.-E. Ménard (éd.), *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi*, Colloque du Centre d'Histoire des Religions, Strasbourg, 23-25 octobre 1974, Leiden 1975, 119.

The view, however, that the Gnostic concept of the demiurge is due to heterodox Jewish sources provokes such violent and uninhibited reactions that it seems wise to prepare the way by drawing attention to some facts which everybody knows or should know. Not infrequently in early Christian sources, and even today in fundamentalist circles, Christ is identified with the Angel of the Lord mentioned in the Old Testament. The reason for this is that God is held to have revealed himself even before the incarnation in the shape of a man, as the anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament show. So Tertullian could answer Marcion's criticisms of the Old Testament God in the following way:

igitur quaecumque exigitis deo digna, habebuntur in patre invisibili incongressibilique et placido et, ut ita dixerim, philosophorum deo, quaecumque autem ut indigna reprehenditis, deputabuntur in filio et viso et audito et congresso (*adv. Marc.* 11, 27). (Therefore all the attributes and activities you make requisition of as worthy of God are to be found in the Father, inaccessible to sight and contact, peaceable also and, so to speak, a god philosophers can approve of; but all the things you repudiate as unworthy, are to be accounted to the Son, who was both seen and heard, and held converse; transl. E. Evans, Oxford 1972, 163).

Martin Werner and Jean Cardinal Daniélou have demonstrated that this so-called Angel-Christology is characteristic of Jewish Christianity.<sup>47</sup> But such notions had already been prepared in pre-Christian Judaism. Already in the Old Testament we see on different occasions, for instance in the story of the burning bush, Ex. 2, that the redactor has toned down the crude anthropomorphism of his source (J), according to which the Lord himself had come down to hide himself in a bush, and replaced the tetragrammaton by the veiled expression "the Angel of the Lord". In the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 9:5 this very special Malak is conceived as the Messenger of God's privy council, identified with the Messiah and called Angel of the Great Council, *Megalès Boulès Angelos*. Philo commonly identifies this angel with the Logos. It has been shown recently by Charles H. Talbert that it was these and similar images that lie behind the New Testament concept of a descending and ascending redeemer.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> M. Werner, *Die Entstehung des christlichen Dogmas*, Bern and Leipzig 1941, 302–321; J. Daniélou, *Theologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, Tournai 1958, 167–198.

<sup>48</sup> Charles H. Talbert, "The Myth of a descending-ascending Redeemer in Mediterranean Antiquity", *NTS* 1976, 418–439.

Now it had already been known for a long time that the rabbis had fought against the heresy of the "two powers in heaven". But it was not quite clear what this meant. Some scholars thought that the "heretics" who taught these views were Christians, who held that Christ was also God, or Jewish Gnostics, who derived their blasphemous ideas from non-Jewish Gnostics and from them had learned that an absolute dualism opposed the highest God to the abominable demiurge who is guilty of this evil creation.

It was the discovery of the *Gospel of Truth* which led to a different orientation. For in that writing it is said that Christ is the Name, even the Proper Name of God. There could be little doubt that this was derived from Jewish speculations about the Name, the ineffable Šem, and about the bearer of the Name, the Angel of the Lord, called Jaol (later Metatron) or little Jahweh, Jahweh Haqqaton, because according to Ex. 23:21 the Name of the Lord was in him. It then became clear that the doctrine of the two powers in heaven in its origin had nothing to do either with Christianity or with Gnostic dualism, but started in Judaism as an expedient to explain anthropomorphic passages in Holy Writ. Recently this whole complex of ideas has been brilliantly treated by Alan Segal in a dissertation at Yale University.<sup>49</sup>

This book discusses all the extant rabbinic passages about Jewish heretics and possibly others who proclaim that there are two principles. The best known of these is rabbi Elisha ben Abuya, called Acher (100 A.D.), who is said to have seen Metatron, sitting and writing down the merits of Israel, from which this rabbi allegedly concluded that perhaps there are two deities.

According to Segal there is no indication whatsoever that these views have anything to do with Iranian dualism. Nor are the opponents aimed at always the same. Sometimes they may have been Gnostics, at other times Christians, and as often as not heterodox Jews. Before the end of the second century A.D. there is no evidence that heretics who proclaimed two powers did believe that these were opposed to each other. They were rather Jews who were worried about anthropomorphism. Biblical theophanies which picture God as a man or a fierce warrior or confuse the Lord with an angel

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<sup>49</sup> Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven. Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*, Leiden 1978.

are the basis of this tradition, which distinguishes between a completely transcendent God and His revelation in anthropomorphic shape. The rabbinic texts about the two powers in heaven can be ascribed in general to the third century. However, the earliest reports can be safely dated to the Bar Kochba revolt of the first half of the second century C.E. An extensive oral period must have preceded our first witnesses.

Segal then discusses the evidence contained in Philo. He shows that this Jewish philosopher of the first century A.D. bases his speculations upon the same ambiguous passages in the Old Testament as the heretics opposed by the rabbis. He worries about the same anthropomorphisms and discusses the concept of a second deity, variously called Angel of the Lord, Lord, Name, Logos. Philo calls his Logos (and so the Angel of the Lord) a *deuteros theos*, a second God. He also reacts to certain traditions according to which one God was mild and the other severe, stating that these are two “measures” of the same God. So Philo turns out to have been profoundly influenced by, and also in part to have reacted against, these traditions, which were then already in existence. The earliest form of this heresy involved the assumption that any anthropomorphic description in the Bible refers to a divinity separate from and subordinate to God. Closely connected with this heresy were mystical and apocalyptic traditions about the divine Name of God as a separate hypostasis, about the Angel of the Lord (Jaoel or Metatron) and about Adam. (later Adam Kadmon, the Archetypal Man of Ezekiel 1:28). All this is Palestinian lore, to which Philo is indebted.

Thus, Philo’s Logos has not only a logical but also a religious function. He uses this concept both for philosophical argumentation and for explaining away the anthropomorphisms in the Holy Bible. From this we must conclude that the theories about two divine powers in heaven, though originating in Palestine, were known in Alexandria at the time when Philo lived there. They could have been known to the author of the *Apocryphon of John* in its original version, or to the tradition which he elaborated, if indeed this author was a Jew and lived in *Alexandria apud Aegyptum*. There is, however, this essential difference that in Philo and the “two principles” heretics this vicegerent and agent of revelation is held to be a positive power, whereas in the *Apocryphon of John* the demiurge is an antagonistic power.

Segal points to several sources which seem to take an intermediate position. In the Gnosis of Baruch Elohim, the creator of the

world, is subordinate to the Good, but not yet the arrogant creature of later Gnosticism. I add that in the well-known *Leyden Magical Papyrus* the Lord and ruler of this world is brought forth by the call of God, who pronounces Iao, but this demiurge is not evil. Segal supposes that these distorted claims of the Gnostics about the ignorance of Israel's God are a polemical answer to the rabbinic polemic against "two powers" which relied heavily on Deuteronomy 32:39: "I kill and revive, I destroy and I heal", implying that God himself causes both good and evil.

In tracing back the origin of the concept of a lower demiurge we should not take our stand exclusively upon the witness of the rabbis and the documents of esoteric and apocalyptic Judaism. There are also the Samaritan sources, now available in excellent editions with translation, which are relevant to our purpose.

Jarl Fossum, who started the preparation of a thesis on the origin of the concept of a demiurge in Gnostic texts, has found a remarkable passage in a Samaritan writing called the *Malef*. There it is said that the Angel of the Lord created the body of Adam, whereas God himself infused his Spirit into that frame. The text is a late composition, but there is no reason to doubt that it contains earlier traditions. For our purposes, however, the chronology is not so important. The essential point is that here for the first time we see an indubitable relationship between this angelic creator and the *Timaëus*.

In this dialogue Plato speaks rather mysteriously about a *demiourgos*, who fashions the visible world (and not the already preexistent world of ideas). He is called the father and maker of this universe, whom it is difficult to find and when found to relate to others. This, however, can be confidently said, that he looked up to the eternal model, especially to the idea of the Good when making the world:

And that which has come into existence must necessarily, as we say, have come into existence by reason of some Cause. Now to discover the Maker and Father of this Universe were a task indeed; and having discovered Him, to declare Him unto all men were a thing impossible. However, let us return and inquire further concerning the Cosmos,— after which of the Models did its Architect construct it? Was it after that which is self-identical and uniform, or after that which has come into existence? Now if so be that this Cosmos is beautiful and its Constructor good, it is plain that he fixed his gaze on the Eternal; but if otherwise (which is an impious supposition), his gaze was on that which has come into existence. But it is clear to everyone that his gaze was on the Eternal; for the Cosmos is the fairest of all that has



come into existence, and He the best of all the Causes (28 C—29 A; translation by R.G. Bury, *Loeb Classical Library* 234, 51–53).

The demiurge leaves the preparation of the bodies of men to his own offspring, some lower gods. They receive the immortal soul from him and envelop it in a mortal body:

And He Himself acts as the Constructor of things divine, but the structure of the mortal things He commanded His own engendered sons to execute. And they, imitating Him, on receiving the immortal principle of soul, framed around it a mortal body, and gave it all the body to be its vehicle, and housed therein besides another form of soul, even the mortal form, which has within it passions both fearful and unavoidable—firstly, pleasure, a most mighty lure to evil; next, pains, which put good to rout; and besides these, rashness and fear, foolish counsellors both; and anger, hard to dissuade; and hope, ready to seduce. And blending these with irrational sensation and with all-daring lust, they thus compounded in necessary fashion the mortal kind of soul (69 C–D; Bury, 179–181).

Christians are so accustomed to identify the creator with God and God with the Good that most of us involuntarily have always assumed that Plato's demiurge is the idea of the Good and that this idea is identical with the God of the Bible. But one of the greatest living experts on Greek philosophy, who is at the same time a fervent Roman Catholic, my colleague C.J. de Vogel,<sup>50</sup> has protested against this view. In her book on Plato she says it is undesirable to designate this demiurge as God and Father, because that is misleading to the Christian reader, who will readily suppose that this demiurge is obviously identical with "the Good" in Plato's *State* and "Being itself" in his *Sophistes*. The demiurge of the *Timaeus*, who produces the souls, must be located above the level of the soul, but is not identical with intelligible Being in its totality and certainly not with the Good which is beyond being and the Ground of being. "If one wants to say that the Good on the level of intelligible being manifests itself in the shape of the demiurge, then I believe one does not say something alien to Plato's thought". Plato's terminology, de Vogel continues, is bewildering for us. He uses the word "god" for the demiurge, and for the "created gods", which are the perfect souls of the heavenly bodies, and also for the wise and good world-soul. But he never calls the highest principle and idea, viz. "the Good",

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<sup>50</sup> C.J. de Vogel, *Plato, de filosoof van het transcendente*, Baarn 1968, 150–152.

God. We must therefore constantly keep in mind that according to Plato the idea of the Good is unconscious and impersonal, whereas the demiurge is personal, a craftsman, an anthropomorphic God.

Perhaps Plato here, as so often, has been inspired by Orphic lore. Since the Derveni papyrus we know that many concepts of this religion, formerly held to be late and Hellenistic, are in reality much older. It seems plausible that already in Plato's time the myth of the demiurge Phanes was circulating in Orphic circles and known to Plato. Phanes is a worldly, immanent demiurge, not the highest principle, which is Zeus according to the Orphics. In any case Plato's problem was similar to that of the Jewish rabbis: how is handicraft, a crude anthropomorphism, to be brought into accord with our notion of the dignity of the Highest? And it may be that his solution was seminal for the later developments in Palestine. For we can explain from immanent causes the stress in Judaism on God's transcendence and, corresponding to that tendency, the ever greater prominence of the Angel of the Lord: the faithful of that time became increasingly aware that God is beyond the visible world and at the same time remained firmly convinced that God sovereignly bridged the gap by revealing Himself. But it is not so easy to see why this Angel received a cosmological function and became a demiurge.

In the Samaritan text mentioned above this happened under the influence of Plato's *Timaeus*. And there are Jewish parallels for it. That is an adaptation of the traditional faith and the traditional exegesis of Scripture to the scientific worldview of that time. For the *Timaeus* of Plato was the bedside book of every civilised and not so civilised man in the centuries before and after the beginning of our era.

From now on we must ask ourselves whether the demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus* is not involved wherever a mediator of creation enters the scene. This is the case with the Jewish Magharians who taught that an anthropomorphic angel created the world. We wonder what relations certain apocalyptic and esoteric Jews had with them: according to the former the world had been created through the Name, the latter taught that the Creator in the Beginning was the Kabod, the glory of God, and not God himself. They all show that a subordinate being had already assumed creative functions before he was identified with the Logos, as in Philo and St John: and this explains why this creator, at least in John, always remained so personal, whereas the Greek logos of the Stoics is strictly impersonal. Christian

Fathers of the Church and Gnostics wrestled with the dilemma, how God could be transcendent and yet created the world like a workman: both used the same traditional material, though in a different way.

This is also the perspective of the *Apocryphon of John*: it teaches that the demiurge is a lower being like the heretics who believed in “two principles,” but also that this world is an image of the eons. This was taken from the *Timaeus*. And therefore it was probably under the influence of Plato’s *Timaeus* that Jewish heretics, and the Gnostics in their wake, said that the world had been created by a lower demiurge.

## V

Does all this mean then that in the *Apocryphon of John* we find a distant echo of the doctrine of the two deities?

That would be too sweeping a statement. It has been shown that this view was known to the rabbis and also to Philo, and therefore must have circulated in Alexandria at the beginning of our era. But in the *Apocryphon of John* it is not said that the angel who creates the world is God: it is only said that this angel calls himself God, though he was ungodly in his ignorance.

This can only be understood in the perspective of Jewish mysticism. One of its main writings, *3 Enoch*, or the Hebrew *Book of Enoch*, edited by Hugo Odeberg in 1928, has much to say about the enormous importance and privileged position of Metatron, the Angel of the Lord. He is called “Youth”, like Jaldabaoth in the *Untitled Document*; he is clothed in a garment of glory, is crowned with a golden crown and called “Lesser YHWH”; on his crown are written the cosmic letters of the divine name by which heaven and earth were created; to him are committed the seventy angels corresponding to the seventy nations of the world; to him wisdom and intelligence are committed more than to all the angels. And he in his turn gives wisdom unto the wise and knowledge to them that know understanding. He reveals secrets and teaches judgment and justice. But if we should suppose that Metatron is divine, this document tells a story to make it perfectly clear that we are wrong. It is clearly directed against heretics who hold the view that there are two divine powers in heaven. According to chapter 16 of *3 Enoch* Metatron was at first sitting upon a great throne at the door of the seventh hall of the heavenly palace, presiding over the celestial court. But when

the arch-heretic Acher came to see him sitting there and concluded that he was a divine power, forthwith a divine voice went forth from heaven, proclaiming that this was unforgivable. Thereupon Metatron received sixty strokes with lashes of fire and was made to stand on his feet. Because this text is so unknown, it should be quoted in full:<sup>51</sup>

R. Ishmael said: Metatron, the Angel, the Prince of the Presence, the Glory of all heaven, said to me: At first I was sitting upon a great Throne at the door of the Seventh Hall; and I was judging the children of heaven, the household on high by authority of the Holy One, blessed be He. And I divided Greatness, Kingship, Dignity, Rulership, Honour and Praise, and Diadem and Crown of Glory unto all the princes of kingdoms, while I was presiding in the Celestial Court, and the princes of kingdoms were standing before me, on my right and on my left—by authority of the Holy One, blessed be He.

But when Acher came to behold the vision of the Merkaba and fixed his eyes on me, he feared and trembled before me and his soul was affrighted even unto departing from him, because of fear, horror and dread of me, when he beheld me sitting upon a throne like a king with all the ministering angels standing by me as my servants and all the princes of kingdoms adorned with crowns surrounding me: in that moment he opened his mouth and said: "Indeed there are two Divine Powers in heaven!" Forthwith Bath Qol (the Divine Voice) went forth from heaven from before the Shekina and said: "Return, ye back-sliding children, except Acher!" Then came *Aniyel*, the Prince, the honoured, glorified, beloved, wonderful, revered and fearful one, in commission from the Holy One, blessed be He and gave me sixty strokes with lashes of fire and made me stand on my feet."

With this should be compared a passage in Irenaeus, *Adv. haereses* 1, 30:

Hence Jaldabaoth in exaltation boasted about all the things beneath him and said: "I am Father and God, and above me there is none". When his mother heard this, she called out against him: "Do not lie, Jaldabaoth, for there is above you the Father of All, the First Man and the Man the Son of Man".

A similar concept is found in the *Untitled Document* 151, 15–21:

When Pistis saw the godlessness of the great Archon, she became angry. Without being seen, she said: "You are wrong, Sammael, that is the blind god, an immortal lightgiving man exists before you, who will reveal himself to your creatures".<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch*, Cambridge 1928, 43–45.

<sup>52</sup> Böhlig, 49.

The *Hypostasis of the Archons* reflects very much the same view (143, 4–8):

And he said to his offspring: “It is I who am the god of the Entirety”. And Life, the daughter of Faith-Wisdom, cried out and said to him: “You are mistaken, Sakla!” (for which the alternate name is Yaltabaoth).<sup>53</sup>

In the *Apocryphon of John* 11, 61, 7–62, 15 parr. the demiurge proclaims that he is the only existing God. Thereupon a voice comes to his mother, Sophia, from the aeons above, and is heard also by the demiurge: “Man (= God) exists, and the Son of Man”. It is Barbelo, the Mother-Father, who reveals that there is a God to an ignorant fool, Sakla, who thinks in his heart there is no God. Then the world of the demiurge trembles, the foundations of the abyss are shaken and owing to the waters which are upon matter the lower world was illuminated by the light of this image that she revealed. And when all the angels and the Protarchon stared, they saw the whole lower world illuminated and by the light they saw in the water the reflection (*typos*) of the image (*eikon*) (62, 24–34). Then they decided to fashion man after this image.”

The underlying idea is that Barbelo, who is the Image of God, projects her reflection in the mirroring waters of the abyss and so offers the angels the opportunity to make outward Adam after the image of God. This concept is still Jewish both in imagery and in tendency. It speaks about a *bat qol*, a voice coming to the angel Metatron, telling him that there is only one God, not two powers in heaven.

Strangely enough, even those passages in the *Apocryphon of John* which at first sight seem to be inspired by an anti-Jewish animus, can only be understood when put against a Jewish background and when compared with the works of Jewish mysticism.

### *Conclusion*

In this paper we have travelled all the way from the cosmogonic world egg in Egyptian Hermopolis to Mycenaean Greece and heterodox Palestine to trace the origins of the concept of the demiurge

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<sup>53</sup> Layton, 416–418; Bullard, 36.

in the Gnostic *Apocryphon of John*. There can be no reasonable doubt that the Orphic Phanes, theriomorph and arising from Chaos, was the prototype of this Ialdabaoth. An immanent development within Judaism—awareness of God's transcendence, embarrassment about the crude anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament—created a situation in which it became feasible to identify the Angel of the Lord with this demiurge. But even before that it had been said that this Angel of the Lord, and not God himself, created man and the world. Perhaps this first happened among the Samaritans and it was from Samaria that this view migrated to Egypt.

So a religious theme after many wanderings returned to the place where it belonged.

The demiurge has come home to roost.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

Starting from this article, Roel van den Broek has proved that there is nothing typically Iranian in the *Apocryphon of John*, but that its concept of the creation of Adam's psychic body is based upon a Jewish, Alexandrian, Middle Platonic interpretation of the *Timaeus* of Plato. See R. van den Broek and M.J. Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic religions*, Leiden 1981, 38–57.

The *Apocryphon of John* has at last been published by F. Wisse and M. Waldstein, Leiden 1995.

Jaap van Amersfoort has shown that the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and *Recognitions* were familiar with a specific version of the Orphic cosmogony, borrowed from an Alexandrian Jewish apology. The mysteries of Orpheus were celebrated in Alexandria and obviously influenced Basilides. See Van den Broek and Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions*, Leiden 1981, 13–30.

James Bruce (1730–1794), one of the few British Gnostics between John Dee, William Blake and W.B. Yeats, acquired the Gnostic *Codex Brucianus* in Egypt, but also the apocalyptic Ethiopian Jewish writing *I Enoch*. The passage in the *Codex Brucianus* on the world clearly depends upon Orphic myth. The biography of Bruce is in Miles Bradin, *The Pale Abessinian*, London 2000.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### A DIATESSARON READING IN A LATIN MANICHAEAN CODEX\*

#### SUMMARY

*There is a serious possibility that the oldest translations of the Bible in the vernacular languages of Western Europe are based upon a deviating Latin Gospel harmony of Manichaean origin.*

The Latin parchment codex found near Tebessa in Algeria in 1918 and preserved in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* at Paris (*Nouvelles acquisitions latines* 1114) is the only Manichaean document in Latin discovered to this date. It tries to show that the Manichaean hierarchy of *electi* and *auditores* is based upon the teachings of Jesus and Paul. It has been suggested that its author was Mani himself;<sup>1</sup> in that case the original language must have been Aramaic (“Syriac”). But it is also quite possible that this treatise was the work of Addai (Adimantius), the missionary of Mani to the West and a gifted adept of higher criticism, whose polemics against Catholicism are known to us through the intermediation of the book which Augustine wrote against him. In that case the original language may have been Greek. The excavations at Kellis in the Egyptian desert west of Luxor have shown that a Manichaean literature in Greek did exist in Antiquity. It is not even completely to be excluded that it was an African Manichaean who wrote this work. But that is not very probable because no other specimens of the kind are known, except the lost treatise of Augustine called *De pulchro et apto* (summarised in *Confessiones* IV, 24), (Augustine’s quotations from) Faustus’ *Capitula* and, moreover, the letter of the Manichaean Secundinus to Augustine. Whatever may be the case, it is quite sure that the book contained in this codex was written by a Manichaean who was a very able polemicist and knew the teachings of Jesus and his apostle Paul very well.

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\* Previously published in *Vigiliae Christianae* 47 (1993) 374–78.

<sup>1</sup> R. Merkelbach, “Der manichäische Codex von Tebessa”, in: P. Bryder (ed.), *Manichaean Studies*, Lund 1988, 233.



In column 9 of folio III, 1 this text reports about the wandering, poor and ascetic *electi* of the Gnostic Christian Church, which we call Manichaeism, in terms derived from the Gospel:

<i>nunc</i>	(now
<i>et opibus pauperes et</i>	destitute of riches and
<i>numero pauci et per</i>	few in number
<i>artam viam incedunt et angusto tramiti</i>	they walk on the strait way
<i>destinati sunt.</i>	and are bound on the narrow path).

This passage, of course, refers to Matthew 7:14, which in the so-called “standard edition” of Kurt Aland (= Nestle 26th edition) runs as follows:

τί στενή ἡ πύλη καὶ τεθλιμμένη	(How strait is <i>the gate</i> and narrow
ἡ ὁδὸς	is the way
ἡ ἀπάγουσα εἰς τὴν ζωὴν	which leadeth unto life
καὶ ὀλίγοι εἰσὶν οἱ εὐρίσκοντες	and few there be that find it).
αὐτήν.	

The omission of ἡ πύλη in this verse is quite common. The “standard edition” cites *ad calcem paginae* the Afra Codex Bobbiensis (k) and the Itala codex a, Cyprian, who almost always agrees with the Bobbiensis, Tertullian in Carthage and Hippolytus in Rome as well as Clement of Alexandria and Origen (partim). Old-fashioned text critics would call this a typically Western variant. To these witnesses should be added Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 7,7,2, to which we will come back later. Here we only observe that this might possibly hint at some influence of the Jewish Christian Gospel tradition on the so-called Western text.<sup>2</sup> Aland chooses not to mention the parallel in the Pseudo-Clementine writing, because as a pupil of Hans Lietzmann he denies that such a thing as Jewish Christianity ever existed. We will return to this problem in a moment.

The variant *per artam viam incedunt* has no parallel whatsoever in any of the numerous Latin, Greek or Aramaic (“Syriac”) manuscripts of the Gospel. It has a Semitic ring: “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly nor setteth foot in the way of sinners” (Psalm 1:1). It is attested for the *Diatessaron* of Tatian, both in the East and in the West:

<sup>2</sup> J. van Amersfoort, “The Gospel of Thomas and the Western Text, A Reappraisal”, in: G. Quispel, *Gnostic Studies*, II, Istanbul 1975, 56–69.

- Persian (Messina 81,2)  
 e quanto pochi sono quelli che *vanno* per essa.  
 Tuscan (Vaccari 230,8):  
 e pochi sono coloro che *vanno* per essa.  
 Dutch Stuttgart (Bergsma 52):  
 ende lettel es dergere die daer in *gaen*.  
 Dutch Haaren (20,30):  
 (ende lettel) sijn der gheene die daer in *gaen*.  
 German Theodiscum (30,21):  
 und wenig ist der die dar in *gent*.

To these should be added another witness for the defence, the influential Aramaic (Syriac) mystic Makarios, who like so many of his countrymen wrote in Greek, but whose works reflect the colourful Christianity of Edessa and as such betray his knowledge not only of the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of the Nazoraeans*, but also of Tatian's *Gospel harmony*:<sup>3</sup>

III, 16, 1, 78, 4: καὶ ὀλίγοι εἰσὶν οἱ διοδεύοντες αὐτήν.

Makarios lived in or around Edessa ca. 350 C.E. If witnesses in the West and in the East agree on a reading, and it is not falsified by the Vulgate or the Peshitta, one can be quite sure that this variant goes back to Tatian himself.

Tatian did not invent it, but must have picked it up from the Jewish Christian Gospel tradition. In fact we find the verse of Matthew alluded to in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 7,7,2, Rehm 119,21:

ἡ δὲ τῶν σωζομένων στενή  
 σφζουσα δὲ τοὺς διαπορευθέντας.

It would seem that this paraphrase implies both the variant *στένη ὁδός* and *πορευθέντες δι' αὐτής*, as we also find in the Codex from Tebessa.<sup>4</sup>

We may conclude then that the author of the writing transcribed in this codex, or his Latin translator, or both, knew and used the *Diatessaron* of Tatian. He was not the only one. Again and again it has been shown in recent years that the Manichaeans used this

<sup>3</sup> "The Gospel of Thomas revisited", in: B. Barc, *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi*, Louvain 1981, 251.

<sup>4</sup> Not relevant for our problem, though supposing the same variants are: Aristides, *Apology* 16; Clem. Al., *Strom.* IV, 22, 140; Eusebius, *Eclog. Proph.* III, 15.

Gospel harmony.<sup>5</sup> The reason why they did so becomes perfectly clear when we visualize the situation of Aramaic Christendom at the time of Mani. According to tradition it has been founded by the Judaic Christian Addai. When in about 170 Tatian returned to the East, his *Diatessaron* was accepted there unanimously. The first to use it was the author of the *Acts of Thomas*, who wrote his work in Edessa about 225 C.E. From then onwards Aramaic (“Syriac”) Christian writers used the same book, right up to “the humble Romanos”, the poet of the Orthodox Church.<sup>6</sup>

There is no evidence whatsoever to prove that the four canonical Gospels were known in the East before Tatian. The existing Old Syriac versions, the *Syrus Sinaiticus* and the *Syrus Curetonianus*, are influenced by Tatian’s writing and therefore much later. What other text of the Gospels could Mani have chosen, when he abandoned the Jewish commune in which he was reared?

Moreover, it is completely sure that Manichaeans writing in Latin like the translator of Augustine’s opponent Adimantus quote a very deviant version of the *Diatessaron*. He writes:

*ibo primum ut sepeliam patrem meum* (Augustine, *C. Adim.* VI) instead of the normal Vulgate and Vetus Latina reading:

*permitte mihi primum ire et sepelire patrem meum* (Luke 9:59). The same is found in the *Acts of Archelaus*, which quotes Tatian’s Gospel harmony in the following words:

*ibo et sepeliam patrem meum* (56,7).

This is not typically Manichaean. The orthodox Aphraates, the Persian saint, who so often quotes the *Diatessaron*, writes the Syrian equivalent of: *vadam et sepeliam patrem meum* (*Dem.* VIII, 18).

The former Manichaean Augustine seems to have read the *Diatessaron* in his wild and heretical youth. While he is extemporising, as he used to do in his sermons, the following slip of the tongue occurs:

*Quid enim dicit? Ibo prius sepelire patrem meum* (*Serm.* 100,2).

<sup>5</sup> W.L. Petersen, “An important unnoticed Diatessaronic reading in Turfan fragment M18”, in *Text and Testimony, Festschrift A.F.J. Klijn*, Kampen 1988, 187–199. H.J. Klimkeit, “Apokryphe Evangelien in Zentral- und Ostasien”, in *Manichaica Selecta*, Louvain 1991, 151.

<sup>6</sup> W.L. Petersen, *The Diatessaron and Ephrem Syrus as Sources of Romanos the Melodist*, Louvain 1985.

The Greek of Augustine was poor, especially in his youth. As a Manichaean he must have been familiar with a Latin translation of Tatian.<sup>7</sup>

From this and other indications we may safely conclude that the Manichaeans of Africa knew and used the *Diatessaron* in a Latin translation. This is also suggested by the Codex from Tebessa.

In the first five centuries of the Christian era, no Catholic author writing in Latin ever mentions the *Diatessaron* of Tatian. Could that be because this work was unknown in Catholic circles in the West? The first to do so was bishop Victor of Capua, who published his almost completely vulgatzed version of it together with the more primitive *capitula* (summaries) in 547. This proves that a Latin archetype of the vernacular translations in Tuscan, Venetian, Old Saxon and Flemish did exist in the Middle Ages. Of course, this has been denied. As late as 1993 it has been proclaimed without any argumentation that in the Netherlands all the numerous versions in the vernacular dialects were based completely on the Vulgate, the authoritative Bible of the Church.<sup>8</sup> Is it really true that Zahn, Baumstark, Peters, Plooy and Petersen, in fact a whole regiment except one, are out of step? It is an established fact that there was once a Latin *Diatessaron* current in Africa and that it was transmitted by Manichaeans.

Indeed, there is a serious possibility that the oldest translation of the Bible in Italy (the Tuscan and Venetian *Diatessaron*), in Germany (the *Heliand*)<sup>9</sup> and in the Netherlands (the *Liège Diatessaron* and related texts) are based upon this specific Manichaean text. This would explain why these Western Harmonies offer so many important and interesting deviant readings which are absent from the Oriental tradition.

A commentator like Ephrem Syrus, a doctor of the Catholic Church, and the faction to which he belonged, must have been worried about this extravagant text and certainly have felt the need to normalize it. The Manichaeans could not have cared less.

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<sup>7</sup> More on Augustine and the Manichaean *Diatessaron* in *Tatian and the Gospel of Thomas*, Leiden 1975, 58–68.

<sup>8</sup> C.C. de Bruin, *De Statenbijbel en zijn voorgangers*, Haarlem-Brussel 1993<sup>2</sup>, 15.

<sup>9</sup> G. Murphy, *The Heliand: the Saxon Gospel*, New York-Oxford 1992; idem, *The Saxon Savior*, New York-Oxford 1989.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE

William Petersen has shown how the discovery of the *Gospel of Thomas* has revitalized the study of Tatian's *Diatessaron*, a gospel harmony composed about 170 in the East in Aramaic (Syriac). He argues that the *Diatessaron* was the first gospel of the Aramaic Christianity centred round Edessa: the four canonical gospels were not known in these regions until much later. Petersen is in no doubt that Tatian knew and used a Judaic Christian gospel. He definitely proves once more that the old Saxon *Heliand* (ca. 840, Werden) and the Middle Dutch *Liège Diatessaron* are valuable witnesses for the very deviant text of the *Diatessaron*, which is sometimes nearer to the source than Matthew, Marc, Luke and John. He has some reservations about the alleged use of a Manichaean *Diatessaron* by Augustine: "At present, no comprehensive, systematic examination has been undertaken" (W.L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, Leiden 1994, 336). But the gospel quotations of Augustine in his writing against the Manichaean Adimantus (in *Contra Adimantum*) as often as not are Diatessaronic. Moreover his slip of the tongue in *Sermo* 100,2 proves that in his famous memoria the *Diatessaron* and so Manichaeism lingered on.

Johannes van Oort has proved that the Letter of the Manichaean Secundinus, preserved in the works of Augustine, also contains echoes of Tatian's *Diatessaron* and the *Gospel of Thomas*. Moreover, he indicates that Augustine in *Enarratio in Psalmos* XLIII,17 and elsewhere may reflect the same Diatessaronic reading. It would seem that the Latin Manichaeans had both a Latin translation of the *Diatessaron* and also of the *Gospel of Thomas*. See J. van Oort, "Secundini Manichaei Epistula", in: J. van Oort, O. Wermelinger, G. Wurst (eds.), *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West*, Leiden 2001, 161–173.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE DIATESSARON IN ICELAND AND NORWAY\*

The Stockholm Homily Book (Sthm. Perg. 15 4<sup>o</sup>) was written in Icelandic about 1200.<sup>1</sup> Its contents, mostly homilies, are copies of older, now lost manuscripts. This codex contains a number of readings which also occur in representatives of the Western version of Tatian's *Diatessaron*.

So we find there the following variant of Mt. 2:16 (84 v. 6), as translated into English: "then he did send men to Bethleem and *commanded* to kill all boys of two winters and younger". The Vulgate here reads: "occidit omnes pueros". But the *Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony, the *Heliand*, the *Liège Diatessaron* and Jacob of Maerlant, the *Pepysian Harmony* and both the Tuscan and the *Venetian Diatessaron* all read or presuppose: "*iussit occidi omnes pueros*".<sup>2</sup>

Besides this Old Icelandic homiliary, there is also an Old Norwegian one in existence of about the same date.<sup>3</sup> This too contains variants that can be paralleled from Western and Eastern Diatessarons: Lk. 1:9 (105<sup>28</sup>) "but when Zacharias entered the temple of *God* (Vulgate: *domini*)". The same reading is found in the *Heliand* and the Old High German *Diatessaron* version of Sankt Gallen, the Stuttgart and Haaren Mss and the Middle German translation of the Dutch Gospelharmony, the Tuscan *Diatessaron*, the Persian *Diatessaron* and the Syro-Palestinensian translation of the Gospels.<sup>4</sup>

These two Scandinavian homiliaries have several homilies in common. Diatessaron readings are found in these common homilies, sometimes even appearing in both versions. Therefore their archetype must already have contained these variants. This suggests that

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\* Co-author: Andrea van Arkel-De Leeuw van Weenen. Previously published in *Vigiliae Christianae* 32 (1978) 214–215.

<sup>1</sup> Andrea van Arkel-De Leeuw van Weenen, *The manuscript Sthm. Perg. 15 4<sup>o</sup>. A diplomatic edition and introduction*, Doctoral thesis University of Utrecht 1977.

<sup>2</sup> G. Quispel, *Tatian and the Gospel of Thomas*, Leiden 1975, 145.

<sup>3</sup> Gustav Indrebø, *Gamal Norsk Homiliebok Cod. A.M. 619 4<sup>o</sup>*, Oslo 1966 (reprint of the 1931 edition).

<sup>4</sup> Quispel, o.c., 126.

its author was familiar with a *Diatessaron* in the vernacular which perhaps was made by Christian missionaries to Scandinavia. Diatessaron readings from this same source seem to be found also in the Gospel quotations from other Old Norse texts.<sup>5</sup>

It has been shown recently that several versions of the *Diatessaron* in the medieval languages of Western Europe are based upon a Latin text different from and not based upon the almost completely vulgarised Gospel Harmony of the *Codex Fuldensis*.<sup>6</sup> The same seems to be true of the Latin manuscript that served as a source for the Old Norse translation of Tatian's text presupposed by the above mentioned witnesses. So Lk. 19, 42 is rendered by Leif 69<sup>2</sup> in the following way:<sup>7</sup> "you would *weep* too if you knew what is now hidden from your eyes". The *Codex Fuldensis* has nothing of the kind. But Ludolph of Saxony reads: "quia, si cognovisses, scilicet ea quae ego super te ventura cognosco, et tu, scilicet *fleres*". The same variant lies behind the *Heliand*, and the Dutch, Middle English and Italian Diatessaron.<sup>8</sup>

There can be no doubt that the *Diatessaron* from which the Old Norse and Icelandic readings were taken, ultimately goes back to the Syrian Tatian who, about 170 A.D., composed his Gospel text. This is shown by the fact that some of these variants are found also in the 4th century commentary of Ephrem Syrus on the *Diatessaron* and in other related texts of the Christian Orient. Luke 2:4 reads according to G N H 38<sup>143</sup>: "because *they* (both Joseph and Mary) *were* of the lineage of David (Vulgate: *esset*)". That is also the variant of Ephrem Syrus (Γ<sup>c(syr and arm)</sup>), the Syriac author of the 4th century Aphrahat and other Eastern witnesses of Tatian's writing.

<sup>5</sup> The old Norse Bible quotations are collected in: Ian J. Kirby, *Biblical Quotation in Old Icelandic-Norwegian Religious Literature*, vol. I, Reykjavík 1976.

<sup>6</sup> R. van den Broek, "Enkele opmerkingen over de Latijnse Archetypus van het Middelnederlandse Diatessaron", *De Nieuwe Taalgids* 70 (1977) 434-458.

<sup>7</sup> *Leifjar fornra kristinna frae ða islenzkra*: Codex Arna-Magnaeanus 677 4<sup>10</sup> auk annara enna elztu brota af islenzkum guðfræðisritum. Edited by Thorvaldur Bjarnarson, Copenhagen 1878.

<sup>8</sup> Quispel, o.c., 167.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE DIATESSARON OF ROMANOS\*

The Dutch Diatessarons are based upon a deviant Latin Gospel harmony translated from Tatian's work. This was proved decisively when the Persian *Diatessaron* came to light. Then B.M. Metzger and A. Baumstark could show how much this writing has in common with the Western harmonies.<sup>1</sup> Since that date (1951) a scholar leaves the solid ground of textual data and commits an obvious error when he tries to deny this established fact. Nor will it help to object that such Tatianic readings are in fact Old Latin (OL) variant readings that crept into the vernacular harmonies during the course of their transmission, because as often as not these Tatianisms are absent from the OL. For example, the original Dutch harmony must have contained the variant: But if you *want* to pray, go into your room (Matt. 6:6).<sup>2</sup> It is not to be found in the Codex Fuldensis or any OL MS, but it is contained in the Persian *Diatessaron*.

The Old High German *Diatessaron* betrays the influence of the same tradition. Perhaps this could be doubted as long as new evidence was not yet available. But recently it was established that the fourth-century mystic Macarius was familiar with a very extravagant Diatessaron text. As Macarius was a Syrian, probably originating from or in contact with Edessa, the capital of Aramaic Christianity, his *Diatessaron* is a counterpart of that of Ephraem Syrus who came from Nisibis. And it is in Macarius (*serm.* 61.2 [Typ. I])<sup>3</sup> that we find the variant ὑπὴρχον for εἰσὶν in Matt. 2:18 ("Rachel wept for her children, because they *were* no more"). This confirms the same variant in Ephraem Syrus' *Commentary on the Diatessaron* and in the

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\* Previously published in: *New Testament Textual Criticism*, Oxford 1981, 305–311.

<sup>1</sup> A. Baumstark in: G. Messina, *Diatessaron Persiano* (BibOr 14; Rome 1951), xcvi–cxi; B.M. Metzger, "Tatian's Diatessaron and a Persian Harmony of the Gospels", *JBL* 69 (1950) 261–80 = *Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism* (NTTS 4; Leiden 1963), 97–120.

<sup>2</sup> R. van den Broek, "Enkele opmerkingen over de Latijnse archetypus van het Middelnederlandse Diatessaron", *De Nieuwe Taalgids* 70 (1977) 434–458, esp. pp. 441–443.

<sup>3</sup> H. Berthold, GCS 2 (Berlin 1973) 202.



Venetian *Diatessaron*. Therefore, this Old High German variant cannot be considered as sheer coincidence and be dismissed out of hand.<sup>4</sup> We find the same reading in Ludolph of Saxony's *Life of Christ*. That is because Ludolph still knew and quoted the Latin version of Tatian that lies behind the Western vernacular harmonies. The objection that Ludolph's *Vita Christi* is a life of Jesus in verse that would have many variants sheerly for poetic variation is not valid for the simple reason that Ludolph wrote prose, not poetry.<sup>5</sup>

It is true that some of the Tatianisms in the Western Diatessarons can have many explanations other than dependence. But the problem is whether such alternative explanations can be plausible in view of the cumulative evidence which points in the opposite direction, especially if these variants also occur in texts written in the same language as the canonical Gospels, namely Greek. And this is the case with the writings of Romanos.

The saintly Melodos, "the humble Romanos", is the greatest and most famous poet of the Greek Orthodox Church. He was born of a Jewish family in Emesa, the present Homs, in Syria, and became a deacon of the Christian Church at Berytus (Beirut). It was during the reign of Anastasius I (491–518) that he went from there to Constantinople, where he joined the clergy of the Theotokos church. His "kontakia" (essays) are elaborately constructed poetical sermons, among others about gospel themes, and were greatly influenced by the poetry of St. Ephraem.<sup>6</sup> This Syrian poet who wrote in Greek was familiar with a version of the *Diatessaron* of Tatian. A few typical examples will suffice to prove this new but obvious observation.

(1) He quotes Mary as having said: "*I am* (εἶμι) the handmaid of him that sent thee" (9.11.8), whereas Luke 1:38 reads: "Lo, the handmaid of the Lord". This is in agreement with the Persian *Diatessaron* ("*I am* the handmaid of *God*") and the *Heliand* (285), whereas Ephraem's

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<sup>4</sup> G. Quispel, *Tatian and the Gospel of Thomas* (Leiden 1975), 114; "Macarius and the Diatessaron of Tatian", *A Tribute to Arthur Voöbus: Studies in Early Christian Literature and Its Environment, Primarily in the Syrian East* (ed. R.H. Fischer; Chicago 1977), 203–209, esp. 204.

<sup>5</sup> See the review of *Tatian and the Gospel of Thomas* by O.C. Edwards, Jr., *JBL* 96 (1977) 464–466, esp. 466.

<sup>6</sup> J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines de la poésie religieuse à Byzance* (Paris 1977); Bathja Bayer, "Romanos Melodos", *EncJud* 14.238; P. Maas, C.A. Trypanis, *Romanus Melodus, Cantica, Cantica genuina* (Oxford 1963); J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes* (SC 99, 110, 114, 128; Paris 1964–1967).

*Commentary on the Diatessaron* has somewhat adapted his text to the canonical version: “Lo, *I am* the maid of *God*”. It is possible of course that there are many other explanations to minimize the importance of the “I am” in the Dutch Diatessaron variant (“*I am* the handmaid of *God*”), but there is none to explain away the reading “of *God*” instead of “of the *Lord*”.

(2) In Romanos’ first hymn on the Resurrection 40. 3–5, Jesus says to Mary Magdalene: “‘*Maria*’. And she, having *recognised* him, said immediately: ‘Truly, my good shepherd calls me’”. John 20:16 only says that she turned to him and said “*Rabbuni*”, which is Hebrew for “My Master”. The variant “she recognised him” is one of the most conspicuous Tatianisms known to date.

In the *Rhymebible* of Jacob of Maerlant (26811/3), based on the oldest version of the Dutch *Diatessaron* we know, it is said that Mary “then *recognised* him *immediately* from that *word* and said ‘*Master*’ and *approached* and wanted to *touch* his *feet*”.<sup>7</sup> The *Liège Diatessaron* (ch. 237) has only: “Then Mary *recognised* him and said: ‘*Rabboni*’, that is to say, ‘*Master*’”. The Stuttgart MS adds: “She *ran* to him and wanted to *touch* him”. But the *Heliand* has more details and is nearer to Maerlant:

And *straightway* she *came closer*, the wife, with good will, and *recognised* her savior himself. In her love she could not refrain, but with her hands she longed to hold him, the woman to *touch* the World-Lord (5929–32; Scott, 203).

This must go back to a common ancestor, a Latin *Diatessaron*, which contained the variants both have in common against the Vulgate.

Traces of the Latin text are preserved in the *Vita beatae virginis Mariae rhythmica* 6173/4:

Mox quod esset dominus ex hac *voce* pia  
novit atque propius *statim* *accedebat*,  
se prosternens *suos pedes tangere volebat*.

As soon as she knew from his voice  
that he was the Lord and came nearer,  
she fell down and wanted to touch his feet.

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<sup>7</sup> R. van den Broek, “Jacob van Maerlant en het Nederlandse Diatessaron”, *NTT* 28 (1974) 141–164.

Moreover the *Meditationes Vitae Christi* (89) of Ps.-Bonaventura read:

Et cognoscens eum ad vocem.

And she recognized him after that voice.

This is reflected by the *Pepysian Harmony* (Ch. 103):

And then she *knew* him by his *voice*.

The Latin *Diatessarons* of Kassel and München (23346) both read: “et occurrit ut tangeret eum”.

As I see it there cannot be the slightest doubt that some of these variants go back to Tatian himself, if only we admit that the Old Syriac versions have been influenced by the *Diatessaron*. The Sinaitic Syriac has:

And she *perceived* him and saith to him: “Rabbuli”. And she *ran* forward unto him that she might draw near to him.

The second variant is found very often, both in gospel MSS and Gospel harmonies.<sup>8</sup> This could be due to influence of the *Diatessaron*. Until now, it might have seemed hazardous to relate the Syrian and the Western fields. But Romanos reveals that the reading “she recognised him” was contained in the *Diatessaron* he was familiar with; and it is a clarification that could well be due to the hand of Tatian himself.

(3) In the hymn on the wedding at Cana in Galilee Romanos says: “Mary *went* immediately and said to her son, ‘They have no wine left’” (18.5.8). John 2:3 has only: “Jesus’ mother said to him, ‘They have no wine left’”. Until now this variant was only attested by Ludolph of Saxony (1.25.2) and the *Heliand* (2019). It formerly had seemed extremely adventurous to consider this as a Tatianism. Now it is attested in the text of a sixth-century Syrian who knew the *Diatessaron*.

These few examples taken from many are sufficient proof that Romanos was familiar with the *Diatessaron*. What does this mean in the context of *Diatessaron* studies? Since the last war it has been established that the ninth-century *Heliand* and the Alemannic poem *Selden Hort* (*Thesaurus Gratiarum*) of the fourteenth century were based on a Latin *Diatessaron* which was not the *Codex Fuldensis*. The former

<sup>8</sup>  $\aleph^3$   $\Theta$   $\Psi$   $\mu c$ ; syr<sup>s,pal</sup>; vg<sup>C,I,d,gat</sup>; T<sup>lat</sup> (M 23346, Cassel); T<sup>ml</sup>(S C H Th); P-H.

turned out to have been preserved in part by the *Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony and the *Vita beatæ virginis Mariæ rhythmica*<sup>9</sup> And the recently discovered Icelandic *Diatessaron* shows great affinity with this specific Latin text.<sup>10</sup>

Not only Augustine, but also his Manichaean opponents were shown to be familiar with this highly deviant and heterodox version. This led to the conclusion that this significant text had come into the Latin world through the intermediary of the Manichaeans.<sup>11</sup>

Now not only the Syrian Macarius, but also the Syrian Romanos turns out to have known the *Diatessaron*, though both wrote in Greek. This raises the question, whether the Greek version of Tatian's harmony, which unquestionably did exist, as the Yale fragment from Dura Europos proves, did not have more influence also on Greek gospel MSS than is generally supposed. This could have served as an intermediary of the Syriac text and the Latin *Diatessaron* current among the Manichaeans of North Africa and known to Augustine. If this is correct, a perplexing problem could possibly have found its solution. No other example of a direct Latin translation from the Syriac is known in the whole history of Latin literature. Macarius and Romanos might reveal that the Greek translation of the *Diatessaron* was still available and influential in the fourth and sixth centuries.

But still more important is the problem whether or not Tatian has also integrated Jewish Christian gospel tradition into his "four-some". Ever since the beginning of critical scholarship with Hugo Grotius, this was generally accepted, although today quite a few text critics would tend to deny it, especially since the discovery of the *Gospel of Thomas*. This apocryphal writing has a host of deviant readings in common with the *Diatessaron*, and the hypothesis has been launched that the author of "Thomas" and Tatian used a common Jewish Christian, extracanonical source. On this problem, too, the text of Romanos has a contribution to make.

In his first hymn on Epiphany (16.14.7–10), Romanos says that John the Baptist was "seeing in the streams him that appeared in the middle of the three young men, dew in fire and *fire in the Jordan radiant*, bubbling, inaccessible *light*". This, then, is an allusion to the

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<sup>9</sup> R. van den Broek, "A Latin Diatessaron in the 'Vita Beate Marie et Salvatoris Rhythmica'", *NTS* 21 (1974–1975) 109–32.

<sup>10</sup> G. Quispel, *VC* 32 (1978) 214–15.

<sup>11</sup> *Tatian and the Gospel of Thomas*, 58–68.

three boys in the burning furnace (Daniel 3) and to the well-known Jewish Christian tradition, contained in the *Gospel according to the Ebionites* (frg. 4: “and straightway there shone about the place a great light”).

The same Jewish Christian tradition lies behind *T. Levi* 18:6–7: “And the *Glory* of the Most High shall be uttered upon him, and the Spirit of understanding and sanctification shall *rest* upon him in the water”.

The words of Ephraem Syrus and other Syrian writers make it clear that Tatian integrated this Jewish Christian tradition into his harmony. As a matter of fact the *Commentary* on the Diatessaron says that the Spirit descended and *rested* upon One only (4.3) and that the splendour of the *light* appeared upon the water (4.5).

These variants were preserved by the Latin version of Tatian’s writing:<sup>12</sup>

Petrus Comestor 34:

Inaestimabilis *splendor* factus est circa eum.

Ludolph of Saxony 1.21.11;

Inaestimabilis *splendor* factus est circa Christum... (Spiritus) *requievit* super eum.

*Vita Rhythmica* 3686:

*Lux* magnaue refulsit in Jesum.

On this Latin text is based the *Pepysian Harmony* (Ch. 7):

So com the *brightnesse* of hevене and the Holy Gost and alighth with-inne hym.

If traces of the same tradition are found in Justin Martyr (*dial.* 88.3), Ps.-Cyprian (*rebapt.* 17), and the OL codices *a* and *g*<sup>1</sup> in Matt. 3:15, this only shows that at a very early date Jewish Christian traditions about the baptism of Jesus have influenced the gospel text of the congregation at Rome which, as the *Pastor of Hermas* shows, was not allergic to the adoptianism which was current among the Jewish Christians.

<sup>12</sup> Van den Broek, “A Latin Diatessaron”, 123.

The opposite view, according to which the Western *Diatessaron* took these variants from the OL MSS, is no longer feasible, for then we would have to suppose that the Greek-writing Syrian, Romanos, in Constantinople also has been influenced by the OL MSS of Western Christendom. This is absurd.

There are still more readings that Romanos has in common with the Jewish Christian gospel tradition. Moreover, there are some variants which this poet has in common with the *Gospel of Thomas*, probably through the intermediary of the *Diatessaron*. They deserve a special inquiry. These few remarks were made in order to show that the problems of the *Diatessaron* and of the possibly independent tradition it may contain deserve to be put in a much wider context than has been done by recent critics. There probably are still other authors besides Romanos who can adduce new light to this hotly debated issue. But from now on Romanos can no longer be ignored in studies on the free tradition. He is a Hellenic witness to Tatian's *Harmony* and its Jewish Christian source.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

In his Utrecht dissertation *The Diatessaron and Ephraem Syrus as Sources of Romanos the Melodist* (Louvain 1985) and in his book *Tatian's Diatessaron* (Leiden 1994) William L. Petersen has definitively shown that Romanos uses Tatian and that Tatian uses Jewish Christian Gospel tradition.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE DIATESSARON OF TATIAN\*

#### AFTER THE BIBLE

The Gospel harmony called *Diatessaron* or *Diapente*, which the Christian apologist Tatian wrote about 170 C.E. in Syriac somewhere in the Near East, welding together the four now canonical gospels with a Judaic Christian Gospel tradition, was the most widely read book after the Bible during the early Christian period and the Middle Ages. It was translated into Persian, Arabic, Armenian, Greek, Latin (the *Codex Fuldensis*, the *Gospel of Bonifatius*), English, Old Saxon, Flemish, German, Icelandic. It was the only version of the Gospel acknowledged by the Manichaeans, who formed a Gnostic Christian Church which spread until China and persisted for more than a thousand years.

It is amazing that all these versions have preserved traces of a deviating text, written about 170 C.E. somewhere in the region of Aramaic Christianity. And yet this cannot be doubted anymore. Whereas Mark (10:21) says that Jesus *loved* the rich young man, the *Liège Diatessaron* (the 12th-century Life of Jesus in the dialect of Limburg), says that Jesus *looked* upon him *lovingly*. That is exactly what Tatian wrote: “Jesus looked upon him lovingly and said”. This was probably a stylistic emendation due to the pen of Tatian himself. But all versions of the *Diatessaron* have preserved variants of the Gospel text not found in modern editions of the New Testament in Greek, which was mostly based on the so-called Egyptian text, which was constituted in Alexandria in the third century and afterwards. It is possible that Tatian, who lived in Rome for some time as a pupil of the Catholic apologist Justin Martyr, has taken the rather deviant text in Rome with him, when he left the city and returned to the East.

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\* First publication.



### JUDAIC CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

But this is not the only reason why these versions are so deviant. Ever since the rise of critical Bible scholarship it has been supposed that the *Diatessaron* transmitted extra-canonical tradition. Already in the seventeenth century, the diplomat and scholar Hugo Grotius, a friend of Queen Christina of Sweden, supposed that the *Diatessaron* preserved traces of the lost Gospel tradition of the Judaic Christians, the descendants of the primitive congregation of Jerusalem. He supposed this because the *Diatessaron* transmitted, like a preserved fragment of a Judaic Christian Gospel, that a light shone on the water, when Jesus was baptised in the river Jordan (meaning that Jesus at that moment was anointed by the Holy Ghost as Messiah). More such traces of a lost tradition were discovered later.

Owing to the decline of critical scholarship and the rise of dogmatic theology (Karl Barth) Diatessaronic studies came to a stop for a while. Today they flourish thanks to the discovery of the *Gospel of Thomas*. This contained in part a Gospel tradition, which can be paralleled by the fragments of the Jewish Christian Gospels, the Pseudo-Clementine writings and the *Diatessaron* of Tatian. This tradition, it turned out, originated in the primitive congregation of Jerusalem and must be older (about 50 C.E.) than the Gospels of Mark (ca. 60), Matthew and Luke (ca. 70) and John (ca. 90). Moreover, it does not show the fingerprints of Pauline theology, which pervades the Canonical New Testament (with the exception of the Apocalypse of John and the Epistle of James).

### NEW SOURCES

Again and again new sources are being discovered. A small parchment codex was found in the former Great Seminary at Haaren in the province of North Brabant in the Netherlands: it contained a Dutch Gospel harmony which at first seemed almost completely adapted to the text of the Vulgate and therefore identical with another Dutch Gospel harmony which was contained in a manuscript at Stuttgart. Close scrutiny, however, revealed that it showed deviant variants to be found in other Diatessarons.

An as yet unpublished and never studied Latin and Dutch Diatessaron in the Utrecht University Library (Ms 1009) was loaned during

the war in 1941 to the Universitäts-Bibliothek Bonn for use by Prof. Anton Baumstark, professor at Utrecht and Bonn and a great expert in this field. Most unfortunately, it got lost in Bonn during or after the war. Perhaps it was looted there by Allied Forces. It was never retrieved, but the invaluable notes of Baumstark were filed in the Benedictine monastery at Beuron, where the famous *Carmina Burana* had once been studied and which is until this day the centre where the Old Latin Bible (the *Vetus Latina*) is in the process of being edited.

Two young scholars, August den Hollander and Ulrich Schmid, visited Beuron and were generously presented with Baumstark's notes, which they intend to publish shortly.<sup>1</sup> It will then be possible to establish to what extent this *Utrecht Diatessaron* relates to its original source, the Syriac Aramaic version written by Tatian around 170 C.E. and even, why not, contains parallels with the *Gospel of Thomas*, as every other known version of the *Diatessaron* did. The real aim and purpose of this study is to bring us nearer to the words which Jesus once spoke.

#### GLOSSA ORDINARIA

This is a commentary on the Bible, attributed to a certain Walafrid Strabo, a scholar of the Carolingian age. Although the real author is unknown and no scholarly edition exists, it is certain that the *Glossa ordinaria* is quoted in the *Liège Diatessaron*. Den Hollander and Schmid argue that the editor of the *Liège Diatessaron*, Daniel Plooiij, made many mistakes and as often as not attributed to a Syriac text or an Old Latin version variants that are also found in the *Glossa ordinaria*. We all make mistakes, but there do exist variants in the *Liège Diatessaron* which are only attested in the Syriac Gospel tradition: "Jesus looked upon him lovingly". Moreover, Walafrid Strabo or whoever wrote the *Glossa ordinaria* may also have known and used a deviant *Diatessaron*. The Old Saxon Heliand (ca. 840) proves that such a wild Gospel harmony was known in the West much earlier than was formerly supposed. There are even positive indications that the *Glossa ordinaria*

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<sup>1</sup> Meantime their book appeared: Christoph Burger, August den Hollander und Ulrich Schmid, *Evangelienharmonien des Mittelalters*, Assen 2004.

was familiar with the *Diatessaron* of Tatian. With a glossa (explanatory note) to Luke 1:24: (Joseph, of the house of David) it observes that this remark refers also to Joseph's wife Mary. They were both of the house of David and so of royal offspring. The *Liège Diatessaron* says the same. This, however, does not prove that Liège depends on the *Glossa ordinaria*, because the English Diatessaron, the *Pepysian Harmony*, also has "his wife also". The Heliand 365–367 also wants us to realize that both Joseph and Mary by birth belonged to the royal house founded by King David. This must go back to Tatian himself, because Ephrem Syrus in his *Commentary on the Diatessaron of Tatian* remarks that both were of the house of David. Because there are so many passages in the Western Diatessarons which correspond with the Syriac tradition only, it is rather probable that the author of the *Glossa ordinaria* also was familiar with a deviant Latin Diatessaron.

#### REACTIONS OF OUTSIDERS

Again and again the study of the Diatessaron is interrupted by outsiders, who claim that eminent scholars like Daniel Plooij and Anton Baumstark were wrong. Not seldom are these endeavours prompted by apologetic reasons: some people abhor the idea that the *Diatessaron* and the *Gospel of Thomas* are nearer to the source, Jesus, than the ecclesiastical Gospels. And again and again other young scholars then protest and prove definitively that the main results of scholarship are certain: "Jesus looked upon him *lovingly*" is attested nowhere else than in the *Liège Diatessaron*, the Old English *Pepysian Harmony* and the Syriac, Aramaic Gospel tradition. Until now nobody has dared to doubt that Tatian also inserted Judaic Christian Gospel tradition.

We may suppose that all Western Diatessarons go back to one deviant, Latin Codex, which Liudger (742–807) perhaps brought with him from Italy (the *Codex Ludgerianus*). And it cannot be doubted any more that the *Gospel of Thomas* in certain cases reflects a Judaic Christian Gospel tradition.

#### ROMANOS

Moreover, the *Diatessaron* is at the basis of several literary masterpieces. The greatest poet of Byzantine culture, the saintly Melodos ("singer") who called himself "the humble Romanos", was born in

Syria and worked in Beirut and Constantinople in the 5th–6th centuries, where he wrote his *Kontakia* (essays), in reality elaborately constructed poetical sermons in classical Greek.

In the first hymn on the resurrection he declares that Mary Magdalene recognised the risen Lord, a particular not mentioned in the Gospel of John (20:16) but also found in other Diatessarons and certainly a stylistic improvement of Tatian himself. That is only one of the many “Tatianisms” that scholars have identified in these poems. They prove that a Greek version of the originally Aramaic *Diatessaron* did exist in the Byzantine world, where, however, its influence was less great than in Aramaic and Latin Christendom.

#### MAKARIOS

The anonymous author who is called Makarios (Edessa ca. 370) was probably the most influential of all Christian mystics, because he put his stamp not only on Byzantine and Russian authors, but also became the patron saint of protestant Pietism and even seems to have influenced the Sufism of Islam.

The study of his *Homilies* has long been bedevilled by the identification of him with another Makarios, Makarios the Egyptian, which put him in the perspective of the Desert Fathers. However, Makarios was a Greek writing Syrian, whose relations with the charismatic movement of the Messalians, which arose in Edessa in the fourth century, are controversial. He holds that God, or rather his luminous Glory, can be beholden by human eyes. This is the fundamental aim and purpose of the monks on Mount Athos to this day: to behold the uncreated archetypal Light. At the same time he impressively describes how the Spirit like a torch illuminates the innermost darkness of the soul and uncovers its abysmal evil even after it has received grace. His experiential religion is more spiritual and pneumatic than biblical and christocentric.

He did not impress Dutch Calvinism, because he admitted free will, which was taboo for the so-called Second Reformation Movement. But Christoffel Plantijn published a translation of the Homilies of Makarios in Antwerp on behalf of the members of the ecumenical Family of Love, to which Plantijn himself seems to have belonged. The same publishing house commissioned the translation into Flemish of the *Corpus Hermeticum* for the same Family of Love, which, however,

Plantijn did not dare to publish after the Fall of Antwerp in 1585, when the Spanish returned and the relative freedom of the press came to an end. The *Corpus Hermeticum* and Makarios are primarily documents that reflect religious experience and attract the same sort of readers.

Makarios quotes the *Diatessaron* in Greek, but also the *Gospel of Thomas* and quite a few extra-canonical Sayings by Jesus which perhaps are taken from the Judaic Christian *Gospel of the Nazoraeans*. Christianity in Edessa was colourful.

#### VITA CHRISTI

The poem *Van den Levene ons Heeren* (The Life of Our Lord) is an impressive and beautiful description of the life of Jesus in verse. It exists in one single complete manuscript, preserved in the Utrecht University Library (HS 1329). Although composed by an anonymous author, its dialect fixed its provenance; the border region between East Flanders and Brabant. The work covers 4,957 lines and is dated in the first half of the thirteenth century. The text was edited by W.H. Beuken (1968), an expert on mysticism, author of a book entitled *Holy Inebriety*. The author of this Life of Christ used a *Diatessaron* that came very near to the *Liège Harmony*.

It is to be hoped that future authors of an history of literature in the Netherlands will pay more attention to the history of the *Diatessaron* in the Low Countries, because it will revolutionize our views. It is rather meagre to start the national literary history with a few lines of the poet Henric van Veldeke (Maastricht, 12th century) about the birds who all have their nests. A beginning has already been made. Knuvelde (1971) mentions the West German Hildebrandslied (8th century) and observes that ever more scholars consider this epos as well as the *Heliand* as virtual products of the soil of the Netherlands. And in a recent history of Dutch literature in French, Frits van Oostrom suggests that this writing should be considered as the first work of the literature of the Dutch nation. We are certain that future historians will pay ample attention to this matter. It is not just that the language of the *Liège Diatessaron* is so beautiful. It *is*, nourished as this language was by the Flemish mysticism and the desire of women to read the Gospel in their vernacular language.

Rightly the greatest expert on Dutch Bible translations, C.C. de Bruin, held that the Liège translation is more adequate and better even than the literalistic Statenbijbel, which shaped the Dutch language. But the real issue is that not this Gospel harmony, but a literary masterpiece, the *Heliand* (ca. 840), may rightly be considered the first known book of the literature of the Netherlands.

#### THE HELIAND

It was a very deviant and primitive version of the *Diatessaron*, which inspired the exquisitely beautiful poem which is called the *Heliand* (the Saviour) and describes the Life of Jesus. It was written in alliterating verses in the Old Saxon dialect with many Frisian elements. In fact, Frisian and Saxon at the time were virtually identical. It was written before 840 C.E. in the monastery of Werden near Essen on the river Ruhr. It has been suggested that this poem was composed by the Frisian bard Bernlef at the instigation of the Frisian nobleman Liudger, Utrecht's most important student and later bishop of Münster. In any case the *Heliand* belongs to the action radius of the Utrecht school.

In this writing the Gospel is transformed into an epopee: the Messiah becomes a Duke, who dies for his retinue. At the same time Roman Catholicism, until 500 essentially an urban religion, became adapted to a feudal society: no more cities, but strongholds everywhere. And yet the *Heliand* is essentially Christian, not a pagan poem under cover. It is true that its author wrestles with the Germanic concept of "wurd", fate. But he clings to the then modern theological concept that Jesus wills the will of God, *non aliqua necessitate coactus, sed propria voluntate passus est pro nobis dum voluit* (not forced by fate, but of his own free will he suffered for us when he willed so). Such hesitations make the *Heliand* compelling reading. For who never asks himself whether the disasters that afflict him are really the will of God or rather fatal coincidences?

In the course of the years J. van Amersfoort and G. Quispel have collected the many parallels in the text of the *Heliand* with other Diatessarons, the *Gospel of Thomas* and the Judaic Christian Gospel tradition in general. The filing cards with these notes can now be consulted in the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica in Amsterdam.

## A MUSLIM GOSPEL

Most remarkable is an Islamic Gospel, which is called the *Gospel of Barnabas*. It is based upon a Diatessaron, which it assimilated mainly by omitting passages which were offensive to the Muslim ear, especially texts from the Gospel of John. It is attested by two textual witnesses, an Italian manuscript dating from the end of the sixteenth century and a Spanish manuscript from the eighteenth century. The text itself dates from the fourteenth century. It has variants in common with the Venetian and the Tuscan Diatessarons. It sounds unbelievable but yet it is true that this Muslim Gospel through this intermediary has a variant in common with the *Gospel of Thomas*.

In the parable of the tares among the weed, Matthew 13:24 following, the *Gospel of Barnabas* reads:

Wilt thou that we go and *pull up* the tares.

That agrees with *Gospel of Thomas* 57:

To *pull up* the seed.

This agreement suggests that Tatian did indeed write: to *pull up* the seed, which he found in his Judaic Christian source.

Matthew, however, says:

Wilt thou then that we go and *gather them up*.

That seems unimportant to an outsider. But an expert gathers up all the similar specimina from all the Diatessarons and knows that sometimes a better version than that contained in the canonical Gospels may crop up.

The *Gospel of Barnabas* was certainly written by a Muslim. Perhaps he was a convert from Catholicism to Islam, or else a *morisco*, an allegedly converted Moor in Spain, who stealthily stuck to his original religion. But how is it to be explained that a Muslim chose the *Diatessaron* to defend Islam, if this is a Catholic writing? Tatian was not a Catholic, but an Encratite, a sexual teetotaller. He rejected marriage whereas the Catholics condoned it. Therefore he was declared a heretic already by Irenaeus of Lyon (180 C.E.) and ever since. It was probably for that reason that Catholic authors in the West never quoted the *Diatessaron*. It was only in 546 that a bishop Victor of Capua got a copy of this writing in his hands, recognized it as Tatian's *Diatessaron* and almost completely adapted it to the

Vulgate. This is the *Codex Fuldensis*, the Gospel harmony of Bonifatius, still preserved in the place where he lived, Fulda.

The only Latin Catholic who sometimes quotes the *Diatessaron* is Saint Augustine, who quotes it in his sermons, especially when he is extemporizing and speaking by heart. Could it be that his iron memory had preserved these deviant texts, because he had been a Manichaean for such a long time and in that period had heard these variants during the Manichaean services which he attended? It is certain that the Manichaeans of Africa had a Latin and deviant *Diatessaron* at their disposal: the Latin codex from Tébessa with Manichaean lore proves it.

Could it be that the Western Diatessarons in the vernacular all go back to this Manichaean Gospel harmony? This would explain, why the Western Diatessarons contain many more extravagant readings than Eastern witnesses like Ephrem Syrus. These ecclesiastics had a holy respect for the canonical translations of the Bible, whereas the Manichaeans could not care less. Be that as it may, in any case an expert like Jan Joosten thinks that this hypothesis would explain how it came to be that a Muslim used a *Diatessaron* to illustrate his views on Jesus.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### GENIUS AND SPIRIT\*

The publication of the Coptic *Gospel of Philip* by Pahor Labib in 1956 has been of paramount importance for several reasons. Among other things it was only then that the relationship of Valentinus' concept of man with the Jewish Christian theology of the Holy Spirit could be established. Let me make this point clear.

According to Eduard Schwartz, Valentinian Gnosis was a chaotic ruin, which could not be reconstructed so as to be a whole structure.<sup>1</sup> This then would mean that the most brilliant Gnostic who ever lived had to remain for ever a complete enigma. This situation was certainly not very satisfactory for scholarship. It is not amazing, therefore, that different scholars have tried to unravel this tangled tale and have come to much the same conclusions:<sup>2</sup>

1. The primitive doctrine of Valentinus was much simpler than that of his pupils Ptolemy and Heracleon. So Valentinus knew of only one Sophia and had no high appreciation of any thing that was "psychic". It is not clear, however, to what extent the views of these leaders of the Western School of Valentinianism may be due to a certain evolution in the thought of the founder, Valentinus, himself.
2. Valentinus was familiar with a gnostic myth similar to that contained in the *Apocryphon of John* and christianized it.
3. Gnostic doctrine in general should be considered as a mythical expression of Self-experience. The centre and starting point of every system is man, his predicament in this world and his awareness of salvation. In the case of Valentinus, it was the *syzygia*, the

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\* Previously published in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts. In honour of Pahor Labib*, ed. M. Krause, Leiden 1975, 155–169.

<sup>1</sup> E. Schwartz, in *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, 1908, 127: "ein wüster Trümmerhaufen, der sich zu einem verständlichen Bau nicht mehr zusammenfügen will".

<sup>2</sup> G. Quispel, "The Original Doctrine of Valentinus", *Vigiliae Christianae* 1 (1947) 43–73 (now also in my *Gnostic Studies*, I, 27–36); E.M. Sagnard, *La Gnose valentinienne et le témoignage de S. Irénée*, Paris 1947.

*mysterium conjunctionis* between man and his angel or transcendental Self, which was the kernel of the myth. It took some time before the genealogy of this angel could be established with some certainty. It turned out that this was the guardian angel, conceived as image and counterpart (*iqonin*) both in Judaism and primitive Christianity and ultimately derived from the Greek, Pythagorean concept of a *daimôn*.<sup>3</sup>

The discovery of Valentinian writings at Nag Hammadi (the *Gospel of Truth*, *De Resurrectione*, *Tractatus Tripartitus*, the *Gospel of Philip*, etc.) has greatly enhanced our knowledge of Valentinus and his school. But these writings contain nothing which would lead us to reconsider the above mentioned views.

Eduard Schwartz also held that the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and *Recognitions* had nothing to do with Jewish Christianity, but formed a novel without any historical value.<sup>4</sup> This view was so unfounded and provocative that it must of necessity lead to a violent reaction. There is no doubt nowadays that the Pseudo-Clementine writings have a very special relationship with the Jewish Christian Elkesaites. It is exceedingly probable that Jewish Christianity was responsible for the foundation of such congregations as Edessa, Alexandria, Carthage and Rome.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, it is clear that the *Gospel of Thomas*, found at Nag Hammadi and containing 114 Sayings attributed to Jesus, contains at least some logia transmitted in or even originating in a Jewish Christian milieu.

I want to adduce a new argument to corroborate this thesis. All Jewish Christians were Law abiding, though accepting Jesus as their Messiah, and therefore kept the sabbath. So it has always been plausible that logion 27 of the *Gospel of Thomas*, in which the sabbath is prescribed, originated among Jewish Christians:<sup>6</sup>

If you fast not from the world, you will not find the Kingdom; if you keep not the Sabbath as Sabbath, you will not see the Father.

<sup>3</sup> G. Quispel, *Makarius, das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle*, Leiden 1967, 39–64; idem, “Das ewige Ebenbild des Menschen. Zur Begegnung mit dem Selbst in der Gnosis”, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 36 (1967) 9–30 (= *Gnostic Studies*, I, 140–157).

<sup>4</sup> E. Schwartz, “Unzeitgemässe Beobachtungen zu den Clementinen”, *ZNW* 31 (1932) 151–199.

<sup>5</sup> J. Daniélou, “Christianity as a Jewish Sect”, in *The Crucible of Christianity*, London 1969, 261–282.

<sup>6</sup> A. Guillaumont, “Nēsteucin ton kosmon”, *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'Archéologie orientale*, 61 (1962) 15–23, offers an Aramaic translation of the logion.

Now according to the *Indiculus de haeresibus* of Ps.-Jerome, the Masbotheans said that Jesus himself taught them to keep the Sabbath in any case:

Masbothaei dicunt ipsum esse Christum qui docuit illos in omni re sabbatizare.<sup>7</sup>

This is clearly an allusion to the Saying in the *Gospel of Thomas*.

Now *mašb'uta'* in Aramaic, *mašbuta* in Mandaic means "baptism". Therefore, Masbotheans are "baptists".<sup>8</sup> Due to the new *Mani Codex* of the University of Cologne, we know that the Jewish Christians in Southern Babylonia, among whom Mani lived from his fourth to his twenty-fifth year, were called "baptists", not because they received the sacrament of baptism once in their life, but because they were addicted to ablutions, like the Mandaeans and the Muslims.<sup>9</sup> The Masbotheans of Ps.-Jerome seem to have been Jewish Christian baptists, among whom circulated the Saying about the sabbath preserved in the *Gospel of Thomas*.

In general, the Jewish Christians expressed their faith in Jewish categories. One of the most astonishing and even shocking features of their theology is the Angel pneumatology.<sup>10</sup>

The expression "Angel of the Holy Spirit" is found in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, probably from Alexandria. There, the Holy Ghost is an angel, and yet adored:

And I saw the Lord and the second angel, and they were standing; but the second one whom I saw was on the left of my Lord. And I asked, "Who is this?", and he said to me, "Worship him, for this is the angel of the Holy Spirit, who speaks through thee and the rest of the righteous". (9, 35–36)

This, however, is not an isolated case. We find the same concept in the Bible, namely in Acts 8:26–29. There it is said that an angel of the Lord ordered Philip to go to the road which leads from Jerusalem to Gaza; whereupon the *Spirit* tells him to go to the carriage of the Ethiopian eunuch. That seems to be nothing but a variation of the same theme. In the source of Luke, the Spirit was conceived as an

<sup>7</sup> F. Oehler, *Corpus haeresiologicum*, I, Berlin 1856, 283.

<sup>8</sup> J. Thomas, *Le mouvement baptiste en Palestine et Syrie*, Gembloux 1935, 42.

<sup>9</sup> A. Henrichs – L. Koenen, "Ein griechischer Mani-Codex", *ZPE* 5 (1970) 133.

<sup>10</sup> W.-D. Hauschild, *Gottes Geist und der Mensch*, Munich 1972, 81.

angel, a messenger from God. It is sometimes said that the story of Philip and the eunuch is a legend which circulated in Hellenistic circles and rivalled the story about the conversion of Cornelius in chapter 10. But the very archaic concept of the Spirit as an angel seems to imply that the story is not of “Hellenistic”, but of “Hebrew” origin.

A somewhat different view has been inspired by a passage of Isaiah, 11:2. There it was told how the Spirit would rest upon the Messiah. It was possible to interpret this Spirit as being sevenfold.<sup>11</sup> This eventually led to the concept that there were seven spirits before the throne of God. We find this in the *Apocalypse of John*, the writing that together with the Letters of James and Jude, comes nearest of all the books of the New Testament to the mentality of Jewish Christianity. But if we keep in mind that the seven spirits are different aspects of the one Spirit, then we discover that there is a trinitarian scheme underlying Apoc. 1:4–5:

John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.

We find the same concept in Clement of Alexandria, where we would not expect it. He clearly took his views from an Alexandrian tradition of Jewish Christian origin, with which he only partly identifies himself.<sup>12</sup> The general idea of this source is that God is above every thing; subordinated to Him is the Son, who is the face of God. Under the Son are to be located the seven *protoktistoi*, the angels who were created first. After that, the archangels and the angels near to man. It is completely clear that these seven *protoktistoi* represented the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that we are entitled to speak about an angel pneumatology in Clement of Alexandria. For our purposes it is important to keep in mind how easy it was for the

<sup>11</sup> K. Schlütz, *Is. 11, 2: Die sieben Gaben des Heiligen Geistes in den ersten vier christlichen Jahrhunderten*, Münster 1932.

<sup>12</sup> Chr. Oeyen, “Eine frühchristliche Engelpneumatologie bei Klemens von Alexandrien”, *Internationale Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 55 (1965) 102–120, and 56 (1966) 27–47. The relevant texts have been collected and discussed by Oeyen, for instance *Paed.* 111, 12, 87, 4; *Strom.* V, 35, 1; *Adumbrationes* 1 Peter 1:10–11; 3:12.

imaginative mind of the Jewish Christians to split the Spirit into angels; and also that this tradition was known in Alexandria.

After these preliminary remarks, we can start with the discussion of our subject.

The concept of a genius or *daimôn* was well known to the Jews in Palestine of Hellenistic times, who called the guardian angel *iqonin* (icon, image) and considered him to be the exact image and counterpart of the man to whom he belonged. The Christians of Palestine took over this concept as is shown by Acts 12:15. There the guardian angel of Peter, and not Peter himself, is said to be standing before the door. This, as so many other Jewish Christian elements, was accepted by Aramaic Christianity which centered in Edessa. In the *Testamentum Domini* (Rahmani, p. 97) it is said: "For of every soul the Image (*salma*) or type is standing before the face of God even before the foundation of the world".

The Syriac word used here is related to the Hebrew *selem*, used in Gen. 1:27 to indicate the image of God in man. It certainly is an impressive interpretation of this passage: that it is not the outward appearance of man, or his reason, or his free will, but his eternal unconscious transcendental Self which is the real image of God. This notion of the Icon was already known in Edessa at a very early date, if we accept that the *Gospel of Thomas* was written there about 140 A.D. Its Logion 84 runs as follows:

Jesus said: When you see your likeness, you rejoice. But when you see your images which came into existence before you, which neither die nor are manifested, how much will you bear!

Man is pleased when he looks at his outward appearance as reflected in a mirror. But when he sees his image, *eikôn*, or guardian angel which is now in heaven beholding the face of God ever since the world was created, will he be able to support this encounter with his real Self?

Preceding this logion is another, extremely difficult logion (83) on the images, which we cannot discuss here. Perhaps we should conceive these two as doublets: two different versions of the same word of Jesus. Such doublets are numerous in the *Gospel of Thomas* and prove beyond any doubt that its author used two *written* sources, an encratitic and a Palestinian source. If this is true, it may be that the simplest version of the doublet has been taken from the Jewish Christian source of the *Gospel of Thomas*. And thus the view would be

confirmed that the Syrians had derived this concept from Jewish Christianity of Palestine.

Aphrahat has given a very curious interpretation of this guardian angel. With an allusion to Matthew 18:10, he speaks about the guardian angels of the little ones, who eternally behold the face of God and goes on to say that this is the Holy Spirit who permanently goes and stands before God, contemplates his face, and accuses everybody who does harm to the man in which he dwells. We quote the Latin translation of Parisot:

Hic igitur Spiritus continenter vadit et stat ante Deum, faciem eius intuetur, atque eum qui templo a se inhabitato noxam infert, ante Deum accusat. (*Dem.* VI, 15; Parisot 1, 298)

But for Aphrahat this one Spirit is identical with the seven spirits of Isaiah 11:2 and the seven eyes of Zechariah 3:9:

De eo lapide haec insuper definivit ac manifestavit: Ecce super illum lapidem oculos septem aperiunt. Quidnam sunt igitur hi septem oculi qui aperti sunt super lapidem? nisi Spiritus Dei, qui super Christum habitavit septem operationibus, sicut ait Isaias propheta: Requiescet et habitabit super eum Spiritus Dei, sapientiae et intellectus, consilii et fortitudinis, scientiae et timoris Domini. Hi sunt septem oculi qui super lapidem aperti sunt; et hi sunt septem oculi Domini, qui circumspiciunt universam terram. (*Dem.* I, 9; Parisot 1, 19/22)

It is a well-known fact that the *Demonstrations* of Aphrahat contain many views which are also found in Jewish writings. These are, however, not to be attributed to the influence of the Jews in Mesopotamia upon Aphrahat. It seems more probable that these Jewish elements are due to the Jewish Christians, who brought the new religion to Mesopotamia.<sup>13</sup> It could be that this was also the case with the curious view that the Spirit is your guardian angel.

Nor is this view only to be found in Aphrahat. The mystic Macarius, who wrote in Greek but reflects the views of the Syrian church, implies in several passages that Spirit and Icon are identical:

Question: Adam had lost, as you say, both his own image as also the heavenly Image. So he must have possessed the Holy Spirit, if he had the Image. (*Homilies* 12, 6)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> J. Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, Leiden 1971.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Quispel, *Makarius*, 58.

The same view is found in the *Hymn of the Pearl* in *Acts of Thomas* 112. There the Self, which comes to encounter the prince, is, on the one hand, the garment left in heaven, the Holy Spirit; and, on the other, the Image (*eikôn*) of the King of Kings, God, was woven into it. The Self is simultaneously Spirit and guardian angel.

We find very much the same concept in very different quarters, namely in Rome in the second century. The *Pastor of Hermas*, written there between 100 and 140 A.D., very often reflects Jewish Christian concepts. The Woman that manifests herself to Hermas is in reality the Holy Spirit (*Sim.* 9,1). This then presupposes the well-known Jewish Christian concept according to which the Holy Spirit is a mother. Secondly, the name of the writing refers to the guardian angel of Hermas to whom the latter has been committed (at baptism). When the angel changes his appearance, then Hermas recognises him, evidently because he is his image and counterpart. The Jewish concept of the guardian angel as *iqonin* is implied (*Vis.* 5,1–3). In the special case of Hermas, however, the guardian angel is the angel of repentance, not the Holy Spirit. But in another passage, in his description of the true prophet, Hermas proves to be familiar with the last mentioned view:

Therefore, when the man who has the Divine Spirit comes into a meeting of righteous men who have the faith of the Divine Spirit, and intercession is made to God from the assembly of those, *then the angel of the prophetic spirit who has been allotted to him* (*keimenos pros auton*, sc. the true prophet) fills the man, and the man, being filled with the Holy Spirit, speaks to the congregation as the Lord wills. (*Mand.* 11,9)

What is meant by the expression: the angel of the prophetic spirit? As I see it, it would be completely wrong to seek here any relationship with the Hellenistic and magical concept of a familiar (or: familiar spirit): the *daimôn paredros* or *spiritus familiaris*.<sup>15</sup> There is nothing in this passage which suggests magical implications. Not even the suggestion of Irenaeus that the Valentinian gnostic Marc the Magician “probably has a *daimôn paredros*” (*Adv. haer.* 1,13,3) is anything else but an insinuation. In Antiquity, and even in our days, it was slandered that the *daimonion* of Socrates was a sorcerer’s familiar. As Cyrano de Bergerac says: “Je prêtai à Socrate son esprit

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<sup>15</sup> J. Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy*, Leiden 1973.



familiar”.<sup>16</sup> So the Church Father suggests that Marc’s higher Self and guardian angel is nothing but a magician’s familiar. But this is neither here nor there the case.

Nor is it sufficient to exclusively refer to the Angel of the Holy Spirit in the *Ascension of Isaiah*. There, the Holy Spirit is conceived of as an angel. But in the passage of the *Pastor of Hermas* the “angel of the prophetic spirit” is the Holy Spirit and at the same time a guardian angel. The parallelism with Aphrahat and other Syrian authors is remarkable. The only difference seems to be that in Hermas the Holy Spirit only is the guardian angel of the true prophet, whereas no such restrictions are made elsewhere.

But if we find the same concept in Mesopotamia and in Rome, and if it seems certain that this is of Jewish Christian origin, then it would seem that both Hermas and Aphrahat drew from a common source. We may trace this interpretation of the guardian angel back to some Palestinian Christians of a very early date.

The same concept is to be found in Egypt. This is not astonishing at all if Christianity was indeed first brought to this country by Jewish Christians. It is true that we find it in the *Pistis Sophia*, chapter 61. And it may be true that the concept in its present form is gnostic. But the underlying idea must be Jewish Christian, as is shown by the parallels in Aphrahat and Hermas. In the *Pistis Sophia*, Mary, the mother of the Lord, tells that, before the Spirit has descended upon Jesus at his baptism, this same Spirit came to her into her house, resembling (*epheine*) Jesus. Mary did not recognise him and thought he was Jesus. The Spirit said to her: where is Jesus, my brother, that I may encounter him? Mary binds him to a leg of the bed and goes to fetch Jesus, who returns home. “And we looked at you and him and found you resembling him. And he was freed from the bed. He embraced you and kissed you and you too kissed him, you became one (*oua n̄ouôt*)”.

The Holy Spirit is here considered to be the guardian angel and image (*iqonin*) of Jesus, who forms a whole with him. We have reason to suppose that the latter was a well-known theme in the Church of Alexandria. This can be seen from a passage in Origen’s *De principiis* II,10,7. There Origen tries to interpret the difficult passage in

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 26, 9: “Socrates novit, qui ad nutum et arbitrium adsidentis sibi daemonis vel declinabat negotia vel petebat”.

Luke 12:46 about the Lord who will cut into two (*dichotomèsei*) his unfaithful servant and put his “part” with the unfaithful. After offering several possible solutions of these problematic words, the Alexandrian doctor of the Church gives a third interpretation of what this separation really means: with every believer, even if he be the smallest in the church, an angel is said to be present, who, according to the Saviour, beholds at all times the face of God. If this man becomes unworthy through disobedience, then this angel, who was of course one with the man to whom he was assigned (*qui utique unum erat cum eo, cui praeerat*), is said to be taken away from him. Then “his part”, that is the part which consists of his human nature, is torn away (*avulsa*) from God’s part and is reckoned among the unbelievers, because it did not pay heed carefully to the suggestions of the angel whom God had allotted to him.

Man is only a part of the whole; his guardian angel is his counterpart. Perdition is disruption of this unity. And so bliss cannot be anything other than the perfect union of the two.

Even before Origen, Clement of Alexandria shows us that there existed a special tradition in Egypt concerning the guardian angel. In his *Excerpta ex Theodoto* (10–15) he gives some notes about the corporeality and the “spatiality” of the spiritual word which are frankly astonishing in the works of a Platonist. It is generally agreed that this theory of radical materialism, constructed on Stoic premises, is not only inconsistent with Clement’s uncompromising Platonism, but also rejected by him elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> Clement must be following a source here. Long ago, it was pointed out that this source had much in common with one of the most provocative passages of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 17,7,2.<sup>18</sup>

There it is said that the first and greatest commandment is to fear that God whose face the angels of the faithful are permanently beholding (Matth. 18:10). It is possible to see God because he has a form and all (bodily) members. This is the case in order that the pure in heart can see him (Matth. 5:8). Because God has a visible form, the image of God in man is his outward bodily appearance.

<sup>17</sup> R.P. Casey, *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria*, London 1934, 10.

<sup>18</sup> P. Collomp, “Une source de Clément d’Alexandrie et des Homélie Pseudo-Clémentines”, *Revue de Philologie, de Littérature et d’Histoire anciennes* 37 (1913) 19–46.

The source of Clement does not say exactly the same. The seven First-Created angels are said to behold Christ, because the face of the Father is the Son:

They (the First-Created) “always behold the face of the Father” (Matth. 18, 10) and the face of the Father is the Son, through whom the Father is known. Yet that which sees and is seen cannot be formless or incorporeal. But they see not with an eye of sense, but with the eye of mind, such as the Father provided. When, therefore, the Lord said, “Despise not one of these little ones. Verily, I say unto you, their angels do always behold the face of the Father” (Matth. 18:10), as is the pattern, so will be the elect, when they have received the perfect advance. But “blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matth. 5:8). And how could there be a face of a shapeless being? (*Exc. ex Theodoto* 10, 6–11, 2)

It is clear that the tradition contained in the *Clementines* has undergone a revision at the hands of a competent theologian, who may or may not have been Clement’s predecessor in Alexandria, Pantaenus. This transpires from the fact that the dimensionality of the spiritual world is still always stressed. Neither the archangels nor the First-Created seven angels (*Protoktistoi*), nor even the Son himself are shapeless and formless and incorporeal. But God himself is formless. He takes on form in Christ, who is said to be his face or *Prosôpon*.

We have stated above that the First-Created angels here represent the Holy Spirit. The world view of this source is strictly hierarchical: God, the Son, the Spirit, the archangels.

Both the passage in the *Pseudo-Clementines* and the one in the *Excerpta* deal with the dimensionality of the spiritual world. In both the same passages from Matthew are quoted. One wonders whether the source of the *Clementines* already contained the views about the First-Created angels who are the Spirit. This is not impossible, because the First-Created angels are traditional and also to be found in Hermas (*Vis.* 3,4,1).

Be that as it may, one thing is certain: in Clement’s source the guardian angels of the faithful are identified with the *Protoktistoi*, who are the Spirit. Guardian angel and Holy Spirit are one and the same. This was a tradition already existing in Alexandria before Clement. Most probably, it has to be traced back to the Jewish Christian founding fathers of the church of Alexandria. Otherwise, how could we find the same concept in Rome (Hermas) and in Mesopotamia (Aphrahat)?

This historical fact is of great importance for the interpretation of Valentinian Gnosis. It has already been said that the marriage of the angel and the bride, or in other words of the Self and the Ego, is the central idea of the whole myth, which can be considered as a poetic expression of this basic experience. This led to an ontology of the male and the female principle, Bythos and Sigè, as ground of being. It also led to a high appreciation of marriage, a symbol of this eternal *dualitudo*, and of the female, who is, of course, not equal with, but of equal importance as the male (a rare view in the Christian world). Now we see clearly that the Valentinians, when formulating these bright ideas, could make use of an already existing tradition about the Spirit as guardian angel. This transpires above all from section 61 of the *Gospel of Philip*. There the author discusses the belief in *incubi* and *succubae*, male and female demons, who were thought to seek sexual intercourse with human beings. He states that among unclean spirits there are male and female. The males are those who unite with the souls inhabiting a female form; the female are those who mingle with the ones in male form, through (the folly of) a fool.<sup>19</sup> None shall be able to escape them, since they detain him, unless he receives a male power and a female power, namely the bridegroom and the bride. And one receives (this) in the symbolic bridal chamber.

This is an allusion to the so-called sacrament of the bridal chamber, in which the initiate is united to the angel or higher Self. Properly speaking, the initiate is already a bride, because he has a spark of spirit which sleeps unconsciously within him. Thanks to the revelation of Christ, man becomes conscious of this feminine side of himself. Man becomes a bride.

This concept has provoked the irony of Tertullian, who here can be quoted only in the *lingua pudicorum virorum*:

fabulae tales utiles, ut Marcus aut Gaius, in hac carne barbatus et in hac anima severus maritus pater avus proavus, certe quod sufficit masculus, in Nymphone Pleromatis ab angelo – tacendo iam dixi. (*Adv. Valent.* 32)

To express such criticism is extremely cheap. The “nymphos” of the Mithraic mysteries was also considered to be the “male bride” of

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<sup>19</sup> I guess this is an allusion to the demiurge, called Saklas, which means: “fool”.

the God. According to Christian mysticism, Christ is the bridegroom even of the male believers. Some psychologists of our days consider the *mysterium coniunctionis* of the male consciousness or *animus* with the female unconsciousness or *anima* to be the real issue of a man's life. We may be sure that the Valentinians expressed something very profound in their rite, but of course, as Christians, they used the symbolism of their religion. This meant that the guardian angel was held to be assigned to man during the sacrament of baptism, which is the basis of the Valentinian "mystery of the bridal chamber".<sup>20</sup>

But at the same time the Christians used to say that the Spirit was conveyed to the believer through and during baptism. The Valentinians did that too. For in the same section of the *Gospel of Philip* it is said: "For if they had the Holy Spirit the unclean spirit would not cleave unto them".

H.G. Gaffron has not understood this passage: according to him, the last mentioned concept is merely an afterthought.<sup>21</sup> No, on the contrary, this is really very illuminating. It shows us that the angel and the Spirit according to this passage are one and the same, and thus discloses that the gnostic concept is rooted in the Angel pneumatology of Jewish Christianity.

The first to see this was W.D. Hauschild. In his book *Gottes Geist und der Mensch* he discussed all relevant passages and came to much the same conclusions as myself. I only want to add that this doctrine must go back to Valentinus himself. It must have been Valentinus who taught that Christ has brought down to earth the "angel of the Spirit" belonging to each one of the elect, who during his lifetime inspires the Gnosis and thus anticipates here and now the wholeness of Ego and Self in the Pleroma. It is because of this that we find traces of this concept in the *Gospel of Philip*. The latter was probably written at Antioch, as certain Syriac elements in it seem to show.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> G. Kretschmar, *Die Geschichte des Taufgottesdienstes in der alten Kirche* (Leiturgia V), Kassel 1970, 31–32; G. Quispel, "The Birth of the Child", *Eranos Jahrbuch* 40 (1971) 285–309 (= *Gnostic Studies*, I, 221–239).

<sup>21</sup> H.G. Gaffron, *Studien zum koptischen Philippusevangelium unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Sakramente*, Bonn 1969, 203: "Die dritte Antwort ist die am wenigsten gnostische, sie gibt die vulgärchristliche Anschauung jener Zeit wieder und ist hier eher ein Nebengedanke".

<sup>22</sup> E. Segelberg, "The Antiochene Background of the Gospel of Philip", *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 18 (1966) 205–223.

Now, according to Tertullian it was a certain Axionicus who was the only one at that time to remain faithful to the original doctrine of Valentinus; and Axionicus lived at Antioch:

solus ad hodiernum Antiochiae Axionicus memoriam Valentini integra custodia regularum eius consolatur. (*Adv. Valent.* 4)

The *Gospel of Philip*, which may have been composed about the time during which Tertullian wrote this passage, and could thus have been edited by Axionicus himself, may certainly be supposed to have preserved the original views of Valentinus.

On the other hand, it is remarkable that in the school of Ptolemy this concept has become purely eschatological. It is only at the final consummation of the world process that the spirit, united to its angel, enters the bridal chamber of the Pleroma:

Then comes the marriage feast, common to all who are saved, until all have become equal and know each other. Henceforth the spiritual elements, having put off their souls, together with the Mother who leads her bridegroom, also lead their bridegrooms, their guardian angels, and pass into the bridal chamber within the Limit. (*Exc. ex Theodoto* 63, 2-64)

This means that man cannot attain his wholeness, not even anticipate it in part, during his lifetime. As so often, Ptolemy has changed here completely the teaching of his master. A realised eschatology has become a futuristic eschatology. This has its implications for the interpretation of the existing material. In the Valentinian inscription of Flavia Sophè, found in 1853 at the third milestone of the Via Latina in Rome, and written towards the end of the second or in the first half of the third century, it is stated that this lady "having been anointed by the bath of Christ with imperishable holy ointment, hastened to go to the *nymphôn* in order to behold the divine faces of the Aions". Margherita Guarducci was right when she interpreted this as meaning that Flavia, when dying, had received the *apolytrôsis* or last rites and then could enter the bridal chamber of the Pleroma without having received the sacrament of the *nymphôn* during her lifetime.<sup>23</sup> Ptolemy, who taught in the West (most probably

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<sup>23</sup> Margherita Guarducci, "Valentiniani a Roma: Ricerche epigrafiche ed archeologiche", *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung* 80 (1973) 185. Here the complete text of the inscription and a photographic reproduction.

in Rome) about the time that the inscription was written there, seems not to have known the sacrament of the *nymphôn* as a “happening” in this life. The inscription would seem to reflect the views of the school of Ptolemy.<sup>24</sup>

But the Angel pneumatology of Jewish Christianity is not only helpful for the interpretation of Valentinian Gnosis, it might also be relevant for discovering the right perspective from which to investigate Mani’s religious experience.

The Twin or heavenly Self, who inspired Mani, protected him and waited for him at the hour of death, was an angel (the angel at-Taum), more specifically a guardian angel, and at the same time the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup> “Angel” is Mani’s own term. In the Manichaean *Homilies* he says during his trial that he has received his wisdom from God through his angel.<sup>26</sup>

It has often been said that this concept is of Iranian origin. Then one must ignore the term “angel” and assume that the title Paraclete was only given later to Mani by Western Manichaeans who tried to christianize superficially a thoroughly non-Christian religion.<sup>27</sup> The discovery of the *Cologne Mani Codex* has refuted this highly speculative and far-fetched theory.<sup>28</sup> Mani grew up in a congregation of Jewish Christian Elkesaites in Southern Babylonia.

Much more scholarly was the endeavour of Erik Peterson to relate Mani’s experience to the theology of Tatian.<sup>29</sup> As a matter of fact, Tatian, in his *Oration against the Greeks* (Ch. 13), says that the Spirit

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<sup>24</sup> In this respect Heracleon seems to have preserved the views of Valentinus, cf. Origen, *In Joh.* XIII, 49, 324. In the *Tractatus Tripartitus*, attributed by some to Heracleon, we find many concepts deviating from Ptolemy; see the commentary by G. Quispel in the edition of this text (Vol. I, Bern 1973) by Malinine, Puech *et alii*. For the Valentinian concept of the guardian angel, see also H.-Ch. Puech, in *Annuaire du Collège de France* 63 (1963) 201–213; 64 (1964) 209–217; 66 (1966) 260–266; 67 (1967) 253–257.

<sup>25</sup> Henrichs-Koenen, *Ein griechischer Mani-Codex*, 161–171.

<sup>26</sup> H.J. Polotsky, *Manichäische Homilien*, Stuttgart 1934, 47: “Frage alle Menschen nach mir: ich habe keinen Meister und keinen Lehrer, von dem ich diese Weisheit gelernt hätte oder von dem ich diese Dinge hätte. Sondern, als ich sie empfangen habe, habe ich sie von Gott durch seinen Engel empfangen”.

<sup>27</sup> G. Quispel, “Mani, the Apostle of Jesus Christ”, in *Epektasis, Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou*, Paris 1972, 667–672.

<sup>28</sup> A. Henrichs, “Mani and the Babylonian Baptists. A Historical Confrontation”, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 77 (1973) note 118.

<sup>29</sup> E. Peterson, “Einige Bemerkungen zum Hamburger Papyrusfragment der Acta Pauli”, in his *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis*, Rome 1959, 205.

forms a *syzygia* with the soul and so leads her to heaven. Now, in the new *Mani Codex* the Twin (which is the Spirit) is called *syzygos*.<sup>30</sup> It might be that this word came to Mani or the Manichaeans from the writings of Tatian, just as the title Paraclete stems from Tatian's *Diatessaron*. But it is also possible that Mani had already found in his Jewish Christian milieu the appropriate terms to express in words his overwhelming experience.

We have seen above that, according to Hermas, the angel of the (prophetic) spirit is the guardian angel of the true prophet. He is not the guardian angel of every Christian. In fact Hermas himself is committed to the angel of repentance. But the Angel of the Spirit only inspires a true prophet. We saw that there is every reason to suppose that this concept was taken by Hermas from a Jewish Christian tradition, because the Spirit as guardian angel was also known to Clement of Alexandria and Aphrahat. These latter, however, do not say that the Angel of the Spirit only inspires the true prophet. But this seems to have been the case with Mani.

According to the *Cologne Mani Codex*, some of the Elkesaites among whom Mani lived and to whom he spoke about his new insights regarded him as a prophet (*hōsei prophētēn*); some even said that the Living Word spoke through him.<sup>31</sup> Mani was considered by some of his fellow Jewish Christians to be a prophet in the primitive Christian sense of the word, namely as somebody who was inspired by the Holy Spirit to deliver a special message to the congregation, like Agabus in Acts 11:27. And most probably Mani at that time shared their conviction and understood himself to be a prophet in this sense. Mani is so to say the last representative of that archaic office which in the Gentile Church was sooner or later eliminated and replaced by the monarchic episcopate, but which in Jewish Christianity seems to have persisted much longer.

The quoted passage of the *Mani Codex* is an allusion to the very special doctrine about the successive revelations of the true prophet, which we find in the Pseudo-Clementine writings. Mani adopted this doctrine and developed it so that Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus (and probably also Elkesai), were considered as predecessors of Mani, the seal of the prophets.

<sup>30</sup> Henrichs-Koenen, *Ein griechischer Mani-Codex*, 161.

<sup>31</sup> Henrichs, "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists", 55.



Likewise Mani transformed the Jewish Christian concept of the Angel of the Spirit as special guardian of the true prophet. Not that he modified it, but he enriched it so as to become really gnostic. For he held that this Twin was nothing alien to him, but in fact identical with his empirical Ego.

As the *Cologne Mani Codex* (24,9) says:

I recognised him  
that he was me,  
from whom I had been separated.

#### FURTHER LITERATURE

- J. van Oort, "The Paraclete Mani as the Apostle of Jesus Christ and the Origins of a New Christian Church", in: A. Hilhorst (ed.), *The Apostolic Age in Patristic Thought*, Leiden-Boston 2004, 139–157.
- J. van Oort en G. Quispel, *De Keulse Mani-Codex. Vertaald, ingeleid en toegelicht*, Amsterdam 2005.

## CHAPTER NINE

### GNOSIS ALS ERFAHRUNG\*

VALENTIN

Valentin, der bedeutendste Gnostiker aller Zeiten, wurde um 100 nach Christus in Niederägypten geboren. In Alexandrien erhielt er eine philosophische Ausbildung, aber der religiöse Rationalismus des Platonikers Eudorus, der dort gelehrt wurde, sagte ihm nicht zu. Später spricht er bedeutungsvoll von der Weisheit, die in das Geheimnis der Gottheit eindringen will und dadurch zu Fall kommt. In Ägypten war er bereits Christ und Mitglied der Kirche, aber nicht katholisch. Vielleicht ist er dort schon mit dem vorchristlichen gnostischen System in Berührung gekommen, das in den Schriften des *Apokryphon Johannis* entwickelt worden ist.

Um 140 ging er nach Rom, wo er in die dortige christliche Gemeinde eintrat. Da er, wie sogar der Ketzerjäger Tertullian zugeben musste, "genial und sehr eloquent" war, war er ein seriöser Kandidat für den vakanten Bischofssitz. Aber der Kandidat der katholischen Faktion, Pius, der Konfessor, Bekenner der Verfolgungen und Mitglied der Widerstandsbewegung war, wurde ihm vorgezogen. Daraufhin wurde Valentin, ebenso wie der andere grosse "Ketzer" Marcion, "hochkantig hinausgeworfen" – wie Tertullian es wieder ausdrückt. Valentin blieb der Anführer seiner Schule, deren Netz von Abteilungen das ganze Römische Reich umspannte. Sie war ein *frequentissimum collegium*, eine Vereinigung mit den meisten Mitgliedern von allen Gruppen ausserhalb der Katholika. Nach einiger Zeit verschwindet er aus der Geschichte. Als Gegenleistung wurde die Romana katholisch und autoritär.

Von Valentin wird berichtet, dass seine Lehre auf eine religiöse Erfahrung zurückgeht: "Valentin sagt, er habe in einer Vision ein neugeborenes Kind geschaut. Er fragte: 'Wer bist du?' Das Kind

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\* Publiziert in: *Von Buddha bis C.G. Jung*, ed. Marcel Messing, Olten und Freiburg im Breisgau, Walter Verlag, 1990.

antwortete: 'Ich bin der Logos.' Diese Erfahrung hat er in einem tragischen Mythos näher dargestellt. Seitdem versucht er, die von ihm gegründete Ketzerei zu verbreiten."

Valentin hatte also eine Vision des Christus. Dieser offenbarte sich ihm als der Logos, die Offenbarung des Geheimnisses. Aber er sah ein neugeborenes Kind. Hier wird zum erstenmal das Thema der Gottesgeburt im Menschenherzen angeschnitten, das später bei Eckhart der Grundton der christlichen Mystik werden wird und noch bei Angelus Silesius anklingt: "Wäre Christus tausendmal in Bethlehem geboren, und nicht in Dir, so wärest Du trotzdem verloren."

Valentins Lehre wird treffend ein tragischer Mythos genannt. Es handelt sich dabei nicht um logisches, analytisches Wissen, sondern um bildhaftes Denken. Das Böse ist, wie wir sehen werden, auch nicht Folge des freien Willens, sondern ein tragisches Ereignis in der geistigen Welt. Dennoch kann man keinesfalls behaupten, Valentins Weltbild sei pessimistisch. Er hatte die Einheit und den Zusammenhang des Alls erfahren und besang diese in einem Gedicht, das *Die Ernte* heisst:

Alles sehe ich zusammenhängen, alles schaue ich vom Pneuma getragen:  
an der Seele, schaue ich, hängt der Körper, von der Luft die Seele  
wird umfassen, und die Luft hinwieder hängt am Äther; aus dem  
Ungrund quellen auf die Früchte, und der Mutterschoss gebärt das  
Kindlein.

(Fragment 8, Hippolytus, *Ref. VI*, 37, 6–8)

Der Grund des Seins, Gott, ist Tiefe und Stille. Aus ihm gehen die *Aeonen* hervor, die Ideen der geistigen Welt. Gott hat eine Gemahlin, die an anderer Stelle Weisheit oder Heiliger Geist genannt wird. Hier heisst sie Schoss, ein krasser Ausdruck. Die geistige und die sichtbare Welt sind keine Schöpfungen aus dem Nichts, sondern gehen aus Gott hervor oder, um ein anderes Bild zu gebrauchen, werden aus der göttlichen Frau geboren. Paaren und Gebären beherrschen den Prozess der Evolution.

Der Seher erfährt, dass er als geistiges Wesen in dieses Ganze aufgenommen wurde und dass er mit dem Grund des Seins identisch ist. Die Inder nennen es Advaita, Nicht-Zweiheit. Aber das beinhaltet auch, dass die sichtbare Welt, die Sinne und Vernunft uns vorzaubern, eine Illusion ist. Das hatte das Kind Valentin offenbart. In der *Abhandlung über die Auferstehung* aus dem Jung-Kodex, eine Schrift, die Valentin vielleicht selbst verfasst hat, wird darüber folgendes gesagt:

Was ist also die Auferstehung? Es ist die Sichtbarwerdung allezeit derer, die auferstanden sind. Wenn du dich nämlich erinnerst, wenn du im Evangelium liest, dass Elias erschien und Moses mit ihm [Mt 17:3], so denke nicht hinsichtlich der Auferstehung, dass sie ein Hirngespinnst sei. Sie ist nicht ein Hirngespinnst, sondern wahr. Vielmehr aber ziemt es sich, zu sagen, dass die Welt ein Hirngespinnst ist, mehr als die Auferstehung, die durch unseren Herrn, den Heiland Jesus Christus, geschehen ist. Weshalb aber belehre ich dich jetzt? Die Lebenden werden sterben. Wie leben sie doch in einer Illusion! Die Reichen werden arm, und die Könige werden gestürzt. Alles ändert sich. Die Welt ist eine Illusion, damit ich nun nicht allzusehr über die Dinge lästere.

(*De resurrectione* 48, 3–30)

Valentin war also ein absolut christozentrischer Denker. Seiner Lehre zufolge war Christus gekommen, um den Menschen von allen Illusionen zu erlösen und ihn zur Erkenntnis seiner selbst zu bringen. Dies kommt sehr deutlich im *Evangelium der Wahrheit* zum Ausdruck, eine der Schriften des Jung-Kodex, die nahezu mit Sicherheit von Valentin selbst verfasst wurde. Darin wird das Leben in der Welt mit einem bösen Traum verglichen, den der Mensch von sich abschüttelt, wenn er erwacht. Ein anderes Bild, das verwendet wird: Der Mensch ist wie ein Bergsteiger, der im Nebel seine Gefährten verloren hat und vom Weg abgekommen ist. Als er seinen Namen rufen hört, weiss er, wohin er gehen muss, woher er kommt, was er ist. Der Gnostiker entdeckt sich selbst, dank des offenbarenden Wortes Christi.

Valentin hat das auf einfache Weise ausgearbeitet. Er lehrte, Christus habe die Schutzengel der geistigen Menschen mitgebracht. Diese widmen sich dem Menschen, dem sie zugeteilt wurden, und schenken ihm die Gnosis. Sie brauchen aber ihrerseits den Menschen, dessen wesenhafter Teil sie sind, weil die Engel ohne ihren Menschen nicht in das Pleroma, die geistige Welt, eingehen können. Zusammen bilden sie eine Einheit, ein Paar, eine Syzygie. Der Schutzengel ist ursprünglich der griechische *daimôn*, der das Kind von Geburt an begleitet und sogar sein Ebenbild ist. Die Juden hatten das auf ihre Art übernommen und sagten, der Mensch habe ein *iqonin*, ein Ebenbild, das ihn beschütze. Diesen Gedanken fand man auch im ägyptischen Christentum. Valentin betrachtete den Engel als den Bräutigam des Menschen und den Menschen selbst als die Braut. Es kann auch sein, dass die Engel der Männer weiblich und die der Frauen männlich sind. Wesentlich ist jedoch, dass das unbewusste Selbst (der Engel) und das bewusste Ich des Gnostikers eine unauflösliche Einheit bilden und zusammen das "Geheimnis des Ehebündnisses" feiern. Die Ehe zwischen Mann und Frau ist ein Abbild davon.

## VALENTINS MYTHOS

Diese abgründige Erfahrungen nun hat Valentin in seinem “tragischen Mythos” zum Ausdruck gebracht. Um diese wirklich verstehen zu können, muss man bedenken, dass ihm bereits eine lange und komplizierte gnostische Tradition vorangegangen war.

In Alexandrien, wo die Juden viel freimütiger waren als in Palästina, dachte man häufig über die Vision des Propheten Ezechiel nach. Dieser erzählt in seinem ersten Kapitel, dass er eine Art von Wagen sah, der von lebenden Wesen getragen wurde und über dem sich eine leuchtende Gestalt – Gottes Glorie – befand, die wie ein Mensch aussah und Adam genannt wird. Schon im zweiten Jahrhundert vor Christus erzählte der jüdische Tragiker Ezechiel, dass Moses auf dem Sinai diese Gestalt, *Phōs*, Mensch, geschaut hatte. Bald darauf wurde auch behauptet, dass dieser Mensch (die Offenbarung Gottes in menschlicher Gestalt) männlich und weiblich (androgyn) und das ideale Vorbild für den irdischen Adam gewesen sei. *Geradamas*, “geraios Adam”, Urmensch wurde diese Glorie genannt, so wie die Mandäer später von *Adam Qadmaia* und die Kabbalisten von *Adam Qadmon* sprachen.

In Alexandrien und anderswo in der Diaspora widmeten die Juden der *Sophia*, die sie manchmal sogar als die Ehefrau Gottes ansahen, ebenfalls viel Aufmerksamkeit.

Dies führte in Alexandrien zu einer jüdischen Gnostik, die erzählte, wie Sophia durch ihre Geilheit zu Fall gekommen war und den Welterschöpfer *Jaldabaoth* gebar, und wie “der Mensch” sich da den niedrigen Engeln und dem Welterschöpfer offenbarte. In dieser ältesten Form des Mythos, die sich auf der Grundlage des *Apokryphon Johannis* rekonstruieren lässt, war von Christus noch keine Rede.

Valentin hat diese jüdische Gnostik christianisiert. Er identifizierte Christus mit “dem Menschen” und ersetzte das Motiv der Geilheit der Sophia durch das gefährliche, dem Mystiker nur zu gut bekannte Verlangen, sich mit Gott zu identifizieren und in das Geheimnis der Gottheit einzudringen.

So entstand sein ursprünglicher Mythos. Dieser ist als solcher nirgendwo tradiert worden. Von Valentin selbst wurden nur Fragmente überliefert, sowie das *Evangelium der Wahrheit* und vielleicht die *Abhandlung über die Auferstehung*. Die Schüler der östlichen Schule hinterliessen Fragmente, die zum Teil in den *Excerpta ex Theodoto* von Clemens von Alexandrien erhalten geblieben sind. Die Anführer der westlichen

Schule, Ptolemäus und Herakleon, betonten viel stärker als Valentin die Bedeutung der *psychè* und der *psychici* (Katholiken). Ihnen zufolge konnten auch die Psychiker, bedauernswerte Menschen ohne Geist, auf ihre Weise selig werden. Es war vor allem Ptolemäus, der die ursprüngliche Lehre Valentins beträchtlich geändert hat. 1947 wurde eine Rekonstruktion veröffentlicht, die 1985 von den amerikanischen Gelehrten Attridge und Pagels eingehend untersucht und für richtig befunden wurde. In der deutschen Übersetzung des Griechischen lautet sie wie folgt:

*Geburt des Pleromas, der Fülle*

Es war in unsichtbaren und unnennbaren Höhen der vollkommene Aeon, die Tiefe, der vor allem da war. Unfassbar, unsichtbar, ewig und unerzeugt, war er unermessliche Ewigkeit in tiefster Ruhe. Und mit ihm war die Ennoia, das Schweigen, die Gnade. Und die Tiefe kam auf den Gedanken, aus sich den Ursprung des Alls zu erzeugen, und legte diesen Gedanken als Samen in den Mutterschoss des Schweigens. Nachdem diese ihn empfangen hatte und schwanger geworden war, gebar sie den Nous, der dem Erzeuger gleich und ähnlich ist und allein die Grösse des Vaters erfasst. Mit ihm zusammen ist auch die Wahrheit geboren.

Als der Nous bemerkte, wozu er hervorgebracht war, erzeugte er seinerseits den Logos und die Zoè, den Vater aller Dinge, die nach ihm kommen sollten, Ursprung und Gestaltungskraft des gesamten Pleromas. Aus ihrer ehelichen Verbindung sind hervorgegangen der Anthropos und die Ekklesia. Jedes dieser Paare ist mannweiblich. Diese Aeonen, hervorgebracht zur Verherrlichung des Vaters, wollten nun auch ihrerseits den Vater verherrlichen. So erzeugten sie Paare von Emanationen. Nachdem aus der Verbindung des Logos und der Zoè der Anthropos und die Ekklesia hervorgegangen waren, erzeugten sie noch zehn weitere Aeonen, die da hiessen: Bythios und Mixia, Ageratos und Henosis, Autophyes und Hedone, Akinetos und Synkrisis, Monogenes und Makaria.

Der Anthropos brachte gleichfalls mit der Ekklesia Aeonen hervor, die da hiessen: Parakletos und Pistis, Patrikos und Elpis, Metrikos und Agape, Aeinous und Synesis, Ekklesiastikos und Makariotes, Theletos und Sophia.

*Der Ursprung des Bösen*

Die Tiefe (den Bythos) kannte nur der Nous, allen andern blieb er unsichtbar und unfassbar. Nur der Nous erfreute sich der Anschauung des Vaters und ergötzte sich in der Betrachtung seiner unermesslichen Grösse. Auch den übrigen Aeonen gedachte er die Grösse des Vaters mitzuteilen, wie gross und herrlich jener war, wie er jenseits des Ursprungs und Verstehens und Begreifens war; aber nach dem Ratschluss des Vaters hielt das Schweigen ihn zurück, weil alle zum Nachdenken und zur Sehnsucht nach Gott geführt werden sollten. Und so verlangten die übrigen Aeonen im stillen danach, den Urheber ihres Samens zu schauen und die anfangslose Wurzel zu erforschen.

Aber der letzte und jüngste Sprössling der Zwölfheit, die Sophia, sprang in die Höhe und geriet in ein Pathos ohne die Umarmung ihres Gemahls Theletos. Dieses Pathos nahm seinen Ausgang in den Aeonen und dem Nous und der Aletheia, kam aber zum Ausbruch in dieser Abgeirrten, der Sophia, unter dem Vorwand der Liebe, obwohl es in Wirklichkeit Hybris war, da sie mit dem vollkommenen Vater keine Gemeinschaft besass wie der Nous: ihr Pathos war nichts anderes als das Suchen nach dem Vater, indem *sie seine Grösse begreifen wollte*. Das konnte sie aber nicht, weil sie sich an Unmögliches gemacht hatte. Und sie geriet wegen der Tiefe des Abgrundes und der Unergründlichkeit des Vaters und ihres Eros zu ihm in tiefe Not, und weil sie immer höher strebte, so wäre sie schliesslich wohl von seiner Süsse verschlungen und in das unbestimmte Sein aufgelöst worden, wenn sie nicht auf die Kraft gestossen wäre, die das All befestigt und ausserhalb der unaussprechlichen Grösse bewacht, die Schwelle (Horos), die sie aus dem Pleroma entfernte.

*Die Emanation des Heiligen Geistes*

Als sie sich draussen befand, im leeren Raum ohne Gnosis, den sie durch ihre Überhebung geschaffen hatte, gebar sie Jesus aus ihrer Erinnerung an die höhere Welt, aber mit einem Schatten. Aber er, der männlich war, hieb den Schatten der Unzulänglichkeit ab, verliess die Mutter und schnellte hinauf zum Pleroma.

Als die Sophia allein draussen zurückgeblieben war, ist alles Leid jeder Art und Gestalt über sie gekommen: *Schmerz*, weil sie nichts verstand, *Angst*, dass das Leben sie verlassen würde wie das Licht, *Verzweiflung* dazu und *Unwissenheit* als Wurzel von alledem.

Als sie des Logos beraubt war, der vorher unsichtbar mit ihr gewesen war, begab sie sich auf die Suche nach dem ihr entschwundenen Licht, konnte es aber nicht erreichen, weil sie vom untern Horos (der Schwelle zwischen Aussenwelt und Pleroma) zurückgehalten wurde. Und als der Horos ihren Fortschritt verhinderte, da schrie sie auf: *Iao*.

Nachdem sie durch alle Leiden hindurchgegangen war, blickte sie scheu hinauf und flehte Jesus, das Licht, an, das sie verlassen hatte. Und dieser, ins Pleroma hineingegangen, bat die Aeonen um Hilfe für die Sophia, die draussen geblieben war.

Und Verwirrung entstand im Pleroma, und alle Aeonen wurden beängstigt, weil sie meinten, dass alsbald das Verderben sie überwältigen würde. Da nahmen alle Aeonen ihre Zuflucht zum Gebet und baten den Vater, dass er dem Schmerz der Sophia ein Ende bereite. Denn sie weinte und jammerte über die Missgeburt, die sie erzeugt hatte. Da erbarmte sich der Vater der Tränen der Sophia und bewilligte die Bitte der Aeonen: er befahl, den Heiligen Geist ausgehen zu lassen, um die Aeonen zu durchdringen, damit er sie trennen und zur Fruchtbarkeit anleiten mochte.

#### *Die Aussendung des Christus*

Der Heilige Geist belehrte die Aeonen, sich mit den Schranken ihres Wissens vom Ungewordenen zu begnügen, und offenbarte ihnen die tiefere Gnosis des Vaters, dass er unfassbar und unbegreiflich sei und dass es nicht möglich sei, ihn zu schauen oder zu hören; nur durch den eingeborenen Sohn, den Nous, sei es möglich, ihn zu erkennen: und dass der Grund ihres ewigen *Seins* der Vater sei, das Göttliche in seiner Unbegreiflichkeit, dass aber der Grund ihres *Werdens* und ihrer Gestaltung der Sohn sei, das Erkennbare Gottes. Dann hob der Heilige Geist die Unterschiede zwischen ihnen auf, lehrte sie Dank sagen und führte sie ein in die wahre Ruhe.

So wurden alle Aeonen gleich in Gestalt und Bewusstsein; alle wurden zum Nous, zum Logos, zum Anthropos; desgleichen wurden die weiblichen Aeonen alle zur Aletheia, zur Zoè, zur Ekklesia. Als so alle insgesamt gefestigt und zur vollkommenen Ruhe gebracht waren, da haben sie mit grosser Freude Hymnen gesungen zur Ehre des Urvaters, der sich an ihrem lauterem Jubel beteiligte.

Und aus Dank für die Wohltat, die ihnen erwiesen war, haben die Aeonen des ganzen Pleromas, eines Willens und eines Gedankens,



das Schönste und Blumenreichste, was ein jeder in sich hatte, zusammengetragen; und diese Beiträge sinnvoll verbindend und harmonisch vereinigend zu einem Ganzen, erzeugten sie eine Emanation zur Ehre und zum Ruhm der Tiefe, ein Wesen vollkommener Schönheit, den Stern des Pleroma, seine vollkommene Frucht, Christos, auch Erlöser genannt, und Logos und das All und den Paraklet; und er wird mit Engeln gleichen Wesens hingeschickt zu dem gefallenem Aeon, der Sophia.

*Der Ursprung der Pneumatiker*

Und Sophia, von Ehrfurcht erfüllt, verhüllte sich zuerst mit einem Schleier, dann aber, als sie ihn mit der Fülle seiner Früchte erblickte, schnellte sie ihm entgegen, Kraft schöpfend aus seiner Erscheinung. Dann verlieh ihr der Erlöser die Ausbildung ihres Wesens und heilte sie vom Leiden. Denn er sonderte ihre Leidenschaften von ihr ab und verdichtete dieselben, so dass sie aus geistiger Leidenschaft in noch körperlose Materie verwandelt wurden.

Dies ist nun der Ursprung und das Wesen der Materie, aus der später die sichtbare Welt zustande kam. Aus der *Sehnsucht* nach dem Pleroma entstand die *Weltseele*; die *Erde* entstand aus ihrer *Verzweiflung*, *Wasser* aus der Aufwallung des *Schmerzes*, *Luft* aus der Verdichtung der *Angst*; das *Feuer* durchwaltet tödend und zerstörend das übrige, wie die *Unwissenheit* den drei übrigen Leidenschaften zugrunde liegt.

Dann legte der Erlöser in diese Elemente eine natürliche Affinität hinein, damit sie sich später zu Körpern zusammenfügen könnten. Als aber die Sophia von ihrem Leid befreit war, schaute sie in Verzückung die Lichter an, die mit dem Erlöser waren, welche sind die Engel seines Gefolges: in Liebe für sie entbrannt und geschwängert von ihrer Phantasie, erzeugte sie Früchte nach deren Bild, geistige Kinder nach dem Ebenbild der Begleiter des Erlösers.

*Die Erschaffung der sichtbaren Welt*

So waren drei Seinsschichten entstanden: die Materie aus dem Leiden; das Seelische aus der Sehnsucht; das Geistige aus der Phantasie. Da unternahm es die Sophia, dies alles zu gestalten: dem Geistigen aber konnte sie selbst keine Gestalt geben, da es gleichen Wesens mit ihr war. So machte sie sich an die Gestaltung der seelischen Substanz, die aus ihrer Sehnsucht entstanden war, und wandte dabei die vom Erlöser empfangenen Offenbarungen an.

Zuerst bildete sie aus der seelischen Substanz den *Demiurg*, ein göttliches Wesen, ein Gleichnis des Vaters: der gestaltete alles, was nach ihm kam, unbewusst getrieben von der Mutter, von der Sophia. Denn Sophia wollte das Weltall zur Ehre der Aeonen erschaffen und machte deswegen das Sichtbare zum Symbol der Aeonen.

Der *Demiurg* trennte die Substanzen des Seelischen und des Materiellen, die bisher noch zusammengemischt waren: aus dem körperlosen Substrat machte er Körper: so schuf er die himmlischen und irdischen Dinge.

Nun meinte zwar der *Demiurg*, dass er dies aus sich selbst geschaffen habe, in Wirklichkeit aber inspirierte ihn die Sophia. So schuf er einen Himmel, ohne den (geistigen) Himmel zu kennen, und bildete den Menschen, ohne den (idealen) Menschen zu kennen, er liess eine Erde erscheinen, und doch wusste er nichts von der (pleromatischen) Erde: überhaupt hat er bei seinem ganzen Schaffen die idealen Urbilder der Dinge nicht gekannt, ja nicht einmal um die Existenz seiner Mutter gewusst. Die Mutter wohnt im überhimmlischen Raum, das heisst im Zwischenreich (unterhalb des Pleroma); der *Demiurg* im himmlischen Raum, d.h. in der Hebdomas (dem Bezirk der sieben Planeten); der Teufel aber in unserer (sublunaren) Welt.

Nachdem der *Demiurg* nun den Kosmos gebaut hatte, machte er auch den irdischen Menschen; und da hinein blies er den seelischen Menschen. Das geistige Element aber, das die Mutter gebar aus der Anschauung der Engel, die den Erlöser begleiteten, erkannte er nicht, weil es gleichen Wesens mit der Mutter war; es konnte dies heimlich in ihm niedergelegt werden ohne sein Wissen: und so wurde durch seine Vermittlung der geistige Samen in die von ihm stammende Menschenseele und den materiellen Leib eingepflanzt, damit dieser geistige Samen in Leib und Seele wie im Mutterschoss getragen werde und wachse, bis er fähig sei, den vollkommenen Logos zu empfangen. Dieses Pneuma wurde in die Welt geschickt, damit es hier, verbunden mit dem Seelischen, gestaltet werde, zusammen mit ihm gebildet durch den Aufenthalt in der Welt. Das ist das Ziel der Welterschöpfung.

### *Der Sieg über den Tod*

Nach der Königsgewalt des Todes, die Herrliches und Schönscheinen-  
des versprach, aber nichtsdestoweniger Dienst am Tode bedeutete,  
als alle Gottheiten und Herrschaften versagt hatten, ist Christus, der

starke Held, hinabgestiegen und hat sich mit *Jesus*, und so auch mit der Ekklesia, verbunden. Er erlöste und führte zurück zu seinem Ursprung, was er zu sich genommen hatte, und dadurch auch alle Wesen, die mit Jesu gleichen Wesens sind. Denn “ist der Anbruch heilig, so ist auch der Teig heilig; und so die Wurzel heilig ist, so sind auch die Zweige heilig”.

Nun deuten die Worte “der Heilige Geist wird über dich kommen” auf das geistige Wesen des Leibes des Erlösers, und die Worte “die Macht des Allerhöchsten wird dich überschatten” spielt auf die Form an, die dieser Leib durch den Demiurg in der heiligen Jungfrau erhielt.

Jesus starb nun, nachdem der Geist sich zurückgezogen hatte, der auf ihn bei der Taufe im Jordan herabgestiegen war: dieser trennte sich nicht so sehr von ihm, als dass er sich vielmehr in sich selbst zurückgezogen hat, damit der Tod auf Jesus einwirken könne: denn wie könnte der Leib sterben, wenn das Leben in ihm gegenwärtig wäre? Sonst würde der Tod auch den Erlöser überwältigt haben. Aber der Tod wurde durch eine Kriegslist aus dem Feld geschlagen. Denn als der Leib gestorben war und der Tod sich seiner bemächtigte, sandte der Erlöser den Lichtstrahl der Kraft, der einst auf Jesus bei der Taufe herabgekommen war, vernichtete den Tod, weckte den sterblichen Leib auf und befreite ihn von seinen Leiden.

### *Das Ende der Weltgeschichte*

Die geistigen Menschen ruhen im Zwischenreich (in der Kuriake), in der Ogdoas, mit ihrer Mutter, Sophia, bekleidet mit ihren Seelen bis zur Vollendung der Welt.

Wenn all das Geistige gestaltet und vervollkommen ist, findet das Hochzeitsmahl aller Erlösten statt, bis alle einander gleich geworden sind und einander kennen.

Dann treten die Geistigen, ihre Seelen ablegend, mit der Mutter, die den Bräutigam, Christus, führt, indem auch sie selber ihre Bräutigame, ihre Taufengel, führen, hinein ins Brautgemach innerhalb der Schwelle und kommen zur Schau des Vaters, bewusste Aeonen geworden – zu der bewussten und ewigen Hochzeit der männlich-weiblichen Gegensatzpaare.

## MANI

Der *Kölner Mani-Kodex* ist einer der kleinsten Bücher der Welt. Es misst 4,5 mal 3,5 cm und enthält 192 Pergamentseiten. Es erzählt in griechischer Sprache und nach Mitteilungen seiner engsten Mitarbeiter das Leben von Mani. Das Manuskript wurde in den sechziger Jahren im Fayûm in Ägypten gefunden, ins Ausland geschmuggelt und an die Kölner Universität verkauft.

Es ist eine ausserordentlich wichtige Quelle. Erzählt wird, dass Mani (216–277), der Stifter einer christlich-gnostischen Weltkirche, in einer Gemeinde von jüdischen Christen in Südbabylonien aufgewachsen ist. Diese Tatsache war zwar schon bekannt, aber die Wissenschaftler wollten es nicht glauben. Jetzt wurde diese These voll und ganz bestätigt. Das bedeutet auch, dass alle Theorien, wonach Mani parthischer königlicher Herkunft gewesen sein soll, Phantasien sind. Es kommt häufiger vor, dass einem Begründer einer Weltreligion eine berühmte königliche Abstammung zugeschrieben wird.

Der *Kölner Mani-Kodex* sagt darüber nichts. Es zeigt sich, dass Mani ein jüdischer Junge war (seine Mutter hiess Mirjam), der sich gegen das Milieu, in dem er aufwuchs, auflehnte. Dort wurde immer wieder betont, dass der Teufel die linke Hand Gottes sei und dass uns auch das Böse aus Gottes (linker) Hand widerfahre. Mani, der lahm war, verweigerte sich, das zu glauben. Seiner Meinung nach war das Böse etwas, das ausserhalb von Gott existierte, eine Welt der Finsternis, eine eigenständige ungeordnete Begehrlichkeit. Mani war also kein Perser, wie die Ketzerjäger und manche Wissenschaftler von heute behaupten, sondern ein christlicher Jude, der, wie Millionen anderer Juden, in Babylonien wohnte. Und sein Dualismus von Gut und Böse, Geist und Materie, Reinheit und Begierde, Licht und Finsternis hat im Prinzip nichts mit der persischen Religion des Zarathustra zu tun.

Aus dem *Kölner Mani-Kodex* ergab sich ebenfalls, dass die Versöhnung zwischen Selbst und Ich, die *dualitudo* genannt wird, Mani viel mehr bedeutete als sein Dualismus. Schon vor der Entdeckung dieses Manuskriptes war bekannt, dass sich Mani im Alter von zwölf Jahren und danach im Alter von vierundzwanzig Jahren sein Zwilling- oder Paarbruder oder der Heilige Geist oder *Paraklet*, kurz sein Selbst, offenbart hatte. Jetzt wurde jedoch klar, dass dies das zentrale Thema seines Lebens und seiner Lehre gewesen war.

Zu dem Zeitpunkt also, als mein Leib die Vollendung ganz erreicht hatte, flog sofort jenes höchst wohlgestaltete und machtvolle Spiegelbild [meiner Gestalt] herab und erschien vor mir. (...)

Der Syzygos belehrte mich: ... und wer ich bin und was mein Leib ist, auf welche Weise ich gekommen bin und wie meine Ankunft in dieser Welt sich vollzog, wer ich unter denen geworden bin, die in ihrem Übermass am meisten ausgezeichnet sind, wie ich in diesen fleischlichen Leib gezeugt worden bin oder welcher Art die Frau gewesen ist, durch deren Hilfe ich in diesem Fleisch entbunden und geboren worden bin, und von wem ich... [dem Leibe nach] gezeugt worden bin.

Der Zwilling offenbarte Mani alle Geheimnisse des Pleromas:

Ich habe ihn erkannt und verstanden, dass er mein Selbst ist, von dem ich getrennt wurde. Ich habe bezeugt, dass ich selbst jener bin, ihm vollkommen gleich.

Der Zwilling begleitete Mani auf all seinen Reisen und inspirierte ihn ständig. Noch während seines Leidens im Gefängnis sah er die Augen seines ewigen Bruders auf sich gerichtet. Er wusste, dass sein Selbst auf ihn wartete, um zusammen mit ihm zum Pleroma zurückzukehren.

Mani wollte diese Erfahrung durch den Ritus institutionalisieren (der Manichäismus kannte keine Sakramente). So wie er selbst seinen Zwilling empfangen hatte, so erhielten die Katechumenen, wenn sie sich bei einer Art von Weihe von der Welt verabschiedeten, die Lichtgestalt.

Aber auch der Mythos des Manichäismus ist letztendlich der bildliche Ausdruck dieser ursprünglichen Erfahrung. Mani hat dazu Bausteine aus der jüdischen und gnostischen Tradition verwandt. Die zentrale Gestalt seiner Lehre ist der Urmensch, Gott selbst in Gestalt eines Kriegers, der entsandt wird, um das Reich der Finsternis zu bekämpfen. Der Urmensch wird besiegt, verliert das Bewusstsein, aber erwacht, wenn er von oben seinen Namen rufen hört. Er kehrt dann ins Reich des Lichtes zurück, muss aber seine Seele, die Jungfrau, Lichtelemente, im Chaos zurücklassen. Die gesamte Weltmaschine ist ausschliesslich dazu da, diese Lichtelemente zu erlösen und so die ursprüngliche Androgynie des Urmenschen wiederherzustellen.

Es fällt nicht schwer, den Ursprung dieser Vorstellung ausfindig zu machen. Der Prophet Ezechiel hatte die Glorie des Herrn als einen Menschen und ein Licht gesehen. Die jüdischen Christen, unter denen Mani aufwuchs, hatten die Glorie mit dem Messias, Jesus,

identifiziert. Ihr Prophet schaute in einer Vision den Christus als einen riesenhaften Mann, dem eine Frau, der Heilige Geist, gegenüberstand.

Der Tragödiendichter Ezechiel in Alexandrien berichtete von Phôs, dem Mann auf dem Thron, nicht Gott selbst, aber seine Glorie.

Und ein gewisser Zosimos von Panopolis erzählte eine Geschichte, die bei den Juden in Ägypten entstanden war: Phôs, der Mann, die anthropomorphe Offenbarungsgestalt Gottes, schöpfte einmal Luft im Paradies (eine Anspielung auf Genesis 3:8: Gott, der Herr, der sich beim Tagwind im Garten erging). Da überredeten sie (die niedrigeren *Archonten*, Weltherrscher) ihn, der schuldlos und unbefleckt war, sich mit dem irdischen Adam zu bekleiden. So ist der Gott-Mensch zum inneren Menschen in jedem Körper geworden. Und dieser Mensch ist bereits im jüdischen, gnostischen *Brief von Eugnostos androgyn*.

So wurde der Manichäismus die Krönung und Vollendung der gnostischen Tradition. Das kann aber nicht darüber hinwegtäuschen, dass die Inspiration für den systematischen Mythos die höchstpersönliche und höchst reelle Erfahrung von Manis Begegnung mit seinem Selbst war.

Der Mythos ist unglaublich kompliziert, lässt sich aber wie folgt zusammenfassen: Am Anfang waren zwei Prinzipien, ein gutes und ein böses, das Reich des Lichtes und das Reich der Finsternis. Im Reich des Lichtes wohnt Gott, "der Vater der Grösse", der mit seinem Licht, seiner Macht und seiner Weisheit eine *quaternio* (Viereinheit) bildet: "der Gott mit den vier Antlitzen". Im Reich der Finsternis wohnt der König der Finsternis. Er stieg aus seinem Gebiet auf, um in das Reich des Lichtes einzudringen. Daraufhin schuf der Vater der Grösse die Mutter des Lebens, und die Mutter des Lebens schuf den Urmenschen. Wenn Gott den Urmenschen entsendet, geht er eigentlich selbst. Der Urmensch und alle anderen Lichtgestalten sind Erscheinungen von Gott selbst.

Der Urmensch zog in seiner funkelnden Rüstung aus "fünf Lichtelementen" aus, um die Streitkräfte der Finsternis zurückzuschlagen. Aber sein Kampf endete in einer Niederlage, und der Urmensch wurde in der Finsternis in einem Zustand der Bewusstlosigkeit zurückgelassen. Dies ist auch ein Opfer Gottes, denn auf diese Weise konnte der Urmensch als Köder dienen, mit dem die Mächte der Finsternis gefangen und gezähmt werden konnten, damit sie das Reich des Lichtes nicht mehr angriffen. Als der Urmensch aus seiner Ohnmacht aufwachte, flehte er den Vater der Grösse an, ihm zu helfen. Von

oben kam zu ihm der Ruf (ein persönliches geistiges Wesen), der sein wahres Wesen aufdeckte. Darauf gab er die Antwort, auch ein geistiges Wesen. Danach kehrte der Urmensch ins Lichtreich zurück, aber er musste seine geistige Rüstung aus fünf Lichtelementen, die auch seine Seele oder seine Jungfrau (*anima*) genannt wurde, im Chaos zurücklassen. Die Abenteuer des Urmenschen werden in den koptischen *Manichäischen Psalmen*, die um 1930 in Medinet Madi (Ägypten) gefunden wurden, ausführlich beschrieben. Sie zeigen uns, wie dieser Mythos den Zustand eines jeden Manichäers widerspiegelte. Auch sie lebten in der Finsternis von Unbewusstheit und Materie, bis sie der Ruf des erlösenden Wortes erreichte, ihnen ihre wirkliche Identität offenbarte und sie so befähigte, wieder in die Welt des Lichtes einzutreten.

Die zurückgebliebenen Lichtelemente mussten nach der Rückkehr des Urmenschen noch erlöst werden. Dazu wurde die Welt als eine Mischung von Gut und Böse erschaffen:

1. Zuerst erschien der Lebende Geist aus dem Lichtreich und zeigte den Söhnen der Finsternis seine Formen. Das Licht, das sie verschlungen hatten, reinigte er und schuf die Sonne, den Mond und mehr als tausend Sterne. So ist die Welt entstanden.
2. Der Dritte Gesandte zeigte daraufhin seine männlichen und weiblichen Formen und wurde von allen Archonten (bösen Geistern), männlichen und weiblichen, gesehen. Sie wurden wollüstig und verschwendeten ihre natürlichen Säfte, die zu Meeresungeheuern, Bäumen und Tieren wurden. So ist das Leben der Pflanzen und Tiere entstanden.
3. Eine Lichtjungfrau erschien den männlichen Archonten als eine schöne Frau und den weiblichen Archonten als ein gut aussehender und lüsterner junger Mann. Sie entbrannten in Liebe und stellten ihr nach, aber die Jungfrau verschwand aus ihrem Blickfeld. Sie begannen zu schwitzen usw. Daraus entstand der Regen usw. So sind die Naturgewalten entstanden.

Diese Phantasien gehen letztendlich zurück auf Genesis 6:2: die Gottessöhne (Engel) sahen, dass die Töchter der Menschen schön waren, und sie nahmen sich zu Frauen, welche sie nur mochten.

Noch ist der Mensch nicht erschienen. Wie im *Apokryphon Johannis* sind Adam und Eva nach Mani von Ašaqlun (Saklas), dem Narren, dem Gott des Alten Testaments, und einem bösen Geist hervorgebracht

worden. Mani betrachtet dies als einen Prozess des Gebärens durch Föten, die von Saklas aufgeessen wurden. Daraus gehen Adam und Eva hervor. Der Mensch ist ein Produkt des Kannibalismus.

“Jesus der Lichtglanz”, eine göttliche Lichtgestalt, weckte Adam aus seinem Schlaf auf, damit er sich seines tiefsten Selbsts, des Lichtelementes, das immer noch in ihm lebte, bewusst wurde. Dies wiederholt sich während der ganzen Geschichte der Menschheit. Der Buddha wurde nach Indien entsandt, Zarathustra nach Persien, Jesus in den Westen. Die Lehre Jesu wurde entstellt. Deshalb wurde der Heilige Geist, der Paraklet und Geist der Wahrheit, den Jesus im Johannesevangelium (14:16) versprochen hatte, schliesslich zu Mani in Babylonien entsandt. Er war berufen, die entscheidende und letzte Offenbarung zu verkünden. Deshalb nannte Mani sich “der Apostel von Jesus Christus” und “das Siegel der Propheten”. Er muss wohl gedacht haben, dass er in den letzten Stunden der Welt lebte, vor der endgültigen Trennung von Licht und Finsternis.

Dann würde die “Erde von Licht”, auf der Gott und alle Erlösten wohnen, endlich von der Wunde, die ihr durch den Angriff der Finsternis zugefügt worden war, geheilt sein. Die Erde werde durch Feuer vernichtet, die Mächte der Finsternis in ihren ursprünglichen Bereich zurückgebracht und unbussfertige Sünder in einem grossen runden Ball, dem Globus, eingeschlossen. Zuletzt wird das Reich des Lichtes den ewigen Frieden geniessen, da es nicht länger von Angriffen der Finsternis bedroht wird. Erst dann wird der Dualismus Realität geworden sein.

Wenn man diesen Mythos aufmerksam liest, lässt sich leicht feststellen, dass er in bildlicher Sprache Manis Erfahrung der Einheit von Selbst und Ego zum Ausdruck bringt.

#### JAKOB BÖHME

Mythologie ist komplizierte Philosophie, Philosophie ist ausgereifte Mythologie. Philosophie ist eine Rationalisierung von irrationalen Bildern. Das wird nirgendwo deutlicher als in der Geschichte des deutschen Idealismus von Schelling, Hegel und Schleiermacher.

Im Jahre 1600 hatte der Schuster Jakob Böhme in Görlitz eine Vision, die er auf eine Erleuchtung durch den Geist zurückführte. Er sah den Widerschein des Lichtes auf einem Zinnbecher. Durch diesen Anblick wurde er in den innersten Grund, den Mittelpunkt



des Verborgenen, die geheime Natur eingeführt. In seiner Unsicherheit dachte er, es sei nur Einbildung. Er überquerte die vor seiner Wohnung gelegene Brücke über die Neisse und ging ins Grüne, um seine Wahnvorstellung loszuwerden. Aber seine Vision wurde nur stärker und klarer, so dass er mittels der Bilder gleichsam in das Herz und die innerste Natur hineinsehen konnte. Er wurde hierdurch mit grosser Freude überschüttet, schwieg still, lobte Gott, widmete sich seinen häuslichen Pflichten und der Erziehung seiner Kinder, ging mit jedem friedfertig und freundlich um und hat über das empfangene Licht und den inneren Wandel mit Gott und der Natur kaum oder nichts verlauten lassen. So berichtet sein Biograph Abraham von Franckenberg.

Böhme selbst hat in seinem Werk *Aurora* (19,1–26) auf seine komplizierte und undeutliche Art und Weise auch über seine Erfahrungen geschrieben. Er erzählt, er habe anfangs, wie die meisten Menschen, gedacht, der Himmel und Gott seien weit über ihm. Eine tiefe Trauer und Melancholie sei über ihn gekommen, als er “die grosse Tiefe dieser Welt” geschaut habe, in der er in allen Dingen Böses und Gutes fand, Liebe und Zorn, sowohl in Holz, Steinen, Erde und Elementen als auch in den Menschen und Tieren, wo es den Gottlosen genauso gut ging wie den Frommen, wenn nicht sogar besser, und wo die barbarischen Völker die besten Ländereien besaßen.

Deshalb kämpfte er mit Gott wie einst Jakob beim Fluss Jabbok und liess nicht nach, es sei denn, Er segnete ihn. Da ist sein Geist durch die Pforten der Hölle durchgebrochen bis in die innerste Geburt der Gottheit und dort umarmt worden, wie ein Bräutigam seine Braut umarmt.

Was aber das für ein Triumphieren im Geiste gewesen, kann ich nicht schreiben oder reden. Es lässt sich auch mit nichts vergleichen als nur mit dem, wo mitten im Tode das Leben geboren wird, und vergleicht sich der Auferstehung von den Toten.

In diesem Lichte hat mein Geist alsbald durch alles gesehen und an allen Kreaturen, sowohl an Kraut und Gras, Gott erkannt, wer der sei und wie der sei und was sein Wille sei. Auch so ist alsbald in diesem Lichte mein Willen gewachsen mit grossem Trieb, das Wesen Gottes zu beschreiben.

Es sollte jedoch noch einige Zeit dauern, ehe es dazu kam. 1612 schrieb er seine *Aurora*, 1619 *De tribus principiis*, dann, kurz vor seinem Tode, wie ein geistiger Platzregen die übrigen Bücher. Diese enthalten, wie so oft bei Werken von Autodidakten, grosse, zu der Zeit wissenschaftliche

Worte, alchemistische Begriffe, die nur halb verstanden wurden, kabbalistische Ausdrücke, die er von gelehrten Freunden aufgefangen hatte. Aber im Grunde ist es ganz einfach: Er hatte die Einheit der Gegensätze entdeckt. Und es steht bei ihm ausser Frage, dass diese Erfahrung Mythologie ist, keine Entdeckung der Vernunft. Man muss sich fragen, ob das nicht im gleichen Masse für diejenigen gilt, die seine Visionen rationalisiert haben, Schelling, Hegel, Karl Marx. Ist Böhme nicht eher ein Gnostiker? Seine Verwandtschaft mit der Gnosis wurde schon früh erkannt. 1699 verfasste der Böhmist Gottfried Arnold seine *Unparteyische Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie*. Darin werden die Gnostiker zum erstenmal in der Geschichte hoch bewertet. 1835 veröffentlichte der grosse Hegelianer Ferdinand Christian Baur sein gelehrtes Buch: *Die christliche Gnosis*, in dem er auf ausserordentlich wissenschaftliche Weise darlegte, was die alten Gnostiker den Berichten der Kirchenväter zufolge gelehrt haben. Danach fuhr er fort, dass auch die moderne Zeit ihre Gnosis kannte, und gab eine gediegene Übersicht über Böhmes Auffassungen, die, wie er nachweisen konnte, von Hegel, Schelling und Schleiermacher fortgeführt wurden. Hätte man sich dies vor Augen gehalten, so hätte man gewusst, dass die Gnosis immer als dritte Komponente des europäischen kulturellen Modells neben dem Glauben und der Vernunft existiert hat, und sich davor gehütet, diese Träume der Seher als rationale Philosophie zu betrachten. Wenn man Böhme und die Seinen als Gnostiker betrachtet, also als Menschen, die ihre inneren Erfahrungen auf den Bildschirm der Ewigkeit projizierten, dann versteht man seine Auffassungen viel besser. Das gilt insbesondere für seine Konzeption der Androgynie.

Die *Androgynie* war seit der Renaissance nicht unbekannt. Leone Ebreo hatte in seinen *Dialoghi d'Amore* an Platons *Symposion* erinnert, in dem der Komödiendichter Aristophanes erzählt, wie Mann und Frau einst eine Einheit gebildet hätten, aber durch Zeus' Zorn getrennt worden seien, so dass jeder von ihnen seitdem seine andere Hälfte suche, und das sei Eros. Leone wusste auch, dass Adam manchen Rabbinern zufolge sowohl männlich als weiblich gewesen sei, und war der Meinung, dass Plato seine Auffassungen von den Rabbinern übernommen habe (was natürlich Unsinn ist!). Auch in der Alchemie war der Hermaphrodit ein bekanntes Symbol. Aber eine solche Gelehrtheit war natürlich nicht die Quelle, aus der der Schuster schöpfte. Die Quelle war, wie immer, seine innere Erfahrung.

Mit seiner grossen Empfindsamkeit, die nicht von einer vernunftmässigen Entwicklung gehemmt worden war, hatte er das unbewusste Bild der Frau in sich selbst, die Anima, entdeckt. Und seiner Ansicht nach war eine solche Doppelgeschlechtlichkeit und Vollkommenheit auch in Gott vorhanden, der zeugt und gebärt. Oder noch deutlicher: da Adam das Bild Gottes genannt wird, ist er weder einseitig Mann oder einseitig Frau, sondern beides.

Adam war ein Mann und auch ein Weib, und dennoch keiner von beiden, sondern eine Jungfrau, voller Keuschheit, Sittsamkeit und Reinheit. Er hatte beide Tinkturen (Wesensmerkmale) vom Feuer und Lichte in sich.

Adam war mit der Weisheit, Sophia, einer göttlichen Frau, verlobt. Der Sündenfall setzte dem ein Ende. Während Adam schlief, wurde Eva seiner Rippe entnommen, damit er sich auf geschlechtliche Weise fortpflanzen könne. Adam herrschte über Eva, was weder für sie noch für ihn gut war. Der Geschlechterstreit (der, wie wir heute wissen, schlimmer ist als der Völker- oder Ständestreit) ist nach Böhme ein sündhafter Zustand, der nicht sein soll. Deshalb war er auch der Meinung, dass Christus, der selbst das Männliche und Weibliche in sich vereinte, gekommen war, um die ursprüngliche Androgynie wiederherzustellen und dem Menschen seine Ganzheit wiederzugeben. Das bedeutet im Prinzip, dass Mann und Frau gleich sind, und Böhme betont das auch immer wieder.

Aber erstaunt über seine eigene Entdeckung und sich deren Folgen noch nicht bewusst (denn die Einheit der Gegensätze schliesst natürlich die Gleichheit der Teile ein), drückt er sich manchmal noch sehr mannorientiert aus: "Darum wurde Christus von einer Jungfrau geboren, dass Er die weibliche Tinktur wieder heiligte, und *in die männliche Tinktur wandelte.*" Aus der Erkenntnis der Androgynie ergeben sich zwei Möglichkeiten:

1. Männlich und weiblich sind Einseitigkeiten, die ein Mann oder eine Frau überwinden muss, um wirklich Mensch werden zu können. Dieser Ansicht war Gichtel, ein Schüler Böhmes, der die Ehe abschaffen wollte.
2. Männlich und weiblich werden in einer Zwei-Einheit aufgehoben, die sich durch die monogame Ehe verwirklichen lässt. Dies lehrte der Böhmist Franz von Baader in der ersten Hälfte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts sowie der niederländische Theologe J.H. Gunning (1829–1905).

In der Antike lässt sich eine ähnliche Teilung feststellen. Im *Thomas-evangelium* (um 140), das sehr asketisch ist, wird gelehrt, dass Eva durch den Sündenfall aus Adam entstanden ist. Aus diesem Grund können Frauen nicht selig werden. Jede Frau muss zuerst ein Mann werden, erst dann kann sie sich, ebenso wie der Mann, über die Geschlechtlichkeit erheben und geistig werden: "Simon Petrus sagte zu ihnen: Maria möge von uns gehen! Denn die Frauen sind des Lebens nicht würdig. Jesus sprach: Seht, ich werde sie führen, um sie zum Manne zu machen, damit auch sie lebendiger Geist werde, euch Männern gleich. Denn jede Frau, die sich zum Manne machen wird, wird in das Königreich der Himmel eingehen." (Logion 114).

Merkwürdigerweise haben zahlreiche katholische Kirchenväter wiederholt, die Frau müsse ein Mann werden, um in den Himmel kommen zu können. Man spricht nur selten darüber, weil es den heutigen Auffassungen der römisch-katholischen Kirche so sehr widerspricht. Aber der Historiker muss sagen, dass dies im Grunde der Standpunkt des altkirchlichen Katholizismus ist.

Ganz anders das *Philippus-Evangelium*, das um 225 von einem Anhänger Valentins in Antiochia verfasst wurde. Die Valentiner befürworteten die Ehe, da Paaren und Gebären die Grundlage ihrer Religion bildeten. Gott ist männlich, Tiefe, und weiblich, Stille; jeder Aeon (geistiges Wesen) ist ein Ganzes, männliche Form und weiblicher Inhalt, die Hauptdarsteller der *divina tragedia* der Erlösung sind Christus und Sophia, Mann und Frau sind eins. Diese Gnostiker sagen sogar wörtlich, dass man jederzeit das Geheimnis des Ehebündnisses (*mysterium coniunctionis*) meditieren und praktizieren muss. Daher kann das *Philippus-Evangelium* sagen: "Das Mysterium der Hochzeit ist gross."

Das Ehebündnis verbindet die Gegensätze:

Als Eva in Adam war, gab es keinen Tod. Als sie sich von ihm trennte, entstand der Tod. Wiederum, wenn er sich mit ihr vereinigt und ihn zu sich nimmt, wird kein Tod mehr sein.

Es ist Christus, der den Zwiespalt der Geschlechter aufhebt:

Deshalb kam Christus, damit er die Trennung, die von Anfang an bestand, wieder beseitige und sie beide vereinige.

Die Einswerdung der Körper ist nach Meinung der Valentinianer das Symbol eines geistigen Ereignisses, die Verbindung des Menschen mit seinem Schutzengel, des Ego mit dem wahren, unbewussten

Selbst. Sie feierten sogar ein spezielles Sakrament, das Sakrament des Brautgemachs, das diese geistige Einswerdung bewirken sollte. Der Erwählte bekam dann seinen Engel.

So existierte in der Urkirche die gleiche Trennung wie zwischen Gichtel und Von Baader: auf Grund der Androgynie lehnte Thomas die Ehe ab und Philipus bejahte sie. Aus der Sicht der Urkirche besteht kein Zweifel, dass Böhmes Offenbarungen gnostischen Charakter haben.

Seine Berufung auf die Bibel belegt dies ebenso. Der Philosoph geht von seiner Vernunft aus und lehnt die Bibel ab, der Dogmatiker legt die Bibel zugrunde und verwirft die innere Erfahrung. Böhme geht von seiner Erfahrung aus und liest die Bibel unter diesem Gesichtspunkt. Das bringt ihn zu der Aussage, dass die Welt aus Gott geschaffen wurde, aus Gott hervorgeht, eine Emanation Gottes ist. Das lehrten die Gnostiker auch (die Welt ist ein Lächeln und eine Träne der Weisheit). Aber die Dogmatiker des Katholizismus, Judentums und Islams lasen in der Bibel, dass die Welt aus dem Nichts geschaffen wurde, und das ist genau das Gegenteil.

Böhme besass nicht die Bildung, etwas zu verneinen, was zwar in der Bibel stand, aber nicht seiner geistigen Erfahrung entsprach. Dies hat allerdings Valentin getan. Für ihn war Jehova ein Symbol – und nicht mehr als ein Symbol des Unbekannten Gottes. Mani besass einen ausserordentlich scharfen Blick für die Unzulänglichkeiten des Alten Testaments. Im Grunde machten sie alle drei das gleiche: sie prüften die Heilige Schrift an ihrer Erfahrung und nicht umgekehrt. In ihrer Erfahrung fanden sie denselben Gott. Auf den ersten Blick scheint das nicht so zu sein, da sie die Sprache ihrer Zeit und Umgebung sprachen. Deshalb könnte man meinen, der Unbekannte Gott Valentins sei der Gott der griechischen Philosophie, weil die Gnostiker und Philosophen den Grund des Seins mit Verneinungen andeuteten. Böhme dagegen, der vor allem den Zorn Gottes betont, mutet orthodox an.

In Wirklichkeit ist der Gott von Valentin, Mani und Böhme ein leidender Gott, der in der Materie eingeschlossen ist und zu seiner Erlösung den Menschen braucht. Valentins Schutzengel brauchen ihre irdischen Entsprechungen, weil sie ohne sie unvollständig sind und nicht ins Pleroma eingehen können. Der leidende Christus Manis, *Jesus patibilis*, ist im All gekreuzigt, “an jedem Baum hängend” (*omni suspensus ex ligno*: Faustus bei Augustinus, *C. Faust.* XX,2) und wird durch die geistigen Übungen der Erwählten aus der Materie befreit.

Der Gott Böhmes ist ein Ozean des Zorns und der Liebe, des Lichtes und der Finsternis, den es hungert und dürstet nach Bewusstwerdung.  
Der Gott der gnostischen Erfahrung ist Sein in Bewegung.

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- Die Geburt des Pleromas
- Der Ursprung des Bösen
- Die Emanation des Hl. Geistes
- Die Aussendung des Christus
- Der Ursprung der Pneumatiker
- Die Erschaffung der sichtbaren Welt
- Der Sieg über den Tod
- Das Ende der Weltgeschichte



## CHAPTER TEN

### GNOSIS AND CULTURE\*

Gnosis is a Greek word that means “knowledge.” It comes from the Indo-European root *gno* from which the English word “knowledge” is derived. In Late Antiquity gnosis was used to designate an intuitive awareness of hidden mysteries as opposed to discursive, analytical knowledge.

Gnostic comes from the Greek *gnōstikos*, knowledgeable. It was used in classical times as an adjective, never as a substantive noun. At the beginning of the Christian era, in Alexandria, there was a school of rebellious Jews who called themselves “Gnostics,” knowers. Later they superficially christianized their views and brought forth such writings as the *Apocryphon of John*, ca. 100. They venerated the Unknown God beyond god and held that the human self was related to this Ground of Being. Until this day there lives in Iran and Iraq a sect that adheres to the same views. They are called Mandaeans, which means nothing else than “Gnostics.” In the second century there were other Christian movements, in Alexandria and elsewhere, whose views resembled those of the Gnostics, but who did not call themselves Gnostics. About 200 there was a catholic thinker in Alexandria, Clemens Alexandrinus, who called himself a “true gnostic.” This led to a generalization and to the practice of designating all leaders of movements later expelled from the Catholic church as Gnostics.

Gnosticism or gnosis is a modern invention. It is used by present-day scholars to indicate all currents of pluriform antiquity that are not Catholic, such as Jewish Christianity, Encratism (rejection of marriage), and related currents. This has led to an enormous confusion. The designation should be limited to those schools and religions that are ostensibly dependent upon the myth of the *Apocryphon of John*, to Valentinians, to adherents of Basilides, and to Marcionites.

Gnosticism is not exclusively a Christian phenomenon. Jewish kabbalism has its origins in the heterodox Jewry of Alexandria, which

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produced the *Apocryphon of John*. The appellation “Adam Qadmon” (archetypal Adam), well known from the kabbala, has been found in pre-Christian gnostic documents found at Nag Hammadi in 1945, in the form of “Geradamas,” that is, “old, archetypal Adam.” In the ninth century, these same Jewish revolutionaries gave rise, in southern Iraq, to the Islamic gnosis of the Ismaili, the religion of the Aga Khan.

All these Gnostics proclaimed a new God, after the old one had failed. It is not correct, however, as Hans Jonas held, that they disparaged the world excessively. A certain depreciation of matter and sex is characteristic of many philosophical schools of the Greeks, of Plato and the Platonists, and of the Stoic philosopher Posidonius and his followers. Christian Catholics had very strong reservations about the world and eros. The Gnostics were no exception to the rule. The large majority of them, however, believed that the world was brought forward to serve as a catharsis for the spirit, to make men and women conscious of their unconscious selves, a belief that, in effect, redeems the phenomenal world.

Gnosticism found its achievement and fulfilment in Manichaeism. As the *Cologne Mani Codex* shows, Mani, a Jewish boy who lived from 216 to 277, was brought up in a Jewish Christian community in Southern Mesopotamia. These people believed that God was the origin of both good and evil. Mani, who was a cripple, abhorred these views. At the age of twelve, and again at twenty-four, he was confronted with a vision of his self, his guardian angel or twin or Holy Spirit, who revealed to him that light and darkness, soul and matter, good and evil are radically opposed to each other. After that he wandered through Asia to proclaim the new doctrine and to found a gnostic Christian church, which has existed for more than a thousand years in Asia.

The Middle Ages, too, had their Gnostics. They were sectarians called Albigensians or Cathars, members of a gnostic antichurch that was founded in 1167 at Saint Felix de Caraman, near Toulouse, and who lived in southern France and northern Italy. The Cathars were bloodily persecuted by the Roman Catholic Inquisition. They owed most of their ideas to the Bogomils of Bulgaria and eastern Europe, who, in turn, went back to the Paulicians, Barbeliots and Messalians of Armenia, where ancient Gnosticism had survived.

According to medieval sources, the Bogomils and the Cathars were a mixture of Messalianism and Paulicianism. This seems to be true. Messalianism (a name based on a word that means “prayers”) was

a charismatic movement in Mesopotamia and Armenia. Messalians were divided into two classes, perfects and believers. The perfects were unmarried, wandered around in poverty, and were familiar with the *Gospel of Thomas*. The Messalians were not Gnostics. They moved from Mesopotamia to Armenia, where they encountered the Paulicians.

The Paulicians were Gnostics. They were a warlike tribe in Armenia, who had inherited the ideas of the Barbeliots and Marcionites and rejected the Old Testament. They had fled to the outskirts of the empire when persecuted by the Catholic authorities, later they were transported to Bulgaria, the cradle of Bogomolism.

There is a direct link between ancient Gnosticism and Catharism. The Cathars held that the creator of the world, Satanael, had usurped the name of God, but that he had subsequently been unmasked and told that he was not really God. In the same way, innumerable passages in the Nag Hammadi writings argue that the demiurge of this world pretended to be the only God, only to be informed that the Unknown God above him was the authentic deity. As Joseph Campbell has said, "The problem with Jehovah is that he thinks he is God."<sup>1</sup> This concept is so rebellious and strange that there must be a historical connection.

Gnosis is, in fact, the third component of European culture. There has always been faith, which goes back to Sinai and Golgotha. There has always been rationalism, which can be traced back to Athens and Ionia. There have always been people who had inner experiences and expressed themselves in imaginative thinking. Valentinus had a vision of a newborn child, the Logos or Christ, and started to compose his "tragic myth." Mani encountered his twin, the Holy spirit, and said, "I recognized him that he was my Self from which I had been separated."<sup>2</sup> Jacob Boehme saw a ray of light in a vessel and wrote his fantastic books. Gnosis originated in Egyptian Alexandria at the beginning of our era. Three cities, therefore, Alexandria, together with Jerusalem and Athens, determined the history of the West.

In modern times, gnosis was generated spontaneously in the heart of the German shoemaker Boehme, who influenced William Blake, Isaac Newton, and the New England transcendentalists, especially

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Campbell, in private conversation at the "C.G. Jung and the Humanities" Conference, Hofstra University, November 1986.

<sup>2</sup> R. Cameron and A.J. Dewey, *The Cologne Mani Codex* (Missoula 1979) 15.

Emerson. In 1600, Boehme had a vision of a lovely vessel of joyous splendor, which initiated him into the innermost ground and core of nature's mysteries. Not knowing whether or not this vision was an illusion, he left his house in Görlitz and crossed over a bridge to the green countryside across the river. The visionary experience became more intense and clear. Boehme could intuit the heart of nature, so that he was overwhelmed with great joy, praised God, and kept silent about the illumination he had received. Much later, he wrote his imaginative books about his experience in which he used alchemistic terms and showed some familiarity with Jewish kabbalism. But his real discovery was the union of opposites, of darkness and light, hate and love, evil and good.

Gottfried Arnold, a pious, radical, and extremely learned professor of church history, was a follower of Boehme. In 1699, disgruntled by orthodoxy, he wrote a book about the history of the church and the heresies, which he called *The Impartial History of the Church and the Heretics*, probably the most partisan writing ever published. The book exploded like a time bomb and caused a universal sensation. It was no wonder, since Arnold depicted the history of the church as a continuous story of decadence and perversity, and described all orthodox teachers, even Lutherans, as hypocrites. The heretics, on the other hand, he described as innocent lambs and true Christians. The heresies, in his view, were part of the history of the church and should be studied with the same empathy as orthodox teachings. Among Arnold's favorites were the ancient Gnostics, which he knew exclusively through the works of Catholic heresy hunters, but whose importance and depth he sensed nevertheless.

This had important consequences for Western culture, because among Arnold's many readers, there was one who was perhaps the greatest poet of all time. In September 1768, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who had been studying in Leipzig, fell ill and returned home. There he met, through his mother, a group of devout people who came together regularly for prayer meetings. These were pietists, some of whom read kabbalistic texts, devoted themselves to alchemy, and read the Gnostic books of Jacob Boehme. Occultism made up a goodly part of their pious beliefs. It was through these pietists that Goethe was introduced to Arnold's book, which was to influence his thought profoundly. He discovered that the heretics, considered mad and godless, were actually not so strange. Gnostic ideas, in particular, made a deep and lasting impression on him. All gnostic systems

start in heaven, run their course on earth, and then return to heaven. Furthermore, Gnostics believe that salvation is a necessity and that a spiritual person cannot be lost. Goethe liked all this immensely. In his youthful fervour he devised a gnostic system for himself, a cosmology, based upon the alternation of *systole*, concentration, and *dias-tole*, expansion. Later, when he created his *Faust*, he began the poem with a prologue in heaven, in accordance with the gnostic systems, and then described the development of Faust on earth. Only toward the end of his life was Goethe able to complete the gnostic cycle of his great work by rewarding Faust with his elevation into heaven.

Goethe's friend, Wilhelm von Humboldt, had visited the monastery of Montserrat, situated on towering grey peaks, in Catalonia, Spain. It was a numinous landscape, in which monks venerated a mysterious Black Madonna, a tiny figure in an enormous church. Von Humboldt, deeply impressed, wrote an enthusiastic report to his old friend Goethe. His description so inspired Goethe that he wrote down the final scene of his Faust poem: the monks adoring the glorious Mother on their mountaintop; she, manifesting herself and saving Faust. This is not simply the Virgin Mary pitying a poor sinner; Faust is saved because he is—and only for as long as he remains—a noble member of the spiritual world. His salvation is not an act of God but a process that, of its own necessity, moves toward completion: "Saved from evil is the noble member of the spiritual world."<sup>3</sup> The Mother is not simply the Black Madonna of Montserrat; she is the eternally feminine or, rather, the womanly eternal. The poem ends: "The eternally feminine elevates us to herself."<sup>4</sup> This is Goethe's last word: the Mother is a mask of God; God is a woman.

This revolutionary vision had incubated and matured over a long time. Before Goethe, Boehme had written a good deal about Sophia, the bride of the Lord and of the wise man—the goddess who manifested the Ground of Being. Arnold had collected passages from the Bible about Sophia in order to provide a biblical foundation for such an unorthodox idea. In his *Impartial History*, he mentioned the gnostic concept of a goddess of wisdom, Sophia, who was a mysterious representation of a divine secret, the *prima materia*, the primeval foundation of all creation.

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<sup>3</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust II* (Frankfurt 1976) 396.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 383.

Goethe had absorbed all this and, as an old man, returned to the images of his youth. By making his hero return to the divine Sophia above, he made his *Faust* a gnostic myth. Goethe coined and immortalized the words—everyone knows them: “the eternally feminine”—that sum up the gnostic experience, a tradition that runs from the ancient Gnostics to modern sages like Boehme, Blake, and Goethe, and later to Steiner, Jung, and Hesse.

Gnosis, I repeat, was the third component of the Western cultural tradition, alongside the rationalism of philosophy and the faith of the churches. Several critics of our age have discerned this importance of gnosis for our Western culture, but, in accordance with the ancient ecclesiastical heresy hunters, they considered it to be a negative factor. Foremost among them were Denis de Rougemont and Erik Vögelin.

Denis de Rougemont, a Swiss essayist who spent the war years in the United States, published his influential book *L'amour et l'Occident* in 1939. It is difficult to understand now why it made such a deep impression upon my generation. His thesis was that the Cathars of Southern France were responsible for the celebration and veneration of adultery in literature, both in the Middle Ages and in modern times: (1) the perfects of Catharism did not marry and sometimes preferred to die, the so-called *endura*; (2) the poetry of the troubadours, which later originated in southern France, celebrated courtly love, that is, the devotion of a knight for his lady, who was not his wife; and (3) adultery is treated as an ideal in romances such as *Tristan and Isolde*. From these facts, de Rougemont draws a direct line to modern poetry and art, not only to Wagner but to almost everybody. The Cathars were to blame, in his opinion, because they were said to be the heirs of the Manichaeans who rejected marriage. In contrast to this, de Rougemont posits the marital fidelity of Christian orthodoxy as the true alternative and ideal solution.

What are we to think of these generalizations? It is true that adultery is a source of artistic inspiration, but should we be so severe on the weakness and frailty of human nature? Even de Rougemont must have changed his mind later, because he divorced his wife after the war. What is important here is that there is not a shred of evidence to prove that the troubadours were Cathars, or that the medieval romance was of Cathar inspiration, or that the Cathars were, in essence, medieval Manichaeans. Manichaeism had been completely

annihilated both in the western and eastern Roman Empire before the end of the sixth century.

Erik Vögelin, a refugee from Austria, who taught at St. Louis, Stanford, and Munich, knew Gnosticism well, though mainly through secondary literature. According to him, the essence of gnosis is that Gnostics want to destroy the world and humanity and murder God. This tendency could also be observed in the millenarian, revolutionary groups of the Middle Ages, and in such figures as Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche. Vögelin applied his insights to political science. Marxists, National Socialists, and liberals, he declared, all want to destroy or at least change the world. Greek thinkers like Plato and Aristotle, on the other hand, argue that order should be maintained in the state, because it reflects the immutable laws of cosmic order. Moreover, the people of Israel had been delivered from Egypt and its pagan idols and had learned to accept history as a source of divine revelation. Conservatism, Vögelin concludes, with its stress on order and history, is therefore the legitimate heir of Greece and Israel.

These ideas had a tremendous impact because they were well researched and profound. Nevertheless they contain a serious flaw. Vögelin is much indebted to Hans Jonas, who thought that the rejection of the world was typical and characteristic of ancient Gnosticism. This is not correct. As already mentioned, all movements of Late Antiquity, including Neoplatonism and Catholicism, had their reservations about the material world. Gnostics, too, were suspicious of its creator, whom they held to be a lower demiurge. But as the *Tripartite Tractate*, one of the writings of the *Jung Codex*, demonstrates, this was not an exclusionary tenet of their belief. This treatise is incredibly optimistic: the world exists, matter exists, evil exists, the soul exists to train the spirit and make it conscious. The logos has to go through the *inferno* of matter and through the *purgatorio* of religion and ethics in order to acquire, through Christ, the liberation of the spirit. It is not the rejection of the world but the discovery of the unconscious self and the dynamic concept of God as Being-in-movement that is characteristic of Gnosticism.

Vögelin's views should be corrected in the light of the new discoveries. And as far as murder is concerned, the Gnostics have a good record. No ancient gnostic or Manichee, no Bogomil or Cathar, no follower of Boehme or Blake, ever killed a Catholic. The Manichaeans and the Cathars were the only Christians ever to have lived

according to the Sermon on the Mount. It is preposterous to put them on the same level with murderous Marx and bloody Nietzsche. Gnosticism, as distinguished from millenarianism and anabaptism, was nonviolent and apolitical. Is there any other faith or creed of which the same can be said?

The position of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, in his book *Montaillou*, is somewhat different from that of de Rougemont and Vögelin: he does not attack gnosis, he ignores it. Le Roy Ladurie offers a very readable and attractive description, gleaned from detailed Inquisition records, of life in a French village near the Spanish border in the Pyrenees, between 1294 and 1324, where Cathars and Catholics lived together. His book represents sociology or social geography rather than historiography. In fact, what he has to say about the history of the Cathars is rather shallow. According to Le Roy Ladurie, Catharism is one of the chief heresies of the Middle Ages. It first appeared in the twelfth or thirteenth century in Languedoc and northern Italy, and in slightly different forms in the Balkans as well. It may have been affected by distant Oriental or Manichaeic influences, but this, in his view, is only a hypothesis. Le Roy Ladurie is absolutely certain, on the other hand, that Catharism foreshadowed the great Protestant revolt of the Reformation three centuries later. His statements are full of errors and prejudices. First, Le Roy Ladurie ignores the fact that gnosis is a perennial philosophy, the “antibody,” so to speak, in the Catholic “bloodstream.” Second, the Reformation had nothing to do with gnosis; it was and is a reformed, transformed continuation of the Roman Catholic church, as its ideal name *reformatata ecclesia catholica* indicates. Catharism was not a heresy but a powerful counterchurch, founded in 1167 at the synod of Saint Felix de Caraman near Toulouse by Nikita, a Bogomil bishop from eastern Europe. Both the Bogomils and the Cathars were Gnostics. They believed that an evil demiurge called Satanael had created this world. Beyond this shared belief, it is quite clear that the Cathars had, in fact, a certain originality. They believed in reincarnation, for example, whereas there is no evidence to suggest that the Bogomils had this belief. It is true that Manichaeism, on the other hand, believed in reincarnation. But Catharism does not owe anything to Manichaeism, since, as already mentioned, Manichaeism had been wiped out completely in the western and eastern Roman Empire long before the rise of Catharism and its avatars in eastern Europe.

## JUNG AND GNOSIS

It was a well-kept secret twenty years ago, but today is common knowledge, that Hermann Hesse, when writing his influential book *Demian*, was leaning heavily on the *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*, which Jung had written in 1915. One need only quote a few passages from Jung and then from Hesse to demonstrate this fact: "Hard to know is the deity of Abraxas. Its power is the greatest because man perceiveth it not. From the sun he draweth the *summum bonum* (the highest good); from the devil the *infimum malum* (the greatest evil); but from Abraxas Life, altogether indefinite, the mother of good and evil."<sup>5</sup>

Even more relevant is Jung's description of the first mandala that he ever drew (in 1916): "At the bottom of this universe, there is the dark Abraxas, the source and origin of everything. . . . From him springs the tree of life, its left branches symbolize the warmth of natural libido; its right, the love of God. Alongside the tree are the dove of the Holy Spirit, a female being, and celestial mother, Sophia, who pours from a chalice. The tree brings forth a child, the Self, called Erikapaios or Phanes, which are Orphic names for Eros, who breaks the world egg and creates the world."<sup>6</sup>

The following passage from Hesse's *Demian* contains almost identical images: "The bird fights its way out of the egg. The egg is the world. Who would be born must first destroy a world. The bird flies to God. That God's name is Abraxas. . . . Abraxas is a godhead whose symbolic task is the uniting of godly and devilish elements. . . . Abraxas was the God who was both god and devil."<sup>7</sup>

We know the source of these images. Jung's unknown and unknowable Godhead was inspired by Basilides, a profound gnostic from Alexandria, A.D. 150: "There was a time when there was nothing; not even the nothing was there, but simply, clearly, and without any sophistry, there was nothing at all."<sup>8</sup> Abraxas is a well-known figure on magic gems of Antiquity that symbolizes the Godhead Iao, who combines heaven and earth, light and dark. Jung was also familiar

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<sup>5</sup> C.G. Jung, *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*, in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffé, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York 1965) 383.

<sup>6</sup> C.G. Jung, *Bild und Wort* (Olten 1977) 76; my translation.

<sup>7</sup> Herman Hesse, *Demian*, trans. Michael Roloff and Michael Lebeck (New York 1970) 78.

<sup>8</sup> Basilides, in Hippolytus, *Refutatio* VII, 20 (ed. Wendland, Berlin 1916) 195.



with a relief of Phanes as a naked youth whose feet, hoofed like the goatlegs of the Greek god Pan, are standing on an upturned hemisphere, the world egg. Above his curly head, adorned with five shining rays, is the other half of the world egg.

Hesse had picked up this. The bird that breaks forth from the egg became, for him, a symbol of his own individuation. From this ancient symbol, Hesse created a universal symbol, a fitting expression for his and our generation's most profound aspiration for wholeness, for the new being, for the healing of the split.

That was before the Nag Hammadi discoveries. In 1945, an Egyptian called Mohammed Ali—a blood avenger who proudly told me that he had eaten the heart of the victim he had killed—found a jar containing Coptic manuscripts with unknown gnostic texts. While he was in prison his mother had used some of them as kindling in her stove; the rest, some thirteen codices (books) containing fifty-two mostly unknown writings, he sold for about sixty dollars. Today, they would be worth about forty million dollars.

On May 10, 1952, I acquired one of the codices with Jung's help, the so-called *Jung Codex*, which contains five unknown scriptures from the school of Valentinus, from the second century A.D. The *Gospel of Truth* is the best known of the five. It is a gnostic meditation on the gospel written by Valentinus himself. It contains passages that are so beautiful that nothing in ancient literature, pagan or Christian, between the parables of Jesus and the *Confessions* of Augustine, can rival them. In one passage, the state of unconsciousness is compared to a nightmare: "One flees, one knows not where, or one remains at the same spot when endeavouring to go forward, in the pursuit of one knows not whom. One is in battle, one gives blows, one receives blows. Or one falls from a great height or one flies through the air without having wings. At other times it is as if one met death at the hands of an invisible murderer, without being pursued by anyone. Or it seems as if one were murdering one's neighbours: one's hands are full of blood."<sup>9</sup> Life in this world is compared to the journey of a mountaineer who has lost his way and his companions in the fog, until he hears his name called: "Therefore a gnostic has something transcendental. When he is called, he hears, he answers, he directs himself to Him who calls him and returns to Him.... He

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. James Robinson (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (Leiden 1984) 43.

who thus possesses gnosis knows whence he comes and whither he goes. . . .”<sup>10</sup>

The *Gospel of Truth* also contains an ecstatic confession. Valentinus explains quite candidly that he has sojourned in the Pleroma, the spiritual world of the eons, situated high above the seven heavens of the planets and the firmament of the fixed stars; the Pleroma where one encounters one’s image and heavenly counterpart, the guardian angel or self, with whom one celebrates even here and now during one’s lifetime the *mysterium coniunctionis* (a Valentinian expression), the sacred marriage of male and female, self and ego, the sacred marriage of wholeness and completion. Valentinus states that he has experienced this mystery: “This is the place of the blessed; this is their place. For the rest, then, may they who dwell in lower places know that it is not fitting for me, after having been in this place of rest, to say anything more. But it is there that I shall dwell to devote myself at all times to God the Father of the All, and to the true brethren and sisters, those upon whom the love of the Father is poured out and in whose midst there is no eclipse of God.”<sup>11</sup>

It was this passage that inspired a famous contemporary critic, Harold Bloom, professor of literature at Yale University, to write a novel—I call it a “gnovel”—titled *The Flight to Lucifer*, in which he translated the ecstatic gnostic experience into a space-travel experience. It is gratifying of course, to see ancient scriptures one has discovered enter modern culture and be assimilated to contemporary tastes, but when one compares the original with the adaptation, one notices a remarkable difference. In Valentinus’s account, Christ is the focus of his heart and thought. It is Christ who reveals the gnosis of the Unknown God and the unknown self to an unconscious humanity. Christ is the Horos, whose illumination restores, confirms, and heals the bewildered mind of Sophia, worldly wisdom. In Bloom’s account, Christ is never even mentioned. Is his translation treason? Or does it mean that modern men and women are too empty and shallow to understand Valentinus?

Jung’s reaction seems more scholarly and dignified. When the discovery and acquisition of the *Jung Codex* was to be announced in 1953, a number of women in his entourage tried to persuade him

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 40.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 48.

not to attend the meeting where the presentation was to take place. They feared Jung would be branded a gnostic, whereas they wanted to present their hero as a meticulous scholar and scientist. Fortunately, Jung had the wisdom to understand the great value of the gnostic texts, which he had generously helped to acquire. It was in such an atmosphere of suspicion, discord, and insinuation, that Jung gave a reserved and scholarly speech on the psychological significance of the gnostic texts, of the *Gospel of Truth* in particular (*CW* 18: Addenda), which I paraphrase here:

Jung observed that this was not a gospel in the usual sense of the word, but rather a commentary on the gospel, which attempted to assimilate the strange and difficult content of the Christian message at the level of the Hellenistic-Egyptian spiritual world of that period. For the gospel's author, Christ was a metaphysical figure, a bringer of light, who had come from the Father to illuminate human unconsciousness, and to lead the individual back to his or her origin through self-knowledge. The symbols generated by the reception of the gospel reveal the reaction of the psyche, namely the unconscious, which responds with archetypal images, indicating how deeply the message has penetrated into the depths of the psyche and how the unconscious interprets the figure of Christ. These symbolic reactions, says Jung, began with Gnosticism and continued, despite suppression and neglect, through the Middle Ages to the present. Even today such archetypal images can emerge spontaneously in healthy people as well as in patients. As a rule, however, modern men and women must be made conscious of their dark side with the help of artificial means, because they have forgotten the fundamental problem of Christianity, the moral and spiritual *agnosia* of the purely natural being. Christianity has brought considerable progress to the development of consciousness, and everywhere that this progress has not come to a standstill new receptions can be observed. Even Judaism has produced a process parallel to these Christian receptions, namely the kabbala.

The closest parallel to Christian Gnosticism, however, is to be found in alchemy. And today, it is psychological analysis that continues the millennial process of coming-to-consciousness, producing the same symbols as did Gnosticism, kabbalism, and hermetic philosophy. All these traditions show the same tendency to integrate the figure of the Son of Man into the innermost core of the personal-

ity while expanding it to a dimension comparable to the *purusha atman* of Hinduism.

Jung's interpretation of the *Gospel of Truth* and of Gnosticism in general was accurate. The gnostic is in search of God and of self. The symbol for this search was the Son of Man who revealed the Unknown God and at the same time represented the archetype and the idea of the human. Jung, a genius, was able to interpret what was expressed in the gnostic writings, whose meaning was not understood at that time. He was familiar with the prophet Ezekiel's vision of the Man on the chariot-throne, and he was familiar with Adam Qadmon of the kabbala, and so he was able to divine the meaning of the newly discovered gnostic manuscripts. The gnostic Son of Man, the god-man, is at the same time the self of the individual as well as the world-spirit, the Indian *purusha*. It was Jung's conviction that the Christian myth of the Son of Man would be the religious symbol that will dominate the future. And so the central symbol of the *Gospel of Truth* and of Christianity, the Son of Man, the god-man, continues to be relevant for modern believers because it reveals and expresses the core of their personality.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

The history of Islamic Gnosticism has been described by Heinz Halm (*Kosmologie und Heilslehre der frühen Ismailiya*, Wiesbaden 1978 and *Die Islamische Gnosis*, Zürich 1982). The Islamic Gnostics venerated for instance Kuni, the creative principle, who is feminine and they thought that there is nothing, no God, above her (a typically Gnostic theme). These currents started in the ninth century in Southern Iraq, where Jewish and Christian Gnostics but also Mandaeans and Manichaeans had survived. They continue until this day to transmit Gnostic traditions in an Islamic disguise.

The world history of Gnosis and its influence on culture has still to be written. So much can be said that Isaac Bashevis Singer and Marc Chagall, Goethe and William Blake, Carl Gustav Jung and Harry Mulish represent a Jewish, Christian, and Hermetic shade of Gnosis.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### GNOSTICISM\*

*Gnōsis* (“knowledge”) is a Greek word of Indo-European origin, related to the English *to know* and the Sanskrit *jñāna*. The term has long been used in comparative religion to indicate a current of Antiquity that stressed awareness of the divine mysteries. This was held to be obtained either by direct experience of a revelation or by initiation into the secret, esoteric tradition of such revelations.

#### PRE-CHRISTIAN GNOSIS

The experience of gnosis was highly esteemed at the beginning of our era in various religious and philosophical circles of Aramaic and Greco-Roman civilization. It is a key word in the scrolls of the Jews of the Essene sect found at Qumran. In the canonical *Gospel of John*, Jesus is quoted as having said at the Last Supper: “This is [*not*: will be] eternal life, that they know [*not*: believe in] Thee [here and now], and know Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Not even the prevailing philosophy of the time, so-called Middle Platonism, was completely beyond the influence of this general movement. Middle Platonism was primarily religious and otherworldly; it distinguished between discursive reasoning and intuition and taught the affinity of the soul with the godhead, basing these teachings upon an oral tradition of the Platonic schools. The writings of Hermes Trismegistus (“thrice-greatest Hermes”, identified with the Egyptian god Thoth) reflect the same atmosphere. These eighteen treatises, of which *Poimandres* and *Asclepius* are the most important, originate in the proverbial wisdom of ancient Egypt. A saying in a recently discovered Armenian collection attributed to Hermes Trismegistus is: “He who knows himself, knows the All.” The author of *Poimandres* expresses the same insight: “Let spiritual man know himself, then he will know that he is immortal and that Eros is the origin of death, and he will

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\* Previously published in: *Religions of Antiquity*. Ed. Mircea Eliade, London, MacMillan, 1989, 259–271.

know the All.” In order to illustrate this saying the author tells the story of a divine being, Anthropos (Man), who becomes enamoured of the world of (lower) nature and so falls into a material body. Most Hermetic treatises take up a short saying and expound on it in this manner. They also preserve the impact of Egyptian mythology. The ancient Egyptians spoke freely about sexual intercourse and about the homosexual behaviour of their gods. The explicit sexual imagery of Egyptian mythology was adopted in a Hermetic prayer that addresses the spouse of God in the following words: “We know thee, womb pregnant by the phallus of the Father.”

The idea of emanation was also prominent in Egyptian religion. Egyptian myth depicts the Nile as tears of the sun god Re. This concept too is found in Hermetic literature. On the other hand, the same writings show the influence of Greek philosophy; indeed, there was a Platonic school of Eudorus in Alexandria. And the impact of the biblical book of Genesis and that of Jewish mysticism are only too obvious. Christian influences, though, are completely absent from the so-called *Corpus Hermeticum*. The treatises in this group of works were all written around the beginning of the Christian era in Alexandria. They appear to be the scriptures of a school of mystics, a sort of lodge that practiced spiritualized sacraments such as “the bath of rebirth”, a holy meal, and the kiss of peace.

#### GNOSTICISM

Ever since the congress on the origins of Gnosticism held at Messina, Italy, in 1966, scholars have made a distinction between gnosis and Gnosticism. *Gnosticism* is a modern term, not attested in Late Antiquity. Even the substantive *gnostic* (Gr., *gnōstikos*, “knower”), found in patristic writings, was never used to indicate a general spiritual movement but was applied only to a single, particular sect. Today Gnosticism is defined as a religion in its own right, whose myths state that the Unknown God is not the creator (demiurge, YHVH); that the world is an error, the consequence of a fall and split within the deity; and that man, spiritual man, is alien to the natural world and related to the deity and becomes conscious of his deepest Self when he hears the word of revelation. Not sin or guilt, but unconsciousness, is the cause of evil.

Until recent times the gnostic religion was almost exclusively known by reports of its opponents, ecclesiastical heresiologists such as Irenaeus (ca. 180 C.E.), Hippolytus (ca. 200), and Epiphanius (ca. 350). Not

until the eighteenth century were two primary sources, the *Codex Askewianus* (named for the physician A. Askew) and the *Codex Brucianus* (named after the Scottish explorer James Bruce), discovered in Egypt. These contained several Coptic gnostic writings: (1) *Two Books of Jeu* from the beginning of the third century; (2) book 4 of *Pistis Sophia* from about 225; and (3) *Pistis Sophia*, books 1, 2, and 3, from the second half of the third century. To these can now be added the writings found near Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt in 1945. The stories told about the discovery are untrustworthy. The only certain fact is that, to date, about thirteen of the codices (books, not scrolls) comprising some fifty-two texts are preserved at the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo. They have been translated into English by a team under James M. Robinson (1977). Not all these writings are gnostic: the *Gospel of Thomas* (114 sayings attributed to Jesus) is encratic; the *Thunder, Perfect Mind* is Jewish; the *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles* is Jewish Christian; the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* is Hermetic; and the *Authoritative Teaching* is early Catholic (characterized by a monarchic episcopacy, a canon of holy writings, and a confession of faith). But the *Epistle of Eugnostos* and the *Apocryphon of John* lead us back very far, close to the sources of Gnosticism in Alexandria.

#### ORIGINS

The hypothesis once supported by Richard Reitzenstein, Geo Widengren, and Rudolf Bultmann that Gnosticism is of Iranian origin has been abandoned; the alleged Iranian mystery of the “saved saviour” has been disproved. At present, many scholars are inclined to believe that Gnosticism is built upon Hellenistic Jewish foundations and can be traced to centres like Alexandria, which had a large Jewish population, much as the city of New York does today. Polemics in the writings of the Jewish philosopher Philo, who himself was an opponent of local heresies, make it clear that he knew Jewish groups that had already formulated certain basic elements of Gnosticism, although a consistent system did not yet exist in pre-Christian times.

#### THE DIVINE MAN

The prophet Ezekiel tells us in the first chapter of the biblical book that bears his name that in 593 B.C.E., dwelling in Babylonia, he beheld the personified Glory of the Lord, who would not abandon



him even in exile. This figure, at once Light and Man, is described as having a form like the appearance of Adam, or “Man” (Ezekiel 1:26). This vision became a stock image of Jewish mysticism. As early as the second century B.C.E., the Jewish Alexandrian dramatist Ezekiel Tragicus alludes to the same figure in his Greek drama *Exodus*, fragmentarily preserved in the *Praeparatio evangelica* (9.29) of the Christian bishop Eusebius. In the play, Moses in a dream beholds a throne on top of Mount Sinai. Upon this throne sits Man (Greek: *ho phōs*) with a crown on his head and a scepter in his left hand. With his right hand he beckons Moses to the throne, presents him with a crown, and invites him to sit beside him on an adjacent throne. Thus is Moses enthroned at the right hand of God. A parallel passage is found in Palestinian Judaism: according to the founding father “Aqiva” ben Yosef (early second century B.C.E.), there are two thrones in heaven, one for God and one for David (Babylonian Talmud, *Hag.* 14a). This is the oldest extant reference to Adam Qadmon, who later became the central figure of qabbalistic literature. Somewhat later, in the *Book of Daniel*, written soon after 168 B.C.E., this same figure is called the Son of Man (i.e., “divine Man”). The same figure is found in the Gospels. In the Fourth Gospel, the Son of Man is referred to as the Glory of God, which comes from heaven, touches the earth for a moment, is incarnated in the man Jesus, and eventually returns to the heavenly realm. In the letters of Paul, the Glory is called the last Adam (comparable to Ezekiel’s *kavod*), who is from heaven and should be distinguished from the first Adam of Genesis 1 and 2, who is from the earth. In the Hellenistic world this divine Man is identified with the Platonic idea of man.

Plato himself never says that there is such a thing as an “idea of man”. In the dialogue *Parmenides* this philosopher ridicules the concept of an *eidos anthrōpos* (130c). Probably this passage reflects a debate of Platonists among themselves and with other schools. It would seem that the Sceptics denied the idea of man a separate existence because then empirical man and his idea would have something in common, and this would require a new idea, the “third man”. In several Middle Platonic sources, however, the idea of man is supposed to exist. The translator of Ezekiel in the Septuagint identifies the figure of divine Man with the Platonic idea when he translates the phrase *demut kemar’eh adam* (Ezekiel 1:26) as *homoïōma hōs eidos anthrōpou*, a hellenizing quotation of Plato.

The same figure is to be found in the Hermetic *Poimandres*, clearly influenced by Alexandrian Jews. This writing relates how God gener-

ated a son to whom he delivered all creatures. The son is androgynous, equally Phos (Man, Adam, Light) and Zoe (Eve, Life). This being, who is still to be distinguished from the Logos, descends in order to create but falls in love with nature and assumes a material body. That is why human beings are both mortal and immortal. And yet the human body has the form of the original Man. This view is very Jewish and has parallels in rabbinical literature: not the soul but the human body was created after the image and likeness of God.

A next stage is reached in Philo's works. He never quotes Ezekiel 1:26 about the Glory of God resembling the form of a man, and yet he must have been familiar with mystical speculations about this divine figure. Philo calls logos "Man after his [God's] image" or "Man of God" and identifies the logos with the idea of man: incorporeal and neither male nor female. Yet he polemicizes against the concept that this heavenly Man was androgynous: "God made man", he says, "made him after the image of God. Male and female he made [now not "him" but:] them" (*Who is the Heir* 164). Obviously, before Philo there must have been Jewish thinkers who claimed that the heavenly Man was androgynous. Such circles originated the Anthropos model of *gnōsis*, which is found in the doctrine of Saturninus (Antioch, ca. 150). In his system, the female figure is completely absent. Our world is said to have been created by seven angels, the seven planets. Thereupon the Unknown God manifested his shining image, the Glory of the heavenly Man. The angels of creation tried to detain this Anthropos but were unable to do so; it returned to heaven at once. Thereupon the angels shaped a human body in the likeness of the heavenly Man. But this creature was unable to stand erect and slithered upon the earth like a worm. The heavenly Adam, having pity on the earthly Adam, sent to him the spark of life, the Spirit, which raised him up and made him live. It is this spark that at death hastens back to its spiritual home, whereas the body dissolves into its constituent elements.

Variations of the myth of Saturninus are found in quite a few of the writings from Nag Hammadi. Valentinus (ca. 150) alludes to this myth when, in a preserved fragment, he states that the Adam of Genesis inspired awe in the angels who created him because he had been fashioned after the pre-existent Anthropos. Mani (216–277) refers to the same story when he relates that in the beginning the Primal Man is sent out to combat the powers of darkness. This Archanthropos is overpowered and forced to leave "the Maiden who is his soul" embedded in matter. The entire world process is necessary to shape

the Perfect Man so that the original state of androgyny (male and maiden at the same time) will be restored. All these speculations presuppose the god Man of Ezekiel 1:26. Moreover, it is possible that Paul was familiar with the same concept when he said that Christ was both the power (*dunamis*) and the wisdom (*sophia*) of God (1 Corinthians 1:24).

### SOPHIA

In the Wisdom of Solomon, part of the Greek and Roman Catholic Bible, written in Alexandria close to the beginning of the Common Era, personified wisdom, called Sophia, is said to be a holy spirit or the Holy Spirit, which penetrates the All. She is also referred to as the effluence of God's glory, an emanation of eternal light, and an immaculate mirror of God's activity. She is described as the beloved both of the wise man and of God, even more as the spouse of the Lord (Wisdom 8:3).

In *Thunder, Whole Mind*, from the same period and milieu, Sophia manifests herself as the wisdom of the Greeks and the *gnōsis* of the barbarians, the saint and the whore, the bridegroom and the bride. Over and over, she introduces these startling and paradoxical revelations with the formula "I am".

According to the eighth-century B.C.E. inscriptions found near Hebron and in the Negev, the God of Israel had a foreign spouse, the Canaanite goddess Asherah. And in the fifth century B.C.E., Jewish soldiers garrisoned in Elephantine (near Aswān, Egypt) venerated another pagan fertility goddess called Anat Yahu, the wife of the Lord. Prophets and priests in Judea did all they could to represent Yahweh as exclusively male and to delete all traces of the primeval matriarchy. But Wisdom survived as Hokhmah, especially in Alexandria.

This is the basis of the Sophia model of *gnōsis*, which finds expression in the teaching of the famous Samaritan Simon, who was attracted to and yet rejected by incipient Christianity (Acts 8). The Samaritans, the last survivors of the ten tribes of northern Israel, were and are heterodox Jews who keep the Law while rejecting the rest of the Bible. They transmit a certain tradition about Wisdom as the personal creator of the world. According to Simon, Wisdom, the spouse of the Lord, was also called Holy Spirit and God's first idea, the mother of all. She descended to the lower regions and gave

birth to the angels by whom the world was created. She was overwhelmed and detained by these world powers that she might not return to her abode. She was even incarnated and reincarnated in human bodies, such as that of the Helen of Greek myth and poetry. Finally, she came to dwell as a whore in a brothel of Tyre in Phoenicia, where Simon, “the great power” of God, found and redeemed her. In the *Apocryphon of John* as well as in the school of Valentinus, this Sophia model has been combined with the Anthropos model. Both are pre-Christian in origin.

#### THE UNKNOWN GOD AND THE DEMIURGE

The rabbis of the first centuries CE complain repeatedly of the heretics (*minim*) who taught the existence of two gods. Dissident Jewish teachers believed that God had a representative, bearing his name Jao (the abbreviation of YHVH), who was therefore called Jaoel. According to this view, Jaoel sat upon a throne next to God’s throne and was therefore called Metatron (a Greek loanword). In reality, however, Jaoel is nothing but an angel, the most important angel, the one who is called the angel of the Lord in the Hebrew Bible. Some dissident Jews called Magharians said that all anthropomorphisms in the Old Testament applied not to God himself but to this angel, who is also said to have created the world. In a Samaritan (i.e., heterodox Jewish) source called *Malef*, which is late but transmits earlier traditions, it is stated that the angel of the Lord formed the body of Adam from dust of the earth and that God breathed the breath of life into him.

Such views must have been known already to Philo of Alexandria, who polemicizes against them. Yet at the same time he calls the Logos, who is instrumental in creation, both “a second god” and “archangel” on the one hand and “Lord” (YHVH) and “Name” (i.e., YHVH) on the other. Jewish Gnostics such as Simon and Cerinthus affirm that the demiurge (identified with YHVH) was in fact this angel of the Lord, who had not yet rebelled against God. In the *Apocryphon of John* the angel is called Saklas (Aramaic for “fool”) because he does not know that there is a God greater than he. Valentinus, Marcion, and Apelles, who were familiar with the myth contained in the *Apocryphon of John*, all held that the demiurge was an angel. This is a typically Jewish concept. A non-Jew, when suffering under the misery of the world, would simply have declared that the Genesis story

was a myth without truth; he could not have cared less about the origin of Jewish law. Only those who had been brought up to believe every word of the Bible and to cling to the faith that God is one, and who yet found reason to rebel against their inheritance, would have inclined toward the gnostic solution: God is one and the Bible reveals the truth, but anthropomorphisms such as the handicraft of a creative workman and personal lawgiving are to be attributed to a subordinate angel.

### THE GOD WITHIN

The biblical book of Genesis relates that God blew the breath of life into the nose of Adam, transforming him into a living being (Genesis 2:7). Already in certain passages of the Old Testament (Job 34:13–15, Psalm 104:29–30), this breath is identified with the spirit of God. That is especially clear in the Dead Sea Scrolls: “I, the creature of dust, have known through the spirit, that Thou hast given me.” The Alexandrian Jews have integrated and amplified this concept. They were familiar with Greek philosophy and knew that the Orphics, Plato, and the Stoics considered the human soul to be a part of the deity. They were influenced by the Stoic Posidonius (ca. 100 B.C.E.), according to whom “the daimon in us [the spirit] is akin to and of the same nature as the Daimon [God] who pervades the All.” The oldest translators of the Septuagint rendered “breath” (Hebrew: *neshamah*) in Genesis 2:7 as “spirit” (Greek: *pneuma*). This variant is evidenced by the Old Latin Version (*spiritus*) translated from the Septuagint. Philo polemicizes against this particular translation because it deifies sinful man (*Allegorical Interpretation* I,42). And yet the Alexandrian Wisdom of Solomon, still included in every Roman Catholic Bible, declares explicitly that God’s incorruptible *pneuma* is in all things (12:1). Most Gnostics preserved this tendentious translation and made it the basis for their mythological speculations. It enabled them to tell how it came to pass that the Spirit sleeps in man and how it can be made conscious. So it is with Valentinus and Mani. Few people nowadays are aware that these mythologemes presuppose a consensus of virtually all Greek philosophers and have a biblical foundation.

## JEWISH GNOSTICISM

The themes discussed above are the basic elements that contributed to the rise of a Jewish Gnosticism, whose myth is contained in the *Apocryphon of John* and other related writings found at Nag Hammadi. The church father Irenaeus attributed this doctrine to the *gnōstikoi*. With this name he indicates not all those whom modern scholars call “Gnostics” but only the adherents of a specific sect. It is misleading to call them Sethians (descendants of Seth, the son of Adam), as some scholars do nowadays. Notwithstanding its name, the *Apocryphon of John* (John is supposed to be a disciple of Jesus) contains no Christian elements apart from the foreword and some minor interpolations. Its contents can be summarized as follows: from the Unknown God (who exists beyond thought and name) and his spouse (who is his counterpart and mirror) issued the spiritual world. The last of the spiritual entities, Sophia, became wanton and brought forth a monster, the demiurge. He organized the zodiac and the seven planets. He proclaimed: “I am a jealous god, apart from me there is no other.” Then a voice was heard, teaching him that above him existed the Unknown God and his spouse. Next, the “first Man in the form of a man” manifested himself to the lower angels. He is the Glory of Ezekiel 1:26. His reflection appears in the waters of chaos (cf. the mirror of the Anthropos in *Poimandres*). Thereupon the lower angels created the body of Adam after the image that they had seen, an imitation of the Man, who clearly serves as an ideal archetype for the human body. For a long time the body of Adam lay unable to move, for the seven planetary angels were unable to raise it up. Then Sophia caused the demiurge to breath the *pneuma* he had inherited from her into the face of his creature. So begins a long struggle between the redeeming Sophia and the malicious demiurge, the struggle for and against the awakening of human spiritual consciousness.

Written in Alexandria about the beginning of the Christian era, the myth of the *Apocryphon of John*, a pivotal and seminal writing, combines the Anthropos model and the Sophia model. It is very complicated and confusing but had enormous influence in the Near East, where so many remnants of great religions survive today. (In the 1980s, for example, there were 420 Samaritans and 30,000 Nestorians.) Even today, some 15,000 Mandaean (the Aramaic term for Gnostics) live in Iraq and Iran. Their religion features ablutions in streaming water and a funerary mass. When a Mandaean has

died, a priest performs a complicated rite in order to return the soul to its heavenly abode, where it will receive a spiritual body. In this way, it is believed, the deceased is integrated into the so-called Secret Adam, the Glory, the divine body of God. This name confirms that, along with the Anthropos of *Poimandres* and the Adam Qadmon of later Jewish mysticism, this divine and heavenly figure is ultimately derived from the vision of the prophet Ezekiel. In Mandaean lore Sophia appears in degraded form as a mean and lewd creature called the Holy Spirit. The creation of the world is attributed to a lower demiurge, Ptahil, a pseudonym for the angel Gabriel (who, according to both the Mandaeans and the Magharians, is the angel who created the world).

The apostle Paul (or one of his pupils) maintains that Christ, who is for him the second Adam, is “the head of his Church, which is his body” (Ephesians 1:22–23). The Christian is integrated into this body through baptism. Mandaean speculations about the Secret Adam may elucidate what Paul meant. In defining his view of the church as the mystical body of Christ, the apostle may be reflecting a familiarity with comparable Jewish and Hellenistic speculations about the *kavod* as the body of God. As a matter of fact, it has become clear from the verses of Ezekiel Tragicus that such ideas circulated in Alexandria long before the beginning of our era. They surfaced in Palestine toward the end of the first century C.E. in strictly Pharisaic circles that transmitted secret, esoteric traditions about the mystical journey of the sage through the seven heavenly places to behold the god man on the throne of God. The author of *Shi'ur Qoma*, the “Measurement of the Body” of God, reports the enormous dimensions of the members of the Glory. The Orphics had taught that the cosmos was actually a divine body. Already early in Hellenistic Egypt similar speculations arose; these were the origin of the remarkable speculations of Palestinian rabbis concerning the mystical body of God. (These speculations ultimately led to the *Zohar*.) It is no coincidence that the Glory is called Geradamas (Arch-Adam) in some Nag Hammadi writings, Adam Qadmaia in Mandaean sources, and Adam Qadmon in medieval Jewish Gnosticism.

In the ninth century several groups of Islamic Gnostics arose in southern Iraq, where several other gnostic sects had found refuge during Late Antiquity and where the Mandaeans continue to live today. The best-known Islamic Gnostics are the Ismailia, of which the Aga Khan is the religious leader. Mythological themes central to their religion are (1) the cycles of the seven prophets; (2) the throne and

the letters; (3) Kuni, the creative principle, who is feminine (a typical remythologizing of a monotheistic Father religion); (4) the higher Pentad; (5) the infatuation of the lower demiurge; (6) the seven planets and the twelve signs of the zodiac; (7) the divine Adam; and (8) the fall and ascent of the soul.

Since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices it has been established that these themes are best explained as transpositions into an Islamic terminology of the Gnostic mythologemes that are found in the *Apocryphon of John* and kindred documents of Jewish Gnosticism.

#### CHRISTIAN GNOSIS

According to a reliable tradition, Barnabas, a missionary of the Jerusalem congregation, was the first to bring the gospel to Alexandria, a relatively easy journey. Egyptian Christianity is Judaic in origin, not gentile, and the great Egyptian Gnostics seem all to have been of Jewish birth. The adherents of Basilides claimed: "We are no longer Jews and not yet Christians." The followers of Valentinus reported: "When we were Hebrews, we were orphans." Basilides and Valentinus both proclaimed a God beyond the Old Testament God, and both were familiar with the myth of the *Apocryphon of John*, which they christianized. The case of Marcion is similar: he was so well-informed about the Hebrew Bible and its flaws that his father, a bishop, may well be presumed to have been Jewish. Through a certain Cerdo, Marcion came to know an already existing gnostic system. Those who reject the god of the Old Testament obviously no longer hold to the Jewish faith, but nevertheless still belong ethnically to the Jewish people. Both Valentinus and Marcion went to Rome and were excommunicated there between 140 and 150. Basilides, who stayed in Alexandria, remained a respected schoolmaster there until his death. The Christians in Alexandria were divided among several synagogues and could afford to be tolerant, for a monarchic bishop did not yet exist and their faith was pluriform anyhow. Basilides, Valentinus, and Marcion were Christocentric and let themselves be influenced by the Gospel of John and the letters of Paul.

#### MARCION

When Marcion, a rich ship owner from Sinope in Pontus (on the Black Sea), was excommunicated, he organized an enormous alternative



church that persisted for a long time, especially in the East (e.g., in Armenia). Marcion was a violin with one string, a religious genius with one overpowering idea: God, the Father of Jesus, was not the Hebrew YHVH. Like the Gnostics, he distinguished between the Unknown God (whom he felt to be the only genuine God) and a lower divinity, the demiurge, who is responsible for creation and interacts with man. Above all, Marcion was fascinated by Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. Following Paul, he contrasted the Law of the Old Testament and Israelite religion with the "gospel of forgiveness", which revealed the goodness of God.

Like his hero Paul, Marcion was overwhelmed by the unconditional and unwarranted love of God for poor creatures. This led him to deny the gnostic idea that man's inmost Self is related to the Godhead. For Marcion, man is nothing more than the creation of a cruel demiurge; the loving God who has rescued him, without any ulterior motive but simply out of a freely bestowed loving kindness, is totally alien to man, his nature, and his fate.

Until Augustine, no one understood Paul as well as Marcion; yet Marcion, the one genuine pupil, misunderstood Paul as well. Notwithstanding his dialectics, Paul never rejected the created world, sexuality, or the people of Israel, as did Marcion.

#### BASILIDES

Basilides was active as the leader of a school in Alexandria in the time of the emperors Hadrian (r. 117–138) and Antoninus Pius (r. 138–161). He seems to have been one of those many liberal Jews who had left behind the concept of a personal Lord for belief in the Unknown God. Yet he was never excommunicated and remained a respected member of the church of Alexandria until his death.

Basilides must have known the earlier Alexandrian, pre-Christian myth contained in the *Apocryphon of John*. He too begins his cosmogony with the Unknown God, "The not-being God, who made a not-yet-being world out of nothing" by bringing forth a single germ of the All. This germ was the primeval chaos. From it in due time one element after another arose on high, while below there remained only the so-called third sonship, or the Spirit in the spiritual man.

When the time was right, Jesus was enlightened at his baptism in the river Jordan (a typically Jewish Christian notion). He is considered to be the prototype of all spiritual men, who through his revealing

word become conscious of their innermost being, the Spirit, and rise up to the spiritual realm.

When the entire third sonship has redeemed itself, God will take pity on the world, and he will allow the descent of "The great unconsciousness" upon the rest of mankind. Thereafter no one will have even an inkling that there was ever anything like the Spirit. Basilides foresees a godless and classless society.

#### VALENTINUS

The greatest gnostic of all times was the poet Valentinus. Despite his Latin name, he was a Greek born in the Nile Delta around the year 100 and educated in Alexandria. He and his followers did not separate from the church of Alexandria but created an academy for free research, which in turn formed a loose network of local groups within the institutional religion. Even among his opponents Valentinus became renowned for his eloquence and genius.

According to his own words, his views originated in a visionary experience in which he saw a newborn child. This vision inspired a "tragic myth", expressed by Valentinus in a psalm that described how the All emanates from the ground of being, called Depth, and his spouse, called Womb or Silence. Together they bring forth the Christ, or Logos, upon whom all aeons (half ideas, half angels) depend and through whom the All is coherent and connected. Through the revelation of Christ, Valentinus experienced the wholeness of the All, the fullness of being, and the nonentity of "I and Thou" (known in Hinduism as *advaita*). Not dualism but duality is the underlying principle of reality, according to Valentinus: God himself is the transcendental unity of Depth and Silence; the aeons of the pleroma (spiritual world) are a diametrical union of the masculine, or creative, and the feminine, or receptive, principles; Christ and Sophia (Wisdom) are a couple (separated for a while on account of the trespass and fall of Sophia but in the end happily reunited). Man and his guardian angel, or transcendental counterpart, celebrate the mystical marriage of bride and bridegroom (the Ego and the Self). Polarity (Greek *syzygia*; Latin *coniunctio*) is characteristic of all things spiritual. On the basis of this metaphysical view, Valentinus and his followers valued both sex and marriage, at least for the pneumatics. A preserved fragment from the school of Valentinus gives the following interpretation of Jesus' statement in the *Gospel of John* that the Christian lives

in the world but is not from it (John 17:14–16): “Whosoever is *in* the world and has not loved a woman so as to become one with her, is not out of the Truth and will not attain the Truth; but he who is *from* the world and unites with a woman, will not attain the Truth, because he made sex out of concupiscence alone.” (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I,6,4). The Valentinians permitted intercourse only between men and women who were able to experience it as a mystery and a sacrament, namely, those who were pneumatics. They forbade it between those whom they called “psychics” (Jews and Catholics) or “hylics” (materialists), because these two lower classes knew nothing but libido. As the only early Christian on record who spoke lovingly about sexual intercourse and womanhood, Valentinus must have been a great lover.

#### THE JUNG CODEX

On 10 May 1952, at the behest of the Jung Institute in Zurich, I acquired one of the thirteen codices found at Nag Hammadi in 1945. In honour of the great psychiatrist who helped to put this manuscript at the disposal of competent scholars, it is called the Jung Codex. It contains five Valentinian writings:

1. The *Prayer of the Apostle Paul*.
2. The *Apocryphon of James* is a letter purporting to contain revelations of the risen Jesus, written by James, his brother. In reality, it contains Valentinian speculations grafted onto the root and fatness of the olive tree planted beside the waters of the Nile by Hebrew missionaries from Jerusalem (ca. 160).
3. The *Gospel of Truth* is a meditation on the true eternal gospel proclaimed by Christ to awaken man’s innermost being, the unconscious Spirit, probably written by Valentinus himself in about 150.
4. The *Epistle to Rheginos concerning the Resurrection* is adequate explanation of Paul’s view on the subject: already, here and now, man anticipates eternal life, and after death he will receive an ethereal body.
5. The so-called *Tripartite Treatise* is a systematic and consistent exposition of the history of the All. It describes how the Spirit evolves through the *inferno* of a materialistic (pagan or “hylic”) phase and the purgatory of a moral (Jewish and Catholic or “psychic”) phase to the coming of Christ, who inaugurates the *paradiso* of final consum-

mation, in which spiritual man becomes conscious of himself and of his identity with the Unknown God. The author, a leader of the Italic (Roman) school of Valentinianism, was most likely a pupil of Heracleon (ca. 170). It was against this shade of Valentinian gnosis that Plotinus, the Neoplatonic philosopher, wrote his pamphlet *Against the Gnostics* (ca. 250).

#### LATER DEVELOPMENTS

Scholars have always admitted that Origen (ca. 180–254), the greatest dogmatician of the Greek church, had much in common with the Valentinians: the spirits fall away from God and become souls before the creation of the world; the world purifies the soul; Jesus brings not only redemption to the faithful but also gnosis to the pneumatics. But whereas Valentinus was said to have taught predestination physics (the teaching that spiritual man was saved by nature), Origen on the contrary allegedly stressed free will. The *Tripartite Treatise* has undermined this apologetic position. There evil is no longer a tragic neurosis that befell Sophia but a free decision. Moreover, this writing is thoroughly optimistic: all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds, and providence educates mankind toward the realization of complete consciousness, as in Origen's soteriology. Some path led from the tragic view of Valentinus to the optimism of Heracleon, and from Heracleon to Origen was only one step more.

The Valentinians of Carthage spoke Latin, whereas the Christians in Rome spoke Greek. Translating their technical terms from Greek, the Valentinians coined Latin equivalents of *infinite*, *consubstantial*, *trinity*, *person*, and *substance*. These terms were eventually adopted by the Roman Catholic church. If ever there was a community that created a special language, it was the school of Valentinus at Carthage.

#### MANI

Gnosticism became a world religion when Mani (216–277) founded his alternative Christian church, which existed for more than a thousand years with adherents in lands from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. From his fourth until his twenty-fifth year Mani was raised in a Jewish Christian community of Baptists, followers of the prophet Elxai (ca. 100). There he heard, first, that Jesus was “the true prophet”,

a manifestation of God's glory (*kavod*) who was first embodied in Adam, then revealed himself to the Old Testament patriarchs, and was ultimately incarnated in the Messiah, Jesus. He also heard, second, that baptisms and ablutions were necessary for salvation and, third, that God was the origin of evil since Satan was the left hand of God. He modified the first belief, identifying himself as the seal of the prophets, who included the Buddha and Zarathustra in the East and Jesus in the West. The second belief he rejected; in fact, he admitted no sacraments at all. Against the third belief he, being a cripple, rebelled with all his might. Evil, in Mani's view, did not originate in the world of light but had its source in a different principle, the world of darkness, matter, and concupiscence.

Influenced by encratic asceticism of the Aramaic Christians of Asia, Mani rejected marriage and the consumption of alcohol and meat, and he designated among his followers an upper class of the elect who lived according to the Sermon on the Mount and a lower class of auditors who were allowed to have wives or concubines and to practice birth control. But very much in the spirit of Valentinus was Mani's primary religious experience. The basis of his entire myth, the encounter with his "twin" or transcendental Self, is gnostic, very much in the spirit of Valentinus: "I recognized him and understood that he was my Self from whom I had been separated." Mani encountered his spiritual Self at the age of twelve and encountered it a second time at the age of twenty-five. He felt constantly accompanied by his twin, and when he died a martyr in prison he was gazing at this familiar. The encounter with one's twin is central to the life of every Manichaean. The mystery of conjunction, the holy marriage of Ego and Self, is thereby democratized. To illustrate this process, Mani related a myth that is indebted to earlier gnostic movements. For Mani the world is in truth created by the Living Spirit, a manifestation of God, and not by a lower demiurge. But a split within the deity takes place when the archetypal Man loses in the battle against darkness, is thus overwhelmed, and abandons his soul as sparks of light dispersed throughout the material world and mankind. Man is contaminated in this way by concupiscence, an evil force from the world of darkness. The entire world system is devised to save these light elements and to restore man as Perfect Man in his original purity and integrity.

Augustine (354–430) was a Manichaean auditor for more than nine years before he became a Father of the Roman Catholic church.

During that period he wrote a treatise (since lost), *On Beauty and Harmony*, in which he stated that the asexual mind was linked with a completely alien element of ire and concupiscence. As a heresy hunter he later maintained that concupiscence was not created by God but was instead a consequence of the Fall. The assertion that the reproductive instinct is not a part of human nature does certainly have Manichaean overtones.

#### THE MIDDLE AGES

Manichaeism disappeared completely in the West and had no successors there: the term “medieval Manichee” is a misnomer. And yet Christianity during the Middle Ages both in Western and in Eastern Europe was not monolithically orthodox. Gnosticism flourished at that time. Such books as *Montaillou* by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco have drawn the attention of a large public of interested outsiders to the existence of dualistic sects such as the Cathars in southern France and northern Italy and the Bogomils (or “friends of God”) in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria; their views resemble those of the ancient Gnostics. Indeed, their affiliation with ancient Gnosticism, if somewhat complicated, is well established.

The Paulicians were typically Armenian sectarians who, persisting into modern times, turned up in 1837 in the village of Arh'wela (in Russian Armenia), with their holy book, the *Key of Truth* (eighth century). Two versions of their doctrine exist. According to one, Jesus was adopted to be the son of God. According to the second version, there are two gods; one is the Father in heaven, while the other is the creator of this world. This can be explained in the following way: Christianity was introduced to Armenia from Edessa at an early date, and Edessa owed its (adoptionist) Christology to Addai, the Jewish Christian missionary from Jerusalem. When Catholicism was established as the state church in 302 by Gregory the Illuminator, the other Christians of Armenia were branded as heretics. Marcionites and Gnostics had taken refuge in these marginal and mountainous regions. They united with the adoptionists, to become one sect, the Paulicians, soon a warlike group. The emperors of Byzantium deported quite a few of them to the Balkans, especially to Bulgaria. It was there that the sect of the Bogomils originated, characterized by the belief that the devil (Sataael) created and rules this world. Their influence spread

to the West, and from the beginning of the eleventh century gave rise to the church of the Cathars, which was strong in southern France and northern Italy. Thus Gnosticism was never completely suppressed but survived into the Middle Ages.

#### MODERN GNOSIS

The gnosis of modern times, launched by the shoemaker Jakob Boehme (ca. 1600), was generated spontaneously as a result of direct experience. It differs from ancient Gnosticism in that it derives not only the light but also the darkness (not only good but also evil) from the ground of being. Inspired by Boehme is the influential gnosis of the English poet and artist William Blake (1757–1827), the only authentic gnostic of the entire Anglo-Saxon world. It is in the school of Boehme that the scholarly study of Gnosticism has its roots, beginning with the *Impartial History of the Churches and Heretics* (1699) by Gottfried Arnold. In this extremely learned work all heretics, including all Gnostics, are represented as the true Christians—innocent and slandered lambs.

Ever since, the study of Gnosticism has been an accepted academic subject in Germany, but in Germany alone. In his youth Goethe read Arnold's book and conceived his own gnostic system, as reported in his autobiography. Toward the end of his life Goethe recalled the love of his youth when he wrote the finale to *Faust*, the hierophany of "the Eternally Feminine", a version of the gnostic Sophia, the exclusive manifestation of the deity. Johann Lorenz von Mosheim and other great historians also took gnosis quite seriously. The brilliant August Neander, who belonged to the conservative reaction to the Enlightenment called the Great Awakening Revivalism (*Erweckungsbewegung*), wrote his *Genetic Evolution of the Most Important Gnostic Systems* in 1818. Ferdinand Christian Baur, a prominent Hegelian, published his monumental *Christian Gnosis* in 1835, in which he defends the thesis that gnosis was a religious philosophy whose modern counterpart is the Idealism of Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Hegel, all based upon the vision of Boehme. According to Baur, even German idealism was a form of gnosis. Yet when "the people of poets and thinkers" became, under Bismarck, a people of merchants and industrial workers, this wonderful empathy, this fantastic feel of gnosis, was almost completely lost.

Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), the ideologue of Wilhelm's empire, defined Gnosticism as the acute, and orthodoxy as the chronic, hel-

lenization (i.e., rationalization) and hence alienation of Christianity. At the time it was difficult to appreciate the experience behind the gnostic symbols. Wilhelm Bousset, in his *Main Problems of Gnosis* (1907), described this religion as a museum of hoary and lifeless Oriental (Indian, Iranian, Babylonian) fossils. The same unimaginative approach led Richard Reitzenstein, Geo Widengren, and Rudolf Bultmann to postulate an Iranian mystery of salvation that never existed but was supposed to explain Gnosticism, Manichaeism, and Christianity.

Existentialism and depth psychology were needed to rediscover the abysmal feelings that inspired the movement of gnosis. Hans Jonas (*The Gnostic Religion*, 1958) has depicted these feelings as dread, alienation, and an aversion to all worldly existence, as if the Gnostics were followers of Heidegger. In the same vein are the writings of Kurt Rudolph, the expert on Mandaicæism.

Under the influence of Carl Gustav Jung, I and other scholars (e.g., Henri-Charles Puech and Károly Kerényi) have interpreted the gnostic symbols as a mythical expression (i.e., projection) of self-experience. As a lone wolf, the Roman Catholic convert Erik Peterson suggested that the origins of Gnosticism were not Iranian or Greek but Jewish. The gnostic writings from Nag Hammadi have shown Jung and Peterson to be in the right. At last the origins, development, and goal of this perennial philosophy have come to light.

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

### THE *GOSPEL OF THOMAS* REVISITED\*

#### I. INTRODUCTION

These are the hidden words which the Living Jesus spoke and Didymus Judas Thomas wrote. And he said: 'Whoever finds the deeper meaning of these words will not taste death'.

This is the reconstructed beginning of a leaf from a papyrusbook in Greek containing Sayings of Jesus and retrieved in 1903 by B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt from one of the rubbish-heaps of the city of Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 654.

In 1897 and 1903 two other fragments were found in the same city, Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1 and 655, which, as we now see, belonged to the same writing, the Gospel of Thomas, though to different copies of it. The discoverers concluded for palaeographical reasons that the papyri could not be much later than 200 A.D. Since then, no one has disputed or refuted this conclusion.

Scholars at that time were no fools. Notwithstanding the fragmentary state of the discovery and the mutilation of the papyri, they saw that these leaves had connections with the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Egyptians. In his book of 1920, *The Sayings of Jesus from Oxyrhynchus*, Evelyn White wrote:

It would, perhaps, be generally conceded by those critics who regard the Sayings as extracts that only three of the various sources which have been suggested any longer have a serious claim to consideration—the Gospel of Thomas, and the Gospels to the Egyptians and the Hebrews (XLII).

Nobody said these Sayings were Gnostic, nobody said that they were taken from the canonical Gospels. Such judgments show how sensible and reasonable scholars were at that time.

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\* Previously published in: B. Barc (éd.), *Colloque international sur Les textes de Nag Hammadi* (Québec, 22–25 août 1978), Québec-Louvain 1981, 218–266.

These “Sayings of Jesus” rapidly became famous. Everybody knew that they existed and students were taught about them at highschools. It is no wonder then that when Jean Doresse had made public the discovery at Nag Hammadi of a writing beginning with the preamble: “These are the hidden words etc.”, that a competent scholar like Henri-Charles Puech could identify this Gospel of Thomas as the collection of Sayings partially found at Oxyrhynchus. He located it in Edessa, traditionally the city of Thomas.<sup>1</sup>

After our flight from Egypt in 1956, when at last we had managed to obtain a complete photocopy of the text and to make a provisional translation of the complete writing, the following hypothesis was launched by Quispel: the Gospel of Thomas found at Nag Hammadi is translated from the Greek. It contains 114 Sayings attributed to Jesus, and therefore is a collection of Sayings, taken from the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel according to the Egyptians. Those taken from the former source, the Jewish Christian source, have some affinities with the fragments preserved of the Jewish Christian Gospels, with the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and *Recognitions*, with the *Diatessaron* of Tatian and with the Western text of the New Testament Gospels. This was because the Jewish Christian Gospel tradition had influenced the text of the Clementines, the *Diatessaron* and the Western text.

It was suggested that this Jewish Christian source contained a tradition of the Sayings of Jesus independent from the four canonical Gospels.

The latter source, the Gospel of the Egyptians, was said to be encratite, like the Gospel of Thomas itself. It was denied that the Gospel of Thomas was Gnostic, in the form in which it came from the pen of its author.<sup>2</sup>

I find it necessary to repeat the above because many a critic has twisted, misquoted and manhandled these views in order to refute them convincingly. It never has been said, by me at least, that the *Diatessaron* was the source of the Gospel of Thomas, that the Gospel of Thomas was Jewish Christian, or that all the Sayings reflected

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<sup>1</sup> H.-Ch. Puech, “Une collection de Paroles de Jésus récemment retrouvée: L’Évangile selon Thomas”, *Comptes Rendus de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* 1957, 59–73.

<sup>2</sup> “The Gospel of Thomas and the New Testament”, *VC* 11 (1957) 189–207 = *Gnostic Studies*, II, Istanbul 1975, 3–16.

the independent tradition. What I did say, however, was that the Gospel of Thomas was not Gnostic and contained in part an independent tradition.

## II. THE REACTION

This theory has been received in different ways. There was 1. a negative reaction, and 2. an alternative approach and 3. a catholic response.

### 1. *The Negative Reaction*

The “reactionaries” mostly thought that these Sayings were a Gnostic perversion of the canonical Gospels. Others went further and argued that the version of the canonical Gospels which was used by the Gnostics, was of the Western Syriac text type. What sort of Gnosticism this was, Naassene, Valentinian or unknown, was not made clear. Remember that at that time theologians called everything Gnostic that did not agree with their own kerygmatic theology. Even the “Republic” of Plato was held to be a newly discovered Gnostic writing. Scholars had no idea how pluriform primitive Christianity was. They spoke in a disparaging and conceited way about Gnosis when compared with their own shade of Christianity. Even the new parables of Jesus, about the woman carrying a jar (97) and the murder of the tyrant (98) (which may very well be authentic) were dismissed out of hand as Gnostic nonsense. The least you can say is that those professors obviously had no Gnosis. But can you understand early Christianity and Jesus if you have no “knowledge of the heart” or at least some respect for this inner experience?

This reaction threatens scholarship with deplorable results. Sound and conservative scholars like A.J. Wensinck, Matthew Black and Arthur Vööbus<sup>3</sup> have opened our eyes to the value of the Gospel tradition outside the Bible and contained in the Diatessaron and the Western Text. The Gospel of Thomas only confirmed their views. Their learned observations are not being obliterated by sweeping

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<sup>3</sup> A.J. Wensinck, “The semitisms of Codex Bezae and their relation to the non-western text of the gospel of Saint Luke”, *Bulletin XII of the Bezaclub*, Leiden 1937; M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, Oxford 1967; A. Vööbus, *The Early Versions of the New Testament*, Stockholm 1954.

generalisations and denials of the obvious. Even a textcritic has to be a spirited and original man, not a manager or a know-it-all. And there is no Confession of faith which forbids Sayings of Jesus to have been transmitted outside the inspired Canon.

What is the difference between the reactionary and a conservative interpretation?

Logion 42 runs in Coptic as follows:

“šope etetrparage”, to which corresponds in Greek: γίνεσθε παράγοντες.

Those who find nothing but perverse Gnosticism in the Gospel of Thomas, translate this as:

Come into being as you pass away,

and presume that this saying has the same meaning as Paul’s statement: “If our outer man is perishing, our inner man is renewed day by day”.

Against this it must be observed that ὁ παράγων is a Greek substantive which means “passer-by”. It is used in the Septuagint, Psalm 128 (129) to translate the Hebrew word ‘ober’, which has the same meaning. The Saying of Thomas therefore means: “Become passers-by”, or “become wanderers”. This is the nucleus of an extracanonical Saying preserved by the twelfth century Spanish author Petrus Alfonsus and by an inscription on a mosque in Fateh-Pur Sikri in India:

Saeculum est quasi pons, transi ergo, ne hospiteris.<sup>4</sup>

It may well be an authentic Saying of Jesus, an instruction to his followers, the missionaries and the prophets, to lead a wandering life—as in fact they did. In that case the very short Logion would belong to the oldest layers of tradition and reflect the situation in the primitive community of Jerusalem. In this perspective the gnosticising interpretation turns out to be completely misleading, and irresponsible; one must remember how often the true believers have been misinformed by the church.

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<sup>4</sup> J. Jeremias, *Unbekannte Jesusworte*, Gütersloh <sup>3</sup>1962, 105–110; cf. “L’Évangile selon Thomas et les origines de l’ascèse chrétienne”, *Aspects du Judéo-christianisme* (Colloque de Strassbourg, 1964), Paris 1965, 35–52 = *Gnostic Studies*, II, 98–112, esp. 104.

Logion 25 says:

Love thy brother as thy soul,  
guard him as the apple of thine eye.

A reactionary interpretation finds here a version of Leviticus 19,17–18 and knows that Thomas means not an Israelite or another human being but another Gnostic, this in contrast to New Testament teaching in general. And he will refer to all sorts of Gnostic texts where a brother is mentioned.

But this Saying has, in Coptic, only the word “*n̄the*”, “as” in common with the New (and Old) Testament commandment that “You *shall* love your *neighbour* as yourself”. The Saying as transmitted by Thomas must have been known to the author of the Johannine writings, who constantly recommends to love the brother and never uses the word “neighbour”, as well as the author of the *Didache* and to the author of the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*.<sup>5</sup> It has influenced both the *Diatessaron* and the Syriac version of the Western Text without ever being reproduced completely.

An appeal to the big bad Gnostics without a reference to these texts of primitive Christianity is a disservice to scholarship. In general it should be observed that the reactionary position is unfounded. Unless these critics refute the generally held view that the Gospel of Thomas was written about 140 A.D. in Edessa and that the Syrus Sinaiticus and Syrus Curetonianus are influenced by the *Diatessaron* (± 170 A.D.) and unless they show that the Sayings of “Thomas” reflect a specific Gnostic school attested in Edessa at 140 A.D., they have not a foot to stand on.

## 2. *The Alternative Approach*

### a. *H. Koester*

Helmut Koester is the master of the free tradition. He established that such Apostolic Fathers as Clement of Rome, Hermas and the *Didache* did not yet know or barely knew our canonical Gospels.<sup>6</sup> Therefore it is all too understandable that he was one of the first to admit that the Gospel of Thomas too contained Sayings which had not been taken from our New Testament, but are derived from

<sup>5</sup> “Love thy Brother”, *AncSoc* 1 (1970) 83–93 = *Gnostic Studies*, II, 169–179.

<sup>6</sup> H. Köster, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den Apostolischen Vätern*, TU 65, Berlin 1957.

an independent tradition. Certainly he deserves our confidence when he observes that the Sayings of Thomas do not reflect—or, as I would say, do not always reflect—the redactional fingerprints of the canonical evangelists.

But in his zeal and radicalism he goes too far. According to him the Gospel of Thomas is a very primitive collection of Sayings preceding Q and incorporated into Q, which was brought to Edessa by the historical Judas Thomas, none else than Jude, the brother of Jesus mentioned in Marc 6,3 and Matthew 13,55. Because Thomas, as everybody knows, means “twin”, Koester was the first in the history of scholarship to suppose that Jesus and Jude were in fact twins.<sup>7</sup> This position is exactly the opposite of that of the above mentioned reactionaries: they believe that everything in the inspired Bible is authentic, but that nothing is authentic in the free tradition. Koester is extremely critical towards the four Gospels of the New Testament and extremely credulous as far as Thomas is concerned. Therefore he rejects the traditional date of the Gospel, 140 A.D., as being too late. And the fact that it is, according to him, a Gnostic writing, does not deter him. In the paper for the Yale Conference on Gnosticism of 1978 he writes:

Sayings of Jesus which appear in so-called Gnostic Gospels and other Gnostic literature are often considered as secondary fabrications or literary inventions. This judgment is especially common with respect to sayings, which seem to express typical Gnostic themes. It is my intention to demonstrate through a few examples that at least some of the sayings in question belong to an early stage of the development and transmission of Jesus' sayings. As a consequence we may have to revise not only our judgment about the relative date of such sayings, but also our view of the character and theology of the early developments of this segment of the Gospel tradition.

Against these rash assumptions we will show in the following that the Gospel of Thomas, far from being a writing older than Q, is an anthology based upon two second century apocryphal Gospels, and moreover a Hermetic writing which gave “Thomas” a seem-

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<sup>7</sup> H. Koester, “Gnomai Diaphoroi: the Origin and Nature of Diversification in the History of Early Christianity”, in J.M. Robinson and H. Köster, *Trajectories through Early Christianity*, Philadelphia 1971, 114–158 (= *HTR* 58, 1965, 279–318); idem, “One Jesus and four primitive Gospels”, *HTR* 61 (1968) 203–247 (= *Trajectories*, 158–204).

ingly Gnostic flavour. This of course does not preclude that at least one of these sources may have transmitted very old tradition.

When we assess Koester's theories we must always keep in mind that formcritical analysis ought to be based on the results of source criticism, an art in itself which cannot be rudely dismissed.

It may well be that, as Koester suggests, the Dialogue of the Saviour, found at Nag Hammadi, has some valuable tradition in common with the Gospel of Thomas, but then it is an established fact that this Dialogue used "Thomas", as is proven by the exclusive use of the word "monachos" in both writings, and nowhere else in Gnostic sources.

I would also agree with Koester that John 14,7 ("if you have known me, you also have known the Father") demonstrates that the Q Saying: "no one knows the Son etc." also existed in an older tradition or source which was related to, but not identical with Q. But I think I can identify this source. It was the Jewish Christian Gospel of the congregation of Ephesus, which according to Fortna served as an outline for the author of the Fourth Gospel. This intermediary link cannot be left out.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover the Gospel of Thomas contains several doublets.<sup>9</sup> It is an established fact that in the case of Matthew and Luke doublets prove the existence of two *written* sources,<sup>10</sup> Mark and Q. What is right for Matthew and Luke is also right for Thomas. The doublets in the latter writing show convincingly that its author used two written sources:

Logion 55:

Jesus said: "Whoever does not hate his father and his mother will not be able to be a disciple to Me, and (whoever does not) hate his brethren and his sisters and (does

Logion 101:

<Jesus said:> "Whoever does not hate his father and his mother in My way will not be able to be a [disciple] to Me. And whoever does [not] love [his father]

<sup>8</sup> R.T. Fortna, *The Gospel of the Signs, a reconstruction of the narrative source underlying the fourth Gospel*, Cambridge 1970, 223.

<sup>9</sup> 48 = 16; 55 = 101; 113 = 51; 38 = 92; 103 = 21b; 68 = 69; 75 = 74; 39 = 102; see, *Makarius, das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle*, Leiden 1967, 93.

<sup>10</sup> That the author used written sources, was shown by H. Montefiore: "The fact that two different versions of the same saying are at times cited by Thomas makes it so probable that he was compiling his collection from *written* sources that the hypothesis of 'memory citation' will be disregarded in the remainder of this chapter"; see H. Montefiore, H.E.W. Turner, *Thomas and the Evangelists*, London 1962, 42.



<p>not) take up his cross in My way will not be worthy of Me”.</p>	<p>and his mother in My way will not be able to be a [disciple] to Me, for My mother [ ] but [My] true [Mother] gave me the Life”.</p>
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Matthew (10,37) and Luke (14,26) transmit the same Logion which they must have taken from Q. Matthew mentions also “son and daughter”, Luke mentions “wife, children” and “own soul”. Nothing of the kind is to be found in the Gospel of Thomas. We are ordered not to give priority to the family we came from, while the family we founded is not mentioned at all. This certainly has an authentic ring. Nor can there be any doubt that Logion 101 is a variation on the theme of Logion 55 and not on the version of the canonical Gospels or Q. This shows clearly that the Gospel of Thomas is based here upon two *written* sources which are not the canonical Gospels. On the contrary, the written source of Logion 55 and similar Sayings must have been an apocryphal Gospel. Clement of Alexandria tells us: “Not out of envy ordered the Lord *in a certain Gospel*: ‘My mystery for me and the sons of my house’”.<sup>11</sup> So this well-known Saying was once contained in an apocryphal Gospel. It is a quotation of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 24,16, as interpreted by the Jerusalem Sanhedrin 94a and the Jewish Christian Bible translator Symmachus.<sup>12</sup> In fact it is, of course, a Semitic doublet of Mark 4,11: “Unto you is given the mystery of the Kingdom of God”. That it was known in Jewish Christian circles, is evident from the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies 19,20:

And Peter said: “We remember that our Lord and Teacher, commanding us, said: Keep the mysteries for me and the sons of my house. Wherefore also He explained to His disciples privately the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven”.<sup>13</sup>

From all these arguments we conclude that this apocryphal Gospel was Jewish Christian. And this must have been the source of Logion 62: “I tell my mysteries to those who can *grasp* my mysteries”.

<sup>11</sup> *Strom.* V, X, 63 (Stählin II 368).

<sup>12</sup> Epiphanius (*De Mensuris et Ponderibus Liber*, 16), following Origen, says that Symmachus was a Samaritan converted to Judaism. Eusebius (*Dem. Ev.* 7,1) says he was an Ebionite. A. van der Kooij (*Oude tekstgetuigen van het boek Jesaja*, diss. Utrecht 1978, 137–146) opts for the first of the two possibilities.

<sup>13</sup> A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, *The Clementine Homilies, the Apostolic Constitutions* (Ante-Nicene Christian Library 17), Edinburgh 1870.

No wonder then that this Gospel source of Thomas had a definitely Jewish Christian tendency. It contained a *vaticinium ex eventu* of the flight from Jerusalem to Pella in Trans-Jordan:

Blessed are you when you are hated and persecuted: and you will find a *place where you will not be persecuted* (68).

That this Logion was not invented or formulated by the author of "Thomas", but is traditional, is made clear by Clement of Alexandria, who quotes certain heterodox Christians who pervert the Gospels as saying:

Blessed the persecuted for my sake for they will have a *place where they will not be persecuted* (Clem., *Strom.* IV, VI, 41, 2).

The Jewish Christians of Jerusalem did not participate in the Jewish war, but migrated to Pella before the outbreak of hostilities. Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* (III, 5, 3) says this happened owing to an oracle, which I would assume to have been nothing less than Logion 68 of the Gospel of Thomas. It would seem that the thoroughly Jewish Christian Apocalypse of John makes an allusion to this Saying:

And the Woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a *place* prepared of God, that they should feed her there (12,6).

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness *into her place*, where she is nourished for a time (12,14).

The Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions in Syriac, quoting a Jewish Christian source, tell that:

those that believed in Him (Jesus) were gathered through the Wisdom of God for their salvation into a *strong place* of the land and so kept safe during the war (I,37).

All these passages presuppose the quoted Jewish Christian version of Jesus' blessing for the persecuted.

A fragment of the Gospel according to the Hebrews says:

He who wondered shall become king and he who has become king shall rest (Clem. Al., *Strom.*, II, IX, 45, 5).

The man or woman that has been amazed, or overawed by the revelation of Jesus, will first become viceroy in the millennial empire of Christ, centred in Jerusalem, and after that enter the eternal kingdom

of God where he can rest from his works. This Saying is typically apocalyptic and describes the future of the true believer in the same images as the Apocalypse of John. The author of the Gospel of Thomas, whose wording has been better preserved by Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 654 than by the Coptic translation, has amplified this Logion and made it sapiential:

Let not him that seeketh cease seeking till he has found and when he has found, he will be scared and after he has been scared, he will become king and having become king he will rest (2).

Therefore one would be inclined to say that this Jewish Christian source of Thomas is the Gospel according to the Hebrews, were it not for certain complications. Logion 99 agrees almost word for word with a fragment of the Gospel of the Ebionites:

The disciples said to him: "Thy brethren and thy mother are standing outside". He said to them: (om. Mark 3,33; om. Mt. 12,49)

"Those here who do the will of my Father, they are my brethren and my mother: these are they who shall enter the kingdom of my Father".<sup>14</sup>

When it was announced to him: "Lo, your mother and your brethren are standing outside, he said: 'Who is my mother and brethren?' And stretching the hand towards his disciples, he said: 'These are my brethren and mother and sisters, who do the will (plur.) of my Father'" (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30, 14).

The Gospel of the Ebionites seems to have used here a special source, to which it has added some canonical elements: Mt. 12,49 (stretching out his hand towards his disciples) and Mark 3,33 (who is my mother and brethren). But Thomas is the only one to transmit that (only) the followers of Jesus can be saved (i.e. can enter the kingdom of God), which implies that the Mother of God is not in heaven. And when we remember how strained the relations of Jesus with his family were, this has an authentic ring.

We may conclude then, that Thomas did not use the Gospel of the Ebionites but one of its sources, because it is much more probable that the critical remark about Jesus' family was left out by a later reader than that it was added (it is also absent in Mark 3,31–35, followed by Matthew 12,46–50 and Luke 8,19–21). But I must admit

<sup>14</sup> Boismard supposes that both Thomas and the Gospel of the Ebionites use the source which he calls Proto-Lucas; see P. Benoit and M.-E. Boismard, *Synopse des quatre évangiles*, II, *Commentaire*, Paris 1972, 176–178.

that I hesitate now to specify that this source of the Gospel of the Ebionites and of Thomas was the Gospel according to the Hebrews. The reason for this is that the Gospel according to the Hebrews seems to have been written in Greek and to have circulated in Egypt in the first place. On the other hand, the Gospel of the Nazoraeans was written in Hebrew and still was in use among the Jewish Christians of Beroea (Aleppo) in the fourth century. It could easily have circulated in neighbouring Edessa in the second century. And we simply do not know what the relations were between the two Jewish Christian writings, if any.

For that reason we cannot be more specific but must maintain that one of the sources of the Gospel of Thomas was a second century apocryphal Gospel or a written collection of Sayings.

b. *Philippe de Suarez*

Helmut Koester does not stand alone with his radical and extreme views. Influential, though not academic French authors have come spontaneously to very much the same position.

It is extremely instructive to read these products of the counterculture on the Gospel of Thomas and to learn from them. It is painful to read the criticisms of the Church and of official scholarship, but are they not justified? Did we not deserve and provoke the ire of the counterculture? Have not some of us tried again to fool the general public that had such great expectations from the new discovery? And who dares to mind the mistakes in the Coptic in these publications, when he remembers the innumerable blunders in Doresse's translation of the Gospel of Thomas?

It is characteristic of these counterculture writings that they have such an unswerving confidence in the hypotheses of official scholarship, if it suits their purposes.

The Wallonian professor at Louvain, Gérard Garitte, once launched the idea, that the Coptic version of Thomas was not a translation of the Greek version, exemplified in the Oxyrhynchus Papyri 1, 654, and 655, but that the reverse was the case. The Greek allegedly had been translated from the Coptic.<sup>15</sup> This was based on a mistaken view of the Coptic text of Logion 37:

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<sup>15</sup> G. Garitte, "Les 'Logoi' d'Oxyrhynque et l'Apocryphe Copte dit 'Evangile de Thomas'", *Mus.* 73 (1960) 151–172.

His disciples said: “When wilt Thou be revealed to us and when will we see Thee?” Jesus said: “When you take off your clothing (and) *have not been ashamed* (*m̄petñšipe*) and take your clothes and put them under your feet as the little children and tread on them, then you shall behold the Son of the Living One and you shall not fear”.

Garitte thought the Coptic said: “When you take off your *shame* (object)”, which the Greek was said to have misunderstood: “When you take off (your clothes and) have not been ashamed” (the Coptic is ambiguous). But “and” (auo) is often omitted in Coptic and the negative Perfect I “m̄petñšipe” is a correct rendering of the Conjunctive Aoristi: μή αἰσχυνθήτε. From this extremely bold theory Garitte could deduce that the Gospel of Thomas had been written only before the beginning of the third century and not about 140 A.D., as most scholars hold.<sup>16</sup>

But the French Philippe de Suarez drew from the same hypothesis a much more interesting conclusion: The Gospel of Thomas is the source of the canonical Gospels.<sup>17</sup> The Coptic of this text was spoken by Jesus himself, who had learned this language during his flight as a baby to Egypt. This transpires from the fact “proven” by Garitte that the Coptic version is older than the Greek.

Like Helmut Koester, the French author Emile Gillabert ignores the sources of the Gospel of Thomas.<sup>18</sup> The result is that Jesus becomes an Oriental sage. Gillabert ironically remarks that he is not so interested to show that Jesus fulfills the words of the Hebrew prophets, but finds it more fascinating to prove that certain Sayings agree with the most sublime utterances of the greatest thinkers of the Far East, India and China. And it is true that some Logia are extremely profound and beautiful and have parallels in Oriental wisdom. From this Gillabert concludes that this was the real Jesus and that all eschatological and apocalyptic Sayings of Jesus in the New Testament are secondary falsifications.

There is some truth in this.

Logion 8 runs as follows:

Man is like a wise fisherman, who cast his net into the sea, he drew it up from the sea full of small fish: among them he found a large and

<sup>16</sup> See the refutation by A. Guillaumont, in “Les Logia d’Oxyrhynchos, sont-ils traduits du Copte?”, *Mus* 73 (1960) 325–333, and the answer of Garitte in “Les ‘Logoi’ d’Oxyrhynque sont traduits du Copte”, *Mus* 73 (1960) 335–349.

<sup>17</sup> Philippe de Suarez, *L’Évangile selon Thomas*, Montélimar <sup>2</sup>1975.

<sup>18</sup> Émile Gillabert, *Paroles de Jésus et Pensée Orientale*, Montélimar 1975.

good fish, that wise fisherman, he threw all the small fish down into the sea, he chose the large fish without regret.<sup>19</sup>

The parable is sapiential, about man and his wisdom, like the parable of the pearl. You can find the kingdom of God here and now.

Before it became a parable in the mouth of Jesus, its theme was already known to the first century Greek poet Babrius, Fable 4:

A *fisherman* drew in the net which he had cast a short time before and, as luck would have it, it was full of all kinds of delectable fish. But the little ones fled to the bottom of the net and slipped out through its many meshes, whereas the *big ones* were caught and lay stretched out in the boat.

If Babrius shows Thomas to have the most primitive version, this does not necessarily prove that the parable is not authentic. Sapiential lore always has been international: Jesus may have known this traditional theme also found in a Hellenistic source. On the other hand, Jesus may have been inspired by the sight of fishermen. Up till this day fishermen threw their cast nets into the Lake of Galilee. This version of the parable does not speak about the coming Last Judgment, but about the discovery of the kingdom of God here and now. But then, like John, Jesus could have believed in “realised eschatology”.

Matthew made the parable eschatological and added an (unnecessary) explanation:

Again the kingdom of heaven is like a net, that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore and sat down and gathered the good into vessels but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (13,47–50).

An adherent of this alternative approach has made a valuable contribution to research. Paulette Duval, who belongs to the same circle as Suarez, has found a version similar to Thomas of the parable of the sower in an eighth century Moslim mystic called al Muhâsibi:

The *sower* went out with his seed and *filled his hand* and sowed. Part of it fell on the road and soon the birds came, they *collected* them.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See for the following, *Tatian and the Gospel of Thomas*, Leiden 1975, 95–106.

<sup>20</sup> Paulette Duval, “Une citation de l’Évangile selon Thomas chez un mystique Arabe du 8<sup>e</sup>–9<sup>e</sup> s.,” *Cahiers Metanoia* 9, 1977, 32–35; this quotation is found in M. Asin y Palacios, *Obras Escogidas*, vol. II and III, Madrid 1948, 348–350.

Compare with this Logion 9:

See the sower went out, he *filled his hand*, he threw. Some fell *on* the road, the birds came, they *gathered* them.

The omission of “to sow” after “went out” is already found in 1 Clem. 24,5. The expression “to fill his hand” is found in the Old Testament (Ps. 129,7; Lev. 9,17) and in Aphraates (14,46); “on the road” is clearer than “beside the road” and cannot have been translated from the Greek “para”. “To fill his hand” is not found in any manuscript or version of the New Testament and cannot be ascribed to influence of the Syriac text. It presupposes an Aramaic (or Hebrew) original and can be authentic. In a way the Islamic version is better than the canonical and nearer to the source.

A similar version of this parable is found in the Arabic Kitab Bilankar wa Būdasf, the Story of Barlaam and Joasaph (= Buddisatva, it is the christianized story of Buddha):

The sower went out with his good seed to sow. When he had *filled his hand* with it and had strawn the seed, some of it fell on the border of the road, where soon the birds picked it up.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. *The Catholic Approach*

The adherents of this school do not necessarily belong to any of the many Catholic churches, but are characterised by that openmind-edness and respect for all traditions inside and outside the Bible which is so typically Catholic. Their battle cry is: “*pari pietate veneramur*”: we venerate with equal piety Bible and tradition. Their founding father, guardian angel and patron saint is Joachim Jeremias, who dared to consider the historicity of the Unknown Sayings of Jesus at a time when the New Quest had not yet begun and everybody thought that we know as much as nothing about Jesus. No wonder that this man immediately seized the importance of the Gospel of Thomas and in his wonderful book on the parables concisely observed that the parables of Thomas stem from an independent tradition, because they lacked the tendentious additions he had identified before in the canonical parables.<sup>22</sup> This lead was followed by P. Benoit and M.E. Boismard in their Synopsis of the Four Gospels (1972) and by the Canadian

<sup>21</sup> Otto Spies, “Die Arbeiter im Weinberg (Mt. 20,1–15) in islamischer Überlieferung”, *ZNW* 66, 1975, 283 sq.

<sup>22</sup> J. Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, Göttingen <sup>6</sup>1962, 67–75.

scholar F.W. Beare in his work *The Earliest Records of Jesus* (1974). These extremely competent scholars with their patient and unselfish learning show again and again—and irrefutably—that “Thomas” cannot possibly depend upon the synoptic Gospels. It is unbelievable that books could be published on the Gospel of Thomas, even as late as 1975, which systematically ignore these basic studies. And yet, according to George W. MacRae, a majority of scholars who have *seriously* investigated the matter have been won over to the side of “Thomas” independence of the canonical Gospels.<sup>23</sup>

A good example of the method of these Catholic scholars is their approach to the parable of the wicked husbandmen. Extremists like A. Jülicher, A. Loisy, R. Bultmann, F. Hahn and E. Haenchen knew for sure that this parable was not authentic. More cautious scholars like C.H. Dodd and Joachim Jeremias were willing to consider the possibility that this parable contained primitive features to which the congregation later added some interpolations to make it an allegory. After all, a parable is a scene from real life with a point. And, a revolutionary situation in Galilee, tenants refusing to pay the rent to their absentee landlord, as described in this story, was only too real in the days of our Lord. Dodd and Jeremias made a tentative reconstruction of the primitive form of the parable. This was repeated later on by Van Iersel<sup>24</sup> and Hubaut, in excellent monographs. All these reconstructions are very similar to each other. Let me quote the latest elucubration, of Hubaut, in *La Parole des Vignerons Homicides*, Paris 1976:

A man had a vineyard.  
 He gave it to husbandmen.  
 When the time came, he sent a servant to the  
 husbandmen to receive the fruits of the vineyard.  
 They seized him, they beat him, they sent him  
 back with empty hands.  
 He sent another, they killed him.  
 He had still someone, his son.  
 He sent him the last.  
 They seized him, they killed him.

When the Gospel of Thomas was discovered, R.Mcl. Wilson, who was a pupil of Dodd, immediately saw that Logion 65 agreed almost

<sup>23</sup> “Nag Hammadi and the New Testament”, *Gnosis*, Festschrift für Hans Jonas, Göttingen 1978, 144–157, esp. 152.

<sup>24</sup> B.M.F. van Iersel, ‘Der Sohn’ in den *synoptischen Jesusworten*, Leiden <sup>2</sup>1964, 124–145.



word for word with the reconstruction of his teacher. So he rightly concluded that at least in this case Thomas could not depend on the synoptics.<sup>25</sup> Likewise Jacques-E. Ménard accepts in his commentary on the Gospel of Thomas that we have to deal here with a presynoptic tradition of the parable.<sup>26</sup> So on the one hand the trustworthiness of our Gospels and on the other hand the value of Thomas is vindicated by sound scholarship. Logion 65:

He said: "A good man had a vineyard. He gave it to husbandmen so that they would work it and that he would receive its fruit from them. He sent his servant so that the husbandmen would give him the fruit of the vineyard. They seized his servant, they beat him; a little longer and they would have killed him. The servant came, he told it to his master. His master said: 'Perhaps they did not know him'. He sent another servant; the husbandmen beat him as well. Then the owner sent his son. He said: 'Perhaps they will respect my son'. Since those husbandmen knew that he was heir of the vineyard, they seized him, they killed him. Whoever has ears let him hear".

It is absolutely certain that this is an independent tradition.

The Synopsis of Boismard and Benoit has also been very helpful in determining the independent tradition in the Gospel of Thomas. Let me quote just one example. They warn us that behind the parable of the lost sheep (107) lies chapter 34 of the prophet Ezekiel about the evil shepherds and the one shepherd, David. There it is said that God's sheep wandered through all the mountains but that God himself will seek out his sheep, the scattered people of Israel, and bring them back:

I will seek the lost animal and bring again that which had gone astray and will bind up that which was wounded and will strengthen that which was sick and I will *preserve*<sup>27</sup> *the fat and the strong*. I will feed them properly (vs 16).

From this it becomes clear that the subject of the parable is God, not his Messiah and that the point is the salvation of Israel or more

<sup>25</sup> R.Mcl. Wilson, "'Thomas' and the Growth of the Gospels", *HTR* 53 (1960) 231–250; esp. 239.

<sup>26</sup> Jacques-E. Ménard, *L'Évangile selon Thomas*, Leiden 1975, 166–167.

<sup>27</sup> In translating Ez. 34,16 with "I will preserve" we follow the Greek rendering of the Seventy, which have based their translation on the Hebrew "šamar". Only two Hebrew manuscripts have this reading, while the other use here the verb "šamad", which means "destroy". The Syriac translation of the O.T. corresponds in this respect with the LXX.

specifically “the lost sheep of the house of Israel”. Thomas, Logion 107, gives only the imagery, without any interpretation. And he has preserved Ezekiel’s notion about the fat and strong sheep (“which was the largest”):

Jesus said: “The Kingdom is like a shepherd who had a hundred sheep. One of them went astray, which was the largest. He left behind ninety-nine, he sought for the one until he found it. Having tired himself out, he said to the sheep: ‘I love thee more than ninety-nine’”.

Matthew (18,12–14) has given a special twist to the parable. He lived in Antioch, which some decades later became the city of Ignatius and the monarchic bishop. He considered the lost sheep to be the “little one”, the simple Christian who had sinned and should be admitted to penance. Therefore he added his lesson:

Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Luke too has adapted the parable to a particular situation: the friendship of Jesus with publicans and sinners. Therefore he has slightly modified the text of Q (known from Mt. 18,13) to the effect that in heaven there is more joy over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance (15,7).

Moreover Luke proclaims, against the silence of Matthew, that the shepherd comes home, calls his friends and neighbours and rejoices with them (15,6), just like the woman that lost a farthing (15,9).

Thomas has none of these secondary features of Luke. And Thomas has preserved the point of the parable: “I love thee more than the ninety-nine”. These words obviously refer to the election of Israel, its special relationship with the Lord. This more than anything else proves that he is independent from the synoptics. If one reads with a sharp eye the Synopsis of Benoit and Boismard, it would be possible to prove, as we have done in several cases here, that all the Sayings which Thomas has in common with the synoptics, are independent. It is safe to assume that all these sayings go back to Jesus himself and in their nucleus are authentic.

## III. THE AUTHOR

The author of the Gospel of Thomas lived in Edessa in Mesopotamia. He was an Encratite, rejecting marriage, wine and meat, and therefore taught that only bachelors could go to heaven. His religious ideal was typically Syrian, the *iḥidaja* or *monachos*, i.e. the androgynous man or woman.

- a. It seems certain that this apocryphal Gospel originated in Edessa, the city of the apostle Thomas. The expression Judas Thomas does not occur anywhere else. If the Book of Thomas the Contender is similar in spirit (the apostle is called there the twin and true companion of Jesus, as in the Edessene Acts of Thomas), this is easily explained by its origin in the same Aramaic city. There can be no doubt whatsoever about this. The author was neither Catholic, nor Gnostic, but Encratite. This becomes clear from Logion 75, where this author does not quote his source, but summarises it:

Many are standing at the door but (only) the bachelors will enter the bridal chamber.

In several writings of Antiquity, *Epistula Apostolorum* (43(54)), the *Acts of Thomas* (7) and Macarius (*passim*) we find the traces of an alternative version of the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Mt. 25,1–13).<sup>28</sup> According to this alternate version not all virgins fell asleep, but only the stupid girls. This seems to be the real point: “Be awake, for you do not know the day or the hour”, says Matthew (25,13) very appropriately. Moreover, the girls are not playmates of the bride, but themselves brides. They do not come to the marriage dinner, but enter the bridal chamber. And the foolish girls are definitely excluded, whereas in Matthew they only find the door closed.

It is this (Jewish Christian) version of the parable that the author of Thomas alludes to, as the variant “*nymphōn*” shows. This is also found in Ephrem Syrus, Aphraates, Balai, Jacob of Edessa and therefore typically Syrian.<sup>29</sup> Obviously the alternative Jewish Christian

<sup>28</sup> R. Staats, “Die törichten Jungfrauen von Mt. 25 in gnostischer und anti-gnostischer Literatur”, in W. Eltester, *Christentum und Gnosis, Berlin 1969, 98–115.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ep. Ap. 43* (Coptic version): “Und ihr werdet wie die klugen Jungfrauen sein, die gewacht haben und *nicht eingeschlafen sind*, sondern herausgegangen sind zu dem

version was known from the very beginning in Edessa. The author has interpreted this eschatological exhortation to vigilance in a thoroughly Encratite way. According to him it means that only bachelors, as opposed to married people, can be saved. This is in accordance with Tatian's views, as can be seen from the discussion of the matter by Clement of Alexandria. In *Stromateis* III, 82, 6 Clement refutes the view of Tatian that ever since the coming of Christ marriage has been abolished. Tatian seems to have argued as follows: according to the Old Testament sexual intercourse even in lawful wedlock pollutes. To remove this impurity an ablution is prescribed. During the Old Dispensation this did not mean that marriage as such was forbidden. It was for a while conceded because these ablutions for the pollutions could be reiterated. In contrast Christian baptism is unique; it cannot be repeated, when the baptised pollutes himself again through intercourse. Whosoever is baptised, is delivered through that rite once and for all from the guilt of all forgoing pollutions, but second baptism is not possible. Therefore each instance of sexual intercourse after baptism is not only sinful (which in fact it always was), but more importantly it cannot be washed off any more. Therefore baptism obliges every Christian to observe complete abstinence. Only unmarried or divorced people can be baptised—and hence saved. Certainly for Tatian celibacy was a requirement for baptism.

That this was the concept which Clement tried to refute transpires from the following words:

Nor does divine providence through our Lord still now prescribe that he who had intercourse in lawful wedlock has to take a bath as was formerly done. For it is not necessarily so that . . . our Lord removes the believers from the begetting of children, purifying them by the unique baptism from sexual intercourse once and for all, even if it is true that He replaced the many ablutions prescribed by Moses by the one unique Christian baptism (*Stromateis* III, 82, 6).<sup>30</sup>

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Herrn in das *Brautgemach*" (Hennecke <sup>3</sup>I, 150); Macarius: τοῦ νυμφῶνος τῆς βασιλείας ἀπεκλείσθησαν (*Hom.* 4,6; Dörries 31,96, *et passim*); Aphraates: observemus igitur horam sponsi gloriosi, ut cum eo ad eius *thalamum* introcamus (*Dem.* 6,1; Parisot I, 240; cf. *Dem.* 9,4); Ephrem: "antequam intret sponsus, et claudatur porta *cubiculi*?" (Lamy III, 139,18). See Staats, in *Christentum und Gnosis*, 103, n. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Ludger Bernard, "Zu Klemens' von Alexandrien *Stromateon* III, 82,6" in *Perennisitas*, Münster 1963, 11–18.

Burkitt and Vööbus<sup>31</sup> have taught us that there must have been a period in the history of the Syrian church that only celibates were admitted to baptism. They refer to a passage in the *Demonstrations* of Aphraates (4th century; VII, 18):

And who is engaged to a woman and wants to marry her, let him go, that he may rejoice with his wife. (Only) for solitaries (ihidaje) the fight is becoming, for they have directed their eyes forward and do not consider what is behind.

It may be asked whether this practice existed from the very beginning. Jewish Christians were all for marriage, not against it. If they were the ones who brought Christianity to Edessa, celibacy as a requirement for baptism cannot have been primitive. But Logion 75 shows that this requirement did exist in Edessa at an early age, at least in certain quarters. The fact that it was taught by Tatian leads us to suppose that such a severe view was limited to Encratite circles.

Recently T. Jansma has argued that the passage in Aphraates VII, 18 does not imply that people living a married life were ever disqualified for baptism in the Syrian churches.<sup>32</sup> But he does not take into account the Logion of Thomas and the view of Tatian, who was so influential in the Aramaic church. The whole problem should be studied anew in the perspective of this new evidence. We dare venture the hypothesis that the selective concept of baptism, though not existing from the very beginning, had many adherents in the realm of Aramaic Christianity, including Aphraates, and that it took a long period before the original situation was restored. It is essential for the understanding of the Edessene church to distinguish between the Jewish Christian foundations and the later arrival of Encratites from the Greek West.

- b. The Gospel of Thomas is the first writing in history to use the noun “monachos”. This was unknown to Classical Antiquity: that knew only an adjective “monachos”, “unique, simple”, a technical expression used in the language of philosophers and naturalists, by an architect and in legal, juridic papyri. Neither Greek poets nor dramatists ever used it. Philo of Alexandria and the Septuagint do

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<sup>31</sup> F.C. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity outside the Roman Empire*, Cambridge 1899; idem, *Early Eastern Christianity*, London 1904, 133 and 129; A. Vööbus, *Celibacy. A Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church*, Stockholm 1951, 48–58.

<sup>32</sup> T. Jansma, “Aphraates’ Demonstration VII §§ 18 and 20. Some observations on the discourse on penance”, *Par Or* 5 (1974) 21–48.

not know it. It is never used in Greek or Latin Christian literature of the first three centuries. The Alexandrians Clement and Origen ignore it. Basil and Gregory of Nyssa still avoid it. It is especially noteworthy that it is never used in Gnostic writings (with the exception of the Dialogue of the Saviour, which quotes the Gospel of Thomas). It was not even used in the sources of the Gospel of Thomas. Where it occurs in Thomas, it is interpolated by the author. Yet this is the most important word, indeed, the central concept of this apocryphal Gospel. This alone separates it from all shades of Gnosticism.

The author of Thomas has not invented this term. It is a Greek translation of the Syriac word “iḥidaja”, still centuries later used in the sense of “bachelor”, not necessarily “monk”, and characteristic of the ascetic trend of Aramaic Christianity. Its use in the Gospel of Thomas reveals that as early as 140 A.D. this term and its connotations were known in the centre of Aramaic Christianity, Edessa.

“Jaḥid” is a Hebrew noun and adjective that can have different meanings, e.g. “only” and “beloved”, “monogenès” and “agapètos”. It occurs in Psalm 67 (68), 7: “God setteth the *solitaries* in families; he bringeth out those which are bound with chains”. Here it could designate the bachelors. At least that is how the rabbis interpreted these verses: they found here a biblical ground for their belief that marriages were made in heaven. The Bible translators Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion used “monachos”: the first and the second to translate “lebadò”, “alone” (“It is not good that man be alone”, Gen. 2,18); the second and the third to translate the *solitaires* of Ps. 67 (68), 7. Symmachus and Theodotion are said to have been Ebionites, living in the time of Marcus Aurelius. This seems to indicate that “jaḥid” was used to indicate the bachelor in Jewish Christian circles. It was the Jewish Christians who brought “jaḥid” to Edessa, where it was translated into the related Eastern Aramaic term “iḥidaia”, “bachelor”. From this “monachos”, first used by Eusebius, was a translation. It was only in the writings of Athanasius and Pachomius that it came to mean: “monk”.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Françoise-E. Morard, *Monachos-Moine*, Fribourg 1973.

## IV. THE JUDAIC CHRISTIAN SOURCE

- a. From the very beginnings it has been shown that certain Sayings of the Gospel of Thomas have some affinity with Judaic Christianity. This theory did not get the attention it deserves. I should make clear that by Judaic Christians I mean the descendants of the faction of the “Hebrews” in the congregation of Jerusalem, who had monopolised this church after the “Hellenists” had been obliged to leave. Later on they were variously called Ebionites, Nazoraeans and Elkesaites. They all accepted Jesus as the Messiah of the Jewish people; they all remained more or less faithful to the Law of Moses.

There is no doubt that some Sayings in the Gospel of Thomas have much in common with fragments of the Judaic Christian Gospels of the Hebrews, the Nazoraeans, the Ebionites and the Gospel quotations in the Pseudo-Clementine writings. But some Logia demonstrate not only a literary connection with Judaic Christianity (as we have demonstrated above); some also reflect a theological connection: they reflect the special tendencies of the Jewish Christians as opposed to the views of the Gentile Church. Hence James, not Peter, is appointed by Jesus as the primate of the whole church (12). Whereas Gentiles gathered on Sundays, Jesus allegedly orders them to keep the Sabbath (27). And whereas Gentile Christians disparaged the Pharisees, Thomas tells us, very much in the trend of Jewish Christianity, that the Pharisees have received the keys of Gnosis, i.e. are the legitimate heirs of the oral tradition on the Law (Mischna) entrusted by Moses to the seventy elders (39).

One Logion specifically reflects the fight of Paul and his Judaic Christian opponents as told in the Second Letter to the Corinthians. According to Paul they “go hawking about the word of God”, i.e. they get a salary for preaching (2,17); they do not preach the Gospel for scratch (δωρεάν, 11,7). They eat and accept goods from others (11,20). They seek to obtain what is “yours”, τὰ ὑμῶν.

This charge is refuted by the Jewish Christians in some passages of the Pseudo-Clementines, *Hom.* 3,71 = *Rec.* 3,66,5–6, *Epistula Clementis* 5,4:

But, brethren, there are some things that you must not wait to hear, but must consider of yourselves what is reasonable. Zaccheus alone

having given himself up wholly to labour for you, and needing sustenance, and not being able to attend to his own affairs, how can he procure necessary support? Is it not reasonable that you are to take forthought for his living? not waiting for his asking you, for this is the part of a beggar. But he will rather die of hunger than submit to do this. And shall not you incur punishment, not considering that the workman is worthy of his hire? And let no one say: "Is, then, the word sold which was freely given?" Far be it. For if any one has the means of living, and takes anything, he sells the word; but if he who has not takes support in order to live—as the Lord also took at supper and among His friends, having nothing, though He alone is the owner of all things—he sins not. Therefore suitably honour elders, catechists, useful deacons, widows who have lived well, orphans as children of the church. But wherever there is need of any provision for an emergency, contribute all together. Be kind one to another, not shrinking from the endurance of anything whatever for your own salvation (*Hom.* 3,71).

This section has been taken from a source called O, allegedly written between 200 and 250 in Koile Syria. It is very archaic: the bishop governs the congregations and preaches the Word but it is not said that he brings the sacrifice of the eucharist. The bishop dedicates himself completely to the congregation and so works no more. Everybody takes care of him without waiting till he asks, for, as Jesus said, the worker is good for his salary. Thus, if someone, like St Paul, were to say that the Word of God, which should be given for scratch (*δωρεάν*), is sold for money, he would be wrong. If someone having a livelihood were to accept goods, then he would be selling the Word. But if someone who has nothing accepts food for his living, he does no wrong. The Lord did the same: he accepted food and shelter from friends, he who had nothing and possessed everything.

The officer of the Jewish Christian congregation does not possess anything, nor is he allowed to work. That was a commandment of Jesus to his missionaries:

Carry no purse . . . And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire (Luke 10,4–7).

The missionaries should live from the missionfield, not from the home base nor from their private property or their work. Paul never understood this. He knew that the Lord ordered, commanded, that those



who preach the Gospel should earn their living by the Gospel.<sup>34</sup> But he boasts repeatedly of not having to avail himself of such a right: he worked for a living. Was it a right? Or was it a duty, obedience to a commandment of Jesus?

The officers of the Jewish Christian Church, the itinerant missionaries (apostles or angels) and extatics (prophets) went from group to group without possessing anything, trusting that pious people would give them their due. They gave them the Word of God. They trusted they would receive what was theirs in return.

The Gentile Church has made the eye of the needle so wide for the camel that present-day Gentiles do not see the Ebionite tendency of Logion 88:

Jesus said: “The ‘angels’ and the prophets will come to you and they will give you what is yours. And you, too, give to them what is in your hands, and say to yourselves: ‘On which day will they come and receive what is theirs?’”.

It might be objected that this interpretation is correct for the Saying as it stood in its Judaic Christian source, but should be explained differently now that the Saying has been integrated in a writing like the Gospel of Thomas. We have seen that the author was an Encratite. Encratites taught that Christians should imitate the Lord who was not married and did not *possess* anything in the world (Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* III, VI,49,1). Sayings should be interpreted *e mente auctoris* and not made conform to the will-o-the-wisp of modern biases. The Encratite view about the wealth of the clergy did not differ from the Ebionite view.

- b. It was established only recently, that the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs also contain important parallels with the Gospel of Thomas. No wonder, because in their present form they clearly are Judaic Christian and show not the slightest awareness of the dialectics of Law and grace dear to St Paul. They say that a light shone upon Jesus during baptism, like the Gospel of the Ebionites, and they proclaim “love of the brethren”, like Logion 25. And it is this writing which confirms in what sense the macarism of the

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<sup>34</sup> 1 Cor. 9,14–15: “In the same way the Lord gave instructions that those who preach the Gospel should earn their living by the Gospel. But I have never taken advantage of any such right, nor do I intend to claim it in this letter”.

poor, not only as transmitted by Thomas but also as meant by Jesus, should be understood.

Jesus said: "Blessed are the poor, for yours is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Logion 54).

Thomas does not have the Matthean (5,3) addition "(poor) of spirit" and does have the idiomatic expression "Kingdom of Heaven", not "Kingdom of God", and he addresses himself to the followers of Jesus (*yours* is the Kingdom of Heaven). It is to them that he promises a leading function in the coming Kingdom of God on earth, the theocracy. Likewise it is said in the Apocalypse (2,26) that the Christian who overcomes and does Jesus' will unto the end shall be given power over the nations of the earth and he shall rule them with a rod of iron.

In this "Thomas" agrees with a Judaic Christian source of the Pseudo-Clementine writings. There it is said that Jesus blessed the *poor* and promised that they (*eos*) for their endurance in hardship would receive the Kingdom of *Heaven* (*Rec.* 2,28). In these Jewish Christian circles there obviously existed a hermeneutic tradition concerning the Sayings of Jesus which is extremely valuable. In the Homilies (15,10) it is said that not all the poor are to be saved according to a specific macarism, for the poverty of the poor is not acceptable if he is touched by desire of undecent things.

So that some are rich as far as their choice goes, though poor in actual wealth, and they are punished because they desire to have more. But one is not unquestionably righteous because he happens to be poor. For he can be a beggar as far as actual wealth is concerned, but he may desire and even do what above everything he ought not to do (*Hom.* 15,10,2-3).

Not the poor in general, the allegedly poor, i.e. the schooled industrial workers, not even the real poor—the subproletariat which populates our great cities—but only those who are voluntarily poor without possessions for Christ's sake, the Ebionites, are blessed.

This very important interpretation is also found in the Testament of Jude 25,3. In a paraphrase of the macarisms of Jesus it is said that "those in poverty for the Lord's sake will become rich".

Here the Judaic Christians have preserved the right interpretation of the Saying. It is this and nothing else, that Jesus meant. Christ does not want man to live for money but neither does he bless the poor for the simple reason that they are poor. These two examples make clear how exceedingly important the Judaic Christian perspective is for the

right hermeneutics of primitive Christianity and its literature. And yet this issue meets with strong resistance in some quarters. For this reason we will give briefly in the following some further indications that the author of the Gospel of Thomas had a Judaic Christian written source before him when he wrote his work.

c. Some Judaic Christian elements in the Gospel of Thomas:

- Log. 2: Let him who seeks etc.: an amplification of a Saying in the Gospel of the Hebrews.
- Log. 6: Do not do what you hate: Hebrew form of the Golden Rule, also attested by Hillel and Tobit.<sup>35</sup>
- Log. 12: Primacy of James the righteous: in the Gospel of the Hebrews Jesus appears first to James after his resurrection.
- Log. 16: I have come to throw divisions upon the earth: parallel in the Pseudo-Clementines (*Rec.* 2,26,6; 2,28,2; 6,4,6).
- Log. 23: One out of thousand...and two out of ten thousand: semi-tism, cf. Deut. 32,30.
- Log. 27: “To keep the Sabbath” is Jewish-Christian.
- Log. 31: A city on the top of a high mountain cannot fall: Jerusalem cannot fall for ever according to Ps. 46,6; 48,9; 77,69.
- Log. 39: Pharisees and Scribes received the keys of knowledge: exclusive parallels in the Pseudo-Clementines (*Hom.* 3,18,3; *Rec.* 1,54,7).
- Log. 44: Blasphemy against God, as in Ps.-Clem. *Hom.* 3,6,1–3.
- Log. 62: “My mysteries for me and for the sons of my house”, as in the Clementines (*Hom.* 19,20,1–2).
- Log. 64: “Go out to the *streets*” (not “roads” as in our edition): invitations remain within the city, only Israelites called; cf. Tertullian, *adv. Marc.* IV,31.<sup>36</sup> Luke adds the calling of the Gentiles. Tradesmen and merchants not in the seats at the dinner of God: Ebionite animus against business.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Tobit 4,5: καὶ ὃ μισεῖς μηδενὶ ποιήσης (And do to nobody, what you hate); b Schab. 31a: “What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbour”.

<sup>36</sup> “Dico primo extraneos et nullius iuris adfines invitari ad cenam non solere, certe facilius solere domesticos et familiares. Ergo creatoris est invitasse, ad quem pertinebant qui invitabantur, et per Adam, qua homines, et (per) patres, qua Iudaici, non eius, ad quem neque natura pertinebant neque praerogativa” (CC I, 629, 26–31).

- Log. 65: "He was the heir of the vineyard": the Messiah of Israel.
- Log. 68: The place where they will not be persecuted is Pella.
- Log. 69: They will fill their belly with what they desire: concrete, chiliastic eschatology of Judaic Christianity. The expression is Hebraic; cf. Ps. 17,14: whose belly thou fillest; Luke 15,16: he would fain have *filled his belly* with the husks that the swine did eat.
- Log. 71: The house that will not be built again is the temple. Animosity of Ebionites against sacrifices in temple. Cf. Gospel of the Ebionites fr. 6: (Jesus said): "I came to do away with sacrifices, and if you cease not from sacrificing, the wrath of God will not cease from you" (the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. predicted).
- Log. 72: "I am not a divider (= a schismatic)". Nazoraeans and Minim were damned as heretic in the "18 prayers" of orthodoxy.<sup>37</sup>
- Log. 84: "When you see your images": according to Jews and Jewish Christians the Guardian Angel is the image, "iqonin", of man:<sup>38</sup> Acts 12,15: ὁ ἄγγελός ἐστιν αὐτοῦ.
- Log. 88: "The angels and the prophets will come": missionaries and prophets were bearers of office in the Jewish Christian church (Apoc. 18,20; Luke 11,49). Jesus sends "angels" (i.e. messengers) (Luke 9,52). The prophet Haggai was an "angel" of the Lord to the people (Haggai 1,13s).
- Log. 90: "Easy is my yoke and my lordship is gentle": same variation of 'ol (yoke) and maruta (lordship) in the Targum of Isaiah (14,25; 47,6).
- Log. 93: Pearls to the swines parallel in the Pseudo-Clementines (*Rec.* 2,3,5; 3,1,5).
- Log. 95: "Give": also in the Pseudo-Clementines (*Rec.* 6,13,5).
- Log. 99: Parallel with fragment of the Gospel of the Ebionites. "My brethren and my mother": precedence oldest son over mother when father dies.

<sup>37</sup> D. Gershenson and G. Quispel, "Meristae", *VC* 12 (1958) 19–26.

<sup>38</sup> "Das ewige Ebenbild des Menschen. Zur Begegnung mit dem Selbst in der Gnosis", *Er Jb* 36, 1967 (published 1968), 9–30 = *Gnostic Studies*, I, Istanbul 1974, 140–157.

- Log. 104: “Comes out of the bridal chamber”: cf. Hieronymus, *In Mattheum* 1,9: “Quamdiu sponsum *in thalamo vident*... Quum autem ille propter peccata a nobis *recesserit*” (PL 26, 59A). The Jewish Christian fasted and prayed in the night of Passah.
- Log. 107: “Which was the largest”: cf. Ezekiel 34,16.
- Log. 109: Treasure hidden in his field: exact parallel in Midrash on Song of Songs 4,13 (116a): “R. Simeon b. Yohai taught: ‘He is like a man who inherited a piece of ground used as a dunghill. Being an indolent man, he went and sold it for a trifling sum. The purchaser began working and digging it up, and he found a treasure there, out of which he built himself a fine palace’” (translation from the Soncino edition IX, 219).
- Log. 113: “Kingdom spread upon the earth”: cf. Testament of Levi 18,5: “The knowledge of the Lord shall be poured forth upon the earth as the water of the seas”.

I suggest that these specific features, combined with the numerous doublets in the writing, described earlier, do show convincingly that one of the sources of the Gospel of Thomas was definitely Judaic Christian. We should not automatically suppose that it either depended upon the canonical Gospels nor that it represents some form of Q. We can only say that this material not only has affinities with Q, but also with Special Matthew, Special Luke and the Judaic Christian Gospel underlying the Gospel of John. Moreover, up till now no redactional elements due to the theologies of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have been determined in this source.

But that does not mean that all problems have been solved. Let me make the reader part of my perplexities, doubts and uncertainties which have become greater and more perplexing the longer I have studied this apocryphal Gospel.

#### d. The Judaic Christian Source and Macarius.

F.C. Burkitt, who laid the foundations of modern Syriology, already in his *Eastern Christianity* of 1899 argued that Syriac, Aramaic Christianity, centred in Mesopotamian Edessa, was based on Palestinian, Jewish Christian foundations. In our times Arthur Vööbus, the greatest living Syriologist, has concluded from the agreements between the militant, ascetic Christianity of the Edessene “Sons of the Covenant” and the

Dead Sea Scrolls, that even the typically Syrian asceticism was due to an ascetic shade of Palestinian Christianity which was Essene in origin.

Since then there is a growing consensus among specialists in this field. Marcel Simon and Jean Daniélou, Peter Kawerau and Georg Kretschmar, Jacob Neusner and Ignatius Ortiz de Urbina all agree that Syrian Christianity has Judaic Christian roots. As R. Murray says in his excellent *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*: "Syriac Christianity long retained some features which can only be accounted for by an origin in a thoroughly Jewish form of Christianity".<sup>39</sup> L.W. Barnard remarks: "If then we look back to the origins of the Church in Edessa it would seem that we must envisage an evangelisation from Palestine which took root among the strong Jewish colony in the city. From this seed an indigenous Syriac Christianity developed along ascetic and encratite lines which early on became permeated with dualistic tendencies. Within this milieu can be placed the Gospel of Thomas, the Odes of Solomon... and the work of Tatian which culminated in the Syriac Diatessaron."<sup>40</sup>

We can here summarise briefly the reasons which compel us to accept this hypothesis.

1. According to the tradition of the church of Edessa, Christianity was founded there by Addai, a missionary sent from Jerusalem.<sup>41</sup> This seems to be trustworthy information, because no endeavour is made to found the hierarchy upon apostolic origin: Addai is not Thaddaeus; Thomas, the beloved disciple of Edessa, is not said to have been in Edessa. Also the tradition that Addai's pupil Mari founded the church of Ktesiphon-Seleucia near ancient Babylon and modern Bagdad can be trustworthy.<sup>42</sup>
2. The Cologne Mani Codex attests the existence of a Jewish Christian, Elkesaite commune in Southern Babylonia and other regions in the East. They styled themselves as Baptists.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom. A Study in Early Syriac Tradition*, Cambridge 1975, 7.

<sup>40</sup> L.W. Barnard, "The Origins and Emergence of the Church in Edessa during the first two centuries A.D.," *VC* 22 (1968) 161-175.

<sup>41</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 1, 13 (Schwartz 32-37); see also *Doctrina Addai*, ed. Phillips, 5f.

<sup>42</sup> J.M. Fiey, *Jalons pour une histoire de l'Église en Iraq*, Louvain 1970.

<sup>43</sup> A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, "Ein Griechischer Mani-Codex", *ζPE* 5 (1970) 97-216.

3. The Persian highpriest Kartir mentions in his third century inscription Nazoraean, Christians, Maktaks (Mandaeans?) and Manichaeans as living in the Sassanid empire. Nazoraean is the self-chosen name of Jewish Christians.<sup>44</sup>
4. This name is still in use to indicate the Aramaic Church. This presupposes its Jewish Christian origin.
5. Syrian Christians, like Jewish ones, believed that the Holy Ghost is female.
6. In the Syrus Sinaiticus, an Old Syriac version of the Gospels originating in Edessa, it is said in Mt. 1,16 that Joseph was the carnal father of Jesus. A branch of the Ebionites denied the virgin birth. They must have influenced the Syriac speaking circles in Edessa which are responsible for this tendentious alteration of the Gospel.
7. The Gospel of Thomas, written in Edessa about 140 A.D., contains Jewish Christian elements.
8. The Diatessaron of Tatian, composed about 170 A.D. in the Aramaic East, has integrated Jewish Christian Gospel traditions.
9. The typically Syrian phenomenon of the “bachelor” (*ihidaja*) presupposes the Jewish Christian and Jewish concept of the *jahid*.
10. Both the Syrian Macarius and the Syrian Audi teach that God has a form. This is said in so many words in the Pseudo-Clementines (*Hom.* 17,7,4) and is typically Jewish.<sup>45</sup>
11. The Syrians originally celebrated Easter on the 14th of Nisan (that is, they were Quartodecimans) like the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem and Asia Minor.<sup>46</sup>
12. Both in the *Liber Graduum* (3,15; 7,20) and in the Pseudo-Clementines (15,10,4) it is said that the true believers cannot give alms because they do not possess anything.<sup>47</sup> Gospel of Thomas 14: if you give alms, you will do evil to your spirits.

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<sup>44</sup> M.L. Chaumont, “Les Sassanides et la christianisation de l’Empire iranien au III<sup>e</sup> siècle de notre ère”, *RHR* 165 (1964) 165–202; see F. Decret, *Mani et la tradition manichéenne*, Paris 1974, 27: “Les doctrines d’Ahriman et des démons, de l’Empire furent chassées. Juifs, bouddhistes, brahmanes, nazariéens, chrétiens, maktaks et zandigs (= Manichéens), dans l’Empire furent abattus” (translation by Chaumont in *JA* 1960, 339–380).

<sup>45</sup> “Sein und Gestalt”, in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion*, presented to Gershom G. Scholem, Jerusalem 1967, 191–195 = *Gnostic Studies*, II, 142–145.

<sup>46</sup> B. Lohse, *Das Passafest der Quartadecimaner*, Gütersloh 1953.

<sup>47</sup> “The Discussion of Judaic Christianity”, *VC* 22, 1968, 81–93; esp. 90 = *Gnostic Studies*, II, 146–158; esp. 153.

13. In the time of Jerome the Nazoraeans lived in Beroea (Aleppo). It is probable that they were there already earlier.
14. The fourth century Persian Sage Aphraates is familiar with the Gospel according to the Nazoraeans.<sup>48</sup>
15. The Jewish Christians kept the sabbath. In some Syrian quarters both the sabbath and the Sunday were observed.<sup>49</sup>
16. In Syria anointment preceded immersion in baptism. In Palestine the unction with the Holy Spirit sometimes preceded the immersion (Acts 10,44–48).
17. According to Macarius, and the Messalians, sin lingered on in Christians even after baptism. According to the Jewish Christians sin lingered on in the O.T. prophets, and even more so in the Christians; there remained something sinful after they had been anointed by the Holy Spirit at baptism (Gospel of the Nazoraeans fragm. 15a).<sup>50</sup>
18. The Mandaeans, even now living in the marshes of Southern Babylonia, are called Nazoraeans and baptists possibly because they took their rites from Jewish Christians there.<sup>50a</sup>
19. Acts (11,27) and the *Didache* show that in the church of Jerusalem there existed the offices of wandering prophets and teachers. In Syria it was customary that a Christian after baptism started a wandering life.<sup>51</sup>

Thus there is no reason to be amazed that there are some parallels between the Gospel of Thomas, the Pseudo-Clementine writings and the Gospel quotations of the fourth century Syrian mystic of Greek tongue, Macarius, who had relations with the Messalian movement

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<sup>48</sup> “The Gospel of Thomas’ and the ‘Gospel of the Hebrews’”, *NTS* 12 (1965/66) 371–382; esp. 376–377.

<sup>49</sup> *Const. Ap.* 2, 59, 3: “Vornehmlich aber am Sabbattag und am Herrntag, am Tag der Auferstehung des Herrn, trefft euch mit noch mehr Eifer und spendet Gott Lob”; *Ibid.* 7, 23, 3: “Den Sabbat freilich und den Herrntag verbringt in Festfreude, weil der eine das Gedächtnis der Schöpfung, der andere dasjenige der Auferstehung ist” (translation by W. Rordorf, *Sabbat und Sonntag*, Zürich 1972, 58); see also, *id.*, *Der Sonntag*, Zürich 1962, 144 sq.

<sup>50</sup> *Macarius, das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle*, 11–13.

<sup>50a</sup> “Jewish Gnosis and Mandaean Gnosticism”, in J.-É. Ménard, *Les Textes de Nag-Hammadi*, Leiden 1975, 82–122; esp. 111 sq.

<sup>51</sup> A. Guillaumont, “Le Nom des ‘Agapètes’”, *VC* 23, 1969, 30–36; see also, *id.*, “Le dépaysement comme forme d’ascèse dans le monachisme ancien”, *Annuaire de l’École Pratique des Hautes Études, V<sup>e</sup> sect., Sciences religieuses*, 76 (1968/69) 31–58.



which originated in Edessa. In the following we will discuss one of the most interesting of these parallels, Logion 89:

Jesus said: “Why do you wash the outside of the cup? Do you not understand that he who made the inside is also he who made the outside?”.

This Saying contains the verb “wash” which obviously is absent from Mt. 23,25 and Luke 11,39–40 (καθαρίζετε = Q).

It is found however in *Logos* 64,8 of Macarius: πλύνοντες. This is not found in any manuscript of the Western text or of the New Testament in general, though it is attested for in several witnesses of the Diatesaron, and reflects a typically Jewish state of affairs.

According to the views of certain rabbis, preserved in the treatise Kelim (25,1–9), the inside of a vessel remains ritually pure even if the outside of it has been defiled. The treatise Berakoth (51a) says that in such a case the inside might only be wiped off, whereas the outside has to be washed off.<sup>52</sup> This seems to make the Logion somewhat clearer: Jesus blames his opponents for evading the spirit of the Law and holds that a cup is impure anyhow if the outside has been defiled. The variant “you wash” however is more idiomatic and appropriate than the variant “you purify”, because the latter can also be used in the sense of “wiping off”.

The same reading is also attested by the Judaic Christian source of ‘Abd al-Jabbār, postulated by Shlomo Pines.<sup>53</sup>

You *wash* the outside of the vessel and its inside is *full of filth*.

The second variant is attested by Macarius, in the quoted passage (64,8: πλήρεις ρύπου) and by the Pseudo-Clementine *Hom.* 11,29,2:

Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but the inside is full of filth (γέμει ρύπου).

Thomas seems to be using his Jewish source as witnessed by the variant “wash”, though incompletely, because the authentic words “full of filth” are absent.

<sup>52</sup> “An apocryphal Variant in Macarius”, in *Miscellanea in honorem Josephi Vèrgote* = *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 6/7 (1975/76) 487–492.

<sup>53</sup> Shlomo Pines, *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source* (The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Proceedings II, 13), Jerusalem 1966.

The source Q of Matthew and Luke, written in Greek, has blurred the real sense of the Logion by using the verb “to purify” instead of “to wash off”. Moreover the author of Q seems to have added the explicit mention of the Pharisees. Matthew seems to have added to this the malediction: “woe to you”; hopefully he has also added the word “hypocrites”, and he seems to have replaced the very real filth by the abstract concepts of extortion and excess. Luke added “you fools”, a stylistic device of the Stoic diatribe, and he changed the ritual observation by a gibe against the Pharisees. He has preserved, however, a remark about the man who made both outside and inside, which is also attested by the Gospel of Thomas.

Did Thomas, the author of the source of the Clementines and Macarius know this Eastern, Aramaic replica of Q directly or through the intermediary of an apocryphal Gospel?

Now it would seem that, if Thomas at about 140 A.D. hypothetically could be using a collection of Sayings as his source and even could be, in a way, the forerunner of the Greek Q, it is almost impossible to suppose that Macarius still was familiar with it. He knew the Gospel of Thomas but there he did not find the original reading “full of filth”. He knew the Diatessaron but he did not find it there either. Would it not be more probable that he took it from the Gospel of the Nazoraeans, which was in use in Beroea (Aleppo) about 400, when Jerome visited the Jewish Christians there?

In the *Liber Graduum*, which was related to Messalianism, we find very clear allusions to passages of the Gospel of the Nazoraeans.

*L.G.* 16,4: “Tu osculare pedes traditorum tuorum”.

Like it is said in the Gospel of the Nazoraeans (fragm. 31): “He kissed the feet of each of them”.

*L.G.* 5,9: “Maerore affecisti cor hominis”.

Gospel of the Hebrews: “Qui fratris sui spiritum contristaverit” (fr. 6).<sup>54</sup> If this Gospel of the Nazoraeans was known to the author of the *Liber Graduum*, would it not be plausible that Macarius who lived in the same age, in the same region and the same milieu used this same source? But then we must suppose that it was also known to the author of the Gospel of Thomas and was related to the source

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<sup>54</sup> *NTS* 12, 374.

of the Pseudo-Clementines, because there can be no doubt whatsoever that the Gospel of the Nazoraeans was already in existence about 140 A.D., when the Gospel of Thomas was composed.<sup>55</sup>

It is true that this is against the opinion of many scholars. The existing fragments of the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Nazoraeans (if it is possible to distinguish between these two), can also be read as revealing a dependence upon the synoptic Gospels. And yet we suggest that Logion 89 of the Gospel of Thomas, which was also known to the Syrian mystic Macarius, was both independent and taken from such an apocryphal Gospel.

Now the most important thing of all is that Thomas here transmits an independent tradition. But it is not quite without interest to ascertain whether a Jewish Christian Gospel contained some independent tradition. Is it not somewhat absurd to suppose that the descendants of the primitive Church of Jerusalem should have had to depend upon Gentile information for their knowledge of Jesus?

e. The relation to the Diatessaron and the Western Text.

The discovery of the Gospel of Thomas has revitalised and regenerated Diatessaronic studies. Most recently the traces of an Icelandic Diatessaron were recovered. If we keep in mind that the Norsemen were the first to bring the Gospel to the American Continent, especially to Greenland and Canada, it might even be that the Diatessaron was not unknown in America, at least about 1000 A.D.

This Icelandic (and Norwegian) Gospel harmony has many features in common with the deviant, wild Diatessaron of Liudger which supposedly lies behind the Old Saxon Heliand. It may have been brought to Scandinavia by a missionary like Anskar whose homebase was in Saxony.<sup>56</sup>

It has become exceedingly clear that all Dutch Diatessarons are based upon this same text and not upon the Codex Fuldensis. This

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<sup>55</sup> P. Vielhauer, in Hennecke-Schneemelcher <sup>3</sup>I, 94: "Terminus a quo ist danach die Abfassung des Mt., terminus ad quem Hegesippus (180), der als erster die Existenz des NE bezeugt. Es wird in der ersten Hälfte des zweiten Jahrhunderts entstanden sein".

<sup>56</sup> Andrea van Arkel-de Leeuw van Weenen and G. Quispel, "The Diatessaron in Iceland and Norway", *VC* 32 (1978) 214–215.

Latin document was detected in the *Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony and in the *Vita Beatae Virginis Mariae Rhythmica*.<sup>57</sup>

All these writings attest readings which Tatian has in common with the Gospel of Thomas. Of course this cannot be ascribed to sheer coincidence. But it is not certain that all the variants which the Diatessaron has in common with Thomas can be ascribed to the direct influence of a common Judaic Christian source on both Tatian and Thomas.

The objection has been made that a number of these variants could be ascribed to the fact that the separate Gospels which Tatian had with him when he went from Rome to the Syrian East already had a Western Text. This is plausible because the text at Rome, as evidenced by Marcion and perhaps also by Justin Martyr, certainly was Western. But where did this text of Rome come from? Marcion complained that in his day the Gospels had been interpolated by Judaists. This seems probable when we observe that Justin (*Dial.* 17,4) has the typically Jewish Christian variant “you hold the keys” (cf. Logion 39).<sup>58</sup>

Moreover we find in the Old Latin manuscripts Vercellensis and Sangermanensis on Mt. 3,16 the Jewish Christian view that light descended upon the water during the baptism of Christ. We should not forget that at that time there lived in Rome the prophet Hermas who held Christ to be an angel. He certainly was not the only Roman Christian tainted with Judaistic views. So if Tatian brought Western Gospels to Edessa, they can already have been influenced by a Jewish Christian Gospel tradition related to that contained in the Gospel of Thomas.

Moreover Thomas does not contain the characteristic graphical error which makes these Latin, Greek and Syriac texts to a definite and specific Western text type: the dittography ὑποκεῖται ὑποκρεῖτά of Luke 6, 42 in D Lat Syr<sup>sin</sup> (Syr<sup>cur</sup> Mt. 7,4) is conspicuously absent from Logion 26:<sup>59</sup>

Jesus said: “The mote that is in thy brother’s eye thou seest, but the beam that is in thine eye, thou seest not. When thou castest the beam

<sup>57</sup> R. van den Broek, “A Latin Diatessaron in the ‘Vita Beatae Mariae et Salvatoris Rhythmica’”, *NTS* 21 (1974/75) 109–132.

<sup>58</sup> *Dial. c. Tryph.* 17, 4 (Goodspeed 110).

<sup>59</sup> “Das Thomasevangelium und das Alte Testament”, *Neotestamentica et Patristica*, Freundesgabe O. Cullmann, Leiden 1962, 243–248; esp. 243.

out of thine eye, then thou wilt see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye".

I dare say that "hypocrite", already present in Q and absent in Thomas, is secondary and was never pronounced by Jesus in this context.

The initiator of the Western Text had misread οὐ for οὗ in Mt. 18,20, with the result that he read:

οὐ γάρ εἰσι...παρ' οἷς οὐκ εἰμι ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν.

Not only is this a characteristic Western reading absent from Thomas, but he has a Jewish version very much parallel to a rabbinic Saying (Pirke Abbot III,6):

R Halafta b Dosa of Kefar Hanania said: "If ten men sit together and occupy themselves in the Law, the Divine Presence rests among them, for it is written, God standeth in the congregation of God. And whence do we learn this even of five? Because it is written, He judgeth among the judges. And whence even of two? Because it is written, Then they that feared the Lord spake one with another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard. *And whence even of one?* Because it is written, In every place where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee".

Logion 30:

Jesus said: "Where there are three [gods], they are gods; where there are two or *one*, I am with him".

This version was also adopted by Tatian (Ephrem, Comm. of the Diat. 14,24: "Where there is *one*, there I am too").

In this case it becomes clear that Tatian derived this passage directly from a Judaic Christian source, not from the Western Text. This source of Tatian was a Gospel, not a collection of Sayings. This is shown in the story of Jesus' baptism where light appeared upon the water, and the Ghost appeared in the shape of a dove and rested upon him, all variants attested for Judaic Christian Gospels. Some of these were contained in the Judaic Christian Gospel which according to Fortna underlies the Fourth Gospel:

I saw the Spirit coming down from heaven like a dove and *resting* upon him (1,32).<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup> According to the New English Version. In the Greek text of John we find "emeine", a form of the verb "meno", which in the LXX often means "to rest".

It is unfortunate that our knowledge of the Judaic Christian Gospel tradition is so fragmentary that we cannot affirm with any certainty which fragments belong to which Gospel. Moreover the fragments conventionally attributed to the Gospel of the Nazoraeans and the Gospel of the Hebrews can be interpreted both ways, either dependent upon or independent from the canonical Gospels. We cannot determine for sure which elements in the fragments of the Gospel of the Ebionites are derived from our Gospels and which from the Judaic Christian tradition. In these circumstances it would perhaps be wiser to refrain from giving a name to the Gospel which served as a source for "Thomas". It may even have been a collection of Sayings.

We can affirm with some degree of certainty, however, that the author of the Gospel of Thomas, when composing his Gospel in Edessa in the course of the second century, used a written Jewish Christian source, which contained a tradition independent of our Gospels. With this in mind we discern, how much Tatian owed to this source, much more than earlier scholars could suppose. Not only Ephrem Syrus and the Persian Diatessaron, but also the Venetian Diatessaron, the Heliand, nay, all the versions of Tatian's writing—including the Codex Fulden-sis and the Old High German translation from Sankt Gallen—have preserved the traces of this Judaic Christian Gospel tradition. Even Romanos, the great poet of Greek orthodoxy, continues the tradition of the light during Christ's baptism (16,14). It is plausible to suppose that Tatian, having returned to his home land, conceived his Gospel Harmony as the definitive Gospel text in order to replace the one known and acknowledged Gospel of the Nazoraean congregation in Edessa, the centre of Aramaic Christianity. He must have considered it as a hypomnema, a provisional sketch for the definitive history, just as he considered the canonical Gospels to be mere hypomnemata.<sup>61</sup>

#### V. THE ENCRATITE SOURCE OF THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS

When the Gospel of Truth was published, in 1956, the editors announced that this writing was dated about 150 A.D. and originated

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<sup>61</sup> Tj. Baarda, *Vier = Een. Enkele bladzijden uit de geschiedenis van de harmonistiek der Evangelieën*, Openbare les V.U., 5 dec. 1969, Kampen 1970.

in the School of Valentinus. This theory was well received everywhere except in Germany. Schenke presumed that this “so called Gospel of Truth” was not Valentinian but belonged to the gnostic sect which also produced the Odes of Solomon.<sup>62</sup> Nagel tried to show that the Gospel of Truth had been translated from the Syriac.<sup>63</sup> The editors did not care to answer because they knew the content of the rest of the Codex Jung, which was so similar to the *Evangelium Veritatis*. The Letter on the Resurrection, the Tripartite Treatise and the Prayer of the Apostle Paul which are undoubtedly Valentinian were published in due time. Today hardly anybody doubts that the Gospel of Truth is Valentinian, like the other writings mentioned.

Again, when the Gospel of Thomas was published, it was explicitly stated that this text was not gnostic but Encratite. The reader was referred to the opponents of “Paul” in the Pastoral Letters to Timothy and Titus in the New Testament, to the Acts of Thomas, the Encratites in the third book of Clement’s *Stromateis*, and the Sentences of Sextus, which contained the same thoroughly ungnostic theology. This timely warning was not heeded: the careless and irritating habit of labelling everything gnostic, including the Gospel of Thomas, invaded practically all publications.

Now that all the manuscripts of Nag Hammadi have been published, we know that several of the discovered writings are not gnostic at all: The Republic is Platonic; The Thunder, Whole Mind is Jewish; the Teachings of Silvanus is Catholic; the Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles are Jewish Christian; The Exegesis on the Soul, the Book of Thomas the Contender and the Dialogue of the Saviour and the Sentences of Sextus all are Encratite.

So is the Gospel of Thomas.

This thesis has become much more plausible owing to the discovery of H.J.W. Drijvers. He established that the Odes of Solomon polemicised against Marcion when they say that there is no envy in God. From this he concluded that they cannot possibly have been written earlier than 200 A.D.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> H.-M. Schenke, *Die Herkunft des sogenannten Evangelium Veritatis*, Berlin 1959.

<sup>63</sup> P. Nagel, “Die Herkunft des Evangelium Veritatis in sprachlicher Sicht”, *OLZ* 61 (1966) 5–14.

<sup>64</sup> H.J.W. Drijvers, “Die Oden Salomos und die Polemik mit den Markioniten im Syrischen Christentum”, *OCA* 205 (Symposium Syriacum 1976), Rome 1978, 39–55.

It cannot be denied that these Odes are typically Semitic poetry, very much in line with the Psalms of Thanksgiving found at Qumran. Notwithstanding this, the late W.C. van Unnik refined this observation by noting that the stocktheme of these hymns was not Jewish, but Platonic, namely the “aphthonia tou theou”.<sup>65</sup> Therefore they are not Judaic Christian, but representative of that Hellenic Christianity prevalent in Edessa towards the end of the second century, very much like Tatian and the Acts of Thomas.

These findings are of great help in understanding the facts. It had already been observed that the Gospel of Thomas had much in common with the Odes of Solomon. But as long as the latter were held to be very archaic, such parallels were of no consequence for the classification of the Gospel of Thomas. Now it has become quite feasible that the Odes quote the already existing apocryphal Gospel.

Odes of Solomon	Gospel of Thomas
3,9: And he that has pleasure in the Living One, will become living.	111: he who lives on the Living (One) shall see neither death.
6,10: For it spread over the face of the whole earth, and it filled everything.	113: But the Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it.
11,6: And speaking waters drew near my lips from the fountain of the Lord plenteously. And I drank and was inebriated with the living water that doth not die.	13: I am not thy Master, because thou hast drunk, thou hast become drunk from the bubbling spring which I have measured out.
30,1: Fill ye water for yourselves from the living fountain of the Lord: for it has been opened to you.	108: Whoever drinks from My mouth shall become as I am and I myself will become he.
5: For it flows from the lips of the Lord, and from the heart of the Lord is its name.	
34,3: The one who is surrounded on every side by open country, there is nothing divided in him.	61: If he becomes divided, he will be filled with darkness.

<sup>65</sup> W.C. van Unnik, *De ἀφθονία van God in de oudchristelijke literatuur*, Med. KNAW, Afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks 36,2, Amsterdam 1973, 5–13.



One sometimes hesitates to say whether the Odes refer to the Gospel of Thomas or to the Judaic Christian Gospel that served as a source of Thomas.

8,10: Keep my secret, ye who are kept by it.	62: I tell My mysteries to those [who are worthy of my] mysteries.
Ps.-Clem. <i>Hom.</i>	19,20: Keep the mysteries for me and the sons of my house. <sup>66</sup>

But there cannot be the slightest doubt that the Odes contain allusions to concepts also contained in the Gospel of the Egyptians:

25,8: And I removed from me the raiment of skins.	Gospel of the Egyptians: When you have trampled on the garment of shame (Clement of Al., <i>Strom.</i> III,92).
11,21: And they have turned away from themselves the bitterness of the trees.	Every plant eat thou, but that which has bitterness eat not (Clement of Al., <i>Strom.</i> III,66). (The plant which has bitterness is the Tree of Life in Paradise, the fruit of which was infected by the devil with inordinate concupi- scense, a well-known Jewish myth.)

From this we conclude that the poet was familiar with the Gospel of the Egyptians: the latter was obviously known in Edessa before 200 A.D., the date of the Odes of Solomon. Therefore it could easily be one of the sources of the Gospel of Thomas.

It has always been a founded and justified objection to my theory that the Gospel of the Egyptians, with its typically Alexandrian and Hellenistic Jewish themes like androgyny, eros as cause of death, and the body as the raiment of skin, could not possibly have been a source for a collection of Sayings written in Edessa. Now we see that Christian hymns in use in the same city as Thomas, and equally hellenised, were indebted to that Alexandrian writing. We are now encouraged in our view that the Gospel of the Egyptians also left its traces in the Acts of Thomas (14):

<sup>66</sup> The parallel was already mentioned in the edition princeps of J.R. Harris and A. Mingana of 1916–20. J.H. Charlesworth denies this. See his edition of the *Odes of Solomon*, Oxford 1973, 43: “Furthermore, ‘keep my mystery’ does not necessarily mean ‘keep secret my secret’”.

And that I am not veiled, is because the *veil of corruption* is taken away from me; and that I am not ashamed, is because the deed of shame has been removed far from me.

Cf. the Gospel of the Egyptians:

“When you have trampled on *the garment of shame*” and “when the two become one and the male with the female neither male nor female” (Clem., *Strom.* III,92).

Therefore we may with some confidence postulate that those Sayings of Thomas, which are akin to the Gospel of the Egyptians, were taken from this latter writing. I have discussed this in detail in my 1967 book on Macarius, the Gospel of Thomas and the Hymn of the Pearl.<sup>67</sup>

All this material had already a long development before it had been integrated. The doublets show that already the author of the Gospel of the Egyptians had transposed a Judaic Christian Saying into an Encratite system of references:

Log. 55:

Jesus said: “Whoever does not hate his father and his mother will not be able to be a disciple to Me, and (whoever does not) hate his brethren and his sisters and (does not) take up his cross in My way will not be worthy of Me.”

Log. 101:

≤Jesus said>: “Whoever does not hate his father and his mother in My way will not be able to be a [disciple] to me. And whoever does [not] love [his father] and his mother in My way will not be able to be a [disciple] to me, for My mother [ ] but [My] true [Mother] gave me the Life.”

The addition “my (fleshly) mother [gave me death] but [my] true [Mother] gave me life” gives a very serious twist to a simple injunction to put your family in second place. The idea is added that you must hate your parents, because every child has to die, whereas the Mother the Holy Ghost gives regeneration and eternal life. This should be compared with the view of Tatian, transmitted by Clement of Alexandria (III, V,45,1) that one should not marry or generate children and so bring into the world another human being who will be unhappy and furnish fodder for Death. Nor should we doubt that this Logion was taken from the Gospel according to the Egyptians, because this proclaimed the same gloomy view, namely that man

<sup>67</sup> Pp. 82–113.

shall continue to die as long as women bring forth children: “How long will death have power?...so long as ye women bear children” (Clemens Al., *Strom.* III, 45).

So the Gospel of Thomas fits into a specific tradition starting with the Gospel of the Egyptians, and continued by the Odes of Solomon and the Acts of Thomas. All these writings are only a small part of the Encratite movement within the Early Church. In Apocalypse 14,4 we are told that the 144,000 were not defiled with women for they are virgins. For the author the ideal church of Jerusalem consists exclusively of people that are not married anymore, because sexual intercourse is held to be a defilement. The church is virtually encratite because, for the author of the Apocalypse, the church of Jerusalem is the only church—the rest are subsidiary.

In the Pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus in the New Testament, which seem to have been written sometime after 120 A.D., the situation in Ephesus has become desperate: the whole of Asia Minor has defected to Jewish teachers of the Law who forbid marriage and order abstinence from certain food (cf. Thomas Log. 105: “Whoever (still) knows father and mother shall be called the son of a harlot”; according to Tatian marriage is fornication). They teach that the resurrection has already taken place: according to the well-known Saying of Jesus, marriage is abolished in the resurrection; Christ has now risen from the dead, therefore marriage is abolished. For a Christian therefore marriage no longer exists. This transpires from the statement of Clement of Alexandria that the Encratites proclaim to have received the resurrection already, and therefore reject marriage (III, VI,48,1). Accordingly Logion 51 of the Gospel of Thomas says:

His disciples said to Him: When will the repose of the dead come about and when will the new world come? He said to them: What you expect has come, but you know it not.

There can be no doubt that the Gospel of Thomas continues this Encratite tradition attested to in Asia Minor in the first half of the second century.

Clement, in the third book of his *Stromateis*, deals with the writings of Tatian, Julius Cassianus who taught docetism and the preexistence of the soul, and the local Encratites within the Christian congregation of Alexandria. These Encratites were hellenised, like their Gospel, the Gospel of the Egyptians; but the Catholics were also

hellenised, the only real difference between the two factions being that the Encratites forbade and the Catholics condoned marriage.

We have no evidence that Tatian was ever considered a heretic in Syrian Christianity because of his Encratism. On the contrary, the Syrian Church accepted his Diatessaron as Holy Writ for centuries. Therefore the Logia of the Gospel of Thomas taken from the Gospel of the Egyptians not only are not gnostic, but are not even heretical.

I have doubts, however, that the Gospel of the Egyptians was only one of two sources of Thomas, beside the Gospel of the Nazoraeans. Recently it occurred to me that he must have had still another source. I owe this insight to a magnificent observation of J.P. Mahé.

## VI. THE HERMETIC SOURCE OF THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS

A gnomology is a collection of Greek sentences, a special literary genre of which there exist quite a few specimens. They contained wise maxims from poets and philosophers, mostly anthologised from their existing works. Especially the drama's of Euripides and the comedies of Menander were plundered for this purpose. This genre had been adapted by Hellenistic Jews. Best known are the Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides, an Alexandrian Jew who wrote between 200 B.C. and 150 A.D. In the context of this study it deserves special attention that more than half of the verses in Pseudo-Phocylides have parallels in Greek gnomonic literature.<sup>68</sup> It would seem that the Encratites of Alexandria followed in the steps of their Jewish fellow citizens. In their milieu was written the 2nd century gnomology called the Sentences of Sextus, of which Henry Chadwick has given us an excellent edition.<sup>69</sup> In this writing we find the same themes as in Thomas: Gnosis (148), soul and body, knowledge of the Self (446: "When you see God, you know yourself"), the Kingdom of God within (311), celibacy (230a), poverty and philanthropy. Many of its sentences have parallels in the Gospel of Thomas. The author has freely used a Greek pagan gnomology similar to the "Pythagorean Sentences" which run

<sup>68</sup> P.W. van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, Leiden 1978, 79.

<sup>69</sup> H. Chadwick, *The Sentences of Sextus. A Contribution to the History of Early Christian Ethics*, Cambridge 1959; id., "Encrateia", *RAC* 5, 343-365.

parallel to Sextus to a large extent.<sup>70</sup> As Chadwick puts it, a Christian compiler has edited, carefully revised and modified a previous pagan collection (or perhaps collections). Very much the same material occurs in the letter which the Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry wrote to his wife Marcella in the latter half of the third century.

It would seem that the author of the Gospel of Thomas has used similar methods. He too must have used a pagan gnomology, whose maxims he attributed to Jesus. In an Armenian collection of Sayings called the *Definitions of Hermes Trismegistos to Asklepios* the following sentence is contained:

Who knows himself, knows (the) All.<sup>71</sup>

This same Logion seems to underlie a well-known passage in the Hermetic Poimandres (18):

Let the spiritual man *know himself* as being immortal and (then he may know) that eros is the cause of death and (he may know) all things.<sup>72</sup>

As is so often the case in the New Testament, first came the sentence and then came the story: “la littérature hermétique philosophique est issue, pour une large part, du commentaire de telles sentences”.<sup>73</sup>

Especially the affinity and the parallelism between the Hermetic literature and the Johannine writings deserve our special attention. The author of the Fourth Gospel had before him a tradition of Sayings very much in the trend of the Gospel of Thomas, probably embedded in a Jewish Christian Gospel, the Gospel of the local congregation

<sup>70</sup> Chadwick, *Sentences of Sextus*, 76 and 84.

<sup>71</sup> J.-P. Mahé, “Les définitions d’Hermès Trismégiste à Asclépius”, *RSR* 50 (1976) 193–214; esp. 203.

<sup>72</sup> Pierre Courcelle, *Connais-toi toi-même, de Socrate à Saint Bernard*, I, Paris 1974, 75–76.

<sup>73</sup> Mahé, “Définitions”, 213. According to H.-Ch. Puech the story of the shameless bride in the Acts of Thomas 14 (“I am not ashamed, because the deed of shame has been removed far from me”) is nothing but an illustration of Logion 37 of the Gospel of Thomas (“When you take off your clothing without being ashamed etc.”). In the same way chapter 92 (“put his left shoe on his right foot”) is held to be an amplification of the underlying Logion 22 (“when you make the two one etc.”) (*En quête de la Gnose*, Paris 1978, 44 and 76). It has been pointed out long ago that the Hymn of the Pearl in the Acts of Thomas is nothing but a poetical amplification and illustration of Logion 76 (the wise merchant who found a pearl) (*Gnostic Studies*, I, 201).

of Ephesus.<sup>74</sup> This he transformed into speeches and discourses, especially Farewell Discourses. So he found in his source that you shall love your brother and inserted this in a discourse. In the same way the Poimandres seems to be an amplification and illustration of the maxim that he, who knows himself and discerns that eros leads to death, knows All.

Therefore we suppose that Logion 67 of the Gospel of Thomas is also of Hermetic origin:

Whoever knows the All but fails (to know) himself lacks everything.

In *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* H. Koester and T.O. Lambdin translate: “Whoever *believes* that the All itself is deficient is (himself) completely deficient”. Parallels from Coptic, Armenian and Hellenistic literature prove without a shadow of doubt that this translation is wrong.

In the Book of Thomas the Contender (138,16–18) we find a longer form of the same Saying, which in its positive formulation is nearer to the Hermetic definition mentioned by Mahé:

He who has not known himself, has known nothing, but he who has known himself has at the same time already achieved knowledge about the Depth of All.

This clearly is an amplification of the Armenian Saying. And this in its turn is a variation of the well-known Hellenic Saying:

Whosoever knows himself, knows God.

The Hermetic definition therefore is older than the Book of Thomas the Contender and the Gospel of Thomas.<sup>75</sup> Also Porphyry was familiar with this sentence:

A braggart in every respect is he, as long as he fails (to know) his Origin and *lacking everything*, as long as he does not see his Wealth, and he succumbs to the mortal part of his nature, as long as he did *not know his true Self* (*De Abstinencia* III, 27).

The Book of Thomas the Contender purports to have been written by Judas Thomas, the twin and true companion of Jesus. This

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<sup>74</sup> “Qumran, John and Jewish-Christianity”, in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *John and Qumran*, London 1972, 137–155 = *Gnostic Studies*, II, 210–229.

<sup>75</sup> John D. Turner (*The Book of Thomas the Contender*, Montana, Missoula 1975, 120–122) has seen the relation of Thomas the Contender with the Hermetic writings.

is an allusion to the well-known and wholly unfounded legend about Thomas also contained in the Acts of Thomas but not in the Gospel of Thomas. This proves that this Encratite writing was composed in Edessa, probably during the first half of the third century. It contains an amplification of a Hermetic Saying, like the Gospel of Thomas. From this state of affairs we must conclude that a Hermetic sentence and so probably also a Hermetic gnomology very much like the Definitions of Hermes Trismegistos to Asklepios was known to the Encratite Christian congregation of Edessa.

We see then clearly that Logion 3 is a variation on the same theme, especially in the version of Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 654:

[Whoever] knows [himself], will find it (i.e. the Kingdom).

One wonders whether the well-known magical formula: “Su ego kai ego su” is not equally behind Logion 108 (shall become as I am etc.) and Logion 13 (I am not thy Master).

A related Saying is found in Logion 111 of the Gospel of Thomas. When we were translating the text we made a mistake because we thought that “hoti” was the Greek conjunction ὅτι. So we translated:

Jesus said: “The heavens will be rolled up and the earth in your presence, and he who lives on the Living (One) shall see neither death nor <fear>, because (hoti) Jesus says: Whoever finds himself, of him the world is not worthy (axios)”.

As far as I know, nobody has corrected us. But it seems much more plausible that “hoti” is Coptic, means “fear”, and corresponds to Bohairic “hoti” and Subachmimic “hatie” (Crum 720b). We should have translated

111a: Jesus said: “.....nor fear”.

111b: Jesus says: “Whoever.....”.

The latter is a separate Logion not related to 111a.

“Axios” means “counterbalancing, weighing as much as, of like value, worth as much as”. The Saying therefore could also mean:

Whoever has discovered his true self, is more weighty than the whole world of man (kosmos).

But even if we maintain the conventional translation, the Logion can be paralleled from Mandaean Gnosticism. The Book of John and the Right Ginza contain the following maxim:

Hail him who understands himself. A man who knows himself, has not his match in the world.<sup>76</sup>

Because it is unthinkable that the Mandaeans borrowed this Logion from the Gospel of Thomas or another Christian source, we must conclude that this Saying was current also outside Christian circles in the second century in Mesopotamia in general and in Edessa in particular. It is so near to Logion 67 that we may suppose it has been taken from the same Hermetic gnomology. This may show that Hermetic lore was known in Mesopotamia, even to the ancient (Proto-)Mandaeans.

In later times the so-called Sabians of nearby Harran eradicated a Hellenistic philosophy attributed to Hermes Trismegistos. The latter was identified by Moslem authors with Idris Henoch and called Har-mas al-harāmisa. There exists a whole Hermetic literature in Arabic.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, in Islam the Ismaelite Gnosis, the religion of the Aga Kahn, has persisted to the present day and there is no doubt that it has much in common with ancient Gnosticism as attested by the documents of Nag Hammadi.<sup>78</sup> It originated in Southern Iraq, where the Mandaeans lived.

It is a fascinating problem to what extent there is a continuity between Arabic Hermetism and Islamic Gnosis on the one hand and Alexandrian Hermetism and Gnosticism on the other hand. In this context it is of some importance to ascertain that already in the second century Hermetic lore and Hermetic writ were current in Edessa, the Athens of the Orient.

The early relations of Hermetism and Edessa have not escaped the most perspicacious historian of Edessa. Drijvers notes that the Hermeticism which later had so many adherents in these regions, especially in Harran, probably goes back to the cult of the god Nebo in Edessa and Harran.<sup>79</sup> According to him, Tatian's concept of man has much in common with the Hermetic writings. Moreover, the teaching on Fate in Corpus Hermeticum XII, and certain views of the

<sup>76</sup> Ƴ. 170,17; 171,16; 180,15; *R.G.* 300,30.

<sup>77</sup> L. Massignon, "Inventaire de la Littérature Hermétique Arabe", in A.J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, I, Paris 1942, <sup>3</sup>1950, 384–400.

<sup>78</sup> Heinz Halm, *Kosmologie und Heilslehre der frühen Ismā'īliya. Eine Studie zur Islamischen Gnosis*, Wiesbaden 1978.

<sup>79</sup> H.J.W. Drijvers, "Edessa und das jüdische Christentum", *VC* 24 (1970) 1–33; esp. 9, 21 and 25.



Poimandres have their parallels in Bardaisan. Such different thinkers as the Encratite Tatian and the champion of marriage Bardaisan seem to have a common Hermetic background, implying that the Hermetic writings which originated in Alexandria were already known in Edessa in the second century.

In a subsequent article Drijvers gives more details about the relations of Hermetism and Edessa:<sup>80</sup>

1. The so-called Sabians in Harran, a town no more than thirty miles from Edessa, had temples dedicated to the Seven: the five planets and the sun and moon. In the 1950s J.B. Segal made a new investigation of the ruins in Sumatar Harabesi, in the Tektek mountains, situated 50 km southeast of Edessa and 30 km northeast of Harran. These ruins consist of the remains of seven differently shaped buildings lying around a central mountain. Very probably the buildings represent temples dedicated to the Seven, the same as those ascribed to the Sabians. They date from the second century A.D. This means that the pagan religion of the Sabians, who were no doubt Hermeticists, is attested to in the second century of our era in the locale of Edessa.
2. The god Nebo, worshipped in Edessa and other Syrian cities, was identified with Hermes and considered to be a psychopompos.
3. In the *Book of the Laws of Countries*, Bardaisan himself tries to prove to his interlocutor that the power of fate is limited and man's lot is not completely determined. In this connection Bardaisan speaks of the "Books of the Babylonian Chaldaeans" and the "Books of the Egyptians". The latter may have been Hermetic writings. Views similar to that of Bardaisan are found in Poimandres 15,24–26 and Corpus Hermeticum XII,5–9.

The parallelism between Bardaisan and the author of the Gospel of Thomas is so important, because both lived in the same city, Edessa, and in about the same period, and because neither of the two properly can be called gnostic. Whenever they seem to tend towards Gnosticism this may be due to the influence of Hermetic lore upon them. But this is not to say that the Gnostics themselves were not

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<sup>80</sup> H.J.W. Drijvers, "Bardaisan of Edessa and the Hermetica. The Aramaic philosopher and the philosophy of his time", *JEOI* 21, 1969/70, 190–210.

influenced by Hermetism. On the contrary, owing to the discoveries of Nag Hammadi at last we see clearly where darkness up till now prevailed.

Ephrem Syrus of Nisibis and Edessa tells us that the Manichaeans adduced Hermes along with Plato and Jesus as heralds of the Good One to the world,<sup>81</sup> and Hermes Trismegistus is named with honour by the Manichaean Faustus in Africa.<sup>82</sup> It now seems quite feasible and plausible that already Mani was familiar with Hermetic lore and that this Hellenistic philosophy reached him through Syrian Christian channels, either the Encratites who are responsible for the Gospel of Thomas, or the Bardesanites who were instrumental in transmitting Hellenistic theosophy and philosophy to the Jewish dualist Mani. This would explain why his archetypal Man has so much in common with the Anthropos of the Poimandres, a curious combination of Ezekiel 1,26 (the form as the appearance of a man) and the Adam of Genesis.

In this context and against this background it is not all surprising to find that a writing from Edessa has quoted at least one pivotal and fundamental Saying which we now find to be contained in a Hermetic book of Sayings. It seems plausible that this one Saying was already then present in a gnomology, as was the case later on.

This insight is also important for the critical assessment of the Saying tradition contained in the Gospel of Thomas. It would seem that its author used a Hermetic gnomology for formulating those Hellenising sayings which speak about the knowledge of the Self and which have no parallels in the Gospel of the Egyptians and do not form doublets with Jewish Christian Logia.

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<sup>81</sup> “For they say about Hermes in Egypt and about Plato among the Greeks and about Jesus who appeared in Judaea, that ‘they are Heralds of that Good One to the world’”; cf. C.W. Mitchell, *S. Ephraim’s Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan*, II, London-Oxford 1921, XCVIII (translation of the Syriac text, p. 208,21–29).

<sup>82</sup> *C. Faustum* 13, 1 (CSEL 25, 378): “Sibyllae de Christo praesagia aut Hermetis, quem dicunt Trismegistum, aut Orphei aliorumque in gentilitate vatum, haec nos aliquanto ad fidem iuvare poterunt, qui ex gentibus effimur Christiani” (= Faustus).

## ADDITIONAL NOTE

April DeConick argues that the Gospel of Thomas is not gnostic, but Encratite: its author is said to have lived in Edessa and to have integrated there an Encratite Saying tradition into the nucleus of the Gospel of Thomas: April D. De Conick, *Seek to See Him. Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas*, Leiden 1996.

More than one Dutch Calvinist still cherishes the hypothesis that the Gospel of Thomas is gnostic and late ( $\pm$  200 A.D.), that it was originally written in Syriac and only afterwards was translated into Greek and that it presupposes a (non-existent, nowhere attested) Syriac variant of the “Western” text of the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which Gospel text in its turn was based upon the Diatessaron of Tatian. See R. Schippers with Tj. Baarda, *Het Evangelie van Thomas*, Kampen 1960; Baarda alone in many subsequent articles.

The Gospel of Thomas is generally agreed to have been written not later than 140 A.D. and cannot possibly depend upon the Diatessaron ( $\pm$  170 A.D.). Moreover, in the Gospel of Thomas the Pharisees are never called “hypocrites”, as in the Synoptic Gospels (Cf. Thomas 26 against Mt 7:3, Lk: 6:41–42 (= Q); Thomas 89 against Mt 23:25). This is not sheer coincidence. Like the Judaic Christians of the Pseudo-Clementine writings, the author of “Thomas” holds the Pharisees in high esteem. They are considered to be legitimate heirs and successors of Moses, who had received (ἔλαβον) from the oral tradition (the later Mishna) the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, namely the Gnosis which enabled them to interpret the written Law of Moses in the right way: “The Pharisees and the Scribes have received the keys of knowledge, they have hidden them” (logion 39). Therefore in logion 100 it are not the Pharisees, but some anonymous “they” who show Jesus a gold coin and say: “Caesar’s men ask taxes from us”, so enabling him to answer with his famous one-liner: “Give the things of Caesar to Caesar, give the things of God to God.” Mark 12, 13–17 parr. transmits an invective against some Pharisees and Herodians (fellow travellers), who feign to be benevolent and so try to trap Jesus. One must hope that “Thomas” has preserved the authentic words of the historical Jesus.

Several American scholars have acknowledged that the Gospel of Thomas contains an independent and primitive tradition which is older than Q, the Greek source of Logia of both Matthew and Luke and to

be dated  $\pm$  50 A.D. Basing themselves upon this plausible hypothesis, they started a new quest of the historical Jesus. See H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, Philadelphia 1990; John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, San Francisco 1991.

Also German scholars have seen the light. See e.g. Jens Schröter, *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte*, Neukirchen 1997, Habilitationsschrift Berlin, Seite 48: “Der Standort des Ev. Thom. kann keinesfalls parallel an Q in 1. Jh. gesucht werden, *auch wenn es alte Ueberlieferung* enthält. Die Träger der Ev. Thom.-Ueberlieferung dürften demnach radikale, asketische Judenchristen des 2. Jh. aus dem syrischen Raum gewesen sein, *die mit den Jesusüberlieferungen des palästinisch-syrischen Raumes vertraut waren*”.

The Saying attributed to Jesus in the Diatessaron, quoted on page 210, can be paralleled from Corpus Hermeticum XII, 19: It is with one living being that God communicates. In the collection of Sayings contained in the Armenian Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus (Mahé 395) Hermes says: “Là où est l’homme, Dieu est aussi.”



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS AND THE TRIAL OF JESUS\*

It is warm today. During the daytime it was already very hot, but in the evening it is even worse. My colleagues have left me and have gone to town to enjoy the pleasures of the Arabic kitchen. I am sitting alone in the room of my hotel with a photocopy of the Coptic text before me. Gradually the letters combine themselves to words and make sense. Every now and then the beginning: 'Jesus said' does occur. This is a collection of Sayings of the Lord, there is no doubt. While I am reading and trying to make connections in time and place, I wonder whether this can be an unknown and yet authentic word of Jesus. For the first time in history a complete text of Sayings has come to light which could possibly enhance our knowledge of this enigmatic personality. And I realise that I am the first to read this new evidence after so many centuries and to make a provisional translation of the Gospel of Thomas.

Soon afterwards, in the fall of 1956, the war of the English and the French against Egypt broke out. We had to fly the country, the good American warship Thuban brought us to Naples and we returned home.

One Sunday afternoon I was sitting in my study. My wife does not want me to work on Sunday. Without working I took a book from the shelf and turned over the pages. It was a novel called the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies, which was said to contain Judaic Christian traditions, highly heretical stuff. By chance my eyes fell on a passage in which it was said that the Pharisees and the scribes had been entrusted, had received, the key of the Kingdom, which is Gnosis, but did not give it to those who wanted to enter (III,18,3). In a flash it occurred to me that the same was to be found in logion 39 of the Gospel of Thomas. As a matter of fact the Greek version contained in the already known Oxyrhynchus Papyrus offered two

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\* Previously published in: *Text and Testimony. Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A.F.J. Klijn*, Kampen 1988, 193–199.

letters ελ. They had been supplied as ἔλεγε, he said, but obviously stood for ἔλ[αβον], they received: “Jesus said, The Pharisees and the Scribes have received the keys of Gnosis and have hidden them, they neither entered and did not admit those who wanted”. This was exactly the text of the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies.

I became somewhat excited and concluded that then the Gospel of Thomas must contain part of the Gospel tradition of the Judaic Christians, the descendants of the primitive congregation of Jerusalem and could not possibly depend upon the synoptic Gentile Gospels Matthew and Luke or their common source, a Greek collection of logia called Q. And so the battle of Thomas began.

At that time most scholars supposed that the Pseudo-Clementine writings were a late novel without any historical value. The Judaic Christians, the descendants of the Hebrew faction in the church of Jerusalem, were held to have disappeared completely after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. There was a general tendency to consider extracanonical tradition as derived from the Gospels of the Church.

Moreover, quite a few scholars preferred to call Gnostic everything that did not agree with the text of the New Testament or their own kerygmatic theology. They called the Gospel of Thomas Gnostic. It was mainly on this issue that the debate focused: is the new text Gnostic, or rather ‘enkratitic’, ascetic? There can be no doubt whatsoever that the Gospel of Thomas is ascetic. It attributes to Jesus the view that whosoever still acknowledges his father and his mother, is to be called the son of a harlot (105). And the Encratites, a Christian faction which rejected sex, alcohol and the eating of meat, said in so many words that marriage is a form of fornication. The Gospel of Thomas, according to a probable conjecture, teaches to hate your mother, because she gave you death (101).

The Encratites held that procreation is evil, because birth inevitably leads to death. According to “Thomas’ many are standing at the door, but only the bachelors will enter the bridal chamber and go to heaven (75).

This is exactly the essential difference between Encratites and Catholics: the former forbade marriage and sexual intercourse, the latter condoned it. The central figure of the Gospel of Thomas is the *monachos*, the single one, who has made the two one, who has transcended the differentiation of the sexes and made the male and the female to a single one, so that the male is no longer male and the female no

longer female (22). The concept of the *monachos* is to be found in the highly ascetic Aramaic Christianity of Edessa, where celibacy once was a requirement for baptism. But both the word *monachos* and the underlying idea are conspicuously absent from all Gnostic documents. It is a mistake to think that all Gnostics were ascetic. On the contrary, Valentinus and his followers were all for sex and marriage, at least for spiritual people. They said: Whosoever is *in* the world and has not loved a woman so as to become one with her, is not out of the Truth (a spiritual being) and will not attain the truth (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, I,6,4). And Basilides and his son Isidorus had very liberal ideas about sex, from which many orthodox Christians of today could learn something.

We conclude then that the Gospel of Thomas is not Gnostic but encratitic and should be localised in the Christianity of Edessa in Mesopotamia, which always was ascetic and never Gnostic. The author of the Gospel of Thomas was an Encratite, who lived in Edessa about 140 A.D. and integrated Gospel tradition of Judaic Christian origin. It would seem that this Gospel tradition was Aramaic. Antoine Guillaumont even argued that the author of the Gospel of Thomas wrote in East Aramaic, the dialect of Edessa, but had assimilated a Gospel tradition in West Aramaic, the language of Jesus and the Judaic Christians of Palestine. The least one can say is that some Sayings clearly show their Aramaic origin. The clearest and most convincing example of this seems to be found in the Parable of the Sower according to Thomas (9):

See the sower went out, he filled his hand, he threw. Some fell *on* the road, the birds came, they gathered them.

No manuscript of the New Testament contains the variants: 'he filled his hand, he threw'. Nor has any such manuscript the omission of the words: 'as he sowed', attested by all three synoptics. Thomas clearly is independent.

Mark (followed by Matthew and Luke) says that the seed fell beside the road. This is impossible because no farmer sows beside the road. Thomas, on the contrary, observes that the seed fell *on* the road. And indeed, if we visualize the Parable and picture the sower, throwing his seeds carelessly even *on* the path which his neighbours have trodden out on the field, because he knows that the plough will do its work afterwards, we see that 'Thomas' is right and reflects an Aramaic tradition. The misunderstanding of Mark is to be explained



by the fact that the underlying Aramaic *‘al urħa* is ambiguous and may mean either ‘on the path’ or ‘beside the road’.

The same reading is presupposed in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* (III,14,7). In the Syriac version of this work we even find the exact words: *‘al urħa*. This suggests that this version of the Parable has been transmitted in a Judaic Christian congregation, which still spoke Aramaic, and not Greek, as the Gentile Christian Churches did.

It would seem then that the battle of ‘Thomas’ has been won. Or should we say that the thirty years war of ‘Thomas’ is finished? In any case the enemy is out of sight. There is a growing consensus among scholars who have seriously studied these problems that the Gospel of Thomas contains in part an independent tradition of Jesus’ Sayings, of Aramaic origin, transmitted in a Judaic Christian milieu, and sometimes with an authentic ring. And the Jesus who so emerges at first sight seems rather different from the eschatological figure pictured by the synoptic Gospels. He speaks impressive mantras of universal validity as the embodiment of divine Wisdom:

- 58 Blessed is the man who suffers, he finds Life.
- 42 Become wanderers.
- 70 If you bring forth that which is within yourselves,  
will that which you have within yourselves, save you;  
if you do not have that within yourselves,  
will that which you do not have within yourselves, kill you.
- 98 The Kingdom of the Father is like a man who wishes to kill a tyrant.  
He draws his sword in his house, he sticks it into the wall in order  
to find out whether his hand could carry through. Then he kills the  
tyrant.

So there remains only one problem which is controversial and can still be discussed, although it is of minor importance: did the author of the Gospel of Thomas use as his source a collection of Sayings or rather an apocryphal Gospel?

Robert McLachlan Wilson, in his Presidential Address delivered at the 36th General Meeting of the Society for New Testament Studies held in Rome, August 1981, reports a growing consensus among professors of the New Testament that most of the ‘synoptic’ materials contained in ‘Thomas’ are Q sayings, but taken from a version of Q in which the apocalyptic expectation of the Son of Man was still missing. Is this thesis correct? Or is it an exaggeration so common with every new discovery?

Logion 16 is a good testcase.

Jesus said: "Men possibly think that I have come to throw peace upon the world and they do not know that I have come to throw divisions upon the earth, fire, sword, war. For there shall be five in a house: three shall be against two and two against three, the father against the son and the son against the father and they will exist as solitaries".

Almost exactly the same text is presupposed in the Pseudo-Clementine writings. And there we find all five: the father and the son, the mother and the daughter, and the daughter-in-law. Clearly the author of the Gospel of Thomas has modified his source; as an Encratite he eliminated the women and made the two men bachelors.

This Saying is a combination of two different logia, which have nothing in common.

The one was probably:

I have not come to bring peace on earth, but war

or

I have not come to throw peace upon the earth, but the sword.

Both versions are found in the Pseudo-Clementine writings. This startling Saying could mean that Jesus considers himself to be the inaugurator of the eschatological war which precedes the coming of God's kingdom on earth.

This Saying is amplified with the explanation 'divisions' like in Luke 12,51 and contaminated with a completely different logion: 'I have come to send fire on the earth' (Luke 12,49). Is not this characteristic of a later, oral tradition? The second Saying is much shorter than Q (Matt 10,34 and 35 = Luke 12,51–53). In fact it reveals the Aramaic idiom in which it was originally spoken by a very Semitic figure of style. Jesus tells that his message will bring discord in the family, because the younger generation, son, daughter, and daughter-in-law will choose for Jesus, and the elder generation, father and mother, against him: 'If there will be five in a house, three will be against two and two against three'.

No doubt the oral tradition has combined the two Sayings to tone down the world war into the antagonism of the generations. The author of Q has done the same. But the source of 'Thomas' cannot be Q, if by this we understand a source written in Greek. We should rather say that the author of 'Thomas' consulted an Aramaic source which contained a later development of the tradition behind the Greek Q.

I think it was an Aramaic Gospel used by Judaic Christians, possibly the apocryphal Gospel of the Nazoraeans. There is some evidence which points in that direction. Logion 62 runs as follows:

Jesus said: "I tell my mysteries to those [who are worthy of my mysteries]".

This is a version of a well-known extra-canonical saying, attested innumerable times in somewhat varying words. In the Pseudo-Clementine writings it has this form:

Preserve the mysteries for me and the sons of my house (*Hom. XIX, 20,1-2*).

The latter is a Semitism for: the members of my family. If it occurs in the Pseudo-Clementines, it was transmitted in a Judaic Christian milieu. This word must be very old. It clearly lies behind the words of Mark 4,11 *parr*:

To you has been given (to know) the mystery (-ies) of the Kingdom of Heaven (of God), but for outsiders I speak in riddles.

Clement of Alexandria says in so many words that the Lord says in a Gospel: 'My mystery for me and the sons of my house' (*Strom. V,10,63*). This observation, combined with the fact that the Saying also occurs in the Pseudo-Clementine writings, leads me to suppose that the author of the Gospel of Thomas in this case used an apocryphal Judaic Christian Gospel, perhaps 'to Ioudaikon', which A.F.J. Klijn is in the process of rehabilitating.

This may or may not be relevant for the interpretation of the next Saying (71) we want to discuss:

Jesus said: "I shall destroy this house and no one will be able to build it again".

In the synoptic Gospels it is said that this was a false accusation brought forward by false witnesses during the trial of Jesus. But here it is maintained that Jesus did say these words indeed. Therefore it is impossible that the author of Thomas's Gospel derived this Saying from the canonical text.

Moreover, 'this house' is an idiomatic expression, found very often in the Old Testament to designate 'this temple' (*habbayit hazzèh*). In fact the Persian *Diatessaron* transmits John's version (2,19) of the logion with the same Semitism: 'Destroy *this house* and after three days I will raise it up again'. When writing his *Diatessaron*, Tatian integrated

a Judaic Christian Gospel tradition, which may be responsible for this remarkable variant.

In the Pseudo-Clementine writings this Saying is not quoted verbatim. But there are several allusions to an utterance of the ‘true prophet’, according to which God will not cease to be irate, because sacrifices are still slaughtered in the temple and therefore he will destroy the temple (*Rec.* 1,64). And John the prophet, the author of the typically Jewish Christian Apocalypse, echoes the version of ‘Thomas’ when he observes that he saw no temple in the new Jerusalem, for the Lord Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it (21,22).

This makes clear that the Logion of Thomas is an announcement of the fall of the Temple. It is absolutely unique in presuming that nobody (not even the Messiah) will build the temple again. Rabbis believe until this day that the Messiah in the end of days will rebuild the sanctuary. The Temple Scroll from Qumran made it clear that the Essenes had some reservations about the Temple cult of their time but hoped that at the End of Days the temple would be rebuilt and the ritual of Sacrifices reinstated: ‘And I will consecrate my temple by my Glory, the temple on which I will settle my Glory, until the day...on which I will create my temple and establish it for myself *for all times*’. This belief is contradicted in this Saying.

According to the Fourth Gospel Jesus spoke a similar Word during the cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem (2,19).

If we accept the thesis of Fortna that the author of this writing heavily edited an already existing Judaic Christian Gospel, the Gospel of the congregation of Ephesus, then this Saying might have been taken from a similar Judaic Christian Passion narrative. In any case it presupposes a historical or supposedly historical situation in which Jesus could point to this temple and predict its ruin. That is blasphemy of the temple. And so this logion can be read in context:

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, on ‘Palm Sunday’, he did not go straight on to the palace where the governor stayed, but he switched to the left, to the temple, which he occupied with his followers for a while. His behaviour alarmed the leaders of the Establishment. They came to him and asked him who had authorised him to act as he did. Thereupon, Jesus must have said, pointing to the temple, something like:

I shall destroy *this house* and no one will be able to build it again.

The later followers of Jesus have been visibly embarrassed by this extraordinary utterance of his. The redactor of the Fourth Gospel has moved this incident from the end to the beginning of Jesus' career, possibly because he thought that Jesus was murdered, not because he had blasphemed the temple, but because he had raised Lazarus from the dead (11,53). He transmits the Saying in a slightly different wording: 'If you break down this temple, in three days I will raise it up' (2,19). He goes on to say that Jesus spoke of the temple of his body, presupposing as a good Hellenist that the body is the temple of the soul. 'In three days' is an addition of the tradition to the original wording and clearly is an allusion to the resurrection. But, as the version of 'Thomas' shows, Jesus must have meant his words literally.

In the Acts of the Apostles (6,14) some inhabitants of Jerusalem are said to have accused a Christian leader called Stephen of having said: 'Jesus the Nazoraean will break down this place (a Semitism for: this temple)'. A simple miracle monger from Galilee thinks he can destroy personally a whole temple? That would amount to megalomania. But Jesus was sound of mind. What did he really say?

Mark (14,58) and Matthew (26,61) report that this Saying was quoted during the trial of Jesus. They add that this was done by false witnesses. It is possible that the latter have twisted the words. Nevertheless Jesus must have said something of the kind: that proves the Gospel of John (2,19).

Everything becomes clear when we remember that Jesus was (also) a prophet and that prophets speak the Word of God. Not they speak, but God speaks through them. Jeremiah, in 609, was ordered by his Lord to stand in the gate of Jerusalem's temple and to proclaim as the Word of the Lord: 'I will do to *this house* as I have done to Silo' (7,14). This means: 'I, God, will destroy this temple as I have destroyed the sanctuary at Silo'. This is going to happen, because the Judaeans did not convert from their evil way. And it did happen in 587. Jesus, by the choice of his words, refers to these passages in Jeremiah. The words 'this house' are idiomatic, a current expression to indicate the temple of Jerusalem, used preferably by Jeremiah. The hint could not be overheard: if the Zealots continued with their fanatical actions against Rome, God himself would destroy the temple. This happened in 70 A.D. And ever since it has not been rebuilt, as Jesus predicted. Before or after this incident Jesus told a parable, in which he warned

stealthily against the foolhardy Zealotry of possible rebels. He described with his usual perspicacity a revolutionary situation in Galilee, tenants refusing to pay the rent to their absentee landlord, a noble and justified protest, which inevitable led to violence and murder (Gospel of Thomas 65). This certainly did not endear him to the Zealots, or to the Establishment.

So Jesus was arrested. And, in a silent connivance between those most interested in Law and Order, the Jewish Council and the Roman governor, Jesus was sentenced to death, for blasphemy of the temple, by *coercitio*. His crime had been purely religious, a tragic collision of duties if ever there was: he had blasphemed because God urged him to do so. But his symbolic act in the sanctuary could be interpreted in terms of social and political implications. And so, in the afternoon of Friday, the 14th of Nisan, the day before Pesah, at the moment that the blood of thousands of paschal lambs was streaming in the temple, not far from there, on a hill called Golgotha, this unique Lamb of God bled to death.



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### DAS HEBRÄEREVANGELIUM IM GNOSTISCHEN EVANGELIUM NACH MARIA\*

#### INTRODUCTION

This was one of the first publications on the Gnostic Gospel of Mary and rightly met with stubborn opposition, because I was hastily jumping to conclusions. But I still think it contains some valuable elements.

Matthew 6:21 and Luke 12:34 both transmit a Saying of Jesus in the following way:

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

It is possible that they took this wording from their common source Q (Q = German for Quelle = Source).

Tertullian, in his *Ad Martyras* 2,10 says exactly the opposite:

Ubi erit cor tuum, illic erit et thesaurus tuus.

(Where your heart is, there will be your treasure also)

The same version is transmitted by the Manichaean *Kephalaia* 223:

As the Saviour said: Where your heart is, there will be your treasure also.

(idem *Kephalaia* 200, 229, 230)

Jesus was a poet, he quite often used the stylistic device of parallelismus membrorum. Therefore it is possible that the two traditions have preserved each one half of the original two-lines:

Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also;

Where your heart is, there will be your treasure.

There is still a third version of the Saying, which is based on the second half:

Where your mind is, there is your treasure.

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This clearly is a hellenisation of a Jewish saying: mind (nous) for heart. This is found in the Gospel of Mary, Alexandria, second century, but also in Clement of Alexandria (ca. 200).

Moreover it is attested by the Catholic Sentences of Sextus (Alexandria, second century), Justin Martyr (Rome, ca. 150) and the fourth century Edessene mystic Macarius.

Remarkably enough it is also attested by the originally Syrian Didascalia: *ubi erit thesaurus eorum, ibi et mens eorum* (Where their treasure will be, there is their mind also).

The Didascalia is localised in Beroea (Aleppo) in the beginning of the third century and is mostly held to be Jewish Christian.

Both the Jewish version and the Hellenistic version of the Saying could be of Jewish Christian origin.

In einem kurzen Aufsatz in *New Testament Studies* hat R. McL. Wilson neuerdings die Benützung des Neuen Testaments im gnostischen *Evangelium nach Maria* besprochen und dabei auch die schwierige Frage aufgeworfen, ob diese gnostische Schrift das Vorkommen des sogenannten Westlichen Textes des Neuen Testamentes (in Ägypten!) bezeuge.<sup>1</sup> Dabei ist ihm nun allerdings ein Zitat entgangen, das zur Vorsicht mahnen dürfte:

Denn (γὰρ) dort, wo der Verstand (νοῦς) ist, da ist πηρὸν  
(Till, p. 69, 1.15).

Till hat in seiner übrigens ausgezeichneten Ausgabe das koptische Wort als "dein Antlitz" übersetzt.<sup>2</sup> Mir scheint es aber, dass nicht ḥo, "Antlitz", sondern aḥo, Achmimisch eḥo, "Schatz", das Wort ist, das an dieser Stelle benützt worden ist,<sup>3</sup> (wie es Till im Apparat auch als mögliche Uebersetzung angibt), sodass zu übersetzen ist:

Denn (γὰρ) dort, wo der Verstand (νοῦς) ist, da ist der Schatz.

Das ist nun allerdings ein bekanntes Logion:

<sup>1</sup> *New Testament Studies* 3, 3, S. 236–243.

<sup>2</sup> W.C. Till, *Die Gnostischen Schriften des Koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis* 8502, Berlin 1955.

<sup>3</sup> W.E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, S. 24b.

Clemens Alexandrinus, *Strom.* VII, 12, 77:<sup>4</sup> ὅπου γὰρ ὁ νοῦς τινος ἐκεῖ καὶ ὁ θησαυρὸς αὐτοῦ.

id., *Q.D.S.* 17: ὅπου γὰρ ὁ νοῦς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκεῖ καὶ ὁ θησαυρὸς αὐτοῦ.

id., *Strom.* IV, 6, 33: ὁ δὲ τῷ ὄντι θησαυρὸς ἡμῶν ἔνθα ἢ συγγενεία τοῦ νοῦ.

Makarius, *Hom.* 43, 3: ὅπου ὁ νοῦς σου ἐκεῖ καὶ ὁ θησαυρὸς σου.

Nun könnte man der Meinung sein, dass hier ein Zitat von Matthäus 6, 21 (= Lucas 12, 34, aus Q) vorliegt. Das scheint mir nun doch nicht der Fall zu sein, und zwar aus folgenden Gründen.

Eine zwar nicht identische, aber doch verwandte Form des Logions findet sich in Justins *Apologie* I, 15, 16:

ὅπου γὰρ ὁ θησαυρὸς ἐστίν, ἐκεῖ καὶ ὁ νοῦς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

Nun scheint es mir nicht zweifelhaft, dass Justin die vier kanonischen Evangelien gekannt hat, (auch das Johannesevangelium), aber die Forschung des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts hat doch auch dies überzeugend nachgewiesen, dass Justin für seine Evangelienzitate noch über eine Nebenquelle verfügte, welche meiner Ansicht nach mit dem judenchristlichen Hebräerevangelium identisch war.<sup>5</sup> Das beweist

<sup>4</sup> F. Mordaunt Barnard, *The Biblical Text of Clement of Alexandria*, Text and Studies V, 5, Cambridge 1899, S. 10.

<sup>5</sup> K.A. Credner, *Beiträge zur Einleitung in die biblischen Schriften*, Halle 1832, S. 92–267, dachte an das judenchristliche Petrusvangelium; A. Hilgenfeld, *Kritische Untersuchungen über die Evangelien Justins*, Halle 1850, war derselben Meinung; W. Bousset, *Die Evangelienzitate Justins des Märtyrers*, Göttingen 1891, hat auf die hypothetische Quelle von Matthäus und Lukas, Q, verwiesen.

Ganz abwegig ist der Versuch von E. Lippelt, (*Quae fuerint Justini Martyris Apomnemoneumata Quaque Ratione cum Forma Evangeliorum Syro-Latina cohaeserint*, Halle 1901), eine Evangelienharmonie als Quelle für Justin darzulegen. Aber aus seinen Ausführungen geht klar hervor, dass dem Justin ein schon harmonisierter "Westlicher Text" der Evangelien vorlag, welcher dem Codex Bezae und seinen syrischen und allateinischen Trabanten sehr verwandt war. Man wird also auch bei Justin zwischen den vom Hebräerevangelium beeinflussten, westlichen Lesarten einerseits und Zitaten aus dem Hebräerevangelium andererseits unterscheiden müssen. Zweifellos entstammt Lukas 3, 22: ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε in *Dialogus c. Tr.* 88, 8 dem Hebräerevangelium, wie Fragment 3 des Ebionitenevangeliums (ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε) zeigt. Das beweist aber nur, dass diese Lesart von D abcf<sup>2</sup> Ir. schon in den Evangelientext Justins eingedrungen war, dass also der Westliche Text vorjustinisch ist und sein Entstehen nicht dem Diatessaron Tatians verdankt. I *Apol.* 63, 3 und 69, 13 liest Justin Matth. 11, 27: οὐδεὶς ἔγνω κτλ.; das ist, wie Pseudoklem. *Hom.* 18, 4 zeigt, dem Hebräerevangelium entnommen. Aber *Dial. c. Tr.* 100, 1 schreibt er, was er offenbar in seinem Evangelium las: οὐδεὶς γινώσκει κτλ. Nun ist allerdings ἔγνω, ein Aramäismus für γινώσκει, nicht charakteristisch für den "Westlichen Text".

nämlich die grosse Uebereinstimmung, welche zwischen den Zitaten Justins aus der Sonderquelle und den Evangelienzitaten in den pseudoklementinischen *Homiliae* und *Recognitiones* besteht.<sup>6</sup> Und selbst wenn man vermuten würde, dass Justin hier Matthäus 6, 21 zitieren will, muss man annehmen, dass die Form des Logions im Hebräerevangelium ihn zu dieser merkwürdigen Umgestaltung bestimmt hat, oder auch, dass sein Evangelientext schon vom Hebräerevangelium beeinflusst worden war.

Deshalb kann ich auch nicht glauben, dass in der erwähnten Stelle des *Evangeliums nach Maria* ein Zitat aus Matthäus vorliegt. Vielmehr handelt es sich um ein Zitat aus dem Hebräerevangelium, das bekanntlich synoptisches Traditionsgut enthielt, ohne doch deswegen, wie mir scheint, von unsern Synoptikern abhängig zu sein.<sup>7</sup> Deshalb wird es wohl schwierig sein, aus dem gnostischen *Evangelium nach Maria* auf die Bekanntschaft mit den kanonischen Evangelien und sogar auf das Vorkommen des sog. Westlichen Textes in Ägypten zu schliessen.<sup>8</sup> Das

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Ignatius kannte das Hebräerevangelium: *Eph.* V, 2: εἰ γὰρ ἐνὸς καὶ δευτέρου προσευχῆ κτλ. setzt den Text des H.E. voraus, welcher in *Papyrus Oxyrrh.* 1, 5: εἷς... <ἡ δύο> und in Ephraems Kommentar zum Diatessaron XIV, 21, p. 144, 13 Leloir (ubi unus... ubi duo) aufbewahrt worden ist. Theophilus von Antiochien, *ad Autolyc.* II, 34 hat die Formulierung des Aposteldekrets ohne πνευμάτων und mit der negativen Fassung des "Golden Rule", wie der *Codex Bezae*. Darf man vermuten, dass der sog. Westliche Text unter Einwirkung des H.E. zwischen 100 und 150 nach Christus in Antiochien entstanden und von dort nach Rom und so nach den Westen gewandert ist? Das würde die Uebereinstimmung zwischen dem Vetus Syrus, Justin und Marcion in Rom, und den lateinischen Vätern und Kodizes erklären.

<sup>6</sup> H.M. van Nes, *Het Nieuwe Testament in de Clementijnen*, Amsterdam 1887. Credner hat systematisch den Zusammenhang zwischen Justin und Ps. Clemens nachgewiesen; unter seinem Einfluss hat man aber die Zitate aus den *Recognitiones* vernachlässigt, welche Lesungen des Hebräerevangeliums enthalten. Hier rächte es sich, dass man die syrischen Pseudoklementinen vernachlässigt hat; diese aber zeigen, dass Rufin, der Uebersetzer der *Recognitiones*, die Zitate kaum geändert hat (W. Frankenberg, *Die Syrischen Clementinen mit Griechischem Paralleltext*, Leipzig 1937).

<sup>7</sup> Th. Zahn, *Gesch. nt. Kanons* II S. 707 hat "siegreich dargethan, dass das H.E. vom kanonischen Matth. (geschweige von Lukas) unabhängig ist und somit den kanonischen Evangelien gegenüber ein ganz selbständiges Evangelium darstellt" (so A. von Harnack, *Die Chronologie* I. S. 645) Allerdings war das Hebräerevangelium auch nicht der hebräische Matthäus wie Zahn meinte.

<sup>8</sup> Es ist deshalb so schwierig, zwischen Einfluss des H.E. und des sogenannten Westlichen Textes zu unterscheiden, weil dieser Text schon sehr früh Lesarten des H.E. aufgenommen hat und zum grossen Teil diesem Einfluss seine Eigenart verdankt. Das zeigt der Westliche Text des Evangeliums Marcions: Marcion las schon in seinem römischen Text Luk. X, 21: εὐχαριστῶ σοι) statt ἐξομολογοῦμαι σοι, was sowohl Eriphanius, (εὐχαριστῶ σοι), wie Tertullian (Gratias ago et confiteor) bezeugen (A. v. Harnack, *Marcion*?, Leipzig 1924, S. 205). Die Evangelienausgabe Zion beweist aber, dass das H.E. Matthäus 11, 25: εὐχαριστῶ σοι las (E. Klostermann, *Apocrypha* II,

ist sogar bei Clemens Alexandrinus schwierig, wie wir sahen. Denn man muss sich eben immer fragen, ob nicht ein Zitat aus einer apokryphen Quelle, zum Beispiel aus dem Hebräerevangelium, vorliegen könnte.

Andererseits bekommen wir einen interessanten Einblick in die Geschichte der Christianisierung Ägyptens, wenn unsere These richtig ist, dass das erwähnte Zitat dem Hebräerevangelium entstammt. Denn was soll das bedeuten, dass der Heidenchrist Clemens und der gnostische Autor des *Evangeliums nach Maria* noch immer das judenchristliche Evangelium zitieren? Doch wohl, dass das Hebräerevangelium in ihrer Zeit noch immer ein gewisses Ansehen genoss.

Aus der Tatsache, dass Clemens Alexandrinus neben den vier kanonischen Evangelien sowohl das Ägypterevangelium wie das Hebräerevangelium erwähnt, haben A. von Harnack und W. Bauer geschlossen, dass früher in Ägypten nur diese, jetzt apokryphen, Evangelien massgebend waren in der Kirche, ehe sie vom "Viergestaltigen Evangelium" der Orthodoxie verdrängt wurden.<sup>9</sup> Diese Tatsache lässt sich an einer Schrift erhärten, welche meiner Ansicht nach in Ägypten entstanden ist, dem *zweiten Clemensbrief*: denn diese enthält Logia, welche sich unter den Fragmenten des Ägypterevangeliums und des Hebräerevangeliums wiederfinden;<sup>10</sup> dass aber der Autor dieses Briefes auch kanonische Evangelien benützt hat, können wir nicht beweisen.<sup>11</sup>

Nehmen wir also an, dass etwa um 140 nur das Ägypterevangelium und das Hebräerevangelium massgebend waren. Aber so wenig auch vom Ägypterevangelium erhalten ist—eines können wir mit Sicherheit sagen, dass es das Hebräerevangelium als Quelle benützt und verarbeitet hat.

Das judenchristliche *Ebionitenevangelium*, das ebenso gut wie das *Nazoräerevangelium* eine targumartige Rezension und Ueberarbeitung des Hebräerevangeliums darstellt, enthält folgenden Satz:

Ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τὰς θυσίας. (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30, 16.)

Berlin 1929, S. 8). Also schon vor Marcions Zeit sind Lesarten aus dem H.E. in den Westlichen Text eingedrungen. "Gratias ago" auch im Diatessaron unter Einfluss des H.E. (D. Plooy, *A Further Study of the Liège Diatessaron*, Leyden 1925, S. 82).

<sup>9</sup> A. von Harnack, *Die Chronologie*, I.S. 614. W. Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei*, Tübingen 1934, S. 55.

<sup>10</sup> II Clem. IV, 5 = H.E. fragm. 7<sup>6</sup> (Klosterm., S. 7). II Clem. XII, 2 = Äg. E. fragm. 2 (Klosterm., S. 15).

<sup>11</sup> *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, Oxford 1905, S. 124–136.

Das hat nun der Autor des Ägypterevangeliums ins Enkratitische transponiert:<sup>12</sup>

Ἦλθον καταλῶσαι τὰ ἔργα τῆς θηλείας. (Clem. Alex., *Strom.* III, 9, 63.)

Mithin war das Hebräerevangelium schon so früh in Ägypten bekannt, dass es als Quelle für das Ägypterevangelium dienen konnte.

Dann fragt man sich doch, ob das Christentum Ägyptens nicht judenchristlicher Herkunft ist und ob nicht wirklich, wie die Pseudoklementinischen *Homiliae* angeben, es Emissäre der judenchristlichen Gemeinde Palästinas gewesen sind, welche erstmalig in Ägypten Mission getrieben haben.<sup>13</sup>

Ich muss es den Neutestamentlern überlassen auszumachen, ob die abweichende Lesart des Hebräerevangeliums nicht auch eine vollständigere Tradition bewahrt hat als unser Matthäus.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> E. Buonaiuti, *Detti Extracanonici di Gesù*, Roma 1925, S. 68: "Il motto ha tutta l'aria di essere una intenzionale contrapposizione al framm. del Vangelo secondo gli Ebioniti".

<sup>13</sup> Die Pseudoklementinen I, *Homilien*, von B. Rehm, Berlin 1953, S. 27 ff.

<sup>14</sup> Etwas, mit dem semitischen Parallelismus: wo der Schatz ist, dort ist auch das Herz und wo das Herz ist, dort ist auch der Schatz. So setzt auch die Lesart von D und den Lateinern ace (mit C ab.) in Lucas 11, 40: ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔσωθεν καὶ τὸ ἔξωθεν ἐποίησεν (= Logion 89 des Thomasevangeliums, m.E. aus dem H.E.) folgende Urform voraus: Der, welcher das Äussere gemacht hat, hat auch das Innere gemacht und der, welcher das Innere gemacht hat, hat auch das Äussere gemacht.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### HERMANN HESSE AND GNOSIS\*

#### I

When some years ago I met the son of Hermann Hesse, the architect Heiner Hesse from Küsnacht (Zürich), he said to me: “you are the man who accused my father of plagiarism”. He referred to an article of mine in which I showed that, when writing his book *Demian*, Hesse had been leaning heavily upon the *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos* of Carl Gustav Jung (both men proclaim a new God of good and evil, Abraxas), whereas Jung in his turn had been inspired by the second century Gnostic Basilides of Alexandria.<sup>1</sup> On a later occasion, Heiner Hesse, who was visibly worried by these facts, pointed out to me that this would be an exceptional case: his father had always been very careful to indicate the sources he had used and studies he had made for his books, but in the case of the “*Demian*” not a single note had been found among his papers. The underlying presupposition was that Hesse had wrought his work from within without any outside help, inspired as he was by his deep emotions, experiences and intuitions. Herman Hesse himself has encouraged this romantic view. When in 1929 a young female reader drew his attention to some parallels between his concept of Kain and that of certain Gnostics, he answered that he could well imagine that the Gnostics would have similar views about this topic, but that no literary sources concerning Kain were known to him.<sup>2</sup> And his friend Hugo Ball wrote: “the book originated vehemently... In a few burning months it was written down”.<sup>3</sup>

It is, of course, understandable, but rather naive to use the term “plagiarism”, whenever the sources of a work of art are being uncovered. As if the use of sources ever precluded authentic inspiration. The evangelists Matthew and Luke are said to have been divinely inspired,

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<sup>1</sup> Hesse, “Jung und die Gnosis”, in: *Gnostic Studies II*, Istanbul 1975, 241–258.

<sup>2</sup> Siegfried Unseld, *Hermann Hesse, eine Werkgeschichte*, Frankfurt a.M. 1973, 58.

<sup>3</sup> Unseld, *o.c.*, 55.

though they used the source “Q”. Moreover a scholar cannot always respect the easily hurt feelings of great men’s families. Without becoming indiscrete he has to ask, where these bright ideas come from. Sometimes his research will show him that certain symbols used by an artist are spontaneous products of the unconscious soul, at other times a literary tradition might be discovered which leads him back to antiquity. As a matter of principle an archetypal experience will only be admitted if the other way of interpretation proves to be inaccessible. So it is possible that Hermann Hesse knew Gnostic symbolism from his own experience and from a literary source (though he denied the latter in 1929, when he had become respectable). A good example of the first case is the “Steppenwolf”.

Hesse wrote this book in 1927. A year before he had been analysed by dr. J.B. Lang, a pupil of C.G. Jung. On 16 March 1926 he attended the famous ball in Hotel Baur au Lac in Zürich in the company of Julia Laubi Honnegger. On 20 February 1927 he read from his new book in the Analytical Club in Zürich. Hesse was very close to the group around Jung when he wrote his “Steppenwolf”.<sup>4</sup> It is about a man who has left his mentally ill wife and lives alone in a rented room. He is a pacifist to such an extent that he quarrels with his nationalistic friends and acquaintances. He comes to realise that inwardly, unconsciously he is a devouring animal, a wolf. Now, of course, an aggressive pacifist is a well-known phenomenon familiar to us all, but Hesse was probably the only pacifist in the history of the universe to admit that this split and dichotomy was his own problem, his disease from which the hero of the novel, Harry Haller, is being healed by a prostitute, Hermine. She teaches him how to dance. Probably one must have had an orthodox, pietistic education, to understand how important it is to learn to dance the Viennese waltz, to feel the harmonic rhythm within your body, one two three one two three, and to discover within yourself a center which is not the brain. Hermine initiates this intellectual into reality. She helps Harry to grow by leading him out of his excessive introversion and isolation to a new, vitalising contact both with the world outside him and with a neglected world of emotions and appetites within. Why then

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<sup>4</sup> Volker Michels, *Materialien zu Hermann Hesses “Der Steppenwolf”*, Frankfurt a.M. 1975, 107.

does he attempt to kill Hermine in the surrealist magic theatre episode at the end of the book? And why does she want him to kill her?<sup>5</sup>

There can be no doubt that Hermine is the *anima* of Hesse himself: Hermine is the feminine form of Hermann. And if Hermann kills Hermine, this is because, according to an oral tradition which has reached me, Hesse at the time he wrote the book had not been healed from the suicidal tendencies not unknown in his family, to which his brother Hans later succumbed. Hermine is a guide for Harry, “a sort of prostitute Beatrice” leading him to a better understanding of areas of experience which he had previously neglected, she speaks a great deal of Wisdom and she may have been intended by the author as the voice of Wisdom, Sophia, herself. What Beatrice was for Dante and Sophie von Kühn for Novalis, and Mendelejewna for Alexander Blok, that Hermine was for Hesse. Why, then, did he make a prostitute of Wisdom? It should be observed that the married woman, with whom Hesse fell in love at the famous ball in Zürich, was a gay, but thoroughly respectable lady.

Without knowing it Hesse has vitalised and rejuvenated a powerful Gnostic symbol, which can only be appreciated in its full meaning after the discoveries of Nag Hammadi. In the writing “Bronté, the Perfect Nous” a female hypostasis, Sophia, proclaims herself to be the prostitute and the saint.<sup>6</sup> This made clear the full implications and the real meaning of her epitheton Prounikos (wanton), which was known already before but not really understood.

Celsus, when discussing the famous Diagram (“circles upon circles”) of the Jewish Gnostics called Ophites,<sup>7</sup> speaks about a power flowing from a certain virgin Prounikos.<sup>8</sup> Origen mistakenly observes that Prounikos is the name given to Wisdom by the Valentinians “according

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<sup>5</sup> Eugen Webb, “Hermine and the problem of Harry’s failure in Hesse’s *Steppenwolf*”, *Modern Fiction Studies* 17, 1 (1971) 115–124.

<sup>6</sup> Bronté, S. 13, 18; Martin Krause and Pahor Labib, “Gnostische und Hermetische Schriften aus Codex II und Codex VI”, *Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Koptische Reihe* 2, Glückstadt (1971) 122.

<sup>7</sup> Th. Hopfner, “Das Diagramm der Ophiten”, in: *Charisteria, Alois Rzach dargebracht*, Reichenberg 1930, 86–98.

<sup>8</sup> Origen, C. Cels. VI, 34: “They have further added one on top of another sayings of prophets, and circles upon circles, and emanations of an earthly Church, and of Circumcision, and a power flowing from a certain virgin Prunicus, and a living soul, and heaven slain that it may have life, and death in the world being stopped when the sin of the world dies, and a narrow descent again, and gates that open of their own accord”; translation of H. Chadwick, in: *Origen, Contra Celsum*, Cambridge 1953, 350.



to their own deceived wisdom". Up till this date no Valentinian writing does exist which confirms this information. On the other hand, Irenaeus of Lyon tells us that certain vulgar Gnostics only superficially christianised (the Barbelo-Gnostics), whose views are very near to those of the Ophites, call their fallen Wisdom Prounikos. It is this Prounikos which gives man the Spirit, the *odor suavitatis humectationis luminis*.<sup>9</sup> It seems possible that Celsus refers to this concept, when he says that a power flows from this virgin.

The word prounikos was used in Greek to mean a "bearer" or, as an adjective, to mean "lewd, lustful". In Antiquity Epiphanius had interpreted the title of Sophia as meaning "obscene".<sup>10</sup> But this was contested by modern critical scholarship. None other than Martin P. Nilsson, the historian of Greek religion, observed that the Fathers of the Church were anxious to give the word an obscene meaning to discredit the Gnostics, whereas these innocent lambs used Prounikos only in the sense of "bearer", because Sophia brought something from the divine realm into the material world.<sup>11</sup>

As so often, this endeavour to whitewash the Gnostics has explained away an essential and most interesting feature of Gnostic thought. After the discovery of the writing "Bronté" we see clearly that Prounikos, as attested in the Berlin manuscript and in the text in Codex III from Nag Hammadi of the "Apokryphon of John" indicates the wantonness of Sophia.<sup>12</sup> The legend according to which Helen was found in a brothel by Simon the Magician seems to hint at the same fact, because Helen is Sophia. This means that this myth was known in a Samaritan, that is Jewish milieu.<sup>13</sup> So in certain Jewish quarters, Wisdom, *ḥokma*, well-known from the book of Proverbs, was tinged with the colours of Astarte, the prostitute with the beard. The *dea meretrix* was venerated in Phoenicia even in classical times.<sup>14</sup> She even inspired the legend of Saint

<sup>9</sup> *Adversus Haereses* I, 30, 8 (Harvey I, 235).

<sup>10</sup> *Panarion* 25, 3–4 (Holl I, 269–271).

<sup>11</sup> M.P. Nilsson, "Sophia-Prunikos", *Eranos* 45 (1947) 169–172.

<sup>12</sup> *Apocryphon Johannis*, Codex III, 23, 21 (Krause 79): "Die Mutter wollte nun die Kraft erlangen, die sie dem Archôn gegeben hatte in einer triebhaften Lust (*hen ouprounikos eso enbalhē*)"; *Codex Berlinensis* 37, 10–11 (Till 115): "indem sie emanierete wegen des in ihr befindlichen prounikon"; 51, 1–4 (143): "und die Mutter wollte wieder erlangen die Kraft, die sie dem Archôn des prounikos gegeben hatte".

<sup>13</sup> "Jewish Gnosis and Mandaean Gnosticism", in: J.-E. Ménard, *Les textes de Nag Hammadi*, Leiden 1975, 82–122.

<sup>14</sup> A. Henrichs, "Die Phoinikika des Lollianos", *Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen* 14, Bonn 1972, 20.

Pelagia, the actress and courtesane of Antioch, who later lived in man's clothes, like Saint Matrona (cf. Solzjenitsyn's "Matrjona's house"), and also was called Saint Marina (cf. Venus Marina), as Hermann Usener has shown long ago.<sup>15</sup>

But if we want to understand the relation between prostitution and wisdom, we must go back much further, to Summerian times. According to the "Gilgamesh Epic" IV, 2ff. Enkidu lives in a beastly state together with the animals, until he meets a hierodule of Ishtar, also called prostitute or "courtesan-girl". She initiates him into love, which is obviously real knowledge. After this he is alienated from wild life, because he has received wisdom and has become as a god, and even accompanies the hierodule to Uruk, the city of the temple of Ishtar with its many prostitutes and of the *hieros gamos* between a representative of the goddess and the king at the New Year festival.

Unnecessary to say that both orthodox Judaism and orthodox Christianity have completely eliminated these disreputable features from divine Wisdom. Greek Christianity sometimes identified Wisdom either with Christ (the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople) or with the Holy Ghost.<sup>16</sup> The latter seems to be the case with the well-known ikons of the Trinity from Novgorod, in which Sophia is represented as a female, (or androgynous?) person. There is certainly a very archaic element in Russian Sophiology. This tendency was reinforced through the influence of Jakob Boehme and Franz von Baader. Intelligent Russians could so defend the cult of Mary with impressive speculations, considering her as the symbol and bearer, though not the incarnation, of divine Wisdom and the Holy Ghost. At the same time, however, Mary was a symbol of the (black, Russian) earth.

The first Russian known to me who openly admitted the links between Mary and the mother goddess of Antiquity was Dostojewski. In "The Possessed" he defines the Mother of God as the Great Mother, the trust of humanity, the great mother of the original earth, who contains great joy for man. The cult of Wisdom among those slavophiles has certainly chthonic overtones.<sup>17</sup> It is in this perspective that Sonja, in "Crime and

<sup>15</sup> H. Usener, "Die Legenden der Pelagia", in: *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Leipzig, Berlin 1907, 191–215.

<sup>16</sup> Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* I, 7 (Bardy 72); II, 15 (Bardy 138); Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* II, 30,9 (Harvey I, 368); IV, 20,1 (Harvey II, 213), et saepe.

<sup>17</sup> N. Zernov, *The Russian religious Renaissance of the twentieth century*, London 1963, 283–308: "the nun asked Maria: 'What is the Mother of God? What do you think?' Maria Timofeevna answered: 'The great Mother, the hope of the human race.' 'Yes',

Punishment”, should be seen. In the gloomy world of Nietzschean murder and Freudian lust described in this book she represents and embodies the principle of salvation. She is deeply religious and reads at the decisive moment the story of the resurrection of Lazarus to the young student allegedly beyond good and evil. She awakens his conscience and tells him to go to the cross-roads, bow down to the people, kiss the earth, against whom he had sinned and to proclaim in a loud voice to the whole world, that he is a murderer. Sonja is a prostitute. Sonja is Russian for Sophia. Towards the end of his life, Dostojewski made great attempts to be a convinced conservative and a true believer (in his diaries even more than in his novels). Here, however, he is more than orthodox, he has penetrated into that profound layers of his soul, where life itself speaks its frightening words.

Hesse, it would seem, came into contact with the same symbol, when he described Hermine, the female Hermann, the embodiment of worldly and earthy Wisdom. Hesse was aware of these connections. In the second volume of his “Joseph in Egypt” Thomas Mann had told how Joseph had read the “Gilgamesh Epic” and so also the story of Enkidu, how the prostitute from Uruk converted him to civilised behaviour. “Joseph liked that, he thought it excellent how the prostitute educated the Steppenwolf.” He sent a copy of this book to his friend Hesse, who answered him on 2. 4, ‘34 that he had discovered the pun and with joyful fright had seen this symbol also return into the infinity of the *aeons* and of myth (“mit frohem Schrecken auch dieses Symbol in die Unendlichkeit der Äonen und des Mythos zurück gerückt sah”).<sup>18</sup> As the terminology shows, Hesse somehow sensed that Hermine was a gnostic symbol.

## II

The “Demian”, written in 1916/17 in Bern and published in 1919, was meant to be and at the time of publication was considered as a gnostic novel. It proclaims the discovery of a new God, Abraxas, the origin of good and evil. The symbol of this is an escutcheon, a sparrow-hawk, who is wrestling to come forth with half of its body from

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confirmed the nun, ‘the Mother of God is the great mother, the damp *earth*, and therein lies great joy for men’” (289). See also the chapter about Sophia.

<sup>18</sup> Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, *Briefwechsel*, Frankfurt a.M. 1972, 45.

the worldglobe, represented as the colossal shell of a half egg. This is interpreted as a symbol of individuation: "the bird struggles forth from the egg. The egg is a world. The bird flies to God. The God is called Abraxas". The latter is said to occur in magical texts and is interpreted as a symbol unifying the divine and the satanic.

This book was written in a period during which Hesse was analysed for the first time in Luzern by the already mentioned dr. J.B. Lang. During that time, Hesse read books of Freud and Jung.<sup>19</sup> The relations of Demian with psycho-analysis are obvious. Therefore it is very difficult to understand that historians of literature, who have devoted so many excellent studies to Hesse's works, have not yet observed how heavily Hesse is leaning here upon views of C.G. Jung. Perhaps this is due to the curious fact that this period of incubation of complex psychology is still clouded in mystery. But in the course of time three facts have been made public, which are relevant for our subject:

1. In his seminal book "Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido" (1912), in which Jung launches his broader interpretation of libido in the sense of an undifferentiated life force, which led to his conflict with Freud, the author observes that his views in this respect were not completely new. Numerous are the mythological and philosophical essays to visualise and formulate this creative vital drive which man knows from experience. In the third edition (the earliest available to me, Leipzig 1938) he refers to the unconscious will of Schopenhauer, the world-soul of Plotinus, the Indian love god Kâma and the archaic Christian view that the Holy Ghost is a mother, all hinting more or less clearly to the notion of a collective unconscious motherly Life. Special attention is given, however, to the Greek concept of Eros. Jung reminds his readers of Plato's Eros (in *Symposium* and *Phaedros*), the cosmogonic function of Eros in Hesiod's "Theogony" and above all of the Orphic figure of Phanes, whose name means "the lightning one", whose title is "the first-begotten" (*protogonos*) and whom Jung calls "the father of Eros" (as far as I know, Phanes is identical with Eros). Phanes has also among the Orphics the meaning of Priapos (the god of fertility with the enormous phallus), he is a god of love, androgynous and identified with Dionysus Lysius of Thebes. Jung refers here to the "Mythological Lexicon" edited by W.H. Roscher, in the III, 2 volume of which the leading authority

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<sup>19</sup> Unseld, *o.c.*, 55.

of the time, Otto Gruppe, had written the article “Phanes”, column 2248–2271.<sup>20</sup> What Jung does not mention, but is contained in that learned dissertation, is that Phanes is the Orphic demiurge, who split the cosmic worldegg into heaven and earth, that he is called sometimes Erikepaios or Erikapaios (meaning and origin unknown) and that he was identified in Antiquity with Pan, the luxurious god with the goat’s legs, whose name could also be interpreted as meaning “the all”. In the fourth edition of 1952, called “Symbols of Transformation”, we find a revised form of the same text, accompanied by an illustration “Phanes in the Egg, Orphic cult image, museum Modena, reproduced from the *Revue Archéologique*, 1902”.<sup>21</sup> The reference is to an article by Franz Cumont, in which however the view that the relief is Orphic is contested: Cumont argues that the represented figure is rather the monstrous Infinite Time of the Mithraic mysteries.<sup>22</sup>

2. According to an oral tradition which was transmitted to me, Jung wrote his *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos* at the end of 1915 and the beginning of 1916. It contained his experiences and views in the time of the great silence after his rupture with Freud. Only hesitantly Jung permitted this esoteric lore to be printed after his death, in the German edition of “Memoirs, Dreams, Reflexions” (Zürich 1962). An English translation of it by H.G. Baines was published in London in 1967.<sup>23</sup> It is not contained in his *Collected Works*. Some people thought that it would do harm to Jung’s scholarly reputation if it became known that he had once revelled in Gnostic lore. There can be no doubt whatsoever that especially in the first pages Jung has willingly let himself be inspired by the Gnostic Basilides’ speculation about No-thing, the transcendent God from whom everything originates:<sup>24</sup> “Harken: I begin with nothingness”. What follows is no longer in the text of Basilides: “nothingness is the same as fullness. In infinity full is no better than empty. Nothingness is both empty and full”. To this we should compare a gnostic idea attributed to Basilides as interpreted by Wolfgang Schulz:<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> W.H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, III, 2, Leipzig 1902–1909.

<sup>21</sup> C.G. Jung, *Symbole der Wandlung*, Zürich 1952, 227.

<sup>22</sup> F. Cumont, “Notice sur deux bas-reliefs Mithriaques”, *Revue Archéologique*, 3e série 40 (1902) 1–13.

<sup>23</sup> H.G. Baynes, *VII Sermones ad Mortuos by C.G. Jung*, London 1967.

<sup>24</sup> *Gnostic Studies* II, 245.

<sup>25</sup> W. Schulz, *Dokumente der Gnosis*, Jena 1910, 148: “Damit war der Grundgedanke des Basilides gegeben. Entsteht aus der verschwindend kleinen Größe, aus der Frucht,

If from the infinitely small quantum, from the fruit which equals the nothing, the world tree originates, then the whole world as such originates from no-thing, then the No-thing is the infinite Full-ness, from which the world is becoming.

Moreover, the famous Abraxas, whom Jung proclaims like Hesse, is not identical with the subordinate demiurge he is according to Basilides. As a matter of fact Abraxas is seldom mentioned in Gnostic literature. Even in the manuscripts from Nag Hammadi the name of Abraxas, as an subordinate hypostasis, occurs only rarely.<sup>26</sup> Abraxas is not a typical gnostic god, let alone *the* gnostic God. There are, however, quite a few magical amulets from Antiquity, sometimes mistakenly called gnostic gems, which have the name and the picture of this God, currently called Abraxas.<sup>27</sup> The monstrous God faces front, he has the head of a cock, usually turned to the right. The arms and the trunk of the body are human; the chest is often armed with a cuirass that closely follows the contours of the body. The right hand regularly holds a whip, whose lash flies in the air, like that of a charioteer. The left arm carries a round shield. The legs of the god are serpentine.

It is probable that this figure, of which there is no equivalent either in Iran, or in Egypt or Greece, was conceived in Alexandria in the first centuries of our era. Its interpretation is not quite certain. The cock's head is generally thought to indicate the solar character of the deity, because this bird announces the rising of the sun. This, then, would be a parallel to the much older Phanes, "the Lightning one", who originates owing to the split of heaven and earth, like *the light* in the Genesis story. The snake legs are those of the Giants, and many other prehistoric Greek mythological beings, but also of the monstrous figure of Kronos-Chronos in Orphism. The snake is the animal of the earth. The snake legs of Abraxas may have chthonic overtones. At the same time the Giant is characteristic of the underworld. Therefore these legs may indicate the cosmic character of Abraxas, who embodies

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die dem Nichts gleich ist, der Weltenbaum, dann entsteht überhaupt die ganze Welt aus dem Nichts, dann ist das Nichts die unendliche Fülle, aus der die Welt wird."

<sup>26</sup> No absolute certainty will be possible until all the manuscripts of Nag Hammadi are available. In the meantime cf. Ap.Ad. 75, 22; Ev.Eg. III, 52, 26; III, 53, 9; III, 65, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, Ann Arbor 1950, 123 sqq.; A. Delatte, Ph. Derchain, *Les intailles magiques Gréco-Egyptiennes*, Paris 1964, 23 sqq.; M.P. Nilsson, "The Anguipede of the Magical Amulets", *Harvard Theological Review* 44 (1951) 61-64.

and encompasses not only heaven, but also hell. Abraxas links light and darkness, consciousness and the unconscious, he is really already in his Hellenistic form a unifying symbol. The cuirass is no more than the uniform of the Roman officer, and the divine emperor, and clad many other gods of the same period. Perhaps in this case it serves to underline the militant character of the God, who seems to have been identified with the God of Israel, the Lord of hosts and the sacred war. The shield, quite uncommon as an attribute of a Hellenistic deity, could have been chosen for the same reason, because according to Psalm 84, 12 the Lord is a shield. In that case the inscription Iao, so frequent on these amulets, would confirm the identification of Abraxas with the Old Testament God.

Jung has very well understood the ambivalent, truly numinous character of this deity when he wrote in the *Septem Sermones*:

Hard to know is the deity of Abraxas. Its power is the greatest, because man perceiveth it not. From the sun he draweth the *summum bonum*; from the devil the *infimum malum*; but from Abraxas Life, altogether indefinite, the mother of good and evil. Smaller and weaker like seemeth to be than the *summum bonum*; wherefore it is also hard to conceive that Abraxas transcendeth even the sun in power, who is himself the radiant source in all the force of life. Abraxas is the sun, and at the same time the eternally sucking gorge of the void, the belittling and dismembering devil. The power of Abraxas is twofold; but ye see it not, because for your eyes the warring opposites of this power are extinguished (Baynes, 19).

In the “Demian” of Hermann Hesse Abraxas has exactly the same function. He is the figure which overcomes dualism and symbolises the wholeness of the soul, the end of schizophrenia. Hermann Hesse must have used the “Seven Sermons to the Dead”, which he must have known through the intermediary of Lang, when he composed his “Demian”.

3. In the third place, due attention should be given to the drawing made by Jung in 1916, which he called *systema totius mundi* and towards the end of his life gave to his biographer Aniéla Jaffé. In his “Memoirs, Dreams, Reflexions” he mentions this, calling it a mandala, the meaning of which he at first did not understand. Only insiders know that a picture of this drawing was published in the Swiss review “Du”, accompanied by an interpretation by the famous psychiatrist himself.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> C.G. Jung, “Mandalas”, *Du*, April 1955, 16–21.

It is said there to be the mandala of a modern man, and it takes some years before one discovers that this modern man is a certain Carl Gustav Jung.

In his dissertation “On the psychology of so-called occult Phenomena” (1902) Jung had described the world system conceived and explained by his niece Helly Preiswerk and even printed a drawing of hers, spirals centering in one fixed point, which visualised the alleged evolution of the universe. In the text which was used for the English translation of this work he rightly calls this mythological fancy a gnostic system. His remark is very characteristic and comes back again and again in his later work: the patient could not know gnostic concepts and yet produces them, because they live unconsciously in her. He writes:

This exhausts my knowledge of the sources used by the patient. Where the root idea came from she was unable to say. Naturally I waded through the occult literature so far as it pertained to this subject, and discovered a wealth of parallels with our gnostic system, dating from different centuries, but scattered about in all kinds of works, most of them quite inaccessible to the patient. Moreover, at her tender age, and in her surroundings, the possibility of any such study must be ruled out of account. A brief survey of the system in the light of the patient’s own explanations will show how much intelligence was expended on its construction. How high the intellectual achievement is to be rated must remain a matter of taste. At all events, considering the youth and mentality of the patient, it must be regarded as something quite out of the ordinary.<sup>29</sup>

It is possible that Jung called this mythological world-view gnostic, because it shows a certain likeness with the so-called Orphitic diagram transmitted by Origen in his *Contra Celsum* (VI, 21–38) with its circles within circles and circles beyond circles. The difference would be that in the ancient circles, describing the universe, the spiritual world, of Father and Son, has no contact whatsoever with the visible world of paradise and earth and underworld and world soul, but is separated from it by a blue and yellow circle, whereas niece Helly’s universe was unified. This characteristically is also the case with the *systema totius mundi* which Jung himself designed in 1916. We find here an all-embracing circle with the inscription “pleroma” which at the left side becomes dark and is called “inane”. Whereas for the Gnostics the “pleroma”, “fullness” or spiritual world was completely opposed to the “kenoma”, “void” or visible world, for Jung “void” and “fullness” are two different

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<sup>29</sup> C.G. Jung, *Collected Works* I, 88.



aspects of the one reality, the No-thing of Basilides. This part of the drawing is a good illustration to the beginning of the *Septem Sermones*, especially to the passage: “This nothingness of fullness we name the *pleroma*”. When interpreting in 1955 his own drawing of 1916, Jung says that it represents the pairs of opposites of the *mikrokosmos* within the *makrokosmic* world and its opposites. Later on he would quote Nicolas Cusanus (*coincidentia oppositorum*) and Heraclitus’ *palindromia* as witnesses for this view. Originally, however, Jung, owed, as we saw, the formulation to Schulz, but experienced the truth of it within himself in those heavy crises between 1912 and 1919. And we remember that the reconciliation of these opposites was the exact problem of Hermann Hesse when he wrote his “*Demian*”.

How is this universe composed? At the bottom of it there is the dark Abraxas, the source and origin of everything. Jung says: “he represents the *dominus mundi*, the Lord of this physical world and is a world creator of contradictory nature. From him originates the tree of life with the added inscription “*vita*”, “*life*”. Above (in the drawing) there can be seen the corresponding figure of a tree of light in the shape of a seven branched chandelier with the indications “*ignis*” (fire) and “*eros*” (love).

The peculiar thing is that Abraxas is here represented as a being with snake legs and the radiating head of a lion, not of a cock. This corresponds to a passage in *Sermo III* where the paradoxical and contradictory character of Abraxas is described:

Abraxas begetteth truth and lying, good and evil, light and darkness, in the same word and in the same act. Wherefore is Abraxas terrible. It is splendid as the lion in the instant he striketh down his victim. It is beautiful as a day of spring (Baynes, 20).

The reason for this change is not known. In several Abraxas gems the anguipede has the head of a lion.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps Jung has had associations with the lion-headed monster of Infinite Time, as represented in the Mithras mysteries, with whom Jung was already at that date quite familiar. A lion-headed monster decorates the frontispiece of Schulz’ “*Dokumente der Gnosis*”. There, however, can be no question that Jung with his great knowledge of Hellenism knew that Abraxas usually was represented *alektrokephale*. Jung continues his exegesis of his own

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<sup>30</sup> Bonner, *o.c.*, 128; Delatte, Derchain, *o.c.*, 38.

mandala: “to the left there arises from an inner circle characterising the body or the blood a serpent entwining the phallus, as principle of generation. She (the serpent) is clear and obscure, directed toward the dark world of earth, moon and void, therefore (in the drawing) designed as Satan”.

This then is the alleged veneration of the devil, for which Jung was so severely criticised and which attracted Hesse so forcefully. It means the integration of sex, earth and matter, which was then, in 1916, as it is now, the great issue both of Christianity and of humanism. The other side, however, was not neglected. Jung had read in Albrecht Dieterich’s “Mother Earth” that according to the Jewish Christians the Holy Spirit was a mother. So he could interpret the chalice and the dove in his mandala with the following words:

The luminous realm of fullness lies on the right, where from the clear circle called *frigus sive amor dei* (cold or love of God) the dove of the Holy Spirit arises and the Wisdom (Sophia) pours over from a double chalice. This female sphere is that of heaven.

It is a Freudian slip that this Christian element is not integrated into the *quaternio* to which Jung at that time adhered. In the fourth Sermo, which is hardly understandable without knowledge of the Mandala, Jung proclaimed:

Four is the number of the principal gods, as four is the number of the world’s measurements. One is the beginning, the god-sun. Two is Eros; for he bindeth twain together and outspreadeth himself in brightness. Three is the Tree of Life, for it filleth space with bodily forms. Four is the devil, for he openeth all that is closed. All that is formed of bodily nature doth he dissolve; he is the destroyer in whom everything is brought to nothing.

This is a far cry from the later suggestion of Jung that the Mother of God should be added to the trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. His *quaternio* was in 1916: Abraxas, Eros, tree of life, devil. This fourfold ramification of Life in the kosmos and in man leads up to a human being at the top of the mandala, perhaps a child, with the arms outstretched within a winged oval, which could be an egg. That it is really an egg, transpires from the added names of this male: Erikapaios (in Greek letters) to the left and (in Greek): Phanes. In his interpretation Jung says: “Above in the mandala the figure of a youth in a winged egg, called Erikapaios or Phanes and so as a spiritual figure reminding of Orphic gods”. Here, as in “Symbols of Transformation”, Jung

distinguishes between Eros and Phanes and says that the light of fire and Eros “is directed toward the spiritual world of the divine child”. The aim of life then is rebirth, the birth of the child as symbol of the Self, which overcomes the tensions of the opposites. So this mandala is an early anticipation of what Jung later amplified and called the process of individuation. On the other hand it is noteworthy that the child is not Christ, as could be expected, but the Orphic Phanes. Both in the mandala and in the “Seven Sermons” Christ, later for Jung the bringer of divinisation, is completely absent.

It should be observed that there is a curious difference between the mandala and the *Sermones*. Whereas in the drawing Abraxas is the origin and Phanes the *telos* of life, in the prose text Phanes, also called Pan and Priapos, and the snake-legged Abraxas are welded together:

It (Abraxas) is the great Pan himself and also the small one. It is Priapos. It is the monster of the underworld, a thousand-armed polyp, coiled knot of winged serpents, frenzy. It is the hermaphrodite of the earliest beginning (Baynes, 20).

This is of the utmost importance for the understanding of Hesse’s “Demian”. There we find Abraxas as the bird—and that is correct, because Abraxas has a cock’s head—rising from the worldegg, like Phanes. There is no representation of Abraxas from Antiquity, in which he rises from the worldegg.

### III

After these preliminaries it would seem feasible to trace back the symbol of the egg to its origin in Antiquity and to point out where Hesse’s concept came from. It is the syncretistic relief at Modena, first published by Signor Cavedoni in 1863 and republished by Franz Cumont in 1902.<sup>31</sup> Here follows a description of it:

In an oval frame containing the twelve signs of the zodiac a naked youth is standing, holding a sceptre in his left hand and a thunderbolt in his right. His feet are hoof-shaped, like the goatlegs of the Greek god Pan. His body is encircled by the spirals of a snake whose head is seen above his head. Behind his shoulders with two wings the horns of a crescent are visible. On his breast the mask of a *lion’s* head, while from his sides

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<sup>31</sup> Cumont, “Notice”, 2.

the heads of a ram and a buck are budding forth. The feet rest upon an upturned cone, which is without any doubt a half *egg*, from which flames are pouring forth. Above the curly head with five *shining rays* is the other half of the egg, also aflame.

Franz Cumont, always eager to find Mithraic monuments, identified this person with the monstrous figure of Time in Mithraism with the head of a lion and wings, the trunk being enveloped in the coils of a snake, who is often related to the Iranian god Zervan akeraña, Infinite Time, and usually is called Chronos (Kronos) and Aion. He denies that the two cones have anything to do with the Orphic worldegg and rather prefers to consider them as the two hemispheres of heaven. The feet are said to be bull's feet.

Robert Eisler in 1910 contradicted these views and identified the youth of Modena with the Orphic god Phanes (or Eros), the Lightning one, who was born from the worldegg and created heaven and earth by splitting it in two halves, very much as in Genesis heaven and earth are split from chaos so that light can be born.<sup>32</sup> By retrospection it is possible to tell all sort of things about Robert Eisler, and Gershom Scholem in his biography of Walter Benjamin makes some caustic remarks about testing his footnotes.<sup>33</sup> But there can be no doubt that in this controversy Eisler was right and Cumont was wrong: there are the halfeggs, the goatlegs, the shining rays and above all this beautiful youngster is no monster at all.

On the other hand more monuments have been found of the same kind, which are generally considered to be Mithraic: a marble statue, found in 1902 and 1903 at Merida in Spain, represents a naked youth in rigid attitude with a curly head, entwined by a serpent,<sup>34</sup> who is to

<sup>32</sup> R. Eisler, *Weltenmantel und Himmelszelt*, München 1910, II, 400 sqq.; cf. M.P. Nilsson, The syncretistic relief at Modena, *Symbolae Osloenses* 24 (1945) 1–7.

<sup>33</sup> Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin—die Geschichte einer Freundschaft*, Frankfurt a.M. 1975, 164: “Ich führte ihn zu Robert Eisler, einer der erstaunlichsten Figuren der Gelehrtenwelt, mit dem ich ihn schon einmal in München zusammengebracht hatte, wo ich öfters mit ihm verkehrte. Eisler war einer der phantasievollsten und, wenn man seinen unvorstellbar gelehrten Schatz an Zitaten in seinen Büchern ohne Nachprüfung ansah, gebildetesten Religionshistoriker. Er hatte für alle großen ungelösten Probleme genial-falsche Lösungen der überraschendsten Art bereit, war von unbändigem Ehrgeiz und rastloser Betriebsamkeit, aber ziemlich haltlosem Charakter.”

<sup>34</sup> M.J. Vermaseren, *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae* I, The Hague 1956, 273, no. 777; fig. 211.

be identified with the new Aion, born every year again and again in an ever repeated cycle, and with Mithras *iuuenis*.<sup>35</sup>

It has been shown that both the monstrous figure of time in Mithraism and the young Aion bear Egyptian features and could easily have originated in the Egypt of Hellenistic syncretistic times:<sup>36</sup> Macrobius describes for us an Egyptian image of Aion with the head of a lion (present), the head of a raving wolf (past) and the head of a fawning dog (future).<sup>37</sup> And no image of Zervan whatsoever has been discovered in Iran.

The problem arises to what extent the old and primitive Orphic concept of Endless Time which produced Phanes (out of water and earth was born a serpent with the heads of a lion and of a bull and the face of a god between)... to what extent this concept influenced the concept of the Mithraic monster and the image of Abraxas, both equally originating in Alexandria.<sup>38</sup> This question cannot be discussed now. We want to make only two observations:

a. It would seem rather obvious that at a certain date in Alexandria Phanes has been integrated into the Mithraic religion and has been identified there with Aion Plutonium, who assures the eternity of the city of Alexandria. Every year, at the Koreion, the sanctuary of Kore, the daughter of Demeter, on New Year's Eve, January 6th (= Epiphany), the birth of Aion was celebrated there. "On this day and at this hour the Virgin gave birth to Aion", the faithful then say.<sup>39</sup> Not everybody would agree that this cult is a combination of the Eleusinian mysteries,

<sup>35</sup> M.J. Vermaseren, "A magical Time god", in: *Mithraic Studies*, ed. by John R. Hinnells, Manchester 1975, 446–456, 450.

<sup>36</sup> R. Pettazzoni, *Essays in the History of Religions*, Studies in the History of Religion 1, Leiden 1954, 164–192.

<sup>37</sup> Macrobius, *Saturnalia* I, 20, 13–15 (Willis I, 114–115): "omnem tamen venerationem soli se sub illius nomine testatur impendere, vel dum calathum capiti eius infigunt vel dum simulacro signum tricipitis animantis adiungunt; quod exprimit medio eodemque maximo capite leonis effigiem, dextra parte caput canis exoritur mansueta specie blandientis, pars vero laeva cervicis rapacis lupi capite finitur, easque formas animalium draco conecit volumine suo, capite redeunte ad dei dexteram qua compescitur monstrum. ergo leonis capite monstratur praesens tempus, quia condicio eius inter praeteritum futurumque actu praesenti valida fervensque est. sed et praeteritum tempus lupi capite signatur, quod memoria rerum transactarum rapitur et aufertur. item canis blandientis effigies futuri temporis designat eventum, de quo nobis spes, licet incerta, blanditur. tempora autem cui nisi proprio famularentur auctori?"

<sup>38</sup> Damascius, *De Princ.* 123 bis (O. Kern, *Orphicorum Veterum Fragmenta* 54, 130).

<sup>39</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion* LI, 22, 3–11 (Holl II, 284).

(where Kore gave birth to Ploutos) and of the mysteries of Isis, which bore Horus the child. But there can be no doubt whatsoever that Aion is the new year, the time as an eternally recurrent, dying and resurrecting cycle. If we keep this in mind, we shall not be astonished if this image is interpreted by modern psychologists and authors as a symbol of psychical rebirth and individuation. On the other hand it must be observed that this view was inspired by an image of Phanes, that is Eros, not by the Christian symbolism of the birth of God in the heart of man as proclaimed by Eckhart and Angelus Silesius.

b. If Aion is originally Phanes, then he must also be a demiurge. A golden plaque, discovered in Ciciliano (Latium) shows an oval outline containing a nude male figure in a stiff hieratic attitude, entwined by a large snake putting its head on the middle of his breast between a bundle of four poppies and a hooklike key, which he holds with both hands. The feet have the appearance of an animal's claw. Above the head figures the name  $\text{IA}\Omega$ , underneath the feet the name  $\text{ADVNAEI}$ . Well-known magical *formulae* elsewhere on the plaque make it clear, that this *lamella aurea* pictures Aion as a magical time god.<sup>40</sup> But the Hebrew Name and its substitute indicate that this god had been identified with the God of the Bible. And that is not astonishing if we remember that Phanes-Eros was the creator of this world.

The influence of this image upon Jung and Hesse has been considerable. Jung most probably read the book of Eisler and was convinced by him that the Modena relief represented Phanes. He knew the works of Cumont at an early date and was familiar with the Hellenistic god Aion, after whom he named one of his books. And yet in his drawing he called the young man in the egg Phanes. Jung liked to behold pictorial representations, he had an eidetic memory. The images of Phanes and Abraxas, in which he recognised his own concept of *libido*, inspired him to represent in his mandala a process of individuation, originating from an indifferentiated energy, which ramified into four different aspects and found its finality in the birth of an androgynous child, symbol of Self and wholeness.

Hesse must have heard from Lang about Abraxas and cannot have seen the representation of Abraxas as a lion. Lang must have told him that Abraxas had the head of a cock, which with poetic licence became a

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<sup>40</sup> Vermaseren, in: *Mithraic Studies*, 446.

sparrow-hawk. Lang must also have told him about the birth (of Phanes) from the egg, as a symbol of individuation, thus confusing the figures of Phanes and Abraxas. Jung, who always loved to speak about the subject of the book he was in the process of writing, must have told Lang about this symbolism. It was the work of Hesse that made this antique symbol, known to few then and even now, the possession of mankind and the adequate expression of his generation's most profound aspiration: wholeness, the new man, the healing of the split.

After "Demian", Hesse does not seem to have cared about Gnosis anymore. He turned to India and China, whose religions were familiar to him ever since his youth, because members of his family had been missionaries there. But he could not learn there more than he had learned from Gnosis, the unity of Life in the kosmos and in man. Later, while preparing "The Bead Game", he studied Oetinger, Boehme and other pietists, endeavouring to renew the contacts with the tradition from which he came and against which he had rebelled. But it seems never to have occurred to him that his new God Abraxas, the all-embracing, omnipotent, cosmic God, the Lord of the heavens and of the underworld, was none other than the God of love and wrath of his father.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

Inscriptions found near Hebron and in the Negeb about J.H.W.H. and his Aschera and papyri from the Jewish garrison at Jeb-Elephantinus in the Nile opposite Aswan about Arab Jahu seem to indicate that once before the prophets the Lord had married a pagan woman, the love goddess of the Near East, variously called Aschera or Istar (hence Esther). Wisdom, Chokma, so prominent in the Hebrew book of Proverbs and in the Greek, Alexandrian, Hellenistic Wisdom of Solomon, perhaps was her successor. At the time of the prophet Jeremiah ( $\pm$  587 B.C. Era) Jews living in Egypt sacrificed to the Queen of Heaven, none other than Aschera. Of course, Jeremiah was against it, but these Egyptian Jews do not seem to have headed his advice. It is possible that the Jewish Gnostics of Alexandria, who called Sophia prounikos, wanton, were descendants of these obstinate Jews mentioned by Jeremiah.

Far from being heretical they may have preserved an original feature of the religion of Israel. Perhaps one might even say that, even in this

perspective, the cult of Mary, also called Queen of Heaven, may be regarded as the outcome of an age-old process within the limits of the biblical faith.

B. Portes, *Archives from Elephantinus. The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony*, Berkeley 1968.





## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### MANI ET LA TRADITION ÉVANGÉLIQUE DES JUDÉO-CHRÉTIENS\*

On ne semble pas encore avoir remarqué que les manichéens combattus par saint Augustin trahissent une certaine connaissance du *Diatessaron* de Tatien. Le fait est cependant très vraisemblable. Le contraire serait même étonnant. Car Mani vivait à une époque où l'écrit de Tatien était l'évangile officiel de l'église araméenne. En outre, on a établi que les sources manichéennes que nous connaissons, aussi bien que des témoins indirects comme les *Actes d'Archelaus*, contiennent des leçons diatessaroniques.<sup>1</sup>

Selon saint Augustin, le texte du manichéen Adimantus aurait inséré dans l'épisode du jeune homme riche l'injonction de Jésus de prendre sur soi la croix (*Contra Adim.* 21: *tolle crucem*). Or cette mention est absente de nos évangiles canoniques, comme le montrent *Matthieu* 19,16–23, *Marc* 10,17–23 et *Luc* 18,18–23. On la retrouve cependant chez Aphraate (20,18), qui a sans aucun doute utilisé le *Diatessaron*.<sup>2</sup>

On conclura donc que Adimantus, ou Addai, disciple de Mani de la première heure, a connu l'œuvre tatianique, comme son maître.<sup>3</sup> En outre, il est évident que le manichéen qui a traduit le traité d'Addai du Syriaque en Latin, a préservé plusieurs fois les variantes si caractéristiques de l'original.

Même quand les manichéens de l'Afrique du Nord n'offrent pas de traductions du Syriaque, mais s'engagent dans des débats avec des catholiques, ils citent quelquefois le *Diatessaron* ou du moins citent un texte biblique teinté par cet écrit. Ainsi Felix dans sa discussion avec saint Augustin:

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\* Previously published in: *Judéo-Christianisme. Recherches historiques et théologiques offertes en hommage au Cardinal Jean Daniélou*, Paris 1972, 143–150 (= *Recherches de science religieuse* 60 (1972) 143–150).

<sup>1</sup> Bibliographie chez G.C. Hansen, "Zu den Evangelienzitaten in den 'Acta Archelai'", *Studia Patristica* VII, Berlin 1966, 475.

<sup>2</sup> *Contra Adim.* 21; Zycha CSEL 25, 179: ... si vis perfectus esse, vende omnia quae possides et divide pauperibus et *tolle crucem tuam* et sequere me.

Aphraate, *Dem.* XX, 18; Parisot PS I, 927: ... si vis perfectus esse, vade, vende omnia quae habes, et da pauperibus, et *tolle crucem tuam*, et sequere me.

<sup>3</sup> Sur Adimante ou Addai, voir P. Alfarc, *Les écritures manichéennes* II, Paris 1919, 104–106.

et MITTAM vobis Spiritum Sanctum Paracletum  
(*Contra Felicem*, I, 2).

François Decret lui-même, dans son livre si méritoire du reste sur le manichéisme dans l'Afrique du Nord, n'a pas observé que cette citation a un arrière-plan diatessarique.<sup>4</sup> Or Ephrem, dans son commentaire sur le *Diatessaron*, présente cette variante de *Jean* 14,16:

Voici que je vous envoie celui qui profère de bonnes paroles...  
Je vous envoie encore quelqu'un d'autre qui profère de bonnes paroles  
(Leloir, p. 338).<sup>5</sup>

On pourrait multiplier ces exemples, soit de l'œuvre de Faustus de Milève, soit d'autres manichéens africains. Je me réserve d'y revenir ailleurs. Tout ce que je voudrais dire ici, c'est que ces variantes prouvent l'existence d'un *Diatessaron* parmi les manichéens de l'Afrique du Nord. Et il y a toute raison de croire que ce *Diatessaron* avait été écrit en Latin. En effet, vu le déclin du Grec parmi les Latins au quatrième siècle de notre ère, est-il possible de supposer que ces manichéens possédaient des connaissances suffisantes pour lire la synopse évangélique de Tatien en Grec? Faustus lui-même, ce savant docteur, lisait des travaux manichéens d'origine syriaque en Latin, comme le dit expressément saint Augustin (*Conf.* 5,11).<sup>6</sup> D'autre part, il ne faut pas confondre cette version latine et manichéenne du *Diatessaron* avec la traduction que Victor de Capua avait devant soi et qu'il a "vulgarisée":<sup>7</sup> car cette version, qui est à la base de toutes les "Vies de Jésus" dans les langues indigènes de l'Occident (Toscane, Vénitienne, Néerlandaise, etc.), ne contenait pas la variante mentionnée tant par Felix que par Ephrem. C'est le *Diatessaron Vénitien* qui le prouve:

<sup>4</sup> François Decret, *Aspects du Manichéisme dans l'Afrique romaine*, Paris 1970, 161.

<sup>5</sup> Il y a dans cet amalgame une allusion à divers passages johanniques: a. *Jean* 16,16 et 28;—b. *Jean* 14,16; 15,26; 16,8;—c. *Jean* 16,14 et 25. Il semble cependant que l'expression *mittam vobis Spiritum sanctum* est une harmonisation de *Jean* 14,16: *et alium paracletum dabit vobis* avec *Jean* 15,26: *quem ego mittam ad vos*.—Comparer également *Contra Felicem* 1, 9 (Zycha, 811): *mitto vobis Spiritum sanctum*. Il est bien sûr que cette leçon remonte à Mani lui-même. A. Böhlig renvoie à *Kephalaia*, 14, 7: *Wenn ich gehen werde, werde ich euch den Parakleten schicken* (A. Böhlig, *Die Bibel bei den Manichäern*, Münster i. W., 1947, 25). Cf. aussi: *T pers*: *e manderò a voi un altro Spirito Paraclito* (Messina, 321);—*Livre des Degrés*: *Ecce ego mitto vobis Spiritum Paraclitum* (III, 11; Parisot 69);—Ephrem: *ἄλλον παράκλητον ὑμῖν ἀποστελλῶ* (*Pan.* LXV, 6); *τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ παράκλητον ἀποπέλλω ὑμῖν* (*Pan.* XLVIII, 11).

<sup>6</sup> *Conf.* V, 11: *suae sectae si qua volumina latine atque composite conscripta erant.*

<sup>7</sup> Sur ce *Diatessaron* latin voir mon livre: *L'Évangile selon Thomas et les Pays-Bas*, Amsterdam 1971 (en hollandais).

ello ve *mandarà* Spirito Sancto  
(Vaccari, p. 137).<sup>8</sup>

On remarque que cette variante trahit bien son origine tatianique (“envoyer” au lieu de “donner”). Mais ce n’est pas le Christ, c’est Dieu lui-même qui envoie l’Esprit. Il y a là une adaptation au texte courant de la Bible. Il faut donc conclure que la version latine sur laquelle se basent les *Diatessarons* médiévaux de langue indigène ne contenait plus la variante originale de Tatien qu’en partie, soit parce que le traducteur avait adapté son texte au texte courant, soit parce que l’exemplaire traduit par lui contenait déjà cette adaptation.<sup>9</sup>

Or, il est très remarquable que saint Augustin offre la même variante dans sa polémique avec l’*Epistula Fundamenti* de Mani:

*contradicis ipsi scripturae, ubi dominus ait: et alium paracletum mittam vobis*  
(VI, 7).

Ce n’est pas son adversaire qu’il cite. Il s’oppose à lui avec la vérité catholique. Mais ce n’est pas le texte de sa Bible. Celui-ci, nous le connaissons très bien par l’intermédiaire de *De Trinitate* 1,18:

*et alium advocatum DABIT vobis, ut vobiscum sit in aeternum.*

Et ce texte, comme si souvent, a des rapports avec les codices africains des Évangiles, dans ce cas avec le *Bobbiensis* (k):

*et alium advocatum DABIT vobis, ut sit vobiscum in aeternum.*<sup>10</sup>

Il est donc clair que saint Augustin cite de mémoire. Et cette mémoire fameuse du docteur de la grâce a été influencée par le *Diatessaron*. C’est sans doute parce qu’il connaissait cet écrit dès sa période manichéenne. On pourrait citer encore beaucoup d’autres passages pour établir cette hypothèse.

En effet, il n’est pas du tout surprenant de découvrir chez saint Augustin des connaissances de l’œuvre tatianique, puisque celle-ci était l’Évangile des manichéens tout court. Or il est demeuré manichéen

<sup>8</sup> V. Todesco, A. Vaccari, M. Vattasso, *Il Diatessaron in Volgare Italiano*, Città del Vaticano 1938.

<sup>9</sup> Comparer aussi: *T ar*: et il vous *transmettra* un autre Paraclet (Marmardji, 435);—*syn*: ‘; that he should *send* you another, the Paraclete (Burkitt, 509);—Philoxène de Mabboug: Il vous *enverra* un autre Paraclet (*Lettre à Patricius* 78; PO 30, 825.)

<sup>10</sup> C.H. Milne, *A Reconstruction of the Old-Latin Text of the Gospels*, Cambridge 1926, 145.

beaucoup plus longtemps que les neuf années qu'il allègue si souvent.<sup>11</sup> Sa théologie a subi des influences considérables de la part du manichéisme.<sup>12</sup> Cette même influence se trahit dans ses citations évangéliques. J'ai même trouvé des indices, que je discuterai ailleurs, d'après lesquels saint Augustin était familier avec l'*Évangile selon Thomas*. Ce fait n'a rien d'étonnant, lui non plus, puisque, comme l'a établi Henri-Charles Puech, Mani et les manichéens ont connu et hautement apprécié cet écrit d'origine syriaque et édessène. Il est a priori vraisemblable qu'un manichéen convaincu et bien informé comme le fut saint Augustin ait parfaitement connu l'œuvre tatianique et l'évangile apocryphe vénérés par le fondateur de la religion dualiste.

A côté de ces leçons diatessaroniques, les travaux anti-manichéens de saint Augustin contiennent certaines citations évangéliques qui doivent être extracanoniques. Ainsi Adimantus cite un dit bien connu de Jésus de la façon suivante:

*Estote benigni, sicut Pater vester caelestis, qui solem suum oriri facit super bonos et malos*  
(c. Ad. VII, 1).

Il est infiniment probable que cette citation reprend un dit de Jésus pris à la tradition évangélique des judéo-chrétiens. Car dans les *Homélie pseudo-clémentines* on lit:

Devenez bon et miséricordieux,  
comme le Père qui est aux cieux,  
qui fait lever le soleil sur les bons et les mauvais  
et fait descendre la pluie  
sur les justes et les injustes  
(III, 57; traduction du Grec G.Q.)

Nous savons aujourd'hui grâce au codex de Cologne que Mani a passé sa jeunesse dans un milieu judéo-chrétien.<sup>13</sup> Cela implique qu'il a connu à fond la tradition évangélique de ces gens-là. Il est possible que Addai, quand il a cité ce passage sous cette forme, l'ait connu par l'intermédiaire de Mani. En tout cas il faut admettre que les parallèles qu'on trouve entre les citations des manichéens et celles des judéo-

<sup>11</sup> P. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, nouvelle édition, Paris 1968, 60–78.

<sup>12</sup> A. Adam, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* I, Gütersloh 1965, 256–260; Id., *Sprache und Dogma*, Gütersloh 1969, 133–140 et 141–166.

<sup>13</sup> A. Henrichs, L. Koenen, "Ein Griechischer Mani-Codex", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, Band 5, Heft 2, Bonn 1970, 97–216.

chrétiens peuvent s'expliquer par la familiarité intime de Mani avec la problématique judéo-chrétienne. Mais alors il devient très difficile de distinguer entre les citations diatessaroniques et les citations judéo-chrétiennes dans les écrits manichéens. Car Tatien lui aussi, comme l'a déjà observé Hugo de Groot, a intégré dans sa synopse évangélique des variantes judéo-chrétiennes. Le fait que Mani a aussi connu l'*Évangile selon Thomas*, et la tradition judéo-chrétienne que cet écrit a conservée, complique encore les choses.<sup>14</sup>

Dans le cas que nous avons rapporté, cependant, la situation semble être assez claire. Addai doit avoir pris sa citation, directement ou indirectement, à une source judéo-chrétienne. Si Justin offre un texte analogue (*Dial.* 96; *Apol.* 15,13), c'est qu'il a connu, directement ou indirectement, une tradition judéo-chrétienne. Il n'est pas possible que Justin ait utilisé ici un texte occidental, puisqu'il n'y a aucun manuscrit du Nouveau Testament qui contienne les mots: γίνεσθε ἀγαθοὶ καὶ οἰκτίρμονες.

De son côté, Tatien semble avoir puisé directement à une source judéo-chrétienne. Car le *Diatessaron Néerlandais* aussi bien que le *Diatessaron Persan* contiennent une variante pittoresque et poétique absente de *Matthieu* 5, 45:

Dieu fait luire son soleil  
(*Matthieu*: ἀνατέλλει).  
Dieu fait pleuvoir sa pluie  
(*Matthieu*: βρέχει).

Le manichéen cependant qui écrivait le *Psaume du Bema* cccxxxix (Allberry, p. 40, 34) semble avoir été influencé directement par la tradition judéo-chrétienne:

afin que vous *soyez bons* comme votre Père qui est dans les cieux, qui *fait luire* (son soleil) sur ceux qui sont mauvais et sur ceux qui sont bons. (Notez l'omission: [...bons] "et miséricordieux", comme chez Addai-Adimante.)

En effet (les mots "soyez bons" (*Matthieu*: ὅπως γένησθε υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν) ne se trouvent à ma connaissance dans aucun *Diatessaron*. D'ailleurs on a bien l'impression que la leçon de *Matthieu* est rédactionnelle et

<sup>14</sup> H.-Ch. Puech, "Gnostische Evangelien und verwandte Dokumente", dans E. Hennecke, W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* I, Tübingen 1959, 203.

que les *Clémentines* ont conservé une forme indépendante et primitive du logion.<sup>15</sup>

Cet exemple nous amène à la théorie bien connue des manichéens selon laquelle les écrits du Nouveau Testament auraient été interpolés par des Judaïsants:

*scripturas novi testamenti falsatas fuisse a nescio quibus, qui Judaeorum legem inserere christianae fidei voluerunt.*<sup>16</sup>

Les manichéens reviennent toujours à cette objection. Il n'y a pas de doute qu'elle remonte à Mani lui-même. C'est lui qui, en sa qualité de Paraclet, distingue entre les passages authentiques et les passages interpolés.<sup>17</sup>

C'est une ironie inouïe de l'histoire que cette théorie anti-judaïque est due en partie au judéo-christianisme lui-même. De même que, d'après les *Clémentines*, Jésus par sa parole distingue entre les péripeties fausses et les péripeties authentiques de l'Ancien Testament, ainsi fait Mani pour le Nouveau Testament. Mais il me semble impossible de refuser à cette théorie une base empirique et historique dans la situation du texte évangélique à cette époque. Il est bien vrai que le *Diatessaron* de Tatien, que Mani utilisait, contenait des interpolations judaïsantes. Et le fondateur de la nouvelle religion était bien placé pour les découvrir: par son éducation religieuse il connaissait très bien le judéo-christianisme.

Le fait que Mani parle des interpolations dans le Nouveau Testament pourrait être considéré comme un nouvel indice, après tant d'autres, que Tatien a puisé à la tradition évangélique des judéo-chrétiens. Il est vrai que Marcion lui aussi parlait d'interpolations judaïsantes:

*interpolatum a protectoribus Iudaismi ad concorporationem legis et prophetarum.*<sup>18</sup>

Et il est très possible que Mani, et Adimante, aient nourri leurs rancunes anti-judaïques avec des arguments empruntés à Marcion.

D'autre part, il est bien établi que le "Texte Occidental" en général et celui de Rome en particulier étaient déjà très corrompus à l'époque même de Marcion, et cela grâce à l'influence d'une tradition extra-

<sup>15</sup> G. Quispel, "L'Évangile selon Thomas et le Diatessaron", *VC* 13 (1959) 99.

<sup>16</sup> Augustin, *Conf.* V, 21.

<sup>17</sup> F. Decret, *o.c.*, 286.

<sup>18</sup> Tertullien, *adv. Marcionem* IV, 4; Kroymann, 429, 22. Cf. A. von Harnack, *Marcion, das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*, 2<sup>e</sup> éd., Leipzig 1924, 78.

canonique et judéo-chrétienne.<sup>19</sup> Il est certain que Marcion et Mani tout autant devaient se servir d'un texte évangélique contenant des interpolations judéo-chrétiennes, et ils semblent s'en être bien rendu compte.

Quand on identifie le christianisme avec le catholicisme (romain ou grec) ou avec le contenu des évangiles canoniques, il est extrêmement difficile de comprendre comment Mani a pu se nommer apôtre du Christ. Mais quand on remarque à quel point le christianisme de Mésopotamie est différent de celui qu'on connaît, il s'avère que Mani peut bien avoir été sincère. Qu'est-ce qu'il connaissait, en somme, du christianisme? Un certain type de judéo-christianisme (hétérodoxe) qui soulignait que le Christ est le vrai prophète, et Satan "la main gauche" de Dieu; l'encratisme rigoureux, tel qu'il se trouve dans l'*Évangile selon Thomas*, dans les *Actes de Thomas*, et dans le *Diatessaron de Tatien*; les théories de Bardesane qui admettait une matière non créée; certaines vues gnostiques sur le Démiurge inférieur, Saklas ou Fou, telles qu'on les trouve dans l'*Apocryphe de Jean*. Mani n'a pas connu le catholicisme. Il a réagi fortement contre la doctrine judéo-chrétienne qui fait de Dieu l'auteur du mal. C'est pourquoi sa religion était nettement dualiste. C'est aussi pourquoi il a rejeté la tradition évangélique des judéo-chrétiens. Au fond, son problème n'était pas tellement différent de celui d'Origène ou de saint Augustin qui, eux aussi, avaient horreur de l'idée que Dieu serait l'auteur du mal.

Mani, cependant, restait fortement tributaire du judéo-christianisme. Il citait encore le texte évangélique des judéo-chrétiens, il acceptait leurs vues trinitaires (Père, Mère, Fils), il amplifiait leur conception des révélations successives du "vrai prophète". On pourrait également signaler la persistance des croyances judéo-chrétiennes dans l'adoptianisme mal déguisé de certains nestoriens, dans la spiritualité du messalianisme et dans les vues de Mahomet sur le prophète.<sup>20</sup> C'est le drame du christianisme en Orient. Jésus prêchait le Royaume de Dieu. Mais, en Asie, ce sont des religions qui sont venues.

<sup>19</sup> G. Quispel, "L'Évangile selon Thomas et le 'texte occidental' du Nouveau Testament", *Vig. Chr.* 14 (1960) 204-215.—Quant à l'influence de la tradition extracanonique sur le "texte occidental", comparer: M. Mees, *Die Zitate aus dem Neuen Testament bei Clemens von Alexandrien*, Bari 1970; A.F.J. Klijn, *A Survey of the Researches into the Western Text of the Gospels and Acts II*, Leiden 1969.

<sup>20</sup> A. Schlatter, "Die Entwicklung des jüdischen Christentums zum Islam", *Evangelische Missions-Magazin* 62 (1918) 251-264. A. Adam, *Dogmengeschichte I*, 386-389. G. Quispel, "The Discussion of Judaic Christianity", *VC* 22 (1968) 92.





## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### MARCION AND THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT\*

Two recent publications drew my attention to a topic upon which I published many years ago, namely, the New Testament text known to Marcion. It is quite remarkable that no comprehensive study of this topic has ever been published. Within the scope of this article, we can do no more than to offer some brief remarks and underscore some points which might otherwise remain unnoticed.

#### I. TWO RECENT INVESTIGATIONS

The first of the two publications which prompted me to return to Marcion was John J. Clabeaux's 1983 Harvard dissertation (published in 1989).<sup>1</sup> Clabeaux discussed a limited number of passages from Marcion's *Apostolikon*, as preserved in two later works: the dialogue of Adamantius, *De recta fide* and Epiphanius in *Panarion* 42, and Tertullian's citations in *Adversus Marcionem* book V. Clabeaux established that Marcion revised only lightly the authoritative, pre-Marcionite Greek text of Paul used and accepted by the ancient Christian congregation of Rome. Clabeaux pointed out that the readings and variants of this early Roman text agreed as often as not with the *Vetus Latina* manuscripts of Paul—all of which seem to derive (directly or indirectly) from Rome. This was a very important observation, for it led Clabeaux to two important insights. First, it demonstrated that the variants in these secondary (*viz.* Tertullian) and tertiary (*viz.* Epiphanius) witnesses to Marcion's text were *not* variants which were "tendentious corruptions" of the text made by Marcion. How could they be, for the very same variants were often found in the manuscripts of the "orthodox" *Vetus Latina*? Second, since the text of the *Vetus Latina* found in Rome (the "Italic" and "European" sub-groups of the *Vetus Latina*) is regarded as belonging to the "Western" text-type, and Marcion's text apparently shared the same variant readings as the

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\* Previously published in *Vigiliae Christianae* 52 (1998) 349–360.

<sup>1</sup> J. Clabeaux, *A Lost Edition of the Letters of Paul. A Reassessment of the Text of the Pauline Corpus attested by Marcion*, diss. Harvard 1983, CBQS 21, Washington D.C. 1989.

*Vetus Latina*, Clabeaux concluded that the pre-Marcionite text of Paul in Rome had been of the “Western” text-type.<sup>2</sup>

The second publication which led me to reconsider this matter was Ulrich Schmid’s 1993 Münster dissertation (published in 1995) on Marcion’s text of Paul.<sup>3</sup> Schmid followed in the footsteps of Clabeaux: he examined and discussed all of the variants attributed to Marcion by the Catholic heresy hunters. He too concluded that Tertullian consulted a *Greek* (not a Latin) text of Marcion’s *Apostolikon*.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to the received opinion, Schmid also concluded that Marcion’s interventions in the text to remove the so-called “Judaistic” interpolations were much less numerous than one would suppose. Schmid based his conclusion on the fact that most of the variants in Marcion’s text which depart from the now-accepted text of the Pauline epistles are also attested elsewhere, notably in *Catholic* sources, and are—upon examination—*not* tendentious. The influence of Marcion on the Biblical manuscripts of the Catholic Church is, therefore, minimal, and has often been overrated in the past. In fact, Schmid concluded that the text which Marcion used was essentially the text of Paul as read in the Church in Rome in Marcion’s time. The manuscripts in use in Rome in the 140’s cannot have differed much from other manuscripts elsewhere in the early church at that time; like them, they must have suffered from scribal errors (like haplography or dittography), and must have undergone redactional corrections. But they probably also preserved remarkable

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<sup>2</sup> The idea that the most ancient text in the church was the “Western” text-type is not new (see the collection of scholars’ statements in W.L. Petersen, *Tatian’s Diatessaron. Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship*, SVC 25 [Leiden 1994] 11–12), but it has been shunned because of the obvious problems such a different text (when compared with the Byzantine text-type) presents for both Protestants (*sola scriptura*, but the *scriptura* is not static) or Catholics (the *magisterium* becomes nothing more than the quirks of a particular time, place, and text-type).

<sup>3</sup> U. Schmid, *Marcion und sein Apostolos: Rekonstruktion und historische Einordnung der marcionitischen Paulusbriefausgabe*, ANTT 25, Berlin/New York 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Long ago, I argued that Tertullian had used a *Greek* copy of Marcion’s edition of Paul (cp. G. Quispel, *De bronnen van Tertullianus’ Adversus Marcionem*, diss. Utrecht 1943 [Leiden 1943]). My position was *contra* A. von Harnack (*Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott. Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche*, [Leipzig 1923; 2nd edition 1924, photomechanical reprint: Darmstadt 1960]), and H. von Soden (“Der Lateinische Paulustext bei Marcion und Tertullian”, in: *Festgabe für A. Jülicher* [Tübingen 1927] 229–281). My position received little support after publication: I was attacked by A.J.B. Higgins, “The Latin Text in Marcion and Tertullian”, *VC* 5 (1951) 1–42, and T.P. O’Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible. Language-Imagery, Exegesis*, diss. Nijmegen 1969. Now, however, the work of Clabeaux and Schmid would seem to tip the balance back in favour of the thesis that Tertullian knew and used a *Greek* Marcion.

ancient readings which have been neglected by textual critics and editors of the New Testament, readings which might, in some cases, be part of the most ancient recoverable text of Paul. Many of these variants are also found in *Codex Bezae* (D) and the *Vetus Latina* manuscripts of Paul – that is, in the “Western” text. Other variants, however, are not found in the “Western” text; therefore, I will call this pre-Marcionite text of the Christian congregation in Rome “pre-Western,” for it appears to antedate the creation of what we now call the “Western” text.

It is here that the significance of Marcion as a witness to the text of the New Testament becomes apparent. If, as both Clabeaux and Schmid have independently found, Marcionite revisions of the New Testament text were very minor, then Marcion’s text would be a valuable witness to the text of the New Testament as known in Rome, prior to 144 (the date of Marcion’s expulsion from the Roman church). Marcion’s text of the New Testament must be the text known in Rome prior to 144. This means that the manuscript Marcion used is even older than what is usually regarded as the “oldest” extant manuscript of Paul’s writings:  $\zeta$ <sup>46</sup> ( $\pm 200$ , from Egypt). However, a timely warning is necessary now. The results of Clabeaux and Schmid should not be overrated, as if the text of Marcion did not contain any tendentious readings at all.

Tertullian does not mention any variant of Marcion’s text in Galatians 1:1: “Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father (καὶ θεοῦ πατρός), who raised him from the dead.”

However, in his *Commentary on Galatians*, Jerome writes:

sciendum quoque in Marcionis apostolo non esse scriptum “et per deum patrem” volentis exponere Christum non a deo patre sed per semetipsum suscitatum. (*In Gal.*, ad loc.)<sup>5</sup>

One should know that in the Pauline corpus of Marcion the words “and through God the Father” have not been written, because he wanted to stress his point that Christ has not been raised by God the Father, but arose spontaneously through his own strength.

This is a very trustworthy tradition. As a Christo-monistic thinker, Marcion wanted to underline that Jesus rose from the dead without any help from the inferior demiurge.

<sup>5</sup> Migne, PL 26, 313A, lines 4–7 (also cited in Schmid, 240).

We may be sure that Marcion intentionally omitted the words *καὶ θεοῦ πατρὸς* from his text of Paul's Letter to the Galatians.

On the other hand, it is not *a priori* completely impossible that even at this early date (before 144 C.E.), doctrinal corrections had been introduced into this pre-Western text of Paul's letters.

In his Epistle to the Galatians (2:9), the apostle declares that James, the brother of the Lord, and Peter (Ἰάκωβος καὶ Κηφῶς), and also John, agreed with Paul and Barnabas that the Antiochenes should go unto the Gentiles, and "they" (the Jerusalemites) should go to the Jews.

When discussing the text of Marcion in the fifth book of *Adversus Marcionem*, Tertullian writes:

bene igitur, quod et dexteras dederunt Petrus et Jacobus et Johannes. . . .  
(*adv. Marc.* V,3,6)

Therefore it is good that Peter and James and John gave the right hands. . . .

The sequence of the names has been inverted: instead of James, it is Peter who is mentioned in the first place. As Schmid observes, elsewhere Tertullian enumerates: Peter and John and James (*adv. Marc.* IV,3,3; *Praesc.* 15,2). That was obviously the reading Tertullian preferred, the text of his own Latin Bible, the *Afra*. The same variant is transmitted by Marius Victorinus.

We may be sure that the sequence "Peter and James" was the variant of Marcion himself. At the same time, it was a typically Western reading, evidenced by the Western manuscripts D F G, the *Itala* manuscripts *a b*, several manuscripts of the Vulgate, the minuscules 629 and 1175, and Latin authors like Ambrosiaster and Pelagius.

Here we face a conundrum: Marcion was no friend of Peter, a "Judaist"; why, then, should he have changed this text in order to give primacy to Peter? Could it be that Marcion simply transmitted the variant reading which he found in the *Corpus Paulinum* at that time and used in Rome, the city where he composed his revision of the "New Testament"? And is it possible that this correction is due to the pen of somebody who wanted to stress that Peter was the primate? At the same time, about 140 C.E., or even before, the Judaic Christian Church affirmed the primacy of James, the brother of the Lord, the Righteous One, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being (*Gospel of Thomas*, log. 12).

## II. MARCION'S TEXT OF PAUL

Marcion's pre-144 manuscript of Paul (what I shall call the "pre-Marcionite text of Rome") must have contained a number of marginal glosses, for one of them is signaled by Tertullian, when discussing Paul's interpretation (Gal. 4:24–25) of Abraham's sons Ishmael (whose mother was a slave) and Isaac (whose mother was freeborn) as symbols of the Old Covenant with Israel and the New Covenant with the Christian Church. Tertullian writes:

quae sunt allegorica, id est aliud portendentia: haec enim sunt duo testamenta (sive duo *ostensiones*, sicut invenimus interpretatum) (Tert., *adv. Marc.* IV,4)

Von Harnack supposed that *interpretari* here meant "to translate," and supposed a tendentious elimination of the covenant with Israel as well as the decisive proof that Tertullian read a Latin translation of Marcion's *Apostolicum*, the oldest Christian Latin text known to us.

But διαθήκη can also mean "declaration of God's will," which comes rather nearer to ἀπόδειξις, Latin "ostensio": "proof of God's intervention." That the one word in this context of Galatians could evoke the other is clear from the commentary of Tyconius on the same passage in Galatians:

Sed quod perspicue duo procreati sunt, *ostensio* est duorum populorum.

But that clearly two children were born, is *proof* that two peoples are meant.

—*Liber regularum* (Burkitt, 28)

Moreover, *interpretari* does not necessarily mean "to translate." It usually means "to explain, to give a special interpretation of something." Therefore, Tertullian, in the passage just cited from *adv. Marc.* V,4, should be translated as follows:

These words are typological, that is: pointing to something else; for these are the two covenants (or, as we find it explained in the margin: two *proofs* of God's intervention).

One of the distinctive features of Marcion's *Apostolikon* was its arrangement of the Pauline letters. Tertullian suggests by his continuing commentary on these letters in Book V of *adv. Marc.*, which begins with Galatians (as well as Epiphanius, *Panarion* 42,9,4), that the following was the order of Marcion's Pauline corpus:

Galatians  
 1–2 Corinthians  
 Romans  
 1–2 Thessalonians  
 Ephesians (called *Laodiceans* by Marcion)  
 Colossians  
 Philippians  
 Philemon (no Hebrews, 1–2 Timothy, Titus)

A similar sequence is found in the *Kanon Sinaiticus*,<sup>6</sup> a Syrian work:

Galatians  
 1–2 Corinthians  
 Romans  
*Hebrews*  
 Colossians  
 Ephesians  
 Philippians  
 1–2 Thessalonians  
 2 *Timothy*  
*Titus*  
 Philemon

In the course of the centuries some writings have obviously been added. But the “Marcionite” (we would call it: “original”) shape of the Pauline corpus has been preserved.

The foregoing suggests that there once was in use in Rome a “deviant” (i.e., deviating from our present text), pre-Marcionite collection of Paul’s epistles, and that this ancient, pre-Marcionite deviating text was once transported to Aramaic Christianity.

Perhaps there is still more evidence which points to this fact. The *Cologne Mani Codex*, a biography of Mani (\*216–†277) contains many quotations from Paul by Mani and his pupil Baraies. Mani turns out to be a seasoned Paulinist, and proves that a gnostic interpretation of the apostle is quite possible. Hans Dieter Betz has observed, in an excellent

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<sup>6</sup> See the “Stichenverzeichnis” of the books of the Old and New Testament, in: *Studia Sinaitica*, ed. A.S. Lewis, London 1894, 11–14 (cited by Schmid, 288).

article, that these quotations show a strong preference for Galatians and Corinthians.<sup>7</sup> I quote only one:

So we also know about the apostle Paul that he was caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2), as he writes in his Epistle to the Galatians: by Jesus Christ and God the Father (καὶ θεοῦ πατρός). (C.M.C. 60,16 [Koenen-Römer 40])

Betz (234) assumes that Mani relied on the canon of Marcion, which began with Galatians and the epistles to the Corinthians, that perhaps he learned his Pauline theology (which is such an important part of his Christian religion) from the Marcionites, and that his close relationship to the apostle Paul was probably due to the influence of Marcion.

However, we have argued in the foregoing pages that the omission of the words καὶ θεοῦ πατρός in Galatians 1:1 was, in fact, a tendentious elimination by Marcion himself. Now we see that the *Cologne Mani Codex* explicitly contains these words. That would seem to indicate that Mani and the Manichaeans did *not* use Marcion's Apostolos.

Moreover, up till this date, not a single tendentious reading of Marcionite origin has been found among the many quotations from Paul in Manichaean sources. One would rather suppose that Mani used a collection of Pauline letters beginning with Galatians, as was used by the Aramaic Church of the East.

Someone may have brought this Roman text to the East. That someone could have been Tatian, the pupil of Justin Martyr in Rome, who left him and returned to his homeland in the East. From quotations in the third book of the *Stromateis* of Clement of Alexandria, it is clear that Tatian knew the letters of Paul and gave an Encratite, anti-marriage interpretation of them. We know that the influence of Encratism on Mani was enormous: no meat, no wine, no sex for him. The Diatesaron of Tatian was his Gospel. Mani may have been familiar with Tatian's *Corpus Paulinum* too.

Schmid also discusses the relationship between the pre-Marcionite text of Rome and the "Western" text. He thinks that the ancient, pre-Marcionite Roman text was constituted in the first decades of the second century or even at the end of the first century. The "Western" text of Paul, known through the bilingual *codices* F G H and D/d, and

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<sup>7</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, "Paul in the Mani Biography (Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis)", in: *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis*, Atti del Simposio Internazionale 3-7 Settembre 1984, Cosenza 1986, 215ff.



the *Vetus Latina* of Paul, seems to have originated from a revision (or several revisions) of the pre-Western, pre-Marcionite text of Paul. Its author accomplished three tasks: (1) he removed the glosses so characteristic of Marcion's text; (2) he consulted other manuscripts of Paul's epistles to constitute his text, and (3) he added the fourteenth chapter of Romans as well as the Pastoral Letters to Timothy and Titus. When and where this happened is left uncertain.

Whether this is so uncertain is open to question, for if the pre-Marcionite text of Paul were written in Rome before 144, it seems plausible that these later redactions of it occurred in the same place.

This suggests a "where": Rome.

### III. ROME AND THE "WESTERN" TEXT

All text-types of the New Testament radiated from a city. Constantinople is the centre from which the so-called "Koine" text spread over the Greek and Slavic world for more than a thousand years. It is rightly called the Byzantine text because Byzantium is the old name for Constantinople.

The "Egyptian" text, represented by *Codex Sinaiticus* (Ⲙ) and *Codex Vaticanus* (B), on which our modern editions of the New Testament are based, is derived from the text of Alexandria, transmitted by the Bodmer Papyrus Ⲕ<sup>64</sup> of Luke and John, and Bodmer Papyrus Ⲕ<sup>75</sup> of John, which show the fingerprints of experienced scribes, who were familiar with the *Editionstechnik* developed in Alexandria during the previous centuries for the publication of critical editions of Homer and other classics; hence, it is sometimes also called the "Alexandrian" text.

Perhaps there existed also in the Early Church a "Caesarean" text, localized in the beautiful and large city of Caesarea in Palestine, to which *Codex Koridethi* (Θ) and some families of texts written in minuscules, family 1 and 13 (*f*<sup>1</sup> and *f*<sup>13</sup>) are said to belong.

The *Vetus Syra*—with its many distinctive readings and harmonizations—originated in Mesopotamian Edessa, the centre of Aramaic Christianity.

The *Afra*—perhaps the oldest translation of the Bible into Latin—originated in Carthage, the second city of the West.

Was Rome—a literary centre, the capital of the world, a cradle of culture and literature, where a host of *grammatici* in numerous *scriptoria* copied not just classics like Vergil but also lawyers like Gaius (± 150,

the author of the important and influential *Institutiones*,<sup>8</sup> who lived in Rome)—was Rome an exception to this rule? I think not. The *codex* had recently been invented there<sup>9</sup> and enthusiastically accepted by the Christians, because a *codex* (book) was so much easier to use than a scroll when looking up a verse or confounding a heretic quoting Scripture to his purpose. The Catholics of Rome must have had their own *scriptorium*.<sup>10</sup> The pre-Marcionite text of Paul's epistles proves it; it shows all the signs of having been written by a professional scribe, with all the scribal errors, emendations and marginal glosses of a normal manuscript. And most likely it was in the form of a *codex*.

Such a *scriptorium* could also produce the "Western" text of Paul's Epistles, as it is transmitted by the bilingual manuscripts F G H, *Codex Claromontanus* (D<sup>p</sup>), and the different versions of the *Vetus Latina*. But there is also a Western Text of the four canonical gospels, contained in the copies of the Latin *Itala* and *Afra*, as well as in *Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis* (D) and the Syriac (Aramaic) Codices Sinaiticus (Syr<sup>sin</sup>) and Curetonianus (Syr<sup>cur</sup>). The text of Luke's Acts of the Apostles was so heavily edited that its Western revision amounts to a second, revised edition. Only the Apocalypse of John and the so-called Pastoral Letters of James, Peter, and John escaped the hands of Western correctors, which all must have done their work after Marcion ( $\pm$  144 C.E.), and before the end of the second century, when I suppose that all these writings must have been available. This thorough revision, which amounts almost to a second, definitive edition seems to presuppose the conscious effort of a whole school of *grammatici* to establish a complete and authoritative edition of the Holy Writings. It would seem that all these conditions were present in the Catholic Church of Rome in the second century of our era. The Catholic congregation there could easily produce an authoritative text of Holy Writ during and after the gnostic crisis. The Western Text is a post-Marcionite text. I want to stress the point that the constitution of this text-type was not only a philological, but also a *theological* achievement.

An example of this theological colouring is found in the Pastoral Letters. These were absent from the pre-Marcionite *corpus* of Paul in

<sup>8</sup> H.L. Nelson, *Ueberlieferung, Aufbau und Stil von Gai Institutiones*, Leiden 1981.

<sup>9</sup> Colin H. Roberts, *The Codex*, in: *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. 60, London 1955.

<sup>10</sup> For a different opinion, see: Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, Leiden/Grand Rapids 1987, 54.

Rome, but apparently the letters of “Paul” to Timothy and to Titus were added to the canon in this post-Marcionite, “Western Text” canon. The author of Timothy rejects heretics, who pretend that the resurrection has already taken place (2 Timothy 2:18). But this was what Valentinus (or one of his disciples?) was teaching in his *Epistle to Rheginos* on the resurrection:

...come away from the divisions and the bonds and *already thou hast the resurrection.*

—*Ep. ad Rheg.* 49.13–15

The “Paul” of 1 Timothy also warns against dissidents who forbid marriage and command abstinence from meats which God has created (1 Timothy 4:3). That was certainly a timely warning welcomed by Catholics in Rome when the Encratite Tatian (“no wine, no meat, no sex”) was present in Rome or had just left!

And what a God-sent gift for a true believer to read in his (new) “authoritative” Bible that the apostle Paul himself had warned against the oppositions (ἀντιθέσεις) of the Gnosis falsely called so (1 Tim. 6:20): remember that Marcion had just published, after 144 in Rome, his *Antitheseis* about the contradictions between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Thus Paul was “defended” against his best friends, vindicated for orthodoxy and encapsulated in Catholicism, all in and by the authors of the Western Text.

All of these features in the post-Marcionite canon of the “Western” Text answer or solve problems which were acute in Rome in the middle of the second century. The Western Text is, therefore, likely a Roman creation, because it is clearly responding to the challenges of Valentinus and Marcion and others who had such impact there in the mid-second century: this would appear to be one case where the oft-dangerous dictum *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* would seem to hold true.

The origin of the Western Text in Rome becomes more plausible when seen against the background of the grand design of Catholic Rome to throw up three dikes in order to protect the true religion:

1. an Apostolic Confession of Faith, written by the disciples of Jesus, which was once a simple baptismal creed in Rome;
2. an Apostolic Canon of inspired and authentic writings about Jesus Christ, linked with the Septuagint;
3. the Apostolic Succession of the bishops, which guaranteed the truth of tradition and a correct interpretation of the Bible.

It is necessary to say that during this period the most important decision was to link this New Testament with the Septuagint, a Hellenistic collection of Greek and originally Hebrew writings, which was neither identical with Jerome's Vulgate and its *hebraica veritas*, nor with any modern Bible. Marcion, Valentinus, and Marcellina, the female teacher of the *Gnostikoi* (a specific sect), who had come to Rome under the episcopacy of Anicetus (155–166) and had converted many Christians there (Irenaeus, *adv. haer.* 1.25.6); they all rejected the Old Testament in the form of the Septuagint.

To the three pillars above, one might add a fourth pillar to Roman Christianity: the creation of an authoritative redaction of the scriptures in the "Western" Text, a text which was specifically pointed at her opponents. Seen in this historical context, the Western Text appears to be both Roman (it answers the controversies so acute there) and Catholic (its answers/solutions are those which became "normative" in geographically western Christianity). The process of creating and introducing the "Western" Text was virtually complete about the year 200, for both Irenaeus and Tertullian have a typically "Western" Text.

#### IV. PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS

1) Marcion's non-doctrinal interventions in the text he took over from the ancient Roman Christian community were minor: he was a reformer, not a philologist. The Greek text of Luke and Paul, upon which Marcion performed his redaction, was the standard text in Rome at the time when he began his revisions (*e.g.*, circa 144, when he was excommunicated from the congregation in the capital). This text was, of course, pre-Marcionite; it was also pre-Western, and constituted before 144. It had been written down by an experienced Catholic *grammaticus*, who had, of course, his own *scriptorium*, and who made mistakes and scribal errors, like all scribes, but also opted for a better variant after having consulted another source: this scribe must have been familiar with all the methods of the classical techniques of edition, which flourished not only in Alexandria, but also in Rome.

2) It is quite possible that Tatian, when leaving Rome (*c.* 172 C.E.) after the death of Justin Martyr, took this pre-Marcionite, pre-Western text with him to the East, and used it for his great work of harmonization, the "one out of four"—the Diatessaron. This would explain why both Catholic and Manichaean authors of a later date *in the East*

seem to have had a *Corpus Paulinum* beginning with the Epistle to the Galatians and the two Epistles to the Corinthians, *as in Rome*.

As Schmid (236) has shown, there is only one testimony for this sequence in the whole Greco-Roman world: the so-called *Marcionite Prologues* to the letters of Paul, which, perhaps, are not Marcionite at all, and which certainly reflect the order of the pre-Marcionite *Corpus Paulinum* then used in Rome.

Because they may reproduce the text known in Rome before 144 C.E., variant readings in the text of Marcion should be examined very carefully. To dismiss all of them, *a priori*, as “tendentious variants” introduced by Marcion himself, is an error of the most basic sort, for it means one has failed to attempt to separate the wheat from the chaff.

3) This pre-Marcionite, pre-Western text of Rome and, consequently, the “Western Text,” which also originated in Rome, seem to have been influenced by a Judaic Christian gospel tradition transmitted by a limited number of *logia* contained in the *Gospel of Thomas* and also by gospel quotations in the Pseudo-Clementine writings.<sup>11</sup> One may think of the many Western interpolations in Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis (D), a representative of the Western Text. The most famous of them is probably Luke 6:5:

On the same day he saw a man working on the Sabbath. He said to him: “Man, if you know what you are doing, you are blessed; if you do not, you are cursed and a transgressor of the Law.”

This extremely profound summary of a truly Christian ethic presupposes that the Law is still valid. Jewish Christians, who were Law abiding, had no reason to reject it. It was probably transmitted by a Jewish Christian source.

The many Semitisms—or rather, Aramaisms—in the Western Text, which Matthew Black<sup>12</sup> identified long ago, with great learning, originality, and precision, often give one the impression that sometimes they are nearer to the source and represent a better tradition than their counterparts in the canonical gospels. Might this be because they come from the primitive, pre-Marcionite, pre-Western version of the scriptures current in Rome, pre-144?

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<sup>11</sup> K.A. Credner, *Beiträge zur Einleitung in die biblischen Schriften*, Halle 1832. G. Quispel and J. van Amersfoort, “The Gospel of Thomas and the Western Text. A Reappraisal”, in: G. Quispel, *Gnostic Studies*, Vol. 2, Istanbul 1975.

<sup>12</sup> M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, Oxford <sup>3</sup>1967.

## SUMMARY

The Catholic Church was born between 144 and 200 A.D., when the Petrine faction within the Christian congregation of Rome threw up their dikes against the local Gnostics:

- an Apostolic Creed;
- an Apostolic Canon (the Greek Septuagint and more or less the present New Testament);
- an Apostolic Succession of bishops, who alone were allowed to interpret Scripture.

To this the Catholics added the so-called Western Text, an authoritative constitution of the literal Greek wording of the New Testament, which amounted almost to a second edition.



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### NOTE SUR “BASILIDE”\*

Une épître provenant de l'école valentiniennne nous apprend: “. . . . . quand au commencement l'Autopator (= Dieu) contenait en lui même *toutes choses*, qui étaient en lui *en état d'inconscience* (ἐν ἀγνωσίᾳ) etc.” (Epiphane, *Panarion* 31,5, p. 390 Holl).

Il semble qu'on retrouve une conception semblable chez Marc le Gnostique: “Quand au commencement le Père. . . . . *qui est dépourvu de conscience* (ἀνευνόητος) et de substance, celui qui est ni masculin ni féminin, voulait etc.” (Hippolyte, *Refutatio* VI, 42,4, p. 174 (Wendland).

Il est possible que la description fameuse de Dieu avant la création du monde, qui serait de la main de Basilide, ne soit qu'une amplification de la même idée de Dieu.

L'auteur dit:

Or, quand il n'existait rien, ni matière, ni substance, ni ce qui est dépourvu de substance, ni ce qui est simple, ni ce qui est composé, ni ce qui est perceptible (αἰσθητόν selon la conjecture de Jacobi), ni ce qui est imperceptible, ni homme, ni ange, ni dieu, ni en général rien de ce qui peut être nommé ou aperçu par les sens ou être compris par l'intelligence, mais quand *toutes choses* étaient ainsi et d'une façon encore plus subtile simplement *désignées* (περιγεγραμμένων), le Dieu n'existait. . . . . a voulu créer le monde ἀνοήτως, ἀναισθητήτως, sans volonté, sans intention, sans passion (Hippolyte, *Refutatio* VII, 21, p. 196 Wendland).

Or il est très remarquable que l'auteur du neuvième traité hermétique combat l'opinion de ceux qui par un excès de révérence supposent que Dieu est ἀναίσθητος et ἀνόητος (*Corpus Hermeticum* IX, 9, p. 100, l. 3 et 4 Nock). On pourrait rendre ces deux mots par “inconscient”, parce que αἴσθησις a les deux sens de perception sensible et de perception intellectuelle et équivaut au terme général de “conscience” (voir la note 4 au p. 34 du commentaire admirable du Père Festugière sur les écrits hermétiques). Il est donc possible que “Basilide” ait voulu dire que Dieu a créé le monde inconsciemment et qu'il ait supposé, de même

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\* Previously published in *Vigiliae Christianae* 2 (1948) 115–116.



que l'écrivain de l'épître valentinienne, qu'avant la création du monde toutes les choses reposaient en Dieu en état d'inconscience.

Si cette interprétation est correcte, elle nous aidera peut-être à expliquer un passage assez obscure du même "Basilide". Quand cet auteur a décrit comment les deux *υιότητες* spirituelles se sont séparées d'avec le chaos primitif, produit par Dieu, et se sont élancées vers le haut, il déclare: *σπεύδει γὰρ... πάντα κάτωθεν ἄνω, ἀπὸ τῶν χειρόνων ἐπὶ τὰ κρείττονα· οὐδὲν δὲ οὕτως ἀνόητόν ἐστι τῶν <ἐν> τοῖς κρείττοσιν, ἵνα μὴ κατέλθῃ κάτω* (Hippolyte, *Refutatio* VII, 22, p. 200 Wendland). On a voulu corriger ce texte. Bunsen propose: *ἀκίνητον* au lieu de *ἀνόητον*, Wendland préfère: *ἀκοινώνητον*. Ne pourrait on pas, en renvoyant à ce qui précède, conserver le texte transmis et traduire simplement: "Car toutes choses s'empressent d'en bas vers le haut, du monde inférieur vers le monde supérieur. Et aucune des choses dans le monde supérieur n'est tellement inconsciente (en Dieu) qu'elle n'est pas descendue vers le bas"? J'admets qu'on pourrait traduire aussi: "Et aucune des choses dans le monde supérieur est à tel point au delà de la conscience (humaine) qu'elle n'est pas descendue vers le bas." Mais les choses spirituelles n'étant pas inconnaissables d'après les Basilidiens, qui croient avoir reçu la *γῶσις τῶν ὑπερκοσμίων*, (Hippolyte, *Refutatio* VII, 27, p. 207 l. 5 Wendland), j'hésiterais à accepter cette explication.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

In 1948 I wrote this short article in our review *Vigiliae Christianae* and submitted an offprint of it to Dr Carl Gustav Jung. Thereupon he published the only essay on Gnosticism he ever wrote: "Gnostic Symbols of the Self," *Collected Works* 9, 287–346, reprinted in Robert A. Segal, *The Gnostic Jung*, Princeton 1992.

In this study Jung quotes the passage from the Valentinian Marc the Magus that God is unconscious (*ἀνευνόητος*) and states that this godhead symbolizes the unconscious in its primordial, undifferentiated state; the lower demiurge symbolizes the ego, which thinks that there is nothing beyond it; the Anthropos, identified with Christ, is a symbol of the Self. Jung hastens to admit that these images have always in all religions expressed the universal Ground of Being, the Deity itself, about whom, however, psychology cannot affirm anything.

The theoretical physicist Wolfgang Pauli picked up the Greek word and identified the underlying concept with the unconscious Will of Schopenhauer. For Pauli this was an adequate image of God.

Recently, Winrich A. Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule*, Tübingen 1996, has denied that Hippolytus transmits the authentic doctrine of Basilides (130 Alexandria), whose fragments prove him to be a talented thinker ("Not being God brought forth not being world out of nothing", Hippolytus). It is, however, implausible that an anonymous disciple thought out such a brilliant idea.



## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### ORIGEN AND THE VALENTINIAN GNOSIS\*

Roughly speaking we can divide research on Origen into three stages.

1) Eugène de Faye, Hal Koch and others stressed the philosophical aspects of Origen's teaching and studied his relation to Greek *philosophy*.<sup>1</sup> These books were valuable, even if at a later date the specific relevance of Middle Platonism was underlined.

2) The catholic renewal after the last world war led to the discovery of Origen *a churchman*. Excellent books of Henri de Lubac, Henri Crouzel and so many other prominent scholars showed that Origen was primarily not a philosopher, but a theologian, whose source of revelation was the Bible.<sup>2</sup> The *Dialogue with Heraclides*, found at Toura, confirmed this view, because it portrayed Origen as an ecclesiastical "troubleshooter". To this new and enthusiastic approach we owe a renewed awareness of the impact of Origen's exegesis on the tradition of the Church, and even of the reformed churches.<sup>3</sup> But perhaps adherents of this school have sometimes gone too far in their zeal to vindicate the basic orthodoxy of the Alexandrian doctor.

3) If I am not mistaken, a new stage has already begun, which pays full attention to Origen in so far as he is a *Gnostic*. This is not to say that this aspect was always and completely neglected in former studies. Hans Jonas was so impressed by the affinities of Plotinus, Origen and Valentinus that he considered all three of them to be Gnostics.<sup>4</sup> But his concept of Gnosis was so vague that under his definition everything written between 0 and 500 A.D. could be labeled Gnostic. Much more cautious was the approach of Jean Cardinal Daniélou in his "Origène". There he showed in detail how Origen was influenced at certain points

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\* Previously published in *Vigiliae Christianae* 28 (1974) 29–42.

<sup>1</sup> E. de Faye, *Origène, sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée*, I–III, Paris 1923–1928. Hal Koch, *Pronoia und Paideusis*, Berlin und Leipzig 1932.

<sup>2</sup> H. de Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit*, Paris 1950. H. Crouzel, *Origène et la "connaissance mystique"*, Desclée de Brouwer, 1960.

<sup>3</sup> Izaak Boot, *The allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs, especially in the Netherlands* (in Dutch), diss. Utrecht 1971, Woerden 1971.

<sup>4</sup> H. Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, II, 1, Göttingen 1954, 171–223.

by the strange “vertical” exegesis of men like Heracleon, a pupil of Valentinus.<sup>5</sup> Moreover he distinguished between typology, of Jewish origin, presupposing a history of salvation with an aim and purpose and therefore strictly “horizontal”, and allegory which interprets details of the sacred text as allusions to pleromatic “happenings”. Even when he found himself under fire, his Eminence maintained his positions, thus paving the way for a more gnostic interpretation of Origen.

As a matter of fact I do believe that even in his exegesis Origen is much more a Gnostic than a Platonist. For in his spiritual world all kinds of happenings do take place, whereas among Plato’s ideas nothing happens at all. Nor should we say that such a “vertical” exegesis is necessarily Greek, because the Stoics too gave allegorical interpretations of Greek mythology. The later Jewish Cabbalists gave a very similar interpretation of the Old Testament. More than alien influences it is a certain Gnostic mentality which produces these hermeneutics.

Even if the above mentioned scholars met with stubborn opposition, we must follow the road they indicated. Origen has been studied as an isolated case, but from now on he should be studied in relationship to his intellectual and theological environment. We can and must do this from now on, because so many new texts have been discovered, which elucidate his Alexandrian background. In the first place there are the Bodmer Papyri, especially Papyrus 75, with the text of Luke and John (about 200 A.D.).<sup>6</sup> This is an excellent, scholarly text, anticipating the fourth century codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, made by competent philologists, who learned their job from the traditional Alexandrian pagan text critics. These texts reveal to us the existence of a circle of Hellenistic, but “Catholic” intellectuals in Alexandria before Clement and Origen, who had a certain predelection for Atticisms and identified the Christian agapè with the Platonic eros (the Egyptian text, represented by Clement, Pap. 46 c and Vaticanus reads 1 Cor. 13, 5: (ἡ ἀγάπη) οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ μὴ ἑαυτῆς, love does not seek *but* itself). That is self realisation, not unselfish love.

This, I guess, was the intellectual climate of Origen’s father Leonides. It has now been shown by Michael Mees that Clement of Alexandria had already this pure, scholarly text before him: whatever deviates in his works from this Egyptian text, should be ascribed to the free,

<sup>5</sup> Jean Daniélou, *Origène*, Paris 1948, 190–198.

<sup>6</sup> V. Martin-R. Kasser, *Papyrus Bodmer XIV–XV*, 1–2, Coligny 1961.

extracanonical Gospel tradition of Jewish Christian origins which was current at this time in the Alexandrian congregation.<sup>7</sup> This fact seems to show that there were Jewish Christians in Alexandria, probably from the very beginning. Manfred Hornschuh has pointed out that Alexandrian Christianity has Jewish Christian origins.<sup>8</sup> This is relevant for our subject, because Origen knows Christians who think that God is a body.<sup>9</sup> It would be rash to dismiss this concept as the naive fancy of simple believers. The same is found in the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* (17, 7); and Jewish mystics of the time were familiar with the theme of the measuring of the body (of God). This was mainly a reaction against the abstract concept of God in Greek philosophy, which menaced the Jewish identity. In face of this both Jewish mystics and Jewish Christians used the most bold and provocative formulas to express their faith in a living personal God.<sup>10</sup>

Origen is very much opposed to this "Judaizing" literalism. And in this respect he agrees with the Gnostics against the Jewish Christians.

Other discoveries reveal the great pluriformity of Alexandrian Christianity before Clement and Origen. The codices of Nag Hammadi now turn out to contain not only gnostic books, but also writings which must be considered as pre- or definitely non-gnostic. Among them the first place must be attributed to the text "Bronté", "Whole Mind", recently edited by Martin Krause.<sup>11</sup> This book shows no signs of Christian influence and might have been written in Jewish Alexandrian circles in the first century *before* Christ. Here Sophia reveals herself, using again and again the introductory formula "Ego eimi". This must have been inspired by the same device in the Isis inscription of Heliopolis, known through several copies found in the Hellenistic world.<sup>12</sup> It would seem that in Alexandria at least some Jewish circles were open to the warm mother religions of the Near East like that of the mysteries of Isis, and integrated some of its colours into their concept of divine, hypostatic Wisdom.

<sup>7</sup> M. Mees, *Die Zitate aus dem Neuen Testament bei Clemens von Alexandrien*, Bari 1970.

<sup>8</sup> Manfred Hornschuh, *Studien zur Epistula Apostolorum*, Berlin 1965.

<sup>9</sup> *De princ.* I, 1, 1 (Koetschau 16): scio quoniam conabuntur quidam etiam secundum scripturas nostras dicere deum corpus esse.

<sup>10</sup> Gershom Scholem, *Von der mystischen Gestalt der Gottheit*, Zürich 1962, 1-47.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Krause-Pahor Labib, *Gnostische und Hermetische Schriften aus Codex II und Codex VI*, Glückstadt 1971, 122-132.

<sup>12</sup> J. Bergmann, *Ich bin Isis. Studien zum memphitischen Hintergrund der griechischen Isisarealogien*, Uppsala 1968.

Wisdom, who here styles herself as Logos, and as “the Wisdom of the Greeks and the Gnosis of the Barbarians”, in her numinous paradoxes even dares to call herself the Saint and the Prostitute: “I am the saint (σεμνή) and the whore (πόρνη) (p. 122, l. 18). We understand then how it came that Simon the Magician could say that his Helen, who was also Sophia, had been a prostitute in a brothel in Tyre. We also see that the view of the *Apocryphon of John*, according to which Sophia fell owing to her libido (προύνικον), is traditional. All this was already there in Alexandria before the arrival of Christianity.

Among the manuscripts of Nag Hammadi some fragments of the *Sentences of Sextus* have been identified. Owing to the excellent edition of Henri Chadwick we now know that the author of this writing, who possibly lived in Alexandria some time before Clement and Origen, integrated Greek philosophical sayings into his collection, and must be considered as an Catholic Christian with encratitic leanings.<sup>13</sup> This leads us to the problem of Encratism within the Alexandrian church. Clement in the third book of his *Stromateis* is engaging in polemics against Tatian, Julius Cassianus and the local Encratites of Alexandria. This, however, does not imply that the Encratites had already been expelled from the Church then and formed a separate sect in Alexandria. Certainly this Encratism had very deep roots in Alexandrian soil: the concept of the *Gospel according to the Egyptians* that the “two must be made one” has its antecedents in Philo and in Platonic philosophy. Originally Encratism must have been an indigenous form of Christianity in Egypt, strongly Hellenised and to be distinguished from Gnosticism.<sup>14</sup>

The most famous text of Nag Hammadi, the *Gospel of Thomas*, is, as I see it, not Gnostic in origin, but encratitic. The text must have been composed in Edessa for several reasons, amongst which the use of the special term “monachos”, an equivalent of the Syriac “ihidaja”, bachelor, which is not found in any Egyptian text of the time. Greek fragments of the work have been found at Oxyrrhynchus, which should be dated in the first half of the third century. This would mean then that encratitic views of the *Gospel of Thomas* were known in Alexandria at a very early date and had found an echo there.

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<sup>13</sup> H. Chadwick, *The Sentences of Sextus. A Contribution to the History of Early Christian Ethics*, Cambridge 1959.

<sup>14</sup> G. Quispel, *Makarius, das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle*, Leiden 1967, 82 sqq.

The *Teachings of Silvanus*, also found at Nag Hammadi, contain nothing that is specifically gnostic. It is suggested that this book was written in Alexandria in the course of the second century.<sup>15</sup> It proclaims an enlightened, hellenistic Christianity, tinged with Stoic and Platonic lore. Thus it shows that a philosophical interpretation of the Christian religion was already to be found in Alexandria before Clement and Origen.

All this shows us that Egyptian Christianity in the second and third century was very open and was characterised by a pluriformity of currents within the one Church. Did it include also the various schools of Gnosticism?

There is no evidence whatsoever to show that Basilides and Valentinus, both of whom taught in Alexandria, had ever been expelled from the local Church during their lifetime. This is astonishing, because both taught the distinction between the demiurge and the highest God. It would seem that both were familiar with an already existing gnostic myth, very similar to the primitive form of the *Apocryphon of John*, which they christianised. The original doctrines of Basilides and of Valentinus, which can be reconstructed with some confidence, are christocentric and agree to teach that Christ awakens the unconscious Self in man. But this basic intuition was expressed in myths which in our eyes are very different from the biblical views. Nevertheless we are never told that they were expelled from the Egyptian Church. Nor do we know at what date this happened to their followers. As long as we compare Origen with Valentinus, it is clear that their systems are very different indeed. For Valentinus salvation is the result of a dialectical process, for Origen the will of man is the basic intuition of his philosophy. But if we take into account that within the school of Valentinus a certain evolution has taken place, the problem does not admit of such a clear-cut solution anymore. There has been a way from Valentinus to Heracleon, and from Heracleon to Origen. The transition is much more gradual than a phenomenological comparison can discern.

The school of Valentinus had split into an Oriental section, to which Theodotus belonged, and a Western or Italian branch, headed by Ptolemy and Heracleon. Whereas the Eastern school remained remarkably faithful to the teachings of the master, the Western school introduced

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<sup>15</sup> J. Zandee, "Die Lehren des Silvanus. Stoischer Rationalismus und Christentum im Zeitalter der frühkatholischen Kirche", in: M. Krause, *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in honour of Alexander Böhlig*, Leiden 1972, 144–155.



many new elements into the primitive system. Although the views of Heracleon were not identical with those of Ptolemy (in fact they differed more than earlier scholars supposed) these great doctors had a basic tendency in common.

They had a greater sympathy than Valentinus for the Catholic church, or as they would have said in their very efficient technical terminology, they had a higher appreciation of the psychic element.<sup>16</sup> Therefore they held that Catholics, ordinary churchgoers who lived by faith without Gnosis, could be saved too. Of course this is completely against the logic of the system, according to which the *spirit* that got lost in matter and thus caused a split within the deity, has to return to its origin in order to restore the balance of the Pleroma. At the cost of consistency Ptolemy and Heracleon taught that the “psychics”, if they had done good works, would live on ever after at the entrance of the Pleroma. In accordance with this principle they taught that Christ had not only a human *spirit* (as Valentinus did) but also a *soul* and a psychic *body*. Whereas Valentinus had stressed that the demiurge was the origin of death, Ptolemy was of the opinion that the demiurge was not evil, but just. We only have to read Ptolemy’s *Letter to Flora*, on the relative value of the Old Testament Law, to see to what extent he, and Heracleon, were approaching the catholic positions. The works of Valentinus, Theodotus and Ptolemy were known to Clement of Alexandria. Origen had the commentary of Heracleon on the fourth gospel at his disposal. We must assume that representatives of the Eastern and the Western, Italian school of Valentinianism were present in Alexandria at that time. Even more important is that both Alexandrians must have been familiar with their opponent’s concept of the Church, consisting of both pneumatics and psychics. This view of Ptolemy and Heracleon anticipated to a large extent the concept of Origen, according to which the Church was primarily a “community” of true Gnostics with an appendix consisting of the faithful. The agreement will be clearer if we remember that according to Saint Paul *all* Christians were pneumatics.

The agreements between Heracleon and Origen would be still more numerous, if we could attribute with certainty the last writing of the Jung Codex to Heracleon himself. This contains an authentic description of a gnostic system, starting with the origin of the Pleroma in God,

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<sup>16</sup> Manlio Simonetti, “Psyché e psychikos nella Gnosi valentiniana”, *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 2, 1966, 1–47.

telling about the fall of one of the Eons, which puts into movement the world process, describing the coming of Christ to save both the pneumatics and the psychics and ending with a picture of the final consummation. When the Jung Codex was discovered, on May 10th 1952, the editors H.-Ch. Puech and G. Quispel, basing themselves upon part of the material (the rest turned out to be in the Coptic Museum in Cairo), have given their reasons for supposing that this very profound and very difficult work had been written by Heracleon.<sup>17</sup> Can this provisional hypothesis be maintained after so many years, now that the book is known almost completely and has been published in part?<sup>18</sup>

Let me be clear. I do not for a moment believe that this so-called *Tractatus Tripartitus* consists of three different treatises, to be distinguished by differences in choice of words and in style. The text most clearly is a unity, like the Valentinian source in the first book of Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses*. Nor would this hypothesis have been propounded, if its author would have known, that there has been an author named Irenaeus whose works contain valuable information about the Valentinian Gnosis.<sup>19</sup> Nor would I be ready to discuss the possibility that Valentinus himself wrote these treatises. It is only too clear that this writing originates in the Italian school of Valentinianism, which differed considerably from the founder. And I do not think it necessary to expound that Irenaeus' sources reflect the views of Ptolemy and his pupils and simply are *not identical* with the newly found book, though they contain a striking parallel to it. Such dilettantic errors we can dismiss without much ado.

However, the problem is that this extremely difficult book can be read in different ways. There are many contacts with the views of Heracleon, and sometimes with Heracleon only. On the other hand there are also differences. More disturbing is the fact that the *Tractatus Tripartitus* sometimes contains doctrines and concepts different from those of Ptolemy: until now we believed that the systems of Ptolemy and of Heracleon were virtually identical. That the writing reflects the views of the Western School of Valentinianism and more specifically those of

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<sup>17</sup> H.-Ch. Puech and G. Quispel, "Le quatrième écrit gnostique du Codex Jung", *Vigiliae Christianae* IX, 1955, 65–102.

<sup>18</sup> *Tractatus Tripartitus*, Pars I, Francke Verlag, Bern 1973. Pars II et III, Francke Verlag, Bern 1975.

<sup>19</sup> R. Kasser, "Les subdivisions du *Tractatus Tripartitus*", *Le Muséon* LXXXII, 1–2, Louvain 1969, 101–121.

the school of Heracleon, is completely clear. Future critics may decide whether the authorship of Heracleon can still be maintained. For the moment (1974) we provisionally accept this hypothesis and speak in the following text about Heracleon, where the author of the fourth treatise of the Jung Codex is meant. I now (2002), however, admit, that the author of the *Tractatus Tripartitus* is not Heracleon, but one of his pupils: 1) he admits that we psychics (Catholics) may enter the eternal bliss of the Pleroma; 2) the erotic and mythological imagery, which Heracleon maintained, has been completely eliminated (see my article “The Original Doctrine of Valentinus the Gnostic” in Van den Broek and Van Heertum, *From Poimandres to Jacob Boehme*, Amsterdam 2002, 145–232). In my commentary I have given several examples of how near this writing comes to Origen. From these I choose a few items now, which are essential: 1) the eternal generation of the Son; 2) free will as the cause of the Fall; 3) Pronoia and Paideusis.

### 1. THE TRINITY

Valentinus seems to have taught that the Ground of being is a *quaternio*. Irenaeus (I, 1, 1) puts it in the following way:

They say that in invisible and unutterable heights a perfect aion was preexisting. Him they call ‘Un-ground’ (proarchè) and ‘Fore-father’ (propatōr) and Depth. . . . With Him was Idea, whom they also call Grace and Silence. And once this Depth conceived of the idea to bring forth the origin of all. This emanation, which he thought to bring forth, was like a sperma. And this he laid down as in a womb in Silence who was with Him. And she, conceiving the seed and having become pregnant, gave birth to Nous and Alètheia. From these emanated the other eons of the Pleroma. This is the first and original Pythagorean tetraktus, which they also call *root of all*.

Valentinus seems to follow here the pattern of the myth contained in the *Apocryphon of John*, according to which Barbelo, the female companion of God, is “the womb (mètra) of the all” and the (androgynous) Father-Mother (Mètropatōr).<sup>20</sup>

The imagery is incredibly crude. If Gnosis strives after vision, then certainly that of Valentinus is the most shameless vision recorded in the history of mankind. Nothing of the kind is to be found in the

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<sup>20</sup> S. Giversen, *Apocryphon Johannis*, Copenhagen 1963, 53, 5.

treatise of "Heracleon". The Ground of being is God, a personal God notwithstanding all negative predicates. "Heracleon" and Origen have in common that their concept of God remains strictly personal, even if they use the Platonic categories to express His transcendence. Because God is Father in the real sense of the word, he is the eternal Father of the eternal Son. From their mutual love a third hypostasis is born, enigmatically called Ekklesia. But from the *Pastor of Hermas* we know that the Holy Ghost is sometimes revealing itself in the shape of the Ekklesia (*Sim. IX, 1, 1*). Therefore we may say that "Heracleon" teaches an ontological and eternal Trinity. We see then that the catholicising tendencies in the Western school of Valentinianism went as far as to replace the *tetras* by a *trias*. But this also means that the Gnosis of this school was much nearer to Origen than the original doctrine of Valentinus. Whereas it was usual to oppose the ideas of Origen to those of the Gnostics, we now see that in the second half of the second century the transitions had become so gradual as to become almost unperceptible.

In this perspective Origen is a consummation of gnostic developments. Just as Valentinus christianised a non-christian gnostic system, so "Heracleon" catholicised Valentinus and Origen in his turn "Heracleon".

It certainly will be objected that this vantage point does not explain the whole Origen, who also was a churchman opposed to heresy. This is certainly true. But my vantage point certainly helps to understand better the system of Origen, which has an even greater affinity with Valentinian Gnosis than could be established before the discovery of the Jung Codex.

## 2. THE FALL

From a psychological point of view the Valentinian myth of the Fall is extremely profound. Whereas in the *Apocryphon of John* the Fall is due to *libido* (*prounikon*), Valentinus ascribes it to the *hybris* (*tolma*) of Sophia, who desires to penetrate into the eternal mystery of God. This reflects the situation of spiritual man on earth who should not seek the "unio mystica" as long as he is immature, but who must expect the revelation which will come in Gods time. There is no instant nirwana, no short cut to Gnosis.

The story is even more impressive, if we see it in the light of the philosophy of that time. Posidonius had discovered the principle of wholeness: a being has its essence and function in an organic and corporate whole. Such a “holon” is the Pleroma. The *tolma* of Sophia is the desire to isolate herself from this whole body and to act on her own. This means that the *principium individuationis* leads to the fall.

It was thus that Plotinus understood the myth. And he accepted it during a certain period of his career. According to him the fall of the soul is due to the *tolma*, the hybridic desire to be an isolated self.<sup>21</sup>

There is however another aspect, which gets lost when we demythologize and actualize too fervently and do not take the manner of thinking of the Gnostics as seriously as it deserves. According to Valentinus the longing for God started among the eons around Nous and Alètheia, like a sort of “focal infection”, which became an abscess and burst out in Sophia, “*ut solent vitia in corpore alibi connata in aliud membrum perniciem suam efflare*” (Tertullian, *Adv. Valent.* 9). This then means that evil is the result of a process, a moment in the “explication” or “explicitation” of the Divinity into its different aspects. For Valentinus held that the eons were “*sensus et affectus, motus*” within the Godhead itself (*Adv. Val.* 4). Evil then is a by-product of evolution and emanation, as in Jewish mysticism and German idealism.

Tertullian tells us that Ptolemy, one of the leaders of the Western school, had changed the views of Valentinus: for him the eons were “*personales substantiae, sed extra deum determinatae*” (*Adv. Val.* 4). Until now, we had no evidence to confirm this report. For in the documents from Ptolemy and his school there is no certain indication that this distinction was made. Nevertheless the statement of Tertullian must contain some truth. For in the *Tractatus Tripartitus* this tragic concept is completely absent.

There the eons have a free will (69, 26). More important still, also Sophia, the last eon, here called Logos, has a free will. And this “autexousion” was for Sophia the cause that she did what she willed, without anything restraining her (75, 35–76, 2). This, of course, is in strong agreement with the teaching of Origen, according to whom the free will of one spiritual being, who was followed by all others but

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<sup>21</sup> Plotinus, *Enneades* IV, 7 (2) 13, 11; V, 1 (10) 1, 4; E.R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, Cambridge 1965, 24.

one, was the origin of the Fall and of the subsequent creation of the world.

It could be objected that among the many Middle Platonists who thought or did not think about the fall of the soul from its celestial realm, there was one, Albinos, who according to Iamblichus said that the soul fell because of its "autexousion".<sup>22</sup> Moreover it could be supposed that this concept influenced both "Heracleon" and Origen.

But even if it could be established that both "Heracleon" and Origen knew Albinos, this answer would be very unsatisfactory. For Albinos this question was so unimportant that he did not mention it at all in his *Didaskalikos*. Moreover Albinos was not familiar with the concept of a Pleroma consisting of eons or the related concept of a realm of spirits. Such a stress on Greek influence would obscure the real issue of what was happening here.

When one attributes the fall to free will, one has solved the problem "*unde malum*" in a very specific way. Evil then becomes a sin or the consequence of sin, for which ultimately man is responsible. It has always been assumed that Origen made the "autexousion", the free will, the leading idea of his system in opposition to the gnostic concept of automatic salvation for the few. It now transpires that there was a precedent for this in Gnosticism. It may even be that Origen took this idea from "Heracleon". For if the idea of free will was widespread in Hellenistic and Christian circles, the specific view that the worldprocess is due to the free decision of one spiritual being in the beyond cannot be attested elsewhere than in Origen and the *Tractatus Tripartitus* of the Codex Jung. Here evil is no longer a by-product of evolution, but due to a contingent decision of a spiritual being. It is true that this is only one side of the coin. The author of the new treatise seems also to have known a sort of "*felix culpa*". According to him it is not fitting to accuse the movement of the Logos, because this movement is the cause for the "dispensation" which was destined to come about, in other words this passion of Sophia was instrumental in bringing about the world process (77, 6–11). It was not without the will of God that Sophia had been engendered, nor without Him that she went forth to penetrate into his Being, but on the contrary God had brought her forth in order that, through her intermediary, those would come into being of whom

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<sup>22</sup> Stobaeus 1, 375; P. Kübel, *Schuld und Schicksal bei Origenes, Gnostikern und Platonikern*, Stuttgart 1973, 20.

He knew beforehand that they would have to come into being (76, 23–30). It would seem then that “Heracleon” has combined free will with a strictly supralapsarian point of view.

### 3. PRONOIA AND PAIDEUSIS

In the new treatise the importance of the demiurge is minimal. This is astonishing if we remember the intense hate in the *Apocryphon of John* against Jaldabaoth, curious mixture of Aiōn, Zervan and Jahweh. Nor is this animosity alien to the other Valentinian sources: in the *Gospel of Truth* the demiurge seems to have been identified with *planè*, the Error which kills Christ (18, 24). In the *Tractatus Tripartitus* Sophia-Logos uses the demiurge as her hand, through which she creates the visible world, and as her mouth, through which the prophesies are spoken (100, 30–35). Behind the scene it is Sophia who directs the universe and the universal history towards the coming of Christ.

Mankind is said to have gone through the Inferno of materialism, its hylic or Hellenic phase, and through the Purgatorio of religion and ethics, its psychic or Jewish phase, before the decisive pneumatic phase of Gnosis and freedom was inaugurated by Christ.

All this is held to have been necessary. Soul and matter are necessary to form the spirit: “They came into being on behalf of those who needed education and instruction and formation, in order that the smallness should receive growth, little by little, as by means of a reflected image” (104, 20–25).

It is even said that evil and death are part of this grandiose plan of education, because they lead to eternal life. This too has been predestined by the providence of Wisdom.

The Spirit has appointed this (short time of death), when he considered in the beginning, that man should receive this greatest experience of what is evil, which is death, which is ignorance concerning the end of all things, in order that he, after he had received the experience of all bad things, which originate from this and after the losses which originated from these things, and everything which is bad, should participate in the highest good, which is eternal life (107, 26–108, 2).

In this the history of mankind repeats the history of the Pleroma. God is said to be the cause of ignorance as well as of Gnosis. He wants the cons to come to the experience of ignorance and its pains: “they should taste evil and should train themselves in it” (126, 6–34).

Henri-Charles Puech spoke about the absolute optimism of the author of this writing. How far are we here from the tragic experiences of other Gnostics, from their abhorrence of evil and their certainty that God is not the originator of evil. Everything is good here, everything is predestined and predetermined, *tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes possibles*.

Such optimism can also be found in Origen. This shows that the latter's roseate views are not strictly personal. More specifically Hal Koch has shown that *Pronoia* and *Paideusis* were the key words of Origen's system. Koch thought he could show the origin of this concept in the philosophy of the time. We may ask whether such an interpretation does justice to the importance of the subject. Recently Wolf-Dieter Hauschild has shown that the concept of formation by the Spirit has Jewish and pre-Christian origins. Already in the Dead Sea Scrolls we find that the Spirit of God forms the spirit of man. This tradition was taken over by various Christians. So Tatian can say that the Spirit saves the soul, thus making of the Holy Spirit a second Saviour. The Valentinians elaborated the same tradition: according to them the Grace of the Spirit gave the formation of Gnosis to the spirit of man, who thus became consciously what he was already, a pneumatic. Origen also knows the tradition of the formation by the Spirit. He engages in polemics against the Valentinian idea, that the pneumatic is saved by nature, but also according to him through the formation of the Spirit the pneumatic is not a "new man", but becomes what he originally was, pneumatic.<sup>23</sup> Both concepts are very much akin. To a certain extent Origen may have been influenced by Valentinianism. If we admit, as we ought to do, that the history of Valentinianism is an important part of the history of dogmas, the old thesis of Hellenisation of Franz Overbeck and Adolf von Harnack loses much of its force.

This is not to say that all influence of Greek philosophy is to be excluded. Especially the Hellenic concept of *Paideia* could be integrated easily both by Valentinus and Origen, once they admitted the Jewish idea that the Spirit forms the spirit. But nowhere in Greek sources, not even those of Middle Platonism, we find a systematic philosophy of history comparable to that of "Heracleon". When we study this

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<sup>23</sup> Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, *Gottes Geist und der Mensch*, München 1972, 126.



alongside the system of Origen, we must admit that Origen is much nearer to Gnosis than to philosophy.

This leads us to the last question: what, then, is the essential difference between “Heracleon” and Origen? In my article on the concept of man in the Valentinian Gnosis, published in 1948, I defended the thesis that the Gnosis of Valentinus was not primarily a philosophy of identity, but a theology of grace and predestination.<sup>24</sup> In this context I quoted Tertullian who expressly said that spirit according to the Valentinians is not a part of human nature but a gift of Grace.<sup>25</sup> This means that the experience of Grace led the pneumatic to the discovery that he was an elect and had a spirit sleeping unconsciously in him. The experience of grace was primary: its rationalisation into a theology of predestination and the ontologisation of the spirit were secondary.

In *De principiis* III, 1, 15 (Koetschau p. 222), Origen, discussing the well-known passage in the prophet Ezekiel (11, 19–21) about “the hearts of stone” and the “hearts of flesh”, says the following:

And if we do not do something in order that we get “the heart of flesh”, but if this is the work of God (alone), it will not be our work to lead a virtuous life, but exclusively divine grace (πάντη θεία χάρις).

I am in no doubt that the views here refuted were held by the Valentinians. It was they who proclaimed the “sola gratia”. And Origen denies this.

Now nobody will doubt that the Valentinian system, derived as it was from a non-Christian Gnosis like that contained in the *Apocryphon of John*, was not adequate to express this basic intuition. But my point is that Origen, out of sheer opposition to the Gnostics, did not find a solution that is more acceptable to Christian theologians. This becomes exceedingly clear, when we see which consequences this doctrine has in eschatology.<sup>26</sup>

Origen denies the second coming. He rejects the belief that Christ will come back on earth to found here his Kingdom. He directs himself against some Christians who believe that in the end “their” city Jerusalem will be rebuilt (*De princ.* II, 11, 2; Koetschau p. 184). This

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<sup>24</sup> G. Quispel, “La conception de l’homme dans la Gnose Valentinienne”, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1947, Zürich 1948, 249–286.

<sup>25</sup> Tertullian, *Adv. Valentinianos* 29 (Kroymann III, 205): spiritalium ex Seth de obvenientia superducunt iam non naturam sed indulgentiam, ut quod Achamoth de superioribus in animas bonas depluat.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Kübel, *o.c.*, 100.

seems to imply that his opponents here were Jewish Christians, who had preserved the millennialist views of their ancestors. Origen rejects this concrete eschatology just like the Valentinians. His own solution seems to be, that the bodiless spirits return to their original equality.<sup>27</sup> This also comes very near to the Valentinian concept.

With this difference, that even in the eschatological situation the spirits preserve their freedom. This principle of needs leads to the view, more Indian than Gnostic or Christian, that again and again a new world process will start and that one world will succeed the other without end. Valentinian Gnosis, for all its eccentricities, had preserved the idea that *time* must have a stop. The concept of free will led Origen to the opposite idea.

The basic issue between the oldest schools of Christian theology was about grace and free will, a debate, which was to be continued throughout the millennia.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

Whatever the differences between Origen and Gnosticism, he has in common with men like Valentinus and Basilides, and even with the vulgar Gnosis of the Gnostikoi who produced the Apocryphon of John and even the bewildering Paraphrasis of Sheem (also found near Nag Hammadi) that he felt the urge, even the obsession, to build a system.<sup>28</sup> Origenes was the first systematic theologian and found reasonable concepts in the imaginative symbols of the Bible. Now the Bible is not systematic but pluriform.

Systematic theologians may be fascinating and maybe Origen was the most sympathetic and talented of them all, but perhaps they were busy building castles in Spain.

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<sup>27</sup> E.H. Kettler, *Der ursprüngliche Sinn der Dogmatik des Origenes*, Berlin 1966, 25.

<sup>28</sup> Plato did not build a system, he wrote essays. No ancient Greek philosopher did with the exception of Plotinus (± 250 A.D.), who may have been influenced by Gnosticism.



## CHAPTER TWENTY

### SAINT AUGUSTIN ET L'ÉVANGILE SELON THOMAS\*

C'est M. H.-Ch. Puech qui a identifié l'Évangile selon Thomas trouvé à Nag Hammadi, puisqu'il a établi que les "Dits de Jésus" trouvés à Oxyrrhynchus (Pap. Ox. 1, 654, 655) étaient une partie de la version grecque de cet écrit. En outre il a été le premier à suggérer que cet apocryphe fut rédigé à Edesse et que Mani lui-même doit l'avoir connu, comme le démontre le début de son *Epistula Fundamenti*.

Cette dernière constatation nous a amené à nous demander si saint Augustin lui aussi n'était pas familier avec l'Évangile selon Thomas. L'hypothèse en soi n'est pas improbable. Le grand docteur africain a été manichéen pendant une longue et importante période de sa vie. Il est probable que les manichéens d'Occident ont traduit cet apocryphe, comme tant d'autres, en latin. Enfin il semble certain que les manichéens de l'Afrique du Nord, et saint Augustin lui-même, ont utilisé une version latine du *Diatessaron* de Tatien telle qu'elle était connue de Mani lui-même et ses disciples orientaux.<sup>1</sup> Mais si l'hypothèse n'est pas improbable, il faut toujours la prouver. Or je crois avoir trouvé un passage chez saint Augustin qui pourrait indiquer qu'il a bien connu l'apocryphe aujourd'hui si fameux. En effet il écrit, *De sermone domini in monte*, II, 17: *sed si in caelis tamquam in superioribus mundi partibus locum dei esse creditur, melioris meriti sunt aves, quarum vita est deo vicinior.*

Le mouvement de la pensée est très augustinien. Comme si souvent, le docteur de la grâce se dirige contre ceux qui ont une conception trop anthropomorphique des choses de l'esprit et s'imaginent que Dieu se localise dans un endroit spatial qui serait le ciel. Contre cette vue si naïve et si matérialiste il objecte que dans ce cas les oiseaux seraient mieux placés que nous, puisqu'ils vivent dans l'air, et seraient ainsi plus près de Dieu que les hommes. D'où on conclura que Dieu et l'âme

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\* Publié dans *Mélanges d'histoire des religions offerts à Henri-Charles Puech*, Paris 1974, 375-378.

<sup>1</sup> "Mani et la tradition évangélique des judéo-chrétiens", *Recherches de science religieuse* 60 (1972) 144-150.

humaine sont des données spirituelles, appartenant à un monde non spatial.

Il n'y a pas de doute que ce passage présente des analogies frappantes avec un Dit de l'Évangile selon Thomas :

Jésus a dit: Si ceux qui vous guident vous disent: Voici, le Royaume est dans le ciel, alors les oiseaux du ciel vous devanceront; s'ils vous disent qu'il est dans la mer, alors les poissons vous devanceront. Mais le Royaume est à l'intérieur de vous et il est à l'extérieur de vous. Quand vous vous connaîtrez, alors vous serez connus et vous saurez que vous êtes les fils du Père qui est vivant. Mais, si vous ne vous connaissez pas, alors vous êtes dans la pauvreté, et vous êtes la pauvreté (logion 3).

La spiritualisation et l'intériorisation du Royaume de Dieu en soi sont assez banales. On pouvait s'y attendre dès que l'Évangile se répandit dans le monde hellénistique et dut se traduire dans les catégories de la pensée grecque. En revanche l'argumentation par les oiseaux est plutôt rare. Jusqu'à maintenant on n'a pu indiquer aucun passage chez un auteur patristique qui contienne la même conception. Pour cette raison on serait enclin à supposer que ce passage trahit une certaine familiarité de saint Augustin avec l'Évangile selon Thomas. Si c'est le cas, il semble assez probable que le saint a fait la connaissance de cet écrit pendant sa période manichéenne. Ne nous dit-il pas lui-même qu'il se rangeait alors à l'avis des critiques manichéens qui lui demandaient si Dieu est borné aux limites d'une forme corporelle (*Conf.* III, VII, 12)? Dans ce même passage il remarque qu'il ne savait pas alors que Dieu est esprit, comme s'il ne connaissait que le matérialisme cru et rude de la métaphysique manichéenne. Ses conceptions si spiritualisées sur Dieu et sur l'âme comme image de Dieu ne lui seraient venues qu'après la rencontre avec Ambroise et avec le néoplatonisme. Il y a lieu cependant d'être quelque peu réservé sur l'authenticité de ces mémoires. Car l'Évangile selon Thomas contenait déjà cette interprétation très spiritualisée du Royaume de Dieu dont il se souviendra plus tard.

L'œuvre de saint Augustin contient encore d'autres parallèles avec l'Évangile selon Thomas qu'on discutera ailleurs. Tout ce que nous voulons dire maintenant, c'est qu'il n'est pas toujours facile de prouver rigoureusement que dans ces cas saint Augustin a puisé à cette source. Les Dits non synoptiques de "Thomas" ne sont pas toujours limités à cet écrit et se trouvent aussi dans d'autres livres que le docteur de la grâce peut avoir connus. Les Dits synoptiques ont beaucoup de variantes en commun avec le *Diatessaron* ou avec le texte dit Occidental du

Nouveau Testament. Or, comme nous l'avons déjà dit, saint Augustin doit avoir connu l'harmonie de Tatien dans sa jeunesse manichéenne. Et nous ne savons pas très bien quel texte évangélique il avait sous les yeux quand il était à Milan, à Rome, à Thagaste ou à Hippone. Tout ce que nous pouvons dire, c'est que c'était probablement un texte occidental (italique ou africain), qui pouvait avoir des parallèles avec l'Évangile selon Thomas. Ceci implique que, dans certains cas, saint Augustin peut être d'accord avec l'écrit édessénien sans en dépendre nécessairement.

Et cependant je crois avoir trouvé un cas où cette solution s'impose. Saint Augustin connaît une version très remarquable du Dit de Jésus transmis aussi par *Luc XII*, 13–14: *quis me constituit divisorem hereditatis inter vos.*<sup>2</sup>

Par contre *Luc* écrit: ἄνθρωπε, τίς με κατέστησεν κριτὴν ἢ μεριστὴν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς.

Vulgate: *Homo, quis me constituit iudicem, aut divisorem super vos?*

On dirait que l'auteur a omis les mots “*iudicem aut...*” parce qu'il cite de mémoire. Mais ceci est impossible, puisque Augustin revient assez souvent à ce verset et le cite toujours sous cette forme. D'autre part, il serait aventureux de supposer qu'alors le Nouveau Testament du docteur africain devait contenir cette variante, car il n'y a aucun manuscrit latin de la Bible qui la contient. Le problème textuel de ce verset est assez compliqué. Mais il semble bien que, à notre connaissance, aucun manuscrit latin ou grec, aucun Père grec, latin ou syriaque, ne nous transmette la même leçon. Le texte dit Occidental ou la tradition diatessaronique ne présente aucune trace de cette omission curieuse.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Grâce à la bienveillance du P. Bonifatius Fischer, Beuron, nous pouvons donner ici tous les passages où saint Augustin cite ce Dit: *divisorem hereditatis* ↓ *Sermo* 265, 11 (*PL.* 38, 1224); *Sermo* 359, 3 (2 x, *PL.* 39, 1592–93); *Sermo Morin Guelferbytanus* 32 (*PL.S.* 2, 647); *Sermo Lambot* (*PL.S.* 2, 771); *De Utilitate Ieiunii* XI, 13 (*C.C.* 46, 241); *divisorem* ↓ *Sermo* 107, 3 (*PL.* 38, 628).

<sup>3</sup> μεριστήν ↓ Sah. κριτήν (omission de μεριστήν) ↓ D 33 pc.; Syr.<sup>sin</sup> cur; Lat. *acd*; Tertullianus; Diat.<sup>Ephr. persan.</sup> δικαστήν ἢ μεριστήν ↓ Koine ΨΔ Boh. μεριστήν ἢ δικαστήν ↓ 472. κριτήν ἢ δικαστήν ↓ 69; Ps.-Clem. ἄρχοντα ἢ κριτήν ἢ μεριστήν ↓ 1012. ἄρχοντα καὶ δικαστήν ↓ 157 (= *Ex.* 2:14 LXX).

Il n'y a que le manuscrit arabe de 'Abd al-Jabbar (x<sup>e</sup> siècle), signalé par Shlomo Pines, qui contient une variante comparable:<sup>4</sup> "Un homme lui disait: Maître, que mes frères partagent (avec moi) les possessions riches de mon père. Il lui disait: Qui a fait de moi *un partageur* entre vous?"

On sait que selon M. Pines 'Abd al-Jabbar a utilisé une source judéo-chrétienne. Même si on ne peut pas toujours suivre le savant israélien et accepter toutes ses hypothèses, il me semble difficile de nier que ce manuscrit arabe peut contenir des traditions très archaïques. Dans le cas du Dit qu'on vient de citer la conclusion semble s'imposer, car l'auteur de l'Évangile selon Thomas, qui a certainement connu une tradition évangélique judéo-chrétienne, cite le même verset presque avec les mêmes mots: "Un homme lui dit: Dis à mes frères qu'ils partagent les biens de mon père avec moi. Il lui dit: O homme, qui a fait de moi un partageur?" (logion 72).

Il semble donc assez probable que la variante curieuse de saint Augustin a été inspirée par l'Évangile selon Thomas.

Il ne reste qu'une difficulté. C'est que la version sahidique elle aussi connaît la variante *μεριστήν* (*rēḥbōrtsch*). Pour cette raison on a supposé que l'Évangile selon Thomas a été influencé, ici et ailleurs, par cette version.<sup>5</sup> Mais le fait qu'on trouve la même variante dans le manuscrit arabe et chez saint Augustin ne prouve-t-il pas que cette solution est trop facile? Car ni l'auteur musulman ni le docteur de la grâce n'ont été influencés par la version sahidique.

Dans ce qui précède nous avons donné seulement quelques résultats d'une recherche qui va nous occuper encore longtemps et qui pourrait encore aboutir à des découvertes inattendues. Car l'œuvre de saint Augustin est immense et peut bien contenir encore d'autres parallèles qui nous ont échappé. Mais il est permis de supposer que ces quelques données sont suffisantes pour prouver que saint Augustin a connu l'Évangile selon Thomas.

<sup>4</sup> Shlomo Pines, *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries according to a New Source*, Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, II, 13, Jerusalem 1966, 1-74; 13, n. 35.

<sup>5</sup> W. Schrage, *Das Verhältnis des Thomasevangeliums zur synoptischen Tradition und zu den koptischen Evangelienübersetzungen*, Berlin 1964, 152.

## NOTE ADDITIONELLE

On a signalé encore des autres variantes diatessaroniques chez saint Augustin: voir *Tatian and the Gospel of Thomas. Studies in the History of the Western Diatessaron*, Leiden 1975, 68.

En outre on a supposé que saint Augustin doit sa connaissance de l'*Asclépius* hermetique, si fréquent dans les livres 8 et 18 de la *Cité de Dieu*, aux manichéens, qui considéraient Hermes Trismégiste comme un prophète comme Mani lui-même: voir Johannes van Oort, "Hermes en Augustinus", dans: G. Quispel (éd.), *De hermetische Gnosis in de loop der eeuwen*, Amsterdam 1992 (<sup>3</sup>1996), 287–311 (version allemande: "Hermes und Augustinus", dans: G. Quispel (éd.), *Die Hermetische Gnosis im Lauf der Jahrhunderte. Betrachtungen über den Einfluss einer ägyptischen Religion auf die Kultur*, Haarlem und Birnbach 2000, 291–316).





## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### SOME REMARKS ON THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS\*

#### INTRODUCTION

This early study inaugurated the “battle of Thomas” which now seems to have been won. It contains many mistakes. Wherever I write Gospel of the Hebrews and Gospel of the Egyptians, I would now prefer to speak about Judaic Christian and Encratitic Gospel tradition.

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In September 1956, just before the Suez crisis, several British and American newspapers announced on their front page that a Gospel of Thomas had been found in Egypt which contained Sayings of Jesus. Since that time, every now and then, news agencies have distributed very inadequate and incompetent items about this mysterious writing. Recently, on 19 March 1959, the Associated Press added to the already great confusion.

The facts are as follows. In 1945, or more probably 1946, farmers in the neighbourhood of Nag Hammadi found a huge collection of manuscripts, mostly Gnostic. In 1952 Professor H.-Ch. Puech, who had at his disposal copies of some of the pages, established the fact that one of the writings discovered, the so-called Gospel of Thomas, contained the Sayings of Jesus which Grenfell and Hunt had discovered at Oxyrhynchus in 1897 and 1903. In 1956 Dr Pahor Labib, the director of the Coptic Museum in Cairo, published the complete text of the Gospel of Thomas in Coptic, which has since then been available to everybody. It then transpired that the Gospel of Thomas was not at all a Gospel, but a collection of about 114 sayings attributed to Jesus and allegedly written by the Apostle Thomas. None of these sayings agrees completely with the text of our canonical Gospels. The Coptic text has been translated from the Greek, as is shown by the Oxyr. Pap. I, 654, 655, all of which belong to this writing.

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\* Lecture held at Aarhus on 6 April, at Copenhagen on 7 April, at Lund on 9 April, at Uppsala on 15 April and at Oslo on 17 April 1959. Previously published in: *NTS* 5 (1958/59) 276-290.

The excitement of the general public, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, seems to be considerable. Great expectations, I am afraid, will be followed by still greater disillusionment. And yet it seems to me that this discovery is much more important than even the wildest reporters dream of, if only we are willing to apply the methods of scholarship. *The importance of the Gospel of Thomas lies in the fact that it contains an independent and very old Gospel tradition.* When I say independent, I mean that some sayings of the Gospel of Thomas were not taken from our canonical Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, but were borrowed from another source.

This is the main theme which I am going to discuss in this paper. With this in view, I will quote one of the most important sayings of the new collection.

The parable of the Sower runs as follows in the Gospel of Thomas:

See, the sower went out, he filled his hand, he threw. Some (seeds) fell on the road; the birds came, they gathered them. Others fell on the rock and did not strike root in the earth and did not produce ears. And others fell on the thorns: they choked the seed and the worm ate them. And others fell on the good earth; and it brought forth good fruit: it bore sixty per measure and one hundred and twenty per measure.

This version of the parable must contain very old elements, for Clement of Rome (xxiv. 5) quotes the first words of the parable as they appear in the Gospel of Thomas rather than as they appear in our canonical Gospels: "The sower went out and threw". But what is more important, this version must be traced back to an Aramaic tradition of the words of our Lord, not only because it is rather different from Mark (iv. 3-9) and Matthew or Luke, who here use Mark as their source, but also because some of these divergencies can be explained as translation variants of the same Aramaic word. Our canonical Gospels say that the seed falls "beside the road." This is puzzling because it is said by Luke that the seed is trodden by passers-by. But people generally walk on the road, not beside the road. It has rightly been pointed out that the reading of the canonical Gospels is an incorrect translation of the Aramaic *al urha*, which means both "on the road" and "beside the road". Our saying, however, tells us that the seed fell *on* the road. This shows that this saying, at least, of the Gospel of Thomas, must have been translated from Aramaic into Greek.

But if this parable has not been taken from our canonical Gospels, we must try to show where it has come from. And in this case it is not difficult to locate the saying within a specific tradition. It would seem that it has been taken from the Jewish Christian Gospel tradition.

Those members of the Christian Community of Jerusalem, who accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but continued to observe the Jewish law and afterwards lived on in separation from the growing catholic Church, must have had their own Gospel tradition. Now, in fact, in several cases the sayings of the Gospel of Thomas show a very close affinity to the fragments of this Jewish Christian tradition. There can be no doubt that at least some of the Words are of Jewish Christian origin. And it is in this Jewish Christian milieu (to be precise in the Syriac translation of the pseudo-Clementine *Recognitiones*, III, 14, 7), that we recover the words *ʿal wḥa*, “on the road”, which scholars had postulated as the underlying Aramaic expression of our canonical reading.

So I suggest that the saying of the Gospel of Thomas as quoted above has been taken from a Jewish Christian Gospel tradition which was completely independent of our canonical writings.

If this is true, this might have some consequences for our assessment of the value of our Gospels. We knew already that the Synoptic Gospels were literary and not literal renderings of an underlying Aramaic tradition. But up till now we practically have had only one witness for the parable of the Sower, namely Mark, because Matthew and Luke used him as their source. But the Gospel of Thomas provides us with a second witness, which with less picturesque details tells us essentially the same thing. And this makes it less probable, that Mark, or the community behind him, invented this story. This would be the consequence of admitting that the Gospel of Thomas in this case does not depend upon the canonical Gospels.

But when I speak about an independent tradition, I also mean to say that this Gospel tradition is not a source of our canonical Gospels. I do not see that it has influenced Mark, or Q, the hypothetical source of Matthew and Luke, or the sources peculiar to Matthew and Luke. Let me explain why I think this special tradition cannot be identified with Q, if by this we understand a Greek written source which was used by both Matthew and Luke.

There are more than twenty sayings which contain the same material as Q, though none of them can be supposed to be exactly identical to the hypothetically reconstructed text of this writing. On the contrary, some of these parallel sayings clearly show that they have not been taken from Q.

Logion 47 says: “It is impossible for a man to mount two horses and to stretch two bows, and it is impossible for a servant to serve two masters, otherwise he will honour the one and offend the other”.

“Honour” and “offend”, as I take it, are elegant translations of the corresponding Aramaic terms, אהב and שנא, which literally mean: “to love” and “to hate”, but must be conceived here as meaning: “to prefer” and “to place second”.

That these two Aramaic words stand behind the Greek is clearly shown by Matthew (vi. 24) and Luke (xvi. 13) and so by Q, since they offer a double translation of these single terms: “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.”

The wording of Thomas, “he will honour the one and offend the other”, clearly shows that the saying is not dependent upon the Greek Q, but offers us an independent translation from the Aramaic.

The relation of this material to Q, however, is somewhat complicated. The sayings clearly are not to be identified with Q. Yet they cover the same ground as Q. But in several cases they seem to be less primitive and more developed than Q.

Logion 16 runs as follows:

Men possibly think that I have come to throw peace upon the world and they do not know that I have come to throw divisions upon the earth, fire, sword, war.

For there shall be five in a house: three shall be against two and two against three, the father against the son and the son against the father, and they will stand as solitaries.

The first thing we may observe is that this saying must have been translated from the Aramaic, because the words “sword, war” are a double translation of the Aramaic “ḥarba”.

Secondly, it seems practically certain that this saying has been taken from the Jewish Christian Gospel tradition, because it is found in almost identical form in the Clementine writings.

Thirdly we may presume that it is a conflation of two sayings of Jesus, one about the sword he came to bring, the other about the fire he came to cast upon the earth, because logion 10 of the Gospel of Thomas says: “I have come to cast fire upon the world, and see, I guard it until it (the world(?)) is afire.”

And yet we cannot help seeing that the saying runs very similar to the well-known word of Jesus, preserved by both Matthew (x. 35) and Luke (xii. 51), which eventually could have been borrowed by them from their common source Q.

The saying looks rather like a later development of the Aramaic tradition behind Q, which clearly shows the traces of its transmission within a Jewish Christian environment.

What does that mean? The bishop of Hierapolis, Papias, wrote in the second century that the disciple Matthew wrote τὰ λόγια in Aramaic. It seems possible that the famous Greek Q is just a recension of this Aramaic document, which for several reasons must be dated before the Fall of Jerusalem. We now find that at least one saying of the Gospel of Thomas offers us the same Aramaic tradition, albeit in a revised and secondary form. Matthew certainly lived in Jerusalem. The newly discovered Gospel tradition must have originated in the primitive community of Jerusalem. But it has undergone a revision. This again points to Jewish Christianity, which after the Fall of Jerusalem stiffened into an isolated group. For we know of no other people that had an Aramaic Gospel; the Jewish Christians were the only ones who are reported to have used a Gospel written in Aramaic. Moreover, the Fathers of the Church constantly tell us that this Gospel of theirs had been written by Matthew. We now see that in a sense they may have been right. For if it was not the Greek Q, or at least its Aramaic original that the Jewish Christians revised, they certainly preserved a primitive tradition which shows close affinity with Q and may be considered as having its origin in the primitive community of Jerusalem.

If for these and similar reasons we assume that a number of sayings contained in the Gospel of Thomas were neither influenced by the canonical Gospels nor had any influence upon them, we may be inclined to think that Luke used still another source besides Mark and Q when he composed his Gospel. When Luke copies Mark, he sometimes adds some words to his source which are not to be found elsewhere. Take for instance Luke ii, 21–2: “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace: but when one stronger than he assails him *and overcomes him*, he takes away his armour in which he trusted and divides his spoil.” This is rather different from Mark iii, 27; we notice especially that according to Mark the stronger man does not overcome the owner of the house but plunders his goods. And yet it would seem that Luke’s differences are not due to his work as a redactor, but must be considered as having been borrowed from a different source.

For logion 35 of the Gospel of Thomas says: “It is not possible for one to enter the house of the strong (man) and take him by force unless

he binds his hands; then will he ransack his house.” This is rather similar to Mark, except that here the verb “to take by force” (βιάζεσθαι) is used instead of “to plunder”. This is to be explained as a variant translation of the Aramaic *anas*, which in fact has both meanings, so that we must conclude again that the quoted saying has been translated from the Aramaic. But then Luke must have known a special tradition of the same origin which enabled him to change his source, Mark, to the effect that the intruder overcomes the owner of the palace.

It would be interesting to quote a few more examples which tend to show that Luke has interwoven Mark with information from a special source which is neither Mark nor Q, and which shows marked affinity with the recently discovered sayings. I must limit myself to one more example.

Luke (v. 36) says:

No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it upon an old garment; if he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new; for he says: the old one is good.

When we compare this with Mark (ii. 21–2), we see that Luke has added the phrase about the drinker of old wine, who declines to drink the new, and also the puzzling remark about the new patch, which does not match the old garment. One would rather expect that an old patch does not match a new garment. For, as we can learn from our wives, a new patch will tear an old garment, but an old patch does not go with a new garment. Moreover the information we get concerning old wine and new wineskins is one-sided: for if it is true that new wine eventually bursts old wineskins, it is equally significant that old wine is spoiled when put into new wineskins. These difficulties are solved however, when we compare the passage in Luke with logion 47, where we find the elements which Luke added to Mark, though in a setting which would seem more primitive. “No man drinks old wine and immediately desires to drink new wine; and they do not put new wine in old wineskins, lest they burst; and they do not put old wine in a new wineskin, lest it spoil it. They do not sew an old patch on a new garment, (because it does not match the new, and they do not sew a new patch on an old garment), because there would be a rent.”

So we see that in this case Luke must have taken his additional material from a special source. If I had more time, I could give you more

examples which all show that the newly discovered sayings have much in common with the tradition peculiar to Luke. I would be inclined to agree with Schlatter who long ago assumed that Luke owed his special tradition to a Jewish Christian who had left Jerusalem to preach the Gospel among the Gentiles. For if the tradition of the newly discovered Sayings points in the direction of Jerusalem, the special tradition contained in Luke must have the same origin.

I do not speak now about the relationship of Matthew and Mark to the synoptic sayings of the Gospel of Thomas, because there are such great differences that it is difficult for me to believe that Mark or Matthew have been influenced by this tradition.

To summarize: the Gospel of Thomas contains a certain number of Sayings which transmit an independent Jewish Christian Gospel tradition, neither influenced by nor having served as source for our canonical Gospels.

Under these circumstances it becomes of the greatest importance to discover an objective rule which may enable us to identify the Jewish Christian sayings within the Gospel of Thomas. For one thing is certain: not all of the roughly 114 sayings contained in this writing have the same origin, not all of them are taken from the Gospel tradition of the Jewish Christians. Now we may say that there are several methods which will help us to identify them. In the first place we may try to discover the *aramaisms*, which are so frequent in these sayings, especially when they are of the synoptic type. It is indeed impressive to see how many aramaisms the editors of the Gospel of Thomas, especially my colleague Guillaumont, have detected in this writing. Up till now about thirty logia have been found to preserve traces of their Aramaic origin and this may in most cases lead to the conclusion that they have been borrowed from an Aramaic Gospel or at least from a Gospel tradition different from our Synoptics.

In the second place we may seek for parallels from *Jewish Christian literature*. This is very valuable because in such cases we may be sure that the sayings concerned reflect not just an independent tradition, but really have been transmitted in a Jewish Christian milieu. In fact, the Gospel of Thomas contains a quotation from the lost Gospel according to the Hebrews, two sayings which are very near to other fragments of the Jewish Christian Gospels, and moreover offers some thirteen parallels to the Gospel quotations of the Clementine writings. All the sayings involved may be considered as having been transmitted by the Jewish Christians.



In the third place we may apply the methods of *Form Criticism*. There has recently been some criticism of Form Criticism, with which I heartily agree, so far as concerns the extreme conclusions to which some adherents of this school have been led, and I expect that this new discovery will clearly show that these extreme conclusions are not justified by the facts.

But that does not prevent me from accepting the methods of Form Criticism and from having the greatest respect for those scholars who introduced this new view of the history of the synoptic tradition. It is instructive to note that Professor Joachim Jeremias, in his book on the parables, has indicated certain elements in the parable of the wicked husbandmen as secondary, which indeed are lacking in the version of this parable (logion 65) as transmitted by the Gospel of Thomas. But I must leave this subject to others, who are better trained and equipped in this field of scholarship.

In the fourth place there is the fact that so many sayings have variants in common with the *Diatessaron* of Tatian and with the so-called *Western Text* of the Gospels. I am not sure that in all quarters the importance of this problem for the evidence as contained in the *Diatessaron* is fully realized. We all know that about A.D. 170 the Syrian Tatian wrote a Gospel Harmony, the first "Life of Jesus", in which he combined the data of the four canonical Gospels. But are we all fully aware of the fact that recensions of this Gospel Harmony exist in many languages? I cannot help but think that the publication of the Persian *Diatessaron* in 1951 did not receive the attention it deserved. It showed, however, against all unjustified scepticism, that the Dutch *Diatessaron*, though written in the thirteenth century, should really be traced back to the writing of Tatian himself and had indeed preserved many valuable and highly interesting variants.

Moreover I am surprised that the suggestion of practically all specialists that Tatian used a fifth source, beside the four Gospels, has not been widely adopted by New Testament scholars. Yet this suggestion is very old indeed. Epiphanius in the fourth century states that some people of his age identified the *Diatessaron* with the Gospel according to the Hebrews; Victor of Capua in the sixth century called the work of Tatian a *Diapente*, which implies that it had five sources.

From these indications Hugo Grotius in his annotations on the New Testament drew the conclusion that Tatian must have used the Jewish Christian Gospel according to the Hebrews, and I know of no competent scholar who in the course of three centuries has refuted

this supposition. On the contrary, Baumstark showed that the Diatessaron of Tatian must have contained a passage of the Hebrew Gospel, which described an appearance after the Resurrection; moreover it is certain that the same writing described certain details of the Baptism of Christ very much in the same way as the Jewish Christian Gospel tradition.

Now the sayings of Jesus in the Gospel according to Thomas have more than 100 parallels in common with the Diatessaron at points where they differ from our canonical Gospels. As these sayings have been proved to show very strong affinity to the Jewish Christian milieu, they tend to confirm the supposition that Tatian, in addition to our four Gospels, used a fifth Jewish Christian Gospel, or at least an apocryphal and independent Gospel tradition which has now come to light. I can adduce a new argument to prove that the Gospel tradition of the Gospel of Thomas has not been forgotten in the course of the centuries, but has been known in certain quarters, through the intermediary of the Diatessaron, even during the Middle Ages. In point of fact the famous old Saxon poem *Heliand* has preserved very clear traces of the sayings of Jesus as transmitted by the Gospel of Thomas. This seems astonishing but is perfectly understandable.

The *Heliand*, written sometime between 814 and 840 somewhere in the Eastern part of the empire of Lewis the Pious, told the Life of Christ to our barbarian ancestors in the primitive and childish concepts they could understand and in this respect reminds us of the film "Green Pastures". In this story the poet used, as everybody agrees and even the most perverted ingenuity cannot deny, a Latin recension of Tatian's Gospel harmony. This has been established by excellent studies on the sources of the *Heliand* that were published in the nineteenth century. It was pointed out then that the *Heliand* followed the pattern of such Latin Gospel harmonies as the Codex Fuldensis, which certainly is a "vulgarized" recension of Tatian's Diatessaron.

The excellent scholars who established these facts failed to notice that the Diatessaron which underlies the *Heliand* must have been of a different type from the Codex Fuldensis. The latter, in fact, has been almost completely adapted to the Latin translation which was authoritative at that time, that is to Jerome's Vulgate. But the Diatessaron which served as a source for the *Heliand* must have been much more faithful to Tatian's Diatessaron and has in fact preserved some of the wilder aspects of this peculiar writing. This became clear after the discovery of the Dutch and Persian Diatessarons. These remarkable recensions

of Tatian's writing show that peculiar features of the *Heliand's* narrative are not due to its author but must be traced back to Tatian himself.

Let me quote you some examples of the deviations from the canonical Gospels which are to be found in the *Heliand*. At the annunciation Mary says: I am the maid of God (not: Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord); in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is supposed to have said: you have heard that it was said *by* the men of old (not: it was said *to* the men of old); it was a male porter (not a maid who kept the door) who, during the trial of Jesus before the high priest, admitted Peter into the court: only afterwards does a female servant accuse Peter of being a disciple of Jesus; during the crucifixion they offered Jesus vinegar mingled with gall (not *wine* mixed with gall) to drink; and Mary Magdalene is said *to have recognized* the Lord on Easter morning, when he pronounced her name.

None of these features is to be found in our canonical Gospels, but they all must be traced back to the primitive Diatessaron, because they are found also in other recensions of this writing.

I am not speaking now about the importance of this discovery for the right interpretation of the *Heliand*, which after all is a very beautiful poem and has so often been considered as a superficially christianized document of pagan religiosity. Let me say just this: the *Heliand* has echoes and overtones which would evoke a response from recently baptized Saxons. What else might we expect from a missionary writing? But when we look to the background strictly speaking, rather than to the casual environment of the poet and his able adaptation to his surroundings, we must seek it in the oecumenical Christendom, and especially in Tatian's Gospel harmony which practically all Christian peoples of the Middle Ages knew and used. When we want to understand the *Heliand*, we must consult the Persian, Armenian, Arabic, Latin, Italian, German, Dutch or English recensions of Tatian, because it is there that we find the curious deviations from the canonical Gospels that are so characteristic of the *Heliand's* narrative. In view of the numerous parallels which can be adduced from these different recensions there can be no doubt that the poet of the *Heliand* used a very primitive text of Tatian's Diatessaron.

Now, if we keep in mind that Tatian used a fifth source, a Jewish Christian Gospel, which offered a special tradition also in part transmitted by the Gospel of Thomas, we may explain the curious fact that the Gospel of Thomas has nowhere in the Diatessaron tradition such clear parallels as in the *Heliand*.

In order to show this I must recall that the parable of the Sower in the Gospel of Thomas was rather different from the canonical versions. It told that some seed fell on the road, not beside the road, that the birds gathered them, not that they devoured them. Above all, it said that the seeds which fell on the rock did not strike root in the earth and did not produce ears, whereas Mark says that the seed sprang up immediately. All this is to be found the *Heliand*: 2388 “a man began to sow on the earth (pure) corn with his hands. Some fell down on hard stone, it did not have earth, that it might grow there and take root, germ and stick.... Some, however, fell on a hard road, where the beat of horses’ shoes and the pace of heroes have trodden it: and birds collected it.”

Nor is it difficult to explain why the *Heliand* has these readings in common with the Gospel of Thomas, because the three variants we mentioned are found in other Diatessarons and must go back to Tatian himself. The fact, however, that the variant “on the road” is to be explained as rendering an Aramaic original and is in fact found in the Jewish Christian Gospel tradition tends to show that Tatian knew and used the Saying of the Gospel of Thomas from a Jewish Christian source.

The Greek text of the Gospel of Thomas said that “a city built on the top of a high mountain and fortified cannot fall nor can it (ever) be hidden”. The variant “built on the top of a high mountain” as against “set on a hill” (Matt. v. 14) has its counterpart in the Jewish Christian Gospel tradition and in the Persian Diatessaron. It has a faint echo in the *Heliand*: 1395, “no more than a borough standing on the mountain, *the high cliff*, can be hidden.”

Logion 33 of the Gospel of Thomas runs as follows: “no one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel nor does he put it in a hidden place, but he sets it on the lampstand, so that all who come in and go out may see its light”.

Note the semitism: “come in and go out”. The variant: “so that” instead of “and” is also found in the Jewish Christian Gospel tradition. Comparison with other Diatessarons shows that Tatian must have used this form of the saying as the basis for his Harmony, not the corresponding passage in Matt. v. 15: “Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.” The *Heliand* has preserved several traces of the primitive Diatessaron when it says: “*No man shall hide* the light that he has from man, conceal it carefully, but he must *put* it high in the hall, *so that* all equally, that are therein, the heroes in the hall, may *see it*.”

“No man”, “hide”, “put”, “so that”, “see it” are the elements which the *Heliand* has in common with Tatian and the Gospel of Thomas as against Matthew. This again shows that Tatian must have used the extra-canonical Gospel tradition which now has been discovered. Tatian must have borrowed very often from a Jewish Christian Gospel, which served also as a source for the collection of sayings which bears the title: Gospel according to Thomas.

One more comparison of a saying from the Gospel of Thomas and a passage of the *Heliand*:

Logion 45 tells us: “an evil man brings forth evil things out of his evil treasure, which is in his heart, and speaks evil things.”

Note again the striking semitism “which is in his heart”, and the curious addition “and speaks evil things”. Both are absent from our canonical Gospels, but may be found in the various Diatessarons. The poet of the *Heliand* must have read this in his copy of the Diatessaron, because he writes: “1755, and from the evil man evil plans, *bitter speech, as he has in his breast*, fixed in his heart: always his mind announces his will *with his words*”. Here again we see that Tatian must have known the Jewish Christian Gospel tradition as transmitted by the Gospel of Thomas.

But in that case the Diatessaron seems to provide us with a clue which enables us to distinguish between those sayings of the Gospel of Thomas which are taken from the Jewish Christian Gospel tradition and those which are not. In each case where the Gospel of Thomas agrees with the Diatessaron against our canonical Gospels, we might ask if this saying has been taken from this specific and independent tradition. Or, to put it more carefully, when we detect aramaisms in a logion, or establish parallels with Jewish Christian literature, or find variants it has in common with the Diatessaron or the Western Text, then we are entitled to consider the possibility that such a saying must be traced back to the Gospel according to the Hebrews or more generally to the tradition which this apocryphal writing represents.

More than once we find that a saying meets all the conditions we stipulated: it shows the traces of having been translated from the Aramaic, it can be paralleled from Jewish Christian sources, and it has its echo in the Diatessaron and the Western Text. Then I am practically sure it is of Jewish Christian origin. In other cases only one or two of the conditions are fulfilled. If we apply this as a general rule we find that about half of the 114 sayings, all of the synoptic type, fulfil one or two of the above-mentioned conditions. Therefore I suggest that

such sayings may all possibly have been borrowed from *one* source, the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

What about the other half, which have in part strong affinities with the teaching of the second-century Encratite ascetics, who abstained from wine, meat and marriage, and which moreover show the enormous impact of hellenistic religiosity?

I am not now going to expound in full detail how these sayings can in part be found in apocryphal and Gnostic or Manichaean writings already known, because my colleague Puech has already published his findings in this field. Nor am I going to repeat what I have said elsewhere, that almost all the sayings of this type might possibly come from one other source, the apocryphal Gospel according to the Egyptians. It will be sufficient to say that the concepts found in this type of sayings are the background of many Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. But the real problem seems to be this: what is the relation of these hellenistic, gnosticising, syncretistic logia to the simple, synoptic sayings, which also form part of the Gospel of Thomas and probably are of Palestinian origin?

It would seem that *some of these syncretistic logia presuppose the Jewish Christian sayings* that are preserved in the same collection.

Logion 55 runs as follows: "Jesus said: 'Whoever does not hate his father and his mother will not be able to be a disciple to me and (whoever does not) hate his brethren and his sisters and (does not) take up his cross in My way will not be worthy of Me.'" There are several reasons to suppose that this saying belongs to the old Palestinian tradition we tried to identify. It seems to transmit some features that are more primitive even than the corresponding passage in Matthew and Luke, who render here their common source, Q. Whereas both Matthew (x. 37) and Luke (xiv. 25–7) convey the message that a follower of Jesus must eventually be ready to hate even his "wife and children" or "his son and daughter", this notion is conspicuously absent here. We are told to break, if necessary, with the family we came from; yes, but not with the family we founded. The wording of the saying is very near indeed to Luke; it may prove that Luke rendered his source here very faithfully, but even then a comparison shows that the tradition of this saying, though akin to Q, is more primitive than Q.

Moreover, this saying must have been translated from Aramaic. As A. Guillaumont has pointed out, the use of the third case for a possessive pronoun ("disciple to me" instead of "my disciple"), the repetition of the possessive pronoun (his father...his mother...his brethren...his

sisters) and the omission of the negation (“and take up his cross” for “and does not take up his cross”) indicates an Aramaic original.

In the third place this logion has had its echoes in the Diatessaron and in the Western Text: so for instance the Codex Bezae and the Old Syriac versions read: “his mother” instead of “the mother”.

We may therefore safely presume that this saying must be traced back to the Jewish Christian Gospel according to the Hebrews.

In the same Gospel of Thomas, however, we find a development of this saying, logion 101, which presupposes this version of the word of Jesus, not its canonical counterpart, but at the same time introduces some elements which tend towards Gnostic conceptions. It suggests an opposition between the earthly father and the heavenly Father, and moreover seems to consider the Holy Ghost as the mother of the believer. It runs as follows: Jesus said, “Whoever does not hate his father and his mother in My way will not be able to be a (disciple) to me. And whoever does (not) love [his father] and his mother in My way will not be able to be a (disciple) to me, for My (carnal(?)) mother (gave me death (?)), but [My] true [Mother] gave me Life.” The severe and radical word of Jesus has been transposed here into a different context and so reflects a syncretistic milieu. We are led to the conclusion that an author, who lived in an atmosphere rather different from that of Jewish Christian Palestine, has consciously and deliberately adapted this difficult word to his own system of references.

The same process may be observed in other cases. Over and again we find doublets which have both a Jewish Christian and a Hellenistic flavour.

Logion 113 has the following content: “His disciples said to Him: When will the Kingdom come? Jesus said: It will not come by expectation, they will not say: ‘See, here’, or ‘See, there’. But the Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it.” This saying is interesting because it is a parallel version of Luke (xvii. 20), “the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you”, which apparently has been translated from the Aramaic; the words “by expectation” are a translation variant of Luke’s “with observation”, *μετὰ παρατηρήσεως*, the Aramaic word ܩܘܪܗܘܢ having these two meanings. Now it is this version of the word, and not Luke’s, which has been reinterpreted in logion 51: “His disciples said to Him: When will the repose of the dead come about and when will the new world come? He said to them: *What you expect* has come, but you know it not.” Here too the Jewish Christian version of the saying lies at the root of a more syncretistic develop-

ment. We observe the same, when we compare logion 48 with logion 106. Logion 48 is a parallel of Matt. xviii. 19: "Jesus said: If two make peace with each other in this one house, they shall say to the mountain: 'Be moved' and it shall be moved." This praise of reconciliation and mutual agreement may be considered as typically Jewish. If we keep in mind that this form of the saying has left its traces in the Diatessaron and in the Western Text, we may feel inclined to attribute it to the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

Logion 106 has "targumized" this in the following way: "Jesus said: When you make the two one, you shall become sons of man, and when you say: 'Mountain, be moved', it will be moved." Here a different notion is introduced. The reviser is hinting at the reunion of the opposites, male and female, above and below, inner and outer. In fact he is expressing an idea of the Gospel according to the Egyptians, also transmitted by the Gospel of Thomas, logion 22: "When you make the two one, and when you make the inner as the outer and the outer as the inner and the above as the below, and when you make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male will not be male and the female not be female . . . then you shall enter the Kingdom." When two different versions of the same saying are found in one writing, it is a safe principle to assume that the author of this writing used two sources. So the author of the Gospel of Thomas used two different sources in these cases.

In fact he quotes elsewhere the Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Gospel according to the Egyptians. It would seem that the same is the case when he quotes doublets. One half of the doublet he could take from the Hebrew Gospel, the other from the Egyptian Gospel. It is interesting to see that in that case the author of the Egyptian Gospel must have known the Jewish Christian tradition, which he reinterprets. We know, however, of no other sources either canonical or apocryphal for the Gospel of Thomas.

This leads me to suppose that the Hellenistic halves of these doublets and similar sayings of the Gospel of Thomas have been borrowed from the Gospel according to the Egyptians, though I admit the possibility that Gnostic interpolations may have been inserted into it in the course of its textual history. But whatever may be the value of the last hypothesis, it seems rather obvious that some sayings which have undergone a Hellenistic revision ultimately go back to a Jewish Christian prototype.



But then even these syncretistic sayings may be of some help in discovering valuable Gospel tradition in the Gospel of Thomas. Just one example will make my meaning clear. Clement of Alexandria, in his *Stromateis*, VI, 95, 3, offers a very interesting and hitherto unnoticed variant of the parable of the fishing net: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who cast his net into the sea and who selects the best ones from the great number of fishes he caught.” This I think makes the point of the parable much clearer than Matt. xiii. 47–8, where the kingdom is like a net and the fishermen are the angels. Here, however, there is only *one* fisherman: I suppose it is God Himself, who now gathers candidates to citizenship in his Kingdom, whereas the final selection will take place at the Last Judgment.

The version of Clement, however, does not seem due to his personal interpretation, but must reflect an extra-canonical tradition, because we find very much the same views in the Diatessaron of Tatian. In point of fact the *Heliand*, which we discussed before, tells about the same story, and there is no doubt that it has preserved here the readings of Tatian’s original Gospel Harmony. The *Heliand* says: 2628, “Also its work (the work of the Kingdom of Heaven) is like that *a man* casts a net into the sea, a fishing net into the flood, and catches both evil and good (fish and) draws (the net) ashore, brings them to the land: after this he *selects* the good ones on the sand, and lets the others return to the abyss, to the *wide waves*.”

We may conclude then that there existed in antiquity a parallel version of this parable, which was neither simply identical with nor based upon the version of Matthew. With this in mind we turn to logion 8: “And he said: man is like a wise *fisherman*, who cast his net into the sea, he drew it up from the sea, full of small fish; among them he found a large and good fish: that wise fisherman, he threw all the small fish down *into the sea*, he *chose* the large fish without regret.” It should be admitted that this parable contains secondary elements, which are due to a transposition into a different context.

The idea that only one out of an enormous multitude is selected, and this because it is the largest, certainly is not primitive and has a Gnostic or pre-Gnostic flavour. Perhaps the modification that Man (possibly the Son of Man), and not the Kingdom of God, is like a man who cast his net into the sea implies a Christological interpretation, which was not originally intended. On the other hand, the idea that the fish are large and small, not good and bad, as Matthew says, could be primitive. Moreover the view that the small fish are thrown back into the

sea is more in accordance with the concrete detail of the parable and with reality than the suggestion of Matthew that these poor fish are thrown into the fire of Hell.

So we may conclude that the sayings of the syncretistic type transmitted by the Gospel of Thomas are based more than once upon a primitive and definitely Jewish Christian Gospel tradition which was transposed into the characteristic features of Hellenistic Christianity.

Thus the Gospel of Thomas brings us into touch with the origins of two important movements within Christianity: Gnosticism and Gospel-writing. The syncretistic sayings of this collection are quoted or alluded to in the Acts of Thomas and other apocryphal acts of the apostles. Mani, the founder of a world religion, and his adherents knew the Gospel of Thomas and quoted it. But I think that even before him such Gnostics as Valentinus, Basilides and Ptolemaeus knew and quoted these sayings, which though not yet Gnostic in the technical sense of the word, but rather pre-Gnostic, were at the root of their Gnostic speculations. We then realize how old and deeply rooted the gnosticizing interpretation of the Christian message really was.

But still older than these syncretistic sayings are the sayings of the synoptic type. They may be traced back to the descendants of the primitive community of Jerusalem, who lived on in the Near East almost completely isolated from the Gentile Christian developments.

And yet their faith was not forgotten, their tradition was not completely lost. Tatian used it to a larger extent than could be known until now and integrated it in his Gospel harmony. So this tradition helped to win the West for Christ and stimulated the evangelical undercurrents so widely spread during the Middle Ages, thus preparing the way for the evangelical Reformation.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### THE STUDY OF ENCRATISM: A HISTORICAL SURVEY\*

#### I. THE PIONEER: ERIK PETERSON

The official biography of Erik Peterson has been written by Franco Bolgiani in his essay “Dalla teologia liberale alla escatologia apocalittica: il pensiero e l’opera di Erik Peterson” (Firenze 1965). Born in Hamburg June 7, 1890; dissertation on *Heis Theos* (1920); professor in Bonn for New Testament and History of the Church (1924–1929) together with Karl Barth, Paul Kahle and Karl Ludwig Schmidt; 1930 converted to Roman Catholicism; 1937 teacher in Rome at the Institute for Christian Archeology; married Matilde Bertini (1933); died in Hamburg (October 26, 1960). Some Swiss and German scholars described his academic and theological career until 1935.<sup>1</sup>

But his legendary life, as told by himself, his friends and colleagues, has not been told. And though these anecdotes and details are not necessarily true, they give the mythical dimension to the tragic existence of a great scholar, a demonic religious genius and a German Catholic, who indeed did resist. Because his grand father was Swedish, the young Erik was full of German nationalism. When the First World War broke out he volunteered for the army, but was so clumsy that he could only serve as a frontier guard in Schleswig-Holstein on the border with peaceful Denmark. In 1918 his views were completely changed and he was almost a communist: ever since he stressed the fact that primitive Christianity was a “stasis”. He participated in the rebirth of Protestant theology after the war, a spring not followed by a summer, and contributed to the periodical of “dialectic theology” *Zwischen den Zeiten*. Soon he discovered his fundamental disagreement with Barth and Bultmann and expressed his views in the essay: “What

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\* Previously published in: *La Tradizione dell’Enkrateia*. Atti del Colloquio Internazionale—Milano, 20–23 aprile 1982, ed. U. Bianchi, Roma 1985, 35–81.

<sup>1</sup> After the sixties some younger scholars described his academic and theological career until 1935 (!) and assessed critically his political views on monotheism as a political problem: A. Schindler (Hg.), *Monotheismus als politisches Problem? Erik Peterson und die Kritik der politischen Theologie*, Gütersloh 1978, 76 sqq.

is theology?" (1926). More perspicacious than Barth he told him that Barth had nothing in common with Bultmann, but the warning was not heeded. One day there was a knock at the door and his two opponents were standing there: "Here stand the Humiliated and Offended", Barth said with Dostojewskian glee; their discussion did not lead to agreement in theology.

In politics they did agree. Peterson's lectures and publications on "monotheism as a political problem" (1935), "the church out of Jews and Pagans" (1933) and "Christ as the end of nationalism" (1951) were brave and thinly veiled attacks upon the then prevailing ideology.<sup>2</sup>

After Peterson's conversion to Catholicism all his friends expected that he would become a monk, because he seemed predestined to this state of grace. Instead he married a beautiful young Italian and bred five beautiful bambini. The salaries of the Vatican were calculated for bachelors. This became a source of many humiliations and much despair.

After the war Peterson disliked the pope and told so everybody. Fellow scholars, when meeting him on the Corso, avoided him and prayed him to keep silent, in order to avoid scandal. Towards the end of his life this restless man did not even feel at home in the Church for which he had suffered so much: he once had a dream, in which he stood at a crossroad and had to choose between the Catholic and the Gnostic way. Cardinal Mercati, his patron and mentor, was standing on the orthodox road and beckoned Peterson to follow him. On the other road stood a Gnostic demon in the person of a Dutch scholar, G.Q.

All scholarly questions of this tormented man were existential problems. And yet, or rather because of this, he turned out to be right.

But perhaps it is better to turn to the philosophical tradition in which Peterson and some of his friends and contemporaries were reared. Among German intellectuals the influence of Arthur Schopenhauer was paramount. It gave them the opportunity to interpret music as a profound revelation and not to take natural science seriously. According to Schopenhauer consciousness creates the world and life creates consciousness. That, however, is the real evil: it would be better not to be born, death is the just penalty for this guilt. The *principium individuationis*

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<sup>2</sup> E. Peterson, "Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem" in *Theologische Traktate*, München 1951, 45–47; id., "Die Kirche aus Juden und Heiden", *ibid.*, 239–286; id., "Das Problem des Nationalismus im alten Christentum", in *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis*, Rom-Freiburg-Wien 1959, 51–63.

is the source and origin of all evil. The best man can do is not to indulge to this vital instinct.

From this point of view Christianity is good in so far as it is ascetic and denies the world and life. Indian religions are still better, because they offer a consistent and permanent philosophy of world annihilation.

Friedrich Nietzsche applied this view to the Greek Tragedy (“Birth of the Tragedy”) and his lifelong friend Overbeck did the same for eschatological Christianity.<sup>3</sup> Seldom an unproductive professor in a small provincial town has had such an enormous influence. Franz Overbeck (1837–1905), a German professor of New Testament at the University of Basel, a sour atheist, a poor stylist who wrote like a kangaroo with a fountain pen, was soft on asceticism. In a pamphlet with the title “Modern Theology is not Christian” (1873, <sup>2</sup>1903) he attacked both the liberal and the conservative theology of his days as Hellenisation and secularisation of eschatological Christianity, which according to him was unworldly, characterized by denial of the world (“Weltverneinung”) and radically hostile to culture. Only monasticism has preserved the original features of the primitive religion and is still Christian. His friend Erwin Rohde immediately after the publication of this book recognized the influence of Schopenhauer in Overbeck’s predilection for asceticism.<sup>4</sup> To this philosophy Overbeck remained faithful during his whole life. Later on he even had to criticize Nietzsche for not seeing that Christianity is essentially ascetic and as such related to Buddhism.<sup>5</sup>

From his estate his naive pupil C.A. Bernoulli composed a heavily edited book (“Christianity and Culture”, 1919), again stressing the eschatological character of primitive Christianity and venomously criticizing the Culture Protestantism of Harnack, the friend of the Kaiser. The book had an enormous response. And it was not so much the quality of its ideas as the constellation at the time of publication which caused this stir. Overbeck had criticized the synthesis of culture and religion in Bismarck’s Germany which had at that precise moment come to an end after a foolish war.

The lost generation of World War I, Barth, Heidegger, Peterson, detested bourgeois Harnack and turned to Overbeck. This is astonishing

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<sup>3</sup> For Schopenhauer’s influence on Overbeck, see Arnold Pfeiffer, *Franz Overbecks Kritik des Christentums*, Göttingen 1975, 141 and 231.

<sup>4</sup> E. Vischer, “Einleitung”, in Franz Overbeck, *Selbstbekenntnisse*, Basel 1941, 15.

<sup>5</sup> F. Overbeck, *Christentum und Kultur. Gedanken und Anmerkungen zur modernen Theologie* (edited by C.A. Bernoulli), Basel 1919, 33.

because the view that the history of the Church is the secularisation of primitive purity was nothing new. The theory of increasing decadence of Catholicism (*Abfalltheorie*) was invented by Matthias Flacius and the other authors of the Magdeburg Centuries, applied by Gottfried Arnold to Lutheran orthodoxy (1699) and now turned against Protestantism and Pietism itself. These then angry young men missed the point that apocalypticism in general rejects this world, the present era, the existing society, but envisaged and proclaimed the ultimate salvation of the universe, the created world and mankind. “Thy Kingdom come (on earth, so that) Thy will be done on earth as it is (already) in heaven”. It is only Gnosticism, not Apocalypticism or Encratism, which rejects creation.<sup>6</sup> They saw primitive Christianity through philosophical spectacles.

Under the influence of Overbeck, Karl Barth completely revised the first edition of his commentary of Paul’s Letter to the Romans. In the preface of the second edition he called this agnostic “an eminently remarkable and *extremely pious* man” and put him next to Jeremiah, Paul, Luther and other prophets of the faith. All this because Overbeck held that culture, theology and Christian politics cannot be reconciled with authentic Christianity, which rejects life and forsakes creation. From Overbeck—and so, indirectly, from Schopenhauer—Barth learned that life as such is guilty: “The great dissatisfaction which slumbers in every man is due to his creatureliness as such, to the difference between the created spirit and Creative Spirit, which has in itself nothing to do with sin, but is grounded in creation as such”.<sup>7</sup> For Barth in his commentary on the Letter to the Romans the Christ-event is annihilation (“*Aufhebung*”) of the world, time, man, creation. Existence as such is a deadly sin. Sexuality as such can never be reconciled with a pure soul. Later on Barth committed disciplinary genocide by overtalk.

Overbeck also contributed to the revival of the pneumatic exegesis in the twentieth century. In his estate were found some lukewarm words in praise of the allegorical interpretation of the Bible. It was said to be one of the devices to save Christianity in the modern world and was defended against the arrogance of the liberals.<sup>8</sup> Most probably this was not meant seriously: Overbeck believed that a modern man could not

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<sup>6</sup> Barth’s interpretation of the Apocalypse was unrealistic and dialectic, not serious; cf. Gerhard Maier, *Die Johannes Offenbarung und die Kirche*, Tübingen 1981, 549.

<sup>7</sup> H. Schindler, *Barth und Overbeck*, Gotha 1936 (Darmstadt <sup>2</sup>1974), 102.

<sup>8</sup> Overbeck, *Christentum und Kultur*, 89–91.

identify with primitive Christianity anyhow but had seen too often that scholarly exegesis had broken the lives of his students.

His remarks were taken seriously by Wilhelm Vischer, the son of Eberhard Vischer, Overbeck's successor, who in a short monograph had exposed him as a hypocrite and atheist.<sup>9</sup> Sons sometimes revolt against their fathers. Still before and during the Second World War Wilhelm Vischer published remarkable books about the Christ testimony in the Old Testament.<sup>10</sup> These soon were to be followed by L. Goppelt's "Typos", in which "Hebrew" typology was opposed to "Greek" allegory. These books were known to Henri de Lubac, when he wrote "Histoire et Esprit", a rehabilitation of Origen's pneumatic interpretation.<sup>11</sup> In a long and industrious life De Lubac extended his attention to the whole of medieval exegesis and recovered a whole world of symbols for the modern mind, discovering the sense of nonsense. More important still, De Lubac's studies initiated the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church, which shook the world.

Heidegger devoted a special study to the fragment of Anaximander about birth and death which had fascinated Nietzsche in his youth.<sup>12</sup> He has not published a monograph on Overbeck, but was familiar with his work and drew the attention of his pupil Karl Löwith towards him and told him that Overbeck did discern more clearly what Christianity really was than the cultural hero Harnack. Karl Löwith devoted the last chapter of his book "From Hegel to Nietzsche" to the sceptic of Basel. In this work he described all the way which German philosophy went from the wholeness and harmony with the cosmos of a man like Goethe to the godless and nihilistic despair of Marx and Nietzsche. Of this tragic development Overbeck was held to be the logical conclusion and summit.<sup>13</sup>

Erik Peterson also knew Overbeck, who had a profound and lasting influence on his thought. Like his friend Barth he always opined that world and culture were the opposite of Christianity. For him the Kingdom of God is the end of all things, not the consummation: the

<sup>9</sup> E. Vischer, "Einleitung", 41–57.

<sup>10</sup> W. Vischer, *Das Christuszeugnis des Alten Testaments*, I, *Das Gesetz*, München <sup>2</sup>1935; II, *Die früheren Propheten*, Zürich 1942.

<sup>11</sup> H. de Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit. L'intelligence de l'Écriture d'après Origène*, Paris 1950, 437 and *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> M. Heidegger, *Holzwege*, Frankfurt am Main <sup>2</sup>1952, 296–343.

<sup>13</sup> K. Löwith, *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche*, Stuttgart <sup>3</sup>1953 (<sup>1</sup>1939), 402–415.



Church calls man out of the world and its natural structures. The world is an illusion (*scheinhaft*), confronted with the reality of God.

Already in 1926, the year his essay “What is theology?” was published, Peterson had accepted the eschatological perspective of the New Testament, the myth of the second coming which Overbeck had singled out as the hub of primitive Christianity. Already then he also held that the allegorical interpretation of Scripture was an essential part of authentic exegesis and preaching. This determined the direction of his theology, characterized by an open mind for the people of Israel in the past and in the present, which he had soon to defend bravely against its enemies. The Church, according to him, consisted from the very beginning and should also nowadays consist both of Gentiles and of Jews (“The Church of the Gentiles and of the Jews”, 1933). This precluded to his rediscovery of Judaic Christianity, which at that time was considered as a phantom which never existed.

In his “Problem of Nationalism” he defended the thesis that after Christ there was no room for the cult of the nation anymore, because “the angels of the nations”, the deep souls of the peoples, had been overcome by the resurrection. The life of Erik Peterson not only shows that there were Catholic Germans who did resist—a fact easily ignored today—but also that his resistance helped him to discover a neglected, but important aspect of the Christian religion, its Jewish character: “In the *Ecclesia* it is not the *nomos* of the natural order of the nation, which prevails, nor does its realisation oblige God to justify its members. Rather it is the spiritual law of love which rules in the *Ecclesia*” (261).

Synagogue and *Ecclesia* belong to each other until the Last Day. That is why their figures stand together on the walls of our medieval churches: “As long as the world exists, Israel is and remains the chosen people”; “The Christian peoples that loose their faith fall a prey to a barbarisation and lack of substance that is impossible for a Jew”; “The whole of Israel in the end will accept Christ”.

Already here a first indication can be found of his appreciation of asceticism as typically Christian. Voluntary celibacy in the Church is held to be a characteristic feature as against rabbinism, a necessary existential expression of the pneumatic, supernatural sphere as against the fleshly Jewish appreciation of wealth.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Peterson, “Die Kirche aus Juden und Heiden”, 291 n. 23.

In eschatological Christianity Peterson discovered a political remedy against the evils of our times. The Secret Book of Revelation, with its parallelism of *imperator* Christus and Nero *redivivus*, gave him a welcome occasion to protest against the cult of the leader ("Christus als Imperator", Leipzig 1937). The unwordly, otherworldly wisdom of this book, with which Overbeck had not been able to identify, became an impressive and topical weapon against state absolutism.

Peterson was courageous and paid the price for his resistance. He was fired as a professor in Bonn and did not find a new chair of equal value, salary or students. But here again we must say that his political engagement opened his eyes, and ours, for a forgotten aspect of our faith. Though he did not use these words, he discovered that Christianity is primarily the religion of innocent suffering: Christ suffered innocently and the suffering of the Christian is participation in this unique and universal passion. The blood of the martyrs, in which they wash their clothes, is the blood of Christ himself. So Peterson could revitalize the mystical experience of the martyr (and there were martyrs then) as participation in the suffering of Christ: "it is inevitable for everybody who belongs to the Church that he participates in the suffering of Christ" (*Witness to the Truth*, Leipzig 1937, 180).

His greatest contribution, however, was his indictment of political theology. Against his former friend and colleague, the prominent Catholic collaborator Carl Schmidt, he argued that paganism knew and knows a vague monotheism, which acknowledged a God, who functions as king but does not effectively govern the world. Unfortunately Christians of the Arian shade, like Eusebius of Caesarea, accepted this heretical view and gave the State and politics a part of their faith. But as soon as the trinitarian dogma had been established and accepted, no room was left anymore for such a political theology. His detractors have discovered flaws and loopholes in this argumentation, which willingly and consciously was written *cum ira et studio*. But this book (*Monotheism as a political problem*, 1935) remains a monument of learning, genius and passion. And ever since Peterson the relation between Eusebius' unfortunate political theology and his deficient christology is an established fact.

The reverse of political theology for Peterson already then was asceticism. Asceticism and resistance went hand in hand: "In Christian asceticism there is for us, who (to speak with St Paul) carry around the *mortificatio Christi* in our members, one motivation, that of the suffering

with Christ, the mortification with him, who was murdered for us” (*Monotheism*, 181).

Peterson was happy enough to identify with eschatological Christianity and he had learned from Overbeck that this is necessarily ascetic. This prepared his later views on the origin of Christian asceticism, which, however, he always tinged with the colours of Schopenhauerian acosmism. For him the fight against concupiscence was not so much an individual act of personal sanctification, as participation in a cosmic process of *world destruction*. This stress on eschatology and asceticism enabled him to see what nobody saw:

1. At a time that everybody thought that the Jewish Christians of Palestine had vanished into the air after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and that the Pseudo-Clementine writings were a novel without any historical value, Peterson maintained that the reaction against Ferdinand Christian Baur and the Tübinger School had gone too far.
2. When everybody believed in Martin Buber’s crusade against Gnosis, he proclaimed that Gnostic dualism was rooted in Judaism, especially in the view of the two inclinations, the good and the bad one. This, it now turns out, is especially true of Manichaeism.
3. Even before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls he thought that Christian asceticism was of Jewish origin.
4. He was the first to discover the importance of Encratism as distinguished from Gnosticism.

Wherever nowadays these issues are discussed or accepted, the impact of Peterson can be discerned. Virtually every scholar who came to Rome and visited Peterson was impressed by his originality and profound learning. If ever, the oral tradition in this case was of paramount importance. He influenced among others Daniélou, Kretschar and Quispel. His views on Encratism were mainly expounded in short and obscure articles, which may be summarized for the younger generation in the following way:

a. *Baptism, Jewish and Greek*

In his book on the funerary symbolism of the Ancients (1941) Franz Cumont had shown that towards the beginning of our era Greek philosophers localized the rivers of the underworld, Styx and Acheron,

in the heavenly atmosphere above the earth and that some Christians had accepted this. The Belgian scholar quoted the Apocalypse of Paul, where it is said that one has to be baptised in the Acherusian Lake before entering the city of God on high (22–23).

Peterson saw how important this text was for the prehistory of Christian baptism. He found other texts with the same view and could trace them to a Jewish source: “the Apocalypse of Moses”. In a Greek fragment of this work, manuscript D, chapter 37, it is said that Adam after his penance is taken by one of the Seraphim and washed in the Acherusian Lake. Then God orders Michael to put Adam in the Paradise of the third heaven until doomsday. Peterson identified the Acherusian Lake as the river running from the temple in Jerusalem, Ezekiel 47, 2, which is the same as “the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Apocalypse 22, 1). This Jewish concept of an apocalyptic river he found back among the Mandaeans, who taught that the living water (the Jordan of every baptism) comes from under the throne of God (*Ginza* 281, 21, Lidzbarski). This he held to be a speculative interpretation of Ezekiel 47, 2.

This hasty sketch has fargoing implications, which are today more clear than at the time Peterson wrote his essay on “Baptism in the Acherusian Lake” (1955).<sup>15</sup> In the first place it is clear that the localisation of Acheron and Styx on high in Christian and Jewish sources is due to Hellenistic influence: Ezekiel sees the river in the temple on earth, John beholds the throne of God or rather of the Messiah in the realm of Christ in Jerusalem.

In the second place an old thesis of the School of the History of Religions found its confirmation. Albrecht Dieterich had pointed out that the “*psychron hydōr*” of the “Orphic” gold plates from Southern Italy must have something to do with Christian *refrigerium* and Christian baptism.<sup>16</sup> When one hears of baptism in the river of death as a preliminary for eternal life, one involuntarily thinks of Thetis baptising Achilles in the Styx to make him immortal.

<sup>15</sup> E. Peterson, “Die ‘Taufe’ im Acherusischen See”, *VC* 9 (1955) 1–20 (= *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis*, 310–332).

<sup>16</sup> A. Dieterich, *Nekyia. Beiträge zur Erklärung der neuentdeckten Petrusapokalypse*, Leipzig-Berlin 1931, 95 sqq.

Moreover we now know that the Secret Adam of the Mandaeans is a far echo of Ezekiel 1, 26, the *demut kemarēh Adam*. Likewise Mandaean baptism in the living water of “Jordan” could easily stem from a Jewish interpretation of Ezekiel 47, 2. Mani having grown up in a Jewish Christian milieu, the Manichaean “baptism of the gods” which the soul receives in the Milky Way, which was regarded as the Column of Glory or the Perfect Man, could have the same Jewish and Hellenistic origin.

Above all, the celestial baptism after death of each Gnostic, so often mentioned in several “Gnostic” writings of Nag Hammadi, *Zostrianos*, *Trimorphic Protennoia* etc., must have the same, Jewish, Alexandrian, origin. All that material proves at last, and decisively, that Christian baptism had a prehistory, which was not necessarily proselyte baptism, but rather a Hellenic, mysteriosophic and at the same time apocalyptic imagery of immersion in death and life. I am not so sure that this material is relevant for the prehistory of Christian baptism as such, as Peterson thought. John the Baptist’s immersion seems to have been purely eschatological, a device to escape from the coming wrath. But we could imagine that in a congregation of “Hellenists”, for instance in Damascus, the old pagan idea of Life from death, preserved by the mysteries, helped to formulate baptism as an immersion in the death and resurrection of Christ, as we find it in St Paul. Styx and Acherusian Lake were rivers of death, which gave eternal Life, like Pauline baptism. We see again how open Judaism, and in its wake primitive Christianity, was for the mystery religions of the Greeks.

#### b. *Baptism and concupiscence*

Baptism as administered by the Jewish Christians was characterized by still another feature unknown to Gentile Christians.<sup>17</sup>

According to Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 9, 15, 4, the Elchasaïtes treated canine madness in a strange way. When bitten by a dog, a member of this sect should baptise himself with his clothes on and swear that he would not sin again. “Canine madness” here is a metaphor for “adultery”. This transpires from several passages in the Pseudo-Clementine writings, which Peterson rightly considers to be related to the sect of Elkesai. Thus the “immersion after rabies” is a sort of second

<sup>17</sup> E. Peterson, “Die Behandlung der Tollwut bei den Elchasaïten nach Hippolyt”, *RSR* 34 (1947) 232 sqq. (= *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis*, 221–235).

penance, like the one proclaimed by Hermas. In general baptism is conceived by this group as the extinction of the sexual instinct. "Fly to the water. That alone can quench the passion of the fire (of lust). Whosoever does not want to come to the water, is still possessed by the spirit of rabies, which prevents him to come to the living water and be saved" (*Hom.* 11, 26). From this and similar passages in the Clementine writings Peterson concludes that Jewish Christian baptism extinguishes concupiscence, identified with the *jezer hara'*, the evil inclination, well known from Pharisaic sources.

This ascetic interpretation of the sacrament is held to be the primitive and original concept, obscured by Gentile Christianity and restored by St Augustine. Peterson does not tell us how this can be combined with the view of the Clementines that concupiscence, *epithymia*, the instinct of procreation, is thoroughly good, given by God to multiply mankind in order that the *certus numerus praedestinatorum* can be elected (19, 21). This is so typically Jewish and so alien to the Gentile Church that it can hardly be secondary.

### c. *The origins of Christian asceticism*

The *Acts of Paul*, mentioned by Tertullian about 200 A.D., presuppose according to Peterson the *Acts of Peter* and the *Acts of Thomas*.<sup>18</sup> These apocryphal Acts were read by the Encratites and are said to have originated at an early date, about 117 to 138. They have relations with Jewish Christianity. One group of these admitted the virgin birth: adherents of this faction must have been ascetic, perhaps they came from Galilee. The crucifixion of Peter upside down is a symbol of all man, who fall headlong down in the world at their birth, when they leave the womb of their mother. The crucifixion in this position means that the true believer should crucify the world of birth and death into which the evil inclination of concupiscence impels us. Peterson admitted in private conversation that this view comes very near to the Buddhist view that the thirst for life is the origin of all evil.

Nevertheless he maintained that asceticism, thus conceived, did not originate in the anti-material tendencies of Greek philosophy or the metaphysical dualism of Gnosticism, but is a means to realize the eschatological coming of the Kingdom of God. Christian asceticism is

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<sup>18</sup> E. Peterson, "Einige Bemerkungen zum Hamburger Papyrusfragment der 'Acta Pauli'", *VC* 3 (1949) 142-162 (= *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis*, 183-208).

an inseparable element of the Christian faith from the very beginning. Rebirth undoes birth.

To prove that this concept is Jewish Christian, Peterson quotes *Recognitiones* 9, 7 (Rehm, p. 261): “ut in aqua regenerati per opera bona, ignem vetustae nativitatis extinguerent. prima enim nostra nativitas per ignem concupiscentiae descendit, et ideo dispensatione divina secunda haec per aquam introducitur, quae restinguat ignis naturam, ut caelesti spiritu anima inluminata metum primae nativitatis abiciat; si tamen ita de reliquo vivat, ut nullas omnino mundi huius voluptates requirat, sed sit tamquam peregrinus et advena atque alterius civitatis civis”.

This however, according to the present author, could reflect the fingerprints of the fourth century translator into Latin Rufinus. The parallel passage in *Homilies* 19, 23 (Rehm, p. 266) seems to suggest that in the Greek original *genesis* rather had the astrological meaning of “constellation”. There Peter says that evil is due to the horoscope, *klēros*. If one does not like his horoscope, one can appeal to his fate and start to live according to the Law: “If one is reborn and thus has escaped the fate of his constellation and has started to live a Law-abiding life, he will acquire eternal salvation”. This is a well-known Christian topos, which has nothing to do with birth as hereditary guilt: “ita in nobis non genitura plectitur, sed ingenii natura punitur” (Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 36, 2).<sup>19</sup>

In his article on the *Physiologos* Peterson shows that Encratism is not limited to the circles who were branded with heresy by certain Catholics—men like Tatian and Julius Cassian or the group in Asia Minor which left its traces in epigraphical monuments—, but that Encratism also was a widespread movement within the Catholic Church of the early ages.<sup>20</sup> And this is perhaps his greatest contribution to the discussion, because since then scholars need not and cannot be spellbound anymore by the will-o’-the-wisp of a heresy hunter or even a magisterial condemnation but have to discern a very powerful and interesting current of thought and practice without being embarrassed by age old prejudices of people never trained in the art of phenomenological scholarship.

It would be indiscrete to seek in Peterson’s private life the motives for this special interest in this subject. Let it suffice to say that at an early

<sup>19</sup> Ed. Quispel; Leiden 1949, 77.

<sup>20</sup> E. Peterson, “Die Spiritualität des griechischen Physiologos”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 1954, 86 sqq. (= *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis*, 236–253).

date he was already quite engrossed in Kierkegaard. And Kierkegaard not only once disengaged himself and renounced marriage, but with increasing violence denounced this institution. Kierkegaard was an Encratite, like the Tolstoy of the Kreuzer Sonate (at least in theory). It is quite astonishing to read in Peterson's study "Kierkegaard and Protestantism" that the Danish Hamlet was a Pietist and could be vindicated for the Roman Catholic position.<sup>21</sup> It is true that Pietists like Gichtel and Arnold (for a while) were sexual teetotallers. But Pietists also developed the theory of androgyny, which could very well be used to justify marriage as a fulfilment and realisation of wholeness. In fact this is what Franz von Baader, basing himself upon Boehme, was doing in the lifetime of Kierkegaard.

Moreover Peterson has left us an essay on "The laughter of Sarah".<sup>22</sup> In it Peterson considers the wife of Abraham as the prototype of womanhood, revealing the essential being of the female. The female is body exclusively and has no direct access to God. On the contrary the virgin, Mary and those like her, can hear the Word of God. "For the virginity the dialectics of the sexes do not exist anymore". The virgin is no woman anymore, because "a profound disorientation belongs to the essence of woman". Rather strange language for a married Catholic who ought to hold that marriage is a sacrament.

## II. ENCRATISM IN GREEK CHRISTIANITY

It was very fortunate that professor, later Cardinal, Michele Pellegrino could induce the university of Torino to acquire the library of Erik Peterson. As a consequence Pellegrino's pupil and soon successor Franco Bolgiani could write the provisional sketch of Peterson's life which we hope will be followed by a definitive biography, and could publish his fundamental studies on the history of primeval Encratism.<sup>23</sup> According

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<sup>21</sup> E. Peterson, "Kierkegaard und Protestantismus", in: *Marginalien zur Theologie*, München 1956, 17–27.

<sup>22</sup> In *Marginalien zur Theologie*, 57–64.

<sup>23</sup> F. Bolgiani, "Dalla teologia liberale alla escatologia apocalittica: il pensiero e l'opera di Erik Peterson", *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 1 (1965) 1–58; id., "La tradizione eresiologica sull'encratismo, II. La confutazione di Clemente di Alessandria", *AAS* 96 (1961/62) 537–664. Giulia Sfameni Gasparro holds that Tatian was an encratite already when he wrote his *Discourse against the Greeks* and taught the preexistence of the soul like Julius Cassian; see "Protologia ed encratismo: esempi di esegesi encratita di Gen 1–3", *Augustiniana* 22 (1982) 75–89.



to Bolgiani, Encratism, characterized by its rejection of wine, meat and marriage, which it held to be fornication and *phthora* (death), should not be identified with Gnosticism, as the Fathers of the Church suggested, but should be considered on its own merits as an independent current with Jewish Christian roots. Nor should we assume that it was eliminated immediately from the Church just because Irenaeus condemned it about 180 A.D. The Syriac speaking Church never condemned Tatian as long as it preserved its independence and always retained an encratite flavour.

The main source for the study of Encratism, the third book of the *Stromateis* of Clement of Alexandria, was divided by Bolgiani into three sections: one reflected the views of Tatian, one the views of Julius Casian (e.g. to the effect that the preexistent soul, having become female through its concupiscence, had come down into the world of birth and death) and one described the Encratites of Alexandria who still at that time existed within the Catholic Church.

The origins of this form of asceticism were eschatological and christological. Christ had said that in the resurrection there would be no marriage anymore. Christ had risen from the dead. That meant that Christians had already been given to live in the end of times. "They had already received the resurrection", because the realisation of eschatology had begun. But then marriage had been abolished, which the Law condoned but the new dispensation definitely forbade. Moreover the Encratites held that they should imitate the life of Christ, who had been poor and unmarried.

A protological motivation of Encratism was not absent either. Original sin, the eating of the forbidden fruit, was copulation, which was followed by death. This was the fruit which contained bitterness: *omne animal post coitum triste*. Mothers who brought forth babies, destined them for death: they should stop "foddering death".

All this was taught in Alexandria by Encratites within the Catholic Church in the time before Clement of Alexandria (ca. 200).

These insights of Bolgiani have neither been disputed nor confuted and met with general approval of the experts. If all New Testament scholars could have read Italian, quite a few disastrous developments in their field of scholarship would not have taken place.

It is plausible that these Encratites of Alexandria knew and used the *Gospel of Thomas*, because Clement of Alexandria also quotes a well-known Saying of Jesus in the form it has in this apocryphal writ-

ing.<sup>24</sup> They certainly were familiar with the *Gospel according to the Egyptians*, a possible source of the *Gospel of Thomas* and quoted by Julius Cassian.

Asceticism has become protologic as soon as it became Hellenic. The *Gospel of the Egyptians* is very impressive when it teaches that Thanatos is the consequence of Eros and that Jesus came to redeem mankind from its thirst of life and to realize “Nirvana” here and now. Whenever the believer has overcome the split within himself—“the two have become one and the male with the female neither male nor female”—, the original androgyny of Adam, before Eve was taken from his side, has been restored; man has “trampled on the garment of shame”, that is, he has annihilated the body which was a punishment for his original sin. Death does not exist anymore, because women do not bear children anymore: Jesus has undone the works of the female. No doubt this Gospel also taught that Jesus was androgynous, and that he revealed the insight that desire created an illusion. Early in the history of Alexandrian Christianity thoughts were uttered that remind us of Indian Buddhism (and Schopenhauer).

The antecedents of these views are to be found in the Hellenic tradition. Heraclitus had observed:

“Once born, they desire to live and that also means to be destined to die, or rather to be absorbed into the eternal cycle of the cosmos. And they leave behind children born to die” (fragment 120). Stobaeus VI, 35: “Birth of a human is the beginning of death.” Manilius *Astronomica: nascentes morimur finisque ab origine pendet*: “as soon as we are born, we start to die and so our end is implied in our beginning”.

Ever since, the dialectics of *genesis* and *phthora*, of Eros and Thanatos, and the awareness that these categories indicated an inferior level of reality, have dominated the Greek scene. Moreover Plato in the *Symposium* found that man longs to find his counterpart, with whom he once was united and that this striving for wholeness was love. And in the *Timaeus* he opined that males who had lived cowardly and unjustly, in a following reincarnation had to become females (*gynaikes metephuonto*,

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<sup>24</sup> Strom. V, 14, 96 (Stählin II, 389, 14–16): “He that seeks will not rest until he finds, and he that has found shall marvel; and he that has marvelled shall reign; and he that has reigned shall rest.” Cf. *Gospel of Thomas*, log. 2: “Jesus said: Let him who seeks, not cease seeking until he finds, and when he finds, he will be troubled, and when he has been troubled, he will marvel and he will reign over the All”.

90 e), which implies that the female might become male again, an anticipation of Freud's view that woman is a deficient man with penis envy. This is the origin of the Encratite view that a woman must make herself male to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (*Gospel of Thomas* 114). It was accepted by Origen. For this reason female saints of the Greek Church like Pelagia and Matrona wore male clothes after their conversion: women should become travestites in order to be saved.

Alexandrian Judaism had integrated these insights already before Philo. This transpires from the fact that he sometimes polemicises against the view, also preserved in the Talmud, that Adam was androgynous ("male and female He made him"),<sup>25</sup> and he elsewhere says that Adam was "bodiless, neither male nor female" (*Opif.* 134) and also remarks that the female should be changed into the male (*Quaest. Ex.* I, 8). It was from these hellenized Jews of Alexandria that the author of the *Poimandres* derived his view that the essential Anthropos (Adam), who fell into the body, was androgynous (15) and that the cause of his death is Eros (18).

There is nothing specifically Gnostic in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. It is Encratite. Encratism admitted creation, incarnation and the resurrection of the body. Themes like the identity of man and God, the split within the deity, the revolt against the creator, the mythology of the pleroma are conspicuously absent here. The same is true of the Apocryphal *Acts of Peter and Andrew*.

The new fragment of the *Acts of Andrew* acquired by me in 1956, of which R. van den Broek has prepared a new Coptic edition, tells us about a soldier and his sister. This girl is a virgin, a great ascetic, who is near to God because of her purity, prayers and alms. It is in vain that a neighbouring magician sends some familiar spirits to seduce her. Her brother is saved from his obsession, throws away his uniform and has himself baptised to put on the uniform of Christ.<sup>26</sup> This prototype of the Faust story, the Encratite alternative for the Gnostic Simon and Helen, agrees with the other apocryphal Acts in that it considers

<sup>25</sup> Ps.-Clem., *Hom.* III, 54, 2: "For He who created man at first, made *him* male and female". Cf. the parallels in the Rabbinic literature *b Megillah* 9 a: "Male and female he created *him*. But they did not write: 'created them'"; *Gen.* R. 8, 1: "R. Jeremiah b. Leazar said: "When the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam, He created him an *hermaphrodite (androgynos)*".

<sup>26</sup> "An unknown Fragment of the Acts of Andrew (Pap. Copt. Utrecht N. 1)", *VC* 10 (1956) 129–148 (= *Gnostic Studies*, II, Istanbul 1975, 271–287). R. van den Broek in: Jean-Marie Prieur, *Acta Andreae, Textus*, Turnhout 1989, 657–671.

marriage as fornication and just as un-christian as military service. In the *Acts of Peter* Peter is said to have been crucified upside down (the position in which a child is born) to manifest that the dying Christ and every Encratite Christian undoes the world of birth and death into which Adam fell and so realizes the Nirvana of the Kingdom come here and now (*Mart. Petri* 9).

The new material which has come to light recently only confirmed the correctness of the Encratite approach towards Early Christian literature. Henry Chadwick had already shown that the *Sentences of Sextus* (second century, Alexandria) were both Encratite and open to Pythagorean lore.<sup>27</sup> The Coptic fragments of this writing, found at Nag Hammadi, contain nothing which should induce us to change this considered opinion. *The Exegesis on the Soul*, also a writing found at Nag Hammadi (II, 6), contains nothing that could not be Encratite. The soul is said to have been originally virginal and androgynous, but now female after she has fallen into a body. At her prayer she is restored to her heavenly bridegroom, with whom she was originally joined before the woman (Eve) led astray the man who is her brother (Adam) and left her perfect husband because of the treachery of Aphrodite. All this is distinctively Christian and Encratite, very much in the trend of Julius Cassian, who may have been the author of this treatise.

Much has been done by Ugo Bianchi and his team to elucidate the influence of Alexandrian Encratism on Origen and his school. It is not only the theme of the double creation in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa that has an Encratite flavour, but also the theme of birth leading to death lingers on in this tradition, as Paola Pisi has shown.<sup>28</sup>

One wonders whether Origen castrated himself, not to emasculate himself, but in order to become male again. On the other hand one should not forget that Gregory of Nyssa certainly, Basil of Caesarea probably was influenced by Syrian, Aramaic Encratism. Gregory of Nyssa read and quoted the *Great Letter* of Macarius and praised ascetics from Mesopotamia as exemplary Christians, when he addressed the Council of Constantinople during the ordination service for Gregory of

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<sup>27</sup> H. Chadwick, *The Sentences of Sextus. A Contribution to the History of Early Christian Ethics*, Cambridge 1959.

<sup>28</sup> Paola Pisi, *Genesis e phthorá. Le motivazioni protologiche della verginità in Gregorio di Nissa e nella tradizione dell'enkrateia*, Roma 1981, 130–131.

Nazianz as bishop of the capital.<sup>29</sup> The Encratite movement of Edessa, which soon afterwards was branded as Messalian, and its most prominent spokesman, Macarius, certainly influenced the bishop of Nyssa.

It requires further study to establish to what extent the same is true of his brother, Basil, directly, through information about Syriac Christianity, or indirectly, through the influence of his bosom friend and bitter enemy Eusthatus of Sebaste, an erratic Encratite. Jean Meyendorff recently pointed out how through Basil this type of spirituality became a persistent element of Greek and Russian Orthodoxy.<sup>30</sup> And it is no wonder that one of the most influential Orthodox thinkers, Nikolai Berdjajew, was a staunch supporter of Encratism and a declared enemy both of marriage and of sexual intercourse.

It is an urgent task of a younger generation to study the influence of these ideas upon the Cappadocians. At the same time the origins of Hellenic Encratism still have to be explored. Was Tatian already an Encratite, when he wrote his apology, which has so much in common with the *Gospel of Thomas*? Were the Jewish teachers opposed in the Pastoral Letters to Timothy and Titus, who abolished marriage, already motivated by the protological considerations of Hellenic Encratism? That they were not Gnostics but Encratites is absolutely sure. But the question is whether they were Judaic, or from the Diaspora and familiar with Greek views about birth and death. They may have come from Alexandria.

We must see, however, this Encratite protology as a foreground rationalisation for an already existing Judaic Christian asceticism. Owing to the exertions of Roberts it is now an established fact that Egyptian Christianity was founded by Judaic Christians from Palestine.<sup>31</sup> As in the *Teachings of Silvanus*, masterly discussed by J. Zandee,<sup>32</sup> we must distinguish in Alexandrian Encratism a Hellenic foreground and a

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<sup>29</sup> "Gregorius van Nyssa en de mystiek", *NTT* 24 (1969/70) 250–255 (translated edition in this book); cf. A.M. Ritter, "Il secondo concilio ecumenico e la sua ricezione: stato della ricerca", *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 2 (1981) 341–365.

<sup>30</sup> J. Meyendorff, "St Basil, Messalianism and Byzantine Christianity", *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 24 (1980) 219–233.

<sup>31</sup> C.H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (The Schweich Lectures 1977), Oxford 1979; cf. M. Mees, *Gesù, chi era per i primi cristiani?*, Firenze 1982, 15: "Però si direbbero anche fino ad Alessandria e le origini del loro cristianesimo dovrebbero risalire all'attività missionaria giudeo-cristiana con Gerusalemme come punto di partenza".

<sup>32</sup> J. Zandee, "'The Teachings of Silvanus' (NHC VII, 4) and Jewish Christianity" in: R. van den Broek and M.J. Vermaseren (ed.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic*

Judaic background. It is this eschatologic, apocalyptic motivation of asceticism that is primitive and essential.

### III. ENCRATISM IN ARAMAIC CHRISTIANITY

The rediscovery of Encratism has also enabled us to rewrite the history of Syriac speaking or Aramaic Christianity. It is no longer possible to write the history of Edessa without using the word Encratism or mentioning the movement of Messalianism (which started in Edessa), as J.B. Segal did still in 1970.<sup>33</sup> We now see clearly that Encratism was present in Edessa even before Tatian returned to the East (c. 180), because the *Gospel of Thomas*, written about 140 in this blessed city, the Athens of the East, is Encratic. And it is quite possible that the optimism, appreciation of marriage, and love of creation which characterize the theories of Bardesanes of Edessa, are an overconscious reaction against this rather Buddhist shade of Christianity.

Macarius, the Greek speaking Syrian from Mesopotamia, used and quoted the *Gospel of Thomas*. And even if he was not a leader of this sect, called Simeon of Mesopotamia, but an older guru who inspired the indigenous charismatic spirituality of Mesopotamia which later was condemned by the Greek Church as heresy, it is completely clear that Macarius is a representative of Syriac Encratism (he quotes Tatian).<sup>34</sup> The different stages which mark this specific tradition are:

1. the *Gospel of Thomas*, c. 140 (Edessa) written by an Encratite author, who used the *Gospel according to the Egyptians*, a Jewish Christian source and a Hermetic collection of sentences or traditions related to these writings;<sup>35</sup>
2. the *Diatessaron* of Tatian, written about 180 somewhere in the Near East, in Syriac, with tendentious variants. So, in Matthew 1, 19 Joseph is not the husband of Mary, but only a just man. And not even on the cross does Jesus drink wine;

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*Religions, presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday* (EPRO 91), Leiden 1981, 498–584.

<sup>33</sup> J.B. Segal, *Edessa, 'the Blessed City'*, Oxford 1970, 92.

<sup>34</sup> *Makarius, das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle*, Leiden 1967, 14–17.

<sup>35</sup> “The *Gospel of Thomas* revisited”, in B. Barc (ed.), *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi* (Québec, 22–25 août 1978), Québec-Louvain 1981, 218–266, esp. 254–264.

3. the *Odes of Solomon*, of unknown date, but familiar with the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and the *Gospel of Thomas* and therefore probably written in the second century;
4. the *Acts of Thomas*, written in Edessa about 225 A.D., proclaiming the good news of Christian divorce;
5. the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, found at Nag Hammadi. According to John D. Turner it presents traditions about the apostle Thomas such as were prevalent within the ascetic Christianity of Syrian Edessa and therefore was probably composed in "Syria" (= Mesopotamia) during the first half of the third century;<sup>36</sup>
6. the *Dialogue of the Saviour*, which presupposes the Gospel of Thomas and is equally Encratic;
7. the *Liber Graduum*, related with Messalianism though probably reflecting an earlier stage of this charismatic movement and certainly Encratic, as M. Kmosko observed rightly in his edition of 1926.<sup>37</sup> Peterson knew this writing at an early date and saw that the doctrine of hereditary sin as expounded by these Encratites and Messalians, and also by Macarius, had implications for the similar views of St Augustine and the Western Church.<sup>38</sup> Even if Guillaumont is right that the *Liber Graduum* does not reflect the specific views of the Messalians (in Mesopotamia a movement within the Church), it is best understood in the perspective of the age old Encratic tradition of Edessa;<sup>39</sup>
8. the most beautiful fruit which grew on this pedigree is the spirituality of Macarius. As J.H. van de Bank has shown, the writings of this great mystic influenced deeply Russian Christianity, were unknown in the West during the Middle Ages, but rediscovered by Pietism (Arnold, Wesley) and Plantijn's Family of Love, an oecumenical, introverted mysticism beyond Calvinism and the Counter-Reformation.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> J.D. Turner, "The Book of Thomas the Contender (II, 7)", in: J.M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, Leiden 1977, 188-194, esp. 188.

<sup>37</sup> M. Kmosko, *Liber Graduum* (PO I, 3), Paris 1926, CIX.

<sup>38</sup> E. Peterson, "Die Schrift des Eremiten Markus über die Taufe und die Messalianer", *ZNW* 31, 1932, 273-289.

<sup>39</sup> A. Guillaumont, "Situation et signification du Liber Graduum dans la spiritualité Syriacque", *OCA* 1974, 311-322; id. art. "Liber Graduum" in: *DSp* IX, 749-754.

<sup>40</sup> J.H. van de Bank, *Macarius en zijn invloed in de Nederlanden*, diss. Utrecht 1977, Amsterdam 1977.

There is no direct evidence that Marcionitism or Gnosticism were present in Edessa during all the ages before Ephraem Syrus. Their presence is boldly concluded from hints and allusions, cannot be proven decisively, but remains possible.

It has been suggested that this Encratism was of Judaic, Palestinian origin:

- a. Kmosko traced back the aversion from sexuality in the *Liber Graduum* to the Pharisaic *jezer hará*.<sup>41</sup>
- b. Vööbus found indications in Aphraates that celibacy once was a requirement for baptism in Mesopotamia and supposed that Essenes had been involved in the mission to Edessa and had imported their asceticism into Syriac Christianity.<sup>42</sup>
- c. Marguerite Harl and Else Morard showed that *monachos*, first found in the Gospel of Thomas and a translation of Syriac *ihidaya* ('the single one'), goes back to Hebrew *jahid*, indicating a pious or holy man and even sometimes a bachelor. That was the meaning of *ihidaya*, before it came to mean: monk.<sup>43</sup> A. Guillaumont argued that in the Old Testament and the rabbinic tradition the man who is not double hearted, but orientated towards God with a singleness of mind, is held to be the ideal believer.<sup>44</sup>
- d. In the *Fihrist* an-Nadim tells that the father of Mani Fattiq was called by a Voice not to eat meat, or to drink wine and not to sleep with his wife, whereupon he joined the Mughtasila (Baptists, a surname for Jewish Christian Elkesaites).<sup>45</sup> From this it is often concluded that these Elkesaites were Encratites, though strictly speaking an-Nadim does not say so. This is extremely improbable. According to the Pseudo-Clementine writings, which are related to the Elkesaites, concupiscence is good, and marriage is a blessing. It seems more

<sup>41</sup> Kmosko, *Liber Graduum*, CXLI–CXLII.

<sup>42</sup> A. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient. A Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East*, Vol. I (CSCO 184), Louvain 1958, 10–30.

<sup>43</sup> M. Harl, "A propos des *Logia* de Jésus: le sens du mot *monachos*", *REG* 73 (1960) 464–474; F.-E. Morard, *Monachos Moine. Histoire du terme grec jusqu' au 4<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Fribourg 1973.

<sup>44</sup> A. Guillaumont, "Monachisme et éthique judéo-chrétienne", in: *Judéo-Christianisme. Recherches historiques et théologiques offertes en hommage au Cardinal Daniélou* (RSR 60, 1972), Paris 1972 199–218, esp. 213–218 (= *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien. Pour une phénoménologie du monachisme*, Bégrolles en Mauges, 47–66, esp. 61–66).

<sup>45</sup> Ibn an-Nadim, *Fihrist*, 327, 30–328, 10.



plausible that Mani or his followers have extrapolated Manichaean ethics into the religious experience of Mani's father.

Now there can be no doubt whatsoever that Aramaic Christianity of Edessa is based upon Judaic foundations. Even if there was no other evidence, the imagery of Ephraem's hymn, the non-Greek theology of Aphraates would suffice to postulate such Palestinian origins.

But the indications abound. Let me just mention a new argument, my twentieth. In the Liturgy of Addai and Mari<sup>46</sup> and in the fifth *Catechesis* (6) of Cyrillus of Jerusalem the narrative of the institution of the eucharist ("this is my flesh... this is my blood: this do in remembrance of me") is conspicuously absent.<sup>47</sup> This hints to a period in the congregation of Jerusalem, in which these words were not spoken, because the eucharist was not an anamnesis of Jesus' last supper, but a joyful anticipation of the royal meal in the Kingdom of God: "breaking bread in a private house they did eat their meal with exultation (*agalliasis*) and singleness of heart" (Acts 2, 46). That is also the reason why the Gospel of John describes the last supper, but "omits" the words of the institution of the eucharist.

The Liturgy of Addai and Mari seems to be based on a Judaic Christian Gospel written by John the prophet, the author of the Apocalypse, and reflects the liturgy of the Church of Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup> This feature was

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<sup>46</sup> For Anaphora of the Apostles Addai and Mari see H.A.J. Wegman, "Une anaphore incomplète? Les Fragments sur Papyrus Strasbourg Gr. 254" in: R. van den Broek and M.J. Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions*, 432–450.

<sup>47</sup> Omission of the story of the institution of the eucharist and the anamnesis in Cyrillus, *Mystical Catecheses* V, 6 (sanctus) and V, 7 (epiklesis); cf. SC 126 (ed. A. Piédagnel), 155.

<sup>48</sup> The Gospel of John omits the words of the institution and the anamnesis, possibly because it is a redaction of a Judaic Christian Gospel, written for the congregation of Ephesus by John the prophet, the author of the Apocalypse, who transmits the tradition of Jerusalem. See G. Quispel, "John and Jewish Christianity", *Gnostic Studies*, II, 210–229, and id. "Eros and Agape in the Gospel of John", *Siculorum Gymnasium* N.S. 29, 1976, 383–386. Paul, once a missionary of the congregation of Antioch, seems to transmit the Antiochene tradition concerning the Last Supper in 1 Cor. 11, 23–26 with the story of the institution and the anamnesis. Joachim Jeremias (*Abendmahlswoorte*, 48) thinks that John passes over in silence the institution of the Eucharist because of the *disciplina arcani* attested for the fourth century. R. Bultmann (*Evangelium des Johannes*) who thinks this omission "the most astonishing of the Johannine description" (348), rightly says that this meal is *not* a Pesach meal and that John's chronology on the 13th Nisan is the correct one. And yet he thinks that John is silent about Eucharist (and Baptism) because he was suspicious of Sacraments and held that the Word alone purifies and sanctifies (360). The truth seems to be more simple: "John", using a Judaic Christian source, describes a Quartodeciman Pascha as usual in Ephesus and Jerusalem where

preserved in later times. Just as the Gospel in the church on Mount Zion in the fourth century still preserved the marginal notes taken from *to Ioudaikón* (the Judaic Gospel of the Nazoraeans) and just as this church stood on the place of the first church or rather synagogue and just as they later still showed there the chair of James, in the same way the gentile Church of Aelia Capitolina had preserved this original feature. Clearly the Church of Edessa had borrowed this remarkable "omission" from the primitive church on Mount Zion. Therefore we must maintain that first of all the Nazoraeans of Jerusalem brought their version of the Good News to Edessa, where the Christians until this day still style themselves as Nazoraeans.

Therefore many of the above mentioned Jewish elements in Mesopotamian Christianity may owe their origin to the Palestinian mission. This is not to say that Aramaic Encratism as such can be derived from Jerusalem. We know nothing of celibacy as a requirement for baptism in Judaic Christianity. But in *Stromateis* III, 82, 6 Clement of Alexandria refutes the view of Tatian, according to which since the coming of Christ marriage has been abolished.<sup>49</sup> So the Encratite Tatian is the only Aramaean we know of who required celibacy from every Christian, and we know how influential he was in Edessa and its surroundings. Unconditional celibacy must have been introduced by him and earlier Encratites: "Jesus said: 'many are standing at the door, but only the bachelors will enter the bridal chamber (of eternal bliss)'" (Thomas, 75). Moreover, the relations between Christian Alexandria and Christian Edessa were very direct: already before c. 200 three different copies of the *Gospel of Thomas*, written in Edessa, were circulating in Egypt, as the Oxyrrhynchus papyri 1, 654, 655 prove. Alexandrian second century Encratism could easily radiate to Edessa.

It has been shown recently that a Hermetic Saying to be located in Alexandria ("Who knows himself, knows (the) All") was known both to the redactor of the *Gospel of Thomas* and the author of the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, both living in Edessa. The Hermetic centre of Harran, which became so important in Islamic times, has very old antecedents indeed.

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after fasting and praying the eschatological meal was anticipated, which was not a memorial service. According to John the prophet, the Lord is present at the meal (*Apocalypse* 3, 20).

<sup>49</sup> "The *Gospel of Thomas* revisited", 235.

Therefore we conclude that Egyptian Enkratism was imported to Mesopotamia at a very early date. It is against this background that Manichaeism becomes understandable. Manichaeism is not exclusively Enkratite, because the overwhelming majority of its adherents, the *auditors*, were married or lived with concubines, and only a few *electi* lived a poor, wandering, celibatary life (as we shall show, this distinction, taken from Syriac Christianity, cf. the *perfecti* and *iusti* in the *Liber Graduum*, can be traced back to Judaic Christianity: “si vis perfectus esse”, Matth. 19, 21). Moreover, Manichaeism to a large extent is a rationalisation of its founder’s personal experiences. Being a cripple, he reacted against the Judaic Christian milieu of Elkesaites in Southern Babylonia in which he grew up and which stressed the view that God is the origin of all evil, also of bodily deficiencies. Here, much more than in Iranian Mazdeism lies the origin of his dualism. Mani was no Persian, whatever the Fathers of the Church may say, but a Babylonian Jew who happened to be a subject of Iran. If all evil comes from a negative principle, matter, then of necessity “concupiscence”, which according to Mani dominates man completely, is to be attributed to the realm of darkness and does not really belong to man. No Enkratite ever said so: according to Julius Cassian the soul from itself brought forth concupiscence. On the other hand, Mani experienced several times the *dualitudo* between the soul and its twin, the guardian angel from heaven, the immanent soul and the transcendent Spirit, or rather the Ego and the Self. This concept of man originated in Pythagoreism, was taken over by Jews and Judaic Christians, but integrated into Aramaic Christianity (*Gospel of Thomas* 83, 84; *Song of the Pearl* in the *Acts of Thomas*). This Aramaic tradition was amplified by Mani into a cosmic vision of life suffering in the world, in plants, animals and man (*Jesus patibilis*) and saved by Christ in his different manifestations.

This extremely profound solution to the problem of innocent suffering was inspired by the Valentinian interpolation in the *Acts of John* (103: πάσχουσι συμπάσχει) and has nothing to do with Enkratism as such. For all these reasons it would be misleading to call Manichaeism Enkratic, though it presupposes the historical phenomenon of Syriac ecclesiastical Enkratism.

Two problems remain:

A. We have identified the intellectual author of the edifying idea that the female must become male again. That was Plato. This is repeated by Porphyry (*ad Marc.* 33) and Philo (*Quaest. Exod.* 1, 8) and Julius Cas-

sian. Therefore nothing prevents us from postulating logion 114 of "Thomas" (I will make her male (again)) for Alexandria and the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. But this Saying seems to contradict logion 22: "When you make the male and the female into a single one etc.". We find here a very authentic description of androgyny which goes beyond the exclusively male and the exclusively female and is just human because it reconciles the two poles. It has been argued that this Saying, also to be found in a shorter form in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* (when the two become one and the male with the female is neither male nor female) and in several other variations, is akin to Paul's view that in Christ is neither man nor woman (Gal. 3, 28)<sup>50</sup> and represents another version of the same, pre-Pauline tradition. Logion 89 and the *Liber Graduum* transmit a Saying of Jesus to the effect that he who made the inside also made the outside and he who made the outside also made the inside.<sup>51</sup> Could this, or a similar *ipsissimum verbum* be the nucleus of the Saying 22, about the equality of man and woman, which is anyhow very much in the spirit of Jesus who had no inhibitions or prejudices concerning women?

B. Recently Paul-Hubert Poirier has published a new edition, translation and commentary of the *Hymn of the Pearl*.<sup>52</sup> He shows that the titles and place names mentioned in this poem reflect faithfully the situation in the Parthian empire. This, however, according to me, proves nothing about the origin of the ideas, because in Edessa of course this was familiar lore. Once again Poirier gives a description of the *daēna* in *Īst* 22, 7–12 to explain that the robe or the Self which comes to the encounter of the prince is of Iranian origin, because its stature grew in accordance with the working of the man on earth (92).

Is this a convincing argument? I do not think so. In the first place the *daēna* is female, whereas the robe, the precise counterpart, likeness and image of the prince, is male like its forbear, the Hebrew *iqonin* and the Judaic Christian guardian angel (Acts 12, 15).<sup>53</sup> In the second place, for imaginative thinking there is no difference between the angel or Self, the house in heaven and the robe which is the resurrection body.

<sup>50</sup> H. Paulsen, "Einheit und Freiheit der Söhne Gottes (Gal 3, 26–29)", *ZNW* 71 (1980) 74–95.

<sup>51</sup> Makarius, *das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle*, 90.

<sup>52</sup> P.-H. Poirier, *L'Hymne de la Perle des Actes de Thomas* (Homo Religiosus 8), Louvain-la-Neuve 1981.

<sup>53</sup> "Gnosis und Religionswissenschaft" in *Gnostic Studies* II, 259–270, esp. 268.

Paul identifies the robe with the house above: “We have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”; he desires “to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (2 Cor. 5, 1–2). In the *Acts of Thomas* 17–25, it is told how the house in heaven is built for the king by the good works of Thomas on earth. And Poirier himself quotes a passage from Ephraem Syrus (*Hymns* 2, 1–2) to the effect that the gate of paradise becomes great or small according to the stature of the believer. Also a Jew can believe that his house or his garment grows with his good works. No need, then, to appeal to Persia. Carsten Colpe has confirmed that the concept of the heavenly Self in conjunction with the earthly Ego both in Valentinianism and Manichaeism comes from the West, from Greece and Israel and only later on, in Mani’s religion, has coalesced with *Daēna*.<sup>54</sup> No earlier occurrence of this syncretism is attested. Maybe Mani took it from the Edessene Christians who produced the *Hymn of the Pearl*.

Poirier in one place seems to admit that the *Hymn of the Pearl* is a Christian poem, which presupposes the view of Tatian that soul and spirit (robe) form a syzygy. He has not seen that the *pneuma* figures as *daimon* and guardian angel in Egyptian and Syrian texts of Judaic Christian origin.<sup>55</sup> But the specific doctrine that soul and spirit form a *conjunctio*, so clearly elaborated in the *Hymn of the Pearl*, is characteristic of Tatian (*Contra Graecos* 13). This then means that the poem has undergone Encratite influence. Moreover I must maintain that the Hymn shows familiarity with logion 76 of the *Gospel of Thomas* and not with Mt. 13, 46, because it mentions the load (4) and the one pearl (*Mt.: one pearl of great price*). This, however, is the Judaic Christian version of the parable.<sup>56</sup> The prince strips off the filthy garment (62) and is clothed with the robe which is the Self (96). This could be an illustration of 2 Cor. 5, 3, where Paul says that the believer, even if at death he is stripped of the body, will not be naked like Adam after the fall (*ekdusamenos* D\* af<sup>c</sup> *Marcion Macarius*), but will be clothed with the house or the robe (or the true Self), as Adam was with sanctifying grace and glory and the garment of light before the fall. Then the poet would

<sup>54</sup> C. Colpe, “Daēnā, Lichtjungfrau, zweite Gestalt. Verbindungen und Unterschiede zwischen zarathustrischer und manichäischer Selbst-Anschauung”, in: *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions*, 58–77.

<sup>55</sup> “Genius and Spirit” in M. Krause (ed.), *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts, in honour of Pahor Labib* (NHS 6), Leiden 1975, 155–169.

<sup>56</sup> 12 b; Poirier, 330: “*le margerita hada*”; the Greek version of the *Acts of Thomas* has “*ton hena margariten*” (108; Lipsius-Bonnet, 220, 7).

have known the *Corpus Paulinum*, which most probably was brought to Edessa by the Encratites.<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand the prince is sent to the world to fulfill a task. According to one Middle Platonist, Calvisius Taurus, the soul is sent down from its preexistent abode above, she does not fall. And the prince represents the soul. But according to Julius Cassian the soul does fall owing to its wantonness. These two views existed already in the school of Plato.<sup>57a</sup>

#### IV. LATIN ENCRATISM

Latin Christianity in Africa before Tertullian was pluriform: there were Judaic Christians, with their own, specific Gospel tradition, which influenced both the Codex Palatinus and the Codex Bobbiensis (Afra); there were Gnostics, Marcionites and Valentinians; there were Monarchianists like Minucius Felix; and there were Encratites.<sup>58</sup> The latter's views can be read in the writing *De Centesima*, which originated in Africa in the second century.

We find there the well known Encratite teaching that a Christian has to *abandon* his parents and his private property (54). The author quotes Sayings of Jesus with the same tendentious variants as the Encratites quoted by Clement of Alexandria in the third book of his *Stromateis*.<sup>59</sup> This seems to show that Encratism was imported in Carthage from Alexandria, from one seaport to another seaport.

We are accustomed to consider the Encratites as heretics, because we accept without much ado the views of the victors, the bishops of the Catholic Church. But it is much more probable that in Carthage, as in Alexandria, the Encratites originally were a current, or faction,

<sup>57</sup> Makarius, *das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle*, 57–60.

<sup>57a</sup> H.J.W. Drijvers thinks that the fifth century *Life of Alexius*, of Edessene origin, also reflects the Encratite view contained in the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Acts of Thomas* and the *Odes of Solomon*. Drijvers denies flatly that these writings are Gnostic; see his "Die Legende des heiligen Alexius und der Typus des Gottesmannes im syrischen Christentum", in: M. Schmidt and C.F. Geyer (eds.), *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter* (Internationales Kolloquium, Eichstätt 1981), Regensburg 1982, 187–217.

<sup>58</sup> "African Christianity before Minucius Felix and Tertullian" in: J. den Boeft and A.H.M. Kessels (eds.), *Actus. Studies in Honour of H.L.W. Nelson*, Utrecht 1982, 257–335.

<sup>59</sup> "African Christianity before Minucius Felix and Tertullian", 302.

within the Church. The *Gospel of the Egyptians* was known to a grass-roots Christian like Perpetua. In her famous vision she beheld how she took her clothes off and became male: “Et expoliata sum et facta sum masculus” (10, 7). The first can mean that she “put off her shame”, her “garment of skin” and “destroyed the works of the female”, both well-known concepts of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. That the female has to become male again in order to become human, is implied in the words of Julius Cassian that the soul, having become female owing to her concupiscence, has fallen into the world of birth and death. Tertullian too teaches in *De cultu feminarum* 1, 2, 5 that the female must become male in order to come to heaven: this may be due to Encratite influence. There even were bold, progressive “virgins” in Carthage, who went through the movements of unveiling themselves in church (*De virginibus velandis* 13). They were Encratites who had put off “the veil of corruption” and were not ashamed anymore, in agreement with the teaching of the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. And they demanded the right to administer the sacrament of baptism and to preach the Gospel in church, after the example of Thecla in the Encratite *Acts of Paul*:

Quodsi (ali)quae Acta Pauli quae perperam scripta sunt—exemplum Theclae!—ad licentiam mulierum docendi tinguendique defendunt, . . . (*De baptismo* 17, 5)

If some women quote the falsely so-called Acts of Paul—the example of Thecla—to defend their right to teach in Church . . .

Encratism was much more satisfactory for women than Catholicism.

Encratism seems to have persisted in Christian Africa, because we find it also in the 4th century African author Lactantius. This means a completely new perspective of Christian Latin literature, which always has been seen as reflecting the explicitation of Roman Catholic language and doctrine. No Encratism is attested for the city of Rome; it certainly is not Roman, but Alexandrian in origin. And yet the Christian Cicero now turns out to be one of its adherents. Wlosok showed how deeply Lactantius was imbued by Hermetic lore.<sup>60</sup> But also his indebtedness to this other Alexandrian current is clear by now.

While commenting on a passage in a Coptic *Sermon on Maria* concerning the phoenix Roel van den Broek established that this text contained

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<sup>60</sup> A. Wlosok, *Laktanz und die philosophische Gnosis. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der gnostischen Erlösungsvorstellung*, Heidelberg 1960.

certain rare items also to be found in the writing *De ave phoenice*. He proved that this Latin poem is Christian and has rightly been attributed to Lactantius. In this work the phoenix is primarily a symbol of the Early Christian *virgo*, who realized the eschatological Paradise already here and now in his earthly life.<sup>61</sup> Lactantius declares that the phoenix is male or female or neither or both at the same time:

Femina seu mas sit seu neutrum seu sit utrumque (163).

The wording of this verse is not completely certain, but the meaning of the words is: the Phoenix is androgynous or bisexual, sexless or whole, because he is one and whole.

It is probable that Lactantius became acquainted with this concept in its Christian, Encratite form as it is to be found in the *Gospel according to the Egyptians* and the *Gospel according to Thomas*. This conclusion is forced on us by his discussion of marriage and virginity in the *Divinae institutiones*. Though not an Encratite himself, Lactantius nevertheless describes continence as the most ideal state. The *virgo* shall conquer the earth, he shall be the equal of God, because he has acquired the virtue of God. Thus he becomes like Adam in Paradise, who was created in the image of God (VI, 23, 38). These ideas show that the Encratite tradition was still powerful in Africa, even upon a Catholic author.

Henry Chadwick, in his study on Priscillian, bishop of Avila (†385), argues that this excellent man was neither a Manichee nor a heretic as so many ecclesiastical authors then and later insinuated.<sup>62</sup> Yet I hesitate to follow him when he calls Priscillianism a charismatic movement. Charismatic movements like Montanism are rigoristic and eschatological, but not necessarily against all sex.

Priscillian, however, had to defend himself against the charge of denying all hope of salvation to married Christians. In fact he was as Encratite as a bishop of the Catholic Church could be at a time that the "Encratite heresy" was officially condemned by the legislation of the state. He admitted that he did not mind if somebody abandoned his parents, children, wealth and status in order to love God more than the world.<sup>63</sup> He opined that true believers were saved and justified by

<sup>61</sup> R. van den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix according to Classical and Early Christian Traditions* (EPRO 24), Leiden 1971, 383.

<sup>62</sup> H. Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila. The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church*, Oxford 1976, 98 f.

<sup>63</sup> *Tract. II*; Schepss (CSEL 18), 35, 24–36, 13.



faith in Christ and not by the law: from this he concluded that Christian slaves should be freed and Christian women emancipated.<sup>64</sup> Abolition of slavery and women's liberation are also attested as occurring among the contemporary encratitic Eusthatians and Messalians of Asia Minor and Edessa.

Priscillian was an Encratite. But not only that, he was also familiar with the Encratite Acts of the Apostles. "The apocryphal Gospels and Acts, particularly the Acts, found their way to Priscillian's heart because with one voice they proclaimed the specific content of the message of Jesus to consist in the call to give up sexual intercourse. The mission of Thomas or John or Paul or Peter or Andrew was none other than a zealous advocacy of the encratite ideal of virginity. The apocryphal Acts had other features as well which found a responsive echo in Priscillian. Together with their strong emphasis on celibacy, the Acts spoke of the wanderings of the homeless apostles, of their detachment from the fixed rigidities and the conventional life of settled churches, of their sufferings in the course of their itinerant mission".<sup>65</sup> The *Acts of Thomas* were current among his adherents.

It is even possible that Priscillian was personally familiar with the *Gospel of Thomas*. In his third treatise, on the use of apocryphal books he writes: "Ait Iuda apostolus clamans ille didymus domini, ille qui deum Christum post passionis insignia cum putatur temptasse plus credidit, ille qui vinculorum pressa vestigia et divinae crucis laudes et vidit et tetigit: prophetavit de his, inquit, septimus ab Adam Enoc dicens: "ecce venit dominus in sanctis milibus facere iudicium et arguere omnem et de omnibus duris quae locuti sunt contra eum peccatores". Quis est hic Enoc quem in testimonium prophetiae apostolus Iudas adsumpsit?"<sup>66</sup> Thus he identifies Jude, the author of the catholic letter in the New Testament with the twin nicknamed Thomas (Didymus) and he thus considers him to be an author. In doing so he shows himself familiar with a very old tradition, localized in Edessa and evidenced by the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Acts of Thomas*, the *Book of Thomas the Contender* and the *Vetus Syra* of the New Testament.<sup>67</sup> The identification of Thomas as

<sup>64</sup> *Can.* 55; Schepss, 133: "Quia non per legem sed per Christi fidem et confessionem salventur ac iustificentur credentes, servitutis iugo et sexuum diversitate carentes".

<sup>65</sup> Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila*, 77.

<sup>66</sup> *Tract.* III; Schepss, 44.

<sup>67</sup> A.B.J.M. Goosen, *Achtergronden van Priscillianus' christelijke ascese*, Diss. Nijmegen 1976, 83.

Jude, the brother of the Lord (Marc 6, 3), so that he becomes the twin of Jesus, is attested for the tradition of Edessa exclusively. It is only in the *Gospel of Thomas* that Thomas is considered as the author of the writing: "These are the hidden words which the living Jesus spoke and Didymus Judas Thomas wrote". The *Acts of Thomas* do not have this pretention. The *Book of Thomas the Contender* has used the *Gospel of Thomas* as a source and therefore mentions the same author.

The *Gospel of Thomas* seems to have been known at the time of Priscillian in the West in a Latin translation, especially to St Augustine.<sup>68</sup> No traces of the form of the *Acts of Thomas* familiar in Greek and Syriac now survive in Latin. For all these reasons it is rather probable that Priscillian of Avila and his followers were influenced by the Encratite tradition of Early Christianity and were themselves Encratites. But then one of the most famous and delightful works of Latin literature, the report of charming Egeria concerning her *Peregrinatio* to Jerusalem and Edessa, must be put in the same perspective.

Nothing has to be added to the confrontation of Egeria's religion and Messalianism by Henry Chadwick: "The aristocratic pilgrim Egeria made her way to Sinai, Palestine, and Mesopotamia in all probability during the period 381–4. The Galician monk Valerius of Bergidum (Vierzo, north-west of Ponferrada) in the seventh century wrote for his fellow monks an account of her pilgrimage which says that she came from 'the extreme coast of the western ocean'. This is a common way of referring to Galicia in texts of this time, and Egeria's Galician origin is probable. Her date and place of origin make it worth putting the question whether she had direct contact with Priscillian's movement. Four points point to a positive answer to this question: (a) Egeria writes for the members of a religious sorority, of the type that Priscillian encouraged. (b) She has an eye for apocryphal texts; e.g. 'at home', she says, 'she has the correspondence between Jesus and Abgar' (*Itiner.* 19. 19). At Edessa she is interested to hear 'something of St Thomas himself' read at his shrine (17). She prizes the shrine of St Thecla (23). (c) She notes that in Palestine they do not fast on Saturday or Sunday (44). The manner of her comment here implies that in her native land she is accustomed to occasions when there may be fasts on both of these days. Sunday fasting was one of the Priscillianist practices to

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<sup>68</sup> "Saint Augustin et l'Évangile selon Thomas", in: *Mélanges d'histoire des religions offerts à Henri-Charles Puech*, Paris 1974, 375–378.

which specific exception was taken at the council of Saragossa in 380. (d) Egeria has a special interest in ascetics, in discovering that in the East the *apotactitae* include both men and women (23. 6; 24. 1; 28. 3). After her visit to Jerusalem she even goes off on a lengthy detour to the north-west to visit the monks of Mesopotamia of whom she will have heard something that especially attracts her. It is tempting to ask if the attraction is the Messalian movement, at that moment spreading through the Mesopotamian monasteries like a forest fire. Although a comparison between Priscillianism and Messalianism would include a long list of dissimilarities, there remain very striking links between the two. Both ascetic movements were felt by the hierarchy to be dangerously separatist. Both sought to bring seriousness and depth to the religion of nominal Christians. Both were accused of Monarchian tendencies in their doctrine of the Trinity, and of Manichee dualism in their ethic. Both had a lively interest in the demonic world. Both used apocryphal Gospels and Acts. Both movements enjoyed a strong following among women, and were alike accused of lapses into libertinism.

The Messalians were at first accused of fasting too little, but later the accusation of fasting in Lent on Saturdays and Sundays is brought against the Messalians of Paphlagonia. Both suffered complaint on ground of their voluntary poverty and vegetarianism. At least it is worth raising the question, therefore, whether perhaps Egeria's expedition towards the Tigris was motivated by a desire to learn something at first hand of this evangelical movement spreading among the monks of that region. Conversely, when one considers the body of evidence for Syrians at this period finding their way into Gaul and Spain, it is equally tempting to ask whether or not Priscillian himself may have been influenced by Messalian ascetics from Egypt and Syria".<sup>69</sup>

The Encratites had always been pilgrims. They transmit the probably authentic Logion of Jesus: "Become wanderers" (*Gospel of Thomas* 42). They commanded one to follow Jesus in everything, the poor and unmarried wanderer of Galilee. Egeria can boast of a long and great tradition. It is just possible that the Priscillianists of Spanish Galicia became instrumental in transmitting *peregrinatio* (and *virgo subintroducta*) to nearby Southern Ireland even before Patrick's arrival. And the Irish (and Anglo-Saxon) wandering saints, soon to be followed by the wandering scholars (Eriugena), laid the foundations for Europe.

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<sup>69</sup> Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila*, 166–167.

Recently P.F. Beatrice, in his brilliant book *Tradux peccati*, has related the teaching of St Augustine concerning hereditary sin to heretical Encratism.<sup>70</sup> The views of the *doctor gratiae* have become the official doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. This means that many problems are ahead.

It might be that Beatrice is right when he argues that neither the Bible nor the Greek Fathers (with the significant exception of the Encratite and Syrian Macarius) admit the notion of hereditary sin. It probably also is correct to state that Julius Cassian, the Encratite of the second century, was the first known to us by name who taught that children are tainted with original sin. And it might be that virtually all Encratites admitted these views. But some questions must be asked:

1. Mani (216–277) is referring to and appealing to infant baptism. He does this in a letter to the Persian woman Menoch, in part preserved by St Augustine in his *Opus imperfectum contra Julianum*.<sup>71</sup> According to this fragment Scripture reveals that concupiscence is the root of all evils (1 Tim. 6, 10: note however: *philargyria*, not: *epithymia*). There are those, continues Mani, who dare say that concupiscence is a good thing (concupiscentiam... bonum ausi sunt dicere). They hold that the joy of sex is permitted by God (a deo id concessum). Against those Mani maintains that concupiscence stems from our sinful material nature and therefore is natural. And he asks:

si peccatum naturale non est, quare baptizantur infantes, quos nihil per se mali egisse constat (187; CSEL 85, 1, 487).

If sin is not natural, why are children baptised who certainly have not committed nothing evil themselves.

Any lingering doubt about the authenticity of this letter to Menoch can be dismissed, now that the *Cologne Mani Codex* has been discovered. Owing to this document it was established with absolute certainty that Mani from his fourth to his twenty fifth year grew up in a community of Elkesaites, that is of Jewish Christian baptists.

The Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* (19, 21, 3), which are related to this group, transmit that according to these Jewish Christians concupiscence in marriage was good, given by the good Creator in order to multiply mankind, from which the *numerus praedestinatorum* was to be taken. This

<sup>70</sup> P.F. Beatrice, *Tradux peccati. Alle fonti della dottrina agostiniana del peccato originale*, Milano 1978.

<sup>71</sup> *Opus imperfectum contra Julianum* III, 172–187 (CSEL 85, 1, 473–488).

praise of lust and procreation is so unique in Christian literature, that Mani's criticism must hint at the custom of the Jewish Christians among whom he grew up. But there is no reason to suppose that this was a later innovation, due to Elkesai. These baptists must have practised infant baptism from the very beginning. This may mean that they did so, because they believed in hereditary sin, without the qualification that it was transmitted by concupiscence. Peterson may be right that Augustine renewed views on baptism already held by Jewish Christians and obliterated by later developments. The Encratites may have derived their notion of hereditary sin from Judaic Christians.

2. St Augustine is not the first in the West to teach hereditary sin. Among others, Tertullian preceded him:

omnis anima eo usque in Adam censetur (= originates in Adam), donec in Christo recenseatur (= renascatur), tamdiu immunda, quamdiu (= until) recenseatur; peccatrix autem quia immunda (*De anima* 40, 1).<sup>72</sup>

Every soul originates from Adam until she is reborn in Christ, as long impure until she is born again in Christ: sinful however because she is impure.

Adhuc in Adam deputabatur cum suo vitio (*De pudicitia* 6).

She was still reckoned to be in Adam with his vice.

Satan has, according to *De testimonio animae* 3, deceived man, Adam: hence Adam has contaminated the whole race with his *sperma* and so made the tendril of damnation (*damnationis traducem*).

It would seem that this view (which implies infant baptism) existed already before him and was taken by him from the tradition of African Christianity. For he himself in 197, when he wrote the *Apologeticum*, still believed that the soul was preexistent and had come down from God to the body:

Novit enim sedem dei vivi; ab illo et inde descendit (17, 6).

For she knows the throne of the living God, from him and from there she came down.

The concept of hereditary sin also clashes with his personal objections against infant baptism, because the child is still innocent:

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<sup>72</sup> J.H. Waszink, *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani De anima*, Amsterdam 1947, 448.

quid festinat innocens aetas ad remissionem peccatorum? (*De baptismo* 18, 5).

Why hastens the innocent age to the forgiveness of sins?

Tertullian, the first known Roman Catholic of Africa, seems to object against an existing custom. If the origins of African Christianity are Judaic Christian, the concept and the custom could go back to primitive Palestinian Christianity.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

Barbara Nichtweiss has published an excellent biography of Peterson, with new material and an updated history of the reception of his ideas (*Erik Peterson. Neues Licht auf Leben und Werk*, Freiburg 1992, XVII + 966 pp.).

Recent research has confirmed the view that Syriac, Aramaic Christianity in Edessa and its surroundings was encratite, not gnostic (April D. DeConick, 'The *Dialogue of the Savior* and the Mystical Sayings of Jesus', *VC* 50 (1996) 178–199; H.J.W. Drijvers, 'Early Syriac Christianity: Some Recent Publications', *VC* 50 (1996) 159–177).

On Augustine, *concupiscentia sexualis* and hereditary sin, see J. van Oort, 'Augustine and Mani on *concupiscentia sexualis*', in: J. den Boeft & J. van Oort (éd.), *Augustiniana Traiectina. Communications présentées au Colloque International d'Utrecht, 13–14 novembre 1986*, Paris 1987, 137–152; idem, 'Augustine on sexual concupiscence and original sin', in: E. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica XXII*, Leuven 1989, 382–386.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### VALENTINIAN GNOSIS AND THE APOCRYPHON OF JOHN\*

#### I

Gnosticism is the “acute,” catholicism the “chronic” christianization of Greek philosophy and Oriental mysticism on the basis of the Gospel. There is a way which leads from the *Apocryphon of John* to Valentinus, and from Valentinus to Heracleon, and from Heracleon to Origen.

This is the basic view which underlies the edition and commentary of the writings of the Jung Codex: 1) the *Apocryphon of James* reflects a shade of Egyptian Christianity in which Valentinian Gnosis was grafted on a Jewish Christian tree; 2) the *Gospel of Truth* reflects the christocentric docetism of the Oriental school of Valentinianism and of Valentinus himself; 3) according to the letter to Rheginos *On Resurrection* only the pneumatic body of Christ (and so of the Gnostics) is saved—this in accordance with the Oriental school and the Founding Father himself; 4) the stress on the importance of the “psychic” element, the sympathy for the Demiurge and the personal features of God in the *Tripartite Tractate* are characteristic of the Western school, more specifically of Heracleon, and prelude the theology of Origen; 5) all these writings presuppose an already existing Oriental Gnosis evidenced by Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29.1, and the four different versions of the *Apocryphon of John* found in recent times.

Moreover, in this perspective the great heretics of the second century, Basilides, Marcion, and Valentinus, are discerned in their true and authentic originality: 1) Basilides was the first Christian to express the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*; 2) Marcion, though certainly influenced by Cerdo or another Gnostic, was so impressed by John’s and Paul’s concept of God’s unmotivated, free love of man that he even eliminated the underlying idea of man’s spiritual affinity with the Godhead; 3) for Valentinus the Christ-event had a central meaning, which is completely absent from the *Apocryphon of John*.

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\* Previously published in: B. Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. I, Leiden 1980, 118–132.



All this could have been discovered before Nag Hammadi, because the text of the *Apocryphon of John* was already known in its outline, as well as Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29.1. But scholarship was so much dominated by the view that “vulgar Gnosis” was an offshoot of “learned Gnosis” that even those scholars who defended the primacy of myth did not dare to say more than that the system of Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.29.1, came near to Valentinianism: they did not even mention that the *Apocryphon of John* had been discovered long before their time.

I am not aware that there is anybody involved in the growth industry of Gnostic studies who contests the validity of the outline sketched above. There is only a quarrel about “firstmanship.” There are, however, details which are still uncertain. In the first place they relate to the problem of the name of the sect from which the *Apocryphon of John* stems and to the original context of this writing.

Tertullian on several occasions mentions the “Gnostics” and the Valentinians together. The “Gnostics” are a specific sect, allied with the Valentinians but not identical with them. When writing his *Scorpiace* ( $\pm$  213), he says that in the times of persecutions the Gnostics and the Valentinians dissuade people from martyrdom. He describes them as being present in Carthage: “tunc Gnostici erumpunt, tunc Valentiniani prosperpunt” (1). One of their leaders is obviously a certain Prodicus (15). He is also mentioned in *Adversus Praxean* (3); together with Valentinus he introduces “more than one god.” Clement of Alexandria also says that the followers of Prodicus call themselves “Gnostics” (*Str.* 3.4.30; Stählin 2. 209.29–31). It would seem that Prodicus was a teacher of Alexandrian sectarians who styled themselves “Gnostics” and had spread from one seaport to another; we need not suppose that they came to Carthage from Rome in the wake of the catholic church. They could have been there long before the arrival of orthodoxy, because Tertullian was, after all, the first known Catholic of Africa.

Irenaeus says in so many words, “The first of them, who took his start from the principles of the so-called ‘Gnostic’ heresy and adapted them to his own brand of teaching, was Valentinus” (*Haer.* 1.11.1). Further on he tells us that according to Valentinus the Mother Sophia brought forth the demiurge, “and that a left-hand ruler was also brought forth together with him in the same way as the falsely-so-called ‘Gnostics’ whom we are going to discuss in the following.” This can only mean that according to Valentinus, just as to his pupils, Sophia suffered passions which were transformed into substance from which the Demiurge and the devil arose. “And first of all, they say, from the psychic substance

she formed the father and the king of all those things which are of the same nature as he is" (1.5.1). "From the sorrow the 'spiritual powers of wickedness' are supposed to be derived, whence the devil (whom they call 'world ruler') also took his origin" (1.5.4). Properly speaking, Sophia brings forth only the Demiurge, who takes over her task for the rest of creation: "But Wisdom, the second, built a house for herself and hewed out seven pillars and first of all she put forth a god, the image of the Father and through him she made heaven and earth" (Clement, *Exc. Theod.* 47.1). This then is the well-known concept that the Demiurge originates from matter, a view the Orphics once taught (Phanes rising from the world egg and splitting heaven and earth). This doctrine was received by certain Gnostics: we find it in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*, and we must postulate it as part of the myth that Sophia mirrored herself in the waters of chaos, so that the Demiurge is a reflection of her in primordial matter. So Dionysus was torn into pieces by the Titans when looking at his image in a mirror.

According to the ancients the mirror captivated part of one's soul. The theme could be transferred from Dionysus to Sophia because Dionysus was identified by the Orphics with Phanes, a demiurge like Sophia. The *Apocryphon of John* in its present state does say that Barbelo projects her image on the waters of chaos in order that Adam be created, but not that Sophia mirrors herself to bring forth Jaldabaoth.

This is not found in the four existent versions of the *Apocryphon of John*, nor in the chapter of Irenaeus in which he describes the teachings of these "Gnostics of Barbelo" (1.29.1). And yet he says that Valentinus taught this in agreement with the falsely-so-called "Gnostics" who will be discussed by him in the following (1.29.1). Hence, we must assume that Valentinus was familiar with a "Gnostic" myth as contained in the actual *Apocryphon of John*, but preserving certain primitive features that are absent from the existing versions.

Tertullian says that "the budding doctrines of the Valentinians have outgrown even the jungles of the Gnostics in wildness" (atque ita inolescentes doctrinae Valentinianorum in silvas iam exoleverunt Gnosticorum; *Adv. Val.* 39). What he means is this: the systems of the Valentinians have become so much more complicated than those of Valentinus himself that they are now wilder than those of the "Gnostics." This remark proves that Tertullian not only knew of the special relationship between Valentinians and "Gnostics," but also was aware of the fact that the systems of the latter were still more bewildering than those of the former, a correct appreciation of the myth contained

in the *Apocryphon of John*. Tertullian read Irenaeus and knew that this author attributed the system of *Haer.* 1.29 to these Gnostics; and he knew them personally from their actions in Carthage. Therefore I suggest that we should not call the group to whom the *Apocryphon of John* and related writings from Nag Hammadi are to be attributed "Sethians," a name not known to Irenaeus or Tertullian, but "Gnostics," as they were called in antiquity.

On the other hand the *Paraphrase of Shem*, generally held to be "Sethian," seems to proclaim that the Spirit looked down upon the water of Darkness. Thereupon the intellect of Darkness (the Demiurge) received an image of the Spirit and arose from Chaos. This obviously is still simpler than the "Gnostic" myth. What was the relation between the "Gnostics" and the "Sethians"? If the "Gnostics" are indebted to the Sethians, this seems to presuppose a long and complex development of Gnosticism within Judaism, because there can be no doubt that both the "Gnostics" and the "Sethians" are Jewish in origin and only superficially Christianized at a later date (cf. the *Paraphrase of Shem* with the report of Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.22). Because the views of the Mandaeans do agree with those of the "Gnostics," more than with those of the "Sethians," it seems plausible that they have a common background and that "Gnostics" is a translation of "Mandaeans," which has the same meaning. It would seem that the Valentinians themselves were aware of their affinity with the "Gnostics." Irenaeus acquired in Lyons some very second-hand documents of Ptolemaean origin from the local Valentinians, together, it would seem, with a copy of the then existing version of what later became the *Apocryphon of John*. The Gnostics, who were the friends of Plotinus and attended his courses for years until he wrote his treatise against them, had in their library non-Christian books, like the Apocalypses of Zoroaster and Zostrianos and Nikotheos and Allogenes and Messos, which in part turned up at Nag Hammadi. They taught that the world-soul and Wisdom (Sophia) had inclined towards the lower regions of the world, though she has not come down, but has only illuminated, so that an image (*eidolon*) was made in the matter. From that image, they say, comes another image, which is the Demiurge who removed himself from his mother and made a world which consists of images only; they say this in order to blame the Demiurge, who made this picture (2.9). It would seem that even a version of the *Apocryphon of John* was to be found in the Roman Gnostic library of these "Gnostics."

In Codex II of Nag Hammadi we likewise find the Valentinian and Antiochene *Gospel of Philip* together with, on the one hand, the *Apocryphon of John* and the related *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*, and, on the other hand, such un-Gnostic and Encratite writings as the *Gospel of Thomas* (written in Edessa), the *Exegesis on the Soul* (which comes near to the views of the Encratite Julius Cassianus) and the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, also from Edessa, as the name indicates. From this we should perhaps conclude that Codex II was composed (at Antioch?) by a Valentinian who was gnostic enough to appreciate the daring speculations about Barbelo and Jaldabaoth, and Christian enough to swallow Thomas. Antioch had strong relations with Edessa; a Valentinian there could easily obtain Edessene writings like the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Book of Thomas the Contender*. If this hypothesis is correct, the *Apocryphon of John* also was known in Antioch at a rather early date. This could be important because Mani seems to have been familiar with the myth of the *Apocryphon*, as is shown by his use of the name Saklas (Asaqlun). Moreover, as Henri-Charles Puech has pointed out, the *Apocryphon of John* was known at a later date among the Syriac Audians and so in the Syriac-speaking region (RAC, article Audians). In view of the importance of the *Apocryphon of John* for the history of religion in Syria and Mesopotamia it would seem that still more arguments are needed to support the suggestion that Codex II originated in an Antiochene milieu.

On the whole I could imagine that it was a Valentinian who collected the nucleus of the heterogeneous writings of Nag Hammadi in Greek, before they were translated into Coptic and copied somewhere near or in the monasteries of Pachomius. In this sense it could still be maintained that this was and is a gnostic library, even though it contained non-Gnostic books like the *Sentences of Sextus* and the *Gospel of Thomas*. We might compare this collector with the redactor of the sources used by Hippolytus. According to Klaus Koschorke (*Hippolyt's Ketzerbekämpfung und Polemik gegen die Gnostiker* [Wiesbaden, 1975] 100), the latter probably was a gnostic who interpolated and revised the texts he adopted for his anthology. As seems to be the case with the sources of the *Refutatio* of Hippolytus, perhaps we have to assume that a collector of manuscripts served as an intermediary and here and there modified his texts in order to adapt them to his views and purpose.

Perhaps we are amazed that a man like Valentinus, impregnated by Christ and the Gospel, who was even deeply moved by the cross, could

appreciate the completely non-Christian myth of the *Apocryphon of John*. But then Eugnostos, who wrote his *Letter*, which contains no trace of Christian influence, and collected Codex III as a deliberate composition in Greek of the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the *Letter of Eugnostos* [*Eugnostos the Blessed*], the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* (a Christian adaptation of the former) and the *Dialogue of the Savior*, was a Christian, as the colophon of the *Gospel of the Egyptians* in Codex III shows.

Moreover, this can be paralleled from modern times by the career of Rudolf Steiner: brought up as a Catholic, he accepted later on the wild cosmological speculations of Helen Blavatsky and her Theosophical Society, before he added to these his christocentric Gnosis called Anthroposophy. This shows how easily Theosophy can become Anthroposophy. In the same way Valentinus may have started as a Christian, have come in touch with a non-Christian sect, and later on have projected his own experiences and insights on the blueprint he was familiar with. After all, Theosophy is a pagan, Anthroposophy a Christian form of modern Gnosis.

## II

It continues to be plausible that Irenaeus used the (updated) *Syntagma* of Justin for his catalogue of heresies. And it would seem that the chapter about Valentinus himself, as distinguished from his pupils (1.11.1), was taken over from the same source, because here, as in the other chapters of the catalogue, the name of the heresiarch is mentioned before his teaching is expounded (this is not the case in 1.29–30). But then this report is extremely valuable, because it has been written by a contemporary of Valentinus, who lived in the same city, Rome, and like him had some notion of the (Middle) Platonic philosophy of his day.

I suggest, therefore, that this short summary still furnishes a valid basis for the reconstruction of the original doctrine of Valentinus. It is true, though, as the *Tripartite Tractate* shows, that the doctors of the Western school rewrote the system completely. It is no longer possible to say that Ptolemaeus or Heracleon adapted an existing manuscript by means of corrections, interpolations, and transpositions. On the other hand, the agreement of the fragments from the Oriental school with Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11.1, is so striking that Valentinus must have designed an elaborate system.

In the light of the *Apocryphon of John* it is exceedingly probable that the Master conceived the deity as a dyad of Depth and Silence (cf.

the Unknown God and Barbelo), developed the notion of a pleroma, and knew of only *one* Sophia who was exiled from the pleroma (cf. Sophia Prounikos; “dicit Valentinus tricesimum aeonem excessisse de pleromate” [Ps.-Tertullian, *Haer.* 4]). He must have taught that the Holy Spirit (not Christ and the Holy Spirit) emanates from God to give Gnosis and unity to the aeons in distress. That Jesus is brought forth as a preexistent being according to Valentinus is plausible because Jesus was the pneumatic body destined to carry the divine Christ; and we know that Valentinus acknowledged a spiritual body and a spiritual body only. This is in agreement with the *Gospel of Truth* (31: 5: “he came forth in a flesh of likeness”), which in its turn should be compared with Tertullian, *Carn.* 16 (similitudo carnis = imago corporis et non veritas). This implies that it is a real problem whether, according to Valentinus, even one of the “psychics” could be saved. Was not this view a consequence of the more favorable attitude of Ptolemaeus and Heracleon towards the growing catholic church of their day? And is not the logic of the system that the pneumatics only are being saved? Saint Paul did not believe anything else, nor did the author of the *Treatise on Resurrection*. Perhaps Valentinus thought, like Paul, that all members of the church were pneumatics, as long as he was a member of the great church. We have no evidence that he changed his mind afterwards. Perhaps he did, and so helped to create the confusion existing in the documents of the Western school.

If we admit that Valentinus borrowed the scheme of his myth from the Oriental, Gnostic sect, as I said in 1947 and Irenaeus said in 180 A.D., then the originality of the man is conspicuous:

- 1) His basic idea was that Christ came to awaken the Self which sleeps unconsciously in man. The system of the *Apocryphon* says nothing of Christ in this respect.
- 2) It is a trivial concept that the fall and misery of Sophia, and man in general, is due to wantonness. It is rather exceptional if a man like Valentinus, who knows the mystical union from experience, warns that it is dangerous to identify with the Ground of being, because this would lead to the dissolution of personality, and proclaims that it is better to wait for God’s revelation in Christ, which grants authentic individuation. This certainly was a timely warning in the century preceding Plotinus, and ever since.
- 3) In the *Apocryphon of John* man automatically has spirit, becomes conscious of himself, and is saved. But it is implied in the doctrine

of Valentinus that the Self is grace and that the discovery of the Self is a revelation. Nobody has yet refuted, though many tried, the statement of the well-informed Tertullian: “spiritalem...non naturam sed indulgentiam” (*Adv. Val.* 27).

- 4) Nothing is said in the *Apocryphon of John* about the guardian angel. And yet we know that Jesus was very specific about the angels of children; moreover, the *Gospel of Thomas* shows that this was one of the key concepts of Jewish Christianity. Valentinus may have become acquainted with this in the church of Egypt. He taught that Christ brought these angels with him to inspire Gnosis into spiritual man. They are the real Self of man, with whom he is confronted in the hour of death. It is this sacred marriage between the Ego and the Self which is the meaning and end of the system. *Cur deus homo?* In order that man may overcome the split between his reason and his instincts. That certainly is a spirited interpretation of the Christian religion.

### III

It has been shown by several scholars on different occasions that it was a long way from Valentinus to Heracleon, whereas Heracleon prepared the way for Origen. Those who project the German *Kirchenkampf* into the history of the early church are inclined to stress the differences between the two and to prefer the Catholic to the Gnostic. But there is no question that the two systems have much in common.

The Valentinians, however, had a different approach than Origen towards the most important problem of human existence, which is at the same time the kernel of Origen's theology, viz., the suffering of the innocent.

In general Origen more or less believed in a sort of karma: if you are poor in this world, or maimed, or ill, or a slave, this is easily explained by the fact that your soul has sinned in preexistence owing to its free will. But being a biblical theologian, he could not fail to notice that Job suffers innocently, and that Paul considers his suffering not as a punishment, but as participation in the eschatological suffering of the Messiah. Therefore he has to admit that some souls are here on earth in order to embellish the state of the world, to suffer with the others, and to help the lower beings, without having any guilt to expiate themselves (*Princ.* 2.9.7: “cum tamen et aliqui ex his, qui melioribus meritis sunt,

ad exornandum mundi statum conpati reliquis et officium praebere inferioribus ordinentur”).

This is also the basic idea of the newly discovered commentary on Job, written in the fourth century by Origen’s follower Didymus the Blind:

The soul of man, which is immortal and in its essence not only different from but also more divine than the body, was linked up with the body in different ways: on the one hand because out of her own inclination and desire she chose to have communion with the body, on the other hand because she joined the body to serve those who need help (56.20–29).

This then is an adaptation of two clashing views within the same Middle Platonism to which Origen was so indebted.

Calvisius (or Calvenus) Taurus of Athens taught in the second century that the souls were sent to the earth:

Taurus and his followers say that the souls were sent by the gods to the earth. Some of them teach, in accordance with Plato’s *Timaeus*, that this happens for the perfection of the universe, in the sense that there are as many living beings in this world as in the ideal world. Others hold that the descent of the souls takes place in order to manifest divine life (Stobaeus 1.378.5).

This, of course, is also the philosophical perspective of the Hymn of the Pearl in the *Acts of Thomas*, in which a prince is sent to this world to perform a given task. It is absurd for professors of philosophy to stick to the unwarranted view that this song is pre-Christian and Iranian. It rather shows that Origen was not the only Christian to smuggle the concept of Taurus into Christianity, a concept which is neither Iranian nor Gnostic, but Platonic.

On the other hand Albinus held that the soul had come down to expiate a “preexistential” sin, due to a decision of its free will in a previous existence.

Origen says nothing that is original. He combines the opposed positions of Middle Platonism which go back to different views of Plato on the soul: more optimistic in the *Timaeus* and rather pessimistic in the *Phaedrus*.

Compare with this the pure Christianity of the Valentinian interpolation in the *Acts of John*. The mandala dance of Christ and the disciples described there may be the reflection of an existing rite, because it would seem that in Sardis and possibly also Ephesus, where the *Acts* were written, the Jews, and so the Jewish Christians, were dancing on



the 14th of Nisan, like Miriam on the shore of the Red Sea after the Exodus. But the spirit conveyed by the hymn song is still the spirit of primitive Christianity:

If you dance, you understand what I do:  
 Your suffering is the suffering of Man, which I will take upon me.  
 You would not understand your suffering  
 if I had not been sent by God to you to reveal what suffering is.  
 ...  
 He is with all of us, and himself suffereth with us when we suffer.

Jesus had said, "Blessed is the man who has suffered, he has found life." (Gospel of Thomas). He proclaimed that John and James, and so all the martyrs, were drinking the same cup of world suffering as he did and were baptized with the same metaphorical blood baptism. According to the author of the *Acts of the Apostles* in the New Testament (9:5) it is Christ in the Christians whom Saul persecutes. Paul himself believed that the whole body suffered (also the head) when one member suffers. John, the prophet of the Apocalypse, styles himself as a brother and companion in the suffering in (and of) Christ. The martyrs in the Apocalypse have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, i.e., they have baptized themselves in the arena through shedding their blood, which mystically is identical with the blood shed by Christ, because their passion and the Passion is one and the same sacrifice. In the *Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas*, the latter says: "Then (in the circus) there will be Another in me, who will suffer for me." And in the *Acts of Peter* the apostle returns to Rome full of joy, because he becomes aware that Christ will suffer in him. This very profound and very Christian mysticism of the cross has been adequately understood by the Valentinian Gnostic who wrote the passage about the dance during the Last Supper.

On the whole there can be no doubt that Valentinus and his Gnostics remained more faithful than Origen and his followers to the essence of primitive Christianity. If we remove the cosmological framework and discern the basic intuitions, Valentinus was the Novalis of early Christianity. Two knights of Christ and Sophia.

#### DISCUSSION

GILLES QUISPÉL: First, I want to say that we regress if we refuse to see Gnosis as a perennial philosophy. To reject it is to deny the valuable les-

sons of F.C. Baur's work on Christian Gnosis and to ignore the history of European culture which, unlike the English-speaking world, has always had Gnosis available as an alternative to faith and reason. Consider, for instance, the Albigenses, Jakob Boehme, or German Idealism.

My paper, however, was concerned not with this point but with historical questions about the relation of Valentinus's Christian Gnosis to the not-so-Christian Gnosis of the *Apocryphon of John*. I want to recognize the work of Carl Schmidt, whose introduction to the *Pistis Sophia* long ago suggested that Valentinianism was based on a Gnosis like that of the *Apocryphon of John*. Despite his announcement about this text, few scholars between the wars recognized its existence. Even now, the original contents of the *Apocryphon of John* remain to be established. As for Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11, I argue that it was probably dependent on Justin's *Syntagma* and is to be taken seriously.

I have maintained that Origen, despite his agreements with Gnosticism, reached a solution of the question of evil which was not Gnostic but rather a combination of Middle Platonic positions. In contrast, the Valentinian answer found in the interpolations in the *Acts of John* is a more Christian solution to the problem of suffering.

MICHEL TARDIEU: You say that the *Apocryphon of John* stems from the "Gnostic" sect in the narrowest sense. Why do you not dare to attribute it to Prodicus?

QUISPEL: I do not find much that is Sethian in the *Apocryphon of John*; instead, I have called it "Gnostic," which in antiquity was not a general term but the designation of a specific heresy. It is attested by Irenaeus that Valentinus followed this heresy, and Tertullian says that Prodicus was one of its heads. Still, I would hesitate to attribute the *Apocryphon of John* to Prodicus himself. First, from the little information we have of him, mostly from Clement of Alexandria, it seems that he was licentious, while the *Apocryphon of John* is ascetic. Moreover, Prodicus was about contemporary with Clement, while the *Apocryphon of John* is to be dated earlier, to a time before Valentinus.

ELAINE PAGELS: What is the background of the identification of the dance in the *Acts of John* as a Valentinian interpolation?

QUISPEL: I refer you to the account of the *Acts of John* in Hennecke's *New Testament Apocrypha*. Here the work is said to be based on Ephesus legends about John, with a Gnostic insertion on the dance and on Jesus as the symbol of the suffering of innocent humanity. There is Valentinian

terminology in the passage, as in Christ's statement, "I am the Horos." It is best, then, for us to accept this as a Valentinian text.

WAYNE MEEKS: Here again we have the question of adequate sources for discussing the evolution of Valentinianism. What is the current state of study on this topic?

QUISPEL: An urgent task for Valentinian studies is the examination of differences between the Oriental and the Western schools. I will give two examples. Of the demiurge, Clement said that Valentinus made him the cause of death, a figure mean enough to have people eat from the tree of knowledge so that they would die. This is no optimistic or Platonic concept of the demiurge; God is made the origin of death. The *Treatise on Resurrection* takes the same position. Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*, on the other hand, speaks positively of God, perhaps from an appreciation of the growing Catholic church. A second point of difference concerns the salvation of the ordinary Christian. This tenet did not fit into Valentinus's system; it is a later addition of the Western school.

These examples show the importance of understanding the distinction between the two schools. Confusion on this point has led to nonsense in the study of the *Tripartite Tractate*. We were criticized for attributing it to the school of Heracleon, but others have ascribed it to Valentinus himself at three stages of his life or to Valentinus and two pupils. Such confusion results from misunderstanding the relation of Eastern and Western Valentinianism.

G.C. STEAD: That the demiurge was made the author of death is not itself sufficient to indicate that this figure was seen as malignant. No exegetes of this period had reached a better solution to the problems raised by Genesis 3. Even Athanasius could describe God as acting much as did Valentinus's demiurge in being responsible for death.

QUISPEL: It is not only I but also Clement who blames Valentinus for making the demiurge the author of death. The question was clearly a live one; remember that the *Gospel of Truth* also speaks of the cross as a tree which didn't kill those who ate from it, with the implication that there was another tree that did.

STEAD: On the question of the salvation or partial salvation of the ψυχικός, we can again find Platonic parallels to what may seem Valentinian innovations. The immortal spirit or νοῦς was said by some

Platonists to descend from the transcendent world and clothe itself with the layers of temperamental and physical attributes which it would discard again in its reascent. Plutarch, for example, had such a view of limited ascent: the physical body was to be discarded at death but the  $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$  was to be left at an intermediate level, at the moon.

QUISPEL: This is not such a good parallel. According to the Valentinian view, the Gnostics are those who have come to themselves, are conscious of ultimate reality and are destined for eternal bliss. Then, before the Pleroma, there was also a place for good churchpeople who could not appreciate the highest realm. This is not like the Platonic, Pythagorean, and Orphic view that a person left behind the subtle body. Instead, it suggests the place which, according to Heine, Kant gave to God. Having excluded the proofs for God in the *First Critique*, the philosopher allowed a place for one in the *Second Critique* out of pity for his poor servant: "Der gute Lampe muss auch seinen Gott haben." The same disparaging concession is apparent in the Valentinian attitude toward the psychics. Valentinus himself recognized no such intermediate stage of salvation. He was a consistent thinker, who envisaged only the world dissolved and the  $\pi\nu\epsilon\delta\mu\alpha$  reintegrated.

PAGELS: This is a fundamental issue which has not yet been fully resolved. In Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.11,  $\tau\omicron\ \psi\upsilon\chi\iota\kappa\omicron\nu$  is said to be able to go either way: it is an unstable element which can identify itself either with the upper realm and be transformed into it or with the lower and be destroyed with it.

QUISPEL: Yes, this doctrine exists, but it is a Ptolemaic view. Valentinus himself taught that Christ had only a pneumatic body and thus he came to save only the Pnuma. This is the logic of the system.

HAROLD ATRIDGE: (*To Quispel*) Your paper mentions points of Valentinus's originality. Did the various schools diverge in their preservation of these points?

QUISPEL: Let us examine the notion of guardian angels as an example. This was a Jewish idea probably picked up by Valentinus in Egypt. In the Western school, the marriage of the angel and man becomes only eschatological, and little is said of it. In the East, for example in Theodotus, Christ's coming with the angels is an essential point: at baptism the angel comes to inspire Gnosis. The difference is that between a

future eschatological reconciliation of ego and self and an eschatology realized in the sacramental life of the Gnostic Christian.

ATTRIDGE: As far as Western Valentinianism is concerned, your account rings true to me. The *Tripartite Tractate*, for example, has elements which you mention: Christ is said to come to awaken the self, and it is believed better to wait for Christ's revelation which grants authentic individuality. These elements are, moreover, absent from the *Apocryphon of John*. But can we say that they were original? The theme of awakening, for example, had an earlier history as a paraenetic theme in Hellenistic Judaism and the New Testament. Perhaps the Valentinian originality lay only in the interpretation of the myth by a theme which was already Christian and traditional.

QUISPEL: I admit that Basilides is reported by Hippolytus to have said that Christ came to awaken the sleeping spirit in man. Now if this is accurate and if Valentinus knew Basilides—and neither point is certain—then Valentinus would be less than original in relation to Basilides. But my assertion of his originality was in reference to the *Apocryphon of John*: this text has the notion of a sleeping spirit but not that of Christ come to awaken it. The appeal of Christ to the unconscious spirit is also not found clearly in the New Testament, although the prodigal son is said to “come to himself.” John comes closest to the concept in saying that one born from God knows whence he comes and where he goes, but this is not made the fundamental idea which it is in Valentinian Gnosis.

ATTRIDGE: Yet just this notion is found also in the *Tripartite Tractate*, which you assign to Western Valentinianism.

QUISPEL: Yes, perhaps; here would be one of the differences between Ptolemy and the *Tripartite Tractate* which I noted in my commentary.

ATTRIDGE: Aren't there other links between the *Tripartite Tractate* and Irenaeus's account (*Haer.* 1.11) of Valentinus's original system? The tractate's stress on the fate of the psychic element can be recognized as an innovation, but the position of the equivalent of Sophia in the *Tripartite Tractate* seems closer to the teaching of Valentinus than to that of Ptolemy.

QUISPEL: I think not. It makes all the difference whether the fall is seen as an epiphenomenon of evolution or as the result of the conscious decision of the free will, as in the first part of the *Tripartite Tractate*. For

Valentinus, the fall is an outbreak in the Pleroma. Here we have the crucial difference between a tragical and an ethical Christianity.

ATTRIDGE: Yes, the dynamics of the fall are different in Valentinus than in the *Tripartite Tractate*. But my comparison was concerned with the figure itself. Ptolemy has two figures, while the *Tripartite Tractate* agrees with Valentinus in having only one. Thus, this Western document here shares traditions with Valentinus and the Oriental school.

QUISPEL: Now, I agree with Professor Stead that the difficulty of the treatise is an objection against attributing the *Tripartite Tractate* to Heracleon himself, because his fragments are so clear. We must, then, speak of the school of Heracleon instead. But we can conclude that there were differences between this figure and Ptolemy, despite their agreement in a high view of the Catholic church.

PAGELS: There is a striking difference between Irenaeus's account of Valentinus's system, which includes an original dyad, and the *Tripartite Tractate*, which argues against this view.

QUISPEL: Yes, the Western school was monistic, and here different from Valentinus. It is not possible that the monotheistic view was original, with the dyad of  $\beta\upsilon\theta\acute{o}\varsigma$  and  $\sigma\upsilon\gamma\acute{\eta}$  appearing later, for the dyad is attested in Irenaeus. Moreover, the concept of an androgynous god was already familiar from Orphic theology and Pythagoreanism: progenitor genetrixque deum deus unus et omnes. Thus, it was a secondary Christianization of the Western school to say that God is one.

STEAD: The notion of an androgynous god is an unstable one. It is not equivalent to a pair of gods, but it could yield to this view. On the other hand, it could also lead to the doctrine that the one God transcends sexual difference.

QUISPEL: Mozart, a later Gnostic, said it well in his *Magic Flute*:

Mann und Weib und Weib und Mann  
Reichen an die Gottheit an.

#### RETRACTATIONES

This essay has some importance for the history of scholarship. In his book *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York 1987, xii–xiii) Bentley Layton writes:

The fundamental historical thesis of this book—that Valentinus was a Christian reformer of the classic gnostic tradition—was enunciated sketchily in antiquity by St. Irenaeus (about A.D. 180) and in the twentieth century by Gilles Quispel and others; it was the organising principle of an International Conference on Gnosticism, at Yale University, which I directed in 1978.

The reference to the *Paraphrasis of Sem* was unfortunate: according to Michel Roberge, *La Paraphrase de Sem*, Québec 2000, it was written about 250 of the Christian Era somewhere in the region of Aramaic Christianity centred in Edessa. It would have been wiser to quote fragments of Basilides (Völker 38–39) who transmits a passage from an older non-Christian, gnostic sect. According to this text a sort of Virgin of the Light mirrored herself in the water of Chaos (velut per speculum). This left its impression upon matter, which the forces of evil tore into pieces (traxerunt). Here the background of the myth of Dionysos is much clearer.

Nobody has reacted to my remark that the Hymn of the dancing Jews in the *Acts of John* 94, a Valentinian interpolation in an otherwise Encratic writing, reflects the primeval Christian theology of suffering, whereas Origen's theory of karma is patristic. An English translation of this Hymn can be found in *New Testament Apocrypha*, II, English translation by R. McL. Wilson, Cambridge 1992, 181–184. It was set to music by Gustav Holst; Marguerite Yourcenar drew freely upon it in her Hermetic novel *L'oeuvre à voir* (1960); the Spanish filmer Luis Buñuel integrated it in his film *La Voie lactée* (1969). Which subliminal inhibition prevent critics to see that according to Christ and Saint Paul suffering is not a punishment for (original) sin, but an (eschatological) part of reality?

There is much in this article to be modest about. The speculations about the history of the codices from Nag Hammadi are highly hypothetical. There remains the possibility that Irenaeus can have used the *Syntagma* of Justin Martyr, availed himself of very bad Valentinian sources from the school of Ptolemaeus and also knew the *Apocryphon of John* (*Adv. haer.* 1, 29). The Valentinians of Lyon may have combined the two. On the other hand it is now completely clear that many non-Valentinian writings from Nag Hammadi (the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Apocalypse of Allogenes* (Seth), *Marsanes*, the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos* (Jacob-Israel) were Jewish apocalyptic writings, in use among the Gnōstikoi of Rome, who were the friends of Plotinus. These Gnōstikoi were the *minim*, about whom the rabbis were so eloquent with their silence.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

### VALENTINUS AND THE GNOSTIKOI\*

One of the few data in the study of Gnosticism that always seemed rather certain was the hypothesis that the “mythological Gnosis” as represented by the sect of the Gnostikoi of Irenaeus 1.29, the *Apocryphon of John* and so many other writings found near Nag Hammadi, preceded the more “philosophical Gnosis” of Valentinus and his pupils.<sup>1</sup>

Bentley Layton accepted this view and made it the fundamental historical thesis of his book *The Gnostic Scriptures*.<sup>2</sup> According to him Valentinus was a Christian reformer of an already existing gnostic tradition and in fact used a version of this gnostic myth of origins as his main system of orientation. Christoph Marksches has recently challenged this approach to gnostic origins and criticised it in the sharpest possible way.<sup>3</sup> He does not deny that all known pupils of Valentinus were influenced by this originally Jewish form of Gnosticism, but he holds that Valentinus himself is an exception to the rule and in fact was nothing but a more or less orthodox, apologetic, Christian theologian like Clement of Alexandria and Origen. In order to prove this assumption, he discusses critically the evidence which seems to point out that Valentinus knew the myth of the Gnostikoi. He has, however, ignored one passage which seems relevant to this problem. Irenaeus quite often mentions the Gnostikoi, mostly together with the Valentinians: according to him they are a separate sect. He never calls other groups, the Valentinians, Marcionites, Basilidians etc. gnostic.<sup>4</sup> The use of the word gnostic in a general sense to indicate all sorts of heretics is modern.

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\* Previously published in *Vigiliae Christianae* 50 (1996) 1–4.

<sup>1</sup> Howard M. Jackson, *The Lion becomes Man*, Atlanta 1985, 22, quotes Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, Tübingen 1835, 171 and Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist I*, Göttingen 1964<sup>3</sup>, 358–362.

<sup>2</sup> Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*, New York 1987, XII and XXII.

<sup>3</sup> Christoph Marksches, *Valentinus Gnosticus?*, Tübingen 1992, 405: “Die These B. Laytons, Valentinus sei ein ‘Christlicher Reformator eines klassischen gnostischen Systems gewesen’, kann nicht scharf genug widersprochen werden”.

<sup>4</sup> R.A. Lipsius, *Die Quellen der ältesten Ketzergeschichte neu untersucht*, Leipzig 1875, 191–225.



Irenaeus never tells us that he had encountered Gnostikoi in his congregation at Lyon. Perhaps he got his information in Rome when he visited pope Eleutherus in 177–178 in his endeavour to mediate in the Paschal controversy between Rome and Asia Minor. It was in Rome that an adherent of the sect of the Gnostikoi, Marcellina, had seduced many true believers during the episcopacy of Anicetus (155–166).<sup>5</sup> The Catholic leaders there knew what they were speaking about: they may have informed the bishop of Lyon.

When summarising the doctrine of Valentinus himself as opposed to that of his pupils, Irenaeus observes that the Master had derived the main tenets of his doctrine from the so-called Gnostic heresy and had transformed them into a school of his own (1, 11, 1). And in *Adversus haereses*, I, 30, 15 he concludes his report on the Gnostikoi in the two preceding chapters with a remarkable passage which demands our special attention and which should be read in the following way:

tales quidem *secundum eos* sententiae sunt, a quibus velut Lernaea hydra, multiplex capitibus fera *de* Valentini schola generata est.

It is true that the editors of Irenaeus in the series *Sources Chrétiennes* 263/264, Rousseau and Doutreleau, have omitted *de* in this passage. But their competent critic Sven Lundström has proved that the reading of the manuscripts makes good sense:<sup>6</sup>

So foolish are the views (of the Gnostikoi), from whom the many-headed serpent,<sup>7</sup> just like the Hydra of Lerna, was generated that arose from the school of Valentinus.

As Lundström remarks, *generata est* has sexual connotations. He compares Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I, 14, 1 where another Valentinian, Marc the Magician, the only pupil of Colorbasus, one of the leaders of the Oriental School of Valentinianism, is said to be “the womb which conceived the Silence of Colorbasus (*vulvam et exceptorium Colorbasi Silentii*).”

<sup>5</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I, 25,6: “Unde et Marcellina, quae Romam sub Aniceto venit, cum esset huius doctrinae, multos exterminavit. Gnosticos se autem vocant.”

<sup>6</sup> Sven Lundström, *Die Überlieferung der lateinischen Irenaeus-Übersetzung*, Uppsala 1985, 12.

<sup>7</sup> *Fera* must be the translation of the Greek θηρίον, which often means: serpent. Bauer, *Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, 361 quotes *Acts of the Apostles* 28:4, where θηρίον variates with ἔχιδνα.

The underlying metaphor of the quoted passage is that Valentinus, impregnated and made pregnant by the opinions of the Gnostikoi, gave birth to the many ramifications of the Valentinian network of Ptolemaeus and Heracleon in the West, Theodotus and Marcus in the East. Valentinus had conceived the ideas of the Gnostikoi as sperma within his womb and transmitted them to his pupils, a many-headed Hydra.

This seems to imply that the school of Valentinus was not yet split during his lifetime. Valentinus was born in Egypt about 100 A.D., came to Rome under bishop Hyginus ( $\pm$ 136–140), reached his *acmè* under Pius (140–155) and remained in Rome under Anicetus (155–160) (Irenaeus, III, 43). He may have returned to Alexandria. The date of his death is unknown. The split among his followers seems to have occurred rather late. But it was from the founder of the sect himself that all his pupils had received their gnostic ideas.

These words of Irenaeus may offer us the right perspective to elucidate a difficult passage in Tertullian, which has vexed the scholars for a very long time. After having stated that Valentinus in Rome had once been a fine evangelical preacher, who failed to become a bishop and out of frustration left the church, he continues:

Ad expugnandam conversus veritatem et cuiusdam veteris opinionis semen nactus colubro suo viam delineavit.

*semen nactus colubro suo* is the conjecture of Kroymann (1906) and Marastoni (1971); *semini nactus colubroso* is the consensus of the manuscripts of *Adversus Valentinianos* 4,2.

In his excellent edition Fredouille chose to read *Colorbaso* instead of *colubroso*, with Latinius (Rome 1584) and our compatriot Junius (Franeker 1597).<sup>8</sup>

Colorbasus was the teacher of Marc the Magician and one of the leaders of the Oriental School of Valentinianism. This conjecture certainly is ingenious. But how could Colorbasus be the intermediary between Valentinus in Rome and Ptolemaeus, leader of the Italic school, who probably was also in Rome? Moreover this change of the text is not necessary as soon as we realise that *coluber* has associations with the Hydra of Lerna:

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Claude Fredouille, *Tertullien Contre les Valentiniens*, Sources Chrétiennes 280, Paris 1980, I, 86.

denique quid Cretae taurus Lernaeaque pestis  
 hydra venenatis posset vallata colubris?  
 (Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 5.26–27)

pectoraque unxerunt Erebeae felle colubrae  
 (Ovid, *Ibis* 227)

So we translate:

He started to fight against the Truth: he conceived the seed (or perhaps: the sperma) of an ancient doctrine and outlined in bold strokes a trajectory for his serpent.

We never will know whether this reconstitution of the text is completely correct. But it would seem that the much criticized Kroymann at least once in his life made an *emendatio palmaris*, for comparison with Irenaeus shows that the *coluber* hints at the many-headed Hydra of the Valentinian network. Tertullian then goes on to reveal that Ptolemaeus changed the system of his Master; according to him the aeons were outside the Godhead (like angels), whereas Valentinus considered them to be *sensus et affectus, motus divinitatis*, ideas and aspects and moments of self-realisation within the mind of the Godhead. His God always was Being in Movement.

The comparison with Irenaeus makes it crystal clear that the *quaedam vetus opinio* can be nothing else than the doctrine of the Gnostikoi.<sup>9</sup> Tertullian says exactly the same as Irenaeus: Valentinus was indebted to an older myth and enunciated sketchily the way for the Hydra, the many ramifications that later, after his death, originated from his school.

Where did he pick up the teaching of the Gnostikoi? Was it in Rome, as Tertullian suggests, possibly following a Roman tradition? Or did he already become familiar with it in Alexandria, where it belonged and did already exist at the time Valentinus studied there, before 136 A.D. I guess the latter is more plausible. This testimony cannot be ignored or be explained away: Tertullian was a brawler and a sophist, not a liar.

The two passages quoted prove without any shadow of doubt that the original doctrine of Valentinus is rooted in a preceding mythological

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<sup>9</sup> Markschies, *o.c.*, 405: “Valentin hat keine Samen gewisser alter Lehren aufgenommen”. He quotes Fredouille, II, 202: “Le platonisme, comme nous serions tenté de le croire”. But Markschies forgets to mention that for Fredouille this Platonism is identical with the system of the *Apocryphon of John* of the Gnostikoi: “Il est en effet admis que l’*Apocryphon de Jean* a joué un rôle important dans la genèse de la doctrine de Valentin.”

Gnosis which he hellenised and christianised. If he was not a Gnostic, he certainly was a gnostic.

#### POST SCRIPTUM

I repeat what I wrote in 1980 (“Valentinian Gnosis and the Apokryphon of John”, *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, I, 119) that according to Tertullian in his work *Adversus Praxean* Valentinus teaches more than one God, i.e. a Highest God and a lower demiurge. It is necessary to give the exact quotation: “plures (dei) secundum Valentinus et Prodicos”. This means according to the normal use of the Latin syntax: “more than one God, according to men like Valentinus and Prodicus”. Prodikos was a leader of the sect of the Gnostikoi that produces the Apocryphon Johannis and its graphic description of the demiurge Saklas, the Fool. According to Tertullian, Valentinus must have taught something similar.

In his book *Valentinus Gnosticus?*, Tübingen 1992, Christoph Marksches argues that Valentinus was not a gnostic but an orthodox theologian like Clement of Alexandria and Origenes, a sort of Tübingen “Vermittlungstheologe”. In order to prove this improbable hypothesis, he criticises Bentley Layton, W.C. van Unnik and Roel van den Broek in the sharpest possible way, but does not quote the passage of Tertullian which flatly refutes his view.



PART II  
JUDAICA



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY BEFORE MINUCIUS FELIX AND TERTULLIAN\*

#### INTRODUCTION

Ever since in 1968 the hypothesis was launched that African Christianity was of Jewish Christian origin, this view has been accepted and further developed by the leading French Church historian Jean Cardinal Daniélou, member of the Académie Française (*The Theology of Latin Christianity*, London-Philadelphia 1977) and by the British scholar W.H.C. Frend (*The Rise of Christianity*, London 1984, especially page 339 sqq). The nestor of German Church historians, bishop Georg Kretschmar, published an eminent summary of the problems in a study called: “Die Kirche aus Juden und Heiden” (in: J. van Amerfoort & J. van Oort, *Juden und Christen in der Antike*, Kampen 1990, 9–40).

According to Augustine, the *civitas dei* consists of the angels in heaven and the (Catholic) Church peregrinating on earth. Together they form a whole. This is a concept that is typically Essene and is attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls of Qumran:

He (God) has joined their assembly (the assembly of the saints) to the Sons of Heaven (i.e., the angels). *The Community Rule XI*

Johannes van Oort has established that the City of God (Jerusalem) ruled by the Holy Spirit is absolutely opposed to and has nothing in common with the *civitas diaboli*, Babylon, ruled by Satan. He shows that Augustine is indebted to a catechetical tradition which had very old roots in Africa and must be of Jewish Christian origin.

Van Oort quotes a passage in the Pseudo-Clementines (*Homiliae XX*, 2) which is certainly derived from a Judaic Christian source: according to this, Peter says not only that God has instituted two kingdoms (*basileiai*), but also that there are two ways (*hodoi*) and two kings (*basileis*).

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\* Previously published in: J. den Boeft and A.H.M. Kessels, *Actus. Studies in Honour of H.L.W. Nelson*, Utrecht 1982, 257–335.



The *Doctrina Apostolorum*, a Latin version of an originally Jewish work on the two ways, translated probably in Africa, and certainly current there among the Catholics, begins as follows:

There are two ways in the world, of life and of death, of light and of darkness. Two angels are set over them, one of righteousness, the other of iniquity. The difference between the two ways, however, is great.

The African Christian Lactantius (ca. 250–ca. 320), who wrote in Latin, taught that there are two powers, one of good and the other of evil (“the right hand and the left hand of God”). These confront each other and are at war. This, of course, is not dualism, but consistent monotheism (*Divinae institutiones* II, 8, 6 add 2). It may be a good old African tradition.

Similar notions can be found in the Donatist Tyconius.

Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon. A Study into Augustine’s City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities*, Leiden 1991 (= *Jeruzalem en Babylon. etc.*, diss. Utrecht, ’s-Gravenhage 1986; 1995<sup>4</sup>), 334, 328, 286.

For the *dualitudo* of the celestial and the earthly Jerusalem in Jewish Apocalypticism and Jewish Gnosis, see Joseph Dan, “Jerusalem in Jewish Spirituality”, in: Nitzza Rosovsky (ed.), *City of the Great King: Jerusalem from David to the Present*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1996, 60–72.

A.F.J. Klijn argues that Christianity in Edessa, Alexandria, Carthage and Rome was of Jewish rather than Judaic origin and characterised by the specific views of the local Jewry. He refers to the Prologue to the Commentary of Paul’s Letter to the Romans, written by an anonymous who is called Ambrosiaster (pseudo-Ambrosius) in the time of pope Damasus (366–384): according to this passage the first Christians in Rome were Law-abiding Jews. This seems to me to be a very valuable tradition, because it is at variance with the already then current myth, that the congregation in Rome had been founded by Peter and Paul unanimously (!).

The history of the Jewish Christian faction in the Church of Rome (the *Pastor of Hermas*!) has not yet been systematically researched.

A.F.J. Klijn, “The Study of Jewish Christianity”, *NTS* 20 (1974) 419–431.

Manlio Simonetti observes that in Pauline communities there were bishops (plural) and deacons, whereas in Jewish Christian congregations there were presbyters, elders, as in the synagogue. In the course of the

second century the monarchic episcopacy comes into being, whereas the priests, presbyters, get a subordinated function.

M. Simonetti, "Presbiteri e vescovi nella chiesa del I e II secolo", *Vetera Christianorum* 33 (1996) 115–132.

From this I conclude that the *seniores laici* in Carthage are a relic from the time that the Christian Church there was exclusively Jewish and there were not yet bishops and their subordinates, the priests. This is another proof that the origins of African Christianity are Jewish Christian.

After the Moslim conquest, about 705 A.D., the African Church continued to exist until ca. 1000 A.D. Until the very end it preserved traces of its Jewish Christian origins: a tombstone of that date, found at Kairouan in Tunisia, commemorates a *senior*, called Peter, probably the leader of the local community (François Decret, *Le Christianisme en Afrique du Nord ancienne*, Paris 1996, 265).

#### PREFACE

In this paper I come back to some of the remarks I made in my "Discussion of Judaic Christianity" of 1968.<sup>1</sup> There I suggested that African Christianity was of Jewish, Palestinian origin; that these primitive founders were succeeded by gnostics and other "heretics"; and that only at a relatively late date this pluriformity was replaced by Catholicism (which introduced the Confession, the Canon, and the Episcopacy). In the following I try to show that this new perspective has consequences for the theory of "Christian Latin" and for the problem of whether or not Minucius wrote before Tertullian. Previous studies were based on philological evidence which have proved to be inconclusive and contradictory. Perhaps a new approach, based on sociological and theological observations, might show that Minucius wrote before Tertullian.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Discussion of Judaic Christianity", *VC* 22 (1968) 81–93, esp. 93 (= *Gnostic Studies*, II, Istanbul 1975, 146–158, esp. 157–158).

## I. VETUS LATINA JUDAICA

Jewish Christianity, recently rediscovered and evinced by the Gospel of Thomas, has given a new dimension to the history of Latin Christian literature and the prehistory of "Christian Latin".<sup>2</sup> We now see clearly that the cradle of both stood in the synagogue—or rather in the main synagogue and the many synagogues—of the second city of the West, with its hundreds of thousands of inhabitants and tens of thousands of Jews. There is no evidence that the latter were already in Carthage in the times of Augustus and Horace. Yet they must have been there, as they were in Rome, and elsewhere in the empire; the diaspora was a historical fact long before the beginning of our Christian era. A medieval chronicle, Yosephon, reports that after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. quite a few Palestinians came to live in Carthage: "And Vespasian gave his son Titus the country of Africa and he settled thirty thousand Jews in Carthage, besides those he established in other places". Support for Yosephon's statement may be found in the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, where a locality south-east of Oea (Tripoli) is marked as *Scina, Locus Judaeorum Augusti*; this was probably an estate, where slaves of the imperial treasury had been settled, who cultivated the grain exported to the metropolis.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that the number of Jews in Africa, Numidia and Mauretania increased after the revolt of 115 in Egypt and Cyrenaica, which almost annihilated the numerous Jewry of these countries and caused a considerable number of refugees to flee to safer and quieter regions. It is even possible that quite a few Berbers of the hinterland opted for this religion of rebels against a hated oppressor. How else can one explain that until the present century colonies of Jews persisted in

<sup>2</sup> "The Gospel of Thomas and the New Testament", *VC* 11 (1957) 189–207, esp. 198 (= *Gnostic Studies*, II, 3–16, esp. 10); J. Daniélou, "La littérature latine avant Tertullien", *REL* 48 (1970) 357–375; id., "Le traité De Centesima, Sexagesima, Tricesima et le Judéo-Christianisme Latin avant Tertullien", *VC* 25 (1971) 171–181; id., *A History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea*, III: *The Origins of Latin Christianity*, London–Philadelphia 1977; W.H.C. Frend, "Tertulliano e gli Ebrei", *RSLR* 4 (1968) 1–10; id., "Jews and Christians in Third Century Carthage", in *Paganisme, Judaïsme, Christianisme. Influences et affrontements dans le monde antique* (Mélanges offerts à Marcel Simon), Paris 1978, 185–194 (reprint in Frend, *Town and Country in the Early Christian Centuries*, London 1980); M. Simon, "Réflexions sur le judéo-christianisme", in: J. Neusner (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults* (Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty), II, Leiden 1975, 53–76.

<sup>3</sup> H.Z. (J.W.) Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa*, I: *From Antiquity to the Sixteenth Century*, Leiden 1974, 27.

out-of-the-way backwaters in Morocco and Algeria? Judaism preceded and survived Christianity in the vast area of the Maghreb. In 1901 there were about 60.000 Jews in Algeria, 18.000 in Tunisia, 80.000 in Morocco.<sup>4</sup> After the last war almost all returned to Israel.

We can easily visualize a service in the synagogue(s) of Carthage, which cannot have differed very much from services elsewhere: prayer, lessons from the Bible, sermon, singing of psalms, all very much like the *missa catechumenorum* of the Roman liturgy and a protestant service. In fact the form of communal worship devised by the Jews was adopted and adapted by Christianity, also in Carthage.

The Bible read in the synagogue of Carthage was the Greek translation of the Seventy. "Why, yes! and the Jews openly read the books. They have that freedom in return for a tribute. Every Sabbath day there is common access to those books. He who will hear, will find God; he who will take the pains to understand, will find himself compelled to believe" (Tertullian, *Apol.* 18, 8; Glover, 92).<sup>4a</sup> We must suppose that the reading of scripture had been entrusted to an official reader or lector, the *ba'al kerî'ah*, and not, as in Palestine, to lay attendants called up to read their own portion, because as the inscriptions show in Carthage the prevailing language, also of the Jews, was Latin and not everyone could read Greek.<sup>5</sup> The Bible was also read for private devotion, together with apologetic writings, and not only by Jews, in Carthage. Minucius Felix, an African whose writing reflects the situation of African Christianity and African Judaism, tells us that the writings of the Old Testament were available for individual readers, even of Gentile offspring. The passage seems to be corrupt and may be read and translated in the following way:

*Scripta eorum relege, vel, ut transeamus veteres, Flavi Iosephi, vel, si Romanis magis gaudes, Antoni Iuliani de Iudaeis require: iam scies, nequitia sua hanc eos meruisse fortunam, nec quidquam accidisse quod non sit his, si in contumacia perseverarent, ante praedictum. Ita prius eos deseruisse comprehendes quam esse desertos nec, ut impie loqueris, cum deo suo captos, sed a deo ut disciplinae transfugas deditos.*

<sup>4</sup> P. Monceaux, "Les colonies juives dans l'Afrique Romaine", *REJ* 44 (1902) 1–28, esp. 1.

<sup>4a</sup> Cf. Augustinus, *Quaest. Vet. et Nov. Test. Quaest.* 44, 1: "sed forte dicant Iudaei: Domus Dei, id est synagoga, omnibus patet. Nec renititur".

<sup>5</sup> J.R.J. Ferron, "Inscriptions juives de Carthage", *Cahiers de Byrsa* 1 (1951) 175–206.

Read their own writings; or omitting the ancients, turn to Flavius Josephus; or, if you prefer Romans, consult Antonius Julianus on the Jews, and you will see that it was their own wickedness which brought them to misfortune, and that nothing happened to them which was not predicted in advance, if they persisted in rebelliousness. You will understand they deserted God before he deserted them, and that they were not—as you profanely say—led captive with their God, but were handed over by God as deserters from his disciplines (*Octavius* 33, 4–5; Glover, 416 and 417).

The “ancients” here referred to are the seventy-two “elders” who, according to an incredible legend, translated the Hebrew text into Greek on the island of Pharos. Minucius knows the written translation of the Seventy, works of Flavius Josephus and a Latin book of a certain Antonius Julianus. Marcus Antonius Julianus was procurator of Judaea after the fall of Jerusalem: the book attributed to him was possibly a Jewish apology, in which the catastrophe of 70 A.D. was described as a punishment for previous sins.

Thus, written copies of the Greek Old Testament were available both for communal and private purposes in Africa. These must have contained some very archaic readings which already existed before Philo, who is polemizing against them, so the revolutionary rendering of *nešama* in Genesis 2, 7 by  $\pi\nu\epsilon\delta\mu\alpha$  and not by  $\pi\nu\omicron\eta$ : *et insufflavit in faciem eius spiritum vitae*.<sup>6</sup> Tertullian seems to indicate that the Greek lesson was translated orally and *ex tempore* into Latin, and that even a Gentile present in the synagogue and listening to the lessons could understand the text and find God in the Bible. We conclude that in Carthage the Septuagint could be read in Greek and heard recited in Latin towards the end of the second century, and possibly earlier too.

Not only the Gentiles but also the Jews of Carthage themselves needed such a Latin translation because they spoke Latin. The majority of the inscriptions found in their cemetery at Gamart, north of Carthage, are in Latin. Only a few are in Greek. Some are in Hebrew, with the inevitable *shalom*. Tertullian tells us that this was the word the Jews of Carthage used to greet each other (*Adv. Marc.* V 5, 1).<sup>7</sup> Of course that does not prove that they knew Hebrew; even today this is the only Hebrew word everyone knows. Latin must have been the only language

<sup>6</sup> See B. Fischer, *Vetus Latina. Die Reste der allateinischen Bibel*, II: *Genesis*, Freiburg 1951–54, 37–41: cf. Philo, *Legum allegoriae* III, 161 and *Quod deterius potiori insidiari solet* 80.

<sup>7</sup> “Nam et hodie Iudaei in pacis nomine appellant et retro in scripturis sic salutabant” (*CCL* I, 675).

all uneducated people in Carthage—of whatever ethnic group—knew and spoke. And in fact we have evidence that in synagogues of the West, Latin was used in translating the Bible. Justinian, in a well-known *novella* (146), orders Jews to use not only Hebrew, but also Greek and Latin: “We therefore decree that, wherever there are Jews who so desire, the Holy Scriptures may be read in the synagogues in Greek, or in our mother tongue [that is in Latin], or in any other language which suits the place where the reading is given, so that the text may be understood by those present and they may live and act according to it. The Jewish interpreters shall not be allowed to corrupt the Hebrew text on account of their being the only ones who understand it, relying, as they do, on the ignorance of the people who do not notice the corruption”.<sup>8</sup> This *novella* evidences the tendency of the Jews in the Roman Empire to return to Hebrew exclusively, a tendency which started much earlier and eventually led to the present day situation. We must suppose that translation into Latin occurred more frequently in earlier times, and certainly in Carthage.

D.S. Blondheim seems to have been the first to see how important the Synagogue of Carthage was for the origin of the *Vetus Latina*. He could adduce the Latin idiom of the Jews in France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, which quite often agrees with the *Vetus Latina*, in order to prove this thesis.<sup>9</sup> But is not the thesis, without this additional material, plausible anyhow? Is not the lector, and his Jewish forerunner, the pivotal figure for almost every translation of the Bible? Saint Anthony entered the church and was converted to monasticism, because he heard the reader orally translate the Gospel of poverty into Coptic. Wulfila was a lector; he had been busy translating in the church before he took writing to hand. In the synagogues of Palestine the Hebrew text was read first, then followed an oral translation into the vernacular Aramaic, made by an interpreter (*meturgeman*); this is the origin of the written targum. This usage may have existed in Carthage too, for the hieratic cantillation characteristic of Hebrew scripture recitation was handed on, from the Synagogue, to the Latin as well as to the Greek

<sup>8</sup> Translation by P. Kahle in: *The Cairo Genizah*, Oxford 1959, 315; the Latin text of this *novella* is edited by R. Schoell and G. Kroll in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, III: *Novellae*, Berlin 1954, 715.

<sup>9</sup> D.S. Blondheim, *Les Judéo-Romains et la Vetus Latina, Etude sur les rapports entre les traductions bibliques en langue Romane des juifs au Moyen Age et les anciennes versions*, Paris 1925. For the life of David Blondheim, see *Enc. Jud.*, IV, 1114–15; Blondheim has been criticized by M. Banitt in his article “Une langue fantôme: le judéo-français”, *Revue de linguistique romane* 27 (1963) 245–294.

Church, the so-called *lectio sollemnis*. The Septuagint is a targum of the synagogue of Alexandria, deeply rooted in the tradition of oral translation during the service.<sup>10</sup> So is the Aramaic targum of Jerusalem. And the targum falsely called “of Onkelos” (Aquila) is in reality the local text of the Synagogue of Edessa or Arbela. In the same way the *Vetus Latina* is the targum of Carthage. We do not know whether or not it existed in written form already in the Synagogue, but we may suppose that it was handed down orally. The language, style and syntax of the *Vetus Latina* is so clumsy, literalistic, folksy and outlandish that it must have been made by people who knew neither Greek nor Latin.

La version qu'on y lit est bien caractéristique: c'est une version populaire. Populaire, par son choix de mots frustes mais colorés; populaire, par la latinité douteuse de ses expressions; populaire, par l'abondance de ses superlatifs; populaire, par sa servilité au grec, dépourvue de la souplesse littéraire qu'on rencontre ailleurs. Ce n'est qu'en Afrique qu'on nous dit: *Ecce quid bonum et voluptabile ut habitent fratres in unum*: ce n'est qu'en Afrique qu'on chante: *Gloriosissima dicta sunt de te*; qu'on exécère les *nequis-simi* et qu'on célèbre les voies du Seigneur qui sont *fidelissima*; ailleurs, les pièges ne s'appellent pas *muscipula*, ni le ressentiment divin *amaricatio*. Bref, c'est une langue assez rude; elle accuse son origine peu littéraire et vient témoigner à sa manière que la version latine primitive ne fut qu'une éclosion spontanée de la vie et de la piété des peuples chrétiens.<sup>11</sup>

What is the relation of the *Vetus Latina* to the Hebrew, Masoretic text as printed in our modern editions? This seems an odd question if it is conceded, as we did before, that the *Vetus Latina* was translated from the Greek Septuagint. But it is an established fact that in the synagogues the Hebrew text was quite often read first and then the translation in the vernacular followed. It has even been argued, with some plausibility, that this custom persisted in the Christian congregation of Sardes, because Melito's Easter Sermon begins with the words: “The lesson from Exodus has been read in Hebrew, and the words of the symbolic story have been elucidated (i.e. by translation into Greek) how the Paschal Lamb was slaughtered and how the people of God was saved”.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> P. Kahle, *Cairo Genizah*, 209–261, esp. 228–235; according to L.Th. Lefort, Jews in Egypt had started to translate parts of the Septuagint into Coptic before the arrival of Christianity; see rec. of W. Grossouw, *The Coptic Versions of the Minor Prophets*, in: *Le Muséon* 51 (1938) 350–351.

<sup>11</sup> P. Capelle, *Le texte du psautier latin en Afrique*, Rome 1913, 183.

<sup>12</sup> G. Zuntz, “On the Opening Sentence of Melito's Paschal Homily”, *HTR* 36 (1943) 299–315, esp. 302; this thesis of Zuntz has been denied by O. Perler in his *Méliton de Sardes, Sur la pâque* (SC 123), Paris 1966, 131–132.

The custom of translating Scripture during the service was preserved until the fourth century in Jerusalem. Egeria writes about her observations in 381–383:

*Lectiones etiam, quaecunque in ecclesia leguntur, quia necesse est graece legi, semper stat qui siriste interpretatur (Peregrinatio Egeriae 47, 4).*

Because the lessons read in church have to be read in Greek, there is always somebody present who translates them in Aramaic.

In the opening chapter of the second fuller edition of Eusebius' book on the Palestinian martyrs we read that Procopius was both lector and interpreter (into Aramaic) of the church in Beth Shean—Scythopolis.<sup>13</sup> So it was quite possible that the lector in the synagogue of Carthage first read the Hebrew text, perhaps transcribed with Greek characters, like the second column of Origen's *Hexapla*. The *Vetus Latina* quite often agrees with the Hebrew text against the Septuagint. This is an observation which fascinated an older generation of scholars. The Bible text of the Donatists was a favourite hunting ground for them, because the Donatists remained faithful to the *Afra* of Cyprian, whereas Augustine and other Catholics of the fourth century offer an eclectic text, sometimes the text of Milan, sometimes the Vulgate of Jerome, and also the African text.<sup>14</sup> Burkitt found several "Hebraisms" in the Rules of Tyconius of which one may be quoted as an example:<sup>15</sup>

Isaiah 14,13

Tyconius	Septuagint	Masoretic text
<i>stellas dei</i>	τῶν ἄστρον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ	koḳbe 'el =
	(οὐρανοῦ: tabu form for God). <sup>16</sup>	the stars of God

Dom Paul Capelle studied the text of the Psalms of the *Afra*. He established that Tertullian already had a written, Latin translation of this book of the Bible. It was a copy made from the Egyptian text type, preserved by Codex Vaticanus (B), mixed with Syrian elements

<sup>13</sup> G. Zuntz, "Melito's Paschal Homily", 311.

<sup>14</sup> P. Monceaux, "La Bible Latine en Afrique, IV", *REJ* 43 (1901) 15–49, esp. 34.

<sup>15</sup> F.C. Burkitt, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius* (Texts and Studies III, 1), Cambridge 1894, LIV.

<sup>16</sup> In his edition of the LXX text of Isaiah, Göttingen<sup>2</sup> 1967, 175, J. Ziegler adopted the reading τῶν ἄστρον τοῦ θεοῦ for his text; in his apparatus criticus, however, he does not mention one manuscript with this reading, and only refers to the text of Cyprian and Tyconius.



later to be found in the recension of Lucianus. Moreover he noted five agreements with the Hebrew in Tertullian and eleven in Cyprian.<sup>17</sup> Modern research has completely neglected this observation. Gustave Bardy quotes Capelle's book only to show how African the Latin of the *Afra* is, but forgets that the Old Testament must have been translated orally already in the Synagogue of Carthage.<sup>18</sup> Neither in Bruce Metzger's *Early Versions of the New Testament*, nor in Tom O'Malley's book on *Tertullian and the Bible* or, for that matter, in Michael Andrew Fahey's *Cyprian and the Bible* is the subject even mentioned.<sup>19</sup> The leaders of the *Vetus Latina* Institute in Beuron informed me, in a letter of 10 April 1981, that no modern study about the occurrence of "Hebrew" variants in the African Text was known to them. And yet this problem is of fundamental importance to their project in which so many millions of German Marks are invested.

After having lived with the *Vetus Latina* during my whole scholarly career I think I have found evidence which may contribute to the solution of this vexed question. In *De mortuorum resurrectione* 29 Tertullian offers the text of Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones revived, so splendidly illustrated by the wall paintings in the synagogue of Doura Europos (where the Spirit is represented as a Woman):

*Et facta est, inquit, super me manus domini et extulit me in spiritu dominus et posuit me in medio campi: is erat ossibus refertus (1). et circumduxit me super ea per circuitum et ecce multa super faciem campi et ecce arida satis (2). et ait ad me, Fili hominis, si vivent ossa ista? et dixi, Adonai domine tu scis (3). et ait ad me, Propheta in ossa haec et dices, Ossa arida audite sermonem domini (4): haec dicit dominus Adonai ossibus istis, Ecce ego adfero in vos spiritum et vivetis (5), et dabo in vos nervos et reducam in vos carnes et circumdabo in vobis cutem et dabo in vobis spiritum, et vivetis et cognoscetis quod ego dominus (6). et prophetavi secundum praeceptum, et ecce vox dum propheto et ecce motus, et accedebant ossa ad ossa (7): et vidi et ecce super ossa nervi et caro ascendit et circumpositae sunt eis carnes, et spiritus in eis non erat (8). et ait ad me, Propheta ad spiritum, fili hominis, propheta et dices ad spiritum, Haec dicit dominus Adonai, A quattuor ventis veni, spiritus, et spira in istis interemptis et vivant (9). et prophetavi ad spiritum sicut praecepit mihi, et introivit in ea spiritus et vixerunt et constiterunt super pedes suos, valentia magna satis (10). et ait ad me, Fili hominis, ossa ista omnis domus Israelis est: ipsi dicunt, Exaruerunt ossa nostra et perit spes nostra, avulsi sumus in eis (11): propterea propheta ad eos, Ecce ego*

<sup>17</sup> Capelle, *Psautier Latin en Afrique*, 201–202; 204 ff.

<sup>18</sup> G. Bardy, *La question des langues dans l'église ancienne*, I, Paris 1948, 60.

<sup>19</sup> B. Metzger, *Early Versions of the New Testament*, Oxford 1977; T.P. O'Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible*, Nijmegen-Utrecht 1967; M.A. Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible. A Study in Third Century Exegesis*, Tübingen 1971.

*patefacio sepulchra vestra et eveham vos de sepulchris vestris, populus meus, et inducam vos in terram Israelis (12), et cognoscetis quod ego dominus aperuerim sepulchra vestra et eduxerim vos de sepulchris vestris, populus meus (13), et dabo in vobis spiritum et vivetis et requiescetis in terra vestra, et cognoscetis quod ego dominus locutus sum et fecerim, dicit dominus (14).*

Remarkable variants in this text are:

3. *Adonai domine*: Sept. 62' 449: ἄδωναί κύριε (Boh.: ἄδωναί domine deus σαβαώθ); Sept. *cet.*: κύριος. Tert. alone of all Latins.
5. *dominus Adonai*: Sept. 62' L' Origenes Theodoretus Boh.: ἄδωναί κύριος; Sept. *cet.*: κύριος. Tert. alone of all Latins.
9. *dominus Adonai*: Sept. 62' L' Theodoretus: ἄδωναί κύριος; (= Mas. text); Sept. *cet.*: κύριος. Tert. alone of all Latins.
10. *valentia*: Tert. alone of all Latins (= Mas. text); Sept.: συναγωγή.
11. *avulsi sumus in eis*: Tert. alone of all Latins (= Mas. text); Sept.: διαπεφωνήκαμεν.

The editor of the Göttingen Septuagint of Ezekiel, J. Ziegler, in his critical apparatus naively supposes that Tertullian reflects an unknown recension of the Greek Septuagint. But that cannot be the case. Nobody will be astonished that this translation agrees with Lucian, i.e. the text of Christian Antioch. And it is significant that Origen also has *adonai* in 5 and 9: his second column, the transliterated Hebrew text, was of Jewish origin.<sup>20</sup> The Jews always said *Adonai*, not κύριος, when translating the Bible. Hebrews refused to pronounce the divine Name because it was so holy and awesome. Origen (*In Psalmos* 2, 2) states that in Greek manuscripts of the Bible written by Jews the tetragrammaton was not translated into κύριος, but written in archaic Hebrew characters. The trustworthiness of this tradition has been confirmed by recent discoveries. A Qumran fragment of Leviticus II–IV in Greek renders the Name by I A Ω, a usage known only from one later manuscript, the Codex Marchalianus of the prophets. In the Cairo Deuteronomy also in Greek the Name is written in the square Hebrew characters, which gave rise later to the mistaken transliteration of the four Hebrew letters as πιπι in Greek.<sup>21</sup> No Jewish biblical manuscript of the Old Testament

<sup>20</sup> P. Kahle, "Die von Origenes verwendeten griechischen Bibelhandschriften" in: F.L. Cross (ed.), *Studia Patristica*, IV, Berlin 1961, 107–117.

<sup>21</sup> C.H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, London 1979, 30; S. Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study*, Oxford 1968, 271.

is known which translates the Name as κύριος, although the Name was, of course, pronounced in the lesson as Adonai.

If the Bible of Tertullian contains Adonai where it is absent from the Septuagint, this shows that this Bible originally was used in the Synagogue of Carthage. If it reads: *Adonai, domine* (for, as we said before, no Jew said κύριος, or *domine*, for that matter, when translating into Greek or Latin), this indicates that afterwards this Latin translation was transferred from the synagogue to the local Christian church. Most probably this Latin translation was an oral one, made by a series of lectors during the service, which gradually ossified and petrified into a fixed tradition. Even today Coptic Christians and Polish Jews (in New York!) know the Bible, also the Hebrew Bible, by heart. How much better must have been the situation, before the art of printing killed memory. This is also the most plausible explanation of the many “Hebraisms” in the *Vetus Latina*. The men who translated the Greek text during the service in Schul into Latin, were professional *lectores* who knew Hebrew and consciously or unconsciously introduced the equivalent of the Hebrew text into their translation of the Greek Septuagint. It is not excluded that after a while also bilingual codices came to be used, which influenced each other, like the Greek and the Latin of the *Codex Bezae*. But at the origin of it all were the oral exertions of the readers-translators. Tertullian knew that the Greek Bible sometimes contains Ἰαώ. In *Adversus Valentinianos* 14, 4 he writes: “inde invenitur Iao in scripturis.” For this there is no equivalent in his source, Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I, 21, 3. Scripture must mean here: Holy Writ. Does this mean that his Greek copy of the Septuagint still contained Ἰαώ? And was this copy originally in Jewish hands?

## II. THE LATIN HAGGADAH

A synagogue has not yet been found at the site of former Carthage—nor in Rome for that matter. But the great necropole excavated north of the ancient city near present day Gamart was the cemetery of the Jewish community there in Roman times. More than hundred *loculi* have been explored, each containing 15 to 17 tombs. The disposition of these tombs is according to the prescriptions of the Talmud. Candlesticks with seven branches are painted or traced at the entrances of the rooms.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Monceaux, “Les colonies juives”, 4; E.R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, II, New York 1953, 63–69.

The numerous *defixionum tabellae* found at Carthage sometimes reveal the influence of Jewish magic:<sup>23</sup>

[Ὶ]τι ἐξορκίζω ὑμᾶς κατὰ τοῦ ἐπάν[ω] τοῦ οὐρανοῦ θεοῦ, τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τῶν χερουβί, ὁ διορίσας τὴν γῆν καὶ χωρίσας τὴν θάλασσαν, Ἰαὼ Ἀβριαὼ Ἀρβαθιαὼ Σαβαὼ Ἄδωναι, ἵνα καταδήσητε...

We even hear that heretical Jews in Africa Proconsularis venerated the Queen of Heaven whom they identified with the Celestial Goddess or Tanit, the Phoenician and Carthagian wife of Baal Hammon:

*Alia est haeresis in Iudaeis, quae Reginam, quam et Fortunam Caeli nuncupant, <adorant>, quam et Caelestem vocant in Africa* (Filastrius, *Diversarum hereseon liber* XV; Marx, 6–7).

The reference is to Jeremiah 44:17 (“to burn incense unto the queen of heaven”) and one wonders whether the subject of *vocant* is indeed *Judaei*. Is it possible that the Jews of Carthage (some of them at least) identified Wisdom in their Bible with Tanit, just as the Jews of Alexandria painted Sophia with the colours of Isis? We cannot prove this. But if Astoret-Šem-Baal, Astarte Name of Baal, in Phoenicia can have influenced the biblical Ḥokma, then Tanit-Pene-Paal, Tanit Face of Baal, might have influenced her in Carthage.

On the other hand, we may be certain that they not only read but also explained their Bible, in their way. There is some evidence that they told imaginative stories to fill in some details of the biblical narrative, the so-called “haggadah”. Tertullian was quite familiar with these oral traditions, which were later committed to writing and are preserved in different treatises of Talmud and Midrash. Some examples:

#### 1. Cain jealous:

*statim ut deus coli coepit, i n v i d i a m religio sortita est* (*Scorpiace* 8) Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 30, 9 (Gnostics): (*Cain*) *primus zelum et mortem ostenderit*; *Ps.-Clem. Homilies* III, 25, 1: (Κάιν) ἐρμηνεύεται γὰρ καὶ κτήσις καὶ ζῆλος

*Pirque Rabbi Eliezer* 21 (Oxf. MS e.76): *Envy* and hatred entered Cain’s heart against his brother Abel, because his offering had been accepted (Friedländer, 154). *Test. of Benjamin* 7, 5: Because forever those who are like unto Cain in *envy* and hatred of brethren shall be punished with the same judgment.

Faulty etymology, based on Hebrew: qinne’ = to envy. Cain means: “smith”.

<sup>23</sup> *CIL* VIII suppl. 12511.

## 2. Paradise regained:

*Adam exomologesi restitutus in paradysum suum (De paenitentia 12, 9)*

*Vita Adae et Evae* 48, 6: And the angels Michael and Uriel buried Adam and Abel in the parts of *Paradise*, before the eyes of Seth and his mother (Charles, 151) (*Georgian Life of Adam and Eve* 40: Et après cela, Dieu donna un ordre à Michel et celui-ci ramena Adam au *paradis* qui est dans le troisième ciel).<sup>23a</sup>

## 3. Adam a heretic:

*quis dubitabit ipsum illud Adae delictum haeresin pronuntiare (Adv. Marcionem II, 2)*

b. Sanhedrin 38 b: Rab Judah also said in Rab's name: Adam was a Min (i.e. a *heretic*), for it is written, And the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou? i.e. whither has thine heart turned?

4. *Concilium impiorum* = theatre:

*felix vir qui non abiit in concilium impiorum... non aliena vox a spectaculorum interdictione (De spectaculis 3)*

b. Abodah Zarah 18 b: Our Rabbis taught: Those who visit stadiums or a camp and witness there [the performance] of sorcerers and enchanters, or of bukion and mukion, Iulion and mulion, blurin or salgurin—lo this is “the seat of the scornful” and against those [who visit them] Scripture says, Happy is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the wicked, nor sat in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23a</sup> J.-P. Mahé, “Le livre d’Adam Georgien”, in R. van den Broek and M.J. Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions* (presented to Gilles Quispel on the occasion of his 65th birthday), Leiden 1981, 227–260, esp. 259.

<sup>24</sup> R. Loewe, “The Jewish Midrashim and Patristic and Scholastic Exegesis of the Bible”, in: K. Aland and F.L. Cross (eds.), *Studia Patristica*, I, Berlin 1957, 492–514.

## 5. The stolen jewels a deserved honorarium:

The order of God to spoil the Egyptians (Exodus 3, 22) is defended as justified: *mercedes restitui oportere illius operariae servitutis* (*Adv. Marcionem* II, 20)

Jubilees 48, 18: And on the fourteenth we bound him that he might not accuse the children of Israel on the day when they asked the Egyptians for vessels and garments, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of bronze, in order to despoil the Egyptians in return for the bondage in which they had forced them to serve;  
 b. Sanhedrin 91 a: "Then I too", said he, "will bring you proof only from the Torah, for it is written, Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. Pay us for the toil of 600 000 men whom ye enslaved for 430 years; cf. Philo, *Vita Moysis* I, 141.

Tertullian himself says that he is taking this haggadic material from an oral tradition: *nam et aiunt ita actum per legatos utrimque* (*Adv. Marcionem* II, 20). This was probably not only the case with the apologetic justification of the theft of the "vessels", but also with the other exegetic elements. They were obviously current in the Church of Carthage. But ultimately they were derived from the Synagogue, where they were transmitted as haggadah. And this again indicates that in Carthage, as everywhere in the Roman empire, the Church was born in the Synagogue. This may have happened at any date between 30 and 180 A.D.

But this same tradition of the Synagogue in Carthage must also have been indebted to liberal Judaism. Tertullian, in his interpretation of Genesis, sometimes agrees with Philo. He says that God did not say "Adam, where are you" as a question (*interrogatorio sono*) but as an exclamation and a reproach (*impresso et incusso et imputativo, Adam, ubi es... id est iam hic non es...*) (*Adv. Marcionem* II, 25, 2)). Exactly the same exegesis is to be found in *Legum allegoriae* 3, 51. Still more fascinating is their agreement in the interpretation of Genesis 2, 7, according to which God breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life. Philo polemizes against the older translation also evidenced by the *Vetus Latina*, which rendered breath (*nešama*) by *pneuma*. For Philo the breath (*pnoué*) is

only an *aura* (*Legum allegoriae* 1, 42). In the same way for Tertullian the *adflatus* is less than the spirit, its *aurula* only (*Adv. Marcionem* II, 9, 2).<sup>25</sup> And yet Waszink was perfectly right when he said that there are no signs indicating that Tertullian read Philo himself.<sup>26</sup> The most plausible supposition seems to me that a Jew in Carthage possessed at least one writing of Philo, became a Christian and contributed to the stream of tradition the learned observation that the breath of life is not *pneuma*, and therefore not a divine element in man. The same must have happened in Alexandria: for Philo is quoted by Christians exclusively.

### III. JEWISH LATIN

Carthage always remained the centre of African Christianity, in Africa Proconsularis (Tunisia), Numidia (Algeria) and Mauretania (Morocco). About 218 A.D. bishop Agrippinus held a general synod there on which 70 bishops were present.<sup>27</sup> In 212, when Tertullian wrote his pamphlet *Ad Scapulam*, the Christians formed almost the majority in every city: *tanta hominum multitudo, pars paene maior civitatis cuiusque* (*Ad Scapulam* 2). As Mommsen said, "in Africa Christianity, once a Jewish sect, has become a world religion". And that in hardly one century! When you stand on the beach north of Tunis among the ruins of ancient Carthage, you realize that the new religion spread and radiated over this enormous area with the Synagogue of Carthage as its starting point.

Some time ago René Braun, in his *Deus Christianorum*, which I for one consider to be the best book on Tertullian since the last World War, has shown that such fundamental and pivotal theological terms as *revelatio*, *deus vivus*, *omnipotens*, *altissimus* were coined in a Jewish milieu before they became Christian.<sup>28</sup> This is especially clear in the case of *instrumentum* (scripture) found in the Jewish inscription of the synagogue of Hamman Lif:

<sup>25</sup> G. Quispel, *De bronnen van Tertullianus' Adversus Marcionem*, Leiden 1943, 139–140.

<sup>26</sup> J.H. Waszink, *Tertullianus, De anima*, Amsterdam 1947, 14.

<sup>27</sup> Cyprian, *Eph.* 71, 4 (*PL* IV, 411): Quod quidem et Agrippinus, bonae memoriae vir, cum ceteris coepiscopis suis qui illo in tempore in provincia Africa et Numidia Ecclesiam Domini gubernant... A. Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums*, II, Leipzig <sup>2</sup>1906, 240; cf. Augustine, *C. Petilianum* 22 (*PL* 43, 606): Nam illud quod adjungit de episcopo Carthaginensi Agrippino, de inclyto martyre Cypriano, de septuaginta praecessoribus Cypriani, quia hoc fecerunt, et fieri praecerunt.

<sup>28</sup> R. Braun, *Deus Christianorum, Recherches sur le vocabulaire doctrinal de Tertullien*, Paris 1962, 413–417 (*revelatio*), 76–78 (*deus vivus*), 97–102 (*omnipotens*), 85–89 (*altissimus*).

*I(n)strumenta servi tui Nar(on)itanus*  
*I(n)strumenta servi tui a Naroni*  
 (CIL VIII suppl. 12457 c).

Paul Monceaux already in 1904 compared this with Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 21: *antiquissimis Iudaeorum instrumentis*.<sup>29</sup> It is amazing that it took so much time before the *gens Tertullianea* was made aware of this fundamental insight. The epigraphical Jewish material had only to be related to Christian literature, to make this startling discovery.

When discussing the theory of “Christian Latin”, Giacomo Devoto observed that no “Christianism” could be indicated that was not related to the new religion and its special purposes and system of references.<sup>30</sup> With the same qualification it may be said that no Jewish Latin word can be found, in the epigraphical material of Africa, that has not to do with the cult prescribed in the Bible or with the Bible itself: *shalom, in pace; cesquet (quiescit) in pace et irene; sancta(m) synagoga(m) Naron(itanam) pro salutem suam ancilla tua Juliana; archisynagogus; deus Abraham, deus Isaac; fidelis metuens* (a God fearer, who believed without being a proselyte); *pater sinagogae*.<sup>31</sup> From this we conclude that it was not Tertullian, or the Christian people before Tertullian, but the Bible, read in the Synagogue and later in the Church of Carthage, which created Christian life and so “Christian Latin”. Tertullian knows the Latin version well, even though he sometimes translates from the Greek. His iron memory resembles a storehouse of Bible texts. Perhaps he was a lector, whose duty it was to read (or rather: sing) Scripture aloud during the services. In that case it was not Tertullian who created Christian Latin, but Jewish Latin which created Tertullian’s language. Moreover, his Asianic style may perhaps owe not a little to the sermon of the Synagogue: Melito’s Easter Sermon has revealed how much indebted the Church was to the Synagogue in this respect, as Wifstrand has shown.<sup>32</sup>

#### IV. JUDAIC CHRISTIANITY

Augustine says that Christianity came to Africa from “the root of the Churches of the Orient” and that earth brought from that region was

<sup>29</sup> P. Monceaux, “Enquête sur l’épigraphie chrétienne de Afrique, II: Inscriptions juives”, *Rev. Arch.* IV (1904) 354–373, esp. 368.

<sup>30</sup> G. Devoto, *Storia della Lingua di Roma*, Bologna <sup>2</sup>1944, 320–324.

<sup>31</sup> Monceaux, “Epigraphie chrétienne”, 362, 365, 366, 367, 369, 370.

<sup>32</sup> A. Wifstrand, “The Homily of Melito on the Passion”, *VC* 2 (1948) 201–223.



venerated by the Donatists: *ab illa radice Orientalium Ecclesiarum se esse praecisam, unde Evangelium in Africam venit; unde terra si eis offeratur, adorant* (*Epistula* 52, 2). This can hardly mean anything else than that Augustine understood Jerusalem, “the mother of all churches”, and the Holy Land in general, the earth of which performed miracles, also to be the mother of the Christian community of Carthage.<sup>33</sup> It would seem that this tradition already existed before Tertullian. In his *Adversus Iudaeos* 7, 4 he quotes Acts 2, 9–11 in the following way:

*cui etenim alii crediderunt gentes, Parthi et Medi et Elamitae et qui habitant Mesopotamiam Armeniam Phrygiam Cappadociam, et incolentes Pontum et Asiam Phrygiam et Pamphyliam, immorantes Aegyptum et regiones Africae quae est trans Cyrenen inhabitantes, Romani et incolae, tunc et in Hierusalem Iudaei et ceterae gentes, ut iam Gaetulorum varietates et Maurorum multi fines,....*

This passage has always been interpreted as showing that in Tertullian’s time wild tribes of North Africa like the Gaetuli and the Mauri (after whom Morocco is named) were Christian as certain Jews were at the time of the first Whitsuntide in Jerusalem. But Tertullian’s Bible seems to have contained the unique variant according to which inhabitants of Africa (Proconsularis, Carthage and surrounding) beyond Cyrene (Gr. τῆς Λιβύης τῆς κατὰ Κυρήνην), were present in Jerusalem and accepted the Gospel. Instead of οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες Ῥωμαῖοι this Latin Codex seems to have read: *Romani et incolae*.<sup>34</sup> *Incola* can be the translation of πάροικος and as such the opposite of *civis*. Thus the *Vetus Latina* of Eph. 2, 19 in Marius Victorinus reads: *Ergo iam non estis hospites et incolae, sed estis cives sanctorum et domestici Dei*.<sup>35</sup> According to Roman Law an *incola* is somebody who has taken his domicile somewhere without having citizenship in his place of residence:

*incola est qui aliqua regione domicilium suum contulit, quem Graeci πάροικον appellant* (Pomponius, in *Digestae* L. 16, 239, 2; Krüger, Mommsen II, 955)

*Romani* in this passage would seem to indicate the Roman settlers in Africa and their offspring, which had Roman citizenship, *incolae* the

<sup>33</sup> Augustine tells us in *De civ. dei* 22, 8, 6, how Hesperius had received from a friend a sample of sacred earth taken from Jerusalem; see also I. Opelt, “Erde”, *RAC* V, 1113–1179, esp. 1163; Alfred Adam, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, I, Gütersloh 1965, 123 also mentions *Ep.* 52, 2 and *De pecc. merit. et remiss.* 1, 34.

<sup>34</sup> H. Roensch, *Das Neue Testament Tertullian’s*, Leipzig 1871, 661: “Ferner übersetzt er... προσήλυτοι durch *inhabitantes*, ἐπιδημοῦντες durch *incolae*”.

<sup>35</sup> H. Tränkle, *Q.S.F. Tertulliani Adversus Iudaeos*, Wiesbaden 1964, 67.

indigenous population devoid of Roman citizenship in *civitates* like Leptis magna and Cirta. So there seemed to have been a current tradition in the Christian congregation of Carthage that Africans converted to Christianity on Whitsuntide 30 A.D. in Jerusalem. This suggests that African Christianity is of Judaic origins.

In 48/49 C.E. at the Apostels' Convent in Jerusalem the mission fields had been divided between the Hellenist congregation of Antioch and the Hebrew congregation of Jerusalem: the missionaries of the first mentioned should go to the Gentiles, the latter to the Jews (*Galatians* 2, 9). Faithful to this agreement Paul visited backwaters in Asia Minor and Macedonia and even intended to go to Spain, of all places (*Romans* 15, 28). But he never went to the second city of the West, Carthage. This is understandable, because there, as the cemetery of Gamart shows, a considerable colony of Jews were living.<sup>36</sup> Tradition tells us that a missionary from Jerusalem, called Addai, went to Edessa, a centre of Jews in Mesopotamia.<sup>37</sup> Another tradition tells us that "a Hebrew man called Barnabas" had come from Jerusalem to Alexandria, where about half a million Jews lived and two of the five quarters were Jewish, and was the first to preach the Jewish Christian Gospel there (*Ps.-Clem. Homilies* I, 9,1). It is feasible that an anonymous missionary came from Jerusalem to Carthage in the same period, the first century of our era.

It may be useful to summarize the history of Christianity in Egypt, as rediscovered in our days, because it might be that in Carthage a very similar development took place. According to C.H. Roberts the papyri found in Egypt in recent years leave no doubt at all that Christianity was brought to Egypt, especially to the Jews, at an early date from Palestine. This Jewish Christianity lost its influence after the insurrection

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<sup>36</sup> E.R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, II, 63–69.

<sup>37</sup> M. Simon, "Réflexions sur le judéo-christianisme", 75: "Edesse semble en avoir constitué le point d'appui principal. Son existence paraît s'expliquer par une mission de très bonne heure de Palestine même et, sur place, par un recrutement initial en grande partie juif. La tradition, légendaire dans le détail, relative à Addaï semble bien se rapporter à un personnage historique, Juif palestinien de la première génération chrétienne. Le caractère "judaique" de l'Évangile de Thomas, écrit probablement à Edesse vers le milieu du II<sup>ème</sup> siècle, est aujourd'hui universellement reconnu. Les autres écrits du cycle de Thomas, au même titre que le Diatessaron de Tatien, éclairent eux aussi cette forme particulière de christianisme, dont la tendance vigoureusement ascétique et encratite paraît découler en ligne directe de groupements sectaires juifs du type essénien".

of 117, which almost annihilated Egyptian Jewry.<sup>38</sup> I too realised that Jerusalem must be the origin of Christianity in Egypt, because Alexandria is so very near to Jerusalem, when in 1956 I was bombarded in the harbour of the former city by Israeli Mosquitoes. The Palestinian origin of Egyptian Christianity has now been generally accepted. Detlef and Müller declare: “Das älteste ägyptische Christentum dürfte Judenchristentum gewesen sein, was auch den starken Einfluss der spätjüdischen Apokalypik auf die koptische Literatur erklären dürfte. Babylon (in Old Cairo, Q) mit seiner starken Judengemeinde käme als Ausgangspunkt in Frage.”<sup>39</sup>

The main contribution of these Jewish Christians to history was the festival of Epiphany on 6 January when the rebirth of Jesus during his baptism in the river Jordan was celebrated (first attested for the adherents of Basilides, later both birth and rebirth).<sup>40</sup> The corresponding adoptionist Christology, attested for Basilides, Valentinus and Carpocrates,<sup>41</sup> all in Alexandria, is, of course, due to Jewish Christian influence, for it is in one of their Gospels, the Ebionite Gospel, fr. 4, that the voice from heaven says during the baptism of Jesus: “I generated thee today”. And the Gospel of the Hebrews, according to which the Holy Spirit was the Mother of Jesus, was current in Egypt in the second century and is quoted by Clement of Alexandria and Origen.

The Gospel was well received by the local Gnostikoi, a special Jewish sect, which according to Irenaeus is responsible for the *Apocryphon of John*. They superficially tried to christianize their doctrines: the result of this can be seen in quite a few writings from Nag Hammadi, especially the *Apocryphon of John*.<sup>42</sup> Basilides and Valentinus took Jesus quite seriously: they had to criticize the Old Testament but were convinced that Christ

<sup>38</sup> Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, 58; M. Hornschuh, *Studien zur Epistola Apostolorum*, Berlin 1965, 109.

<sup>39</sup> C. Detlef – G. Müller, *Geschichte der orientalischen Nationalkirchen*, in: B. Moeller, *Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte*, I D 2, Göttingen 1981, 321.

<sup>40</sup> H. Usener, *Das Weihnachtsfest*, Bonn 1969, 18 sqq.

<sup>41</sup> For Basilides, see Hippolytus, *Refutatio* VII, 26, 9 (Wendland, 205): ἐφωτίσθη; for Valentinus, see Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 26, 1 (Stählin III, 115); for Carpocrates, see Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I, 25, 1 (Harvey I, 204).

<sup>42</sup> “Valentinian Gnosis and the Apocryphon of John”, in: B. Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* (Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale New Haven, Connecticut, March 28–31, 1978), Leiden 1980, 118–132, esp. 119.

was the definite revelation of the Unknown God. They both were and remained members of the Christian church of Alexandria.<sup>43</sup>

The Gospel of Thomas was known in Egypt before 200 A.D., as the different versions of Oxyrrhynchus Papyrus 1, 654, 655 show. Though originally written in Edessa, it was known to the Egyptians in Greek and in Coptic.<sup>44</sup> It is an Encratite work and must have been appreciated by Encratite Christians in Egypt. Their views are revealed, together with those of their teachers Tatian and Julius Cassian in the third book of Clement's *Stromateis*. Thus there were Encratites in Egypt before Clement of Alexandria. There is no evidence whatsoever that by then they had already been expelled from the Church there. You could reject marriage and yet remain a member of the Church, like Kierkegaard and Tolstois later on. Their Gospel was the Gospel of the Egyptians.<sup>45</sup>

Gentile, Hellenistic Christianity was not completely absent, as the fragments of canonical Gospels found in the sands of Egypt prove. But *The Teachings of Silvanus* (NHC VII, 4) found at Nag Hammadi show that Gentile Christianity was not necessarily Catholic, as we are inclined to think. These *Teachings* continue the sapiential traditions of *Proverbs* and *Wisdom*, and sometimes echo the Jewish Christianity of Egypt: Christ is the Hand of the Lord (115, 3–8), or even an angel (106, 27). At the same time, Christ has the same epithets as God: He is Father (96, 30), He is King (96, 30; 111, 15–20), He is both begotten and unbegotten (101, 35–102, 1), He is God (103, 34; 110, 17.18; 111, 5). There is no personal distinction between the Father and the Son in *The Teachings of Silvanus*. We call this “modalism”.<sup>46</sup>

Catholicism (as characterized by *regula fidei*, Canon and monarchic episcopacy) seems to have been a latecomer in Alexandria. Walter Bauer may be right that it was introduced there under the influence of Rome: the legend that Mark, coming from Rome, was the first bishop of Alexandria, seems to hint in that direction.<sup>47</sup> But for a considerable

<sup>43</sup> See for Basilides, E. Mühlberg, “Basilides”, *TRE* V, 296–301; for Valentinus, “The Original Doctrine of Valentinus”, *VC* 1 (1947) 43–73 (= *Gnostic Studies*, I, 27–36).

<sup>44</sup> A. Guillaumont, “Les sémitismes dans l’Évangile selon Thomas. Essai de classement”, in: Van den Broek and Vermaseren, *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions*, 190–204.

<sup>45</sup> F. Bolgiani, *La tradizione Eresiologica sull’ Encratismo*, II, Turin 1962, 118.

<sup>46</sup> J. Zandee, “The Teachings of Silvanus (NHC VII, 4) and Jewish Christianity”, in: Van den Broek and Vermaseren, *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions*, 498–584.

<sup>47</sup> W. Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*, Tübingen 1934, 99–133, esp. 121.

time the Christian Church of Egypt was more like the pluriform *Anglicana* than the monolithic *Romana*: Jewish Christians, Gnostics, Encratites, Modalists, Catholics.

Carthage shows a very similar pattern. We must suppose that the message of the Messiah was first preached in the synagogue, or one of the synagogues, of this city. But peaceful relations between “the faction of the Nazoraeans”, as the Jewish Christians called themselves, and the other Jews did not persist.

Tertullian tells us that the Jews of Carthage called the Christians of his time: *Nozerim: nos Iudaei Nazarenos* (Pamelius rightly: *Nazaraeos*, or still better: *Nazoraeos*) *appellant* (*Adv. Marcionem* IV, 8, 1). That was no compliment, nor was it meant to be. “Nazoraeon” is the name which Jewish documents use for those Israelites in Palestine who accepted Jesus as the Messiah but remained loyal to the Jewish Law. “Nazoraeon” was already in the times of Paul the nickname of Judaic followers of Jesus (*Acts* 24, 5). And thus they called themselves. “Christian” was a name given to and accepted by the Hellenists and Gentile believers of Antioch (*Acts* 11, 26). At a certain moment the Amida, the Prayer of the Eighteen Benedictions, had been reformulated in order to render impossible Judaic Christian participation in the service of the synagogue and to consummate their separation: the *Birkat ha-Minim* then cursed both the Minim (heretics) and the Nazoraeans (Judaic Christians). The specific name-calling mentioned by Tertullian seems to indicate that there once were Judaic Christian *Nazoraei* in Carthage and that the Catholic Church of the second century was considered to be the continuation of this “heresy”. In Carthage too this small group must have been expelled from the synagogue. This does not preclude that African Christianity everywhere in Africa, Numidia and Mauretania probably originated from this one Jewish building in Carthage. Carthage remained the Metropolis of this enormous area, because Carthage was the cradle of African Christianity. And the cradle of the church there was the synagogue. In this synagogue, as in every synagogue, the Bible was first read in Hebrew. After the split, in the “synagogue” of the Nazoraeans in Carthage the same must have happened. Epiphanius says of the Nazoraeans:

παρ’ αὐτοῖς πᾶς ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται... Ἐβραϊκῶς ἀναγινώσκεται, ὡσπερ ἀμέλει καὶ παρὰ Ἰουδαίους.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29, 7, 4.

Among them the whole Law and all the prophets are read, as of course among the Jews.

But then the lector, who sung the Lesson, must have translated it too.

a. *Seniores laici*

The Christians of Carthage, like all Christians of the Roman Empire, inherited also the Septuagint from the Synagogue. This implied that they also inherited the lesson and the *lectio sollemnis*, the music of the singing and possible also the lector. As everywhere the liturgy of the synagogue, prayer, lesson, sermon, psalms, was integrated as *missa catechumenorum*. Did they also take over the organisation of the Synagogue? At the beginning of our era every local community of Jews had a Council of Elders, *zaqēnim*, who also had the supervision of the synagogue.<sup>49</sup> In Africa the direction and supervision of the Christian Church had been entrusted to *seniores laici*. Tertullian seems to be the first to mention them: *praesident probati quique seniores* (*Apologeticum* 39, 4). They are mentioned quite often by later African authors, including Augustine (*Epistula* 78). Ambrosiaster suggests that these *seniores* had been taken over by the Church from the Synagogue: *Unde et Synagoga, et postea Ecclesia seniores habuit, quorum sine consilio nihil agebatur in Ecclesia. Quod qua negligentia obsoleverit nescio, nisi forte doctorum desidia, aut magis superbia, dum soli volunt aliquid videri.*<sup>50</sup> But is it completely sure that this institution was taken over from the local synagogue? As far as I know, these *seniores* are never mentioned in Jewish inscriptions from Africa: there is “archon” (Utica), *arcosinagogus* (Naro), *pater sinagogae* (Sitifis), but not *senior*.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, in the generally acknowledged “authentic” letters of Paul “presbyteroi” are never mentioned: it seems probable that such an office did not exist in the Pauline, Gentile Christian, churches at the time Paul’s letters were written. On the other hand, there did exist a Council of Elders in Qumran.

<sup>49</sup> For the following, see A. van Ginkel, *De ouderling. Oorsprong en ontwikkeling van het ambt van ouderling en de functie daarvan in de Gereformeerde Kerk der Nederlanden in de 16<sup>e</sup> en 17<sup>e</sup> eeuw*, Amsterdam 1975, 15–45.

<sup>50</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ad Timotheum* I, 5, 2; CSEL 81<sup>III</sup>, 278, 6–9); cf. W.H.C. Frend, “The Seniores Laici and the Origins of the Church in North Africa”, *JTS* n.s. 12 (1961) 280–284.

<sup>51</sup> P. Monceaux, “Epigraphie chrétienne”, 357.

In the Judaic Christian congregation of Jerusalem there was an executive college composed of Elders, which is mentioned quite often by Luke in his Acts.<sup>52</sup> In the Letter of James, a Judaic Christian epistle written either by the brother of the Lord or one of his staunch supporters in Jerusalem, the Elders are introduced as an authoritative body of spiritual leaders of the local congregations: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the Elders of the Church" (5, 14). John the prophet, the author of the Apocalypse, who may have introduced Judaic Christianity into the (Pauline) congregation of Ephesus and who certainly was a Judaic Christian of Palestinian origin, beholds four and twenty Elders in the ideal, celestial Church above (*Apocalypse* 4, 4 and passim).<sup>53</sup> They are also mentioned in the Pastoral Letters.<sup>54</sup> It is a plausible guess that they were in office in Ephesus at the time the Pastoral Letters were written (130 A.D.?), and had been introduced into Asia Minor against the will and the spirit of St. Paul under the heavy pressure of Judaic Christians that had come to Ephesus after the fall of Jerusalem.

The Cologne Mani Codex recently revealed that there were Elders in the Judaic Christian faction of the Elkesaites in Mesopotamia at the time when Mani grew up among them:

The lord (Mani) said: "When I was dwelling in their midst, one day Sitaïos, the *elder* of their council, the son of Gara, took me by the hand, because he greatly loved me and regarded (me) as a beloved son."<sup>55</sup>

We find them also in the Aramaic Church of which Edessa was the centre: *In ecclesia noti sint duodecim presbyteri, septem diaconi, quattuor hypodiaconi et tres viduae habentes praecedentiam sessionis*.<sup>56</sup> If there is some truth in the tradition that Addai founded the Church of Edessa, this institution of Elders may be of Judaic Christian origin. In Alexandria the presbyters used to choose the bishop: *Nam et Alexandriae a Marco Evangelista usque ad Heraclam et Dionysium Episcopos, Presbyteri semper unum ex se electum, in exceliori gradu collocatum, Episcopum nominabant: quomodo si exercitus Imperatorem*

<sup>52</sup> Acts 11, 30; 15, 2. 4. 6. 22 sqq.; 16, 4; 21, 8.

<sup>53</sup> G. Quispel, *The Secret Book of Revelation*, New York 1979, 49; Ulrich B. Müller, *Zur frühchristlichen Theologiegeschichte: Judentum und Paulinismus in Kleinasien an der Wende vom ersten zum zweiten Jahrhundert n. Chr.*, Gütersloh 1976, 13–50.

<sup>54</sup> 1 Tim. 3, 1–7; 4, 14; 5, 17–19; Titus 1, 7–9.

<sup>55</sup> CMC 74, 8–15; English translation in R. Cameron and A.J. Dewey, *The Cologne Mani Codex (P. Colon. inv. no. 4780) "Concerning the Origin of his Body"*, Missoula 1979, 59.

<sup>56</sup> *Testamentum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi* I, 34 (Rahmani, 83); see Van Ginkel, *De ouderling*, 28.

*faciat*...<sup>57</sup> Possibly this democratic procedure goes back to the Judaic foundations of the Alexandrian Church.

For all these reasons it is not completely excluded that the institution of *seniores laici* was established by the Palestinian Christians who are said to have founded the Christian Church of Carthage. And whatever solution we might opt, we may safely assume that the Elders there, as everywhere, are not a later invention, but go back to primitive, archaic times, when the Church was neither Episcopal nor Catholic.

#### b. *The Gospel of Thomas*

The Old Latin codices Palatinus (e) and Bobbiensis (k), together the “Afra” translation of the Gospels and rendering the text of Carthage and Cyprian, have quite a few variants in common with the Gospel tradition of the *Gospel of Thomas*.<sup>58</sup> One example may suffice:

e Luke 6, 45:	G. Thom. log 45:
<i>de abundantia cordis</i>	out of the abundance of the
<i>loquitur malum</i>	heart <i>he brings forth evil things</i> .

Recently Antoine Guillaumont has argued that the Gospel of Thomas was originally written in the dialect of Edessa, Eastern Aramaic or “Syriac”, but contained a “synoptic” tradition of Sayings in Western Aramaic, the dialect of Palestine.<sup>59</sup> Moreover form-critical analysis by itself alone has permitted Helmut Koester to explore the theology of these sayings, which is sapiential and as such very much akin to the source of Sayings of Matthew and Luke, Q, though not identical with it. This tradition is, of course, independent of the canonical Gospels, to such an extent that, according to Koester, the Gospel of Thomas as a whole should be dated towards the end of the first century.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 146, 1 (*PL* 22, 1194); see also M. Roncaglia, *Histoire de l'église copte*, Dar Al-Kalima 1966, I, 133.

<sup>58</sup> A. Jülicher, W. Matzkow and K. Aland, *Itala. Das neue Testament in altlateinischer Übersetzung*, I: *Mattheus*, Berlin <sup>2</sup>1972; II: *Marcus*, Berlin <sup>2</sup>1970; III: *Lucas*, Berlin 1954; IV: *Johannes*, Berlin 1963.

<sup>59</sup> “Sémitismes”, 198–201.

<sup>60</sup> H. Koester, “Gnomai Diaphoroi. Ursprung und Wesen der Mannigfaltigkeit in der Geschichte des frühen Christentums”, in: H. Koester and J.M. Robinson, *Entwicklungslinien durch die Welt des frühen Christentums*, Tübingen 1971, 107–146 (= *HTR* 58, 1965, 279–318 and *ZThK* 65, 1968, 160–203); id., “Ein Jesus und vier ursprünglichen Evangeliengattungen”, *ibid.*, 147–190 (= *HTR* 62, 1968, 203–247).



Nobody has refuted these linguistic and form-critical observations.<sup>61</sup> The battle of St. Thomas has been won, the enemy is out of sight: this writing contains an independent tradition of the Words which Jesus once spoke. But then, of course, tradition in other writings which agrees with the Gospel of Thomas and disagrees with the canonical Gospels must also be independent. From the very beginning it has been shown that the Pseudo-Clementine *Homiliae* and *Recognitiones*, the *Diatessaron* of Tatian and the “Western Text” of the New Testament had much in common with the Gospel of Thomas.<sup>62</sup> If Guillaumont and Koester are right, then these writings must also contain elements of this same independent tradition. The *Afra* belongs to the “Western Text”. Therefore the *Afra* too must contain traces of this independent tradition of Aramaic origin. It is true that quite a few of these variants are also found in non-African, Italian manuscripts of the Old Latin Gospel translation which for convenience sake we may call *Itala*. But this is not very important. Even if this *Itala* would be an autonomous translation—quod non—, it must be much later than the *Afra*: we know that the liturgical language in Rome was Greek until the fourth century. And translations were made for liturgical purposes. Moreover the *Afra* may have influenced the various manuscripts of or traditions behind the *Itala*.<sup>63</sup> There must have existed an independent Gospel tradition in Carthage.

The “doublets” (different versions of the same Saying) contained in the Gospel of Thomas prove without a shadow of doubt that the author of this work, when writing in Edessa about 140 A.D., had at least two written sources before him, the one Judaic Christian, the other Encratite (no meat, no wine, no sex). Much has been written about the problem whether the one was identical with, or related to

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<sup>61</sup> Only K.H. Kuhn has argued against Guillaumont in his article “The Coptic Gospel according to Thomas”, *Le Muséon* 73 (1960) 317–323. According to him some semitisms are really copticisms, but this does not refute all the observations brought forward by Guillaumont. See for further evidence, P. Nagel, “Erwägungen zum Thomas-Evangelium”, in: F. Altheim and R. Stiehl, *Die Araber in der alten Welt*, V, 2, Berlin 1969, 368–392.

<sup>62</sup> “L’Evangile selon Thomas et les Clémentines”, *VC* 12 (1958) 181–196 (= *Gnostic Studies*, II, 17–32); “L’Evangile selon Thomas et le Diatessaron”, *VC* 13 (1959) 87–117 (= *Gnostic Studies*, II, 31–55); “Der Heliand und das Thomasevangelium”, *VC* 16 (1962) 121–151 (= *Gnostic Studies*, II, 70–97); “L’Evangile selon Thomas et le “Texte Occidental” du Nouveau Testament”, *VC* 14 (1960) 204–215; “The Gospel of Thomas and the Western Text: A Reappraisal”, in *Gnostic Studies*, II, 56–69.

<sup>63</sup> See B. Fischer, “Das Neue Testament in lateinischer Sprache”, in: K. Aland (ed.), *Die alten Übersetzungen des Neuen Testaments: die Kirchenwörterzitate und Lektionare*, Berlin 1972, 1–92, esp. 30–39.

the Judaic Christian Gospel of the Nazoraeans, the other identical with or related to the Encratite Gospel of the Egyptians (fragments of both these writings survive). This is not important. Because the Judaic Christian Gospel material in "Thomas" has parallels in the Edessene mystic Macarius ( $\pm$  350) and the "Persian" Aphraates ( $\pm$  350), who both probably used the Gospel of the Nazoraeans, in their time in use among the Judaic Christians of Beroea (Aleppo), I would guess that the Gospel of the Nazoraeans was the source of the independent, Aramaic, Judaic Christian Gospel tradition present in Carthage. If there were Judaic Christians there, they must have had their own Gospel, for it is a plausible hypothesis that the author of the Gospel of Thomas used the Judaic Christian Gospel of the Nazoraeans.<sup>64</sup>

Recently a third source of the Gospel of Thomas has been postulated. This must have been a Hermetic list of Apophthegmata, similar to the recently discovered *Definitiones of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius*. The latter has been preserved in Armenian, though originating in Alexandria and written in Greek. It may have reached Armenia through the intermediary of Edessa, like Christianity, and contains the following Saying:

Who knows himself, knows the all.<sup>65</sup>

This of course lies behind Logion 67 of "Thomas":

Jesus said: "Whoever knows the all, but fails to know himself lacks everything".

It would seem, however, that the Gospel of Thomas was not known in Carthage. Wherever we find variants common to "Thomas" and the *Afra*, this seems to indicate the oldest Gospel tradition brought to Carthage by Judaic Christians. This then means that an extremely profound Saying of Jesus, which bears all the marks of his Spirit, is attributed by Tertullian to Holy Writ and is also attested by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* I, 94, 5; Stählin II, 60, 25) and by Palladius: εἶδες γὰρ, φησί, τὸν ἀδελφόν σου, εἶδες τὸν θεόν σου, can have been taken from the Judaic Christian Gospel tradition and therefore be very archaic:

*Vidisti, inquit, fratrem, vidisti Dominum tuum (De oratione 26).*

<sup>64</sup> *Makarius, das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle*, Leiden 1967, 79.

<sup>65</sup> J.-P. Mahé, "Les définitions d'Hermès Trismégiste à Asclépius", *RSR* 50 (1976) 193-214, esp. 203; see also G. Quispel, "The Gospel of Thomas revisited" in *Actes du Colloque International sur les textes de Nag Hammadi* (Québec, 22-25 août 1978), édité par B. Barc, Québec 1981, 218-266, esp. 260.

## LIST OF VARIANTS

Thomas	Afra	Itala
VIII—Mt. 13:48 he drew it up (3th pers.sg. 1. participle)	e: inposuerunt illud ad litus k: posuerunt illud ad litus	a b d f ff <sup>2</sup> h q: eduxerunt
IX—Lk. 8:5 some fell on the road (on 1. along)	e: cecidit <i>ad</i> viam	d (= vg. D: super viam)
XII—Mt. 18:1 par. who is it who <i>shall</i> be great over us? (Future 1. Present)	e: quisnam <i>erit</i> maior (Mt. 18:1) e: hic <i>erit</i> magnus (Lk. 9:48)	ff <sup>1</sup> d q
XVI—Lk. 12:49 and <i>they do not know</i> that I have come to throw divisions upon the earth, fire, sword, war (+ and they do not know)	e: <i>nescitis</i> , quoniam ignem veni mittere in terram	b ff <sup>2</sup> l
XXVI—Lk. 6:41 par. but the beam that is in thine eye, thou <i>seest</i> not (see 1. notice)	e: travem autem in oculo tuo non <i>vidis</i>	c: vides (ad. Mt. 7:3 omnes exc. a)
XXX—Mt. 18:20 I am <i>with</i> him (with 1. in the midst of)	e: et ego <i>cum</i> eis sum	
XXXIV—Mt. 15:14 par. both of them <i>fall</i> into a pit (Present 1. Future)	e: simul in foveam <i>cadunt</i> (Mt. 15:14) e: nonne ambo in foveam <i>cadunt</i> (Lk. 6:39)	a aur c f ff <sup>1</sup> l. (= vg) (d: incidunt) c l (= vg)
XXXV—Mk. 3:27 it is not possible for one to enter the house of the strong (man) (om. but)	e: nemo potest vasa fortis diripere (om. autem)	aur b c f i l q r <sup>1</sup>
XXXVI Pap. Ox. 655—Lk. 12:27 ἄτι [να α]ὐξάνει οὐδὲ ν[ήθ]ει: μ[ηδ]ὲν ἔχοντα ἐνδυμα om. ὑφαίνει	e: neque laborant neque neunt (om. neque texunt)	aur f q (= vg)

- XXXIX—Lk. 11:52 they have *hidden* them (hide 1. take away) e: quoniam *absconditis* clavem scientiae q r<sup>2</sup>: absconditis a b c d: abscondistis
- XLV—Mt. 12:34 par. for out of the abundance of the heart he *brings forth evil things* 1. bring forth 1. speak k: de abundantia enim cordis os *emittit* (ad Mt. 12:34 ff<sup>1</sup>: mala) 2. + evil things e: de abundantia cordis loquitur *malum* (Lk. 6:45)
- LVII—Mt. 13:24–30 he *sowed* a weed among the good seed (seminavit 1. superseminavit) and pull up *the wheat with it* (the wheat with it 1. with it the wheat) k e: et *seminavit zizania* inter frumentum (e: in medio tritici) q k: eradicetis simul *frumentum cum eis* d: triticum cum eis
- LXIII—Lk. 12:16 there was a rich man who had much *money* (money (or property) 1. land) e: hominis cuiusdam divitis uberes fructus adtulit *possessio* b ff<sup>2</sup> i l m q
- LXIV—Lk. 14:16–24 and when he had prepared the *dinner* (dinner 1. a great dinner) I have bought a *farm* (farm 1. field) the servant *came*, he *said* (he came, he said 1. when he came, he said) e: homo quidam fecit *cenam* e: *villam* emi omnes exc. d (= vg) e: et *venit* servus, et, *renuntiavit* domino suo
- LXV—Lk. 20:9–16 par. he *sent* another servant (misit 1. addidit mittere) then the owner sent his son (om. to them) e: et *misit* alium servum d e: nobissime autem misit filium suum unicum dicens (Mt. 21:37) ff<sup>1</sup> k: novissimum misit filium dicens (Mk. 12:6) omnes exc. l

LXXVI—Mt. 13:45 the Kingdom of the Father is like a <i>man</i> , a merchant (+ a man)	k e: iterum simile est regnum caelorum <i>homini negotianti</i>	omnes (g <sup>1</sup> : homine) (= vg)
LXXIX—Lk. 11:27 the breasts which <i>nourished</i> thee	e: et mammae, qui te <i>lactaverunt</i>	
LXXIX—Lk. 23:29 for there <i>will be</i> days when you will say	e: quoniam <i>venient</i> dies, in quibus dicent	
1. om. behold	1. om ecce	a b d ff <sup>2</sup> l r <sup>1</sup>
2. Future 1. Present	2. <i>venient</i> 1. <i>veniunt</i>	omnes
LXXXVI—Lk. 9:58 but the Son of Man has no place to lay <i>his</i> head (+ his)	e: filius autem hominis non habet ubi caput <i>suum</i> declinet	aur b r <sup>1</sup> ; Mt. 8:20: a b c g <sup>1</sup> h
LXXXIX—Mt. 23:25–26 par. why do you wash the outside of the cup (om. and of the dish) that he who made the inside is also he who made the outside (inside... outside 1. outside...inside)	e: emunda primo quod intus est calicis  e: nonne qui fecit quod est intus, fecit et quod foris est? (Lk. 11:40)	a d ff <sup>2</sup> r <sup>1</sup>  c d; a: interiora
XCI—Lk. 12:56 you test the face <i>of the sky and of the earth</i> (cf. the sky...of the earth 1. of the earth...of the sky) you do not know to test (om. how)	e: faciem <i>caeli et terrae</i> nostis probare  e: verum tempus istud non probatis	omnes  b c d ff <sup>2</sup> i l r <sup>1</sup>
CIX—Mt. 13:44 and he who bought it he went (om. a man)	k e: quod, qui invenit, abscondit	d

*c. Angel Christology*

In the writing *De centesima*, first edited by Reitzenstein and now reprinted by A. Hamman, Christ is described in the following way:

*angelos enim dominus cum ex igne principum numero VII crearet, ex his unum in filium sibi constituere, quem Isaias dominum Sabaot praeconaret, disposuit.*<sup>66</sup>

This passage can only be understood if one sees its Judaic and Judaic Christian perspective. The reference of course is to the sixth chapter of Isaiah, where the prophet tells how he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, and Seraphim crying to each other and saying: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts (JHWH Zebaoth). In later Judaism the tendency became stronger and stronger to avoid anthropomorphisms and to replace JHWH by “the Angel of the Lord”. There were heretics (minim) who attributed all anthropomorphic features to this Angel. And in esoteric mystical Judaism of Palestine this Angel of the Lord, called “the little JHWH” or Jaobel or Metatron, played a prominent part.<sup>67</sup>

Judaic Christians were said to consider Christ as an angel.<sup>68</sup> So Elchasai is said to have beheld an angel which was Christ and another angel, the Holy Spirit.<sup>69</sup> In the *Ascensio Jesaiae* the prophet sees the Lord and the second angel, the angel of the Holy Spirit, standing and interceding for the throne of God (9, 27–40). The angel with whom Christ is identified, is, of course, the Angel of the Lord. In the *Apocalypse* of John, the manifesto of a Jew from Palestine who had come to Ephesus, Christ is by implication called an angel (14, 6: ἄγγελον ἄγγελον). And, if we follow the New Testament text of the United Bible Societies, in the Letter of Jude (perhaps the brother of our Lord) verse 5, it was Jesus, as the Angel of the Lord, who first saved the people out of the land of Egypt and afterwards destroyed them that believed not. The reference is to Exodus 12, 51: “JHWH did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt”.

In its present form the writing *De centesima* is Encratite, and we have no evidence that the Encratites professed an Angel Christology. The author of this writing must have taken his view from a tradition already transmitted in the congregation to which he belonged. *De centesima*

<sup>66</sup> R. Reitzenstein, “Eine frühchristliche Schrift von den dreierlei Früchten des christlichen Lebens”, *ZNW* 15 (1914) 60–90, esp. 82 (lately edited by A. Hamman in *PLS* I, 53–67, esp. 60).

<sup>67</sup> A.F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven. Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*, Leiden 1977, 60–73.

<sup>68</sup> J. Daniélou, *Histoire des doctrines chrétiennes avant Nicée, I: Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, Paris-Tournai 1958, 167–177; J. Barbel, *Christos Angelos. Die Anschauung von Christus als Bote und Engel in der gelehrten und volkstümlichen Literatur des christlichen Altertums*, Bonn 1964; M. Werner, *Die Entstehung des christlichen Dogmas*, Leipzig 1941, 302–321.

<sup>69</sup> Hippolytus, *Refutatio* IX, 13, 2–3 (Wendland, 251).

was not translated from the Greek, but directly written in Latin. The archaic Christology and the very deviant Gospel quotations indicate a rather early date. Then it must have been written in Africa. There this typically Jewish Christian concept, characteristic of Palestine and completely alien to the Gentile Christian tradition radiating from Antioch, must have been known from the very beginning of local and provincial Christianity.

d. *Adoptianism*

In his *Rules* the Donatist Tyconius quotes Luke 3, 22 in the following way:

*ille, cui secundum Lucan dicit in baptismo: Filius meus es tu, ego hodie generavi te*  
(Burkitt 7, 5).

This agrees with the Gospel of the Ebionites, fragment 4: Ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε. This does not necessarily mean that the variant of Tyconius ultimately derives from the Ebionite Gospel, because the latter has already a composite text, mixed from one or more of the Canonical Gospels and an extra-canonical, Jewish Christian tradition. Neither should we for a moment assume that this was the original reading of Luke. But we must stress the point that this variant reveals an adoptianist Christology, according to which Jesus became the Son of God only during his baptism. Judaic Christians might differ among each other as to whether or not Jesus was born from a virgin, but both groups of Ebionites accepted that Jesus was an adopted son of God. This Judaic Christian Christology left its marks upon the text of the New Testament: the Syrus Sinaiticus, from Edessa, reads Mt. 1, 16: *Joseph*, to whom was betrothed Mary the virgin, *begot* Jesus who is called the Christ; D (the Codex Bezae) and the Itala manuscripts a b c d ff<sup>2</sup> l r<sup>1</sup> read or presuppose:

ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε (Lk. 3, 22).

The *Afra* manuscripts Palatinus (e) and Bobbiensis (k) date from the 5th and the 4th century and can have suppressed this variant, which obviously stood in the Gospel of Tyconius. This Donatist, whose Old Testament also preserved some very important Hebrew readings absent from the Septuagint and the later *Vetus Latina*, may also have preserved this adoptianist variant attested for the Ebionite Gospel and possibly current in Carthage even before the arrival there of the Synoptic

Gospels. Though Tyconius projects his orthodox views into this text, originally it must have circulated in a milieu in Africa for which adoptionism was characteristic.

e. *The Apostolic Decree*

Luke tells us in his Acts that there was a conflict between the metropolis of Jerusalem and the congregation of Antioch concerning the admission of Gentiles to the Christian Church. Thereupon a council was held (49 A.D.) where it was decided, says Luke, to lay no further burden upon the Gentile Christians except that they should

abstain from meat that has been offered to idols, from blood, from anything that has been strangled and from fornication (15, 28–29).

This has a ritual meaning: Gentiles should abstain from meat used in sacrifices but afterwards sold on the market, from meat that was not kosher, because the animals had not been slaughtered in the way prescribed by the Law, and from sexual intercourse with near relatives or during menstruation.<sup>70</sup>

One of the most difficult problems of New Testament scholarship is to decide, whether or not this Apostolic Decree is authentic and whether or not it was promulgated by the Council of Jerusalem. I think Antioch accepted it in Jerusalem, but never implemented it in Antioch or in the mission field. So Paul light-heartedly says to his Corinthians:

you may eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience (1 *Cor.* 10, 25).

The Western Text of Acts which originated in Antioch and reflects a tendentious redaction which really made a different book of Luke's writing, has explained away the ritual meaning of the Apostolic Decree by redaction and interpretation. It omitted καὶ πνικτῶν. It added the ethical Golden Rule. Moreover, Theophilus of Antioch (*Ad Autol.* II, 34) shows that εἰδωλοθύτα was held there to mean εἰδωλατρεία in a metaphorical sense: "to abstain from unlawful idolatry and adultery and murder, fornication...". So in Antioch the Gentiles were simply told to abstain from idolatry, murder or military service (ἄϊμα) or immoral behaviour (πορνεία).

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<sup>70</sup> H. Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, Tübingen 1963, 84–85.



Einar Molland has proved decisively that the only ones to remain loyal to the Decree of 49 were the Judaic Christians who are responsible for the views expressed in the Pseudo-Clementine writings. For them circumcision had been replaced by baptism as the rite of initiation to the community. The Jewish rule which forbade eating with uncircumcised people had been transformed into a rule to eat exclusively with baptised people. Only the doctors of the congregation had to be taken from the Jewish people and had to be circumcised. For the rest they inculcated in their catechetical instruction of future neophytes the ritual meaning of the commandments contained in the Apostolic Decree. Not that they took this from Acts, a book that they rejected, but they had received the text of this decree, together with its (correct) interpretation from oral tradition.<sup>71</sup> Minucius Felix, an African, knows the Apostolic Decree in its literal, ritual meaning:

*convivia publica absque vobis...praecertos cibos et delibatos altaribus potus abhorretis* (12, 5);

*nec edulium pecorum in cibis sanguinem noverimus* (30, 6);

*sacrificiorum reliquias et pocula delibata contemnimus...* (38, 1).

The consequences for daily life were enormous. If a Christian in Carthage wanted to eat some meat, he had to go to the Jewish butcher. Tertullian knows both the literal and the moralistic interpretation of the Apostolic Decree. In the *Apologeticum* (9, 13) he says:

*ne animalium quidem sanguinem in epulis esculentis habemus, qui propterea suffocatis* (= πνικτῶν, omitted in the Western text) *quoque et morticinis abstinemus, ne quo modo sanguine contaminemur vel intra viscera sepulto.*

He goes on to relate that the Roman authorities in Carthage used to test Christians by offering them sausages full of blood, because they were well aware that Christians were forbidden to eat meat which still contained blood and thus was not kosher. From this we see that Minucius in the quoted passages is alluding to a rigoristic interpretation of the Decree usual in Carthage already before Tertullian. On other occasions, however, Tertullian omits *suffocatis* and liberally interprets sacrificial meat as *sacrificia* (*De pudicitia* 12): the latter is conceived as *idololatria* in

<sup>71</sup> E. Molland, "La circoncision, le baptême et l'autorité du décret apostolique (Actes XV, 28 sq.) dans les milieux judéo-chrétiens des Pseudo-Clémentines", *Studia Theologica* IX (1955) 1–39 (= *Opuscula Patristica*, Oslo 1970, 25–59).

chapter 24 of the same writing; “blood” however is spiritualized as *homicidium* in *De pudicitia* 12.

We see then that two completely different interpretations clash in Tertullian: the one metaphorical, moralistic, Western, Gentile Christian; the other literal, ritualistic, correct, Judaic Christian. The former possibly came from Rome, *unde nobis quoque auctoritas praesto est*, and may have been the reading of Acts 15, 28–29 in the Bible of the Catholics at the time of Tertullian. The latter ultimately came from Jerusalem and must have been transmitted by Jewish Christians, who knew the ritual Law. It is not necessarily based upon a text of Acts, but may also have been taken from an oral tradition in the congregation of Carthage.

#### f. *The Key of Gnosis*

The Gospel of Thomas transmits a Saying of Jesus (*log* 39) about the Pharisees, which differs from Matthew 23, 13 and Luke 11, 52 (= Q). It proclaims that the Pharisees and the Scribes have received the keys of Knowledge, and they have hidden them. This version presupposes a Jewish background. Jesus acknowledges here, that the Pharisees have received (ἔλαβον) the oral tradition (or mishna: the oral interpretation of the written Torah), but at the same time states that they have concealed and lost this key to the Law. So this logion has the same, or a related tendency as the Saying in Matthew (23, 1–3), that the Pharisees and the Scribes sit in Moses’ seat (and thus explain the Law with authority), but do not themselves know what they are saying.

In the Pseudo-Clementines this Logion is transmitted in the same, or almost the same wording as in “Thomas”: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat; all things whatsoever they say to you, hear them. Hear them, He said, as entrusted with the key of the kingdom, which is knowledge, which alone can open the gate of life, through which alone is the entrance to eternal life. But truly, He says, they possess the key, but those wishing to enter they do not suffer to do so”.<sup>72</sup> This proves that the Saying of “Thomas” has been taken from the Jewish Christian source. But the Clementines have also preserved the interpretation of Jesus’ Saying: the key *is* the Gnosis, the oral interpretation of the Torah. “The key of Gnosis” means: “the key namely the Gnosis”. This Gnosis

<sup>72</sup> *Hom.* III, 18, 2–3 (Rehm 63, 7–12); cf. *Hom.* XVIII, 15, 7 (Rehm 248, 23–24); *Rec.* II, 30, 1 (Rehm 69, 22–26).

opens the door of the Kingdom of God. According to Joachim Jeremias this is the correct interpretation of the logion: “In der Wendung τὴν κλεῖδα τῆς γνώσεως ist τῆς γνώσεως entweder Gen. appos. oder Gen. obj. Versteht man den Gen. als Gen appos. (‘den Schlüssel zum Gottesreich, nämlich die Erkenntnis, habt ihr fortgenommen’), dann liegt das Bild von der Tür zum Gottesreich vor. Das Gottesreich ist das höchste Gut, während die Erkenntnis lediglich der Schlüssel ist, der den Zugang zu ihm öffnet. Da das ‘Eingehen in die Königsherrschaft Gottes’ ein spezifisch palästinisches Bild ist, muss bei dieser Deutung auch die ‘Erkenntnis’ dem palästinischen Verständnis entsprechend gedeutet werden: als die gehorsame Erkenntnis der Schrift. In der Tat ist der Vergleich der Schriftkenntnis mit dem Schlüssel rabbinisch bezeugt... Das Ursprüngliche wird der Gen. appos. sein”.<sup>73</sup>

When discussing the passage of Luke 11, 52 (“Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge”), Tertullian asks Marcion (*Adv. Marcionem* IV, 27): *Quam vero clavem habebant legis doctores nisi interpretationem legis?* I would not insist upon the fact that the variant *habebant* presupposes the reading ἔλαβον of “Thomas” and not ἤρατε of Luke: exactly the same reading (ἔχετε) is to be found in Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Tryphon* 17, 4. It could be that ἔχετε was the reading of the Western Text of Rome about 150 A.D. and Tertullian might have found it in a Latin translation of Marcion’s Gospel, which originated in Rome. But the addition *nisi interpretationem legis* is so remarkable and so very much in accordance with the Clementines, that one is inclined to suppose that there existed in Carthage not only a Judaic Christian Gospel tradition but also a Judaic Christian exegetical tradition, according to which the Gnosis of the Mishna was the key to the Kingdom of God.

#### g. Corban, Offertory Box

In the church of Carthage there was “a chest of a sort” (*quod arcae genus*) in which everybody threw a modest coin. One might call these gifts the trust funds of piety, which were spent to feed the poor and to bury them and for other people in need (Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 39, 5–6). We can visualize the Christians of those days, bringing their offerings in money and in kind before the service; these offerings were blessed during the eucharist, from them the bread and wine were taken which

<sup>73</sup> J. Jeremias, κλείς, *ThWNT*, III, 743–753, esp. 746–747.

represented Christ among and in his flock, and afterwards all the poor received what they needed. So Christianity solved the social problem: it was the only mystery religion with real social implications.

The “chest of a sort” was called in Carthage: “corban”. This transpires from a passage in Cyprian: *Locuples et dives dominicum celebrare te credis quae corban omnino non respicis* (*De opere et eleemosynis* 15; Simonetti, 64). “Corban” is a Hebrew word, which means “present” (Mark 7, 11) and indicated a present to God in the temple. There was the γαζοφυλακεῖον (Luke 21, 1), also called κορβανᾶς (Mt. 27, 6). This was an Aramaic word meaning here “treasure house”. In Luke 21, however, Jesus sees the rich men and a poor widow throwing their money “into the treasury”. The latter can of course not mean “temple treasure house”, but an offertory box. The Talmudic treatise *Shekalim* (6, 5) transmits that there were thirteen such offertory boxes in the form of a *cornu copiae* in the Temple.<sup>74</sup> “Korban” then, or “korbana”, also meant offertory box in Jerusalem, as in Carthage.

Rengstorf, in his article on the subject in Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* remarks that this liturgical use of “corban” in the Christian Church shows how the Christians had learned to consider their alms to the poor as gifts to God.<sup>75</sup> It is typically Judaic Christian to see God or Christ in your brother. According to Jerome (*In Ephesios* 5, 4) Jesus in the Hebrew Gospel told his followers never to be joyful, save when they beheld their brother with love. This may be the same Logion as the one transmitted by Tertullian which we mentioned before (*De oratione* 26: *vidisti fratrem tuum, vidisti dominum tuum*). According to Matthew (25, 40) Jesus had said that in as much as one has done something unto one of the least of his brethren, one has done it unto Him. The offertory box of Carthage not only proves the Judaic Christian, Palestinianian

<sup>74</sup> B. *Shekalim* 6, 5: “There were thirteen chests in the temple and in them was inscribed (respectively) ‘new shekels’, ‘old shekels’, ‘bird offerings’, ‘young pigeons for burnt offerings’, ‘wood’, ‘francincense’, ‘gold for the mercy-seat’; and on six (was inscribed) ‘for freewill-offerings’. ‘New shekels’—those for each year; ‘old shekels’—whosoever has not paid his shekel in the past year may pay it in the coming year; ‘bird-offerings’—these are turtle-doves; ‘young pigeons for burnt-offerings’—these are young pigeons. Both (these two chests) are for burnt-offerings; thus R. Judah. But the sages say: (of the chest inscribed) ‘bird-offerings’ one (half) is for sin-offerings and the other (half) for burnt-offerings, but (of the chest inscribed) ‘young pigeons for burnt-offerings’ all goes to burnt-offerings”.

<sup>75</sup> K.H. Rengstorf, κορβαν, *ThWNT*, III, 860–866, esp. 866.

origins of African Christianity, but can also explain the success of a Jewish sect, which in Africa became a world religion.

#### h. *Cena pura*, *Dainty Dish*

St. Augustine, commenting on the text of Matthew 28, 1 writes:

*quando iam propter parasceuen, quam cenam puram Iudaei latine usitatus apud nos vocant, facere tale aliquid non licebat (In Johannem 120, 5).*

Jews, Latin speaking Jews, used to call Friday *cena pura* instead of *parasceue*, which belonged to the Christian idiom. This happened *apud nos*: already Blondheim (XXX) has concluded from these words that here probably African Jews are speaking, as opposed to Italian Jews. St. Augustine should know: he had lived both in Milan and in Hippo, in Rome and in Carthage. This hypothetical and dialectical difference between Africa and Italy is confirmed by the *Afra*, Codex Bobbiensis (k) of Mark 15, 42, which reads: *cena pura sabbati*. All *Itala* manuscripts except one read *parasceue*; only the Sangallensis (n) has also *cena pura*.

In the times of Tertullian *cena pura* belonged clearly to the Jewish idiom, not to “Christian Latin”. Like a Gentile telling a sick joke about a Jew, he complements the criticism of St. Paul concerning Judaisers in Galatia with the words:

*et sabbata, ut opinor, et cenas puras et ieiunia et dies magnos (= Yom Kippur) (Adv. Marcionem V, 4).*

The irony, the emphasis and the intonation make it clear that Tertullian uses uncommon words of a strange dialect. As a matter of fact, he says that *cena pura* on Friday is a Jewish festival: *Iudaei enim festi sabbata et cena pura (Ad N. Nationes 1, 13)*. There are some slight indications that the term was already used in the Jewish Latin (oral or written) translation of the Old Testament, because it is found in Judith 8, 6 (*praeter cena pura = χωρις προσαββατου*), though in the Sangermanensis, which belongs to the *Itala*, not to the *Afra*. The word is still used by St. Augustine, *Sermo 221 (Parasceuen, quam Iudaei etiam Coenam puram vocant)* and in Rule 5 of Tyconius (*cena pura initium sabbati*) in a commentary of John 19, 42 (*propter cenam puram Iudaeorum*). This shows that it was still then the standard version of *παρασκευή* in Africa. This was already the case much earlier, because the Codex Palatinus (e), the text of Carthage at the time of Cyprian, uses *cena pura* for *παρασκευή* in John 19, 42.

It certainly was a Jew who was the first to use this typically Jewish and odd expression (*Dainty Dish* for Friday). So even for the translation of

the Gospels in church sometimes use had been made of a Jewish lector, who introduced this strange word into the idiom of translation Latin. Other occurrences of *cena pura* may be due to African influence.<sup>76</sup>

The vocalisation of biblical names after their Hebrew pattern in the *Afra* of the New Testament points in the same direction:

*Eleazarus* for *Lazarus* (Hebrew: ‘עֲלִיָּאֲזָר) in Luke 16, 20: e (*cum c r*<sup>l</sup>);  
*Juda* for *Judas* (Hebrew: יְהוּדָה) in Luke 22, 48: e (*cum aliis*);  
*Zebedaeus* for *Zebedaeus* (Hebrew: זַבְדַּי) in Mark 10, 35: k;  
*Gulgotha* for *Golgotha* (Hebrew: גּוֹלְגוֹתָא) in John 19, 17: e (Mark 15, 22 k: *Culgotham*).

These unusual phonemes seem to lead back to a time when the lector/translator, a figure typical also for the Synagogue, was still a Jew, even if he translated no longer the books of the Old Testament exclusively, as it was in the very beginning, but also Gospels written by and for the Gentiles.

It is only by this means that certain corrections in Holy Writ can be explained. Isaiah had written: “Make the heart of the people fat”. The translator of the Septuagint found it an unbearable idea that God hardens the heart of man or that he orders a prophet to do so. Therefore he translated: ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδία τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου and so it is quoted in Matthew 13, 15. But the *Afra*, more specifically the Codex Bobbiensis (k) reads in Matthew 13, 15: *incrassa corpori* (= *cor populi*) *huius*. A Jewish lector/translator in the Christian Church, who knew Hebrew and saw the mistake, must have been the first to introduce this variant. Epiphanius tells us in *Panarion* 29, 7, 4 that in the synagogue services of the Nazoraeans “the whole law and the prophets are read in Hebrew”. Such a Nazoraean seems to have lived in Carthage at the time. It is even quite possible that the respectable office of lector in the Catholic Church of Carthage stems from this Nazoraean institution.

<sup>76</sup> Other places, where *cena pura* is used for *parasceue* are in the *Vetus Latina*: Matth. 27, 62 (*Itala*: d), Luke 23, 54 (*Afra*: e; *Itala*: a b c ff<sup>2</sup> q), John 19, 14 (*Afra*: e), John 19, 31 (*Afra*: e; *Itala*: a b n q); cf. also Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I, 14, 6; V, 23, 2; Beda, *In Joh.* 19; *In Luc.* 6; *Missale Mozarabicum* (PL 85, 425 A; 427 B); *Glossarium Lat. Graec. Floriacensis*, 274; *Glossarium Arab. Lat.*, 708; see also H. Rönsch, *Itala und Vulgata. Das Sprachidiom der urchristlichen Itala und der katholischen Vulgata*, <sup>2</sup>1874 (reprint München 1965), 306–307.

The answer of the Scillitan martyr Speratus proves that in 180 A.D. there existed in Carthage already a Latin written translation of the Letters of Paul and other books of the Bible:

*Saturninus proconsul dixit: Quae sunt res in capsula vestra? Speratus dixit: Libri et epistulae Pauli viri iusti (Passio Sanctorum Scillitanorum 12; Musurillo 88).*

But the oral translation of the Gospels in church must have preceded the written translation, and the Gospel the Letters, and the Old Testament the New Testament, at least in Africa. The Hebrew vocalisation of these names and the competent correction of Matthew point to a time long before Tertullian, long before the arrival of Catholicism in Carthage, when there were still Jews in office.

The same is true for the very specific vocabulary in the *Afra*. The Hebrew word *jahid* means both “beloved child” and “only son”: “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest” (Genesis 22, 2). It would seem that the man who translated *μονογενής* (a clumsy Hellenization of *jahid*) in John 1, 18; 3, 16; 3, 18 by *unicus* (attested by Tertullian,<sup>77</sup> Cyprian and the *Afra*), intuited the Hebrew word behind the Greek.<sup>78</sup> This certainly was the case in Luke 20,13: *filium meum unicum* (*Afra*: ε), for τὸν υἱόν μου τὸν ἀγαπητὸν.

*Kabod*, a typically Hebrew word to indicate the lightgiving, glorious manifestation of God’s personal revelation, is usually translated by the Greek δόξα, which has no association with light. The latter is usually translated in the *Afra*, both of the Old and the New Testament, by *claritas*, a typically *Afra* word as opposed to the *Itala* word *gloria*.<sup>79</sup> Here again we seem to find the fingerprints of a Hebrew mind, which discerned *kabod* behind δόξα. Minucius has *claritas: Aufer additamenta nominum et perspicies eius claritatem* (*Octavius* 18, 10). Even when he is speaking in

<sup>77</sup> Tertullian uses *unicus* for *μονογενής* in *Adversus Praxean* 13, 4: “vero et unico dei filio”; 21, 3: “tamquam unicus a Patre... hic unicus sinum patris disseruit”; 21, 6: “filium suum unicum... in nomine unicus filii dei”. Elsewhere he uses *unigenitus* (*Adv. Hermogenem* 18, 5; *Scorpiace* 7, 4; *Adv. Praxean* 7, 1; 15, 6 (bis)); this is a neologism created to underline the preexistence and divine (eternal) birth and is almost always found in the *Itala*. This proves that the Latin Bible of Tertullian’s time already contained the version *unicus*, but that Tertullian did no longer understand the dialectics of *μονογενής* and *jahid*.

<sup>78</sup> Tertullian, *Adv. Praxean*, 21; see H. Roensch, *Das Neue Testament Tertullian’s*, 253 (John 1, 14), 257 (John 3, 16.18); Hans von Soden, *Das lateinische Neue Testament in Afrika zur Zeit Cyprians*, Leipzig 1909, 507 (John 1, 14), 511 (John 3, 16.18); see also R. Braun, *Deus Christianorum*, 248.

<sup>79</sup> Hans von Soden, “Der Lateinische Paulustext bei Marcion und Tertullian” in: *Festgabe für Adolf Jülicher zum 70. Geburtstag 26 Januar 1927*, Tübingen 1927, 229–281, esp. 248.

philosophical Ciceronian terms, he cannot help betraying his Christian and African background. Did a pagan ever speak about the *claritas* of his god, when he meant his glorious light manifestation?<sup>80</sup>

i. *The Body and Eternal Life*

Present day visitors of North Africa may see pious men sitting quietly around the tomb of a marabout. So African Christians used to venerate their martyrs, sitting in veneration around their *cella*, as *circumcelliones*. The presupposition is and was, of course, that the saint is in his grave.

The belief that men wait in their sepulchre for the resurrection was imported in Africa by the Jews: their graves as often as not have the inscription *in pace* or *shalom* which in the first place expresses the wish that the deceased may await undisturbed, whole and intact, until the Last Day. The rabbis sometimes taught that the resurrection of the dead was a birth from mother earth. Referring to Isaiah 66, 8 (*si parturivit terra in una die, aut si nata est gens simul, Vetus Latina*) “Rabbi Tabi said in Rabbi Josia’s name . . . just as the womb receives and bringth forth, so does the grave too receive and bring forth”.<sup>81</sup>

This concept, and the word *παλιγγενεσία* in this sense is not to be found in the New Testament. It is no surprise that we find it in Christian literature in a millenarian context, as an exegesis of Isaiah 66, 7ff.: “the mystery of the new birth of us (τῆς πάλιν γενέσεως ἡμῶν), and of all who look forward to the manifestation of Christ in Jerusalem” (Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 85, 7). When Jesus comes back to Jerusalem, to found his Kingdom there on Mount Zion, the faithful will rise in the body and join him to govern the peoples of this world as vicegerents, a very earthly theocracy.

In accordance with the reading of the *Vetus Latina* Minucius Felix is of the opinion that in the resurrection man is reborn. Caecilius observes: *renasci se ferunt post mortem et cineres et favillas* (*Octavius* 11, 2). Octavius answers that concerning the *condicio renascendi* (= the resurrection) the philosophers have put on record a perverted half truth; on the dissolution of the bodies the souls alone they hold remain eternal. But man

<sup>80</sup> *Claritas* in the meaning of *splendor dei* is only attested for the early Christian Latin literature; see *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, III, 1268.

<sup>81</sup> *B. Sanhedrin* 92 a; see also C.-M. Edsman, “The Body and Eternal Life” in *Horae Soederblomianae* I (Mélanges Johs. Pedersen), Stockholm 1946, 33–104, esp. 71.



can be remade again. After death man returns to nothingness, but can be reconstructed (body and soul) out of nothing (34, 6). This seems to be in agreement with popular belief that the flesh will need to be brought under review, because otherwise the soul would be incapable of experiencing torment or refreshment: *hoc enim vulgus existimat* (Tertullian, *De resurrectione mortuorum* 17). Tertullian seems to have been the first African writer to describe the reality and the immortality of the soul (*Apologeticum* 47, 13). Neither in the *Apologeticum* (especially chapter 48) nor in *De resurrectione mortuorum* nor anywhere else. Tertullian uses *renasci* or its derivatives to indicate the resurrection of the faithful in the Last Days.<sup>82</sup> Minucius is in this respect more archaic, nearer to the Jewish source than Tertullian.

#### j. *The Birkat ha-Minim*

One wonders how long the Jewish Christians in Carthage remained in touch with the synagogue there. Minucius Felix still knows that many Christians were poor (*Octavius* 12, 2: *pars vestrum et maior, melior, ut dicitis, egetis algetis, opere fame laboratis...*). He even says that the overwhelming majority of the Christians are called poor (36, 3: *plerique pauperes dicimur*). This reminds us of the fact that the Christians of Jerusalem and their later descendants called themselves Ebionim, because in the steps of their Master and following His example they chose to become voluntarily poor for God's sake. This opens the possibility that for a certain period the Christians of Carthage functioned within the limits of the Jewish synagogue. Moreover, they did not have to contend with resistance from their compatriots like St. Paul, because they were not Pauline. But perhaps the wording of Minucius is too vague to admit any conclusion.

At a certain moment, however, the Jewish Christians were banned from the synagogue. This is apparent from the remark of Minucius that the demons have stuffed the ears of the ignorant with fables of incest, fornication and child sacrifice in church to excite horror of the Christians and their anathema (28, 6: *execratio*). This refers to the

<sup>82</sup> G. Claesson mentions in his *Index Tertullianus* (Paris 1974) *Scorp.* 15, *De anima* 21 and 37, *Adv. Marcionem* V, 9, *Ad nationes* I, 9, 4 and *De baptism.* 13; see also "African Christianity before Tertullian" in: W. den Boer a.o. (ed.), *Romanitas et Christianitas* (Studia Iano Henrico Waszink A.D. VI Kal. Nov. A. MCMLXXIII XIII lustra complenti oblata), Amsterdam-London 1973, 275–279.

so-called Heretic Benediction (= Malediction of the Heretics, *Birkat ha-Minim*). A manuscript from the Cairo Genizah gives a version of this curse which has been translated in the following way:

For the renegades let there be no hope, and may the arrogant kingdom soon be rooted out in our days and the Nazoraeans (Judaic Christians) and the heretics (*minim*) perish as in a moment and be blotted out from the book of life and with the righteous may they not be inscribed.<sup>83</sup>

The remark in Minucius seems to indicate that such an anathema was also pronounced in Carthage. It is true that Minucius attributes the *execratio* to the *imperi* in general. But Gentiles did not pronounce an anathema against the Christians, only Jews did. Moreover *execratio* is a word used in the Bible of Tertullian: *in sancto execratio vastationis* (quotation of Daniel 9, 27 in *Adversus Judaeos* 8). Tertullian himself does not use the word *execratio*, but instead *execrumentum* in the sense of *maledictum* = *maledictio* (*Apol.* 22, 2).

Minucius has the habit of changing Jewish objections into generalities. Caecilius knows people, who say that Jesus was a mere man who died as a convicted criminal (9, 4; 29, 2). But in the Acts of the martyr Pionius (13, 3) it is said more precisely:

For you have heard that the Jews say: Christ was a man and he died as a “biothanès” (convicted criminal).

And so he may have put the Jewish damnation of the Nazoraeans into the mouth of the pagan spokesman Caecilius (9, 1). In the same way Caecilius has heard that the Christians venerated the head of an ass. This absurd slander was brought forward against the Jews by their Alexandrian opponent Apion, allegedly as a quotation from Mnaseas of Patras.<sup>84</sup> I do not know whether it has been said before, but this propaganda is based on the homophony of εἶω, ass, in Coptic and the Name Ἰᾶω (the Jewish Septuagint version of the tetragrammaton). Tertullian, who, like Minucius, reports this vulgar fancy (*Apologeticum* 16, 1), knows that ass worship had been attributed to the Christians in Carthage *nec adeo nuper*, that is, quite a long time ago (before 197 A.D., the date of *Ad Nationes*), by an apostate Jew: *et credidit vulgus infami Iudaeo* (*Ad Nationes*

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<sup>83</sup> Translation by C.K. Barrett in *The Gospel according to St. John*, London 1956, 300. The original text, found in a Cairo Genizah manuscript, has been edited by S. Schechter in *Jewish Quarterly Review* X, 657.

<sup>84</sup> Josephus, *Contra Apionem* II, 114.

14). This reveals the real source of Caecilius' opinion. Therefore it is not completely excluded that Caecilius echoes the anathema of the synagogue in Carthage when he says (9, 1): *Eruenda prorsus haec et execranda consensio*. But if somebody would find this argument rather weak, he should remember that the arguments enumerated previously corroborate this hypothesis. For Justin Martyr the pronouncement of this malediction was still a great problem, which he mentions again and again: "you are cursing in your synagogues those who believe in Christ (*Dialogue with Trypho* 16, 4; cf. 47, 3; 93, 4; 95, 4; 108, 3; 133, 6).

Now it is remarkable that, as far as I can see, Tertullian does not mention or allude to this *Birkat ha-Minim* even once in all his works. He knew and used, sometimes even plagiarized Justin Martyr's dialogue (*Adv. Marcionem* III; *Adv. Judaeos*): and yet I cannot remember that he ever mentions the malediction of the Nazoraeans. We learn from the *Octavius* that the *execratio* was a fact in Carthage, at least in the times of Minucius. Even when the local Jews called the Catholics Nazoraeans, this did not ring a bell in Tertullian.

It would seem that the turmoils and birth pangs which accompanied the birth of Christianity from Judaism in Carthage belonged, during the lifetime of Tertullian, to the past. It is true that he says: *Synagogas Iudaeorum fontes persecutionum* (*Scorpiace* 10, 10), but this refers to the times of Paul, not to his own time. So Claude Aziza rightly remarks: "On voit dès lors que le fameux cri: 'Synagogas Iudaeorum, fontes persecutionum' ne peut être compris, si l'on veut lui accorder quelque créance, que dans ce contexte et va perdre toute valeur d'observation et de jugement sur une réalité présente... Alors que reste-t-il? Fort peu de choses".<sup>85</sup>

Tertullian is well informed about Jewish rites: this is no wonder because there lived thousands and tens of thousands of Jews in Carthage.<sup>86</sup> There were still debates between Jews and Christians about the "Christuszeugnis" of the Old Testament: *Proxime accidit: disputatio habita est Christiano et proselyto Iudaeo* (*Adv. Judaeos* 1). Tertullian knew the etymology of Maleachi (*Adv. Judaeos* 5,4: *per Malachiam angelum (malak) unum*) and is aware of the fact that the Jews greet each other with the cry: "shalom" (who is not?). He may have consulted the rabbis sometimes,

<sup>85</sup> C. Aziza, *Tertullien et le judaïsme*, Nice 1977, 112 (against W.H.C. Frend, "Tertulliano e gli Ebrei").

<sup>86</sup> Aziza, *Tertullien*, 7–43.

but nothing proves that he knew Hebrew. Relations were peaceful. It was a long time ago that the Christians had been expelled from the synagogue. The manuscript Codex Palatinus (e), reflecting the text of Carthage in the time of Cyprian, has changed the future into the past tense in John 16, 2:

*expulerunt vos a synagoga* (Gr: ποιήσουσιν).

Why this relative peace after all these curses and quarrels? Probably because in Carthage there was no Jewish Christian left in the synagogue to be banned. In the time of Tertullian the Christian congregation of Carthage had become Gentile Catholic, episcopal, trinitarian and orientated towards Rome. It seems to have lost all its attractiveness for Hebrews. No anathema was necessary any more.

As I said before, Judaism survived Christianity in Africa and showed more character. Jews were present and active in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco even when not one Christian was found there any more.<sup>87</sup> And yet Judaic Christianity had made a lasting impression upon African Christianity. The *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* reveals to us the way of thinking of pneumatics, who firmly believe in visions and “light for the Last Days”, and who can speak directly with the Lord, the true inheritors of apocalyptic eschatological Milleniarism. “With conviction that Judgment was approaching, is associated an interpretation of Christianity that owed little to the Synoptic Gospels and Epistles. It appears to be based on the Pentateuch and late-Jewish and Jewish-Christian writings”.<sup>88</sup>

The same is true of Tertullian himself. In his fine study on Tertullian as apologist, Joseph Lortz as early as 1928 observed that the religiosity of St. Paul represented only one type of primitive Christian piety and the rational, monotheistic approach of the Apologists another equally valid and valuable type.<sup>89</sup> This phenomenological approach should be supplemented by the historical observation that Paul never came to Africa and that his letters were never really understood there. Tertullian and Cyprian and their descendants, the Donatists, as well as the

<sup>87</sup> Hirschberg, *History of the Jews in North Africa*.

<sup>88</sup> W.H.C. Frend, “Blandina and Perpetua, two Early Christian Heroines” in *Les Martyrs de Lyon (177)* (Colloques internationaux du CNRS, no. 575), Paris 1978, 167–175, esp. 172 (reprint in Frend, *Town and Country in the Early Christian Centuries*, London 1980).

<sup>89</sup> J. Lortz, *Tertullian als Apologet*, II, Münster 1928, 20–30.

Catholics until St. Augustine preached the New Law and did not really understand what “the rightwising of the ungodly” or “suffering with Christ” or “Christ is the end of the Law” really meant.

## V. THE GNOSTICS

The discovery of the Jung Codex revealed that Tertullian was an excellent source for the knowledge of Valentinian Gnosis, especially in *Adversus Valentinianos*, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, *De carne Christi* and *De resurrectione mortuorum*. French scholars were quick to apply the new information to old problems and furnished us with excellent editions and commentaries of the relevant writings. Thus they took over the leadership in Tertullianean studies from the Dutch.<sup>90</sup>

There may have been *Gnostikoi* in Carthage even before the arrival of Catholic Christianity. In Tertullian’s time they went through the movements of Christian heretics and dissuaded the Catholics from martyrdom (*Scorpiace* 1). One of their leaders was a certain Prodicus (15). He is also mentioned in *Adversus Praxean* (3) together with Valentinus as introducing “more than one god”. Prodicus, whose adherents called themselves *Gnostikoi* in Alexandria too, was known to Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* III, 4, 30). It would seem that this school had spread from one seaport to another.<sup>91</sup>

It is possible that the Valentinians in Carthage also had been proselytized from Alexandria. Tertullian renders the complicated doctrine of the Valentinians on the resurrection of the spiritual body so adequately, that it seems as if he has read the Valentinian *De resurrectione ad Rheginum*.<sup>92</sup> This transpires from the unusual appreciation of faith by the Valentinians he knew: *exinde ergo, resurrectionem fide consecutos, cum domino*

<sup>90</sup> J.-C. Fredouille, *Tertullien, Contre les Valentiniens* (SC 280, 281), Paris 1980/81; R.F. Refoulé, *Tertullien, Traité de la prescription contre les hérétiques* (SC 46), Paris 1957; J.-P. Mahé, *La chair du Christ* (SC 216, 217), Paris 1975; J.-C. Fredouille, *Tertullien et la conversion de la culture antique*, Paris 1972, 179–194; text, translation and commentary in E. Evans, *Tertullian’s Treatise on the Incarnation*, London 1956, and *Tertullian’s Treatise on the Resurrection*, London 1960; see for an analysis of *De resurrectione*, P. Siniscalco, *Ricerche sul “De Resurrectione” di Tertulliano*, Rome 1966.

<sup>91</sup> R.A. Lipsius showed in 1875 that *Gnostikos* in Irenaeus is a very special sect (responsible for the *Apocryphon of John*); see his *Die Quellen der ältesten Ketzergeschichte neu untersucht*, Leipzig 1875, 191–225.

<sup>92</sup> M. Malinine, H.-Ch. Puech, G. Quispel and W. Till, *De resurrectione, Epistula ad Rheginum*, Zürich-Stuttgart 1963, XII.

*esse quem in baptisate induerint* (*De resurrectione mortuorum* 19). This agrees completely with the Valentinian Letter: “it is a matter of faith, my son, and not of persuasion, <that> the dead shall arise (46, 5–8).<sup>93</sup> And yet in *Adversus Valentinianos* he follows Irenaeus exclusively and no other source. He boasts the knowledge of the *Syntagma* of Justin Martyr and anti-Valentinian works of Miltiades and Proculus (5). Yet he knows no better than to follow the confused and second-rate report of the good but narrow-minded bishop of Lyons. The result is unfortunate and embarrassing. As J.-C. Fredouille says: “la dette de Tertullien à l’égard de ses trois autres prédécesseurs dût être relativement négligeable” (*Contre les Valentiniens*, 28). The information of Tertullian concerning Valentinian Gnosis seems mainly due to discussions with local Valentinians: *in colloquiis saepe nostros decipere consueverunt* (*De res. mort.* 19). And they had mental reservations in dealing with this passionate brawler:

*Si bona fide quaeras, concreto vultu, suspensio supercilio “altum est” aiunt; si subtiliter temptes, per ambiguitates bilingues communem fidem adfirmant; si scire te subostendas, negant quicquid agnoscunt; si cominus certes, tuam simplicitatem sua caede dispergunt* (*Adv. Valentinianos* 1, 4).

If their inquisitive mind asked difficult questions (*unde deus?*), they received a peremptory answer with menacing overtones: *nobis curiositate opus non est post Christum Jesum nec inquisitione post evangelium*. The debate was all about freedom of research.

There were in Carthage Valentinians who knew that Valentinus himself, like the Oriental School of Valentinianism, taught that the flesh of Christ was spiritual: *Licuit et Valentino ex privilegio haeretico carnem Christi spiritalem comminisci* (*De carne Christi* 15). They also taught, like Valentinus, that “body and soul”, i.e. psychics and hylics will be killed. They will not burn eternally in hell, but be annihilated at the final conflagration: only the pneumatics are saved (*De res. mort.* 35). It seems plausible that these people belonged to the Oriental School located, among others, in Alexandria and Antioch. Probably it was they who were so well informed about the resurrection of the spirit. Others were of the opinion that the flesh of Christ was psychic (*De carne Christi* 10, 1). That was an innovation of the Italian School and may have been imported from Rome. Tertullian could have had much better information than Irenaeus, if he had really cared to listen to his opponents.

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<sup>93</sup> Malinine a.o., *De resurrectione*, 8.

These Valentinians of Carthage spoke Latin. As René Braun has shown, they had a great influence on the *copia verborum* of Tertullian. They coined words like *infinitus* and *consubstantialis*. He borrows from them *trinitas* (!), *persona* and *substantia* (avoiding *essentia*!) and *forma* (principle of individuation). In his principal work on dogmatic issues, so influential at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, he even undertook the unsuccessful endeavour to incorporate *oikonomia* (inner “explicitising”) and *prolatio* (προβολή, really the projection by God of an emanation) into the Catholic tradition.<sup>94</sup> If there ever was a congregation which created a language not directly related to the Bible or the cult and which opened the possibility for a poor language as Latin was to express idealistic notions, it was the Valentinian community at Carthage. If the Valentinians, *frequentissimum collegium*, would have won, Latin perhaps would have acquired the faculty to verbalize “Being in Motion” and would not have faded away in modern times after the rise of German Idealism.<sup>95</sup>

What about the Marcionites, who with the Valentinians were perhaps in the majority, at least in Rome and Carthage? During the war, when writing my dissertation, I had the impression that Tertullian knew not only their fundamental writing, *Antitheseis*, but also their Gospel and Apostle in Greek. This thesis met with such strong resistance that it is necessary to reconsider the whole problem.

Tertullian, in his bulkiest work, the five books against Marcion, gives the impression that he is constantly debating with the local representatives of this faction and with Marcion himself. It is true that he affirms the Catholics to be more numerous than the Marcionites: *cum et hodie maior pars sit omnibus in locis sententiae nostrae quam haereticae* (V, 20). But nevertheless the adherence to the Pontic’s heresy must have been substantial in Carthage.

In my dissertation I tried to show that the third book of *Adversus Marcionem* in some cases was nearer to its source, the *Dialogue with Trypho* of Justin Martyr, than the second half of *Adversus Judaeos*, which has with the former so much in common, that some relationship must exist between the two writings. From this greater nearness I concluded that the second half of *Adversus Judaeos* was not a hoax, but a first draft of

<sup>94</sup> Braun, *Deus Christianorum*, 153, 160, 197, 224.

<sup>95</sup> See J.Ph. Krebs und J.H. Schmalz, *Antibarbarus der Lateinischen Sprache nebst einem kurzen Abriss der Geschichte der Lateinischen Sprache und Vorbemerkungen über reine Latinität*, I, Basel 1886, 20; cf. 613 (*idea*).

the third book against Marcion heavily edited by a former brother in the faith and added to the authentic first half.<sup>96</sup> H. Tränkle agrees that *Adversus Judaeos* was only a concept, of which the parts were combined by an editor and published against the will of the author. But he holds that *Adversus Judaeos* was written long before *Adversus Marcionem* and as a whole directed against the Jews.<sup>97</sup> If this is right, Tertullian is a very untrustworthy witness for the original doctrine of Marcion: he simply repeats against Marcion and the Marcionites what he had said already against the Jews—and then he had been copying from Justin Martyr. One example will be sufficient:

*Adversus Judaeos* 9:  
itaque, dicunt Iudaei,  
provocemus istam praedicationem et  
faciamus comparationem...  
(Isaiah 7, 13–16) cf. *Dial.* 77 sqq.

*Adversus Marcionem* III, 12:  
provoca nunc, ut soles,  
ad hanc Esaiiae comparationem  
Christi, contendens illam in  
nullo convenire (Isaiah 7, 14–16)  
cf. V, 18.

Harnack, desirous to describe Marcion as a Pauline anti-Gnostic, trusted Tertullian completely and ignored the evidence which Ephrem Syrus offered in the *Prose Refutations*, which were already then available in translation.<sup>98</sup> It would seem now that Tertullian did not deserve such great confidence. Is his information about Marcion's Gospel any better?

Parallel quotations in other authors do prove that he had the Marcionite Gospel (a revised Luke) and the Marcionite Apostle (the expurgated Letters of Paul, but not the Pastoral Letters) before him, when he wrote book IV and V of *Adversus Marcionem*. What was the language of this heretical Canon?

In my dissertation I suggested that Tertullian was translating this text from the Greek.<sup>99</sup> Against this A.J.B. Higgins and T.P. O'Malley argued that it was a Latin text.<sup>100</sup> If they are right, then this translation might have been made in Africa. Von Soden thought he found many *Itala* words in them,<sup>101</sup> but there is no evidence that the *Itala* existed

<sup>96</sup> Quispel, *Bronnen Adversus Marcionem*, 56–79, esp. 78–79.

<sup>97</sup> Tränkle, *Adversus Judaeos*, LIII.

<sup>98</sup> C.W. Mitchell, *Ephraem, Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan*, I, London 1912, LI, LIV, LXIII, XCIV, XCVII f., XCIX f.; cf. A. Adam, *Lehrbuch der Dogmenschichte*, I, 146–149.

<sup>99</sup> Quispel, *Bronnen Adversus Marcionem*, 104–142.

<sup>100</sup> A.J.B. Higgins, "The Latin Text of Luke in Marcion and Tertullian", *VC* 5 (1951) 1–42; O'Malley, *Tertullian and the Bible*, 37–41.

<sup>101</sup> Von Soden, "Der lateinische Paulustext bei Marcion und Tertullian", 264.



at that time. This hypothetical Latin Gospel seems to have contained a variant of the Lord's Prayer to the effect that God was asked not to allow us to be led into temptation:

*quis non sinet nos deduci in temptationem (Adv. Marcionem IV, 26).*

This was Marcion's reading, also attested elsewhere.<sup>102</sup> And this is understandable, because Marcion's God was so good that he could not be supposed to lead man into temptation personally. This reading was accepted by Tatian, who took it with him to the East, where it found its way into the *Diatessaron*.<sup>103</sup> It is also attested for in the *Afra*. This reading in the *Afra* may go back to a time that the Christians of Africa were still so close to each other, that the Marcionite Gospel could influence the Holy Writ of the Great Church.

Note that a Latin translation of Marcionite Scripture in Rome would be quite irregular. We know nowadays that Hermas does not presuppose Christian Latin when he uses the word *statio*, because this Latin word had already been adopted by the Jews of Rome.<sup>104</sup> Apart from this we do not have any certain indication that Rome had a Latin liturgy, or Bible, or literature or "special language" during the early centuries of our era.

A translation of Marcion's Luke and Paul in Latin, made in Rome at that time, would be a complete anomaly. And a confrontation of *Itala* words, used by the Marcionite, and *Afra* words, used by Tertullian, to determine whether or not Tertullian used a Latin translation of the Marcionite Gospel and Apostle, is of no avail, because the *Itala* did not yet exist at that time. The first Roman author who knew or who wrote Latin was Novatian ( $\pm$  250; Minucius was an African).

## VI. ENCRATISM

The Encratite interpretation of the Christian religion (no wine, no meat, no sex) is as old as the Pastoral Letters to Timothy and Titus, that is as old as St. Paul himself, if he is the author of these Pastoral

<sup>102</sup> A. von Harnack, *Marcion. Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*, Leipzig <sup>2</sup>1924, 207.

<sup>103</sup> *Venetian Diatessaron*: "no ne lasare vegnire...in tentatione" (Vaccari, 43); *Tuscan Diatessaron*: "e non ci permettere entrare nella tentazione" (Vaccari, 227); *Dutch Diatessaron*: "en laet ons niet in becoringhe" (ms. Haaren; De Bruin, 18; ms. Cambridge; De Bruin, 17); *Heliand* 1610: "ne lât ûs farlêdean lêda wihti".

<sup>104</sup> A. Hilhorst, *Sémîtismes et latinismes dans le Pasteur d'Herma*, Nijmegen 1976, 168–179.

Letters, or rather as old as the anonymous pupil of St. Paul, writing about 130 A.D. in Ephesus. Perhaps we may even go so far as to suppose that Encratism is also attested at Ephesus in the Apocalypse of John about 90 A.D.: “these are they which are not defiled with women; for they are virgins” (*Apocalypse* 14, 4). These Encratites demanded divorce and abstinence from certain food (1 *Tim.* 4, 3) and they drank water (5, 23). For Oriental women this was an enormous progress: at last they could say “no” (2 *Tim.* 3, 6). The whole Christendom of the enormous province of Asia defected from St. Paul (2 *Tim.* 1, 15). All turned to these Jewish teachers of the Law (1 *Tim.* 1, 7). I guess they came from Alexandria. Encratites are Jewish, not Judaic Christians.

The writing *De centesima* reveals that these Encratites were present also within the Church of Africa.<sup>105</sup> Moreover it is plausible that this faction had been introduced from Alexandria, because the same deviant Logia are quoted as by Alexandrian Encratites:

Clement of Alexandria,  
*Strom.* III, 12, 87:

οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐκείνου οὐτε  
γαμοῦσι οὐτε γαμίζονται

*De centesima* 64:

*filiū autem illius aevi...  
neque nubunt neque nubuntur*  
(Luke 20, 35).

We even find variants attested for the Diatessaron of the arch-encratite Tatian:

*si quis non dimiserit patrem aut matrem aut omnia quae possidet et secutus me fuerit,  
non est me dignus* (*De centesima* 54, cf. Mt. 10, 37/Luke 14, 26: μισεῖ).<sup>106</sup>

Whereas the Gospel only orders one to prefer God and to put father, mother, brethren and sisters, wife and children in the second place, here the Christian is commanded to abandon his parents (and no doubt also his family) and his possessions, if he wants to follow Christ.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>105</sup> R. Reitzenstein, “Von den dreierlei Früchten des christlichen Lebens”, 68.

<sup>106</sup> *Persian harmony*: “non lascia il padre” (Messina, 295); cf. Macarius, *Homiliae* II, 45, 1: πᾶς ὅς τις οὐκ ἀφῆκε πατέρα ἢ μητέρα κτλ. (H. Dörries a.o., *Die 50 geistlichen Homilien des Makarius*, Berlin 1964, 296); *Liber Graduum* 30, 25: “si quis non reliquerit omnia, quae habet et patrem suum et matrem suam etc.” (Kmosko, 919, 22); Bahai, *Histoire de Mar Jabalaha* (Bedjan, 462); Abraham Netphar (Ms Berl. Sachau 352, fol. 166 a); Ishaq of Nineve, *De perfectione religiosa* (Bedjan, 511); Johannan bar Kaldun (Ms Br. Mus. Orient. 9387, fol. 20); *Acta Mar Kardaghi* (edited by J.-B. Abbeloos, Brussels 1890, 94); *Acta martyrum et sanctorum* (Bedjan I, 402, 474; III, 487); Gewargis Warda (Ms Cambr. Add. 1982, fol. 21 a).

<sup>107</sup> O. Michel, μισέω, *ThWNT*, IV, 687–698, esp. 694: “Eine andere Färbung erhält das Gegensatzpaar ἀγαπᾶν/μισεῖν in Mt. 6, 24; Lk. 16, 13, wo es im Anschluss an den

There can be no question at all that *De centesima* is Encratite. But ever since Irenaeus, Tatian has been considered a heretic, at least in the West (not in Aramaic Christianity centred in Edessa). For that reason alone it is very improbable that such a writing originated in the Catholic Church of Africa after Tertullian or Cyprian. Moreover, the Gospel quotations, if well chosen, reveal an early date:

*Si quis non renatus fuerit  
ex aqua et spiritu sancto  
non intrabit  
in regnum caelorum* (*De centesima* 63; quotation of John 3, 5).

The variants *renatus fuerit* (ἀναγεννηθῆναι loco γεννηθῆναι ἀνωθεν), *intrabit* (εἰσελθῆναι loco δύνναται ἰδεῖν) and *caelorum* (οὐρανῶν loco θεοῦ) can be paralleled from the Pseudo-Clementines, Justin and Macarius and have a Judaic Christian flavour.<sup>108</sup>

The version of the Parable of the Sower should be compared with Logion 9 of the Gospel of Thomas:

<i>De centesima</i> 9:	G. Thom. Log. 9:
<i>unum cecidit in via</i>	<i>Some fell on the road.</i>

The fact that the seed here falls on the road, not beside the road, as in the Synoptics (*Mark* 4, 4; *Mt.* 13, 4; *Luke* 8, 5), and that the unnecessary addition ἐν τῷ σπεῖρειν αὐτόν is omitted, makes it clear that we find here a very archaic independent tradition, not necessarily to be derived from the Gospel of Thomas, but possibly taken from a Judaic Christian tradition.<sup>109</sup>

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Sprachgebrauch von Dt. 21, 15–17 und Ex. r. 51 (104) soviel bedeutet wie vorziehen (anhängen) und zurücksetzen (verachten). Es handelt sich hier um einen bestimmten Hebraismus, der auch in der Nachfolgeforderung Jesu wiederkehrt (Mt. 10, 37: ὁ φιλῶν ὑπὲρ ἐμέ, Lk. 14, 26: καὶ οὐ μισεῖ).

<sup>108</sup> Ps.-Clem. *Hom.* XI, 26, 2 (Rehm 167, 4; see also the Syriac version in W. Frankenberg, *Die Syrischen Clementinen mit Griechischem Paralleltext*, Leipzig 1937, 276); Justin, *Apology* I, 64, 4 (Goodspeed, 70); Macarius, *Homiliae* III, 16, 3 (E. Klostermann and H. Bertold, *Neue Homilien des Makarius/Symeon*, Berlin 1961, 83).

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Ps.-Clem. *Rec.* III, 14, 7 (Rehm 109, 10): “aut in his quae ab hominibus conculcanda sunt” (cf. also the Syriac version in Frankenberg, 173, 6 sqq.); Ephrem, *E C Syr.*: super viam (L. Leloir, *Commentaire de l’Evangile Concordant, Texte syriaque*, Dublin 1963, 63, 13); *Arabic Diatessaron*: “sur le haut du chemin” (Marmardji, 155, 11; 159, 6); *Heliland* 2399: “an êna starca strâton”; cf. also Aphraates Arm.; *Vetus Latina (Afra)*: e; *Itala*: d); *ad viam* (ad Luke 8, 5); Augustine, *Sermo* 101, 3: “aliud cecidit in viam” (either *Afra* or *Diatessaron*).

All this brings us to a time long before Tertullian. Encratites were already there when he wrote. This is a good perspective for the famous vision of Perpetua, in which she beheld how she became male: *facta sum masculus* (10, 7). That this has been an authentic experience, is revealed by the irregular grammar, inspired by her unconscious *animus*. But the wording is prefigured by a well-known Saying of the Gospel of Thomas: “Simon Peter said to them: Let Mary go out from among us, because women are not worthy of the Life. Jesus said: See, I shall lead her, so that I will make her male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (Log. 114). The Gospel of Thomas is here possibly rewording a Saying of Jesus in the Gospel of the Egyptians. In the latter the real Fall was the coming forth of Eve from the side of Adam. Christ came “to destroy the works of the female”. “When the two become one and the male with the female is neither male nor female”. Therefore the Alexandrian Encratite Julius Cassianus says that the soul, which originates from above, after it had *become female* owing to her concupiscence, has fallen into our world of birth and death.<sup>110</sup> Then the female has to become male again.

It is often said that this annihilation of the female is typically Gnostic. But most Gnostics taught the syzygie, that is the unity and equality of the male and the female element. I regret to say that it is rather Catholic, attested both by Tertullian and Origen.<sup>111</sup> It is an Encratite element, derived from the Gospel of the Egyptians and rampant in the Church long before Clement of Alexandria or Tertullian.

It would seem that the latter who was an ardent lover, whose marriage was excellent, the author of a wonderful and very realistic description of a copulation<sup>112</sup>...himself was an Encratite. In her edition of *De*

<sup>110</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III, 93, 3 (Stählin II, 239, 5–7): ἡγεῖται δὲ ὁ γενναῖος οὗτος Πλατωνικότερον θεῖαν οὖσαν τὴν ψυχὴν ἀνωθεν ἐπιθυμία θηλυθυεῖσαν δεῦρο ἦκειν εἰς γένεσιν καὶ φθοράν.

<sup>111</sup> *De cultu feminarum* 1, 2, 5: “nam et vobis eadem tunc substantia angelica repromissa, idem sexus, qui et viris”; Jerome, quoting Origen, states: “Foveamus igitur et viri uxores, et animae nostra corpora, ut et uxores in viros, et corpora redigantur in animas. Et nequaquam sit sexuum ulla diversitas: sed quomodo apud angelos non est vir et mulier: ita et nos, qui similes angelis futuri sumus, jam nunc incipiamus esse quod nobis in coelestibus repromissum est” (*In Ephes.* III, 5, 29; *PL* 26, 534); for the influence of this Encratite (not Gnostic) tradition on the Byzantine Church, especially on the Lives of the Saints Pelagia, Marina and Matrona, see Evelyne Patlagean, *L’histoire de la femme déguisée en moine*, Studi Medievali, 3<sup>e</sup> série, XVII, II, Spoleto 1979, 597–623.

<sup>112</sup> *De anima*, 27, 4–6.

*virginibus velandis* Eva Schulz-Flügel observes that Tertullian considered the Christian marriage to be an Encratite community of life excluding sexual intercourse.<sup>113</sup> Whatever one may think of this elimination of sex, in any case it led to the discovery that between man and woman an equivalent spiritual community is possible. But at the same time we see in this perspective how inclined this author was to gulp down a camel and strain off a midge. Why, for heaven's sake, did he thunder so loudly against the Encratite virgins, who had taken off the veil in church (a very daring innovation in Carthage and in any Oriental country)? What did these brave and pious girls do?

Jewish women in Carthage were veiled:

*Apud Judaeos tam sollemne est feminis eorum velamen capitis, ut inde noscantur (De corona 4); una et disciplina capitis exigitur, etiam ad eas virgines, quas pueritia defendit; a primo enim femina nominata est. Sic denique et Israel observat (De oratione 22, 8).*

Following this habit, married Christian women covered their head and face in public and in chapel. Even unmarried women, who had devoted themselves to God came veiled to church. Another group of such virgins did, however, come to church unveiled (thus indicating that they had opted for virginity in honour of God), although they wore a veil in public. Their behaviour can be deduced from Tertullian's criticism, which implies that they did not wear a veil:

*"Sed aliqua se Deo vovit". Tamen et crinem exinde transfigurat et omnem habitum ad mulieris convertit. Totum ergo asseveret et totum virginis praestet: quod propter Deum abscondit, plene obumbret... Quid nudas ante Deum, quod ante homines tegis?... Quid alias ostentione tui iudicas? (De oratione 22, 9); Si propter homines habitu abutuntur, impleant illum etiam in hoc, ut et apud ethnicos caput velent, certe in ecclesia virginitatem suam abscondant, quam extra ecclesiam celant (De virginibus velandis 13).*

This was a very provocative demonstration.

I know only one parallel to this, namely in the Encratite Acts of Thomas (14), written in Edessa about 225 A.D. There a marriage is not consummated during the wedding night and the bride is sitting unveiled without being ashamed because the veil of corruption has been taken away from her and thus she is a virgin for ever. We are reminded of the Gospel of Thomas, Logion 37, where Jesus is said to be revealed

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<sup>113</sup> E. Schulz-Flügel, *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani De virginibus velandis*, Göttingen 1977, 76.

(to the faithful) when they take off their clothes without being ashamed. Against this memorable and theologically motivated act of rebellion Tertullian wrote his unspeakable treatise *De virginibus velandis*. This work proves that the Encratites were there in Carthage before him. Possibly Encratism had come from Alexandria, from port to port.

## VII. MODALISM

The Church of Rome had a brief spell of Monarchianism towards the beginning of the third century. As every textbook of Church history tells us, Praxeas the Monarchianist came from Asia Minor to Rome and is said to have had some influence upon pope Victor ( $\pm$  190), or even upon his predecessor Eleutherus. Later on two adherents of Noetus, another leader of the same faction (their names were Epigonus and Cleomenes), came to Rome and influenced bishop Zephyrinus. At that time the pope declared *ex cathedra*: "I know one God, Christ Jesus, and apart from him I know no other (God), born and suffering" (Hippolytus, *Refutatio* IX, 11, 3). It was a passing fad. Soon the Logos Christology of Hippolytus and Novatian held the field. Before the Monarchian period in Rome Hermas taught that Christ and the Holy Spirit were angels, like the Judaic Christians of Palestine. It is true that the Apostolic Creed, which originated in this period in Rome, in its original form ignored the personal preexistence of Christ. It rather implied that Jesus was the Son of God, because he had been generated by the Holy Spirit from the virgin Mary and had become Lord because of his exaltation to a seat at the right hand of God. But that is not Monarchianism; it is a very primitive and archaic form of Adoptionism, identical with the concept which the author of Acts (2, 36) put in the mouth of the first bishop of Rome, Peter: "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah".<sup>114</sup>

In Africa Praxeas had a great following in Carthage: "Praxean tares were sown above the wheat and had germinated *here also*, while many were asleep in simplicity of doctrine... But those tares had at that time scattered their seed *everywhere*, and so for a time it lay hid, deceptively

<sup>114</sup> K. Holl, "Zur Auslegung des 2. Artikels des sog. apostolischen Glaubensbekenntnisses", in: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, II, Tübingen 1928, 115–122, esp. 121: "Darin liegt zugleich, dass für unsern Verfasser der κύριος Titel mehr besagt, als der Name υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ: zum υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ wurde er geboren, κύριος ist er erst geworden durch sein Leiden und seine Auferstehung".

dissembling its life, and has now burst forth anew” (*Adv. Praxean* 1). Tertullian suggests that, but for him, the whole of North Africa would have succumbed to the charms of Praxeas and that, notwithstanding his exertions for the Truth, virtually all Catholics were still Monarchian modalists. We cannot expect that his writing *Adversus Praxean*, the Tract for the Times of a Montanist defector, deeply impressed the faithful members of the Great Church.

What was the reason for the great success of Praxeas in Africa? I think it was because Catholicism was a newcomer in Carthage, imported from Rome, with an episcopal structure which clashed with the old system of *seniores*, and with a Logos Christology which suppressed the simple faith of the faithful who believed simply that Christ was God without any theological specification. We call that faith Modalism.

The overwhelming majority of the Christians in Africa shared this simple faith:

*Simplices enim quique, ne dixerim imprudentes et idiotae, quae maior semper credentium pars est, ... expavescent ad oeconomiam ... Monarchiam, inveniunt, tenemus ...* (*Adv. Praxean* 3).

This faith of the African faithful is reflected, with some philosophical overtones, by Minucius Felix:

Look where you will: bees have but one *king*, flocks one leader, cattle one monarch of the herd. Can you suppose that in heaven the supreme power is divided, that the imperial authority over that true and divine empire is sundered, when it is plain that God, the author of all, has neither beginning nor end... (God) who by his word calls into being all things that are, orders them by his wisdom, and perfects them by his power (*Octavius* 18, 7).

On the other hand Christ was God, not a criminal or a mere man:

you go very far wide of the truth, in supposing that a criminal deserved, that a mere man had the right to be believed in as God (*Octavius* 29, 2).

Does this show that Minucius Felix preceded Tertullian who was a strict trinitarian?<sup>115</sup>

Speaking about the Pseudo-Cyprianist treatise *De montibus Sina et Sion* the late lamented Jean Cardinal Daniélou observed that in this writing the Son had no preexistence. Because of this, he says, it is tempting to regard the *De montibus*, as Corssen does, as a Monarchian work. In that

<sup>115</sup> “African Christianity before Tertullian”, 277–279.

case it would represent the teaching of the African Monarchians, which was refuted by Tertullian, but would not be by Praxeas himself, though deriving from his circle. The work was written before the *Adversus Praxeas* and the appearance of Tertullian's doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>116</sup>

I would go even further and say that *De montibus* reflects the naive and popular modalism of Africa and therefore could be even older. Against this Orbán and Bartelink have argued that linguistic arguments, derived from the well-known theory of "Christian Latin", plead in favour of a later, even much later date.<sup>117</sup> Against this I would object that linguistic arguments in themselves hardly are decisive, because linguistic insights are unpredictable and vary from time to time. Not so long ago "Christian Latin" was said to be a language of its own, which owed nothing to the Synagogue except *R.I.P.*, which did exist in Rome already in the first century (*testis est "statio" et prima Clementis latina*) and differed completely from the Greek of the Christians. But this "special language" was not created by the Catholic Church as a sociological group, because Catholicism did not yet exist. It rather was a "language of Canaan" (Isaiah 19, 18), created in the synagogue, the church and the Gnostic school of Carthage for the translation and interpretation of the Bible, to which Catholics may have added later such typically "Roman" terms as *meritum*, *satisfactio*, *reconciliatio*, *placatio* and *propitiare*. At an unknown date it was transplanted to Italy, especially to Rome, where it was used in a purified and domesticated form for the *Itala*. This translation language contaminated the verbiage of educated authors like Minucius, Tertullian, Lactantius and Augustine in cases concerning churchy matters. What Hein Nelson writes about "Lawyers' Latin" in his monumental "Ueberlieferung, Aufbau und Stil von Gai Institutiones", can also be applied to "Christian Latin":

Die Rechtslehrer haben sich nämlich nicht irgendeiner Sondersprache bedient, sondern sie haben für ihre Lehrbücher, Instruktionsschriften und Kommentare im groszen und ganzen dieselbe Sprache und denselben Stil verwendet, den man auch in anderen von Nicht-Juristen verfassten Fachschriften findet: fachsprachliches Latein (411)<sup>117a</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Daniélou, *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 55–57.

<sup>117</sup> A.P. Orbán, "Die Frage der ersten Zeugnisse des Christenlateins", *VC* 30 (1976) 214–238; G.J.M. Bartelink, in review of J. Daniélou, *The Origins of Latin Christianity*, *VC* 34 (1980) 93–98.

<sup>117a</sup> H.L.W. Nelson, *Überlieferung, Aufbau und Stil von Gai Institutiones*, Leiden 1981, 411.



Linguistic arguments have to be supplemented by historical, archaeological, epigraphical, doctrinal and general observations. In the case of *De montibus* it would give a very strange idea of African Catholicism, if long after Tertullian and Cyprian the Monarchian heresy could still be propagated, and that under the cover of Cyprian.

Modalism in Arabia preceded Trinitarianism and Logos Christology, as the "Dialogue with Heraclides" of Origen proves. And the Modalism of "Silvanus", a text found at Nag Hammadi, preceded Clement of Alexandria as J. Zandee has shown. Therefore *De montibus* might precede *Adversus Praxean*. And the *Octavius* might precede the *Apologeticum*, as far as its simple, non trinitarian theology is concerned.

### VIII. A LOST WILL CASE: THE LEGACY OF BORLEFFS

In the preceding chapters we have seen that African Christianity was built upon Judaic Christian foundations. This may explain why St. Paul, the Paul of the justification by faith and of the mysticism of realized eschatology, was never integrated into the main stream of North African Christianity until St. Augustine. As in Egypt, Judaic Christianity was superseded by Gnosticism. It may be, however, that among the Jews in Carthage there were already *Gnostikoi*, Jewish Gnostics who derived their shocking heresies from Alexandria. Encratism as well was imported from the last mentioned city, before Tertullian. Moreover Modalism prevailed among the true believers from amongst the Gentiles.

Catholicism was a latecomer in Carthage. It is against this background that the hotly debated problem, whether Minucius Felix wrote before Tertullian or the reverse, must be seen. This question cannot be solved by purely philological arguments alone. The discussion has rightly been compared to an hourglass that can easily be turned upside down. And yet I think that even so, a few points in favour of Minucius can be made.

#### I

Seneca, *De superstitione* (in Augustine, *De civitate dei* 6, 10):

*Cloacinam Tatius dedicavit deam,  
Picum Tiberinumque Romulus,  
Hostilius Pavorem atque Pallorem.*

Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 25, 8–9 as so often, copies Seneca and adds *Consus*, the Roman god of the harvest:

*Romulo* (conj. Baehrens) *Picus*, *Tiberinus* et *Consus* et *Pilumnus* ac *Volumnus* *diū*; *Cloacinam* *Tatius* et *invenit* et *coluit*, *Pavorem* *Hostilius* atque *Pallorem*... *Isti scilicet adversus ceteros, qui in gentibus colebantur, Romanorum imperium protulerunt; neque enim eos adversus suos homines vel Mars Thracius vel Iuppiter Creticus, vel Iuno nunc Argiva, nunc Samia, nunc Poena, vel Diana Taurica vel Mater Idaea vel Aegyptia illa non numina, sed portenta iuverunt.*

Tertullian, *Ad nationes* II, 17, 3:

*Nimirum Sterculus et Mutun<us et Larentina> pro<vexit> hoc imperium... Nam peregrinos deos n<on> p<u>tem extraneo potius p<opul>o q<uam> s<u>o fuisse... Ita ne Iupp<iter quidem Cretam Ro>manis fascibus p<remi> sineret>,... Vellet <Iuno urbem suam>, posthabita Samo dilectam et utique Aeneadarum ignibus adoleri?*

Tertullian, *Ad nationes* I, 10, 14:

*ut contigit <M. Aem>ilio, qui voverat Alburno deo.*

Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 25, 3–8:

*Sterculus et Mutunus et Larentina provexit imperium. Peregrinos enim deos non putem extraneae genti magis factum voluisse quam suae... Viderit Cybele, si urbem Romanam ut memoriam Troiani generis adamavit, vernaculi sui scilicet adversus Achivorum arma protecti... Sed non statim et Iupiter Cretam suam Romanis fascibus concuti sineret, ... Vellet Iuno Punicam urbem posthabita Samo dilectam ab Aeneadarum gente deleri?*

Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 5, 1:

*Scit M. Aemilius de deo suo Alburno.*

Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem* I, 18:

*Alioquin, si sic homo deum commentabitur, quomodo Romulus Consum et Hostilius Pavorem et Metellus Alburnum...*

Tertullian mentions *Consus*, not to be found in Seneca but attested by Minucius. So he seems to quote the latter in *Adv. Marcionem*. Is it thinkable that Minucius would have followed *Adversus Marcionem* here, and not Seneca? And yet it is clear that Tertullian both in *Ad Nationes* and the *Apologeticum* expresses the same idea.

One is inclined to suppose that Tertullian follows Minucius in these quoted passages.<sup>118</sup> It is difficult to imagine that Tertullian in *Adversus Marcionem* added both *Consus* and *Alburnus* and that Minucius, who

<sup>118</sup> P. Schwenke, "Die Zeit des Minucius Felix", *Jahrbuch der protestantischen Theologie* IX (1883) 264–298.

otherwise quotes Seneca often, here follows *Adversus Marcionem*, but omits Alburnus.

## II

It was established in 1949 that Minucius Felix presupposed and reflected a philosophy of religion of Stoic origin. This is based on the dialectics of natural, primitive religion and the positive, institutional religions which developed from this underground.<sup>119</sup> Summaries of this theory are preserved by Dio Chrysostomus in his *Olympic Discourse* and by Sextus Empiricus: it is there and not, for instance, in Varro that we find the view according to which all religions agree. Dio and Sextus do say that a) the religion of the people, imposed by the lawgivers, b) the imaginative religion of poets (like Homer and Hesiod) and c) the philosophical faith (even that of Epicurus) agree about the God of nature, known from his Providence in the kosmos.<sup>120</sup> Minucius orders his material, in part taken from Cicero's *De natura deorum*, exactly according to this pattern, which is not to be found either in Cicero or in any other Latin author.<sup>121</sup>

Octavius starts by observing that man ought to know himself, what is not possible without inquiry into the All (17, 1). This is, as we said before, Alexandrian lore, summarized in a Hermetic Logion: "Who knows himself, knows the All" and amplified by the *Poimandres*, and integrated in such second century writings as the Gospel of Thomas (Log. 67) and the Book of Thomas the Contender.<sup>122</sup> It is not to be found in Cicero, Seneca or Tertullian: this proves that Minucius is following a special source.

<sup>119</sup> G. Quispel, *M. Minucii Felicis Octavius* (uitgegeven en van commentaar voorzien), Leiden 1949 (<sup>2</sup>1973), 37–42; "Anima naturaliter christiana", *Latomus* 10 (1951) 163–169 (= *Gnostic Studies*, I, Istanbul 1974, 134–139); *Tertulliani De testimonio animae*, Leiden 1952; "Anima naturaliter christiana", *Eranos Jahrbuch* 18 (1950) 173–182.

<sup>120</sup> G. Lieberg, "Die 'Theologia Tripertita' in Forschung und Bezeugung" in H. Temporini und W. Haase, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, I, 4, Berlin 1973, 63–115.

<sup>121</sup> S. Blankert, *Seneca (Epist. 90) over natuur en cultuur en Posidonius als zijn bron*, Amsterdam 1940, 157; K. Reinhardt, "Posidonios von Apameia", *PW* XXII, 1, 558–826, esp. 718.

<sup>122</sup> See "Thomas revisited", 259–265.

Man, Octavius continues, all men, were created with the capacity and power of reasoning and understanding and therefore have an innate wisdom, planted in them by nature, and not accidentally acquired. The Latin reflects the Greek of Dio: *nec fortuna nanclos* (οὐδὲ ὡς ἔτυχεν, ἐπίκτητος ἐπίνοια) *sed natura insitos esse sapientiam* (τὴν ἔμφυτον ἄπασιν ἀνθρώποις ἐπίνοιαν), *Octavius* 16, 5 ~ Dio Chrys. *Olymp. Disc.* 39; cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 237 d. It is remarkable that Minucius and his source use here a Platonic terminology without Platonic ideas: neither in Minucius nor in Dio man knows God unconsciously, but he acquires his notion of the Divinity spontaneously, through observation of Cosmic order.

There follows the proof of God *ex consensu omnium*, but in a special form. Octavius appeals to the religion of the people, which prays: “o God” (*audio vulgus*, 18, 11), to the religion of poetical imagination (*audio poetas*, 19, 1), and to the testimony of the philosophers (*recenseamus, si placet, disciplinam philosophorum*, 19, 3). All agree that there is one God. All this can be paralleled from Dio and Sextus: “Of man’s belief in the deity and his assumption that there is a god we were maintaining that the fountainhead, as we may say, or source, was that idea which is innate in all mankind . . . , and has arisen among all nations and still remains, being, one may almost say, a common and general endowment of rational beings” (Dio Chrys. *Olymp. Disc.* 39 cf. Sextus Emp. *Adv. Physicos* I, 62–64). Minucius does not say, what Dio (*Olymp. Disc.* 40) does say, that primitive monotheism remained the basis of the others, which means that institutional religion is not completely corrupted but retains a core of truth. This shows that Minucius is not a philosopher, but an apologist, who requires for the Christian the same freedom as all other men have. For the rest he follows his source very carefully. This source is here not Cicero’s *De natura deorum*, because there, as I said, this pattern is absent.

Some critics have ignored the agreement of Minucius with the theory transmitted by Sextus and Dio and have stressed the novelty of the argument brought forward by Tertullian about the *anima naturaliter Christiana*. Carlo Tibiletti writes:

Questa testimonianza è irriducibile alle conclusioni dell’ argomento cosmologico tradizionale, in quanto si presenta come indipendente da ogni esperienza e ad essa antecedente . . . si riferisce a una conoscenza estranea a ogni, che scaturisce immediatamente dalle profondità dell’ animo. È una argomentazione di carattere psicologico. Questo emerge dalla forma

disgiuntiva del periodo (*vultis-vultis*): nella prima c'è riferimento a oggetti esterni, mentre tale riferimento manca nella seconda parte. Tale forma non avrebbe senso, se si alludesse a un unico argomento a posteriori.<sup>123</sup>

There can be no doubt whatsoever that either Tertullian used Minucius or the reverse. Is Tibiletti's argument so strong that it obliges us to opt for the latter solution? In *Apologeticum* 17, 4 Tertullian writes:

*Vultis ex operibus ipsius tot ac talibus, quibus continemur, quibus sustinemur, quibus oblectamur, etiam quibus exterremur, vultis ex animae ipsius testimonio comprobemus? Quae licet carcere corporis pressa, licet institutionibus pravis circumscripta, licet libidinibus et concupiscentiis evigorata, licet falsis deis exancillata, cum tamen resipiscit, ut ex crapula, ut ex somno, ut ex aliqua valetudine, et sanitatem suam patitur, "deum" nominat hoc solo quasi proprio nomine. "Deus verus" et "Deus magnus" et "deus bonus" et "quod deus dederit" omnium vox est. Iudicem quoque contestatur illum: "Deus videt" et "deo commendo" et "deus mihi reddet". O testimonium animae naturaliter christianae! Denique pronuntians haec non ad Capitolium sed ad caelum respicit. Novit enim sedem dei vivi; ab illo et inde descendit.*

Much has been said about the originality of Tertullian and the novelty of his argument. And many have succumbed to the charms of the impressive rhetor, who himself says in *De testimonio animae* (1, 5): *novum testimonium advoco... Consiste in medio, anima...*

But is this true?

Compared with Minucius, of course, it is new to speak about the soul. Minucius does not use *anima* in this context and, as we saw, seems to have held that man is his body, which continues to be in the grave and rises on the last day.

But already Maximus Tyrius had written:

θεοῦ πάντα ἔργα· ἡ ψυχὴ λέγει... (XI, 5d; Hobein, 133, 3).

It is also true that Tertullian has un-Stoical overtones. The soul is cabined and cribbed by the prison of the body; but becomes sober (*resipiscit*), as after surfeit and after sleep; then she knows about God and his judgement and turns her gaze to heaven, because the soul comes from the abode of the living God, where she preexisted, and whither she returns after her release from the body. Tibiletti is completely right to stress these differences. But it is not necessary to make with him the long walk through the whole of Antiquity until the lost, young Aristotle,

<sup>123</sup> C. Tibiletti, "Una presunta dipendenza di Tertulliano da Minucio Felice", *Atti della Accademia delle scienze di Torino*, II: Classe di Scienze Morali Storiche e Filologiche, 91 (1956–57), 60–72, esp. 66–67.

because Tertullian's source is near at hand and not lost, but preserved.<sup>124</sup> It is the writing *Ad Autolyicum* of Theophilus of Antioch (2, 8), used also elsewhere in the *Apologeticum*. There it is explicitly stated that some (poets), *becoming sober in soul* (τῆ ψυχῆ ἐκνήψαντες) and departing from the demons, made statements in agreement with those of the prophets in order to bear witness to themselves and to all men concerning the sole rule of God and the Judgement and the other matters they discussed. The last idea, inspired by Theophilus and repeated in *De testimonio animae* 2, 6–7, is conspicuously absent from Minucius, *Octavius* 18, 11. The Platonic overtones are nothing but rhetorical make-up. That the soul knows God from creation, not from its own deep Self is shown by *Adversus Valentianos* 3, 2: *eum deum recognoscere, quem iam illi natura commisit, quem cotidie in operibus omnibus sentit.*

Tibiletti's refutation of my thesis is not adequate. The real difference between Minucius and Tertullian is that the former proclaims a "natural theology", the faculty of reason to conclude from cosmic order that there is a God, whereas for the latter the testimony of the soul is a result of divination, the answer of man to God's revelation in his creation:

*Magistra natura, anima discipula est. Quidquid aut illa edocuit aut ista perdidicit, a deo traditum est, magistro scilicet ipsius magistrae (De test. anim. 5, 1).*

Tertullian has christianized the Stoa, and Minucius as well.

Recently Waszink has joined the debate on this very tricky problem. In a first article he pointed out that Tertullian derived his knowledge concerning the *genus mythicon*, the doctrine of the poets, the *genus physicon*, the doctrine of the philosophers, and the *genus civile (publicum)* of popular or state religion from Varro, whom he quotes in the first chapter of the second book of *Ad nationes*. He then goes on to argue that Tertullian presupposes this *theologia tripertita* of Varro when in the first chapter of *De testimonio animae* he contrasts the simplicity of the naked soul with the erudition of poets and philosophers. Tertullian has modified the scheme of Varro: the third species of *theologia* does not belong to groups of men, to *populi*, as Varro expressed himself, but to human souls. Minucius Felix too is said to use this doctrine of the *theologia tripertita*, that he knew in its original form from his reading of

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<sup>124</sup> C. Tibiletti, "Un motivo del primo Aristotele in Tertulliano", *VC* 23 (1969) 21–29.

Cicero's *De natura deorum*. Minucius remains much more faithful to his source. The three groups, the poets, the philosophers and the *vulgus* admit all the existence, not of the gods in general, but of the *unus et verus deus*. The substitution of *vulgus* ("simple people") to Varro's *populi* betrays the influence of Tertullian's more radical theory who had replaced *populus* by *anima simplex*.<sup>125</sup>

It is certainly a great discovery that Tertullian in his *De testimonio animae* presupposes and modifies the scheme of the *theologia tripartita*, when he rejects the *litterae philosophorum vel poetarum* and appeals instead to the *anima simplex et rudis et impolita et idiota*.<sup>126</sup>

But is it so sure that he is opposing Varro in this passage? Rather, does he not polemize against Christian apologists, who stressed the concordance of the three modes of pagan religion in admitting the one, cosmic God? And is there any apologist who does so except Minucius Felix? And does not Minucius faithfully respect the views laid down in Dio's *Olympic Discourse*, not mentioned by Waszink in his article on Varro?

Neither Varro nor Cicero says that the three types of religion agree in admitting the one cosmic God behind the scene nor do they opine that popular religion somehow has preserved monotheism. Varro is quoted by St. Augustine, *De civitate dei* VI, 5 as having written:

*Mythicon appellant, quo maxime utuntur poetae; physicon, quo philosophi, civile, quo populi. Primum, inquit, quod dixi, in eo sunt multa contra dignitatem et naturam immortalium ficta... tertium genus est, quod in urbibus cives, maxime sacerdotes nosse atque administrate debent.*

The Epicurean Velleius who in *De natura deorum* I, 42–43 rejects the religions of the philosophers, the poets and especially the *vulgus*, observes:

*Exposui fere non philosophorum iudicia sed delirantium somnia, nec enim multo absurdiora sunt ea, quae poetarum vocibus fusa ipsa suavitate nocuerunt, qui et ira inflammatos et libidine furentis induxerunt deos... Cum poetarum autem errore con-*

<sup>125</sup> J.H. Waszink, "Varrone nella letteratura cristiana dei primi secoli", *Atti del congresso internazionale di studi Varroniani*, Rieti 1976, 209–223 (= *Opuscula Selecta*, Leiden 1979, 386–410): "anche Minucio Felice ricorre a questa dottrina della *theologia tripartita*, che senza dubbio ha conosciuta nella sua forma originale dalla sua lettura del *De natura deorum*... La sostituzione di *vulgus* ("gente semplice") a *populi*, menzionati da Varrone, mostra un certo influsso (nell' elemento aggiunto di semplicità) della teoria più radicale di Tertulliano, che aveva sostituito *anima simplex* a *populus*" (217).

<sup>126</sup> See Lieberg, "Theologia Tripartita", 68.

*ungere licet portenta magorum Aegyptiorumque in eodem genere dementia, tum etiam vulgi opiniones, quae in maxima inconstantia veritatis ignoratione versantur.*

And yet this reference of Waszink to the passage in *De natura deorum* is valuable. Cicero's words show that Minucius did not need to go out of his way to hint at the appeal to the soul of the people in *De testimonio animae* or to change the *populi* of Varro into *vulgus* (*audio vulgus*). He simply found the word *vulgi* in *De natura deorum*, which he plundered on other occasions too. As so often, Minucius is nearer to his undoubted source, Cicero, than to his problematic source, Tertullian. He may have taken some material from *De natura deorum*, as when he speaks about the agreement of all philosophers (*Octavius* 19, 3, cf. *De natura deorum* I, 25), but he has inserted it into a pattern still unknown to Cicero (and Varro) and transmitted by Dio, Sextus and their fellows, according to which people, poets and all philosophers admit that there is a God. Waszink's reference to Varro does not prove the priority of Tertullian.

On the other hand, we see clearly in this perspective that Minucius indeed knows the Latin terminology of the *theologia tripertita* (*persuasio civilis*, popular religion, 19, 14). Perhaps this shows that Minucius did not consult a Greek source, Dio Chrysostomus or Posidonius or a similar writing, but was familiar with a Latin rhetorical thesis on Providence, a *disputatio in utramque partem*, *an providentia mundus regatur*, mentioned by Quintilian, *Institutiones Oratoriae* 3, 5 and transmitted by Theon's *Progymnastica*. In the latter we find the description of cosmic order and the agreement of lawgivers, poets and philosophers exactly as in Minucius.<sup>127</sup> In a later study Waszink still maintained that Tertullian, when speaking in *Apologeticum* 17 and *De testimonio animae* about the soul Christian by nature, was inspired by Varro's *theologia tripertita*.<sup>128</sup> But now he also mentions Dio Chrysostomus and Sextus Empiricus, stressing the latter's point that the natural common sense (*φυσικὴ ἐννοία*) can be divided into the "opinion of the uneducated" (*ἰδιωτικὴ ὑπονοία*), that of the poets and that of the philosophers. He says literally: "Es ist klar, dass diese Form der Theorie Tertullians Denken aktiv beeinflusst hat, während er ihre 'varronische' Gestalt in 'Ad nationes' rein referierend direkt aus Varros 'Antiquitates rerum divinarum' entnommen hat". He

<sup>127</sup> See L. Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci*, II, Leipzig 1854, 122, 22–25. Cf. "Anima naturaliter christiana", *Gnostic Studies*, I, 138.

<sup>128</sup> J.H. Waszink, *Tertullian über die Seele*, Zürich-München 1980. 18.



goes on to state that the same views are to be found in the chapters 18, 11–19, 15 of Minucius' *Octavius*, in defence of monotheism.

I must confess that I do not understand these lines. Either Varro has inspired the views on the testimony of the soul or he has not, I would say. But let us see what Waszink's<sup>128a</sup> arguments are against the hypothesis that Tertullian is reacting against Minucius Felix, when he speaks about the disagreement or agreement of *vulgus*, *poetae* and *philosophi*.

- a. In *Apologeticum* 22, 1–2 Tertullian also mentions the “normal” tripartition *poetae*—*philosophi*—*vulgus* (and their agreement on the existence of ... the devil):

*Sciunt daemones philosophi, Socrate ipso ad daemonii arbitrium exspectante. Quidni? cum et ipsi daemonium a pueritia adhaesisse dicatur, dehortatorium plane a bono. Omnes sciunt poetae; etiam vulgus indoctum in usum maledicti frequentat. Nam et Satanam, principem huius mali generis, proinde de propria conscientia animae eadem execramenti voce pronuntiat.*

- b. Minucius says in the passage concerning the natural monotheism of the people:

*Et qui Iovem principem volunt, falluntur in nomine, sed de una potestate consentiunt (Octavius 18, 11).*

*Princeps* (“ruler”) is not clear and can only be understood as an awkward imitation of Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 24, 3, where the highest God is designated as *princeps mundi*.

- c. When Tertullian uses the Graecism *idiotica* in his appeal to the soul (*te simplicem et rudem et impolitam et idioticam compello*, *De testimonio animae* 1, 6), he shows familiarity with the theories of Greek popular philosophy concerning the *consensus omnium*. *Idiotica* occurs here for the first time in Latin literature and is extremely rare, but it corresponds with the ἰδιωτικὴ ὑπόνοια mentioned by Sextus Empiricus.

*ad a)*

The first argument does not convince me. In *Apologeticum* 22, 1–2 Tertullian concludes that people, poets and philosophers agree on the existence of demons (or the demon), because, when people cursed, they said *malum*. This is amplified in *De testimonio animae* 3, 2: *Satanam denique in omni vexatione et aspernatione et detestatione pronuntias*. The latter simply is

<sup>128a</sup> Waszink, *Tertullian über die Seele*, 194–196.

not true: *malum!* means *i in malam rem, i in malam crucem* and has nothing to do with the devil. It is true that some philosophers and some poets speak about demons, as Minucius Felix observes:

*Eos spiritus, daemones, esse poetae sciunt, philosophi disserunt* (*Octavius* 26, 9).

But the Stoics never said that the belief in *daimones* or demons was common to the religions of lawgivers, poets and philosophers. The whole passage in Tertullian is a good example of bad taste and perverted ingenuity, very characteristic of his radical and mercurial mind. The remark could equally well have been inspired by Minucius' wording about the agreement of people, poets and philosophers concerning God. In any case Minucius has not followed Tertullian, because he does *not* say that the three categories know the devil.

*ad b)*

As far as the second argument is concerned, could it not be that Minucius simply is referring to the exclamation: ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ, when he says: *audio vulgus: cum ad caelum manus tendunt, nihil aliud quam "deum" dicunt... Et qui Iovem principem volunt, falluntur in nomine, sed de una potestate consentiunt.*<sup>129</sup> Could not *deum* here represent the vocativus: "o God" (of the type: "*Italiam*" *vocabant*, "they exclaimed 'Italy!'"). And could not *Iuppiter princeps* indicate simply the high god of the pantheon, not the ruler of the world?

*ad c)*

The third argument leaves me embarrassed. I could answer that Tertullian, as an experienced rhetor, could have had access to the same material of the rhetorical thesis on Providence which Minucius had consulted before him. But then Tertullian knew already everything concerning the agreements and disagreements of the three types of religion from this thesis and did not need Minucius. The argument that Minucius is faithful to his source, whereas Tertullian changes and modifies the arguments, is no longer a valid proof for the priority of Minucius as some of us thought in the days of their youth. The hour-glass is turned upside down again. For this reason I believe that this problem cannot be solved by purely philological arguments, because they can always be contradicted. Philology is a blind alley.

<sup>129</sup> *Stromateis* V, 102, 1 (Stählin II, 394). See also Q Cataudella, *Democrito, Fr. 55 B 30 Vorsokr.*, Athena e Roma 19, 1941, 73-81.

I strongly feel that archaeological, epigraphical, historical and theological arguments,—in short the prehistory of African Christianity—, should be introduced into the debate in order to come to a new approach. In the following I will try to apply this method to the discussion of one special problem.

### III

In 1925 J.G.Ph. Borleffs wrote:

*Minucius* 29, 4, *Tert. ad Nat.* II 8 (109, 5) *ambo dicunt Aegyptios hominem consecrasse ac colere: Min.: "Aegyptii sane hominem sibi quem colant eligunt; illum unum propitiant, illum de omnibus consulunt, illi victimas caedunt". Tert.: "parum est, si etiam hominem consecraverunt (Aegyptii)"; in Apolog. nihil tale legitur. De Aegyptiorum hominis cultu veteres non nisi perraro loquuntur; quo adducor ut credam alterum hic ab altero pendere. Quod si verum, veri simile est Tertullianum de Minucio hortulorum suum irrigasse; nam cum Octavii auctor nihil habeat quod ceteris hac de re auctoribus contrarium sit, ille pergit dicere hominem illum esse Serapidem; Serapidem autem esse Josephum Judaeum! Falsum profecto utrumque. Tamen Septimius in priore suo libro cum Minucio commune aliquid habet quod in Apol. desideratur.*<sup>130</sup>

In 1941 Bertil Axelson, while defending the priority of Tertullian in a booklet full of sound and fury, tried to refute this brilliant observation.<sup>131</sup> But when the Founding Father of Dutch patristics, whose editions were and are still unanimously praised, expresses his considered opinion on a subject, it is time to reconsider the problem.

The remark of Minucius to which Borleffs alludes can be paralleled by a passage in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homiliae*:

*Hom.* VI, 23:

Ἀλλὰ καὶ παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις ἔτι  
καὶ νῦν ἄνθρωπος ὡς θεὸς πρὸ  
τοῦ θανάτου προσκυνεῖται

*Octavius* 29, 4:

*Aegyptii sane hominem sibi  
quem colant eligunt: illum  
unum propitiant, illum de omnibus  
consulunt, illi victimas caedunt.*

It happens to be known that both authors are hinting at a religious custom in the Egyptian village of Anabis, where the inhabitants choose one of their fellow-citizens to be a sort of Father Divine.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>130</sup> J.G.Ph. Borleffs, *De Tertulliano et Minucio Felice*, Groningen-Den Haag 1925, 67.

<sup>131</sup> B. Axelson, *Das Prioritätsproblem Tertullian-Minucius Felix*, Lund 1941.

<sup>132</sup> Porphyrius, *De abstinentia* 4, 9 (De Roer, 325): ἄνθρωπον σέβουσιν κατὰ Ἄναβιν κόμην, ἐν ἧ καὶ τούτῳ θύεται καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν βωμῶν τὰ ἱερεῖα καίεται.

In an article of 1949 it was pointed out that the author of the Pseudo-Clementine *Homiliae*, or his source, had used a Jewish apology, written in Alexandria in the first century of our era, which contained among other things a *disputatio in utranque partem* on Providence, held in a garden.<sup>133</sup> Because the *Octavius* turned out to have much in common with this source, it was suggested that Minucius too had used this Jewish apology.<sup>134</sup>

This thesis was not contradicted by anybody in the course of the years and accepted by Claude Aziza, the expert in all things Judaic and Tertullianean, as well as by Hirschberg (the historian of the Jews in North Africa).<sup>135</sup> Recently the existence of the Alexandrian apology has become still more probable, because it contained evidence on Orphism also attested by Basilides the Gnostic, who lived in Alexandria in the beginning of the second century: from this J. van Amersfoort concluded that this Jewish writing was a plausible guess.<sup>136</sup> Now that we know how much African Christianity was influenced by Judaic Christianity and kept in touch with Judaic and Christian Alexandria, it seems quite possible that Minucius used the Jewish apology, not only for rare information like the cult of a man in an Egyptian village, but also as an example to intimate the faith in the one God of the Bible by an idyllic discussion and dialogue for and against Providence. There are, after all, only two dialogues preserved from second century Christianity, the *Dialogue with Trypho* by Justin Martyr, which seems to reflect real life and the *Octavius* which is completely unreal, the walk along the beach, the veneration of the idol, the argumentation for and against Providence. Not only Cicero's *De natura deorum* but also the Jewish apology on Providence might have been Minucius' source. And there he may have found the information about the Father Divine in an Egyptian village.

Tertullian tells a story different from Minucius and the Jewish apology:

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<sup>133</sup> The elements of this thesis are to be found in Ps.-Clem. *Hom.* VI, 25 and *Rec.* X, 39.

<sup>134</sup> "A Jewish Source of Minucius Felix", *VC* 3 (1949) 113–122.

<sup>135</sup> C. Aziza, *Tertullien et le judaïsme*, 210; H.Z. Hirschberg, *History of the Jews in North Africa*, I, 72–73, 79.

<sup>136</sup> J. van Amersfoort, "Traces of an Alexandrian Orphic Theogony in the Pseudo-Clementines" in: R. van den Broek and M.J. Vermaseren, *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions*, 13–30.

*Parum est, si etiam hominem consacra<verunt>, illum dico quem non iam Aegyptus aut Graecia, verum totus orbis <colit et A>fri iurant, de cuius statu quod conici potest, apud nostras litteras, <ut ve>risimile videtur, positum est. Nam Serapis iste quidam olim Io<seph dictus> fuit, de genere sanctorum;... Hunc Serapidem ex suggestu quo caput eius orn<atum>, vocaverunt; cuius suggestus modialis figura frumentationi<s eius> memoriam obsignat, <et c>ura<m> frugum super caput eius fuisse ipsis spi<cis>, quibus per ambitum notatur, apparet (Ad nationes II, 8, 9–16).*

So according to Tertullian Serapis was formerly called Joseph and was named Serapis after the headdress which adorns his head: its “modius form” impresses on the mind the memory of his corn distribution; from the ears of corn by which its brim is marked it appears that the concern for fruits was burdensome. For the Egyptians, accustomed to worship animals, it was only a little step to deify a man.

Gerard Mussies, who gave us a detailed study of the Jewish interpretation of Serapis, shows that the same identification is to be found in the Talmud, where it is attributed to R. Jehuda, c. 150 A.D. and in the Syriac translation of an apology written by Melito of Sardes about 160 A.D. (“The Egyptians worshipped Joseph, a Hebrew, who was called Serapis, because he supplied them with sustenance in the years of famine”). Mussies points out that it was Jews who first propagated the identity of Joseph and Serapis, because both, each in his own way, gave corn to Egypt.<sup>137</sup> Tertullian, who was so familiar with many echoes of the Jewish haggada because these had been transmitted in the tradition of the Church of Carthage, most probably is indebted to Jewish lore.

In the *Apologeticum* he does not repeat the same argument. But he seems to allude to the same passage, when he observes that no god could wish to be venerated by an unwilling man, not even if that god would be a man: *Nemo se ab invito coli volet, ne homo quidem* (24, 6). Or perhaps he meant the man Joseph, who was venerated as the God Serapis.

The most plausible interpretation of this strange digression is that Tertullian misunderstood Minucius’ information concerning the godman in Anabis and connected it with an euhemeristic interpretation of Serapis with which it has nothing to do. It is almost unthinkable that Minucius, inspired by the confused statement of Tertullian, replaced it by a correct information concerning an existing Egyptian cult. Moreover, why should he consult *Ad nationes* in this passage, whereas he usually agrees with the *Apologeticum*? And how could Minucius, if he had

<sup>137</sup> G. Mussies, “The interpretatio Judaica of Serapis”, in M.J. Vermaseren (ed.), *Studies in Hellenistic Religions*, Leiden 1979, 189–214.

the words of the *Apologeticum*: *nemo se ab invito coli volet, ne homo quidem* before him, be induced to conclude from this passage that Tertullian was speaking here about the cult of a Father Divine in the Egyptian village of Anabis?

Until this argument is refuted or at least contradicted, I accept the priority of Minucius. In the perspective of Christian prehistory in Carthage, the simple modalism of Minucius and his fidelity to his Jewish source are certainly nearer to the Jewish and Palestinian origins of Christianity in Carthage than the trinitarian Catholicism of Tertullian. Just as the "Arabic" (Jordanian) bishops of the recently discovered *Dialogue (of Origen) with Heraclides*, who proclaimed a primitive modalism, preceded Origen, and just as such thoroughly Hellenistic writings as the *Sentences of Sextus*, the *Authentikos Logos* and the *Teachings of Silvanus* antedate Clement in Alexandria, so the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix seems to have been written before *Ad nationes* and the *Apologeticum* of Tertullian. A date before 180, when a Stoic philosopher, Marcus Aurelius, was sitting on the throne and the criticism of Fronto, his teacher, concerning the Christians (*Octavius* 9, 6; 31, 2) was still relevant, would be a feasible option for this both primitive Christian and Stoicising writing.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

### EZEKIEL 1,26 IN JEWISH MYSTICISM AND GNOSIS\*

Myth and dream can express what discursive reasoning cannot: a certain awareness that God is revealing himself in a symbol, and yet is beyond that imagery. The Eastern Church has admitted this in stating that monks on Mount Athos could behold the uncreated primordial Light, whereas the essence of the deity remained inscrutable.

Hebrews of Antiquity and Cabbalists call this manifestation of the hidden “Un-ground” the *kabod*. The Hebrew word *kabod* means: “weight, glory, splendour.” It can be used not only to denote the power and majesty of the Lord in nature and history, but also to describe an outward manifestation of ultimate Reality, seen by a prophet in ecstasy, but invisible to the natural eye.

One of the first to use it in this latter sense was the prophet Ezekiel. His was an extraordinary experience, until then unknown, as it would seem, either in Israel or elsewhere. His eyes had seen the coming of the Glory of the Lord. And possibly it is because this experience was so deeply felt and authentic that his words are so extremely difficult to follow or to visualize.

During the time that he was in exile, far from his native Jerusalem somewhere in Babylonia near the Grand Canal between the Euphrates and the Tigris, in the year 593 before the beginning of the Christian Era, he saw the divine throne approaching the place where he stood. And thereon appeared “the likeness as the appearance of a Man” (*demuth kemareh Adam*). God, when he reveals himself, is like man. He really is Man. Or, rather, his *kabod* is. Ezekiel finds it necessary to formulate this qualification: “This was the appearance of the likeness of the Glory (*kabod*) of the Lord”. For this prophet the manifestation of *kabod* was an experience of light.

This vision of Ezekiel has inspired the greatest of all prophets, the one who is called Deutero-Isaiah and is said to have lived about 550 BCE in exile in Babylonia. At the very beginning of his writing he describes

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\* Previously published in: *Vigillae Christianae* 34 (1980) 1–13.



how, at the end of time, his people in procession will go through the land of all the nations between Babel and Israel. The *kabod* will precede them and be their rear guard; all the peoples on their way will behold the splendour of this Glory: “the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together” (Is. 40:5). The manifestation of Light was obviously a visionary experience for Isaiah.

I am not going out of my way to show that this *demuth kemareh Adam* is identical with the Son of Man of Jewish apocalyptic literature. It is a well-known fact that Son of Man, Aramaic *barnash*, means nothing but “man”, and designates the eschatological Judge of all mankind. Let it suffice here to say that the description of the first chapter of Ezekiel influenced the concept of the Son of Man. The so-called first book of Enoch, in part found at Qumran, contains the following passage:

And there I saw one, who had a head of days (God),  
 And his head was white like wool,  
 And with him was another being *whose countenance had the appearance of a man*,  
 And his face was full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels  
 (46, 1).

There can be no doubt that the words “whose countenance had the appearance of a man” echo the expression “likeness as the appearance of man” in Ezekiel 1: 26. In other words, the Son of Man described in this passage is identified by the author of 1 Enoch with the *kabod*, the glorious manifestation of God as Man.

Justin Martyr makes an allusion to Jewish theologians, when he enumerates passages from the Old Testament in which Christ is called *Anthropos*, among other titles:

And do not think, sirs, that it is superfluous to quote these passages so frequently. I do this because I am aware that some people want to vindicate these passages for their own theological positions. They proclaim that *the Power* which comes from the Father of the universe and revealed itself to Moses or Abraham or Jacob is called Angel when he comes to men, because through that Power God’s messages are announced to men, and that he is called Glory (*doxa*) because he appears sometimes in a vision that is beyond the capacity of human understanding, and that he is sometimes called Man (*anér*) and *Anthropos*, because he appears arrayed in such forms if so pleaseth God (*Dial. c. Tryphone* 128, 2).

These Jewish theologians identify the Power issuing from God with the Glory and with the *Anthropos*; it is clear that they have the vision of

Ezekiel in mind. The true inheritors of Apocalypitics also in this respect were the Jewish mystics of the first centuries of our era.

When Apocalypitics lost its touch with history and switched over to timeless contemplation, after the fall of the second temple in A.D. 70, the vision of Ezekiel became typical and exemplary for the experiences of certain rabbis. Akiba and Ishmael were quoted as having ascended to the third heaven or paradise and to have beheld there the *kabod* of God, though not God himself in his essence.

This Glory of God was called the “creator in the beginning” or “the body of the *Shekhinah*”. The enormous dimensions of this divine body were enumerated with great delight. And the *kabod* was identified with the beloved of the Song of Songs.

The esoteric doctrine concerning this appearance of God in a bodily form was called in Hebrew: *Shiur Komah*, the measure of the body, namely the body of God. The mystical book of the same name contains a detailed and provocative description of the limbs of God, his head, his feet etc. The Book of the *Shiur Komah* begins in the following way:

This is the extent of the body about which it is spoken in the Book of the *Shiur*: Great is the Lord and mighty is his power (Ps. 147:5). The height of the Holy One, blessed be he, is 236.000 parasangs. The extent of one parasang of him is three miles. And one mile is 10.000 els. And one el is three times the span of one hand. And one span of one hand contains the whole world. Etc. etc.

The knowledge of the dimensions of this enormous body is a saving Gnosis:

R. Ishmael spoke: “When I spoke about this to R. Akiba, he said to me: Anyone who knows this *extent* of our creator and the Glory of the Holy One, blessed be he, who is hidden from all creatures,—he is sure of having a share in the world to come, and it will be well with him in this world on account of the good of the world to come, and he will prolong his days in this world”.

The word translated here with: extent, *š b h*, is an equivalent of Aramaic *šwa*. The extent, dimension, form or body of God is identical with his Glory. Form, Adam, Body, Glory are interchangeable and refer to the manifestation of God.

A striking parallel to this body of the *Shekhinah* in Jewish mysticism is the Mandaean concept of the *Adam Qadmaia*, the primordial Man,

masterfully described by Lady E.S. Drower in her book: *The Secret Adam* (Oxford 1960). This metaphysical Adam is God's first-born Son and should be distinguished from the bodily physical Adam whom he preceded by many myriads of years. He is also called *Adakas*, a contraction of *Adam Kasia*, Secret Adam, or *Adakas Žiwa*, Adam the *Kabod*. The fact that this first emanation is both celestial Man and Glory shows that this Mandaean speculation has Israelitic roots and ultimately goes back to the first chapter of Ezekiel. The quoted passage in the mystical book *Shiur Komah* about the identity of the "dimension" and the Glory of God is a beautiful parallel to it and proves that the concept of *Adakas Žiwa* is very old indeed.

Even the name *Adam Qadmaia* is old. This is proved by the fact that in several Gnostic writings the divine, heavenly Adam is called: *thé Geradamas*. Irenaeus, in his version of the myth of the Apocryphon of John (*Adv. Haer.* 1, 29, 3) only speaks of a "*Homo perfectus et verus, quem et Adamantem vocant quia neque ipse domatus est*".

But in the version of the *Apocryphon of John* in Codex II of Nag Hammadi (8, 34–35) this divine *Anthropos* is called *thé Geradamas (Pigeradamas)*. The same form is found in the Nag Hammadi writing Melchizedek (IX, 1; 6, 6): "the Man of Light, immortal aeon *Pi Geradamas*". In the *Three Steles of Seth* (VII, 5; 118, 26) the Old Testament Seth addresses his heavenly father Adam with the following words: "I bless thee, father *Geradamas*, I as thine own son". In *Žostrianos*, a book discovered in the same library (VIII, 1) *Geradamas* is mentioned several times (6, 23; 13, 6; 51, 7).

*Geradamas*, *Geron Adam* or "*Geradamas Adam*" seems to be the Greek translation of *Adam Qadmaia*, or *Adam Kadmon*, just as Ophites is a translation of Naassenes. In medieval Jewish mysticism the term *Adam Kadmon* is first found in an early 13th century cabbalistic treatise. But Jews from the beginning of our era have anticipated it. This confirms the hypothesis that the views of the Mandaeans on the heavenly Adam or Adam the Glory are old and of Jewish origin.

Not only the Jewish mystics, but also Philo mentions a heavenly Man, whom he identifies with the *Logos* and sometimes calls "Man after his (God's) image" (*Conf.* 146) or "Man of God" (*Conf.* 41). This divine Adam is an *idea*, incorporeal, neither male nor female, by nature incorruptible (*Op.* 134). Here an important development has taken place. The notion of the *kabod*, in the Greek of the Septuagint *homoïōma hōs eidos anthrōpou*, has integrated the Greek and Platonic idea of man.

Plato, the founding father of idealism, never uses this concept. It seems to occur for the first time in Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 65, 7, according to whom: “*homines quidem pereunt, ipsa autem humanitas, ad quam homo effingitur, permanet*”. According to the Middle Platonic thinker who was the source of Seneca, the idea of man is contained in the mind of God.

The same concept is found in Ps. Justin, *Cohortatio ad Graecos* 30, where it is said that Plato misunderstood Moses, when he stated that there are ideas of heaven, earth and *man*:

Moses mentioned the word “man” first (in Genesis 1: 27), and then after the many creatures he mentions the formation of man with the words: “And God made man by taking dust from the earth” (2: 7). Therefore he (Plato) thought that the first mentioned man preexisted before the other man that came into being, and that the man fashioned from earth had come into being later after the preexistent idea.

The Valentinians were also familiar with the view that there were ideas of heaven, earth and man (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1, 5, 3). This suggests that there already existed in his time in Alexandria a Jewish tradition, to which Philo is indebted and which tried to combine the idea of Man with the Bible. In the quoted passage Philo says that this ideal Man was neither male nor female. He even polemicizes against the view that Man was androgynous:

“God made man”, he says, “made him after the image of God. Male and female He made—not now ‘him’ but ‘them’. He concludes with the plural, thus connecting with the genus mankind the species which had been divided, as I said, by equality” (*Heres* 164).

Philo’s polemic against the androgyny of heavenly Man seems to show that there existed in Alexandria a Jewish circle which proclaimed that the heavenly Adam was both male and female.

What was the nature of Philo’s teaching? Harry Wolfson devoted a great part of his long life to proving *more geometrico* that Philo was a systematic and consistent philosopher. Erwin Goodenough, on the other hand, was of the opinion that Philo was a mystic. And Arthur Darby Nock, the editor of the *Hermetica*, considered Philo as a mine of petrified philosophical common places. It is amusing to visualize the three, every day silently disagreeing with each other, at the Scholars Table in the Faculty Club of Harvard University.

Things do appear in a different light, however, when we discover that Philo is indebted to and reacting against an already existing Jewish

mythology and that his alleged philosophy appears as a rationalization of powerful symbols thinly veiled. According to him, Wisdom received the seed of God when she had union with him (*Ebr.* 30). This should be compared with a passage in the Hermetic Prayer of thanksgiving, already known in Greek from the Louvre Papyrus 2391 and from the Latin Asclepius, but now better preserved in a Coptic version (Nag Hammadi Codex VI, 63, 33 ff.). According to it, the divine Mother is a uterus conceiving through the phallus of the Father. The imagery is so crude that it was passed over in silence up till now. But what seemed to be a clumsy and innocent allegory of an absent-minded philosopher turns out to be the survival of a shocking mythological symbol.

Philo also called the *Logos* a second God (*In Genes.* II 62). This proves that he reflects the traditions of the heretics (*minim*), who, basing themselves upon ambiguous passages of the Old Testament, concluded that there were “two powers in heaven”, God and the Angel of the Lord, who created the world.

It is these heterodox Jews of the diaspora, who were older than Philo, who are most relevant for our theme. In the first place it will be clear that they influenced the Hermetic *Poimandres*. In this writing it is told that God generated a son, the *Anthropos*, who is his Form, to whom he delivered all creatures and who is androgynous, both *Phōs* (Man, Adam, Light) and *Zōe* (Eve). But it must have been also in these circles that the Gnostic idea of *Anthropos* originated. In the writing on *The Origin of the World* the relation of this ideal Man with the *kabod* of Ezekiel is still very clear. In the process of creation a light reveals itself. We are told that it originated on the first day, and this makes it clear that *The Origin of the World* is a commentary on Genesis, where the light is said to have been created on the first day. This light comes from the *Ogdoas*, the celestial abode above the seven planets: “When this Light was manifested, an Image of Man revealed itself in it, which was amazing” (108, 8–9). The angels of the planets, the rulers of this world, had seen this Man of Light. They fashioned a body after the image of this heavenly Adam in the hope that he would fall in love with his bodily image.

It is typically Jewish to think that the image of God is to be found in the body. But it is also a heretical idea. Later on the rabbis pretend that Adam was created on the eve of the Sabbath, i.e. at the last moment of the sixth day of creation. They thus reacted against Jewish heretics, who taught that Adam, the heavenly Adam of Ezekiel, the *demuth kemareh Adam*, was the first born of creation, to be identified

with the primordial light of the first day, and so God's partner in the work of creation.

Our rabbis taught: "Adam was created (last of all beings) on the eve of Sabbath". And why? Lest the *minim* should say: "The Holy One, blessed be He, had a partner in his work of creation" (b. Sanh. 38 b; Tos. Sanh. VIII 7).

Here it becomes absolutely certain that the Gnostic *Anthropos* is derived from heterodox Jewish circles, which are older than Philo and therefore pre-Christian, and who speculated about the *kabod* which comes from God, is manifesting itself, and then withdraws back into its origin. But at the same time this concept presupposes a pun on *ho phōs*, the man, and *to phōs*, the light, and therefore must have originated in the Greek diaspora.

The *Letter of Eugnostus*, which shows no traces of any Christian influence, is still more explicit than *The Origin of the World*. According to this teacher, the Unknown God dwells in an invisible supercelestial region beyond the visible world. He is God beyond god and therefore not a Father in the real sense of the word. Rather the *Anthropos*, the Son generated by him and mirroring his image as a reflection (and therefore predicable) should be called Father:

In the beginning he (God) conceived the idea to let his *Eikon* come into being as a Great Power. Immediately the *arché* of that light manifested itself as an immortal *androgynous Man*. The name of his malehood is called: the perfect (begetter). The name of his womanhood (is): (the) all-wise begetress *Sophia*. It is also said that she resembles her brother who is her consort (76, 19–77,6).

The *eikōn* (*demuth*) and Glory of God, has here a male, generative aspect, *Gennétor*, and a female, productive aspect, which is *Sophia*.

It is impossible to quote here all passages, in which the Gnostic *Anthropos* is mentioned. Let it suffice to say that they all are derived from the meditations on the Glory of God in heterodox Jewish circles. Even the Primordial Adam of the Mandaean must have the same origin.

The views of Valentinus are based on this already existing Gnostic tradition. In a fragment transmitted by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* II 8, 36, 2–4) Valentinus says that Adam, when he was fashioned with the name "man", inspired the awe of the preexistent *Anthropos*, because he was obviously present in him. The *Anthropos* is here the ideal prototype of Adam, as in the Gnostic myth. And yet Valentinus seems to have given a new interpretation to the traditional symbol. According

to him Man is the spiritual body of Christ, born from Mary, and the vehicle of Christ during his life on earth, in short the human Jesus. Thus, Man, for Valentinus is the symbol and prototype of progressing, ascending, to its origin in God returning mankind. This is echoed by his pupil Heracleon or a pupil of Heracleon:

When the redemption was preached, the Perfect Man received *Gnosis* in the first place, that he might return in haste to his unity, the place from which he originated (*Tract. Trip.* 123, 3–8).

Mani taught very much the same. The new Coptic and Iranian sources have only confirmed what Theodore bar Konai transmitted in his *Liber Scholiorum* XI:

When the evil tried to penetrate into the realm of Light, God decided to go down himself and fight against it. Thereupon he called forth the Mother of Life. And she in her turn evoked the Primal Man (in Syriac: *naša kadmaja* = Hebrew: *Adam kadmon*). He goes forth to combat against darkness, is overpowered by the hostile powers, but later returns to the world above from which he originated.

The Coptic Manichaean Psalms (Allberry 9, 22–10, 22) have added the important qualification, that the “armour” or “soul” of the *Arch-anthropos*, left behind in matter, is “the Maiden, who is his soul”. She is dispersed in matter and the whole worldprocess serves to restore her to Man, so that his original androgyny (Man and Virgin at the same time) be restored.

We may ask now to what extent these new texts are relevant for the interpretation of Saint Paul’s concept of the heavenly Man. Confronted with Jewish Christians most probably coming from Palestine and boasting of their ecstatic experiences (“visions and revelations by the Lord”), he involuntarily admits to having been caught up fourteen years ago as far as the third heaven and to have been caught up into Paradise, where he heard unutterable words which it is not permitted for a man to speak (2 Cor. 12:1–4). By identifying “paradise” and “third heaven” Paul uses the terminology of Jewish mysticism. A Jew would have understood by implication that Paul had seen the “likeness as the appearance of a Man” like Ezekiel and later R. Akiba and R. Ishmael. And certainly Paul would have agreed, but for him this Manifestation, this Glory, which he had seen and heard, identified itself with Jesus.

Where did St. Paul learn to give this interpretation to his experience? In Jerusalem Jesus was considered to be the Son of Man, the eschatological judge of the world and the coming Messiah of Israel. But Paul

never uses the expression “Son of Man”, and for him Christ is not a title, but a name, Jesus Christ. In Antioch, where he was active as a missionary for some time, he could have heard that Jesus in his human existence had been a descendant of David but in his (later) spiritual mode of being had been inaugurated as Son of God since his resurrection (Rom. 1:4). But Paul had also been for a considerable time in the congregation of Damascus after his conversion in about A.D. 32. And the story about his experience on the road to Damascus, as told by Luke, contains some very clear allusions to the visionary experience of Ezekiel. Paul fell to the earth and heard a voice saying to stand upon his feet because he is to be sent... exactly as Ezekiel did, according to the first two chapters of the prophet. And whereas Ezekiel was dumbfounded, Paul was blinded after his vision. For those familiar with the meaning and purpose of such hints in ancient literature, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the author of Acts is paralleling the vocation of Ezekiel and the vocation of St. Paul. As the *kabod* appeared to the prophet in Babylonia in 593 B.C., so the *kabod* appeared to Saul near Damascus in A.D. 32. As far as I know, nowhere else in his Gospel or Acts does Luke show any familiarity with the vision of Ezekiel. Therefore it is plausible that he took his story from an existing source. The *couleur locale* (“Straight Street”) and the prominence of a Damascene Christian, Ananias, in the story suggests that this source originated in Damascus.

Familiarity with Ezekiel’s first chapter and its interpretation in Jewish mysticism transpires also in the hymn quoted by the apostle (Phil. 2:6–11), not due to him personally, but to a hymn already in use in a Christian congregation, possibly Damascus. That community must have been Jewish Christian and not Gentile Christian. For the hymn alludes to the Jewish and biblical concept so repulsive for Gentiles and Gentile Christians that God has a shape, and, still more shocking, that the image of God in man is to be found not in his soul, reason, free will or Self, but in the outward bodily appearance of the human male. It says that, because Christ was the Form of God, he felt fully entitled to be God’s peer. And yet he gave up this high rank and accepted the Form of a slave, by assuming the human frame. In a similar way the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* (3, 7, 2) contain a Jewish Christian tradition to the effect that God has a Form (*morphé*) and that the body of man carries the form of God. In the same work (17, 7) it is said that God has a form (*morphé*) which is beautiful, and all members of a body, face, ears etc. and that this *sōma* is incomparably more brilliant



and radiant than our sight or the light of the sun. He has this beautiful *morphé* for the sake of man in order that the pure in heart may be able to see him.

The implication of *morphé* obviously is that it is a divine body, is identical with *kabōd*, Glory, and equivalent with *eikōn*, for man is made after the *eikōn* of God and thus is a faint copy of the divine *morphé*, *demuth*. All this is in accordance with Merkabah mysticism. There is even a most striking parallel to the hymn's opposition of God's form and man's form in the *Shiur Komah*:

His (God's) *demuth* is hidden from every one,  
but nobody's *demuth* is hidden from Him.

God's *demuth*, form, is the *kabod*, man's *demuth* is the image of God in him. The same contrast is found in the *Poimandres*, reflecting Hellenistic Jewish views in this passage. In this writing it is said that *Anthropos*, though the Form (*morphé*) of God and equal (*isos*) to Him (12) and even possessing demiurgic powers, has come to inhabit the irrational Form (14: *morphé*) of the human body produced by lower Nature. So man has become a slave of the planets, an *enharmonios doulos* subject to Fate. The hymn of Philippians agrees with the *Poimandres* in supposing that man has become a slave of the planetary and other astrological powers: "the Form of a slave".

The question then arises whether St. Paul, or his source, is to be explained in terms of Hellenistic, heterodox Judaism.

a. For Paul Christ is also *Pneuma*, he has given his *Pneuma* into the heart of every single faithful one: "The Lord is at the same time the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17). But he is also the heavenly *Anthropos*, in whom the *Pneuma* originates, which is going to function as the vital principle, the centre of the existence of the new, spiritual man: "The last Adam is instrumental in conveying the quickening, life giving *Pneuma*" (1 Cor. 15:45).

From the point of view of Palestinian mysticism it is understandable that Paul calls the Messiah Jesus, whom he identifies with the *kabod*, the heavenly or *last* Man. Already in Isaiah the *kabod* had an eschatological function. But it is not clear, from this perspective, that this *Anthropos* is also the *Pneuma* and conveys the *Pneuma* to man. And we must remember that for a Jew *Pneuma*, Hebrew: *ruah*, had feminine connotations.

In a Hellenistic perspective this is better understandable. In the first place *pneuma* was used sometimes in Hellenistic circles to translate the Hebrew equivalent (*nešamah*) of "breath of life", which God breathed

into the nostrils of Adam (Gen. 2:7). On two occasions, *Legum Allegoriae* 3, 161 and *Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Soleat* 80, Philo has *pneuma zōēs*, spirit of life, instead of *pnoé zōēs*, the usual reading in our editions of the Septuagint. Also the *Vetus Latina*, which has very old roots in the Jewry of Carthage, has *spiritus*, a translation of *pneuma*. Thus this variant existed independent of Philo and possibly prior to him.

In the second place, it is only in Hellenistic sources that the heavenly Adam had such a double aspect as he has in Paul. As we have seen, according to the *Poimandres* (17) the divine *Anthropos* consists of *Phōs*, Light or Man (Adam) and *ζῳέ*, Life or Eve. In the *Letter of Eugnostus* the immortal Man has a male side, *Gennétor*, and a female side, *Sophia*. The Naassene Sermon, transmitted by Hippolytus (*Refutatio* V 6, 3–11, 1) says that in the Primordial Man *ζῳέ* originated (8, 5): “This *ζῳέ* is the unutterable race of perfect man”. She is the soul, the breath of life which vivifies all men, but especially the earthly body of Adam whom the earth had produced by herself and which lay without breath, without motion, as an image of the celestial. This soul has come down from that Man above, or Primal Man, or *Adamas*, into this moulded figure of clay (7, 3). This is a good parallel for the view of Paul that Christ is at the the same time the heavenly *Anthropos*, and the *Pneuma*, whom he conveys to the faithful.

b. Paul also says in his first letter to the Corinthians that “unto them that are called” Christ is the *Dynamis* of God and the *Sophia* of God (1:24). For this concept there is a good parallel in apocalypticism and mysticism. Gershom Scholem, in his *Jewish Gnosticism* (67) has shown convincingly that *Geburah* or *Dynamis* was an appellative or metonym of the divine Glory among the apocalypticists. This esoteric use continued in the circles of Merkabah mystics. In the *Ma'asseh Merkabah* quoted by Scholem it is said:

R. Akiba said: “When I ascended and beheld the *Dynamis*, I saw all the creatures that are to be found in the pathways of heaven”.

And the *Visions of Ezekiel* contains the following passage:

The Holy One, blessed be He, opened to him (i.e. to Ezekiel) the seven heavens and he beheld the *Dynamis*... and he beheld the *kabod* of God.

When Paul calls the Son of God, and not God himself, the *Dynamis*, he is nearer to the esoteric than to the exoteric terminology of Palestinian rabbis. But as far as I know, there is no evidence in the mystical writings of Palestinian Pharisees which would elucidate the double aspect of the *Anthropos*. Philo is of no help either. In all his writings he never

quotes Ezekiel 1:26, and when he speaks about the Glory of God, which he does rarely, he does not identify it with the *Dynamis*, but with the *dynameis* (the ideas, *Spec. Leg.* 1, 45).

In the *Letter of Eugnostus*, which we quoted before, Man is at the same time male, *Gennétor*, and female, *Sophia*. He is also “a great Power (*Dynamis*)”. This is a striking parallel to the double aspect of the Pauline Christ, and must reflect a tradition of Hellenistic Judaism.

c. On several occasions Paul identifies Christ with the *Ecclesia* (1 Cor. 12:12–13; Gal. 3:28). At the same time he seems to say that Christ is the body of God, in whom the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily (Col. 2:9).

If we want to understand this concept, the writing *Shiur Komah*, the Extent of the Body (of God), might be of some help. There it is told how the *kabod* upon the throne is both the heavenly Adam and the body of the Holy One, praised be He, the measures of which are given in detail:

R. Ishmael spoke: “I have seen the King of kings, sitting upon a high and elevated seat, and his powers stood before him, at his right and at his left...”.

R. Ishmael spoke: “How great is the extent of the *body* of the Holy One, praised be he, who is hidden from all creatures? The front of his feet fills the whole world, for it is said: the heaven is my seat and the earth the stool of my feet (Is. 66: 1). The height of the front of his feet is 30000000 parasangs.” Etc. etc.

The authoritative names of R. Akiba and R. Ishmael were chosen to legitimize a mysticism which definitely and consciously desired to remain within the boundaries of rabbinic, orthodox, Pharisaic Judaism. There is in these texts a complete absence of any sentiment of divine immanence, no trace of a mystical union between the soul and God. The infinite gulf between the soul and the Ultimate is not even bridged at the climax of mystical ecstasy.

The notion of the Body of God seems also to have been current in the diaspora. Philo polemicizes against opponents who hold that God has a body (*Somn.* 1, 236). At the same time he maintains that the *Logos* is the head of all things, under whom, as if it were his feet or other limbs, is placed the whole world (*In Exodum* 2, 117). Such passages make it plausible that the Mandaean views about the body of the Cosmic Adam are very old and of Jewish origin.

This Primordial Adam of the Mandaeans has a spiritual and cosmic body with organs and parts which perform menial functions like

digestion and evacuation. The Cosmic Adam is androgynous, like the *Anthropos* of the *Poimandres* and like the *Adam Kadmon* of Medieval Cabbalism. There can be no doubt at all that this Adam the *Kabod* originates in Ezekiel. But on his way through the Hellenistic world he has integrated certain views of the Orphic Mysteries.

In an Orphic hymn, quoted in the Derveni papyrus of the fourth century, it is said that "Zeus is the head, Zeus the middle, Zeus the end of every thing". This then seems to presuppose the view that the Cosmic God of the All, as the *Makrokosmos*, is a *Makranthropos*. He was androgynous, *progenitor genetrisque deum, deus unus et omnes*.

The Jewish Gnostics who were the ancestors of the Mandaeans applied this to their Primordial Adam. According to the Mandaeans the bodies of the earthly Adam and Eve (of Genesis) were fashioned first and later on the soul (*nišimta*, the same word as the Hebrew *nešamah* in Genesis 2:7), which originates in the heavenly Adam, fell into these bodies. The aim of the Mandaean death mass is that this soul be incorporated into the body of the Primordial Adam again and receive a spiritual body. This concept must be older than the Pharisaic mysticism of Palestine. The orthodox have adapted it to their categories of thought.

Paul agrees with the Palestinian mystics in the conviction that God has a body, but with the opponents of Philo and with the Mandaeans in the idea, that the Spirit of the heavenly Man dwells in the heart of men and receives a spiritual body. Nor is there any evidence that Paul became familiar with these Hellenistic meditations on Ezekiel 1:26 in a Jewish surrounding. From the very beginning he seems to have identified the Manifestation of God with Messiah Jesus and the same is the case with the pre-Pauline hymn in the Letter to the Philippians. This never happens either in Philo or his predecessors and must have been a Christian innovation before Paul.

Where did he become familiar with this tradition? Paul does transmit Jerusalem traditions about the second coming and the Antichrist, but eschatological Jerusalem saw Jesus mainly as the Son of Man, a term which, as we said, Paul ignores. Paul also was familiar with Antiochene traditions that Jesus died for us and brought the completion (not the end) of the Law. This interpretation of Christ did not presuppose the pre-existence of Christ, no eternal Adam. Paul had been initiated into the new religion and baptised in Damascus. The Christians there must have been "Hellenists", who were persecuted because, like Stephen, they dared to challenge the Law (the "Hebrews" in Jerusalem were

left unmolested, Acts 8:1). We can easily imagine that for them Jesus was the Glory, the Form, the Manifestation of God, into whose Body man was incorporated through baptism, which conveyed the Spirit, the Spirit of the heavenly Man.

This then means that Paul was not directly related to the mystical traditions of the Palestinian Pharisees. If he has been a Pharisee, and even a pupil of the Jerusalem teacher Gamaliel, his use of mystical terminology does not prove that these traditions existed already in strictly orthodox circles in Palestine in the first century of our Era. Paul is nearer to the Hellenistic traditions which existed before Philo, and thus, certainly before Paul's conversion in 32. If this be true, then Paul was initiated into a gnostic interpretation of Christianity, which almost from the very beginning (about A.D. 32, the time of Paul's conversion) served as an alternative for the primitive eschatology of Jerusalem and the liberal interpretation of Antioch.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

The above is the revised text of a lecture held at the 8th Patristic Conference in Oxford on September 5th 1979. This was a summary of a long study of 205 pages, written at the request of the editorial board of *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, with the title: 'Hermetism and the New Testament, especially Paul' and forwarded to the director W. Haase ever before 1979. On April 10, 1990, Mr. Haase wrote me that my work would be published soon. Nothing was heard since then.

I still hold that the likeness as the appearance of Man in Ezekiel is the backdrop of the title of Christ: 'Son of Man' (= Man) in the canonical Gospels. It should be observed that 'Son of Man' in the technical sense of the word is prominent in Q, the Greek written source of Matthew and Luke, and absent from the Gospel of Thomas. This proves that the oldest, Judaic Christian layer of Thomas is older than Q (before 50 A.D.).

My tentative endeavours to formulate a completely new Christology have been accepted by Jarl Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord*, Tübingen 1985, and by Carey Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology: Tradition and Rhetoric*, Leiden 1992.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

### THE FOURTH GOSPEL AND THE JUDAIC GOSPEL TRADITION\*

There is a growing consensus among scholars who have seriously studied the problem that the Fourth Gospel is a Jewish Christian Gospel revised by a Hellenic Ghostwriter.<sup>1</sup> The author of this original source must have had the name John: why else should the Fourth Gospel be called: the Gospel of John? This John cannot have been the son of Zebedee: a host of witnesses from the Aramaic Church attests that the latter had been killed a martyr in Jerusalem by king Agrippa I († 44 A.D.). As the Manichaean Psalms say: “The two sons of Zebedee were compelled to drink the cup of martyrdom” (*PsB* 148, 22).

Was not this exactly what Jesus had predicted, when these two sons, James and John, once asked Jesus for privileged positions in the Kingdom of God on earth: “You shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism of blood that I am baptized with shall you be baptized also” (Mark 10, 39)? For this reason I suggest that the fundamental writing in which the Fourth Gospel is grounded, was the Jewish Christian Gospel of the congregation of Ephesus written by the presbyter John, the author of the Apocalypse of John, who had come from Jerusalem to Ephesus, probably after the capture of the Holy City in 70 A.D.<sup>2</sup> This hypothesis would explain why both writings have so much in common: both seem to be Quartodeciman, which implies that they place the Last Supper on the day before Easter, both see Jesus as the Paschal Lamb, a vicarious sacrifice, both are strictly predestinarian, like the Dead Sea Scrolls, both call Jesus “the Name”.<sup>3</sup>

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\* Previously published in: J.H. Charlesworth, *John and Qumran*, London 1972, 137–155.

<sup>1</sup> R.T. Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs*, Cambridge 1970. E. Haenchen, *Das Johannesevangelium* (Tübingen 1980), 85, admits that a “fundamental writing” was a source of the author, but does not even consider the possibility that it was of Jewish Christian origin.

<sup>2</sup> *The Secret Book of Revelation*, New York 1979, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Paschal lamb: J. I, 36—Ap. V, 6; Name-logos: J. XVII, 6—Ap. XIX, 13.

It is obvious that this source was a gospel, not only a collection of miracles. The Ghostwriter alludes to the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan but does not mention it: “John (the Baptist) testified further: ‘I saw the Spirit coming down from heaven like a dove and resting upon him’” (John 1, 32). Clearly his source described the baptism of Jesus in this way.<sup>4</sup>

The Ghostwriter said that Jesus’ side was pierced by a lance after his death: “But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water” (19, 33–34). According to a marginal reading on Matthew 27, 49 in manuscript 72, Tatian, when writing the Diatessaron, inserted the reading asserting the piercing of Jesus’ side after his cry of dereliction but before his expiration. It is plausible to assume that Tatian, as so often, was using here the Jewish Christian tradition. The latter could very well transmit a historical fact. A victim used to receive the finishing blow before his death. But then the Ghostwriter must have modified his Jewish Christian source for theological reasons. He wanted to underline his view that the sacraments of baptism (water) and eucharist (blood) originate from the lifegiving death of Jesus, a typically Gentile Christian concept. So the Fourth Gospel can be very trustworthy as far as historical facts are concerned—it rightly reports that there was no trial of Jesus, but only condemnation by *coercitio*, as in the case of the later Christian martyrs—and at the same time it is highly personal in the interpretation of these facts.

In this perspective it also becomes clear that there never was such a thing as a pre-Christian “Redequelle”. As can be expected from a seasoned Hellenist, the Ghostwriter transforms Sayings of Jesus into discourses which contain ever new variations on the theme of the Logion:<sup>5</sup>

I give you a new commandment: love one another (XIII, 34).

This is my commandment to you: love one another (XV, 17).

The Johannine letters make it clear that the author meant brotherly love:

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<sup>4</sup> *John and Jewish Christianity*, in *Gnostic Studies*, II, 213.

<sup>5</sup> *Love thy brother*, in my *Gnostic Studies*, II, 169 sqq.

A new commandment I write unto you: . . . he that loves his brother abideth in the light" (1 John II, 8–10).

I wrote a new commandment: . . . let us love each other (2 John 5).

Owing to the Gospel of Thomas, logion 25, we now know what Jesus really said, with a phrasing related to the style of the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>6</sup> Jesus said:

Love thy brother as thy soul,  
guard him as the apple of thine eye.

Of course, it is generally agreed that the Ghostwriter was not familiar with the synoptic gospels and yet was familiar with a tradition of Sayings.<sup>7</sup> My contention is that this tradition was specifically Jewish Christian and contained in the Gospel of Ephesus.

Recently A.F.J. Klijn has reedited the fragments of the Gospel of the Nazoraeans, which up till then had been completely mistranslated.<sup>8</sup> It then transpired that the Jewish Christians who accepted this Gospel held that the world would be judged on the last Easter festival, in other words that Jesus would come back for the last judgment on Easter:

Item isti VIII dies pascae in quo resurrexit Christus filius dei significant VIII dies postremi pascae in quo iudicabitur totum semen Adae, ut nuntiatur in evangelio Ebreorum (*Codex Vat. Reg. lat.* 49).

This is relevant for the Apocalypse of John, according to which Christ would come back to Mount Zion:

And I looked and a lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand (XIV, 1).

Obviously this author shared the belief of the Jews that the Messiah would come on Pesah in Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> "Brother" is used here, not in the sense of "compatriot", but of "co-religionist", as in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Damascus Document VI, 20).

<sup>7</sup> H. Koester, *Gnostic Sayings and Controversy Traditions in John 8; 12–59*, in Hedrick-Hodgson, *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, Peabody, Mass. 1986.

<sup>8</sup> *Das Hebräer- und das Nazoräerevangelium*, in *ANRW* II, 25,5, 3997–4033.

<sup>9</sup> Jerome, *In Matt.* IV, 25,6: *Traditio Judaeorum est Christum media nocte venturum in similitudinem Aegyptii temporis, quando pascha celebratum est.*



The Quartodecimans and their ancestors, the primitive congregation of Jerusalem, were of the same opinion.<sup>10</sup> In this case, as so often, the Apocalypse of John turns out to be completely Jewish Christian. Therefore it is plausible that the Ghostwriter of the Fourth Gospel is amplifying a Jewish Christian Saying of Aramaic origin, when he offers variations on the theme of God giving to Jesus his followers.

Eusebius of Caesarea transmits the following quotations from the Gospel of the Nazoraeans which he found in the library of Caesarea:

I chose me the good (= the true believers), the good which my Father in heaven has given to me (Theophaneia Syriaca IV, 12).

The Ghostwriter has modified this Saying in several ways very characteristic of him:

1) God gives:

All that the Father giveth shall come to me (VI, 37);  
 My Father, which gave them to me (X, 29);  
 the men which thou gavest me...  
 thine they were, and thou gavest them me (XVII, 6);  
 for them which thou hast given me (XVIII, 9);  
 whom thou hast given me (XVII, 24).

2) But the Ghostwriter adds the important proviso that Jesus is not so much the *speculum electionis* as the *auctor electionis*, this in accordance with his source, as the quotation from the Gospel of the Nazoraeans shows:

Have not I chosen you? (VI, 70);  
 I know whom I have chosen (XIII, 18);  
 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you (XV, 16).

It would seem that the number of those chosen is fixed. The Johannine Christ is quoted as having said:

(That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake):  
 Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none (XVIII, 9).

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<sup>10</sup> In the *Epistula Apostolorum* 17 (28) it is said that the eschatological coming of God (Christ) will take place on the days of the Pascha: cf. *Judaism, Judaic Christianity and Gnosis*, in Logan & Wedderburn, *The New Testament and Gnosis*, Edinburgh 1983, 53.

When we look up the passages in the Gospel of John which the Ghostwriter is supposed to have referred to, we do not find the exact equivalent:

of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing (VI, 39);  
 I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me  
 I have kept and none of them is lost (XVII, 12).

Probably the Ghostwriter is referring to his source. In any case the *numerus praedestinatorum* is a typically Jewish theologoumenon,<sup>11</sup> preserved by the Clementines in two passages:

The concupiscence has rightly been given to the living being, in order that, instigated by it to intercourse, he multiply the human race, from which is taken the number of the elect (πλήθος ἐκλογής) of the *better ones* which are ready for eternal life (*Hom.* 19, 21,3);

ut repleretur ille *numerus* qui demonstratus fuerat Abrahae” (*Rec.* 1, 42).

There are some other parallel passages of our Saying in the Jewish Christian Gospel tradition.

In the Gospel of the Ebionites, fragment 1, Jesus is quoted as having said: “When I came to the lake of Tiberias, I elected John and James etc.”. The Gospel of Thomas, logion 23, transmits the following words:

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<sup>11</sup> W.C. van Unnik, *Le nombre des élus dans la première épître de Clément, Sparsa collecta* III, 124–133; Id., *Die Zahl der Vollkommenen Seelen in der Pistis Sophia*, *ibid.* 214–223. Van Unnik finds the *numerus praedestinatorum* in Clement of Rome 59, 2:4; Justin Martyr, *Apology* 45, 1; *Const. Ap.* VIII, 22: 3, VIII, 5: 6; Didascalia Apost. 11; *Pistis Sophia* 125, 86, 26, 23, 96, Didascalia 21 (*Const. Apost.* V, 15, 3). He reports that the same concept is found in the Jewish apocalyptic writings *Apoc. Baruch* 23: 4–5; *IV Esdras* 4: 33; *Apoc. Abrah.* 29. It seems to me that the concept is of Jewish origin, was integrated by Jewish Christians, and then spread to the Aramaic Church and some Gentile authors. The Valentinian *Excerptum ex Theodoto*, 67, 3, not mentioned by Van Unnik, clearly depends upon the view expressed in *Ps. Clem. Hom.* 19, 21,3. It defends intercourse with the following words: “For birth must exist until the (elected) seed (of pneumatics) that has been counted before, has been brought forward”. In the same way the Clementines, translated above, defend concupiscence, because it multiplies the human race, from which the *numerus praedestinatorum* is to be taken. The author of the *Excerpta*, living about 160 A.D. in Alexandria, must have been familiar with this Jewish Christian praise of sex. This again shows that Egyptian Christianity is of Jewish Christian, Palestinian origin. The passages in the *Pistis Sophia* are the heritage of the Judaic Christian beginnings of Christianity which laid the foundations of both Christian Gnosticism and Christian Catholicism there. Cf. M. Hornschuh, *Studien zur Epistula Apostolorum*, Berlin 1965, 109; C.H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, London 1979, 58; G. Quispel, *African Christianity before Minucius Felix and Tertullian*, in: J. den Boeft and A. Kessels, *Actus. Studies in Honour of H.L.W. Nelsen*, Utrecht 1982, 272.

Jesus said: I shall choose you, one out of thousand and two out of ten thousand,

to which the Encratite redactor, mistakenly taking “one” to allude to the solitary bachelor or monachos so dear to him, added the words:

and they shall stand as a single one.

The Saying itself, so typically Semitic in the choice of its words, and being a parallel to Matthew XXII, 14 (few are chosen), must come from the Jewish Christian source of the Gospel of Thomas.

In the War Scroll (XIII) from Qumran it is said, according to the translation and suppletion of Vermes (141):

And the Prince of Light Thou hast appointed from ancient times to come to our support, [all the sons of righteousness are in his hand] and all the spirits of truth are under his dominion.

This suggests that the Saying we discussed could arise in a Jewish Christian milieu saturated with ideas also current in Qumran. But as far as I know there are no Essene sources that say exactly that God gives his adherents (“the good”) to the Messiah, nor any specific item about the fixed number of the Messiah’s elects.

Is it still necessary to say that the Gospel of the Nazoraeans cannot possibly have been influenced by the Fourth Gospel as has been supposed by Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker even in the latest edition of Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* (5th edition, 1987, p. 132)? The “Gospel of John” was so unpopular in Jewish Christian quarters, Jewish Christians were so allergic to it, that it is not quoted at all in the Pseudo-Clementine writings, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of the Ebionites and the synoptic Gospel harmony which Justin may or may not have used.<sup>12</sup> Such fanciful suppositions block the road of real scholarship and from now on can be dismissed out of hand.

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<sup>12</sup> For Justin’s Harmony see H. Koester, “The Text of the Synoptic Gospels in the Second Century”, in: William L. Peterson (ed.), *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century*, Notre Dame 1989, 28–36.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

### JEWISH CHRISTIAN GOSPEL TRADITION\*

In an important article, Dr. A.F.J. Klijn has recently studied some fragments of Jewish Christian Nazoraeans in Beroea (Aleppo), transmitted by St. Jerome.<sup>1</sup> He shows that their text of the Old Testament has much in common with the Targum and the Jewish Christian translator Symmachus. Their views, moreover, are held to be less radical than that contained in the Gospel according to Matthew. Though opposed to the tradition of the Pharisees and the scribes, they did not consider them as hypocrites, and they certainly did not teach that the Jewish people as such has been rejected.

Their opinion on St. Paul was different from that held by the Elkesaites and contained in the *Pseudo-Clementines*. Far from considering him has a renegade, they appreciated Paul's activity as a missionary among the Gentiles, although as Law-abiding Jews they cannot have accepted or understood his dialectics of Law and Grace. According to Klijn, in this they reflect the attitude of the primitive church in Jerusalem, or rather of that faction within this church, which under the direction of James accepted Paul but remained faithful to the Law. So there is an uninterrupted continuity between these Jewish Christians in Beroea and their ancestors in Jerusalem.

On the other hand the new Mani Codex of Cologne reveals that Mani, from his fourth until his twenty-fifth year, was living in a community of Jewish Christian Elkesaites in Southern Babylonia.<sup>2</sup> This shows definitively at last that there were Jewish Christians in Babylonia. They, of course, were violently opposed to Paul. As against the Nazoraeans, they did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, and they rejected the Virgin Birth. It would seem that they were responsible

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<sup>1</sup> “Jerome’s quotations from a Nazoraean interpretation of Isaiah”, *Recherches de science religieuse* 60 (1972) 241–255.

<sup>2</sup> A. Henrichs, L. Koenen, “Ein griechischer Mani-Codex”, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* V, 2, 97–216.

for the reading of the Syrus Sinaiticus (Matthew 1:16): “Joseph . . . begat Jesus, who is called Christ.”

It would seem wise to use in scholarly work the terms Nazoraeans and Elkesaites, because they are well attested, rather than “orthodox” and “heterodox” Jewish Christians, and to leave aside the very confusing reports of the Fathers of the Church about the Ebionites. The Nazoraeans then must have been the direct descendents of the “Hebrews” in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1), whereas the Elkesaites, a derivation from the main stream, integrated the views of the prophet Elxai and heterodox Jewish influences. The Gentile church was mainly a consequence of the “Hellenists” among whom Paul was very prominent. This would mean that the Jewish Gospel material is twofold. There is the Elkesaite tradition, transmitted by the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, the Gospel quotations in the *Pseudo-Clementines*, and certain quotations transmitted by Mani.<sup>3</sup> Though this may be ultimately derived from the main stream of Jewish Christian Gospel tradition, it is generally agreed that this archaic material has been mixed up with influences from some of the canonical Gospels.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the Nazoraean tradition could be independent, for if the views of the Nazoraeans in Aleppo were more primitive than those of “St. Matthew,” there is a chance that their Gospel tradition, too, was nearer to the source. No certainty can be arrived at as far as the fragments of the *Gospel of the Nazoraeans* is concerned. Zahn and Lagrange thought that they were independent of the Greek Matthew, whereas Vielhauer was convinced of the contrary.<sup>5</sup> But this problem should be viewed in a much larger perspective. If the extra-canonical tradition contained in the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Diatessaron* of Tatian, Aphraates, Clement of Alexandria, and certain interpolations in the Western text are all derived from the Nazoraean source, then it is probable that the fragments of the *Gospel of the Nazoraeans*, in part or

<sup>3</sup> G. Quispel, “Mani et la tradition évangélique des judéo-chrétiens”, *Recherches de science religieuse* 60 (1972) 143–150.

<sup>4</sup> The relationship of the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, used in Egypt by Clement and Origen, to the *Gospel of the Nazoraeans* is not clear.

<sup>5</sup> Th. Zahn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur*, II, Leipzig: A. Deichert 1892, 642–723; A. von Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius*, II, 1, 2nd ed., Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs 1958, 625–649; M.-J. Lagrange, “L’évangile selon les Hébreux”, *Revue Biblique* 31 (1922) 161–181; 321–349; P. Vielhauer in: E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen*, I, 3rd ed., Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 1959, 90–95.

completely, reflect the same independent tradition.<sup>6</sup> That this is the case may be illustrated by one characteristic example.

The *Heliand*, an Old Saxon poem, written about A.D. 840 in Werden, near Essen, contains the following version of the parable of the Fisherman:<sup>7</sup>

... that a man casts a net into the sea, a fishnet into the flood and catches both wicked and good and draws them to the shore. He brings them to the land, collects then the good to the sand and lets the other go to the ground, to the wide waves (2629–2634).

The *Heliand* has used a very wild Latin version of Tatian's *Diatessaron*, which has much in common with the Dutch, Venetian, and Tuscan *Diatessaron*. Probably this text was brought from Italy to Utrecht and Essen by Liudger (741–809), the Frisian missionary of northern Germany and founder of the monastery at Werden. The Latin text of this passage can be reconstructed with some confidence:

Simile est regnum caelorum *piscatori* mittenti rete in mare; quod cum *plenum sit*, *educit* et sedens secus litus *eligit pisces magnos* et *ponit* in vasa sua, *parvos* autem mittit in mare.<sup>8</sup>

There is a parallel for this version in Philoxenus, the sixth century Monophysite Bishop of Mabbug-Heliopolis. He says:

<sup>6</sup> G. Quispel, *Makarius, das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle*, Leiden: E.J. Brill 1967.

<sup>7</sup> G. Quispel, "Gnosis and the New Sayings of Jesus," *Eranos Jahrbuch XXXVIII* (1969), Zürich 1971, 274.

<sup>8</sup> piscator l. sagena:

Tc (arm): misit eam; Aphraates: pisces debiles foras proiciet piscator; Macarius: ὁ θηρατής; Clemens Alex.: ἀνθρώπων σαγήνην... βεβληκότι;

plenum sit l. impleta esset:

Tndl: vol es; Tven: è plena; Ttos: fu piena; lat h;

educit l. educentes:

Tc (arm): educunt; Tper: tirarono; Tar: ils le montèrent; Tndl: trekkense ut; Tven: tirano; Ttos: trassero; lat (omnes exc. aur c ff<sup>1</sup> 1); D;

eligit l. colligunt:

Tc (arm): Tar; Tper; Tndl; Ttos; Tlat; sy s c; lat (omnes exc. d e k); vg;

+pisces:

Tc (arm syr); Tndl; sy s c;

magnos l. bonos:

Tven: et li grandi et li buoni;

+ponit:

Tper; Tar; Tndl; Tven;

+in mare:

Macarius: εἰς τὸν βυθόν

Then one will see the *fisherman* cast his net into the sea of the world and fill it with fish, *small and great* . . . at that time he will *draw* his net and bring it up to the shore of the sea, as he said it, and he will choose the good *fishes* and will *put* them in his vessels . . . and he will throw away the wicked ones into the utter darkness, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (*Homilies* I, 9)

There are parallels for this in Aphraates and Macarius, but it is not certain that these two reflect the *Diatessaron*.<sup>9</sup> Macarius has known the *Gospel of Thomas*. Aphraates sometimes uses the same tradition as the *Gospel of Thomas*. It seems, however, possible that Philoxenus reflects the *Diatessaron*; he has the addition “put them into vessels” with the Persian, Arabic, Venetian, and Dutch *Diatessaron* and the *Peshitta*; moreover the Armenian text of Ephrem Syrus’ commentary on the *Diatessaron* reads: “The kingdom of heaven is similar to a net, because *he threw it into the sea*.”<sup>10</sup>

It would seem, however, that the Parable of the Fisherman, as distinguished from Matthew’s Parable of the Fishnet, was circulating before and independent of the *Diatessaron*. For Clement of Alexandria has the following version: “The kingdom of heaven is like *a man*, who has cast his net into the sea and from the mass of caught fish makes *the choice* of the best.”<sup>11</sup> Here we remember that, according to Michael Mees, Clement was familiar with a good Egyptian text, related to the Vaticanus and the Sinaiticus, and the Papyrus Bodmer 75, whereas he took his deviating quotations from an extra-canonical, Jewish Christian tradition current in Alexandria.<sup>12</sup> Clement seems to reflect the same tradition as Tatian.

We have now prepared the way for a comparison between Matthew 13:47–50 and Logion 8 of the *Gospel of Thomas*:

<sup>9</sup> *Het Evangelie van Thomas en de Nederlanden*, Amsterdam 1971, 117.

<sup>10</sup> *Simile est sagenae, quia misit eam in mare*; L. Leloir, *Saint Ephrem commentaire de l'évangile concordant*, version arménienne, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Vol. 145; Louvain 1954, 111, 22.

<sup>11</sup> *Stromata* VI. 11, 95 (ed. Stählin, II, 479).

<sup>12</sup> Michael Mees, *Die Zitate aus dem Neuen Testament bei Clemens von Alexandrien*, Rome: Istituto di Letteratura Cristiana Antica 1970.

Matthew<sup>13</sup>

Again the kingdom of heaven  
is like to a net thrown  
into the sea, and bringing  
together all kind;  
which, when it is filled,  
causing to mount up to  
the shore, and having sit  
down, they gathered the  
good ones into vessels,  
but the stale ones they  
threw out.

## Thomas

The Man is like a *wise fisherman*  
who cast his net into the sea;  
he drew it up from the sea  
full of small *fish*.  
Among them he found a *large* (and)  
good fish, that wise fisherman,  
he threw all the small fish  
down into the sea; he *chose*  
the large fish without regret.

Matthew adds an allegorical interpretation, to the effect that the angels will throw the wicked men into hell fire (like fried fish), and so gives an eschatological twist to the parable. This is conspicuously absent from Thomas. Moreover the situation is completely different. Matthew describes how several people in a boat use a trawlnet. Thomas speaks about one fisher, who standing in the shallow water near the shore throws out his castnet. His point is that man in his wisdom should know how to act when the unexpected chance of the Kingdom of Heaven comes his way. He throws everything away to avail himself of this one great opportunity. The same point is to be found in the Parable of the Pearl (Logion 76).

There is no doubt that the *Gospel of Thomas* used a Jewish Christian source, be it the *Gospel of the Nazoraeans* or a collection of "Sayings."<sup>14</sup> Some still think that even this tradition is a perversion of the canonical Gospels. It would seem, however, that in this case at least "Thomas" is not perverted. His version contains no allegorical features and gives sense. It seems to reveal that "realized eschatology" is the key to the interpretation of the parable as spoken by Jesus.

This, however, can only be discerned, if we agree that the problems of the Jewish Christian Gospel tradition should be discussed in a much wider framework than has been done until now. There are not only a few fragments of the Jewish Christian Gospels (Ebionite, Nazoraean, Hebrew) or the quotations in the *Pseudo-Clementines*. Since the discovery of the *Gospel of Thomas* we know that the Western text, the *Diatessaron*,

<sup>13</sup> Author's note: The translation is literal.

<sup>14</sup> For the latter possibility, cf. J.M. Robinson and H. Koester, *Trajectories through the World of Early Christianity*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1971.



Clement of Alexandria, Aphraates, and so many others have been influenced by the tradition of the Nazoraeans.

ADDITIONAL NOTE

In 1992 A.F.J. Klijn has published the book *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, Leiden 1992, in which all fragments have been discussed.

The ongoing discussion of the *Gospel of Thomas* shows that the real issue is: Was Jesus an eschatological fool, as Albert Schweitzer thought, or a teacher of wisdom and the embodiment of Divine Wisdom, as “Thomas” proclaims?

## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

### JEWISH GNOSIS AND MANDAEAN Gnosticism

#### *Some Reflections on the Writing Brontè\**

## I

The writing *The Thunder, The Perfect Mind* is one of the most impressive writings that I know. It was found in one of the codices of Nag Hammadi in 1945 (VI, page 13–page 21) and published by Martin Krause and Pahor Labib in 1971.<sup>1</sup> Its title is uncertain: instead of *tebrontè*, the thunder, one can also read: *nebrontè*, a name similar to that used by Mandaeans and Manichaeans to indicate a female deity.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, its content seems to suggest that “*Nous teleios*” should rather be translated as “Complete Mind”, or: “Whole Mind” than as “Perfect Mind”.

Be that as it may, the text itself is fascinating. In it Sophia introduces herself as the beginning and the end, the prostitute and the saint, the woman and the virgin, and so on and so forth in an almost endless continuation of paradoxes.

There is nothing explicitly and even implicitly Christian in this text. At first sight one might even think that it could even be pre-Christian.

Nor is there anything typically gnostic in *The Thunder, the Complete Mind*. In it Wisdom declares:

For I am the Sophia of the Greeks  
and the Gnosis of the barbarians.  
(16, 3–5)

I am unwise  
and I am wise.  
(15, 29–30)

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\* First published in: *Les Textes de Nag Hammadi, Colloque Strasbourg 23–25 October 1974*, 1975, 82–122.

<sup>1</sup> M. Krause and P. Labib, *Gnostische und hermetische Schriften aus Codex II und Codex VI (Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Koptische Reihe, Band 2)*, Glückstadt 1971, 122–132.

<sup>2</sup> See C. Colpe, “Heidnische, jüdische und christliche Überlieferung in den Schriften aus Nag Hammadi”, I, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, 15 (1972) 11–12.

I am without wisdom  
and they receive wisdom from me.  
(16, 28–29)

But there is nothing to suggest that according to the author Wisdom has fallen from the spiritual world, as is the case in the Gnosis of Simon the Magician, or in the *Apocryphon of John*, or in the myth of Valentinus. This might tend to indicate that *Brontè* is pre-gnostic.

It would be much more difficult to deny that it is Jewish. Its remarkable style, the endless repetition of antithetical parallelisms, “I am... I am not”, has its counterpart in *Ecclesiastes* 3:

a time to be born  
and a time to die;  
a time to plant  
and a time to uproot;  
and so on and so forth.

I may be mistaken or misinformed, but I do not know of any document in any other literature where we find the same fatiguing and monotonous device.

Moreover, it is in the Hebrew literature that we find similar self-proclamations of Wisdom:

*Prov.* 8, 4: Men, it is to you I call,  
I appeal to every man.  
*Prov.* 8, 12: I am Wisdom, I bestow shrewdness  
and show the way to knowledge and prudence.  
*Prov.* 8, 30–31: Then (sc. at the creation) I was at his side each day,  
his darling and his delight,  
playing in his presence continually,  
playing on the earth when he had finished it,  
while my delight was in mankind.

The same may be observed in *Siracides* 24:

3 I (ἐγώ) came forth from the mouth of the most high...  
4 I (ἐγώ) put my tent on high.  
16 I (ἐγώ) stretched out my branches as a terebinth.  
17 I (ἐγώ) blossomed grace like a vine.

Generally speaking, many parallels with *Brontè* are to be found in the sapiential literature of the Hebrews, both in style and in thought.

So *Siracides* 33, 10–16 seems to observe that good and evil, life and death, piety and sin originate in God, because his works consist always of opposites. This may be relevant for *Brontè* 19, 15:

I, I am sinless and the root of sin is in me.

And also for 16, 11–13:

I am the one who is called Life, and you have called me Death.

Such paradoxes can also be found elsewhere in the Bible. For our purposes it may suffice to quote two passages:

<i>Is.</i> 45, 7	<i>Brontè</i> 21, 4
I form the light and create darkness,	<I am> the light <and the darkness>.
	<i>Brontè</i> 14, 31; 32
I make peace and create evil.	I am the war and the peace.
	Heraclitus ὁ θεὸς πόλεμος εἰρήνη
<i>Deut.</i> 32, 39	<i>Brontè</i> 16, 11–13
I put to death and I keep alive,	I am the one who is called Life and
I wound and I heal.	you have called me death.
	<I am the healer that heals, and I am
	the wounder that wounds>.

Even if these passages are the ultimate roots from which the views of *Brontè* have grown, it seems clear that the wisdom literature served as an intermediary.

In the mean time much had happened. God was no longer the lonely male of the desert, he had got a wife. This view is clearly enounced by the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, viz. that Sophia is the housewife of God, who lives with him (8, 3: συμβίωσιν θεοῦ ἔχουσα). Moreover, she is She who at the same time treats the wise man like a sweet mother, spoils her best boy, and receives her lover with the tenderness and unexpected wildness of a young mistress:

She will come out to meet him like a mother;  
 She will receive him like a young bride.  
 (*Siracides* 15, 2)

This is not different from what the poet Christian Morgenstern later wrote:

Du, trotz aller Abseitsrolle,  
 Göttin mit den Möglichkeiten  
 Allerletzten Tragischkeiten,  
 allerletzten Glücks und Leidens,  
 Mutter und Geliebte, beides.

Christians know their own tradition so poorly, and have such a distorted view of Israel's religion, that they cannot believe this to be

Jewish. And yet it is, or ought to be, inspired scripture and living faith of all Catholics. Moreover, it can be integrated easily into the existing system of orthodoxy, if Sophia is identified with the Holy Spirit. This, however, is already the case in the *Wisdom of Solomon* (1, 4–5; 1, 6; 7, 7; 7, 22; 9, 17).

In a sense this is an inner-Jewish process, that can be observed in Hebrew Scripture and announces the trinitarian convictions of Christianity. For a while, Old Testament scholars have been reluctant to admit that this process has been stimulated by the beliefs of Israel's surrounding nations, Egypt, Canaan, Mesopotamia. It is true that the existence of a consistent Sophia myth and an underlying Aryan myth of the Saved Saviour, which was supposed to have influenced the biblical notions, cannot be proved.

But recently some undisputable facts have been adduced, which refuted the fancies of the radicals and the scepticism of the conservatives. Attention was drawn to the Isis inscriptions in the temple of Memphis, Egypt, copies of which have been found at several places in the Hellenistic world. In this so-called aretology Isis reveals who she is and what her gifts are with an ever recurrent "egô eimi". Very careful and solid studies have established that this aretology has influenced both *Siracides* (3rd century B.C., Jerusalem) and the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* (1st century B.C., Alexandria), when they describe Wisdom.<sup>3</sup> This is important.

It had rightly been observed that "Ego eimi" is not correct Greek. *Odysseus* says:

εἰμὶ Ὀδυσσεὺς Λαερτιάδης  
(*Od.* 9, 19)

when he wants to introduce himself in the palace of Alkinoos. "Ego eimi", to introduce oneself, is not Greek, it rather is Oriental.

Eduard Schweizer drew attention to late Mandaean texts, which contained parallels with the Johannine Gospel: "I am the Life...I am the Kusta (= Truth)...I am the Light", etc.<sup>4</sup> He concluded that

<sup>3</sup> J. Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel. Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie bei Ben Sira* (Bonner Biblische Beiträge, 37), Bonn 1971. J.M. Reese, *Hellenistic Influence on the Book of Wisdom and its Consequences* (Analecta Biblica, 41), Rome 1970.

<sup>4</sup> E. Schweizer, *Ego Eimi. Die religionsgeschichtliche Herkunft und theologische Bedeutung der johanneischen Bildreden* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und des Neuen Testaments, 56), 2nd ed., Göttingen 1965, 37.

the Mandaean material was older than the Gospel of John and had influenced its author.

But now we can offer an alternative that is much less hypothetical and less vague. The origin of the “Ego eimi” style is to be found in the Egyptian Isis aretology. It was applied to Sophia by Jewish authors who were thoroughly familiar with Hellenistic culture. This happened either in the “I am” style (*Siracides* 24) or in the related “She it is who...” style (*Wisdom of Solomon* 10).

We know nowadays that these speculations about Wisdom were very important for the formulation of Christology. When Jesus says:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (*Matth.* 11, 28),

he speaks as the embodiment of divine Wisdom. When the Johannine Christ says: “I am” (the true vine, the good shepherd, etc.), he would seem to be in the same Wisdom tradition. We see that now clearer than before, because Sophia in the writing *Brontè* anticipates John in several respects:

I am the voice, whose sound is multiple  
and the *Logos*, whose appearance is numerous (14, 12–14);  
I am the one who is called *Life* (16, 11–12);  
I am the one who is called *Truth* (20, 7–8);  
I am the *Light* (20, 4).

It is quite clear that *Brontè* has been inspired by the Isis aretology. Nevertheless it may be a Jewish writing about Wisdom, like *Siracides* and the *Wisdom of Solomon*. It might have been written in the third century B.C., like *Siracides*, when Palestine was a part of Ptolemaic, Hellenistic Egypt and the national reaction of the Maccabees had not yet begun. On the other hand, the writing is so sophisticated that a later date, the first century B.C., and a Hellenistic milieu, Alexandria, all seem preferable. But there are, as far as I can see, no indications which lead us to suppose that the text, in its original form, is not Jewish and is not pre-Christian.

This would imply that John and the Mandaeans are mutually independent continuations of the same Wisdom tradition.

What does that mean?

In *Brontè* Sophia exclaims:

I am the Gnosis and the Ignorance.  
(14, 26–27)

This is understandable as an amplification of a view already expounded in *Proverbs* 8, 14, where Wisdom styles herself as “bina”, understanding:

Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom;  
*I am understanding*; I have strength.

The Mandaean bearer of revelation is called Manda d’Haijē, Gnosis of Life (= God) and this is very much in the trend of Jewish Wisdom, and so akin to John. But nothing obliges us to suppose that the Mandaean Manda d’Haijē is behind the Johannine Christ. We rather must suppose that the author of *John* was familiar with the idea contained in *Brontè*, that Sophia is the absolute consciousness of God, which reflects and reveals this hidden mystery.

This “Egyptian” solution seems much more plausible than the Mandaean hypothesis of Eduard Schweizer: it is more precise, firmer based upon chronological facts and explains more phenomena. We suppose that it might be right.

Then we see that *Brontè* is not only composed in the same way as the aretalogy, with its endless repetition of “Ego eimi”, but in some cases is clearly related in content:

Kyme-Memphis inscr. (Bergman 301) <sup>5</sup>	<i>Brontè</i> 13, 31–32
6. I am the wife and the sister of king Osiris (ἐγὼ εἰμι γυνὴ καὶ ἀδελφὴ Ὀσειρίδος βασιλέως).	I am the sister of my husband.
41. I am the lady of war (ἐγὼ εἰμι πολέμου κυρία).	14, 31–32 I am war and peace. 18, 24–25 I am peace, and war came into being because of me.

This relation of our text to Egypt and its religion encourages us to find some affinity between Sophia and the interpretation of Isis found in Plutarch. In his work *Isis and Osiris* he discusses among other things the problem of evil, mentions the solution of dualism, quotes Heraclitus’s dialectics of the resilient harmony of the universe, “like that of a lyre or bow”, and seems to find this monism in the figure of Isis. She, as a matter of fact, is concerned with “matter, which becomes everything:

<sup>5</sup> J. Bergman, *Ich bin Isis* (*Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis*, Hist. Relig., 3), Uppsala 1968.

light, darkness,  
 day, night,  
 fire, water,  
 life, death,  
 beginning, end" (*De Iside*, 77).

In ch. 38 Isis is thought to be the earth: "they hold and believe the earth to be the body of Isis, not all of it, but so much of it as the Nile covers, fertilizing it and uniting with it".<sup>6</sup> This is somewhat different from the interpretation given in ch. 77. In ch. 53 Isis is in fact the female principle of nature and is receptive of every form of generation. This would seem to be the same interpretation as in ch. 77.<sup>7</sup>

Some of the paradoxes of ch. 77 do occur in *Brontè*:

13, 16: for I am the first and the last;  
 16, 11–13: I am the one that is called Life and you have called me Death;  
 21, 4: I am the light and I am the darkness.

It is perhaps owing to this Egyptian, Isiac inspiration that the author of *Brontè* goes much further than any other Hebrew prophet or sage. For if Isaiah says that God creates light and darkness, peace and catastrophe, and if the Deuteronomist observes that God wounds and heals, it was reserved for *Brontè* to say that Wisdom *is* life and death, war and peace, good and evil.

On the whole, then, we may say that the Egyptian influence on *Brontè* is sure. It is here much clearer than in the *Siracides* or in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, and in this respect *Brontè* confirms the studies which established a special relationship of the last-mentioned texts with the Isis aretalogy. On the other hand, comparison of *Brontè* with these and other sapiential writings of the Hebrews makes it sufficiently clear that its author was a Jewish sage. Perhaps he alludes to this affinity between Isis, whose image is to be found in Egypt, and Wisdom, whose image is taboo among the iconoclastic Jews, in the following passage:

<sup>6</sup> See also below.

<sup>7</sup> Plutarch continues: "in accord with which she is called by Plato the 'gentle nurse' and the all receptive". According to Alexander of Lycopolis, *Adv. Man.*, Plato calls matter "all receiving" (*Timaëus* 51a, 7) and "mother" (*Tim.* 50d, 3) and "nurse" (*Tim.* 49a, 6). J. Mansveld has shown that Alexander reflects the earlier traditions of Alexandrian Middle Platonism; cf. P.W. van der Horst and J. Mansveld, "An Alexandrian Platonist against Dualism", *Theta Pi*, 3 (1974) 6–47. He may do so in this passage too. Then Plutarch possibly uses an Alexandrian source. This is relevant for *Brontè*, if this writing originates in Alexandria.



Why did you hate me, ye Greeks?  
 Because I am a barbarian (Jew) among the barbarians.  
 I am namely the Sophia of the Greeks and the Gnosis of the barbarians.  
 I am the crisis of the Greeks and the barbarians.  
 I am she whose image is numerous in Egypt  
 and who has no image among the barbarians (= Jews).  
 (16, 1–9)

## II

It is much more difficult to establish, if and to what extent Jewish speculations about Wisdom have been influenced by that other powerful deity of the Near East, the goddess of love and war, who was known under different names but for convenience's sake may be called here Ishtar.

Perhaps the writing *Brontê* may be of some help to solve this very controversial problem. In this book Wisdom says:

I am the first and the last,  
 I am the honoured one and the despised one,  
*I am the prostitute (πόρνη) and the saint (σεμνή),*  
 I am the woman and the virgin.  
 (13, 16–20)

I am the bride and the bridegroom.  
 (13, 27–28)

The last remark seems to suggest that Sophia is androgynous. The concept, however, that Sophia is a prostitute reminds us of the fact that quite often Ishtar in Sumerian and Akkadian texts is called “the prostitute”.<sup>8</sup>

From Sumer to Alexandria is a very long way, from 3000 B.C. until 100 B.C. is an exceedingly long period. And though we may admit that Astarte in the West-Semitic world had very much the same function as Ishtar in the East, the impact of this fertility deity upon Wisdom is still very controversial.

<sup>8</sup> My late colleague R. Frankena has given me some valuable references on this point, for instance *The Assyrian Dictionary*, 6, Chicago 1956, 101: “When I sit at the entrance of the tavern *I* (Ishtar) *am a loving prostitute*” (in a Ishtar hymn). The word *istaritu*, an epithet of Ishtar, means “hierodoule”, cf. W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (fasc. 5, 1963), 399. In Sumerian texts Inanna (Ishtar) is sometimes called *nugig- (gadišum)* or *istaritu* (Edzard, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 55, 104–105; Falkenstein, *ibid.*, 56, 119 ff.); B. Landsberger, *Materialien zum Sumerischen Lexikon*, IV, Rome 1956, p. 17 (78), translates *nu.gig* with “tabooed woman”.

In Sumer and Akkad the king at the New Year festival had conjugal relations with a sacred prostitute to ensure the fertility of the earth through sympathetic magic. To this rite the love of Ishtar and Tammuz furnished the myth. New fragments of their lovesong have been found, which sometimes show a word for word agreement with the biblical Song of Songs.<sup>9</sup>

I have not the slightest doubt that this book is a description of the love between the Lord and his bride, coined after the love of Tammuz and Ishtar. In this sense the *Song of Songs* is mythological and symbolic, because a myth is a story about gods. Those who say that the *Song of Songs* contains profane love songs and sings the praise of profanity and secularisation, are wrong in my view.

But was Chokma coined after Istar?

There does exist an Assyrian hymn (and a Babylonian doublet) in which Ishtar proclaims herself:

Ishtar, the goddess of the evening *am I*,  
Ishtar, the goddess of the morning *am I*.<sup>10</sup>

This has undoubtedly a formal similarity to the self-proclamation of Wisdom in *Proverbs* 8 and in *Brontè*.

Nevertheless Gershom Scholem flatly denies that Wisdom has a mythological background. She is a creature, not divine, an allegory, not a myth, hardly an aspect of God, not to speak of her being his wife.

Scholem cannot deny that in Philo God is the husband of Sophia. But he stresses the fact that Shechinah, a related character, nowhere shows the slightest trace of being female. Yet he ruefully admits that already in Talmudic times Jewish speech about Shechinah tended towards a gnostic hypostatisation: this is proved by the fact that the Mandaeans have inherited from the Jews the pluralistic use of Shechinah and speak about *Shechināthā*.<sup>11</sup>

Gerhard von Rad is more careful. He points to the Egyptian goddess Maat (Truth, Sense), the daughter of the sungod Atum, later identified with Isis, who is represented as embracing her father and kissed by him,

<sup>9</sup> S.N. Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite. Aspects of Faith, Myth and Ritual in Ancient Sumer*, Bloomington-London 1969, pp. 85–106.

<sup>10</sup> A. Ungnad, *Die Religion der Babylonier und Assyrer*, Jena 1921, 201.

<sup>11</sup> G. Scholem, "Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Kabbalistischen Konzeption der Schechinah", *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 12 (1952) 45–107.

after “he has put her before his nose”.<sup>12</sup> In the same way Wisdom is a child, a pet:

The Lord brought me forth as the beginning of his works,  
 before all else that he made, long ago.  
 Alone, I was fashioned in times long past,  
 at the beginning, long before earth itself.  
 When there was yet no ocean  
 no springs brimming with water,  
 Before the mountains were settled in their place,  
 long before the hills I was born,  
 when as yet he had made neither land nor lake  
 nor the first clod of earth.  
 When he set the heavens in their place I was there,  
 when he girdled the ocean with the horizon,  
 when he fixed the canopy of clouds overhead  
 and set the springs of ocean firm in their place,  
 when he prescribed its limits for the sea  
 and knit together earth’s foundations,  
 then I was at his side each day,  
 his darling and delight,  
 playing in his presence continually,  
 playing on the earth, when he had finished it,  
 while my delight was in mankind.  
 (*Proverbs* 8, 22–31)

But then Sophia is quite a person, visualized in a very imaginative and poetic way, a little princess playing in her father’s presence, sitting as it were on his knee. Certainly she is the child of God, not his creature.

When discussing the well-known passage in *Proverbs* 9 about the house Sophia built with the seven pillars of wisdom, von Rad observes that here Chokma is a sort of photographic negative (*Kontrastbild*), made by the teachers of wisdom to suppress rites like temple prostitution or sacred fornication that under the influence of Astarte’s cult had penetrated into Israel.<sup>13</sup>

Certainly the counterpart of Wisdom, “Mrs. Folly”, is painted with the colours of Astarte:

The Lady Stupidity is a flighty creature;  
 the simpleton, she cares for nothing.  
 She sits at the door of her house,

<sup>12</sup> G. von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1970, 199.

<sup>13</sup> G. von Rad, *o.c.*, 217.

on a seat on the highest part of the town,  
 to invite the passers-by indoors  
 as they hurry on their way;  
 "Come in, you simpletons", she says.  
 She says also to the fool,  
 "Stolen water is sweet  
 and bread got by stealth tastes good".  
 Little does she know that death lurks there,  
 that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.  
 (*Proverbs* 9, 13–18)

In *Brontè* Wisdom styles herself as the saint and the prostitute. Must we assume, then, that in certain liberal quarters in Israel Wisdom had preserved some of the ambivalence of her anti-type Astarte? The latter, as a matter of fact, was sophisticated, the goddess of love and of war, female and male, saintly and fornicating. Could it be that the author of *Proverbs* is polemicizing against some people in Israel, in the North or in the South, according to whom the spouse of God was both positive and negative, wise and wanton?

Until now parallels to this paradoxical concept could only be adduced from the *Zohar* and the *Kabbalah of Safed*.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, it seemed adventurous to suppose that Wisdom was once conceived in Israel as being a prostitute. But now that we have this view in *Brontè*, the whole problem should be taken up again. The more so, because we find a related concept in Mandaeanism. This too would seem to be a heritage of Judaism. *Rūhā d'Qudšā*, the Holy Ghost, the Mother of the Seven (planets), is a figure much related to Chokma, who builds her house with seven pillars. She is called the prostitute, *kadišta*, in two passages of the *Right Ginza*, 80, 31 and 494, 11. Equally Libat, the planet Venus or Ishtar, is called prostitute in the *Book of John*, 183, 13.

Is it thinkable that two religions, Cabbalism and Mandaeanism, both dependent upon Judaism, have developed spontaneously a very peculiar view on the same subject, without any relation with Ishtar? And yet *qadištu*, the devotee, is also an epitheton of Ishtar.<sup>15</sup> Or is it more probable that at a certain moment, under the influence of Astarte's cult, Wisdom was represented in its ambivalence?

<sup>14</sup> G. Scholem, *o.c.*, 102.

<sup>15</sup> W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Wörterbuch* (fasc. 10, 1971), 891, s.v. *qadištu(m)*, 4c (Ištar).

The Hebrew language shows some awareness of this ambiguity: *kadēšā*, prostitute, lit. devotee, is related to *kadoš*, holy.

We will never know with certainty whether the holy and fornicating Wisdom was already known to Israel when the book of *Proverbs* was written. It seems, however, rather sure that the writing *Brontè* is ultimately indebted to the cult of Astarte when it calls Wisdom a prostitute, as we shall see more clearly below. This prefigures at a very early date some very important developments which were to take place later on both in Cabbalism and in Mandaeanism. Sophia at a certain moment and in certain quarters was a very ambivalent figure.

For this reason we cannot believe that the shocking and coarse erotic language which Philo of Alexandria uses when speaking about Sophia, is the first outbreak of a mythological consciousness, which had been absent in Israel before the first century A.D. We consider this rather to be a revival and survival of older views, suppressed and repressed by the violence of prophets and scribes to such an extent that it seemed to have almost completely vanished.

According to Philo, Sophia is the *wife* of God. The sexual imagery is so drastic that the Alexandrian philosopher can even speak about the sperma of God, which is conceived by Sophia and from which she brings forth a son, the world, in birth pangs:

With his Knowledge God had union, not as man have it, and begat created being. And Knowledge, having received the divine seed, when her travail was consummated, bore the only beloved son who is apprehended by the senses, the world which we see. (*De ebrietate* 30)

On the other hand, Sophia is also the *daughter* of God, even a virginal daughter:

and it is Wisdom's name that the holy oracles proclaim by "Bethuel", a name meaning in our speech "Daughter of God"; yea, a true-born and ever-virgin daughter, who, by reason alike of her own modesty and of the glory of Him that begat her, hath obtained a nature free from every defiling touch. (*De fuga et inventione* 50)

These are good parallels for the concept of *Brontè*:

I am the woman and the virgin,  
I am the mother and the daughter.  
(13, 19–21)

This makes it more probable that *Brontè* was written in Alexandria, where Philo lived in the first century A.D. The comparison shows,

that such passages are not isolated outbreaks in one author, but reflect current views in certain Jewish quarters, which have been eliminated later on by the victorious Talmudists. So *Brontè* helps us to recover an unknown and forgotten aspect of Judaism. For what does it mean that Sophia is called by Philo “earth”?<sup>16</sup> Isis in a sense symbolizes the earth, her images sometimes are black.<sup>17</sup> Philo lived in exile, in the Diaspora, and had no roots in Palestinian soil, like the Jewish people after him for almost two millennia. Is not, as Scholem has suggested in his masterly article, this quest for the tender, female aspects of God at the same time an expression of the Jew’s aspiration to return to his origin and to finish the exile?

If we see the importance of such utterances for the Jewish existence, we clearly discern that these speculations are not exclusively due to the influence of Egyptian religion, but also are a valid expression of the existential situation of the Jewish people.

We are not amazed to hear in the last-quoted passage from Philo that Sophia is (also) male and therefore a father:

He called Bethuel Rebecca’s father. How...can Wisdom, the daughter of God, be rightly spoken of as a father? Is it because, while Wisdom’s name is feminine, her nature is manly? ...Let us, then, pay no heed to the discrepancy in the gender of the words, and say that the daughter of God, even Wisdom, is not only masculine but father, sowing and begetting in souls aptness to learn, discipline, knowledge, sound sense, good and laudable actions. (*De fuga et inventione* 51–52)

This passage more than any other makes it clear that Barbelo, the spouse of God in the *Apocryphon of John*, is none other than Sophia. And we understand that Barbelo (Sophia) is called Metro-pator, the mother who is at the same time father, and Holy Spirit (because Spirit and Sophia have been identified already in the *Wisdom of Solomon*), and also androgynous (53, 4–10).

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<sup>16</sup> *De Cherubim*, 49: “...that He is the father of all things, for He begat them, and the husband of Wisdom, dropping the seed of happiness for the race of mortals into good and virgin soil”.

<sup>17</sup> G. Vandebecq, *De Interpretatio Graeca van de Isisfiguur (Studia Hellenistica, 4)*, Louvain 1946, 98.

We can make these connections now without leaving any doubt. And we see clearly that it is in the context of these historical developments that the word of *Brontè*: “I am the bride and the bridegroom” should be understood.

We expect much greater opposition when we suggest that the view of these Alexandrian Jews that God has a wife has very archaic antecedents in the history of Israel.

The facts are clear: this is what the book *Wisdom of Solomon* says (8,3). There Sophia is said to live with God, and the word “symbiosis” clearly has matrimonial and sexual connotations. Philo is more than clear in the quoted passages. And *Brontè* means very much the same, when Sophia proclaims: “And my husband it is who engendered me” (13,29). This is only understandable in the perspective of the sapiential tradition, according to which Sophia was brought forth before all ages as the daughter of God (*Proverbs* 8) and is at the same time God’s spouse.

But our admittedly bold hypothesis is that the Alexandrians have not invented this spontaneously, but have preserved the more unorthodox view, not unknown in ancient Israel, namely that the Lord had a spouse called Anat Jahu.

In order to silence in advance all too understandable protests, we draw the attention of our readers to the rather unknown fact that Anath-Haijē continued to exist as a female being in the Mandaean pantheon. Haijē, Life, being a designation of God in the Mandaean religion, we may safely assume that she is none other than Anat Jahu.

The passage in the *Ginza* (Lidzbarski, 118, 3), where she is mentioned, is not perfectly clear. It is said there that Anath-Haijē was born together with Hibil (Abel) from the secret Adam and the “cloud of light”. But for our aim it is sufficient to prove that Anat Jahu was not completely suppressed but continued to exist even until the rise of the Mandaean religion.

Anat, Ashera and Astarte were the three great deities of the Phoenician, Canaanite religion long before the Israelite tribes entered the promised land. The three are different from each other and related at the same time.

Anat was considered to be the sister and the wife of Baal. She is consummating the Hieros Gamos with Baal. At the division of the kingdom of Israel the Northern part developed a syncretistic Jahwe cult at the instigation of Jeroboam, especially in the royal town Samaria. It was here, it seems, that at an unknown date the Canaanite deity was integrated into Jahwism under the name of Anat Jahu, the spouse, it

would seem, of the Lord. If we want to appreciate to what extent the cult of love, sex and fertility coloured the convictions of true believers, we have only to read the prophet *Hosea*, the only scriptural prophet from Northern Israel, who lived before the exile. There God prophesies that his people one day will call Him “my husband” and no longer “my Baal” (2,16). And one can suppose that in certain quarters Anat Jahu was supposed to say both.

In 721, when the Northern Kingdom came to its end, much of the syncretism seems to have been transferred to Bethel, in what later was to be called Samaria, where the cult continued to exist.

It was from there that the Jewish military colony at Jeb-Elephantine (near Assuan, Egypt) can have come. The correspondence of this community is to be dated about 410 B.C., when their sanctuary had been destroyed. It reveals that these people considered themselves to be Jews, but at the same time continued the syncretism that existed at Bethel and in the former Northern Kingdom. They venerated Jahu, a special form of the name of the Lord, but also Anat Jahu or Anat Bethel, whom one would guess to be the spouse of the Lord.<sup>18</sup> It is, however, equally possible that the veneration of Anat Jahu did exist in the Southern Kingdom too. This is suggested by such names of places as Anathot and Beth Anat, both in the South. Then the Elephantine papyri might reflect the atmosphere of popular religion in Juda and Benjamin, untouched by the criticism of the prophets. In any case there must have been a period in the religion of Israel in which, according to some, the Lord had a divine spouse, called Anat, with whom he was celebrating the Hieros Gamos. Already Jeremiah had complained that all the Jews, who dwell in the land of Egypt, have burned incense to the Queen of Heaven, a practice known even in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem (*Jeremiah* 44,17).

It is my hypothesis that the erotic flavour of the Alexandrian views on Sophia somehow is an echo of these quite unorthodox beliefs. After all, the Jews in Elephantine were living in Egypt. Why could not later Jews like the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* or Philo, or the author of *Brontè*, have continued their views rather than those of official Jerusalem? It gave them the opportunity to integrate the warm mother religiosity of their surroundings, the ever more prevalent cult of Isis, into their traditional faith.

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<sup>18</sup> Th.C. Vriezen, *De godsdienst van Israel*, Zeist 1963, 214.



The name Jahu, an abbreviation of the tetragrammaton, lies behind the Greek name Iao, under which so many Greek and Roman authors, not only writers of magical papyri, knew the Jewish God.<sup>19</sup> The same name Iao is now even found in a papyrus manuscript of the Septuagint, thus showing that it was current among the Jews of Egypt. And compound names like Io rabba (= Great Iao) in Mandaean suggest that it was known among the ancestors or forerunners of these Mesopotamian gnostics. In the same way the West-Semitic love goddess, integrated into the religion of Israel as Anat Jahu and still familiar to the Mandaeans as Anath Haijē, can have persisted among the Egyptian Jews as Sophia, the spouse of God.<sup>20</sup>

To confirm this view, I refer to a Jew of the first centuries of our era, namely Justinus the gnostic, who most probably lived in Egypt and was in fact a Christian Jew.

He quotes the words of *Hosea* 1, 2 in the wording of the Septuagint and understands this as alluding to a mythical figure called Edem, who “whored away from behind the Lord”:

And, he says, when the prophet is said “to take to himself a wife of harlotry, because the land will go a-whoring from the following of the Lord” (*Hos.* 1, 2), in these words, he says, the prophet clearly speaks the whole mystery, and is not heard because of the wickedness of Naas. (Hippolytus, *Ref.* V, 27, 4)

For Edem, the consort of Elohim, is also called Israel. (*Ibid.* V, 26, 36)

It has become clear only recently, who this Edem really is. She is depicted as having the same outward appearance as the Egyptian goddess Thermouthis, who at that time had been identified with Isis: a virgin above her groin, a viper below.<sup>21</sup> So it was established for the first time that such Jewish speculations on a gnostic goddess were somehow inspired by the concept of Isis.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ganschnietz, “Iao”, in Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie*, 9, 1916, 689–721.

<sup>20</sup> H. Schmid, “Altes Testament. Exilische und nachexilische Literatur”, in *Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*. Edited by U. Mann, Darmstadt 1973, 277: “Meines Erachtens ersetzte die Weisheit eine Göttin (wohl Aschera), die in heterodoxen Kreisen Jahwe zugeordnet wurde”.

<sup>21</sup> R. van den Broek, “The Shape of Edem according to Justin the Gnostic”, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 27 (1973) 35–45. Now also in Roelof van den Broek, *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity*, Leiden 1996, 131–141.

This connection becomes still more clear if we keep in mind that Edem in Hebrew means “earth”, as Justinus the Gnostic still knows quite well:

When the paradise had come into being out of the mutual good pleasure of Elohim and Edem, then the angels of Elohim took of the finest earth—that is, not of the animal part of Edem, but from the human and civilized regions of the earth above the groin—and made man.  
(Hippolytus, *Ref.* V, 26, 7)

Increase and multiply, and inherit the earth, i.e. Edem.  
(*Ibid.* V, 26, 9)

For he (*sc.* Elohim) aspired upwards, leaving Edem behind; being earth, she did not wish to follow her consort upwards.  
(*Ibid.* V, 26, 14)

It was, however, Isis who was interpreted by the Hellenistic authors as being earth. Among the many witnesses we quote Varro, who in *De lingua latina* V, 10, says:

principes dei caelum et *terra*, hi dei idem qui Aegypti Serapis et *Isis*.<sup>22</sup>

Firmicus Maternus, *De errore profanarum religionum* 2, 6, affirms the same: *Isin terram*. According to the Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry, Osiris is the river Nile, and Isis is the Egyptian land which is fertilized by it:

Ἴσις ἡ Αἰγυπτία ἐστὶν γῆ  
(Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* III, 11, 51).

If any doubt about the meaning of Edem still lingers in the mind of some scholars, this can now be dispelled: Edem means “earth” and resembles Isis.

But at the same time Edem is called Israel and is a symbol of the Jewish people like in *Hosea*:

This maiden is called “Edem” and “Israel”.  
(Hippolytus, *Ref.* V, 26, 2)

The myth of Justinus, however, describes the sacred marriage between Elohim and Edem, that is between God and Israel:

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Th. Hopfner, *Plutarch über Isis und Osiris*, II, Prague 1941, 176; J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*, University of Wales, 1970, 445–446.

When the father saw that half-woman Edem, since he was without fore-knowledge, he came to a desire for her. Now this father, he says, is called "Elohim". Edem was no less desirous for Elohim, and the desire brought them together in heart-felt love. (*Ibid.* V, 26, 2)

Edem is not intrinsically evil. It is only when her husband leaves her that she makes herself up in order to make him return to her. When he does not come back, she instructs her daughter, the goddess of love Aphrodite, to create fornication and separation among men:

Then Edem, knowing that she had been abandoned by Elohim, in her grief set her own angels beside her and adorned herself becomingly, in the hope that Elohim might fall into desire and come to her. But as Elohim, held fast by "the Good", came down no more to Edem, Edem commanded Babel (who is Aphrodite) to effect adulteries and divorces among men, in order that, just as she herself had been separated from Elohim, so also the spirit of Elohim might be pained and tormented by such separations, and suffer the same as the abandoned Edem. (*Ibid.* V, 26, 19–20)

Here the blasphemous view that Israel is at the same time a goddess and a prostitute is only thinly veiled.

It would seem that this can be explained in a satisfactory way by supposing that among the Jews of Egypt the view persisted that the Lord had a divine spouse who is at the same time the cause and symbol of all fornication.

Holy prostitution was unknown to the Egyptian religion. It is impossible that some Egyptian myth about Isis-Thermouthis as a prostitute inspired the myth of Edem-Israel. Isis was steadfast to her husband and for ever faithful. This leads us to suppose that Justinus used traditional material already existing before him, describing Israel as the divine and unfaithful spouse of the Lord, which he welded with the concept of Isis as earth and anguipede.

There is a decisive proof that at one time the West-Semitic love goddess, the Egyptian Isis and the Jewish Wisdom were all welded together. Epiphanius tells us that Isis has been prostituting herself for ten years in Tyrus.<sup>23</sup> Contacts between Isis and the Phoenician female

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<sup>23</sup> Epiphanius, *Ancoratus* 104; W. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, Göttingen 1907, 81. For the cult of Astarte in Tyrus see H. Gese, *Die Religionen Altsyriens (Die Religionen der Menschheit, 10, 2)*, Stuttgart 1970, 173.

deity were old and persisted in the Hellenistic period.<sup>24</sup> And yet this is the only passage known to me where it is said that Isis was a harlot. This is very unusual.

Therefore it is this specific legend which must be responsible for the report that the gnostic Helena had been prostituting herself in the same city of Tyrus. This, then, means that according to these gnostics it was Sophia herself who had done this, because Helena was another name of Sophia.

Irenaeus tells us the following story about Helena, the companion of Simon the Magician. She had come forth from God as his First Idea, the Mother of the All, through whom he conceived in the beginning to make angels and archangels, the celestial powers that rule this world. In the process, however, this divine being has been made captive by these Archons and migrated from one incarnation to another. It was she who was in Helen of Troy and who at last prostituted herself in a brothel in Tyrus.<sup>25</sup>

This is a curious mixture of Greek and Jewish lore. It was the Pythagoreans who taught that Helena, abducted by Paris and brought home by the Greeks, symbolized the soul, which was once on the moon (Helena-Selènè), now is living in exile in this world, and will return to her original abode.<sup>26</sup>

There is, however, no Greek evidence to show that Helena ever had a cosmogonic function. Therefore Helena in Simonian Gnosis really is a covername for Chokma. For Sophia's role in creation is mentioned in other Jewish sapiential sources too.

As a matter of fact we learn from another source that Helena, according to Simon the Magician, was none other than Sophia:

κυρίαν οὖσαν, ὡς παμμήτορα οὐσίαν καὶ σοφίαν  
(Pseudo-Clementine *Hom.* 2, 25, 2, Rehm 45)

Still more illuminating is a report of Epiphanius which has not received the attention it deserves. According to this, Simon identified

<sup>24</sup> Vandebeck, *o.c.*, 83–84; R.E. Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World*, London 1971, 69, 109, 131.

<sup>25</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 23, 2.

<sup>26</sup> M. Detienne, “La légende pythagoricienne d’Hélène”, *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions*, 152 (1957) 129–152.

Helena-Sophia with the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup> This equation, Sophia = Holy Spirit, of course, is found in many Christian Fathers; but it seems to have been known also to the Jewish Christians, for in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 16, 12, 1 it is said: ἡ δὲ σοφία, ἣ ὡσπερ ἰδίῳ πνεύματι αὐτὸς ἀεὶ συνέχαιρεν. But already in the *Wisdom of Solomon* this equation seems to have taken place. So it is a pre-Christian and Jewish view that Wisdom and the Holy Spirit are the same. The presuppositions of Simon or the Simonians are Jewish. Because they had preserved the older view that the female deity was a harlot, they came to the paradoxical conclusion that the Holy Spirit was a prostitute.

This proves that in this case the speculations about Sophia were influenced by views on Isis and the Phoenician deity, which had clearly penetrated Samaritan Judaism. But then thinkers like Philo, or the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, or the author of *Brontè* could very well be in the same position. If we hesitate to admit that *Brontè* is a Jewish writing of the first century B.C., we should remember that the same concept of the holy prostitute occurs in the Jewish Gnosis of Simon the Samaritan. With this difference that the Simonian Gnosis knew about the fall of Sophia, the tragic split within the deity, whereas nothing of the kind can be found in *Brontè*.

A later phase has been reached in the *Apocryphon of John*, which in its original form can be dated about 100 A.D. There we find a very lofty description of the Unknown God, who generates his “first Idea”, Barbelo. She has the features of Sophia, being virginal and mother, and Holy Spirit and androgynous. But the more negative aspects have been removed from this saintly figure and attributed to the last aeon of the Pleroma, Sophia. She, in fact, though her name is Wisdom, brings forth a being called Saklas (Aram.: the Fool) owing to her “prounikon”, her wantonness. She is even called Prounikos, the whore (*Iren.*, I, 29, 4: *quem et Sophiam et Prunicum vocant*).

It has been said very often and becomes ever more clear that the essential myth of the *Apocryphon of John* has nothing to do with Christianity, but could easily be Jewish. Should that turn out to be true, then Mandaeism is primarily and mainly the continuation of this Jewish Gnosticism. The “Mother” of the Mandaean faith is the divine Mother, complement of the Father. In her celestial character she has

<sup>27</sup> Eriphanius, *Panarion* 21, 2, 4: ἥτις ἐστὶν αὐτὴ ἡ καὶ Προϋνικός καὶ πνεῦμα ἅγιον καλουμένη.

several aspects and several names: she is the “Wellspring”, Mother of Life, spouse of the great principle of divine enlightenment; she is the archetype of the pure Bride and she appears too as Naṣirutha, the true Naṣorean faith.<sup>28</sup>

I am the Lord of Greatness (= God), father of the spiritual beings and the “Wellspring” is my spouse. Praised is the great ’zlat, for she is the wellspring of light, for she is my spouse, mine, your Father, the Lord of Greatness... Praised be the treasure of Life, mother of all worlds, she from whom the upper, middle and lower worlds emanated.<sup>29</sup>

This Mother is obviously the same as Barbelo, and Chokma, and ultimately, Anat Jahu. The more negative aspects of the terrible Great Mother have all been attributed to Ruha, the female devil, the Mother of the Seven (planets), who is constantly harrasing and tempting the soul, figuring out new strategies against the Life and its envoys, and trying to obstruct Mandaean rites.<sup>30</sup>

There are however quite a few passages in Mandaean literature, which prove that Ruha originally belonged to the world of light and spirit and still has preserved some sparks of her original nature.

In the *Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans* we read the following reaction of Ruha to the revelation of Life:

Spirit (*ruha*) lifted up her voice,  
 She cried aloud and said, “My Father, my Father,  
 Why didst thou create me? My God, my God,  
 My Allah, why hast thou set me afar off  
 And cut me off and left me in the depths of the earth  
 And in the nether glooms of darkness  
 So that I have no strength to rise up thither?”<sup>31</sup>

Ruha is perfectly aware that she is cut off from the realm of light and in exile in this world, like the gnostic Sophia and the Shechina of later Cabbalism.

It is only in the perspective of Jewish Wisdom speculations that this ambivalence can be understood. Ruha is called at the same time the Holy Spirit and the prostitute, just as Sophia in *Brontè* is the saint and the whore, just as in Simonian Gnosis Sophia is called the Holy Spirit

<sup>28</sup> Cf. E.S. Drower, *The Secret Adam*, Oxford 1960, 12.

<sup>29</sup> Id., *The Thousand and Twelve Questions*, Berlin 1960, 111.

<sup>30</sup> From now on I use material from a paper by a student, Jorunn Jacobsen.

<sup>31</sup> E.S. Drower, *The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans*, Leiden 1959, 74.

and the harlot. It would even seem that her dialectical nature goes back much further than *Brontè* or Simon the Magician or the *Apocryphon of John*, to the syncretism of Israel before, during and after the prophets. In any case we have in Mandaeism a parallel development as in later Cabbalism, where the Shechina is the divine Mother and yet shows demonic features.

Much has been written about the Iranian or Babylonian sources of Mandaeism. Only recently it has become clear that it preserved the elements of a Jewish Gnosticism. In the future, scholars must reckon with the fact that this Gnosticism in its turn originated in an Israelitic Gnosis and a Jewish Wisdom tradition which has left only a few traces in the Hebrew Bible.

This is exactly why Mandaeism is important for the study of Gnostic origins. Our present evidence for the existence of a Jewish Gnosis, the reports about the teaching of Simon the Magician, the *Apocryphon of John* and similar documents are all tinged with the terminology of Greek philosophy. So Helena in Simonian sources, Barbelo in the *Apocryphon of John*, is called "the First Idea", a Stoic and highly philosophical terminology.

This veneer of civilisation is completely absent from the wild and confused mythology of the Mandaean texts. This proves that Mandaeism does not go back directly to the Simonian lore or the "Sethian" Gnosis of the *Apocryphon of John*, but rather to its even more mythological Jewish prototype.

The Mandaean literature still reveals the signs of the revolt of the images on Jewish soil at the beginning of our era.

### III

These long preliminaries were necessary in order to discuss the simple fact that *Brontè* is quoted in the *Treatise without Title* and in the *Ginza*. Or, to put it more carefully: it would seem that a passage in the Coptic translation of the writing *Brontè, the Complete Mind* shows some similarities with a passage in a gnostic writing which was found at Nag Hammadi, in Codex II, without having a title and was therefore called by its editor *Treatise without Title* and is now mostly called *On the Origins of the World*, and with a passage in the *Book of Dinanukht*, a Mandaean writing contained in the so-called *Right Ginza*.

The passage in *Brontè* 13,2–44,1, can be translated literally as follows:

They sent me from the power. And I came to those who think of me  
and they found me among those who seek for me.  
Look at me, you who think of me. And you hearers, hear me. You who  
expect me, take me to you and do not persecute me before your eyes.  
And do not suffer that your voice hate me and your hearing. Do not be  
ignorant concerning me everywhere and at all times.  
Be careful, do not be ignorant concerning me.  
For I am the first and the end.  
I am the honoured one and the despised one.  
I am the harlot and the respectable.  
I am the woman and the virgin.  
I am the mother and the daughter.  
I am the members of my mother.  
I am the barren one and numerous are her children.  
I am the midwife and the one that does not bear.  
I am the consolation of my birth pangs.  
I am the bride and the bridegroom. And my husband it is who  
engendered me.  
I am the mother of my father and the sister of my husband and  
he is my offspring.  
I am the slave of him that prepared me. I am the mistress of my offspring.

It is not only the English that is clumsy here, the Coptic is too. The passage is almost incomprehensible.

The *Treatise without Title* is not very clear either. It was written in Coptic, before ± 350 A.D., the date of almost all the manuscripts of Nag Hammadi. In its present form the work contains some Christian retouching, but critics agree that its sources, though gnostic, are not Christian at all but rather Jewish. The original language must have been Greek. If the passage we are going to quote has been taken from *Brontè*, it certainly was not borrowed from its Coptic translation: the Coptic is too different. We must assume that it was the Greek text of *Brontè* which underlies the passage in the *Treatise without Title*.

In it a spiritual being, called Sophia-Zoè (= Eve) and also Eve, the first virgin, is said to have sung the following hymn after having brought Man forth:

I am the part of my mother and I am the mother,  
I am the woman, *I am* the virgin.  
I am pregnant,  
I am the physician.



I am the consoler of the birth pangs. My husband it is who engendered me and  
 I am his mother and he is my father and my master. He is my force.  
 What he wants, he says it. In a reasonable way I am becoming. But I  
 have brought forth a man that is lord. (114, 8–15)

These words, obscure as they are, may help us to restore the original wording of *Brontè*. Even the smallest details may be helpful.

Here we read: “*I am* (ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΥ) the virgin”. This may lead us to suppose that we should read in *Brontè*: “I am the woman and <*I am*> the virgin”. It is to be remembered that “Ego eimi” is not correct Greek at all and could be easily omitted by a Greek or Coptic scribe.

Moreover the parallelism, so popular among the Jews, was offensive to the Greek ear. Luke, the evangelist, has often broken away the parallelism he found in his source Q, for the obvious reason that he tried to write a correct and elegant Greek.<sup>32</sup>

This fact suggests that the author of *Brontè* built up his text with perfect parallelisms, repeating again and again his “Ego eimi”, somewhat like the *Ecclesiastes* in his third chapter ([there is] a time to... and [there is] a time not to...).

Moreover, the passage in the *Treatise without Title* seems to suggest that some of the original antitheses have got lost in the Coptic version of *Brontè*.

Sophia-Zoè says she is pregnant. This presupposes a certain climax in *Brontè*, where Sophia must have said that she was married, though unmarried, was pregnant and still barren, brought forth and yet did not engender.

Moreover, Sophia-Zoè says she is a physician. This presupposes the original parallelism:

I am the healer that heals  
 and I am the wounder that wounds.

As a matter of fact it is this thought that is to be found in the Mandaean writing. Knowing no Mandaean, I must translate here the German version of Lidzbarski:

Then came Ewath, the Holy Spirit, approached me in my Šhīnā and said to me:

<sup>32</sup> See, for instance, R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 7th ed., Göttingen 1967, 97.

Why are you lying there, Dīnānūkht?  
 Why did sleep please you?  
 I am the Life that was from old,  
 I am the Truth that was already before in the beginning.  
 I am the splendour, I am the Light,  
*I am death, I am Life,*  
 I am darkness, I am light,  
 I am error, I am truth,  
 I am destruction, I am construction,  
*I am the blow, I am the healing.*  
 (*Right Ginza*, 207)

It should be observed that Ewath, the Holy Spirit, is none other than Ruha, the evil spirit of the Mandaeans, who reveals herself here in her original ambivalence. Because it is unthinkable that two authors independently of each other are putting such extraordinary dialectical language into the mouth of the same divine person, Sophia or the Holy Spirit, we must assume that the Mandaean was inspired by the earlier writing *Brontè*, which must somehow have been familiar to him. Or perhaps we must say that this Mandaean writing here preserved the same thoroughly ungnostic complex of ideas which also underlies the Alexandrian writing.

In any case it is clear that the monistic version of Ewath is older and more primitive than certain dualistic formulations also to be found in Mandaean literature which we shall discuss presently. For her speech, like that of *Brontè*, echoes the words of *Deuteronomy* 32, 39:

I put to death and I keep alive,  
 I wound and I heal.

It was Tertullian who quoted these words against Marcion to refute the latter's dualism (*Adv. Marc.* IV, 1, 10: *Ego, inquit, percutiam, et ego sanabo; Ego, inquit, occidam, et ego vivificabo*). This seems to show that the quoted passages of Ewath and *Brontè* cannot possibly be gnostic, because the gnostics abhorred this view, and therefore could reflect views which preceded the rise of Gnosticism.

We may try then to restore tentatively the original text of *Brontè* in this passage:

I was sent from the Power (= God)  
 and I came to those who thought of me  
 and I was found by those who sought me.  
 Behold me, ye who thought of me,  
 and ye who wanted to hear me, listen to me,

and ye who expected me, accept me  
 and do not chase me away from before your eyes.  
 And let not your voice and your ear hate me.  
 Do not ignore me anywhere or at any time,  
 be careful, do not ignore me.

For

I am the first and <I am> the last,  
 I am the honoured one and <I am> the despised one,  
 I am the harlot and <I am> the saint,  
 I am the woman and <I am> the virgin,  
 I am the mother and <I am> the daughter,  
 I am part of my mother <and my mother is part of me>,  
 I am childless and <I am> having many children,  
 I am polyandrous <and I am> unmarried,  
 <I am pregnant and I am barren>,  
 I am the midwife <and I am the woman in travail>,  
 <I am the woman in childbed> and <I am> the one that bears not,  
 <I am the one that causes the birth pangs and> I am the consoler of  
 birth pangs,  
 <I am the physician that heals and I am the wounder that wounds>,  
 I am the bride and <I am> the bridegroom,  
 <I am the mother of my husband and my husband is my father,  
 I am the daughter of my husband and my husband is my son,  
 I am the sister of my husband and my husband is my brother>,  
 I am the slave of my father and I am the mistress of my son.

In *Brontè* and in the quoted passage of the *Right Ginza* the same dialectical concept is put into the mouth of Sophia-Ruha. The “I am” formula must be the original version.

In the same Mandaean writing we find a variation on the theme:

There is brightness, there is light,  
 There is death, there is life,  
 There is darkness, there is light,  
 There is wrong, there is right,  
 There is destruction, there is construction,  
 There is striking, there is healing.  
 (*Right Ginza* VI, Lidzbarski, 206, 23–26)<sup>33</sup>

This, of course, is not only different in style but also in concept. This is the principle of dualism, of an irreconcilable war between the fun-

<sup>33</sup> Similar formulations in 207, 13–16, and 210, 27–30.

damental opposites of reality. This is presented in a rather old section of the *Right Ginza* (Lidzbarski, 48,10 ff.).

There we are told that the Saviour Anos (= the biblical Enos, which means Man) comes to Jerusalem in the time of Pontius Pilate; he heals the sick, makes the blind see again, purifies the lepers, makes the lame walk and gives speech to the deaf and mute. With the force of the high king of light (= God) he even quickens the dead. So he wins faithful ones among the Jews and entrusts them with his revelation:

There is death and there is life,  
and there is darkness and there is light,  
and there is wrong and there is right.

He converts some Jews to the truth and destroys the city of Jerusalem.

As we shall see in the following pages, this passage may help us to discern that the rise of the Mandaean religion (and there is no Mandaeanism without dualism) can to a certain extent be explained as an inner Jewish process, namely as a reaction against the view that it is God who creates light and darkness, life and death, good and evil.

This view was especially characteristic of the Essenes who are responsible for the Dead Sea Scrolls. And then we see what little significance the fact has, that the Scrolls and the writings of the Mandaeans have some words in common. The section we are discussing is sometimes called the *Mandaean Book of the Lord of Greatness*, because that expression is found here to designate God. "Lord of Greatness, Mar d'Rabutha", is also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. But that does not mean that Mandaeanism originated among the Essenes. On the contrary, it is essentially a *reaction* against the monism of the Jewish religion, and so of the Essenes and of the Jewish Christians (who held that the devil was the left hand of God).

There is yet another text that should be discussed in this context. Among the Manichaean Psalms discovered at Medinet Madi in 1930 there is a section called the *Psalms of Thomas*. One of these contains a dialogue between a saviour, here called the Physician, and Hylè or Matter, designed as the Mother of this world.

Matter tells that she hears the cry of the Physician and implores him to heal her. The saviour refuses:

How shall I heal thee, o Matter, the ..., the Mother of this world. For  
*I am* the physician that heals  
but *thou art* the wounder that wounds,  
I am the.....  
but thou art the striker that lays low...

Thereupon Matter asks him to give her a single day, an hour only for her to wound (?) the sons of men so that they do not hope for what has been told (?) to them, that there is death, there is life, there is also the Land of Truth. The saviour answers:

I will not give thee a single day,  
I will not allow thee an hour only.  
(Allberry, 221)

In the foregoing we have seen that the opposites mentioned in this passage go back to *Deuteronomy* 32, 39.

It would seem that this Manichaean Psalm is a protest against this view that good and evil, wounding and healing come forth from the same source. It seems now reasonably certain that in the Jewish writing *Brontè Sophia* proclaimed:

I am the healer that heals  
and I am the wounder that wounds.

The lines in the *Psalm of Thomas* contradict this:

*I am* the healer that heals,  
but *thou art* the wounder that wounds.

What are the connections between *Brontè* and Mani?

In an excellent study Torgny Säve-Söderbergh has shown that the Manichaean Psalms agree both in style and in wording with certain Mandaean hymns, to such an extent that the former must depend upon the latter.<sup>34</sup> The arguments of the Swedish scholar are so numerous and so convincing that there must be some truth in it.

Writing in 1949 Säve-Söderbergh could not yet know that the hypothesis according to which Mani lived in his youth among the Mandaeans rested upon shaky foundations indeed. The Cologne Mani Codex proved this theory to be wrong. Mani did not live among the Mandaeans, but among the Elkesaites.<sup>35</sup> Presently we can better understand the existential situation from which his dualism sprang.

The Jewish Christians of the Pseudo-Clementine writings, who are certainly related to, if not identical with the Elkesaites, stressed the view that evil originated in God (*Hom.* 20, 3, 6). Among them circulated a

<sup>34</sup> T. Säve-Söderbergh, *Studies in the Coptic Manichaean Psalm-Book*, Uppsala 1949.

<sup>35</sup> A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, "Ein griechischer Mani-Codex", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie and Epigraphik*, 5 (1970) 97-216.

word of Jesus stressing that good and evil are destined to come, that is, are both willed by God:

The good is destined to come,  
blessed is he by whose hand it comes;  
the evil is destined to come,  
cursed is he through whom it comes.  
(Pseudo-Clementine *Hom.* 12, 29)

This same logion is quoted in a Manichaean source.<sup>36</sup> The simplest solution of this problem is to assume that Mani picked this word up in his youth and transmitted it to his followers.

This does not mean that he agreed with it. On the contrary, there was no view which Mani disliked more than the concept that evil originates in God. His dualism of spirit and matter, light and darkness, good and evil, was meant mainly to unburden God of any responsibility for the evil of this world of which he was so keenly aware.

So I can imagine the possibility that in the Psalm of Thomas which we discussed above Mani or one of his followers is reacting against the views also expressed in the writing *Brontè*, with which Mani may have become familiar in his Jewish Christian youth. If there are nevertheless enough parallels left between the Manichaean *Psalms of Thomas* and certain Mandaean hymns to assume a mutual dependence, the possibility must be envisaged that the latter were originally Jewish Christian hymns or were made after the pattern of these last-mentioned hymns.

Jewish Christians are said to have laid the foundations of Aramaic Christianity, they had an enormous impact even upon such typically Syrian movements as the Messalians. It is now absolutely certain, since the discovery of the Mani Codex, that they were active in Southern Babylonia.

The time seems to have come to investigate whether these Jewish Christians might have influenced the Mandaeans.

#### IV

Mandaean studies have made great progress recently, mainly owing to the exertions of K. Rudolph and R. Macuch. It is not so much that they discovered anything new. In fact not much of decisive importance

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<sup>36</sup> *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, II, edited by C.R.C. Allberry, Stuttgart 1938, 39.

has been discovered ever since Lidzbarski made known his arguments for a Jewish, pre-Christian origin of the Mandaean sect now living in Iraq and Iran. But Mandaean studies had become disreputable, because R. Reitzenstein, an amateur, had launched the wildest and most improbable hypotheses about the impact of the early Mandaeans upon primitive Christianity. Macuch and Rudolph made the study of Mandaeanism respectable again. The first wrote, together with Lady Drower, a dictionary on the language of the community which now numbers about 15,000 members.<sup>37</sup> The second published some excellent books on the history of this group, with that thoroughness one has learned to admire and to fear.<sup>38</sup> Ever since he writes summaries on the present state of the question, here and there and everywhere, and defends his positions ably and aggressively.

Macuch and Rudolph do not always agree, but their common views can be summarized in the following way. Discernible connections with John's Gospel, the *Odes of Solomon* and other gnostic writings make it *entirely* probable that Mandaean traditions reach back to the pre-Christian period. Their baptism, *mašbūtā* (from *šb'*, immerse), takes place only in "living" (= flowing) water, which bears the name *yardna* (Jordan). Certain traits of this rite go back to a pre-Christian period and have their origin in the lustral and baptismal practices of unorthodox Judaism, i.e. in the so-called baptismal sects once living in the neighbourhood of the Jordan in Palestine (cf. John the Baptist). Indications of their Western origin are to be found in the name *Jordan* for baptismal water, in the name *Nāšōrāyē* (Nazoraeans = Puritans) used by the Mandaeans to design themselves, and even by the name *Šubbi* (baptists), used by their Arabic neighbours to design the Mandaeans.

Their millennial history can be reconstructed with some certainty. The sect originated in Jerusalem. In several texts a tradition is preserved which tells of the persecution of the oldest Mandaeans by the Jews, as a consequence of which Jerusalem was destroyed. Thereupon

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<sup>37</sup> E.S. Drower and R. Macuch, *A Mandaic Dictionary*, Oxford 1963; R. Macuch, "Anfänge der Mandäer", in *Die Araber in der Alten Welt*. Edited by F. Altheim and R. Süchl, II, Berlin 1965, 76–190; Id., *Handbook of Classical and Modern Mandaic*, Berlin 1965.

<sup>38</sup> K. Rudolph, *Die Mandäer*, I and II (*Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, 74–75), Göttingen 1960, 1961; Id., *Theogonie, Kosmogonie und Anthropogonie in den mandäischen Schriften* (*Forschungen*, etc., 88), Göttingen 1965. A selection of Mandaic sources by Rudolph in W. Foerster, *Gnosis. A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, II. English translation edited by R.McL. Wilson, Oxford 1974.

they must have migrated to Transjordan, not far from the mountain Haurān. This because a genius Harān is mentioned in the Mandaean sources. From there they moved to Mesopotamia, more specifically to Harran (Carrhae, near Edessa) into the region between Harran and Nisibis, which was then Iranian territory. This took place in the first and second century A.D. under the reign of a Parthian king called Ardbān (Artabanus).

This part of the theory is based on a sort of “History of the Mandaean Movement”, called *Diwan of the Great Revelation, called Harran Gawaita (the Inner Harran)* published in 1953 by Lady E.S. Drower.<sup>39</sup> It begins, after a preamble and a lacuna, with the enigmatic words:

and Harran Gawaita receiveth him and that city in which there were Naṣoraeans, because there was no road for the Jewish rulers. Over them was king Ardban. And sixty thousand Naṣoraeans abandoned the sign of the Seven (planets) and entered the Median hills, a place where we were free from domination by all other races.

Later on they lived in the southern regions of Mesopotamia.<sup>40</sup>

All this is very edifying and impressive and could be believed, was also believed by me, until the Cologne Mani Codex was discovered.

According to this writing Mani lived from his fourth to his twenty-fifth year in a commune of Jewish Christians. The founder of their “law” is said to have been Elchasaïos. So they belonged to the well-known sect of the Elkesaites, founded by the prophet Elxai (± 110 A.D.) as a special sect of Jewish Christianity. They were baptists in the sense that after baptism they knew ritual ablutions.<sup>41</sup>

Now the *Fihrist* of the Arabic author An Nadim never had said anything else. It reported that already Mani’s father, Fattik, had joined the baptists (Muqtasila) who lived in the marshes of Southern Babylonia and whose chief is said to have been a certain al Ḥasīḥ (Elxai or Elchasaï).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> E.S. Drower, *The Haran Gawaita and the Baptism of Hibil Zūwa (Studi e Testi, 176)*, Città del Vaticano 1953.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Rudolph in *Gnosis*, II, 140.

<sup>41</sup> This completely new view on Manichaean origins is also to be found in F. Decret, *Mani et la tradition manichéenne*, Paris 1974, 48.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. G. Flügel, *Mani, seine Lehre und seine Schriften*, Leipzig 1862 (reprinted Osnabrück 1969), 133.



But some scholars of Mandaeism knew better. According to them, Mani grew up among Mandaeans, and upon this pillar their whole theory was built. Even after the announcement of the Mani Codex one of them goes on to speak about “the certain fact that Mani was rooted in Mandaeism”, in the same paper where he pussyfoots (in a footnote) past the recent discovery.<sup>43</sup> Such a procedure certainly does not enhance the confidence in the soundness of the methods applied.

It is, however, a fact that Mani grew up among Jewish Christians who are said to have baptized themselves every day. “Why do you baptize yourself again every day, after having been baptized once and for all and having been purified once and for all?”, asks Mani.<sup>44</sup> He also tells an anecdote about Sabbaios the Baptist (ὁ βαπτιστής).<sup>45</sup> In short this Jewish group must be identified with the “baptists” mentioned under different names (Maṣboteans, from *Maṣbūtā*, baptism; *Muqtasila*, Ṣabaeans). The Koran knows them under the name Ṣabaeans and grants them the privilege of being a “people of the book” and therefore tolerates them.

These Jewish Christians originated in Jerusalem, though their leaders, among whom James, the Brother of the Lord, was prominent, were all Galilaeans. There was a time when the church of Jerusalem consisted exclusively of “Hebrews”, Aramaic speaking Jews from the motherland, who were *all* zelotic practisants of the Law:

Then they said to Paul: “You see, brother, how many thousands of converts we have among the Jews, all of them staunch upholders of the Law.”  
(*Acts* 21, 20)

They were called Nazoraeans:

We have found this man (Paul) to be a perfect pest, a fomenter of discord among the Jews all over the world, a ringleader of the sect of the Nazoraeans.  
(*Acts* 24, 5)

Before the Jewish-Roman war they are said to have left Jerusalem and migrated to Transjordan, namely to the city of Pella, quite a long way from Jerusalem, but not so far from Gilead and Mount Haurān. At least that is what Eusebius tells in his *History of the Church* (III, 5, 3).

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<sup>43</sup> K. Rudolph, “Zum gegenwärtigen Stand der mandäischen Religionsgeschichte”, in *Gnosis und Neues Testament*. Edited by K.-W.-Tröger, Berlin 1973, 128.

<sup>44</sup> Henrichs-Koenen, *o.c.*, 141.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

There is also a tradition that they migrated to Harran, that is to Carrhae, a city in Northern Mesopotamia between Beroea (Aleppo) and Edessa (Urfa). It is told in the allegedly Jewish Christian source identified by Schlomo Pines in a work of Jabbar. It is true that the historical trustworthiness of this source is rather doubtful. But it does say that the original and authentic Jewish Christians left Jerusalem and migrated to Harran:

Thereupon they (sc. the Jewish Christians) fled the country. And the Romans wrote concerning them to their governors in the districts of Mosul and in the *Ḥazirat Al-'Arab*.<sup>46</sup>

In nearby Aleppo there lived, in the fourth century and possibly much earlier, Jewish Christians which called themselves Nazoraeans. They are sometimes distinguished from other groups as orthodox in their faith and judaizing in their way of life:

They confess that Jesus is the Christ, Son of God, but they live in every way according to the Law.  
(Epiphanius, *Anacephalaiōsis* 2, 29)<sup>47</sup>

They are said to live both in Coele Syria and in Transjordan:

This heresy of the Nazoraeans exists in Beroea in the neighbourhood of Coele Syria and the Decapolis in the region of Pella and in Basanitis in the so-called Kokaba (Chochabe in Hebrew). From there it took its beginning after the exodus from Jerusalem when all the disciples went to live in Pella because Christ had told them to leave Jerusalem and to go away since it would undergo a siege. Because of this advice they lived in Perea after having moved to that place, as I said.  
(Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29, 7,7–8)<sup>48</sup>

It is quite possible that there existed such a group, admitting at least in words the Sonship of Christ, tolerant of St Paul but not accepting his dialectics of Law and grace, the authentic successors of James and his fellows in Jerusalem. But it would seem that the name Nazoraeans remained the property of *all* Jewish adherents of Messiah Jesus. Why should they have given up their original name? Though this is not

<sup>46</sup> S. Pines, *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source (Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, II, 13)*, Jerusalem 1966, 15.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. A.F.J. Klijn and G.J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects (Supplements to *Novum Testamentum*, XXXVI)*, Leiden 1973, 161.

<sup>48</sup> Klijn-Reinink, *o.c.*, 173.

attested in so many words, we must assume that the Elkesaites too styled themselves as Nazoraeans. They had several doctrines of their own, like the doctrine of the True Prophet or the possibility of a second penance after baptism, accompanied by ritual ablutions. But they did remain Jewish Christians and must have preserved their original name, Nazoraeans. The name Christians was an Antiochene invention, given to a gentile Christian congregation (*Acts* 11, 26). The original name of the adherents of the new religion in Palestine was Nazoraeans.

If in the fourth century Jewish Christians in Transjordan and Aleppo called themselves Nazoraeans, it is rather obvious that they must have come to Syria from Palestine. As a matter of fact, it must have been they who gave their name to the Christians of Syria, who were always called and are still called Nazoraeans. This is one of the many arguments showing that Aramaic Christianity which centered in Edessa originated in Jewish Christian foundations. Tradition tells us that Christianity was brought to this last city by Addai, a Jewish Christian from Jerusalem. Some scholars tell us that this is nothing but a legend without any historical value. But the *Gospel of Thomas*, composed about 140 A.D. in Edessa or its surroundings and containing in part a Jewish Christian Gospel tradition, indicates that Christianity in these regions is of Palestinian origin.

The Mani Codex reveals that Jewish Christians were living in Southern Babylonia at the time of Mani (216–267 A.D.).

It is unthinkable that two different sects had the same names (Nazoraeans, baptists) and the same history (including an emigration from Transjordan to Harran) at the same time. The conclusion is inevitable: the present day Mandaean are indebted to the Elkesaites for the rites and legends and views they have in common with these Jewish Christians. This explains the Western elements undoubtedly contained in their tradition. This, of course, is only one half of the story: Elkesaitism may explain the ritualism of the Mandaeans, not their Gnosticism. But if the story is only half true, this half is true.

It was Schou Pedersen who to the best of my knowledge was the first to envisage this possibility in his book *Bidrag til en Analyse af de mandaeiske Skrifter*.<sup>49</sup> He pointed to, among other things, the belief of the Mandaeans, and of the Pseudo-Clementine writings, that the Jews had falsified the Law of Moses.

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<sup>49</sup> V. Schou Pedersen, *Bidrag til en Analyse af de mandaeiske Skrifter* (Theol. thesis Copenhagen 1940), Aarhus 1940.

The same hypothesis would be able to explain much more:

1. the name Nazoraeans of the Mandaeans;
2. their baptism and ablutions, dressed in their clothes. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30, 2, 5, says of the Jewish Christians: "But also if one meets somebody coming up from immersion in water and from washing, one returns to wash oneself in the same way again, several times and *fully clothed*";
3. their affirmation of sex and marriage, a characteristic feature of the Pseudo-Clementines and the Jewish Christian group which is behind them;
4. the precept of love for one's neighbour, not yet unrestricted but valid only for the members of the community; with this should be compared the Saying contained in the *Gospel of Thomas* (log. 25) but of Jewish Christian origin: "Jesus said: Love thy brother as thy soul, guard him as the apple of thine eye".
5. the concept of a transcendental Self, the image and counterpart of man. This belief existed already in the primitive community of Jerusalem (the angel of Peter in *Acts* 12, 15) and is attested in the *Gospel of Thomas* (log. 84). There is a difference of terminology here: the Mandaeans say *d'muta*, likeness, whereas the later Syrians speak about the *zaelaem*, the image, and the Jews say: *iqonin* (eikôn).<sup>50</sup> There is, however, not the slightest doubt that this terminology relates to *Genesis* 1, 26, according to which man is created after the image and the likeness of God;
6. the idea that there are two kings, one of this world, and one of the beyond. According to the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 20, 2, 1–2, the devil is the king of this world and Christ is the king of the next world:

Ps-Clem. *Hom.* 20, 2, 2

God established two kingdoms and two worlds. To the evil one he attributed the present world, because the latter is short and passing away quickly, but to the good one he promised the coming world, because that is great and eternal.

*Book of John* 13

Two kings came into being, two natures were created: a king of this world and a king beyond the world.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. G. Quispel, *Makarios, das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle* (Supplements to *Novum Testamentum*, XV), Leiden 1967.

There are still many more elements which could be enumerated here in order to establish that the Mandaeans are dependent upon Jewish Christian views. In this context the given examples may suffice.

This then does mean that it becomes extremely dangerous to use Mandaean material in order to reconstruct the prehistory of Christian baptism. For what seems to have been pre-Christian, can easily have been derived from Jewish Christianity.

## V

Macuch and Rudolph were absolutely right when they stressed the western elements in Mandaeanism and assumed that these were due to a migration of a group from Palestine to Mesopotamia. They went astray when they supposed that this also explained the gnostic character of the Mandaean religion. It is much more plausible to assume that it were the Elkesaites who grafted these typically West-Semitic components into another branch. And the Elkesaites were not in the least gnostics: their problem was sin after baptism and their solution was: ritual ablutions.<sup>51</sup>

As we see it, Mandaeanism is basically the survival of a Jewish Gnosticism such as that attested by the *Apocryphon of John* and other writings from Nag Hammadi. There must have existed in Southern Babylonia a group of Jewish Gnostics who knew the primitive myth of the *Apocryphon of John*.

According to the Mandaeans the King of Darkness has the head of a lion, the body of a dragon, the hands and feet of a monster. He is stupid, he knows neither the First nor the Last. He became arrogant and exalted and said: "Is there anyone who is greater than I?"<sup>52</sup>

According to the *Apocryphon of John* the demiurge Jaldabaoth is a dragon with a lion's face and his eyes were like burning lightning which flashes. One of his names is Saklas, which means "fool". In his ignorance he said: "I am God and there is no other God but me".<sup>53</sup>

The story of the creation of Adam by the demiurge and his seven planet spirits is also very similar in the *Apocryphon of John* and the Man-

<sup>51</sup> H. Lietzmann, *Geschichte der Alten Kirche*, 3rd ed., I, Berlin 1953, 193–197.

<sup>52</sup> *Right Ginza* XII, 6 (Lidzbarski, 277 ff.).

<sup>53</sup> S. Giversen, *Apocryphon Johannis* (*Acta Theologica Danica*, V), Copenhagen 1963, 67 (Nag Hammadi Codex II, 11, 20–21).

daean sources. The inability of the demiurge and his powers to make Adam stand on his feet is stressed by both.<sup>54</sup> There is no doubt that the underlying gnostic myth is essentially the same.

It was only after the discovery of the Jung Codex, with its strong Jewish influences, that people dared to speak about a Jewish Gnosticism.<sup>55</sup> One wonders why these connections were not made before, because they are so obvious. The fact is, however, that we were all too intimidated by current theories to dare see clearly. Even today one meets with stubborn opposition when one observes that there must have been Jewish Gnostics who distinguished between the Highest God and an inferior demiurge. And yet, at that time the *Timaeus* of Plato, which does teach a lower creator, the *dèmiourgos*, was the “livre de chevet” of every philosopher and theosophist. And yet, in most creation myths the world is made by one of the lower gods. This is obviously human, and Jews were human, also at that time of occupation by the Romans and national disaster.

The stories about the creation of the world of the Mandaeans are confused and contradictory, but very often Ptahil functions as the demiurge of the earthly world.<sup>56</sup> He is sometimes addressed as:

<sup>54</sup> K. Rudolph, “Ein Grundtyp gnostischer Urmensch-Adam-Spekulation”, *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, 9 (1957) 1–20.

<sup>55</sup> Ithamar Gruenwald has ably shown that both Gnosticism and Merkava-mysticism have their roots, or some of their roots, in Jewish apocalypticism; the latter is a reaction against the absolute scepticism of Job. Gnosticism and Merkava-mysticism have in common that they are an anti-eschatological reaction to apocalypticism; cf. his “Knowledge and Vision. Towards a clarification of two ‘gnostic’ concepts in the light of their alleged origins”, *Israel Oriental Studies*, 3 (1973) 93–107.

<sup>56</sup> The name of this subordinate deity has led to several hypotheses and most people could not help thinking of the god Ptah, who has a creative function in Egyptian mythology. This hunch is not improbable. There has been found a representation of Ptah in Lachish accompanied by an inscription in Proto-Canaanite letters which seems to suggest that Ptah was identified with El, the main God of their pantheon, by some Canaanites long before the invasion of Palestine by the Hebrews (F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, Cambridge [Mass.] 1974, 19). Now it is an astonishing fact that some very archaic names like Samašilam (Eternal Sun) have been preserved by some magical papyri and amulets dating from the first centuries of our era (cf. C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* [University of Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series, XLIX], Ann Arbor 1950). One of them is precisely Ptahil, Cf. K. Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, I, Leipzig-Berlin 1928, 28, 119: φθαήωλι, 106, 972: φθαήλ (note: “der mandäische Schöpfergott; Jac.” (= A. Jacobi). It is possible then that the name Ptahil preserves the very old identification of the Egyptian Ptah and the Canaanite El. One must suppose, however, that at the time of Mandaean origins this was just a magical very old word, like our Abracadabra (from Abraxas), rather meant to cover his real significance and meaning than revealing and making it understandable.

“O, you fool” (Sakla, cf. Saklas in the *Apocryphon of John*).<sup>57</sup> Sometimes he is called Gabriel:

He called Ptahil-Uthra,  
embraced him, and kissed him like a mighty one.  
He bestowed names on him,  
which are hidden and protected in their place.  
He gave him the name Gabriel, the Messenger...  
(*Right Ginza* III, Lidzbarski, 98)

“Gabriel the Messenger” is said to be the secret but authentic name of the Mandaean Demiurge. The creator is an angel.

The wonderful living fire shall be established and Gabriel  
the Messenger shall be called forth.  
He shall be called forth and commissioned,  
he will be sent hither.  
He shall be called forth and commissioned,  
he will call forth the world.  
He shall come and perform solidification  
and call forth the earth skilfully.  
He shall call forth the earth skilfully  
and stop up the springs of the turbid water.  
(*Right Ginza* III, Lidzbarski, 89)

An angel is the demiurge of this world.

Something similar we find in the *Treatise without Title* (100, 24–26 Böhlig, 43, 24): there it is said that the perfect call Jaldabaoth “Ariel”, because he has the face of a lion. This could only have been invented by a Jew, because Ariel means: “the lion of God”. We conclude then that in the *Treatise without Title* the demiurge is thought to be an angel.

A magical amulet of Antiquity contains on its obverse the names Jaldabaoth and Ariel in Greek letters, together with a lion-headed figure, and on its reverse the names of the seven demonic rulers of the universe.<sup>58</sup>

Scholem says: “That Yaldabaoth was also named Ariel was not known before the publication of this amulet. But Ariel as a lion-headed angel could be only a Jewish conception, Ariel meaning ‘the lion of God’. Ariel seems to have been, therefore, an older name of Yaldabaoth, and the sectarian who designed that amulet was still aware

<sup>57</sup> *Right Ginza* V, 1 (Lidzbarski, 174).

<sup>58</sup> Bonner, *o.c.*, 135–138.

of the original context and meaning of Ariel".<sup>59</sup> We add that only a Jew could conceive of the idea that an angel is to be identified as the creator of the world.

Ever since the Jews became theologically conscious, the crude anthropomorphisms of their concept of God have been toned down: the "Angel of the Lord" came to replace the Lord Himself.

There has even been a pre-Christian sect of the Magharians, according to whom the anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament are applied to the angel who created the world.<sup>60</sup> The same doctrine is attributed to Jewish Gnostics like Simon the Magician and Cerinthus. Ever since the beginning of my career I have been quoting the relevant passages, without at that moment seeing their connection with the Mandaean problem. When it becomes clear to one that Ptahil is an esoteric name for Gabriel, the Jewish angel, these pieces of information become still more precious. Qirqisāni, living in the first half of the 10th century, writes in his work *The Book of Lights and Watchtowers* about the pre-Christian Jewish sect of the Magharians:

Their interpretations of some passages in the Scriptures are altogether improbable and resemble foolish talk. Daūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammiṣ says in one of his books that the Sadducees ascribe corporeality to God and understand all the Scriptural descriptions of Him which imply anthropomorphism in their literal sense. The Magharians are said to be opposed to this, i.e., they do not profess anthropomorphism; yet they also do not take these descriptions (of God) out of their literal meaning, but assert instead that these descriptions refer to one of the angels namely to one who created the world. This (opinion) is similar to the view of Benjamin al-Nahāwandi which we shall explain later.<sup>61</sup>

Still more illuminating are the words of Shahrastāni, rightly called the first scholar of the history of religions. In his work *The Book of Religions and Sects*, which was composed in 1127, he writes:

But one sect of the Maqāriba claims that God spoke to the prophets, may peace be upon them, through the agency of an angel whom He had elected and whom He had given precedence over all creatures and had appointed viceroy over them. They say: "Every description of God in the

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<sup>59</sup> G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, New York 1960, 72.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. G. Quispel, *Gnostic Studies*, I, Istanbul 1974, 215.

<sup>61</sup> Translation by A.A. di Lella, *The Hebrew Text of Sirach*, The Hague 1966, 85; text in L. Nemoy, "Al-Qirqisāni's Account of the Jewish Sects and Christianity", *Hebrew Union College Annual* 7 (1930) 363 f.



Torah and in the rest of the Books is an account (given) on the authority of this angel. For otherwise it would not be possible to describe God in any way at all". They also say: "Furthermore, he who addressed Moses, may peace be upon him, is that angel. And God the exalted One is too exalted to address in human fashion mortal man...".<sup>62</sup>

If these reports are authentic, it would be clear that this Angel according to the Magharians was the Angel of the Lord, who addressed Moses in the Burning Bush. When we realize what the meaning and function of the Angel of the Lord in the religion of Israel was, we can understand that some Jews said that he had manifested himself to Moses. That is after all what *Exodus* says in the story of the Burning Bush.

They went further when they said it was this Angel who had given the Law. But even that is not remarkable in a Jewish milieu: Stephen and Paul, both Jews, said that the Law had been given by angels, not by God directly (*Acts* 7, 53; *Gal.* 3,19). The motivation seems to have been very much the same.

The view that is really new and unheard of is that according to the Magharians it was this Angel of the Lord who had created the world. But this is only consistent, if you want to keep the Bible intact and yet believe that God is beyond anthropomorphism.

There cannot be any reasonable doubt that the Mandaeans have preserved the Jewish notions of the Magharians. For it does not mean very much whether you name the demiurge Gabriel or Ariel. The important thing is that in both cases the creation of the world is attributed to a Jewish angel.

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We therefore conclude that at a certain moment Jewish Gnostics in Southern Babylonia, the heirs of the Magharians, thought it good to cover themselves with the name of the Nazoraean. They also accepted the baptism and the ritual ablutions characteristic of the Elkesaites. In this way they integrated many western elements into their body of doctrine, which have led some to suppose that they reflected a pre-Christian baptism and a pre-Christian Gnosticism.

Now it is quite possible that these Babylonian gnostics have preserved some archaic views of Jewish Gnosis, such as the concept of Wisdom as the spouse of God who was both attractive and demonic.

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<sup>62</sup> Translation by Di Lella, o.c., 87; text in W. Cureton (ed.), *Book of Religions and Philosophical Sects*, by Muhammad al-Sharastani, I (London 1892), 169.

The dualism of the sect, however, the complete demonisation of Ruha, the distinction between God as Life and Light on the one hand and the foolish demiurge on the other hand, can only be a later development.

Still later the merger with the Jewish Christians took place. It was only then that Mandaeanism, as a religion at the same time ritual and gnostic, came into being.

We do not know when that happened. The only certain thing is that no evidence from the first, second or third century is available. *Ignoramus et ignorabimus*.

If these ideas are right, the Mandaeans will be studied in the future without sensationalism but with understanding and sympathy. For they represent a very curious development of the Jewish religion, namely Jewish Gnosticism. As such they form an important interval between the religion of Israel and the mystical movements within Judaism during the second millennium of our era.



## CHAPTER THIRTY

### A JEWISH SOURCE OF MINUCIUS FELIX\*

The much disputed problem whether the *Octavius* was written before or after the *Apologeticum* remains as yet unsolved.<sup>1</sup> Our generation, which is more readily impressed by force and temperament than by equilibrium and refinement, will perhaps be inclined to prefer Tertullian, a genius, to Minucius, a compiler,<sup>2</sup> but such subjective matters of taste must not prejudice in this question, which should be dealt with *more geometrico*. The fact that very distinguished scholars, though using the same material, have come to opposite conclusions, seems to indicate that our present information is too scanty to allow of a final conclusion and that only a new point of view may bring some light.<sup>3</sup> Having found an argument in favour of the priority of Minucius which has made some impression upon me I submit the following results of my investigation to the criticism of scholars:

- 1) in my opinion some passages of the *Octavius* show that its author knew a Jewish apology, large parts of which are preserved in the so-called *pseudo-Clementina*;

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\* Previously published in *Vigiliae Christianae* 3 (1949) 113–122.

<sup>1</sup> Bertil Axelson's book: *Das Prioritätsproblem Tertullian-Minucius Felix*, Lund 1941, which defends the priority of Tertullian, was severely criticized by J.W.Ph. Borleffs in *Museum* 50, 1943, 216 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Axelson, *op. cit.*, 62: "Niemand bestreitet Tertullian, der genialen Persönlichkeit und dem gewaltigen Neuerer, seinen Platz unter den Allergrössten des lateinischen Schrifttums, wie wohl auch niemand leugnet, dass sich der Verfasser des kleinen Dialogs *Octavius* kaum über das Niveau des gewandten Formtalentes erhebt... auszugehen ist immerhin von der trivialen menschlichen Erfahrung, dass sich in der Regel das Talent an das Genie anlehnt, nicht umgekehrt." Against this it may be observed that Tertullian has plagiarized such a literary "talent" as Justinus Martyr in his third book against Marcion (G. Quispel, *De bronnen van Tertullianus' Adversus Marcionem*, Leiden 1943, 56 sqq.).

<sup>3</sup> J.W.Ph. Borleffs, *De Tertulliano et Minucio Felice*, Groningen 1925, refutes most of the arguments of R. Heinze (*Tertullians Apologeticum*, Berichte der K. sächs. Ges. der Wissenschaften 62, 1910, 279 sqq.), rightly stresses the importance of the preparatory study of the *Apologeticum*, the *Ad Nationes*, for the whole question, and advances some very strong arguments in favour of the priority of the *Octavius*.

- 2) when used as a *tertium comparationis* this Jewish book may reveal that Minucius rendered the text of his source faithfully, whereas Tertullian misunderstood the text of the *Octavius* in the corresponding passage of the *Ad Nationes*.

## I

Already H. Waitz, as long ago as 1902, indicated that one of the sources used by the author of the so-called pseudo-Clementinian “fundamental writing” (Grundschrift), from which both the *Homiliae* and the *Recognitiones* are derived, must have been a dialogue, which shows no trace of Christian influences.<sup>4</sup> The supposition made by Waitz was brilliantly elaborated by Werner Heintze, who was the first to discover that this source had been a Jewish apology and who even managed to determine with some probability the Greek sources of the Jewish author, apparently a man much interested in Greek philosophy.<sup>5</sup> Nor did it require subtle reasoning to prove this statement: in a long digression in the *Homiliae* (IV, 7–VI, 26) “Clement” tells us in a debate with the well-known Alexandrian enemy of the Jews, Apion, how he was converted to Judaism at Rome by a Jewish merchant (*Hom.* V, 28, 2); this statement is contradicted by the rest of the story, which shows how Clement, still a pagan, made the acquaintance of Barnabas at Alexandria and was afterwards baptized by St. Peter (*Hom.* I, 7 sqq.).

The results arrived at by Heintze were examined and accepted in a slightly modified form by Carl Schmidt.<sup>6</sup> After him Oscar Cullmann once again reviewed the whole question and summed up the results of the preceding scholars in an excellent study.<sup>7</sup> A re-examination of the facts alleged and the methods applied has led the author of the present article to the firm conviction that, if the principles of philological understanding are sound, the main result of this fine piece of research

<sup>4</sup> H. Waitz, *Die Pseudo-Clementinen, Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung*, Texte u. Untersuchungen, N.F. X, 4, Leipzig 1904, 252 and 256.

<sup>5</sup> W. Heintze, *Der Clemensroman und seine griechischen Quellen*, Texte und Untersuchungen, XL, 2, Leipzig 1914, 45 sqq.

<sup>6</sup> Carl Schmidt, *Studien zu den Pseudo-Clementinen*, Texte u. Untersuchungen, IV, 1, Leipzig 1930, 125–240.

<sup>7</sup> O. Cullmann, *Le problème littéraire et historique du roman Pseudo-Clémentin*, Paris 1930. Ed. Schwartz, *Zeitschrift f. Neutest. Wiss.*, 31, 1932, 151 sqq. is too sceptical.

work will remain unshaken and that the existence of the above-named Jewish apology has to be accepted as a historical fact.

Moreover, it is quite certain that apologetic writings of Hellenistic Jews exercised a considerable influence upon the Christian apologists of Greek speech. Nor can it be denied that another Latin apologist, Tertullian, did use the *Archaeologia* and the *Contra Apionem* of Flavius Josephus (*Apologeticum* 18). Therefore it is possible that such a Latin Christian author as Minucius borrowed from a Jewish source. To this may be added that Minucius himself declares that he is acquainted with Jewish literature. In a famous passage, which has been corrupted by some editors, he says according to the manuscript:

*scripta eorum relege vel si Romanis magis gaudes, ut transeamus veteres, Flavi Josephi vel Antonini Juliani de Judaeis require.*  
Oct. 33,4 Waltz. p. 58.

From the words quoted the conclusion may be drawn that Minucius knew the Greek translation of the Old Testament (*scripta eorum*), some older Jewish writings of the Hellenistic age such as, for instance, the letter of Aristeeas (*veteres transeamus*), and the works of two "Romans", Josephus and the otherwise unknown Julianus Antoninus, who obviously were two Jewish authors who possessed Roman citizenship.<sup>8</sup> Why, then, could he not have known the Jewish apology of which the pseudo-Clementinian writings have preserved considerable fragments?

In order to prove that Minucius actually used this book, a few passages of both works will be examined which show a striking similarity and are, as far as I know, not found elsewhere. Readers who keep in mind that the apologists all repeat the same arguments with that endless monotony which makes every kind of propaganda and advertising very boring and very efficient, will understand that such isolated parallels, even if relatively rare, possess some conclusive force.

a) The Latin dialogue contains a curious remark to the effect that the Egyptians considered a living man to be a god. It happens to be known that in this passage the author is hinting at a religious custom in

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<sup>8</sup> Hertlein, *Philologus*, N.F. 31 (1921) 174–193. It should be kept in mind that the author of the Jewish apology introduces himself as a Roman nobleman, who was converted to Judaism. Was his name in the original version not Clement, but Julianus Antoninus, with other words, was the Jewish apology a pseudepigraph which was supposed to have been written by the Roman Jew Julianus Antoninus?

the village of Anabis, where the inhabitants would choose one of their fellow-citizens to be a sort of Father Divine.<sup>9</sup> Neither in pagan nor in Christian, neither in Egyptian nor in Coptic literature have the numerous editors of the *Octavius* found anything that can be compared to this statement. Is it not very remarkable then that the same observation is found in the sixth book of the pseudo-Clementinian *Homiliae*?

Hom. VI, 23, Dressel p. 170, 15:

Ἀλλὰ καὶ παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἄνθρωπος ὡς θεὸς πρὸ τοῦ θανάτου προσκυνεῖται.

Oct. 29,4, Waltz. p. 50, 23:

Aegyptii sane hominem sibi quem colant eligunt: illum unum propitiant, illum de omnibus consulunt, illi victimas caedunt.

That Minucius said almost the same as the author of the *Homiliae* was observed by the admirable J.B. Cotelerius (see note 9). This statement comes in a new light now that it has been proved that the sixth book of the *Homiliae* was borrowed from the Jewish apology. Minucius must have got his information from some written source. It is found in the writing of one of his Jewish predecessors and nowhere else. The conclusion is obvious.

b) Retorting the well-known calumny of the pagans that the Christians adored the head of an ass, Octavius tries to prove that his adversaries, the Roman Caecilius and his countrymen, were themselves guilty of the crime of theriolatry. My learned opponents Heinze and Axelson rightly observe that the end of this passage must have been borrowed from some unknown source, from Greek apologists, as Heinze puts it.<sup>10</sup> But it is even more obvious that no known work of the *Christian* apologists can have been the source of Minucius. If the reader consults the passages which Waltzing has annotated *ad calcem paginae*, he will observe that some of the facts mentioned by Minucius are found elsewhere, but that after all these commonplace remarks on Egyptian

<sup>9</sup> Porphyrius, *de Abstinētia* 4, 9, De Roer, 325: ἄνθρωπον σέβουσιν κατὰ Ἄναβιν κώμην, ἐν ἧ καὶ τοῦτο θύεται καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν βομῶν τὰ ἱερεῖα καίεται.

The agreement of this passage with that of *Homiliae* V, 23 and *Octavius* 29, 4 was observed by Cotelerius, *Patres Apostolici*, Antverpiae 1698, 670 and J. de Roer, *Porphyrii de Abstinētia*, Trajecti ad Rhenum 1767, 325, but not by J.P. Waltzing, *Octavius*, Teubner Leipzig 1912, 50; cf. Th. Hopfner, *Fontes Historiae Religionis Aegyptiacae*, Bonnæ 1922, I, 467, 471–472; F. Zimmermann, *Die ägyptische Religion*, Paderborn 1912, 10; Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* III, 12; Theodoretus, *in Graecos* 3.

<sup>10</sup> R. Heinze, *op. cit.*, 368: "einige Details kennt Minucius gewiss aus älteren Apologeten"; Axelson, *op. cit.*, 78: "Notizen aus irgendeiner Schrift über ägyptischen Kult".

religion have very little in common with the passage of the *Octavius*.<sup>11</sup> As a matter of fact it must be admitted that the words of Minucius, taken as a whole, cannot be paralleled from Early Christian literature. Secondly, it is clear that the argument of Octavius is incredibly weak, because the Romans did not worship beasts, and that it would be far more suitable in a work in which an Egyptian was being addressed. In point of fact something of the kind is found in the book of Josephus against Apion, who was an Alexandrian. Answering to the charge brought forward by the latter that the Jews venerated the head of an ass, the famous Jewish author declares:

*ad haec igitur prius equidem dico, quoniam Aegyptius, vel si aliquid tale apud nos fuisset, nequaquam debuerat increpare, cum non sit deterior asinus ꝛ furonibus et hircis et aliis, quae sunt apud eos dii.*

Jos., *contra Apionem* 2, 81, Reinach p. 72.

Here the retort is more effective than in the *Octavius*. Nevertheless I do not believe for a moment that Minucius in the passage on theriolatry is borrowing from Josephus, because the two passages do not show the slightest verbal affinity.

But a speech of Peter in the *Homiliae* also contains some remarks on Egyptian religion and W. Heintze, who was not thinking of the passage in the *Octavius*, but was concerned only with the sources of the *pseudo-Clementina* has rightly observed that these remarks must have been taken from the Jewish apology, where they were directed against Apion the Egyptian.<sup>12</sup>

Let us compare the two passages:

*Hom. X* 16, Dressel p. 222, 11: τῶν Αἰγυπτίων οἱ ἀρχηγέται . . . παρέδοσαν βούν τὸν λεγόμενον Ἄπιν σέβειν, οἱ δὲ τράγον, οἱ δὲ αἴλουρον, οἱ δὲ ὄφιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ κρόμμυα καὶ γαστρῶν πνεύματα.

*Oct.* 28,8, Waltz. p. 49,17:

Nonne et Apin bovem cum Aegyptiis adoratis et pascitis? Nec eorum sacra damnatis instituta serpentibus, crocodillis, belvis ceteris et avibus et piscibus . . . Idem Aegyptii cum plerisque vobis non magis Isidem quam cepearum acrimonias metuunt, nec Serapidem magis quam strepitus per pudenda corporis expressos contremescunt.

<sup>11</sup> Waltzing, *op. cit.*, 49, cites: Cic., *de N.D.* I, 82; 101; III, 39; 47; Iuven., *Sat.* XV, 1–13; Plin., *Nat. Hist.* II, 7, 16; *Gell.* XX, 8, 7; Plut., *de Iside*, 253; Origen., *contra Cels.* V, 35 (p. 39, 2); Theoph., *ad Autol.* I, 10 (cf. Clem. Rom., *Hom.* X, 16). For Apis see E.J. Goodspeed, *Die ältesten Apologeten*, Göttingen 1914, 360.

<sup>12</sup> W. Heintze, *op. cit.*, 108.



Nowhere else are the same facts enumerated with the same details and in the same order.<sup>13</sup> The resemblance is so striking that already Gronovius annotated the passage of the *Homiliae* in the commentary he added to his edition of the *Octavius*.<sup>14</sup> In view of the fact that Minucius cannot be supposed to have known the *Homiliae* or even the “fundamental writing”, because these books were written somewhere in the Near East some time during the third century and were not known in the western part of the world before the time of Rufinus,<sup>15</sup> it must be concluded that the Roman is quoting from the lost Jewish apology. This shows that he was so dependent upon tradition that he even accepted an argument which in its original context was conclusive, but could not possibly be adapted to Roman circumstances.

c) All the arguments which Minucius advances in favour of the Christian belief in resurrection can be found in the works of his predecessors, the Greek apologists.<sup>16</sup> It is only when the author states that the wicked rather wish than believe that death is the end of all, that no parallel statement can be found in any other Christian writer. As common place people usually write common places, it would be rather astonishing, if Minucius had invented this remark. Now Cotelerius, the highly learned editor of the *pseudo-Clementina*, as long ago as 1672, noticed the striking parallelism with a passage of the *Recognitiones*<sup>17</sup> [sic]:

*Recogn.* V, 28, Gersdorf p. 143:

*Immortales* namque sunt etiam *impiorum* animae, quas ipsi fortasse *velint* pariter cum corporibus suis *finiri*.

*Oct.* 34, 12, Waltz. p. 61, 4:

Nec ignoro plerosque *conscientia meritorum nihil se esse post mortem magis optare* quam credere.

It is beyond question that the fifth book of the *Recognitiones*, from which the above quotation has been taken, as often as not echoes the Jewish apology. So we are not jumping to conclusions when we assume that the author of the “fundamental writing” and Minucius Felix used the same source.

<sup>13</sup> *ceparum acrimonias* = *cepas acres*; cf. Arnobius VII, 16, Marchesi 361, 18: *Quid ergo cessatis altaribus et haec dare rebusque his omnibus conilam superspergere bubulam et acrimonias intermiscere ceparum?*

<sup>14</sup> I. Gronovius, *Octavius*, Lugduni Batavorum 1709, 294.

<sup>15</sup> Carl Schmidt, *op. cit.*, 313.

<sup>16</sup> Waltzing, *op. cit.*, 59–61 *ad calcem paginae*.

<sup>17</sup> Cotelerius, *op. cit.*, 547.

These arguments will, I think, suffice to prove that the Roman apologist used the Jewish apology. It must be underlined that my enumeration is not exhaustive, because

- 1) some parallels may not have been noticed by me;
- 2) large parts of the Jewish apology, which may have influenced other passages of the *Octavius*, are lost;
- 3) all observations found in the two writings which can be indicated in other apologists as well, had to be eliminated;
- 4) I am not trying to stone poor Minucius with quotations from his source, but to give as much evidence as is needed to be conclusive: future editors of the *Octavius* may consult the *pseudo-Clementina* and discover still other correspondences.<sup>18</sup>

Against those who are obstinate enough to presume that no dependence of one apologist from another can be proved, because they all take their arguments from some anonymous stream of tradition, it may be observed that they will fail to discover any obvious parallel to the *Octavius* in those parts of the *Clementina* which are certainly not derived from the Jewish apology, though they often contain the traditional material common to all the apologists.

## II

Let us see now whether the result of the foregoing investigation gives us a clue to the problem of the priority of the *Octavius*. The passage on the *apotheosis* of a living man may serve as a starting point. Octavius has to answer to the pagan objection that the Christians venerate a crucified

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<sup>18</sup> For instance: *Hom.* VI, 18, Dr. 167, 9~*Oct.* 31, 3, W. 53, 18 (cf. *Apol.* IX, 16); *Hom.* IV, 18, Dr. 129, 11~*Oct.* 24, 8, W. 40, 12; *Hom.* X, 22, Dr. 226, 11 + 23, Dr. 227, 10~*Oct.* 22, 6, W. 35, 6; *Recogn.* VIII, 20 Gersd. 181~*Oct.* 19, 8, W. 28, 11; *Recogn.* IX, 30, Gersd. 216. a) cum Deus *iustus* sit et ipse fecerit *hominum naturam*, quomodo poterat fieri, ut ipse poneret *genesim* contrariam nobis, b) quae nos *cogeret ad peccatum et rursus ulcisceretur ipse peccatum*. c) Unde certum est, quod non aliam ob causam Deus sive in praesenti sive in futuro saeculo peccatorem *punit* nisi quia *scit* eum potuisse vincere sed neglexisse victoriam~*Oct.* 11, 6, W. 15, 6 + *Oct.* 36. 2, W. 62, 18: b) culpam tamen vel innocentiam *falo* tribui sententiis plurimorum... Igitur *iniquum iudicem* fingitis, qui *sortem in hominibus punit non voluntatem*. c) Qui cum possit *praescire* materiam, pro meritis et qualitatibus singulorum etiam *falo determinat*... a) Ita in nobis non *genitura* plectitur, sed *ingenii natura* punitur; *Recogn.* 1, 3, Gersd. 3~*Oct.* 14, 3, W. 18, 19; *Hom.* 1, 20, Dr. 42, 17~*Oct.* 16, 6, W. 21, 6.

man: he retorts that the Egyptians choose a man to be their god. The context shows that this custom is considered *to be still observed*. We have seen that this remark alludes to some local custom in the village of Anabis and was borrowed by the author from his Jewish source.

What does Tertullian say on this subject? When discussing the adoption of local gods throughout the Empire, he mentions the animal worship of the Egyptians, not to retort the objections of the pagans,—as Josephus, the author of the Jewish apology, and Minucius did in the traditional way—, but to show to what this freedom in the choice of divinities may lead. Then, with an ironical sneer very characteristic of the man, he adds: *Parum est, si etiam hominem consecraverunt* (*Ad Nationes* 11, 8, 9, Borleffs p. 52). “When compared with the adoration of animals, the consecration of a man, also once practised by them, is only a trifle”. He goes on to say that this man was Serapis, another name for Joseph, and he obviously thinks that this consecration took place only in the past. In the *Apologeticum* the author does not repeat the same argument.

Because the *Octavius* and the *Ad Nationes* are the only documents of Early Christian literature in which this Egyptian god-man is spoken of, it will need much perverted ingenuity to deny that the two passages have some correlation whatever this may be. Now it has already been supposed by Borleffs that Tertullian misunderstood the information concerning this god-man which he found in his source, the *Octavius*, because he wrongly connects it with some euhemeristic interpretation of Serapis with which it has nothing to do.<sup>19</sup> This hypothesis becomes much more probable now that Minucius’ source can be indicated. It may be said that Minucius faithfully transmitted the statement of the Jewish apology, which of course may have been more detailed than the brief remark in the *Homiliae*, whereas the words of Tertullian preserve only the faintest memory of the original concept.

Tertullian must have got his information from somewhere. As far as we know, it was not taken from pagan literature or from the Christian apologetic tradition. So he must have found it either in the Jewish apology or in the *Octavius*. But in the works of Tertullian I have not found any indication to the effect that he knew the Jewish work: until the contrary has been proved, it may be assumed that he did not. Thus judging from the present state of our knowledge, the conclusion is inevitable

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<sup>19</sup> Borleffs, *op. cit.*, 67.

that Tertullian in this passage depends on Minucius. For, if we suppose that Minucius used the *Ad Nationes* of Tertullian, with which he has only a few details in common, we can explain neither where Tertullian got his information from nor how Minucius can have understood his very confused statement so well that he suppressed Tertullian's false additions concerning Serapis and replaced Tertullian's brief hint by the more detailed and correct words of the Jewish apology. But if the *Octavius* has been one of the sources of the *Ad Nationes*, Tertullian must of needs have used this dialogue in the *Apologeticum* as well.

#### NOTE

This article has not persuaded anybody that Minucius preceded Tertullian, but at least one scholar noticed that it was important for reconstructing the history of the Jews in North Africa: H.Z. Hirschberg, *A History of the Jews in North Africa*, I, Leiden 1974.



CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE  
JUDAISM AND GNOSIS\*

I

My distinguished colleague, Robert McLachlan Wilson, in 1960 saved the honour of New Testament scholarship. After the publication of the *Gospel of Thomas*, quite a few professors considered this text as nothing but a Gnostic perversion of Holy Writ. But Wilson pointed out that the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, logion 65, in its Synoptic form had undergone some expansion, having been converted into an allegory in which the servants represent the prophets. The striking thing about the version in the *Gospel of Thomas*, as he saw it, only appears when we compare it with Dodd's reconstruction of the original story, in which we should have "a climactic series of three"—two slaves and then the son. This is, in fact, precisely what we find in the Gospel of Thomas. From this and similar observations Wilson concluded that perhaps we may speak of an element of genuine early tradition, possibly embodying a few authentic sayings, and of an element parallel to but perhaps independent of our Gospels.<sup>1</sup> Some twenty years later Antoine Guillaumont, carefully studying the Semitisms in the Gospel of Thomas, definitively proved that these views were correct.<sup>2</sup>

Wilson also stressed the importance of Judaism for Gnostic studies. He was not the first to derive Gnosticism from Judaism. That was the particular merit of the great Berlin Church historian August Neander (David Mendel, 1789–1850).<sup>3</sup> But the man from St Andrews was probably the first Anglo-Saxon, if not the first of all New Testament scholars, to reconsider this hypothesis after a long eclipse. In 1958 he

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\* Previously published in: *The New Testament and Gnosis: Studies in honour of Robert McL. Wilson*, eds. A.H.B. Logan and A.J.M. Wedderburn, Edinburgh 1983.

<sup>1</sup> R.McL. Wilson, *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas*, London 1960, 148.

<sup>2</sup> A. Guillaumont, "Les sémitismes dans l'Évangile selon Thomas. Essai de classement", in: *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions presented to Gilles Quispel on the occasion of his 65th birthday*, eds. R. van den Broek & M.J. Vermaseren, Leiden 1981, 190–204.

<sup>3</sup> A. Neander, *Genetische Entwicklung der vornehmsten gnostischen Systeme*, Berlin 1818.

expressed the opinion that certain elements of Gnosticism were purely Jewish, and that other, pagan elements were also derived from Diaspora Judaism, even though it was not the ultimate source. Thus Diaspora Judaism was established as a contributory source for the development of Gnosticism.<sup>4</sup> Already at the time he stressed the importance of Philo for Gnostic studies, not because one of the richest men of Alexandria was himself a Gnostic, but because he was developing, modifying, and generally carrying to a conclusion the work of those who had gone before. Philo did not simply concoct his theories and allegories for himself, but drew upon an existing tradition.<sup>5</sup> This is an excellent vantage-point for considering the special relationship between Gnosis and early Christianity.

Wilson never paid much attention to the rediscovery of Judaic Christianity by Erik Peterson and others, and he once frankly told me that he hesitated to follow me in this field. But this treacherous ground perhaps became a bit safer when a mutual friend of ours set the seal of his approval upon the bold hypotheses of H.J. Schoeps and Jean Cardinal Daniélou, and their followers.<sup>6</sup>

Marcel Simon starts his survey of the present state of the problem by observing that only a few decades ago nobody spoke about Jewish Christianity, whereas today there is barely a single scholar in the field of early Christian literature who does not feel he has to express his opinion on this question. The result is that the problem has been made extremely complicated. But there can be no doubt whatsoever that there did exist in Antiquity sects like Ebionites, Nazoreans and Elkesaites, which somehow more or less continued the tradition of the primitive congregation of Jerusalem (more especially, I add, the tradition of the "Hebrews" there, as opposed to the "Hellenists" like St Stephen and St Paul: Acts 6:1; 7:58).

Schoeps has been criticised for limiting his scope too much when he considered the Jewish Christians (Elkesaites) of the pseudo-Clementines as the exclusive and direct heirs of these "Hebrews" or "Nazoreans". Daniélou, on the other hand, was too sweeping when he identified as Jewish Christian every writing before 150 C.E. which expressed itself

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<sup>4</sup> R.McL. Wilson, *The Gnostic Problem: a Study of the Relations between Hellenistic Judaism and the Gnostic Heresy*, London 1958, 176.

<sup>5</sup> R.McL. Wilson, *The Gnostic Problem* (as in note 4), 35.

<sup>6</sup> M. Simon, "Réflexions sur le judéo-christianisme", in: *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*. Leiden 1975, 53–76.

in biblical categories (except the books of the New Testament). More recently, the old tradition that the Church in Edessa was founded by a missionary from Jerusalem has been confirmed by new discoveries: the *Gospel of Thomas*, written ca. 140 C.E. in Edessa, contains specific typically Jewish Christian material. Mesopotamia and Palestine should be considered as a special, Semitic unit. The shade of Christianity in vogue there should no longer be called Jewish Christian, but rather Judaic Christian. The chronological approach of Daniélou has to be replaced by the new geographical approach to the problem. Syrian Christianity, originally founded by Judaic Christians and always remaining Semitic in spirit, definitely represents the most important form, numerically and historically, of the great and diversified Jewish Christian family, says Simon.

On the other hand Simon sees the relationship between Jewish Christianity and Gnosticism as extremely problematic. This would be a deplorable situation for Wilson and myself, because one of the works we edited together, the *Apocryphon of James*, conveys the impression that it reflects the thoughts of a Valentinian in Egypt, who has grafted his Gnostic experiences onto the root and fatness of a Judaic Christian olive tree. How else could one explain the words: "become equal to the Son of the Holy Spirit" (6:20), an expression found only in the Armenian Adam books<sup>7</sup> and implicit in the view expressed by several Jewish Christian gospel fragments that the Holy Ghost is the mother of Jesus?

But if we take Judaic Christianity in its limited, geographical sense, then the special relationship between the Egyptian branch of Judaic Christianity and the Egyptian section of Valentinian Gnosis becomes somewhat more plausible. Alexandria is very near to Israel. Tradition tells us that a "Hebrew" man called Barnabas had come from Palestine to Alexandria to preach the Gospel there for the first time.<sup>8</sup> Who can prove that this is not true? Does not a deviant tradition, at variance with the Catholic myth of Mark coming from Rome to Egypt, deserve our very serious consideration? Other important, quite impressive arguments have impelled C.H. Roberts to assume that at an early date Christianity was introduced to Egypt directly from Palestine. Nobody has refuted or

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<sup>7</sup> In E. Preuschen, "Die apokryphen gnostischen Adamsschriften aus dem Armenischen übersetzt und untersucht", *Festgruss B. Stade*, Giessen 1900, 163–252.

<sup>8</sup> Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* I, 9:1, *GCS* 42, 27:16–19.



contradicted him.<sup>9</sup> Birger A. Pearson holds that the Melchizedek text (IX.1 of the Nag Hammadi Library) is a Judaic Christian apocalypse, with Gnostic interpolations, written in Egypt at the end of the second or the beginning of the third century.<sup>10</sup> All this seems to confirm that, at least in Egypt, Judaic Christianity did influence Gnosis. Simon was wrong in this respect.

These general considerations may serve as a background for a special case, viz. the concept of deification through vision in Philo of Alexandria and John the Evangelist. Philo never and nowhere cites Ezekiel 1:26; “and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of man (adam, *Anthrōpos*) above upon it”.

However, he must have been familiar with the exegesis of this verse, already to be found in the Old Testament (Isaiah 40:5), apocalyptic (Ethiopic Enoch 46:1) and the New Testament (Revelation 1:13: “one like unto the son of man”). This transpires from the fact that he calls the Logos: “Man after his [God’s] image (*Conf. Ling.* 146) or ‘Man of God’” (*Conf. Ling.* 41). This divine Adam is an idea, incorporeal, neither male nor female, by nature incorruptible (*De Opificio Mundi* 134).<sup>11</sup> It is possible that the last concept is already to be found in the Septuagint translation of Ezekiel: “*homoïōma hōs eidos anthrōpou*”. In that case, as so often, Philo would have used, developed and modified an already existing tradition. Philo cannot be original, when he speaks about the idea of man: though not present in Plato, it was current in Middle Platonism (cf. the summary of Middle Platonism in the (eclectic) Stoic Seneca, *Epistola* 65:7).

Philo seems also to be polemicizing against an already existing interpretation, when he stresses that God made male and female—“them, not him”—after his image (*Rer. Div. Her.* 164). There is a variant of Genesis 1:27, attested both by the pseudo-Clementines and some rabbis: “male and female created he him”.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, we find this same con-

<sup>9</sup> C.H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, London 1979.

<sup>10</sup> B.A. Pearson, *Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X, NHS* 15, Leiden 1981, 19–40, esp. 38.

<sup>11</sup> G. Quispel, “Ezekiel 1:26 in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosis”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1980) 1–13, esp. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* III, 54:2, *GCS* 42, 76:28f.: “For he who created man at first, made *him* male and female”. Cf. the parallels in the rabbinic literature: *b. Megillah* 9 a: “Male and female he created *him*. But they did not write: ‘created them’”; *Gn.r.* 8:1: “R. Jeremiah ben Leazar said: ‘When the Holy One, blessed be he, created Adam, he created him an *hermaphrodite (androgynous)*’”.

cept in the Alexandrian *Poimandres*, according to which the heavenly Man, Phōs, is androgynous, both Adam and Ζοῶ. Here the ideal Man of Ezekiel 1:26 is held to contain in him the two sexes.

It is certain anyhow that the mystical meditations on the first chapter of Ezekiel were known in Alexandria long before Philo. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praep. Ev.* IX, 29:5, a certain Alexandrian poet, called Ezekiel the Dramatist, who is held to have lived in the second century B.C.E., in a lost work described events connected with the Exodus of the Israelite people from Egypt. This is the oldest evidence for the existence of Throne Mysticism, which speculated on the existence of the *kabod* which, according to the prophet Ezekiel, appeared upon the throne of God in the form of a male being.<sup>13</sup> It is clear that by then the meditations on God's glory were already traditional, because the poet has transposed the scenery to another time and region and man. Among other things he related a dream vision which Moses, not Ezekiel the prophet, experienced, when he was wandering with the flocks of Jethro in the desert. In that dream Moses saw himself on the top of Mount Sinai, and there he beheld a high throne which reached to heaven. On the throne Man (Greek: *phōs*) was sitting, wearing a crown on his head, and holding a sceptre in his left hand. Of course this is not God himself, but his anthropomorphic revelation to man, his *kabod*, the *ʿdmūt k'mar'eh* 'adam, a figure of enormous dimensions as he is also described in later documents of Jewish mysticism such as the *Shi'ur Komah* (the measure of the body).

With his right hand this Man on the throne is said by the poet to have gestured to Moses to come forward and to approach the throne. Then follows this passage in Greek:

skēptron de moi paredōke kai eis thronon megan eipen kathēsthai: basilikon d'edōke moi diadēma kai autos ek thronōn chōrizetai.<sup>14</sup>

This I take to mean: "And he gave me a sceptre and ordered me to sit upon a great throne. And he gave me a royal crown and rose himself from his throne".

To understand this passage we must familiarize ourselves to some extent with Jewish mysticism. Its subject is the glory of God, his revelation and manifestation to man in human form, not God himself, who

<sup>13</sup> I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkawah Mysticism*, Leiden 1980, 128.

<sup>14</sup> In Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* IX, 29:5, *GCS* 43:1, 529:11–13.

remains hidden. It is the *kabod* who appears upon the throne in Ezekiel 1 and Isaiah 6. So it is here *ho phōs*, the *ḏmut k'mar'eh 'adam*, the god Man who appears upon the throne.

In the syncretistic milieu of Alexandria, under the pressure of a rational world civilisation, the Jewish people clung to its living God, but had to admit that ultimately he was an unknown God. Moreover, Saul Lieberman has definitively elucidated the meaning of the Metatron, the name of the angel of the Lord, also called Jaobel, a prominent figure in Jewish mysticism. Metatron, *metathronos* in Greek, is synonymous with *sunthronos* and indicates a dignitary who is allowed, not to share the same throne as the king, but to sit upon a throne next to the king (as Jesus is said to sit “at the right hand of God”). Thus Jaobel according to some mystical traditions was sitting in heaven and therefore he was called Metatron.<sup>15</sup>

The same situation seems to be presupposed in our fragment. The glory of God sitting upon his throne invites Moses to take his place upon a seat next to the royal throne proper. Thereupon, the poet continues, the hosts of the heavenly stars fall down upon their knees before him. They adore Moses as a *deuteros theos*. He has seen the *kabod* and has become divine. The vision of God achieves deification.

In this passage of Ezekiel the Dramatist certain Hellenistic features of later times are absent. Man, divine Man, the manifestation of God, is not yet androgynous, not yet an idea, but the vision of this God makes man divine.

Philo seems to have shared the latter view and to have been familiar with this tradition. He never interprets the glory in a personal way, like the poet Ezekiel before him, but thinks the glory indicates the powers, that is the angels or the archetypes of the divine world.<sup>16</sup> And yet he seems to presuppose the same concept as the Alexandrian poet Ezekiel the Dramatist. In his *Life of Moses* I, 158 he says:

Did he not enjoy an even greater partnership with the Father and Maker of the universe, being deemed worthy of the same title? For he was named god and king of the whole nation. And he was said to have entered into the darkness where God was, that is, into the formless and invisible and incorporeal archetypal essence of existing things, perceiving things invisible in mortal nature. And, like a well-executed painting,

<sup>15</sup> Gruenwald (see note 13), 235.

<sup>16</sup> *Spec. Leg.* I, 8, 45; see H.A. Wolfson, *Philo, Foundations of religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* II, Cambridge (Mass.) 1962<sup>3</sup>, 143.

openly presenting himself and his life, he set up an altogether beautiful and God-formed work as an example for those who are willing to imitate it. (Translation W.A. Weeks)

This is a commentary on Exodus 20:21: "And the people stood far off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness, where God was". A midrashic tradition attested in later times, but possibly already known to Philo, interpreted Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai as an ascent to heaven. Utilizing this tradition, Philo founds Moses' paradigmatic office on a mystic vision. Owing to that vision (of God) Moses has become a divine king himself.<sup>17</sup>

There are also Jewish documents with a Palestinian background which contain a description of the vision of the *kabod*. In the first place there is *Shiur Komah*, the measure of the body (of God), of unknown date but certainly containing very old traditions.<sup>18</sup> Then there is Elxai, who lived in the reign of Trajan, who had a vision of the Messiah as one having enormous dimensions, like the speculations contained in the *Shiur Komah*.<sup>19</sup> In the third place there is the revelation of John the Divine, written in or near Asia Minor, but reflecting Palestinian traditions.

The prophet John sees in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man (Revelation 1:13). The underlying idea is probably that Jesus, after his death and ascension, has become identified with the Son of Man, or Man, somewhat like Enoch in a famous passage of the Ethiopic Enoch, 71:14: "And he came to me (Enoch) and greeted me with his voice, and said unto me: 'Thou art the Son of Man'".

The expression *homoion huion anthrōpou* in Revelation 1:13 refers to the Septuagint translation *homoïōma hōs eidos anthrōpou* of Ezekiel 1:26 or even its Hebrew equivalent. This means that for John the prophet Jesus has become the *kabod*, the glory of God, which has the figure of Man, and is now the divine, celestial Man as opposed to the earthly, human Adam of Genesis.<sup>20</sup> We find the same curious expression *homoion huion anthrōpou* in Revelation 14:14. This is of course a reference to

<sup>17</sup> W.A. Meeks, "Moses as God and King", in: *Religions in Antiquity, Essays in Memory of Ervin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. J. Neusner, Cambridge (Mass.) 1962<sup>3</sup>, 143.

<sup>18</sup> Gruenwald (see note 13), 213–217.

<sup>19</sup> Hipp. Ref. IX, 13, GCS 26, 51; cf. G.G. Stroumsa, "Le couple de l'ange et de l'esprit", *RB* 88 (1981) 42–61. For Elxai see also in this volume "The Holy Spirit according to the Ancient Church", 739–748.

<sup>20</sup> *The Secret Book of Revelation*, New York 1979, 37.

Ezekiel 1:26. But this means that according to this passage also Jesus is the Man, the divine Man, with the golden crown, the royal *kabod*, who reaps the grapes of wrath.

This same figure is described in chapter 14:1: “and I looked, and lo, a lamb stood on Mount Zion”. There is no question that this is an allusion to the second coming; Jesus has returned from heaven as the Messiah-king to found his earthly, material, historical kingdom in Jerusalem. But the underlying idea is that this Messiah, at his second coming, is identical with the glory of God. John beholds and anticipates the coming of the glory of the Lord, embodied in Jesus. John the prophet had a vision of the *kabod*, like Moses on Mount Sinai.

There seems to have existed a tradition amongst the Israelites that the Messiah would manifest himself upon Mount Zion, a hill in the south of Jerusalem in the days of the Apocalypticist. This tradition has been preserved by the author of 4 Ezra (13:35): “ipse autem stabit super cacumen montis Sion”. For the author of 4 Ezra this Messiah seems to be identical with the divine Man of Ezekiel 1:26:

Et ecce de mari ventus exsurgebat ut conturbaret omnes fluctus eius. Et vidi et ecce convolabat *ille homo* cum nubibus caeli...et ecce congregabatur multitudo hominum...ut debellarent *hominem* qui ascenderat de mari. (13:2–5)

There is no doubt that this Man coming with the clouds of heaven is identical with the *iuvenis* on Mount Zion. Perhaps we may even think of *Shiur Komah*, when the enormous dimensions of this Messiah are stressed:

Ego Ezra vidi in Monte Sion turbam magnam, quam numerare non potui, et omnes canticis conlaudabant dominum. Et in medio eorum erat iuvenis statura caelus, eminentior omnibus illis, et singulis eorum capitibus imponebat coronas, et magis exaltabatur. (2:42–43)

Curiously enough, the counterpart of this view has been preserved by the Samaritans, who of course are nothing but the remnant of the Northern kingdom of Israel and as such a ramification of the religion of Israel:

Let the Taheb come safely and sacrifice a true offering before  
Bethel.  
Let the Taheb come safely, that the Lord may have pity and  
Reveal his favour, and that Israel may sacrifice in the evening.  
Let the Taheb come safely and separate the chosen from the

Rejected, and let this affliction be turned into relief!  
 The day which he made the fourteenth is the end  
 Of one affair and the beginning of another.<sup>21</sup>

The Messiah is supposed in this prayer to manifest himself in the evening of the 14th (15th) of Nisan, when Israel is to kill the Paschal lamb according to the commandment of Exodus 12:6b. This will happen on Mount Gerizim (= Bethel), where the Messiah will re-establish true worship and sacrifice. That day, the fourteenth of Nisan, is the end of servitude and the beginning of freedom, because the Messiah is the national liberator of Israel, who has come to scatter the enemies of Israel, who have provoked the ire of God.

## II

This passage shows that among the Samaritans also the view circulated that their Messiah would reveal himself upon their Holy Mountain. A comparison with 4 Ezra suggests that this tradition was intended to rival, and was probably patterned after, the Judaic tradition concerning the revelation of the Messiah on Mount Zion. This implies that this tradition is very old indeed and must go back to a time when the Samaritans, or at least those who gave them their special cult, had not yet been separated from the temple in Jerusalem.

Is this also true for their expectation that their Taheb would come on the eve of Easter? The Jews even today during the Paschal meal leave a chair empty for Elijah, considered to be the forerunner of the Messiah. This is only consistent, because they celebrate their delivery from Egypt and thus hope that a new, eschatological Moses, a national saviour, will redeem them so as to be "next year in Jerusalem". This tradition was also current in antiquity.<sup>22</sup> It was known to St Jerome:

Traditio Juaeorum est Christum media nocte venturum in similitudinem Aegypti temporis, quando pascha celebratum est. (*In Matt.* IV, 25:6; *C Chr. SL* 77, 237)

<sup>21</sup> J. Macdonald, *Memar Marqah. The Teaching of Marqah*, BZAW 84, Berlin 1963, 33.

<sup>22</sup> W. Huber, *Passa und Ostern. Untersuchungen zur Osterfeier der alten Kirche*, BZNW 35, Berlin 1969, 213.

John the prophet, the author of the Apocalypse, was probably a Jew from Jerusalem or at least from Palestine. It is plausible to suppose that he, too, like the Jews of his time, expected the coming of the Messiah, his manifestation on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, to happen during the feast of Pesach, the only difference being that for him it was the second coming.

But there are also positive indications that he did believe what he is supposed to have believed. According to a letter of Polycrates of Ephesus, the primate of the Asian Church during the second half of the second century C.E. (preserved by Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. Eccl.* V, 24:3), John used to celebrate Easter on the 14th of Nisan. John was a Quartodeciman, like the Christians of Asia in general: and this would explain much of his imagery, especially that of the Lamb, the Paschal Lamb, sacrificed on the 14th of Nisan, just before the meal began at the time that thousands of lambs were being slaughtered in the temple.

The Quartodecimans fasted during the time that their compatriots celebrated their festival, prayed for the conversion of Israel and celebrated the eucharist/*agapè* in the morning. This is the origin of Lent. During their service they read Exodus 12, the story of the delivery out of Egypt, and explained it in a sermon as a type of the delivery of Christ. The Samaritans and the Eastern Church still do so. They maintained the Johannine chronology of Christ's Passion on the 14th of Nisan, properly speaking the day before *Pesach*.<sup>23</sup> They preserved the eschatological aspects of the Jewish Pesach. In the *Epistula Apostolorum*, 17 (28) it is said that the eschatological coming of God (Christ) will take place on the days of the *Pascha*.<sup>24</sup>

The Aramaic Church, centred in Edessa, was originally also Quartodeciman and preserved these eschatological features. This transpires from the texts of the Manichaean *Bema* festival, which was patterned after the Quartodeciman Easter.<sup>25</sup> In one of the Psalms of the *Bema* it is said:

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<sup>23</sup> See G.A.M. Rouwhorst's Utrecht dissertation on this subject, mentioned in the Additional Notes.

<sup>24</sup> B. Lohse, *Das Passafest der Quartodecimaner*, *BFChTh.M* 54, Gütersloh 1953, 79; Huber (see note 22), 212.

<sup>25</sup> G.A.M. Rouwhorst, "Das manichäische Bema-fest und das Passafest der syrischen Christen", *Vigiliae Christianae* 35 (1981) 397–411.

Thou art glorious, blessed Bema,  
that shall reign unto the end of world,  
until Jesus shall come and sit upon it and judge all races.<sup>26</sup>

The *Bema* festival (and the Quartodeciman Pesach on which it is patterned) is an anticipation of the second coming of Jesus.

We may be confident that the Quartodeciman *Pascha* has its roots in the congregation of Jerusalem. In fact John the prophet must have been one of those Judaic Christians who brought this special Easter celebration from Jerusalem to Ephesus. This makes clear what Revelation 14 means to say: the prophet sees in his vision the second coming of Jesus as the embodiment of the *kabod* and as national liberator of the people of Israel on Mount Zion on the 14th of Nisan. We may compare this vision with what Ezekiel the Dramatist and Philo say about the vision of the *kabod* by Moses. What strikes us then is that John definitely does not say that this vision leads to the divinization of the visionary. Like the initiates of Merkabah mysticism, John maintains that man remains man even in the ecstasy of the highest vision, when the apocalypticist, or the mystic, beholds the glory of God.

### III

The author of the First Letter of John, whom I regard as identical with the last redactor of the Fourth Gospel, also alludes to an eschatological manifestation of the Messiah:

Dear brethren and sisters, we are already here and now the children of God, although it is not yet evident what will be our ultimate destiny. And yet we know for sure that, when the Messiah shall manifest himself, we shall be equal to him, because we shall behold him in his divine essence. (3:2, translation of the author)

The subject of *phanerōthē(i)* ("shall manifest himself") must be Christ, not God. This is suggested by 2:28; 3:5, 8 (*ephanerōthē ho huīos tou theou*) and Colossians 3:4 (*hotan ho Christos phanerōthē(i)*).<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the above mentioned parallels in Philo and Ezekiel the Dramatist seem to suggest that the true believers will see Christ, not God, whom nobody has ever seen.

<sup>26</sup> C.R.C. Allberry, *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, Stuttgart 1938, 25.

<sup>27</sup> H. Windisch & H. Preisker, *Die katholischen Briefe*, HNT 15, Tübingen 1951<sup>3</sup>, 120; R. Schnackenburg, *Die Johannesbriefe*, HThK 13:3, Freiburg 1953, 150 note 4.



The author of 1 John and the redactor of the Fourth Gospel has much in common with the Revelation of John the Divine. I think this is because he heavily edited a Judaic Christian Gospel which John the prophet, also author of Revelation, had written for the congregation of Ephesus. This hypothesis would explain many riddles of the Johannine writings, among others the fact that they proclaim a realized eschatology and at the same time have not eliminated the traces of a realistic eschatology (which cannot possibly be secondary).<sup>28</sup> The prophet John had described a vision of the second coming of the Messiah in Jerusalem. It would seem that this tradition was known to the author of 1 John.

The same man seems to have been familiar with the notion, so dear to John the prophet, that Jesus had identified himself with the *kabod*. He writes in the Fourth Gospel:

Isaiah said this because (or: when) he saw the glory and spoke about him (12:41)

This, of course, is an allusion to Isaiah 6, which was interpreted by the Jewish mystics as revealing that the prophet saw the *kabod* of the Lord, not the Lord himself. C.K. Barrett observes in his commentary:

the theophany as described in Isaiah 6 could well be termed the “glory of God”. But it is to be noted that in the Targum to Isaiah 6.5 Isaiah declares that he has not seen “the King, the Lord of hosts” but the “glory of the *shekinah* of the King of ages”...It is possible that John was aware of some such version, but not likely that it was the reference to the *shekinah* of God that made him say that Isaiah saw the glory of Christ and spoke of him.<sup>29</sup>

We have seen, however, that both Elxai and John the prophet had identified the Messiah with the glory. The redactor of the Fourth Gospel seems to transmit a genuine piece of Judaic Christian tradition.

What is new, however, in 1 John 3:2 as compared to Revelation 14, is the concept that the vision of the divine *kabod*, the coming of Jesus as the divine glory, makes the beholder divine, equal to the divine glory, Christ. This point was not lost on Wilhelm Bousset; in his *Kyrios Christos* he devotes a whole section to the “Vergöttung durch Gottes-

<sup>28</sup> “Qumran, John and Jewish Christianity”, in: *John and Qumran*, ed. J.H. Charlesworth, London 1972, 137–155, esp. 140.

<sup>29</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John*, London 1955, 360.

schau".<sup>30</sup> He considers 1 John 3:2 as mysticism of God, not of Christ, and relates this passage to the *epopteia* of the Hellenistic mysteries. As examples he quotes among other texts the *Logos Tέλειος* or the *Asclepius*, as reconstructed by R. Reitzenstein: "*chairomen hoti en sōmasin hēmas ontas apetheōsas tē(i) seauto thea(i)*".<sup>31</sup> All this is completely wrong. The subject of *panerōthē(i)* is Christ, not God. Nothing of the kind is to be found in the *Asclepius*. And yet Bousset was basically right.

Thanks to Nag Hammadi Codex VI,7, *The Prayer of Thanksgiving*, we now see clearly that the *Asclepius* does not refer at all to deifying vision and yet is a good parallel to 1 John, because it speaks about God as the source of love, like "John" (1 John 4:9), and about the seed of God, again like "John" (1 John 3:9). I give here a personal and a paraphrasing translation of the whole passage:

We give thanks to thee  
 (with) the whole soul and the (whole) heart lifted up to thee,  
 O unutterable Name, honoured with the word "God" and blessed  
 with the word "Father",  
 Because to every single one and to the universe  
 (thou showest) benevolence, *eros* and *love* and  
 whatever may be known that is sweet and simple  
 by giving us intuition,  
 reasoning,  
 gnosis:  
 intuition that we may see thee inwardly,  
 reason that we may discourse about thee,  
 gnosis that we may experience thee.  
 We rejoice because thou hast enlightened us by this gnosis,  
 We rejoice because thou hast revealed thyself to us,  
 We rejoice because *thou hast made us divine* through  
 Thy gnosis even though we were still in the body.  
 This alone is grace in man's relation to thee, that he knows thee.  
 We know thee, spiritual light.  
 Life of our life.  
 We know thee, Womb full of sperma,  
 We know thee, Womb pregnant by the phallus of the Father,  
 We know thee, eternal generation of the begetting Father.

<sup>30</sup> W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos. Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus*, FRLANT 21, Göttingen 1921<sup>2</sup>, 165ff.

<sup>31</sup> R. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*, Berlin 1920<sup>2</sup>, 137ff.

(Thus having) worshipped thy goodness,  
 we pray thee only this: we want to be preserved in the gnosis of thee,  
 and the one and only guarantee for this is  
 not to fall away from this way of Life.<sup>32</sup> (63, 33–65, 2)

It has been hotly debated whether or not *sperma* in 1 John 3:9 really did mean “male seed”. But this passage in the Asclepius, combined with certain parallels in Philo (*Ebr.* 30: “*paradexamenē ta tou theou spermata*”), in Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses* I, 1:1: “*probalesthai ton Buthon . . . kathaper sperma tēn probolēn tautēn . . . katathestai hōs en mētra(i) . . . Sigēs*”) and the *Apocryphon of John* (Giversen 53:5: “she became the womb (*mētra*) of the All”), do show that this crude imagery could easily be used by a Hellenistic Jew like the author of 1 John.

#### IV

In the second place the concept that the vision of a god makes divine is not just Hellenistic, but Hellenic and Greek and mysteriosophic. We have in 1 John 3:2 a classic example of the influence of Eleusis on primitive Christianity.

In the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* the initiated who has beheld the mysteries of Mother and Daughter is said to participate in eternal life:

Blessed is he among men on earth, who has beheld this. Never will he who has not been initiated into these ceremonies, who has had no part in them, share in such things. He will be as a dead man in sultry darkness. (480–482)

Pindar proclaims:

Blessed is he who, after beholding this, enters upon the way beneath the earth: he knows the end of life and its beginning given by Zeus.  
 (Greek in Bowra, fragm. 121, *ap.* Clemens Alex., *Strom.* III, 17:2.)

And cf. Sophocles:

Thrice blessed are those among men who, after beholding these rites, go down to Hades. Only for them is there life; all the rest will suffer an evil lot.  
 (Greek in Pearson III, fragm. 837)

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<sup>32</sup> J.-P. Mahé, *Hermès en Haute-Égypte. Les textes Hermétiques de Nag Hammadi et leurs parallèles Grecs et Latins*, I, *BCNH* 3, Québec 1978, 161–165.

The hermetic writings are also familiar with this concept:

It is impossible, dear child, that the soul should be deified because it has beheld the beauty of the Good, if it still is contained within the human body.

(CH X,6; Nock & Festugière I, 116)

He who has not ignored these things can know God and even, if I may say so, he can become an eyewitness of God and behold him and he can become blessed, because he has seen him.

(CH, fragm. 6:18; Nock & Festugière III, 39.)

The so-called Mithras Liturgy is a reading mystery, aiming at immortality through inner vision. The process of immortalization is accomplished through a heavenly journey, climaxed by a face-to-face vision of the divinity, in which the divinity of the god appears to confer immortality:

O Lord, I pass away and am born again, I die and grow and grow;  
I am passing on, released to death, while being born from a life—  
giving birth,—

as you have established,

as you have decreed,

as you have initiated the mystery.

(718–723; translation by the author)<sup>33</sup>

The most instructive example for our purpose is a *lekanomanteia*, a revelation of the deity through dish-divination:

I have been united with your holy form,  
I received strength from your holy name,  
I participated in an emanation of your goodness,  
Lord, god of gods, ruler, divinity;  
Thereupon come down, having acquired the divine nature  
Owing to the *lekanomanteia* as an eyewitness and the oracle  
Of the dead, which is achieved by this mystical union.

(P.G.M. IV, 216–221; Preisendanz I, 78)

The divinity has manifested itself to the magician in the water of the dish after he has invoked the god and impelled him to come down. The magician looks upon the water and sees there the reflection of the Lord: this vision grants participation in the divine nature (*isotheou*

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<sup>33</sup> A.F. Segal, "Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition", in: *Studies in Gnosticism* (see note 2), 349–375, esp. 354.

*phuseōs kurieusas*).<sup>34</sup> The mirror is a powerful symbol in Greek and Gnostic religion.<sup>35</sup> Narcissus is said to have jumped into the water and to have embraced his own shadow and to have drowned when he looked into the water and saw his own shadow and fell in love with it. This is not true, the myth says, for he was not suffocated in the water, but he contemplated in the transient and passing nature of his material body, his own shadow, namely the body, which is the basest *eidōlon* of the real soul. Desiring to embrace this, he became enamoured with life according to that shadow. Therefore he drowned and suffocated his real soul and a real and true life. Therefore the proverb says: “Fear your own shadow”. This story teaches you to fear the inclination to prize inferior things as the highest, because that leads man to the loss of his soul and the annihilation of the true Gnosis of ultimate reality. Thus the *Anonymous de incredibilibus IX*.<sup>36</sup>

Nonnus of Panopolis tells us that the young Dionysus was looking in a mirror when the Titans tore him into pieces:

He did not long occupy the throne of Zeus; Hera in her anger moved the Titans, their faces whitened with plaster, to kill him with infernal knives while he was looking at his reflection in the mirror. (VI, 169–173)<sup>37</sup>

The Orphics applied this myth to the dispersion of the world soul through the whole creation, according to Proclus, in *Tim.* 33B. Olympiodorus, in his *Commentary on the Phaedo*, B 128, combines this Orphic exegesis with the myth of Narcissus:

*Ho gar Dionusos, hote to eidōlon enethēke tō(i) esoptō(i),  
toutō(i) ephespeto, kai houtōs eis to pan emeristhē.*

Jean Pépin<sup>38</sup> thinks that this combination of the myth of Zagreus and that of Narcissus goes back to Plotinus, who says that the human souls, having seen their reflection (*eidōla*) as Dionysus in the mirror, have hastened to come down from above (*Enn.* IV, 3:12). Pépin has reason to suppose that this applies to the world soul, too. If that is correct, Plotinus

<sup>34</sup> For hydromantic see Varro *apud* Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, VII, 35.

<sup>35</sup> A. Delatte, *La catoptromancie grèque et ses dérivés*, Liège/Paris 1932, 36.

<sup>36</sup> A. Westermann, *Mythographoi*, Brunswick 1834, 323.

<sup>37</sup> C. Kerényi, *Dionysos, Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life*, Princeton 1976, 267; J. Pépin, “Plotin et le miroir de Dionysos, *Enn.* IV, 3 [27], 12, 1–2”, *RIPH* 24 (1970), 304–320.

<sup>38</sup> “Plotin” (see note 37), 315.

must have used a tradition older than the *Poimandres* (Alexandria, first centuries C.E.), because we find the same motif there.

In chapter 14 of the *Poimandres* this theme has been applied to the Anthropos, that is the *kabod* of Ezekiel 1:26: he looks through the harmony of the seven spheres and shows his form. Nature becomes enamoured of him when she sees his reflection in the water and his shadow on the earth. Thereupon Man falls into the irrational body and becomes man. He becomes enamoured of his reflection in the water and wants to dwell there, like Narcissus.

Saturninus of Antioch has preserved a more primitive version of the myth of the divine Anthropos. According to him, the *kabod* does not fall (a combination of Ezekiel 1 with Genesis 3), but only reveals himself and thus shows the prototype for the body of the first man, earthly Adam:

The world and everything in it came into being from seven angels, and man also was a creation of angels. When a shining image appeared from the supreme power above, which they were not able to detain, he says, because it immediately sped back upwards, they exhorted one another, saying: "Let us make a man after the image and likeness".<sup>39</sup>

Moreover Man, in this case the idea of Man in the Platonic sense of the word, is not yet identified with Dionysus-Narcissus, the world soul in exile, an Alexandrian tradition. This proves that the concept is older than Saturninus and to be located, not in Alexandria, but elsewhere in the Diaspora, probably in Antioch. This myth was adopted by other Gnostics in innumerable variations.<sup>40</sup>

This myth is typically Jewish: God reveals himself as the celestial Adam (Ezekiel 1:26), angels create man, a Jewish heresy (Justin, *Dial.* 62:2), the body of man is the image of God, the underlying idea that you can see God only through a glass darkly is expressed with a pun on *r<sup>e</sup>'i* (mirror) and *r<sup>a</sup>'eh* (vision).<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Translation by R.Mcl. Wilson in W. Foerster, *Gnosis* I, Oxford 1972, 41.

<sup>40</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, I, 29:2 (*Ap. John*); I, 30:3 (*Gnostici*); *Act. Archelai* 67:8 (*Gnostici* according to Basilides); *R. Ginza* V, 1 (Lidzbarski, 174); Plotinus, *Enn.* II, 9:10 (*Gnostici*); *Pistis Sophia* 27 (Schmidt-Till, 23); *Gos. Eg.* 57 (Robinson, 201); *Hyp. Arch.* 87 (Robinson, 153); *Orig. World* 98 (Robinson, 162); *Great Pow.* 38 (Robinson 285); *Paraph. Shem* 12 (Robinson, 314, 315, 319); *Zost.* 10 (Robinson, 372); 27 (Robinson, 376); *Trim. Prot.* 36 (Robinson, 462).

<sup>41</sup> M. Mislen, "Significations rituelles et symboliques du miroir" in: *Perennitas, studi in onore di Angelo Brelich*, Rome [1980], 327-341.

For our purpose it is important that this myth does not say at all that vision makes the beholder divine. From this we conclude that the author of 1 John is *not* influenced by Gnosticism when he says that in the end the believer, who sees the manifestation of Christ in his divine essence, will be divine like him. “John” and the Gnostics are familiar with the mysticism of the *kabod*. But their concepts of the consequences of this vision for human existence are very different indeed. So even if Gnosticism in Alexandria and elsewhere in the Diaspora might have preceded John, it has not influenced him in his basic tenet, deification through incarnation and vision. This is Hellenic, not Gnostic.

## V

With this in mind we turn to the various general studies on the relation of Judaism and Gnosticism.

As long as Protestant scholars from Reuchlin to Knorr von Rosenroth (author of *Morgenglanz der Ewigkeit*) studied Kabbalah and identified Jesus with the Adam of Ezekiel 1, the parallels between Gnosticism and Jewish mysticism could not be left unnoticed.<sup>42</sup> The Enlightenment totally obscured this very real insight. Ever since R. Reitzenstein’s “Iranian myth of the Redeemed Redeemer”, it was generally held that there once existed a pre-Christian, Aryan myth which could explain Jewish apocalyptic and Wisdom literature, the New Testament (especially John and Paul), Mandaeism, Gnosticism and Manichaeism (*excusez du peu*). As Geo Widengren put it: “Que cette hypothèse soit fausse tout le monde le pense aujourd’hui”.<sup>43</sup>

As a matter of fact, this alleged and non-existent Iranian myth is the greatest hoax of the twentieth century. It is of no avail if this scandal is disguised by excluding the experts from the edition of newly discovered texts and by launching hypotheses about a pre-Christian Saviour long before the relevant writings have been translated and published. When the *Gospel of Truth* was discovered (1952), with its elaborate speculations on Jesus as the Name of God, it became all of a sudden clear that these views had a Jewish background. When the *Cologne Mani*

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<sup>42</sup> G. Scholem, *Die Erforschung der Kabbala von Reuchlin bis zur Gegenwart*, Pforzheim 1969.

<sup>43</sup> G. Widengren, “Les origines du gnosticisme et l’histoire des religions”, in: *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo: Colloquio di Messina 13-18 Aprile 1966*, ed. U. Bianchi, *SHR* 12, Leiden 1967, 28-60, esp. 35.

*Codex* was published, it was established that Mani had lived in a community of Elkesaites (that is, Jewish Christians) from when he was four until he was twenty five.<sup>44</sup> It was then established that Manichaeism, by reaction, had originated in a Jewish milieu. Notwithstanding these undeniable facts some scholars still refuse to admit that Gnosticism is of Jewish origin.

K.W. Tröger thinks that Gnosticism has social origins, being one of the many possible responses to the challenge presented by the social conditions of late Antiquity. According to him, Gnosticism cannot be of Jewish origin, because it is characterized by an anti-Jewish animus; it rejects the world (as no Greek or Jew or Catholic would do), and is aware of a rift between the demiurge of this world and the God beyond god.<sup>45</sup>

This is difficult to understand. Catholicism, Mandaeanism and Manichaeism are against the “Jews”, though these religious currents are of Jewish origin themselves. Could not Gnosticism be in the same situation? Alan Segal has definitively shown that certain Jewish *minim*, that is Jewish religious thinkers later considered as unorthodox, used to distinguish between the Unknown God and his viceregent, the angel of the Lord, his anthropomorphic representative, who, according to some, even created the world: this is certainly the idea underlying the Gnostic split within the Deity.<sup>46</sup> Would it not be wiser to say that apocalyptic, Wisdom schools, Samaritanism, Essenism, Zealotism, Sadduceeism, *minim*, the Hellenistic monotheism of Philo and his fellows, magic, syncretism, Merkabah mysticism, Mandaeanism, Manichaeism, Christianity and Gnosticism were all varieties of the religion of the Jews in Palestine (ca. 500,000 Jews) and the Diaspora (ca. 10,000,000 Jews) as it gradually developed from the small group of Pharisees after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.?

Birger Pearson gave a more sophisticated answer to the same vexed problem.<sup>47</sup> According, to him, the Gnostic attitude to Judaism is one of

<sup>44</sup> A. Henrichs & L. Koenen, “Ein griechischer Mani-Codex”, *ZPE* 5, 1970, 97–216; *ibid.* 19, 1975, 1–85; *ibid.* 32, 1978, 87–200; *ibid.* 44, 1981, 201–318; cf. A. Henrichs, “The Cologne Mani Codex Reconsidered”, *HSCP* 83, 1979, 339–367.

<sup>45</sup> K.W. Tröger, “The Attitude of the Gnostic Religion towards Judaism as viewed in a Variety of Perspectives”, in: *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi (Québec, 22–25 août 1978)*, ed. B. Barc, *BCNH Ét.* 1, Québec/Louvain 1981, 86–98.

<sup>46</sup> A.F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*, *SJLA* 25, Leiden 1977.

<sup>47</sup> B.A. Pearson, “Jewish Elements in Gnosticism and the Development of Gnostic



alienation and revolt; this, taken together with the massive utilization of Jewish traditions, can only be explained as a movement of the Jews. Even their own self-definition turns out to be based to some extent on Jewish tradition. The best possible group of texts to show this consists of those tractates in the Nag Hammadi Library which have been labelled as “Sethian”-Gnostic (the *Apocryphon of John* and other texts, which have been Christianized slightly, or not at all). They originate in a specific group of “Sethians” which considered the so-called Old Testament son of Adam, Seth, as a redeemer; there really were, over a period of time, religious communities of “Sethian”-Gnostics, as the Church Fathers affirm (especially pseudo-Tertullian, *Adversus omnes haereses* 8; Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses* 39). But, still according to Pearson, this movement of Jews was a movement away from their own traditions as part of a process of religious self-redefinition. These Gnostics, at least in the earliest stages of the history of the Gnostic movement, were people who can be aptly designated as “no longer Jews”.

Against this theory it can be observed that the myth of the *Apocryphon of John* is attributed by Irenaeus to the *Gnōstikoi*, not to the Sethians:

Super hos autem... multitudo Gnosticorum [Barbelo] exsurrexit. (*Adversus Haereses* I, 29)

The latest editors of Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* have shown that Barbelo is an interpolation here.<sup>48</sup> As long ago as 1875, R.A. Lipsius made it perfectly clear that *Gnōstikoi* was originally the name which the adherents of a specific sect gave to themselves.<sup>49</sup> When Irenaeus in the preface to Book II, refers to the above quoted passage in Book I, 29–30, he attributes the views contained in them to the *Gnōstikoi tout court*:

Diximus quoque multitudinem eorum sunt qui sunt ab eo Gnostici.

This is not the place to mention the numerous passages in Irenaeus where he mentions *reliqui Gnostici* (i.e. Book II, 13, 8). Let it suffice to say that in Greek *Odyseus kai hoi alloi Phaiakes* means: “Odysseus and the others, namely Phaiakes”. Liddell and Scott *s.v.* II:8 mention for

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Self-Definition”, in: *The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries*, ed. E.P. Sanders, London/Philadelphia 1980, 151–160; 241–245.

<sup>48</sup> A. Rousseau & L. Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon, Contre les hérésies* II, SC 264, Paris 1979, 358.

<sup>49</sup> R.A. Lipsius, *Die Quellen der ältesten Ketzergeschichte neu untersucht*, Leipzig 1875, 190.

*allos* the meaning: “as well, besides”, in enumerations. We then see that Irenaeus almost always refers to the group of Book I, 29–30, the group of the *Apocryphon of John* and its relatives, when he mentions the *Gnostici*. In any case Tertullian did not read Barbelo in his text of (Irenaeus) I, 29; when he alludes to (Irenaeus) I, 29, he only mentions the *Gnostici* as distinct from the Valentinians.<sup>50</sup>

Just as in the past some New Testament scholars have created enormous confusion by calling “Gnostic” every phenomenon of late Antiquity that did not agree with their kerygmatic theology, at present the danger is very real that everything not Valentinian in the field of Gnosticism will be called “Sethian”.

Moreover, a Jew who is alienated from his religious tradition in which he was brought up still remains a Jew, because he belongs to a specific people; in the same way as a Dutchman revolting against his Calvinistic background is still Dutch. Let us face it: Mani was a Jew, though he founded a religion which rejected the Old Testament. It is a dangerous fallacy to suppose that all Jews are equal, but that some are more equal than others and excel in Jewishness.

On the other hand Pearson is completely right when he submits the works of Philo to close reading in order to find out what the invisible opposition opposed by this would-be philosopher held about Seth and his offspring, a tradition found very often in the books of the *Gnōstikoi*. In his treatise *On the Posterity and Exile of Cain*, while commenting on Genesis 4:17–25, he remarks that all lovers of virtue are descendants of Seth, in contrast to the wicked race of Cain (42). On the term *heteron sperma* in Genesis 4:25, Philo observes that Seth is “the seed of human virtue”, sown from God (173). One might easily conclude that the Gnostic interpretation of Genesis 4:25 is influenced by, and probably derived from, an exegetical tradition similar to that encountered in Philo.

These views of Birger Pearson agree with the findings of others. Bernard Barc has shown how deeply Gnostic mythology is rooted in Jewish apocalyptic and has its parallels in Philo. In writings like the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, *On the Origin of the World* and the *Apocryphon of John* (that is in the writings of the specific

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<sup>50</sup> G. Quispel, “African Christianity before Minucius Felix and Tertullian”, in: *Actus. Studies in honour of H.L.W. Nelson*, eds. J. den Boeft & A.H.M. Kessels, Utrecht 1982.

sect of the *Gnōstikoi*) he finds echoes of the story of the Ethiopic Enoch concerning the descent of the angels on Mount Hermon, their union with the daughters of men and the generation of giants (*nephilim*). In the opposition of Elohim and Jaweh in the *Apocryphon of John* he recognizes Philo's distinction between the creative force (*theos*) and the royal force (*kyrios*) of God. And he shows that the above-mentioned writings reflect a gradual evolution from Alexandrian Judaism to Gnostic dualism.<sup>51</sup>

In his edition of the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, Barc relates the shadow descending into matter and forming an arrogant being from matter (94:4019) to the Logos as shadow in Philo which is instrumental in creating the world (*Leg. All.* III, 96).<sup>52</sup> This is very illuminating. The entire text is a meditation on Genesis 1: (a) the Spirit brooding upon the waters and (b) the creation of light. (a) The Spirit upon the waters is a shadow or the *eidōlon* of Sophia which is the Aristotelian form in matter, *to organikon*. (b) The light of the first day, considered as *phos* (light) and as *phōs* (man), is at the same time the Man of Ezekiel 1:26, the light of the *kabod* in the shape of a man, *to paradeigmatikon*, Plato's ideas.<sup>53</sup> The androgynous monster rising from matter is Phanes, the androgynous demiurge originating from the eggshell of matter, identified with Yaldabaōth. He receives a form after the shadow. Thus he is the *eidōlon hylikon* of Plotinus (*Enn.* II, 9, 12, 10), the *eidōlon eidōlou* of the shadow, who is the *eidōlon en tē(i) hulē(i)* (*ibid.*, 10, 26).

That this is the meaning of this passage, is shown by the parallel in *On the Origin of the World*:

Sophia reveals herself on the Hyle of Chaos, more specifically on the water, by projecting her image on this mirror. Thereupon the demiurge, the typos of this *eikōn* (*eine*), arises from the water, an androgynous Archon. (99:23–100:9).<sup>54</sup>

The author of the common source of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*, or the tradition he transmits, has transferred the theme of the mirror of Dionysus, already applied to the Man

<sup>51</sup> B. Barc, "Samaël-Saklas-Yaldabaōth. Recherche sur la genèse d'un mythe gnostique", in: Barc (see note 45), 123–150, esp. 128–130.

<sup>52</sup> B. Barc, *L'hypostase des archontes: Traité gnostique sur l'origine de l'homme, du monde et des archontes*, BCNH 5, Québec/Louvain 1980, 31.

<sup>53</sup> W. Theiler, *Die Vorbereitung des Neoplatonismus*, Berlin/Zürich 1964, 21.

<sup>54</sup> On the *Eikōn* of Sophia in *Zōst.* 10:16 and the *eidōlon eidōlou* in the same text, see H.-Ch. Puech, *En quête de la Gnose I*, Paris 1978, 114 and V. Cilento, *Paideia Antignostica, Ricostruzione d'un unico scritto da Enneadi III 8, V 8, V 5, II 9*, Florence 1971, 256–257.

of Ezekiel 1:26 and anthropogony, to the exile of Sophia and her cosmogonic function. The same is found in the views of the Gnostics opposed by Plotinus.

It would seem that the opponents of Plotinus (ca. 250) were Valentinians who had writings of the *Gnōstikoi*, just as the Valentinians of Lyons had the *Apocryphon of John* next to the secondary Ptolemaic sources in their library. That was a nucleus of the Gnostic library that was found in the neighbourhood of Nag Hammadi.<sup>55</sup>

Quite often it is said in Gnostic texts that Sophia played a part in anthropogony: she wants to retrieve the power which she has given to the chief Archon and has the *pneuma* transferred into the psychic soul of Adam (*Ap. John* NHC II, 19:28–30); Sophia Zoē sent her breath into Adam (*On the Origin of the World*, 115:14). This seems to be an extrapolation of Ezekiel 37:9ff., where the *Pneuma*, *Ruah* (fem.) is said to *blow* the life-spirits into the bodies lying motionless upon the earth. In

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<sup>55</sup> “Valentinian Gnosis and the Apocryphon of John”, in: *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism. Proceedings of the Conference at Yale, March 1978* I, ed. B. Layton, *SHR* 41:1, Leiden 1980, 118–132; C. Elsas, *Neuplatonische und gnostische Weltablehnung in der Schule Plotins*, *RVV* 34, Berlin 1975, 5–10. Plotinus seems to have known Valentinians of the Italic School in Rome:

- a) He reports that Sophia created to be honoured (*Enn.* II, 9–11: *hina timō(i)to*); the best parallel for this is Hipp., *Ref.* VI, 30:7 (Italic School, cf. Elsas, 201).
- b) According to his opponents, Sophia brings forth a *logos* after her fall (*Enn.* II, 9:5); this corresponds to the doctrine of Valentinus that the spiritual body of Christ was brought forth after the fall (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I, 11:1). This, however, is also to be found in the *Tripartite Tractate* (Heracleon (?), Italic School) 81:21; 82:2–3; 115:23–28 (with my notes).
- c) These same opponents hold that the Pronoia of God takes care only of the elect (*Enn.* II, 9:16). This agrees with the view of the *Tripartite Tractate* 66:191ff. (God the *pronoia* for those for whom he is *pronoia*). The same in the Valentinian *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 74 (the Lord himself, men’s guide, who came down to earth to transfer from fate to his Pronoia those who believed in Christ). See J. Zandee, *The Terminology of Plotinus and of some Gnostic Writings, mainly the Fourth Treatise of the Jung Codex*, Istanbul 1961, 30. Plotinus seems also to have read writings of the *Gnōstikoi*.
- d) The demiurge defects from his mother (*Enn.* II, 9–10) as in the *Apocryphon of John* in Codex III, 15. This is rather unique: elsewhere the demiurge arises from matter.
- e) The reflection in the water of Chaos (*Enn.* II, 9–10) as in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*.
- f) Exile, resipiscence and antitypes, as in *Zostrianos*.

Plotinus has confused the views of the Valentinians and the *Gnōstikoi* in order to create the impression that his opponents had a muddled mind. If only he had used the *Tractatus Tripartitus* as a source, a writing more rational, consistent and optimistic than anything Plotinus wrote!

the synagogue of Dura-Europos this Spirit is represented as a winged lady; *Pneuma* and *Sophia* had been identified long before in the Wisdom literature of Israel.<sup>56</sup>

In a more primitive version of this anthropogonic myth neither *Sophia*, nor any other female being, plays any part whatsoever. According to Saturninus of Antioch there is one unknown God, who reveals his shining image, the *kabod* or heavenly Adam, upon the waters of *tōhū wabōhū*. Therupon the Archons of this world decided to make a material man after the image and the likeness of the *kabod*. When this creature could not stand erect, the Power above (God) sent a spark of life (the *pneuma*) which raised man up (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I, 24:1). When this Anthropos model was combined with the *Sophia* model (attested by Simon Magus), the conveying of the Spirit in the way described by *On the Origin of the World* was added by someone who associated the creation of man as described by Genesis 2 with the vision contained in Ezekiel 37. This seems to prove that this Gnostic myth not only originated, but was also transmitted and changed in a Jewish milieu.

It should be noted, moreover, that the *Sophia-Helena* of Simon Magus does not fall, but lives in exile, together with the people of Israel (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I, 23:2). Already in apocalyptic, *Chokma* was said to have descended on earth but to have found there no place to dwell and therefore to have returned to heaven (*Ethiopic Enoch* 42). She is a stranger down here on earth. The Simonian *Sophia* was patterned after this apocalyptic Wisdom.

In the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and other writings of the *Gnōstikoi* we find that *Sophia* has fallen. This notion, an anticipation of similar ones in Kabbalah, Boehme, Schelling and Hegel, seems to be a secondary development. Plotinus in his work against the Gnostics (*Enn.* II, 9:4) flatly denies that the world soul has ever fallen. Already in the writings of his youth, this philosopher stressed the fact that the world soul cannot do anything wrong and cannot suffer any predicament (*Enn.* IV, 8:7); this same soul did not come into

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<sup>56</sup> C. Kraeling, *The Synagogue* (= *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report VIII*, New Haven 1956), plate LXX. In the Mandaean religion, as with Saturninus, it is God himself, not the *Ruach* (= the Holy Spirit = *Sophia*), who gives the divine spirit to Adam (M.V. Cerutti, *Dualismo e Ambiguità*, Rome 1981, 19: “Interviene allora il padre degli ‘utria, spiriti della vita e della luce, il quale immette in Adamo l’anima (*nišimta o mana*)”). This seems to show that the role of *Sophia* in the process of anthropogony is secondary, rather late and perhaps to be located in Alexandria, the place of origin of the *Apocryphon of John* and other related writings.

being nor did it come down (*Enn.* III, 9:3). This is a *petitio principii*: is it not inconsistent to admit that the individual soul has fallen and to maintain that the world soul did not? Plotinus seems to have reacted from the very beginning to the position of his Gnostic friends. This, much more than the ambivalent argument about the cosmos, is the fundamental difference between Platonic philosophy and Gnosticism. At least one Valentinian, the author of the fifth (fourth) treatise of the Jung Codex, has affirmed that the world, matter, and history have a positive value, because they are instrumental in making the Spirit conscious. This author belonged to the Italic School of Valentinian Gnosis, which highly appreciated everything “psychic”, the creator, the creation, the true believer, catholics, the Old Testament and Christian morals. Plotinus may have known in Rome Valentinians of this school and this specific text. It could very well be that he is projecting his own shadow, his dislike of the body, his revolt against history, into his *bêtes noires*, his Gnostic friends.

It would seem that this notion is not Hellenistic. On the other hand Philo seems to polemicize against earlier Gnostics when he paints a favourable image of Hagar, according to him the symbol of *paroikēsis*.<sup>57</sup> In the Prologue of Sirach (34: *tois en tē(i) paroikia(i)*), *paroikia* means Diaspora. The Gnostics of Plotinus (*Enn.* II, 9:6) and the Gnostic text *Zostrianos* also use this term.<sup>58</sup> It is also found in the Unknown Gnostic Treatise of the *Codex Brucianus*, chap. 20.<sup>59</sup> Could it be that Jewish Gnostics before Philo considered their existence abroad, and perhaps the situation of Sophia, as a life in exile? In that case the historical Diaspora was the basic presupposition for the philosophical tenet that

<sup>57</sup> R.A. Bitter, *Vreemdelingschap bij Philo van Alexandrië. Een onderzoek naar de betekenis van paroikos*. [Dissertation in Dutch with an English summary on “Alienship in Philo of Alexandria. An investigation into the meaning of paroikos”], Utrecht 1982, 182–183.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *Zostrianos* 5:24ff. (Robinson, 370): “I ascended to the *Transmigration* (*paroikēsis* = exile), which [really] exists. I was baptized and [...] world. I ascended to the repentance (*metanoia*) which [really] exists [and was] baptized there four times”; 8:15f. (Robinson, 371): “Concerning the *Transmigration* and the Repentance and the Creation of [aeons]”; 12:8ff. (Robinson, 372): “They come into being and are removed, one by one, first from the copy of the *transmigration* up to the *Transmigration* which really exists, then from the copy of the repentance up to the Repentance which really exists”; 27:13ff. (Robinson, 376): “for there are three forms of [immortal] souls: those who have taken root upon the *transmigration*, because they cannot beget”; 43:13f. (Robinson, 379): “Now concerning the man in the *Transmigration*”.

<sup>59</sup> C. Schmidt & W. Till, *Koptisch-Gnostische Schriften I: Die Pistis Sophia, die beiden Bücher des Jeü, unbekanntes altgnostisches Werk*, GCS 45, Berlin 1954<sup>2</sup>, 362: “danach die Wohnung in der Fremde, die Reue, innerhalb davon die selbstgezeugten Gegenbilder”.

nature is Spirit in exile, God is being in movement, and that matter and history are the result of dialectics. The latter in fact is an oriental myth. It would seem that only the Jewish Diaspora is the historical presupposition for this view. Only in this specific milieu could the awareness arise that the Spirit is in exile in this world.

All this becomes perfectly clear, if only we keep in mind that Philo was not a Gnostic, but a reactionary opportunist, who used and at the same time opposed Gnostic traditions already existing before this time.

Nils Dahl has argued that the target of the Gnostic revolt is the creator of the world rather than the world itself. In fact the world is better than God (I add that in the same way their target was not the Jewish people, but the deficient Law of a tribal god). Dahl shows convincingly that the vain claim of the arrogant demiurge (a Hebrew angel, the Angel of the Lord!) is only understandable as a protest within Judaism.<sup>60</sup> We must remember that the Gnostics were passionately interested in the real and true God, more so than some existentialist philosophers and liberal theologians of our days.

Where do these bright ideas come from? In Alexandria and elsewhere in the Diaspora there lived people even before Philo who taught that the heavenly Adam was androgynous, that Sophia was a passionate female, that the *pneuma* blown into the nostrils of the earthy Adam was divine and that the Angel of the Lord was a *deuteros theos*.<sup>61</sup> We may say, then, that almost all the elements which made Gnosticism, but not a consistent system, were there already in the Diaspora before Philo and the rise of early Christianity. This, however, has nothing to do with the Christian Saviour, a historical person to whom already existing Hebrew, Israelite notions like Name, Man (Son of Man), *kabod*, Wisdom Angel were applied, because he was considered to be the Messiah who came in the end of time to save his people.

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<sup>60</sup> N. Dahl, "The Arrogant Archon and the Lewd Sophia: Jewish Traditions in Gnostic Revolt", in: *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* (see note 55) II, *SHR* 41:2, Leiden 1982, 689–712.

<sup>61</sup> G. Quispel, "Gnosis", in: *Die orientalischen Religionen im Römerreich*, *EPRO* 93, Leiden 1981, 413–435, esp. 422; *ibid.*, "Gnosticism" in: *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. in chief M. Eliade, New York 1987, vol. 5, 566–574.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

G.A.M. Rouwhorst, *Les Hymnes Pascales d'Ephrem de Nisibe, I*, Leiden 1989, has shown that the Paschal Feast of Nisibis and Edessa is rooted in Quartodeciman traditions.

J. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord*, Tübingen 1985, discusses all the material on the *kabod* in Samaritan (Israelite) and rabbinic (= Pharisaic) literature.

A.D. DeConick, *Voices of the Mystics*, Sheffield 2001, 49ff. gives a summary of passages in Philo which show that the notion that the vision of a god makes divine, though Greek in origin, was combined with Jewish traditions about celestial journeys.





## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

### JUNG AND PAULI\*

When Jung was engaged in writing his book *Answer to Job*, his wife implored him not to publish it, because it was so offensive to believers. He remained adamant, however, like a petulant boy.

The “quaternio”, the idea that God had become foursome, now that the Virgin Mary had ascended to heaven body and soul, had become such an obsession for him that it even influenced his sense of humour.

One day in 1951, during the Eranos Conference in Ascona, Jung, his associate C.A. Meier and Gilles Quispel did not attend the afternoon lecture, but instead, seated on the balcony above the lecture room, discussed the problem of evil that occupied Jung at the time. At a certain moment the lecture ended, applause resounded and Quispel’s young wife mounted the stairs to join the company. The three men fell silent. Then Jung said: “Now you can imagine what is happening at the moment on the Olympus. When a woman joins three men, the males are embarrassed. Especially the Holy Ghost must have great difficulties now”.

After the publication of the book, he eagerly awaited the reaction of Academia, for which he retained great respect all his life. There was none. Karl Barth, the greatest theologian of the twentieth century and at that time a colleague at Basel University, merely remarked that such an analysis said more about the author than about the book Job in the Bible. And that was the only time Barth quoted Jung in his dinosauric Dogmatics.

Gershom Scholem, the greatest professor of comparative religion of the twentieth century and an expert on Jewish mysticism, said to Olga Froebe, the leader of Eranos, that such a book could not be written anymore after the Holocaust. That was all.

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\* Previously published as the introduction to a new edition of *Answer to Job*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press 2002. See also the article “Note sur Basilide” in this volume.

The reason for this is simple: Jung ignored the certain results of philological scholarship. He supposed that John, the beloved disciple, first wrote his Gospel and his Letters which are full of love, but in old age had become so aggressive, that he could hate with an unequalled fury. However, already in Antiquity it had been proved that the difference in style was so great, that the Gospel and the Apocalypse cannot possibly have issued from the same pen.

Moreover, Jung, who spent the years of the war in neutral Switzerland, could not gauge how deep a person forced to live his entire life under foreign occupation may be traumatised. His empathy failed when he had to explain why John, a political prisoner, was so full of hate towards Rome, the whore on the seven hills.

Finally, the underlying plot of this obscure book is very simple: the emperor Nero (54–68) is not dead, he escaped to Persia. From there he will return at the head of the mounted cavalry, to destroy Rome, but to be vanquished by the returned Messiah in Armageddon (Israel). The first to see this was the successor of Zwingli in Zürich, Theodore Buchmann, in 1549 (!). Jung did not know it. For all these and several other reasons a historian could not take Jung seriously.

And yet the view can be defended that this book is a major contribution to biblical scholarship, if only it were phrased in a less sardonic and more adequate way. The biblical book Job belongs to the wisdom literature of Israel. It was written possibly around 300 B.C.E. and concerns the suffering of the guiltless. A rich man loses all of his property and his children and is afflicted with a skin disease. Three friends argue that this is punishment for sin. But Job insists on his guiltlessness: not he, but God is guilty (19:1–9). Then God himself answers Job out of the tempest and poses questions to which no man has an answer (38:1–16). But Job remains sceptic because Wisdom is completely hidden: “But where shall Wisdom be found?” (28:12).

The following period, the time of Apocalypics, may be seen as an endeavour to answer the question Job asked. It is admitted that now the guiltless suffer, but surely at the end of time the guiltless will rule the earth. Even now unfathomable secrets are being revealed. A Messiah, called Man or Son of Man, will emerge from the sea and bring peace to Jerusalem. And in the Apocalypse, the Second Coming takes place in Jerusalem. This means that God Himself has taken upon Himself the suffering of Mankind on the cross. In this sense Christianity is indeed an answer to Job.

Jung had the good fortune to know the Kabbalah and its teaching about Adam Qadmon (Archetypal Man) long before Gershom Scholem published his ground-breaking studies on *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. When you visited him, you could find him engrossed in the bulky *Kabbala Denudata* compiled by the pietistic Kabbalist Knorr von Rosenroth (1616–1689). With characteristic glee he would say: this book is about the “partes posteriores dei” (the behind of God), alluding to the passage in the Bible, Exodus 33:23, in which Moses is allowed to see only the hindside of the passing Glory of God.

Jung also knew, which few people nowadays know, that the prototype of Adam Qadmon is to be found in the Bible: that is, in the first chapter of the prophet Ezekiel. When in exile in Babylonia in 553, Ezekiel saw the luminous and personal Glory (*kabod*) of God, the human face of God so to say. Many readers of *Answer to Job* must have heard about this chapter for the first time in their life when reading Jung’s exegesis of it. It is the main subject of Jewish Merkabah mysticism, and the mystic concept of Jesus as the *kabod* is the background of the Gospel of John and the Epistles of Paul, but it is largely ignored, together with the whole literature of Merkabah mysticism, by German biblical scholarship. Jung knew. Lately, Alan F. Segal has worked out this new approach to Paul in his book *Paul the Convert* (New Haven 1990). Jung also saw that this was the historical background of the expression Son of Man in the Gospels. Thus he was aware that this title (Aramaic: *bar anash*) had a solid Jewish root and means the God-man.

Reitzenstein, Bultmann and Widengren, by contrast, believed in an Iranian Gayomart and an Aryan, pre-Christian, myth of the saved saviour as ultimate background of the New Testament.

Fortunately Jung could not be fooled by protestant theologians into believing that Wisdom (*Chokma*, *Sophia*) in the Old Testament is nothing but an allegorical expression of an impersonal power. In the book Wisdom of Solomon, 8:3, to this day an integral part of the Catholic Bible, she is said to be the spouse of God. Recently, inscriptions have been found in the Negev and near Hebron, in which Ashera, a Canaanite deity, figures as the wife of the Lord. *Sophia* is a mask of her. As Noel Freedman once said: “They could not keep the Goddess out.” It has become evident that a religion, any religion, without the archetypal Mother of God, is not a religion but a faith.

Finally, Jung was one of the few scholars who had read the Pseudo-Clementine writings, the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions*. At the time they were considered by authoritative theologians to be a novel without any

historical value. But now they are generally held to be a Jewish Christian document, transmitted by the heirs of the primitive Christian congregation of Jerusalem and revealing an independent Gospel tradition and very archaic views about Christ as the true prophet.

As is so often the case, Jung was so conservative that he was far ahead of his time. He used to quote very often a passage from the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* (20:2–3), according to which the Messiah is the right hand and the devil the left hand of God. That is Judaic Christian theology. It probably reflects the views of the historical Jesus. The following two-liner is attributed to him:

The Good is bound to come,  
all hail to him through whom it comes;  
Evil is bound to come,  
damned is he, through whom it comes.  
(Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* xii, 29, 1)

This means that it is God's will that evil happens, but that nevertheless the man through whom it comes is fully accountable for it. There is no reason whatsoever to assume that this Saying is not authentic.

It has an antecedent in the Dead Sea Scrolls: the *Community Rule* of the Essenes living in the commune of Qumran proclaims:

He (God) has created man to govern the world,  
and has appointed for him two spirits,  
in which to walk until the time of his visitation,  
the spirits of truth and of falsehood.  
(III, 17–19; translation Vermes 75)

It was against this typically Jewish view that both the gnostics and the Catholics, later also Mani and the Manichaeans, took issue. The gnostics found the world so cruel, that they would admit only and at most that a lower demiurge, Jehova, was just. The Catholics held that God was both good and just; he rightly punished the sins of man because man was gifted with a free will. Mani was a cripple and had every reason to doubt that evil was his own fault.

Jung's insistence that the Ground of Being is also the origin of evil was not gnostic, as he thought, but is in accordance with the most primitive form of the Christian religion we know, Judaic Christianity. In private conversation he would admit that this was true.

These ideas of Jung profoundly influenced Wolfgang Pauli (1900–1958). He was an active member of the Jung circle in Zürich. I was introduced to him in 1950 at the end of a lecture in the aula of Zürich

University on *memoria* (the unconscious) in Saint Augustine. There he was, the Nobel prize winner for theoretical physics for 1945, treated with much respect by Jung (who could be very rude) and admired by the Jungians who would attend his course at the Confederate Technical High School, the E.T.H.: bald, fat, with bulging eyes. He said he was very interested in Saint Augustine, which is remarkable in a physicist. Later, one would meet him on the Hornweg in Küsnacht, where his friend Fräulein von Franz lived. Or at Steinwiesstrasse 37 in Zürich, during a visit to his soulmate C.A. Meier, together with his wife, who was eager to defend the reputation of her famous husband and after his death in vain tried to prevent the publication of his correspondence with Jung.

He was a member of the Psychological Club in the Gemeindestrasse, which he visited rarely. He was critical of Jung, whose quotations he distrusted. And yet, together with Jung, he published a book on the relationship between psychology and the sciences, *The Interpretation of Nature and the Psyche* (1953). In this book, Jung wrote about synchronicity, an indirect demonstration of God; Pauli argued that the imaginative thinking of the alchemist Robert Fludd was just as valid and true as the analytical thinking of modern scientists.

Pauli liked dancing, drinking, making it a night. Nevertheless, this thoroughly modern man was a God-seeker. Standing before the fire long after midnight, with a glass of whisky in his hand, he could ask you: "Do you believe in a personal God?" He was embarrassing.

On November 16, 1953, he was among the audience when the discovery of the Jung Codex was announced. This codex contained five unknown writings dating to the 2nd century C.E.: one of them offered an impressive description of the Unknown God, who is beyond any definition.

After the ceremony, Pauli came up to me. He was enthusiastic and excited as I had never seen him before. He said: "This negative theology, that is what we need. Schopenhauer said: He cannot be personal, because in that case he could not bear to see the suffering of mankind. This Unknown God of Gnosis, that is what we need." The historian of science Samuel Samburski, a friend of Scholem and a lecturer at Eranos in Ascona, has declared that Pauli towards the end of his life returned to the kabbalistic religion of his fathers.

All this may be relevant to see the book which Werner Heisenberg dedicated to their lifelong friendship, entitled *Das Teil und das Ganze* (The

Part and the Whole), in its proper perspective. Heisenberg reports on their common endeavour to formulate the fearful a-symmetry of the Universe and how they failed to achieve this.

Pauli had spent the years of the war in Princeton and had not participated in the Manhattan Project. Heisenberg, for whatever reasons, had not made an atom bomb for Germany. The two friends did not understand each other anymore. Pauli wrote to Heisenberg: “Division and reduction of symmetry, this then is the kernel of the bastard. Division is an ancient attribute of the devil. A bishop in a play of Bernard Shaw says: A fair play for the devil please. Therefore he cannot be absent at Christmas [as black Peter]. If only the two divine Lords—Christ and the Devil—would notice that they have grown much more symmetrical in the meantime. Please do not tell these heresies to your children.”

Pauli is also quoted as having said on another occasion: “Gott ist kein schwacher Linkshändler” (God has no weak left hand). To understand these words, we must go back to a lobby in a hotel in Brussels in 1927. Three young physicists, Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg and Wolfgang Pauli tried to explain to Albert Einstein the new developments in theoretical physics, the so-called quantum uncertainty theory. Einstein could not follow them and finished the conversation with the words: “God does not throw dices”. Then these three Founding Fathers of our atomic age discussed amongst each other what these words could mean. Perhaps Einstein wanted to say that our universe is perfectly rational and that God is even-handed.

Against this it would seem that Pauli would say, that the Ground of Being—or rather we should say, with Jacob Boehme, the “Un-Ground”—is not only rational, but also irrational. In using the image of the left hand of God, he quoted the above-mentioned passage of the Pseudo-Clementine writings. Whether he referred to a passage in Jung’s *Aiōn*, or to *Answer to Job*, must remain uncertain.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

### MERISTAE\*

#### SUMMARY

*The Gospel of Thomas, logion 72, has been taken from the Judaic Christian Gospel tradition and has preserved the original meaning of meristès, dissenter, heretic. See also the article on the Muslim Jesus in this book.*

In one passage of the *Dialogue with Tryphon*,<sup>1</sup> Justin Martyr introduces a list of seven Jewish heresies (80, 4). The discussion is in fact about Christian sects; the obvious analogy is Judaism, however, and so, it would appear almost unintentionally, we were left with the earliest of a number of patristic catalogues of “Jewish heresies”.

One of the seven names on Justin’s list has long presented great difficulty. The *Meristae* are mentioned third in a list that includes *Sadducees*, *Genistae*, *Galilaeans*, *Helleniani*, *Pharisees* and *Baptistae*. Although a noun such as μεριστής would cause no great surprise to the casual reader of a Greek text,<sup>2</sup> there has been little agreement on its meaning here. The question we face is not restricted to etymology. We cannot avoid asking what sort of belief a sect called “the dividers” might have held; we cannot escape the religious-historical implications of the question.

Justin himself gives no hint of the possible meaning or derivation of the names on his list. *Sadducees*, *Pharisees* and *Galilaeans* are all untranslated Hebrew names, known to us from other sources. The *Helleniani* remain unknown, although several conjectures at the meaning of the name have been offered. The explanation generally accepted for *Genistae* was arrived at independently by a number of scholars. The Hebrew

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\* Co-author: Daniel Gershenson. Previously published in *Vigiliae Christianae* 12 (1958) 19–26.

<sup>1</sup> G. Archambault, *Justin, Dialogue avec Tryphon* 2, Paris 1909, 35.

<sup>2</sup> Its meaning is sufficiently clear from its etymology: μέρος = a part, μερίζω = to divide, therefore μεριστής, formed by the addition of the familiar suffix “-της”, signifying agency, = one who divides. There would be no difficulty in identifying it as one of a class of nouns formed from nouns in “-ίζω” and “-άζω”, very common in Koinē, e.g., πειραστής, ἐξεταστής, γραμματιστής.

Liddell and Scott *Greek-English Lexicon* attest the word altogether four times. Our passage is not given.



term for “heretic”, “mīn”, which may also mean “kind” or “genus”, would have been translated into Greek according to the second of its meanings. Professor Hans Joachim Schoeps has attempted to assign *Meristae* to the same somewhat eccentric translation.<sup>3</sup>

The derivation of *Genistae* contains the difficulty of accounting for the ending “-ιστής” on a non-verbal stem, since no verb “γενίζω” has been found. It is possible, however, that in the Koinē the ending had no more verbal force than it does in English, where it can often simply denote an adherent of a certain doctrine or opinion, and is not uncommonly found on non-verbal stems as e.g. in the word “optimist” or “Fascist”.

Moreover “-ιστής” is suffixed to a noun root as far back as the Homeric “ὄπισθής”,<sup>4</sup> “one armed with a shield”. Its appearance in *Genistae* can also be explained, more easily perhaps, by analogy with other group names, such as *Baptistae* and *Hellenistae*.

*Meristae*, however, cannot be dismissed so curtly as Professor Schoeps has done. “Μέρος” is, unlike “γένος”, not an acceptable translation of מְרִיב. Yet we may profitably follow the hint given us by the derivation of *Genistae*, and seek its explanation in a rendering of a Semitic root.

Another explanation of *Meristae* has been offered by A.M. Honeyman who refers it to a Hebrew, “mēras”, a name he claims the authors of the Mishnah applied to the Christians.<sup>5</sup> This is an ingenious attempt, but it must remain fanciful. “The books of the mēras” which are said to “defile the hands” in Mishnah Yadayim 4, 6, plainly refers to the books of Homer, once one realizes that in Hebrew “the mēras” can be read “Homeros”.<sup>6</sup>

Other explanations offered tend to disregard the possibility that *Meristae* may derive from the Hebrew in some way. Isidore of Seville assumed that the Greek name was invented among Hellenized Jews to describe a doctrinal divergence of the sect which bore it, and in our day Professor Marcel Simon has sought for traces of a religious phenomenon in pre-Christian Judaism which might deserve the name. Although such attempts overlook the consideration that the names of Justin’s list are all either Hebrew or translations from the Hebrew, with

<sup>3</sup> Schoeps, *Theologie u. Geschichte des Judenchristentums* Tübingen 1949, 387, n. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Iliad* IV 90 et passim.

<sup>5</sup> Honeyman, “A Tannaitic Term for the Christians”, *Jewish Quarterly Review* (1947) 151 ff.

<sup>6</sup> See also S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, New York 1950, 108 ff.

the exception of *Helleniani*, which, as a proper noun, need have had no special Hebrew form, they are nonetheless worthy of serious study.

Isidore of Seville writes<sup>7</sup> that the *Meristae* were given the name because they “make a division among the holy books. They do not believe in all the prophets, but say that their prophecies were delivered under various sources of inspiration”. The character Isidore assigns to the *Meristae* is most probably a digest of opinions<sup>8</sup> about the Samaritans and hearsay about the arguments about the fixing of the canon reported in the Talmud. In his eagerness to apply the etymology from μέρος to something within Judaism, he seized on the closest at hand. Nevertheless, we have no earlier evidence than his of the existence of a Jewish sect which denied the canonicity of some of the prophetic books, and it is doubtful whether the dispute about the canonicity of certain books, not definitely settled until the time of Justin himself for Ecclesiastes, could have created enough vehemence to mark the contenders off as two different *sects*. So the Samaritan controversy must be foremost in Isidore’s mind when he refers to a rejection of the prophets.

As for the use of the term “*alius spiritus*” which may be translated “false inspiration”, one can think of no better way of discrediting a prophet than from the Biblical injunction itself in Deuteronomy 13 where the false prophet is called a “dreamer of dreams” and is not the voice of God. Isidore surely lit upon this as the most likely argument of his fictive sect.

Professor Simon<sup>9</sup> holds that the division made by the *Meristae* was in the divine power. They are “Hellenized Jews, with gnostic tendencies perhaps, fargone along the road to dualism”. Professor Simon has discovered these Jews in a polemic by Justin in Cap. 128 of the *Dialogue* against those who maintain that the *logos* cannot act separately from the Godhead, but is emitted and reabsorbed by Him at will. In his argument Justin goes to great lengths to show that the *logos* is separate

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<sup>7</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum Liber* 8, 4 in: Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*. “Meristaei appellati eo quod separant scripturas, non credentes omnibus prophetis, dicentes alii et aliis spiritibus prophetasse.” O. Cullmann, *Le Problème Littéraire et Historique du Roman Pseudo-Clementin*, Paris 1930, 189, with a reference to the passage in Isidore, suggests that the *Meristae* were Jewish heretics who distinguished different strata in the Old Testament, like the Jewish Christians later on.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Archambault, *op. cit.* 35, “Il serait bien difficile de dire ce que furent Méristes et Génistes: les renseignements qu’Isidore de Séville avance à leur sujet pourraient bien n’être que de conjectures arbitraires que lui-même a bâti sur l’“étymologie”.

<sup>9</sup> M. Simon, “Les sectes juives d’après les témoignages patristiques”, *Studia Patristica* 1 (Texte u. Untersuchungen 63), Berlin 1957, 526 ff.

from the Godhead, but is yet the same. Here he makes the point that the *nature* of the father has not been divided (οὐκ ἀπομεριζομένης τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσίας) in the same way as material things which no longer remain what they were before they were cut. Since Justin is here polemizing against a group with “monarchianist or anti-hypostatic tendencies”, i.e. one which asserts the identity of the Godhead and the *logos*, Professor Simon seems to think that such a defence of the essential unity of the Godhead and the *logos* is out of place; he concludes, accordingly, that Justin must have gone over to a refutation of “other adversaries on the other side of the orthodox *via media*”. These, although nameless here, would be the *Meristae*, those who wish to separate the *logos* entirely from the Father.

Is this conclusion necessary? Let us consider what the argument of Justin’s monarchianists would be. “If the *logos* is engendered by the Godhead and acts outside His will”, they would say, “we have introduced a cleavage into the power of God, and neither the Father nor the *logos* would be the same.” Justin set out to refute *this* position by bringing in the concept of a spiritual cleavage in the Godhead that would not destroy its substantial unity, not some hypothetical dualistic one.

Even if we were to admit the existence of such a sect as Professor Simon claims to have found here, still this passage would be anachronistic in its use of the terms *Father* and *Son* for the Godhead and the *logos*. It would certainly seem that a Christian rather than Jewish controversy is under discussion here, and that Professor Simon has followed the patristic usage he has called attention to himself, that of identifying a heresy which caused the Church doctrinal difficulties with a corresponding Jewish one.

There is still another, linguistic objection to Professor Simon’s thesis. The name of his sect may be originally Greek. In that case it cannot derive from the verb Justin uses here to “hint” at the activities of the sect, “ἀπομερίζω.” On the other hand, it may be a translation from the Hebrew or Aramaic. But a sect with these characteristics could not be called “dividers” in Hebrew. Their name would rather be something derived from the usual Hebrew for “dualism”, “שתי רשויות” or “two sovereignties”.

It is noteworthy that none of those who have dealt with the meaning of *Meristae* in Justin, have referred to any other occurrence of the word as an aid in ascertaining its signification here. It may be profitable to quote the passage in Luke in which the singular form of the word, “μεριστής” appears.

The parable in Luke 12: 14 is well known:

And one out of the multitude said unto him, Master, bid my brother divide (μερίσασθαι) the inheritance with me. But He said to him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider (μεριστήν) over you?

The same story appears in a slightly different version in the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*, recently discovered at Nag Hammadi,<sup>10</sup> logion 72. Here Jesus' answer reads simply, "Man, who made me a divider?"; and we find an interesting addition, "He turned to His disciples and He said unto them, 'In truth, am I a divider?'". Here we have the word *meristēs* in a more meaningful context than heretofore.

If we compare the two versions of the logion which we have before us we will notice a marked difference. In the Gospel of Luke the entire account of the brothers' quarrel and their search for someone to apportion the inheritance among them is used, as it were, to introduce the Christian version of the quarreling Israelites' answer to Moses in Exodus 2: 14. This context has given rise to a translation "arbitrator" for "meristēs". Professor Simon even extends this meaning to the verb "μερίζειν", which he translates "départager". As far as we know, the Luke passage is the only basis for this translation.

In the Coptic, on the other hand, there are no extraneous references. The brother's question receives a direct and straightforward answer, "who made me a divider?"; then the logion in Coptic goes on to add to the end of the story, "In truth, am I a Meristes?". The Gospel answer is clear enough without any further elucidation: Christ, unlike Moses, will not limit himself to adjudging the quarrels of the Israelites, but will appear as the judge of all the earth. Why then does the Coptic have its strange addition?

It would seem that *meristēs* has, in the Coptic logion, a pejorative connotation. Whatever a *meristēs* is, Jesus plainly does not want to be one. Moreover the repetition (μερίσασθαι-μεριστής), and the form of the question ("am I really...?") make it hard to escape the conclusion that there is a pun at the root of the Coptic version. And indeed the pun-form is not foreign to the Gospels. It appears in Mark 1:17 and in

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<sup>10</sup> Pahor Labib, *Coptic Gnostic Papyri in the Coptic Museum*, Cairo 1956, plate 94,1. 1-6: A man said unto Him: Say unto my brethren that they divide the things of my father with me. He said unto him, O Man, who made me (a) divider. He turned to His Disciples, he said unto them: In truth, am I a divider?

Matt. 16:18 as well as here, where it only becomes intelligible in terms of the Semitic equivalents for the crucial words in the Coptic.

“To divide” is חלק and פלג in Hebrew and Aramaic respectively. It is of some interest to note that words employing these roots in both languages designate “one who holds a differing opinion”, as well as “a divider”. If we examine the participial form (the פועל) of the root חלק, we find it can mean both these things. In addition the Hebrew מחלוקת (Aramaic פלגנותא) means “a controversy” and in one sense חולק or the Aramaic בעל פלגנותא comes close to the meaning of the English “schismatic”.

If a Hebrew or Aramaic original is assumed for the logion as it stands in the Coptic, it can therefore be interpreted as follows. One of the brothers asks Jesus to tell the other to *divide*<sup>11</sup> his father’s possessions with him. Jesus answers with a pun, made all the more striking because חולק does not mean the executor of a will, or one who divides the estate between the heirs (which He was not asked to do).<sup>12</sup> What He says is this: Who has made me a *hólēq*? He cannot take a hand in the division of the property because He is not one who divides, or rather one who introduces dissenting opinions.

The addition to the logion is an appeal to the disciples for corroboration of Jesus’ strict adherence to the law. He does not consider Himself the founder of a new school, not even in the face of the Tannaitic dictum that “any controversy in the name of Heaven will ultimately endure, such as the difference between Hillel and Shammai”.<sup>13</sup>

There is one linguistic objection to the pun on חלק which must be met. The Qal form of the word is used to mean dividing an inheritance only in Biblical Hebrew, while the meaning “to dissent” does not appear before the Mishnaic period. It can, however, be assumed that in the first century A.D. both usages were current. There is no ground for believing that a slightly archaic pun would not have been understood.

<sup>11</sup> The root חלק is used of dividing an inheritance in Prov. 17, 2, a passage very close to ours, in Joshua 14:5, 18:2 and elsewhere.

<sup>12</sup> At least there is no evidence of this in Rabbinic sources. Jesus is asked to use his authority to have the recalcitrant brother share the inheritance, not to do the actual apportioning.

<sup>13</sup> *Mishnah Aboth* 5, 17. This argument is used by Gamaliel in Acts 5.

Without trying to decide which of the two forms of the logion is historical, we may proceed to examine the factors that conduced to their surviving where they did. The Coptic, interested in showing that Christianity presents no break of any kind in historical Judaism, arose most probably among the Jewish Christians. In this form, the logion would serve their purpose admirably. The Gospel version, however, is more interested in the story as a kind of *testimonium*. Jesus is presented, as often, as a new Moses, with a more universal aim, a connection not likely to have been welcome to the Jewish Christians.<sup>14</sup>

How did the name *Meristae* come to stand in Justin's catalogue of Jewish heresies? Did Justin or his source know the Hebrew expression and translate it, as he did "mīn"? Or did he rather know the version preserved by "Thomas" and take the word *meristēs* for the name of a sect, copying it out in the same way that Epiphanius did the *Herodians* and the *Scribes*?<sup>15</sup> The possibility that *Meristae* was a common term for a "dissenter" among Hellenistic Jews can be excluded; the translation is too literal and artificial, and the "σχίσμα" of John 9:16 was a more likely translation of the same idea.

We confess that we cannot choose between these alternatives. Perhaps, though, there may be a hint in the peculiar ending of *Genistae*, noted above. Professor Simon in the article we have discussed suggests that this form was influenced by that of *Meristae*. If this is true, then perhaps we can assume that Justin took the name from the Jewish Christian tradition also preserved by "Thomas", understanding it as the name of a Jewish sect, and then formed *Genistae* on its analogy.

But whatever may be the case, it seems rather obvious that both *Meristae* and *Genistae* are translations of Hebrew or Aramaic terms which designate respectively *Schismatics* and *Heretics*.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> J. Daniélou, *Sacramentum Futuri*, Paris 1950, 137 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Epiphanius, *Haer.* 1, 14.

<sup>16</sup> Peshitto, 1 Cor. 1, 10: phaelguta = σχίσμα: Pesh., Sin., Cur. John 7, 43: idem; Pesh., Sin. John 10, 19: idem; Pesh. John 9, 16: idem.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE

This is probably the first scholarly article on the Gospel of Thomas after its provisional photographic reproduction published by Pahor Labib (Cairo 1956). Logion 72 stresses that Jesus was Law abiding and did not want to change any of its stipulations.

Luke 12:14 underlines that Jesus, like Moses, has not been appointed as judge among his compatriots and implies that he rather is the saviour of his people (τίς με κατέστησεν κριτὴν ἢ μεριστὴν ἐφ' ὑμῶς, cf. Exodus 2:14; Acts of the Apostles 7:27.35). Or, perhaps, Luke means to say that the Jews rejected Jesus as they had rejected Moses (cf. Acts 7:35: ὃν ἠρνήσαντο).

“Judge” (κριτὴν), the text of Marcion at Rome in the first half of the second century, and of Codex Bezae, Syrus Sinaiticus and Syrus Curetonianus, or δικαστὴν of family 28 and several codices, instead of κριτὴν ἢ μεριστὴν in Alands so-called “standard text”, the Alexandrian reading of second-century Bodmer Papyrus 75, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, is a Western correction of the original text, which makes the reference to Moses (Ex. 2:14) still more explicit.

In a legendary history of Early Christianity, written in the tenth century by the Arabic Islamic author Abd al-Jabbar, this same logion has been transmitted in the following words:

A man said to him: Master, let my brother share with me the *rich possessions of my father*. He said to him: who has *made me a divider*.

“A man” justifies the suppletion of a gap in the Gospel of Thomas: [a man said]. Man (Greek: ἄνθρωπος, = Hebrew iš = somebody) seems to be original.

The version of the Saying recorded by Al-Jabbar can have been taken from the Gospel of Thomas. St. Augustine, who knew the Gospel of Thomas and sometimes quotes it, especially when he is extemporising, says in a sermon (359,3):

quis me constituit *divisorem* haereditatis inter vos.

It is equally possible that Al-Jabbar quotes a Jewish Christian Gospel, the Aramaic Gospel of the Nazoraeans. The word, “a man”, a Semitism, suggests that this is correct. Luke’s τίς ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου links the saying with the context and seems to be redactional.

“The possessions of my father” = the family estate (τὰ κτήματα τοῦ πατρὸς μου) seems to be more specific and idiomatic than τὴν κληρονομίαν of Luke 12:13.

The Diatessaron has preserved traces of this alternative tradition: Papyrusian Harmony (heritage *of his father*. Who *makes* me) and Liège Diatessaron (heft mi *ghemaakt*). “Thomas” seems to have preserved a Judaic Christian tradition which is nearer to the source than Luke’s version.





## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

### PLOTINUS AND THE JEWISH GNŌSTIKOI\*

Plotinus, the last great Greek philosopher and founder of the influential Neoplatonic school, was born in 205 in Lykopolis on the Nile, present-day Assiout in Upper Egypt. At that time, Catholics and Manichaeans thronged the streets of Lykopolis.

From 232 to 243 he studied Platonic philosophy in Alexandria with a certain Ammonius Saccas. Desirous to become acquainted with Indian thought, he joined the court of emperor Gordianus III on an expedition against the hereditary enemy of the Roman Empire, Persia. After the assassination of Gordianus, Plotinus went to Rome where he founded a school. Later he went to the South, to Campania, where he founded a Platonic community, called Platonopolis. He died in 270.

Plotinus has traditionally been cast as a fire-proof rationalist, the crowning and consummation of Greek philosophy, who arrived at his systematic world view through the interpretation of Plato, Aristotle and the Pythagoreans: the Ground of Being, the One, produces the Mind (world of ideas) which in its turn produces the World soul. Matter is evil, it is absence of light and goodness.

If the Stoic philosopher Posidonius with his Sympathy of the All and the Platonist Eudorus of Alexandria had anticipated some of Plotinus' ideas, this was held to be nothing but a preparation and anticipation of Neoplatonism. There is hardly one Western philosopher who has not read Plotinus.

#### EGO PORPHYRIUS

Thirty years after the death of Plotinus, his pupil Porphyrius edited the writings of Plotinus. He arranged them systematically, not chronologically, dividing them into  $6 \times 9 = 54$  Enneads, giving them titles and putting them in codices. To this he added a *Life of Plotinus*, the sixteenth chapter of which may be translated into English as follows:

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\* Previously published in: *Il Manicheismo. Nuove Prospettive della Ricerca*, Turnhout 2005, 287–329.

There were in his time in Rome many Christians, Catholics, but also heretics besides these. They originated from classical philosophy, people like Adelphius and Aquilinus and their followers. They had in their possession many works of Alexander the Libyan, of Philocomus, of Demonstratus and of Lydus. Moreover, they brought an Apocalypse of Zoroaster, of Zostrianus, of Nikotheos, of Allogenes and of Messos, and other such figures.

They deceived many people and themselves as well, pretending that Plato had not fathomed the depth of spiritual Being itself. Accordingly, Plotinus constructed many refutations of their ideas in his seminar meetings which they attended: in addition to this, he wrote the work, to which I assigned the title: *Against the Gnostics*.

He left to us the task to contend with the rest. Amelius proceeded with a refutation in as many as forty books of the work: *Zostrianus*. I myself, Porphyrius, added many arguments to show that the Apocalypse of Zoroaster is spurious and modern and recently composed, fabricated by the founders of the sect in order to give the impression that the ancient Zarathustra himself had proclaimed the doctrines which they themselves wished to represent.

(English translation after Bentley Layton)

#### INTERPRETATION

Michel Tardieu has written an excellent commentary of this passage with a survey of the relevant secondary literature from 1933 to 1990. He shows that the report of Porphyrius is tendentious. We accept most of his views. Nowhere in his writings does Plotinus mention Christians. As has been stated above, the city of Lykopolis had a great number of Catholic and Manichaean inhabitants. A local philosopher, Alexander of Lykopolis, wrote against Manichaeans living in his town and confronted them with an old-fashioned version of Middle Platonism as taught by Eudorus in Alexandria in the first century B.C.E.

In Alexandria, Catholicism had come of age and had become respectable: Origen was both a fine philosopher and a brilliant intellectual. In Rome, the Catholic Church had outgrown the Gnostic crisis of the second century. It now had an apostolic confession, an inspired canon of the Bible and a monarchic episcopacy. It was on its way to become the official Church of the Roman Empire.

Plotinus ignores all this. He resembles the authors of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, who wrote their treatises at about the same time in Alexandria, did not introduce any Christian ideas and did not even refute them. When heretical Christians penetrated into his school and attended his seminars, he felt embarrassed. He wrote a long treatise, in which he

discussed the ideas of these heretics. He hesitated to use their names, out of respect (*aidōs*) for them, because they were his friends. He left it to his pupils to analyse their writings.

Porphyrius was very different. He wrote his *Life of Plotinus* thirty years after the death of his master, just before emperor Diocletian launched the most severe persecutions ever against the Catholics and the Manichaeans. He was a gifted philologist, a master of higher criticism, who had already written his book *Against the Christians*. Now he constituted the text of the writings of Plotinus, cut the long treatise about the ideas of the heretics into four parts (II, 9; III, 3; V, 8; V, 5) and gave to one of these treatises (II, 9) the title: *Against the Gnōstikoi*. So he transformed a friend and a mild critic of the Gnostics into a heresy hunter and an enemy of Gnosis.

Who were these Gnōstikoi? They were not gnostics in the usual sense of the word, men like Basilides and Valentinus and Marcion. The Greek adjective *gnōstikos*, meaning “scholarly”, was never applied to human beings. The term “Gnōstikoi” as applied to persons sounded new and rather odd to Greek speakers of the second century. It may be the translation of the Aramaic word *Mandaeans*, meaning an “initiate”, who has Gnosis, intuitive knowledge of the higher world. In any case, in Porphyrius it strictly and historically pertains to an originally Jewish sect, which originated in Alexandria, spread to Carthage and elsewhere, and also to Rome. Some of their writings have a thin Christian veneer.

According to Irenaeus, the well-informed bishop of Lyon (180 C.E.), it had been a woman called Marcellina, who had brought the ideas of this sect to Rome. This happened during the episcopacy of Anicetus (155–166). She seduced many (*multos*) true believers. Porphyrius tells us there were many Gnōstikoi in Rome in his day. They had continued to live there ever since the middle of the second century. We are very well informed about their views because their pivotal and seminal text, the *Apocryphon of John*, has been preserved in Coptic in four copies. The *Apocryphon of John* is all about the Unknown God and his female counterpart Barbelo (Sophia), who brings forth an angelic being, Jaldabaoth or Jehova, the personal God of Israel. Its core material is Jewish and has no Christian elements in it at all.

It is remarkable that Porphyrius does not mention the *Apocryphon of John* among the writings which the Gnōstikoi had in their possession. Porphyrius knew the Catholics in Rome quite well. He knew that they blamed the heretics for being crypto-philosophers, originating from

Plato, Aristotle and Pythagoras, not Christ. So did Hippolytus in his *Refutation of all Heresies*, written in the time of Porphyrius (ca. 250). So did Tertullian, the great anti-Gnostic: “doleo bona fide Platonem omnium haereticorum condimentarium factum” (I am sorry to say that Plato has become the grocer of all heresies, *De Anima*, c. 23). It was not the Greek heretics themselves who appealed to the Greek philosophers.

#### ZOROASTER

This book was not among the 52 writings found near Nag Hammadi, nor has it been rediscovered ever since. Hence we know very little about it. Zoroaster is the Greek name of Zarathustra, the founder of the Iranian religion, to whom the Greeks since Aristotle ascribed an absolute dualism of light and darkness. In the Coptic manuscript of the book *Zostrianus* (VIII, 1) there is a final cryptogram, which has been solved as meaning: “Zostrianos. Words of Zostrianus. God of Truth. Words of Zoroaster.” (132, 6–9) Perhaps this implies that a certain Zostrianus, who, as we will see, was held to be an ancestor of Zoroaster, revealed transcendental insights which were also transmitted by Zoroaster.

The long version of the *Apocryphon of John* contains a long Melothesia, that is a list of correspondences between the stars and the members of the human body (Waldstein/Wisse II, 19, 9–10: “But if you wish to know them, it is written in the book of Zoroaster”). This seems to indicate that this text had an astrological character. Astrology was omnipotent in Hellenistic times, even in the Dead Sea scrolls, the Apocalypse of John in the New Testament, and even in Saint Paul’s Epistles:

For I am persuaded,  
 that neither death nor life,  
     neither angels nor principalities, nor powers,  
     neither things present nor things to come,  
     neither height (zenith) nor depth (nadir),  
     nor any other creature  
 shall be able to separate us from the love of God,  
 which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
 (1 Romans 8:38–39)

A melothesia might be integrated into a Jewish apocalyptic text. But this astrological interpolation, which can be paralleled from other sources, is absent from the short version of the *Apocryphon of John*. The text of Zoroaster, however, must have been astrological, and therefore not Iranian, anyhow.

According to a Jewish Christian tradition, transmitted by the novel *Recognitiones* attributed to Pseudo-Clement of Rome (IV, 27, 2–3), Zoroaster should be identified with Cham, the son of Noah. In Nag Hammadi, a Jewish *Apocalypse of Sem* has been found. Sem was a brother of Cham. Therefore it is possible that the Apocalypse of Zoroaster was just another Jewish apocalypse.

One thing is certain, the *Apocalypse of Zoroaster* was a text which originated in the Jewish sect of the Gnōstikoi. That is what Porphyrius tells us.

### ZOSTRIANUS

*Zostrianus* is the title of the longest of the 52 writings found near Nag Hammadi. It occupies the first 132 pages of the Codex VIII: hence it is designated as VIII, 1. Like other writings of the Gnōstikoi, it tells the story of an initiate, who ascends on high, passes through all the spiritual worlds up there, knows all the passwords, is transformed into a divine angelic being and descends in order to awaken the living elect and call them to eternal life. The end of the tractate very much resembles the end of the Hermetic *Poimandres*:

I awakened a multitude that were lost, saying:  
 O living people!  
 O holy seed of Seth!  
 Understand!  
 Do not let yourselves appear inattentive to me.  
 Elevate your divine element as being god.  
 (130, 15–19; translation Bentley Layton)

As in the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Enneads* of Plotinus, there is not the slightest allusion to any Christian concept. On the other hand, Jewish elements abound: Jaoel, Uriel, Seth, David. Its world and otherworld is the henotheistic pantheon of Jewish apocalypticism and the *Apocalypse of John*, the last book of the New Testament.

It would seem that Plotinus knew *Zostrianus*. He reports that according to his opponents, the *Psyche*, the World-soul, did not come down, but enlightened the darkness and produced an image (*eidōlon*) in matter. They imagined that thereupon an image of an image (εἰδώλον εἰδώλου) originated from matter, the demiurge (*Enneades* II, 9, 10).

This seems to echo the following passage in *Zostrianus*:

The ruler of the world saw a reflection and with reference to the reflection that he saw therein, he made the world. And with a *reflection of a reflection* he worked at crafting the world. (10, 1–15)

This seems to be a Gnostic exegesis of the first verses of Genesis: Light, darkness and the waters of the abyss mirroring the light.

The Persian setting which is implied in the name Zostrianus is a literary fiction. Outside our context this outlandish name is mentioned only once in Antiquity. The Christian apologist Arnobius, a recent convert (beginning of the fourth century), mentions a magus called Zoroaster, who should come through the fiery zone from the interior of the world. This magus is called “the Armenian Zoroaster, grandson of Zostrianus” (“Zostriani nepos”) and the Pamphylian friend of Cyrus (*Against the Gentiles*, 1, 52). This fragment seems to suggest that Zarathustra as the high priest of the Iranian fire priests was the maior domus of the Shah of Shas, king Cyrus. There is, however, nothing Iranian whatsoever in the Gnostic text *Zostrianus*. On the contrary, it echoes the views of the Essenes of the Dead Sea scrolls, according to whom they alone (4.000) were predestined and elect, whereas the other Jews (ca. 10.000.000) and the rest of mankind was damned. Gullible people, who are impressed by resounding names of Oriental sages, are of all ages. Possibly Zostrianus is the pseudonym of still another biblical figure from the first chapters of the book Genesis, like Seth and Cham and chem.

#### ALLOGENES

The *Apocalypse of Allogenes* is another text of the Gnostic friends of Plotinus, which was also found in the collection of writings from Nag Hammadi. It is the third book of the eleventh codex, from page 45,1–69, 20. It can be divided into two parts: the first consists of revelations by Jouel. This is the Angel of the Lord, well-known from the Old Testament. He is called Jaol in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the oldest known document of Jewish mysticism, written first century C.E. In later mystical writings Jaol is called Metatron, the angel who shares the divine throne with God. The use of the name Jouel instead of Metatron in *Allogenes* proves that it must contain very old traditions. The Gnosis of *Allogenes* clearly continues the Jewish Apocalypticism of the centuries before the beginning of the Common Era. The second part of *Allogenes* describes the ascent of a person called Allogenes to the Unknown God. He is called Allogenes, Foreigner, because in the Septuaginta Seth, the

son of Adam, is called ἕτερον σπέρμα, another seed. Through the vision of the Unknown God the initiate, Allogenes-Seth, is transformed into a god: “Having *seen* the Light that encompassed me and the God that was within me, I became divine”. This may explain the form of the name, Seth-el, God-Seth, which is often found in Gnostic, Manichaean and Mandaean writings. God is unfathomable and incomprehensible, what Boehme calls “Un-Grund” and the Kabbalah calls “Ein Sof”, nihil, “Un-ground”, God is, non-existing.

From Him comes Light, which is Being, Life, Spirit. This is probably an exegesis of the first verses of Genesis: Light, Phōs, is brought forth on the first day. “Phos” with an oxytonon means “man”, with a circumflexus: “light”. According to a mystical interpretation, this is an allusion to the emanation of God’s Glory, the kabod, who is both man and light according to Ezekiel 1:26. This Man (or: Son of Man) is the actualisation of Being, Light and Spirit from the Source of the Unknown. In another text of the Gnōstikoi, the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, also found near Nag Hammadi, Seth is a saviour, he is sent three times from above, three advents (*parousiai*) to proclaim his saving Gnosis: during the Flood in the time of Noah, during the conflagration of Sodom and Gomorrah in the time of Abraham and Lot, and during the judgement of the archonts in the time of Christ. So he saved the straying race of Seth, the few spiritual beings of mankind, who have the divine spark within them. In the text *Allogenes*, however, no reference is made to a return voyage of Seth downward.

In the *Cologne Mani Codex* (50–51) Mani himself quotes an *Apocalypse of Seth*, which was in use among the Jewish Christian Baptists amongst whom he was raised:

I opened my eyes and saw before me an angel of which I cannot describe the splendour, because he was all lightning... When I heard this, my heart rejoiced and I became like one of the greatest angels.

Already in its primitive, Jewish, form, which later was to become the *Apocalypse of Allogenes*, the leading idea was transformation through vision of Light.

#### MESSOS

The Scottish explorer and freemason James Bruce (1730–1794) who visited Abyssinia and discovered the sources of the Blue Nile, acquired



the Jewish apocalyptic book called 1 *Enoch* (about the Son of Man) around 1769 and on his way back in Egypt bought a Coptic Gnostic codex, which contained the *First Book of Jeu* (JHWH), the *Second Book of Jeu* and an *Untitled Text*.

According to Charlotte Baynes, who was the first to edit and translate the last-mentioned text (Cambridge 1933), Bruce bought this text in Luxor, ancient Thebes, on the Nile opposite the Valley of the Kings. According to its latest editor and translator into English, Violet MacDermot (Leiden 1973), this happened in Medinet Habu, far south of Assuan. It now transpires that the *Untitled Text* of the Bruce Codex is a translation from the Greek of the book entitled *Messos* which was in the possession of Plotinus' Gnostic friends. And indeed it is typical for the sect of the Gnōstikoi.

Messos must be a pseudonym for Enos, the son of Seth (Genesis 5:6). So the *Apocalypse of Messos* is, like the *Apocalypse of Allogenes*, a Jewish apocalypse turned Gnostic.

Plotinus quotes this text in his book *Against the Gnostics*. He observes:

What to say of the other notions (*hypostasis*) they introduce, exiles (*paroi-  
kia*), reflections (*antitypos*) and resipiscences (*metanoia*). If they say that that  
are passions of the Soul (*Psyche*, *Sophia*) when she comes to herself *and*  
*reflections*, when she beholds symbols of Reality but not yet Reality itself,  
that is characteristic of people who use resounding neologisms to make  
propaganda for their sect. (*Against the Gnostics* II, 9, 6, 1–6)

This refers to the following passage in the *Apocalypse of Messos*:

Next is the true dwelling place. In it is the place of resipiscence (*metanoia*),  
within are also the antitypes of air divine. After this the place of exile  
(*paroi-  
kēsīs*), the resipiscence (*metanoia*). (Chapter 20, MacDermot 263)

The Jewish friends of Plotinus projected their feelings about the *galut* into Sophia, the Worldspirit in Exile. For them living in foreign lands was not attractive, as it was for a rich man like Philo Hebraeus of Alexandria. Later the theme of the Exile of the Shekinah, God suffering with his people, became the stock theme of Jewish "mysticism".

If it is possible to discern some structure in a complicated and confusing myth, one may perhaps suppose that the *Apocalypse of Messos-Enos* presupposes one basic concept: the god Man, brought forth by the Unknown God, is the main figure of the spiritual world, the cosmos and world history:

He is Logos and Source and Spirit and Man, the eternal and Infinite (2);  
 He is Adam of the Light (3);  
 He is the only begotten one, called: the darkness of light (7);  
 He is the door of God (10);  
 God has begotten Man in his self-originated spirit and reflection and peaceful thought.

In short: He is the god Man (*prōme n̄pnoute*).

All this is perhaps less obscure, if one keeps in mind that the Glory of God, the *kabod*, called “the figure like the appearance of a man”, who appeared to the prophet Ezekiel as Light (1:26) and was later called Son of Man (= Man) in the book Daniel of the Old Testament, and in the Apocalypse called *Enoch* or the *Ethiopic Enoch* was hypostatised, personalised and individuated by the Gnostics. Then it is clear that the Adam of the Light of Enos, the Son of Man of the Gospels and the Anthropos of the Hermetic *Poimandres* all refer to the same symbol.

But how strange that according to Messos-Enos, this god Man has a right hand and a left hand, a head, shoulders, a belly, feet, everything, it would seem, of enormous proportions (7). Or even, more explicitly, in a damaged passage:

Belly, nerves, twenty digits, navel, long intestine, small intestine, womb, knees, members, right foot, four corners (?), two thighs, his necessities (phallus), hips, right foot, left foot. (21)

Such a detailed description of the body of the god Man is, as far as I know, quite unique in Gnostic literature.

It seems to be an exegesis of the Bible, more especially of the first chapters of Genesis and Ezekiel according to the text of the Septuaginta.

The Glory of God was translated in Ezekiel 1:26 as “similitude as idea of man” (*homoīōma hōs eidos anthrōpou*). According to the Middle Platonists, there was such a thing as the Idea of Man; and the translation of the Septuaginta may have identified this with the Glory of God. In any case this is how Gnostics and Hermetists understood it.

According to Genesis 1:27 Adam was fashioned after the image and after the similitude of God (*kat'eikona kai kat'homoīōsin*). Most Jews would understand this to mean that the body of Adam was created after the image of God. Adam was held to be androgynous before Eve had been taken from his side. He had both a phallus and a womb.

According to the author of the *Apocalypse of Messos-Enos*, this implied that every member of the body of Adam was prefigured in the Idea of Man which was the body of God, the god Man. This author was obviously a Hellenistic Jew, because he adapted Platonic concepts to interpret the Bible: the correspondence between archetype and image is purely Platonic, or, if one wants, Platonistic.

The speculations of Messos-Enos have their counterpart in one of the main writings of Jewish “mysticism”, the book *Shi'ur Qoma* (the Measures of the Body of God). This purports to be a revelation of the angel Metatron to a rabbi, Ismael. Metatron is a disguise for Jao-el, the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament. In the foregoing we have seen that the same stylistic device was used in the Gnostic text *Allogenes* (Seth) of the Jewish friends of Plotinus. *Shi'ur Qoma*, an orthodox document, describes in great detail the physical members of God, starting at the feet and ending at the top. There must be some relation between *Shi'ur Qoma* and the *Apocalypse of Messos-Enos*. *Shi'ur Qoma* must depend on the Gnostic apocalypse, or else it is tributary to a similar heretical text. Thus the minim anticipated the Adam Qadmon of the *Zohar*.

If esoteric Judaism made a substantial contribution to the mainstream of Gnosticism, its origins are to be found in Alexandrian Hermetism, an Egyptian religion. This seems to be indicated also by a passage in the *Apocalypse of Messos-Enos*:

Afterwards she (Sophia) cried out to the Endless Power,  
 who stands near the hidden aeon of the Father,  
 who is one of the great powers of glory,  
 who is called among the glories Trigenethlios,  
 that is: the one who was born three times,  
 whence he is also called Trigenes,  
 and also called: Harmes.

It could still be doubted some time ago that Harmes was no other than Hermes, more specifically Hermes Trismegistus, the Thrice Great Hermes, the Egyptian God of Wisdom Thoth. But even then it was more than probable: had not the Neoplatonist and Hermetic emperor Julian the Apostate (361–363) stated (in a fragment of his work *Against the Christians*, preserved by his opponent, patriarch Cyril of Alexandria in his *Contra Julianum* V), that Hermes, called Trismegistus, came to Egypt for the third time and on that occasion knew himself, as the holy and admirable books narrate about him? Unfortunately these books are lost. But there is no reason to doubt that there once existed a Hermetic

tradition concerning the three incarnations of Hermes Trismegistus. Then it is not improbable that Harmes designated Hermes.

Recently, however, new sources have been discovered, which all point in the same direction:

1. In the Hermetic *Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth* found near Nag Hammadi, a triad of Unbegotten (Agennètos), Selfbegotten (Autogenès) and Begotten (Gennètos) is thrice mentioned (NHC VI, 57, 13–15; 63, 21–23). That is a very unusual and almost unique terminology to indicate the structure of the All, its unknown source, its ideal explication, its material consolidation.

The same title is found with the same words in the Gnostic *Gospel of the Egyptians* (NHC III, 545, 13–18). The *Gospel of the Egyptians* as well as the Hermetic *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* were found in the same collection of manuscripts discovered near Nag Hammadi. It seems probable that the Gnostics have adopted this terminology from the Hermetic mystics.

2. A Hermetic collection of sayings, called *Aphorisms of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius*, in part preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, contains the following proverb:

Man has three essences,  
spiritual (νοητή),  
vital (psychic, ψυχική)  
and material (hylic, ὑλική). (VI, 1)

The Gnostics in their documents use the same, very characteristic terminology (pneumatic, psychic, hylic) and apply that to the three races of mankind, to Kain (hylic), Abel (psychic) and Seth (pneumatic). This is already the case in the *Apocryphon of John*, the pivotal text of the sects of the Gnōstikoi. It is almost certain that these Gnostics adopted the technical terminology in Alexandria from the Hermetists there.

But then it becomes more probable that they also canonised Hermes Trismegistus and gave him a place in their henotheistic pantheon. It would seem that Jewish Gnostics integrated this triad of successive revelations at a very early date. According to a tradition preserved by Cyril of Jerusalem in his *Catecheseis* (VI, 14) Simon the Magician, an Israelite of the Jewish faith, alleged that God had revealed himself to Moses on Mount Sinai as Father, as Son in Jesus in Jerusalem and as Holy Ghost in Simon in Samaria. He is quoted as having said before

his ascent to heaven: “I have returned to myself” (*Actus Vercellenses* 31). Is this not an echo of Hermes who knew himself when he came to Egypt for the third time?

As has been said earlier, the Jewish Gnōstikoi, who may have existed in Alexandria already in the first century C.E., taught that the divine Seth intervened three times, during the Flood in the times of Noah, during the conflagration of Sodom and Gomorrah, and in the last days. These Gnōstikoi above all tried to interpret Genesis. But in Genesis the scheme of a threefold revelation cannot be found. It is more probable that the Jewish Gnostics and the Jewish Gnostic Simon adopted it from the Hermetists.

The Jewish Christians who followed Elxai (Elkesai)<sup>1</sup> (second century) and left their views in the Pseudo-Clementine writings taught that the True Prophet had incarnated Himself in Adam, then in Jesus and, it would seem, ultimately in Elxai.

Mani (216–277) grew up among Jewish Baptists who were followers of Elxai. Later he proclaimed that the Spirit of Light had been incarnated in Adam, Seth, Hermes, Buddha, Zarathustra, Jesus and finally in Mani. He was the first Christian to see that in other religions than Christianity revelation also can be found. He amplified and developed a periodisation of world history, which he may have learned amongst the Jewish Baptists and which ultimately goes back to the traditions concerning Hermes Trismegistus.

In his biography, preserved in Greek and called the *Cologne Mani Codex*, Mani is quoted as having said that all his forerunners and predecessors have transmitted in writing the revelations they had received from their generation as he had done for his generation: the first was Adam, then his son Seth, after him his son Enos, later Sem, the son of Noah, and also Enoch, the enigmatic figure who walked with God and was carried away by Him: the Apostle Paul, too, relates in his Letter to the Corinthians (12:2–9) how he had once been caught up to paradise in the third heaven. It should be noted that Mani designates his encounter with his Twin, the Holy Ghost, as a rapture (*harpagē*), just as the experience of the others.

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<sup>1</sup> For Elxai see also in this volume “The Holy Spirit according to the Ancient Church”, 743–752.

About Seth, the third son of Adam, who as we remember was identical with the hero of one of the apocalypses of the friends of Plotinus, Mani says:

In the same way his (Adam's) son Seth has written the following in his Apocalypse: "I opened my eyes and saw an angel before me whose splendour I cannot describe...When I heard this, my heart rejoiced, my thought was transformed and I became like one of the greatest angels."

So there was among the Jewish Baptists in Mesopotamia, amongst whom Mani was reared, an *Apocalypse of Seth*, with virtually the same title as the *Apocalypse of Allogenes*.

Little can be said about the *Apocalypse of Enoch* quoted by Mani. Three Jewish Apocalypses of Enoch have been preserved (*Enoch* I, II, III). There may also have been a fourth one.

According to Mani, the *Apocalypse of Sem*, which was current amongst the Baptists and which no doubt was of Jewish origin, began with the following words:

I considered how all things may have come into being.  
While I was thinking, suddenly the living Spirit took me away and carried me with great force and put me on the top of a very high mountain.  
(55)

In a similar way, the text *Paraphrasis of Shem*, found near Nag Hammadi, starts as follows:

As God willed, my Spirit which is in my body carried me away from the race of man among whom I lived, it carried me to the height of the creation near the light that shone upon the whole world. (1, 5-11)

In Antiquity authors used to indicate the example they wished to follow by the first words they used. Caesar, *De bello Gallico*: "Gallia est omnis"; Tacitus, *Germania*: "Germania omnis". It would seem that the Gnostic *Paraphrasis of Shem* used the Jewish *Apocalypse of Sem* as a source.

Mani also quotes passages from the *Apocalypse of Enos*. It began as follows:

In the 10th month of the third year I went out to walk in the desert. Then I considered in my heart, for what reason, by whom and through whose will the earth and all things have come into being; There an angel appeared to me and took me away with deep silence. (52)

The beginning of the Bruce Codex, (which is identical with the *Apocalypse of Messos* mentioned by Porphyrius and thus also an *Apocalypse*

of Enos) is lost. Therefore we cannot say whether “Messos” continued “Enos”. It is, however, possible that the Jewish text preceded the Gnostic work and served as a source.

In general, it would seem that the Apocalypses mentioned by Mani all follow the same pattern: an Old Testament patriarch encounters an angel, he ascends to heaven, sees God, is transformed by this beatific vision and returns to earth to *record* a revelation. They all seem to ascend with and in the body. This is very Jewish. Even the four men who, according to rabbinical Judaism, entered Paradise, ascended with their bodies.

Until this day, the scholarly debate about the Gnostics of Porphyrius has not taken into account what Mani says about the Apocalypses current in the community of these Baptists.

The whole subject should be discussed in a special monograph. Perhaps we may provisionally say that the Jewish Apocalypses which Mani quotes are the originals and the Gnostic books mentioned by Porphyrius Hellenized adaptations of them. One thing seems certain: the background of Mani himself, and of the Gnostic friends of Plotinus, is Jewish apocalyptic, not Iranian dualism. But if we want to gauge the relationship of Gnosticism proper to Manichaeism, we must also discuss the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos*, one of the writings of the Gnōstikoi which are mentioned by Porphyrius.

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#### THE ESOTERIC INTERPRETATION OF THE NAME ISRAEL

The great initiates of the heresy of the Gnostics all had prestigious and resounding names: *The Apocalypse of Zoroaster* (Also sprach Zarathustra), *Allogenes* (*l'Etranger*) etc. etc. These served as disguises of Old Testament Fathers, who all figure in the book Genesis: Adam, Seth, Enos, Cham. All the books of the Gnostics which Porphyrius mentions were meant

to be esoteric interpretations of Genesis. Even the *Paraphrasis of Shem* (NHC VII, 1) which comes from a related group is clearly inspired by the story of Genesis 1: in the beginning there was the Light, brought forth on the first day, and darkness on the abyss of Chaos, and the Spirit, hovering over the waters.

One name is missing: Jacob. It is my considered opinion that Nikotheos is a pseudonym for Jacob. Nikotheos can mean: God (theos) is victorious (nikai). It might also mean: the man who gained victory over God. In a Gnostic context it might possibly mean: the Man who overcame god the demiurge. Jacob wrestled with God and won. Therefore Nikotheos might indicate Jacob. This hypothesis is so simple that as far as I know it has not occurred to anybody so far. Therefore it seems necessary to elucidate this bold equation.

Let me first summarise the story. Jacob returns from voluntary exile. He worries about the unavoidable encounter with his brother Esau, whom he has deceived. During the night he gets up and ferries his companions across the brook Jabbok, before which he has made a halt. So he remains behind alone.

A man wrestled with him until dawn. When the man saw that he could not prevail over Jacob, he struck him on his hip. Jacob remained a cripple for life. Then the man said: let me go, for the dawn has come. But Jacob answered: I will not let you go, unless you bless me. Then the man said: from now on your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have wrestled with God and man and you have prevailed. Thereupon Jacob asked: Tell me your name. But he asked: Why do you ask my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called that place Pni-el, Face of God, for he said: I have seen God face to face and I remained alive (Genesis 32:22–32).

It was to be expected that later mystics and Gnostics were fascinated by the impressive pericope. They were deeply convinced that God was infinitely transcendent and inscrutable. At the same time they experienced his presence. And they believed that every word of Scripture could have a special meaning. They asked: Who is that man, who fights with Jacob? Could he be the god Man, the personal revelation of God, the figure like the appearance of a man, the kabod, of which Ezekiel 1:26 speaks? What does Israel mean? Could this mean, as the Hebrew seems to suggest, a man beholding god, ἄνθρωπος ὁρῶν θεόν? But no mortal eye has ever seen God. Israel must be an Archangel,



the Angel of the Lord, the Prince of the Face, who alone beholds the Ground of Being.

In late Antiquity, Israel features quite often in magical amulets, which reflect the popular religion and the legendary lore of the Jews in Egypt.

I quote one example. In 1956 I acquired in Berlin from the estate of the late Carl Schmidt a Coptic papyrus with the inscription:

Adonai  
Istrael  
Michael  
Ouriel.

Israel was clearly regarded as an archangel in this papyrus, above Michael and Uriel and immediately under the Lord. Israel had become *the* Angel of the Lord, who is elsewhere called Jao-el or Metatron. Israel figures in this context as the Genius of the Jewish people. In a fragment of the *Prayer of Joseph*, a Jewish apocryphal work from the second or even from the first century, which is quoted in Origen, *Commentary on John* (II, 31), Jacob claims that God called him Israel, which means: a man seeing God, because he was the firstborn of every being to whom God gives life:

Am I not Israel, the archangel of the Power of the Lord and the archi-strategos among the sons of God? Am I not Israel, the first of those who serve before the face of the Lord?

This apparently means that Jacob is the possessor of the ineffable and secret Name of God, JHWH.

The Glory of God and Angel of the Lord has identified itself with the man Jacob. And the man Jacob has identified himself with the Glory of God. The two, sarx and pneuma, flesh and Spirit, confronted each other, wrestled and became one. That, too, is an exegesis of the book Genesis.

A similar interpretation of Jacob can be found in Zosimus.

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## ZOSIMUS AND NIKOTHEOS

Zosimus of Panopolis in Egypt, a Greek alchemist of the third or fourth century C.E., wrote a treatise on the letter Omega. In this work he quotes Nikotheos several times. It is clear that he uses a Jewish source: we may suppose that this is the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos* mentioned by Porphyrius. It is not always clear where Nikotheos ends and Zosimus begins. But we may suppose with some confidence that we hear the voice of Nikotheos in the following passages:

1. Round Omega is the bipartite letter, the one that in the literal sense belongs to the seventh sphere, that of the planet Saturnus, but in the spiritual sense it alludes to something altogether different, something inexplicable, something that only Nikotheos the hidden one knows. (1)

Nikotheos is called: the hidden one. This expression has been compared with the name of the Jewish Christian prophet Elxai, which means "hidden power". In chapter 10 the same Nikotheos is called: unfindable. Now this has rightly been related to the story of Henoah, who according to the Greek text of the Septuaginta (*Genesis* 5:24) was not found anymore because God had taken him away. What did this mean? That the man Elxai had ascended to the highest heaven and had identified with God. The same is true of Henoah. This seems to show that according to the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos* its hero, Jacob Israel, had ascended, seen God, was eternalised and divinised and therefore was hidden and unfindable.

2. In a following passage which seems to come from the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos* the anonymous author alludes to a heretical Jewish interpretation of the Genesis story, according to which only angels, not God himself, moulded the body of Adam. The Gnostic author of the Apocalypse adds the characteristic detail that these angels did not know (ἠγνόουν) the Name of God:

So, then, the Adam of flesh is called Thoth  
with respect to the visible outer mould,  
but the Man within him, spiritual Man,  
has a Proper Name as well as a common one.  
Now the Proper Name they did not know until this day,  
For only Nikotheos, the unfindable one, knows that.  
But his common name is Phoos,  
After whom men are called Photes. (10)

There is in this passage a pun on the Greeks word “Phoos”. It can mean “light”, as a contraction of *Phaos*. It can also mean Man. It alludes to the light that was brought forth on the first day. According to Jewish gnostics, among whom probably Nikotheos, this alludes to the birth of the kabod, the Glory, the figure like the appearance of man in Ezekiel 1:26, the stock theme until this day of Jewish mysticism.

3. Zosimus, and probably Nikotheos, continues:

One day Phoos, the god Man, was taking a deep breath of fresh air in Paradise. Instigated by Fate, they (these angels) cajoled him to clothe himself with the Adam they had moulded, the one made from the four elements. Man was sinless and not yet subject to this influence of Fate. But innocent as he was he did not refuse. Then they boasted that they had made him their slave. (11)

Like the *Prayer of Joseph*, the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos* opposes divine Spirit and human flesh in one person.

4. It would seem that Nikotheos was also concerned with the fate of Adam after death. This is at least what Zosimus writes:

Jesus Christ drew nigh to Adam and bore him up to the place where the so-called Photes dwelled before. (13)

This does not refer to Christ’s descent to Hell, from where he took Adam and all deceased, except Judas, as a Christian tradition has it. It rather alludes to a Jewish Haggadah about Adam’s Paradise Regained. As so often, this Jewish lore has been preserved by Tertullian in his book *On Penance*:

Because I am a sinner of all sorts and not born if not for penance. I cannot easily be silent about that on which the first author of the human race and of sin against the Lord is not silent, I speak of Adam, who after his confession was restored to his paradise. (*De paenitentia* XII, 9: Adam exomologèsi restitutus in paradisum suum)

And in the Georgian *Life of Adam and Eve* God speaks to his archangel:

Bring him (Adam) to the third heaven, in paradise, before the altar.

The Phōtes are the souls of man, who preexist in paradise before they incarnate in the body (pre-existentialism). In the *Apocalypse of Moses* 37, 4 it is said about Adam:

Lift him up into paradise unto the third heaven and leave him there until that fearful day of my reckoning, which I will make in the world. Then Michael took Adam and left him where God told him.

It would seem that Zosimus, and Nikotheos, allude to the same legend, when they say:

He (Adam) fell and did penance, then he sought for the realm of bliss: he explains all and counsels all for those who have spiritual ears. But those who have only bodily ears are slaves of Fate: they neither grasp nor admit anything else. (16)

Note that Christ makes a sudden appearance in this scenario. In the Old Testament it was Sophia who raised Adam, the protoplast and father of the world of men (*Sophia Salomonis* X, 1). Christ has replaced Sophia in the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos*. We remember that according to Porphyrius the Gnōstikoi were Christian heretics. But Christ was a late-comer in their system. Originally they were purely Jewish, Alexandrian and perhaps even pre-Christian.

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#### NIKOTHEOS AND SIMON THE MAGICIAN

According to Zosimus (10) the Man of Spirit within Adam of the flesh has a Proper Name as well as a common name. The Proper Name the angels who moulded the body of Adam did not know (read ἠγνόουν, they did not know). This is Jewish lore and at the same time high Gnosticism. According to Jewish heresy, God did not mould the body of Adam himself, it was performed instead by subaltern angels. These Archonts, the Rulers of the World, are ignorant. They do not know the real name of God and of his Glory (kabod). In a similar way the apostle Paul says that the princes of this world, the planetary powers, would not have crucified the Lord of Glory, had they known him. According to this passage, 1 Corinthians 2:8, the Rulers of the World are dumb.

Zosimus also speaks the language of esoteric Judaism. We may assume he found it in the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos*. According to Jewish “mysticism” the Name of God, JHWH, is a complete mystery: nobody knows the Proper Name (in Hebrew: shem hammejudah) of the Lord. Only Nikotheos, Jacob Israel, knows it, because he has been up there and seen the face of the Lord. Hence his name Israel. Like Henoch he is said to be unfindable, he could not be found anymore, he disappeared from this world, ascended on high and beheld the Glory of God, variously called Man or Son of Man or Jacob or Name of the Lord. Hence he knows the ineffable Name. This seems to be confirmed by a passage in the *Untitled Text* of the Bruce codex which, as we have seen, is identical with the *Apocalypse of Enos*, which was in the hands of the friends of Plotinus:

Nikotheos spoke concerning Him (God), for he is the one who has been up there (Coptic: ntof pe petmmau). He said: The Father, who surpasses every perfection, is.

He has revealed the invisible, triplex powered perfect one.

Each of the initiated men saw them, they spoke of them and gave glory to him, each one in his own way.

(Cf. MacDermot 235, translation by the author)

We must assume that all this was also continued in the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos*, known to Plotinus and mentioned by Porphyrius.

The “triple-powered perfect one, three in one, Existence, Life and Consciousness” is mentioned also in other Gnostic writings. Thus the *Apocalypse of Allogenes* (Seth) 64, 34–36 speaks about the Triple Power of the First Thought of the Invisible Spirit.

It has been observed that the same triad occurs in the philosopher Porphyrius and the Christian rhetor Marius Victorinus. In a way this triad anticipates the psychological interpretation of the Holy Trinity by Augustine as *memoria* (unconscious), *intelligentia* (consciousness) and *voluntas*. Of course it has been supposed that the Gnostics adopted it from more respectable people like philosophers and Christians.

But if the Triple Power was already proclaimed by the author of the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos*, the concept preceded Plotinus and must be characteristic of the views of the Gnōstikoi. Nikotheos adds that all initiates have seen this One God and spoke about Him. He must mean such patriarchs as Adam, Seth and Enos who preceded him, Jacob-Israel.

But Mani also accepted the trinity of Father, Mother and Man, which is characteristic of the Gnōstikoi, for instance in the *Apocryphon of John*. He taught that the Father of Greatness, when attacked by the realm of

darkness, decided to go and fight the invading enemy himself: thereupon he evoked the Mother and brought forth archetypal Man. This, too, is an interpretation of Genesis. There are two stories about the creation of man. In Genesis 1:27 man is created after the image of God; in Genesis 2:7 God moulds the man from dust. Esoteric Jews interpreted this as ideal, spiritual man and material man. Nikotheos identified the archetypal Man with the Glory, *kabod*, the figure like an appearance of man who was luminous. This he found, like other Gnostics, in the Septuaginta, where Phoos, in Greek “Light” or “Man”, is brought forward on the first day by God: “Let there be Phoos”.

The Gnosis of Nikotheos-Israel may be compared with that of the Samaritan Simon the Magician. The Samaritans are Israelites. They descend from the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom, called Israel, which after the death of King David (1000 B.C.E.) separated from the Southern Kingdom called Juda. Until this day their centre is Nablus, ancient Sicheim, in Palestine. On nearby Mount Gerizim they have a synagogue. In the night of Pesach they gather there and slaughter their sheep as is prescribed in the book Exodus of the Old Testament. Their religion is Jewish, but they accept only the five Mosaic books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numeri and Deuteronomium and reject the rest of the Bible. They have an ancient literature in Hebrew and in Hebrew script which deals with special subjects of their religion. One of their prophets in the first centuries of the Common Era was a certain Simon of Samaria, or Simon the Magician.

According to Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles in the Christian New Testament, this Simon was a sorcerer in the city of Samaria, the capital of their country, “to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest” (Acts 8:9–10). According to the Fathers of the Church, however, Simon was a Gnostic and the father of all heresies. There need not be a contradiction between these two positions, because recent research has shown that every form of Gnosticism, even Hermetism, is mythology built upon an underground of magic and not a philosophy.

Beautiful legends surround this colourful figure. Simon is said to have been the first to construct a *golem*, an artificial man, a sort of forerunner of rabbi Lev of Prague. Allegedly he flew in the air above the Forum in Rome, before the apostle Peter brought him down through prayer. Simon is quoted as having said: “I am going up to my Father and shall say to him: ‘Even me, thy son, they desired to bring down, but I did not consent with them, and I returned to my Self.’” Could that be the

banter of the belief of the Simonians, that their master had ascended after his death to heaven?

However, he must have been a historical figure, whose views can be reconstructed with some confidence. According to the apocryphal Acts of Peter, written in the second century C.E., a certain Roman matron Euboula accused her household of theft on occasion of Simon's visit to Rome:

You took advantage of the visit of this godly man and have robbed me, because you saw him coming into me to do honour to a simple woman, he *whose name is the Name of the Lord* (cui nomen est nomen domini). (17)

A hypercritical scholar called Turner thought he knew better than the tradition of all manuscripts. He changed the text: whose name is the Power (*numen*, not *nomen*) of the Lord. So he harmonised the text and brought it in accordance with the text of the Acts of the Apostles 8:10 according to which Simon was considered to be the Great Power of God.

Ingeniosius quam verius, more ingenious than true. For even if it is not certain that Simon was ever in Rome, it is quite plausible that he was considered to be a possessor of the divine Name JHWH, like Nikotheos. The religious literature confirms this view. Simon was called a *Hestoos*, a Standing one. Parallels from Samaritan texts proves that this means that he was standing before the face of the Lord, like a sar ha-panim, a Prince of the Face, the angel who stands before the face of the Lord and through that vision becomes eternal and divine. This implies that he knows the hidden sacred Name of God. Simon, like Nikotheos, thus turns out to be a rival of Jesus Christ.

In his so-called Farewell Discourse, held by Jesus during the last supper with his disciples before his untimely death, he is quoted by John the Evangelist as having prayed to God:

While I was with them, I kept them in thine Name which thou has given to me

(ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ᾧ δέδωκάς μοι).  
Gospel of John 17:11

This is esoteric language which can only be understood in the light of Jewish "mysticism". For the Ancients the name is meaningful. It reflects the innermost being of the person to whom it belongs. When Jesus says that God has given him His Name, His Proper Name, this implies that Jesus is the Proper Name, the essential revelation of God.

Could it be that the author of the Fourth Gospel is polemicising against certain Samaritans who claimed that Simon incorporated the Holy Name of God? Could it be that he considered his contemporary Simon the Magician as one who, in lying fashion, gives himself out to be the Christ, a false Messiah? He seems to say that Jesus alone, and exclusively, reveals that God is and who he is. It would seem that John is using an already existing esoteric tradition about the Name of God.

The author of the Gospel of Truth, Valentinus, has a long passage about Christ as the Name of God;

He is the authentic name,  
He is, indeed, the Name of the Father,  
for he is the Proper Name.  
(40:5–9)

That is a beautiful parallel for the remark of Zosimus that Nikotheos is the only one who knows the Proper name of God and of the passage in the Acts of Peter 17, according to which Simon possessed the Name of God. The *Apocalypse of Nikotheos* was written before the death of Plotinus in 270 and probably in the second century. It originated in the group of the Gnōstikoi, a Christian sect. Theoretically it is possible, though very improbable, that the author of the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos* owed his insights about the Proper Name to the Gospel of John. But Simon was a Samaritan prophet and sorcerer, who was rejected by the apostle Peter. He seems to depend upon an already existing esoteric tradition about the essential revelation of God in His Name and the bearer of His Name.

It is feasible that this tradition was pre-Christian and known to John.

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#### NIKOTHEOS AND MANI

From Samarkand in present-day Siberia just outside the Persian Empire Manichaeism spread across Siberia, Mongolia and China, where for



a short period it became the state religion of the Turkish tribe of the Ouigour which then lived and still lives in so-called East Turkestan, present-day Sin Kiang.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century German explorers have been uncovering there beautiful Manichaean frescoes and fragments of Manichaean literature in several Asiatic languages.

One of them is in Middle Persian, in the gibberish of experts is called M299 and contains the following names: Schem, Sem, Enos, Nikotheos, Henoch. With the exception of Nikotheos, these figures all have Hebrew biblical names. This seems to suggest that also Nikotheos was a biblical figure, namely Jacob-Israel, who, as we have seen before, had become a powerful angel in the henotheistic pantheon of esoteric Judaism.

In 1932 at Medinet El Fayoum south of Cairo very fragmented Manichaean books in Coptic were discovered. One of these was called *Homilies*, a collection of sermons attributed to Mani himself. One fragment contained the following names: Enos, Sem, Schem, Nikotheos, Henoch (68, 17). These are the same names as those belonging to the Middle Persian fragment. If Nikotheos occurs in the *Homilies* attributed to Mani, the latter may have known the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos* mentioned by Porphyrius. It may have been in use among the Jewish Christian Baptists among whom Mani was reared.

### *Enoch*

Enoch must be the Old Testament figure mentioned in Genesis 5:18–24, who walked with God and was not found anymore, because God had taken him away. According to esoteric Judaism, Enoch had ascended on high and had identified with the Son of Man (the Glory of the Lord), viz. Metatron-Jaoel, *the* Angel of the Lord. As has been said, the *Apocalypse of Enoch* was discovered in an Ethiopic translation in Abyssinia by the Scottish explorer James Bruce and brought to Europe in 1773. Its original language was Hebrew or Aramaic. Parts of it have been found among the manuscripts found at Qumran near the Dead Sea. It describes how Enoch makes a heavenly voyage which ends with his merger with the Son of Man. The *Apocalypse of Enoch* is certainly pre-Christian. It was already known from other sources that this Apocalypse was known to the Manichaeans. Now our fragments show that it was known to Mani himself, perhaps through the intermediary of the Jewish Christian Baptists. And Mani considered Enoch as one of the forerunners of his rapture.

*Enos*

The *Apocalypse of Enos* is quoted by Mani in the recently discovered *Life of Mani*, the so-called Cologne Mani Codex (52). It may have some relation with the *Apocalypse of Messos*, mentioned by Porphyrius. Messos is a pseudonym for Enos, the son of Seth. And the *Apocalypse of Messos* is identical with the *Untitled Text* in the Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae. This text, too, helped Mani express his experience of rapture. Its occurrence among the sources of Mani's religious experience shows how outlandish the ideas of the friends of Plotinus really were.

*Sem*

More can be said about Sem, the son of Noah. Most probably, Schem who is mentioned in both Manichaean fragments, is identical with him. With a pun on the Hebrew letter *shin*, the name of Sem is changed to Schem, which means "name" in Hebrew, the sacred Tetragrammaton, JHWH. That would imply that Sem ascended to heaven and there received the Proper Name of God, like Nikotheos. Probably the Manichaeans in those two fragments alluded to the *Paraphrasis of Sem*, found among the writings of Nag Hammadi, NHC VII, 1.

This is a Gnostic-Christian apocalypse, written in the Sahidic dialect of the Coptic language, but translated from the Greek. Like so many other Gnostic texts, it was an esoteric exegesis of the first verses of Genesis I: in the beginning there was Light, brought forth on the first day, there was darkness upon the chaos of the abyss (*tohu wabohu*, Sefardic) and the Spirit hovering on the waters between them.

The world view of the author is peculiar: the Cosmos is seen as an enormous womb of a woman in labour. This womb is called *physis*, meaning here uterus. A similar concept has been summarised by the Latin author Plinius Maior († 70 C.E.) in his *Natural History* II, 45, 116:

*generabilis rerum naturae spiritus tamquam in utero aliquo vagus*

(the Spirit which brings forth the things of nature as if hovering on a womb)

The apostle Paul seems to allude to the same image, when he stresses that creation groans like a woman in labour:

We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together with us until now. (Epistle to the Romans 8:22)

But the author of the *Paraphrasis of Sem* has a very different view of the history of salvation from that of Paul. According to him, this was marked by the endeavours of the female Physis and the evil demiurge to annihilate the race of spiritual man:

by the Flood in the days of Noah;  
by the conflagration of Sodom;  
and finally by the crucifixion of Jesus.

And yet, owing to the revelations of the Saviour, the Spirit was delivered from its entanglement with darkness.

The fact that Mani knew the *Paraphrasis of Sem* has some implications for our view of Manichaeism. Until now it was not clear how Mani, who according to the Cologne Mani Codex was nothing if not a reformer of Jewish Christian Baptism, related to Gnosticism. The *Paraphrasis of Sem*, however, one of his sources, is certainly Gnostic. The influence on Mani of Gnosticism is indisputable. Mani's radical asceticism may be due to the impact of this work.

In the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos* he found that Man, or Light, *Phōs*, fell into the body and that Adam returned to Paradise. This he transformed into the myth of Archanthropos, archetypal Man: when the forces of Darkness attacked the realm of Light, God decided to go down himself against the enemy. Thereupon the Father of Greatness, God himself, evoked the Mother of Life, and the Mother of Life evoked Primal Man.

This, too, is an interpretation of Genesis, Man as the Light of the first day, the Spirit as Mother, like the Holy Ghost to all Jewish Christians and Aramaic Christians. This trinity is typically Jewish and Aramaic, and at the same time characteristic for the writings of the Gnōstikoi as witnessed by the *Apocryphon of John*:

I am the Father, I am the Mother, I am the Son.  
(2, 2, 14)

It was the writings of the Gnōstikoi which made Manichaeism Gnostic.

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## JEWISH MYSTICISM

There once was a time, from Pico della Mirandola to Jacob Boehme, that Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism, was taken very seriously by Christian scholars. The Enlightenment brought the black-out. Even in enormous dictionaries of the New Testament like that of Kittel not a single reference to the writings of the so-called Merkabah mysticism, the oldest version of orthodox Jewish Gnosis, can be found.

The studies of Gershom Scholem, above all his masterpiece *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, have changed this situation. Now at last the most important texts of this esoteric current have been published. Inevitably a quarrel arose among the experts: are these texts nothing but interpretations of the Old Testament or do they reflect a personal experience of the mystic? We will see that both parties are right. But nobody asks how it could happen that these texts came into being in the midst of strictly orthodox Pharisaic circles towards the end of the first century C.E. in Palestine. Yet this type of religiosity was new in Israel. The Merkabah traditions describe an ascent of the initiate into the heavens and the vision of the Glory of God, the *kabod*, which involves a transformation of the visionary into an angelic or supra-angelic likeness of the Glory.

But the prophets of Israel, to whom a visionary experience has been granted, remained solidly on the ground. Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on a throne in the temple of Jerusalem: seraphs called to each other: "holy, holy, holy" (chapter 6). Ezekiel was in exile in Mesopotamia in 593 B.C.E., when he saw there the coming of the Glory of the Lord. No room for space travels in the Old Testament.

But in the Graeco-Roman world ascension to heaven was common during and after the beginning of the Common Era. Cicero describes in his *Dream of Scipio* how a famous Roman general, Scipio Africanus Minor, who took Carthage in 146 B.C.E., in a dream looks down from the Milky Way above on our own little world. Virgil, in the Sixth Book of his *Aeneis*, shows how Aeneas somewhere in Southern Italy descends to the Underworld and somehow ends in the Elysium on high. Almost all Roman emperors are said to have gone to heaven.

It is true that the transformation of the mystic in Jewish Gnosticism has some very special and characteristic features: *the ascent takes place in and with the body*. In the *Apocalypse of Enoch* which is called IV *Enoch*, the *flesh* of the initiate who is identified with *the Angel of the Lord* Jael

or Metatron is turned into flame, his bones into juniper coals etc. It is the body which is transformed. Likewise four rabbis are said to have entered Paradise. And, as the story goes, one became mad, another died, a third became a heretic and only orthodox rabbi Akiba returned in peace. But they all have in common that they ascended with their bodies and came back to earth in the body.

In the same way Luke, the author of both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, leaves his reader in no doubt that Jesus has gone through a bodily resurrection: Jesus shows his disciples his hands and feet after his resurrection and eats a piece of broiled fish and a piece of honeycomb (Luke 24:40–43). That is the Jewish way of telling the story: the ascent takes place with the body. Moreover, these imaginative space travels have become dangerous: one has to know the pass-words and have a passport to show to the planetary customhouse officers before you reach the open gate of heaven.

This is clearly due to Egyptian influence. Just as in Egypt since time immemorial a deceased person is represented as standing before the door of the Hall of Absolute Truth and holding in his hands the magical formulae which will empower him to enter through the door, so also the Jewish initiates and Jewish Gnostic elect are threatened in their dangerous way on high.

Because nobody pointed to the Hellenistic parallels with Jewish Merkabah stories, I wrote a short note in 1995 to point out that the notion of the transformation of the visionary into an angelic being had Greek antecedents. April DeConick followed suit and offered still more material to corroborate this hypothesis. My own aims were limited. I only wanted to show that the idea of angelic transformation was to be found in the Jewish *Apocalypse of Seth-el*, which was quoted in the Life of Mani, the so-called *Cologne Mani Codex*. April DeConick argued that the tendency of the author of the Fourth Gospel is to contradict this theme of an ascent on high, because for him the incarnate Jesus is the exclusive revelation of God unseen.

The purpose of the present study, however, is to establish what this perspective means for the views of the Gnōstikoi, the friends of Plotinus. They lived in the third century, whereas the Merkabah mystics could have lived earlier, from the first century C.E. onwards. What is their relationship? In the following I hope to show that the heretical views of these Gnostics are older than the concepts of the orthodox, Pharisaic “descendants” to the Merkabah.

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## TRANSFORMATION THROUGH VISION IN THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES

The aim and purpose of all Greek mystery cults seems to have been: transformation. Already in the mysteries of Orpheus, which I think were very old indeed, the initiate became a god. On a gold plate found in Southern Italy such a mystic declares:

ἔριφος εἰς γάλα ἔπετον.

This has sometimes been translated in the following way:

as a kid of a goat I fell into the milk.

But that is unrealistic and makes no sense: a goat does not fall into the milk. The Greek verb *πίπτω* does indeed sometimes mean: "to fall". But it can also mean: "to throw oneself". Homeric: *ἔπεσον εἰς χεῖρας γυναικῶν* does mean: "they threw themselves into the arms of their wives". So the initiate throws himself like a new-born animal on the mother's milk of the Queen of the Night, Mother Earth. The image is that of a new-born baby. It hints at rebirth. In a similar way the neophytes in the night of Eastern, who have just been baptised, are invited to drink the new milk (*quasi modo geniti novum lac bibite*).

The well-known specialist on the Oriental religions in the Roman Empire, Franz Cumont, once said that all the mystery cults of Antiquity presuppose what Lamartine once said: "l'homme est un dieu tombé qui se souvient des dieux". That, however, is Platonic, not mysteriosophic. Their basic tenet was rather deification: the initiation resulted in the eternal perpetuation of finite existence. Such an apotheosis in Antiquity could be realised in different ways. For some the Word was instrumental. According to the Gospel of John Jesus once said: "If He, God, called them *gods* to whom the Word of God came" (10:35). And in the Gospel of Thomas Jesus says: "Whosoever finds the deeper meaning of these words, will not taste death." All sayings in this apocryphal gospel are esoteric and confer immortality.

But the performance of the rites of the cult can also have that effect. Until the present day the Eucharist of Saint John Chrysostom still is

and always has been the celebration of a mystery, to which in theory only the initiates, those who had received the sacrament of baptism, were admitted. If they had communicated in bread and wine, they had become gods.

Tremble looking at the deifying blood, o man;  
It makes the body divine, it makes me divine and nourishes me.  
It makes the spirit divine and nourishes the mind in a strange way.

But the ancient Greeks, who attended the mysteries of Eleusis, trusted their eyes rather than their ears. It is typically Hellenic to suppose that transformation is achieved through vision. The Homeric Hymn to Demeter narrates in great detail how the goddess Demeter, Mother Earth, once came as a *mater dolorosa* to the village of Eleusis after her daughter Kore had been abducted by the god of the underworld Hades. But when a woman called Baubo showed her bare bottom to the goddess, she roared with laughter and gave to the villagers the mystery of corn dying in the earth and rising as ears. Then the hymn says:

Blessed is he, who among men living on earth,  
Has beheld these mysteries.  
But the uninitiated, who has not participated in them,  
Will never in a similar way be happy,  
But perish in nebulous darkness.  
(Fragments 480–482, Turchi 80)

Pindar (518–422), whose poetry was so profoundly influenced by Orphic lore, proclaims in a fragment:

Blessed is he, who has beheld these mysteries  
before he enters upon the way beneath the earth.  
He knows the end of life  
and at the same time he knows the godgiven beginning.  
(Fragment 137, Turchi 97)

The emphasis here is on knowledge as a precondition of transformation. The *epoptēs*, the seer, the man who has been initiated into the highest grade and has seen the most profound of all mysteries, knows that the end of life is a new beginning. And Sophocles, the Athenian playwright (496–406), who in his tragedies is so sceptical about the righteousness of Zeus and doubts like Job that evil is a punishment for sin, nevertheless is firmly convinced that the vision of the mysteries grants immortality:

Thrice blessed are those among men,  
 who have beheld these rites  
 before they go to the realm of Death.  
 For they alone can live there,  
 for the other men all is evil down under.  
 (Fragment 753, Turchi 98)

What did the mystic see? Nobody knows. We are told what the leader of the ceremony, the hierophant, proclaimed at a certain moment:

The Mistress has given birth to a holy child,  
 the strong one to a strong one.

This may hint at the experience of an epiphany, in which the initiate saw how the Goddess in labour engendered a divine child, that is: he re-enacted and re-presented the myth through a rite of adoption and somehow felt that he had become a child of the Mother. Perhaps. One thing is certain: the initiate did not see God.

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#### VISION IN THE MYSTERIES OF HERMES TRISMEGISTUS

The only Gnostic work known in the West during the Middle Ages was the Latin *Asclepius*, a complete revelation of all esoteric secrets (except the mystical experience of God), given by Hermes Trismegistus. An alchemical work well-known in the Middle Ages and also attributed to Hermes Trismegistus was the *Tabula Smaragdina*, an inscription allegedly incised on an emerald plate and found in the tomb of Hermes. This remained the charter for all alchemists until Isaac Newton, the last of the magicians. But the history of Hermetism in Europe only really started after a monk, Leonardo di Pistoia, in 1460 brought a manuscript from Macedonia to Florence containing Hermetic writings in Greek, including *Poimandres*, a cosmology. It caused a great stir because this Thrice Great Hermes, identified with the Egyptian Ibis god Thoth, to whom these writings were ascribed, was held by some to be a primal sage who was even older than Moses and Plato and therefore the source of all truth.



This humanistic myth was laid to rest by the Genevan Calvinist Casaubonus, who proved that these writings were of later date, not older than the first centuries C.E. This exposure ultimately led to their complete devaluation: they were generally held to contain nothing but edifying banalities. However, the discovery of Hermetic writings in one of the thirteen codices found near Nag Hammadi, Codex VI, has changed this situation completely. Codex VI, 7 and 8 offered a better and more trustworthy version in Coptic of parts of the *Asclepius*, including the magnificent Eucharistic Prayer of Thanksgiving.

The preceding pages of the same Codex (VI, 6) contained a completely new work, entitled *The Discourse on the Eighth and the Ninth*: this describes the ecstatic experiences of two initiates on the brink of the spiritual world.

Still another unknown work was to be added to the treasure trove of Hermetic writings. Jean-Pierre Mahé published an Armenian collection of sayings, the *Aphorisms of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius*. Later on a French priest found part of the Greek original of this text in the Bodleian Library in Oxford (the English never noticed): it was called Clarkianus II. These proverbs are certainly older than the *Poimandres*, because one of them (“Who knows himself, knows the All”) is quoted and amplified in the *Poimandres*. The *Poimandres* with its strong Jewish influences can hardly be later than the first century C.E., because after the revolt of the Jews in Egypt and Libya in 115 C.E. hardly any Jew was left in these regions.

The *Aphorisms* show no trace of Christian influence and can easily be pre-Christian. They are the oldest part of Hermetic literature. All this leads to the conclusion that the writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus originated in a secret society in Alexandria, a mystery cult like that of Isis and of Sarapis. The members of this group called themselves “Brethren”, they were initiated through a baptism of the Spirit, greeted each other with a holy kiss, celebrated a communal meal, read the Hermetic writings as edifying treatises for their individual progress and had to go through several grades before they reached the level necessary for their experience of God and Self. It was in this mystical milieu that the idea of transformation through vision was very much alive.

*Poimandres* (25–26) describes the ascent of the soul after death along the seven planets to the sphere of the fixed stars, where she becomes equal to the spiritual beings there. Then she rises to the Powers before

God: she becomes such a Power herself and lives in God: that is the end of those who have received Gnosis, they become gods. Gnosis is here identical with vision.

A passage in the thirteenth treatise of *Corpus Hermeticum* refers to the same process of transformation: Tat there asks his father what rebirth is. Thereupon Hermes Trismegistus answers:

What can I say, my child? Nothing, except this:  
When I saw something within me, a vision of uncreated light that shone upon me through the mercy of God, I went out of myself into an immortal body, and now I am no more what I was before.

For us, moderns and post-moderns, it is extremely difficult to understand the Ancients. We are all children of Immanuel Kant: we produce the truth. According to this eminent philosopher our brain is like a crumplet ring. With the two ladles of time and space we take the dough of our observations from outside and put them on the patterns of thought or categories of our brains and bake them until they are done.

But the Ancients thought quite differently. Take Saint Augustine. According to him, a human being can do no good, unless interior grace supports him. And he can think no truth, unless Christ, the interior master, illuminates him. Truth is a gift, not a possession. The Hermetists did not think differently. They were not systematic thinkers and like all pious people, they contradict themselves and each other. And why should they not? But about the following point they are adamant. Hermes tells Tat:

Whosoever is not ignorant of these esoteric secrets, can know God exactly.  
If it is allowed to speak freely, he can see Him face to face and, having beheld Him, he can become blessed. Really and truly is he blessed who has beheld Him.  
(Fragment VI, Festugière III, 39)

The human being who has seen God, becomes divine. It would even seem that such a *theōria*, from “theos”, god, and “horan”, “seen”, is a requirement for eternal life.

In treatise X of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, rightly called *Key*, because it contains the words that give access to the key notions of Hermetism, such as illumination, the En-light-en-ment is described with great eloquence:

Hermes: So it is, then, for one who can see.  
For God wishes this seeing to happen...

And so it happens, but only, if he disposes it.  
 One may even say that all other things are there for this.  
 For it is characteristic of the Good  
 That it reveals itself to the initiate, Tat.

Tat: You have filled us with a vision, father,  
 which is good and very beautiful,  
 and the eye of my spirit is almost overawed  
 by the insight in this holy mystery.

Hermes: Yes, but the vision of the Good is quite different from the ray  
 of the sun.

That is fiery, dazzles the eyes with light and makes them shut.  
 But this vision enlightens only to the extent  
 as one who is receptive for that  
 can receive the inflow of spiritual splendour.  
 It penetrates deeper, but does not wound  
 and is full of immortality...

Whosoever has experienced that,  
 cannot think of anything else or hear anything else.  
 His body is lamed,  
 he stays still, all bodily senses and motions forgotten.  
 It kindles the whole spirit and the whole soul,  
 enlightens the soul and draws it away from the body  
 and transforms his whole existence into Being itself.  
 For yes, my boy, the soul who has beheld the beauty of the Good one  
 has become a god,  
 but this happens only if one's body does not function anymore.  
 (C.H. X, 4–6, Festugière I, 114–115)

In fact, Gnosis is identical with illumination. This becomes exceedingly  
 clear in the Eucharistic Prayer, which closes the *Asclepius*:

tua enim gratia tantum sumus cognitionis tuae lumen consecuti.

(through thine grace alone we have attained the light of the Gnosis of  
 thee) (41)

The Eucharistic Prayer proclaims that man already in this life is trans-  
 formed by an enlightening vision, by Gnosis. It is like the Fourth Gospel,  
 17:3: “This is, already here and now, eternal life that we know Thee”  
 (not: that we believe in Thee).

So the Hermetic Eucharistic Prayer says:

We rejoice that you have enlightened us by Thine Gnosis  
 we rejoice that You have completely revealed yourself to us,  
 we rejoice that You have made us gods through the Gnosis of Thee  
 while we were still dwelling in our bodies.  
 (Prayer of Thanksgiving 64, 15–19)

*Illuminatio mentis*, so essential to Saint Augustine and borrowed by him from Plotinus, was already anticipated by the Hermetists. It was, however, not limited to this mystery cult, but also accepted by the followers of Valentinus the Gnostic. *The Gospel of Philip*, written about 225 C.E. in Antioch by a Valentinian teacher, possibly by Axionicus, who had remained faithful to the original doctrine of his master, declares:

It is not possible for anyone to see anything of the things that really exist, unless he becomes like them:  
 You saw Christ, you became Christ,  
 You saw the Father, you shall become the Father. (61, 20–31)

The same basic concept was also characteristic of the sect of the Gnōstikoi, which was older than Valentinus, originating in Alexandria and typically Jewish. See *The Three Steles of Seth*:

Thou art light, since thou beholdest light. (119, 9–10)

and the *Apocalypse of Allogenes* (= Seth):

Having seen the light, I became divine. (52, 10–12)

Plotinus had read the *Apocalypse of Allogenes*. There he may have learnt that the vision of God, the illumination of the Soul by the Spirit, makes divine. He may also have taken it from the Valentinians in Rome or from the Hermetists in Alexandria. It may even have been common knowledge in mystical circles in Alexandria.

One thing is certain: he did not learn it from Plato or the Platonistic tradition, because it is not there.

#### THE MYSTERIES OF AION IN ALEXANDRIA

Once it was a papyrus buried in the sand of Egypt. Then it came to Paris and became the Great Parisian Magical Papyrus, supplément 574 in the Bibliothèque Nationale. This was at the time the French dominated the archaeological scene in Egypt. The papyrus describes how the initiated ascends through the spheres of the planets and penetrates the sphere of the fixed stars and for a while ascends to the realm of the gods. There he asks for rebirth.

After some time the papyrus became a liturgy for the service of the Persian god Mithras. That was when the School of Comparative Religion, the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule, was in the process of discovering the importance of popular religion, sacraments and folklore.

As such it became very influential for psychology. The “tube of the sun, from which the wind issues”, mentioned in line 550, combined with the fancies of a mad patient in the Burkhölzli asylum that the sun had a tail (or phallus), inspired Jung to formulate his doctrine of archetypes: he discovered that ancient mythological patterns survive in the dreams of modern men and women. Another passage of the same Mithras liturgy does emerge in his “juvenile sin”, the *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*, a modern Gnostic myth:

I am a star like you, rising with my light  
From the depth  
(line 573–575)

has become:

This star is man’s God and goal.  
It is his guiding divinity, in it man finds repose.  
To this one, man ought to pray.

Late in life, Jung could still quote the Greek words by heart. Individuation, realisation of the Self, was the core of his religion.

No less important was another passage of the papyrus for the history of scholarship:

I, a mortal man, born from a mortal womb, will *see* with immortal eyes  
the immortal God of eternity. (517–521)

Erik Peterson supposed that this referred to Adam, who was saved from the realm of fate and regained Paradise. His article on the subject ultimately led to the deconstruction of Bultmann’s Aryan Myth of the Saved Saviour and to the discovery of the Jewish origins of Gnosticism.

Recently, the papyrus became a ritual of initiation into the mysteries of the Alexandrian god Pscha—Aion, the God of Eternity. This initiation is said to have been performed with theatrical elements: it was like a guided tour in a planetarium. With great ingenuity Reinhold Merkelbach has reconstructed the scenario of this mystery play. The officiating priests applied all the devices necessary to impress the pious. They could cause earthquakes, thunders, lightnings. Gods were represented by marionets. The priests could make stars to fall and project theophanies with mirrors.

Its aim and purpose was *apathanatismos*, immortalisation. This process is accomplished through a heavenly journey.

Two stages may be distinguished: first he encounters a god, then *the* God.

A: Take your stand, look at the godhead and draw his spirit into you. When you have that, you will see a beautiful god with fiery hair, wearing a white dress, a red cloak and a fiery garland.

B: The climax of the process is a face-to-face vision of the God, Aion (“Behold the God”). Then this God empowers the journey and grants immortality. This vision is quite an experience:

O Lord, I pass away and I am born again,  
I am growing, become greater and I die.  
I am born from a life generating constellation,  
and am passing on, released to death,  
as You have ordained,  
as You have wrought,  
as You have established the mystery.

It would seem that the mysteries of Eleusis have served as an example for the mysteries of Hermes Trismegistus and the mysteries of Aion, both in Alexandria. The underlying model seems to have been the same: transformation through vision. Christianity appropriated the idea of rebirth and applied it to the *sacramentum* (a translation of Greek: *mysterion*) of baptism. Jesus says to Nicodemus: “Verily, verily, I say to thee: Except man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God” (John 3:1). In Protestantism the link between rebirth and baptism was forgotten. In Pietism baptism became the hallmark of the true believer. Goethe, the son of a Pietist mother, once said:

Und so lang ihr es nicht hast,  
dieses “Stirb und werde”,  
bist du noch ein trüber Gast  
auf der dunklen Erde.

(As long as you do not have this: Die and come into being, you are still a lonely guest on the dark earth).

In modernity, rebirth has become a psychological process without any link with Christianity or religion. Some speak about rebirthing.

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## TRANSFORMATION THROUGH VISION IN PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY?

The Gnōstikoi who were friends of Plotinus and enemies of Porphyrius are said to have been Christian heretics. What did they think about Christ? It would seem that they taught the so-called resurrection from the cross. According to the *Paraphrasis of Sem*, Nature, Physis, tried to take possession of the Saviour, but managed only to crucify "Soldas", the terrestrial human being Jesus, whereas the celestial Christ, here called Derdekeas (Aramaic for: the Child) ascended to the celestial spheres. It is possible that Jewish Christians in Alexandria, such as the Gnōstikoi were, developed these views as a continuation of the faith of the congregation in Jerusalem.

The New Testament and the Jewish Christian Gospels of the Hebrews and the Nazoraeans all contain some traditions about the resurrection of Jesus. All Christians of Antiquity, both Catholics, Gnostics and Manichaeans, believed in resurrection.

It seems wise to assume that something has happened on that fateful day in Jerusalem. The traditions about that event differ. According to Luke's Acts of the Apostles (1:3–9), Jesus conversed with his disciples during forty days after his resurrection and then ascended to heaven before their eyes on the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem. Another story is told in the unauthentic end of the Gospel of Mark (16:9–20). According to this version, Jesus rose from the dead and first appeared to Mary Magdalene; after that he appeared in another form unto two of his followers as they walked to a field (εἰς ἄγρον); still later he appeared to the eleven disciples left after Judas had relinquished them; they were having their meal, the prototype of the Eucharist where Christ is really present; he ordered them to go into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; then he was received up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God. *All this happened on the same day.*

It would seem that this is a collection of traditions that are also transmitted elsewhere in another form. So Mary Magdalene is also very prominent in the Gospel of John (20: 1–13): she really is the apostle of the apostles. But John is the first to believe. The two going to a field can be paralleled by the story of the walk to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13–21). In fact, the traditions are identical if we admit that εἰς ἄγρον, to a field, and εἰς κώμην, to a village, are translation variants: both may render the same Aramaic word *kir'ja*. In the same way the Parable of the Invitations (“I pray thee have me excused”) is told by Luke and by Thomas, but in a slightly different way. Luke says that one of those invited says:

I have bought a piece of ground (ἄγρον ἠγόρασα), and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. (Luke 14:18)

Thomas transmits the same incident in different wording:

I have bought a farm (κώμην), I go to collect the rent, I shall not be able to come. (Logion 64)

It seems quite certain that Jesus once spoke this parable. Luke transmits it as transmitted by Gentile Christians. Thomas transmits the Jewish Christian version, the tradition of the congregation of Jerusalem. ἄγρος and κώμη both render *kir'ja*, which can mean both “ground, field” and “village”. Therefore it seems plausible to suppose that the story added to the Gospel of Mark was translated from the Aramaic, the language spoken by the so-called “Hebrews”, the Aramaic-speaking faction of the Christians living in Jerusalem.

There are some indications that point in the same direction. If we may trust Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles, some Christians in Jerusalem had a remarkable view about the elevation of Jesus after his death and resurrection. Peter, the spokesman of the apostles, is quoted as having said on the day of Pentecost, when he addressed some Israelites, that God has *made* that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord (Κύριος) and Messiah (Acts 2:36). This seems to suggest that the man Jesus after his ascension has become Kyrios, JHWH, that God has given him his Name and has made him his vice-regent, identical with the kabod or Glory of God. Stephen, the leader of the Hellenists, that is the leader of the Greek-speaking Christians in the congregation of Jerusalem, as opposed to the Hebrews or Aramaic Christians—when Stephen was being stoned by a hostile mob, he looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw God himself and Jesus *standing* at the right hand



of God. And he said: “Behold, I see the heaven opened and the Son of Man *standing* at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:54–60).

So he saw God and Jesus, who after his death had become identified with the Son of Man, that is the divine Man, the *kabod* or personified Glory of God. He stands at the right hand of God, like a courtier in a heavenly palace, a vice-regent of God, like the angel Jaoel in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, to whom God has given his ineffable Name. Sometimes this Angel of the Lord is called Metatron because he shared the divine throne with God himself. But the passage about Stephen is therefore so remarkable, because he sees Jesus standing, not sitting. One cannot help being reminded of the *Apocryphon of John*, because there originally Man, the divine Anthropos, is brought forth *euparastasis*, that is standing near God like a prominent minister stands near the King (III, 11, 19).

A Samaritan might have said that Jesus had become a *Hestoos*, a spiritualised man, *standing* eternally before the face of God. Does this imply that, according to the Christians of the primitive community of Jerusalem, Jesus after his death became God, because he beheld the Light, who is Phoos, Man, the Son of Man?

The *Apocalypse of John*, the last book of the New Testament, seems to have preserved the same pattern. However, every interpretation of this visionary book is uncertain. Not that the basic idea of it is obscure: it is all about Nero redivivus. The emperor Nero (54–68), it proclaims, is not dead. He has fled to Persia, present-day Iran. From there he will come to attack the Roman Empire, at the head of the Persian mounted cavalry. He will destroy the city of Rome, the whore on the seven hills. Then he attacks Israel. But the Messiah will return to Jerusalem, his second coming. He will vanquish Nero in Armageddon, near Jerusalem, which has become the centre and capital of the united nations.

The imagery in which this basic idea is expressed is complicated. Therefore, a timely warning is necessary: our interpretation is controversial and uncertain. In chapter twelve of the *Apocalypse* there appears a great wonder in heaven:

a woman clothed with the sun,  
and the moon under her feet,  
and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:  
and she being with child cried  
travailing in birth,  
and pained to be delivered. (12:1–2)

It is a plausible guess that this woman is the Holy Spirit. All Jewish Christians used to regard the Holy Spirit as both a Lady and a Mother. John, the author of the Apocalypse, is one of them:

and she brought forth a man child,  
 who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron;  
 and her child was caught up  
 to God and to his throne. (12:5)

The child is Jesus, Derdekeas according to the Gnostics. According to the Jewish Christians, Jesus was reborn at his baptism in the river Jordan: it was there that a Voice spoke to him: “You are my Son, today I brought Thee forth.” John must have had the same opinion. As we said, in the last days he will come back to Jerusalem and rule in his messianic kingdom. But before that, an enthronement has taken place: he has become Lord and Messiah, exactly as Peter had said in his speech in Jerusalem. That event is described in the verses quoted above. That Jesus has become the Son of Man or *Anthrōpos*, the god Man, is said in so many words in the Apocalypse. In the first chapter John describes how he was in the Spirit and enraptured and how he in heaven beholds the heavenly Christ, “one like a Son of Man”. This is a direct reference to the inaugural vision of the prophet Ezekiel, in which appeared the *kabod*, the radiant Glory of God which emanates from Him. Jesus has identified with God’s Glory, he has become God’s viceroy and is destined to be the Last Judge, the Son of Man.

This is unmistakably a parallel to the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos*; Jacob, who became Israel, because he saw God, who had received the Proper Name of God and who had taken the place of the Angel of the Lord, Jaol.

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## MOSES BECOMES A GOD

Ezekiel Tragicus, whom the Anglo-Saxons call Ezekiel the Dramatist, was a Jewish poet, who lived in Alexandria, probably in the second century B.C.E. He wrote a poem in Greek called *Exagoge*, in which he described the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. Only fragments of it have been preserved in the work *Preparation of the Gospel* (9, 29) written by the Christian historian, bishop Eusebius of Caesarea in the fourth century. In one of these fragments the poet tells us how Moses in a vision saw a great throne on the top of Mount Sinai which reached until heaven. On the throne Phoos, a Man, was sitting, wearing a crown on his head and holding a sceptre in his left hand. With his right hand he beckoned to Moses. Then he said to him that he should take place on a (or: the) throne.

Thereupon he gave me the royal crown.

Then the man rose from his throne. From on high Moses saw the whole earth around and what was under the earth and above the heaven. And the hosts of the heavenly stars fell down on their knees (adored him):

And I counted them all and then they marched along me as an army of mortals. Then full of anxiety I arose from my sleep.

There cannot be any doubt that in this passage a real deification is described: the stars adore Moses. The imagery is derived from the protocol of the royal court. Living dignitaries are often called *σύνθρονοι θεοί*, gods on the throne with the king, in Hellenistic documents of this period. *The Angel of the Lord*, called Jaobel, because the Name of the Lord is in him, is also called Metatron, the Angel beside the throne of his master. In the fragment of Ezekiel Tragicus, Moses has become Metatron, a god.

The figure whom Moses beholds is called Phoos, Man. He is not God himself, whom nobody has ever seen, but rather the *kabod*, the personal glory of the Lord. The scene seems to have been inspired by Exodus 24:17, where the appearance of the Glory of the Lord is resting on the top of Mount Sinai. Moses does not see the Lord himself, he beholds His luminous manifestation, the figure like the appearance of a Man whom Ezekiel saw. Moses according to Ezekiel the Dramatist sees Phoos, just like the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos* described how Phoos was taking a breath of fresh air when walking in Paradise. It seems to have been traditional in Alexandria to call the Glory of God Phoos, Man.

It now becomes clear that the Anthropos, the Man, in *Poimandres* has the same Jewish background and has very old roots in Alexandria. Ezekiel the Dramatist is not far from Philo, who in his *Life of Moses* (158) describes how Moses, when ascending Mount Sinai, entered into the darkness, where God was, that is into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal and archetypal essence of existing things, the world of ideas.

In fact Ezekiel Tragicus also describes an ontological elevation, a transformation through vision: Moses sees the Glory of God and is transformed into a divine being.

Among the many texts of Antiquity which describe the ascent to heaven of a biblical figure there is none which is so similar to the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos* as the fragment of Ezekiel the Dramatist. Nikotheos-Israel, too, was “unfindable”, taken away from the earth and lifted to the invisible world. Nikotheos was the only one who knew the enigmatic Name of God. This was because Israel had seen God and had taken over the place of *the* Angel of the Lord, Jaol, a power in the possession of the ineffable Name. So Moses was deified because he had seen God. He did, however, not see God himself, but the luminous and personal Glory of God. φῶς, Man, according to the prophet Ezekiel, φως, Light, according to Genesis 1. The model is the same.

What about the orthodox Merkabah tradition of the second century and afterwards? According to a specialist in his field, C.R.A. Morray-Jones, this tradition is characterised by an ascent of a rabbi into heaven, where he beholds the *kabod*: this involves the transformation of the visionary into an angelic or supra-angelic likeness of that Glory in divine image. That is exactly the same as what Ezekiel Tragicus describes, but also the *Apocalypse of Nikotheos*, the *Apocalypse of Allogenes-Seth* and other writings of the Gnōstikoi mentioned by Porphyrius. And we can now be sure, that these traditions are old and have pre-Christian roots. Can there be any doubt that the rabbis knew the ideas of these *minim*, heretics and domesticated them, eliminating the distinction between the Unknown Godhead and the personal god? And that the rabbi was not transformed into a god, but only into an angel? As so often, heresy preceded orthodoxy. The myth of transformation through vision arose in the Hellenistic world among Hellenized Jews and was made orthodox by Pharisaic rabbis in Palestine. We must suppose that it was known in its Hellenistic form to Paul and to John, the author of the Fourth Gospel. Perhaps it was known even to the primitive Christian congregation of Jerusalem and to the author of the *Apocalypse of John*.

We are left with the painful question what for heaven's sake may have moved the rationalist Plotinus to tolerate these wild anthroposophists in his inner circle and even consider them as his friends. According to Porphyrius they said that "Plato had not gauged the depth of the spiritual world". Perhaps Plotinus agreed. Plato was not a mystic, he was a rationalist. These people told stories about men who had seen God, speculations as old as the prophet Ezekiel in Babylonia in 553 B.C.E. Plotinus may have been fascinated by them, because he had known the same experience.

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

### THE MUSLIM JESUS\*

#### I

##### AN APHORISTIC JESUS

Tarif Khalidi, the author of a recent book on Sayings of Jesus and stories about Jesus in Islamic literature,<sup>1</sup> is Sir Thomas Adams' Professor of Arabic, Director of the Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies and Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. The idea for the book on the Sayings of Jesus occurred to him many years ago during a conversation in Beirut with a friend of the author. Years went by during which he did little more than to keep half an eye open for any Sayings of and stories about Jesus in Arabic literature. It was the well-known Orientalist and critic of Orientalism Edward Said who brought about its nativity. A generous grant from a Foundation enabled the author to devote a whole year to Jesus and write this work.

After an introduction on the Muslim Gospel there follow a sketch of the Qur'anic Jesus and his early context, chapters on the earliest and the later Sayings and a conclusion. The 303 Sayings are translated, accompanied by a short commentary, in which almost always reference is made to a corresponding passage in the canonical Gospels in the New Testament. Much of it comes from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. Of course, the author mentions similar collections of such Arabic Sayings by Moses Margoliouth in 1846 and Miguel Asin y Palacios in 1919 and observes that since then several Sayings and stories in a number of early Islamic texts have recently come to light. He mentions Nag Hammadi in passing, but is not aware of the implications of this discovery for the subject of his book. He fails to see that the *Gospel of Thomas*, found near Nag Hammadi in 1945, contains in part a Judaic Christian Gospel tradition which can be paralleled from Arabic sources.

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\* First publication.

<sup>1</sup> *The Muslim Jesus*, London 2001 (3rd ed.).

JEWISH CHRISTIANITY<sup>2</sup>

Not every Jew who became a Christian was a Jewish Christian. St Paul was not. He was baptized in Damascus and later became a missionary of the Christian congregation of Antioch. The latter had been founded by Hellenists, Greek-speaking Jews from the Diaspora, who had lived in Jerusalem and had fled the Holy City after the martyrdom of St Stephen. They had been the first to admit Gentiles to the fold. St Paul agreed. He became one of the founding fathers of Gentile Christianity, whose thought was dominated by the dialectics of Law and Grace.

However, the faction of the Hebrews, the Aramaic-speaking indigenous Jews, under the leadership of James, the brother of the Lord, remained in Jerusalem after the death of St Stephen. They observed the Law and may be called Judaic Christians. The Epistle of James, the General Epistle of Jude, the Secret Book of Revelation (written by a presbyter called John who had fled from Jerusalem to Ephesus),<sup>3</sup> all contained in the New Testament, but also the *Pastor* (Guardian Angel) written about 140 C.E. by a certain Hermas in Rome, and the written source Q (= "Quelle", source) of Matthew and Luke (ca. 60 C.E.) are sometimes considered to transmit their views. Tradition tells us that they migrated to Pella in Transjordanian before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Later on they came to be regarded as heretics and were variously called Ebionites (Poor men), Nazoraeans (Puritans) and Masbothaeans (Baptists). It is possible that the Nazoraeans tolerated Paul (and the virginal birth of Jesus), whereas the Ebionites rejected Paul as an apostate from the Law and did not accept the virginal birth. Their views have been transmitted by the pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* and *Recognitions*. Some of them migrated to Mesopotamia, where they founded Aramaic Christianity, centred in the city of Edessa (present-day Urfa). Mani (216–277), the founder of the world religion of Manichaeism, was reared in a commune of Jewish Christian Baptists.<sup>4</sup> According to a trustworthy tradition, the Hebrew faction in Jerusalem sent a missionary, Barnabas, to nearby Alexandria in Egypt already in the first century C.E.<sup>5</sup> This became the nucleus of the powerful Egyptian Church, which still exists

<sup>2</sup> G. Quispel, *Makarius, das Thomas-Evangelium und das Lied von der Perle*, Leiden 1967; W.D. Stroker, *Extracanonical Sayings of Jesus*, Atlanta 1989.

<sup>3</sup> G. Quispel, *The Secret Book of Revelation*, Maidenhead 1979.

<sup>4</sup> *Der Kölner Mani-Codex*, eds. L. Koenen & C. Römer, Opladen 1988.

<sup>5</sup> Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1,7,7; *Homilies* 1,9,1.

(the Copts). In the second century Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* III) transmitted that there was a faction of Encratites (strict ascetes: no alcohol, no meat, no sex) in Alexandria. They had accepted the severe other-worldliness of Alexandrian Platonism. They were already attested in the *First* and *Second Epistle to Timothy* and the *Epistle to Titus* in the New Testament (before 130 C.E.); their author combats the views of Jewish teachers of the Mosaic Law who were active in Crete and in Pauline congregations in Asia Minor; they prohibited marriage and insisted on abstinence from meat. It is possible that these so-called Encratites came to Crete from Alexandria and were Hellenistic Jewish Christians.

The Judaic Christians, however, who produced the pseudo-Clementine writings, were in favour of sex and marriage. Moreover, they taught that Jesus was the definitive embodiment of the True Prophet, who had been prophesized by Moses, an angelic and transcendent being who had revealed himself in successive stages in the history of salvation, ultimately in Jesus. The death of Jesus is not even mentioned in the pseudo-Clementine writings and has no special meaning for them.

These Ebionites orientated their prayers towards Jerusalem. They were baptised fully dressed in living (streaming) water and moreover practised daily ablutions. Hence their name: Baptists.

The Jewish Christians of Alexandria had their own Gospels: the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and the Encratite *Gospel of the Egyptians*. The Judaic Christians also had a Gospel tradition of their own, which is preserved in fragments of the *Gospel of the Nazoraeans* and the *Gospel of the Ebionites*.<sup>6</sup>

Vestiges of the Judaic Christian Gospel tradition have been identified in the *Gospel of Thomas* (Edessa, before 140 C.E.), the Pseudo-Clementine writings, the *Diatessaron* of Tatian (Mesopotamia 170 C.E.), the Aramaic *Liber Graduum* (4th century, edited by M. Kmosko), the works of the Syrian mystic from Edessa Makarios (Edessa, 4th century), the Syriac *Didascalia* (second half 3rd century, North Syria), the *Pastor* of Hermas (Rome 140) and the Western Text of the New Testament (Rome, 144–200).

In short, Judaic Christianity is much nearer to Islam than Gentile Christian and Catholic Christianity. The Judaic Christian Gospel tradition is a much more plausible source for Islamic Sayings of Jesus than the Canonical Gospels.

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<sup>6</sup> A.F.J. Klijn, *Jewish Christian Gospel Tradition*, Leiden 1992.



## THE SABBATH (SAYING 280)

Jesus exhorted some of his companions as follows:

*Fast from the world* and break your fast with death...

This aphorism was already known in a slightly different and also longer form from the Greek Papyrus Oxyrrhynchus 1,11–47:

Jesus said:  
 If you do not fast as regards the world,  
 You will not find the Kingdom of God.  
 If you do not observe the Sabbath as Sabbath,  
 You will not see the Father.  
 (translation Attridge)

When the *Gospel of Thomas* was discovered near Nag Hammadi in 1945, Henri-Charles Puech established that this Logion was part of the *Gospel of Thomas* (27), (Edessa, before 140 C.E.).<sup>7</sup>

The Judaic Christians observed the Law and kept the Sabbath, whereas the Gentile Christians gave up the Sabbath and accepted the Sunday for celebrating the Eucharist. It was only under Constantine the Great that the Day of the Sun also became a day of rest. It is plausible to suppose, therefore, that this Logion was transmitted by the Judaic Christians, the heirs of the primitive congregation of Jerusalem. Jesus certainly observed the Law, but of course we cannot determine whether or not this Logion is authentic.<sup>8</sup> One thing is certain: there is nothing comparable in the Canonical Gospels. Therefore it is more probable that Islam derived it from the Judaic Christian Gospel tradition. This Logion was known in Aramaic Christianity. It was known to the author of the *Liber Graduum* (XXIX, 6: he fasts the world) and to the author of the Manichaean *Kephalaia* (LXX, 192,30: The fast that he fasts is this: let him fast on the day of the Lord and rest from the works of the world). The expression “to fast the world” is Aramaic and means: “to renounce the world”.

The Saying echoes the radical otherworldliness of Judaic Christianity and the congregation of Jerusalem. The *General Epistle of James*, written either by James, the brother of the Lord and leader of the Church

<sup>7</sup> H.-C. Puech, “Gnostische Evangelien und verwandte Dokumente”, in: E. Hennecke & W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentische Apokryphen* I, Tübingen 1968, 158–249.

<sup>8</sup> G. Rouwhorst, “The reception of the Jewish Sabbath”, in: P. Post, G. Rouwhorst et al., eds., *Christian Feast and Festival*, Louvain 2001.

centred in Jerusalem, or by some of his school, teaches that pure religion and standing undefiled before God the Father is this: ...to keep oneself unspotted by the world (1:27). Could it be that the Islamic and Manichaean practice of fasting originated in Judaic Christianity and was transmitted to Islam by Syriac, Aramaic-speaking Christians? Or did the Jewish Christians themselves serve as a source?

#### THE WANDERING PROPHET

Other Sayings of Jesus in Arabic sources seem to be moving the Gospel from a generally ascetic to a more ethical perspective. On a mosque of Fatah Shapur in India the following inscription can be read:

Jesus on whom be peace said: The world is a bridge. Cross it but do not build your house on it.

Khalidi chooses to print another version, his Saying 99:

Christ said: The world is a bridge. Cross this bridge, but do not build upon it.

Moreover he quotes many other Islamic sources which quote the same Saying. And he refers to the *Gospel of Thomas*, Logion 42: Jesus said, become wanderers. This Saying in its amplified form penetrated the whole world of Islam as far as Spain, when Petrus Alfonsi (1062–ca. 1140) in his *Disciplina clericalis* quotes it in a Latin translation:

*Saeculum est quasi pons: transi ergo, ne hospiteris*

In its original form, however, it reflects the *Wander-Radikalismus* of primitive Christianity.<sup>9</sup> The Jewish Christian *Didachè* (ca. 100, Syria) shows that in the first century, apostles (missionaries) and prophets (ecstatics) wandered from one congregation to another to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments. The Church was not yet hierarchical. The *Gospel of Thomas* (ca. 140, Edessa), an Encratic, strongly ascetic writing with in part Judaic Christian Gospel tradition, presupposes the same primitive offices. This will be evident if we keep in mind that Greek *angelos* in the first place means: envoy, messenger, and only metaphorically: angel. Strictly speaking it means the same as *apostolos* (missionary, envoy), from Greek *apostellō*, to send. This primitive state of affairs is reflected by Logion 88 of the *Gospel of Thomas*:

<sup>9</sup> G. Theissen, *Soziologie der Jesusbewegung*, München 1977.

Jesus said: The messengers (angeli) and the prophets will come to you and will give you what is yours. And you, too, give you to them what is in your hands (= what you can spare).

The apostle Saint Paul, not one of the Twelve, but a missionary of the congregation of Antioch, admits that Jesus himself had ordained that missionaries should

live from the Gospel: Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:14)

But Saint Paul ignored the commandment that missionaries should give up all private property and live from the gifts of the newly converted in the mission field. Paul was rich.

The Judaic Christians, however, were obedient to Jesus' commandment, that missionaries and prophets should live from the gifts of new converts in the mission field. That is the meaning of Logion 88 of the *Gospel of Thomas* and also of Logion 42: Become wanderers. This last aphorism has a Semitic ring. The underlying Greek of the Coptic text is: *ginesthe paragontes*. Greek *paragoon* can be the translation of the Hebrew word: *'ober*. In Psalm 128 (129):8 the words: *hoi paragontes* translate the Hebrew word *'ober*, which means: passer-by. This concept is typical for the Judaic Christians of the *Pseudo-Clementines*, who consider themselves as travellers, pilgrims (Latin: *iter acturi*) on their way through this world to the City of God at the end of times (*Recognitions II*, 21).

According to the tradition of the Syrian church it had been the Jewish missionary Addai who had preached this way of life when he had come to Edessa to found there Aramaic Christianity:

Consider yourself in your relation to the world as travellers and guests, who remain only for one night and soon return to their homes.  
(*Doctrina Addai*, Phillips 4)

Aramaic Christianity assimilated this world-view. The doctor of the Church Ephrem Syrus (Nisibis, fourth century) teaches:

Whosoever aims at perfection, may choose a wandering life.  
(*Life of Pilgrim* 13)

Manichaeism accepted this typically Syrian way of life for their elects. A whole section of the Manichaean Psalms found at Medinet Madi in 1931 is called: Psalms of the Wanderers (Coptic: *Sarakote*). The 4th-century Messalians, a movement which originated in Edessa, also led a wandering life.

It is probable that Islamic sages took over the short form of this Saying from Syrian Christians and made it sapiential, no longer eschatological: cross the bridge, do not build your house upon it.

### MONACHOS

Jesus said:

“Oh God, who is the most honourable of men?”

God replied:

“He who when alone knows that I am with him”

(Khalidi, *Saying* 177)

This is probably not a parallel to Matthew 18:20: “When two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them”. For Matthew knows nothing about God’s relation with the single individual, which is the gist of the Islamic Saying. The latter rather goes back to a variant of that aphorism which is transmitted by Logion 30 of the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*. The Greek original of this is also preserved in part by *Papyrus Oxryrynchus* 1, 23–30. The restoration of this defective fragment is uncertain. According to Antoine Guillaumont we should read: *eisin theoi*, they are gods, and translate:

Jesus says, where there are three, they are gods.

This strange text can be explained by a typically Jewish exegetical device. The rabbis explained away all traces of polytheism in the Old Testament. Psalm 82:1 proclaims:

God standeth in the congregation of the mighty:  
He judges among the gods.

The rabbis explained that this only meant that God was present among three judges. These judges were metaphorically called: three gods. This same line of reasoning would also explain the Coptic translation of the Greek in the *Gospel of Thomas* (30):

Where there are three gods, they are gods.  
Where there are two or one, I am with him.

So the Greek should be restored as meaning:

Where there is but a single one (*heis estin monos*)  
I say that I am within him.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> A. Guillaumont, *Journal Asiatique* CCXLVI, 1958, 114–116.

This version of the Saying, so different from the Canonical one, is typically Jewish and Judaic Christian. The so-called “règle de tri” (where there are three..., where there are two..., where there is one...) is a device of popular narrative and characteristic of the style of Jesus, a priest, a Levite, a Samaritan (Luke 10:31–33).

Special attention should be paid to the view that God has a special relation with one individual. The Judaic Christians venerated the single one. This is a technical term, in Hebrew: *jachid*, to indicate a saint. It could, however, also have the meaning of: bachelor, celibate. The rabbis would explain Psalm 68:7 (God) setteth the solitaires (*jachidim*) in families, as implying that marriages are contracted in heaven. *Jachid* is translated in Greek as: *monachos*. But the Judaic Christian Symmachus translated also the Hebrew term: *lebado* in Genesis 2:18 (it is not good that the male remains *alone*) as *monachos*, the single one. This is the typical term of the *Gospel of Thomas*: a saintly celibate; a whole man, who has transcended the antithesis of male and female and has become human. This was adopted in Syriac: *ichidaja*.

These were the overtones of the variant assimilated by the Encratite Tatian in his *Diatessaron*:

Ubi unus, ibi sum et ego

(where there is one, there I am, too)

(Ephrem Syrus, *Diatessaron* XIV, 24, Leloir 144)

There cannot be any doubt that Tatian, when composing his Gospel harmony out of the four canonical Gospels and a fifth source, took this variant reading from a Judaic Christian source, when he wrote his *Diatessaron* about 170 C.E. in the East.

These are very strong indications that Islam took this version, with its stress on the single one, from the same document, or rather from the Judaic Christian Gospel tradition.<sup>11</sup>

#### PLATO AND JESUS

Jesus said, I reflected upon creation and found that he who has not been created is in my view happier than he who has.

(Khalidi, *Saying* 104)

<sup>11</sup> G. Quispel, “L’Évangile selon Thomas et les origines de l’ascèse chrétienne”, in: *Aspects du Judéo-christianisme*, Paris 1965, 35–53 (= *Gnostic Studies*, II, 95–113).

It is true that this curious Saying is not akin to anything found in the Canonical Gospels, not even Matthew 26:24, which concerns the treason of Judas. It is also true that a parallel of it is found in the *Gospel of Thomas* 19 (Blessed is he who was before he came into being...) and the *Gospel of Philip* 64, 10–11 (The Lord said, blessed is *he*, who was before *he* came into existence...).

But there is more. In the first place the *Gospel of Philip* (ca. 225, Antioch) may have borrowed the Logion from the *Gospel of Thomas* (Edessa, before 140 C.E.). Secondly, this Logion is also attested elsewhere. Irenaeus of Lyon (after 185) quoted it in his *Demonstration* (43), a sort of Catholic catechism preserved only in Armenian. So does Lactantius, surnamed the Christian Cicero, a Catholic rhetor and apologist, in his *Divinae Institutiones: beatus qui erat ante quam nasceretur*. Both authors, however, attribute this Saying not to Jesus, but to the prophet Jeremiah, where it cannot be found.

The same terminology, and the dialectics of Being and Becoming, are found in Plato's dialogue *Phaedo* about the immortality of the soul: "Our souls were before we came into existence" (76E). And that, no doubt, was the ultimate source of the Saying. For Platonism, more especially Middle Platonism, was ubiquitous in the Roman Empire at the beginning of the Christian Era, but especially in Egyptian Alexandria. According to Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis*, III, 93–95), a certain Julius Cassianus, a Christian Enkratite, was teaching there that "the soul, having become effeminate through its desire, had come down from above to our world of birth and death". "This is rather Platonic", says Clement. The same pre-existence of the soul is presupposed in several Sayings of the *Gospel of Thomas*, e.g. 18, 50 etc. This is no wonder, because the *Gospel of Thomas* is Encratic, like Julius Cassianus.

The first Muslim who integrated this Logion, saw very well its implication: he, who has a pre-existent soul, is blessed, he who has not, is damned. The context has become Christian, a drama of heaven and hell. The fact that the Saying is attributed to Jesus, seems to prove that it originated in Alexandrian Christianity. But ultimately: it goes back to Plato himself.

#### THE MYSTERIES OF JESUS

Jesus said:

To dispense wisdom to others than those worthy of it  
is to do it injustice

and to bar it from those worthy of it  
 is to do them injustice  
 (Khalidi, *Saying* 200)

It is very improbable that this Saying is an echo of the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:6:

Give not sacrificial meat unto the dogs,  
 neither cast ye your pearls before swine.

It seems more plausible that it goes back to some version of Logion 62 of the Gospel of Thomas:

Jesus said:  
 I tell my mysteries to those,  
 [who are worthy of] my mysteries.

It is true that the words “who are worthy of” are an emendation to supply a lacuna of ten letters. But this conjecture is supported by a variant of this Logion in the Gnostic Second *Book of Jeu* (MacDermot 101):

Now behold, I have spoken with you concerning  
 the mysteries: guard them. Do not give them to any  
 man except to *those who are worthy of them*.

This same Logion is transmitted in slightly different forms in numerous writings of Ancient Christian literature.<sup>12</sup> For our purpose it suffices to refer to the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* XIX, 20,1:

The mysteries for me and for the sons of my house (Semitism for: inmates)

This parallel proves that this Logion was transmitted by Judaic Christians and that the author of the *Gospel of Thomas* borrowed it from his written Judaic Christian source.

A similar Saying of Jesus is contained in the Gospel of Saint Mark, who was followed by Saint Matthew (13:11) and Saint Luke (8:10):

And he said unto them: Unto you it is given  
 to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God,  
 but unto them that are without, all things are  
 done in parables (riddles)  
 (Mark 4:11)

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<sup>12</sup> J. v. Amersfoort, *Het Evangelie van Thomas en de Pseudo-Clementinen*, Utrecht (diss.) 1984, 88–94; A. Resch, *Agrapha*, Darmstadt 1967, 108–109.

The wording of Saint Mark is rather different from that of Saint Thomas, but the words have the same tendency: Jesus reveals mysteries exclusively to an inner circle, but to outsiders he speaks in riddles. In both cases Jesus comes very near to the Hellenistic mysteries of his time, where only the initiates were entrusted with the esoteric secrets, which they were strictly forbidden to give away to the madding crowd outside.

#### PRIVATE PROPERTY

One day Jesus went out with his disciples. At noon they passed by a field ready for harvest. "Prophet of God", they said, "We are hungry". God inspired him to allow them to eat, so they dispersed among the wheat, rubbing and eating. While they were eating, the owner came up and cried: "This is my field and my land, inherited from my father and grandfather. By whose permission do you eat it?" Jesus prayed God to resurrect all those who had ever possessed that field, from the days of Adam until that very time. And so at each blade of wheat a multitude of men and women appeared, each of them saying; "This is my land, inherited from my father and grandfather". The man fled in fear. (Saying 246, Khalidi).

Khalidi observes that the story seems to have had its Islamic origin in the biographical compendium of the ninth-century genealogist al-Zubayr ibn Bakr. He concedes that it may ultimately go back to Logion 21 of the *Gospel of Thomas*:

Mary (Magdalene) said to Jesus: Whom are thy disciples like? He said: They are like little children who have installed themselves in a field which is not theirs. When the owners of the field come, they will say: "Release to us our field". They take off their clothes before them to release the field to them...

It is indeed plausible that this is the ultimate source of the Islamic Saying. But more can be said. The *Pastor* or Guardian Angel of Hermas, a Jewish Christian in Rome (ca. 140 C.E.), tells him:

You know, the servants of God dwell in a foreign country. For your city is far from this city. If then you know the city in which you are going to live, why do you prepare here fields, expensive possessions, houses and superfluous buildings. For the Lord of this city rightly says to you: Either live in accordance with my laws or depart from the country. (*Similitude* 1, 1-4)



It is possible that this passage was a source for Saint Augustine's anti-thesis, in his *Civitas Dei*, of the City of God and the City of the Devil.<sup>13</sup> Works of world literature, like Dante's *Divina Commedia*, Goethe's *Faust* and also the *Civitas Dei* all have a long incubation time.

A similar story is told in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*. There the Christians are compared to *paroristai* (intruders, immigrants) who are staying in the country of another king. What they possess they have derived from the possessions of the autochthones. For the rest they should content themselves with all the high demands pitched upon them by the strangers amongst whom they live and be grateful if their lives are spared. For, what Christians possess, properly speaking belongs to the strangers who are at home in that country (*Homilies* 15,7).

Seen in this perspective it seems rather certain that the Islamic Saying has been borrowed from the Judaic Christian Gospel tradition of Palestine and Syria. If so, it is curious to observe that Islam has preserved the very characteristic eschatological reservations of Judaic Christianity against private property.

#### PHARISEES ARE NO HYPOCRITES

Jesus said to the religious leaders:  
 "You sit on the road to the afterlife,  
 but you have neither walked this road to its end,  
 nor allowed anyone else to pass by.  
 Woe to him who is beguiled by you"  
 (quoted by Ibn 'Arabbi, ca. 1240 C.E.)  
 (Khalidi, *Saying* 276)

The Arabic aphorism reflects a specific historical situation in the development of Islam. The age of Ibn 'Arabbi saw increasing tension between Sufis and legal scholars. Jesus was conveniently inducted in this struggle on the side of the Sufis because of his perceived disapproval of narrow-minded legalism. However, the original context in which this Logion was spoken and first committed to writing was very different. It is very remarkable that even the Arabic text still admits that the teachers of the Law are on their way to eternal Life. Saint Matthew on the contrary (Matthew 23:13) has a less positive appreciation of the Pharisees and the Scribes: he calls them hypocrites and usurers because

<sup>13</sup> J. van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*, Leiden 1991, 305.

they *shut up* the Kingdom of Heaven against men. According to Saint Luke (11:52) Jesus strongly condemns the Lawyers (“Woe unto you”), because they had taken away the key to the Kingdom of God which is Gnosis, to wit the oral interpretation of the Mosaic Law. We must conclude that even according to the common source of Matthew and Luke (Q) the Pharisees and the Scribes were not sitting on the road which led to eternal life.

In this respect gentile Christianity differed sharply from Judaic, pre-Pauline Christianity. We know the views of the latter both from the Pseudo-Clementine writings and the *Gospel of Thomas*. According to the Pseudo-Clementine writings, Jesus had said that the key to the Kingdom had been *committed* to the Pharisees and the Scribes (*Homilies* 3,18,3). Therefore, Jesus had not condemned all Pharisees, but only those who had hidden the key, which gave access to the house of the Kingdom (Syriac *Recognitions* II, 30, 1). The Greek version of this Logion is contained in *Papyrus Oxryrnychus* 655, column II, 11–23, a badly damaged folio which can be restored as follows:

Jesus said: The Pharisees and the Scribes have received (*elabon*) the keys of Gnosis and have hidden them. They themselves have not entered nor have they allowed to enter those who wished.

An almost identical version of this Logion is to be found in the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* (39). There is not the slightest doubt that this and not the wording of the Canonical Gospels is the ultimate source of the Islamic Saying quoted above.

It was the *Oxryrnychus Papyrus* 655 which enabled a Dutch clergyman to discover the Gospel of Thomas in 1905, long before the Coptic translation of this writing came to light in 1945.

Jan Hendrik Adolf Michelsen (1838–1918) was a Lutheran pastor, who had already served several congregations in the Netherlands and had settled in the coastal resort town of Noordwijk when he published his study on *Papyrus Oxryrnychus* 655 in 1905.

He noticed its relation to Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 18,5, which enabled him to supply the gap in the fragmentary papyrus *el as elabon*, which proved an *emendatio palmaris*. This meant that the Pharisees were acknowledged as the legitimate heirs and successors of Law-giver Moses, who had received the oral tradition or *mishna*, the interpretation of the Law, which Moses had committed to certain Elders. In fact, “Thomas” does not damn the Pharisees (“Woe”) nor does he call them hypocrites, as Matthew 23:13 does. That same “omission” also occurs elsewhere in Thomas; in Logion 100 (“give Caesar what is Caesar’s”, as compared

with Mark 12:13–14 par.); in Logion 89 (“why do you wash the outside of the cup?”), cf. Matthew 28:25; in Logion 26 (mote in brother’s eye, cf. Luke 6:43 and Matthew 7:5). Neither does the Arabic Saying include it. Could it be that Jesus never called his Pharisaic opponents hypocrites?

Again we must conclude that the above-quoted Arabic Saying of Jesus is indebted to the Judaic Christian Gospel tradition and not to the Canonical Gospels of the Catholic Church of Antiquity.<sup>14</sup>

#### MORE ISLAMIC SAYINGS OF JESUS

There are still more footmarks of the Judaic Christian Gospel tradition to be found in Islamic sources. An eight-century Muslim mystic called Al-Muhasibi quotes the Parable of the Sower in a form different from that of the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 4:3–9 par.):

The sower went out with his seed and *filled his hand* and sowed. Some fell *on the path*, the birds came, *they gathered them*.

This corresponds to Logion 9 of the Gospel of Thomas:

Jesus said: See, the sower went out, he *filled his hand*, he threw. Some fell *on the path*, the birds came, *they gathered them*.

*On the path*, which the neighbours have trodden in the field, not: “by the way side” (*para tèn hodon*), which is unrealistic. The difference between “Thomas” and the Synoptics can be explained as a misunderstanding by the latter of the Aramaic preposition: ‘al (urha) which has both meanings. The Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* Latin and Syriac III, 14 (*in his quae ab hominibus conculcanda sunt*) presuppose: *eis ten hodon*, on the path, not *para ten hodon* (by the wayside). This proves that Logion 9 of the *Gospel of Thomas* has been taken from a Judaic Christian source with an Aramaic background. “The birds came, they *gathered* them”, not: “The fowls of the air came and *devoured* it” (Mark). “He *filled his hand*” is a biblical Semitism (Psalm 129:7, “Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand”). It is absent from the Synoptics and has an authentic ring.

A similar version of the Parable is found in the Arabic version of The Story of Saint Barlaam and Saint Joasaph (= Boddhisatva)

<sup>14</sup> See the article on Michelsen in *Biographisch Lexicon van de geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Protestantisme*, Vol. 5, 374.

The sower went out with his good seed to sow and had *filled his hand* with it and had strewn the seed, some of it fell on the border of the road, where soon the birds *picked* it up.<sup>15</sup>

The tenth-century Arabic scholar Abd al-Jabbar, to whom we will come back later, transmits the following Saying of Jesus:

A man said to him: Master, let my brother share with me my father's wealth.

He said to him: Who set me over you as a divider?<sup>16</sup>

This corresponds to Logion 72 of the Gospel of Thomas:

[A man said] to him: Tell my brethren to divide my father's possessions with me. He said to him: Man, who made me a divider?

When the editors of the *editio princeps* of the Gospel of Thomas supplied a gap in the manuscript with the Coptic equivalent of: 'a man said/*pedzje ourōme*), they did not yet know the text of Abd al-Jabbar. Curiously enough, the Arabic text, of much later date, seems to confirm this conjecture. Bentley Layton, in his edition of 1989, has taken over this emendation. The text of "Thomas" also seems to show that Saint Luke, who knew Greek quite well, has Hellenized the source which he used in chapter 12:13–14 and made the language more elegant:

And one of the company said unto him:

Master, speak to my brother  
that he divide the inheritance with me.

And he said unto him:

Man, who made me a judge and a divider over you?

"One of the company" (Greek: *heis ek tou òchlou*), which would be translated as: "one in the crowd said to him from out of the crowd" is idiomatic. Luke adds: "in the crowd" to insert an isolated logion into the speech he composed: it refers to "the innumerable multitude of people" which Jesus according to Saint Luke is addressing.

The words: "who made me a judge and a divider over you" refer to an incident in the life of Moses. When still in Egypt, he tried to intervene in a quarrel between two Hebrew men; one said to him, according to the Greek text of the Septuagint: "who has made you ruler and judge over us?" (Exodus 2:14). This has nothing to do with our Logion. The

<sup>15</sup> G. Quispel, "The Gospel of Thomas revisited", in: B. Barc, ed. *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi*, Québec-Louvain 1981, 231.

<sup>16</sup> G. Quispel, *Gnostic Studies*, Istanbul 1974–1975, part II, 150.

latter reflects a situation which is very common in an agrarian society, a family row about the patrimony. The rules for the division of an inheritance were established in Deuteronomy 21:15–17. According to the rights of primogeniture, the eldest son did get a double share, the other sons each one part, the daughters obviously did not get anything. Jesus is asked to act as an arbitrator (*meristès*). But the rules of the Law are perfectly clear. Jesus, who is observant, does not wish to act against the revealed stipulations, he does not want to rule against the Law.

The text of the *Gospel of Thomas* adds to this logion the following:

He turned to his disciples, he said to them:  
I am not a divider, am I?

This is obviously a later addition to a Saying of Jesus. It may be a pun. The Aramaic word *phalguta* means literally “divider”, but can indicate a person who brings dissension because he gives a devious interpretation of the Law. *Phalguta* may indicate a *min* or heretic. Very soon after the death of Jesus, the Judaic Christians of Jerusalem and Palestine were excluded from the synagogue and even cursed as Nazoraeans together with the “heretics” (*minim*). The Judaic Christians may have added these words, because they wanted to stress that Jesus, and by implication they, too, were no heretics at all.

Apart from this last one-liner, “Thomas” confirms the trustworthiness of Luke, even when the latter is the only one of the Synoptics to transmit this Saying of Jesus (“special Luke”). At the same time he is more Semitic than Luke, nearer to the time when an aphoristic Jesus spoke this Logion in Aramaic. Doubting Thomas has become: undoubtable Thomas.

## II

### DOUBLETS

The other Arabic scholars who also transmit Sayings of Jesus may have known the Judaic Christian Gospel tradition quite apart from the *Gospel of Thomas*. As we have said before, Islam and Judaic Christianity have much in common. The Judaic Christians believed that Jesus was the true Prophet: his death and cross are not even mentioned in the Pseudo-Clementine writings and had for them no salvific value: they observed the Law and the Sabbath on Saturday, practised circumcision and fasted; during prayers they orientated themselves towards Jerusalem;

once they were baptized they practised ablutions and for this reason were sometimes called Hemerobaptists or Daily Baptists; in the Mani Codex (*CMC*) they are called Baptists. As has been said before, they were also called Ebionites (the Poor), Nazoraeans (the Puritans) or Masbuthaeans (Baptists) in Aramaic, Baptists in Greek. All this has a parallel in Islam. In fact there is no religion that is so similar to Islam, not even Rabbinic Judaism, let alone Catholic Christianity, as Judaic pre-Pauline and non-Pauline Christianity. Hence the question arises whether they are not identical with the Sabians (Baptists) who are mentioned several times in the Qur'an, and, together with the Jews and the "Christians" (Orthodox, Monophysites, Nestorians) are treated with respect and tolerance (Islam is a tolerant religion) as People of the Book, the Holy Writ of the Judaic Christians being the Hebrew Bible. This hypothesis is not new. It was formulated as early as 1918 by the famous New Testament scholar Prof. Adolf Schlatter.<sup>17</sup>

We must leave the problem of the Sabians to the specialists of Islam, but we have established that some of the Sayings of Jesus quoted by Arabic scholars have a parallel in the *Gospel of Thomas*, or rather its Judaic Christian source. Not all theologians who have studied this apocryphal text admit that it contains in part a Judaic Christian tradition. We shall therefore once more discuss why we suppose that the Gospel of Thomas is based upon at least two sources, a Judaic Christian one and a Hellenistic one.

The *Gospel of Thomas* does contain a certain number of so-called *doublets*. Doublets are two different versions of the same Saying of Jesus. Such doublets are to be found in Mark on the one hand and in Luke and Matthew on the other. These latter two both use Mark as a source and also Q, the Greek common source of Matthew and Luke. Hence the astonishing fact that Matthew and Luke sometimes offer the same Saying of Jesus in different forms. Mark and Q are *written* sources. The occurrence of doublets in a text is a certain indication that its author used two *written* sources. Hence the theory that the author of "Thomas" (who was writing in Edessa before 140 C.E.) used a Judaic Christian source not influenced by the Synoptics (ca. 50 C.E., the oldest Christian literary product) and a Hellenistic source (ca. 100 C.E., Alexandria), which sometimes reveal the fingerprints of the Synoptics. It would seem

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<sup>17</sup> A. Schlatter, "Die Entwicklung des jüdischen Christentums zum Islam", *Evangelisches Missions Magazin* 62 (1918) 251–264.

that the doublets in the *Gospel of Thomas* are ethical, Judaic, on the one hand, and mystical and Hellenistic on the other.

One of these is Logion 41 and Logion 70:

41	70
Jesus said:	Jesus said:
Whoever has in his hand	If you bring forth that which is in
	yourselves,
to him shall be given;	that which you have shall save
	you;
and whoever does not have,	If you do not have it within
	yourselves,
from him shall be taken	that which you do not have within
	yourselves will
even the little which he has.	kill you

Logion 41 is very similar to Mark 4:25, the source of Matthew 13:12 and Luke 8:18:

For he that hath,  
to him shall be given,  
and he that has not,  
from him shall be taken  
even that which he hath.

The canonical Saying has often been quoted to prove how unjust a capitalistic society is.

The version of “Thomas” is similar; but it adds: *in his hand*. And that makes all the difference. The same expression in Hebrew: *bejado*, is found in the Old Testament, in 1 Samuel 9:8, where it is related how Saul, the future King of Israel, is sent out by his father with a servant to search for some asses that were lost. They do not find them, and Saul wants to return. His servant suggests that they should consult a nearby man of God, the prophet Elia, for advice. But what to give the prophet? The servant says he still has a quarter of a shekel of silver *with him* (literally: in his hand, *bejado*): “I could give this to the man of God”. This passage proves that the version of “Thomas” is Semitic and idiomatic. It may stem from a Judaic Christian source. It suggests that you should always have money with you, in your hand so to speak, to hand it out to the poor, cf. Logion 88: give you to them what is in your hands (= what you can spare). If, however, you are thrifty and are not ready to give to the needy, then God will take from you even the little capital that you have saved. The Saying has an ethical meaning and is very much in the spirit of Jesus: “Give and you will be given”.

The author of the Hellenistic source had other priorities. He lived in a city like Alexandria, where the problem was not charity, but self-realization. He gave a mystical meaning to the Logion which he obviously knew in its Judaic Christian version and changed it to serve his purpose.

Another doublet.

We have seen before that Logion 39 reflected a typically Judaic situation: the local Pharisees indeed possessed the key of knowledge, but they did not enter the kingdom of God themselves and they prevent others from entering. But Logion 39 is also one half of a doublet: in Logion 102 the Palestinian scenery is replaced by a Greek proverb which still exists in English—dog in the manger:

Jesus said: Woe to them, the Pharisees, for they are like a dog sleeping in the manger of oxen, for neither does he eat nor does he allow the oxen to eat.

Other doublets reveal the same duplicity: Logion 89 of the *Gospel of Thomas* may be reconstructed in the following way:

Jesus said: Why do you wash the outside of the cup?  
He who made the outside, also made the inside,  
He who made the inside, also made the outside.<sup>18</sup>

This Saying has a ritual meaning: yet, it is true, a cup is defiled if the outside is defiled; but it is also true that if the inside is pure, then the outside is also pure. The Hellenistic ghostwriter transposed this Saying into a completely different context; cf. Logion 22:

When you make the two one,  
and the inner as the outside  
and the outer as the inner  
and the above as the below,  
when you make the male and the female into a single one  
...  
then you shall enter the Kingdom.

Not the rite, but cultivation of the inner life, inwardness, equality of the sexes and androgyny is the real issue.

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. G. Quispel, "Gnosis and Alchemy", in: *From "Poimandres" to Jacob Böhme*, eds. R. van den Broek & C. van Heertum, Amsterdam 2001, 318.



Still another doublet: Jesus ordered his followers to put their family second place, to take up the cross and follow him:

Jesus said:

Whoever does not hate his father and his mother will not be able to be a disciple to me,  
and whoever does not hate his brethren and his sisters, and does not take up his cross in my way, will not be worthy of me.  
(Logion 55)

The situation in Palestine was such, that a follower of Jesus risked being crucified.

In Alexandria one knew that once born, one was bound to die and that the Spirit, conveyed through baptism, granted eternal life and immortality. Therefore the ghostwriter put his Saying of Jesus in a mysteriosophic context:

Jesus said:

Whoever does not hate his father and his mother in my way,  
will not be able to be a disciple to me,  
and whoever does not love his Father  
and his Mother in my way  
will not be able to be a disciple to me.  
For my mother of the flesh gave me death,  
But my true Mother gave me Life  
(Logion 101)

A last doublet:

In the Judaic Christian source of “Thomas”, Jesus exhorted a man and his wife not to quarrel, but to live in harmony with each other:

Jesus said:

If two make peace with each other in this one house,  
they will say to the mountain: “Be moved” and it shall be moved.  
(Logion 48)

The Hellenistic “ghostwriter” was a mystic. He believed that God, Christ, is in man and man is in God. One may call this: mutual indwelling. It is the basic idea of the author of the Gospel of John:

Ye in me,  
and I in you  
(14:20)

For the author of the *Gospel of Thomas*, this meant that not only Jesus was the Son of Man (meaning: God), but man, too, had become a son of Man:

Jesus said:  
 When you make the two one,  
 you shall become Sons of Man,  
 and when you say: "Mountain, be moved",  
 it will be moved.  
 (Logion 106)

We may conclude that the author of the *Gospel of Thomas* used two written sources, a Judaic Christian and a Hellenistic source, both containing Sayings of Jesus. The author of this Hellenistic source of Sayings of Jesus was a profound thinker, who found his inspiration in the words of the Judaic Christian Jesus and transposed them into his own system of references. He held that these words were life-transforming, they divinized finite existence. Thus he could write:

Jesus said:  
 Whoever drinks from my mouth,  
 Shall become as I am,  
 And I myself will become he,  
 And the hidden things will be revealed to him.  
 (Logion 108)

It is true that this does not agree with the message of the Prophets of Israel. Such mysticism is alien to the Old Testament. But this is nothing to be ashamed about: it does agree with great Indian thinkers.

All this happened in Alexandria in the first century C.E. An ethical saying of Jesus is transposed into a mystical context, Judaic Christianity is Hellenized. This is not an isolated case, it is not limited to the Gospel of Thomas. The same interdependence can be established between the fragments of the Judaic Christian Gospel of the Ebionites and the fragments of the Alexandrian Encratitic Gospel of the Egyptians.

The Judaic Christian Ebionites were very much opposed to the sacrificial cult in the temple of Jerusalem, which according to them had been abolished by Jesus. They saw the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. as a punishment of God. Therefore they transmitted an apocryphal Saying of Jesus:

I am come to do away with sacrifices and if you cease not from sacrificing, the wrath of God will not cease from you.  
 (Quoted by Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30, 16, 4)

The Encratites of Alexandria who used the Gospel of the Egyptians lived in a metropolis, the second city of the Roman Empire. You did not need to be a Christian to be against lust. A Pythagorean philosopher

living there would also be a vegetarian, a teetotaler and a celibate. In Alexandria it was not the Temple or the Law, but sex which was the real problem. So the Word of Jesus about sacrifices was transformed by the author of the Gospel of the Egyptians in the following way:

I have come to undo the works of the female (= marriage)  
(Quoted by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* III, 6, 45)

I once thought that the *Gospel of Thomas* had two Gospels as sources: the Judaic Christian *Gospel of the Hebrews* and the Encratic *Gospel of the Egyptians*. There was some reason to think so, because the *Gospel of Thomas* begins with a quotation from the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. This may be a hint as to its source:

Jesus said:  
Let him who seeks not cease to seek until he has found.  
And when he has found, he will marvel,  
and when he has marvelled, he will be king.  
And when he is king, he will attain rest.

My hypothesis met with determined opposition. Since then I speak only of a Judaic Christian source and an Encratic, strongly ascetic, source. And I do believe that the author of the Hellenistic source knew and redacted the Judaic Christian Gospel tradition also attested by the *Gospel of Thomas*: the doublets prove it.

Who transmits the right interpretation of the words Jesus once spoke: the Judaic Christian or the Hellenistic Christian? Jesus was an eschatological prophet. He announced the imminent coming on earth of the Kingdom of God, a realm of justice and equality. At the same time he spoke like the embodiment of divine Wisdom with motherly compassion:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen does gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not. (Luke 13:34)

Perhaps both were right. Maybe the Hellenization of Christianity was implied in the Words Jesus spoke. But in this paper our real problem is this: did Arabic scholars still have trustworthy traditions about Judaic Christianity?

## III

## WHAT DID ABD AL-JABBAR KNOW ABOUT JUDAIC CHRISTIANITY?

Towards 1966 the well-known Israeli Arabist Shlomo Pines held a lecture at the prestigious Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.<sup>19</sup> It concerned a chapter of an unpublished lengthy manuscript in Arabic, No. 1575 in the Shehid' Ali Pasha collection in Istanbul. This was entitled *The Establishment of Proofs for the Prophethood of Our Master Mohammed*, written by the Arabic scholar 'Abd al Jabbar (died in Bagdad 1024/25). Pines intended to publish this work together with his colleague S.M. Stern of Cambridge, Great Britain. But first he supplied a preview of this one chapter, because he was convinced that it proved that the Muslim theologian had adapted writings reflecting the views and traditions of a Judaic Christian community. In fact Abd al-Jabbar was supposed to have used a Syriac source from about the fifth century of the Common Era, written in Harran (Carrhai) south of Edessa in Mesopotamia.

According to this text, Byzantine Orthodoxy had abandoned the commandments of the Mosaic Law as a result to the influence of Saint Paul. Its monotonously recurrent *Leitmotif* is that these Byzantine Christians are in disaccord with the religion of the Jews. They were said to have repudiated the commandments concerning ritual purity which Jesus observed; they turn to the East when praying, whereas Jesus turned towards Jerusalem; Jesus was nothing more than the son of Joseph the Carpenter, until during his baptism the voice came from heaven: this is my son from heaven in which my soul rejoices.

In every respect, Jesus was an observant prophet: he kept the Jewish days of fast and did not abolish for one hour the observance of the Sabbath. The Early Christians were divided. After a quarrel caused by Saint Paul, part of them migrated to Mosul in Iraq.

Gentile Christians had given up the use of Hebrew, even for their Gospels. This gave them the opportunity to convert many nations, but at the same time checked any possibility to win over the Jews. Pines

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<sup>19</sup> S. Pines, "The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source", *Proceedings of The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, English Series vol. II, 13 (1966).

also revealed that his Jewish Christian source transmitted a Saying of Jesus:

A man said to him: Master, my brother wishes to share with me my father's blessing.

Jesus said to him: Who set me over you (in order to determine your) share.

Pines added the Arabic text in transcription:

Wa-qāla lahu rajulun: murā, akhi  
 Yuq āsimunī barakā abi,  
 Fa-qāla: wa-man ja'alanī alaykum qāsīman.

I showed this Arabic text to my colleague Dirk Hoens, who provided the following translation:

A man said to him: Master, let my brother share with me my father's wealth.

He said to him: Who set me over you as divider?

As we showed before, the single "divider" is much more appropriate than the double "ruler and judge" of Luke. The Logion does not allude to Moses, but to a legal problem in an agrarian community.

Shlomo Pines' article caused quite a sensation, especially in Jerusalem. Gershom Scholem, who was the first to tell me about it, was very impressed. But alas, God created not only the professor, but also his colleague. S.M. Stern heard about Pines' success story, took a plane to Istanbul, consulted the manuscript and wrote a venomous article in which he flatly denied everything Pines had said.<sup>20</sup>

What should we say of all this? Jealousy is a basic instinct and one of mankind's motivating drives. Rivalry among colleagues is natural and useful. Moreover, defence of the Christian Canon will always be applauded. Some pious people are appalled by the assertion that an extra-canonical, Judaic Christian Gospel tradition might preserve some of the Sayings of Jesus in a more ancient form than the canonical Gospels. For them, all of "Thomas" has to be dependent on the canonical Gospels, which has to be the best and oldest source of Jesus' Sayings. They will point out that the single word "divider" is also found in the much later Coptic version of the Gospel of Luke and in Saint Augustine

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<sup>20</sup> S.M. Stern, "Quotations from an apocryphal Gospel in 'Abd al-Jabbar", *Journal of Theological Studies* XVIII (1967) 1-52.

(354–430). They then suppose that the reading in “Thomas” is based upon an Old Syriac translation, nowhere attested, of the four Gospels of the New Testament, which are supposed to have composed an equally unknown version of the *Diatessaron* of Tatian. On the basis of this hypothesis they triumphantly conclude that the *Gospel of Thomas* is later than 200 C.E. and therefore dependent on the canonical Gospels. This theory has not convinced everybody.

But was Pines right? ‘Abd al-Jabbar becomes more and more untrustworthy as he progresses in the history of Catholic Christianity. What he has to say about the Emperor Constantine and his mother Helena, the Council of Nicaea and the Arians, is not necessarily Jewish Christian slander. What he says about Saint Paul and Gentile Christianity can also be gleaned from the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament. On the other hand, he is quite often in agreement with the reports of Irenaeus of Lyon in his *Against the Heresies* 1, 26, 2 and those of Epiphanius, *Panarion* 1, 29–30, about the Jewish Christian sects of the Ebionites and the Nazoraeans, writings he did not know. How could he know that Jesus, and the Judaic Christians, orientated their prayers towards Jerusalem?

How could he know that according to the Judaic Christians, Jesus became the Son of God during his baptism in the river Jordan?

They say: When John baptized him in the Jordan, the gates of heaven were opened and the Father cried out: This is my Son and my beloved in whom my soul rejoices. (Pines 63)

This corresponds to a passage in the *Gospel of the Ebionites* presented by Epiphanius of Salamis:

When the people were baptized, Jesus also came and was baptized by John. And as he came up from the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove that descended and entered into him. And a voice sounded from heaven and said: Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased. And again: *I have this day begotten thee*. And immediately a great light shone about that place. (*Panarion* 30, 13, 7)

Moreover, Abd al-Jabbar reports:

A violent quarrel broke out (between two groups in the primitive congregation of the Christians in Jerusalem). They (those mentioned in the first place) went back to the Romans and said to them: “Help us against the Jews, and take away from them on our behalf our book”.

Thereupon (the companions of whom they had spoken) fled the country. And the Romans wrote concerning them to their governors in the districts of *Mosul* and in the *Jazirat al-Arab*.

This implies that there were Christians from Jerusalem in Mosul (roughly speaking: in Antiquity the kingdom of Osrhoene, capital Edessa) and possibly the region of North-Eastern Syria, Aleppo (where in the fourth century Nazoraeans still lived). This makes sense. According to the tradition of the Church a missionary from Jerusalem, called Addai, was the first to bring the Good News to Edessa. There are many reasons to suppose that there is some truth in this story (cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 1, 13). The name Nazoraeans is still in use to indicate the Aramaic Church; Syrian Christians, like the Jewish ones, believed that the Holy Ghost is female; in Syria for centuries Easter was celebrated on the 14th of the month Nisan, like the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem, etcetera, etcetera.<sup>21</sup>

Can this tradition have been invented by an Arabic scholar of the tenth century without any foundation in historical fact? Last and not least: Abd al-Jabbar transmits a Saying of Jesus which is nearer to the source than the same Logion in the Gospel of Luke. It bears the fingerprints of an Aramaic background, it reflects the biblical right of succession to the father and could only be translated correctly after its parallel in the *Gospel of Thomas* had been identified. Its content is strongly reminiscent of Judaic Christianity and might eventually go back to a Judaic Christian source. This implies that other Sayings of the Muslim Jews might also be rooted in the same tradition and even in exceptional cases might have preserved primitive features, which have disappeared from the Gentile Christian Gospels of the Church.

It is not even completely excluded that Muhammed was somehow familiar with these traditions: the beliefs of the Ebionites, Nazoraeans, Elkesaites persisted in Asia, where a religion rarely dies out completely. They might have been the Sabians, Baptists, who were acknowledged as a People of the Book in the Qur'an. Their Book was the Hebrew Bible. They had no New Testament, like the Catholics.

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<sup>21</sup> G. Quispel, "The Gospel of Thomas revisited", in: B. Barc, *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi*, Quebec 1978, 246.

## IV

## FOUR TENTATIVE SOLUTIONS

How are these correspondences to be explained?

1. They may be sheer coincidences. This is a possibility: nothing is impossible in philological research, although not everything is plausible. Take for example the sower's seed falling "on the road" in the *Gospel of Thomas* version of the Parable of the Sower rather than the canonical "beside the road". It can be explained as the correct interpretation of the Aramaic preposition *'al (urha)*. The occurrence of the same reading in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* might indicate that the Parable in "Thomas" was transmitted in a Judaic Christian milieu and does not depend on the Ecclesiastical Gospels. Against this argumentation one might object that in cases such as these, there is a legitimate reluctance on the part of the reader to accept the variances at face value, for there may be other explanations. First, there are the grammatical and syntactical conventions of each language to consider: in some languages, a certain form may be required.

Secondly, the changes are often so minor that errors of the eye or ear will be a rule, not an exception.

Thirdly, prepositions are notoriously difficult to master in a second language, because they are so idiomatic. Consequently, some leniency must be accorded to our sources.

Fourthly and finally, the reading of "Thomas" (*epi*) is also found in Mark 4:4 in the late Byzantine minuscule manuscripts 7, 28, 33, 827, 1241 and in Luke 4:5 in the manuscript R (027 *sixth* century), making it the oldest manuscript with the reading.

It is possible, therefore, that the reading arose from reasons unconnected with the Gospel of Thomas and its Judaic Christian source from a manuscript of the canonical Gospels.<sup>22</sup>

All this is true. But it does not prove that the alternative exegesis is wrong. Moreover, there is not the slightest indication that Canonical Gospels were known in Edessa at the time that the Gospel of Thomas was written there, before 140 C.E. The Gospel harmony called *Diatessaron* composed by Tatian in the Near East about 170 C.E. was the

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<sup>22</sup> W.L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron*, Leiden 1994, 366.



first known Gospel there. Considerations like the above do not explain the *Gospel of Thomas*, they explain it away. They contribute nothing to the research of the *Gospel of Thomas*. They smell of apologetics, as if this extra-canonical writing were a perversion of Holy Writ, as if deviant views by respectable scholars were nothing but “silly prattle of Californian Jesuologists”.

One needs a whole bundle of hypotheses to substructure the thesis that the *Gospel of Thomas* depends upon the Ecclesiastical Gospels: it is supposed to be based upon an unattested Syriac version of Tatian’s *Diatessaron*, which is supposed to have been composed of four otherwise unknown Old Syriac translations of the Canonical Gospels, from which it follows that the *Gospel of Thomas* was written in Edessa only after 200 C.E. (which nobody else believes). Such theories are a disservice to free scholarship.

2. The Islamic scholars who quote the Sayings discussed above may have known the Gospel of Thomas. This is not only possible, but also rather probable, although as far as I know no evidence has been found that a translation of this text existed in Arabic until the present day. However, such a translation may have been overlooked. And even without any supportive documentation, the theory of dependence is possible. In the existing material on the Cathars of Southern France and Northern Italy, the *Gospel of Thomas* is never mentioned. And yet the last “parfait” of the Cathars, Guillaume Belibaste, knew it by heart:

quia, ubi erat unus parvulus ejus, ipse esset cum eo, et ubi erant duo, similiter.<sup>23</sup>

where there was one little one of Him, he was with him, and where there were two, also.

It is feasible that the Cathars owed this writing to the Bogomils of Eastern Europe; they in turn may have received it from the Messalians, a charismatic sect of the fourth century and later, which originated in Edessa, spread to Armenia, and were transplanted by the emperors of Byzantine to Bulgaria (hence: “buggers”).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> I. von Döllinger, *Beiträge zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters* II, Munich 1890, 210. I owe this reference to Henri-Charles Puech.

<sup>24</sup> R. v.d. Broek, “The Cathars, Medieval Gnostics”, in his *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity*, Leiden 1996, 159–197; G. Quispel, “The Syrian Thomas and the Syrian Macarius”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 18 (1964) 226–235 (= *Gnostic Studies, II*, Istanbul 1975, 113–121).

In a similar way, the Arabs may have had access to an otherwise unknown translation into Arabic of the Greek or the Coptic Gospel of Thomas.

3. Arabic scholars may have been familiar with the Gospel of Thomas through the intermediary of Manichaeans. As a matter of fact, the Gospel of Thomas was Holy Writ for these dualists: for them it took the place of the four Canonical Gospels, together with the *Diatessaron* of Tatian. To these were added the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*, *Acts of Peter*, *Acts of Andrew* and *Acts of Paul*, which replaced the canonical Acts of the Apostles by Luke in the Catholic Bible. They were followed by the Epistles of Saint Paul, preceded by the Epistle to the Galatians instead of the Epistle to the Romans and without the Pastoral Epistles to Timothy and Titus. That was the Manichaean Canon of the New Testament.<sup>25</sup> Mani (216–277), the founder of this new Christian Church, himself already knew the Gospel of Thomas. This transpires from the beginning of his *Epistula Fundamenti*, which is quoted by the former Manichaean Saint Augustine:

These are the salubrious Words from the perennial and living source, whosoever hears them and first believes them, then holds what they teach, will not be subject to death but will enjoy eternal and glorious life. (Saint Augustine, *Contra Epistulam Fundamenti* 2)

These words refer to the preface of the Gospel of Thomas:

These are the esoteric Words which the living Jesus spoke and Didymus Judas Thomas wrote down: And he said: Whosoever finds the hidden meaning of these Words will not taste death.

In Antiquity, an author would indicate by his choice of opening words which admired prototype he wished to imitate: excellence, not originality, was his aim. The best known example of this literary device is the Gospel of John, which begins with the words “In the beginning was the Word”, which clearly refers to Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created heaven and earth”. It would seem that similarly, Mani wished to indicate with the first words of his *Epistula Fundamenti* that for him the Gospel of Thomas is an authoritative writing, the introduction to his alternative Canon of the New Testament. Manichaeism, which started as a reformed Jewish Christian sect, soon became a gnostic world

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<sup>25</sup> G. Quispel, “Marcion and the Text of the New Testament”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 52 (1998) 349–360.

religion, which spread from the Atlantic to the Pacific and remained an active force for more than a thousand years. And wherever Manichaean manuscripts have been found, be it in the Fayum south of Cairo or in Turfan in Chinese Turkestan, quotations from the Gospel of Thomas have been found in many Oriental languages.<sup>26</sup> This must mean that different translations from the original Greek must have circulated, not only in Coptic, but also in Asiatic languages. Mani may even have used a translation of the *Gospel of Thomas* in Aramaic, if it is true, as is generally supposed, that Mani did not know Greek. One day, one of these translations may be recovered.

Manichaeism was the most persecuted of all religions. They suffered from Rome, Byzantium, Iranian Mazdeism, and also from Islam. And yet, Arabic scholars have been familiar with the Manichaean myth. Although they may also have known the *Gospel of Thomas*, it is not very probable that they took the Sayings from this source. They would hesitate to quote from such a heretical source. Their veneration of Jesus was too great for that.

There remains a fourth possibility, that Arabic scholars were somehow and through whatever channels still familiar with the Judaic Christian Gospel tradition.

## V

### CONCLUSION: JUDAIC CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

All religions are equal, but some are more equal than others: Judaism, Christianity and Islam proclaim that there is one God. They vary considerably. The comprehensive framework of meaning of each of the three, in which every detail has its allocated place, has a different focus. Judaism, rabbinical Judaism, imposes observance of the Law: Jewish boys must marry Jewish girls. Orthodox Jews still expect the Messiah, a national liberator. Early Christianity was trinitarian: Jesus is essentially God, the Holy Ghost is also God. To this was added in the West, since Saint Augustine (354–430), the belief in predestination: this ultimately led to a separation into Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. In the

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<sup>26</sup> H.-C. Puech, “Das Thomas-Evangelium”, in: E. Hennecke & W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentische Apokryphen I*, Tübingen 1968, 199–223.

West, ever since pope Leo I (the Great, 440–461), the patriarch of Rome was also the primate; the infallibility of the bishop of Rome was defined at the Vatican Council of 1869–1870. The Orthodox Church of the East ignored Saint Augustine and did not go through a process of Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment. It accepted the very radical mysticism of Dionysius the Areopagite (ca. 500). The Islam believes that Mohammed is the last and definitive prophet. It holds that he is a *rasul*, a man sent by God. It venerates Jesus as the prophet of the Word of God and Spirit of God. But it strongly rejects that He is consubstantial with God. Islam split into Sunnites and Shi'ites, together one billion people.

Interreligious missions were a failure: very few Jews or Muslims became Christians, or vice versa. And yet the three are one. In order to discern the unity of Christianity and Judaism, a paradigm shift is necessary. In the course of the first three centuries of the Christian Era, the Church of Rome overcame the Gnostic crisis and formulated a Canon of authoritative Scripture, the New Testament. In the same period, rabbinical Judaism suppressed the Jewish Gnosis of the so-called *minim* and established the Hebrew text of the Tenach. They are hostile brethren.

Before these developments took place, both Judaism and Christianity were pluriform. And Early Christianity entertained a special relationship with the Essenes of Qumran. Not that Jesus was an Essene. He was too generous to accept that only 4,000 Essenes were elect and that the rest of Israel and the whole of mankind was damned. But perhaps John the Baptist was a different case. According to the Gospel of Luke (1:80) he was born somewhere in the Judean mountains east of Jerusalem. There he grew up and waxed strong in spirit and then was in the desert until the day of his appearance to Israel. No child can survive in the desert. Perhaps John the Baptist was offered as a *puer oblatus*, a young candidate for membership, to the nearby monastery of Qumran in the desert. He may have quitted this monastic community and started to preach at the border of the Jordan, a few hours' walking away. Be that as it may, there can be no doubt whatsoever that the liturgy of primitive Christianity should be seen in the perspective of the *Angelic Liturgy* as described in the scroll of the same name that was found in Qumran. The congregation living there considered their assembly as joined to the angels in heaven, linked up with the celestial hierarchies. These worshippers lived in a henotheistic pantheon and

experienced themselves as participating in the liturgy of the celestial Temple, where the angels and the archangels sing the praise of God. In the same way, esoteric Judaism of the first centuries of the Christian Era held that some rabbis had travelled along the seven planets and through the seven successive palaces of heaven, where the angels sang *with one voice*. These hymns all end with the words “Holy, holy, holy”, the song of the “angels” transmitted by Isaiah in his sixth chapter. The ecstatic rabbis tune in with the angels, according to the documents of esoteric Judaism.

The oldest available source for the history of the *Missa Romana*, an epistle of Clement of Rome (95–96 C.E.) hints at this unison chant of the angels and the community: “let us *from one mouth* cry unto them” (1 Clement 34, 4–7). Until recently, all priests in the Roman Catholic Church would invite the congregation to sing with one voice (*una voce*) together with the archangels and angels: *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth*. And until this day all Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox priests will silently pray at the same place in the liturgy: “With these blessed Powers (the Cherubim and the Seraphim) let us, too, oh mankind-loving Master, cry and say: Holy and quite holy art Thou, and Thine only Son and thine Holy Ghost” (Holy Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom).

This usage was already hinted at by bishop Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 117 C.E.) when he wrote to the Ephesians: sing with *one voice* to the Father (4, 1–2). Saint Augustine made it the basic idea of his book *City of God*: the Church on earth, on a pilgrimage in this wilderness, is one with the *Ecclesia Caelestis* of the angels above. In this very important aspect Judaism and Christianity are one.

If we want to discuss the basic unity of Islam and Christianity, again a paradigm shift is necessary. No longer Ebionites and Nazoraeans are considered to be Judaizing heresies, but Judaic Christianity is a faith of its own: it continues the teaching of Jesus and of pre-Pauline Christianity in Jerusalem.

Against this backdrop, Islam has more in common with this shade of Christianity than with any other religion. Both were legalistic, both see Jesus as a prophet, both prescribe fast (Ramadan), both observe a day of rest (Saturday, Friday), both orientate prayer (to Jerusalem, to Jerusalem and later to Mecca), both circumcise new-born boys, both practise ablutions. To both the death of Jesus has no salvific value, as was the case for Saint Paul.

## PARALLELS WITH MANICHAISM

As I said before, in the Orient a religion hardly ever dies. It is just possible that Jewish Christians still lived somewhere in the time of Mohammed and that they were the Sabians, the Baptists, appointed by the Prophet as another People of the Book, who were to be tolerated. In this sense Islam is a Jewish Christian “heresy”.

A similar process took place with the rise of Manichaeism. The *Cologne Mani Codex*, a Life of Mani, discovered in the Fayum south of Cairo, proves without even the shadow of a doubt, that Mani (216–277) grew up in a community of Jewish Christians (Elkesaites) somewhere in Mesopotamia. He started to oppose the Law observed by the group and tried to reform the sect. He underwent an overwhelming religious experience, the encounter with the Self. This he worked out in a synthesis which was to be acceptable to Christians in the West and to Persians and Indians in the East. In this sense Manichaeism is also a Judaic Christian heresy. Very soon, this religion spread from the Atlantic to the Pacific: it became a Gnostic world religion. And yet, the Jewish Christian foundations of this new faith could never be blotted out. These sectarians believed that God caused both good and evil; Satan was “the left hand of God”. Mani, who was a cripple, could not accept this. He formulated a strict dualism of good and evil, light and darkness, spirit and matter.

Both Islam and Manichaeism have Jewish Christian origins. But Manichaeism can hardly have influenced Islam, because it has no rituals of daily ablutions, like the Baptists of Judaic Christianity and Islam.

## GOD IS NOTHING

Even in dogmatics Catholicism, rabbinical Judaism and Islam sometimes agree. Catholic theologians, rabbinic teachers and Islamic doctors spontaneously, and independently of each other, developed the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, creation out of nothing. This means that a transcendent, otherworldly God highhandedly brought forward this world out of nothing and not out of a pre-existent matter, as Plato and the Platonists taught. This dogma is not biblical: according to Genesis, God has processed chaos, *tohu vabohu*, in order to bring forth light out of it. But obviously a sort of innate tendency drove the dogmaticians of the three religions to this doctrine in order to underline the absolute

sovereignty of God. In Catholic Christianity, one of the first to formulate the doctrine of creation out of nothing was the apologist, bishop Theophilus of Antioch (ca. 170). Other bishops followed suit. In Judaism and Islam the same development took place. The response of the mystics of the three religions was generally the same. Johannes Scotus Eriugena, the brilliant Irish genius at the court of Charles the Bald (823–877), compeer of Spinoza, Hegel and Teilhard de Chardin, was anxious not to offend contemporary dogmatians. He pretended only to interpret Scripture, for him the unique and exclusive source of revelation. And he accepted the traditional formula: *creatio ex nihilo*. But, he asked, What is nothing? And he concluded that God was that Nothing, No-Thing, for God had created the world out of himself (*De divisione naturae*, 3, 19). So he became the father of Western mysticism, Eckhart in Germany, Ruusbroec in Flanders, Juan de la Cruz in Spain. The same experience was expressed by the Protestant mystic Angelus Silesius (1624–1677), an adherent of Jacob Boehme:

Gott ist ein lauter Nichts, wo Ich und Du nicht stehen,  
Du musst noch über Gott hinaus in eine Wüste gehen.

God is a pure Nothing, where I and Thou do not exist,  
You must transcend beyond God into a wasteland.

Some time later, about 1000 C.E., Jewish mystics in Southern France and Spain came to the insight that God was “Un-ground” and as such the origin of the world. They, too, did not deny *creatio ex nihilo*, they explained it away. In the Islamic world the same development took place: in the ninth century, in texts of the Islamic gnosis, God, who creates everything out of nothing, is himself the Nothing, the Logos or the Will. So in the end the three became one again.<sup>27</sup>

#### SAINT PAUL, THE ANSWER FOR OUR TIMES

Adolf Schlatter, one of the first to discern the Judaic Christian origins of Islam, advised his audience, consisting of Swiss missionaries in Islamic countries, not to adapt to Islam and blur the differences between the two religions, but to preach Saint Paul to them instead. And perhaps Paul, the mystic Paul, the gnostic Paul, is the solution to the problem. Islam is dominated by the *Shari'a*, the Law, a construct of lawyers after

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<sup>27</sup> G. Scholem, “Schöpfung aus Nichts und Selbstverschränkung Gottes”, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 25 (1956) 87–119.

Muhammed. Rabbinical Judaism is dominated by *Talmud* and *Midrash*, a very elaborate system of interpretations of the Mosaic Law, the constitution of the Jewish people, adapted to the situation after the destruction of the Temple and its sacrificial cult. Catholicism developed a new Law, the *Canonical Law*, a bulky volume with strict regulations concerning marriage, birth control, procreation and homosexuality, all this with the noble aim to educate a decadent Roman society and violent German tribes. But Saint Paul held that Christ was the end, the cessation and the termination of the Law: "Christ is the end of the Law" (Romans 10:4). Henceforth Christians should be guided by the Spirit and follow their own conscience. All Sufi's and Christian mystics would agree that ethics is a matter of inwardness and individual decision. Even Jewish mystics would agree that every man has a ladder to ascend to God and does not need Bible or Law. Perhaps in the long run a new paradigm shift, from Law to heart, could bring peace to our world and make it one.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

Recently April D. DeConick<sup>28</sup> has suggested a new model for the genesis of "Thomas". Originally it was a very old Gospel of Sayings of Jesus that likely originated from the Jerusalem church in the first century C.E. This Gospel was carried to Edessa in Mesopotamia, seemingly the result of missionary activity of the Jerusalem church. This was known to Tatian, when about 170 he composed his Gospel harmony called the Diatessaron, "one out of four" in the same region, Osrhoene or Adiabene. This group in Edessa added sayings about Judas Thomas the Twin (like James a brother of the Lord). Thomas became the traditional hero of Edessa. This same group developed close connections with Christians in Alexandria. This resulted in knowledge of a more encratic and hermetic form of Christianity that had been developed in this second city of the Roman Empire. It is to this connection that the Hellenizing sayings of "Thomas" are due. By the mid-second century this Gospel acquired its definitive form. It was taken from Edessa to Alexandria, where it became part of the Early Christian landscape. To these observations I should like to add that in its primitive form, it may have influenced Islam.

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<sup>28</sup> "The Original Gospel of Thomas", *Vigiliae Christianae* 56 (2002) 166–197.



## ADDITIONAL NOTE 2

The Judaic Christian source of Abd al-Jabbar also contained the following Gospel quotation:

You wash the outside of the vessel,  
and its inside is *full of filth*.

The mystic Makarius (4th century) also reads: full of filth (*gemei rupous*), *Hom. XI*, 29, 2. The *Gospel of Thomas* reads:

Why do you wash the outside of the cup?

The variant: “you wash” is not to be found in any of the 88 papyri, 0274 uncials, 2795 minuscules and 2209 lectionaries of the Greek New Testament, but is also attested by the *Diatessaron* of Tatian. It is, however, more adequate than: “you purify” of Q (= Matthew 23:25; Luke 11:39–40), because the Talmud prescribes that only the outside has to be *washed* off.

More details in: Gilles Quispel, “An apocryphal variant in Macarius”, in: *Miscellanea in honorem Josephi Vergote*, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 6/7, 1975–1976.

In this case also Islam seems to be nearer to the source than the canonical gospels.

PART III  
CATHOLICA



## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

### AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY BEFORE TERTULLIAN\*

The *Octavius* of Minucius Felix has the form of a *disputatio in utramque partem* with an introduction which seems to be purely traditional. Suetonius describes in his *De rhetoribus* how young men come from Rome to Ostia, walk upon the beach, see some fishermen there drawing their nets upon shore and make an arrangement to buy the catch. When the nets are ashore there are no fish in them; there is only a basket with gold in it. The buyers say it is theirs, the fishermen claim it for themselves and so the *controversia* can begin.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly in his *Erotes* Lucian describes how a dispute about love can begin after a young man has kissed a statue of a goddess.<sup>2</sup>

All this reminds us strongly of the scenery of the *Octavius* and of the occasion for the debate: it would seem that both the walk along the beach and the veneration of the statue of Serapis by Caecilius are taken from a handbook of rhetoric.

On the other hand, the names of the debaters may be historical, as in the dialogues of Cicero, because similar names have been found in inscriptions from North Africa.<sup>3</sup> And there is no doubt that the speech of Octavius is supposed to reflect the views of an African Christian.

This shade of Christianity, however, is rather different from that of Tertullian and other African Christian authors.

Octavius defends the resurrection of the body at the end of times (34,9). But he does not speak about the immortality of the soul. Now Tertullian, in his treatise *On the Resurrection* (17), tells us that according to the more artless supporters of the resurrection, the flesh will need to be brought under review at the judgment, because otherwise the soul would be incapable of experiencing torment or refreshment, as being

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\* Previously published in: *Romanitas et Christianitas: Festschrift J.H. Waszink*, ed. W. den Boer et al., 1973, 275–279.

<sup>1</sup> Suetonius, *De rhetoribus* 1; for other parallels, see J. Beaujeu, *Minucius Felix, Octavius*, Paris 1964, XXff.

<sup>2</sup> Lucian, *Erotes* 13, Iacobitz II, 213.

<sup>3</sup> G.W. Clarke, *Four passages in Minucius Felix*, in: *Kyriakon. Festschrift Johannes Quasten, II*, Münster 1970, 502.

incorporeal: for such is the vulgar idea (*hoc enim vulgus existimat*). The implications of this popular view seem to be that the soul is dwelling in the tomb of the deceased. Tertullian himself gives an example of this belief (*De anima* 51,7). It may even be that some naive Christians in Africa did not believe at all that man had a soul. In any case the Christians of Africa before Tertullian did not believe that the soul of the believer went immediately after death to Paradise, or heaven, or to some intermediate abode, as most other Christians believed. It would seem that Minucius here is reflecting these rather archaic views of his African fellow Christians.<sup>4</sup> The same may perhaps be said about the Christology of Minucius.

Caecilius has remarked that some myths about the return to life from the grave have been applied by the Christians to their God:

Omnia ista figmenta male sanae opinionis et inepta solacia a poetis fallacibus in dulcedine carminis lusa a vobis nimium credulis in deum vestrum turpiter reformata sunt (11,9).

This then presupposes the belief of the Christians that Christ is risen from the dead and that He is God.

But according to Caecilius, Christ was a criminal who rightly received the penalty of death (9,4: *hominem summo supplicio pro facinore punitum*).

Against this, Octavius observes that Christ was neither a criminal nor a mere man. Though he does not say so with so many words, he gives us to understand that Christ was rightly believed to be God and rose from the dead:

Nam quod religioni nostrae hominem noxium et crucem eius adscribitis, longe de vicinia veritatis erratis, qui putatis deum credi aut meruisse noxium aut potuisse terrenum. Ne ille miserabilis, cuius in homine mortali spes omnis innititur; totum enim eius auxilium cum extincto homine finitur (29,2–3).

Basing himself upon the verse of Propertius:

immatura quidem, tamen huc non *noxia* veni,  
(*Elegiae* IV, 11,17)

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<sup>4</sup> Tertullian believes that the souls of the saints live on in Paradise (*Apol.* 47,13: *Et si paradisum nominemus, locum divinae amenitatis recipiendis sanctorum spiritibus destinatum*). There is no parallel for this in the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix. The latter seems to teach complete annihilation after death and complete restitution in the resurrection (34,9: *nihil esse post obitum et ante ortum nihil fuisse? sicut de nihilo nasci licuit, ita de nihilo licere reparari?*).

J.H. Waszink has shown that general belief in Antiquity “must gradually have attained at a division of the *ahori* into a group of innocent souls (children, ἄγαμοι; *ahori* in the narrower sense of the word) and one of guilty souls (*biothanati*, regarded as *ahori* at the same time)”.<sup>5</sup>

*Noxius*, then, in the passage of Minucius, means exactly the same as *homo summo supplicio pro facinore punitus*, a *biothanatos* or executed criminal. The view of Caecilius, therefore, is very similar to that attributed to the Jews by the author of the *Acta Pionii* 13,3: φασὶν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ὁ Χριστὸς ἄνθρωπος ἦν καὶ ἀνεπαύσατο ὡς βιοθανής.<sup>6</sup> Against this objection, Octavius holds that Christ was innocent, rose from the dead and was not simply a man, but God.

It might be that these words contain a silent criticism of the Jewish Christians, who according to the Fathers thought that Christ was a ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος. In any case these words make it perfectly clear that the Christology of Minucius is not Jewish Christian.

It would seem, however, that it is not Catholic either. For there is not the slightest hint that Minucius accepted the doctrine of the Logos so characteristic of Justin, Origen, Hippolytus and Tertullian. On the contrary, his own words exclude that he accepted the concept of a hypostatic Logos. According to him, it is God himself who by his word commands, by his thought rules and by his power perfects all the things that are:

qui universa, quaecumque sunt, verbo iubet, ratione dispensat, virtute consummat (18,7).

Word and thought are here attributes of God, like power. But if word and thought are inner qualities of God, there is no room for a hypostatic Logos, brought forth before creation and instrumental for creation, as in Tertullian.

It is not necessary to discuss these passages at any length, because this has been done already by J.J. de Jong.<sup>7</sup> He shows conclusively that the Christology of Minucius Felix is modalistic. And indeed, when Christ is called God and yet no Logos is admitted, what can it be called other than modalistic?

<sup>5</sup> J.H. Waszink, “Mors immatura”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 3 (1949) 111.

<sup>6</sup> R. Knopf – G. Krüger, *Ausgewählte Märtyrerakten*, 3rd ed., Tübingen 1929, 52.

<sup>7</sup> J.J. de Jong, *Apologetiek en Christendom in den Octavius van Minucius Felix* (thesis Leyden 1935), Maastricht 1935, 79–105.

Is it, therefore, necessary to relate Minucius to well-known modalists like Noetus, Praxeas and Sabellius, whose views were opposed by Hippolytus and Tertullian? It would seem that this conclusion is not necessary. They gave to their concept that Christ is God a formulation that was not accepted by the Catholic Church. But the naive faith that Christ is identical with God without any personal distinction was not limited to the above-mentioned heretics. We find it in the early centuries, and even nowadays, as an expression of the faith of the faithful. Tertullian tells us that the simple people, not to say the thoughtless and the ignorant, who are always the majority of the faithful, shy at his Logos doctrine; they claim to be worshippers of one God and hold to the monarchy (*Adv. Praxeas* 3). This shows us what the situation in Africa was at that time. Tertullian had to fight not only against the heresy of a man from Asia Minor, called Praxeas, but also against the simple faith of the ordinary Christians, who did not want to hear about a hypostatic Logos and the economy of the Trinity, because this was new to them. There is no doubt that these same people believed in the divinity of Christ, which for their simple faith was not in contradiction with the unicity and monarchy of God.

I suggest that Minucius Felix reflects this naive modalism of African Christianity as he reflected its naive belief in the resurrection of the body. We may compare the difference between Minucius and Tertullian in this respect with that between the Arabic Christians and Origen, as revealed by the *Dialogue with Heraclides*, discovered at Toura.<sup>8</sup> There too the Arabs cling to their more archaic views about Christ and the resurrection and are restive to the Logos doctrine of Origen and his views about the life of the soul after death. It would seem that bishop Heraclides, whose orthodoxy is under fire at this conference, had his doubts about the hypostatic preexistence of the Logos. Another heretical view held by the Arabs and discussed by Origen, is that the soul is blood, which implies that the soul after death dwells in the tomb or the body and is not immediately united to Christ. When Origen defends this Pauline position, he is said to teach the immortality of the soul.

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<sup>8</sup> J. Scherer, "Entretien d'Origène avec Héraclide", *Sources Chrétiennes* 67, Paris 1960; G. Lomiento, *Il dialogo di Origene con Eraclide* etc., Bari 1971.

It is quite clear that Minucius Felix' faith is near to that of the Arabs, whereas Tertullian holds very much the same position as Origen.

This in itself does not prove that Minucius wrote before Tertullian. For it is always possible that an author of a later date retains old-fashioned and outmoded views. It does show, however, that Catholicism was a newcomer to Africa in the age of Tertullian.

It is generally agreed today that Christianity at Carthage was of Jewish origin. Not only the language of the Christians there was rooted in the special idiom of the African Jews,<sup>9</sup> but the treatise *De centesima*, which reflects a pre-Tertullian form of African Christianity, contains an angel Christology of doubtful orthodoxy.<sup>10</sup> The translation of the New Testament before Tertullian shows that there were also Gentile Christians in Africa. That does not necessarily mean that they were Catholics. Minucius Felix rather suggests that many of them were modalists. Theirs was a simple theology: one God, Christ is God, the resurrection of the body. Moreover, it is by no means sure that the Marcionites, Valentinians and Gnostics, against whom Tertullian wrote, were an offshoot from the Catholic Church. They may have been there in Carthage before Catholicism arrived. All this suggests original pluriformity, which has been destroyed by later developments. Therefore scholarship could believe for such a long time that Tertullian was the creator of Christian Latin, that he was the first Christian Latin author, that nothing had existed before him in Africa. We now see clearly that African Christianity had a long and surprising prehistory, like Egyptian Christianity. This new light might oblige us to reconsider very old problems.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

I am more and more convinced that Minucius Felix wrote before Tertullian. But I do seem now to be the only one who thinks so.

<sup>9</sup> R. Braun, *Deus Christianorum*, Paris 1962; G. Quispel, "The Discussion of Judaic Christianity", *Vigiliae Christianae* 22 (1968) 93.

<sup>10</sup> J. Daniélou, "Le traité *De centesima, sexagesima, tricesima* et le judéo-christianisme latin avant Tertullien", *Vigiliae Christianae* 25 (1971) 171-181.



## RETRACTATIO

This is an elegant prelude, published in the Festschrift for Waszink (1973), to the rather discursive essay "African Christianity before Minucius Felix and Tertullian", *Actus* 1982.

Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*, Leiden 1991, took this as his basic presupposition for his thesis that the opposition and conflict of the City of God and the City of the devil in Augustin's *Civitas Dei* has very old roots in African Christianity and has parallels in Jewish Christianity and Qumran.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

### ANIMA NATURALITER CHRISTIANA\*

Ein Spaziergang bei Ostia, am Tyrrhenischen Meer entlang, das sich in problemloser Bläue ausbreitet; in der Ferne die klargezeichneten Konturen der treuherzigen Albanerberge; spielende Knaben werfen Steine über die Wellen, und in dieser Landschaft ohne Melancholie sitzen Freunde auf einem großen Stein, im Gespräch über die letzte Frage: gibt es Gott?—all das ist bekanntlich der Inhalt des goldenen Büchleins, das Minucius Felix einer bewundernden Nachwelt hinterlassen hat. Merkwürdig, mit welchem psychologischen Fingerspitzengefühl die Typen der Gesprächspartner gezeichnet sind. Der Heide, eine empfindliche und in sich gekehrte Natur, leidet unter der Unvollkommenheit der Außenwelt und kann die Sinnlosigkeit des Geschehens nicht versöhnen mit irgendeiner Teleologie; er weiß etwas von der erotischen Hybris, mit welcher der menschliche Geist die Grenzen der Erfahrung übersteigt und sich ins Unbekannte des göttlichen Jenseits wagen will, aber er hält solch faustisches Streben für unerlaubt und irreligiös. Zwar möchte er sich auf den Menschen beschränken und sich mit Selbsterkenntnis bescheiden, aber ohne daß er es weiß, kämpft in seinem Innern der Geist der Zeit. Gerade weil er an der Möglichkeit eines wissenschaftlichen Weltverständnisses verzweifelt, macht er dem Glauben an die Götter der Väter Platz, die für ihn die Apotheose seines Patriotismus und seiner Verbundenheit mit der Romanität bedeuten. Aber es will beachtet sein, daß er auch Serapis inbrünstig verehrt: Serapis aber ist Osiris, der sterbende und auferstehende Gott, der Kosmokrator. So kündigt sich in ihm die große Wende an, die sich am Ende des Gespräches vollzieht, die Hinwendung zum Christentum. Diesem tiefreligiösen und edlen Manne, der sich von der Natur auf den Menschen zurückgezogen hat, hält der Christ vor, daß man das Wesen des Menschen nicht kennen kann, wenn man sich nicht erst um das Wesen Gottes ernstlich bemüht hat: nisi divinitatis rationem diligentius excusseris, nescis humanitatis. Der Mensch ist ja ein Teil des

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Ganzen und kann nur wissen, was er ist, von wo er stammt, wozu er lebt, wenn er auf das Ganze sieht, das seine Abhängigkeit von Gott bezeugt in seiner Schönheit und Ordnung.

Was dann folgt bei Minucius, bezieht sich unmittelbar auf unser Thema, die Verfolgung des Motivs der "anima naturaliter christiana", das gerade in der Festschrift eines Mannes, der sich von der Seite der Psychologie her eingehend mit der Auffassung einer natürlichen Christlichkeit der Seele beschäftigt hat, angebracht sein dürfte. Da hat es schon seine Bedeutung, daß dieses Thema, zwar nicht in der wörtlichen Formulierung, aber doch inhaltlich, sich nicht nur bei Tertullian findet, sondern auch bei Minucius. Und ich möchte sofort sagen, in einer ursprünglicheren und altertümlicheren Form. Denn daß Minucius sein Kleinod früher geschrieben hat als Tertullian das "Apologeticum" und "De Testimonio Animae", davon bin ich, und viele mit mir, überzeugt.<sup>1</sup> Dann aber ändert sich die ganze Frage. Tertullian ist dann nicht selbständig auf diese Ideen verfallen, sondern ist von Minucius wenigstens angeregt worden. Minucius wäre dann der erste christliche Autor, bei dem das Thema anklingt. Aber es gibt in diesem Passus bei Minucius kaum einen Satz, der sich nicht bei früheren stoischen Schriftstellern belegen läßt. So gewinnen wir die richtige Perspektive für die Beurteilung einer Auffassung, die bis heute im Christentum mächtig wirkt.

Hören wir denn, was Minucius sagt. Er bemerkt, daß ein allgemeiner Consensus über Gott bestehe. Das wird dann folgendermaßen aufgliedert: "Ich höre das Volk... ich höre die Dichter... Untersuchen wir jetzt bitte die Lehre der Philosophen." Diese drei Formen der Religion, so verschieden sie sind, stimmen darin überein, daß sie das Bestehen des einen höchsten Gottes anerkennen (XVIII, 11 bis XX, 2). Es ist nun sehr beachtenswert, daß es, soweit ich weiß, noch keinem der hochgelehrten und zahlreichen Kommentatoren aufgefallen ist, wie merkwürdig diese Dreigliederung an sich schon ist. Es ist durchaus nicht zufällig, daß hier zwischen der Volksreligion, Dichterreligion und Philosophenreligion unterschieden wird. Denn die Volksreligion ist die konventionelle Religion, die auf Satzung durch den Gesetzgeber beruht; wir finden hier also die berühmte Unterscheidung der Religion der Gesetzgeber, der Dichter und der Philosophen wieder, die wir in verschiedenen Quellen der Mittelstoa finden. Das erste Mal, daß darüber in den uns überlieferten Quellen gesprochen wird, geschieht es bei

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<sup>1</sup> G. Quispel, "A Jewish source of Minucius Felix", *Vigiliae Christianae*, III, 2, 115.

einem Schüler sowohl des Panaetius wie des Posidonius, nämlich durch den Pontifex Scaevola. Ob nun schon Panaetius selbst dies religionsgeschichtliche Schema eingeführt hat, läßt sich nicht entscheiden, obwohl es mir wahrscheinlich scheint. Weiter zurückzugehen verbietet uns das Schweigen der Überlieferung, ja wir wissen nicht einmal, ob die ältere Stoa überhaupt den Gottesbeweis ex consensu gekannt hat. Es scheint also ziemlich sicher, daß die Dreiteilung der Religion zuerst in der philosophischen Schule entstanden ist, die dem Römischen Reiche das Ideal der Humanitas gegeben und auf die nachfolgenden Jahrhunderte so tiefgehenden Einfluß gehabt hat—das heißt in der Mittelstoa.

Aber was bedeutet an sich diese Schematisierung und Katalogisierung der Religionen? Panaetius, der überhaupt nicht religiös orientiert war, wird wenig darüber nachgedacht haben. Das Entscheidende ist, daß anerkannt wird, daß alle Religionen, trotz ihrer Verschiedenheit, an einen Hochgott glauben. Das behauptet Minucius. Und gerade diese Auffassung liegt auch in stoischen Quellen vor. Sowohl bei Sextus Empiricus, *adv. Math.* IX, 62, wie bei Dio Chrysostomos in seiner olympischen Rede wird gesagt, daß die drei Typen der Religion sich im Grunde zum Hochgottglauben bekennen. Ich habe die Stellen in meiner Ausgabe des Minucius (Leiden, Brill 1949) abgedruckt und werde anderswo gründlicher darauf eingehen.<sup>2</sup> Hier genügt es, festzustellen, daß der Gedanke, den Minucius ausspricht, sich ganz deutlich schon in stoischen Werken findet. Und damit sehen wir auch die Hintergründe der Auffassung, daß die Seele von Natur christlich ist. Denn man fragt sich doch, warum denn die Religionen darin übereinstimmen, daß sie einen höchsten Gott anerkennen. Minucius sagt das nicht direkt. Er deutet aber an, daß "alle Menschen, ohne Unterschied des Alters, des Geschlechtes und der gesellschaftlichen Stellung der rationalen und intuitiven Einsicht fähig sind und also nicht durch zufällige äußere Umstände ihre Kenntnisse erwerben, sondern ein ihrem natürlichen Sein eingeborenes Wissen um die Wahrheit haben" (XVI, 5): *nec fortuna nancos, sed natura insitos esse sapientiam*. Das heißt in unserem Falle: das Wissen, daß Gott ist, ist eine angeborene, nicht eine von außen kommende Erkenntnis, es ist, um die stoischen Termini, auf die hier angespielt wird, zu benutzen, eine *ἔμφυτος*, nicht eine *ἐπίκτητος ἐπίνοια*.

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<sup>2</sup> Ich verweise auf meinen Aufsatz "De mensbeschouwing van het Oude Christendom", *Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* XLVII; näheres in: *Vigiliae Christianae*, North Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1950.

Der Gottesglaube ist natürlich, nicht positiv, ist φύσει, nicht θέσει. Die Volksreligion und die Dichterreligion haben die Anerkennung eines höchsten Gottes offenbar bewahrt, weil sie sich aus einem primitiven und natürlichen Monotheismus entwickelt haben. Ob nun Minucius dies wirklich so scharf durchgedacht hat, läßt sich kaum entscheiden. Überhaupt sind Gedankengänge und logische Erörterungen in der patristischen Literatur selten, sogar bei den griechischen Vätern, die doch von Nichtkennern wegen ihrer "philosophischen" Einstellung so sehr gerühmt werden; meistens handelt es sich um Anklänge, Prahlens mit doxographischem Scheinwissen und gedankenloses Nachbeten. Daß aber die Anschauungen des Minucius über den Menschen—der Hinweis auf das Ganze für die Existenzerhellung,<sup>3</sup> die Unterscheidung zwischen angeborenen und positiven religiösen Erkenntnissen, die Dreigliederung des Gottesbeweises ex consensu omnium—in einen systematischen Zusammenhang gehören und nur von dorthier verstanden werden können, das sei hier besonders nachdrücklich hervorgehoben. Im Hintergrunde steht nämlich eine grandiose Religionsphilosophie, die sich zum großen Teil bei Dio Chrysostomos findet und von den verschiedenen Forschern mit Recht auf Posidonius zurückgeführt wird. Sie läßt sich nach den Ergebnissen Isaac Heinemanns,<sup>4</sup> die im folgenden etwas auf unsere Frage zugespitzt sind, folgendermaßen zusammenfassen: Die ursprüngliche Religion der Menschheit war der Monotheismus oder, besser gesagt, ein Hochgottglaube. So oft der primitive Mensch die schöne Ordnung der Natur betrachtete, entstand in ihm spontan die Einsicht, daß diese Gesetzmäßigkeit einem höheren Wesen zu verdanken sei. Der Glaube an ein höchstes Wesen ist ein sensus communis, der notwendigerweise überall entstehen muß. Der Urmonotheismus ist die natürliche Religion des primitiven Menschen.

Im Laufe der Zeit ist die Reinheit dieser Anschauung verloren gegangen. Um der Schwäche des einfachen Menschen einen Halt zu geben, haben die Gesetzgeber verschiedenartige Satzungen und Gebote aufgestellt und auch den Bilderdienst eingeführt; die verschiedenen Religionen der Völker beruhen auf willkürlichen Konventionen (Ethos); ihrerseits haben die Dichter die Götter als anthropomorphe Wesen dargestellt:

<sup>3</sup> Posidonius (bei Clemens Alexandr., *Strom.* II, 21, 129) gibt als Telos an, daß "man lebt in der Anschauung der Wahrheit und Ordnung des Ganzen und sich selbst damit so weit wie möglich in Übereinstimmung bringt", eine ganz extravertierte Anthropologie.

<sup>4</sup> I. Heinemann, *Posidonios' metaphysische Schriften* II, Breslau 1928. Vieles lernte ich aus S. Blankert, *Seneca (epist. 90) over natuur en cultuur*, Amsterdam, 1940.

ihre Religion ist durch den Mythos gekennzeichnet. Aufgabe der Philosophen ist es, die positiven Religionen der Konvention und des Mythos einerseits in ihrer relativen und geschichtlichen Berechtigung, andererseits in ihrer grundsätzlichen Unhaltbarkeit zu verstehen, schließlich die primitiven Urintuitionen, die ja in spontanen Ahnungen bestanden, zur Klarheit bewußter, vernunftgemäßer Erkenntnis zu erheben: die Religion der Philosophen beruht auf dem Logos.

So sind im Wandel der Jahrhunderte drei Typen der Religion entstanden: 1. der konventionelle der Gesetzgeber (das sind die Volksreligionen), 2. der mythische der Dichter, 3. der logische der Philosophen. Dies sind positive Religionen, die von außen her dem Menschen beigebracht werden (ἐπίκτητος). Aber trotz ihrer Unterschiede haben sie den ursprünglichen Monotheismus doch mehr oder weniger treu bewahrt. Warum? Weil die positiven Religionen Entwicklungsformen des primitiven Monotheismus sind. Ihre Stifter haben angeknüpft bei dem natürlichen religiösen Trieb (ὄρμη) und eine bestimmte Lehre darauf aufgebaut. Alle Religionen der Erde sind also von einer primitiven Grundlage ausgehende positive Spielarten, Entartungen der natürlichen Urreligion, des Urmonotheismus. Und darum haben das Volk, die Dichter und die Philosophen den Glauben an den einen Gott gemeinsam. Das sind die Hintergründe der Auffassung von Minucius und Tertullian, daß die Seele natürlicherweise christlich sei. Es ist hier nicht der Ort für philologische Erörterungen. Anderswo hoffe ich, wie gesagt, zu zeigen, daß Minucius seine stoische Vorlage fast wörtlich abgeschrieben hat, und daß Tertullian, durch Minucius angeregt, diese Anschauung dann christianisierte. Selbst die so originell scheinende Berufung auf die spontanen Äußerungen der ungebildeten Seele, die sich in Tertullians *De Testimonio Animae* findet, hat ihre Entsprechung in den stoischen Quellen. Auch die Bemerkungen über einen sensus communis der Unsterblichkeit gehen auf posidonisches Gedankengut zurück.

Doch sei das nur nebenbei bemerkt. Hier will ich nur einige mehr allgemeine Bemerkungen machen. Es ist klar, daß Pater Schmidt an den Anschauungen des Posidonius seine helle Freude haben würde: hat er doch versucht, auf Grund eines umfassenden ethnologischen Materials den urmonotheistischen Kern aus der Mythologie der Primitiven herauszuschälen. Die Übereinstimmung seiner Ideen mit denen Tertullians ist schon von einem seiner Bewunderer rühmend hervorgehoben.<sup>5</sup> Und

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<sup>5</sup> M. Haidenthaller, *Ad Nationes und De Testimonio Animae*, Paderborn 1942, 99–301.

freilich ist bei den christlichen Apologeten die Seele christlich, weil sie in ihren primitiven Lagen an den einen Gott glaubt. Man sollte hier aber keine Bestätigung des katholischen Dogmas finden wollen, das ist ein seltsames Quidproquo, sondern statt dessen sich ein bißchen mit Quellenforschung beschäftigen und anerkennen, daß die Hypothese des primitiven Hochgottglaubens posidonisch ist. Dann ist die Frage, was damit eigentlich gemeint ist.

Die Stoiker reden vom *sensus communis*; der Glaube an das göttliche Pneuma, das den Kosmos durchwaltet, der Glaube an die Unsterblichkeit der Seele, sind *sensus communes*, die überall und von jeher bestehen. Ja, die primitive Religion der Urzeit scheint sich ihrer Meinung nach hauptsächlich auf die Verehrung dieses bildlosen und unsichtbaren Gottes und den Glauben an die Unsterblichkeit zu beschränken. Der primitive Mensch und der heutige Mensch, insoweit er noch primitiv ist, glaubt daran intuitiv, weil es eine *ἔμφυτος ἐπίνοια* ist. Was soll das bedeuten? Heinemann erklärt: "Das heißt nicht, wie man in Verkennung des Sprachgebrauchs übersetzt hat, eingeborene, sondern in uns von selbst erwachende Erkenntnis",<sup>6</sup> (im Gegensatz zu *τέχνη* und *διδασκαλία*). Die Gottesidee hat sich also durch die sinnvolle Ordnung des Kosmos dem unbeschriebenen Blatte der menschlichen Seele eingeprägt: die *sensus communes* wären ganz sensualistisch zu verstehen. Es kommt mir vor, daß hier überscharf interpretiert wird. Es wird geschieden, was für das damalige Bewußtsein nicht einmal unterschieden war. Denn erstens wird gesagt, daß die Gottesidee entstanden sei sowohl wegen der Verwandtschaft des Urmenschen mit Gott, als auch wegen des Eindruckes des prachtvollen Kosmos (Dio Chrys., *Olymp.* 201, b); weiter ist nicht einzusehen, wie aus dem Anblick des Kosmos der Glaube an die Unsterblichkeit entstehen konnte; schließlich soll nicht vergessen werden, daß Posidonius gerade in seiner Psychologie platonisierte. Wir wissen ganz genau, daß gewisse Stoiker aus der Zeit nach Posidonius die stoische *sensus communes* mit den platonischen eingeborenen Ideen identifizierten;<sup>7</sup> die Terminologie *ἔμφυτος*, bzw. *ἐπίκτητος ἐπίνοια* stammt aus Platon, *Phaedrus* 237, d; und daß die natürliche Gotteserkenntnis im Menschen nur entstehen kann, weil er im tiefsten gottverwandt ist, zeigt mit erfreulicher Deutlichkeit ein Fragment von Posidonius selbst: "Wie das Licht", sagt Posidonius,

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, 126.

<sup>7</sup> Witt, *Albinus and the History of Middleplatonism*, 11.

“durch das lichthafte Auge wahrgenommen wird, so muß das Wesen des Ganzen wahrgenommen werden durch den gottverwandten Logos” (Sextus Empiricus, *adv. Log.* I, 93). Das entspricht genau dem Goetheschen Worte:

Wär nicht das Auge sonnenhaft,  
Die Sonne könnte es nicht erblicken,  
Lebte nicht in uns des Gottes eigene Kraft,  
Wie könnte uns Göttliches entzücken.

Ein Nur-Sensualist konnte so etwas nicht sagen: das Pathos ist dafür zu verschieden. Es ist also wohl so, daß nach Posidonius der Gottesglaube und der Unsterblichkeitsglaube auch eingeborene Ideen sind, die nicht nur aus dem Anblick des Kosmos stammen, sondern im Gott verwandten menschlichen Geiste, in seinem religiösen Triebe, irgendwie gegeben sind.

Es scheint mir nicht ohne Bedeutung, daß Posidonius sozusagen die primitive Grundlage der religionsgeschichtlichen Entwicklung entdeckt hat, und gerade den Glauben an ein im Kosmos waltendes unpersönliches Pneuma-Mana und die Überzeugung, daß die Menschenseele den Tod überlebt als primitive Überreste des ausgebildeten Bewußtseins gewürdigt hat; daß aber diese primitiven Intuitionen, von weisen Menschen aus Ahnungen zu klaren, erkenntnismäßigen Einsichten erhoben werden können, versichert er uns. Aber ist das wahr? Muß nicht der Glaube an den in die Geschichte eintretenden Gott und an die Auferstehung der Toten auf jede logische Stütze verzichten? Ist nicht der “primitive Trieb”, das Verlangen nach Gott, das Gott nicht beweist, aber postuliert, sich selbst genug?

Freilich, die christlichen Apologeten haben wenig geahnt von den Abgründen, die hier stoische und christliche Anschauungen scheiden. Sie knüpfen ganz unbefangen bei den stoischen Anschauungen an. Vielleicht war es ihnen mit diesen Dingen gar nicht so ernst, vielleicht waren es von Rhetoren gezogene periphere Hilfslinien, um zu den Menschen ihrer Zeit in einer verständlichen Sprache zu sprechen, während das Wesen des Christentums, im Sakrament erlebt, dies blieb, daß der Mensch nicht Christ ist, sondern Christ wird. *Fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani*, sagt derselbe Tertullian zutreffend, denn im Christentum ist der Mensch, was er wird. Wie aber das Verhältnis urchristlicher und katholischer Menschenbetrachtung zu beurteilen ist, darüber sind die Meinungen geteilt.





## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

### AN APOCRYPHAL VARIANT IN MACARIUS\*

The “Sermons and Letters” of the Syrian mystic Macarius (4th century) have recently been published.<sup>1</sup> Now at last we can discuss a passage to which we have drawn the attention of scholars before.<sup>2</sup>

Logos 64, 8(II, p. 218, 25–28):

ἵνα καὶ ἔσωθεν καὶ ἔξωθεν κατὰ τὸ τοῦ κυρίου παράγγελμα τὸ ποτήριον ἦ καθαρὸν, ὅπως μὴ τῇ τῶν Φαρισαίων νενοθευμένη δικαιοσύνη ὅμοιοι γενώμεθα τὸ ἔξωθεν μόνον πλύνοντες, τὸ δὲ ἔσωθεν πλήρες ῥύπου ἔχοντες.

We find several variations of this Saying in other passages of Macarius.<sup>3</sup> These are somewhat different from each other. And yet we may be sure that the deviations from Matthew 23, 25 and Luke 11, 39 are not simply due to the pen of the author. It would seem more probable that the variants πλύνετε 1. καθαρίζετε and πλήρες ῥύπου 1. γέμει ἀρπαγῆς καὶ πονηρίας (Luke) or γέμουσιν ἐξ ἀρπαγῆς καὶ ἀκρασίας (Mathew), are traditional and extracanonical.

A comparison with some Jewish texts, quoted by Strack-Billerbeck,<sup>4</sup> shows that this Saying of Jesus refers to a typically Jewish problem. According to the views of certain rabbi's, preserved by the treatise *Kelim*, the inside of a vessel remains ritually pure, if only the outside of it has been defiled.<sup>5</sup> The treatise *Berakoth* says in so many words that in such a case the inside might only be *wiped* off, whereas the outside has to be *washed* off (הטש).<sup>6</sup> This makes the meaning of the Saying somewhat

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<sup>1</sup> H. Berthold, *Makarios/Symeon Reden und Briefen* (Die Sammlung I des Vaticanus Graecus 694 [B]), 2 volumes, GCS, Berlin 1973.

<sup>2</sup> *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 24, 3/4 (1967) 214.

<sup>3</sup> *Logos* 40, 1,8 (vol. 2, p. 62, 10); *Hom.* 8, 1 (Typus III) (Klostermann, p. 38, 15); *Hom.* 28, 4 (Typus III; Klostermann, p. 168, 17 sq.); *Great Letter* (Jaeger, p. 263, 17).

<sup>4</sup> H.L. Strack, P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch I* (Matthäus), München 1965<sup>4</sup>, 934.

<sup>5</sup> *Kelim* 2, 1 (Soncino translation *Kelim* p. 13): They contract uncleanness through their concave bottoms, but not through their backs.

<sup>6</sup> *Berakoth* 51 a (Soncino translation *Berakoth* p. 309): Rinsing (ההדה) refers to the inside, washing (הטש) to the outside.

clearer. Jesus blames his opponents for evading the spirit of the Law and holds that a cup is impure, anyhow if the outside has been defiled. The variant “you wash”, however, is more adequate than the variant “you purify”, because the latter can be used both for “wiping off” and for “washing off”.<sup>7</sup> This leads us to the conclusion that Macarius in this case is nearer to the source even than Q. He must have used here an apocryphal and independent tradition, which has very ancient, Jewish roots.

It might be objected that the same variant is found elsewhere, more specifically in the *Diatessaron* of Tatian.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand the variant “full of filth” is to be found in the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*:

Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι καθαρίζετε τοῦ ποτηρίου καὶ τῆς παροψίδος τὸ ἔξωθεν, ἔσωθεν δὲ γέμει ρύπους. Φαρισαῖε τυφλέ, καθάρισον πρῶτον τοῦ ποτηρίου καὶ τῆς παροψίδος τὸ ἔσωθεν, ἵνα γένηται καὶ τὰ ἔξω αὐτῶν καθαρά. (*Hom.* XI, 29, 2; Rehm I, p. 168, 18–21).

This is not an isolated case. It has been shown that the Gospel tradition of the Clementine writings has quite a lot in common with the citations of Macarius. We therefore suggest that the latter used a Jewish Christian Gospel source. Perhaps a writing of the tenth century Arabic author ‘Abd al-Jabbār, entitled *The Establishment of Proofs for the Prophethood of Our Master Mohammed* can be of some help in this case. According to Shlomo Pines this work contains a legendary, but valuable Jewish Christian source, describing the primitive life of the first, Hebrew, Christians in Jerusalem and their later migration to Mesopotamia.<sup>9</sup> This hypothesis has been violently criticised by several

<sup>7</sup> Καθαρίζω in the Septuagint does not translate ἥσῳ (see Hatch, Redpath II, p. 698). The difference in translation could arise, because “hadaha” may mean both “to wash off” and “to cleanse” (literally “the removal of impurity”, cf. J. Levy, *Neuhebräisches und chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midrashim*, Leipzig 1889, vol. I, p. 380 b).

<sup>8</sup> The following versions of the *Diatessaron* have “wash” in stead of “cleanse”: Persian: lavate (Messina p. 269, 21); Arabic: vous lavez (Mamardji p. 193); Venetian: lavate (Vaccari Todesco p. 73, 21); Tuscan (ms S): lavate (Vaccari Todesco p. 260); Dutch: duact ende suvert (ms of Liege, Plooy, p. 215); wascht ende zuvert (ms of Stuttgart, Bergsma p. 108); wasschet (ms of Haaren, de Bruin, p. 45, 10); Theodiscum: ir weschet (Gerhardt, p. 65, 20). In the Syriac tradition we find this variant in the *Demonstrations* of Aphraates (15, 1; Parisot I, p. 729, 4) and in an allusion to this text in the *Liber Graduum* (10, 3; Kmosko, p. 253, 9). This reading is also attested in the Gospeltex of Marcion cf. Tertullianus, *adv. Marc.* IV, 27: lavatis.

<sup>9</sup> Shlomo Pines, *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source* (The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Proceedings, II, 13), Jerusalem 1966.

scholars, though they admit that this text does contain apocryphal or Syrian traditions.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, it has been established that this Arabic text also contains Jewish Christian Gospel tradition.<sup>11</sup> As long as no satisfactory explanation for this fact has been found, the possibility remains open that the text of al-Jabbār contains Jewish Christian material. Therefore it is remarkable that this text contains the following passage:

(It is said) there (i.e., in the Gospel): He said to the Children of Israel: “O serpents, children of vipers, you profess the Scripture, and you do not understand. You *wash* the outside of the *vessel*, and its inside is full of *filth*”.<sup>12</sup> (Variants: a. you wash; b. *vessel*, and (without πίνακος or παροψίδος); c. full of filth).

Now, we might say of course: “you wash” comes from the *Diatessaron* and the omission of “dish” or “plate” has been taken from the Syriac text of Matthew 23, 26 (it is, in fact, a well-known “non-interpolation” of the Western text, contained in D, the Itala and the Syrus Sinaiticus) and “full of filth” is also contained in the Syrus Sinaiticus, as well as in the Vulgate and the Coptic (Sahidic and Bohairic) version, and in the *Diatessaron*.<sup>13</sup>

But it is also possible to take the evidence of the Clementines and of al-Jabbār seriously and to suppose that this is an apocryphal Jewish Christian tradition. We might restore this tentatively and hypothetically as a model in the following way:

τί πλύνετε τὸ ἔξωθεν τοῦ ποτηρίου,  
τὸ δὲ ἔσωθεν γέμει ῥύπου·  
οὐ νοεῖτε, ὅτι ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔσωθεν

<sup>10</sup> S.M. Stern. “Quotations from Apocryphal Gospels in Abd-al-Jabbar”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 18 (1967) 34–57; T. Baarda, “De vier evangeliën volgens Abd-al-Djabbar”, *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 28 (1974) 215–238.

<sup>11</sup> See *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 24, 3/4 (1967) 214 and *Vigiliae Christianae*, 22 (1968) 62 (in a review of Manfred Hornschuh’s, *Studien zur Epistula Apostolorum*).

<sup>12</sup> 67 b, Pines, o.c., 64.

<sup>13</sup> This variant we also find in the writings of Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* 3, 9, 48; Stählin I, 264: ἀκαθαρσία), Epiphanius (*Pan.* 16, 4; Roll I, 213, 16), the *Acta Archelai* (24, Beeson 35), the Armenian version and the Palestinian Syriac version (J.P.N. Land, *Anecdota Syriaca* IV, Leiden 1875, 126). In the *Diatessaron* this variant has been attested in the Persian version (Messina 269, 22: sozzure), in the Dutch versions (ms of Liege; Plooy, 581: onsuverheide; ms of Haaren; de Bruin, 90 and ms of Cambridge; de Bruin, 32: onreinicheid; Theodiscum; Gerhardt, 126: Unreinheit), and the Italian versions (Venetian; Todesco Vaccari 122, 9: immunditia; Tuscan; Todesco Vaccari, 321, 8: sozzura).

καὶ τὸ ἔξωθεν ἐποίησεν  
καὶ ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔξωθεν  
καὶ τὸ ἔσωθεν ἐποίησεν.

If there is some truth in this reconstruction, we might explain some special features concerning the tradition of this Saying:

1. The *Gospel of Thomas* was the starting-point for our model, but does not reflect it completely:

Jesus said: Why do you *wash* the outside of the cup? Do you not understand that he who made the inside is also he who made the outside? (Logion 89).

The parallelism is not there, or not there anymore. Moreover the words “but the inside is full of filth” are lacking. But they seem to be necessary, because they reveal the completely casuistic behaviour of the Jews: even if the inside is ritually unclean, they act as if this were not the case and as if only the outside of the cup has to be washed. This form of the Logion suggests that the author of the *Gospel of Thomas* took this Saying from a Jewish Christian source, but submitted it to slight redactional adaptations. As against Luke and Matthew the version of “Thomas” is transmitted without any indication of the place or time of its delivery. Form criticism teaches us that this is an archaic feature.

2. The source Q of Matthew and Luke, which in this case too turns out to be a Greek writing, has blurred the real sense of the Saying by using the verb καθαρίζειν, to purify, in stead of πλύνειν, to wash off. Moreover the author of Q seems to have added the explicit mention of the Pharisees. Originally, this might not have been the case.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> F.W. Beare, *The Earliest Records of Jesus*, Oxford 1964, 214–215: “It would seem that Mark XII, 37 b should be taken as the conclusion of the preceding section. Note that in Mark (followed almost word for word by Luke, except in the introduction), we have a single sentence of warning against the scribes; there is no mention of the Pharisees. In Matthew scribes and Pharisees are grouped together as the recognised leaders of Judaism, sitting “in Moses’ seat” (a conception hardly possible while the Temple was still standing and the powers of the priesthood and of the Great Sanhedrin were still unimpaired); and the single sentence of Mark has been used as the nucleus of a long series of denunciations, under the repeated malediction: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”. Part of the additional material is from Q and has been used by Luke in his Travel Narrative (Luke XI, 39ff.), where scribes and Pharisees are denounced separately”.

3. Matthew seems to have added certain elements to his Greek source.

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!* for you cleanse the outside of the cup and *of the plate*, but inside they are full of *extortion* and *rapacity* (Matthew 23, 25).

- a) The malediction (woe to you) is absent from Thomas and Luke; it could be redactional.
- b) It is to be hoped that the word “hypocrites”, which is not to be found in Luke and Thomas, is an addition. It would seem rather impolite to address your opponents in this way.
- c) A cup cannot be full of ideal and abstract concepts like extortion and excess. It can be full of filth and so ritually impure.

4. Luke seems to have combined his source Q with a special tradition which has much in common with Thomas and must be of Palestinian origin. He writes: “Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and *of the dish*, but inside *you* are full of extortion and wickedness. *You fools*. Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?” (Luke 11, 39–40). This last Saying might simply have meant that a potter makes a cup as a whole, so that you cannot make any distinction between its inside and outside, as far as ritual purity is concerned. Luke has spiritualised and interiorised this ritual observation, applying it to the inward part of the Pharisees. These he addresses as ἄφρονες: this is a stylistic device of the Stoic diatribe. Dissent about a ritual problem has become a moral issue.

5. The Western text of Matthew 23, 26 does not contain a “non interpolation”, that is the original wording of the Evangelist himself. The variant τοῦ ποτηρίου 1. τοῦ ποτηρίου καὶ τῆς παροψίδος in verse 26 could be due to the influence of a Jewish Christian free tradition upon the Western text. This might be the case, because the Gospel of Thomas has ποτήριον only in the equivalent of Matthew 23, 25. The same is true of ἀκαθαρσίας 1. ἐξ ἀπαργῆς καὶ ἀκρασίας and of the transposition τὸ ἔσωθεν καὶ τὸ ἔξωθεν in Luke 11, 40. This transposition might hint to an original parallelism: he who made the inside also made the outside and he who made the outside also made the inside. Thomas seems to have preserved one half: he who made the inside is also he who made the outside. Luke might have preserved the other half: he who made the outside made the inside also.

6. The reading “you wash” in the various versions of the *Diatessaron* shows that Tatian was indebted to this Jewish Christian tradition. The fact that this variant is not to be found in any manuscript of the Western text might show that he knew this tradition directly and not through the intermediary of a Western text.
7. The Gospel version of the Pseudo-Clementines is not a direct and pure quotation from the Jewish Christian tradition, but a mixture of the synoptics with this tradition.
8. Macarius of course knew the synoptic Gospels, but also was familiar with an extracanonical tradition of Jewish origin. It becomes more and more clear that Macarius originated from Edessa, the centre of Aramaic Christianity, like the Messalian movement, to which he belonged or which he inspired. Though he certainly knew the *Gospel of Thomas*, he quotes Jewish Christian Gospel tradition not to be found in the *Gospel of Thomas* (full of filth etc.). Quite a few of his Gospel quotations have a marked affinity with the Pseudo-Clementines, but cannot possibly be identified with the wording of the Clementines or their source. He rather seems familiar with the tradition underlying both “Thomas” and “Clement”, which in certain respects is more primitive than Q.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

### APOCALYPTICS AND GNOSIS FROM JOB TO JAN VAN EYCK\*

The biblical book Job belongs to the wisdom literature of Israel. It was written possibly around 300 B.C.E. and concerns the suffering of the guiltless. It describes the course of events following a wager between the Lord God and his servant, Satan. A rich man loses all of his property and his children and is afflicted with a skin disease. Three friends argue that this is punishment for sin. That is usually the moral of wisdom literature, not unlike the Indian concept of karma. But Job insists on his guiltlessness: not he, but God is guilty. Then God himself answers Job out of the tempest and poses questions to which no man has an answer (38:1–16). Job puts his hand to his mouth, but will not admit that he is to blame for his suffering. The author has discovered the enigma of guiltless suffering, but escapes in mere scepticism. According to him, Wisdom is completely hidden: “But where shall Wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?” (28:12)

The book Job is no more than the beginning of a development. The authors of apocalypses (revelations) have an answer to that question. They say: it is true that the innocent suffer, but at the end of times they will rule the earth. They also say that although secrets are unfathomable, they are nevertheless revealed to some initiates. Sometimes it seems they provide a direct answer to certain passages in the book of Job. Job does not know the secrets of nature, the weight of the winds, the measures of the waters, the rain and the way for the lightning of the thunder (28:25–26). But when “Henoah” was transported he saw the secrets of the lightning and the thunder, the secrets of the wind and the secrets of the clouds and the dew (41:3–9). This “Henoah” is the fictitious hero of a work which has been preserved in Ethiopic and was probably written around 200 B.C.E., somewhere in Palestine. By means of parables, it foretells the coming of the “Son of Man” as

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\* Translation of an article which originally appeared in Dutch in G. Lernout, *Apocalypse*, Antwerp 1988.



world judge at the end of times. This “Son of Man”, an Aramaic title signifying nothing else than “man”, is the Glory or revelatory figure of God in the shape of a man, about which the prophet Ezechiel had already spoken in the first chapter of his prophecy in 593.

Another apocalyptic work called *4 Ezra*, written at the beginning of the Common Era in Palestine, describes how this Man emerges from the sea (as did the goddess Isis in the dream of the Latin author Apuleius) to bring peace to Jerusalem as the Messiah: “he shall stand on the top of mount Zion” (13:35). At the time the Jews expected that on the eve of Pesach the Messiah would reveal himself on Mount Zion, a hill south of Jerusalem, and establish a reign of peace there.

All this has to do with the mystic Lamb of God in Gent in Belgium, because the *Revelation of John* speaks of the Lamb on Mount Zion. We must see this in the light of Jewish apocalypticism.

All in all, Christianity is God’s answer to Job. God himself assumed the suffering of the guiltless. That guiltless man was judged because he warned against the fanatic actions of the Zelots. Those who believed in him saw their own, equally guiltless suffering as “communion with the suffering of Christ”. They were convinced that he would return to establish his realm of peace and freedom upon earth. That is what the *Apocalypse of John* is about. This biblical book is easy to understand when it is not regarded as a timetable forecasting the Third World War, but as a political pamphlet, a fierce indictment of the state absolutism at the time practised by Rome, the harlot on the seven hills. Nero, the beast, 666, the Apocalypse says, is not dead, he will return from Parthia and destroy Rome, but he will be defeated in Israel by the Messiah. The visions in which this message is clothed are sometimes highly original: God is viewed as a jasper stone (4:1–3), Jesus is called the Paschal Lamb, because he was killed in the temple on the eve of Pesach, 14 Nisan, together with thousands of paschal lambs. But it is tradition that he returns as Messiah on Mount Zion, probably on the eve of Pesach and stands there with 144,000 followers, the congregation of Jerusalem, to begin the battle against Nero (14:1–5).

The apocalypticism becomes Gnosis when the Kingdom of God on earth fails to take place and men go look for it in heaven. Thus proleptic eschatology is born. The Jewish gnostics of the first centuries of the Common Era ascend on high, where they behold the chariot of Ezechiel and on it the shining Glory of God. The Gnostic Valentinus (ca. 150 C.E.) says in the *Gospel of Truth* (42,37–43,8) that he has been in the Pleroma. This proleptic eschatology can also be found in the

canonical Gospel of John: “This *is* (not: will be) the eternal life, that they know Thee” (19:3).

The Apocalypse also gave rise to splendid art. Already in Antiquity a stereotypical image arose around the fourteenth chapter: the Lamb is seen standing on a surrealist mountain, surrounded by 144,000 singing followers. Throughout the ages, the miniature remained essentially unchanged: in the Trier Apocalypse (ca. 800), in the Bamberg Apocalypse (ca. 1000) and in the various Spanish and Aquitaine illustrations of the commentary of Beatus of Liébana on the Apocalypse (ca. 1200).

These miniatures have inspired works of art:

- 1 The Lamb on the Angers tapestry (ca. 1380) after designs of Jan Bondel of Bruges;
- 2 The miraculous many-headed Lamb floating high above reality, on Dürer’s woodcut;
- 3 The Brussels tapestry, produced in the workshop of Willem de Panne-maker (ca. 1540). To remove all doubt whether this is an illustration of Apocalypse 14, the artist wrote “Sion” on the mountain carrying the Lamb.

I am firmly convinced that the mystic Lamb of Gent also arose from the miniature tradition accompanying the fourteenth chapter of the Apocalypse. It is striking that experts like Elizabeth Daenens in her monumental work on the van Eycks, and even Frits van der Meer in his splendid work on Apocalyptic art, failed to notice this. There is no doubt in my mind that van Eyck was conversant with the tradition of Apocalyptic miniature art. Michael on the lectern of the singing angels has been painted after the traditional image accompanying Revelations 12, the Lamb of Gent is standing on Mount Zion, the cup, the virgins, the 144,000, even the singing and music-making angels can be found in Revelations 14. The almost one thousand-year-old miniature tradition prepared the ground for this work.

Van Eyck had a good grasp of John. In the background there are medieval cities, and all those flowers show that this is earth, not heaven. But this is not Jerusalem, this is the Second Coming of Christ in Flanders, bringing freedom to its flourishing cities.

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## CHAPTER FORTY

### THE EPISTLE TO THE LAODICEANS: A MARCIONITE FORGERY\*

For more than a thousand years Western Christianity has read the *Epistola ad Laodicenses* in numerous manuscripts of the Vulgate and in German, Czech and English translations. This letter could impossibly have been written by Paul, something already hotly contended by Erasmus. It is a *Cento* from the Epistle to the Philippians, with an occasional allusion to texts of other Pauline writings and a single tendentious change or addition. Only the introductory words were very clearly derived from the Epistle to the Galatians. *Paulus apostolus non ab hominibus neque per hominem, sed per Iesum Christum, fratribus qui sunt Laodiciae*. The text is printed in Adolf Harnack's *Marcion*.<sup>1</sup>

I am concerned here with those introductory words. A certain familiarity with the devices of ancient stilistics will immediately lead one to conclude that something is going on here. It was quite common in Antiquity to indicate by means of the introductory words which admirable model was emulated, which source was used, and which genre was followed. The view about originality in Antiquity was far different from what we nowadays profess about the subject. The *imitatio* of famous writers was considered an asset which was taught to children from an early age onwards in rhetorical schools. It was, however, considered reprehensible if an author imitated another without acknowledging his indebtedness and tried to pass off his work as his own invention. Cicero reflects the *communis opinio* of authoritative critics of Greek and Roman letters when he apostrophises the poet Ennius in the following words: “*qui a Naevio vel sumpsisti multa, si fateris; vel si negas, surripuisti*” (you who took much from Naevius, if you admit it: or if you deny it, you stole it (Brutus 76).

The first was considered acceptable and even commendable; only the latter was regarded as theft. It was essential therefore to make it

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\* Translation (by Cis van Heertum and the author) of a revised article which first appeared in *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 5 (1950/51) 43–46.

<sup>1</sup> Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion. Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott. Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der Katholischen Kirche*, repr. Darmstadt 1962, 137.

absolutely clear who was emulated (ζηλωτῶν). This could be achieved by directly referring to the source in the opening words.

An example from two authors who everyone will remember from their own schooldays:

Homer, *Odyssey* I, I: ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα... (tell me, oh Muse, the man...)  
Virgil, *Aeneid* I, I: *arma virumque cano*... (of war and a man I sing)

Another example from two other old favourites:

Tacitus, *Germania* 1: *Germania omnis*...  
Caesar, *De bello Gallico* I, 1: *Gallia est omnis*...

In order to deflate the argument, that this is a *ingeniosior quam verior fictio* of contemporary philologists I may refer to a passage of the *Cohortatio ad Gentiles* 17, Otto 2, 66, in which it is argued that Homer imitated Orphic poems in his works:

τῆς Ὀρφείως... ποιήσεως, ἣν οὕτως ζηλωτῶσαι  
προϋθροτο, ὡς καὶ διὰ τοῦ πρώτου τῆς ποιήσεως  
ἔπους τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν σημήναι σχέσιν.

(The poetry of Orpheus, which he so distinctly proposed to rival, that even in the first line of his poem he indicated the relation he held to him).

That pseudo-Justin was wrong in his assessment of the relationship between Homer and Orpheus doesn't bother me. His words make it very clear that it was customary, at least in his days, to indicate with the first words (ἔπους = verse line) of a work which author one wished to ζηλωτῶσαι.

Christian authors were also familiar with this custom. Minucius Felix begins his *aureus libellus* with an allusion to Cicero:

Min. I, I	Cicero, <i>de Oratore</i> I, I
<i>Cogitanti mihi et...</i>	<i>cogitanti mihi saepenumero</i>
<i>memoriam recensenti</i>	<i>et memoria vetera recensenti.</i>

Indeed, Minucius' disputation was written in the style of the Ciceronic dialogue, and it has derived much from it. This should not be used against Minucius, however, because already the first word indicates that his *imitatio* was a conscious act. In his turn Lactantius, who owed a great deal to Minucius, demonstrated his indebtedness in a similar way:

Lactantius IV, I, I: *cogitanti mihi et cum animo meo reputanti*

Both pseudo Cyprian, *ad Novatianum* I, "*cogitanti mihi*" and Victorinus of Pettau I, I: "*cogitanti mihi*", must be interpreted in this light.

The method used by Minucius, who must have lived in the second half of the second century, is important to our theme because Harnack claims the *Epistola ad Laodicenses* must have come into existence at around this time. It is a summary of the Epistle to the Philippians, but it begins with the first verse of the Galatians. *However, it must be noted that the Epistle to the Galatians headed Marcions' Apostolikon: ἡ πρὸς Γαλάτας ἐπιστολὴ παρὰ Μαρκίωνι πρώτη κεῖται* (the Epistle to the Galatians stands as first in Marcion's collection of Pauline Epistles), said Epiphanius. It rather seems as if we here have a reference to the source, the Marcionite *Apostolikon*, as was customary in those days, and that the author himself points out that he has Paul speak in a Marcionite mode in the Epistle. Amongst the arguments put forward by Von Harnack in evidence of the Marcionite character of this letter we also find: "Der 'Apostolos' Marcions beginnt mit dem Galaterbrief als der Grundlage seiner Lehre und deshalb mit den Worten: '*Paulus apostolus non ab hominibus neque per hominem, sed per Iesum Christum*'. Auch unser Brief beginnt mit diesen monumentalen, im Sinne Marcions antikatholischen Worten".<sup>2</sup> If I understand him correctly, Von Harnack using his fine powers of intuition, assumed that a certain relation with the Marcionite *Apostolikon* was indicated by the very first words of the Epistula. This assumption can now be corroborated with parallels from Ancient and Early Christian literature. Von Harnack's opinion, that the epistle is a Marcionite forgery, is confirmed by our reference to the rule which the Ancients applied for the *imitatio*.

However this may be, one has to take into account the possibility that for centuries a Marcionite text, the only Marcionite text that has come down to us, was included in the manuscripts of the Vulgate.

Possibly all this is also of importance for the assessment of the prologue to the Gospel of John. That he refers to Genesis I is something which will nowadays not be contested. Gerhard Kittel notes:

Daß der Prolog dieser Verbindung vollzogen hat, und zwar in einem auszerordentlich bewußtem Sinn, beweist die Wortverbindung ἐν ἀρχῆ. Die Art, wie sie an den Anfang des ganzen Evangeliums gestellt ist, kann schlechterdings nicht anders verstanden werden als im Sinn einer gewollten Aufnahme der ersten beiden Worte des ersten Buches der Bibel: Genesis I, I: ברשׂית = LXX: ἐν ἀρχῆ.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion*, 141.

<sup>3</sup> *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum neuen Testament*, Stuttgart 1957, IV, 135, l. 14.

It is possible that the examples quoted above confirm Kittel's remark. But one wonders whether the opening words of the Gospel only refer to the first chapter of Genesis: the prologue is a continual polemic against the hypostasising of the Thora, contained in the entire Pentateuch. Virgil demonstrates with his "arma virumque" that he wishes to emulate the entire *Odyssey*, not so much on the first book only, but throughout the *Aeneid*. Similarly, John might also point to the entire Pentateuch with his ἐν ἀρχῇ.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

The Epistle to the Laodiceans, transmitted in Latin in many manuscripts of the Vulgate and attributed to the apostle Paul, belongs to the so-called Apocrypha of the New Testament.

An English translation of it can be found in the book *Apocrypha I*, 42, edited by W. Schneemelcher and R. Mcl. Wilson, Westminster 1992. From a philological point of view it represents a very special genre of Ancient Literature, called *cento* (quilt), because it patches together Pauline passages and phrases, mainly taken from the Epistle to the Philippians, but not from the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Pastoral Epistles to Timothy and Titus. In this it reflects the Canon of the Pauline Epistles at Rome in the time of Marcion and before the constitution of the definitive Canon of the New Testament in Rome (ca. 200).<sup>4</sup>

Numerous *centones* from Antiquity have been preserved. Boys learned in the rhetorical schools to forge such stylistic imitations of famous and authoritative authors. One of them was the author of the Epistle to the Laodiceans. No wonder, then, that he used a well-known literary device to indicate his source by the first words of his own text. This was obviously the Corpus Paulinum as it was in use before and during Marcion's stay at Rome; it began with the Epistle to the Galatians.

For an ancient reader this sequence had a special meaning. It was not only chronological (Paul was said in Antiquity to have written Galatians first), but it was also tendentious and provocative. The theme of the Epistle to the Galatians is indeed the opposition of the Law and the Gospel. By putting it before everything else, it conveyed the impression

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<sup>4</sup> Ulrich Schmid, *Marcion und sein Apostolos*, Berlin-New York 1995.

that St Paul was the only real champion of Truth in his fight against a host of pseudo-apostles. Marcion, an extreme Paulinist, who separated the Law (of Jehova) from the Gospel (of the God of Love), could be assured of some sympathy for his ideas, when he came from Pontus in Asia Minor to Rome and gave a considerable sum of money to the congregation there, which was gratefully accepted. The Canon Muratori, a second-century catalogue of authoritative New Testament writings which originated in Rome, reports:

There is current also an Epistle to the Laodiceans, another to the Alexandrians forged in Paul's name for the sect of Marcion.

The Epistle to the Alexandrians may be the Epistle to the Hebrews, not included in the Canon at the time of Marcion and certainly not Pauline, controversial in Rome but in the end accepted.

The Epistle to the Laodiceans may be identical with our Apocryphon. If that is the case, the following passage from the Epistle to the Laodiceans may allude to the endeavour of the Catholics in Rome to emasculate St Paul and to encapsulate him in a Canon by adding the unauthentic Pastoral Letters to Timothy and Titus:

And may you not be deceived by the vain talk of some people who tell you in false tales that may lead you away from the truth of the Gospel which is proclaimed by me.

Are these words an echo of the gigantic struggle between the followers of Paul in Rome and the followers of Peter, which was to lead to the birth of the Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church?

Ultimately, the order of the Pauline letters was changed in Rome. The Epistle of the Romans was supplied with two authentic chapters (15 and 16), which were taken from superior, Alexandrian manuscripts. This shows that the Canon was constituted by professionals (*grammatici*), who knew how to edit an ancient text.

But it also showed that the concept of Rome's primacy has very ancient roots: Romans first, Rome first.





## CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

### EROS AND AGAPE IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN\*

In 1948/1949 I lived in Rome as a fellow of Bollingen Foundation. During the spring of '49, I made a trip to Sicily and visited Catania, where our bus stopped for some time. I went to the university and asked the janitor whether I could see a certain professor Rapisarda, whose book on Arnobius I had reviewed for *Vigiliae Christianae*. It so happened that he was there, standing in the yard, surrounded by his students, ironic, humane, very much like Socrates in the midst of his pupils. Some time later I was invited to lecture at the university and he introduced me. I still remember the powerful eloquence with which he proclaimed the relevance of the study of Christian literature: he foresaw the danger that Christian charity would vanish from our society.

Ever since my attention has been focused on this central theme, wondering what charity could mean, but only recently I came to read Anders Nygren's famous book *Eros and Agape*. As everybody knows he opposes the two: eros is Greek and egoistic, agape is Christian and altruistic. A synthesis between the two has been endeavoured in Antiquity, both by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and St. Augustine, but these radically different views could not be reconciled. So Luther and the Reformation opted for charity, the Renaissance for eros, and rightly so: never the twain shall meet.

It would seem that the basis for this impressive theory is somewhat shaky, because in the Bible this radical opposition is not to be found. It is true that eros is not attested for the New Testament, but the word "agape" can have virtually the same meaning as "eros". To prove this thesis I refer to John 15, 12–14:

This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.  
Greater love hath no man than this,  
that a man lay down his life for his friends.  
Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

These words are seen in their right perspective if we remember that

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\* Previously published in: *Sicilorum Gymnasium*, N.S. 29 (1976) 383–386.

the author of the fourth gospel, like every writer of antiquity, had the right to compose discourses which reflected a situation as he saw it. This, of course, does not mean that these orations were created out of nothing. He can very well have amplified an already existing tradition. In this case we can even positively indicate the Saying of Jesus which “John” is variating again and again, not only in his gospel, but also in his first letter.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus said: Love thy brother as thy soul,  
guard him as the apple of thine eye.  
(Gospel of Thomas, logion 25)

This word of course is not identical with or derived from Mark 12, 30–31 parr., the commandment to love God and neighbour, with which it has hardly one word in common. Its beautiful parallelism, to mention nothing else, shows that it has been transmitted in a Jewish milieu (as opposed to the Gentile origin of the canonical gospels). The author of the Gospel of Thomas must have taken it from his Jewish Christian source. The logion teaches us to sacrifice ourselves on behalf of the members of the brotherhood to which we belong and to have the highest regards for our fellow Christians.

The Church of Christ should be a brotherhood and a sorority, a society of friends. This certainly is charity in the Jewish sense of the word.

Then, in John 15:13, Jesus is quoted as having said that the greatest love is to give your life for a friend. This is somewhat astonishing, because, as Bultmann remarks in his commentary, one would expect the greatest love to be love of your enemy. And then it occurs to us that this ideal of death for a friend is a *locus communis* of erotic literature. So Phaedrus says in the *Symposion* of Plato, 179 b:

Love will make men dare to die for their beloved—love alone; and women as well as men. Of this, Alcestis, the daughter of Pelias, is a monument to all Hellas; for she was willing to lay down her life on behalf of her husband, when no else would, although he had a father and mother; but the tenderness of her love so far exceeded theirs, that she made them seem to be strangers in blood to their own son, and in name only related to him; and so noble did this action of hers appear to the gods, as well as to men, that among the many who have done virtuously she is one of the very few to whom, in admiration of her noble action, they have granted

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<sup>1</sup> See “Love thy brother”, in: *Gnostic Studies* II, 169.

the privilege of returning alive to earth; such exceeding honour is paid by the gods to the devotion and virtue of love. But Orpheus, the son of Oeagrus, the harper, they sent empty away, having presented to him an apparition only of her whom he sought, but herself they would not relinquish, because he showed no spirit; he was only a harp player, and did not dare like Alcestis to die for love, but was contriving how he might enter Hades alive; therefore they afterwards caused him to suffer death at the hands of women, as the punishment of his cowardliness.

Very different was the reward of the true love of Achilles towards his lover Patroclus—his lover and not his love (the notion that Patroclus was the beloved one is a foolish error into which Aeschylus has fallen, for Achilles was the fairer of the two, fairer also than all the other heroes; and, as Homer informs us, he was still beardless, and younger far). And greatly as the gods honour the virtue of love, still the return of love on the part of the beloved to the lover is more admired and valued and rewarded by them; for the lover is more divine, because he is inspired by God. Now Achilles was quite aware, for he had been told by his mother, that he might avoid death and return home, and live to a good old age, if he abstained from slaying Hector. Nevertheless he gave his life to revenge his friend, and dared to die for him, not only in his defence, but after he was dead. Wherefore the gods honoured him even above Alcestis, and sent him to the Islands of the Blest. These are my reasons for affirming that Love is the eldest and noblest and mightiest of the gods, and the chiefest author and giver of virtue and happiness, alike in life, and after death.

Likewise Seneca can say that I do make a man my friend in order to have someone for whom I may die (*ut habeam pro quo mori possim*, Epistula 9, 10).

It is a sign of eros if a man lays down his life for his friend(s).

The author of the Fourth Gospel was not alien to Greek thoughts and views. He even introduced the thoroughly un-Jewish and typically Greek concept of a “beloved disciple” and dared to represent the Last Supper as a sort of Symposium at which the beloved pupil rested at the bosom of this teacher. He knew both eros and agape. In the passage we discussed he welded together Greek eros and Jewish agape in a lasting synthesis.

This then would mean that St. Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius interpreted the Bible correctly. And if in later times the leaders of Christendom had valued Eros more positively, as John did, the situation of the Church would be more felicitous in our times.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE

It is quite clear that the Fourth Gospel cannot be explained by parallels from Talmud and Midrash alone. It is a Hellenistic and Gentile Christian writing. And yet it has so much in common with the typically Judaic Christian Apocalypse of John (Christ as Pascal Lamb, also as Name of God) that both can be positioned in Ephesus in the first century A.D.

So either its author was a ghostwriter, who revised the local Gospel from the hand of the presbyter John. The ghostwriter did this in order to make this Gospel readable and acceptable for Greek speakers.

Or he has somehow preserved a Hellenic feature of Jesus himself, who lived in Nazareth, which is very near to the thoroughly Hellenistic city of Sepphoris in Galilee.

John is the only one of the four Evangelists to add a significant detail to the arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane: “If ye wish me, let these go their way” (18:8). Jesus himself dies for his friends.

It is not unthinkable that a charismatic and messianic leader is unjustly made prisoner, pleads for his comrades and is lynched without any form of legal process. There is a parallel for that in modern times. (Hugo Claus, *De Verwondering*, 238)

## CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

### L'EXTASE DE SAINT PAUL\*

#### VIE

Saul naquit à Tarses, ville grecque et provinciale de Cilicie, aujourd'hui Tarsus Tsjai en Turquie, juste au Nord du Liban. Ses parents avaient acquis la citoyenneté romaine et avaient adopté le nom de leur patron dans la capitale, la famille Paulus. C'est pourquoi Saul s'appelait aussi Paul, depuis sa naissance.

Comme son père il était actif dans l'industrie textile, pour laquelle la Cilicie était fameuse. L'évangéliste Luc, dans ses Actes des Apôtres (18:3) l'appelle "fabricant de textiles", c.-à.-d. fabricant de tissus d'étoffe en poils de chèvre, technique typique pour la patrie de Paul. La famille semble avoir été aisée, comme Paul lui-même. Dans ses lettres il se plaint de bien des choses, mais jamais de pénurie.

Pendant toute sa vie Paul est resté un citadin, un homme de ville. Il ne comprend rien à l'horticulture ou à l'agriculture. Ce type-là s' imagine qu'on puisse greffer un olivier sauvage sur un olivier franc (Épître aux Romains 11:17). Dans sa première lettre aux Corinthiens (9:9) il explique à sa manière le commandement si humain du Premier Testament: "Tu ne muselleras pas le boeuf qui foule le foin". Selon lui ce verset a un sens figuré et indique qu'un missionnaire peut vivre des contributions de ses néophytes. Il se demande: "Est-ce que Dieu se soucie des boeufs?" Il suppose que la réponse à cette question est: "non", tandis qu'évidemment la réponse correcte est: "oui".

Paul et sa famille appartenaient à la secte stricte et sévère des Phariens. Certains exégètes à la mode font grand cas de ce fait historique, comme de sa connaissance de l'araméen qui se trahirait par certains

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\* Text of a lecture previously delivered in three versions:

(I) Dutch version, Amsterdam (printed in *De Hermetische Gnosis*, ed. G. Quispel, 1994);

(II) English version, Zürich (printed in *From Poimandres to Jacob Boehme*, eds. R. van den Broek & C. van Heertum, 2000);

(III) French version, Paris. This last version differs from the previous two in stressing the Hermetic parallels with Paul. This is my last word.

araméismes supposés qui se feraient entendre dans le grec de ses lettres, et encore de l'hypothèse mal fondée qu'il aurait eu sa formation religieuse et théologique à Jérusalem, cité monolithiquement orthodoxe. Ceci prouverait que Paul est toujours un penseur typiquement juif et non hellénistique. Car selon cette école tous les Juifs étaient égaux, mais les Juifs palestiniens, une petite minorité, étaient plus juifs que leurs compatriotes hellénistiques dans la diaspora et excellerait en qualité de Juifs.

Paul lui-même qualifie son passé pharisien avec une expression très grossière comme "merde", grec: *skubala* (Philippiens 3:8). Son expérience religieuse l'avait délivré de cette éducation formelle et extérieure.

Paul décrit cet événement comme un voyage céleste vers le troisième ciel et le paradis, où il aurait vu et entendu le Christ divin et éternel, un contact direct et immédiat avec Dieu sans intervention de l'Écriture et de l'exégèse rabbinique (2 Corinthiens 12.2-4). Dans les Actes des Apôtres Luc déclare que cette expérience, ou une expérience semblable, a eu lieu sur la route vers Damas, quand Paul persécutait les adhérents de la nouvelle religion. Cela doit être arrivé vers l'an 34 de notre ère.

Quelques années plus tard nous le trouvons missionnaire de la congrégation chrétienne d'Antioche et s'adressant à des villettes dans l'Asie Mineure.

Retourné à Antioche il s'opposait à Pierre ouvertement dans un conflit sur la validité de la Loi juive pour les chrétiens d'origine juive (Galates 2). Pierre, lui, fut un homme du juste milieu, tandis que Jacques, à Jérusalem, était à droite et Paul, à l'extrême gauche. Bien que l'apôtre des nations ne l'admette pas dans ces termes, il est évident que Paul a perdu ce débat. Après cette confrontation il n'a jamais plus visité Antioche. Il était devenu un loup solitaire qui pour le reste de sa vie était engagé dans une controverse interminable avec ses compatriotes et avec ses coreligionnaires d'origine juive.

Paul se rendit vers la région qui lui était si familière, la Cilicie, et de là se dirigea vers l'Ouest. Arrivé à Troas, sur les ruines de l'ancienne Troyes, il traversa l'Hellespont vers la Macédoine et gagna Athènes, où il délivra son oraison fameuse sur le Dieu Inconnu. Dès lors il concentra enfin son attention sur les grandes villes, où l'avenir du christianisme se décidait. Pendant plus d'une année et demie il travailla avec succès à Corinthe, puis pendant plus de deux ans à Ephèse, la capitale prospère et magnifique de la province d'Asie, qui occupait une grande partie de la Turquie actuelle. Ici il entra en conflit avec les adeptes de la Grande

Mère, l'Artemis bistrée avec son temple de réputation mondiale. Il dut quitter la ville. Son effort missionnaire à Ephèse avait complètement échoué.

Dans ses Actes des Apôtres l'évangéliste et historien Luc raconte que Paul partit ensuite pour Jérusalem, sans doute pour y livrer les contributions des chrétiens d'origine non juive pour la métropole qui jouissait d'une certaine primauté.

Pendant une visite au temple une foule hostile essaya de l'écharper: les Romains l'arrêtèrent pour le sauver. Profitant de sa citoyenneté il préféra en appeler à l'empereur. Après un voyage plein d'aventures il gagna la capitale. Il est possible qu'il restât là, plus ou moins prisonnier, pendant une période considérable, de 53 à 64, la date de l'incendie de Rome.

Son projet d'aller en Espagne ne fut pas réalisé. Il était en froid avec ses anciens amis Jean Marc, Barnabé, Démas. Tous les chrétiens de la grande province d'Asie l'avaient abandonné pour rejoindre ses adversaires, les légalistes judéo-chrétiens. Jacques le frère très conservatoire de Jésus, gouvernait et dominait la congrégation mère de Jérusalem. Il semble même que Pierre soit venu d'Antioche à Rome pour mettre fin aux dissensions entre les chrétiens pauliniens et les Juifs et judéo-chrétiens de Rome, que Paul avait provoqués par ses remarques très hardies et dures sur la morale de ses compatriotes dans sa lettre aux Romains. L'apôtre des nations n'avait pratiquement plus de sectateurs quand vers 64 il mourut, décapité, dit-on, près de la Porte d'Ostie.

Et cependant, comme le remarque à juste titre Michael Grant dans sa monographie sur Saint Paul, cet homme a changé le monde plus qu'Alexandre le Grand ou Napoléon.

Par sa plume.

Un peu comme Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn, qui lui ressemble à bien des égards.

#### PAUL: UN VOLCAN ACTIF

Dans son livre *La mystique de l'Apôtre Paul*, le médecin savant Albert Schweitzer a caractérisé Saul comme un volcan avec deux cratères. L'un c'est la justification de l'athée, ce qui veut dire que l'homme, bien qu'athée et pervers en lui-même, est acquitté par Dieu de sorte qu'il croie en Christ. C'est une interprétation très osée et très profonde du mystère de Golgotha, que très peu de chrétiens ont jamais compris.



L'autre cratère est l'Être en Christ. Par le baptême l'homme commence à vivre par l'Esprit, qui habite dans son cœur et y crée et dévoile l'homme nouveau qui est le vrai Soi, et qui inspire tout le *corpus Christi* qui est l'Église. Selon certains interprètes, Erich Dinkler par exemple, l'Esprit Saint pour Saint Paul s'identifie avec le vrai Soi.

Pour un tel homme la Loi juive est morte. L'avènement du Christ signifie l'abrogation définitive et complète de tout commandement venant de l'extérieur. Le fait christique, ce n'est pas l'accomplissement de la Loi ou sa perfection, mais sa fin définitive. Selon l'Épître aux Romains (10:4): "le Christ c'est la fin de la Loi" (*telos gar nomou Christos*).

La vie éthique et religieuse est désormais tout à fait intériorisée. Même un chrétien d'origine juive n'a plus besoin de s'autoriser de la Bible ou des exégètes professionnels de la Loi. Lui-aussi vit en contact direct avec Dieu. Son moi haïssable n'existe plus, le Christ céleste et divin vit dans son fidèle par son Esprit. C'est là l'aspect gnostique de Saint Paul. Cette Gnose intime et chaleureuse, vraie Gnose de cœur que la raison ne connaît pas, découle et provient immédiatement de l'expérience décisive qu'il a vécue: il a vu et entendu parler le Christ éternel dans une vision.

#### EXPÉRIENCE

Vous m'obligez de me glorifier de mes expériences religieuses. Ce n'est pas que j'y attache une quelconque importance, mais si vous insistez, je veux bien parler des visions du Seigneur et des révélations dont le Seigneur m'a gratifié. Je connais quelqu'un, un membre du corps du Christ—il y a maintenant quatorze ans; est-ce que cela lui est arrivé pendant que son âme se trouvait encore dans son corps? ou fut-ce que l'âme avait abandonné le corps? Je ne saurais le dire, Dieu seul le sait. Alors cet homme-là fut enlevé en extase jusqu'au troisième ciel. Et je suis sûr que cet homme-là—fût-ce avec son corps ou avec son âme seule, je ne sais pas, Dieu le sait—, que cet homme, comme je disais, fut enlevé en extase jusqu'au paradis au troisième ciel. Là il écouta des paroles indicibles, des mystères en outre qu'il n'est pas permis à un initié d'énoncer aux profanes. (2 Corinthiens 12:1-4).

C'est une expérience bien spéciale que celle de Saint Paul. Il voyagea, semble-t-il, à travers le premier ciel des sept planètes et à travers le deuxième ciel des étoiles fixes vers le troisième ciel dans l'au-delà, où se trouve le paradis, le séjour des bienheureux et des anges. Là il a vu le Christ, qui lui révéla des *voces barbarae*, des énonciations incompré-

hensibles et chargées de numinosité, la langue des anges. Et en outre, le Christ éternel dans le palais céleste lui révéla les secrets de l'autre monde, destinés exclusivement aux initiés dans "les oeuvres du char portant le trône divin".

Son style balbutiant trahit qu'il s'agit bien d'une expérience authentique et personnelle. Mais à la fois il est bien établi que dans les premiers siècles de notre ère il existait tout un scénario de l'ascension visionnaire dans le monde juif.

Le Talmud lui-même raconte à sa manière qu'un tel voyage céleste était dangereux mais possible. Il n'y avait été jadis, dit le Talmud, que quatre rabbins qui avaient pénétré jusqu'à ce paradis céleste. Un d'eux devint fou, un autre mourut, un certain Acher devint apostate. Seul le rabbin Akiba retourna sain et sauf, mais celui-là était aussi d'une orthodoxie impeccable.

Pourquoi Acher est-il devenu herétique? Il voyait l'Ange du Seigneur, appelé Metatron, étant assis dans le ciel. Mais en présence de Dieu les anges se tiennent debout. Alors Acher se demanda: "Pourrait-il être vrai qu'il y a, non un Dieu unique, mais deux principes, deux Dieux?"

Les rabbins des premiers siècles avertissent constamment contre des hérétiques qui admettent deux principes. Mais dans leurs traditions ésotériques ils admettent à la fois qu'il y a des docteurs en Israël qui savent combiner cette doctrine tant décriée avec une orthodoxie plus que parfaite. Leur enseignement est contenu dans cinq traités qui datent d'une période allant du deuxième au quatrième siècle après la naissance de Jésus Christ et décrivent le passage de certains rabbins par les sept sphères ou les sept palais célestes vers le trône de Dieu décrit dans Isaïe 6.

Le plus important de ces traités est Hekhalot Zutarti récemment étudié par Joseph Dan. Cet écrit contient une Gnose juive de dimensions cosmiques, qui révèle "le secret du monde" et déclare qu'en principe tout homme dispose d'une échelle pour monter vers le plérôme céleste par ses propres forces et y obtenir la vision de Tetrosia, deuxième principe, et l'homme est à même de faire tout cela sans s'autoriser de l'Écriture sacrée et sans s'appuyer sur les traditions exégétiques des Anciens.

L'escalier rappelle l'échelle qu'une fois Jacob a vu avec les anges montant vers Dieu et descendant vers lui (Genèse 28:12). Ou l'escalier de Nathanaël, à qui Jésus promet qu'un jour il verrait le ciel ouvert et les anges de Dieu montant vers le Fils de l'Homme en haut et descendant vers lui (Jean 1:51).

Mais ce qui est vraiment étonnant est que ces rabbins n'arrivent pas à leurs conclusions par une exégèse de Isaïe 6 ("je voyais le Seigneur") ou du premier chapitre du prophète Ezéchiel, qui voyait la Gloire de Dieu sous la forme d'un homme. Ces rabbins n'interprètent pas les visions des prophètes, mais ils ont la même expérience vécue.

"Cette déclaration", dit Joseph Dan, "est révolutionnaire, puisqu'elle nie et nullifie la base des attitudes religieuses des Juifs comme elle était en train de se développer pendant le deuxième siècle et après."

C'est exactement ce que Paul a fait. Ayant eu un contact direct avec Dieu, il n'avait plus besoin de la Loi. Il fut un précurseur gnostique de ces gnostiques juifs. S'il est vrai qu'il a toujours interprété la Bible comme Akiba, d'autre part il fut un renégat comme Acher et pour les mêmes raisons. Après son ascension extatique lui aussi pouvait affirmer avec certitude qu'il y a vraiment deux principes. Il n'était pas le seul.

Il existait à cette époque certains cercles apocalyptiques qui disaient que l'Ange du Seigneur qui apparut à Moïse dans le buisson ardent, Jao-el ou Metatron, identifié avec le Nom (le Tetragrammaton, grec: Jao) et avec la Gloire de Dieu, était lui aussi divin. C'est l'arrière-fond du Logos de Philon d'Alexandrie, appelé par lui "*deuxième Dieu*". Ce n'est que beaucoup plus tard que cette conception fut condamnée comme hérésie par le judaïsme rabbinique, faction parmi beaucoup d'autres qui dans une lutte séculaire gagna la suprématie, comme la faction catholique dans l'église chrétienne.

La Gnose juive du Trône dérive de ces milieux apocalyptiques: Tetrosia Seigneur Dieu d'Israël, contenant dans son nom une allusion à Tettares, quatre, le Tetragrammaton, n'est qu'une variation mal déguisée de Jao-el, Ange du Seigneur.

La différence entre ces apocalyptiques et Paul, c'était surtout que l'apôtre identifia la Gloire lumineuse et concrète de Dieu qu'il avait contemplée dans son expérience religieuse, avec l'homme Jésus le Nazoréen.

Luc, dans trois versions un peu différentes dans les Actes, semble indiquer que Paul avait vu cette lumière sur la route vers Damas. Une lumière venue du ciel l'enveloppa de son éclat. Paul tomba par terre. L'allusion au premier chapitre d'Ezéchiel n'est que trop évidente. Le prophète lui aussi voit le Kabod, la *doxa* lumineuse et tombe par terre. Cette Gloire eut la forme comme l'apparence d'un homme et révéla à Ezéchiel que Dieu n'abandonne pas son peuple même dans l'exil. C'est le grand thème de la Gnose juive, faussement appelée mystique juive, jusqu'à nos jours.

Elle s'était répandue vers le commencement de notre ère à Alexandrie, où tant de Juifs vivaient alors en exil. En effet ce chapitre d'Ezéchiel était devenu là-bas le noyau de spéculations gnostiques très hardies.

C'est le *Poimandrès*, le premier écrit du Corpus Hermétique, qui le prouve.

#### LE DIEU HOMME

Le *Poimandrès* raconte l'origine du cosmos et de l'homme. Cet écrit date probablement du premier siècle de notre ère et provient d'une congrégation hermétique à Alexandrie. C'était une sorte de loge maçonnique, dont des Égyptiens, des Juifs et des Grecs pouvaient être membres.

Le *Poimandrès* décrit comment Dieu qui est vie et lumière enfanta un être céleste semblable à lui auquel il livra toutes ses oeuvres; son nom était Anthrôpos, Homme. Celui-ci voulait lui-aussi créer et se penchant à travers l'armature des sphères s'éprit de la Nature, sorte de Terre Mère. Il s'unit à elle.

C'est pour cette raison qu'un élément divin se trouve dans chaque homme.

De son côté, la Nature produit des corps façonnés d'après la forme idéale de l'Homme transcendant.

L'influence de la Genèse n'est que trop évidente. L'homme, Adam, est bien créé selon l'image de Dieu. Ce qui frappe cependant, c'est que cette image se trouve dans son corps. C'est une conception qui se trouve parmi les Juifs et les judéo-chrétiens, jamais parmi les Grecs et les Pères catholiques, qui voudraient trouver l'image de Dieu plutôt dans la raison, le libre arbitre, l'âme.

En outre, il est évident que l'Anthrôpos céleste n'est autre que la Gloire du Seigneur, qui d'après le prophète Ezéchiel a la forme d'un homme.

Mais cette imagerie hébraïque est combinée dans le *Poimandrès* avec une conception grecque. L'Anthrôpos est à la fois l'exemple platonique, dont l'homme est image et ressemblance. La Gloire est devenue Idée, un mythe imaginaire devient un philosophème rationnel.

Il est vrai que Platon n'admet pas qu'il y ait une idée de l'homme, ce qui est vraiment remarquable et étonnant. Mais les adeptes de Platon d'une époque postérieure et appartenant à l'école dite moyen platonisme voulaient bien que l'idée de l'homme soit une réalité spirituelle et transcendante. Parmi eux fut un certain Eudorus, qui enseignait à Alexandrie pendant le premier siècle avant le commencement de notre

ère et qui a exercé une influence énorme sur les Juifs, les gnostiques, les hermétiques et les chrétiens de cette ville. Qu'on pense à Philon et à Origène.

#### LE DIEU HOMME DANS LA GNOSE

Le modèle du *Poimandrès* a été intégré par la secte juive des *Gnostikoi* qui est à la base de beaucoup d'écrits trouvés à Nag Hammadi en 1945.

Dans l'*Apocryphe de Jean* comme dans beaucoup d'autres écrits issus de la même secte gnostique la figure de l'Anthrôpos se révèle au monde inférieur, après quoi des anges inférieurs façonnent le corps de l'homme Adam ou bien son corps psychique selon l'image de cet Anthrôpos divin. Dans plusieurs écrits de Nag Hammadi ce dieu Homme est nommé *Geradamas*, *Geraios Adam*, "l'ancien Adam": c'est exactement la même expression si curieuse pour indiquer la Gloire de Dieu que celle, plus tard, d'Adam Kadmaja de la secte juive des Mandéens existante encore en Iraq et en Iran, et celle, encore plus tard, d'Adam Kadmon de la Gnose juive médiévale qu'on nomme Kabbalistique.

C'est à cette époque très reculée, vers le commencement de notre ère, et à Alexandrie, que la Kabbalistique juive est née, bien avant la Gnose juive orthodoxe et palestinienne du trône qui n'en est qu'un décalque.

Le plus ancien témoignage de cette Gnose alexandrine se trouve chez le poète juif Ezéchiel le Tragédien, qui vivait à Alexandrie au deuxième siècle avant Jésus Christ. Celui-ci décrit dans un fragment conservé de son oeuvre comment Moïse, après sa fuite de l'Égypte et avant l'exode de son peuple a vu un trône posé sur la cime du mont Sinaï. Là-dessus était assis l'Homme (grec: *ho Phôs*), avec une couronne sur la tête et un sceptre dans la main gauche. Avec la main gauche il signala à Moïse de s'approcher du trône, lui donna une couronne et le pria de prendre place sur son trône à côté de Lui. Ensuite les étoiles tombent sur les genoux et adorent Moïse comme Dieu. Le messenger humain de la révélation au peuple d'Israël est lui-même devenu Dieu. La vision de Dieu déifie. Car cet Homme, Phôs, évidemment, c'est la Gloire de Dieu comme Homme, que les apocalyptiques et les évangiles nommeront *bar anash*, Fils de l'Homme, ce qui ne veut dire autre chose que l'Homme. Et cependant cette Gloire est identique au Dieu caché.

La même conception et la même terminologie se retrouve chez Zosime de Panopolis en Égypte. Selon lui ce même Phôs, cette Gloire

de Dieu, a été séduit par des anges inférieurs d'habiter le corps humain d'Adam. Zosime fut un alchimiste. Cette histoire révèle que le mythe du dieu Homme à cette époque, le quatrième siècle de notre ère, avait déjà été intégré dans l'alchimie, où il survit jusqu'à la fin de cette science comme Rebis androgyne. Zosime cite et a connu l'hermétisme. Mercure, Hermès, est toujours resté le grand dieu de l'alchimie, mère de la chimie. Il est possible que Zosime eût appartenu à la loge hermétique.

Quoi qu'il en soit, il est évident qu'il transmet une exégèse de la Bible qui avait cours dans certains cercles très libéraux de la juiverie alexandrine. C'est une interprétation apologétique du passage si pittoresque de la Genèse (3:8), qui décrit comment au soir le Seigneur descend au paradis terrestre d'Adam et d'Eve et y fait une petite promenade pour prendre un souffle d'air. Déjà au temps de Zosime et même avant, cette histoire si anthropomorphique choquait les esprits éclairés. Pour cette raison on inventa que ce Seigneur si humain, trop humain ne fut pas Dieu, mais plutôt un être inférieur à Dieu, Phôs, l'Homme, la Gloire personnifiée et anthropomorphique, qui se rafraîchit ainsi. Jehova n'est pas Dieu. On voit bien que les gnostiques et surtout Marcion ont utilisé cette vue pour exprimer la différence entre le Père de Jésus Christ et le dieu de ce monde. C'est la route qui mène en dernière analyse à Anatole France et son livre *Révolte des Anges*.

Zosime se limite à raconter comment les créatures inférieures, des anges qui s'identifient aux esprits des planètes, persuadèrent ce Phôs, qui fut naïf et innocent, de s'installer dans le corps de l'Adam terrestre qu'ils avaient façonné de leurs propres mains. C'est ainsi que l'âme, l'élément divin, a été capturée dans le corps et le sert comme une esclave de ces puissances mondiales. Cette conception hermétique de la défaite de l'Homme céleste a influencé plus tard Mani quand il ébaucha le drame cosmogonique de l'Archanthropôs ou Adam Qadmaia: selon lui cet Homme divin et archétypique quitte le Royaume de la Lumière pour combattre les puissances mauvaises et agressives mais succombe sous leurs attaques.

Mais il semble bien que trois siècles avant Mani et même avant le commencement de notre ère on opposait à Alexandrie le Phôs divin à l'Adam terrestre, c'est-à-dire la Gloire humaine et divine vue par Ezéchiël à l'homme terrestre de la Genèse.

On trouve la même dualité chez Saint Paul. Il oppose lui aussi l'Adam terrestre à l'Adam céleste qui est le Christ.

Il n'est pas nécessaire de supposer que Paul dépend directement de la Gnose hermétique. Mais il semble bien qu'il utilise un schématisme déjà existant pour exprimer la différence entre l'homme ancien et l'homme nouveau.

Ainsi les écrits hermétiques jettent une lumière nouvelle et inattendue sur les obscurités de Saint Paul, qui sont brillantes comme l'ivoire noire.

#### LE DIVIN DEUXIÈME ADAM

Selon Saint Paul le Christ est une radiation éternelle de Dieu, qui s'incorpora vers la fin des temps en Jésus:

Le premier homme, Adam, ne fut qu'une âme vivante, le dernier Adam est un être spirituel vivifiant... Le premier homme tiré de la terre fut terrestre, le dernier Homme, Anthrôpos, est venu du ciel vers la terre... De même que nous avons porté une fois l'image de cet homme terrestre, Adam, nous devons porter aussi l'image de cet Homme céleste, Anthrôpos (qui sera achevée complètement dans l'éternité). (1 Corinthiens 15:45-49).

Le premier homme, c'était cet Adam dont parlent les premiers chapitres de la Genèse. Le dernier, Anthrôpos, qui vient du ciel vers la terre, c'est évidemment la Gloire, le Kabod d'Ezéchiel le prophète et l'Anthrôpos dont parle le *Poimandrès*, le Christ glorifié.

L'homme nouveau, recréé selon le Christ, porte et reflète l'image de cet Anthrôpos céleste. Il semble bien que chez Saint Paul, comme dans le *Poimandrès*, cet Anthrôpos qui s'identifie avec le Christ soit à la fois l'archétype du chrétien, dans lequel le Christ s'est configuré. Alors le Christ serait, aussi selon Saint Paul, l'idée exemplaire de l'homme nouveau, à la manière de Platon.

#### LE CHRIST COMME ARCHÉTYPE COSMIQUE

On trouve une conception semblable dans la lettre aux Colossiens. Elle est peut-être d'un élève de Saint Paul, ce qui pour nos buts n'a aucune importance. Dans des périodes longues et compliquées l'auteur argua que le Christ éternel a une fonction cosmique et a créé toutes choses. Ceci devient peut-être plus clair quand on se rappelle que selon la Gnose juive dont nous avons parlé, ce n'est pas le Dieu caché lui-même, mais plutôt sa Gloire, le *kabod*, qui est bien le "*jozêr bereshith*", le créateur au

commencement. Dans le *Poimandrès* aussi, ce n'est pas Dieu lui-même qui crée, c'est l'Anthrôpos qui veut créer et qui dans une version plus primitive du mythe, a fait fonction de créateur du monde. Mais selon le Paul de la lettre aux Colossiens c'est dans un sens le cosmos tout entier, mais surtout l'Ecclêsia, qui est étroitement liée à l'Anthrôpos christique. Elle est, avec tous ses membres, le *corpus Christi*, le corps spirituel de l'Homme divin.

Dans ce contexte l'auteur fait appel aux fidèles d'attirer l'homme nouveau comme si ce fût un manteau, l'homme nouveau, sorte de vrai Soi, qui est en train de se renouveler toujours plus afin d'atteindre à une Gnose plus profonde et de refléter toujours plus les traits du Christ cosmique qui l'a créé:

Vous vous êtes dépouillés du vieil homme avec ses pratiques et vous avez revêtu l'homme nouveau qui a été gratifié de la Gnose, de sorte qu'il porte de plus en plus l'image du Christ qui l'a créé. (3:9-10).

Le Christ, c'est l'archétype, le vrai Soi de l'homme nouveau est son image, une copie qui représente l'original. C'est là, chez Saint Paul, une conception platonicienne et hermétique.

#### L'ESPRIT COMME DON

Selon Saint Paul il y a une source coulante et inspirante dans le for intérieur du chrétien qui n'est pas l'intellect et qui n'est pas universelle et commune à tout être humain: c'est l'Esprit, appelé *pneuma* ou, quelquefois, *noûs* en grec. Celui-ci doit être distingué de la *psyché*, l'âme:

L'homme psychique (qui n'a qu'une âme seule et pour cette raison est un pauvre hère) n'accepte pas les révélations de l'Esprit de Dieu. C'est de la folie pour lui. A vrai dire, ce type-là n'est même pas capable de les saisir avec une gnose profonde, puisque seul l'homme qui a lui-même de l'Esprit peut en juger. Un homme spirituel, par contre, lui, est à même d'exprimer un jugement sur toute chose, tandis qu'il n'est jugé par personne qui n'a pas été gratifié de l'Esprit. En effet, c'est l'Écriture elle-même qui le dit: "Qui a jamais connu l'Esprit de Dieu, de sorte qu'il ait pu le conseiller?". Certainement, non pas un homme sans Esprit. Mais nous, nous avons reçu l'Esprit. Or, l'Esprit de Dieu connaît Dieu lui-même. C'est pourquoi nous pouvons affirmer avec assurance: "nous, nous connaissons Dieu". (1 Corinthiens 2:14-15).

Les écrits hermétiques soulignent maintes fois que l'Esprit n'est pas donné à tous:



Demande de Hermès: “Tous les hommes en effet n’ont-ils pas de l’Esprit?”  
 Réponse de Poimandrès: “Veille à ta langue, mon cher ami. Moi, l’Esprit lui-même, je me tiens seulement et exclusivement auprès de ceux qui sont saints et bons et purs et miséricordieux, auprès des pieux, et ma présence devient pour eux un *adiutorium gratiae*, de sorte qu’il connaissent aussitôt le Tout”. (*Poimandrès* 22).

La prière de grâce à Dieu, vraie eucharistie qui termine l’*Asclépius* hermétique en latin et qui est transmise dans une version plus authentique dans un des codex coptes de Nag Hammadi, contient le passage suivant:

Nous te rendons grâce, avec tout notre coeur et avec toute notre âme dirigés vers Vous, o Nom indicible, honoré par l’appellation: “Dieu” et béni par le mot “Père”, car vous avez daigné de montrer en nous et dans le tout votre bienveillance, votre Éros et votre Agapè, et de réaliser en nous chaque sentiment doux et unique en nous gratifiant de l’Esprit, du Verbe, de la Gnose; l’Esprit avant tout, pour que nous tâtions par l’intuition, le Verbe après, afin que nous devenions vos interprètes, la Gnose enfin, pour que nous fassions l’expérience de Vous. (*Asclépius* 41, NHC VI. 63, 34–64,14).

L’*Asclépius* latin lui-aussi déclare que l’Esprit (latin: *sensus*) est un don de la grâce, qui n’est concédé qu’à quelques élus:

Demande: “Quoi, Trismégiste, l’Esprit n’est-il pas dans tous les hommes?” Réponse: “Non, Asclépius, tous n’ont pas atteint à la Gnose authentique”.

Ces vues circulaient déjà dans les milieux hermétiques longtemps avant la période pendant laquelle les traités hermétiques préservés dans le *Corpus hermeticum* furent mis par écrit, pendant le premier, second ou troisième siècle de notre ère. Ceci s’est avéré grâce à la découverte des *Définitions hermétiques* arméniennes et grecques, récemment identifiées par J.-P. Mahé et J. Paramelle: en effet, celles-ci remontent beaucoup plus haut que les traités dits philosophiques du *Corpus* et peuvent très bien être pré-chrétiennes. Donnons quelques exemples:

“Le Logos doué d’Esprit est un don de Dieu.” (V,3).

“De même que le corps, s’il n’a pas des yeux, ne voit pas, de même aussi l’âme, si elle n’a pas l’Esprit, est aveugle.” (VII,3).

“Tout homme a un corps et une âme, mais non toute âme un Esprit.” (VIII,4).

Ces dits d’Hermès, qui peuvent très bien être antérieurs à Saint Paul, ressemblent beaucoup aux vues de l’apôtre sur l’homme psychique et

l'homme pneumatique. Le chrétien et l'hermétique confessent tous les deux que l'Esprit et la Gnose sont un don de la grâce.

Il est évident que de telles convictions sont absolument contraires à tout ce que les philosophes grecs et les philosophes de tous les temps ont jamais pensé. Selon ces derniers, l'esprit, identifié avec l'intellect et la conscience raisonnable, a toujours été une qualité et même la propriété privée de l'homme dans son sens le plus général, et plus spécialement du savant ou plutôt, du philosophe.

### L'HOMME-DIEU

Le codex VI des écrits trouvés en 1945 à Nag Hammadi contient un livre inconnu jusqu'à sa découverte, qu'on appelle *L'Ogdoade et l'Ennéade*. Cette oeuvre doit remonter très haut et pourrait bien être pré-chrétienne. C'est que Hermès est identifié ici avec l'Esprit lui-même, conception choquante qui est éliminée dans les écrits d'une époque postérieure.

*L'Ogdoade et l'Ennéade* décrit la Gnose hermétique comme une initiation et une expérience personnelle. Le texte commence avec ces paroles adressées par un néophyte appelé Asclépius à Hermès Trismégiste:

Mon Père, tu m'a promis bien d'initier mon Esprit dans le grade de la huitième sphère et de m'initier après dans le grade de la neuvième sphère. Tu as dit: c'est là l'ordre dans lequel les mystères sont transmis. (VI, 52, 2-7)

La huitième sphère, c'est le ciel des astres fixes au-delà des planètes. La neuvième sphère, c'est le monde spirituel. On reconnaît le schéma des trois cieux dont parle Saint Paul.

Avant le néophyte avait déjà reçu une formation spirituelle par degrés. Peut-être c'étaient sept degrés, comme dans les mystères de Mithra, dieu persan. C'est qu'il a traversé l'Hebdomade, les sphères des sept planètes. Et il a adressé les mots de passe à ces gardiens austères, formules magiques qui contraignent les dieux, comme dans la religion égyptienne.

Maintenant les deux, Asclépius et Hermès, prient:

Seigneur, accorde-nous sagesse de ta puissance parvenant jusqu'à nous, afin que nous trouvions les paroles pour pouvoir parler de la contemplation de l'Ogdoade et de l'Ennéade. (56, 23-26)

Toute l'Ogdoade et les âmes heureuses qui s'y trouvent ensemble avec les anges chantent des louanges en silence. Et les initiés qui forment

une réplique du plérôme d'en haut, y participent, exactement comme dans l'eucharistie grecque et romaine quand la congrégation toute entière, après le *sursum corda*, rejoint les chœurs des anges et archanges qui chantent dans le ciel les louanges immortelles du Très Saint.

Puis, Asclépius ascensionne jusqu'à la Décade, la demeure de Dieu lui-même, et atteint à la vision de Dieu:

Je vois, oui je vois des profondeurs indicibles... Je vois par une sainte extase Celui qui me donne le mouvement. Tu (Dieu) m'en accordes la possibilité. Je me vois moi-même... Je vois une source vibrante de vie. (57,31–58,14)

Hermès et Asclépius sont donc, d'après cet écrit, montés jusqu'au troisième ciel. C'est la voie d'immortalité de tout initié hermétique. Et rien n'indique que la Gnose hermétique doit cette conception à la Bible ou à une autre influence du judaïsme. Au contraire. Grâce à notre collègue et ami Ioan Culianu nous voyons clairement que ces expériences de l'extase ont une préhistoire typiquement grecque et se situent tout d'abord dans le milieu astrologique de l'hermétisme alexandrin.

Couliano renvoie au traité hermétique *Panaretos* du deuxième siècle avant notre ère. Il écrit:

La théorie des sorts planétaires provient, selon W. Gundel, d'une très ancienne technique divinatoire. Au moyen de deux méthodes différentes—le jet des dés ou un calcul astrologique relativement simple, qui part des positions relatives du Soleil, de la Lune et de l'Ascendant dans le thème de géniture—on peut calculer le locus fortunæ de chaque individu. Le *Panaretos* indique les sorts des planètes singulières... (*Expériences de l'extase*, p. 143).

A cette conception astrologique s'est liée la foi magique et égyptienne que l'initié qui connaît les mots de passe peut contraindre les dieux planétaires par des formules compliquées et incompréhensibles. Ce n'est qu'à Alexandrie qu'une telle combinaison a pu se réaliser. Et si plus tard l'ascension à travers les sphères de l'initié muni des mots de passe se retrouve dans des livres gnostiques, comme le deuxième livre de Jeû, ou encore dans les documents de la Gnose juive du trône, c'est que ces écrits ont dérivé leurs vues du milieu alexandrin saturé de telles expériences. Il est très établi aujourd'hui que l'hermétisme alexandrin précède ces écrits par plusieurs siècles. Et il est devenu toujours plus clair que l'hermétisme remonte aussi plus haut que Saint Paul.

Nous savons maintenant que les écrits hermétiques dits "philosophiques" sont issus d'une sorte de loge alexandrine, dont des Grecs, des Juifs et des Égyptiens pouvaient être membres. On y pratiquait des

rituels comme un repas sacré, un baptême avec l'Esprit et un baiser de paix. Les initiés y procédaient par degrés (*bathmoi*, grades) vers l'expérience ultime, la vision de Dieu et la rencontre avec soi-même, comme l'a bien montré Jean-Pierre Mahé. Ces gens-là ont bien été gratifiés de boire de cette source intérieure et inspirante qui n'est pas l'intellect. Et c'est dans ce milieu que se situe la conception hermétique de l'homme-Dieu. Hermès, dit-on, est un homme qui vécut une fois dans la préhistoire en Égypte comme roi et prêtre. Ce fut un homme privilégié et exceptionnel, mais pourtant un homme. Et c'est de cet homme que l'écrit sur l'Ogdoade et l'Ennéade déclare qu'il est l'Esprit de Dieu personnifié :

“Je suis l'Esprit (nous).” (58,4).

“Je t'ai dit, ô mon enfant, que je suis l'Esprit.” (58, 14–15).

“Je fais silence, ô mon Père. Je désire t'adresser un hymne en silence.— Adresse-le-moi donc, car je suis l'Esprit.” (58,24–27).

La conception du voyage céleste de l'âme fut adoptée à Alexandrie par certains Juifs comme Philon et le *Gnostikoi*, qui ont produit des écrits comme *Zostrianos*, où l'envolée de l'initié à travers les sphères est l'essence de la doctrine secrète. Il en est de même dans des écrits gnostiques chrétiens comme l'*Évangile selon Marie-Madeleine* et les *Apocalypses de Jacques*.

La religion d'Israël n'admet pas ce mythe. Des prophètes comme Isaïe et Ezéchiel ont bien eu des visions de Dieu, mais dans l'entre-temps il restèrent solidement plantés sur la terre.

La religion d'Abraham, d'Isaac et de Jacob n'admet pas non plus qu'il y ait un monde transcendant et spirituel opposé au monde visible dominé par les astres. L'Ancien Testament n'admet qu'un monde, le nôtre.

L'élévation ontologique vers l'au-delà est un phénomène nouveau en Israël.

De même, la conception d'un homme Dieu ne se retrouve pas dans les documents de l'ancienne disposition. Il est vrai que l'écrit apocalyptique qu'on nomme le premier Enoch (34–41), de date incertaine mais sûrement pré-chrétien, contient la narration de la transformation d'Enoch en Fils de l'Homme: ainsi un homme terrestre de la préhistoire s'identifie avec la Gloire de Dieu (car fils de l'Homme signifie: Homme avec une majuscule, l'Homme-Gloire d'Ezéchiel). Et un écrit postérieur, le troisième Enoch, raconte la fusion du même Enoch avec l'Ange du Seigneur appelé Metatron, ce qui revient à la même chose.

Gershom Scholem a démontré que cette Gnose juive naquit dans les milieux pharisiens strictement orthodoxes des premiers siècles de notre ère en Palestine. Et le même savant a observé que ces documents défient le rationalisme de la philosophie grecque, en soulignant les traits anthropomorphiques de cette Gloire lumineuse par laquelle le Dieu caché se révèle. Mais on se demande si dans ce cas, comme si souvent dans l'histoire, l'hérésie n'a pas précédé l'orthodoxie, et si cette hérésie ne provient pas d'Alexandrie. La Palestine est très proche de cette ville cosmopolite. Et alors le problème se pose de savoir si cette hérésie juive et alexandrine ne doit pas beaucoup, ou du moins est compatible avec la conception hermétique de l'homme-Dieu.

Pas de doute, Saint Paul a identifié Jésus ressuscité avec la Gloire éternelle de Dieu. Il considérait Jésus comme un homme né d'une femme dans lequel le *kabod* éternel s'est incorporé pour toujours.

C'est cette expérience profonde et décisive qu'il a exprimé dans le cadre traditionnel de l'extase hellénistique adapté aux catégories d'une Gnose juive et alexandrine.

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CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

GOD IS LOVE\*

DANTE AND BOETHIUS

Dante ends his *Divina Commedia* with the following words:

All' alta fantasia qui mancò possa;  
ma già volgeva il mio disio e 'l velle,  
sì come rota ch'igualmente è mossa,  
*l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.*

Here power failed the lofty phantasy;  
but already my desire and my will were revolved,  
like a wheel that is evenly moved,  
*by the Love which moves the sun and the other stars.*  
(Translation Charles S. Singleton)

Although the commentaries which I consulted do not mention it, certainly someone will have observed already that the last line is a meaningful quotation from Boethius:

That this fair world in settled course  
her several forms should vary,  
That a perpetual law should tame  
the fighting seeds of things,  
That Phoebus should the rosy day  
in his bright chariot carry,  
That Phoebe should govern the nights  
which Hesperus forth brings,  
That to the floods of greedy seas  
are certain bounds assigned,  
Which them, lest they usurp too much  
upon the earth, debar,  
*Love ruling heaven, and earth, and seas,*  
them in this course doth bind.

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\* "Eros and Agapè in Dionysius Areopagite" = "God is Eros" in: *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition*, ed. W.R. Schoedel and R.L. Wilken, Paris 1979, 189–205.

And if it once let loose their reins,  
 their friendship turns to war,  
 Tearing the world whose ordered form  
 their quiet motions bear.  
*By it all holy laws are made  
 and marriage rites are tied,  
 by it is faithful friendship joined.*  
 How happy ye mortals are,  
*if the Eros which governs the heaven*  
 does also reign in your heart.  
 O felix hominum genus,  
 si vestros animos *amor*  
*quo caelum regitur* regat.  
*Consolatio Philosophiae*, II, metrum 8  
 (Translation after H.F. Stewart)

This love, according to Boethius, is a cosmogonic Eros, not only ruling heaven and earth and seas, but also working in man as social sense and public spirit (“by it all holy laws are made”) and, moreover, as the instinct of procreation by which “marriage rites are tied” and friendship is instigated among males.<sup>1</sup>

#### EROS IN DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITA

Very much the same concept is to be found in the contemporary of Boethius, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names*, IV, 11–18. And it is plausible that both are using a common source.

The passage in Dionysius is one of the most daring and delightful of Greek literature.<sup>2</sup> No wonder that translators did all they could to make it incomprehensible, translating Eros by “Yearning” and glossing over the erotic relation between David and Jonathan!

Eros has several aspects according to Dionysius:

Inferior things yearn for the superior by being attracted (*epistriptikós*). And those of the same rank love their equals in communion (*koinónikós*). And the superior love their inferiors by taking care of them (*pronoétikós*). And every thing loves itself through the instinct of self preservation, self love (*synektikós*).

<sup>1</sup> The technical term “cosmogonic Eros” has been coined by the German philosopher Ludwig Klages in his book *Vom kosmogonischen Eros*, 4th ed., Jena 1941.

<sup>2</sup> Dionysius is leaning heavily here on Origen; cf. John. M. Rist, *Eros and Psyche*, Toronto 1964, 204.

Eros is live in all its ramifications.

Dionysius observes that he is not contradicting the Bible when he uses the word Eros instead of Agapé. He finds it unreasonable and foolish to focus on the words rather than their meaning. As if addressing an invisible opposition, he remarks that such is the way of them that receive the empty sounds without letting them pass beyond their ears and shut them out, not wishing to know what such and such a phrase intends, nor how they ought to explain it in other terms expressing the same sense more clearly. “Nay,” he says, “some of our writers about holy things have thought the word Eros more appropriate for divine things than Agapé.” This latter (*agapé*) is used for human love, as in 2 Samuel 1, 26: “Your love (*agapésis*) was more delightful for me than the love (*agapésis*) of women.” On this basis this great mystic can describe Eros as a mighty stream, coming from God and ruling the kosmos: this is condescending love of the higher for the lower, *eros pronoétikos*:

And we must dare to affirm (for it is the truth) that the Creator of the universe himself in his beautiful and good Eros towards the universe is through the excess of his erotic goodness transported outside of himself in his providential care for all things that have being, and is touched by the sweet spell of goodness, love and Eros and so is drawn from his transcendence up there to dwell within the heart of all things. (13)

Down here on earth Eros also works as a uniting and commingling power in men by urging them to create community, “moves co-equals to a communion,” be it in society or marriage. And finally this life force can be sublimated into a desire for God: it “moves the inferiors to turn towards their superiors in virtue and position” (*eros epistreptikós*).

So the cosmogonic Eros forms a cycle, originating in God, penetrating the kosmos, transformed in man into public spirit and sexual desire and returning to its source as love of God, “revolving in a perpetual circle...with unerring revolution, never varying its centre or direction, perpetually advancing and remaining and returning to itself.” Dionysius quotes from the *Erotic Hymns* of his mysterious teacher Hierotheos:

There is one simple power which of itself moveth all things to be combined into a unity, starting from the Good and going to the lowest of creatures and thence again returning through all stages in due order unto the Good, and thus revolving from itself and upon itself and towards itself, in an unceasing orbit. (17)

Love (Eros) comes from God and returns to God.



In fact Dionysius here blows up the theories of all those who keep telling us that Eros is never used in the Bible, that Agapé alone is found there and not in profane Greek literature, and that the Hebrew notion of Agapé, unselfish love, is the complete opposite of Greek Eros which is egoistic, self-realising love. They forget to tell us that Agapé in the Septuagint (the Song of Songs) and in the Fathers as often as not has erotic, sexual connotations and is virtually identical with Eros.<sup>3</sup>

It has been established long ago that in this passage, as so often, Dionysius is leaning heavily upon Proclus.<sup>4</sup> This is obvious from the fact that he, Dionysius, uses the same terminology as the Neoplatonist philosopher of Athens in his commentary on Plato's *First Alcibiades*.<sup>5</sup> The latter, too, uses such terms as *eros pronoëtikos* (chs. 45, 55) and *eros epistreptikos* (ch. 27).

But, as Cornelia de Vogel has pointed out, Boethius, in the quoted Hymn on Eros, must have used the same source.<sup>6</sup>

#### Common Source: Proclus

Proclus died in Athens on April 17, 486. Boethius is supposed to have been born about 480 A.D. and died in the autumn of 524. Therefore he probably was not a direct disciple of Proclus. In *De disciplina scholarium* he is supposed to declare: *annis duobus de viginti Athenis convalui*.<sup>7</sup> But this treatise is generally held to have been written in the thirteenth century and to have been falsely attributed to Boethius. King Theodoric writes

<sup>3</sup> Like Dionysius, his predecessor Macarius (ca. A.D. 350, Mesopotamia) opposes the "sarkos agapé" as "fleshly love" (of man and wife) to the "ouranios erôs" or spiritual love of God (*Homilies* 4, 15, ed. Dörries 38, 234–243). In *Hom.* 25, 5 (Dörries 202, 74–75) Macarius speaks about "being wounded" by love, Eros, referring to *Song of Songs* 2, 5, where the Septuagint uses "agapé". Verlaine says: "Mon Dieu, vous m'avez blessé d'amour" (not: "de charité").

<sup>4</sup> J. Stiglmayr, *Historisches Jahrbuch der Görresgesellschaft*, 1895, 748, proves that Dionysius used Proclus' work *De malorum subsistentia* (preserved in the translation of Willem van Moerbeke, archbishop of Corinth, 1277–281), when he argued that evil is nothing but privation of good (*D.N.* 4, 18–35). Stiglmayr also mentions that Dionysius knew Proclus' commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* and his commentary on the first *Alcibiades*. For the latter assertion he does not adduce any proof. H. Koch, *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 1895, 353–420, also discovered Dionysius' dependence from Proclus but does not mention Eros in this context.

<sup>5</sup> Edited by L.G. Westerink, *Proclus Diadochus, Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, Amsterdam 1954; translated by W. O'Neill, *Proclus: Alcibiades I. A Translation and a Commentary*, The Hague 1965.

<sup>6</sup> C. de Vogel, "Amor quo caelum regitur", *Vivarium* 1, 1963, 1–34.

<sup>7</sup> *PL* 64, 1232B.

to Boethius in a letter: *sic enim Atheniensium scholas longe positus introisti*.<sup>8</sup> This passage means only that the philosopher, though far removed from Athens, nevertheless in spirit has visited the schools of that city. It refers to the famous translations and commentaries of Boethius. Therefore the great master Pierre Courcelle denies that Boethius ever visited the Neoplatonic school at Athens in his youth.<sup>9</sup> He supposes that Boethius has learned Greek not in Rome, but in Alexandria, where he visited the Neoplatonic school of the pagan Ammonius. Be that as it may, the curious fact remains that two prominent and influential Christians appropriated Proclus when they wanted to write about divine Love.

This has shocked some Christian scholars. They had been taught that according to the Greeks the world loves God, whereas according to the Christians, God loves the world; these generalisations (Aristotle = the Greeks; John = the Christians) belonged to the basic presuppositions of their theology, and now they had to conclude that at least in one case a Greek had taught that love comes from God.

#### NYGREN: AGAPÉ AGAINST EROS

Anders Nygren, author of *Eros and Agapé*, arrogantly and perversely supposed that this must be due to Christian influence on Proclus.<sup>10</sup> According to Nygren only a Christian could know what love and love divine really is. Cornelia de Vogel, an eminent specialist who probably knows the sources better than anyone else, admits in the above mentioned article that, however strange and un-Greek it might seem to us, Proclus actually applied the term Eros to the gods, and to the gods of the noëtic level. Thus, in the mind of this late Greek philosopher there proves to be in fact a divine descending love, stretching from the transcendental level of Noûs down to the souls of human beings living on earth.

In the *Elementa Theologiae* and the *Theologia Platonis* of Proclus the concept of *eros pronoëtikos* and even the term *eros* are said to be lacking. From this Cornelia de Vogel infers that the idea of divine Love was not very much alive in Proclus' mind when he wrote his theological

<sup>8</sup> Cassiodorus, *Variae*, I, 45, 3.

<sup>9</sup> P. Courcelle, *Les lettres grecques en Occident*, Paris 1943, 260.

<sup>10</sup> A. Nygren, *Eros et Agapè*, Paris 1943, 133.

works proper. She fears that otherwise we might come to think that the idea of divine Love took an important part in Proclus' theology and by this might be led to suppose (as Nygren did) that he may have introduced this idea in order to create a counterpart of the Christian God of love. Such an intention must have been far from his mind, for the idea of divine Love did not take a central part in Proclus' theological thought anyway. My eminent colleague goes on to show that for Greek thought in general it is a kind of anomaly (she says "*monstrum*") to speak of divine love.

Plato could not attribute Eros to the gods. Aristotle, too, was very far from such a use of the term. The supreme principle moves that which directly depends on it, the first heaven, by a kind of attractive power, i.e., by "being loved". But it could not possibly be said that that which is first would love that which is inferior to it.

Similarly with the Stoics. It is alleged that they never spoke of the love of God either towards the world as a whole or towards man.

It is a moot point that Plotinus defines God as love: "He is loveable, Love itself and selflove" (*Enn.* VI 8, 15, Bréhier 152). But interpretation makes clear that Plotinus meant: "Love itself, that is (*kai explicativum*) self love."

We conclude then that according to Cornelia de Vogel Proclus does speak about divine love, but that this does not mean anything, because this was an anomaly in Proclus, and a concept completely alien to Greek thought.

I find it very difficult to accept this view. Although I am not a professor of Greek philosophy and therefore would not dare to contradict a distinguished scholar in her own field, I am a reader of Plato's dialogue *First Alcibiades* (about the unselfish love of Socrates for Alcibiades) and of Proclus' allegorical interpretation of this love, finding in it the cosmogonic Eros, which emanates from God: *eros proeisi ek tou Dios* (233).<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, this is Proclus' basic idea, to which he comes back again and again:

If, then, the lover is inspired by love, he would be the sort of person who turns back and recalls noble natures to the good, like love itself. (Ch. 27, O'Neill 17)

...the whole order of love is for all beings the cause of reversion to the divine beauty, on the one hand elevating to, uniting with and establishing

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. 1 John 4, 7: "agapè ek tou theou estin".

in it all that is secondary, and on the other filling therefrom what lies subsequent to itself and radiating the communications of divine light that proceed from it.

(Ch. 30, O'Neill 19)

The whole series of love, then, produced from the cause of beauty, gathers all things towards it, recalls them to participation therein, and has set up a procession midway between the object of love and the beings elevated through love...

(Ch. 31, O'Neill 19)

After the unitary primary principle of love and the triple and self-perfecting substance thereof appears the manifold mass of loves, whence the choirs of angels are filled with their share of love, the bands of spirits through the fullness imparted by this god accompany the gods in their ascent to intelligible beauty, the armies of heroes revel with the spirits and angels because of their share in the beautiful, and practically everything is aroused, re-kindled and warmed around "the effluence of beauty." Furthermore, men's souls receive a share of such inspiration, through intimacy with the god are moved with regard to the beautiful, and descend to the region of coming-to-be for the benefit of less perfect souls and out of forethought for those in need of salvation.

(Ch. 32, O'Neill 21)

The same concept emerges in another work by Proclus:

For also the specific effect (*idiótēs*) of Eros first enlightens the gods (and then descends down to matter).

(In *Cratylum* CLXIV, Pasquali 90, 16)

And of course the Eros of Aphrodite must be conceived of as good in its effects and *pronoëtikos*, because it is lavished by a higher god on a lower god.

(In *Cratylum* CLXXX, Pasquali 107, 15)<sup>12</sup>

Moreover how can one fail to trace the origin of this concept, since Proclus indicates his source four times in his commentary on *First Alcibiades*?

He says:

In general, too, since the whole order of love proceeds from the intelligible Father (in all things, *as the Oracles say*, the Father "has sown the fire-laden bond of love," in order that the whole world may be held together by the indissoluble bonds of friendship...)

(Ch. 26, O'Neill 16)

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<sup>12</sup> Eugenio Corsini, *Il trattato De Divinis Nominibus dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatonici al Parmenide*, Torino 1962, 49.

THE *CHALDAEAN ORACLES*: A GNOSTIC SOURCE OF PROCLUS

The reference is to the second century *Chaldaean Oracles*, a writing as authoritative and canonical for Proclus as the Bible was for Christians of his day. His recent translator O'Neill says: "Proclus is always concerned with harmonising his Neoplatonism with what he regarded as two sources of divine revelation—the *Chaldaean Oracles* and the teachings of the Orphics."

Another passage about cosmogonic, unselfish Eros also contains a reference to the *Chaldaean Oracles*:

From above, then, love ranges from the intelligibles to the intra-mundane making everything revert to the divine beauty, truth illuminating the universe with knowledge, and faith establishing each reality in the good. "For everything," says the *Oracle*, "is governed and exists in these three" ... (Ch. 52, O'Neill 34)

Proclus quotes the "Logia" a third time:

What effects this bond of union between the inferior and the superior if not love? For this god the *Oracles* call "the binding guide of all things," and not "binding together some and not others"; he it is, then, who unites us with the care of the spirits. (Ch. 64, O'Neill 41)

And in a fourth passage Proclus clearly shows where he found the basic idea that cosmogonic Eros comes from God:

... the *Oracles* have termed the fire of this love binding: "who first leapt forth from Intellect, clothing his binding fire in the fire (of Intellect = God)." (Ch. 65, O'Neill 42)

If one does not disdain Gnosis (to which the *Chaldaic Oracles* belong) and realizes that Greek philosophy sprang from mythology, then one will see that Proclus took his ideas of divine love from the *Chaldaean Oracles* which had preserved the Orphic myth of cosmogonic Eros. And in the Renaissance Leo Hebraeus, when writing his influential *Dialogues on Love*, used Proclus' ideas on Eros.<sup>13</sup>

Even if Proclus had not acknowledged his source, the parallels would be clear. This is what the fragments of the *Chaldaean Oracles* have preserved of their author's concept of Eros:

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<sup>13</sup> Leone Ebreo, *Dialoghi d'Amore*, III, 30ff. (facs. ed. by C. Gebhardt in *Bibliotheca Spinoziana*, tom. III, Heidelberg-London-Paris-Amsterdam 1929).

The Paternal Self-begotten Mind (= God), having conceived his works, inseminated in all things the fire-laden *bond of Eros*, in order that the All should continue to love forever, and that the weavings of the Father's intelligent light should not collapse; it is owing to the Eros that the stars of one universe keep revolving.

(*Chaldaean Oracles* 39, edition E. des Places, Paris 1971, 77. Cf. Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theology*, Cairo 1956, 126.)

(The portions of the world are held together) by the bonds of admirable *Eros, who first leapt forth out of Mind* (= God), wrapping his binding fire in the fire (of Mind), that he might mix the mixing-bowls of the Sources, spreading there the flowers of his fire.

(Ch. 42, des Places 77. Cf. Lewy 127, and the first begotten Eros or Phanes of Orphism.)

Having mingled the spark of the soul with two like minded faculties, with mind and divine will, (God) added to them as a third *chaste Eros, the binder of all things and their sublime guide*.

(Ch. 44, des Places 78. Cf. Lewy 179.)

...the choking of true Eros...

(Ch. 45, des Places 78.)

...faith, truth and Eros...

(Ch. 46, des Places 78.)

From these few lines it transpires that not only Proclus but also the authors of the *Chaldaean Oracles* were familiar with the notion that love comes from God.

Our next question is: How did these spiritualistic verses of the second century A.D., which contain a curious mixture of Iranian, Babylonian and Jewish lore, come to incorporate Eros, an eminently Hellenistic concept? It was because of syncretistic tendencies that the Near East integrated Eros, originally so alien to its mind and spirit. Indeed, we now have a striking parallel from Nag Hammadi, which proves this was the case.

#### GNOSTIC PARALLELS TO THE CHALDAEAN ORACLES

Codex II of Nag Hammadi contains seven tractates in Coptic, the fourth of which is entitled: *The Hypostasis of the Archons*.<sup>14</sup> It consists

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<sup>14</sup> Edited by R.A. Bullard, *The Hypostasis of the Archons. The Coptic Text with Translation and Commentary*, Berlin 1970. Other translations by M. Krause/R. McL. Wilson in W. Foerster (ed.), *Gnosis. A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, II, Oxford 1974, 41–52, and by Bentley Layton, *Harvard Theological Review* 67 (1974) 352–393.

clearly of two different parts, which originally were perhaps two different writings, to which a redactor added some Christian texts and views. Originally this small work of 384 lines, going from pages 86, 20 to 97, 29, was not Christian. It seems to have originated in the Jewish sect of Gnostikoi in Alexandria.

It tells a myth very similar to that of the *Apocryphon of John*: from the Unknown God a spiritual world emanates, which in turn is the origin of the material world. The beginning of the work shows a definite anti-Greek tendency: the Greeks allegedly say that the gods come from chaos, whereas the author of this esoteric document affirms that chaos comes from God.

A lower Aeon, Sophia, has made the firmament. She cast her shadow which became matter, from which the rulers of the world arose, headed by Jaldabaoth or Sakla (the Fool).

Thereupon a female entity, Aphtharsia, looked into the primeval water of chaos and projected her image into it. The powers of darkness saw this, loved it and made a human body after this image. But it could not rise until it was given a living soul, namely the Spirit. So man is more than the rulers of this world and contains an element which is indestructible. He is forbidden to eat from the tree of knowledge in Paradise, but instructed by a messenger of God, the serpent, he does acquire this Gnosis.

As a consequence, world history as described in this writing is the continuous struggle of the spirit in man against the rulers of the world; it is in fact an inversion of the biblical history. The document is meant to be an interpretation of Genesis, full of allusions to the Bible and Aramaic puns. It must have been written by a Jew, but a heterodox Jew, who was familiar with the deviating view of the "minim" (the heretics) that the creation of the world was due not to God himself, but to the anthropomorphic "Angel of the Lord."<sup>15</sup>

Immediately following in the same codex is the writing variously called *The Untitled Treatise* or *The Origin of the World*.<sup>16</sup> The material is the same as in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, though rearranged. The most plausible explanation of this is that the author of *The Origin of the World* used the other writing as a source, or at least a version very similar to it.

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<sup>15</sup> A. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, Leiden 1978, shows that the doctrine of the two Powers in Heaven is older than Philo.

<sup>16</sup> Edited with a German translation by A. Böhlig and P. Labib, *Die koptisch-gnostische Schrift ohne Titel aus Codex II von Nag Hammadi im Koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo*, Berlin 1962.

New are the elucidations on the Phoenix and on Eros, both typically Greek themes. This is what the author says about Eros, a cosmogonic figure, born from the blood of a virgin and engaged in the organisation of chaos:

From this first blood Eros originated, who is androgynous. His male part is Himeros (Desire), who is fire from light. His female counterpart that is with him is blood Soul (Psyche) being from the substance of Providence (cf. *eros pronoëtikos*)... He is exceedingly comely in his beauty, having more charm than all creatures of Chaos. When all the gods and their angels saw Eros, they fell in love with him. When, however, he manifested himself among them all, he set them on fire. Just as from one single lamp many lamps are lit and yet remain one and the same light and the first lamp is not reduced, similarly Eros dispersed himself among the creatures of Chaos and was not diminished... As soon as in the middle region between light and darkness Eros manifested himself among angels and men, then the first copulation of Eros took place. So on earth the first lust was born. The female arrived with the earth. And marriage arrived with the female. Birth arrived with marriage. Death arrived with birth. (*Origin of the World*, 109, 1–25)

We notice that this Eros is androgynous (Himeros and psyche), like the old Orphic Phanes. There is a remarkable parallel with Apuleius' story of Amor and Psyche (*Voluptas* is born here and there). And Eros is here the origin of death, as in the *Poimandres* of the Corpus Hermeticum. Michel Tardieu has shown in his excellent study of the myth of Eros in this gnostic writing, that every detail of this myth can be traced to Greek antecedents.<sup>17</sup>

For our purpose it is important to establish that the cosmogonic Eros was still alive at that time in Greek civilisation. Of course it is true that Plato had demythologised and humanised Eros by saying that he was not a god, but a daemon and by identifying him with the yearning for Being in the soul. And Aristotle had perverted cosmogonic Eros by saying that the world loved God and not the reverse. But that does not mean that Eros, cosmogonic Eros, was not a principal feature of Greek civilisation. It is found in Orphism.

There are two different versions of the birth of Eros. The first is recorded by Hieronymus and Hellenikos.<sup>18</sup>

In this version from the very beginning there was water and some solid matter that was to harden into earth. Out of water and earth

<sup>17</sup> M. Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques*, Paris 1974, 141–214.

<sup>18</sup> W.K.C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, London, 1935, 79; text in O. Kern, *Orphicorum fragmenta*, 2nd ed., Berlin 1963, 130., frg. 54.



was born a monstrous figure, Endless Time. Out of Time were born Aither and Chaos and Darkness. In them Time brought forth an egg (which contained Phanes or Eros, the androgynous god, the demiurge of all things and the whole world).

The second version is the version found in the cosmogony according to the *Orphic Rhapsodies*.<sup>19</sup> There Time is the first principle, but here too Phanes (= Eros) comes out of the world egg.

There simply cannot be any doubt that the cosmogonic Eros was an Orphic myth.

The problem with the study of Orphism is that it has been bedevilled by the vicious desire of hypercritical scholars to prove that they were right and that tradition was wrong. Hence the theories that the above mentioned views are not older than the Alexandrian era. The Derveni Papyrus, from about 350 B.C., has shown how wrong they were. It contains a theological commentary on a mythical theogonic poem of the Orphics made in the sixth century. This commentary showed that the Orphics were perfectly able to replace the imagery of their myths by abstract concepts with the help of pre-Socratic philosophy.<sup>20</sup>

Professors of Greek philosophy are sometimes reluctant to admit that their beloved thinkers have been influenced by mythology, especially Oriental. And yet what is more plausible than that the image precedes the concept? Therefore it is exceedingly probable that the Orphics spoke about androgynous Eros sprung from the world egg long before Eros was mentioned by the Presocratics, or even Hesiod (*Theogony*, 120–122).

In any case there seems to be little doubt that according to Parmenides the All-God, a female being, planned and conceived cosmogonic Love: “first of all the gods she conceived Eros.” (fr. B, 13).

We may then conclude that cosmogonic, demiurgic, divine Love was conceived by the Orphics, received by the Presocratics, saved by later unknown mystics, perhaps Orphic, in a period of demythologisation and revitalised by the Gnostics, both pagan (*Chaldaean Oracles*) and Christian (*Origin of the World*).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Kern, *a.c.*, 143, frg. 60.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. F. St. Kapsomenos, *Gnomon*, 35, 1963, 222.

<sup>21</sup> In a recension of the well-known sixth-century hymn: “Zeus is the head, Zeus is the middle, from Zeus comes the end” it is said that both Mêtis and “the first begetter, much-delighting Eros” originate in the All-God Zeus, “for all this lies in the great body of Zeus” (Kern, *a.c.*, 201, frg. 168, 9–10). This shows that a pantheistic interpretation of the archaic myth, according to which Eros comes from God, did already exist in

These observations are of some importance for the interpretation of the Johannine Corpus of the New Testament.

#### THE FOURTH GOSPEL AND EROS-AGAPÈ

Recently Robert T. Fortna has argued that the Fourth Gospel is based upon a Jewish Christian gospel, which has undergone a thoroughgoing revision.<sup>22</sup>

I agree with him.

I think that the presbyter John, the author of the *Apocalypse* of John, wrote a gospel for the congregation of Ephesus, which was heavily edited by a Hellenistic Jew, a member of the same community. We will designate the author as John. The final redactor and ghostwriter we will term his "editor."

That this editor used a written Gospel is fairly obvious, because he implies, but does not say, that Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist (1, 32). It was a Jewish Christian, because even in its present form it still says that Jesus, the Paschal Lamb, died on the 14th. of Nisan, the day on which the congregations of Jerusalem and Asia Minor mourned and fasted in remembrance of what had happened and expected the Second Coming. Indeed this was the Quartodeciman, that is Jewish Christian, Easter. The framework of this source probably comprised the baptism of Jesus, sayings, miracles, passion and resurrection. These sayings showed marked affinity with the Judaic Christian logia in the Gospel of Thomas: John, like "Thomas," does not speak of the love of neighbour, or love of God, but of love of brother (Jn. 15, 12; I Jn. 2, 10; Thomas 25).

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Orphic circles at an early date. In the course of time this interpretation obviously has been combined with Stoic, Posidonian ideas on providence, sympathy, syndesmos and oikiosis (instinct of self-preservation, self-love). When and where this happened, I for one do not know. Cf. K. Reinhardt, *Poseidonios von Apameia, der Rhodier genannt*, Stuttgart 1954 (= article in Pauly-Wissowa's *Realencyclopaedie*). It is clear that Chaldaean Oracle 42: "Eros, who first leapt forth out of Mind (= God)" is an interpretation of the Orphic concept of Eros as born from Zeus. The concept that he binds together all things (44) seems to show that the Orphics had integrated the Stoic concept of syndesmos. Therefore the unknown mystics who preserved cosmogonic Eros in a period of demythologization might have been Orphic.

<sup>22</sup> R.T. Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs*, Cambridge 1970; *idem*, "The theological Use of Locale in the Fourth Gospel", *Anglican Theological Review*, Supplementary Series, 3 (1974) 58-95.

From these sayings the editor made discourses, amplifying them and linking them with each other and inserting them into a certain situation (the Farewell discourses, etc.).

Of course, he added his own view, the *kerygma*. Similarly he introduced the Greek Eros into his redaction, just as the *Chaldaean Oracles* and *The Origin of the World* had done, writings which are roughly contemporary with this editor.

We may suppose that John wrote in his Gospel, as he did in his *Apocalypse* (1, 5), that Jesus has loved us (*agapésanti*, once and for all) and has delivered us from our sins through the sacrifice of his life. And he may have used the imagery of the Paschal Lamb, vicariously victimised to save others from death and suffering.

John's ghostwriter might have used this as the starting point for very remarkable developments which reveal not the slightest influence of Pauline theology (like the *Apocalypse*)<sup>23</sup> and have no parallel in Jewish or Old Testament literature, but show a very high appreciation of Greek Eros.

We give only three examples:

A) "This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. No man has greater love than he who gives his life for his friends" (15, 12–13).

The ghostwriter may have found in his source, the Jewish Christian Gospel of John, something like logion 25: "Love thy brother as thy soul, preserve him as the apple of thine eye."<sup>24</sup>

He made the general commandment historical, adding "as I have loved you," and that our love should be like His, self denying. Then he adds something for which there is no parallel whatsoever in the Old Testament, Talmud, Midrash nor Jewish literature in general, for the simple reason that Hebrew has no word for "friend" and no notion of friendship.<sup>25</sup>

But it is a well known topic in Greek and Latin literature. Let us quote just two examples:

<sup>23</sup> U.B. Müller, *Zur frühchristliche Theologiegeschichte*, Gütersloh 1976, 13–50.

<sup>24</sup> See my article "John, Qumran and Jewish Christianity", in: J.H. Charlesworth, *John and Qumran*, London 1972, 143.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. G. Stählin, "Philos", *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, IX, Stuttgart 1973, 153.

Love will make men dare to die for their beloved-love alone.

(Plato, *Symposium* 1796, translation B. Jowett)

For what purpose then do I make a man my friend? In order to have someone for whom I may die, whom I may follow into exile, against whose death I may stake my own life, and pay the pledge, too (*inpendam*). (Seneca, *Ep.* 9, 10, translation R.M. Gummere)

Seneca says that out of love a man is ready to give his life as a guarantor for his friend. This possibly is an allusion to the story of the Pythagorean friends Damon and Phintias, two young men in Syracuse. This anecdote, as narrated by Jamblichus, *Vita Pythagorica*, 233ff., Deubner, 125, tells how Damon is ready to risk his life, giving it as a guarantee (*thanatou eggué*), for the return of his friend, Phintias. "Those two men lived together and had everything in common." Jamblichus alludes to the story of the hind that has replaced Iphigeneneia as a victim in Aulis. "They mocked Damon suggesting that he would be left alone by his friend and said jeering that he would be given instead as a hind (*elaphon antididosthai*)." He clearly conceives of Damon's act of friendship in terms of a vicarious sacrifice. To suffer for your friend and to die instead of him was for the Ancients, and possibly also for John's editor, implied in the notion of Eros.

B) "One of his pupils, whom Jesus loved, was reclining on his bosom during the meal" (13, 23). Here again we must say that the notion of the special favourite of a teacher, who is the privileged object of his affection and even has a place of honour during the meal, is not Jewish, but typically Hellenistic. Hundreds of examples of such special relationships can be quoted from Greek literature. Think of Socrates and Alcibiades.

It is unthinkable that the editor found this concept in his source, the Jewish Christian gospel written by the prophet John. He has innovated here. He made a symposium of the Last Supper.

C) No prophet, priest or writer of the Old Testament, nor any author of Hebrew or Aramaic literature is known to have said that God loves the world. And yet the Fourth Gospel says: "God loved the world so much..." (3,16).

Bultmann was probably right when in his commentary he stressed the aorist (*égapésen*): God loved, showed his love for the world once and for all by suffering on the cross to redeem mankind. Nevertheless the concept of love descending from the ground of Being and coming to the kosmos is thoroughly Hellenic, as is shown by Parmenides, the *Chaldaean Oracles* and Proclus.

Nor is our editor afraid of such generalisations, if he is the same as the author of I John. He writes:

Beloved friends, let us love one another, because love is out of God.

Everyone who is loving is born from God and does know God. Whoever is not loving does not know God, because God is love. And his love was disclosed to us in this event, that he sent his beloved Son to the world to give us Life. (I John 4, 7–9)

This passage is very characteristic of the redactional work by the anonymous editor. He starts, again, with the Jewish Christian injunction to love the brother, but gives a very peculiar motivation for this commandment. The Christian should love his brethren, his beloved friends; this proves he has the love of God within himself and may consider himself to be a child of God, because this Ground of being is the source of all love. Love, all love, comes from God, because God as such is love. Love originates in God, enters the human heart as a unifying force, an *eros koinōnikos*, the foundation of community and brotherly togetherness, and returns as love of God from man to God. The initiative is in God, *eros pronoētikos*, it founds the congregation, *eros koinōnikos*, and at last returns to God, *eros epistreptikōs*.

Therefore John's editor, describing love as the motivation of God's condescendence and the public spirit of the congregation, at last also speaks of love of God.

This is real love, that God was the first to love us by sending his Son to cover our sins and that we are only secondarily loving God. (I John 4, 10)

We love (God) because he loved us first. (I Jn. 4, 19)

All this is also typically Orphic and Hellenic. The best parallel for the statement that love comes from God is in Proclus (*In Alc.* 235), as we have shown above; and for the definition that God is Love, we find the equivalent in Plotinus (*Enn.* VI, 8, 15), as we said above.

From this we conclude that the Orphic and Hellenic tradition on Eros is important to understand the true meaning of love in the Johannean corpus of the New Testament and that its most thoughtful and sagacious exegetes were Dionysius Areopagita and Boethius.

Moreover, both Dionysius and Boethius show how easily a Christian could integrate the Orphic and philosophical concept of Eros into his own system, when he wanted to speak about the love of God. The editor of John might have done the same.

In fact he did.

But then Dionysius the Areopagite understood the Bible very well and was completely in agreement with primitive Christianity when he said that God is Eros.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

Cornelia de Vogel, the famous specialist on Greek philosophy, has written a learned and furious article in order to refute the above mentioned views (“Greek Cosmic Love and the Christian Love of God”, *VC* 35, 1981, 57–81).

According to her the background of John is totally different from that of the Platonists. John is thinking of the God of Israel who elected the Jewish people, who spoke to them through the prophets and at last sent them his Son. Origen and Dionysius Areopagita on his track misunderstood John. The reference of de Vogel to Origenes is very helpful.

In the Prologue to his Commentary this Alexandrian master declared that it is just a matter of words either to speak of “amare deum” (from ἐράσθαι) or “diligere” (from ἀγαπᾶν). One can with equal right say that God is “amor” (Ἔρως) as, like John, name Him “Caritas” (ἀγάπη). Origenes is not the only Alexandrian who holds that God is Eros. The same is the case in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which reflects the views of some brethren of the Hermetic lodge in Alexandria:

The charm that brings them (all things) together is Love (Eros), the same Love that makes one harmony out of all things.

*CH* XIII, 14.

The *Eucharistic Prayer* at the end of the *Asclepius*, preserved also in Greek by Papyrus Mimout 64, says in different words that God has graciously poured out his Love in the heart of men:

We thank Thee, who deign to grant to all your paternal affection and Love (στοργή) and loving kindness (φιλία).

According to the Hermetic *Asclepius* 8 God loves the Cosmos as the progeny of His own divinity:

amavit eum ut divinitatis partum suae

This same view is also to be found in Philo. According to him the Cosmos is the unique and *beloved* sensible Son of God.

(*De ebrietate* 30)

We see then that there existed in Alexandria a tradition according to which God loved the world (which He had brought forth).

It is a plausible hypothesis that this concept was introduced in Alexandria by the Middle-Platonist Eudorus, who lived there in the first century before the beginning of the Christian Era. Is it thinkable that the ghostwriter of the Fourth Gospel, who possibly lived in Ephesus and in any case in the Hellenistic culture, could write that the Logos is cosmogonic and that God loves the world without any cosmic implications?

When read in context, the editor of John has Hellenistic overtones.

Conclusion: 1) the Platonic tradition was possibly since Eudorus, in any case since Philo, familiar with the theme that God loves the world;

2) Ever since Origen (†254) this was part of Christian philosophy. We quoted Macarius, the influential Syrian mystic (± 370 A.D.), who said that God can be seen by human eyes. One cannot imagine a doctrine which Dionysius abhorred more. He may have known Macarius and taught against him. But then, the use of Proclus as a source by Dionysius was just an expedient to make clear a traditional Christian view of Greek orthodoxy which had biblical foundations in the Johannine literature.

## CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

### GREGORY OF NYSSA AND MYSTICISM\*

Gregory of Nyssa is sometimes called the first Christian mystic and his mysticism is said to derive largely from Plotinus. This would imply that mysticism has been an odd Greek influence in the Christian setting from the beginning.<sup>1</sup> Gregory read Plotinus, he was a thinker and able to reproduce or produce himself philosophical trains of thought. Gregory was the thinker, Basilus was the prince of the Church and Gregory of Nazianzus the pioneer of Christian eloquence.

This Hellenistic side to the man greatly appealed to Werner Jaeger. The founder of the “third humanism”, rather anti-Christian in his German period, towards the end of his life strove for a humanism inspired by Christianity, and a reconciliation between the Bible and Greek philosophy. He found the synthesis in Gregory of Nyssa, whom he regarded as a forerunner of Pelagius and Erasmus, his personal saints. And that is why we now have a fine edition of Gregory’s works, with Jaeger as its devoted editor.<sup>2</sup>

The years following the Second World War saw a reaction to the *interpretatio Graeca*. This was mainly due to the studies of W. Völker and J. Daniélou, who saw Gregory primarily as a Christian.<sup>3</sup> Such an approach has its advantages. There are a few themes which are best explained in a Biblical light. There is the experience of the dark cloud, orientated on the description of Moses on Mount Sinai. There is also the thought of the mystical life as a continuous and endless progress, based on the words of Paul, that he didn’t think he had already grasped it. And then there is the emphasis on love, which is inebriating and takes us out of ourselves. Here the Song of Songs and the Gospel of John are clearly sources of inspiration. Gregory was indeed a Christian and a (Origenist) theologian.

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\* Previously published in Dutch in: *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 24 (1970) 250–255.

<sup>1</sup> E.R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, Cambridge 1965, 99.

<sup>2</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera*. Ed. W. Jaeger, vol. 5, and following.

<sup>3</sup> J. Daniélou, *Platonisme et Théologie Mystique*, Paris 1944. W. Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, Wiesbaden 1955.



This struggle between classicists and theologians may of course continue for centuries, and has been waged in other areas for centuries. It is time for a different sound. We can let it be heard if we can visualise the historical situation.

There was great division in the Church in the days of the Cappadocians. The situation was extraordinarily unpleasant and confused. It is fair to say that Rome and Alexandria were pitted against the Eastern Church (especially the churches of Asia Minor and Syria). Julian the Apostate (361–363) had sought to introduce a humanistic state church, which led to the awareness that an adjustment was needed between Christendom and its cultural environment. The Cappadocians achieved the unity of the Church and the reconciliation with the cultural environment. The consequences were: the recognition of the Godhead of the Holy Ghost at the Council of Constantinople in 381; the introduction of the Creed, still erroneously known as the Nicene Creed, and which in contrast to the Apostolicum may be regarded as the only true symbol of all Christian churches. Basil of Caesarea organised monasticism in Asia Minor according to a rule which until the present day prevails for all orthodox monasteries (Orthodoxy has no monastic orders). Thus the Cappadocians present themselves to our mind's eye as honourable men, philosophically trained, striving for ecclesiastical unity and in dialogue with the world.

But every man has his dark side. This is also true for a Church Father and a *doctor ecclesiae*. In the case of Basil we don't have to search far and wide.<sup>4</sup> It was his friend Eustathius, not he, who was responsible for the rise of monasticism in Asia Minor. This phenomenon was ushered in with wild excesses, as is usually the case when something new happens. Women were dressed in men's outfits, the state of matrimony was dissolved, ownership abolished, slaves were manumitted. The Church thought it was all awful and decided to put a stop to it (Gangrae ca. 343). But Basil owed his impetus to that movement and to his friend Eustathius. Later he quarreled with Eustathius over church politics, and took all credit himself.

Gregory of Nyssa, too, had his dark side. He was in touch with heretics and also drew on them. These heretics were Messalians, or Euchites, those who pray. They were repeatedly condemned, first at the Synod of Side (ca. 390), later at the ecumenical Council of Ephesus in

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<sup>4</sup> F. Loofs, art. "Eustathius" in: *PRE*<sup>2</sup>, V, 627–630.

431, and at other councils. The documents relating to the Messalians have been printed by M. Kmosko in his introduction to the edition of the *Liber Graduum*.

The research into this area has made significant progress in the last decades. It has now been established without doubt that Macarius, the great patron saint of Pietism, shared the condemned views of the Messalians and that Gregory of Nyssa largely copied the "Great Letter of Macarius".<sup>5</sup> But at a closer look it becomes obvious that the notion of heresy in this case, as so often, is a dogmatic category, and unusable in historical studies.

These Messalians taught that the Holy Ghost may be experienced, that God can be viewed with physical eyes, that is that God is concrete and not abstract, and that man remains sinful even after baptism. Macarius shares these thoughts (*Homilies* 8:1–4; 1:1; 15:15). The permanent sinfulness of man was already taught by the Jewish Christians; according to them something sinful remained in the believers, as in the prophets, after they had been anointed with the Holy Ghost (Nazoraeans' Gospel frg. 10). Before them, the Pharisees were already acquainted with the "evil urge" which remained alive in the human heart.

Syriac Christianity in Edessa evolved out of Jewish Christianity. Messalianism, which had its focus and its origin in Edessa, preserved something here, which in Syria was as old as Christianity and may be termed a typically Jewish heritage. The same is true for Macarius' view that the Holy Ghost is a Mother, which is also Jewish Christian in origin, and also that God has a shape.<sup>6</sup> At the Council of Side the Church condemned early Christian views.<sup>7</sup> If there was anything heretical about the Messalians, it might have been the notion that the Spirit *had* to be experienced. Or the notion that it was forbidden to marry. Although we think this is quite progressive.

However it may be, it has been established that Gregory copied the greater part of a work by Macarius in his *De Instituto Christiano*, in which he strongly emphasises the need for spiritual experience. It has been suggested that this Messalian influence only became evident towards the end of Gregory's life. But I don't think so. I believe all of Gregory's

<sup>5</sup> R. Staats, *Gregor von Nyssa und die Messalianer*, Berlin 1968.

<sup>6</sup> G. Quispel, *Makarius, das Thomasevangelium und das Lied von der Perle*, Leiden 1967, 9–13. See also in: *Studies in mysticism presented to Gershom G. Scholem*, Jerusalem 1967, 191–195.

<sup>7</sup> K. Holl, *Amphilochius von Ikonium*, Tübingen 1904, 30.

works and activities must be viewed in this light. A careful analysis of his entire output might reveal more. Pending further research we already have a few indications. In the first place there is the fact that Gregory occasionally alludes to the Holy Ghost as a Mother (*Canticum* VI, 893 M., Langerbeck 183; *Canticum* XV, V 117 M., Langerbeck 468). That is characteristic of Syriac Christianity and points to connections of Gregory with Syria. Langerbeck furthermore discovered that there are frequent readings from the *Diatessaron* of the Syriac Tatian in the commentary on the Song of Songs (see his notes to his edition).<sup>8</sup>

Gregory was present at the Council of Constantinople. W. Jaeger presumed that he formulated the dogma on the spot, but his arguments are not convincing.<sup>9</sup> In the meantime the question remains what role he played at this council of the Spirit as the executor of his brother Basil's legacy. The formulation in the Creed: "who together with the Father and the Son is to be adored and glorified", inspired by Basil's *De Spiritu sancto*, might point to the activity of Gregory.

But this is not all we know. Gregory delivered a sermon at the Council in 381, on the occasion of the ordination of Gregory of Nazianzus as patriarch of the capital.<sup>10</sup> In it he speaks of the general malaise and dullness existing in the church of his age. Why were many souls saved in the times of the apostles and why do the finest of sermons have little if any impact nowadays? The speaker is pessimistic, although he does observe the workings of the Holy Ghost even at present. There are ascetics from Mesopotamia, whom Gregory addresses as if they were present at the Council. Like Abraham they have left their country. They do not talk but act, they are not familiar with rhetoric, but expel demons, through the Holy Ghost. They demonstrate that grace is with us here and now. That is the practical Christianity which ought to persuade us. Gregory expects of these men a rich harvest, a flourishing church, in which peace has returned. He contrasts them with the Pneumatomachians, or killers of the Ghost, who have disrupted the unity of the church with their rational observations on the substance and dimensions of God. All this while God is infinite and therefore

<sup>8</sup> *Canticum Canticorum*. Ed. H. Langerbeck (*Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.P. Migne (hereafter PG), 44, 756–1120).

<sup>9</sup> W. Jaeger, *Gregor von Nyssa's Lehre vom Heiligen Geist*, Leiden 1966. For an account of Jaeger's personality, see W. Schadewaldt, *Gedenkrede auf Werner Jaeger*, Berlin 1963.

<sup>10</sup> *De Deitate Adversus Euagrium* (*vulgo, In Suam Ordinationem Oratio*). Ed. E. Gebhardt. (PG 46, 543–554). See also A.M. Ritter, "Gregor von Nyssa 'In suam ordinationem'" *ZKG* 79 (1968) 308–328.

inexhaustible and unfathomable. Then there is an image: if a man journeying in intense heat comes upon a well, he doesn't ask himself where it's from and why it is there, he drinks and quenches his thirst. Therefore do not speculate about innertrinitarian relationships, but drink of the Spirit. Macarius also uses the image of the water, of which one drinks without asking where it comes from and whither it flows (*Homilies* 12, 12).<sup>11</sup> To my knowledge it is unique.

Apparently Gregory at the Council of Constantinople in 381 already knew spiritual men from Mesopotamia, who might even have been present there. Already then he appears to have been familiar with the thoughts of Macarius. It is not too bold to assume that Gregory was made acquainted with the works of Macarius through these Mesopotamian ascetics. This is also how Macarius' works came to the Rufinianae monastery near Chalcedon on the Bosphorus even before 426, through the mediation of the Syrian Callinicus.<sup>12</sup> We must not call these itinerant ascetics from Mesopotamia heretics or Messalians. Macarius himself was not a Messalian in the strict sense of the word.<sup>13</sup> They are only a few hotheads from within their own circle, who were later condemned.<sup>14</sup> Much chaff was severed from the wheat in the process.

But one thing appears to be certain: when Gregory at the Council of Constantinople battled for the Holy Ghost against the Pneumatomachians, whom he regarded as a fatal danger for the Church, he was thinking of the spiritual teachings of the Syrian Macarius and the Syrian enthusiasts from this circle were before his mind's eye. Macarius inspired Gregory of Nyssa. He did not find his true inspiration in Greek philosophy or in learned Alexandrian theology. Plotinus and Origen are no more than a cover and windscreen.

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<sup>11</sup> R. Staats, "Die Asketen aus Mesopotamien", *Vigiliae Christianae* 21 (1967) 165–179.

<sup>12</sup> G.J.M. Bartelink, "Text parallels between the Vita Hypatii of Callinicus and the Pseudo-Macariana", *Vigiliae Christianae* 22 (1968) 128–136.

<sup>13</sup> This view is shared by Ephrem Davids, *Der neue Mensch*, Salzburg 1968, though on different grounds.

<sup>14</sup> In *De virginitate* 23 Gregorius reacts against workshy ascetics, who rely more on dreams than on the teachings of the Gospel and who cohabit with *virgines subintroductae*. J. Daniélou (*RSR* 48, 1960, 119–134), believes that these were Messalians. It's a possibility. They may also have been Eustathians or Encratites, who were then still around in Asia Minor. If they were Messalians, it does Gregory credit that such excesses did not altogether cancel his ability to appreciate and learn from the enthusiastic, pietist current existing in his day.

This is also how I believe the dogma and the creed of Constantinople should be seen: not to think, but to live, not the mind, but the heart, no chimeras, but inner experience, ample room for the mysticism of the Spirit. Religious experience comes first. Departing from religious experience, peace may be obtained in the Church as well as synthesis with the cultural environment. Thus the intention of the Creed of Constantinople may be summarised in its historical connection with Gregory of Nyssa.

If one wants, the teachings of Gregory of Nyssa can be placed in the void of a-historicity and subsequently confront them with prevalent theologian fabrications. And naturally one may then find that Gregory was almost something of a modern Protestant, as if this would plead for him. But if one has a historical outlook, one may perhaps discover the hidden source from which this theology has welled up, the experience of the Ghost in communion with the ordinary folk from distant Edessa.

#### LITERATURE

- E. Benz, *Die protestantische Thebais*, Wiesbaden 1963, sketches the influence of Macarius on small Christian communities in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries.
- H. Dörrie, *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon*, Göttingen 1978, compares Macarius with Augustine and Luther.
- J.H. van de Bank, *Macarius en zijn invloed in de Nederlanden*, Amsterdam 1977, demonstrated that the Flemish printer Christoffel Plantijn published a Dutch translation for the Family of Love in Antwerp.
- Reinhart Staats, *Makarios/Symeon, Epistola Magna*, Göttingen 1984, has republished after Jaeger the Great Letter of Makarios, which is according to him the source of *De Instituto Christiano* by Gregory of Nyssa. Following Makarios Gregory sometimes transmits extra-canonical and deviant versions of the Gospel: cf. "The Syrian Thomas and the Syrian Macarius" in: *Gnostic Studies II*, 119.

## CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

### THE HOLY SPIRIT ACCORDING TO THE EARLY CHURCH\*

Around 100 C.E. the Jewish Christian Elxai (Elkesai) described a vision in which Christ handed him a book: “Opposite Him, however, stood the Holy Spirit in the shape of an (invisible) female being”.<sup>1</sup> This scheme is the “oldest form of the doctrine of the Trinity known to us”.<sup>2</sup> The important thing is that it is found in a Jewish Christian text.

For some time now we know (or ought to know) that the pursuit of visionary experiences was not uncommon in the Judaism of those days. Even within the strictest Pharisaism in Palestine, secret teachings were being transmitted which explained how to ascend to the Throne itself and to see the Glory. Gershom Scholem demonstrated that this mystical Jewish teaching was much older than he had originally assumed and that it goes back to the first century C.E.<sup>3</sup> At the time, the Jews did not only hear, they also saw. That is why Elxai’s vision on Jewish soil at that time is not extraordinary.

But neither do we have any indication that the vision of Elxai in itself was special or idiosyncratic. It should be assumed rather that it was traditional and that it had very ancient roots. Paul is familiar with the notion that the Spirit is a Paraclete, that is a person who intercedes and prays for man; who calls out “Abba” (Galatians 4:6), who prays for us with groanings that cannot be spoken (Romans 8:26). Even closer to Elxai is the Gospel of John, which takes both Christ and the Holy Spirit to be a Paraclete (John 14:16). When one assumes that Paul and John here draw on a tradition from which Elxai eventually also derived his vision, it must be concluded that the concept of the Holy Spirit as a Person had very ancient roots.

But it is important that this notion of Elxai is accompanied by visionary experiences.

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\* Previously published in Dutch in: *De Spiritu Sancto*, Utrecht 1964, 76–88.

<sup>1</sup> Hippolytus, *Refutatio* IX, 13, 2; Wendland, 251, 14.

<sup>2</sup> G. Kretschmar, *Studien zur frühchristlichen Trinitätstheologie*, Tübingen 1956, 99.

<sup>3</sup> G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, New York 1960.

Another source for the notions of the Jewish Christians in this respect is the Gospel of Thomas. Many researchers admit that this work contains Words which were transmitted by Jewish Christians. The question is, however, whether these in turn depended on the canonical gospels or relied on an independent tradition.

Logion 44 of the Gospel of Thomas says:

Jesus said, "Whoever blasphemes against the Father will be forgiven, and whoever blasphemes against the Son will be forgiven, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven either on earth or in heaven."

It is certain that this saying has not been changed appreciably by the author of the Gospel of Thomas. A similar formula can be found in the Tuscan Diatessaron. And since more than a hundred parallels between the various versions of the Diatessaron and the apocryphon found at Nag Hammadi demonstrate that both the author of the Diatessaron, Tatian, and the author of Thomas drew on one and the same Jewish Christian tradition, we may also assume in this case that the logion was transmitted in this form by Jewish Christians. The choice of words: "neither on earth or in heaven [= or by God]" is a Semitism.

It may be supposed that this Jewish Christian logion is an adaptation of Matthew 12:31–32, a combination of Mark 3:28–29 and Q [= Luke 12:10). But in that case it ought to be explained why Thomas bears no traces of Mark, preserved so faithfully in Matthew and Luke. It seems more probable that the tripartiteness of the logion owes its existence to an independent tradition.

This problem, however, has little bearing on our aims. The essential importance of the logion is this, that it reflects the notions of the Jewish Christians. And we may add to this: the religion of the Jewish Christians was trinitarian. Even when the Christian revelation is expressed in Semitic categories, it receives a trinitarian differentiation. Although there are some who think that the dogma of the trinity is a product of the Greek mind on evangelical soil, this cannot be maintained from a historical perspective. The Jewish Christians, too, possessed a doctrine of the trinity. And in the case of Elxai one might furthermore add that he was a heretic. But there is no evidence pointing to the fact that the Jewish Christians who transmitted the tradition which is to be found in the Gospel of Thomas, were also heretics.

To them this was no speculation in the first place. They say there is no forgiveness for sins committed against the Holy Spirit, on earth

or in heaven. This means that neither the leaders of the congregation here on earth, or God in heaven can forgive the sin committed against the Holy Spirit. The pagans blaspheme God through their polytheism, the Jews blaspheme Christ, whom they refuse to accept. That is forgivable. But the Christians who through baptism have become members of a congregation in which the Holy Spirit lives, and who themselves have also received this Spirit, commit an unforgivable sin when they transgress against that Spirit. What exactly is meant by this is hard to say. We probably don't err on the wrong side too much when we interpret it as the demand for a sanctification of life and the notion that a serious transgression leads to excommunication from the congregation and to eternal damnation. Not a second penance, nor a second baptism as Elxai wished it, but severe discipline.

These testimonies of Jewish Christians are of major importance for two reasons. They show us that in these circles the Holy Spirit was taken to be a Person. When one reads the New Testament on the basis of this tradition, it appears that this is also the case in several places in the New Testament. It is true that without the light of tradition this is not entirely clear; when one reads the Scripture on its own one might rather be inclined to say that the Holy Spirit was an impersonal force or gift. It is easy to understand why an English scholar once sighed that it was a good thing that the Church later designated the Spirit as a Person, because one might otherwise come to the wrong conclusions on the basis of biblical evidence. But whoever regards the evidence in the light of the tradition and of history notices that Paul and John certainly meant this.

But in addition this information is of importance to the history of the Church, because it shows us what has been the basis underlying the dogma. This is true for both Syria and Egypt.

The tradition says that Christianity was founded in Edessa and other places of East Syria by Addai [= Adonya], a Jewish Christian who had travelled directly from Palestine to Syria and also lodged with Jewish people there. Modern scholarship can find nothing to the contrary.<sup>4</sup> So we must assume that Christianity in East Syria has Jewish Christian roots. Traces of these roots may be found in much later times. These Syrians, who spoke and thought Semitic, were hardly susceptible to

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<sup>4</sup> F.C. Burkitt, *Urchristentum im Orient*, Tübingen 1907, 18.



the finer points of Greek theology. The dogmatic controversies of the Greeks in the first century C.E. passed them by. But they certainly had a very decided idea about the Holy Spirit.

In the *Acts of Thomas*, written in Edessa around 225 and reflecting the notions of at least a part of the Church congregation there, the Holy Spirit is invoked as “the compassionate Mother”, as “she that revealeth the hidden mysteries”, “the mother of the seven houses, that thy rest may be in the eighth house” (c. 27).

In the Old Syriac bible translation (John 14:26) we read: “the Spirit, the Paraclete, *she* will teach you everything”. Aphraates in *Demonstratio* XVIII, 10, says: “As long as man does not take a woman, he loves and honours God, his Father, and the Holy Spirit, his Mother, and he has no other love”. One should of course consider in all of this that *ruach* in Hebrew and in Syriac is feminine. But also, that already in the Jewish Christian Gospel of the Hebrews the Holy Spirit is indicated as “my Mother”. It is certainly plausible to see in this an aftereffect of Jewish Christian theology on Syriac Christianity.

Here we must briefly pause. For the Syrian and the Jewish Christians, God was also Mother. That possibility later no longer existed, at least not officially. Perhaps a similar notion emerges amongst certain Pietists, Gottfried Arnold, Gerhard Tersteegen and other naughty boys from the school of Jacob Böhme, when they speak so ardently of the Sophia. It may also be recalled that for a long time Zinzendorf thought of the Holy Spirit as a Female. But in general it is safe to say that later Christianity no longer offered the opportunity to express that there was something so tender and ardent in God that it could only be expressed in the shape of a Female. Modern theologians are startled by such mythology. It surely is a mythical means of expression, when the Holy Spirit is presented as a Mother. But one should also consider that Christianity, especially in its Semitic expression, was a lot more mythical than we can imagine. Historically speaking, one can only say that obviously the dogma does not make itself explicit, but that in the evolution values may also be lost.

Let us now investigate to what extent these notions have also permeated the Greek Church. Due credit must here be given to Friedrich Loofs, who distinguished in addition to a pluralistic theology also an economical-trinitarian and soteriological theology in the Early Church. In how far we can speak of the survival of certain traditions of a so-called Minor Asiatic theology will not be considered here. That a pagan Christian emphasizing the unity of God would almost auto-

matically be led to interpret the Holy Spirit residing in the Church as the Spirit of Christ and present since Christ, almost goes without saying. But there is little room in such a theology for the notion that the Holy Spirit is a Person. I would consequently not want to speak of an influence of Jewish Christian theology on this type of theologising. It is striking that precisely biblical theologians like Irenaeus who emphasise the unity of God so strongly that they approach modalism, do not think at all semitically, or at least not like the Semitic Christians. This theology, too, certainly contributed to the formulation of the dogma. But I must concede to Kretschmar that the monarchian form of the doctrine of the trinity is secondary and will not lead us back to the origin of this doctrine.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, Origen and his school have always held the Holy Spirit to be a hypostasis, a Person. Now we are faced with the big question whether there is also a historical connection between the theology of Origen and the notions of Jewish Christians. Has Alexandrian theology preserved something of its archaic predecessor? And is this perhaps because the Christianity of Egypt is partly Jewish Christian in origin? That there were already Jewish Christians in Egypt early on is certain. Clement and Origen quote the Gospel of the Hebrews and thus demonstrate that it still carried some authority in their days. Might it be possible that the New Testament has nothing to say about the Christians in Egypt because this missionary field was not allotted to Paul but to others, members of the congregation of Jerusalem? And might this be the reason why so little is known about Egyptian Christianity prior to 200, because it deviated from the standard pattern?

Dr M. Hornschuh in his excellent dissertation *Die Anfänge des Christentums in Ägypten*, Bonn 1959, argued that in its oldest phase, Christianity was Palestinian and synoptic. I should like to add to this that it was also, or mainly, Jewish Christian. Thus Alexandrian theology, too, might in principle be Jewish Christian.

A connection may have been made by the *Ascensio Jesaiae*. This work narrates the ascent of Isaiah to the highest heaven:

And I saw the Lord and the second Angel, and they were standing, but the other, whom I had seen, was standing on the left side of my Lord. And I asked: "Who is this?" And he spoke to me: "Worship him, for he

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<sup>5</sup> Kretschmar (as in n. 2), 61.

is the angel of the Holy Spirit" [...] And I saw, how my Lord worshipped and the angel of the Holy Spirit and how both together praised God. (9:35–40)

Christ and the Holy Spirit are standing in front of the Throne as paracletes. They are called “angels” and yet they are worshipped as *divine* beings.

As the *Ascension of Isaiah* was known in Alexandria around 150 C.E., this work may also have originated in Alexandria.<sup>6</sup> Its representation of the Holy Spirit is certainly related to that of the Jewish Christians. When we may assume that this archaic theology was known to Origen, we obtain the perspective for his theology, an ancient feature of which is the interpretation of the Holy Spirit as a Person.

But in the subordinationism we witness an adaptation to the Hellenistic world view. Just as Plotinus sees the universe as a cascade of Being, welling from an origin and gradually losing itself in the Nothing, so for Origen, too, the Spirit is of a lower order and placed under the Logos.

This also presents the problem which would subsequently not leave off exercising Greek theology: to what extent can we speak of three Gods?

In the *Dialogue with Heraclides*,<sup>7</sup> Origen has no problem admitting that there are *two* Gods. This makes clear which pitfalls the doctrine of the trinity had to pass before it was established by the Church. But it is rather remarkable that there is no mention of three Gods here. No thought was given to the Holy Spirit. The need was felt to adopt the middle ground between on the one hand monarchianism and on the other hand adoptionism and to focus on a doctrine concerning the Logos. As the struggle intensified, because Arius drew the consequences from Origen’s subordinationism, interest in this doctrine also grew.

So it was not until 359 before the doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit became an issue in the Church. In 381 it was established by an ecumenical synod. We should like to offer a brief sketch of the protagonists and emphasise especially that this dogma is closely related to the practice of ecclesiastical life.

<sup>6</sup> Kretschmar (as in n. 2), 78.

<sup>7</sup> J. Scherer, *Entretien d’Origène avec Héraclide*, Cairo 1949, 2.

If one wishes to form an idea of Athanasius, it is still best to read the enthusiastic pages which Gibbon devoted to this heart of oak in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. We are filled with nostalgia when recalling this true prince of the Church, who dared oppose not only the authorities, but also his fellow-travelling Christians. His theology is still aptly defined by Adolf von Harnack: “der ganze Glaube, Alles, wofür Athanasius sein Leben eingesetzt hat, ist beschrieben in dem einen Satze: Gott selbst ist in die Menschheit eingegangen [...] der Logos—Sohn—Christus ist im Grunde nicht mehr Weltprinzip, sondern Heilsprinzip”.<sup>8</sup> When Christology is indeed: the doctrine of divine compassion, it is difficult to imagine a more biblical, more un-Greek thinker than Athanasius. Although it is true that he wrote Greek and was more or less conversant with the commonplaces of apologetics, it is impossible to attribute his deviations from the later protestantism, which are quite considerable, to the influence of Greek philosophy. His doctrine of divinisation, or rather re-creation, is an original contribution, which cannot be smothered with big words about the hellenization of Christianity.

Nor can the transition from the christological to the pneumatological point of view, the road of *De Incarnatione Verbi* to the *Letters to Serapion* be attributed to extra-ecclesiastical influences. During the episcopacy of Athanasius, Egyptian monasticism in Egypt had grown substantially in power. It was experienced as a work of the Holy Spirit, as a revival of pneumatic Early Christianity, more or less justified, when Paul himself, and the men and women in Corinth, who called themselves “virgins”, may stand as legitimate representatives of the oldest Christianity.<sup>9</sup> Athanasius was the great friend of the monks, amongst whom he would seek shelter whenever he was forced to flee again.

Although he was such an agile ecclesiastical leader that he managed to hold together the three components of his country, the Origenist school of Catechetes, the fractious Greek citizens of Alexandria and the Coptic proletariat, his ultimate love lay with the uncouth spiritual men of the desert, who didn't even know any Greek and whose Pharaoh he was. It was these men who more particularly directed his attention to the spiritual life as a materializing eschatology and who caused him

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<sup>8</sup> A. von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*<sup>4</sup>, Tübingen 1909, 208, 211.

<sup>9</sup> M. Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins*, London 1961, 83–88.

to tune his theology to the pitch of the Pneuma. Divinisation of the Christian is not a reality when the Holy Spirit, which grants divinity, is not God.

So much for the actual background of Athanasius' pneumatology. But for a true understanding of the letters to Serapion a false perspective also needs to be eliminated. Athanasius is with the monks in the desert when he receives an agitated letter by his colleague Serapion, bishop of Thmuis. There are those in his congregation who do accept the divinity of the Logos, but interpret the Holy Spirit as a creature and an angel. Athanasius replies to these "Tropici" with long quotations from Holy Scripture, which demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God and thus is God.<sup>10</sup> When one reads these quotations it is impossible to understand how Christians can have been so unwise as to deny the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

If one considers that the *Ascension of Isaiah* also speaks of an Angel of the Holy Spirit and concedes that Jewish Christianity knew something of an Angel christology, one would be inclined to regard the Arian views in this respect, and in general, as the heritage of an ancient, perhaps even New Testament tradition. This is what Martin Werner puts forward.<sup>11</sup> According to Werner, not the Arian but the Nicene orthodoxy was a new heresy.

Although I regard Werner's book to be much better than the emotional language of his opponents at the time would suggest, I cannot share his views. It is true that Christ is already identified in the Septuagint and in many patristic passages with the Angel of the Lord. The latter, however, is a designation of the Revelation and does not involve any essential distinction or difference in Being. But Origen's theology, which was subordinatian, inclined towards accepting this difference in Being for the Holy Spirit and to regard the Holy Spirit as a creature. What is then more obvious for the subordinatians but to grasp at the concept "angel", altogether independent of any tradition. The Christians whom Athanasius opposes were not affiliated in spirit with Arius, as the Church Father cleverly suggests, but Origenists wishing to adhere to Origen's scheme. Moreover, Athanasius is not merely a simple biblical theologian. How often has he not been charged with

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<sup>10</sup> Athanase d'Alexandrie, *Lettres à Serapion*, éd. J. Lebon, *Sources Chrétiennes* 15, Paris 1947.

<sup>11</sup> M. Werner, *Die Entstehung des christlichen Dogmas*, Bern 1941, 371–388.

“Sabellianism”? He was a faithful reader of Irenaeus, whose thinking was as modalist as was possible for an ecclesiastical author. But in his letters to Serapion, Athanasius attempts to undermine the Origenist subordinatian views concerning the Holy Spirit.

In this is he was not entirely successful. The causes underlying this failure must be sought in political history. The blow which the reign of Julian the Apostate (361–363) dealt to the Christians was so great that the unity of the Church and the embrace of the Greek culture, in particular the mysticism of neo-Platonism, was the first requirement. Athanasius was not a man for this season. It is to his credit that at the synod of Alexandria (362) he made peace by insisting that the *homoousios* of the Holy Spirit had to be accepted, though on the other hand leaving room for an Origenist interpretation of this notion. Thus, through the intercession of Athanasius himself, not the orthodoxy, but a modified Origenism carried the day. The times would no longer allow an ecclesiastical theology ignoring contemporary culture. The philosophy of Plotinus was true mysticism. A pagan neo-Platonist state Church was looming. The Christian Church had to come to terms with mysticism. The Cappadocians, who knew their Plotinus and their Origen, recognised this and knew at the same time that a christianised mysticism was possible through contemplation on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

This to me would seem to be the significance of Basil of Caesarea's *De Spiritu Sancto*.<sup>12</sup> The work itself was prompted by a change in the liturgy. On 7 September 374 Basil expressed in the doxology that the Holy Spirit is glorified *with* the Father and the Son; until that time the formula ran: “Praise be the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit”. Basil, who had read the letters to Serapion, wanted to do justice to the Athanasian demand. The remarkable thing is that *De Spiritu Sancto* does not say in so many words that the Holy Spirit is God and *homoousios*. Dörries praised Basil for the delicacy of this theological thought, which avoids the standing expressions and speaks of the matter at hand in personal and subtle terms.<sup>13</sup> But, one will also have to admit that this work does not pose a radical rift with the subordinatianism of Origen and that the threat of tritheism has not subsided because of it.

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<sup>12</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Traité du Saint Esprit*, éd. B. Pruche, *Sources Chrétiennes* 17, Paris 1946.

<sup>13</sup> H. Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto. Der Beitrag des Basiliius zum Abschluss des trinitarischen Dogmas*, Göttingen 1956.

It is this theology which is victorious at the Ecumenical Council of 381. It was, as Werner Jaeger has demonstrated, Gregory of Nyssa, the mystic, who persisted in advancing the formulation of this dogma at this council: since that time the rule is that “the one Godhead of the Trinity is understood and worshipped in three hypostases”.<sup>14</sup> In Constantinople, the Godhead of the Holy Spirit was acknowledged, though in the sense of the Origenist and not that of the Athanasian theology.

This has become the Church’s creed, because it is included in the only ecumenical creed the Christian churches possess, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. Lately it has become more and more plausible that this is the creed of the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381.<sup>15</sup> And so it is the creed of the Holy Spirit:

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
 who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],  
 who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,  
 who has spoken through the prophets.

Here we find the same reticence as in Basil. It is not stated, as in the second article, that the Holy Spirit is God and essentially of the same being. In the acknowledgement that the Spirit is the Lord and makes alive, we may trace an echo of Athanasius. In the words on the worship and the glorification, the thoughts of Basil are summarised. Against the background of the Cappadocian theology, however, it is clear that the Holy Spirit is thought of as a Person, who is similar in being (not identical in being) with God.

Thus the Ancient Church, in spite of the Greek terminology, has retained the old Jewish Christian concept. The Holy Spirit is a Person, a Word, a Voice confronting me. In this personal encounter is rooted the sanctification of life and the rapture of the mystical experience.

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<sup>14</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera ascetica* VIII, 1, ed. W. Jaeger, Leiden 1952, 42.

<sup>15</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, London 1952, 296–358.

## CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AS WOMAN IN APOCALYPSE 12\*

Simone Weil seems to have been the first of all mankind to discern that the Woman in the Apocalypse chapter 12 was no one other than the Holy Spirit. This she did in her book *La connaissance surnaturelle*, Paris 1950, pp. 245–286.<sup>1</sup> Her friend and biographer Simone Pétrement, an expert on Gnosis who in her study on dualism stressed the importance of grace in Gnosticism and Manichaeism, has amplified this observation with well chosen arguments.<sup>2</sup>

Independently of these two learned and perspicacious mavericks, I have come to the same conclusion, though on different grounds, which I have mentioned in part in my commentary on the Apocalypse published by McGraw Hill in 1979.<sup>3</sup> Here I wish to consider the same subject in a more detailed argument.

In my mind there can be no doubt whatsoever that the episode of this Woman in travail, who brings forth a child and flees into the desert, contains an allusion to the escape of the congregation of Jerusalem to Pella in Transjordanian before the Jewish war broke out or at least came to an end. The Woman, then, is the Shekhinah or Holy Spirit, who follows the people of God into temporary exile.

Most patristic scholars know that the concept of Shekhinah played a very important role in kabbalistic and ḥasidic literature and was borrowed from there by modern philosophers like Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig. According to the latter God descends and suffers with his people and wanders with them in exile. This idea can be traced back to the rabbinic literature of the second century, being of the same date as most rabbinic parallels to the New Testament:

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\* Previously published in: *Compostellanum* 34 (1989) 81–83.

<sup>1</sup> “D’après les protestants, la femme céleste d’Apocalypse serait l’Église. D’après le passage de l’Évangile des Hébreux, cité par Origène, sur ‘ma mère le Saint-Esprit’, ce pourrait être le Saint-Esprit” (245); “La femme doit être le Saint-Esprit” (268).

<sup>2</sup> Simone Pétrement, “Une suggestion de Simone Weil à propos d’Apocalypse XII”, *NIS* 11 (1964/65) 291–296.

<sup>3</sup> *The Secret Book of Revelation*, New York 1979, 77.



Speaking about 2 Sam. 7,23 (“From before Thy people, whom Thou didst redeem to Thee out of Egypt, the nation and its God”) R. Akiba said: “were it not an undoubtedly authentic verse of Scripture, it would be completely impossible to speak in this way. Israel speaks as it were before God: you saved yourself, and so we find that in every place, where Israel was in exile, the Shekhinah was with them.”<sup>4</sup>

If this is a valid parallel, then John the prophet seems to indicate that God himself, in his female manifestation of the Presence, accompanies the Ecclesia in her flight from Jerusalem. It is true that there is no rabbinic evidence that the Shekhinah already was conceived as a female hypostasis at such an early date, as she was in later mysticism, but Jewish Christianity and Early Gnosticism have often anticipated the concepts of later Kabbala. Moreover the related view that the Glory of God, the “kabod”, is present even in exile, is attested in the first chapter of the prophet Ezekiel, to be dated 593 B.C. Inspired by him, the greatest of all prophets, he who is called Deutero-Isaiah, describes at the very beginning of his writing how, at the end of time, the people in procession will go through the land of all the nations between Babylonia and Israel: the “kabod” will precede them and be their rearguard (Is. 40,5).

We may be fairly certain that in the passage discussed it is the Holy Spirit that is meant by the figure of the Woman. It is a well known fact that the Jewish Christians and the Syrian, Aramaic Christians, who received their faith from them, considered the Holy Spirit to be a female hypostasis. In the Gospel of the Hebrews the Holy Spirit says to Jesus during his baptism, that he is her first begotten “son” (*filius primigenitus*, frag. 2). In other words the Holy Spirit generates Jesus as Sort of God during his baptism, Jesus experienced this ceremony as a spiritual rebirth.

The Apocalypse of John, though written in Ephesus or its surroundings (Patmos), is a typically Jewish Christian writing. When its author describes the birth of the child, he probably alludes to the birth of the Messiah at his baptism. But then it becomes still more probable that the Woman who generates the child is the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>4</sup> *Mekilla, Pisha* 14, 94–95; 97–100; ed. J.Z. Lauterbach I, Philadelphia 1933, 114, quoted by G. Scholem, “Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Kabbalistischen Konzeption der Schechinah”, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1952, Zürich 1953, 45–107, esp. 55.

Recently a hymn of Melito of Sardes has been published by Othmar Perler which is relevant for our theme.<sup>5</sup> It begins with the words:

Praise ye the Father, ye saints,  
Sing ye to the Mother, ye virgins.

The Father here, of course, is God. And the Mother cannot be any other than the Holy Ghost, because she is treated on equal footing with God and is the object of the jubilations of the faithful. This is the legacy of Jewish Christianity in Asia Minor. Melito, who in his Sermon on Pascha turned out to be a staunch supporter of Palestinian and Asian Quartodecimanism, has also preserved the archaic Jewish Christian concept that the Spirit is female.

Another witness is Hermas. We remember how Hermas went through the whole scenario of a classical individuation process. First he saw his beautiful and well built mistress Rhode and, though a married man, he desired her. After her, the Ecclesia was manifested to him in different shapes. Then a male figure, his Guardian Angel or Pastor enters into the scene. But the real "dénouement" follows in *Sim.* 9,1 where it is said that this woman Ecclesia in fact is nobody else than the Holy Spirit:

I will show you what the Holy Spirit showed to you, when she spoke with you in the shape of the Ecclesia. For that Spirit is the Son of God.

P. Prigent has shown that the Woman in Apocalypse 12 has been interpreted differently in the course of the ages:<sup>6</sup> sometimes she was held to be the Church, later also the Mother of God, Mary. I would not say that the traditional interpretations were wrong, because the imaginative thinking of Bible and Church is not dominated by the principle of contradiction, as Aristotelian logic is.

If in fact the Spirit manifests the tender and motherly features of God, the Church, which is or ought to be the dwelling place of the Spirit, and Mary, who is both the vessel and the symbol of the Spirit, come very near to what is meant in Apocalypse 12.

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<sup>5</sup> O. Perler, "Ein Hymnus zur Ostervigil von Meliton? (Papyrus Bodmer XII)", *Paradosis* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur und Theologie 15), Freiburg i.d. Schweiz 1960, 9–10.

<sup>6</sup> P. Prigent, *Apocalypse 12, Histoire de l'exégèse* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese 2), Tübingen 1959.

The only interpretation which seems to me to be radically wrong is the modern interpretation, that the Messiah is a product of the people. Such a perversion of religious symbolism into the categories of politics is a *metabasis eis allo genos*.

## CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

### JOHANNESSEVANGELIUM UND GNOSIS\*

#### INTRODUCTION

This imperfect and tentative essay was published in Dutch in *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* in early 1957. At that time I knew only the Community Role of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the esoteric Jewish writing called III Enoch. Now all the writings from Qumran and Nag Hammadi have been published as well as the *Shiur Qoma* (the Measuring of God's Body) by M. Cohen (Tübingen 1985) and the other documents of Early Jewish Gnosticism by P. Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen 1981). In the light of these publications I must have made many errors and mistakes in the present article. I leave to my opponents to sift them out.

The gist of my argument has been accepted and developed by Jarl Fossum (*The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord*, Tübingen 1985). Jan Helderman (*Die Anapausis im Evangelium Veritatis*, Leiden 1984) tested and acknowledged the Jewish origins of the speculations on Christ as the Name of God in the Gospel of Truth.

Roelof van den Broek (*De taal van de Gnosis*, Baarn 1986) established that the metaphysical Anthropos in the *Letter of Eugnostos* and other Gnostic writings from Nag Hammadi is a far echo from Ezekiel 1,26, on the luminous Glory or *kabod* of God in the shape of heavenly Adam.

April D. DeConick (*Seek to see Him*, Leiden 1996) proves that the Gospel of Thomas used not only an independent Judaic Christian source of Sayings of Jesus but also an esoteric Jewish mystical source with Hermetic overtones, to be located in Alexandria. To the latter she assigns Logion 13, in which Jesus reveals to Thomas three secret words, which Thomas does not dare to articulate, because then the disciples will stone him. She argues that these three words are: *ehjeh asjer ehjeh*, the equivalent of Greek: *ego eimi ho ôn* (Exodus 3,14) (cf. the equivalent

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\* The Dutch text of this lecture was published as "Het Johannesevangelie en de Gnosis" in: *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 11 (1957) 173–203.

expression “The Father and I are one”, John 10,30). In that case the esoteric Jewish source of “Thomas” would be an instructive and important parallel for the Fourth Gospel and perhaps show that the latter’s Christology has very deep roots in primitive Christianity.

For all these reasons my juvenile sin has happened to become seminal and might deserve a place in the history of hermeneutic scholarship.

On the relation of John and Jewish Christianity, see the article in *Gnostic Studies*, II, 1995, 210–229.

The relation between the Gospel of John and esoteric Judaism was also discussed in *The Jung Codex*, edited by F.L. Cross, London 1955, reprinted *Gnostic Studies*, I, 1974, 3–26.

On the Pre-Christian sect of the Magharians, see Jarl Fossum, “The Magharians. A Pre-Christian Jewish Sect and Its Significance for the Study of Gnosticism and Christianity”, *Henoch* 11 (1987) 303–344.

Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, Leiden 1980, has at last published a survey of Jewish mysticism of the first centuries after Christ, which was largely ignored or explained away till then by Gentile scholars. This may perhaps excuse the above publication of 1957 by an outsider.

## I

In einem Vortrag beim zweiten Patristischen Kongress in Oxford im September 1955 habe ich gezeigt, dass der Verfasser des Evangeliums der Wahrheit, den wir fortan – nicht ohne Gründe – Valentinus nennen, mit praktisch allen Schriften des Neuen Testaments, insbesondere mit dem Johannesevangelium, bekannt, ja sogar sehr vertraut war. Eine fortgesetzte Beschäftigung mit dieser Schrift lässt immerwieder erkennen, wie stark der Verfasser bewusst und absichtlich Reminiszenzen an das Vierte Evangelium eingeflochten hat, was uns aus den Dokumenten der Valentinianischen Gnosis in dem Masse und in dieser Weise nicht bekannt war.

Dies scheint die Auffassung Mosheims zu bestätigen:

Valentinus fere Christum iam professus esse videtur, antequam ad philosophiam sese conferret: ex quo evenit ut philosophiam quam adoptabat, ad

religionis Christianae regulam magis accommodaret et quaedam nimis ei adversa fugeret. Maxima pars vocabulorum, quibus utitur in sententiis suis explicandis, ex sacris libris Novi Testamenti sumpta est: id, nisi multum fallor, declarat libros hos una cum religione Christiana probatos ab eo et receptos fuisse, antequam disciplinae suae formandae operam daret. (*De rebus christianorum*, Helmstedt 1753, 376<sup>a</sup>).

Dass die Systeme der valentinianischen Gnosis, die wir durch die Kirchenväter kennen, in ihren Grundzügen auf Valentinus selbst zurückgehen, steht für mich noch immer fest. In einem theosophischen Leben wie dem des Valentinus bilden sich solche Systeme in überwältigend schneller Folge, und das Leben Rudolf Steiners ist ein analoges Beispiel, wie eine visionäre Begabung unter dem Einfluss einer vulgären Theosophie in ganz kurzer Zeit in eine wirre Verwilderung geraten kann.

Man gewinnt aber den Eindruck, dass das Evangelium der Wahrheit eine Phase im Leben des Valentinus widerspiegelt, in der dieses System noch erst rudimentär entwickelt, sozusagen in statu nascendi war.

Beim blossen Lesen kann man nun schon feststellen, wie Valentinus Mühe hat, die Johanneischen Hauptbegriffe in eine gnostische Gedankenwelt zu transponieren, die, obschon noch nicht voll entfaltet und in ein System eingeordnet, dem Verfasser stets gegenwärtig ist. Valentinus musste die johanneischen Begriffe umwandeln, damit sie sich in einen gnostischen Zusammenhang einfügten. Hieraus muss man die Schlussfolgerung ziehen, dass das Johannesevangelium also nicht gnostisch ist. Im Blick auf das Evangelium der Wahrheit dürfen wir sogar sagen, dass uns nichts zu der Annahme zwingt, dass es vor dem zweiten Jahrhundert nach Christus schon gnostische Systeme als zusammenhängende Einheiten gab. Als Möglichkeit bleibt dieser Tatsache gegenüber nur, dass sich diese Systeme entwickelt haben aus bestimmten, bereits vorhandenen Vorstellungen und Strömungen, die man als vor-gnostisch bezeichnen kann.

Zum anderen vertrat ich vor dem Patristischen Kongress in Oxford die These, dass das Menschenbild im Evangelium der Wahrheit zwar noch nicht klassisch-valentinianisch, aber doch wohl typisch gnostisch ist: Eine Anzahl geistiger Wesenheiten hat sich entfernt vom erhöhten Ort und ist abgeirrt. Sie kannten Gott nicht und hatten die Möglichkeit, aus eigenen freien Willen die Welt der Geister zu verlassen. So haben sie die Verirrung gewählt, weil sie die Tiefen Gottes nicht umfassen konnten (S.22,22–23). Andere geistige Wesenheiten sind nicht gefallen: sie haben Teil an Seinem Antlitz in Umarmungen und haben sich nicht erhoben. Sie sind nicht der Herrlichkeit Gottes beraubt und haben nicht in dem

Wahn gelebt, Gott sei klein, bitter und zornmütig (S.41,28–42,6). Dies war offenbar das Abirren der gefallenen Geister: es war die Angst vor Strafen und Geisseln, die sie fern von Seinem Antlitz irren liess (S.31, 21–25). Diese Unwissenheit, diese durch und durch verkehrte Meinung vom Wesen Gottes hat die Angst und Furcht der gefallenen Geister hervorgebracht, und diese Angst hat sich verdichtet zu einem Nebel, der ihnen die Aussicht nach oben nahm, sodass keiner von ihnen etwas sehen konnte (S.17,9–13). So hat das Abirren sie nach unten gezogen und in die Materie gefangen genommen (S.17,29–35).

Diese Beschreibung des Falles ist eine Variation eines Themas: sie zeigt eine gewisse Übereinstimmung mit der Konzeption des hermetischen Traktates *Kore Kosmou* (S.22) und mit Apelles (Tert., *de An.*, 23); ihr liegt die vulgär-platonische Psychologie zugrunde, dass die Seele in den Leib eingekerkert ist, in eine andere Welt gehört und dorthin auch zurückkehrt. Dies gibt Valentinus die Möglichkeit, die christliche Botschaft als Weckruf an das unbewusste Selbst zu formulieren, das erinnert wird an seine Herkunft, sein Wesen und seine Bestimmung. Durch das Wort lernt der Mensch sich selbst kennen als göttlichen Geist, der zu der anderen Welt zurückkehrt.

Diese Mythologie des Selbst kennt Johannes nicht. Für ihn ist der Mensch  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\tilde{\xi}$  vom Scheitel bis zur Sohle; er muss zuvor wiedergeboren werden, bevor er als geistig qualifiziert werden kann; und er weiss erst, was der Ausserstehende nicht weiss, wenn er von oben, aus Geist, wiedergeboren ist: woher er kommt und wohin er geht: aus Gott und zu Gott (Joh. 3,8).

Wohl weiss Johannes ebenso wie Valentinus, dass es zwei Arten von Menschen gibt. Für Valentinus sind das diejenigen, die etwas von der anderen Welt haben gegenüber den anderen, die ein "Erzeugnis der Vergessenheit" sind. Für Johannes sind die Kinder des Lichts solche, die durch das freie Wirken des erwählenden Geistes zu Christus getrieben werden und dort entdecken, was sie sind: Erwählte; Kinder der Finsternis sind solche, zu denen das Wort Christi nicht durchdringt, weil sie aufgehen in der Welt und vom Geist übergangen werden in seinem heilshistorischen Handeln. Physiologisch besteht aber kein Unterschied zwischen beiden: beide sind in sich selbst  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\tilde{\xi}$ .

Es ist wichtig, nochmals nachdrücklich zu betonen, dass Johannes in dieser Hinsicht jüdisch denkt und mit dem Mythos des Selbst noch nicht vertraut ist. Das bedeutet, dass das zentrale Thema der Gnosis bei ihm nicht vorhanden ist. Darum ist es etwas irreführend, ihn mit allerlei Zitaten aus Gnostikern, Manichäern und Mandäern zu inter-

pretieren, deren Religion auf diesem Gedanken des göttlichen Funken beruht; denn dabei verliert man das Eigentliche und Ueberraschende des Johannesevangeliums aus den Augen: dass Gott der Herr in seiner Liebe so ungöttliche Grössen wie *σάρξ* und *κόσμος* zur Teilnahme am göttlichen Leben bestimmt hat.

Auch die Ausrede, dass Johannes den bereits vorhandenen gnostischen Mythos im Dienste seines Kerygmas umgeformt hat, ist historisch unhaltbar und beraubt das Johannesevangelium seines eigentlichen Gewichtes. Denn dieser Mythos ist deutlich genug erst entstanden aus der Begegnung der vor-gnostischen Strömungen mit der hellenistischen Welt: in den Rollen vom Toten Meer und sogar bei Simon Magus ist er nicht da.

Die Tatsache, dass das Johannesevangelium diesen Mythos noch nicht kennt, erweist gerade, dass es zum mindesten in dieser Hinsicht nicht hellenistisch ist. Anders die apokryphen Apostelakten: sie sprechen die Sprache vom Wort und vom Selbst. Darüberhinaus ist in den letzten Jahren völlig deutlich erhellt worden, was statt des Mythos vom Erlösten Erlöser hinter dem Johannesevangelium steht. Vor einiger Zeit hat Gershom Scholem darauf hingewiesen, dass eine gewisse physiognomische Schrift *Hakarath Panim* (4. oder 5. Jh. n.Chr.) mit den Worten beginnt: "Dies ist das Buch der tholedoth Adams um zu erkennen den Gerechten und den Bösen".<sup>1</sup> Diese Schrift stammt aus einem Kreis, wo das Wort "tholedoth" schon lange in Gebrauch war in dem besonderen Sinn von "natura", "Beschaffenheit des Menschen", die sich aus der Bedeutung "historia", "Genealogie" usw. entwickelt hatte. Und in der Tat reicht die Verwendung des Wortes "tholedoth" in diesem Sinn bis weit vor die Zeit der Tannaiten und Markabahmystiker hinunter. Scholem findet es wieder in der Sektenschrift von Qumran:

III, 13:

Es ist die Aufgabe des Lehrers, alle Kinder des Lichtes kennen zu lehren und zu unterweisen die tholedoth (Naturen) des Menschen gemäss der Geister in ihnen nach ihren Merkmalen.

Es gibt also zwei Menschengruppen: die Guten und die Bösen, und es ist eine gewisse Gnosis erforderlich, um sie zu erkennen, weil sie gewisse Erkennungszeichen tragen. Man muss fragen, ob dem *γενέα* in Luk. 16,8 diese Bedeutung von tholedoth zugrundeliegt: "die Kinder dieser Welt sind klüger als die Kinder des Lichts in ihrer Art".

<sup>1</sup> Gershom Scholem, *Hakarath Panim etc., Sepher Asaf*, Jerusalem 1954, 477.



Ich kann mich des Eindrucks nicht erwehren, dass diese oder eine verwandte Vorstellung die Perspektive bestimmt für die johanneischen Anschauungen über Erwählte und Verworfenene. Denn bei Johannes ist ja gerade dies das Ueberraschende, dass die Verworfenen, Samaritaner und Heiden, erwählt sind, weil sie zu Jesus kommen, die Erwählten dagegen, die Nachkommen Abrahams, verworfen sind. Diese Dialektik bewegt sich in derselben Vorstellungswelt. Denn sowohl für die "Essener" wie für Johannes gehört der Mensch zu einer bestimmten "Art", wenn er vom Geist des Lichtes oder vom Geist des Abgrundes beherrscht wird. Denn "in der Wohnung des Lichtes wurzelt die *Natur* (oder das Wesen) der Wahrheit, und aus der Quelle der Finsternis kommt die *Natur* der Ungerechtigkeit hervor" (Sektenschrift III,19) und "in diesen beiden Geisten sind die *Naturen* aller Menschen gegründet" (ib. IV, 15). Welcher Natur man ist, hängt davon ab, von welchem Geist man beherrscht wird: ob man durch Weltvernunft und Zeitgeist oder aber durch den Logos des Herrn und das Πνεῦμα ἄγιον bestimmt ist. Eine Physiologie bzw. ein Unterschied nach dem psychischen Ursprung ist bei keinem der beiden zu finden.

Man mag nun dennoch in diesem antithetischen Menschenbild den Ursprung der gnostischen Prädestinationsphysik suchen – es zeigt sich jedenfalls, dass gerade in diesem Punkt die Auffassung des Evangeliums der Wahrheit als eine Transposition des johanneischen Materials in die gnostische Anthropologie zu verstehen ist:

Diejenigen, deren Namen er vorher gekannt hat, sind am Ende gerufen worden, sodass ein Wissender der ist, dessen Name der Vater ausgesprochen hat. Denn derjenige, dessen Name nicht genannt worden ist, ist unwissend. Wie würde ja jemand hören, wenn sein Name nicht gerufen worden ist? Denn jener, der unwissend ist bis zum Ende, der ist ein Gebilde der Vergessenheit, und er wird aufgelöst werden mit ihr. Wenn es anders wäre, warum bekommen diese Elenden keinen Namen, vernehmen sie den Ruf nicht? Darum ist einer, wenn er Gnosis hat, ein (Wesen) von Oben. Wenn er gerufen wird, hört er, antwortet er, und er wendet sich zu dem, der ihn ruft, und kehrt zu ihm zurück und weiss, wie er gerufen wird. (S.21,25–22,9)

Diese Passage ist voller Anklänge an Johannes, insbesondere Joh. 8,43 (οὐ δύνασθε ἀκούειν τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐμόν) und Joh. 18,37 (πᾶς ὁ ὢν ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας ἀκούει μου τῆς φωνῆς), und sie macht deutlich, wie leicht man eine Prädestinationsphysik aus dem Johannesevangelium herauslesen kann. Ebenso macht ein Vergleich mit der *Sektenschrift*

deutlich, dass Johannes dies nicht physisch gemeint hat – auch wenn er eine Gnosis der Erkennungszeichen von Erwählung und Verwerfung anerkannt haben sollte.

## II

Ich rechne auf keinen ernsthaften Widerspruch, wenn ich behaupte, dass das Johannesevangelium erst durch Transposition gnostisch wird, und dass seine Anthropologie in eine Umgebung gehört, die man vielleicht *vor*-gnostisch, aber doch gewiss noch nicht gnostisch nennen darf. Vorbehalte aber waren von vornherein zu erwarten gegenüber meiner Sicht, dass der Ursprung der Gnosis im heterodoxen Judentum zu suchen ist. Allerdings kann sich diese Konzeption auf die Tradition berufen: seit jeher gilt der Samaritaner Simon Magus als der Erzvater der Ketzerei, und der Jude Hegesippus sagt mit dürren Worten, dass die christlichen Häresien aus den jüdischen Häresien entstanden sind. Nun sind aber für die meisten Forscher jüdisches Denken und Gnostik so völlig verschiedene Größen, dass sie spontan protestieren, wenn man sie miteinander in einen Zusammenhang bringt. Nun verstehe man richtig: als jüdische Heterodoxie werden hier die Sekten betrachtet, die in Palästina neben dem (später) offiziellen Judentum der Rabbinen existierten und mehr oder weniger zur Heterodoxie neigten – oder besser gesagt: die umso mehr als heterodoxie galten, je mehr die sich konsolidierende Orthodoxie der Pharisäer sich anschickte, die ursprüngliche Mannigfaltigkeit der religiösen Lebensäußerungen in Palästina zu verdrängen. Zudem soll damit ja auch nicht gesagt sein, dass die jüdische Heterodoxie die einzige Quelle der Gnosis ist: es ist vielmehr evident, dass griechische Philosophie, vorderasiatischer Okkultismus und vielleicht auch iranische Elemente bei der Entstehung dieser Strömung zusammenwirken. Und dass die aus diesen Elementen entstandene Gnosis, wie wir sie vom zweiten Jahrhundert an kennen, anders strukturiert ist als das aus dem Alten Testament lebende Judentum oder als das eschatologische Urchristentum, braucht man einem Anhänger der phänomenologischen Betrachtungsweise nicht erst klarzumachen. Worauf es ankommt, ist folgendes: 1) Man ist nicht sorgfältig genug der Frage nachgegangen, in welchem Masse die gnostischen Bewegungen Elemente aufnehmen, die ohne Zweifel jüdischer Herkunft sind. 2) Man hat zu berücksichtigen versäumt, dass es in Palästina – jedenfalls seit dem

1. Jh.n.Chr. – esoterische und dazu häretische Gruppen gibt, die in der jüdischen Apokalyptik ihre Wurzel haben und dann doch wohl im Laufe der Jahrhunderte eine jüdische Gnosis hervorgebracht haben.

Man hat vor einiger hundert Jahren richtig gesehen, dass die Anschauungen über Metatron usw. in diesen Kreisen für das Christentum und auch für die Entstehung der Gnosis von Bedeutung gewesen sind, und ich kann noch nicht einsehen, warum man das heute vergessen soll.

Jedenfalls ist es nötig, noch einmal kurz den Bestand der in diesen Kreisen lebendigen Gedanken und Vorstellungen aufzunehmen, weil wir den Stoff heute historisch besser einordnen können. Dabei wird es deutlich werden, wieweit dem Verfasser des Johannesevangeliums die Vorstellungen dieser Gruppen bekannt waren. Danach kann man dann sein Verhältnis zur Gnosis zu bestimmen versuchen und fragen, ob er und der Verfasser des Evangeliums der Wahrheit Stoffe verwertet haben, die aus derselben Quelle stammen.

Zuvor muss ich betonen, dass meine Darlegungen über das esoterische Judentum nicht neu sind. Ich gehe aus von den Ergebnissen der Untersuchungen von Gershom Scholem<sup>2</sup> und habe die Entdeckung gemacht, dass bereits Odeberg<sup>3</sup> das Verhältnis des Johannes zu diesem esoterischen Judentum ebenso beurteilte wie ich. Und es ist eine angenehme Pflicht, die richtige Sicht dieses Gelehrten in einem Augenblick zu ehren, wo neues Material seine Ergebnisse bestätigt. Aber weil ich den Eindruck habe, dass nur die wenigsten Forscher die Texte dieses esoterischen Judentums auch wirklich gelesen haben, will ich hier noch einmal wiederholen, was ich von anderen gelernt habe.

Im wesentlichen kann man sagen, dass es esoterische Traditionen gab über

- 1) die Geheimnisse der Schöpfung am Anfang;
- 2) die Geheimnisse der Thronwelt und
- 3) die Geheimnisse der Endzeit, in der der Thron und der kabod auf ihm "aufs neue offenbart werden allen Bewohnern der Welt".

Im einzelnen kann man zwei Tendenzen unterscheiden.

Im III. Henoch finden wir allerlei Spekulationen über Metatron, den kleinen Jhwh. Die Datierung des III. Henoch ist aber noch nicht gesichert, und es steht fest, dass die Vorstellung von Metatron sich im

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<sup>2</sup> G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York 1946, 40–79.

<sup>3</sup> H. Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel*, Uppsala 1929.

Laufe der Zeit mannigfaltig gewandelt hat. Aber auch wenn man dies in Rechnung stellt, ist es dennoch zulässig, einige Passagen dieser Schrift zur Erklärung bestimmter Züge des vierten Evangeliums heranzuziehen. Im allgemeinen kann man sagen, dass Metatron einerseits die Gottheit manifestiert und andererseits gesandt wird, den Menschen vor Gottes Thron zu führen.

Ich führe nun einfach einige Passagen<sup>4</sup> an, die für die Interpretation des vierten Evangeliums wichtig sind:

X,3:

This is Metatron, my servant. I made him into a prince and a ruler over all the princes of my kingdoms and over all the children of heaven... And every command that he utters in my name do ye observe and fulfil.

XI,1:

Henceforth the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed to me (Metatron) all the mysteries of Tora and all the secrets of wisdom and all the depths of the Perfect Law; and all living beings' thoughts of heart (Joh. 2,25) and all the secrets of the universe and all the secrets of Creation were revealed unto me even as they are revealed unto the Maker of Creation etc.

XII,5:

And He called me the Lesser YHWH in the presence of all his heavenly household: as it is written (Ex. 23,21): "For my Name is in him" (Joh. 17,11,12).

XLVIII,C7:

And I put upon him of my honour, my majesty and the splendour of my glory that is upon my Throne of Glory. I called him the lesser YHWH, the Prince of the Presence, the Knower of Secrets: for every secret I reveal to him as a father and all mysteries declared I unto him in uprightness.

Dieses Geben des Namens wird wie folgt variiert:

XIII,1:

Because of the great love and mercy with which the Holy One, blessed be He, loved and cherished me more than all the children of heaven, He wrote with his finger with a flaming style upon the crown on my head the letters by which were created heaven and earth (cf. 1 Henoch 69, 14f sqq.).

XVb,5:

Metatron said to him (Moses): "Receive the letters of the oath (= *Name*), *in which* there is no breaking the covenant (which precludes any breach of the covenant). Cf. Joh. 17,11: τήρησον αὐτοῦς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ᾧ

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<sup>4</sup> H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, Cambridge 1928.

δέδωκός μοι ἴνα ᾧσιν ἐν. (Das Kennen des Namen des Herrn sichert die Einheit der Bundesmitglieder.)

XLVIII (D),9, wo gott sagt:

I delight in, and *have set my love on*, and have entrusted and committed unto Metatron, my Servant, alone, for he is One (unique) among all the children of heaven.

Heute sind wir in der Lage zu sehen, dass schon in vorchristlicher Zeit bei den Juden die Vorstellung zu finden war, dass Gott den Fürst der Lichtwesen und Boten seiner Wahrheit liebt:

In der Hand des Fürsten der Lichtwesen liegt die Herrschaft über alle Gerechten...Aber der Gott Israëls und der Bote seiner Wahrheit haben allen Söhnen des Lichtes beigestanden...Den einen dieser Geister (den Fürst der Lichtwesen) *hat Gott lieb* bis in alle Zeiten der Ewigkeit und in allen seinen Taten hat er ein Wohlgefallen für immer...

(Seine Aufgabe ist es "Licht zu entzünden in den Herzen der Menschen")  
(Sektenschrift)

Es ist nicht meine Aufgabe, festzustellen, ob mit diesem Fürst der Lichtwesen der "Engel des Herrn" gemeint ist, der im III. Henoch mit dem Namen Metatron benannt wird. Ebenso lasse ich die Frage offen, ob die esoterischen Strömungen innerhalb des Judentums in der Sekte ihre Wurzel haben, aus der die Sektenschrift stammt. Was ich festhalten möchte ist nur dies, dass die Konzeptionen im III. Henoch für die Interpretation des vierten Evangeliums nicht dadurch ihre Bedeutung verlieren, dass die Traditionen dieses Buches erst einige Jahrhunderte nach Beginn unserer Zeitrechnung in ihrer heutigen Form schriftlichen Niederschlag gefunden haben. Diese Traditionen können viel älter sein. Und wir erinnern uns des Wortes Johannes des Täufers: ὁ πατήρ ἀγαπᾷ τὸν υἱόν, καὶ πάντα δέδωκεν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ (Joh. 3,35).

Ich frage mich denn auch, ob die Vorstellungen des III. Henoch nur als Analogien – dann aber als überzeugende Analogien – für die johan-neischen Inhalte zu werten sind. Nun, sicher ist, dass die zentrale Vorstellung des Buches im Lauf der Jahrhunderte durch allerlei sekundäre Elemente reicher ausgestaltet worden ist.

1) Erst ziemlich spät – nach Anfang des zweiten Jahrhunderts – ist Henoch mit Metatron identifiziert. In der Abraham-Apokalypse ist dies noch nicht der Fall.

2) Die vox mystica Metatron ist an die Stelle des ursprünglichen Namens Israel getreten: die Gnostiker des zweiten und dritten Jahrhunderts kennen offenbar den letzten Namen oder damit zusammenhängende Benennungen, nicht dagegen Metatron.

3) Metatron-Henoch hat bestimmte Züge Adams übernommen (III Henoch 9). Diese Konflation kann vielleicht von grosser Bedeutung sein für den Begriff des manichäischen Urmenschen, aber ich muss gestehen, dass ich noch nicht deutlich machen kann, wie die Verbindungslinien verlaufen.

4) Es liegt mir daran zu betönen, dass Metatron ein Engel war, und zwar als Reaktion auf die ketzerische Behauptung, dass er Gott sei (III Henoch 17). Auch viele Rabbinen klagen über Ketzer, die lehren, dass es zwei Mächte oder Prinzipien gebe. Man wird aber fragen, ob die jüdische Orthodoxie hier nicht eine Neuerung eingeführt hat. Soviel scheint mir sicher, dass für den Verfasser von Ex. 2,23–3,13 zwischen “dem Engel des Herrn” und “dem Herrn” kein wesentlicher Unterschied besteht – und die jüdischen Esoteriker meinten doch “den Engel des Herrn”, wenn sie von Metatron sprachen. Ödeberg sagt sehr treffend: “the special way in which the Divine vicegerent or partaker in the Divine work is attached to the Holy One is expressed by the special sense in which general epithets of the Holy One are used by this partaker, and in which Divine names are assigned to him. In this respect the earlier Jewish mystical traditions seem to have gone farther even than John. Thus, when in addressing Metatron, the Holy One is called “thy begetter”, (qōnāēkā), this evidently carries quite another significance than when the phrase is used of man in general. It is meant to express that he has received all the Divine functions with regard to the angelic and terrestrial worlds. With this may be compared how, according to John 5,18, the ὁ πατήρ μου in the mouth of Jesus was by Jesus understood as used in a specific sense: ἐζήτουν αὐτὸν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἀποκτεῖναι, ὅτι... πατέρα ἴδιον ἔλεγεν τὸν θεόν. Similarly when Metatron is called “the little Jhwh” this constitutes a specific *relation* between the Holy One and his vicegerent; it expresses that he is “mē’ēn”, a reflexion of “in unity with” and “similar to” the Holy One”.<sup>5</sup>

Nun gibt es in der Tat eine Schrift, das älteste Dokument des esoterischen Judentums, wo die Traditionen über den Engel des Herrn in einer noch einfacheren Form vorkommen. Das ist die Abrahamapokalypse, nach Angabe des Herausgebers G.H. Box zwischen 70 und 120 n. Chr. in Palästina entstanden.<sup>6</sup> Man findet hier die für die Merkabahmystik so charakteristische ontologische Elevation, daneben Spekulationen über Ezechiel 1,26, den Engel des Herrn, der den Namen des Herrn,

<sup>5</sup> Ödeberg, *Fourth Gospel*, 286.

<sup>6</sup> G.H. Box, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, London 1919.

Jaobel, nach Ex. 23,21 (“Mein Name ist in ihm”) trägt, sowie die sieben hekkaloth, an denen man vorbeigeht, bevor man den Thron schaut.

Ch.X:

And while I was still lying with my face upon the earth, I heard the voice of the Holy One speaking: “Go, Jaobel, and by means of my ineffable Name raise me yonder man, and strengthen him (so that he recover) from his trembling”. And the angel came, whom he had sent to me, in the likeness of a man, and grasped me by my right hand, and set me upon my feet, and said to me: . . . I am called Jaobel by Him who moveth that which existeth with me on the seventh expanse upon the firmament, a power in virtue of the ineffable Name that is dwelling in me. I am the one who hath been given to restrain, according to this commandment, the threatening attack of the living creatures of the Cherubim against one another; and teach those who carry Him the song of the seventh hour of the night of man.

Hier ist ohne Zweifel vom Engel des Herrn die Rede, der einerseits sogar Herr der hajjoth (lebende Wesen) und über sie erhöht ist, und andererseits als der *ἀπόστολος* Gottes zu Abraham kommt.

Über die Geheimnisse der Schöpfung – das maasch berešith, jenes andere Thema des esoterischen Judentums – wird in der Abrahamapokalypse nicht gesprochen, und darum erfahren wir nicht, ob der “Engel des Herrn” auch irgendwie bei der Schöpfung beteiligt war.

Wohl scheint es deutlich zu sein, dass Jaobel für den Verfasser dieser Schrift ein anderer war als der Messias. Denn am Ende der Zeiten, heisst es in Kapitel XXXI, wird Gott seinen Auserwählten senden: “and then I will sound the trumpet out of the air, and will send mine Elect One, having in him all my power, one measure (i.e. a measure of all the divine attributes – he reflects in little the totality of the divine character); and this one shall summon my despised people from the nations”.

Es ist zu bedauern, dass diese Schrift zwar den – für die Merkabahmystik so charakteristischen – ganzen Apparat aus Ezechiel 1 aufbietet, dass aber leider nicht beschrieben wird, dass etwas auf dem Thron erscheint: “but Himself thou canst not see” (XVI). In diesem Kreis hat man also mit Johannes gewusst, dass niemand Gott je gesehen hat, aber wie es dann doch möglich ist, dass Ezechiel (1,26) die “Gestalt wie das Aussehen Adams” geschaut hat, wird nicht gesagt. Abraham hört nur eine Stimme: “and I heard its holy voice like the voice of a man” (XVIII). Dies ist eine Kombination von zwei Texten: Ez. 1,28: “und ich hörte die Stimme eines der da redete” und Ez. 1,26: “eine Gestalt wie das Aussehen eines Menschen”, aber dass Abraham etwas sieht, wird

nicht gesagt. Dies erinnert uns daran, dass die oben erwähnte Skizze der Gedankenwelt des esoterischen Judentums einseitig ist; aber es ist schwierig, diese Lücke zu schliessen, weil die Schriften, die uns als Quelle dienen müssten, noch nicht zuverlässig ediert und übersetzt sind. Wir sind darum auf die Mitteilungen Gershom Scholems angewiesen, dem wir jedoch gerne folgen, weil er sich bei unseren Untersuchungen stets als vertrauenswürdiger und zuverlässiger Führer bewährt hat.

Zunächst müssen wir dann aber darauf hinweisen, dass die Vorstellungen, um die es hier geht, älter sind als man früher annahm, und sogar noch geraume Zeit früher zu datieren sind als Scholem in seinem Meisterwerk angibt. Die Schriften in ihrer heutigen Form scheinen im fünften und sechsten Jahrhundert verbreitet worden zu sein, aber das in ihnen verarbeitete Material ist viel älter. Aus der Vorrede von Origenes' Kommentar zum Hohen Lied ist ersichtlich, dass der Kirchenvater die zentralen Themen dieser esoterischen jüdischen Traditionen kannte – eine Tatsache, die für die Interpretation seiner Brautmystik von einzigartiger Bedeutung ist. Nur wieviel diese Traditionen älter sind als Origenes, lässt sich im Augenblick noch nicht ausmachen. Es besagt aber sehr viel, dass diese Spekulationen über die demuth von Ez. 1,26 und über den Bräutigam aus dem Hohen Lied schon vor ± 200 in jüdischen Kreisen im Umlauf waren, die sich durch strenge Gesetzesobservanz hervortraten.

Die in Frage kommenden Schriften sind: die "kleine Hekkaloth", die "grosse Hekkaloth" und "Shiur Qoma". Sie beschreiben wie zu erwarten die Himmelfahrt eines Eingeweihten und seine Vision der himmlischen Thronwelt. Ihr Höhepunkt ist die Schau dessen, was in Ezechiel 1,26 beschrieben steht. Das Paradoxe ist nun, dass diese "Gestalt wie das Aussehen eines Menschen" in "Shiur Qoma" mit einem herausfordernden Anthropomorphismus beschrieben wird. Er ist der Bräutigam aus dem Hohen Lied, dessen Aussehen im fünften Kapitel dieses biblischen Buches beschrieben wird:

Sein Haupt ist feines Gold, gediegenes Gold,  
Seine Locken sind kraus, rabenschwarz.  
Seine Augen gleichen Tauben, über Wasserbächen usw. (5, 11–12)

"Gottes heilige Majestät", sagt Scholem, "nimmt gleichsam Fleisch und Blut an" in dieser so merkwürdig anmutenden Beschreibung, die stark an die Spekulationen des Gnostikers Markus aus dem zweiten Jahrhundert erinnert. Und wir erinnern uns, dass bereits Origenes diese



jüdischen esoterischen Spekulationen über den Bräutigam aus dem Hohen Lied kannte.

Die Gestalt, die auf dem Thron erscheint, wird aber auch der Yotzer Bereshit genannt, der Schöpfer der Welt. Dennoch ist diese Gestalt – wenn ich mich so ausdrücken darf – noch immer nicht Gott selbst, der in seinem Wesen verborgen bleibt, sondern nur seine Offenbarungsgestalt, die δόξα oder kābōd des Herrn. Wir finden also in diesen Schriften eine esoterische Interpretation von Gen. 1, Ezech. 1,26 und Hohes Lied 5, die man meint anwenden zu können nicht auf Gott selbst, aber doch auf seine Offenbarungsgestalt, die doch auch Gott war.

So finden wir also in diesem esoterischen Judentum zwei Zentren der Spekulationen, die für unsere Untersuchung von höchster Wichtigkeit sind: einerseits die “Gestalt wie das Aussehen eines Menschen”, die der Schöpfer ist und der Bräutigam; andererseits “der Engel des Herrn”, die Widerspiegelung und Manifestation Gottes und Seines Gesandten zu den Menschen. Mit besonderem Interesse vernehmen wir, dass in den ältesten Bestandteilen des “grossen Hekhaloth” nirgends Metatron erwähnt wird.<sup>7</sup> Obwohl es feststeht, dass ein historischer Zusammenhang mit I Henoch besteht, wo eschatologische Spekulationen über “dem Sohn des Menschen” eine so wichtige Rolle spielen, ist es mir bisher bei meiner Arbeit nicht deutlich geworden, ob in den esoterischen Traditionen des Judentums die “Gestalt wie das Aussehen eines Menschen” auch als eschatologischer Richter genannt wird.

Es bleibt für uns die Frage, ob diese esoterischen Traditionen, die ohne Zweifel in apokalyptischen Kreisen ihre Wurzel haben, nicht auf irgendeine Weise mit den häretischen Lehren über die zwei “principia” zusammenhängen. Als eigentliches Problem bleibt für uns das der jüdischen Heterodoxie.

Sind diese Schriften nun gnostisch? Ja, insofern sie eine Thronwelt und ein pleroma beschreiben und allerlei mythische Motive kennen, die in der Gnosis ihre Parallelen haben. Nein, insofern sie einen wesentlichen, abgründiger Unterschied zwischen Gott und Mensch kennen, und den Menschen auch in seiner höchsten Verzückerung Mensch bleiben lassen. Das eine wie das andere ist für das Johannesevangelium wichtig. Letzteres zeigt, dass das vierte Evangelium in seinem Menschenbild jüdisch und nicht hellenistisch ist.

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<sup>7</sup> Scholem, *Major Trends*, 68.

## III

Wenn wir jetzt fragen, ob das Evangelium der Wahrheit bestimmte Anhaltspunkte bietet, die geeignet sind, die Beziehung zwischen christlicher Gnosis und jüdischer Heterodoxie zu erhellen, so ist dies eigentlich eine undankbare Aufgabe. Es ist bekannt, dass diese Schrift Spekulationen enthält über Christus als dem Namen Gottes, die ohne Zweifel ein jüdisches Gepräge haben. Wenn wir dieses jüdische Milieu aber näher zu bestimmen versuchen, geben wir unseren Angriffspunkte. Aber ihren kritischen Widerspruch werden wir geguerrn ertragen können, weil wir ja auf bestimmte Tatbestände hingewiesen haben, die unwiderruflich auf einen Zusammenhang zwischen Gnosis und Judentum geführt haben, wodurch einer grossen Zahl von anderen Hypothesen die Grundlage genommen ist. Wenn wir also jetzt den jüdischen Kreis finden wollen, in dem diese Spekulationen ihren Ursprung haben, dann dürfen auch wir mit einer Hypothese arbeiten – so ist nun einmal der Gang der Forschung, die nicht ruht, bis sie auch eine noch so vorläufige Antwort formuliert hat auf die Fragen, die das Material und der Fortgang der Wissenschaft von selbst stellen. Diese Fragen lauten hier: 1) Gibt es ein Dokument, in dem *expressis verbis* steht, dass Spekulationen über “den Engel des Herrn” als Träger des Namens Gottes bei einer vorchristlichen jüdischen Sekte in Palästina vorkamen? 2) Kann aufgezeigt werden, dass diese esoterischen jüdischen Spekulationen Gnostikern des zweiten Jahrhunderts bekannt wurden? Ich glaube, dass auf beide Fragen eine positive Antwort gegeben werden kann. Um dies zu beweisen, muss ich aufmerksam machen auf eine Passage im Evangelium der Wahrheit, die erst nach viel Kopfzerbrechen klar wurde.

Auf Seite 38 dieser Schrift setzt der Verfasser auseinander, dass Christus der Name Gottes ist. Gott hat seinen Namen dem Sohn gegeben, der von ihm ausgegangen, der durch ihm hervorgebracht, ja der Er Selbst ist. Hier wird also die *γέννησις* und die *ὁμοουσία* des Sohnes gelehrt. Gott allein konnte den Namen aussprechen, niemand sonst war dazu in der Lage.

S.38,25–S.39,2:

Wer hat doch den Namen für ihm aussprechen können, diesen grossen Namen, wenn nicht er allein, dessen dieser Name ist, und die Söhne des Namens, die, in denen der Name des Vater ruhte, und die ihrerseits auch ruhten in seinem Namen? Weil der Vater ungeworden ist, war allein der es, den Er (oder: der ihn) erzeugt hat, für sich als Name, bevor er die Äonen eingerichtet hat, damit der Name des Vaters über ihren Haupte sei, als

*Herr*, welcher der wahrhafte Name ist, fest durch seine ἐξουσία und vollkommene δύναμις.

Welche Vorstellung begegnet uns hier? Gott hat seinen Sohn vor allen Zeiten gezeugt und ihm Seinen Namen gegeben, damit er als Herr (Κύριος) über die Äonen herrsche. Der Sohn, der hier der “Name” genannt wird, ist also der Herr über die Äonen; dies ist zu vergleichen mit der Auffassung, dass Christus der Herr der Engel ist – und sogar auch mit dem *sar haōrim*, dem Fürst der Lichtwesen, in der Sektenschrift. Hier ist aber nicht von Engeln die Rede, sondern von Äonen – ein sehr dunkler Terminus im Evangelium der Wahrheit. An dieser Stelle darf man ihn wohl als geistige Wesenheiten fassen, die in der geistigen Welt leben. Der Text sagt, dass diese Äonen nach dem Sohn entstanden sind, und die Vorstellung scheint die zu sein, dass Gott nur den Sohn zeugt, und dass der Sohn dann die Äonen hervorbringt. Das einzige, was Gott tut, ist, dass Er den Sohn hervorbringt, der dann seinerseits die Äonen ins Dasein ruft.

Von diesen Äonen, hier die “Söhne des Namens” genannt, wird nun gesagt, dass der Sohn, der der Name des Vaters ist, in ihnen ruhte und Herr über sie war, bekleidet mit ἐξουσία und δύναμις.

Es scheint mir keinem Zweifel zu unterliegen, dass diese Passage letzten Endes irgendwie durch Jesaja 57,15 LXX beeinflusst ist:

Κύριος ὁ ὑψιστος ὁ ἐν ὑψηλοῖς κατοικῶν τὸν αἰῶνα, ἅγιος ἐν ἁγίοις ὄνομα αὐτῷ, κύριος ὑψιστος ἐν ἁγίοις ἀναπαύομενος.

In diesem Text ist die Rede vom Κύριος, der in den Engeln (= ἅγιοι) ruht und zugleich in seinem Wesen als ὑψιστος über sie erhoben ist und über sie herrscht. Darin liegt eine grosse Übereinstimmung mit der Passage aus dem Evangelium Veritatis. Der wesentliche Unterschied ist aber der, dass in der letztgenannten Schrift nicht Gott selbst Κύριος ist, sondern der Sohn Gottes, der durch Gott gezeugt ist und die Äonen hervorgebracht hat. An diesem Punkt unserer Darlegung müssen wir zunächst noch offen lassen, ob wir es hier mit einem Stück christlicher Interpretation des A.T. zu tun haben, wie man dies oft genug bei den christlichen Vätern findet, oder ob dieser Unterschied der Interpretation ältere jüdische Wurzeln hat. Soweit wir die Frage verfolgen konnten, ist eine christologische Interpretation von Jesaja 57,15 bei den christlichen Schriftstellern des 2. Jahrhunderts nicht nachzuweisen.

Nun braucht es uns aber keineswegs zu befremden, dass der Sohn hier neben Κύριον Ὄνομα auch Κύριος genannt wird. Der Name,

über den in der Passage des Evangelium Veritatis gesprochen wird, ist nämlich der Name des Herrn, der *šem Jahweh*. Die Valentinianer haben noch eine Erinnerung daran bewahrt wenn sie formulieren:

ich bin versiegelt und erlöst...im Namen von Iao (= Jahweh).  
(Iren., *adv. Haer.*, 1,21,3)

Die ganze Passage sagt also dies, dass Gott vor allen Zeiten seinen verborgenen Namen, den Namen des Herrn, *Jahweh*, seinem Sohn gegeben hat, damit dieser als Herr über die Äonen herrsche. Der Sohn ist der einzige, der durch Gott gezeugt ist; die Äonen sind durch den Sohn hervorgebracht.

An anderen Stellen des Evangelium Veritatis zeigt es sich dann, dass der Sohn gesandt wird, um Gott zu offenbaren:

S.40,23–S.41,3:

Als es ihm dann wohlgefällig war, dass sein geliebter Sohn sein Name sein würde, und (als) er ihm den Namen gegeben hatte, hat der, welcher aus der Tiefe gekommen ist, gesprochen von seinen Verborgenen, wissend dass der Vater ὄκκος ist. Deshalb auch hat er ihn geschickt, damit er spreche über den τόπος und seinen Ort der Ruhe, von dem er ausgegangen war, und damit er verherrliche das Pleroma, die Grösse seines Namens und die Süsse des Vaters.

S.23,33–S.24,5:

so geht der Logos des Vaters heraus im All, als Frucht seines Herzens und Ausdruck seines Willens. Aber er befestigt das All, er erwählt es, und dazu empfängt er die Gestalt des Alls.

Gott hat einzig seinen Sohn gezeugt und nichts daneben; diesem ist der Name Gottes verliehen, er herrscht über die Äonen und wird auch in das All gesandt, um Gott zu offenbaren und Seinen Willen kundzumachen. Der Sohn trägt den Namen des Herrn, ist Κύριος über die geistigen Wesenheiten und ἀπόστολος für die Menschen.

Wir müssen nun feststellen, dass diese Spekulationen im Evangelium Veritatis über den Namen in der Tat gnostisch sind in dem Sinne, dass sie mit typischen Gedanken in anderen gnostischen Werken zusammenhängen. Es ist nicht überflüssig, dies hervorzuheben, weil man ausschliesslich vom Evangelium der Wahrheit ausgehend vielleicht zu der Annahme neigen könnte, dass vorliegenden Anschauungen dem Hirn des Valentinus entsprossen seien, vielleicht inspiriert durch gewisse Passagen im N.T. und bei den Apostolischen Vätern und vielleicht auch durch gewisse magische Anschauungen, die uns in Ägyptischen Zauberpapyri erhalten sind. Es ist natürlich nicht ausgeschlossen, dass

in der alchemistischen Retorte dieses gnostischen Hirns solche Einflüsse mitgespielt haben. Das ist bei einem so assoziativ Denkenden sogar sehr wahrscheinlich. Aber auch wenn man solche Einflüsse abzieht, bleibt eine Vorstellung, die mit der anderer gnostischer Schriften engstens verwandt ist. Dann wird direkt deutlich werden, dass Jao und Jeu Nebenformen von Jahweh sind, und dass der Name, von dem im Evangelium Veritatis die Rede ist, der šem Jahweh ist.

Nun kommt es mir so vor, dass diese Konzeption ihr Gegenstück hat in den Lehren des ersten Buches Jeu über den *λόγος κατὰ μυστήριον τοῦ Ἰεοῦ*, den verborgenen *Logos Jahwehs*.

Das Buch von dem grossen *κατὰ μυστήριον λόγος*<sup>8</sup> ist in Atmosphäre und Niveau grundverschieden von dem, was wir in Valentinus' Schrift antreffen. Es ist wirklich undenkbar, dass es sich aus der valentinianischen Gnosis entwickelt hat, und es gehört auch zu einem ganz anderen Zweig der gnostischen Bewegung. Es gibt sozusagen eine Geographie der oberen Welt zum Gebrauch bei der Himmelreise des Eingeweihten. Der Gedanke, der dem Ganzen zugrundeliegt, ist der, dass der höchste Gott unnahbar ist für jedes Wesen, völlig jenseits unseres Bereiches, aber dass sich der Mensch ihm doch nahen kann durch den *λόγος κατὰ μυστήριον τοῦ Ἰεοῦ*, der die höchste Manifestation der Gottheit ist und durch den der Mensch Gott selbst schaut.

Dies wird nun näher erläutert durch bestimmte Passagen, die auseinanderzusetzen, wie diese Rangordnung im All zustande gekommen ist.

Jeu ist die erste und einzige Emanation Gottes, der dann seinerseits durch das Aussprechen des Gottesnamens das All ins Dasein ruft und zustandebringt. Gott selbst hat ihm den Namen Jeu gegeben und er ist selbst Gott.<sup>9</sup> Jeu ist ohne jeden Zweifel eine Transskription von *יהו*, eine Abkürzung von *Jhwh*. Gott hat also seinen Namen Seiner einzigen Emanation gegeben, die Er selbst ist und die Ihn offenbart.

Dieser hat aber nicht nur das All hervorgebracht; er ist auch "der König über den ganzen Lichtschatz", der "der grosse Mensch" genannt wird.<sup>10</sup> Ich lasse nun einen Augenblick die interessante Frage ruhen, warum die Offenbarungsgestalt auch Mensch genannt wird. In diesem Zusammenhang ist es von grösserem Interesse, wie der Name dieses

<sup>8</sup> W. Till, *Koptisch-Gnostische Schriften I*, Berlin 1954, 257–302, spez. c. 5 und c. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Till, *a.c.*, 301: Du nanntest sie (sc. die Emanation) "Jeu"

du bist ein Unnahbarer in ihnen in diesem

grossen *κατὰ μυστήριον λόγος* des Jeu, ..., *der Du selber bist*.

<sup>10</sup> Till, *a.c.*, 318.

Schöpfungsmittlers, dieses Hauptes der geistigen Wesenheiten, dieser Manifestation Gottes, lautet: nämlich der grosse *λόγος κατὰ μυστήριον τοῦ Ἰεοῦ*. Der Träger des göttlichen Namens ist der Logos Jahwehs. Logos ist hier also, und das ist wichtig, eine Bezeichnung für den Träger des göttlichen Namens, Logos hat hier wenigstens nicht Beziehung auf die Weltvernunft, sondern auf die Gottesoffenbarung. Und wenn wir diesen Terminus einmal ins Aramäische übersetzen: *memra Jahweh*, dann müssen wir sagen, dass dieser Ausdruck hier jedenfalls eine besondere Hypostase andeutet.

Die Spekulationen im Evangelium der Wahrheit und im ersten Buch Jeu über den Träger des Gottesnamens haben viele gemeinsame Züge. Und doch haben wir nicht den geringsten Anlass zu der Annahme, dass eines das andere beeinflusst hat. Wir müssen vielmehr annehmen, dass beide Gnostiker aus einer gemeinsamen Quelle geschöpft haben, aus einem gnostischen oder – wenn man will – vor-gnostischen Kreis in Ägypten des ersten Jahrhunderts, in dem Spekulationen über den Namen Gottes durchgedrungen waren.

#### IV

Meiner Ansicht nach unterliegt es keinem Zweifel, dass die Spekulationen über den Namen in der Gnosis in letzter Instanz zurückgehen auf bestimmte Lehren des heterodoxen Judentums in Palästina vor Beginn unserer Zeitrechnung. In einer anderen Veröffentlichung habe ich bereits hingewiesen auf die Anschauungen der Abrahamapokalypse, wo der Engel des Herrn – Jaobel genannt, weil nach dem Wort Exodus 23,21 der Name des Herrn in ihm war – zum ersten Mal in der esoterischen Literatur des palästinischen Judentums vorkommt. Dabei habe ich schon auf die Auffassung des grossen Gelehrten Odeberg verwiesen, die es so formuliert:

The most important element or complex of elements which gave life and endurance to the conception in question (of Metatron in later Jewish mysticism) was the notion of the “Angel of JHVH, who bears the divine Name”, and the “Angel of the Face, the Divine Presence”, called Yaeol, Yehoel, Yoel, the highest of the angels, the Divine Name representing the Godhead. Extensive speculations must have centred round the possessor of the Divine Name.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *The Jung Codex*, Londen 1955, 68.

Die Abrahamapokalypse ist bisher in das erste Jahrhundert nach Christus datiert worden, sodass ja noch sehr gut die Möglichkeit offenbleibt, dass die Gnostiker des zweiten Jahrhunderts ihre Spekulationen über den Namen den jüdischen Esoterikern entlehnt haben. Es kommt mir aber so vor, dass auf eine Angabe hingewiesen werden kann, die zeigt, dass die Spekulationen über den Namen vorchristlich sind.

Scharastāni und Al Qirqisāni<sup>12</sup> liefern uns einige Angaben über die vorchristliche jüdische Sekte der Magharier, der Höhlenmenschen, die so genannt wurden, weil ihre Schriften in einer Grotte gefunden wurden. Diese Magharier betonten besonders die uneingeschränkte Transzendenz Gottes. Al Qirqisāni drückt das so aus, dass die Magharier “do not profess anthropomorphism”. Dennoch werden die Anthropomorphismen des Alten Testaments in ihrer buchstäblichen Bedeutung keineswegs geleugnet oder verflüchtigt, aber die Magharier lehrten “that these descriptions refer to one of the angels, namely to the one who created the world”.

Wir wollen nun einen Augenblick die aufregende Mitteilung beiseite lassen, dass die Welt durch einen Engel geschaffen ist: wir beschränken uns auf die Bemerkung, dass es hier natürlich nicht um einen Engel geht, sondern um *den* Engel, nämlich den Engel des Herrn, den *angelus increatus* der Dogmatik. Dieser *malak Jahweh* wurde in diesen Kreisen deshalb Gegenstand der Betrachtungen, weil er nach Ex. 23,21 Träger des göttlichen Namens war und so den transzendenten Gott auf der Erde repräsentierte. Dies ist ersichtlich aus einer Passage bei Scharāstani, die ich hier widergebe in einer Uebersetzung, die etwas buchstäblicher ist als die von Haarbrücker:

Sie sagen: “es ist gewöhnlich erlaubt, dass jemand *einen Boten sendet* aus der Zahl derer, die besonders nah bei ihm sind, und dass er dann auf ihm *seinen Namen legt*, während er sagt: dies ist mein Abgesandter, und seine Stellung unter euch ist meine Stellung, und sein Wort und sein Befehl sind mein Wort und Befehl, und wenn er zu euch kommt ist es, als ob ich zu euch komme: und so ist der Stand dieses Malak gewesen”.<sup>13</sup>

Nun besagt es nicht viel, dass Scharastāni im 12. Jahrhundert lebte, denn der Schreiber seiner Quelle, Isa al-Warrak, lebte im 9. Jh. Und es ist doch sehr wahrscheinlich, dass die Karaiten, insbesondere Al-Nahawandi,

<sup>12</sup> L. Nemoj, “Al Qirqisāni’s Account of the Jewish Sects”, *Hebrew Union College Annual* 7(1930) 363 und 386. Th. Haarbrücker, *Scharastāni’s Religionsparteien und Philosophenschulen*, Halle 1850, 256–257.

<sup>13</sup> Ich verdanke diese Übersetzung Herrn Dr. C.Th. Niemeyer (Utrecht).

Schriften dieser Magharier, dieser Höhlenmenschen, besaßen. Es wird nämlich überliefert, dass um 800 in der Umgebung von Jericho jüdische Handschriften gefunden worden sind. Die Quelle aus der Scharastāni schöpft, und ebenso Al Qirqisāni können ihr Wissen den Schriften der Magharier selbst entlehnt haben. Wie dem auch sei – es steht in den Quellen, dass eine vorchristliche jüdische Sekte Spekulationen anstellte über den Malak Jahweh als Träger des Namens, und die Kritik hat keinen Anlass, an der Richtigkeit dieser Mitteilung zu zweifeln. Es ist völlig klar, dass diese Spekulationen aus der Interpretation des Alten Testaments entstanden sind und nirgends anders ihren Ursprung haben. Aber bei der Anwendung ihres Prinzips scheinen sie doch die Grenzen des Alten Testaments überschritten zu haben:

sie sagen, alles was in der Thora und den übrigen Büchern von der Beschreibung Gottes vorkomme, das beziehe sich auf diesen Engel: denn es sei anders nicht zulässig, dass der höchste Schöpfer irgendwie beschrieben werde.

Wenn man meint, dass Gott so transzendent ist, dass niemand ihm je geschaut hat, und wenn man andererseits die Theophanien des A.T. buchstäblich nimmt, dann muss man wohl so sprechen. Aber die Magharier führten dies mit einer Konsequenz durch, die auf den ersten Blick Staunen weckt:

Sie bezogen Alles, was in der Thora von dem Verlangen (Gott) zu sehen vorkommt und die Aussprüche: ich nahte Gott, Gott kommt, Gott erhebt sich in die Wolken, er hat die Thora mit seiner Hand geschrieben, er sitzt fest auf dem Throne, er hat die Gestalt Adams, krauses Haar und schwarzes Haupthaar... auf diesen Engel.

Wenn wir uns auf die letztgenannten Züge beschränken, können wir mit einiger Wahrscheinlichkeit feststellen, auf welche Passages des A.T. sie Bezug haben:

- a) *er sitzt auf dem Throne*: Jesaja 6,1: “In dem Jahre, da der König Usia starb, sah ich den Herrn sitzen auf einem hohen und erhabenen Throne”.
- b) *er hat die Gestalt Adams*: Ezechiel 1,26: “und oben auf dem, was wie ein Thron aussah, eine Gestalt wie das Aussehen “Adams”.
- c) *krauses Haar und schwarzes Haupthaar*: Hohes Lied 5,11: “seine Locken sind kraus, schwarz wie ein Rabe.”

Dies erinnert uns sofort an bestimmte Schriften des esoterischen Judentums, insbesondere die Hekhaloth. Diese spekulierten vor allem über



Ez. 1,26 und meinten, dass das, was auf dem Thron erschienen war, nicht Gott selbst in seiner Transzendenz war, vielmehr – wenn ich es so ausdrücken darf – die Offenbarungsgestalt Gottes, die mit Hilfe der krassesten Anthropomorphismen angedeutet wurde. Das war es, was Jesaja geschaut hatte, das war auch der Bräutigam aus Hohes Lied 5, das war der “Schöpfer im Anfang”.

Es ist sicher, dass dieses esoterische Judentum schon im ersten Jahrhundert nach Chr. in Palästina in einer bestimmten Form bestand, und dass bereits Origenes mit dessen Brautmystik vertraut war. Wenn man sich aber auf unsere Passage verlassen kann, wird man sagen können, dass bereits in vorchristlicher Zeit in bestimmten Kreisen des heterodoxen Judentums solche Vorstellungen lebten. Insbesondere will ich darauf hinweisen, dass bei den Maghariern ebenso wie im esoterischen Judentum die Welt nicht durch Gott selbst geschaffen ist. Al Qirqisāni sagt darüber:

The Magharians are said to be opposed to this, i.e., they do not profess anthropomorphism: yet they also do not take these descriptions (of God) out of their literal meaning, but assert instead that these descriptions refer to one of the angels, namely to the one who created the world. This (opinion) is similar to the view of Benjamin al Nahāwandi which we shall explain later.

Über Benjamin Al-Nahāwandi, der seine Auffassungen aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach von den Maghariern entlehnte, wird dann gesagt:

He asserted that the Creator created *nothing but a single angel*, and that it was this angel *who created the entire world*, sent out the prophets and commissioned the messengers, performed miracles and issued orders and prohibitions; and that it is he who causes everything in the world to happen, without (the interference of) the original Creator.

Was folgt daraus? Wenn unsere Quellen hierin zu verlässlich sind, kann man sagen, dass im heterodoxen Judentum vor unserer Zeitrechnung bestimmte Vorstellungen des späteren esoterischen Judentums vorweggenommen worden sind. Das esoterische Judentum kannte Vorstellungen über “den Engel des Herrn”: es hatte auch bestimmte Vorstellungen über “die Gestalt”, die auf dem Thron erschien. Es hat aber den Anschein, dass die Magharier nur *eine* Gestalt kennen, die auf den Thron erscheint *und* zu den Propheten gesandt wird. Dann ist es auch ausgeschlossen, dass diese heterodoxen Kreise einer Art von “Engelchristologie” gehuldigt haben. Denn der, der die Welt schuf und auf dem Thron erschien, der “Engel des Herrn”, war ganz und gar Gott – wenn auch nicht die *fons deitatis*.

Dieses göttliche Wesen, das zugleich der Adam von Ezechiel 1,26 und der malak Jahweh war, der zu Mose gesandt war, muss aber als der Messias aufgefasst worden sein oder wenigstens messianische Züge aufgewiesen haben.

Scharastāni sagt:

Eine Sekte der Makariba glaubte, dass Gott mit den Propheten mittelst eines Engels spreche, welchen er ausgewählt und *allen Geschöpfen* vorgesetzt und zu seinem Statthalter für sie gemacht habe.

Sehr zu Recht hat Matthew Black angenommen, dass bei den Maghariern dieser "Engel des Herrn" den Titel des "Auserwählten" trug, und hat daraufhingewiesen, dass dies ein gern verwendeter Ausdruck für den Messias oder den Menschensohn in I Henoch 37–71 ist.<sup>14</sup> Wir müssen darum annehmen, dass der Messias in dieser Sekte als der göttliche Adam aufgefasst wurde, als *Herr der Engel* und der Malak Jahweh. So bleibt eigentlich im Bericht Scharastānis nur eine Passage übrig, die uns Schwierigkeiten macht: "der in der Thora erwähnte Baum sei auch dieser Engel gewesen". Was das bedeutet, weiss ich nicht; ich darf aber darauf verweisen, dass nach III Henoch V,1 "Sheḥina was dwelling upon a Kerub under the Tree of Life". Andere Stellen noch bei L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, V, S. 122, 152, 159. Nach dem Apokryphon Johannis 57,8 war "der Baum, der durch sie genannt wird: "um zu erkennen das Gute und das Böse", die ἐπίνοια des Lichtes".

Wenn wir uns nun die Frage vorlegen, ob die Auffassungen dieser jüdischen Sekte, wie sie uns hier durch zwei mittelalterliche Zeugen überliefert werden, irgendwie übereinstimmen mit dem Material, das uns aus anderen Quellen für die Zeit um den Anfang unserer Zeitrechnung bekannt ist, so kann man natürlich darauf hinweisen, dass das Judentum dieser Zeit tatsächlich die völlige Transzendenz Gottes mit Nachdruck betonte. Weiterhin kann man in Versuchung kommen, an den "Fürst der Lichtwesen", d.h. an den "Herrn der Engel" in der Sektenschrift zu denken, der auch "Bote der Wahrheit" (= Bringer der Offenbarung) genannt wird, und mit dem Engel des Herrn identifiziert zu sein scheint. Die meiste Übereinstimmung scheint aber wohl mit den Gedanken Johannes des Täufers zu bestehen, wie sie durch das vierte Evangelium überliefert werden – zum mindesten wenn wir den letzteren freundlicherweise ausreden lassen und ihn nicht direkt mit

<sup>14</sup> M. Black, "The Pauline Doctrine of the Second Adam", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 7 (1954) 178.

gewissen Vorurteilen steinigen. Wir haben es in den letzten Jahren gelernt, ihm als den verschlagenen Phantasten anzusehen, der die Gnosis und die paulinische Theologie als bekannt voraussetzt – ja mit recht sind Zweifel aufgekommen, ob er das Markusevangelium wohl kannte. Und jeder, der nicht blind ist, kann sehen, dass seine Theologie so oder so aus der Perspektive des heterodoxen Judentums Palästinas verstanden werden muss. So wollen wir denn auch ohne Voreingenommenheit hören, inwieweit das Zeugnis des vierten Evangeliums über Johannes den Täufer mit den Anschauungen der “Magharier” Analogien aufweist, ohne dass wir damit zugleich annehmen die “Magharier” seien Schüler Johannes des Täufers:

1) Bei den Maghariern war der Messias der “Auserwählte”. Nach einer sehr alten Lesart, die gute Chancen hat, die ursprüngliche zu sein, lautet das Zeugnis Johannes des Täufers: οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ ἐκλεκτός τοῦ θεοῦ (Joh. 1,34)

2) Die Magharier scheinen ebenso wie der Verfasser von I Henoch über Ezechiel 1,26 spekuliert und den Messias als den göttlichen Adam angesehen zu haben, der als Herr über die Engel gesetzt wurde. Johannes betrachtet sich selbst als einen Nachfahren des irdischen Adam und scheint ihn mit dem himmlischen zu kontrastieren: ὁ ὢν ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἐστὶν καὶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς λαλεῖ. ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐρχόμενος ἐπάνω πάντων ἐστὶν (Joh. 3,31). Das erinnert natürlich an 1 Kor. 15,47, wo Paulus den ἄνθρωπος ἐκ γῆς χοϊκός dem ἄνθρωπος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ gegenüberstellt. Es ist aber sehr gut möglich, dass der Evangelist Johannes hier eine Tradition wiedergibt, die von Paulus unabhängig ist, und die auf diese Weise völlig zu Recht angibt, dass es die Gegenüberstellung von πρῶτος Ἀδάμ und ἔσχατος Ἀδάμ schon im heterodoxen Judentum gab.

3) Der Messias ist bei den Maghariern der Bote, der mit göttlicher Vollmacht gesandt wird: sein Wort ist Gottes Wort: ὃν γὰρ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ θεοῦ λαλεῖ (Joh. 3,34).

4) Man hat von geschätzter Seite geschrieben, dass die Allegorie vom Messias als dem Bräutigam sowohl der Predigt Jesu wie seiner jüdischen Umwelt unbekannt gewesen ist. Bei Paulus wäre danach diese Allegorie zu ersten Mal zu finden, und zwar unter Einfluss der im Hellenismus, insbesondere in der Gnosis verbreiteten, aus dem Mythos stammenden Anwendung dieses Bildes auf den Soter. Es soll seicher sein, dass erst in nachchristlicher Zeit sich die Mystik dieser Allegorie bemächtigt habe, die sie des eschatologischen Inhalts entkleidete und sie stattdes-

sen auf schicksalhafte Weise mit dem sinnlichen Inhalt der hellenistischen *ἱερός γάμος*-Vorstellungen verband. Joh. 3,29 "wer die Braut hat, ist der Bräutigam" soll keine Allegorie sein, "sondern ein echtes Bildwort".<sup>15</sup> Von dogmatischem Standpunkt aus müsste man eigentlich gegen diese Interpretation protestieren, weil sie die Katholizität des Christentums leugnet, die Kirchengeschichte als einen folgenschweren Abfall betrachtet, der jüdischen Umwelt Jesu gegen den Buchstaben der Heiligen Schrift den Vorrang gibt und die Legitimität der Brautmystik innerhalb des Christentums in Abrede stellt. Aber da nun einmal die Schrift über der Tradition steht, müssen wir einzig erwägen, ob die philologische Grundlage für diese Auffassung stark genug ist. Dann fällt auf, dass jede Bezugnahme auf die Brautmystik des esoterischen Judentums fehlt: diese beweist aber, dass eine ganz bestimmte Form von Brautmystik gut jüdisch ist. Ausserdem bemerkten wir schon, dass bereits die Magharier ihren Messias mit Zügen des Bräutigams aus dem Hohen Lied ausstatteten. Dann gibt es keinen Anlass, das Wort Joh. 3,29 nicht als Allegorie für den Messias aufzufassen oder es Johannes dem Täufer abzusprechen. Das Evangelium schreibt es einem jüdischen Heterodoxen zu, und die Magharier, jüdische Heterodoxe, kannten die Brautmystik bereits – es gibt keinen Grund, an der Zuverlässigkeit der biblischen Überlieferung zu zweifeln.

## V

Dies ist nun für unsere Problematik von Gewicht. Wir fragten nämlich wo der Ursprung der Spekulationen über den Namen lag, und meinten, dass der Verfasser der valentinianischen Schrift dieselben der jüdischen Heterodoxie Palästinas entlehnte. Wir müssen jetzt hinzufügen, dass auch der Verfasser des vierten Evangeliums mit derartigen Anschauungen vertraut war. Er steht darin nicht allein. Auch die Quelle von Acta 3–5 spiegelt, wie L. Cerfaux gezeigt hat, eine Namenstheologie wider, die in der Urgemeinde in Jerusalem lebendig war.<sup>16</sup> Aber im vierten Evangelium steht dies Thema vom Namen im Mittelpunkt, und zwar in zwei Hinsichten: einmal durch direkte Erwähnung des Namens,

<sup>15</sup> J. Jeremias in: *Küttels Th. Wörterb. zum N.T.*, IV, 1097.

<sup>16</sup> L. Cerfaux, "La première communauté chrétienne à Jérusalem", *Ephem. Theol. Lov.* XVI (1938) 24–26.

und zum anderen durch die Umschreibung mit ἐγώ εἰμι und andere Periphrasen.

a) Im hohepriesterlichen Gebet wird gesagt, dass Christus den Menschen den Namen offenbart, den Gott ihm gegeben hat: ἐφανέρωσά σου τὸ ὄνομα (V.6); ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ᾧ δέδωκάς μοι (V.11,12). Daneben scheint Christus auch Name Gottes genannt zu werden, denn δόξασόν σου τὸ ὄνομα (12,28) korrespondiert mit ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (12,23) und scheint in der Bedeutung mit δόξασόν με (17,5) übereinzustimmen.

The understanding of this prayer demands the consideration also of the fact that Jesus carries (one might even venture to say: is) the Divine Name. The Father is glorified in the glorification of his Name = Jesus. (Odeberg p. 33,4)

Vielleicht darf man hier auch 3.Joh.7 anfügen: ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐξῆλθον. Christus offenbart nach Johannes den Namen Gottes und ist es selbst.

b) Sehr stark wird im Johannesevangelium unterstrichen, dass die Wunder, die Jesus tut, ein Hinweis sind, dass er von Gott gesandt ist, dass er gekommen ist ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρὸς, denn er tut diese Wunder "in = durch die Kraft des Namens Gottes". "Ich habe es euch schon gesagt, aber ihr glaubt es nicht: die Wunder, die ich tue ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρὸς μου, die zeugen für mich". (10,25, cf. 5,36 und 14,12). Viele glaubten εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, weil sie die Wunder sahen, die er tat (2,23). Die Wunder, die Christus tut, sind nämlich τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ.

Dies scheint nun zusammenzuhängen mit der Auffassung, dass derjenige, der im Besitz des *šem hammephoraš* ist, Wunder tun kann, und vielleicht hat H.J. Schoeps recht, wenn er sagt, dass Jesus in der jüdischen Ueberlieferung als Zauberer galt, oder dass er den *šem hammephoraš* gekannt hat, weil man nun einmal nicht leugnen konnte, dass Jesus Wunder getan hatte.<sup>17</sup>

c) Die Worte ἐγώ εἰμι im Johannesevangelium haben natürlich Anklänge an verschiedene Stellen aus dem A.T., aber doch auch und wohl vor allen anderen an Ex. 3,14, wo Gott zu Mose spricht: ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὄν. In jedem Falle wird man Dodd recht geben müssen, wenn er sagt, dass der Ausdruck ἐγώ εἰμι impliziert, dass Gott seinen eigenen Namen Christus gegeben hat. Und Ödeberg S. 309 sagt sogar, dass

<sup>17</sup> H.J. Schoeps, *Aus frühchristlicher Zeit*, Tübingen 1950, 241.

comparative agreement seems to obtain that the ἐγώ εἰμι actually represents an appropriation by Jesus of a Divine Name.

So hat schon Augustinus diesen Ausdruck erklärt:

deus autem hoc est quod est: ideo proprium nomen sibi tenuit: Ego sum qui sum. Hoc est Filius, dicendo, Nisi crederitis quia ego sum.  
In Joh. 40,8

Schliesslich muss das Wort: ἐγώ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἐν ἑσμεν (Joh. 10,30) eine Anspielung auf den Namen Gottes enthalten, denn die Juden fassen es als eine βλασφημία auf: Gotteslästerung liegt nach jüdischem Gesetz (Sanhedrin 7,5) nur dann vor, wenn jemand den Namen selbst ausspricht. Im Vorangehenden wird gesagt, dass die Wunder, die Jesus tut ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρός, von ihm zeugen (10,25): wenn sie die Wunder glauben wollten, würden die Juden einsehen ὅτι ἐν ἐμοί ὁ πατήρ καγὼ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ (V.38). Mit aller Vorsicht muss doch hier auf Ex. 23,21 verwiesen werden: "mein Name ist in ihm". Es legt sich die Vermutung nahe, dass mit dem Wort ὁ πατήρ μου ὃ δέδωκέν μοι πάντων μεῖζόν ἐστιν (V.29) zurückgegriffen wird auf V.25 und der Name gemeint ist, der Christus gegeben ist (17,11; cf. 5,36). Darauf folgt dann auch tatsächlich in V.30 das Aussprechen des Namens wenn – wie einige Forscher annehmen – diese Worte wirklich mit יהוה יגא zusammenhängen.

So enthält das Johannesevangelium offenbar eine ganze Namenchristologie, von der aus Verbindungslinien zwar auch in andere Schichten des N.T. führen, die aber hier einen viel stärkeren Akzent bekommt als das sonstwo der Fall ist. Natürlich haben schon viele Forscher auf den jüdischen Hintergrund der ἐγώ εἰμί-Stellen hingewiesen, und man hat mehr oder weniger verwandte Vorstellungen aus dem Rabbinischen Schrifttum als Parallelen zitiert. Aber die Spekulationen über den Namen bei den Gnostikern und im heterodoxen Judentum zwingen uns, in eine andere Richtung zu blicken. Die vorchristlichen Magharier lehrten, dass der Messias der Gesandte, der ἀπόστολος Gottes war, auf den Er Seinen Namen gelegt hatte, dessen Wort das Wort Gottes und dessen Kommen aus seinem himmlischen Stand der Herrlichkeit das Kommen Gottes selbst ist. Das ist, habe ich den Eindruck, eine bessere Parallele zu den johanneischen Texten, die direkt oder verhüllt über Christus als den Träger des Namens Gottes sprechen. Ich würde dann auch keine Bedenken haben, nötigenfalls und soweit wie nötig anzunehmen, dass der Evangelist in dieser Hinsicht an Vorstellungen anknüpft, die im Kreise Johannes des Täufers lebten. In jedem Falle sind seine Gedanken über den Namen und über das ἐγώ εἰμί am besten im Lichte der jüdischen Heterodoxie Palästinas zu verstehen.

Es bleibt nun die Frage, wie es möglich war, dass die Gnostiker Ägyptens mit diesen Spekulationen des Evangeliums der Wahrheit und des Buches Jeu uns zu der Annahme zwangen, dass schon zu Anfang unserer Zeitrechnung diese Anschauungen über den Namen oder den Logos Jahwehs – seien sie nun esoterisch oder heterodox – in mehr oder weniger gnostischen Kreisen Ägyptens bekannt gewesen sein müssen.

Nun ist das Verhältnis von Kirche und Synagoge im zweiten Jahrhundert keineswegs von der Art gewesen, dass man von einem innigen Kontakt sprechen könnte. Insbesondere ist es nahezu undenkbar, dass die Gnostiker dieser Zeit viel Kontakt mit ‘orthodoxen’ Juden gehabt haben. Und dennoch finden wir sowohl in gnostischen wie christlichen Kreisen dieses Jahrhunderts allerlei Vorstellungen über den Namen, die von den jüdischen Spekulationen darüber nicht sehr verschieden zu sein scheinen.

Man vergleiche:

Didache X,2:

εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, πάτερ  
ἄγιε, ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἁγίου ὀνόματός  
σου, οὗ κατεσκήνωσας ἐν ταῖς  
καρδίαις ἡμῶν

Psalmi Salomonis 7,6:

Ἐν τῷ κατασκηνοῦν τὸ ὄνομα  
σου ἐν μέσῳ ἡμῶν ἐλεθησόμεθα.

(cf. Joh. 1,14: ὁ λόγος ἐσκήνωσε  
ἐν ἡμῖν, und Ex. 25:8).

Es ist natürlich möglich, dass – wie E. Peterson vermutete – mit ὄνομα in der Didache Jesus Christus gemeint ist.<sup>18</sup> Das würde unsere These aber nur stützen. Es ist auch nicht ausgeschlossen, dass im Lichte des neuen Materials die Ergebnisse der an sich ausgezeichneten Untersuchung von J. Ponthot über den Namen in der Theologie der Apostolischen Väter korrigiert werden müssen. Ausgeschlossen scheint mir dagegen zu sein, dass die gnostischen Spekulationen über den Namen zurück zu führen sind auf ähnliche, aber viel weniger deutlich ausgesprochene und authentische Anschauungen bei den Apostolischen Vätern, im Neuen Testament oder, wenn man will, in den Zauberpapyri. Diese alle miteinander können in höherem oder geringerem Masse auf dieselbe Quelle zurückweisen, nämlich auf die jüdische Heterodoxie Palästinas.

So scheint mir nur eine Lösung möglich: im ersten Jahrhundert sind Juden, die diese esoterischen Spekulationen kannten, zum Christentum übergetreten und haben diese typisch jüdischen Gedanken in die Kreise

<sup>18</sup> E. Peterson, *Ephem. Liturg.* 58 (1944) 1–13.

mitgebracht, die im zweiten Jahrhundert so häretisch wurden, dass man sie in der Kirche nicht mehr dulden konnte. Nur so erklärt es sich, dass in der christlichen Gnosis diese Vorstellungen auftauchen, die in der jüdischen Prae-Gnosis Palästinas ihre Heimat haben.

Fragen wir nun noch, was dies für die Interpretation des Logos im Prolog des Johannesevangeliums besagt. Es besteht für mich kein Zweifel daran, dass Johannes ständig an den biblisch-historischen Jesus Christus dachte, als er seinen Prolog schrieb. In ihm, sagt Johannes, war das göttliche Leben verkörpert, war das Ewige auf der Erde, und warf sein enthüllendes Licht auf das Sein jedes Menschen, als er in die Welt kam: auf die Menschen der Welt, die ihm ihr Bestehen verdankte und ihn doch nicht erkannte, auf die Glieder seines eigenen Volkes, die ihn dessen ungeachtet nicht aufnahmen, aber auch auf alle diejenigen, die an ihn glaubten, an seinen Namen, und auf geistliche Weise wiedergeboren wurden. So ist er Mensch gewesen und verweilte in unserer Mitte, und wir, sagt der Evangelist, haben den Glanz seiner Herrlichkeit geschaut, die Herrlichkeit von Gottes eingeborenem Sohn, voll Gnade und Offenbarung. Und sein Licht scheint auch jetzt noch in die Finsternis, weil die Finsternis ihn nicht für immer zu überwinden vermochte.

Dies ist eine Erinnerung an eine Person, die in der Geschichte auftrat, starb und wieder auferstand.

Es ist meines Erachtens deutlich, dass der historische Jesus Christus das Subjekt des Prologs ist, und dass  $\acute{\omicron}$   $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  mit allem, was dazu gehört, eine prädikative Bestimmung des Subjekts ist. Tatsächlich muss  $\acute{\omicron}$   $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  ein Titel des Messias sein, der ohne nähere Erklärung eingeführt wird, weil der Schreiber annimmt, dass seine Leser ihn verstehen.

Nun lehrt Johannes ohne jeden Zweifel, dass der Christus vor allen Zeiten bei Gott war und dass er in der Endzeit urteilen wird, weil er der Menschensohn ist (5,27), der nach Auffassung des 1. Henoch das letzte Urteil ausspricht.

Aber daneben ist der Messias auch bereits vor der Inkarnation den Männern der alten Fügung erschienen: Jesaja sah seine Herrlichkeit (12,41), als er den Herrn auf einem hohen und erhabenen Thron sitzen sah (Jesaja sah also nicht Gott selbst, sondern den Christus); Abraham (8,58) hat auch Christus gesehen, und offenbar hat Abraham das Wort Christi gehört, denn die Juden werden angespornt, das Werk Abrahams zu tun statt danach zu trachten, den Christus zu töten, der ihnen die Offenbarung verkündigt, die er von Gott gehört hat (8,39); und dem Nathanael, der Israelit im wahren Sinne des Wortes ist, in dem kein



Falsch ist, wird verheissen, dass er es einmal schauen wird, wie der Himmel offen ist und die Engel Gottes aufsteigen zum "Menschensohn" und niederfahren auf die Erde, wie einst Jakob, der Israelit, in dem wohl Falsch war, die Engel Gottes zum Herrn (= zum Christus) aufsteigen und niederfahren sah zur Erde (1,51).

Wir sehen also, dass die Gedanken des vierten Evangeliums über die Theophanien des Alten Testaments eine grosse formale Uebereinstimmung mit den Anschauungen der Sektierer zeigen, die wir ausführlich mitgeteilt haben: dass nicht Gott selbst, sondern der Engel des Herrn, oder "die Gestalt wie das Aussehen Adams" oder aber als Träger des Namens und Bringer des Wortes den Vätern erschienen war und auch die Welt geschaffen hatte.

Der Titel  $\acute{\omicron}$   $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  muss eine Bezeichnung sein für dieses ewige und göttliche Wesens, das die Wesensoffenbarung Gottes war.

Nun ist es bemerkenswert, dass in den johanneischen Schriften im weiteren Sinne des Wortes eine Korrespondenz besteht zwischen  $\acute{\omicron}$   $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  und  $\tau\acute{\omicron}$   $\acute{\omicron}\nu\omicron\mu\alpha$ . In der Offenbarung 19,12 hat der verherrlichte Christus einen Namen, den niemand kennt als er selbst: das ist natürlich der verborgene Name, der Name über alle Namen, den Gott Christus verliehen hat, der Name des Herrn = Jahweh; aber in V.13 wird dieser Name als  $\acute{\omicron}$   $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$   $\tau\omicron\upsilon$   $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  umschrieben.

In Joh. 17,6 beantwortet  $\acute{\epsilon}\phi\alpha\acute{\nu}\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omega\varsigma\acute{\alpha}$   $\sigma\omicron\upsilon$   $\tau\acute{\omicron}$   $\acute{\omicron}\nu\omicron\mu\alpha$  mit  $\tau\omicron\acute{\nu}$   $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\upsilon\acute{\nu}$   $\sigma\omicron\upsilon$   $\tau\epsilon\tau\acute{\eta}\rho\eta\kappa\alpha\upsilon$  und wird variiert:  $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omicron$   $\delta\acute{\epsilon}\delta\omega\kappa\alpha$   $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma$   $\tau\omicron\acute{\nu}$   $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\upsilon$   $\sigma\omicron\upsilon$ . Dies erscheint mir als ein Hinweis darauf, dass der Verfasser mit der Dialektik von *šem* und *memra* vertraut war, und die gnostische Bezeichnung "Logos des Jeu" scheint eine Erinnerung daran bewahrt zu haben. Es ist mir dann auch nicht zweifelhaft, dass  $\acute{\omicron}$   $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  im Prolog Übersetzung von *memra* ist, "das Wort", das den Namen des Herrn meint. Es ist vielleicht richtig, dass das rabbinische Material nicht ausreicht zu dem Nachweis, dass *memra* je auf eine persönliche Hypostase angewendet wird, und inzwischen ist es klar geworden, dass in heterodox-jüdischen Kreisen der Messias der die Welt schuf und den Vätern erschien, der Träger des göttlichen Namens war. Diese Konzeption zeigt soviel Übereinstimmung mit der Johanneischen, dass bestimmte Kreise in Palästina sofort an diesen "Träger des Namens" gedacht haben müssen, wenn sie im vierten Evangelium lasen, dass Jesus von Nazareth der  $\lambda\acute{\omicron}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  oder in ihrer eigenen Sprache "memra Jahweh", war. Memra ist nämlich eine Bezeichnung des Namens Gottes. Daher kann es auch als Bezeichnung für denjenigen gebraucht werden, der der Träger des Namens Gottes ist, des Herrn und Menschensohnes, in dem der Name des Herrn war. Am Schluss seines ersten Kapitels sagt

Johannes, dass Jesus Christus der Menschensohn war, d.h. der göttliche Mensch, den Ezechiel durch den offenen Himmel geschaut hatte und der dem Jakob als Herr in der Höhe erschienen war (1,51). In V.12 spricht er von denen, die *an den Namen des "Logos" glauben*, das bedeutet: die glauben, dass derjenige, der als  $\acute{\omicron}$   $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  oder *memra* in Ehrfurcht auf umschreibende Weise angedeutet wird, wahrhaftig den Name des Herrn, den *šem Jahweh*, von Gott empfangen hatte und darum als seine Wesenoffenbarung im Wesen Gott ist. Dieser Ausdruck setzt voraus, dass den Lesern bekannt war, was der Titel  $\acute{\omicron}$   $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  umfasste.

So wird es dann auch deutlich, welche Assoziationen bestimmte Leser gehabt haben müssen, wenn sie vernahmen: der Logos  $\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\kappa\eta\nu\omega\sigma\epsilon\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ . In den Psalmen Salomos (7,6) wird gesagt, dass "wir Erbarmung finden würden wenn der Name Gottes unter uns wohnte": das war jetzt im prägnantesten Sinne erfüllt:  $\tau\acute{o} \acute{\omicron}\nu\omicron\mu\alpha \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\kappa\eta\nu\omega\sigma\epsilon\nu \acute{\epsilon}\nu \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ , der *šem* wurde *basar*. Dies alles setzt die Thematik des Namens, die Identität von Logos und Namen voraus. Vielleicht wurde bereits im Kreise Johannes des Täufers der Messias mit dem Titel *memra* geehrt.

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Mir scheint also das Problem Johannes und Gnosis in den letzten Jahren in ein ganz anderes Licht gekommen zu sein. Einerseits haben die Funde am Toten Meer gezeigt, dass das Johannesevangelium in der Perspektive der jüdischen Vor-Gnosis verstanden werden muss. Die Rollen der "Essener" geben aber bitter wenig Auskunft über den präexistenten Messias, den doch nach dem vierten Evangelium Johannes der Täufer verkündigt haben muss. Das Evangelium der Wahrheit hilft, diese Lücke einigermassen auszufüllen. Wenn man aus dieser Schrift die Spekulationen über den Namen mit den Angaben über die vorchristliche Sekte der Magharier kombiniert, ergibt sich, dass diese Angaben Vergleichsmaterial liefern für die Christologie des vierten Evangeliums.

Es ist offenbar nicht ganz unjüdisch, wenn das vierte Evangelium den Gottmenschen verkündigt. Alle Verweise auf Iran, Gnostizismus oder griechische Philosophie sind Ausflüchte. Wenn man einmal sagt, dass der Messias einerseits der göttliche Adam von Ezechiel 1,26 und andererseits der Träger des Namens (und also Herr) ist, dann spricht man über einen Gottmenschen. Es ist nicht einzusehen, wieso das kirchliche Dogma dem Kerygma des vierten Evangeliums, das doch – wie sich ergeben hat – so eng mit der Messiaserwachtung des jüdischen Volkes verbunden ist, wirklich Schaden zugefügt haben soll.



## CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

### TIME AND HISTORY IN CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY, ESPECIALLY AUGUSTINE\*

We write: "Anno Domini 1951." This means that we measure time from a center. This center determines the time that follows it, and the time which preceded it strove toward this center. Our historical numbering of the years tacitly presupposes a caesura between the era before the birth of Christ and the era which came after it. Our history is oriented toward a center.

It is true that for some years certain circles have been trying to repress this fact. They speak with a special pathos of the year so-and-so "before our time reckoning." This term is hard to understand and suggests certain innocent Socratic questions. Is there, for example, any such a thing as "after our time reckoning"? What will happen "after our time reckoning"? Or will nothing at all happen in the vacuum "after our time reckoning," a vacuum that will drop out of time so entirely as to lose all connection with tradition? Do these circles perhaps altogether deny the Western tradition that is so utterly saturated with history?

It must be admitted that their reluctance to speak of a center of history is understandable, for obviously such a term also implies the central fact of the Christian religion; it implies that past, present, and future are to be understood in terms of this center, that the world as history converges toward this point in a mysterious *systolè* and diverges from it in an equally mysterious *diastolè*. How has this come about? How was it possible that the belief in a universal history, a belief which, as we read in the Book of Daniel, was the dream of a Nebuchadnezzar in the year 168 "before our time reckoning," should have become the basic presupposition of Western people?

The New Testament conception of time is wholly naïve: as in Judaism and to some extent in Parseism, a distinction is made between the present aeon, which extends up to the second coming of Christ, and the future aeon. Thus the history of Salvation becomes a movement from the beginning in paradise to the end in the New Jerusalem.

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\* Previously published in: *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1957, 85–107 (with the title: *Time and History in Patristic Christianity*).

In this historical unfolding the religious vision discovers the workings of an *oikonomia*, a divine plan of Salvation. (It is characteristic that in the later Christian idiom *oikonomia* signifies “Incarnation” as well as “plan of Salvation,” and finally comes to designate the inner unfolding of God into the Trinity, because historically neither the inner life of the Godhead nor the *oikonomia* can be understood except from the perspective of the Incarnation.) And when man is placed in this *oikonomia*, he experiences his *kairos*—that is to say, a tension and a meaning enter into his inherently profane and aimless life “time,” because it becomes related to the plan of Salvation and is thus in direct relation to God.

Nowhere is what the New Testament means by *kairos* better expressed than in the passage from the Gospel of St. John (7:3ff.) (in this respect a truly classic passage) in which Jesus says to his unbelieving brethren: “My *kairos* [to go up to Jerusalem] is not yet come, but your *kairos* is always ready” (verse 6). This means: For you there is no *kairos* in the historical, New Testament sense; there are no times appointed and specially singled out by God in his omnipotence with a view to his plan of salvation. For the others there exists only the profane usage of the word *kairos*: everything depends merely on the human decision as to whether a *kairos* is favorable or not. They can go up to Jerusalem at any time. But not so Christ, for he stands in the very midst of the divine plan of salvation, whose *kairoi* are exactly determined by God.<sup>1</sup>

To a certain degree this sense of time was determined by eschatology. The great discovery of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer was the significance of the expectation of the end for the teachings of Jesus, for beyond any doubt the first Christians expected and hoped that the kingdom of God would *soon* be manifested on earth. In the New Testament man stands in a process which draws its meaning and virtue from an invisible end; mankind, and the cosmos as well, has an *eschaton*, a *telos*, an end which draws events toward it like a magnet. How new this was is shown by a comparison with the Greeks. In his book *In the Grip of the Past*,<sup>2</sup> Bernhard A. van Groningen describes how the Greeks lived in the past and were fascinated by the repetition of the past; so much so that for them the future had no dimension of its own.

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<sup>1</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Christus und die Zeit*, Zurich 1946, 35. Cf. Théo Preiss, “The Vision of History in the New Testament”, *Papers of the Ecumenical Institute* (Geneva), V (1950) 48.

<sup>2</sup> In the series *Philosophia antiqua*, Vol. VI, Leiden 1953.

And yet we should misunderstand the special character of the early Christian sense of time if we attempted to see it wholly in terms of the *telos*. The decisive factor was, rather, the center, the life and death of Jesus. This is the unique, unrepeatable, essential fact, which gives rise to history and to the new sense of time. From it the course of time takes its direction; from it time strives toward an end. There is a divine *ephapax*, a “once and for all”: “For in that [Christ] died, he died unto sin *once*” (Rom. 6:10). Wherever Christians forgather down to the present day, the significance of this act and this sacrifice for salvation is called to mind: “This do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). Moreover, the kingdom of God is mysteriously and invisibly present with the first appearance of Jesus: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15). Or, as in an interpolation to the Gospel of St. Mark, “The limit of the years of the power of Satan is fulfilled” (Mark 16:14, Western text).

There is no doubt that for Jesus the kingdom of God was already present in his person: “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matthew 11:5). These are the signs of eschatological time. It is particularly through and after the Passover that this knowledge that the end of time is at hand is fully formed in the disciples: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17). The spirit had been poured forth and was the supreme reality in the life of the early Christians. It will come to pass at the end of days that the dead will rise again. Christ is risen. To be sure, the future aeon was not yet here in all its glory; but the Resurrection, the coming of the Holy Ghost, are anticipations of the end: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be” (1 John 3:2). Eschatological time breaks into present time. And just as the present has its own meaning and necessity in the announcement of the victory and in selfless charity, so the *pneuma* is already present as the *ἀπαρχή* of transfiguration. The early Christian sense of time was constituted by the *ephapax*—by proleptic eschatology and the meaning of the present for salvation—no less than by eschatology proper.

The thesis that this early Christian time feeling vanished completely in the patristic period is untenable. This notion is in keeping with Protestant or liberal dogma, but the facts speak a different language. Puech has shown that in the first centuries Christian thinkers developed the

idea of rectilinear history and its unrepeatable uniqueness in even greater detail.<sup>3</sup> And indeed, the Church Fathers, in their polemics against heresy, expressed for the first time the idea that there exists a development in history, the idea that in the education of the human race certain forms were justified in their time, only to be rejected at a later epoch. A study of the Church Fathers makes it clear that the pathos of progress is a secularization of early Christian conceptions. This historical vision of ancient Christianity grew out of the *ephapax*, the “once and for all.”

Nor did the thread of proleptic eschatology ever break off. To be sure, patristic Christianity is not merely a continuation of early Christianity. The struggle against Gnosticism led to an overemphasis on free will, which gave patristic Christianity a different imprint from the early Christianity out of which it grew. However, it is a hasty simplification of a complex situation to say that vain waiting for the ardently hoped-for *Parousia* led to a total degeneration and secularization of Christianity—as though the dwindling of eschatological tension and the fading of the eschatological perspective were the causes of the so-called Hellenization of Christianity. In the first place, the texts give little evidence of any such weariness and disillusionment: nowhere is a breach in the tradition discernible. Moreover, such simple solutions for complex problems always tend to be false: it cannot be denied that the germs of the subsequent development were present in early Christianity.

In patristic Christianity we see the development of dogmatism, liturgy, asceticism, mysticism, and apologetics. Is this to be judged as a pseudo-morphosis of the Gospel?

Concerning the origin of the trinitarian dogma, C.G. Jung writes:

The sole reason for the dogma lies in the Christian “message,” which caused a psychic revolution in Western man. On the evidence of the gospels, and of Paul’s letters in particular, it announced the real and veracious appearance of the God-man in this humdrum human world, accompanied by all the marvellous portents worthy of the son of God. However obscure the historical core of this phenomenon may seem to us moderns, with our hankering for factual accuracy, it is quite certain that those tremendous psychic effects, lasting for centuries, were not called forth causelessly, by just nothing at all.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Henri-Charles Puech, “Temps, histoire et mythe dans le christianisme des premiers siècles”, *Proceedings of the 7th Congress for the History of Religions*, Amsterdam 1951, 33–52.

<sup>4</sup> “A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity”, in: *Psychology and Reli-*

Thus Jung, too, believes that the dogmatic development is rooted in the *ephapax* and consequently has nothing to do with weariness and the disappearance of the eschatological perspective. As for the other phenomena, they can be shown to have developed at least in part from proleptic eschatology, so that, ironically enough, it would seem to have been through eschatology that elements having their origin in the mysteries, in philosophy, and in the Gnosis of antiquity became integrated with Christianity.

The early Christian Eucharist, a highly complex phenomenon, was not only an ethic of remembrance and the motif of sacrifice but also a Messianic banquet of rejoicing, an anticipation of the Lord's eschatological *beraka* with his disciples in the kingdom of God. Karl Barth writes: "It is the presence of Jesus in his congregation that is full of his future. For the congregation strives and yearns for his future, universal, and final revelation, which has occurred only in a particular and provisional sense in the Easter episode, so that even the full presence of Jesus in the spirit can only be a pledge and token of what the congregation, along with the whole cosmos, may and must still await: his return in glory."<sup>5</sup> Thus the divine service of the early Christians, like that of the Eastern Church to this day, is an anticipation of the end; it represents the kingdom of God here and now, living in concealment on earth. Cullmann also supports this view: "For the early Christians, the Eucharistic supper was an anticipation of the Messianic supper awaited by the Jews."<sup>6</sup> Barth calls the Last Supper "an anticipation of the universal, ultimate and definitive revelation, which had indeed begun with the resurrection of Jesus, but had only begun; the resurrection had been its ἀρραβών (pledge) and ἀπαρχή (first fruits), but its wholeness was still absent, still to come, so that any celebration of the Last Supper can only look forward to it."<sup>7</sup> Concerning the author of the Apocalypse, Cullmann says: "Receiving his visions on the day of the Lord—that is, on the day in which the Christian congregation is united—the seer considers the Christian cult as a kind of anticipation of the events at the end of time, so that to describe the final drama, indescribable as it is in principle, he is justified in borrowing the terms

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*gion: West and East*, tr. R.F.C. Hull (Collected Works, Vol. II), New York and London 1957, par. 222.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, Vol. III, part II, Zurich 1948, 562.

<sup>6</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Les sacrements dans l'évangile Johannique*, Paris 1951, 40.

<sup>7</sup> Barth, 604.



and images of liturgical life.” And concerning the intention of St. John the Evangelist, he writes: “Beginning with the events of the life of Jesus, he seeks to demonstrate the complete identity of the Lord present in the Christian congregation and of the historical Jesus.”<sup>8</sup> Thus the *Kyrios* was present in the cult, *in praesentia reali*, but this was believed because the early Christians believed in the Easter event, and that he came as a prolepsis of the ultimate transfiguration.

Even if we reject the notion of influence, there is no doubt that this cult *eidos* discloses a certain parallelism with the Hellenistic mysteries. An account of the *inventio*, the great festival of the mysteries of Isis, tells how the *mater dolorosa* searched and how she found the dismembered Osiris:

Isis grieves, laments, searches for her lost son with her dog’s head [Anubis] and the shaven-headed priests; and the unhappy Isiaci beat their breasts and imitate the grief of the mournful mother; then, when the child is found, Isis is glad, the priests are beside themselves with joy, the dog’s head who has found him is proud. And year after year they never cease to lose what they have found and to find what they have lost.<sup>9</sup>

Isis herself was present in the mystery: “It was she who was supposed to direct the rites.”<sup>10</sup> In this *praesentia realis* lies a parallelism with the early Christian Eucharist. The Eucharist, too, knew sorrow when the Lord’s death was announced. But it is also recorded that in the original Jerusalem congregation the festival was celebrated with rejoicing (ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει). This was joy at the presence of the *Kyrios*. The cry “*Maran atha*” implies, besides the prayer for the *Parousia* and the profession of the incarnation, the notion that the Lord is now present, in the divine service, and particularly in the rite of the Lord’s supper.

The strange thing is: whereas the motif of remembrance was taken over from the Jewish feast of the Passover and the motif of sacrifice does not appear to be paralleled at all in the mysteries,<sup>11</sup> this most central idea, most native of all, it would seem, to Christianity, this intuition of the Lord’s presence in the cult has its correspondence in the Hellenistic mysteries.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Cullmann, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, XXI (Migne, *PL*, III, col. 303).

<sup>10</sup> Georges Lafaye, *Histoire du culte des divinités d’Alexandrie hors de l’Égypte*, Paris 1884, 127.

<sup>11</sup> New discoveries show that the adepts of Mithras ate the sacrificed bull, but nothing indicates that Mithras was identical with the bull: M.J. Vermaseren, “De Mithrasmaaltijd”, *Annalen van het Thymgenootschap*, XXXVIII (1950), part 1, 26ff.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur D. Nock, “Hellenistic Mysteries and Christian Sacraments”, *Proceedings of*

But how different is the time sense: the celebration of the Lord's presence is linked to historical events in the most recent past; it is an anticipation of the future—a point, so to speak, on a line between two points. For this reason it is celebrated on Sunday, which is the day of Resurrection but also anticipates the ultimate “day of the Lord,” God's eschatological day of rest after the cosmic week. The celebrants of the mysteries of Isis, however, never cease, year after year, to lose what they have found, and to find what they have lost. This rite represents a timeless, primordial myth, an eternal repetition of the cycle of nature. The totality of the circle is the mystery of the ancient religions; proleptic eschatology, on the other hand, connotes an anticipation of the end. The same relationship stands out in another detail. Isis collects the scattered members (*sparsa membra*) of Osiris, and in the *Didache*, the Christians prayed for the regathering of the dispersed members of the *corpus Christi*: “As this piece [of bread] was scattered over the hills and then was brought together and made one, so let your Church be brought together from the ends of the earth into your Kingdom.”<sup>13</sup> The Gospel of St. John (11:51–52) relates: “. . . that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” This symbolism attaches to the historical fact of the Diaspora and to the eschatological hope that at the time of the coming of the kingdom of heaven the people of God will return to Jerusalem, the center of the earth, because Christ, too, was expected to return to Jerusalem at his second coming. The theme of the *dispersio* has been elevated from the realm of nature to that of history.

It would seem to be more difficult to understand apologetics from the standpoint of eschatology. For on the one hand Christian apologetics is a continuation of Jewish apologetics, while on the other hand it is so saturated with Greek popular philosophy that here at least one is justified in speaking of a penetration of the Greek spirit. Certain hotheads have even gone so far as to speak of pre-existent Renans and Strausses. For some of the apologists do not so much as mention the name of Christ, but expatiate indefinitely on providence and free will, terms that do not even occur in the Bible. But here most particularly

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*the 7th Congress for the History of Religions*, 53–66, shows without acrimony that Christian sacramentalism was not influenced by the mystery religions.

<sup>13</sup> *Didache*, IX, 4; tr. Cyril C. Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers* (Library of Christian Classics, Vol. I), London 1953, 175.

we must guard against optical illusion. For the apologists do not expound a philosophical doctrine but speak the language of the schools of rhetoric and of the anthologies: this gives us, who know the sources of the anthologies which were surely unknown to them, the impression that they mastered philosophy, just as an Italian can impress us tremendously with his knowledge because he has just finished reading that wonderful weekly, *l'Europeo*.

Why did the apologists speak in this way? For one thing, because otherwise they would not have been understood. With their exaggerated penchant for aesthetic effects the people of late antiquity could not tolerate clear, simple language: even St. Augustine complained that the Gospels were unbeautiful. By way of entertaining their readers, the apologists proceed to discuss providence a little. Minucius Felix actually wrote that golden booklet, *Octavius*, containing arguments for and against the idea of providence. It should be borne in mind that this was a topic in a rhetorical thesis which every schoolboy had to compose, and Minucius merely repeated in an elegant style what everyone had long since known. Another apologist who took up a rhetorical thesis of this sort openly declared that he did so in order to show that in following this method one becomes entangled in antinomies; he annuls rhetoric in order to make room for faith.<sup>14</sup> For one of the purposes of apologetics was to convert the heathen. It was also a form of mission.

The literary genres invoked by the apologists had a long and venerable tradition; there were certain things you had to say—just as in fox hunting you have to say “Tallyho”—and certain things you were positively not supposed to say. That is why some of the apologists, for example, did not like to speak of a revolutionary’s cross. Nevertheless, at the end of Minucius Felix’s *Octavius* the pagan is converted to Christianity, while at the end of Cicero’s dialogues the contestants go home just as they came. The purpose was after all the Christian mission.<sup>15</sup> But in early Christianity the mission had very little to do with importunateness and nothing at all to do with sentimental pietism. There was something very different behind it, namely eschatology. It was believed that the kingdom of God could not come before the joyous tidings were proclaimed to all the nations. Not that the early Christians wanted

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<sup>14</sup> Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitiones*, VIII, 5 (Migne, *PG*, III, cols. 1572–73), tr. Thomas Smith, “Recognitions of Clement”, in: *Tatian, Theophilus, and the Clementine Recognitions*, Edinburgh 1867, 362.

<sup>15</sup> G. Quispel, “Anima naturaliter Christiana”, *Latomus* 10 (1951) 163.

everyone to be a Christian; the Constantinian national church was foisted upon the Ecclesia and amounted to a falsification of its intentions. Originally, the early Christians regarded themselves as heralds, who proclaimed the coming of the king of the world and recruited for the army of Christ. This eschatological perspective seems to account for St. Paul's missionary journeys, which followed from the prophecy of a famine, interpreted as a harbinger of the end. Thus eschatology created the mission and the mission produced its apologetics.

Here I shall not speak of the eschatological origins of asceticism and mysticism, because this has recently been done by Peterson<sup>16</sup> and Van Unnik.<sup>17</sup> Instead, we shall turn to theology.

Can eschatology be said to have played a part in Christian theology and specifically in the Augustinian theology, which for obvious reasons is of particular interest to us here? There is no doubt that in theology we find ourselves on a very different level from that of liturgy or mysticism, and that the wind that blows in St. Augustine is very different from that of early Christianity. If it is the task of the theologian to provide a scientific and systematic exposition of what he finds or thinks he finds in the documents of revelation, St. Augustine was assuredly a theologian. Perhaps for this very reason his thinking was so elastic and fruitful. Compared to a philosopher, he was seemingly at a disadvantage, for the philosopher has only his reason to reckon with and rejects what his reason does not recognize. Augustine, however, had to start from the Bible, which relates the most impossible things, which often seems to mock at reason, and which is in general exceedingly obscure. He literally believed first, in order to understand afterward: *Credo ut intellegam*. But this method proved remarkably beneficial to Augustine's thinking. He himself says more than once that even with the greatest effort it is impossible to determine the author's intention; yet (he goes on to say) if one immerses oneself in the "profound obscurities" of Scripture, truths arise in one's spirit which are valid even if they do not reflect the author's meaning. I have never been able to find a single important doctrine in Augustine which is not based on an error in Bible translation. This is true of his theory of visions, which contains the profoundest psychological insights; it is true of his principle of *credo ut intellegam*; it even applies to his fundamental concept of *justitia* and to his theory of

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<sup>16</sup> Erik Peterson, *Euntes docete* 1 (1948) 195.

<sup>17</sup> W.C. van Unnik, *Gregorius van Nyssa, Oratio Catechetica*, Amsterdam 1949, 22ff.

predestination. The same may be said of his ideas on time: we shall see that his analysis of time as *distentio* and *intentio* is based on a mistake in translation. Yet though Augustine teaches us how productive such misunderstandings can be, it remains a miracle how, precisely because he did not understand the Bible, he could discover so much by taking the Bible rather than reason as his starting point. Whatever we may think of Augustine's theological thinking, there is no doubt that it *is* theology, and for this reason we find ourselves with Augustine on a different level from early Christianity or the Christian liturgy.

For, among other things, theology is a demythologization. In our own day, Rudolf Bultmann has made the brand-new discovery that Christianity must be demythologized because the modern consciousness demands it. Why anything so questionable and ambiguous as the modern consciousness (whose consciousness? and why, precisely, consciousness?) should have been elected Pope is not easy to see: there are cleverer Popes and there always have been. If one wants to demythologize at any cost, one must be able to tell what is a myth and what is a fact established by scholarship. Furthermore, one must bear in mind that history means history, that *theos* means *theos*, and that consequently *anthropos* means *anthropos*. When I consider all this, it seems to me that the reduction of the Christian religion to Heideggerian existentialism, illuminating and suggestive as it may be, cannot be called demythologization, for one thing because this philosophy gives no answer to the question of what myth is.

Meanwhile, we can learn a good deal about demythologization from St. Augustine, who designates God as he who is *interior intimo meo et superior summo meo* ("more inward than my inwardness and higher than my highest height"). Where evil is no longer, as the Manichaeans supposed, situated in the cosmos—or in matter, as the Neoplatonists thought—but in the human will; where grace is infused and not forensically imputed; where the criterion for truth is found in an inward and yet not intrapsychic divine master; where Holy Scripture is inwardly inspired by the Holy Ghost; where history is interpreted as the conflict between the love of God and the love of self, and time as subjective; where visions are taken as products of the memory—a long step has been taken toward demythologization. And not so much because the contemporary consciousness dictated such thinking as because reflection on the content of religious beliefs is a feature immanent in theism. For St. Paul (1 Cor. 14–15) *nous* and *pneuma* belong together, and Augustine remembered this passage when he turned his attention to the *visio mentis* and the *visio spiritus* in *De Genesi ad litteram* (XI, 8). This method

of demythologizing can be exemplified by Augustine's treatment of the problems of time and history: the contemporary consciousness caused the question to be raised and proposed the problem, and its influence was merely heuristic; moreover, Augustine exposed the hollowness and archaism of this consciousness. The point of departure was *faith*: faith in creation, in the *ephapax*, and in the experience of the end, jutting into time. He could justify this faith only by refuting the Hellenistic concept of time. This happens in successive stages. First, in the *Confessions*, time is taken into the soul; then, in the *City of God*, he refutes the cyclical conception of history, the belief in the eternal recurrence of all things and in reincarnation; finally, in *De Genesi ad Litteram*, he so extends the Greek concept of nature that side by side with the natural phenomena which are subservient to law he is able to recognize the rare and unique events, such as miracles, magic, and parapsychological phenomena, as well as, through his doctrine of *rationes seminales*,<sup>18</sup> something akin to a history of nature.

It has become customary to lift Augustine's reflections on time out of their context and compare them with the findings of modern scholars. When this is done, Augustine is often said to have anticipated Kant's discovery of the subjectivity of time. Emil Brunner goes so far as to compare him with Einstein and Planck. He writes glibly:

It is certain that Augustine made a great discovery in venturing to state for the first time (in his *Confessions*) that the world is neither atemporal and eternal, nor created at a certain moment in the succession of time, but that world and time were created together, that world and time thus have their beginning in creation; so that it is meaningless to ask what God did before the Creation of the world. The entire schema of before and after—that is to say, the schema of time—is given only with creation, which is thus posited as a temporal creation. We cannot sufficiently admire the depth and boldness of this thought: and if we consider the most recent findings of astrophysics, we can only be astounded at the brilliance of the thinker who through faith and without any scientific foundation intuitively arrived at an idea which, paradoxical as it may seem, imposes itself as the truth upon the scientific thinking of our day; since it follows both from Einstein's theory of relativity and from Planck's quantum physics.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Jacques de Blic, "Le processus de la création d'après Saint Augustin", *Mélanges offerts au R.P. Ferdinand Cavallera*, Toulouse 1948, 179–89.

<sup>19</sup> Emil Brunner, "La conception chrétienne du temps", *Dieu Vivant* 14 (1949) 18. A Christological grounding of time is in Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, III, 2, 524ff.

But experience teaches that such parallels with modern science are dangerous. Perhaps it will be worthwhile to place St. Augustine's ideas, especially his conception of time, strictly in their own setting, to ask whom he is attacking and with what intention he says what he says.

Augustine speaks of time because his adversaries asked him: What did God do before he created heaven and earth? This theatrical question had made itself at home in philosophy long before Christ and was an old stand-by of the rhetorical curriculum. The Epicureans and Manichaeans had taken it over, although in the mouths of the latter this argument could have no more than a rhetorical significance, because according to them the world had a beginning in time. Therefore, the adversaries at whom Augustine aimed were others, profane philosophers who busied themselves with the *controversia de initio rerum temporalium* (controversy on the beginning of time). As a comparison between the *City of God* (XI, 4, 5, and XII, 18) and the *Confessions* (XI, 12) shows, these were the Neoplatonists of his day. Thus speculation on time became a motif in the great struggle between a cyclical and a historical view of the world, between archaism and Christianity, which was being enacted in those truly apocalyptic times. The battle was not about the academic problem of *tempus* but about *Christiana tempora*.

Augustine's Neoplatonic adversaries are to be sought in the city of Rome in the ranks of the national reaction once led by Symmachus, who wished to lay the blame for the sacking of Rome (A.D. 410) upon the Christians. It was they who by raising this question of responsibility led Augustine to write his *City of God*. Their shibboleth was criticism of the *Christiana tempora*: ah, the golden days of the heroes Horace and Cicero! To the Christian view of history they opposed their own, a doctrine of the eternal recurrence of all things, a cyclical law of history which reminds us somewhat of Nietzsche and Spengler. In cosmic periods the same process is forever repeated. As Plato once taught in Athens, so he will teach once again; indeed he will teach innumerable times, in the same city and in the same school.

Similarly all human life is repeated over and over again in endless metempsychoses, from heavenly bliss to earthly misery, from earthly misery to heavenly bliss. The logical ground for this theory is that only knowledge of the finite is possible: thus God, too, has only a finite number of causes for the finite number of things that he creates. Hence there is no beginning and no *telos*, no *novum*, no unique fact, no irreversible time, no evolution; and man, so to speak, is a squirrel in a cage—eternity is immanent. In their refutation of Christianity the

Neoplatonists opposed the cycle to the straight line, the *circuitus* to the *via recta*: “these arguments, with which the impious seek to turn our simple faith away from the straight way, in order that we may walk in a circle with them.”<sup>20</sup> Thus an entire philosophy of history is concealed in their question about the beginning of time.

This question preoccupied Augustine because the theme of time and eternity evoked by his vision in Ostia, where he experienced eternity, runs through his whole opus.<sup>21</sup> In *De Genesi ad Litteram* he elaborates the relationship of time and eternity in the creation of the cosmos; in the *City of God* he attacks the cyclical view of history in order to free eternity from the embrace of time; and in the *Confessions* he shows that the question was false, because time is within the soul and presupposes the movement of the cosmos, so that before the creation there was no time.

In the *City of God* (XII) he attempts, not unsuccessfully, to undermine the cyclical sense of the cosmos by showing that even a Platonist must admit that in the continuous repetition of the reincarnated soul there must be some *novum*; for either we assume that this circuit has an end, or we must, in order to avoid being caught in an endless chain, assume that the soul once upon a time fell from the spiritual world. In both cases a *novum* appears. But if there is a *novum* in human life, a *novum* enters automatically into history as well.<sup>22</sup> But then the eternal recurrence of all things proves false and our eyes open to the *ephapax* and the *eschaton*. And Augustine cries out: “Where are our revolutions, that admit nothing new, but keep all in one course?” (XII, 20). The spell of determinism is broken, the circle is shattered. Whereas Herodotus, the first important historian among the Greeks, spoke of the cycle of human events, the last great historian of ancient times leads his readers from the *falsus circuitus* to the *trames recti itineris*, the straight line of history.

After thus demolishing the cyclic view of history, Augustine could proceed to develop his own vision of the two kingdoms, of God and of the Devil, which have existed side by side from the very beginning and will exist down to the last judgment; and the mixture of the two constitutes the history which, guided by an admirable providence,

<sup>20</sup> *City of God*, XII, 10–20.

<sup>21</sup> To have demonstrated this is Guitton's great achievement: Jean Guitton, *Le temps et l'éternité chez Plotin et Augustin*, Paris 1933.

<sup>22</sup> John F. Callahan, *Four Views of Time in Ancient Philosophy*, Cambridge, Mass. 1948, deals with Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and Augustine.



makes the universe into a picture containing darkness as a necessary component, so that the passage of the centuries becomes a wonderful song of antitheses: “So making the world’s course, like a fair poem, more gracious by antithetic figures.”<sup>23</sup> In developing this universal vision, he revived old Judeo-Christian eschatological conceptions, particularly that of the heavenly Jerusalem which would come at the end of time. It should also be borne in mind that in his anti-Manichaean works he had become versed in the historical themes of the heresy hunters and in this respect shows himself very much dependent on the tradition. However, he abandoned the chiliasm—still very much alive in Western tradition—which gave a very vivid picture of the future paradise on earth, in other words, confused time and eternity. The City of God remains an *eschaton*, a goal of the cosmic, historical, and individual process, but it is still *eternal* life. Yet Augustine would not have been what he was if he had not derived the two kingdoms from their psychological roots, *amor Dei* and *amor sui*, love of God and love of self, and sought the source of the second kingdom in *superbia*, pride and lust for power, which for him was the beginning of all sin: *initium omnis peccati superbia est*. Here he speaks from personal experience. And this is how Augustine demythologized history. We may characterize his theology as demythologized eschatology.

It is against this background that we must view his remarks on time in the eleventh book of the *Confessions*.<sup>24</sup> Here again he comes to grips with the Neoplatonists and turns time inward in order to make room for eschatology. In this connection it should be remembered that the Neoplatonism he was fighting was a mixture of Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic elements, so that he was actually attacking the whole ancient concept of time. Augustine’s arguments are best understood in the perspective of the Aristotelian concept of time, to which he also refers in his text. According to Aristotle, time is the number of motion; time and motion exist in an indissoluble togetherness (ἄμω): “Time is, if not motion (κίνησις), at least something in it; it is the number of motion, hence an event (πάθος) and a state (ἕξις) of motion. Ἀριθμός—it is explicitly stated—does not, in this definition of time, signify that with

<sup>23</sup> *City of God*, XII, 18, tr. John Healey, ed. R.V.G. Tasker (2 vols.), London and New York 1945.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Brunner, “Zur Auseinandersetzung zwischen antikem und christlichem Zeit- und Geschichtsverständnis bei Augustin”, *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 14 (1933) 1–25.

which we count, but that which is itself counted.”<sup>25</sup> In order to detach this most common and banal phenomenon from its exteriority, Augustine must make it into a riddle. “What then is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to a questioner, I do not know.”<sup>26</sup> We speak of past, present, and future; the past is no longer, the future is not yet; if the present endured, it would not be time but eternity: in order to be time, it must become the past; it owes its being to nonbeing; it is time only if it tends toward nonbeing. “An *X* hurtles from a nothingness to a nothingness through a nothingness.”

If there is any such thing as past and future, they must be presence, present in the soul. And indeed, the past is present in the memory as an image. Is this also true of the future? Here Augustine begins to hesitate with that magnificent, inspired hesitation which so often veils his profoundest intimations. Yes, it must be so, the future exists for me only as presence in my soul. But how can this be? Are existent images, images that are already present in the memory, anticipated? Is there a kind of *arcana praesensio futurorum* (mysterious prescience of things future) which would explain biblical prophecy as well as pagan divination? This he does not know at this point. But he does know that the future as expectation arises through rational induction from the present.

Thus past, present, and future are in the soul as *memoria*, *contuitus* (sight), and *expectatio*. We measure times. But how can we measure what does not exist? The past is no longer, the future is not yet. And what of the present? The present has no duration. *Praesens nullum habet spatium*. It has vanished before one can apply the measure. *Implicatissimum aenigma!* A very intricate riddle!

After thus leading his belated Horaces, “cyclists,” and guilt specialists around by the nose for a time, Augustine gives the solution of the riddle. How shall I measure time? In order that we may compare a short and a long syllable, both must have died away. Thus I do not measure the syllables themselves, but the images of the two tones in my *memory*. “In thee, my soul, I measure my times.” Thus when I measure time, I measure impressions, modifications of consciousness.

When I deliver a lecture, my expectation is directed toward what I wish to say, my attention toward what I am saying, and my memory toward what I have said. Time consists precisely in the present regard

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>26</sup> *Confessions*, XI, 14; tr. F.J. Sheed, London and New York 1951.

of a comparing consciousness. My attention is broadened, becomes extensive, a *distentio*. Time is a *distentio animi*. This extensivity of the soul signifies at the same time its dismemberment, for it is hurled back and forth between memory, expectation, and attention until nothing more is to be expected, because death has come. My whole life is *distentio*! The time of all men in the world draws to an end. I have succumbed to time: “I am divided up in time, whose order I do not know, and my thoughts are torn with every kind of tumult.”<sup>27</sup>

Now at last Augustine is where he wants to be. For he has transposed time into the soul, in order to recover the soul from its externalization and dispersion in the world. With an allusion to one of the profoundest eschatological passages in St. Paul he says:

But Thy mercy is better than lives, and behold my life is but a scattering. Thy right hand has held me up in my Lord, the Son of Man who is the Mediator in many things and in divers manners—that I may apprehend by Him in whom I am apprehended and may be set free from what I once was, following your Oneness: forgetting the things that are behind and not poured out upon things to come and things transient, but stretching forth to those that are before (not by dispersal but by concentration of energy) I press towards the prize of the supernal vocation, where I may hear the voice of Thy praise and contemplate Thy delight which neither comes nor passes away.<sup>28</sup>

Peter Brunner remarks:

I myself am *distentus*, I am in the dispersion of my temporality. Is there still a salvation, a healing? Can the self, shattered in its temporality, still find its wholeness and unity? Yes, but never within its own temporality, but only if the self looks out from its own temporal fragmentation toward the eschatological, eternal *ante* of all time which is manifested in the Mediator; only by reaching and striving out of time toward *ea quae ante sunt*, beyond our temporality. Only when I look toward this eternal *ante* am I no longer *distentus*, but *extentus*, reaching out of this temporality and toward the *superna vocatio*.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, XI, 29; tr. Sheed.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> P. Brunner, 15. In *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Vol. I, part 11, 51, Barth gives us the following misjudgment: “A problematization of the time arising in the act of the human spirit through the consideration that the time which we think we ‘have’ might be lost time, does not seem to come within his scope.”

Beside *distentio* into past, present, and future, we have *intentio* toward eternity. There can be no doubt that Augustine regards outward time without relation to God as “lost time.” From the very outset it has been his purpose, in fact the aim of all his reflections on time, to free the inner eye for this dimension, to show that his adversaries’ cyclical conception of time comprehends no true eternity but only a circular, static finiteness, and that eternity, or rather the all-embracing Eternal One, constitutes time and encompasses it in his incomparable otherness, and that man, if he withdraws from the outside world, can in some way, through his *intentio*, come into contact with this eternity, this original, genuine, creative time of God. It has not been sufficiently taken into account that Augustine himself sounds this programmatic theme at the beginning of his philosophy of time:

Those who speak thus do not yet understand You, O Wisdom of God, light of minds: they do not yet understand how the things are made that are made by You and in You. They strive for the savor of eternity, but their mind is still tossing about in the past and future movements of things, and is still vain. Who shall lay hold upon their mind and hold it still, that it may stand a little while, and a little while glimpse the splendor of eternity which stands for ever: and compare it with time whose moments never stand, and see that it is not comparable?<sup>30</sup>

This *intentio*, this inner relation to eternity, is the heart of the matter. And this precisely is an idea that could not have been held by Kant, whose precursor Augustine is said to be.

A comparison between modern thinkers and Augustine would seem to pass by what is most essential. This also seems to apply to the distinction between “lived time” and “thought time,” which Emil Brunner misses in Augustine. “No sooner has something passed from the future into the present,” Brunner writes, “than it has become the past. On this, too, Augustine made definitive statements. But if I am not mistaken, he failed to take one of the most important facts into account, namely that lived time is something other than thought time. Lived time, to use Bergson’s term, is real time (*durée réelle*).”<sup>31</sup> Brunner goes on to explain how this deficiency in St. Augustine is to be understood.

Here again time as *intentio* is not taken into account. It seems to me that it would be more fruitful for an understanding of Augustine

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<sup>30</sup> *Confessions*, XI, 11; tr. Sheed.

<sup>31</sup> E. Brunner, 28.

to compare him with himself than to indulge in such excursions into vitalism. Here our ways part from those of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, who lift Augustine's philosophy of time from its phenomenological context, as though the old theology of loci, based on quoting disconnected passages, had not long been superseded. For on all sides we are admonished to consider the whole, the fundamental structure. In this sense and only in this sense can it be illuminating to compare Augustine with Bergson. If I understand Bergson correctly and if it is permissible to demythologize this thinker too, he believed that when I close my eyes I "intuit" that I endure; he believed that duration is the experience of the "time that passes," whereas for the intelligence this experience congeals into a "past time."<sup>32</sup>

Now this can in some degree be compared with the first phase of *intentio*, the imaged vision of the *visio spiritus*. The *intentio* turns away, detaches itself from the sense organs, and enters into ecstasy, so that even where the senses are unobstructed, no things are seen, no words are heard, and the soul is entirely with the images (*De Genesi ad litteram*, XII, 12). But Augustine has a still profounder vision, *visio mentis*, the imageless contemplation of God, the experience of eternity, the highest intensity and inwardness of the soul, illumination. Here the intention is directed toward eternity, and God speaks ineffably, more withdrawn and yet more intensely present than in the image, and directly (*De Genesi ad litteram*, XII, 27: "in that manifestation, in which God is, He speaks ineffably, being unspeakably far more hidden and yet more present"). In this sense, to be sure, Augustine does know two modes of time, *distentio* and *intentio*, distraction and intensity of the soul, but it is eternity, the eternal, which is experienced in a realm beyond images. "Why," writes Guitton, "might there not for some men be moments in which they would, through grace, be sufficiently present to themselves, not of course to coincide with God's eternity, but at least to savor their eternity in God in hope and anticipation?"<sup>33</sup>

In his account of his conversation on eternal life with his mother, shortly before her death, Augustine makes it clear to us why he was so concerned with the relationship between time and eternity, and why he later spoke in so sublime a tone of the vision of God:

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. C.H. de Goeje, *What Is Time?*, Leiden 1949, though de Goeje's remarks are also in need of demythologizing.

<sup>33</sup> *Le temps et l'éternité*, 198.

When the day was approaching on which she was to depart this life—a day that You knew though we did not—it came about, as I believe by Your secret arrangement, that she and I stood alone leaning in a window, which looked inwards to the garden within the house where we were staying, at Ostia on the Tiber; for there we were away from everybody, resting for the sea-voyage from the weariness of our long journey by land. There we talked together, she and I alone, in deep joy; and forgetting the things that were behind and looking forward to those that were before, we were discussing in the presence of Truth, which You are, what the eternal life of the saints could be like, which eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man. But with the mouth of our heart we panted for the high waters of Your fountain, the fountain of the life which is with You; that being sprinkled from that fountain according to our capacity, we might in some sense meditate upon so great a matter.

And our conversation had brought us to this point that any pleasure whatsoever of the bodily senses, in any brightness whatsoever of corporeal light, seemed to us not worthy of comparison with the pleasure of that eternal Light, not worthy even of mention. Rising as our love flamed upwards towards that Selfsame, we passed in review the various levels of bodily things, up to the heavens themselves, whence sun and moon and stars shine upon this earth. And higher still we soared, thinking in our minds and speaking and marvelling at Your works; and so we came to our own souls, and went beyond them to come at last to that region of richness unending, where You feed Israel forever with the food of truth: and there life is that Wisdom by which all things are made, both the things that have been and the things that are yet to be. But this Wisdom itself is not made: it is as it has ever been, and so it shall be forever: indeed “has ever been” and “shall be forever” have no place in it, for it simply is, for it is eternal: whereas “to have been” and “to be going to be” are not eternal. And while we were thus talking of His Wisdom and panting for it, with all the effort of our heart we did for one instant attain to touch it; then sighing, and leaving the first fruits of our spirit bound to it, we returned to the sound of our own tongue, in which a word has both beginning and ending. For what is like to your Word, Our Lord, who abides in Himself forever, yet grows not old and makes all things new!

So we said: If to any man the tumult of the flesh grew silent, silent the images of earth and sea and air; and if the heavens grew silent, and the very soul grew silent to herself and by not thinking of self mounted beyond self; if all dreams and imagined visions grew silent, and every tongue and every sign and whatsoever is transient—for indeed if any man could hear them, he should hear them saying with one voice: We did not make ourselves, but He made us who abides forever: but if, having uttered this and so set us listening to Him who made them, they all grew silent, and in their silence He alone spoke to us, not by them but by Himself: so that we should hear His word, not by any tongue of flesh nor the voice of an angel nor the sound of thunder nor in the darkness

of a parable, but that we should hear Himself whom in all these things we love, should hear Himself and not them; just as we two had but now reached forth and in a flash of the mind attained to touch the eternal Wisdom which abides over all: and if this could continue, and all other visions so different be quite taken away, and this one should so ravish and absorb and wrap the beholder in inward joys that his life should eternally be such as that one moment of understanding for which we had been sighing—would not this be: *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?*<sup>34</sup>

So much has been written about this vision that one scarcely dares say any more. If I nevertheless do so, it is certainly not in order to refute earlier scholars. There are good reasons for the attempt to view this passage in the light of mysticism, and it is an established fact that Augustine made use of Neoplatonic models in describing his experience. But it is a mistake to seek here only a mystical experience or only a philosophical intuition as though the two were mutually exclusive and as though St. Augustine's illumination (for that is the core of the matter) could be defined so clearly. For in the ancient Christian consciousness the elements that we differentiate and delimit, and even set off against one another, were indissolubly connected—as the whole of the patristic literature, and particularly Augustine's theory of illumination, shows. Even so, we shall attempt to take a third path and ask what Augustine himself thought of his vision. This can be done, because in the twelfth book of *De Genesi ad litteram* he delivered a very detailed judgment on visions in reference to his experience at Ostia.

Here we find that formally Augustine would have designated this event, with a term going back to the Neoplatonist Porphyry, as a *visio mentis*, a spiritual intuition. But from the standpoint of content he takes a deeper view, for according to Augustine it is precisely in this moment that man becomes aware of his createdness, his limitation, and absolute dependence: "however little the mind, which is not what God is... can comprehend Him" (XII, 26). Moreover, it was very well known to Augustine that man walks by faith on this earth, even though he live justly.<sup>35</sup> But man cannot achieve such a vision through intellectual

<sup>34</sup> *Confessions*, IX, 10; tr. Sheed.

<sup>35</sup> *De Genesi ad litteram*, XII, 26 (Migne, *PL*, XXXIV, col. 478): secundum assumptis Dei gratiam. *Ibid.*, 28: Unde dictum est: Beati mundo corde quia ipsi Deum videbunt, non per aliquam corporaliter vel spiritualiter figuratam significationem tamquam per speculum in aenigmate, sed facie ad faciem, quod de Moyse dictum est, est "os ad os," per speciem scilicet, qua Deus est quidquid est, quantumcumque eum mens, quae non est quod ipse, etiam ab omni terrena labe munda, et ab

exertion; it is a revelation, a charisma of God: *secundum assumentis Dei gratiam* (XII, 26).

It is precisely for this reason, because from the very beginning the living God sent man on this road, guided him in this direction, that man can be held worthy to drink beatitude at the source in this life and to preserve the memory of it: "Then the one and only virtue is to love what you see, and the highest happiness is to have what you love, for then the blessed life is drunk in its source, whence some part of this human life is watered" (XII, 26). When Augustine speaks of the *visio mentis*, he is thinking of the Apostle Paul, who in a vision heard "unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (II Cor. 12:4). He aspires not to the idea of the Good, which is an "object of understanding," but to the living God who is the subject of the encounter. Where grace and revelation are concerned, he went beyond Plotinus, spiritual empiricism seeing more deeply than rational metaphysics into the heart of religion.<sup>36</sup>

If it is true that the art of writing consists of keeping something silent, we may go farther in our judgment of the vision in Ostia. And then, "with all the effort of our heart we did for one instant attain to touch it; then sighing, and leaving the first fruits of our spirit bound to it, we returned..."<sup>37</sup> "It" means the heavenly Jerusalem, which he remembers on his pilgrimage through life, which is his home and is

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omni corpore et similitudine corporis alienata et abrepta capere potest: a quo peregrinamur mortali et corruptibili onere gravati, quamdiu per fidem ambulamus, non per speciem, et cum hic iuste vivimus. Cur autem non credamus, quod tanto apostolo gentium doctore, raptus usque ad istam excellentissimam visionem, voluerit Deus demonstrare vitam, in qua post hanc vitam vivendum est in aeternum? ("according to the grace of God who takes him up."/"Wherefore it is said: Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God, not in any figurative appearance whether bodily or spiritual, as though in a glass darkly, but face to face, or, as is said of Moses, "mouth to mouth"; namely, in that manifestation in which God is whatsoever He is, however little the mind, which is not what He is, even though it be cleansed of all earthly dross, and cut off and set free from all body and all that is bodily, be able to comprehend Him; for we are on pilgrimage away from Him, weighed down with a mortal and corruptible burden, so long as we walk by faith, not by sight, and live righteously here. For why should we not find it credible that to so great an apostle, the Doctor of the Gentiles, rapt in that most excellent vision of his, God willed to show that life in which after this life we are to live for ever?"—Tr. A.S.B.G.)

Barth's remarks in *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Vol. II, pt. 1, p. 9, are in need of revision to conform with this passage.

<sup>36</sup> On Neoplatonism, Gnosis, and Christianity cf. my *Gnosis als Weltreligion*, Zürich 1951, 16.

<sup>37</sup> *Confessions*, IX, 10; tr. Sheed.



his mother, the place of God's presence, "so that I shall not turn away but shall come to the peace of that Jerusalem, my dear mother, where are the first fruits of my spirit, . . . and there Thou shalt collect from my present scatteredness and deformity all that I am."<sup>38</sup> Then suddenly we see what lies behind the *distentio* and *intentio*: here we find a recurrence of those original themes of the Judeo-Christian eschatology—diaspora and return to Jerusalem—but in a new, more inward sense: only through the restoration of his relation with God, only by being overpowered by God, can man achieve his wholeness. The theme of the *dispersio* is transferred into the soul.

And more: when Augustine, both in his reflections on time and in his account of his vision at Ostia, repeatedly echoes one of the finest eschatological passages in St. Paul: "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark (*secundum intentionem*) for the prize of the high calling," we should not forget what immediately precedes these words in the epistle: "I count not myself to have apprehended" (Phil. 3:13).

This is crucial for St. Augustine as well. Jean Guitton, the eminent student of St. Augustine, has compared Augustine's experience of time and eternity with the conception of Plotinus and Spinoza, and sums up what is characteristic for Augustine in the following words: "But in it he sees not salvation, but only a foretaste of it."<sup>39</sup> As in early Christianity, as in St. Paul, so also in St. Augustine, the οὐπω λογίζομαι κατειληφέναι (I count not myself to have apprehended) stands beside the οἶδα ἄνθρωπον ἐν Χριστῷ (I know a man in Christ). And one wonders: is this utter detachment of soul, which experiences God's eternity with absolute evidence and yet hovers between "already fulfilled" and "not yet fulfilled"—is this not an anticipation of the end, is it not proleptic eschatology?

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Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon*, Brill Leiden 1991, has shown that Augustine's City of God and his doctrine of the Two Cities has Jewish Christian and Early Christian African roots.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Le temps et l'éternité*, 199.

## CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

### UTRECHT AND THE CONVERSION OF GERMANY. LIUDGER AND THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS\*

#### SCHOOL

Liudger or Ludger, also known as Saint Ludgerus, was sent by his father and mother to the school of abbot Gregorius in Utrecht in 754. This school was situated between the church of Saint Martin and the church of the Salvator, roughly on the site of the present main university building on the Domplein.

At the time, the school drew students from far afield: Angles and Franks, Frisians and Saxons and even Swabians and Bavarians from the south of Germany and Austria. Now and again an itinerant saint from England would stop at the school to prepare himself for his missionary work amongst the still pagan, cognate Saxons living in the Dutch provinces of Overijssel and Drenthe, in the area known as the “Achterhoek”, and in the north of Germany. Boniface wintered in Utrecht in 754 before setting off on what would become his last journey to Frisia. The young Liudger saw him there and would later remember his grey head. The quality of the education offered was high. Liudger read with his favourite tutor Augustine’s *Encheiridion* in Latin, still an important fountainhead of theology, which since the academic revolution of 1968 most students in the Netherlands are no longer capable of reading. But the library also held a “codex” containing the works of the Roman historian Livy. Utrecht at the time also offered classical literature on the curriculum.

Abbot Gregorius, a noble Frank from the vicinity of Trier, had been so inspired by Boniface when he was a young lad, that he followed him everywhere, eventually becoming the successor of Willibrord and Boniface in Utrecht. Yet he had not become a bishop, he was an abbot and a professor. As was the case in Ireland, abbots and professors in those days ranked above bishops.

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Liudger was very fond of Gregorius and later composed his biography, the “Vita Gregorii”. This made him the first literary figure in the Netherlands.

#### MOTHER

Shortly after she had been born, Liudger’s mother had narrowly escaped death. Her paternal grandmother was a pagan, and took it ill of her daughter-in-law that she only bore her husband daughters. She hired murderers to kill the child, who put the infant in a tub filled with water to drown it. The little child grabbed hold of the edge of the tub and resisted its killers. Providentially, a neighbour intruded on the scene. She took hold of the child and dabbed its mouth with honey. This made the killing, according to Germanic law, illegal.

Our ancestors’ customs could be cruel. Cannibalism, witch murders, strangulation of prisoners of war were not uncommon practices. As a result of the miraculous intervention, Liudger’s entire family dedicated itself to the Church. Both Liudger and his younger brother Hildegrim, who was educated by Liudger himself at Utrecht, rose to become priests, abbots and bishops. Two daughters married into the aristocracy, but their sons, too, became abbots and bishops. The youngest daughter, Heriburg, entered the convent. There was nobody left in the family to inhabit the manor house on the river Vecht.

#### FRISIAN NOBLEMAN

The Frisians at the time peopled the area which roughly runs from the river Weser in Germany to the river Zwin in Belgium. They also lived along the Dutch river Vecht in the province of Utrecht, where Liudger’s father owned vast properties. Liudger was born in Zwesen, which survives in the name Zwesereng, the common farmland of the villagers of Zwesen, opposite castle Oud-Zuilen on the Vecht, which was possibly built on the site where once the manor house of Liudger’s Frisian family stood. There the boy saw the ships pass on their way to Sweden. Later he longed to go to the immense Scandinavian lands, but he was barred from going by the Emperor Charlemagne. He only got as far as Helgoland. It later became a family legend that as a child, Liudger already trained for his future task. Hardly could he walk or speak or he was gathering the bark of trees and turned them into

booklets. With a little water and a chalk of straw, he would pretend to write and would then take his books to his nurse. "Thus he already practised at an early age what he was to fulfil with great commitment later", his biographer Altfrið wrote of him.

#### BIBLIOPHILE

Liudger was to become a life-long lover of fine books. In 767 he went to York for a year to study in this city, where scholarship and religion flourished. He was to return there for another three years in 769. In York he studied at the still existing St. Peter's school under Alcuin, the greatest scholar of his age, who would later mastermind the European cultural policy of Charlemagne. York boasted a splendid library, probably the largest of all of Western Europe. Liudger returned to Utrecht with a great many books. Shortly afterwards he wrote a "codex" containing the letters of the apostle Paul, which bears the characteristics of the Northumbrian script, then in vogue in York. He may have written this manuscript in Utrecht at the time.

Liudger was sent to Deventer and Friesland where he continued the work begun by Boniface. In 784 he had to flee during an uprising and went with his brother to Italy, where they stayed for two and a half years. There he visited the monastery at Monte Cassino, the mother of all Benedictine monasteries. He copied the Rule of Benedict, who organised the monastic system of the Catholics, without ever becoming a monk himself.

It is assumed that it was at this time that Liudger acquired the renowned *Codex Argenteus*, which was later part of his abbey library. This Codex is a wonderful and precious book, written on purple-stained vellum with golden and silver letters, and was produced in northern Italy in the sixth century for a Gothic prince who ruled there. It contains parts of a translation of the Bible in Gothic. Just the thing for a rich aristocrat, who proclaimed the gospel to the Frisians in their own language and who must have been interested in such a translation. According to a later list, he also owned a "Codex quattuor evangeliorum a sancto Liudgero ut fertur conscriptus in membrano" (A book of the four gospels, presumed to be written by Saint Liudger himself, on vellum).

This may well have been a Latin harmony of the four gospels, a "Diatessaron", "one out of four", such as had been produced by the

Syrian Tatian in 170 C.E. For centuries it was in general use in the Christian world and it was in fact the most widely-read book after the Bible, because occasionally it was also read during the service. It is the basis for the oldest biblical translations in the Netherlands, the Limburg “Life of Jesus” (ca. 1250) and the Saxon poem the *Heliand* (the Saviour) which was written around 840. The Diatessaron also contains tradition not derived from the four Church gospels, which is why it was also called “Diapente”, “one out of five”.

In 1983 Frits Hugenholtz and his students critically studied all available information on Liudger and came to the well-researched conclusion, that Liudger must indeed have owned such a Diatessaron. In their study *Dom en onderwijs* they wrote: “All books we know for certain to have been available at the school in Utrecht: the Bible, a harmony of the gospels, the *Encheiridion* (of Augustine), a psalter and the *Regula Benedicti*, are extremely fit for the training of future missionaries”.

This amounts to a marvellous concession, because it implies that the tradition of the Gospel of Thomas must also have been indirectly known in Utrecht in the eighth century. The Gospel of Thomas reverberates in all of the numerous versions of the Diatessaron. That is why that lost harmony of gospels which Liudger owned, the *Codex Liudgerianus*, is of exceptional importance.

The Gospel of Thomas is a book containing 114 sayings attributed to Jesus. There isn't a cross, resurrection or Last Judgement to be found here. This Jesus speaks to us like a wisdom teacher, an “Oriental sage”. The work has several layers. Crossan assumes that the oldest source, the oldest shape of the work, was put to writing in the Christian community of Jerusalem around 50 C.E. This community was led by James, the brother of the Lord. It would make it the oldest Christian work known to us, much older than the Church gospels. It contains words which are absolutely new. Jesus says:

If you bring forth what is within you,  
 what you have will save you;  
 if you do not have that within you,  
 what you do not have within you will kill you.  
 (Logion 70)

This is very deep. Here speaks the physician of all souls, who knows that forgotten memories must be restored to oneself and that unconscious forces within the soul need be tapped in order to heal a man.

Other sayings resemble well-known sayings of Jesus but are pithier and more original:

There will be five in a house;  
there will be three against two and two against three.  
(Logion 16)

This relates to the generation gap. The son, his wife and his sister are all for Jesus, the parents, however, prefer to walk in the old paths. The above passage is to be found verbatim in the Limburg “Life of Jesus” and nowhere else:

dar si vive selen sijn in een hus  
de drie selen sijn tegen de twee en de twee tegen de drie  
[where there are five in a house,  
three are against the two and the two against the three].

Sometimes there is a marked difference between *Thomas* and the Gospel of Matthew:

The man is like a wise fisherman who casts his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea full of small fish.  
(Logion 8)

A parable is an image taken from daily life, observed with the sharp vision of a fresh and innocent eye. A fisherman stands up to his thighs in water and casts out his net, gathers it in, returns the small fish and keeps the one big fish he has caught. This can still be seen today on the shores of Lake Gennesaret in Israel.

Matthew speaks of a trawl, operated by more than one man:

Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a drag net thrown into the sea, and gathering together of every kind. (Matthew 13:47)

And he uses it to refer to the Last Judgement, when angels will cast the evil ones into a burning oven.

*Thomas* says nothing at all on this subject: he is concerned with man, who in his wisdom chooses the one necessary thing, the way the merchant in another parable selects that one pearl. It doesn't take a professor of the New Testament to explain that *this* is the original version.

The *Heliand* retained an echo of this passage:

There is a work, which resembles the Kingdom of heaven:  
one man casts out his net in the ocean, fishing in the sea,  
he catches good fish and bad fish, he pulls them in on the shore.  
(2628–2631, translation after Murphy)

Another example: the parable of the sower according to *Thomas*:

Jesus said, Look, the sower went out, took a handful (of seeds), and scattered (them). Some fell on the road.  
(Logion 9)

That is very graphic and closely corresponds to reality. In Palestine people first sowed and then they ploughed. Hence the carefree air of the sower: he also casts the seeds on the path which his neighbours trod on his land. They will be ploughed under anyway.

Mark, Matthew and Luke say that the seed falls *alongside* the path. What kind of a sower would do such a thing? The misconception arose through an erroneous Greek translation of the Aramaic preposition “‘al”, which can mean both “on” and “alongside”. *Thomas* gave the original meaning of the Aramaic: some seeds fell *on* the road.

The *Heliand* has preserved this meaning:

A part of it on the other hand fell *on* the firm road.  
(2398–2399)

More examples might be given to demonstrate that the Diatessaron of Tatian, and also the Limburg “Life of Jesus” and the *Heliand* have preserved an original reading not to be found in the Church gospels. This is because *Thomas* and Tatian both draw on a common source, the gospel tradition of the first Christian community.

It is therefore of great importance to make a reasonable case for Liudger’s purchase of a Latin Diatessaron when he was in Italy. It is certainly true that while he was there he acquired a great number of treasures to use in his missionary work in Frisia and Saxony.

#### THE IVORY BINDING

One of these treasures is a precious ivory bookbinding dating to ca. 400 C.E., representing an imperial official in Rome, who dictates his priceless words to scribes while the grateful crowd is cheering him.

A monk from the monastery of Werden composed the so-called “Second Life of Liudger” around 1050, and the manuscript on which he wrote it was subsequently made to fit this binding. This suggests that it was then still known that Liudger himself had brought the binding back with him from Italy. The “Second Life of Liudger” contains 23 miniatures illustrating scenes from Liudger’s life. The “Life” has been published in a facsimile edition in 1993, with a translation of the Latin text and a commentary.

## THE "PYXIS"

Equally beautiful is an ivory "pyxis", a box from the fifth or sixth century which may have been used as a receptacle for the Host. Carved on the exterior are the nativity and the annunciation to the shepherds lying in the fields. This, too, is a classic object of art, brought back from the south by Liudger. He was a man of artistic sensibility.

## THE COMMUNION CHALICE

The deanery church in Werden still holds one of the oldest Communion cups of Western Europe, dating from the 9th or 10th century, which may have belonged to Liudger.

## THE PORTABLE ALTAR

It is easy to imagine how Liudger travelled through these parts of the world, because not only the eucharistic cup and the pyxis, but also the portable altar on which he celebrated Mass, has been preserved.

The altar is an outstanding example of contemporary Frankish popular art. It has a coating with scenes carved out in bone.

Once it showed the soldier Longinus piercing the side of Jesus. The altar also served as a chest in which Liudger kept the relics of the Saviour and the Mother of God, which had been given to him when he was in Rome and which he always carried around with him. He used them to impress the rich and sinful landowners in the eastern parts of the Netherlands and in Germany, promising them that he would pray for their souls in his abbey if they would give him a piece of land in return. In this way he came to possess a great deal of land in various places. Charters from his abbey in Werden which have been preserved proved that he was an able manager, always busy with the fulfilment of his great plan: the Christianization of the northern German plains as far as the river Elbe.

## MÜNSTER: 792 AND 805

In 792 Charlemagne appointed Liudger as missionary amongst the West Saxons in Westphalia. The Frisian man of God built a church in



Mimigernaford, now Münster, and founded a school after the Utrecht example, the “monasterium”, from which Münster derives its name. This school would later become the Gymnasium Paulinum, the oldest grammar school of Germany, which still exists today. Liudger’s missionary activities appear to have stretched as far as Helmstedt.

Much against his own wishes, Liudger was created bishop of Münster by Hildebold, the Archbishop of Cologne, on 30 March 805. His vast bishopric spanned Westphalia and East Frisia, connected by the river Eems, and also the Dutch province of Groningen and the Achterhoek. The charters of Werden prove that all the while, he was still busy buying land in the Netherlands. He was the apostle of both the Frisians and the Saxons.

#### THE ABBEY

His visit to Monte Cassino had inspired Liudger to found an abbey himself. Initially he had planned to do so on his own land, near Werthina on the sea, where he had built a church. Werthina might mean Waarden. A “waard”, a holm, is an area of land alongside a river. Perhaps the town of Muiden is meant, which was situated on a large lake and on the river Vecht.

His sister Heriburg later recalled that Liudger had had a terrifying dream when they were both in Werthina. He saw the sun flee from the north over the sea and dark clouds chasing it. Later a pale sun returned. From this dream he gathered that the Vikings would come and bring near desolation to the coastal areas. Later better times would return. According to Alfrid, Liudger’s cousin, bishop of Münster and abbot of Werden, who wrote the Latin “Life of Liudger”, Heriburg then said: “Oh, if only the Lord would deign to take me away from this world before these disasters befall us” (*Priusquam haec mala superveniant*).

This is an allusion to a variant reading of the Latin Diatessaron, which, as has been stated earlier, forms the basis for the Limburg “Life of Jesus” and the *Heliand*. Here Jesus, weeping over Jerusalem, addresses the city of peace:

You, too, would weep, if you knew these disasters would befall you  
Et tu fleres, si cognivisses haec superventura mala.  
(cf. Luke 19:42)

This allusion indicates that such a variant Diatessaron reading must have been known in the circle of Liudger. It was apparently available at Werden.

When Liudger was later active in the Achterhoek he also, as is proved by the charters, thought of Wichmond when casting about for a place to found his abbey. In the end the choice fell on a clearing in the vicinity of Essen, which he also called Werthina, present-day Werden. It was safely located on the south side of the river Ruhr, just outside Saxony. From there the “Hellweg”, the clear road, led to Helmstedt through the dark woods. The abbey at Helmstedt soon became a dependence of Werden. Both abbeys were the personal property of Liudger and his family and remained linked as autonomous areas until their dissolution in 1803.

A miniature from the “Second Life of Liudger” would appear to suggest that Charlemagne allowed Liudger to build an abbey at Werden and to this end granted him territory from the royal domain Lotusa (= Leuse in Belgian Hainault). In this way Liudger became associated with the state policy of Charlemagne and the latter’s thirty years’ war against the Saxons.

In reality, however, Liudger was very reticent with respect to the emperor. He refused to become bishop of the important and lucrative bishopric Trier. This rich youngster had chosen voluntary poverty and preferred to ride through the mud of Groningen rather than tread in the path of tradition and concern himself with the use of arms and falconry as an official bishop. In 787 he was awarded Lotusa to provide an economic basis for his missionary work amongst the Frisians. But it cannot be established when exactly the abbey at Werden was founded, a charter of Charlemagne granting its foundation not being known.

#### OLDEST ILLUMINATION

A miniature from the “Second Life of Liudger” shows what the abbey must have looked like around 1050. The abbey was placed under the patronage of the Mother of God, who in the miniature is flanked by Benedict of Nursia and Liudger himself. Below this image we see the abbey’s scriptorium, with monks at work on manuscripts.

It was here that the *Heliand* was written, as is evidenced by a copy of the manuscript, in which we find the distinctive letter “b” with a crossbar, typical for the script used at Werden. As we already know, the library also held the *Codex Argenteus* containing bishop Wulfila’s Gothic Bible translation. There was also a copy of the Rule of Benedict, which Liudger himself had copied in the mother convent at Monte Cassino. Then there was also Tatian’s Diatessaron, the Latin harmony

of the gospels, used as a source for the Limburg “Life of Jesus” and the *Heliand*.

The abbey at Werden was one of the foremost abbeys of Germany and remained so until 1803, when it fell victim to the Enlightenment and the anti-Papal secularization engulfing Prussia. The 11,000 books in the library were dispersed all over the world; many of them are irretrievably lost.

#### THE DEANERY CHURCH

The present deanery church at Werden is the successor to the erstwhile abbey. The building dates from the years 852 to 870 and naturally underwent many changes in the course of time.

Some time ago a treasury was opened showing the objects once owned by Liudger, such as the Communion chalice, the portable altar, the ivory “pyxis” and other valuable objects of art. The treasury is open to the public, and it is marvellous to see how much of the saint has been preserved.

#### THE CRYPT

Below the church lies the crypt in which Liudger was buried after he died in Billerbeck on the river Berkel west of Münster in 809. During his lifetime he had expressed the wish to be buried under a certain tree on the abbey grounds. His wish was respected. Later the grave was encompassed by the church, which also houses the remains of the Liudgerides, Liudger’s relatives who likewise became abbots of Werden: his brother Hildegrim, who died in 827, his cousins Gerfrid and Thiatgrim, Alfrid, Liudger’s biographer, and a second Hildegrim. When the latter died in 886, the Frisian family’s influence in the Saxon lands came to an end. It is only when all of the relatives are taken into account that one fully realises how great the influence of “Utrecht” on the Christianization of the northern German lowlands has been. Their missionary work turned out to have an enduring effect. During the Viking raids the Saxons remained loyal to their Christianity. The restoration of normal relations in Germany began with the rise of the Saxon house of the Ottonians. What Boniface had envisaged but had never been able to achieve, namely the conversion of the Saxons, was brought about by Liudger and his followers. And so Germany is still

an integral part of Western Europe. Europe could also have become pagan, with a German upper class and a Catholic underclass, a society based on “apartheid”.

#### BERNLEF AND THE HELIAND

On his travels through the province of Groningen, Liudger once arrived at Helwerd, now a hamlet with a few farmhouses north of the city of Groningen. There he was the guest of a widow. While they were at dinner a blind bard was introduced to him, called Bernlef. He was much loved amongst his fellow tribesmen, because he had an amicable nature and could masterfully declaim the local epics. Liudger asked him if he might hear his confession and requested him to return the next day. When the saint was about to ride off the next morning, he encountered the blind man. He alighted from his horse, led it away by its reins and heard Bernlef’s confession in a secluded spot. He then absolved him, made the sign of the cross over his eyes, held his hand in front of Bernlef’s face and asked him whether he saw anything. And indeed Bernlef plainly saw Liudger’s hand.

They arrived at the town of Warfum: there the formerly blind man was already able to behold the trees and the buildings. At Usquert they came across a chapel, where they prayed together.

In 784 an uprising forced Liudger to flee Friesland, and he left to go to Italy for three years. In those years Bernlef would occasionally baptise children. Later, when Liudger had returned, they were to remain in touch. When Liudger would then meet Bernlef, he taught him the Psalms, a method he had learnt in England. There a monk would each day translate a bit of the Bible for a poet. The poet, having slept on his daily portion, would the next morning return with the biblical episode in poetical form. This gave rise to a genre of biblical narratives in the vernacular, some of which have been preserved. I imagine that Liudger and Bernlef did very much the same thing.

Dr J.J. van Weringh’s fifth thesis to accompany his Utrecht dissertation on *Heliand and Diatessaron* (1965), proposed that Bernlef is the poet of the *Heliand*, a splendid poem cast in an epic language which is a mixture of Saxon, Frisian and English. It embeds the life of Jesus in the thought patterns of a feudal society: Jesus is a hero with a following of twelve hearts of oak, who sacrifices himself for his “young disciples” (‘Jünger’).

In the meantime new material has come to light to confirm and support van Weringh's thesis. In 1977 a fragment of the *Heliand* was found in Straubing, east of Regensburg in Bavaria, which bears many similarities with Old Frisian. Was Old Frisian perhaps the original language of *Heliand*, the language of Liudger and Bernlef? At any case it became more and more likely that the *Heliand* was composed in the abbey at Werden for the benefit of the Saxons and Frisians belonging to Liudger's bishopric of Münster. In addition, Redbad Veenbaas discovered that the introduction to the *Heliand* may contain a hidden allusion to the poet's name:

the bairns [barno] of man praised [lofon] the teachings of Christ.  
(barno lofon = Bernlef)

It is more and more probable that the *Heliand* was composed in the abbey at Werden before 840.

Historians classify certain works not deriving from Utrecht itself, but bearing all the hallmarks of the school there as writings of the school of Utrecht. Amongst these are the Latin "Life of Gregory and Boniface" by Liudger, but also the "Life of Liudger" itself, which as we indicated was written by his cousin Altfrid, bishop of Münster. The *Heliand*, too, belongs to the Utrecht school. If Liudger died too early to supply the *Heliand* with biblical material, Bernlef may also have collaborated with Hildegim, Liudger's younger brother, who did not die until 827. And if the poet of the *Heliand* was not Bernlef, it was certainly someone who greatly resembled him. At any rate the *Heliand* is based on a variant Diatessaron, which at the time must have been known in Utrecht. The *Heliand* shows how in their days Willibrord, Boniface and Liudger proclaimed the gospel in the Netherlands.

#### THE HELMSTEDT CRUCIFIX

The treasury of the deanery church at Werden exhibits a bronze crucifix which was part of the dependence at Helmstedt, but which originally derived from Werden. It was made around 1060 and was once gilded. Lashed with pain and succumbing to his sorrows, Jesus gives up the ghost. This object must be placed in its historical setting. Some years ago, an article appeared in one of the Dutch national newspapers on the representation of the crucifixion in the Christian art of the first ten centuries. The article was headed: "Not a trace of human suffering".

It is indeed true, that there is little evidence for crucifixion scenes in the Christian art of the first millennium. If there are any, they show the Godman, with his eyes open: even in death he is not really dead. At the beginning of the new millennium there was a shift in perspective, which is associated with a new approach in the theology practised in England. There the free human will of Christ came to be strongly emphasised: “Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben”. It sounds so familiar now, but at the time it was completely new. Alcuin, Liudger’s teacher, formulated it as follows:

non aliqua necessitate coactus, sed propria voluntate passus est pro nobis,  
dum voluit.

(not forced by any fate, but out of his own free will did he suffer for us,  
when he wanted it.)

It may express the new theology Liudger learned in England. That is the basic thought underlying the *Heliand*, which in verses 4918–4921 states explicitly, that fate did not force Christ to suffer, but that he did so, because he wanted to redeem mankind through his suffering. This is also the background of the image of the suffering Christ on the Helmstedt crucifix. Christianity became a covenant against fate. The emphasis on the cross has become characteristic for both Romana and Reformata, in contrast to Eastern orthodoxy, which rather more focuses on the resurrection and life out of death.

In the West, this culminates in the Mattheus Passion: “O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden.”

#### CONCLUSION

In the persons of Liudger and the Liudgerides, the Utrecht school has made a decisive contribution to the Christianization of northern Germany and so to the rise of a Catholic Western Europe, which continued to exist for almost a thousand years. Indirectly, this school also influenced literature (the *Heliand*!) and the visual arts (the Helmstedt crucifix). But the most wonderful thing of all, is that the tradition of the Gospel of Thomas (which is the oldest known tradition concerning Jesus) has been partially preserved, via Tatian’s Diatessaron, in the Limburg “Life of Jesus” and in the *Heliand*, because both are based on a Latin harmony of the gospels, which was very likely brought from Italy to Utrecht and on to Werden by Liudger.

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PART IV

EPILOGUE





## CHAPTER FIFTY

### GNOSIS AND THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIAN RELIGION\*

#### I. PLOTINUS

According to the Authorized Version, the apostle Paul around 64 C.E. wrote to his fellow worker Timothy in Ephesus from his prison cell in Rome:

Bring the cloak which I left in Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments, when you come. (2 Timothy 4:13)

These words characterise the man: Paul loved books.

Jesus was a child of the lovely Galilee. He was fond of flowers: “Consider the lilies of the field”, do mark those little red anemones, which blossom myriadlike all over Israel against Easter.

Paul was a city dweller and loved books. We know him well from his letters: like so many professors and journalists, he had a marked talent for writing, but he was a poor public speaker. The members of his congregation remarked about him: “the letters are weighty and strong, but the bodily presence is weak, his sermons are abominable” (2 Corinthians 10:10). Paul was a shy man. And who is oblivious enough to forget his raincoat when visiting ancient Troy, where once Helen revelled in adultery with Paris? He was absent-minded, too. But what does he mean, when he asks for his books and especially the parchments?

With these are probably meant the scrolls of the First Testament. And parchments may mean codices: wooden notebooks, containing words of Jesus. The codex had just then been invented in Rome. Codex means in Latin: woodblock, and by extension a waxed board, used for writing. These could be bound together and so the book was born.

Nowadays we take it for granted, but in fact it was an invention as momentous as the invention of the art of printing in the fifteenth century and that of the Internet in our own days.

It was at that time, during the first centuries of the Christian era, that it was decided which Greek and Latin works were to be transmitted

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\* Text of a lecture held at the Engelberg Seminar, Sweden 2000.

from the scroll on to the codex and which were to be excluded. It was then determined, what to preserve and what to discard. This decision was to have far-reaching consequences.

The philosopher Porphyry constituted the text of the treatises of his master Plotinus in Rome towards the end of the third century. He also altered their chronological sequence and systematised them, turning them into 6 × 9 treatises. At the beginning he added a Life of Plotinus. He also awarded titles to the treatises, one of them being: "Against the Gnoostikoi". And he said that Plotinus had refuted these people who had invaded his school. He transcribed these treatises from the scroll on to the codex. As a result, the works of Plotinus changed in nature. Plotinus himself had called these alleged opponents his friends, and discussed their views in more than one treatise. The works of these heretics have been found in Nag Hammadi. They turn out to be Revelations of Seth, the son of Adam, and of Jacob-Israel, the son of Isaac. The friends of Plotinus were Jewish gnostics. It now appears that Plotinus adopted a lot of their views and was himself in fact a gnostic.

## II. ROMANA

The new invention of the codex was also adopted by the Catholic faction within the Christian Church of Rome in the second century. At the time there existed various modalities: there was a group which followed Paul, headed by highly-gifted and devout men like Marcion and Valentinus; there was a Jewish Christian group, counting amongst its members a certain Hermas, whose work Poimen, the Shepherd, or the Guardian Angel, has been preserved. And there were the followers of Peter, as is evident from the so-called First Letter of Clement to the Corinthians, a letter of the secretary of the Christian community in Rome to rebellious young Christians in Corinth (ca. 100 C.E.).

When the bishop died, the Egyptian Valentinus, who had already served in Alexandria and who was claimed to be brilliant and highly eloquent even by his enemies, was nearly elected Pope. But the leader of the party of Peter, who had made his mark in the resistance and had suffered in the persecutions, was preferred above Valentinus. His name is Pope Pius. He excommunicated Marcion in 144. Valentinus, too, was thrown out once and more than once, as the expression goes (*semel et iterum eieci*). Then the Catholics in Rome raised three dykes:

1. the "Guardian": an Apostolic Canon determined which works were to be admitted to the Bible and which were apocryphal. The sequence of the Pauline epistles was changed. No longer his Epistle to the Galatians, about the antithesis between the Law and the Gospel, but his Epistle to the Romans came first. Also, the so-called Pastoral Epistles to Timothy and Titus were added, which were posthumously attributed to Paul and which "proved" that Paul was much opposed to Gnosis; thus Paul changed from a friend of the Gnosis into its enemy.
2. the "Sleeper": the Apostolic Creed, in fact a brief baptismal formula of the congregation in Rome.
3. the "Dreamer": only the bishop, being part of the Apostolic Succession, was authorised to provide an exegesis of the Bible.

Also, Rome established the text of the New Testament, the so-called Western Text: contradictions or variant readings between the three synoptic Gospels were eliminated and harmonised: the text of the Acts of the Apostles was completely re-written, which amounted to a second edition. In Galatians 2:9 the sequence James and Cephas (Peter) was replaced by: Peter and James, to underline who was the primate of the whole Church. Some Jewish Christian traditions were integrated, for instance the Pericope about the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11), which was also transmitted by the Gospel of the Hebrews. To be on the safe side, the authorised works were copied from the scrolls on to the codex, so that the other works might disappear in due course. Amongst these were for instance the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Truth. And so the Catholic Church in Rome was born. Indeed the other works did eventually disappear. After a while one was only allowed to read what had been approved of by the Church. Canon Law determined that those who thought differently were heretics, and punishable in consequence. This situation endures until the present day.

### III. "NORMATIVE JUDAISM"

A similar development took place in Palestine. There, too, a canon was established, the Hebrew Bible. Its text, the so-called Masoretic text, was carefully constituted, with marginal annotations, and was not to be changed under any condition. The chosen works were not transcribed on the codex, which in those days already existed. The rabbis establishing

the canon of the Hebrew bible were conservative and preferred instead to retain the scroll, the vellum scroll, for their Holy Writ. Since that time it has not contained a single variant. What a contrast with the manuscripts of the New Testament, which are teeming with variants! But perhaps it was not only conservatism, which made the rabbis prefer the scroll. Maybe they consciously opted for the scroll, because the Christians had appropriated the codex. Hebrew, then already a dead language, became the sacred language of the Jewish religion. Greek works such as the Wisdom of Solomon, to be found in the Septuagint, apocalyptic works like the Ethiopic Enoch, were banned. This created an image of the Jewish religion which did not correspond with actual reality. In this context I should like to pay high tribute to Hugo Odeberg of Lund, who with his edition of the esoteric writing III Enoch of 1928 tried in vain to correct this image.

As in Rome, the real enemies here, too, were the heretics. They are called "minim" in the Talmud. In reality they were Jewish gnostics. The rabbis were more sensible than the heresy hunters in Rome: they named no names and did not dwell in detail on the views of their opponents. All they said was that these heretics taught two principles and therefore broke with monotheism. Thanks to Nag Hammadi we now know what these suppressed works of the Jewish gnostics were: descriptions of the ascension of Adam or Seth, Sem, the son of Noah, Enoch, Jacob-Israel and Moses. All of them, it is said in the Nag Hammadi codices, ascended to the spiritual world and viewed the Glory, the *kabod*, of God; in consequence they became divine and revealed that the Godhead is raised infinitely high above the personal god. Can there still be any doubt that the work *Allogenes*, found in Nag Hammadi, is a Jewish apocalypse?

In it Seth, the son of Adam, relates to his son Enos what the angel Jaobel revealed to him. In the same way the oldest source of Jewish mysticism known to us, the Apocalypse of Abraham, written in the first century of the Christian Era, relates what the Angel of the Lord, called Jaobel, has revealed to the father of all faithful.

At last, after almost two thousand years that secret, hushed up by the rabbis, has been revealed. It throws an unexpected light on an unknown side of the Jewish soul: God as Being in Movement, the angel Israel the genius of the Jewish people. Gershom Scholem once said to me: "at all times, but especially at the dawn of the Christian era, the Jewish soul has been much livelier than you *goyim* can ever imagine." This appears to be all too true.

The rabbis believed that they had a superior understanding of the Bible. This led to the Orthodoxy, a phenomenon later in origin than the Jewish Gnosis and a reaction to it. Orthodoxy strictly observed the Law, was highly astute and sober, and has remained so to the present day. The Romana became episcopal and authoritarian, the synagogue remained presbyterian and democratic. In this sense the history of Christianity and Judaism may be gathered in one sentence:

The Catholics had a bulldozer,  
The rabbis too.

The abundant literature of Jewish and Christian gnosis was all but lost.

#### *Intermezzo*

In 1945 an Egyptian farmer from a hamlet near Nag Hammadi found a jar with 13 codices containing some 50 largely unknown Coptic works. These threw an altogether new light on the history of Christianity, on Jesus, and on God. I shall now discuss two of these works together with the Life of Mani, discovered in Egypt not much later, and sold to the University of Cologne.

#### IV. THE GOSPEL OF TRUTH

The Gospel of Truth is joy for those who have received from the Father of truth the grace of knowing him, through the power of the Word that came forth from the pleroma, which is in the thought and the mind of the Father. (16, 31–36)

This is the beginning of a work from the Jung Codex. As is common, the first words served as its title. The followers of Valentinus regarded it as a fifth gospel. It has by now been established beyond doubt that the gnostic Valentinus himself wrote this work. It is in fact a meditation on the Gnosis, possibly pronounced by Valentinus in Rome around 150 C.E.

It contains a poignant description of a life without God in a nightmarish world: you are fleeing from someone, or you are hounding someone yourself: you are being beaten or you are yourself the aggressor; you are flying through the air without wings; someone is out to murder you or you are busy strangling someone yourself, your hands are soaked with blood. Until you awake and realise that all those dreams were as nothing. Thus it may come to pass that the light of the Gnosis is kindled in a human.

In all of the Christian literature of Antiquity, between the parables of Jesus and the Confessions of Augustine, there is nothing that can compare to the beauty of this passage.

The Gospel of Truth also contains detailed reflections on Christ as the Name, that is: the essential revelation of the Unknown God. They are esoteric speculations of Jewish origin. They prove that gnosticism has Jewish roots and must have come into existence in Alexandria.

But Valentinus is really an Egyptian continuing the traditions of his country. Ancient Egyptian religion saw man and nature as an overflow (emanation) of God. Man (*rōme*) was the offspring of a tear (*rime*) of the Sun God. The Nile found its origin in the tears of Isis. Thus Valentinus sees the universe as a tear and a smile of Wisdom. He means to say that suffering is part of reality and not a punishment for sin.

The author of the Gospel of Truth must have known most of the present Canon, including the Fourth Gospel, the Apocalypse of John and the Epistle to the Hebrews (which is not Pauline).

If this author is Valentinus, and if he wrote his Gospel of Truth in Rome, then this may show that at that moment, ca. 150 C.E., the Canon in Rome was *in statu nascendi*. It is even possible that the Gospel of Truth is even older, ca. 140 C.E. Valentinus, when and if he was addressing the congregation of Rome in 140 C.E., had good reasons to cloak his highly heretical views in a veil of edifying allusion. For a while there was much uncertainty in Rome: some rejected the Fourth Gospel, because it spoke about the Logos: they were called *Alogi*. There was also some hesitation about the succession of the Pauline Epistles. If the length of the Epistle was decisive, then 1 Corinthians (1060 lines) should precede Romans (1040 lines). The end product was a miracle of diplomatic tact. There were such Jewish Christian writings as the Apocalypse of John but also the Hellenistic Gospel of John, which was preferred by the Valentinians. Into this whole Paul was encapsulated. But Romans received precedence, because Rome had primacy.

## V. THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS

The Gospel of Thomas was written some time before 140 C.E. in the city of Edessa in Mesopotamia. It is therefore impossible that its author knew the four church gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These were then not yet known in the remote city of Edessa. The first gospel

to arrive there was the Diatessaron of Tatian, compiled in its vicinity in the Orient only after 170.

The message of the author of "Thomas" is crystal clear: once Adam lived in paradise as an androgyne, before Eve was taken from his side. The Fall is the separation of man into male and female. Jesus has come to restore the original oneness and wholeness.

The author used two written sources, both Jewish Christian. The one was Hellenistic and Alexandrian: no alcohol, no meat, no sex. The other source is Palestinian and transmits the gospel tradition of the primal congregation of Jerusalem. This is the oldest Christian work known to us, composed around 50 C.E.

In it Jesus speaks as the embodiment of divine Wisdom. He is an *Oriental sage*, and he says:

Man is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea full of small fish. Among them the wise fisherman found a fine large fish. He threw all the small fish back into the sea and chose the large fish without regret.  
(Logion 8)

Thomas speaks of *one* fisherman, who, standing in the shallow water close to the shore, casts out his net. What is meant here is man and his wisdom.

Matthew (13:47–50) has the same parable relate to the Last Judgment. Many fishermen use a trawl. They represent the angels, who one time will cast the evil ones into the fire of hell.

That is quite a difference. The discovery of the Gospel of Thomas has led young scholars in the United States to start a new quest for the historical Jesus. According to them, Jesus was an itinerant wisdom teacher, who had something in common with the cynical philosophers of his day. The Dutch film director Paul Verhoeven (*Basic Instinct*) plans to make a film on this subject. In that case, this will become the image of Jesus in the twenty-first century.

Other parables in Thomas are completely new:

Jesus said: The Kingdom of God is like a woman who was carrying a jar full of meal.  
While she was walking on a distant road, the handle of the jar broke.  
The meal streamed out behind her on the road.  
She did not know it, she had noticed no accident.  
After she came into her house, she put the jar down, she found it empty.  
(Logion 97)



Jesus said: The Kingdom of God is like a man who wishes to kill a powerful man.

He drew the sword in his house, he stuck it into the wall, in order to know whether his hand would carry through.

Then he slew the powerful man.

(Logion 98)

There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of these parables.

## VI. THE COLOGNE MANI CODEX

The Cologne Mani Codex is one of the world's smallest books. It measures 4,5 by 3,5 cm, and contains 192 leaves of vellum. It is written in Greek and relates the life of Mani, who lived from 216–277. It turns out that he was raised in a Jewish Christian community of Baptists in the south of Babylonia. This confirms the tradition of the Church, which has always maintained that in these parts of the world Christianity was introduced by Addai, a missionary from Jerusalem. Jewish Christians believed that evil things originated in God. Mani, who was a cripple, refused to believe it. On his 24th birthday he received a revelation. His guardian angel appeared to him (the Twin, his twin image), and revealed to him all secrets of the realm of the spirit:

I recognised him  
And saw that he was my Self  
From whom I had been once separated.

He elaborated this experience into a world view and with boundless energy founded a gnostic universal church on Jewish Christian principles, which drew followers from the Atlantic to the Pacific, abided in Asia for more than a thousand years and has been the most heavily persecuted of all religions.

He also authored an entire library, which has been lost to us.

Mani knew the Gospel of Thomas and acknowledged it as Holy Writ. Henri-Charles Puech established that another Christian church, that of the Cathars of southern France, also knew it and cherished it: the well-known *parfait*, Guillaume Belibaste, knew the Gospel of Thomas by heart. This raises the question why one of the three churches has arrogated the right to reject genuine Words of Jesus.

## CONCLUSION

Let me end this talk on a personal note. In 1951 I published a booklet on the works of Nag Hammadi to which I gave the title: *Gnosis als Weltreligion*, Gnosis as a World Religion. In it, I delineated that Gnosis, the heresy of Gnosticism, has always accompanied the Catholic Church from the very beginning until the present day as its shadow: during the past two thousand years, second-century Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Catharism, Jacob Boehme, German Idealism, Anglo-Saxon theosophy and Germanic anthroposophy, have been posing a challenge to the same opponent. And I suggested that now at last the time had come to integrate this shadow and make room in the Church for the gnostic experience.

Somewhat later, towards 1964, during a patristic conference at Oxford, a young Roman Catholic priest addressed me and asked me how my book had been received. With Socratic *eironeia*, that is, with false modesty, I answered him that it had been torn to pieces by the critics, especially by Geo Widengren of Uppsala. "How is it possible", said the priest, "because I recommended it so strongly in the review of it which I wrote".

I was in the position to follow the career of this clergyman. Soon he visited Greece and lectured there on the possibility of reunion between Rome and Eastern Orthodoxy. Years later he became archbishop of Munich in Bavaria, and still years later he was appointed by the present Pope to become Head of the Holy Office. As such he officiates as Grand Inquisitor until the present day. His name is Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. If such a man can hold that office, he gives me some hope.

The actual Pope has performed miracles. He was instrumental in bringing about, through the intermediary of the heroic Polish people, the fall of the greatest and bloodiest tyranny the world has ever seen. He is adamant against xenophobia. He confessed the sins of many Christians when he was standing before the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. He is the only man of influence in this world to oppose the unlimited free market economy. How many divisions has the Pope? He leads an army of a billion believers, and he proved that Rome can change.

I do not foresee a great future for Protestantism. In our age of television it is not audiovisual: it can mainly preach. The missa Romana is audiovisual. It still is the celebration of a mystery. The liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom is still more mysteriosophic.

It would be unwise to expect that the Roman Catholic Church becomes democratic. The ‘orthodox’ Christian Church never was. Initially it was led by James, the brother of the Lord, later by Peter in Rome, still later by bishops, a monarchic episcopacy. The Christian Church was always a monarchy until Calvin. During the Gnostic Crisis the Roman congregation chose to expel Valentinus. Had he become bishop, the Catholic Church would not have become authoritarian, because Gnosis stresses personal experience, not authority. Until now Rome has been an absolute monarchy.

Now even in politics a president is not always desirable: there was Mitterand, there was Clinton. And a king can be a blessing in disguise; think of the king of Spain, who saved his people from military dictatorship. History has shown that the absolute monarchy can be transformed into a constitutional monarchy. In my country, the Netherlands, this happened without bloodshed in 1848, when king William II turned from a conservative into a liberal overnight. And we are very happy to have had three eminent female monarchs in the last century. As I see it, the only hope for the Christian religion is for the Roman Catholic Church to integrate Gnosis and personal religious experience. In this way it could be transformed from an authoritarian institution into a constitutional monarchy.

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## INDEX OF BIBLICAL TEXTS

<i>Genesis</i>			
1	766	<i>1 Samuel</i>	
1, 1	655, 691	9, 8	644
1, 1-3	56	<i>2 Kings</i>	
1, 26	521	17	23
1, 27	107, 542, 591, 603	<i>Job</i>	
2, 7	162, 394, 471, 603	19, 1-9	568
2, 18	195, 634	28, 12	568, 685
3, 8	131, 707	38, 1-16	568, 685
4, 25	559	34, 13-15	162
5, 18-24	606	41, 3-9	685
5, 24	599	<i>Psalms</i>	
6, 2	132	1, 1	78
22, 2	428	17, 14	201
28, 12	703	46, 6	200
32, 22-32	597	48, 9	200
		68 (67), 7	195, 634
<i>Exodus</i>		78 (77), 69	200
2	66	82, 1	633
2, 14	307, 577, 580, 641	84, 12	252
2, 23-3, 13	763	104, 29-30	162
3, 14	753, 778	129 (128)	178
12, 6b	547	129, 7	188, 640
12, 51	419	129, 8	632
20, 21	545	147, 5	463
23, 21	761, 763, 771, 779	<i>Proverbs</i>	
24, 17	624	8, 4	488
25, 8	780	8, 12	488
33, 23	569	8, 14	492
		8, 22-31	496
<i>Leviticus</i>		8, 30-31	488
9, 17	188	9, 13-18	496f.
19, 17-18	179	17, 2	578
		<i>Ecclesiastes</i>	
<i>Deuteronomy</i>		3	488
13, 1-5	575	<i>Song of Songs</i>	
18, 15	24	2, 5	718
21, 15-17	440, 642	5	766
32, 30	200	5, 11-12	765, 773
32, 39	69, 489, 511, 514	<i>Isaiah</i>	
		6, 1	773
<i>Joshua</i>		6, 5	550
14, 5	578	7, 14-16	437
18, 2	578		

9, 5	66	<i>Wisdom of Jesus Sirach</i>	
11, 2	106, 108	prooemium 34	563
14, 13	397	15, 2	489
19, 18	445	24, 3–4	488
24, 16	182	24, 16–17	488
40, 5	462, 542, 750	33, 10–16	488
45, 5	11		
45, 7	489	<i>Matthew</i>	
57, 15 LXX	768	1, 16	204, 420, 482
66, 1	472	1, 19	347
66, 7ff.	429	2, 16	83
		2, 18	85
<i>Jeremiah</i>		3, 15	90
7, 14	234	5, 3	199
44, 17	401, 501	5, 8	111f.
		5, 14	321
<i>Ezekiel</i>		5, 15	321
1	13, 16, 122	5, 45	267
1, 26	39, 40, 158f., 160, 163, 223, 338, 461f., 542ff., 589f., 753, 763f., 766, 773	6, 6	85
		6, 21	237, 239f.
		6, 24	314, 439
		7, 3	224
		7, 5	640
		7, 6	636
		7, 14	78
1, 28	68, 764	10, 34–35	231
11, 19–21	302	10, 37	182, 323, 439
34, 16	190, 202	11, 5	787
47, 2	337f.	11, 25	240
		11, 27	239
<i>Daniel</i>		11, 28	491
3	90	12, 31–32	740
9, 2	431	12, 34	417
		12, 46–50	184
<i>Hosea</i>		13, 4	440
1, 2	502	13, 11	636
2, 16	501	13, 12	644
		13, 15	427
<i>Haggai</i>		13, 24	100
1, 13f.	201	13, 24–30	417
		13, 44	418
<i>Zechariah</i>		13, 45	418
3, 9	108	13, 46	354
		13, 47–50	187, 326, 484f., 829
<i>Tobit</i>		13, 48	416
4, 5	200	13, 55	180
		15, 14	416
<i>Judith</i>		16, 18	578
8, 6	426	17, 3	121
		18, 1	416
<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>		18, 10	108, 111f.
1, 4–6	490	18, 12–14	191
7, 7.22	490	18, 19	325
8, 3	160, 500, 569	18, 20	9, 210, 416, 633
9, 17	490		
12, 1	162		

19, 16–23	263	8, 10	636
19, 21	352	8, 18	644
21, 37	417	8, 19–21	184
22, 14	480	9, 52	201
23, 1–3	423	9, 58	418
23, 13	423, 638f.	9, 59	80
23, 25	206, 224, 640, 662, 679	10, 4–7	197
23, 25–26	418, 683	10, 21	240
23, 26	681	10, 31–33	634
25, 1–13	192	11, 21–22	315
25, 40	425	11, 27	418
26, 24	635	11, 39	679
26, 61	234	11, 39–40	206, 662, 683
27, 6	425	11, 40	242
27, 49	476	11, 49	201
28, 1	426	11, 52	417, 423f., 639
		12, 10	740
		12, 13–14	307, 580, 641
<i>Mark</i>		12, 14	577
1, 15	787	12, 16	417
1, 17	577	12, 27	416
2, 21–22	316	12, 34	237, 239
3, 27	315, 416	12, 46	111
3, 28–29	740	12, 49	231, 416
3, 31–35	184	12, 51–53	231
4, 3–9	312, 640	12, 56	418
4, 4	440, 653	13, 34	648
4, 11	232, 636	14, 18	621
4, 25	644	14, 25–27	323
6, 3	180, 359	14, 26	182, 439
7, 11	425	14, 16–24	417
10, 17–23	263	15, 4–9	191
10, 21	93	15, 16	201
10, 35	427	16, 8	758
10, 39	475	16, 13	314, 439
12, 6	417	16, 20	427
12, 13–17	224, 640	17, 20–21	324
12, 30–31	696	17, 26–30	22
14, 58	234	18, 18–23	263
15, 22	427	19, 42	84, 814
15, 42	426	20, 9–16	417
16, 9–20	620	20, 13	428
16, 14	787	20, 35	439
		21, 1	425
		22, 19	787
<i>Luke</i>		22, 48	427
1, 24	96	23, 29	418
1, 38	86	24, 40–43	610
1, 80	657		
2, 4	84		
3, 22	239, 420	<i>John</i>	
5, 36–39	316	1, 12	34, 783
6, 41	416	1, 14	780
6, 42	209, 224, 640	1, 18	428
6, 45	413	1, 32	210, 476
8, 5	416, 440, 653	1, 34	776

1, 51	703, 782f.	18, 8	698
2, 19	232ff.	18, 9	478
2, 23	778	18, 37	758
2, 25	761	19, 17	427
3, 1	619	19, 32–34	476
3, 5	440	19, 42	426
3, 8	756	20, 1–13	621
3, 16	428, 729	20, 16	87, 97
3, 18	428		
3, 29	776f.		
3, 31	776	<i>Acts</i>	
3, 34	776	1, 3–9	620
3, 35	762	2, 9–11	406
5, 18	763	2, 17	787
5, 27	781	2, 36	443, 621
6, 37	478	2, 46	350
6, 39	479	6, 1	482, 540
6, 70	478	6, 14	234
7, 6	786	7, 27	580
8, 1–12	825	7, 35	580
8, 39	782	7, 53	526
8, 43	758	7, 54–60	622
8, 58	782	7, 58	540
9, 16	579	8	160
10, 25	778f.	8, 1	474
10, 29	478, 779	8, 9–10	603
10, 30	753, 779	8, 20	25
10, 35	611	8, 26–29	105
10, 38	779	10, 44–48	205
11, 51–52	791	11, 26	410, 520
11, 53	234	11, 27	117, 205
12, 23	778	12, 15	107, 201, 353,
12, 28	778		521
12, 41	550, 781	15, 28–29	421, 423
13, 18	478	21, 20	518
13, 23	729	24, 5	410, 518
13, 34	476		
14, 7	181	<i>Romans</i>	
14, 16	133, 264, 739	1, 4	469
14, 20	646	6, 10	787
14, 26	742	8, 22	607
15, 2	727	8, 26	739
15, 12–14	695f., 728	8, 38–39	586
15, 16	478	10, 4	702
15, 17	476	11, 17	699
15, 26	264	15, 28	407
16, 2	433		
16, 7–11	29	<i>1 Corinthians</i>	
17, 3	135, 616, 687	1, 10	579
17, 5	778	1, 24	160, 171
17, 6	478, 778, 782	2, 8	601
17, 11	604, 761, 778f.	2, 14–15	709
17, 12	479, 778	9, 9	699
17, 14–16	168	9, 14	632
17, 24	478	9, 14–15	198
		10, 25	421

11, 23–26	350	<i>Titus</i>	
12, 12–13	472	1, 7–9	412
13, 5	290		
14, 15	794	<i>James</i>	
15, 45	470	1, 27	631
15, 45–49	708	5, 14	412
15, 47	776		
<i>2 Corinthians</i>		<i>1 John</i>	
5, 1–2	354	2, 1–2	29
5, 3	354	2, 8–10	477
10, 10	823	2, 10	727
12, 2	277	2, 28	549
12, 1–4	468, 700, 702	3, 2	549f., 787
12, 2–9	594	3, 5	549
12, 4	805	3, 8	549
		3, 9	551
<i>Galatians</i>		4, 7	720
1, 1	273	4, 7–10	730
2	700	4, 9	551
2, 9	274, 407, 825	4, 19	730
3, 19	526	<i>2 John</i>	
3, 28	353, 472	5	477
4, 6	739	<i>3 John</i>	
4, 24–25	275	7	778
<i>Ephesians</i>		<i>Jude</i>	
1, 22–23	164	5	419
2, 19	406		
<i>Philippians</i>		<i>Revelation</i>	
2, 6–11	469	1, 4–5	106
3, 8	700	1, 5	728
3, 13	806	1, 13	542, 545
<i>Colossians</i>		2, 26	199
2, 9	472	3, 20	351
3, 9–10	709	4, 1–3	686
		4, 4	412
<i>1 Timothy</i>		12	687, 749ff.
1, 7	439	12, 1–2	622
2, 3	7	12, 5	623
3, 1–7	412	12, 6	183
4, 3	280, 439	12, 14	183
4, 13	823	14	687
4, 14	412	14, 1	477, 546
5, 17–19	412	14, 1–5	686
5, 23	439	14, 4	439
6, 10	361	14, 6	419
6, 20	280	14, 14	545
		18, 20	201
<i>2 Timothy</i>		19, 12–13	782
1, 15	439	21, 6	59
2, 18	280	21, 22	233
3, 6	439 2	22, 1	337
		22, 13	59



## INDEX OF OTHER ANCIENT TEXTS

<p><i>Acts of Andrew</i>, 344, 655</p> <p><i>Acts of John</i>, 45, 47, 352, 373, 375, 380                94ff.                      380                96, 31–34                374                103                        352</p> <p><i>Acts of Paul</i>, 45, 339, 356, 655</p> <p><i>Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas</i>, 433                10, 7                      356, 441                15, 6                      374</p> <p><i>Acts of Peter</i>, 25, 38, 41, 45, 47, 157, 212,            339, 344, 345, 374, 605                17                        604                21                        45                31                        594</p> <p><i>Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles</i>, 41</p> <p><i>Acts of Philip</i>                19 (14)                    48</p> <p><i>Acts of Pionius</i>                13, 3                      431, 667</p> <p><i>Acts of Thomas</i>, 45, 80, 109, 192, 212, 213,            216, 218, 220, 269, 327, 339, 348, 352,            353, 354, 355, 359, 373, 655, 742                7                        192                14                        214, 442                17–25                    354                27                        742                108                      354                112                      109                118–119                 45                154                      45                157                      45</p> <p>Ambrosiaster,              <i>Ad Timotheum</i>                I, 5, 2                    411</p> <p>Aphrahat              <i>Demonstrationes</i>                I, 9                      8, 108                VI, 1                    193</p>	<p>VI, 15                      108            VII, 18                    194            VIII, 18                   80            IX, 4                      193            XIV, 46                   188            XV, 1                      680            XVIII, 10                 742            XX, 18                    263</p> <p><i>Apocalypse of Adam</i>, 5, 22, 35</p> <p><i>Apocalypse of Abraham</i>, 763, 764, 771, 772                10, 3–10                 764                16,3                      764                18, 13                   764                31, 1–2                 764</p> <p><i>Apocalypse of Enoch</i>, 35</p> <p><i>Apocalypse of Messos</i>, 34, 592, 607                20                        590</p> <p><i>Apocalypse of Moses</i>                37                        337                37, 4                    600</p> <p><i>Apocalypse of Nikotheos</i>, 380, 596, 599,            600, 601, 602, 605, 606, 608, 623,            624, 625</p> <p><i>Apocalypse of Paul</i>                22–23                    337</p> <p>Aristides              <i>Apologia</i>                16, 6                    79</p> <p>Aristophanes              <i>Aves</i>                693–702                 53</p> <p>Arnobius of Sicca              <i>Adv. Nationes</i>                I, 52                    588                VII, 16                 534</p>
--	--

<i>Ascension of Isaiah</i> , 105, 110, 419, 743, 744, 746		<i>De utilitate ieiunii</i> XI, 13	307
9, 27-40	419	<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i> 43, 17	82
9, 35-36	105	100, 2	80
9, 35-40	743f.	<i>Epistulae</i> 52, 2	406
Athenagoras		78, 1	411
<i>Supplicatio</i> 18	58	<i>Quaest. Vet. et Nov. Test.</i> 44, 1	393
Augustine		<i>In Johannem</i> 40, 8	779
<i>Confessiones</i> III, 12	306	120, 5	426
IV, 25	77	<i>Sermones</i> 101, 3	440
V, 11	264	221	426
V, 21	268	265, 11	307
XI, 11	801	359, 3	307, 580
XI, 12	796	Babrius, <i>Fables</i> 4	187
XI, 14	799	Basil of Caesarea <i>In Hexaemeron</i> II, 6	56
XI, 29	800	Böhme, <i>Aurora</i> 19, 1-26	134
<i>Contra Adimantum</i> 6	80	Boethius <i>Consolatio Philosophiae</i> II, metrum 8	715f.
7, 1	266	(Ps.-) Bonaventura <i>Meditationes Vitae Christi</i> 89	88
21	263	<i>Book of Jeu</i> , 37, 43, 157 41	770
<i>Contra epistolam fundamenti</i> 5	655	43	636
VI, 7	265	50	770
<i>Contra Faustum</i> 13, 1	33-34, 223	Caesar, <i>De bello Gallico</i> I, 1	690
20, 2	138	Cassiodorus, <i>Variae</i> 45, 3	719
<i>Contra Felicem</i> I, 2	264	Cicero <i>Brutus</i> 76	689
<i>Contra Iulianum</i> III, 187	361	<i>De natura deorum</i> I, 25	453
<i>De civitate dei</i> VI, 5, 1	452	I, 42-43	452
VI, 10, 1	446		
VII, 35	554		
IX, 10	803ff.		
XI, 4-5	796		
XI, 18	798		
XII, 18	796		
XII, 10-20	797		
XII, 20	797		
XXII, 8, 6	406		
<i>De Genesi ad litteram</i> XII, 8	794		
XII, 12	802		
XII, 26	804f.		
XII, 27	802		
<i>De sermone domini in monte</i> II, 17	305		
<i>De Trinitate</i> I, 18	265		

<i>De oratore</i>		480, 481, 482, 485, 520, 529, 569,
I, 1	690	570, 572, 594, 629, 632, 642, 653,
		684, 792
Clement of Alexandria		<i>Homiliae</i>
<i>Excerpta ex Theodoto</i> , 122, 408, 561		I, 7ff. 530
10, 6–11, 2	112	I, 9, 1 41, 407, 541,
10–15	111	628
26, 1	408	II, 17, 2 28
47, 1	367	II, 25, 2 505
63, 2–64	115	III, 6, 1–3 200
67, 3	479	III, 7, 2 469
<i>Paedagogus</i>		III, 18, 3 200, 227,
III, 9, 48	681	423, 639
<i>Quis dives salvetur</i>		III, 20, 2 28
17, 1	239	III, 54, 2 542
<i>Stromata</i>		III, 57 266
I, 94, 5	415	III, 71 197
II, 21, 129	674	III, 93–95 635
II, 36, 2–4	467	IV, 6, 2 61
II, 45, 5	183	V, 10, 4–6 61
III, 12, 87	439	V, 28, 2 530
III, 17, 2 (Pindar)	552, 612	V, 29, 1 60
III, 30, 1	366, 434	VI, 3–26 60
III, 45, 1	215	VI, 23, 1 456, 532
III, 45, 3	216	VI, 25 457
III, 48, 1	216	VII, 7, 2 78f
III, 49, 1	198	X, 16 533
III, 54, 2	344	XI, 26, 2 440
III, 63, 1	242, 648	XI, 26, 3–4 339
III, 66, 2	214	XI, 29, 2 206, 680
III, 82, 6	193, 351	XII, 29, 1 515, 570
III, 92, 2	214f.	XV, 7, 1 638
III, 93, 3	441	XV, 10, 2–3 199
IV, 22, 140	79	XV, 10, 4 204
IV, 33, 5	239	XVI, 12, 1 506
IV, 41, 2	183	XVII, 7, 2 111
V, 14, 96	343	XVII, 7, 4 204, 291, 469
V, 63, 7	182, 232	XVIII, 4, 2 239
VI, 95, 3	484	XVIII, 15, 7 423
VII, 77, 6	239	XIX, 20 182, 200, 214
		XIX, 20, 1 636
Clement of Rome,		XIX, 20, 1–2 232
<i>Ep. ad Corinthios</i>		XIX, 21, 3 339, 361, 479
24, 5	188, 312	XIX, 23, 6 340, 370
34, 7	658	XX, 2, 2 521
2 <i>Clement</i>		XX, 3, 6 514
4, 5	241	<i>Recognitiones</i>
12, 2	241	I, 7, 7 628
		I, 37 (Syr.) 183
(Ps.-) Clement of Rome (Pseudo-		I, 42, 1 479
Clementines), 27, 29, 75, 94, 104,		I, 64, 1–2 233
112, 117, 176, 196, 205, 208, 224,		I, 54, 7 200
228, 231, 240, 242, 268, 282, 314,		II, 3, 5 201
317, 336, 338, 349, 389, 414, 422,		II, 21, 3 632

II, 26, 6	200	<i>Mystical Catecheses</i>	
II, 28, 2	200	V, 6-7	350
II, 28, 5	199		
II, 30, 1	423, 639	Damascius	
III, 1, 5	201	<i>De primis principibus</i>	
III, 14, 7 (Syr.)	313, 640	123 bis	57, 258
III, 14, 7	230, 440, 640	125	55
IV, 27, 2-3	587		
V, 28, 2	534	Dante Alighieri, <i>La Divina Commedia</i>	
V, 102, 1	455	<i>Paradiso</i>	
VI, 4, 6	200	XXXIII, 142-145	715
VI, 13, 5	201		
VI, 95, 3	326	<i>De centesima</i> , 355, 392, 418, 419, 669	
VIII, 5	792	p. 75	439
IX, 7, 4-6	340	p. 77	440
IX, 30, 2-3	535	p. 84	440
X, 30	60	p. 86	439
X, 39	457		
<i>Codex Brucianus</i>		<i>De montibus Sina et Sion</i> , 444, 445, 446	
XX	563		
LII, 13ff.	62	Democritus (ed. Q Cataudella)	
		fragm. 55B	455
<i>Cologne Mani Codex</i> , 4, 30, 31, 35, 116,		<i>Diatessaron</i> , 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84,	
117, 118, 129, 142, 143, 203, 266,		85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 95,	
276, 277, 361, 412, 481, 514, 517,		96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 117, 176,	
594, 607, 610, 628, 830		177, 179, 203, 204, 206, 207, 208,	
17	130	209, 211, 217, 224, 225, 232, 239,	
21	130	240, 241, 263, 267, 268, 269, 272,	
24	130, 830	277, 281, 305, 306, 309, 318, 319,	
24, 9	118	320, 321, 322, 324, 325, 326, 347,	
50-51	589, 595	407, 414, 476, 482, 483, 484, 485,	
52	595, 607	581, 629, 634, 651, 653, 654, 655,	
55	595	661, 662, 684, 736, 740, 809, 810,	
60	277	812, 814, 815, 817, 818, 819, 820,	
83	518	829	
		Arabic (ed. A.-S. Marmardji)	
Cyprian of Carthage		p. 435, 44	265
<i>De opere et eleemosynis</i>		p. 155, 11	440
114	425	p. 159, 6	440
		p. 193	680
(Ps.-) Cyprian		p. 435	265
<i>Rebapt.</i>		Dutch (Cambridge, ed. C.C. de Bruin)	
17	90	p. 17	438
<i>Ad Novatianum</i>		p. 32, 15	681
1	690	(Haaren, ed. C.C. de Bruin)	
		p. 18	438
<i>Constitutiones Apost.</i>		p. 45, 11	680
2, 59, 3	205	p. 90, 22	681
7, 23, 3	204	(Stuttgart, ed. J. Bergsma)	
		p. 108	680
Cyril of Jerusalem		(Theodiscum, ed. C. Gerhardt)	
<i>Catecheses</i>		p. 65, 20	680
VI, 14	25	p. 126, 18	681

Persian (ed. G. Messina)		41, 3-9	685
p. 269, 21	680	42	562
p. 269, 22	681	46, 1	462, 542
p. 295	439	69, 14f.	761
p. 321	264	71, 14	545
Tuscan (ed. A. Vaccari)			
p. 227	438	<i>3 Enoch</i> , 753, 760, 826	
p. 260, 26	680	5, 1	775
p. 321, 8	681	9	763
Venetian (ed. A. Vaccari)		10, 3	761
p. 43	438	11, 1	761
p. 73, 21	680	12, 5	761
p. 122, 9	681	13, 1	761
p. 137	265	15(B), 5	761
		16	72f.
		17	763
<i>Didache (Doctrina Apostolorum)</i> , 179, 205		48(C), 7	761
I, 1	390	48(D), 9	762
IX, 4	791		
X, 2	780		
<i>Didascalica</i> , 238, 479, 629			
Didymus the Blind		Ephrem Syrus	
<i>Commentary on Job</i>		<i>Commentary on the Diatessaron</i>	
56, 20-29	373	IV, 3-5	90
		XIV, 24	210, 240,
			634
		XIX, 14	264
		p. 63, 13 (Syr.)	440
		p. 111, 22	484
Dio Chrysostomus		<i>Hymns</i>	
<i>Discourses</i>		2, 1-2	354
XII, 39f.	449	<i>Life of a Pilgrim</i>	
XII, 201, b	676	13	632
(Ps.-) Dionysius the Areopagite		<i>Prose Refutations</i>	
<i>De Divinis nominibus</i>		II, 98	33
IV, 11-18	716		
IV, 13	717	Epiphanius	
IV, 17	717	<i>Ancoratus</i>	
IV, 18-35	718	104, 11	504
<i>Doctrina Addai</i>		<i>De mensuris et ponderibus</i>	
4 (ed. Philips)	632	16	182
Egeria		<i>Panarion</i>	
<i>Itinerarium</i>		1, 14	579
17	359	16, 4, 4	681
19, 19	359	19, 4, 3	29
23	359	21, 2, 4	506
23, 6	360	25, 3-4	246
24, 1	360	29, 7, 4	410, 427
28, 3	360	29, 7, 7-8	519
44	359	30, 2, 5	521
47, 4	397	30, 13, 7	651
<i>1 Enoch</i> , 35		30, 14, 5	184
34-41	713	30, 16, 5	241, 647
37-71	775	31, 5	285
		39	558
		42, 9, 4	275
		48, 11, 5	264

- |  |              |  |  |
|--|--------------|--|--|
| 51, 22, 3–11   | 258          |  |  |
| 65, 6, 8   | 264          |  |  |
| (Ps.-) Epiphanius                                    |              |  |  |
| <i>Anacephalaios</i>                                 |              |  |  |
| 2, 29  | 519          |  |  |
| <i>Epistle to the Laodiceans</i> , 689, 691          |              |  |  |
| 4  | 693          |  |  |
| <i>Epistula Apostolorum</i> , 291, 479, 681          |              |  |  |
| 17 (28)  | 478, 548     |  |  |
| 43 (54)  | 192          |  |  |
| <i>Epistula Fundamenti</i> , 265, 305, 655           |              |  |  |
| Eusebius of Caesarea                                 |              |  |  |
| <i>Praeparatio Evangelica</i>                        |              |  |  |
| III, 11, 51  | 503          |  |  |
| III, 12  | 532          |  |  |
| V, 24, 3   | 548          |  |  |
| IX, 28–29  | 12, 158, 624 |  |  |
| IX, 29, 5  | 543          |  |  |
| <i>Eclogae Propheticae</i>                           |              |  |  |
| III, 15  | 79           |  |  |
| <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>                        |              |  |  |
| I, 13  | 203, 653     |  |  |
| III, 5, 3  | 183, 518     |  |  |
| <i>Theophania</i>                                    |              |  |  |
| IV, 12   | 478          |  |  |
| 4 <i>Ezra</i>  |              |  |  |
| 2, 42–43   | 546          |  |  |
| 13, 2–5  | 546          |  |  |
| 13, 35   | 546, 686     |  |  |
| Filastrius of Brescia                                |              |  |  |
| <i>Diversarum hereseon liber</i>                     |              |  |  |
| XV   | 401          |  |  |
| Firmicius Maternus                                   |              |  |  |
| <i>De errore profanarum religionum</i>               |              |  |  |
| 2, 6   | 503          |  |  |
| <i>Gospel of Barnabas</i> , 100f.                    |              |  |  |
| <i>Gospel of Mary</i> (BG 8502), 38, 43, 237,        |              |  |  |
| 238, 240, 241  |              |  |  |
| 10, 15–16  | 238          |  |  |
| <i>Gospel of the Ebionites</i> , 184, 198, 241, 480, |              |  |  |
| 482, 647, 651  |              |  |  |
| fragm. 1   | 479          |  |  |
| fragm. 4   | 90, 408,     |  |  |
|  | 420          |  |  |
| fragm. 6   | 201          |  |  |
| <i>Gospel of the Egyptians</i> , 175, 176, 214,      |              |  |  |
| 215, 216, 217, 223, 241, 242, 292,                   |              |  |  |
| 311, 323, 325, 343, 344, 347, 353,                   |              |  |  |
| 356, 409, 415, 441, 629, 647, 648                    |              |  |  |
| <i>Gospel of the Hebrews</i> , 3, 10, 36, 41, 175,   |              |  |  |
| 176, 183, 184, 185, 200, 205, 208,                   |              |  |  |
| 211, 239, 240, 241, 242, 317, 318,                   |              |  |  |
| 319, 322, 323, 324, 325, 408, 425,                   |              |  |  |
| 482, 629, 648, 742, 743, 825                         |              |  |  |
| fragm. 2   | 750          |  |  |
| fragm. 6   | 207          |  |  |
| <i>Gospel of the Nazoraeans</i> , 26, 79, 98, 185,   |              |  |  |
| 208, 211, 217, 232, 241, 351, 415,                   |              |  |  |
| 478, 480, 482, 580, 629, 750                         |              |  |  |
| fragm. 15a   | 205          |  |  |
| fragm. 31  | 207          |  |  |
| fragm. 26  | 477          |  |  |
| Gregory of Nazianz                                   |              |  |  |
| <i>Homiliae</i>                                      |              |  |  |
| 28, 4  | 20           |  |  |
| Gregory of Nyssa                                     |              |  |  |
| <i>De virginitate</i>                                |              |  |  |
| 23   | 737          |  |  |
| <i>In Canticum Canticorum</i>                        |              |  |  |
| VI, 893 M  | 736          |  |  |
| XV, 117 M  | 736          |  |  |
| <i>De instituto christiano</i> (ed. W. Jaeger)       |              |  |  |
| VIII, 1, p. 42, 7–10                                 | 748          |  |  |
| (Ps.-) Hegemonius                                    |              |  |  |
| <i>Acta Archelai</i> , 263                           |              |  |  |
| 24   | 681          |  |  |
| 56, 7  | 80           |  |  |
| 67, 4–12   | 50           |  |  |
| <i>Heliand</i> , 81, 82, 83, 84, 95, 98, 99, 101,    |              |  |  |
| 208, 211, 319, 320, 414, 810, 814,                   |              |  |  |
| 815, 816, 817, 820                                   |              |  |  |
| 6  | 818          |  |  |
| 285  | 86           |  |  |
| 365–367  | 96           |  |  |
| 1395–1396  | 321          |  |  |
| 1610   | 438          |  |  |
| 1755–1758  | 322          |  |  |
| 2019   | 88           |  |  |
| 2388–2400  | 321          |  |  |
| 2398–2399  | 812          |  |  |
| 2399   | 440          |  |  |
| 2628–2634  | 326, 483     |  |  |
| 2628–2631  | 811          |  |  |
| 4918–4921  | 819          |  |  |
| 5929–5932  | 87           |  |  |

Hermetic Texts		V, 22	368
Asclepius, 20, 155, 218, 309, 415,		V, 26, 2	503f.
466, 551, 552, 593, 613, 614, 616,		V, 26, 7.9	503
710, 711, 712, 731		V, 26, 14	503
8	731	V, 26, 19–20	504
41	616	V, 26, 36	502
		V, 27, 4	502
<i>Corpus Hermeticum</i> ,		VI, 42, 4	285
I ( <i>Poimandres</i> ), 13, 40, 155, 158,		VII, 20	149
163, 164, 218, 219, 221, 222, 223,		VII, 20–27, 13	62
296, 344, 448, 466, 470, 471, 473,		VII, 21	285
543, 555, 587, 591, 613, 614, 625,		VII, 22	286
645, 699, 705, 706, 708, 709, 710,		VII, 26, 9	408
725, 832		VII, 27	286
12	470	IX, 11, 3	443
14	470, 555	IX, 13, 2–3	419,
15	344		545, 739
15, 24–26	222	IX, 14	28
17	471	IX, 15, 4	338
18	218, 344		
22	710	Homer	
25–26	614	<i>Iliad</i>	
IX, 9	285	IV, 90	574
X, 4–6	615f.	<i>Odyssey</i>	
X, 6	553	I, 1	690
XII, 5–9	222	IX, 19	490
XII, 19	225	<i>Hymn to Demeter</i>	
XIII, 3	615	480–482	552, 612
fragm. 6, 18	553, 615		
		<i>Hymn of the Pearl</i> , 8, 109, 218, 352, 353,	
<i>Definitions to Asklepios</i> ,		354, 373	
V, 3	710	4	354
VI, 1	593	62	354
VII, 3	710	92	353
VIII, 4	710	96	354
IX, 4	218, 415		
IX, 6	225	Ignatius	
		<i>Ephesians</i>	
<i>Kore Kosmou</i>		4, 1–2	658
22	756	5, 2	240
Hermias		Inscriptions	
<i>Commentary on Plato's Phaedrus</i>		<i>CIL</i> VIII suppl. 12457 c	405
94, 21	21	<i>CIL</i> VIII suppl. 12511	401
168, 24	21	<i>Kyme-Memphis inscr.</i> ,	
		6	492
Hesiod		41	492
<i>Theogony</i>			
120–122	726	Irenaeus	
		<i>Epideixis</i>	
Hippolytus		43	635
<i>Refutatio</i>		<i>Adv. Haer.</i>	
V, 7, 3	471	I, 1, 1	296, 552
V, 8, 5	471	I, 5, 1	367
V, 19	51	I, 5, 3	465

I, 5, 4	367	John of Damascus	
I, 6, 4	168, 229	<i>Passio sancti Artemii</i>	
I, 11, 1	366, 370, 375, 382	26	19
I, 13, 3	109	Josephus, Flavius	
I, 14, 1	382	<i>Ant. Jud.</i>	
I, 21, 3	400, 768	VIII, 280	59
I, 23	25	<i>Contra Apionem</i>	
I, 23, 2	505, 562	II, 81	533
I, 24, 1	562	II, 114	431
I, 25, 1	408	II, 190	59
I, 25, 6	281, 382		
I, 26, 2	651	<i>Jubilees</i>	
I, 29	43, 49, 368, 380, 381	48, 18	403
I, 29, 1	365f., 367, 558	Justin	
I, 29, 3	464	<i>I Apologia</i>	
I, 29, 4	506	15, 13	267
I, 30	73	15, 16	239
I, 30, 8	246	61, 4	440
I, 30, 15	382	63, 3	239
II, prooemium 1	558	<i>Dial. c. Tryphone</i>	
II, 13, 8	558	16, 4	432
II, 30, 9	247	17, 4	209, 424
IV, 20, 1	247	62, 3	555
		80, 4	573
		85, 7	429
Isidore of Seville		88, 3	90
<i>Etymologiae</i>		88, 8	239
VIII, 4	575	96, 3	267
		100, 1	239
Jamblichus		128, 2	462
<i>Vita Pythagorica</i>		128, 3-4	575
233ff.	729	<i>Syntagma</i> , 370, 375, 380, 435	
Jerome		(Ps.-) Justin	
<i>Epistulae</i>		<i>Cohortatio ad Graecos</i>	
146, 1, 6	413	17	690
<i>In Ephesios</i>		25	465
5, 4	425		
5, 29	441	Justinian,	
<i>In Galatios</i>		<i>Novellae</i>	
I, 1	273	146	395
<i>In Mattheum</i>			
I, 9	202	Lactantius	
IV, 25, 6	477, 547	<i>De ave Phoenice</i>	
		163	357
(Ps.-) Jerome		<i>Divinae institutiones</i>	
<i>Indiculus de haeresibus</i>	105	II, 8, 6	390
		IV, 1	690
Johannes Scotus Eriugena			
<i>De divisione naturae</i>			
3, 19	660		



<i>Liber Graduum</i> , 204, 207, 348, 349, 352, 353, 439, 629, 630, 680, 735		I, 20, 13–15	258
2, 4	630	III, 16, 1,	79
3, 11	264		
3, 15	204	Macrlant	
5, 9	207	<i>Rhymebible</i>	
7, 20	204	26811–26813	87
10, 3	680	<i>Manichaean Homilies</i> (ed. H.J. Polotsky)	
16, 4	207	47, 6–10	116
29, 6	630	<i>Manichaean Kephalaia</i> (ed. H.J. Polotsky)	
30, 25	439	14, 7	264
<i>Liège Diatessaron</i> , 83, 87, 93, 95, 96, 98, 581		192, 30	630
p. 215	680	200	237
p. 237	87	223	237
p. 581	681	229f.	237
Lucretius		<i>Manichaean Psalms</i> (ed. C.R.C. Allberry)	
<i>De rerum natura</i>		9, 22–10, 12	468
V, 26–27	384	25	549
Lucianus		39, 27–28	515
<i>Erotes</i>		40, 34	267
13	665	148, 22	475
Ludolph of Saxony		221, 18–20	514
I, 21, 11	90	Mandaean Texts	
I, 25, 2	88	<i>Book of John</i> (ed. M. Lidzbarski)	
(Ps.) Macarius		55, 11–13	521
<i>Homiliae</i>		170, 17	221
I, 40, 1, 8	679	171, 16	221
I, 61, 2	85	180, 15	221
I, 64, 8	206, 679	183, 13	497
II, 1, 1	735	<i>Right Ginza</i> (ed. M. Lidzbarski), 221, 508, 555	
II, 4, 6	193	48, 10ff.	513
II, 4, 15	718	80, 31	497
II, 8, 1–4	735	89, 5–14	524
II, 11, 29, 2	662	98, 7–11	524
II, 12, 6	8, 108	118, 3	500
II, 15, 15	735	174, 30	524
II, 25, 5	718	206, 23–26	512
II, 43, 3	239	207, 32–38	510f.
II, 45, 1	439	277ff.	522
III, 8, 1	679	281, 21	337
III, 16, 3	440	300, 30	221
III, 28, 4	679	494, 11	497
Macrobius		<i>Martyrium Petri</i>	
<i>Saturnalia</i>		3	26
I, 20	65	9	345
		14	47

Maximus Tyrius, <i>Philosophical Orations</i> XI, 5d	450	36, 2 36, 3 38, 1	340, 535 430 422
Mazdean Texts <i>Yast</i> 22, 7–12	353	Mishnah <i>Aboth</i> 5, 17	578
Melito of Sardes <i>Homily on the Passion</i> 1	396	<i>Mithras Liturgy</i> 517–521 550 573–575 718–723	618 618 618 553
Midrash <i>Canticles Rabbah</i> 4, 13 (116a) <i>Genesis Rabbah</i> 8, 1 <i>Mekilta Pisha</i> 97–100	202 344, 542 750	Nag Hammadi Texts <i>Apocalypse of Adam</i> (V, 5) 75, 22 78, 8–11	21 251 22
Minucius Felix <i>Octavius</i> 1, 1 9, 1 9, 4 9, 6 11, 2 11, 6 11, 9 12, 2 12, 5 16, 5 17, 1–2 18, 7 18, 10 18, 11 18, 11–20, 2 19, 1–3 19, 3 19, 14 23, 1 25, 8–9 26, 9 28, 6 28, 8–9 29, 2 29, 2–3 29, 4 30, 6 31, 2 33, 4 33, 4–5 34, 4 34, 9 34, 12	690 431f. 431, 666 459 429 535 666 430 422 449, 673 448 444, 667 428 451, 454 672 449 453 453 790 447 110, 455 430 533 431, 444 666 456, 532 422 459 531 393–394 430 665f. 534	<i>Apocryphon of James</i> (I, 2) 6, 19–20 <i>Apocryphon of John</i> 5, 11, 12, 14, 18, 21, 34, 36, 41, 43, 44, 46, 48, 49, 50, 64, 68, 72, 75, 103, 119, 122, 132, 141, 142, 157, 161, 163, 165, 166, 246, 269, 292, 293, 296, 297, 300, 302, 303, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 375, 378, 380, 384, 408, 434, 488, 506, 508, 524, 558, 559, 560, 562, 585, 593, 706, 724 II, 1, 30–2, 9 II, 2, 14 II, 8, 34–35 II, 9, 25–10, 28 II, 11, 20–21 II, 19, 9–10 II, 19, 28–30 II, 61, 7–62, 15 II, 62, 24–34 III, 11, 19 III, 14, 9–16, 18 III, 23, 21 III, 28, 6–9 IV, 15, 1–16, 6 BG 37, 16–39, 17 Giversen 53, 4–10 Giversen 53, 5	168, 365 541 5, 11, 12, 14, 18, 21, 34, 36, 41, 43, 44, 46, 48, 49, 50, 64, 68, 72, 75, 103, 119, 122, 132, 141, 142, 157, 161, 163, 165, 166, 246, 269, 292, 293, 296, 297, 300, 302, 303, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 375, 378, 380, 384, 408, 434, 488, 506, 508, 524, 558, 559, 560, 562, 585, 593, 706, 724 46 608 13, 464 52 522 586 561 74 74 622 52 246 775 52 51 499 552
		<i>Allogenes</i> (XI, 3) 589, 590, 592, 595, 596, 602, 617, 625, 826 52, 10–12 64, 34–36	35, 368, 380, 584, 588, 617, 602

<i>Book of Thomas the Contender</i> (II, 7), 41,		(Logion)	
192, 212, 219, 220, 348, 351, 358,		1	611, 655
359, 369, 448		2	184, 200, 343, 648
138, 16–18	219	3	220, 306
		6	200
<i>Dialogue of the Savior</i> (III, 5), 181, 195,		8	186f., 326, 416,
212, 348, 363, 370		–	484f., 811, 829
		9	229, 312, 416,
<i>Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth</i> (VI, 6), 19			440, 640, 812
52, 2–7	711	10	314
56, 23–26	711	12	200, 274, 416
57, 13–15	593	13	213, 220, 753
57, 31–58, 14	712	14	204
58, 4	713	16	200, 231, 314,
58, 14–15	713		416, 811
58, 24–27	713	19	635
63, 21–23	593	21	637
		22	229, 325, 353, 645
<i>Eugnostos</i> (III, 3), 5, 18, 38, 40, 65, 131,		23	200, 179f.
157, 370, 467, 471, 472, 753		25	179, 198, 477,
76, 19–77, 6	467		521, 696, 727f.
		26	209, 224, 416, 640
<i>Exegesis on the Soul</i> (II, 6), 41, 212, 345		27	104, 200, 630
		30	9, 210, 416, 633
<i>Gospel of the Egyptians</i> (III, 2), 21, 370,		31	200
559, 589, 593		32	321
52, 26	251	33	321
53, 9	251	34	416
63	22	35	315, 416
65, 1	251	36 (Gr.)	416
		37	185f., 442
<i>Gospel of Philip</i> (II, 3), 103, 104, 114,		39	200, 209, 227,
115, 369			417, 423, 645
61, 20–31	617	41	644
64, 10–11	635	42	178, 230, 360,
65	113		631f.
68, 22–26	137	44	9, 200, 740
70, 12–15	137	45	322, 413, 417
		47	313, 316
<i>Gospel of Thomas</i> (II, 2), 8, 12, 41, 78, 79,		48	325, 646
82, 83, 86, 89, 91, 94, 95, 96, 98, 99,		51	216, 324
105, 139, 143, 157, 175, 176, 188,		54	199
189, 194, 195, 196, 203, 205, 207,		55	181f., 215, 323,
211, 212, 217, 218, 221, 223, 264,			646
266, 267, 268, 269, 282, 292, 305,		57	100, 417
307, 309, 311, 312, 317, 318, 319,		58	230
320, 327, 342, 343, 346, 347, 348,		61	213
349, 355, 358, 359, 369, 372, 374,		62	182, 200, 214,
392, 409, 414, 479, 480, 482, 483,			232, 636
484, 520, 541, 573, 580, 627, 629,		63	417
634, 642, 643, 651, 652, 653, 654,		64	200, 417, 621
656, 661, 684, 735, 819, 820, 825,		65	190, 201, 235,
828			417, 539

67	219, 415, 448	29, 11–25	150
68	183, 201	31, 5	371
69	201	31, 21–25	756
70	230, 644, 810	38, 25–39, 2	767
71	201, 232	40, 5–9	605
72	201, 308, 577, 579, 641	40, 23–41, 3 41, 28–42, 6	769 756
75	192, 228, 351	42, 37–43, 8	151, 686
76	354, 418, 485		
79	418	<i>Hypostasis of the Archons</i> (II, 4), 41, 49, 63, 64, 367, 369, 559, 562, 723, 724	
83	107, 352	94, 10–19	560
84	107, 201, 352, 521	142, 7–23	51
86	418	143, 4–8	74
88	198, 201, 631f., 644	<i>Melchizedek</i> (IX, 1)	
89	206, 208, 224, 242, 353, 418, 640, 645, 662, 682	6, 6	464
90	201	<i>On the Origin of the World</i> (II, 5), 41, 49, 63, 64, 65, 467, 724	
91	418	99, 23–100, 9	560
93	201	100, 24–26	524
95	201	108, 8–9	466
97	177, 829	109, 1–25	725
98	230, 830	114, 8–15	510
99	184, 201	115, 14	561
98	177	146, 13ff.	51
100	224, 639	151, 15–21	73
101	181f., 215, 228, 324, 646	<i>Paraphrase of Shem</i> (VII, 1), 50, 61, 303, 368, 380, 595, 597, 607, 608, 620	
102	645	1, 5–11	595
104	202	1, 26–4, 12	50
105	216, 228	15, 12–16	51
106	647		
107	191, 202	<i>Prayer of Thanksgiving</i> (VI, 7), 40, 157, 614	
108	213, 220, 647	63, 33ff.	466
109	202, 418	63, 33–65, 2	551f.
111	213, 220	63, 34–64, 14	710
113	213, 202, 324	64, 15–19	616
114	9, 137, 344, 353, 441		
<i>Gospel of Truth</i> (I, 3), 41, 67, 104, 121, 122, 152, 153, 168, 211, 212, 365, 376, 556, 755, 768, 771, 783, 825, 828		<i>Prayer of the Apostle Paul</i> (I, 1), 168, 212	
16, 31–36	827	<i>Sophia of Jesus Christ</i> (III, 4), 43, 65 121, 12	65
17, 9–13	756	<i>Teachings of Silvanus</i> (VII, 4), 41, 212, 293, 346, 409, 446, 459	
17, 29–35	756	96, 30	409
18, 24	300	101, 35–102, 1	409
21, 25–22, 9	758	103, 34	409
22, 2–15	151	106, 27	409
22, 22–23	756	110, 17–18	409
23, 33–24, 5	769		

- |  |               |   |     |
|--|---------------|---|-----|
| 111, 5   | 409           |   |     |
| 111, 15–20   | 409           |   |     |
| 115, 3–8   | 409           |   |     |
| <i>Three Steles of Seth</i> (VII, 5), 13, 21, 40     |               |   |     |
| 464, 617   |               |   |     |
| 118, 26  | 464           |   |     |
| 119, 9–10  | 617           |   |     |
| <i>Thunder: The Perfect Mind</i> (VI, 2), 18, 39,    |               |   |     |
| 157, 160, 212, 245, 291, 508                         |               |   |     |
| 13, 2–14, 1  | 509           |   |     |
| 13, 16–20  | 494           |   |     |
| 13, 16   | 493           |   |     |
| 13, 18   | 292           |   |     |
| 13, 19–21  | 498           |   |     |
| 13, 27–28  | 494           |   |     |
| 13, 29–30  | 500           |   |     |
| 13, 31–32  | 492           |   |     |
| 14, 12–14  | 491           |   |     |
| 14, 26–27  | 491           |   |     |
| 14, 31–32  | 489, 492      |   |     |
| 15, 29–30  | 487           |   |     |
| 16, 1–9  | 494           |   |     |
| 16, 3–5  | 487           |   |     |
| 16, 11–13  | 489, 491, 493 |   |     |
| 16, 28–29  | 488           |   |     |
| 18, 24–25  | 492           |   |     |
| 19, 15–17  | 488f.         |   |     |
| 20, 7–8  | 491           |   |     |
| 21, 4  | 489           |   |     |
| <i>Treatise on the Resurrection</i> (I, 4), 87, 104, |               |   |     |
| 120, 122, 139, 168, 212, 365, 371,                   |               |   |     |
| 376, 434   |               |   |     |
| 46, 5–8  | 435           |   |     |
| 48, 3–30   | 121           |   |     |
| 49, 13–15  | 280           |   |     |
| <i>Trimorphic Protennoia</i> (XIII, 1), 34, 338      |               |   |     |
| <i>Tripartite Tractate</i> (I, 5), 42, 104, 116,     |               |   |     |
| 147, 168, 169, 212, 295, 296, 365,                   |               |   |     |
| 370, 376, 378, 379, 561                              |               |   |     |
| 69, 26   | 298           |   |     |
| 75, 35–76, 2   | 298           |   |     |
| 76, 23–30  | 299           |   |     |
| 77, 6–11   | 299           |   |     |
| 100, 30–35   | 300           |   |     |
| 104, 20–25   | 300           |   |     |
| 107, 26–108, 2                                       | 300           |   |     |
| 123, 3–8   | 468           |   |     |
| 126, 6–34  | 300           |   |     |
|  |               | <i>Zostrianos</i> (VIII, 1), 13, 18, 338, 368,    |     |
|  |               | 561, 563, 584, 713                                |     |
|  |               | 6, 23   | 464 |
|  |               | 10, 1–5   | 588 |
|  |               | 10, 16  | 560 |
|  |               | 13, 6   | 464 |
|  |               | 51, 7   | 464 |
|  |               | 130, 15–19  | 587 |
|  |               | 132, 6–9  | 586 |
|  |               | Nonnus of Panopolis,                              |     |
|  |               | <i>Dionysiaca</i>                                 |     |
|  |               | VI, 169–173                                       | 554 |
|  |               | <i>Odes of Solomon</i> , 203, 212, 216, 348, 355, |     |
|  |               | 516   |     |
|  |               | 3, 9  | 213 |
|  |               | 6, 10   | 213 |
|  |               | 8, 10   | 214 |
|  |               | 11, 6   | 213 |
|  |               | 11, 21  | 214 |
|  |               | 25, 8   | 214 |
|  |               | 30, 1   | 213 |
|  |               | 30, 5   | 213 |
|  |               | 34, 3   | 213 |
|  |               | Olympiodorus                                      |     |
|  |               | <i>Comm. on the Phaedo</i>                        |     |
|  |               | B 128   | 554 |
|  |               | <i>Oracula Chaldaica</i>                          |     |
|  |               | 39  | 723 |
|  |               | 42  | 723 |
|  |               | 44–46   | 723 |
|  |               | <i>Oracula Sibyllina</i> , 33                     |     |
|  |               | Origen  |     |
|  |               | <i>Contra Celsum</i>                              |     |
|  |               | VI, 21–38   | 253 |
|  |               | VI, 34  | 245 |
|  |               | <i>Dialogue with Heraclides</i> , 289, 446, 668   |     |
|  |               | 2   | 744 |
|  |               | <i>De principiis</i>                              |     |
|  |               | I, 1, 1   | 291 |
|  |               | II, 9, 7  | 372 |
|  |               | II, 10, 7   | 110 |
|  |               | II, 11, 2   | 302 |
|  |               | III, 1, 15  | 302 |
|  |               | <i>In Johannem</i>                                |     |
|  |               | II, 31, 190                                       | 598 |
|  |               | XIII, 49  | 116 |

<i>Orphic Fragments</i> (ed. Kern)		<i>De fuga et inventione</i>	
fragm. 60	726	50	498
fragm. 168, 9–10	726	51–52	499
		<i>De opificio mundi</i>	
Ovid		134	344, 464
<i>Ibis</i>		<i>De posteritate Caini</i>	
227	384	42	559
		173	559
<i>Oxyrhynchus Papyri I, 654, 655, 175,</i>		<i>De somniis</i>	
184, 185, 220, 305, 311, 351, 409,		I, 236	472
633, 639		<i>De specialibus legibus</i>	
		I, 45	472, 544
Parmenides		<i>De vita Moysis</i>	
fragm. B, 13	726	I, 158	544, 625
		<i>Legum allegoriae</i>	
<i>Passio Sanctorum Scillitanorum</i>		I, 42	162, 404
12	428	III, 51	403
		III, 96	560
<i>Passion of Artemius, 19, 20</i>		III, 161	394, 471
		<i>Quaestiones in Genesim</i>	
<i>Pastor of Hermas, 90, 110, 117, 179, 209,</i>		II, 62	466
339, 390, 438, 443, 628, 629, 824		<i>Quaestiones in Exodum</i>	
<i>Visiones</i>		I, 8	344, 352
3, 4, 1	112	II, 117	472
5, 1–3	109	<i>Quis rerum divinarum heres</i>	
<i>Mandata</i>		164	159, 465,
11, 9	109		542
<i>Similitudines</i>		<i>Quod deterius potiori insidians soleat</i>	
1, 1–4	637	80	394, 471
9, 1	109		
9, 1, 1	297, 751	Philoxenus of Mabbug	
		<i>Homilies</i>	
<i>Papyri Graeci Magici</i> (ed. Preisendanz)		I, 9	484
IV, 216–221	553	<i>Letter to Patricius</i>	
		78	265
<i>Papyrus Berolinensis 8502, 37, 38, 43, 44,</i>		Photius	
238		<i>Bibliotheca</i>	
<i>Pepysian Harmony, 83, 96, 581</i>		114	47
7	90	<i>Pirke Abbot</i>	
103	88	III, 6	210
Peter Comestor		<i>Pirke Rabbi Eliezer</i>	
<i>Hist. Schol.</i>		21	401
34	90		
Philo of Alexandria		<i>Pistis Sophia, 18, 37, 41, 43, 63, 64, 110,</i>	
<i>De cherubim</i>		157, 479, 555, 563	
49	499	61	110
<i>De confusione linguarum</i>		Plato	
41	464, 542	<i>Laws</i>	
146	464, 542	IV, 715 E–716 C	59
<i>De ebrietate</i>		<i>Parmenides</i>	
30	466, 498,	130 C	39, 158
	552, 731		

- Phaedo*  
76 E 635
- Phaedrus*  
237 D 449, 676
- Symposion*  
179 B–180 B 696f., 729
- Timaeus*, 71, 72  
28 C–29 A 69f.  
69 C–D 70  
90 E 344
- Plinius Maior,  
*Naturalis Historia*  
II, 45, 116 607
- Plotinus,  
*Enneades*  
II, 9 368  
II, 9, 4, 1–6 562  
II, 9, 6 563  
II, 9, 6, 1–6 590  
II, 9, 10 587  
II, 9, 10, 26 560  
II, 9, 12, 10 560  
III, 9, 3, 1 563  
IV, 3, 12 554  
IV, 7 (2), 13, 11 298  
IV, 8, 7, 26–28 562  
V, 1 (10), 1, 4 298  
VI, 8, 15 720, 730
- Plutarch  
*De Iside et Osiride*  
38 493  
53 493  
77 493
- Porphyry  
*Ad Marcellum*  
33 352  
*De Abstinentia*  
III, 27 219  
IV, 9, 6 456, 532  
*Vita Plotini*  
16 583
- Priscillian of Avila  
*Canones*.  
55 358  
*Tract.*  
II, 43 357  
III, 56 358
- Proclus  
*In Plat. 1. Alcibiad.*  
26 721  
27 718, 720  
30–32 721  
45 718  
52 722  
55 718  
64–65 722  
233 720  
235 730  
*In Plat. Cratylum*  
164 721  
180 721  
*In Plat. Rempubl.*  
II, 138, 18 58  
*In Plat. Tim.*  
28 C 60  
30 C–D 58  
33 B 554  
39 E 60
- Propertius  
*Elegiae*  
IV, 11, 17 666
- Psalms of Solomon*  
7, 6 780, 783
- Quintilianus  
*Institutiones Oratoriae*  
III, 5, 5–6 453
- Qumran Texts  
*Community Rule*  
III, 13–14 757  
III, 17–19 570  
III, 19 758  
IV, 15 758  
XI, 8 389  
*Damascus Document*  
VI, 20 477  
*War Scroll*  
XIII, 10 480
- Romanos  
*Hymns*  
IX, 11, 8 86  
XVII, 5, 8 88  
XVI, 14, 7–10 89, 211  
XL, 3–5 87

<i>Selden Hort</i> , 88		Tarif Khalidi, <i>The Muslim Jesus</i>	
Seneca		Saying	
<i>Epistulae Morales</i>		99	631
9, 10	697, 729	104	634
65, 7	465, 542	177	633
		200	635f.
		246	637
Sextus Empiricus		276	638
<i>Adv. Mathematicos</i>		280	630
VII, 93	677		
IX, 62–64	449, 673	Tertullian	
<i>Sophia Jesu Christi</i> , 43, 65		<i>Ad Martyras</i>	
		2, 10	237
Sophocles		<i>Ad Nationes</i>	
<i>Fragments</i> (ed. Pearson III)		1, 10, 14	447
837	552, 613	1, 13, 4	426
		1, 14, 2	431
		2, 8, 9–16	456, 458, 536
		2, 17, 3–6	447
Stobaeus		<i>Ad Scapulam</i>	
<i>Anthologium</i>		2, 10	404
I, 21, 9, 18	615	<i>Adv. Judaeos</i>	
I, 375	299	1, 1	432
I, 378, 5 (Calvisius)	373	5, 4	432
VI, 35 (Heraclitus)	343	7, 4	406
Suetonius		8, 6	431
<i>De rhetoribus</i>		9, 1	437
1	665	<i>Adv. Marcionem</i>	
		I, 18	447
Tacitus		II, 2, 7	402
<i>Germania</i>		II, 9, 2	404
1	690	II, 20, 2	403
		II, 20, 3	403
Tatian		II, 25, 2	403
<i>Adress to the Greeks</i>		II, 27, 6	66
13	116, 354	III, 12, 1	437
26	46	IV, 1, 10	511
		IV, 3, 3	274
Talmud Babli		IV, 4, 4	268
Abodah Zarah 18b	402	IV, 8, 1	410
Berakoth 51a	206, 679	IV, 26, 5	438
Hagigah 14a	158	IV, 27, 9	424
Kelim 2, 1	679	IV, 31, 5	200
Kelim 25, 1–9	206	V, 3, 6	274
Megillah 9a	344, 542	V, 4, 6	426
Sanhedrin 38b	402, 467	V, 4, 8	275
Sanhedrin 56a	779	V, 5, 1	394
Shabbat 31a	200	V, 20, 2	436
Shekalim 6, 5	425	<i>Adv. Praxean</i>	
		1	444
Targum		3	366, 434, 444,
<i>Targum of Isaiah</i>			668
14, 25	201	13, 4	428
47, 6	201	21, 3	428
		21, 6	428



<i>Adv. Valentinianos</i>		29, 2-15	398f.
1, 4	435	35	435
3, 2	451	<i>De spectaculis</i>	
4	115, 298	3	402
4, 2	383	<i>De testimonio animae</i>	
9	298	1, 5	450
14, 4	400	1, 6	454
27	372	2, 6-7	451
29	302	3	362
32	113	3, 2	454
39	367	5, 1	451
<i>Apologeticum</i>		<i>De virginibus velandis</i>	
5, 1	447	13, 1	356, 442
9, 13	422	<i>Scorpisce</i>	
16, 1	431	1, 5	366, 434
17, 4-6	450	8, 3	401
17, 6	362, 453	10, 10	432
18	531		
18, 8	393	(Ps.) Tertullian,	
21, 1	405	<i>Adversus omnes haereses</i>	
22, 1-2	454	2, 7-9	558
22, 2	431	4	371
24, 3	454		
25, 3-8	447	<i>Testament of Benjamin</i>	
39, 4	411	7, 5	401
39, 5-6	424		
47, 13	430, 666	<i>Testament of Jude</i>	
<i>De anima</i>		25, 3	199
23, 5	586		
27, 4-6	441	<i>Testament of Levi</i>	
40, 1	362	18, 5	202
51, 6-7	666	18, 6-7	90
<i>De baptismo</i>		<i>Testamentum Domini</i> (ed. Rahmani),	412
17, 5	356	p. 97	107
18, 5	363		
<i>De carne Christi</i>		Theodoretus	
10, 1	435	<i>In Graecos</i>	
15	435	3	532
16	371		
<i>De corona militis</i>		Theodore bar Koni	
4, 2	442	<i>Liber Scholiorum</i>	
<i>De cultu feminarum</i>		XI	468
1, 2, 5	356, 441		
<i>De oratione</i>		Theophilus of Antioch	
22, 8.9	442	<i>Ad Autolyca.</i>	
26, 1	415, 425	I, 7	247
<i>De paenitentia</i>		II, 8	451
12, 9	402, 600	II, 34	240, 421
<i>De pudicitia</i>			
6	362	Tosefta	
12, 4-5	423	Sanhedrin VIII, 7	467
<i>De resurrectione mortuorum</i>			
17	665		
19	434f.		

Tyconius		<i>Vita Adae et Evae</i>	
<i>Liber Regularum</i> (ed. J.-M. Verkruysse)		48, 6 (Latin)	402
I, 12, 1	420	37 (Georgian)	600
III, 25	275	40 (Georgian)	402
V, 3, 7	426		
		<i>Vita Mariae Rhythmica</i> , 87, 89, 209	
Valentinus		3686	90
fragm. 8	120	6173–6174	87
<i>Van den Levene ons Heeren</i> , 98		Virgil	
		<i>Aeneid</i>	
Varro		I, 1	690
<i>De lingua latina</i>		Zosimus of Panopolis,	
V, 10, 57	503	<i>On the Letter Omega</i>	
Victorinus of Pettau,		1	599
<i>De fabrica mundi</i>		10	599, 601
1	690	11	600
<i>Vita Abercū</i>		13	600
22	47	16	601

## INDEX OF NAMES AND SUBJECTS

- Abel, E., 60  
 Abd al-Jabbar, 206, 308, 580, 641, 649,  
 651, 652, 662, 680, 681  
 Abraxas, 40, 52, 53, 62, 65, 149, 243,  
 248, 249, 251, 252, 254, 255, 256,  
 258, 259, 260, 523, 620  
 Acher, 67, 73, 703, 704  
 Adam, A., 266, 269, 406, 437  
 Adamantius, 271  
 Addai, 77, 80, 171, 203, 263, 267, 350,  
 407, 412, 520, 632, 652, 741, 830  
 Addai and Mari, 350  
 Adimantus, 77, 80, 82, 263, 266, 267,  
 268  
 Adoptianism, 408, 420, 443  
 Advaita, 120  
 Aeschylus, 697  
 Ahriman, 4  
 Ahuramazda, 4  
*Aion*, 35, 46, 47, 48, 49, 55, 61, 62, 64,  
 65, 257, 258, 259, 300, 572, 617,  
 618, 619  
 Aland, Barbara, 279  
 Aland, Kurt, 78, 279, 402, 413, 414  
 Albinus, 299, 373, 676  
 Alcuin, 809, 819  
 Alexander of Lycopolis, 38, 493  
 Alexandria, 4, 10, 12, 13, 21, 23, 26,  
 37, 39, 40, 41, 43, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65,  
 68, 72, 75, 93, 104, 105, 106, 107,  
 110, 111, 112, 119, 122, 131, 141,  
 143, 149, 156, 157, 160, 161, 163,  
 164, 165, 166, 167, 193, 195, 216,  
 217, 222, 238, 239, 243, 251, 258,  
 260, 269, 278, 281, 287, 290, 291,  
 292, 293, 294, 342, 344, 345, 346,  
 351, 353, 355, 375, 383, 384, 385,  
 390, 396, 401, 404, 407, 408, 409,  
 412, 415, 434, 435, 439, 441, 443,  
 446, 457, 459, 465, 479, 484, 486,  
 490, 491, 493, 494, 498, 530, 540,  
 541, 542, 543, 544, 555, 556, 562,  
 563, 564, 583, 584, 585, 590, 592,  
 593, 594, 614, 617, 619, 620, 624,  
 625, 628, 629, 635, 643, 645, 646,  
 647, 648, 661, 681, 704, 705, 706,  
 707, 712, 713, 714, 719, 724, 731,  
 732, 734, 744, 745, 746, 747, 753,  
 790, 824, 828  
 Alfarcic, P., 263  
 Alfonsi, Petrus, 631  
 Allberry, C.R.C., 267, 468, 514, 515,  
 549  
 Al-Muhasibi, 187, 640  
 Al-Nahāwandi, Benjamin, 774  
 Al-Qirqisāni, 525, 772, 773, 774  
 Al-Shahrastani, 525, 772, 773  
 Altfred, 809, 814, 816, 818  
 Ambrose, 306  
 Ambrosiaster, 274, 390, 411  
 Amersfoort, J. van, 75, 78, 99, 101, 282,  
 457, 636  
 Ammonius Saccas, 583, 719  
 Amon, 55  
 Anastasius I, 86  
 Anaximander, 333  
 androgyny, 40, 51, 54, 55, 58, 61, 63,  
 122, 123, 128, 130, 131, 135, 136,  
 138, 159, 160, 192, 214, 247, 249,  
 259, 296, 341, 343, 344, 345, 353,  
 357, 379, 465, 466, 467, 468, 473,  
 494, 499, 506, 542, 543, 544, 560,  
 564, 591, 645, 725, 726  
 Angel of the Holy Spirit, 105, 110  
 Angel of the Lord, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69,  
 71, 72, 75, 161, 419, 466, 525, 526,  
 564, 565, 588, 592, 598, 606, 609,  
 622, 623, 624, 625, 703, 704, 714,  
 724, 746, 753, 762, 763, 764, 766,  
 767, 771, 772, 774, 775, 782, 826  
 Angel of the Spirit, 117, 118  
 Angelus Silesius, 120, 259, 660  
 Anicetus, 281, 382, 383, 585  
 Antoninus Pius, 166  
 Antonius Julianus, 394  
 Anthony, 395  
 Apelles, 161, 756  
 Aphrahat, 8, 80, 84, 108, 110, 112, 117,  
 188, 192, 193, 194, 205, 349, 350,  
 415, 440, 482, 483, 484, 486, 680,  
 742  
 Aphrodite, 54, 345, 504, 721  
 Apion, 60, 61, 431, 530, 533  
 Aquila, 195, 396

- Archambault, G., 573, 575  
 Aristophanes, 53, 56, 135  
 Aristotle, 57, 59, 147, 450, 583, 585,  
 586, 719, 720, 725, 797, 798  
 Arius, 744, 746  
 Arkel-de Leeuw van Weenen, A. van,  
 83, 208  
 Arnobius, 534, 588, 695  
 Arnold, Gottfried, 135, 144, 145, 172,  
 332, 341, 348, 742  
 asceticism, 170, 203, 331, 334, 335,  
 336, 339, 342, 346, 347, 349, 608,  
 788, 793  
 Asherah, 160, 260  
 Asin y Palacios, M., 187, 627  
 Astarte, 39, 54, 246, 260, 401, 494, 496,  
 497, 498, 500, 502, 504  
 Athanasius, 38, 195, 376, 745, 746, 747,  
 748  
 Athenagoras, 58  
 Attridge, H.W., 123, 139, 377, 378,  
 379, 630  
 Audi, 204  
 Audians, 369  
 Augustine, 4, 32, 33, 34, 36, 77, 80, 81,  
 82, 89, 101, 138, 139, 150, 166, 170,  
 173, 263, 264, 265, 266, 268, 269,  
 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 339, 348,  
 359, 361, 362, 389, 390, 393, 397,  
 404, 405, 406, 411, 426, 434, 440,  
 445, 446, 452, 554, 571, 580, 602,  
 615, 617, 638, 650, 655, 656, 657,  
 658, 670, 695, 697, 738, 779, 792,  
 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799,  
 800, 801, 802, 804, 805, 806, 807,  
 810, 828  
*Authentikos Logos*, 459  
 Autogenes, 35, 36  
 Axelson, Bertil, 456, 529, 532  
 Axionicus, 115, 617  
 Aziza, Claude, 432, 457  
  
 Baader, Franz von, 136, 138, 247, 341  
 Baarda, T., 211, 224, 681  
 Babrius, 187  
 Bahram I., 31  
 Balai, 192  
 Banitt, M., 395  
 Bank, J.H. van de, 101, 348, 738  
 Bar Kochba, 68  
 Baraics, 276  
 Barbeliots, 142, 143  
 Barbelo-Gnostics, 246  
 Barc, B., 79, 347, 415, 557, 559, 560,  
 641, 652  
 Bardaisan, 222, 223, 347, 437  
 Bardy, G., 247, 398  
 Barker, M., 623  
 Barlaam and Joasaph, 188  
 Barnard, F.M., 239  
 Barnard, L.W., 203  
 Barrett, C.K., 431, 550  
 Bartelink, G.J.M., 445, 737  
 Barth, Karl, 94, 329, 330, 331, 332,  
 333, 567, 789, 795, 800, 802, 805  
 Baruch Elohim, 68  
 Bashevis Singer, Isaac, 14  
 Basilides, 18, 37, 40, 41, 50, 62, 63, 75,  
 141, 149, 165, 166, 167, 229, 243,  
 250, 251, 254, 285, 286, 287, 293,  
 303, 327, 365, 378, 380, 408, 409,  
 457, 555, 567, 585  
 Basilus, 56, 195, 345, 346, 733, 734,  
 736, 747, 748  
 Bauer, W., 241, 382, 409  
 Baumstark, A., 81, 85, 95, 96, 319  
 Baur, F.Ch., 3, 4, 5, 36, 135, 172, 244,  
 336, 375, 381  
 Bayer, B., 86  
 Baynes C., 590  
 Baynes, H.G., 250, 252, 254, 256  
 Beare, F.W., 188, 682  
 Beatrice, P.F., 245, 361  
 Beatus of Liébana, 687  
 Beaujeu, J., 665  
 Belibaste, Guillaume, 654, 830  
 Benedict of Nursia, 809, 810, 815  
 Benjamin, W., 18  
 Benoit, P., 184, 188, 190, 191  
 Benz, E., 738  
 Berdjajew, N., 346  
 Bergerac, C. de, 109  
 Bergmann, J., 291  
 Bergson, Henri, 801, 802  
 Bernard, L., 193  
 Bernlef, 99, 817, 818, 820  
 Bernouilli, C.A., 331  
 Betz, H.D., 276, 277  
 Beuken, W.H., 98  
 Bianchi, U., 329, 345, 556  
*Birkat ha-Minim*, 410, 430, 432  
 Bitter, R.A., 563  
 Black, M., 145, 165, 177, 282, 745, 775  
 Blackstone, W.J., 48  
 Blake, W., 39, 75, 143, 146, 147, 153,  
 172

- Blankert, S., 448, 674  
 Blavatsky, H., 370  
 Blic, J. de, 795  
 Blok, D.P., 245, 820  
 Blondheim, D.S., 395, 426  
 Bloom, H., 151  
 Bodmer Papyri, 290  
 Boehme, R., 58  
 Boethius, 715, 716, 718, 719, 730  
 Bogomiles, 6, 8, 10, 142, 143, 148, 171, 654  
 Böhlig, A., 64, 73, 264, 293, 524, 724  
 Böhme, Jacob, 4, 5, 39, 42, 133, 134, 135, 136, 138, 139, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 172, 247, 260, 296, 341, 375, 562, 572, 589, 609, 645, 660, 699, 742, 831, 832  
 Bohr, Niels, 572  
 Boismard, M.-E., 184, 188, 190, 191  
 Bolgiani, F., 329, 341, 342, 409  
 Bondel, J., 687  
 Boniface, 93, 101, 807, 809, 816, 818  
 Bonner, Campbell, 52, 251, 254, 523, 524  
 Boot, I., 289  
 Borborians, 10  
 Borleffs, J.G.Ph., 446, 456, 529, 536  
 Bousset, Wilhelm, 173, 239, 504, 550, 551  
 Box, G.H., 424, 763  
 Bradin, M., 42, 75  
 Braun, René, 404, 428, 436, 669  
 Brock, R. van den, 10, 36, 54, 75, 84, 85, 87, 89, 90, 139, 209, 344, 346, 350, 356, 357, 385, 402, 409, 457, 502, 539, 601, 620, 645, 646, 654, 699, 753, 832  
 Bruce, James, 37, 42, 75, 157, 589, 606  
 Bruin, C.C. de, 81, 99, 820  
 Brunner, Emil, 795, 801, 802  
 Brunner, Peter, 798, 800  
 Buber, Martin, 14, 15, 336, 749  
 Buddha, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 117, 119, 133, 170, 188, 594  
 Bultmann, Rudolf, 157, 173, 189, 329, 330, 350, 510, 569, 618, 696, 729, 794  
 Buonaiuti, E., 242  
 Burkitt, F.C., 194, 202, 265, 275, 397, 420, 741  
 Callahan, J.F., 797  
 Calvin, Jean, 832  
 Calvisius Taurus, 355, 373  
 Campbell, J., 143  
 Capelle, P., 396, 397, 398  
 Carpocrates, 18, 41, 408  
 Carthage, 78, 104, 169, 278, 355, 356, 366, 368, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 400, 401, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 410, 411, 413, 414, 415, 420, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 458, 459, 471, 585, 609, 669  
 Casaubonus, I., 614  
 Casey, R.P., 111  
 Cassianus, Julius, 216, 292, 340, 341, 342, 343, 345, 352, 355, 356, 361, 369, 409, 635  
 Cassiodorus, 605, 719  
 Castelnau, P. de, 6  
 Cathars, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 39, 142, 143, 146, 147, 148, 171, 172, 654, 830, 831  
 Celsus, 245, 246  
 Cerdo, 165, 365  
 Cerfaux, L., 777  
 Cerinthus, 161, 525  
 Cerutti, M.V., 562  
 Chadwick, H., 57, 217, 218, 245, 292, 345, 357, 358, 359, 360  
 Chadwick, J., 53  
 Chagall, M., 14  
 Chalcedon, 45, 436  
*Chaldaean Oracles*, 722, 723, 726, 728, 729  
 Charlemagne, 808, 809, 813, 815  
 Chassidism, 14  
 Chaumont, M.L., 204  
 Chronos, 58, 59, 64, 65, 251, 257  
 Cicero, 356, 448, 449, 452, 453, 457, 609, 635, 665, 689, 690, 792, 796  
 Cilento, V., 560, 596  
 Clabeaux, J., 271, 272, 273  
 Clarke, G.W., 665  
 Claus, Hugo, 698  
 Clement of Alexandria, 41, 78, 106, 111, 117, 141, 182, 183, 193, 198, 215, 216, 232, 238, 239, 241, 277, 290, 326, 342, 351, 366, 381, 408, 415, 434, 439, 446, 467, 482, 484, 628, 635, 743  
 Clement of Rome, 179, 312, 479, 658  
 Cleomenes, 443  
 Codex Argenteus, 809, 815  
 Codex Askewianus, 37, 157  
 Codex Berolinensis 8502, 51

- Codex Brucianus, 34, 35, 37, 43, 62, 75, 157, 563, 607  
 Codex Fuldensis, 84, 85, 88, 93, 101, 208, 211, 319  
 Codex Jung, 120, 121, 147, 150, 168, 212, 294, 295, 297, 299, 365, 434, 523, 561, 754, 771, 827  
 Codex Liudgerianus, 810  
 Codex of Tébessa, 77, 79, 81, 101  
 Cohen, M.Y., 753  
 Collomp, P., 111  
 Colorbasus, 382, 383  
 Colpe, C., 354, 487  
*Consolamentum*, 8  
 Conzelmann, H., 421  
*Corpus Hermeticum*, 18, 19, 20, 40, 97, 98, 156, 225, 285, 584, 587, 615, 725, 731  
 Corsini, E., 721  
 Cotclerius, J.B., 532, 534  
 Courcelle, P., 218, 266, 719  
 Credner, K.A., 239, 282  
 Crossan, J.D., 225, 810, 820  
 Crouzel, H., 289  
 Culianu, I.P., 712  
 Cullmann, Oscar, 209, 530, 575, 786, 789, 790  
 Cumont, Franz, 250, 256, 257, 259, 336, 611  
 Cyprian, 78, 397, 398, 404, 413, 425, 426, 428, 433, 440, 446, 690  
 Cyril of Jerusalem, 21, 25, 350, 593
- daimonion, 109  
 Dan, J., 390, 703, 704, 714  
 Daniélou, Jean, 66, 104, 116, 203, 289, 290, 336, 349, 389, 392, 419, 444, 445, 540, 541, 579, 669, 733, 737  
 Dante Alighieri, 245, 638, 715  
 Davids, Ephrem, 737  
 DeConick, April D., 224, 363, 565, 610, 661, 753  
 Decret, F., 139, 204, 264, 268, 391, 517  
 Delatte, A., 251, 254, 554  
 Demeter, 258, 552, 612  
 demiurge, 6, 11, 22, 38, 40, 43, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 113, 127, 128, 143, 147, 148, 156, 161, 163, 164, 165, 166, 170, 250, 251, 259, 269, 273, 293, 294, 300, 365, 366, 367, 368, 376, 385, 522, 523, 524, 526, 527, 557, 560, 561, 564, 570, 587, 597, 608, 726
- Denzey, N.F., 34  
 Derchain, Ph., 251, 254  
 Derveni papyrus, 58, 60, 61, 71, 473, 726  
 Detienne, M., 505  
 Detlef, C., 408  
 Devoto, G., 405  
 Dhanens, Elisabeth, 687  
 Didymus the Blind, 373  
 Dieterich, A., 255, 337, 620  
 Dinkler, E., 702  
 Dio Chrysostomus, 448, 449, 452, 453, 673, 674, 676  
 Diogenes of Apollonia, 59  
 Dionysius the Areopagite, 21, 657, 695, 716, 730, 731  
 Dionysus, 50, 57, 249, 367, 380, 554, 555, 560  
 Dodd, C.H., 189, 539, 778  
 Dodds, E.R., 298, 733  
 Döllinger, I. von, 654  
 Donatists, 397, 406, 433  
 Doresse, J., 176, 185  
 Dörrie, H., 738  
 Dörries, H., 193, 439, 718, 747  
 Dostojewski, F.M., 247, 248  
 Drijvers, H.J.W., 212, 221, 222, 355, 363  
 Drower, E.S., 464, 507, 516, 517  
*duaitudo*, 113, 129, 352, 390  
 Dürer, Albrecht, 687  
 Duval, P., 187
- Ebionites, 27, 184, 185, 195, 196, 199, 201, 204, 211, 420, 482, 540, 628, 629, 643, 647, 651, 652, 658  
 Ebreo, Leone, 135, 722  
 Eckhart, 120, 259, 660  
 Eco, Umberto, 171  
 Edem, 502, 503, 504  
 Edessa, 7, 8, 9, 79, 80, 82, 85, 97, 98, 104, 107, 171, 176, 179, 180, 185, 192, 193, 194, 195, 202, 203, 204, 206, 209, 211, 213, 214, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 229, 278, 292, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 353, 355, 358, 359, 369, 380, 390, 396, 407, 409, 412, 413, 414, 415, 420, 440, 442, 517, 519, 520, 541, 548, 565, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 635, 643, 649, 652, 653, 654, 661, 684, 735, 738, 741, 742, 828  
 Edsman, C.-M., 429  
 Egeria, 359, 360, 397  
 egg, cosmic, 40, 43, 53, 54, 55, 58, 61,

- 62, 74, 149, 150, 249, 250, 256, 257,  
367, 726
- Einstein, Albert, 572, 795
- Eisler, R., 50, 257
- Eissfeldt, O., 55, 56
- Elbern, V.H., 820
- Eleusis, 12, 552, 612, 619
- Eleutherus, 382, 443
- Elkesaitism, 26, 27, 30, 32, 104, 116,  
117, 196, 203, 349, 352, 361, 412,  
481, 482, 514, 517, 520, 522, 526,  
540, 557, 652, 659
- Elsas, C., 561
- Eltester, W., 192
- Elxai, 27, 28, 29, 32, 117, 169, 338,  
362, 482, 545, 550, 594, 599, 739,  
740, 741
- Emerson, R.W., 39
- encratite(s), 7, 8, 41, 45, 100, 107, 141,  
157, 170, 192, 193, 194, 198, 211,  
212, 215, 216, 217, 220, 222, 223,  
224, 228, 229, 231, 277, 280, 292,  
323, 332, 336, 339, 340, 341, 342,  
344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 351,  
352, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359,  
360, 361, 362, 369, 409, 410, 414,  
415, 419, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442,  
443, 446, 629, 634, 635, 647, 737
- Enkidu, 247, 248
- Ennius, 689
- Ephrem Syrus, 33, 80, 81, 84, 85, 86,  
90, 91, 96, 101, 192, 193, 210, 211,  
223, 264, 349, 350, 354, 437, 440,  
484, 565, 632, 634
- Epicureans, 796
- Epicurus, 448
- Epigonus, 443
- Epiphanius (of Salamis), 28, 29, 37, 156,  
182, 184, 240, 241, 246, 258, 264,  
271, 275, 285, 318, 410, 427, 504,  
505, 506, 519, 521, 558, 579, 647,  
651, 681, 691
- Eros, 49, 53, 54, 57, 58, 61, 63, 65,  
124, 135, 142, 149, 155, 214, 218,  
219, 249, 254, 255, 256, 257, 259,  
290, 343, 344, 350, 551, 695, 697,  
715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721,  
722, 723, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729,  
730, 731
- Eudorus, 39, 119, 156, 583, 584, 705,  
732
- Euripides, 217
- Eusebius of Caesarea, 12, 26, 79, 158,  
182, 183, 195, 203, 335, 397, 478,  
482, 503, 518, 532, 543, 548, 624,  
652
- Eusthatius of Sebaste, 346, 734
- Eyck, Jan van, 687
- Ezekiel Tragicus, 12, 39, 122, 131, 158,  
164, 543, 544, 549, 624, 625, 706
- Fahey, M.A., 398
- Faust*, 138, 145, 146, 172, 344, 638
- Faustus of Milevis, 33, 77, 138, 223,  
264
- Faye, E. de, 289
- Ferron, J.R.J., 393
- Festugière, A.-J., 36, 60, 221, 285, 553,  
615, 616
- Fihrist*, 349, 517
- Fischer, B., 86, 307, 394, 414
- Flacius, Mathias, 332
- Flavia Sophè, 115
- Flavius Josephus, 59, 60, 61, 394, 431,  
531, 533, 536
- Fludd, R., 571
- Flügel, G., 517
- Foerster, W., 49, 516, 555, 723
- Fortna, R.T., 181, 210, 233, 475, 727
- Fossum, J., 36, 69, 474, 565, 598, 714,  
753
- Franckenberg, Abraham von, 134
- Frankena, R., 494
- Frankenberg, W., 240, 440
- Fredouille, Jean-Claude, 383, 384, 434,  
435
- Frend, W.H.C., 389, 392, 411, 432, 433
- Fronto, 459
- Gaffron, H.G., 114
- Gaius, 278
- Garitte, G., 185, 186
- Gershenson, D., 201, 573
- Gibbon, E., 745
- Gichtel, J.G., 136, 138, 341
- Gilgamesh Epic*, 247, 248
- Gillabert, Emile, 186
- Ginkel, A. van, 411, 412
- Ginzberg, L., 775
- Giversen, S., 36, 47, 296, 522, 552
- Glossa ordinaria*, 95, 96
- Gnostikoi, 10, 11, 13, 18, 21, 22, 23,  
26, 29, 35, 37, 40, 41, 49, 50, 60, 67,  
69, 72, 75, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145,  
146, 147, 148, 153, 156, 161, 162,  
163, 164, 165, 166, 169, 171, 172,  
173, 177, 179, 222, 229, 243, 245,  
246, 253, 260, 281, 283, 289, 291,

- 294, 297, 298, 301, 302, 303, 327,  
 346, 355, 365, 366, 367, 368, 374,  
 377, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385,  
 401, 408, 410, 434, 441, 446, 473,  
 522, 523, 525, 526, 555, 556, 558,  
 561, 563, 564, 584, 585, 590, 591,  
 593, 594, 596, 597, 602, 603, 610,  
 620, 623, 654, 669, 706, 713, 724,  
 726  
 Goeje, C.H. de, 802  
 Goethe, W. von, 5, 39, 144, 145, 146,  
 153, 172, 333, 619, 638  
 Goodenough, E.R., 400, 407, 465, 545  
 Goosen, A.B.J.M., 358  
 Goppelt, L., 333  
 Gordianus III, 583  
 Grant, Michael, 701  
 Gregory (abbot), 807, 808  
 Gregory the Illuminator, 171  
 Gregory of Nazianzus, 20  
 Gregory of Nyssa, 56, 195, 345, 346,  
 733, 734, 735, 737, 738, 748, 793  
 Groningen, B.A. van, 786  
 Gronovius, I., 534  
 Grosdidier de Matons, J., 86  
 Grotius, Hugo, 94, 267, 318  
 Gruenwald, I., 36, 523, 543, 544, 545,  
 754  
 Gruppe, O., 250  
 guardian angel, 8, 31, 42, 104, 107,  
 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 114, 116,  
 117, 121, 137, 138, 142, 151, 188,  
 201, 352, 353, 354, 372, 830  
 Guarducci, M., 115  
 Guillaumont, A., 104, 186, 205, 229,  
 317, 323, 348, 349, 409, 413, 414,  
 539, 633  
 Guitton, J., 797, 802, 806  
 Gundel, W., 712  
 Gunning, J.H., 136  
 Guthrie, W.K.C., 725  
 Gwyn Griffiths, J., 503  
  
 Haarbrücker, Th., 772  
 Hadrian, 166  
 Haenchen, E., 189, 475  
 Hahn, F., 189  
 Haidenthaller, M., 675  
*Hakarath Panim*, 757  
 Halm, H., 153, 221  
 Harl, M., 349  
 Harnack, Adolf von, 172, 240, 241, 268,  
 272, 275, 301, 331, 333, 404, 437,  
 438, 482, 689, 691, 745  
 Hauschild, W.-D., 105, 114, 301  
 Hegel, G.W.F., 4, 5, 16, 20, 39, 133,  
 135, 172, 333, 562, 660  
 Hegesippus, 208, 759  
 Heidegger, Martin, 5, 173, 331, 333  
 Heinemann, I., 674, 676  
 Heintze, W., 60, 530, 533  
 Heinze, R., 60, 529, 532  
 Heisenberg, W., 571, 572  
*Hekaloth Zutarit*, 703  
*Hekaloth*, 765, 766, 773  
 Helderman, J., 753  
 Helena, 25, 505, 506, 508, 562, 651  
 Henrichs, A., 105, 116, 117, 203, 246,  
 266, 481, 514, 518, 557  
 Heracleon, 41, 42, 103, 116, 123, 169,  
 290, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 299,  
 300, 301, 302, 365, 370, 371, 372,  
 376, 379, 383, 468, 561  
 Heraclitus, 254  
 Hermes, 36, 218, 221, 415, 552, 596,  
 707, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714  
 Hermes Trigenethlios, 21, 30  
 Hermes Trismegistos, 13, 19, 20, 21,  
 23, 26, 33, 34, 155, 218, 220, 221,  
 223, 225, 415, 592, 593, 594, 613,  
 614, 615, 619, 714  
 Hermetism, 26, 40, 99, 152, 153, 156,  
 157, 158, 180, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221,  
 222, 223, 347, 351, 356, 380, 415, 448,  
 465, 466, 553, 587, 591, 592, 593,  
 613, 614, 616, 661, 699, 731, 753  
 Hermias, 21  
 Hermopolis, 40, 55, 74  
 Herodotus, 797  
 Herter, H., 54  
 Hesiod, 249, 448, 726  
 Hesse, Heiner, 243  
 Hesse, Hermann, 52, 146, 149, 150,  
 243, 244, 245, 248, 249, 251, 252,  
 254, 255, 256, 259, 260  
 Hieronymus and Hellenicus, 57, 58  
 Hierotheos, 717  
 Higgins, A.J.B., 272, 437  
*Hildebrandslied*, 98  
 Hilgenfeld, A., 239  
 Hilhorst, A., 36, 118, 438  
 Hippolytus, 51, 62, 78, 149, 156, 285,  
 286, 287, 338, 368, 369, 378, 408,  
 419, 443, 471, 502, 503, 585, 667,  
 668, 739  
 Hirschberg, J.W., 392, 433, 457, 537  
 Hoens, D.J., 650  
 Holl, K., 246, 258, 285, 443, 735



- Hollander, A. den, 95  
 Holst, G., 380  
 Homer, 278, 448, 574, 690, 697  
 Honeyman, A.M., 574  
 Hopfner, Th., 245, 503, 532  
 Horace, 392, 796  
 Hornschuh, M., 291, 408, 479, 681, 743  
 Horst, P.W. van der, 217, 493  
 Huber, W., 547, 548  
 Hugenholtz, F.W.N., 810, 820  
 Humboldt, Wilhelm von, 145  
 Hyginus, 383
- Iersel, B.M.F., 189  
 Ignatius, 191, 203, 240, 658  
 Indrebø, Gustav, 83  
*Interrogatio Johannis*, 10, 11  
 Irenaeus, 25, 43, 49, 50, 51, 52, 73,  
 100, 109, 156, 163, 229, 246, 247,  
 281, 295, 296, 342, 365, 366, 367,  
 368, 370, 371, 375, 377, 378, 379,  
 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 400, 401,  
 408, 427, 434, 435, 440, 464, 465,  
 505, 551, 552, 555, 558, 559, 561,  
 562, 585, 635, 651, 743, 747  
 Ishtar, 54, 247, 494, 495, 497  
 Isidorus, 229  
 Isis, 259, 291, 401, 490, 491, 492, 493,  
 495, 499, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505,  
 506, 614, 686, 790, 791, 828  
 Ismaili, 142, 153, 164, 221
- Jackson, H.M., 381, 601  
 Jacob of Edessa, 192  
 Jacob of Maerlant, 83, 87  
 Jaeger, Werner, 679, 733, 736, 738, 748  
 Jaffé, Aniéla, 149, 252  
 Jaldabaoth, 11, 38, 51, 52, 64, 65, 72,  
 73, 122, 300, 367, 369, 522, 524,  
 585, 724  
 Jamblichus, 729  
 Jansma, T., 194  
 Jellicoe, S., 399  
 Jeremias, Joachim, 178, 188, 189, 318,  
 350, 424, 777  
 Jerome, 26, 105, 205, 207, 273, 281,  
 319, 397, 413, 425, 441, 477, 481,  
 547  
 Jewish Christianity/Jewish Christians,  
 24, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 34, 36, 41, 45,  
 66, 78, 79, 80, 82, 89, 90, 91, 94, 96,  
 98, 99, 100, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107,  
 108, 109, 110, 114, 116, 117, 118,  
 141, 142, 157, 166, 169, 171, 176,  
 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 192, 194,  
 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201,  
 202, 203, 204, 206, 208, 209, 210,  
 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 218, 219,  
 224, 223, 228, 229, 230, 232, 233,  
 238, 255, 267, 268, 269, 282, 291,  
 303, 308, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315,  
 317, 318, 319, 321, 322, 324, 325,  
 327, 334, 336, 338, 339, 342, 346,  
 347, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354,  
 355, 361, 362, 363, 365, 372, 373,  
 389, 390, 391, 392, 405, 407, 408,  
 409, 410, 412, 414, 415, 419, 420,  
 422, 423, 424, 425, 430, 431, 433,  
 439, 440, 443, 446, 468, 469, 475,  
 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482,  
 484, 485, 506, 513, 514, 515, 517,  
 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 527, 540,  
 541, 542, 549, 550, 557, 570, 573,  
 575, 579, 580, 581, 587, 589, 594,  
 599, 606, 608, 620, 623, 627, 628,  
 629, 630, 631, 632, 634, 636, 637,  
 638, 640, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646,  
 647, 648, 649, 651, 652, 653, 655,  
 656, 658, 659, 660, 662, 667, 669,  
 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 698, 727,  
 728, 729, 730, 735, 739, 740, 741,  
 742, 743, 744, 746, 750, 751, 806,  
 824, 825, 829  
 Johannes Scotus Eriugena, 660  
 John of Damascus, 19, 20  
 John of the Cross, 17  
 Jonas, Hans, 52, 142, 147, 173, 189,  
 243, 289, 381  
 Jong, J.J. de, 667  
 Joosten, J., 101  
 Juan de la Cruz, 660  
 Julian (emperor), 19, 20, 21, 592, 734,  
 747  
 Jülicher, A., 189, 272, 413, 428  
 Jung, Carl Gustav, 15, 39, 119, 120,  
 121, 139, 141, 143, 146, 149, 150,  
 151, 152, 153, 168, 173, 243, 244,  
 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255,  
 256, 259, 260, 286, 295, 296, 563,  
 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 618,  
 788, 789  
 Justin Martyr, 90, 93, 209, 238, 239,  
 240, 267, 277, 281, 370, 375, 380,  
 424, 429, 432, 435, 436, 437, 440,  
 457, 462, 465, 479, 480, 555, 573,  
 574, 575, 576, 579, 667  
 Justinian, 395  
 Justinus the gnostic, 502

- Kabbala(h)*, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 122, 141, 142, 144, 152, 153, 158, 290, 461, 473, 497, 498, 507, 508, 556, 562, 569, 589, 609
- kabod, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 28, 24, 26, 35, 39, 71, 72, 73, 90, 97, 122, 130, 131, 157, 158, 159, 160, 163, 164, 170, 233, 338, 354, 428, 461, 462, 463, 464, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 498, 543, 544, 545, 546, 549, 550, 555, 556, 560, 562, 564, 565, 569, 589, 591, 592, 597, 598, 600, 601, 602, 603, 606, 609, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 686, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 713, 714, 739, 750, 753, 760, 761, 787, 789, 826
- Kahle, P., 329, 395, 396, 399
- Kâma, 249
- Kanon Sinaiticus*, 276
- Kapsomenos, F.St., 58, 726
- Kartir, 204
- Kasser, R., 290, 295
- Kawerau, P., 203
- Kellis, 77
- Kelly, J.N.D., 748
- Kerényi, Károly, 173, 554
- Khalidi, Tarif, 627
- Kierkegaard, Søren, 341, 409
- Klages, Ludwig, 716
- Klijn, A.F.J., 80, 227, 232, 269, 390, 477, 481, 486, 519, 629
- Kmosko, M., 348, 349, 439, 629, 680, 735
- Knorr von Rosenroth, Christian, 14
- Koch, Hal, 289, 301, 718
- Koenen, L., 105, 116, 117, 139, 203, 266, 277, 481, 514, 518, 557, 596, 628, 832
- Koester, Helmut, 179, 180, 181, 185, 186, 219, 225, 413, 414, 477, 480, 485
- Kooij, A. van der, 182
- Koole, B., 139
- Kore, 258, 259, 612
- Koschorke, K., 369
- Kraeling, C., 562
- Kramer, S.N., 495
- Krause, M., 47, 103, 139, 245, 246, 291, 293, 354, 487, 723
- Kretschmar, G., 114, 203, 336, 389, 743, 739, 744
- Kronos, 56, 251, 257
- Kübel, P., 299, 302
- Kuhn, K.H., 414
- Labib, Pahor, 44, 64, 103, 245, 291, 311, 354, 487, 577, 580, 724
- Lactantius, 356, 357, 390, 445, 635, 690
- Lagrange, M.-J., 482
- Landsberger, B., 494
- Lang, J.B., 244, 249, 252, 259, 260
- Layton, B., 42, 63, 74, 379, 381, 385, 408, 561, 584, 587, 641, 723
- Le Roy Ladurie, Emmanuel, 148, 171
- Lecuw, G. van der, 15
- Leo I (pope), 657
- Leonardo di Pistoia, 613
- Letter to Flora*, 37, 294
- Leyden Magical Papyrus*, 69
- Lieberg, G., 448, 452
- Lieberman, S., 574, 626
- Liebermann, Saul, 544
- Lietzmann, Hans, 78, 522
- Lippelt, E., 239
- Lipsius, R.A., 47, 48, 354, 381, 434, 558
- Liudger, 96, 99, 208, 483, 807, 808, 809, 810, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820
- Loewe, R., 402
- Löhr, W.A., 287
- Lohse, B., 204, 548
- Loisy, A., 189
- Lomiento, G., 668
- Loofs, F., 734, 742
- Lortz, J., 433
- Löwith, K., 333
- Lubac, Henri de, 289, 333
- Lucianus, 398, 399, 665
- Lucretius, 384
- Ludolph of Saxony, 83, 84, 86, 88, 89, 90, 209
- Lundström, S., 382
- Luther, Martin, 332, 695, 738
- (Ps.-) Macarius, 7, 8, 9, 79, 85, 86, 89, 97, 98, 101, 104, 108, 181, 192, 193, 202, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 215, 238, 239, 292, 345, 346, 347, 348, 353, 354, 355, 361, 415, 439, 440, 483, 484, 521, 628, 629, 654, 662, 679, 680, 684, 718, 732, 735, 737, 738
- MacDermot, Violet, 34, 590, 602, 636
- Macdonald, J., 547
- Macrobius, 65, 258
- Macuch, R., 515, 516, 522
- Magharians, 71, 161, 164, 525, 526, 754, 772, 773, 774, 776, 777, 779, 783

- Mahé, J.-P., 19, 217, 218, 219, 225,  
 402, 415, 434, 552, 596, 601, 614,  
 710, 713, 714  
 Maier, G., 332  
*Malef*, 69, 161  
 Malinine, M., 116, 434, 435  
 Mandaeans/Mandaeism, 65, 105,  
 141, 153, 163, 164, 204, 205, 221,  
 337, 338, 368, 463, 464, 467, 472,  
 473, 487, 490, 491, 492, 495, 497,  
 498, 500, 502, 506, 507, 508, 510,  
 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517,  
 518, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525,  
 526, 527, 585, 589  
 mandala, 149, 252, 253, 255, 256, 259,  
 373  
 Mani, 4, 5, 18, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36,  
 38, 42, 77, 80, 105, 116, 117, 118,  
 129, 130, 132, 133, 138, 139, 142,  
 143, 159, 162, 169, 170, 173, 203,  
 204, 223, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267,  
 268, 269, 276, 277, 305, 309, 327,  
 338, 349, 350, 352, 354, 361, 362,  
 369, 412, 437, 468, 481, 482, 514,  
 515, 517, 518, 520, 557, 559, 570,  
 589, 594, 595, 596, 602, 605, 606,  
 607, 608, 610, 628, 643, 655, 656,  
 659, 707, 827, 830, 832  
 Manichaeans/Manichaeism, 4, 5, 6, 10,  
 13, 30, 31, 33, 34, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41,  
 42, 45, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 89, 93,  
 101, 116, 117, 130, 131, 142, 146,  
 147, 148, 153, 170, 171, 173, 204,  
 223, 237, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267,  
 268, 277, 281, 305, 306, 323, 336,  
 350, 352, 354, 468, 475, 487, 513,  
 514, 515, 517, 549, 570, 583, 584,  
 585, 589, 596, 605, 606, 607, 608,  
 620, 628, 630, 631, 632, 655, 656,  
 659, 749, 794, 796, 798, 831  
 Manilius, 343  
 Mann, Thomas, 7, 14, 15, 20, 24, 121,  
 131, 132, 135, 136, 137, 248  
 Mansveld, J., 493  
 Marböck, J., 490  
 Marc the Magician, 109, 113, 195, 285,  
 286, 382, 383  
 Marcellina, 281, 382, 585  
 Marcion, 10, 37, 66, 119, 161, 165,  
 166, 209, 212, 223, 240, 268, 269,  
 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277,  
 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 354, 365,  
 424, 428, 436, 437, 438, 511, 529,  
 580, 585, 655, 680, 689, 691, 692,  
 693, 707, 824, 832  
 Marcionites, 141, 143, 171, 277, 349,  
 355, 381, 436, 437, 669  
 Marco Polo, 47  
 Marcus Aurelius, 195, 459  
 Margoliouth, M., 627  
 Marius Victorinus, 274, 406, 602  
 Markschiev, C., 381, 384, 385  
*Marsanes*, 380  
 Marx, Karl, 135, 147, 148, 333  
 Mary, 86, 96, 110, 145, 247, 341, 420,  
 441, 443, 567  
 Masbotheans, 105  
 Massignon, L., 221  
 Maury, P., 8  
 Maximus Tyrius, 450  
 Mazdeism, 352, 656  
 Medinet Madi, 38, 132, 513, 632  
 Meeks, W., 376, 545  
 Meer, F. van der, 687  
 Mees, M., 269, 290, 291, 346, 484  
 Melito of Sardes, 396, 397, 405, 458,  
 751  
 Menander, 217  
 Ménard, J.-E., 65, 190, 205, 246  
*Meristae*, 201, 573, 574, 575, 576, 579  
 Merkabah, 18, 470, 471, 525, 549, 557,  
 569, 609, 610, 611, 625, 626, 739  
 Merkelbach, R., 77, 620, 618  
 Messalianism, 7, 8, 9, 39, 48, 97, 142,  
 143, 205, 269, 346, 348, 358, 360,  
 515, 632, 654, 684, 734, 735, 737  
 Metatron, 67, 68, 72, 73, 74, 161, 419,  
 544, 588, 592, 598, 606, 610, 622,  
 624, 626, 703, 704, 713, 760, 761,  
 762, 763, 766, 771  
 Metzger, B.M., 85, 398  
 Meyendorff, J., 346  
 Meyer, M., 820  
 Meyer, M.W., 620  
 Michel, O., 375, 439, 584, 725, 832  
 Michelsen, J.H.A., 639, 640  
 Middle Platonism, 75, 155, 289, 301, 370,  
 373, 375, 465, 493, 542, 584, 635  
 Midrash, 202, 401, 660, 698, 728  
 Milne, C.H., 265  
 Minucius Felix, 110, 340, 355, 391, 393,  
 394, 422, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432,  
 438, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449,  
 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456,  
 457, 458, 459, 479, 529, 530, 531,  
 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 559,  
 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671,  
 672, 673, 674, 675, 690, 691, 790,  
 792  
 Mishnah, 574, 578

- Mithras/Mithraism, 62, 64, 254, 257,  
 258, 553, 617, 618, 620, 790  
 Modalism, 409, 443, 444, 445, 446,  
 459, 668, 743  
 Modena, 47, 250, 256, 257, 259  
 Molland, Einar, 422  
*monachos*, 181, 192, 194, 195, 228, 229,  
 292, 349, 480, 633, 634  
 Monceaux, P., 393, 397, 400, 405, 411  
 Monophysitism, 30  
 Montanism, 357  
 Montefiore, H., 181  
 Morard, F.-E., 195, 349  
 Morenz, S., 55, 57  
 Morgenstern, Christian, 489  
 Morray-Jones, C.R.A., 611, 625, 626  
 Mosheim, Johann Lorenz von, 172, 754  
 Mughtasila, 349  
 Muhammad, 150, 269, 649, 657, 659,  
 680  
 Muhammad Ali al Samman, 38  
 Müller, G., 408  
 Müller, U.B., 412, 728  
 Munck, J., 44  
 Murray, R., 203  
 Mythos, 5, 12, 22, 120, 122, 130, 131,  
 132, 133, 248, 756, 757, 776  
  
 Naevius, 689  
 Nag Hammadi, 5, 12, 13, 18, 21, 34,  
 35, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 46, 49, 52, 63,  
 64, 65, 79, 103, 104, 139, 142, 143,  
 150, 157, 159, 163, 164, 165, 168,  
 173, 175, 176, 181, 189, 212, 219,  
 221, 223, 245, 251, 291, 292, 293,  
 305, 311, 338, 345, 347, 348, 354,  
 366, 368, 369, 380, 381, 408, 409,  
 415, 446, 464, 477, 487, 508, 509,  
 522, 542, 551, 552, 557, 561, 577,  
 586, 587, 589, 593, 595, 607, 614,  
 627, 630, 641, 652, 706, 710, 711,  
 723, 724, 740, 753, 824, 826, 827,  
 831  
 Nagel, P., 36, 212, 414  
 Nazarius of Concorezzo, 10  
 Nazoraecans, 196, 201, 204, 205, 208,  
 351, 410, 427, 431, 432, 477, 481,  
 482, 486, 516, 518, 519, 520, 521,  
 526, 540, 620, 628, 642, 643, 651,  
 652, 658, 735  
 Neander, August, 172, 539  
 Nelson, H.L., 279, 355, 389, 445, 559  
 Nemoy, L., 525, 772  
 Neoplatonism, 42, 60, 147, 583, 722,  
 794, 796, 797, 798, 805  
  
 Nes, H.M. van, 240  
 Nestorianism, 30, 269  
 Neusner, J., 108, 203, 392, 545  
 Newman, C., 474  
 Newton, Isaac, 143, 613  
 Nicetas of Constantinople, 6  
 Nicholas of Cusa, 254  
 Nichtweiss, B., 363  
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 147, 148, 331,  
 333, 796  
 Nilsson, M.P., 246, 251, 257  
 Nock, A.D. 285, 465, 553, 790  
 Noetus, 443, 668  
 Nonnus of Panopolis, 554  
 Novalis, 5, 245, 374  
 Novatian, 438, 443  
 Nygren, A., 695, 719, 720  
  
 O'Malley, T.P., 272, 398, 437  
 Odeberg, H., 72, 73, 760, 761, 763,  
 771, 778, 826  
 Oeyen, Chr., 106  
 Oort, J. van, 36, 82, 118, 139, 173, 309,  
 363, 389, 390, 638, 670, 806  
 Oostrom, F.P. van, 98  
 Ophites, 245, 246, 464  
 Orbán, A.P., 445  
 Origen, 41, 42, 78, 110, 111, 116, 169,  
 182, 195, 245, 253, 289, 290, 291,  
 292, 293, 294, 296, 297, 298, 299,  
 301, 302, 303, 333, 344, 345, 365,  
 372, 373, 374, 375, 380, 381, 385,  
 397, 399, 408, 441, 446, 459, 482,  
 533, 584, 598, 667, 668, 669, 716,  
 731, 732, 737, 743, 744, 746, 747,  
 765, 774  
 Orpheus, 33, 58, 60, 61, 75, 611, 690,  
 697, 725  
 Orphics, 40, 43, 49, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59,  
 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 71, 75, 149,  
 162, 164, 249, 250, 251, 255, 256, 257,  
 258, 337, 367, 377, 379, 457, 473, 554,  
 612, 690, 722, 723, 725, 726, 727, 730  
 Ortiz de Urbina, I., 203  
 Osiris, 492, 503, 671, 790, 791  
 Ouranos, 56  
 Overbeck, Franz, 44, 301, 331  
 Ovid, 384  
  
 Pachomius, 195, 369  
 Pagels, E., 42, 123, 173, 375, 377, 379  
 Palladius, 415  
 Pan, 150, 241, 250, 256, 264, 681  
 Panaetius, 673  
 Pantaenus, 112

- Papias, 315  
 Paraclete, 29, 31, 32, 126, 129, 133  
 Paramelle, J., 710  
 Patlagean, E., 441  
 Pauli, Wolfgang, E., 45, 47, 116, 286,  
     339, 356, 428, 570, 571, 572  
 Paulicians, 39, 142, 143, 171  
 Paulsen, H., 353  
 Pausanias, 54  
 Pearson, Birger A., 542, 552, 557, 558,  
     559  
 Pelagia, 247, 344, 441  
 Pelagius, 274, 733  
 Pellegrino, M., 341  
 Pépin, J., 20, 554  
 Perkins, Ph., 50  
 Perler, O., 396, 751  
 Perpetua, 356, 374, 433, 441  
 Petersen, W.L., 80, 81, 82, 91, 101,  
     272, 653, 820  
 Peterson, Erik, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 116,  
     173, 329, 330, 331, 333, 334, 335,  
     336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 348,  
     362, 540, 618, 620, 780, 793  
 Pétrement, Simone, 749  
 Petrus Comestor, 90  
 Pettazzoni, R., 258  
 Pfeiffer, A., 331  
 Phanes, 40, 43, 47, 49, 54, 56, 58, 60,  
     61, 64, 65, 71, 75, 149, 150, 249,  
     250, 251, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259,  
     260, 367, 560, 723, 725, 726  
 Philo of Alexandria, 39, 66, 68, 71, 72,  
     157, 159, 161, 162, 195, 292, 344,  
     352, 394, 403, 404, 464, 465, 466,  
     467, 471, 472, 473, 474, 495, 498,  
     499, 500, 501, 506, 540, 542, 543,  
     544, 545, 549, 552, 557, 559, 560,  
     563, 564, 565, 590, 625, 704, 706,  
     713, 724, 731, 732  
 Philoxenus of Mabbog, 265, 483, 484  
 phoenix, 54, 356, 357, 725  
 Photius, 47  
 Picard, Ch., 57  
 Pindar, 552, 612  
 Pines, Shlomo, 206, 308, 519, 649, 650,  
     651, 680, 681  
 Pisi, Paola, 345  
 Pius (pope), 119, 383, 824  
 Plantijn, Christoffel, 97, 98, 348, 738  
 Plato, 21, 33, 34, 39, 43, 52, 57, 59, 60,  
     61, 69, 70, 71, 72, 75, 135, 142, 147,  
     158, 162, 177, 223, 249, 290, 303,  
     343, 352, 355, 373, 449, 465, 493,  
     523, 542, 560, 583, 584, 585, 586,  
     613, 617, 626, 634, 635, 659, 676,  
     696, 705, 708, 718, 720, 725, 729,  
     796, 797  
 Plinius Maior, 607  
 Plooi, D., 95, 96, 241  
 Plotinus, 35, 39, 42, 169, 249, 289, 298,  
     303, 368, 371, 380, 554, 555, 560,  
     561, 562, 563, 583, 584, 585, 587,  
     588, 590, 592, 595, 596, 602, 605,  
     607, 610, 617, 620, 626, 720, 730,  
     733, 737, 744, 747, 797, 805, 806,  
     823, 824, 832  
 Plutarch, 377, 492, 493, 503  
 Poirier, P.-H., 353, 354  
 Polotsky, H.J., 116  
 Porphyry, 35, 218, 219, 352, 456, 503,  
     532, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 595,  
     596, 599, 601, 602, 606, 607, 620,  
     625, 626, 804, 824  
 Portes, B., 261  
 Posidonius, 142, 162, 298, 448, 453,  
     583, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677  
 Praxeas, 443, 444, 445, 668  
 Preisendanz, K., 523, 553  
 Preiswerk, Helly, 253  
 Preuschen, E., 541  
 Priapos, 249, 256  
 Prigent, P., 751  
 Priscillian, 357, 358, 359, 360  
 Proclus, 58, 60, 554, 718, 719, 720,  
     721, 722, 723, 729, 730, 732  
 Prodicus, 366, 375, 385, 434  
 Propertius, 666  
*Protoktistoi*, 112, 106  
 Prounikos, 245, 246, 371, 506  
 Pseudo-Phocylides, 217  
 Ptah, 55, 523  
 Ptolemaeus, 37, 41, 103, 115, 116, 123,  
     293, 294, 295, 298, 327, 370, 371,  
     376, 378, 379, 380, 383, 384  
 Puech, H.-Ch., 36, 44, 47, 48, 64, 116,  
     173, 176, 218, 266, 267, 295, 301,  
     305, 311, 323, 359, 369, 434, 560,  
     630, 654, 656, 787, 788, 830, 832  
 Quartodecimans, 204, 350, 475, 478,  
     548, 549, 565, 727, 751  
 Quintilian, 453  
 Qumran, 155, 213, 219, 220, 233, 389,  
     399, 411, 462, 475, 480, 550, 570,  
     606, 657, 670, 728, 753  
 Rad, Gerhard von, 495, 496  
 Ras Shamra, 53, 55, 57  
 Ratzinger, Joseph, 831

- Re, 40, 55, 156  
 Reese, J.M., 490  
 Reiling, J., 109  
 Reinhardt, K., 448, 727  
 Reinink, G.J., 519  
 Reitzenstein, Richard A., 157, 173, 418,  
     419, 439, 516, 551, 556, 569  
 Rengstorf, K.H., 425  
 Richardson, C.C., 791  
 Rist, J.M., 716  
 Ritter, A.M., 6, 346, 736  
 Roberge, M., 380, 608  
 Roberts, C.H., 182, 279, 346, 399,  
     407, 408, 479, 541, 542, 832  
 Robinson, James M., 150, 157, 173,  
     180, 348, 413, 485, 555, 563  
 Roensch, H., 406, 427, 428  
 Rohde, Erwin, 331  
 Romanos, 80, 86, 87, 88, 89, 91, 96,  
     101, 211  
 Roncaglia, M., 413  
 Rordorf, W., 205  
 Rosenzweig, Franz, 749  
 Rougemont, Denis de, 146, 148  
 Rouwhorst, G.A.M., 548, 565, 623, 630  
 Rubljow, Andrej, 14  
 Rudolph, K., 139, 173, 515, 516, 517,  
     518, 522, 523  
 Rufinus, 60, 340, 534  
  
 Sabellius, 668  
 Sabians, 221, 222, 643, 652, 659  
 Sagnard, F.M.M., 103  
 Said, E., 627  
 Samaritans, 23, 24, 25, 36, 69, 71, 75,  
     160, 161, 163, 182, 246, 506, 546,  
     547, 548, 565, 575, 603, 604, 605,  
     622, 634  
 Samburski, S., 571  
 Saturninus, 12, 159, 555, 562  
 saved saviour, 157  
 Säve-Söderbergh, T., 514  
 Scaevola, 673  
 Schäfer, P., 753  
 Schelling, Friedrich W.J., 4, 17, 133,  
     135, 172, 562  
 Schenke, H.-M., 212  
 Scherer, J., 668, 744  
 Schindler, A., 329  
 Schindler, H., 332  
 Schippers, R., 224  
 Schlatter, A., 269, 317, 643, 660  
 Schleiermacher, Friedrich D.E., 4, 133,  
     135, 172  
 Schlütz, K., 106  
  
 Schmid, H., 502  
 Schmid, Ulrich, 95, 272, 273, 274, 276,  
     277, 282, 692, 832  
 Schmidt, Carl, 36, 37, 43, 44, 45, 46,  
     47, 95, 329, 335, 355, 375, 530, 534,  
     555, 563, 598  
 Schnackenburg, R., 549  
 Schneemelcher, W., 45, 267, 480, 482,  
     630, 656, 692  
 Schoeps, H.-J., 540, 574, 778  
 Scholem, Gershom, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18,  
     64, 204, 257, 291, 471, 495, 497,  
     499, 524, 525, 556, 567, 569, 571,  
     609, 650, 660, 714, 735, 739, 750,  
     757, 760, 765, 766, 826  
 Schopenhauer, Arthur, 249, 286, 330,  
     331, 332, 343, 571  
 Schou Pedersen, V., 520  
 Schrage, W., 308  
 Schröter, J., 225  
 Schulz, W., 250, 254  
 Schulz-Flügel, Eva, 442  
 Schwartz, E., 103, 104, 203, 530  
 Schweitzer, Albert, 486, 701, 786  
 Schweizer, Eduard, 490, 492  
 Schwenke, P., 447  
 Secundinus, 77, 82  
 Segal, Alan F., 42, 67, 68, 69, 419, 553,  
     557, 569, 620, 714, 724  
 Segal, J.B., 222, 347  
 Segal, R.A., 286  
 Segelberg, E., 114  
 Seneca, 446, 447, 448, 465, 542, 674,  
     697, 729  
*seniores laici*, 391, 411, 413  
*Sentences of Sextus*, 41, 212, 217, 218, 238,  
     292, 345, 369, 459  
*Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*, 149, 243, 250,  
     252, 254, 256, 618  
 Septuagint, 66, 158, 162, 178, 195, 280,  
     281, 283, 394, 396, 397, 399, 400,  
     411, 420, 427, 431, 464, 471, 502,  
     542, 545, 641, 680, 718, 746, 826  
 Serapion, 745, 746, 747  
 Serapis, 458, 503, 536, 537, 665, 671  
 Sethians, 21, 163, 368, 375, 508, 558, 559  
 Sextus Empiricus, 448, 449, 453, 454,  
     673, 677  
 Sfameni Gasparro, G., 341  
 Shapur, 33  
*Shapurakan*, 33  
*Shekhinah*, 463, 749, 750  
*Shiur Qoma*, 28, 164, 463, 464, 470, 472,  
     545, 546, 592, 753, 765  
 Sibylle of Cumae, 33

- Simon Magus, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29,  
30, 36, 47, 137, 160, 161, 246, 292,  
344, 392, 488, 505, 506, 508, 525,  
562, 593, 594, 601, 603, 604, 605,  
757, 759
- Simon, M., 203, 392, 407, 540, 541,  
542, 574, 575, 576, 577, 579
- Simonetti, Manlio, 294, 390
- Siniscalco, P., 434
- Sinnige, Th.G., 42, 832
- Socrates, 109, 110, 695, 720, 729
- Soden, H. von, 272, 428, 437
- Soden, W. von, 494, 497
- Solzhenitsyn, A.I., 701
- Son of Man, 73, 74, 152, 153, 158, 230,  
326, 418, 462, 468, 469, 473, 474,  
545, 564, 568, 589, 590, 591, 602,  
606, 622, 623, 646, 685, 686, 703,  
706, 713, 800
- Sophocles, 552, 612
- Spengel, L., 453
- Spengler, Oswald, 796
- Spies, O., 188
- Staats, R., 192, 193, 735, 737, 738
- Stead, G.C., 376, 379
- Steiner, Rudolf, 39, 146, 370, 755
- Stern, S.M., 126, 649, 650, 681
- Stiglmayr, J., 718
- Stoics, 59, 61, 71, 162, 290, 455, 720
- Strauß, Daniel Friedrich, 3
- Strecker, G., 480
- Stroker, W.D., 628
- Stroumsa, G.G., 545
- Suarez, Ph. de, 185, 186, 187
- Suetonius, 665
- Symmachus, 182, 195, 481, 634, 796
- Syrus Curetonianus*, 80, 179
- Syrus Sinaiticus*, 80, 179, 204, 420, 482,  
580, 681
- Tacitus, 595, 690
- taheb*, 24
- Talbert, Ch.H., 66
- Talmud, 158, 344, 400, 401, 458, 575,  
660, 662, 679, 698, 703, 728, 826
- Tanit, 401
- Tardieu, M., 375, 584, 596, 725, 832
- Targum, 395, 396
- Tatian, 8, 45, 48, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83,  
84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 95,  
96, 97, 100, 101, 116, 117, 176, 187,  
193, 194, 203, 204, 209, 210, 211,  
213, 215, 216, 217, 221, 222, 224,  
232, 263, 264, 265, 267, 268, 269,  
272, 277, 280, 281, 292, 301, 305,  
307, 309, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322,  
326, 327, 340, 341, 342, 346, 347,  
351, 354, 407, 409, 414, 438, 439,  
440, 476, 482, 483, 484, 629, 634,  
651, 653, 654, 655, 661, 662, 680,  
684, 736, 740, 792, 810, 812, 815,  
819, 820, 829
- Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, 660
- Tersteegen, Gerhard, 742
- Tertullian, 66, 78, 113, 115, 119, 200,  
237, 240, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275,  
281, 298, 302, 339, 355, 356, 362,  
363, 366, 367, 368, 371, 372, 375,  
383, 384, 385, 391, 393, 394, 397,  
398, 399, 400, 401, 403, 404, 405,  
406, 410, 411, 415, 422, 423, 424,  
425, 426, 428, 430, 431, 432, 433,  
434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 440, 441,  
442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448,  
449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455,  
456, 457, 458, 459, 479, 511, 529,  
530, 531, 536, 537, 558, 559, 586,  
600, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670,  
672, 675, 677
- Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, 179
- Theiler, W., 560
- Theissen, G., 631
- Theodore bar Konai, 468
- Theodosius II, 10
- Theodotion, 195
- Theodotus, 293, 294, 377, 383
- Theophilus of Antioch, 240, 247, 421,  
451, 660
- Thomas, J., 105
- Tibiletti, Carlo, 449, 450, 451
- Till, Walter, 44, 46, 51, 238, 246, 434,  
555, 563, 770
- Titus (emperor), 392
- Tommasi-Moreschini, C.O., 605
- Tränkle, H., 406, 437
- Tröger, K.W., 518, 557
- Turchi, N., 612, 613
- Turner, J.D., 181, 220, 348, 604
- Tyconius, 275, 390, 397, 420, 421, 426
- Ungnad, A., 495
- Unnik, W.C. van, 59, 213, 385, 479,  
793
- Unsold, S., 243, 249
- Usener, Hermann, 247, 408
- Valentinians, 40, 50, 103, 104, 109,  
113, 114, 115, 116, 141, 151, 168,  
169, 177, 212, 245, 246, 286, 295,  
297, 300, 301, 302, 303, 352, 355,

- 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 372, 373,  
374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 380, 381,  
382, 383, 384, 385, 408, 434, 435,  
436, 465, 479, 541, 559, 561, 563,  
617, 669, 828
- Valentinus, 5, 10, 18, 37, 40, 41, 42,  
50, 103, 104, 114, 115, 116, 119,  
120, 121, 122, 123, 138, 139, 143,  
150, 151, 159, 161, 162, 165, 167,  
168, 169, 170, 212, 229, 280, 281,  
289, 290, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297,  
298, 301, 302, 303, 327, 365, 366,  
367, 369, 370, 371, 372, 374, 375,  
376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382,  
383, 384, 385, 408, 409, 434, 435,  
467, 468, 488, 561, 585, 605, 617,  
686, 754, 755, 756, 769, 770, 824,  
827, 828, 832
- Valerius of Bergidum, 359
- Vandebeck, G., 499, 505
- Varro, 448, 451, 452, 453, 454, 503,  
554
- Veenbaas, R., 818, 820
- Ventris, M., 53
- Vermaseren, M.J., 75, 257, 258, 259,  
346, 350, 402, 457, 458, 539, 601,  
620, 790
- Vespasian, 392
- Vetus Latina*, 80, 95, 271, 272, 273, 278,  
279, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 400,  
403, 406, 420, 427, 429, 440, 471
- Victor (pope), 81, 100, 264, 318, 443
- Victor of Capua, 81, 100, 264, 318
- Victorinus of Pettau, 690
- Vielhauer, Ph., 208, 480, 482
- Virgil, 278, 609, 690, 692
- Vischer, Eberhard, 331, 333
- Vischer, Wilhelm, 333
- Vogel, C.J. de, 70, 718, 719, 720, 731
- Vögelin, Eric, 146, 147, 148
- Volker, M., 244
- Völker, W., 134, 136, 674, 733
- Vööbus, A., 86, 177, 194, 202, 349
- Vriezen, Th.C., 501
- Waitz, H., 530
- Walafrid Strabo, 95
- Waszink, J.H., 362, 404, 430, 451, 452,  
453, 454, 665, 667, 670
- Webb, E., 245
- Wegman, H.A.J., 350
- Wehr, G., 139
- Weil, Simone, 29, 675, 749
- Weinreb, Friedrich, 14, 15
- Weiss, Johannes, 786
- Wensinck, A.J., 177
- Werden, 82, 99, 483, 812, 813, 814,  
815, 816, 818, 819, 820
- Weringh, J.J. van, 817, 818, 820
- Werner, M., 66, 746
- Westermann, A., 554
- Western Text, 78, 176, 177, 179, 206,  
208, 209, 210, 224, 274, 279, 271,  
272, 273, 277, 279, 280, 281, 282,  
306, 307, 322, 324, 325, 414, 421,  
422, 482, 485, 629, 681, 683, 684,  
787, 825
- White, Evelyn, 175
- Widengren, Geo, 157, 173, 556, 569, 831
- Wifstrand, A., 405
- Willem de Pannemaker, 687
- Willibrord, 807, 818
- Wilson, R.Mcl., 43, 45, 49, 189, 190,  
230, 238, 380, 516, 539, 540, 541,  
692, 723
- Wlosok, A., 356
- Wolfson, Harry A., 465, 544
- Wulfila, 395
- Yosephon, 392
- Yourcenar, M., 380
- Zahn, Th., 81, 240, 482
- Zandee, J., 54, 55, 293, 346, 409, 446,  
561
- Zephyrinus (pope), 443
- Zernov, N., 247
- Zeus, 60, 71, 135, 473, 552, 554, 612,  
726, 727
- Ziegler, J., 397, 399
- Zimmermann, F., 532
- Zinzendorf, N.L. Graf von, 742
- Zohar*, 164, 497, 592
- Zoroaster/Zarathustra, 30, 31, 32, 33,  
34, 35, 117, 129, 133, 170, 584, 586,  
588, 594, 596
- Zosimos of Panopolis, 131, 598, 599,  
600, 601, 602, 605, 706, 707
- Zuntz, G., 396, 397



