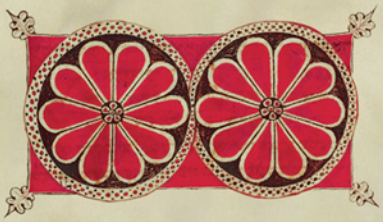
From a Virgin Womb

THE *APOCALYPSE OF ADAM* AND THE VIRGIN BIRTH



ANDREW J. WELBURN

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The *Apocalypse of Adam* and the Virgin Birth

By
Andrew J. Welburn

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INTRODUCTION

FROM THE VIRGIN BIRTH TO THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The Apocalypse of Adam: Cycles of Revelation

Over the centuries, generations of Christians have been awed and mystified by the Gospel of Matthew's infancy narratives concerning the origins of Jesus, and in particular by the mystery of the "virgin birth". More recently the story has provoked controversy through faith and doubt among laymen and clergy alike. Understanding it has become an issue, therefore, at the fracture-line of modern Christian thought. Biology, symbolism, myth or historical reminiscence—how we understand it will depend upon our wider interpretation of the Christian message. But what did it mean to those who spread the story? It is hard to see how the modern debate can be resolved until we know something of the background and origins of the idea itself.

On a more modest scale, though still running into generations, biblical scholars have wondered about the background of the idea and, while hearkening in their own way to contemporary issues, have perhaps wisely devoted themselves to the problem of first understanding what the Gospel writer's conception of its meaning originally was. Is it biblical? It has of course long had to be acknowledged that Is. 7,14 did not really speak of a virgin birth; yet the origins of the idea have still generally been sought in what have seemed to many a strained exegesis of other biblical (and post-biblical) stories.[1] It is simply a fact in the end that the Old Testament and the haggadic traditions provide no

[1] The approach is reaffirmed by R.E. Brown, "Gospel Infancy Narrative Research from 1976–1986", *CBQ* 48(1986), 468–483; 660–680; cf. his *Birth of the Messiah. A Commentary on the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke* (London 1977) pp. 111–116, and further bibliography pp. 120–121. More recently D.C. Allison has looked for background to haggadic traditions concerning Moses, and even found there "hints" of a virgin birth: Allison, *The New Moses. A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis 1993) pp. 157–165. However, it is hard to see how such a marginal feature of the stories could have come to be used to indicate Jesus as the "prophet like Moses".

substantial basis for any stories of the miraculous birth of the Messiah. Relatively few scholars, on the other hand, have wanted to utilise the obvious pagan analogies, since these pose what seem almost insuperable questions about the way Christian circles could have been open to extra-biblical ideas.[2] Altogether, plausible sources that tell of virgin birth in areas convincingly close to the Gospel's own probable origins have proved extremely hard to demonstrate.

Early in the last century G. Messina made a bold attempt to explain its significance by studying its close connection with the coming of the mysterious Magi, a term which strictly designates Zoroastrian priests rather than kings or "wise-men", and with the development of Christian legends which seem to belong to the same background. The Gospel's unique interest in these oriental sages seemed to link it to traditions about the prophecy of Zarathustra concerning a great "World-Saviour", the Saošyant.[3] In certain Christian circles, e.g. in Lactantius and especially in Eastern Christianity, the prophecy was naturally taken to allude to Christ, and there is widespread recognition that genuine Zoroastrian connections underlie the elaboration of the legends which grew up about the Magi, the prophecy and the famous Star.[4] On the other hand, Messina's contention that the background of these legends is originally the background of the Gospel infancy-narratives themselves has generally been received with scepticism. The legends on which he drew are in many cases several centuries later than the

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[2] Pagan material is critically considered especially in J.G. Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (New York 1930); T. Boslooper, *The Virgin Birth* (Philadelphia 1962); R.E. Brown, *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* (New York 1973).

[3] G. Messina, *I magi a Betlemme e una predizione di Zoroastro* (Rome 1933) = id., "Il Saušyant nella tradizione iranica et la sua attesa", *Orientalia* 1(1932), 149–176 and "Una presunta profezia di Zoroastro sulla venuta del Messia", *Biblica* XIV(1933), 170–198; for the Zoroastrian character of the Magi, cf. A. Paul, *L'Évangile de l'enfance selon saint Matthieu* (Paris 1968), pp. 104–112; 116–125; for Iranian elements in Christian legends e.g. such as those found in the *Chronicle* of Zuqnin, U. Monneret de Villard, *Le leggende orientali sui magi evangelici* (Rome 1952); on the Zoroastrian "Prophecy of Hystaspes" utilised by Lactantius, see below, pp. 81–82.

[4] On the background of the "star", see the summary in G. Widengren, "The Sacral Kingship of Iran", in *La Regalità Sacra* (Leiden 1959), 242–257 (248ff.); also below, pp. 155–159. J. Duchesne-Guillemin's wholly sceptical response seems excessive: "Even if the motif of the cave and the star are very ancient, nothing goes to prove that their occurrence together in the legend of a saviour, in Iran, was prior (and foreign) to the legend of the Nativity. It seems more likely that it was the Christian apologists who transposed and applied to Iran and the Magi a story originally told about Jesus." Cf. Duchesne-Guillemin, "Die Magier in Bethlehem und Mithras als Erlöser?", ZDMG (1962).

Gospel, and despite the strong thematic links it has seemed to most scholars that the historical chasm to be bridged is simply too dauntingly large.

The links certainly include the idea of a "virgin birth", part of a complex Zoroastrian myth of bringing the original prophecy to its eschatological fulfilment: the prophet not only foretells, but in Zoroastrian thought is actually part of a mystical process leading to the advent of his "posthumous son". Sometimes seemingly rather abstract and "symbolic", the Saošyant is thus the child of a divine prophetic word, and not just of ordinary human nature. Many other aspects of his destined role seem appropriate. The themes of promise and fulfilment might well have appealed to the circles from which Matthew's Gospel stemmed. R.E. Brown is suitably impressed by the scope of Messina's proposed explanation, while also noting the awkward historical gap:

> He sees the possible origins of the whole idea in the doctrine of the Avesta concerning the expectation of the Saušyant, a son to be born after Zoroaster's death. (The seed of Zoroaster was preserved in a lake; and when a pre-ordained virgin would bathe there, she would be impregnated by it.) This salvific figure was to raise the dead and crush the forces of evil. However, there is no evidence that Christians in Matthew's time knew of this expectation. …[5]

And so matters stood until the discovery of a remarkable document, with roots apparently in both Jewish and Iranian ideas, which was preserved as part of the Nag Hammadi Library, Codex V/5.[6] This is

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[5] R.E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* pp. 168–169.

[6] Trans. G. MacRae in D.M. Parrott (ed.), *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI with Papyrus Berolensis 8502* (Leiden 1979). It should not be assumed at this point that ApocAd is Gnostic just because it was included in the Nag Hammadi collection, which also contains ethical maxims, philosophical extracts, Hermetic discourses, etc. Those who broadly favour an earlier and possibly Jewish-Palestinian origin for ApocAd include M. Krause, G. MacRae, J.M. Robinson, R. Kasser, H.-M. Schenke, et al. See too the important studies by G.W.E. Nickelsburg, "Some Related Traditions in the Apocalypse of Adam, the Books of Adam and Eve and 1 Enoch", in B. Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, vol. 2 (Leiden 1981), pp. 515–539; and P. Perkins, "Apocalyptic Schematisation in the *Apocalypse of Adam* and *Gospel of the Egyptians*", in McGaughy (ed.), *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Literature* 2 (Missoula 1972), pp. 591–599. The undoubted Greek language behind our Coptic document is no barrier to such origination. A review of earlier theories about ApocAd in K. Rudolph, "Gnosis und Gnostizismus, ein Forschungsbericht", TR 34(1969), 121–175 (160–169); also E. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism. A Survey of the Proposed Evidence* (London 1973), pp. 107–115. G. MacRae, "Apocalypse of Adam" in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* vol. 1 (London 1983) pp. 707–719 justifies its inclusion in the pseudepigrapha on several grounds, being not only dependent on th text of Genesis "but a text already mediated by Jewish exegetical

the document with which I shall chiefly be concerned, the *Apocalypse of Adam* (ApocAd).

Many questions remain about the background and significance of this document; yet at the very least it has the potential to fill out our perspective and certainly takes us back to a much earlier stage in the tradition than before. Moreover, the Iranian-Zoroastrian ideas to which it alludes are not exactly the same as those in the later Christian legends used by Messina. But they bring us closer to the particular traditions which in their turn may illuminate the Gospel of Matthew. The focus of the connection will fall more on the remarkable Jewish-Christian notion of a prophetological cycle, or chain of prophecy reaching from Adam, through Moses and others, to Jesus. The chain is not only inaugurated but sustained and renewed by a definitive inspiring figure, the True Prophet, who in the sequence of world-ages (sometimes schematised as twelvefold) provides a continual link with the world of revelation. Such a figure is prominent in many versions of Jewish-Christianity (Jewish-Christian Gospels, the Ebionites, Elchasai, etc.).[7] At the same time it seems increasingly likely that it points us back to Jewish ideas of an apocalyptic and esoteric nature in sources underlying such texts as the *Testament of Isaac*, II *Enoch* etc. Whereas it

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tradition" and "evidence of an acquaintance with the Old Testament" (p. 709); and see further below, pp. 13–18.

I would like to acknowledge the encouragement given to me by Professor C. Rowland when I was beginning to develop my ideas on the *Apocalypse of Adam*. In the early stages of writing I benefited also from the support of the Margaret Wilkinson Fund.

[7] See especially Clementine *Homilies* III,17–28; XI,19,3 (sections which are often supposed to be part of a second-century A.D. "*Kerygmata Petrou*" source-document); from the Jewish-Christian Gospel-tradition see especially the passage cited in Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah* IV: "My Son, in all the prophets I was waiting for thee that thou shouldst come, and I should rest in thee. For thou art my rest, thou art my first-begotten Son …". The relationship of these Gospels to Mt., so strongly asserted in the patristic tradition, has never been satisfactorily resolved; cf. in particular the light-symbolism at the baptism of Jesus (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30,13,7) which also appears in some mss. of Mt. after 3,15 (notably in the Old Latin versions). On the other hand the closely connected complex of Jewish-Christian ideas is preserved in later polemical form in the pseudo-Clementines, but its relationship to earliest Christianity has repeatedly been demonstrated, notably in H.J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen 1949); H. Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Berlin and New York 1987) p. 206–207 judges likewise that "the *Kerygmata* are doubtless dependent upon the general tradition of the early catholic church" rather than representing a separative "Gnostic" or sectarian view, and notes that "in this [document's] explanation of the world and history, the universalistic claims of the *Kerygmata*'s Jewish-Christianity appear in clear form".

used to be assumed that there were late and Gnosticising influences at work in these developments, more recently M. Delcor and others have looked to the Jewish sectarianism now familiar through the Dead Sea Scrolls to suggest the background of their thought.[8] D. Flusser has urged that already in the time of Jesus some among his followers

[8] M. Delcor in particular has argued convincingly that the Jewish-Christian *Testament of Isaac* contains a number of affinities to the Dead Sea Scrolls, and goes back to a Jewish original similar in date and setting to the *Testament of Abraham*, which has long been suspected of Essene affiliations: see Delcor, *Le Testament d'Abraham. Introduction, traduction du texte grec et commentaire de la recension grecque longue, suivie de la traduction des Testaments d'Abraham, d'Isaac et de Jacob d'après les versions orientales* (Leiden 1973), esp. p. 83. It is surely wrong to object, as does E.P. Sanders, "Testament of Abraham" in J.H, Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. I (London 1983) p. 876 on the basis that such elements are rather widespread in Judaism: quite apart from their sectarian use at Qumran, the Scrolls document the fact that such tendencies represent what was then a broad stratum in Jewish thought, expressed in other "Testamentary" literature and works akin to the Scrolls though not strictly Essene, in which such universalising and cosmic conceptions could arise. Though it remains difficult to specify any precise background for II *Enoch*, a number of close connections to ApocAd will be discussed below, pp. 36–37, 101–104, 114–115. A Jewish origin and an earlier rather than a later dating are now widely conjectured: the shorter recensions as a whole (such as text "A") show no Christian elements, and this form is considered to be the original (cf. A. Vaillant, *Le livre des secrets d'Hénoch* (Paris 1952)); moreover, there has been a decisive shift in attitude to the Melchizedek birth-legend. "This part of the book was reckoned until recent years to be a Christian addition, inspired by Heb. 7,1–10," comments M.E. Stone. "Two considerations now weigh against this. First, the Melchisedek story in the recension considered most original by Vaillant, contains no Christian elements. Secondly, the discovery and publication of 11QMelchizedek shows that the attribution of a special role to Melchizedek occurs in indisputably Jewish texts": Stone, "Apocalyptic Literature", in M.E. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (Assen and Philadelphia 1984) p. 408. Important indications of background are the Zoroastrian connections pointed out by S. Pines, "Eschatology and the Concept of Time in the Slavonic Book of Enoch", in R.J.Z. Werblowsky and C.J. Bleeker, *Types of Redemption* (Leiden 1970), pp. 72–87; M. Boyce, *History Of Zoroastrianism* vol. I, pp. 230, 243 ("almost pure Zoroastrian doctrine"). The interpretation of the Melchizedek-story and its time-framework can be helped, as I hope to show, by its analogies in ApocAd. These probable Jewish prototypes for "Ebionite" and other Jewish-Christian ideas make it unlikely that we should follow the older theory of such "Gnostic" conceptions infiltrating only with Elchasai. It is furthermore unwise to rest reconstruction of elaborate stages of development on the literary analysis of the pseudo-Clementines, which is not certain: J.A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London 1971) p. 452, also pp. 460–462 on Qumran analogies in function and title to the "Prophet". The evidence about Elchasai (especially Hippolytus, *Ref.* IX,13,3) perhaps only really entitles us to say that by 100 A.D. these ideas had reached a high degree of elaboration, including the concept of the repeated embodiment of the prophetic spirit pointing to the appearance of the Messiah (*Ref.* IX,14,1). The Gnostic background insisted on by G. Strecker in many books and articles cannot be decisively demonstrated, and a source in sectarian Judaism is now more plausible.

must have identified him as such a cyclic-prophetic embodiment, as is shown by allusions to the concept in some texts of Mt. 12,42 as well as the more elaborate expression in the Jewish-Christian gospel-fragments preserved by the Fathers.[9]

The situation is the more striking, since in some of these Jewish and Jewish-Christian works the influence of the Zarathustra-legend is clear, and since the time of W. Bousset has repeatedly been analysed. Apocalyptic ideas naturally related the concept of salvation to critical moments in time, whose pattern might be revealed to the seer. The role of the Messiah must also be connected with such cycles and revelations. J.R. Hinnells has shown that Iranian influence is clear in such themes as the Messiah's defeat of the demons, his gathering of men for the Judgment, his raising of the dead, his active role in the eschatological events. The appropriate context for Iranian influence, he suggests, would have lain "in the Jewish-Parthian contacts which began in the second century B.C., but which came to a climax in the middle of the first century B.C."[10] That would presumably also be the setting for the beginnings of a "cyclic" understanding of prophetology. At any rate it is notable that at some point in the Zoroastrian sources the Saošyant of Zarathustra's original prophecy had subsequently become mythologised into several figures related to the different climes and ages of the world.[11]

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[9] For the idea generally in the development of Christology, see O. Cullmann, *Christology of the New Testament* (London 1959) pp. 34–36; 38–42. The comments of D. Flusser in to be found in his "Salvation Past and Future", in C.J. Bleeker—R.J.Z. Werblowsky (eds.), *Types of Redemption* (Leiden 1978), p. 51. For the *lectio difficilior* in Mt. 12,42, see further below, pp. 158–159.

[10] J.R. Hinnells, "Iranian Influence", *Numen* (1969), p. 161.

[11] The *Greater Bundahišn* preserves the standard elaborated version with three Saošyants or "posthumous sons" of Zarathustra: "Three times Zaradušt approached his wife, Hvovi. Each time his seed fell to the ground. The divinity Neryosang took all the light and power of that seed, and … it was consigned to Lake Kayansih, in the care of the Waters … And for each, when his own time comes, it will be thus: a virgin will go to Lake Kayansih to bathe, and the glory (of Zaradušt) will enter her body, and she will become with child" in: M. Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (Manchester 1984) pp. 90f. from *Greater Bundahišn* XXXIII,36–38; XXX,56–60; the main passages relating to the Saošyant in Iranian literature are listed in C. Colpe, "Sethian and Zoroastrian Ages of the World", in B. Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* vol. II (Leiden 1980) p. 545. Boyce shows that the cyclic doctrine was an "Iranian adaptation of the Babylonian theory of recurrent events" in the "Great Year"; and that the teaching of the three periodic Saošyants following Zarathustra may be dated to Achaemenian times: *History of Zoroastrianism* vol. II (Leiden and Köln 1982) pp. 242–243. The *Zand* of the *Vahman Yašt* 3 preserves a further development, a vision in which the ages of the world are seven, just as subsequently we hear of seven Saošyants corresponding to the epochs and the places in which they are born (*History of Zoroastrianism* vol. I

The basis for this is in part the close association between the Saošyant-Saviour and the old royal mythology of the charismatic power and light called the "glory" (*xvarenah*). The mythology affected the presentation of Zarathustra himself. "Die Zarathustra-Legende in Denkart VII," says G. Widengren, "trägt viele Züge der iranischen Königslegende."[12] Many of them are mythologically related to the legends of the Saošyant. Zoroastrianism expected a decisive coming-together of the royal and the religious aspects of the prophecies in the World-Saviour, who could thus be seen as a climax of the several ages and kingdoms of the world. As this mythology was developed, it meant that a number of heroes of old, said to have "borne the glory", and indeed Zarathustra himself could be envisaged as prototypes or accompanying figures of the redeemer (*Dēnkart* VII,1,9–43; 11,2–3), and sometimes syncretism with other mythologies was also facilitated. After all, the conquests of the Achaemenians and later the Parthians had brought about religious expansion too, especially involving Babylonian and Hellenistic ideas, and the myth of the World-Saviour naturally echoed the sense of the expanding horizons. In *Dātastān-ī Dēnīk* 36,3–6 there are six Saošyants representing the other "continents", in addition to Zarathustra who stands for the central locus of revelation and for the meaning of the whole (cf. *Bundahišn* XXIX,1–6); they will join in the Final Sacrifice that brings the Transfiguration, i.e. the eschatological spiritualisation of the world. Heroic and religious figures (Farīdūn, the "First Man" Gayōmart, etc.) were utilised as models and drawn into a pattern of prophetic fulfilment. Zarathustra's great prophecy opened the way to eschatological perspectives, and the connection with the royal "light of glory" pointed to universalism in the sense of fulfilling revelations throughout previous world-history, from the time of the "First Man",

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(Leiden 1975), p. 284). Boyce notes that the schematisation in seven ages probably goes back to "the troubled period after Alexander's conquest", and that although the prophecies "have been extended through the Parthian and Sasanian periods, down into Islamic times", materials have been adapted that "may once have been lamentations over Macedonian conquerors" (*Textual Sources*, p. 91). See further Duchesne-Guillemin, *Religion of Ancient Iran* (Bombay 1973) pp. 228–235, which compares the evidence of such conceptions in Hellenistic sources with the apocalyptic schemes in the Pahlavi books. Still later twelvefold divisions of the world and time became frequent, and in Syrian legends we hear of Zarathustra preaching his universal doctrine either in seven or in twelve languages, etc. (Bidez-Cumont, vol. II: S6; S9a and b; S22).

[12] Widengren, *Iranisch-semitische Kulturbegegnung in parthischer Zeit* (Köln–Opladen 1960) p. 68; for the Religion and the Kingship, cf. R.C. Zaehner, *Teachings of the Magi* (London 1975) pp. 85–86, 94–96 (with texts).

and to the ever-renewed "wonder" of cyclic renewal. Each mythic age is ushered in by a new "marvel" of heroism or prophecy, which also points back to the original unity and primordial knowledge, restored to its first splendour by a Saošyant in each new cycle.[13] His virgin birth was an expression of this role.

The prophetic myth of the World-Saviour thus brought with it associations both of primal royalty, miracle and of the renewal of revelation, connected essentially with the one who had made the prophecy. Among the widespread Magian communities this evidently opened further vistas based on the spread of the Religion and some syncretistic developments, and by Hellenistic times, Zarathustra through his prophecy could be seen as a reappearing figure behind the several different revelations of the ancient world. This conception seems already to be echoed in the viewpoint of the Jewish-Christianity in the pseudo-Clementines, where the all the dominant figures behind the pagan cultures are assimilated to Zarathustra. His identification with "Nimrod", for example, as founder of the Persian fire-cult is almost certainly pre-Christian; and in like manner to Zarathustra is traced essentially the whole religious history of humanity since the time of the Flood.

We find a notion strangely analogous to these ideas in ApocAd with its φωστήρ ("Illuminator", itself a title of Zarathustra in Iranian tradition) who is variously described by the different "kingdoms" of the world following the Deluge (CG V 77,26 – 82,19).[14] But it seems that

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[13] Widengren, "Sacral Kingship", p. 249: "the king is the cosmic ruler, lord of the seven climes"; for more on the lore of cosmic rhythms and zones and their relation to the redemptive pattern, cf. H. Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* (Princeton 1977) esp. pp. 17–24. The royal Saviour-figure is connected thereby, especially in eschatological terms, with Gayōmart the "First Man" or earthly "Giant": extensive discussion of emergence of the typology in S. Hartman, *Gayōmart. Étude sur le syncrétisme dans l'Iran ancien* (Uppsala 1953); Corbin, pp. 47–48. S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (Oxford 1956) p. 423 rather too sweepingly identified the various figures: "When the new world comes, it is Primordial Man who returns; and the eschatological Saviour Saoshyant is regarded as an incarnation both of Zarathustra, the founder of the religion, and of Gayōmart, the Primordial Man." The actual complexity of the mythology, which was used to correlate and to differentiate these conceptions, may however now be becoming available to us.

[14] Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology and the Birth of the Messiah", *ANRW* 25.6 ed. W. Haase and H. Temporini (Berlin and New York 1988) p. 4764. For the ps.-Clementines, Bidez and Cumont reproduce the passages containing the relevant allusions, and remark that in this context, "pour le polémiste … la doctrine de Zoroastre et des Mages était la forme la plus marquante du paganisme. De l'apparition du prophète après le deluge dépend toute l'histoire religieuse de l'humanité": J. Bidez—F. Cumont, *Les mages hellénisés*, t.II *Les textes* (Paris 1938) p. 54n9, citing the views already formu-

all the twelve "generations" (called sons of Ham and Japheth) are nevertheless still partially in "error" about him, for the full meaning of the figure is only revealed to the unexpectedly superadded "Thirteenth Kingdom", which in terms of the apocalyptic structure of the document is quite evidently that of the Jews. The φωστήρ subsequently plays a salvific and Messianic role, presiding over the struggle against "the powers", and division of those who will "live forever" from those whose "souls will die the death" (83,14; 84,3), purifying the cult (expressed especially in baptismal rites) and giving true teaching "for those who know the eternal God in a wisdom of knowledge and teaching of angels forever" (again sounding rather reminiscent of Qumran).[15] In the Jewish-Christian versions, Iranian details from such legends are again authentically preserved: "Auch in diesen Traditionen," says Widengren, "findet sich also dieselbe Verbindung zwischen *xvarnah* und Feuer, die mit der Feuernatur des Herrschers … übereinstimmen. Das Blitzfeuer in den Ps.Klementinen wird ganz richtig τὸ τῆς βασιλείας πῦρ genannt, und der im Text erwähnte Magier Zarathustra heißt γίγας = *kavi* (*kai, kav*), ist also als König gedacht."[16] As background we may be reminded especially of *Testament of Isaac* 3,17–18:

> And hereafter twelve mighty ones [the texts reads literally "Giants" (so Stinespring)] shall come forth, and Jesus the Messiah shall come of thy [i.e. Jacob's] seed of a virgin whose name is Miriam …

These "Giants" or "great ones", as D. Flusser comments, "are probably twelve incarnations before Jesus' birth", and he compares the twelve priests in II *Enoch* (71,33–35) who precede Christ.[17] A somewhat more

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lated by W. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme de Gnosis* (Göttingen 1907) pp. 145ff.; this perspective is already fundamentally that of ApocAd. For Greek fascination with and conceptions of the "heavenly fire" of the *xvarenah*, Bidez-Cumont, *t.* II, pp. 52–54. Already in *Recog.* IV,27 the original connection with Nimrod is overlaid (cf. *Hom.* IX,4) by a subsequent history of interpretation (nn. 2; 8). See also H.J. Schoeps, "Iranisches in den ps.Klementinen", in *ZNW* 51(1960), 1–10.

[15] J. Daniélou initially assumed on the basis of "les allusions à une maternité virginale" and "le fait qu'il accomplit des signes et des miracles" that the Illuminator was Christ: see his revue of A. Böhlig and P. Labib, *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen aus Codex V von Nag Hammadi*, in: *RSR* 54(1966), 285–934 (292). Bu the apocalyptic schema of ApocAd indicates strongly a Jewish identity—and the question needs to be kept open even while we examine Jewish-Christian analogies, whether we are still dealing with Jewish-sectarian ideas.

[16] Widengren, *Iranisch-semitische Kulturbegegnung* p. 68 n. 239.

[17] D. Flusser, op. cit. p. 55. Cf. W.F. Stinespring in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 pp. 907.

mythological elaboration whose underlying idea seems similar occurs in the very early Gnostic *Book of Baruch* (Hippolytus, *Ref.* V,26,1–27,5), which as Reitzenstein noted depends on an identification of the saviour, or "Blessed One" (given the title *Baruch*), with Zarathustra. He appears in the world in twelve manifestations, evidently related to the signs of the zodiac which govern the world (though only five of his missions are actually recounted); the Christian stratum is only an upper layer, and the roots of the system are in a sort of proto-kabbalistic, esoteric Jewish thought.[18]

Along with apocalyptic-cyclic ideas of a more cosmic-astrological nature, therefore, it seems quite likely that before Christian times some circles in esoteric Judaism essentially close to those of the Essenes had assimilated the idea of cyclic manifestations, with the notion of a constantly renewed revelation, combined with apocalyptic schematisation of times and "kingdoms", and with a climactic figure like the Saošyant identified with Messiah; these lived on in the "True Prophet" Messianism of Jewish Christianity and other, sometimes more unorthodox forms.

Clearly these were powerful universalistic ideas, which may have carried over as essentially connected with them the mythology of the virgin-birth. But how was it possible for such ideas to find entry into Judaism? "Let Righteousness be embodied" were Zarathustra's words (Yasna 43,16). The idea of the Saošyant, thus named as Astvat-ereta or "Righteousness embodied", as a Saviour who is born of a prophecy rather than human reproduction, remains the strongest probable link between the Zoroastrian expectation and its reception in a Jewish-apocalyptic background—compare the statement in ApocAd (V 82,12–13): "every birth of their ruler is a word", spoken by the last or Thirteenth Kingdom, i.e. the Jews, in a context which I have suggested elsewhere reproduces ideas from the Enoch-tradition of the "hidden

[18] Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen* (Leipzig and Berlin 1920) p. 60 for the identification with Zarathustra; Iranian-Zoroastrian elements also in M. Marcovich, "Justin's *Baruch*: A Showcase of Gnostic Syncretism", in id., *Studies in Graeco-Roman Religions and Gnosticism* (Leiden–New York–Kobenhavn-Köln 1988), pp. 95, 100, 103, 115, etc. Jewish elements in Widengren, "Baptism and Enthronement in some Jewish-Gnostic Documents", in S.G.F. Brandon (ed.), *The Saviour God* (Manchester 1963) pp. 205–217; G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (New York 1969) pp. 164–165; Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology", p. 4787; connections between the Christian section and the *Testament of Levi* in Welburn, *Beginnings of Christianity* (new ed. Edinburgh 2004) pp. 175–177.

name" of the Messiah to be made known by God.[19] But it also evidently opened the way to a more mythological elaboration of the theme in circles which wanted to express the universal meaning of God's revelation as the fulfilment of all times and nations.

This process was undoubtedly facilitated also by the doctrine of the "double revelation", especially among the Essenes. Pagan wisdom and culture was regarded, following the Enochic tradition, as stemming from the betrayal of divine secrets by the fallen angels. "To rob these negative 'revelations' of their force," explains M. Hengel, "'counter revelations' were given by God … to Enoch, Noah, … and Abraham:"

> When the Essenes were occupied with astrology and iatromantics they believed this to be something fundamentally different from what was happening outside the community in the same area. As a result of their Hasidic heritage, they still maintained an 'encyclopaedic' interest alongside their soteriological and anthropological thought; they wanted to set against the 'demonic' Chaldaean, Egyptian or Greek 'wisdom' a more comprehensive, genuine wisdom of their own, encompassing the cosmos and history.[20]

It is this theory above all which makes sense of the way that syncretistic materials could be adopted and embraced, yet associated with "error", the fallen angels, etc. and the true meaning claimed as the content of Jewish revelation—how, for instance, the appearances of the φωστήρ could be said to find their true significance in the Messianic secret of the Thirteenth Kingdom. The use of astrology, apparently deterministic cyclical prophecy, etc. to point to the Messiah, also makes sense when we realise it is used to indicate a religious mystery and in its pagan-deterministic form is seen as a mere approximation to "true" apocalyptic ideas.

Could that also have meant an encounter between Judaism and the closely connected ideas of miraculous birth, specifically virgin birth, etc. associated in mythology with the Saošyant? The reference to Miriam in *Testament of Isaac* 3,19 is obviously secondary elaboration, but in II *Enoch* the prophecy is linked to a strange virgin-birth legend (to be analysed in detail later), much in the vein of some of the miraculous stories in ApocAd.

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[19] Welburn op. cit. p. 4783 and generally 4781–4784; also p. 4754 n. 7. In a passage consisting of clearly related though obviously later material in CG III 64,1 (cf. 63,10) the figure is identified as the "word-begotten" one, Jesus the living who has "nailed the power of the thirteen aeons"—recalling the thirteen prophetic statements of ApocAd.

[20] M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* vol. I (London 1974) p. 243.

The Apocalypse of Adam

In ApocAd we have a prophetic announcement recorded by Adam's son Seth of the future course of history, culminating in the Messianic embodiment but already partly revealed by the preliminary appearance of the φωστήρ among each of twelve gentile "kingdoms", who understand him in ways drawn from pagan myth and mystery-language. In contrast to those who would derive its ideas from later Gnosticism, the overall background of the Illuminator-myth, the reference to the "Glory" and particularly the recurring refrain "and thus he came on the water", was found by A. Böhlig in the symbolism of the Saošyants, born from the seed of the prophet when a pure virgin comes to the lake to bathe.[21] One bloc in particular of the stories told about him includes the prominent motif of virgin birth:

> The third kingdom says
> of him that he came
> from a virgin womb.
> He was cast out of his city,
> he and his mother; he was brought
> to a desert place. He was nurtured
> there. He came and received
> glory and power. And thus
> he came on the water. (78,19–26)

> [The fourth] kingdom says
> [of him that] he came
> [from a virgin. …]
> [… Solomon]
> [sought] her, he and Phersalo
> and Sauel and his armies
> which had been sent out. Solomon
> himself sent his army
> of demons to seek out the
> virgin. And they did not find
> the one whom they sought. But
> the virgin who was given to them,

[21] A. Böhlig, "Jüdisches und iranisches in der Adamapokalypse des Codex V von Nag Hammadi", in his *Mysterion und Wahrheit* (Leiden 1968), pp. 149–161; also (with some differences) in his "Die Adamapokalypse des Codex V von Nag Hammadi", *Oriens Christianus* 48(1964), 44–49. The myth of the *xvarenah* in the depths of the waters is fundamental to the ideas concerning the Saošyant: see *Yašt* 19. Each of the separate stories is thus presented as a variation on this fundamental theme of the "World-Saviour".

it was she whom they brought (and)
Solomon took her.
But the virgin became pregnant and gave birth to
the child there. She nourished him on the border
of the desert. When
he had been nourished, he received glory
and power from the seed
from which he had been begotten.
And thus he came on the
water. (78,27 – 79,19)

Immediately, important questions press upon us. Does the motif reflect Christian ideas, which might then have drawn in elements of the Zoroastrian mythology much as the prophecy of the Saošyant came to feature in Christian legends, in the thought of Lactantius and others?—or is it possible that the document could be independent of Christian influence, and reflect an older Jewish absorption of Iranian ideas, analogous to that we find, after all, in the *Testament of Isaac*, II *Enoch* and other writings of intertestamental Judaism? Could it be early enough to have influenced the Gospel-tradition, or should we look rather to its origins in a later Christian-Gnostic synthesis in which pagan and Jewish-Christian conceptions are fused together? Do any of the possible backgrounds coincide with what we can infer about the background of the Gospel of Matthew's legends? And what light does the document's "virgin birth" mythology cast on the meaning of the infancy narratives—or should we follow Allison, Brown and other commentators in seeking out parallels only from the Bible and its commentary-elaborations—midrash, targum, etc.?

It would undoubtedly be least disturbing to assign the developments in the work to Gnostic or some similar marginal Christian groups. We have mentioned the possibility that ApocAd may have earlier roots; yet certainly, on the face of it, ApocAd would appear to invite consideration as a sectarian Christian-Gnostic document. G. Stroumsa has in fact treated it *in extenso* from this point of view,[22] and its discovery in a "Gnostic library" from Upper Egypt could obviously point in that direction. Further support could come from the frequently observed relationship between it and another of the Nag Hammadi texts, the so-called "Gospel of the Egyptians" in codices III/2 and IV/2 which is perhaps better called by its other title *The Sacred Book of the Great Invisible*

[22] G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Leiden 1984) pp. 81–113.

Spirit. In the latter we have many familiar features of a Gnostic treatise: the Gnostic cosmogony of the pleroma, pre-earthly spiritual realities or aeons, complex emanations and entities including "the Great Seth" (here a heavenly being), Adamas, and well-known Gnostic scenes such as that of the Man and Son of Man's revelation to the demiurge (III 58,23 – 59,9): all this as the mystic instruction prior to a baptism into higher knowledge. Much of this, with the passages about the four Great Lights and the archontic powers seems to be developed or indeed simply lifted from the *Apocryphon Johannis*.[23] It has however a passage about the Illuminator (III 63,4 – 64,9) now identified as one "whom the Great Seth has put on" and as "Jesus the Living", and so as a typical Gnostic saviour-figure. Whether there is enough to reconstruct from this a Gnostic "Sethianism" is extremely dubious, but one can hardly deny that we have here a Gnostic tradition in which ideas from the same background as the ApocAd have been taken up (along with other things).

Against a Gnostic background, virginity might suggest the theme of the aeon called the virgin Sophia, often closely associated with the heavenly Christ, rather than the birth-stories of the Messiah in Mt. A little reflection will almost immediately suggest, however, that the comparison of the *Sacred Book* with ApocAd does at least as much to distance the latter from characteristically Gnostic phenomena as it does to connect it with them. Not only is the complex Gnostic cosmology absent from CG V/5—which might yet be explained if it were considered an introductory or elementary work;[24] but there are considerable disparities in thought and emphasis. Seth is not a heavenly being and divine Revealer when he appears in ApocAd, but the son of Adam receiving his father's testamentary admonitions and prophetic words. There is nothing to suggest that he himself is to become a Gnostic redeemer-figure through the knowledge communicated to him, along the lines of the Gnostic redeemed redeemer. Nor indeed is there anything of the paradoxes of the Christian mystery of a suffering divinity in any of its account of the Illuminator, though some scholars have worked hard to find them.[25] The perspective is rather extrovert, historical and apoca-

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[23] See Welburn, "The Identity of the Archons in the *Apocryphon Johannis*", *Vigiliae Christianae* (1978), pp. 241–254.

[24] So e.g. B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (London 1987) argues from the presence of mythological figures such as angels known from the *Sacred Book* and CG VIII/1 *Zostrianus* that a more "sophisticated form of the myth is presupposed" (p. 52).

[25] Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology", p. 4783.

lyptic, envisaging a struggle with the powers of the world and a transformation of earthly existence (83,4ff.) rather than Gnostic transcendence and liberation into another world. In its treatment of the Fall, it is true that Eve is "divided" from Adam by a wrathful God (64,20–22), but there is nothing to suggest that she represents Adam's divided higher "image" as in the Gnostic mythology e.g. of the CG II/5 *Origin of the World* (113,30ff.). There is no trace, accordingly, of the use of the Sophia-like virgin-birth motif in the service of Gnostic paradox, as in the latter work where Eve proclaims:

> I am
> the mother, I am the wife; I am the virgin,
> I am the one who is with child. (CG II 114,8–10)

The virgin/with child paradox here points to a divine being who transcends human categories, and embodies the essence of femininity.[26] There is no reference at all to an event, a virgin birth, but rather to the attainment of transcendent Gnostic insight.

Many other factors could be mentioned in favour of an argument for dissociating ApocAd from typically Gnostic writings. The question of its setting in religious history must thus be held open. The case remains to be made below that the literary form of ApocAd is rather consistent with a a fairly precise, pre-Christian Jewish esoteric setting. I shall argue that it makes more satisfying sense as a Jewish apocalyptic vision, originating from a milieu like that which produced the *Testaments of the Patriarchs*, and the *Testament of Amram*, and not as a Gnostic handling of revelation-myths.[27] At the same time I would emphasise also at this stage that the frequent assumptions made concerning other supposedly Christian features in the document (such as allusions to baptism) remain to be proved (see further Part One below).

But if ApocAd's bringing together of Jewish and Iranian motifs did not have the meaning of reflecting Christian legend or of Gnostic syncretism, we must ask what might have been the ideas with which the

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[26] And see generally 114,4–11. M. Tardieu has noted the strong parallels with the Gnostic *Bronte*: *Perfect Mind* in Codex VI 13,19–21 etc. and with the Sophia of the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (CG II/4): see his *Trois mythes gnostiques* (Paris 1974) p. 107 n157, and p. 109 for the parallels with the Sophia of II 89,16–17; cf. the Peratae in Hippolytus, *Ref.* V,16,13. The underlying idea, he rightly argues, is "l'universalité de la femme, à la fois mère et vierge, enceinte et accoucheuse", and behind the self-declarations of the Gnostic goddess stand patterns belonging to the Isis-aretalogies.

[27] Cf. the works cited, n. 5 above.

Illuminator-stories would have been associated in that more original context. In previous studies I have already suggested that the clue is to be found in the fact that all ApocAd's stories about the Illuminator have parallels in the "Zoroastrian apocrypha", i.e. the mass of legends and ideas that are reported from classical and later times as stemming from the "Magusaeans" or Hellenised Magi, scattered through Asia Minor, Babylonia and the Middle East after the historic expansions of the Persian and Parthian empires brought "the Religion" to the West.[28] Most of them remain closely related to the mainstream of Zoroastrianism, while also evincing the fact that many other developments took place which never found a place there or were denied and rejected by later orthodoxy. Some of them are echoed later, for example in the epic retelling of Persian tradition in the *Shahnameh* of Firdausi (tenth century A.D.). And since it is generally admitted that long periods of Zoroastrian history remain virtual dark ages, largely because the tradition passes over whole eras (including the glories of the Achaemenians) without a mention, they often furnish valuable clues to the earlier stages of Zoroastrian thought.

When sifted together with materials from the Pahlavi books collected in the ninth century A.D., these sources help to reconstruct some of the developments of Hellenistic times e.g. in the expectation concerning the Saošyants, and subsequently the formation of the highly developed, not to say dazzling versions of the "Zarathustra legend" we find in the Pahlavi texts. Motifs of virgin birth play a complex and often allusive part, as the myth about the Saošyants provides themes that have come to express the perspective of the greater world-view of the dispersion; they enable the absorption of analogous hero-figures of the Middle East, then later—or perhaps rather, simultaneously in a complex retrenching movement of orthodoxy—appear once more to be concentrated increasingly upon the figure of the one prophet, Zarathustra, himself. The supernatural "glory" that has appeared from time to time throughout history in connection with kings, heroes and religious teachers becomes, in later Zoroastrian thought, something like the eternal soul of the prophet himself.[29] As a general hypothesis, then, the cycle of

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[28] Widengren, *Iranisch-semitische Kulturbegegnung* pp. 51 ff.

[29] M. Molé, *La légende de Zoroastre selon les sources pehlevis* (Paris 1967). On the concept of the *xvarenah* see esp. R.C. Zaehner, *Zurvan. A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Oxford 1955), p. 370; Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, pp. 13–14; W.W. Malandra, *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion* (Minneapolis 1983) pp. 88–97; other aspects noted briefly in Welburn, op. cit. pp. 4756, 4763 and n. 36. On "Glory" in ApocAd, MacRae comments

stories in ApocAd would make sense if we understand them as an earlier phase in this evolution of the Zarathustra legend, which seems to have come together with Jewish forms of thought and apocalyptic ideas close to the time of Christian origins, and thus modified underlies or has strongly affected the Jewish-Christian theology of the True Prophet.

The use of the stories to hold together universal history, with its variety of prophetic figures, while at the same time revealing an underlying unity that climaxes in a "Messiah" whose appearance sums up the whole, suggests also that this Jewish-syncretistic evolution of the Zarathustra legend might provide a prototype for the hermeneutic of the Matthaean infancy-chapters, especially if we connect the Gospel with a Jewish-sectarian background: Jesus is being presented in concentrated, "symbolic" fashion as one who is born to fulfil the universal redemptive work. The prophet Zarathustra himself was already starting to be treated in this way in his universalised adaptation, it appears, when his legend influenced the stories in ApocAd. Zarathustra was being associated ever more closely with his "sons" the Saošyants. Was this reflected in the development of the "True Prophet" teachings, which assimilate him to the Jewish equivalent figure, the Messiah (as in the "Thirteenth Kingdom")? All depends on how closely we can show the detailed connections with ideas known to be available in the Jewish-Christian milieu of the Gospel.

It is an important point, in this perspective, that the motif of the virgin birth belongs to a prophetic figure, rather than as in paganism to divine beings or as in later Christian theology to the "Son of God". It is not the Son of God who is virgin-born, but the human vessel on which the Spirit is poured out: a factor which may help in showing how it was conceivable for the theme to be treated in Jewish-Christian circles without the sense of blasphemy. Perhaps it is equally important to observe that the motif is a way of referring to the larger spiritual dimension of the prophet's revelatory work, and in no sense an exaltation of the virginity, perpetual or otherwise, of his mother. As a link with paradise and so with the "glory" of the First Man whose mythology it partly parallels, the myth rather has implications of a kind of spiritual egalitarianism: birth itself is a miracle of renewal that forms the basis of the sym-

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"It may sometimes refer to honour or dignity, sometimes to external splendour": "Apocalypse of Adam", in J.H. Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. I pp. 712–719 (p. 712 n.b). The Gk. δόξα does not normally have this range of meaning, nor has the usage really much precedent in the LXX.

bolism, each new birth attended by the light of wonder and transcending the mere sum of the historical past. The final generation, which sees the Illuminator, itself shines with his glory (83,1–4), and in Zoroastrianism we are all of us destined to reach the Boundless Light, when the struggle to free the world from the dark powers is complete.[30] Paradisal Man (Gayōmart) was the child of the spirit of Light (Ohrmazd) and his daughter, the Earth. The myth itself appears in the Eleventh Kingdom (81,24 – 82,4).[31] We mortals are the offspring of his seed, which fell upon the ground as he died. The prophet's seed preserved in the lake seems to belong to the same mythic complex, but imaginatively to raise this symbolism of birth to a higher level. The underlying continuity of ideas is clear. Having shone his light into the twelve kingdoms of the world, therefore, it seems the Illuminator is leading the way to a universal awakening of the Light. Judaism developed something similar in its literature about Adam (*Books of Adam and Eve*, etc.), now starting to be better understood,[32] and it seems conceivable that a work such CG V/5 saw the potential of the mythology, if pressed into the service of a Jewish-Messianic vision. Instead of a recurring myth, it could become thereby a conception of "saving history" with a definitive realisation in the future advent of God's Anointed. That ApocAd has some such Jewish yet apocalyptic-universal meaning will stand at the centre of my argument that it could have furnished ideas, and detailed narrative prototypes, for the Infancy Stories in Mt.

Plan of the Argument

A somewhat complex, two-pronged programme of matters to be shown is beginning to take shape. Demonstrating the relevance of ApocAd to the infancy narratives in Mt. will depend on our being able to do several things. First of all, we will have to be able to establish a fairly precise cultural-historical setting in which the Jewish and Iranian elements in ApocAd, noted by Böhlig and others, could have come

[30] Lactantius' use of these materials is studied in J.R. Hinnells, "The Zoroastrian Doctrine of salvation in the Roman World: A Study of the *Oracle of Hystaspes*", in E.J. Sharpe and J.R. Hinnells (eds.), *Man and his Salvation* (Manchester 1973), 125–148. For universal salvation, cf. p. 142; doctrine of the Saošyant, pp. 143–145.

[31] Cf. below, p.

[32] See especially the collection of studies in G.A. Anderson, M. Stone, and J. Tromp (eds.), *Literature on Adam and Eve* (Leiden, Boston and Cologne 2000).

together into such a coherent religious statement—and also to make sense of it as a literary product in a way that the Gnostic reading, as we have seen, does not seem to be able to do at all convincingly. Then it will be necessary to show that the allusions to virgin birth in its stories of the Illuminator can be explained, not as already Christian or Gnostic allusions, but as features stemming from the Zarathustra legend at an earlier stage than we know from the orthodox texts, and which has influenced the Jewish-apocalyptic concepts of cycles of revelation and recurrent prophecy.

The mythological meaning of virgin birth, in relation to prophetology, to the wonder of the renewal of the revelation, and to the wonder of origination itself—all this will need further exploration in the process. But the idea of connecting it with the Matthaean narratives, so far solely on the basis of a couple of allusions to virgin birth, might still seem a little far-fetched. And so I suppose it would be if it were not for an extraordinary set of correlations, which must be mentioned here although the full working-out of their implications will need to be held over to later chapters.

Matthew alone among the Gospels preserves the narration of Joseph's discomfiture at the discovery of Mary's being with child "by the Holy Spirit", the family's persecution by Herod and the flight into Egypt, and of course the visit of the Magi. These stories hold pride of place at the outset of the Gospel, revealing Jesus as specially marked out from birth to fulfil a special destiny. Since the material is considerably different in kind from that which the Gospel broadly shares with Mark and Luke (so-called "Synoptic tradition"), we may well suppose that he included it because it was already held in honour by the distinctive community for which he wrote. Recent scholarship has tended increasingly to the view that this would have been a Jewish-Christian community, or perhaps even one better described as a community of "Christian Jews".[33] Moreover, linguistic study of Mt.1–2 shows the presence of

[33] See further D. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism* (Edinburgh 1998). A majority of scholars now see Mt. as originating from a Jewish-Christian milieu. General reasons for accepting a strongly Jewish setting: see W. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (London 1975) pp. 112–116. Although the scholarly pendulum has swung away from attempts to relate Mt. closely to the Qumran Scrolls, H. Burgmann recently advanced strong arguments for a connection between the evangelist and Essene doctrines: Burgmann, *Die essenischen Gemeinden von Qumran und Damaskus* (Frankfurt-am-Main 1988), pp. 368ff. On the basis of 2,23 it has been conjectured that Mt.'s community called themselves "Nazorenes" or something similar: D.C. Allison, "Matthew", in *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford 2002), 844–886 (p. 850); *Nazoraioi* is known as a name

many features of language and vocabulary which are not typical of Mt. elsewhere. On grounds of literary criticism too, then, they are usually regarded as "pre-Matthaean materials".[34] Moreover, the three strands in the narration themselves give hints of an originally separate existence. These assumptions must be put to the test later, but will suffice to give a basic perspective here. The evidence is usually taken to indicate a) an "annunciation of birth" story; this, as J.A. Fitzmyer, G.W.E. Nickelsburg and others have pointed out has parallels in a narrative known from the "Dead Sea Scrolls" (1Q ApGen) and Enoch-traditions (I *Enoch* 106). That story has some structural features like ones in the Old Testament (especially "naming stories"), but only to a certain extent. "In the details of its plot, however, it is closer to Matthew's story of the conception and birth of Jesus."[35] Identifying the tradition which shaped it will therefore give a strong presumption of the background to Mt. too. Then b) there are signs of a further distinctive narrative which involved dream-visions, with the persecution of the family, slaughter of the innocents and the flight into Egypt.[36] Lastly c) the visit of the Magi, which seems to treat thematically of the encounter between Jewish and pagan wisdom and has been argued as we shall see by J.E. Bruns in particular, to be an originally independent story modelled on the encounter of Solomon and the Queen of the South.[37] Either Mt., or the underlying pre-Matthaean tradition, has woven these thematically different tales

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for Jewish-Christians, less unorthodox than the Ebionites, in the Fathers: summary and evaluation in J.A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background* pp. 442–444. This group is specifically mentioned (Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, possibly Epiphanius) as believing in the virgin-birth of Christ. As place of origin for Mt., Syria (above all Antioch) is most widely assumed.

[34] A major concern in the isolating of this strand, e.g. in the work of R.E. Brown, has been the possibility that it is tradition shared with Luke: Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, pp. 34–35 where he notes that nearly all the points shared by Lk. and Mt., including the virgin birth, are focussed in one section of the Matthaean narrative, namely 1,18 – 2,1; however, the new detail concerning the background of this section does not support Brown's conclusion (cf. below, pp. 117ff, 123ff). Meanwhile see his pp. 109ff. for the results of his literary analysis on the Infancy Narratives (with n. 31 for some contradictions and different conclusions); and see below, pp. 112–113.

[35] Comment in Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded", in M.E. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (Assen and Philadelphia 1984) p. 94; on the connection between the versions of the story, see J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Cave 1 of Qumran* (Rome 1971) pp. 16–17.

[36] The centrality of dream-revelation is striking, and there may have been still more dream-visions in the pre-Matthaean version (cf. below, pp. 121–122).

[37] See J.E. Bruns, "The Magi Episode in Matthew 2", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23((1961), 51–54; below, pp. 131–159.

into the complex we now know; and the evangelist has included it, with little attempt at integration, as a prologue to his Gospel.

The relationship between these stories and those in ApocAd may not be immediately obvious, but that is largely because the latter indicates them in so economical, not to say cryptic a fashion. Each statement from the various "kingdoms" of the world is sufficient to identify it, and the legend to which it alludes, but the art of story-telling evidently held no charms for the compiler. With the aid of the "Zoroastrian apocrypha" we can be fairly certain of most, as I have shown in a previous study.[38] And it is when we recognise the heroes of the several traditions that their stories start to suggest an underlying pattern of relations. In our present context we are concerned with the passage reporting the pronouncements of the first four kingdoms only (77,26 – 79,19).

Of these the first, naturally, is the indication of Zarathustra himself (77,26 – 78,6). As in the accounts in the Pahlavi books, his eternal essence or glory was "nurtured in the heavens" and descended to be received along with the other significant aspects of his being into "the bosom of his mother". The emphasis on its coming to the mother is in accordance with the usual emphasis in the Zoroastrian legends of the glory, and perhaps already touches on the symbolism of the virgin birth since the natural father is by-passed in the spiritual relationship between the prophet and his future mother.[39] At any rate the scene is set by the theme of the advent of one whose role is foreordained, and prepared in heaven.

The second kingdom tells the story of Zāl, an Iranian hero from the non-Avestan tradition. His tale is preserved by the Persian epic poet Firdausi, from old traditions, in the *Shahnameh*.[40] Though ApocAd

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[38] Summarised below,.

[39] Thus in *Dēnkart* VII,2,3 we read: "As the Religion says: when Ohrmazd created the creation of Zardušt, then (first) was his glory. Then the creation of Zardušt sped down from before Ohrmazd … upon the wife of Frahim-ruvanan Zoiš, at the time when she bore … Zaradušt's mother" (trans. restoring the Avestan text after Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (Manchester 1984) p. 72); also *Selections of Zātsparam* XIII,1: "the glory of Zaratušt … came down from the [heaven of] Endless Light, in the manner of fire … [and] mingled with the mother of Zaratušt". Similar emphasis in some of the legends of the "glory" which connect it with earlier heroes: "it came, through the mother, to a descendant of Frēdūn …" (*Dēnkart* VII,1,29). Especially in wider circles where the legend became known, this could be interpreted, not without justification, as making Zoroaster the son of Ohrmazd: Bidez-Cumont, vol. II B 10a; D 11; vol. I, *Introduction*, p. 24. For these developments in general, Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology" pp. 4760–4763.

[40] Welburn, op. cit. pp. 4765–4766. The epic material in this section is included in

mentions principally his association with the "bird of heaven", the fabulous Sīmurgh which nurtures him, prominent in the fuller version story is the reaction of his father Sām, i.e. Kerešāsp the Sāman, another hero who in contrast to Zāl himself is well-known from the Zoroastrian literature. The second kingdom formula deliberately, cryptically, tells us only the minimum required to enable identification: but fortunately we can be certain that the fuller version was circulating at the time of ApocAd, for the account of the shock of his father at the strange, supernatural (or demonic?) aspects of his son is accompanied by certain elements so specific that it is demonstrably the story which was used as the model for that in I *Enoch* 106 and its Qumran counterpart, so startlingly close in turn to Matthew's annunciation of birth. A feature that helped its adoption, through assimilation to an Old Testament figure, was doubtless its reference to the significant naming of the hero (*Zal-zar* or "golden Zāl")—an established Old Testament literary form. It also has a crucial place in the cycle of legends concerning the Saošyant, moreover, since it was for the sake of Kerešāsp, to save him from the evil witch Knathaiti, that Zarathustra first promised the future sending of the Saošyant: a saving event which is apparently represented mythically in the birth of his strange, magical child, Zāl.

In other words, as must be shown in more detail later, it seems possible that ApocAd here incorporates from the cyclic-mythology the precise prototype from which developed stories about a disturbing nativity, which circulated in Essene and apocalyptic circles at the period of Christian origins, and which furnish the closest parallels to the infancy narrative of the birth of Jesus.[41]

The story told by the third kingdom is that of the hero Farīdūn (Av. Thraētaona). ApocAd assigns to him a virgin birth (78,19–20). In the literary version of the myth preserved in Firdausi, and in fragmentary forms elsewhere, Farīdūn's birth comes during the reign of the "dragon-king", Azi-Dahāk. The evil ruler learns in a dream that a child has been born called Farīdūn, who will be king, since he bears the royal Glory. Perturbed, he sends his evil minions to search out the child,

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the partial translation by R. Levy, *The Epic of the Kings* (London, Henley and Boston 1967) pp. 34 ff.

[41] The story's origin has not previously been identified; see in detail below, pp. 92 ff. Because it does not refer directly to a virgin-birth, this material has been under-exploited in interpreting the Gospel: the criticism was made already by J.A. Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramaean* (Missoula 1979) p. 98.

seeking its death, "hunting for him and searching in every direction". The child and his mother Farānak flee into the wilderness, where the child is reared. Meanwhile, the dragon-king continues to prey upon the children of his subjects, consuming the brains of two of them every day. Subsequently, Farīdūn returns to overthrow Azi-Dahāk and become king, but not in the simple sense of killing him, since he cannot be destroyed until the end of time: rather the story points to the idea of an episode in the eschatological struggle, foreshadowed in cyclic-ritual repetition. Only in the final struggle before the Transfiguration will Azi-Dahāk be killed, and then by the risen hero Kerešāsp; in the meantime, the triumph over him by Faridun is ritually enacted every year on the day of Mihr (Mithra), the divine opponent of the dragon.[42] ApocAd reproduces the flight of mother and child from their city, his nurture in the wilderness, and the hero's return in glory and power. The close relation to the pattern of the second component-narrative underlying Matthew's ch. 2 hardly needs to be pointed out (see summary diagram). If the early dating of ApocAd can be rendered sufficiently plausible, the authenticity of Firdausi's retelling would be confirmed, since details gained from the later version (Azi-Dahāk's fear about his successor, the systematic murder of children, the search for the royal child to kill it, the idea that the return is not the end of the story but one moment in an eschatological struggle) would show that fuller versions must already have been circulating at that time, and have evidently helped form the background to the mythologised picture of Herod. The question of the virgin birth in connection with this myth needs to be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Finally, the fourth kingdom gives us a version of the story of Solomon and the Queen of the South (78,27 – 79,19). Disparities between its narrative and the well-known legend as we know it from the Ethiopian *Kebra Nagast* (e.g. the two women, the virginal birth), remain to be resolved and require detailed analysis in Chapter 6. Suffice it to say for our purposes here that it introduces into the block of tradition CG V 77,26 – 79,19 the story of an encounter between Israelite and pagan wisdom, here involving the story of a virgin birth, and that the underly-

[42] Welburn, op. cit. pp. 4766–4767; M. Boyce, "Iranian Festivals" in E. Yarshater (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran* vol. III.2 *The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods* (Cambridge 1983) pp. 792ff.; Widengren, *Iranisch-semitische Kulturbegegnung* p. 52; for Mithraic elements in ApocAd, which are however in my view exaggerated by Böhlig, see my comments op. cit. pp. 4773–4774 and cf. below, p. 71.

ing tale is plausibly regarded as the model for the pre-Matthaean third episode, the Magi's visit in Mt. 2,9–11. The influence on Mt. would not be directly from the Old Testament account, naturally, but through legendary developments that had already connected the story with themes close to Mt.'s own. Indeed the occurrence of all the relevant stories in the single block of material in CG V/5 77,26 – 79,19 would strikingly confirm the idea that these developments belong to pre-Matthaean source-material which had not only established certain ideas in Mt.'s community, but had already woven the stories together.

With these resemblances in theme and narrative structure, the possibility of understanding the virgin birth theme in ApocAd is accordingly brought much closer to the question of understanding the Gospel. If we can show that ApocAd plausibly did stand at the juncture where such stories flowed into apocalyptic Judaism, and if we can reconstruct the significance of the Zarathustra legend as it had developed at that time, thus grasping what the virgin birth meant when it came into the setting of ApocAd—we shall be in a powerful position: first of all to clarify a surprisingly large part of the narrative substance of Mt.'s infancy chapters (Fig. 1); and we may hope that the religious ideas underlying the stories in Mt. will be brought into sharper focus. The main problem in fathoming the virgin birth—namely, an understanding of its context and original implications—might even come closer to being solved. These are as yet many "ifs". But with that potential in mind, we must turn once again to the document from Nag Hammadi and its setting in spiritual history, its meaning as a Jewish revelation and its character as a "testament", reputedly preserved from the beginnings of human time.

Mt. 1–2	*Enoch*/1QapGen	ApocAd and expansions
1,18 Mary with child by Holy Spirit	Wife with child of supernatural appearance	Wife has child of supernatural appearance
		ZĀL
19 Joseph scandalised	Lamech scandalised	Sām scandalised
20 Joseph considers rejection		Sām rejects child, but later seeks to find truth
Dream-vision, angel Pronouncement	Sends to Enoch at world's end for pronouncement	Apparition of angel/bird Pronouncement
21 Reassured about child Significant name and special destiny as saviour	Reassured about child and his special destiny as saviour	Reassured about child Significant name and special destiny
22–24 Fulfilment cit. Virgin birth		STORY Fulfils Zarathustra's promise to his father of a saviour
2,2–3 Herod learns from diviners about child to be born		Virgin birth Azi-Dahāk learns in a dream about child to be king
		FARĪDŪN
4–8 Asks where it is to be born, plotting to kill it		Asks where it is born, plotting to kill it
9–12 Visit of magi to virgin mother and child		Solomon's encounter with Queen of the South; her virgin birth
		QUEEN OF THE SOUTH STORY
13–15 Joseph flees with mother and child		Mother and child flee from their city
16 Herod slaughters children		Azi-Dahāk slaughters children and others in his search for child
		STORY
20–21 Instructed by angel, child brought back to Israel, his kingdom		Returns to his kingdom
But struggle is not over (eschatological implications)		But struggle is not over (eschatological implications).

Fig. 1

PART ONE

THE *APOCALYPSE OF ADAM*

CHAPTER ONE

ADAM'S APOCALYPSE: CG V/5 AS TESTAMENT AND JEWISH REVELATION

Since we need to be more certain whether it can validly be used to explore the background of Mt., it is unfortunate that opinions concerning ApocAd (CG V/5), and most of all as regards its date and basic character, so strikingly continue to vary. Some scholars, as we have noted, maintain that it is a Christian-Gnostic apocryphon, rather likely to be late in date than early, and find dependence on developed Gnostic systems of thought. However, its strong Jewish features, the difficulty of establishing any clear Christian allusions, and the absence of unambiguously stated Gnostic theologoumena have suggested to others the possibility that it might be early enough, perhaps, to show Gnostic developments at a primitive stage or even a "transitional stage in an evolution from Jewish to Gnostic apocalyptic."[1]

The difficulty in establishing external criteria for dating the document more exactly means that a solution to the many perplexities surrounding it must look to a better understanding of its internal structure (i.e. Gnostic or apocalyptic?) and the identification of a background in which the developments which it represents might plausibly be at home. In the absence of definite Christian allusions, the view that it can be included in the broad category of the pseudepigrapha has opened a number of fruitful avenues of comparison with apocalyptic in particular, which can be utilised and extended, I believe, so as to try to clarify certain aspects at least of its place in the history of religions. Recent progress in mapping out Noachic and Enochic traditions, and even more the work on the nature of the Jewish literature of the "Testaments", intimately related to apocalyptic, should also be able to help us understand its structural features and literary affinities more closely.

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[1] G. MacRae in D. Parrott, *Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI etc.* (Leiden 1979) p. 152. Favouring a late date, in addition to Stroumsa's views already discussed: R.McL. Wilson, and more recently G.M. Shellrude, W. Beltz etc.; but feeling the "Christian" interpretation is uncertain are K. Berger, M. Franzmann; proposing a pre-Christian or early dating or Jewish-apocalyptic provenance notably A. Böhlig, G.W.E. Nickelsburg and G. MacRae.

The *Apocalypse of Adam* may well look different depending on which way we approach it, but for that very reason it may well also help us in defining the transition-process from the sort of resolution of tensions and contradictions in religious experience we call apocalyptic, to that which became Gnosticism.

I shall argue in the first instance that the work has features which suggest a well-defined place in the development of "apocalyptic"-biblical interpretation, that it has a genuinely apocalyptic structure, and that it can be understood without allusion to Gnostic theologoumena. At the same time, it is clear that some of the tensions normal within apocalyptic and similar models to which it relates are here intensifiedd even to breaking-point, in a way which does suggest the beginnings of a more vehement, Gnostic departure from the Jewish framework.[2]

Apocalypse or Testament?

Notable at the outset is the testamentary framework, coupled with the designation of the book as ἀποκάλυψις (64, 1–6). J.J. Collins has delimited in rather rigorous terms the scope of comparison for "Testaments". He points to a small number of pseudepigraphic works: fundamentally the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*, the *Testament of Moses*, the *Testament of Job* and the fragmentary 4Q *Testament of Amram* from Qumran. Attempts to relate the *Testament of Abraham* to a Jewish background, he argues, as recently taken further by von Nordheim, remain flawed or at best inconclusive, and it lacks the strict features of a farewell discourse; the *Testaments of Isaac and Jacob* which are closely related to it are more likely later developments and clearly Christian in their present form. Other candidates (such as the *Testament of Solomon* etc.) possess in even smaller degree the specific features required.[3] This strict analysis of the extant texts is valuable: but in order to facilitate comparison with the *Apoca-*

[2] I add here to the perspective of my previous article: "Iranian Prophetology and the Birth of the Messiah: the *Apocalypse of Adam*", in *ANRW* II. 25.6 (Berlin and New York 1988), 4752–4794 though now shifting focus away from the syncretistic materials and more on to the framework of apocalyptic ideas which utilised and responded to them.

[3] Collins, "Testaments", in M.E. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* pp. 325–329; against von Nordheim, *Die Lehre der Alten. 1. Das Testament* (Leiden 1980) pp. 136–170.

lypse of Adam, both Collins' and von Nordheim's assumption that there is a genre called "Testament" with distinctive features itself needs to be questioned.[4] The fact that II *Enoch* constitutes a revelatory testament prior to the patriarch's death, for example, indicates the real continuity with apocalyptic literature, and this feature in turn perhaps adds weight to G.W.E. Nickelsburg's speculation that prior to its present redaction, parts of I *Enoch* such as chs. 1–36 and 92–105 "may have formed the major parts of an Enochic testament, with chaps. 81–82 and 91 serving as a narrative bridge between the two parts."[5]

More valuable than the concept of a genre with distinctive features, therefore, is M.E. Stone's observation that the death-bed address and literary testament of an patriarch-seer "was considered particularly apt for the passing on of eschatological or cosmic secrets".[6] It is not hard to see that the authority of a patriarchal figure provides a crucial link between the cosmic-apocalyptic revelations of these works and the historical tradition of Judaism. The emergence of the distinctive "testamentary" documents with a series of recognisable features seems therefore to indicate a particular stage in the attempt, in certain Jewish circles, to reconcile with biblical authority apocalyptic and related forms of esoteric knowledge. The context of that attempt was a literary response, at least in part, to the awareness of syncretistic tendencies which are evident here as in many apocalyptic writings (cf. *Test.Levi* 8, 14; *Jubilees* 1,9ff.). The traditional framework of Judaism was strained by the effort, in apocalyptic, to envision the larger pattern of the cosmic future. But this wider vision was also the ground of an attempt to find the deeper meaning in the tradition and, in the new cosmic setting, a continuing special role for Israel. Such historical and retrospective claiming of authority is however fundamentally alien to the atmosphere of Gnosticism, in which the individual Gnostic seer lays claim to a transcendent and essentially unprecedented vision (Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* I,18,5; CH I,16; etc.).

The claim to possess authentic "testamentary" writings addressed to Israel or to priestly-esoteric groupings is thus closely related to that wider Jewish *topos* of the supposed rediscovery of priestly books, archaic

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[4] Cf. M. de Jonge in JSJ 12(1981) pp. 112–117.

[5] G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Philadelphia 1981) p. 150.

[6] M.E. Stone "Apocalyptic Literature", *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* p. 418.

tablets, steles of Seth, and so on.[7] The climactic secret of the *Apocalypse of Adam* is presented as an antediluvian revelation written on a mountain, "upon a rock of truth", which can only be interpreted by angelic inspiration (85,3–11) Closer here than the derivative Gnostic version in *Gospel of the Egyptians* (CG III 68,1–23), is the parallel in *Jubilees* 8,3: a discovery of secret teachings engraved on the "rock", said to derive from the Watcher-angels before the flood. Whether designated as "genuine" patriarchal revelation or evil knowledge resulting from the betrayal of heavenly secrets, apocalyptic knowledge of cosmic-heavenly mysteries can thus be interpreted "historically", i.e. as the inner content of events which are mentioned in the Bible, already implicit in it from the time of an ancient seer and waiting to be "discovered" or "fulfilled". But the projection-back of the content to archaic times is hardly intended to disguise its visionary nature. The knowledge to be rediscovered in the prophetic revelation of a patriarch or primordial figure such as Enoch, Seth or Adam generally retains many signs of its actual origin in visionary states—apocalyptic raptures or even involving ritual procedures, as evidently in *Test. Levi* 8.[8]

Very often indeed the patriarch is said to have experienced a revelation which coincides, wholly or in main part, with the visionary experience of the actual author: its content applies to his present and immediate future. A kind of visionary identification may result. It will be important to discover whether or not such a structure governs the *Apocalypse of Adam*. Certainly there are clear correspondences between Adam's vision (65,26ff.) of the three heavenly men and the later, apocalyptic parts with the "heavenly voice" and the angelic representatives of knowledge: Yesseus, Mazareus, Yessedekeus (84,4ff.; apparently one being with triple name in CG III 64,10–11). In the 4Q *Testament of Amram* this element is presented in an almost programmatic way. Here biblical figures have become representatives of the cosmic powers: the struggle they represent is one that has been immediately experienced by every Essene who has recognised himself as a "son of light", i.e. in baptism-initiation (cf. 1QS 4:2–16; 23–26). The fundamental Essene experience clearly forms the immediate content of the vision attributed to Amram: the encounter with an angelic figure who announces him-

[7] Hengel, "Excursus" in his *Judaism and Hellenism* (London 1974) vol. I pp. 241–243; and cf. already such legends as 2Macc. 2,4–8.

[8] Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History* (London 1967) p. 165; also Welburn, *Gnosis: the Mysteries and Christianity* (Edinburgh 1994) commentary p. 132.

self in three forms and has a dark opposite number also constitutes an obvious parallel to Adam's vision already mentioned. The parallel is the more significant in that it is probably to be understood that in one of his earthly forms the light-angel is identical with a "patriarchal" figure (Melchizedek). Emerging directly from this is the strong tendency for the patriarch-seer to be transformed into a figure whose real meaning lies not in his earthly life but in his death-bed vision, or still more in the revelatory future to which he points. The patriarch becomes something in the nature of an angelic representative, even a cosmic principle etc. as happened in the apocalyptic literature especially with Enoch and Melchizedek: in the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*, Levi and Judah themselves play elaborate roles in the end-time, and are presented already not only as prophetic but explicitly as cosmic figures. Amram is told: "You will be called an angel of God".[9] The ideas in the *Apocalypse of Adam* notably 64,10–14 are also readily explicable against the background of these developments.

When narrative elucidation of a figure is directed back e.g. to retell the life-history of the patriarch (cf. 64,5 ff.), it is hardly to establish the "truth" of biblical events, which is basically taken for granted (cf. *Test. Moses 1,5*; *Test. Levi* 2,1) but to elicit a deeper meaning or apocalyptic schema. In their retrospective narrative-sections as well as in their "prophetic" content, the *Testaments* are therefore also essentially parallel in literary function, not only to apocalyptic but, at the other end of the spectrum, to the visionary schematisation of the Bible *in extenso* that we find e.g. in *Jubilees*, or the *pesharim* from Qumran. *Jubilees* indeed actually incorporates "testaments" (chs. 21; 36), appeals to a special "divine revelation" to Moses through an angel, includes Enochic materials and possesses (see ch. 23) a clearly apocalyptic structure indicating an imminent reversal in the author's own time.[10]

The grounding of visionary experience in the historical tradition thus leads in these works to a changed perception of that history in turn. Estimating the balance between the different religious forces is central, it seems to me, to any act of interpretation of these documents. We may obviously acquiesce in Nickelsburg's placing of the *Testaments*

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[9] Cosmic associations: *Test. Naphtali* 5,3–5. For eschatological roles see refs. in Charlesworth, *OT Pseudepigrapha* I p. 799 and A. Hultgård, *L'eschatologie des Testament des douzes Patriarches* (Uppsala 1977), II pp. ff; for *Testament of Amram*: I, p. 42.

[10] M. Testuz, *Les idées réligieuses du livre des Jubilés* (Geneva 1960) pp. 11 ff.; G.L. Davenport, *The Eschatology of the Book of Jubilees* (Leiden 1971); J. Vanderkam, "Enoch Traditions in *Jubilees*", *SBL Seminar Papers* (Missoula 1978), vol. 1, pp. 228–251.

under the rubric "Exposition of Israel's Scriptures", much as G. Vermes includes *Test. Amram* under "Bible Interpretation", while the *Test. Job* is "rewritten Bible" etc.—so long as we take equal care to define the position from which they are being expounded, interpreted and paraphrased! Such "illuminated", i.e. visionary reinterpretation of the biblical story was to be carried to particular lengths in the Qumran literature. The *Apocalypse of Adam* offers sweeping reinterpretation of biblical events—to which it seems to remain too closely tied, however, for a Gnostic apocryphon.

Rather than trying to demarcate between pure apocalyptic and a "poorly attested" testamentary genre such as is still often assumed, it is more valuable *vis a vis* the *Apocalypse of Adam* if we take the *Testaments* in particular as evidence of a stage in the development and especially the cultural absorption of apocalyptic ideas and implications, which can fundamentally be dated to the second and first centuries B.C. Since in them apocalyptic ideas are extensively integrated with Bible-interpretation they can best be understood as part of a distinctive literary group which extends to texts such as *Jubilees* and some of the Essene sectarian works. The *Testament of Job* and perhaps *II Enoch* might also illustrate the tendency, with apocalyptic turning readily into *midrash* or reworking of the biblical text. The texts still evidently attempt to deal radically with many of the internal religious tensions of the period, as is shown by the close link to apocalyptic thought. It is in this way too that they offer an analogy for the interpretation of the *Apocalypse of Adam* as apocalypse and testament, complementing Nickelsburg's observations on its relationship to specifically "Adamic" literature.[11]

In contrast, in later, properly Gnostic literature the whole model of a revelation confirmed by its attestation on archaic inscriptions or patriarchal testaments falls apart: the words inscribed on the Nag Hammadi *Three Steles of Seth* are declared to be accessible, not because they have survived to be found by a suitable chosen person, but only because they have been seen in a vision by the Gnostic Dositheus (CG VII 118,10–12). Rather than integrating the vision with tradition, the number of steles is increased from the usual two to three, contradicting the tradition and highlighting instead the unique authority of the Gnostic seer.

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[11] Nickelsburg, "Some Related Traditions in the Apocalypse of Adam, the Books of Adam and Eve and I Enoch", in B. Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* I (Leiden 1981) pp. 515–539.

Structural Analogies

It will be worthwhile summarising the formal points of analogy between the ApocAd and the Jewish *Testaments*.

a) Most obviously it begins with the address of the dying Adam to his son, mentioning the age of the patriarch (64,1; 68,14–27; close analogies esp. *Test.Reuben* 1,1; 2,1 ff.; *Test.Levi* 1,1; *Test.Dan* 1,1–2; *Test. Benjamin* 1,1–2);
b) it also later includes a typical note that the contents are to be handed down or have been handed down from generation to generation (85, 19–22; cf. *Test. Simeon* 7,3; *Levi* 1,1; *Judah* 26,4; *Gad* 8,1; *Test. Moses* 1,16; 10,12; *Test. Amram*; II *Enoch* 48,6; *Jubilees* 1,5). Seth functions here as the bearer of the tradition: there is nothing to suggest the Gnostic concept of an "alien" seed to which such knowledge intrinsically belongs. The revelation "belongs", in fact, to Adam rather than to a pneumatically represented Seth, despite the tortuous argument by G. MacRae that the title is inappropriate—i.e. in effect that the work ought to present itself more like a Gnostic apocryphon![12] Its rather precise correspondence to the vision of future catastrophes by flood and fire in Josephus, *Antt.* I,70 does not support the idea that its content originated in ("Sethian") Gnosticism;
c) The address continues with a typically condensed retrospective narration (64,6 ff.; cf. *Test. Levi* 2,1 ff.; *Test.Judah* 1,3 ff.; etc.);
d) which nevertheless leads characteristically to a vision and a prophetic passage (65,24; 69,1; cf. *Test. Levi* 2,6; *Judah* 24; *Zebulon* 10; *Test. Moses* 2 ff.; *Test. Amram*; etc.);
e) Where the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs are* each dedicated to the praise of a single abstract virtue, the *Apocalypse of Adam* celebrates "eternal knowledge" of God—in terms somewhat reminiscent of Qumran (83,8–23; cf. 1QH III,3; VII,26–33 etc.);
f) The polarisation of humanity according to their possession or otherwise of these virtues/knowledge (83,23–29) leading to their division into two eschatological camps,
g) defined in terms of the symbolism of light and darkness (65,23; 66,24; 71,9–10; 75,14–17; 83,7–8;).

[12] G. MacRae, "Seth in Gnostic Texts and Traditions", in Achtemeier (ed.) *SBL Seminar Papers 1977* (Montana 1977) pp. 17–24 (18).

h) Though I am unable to concur with those scholars who find in the testamentary literature a clear "Deuteronomistic" morality,[13] yet an attempt to reinterpret the important biblical patterning of history as exile-and-return from an eschatological-visionary perspective is certainly prominent, and I shall argue below that this, rather than a Gnostic "inversion" of biblical values, underlies 69, 1–76,8;

i) At the far horizon of the vision/prophecy comes the apocalyptic resolution of the struggle of the light and darkness (83,4 ff.; cf. *Test. Moses* 10,1; *Test. Levi* 10; 14–15; 16; *Test. Judah* 23; *Test. Reuben* 6; *Test. Simeon* 5; etc.). In the *Apocalypse of Adam* the cosmic victory of the Light seems to be actually identical with the revelation of knowledge (85,8 ff.), again suggesting a pattern similar to Qumran, where the Essenes as "sons of light" were already living in "the age to come";

j) Messianic figures are expected, or others with special or syncretistic features: indicated in our *Apocalypse of Adam* e.g. as "the illuminator of knowledge will pass by" in judgment; comparable here are the Qumran references to "the time of God's visitation" (CD vii,9; viii,2 ff.); and with the role of "the Illuminator of knowledge" one might also compare the the outpouring of knowledge connected with the Son of Man (I *Enoch* 51,3) or the priestly Messiah (*Test. Levi* 18,3; 5). Further correlations will be discussed in detail below.

The *Apocalypse of Adam*, is thus a "revelation" sharing important historical assumptions and tensions with the apocalyptic component in the Jewish testaments and related documents. Many of these analogies link it additionally, as I have already discussed elsewhere, with II *Enoch* ("J" text 1,1–10).[14] Apart from the death-bed framework of Enoch's discourse previously mentioned, which furnishes the setting for a dream-vision of the heavenly "men" i.e. angels, there is the calling by name, the striking motif of the seer's repentance, distress and incomprehension; and the supernatural luminescence of the messengers.

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[13] In *Test. Simeon* 7,2–3 it is clearly explained, for example, that the reason for obeying the commandments is to take part in the eschatological events associated with Levi and Judah; cf. 1QS viii,20 – ix,11; CD xiii,20 – xiv,2.

Even where this morality is not deterministic, its point is belonging to the right eschatological camp rather than "covenantal nomism".

[14] art. cit. *ANRW* II Bd.25.6 p. 4874 and note 80.

Elements such as these must certainly be an indication, despite their imaginative retrojection into patriarchal scenes, of the actual setting in which the "eternal knowledge" of this and similar revelations were transmitted. CG V 85,23–29 tells us that the "hidden knowledge of Adam" is identical with a "holy baptism", accessible through "those born of the word and the eternal illuminators". Though G. MacRae among others has noted that Gnostic knowledge can be identified with baptism,[15] and also referred here to the Christian doctrine of the *logos*, there is no need to look beyond the Jewish circles which produced testamentary and apocalyptic literature for parallels. The *Testament of Amram* directly suggests the Essene baptismal setting of its vision experience; the calling by name as at 66,1–2 figures in the vision narrative of *Test. Levi* 2,6 (with important parallels at CD ii,11; iv,4). It is true that many of these elements, such as the appearance of a vast angelic figure to one "weighed down as by sleep", a "heavenly voice" and a calling by name, in the setting of a myth about the First Man, water- and baptismal imagery involving *metanoia*, etc. feature in CH I,1 ff.; I,28; cf. also *Test. Gad* 5,7; *Judah* 15,4; etc.). But this is rather a result of the fact that despite the pagan setting, the Hermetic background there is essentially Jewish. When the *Apocalypse of Adam*'s mysterious guardians of baptism, together with the angelic names, appear again in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, they are associated with Jewish lore concerning a being called *Metanoia* (CG III 59,1–10): her origins are elaborated in a mythical context close to if not directly influenced by CH I 12–14.[16] What we apparently have here and in the *Apocalypse of Adam* are Jewish ideas which we can subsequently witness being adapted and taken over into a Gnostic synthesis. But CG III 63,4 ff. shows clearly the further Gnosticizing (and Christianizing) of the materials; from this it is certainly not possible to restore their original meaning in ApocAd. Rather we may notice the extent of the Gnosticizing change they have undergone in the process.

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[15] MacRae, "Apocalypse of Adam" in Charlesworth, *OT Pseudepigrapha* I, p. 719 and note f: citing Epiphanius, *Panarion* 40,2,6 and *Paraphrase of Shem* 30–31. MacRae also wishes to restore from *Gospel of the Egyptians* CG III 66, 10 the concluding reference to "the living water."

[16] Cf. the appearance of Poimael (= Poimandres?) at CG III 66,1; generally, B.A. Pearson, "Jewish Elements in Corpus Hermeticum I (Poimandres)", in R. van den Broek – M. Vermaseren, *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions* (Leiden 1981) pp. 336–348. For "Repentance" as a pre-existent entity: *Bereshit Rabbah* 1,4; *Joseph and Aseneth* 15,7; cf. *Test. Gad* 5,7.

Nickelsburg has seen an allusion to Jewish baptismal practices in the repentance of Adam and Eve by standing in the rivers Jordan and Tigris, together with other elements in the *Vita/Apocalypse of Moses*.[17] Their fall is connected with the losing of the supernatural "glory" they possessed in Paradise, related to *Apocalypse of Adam* 64,24–29 where the glory is closely associated with the "first knowledge" that breathed within them. The baptism which communicates the "hidden knowledge of Adam" evidently restores also the paradisal radiance (as promised in 82,28–83,4).

Hence there is still nothing here that cannot be explained in terms of an eschatological baptism like that of *Test. Levi* 8,5—part of an initiation which is "a sign of the glory of the Lord who is coming" (8,11), and whose fulfilment involves all the same elements:

> kindling the light of knowledge as day is
> illumined by the sun … and from the temple of
> glory sanctification shall come upon him,
> with a fatherly voice as from Abraham to Isaac.
> And the glory of the Most High shall burst forth
> upon him. And the spirit of understanding
> and sanctification shall rest upon him in the
> water. For he shall give the majesty of the
> Lord to those who are his sons in truth
> forever.[18]

The transmission of the spirit "in the water" has persuaded even many of those who otherwise accepted the Jewish nature of the document to exclude this phrase and the fatherly "voice" as an allusion to the Gospels.[19] But the parallels in our *Apocalypse* are striking, for instance in the recurring formula "He received glory and power, and thus he came on the water" (78,3 etc.). Moreover the Thirteenth Kingdom declares

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[17] Nickelsburg, art. cit. See for their penitence 29,11–13 (= *Vita* 6–7), and for the evidently esoteric nature of their immersion, paralleled in the mystic text *Merkavah Rabba*, I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden-Köln 1980) p. 102 n. 22. Loss of the glory: *Apocalypse of Moses* 20,2 (Eve) and 21,6 (Adam).

[18] *Test.Levi* 18,3; 6–8. Cf. Dan. 12,3; I *Enoch* 104,2. Associated with restoration to paradisal status, 18,10.

[19] Hultgård, vol. II, p. 249; and further discussion in his vol. I p. 270n1. G.M. Shellrude, "The Apocalypse of Adam" in M. Krause (ed.), *Gnosis and Gnosticism* (Leiden 1981), pp. 82–91 builds heavily on the basis of references to the water in the passage 77,27–82,19, assuming that there must be a Christian allusion. M. Black, "The Messiah in the Testament of Levi 18", *ET* 60(1949), 321–322 argued a Christian intrusion from the allusion of the "voice" to the binding of Isaac: but the allusion must have been intended to appeal, at the very least, to existing Jewish expectations?

of the Illuminator that "every birth of their ruler is a word, and this word received a mandate" in him. This statement of the Thirteenth Kingdom about the "word", as I have shown elsewhere, should be understood as an expression of the Enochic theology of the hidden name of the Messiah,[20] and certainly requires no Christian reference to the Johannine *Logos*. The reference to the "voice" and the water in *Test. Levi* likewise more probably simply shares the same background in syncretistic and eschatological ideas.

The eschatological teacher or "prêtre-sauveur", as Hultgard has called him, appears in the *Apocalypse of Adam* with the title φωστήρ, Illuminator. Though rich in (and here no doubt chosen for its) syncretistic possibilities, as we shall see, the title is already encountered in the testamental literature. In *Test. Levi* 4,3 Judah and Levi "will be φωστῆρες of Israel", and the idea is directly linked to their eschatological reappearance by the star of *Test. Levi* 18; Hultgård points out also the cosmic and light-symbolism in the blessing of the priest at Qumran: "(May He make you) an [eternal] light etc. …" (1 QSb iv,27).

Now, if the statement by the Thirteenth Kingdom can be understood as a messianic prophecy with Enochic associations, the unexpected additional statement from the "kingless race" (82,19–83,4) may surely suggest the further transformation of the traditional Jewish expectation that is connected with the "prêtre-sauveur". In contrast to the royal associations of the Thirteenth Kingdom's Messiah, those of the fourteenth statement concerning the φωστήρ are predominantly cosmic: "God chose him from all aeons", i.e. from eternity and forever, like the Melchizedekian priest of Ps. 110,3; this conception also directly influenced and was absorbed into the exaltation of Levi (*Jub*. 32,1) In our text his main characteristic is that he speaks words of divine revelation, again the role prescribed for Levi in the *Testaments*: "He will be close to God and announce to men (God's) mysteries" (*Test. Levi* 2,10). Opinion was divided as to whether the priestly Messiah would be a second personage, surpassing in significance even the traditional royal anointed, or a higher role to be fulfilled by a single figure. Even at Qumran, with its enclosed sectarian organisation, we find documents which represent opposing views or different stages in the argument. The traditions behind the recital of the birth-legends in the long passage 77,27–82,19 are clearly linked to the subsequent conception of the

[20] Welburn, art. cit. pp. 4781–4783.

successive appearances of the "true prophet" which was to be so important a doctrine in Jewish Christianity.[21]

Since the fourteenth prophecy is not associated with a further worldly "kingdom" or other earthly place of origin, however, it appears most likely that it should be understood as a supplementary theological statement concerning the Illuminator's last appearance. The idea would then be close to the doctrine found for example in CD xii,23; xiv,19 of a single Messianic embodiment fulfilling the kingly and priestly roles.

This contradicts, of course, the widespread assumption that the "kingless race" stands for the radically other-worldly Gnostic teaching of salvation, in contradistinction to all the existing traditions. But such an assumption is wholly unwarranted. The concept and variants of the term exist outside the Gnostic thought-world, and indeed it is clear that its use there represented a radicalising and an extension of its original meaning.[22] A. Böhlig notes that in the Jewish-Christian *Ascension of Isaiah* the blessed righteous dwell in the higher heavens, where there is no throne over the inhabitants as in the lower spheres (8,7 etc.). The alchemical *True Book of Sophe the Egyptian* also shows the survival of the concept. It asserts a Jewish wisdom alongside the Egyptian, ascribed to the God of the Hebrews and of the powers, Sabaoth: its adherents are a generation without a king (γεννὰ … ἀβασίλευτος), autonomous and above materiality.[23] Exactly such a race of "philosophers" is what Clement of Alexandria calls the "true Israelites" (*Stromateis* VI,108,1). Though transmitted via apocalyptic, the idea develops from obviously historical roots. It has even a biblical basis in 1 Sam. 8,7 ff.; but the reality of its appeal is perhaps more directly expressed in the prayer *Emet ve-emunah* (one of the benedictions of the *Shema*): "He is the one who delivered us from the hands of kings, our [sole] King, who redeemed us from the power of all tyrants …"; cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 3,322; *contra Apionem* 2,165. *Jub.* 15,32 offers a particularly close parallel to our *Apocalypse*: no angelic power or ruling spirit is placed over Israel, as they are over the nations just as ApocAd's "kingdoms" are evidently ruled by the twelve "powers". The "kingless race" idea no doubt became important among those esoteric groups who believed themselves to be the

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[21] See Introduction, and in this context especially the *Testament of Isaac* 3,17–19.

[22] For Gnostic use of the concept, see M. Tardieu, *Trois mythes gnostiques* (Paris 1974) pp. 81–82 and n. 236. See esp. Hippolytus, *Ref.* V,8,2: ἡ … ἀβασίλευτος γενεὰ.

[23] Böhlig, *Die koptisch-gnostische Schrift ohne Titel aus Codex II* (Berlin 1962) p. 102. *Sophe the Egyptian* in M.P.E. Berthelot – M.C.E. Ruelle, *Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs* (London 1963), t. III p. 213.

"true Israel" yet found themselves disillusioned by the Hasmonaeans and the Jerusalem cult. Josephus notes that the Essenes refused to call any man "Lord", and had to be exempted from the oath of obedience to Herod. The addition of the priestly role to the Messiah, as well as reflecting changing political realities, is part of the process by which an esoteric Judaism assumes importance alongside the traditional hope. The sequence of appearances of the Illuminator shows a recognition of wider religious realities in the twelve kingly incarnations (this block of material concerning the appearances of the Illuminator was, I take it, the esoteric content which had to be assimilated to the Bible by the vision projected back onto Adam). In addition it advances a claim that this universal teaching finds its fulfilment in the coming of the Messiah. The prophecies concerning the Messiah are thus shown to have been preserved from primordial times, partially understood among the nations who worship each only one of the cosmic powers, until finally they will be fulfilled, and understanding of them will reach the "true Israel" who preserve the Adamic knowledge of the Messiah's deeper, i.e. priestly-esoteric role.

M. Hengel notes that the discovery of antediluvian secrets in *Jub.* 8,1 was presumably supposed to have "laid the foundation for the Chaldaean star cult, the practice of omens and magic". According to the Essenes, the whole range of pagan wisdom resulted from this effective betrayal of divine secrets, very much as each of the "kingdoms" wrests one part of Adam's prophetic knowledge from the whole, the totality to which the *Apocalypse of Adam*'s revelation restores its full significance.[24] The Essene theory is thus identical with the reproach against the guardians who have betrayed the secrets to the powers (84,14–21). It is interesting to note that this view is not shared by the Alexandrian-Gnostic users of CG III 64,14–16 who continued the ideas in a non-Jewish(?), and Christian setting.

It seems eminently likely, then, that the formal resemblances between our document and apocalyptic-testamentary literature are genuine structural analogies. The document was indeed constructed, in other words, as Adam's apocalypse, not Sethian γνῶσις. Its purpose was to announce the imminent restoration of the scattered wisdom of the nations and of the true Israel through an impending manifestation of the Illuminator. The twelve appearances from the source-material are

[24] M. Hengel, "Excursus" pp. 241–243 (above, n. 7).

already past, but the thirteenth, or Messianic appearance will reveal the privileged role of Judaism and at the same time vindicate the knowledge of the "kingless race". This appearance lies in the future for the writer. It leads on to a typical eschatological passage (83,4ff.). Moreover, with the finalistic terminology, introduced only for the thirteenth prophecy ("in order that the desire of those powers might be fulfilled": 82,18–19), one may compare such passages in the midrash as *Ber. Rabbah* 3,9: "From the commencement of the creation of the universe, God desired to dwell among his creatures, and this desire was fulfilled when the tabernacle was created …". There is really no reason to entangle ourselves in what amounts to the double-think of P. Perkins' contention that throughout the document its author "invokes literary models developed in Jewish intertestamental writings" but that "he uses them against their original intent".[25] This is genuine Jewish language of fulfilment and the structure of the document that of genuine apocalyptic, not Gnostic expectation.

In summary, then, the apocalyptic structure, with its future expectation of the "fulfilment", together with the close analogies in the literature of the "Testaments" points to a non-Christian document in which all the Jewish apocalyptic features are still integral and significant. Closeness to the *Testament of Amram* in particular would indicate a somewhat late point in the history of this intertestamental literature; the differences from Qumran theology, the originally Greek text and closeness to the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* indicate probably an origin in Syria. H.M. Schenke among others is, on the evidence, right in withdrawing his initial objections to Böhlig's claim that it is also pre-Christian.[26] In view of its content and its structure, there is no reason that it should not already have been in existence by the turn of the Christian era.

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[25] Perkins, "The *Apocalypse of Adam*", *CBQ* 39(1977) 391. Such handling of set forms would be a piece of virtuosity surely very uncharacteristic of Gnostics, whose literary usage is in general clumsy and periphrastic? Literary forms indeed often break down altogether in Gnosticism, again expressing the unprecedented nature of *gnosis*, its "breakthrough" nature, or its otherness to previous discourse.

[26] H.-M. Schenke, "The Phenomenon and Significance of Gnostic Sethianism", in Layton (ed.), op. cit. vol. II, pp. 588–616 (p. 607).

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL MATERIALS: EXILE AND RETURN

In the previous chapter we considered ApocAd from the point of view of what one may call its real visionary situation: we asked about the setting in which someone could write a work whose content he attributed to the dying Adam, handing it down to his son Seth, and found it in Jewish circles like those of the Essenes or similar esoteric sects. Among them visionary knowledge, rather than challenging the received biblical tradition, is understood as the historical tradition's deeper, hidden significance which will be made generally known only in the time of the fulfilment. At the same time, the visionary "pressure" exerted on the tradition shows clearly nonetheless that historically there was an urgent need for a new perspective and wider understanding. The experienced need to reaffirm the Jewish viewpoint within a larger framework of universal history is to be associated with the threat of absorption, not only of political autonomy into the Hellenistic and subsequently Roman world, but also of the sense of an erosion of allegiance to the special content of Judaism as people gained knowledge of general history and Hellenistic ideas. The literary framework which it employs, as a apocalyptic "testament", likewise makes sense in a specific phase of the history of such groups in the intertestamental period.

Following on from these researches, in the next two chapters we turn to the other side of the coin, so to speak. We examine first the biblical materials used by ApocAd to construct its account of post-diluvial history as foreseen by Adam in the frame-story. Contrasts, rather than similarities to Gnostic treatments of Genesis must repeatedly be pointed out. Having indicated the biblical framework within which ApocAd develops its ideas we may then return, in this non-Gnostic context, to the somewhat complex question as to the nature of those "syncretistic" pressures on the writer-seer who devised it: what was the challenge which pushed him toward a reformulation of the inner meaning of history from its inception, from Adam onward? It must have been in itself something of considerable power and spiritual scope, at least in the eyes of a visionary Jew who sought in the process of understanding

it to grasp the special implications for the people of God, as defined by their history and by its record, the Bible.

Biblical Materials: Exile and Return

One aspect of being true to the tradition is that, in constructing his projected framework to reveal the meaning of history from Adam up to his own time and into the future, the writer of ApocAd held firmly to biblical linear time. With this linearity of the narrative, comprising the story of the Flood followed by the continued preservation of the "first knowledge" through a further, more obscure catastrophe of fire, the literary construction of CG V/5 again distinguishes itself immediately from the characteristic manifestations of Gnostic myth, where transcendent meaning is hinted through the fracture or fragmentation of historical time. (Compare for instance the Gnostic treatment of related materials in the Nag Hammadi *Hypostasis of the Archons*- especially, for example, the typically Gnostic, violent narrative dislocation at CG II 94,2 ff.).

Adam's visionary description of the meaning of history does not resemble Gnosticism but even in its details stands close to the *midrash* or related techniques like those of *Jubilees*. The idea that Adam saw the whole of history, as well as being attested by Josephus' *Antt.*1.67–71, is described in very similar accounts from the early *midrashim* (see esp. *Midrash Tanhuma, Mas'e* § 4; *Bereshit Rabbah* (ed. Theodor) p. 445). Moreover, at quite a number of points in ApocAd there are signs of a powerful engagement with the biblical text, so that the esotericism encountered here seems to me quite different from the way a document such as the Gnostic *Apocryphon Johannis* appeals over the head of tradition to mythic factors, thereby finding the freedom to re-envision the meaning of things in a way that eludes past structures, and only to has to confront the biblical text at some few crucial points with its "Not as Moses said …" (CG II 13,19–20). In contrast AAd engages rather strictly with details from the biblical tradition, and clearly intends to remain within the parameters of midrashic interpretation rather than dissolving it by reaching out to myth. We can see this in many details which reveal a grounding in the biblical text. Thus the initially strange statement (70,7) that after the Flood God will "rest from his wrath" and make a covenant with the seed of Noah, for example, might well be explained as having come from Jewish exegetical tradition which, despite Gen. 5,29, often interpreted Noah's name as "rest": a view upheld by several

rabbinic authorities (*Bereshit Rabbah* 25,2; ps.Philo, *Bib. Antt.* 1,20). Then there is God's special concern over the animals (70,12–16), and the fact that those preserved were the ones "which he pleased" also concurs with midrashic themes (*Yalkut Shimeoni*, Gen.#57; *Ber. Rabbah* 33,3). Moreover the notion that Noah was given "dominion" in this context (71,1–4) may be compared to the opinion of Shimeon ben Lakish that the fall was a sort of universal rebellion of nature, so that the animals became hostile to man, etc. But God granted to Noah the dominion over nature and all creatures that had originally belonged to the first man. "When Noah came, they returned to their former obedience and helpfulness to man—they were at peace" (*Ber. Rabbah* 25,2). Gauging the antiquity of rabbinic traditions is notoriously difficult, but none of these conceptions is likely to be the result of Gnostic influence on the Jewish tradition. A Jewish background of thought for our document is a much more simple explanation. Also worth noting is the frequent ambivalence about Noah in the *midrashim* (*Yalkut Shimeoni*, Gen. §44; *Ber. Rabbah* 26,6; 28,9)—a theme therefore that likewise does not need to be derived from Gnostic "inversion".

Many at least of the more curious Jewish ideas about Noah were developed in the "Noachic" literature of the intertestamental period, showing once more how the Bible was being reinterpreted especially in the light of apocalyptic ideas—notably ideas from the Enoch-tradition. I *Enoch* has clearly taken over some of this literature bodily, but its originally independent existence is now attested by discoveries at Qumran (1Q19). An especially close parallel to the angel-like status of Adam and Eve (64,14–15) is provided by the case of patriarchal figures in the fragment 4Q535 line 8, "He will reveal mysteries like the highest angels", if this does refer to Noah: or cf. 1QApGen ii, "he shared the lot [of the angels] who taught him all things", referring to Enoch in the context of Noah's birth. II *Enoch* too centres upon the "universal" antediluvian revelation of God as Creator and incorporates syncretistic legends in its extended *midrash* on this and similar episodes. ApocAd incorporates a subsidiary "Testament of Noah" (72,15ff.), rather in the manner of those found in *Jubilees*. Parallels between the general style, as well as the significance of the detailed content of the sequence of birth-legends of the Illuminator and those of Noah (1QApGen ii; I *Enoch* 106) and Melchizedek (II *Enoch* 71), are particularly striking.

The passage most directly comparable, II *Enoch* 71,34–37, is admittedly to be used with caution and is to be found only in one manuscript (ms.R). Interestingly, in the context of our researches here, it shows its

clear background connection to Adam-legends (v. 36) suggesting that it shares a common matrix with ideas like those in our *Apocalypse*. It has come in at an explicitly Christian stage (v. 34) though it need not be Christian (above, pp. 4–5 and n. 8); but even though II *Enoch* cannot therefore be used here to help explain the genesis of the ideas in their pre-Christian form, it does show that the Noachic literature was at the very least one area specially open to transformation and the assimilation of syncretistic-legendary ideas. These similarities, and above all the strong relationship to legend and myth that continues the detail of Jewish Noah-literature, suggests that the utilisation of the Flood episode in ApocAd is not incidental to a timeless Gnostic vision, but much more likely an intrinsic part of the background of the evolution of these traditions. When we come to look at the more syncretistic Jewish materials in the next chapter, we shall see that it was probably here in Noachic conceptions that the fusion between the incarnation-stories and Jewish materials began; and the pushing of the vision back to Adam must be a subsequent development, indeed the latest stage of the process which led to CG V/5.

Contrary to the contention of B. Layton that in its treatment of the Flood "the story line seems to be based primarily on the [Gnostic] myth rather than Genesis,"[1] then, it is quite arguable that the ideas in the document are to be explained from these "Noachic" versions and elaborations of the Bible-text, and that they evolved as an interpretation along midrashic lines of the biblical *Heilsgeschichte*. Above all the thematic lines of the *Apocalypse* can be derived from the Enochic notion that the Flood was sent to punish mankind for following the fallen knowledge of the Watchers (I *Enoch* 8,1–3; 10,7–8; 65,6). Furthermore after the Flood, according to *Jubilees* 23,8 ff. men "will grow old quickly, and their knowledge will forsake them", just as happens with Adam and Eve in our document at 67,4–14. The formulations of the Flood-myth at 69,2 ff. together with the idea that henceforth the world falls under "the authority of death" have an especially close parallel in II *Enoch* 70,8: "the great storages of the waters of heaven will come down onto the earth … And the whole constitution of the earth will perish, and all the earth … will be deprived of its strength from that day". Moreover the description of the angels taking up the righteous seed into "the place where the spirit of life dwells" (= Paradise?) in order that it may

[1] Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (London 1987) p. 52.

survive and preserve the antediluvian knowledge (69,19–23) is exactly the same myth we find applied to Melchizedek in II *Enoch* 72,1. In all this there is no need to appeal to a special "Gnostic" myth of an alien seed. The "rediscovery" of this secret knowledge, in the form in which it is scattered among the nations, has its basis in the Hasidic theory of the "encyclopaedic" nature of the biblical revelation (above, Introduction) and its pagan analogues. It may furthermore be seen to generate in ApocAd an apocalyptic variation on what is nevertheless still a very biblical theme: exile and return. Its implications prove to be, not a special Gnostic destiny of the soul, but an historical and Messianic drama reaching fulfilment.

Jub. 1,15–16 already gives the promise contained in Deut. 5,27 an eschatological—or even, with its reference to the "righteous plant", an implicitly Messianic meaning. The gathering of Israel "from the nations" is represented at Qumran by the names of the twelve tribes, to be inscribed around the points of the compass in the court of the eschatological Temple (11QT xxxix,12–13). We may speculate that some such conception of restoration underlies the very idea of a "synoptic" collection of *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. I have proposed elsewhere that the symbolism of the twelve tribes, and their dispersion among the nations, originally facilitated the syncretism with the doctrine of the multiple appearances of the Illuminator. One important aspect of this, again taking us back to Noachic themes, is the geographical interpretation given to the underlying set of ideas. As we shall see in more detail in Chapter 3, in accounts of the division of the earth among the sons of Noah, Israel is treated as the cosmic centre (*Jub*. 8,12; 1QApGen xxi,15–19)—though in the Bible, of course, Israel is significant through being the central strand in the history of the world, not as having the central cosmic location![2] Furthermore, it appears that the text of Deut. 32,8–9 was read by some to mean that the Most High "set the bounds" of the nations, not merely "according to the number of the children of Israel", but as in the LXX according to the number of the "sons of God", i.e. the heavenly powers. ApocAd evidently follows this interpretation in making Noah's grandsons twelve (as in the LXX of Gen. 10,6), founders of the twelve Kingdoms, with the thirteenth, i.e. Shem/Israel being exempt from rule except directly by God. We

[2] M. Hengel and A.-M. Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch* (London 1997) pp. 174ff. have conjectured that this geographical-Messianic conception may also have influenced Paul.

should undoubtedly see here an area where biblical thought has been strongly modified by cosmic ideas, and most likely by the Iranian conception of the "continents" (*keshvars*), whose significance is eschatological as well as geographical. However, the discovery of a Hebrew text of Deuteronomy 32,8–9 at Qumran where the earthly nations are numbered "according to the number of the sons of God" as in the LXX demonstrates that this development is not necessarily the sign of radically extra-biblical developments and certainly need not point to Gnostic origination.[3] Interestingly, the offspring of Israel and of Noah's three sons are both reckoned at "seventy" (Ex. 1,5; Gen. 10) so that on this more usual biblical reckoning there is a already a basis for the correspondence between the ordering of the other nations and that of Israel. R.H. Charles makes a strong case that the seventy "shepherd" angels in I *Enoch* 89,59 ff. who are given authority over Israel likewise represent the power of the nations, manifested by their heavenly-angelic counterparts.[4] In this apocalyptic interpretation of events, Israel becomes the key to the meaning of world-history, but because through its sinfulness it has failed and fallen short in its relation to God, that key can only be recovered through the involvement of the nations or the heavenly powers who are their representatives. Our *Apocalypse* develops its ideas within a fundamentally similar attitude: for even the Thirteenth Kingdom (Shem) is inadequate here in the sense that it does not represent the full resolution or "fulfilment" of Adam's revelation. That requires the fourteenth statement, or esoteric expansion in the light of the vision of the whole, discernible as it has left scattered in the partial wisdom preserved among the twelve kingdoms of the world, having been known in its wholeness only in Adam. In both versions of the myth, Israel is reclaiming from the nations the true wisdom or "first knowledge", that in its primal revelation had preceded them all, but which in its fullness is uniquely Israel's own.

The multiple appearances of the φωστήρ of knowledge thus enact a drama of dispersal and recentering, corresponding to the Exile and return of the bearers of the lost knowledge. He will finally be the Messiah. In its spatial aspect, the process will climax in the revelation on the "holy mountain". The disparity between the spatial and temporal patterns, however, or between cosmic and historical fulfilment, is

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[3] M. Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (London 1956) p. 319; more on these ideas below, pp.

[4] R.H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch* (Oxford 1912) p. 200.

not resolved in the ApocAd by too easy an assimilation of history and vision. Rather the role of the Thirteenth Kingdom, which constitutes an addition to the apparently complete cosmic cycle of the Twelve, is treated as an apocalyptic mystery, which we can only deduce when we know the "secret history" divulged by ApocAd: hence that is an essential aspect of the secret which the document wishes to reveal. Israel does not play its role by right of its mere existence, but through the deeper understanding attained in the Fourteenth prophecy, etc.

We may call this syncretism; yet the encounter of Jewish and pagan ideas here generates not a blurring but rather a very precise awareness of these contentious issues, and culminates in the clear advancing of Israel's special claim to add unique historical-eschatological meaning within the context of a "syncretistic" whole.

The inheritance of Shem is merely alluded to at the stage of Noah's division of the earth, in typically apocalyptic and riddling terms, as "the kingdom of another people" (73,29). Similarly allusive, apocalyptic language is also found in the reference to "another land" and to those who will enter into it with them; they will acquire the primal knowledge preserved from before the Flood (73,16–17). If we are to see how the text expects us to solve these riddles, we obviously need to identify the events to which allusion is subsequently made concerning the preservation of this knowledge not only from the Flood but through yet another catastrophic assault: the destruction by Fire (75,9 – 76,7).

It is natural to seek help here from other, parallel versions of the two-catastrophe schema (Flood and Fire) that sometimes shapes a similar broad pattern of events, in order to pin down the nature of the allusions. But this natural wish must be tempered by the fact, conceded in the analysis of G.A.G. Stroumsa, that this schema was apparently utilised in different and even quite contradictory ways by different authors, including the work of Josephus (*Antt.* I,70–71; cf. *Vita Adae et Evae* 49). Especially in later Jewish tradition, the second catastrophe might be viewed eschatologically, suggesting influential theories of the *ekpyrosis*, or it might be identified with historical events such as the Exile and the destruction of the Temple, or simply omitted altogether.[5] Stroumsa's conclusion is nevertheless that the passage 75,9 – 76,7 "obviously" rewrites the tale of Sodom and Gomorrha from a

[5] Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Leiden 1984) pp. 106–107 and n. 111. Cf. A.F.J. Klijn, *Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature* (Leiden 1977) pp. 121–124.

Gnostic stance. This, however, seems unlikely, unless we are determined to assume that the episode's function is simply to be a Gnostic violation of the biblical norms. There is actually very little evidence to support it. Certainly it derives none from CG III 60,9ff.: this does mention the cities, but rather than inverting the biblical estimate of "Sodom and Gomorrha" to endow them with a positive, "Gnostic" evaluation, that passage actually plays off the rival claims of one against the other, seeming to come down in favour of Sodom as the place where the "plant" of Seth is finally to be found, despite the prior claim of Gomorrha. This passage is better understood as concerning rivalries among groups known (e.g. from Synesius of Cyrene) to inhabit these localities, and at any rate has nothing whatsoever to do with their biblical associations.[6] Beyond that, the only evidence internal to the text itself is the mention of "sulphur and asphalt" at 75,10. And against the identification should be weighed the absence in the story of Sodom and Gomorrha of all those other vivid phenomena described in ApocAd: being caught up to heaven by angels, revelation of the aeons, "the great commandment of an eternal angel", clouds of light, darkening of the sun and moon, etc. (74,26 – 76,7).

In these cases we must not try too hard. Allusive phrases essentially have the function in apocalyptic of drawing our attention to the easily recognisable components in the vision, ones which we can readily identify, and so which vouch for the obscurer or mystical-eschatological elements which the writer really desires to indicate. The "another land" which features so prominently after the Flood could much more "obviously" be taken for Egypt (Gen. 15,13: for the reading ἐν γῇ ἀλλοτρίᾳ see the Göttingen LXX ad loc.), certainly one home of the wisdom and magical tradition which is a part of the scattered knowledge. Here too a remnant of the true Israel receives the secret doctrine in a special form which will show the key to its place in the totality of the revelation. The cataclysms by which the hostile powers attempt to prevent the true Israel escaping with this knowledge are also much more "obvi-

[6] H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston 1963) pp. 307–308 tentatively following the original suggestion of J. Doresse. For immediate purposes, a recognition of the right kind of interpretation here, rather than specific identification of the sites, is the main issue. The references to Sodom as part of a "pattern" in intertestamental literature mentioned by P. Perkins, art. cit. p. 387 and n. 20, are tenuous indeed. That the present section does not refer to the "last days", on the other hand, may legitimately be deduced from the later reflection of this teaching in CG III 63,4–8. The eschatological struggle is clearly a further stage (= *Apocalypse* V 83,4ff.).

ously" reminiscent of the volcanic phenomena of the Exodus and the revelation on Sinai, especially as we find them in the midrashic and haggadic treatments, notably in *Jubilees*. Ex.14,19–20 already describes the apparition of the "angel of God" that moved with the "cloud and darkness", which also "gave light by night". *Jubilees* 48,5 adds to the darkness that came over Egypt a non-biblical episode, speaking of the Lord taking vengeance on their idols by destroying them with fire. Such ideas might have developed from passages such as Num. 16,19 where the divine *kavod* appears in judgment. Deut. 5,24–25 had linked the divine glory with fire and the voice of God at the giving of the Law. *Jubilees* 1,2–3 heightens this into a volcanic manifestation, referring to "Glory … cloud … and the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like fire burning on the top of the mountain." And in its account of the Exodus, too, we find already the theme of the efforts of Prince Mastema and his angels to harm the chosen people (48,9–15), just as the "powers" attempt to do here. However, they are spared to receive instead the esoteric revelation of their future role, i.e. as contained in *Jubilees* itself. Similarly, that destiny is "foreseen" by ApocAd within the Adamic revelation, again in terms which do not really go beyond what we know from treatments in the intertestamental literature. The giving of the Law through an angel recalls the fact that in *Jubilees* the revelation is given by the Angel of the Presence, who is in fact explicitly identified with the angel in the cloud, which "went before the camp of Israel" (1,27–29; cf. Ex. 14,19).

The *Apocalypse*'s pattern of history would then closely conform to the emphases found in CD ii,14 – iii,12: the Watchers, the Flood, Noah and his sons; the Covenant; Israel's afflictions in Egypt, and in the desert. The glaring difference is that instead of the nationalistic focus on the Covenant, in the *Apocalypse* we have the angelic rescue-operations and the putting together of the fragments of the primal knowledge, whose mechanism will shortly be revealed when we reach the statement concerning the multiple appearances of the φωστήϱ. Some similar shift clearly stands behind the later Jewish-Christian belief in the True Prophet who "from the beginning, and always, was ever present with the Pious, though secretly, throughout all their generations; especially with those who waited for him, to whom he frequently appeared" (ps.-Clementine *Rec.* I,52). This substitution led some at least to a partial rejection of the prophets and the Old Testament (cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30,17–18). Strong links nevertheless remained, since the "appearances" were made at crucial points (Adam, Moses, etc.:

Hom. 3,21; *Rec.* 1,34) in salvation-history. J.A. Fitzmyer rightly points out that in the ps.-Clementines these links probably refer "not to Christ as such, but to the spirit which made him the True Prophet."[7] These are the equivalent moments, one may surmise, not of the incarnations of the reappearing prophet, but revelatory interventions from which an "apocalyptic" vision of his significance for the special destiny of Israel and so for the *eschaton* opens out. In ApocAd, the affliction of the true Israel among the nations leads to contacts with the fragmented "knowledge"—brought to the nations by the φωστήρ—whose full revelation will indeed turn out to be the coming of the Messiah. The sect which used it presumably thought of itself as the core of historical Israel, but the part which had now received that knowledge in full. The spirit with which it is associated is here described in syncretistically coloured terms as the primal "glory", mentioned as we have seen in connection with Adam and Eve, and to be transmitted (perhaps through esoteric baptism) among those who can receive thereby initiation into the original Adamic revelation.

The notion of contact with this spirit may help explain a further episode. For, still preliminary to the (re-)emergence of the full pattern in the *Apocalypse*'s revelation-history (which happens with the prophecy of the twelve incarnations), there is a third epoch. A worker of wonders and signs appears, and bears testimony to the "passing by" of the Illuminator. Neither his appearance nor the "passing by" can easily be interpreted as Messianic. And no more than in the parallel expression at Qumran "the time of God's visitation", of course, need there be any allusion to the Christian God-incarnate, but rather to events manifesting the imminence of the End-time. The climactic manifestation of the Illuminator will be alluded to by the Thirteenth Kingdom but still lies in the future for the writer of the document. The prophetic witness to the Illuminator must therefore belong to the very recent past, the history of the writer's own sect. Nor is there anything about the fate of the charismatic that goes beyond the type of the suffering Jewish *zaddik*, as analysed at length by G.W.E. Nickelsburg.[8] Our docu-

[7] J.A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London 1971) p. 465.

[8] See G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Harvard 1972) pp. 48ff. One may agree therefore with D.M. Parrott concerning the wonder-worker in our *Apocalypse* that "It is difficult to see any compelling reason to identify this figure with Christ": in J.M. Robinson (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (Leiden 1988) p. 278.

ment does not show any awareness of a "suffering Messiah" prior to the triumph, despite the early efforts to find one by G. MacRae.[9] The prophet-figure is a "man upon whom the Holy Spirit came" (77,17–18), and his status is described in terms identical to those of Adam (77,5–7; cf. 64,16–17), rather than the Illuminator—from whom he is in fact explicitly distinguished (77,14–15).[10] I take it therefore that he represents the founder or central figure of the group which is in a position to receive the revelation which our text claims to restore. The signs and manifestations "with great glory" are the charismata associated with the announcing of the imminence of the Messiah. He (and his followers) are in the line of figures like Adam, Noah, etc. by being in a position to see the meaning of current history fulfilled thereby (76,11–15), and so are "waiting for him". Despite some obvious syncretistic inheritance, the group is clearly identified with the true Israel (76,24–27 echoing 75,8–9). Pliny's informant on the Essenes attests the more mythical notion that they had existed for many many generations, and Philo regards them as having already existed at the time of Moses. Probably we should see here reference to such a legendary "history" of the sect, supposed to have always existed as the core of the faithful. The worldly powers now punish the man in his flesh (MacRae compares language from Qumran), but they are not able to see the "glory", nor will they recognise the Illuminator. It is unlikely that we should see here an allusion to the "spiritual invisibility" of the Gnostic, especially in view of the outward signs and wonders the man has been said to perform. Rather an esoteric teaching within Judaism, from the sectarian view obstinately rejected by the authorities despite the signs which authenticate its mission, forms a plausible milieu. The similarity to the situation of the Messianically orientated Qumran sectarians under the Righteous Teacher again suggests the type of grouping to which the *Apocalypse of Adam* may have been addressed, but does not permit any closer identification. It remains unclear, furthermore, whether the withdrawal of the "glory" to certain specially chosen locations represents a break with the charismatic figure and his teachings, or perhaps rather its transmission to those of his followers who are finally elected to receive the message of the coming of the Illuminator-as-Messiah.

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[9] G. MacRae, "The Coptic-Gnostic Apocalypse of Adam", HJ 6(1965), 27–35.

[10] W. Beltz, "Bemerkungen zur Adamapokalypse" in P. Nagel (ed.), *Studia Coptica* (Berlin 1974), 159–163 (p. 162). I see no reason to suppose the prophet is Jesus, however.

The significance of the mention of Seth at the top of 77 is quite obscure, because of the previous four-line lacuna in the text at the bottom of 76. The passage will accordingly not bear the weight of "Sethian" theories that we have here some kind of incarnation of Seth as a "redeemer-figure". Nor is there anything else, so far as I can see, in the document that need take us beyond the honour we know was accorded to Seth in Jewish and Samaritan traditions, and invest him with transcendent or specifically "Gnostic" significance.

Conclusion

These observations lead again to the conclusion that scholars have been rather too concerned with finding in ApocAd evidence for their favourite theories of a "Sethian" Gnosticism to consider carefully enough the primarily Jewish meaning of the document, of which there are nonetheless numerous strong indications. Syncretistic elements there certainly are too, especially in the materials concerning the manifold appearances of the φωστήρ of knowledge; but these are not Gnostic ideas. Where there are observable connections with e.g. Hermetic developments, the work rather seems to represent that kind of syncretising Judaism that we must assume (from CH I, CH IV, etc.) to have already entered into the Jewish-pagan Egyptian encounter, perhaps paving the way later for the Gnostic interpretations. But nowhere do we need to assume that definitively Gnostic developments had already taken place.[11]

[11] As explained in the Introduction, in order to show a possible the Jewish-apocalyptic meaning and structure, I have avoided starting with the related but definitely Gnostic ideas in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* as a basis. Note also that the *Gospel* is an obviously composite and secondary writing, so that the assumption of an organised Sethian mythology as a primary form of Gnosticism based on this and other Nag Hammadi texts has increasing been considered doubtful. Rather than returning in detail to the matter here, we may say: if they are not actually *required* for understanding the present text, then methodologically the onus is on those who wish to use materials from later Gnostic mythology to show its necessity for interpreting the *Apocalypse*. J.D. Turner for example asserts that the "imperishable illuminators", mentioned along with those "born of the word" in 85, 27–28, are the Gnostic heavenly entities mentioned in *Apocryphon Johannis* CG II 7,32 ff. (the "Four Lights"); but there is no real reason to introduce these concepts, and certainly none for declaring that the the "holy seed" from which they came is that of the "celestial Sethians": see his "Sethian Gnosticism: A Literary History" in C.W. Hedrick *et al.*, *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (Massachusetts 1986), pp. 55–86 (p. 71). In fact, this creates quite gratuitous confusion, since

Let us try to put together an alternative sketch of the genesis of ApocAd. A necessary presupposition for its formation I certainly take to be the collection of legends concerning the universal revelation by the φωστήρ: this has its basis in oriental and (I think) astrological conceptions. But the author of the document we currently possess responded to its implications in a fundamentally Jewish way, with an apocalyptic vision and a form of literary construction drawn, naturally enough, from his contemporary religious setting (a patriarchal "testament"). He saw the universal meaning of the revelation as something to be "fulfilled" through the special destiny (and above all through the eschatological role) of Israel, and the wholeness of the vision as something that must have existed already in a founding figure of the biblical tradition though it was later fragmented among the nations—so that in all the apparent influence upon, and indeed foreign domination of Israel, it was on a deeper level reclaiming its own and indeed unveiling its unique, apocalyptic significance.[12] This interaction between what one might call the spatial-holistic and the historical-visionary aspects in the imaginative world of the document is, for me, one of its most interesting and important features—pointing forward towards early Christianity's own difficult and dynamic resolution of these different dimensions at least as much as it prefigures Gnosticism. Very much as at Qumran, the hope of "universal" fulfilment had come to be focussed not unnaturally upon a priestly-Messianic figure such as furnished the basis for much of the esoteric interpretation of Judaism (e.g. in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*), though it is joined to the expectation of the royal Messiah in its Enochic form, and the work evidently looks to find both roles in a single figure whose coming lies in the imminent future for the writer.

There is much here that is familiar to students of apocalyptic. In his handling of the literary form of the "testament" the writer adapts those that had been developed in the second-to-first centuries B.C.

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actually Seth is placed in one of the Heavenly Lights, and his seed (followers, offspring) in another: CG II 12,11–16!

[12] The broad reaction of Jewish intellectuals to Hellenism, as for instance in the theory of Aristobulos (fr. 3) that the Greek philosophers were dependent upon but inferior to Moses, whose philosophy could therefore be restated in terms of advanced Hellenistic thought, is essentially similar. The special Essene theory of the double manifestation of divine secrets evidently utilised here shows still more clearly, in relation to religious knowledge, the fundamentally spiritual intuition upon which this attitude was based.

The date of ApocAd presumably lies within those same parameters. I have proposed furthermore that the formulation of salvation-history utilised is not so unfamiliar, nor so Gnostically perverse, as has usually been supposed. In this document's case, however, it may be admitted that the underlying tensions were especially potent, and the religious and spiritual strains which the writer reveals do sometimes threaten to push the whole work beyond even the "apocalyptic" atmosphere into something more radical and acute. Already elsewhere, however, these forces are discernible in some of the parallel Jewish literature: the *Testament of Amram* on some level clearly manifests an attempt, by going back to Amram, to assert the primacy of the special Essene experience over the "mainstream" Judaism represented by his sons Aaron and Moses; the exaltation of Levi in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* is accompanied by a studied silence concerning Aaron and the traditional priesthood. Such "esoteric" Judaism including that of the Qumran Essenes found itself increasingly at odds with the Jerusalem authorities, and a similar situation is most likely projected in the *Apocalypse* with the persecution of the charismatic holy man. The ambiguity of the traditional Jewish God and his worship in some of the work stemming from these circles, or the need to assign some of his deeds to his lesser agents or even to Mastema, is therefore not altogether surprising.

The reference to the ruler of the powers simply as "God", with the absence of the Gnostic terminology of demiurge, archons, etc. is usually taken, and rightly, to support an early dating. B. Layton too admits that the document uses the same term for the highest God and for the (supposed) demiurge, while maintaining his "Gnostic" interpretation nonetheless. G.A.G. Stroumsa has brought forward, in support of this, the late use of "God" for a being less than the "Good" or highest God, namely the "Just" God in Marcion; but no such distinction is made here, and it is probably a mistake to polarise the titles artificially when the text actually shows many more signs of utilising the biblical names and titles of God.

Thus the document seems to embody the theory that it was as "God of the powers" (64,20–22) that God moulded Adam and Eve; as God the Almighty (69,3–4) that he sent the Flood; and as Sakla, "their God" (74,3) he shows himself only at the Exodus and its aftermath in fire and smoke. The argument is thus more modulated than Gnostic dualism. Some of these are aspects of God which had long been central to Judaism; but ApocAd evidently sees them as important only as adjuncts to the esoterically revealed universal role of Judaism as expressed in the

Adamic revelation. The titles express views of God which are related to that revelation as moments when "historical" Judaism touched upon the sphere of activity of the Illuminator. Each is no doubt valid as a step toward understanding the "Eternal God". But our author has adopted a "universalising", and to that extent syncretistic perspective to the degree that it predominates overall, even though Israel retains a unique historical position. Those who do *not* adopt the new esoteric interpretation of Judaism are presented as serving in "fear and slavery" the God of the traditional covenants (65,20–21; 72,21–22)—in short, as stuck in the past.

Such theories about the changing revelation of God through his biblically revealed names, and the use of "the Eternal God" to indicate his highest aspect, are already much in evidence, e.g. in *Jubilees*.[13] Moreover, the conflict of the charismatic with the worldly powers turns upon the very Jewish issue that they "use the name in error" (77,21–22): perhaps a reflection of arguments over claims to be reveal God's will by sectarians that challenged the traditional covenants. The deformation of the central name of the Exodus covenant into Sakla, however, originally a word-play contrasting the claim to spiritual "discernment" with what is now instead declared to be, without the esoteric interpretation, rather the God of human "folly", clearly brings the author to the very margin of Judaism.

The apocalyptic technique of tracing back elements of a new or impending synthesis to a crucial figure in the Old Testament, thus theoretically grounding it in the *Heilsgeschichte*, is also pushed to its limits if not beyond by the visionary's identification with the earliest possible figure, Adam. The reinterpretation of tradition, in effect, has to be one *ab initio*: the biblical history is true, but only in so far as every facet of it is given the new esoteric orientation! Whereas the Qumran Essenes managed to absorb the Mystery- and esoteric influences (e.g. from Iran) that are just as apparent in their writings into a centrally Judaic structure, this universal Adamic message certainly tends further to relativise Judaism. Adam-literature is glaringly absent from the Qumran discoveries; the *Damascus Covenant* and the *Hodayot*, on the other hand, might be seen as developing the "Testament" and the personal revelation form in exactly the opposite direction, towards a genuinely historical specificity for its community, based a personal religious experience in

[13] See e.g. 8,20 (following the reading of O.S. Wintermute).

the recent past, and notably lacking the apocalyptic-visionary identification with a patriarch. Groups like the Mandaeans, some of whose evidence is only a little later, show that ideas about the First Man could generate ideas that broke with historical expectation altogether and clearly helped float them out into Gnosticism. MacRae's formula about the transitional nature of our document may in that sense be helpful (quoted above, p. 29). But it is not really very helpful to say that we are seeing something turning into something else unless we can also specify the forces of change—specify both those involved in struggling to maintain a form and those bringing about the alteration. I have attempted to suggest these for ApocAd, with its effort to incorporate a universal wisdom within an allegiance to the hopes and (esoteric) God of Judaism.

ApocAd is not a Gnostic revelation. Nevertheless the tensions at work in the environment we have reconstructed may indeed have been ones, as I also believe, which generated Gnosticism in the early centuries of our epoch: a crisis of religious relativism that subsequently led in some circles to a vituperative split with Judaism's special claims. I have tried to show elsewhere, however, that we must conceive of that Gnostic trajectory rather in a cultural domain where, although Judaism exerted a strong claim, we find the presence of ultimately still more powerful extra-Jewish ideas. ApocAd shows that *within* Judaism the result is not exactly a Gnostic vision. In ApocAd the tentative equilibrium between the claims of universal wisdom and the possibility that it can be found in a uniquely valuable historical form in Judaism, which enables it to play a vital role in the impending future time is, though narrowly, maintained. The work provides no evidence for that obstinately invisible rebellion-from-within against the tyranny of the Jewish God invoked by some, but which continues to lack a convincing setting or motivation in any sources that we know.[14] And we should note that in Christianity very similar forces and tensions produced, not disintegration, but a dramatic further extension of the universalising model of salvation-history, overlapping with Gnostic developments only in part. ApocAd shows its still greater relevance for an understanding of early developments in Christianity also there.[15]

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[14] Cf. G. Quispel, "Gnosis", in M. Vermaseren (ed.), *Die orientalischen Religionen im Römerreich* (Leiden 1981), pp. 413–435.

[15] Some interesting recent views on the debate on ApocAd in relation to early Christianity e.g. in K. Berger, "Gnosis/Gnostizismus, I. Vor- und ausserchristlich",

Appendix

If Gen.15,13 is indeed alluded to at 73,16–17 it is worth noting that its context contains several other elements relevant to the development we find in the *Apocalypse*. Virtually all the biblical commentators have noted both the "deep sleep" (15,12) that falls on Abram, just like that which comes upon Adam (Gen.2,21), and the foreshadowing of the Exodus in the smoking fire and blazing torch which pass between the victims (15,17). Unfortunately, this part of the text of Genesis is not (as yet) attested at Qumran, so that we do not know what developments, if any, had entered into the interpretation; but it remains highly probable that elaboration of this symbolism could help explain the emphases found on fiery theophanies at the Exodus in *Jubilees*. Both features therefore, the Adamic sleep and the interpretation of Egypt and the Exodus, could likewise form a prototype for parts of CG V/5, being woven in much in the same way that Noachic and apocalyptic materials have there become attached to Adam traditions. The probability is that in this section as with the other "parousias" we have an originally Jewish development put to wider use in the ApocAd.

TRE 13(1984), 519–535 (526); on the possibility of it containing paradigms affecting the New Testament in C. Evans, "Jesus in Gnostic Literature", *Biblica* 62(1981), 406–412; see also the recent remarks in A. Böhlig and C. Markschies, *Gnosis und Manichäismus* (Berlin 1994) p. 180.

CHAPTER THREE

"SYNCRETISTIC" MATERIALS

The Zarathustra-legend and the Date of ApocAd

The cycle of stories in ApocAd 77,26 – 82,10 is very different in literary character from the rest of the text. It is organised into sections with a recurring "refrain", and there is further patterning such as the repeated mention of certain key terms like "Glory", and repeated concern with the birth and nurturing of the child. So distinctive are these features that it has plausibly been judged to have existed independently and prior to the rest of the document.[1]

That does not mean that it is a mere addendum to the rest of the text of ApocAd. On the contrary, it is quite likely the key to the purpose of the document. With its allusions to the myths and Mysteries of the wider ancient world, it evidently furnished the writer of our *Apocalypse* with precisely the universalist perspective he desired. If my previous assessment is correct, it challenged his Judaism on the principle of the "double revelation" to become a message of world-significance; and by assimilating its central figure, the Illuminator, to the Messiah (13th Kingdom), it allowed the development of a specifically Jewish perspective on universal history and eschatology. All this was expressed in terms which reinforced the great themes of his apocalyptic revelation: "prophecy incarnate", light and darkness, struggle against the cosmic powers worshipped by paganism, etc. The Illuminator (Zarathustra) was the key to what it all meant, a towering figure in the late antique mind—and yet the Messiah would be something greater. It was not entirely original of course, for Iranian influences had already markedly affected Jewish apocalypticism. Thus the notion of a pre-Judaic cycle of cosmic-pagan religion that had a unifying factor in Zarathustra's cos-

[1] Cf. C. Hedrick, *The Apocalypse of Adam. A Literary and Source Analysis* (Chico California 1980), who has offered a more extensive breakdown of the text in which material from an originally separate source is inserted starting at V 65,24—but the argument for differing perspectives characterising the different sources is not very strong.

mic vision, yet culminated in a Jewish-apocalyptic revelation, was not without some religious grounding.

On the interpretation suggested above, the material of Illuminator-cycle is the challenge to which the writer of ApocAd rose. The whole sweep of Adam's prophetic vision is needed to explain "historically" and biblically the universal revelation, which the Illuminator-passage brought originally in mythical form. The Mysteries known to the cosmic powers are contained and transcended in "Adam"'s still wider view. We therefore need to examine further the content and inner structure of this remarkable block of tradition. It seems likely that the author of ApocAd encountered it as a pre-existing cycle of birth-legends—though even so, on the literary plane we are obviously not in a position to know whether he himself shortened and summarised his material, or whether he found it in such dense and allusive form already.[2]

The mythological foundations of the cycle lie, as A. Böhlig showed, in the idea of the Saošyant, born from the seed hidden in the waters.[3] The refrain alludes to this idea. The inspiration for the motif lies in Indo-Iranian symbolism. But as the mythology developed, the prophet of the coming Saošyant himself was himself drawn into the complex of ideas he had inspired.[4] Longing for the advent of a great Restorer was intensified in the period after Alexander's conquests. As they became progressively more elaborated, the legends drew together stories and gave an altogether new religious depth to the tales of ancient heroes who had "borne the Glory"; it also furnished the symbolism for the most elaborate birth-legend of all—the Zarathustra-legend, which in the mediaeval Zoroastrian Pahlavi books is a dazzling demonstration of the prophet's significance on the human, divine, cosmic, and eschatological levels.[5]

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[2] As we shall see, aspects of the stories which are not actually preserved in the summary statements of the Kingdoms, are nevertheless important for understanding the way they influenced Jewish sources; below, pp. 65–67.

[3] Böhlig, "Jüdisches und iranisches", in *Mysterion und Wahrheit* (Leiden 1968) pp. 149–161; Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology", pp. 4756–4758.

[4] R. Reitzenstein – H.H. Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland* (Leipzig and Berlin 1926) p. 230 and n. 1. The *xvarenah* comes to be conceived as almost the soul of the prophet himself. Cf. *Selections of Zātsparam* XIII for the pre-existent prophet.

[5] M. Molé, *La légende de Zoroastre selon les sources péhlevis* (Paris 1967). The main sources are *Dēnkart* VII and the *Selections of Zātsparam* XIII–XVII. See the detailed analysis in Appendix (below, pp. 181–207).

In ApocAd, in token of the fact that the mythology of a coming World-Saviour or -Saviours had begun to organise itself already around the figure of the prophet, we note once more the indication of the First Kingdom, which announces the core-legend of Zarathustra himself:

Now the First Kingdom says of him,	As it says in the Religion:
that he came from … a Spirit … heaven.	When Ohrmazd created the substance of Zardušt then first was his Glory. Then the substance of Zardušt in the presence of Ohrmaz sped down to the (highest heaven) of Boundless Light, then … to the Sun … to the Moon … to the Stars … then to the fire. …
He was nurtured in the heavens.	
He received the Glory of that one and the power.	Thus the Glory came to the house of Purušasp. Thus … Ohrmazd miraculously caused the *fravahr* of Zardušt to pass into the parents of Zardušt.
He came to the bosom of his mother.	
(77,26 – 78,5)	(*Dēnkart* VII,2,3; 13–14 trans. M. Boyce)

The legend tells of the heavenly "nurture" and earthly genesis ("in the bosom of his mother") of the Illuminator-Zarathustra; his bearing of the Glory that will also appear finally in the Saošyant(s); and in the context of the document, the other declarations of the twelve kingdoms which follow are clearly so placed as to indicate him as the essential source of all the pagan teachings after the Flood—characterised as the worship of the cosmic powers much as in the Jewish-Christian teaching preserved in the pseudo-Clementines (Jewish parallels with basically similar cultural "slant", from the *Sibyllines* Book III and "pseudo-Eupolemus" will be discussed below).[6]

Thus the assembling of the birth-legends into a cycle could indeed have had a definite meaning prior to the composition of ApocAd: the coming of the Saošyant would make sense of the whole course of spiritual history, reaching all the way back to the first, the archetypal prophet himself, Zarathustra. In him and his teaching, that whole significance had been implicit. The Jewish author of ApocAd also apparently understood this very well. He says it in his own way by extending the scope of his apocalyptic vision not just back to a patriarch, to Enoch

[6] See below, pp. 78–82.

or Elijah, but to Adam himself. Not just the history of the Jews, but of all mankind, is to be explicated by the narrative he will unfold. Thus there are signs that Zarathustra could already have been understood as founder of a universal prophetological cycle, and that this idea was consciously taken up by the author of ApocAd. It is striking above all that the stories assembled in the cycle are unified by the very motifs and symbolism which are later focussed around Zarathustra in the birth-legends from the *Dēnkart* etc.

The nature of the Second Kingdom's legend has already been indicated briefly in the Introduction. Moreover, since a full analysis awaits us in Chapter 4, commentary here will be limited to a highly specific, important feature which was incorporated into the Zarathustra legend. The evidence here also has a particular bearing on the possible date of ApocAd.

The legend is the birth-story of Zāl, preserved in romanticised form in Firdausi and clearly recognisable in its outlines in ApocAd. According to Firdausi,[7] the hero Sām (Kerešāsp) has a child, who shocks him because when his father sees him just after birth he has white hair. Suspecting some supernatural trick in his origins, the hero violently rejects him and casts him out from the land. The miraculous bird, the Sīmurgh, takes him up and nurtures him in the inaccessible Elburz mountains, knowing that one day the child will receive the Glory (*farr, xvarenah*) and be king. Eventually, repenting, his father comes looking for his son, and the Simurgh returns him so that he can fulfil his destiny; but he is watched over by the magic bird ever afterward. In ApocAd:

> And the Second Kingdom says
> about him that he came
> from a great prophet.
> And a bird came, took
> the child who was born and brought him
> onto a high mountain.
> And he was nurtured by
> the bird of heaven. An angel
> came forth there. He said to him,
> 'Arise! God has given the Glory
> to you.' (78,6 – 16)

I have commented elsewhere that the angel (divinity) who "came forth" (i.e. manifested himself in a vision) most likely preserves an older and

[7] See details in Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology", pp. 4766–4767.

more original form of the tale, whose pagan elements have been toned down by Firdausi. He attributes the divine manifestation and speech to the Sīmurgh.[8]

We have mentioned already that a version of this story was known to the Jewish writers who produced the section of I *Enoch* that is now chapter 106, on the birth of Noah; the same story appears in the Qumran *Genesis Apocryphon* (1QApGen ii). The real importance of the story will to be seen in a comparison of the whole pattern with Matthew's nativity. But the immediate aspects that are of relevance here are ones that do *not* feature in ApocAd. The Jewish-intertestamental retellings focus, much as does Firdausi, on the agonised soul of the doubting father more than on the magic bird or the heavenly proclamation of destiny (a duty there undertaken by Enoch, who is able to fulfil it because he has become a sort of magical being who "shares the lot of the angels" and watches over the child from the "Mountain of Paradise" at the world's edge). But the feature which concerns us just now is that as well as being born with white hair, the child also has a special supernatural radiance:

"And his hair was white like wool … and when he opened his eyes all the house glowed like the sun, or even more exceedingly." (106,2).

Lamech "was afraid of him and fled and … said: I have begotten a strange son; blackened soul writhes with he is not like a human being, but like the children of the angels."

(I *Enoch* 106,4–5)

"When the child was severed from his mother his face was beautiful as the sun but his hair was entirely white."

"On seeing his son thus, with his white hair, Sām in great fear … strayed" and said: "My shame because of this child which … resembles a child of Ahriman."

Firdausi, *Shahnameh* (trans. Levy p. 35)

As often, Firdausi appears somewhat to have played down the supernatural for his secular epic. But the magic radiance is an undoubted part of the Iranian myth, and a part which was synthesised into the Zarathustra-legend: his future mother is already surrounded by the radiance of the child's Glory, lighting up the house (*Dēnkart* VII,2,4; 8).[9]

From our point of view, several important observations should be made on this material. Firstly, the pseudepigraphic versions of the

[8] Welburn, op. cit., p. 4767.
[9] Molé, *La légende de Zoroastre*, pp. 15ff.

Zāl-story are strongly affected by aspects of the myth which are not included in the condensed summary in ApocAd—a) the agonised soul of the father; b) the light-symbolism of the Glory which attends his birth. Since they were circulating in his time, it is therefore likely that the author of ApocAd would have known fuller versions of the stories, and may even be responsible for the condensed formulations he has chosen to include. And if he knew the fuller symbolism, he would presumably have understood the implications of the stories fairly extensively—in other words, he will have been affected by the general religious background of ideas rather than just taking over isolated, fragmentary motifs.

Secondly, ApocAd's familiarity with these stories and their organisation into a Zarathustra-cycle suggests that the legends of the prophet's birth, familiar from the Pahlavi books, were still forming when it was written. The extraordinary complexity of the Zarathustra-legend indeed makes sense if we see it as the product of a later distillation from a manifold mythology about the heroes who bore the Glory, put to a new religious-Zoroastrian purpose in connection with the expectation of the Saošyant(s), and later used to assert the absolute supremacy of Zarathustra and his revelation. The connected "block" of traditions preserved in ApocAd 77,26 – 82,10 enables us to witness something of the formative stages of the myth. In further comments below, I shall mention a number of other motifs which became part of the Zarathustra- legend that occur already in ApocAd's cycle.

Thirdly, and perhaps most excitingly, the identification of legendary material common to ApocAd V 78,6–16 and I *Enoch* 106 = 1QApGen ii provides for the first time strong evidence that ApocAd is pre-Christian. The pseudepigraphal versions date from the second-first century B.C. More strictly, we can prove for the first time that some of the ideas in ApocAd are to be found in pre-Christian times, rather than merely holding open the possibility that they were. They enable us to show, at the very least, that the stories we find in ApocAd *were* partly known in Jewish circles and affected Jewish literature in the century or two prior to Christian origins. Although the use made of the Zāl-story seems initially very different, in fact we shall see that there are many further analogies (Chapter 4). Zāl was evidently understood as a figure from the time immediately after the Flood, homologous with Noah. The origins of ApocAd's tradition in this Noachic literary milieu confirm many of our previous observations. Fragments of that literature later ended up piecemeal in the Enoch-tradition used by Essenes and Jewish groups

like them, while in some of these circles its ideas were apparently expanded into a "patriarchal" and Adam-literature which in some ways reinterpreted the whole sweep of biblical history from an esoteric-universalistic standpoint.[10]

Beyond that minimum, it remains to be demonstrated that the rest of the content was evolving in pre-Christian/non-Gnostic thought. Although it has not yet been possible to show that all the stories were known in pre-Christian Judaism, the context of the syncretistic material in the *Apocalypse* shows that the separate stories came together with the ideas that were already synthesizing into the Saošyant- and Zarathustra-legends. I attempt later to show that other elements belonging to the pattern (symbolic-eschatological geography like that which assigns a Saošyant to each "continent", etc.) had likewise already arrived there (*Jubilees*, etc.).

The third and fourth stories (78,18 – 79,19) both bring explicit mention of a virgin birth. An examination of their significance on that point is postponed, however: what we need to show here is the context in which that idea was transmitted. If it was the emerging Zarathustra-legend—and if subsequently we can derive major elements in the Matthaean infancy-narratives from the legends in ApocAd—we shall have gone far toward establishing the meaning of the virgin birth in the mythological background of the tradition. The Third Kingdom's narrative is more immediately interesting for the themes of violent rejection, of being cast out of the city, and the mention of the mother specifically as sharing in the persecution. In *Dēnkart* VII,2,6–9 the mother of Zarathustra, already shining with his *xvarenah*, is the victim of slander and lies inspired by the *devs*, so that she is persecuted as a "witch"; eventually the community turn against her completely, and her father has to send her away.[11] The original figure in the story will once have been Farīdūn (below, pp. 201–204); but once more they are the ones that will be extensively borrowed for that composite, even contrapuntal treatment of the mythical narratives that we find in the later Zarathustra-legend. In the Younger Avestan literature Zarathustra is already repeatedly associated with precisely these heroes Farīdūn and Kereśāsp, especially as bearers of the Glory (*Yašt* 9,36–44; 53; *Yasna* 9,7; 9–15; etc.).

[10] Links between CG V/5 and this literature were indicated by G.W.E. Nickelsburg, "Some Related Traditions in the Apocalypse of Adam, the Books of Adam and Eve and I Enoch", in B. Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* vol. 2 (Leiden 1981).

[11] Below, Appendix pp. 119–121.

Thus CG V 76,26 – 78,26 almost certainly formed a unity prior to the filling-out of the rest of the cycle—a unity, that is to say, already in terms of the core Zoroastrian development of the legend of the prophet.

The Fourth Kingdom tells a story about Solomon and a "virgin", with the motif of a virgin birth as part of its reworking of the episode from I Kgs. 10,1–13. Any evaluation depends upon identifying the influences which have produced the unfamiliar version in ApocAd. Features alien to the biblical story, as well as the virgin birth, include: the idea of a special destiny deriving from "the seed from which he had been begotten" (79,16–17)—not Solomon's seed (since the virgin evades him) but the mystic force behind his birth associated with the Glory and kingship. The Glory in the Saošyant legends is the mystic "seed" in the hidden depths (*Yašt* 19,51–52; 92–93) later conceived as virtually identical with the soul of Zarathustra. Dualistic themes will also indicate that the story as we have it in ApocAd has been subjected to influences in a Zoroastrian environment (below, pp. 143–147). If its version is close to stories underlying the Magi-episode in Mt. 2,1–12 then we will once again have established the background of its virgin-birth idea.

The remaining stories pertaining to the Kingdoms that do not concern us directly may be more summarily treated:

> Fifth Kingdom (79,19–27): Legend of Vahagn, the Armenian form of Verethraghna, the Iranian genius of Victory. He is a sun-figure (sun as a "drop" of fire from heaven, or born from heaven, earth (abyss) and sea). The themes of the fire hidden in the waters in his mythology are part of the mythic complex which features in the stories of the Saošyants and the complex versions of the Zarathustra-legend. G. MacRae and G.R. Cardona have indicated links between CG V/5 and Armenia.[12] In Moses of Khorene, Vahagn is born from a reed in the sea (cf. Farīdūn, Zarathustra-legend) and according to M. Ananikian is an heroic variant of "the fire-god surging out of heaven in the form of lightning"; he notes that in this mythology we are on "old Aryan ground", and that "we must regard it as a very interesting echo of the same hoary myth that Zarathustra's soul was sent down in the stalk of a haoma plant". Our version seems to give primacy to solar aspects however.[13]

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[12] G. MacRae in J.H. Charlesworth, (ed.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* I (London 1983) p. 708; G.R. Cardona, "Sur le gnosticisme en Arménie," in U. Bianchi (ed.), *Le origini dello gnosticismo—Colloquio di Messina (SHR 12)* (Leiden 1967) pp. 645–648; and further, Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology", *ANRW* vol. 25.6 (Berlin and New York 1988) pp. 4769–4771.

[13] M. Ananikian, *Armenian Mythology* (London 1925) pp. 44, 45.

> Sixth Kingdom (79,28 – 80.9): The Indian legend of Skanda, the unnatural son springing from the fiery seed of Śiva when it falls into the waters, forming an enormous lake full of lotus-flowers from which Pārvati, and in some versions his surrogate mothers (the Kṛttikas, or nymphs of the Pleiades) conceived.[14] Cognate themes from India thus form the connection with the stories of the Saošyants.

The identification with Vahagn, and with a hero from the Śiva cycle, suggests an important contributory factor in the spread and synthesis of the stories, namely an assimilation to the extremely far-reaching Herakles-cult in the East. "In Armenia he was identified with Vahagn, the national hero, … the Iranian Verethraghna" says R.N. Frye. "In Bactria he seems to have been identified with Shiva, at least by certain worshippers there."[15] It was probably in this more syncretistic context that the final patterning of the twelvefold cycle therefore took place, with some reference to astrology and the interpretation of the twelve labours. It is important to remember that as well as a hero, Herakles from his Greek origins could also be seen as an archetypal initiate.[16] In his eastern developments he often partakes of a somewhat esoteric character.

Such ideas clearly underlie one side of the early Gnostic system of Justin in the *Book of Baruch*, with its "prophet Herakles" who is sent to the Gentiles as a representative of the angelic being who gives the book its name. The "Blessed One" (*Baruch*) was rightly recognised as Zarathustra by R. Reitzenstein, and in modern times scholars such as Marcovich have repeatedly noted underlying Iranian conceptions such as the supracosmic Light of Justin's power "the Good", albeit sometimes taking on a somewhat surprising guise as "Priapus" i.e. the phallic Śiva.[17] In the Zoroastrian *Vahman Yašt* (1st century B.C.?) the expecta-

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[14] W.D. O'Flaherty, *Śiva. The Erotic Ascetic* (London and New York 1981) pp. 90ff.; Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology" pp. 4771–4773.

[15] R.N. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (London 1976) pp. 170–171; M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians. Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London 1979), pp. 82,89. For assimilation or connection with Zarathustra: in Ammianus Marcellinus XXIII,6,32–36 a "Bactrian" Zoroaster is credited with having taught the mysteries of the Brahmans; other Indian allusions in the Zoroastrian apocrypha, Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology", p. 4772 and n. 53.

[16] See W. Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (London 1987) pp. 55, 76.

[17] It is Baruch who finally, "in the days of Herod the king," inspires "Jesus, the son of man" (Hippolytus, *Ref.* V,26,27–30). See further Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology", pp. 4787–4788; for the fundamental identification of Baruch with Zarathustra, R. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen* (Leipzig–Berlin 1920) p. 80. Justin's implicit identification of "the Good" Ohrmazd with Priapus (V,26,32), which shocked M. Mar-

tion of the star-prince Vahram (Verethraghna, Herakles) stands alongside that of the Saošyant (III,14ff.), or rather seems to challenge him for supremacy, and it is not surprising to find the two figures subsequently assimilated. Also there is the tale of his subjection to the power of the woman (i.e. Justin's Edem-Omphale), interpreted astrologically: "When the star Jupiter comes to its culminating point and casts Venus down, the sovereignty comes to the prince."[18] Various similar Eastern heroic figures, including an Indian Hercules, are mentioned by Cicero, *de natura deorum*. The latter is strangely considered to be the same as the Babylonian god Bel (Marduk):

> Seventh Kingdom (80,9–20): the Babylonian myth of Marduk, born from the "sweet water" of the *apsu*, or primal abyss, who in his fight with the dragons Ti'āmat and her brood at first threatened his reign and perhaps imprisoned him temporarily in the underworld-mountain; from thence he is delivered by Nabu, who then accompanies him to his heavenly triumph. The role was enacted by the king at the annual festival of creation, so that this is essentially royal mythology.[19] Subsequent legends

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covich, is doubtless to be explained as the phallic Śiva: cf. Marcovich, pp. 115–119; astrological background in the twelve signs and their circling "rule" or satrapy over the world: Hippolytus V,26,11.

[18] See G. Widengren, *Iranisch-semitische Kulturbegegnung in parthischer Zeit* (Köln–Opladen 1960) p. 67; emphasis on the planetary and astral system in the *Vahman Yašt* in J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *Religion of Ancient Iran* (Bombay 1973) pp. 230–232, along with similar material as characteristic of the "Western Magi".

[19] A good critical account of this reconstruction is to be found in H.A. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (Sheffield 1986), pp. 87–96. Since the re-examination by W. von Soden, "Gibt es ein Zeugnis dafür, daß die Babylonier an der Wiederauferstehung Marduks geglaubt haben?" in ZA (NF) 17(1955), 130–166 the notion of a "dying-and-rising" Marduk has rightly been questioned. That issue does not affect us significantly here. It is clear that a) the king essentially played the part of Marduk at New Year and celebrated that king-god's victory over Ti'āmat, bringing about the renewal of Babylon for another cycle, and hoped "that the outcome of the ritual would be for him a destiny of joyful life, conquest of enemies and an eternal destiny" (Eaton, p. 93); b) in the course of the rites the king is humiliated, stripped of his royal insignia, dragged by the ears and made to bow before the god by the chief priest, who even strikes him, making the tears to flow—this is a good omen, and the god promises a favourable future (Eaton, p. 92, and cf. the continuing mood of hopeful earnestness, p. 94); the rite involves a prominent feature in the arrival of Nabu's image from Borsippa which relates to the liberation or purification of the city, with the sacrifice of a ram "which is beheaded and made in some way to draw upon itself the impurities" (Eaton, p. 92). The whole resulting benediction to the city is expressed mythologically in the acclamation of Marduk by the gods when he ascends again to heaven after slaying the dragon, and on the earthly level "the rejoicing of the whole community also fits into this picture", corresponding to the second gathering of the gods in Babylon to fix the destines in "the prospect of ordered life in the kingdom of Marduk" (Eaton, p. 94).

show that, as was indeed inevitable, Babylonian-Iranian syncretism was widespread under the Persian domination, including aspects relevant to our theme: Bidez-Cumont already inferred that the identification Zarathustra-Nimrod was pre-Christian, and is ultimately based on such legends, identifying the prophet as king in Babylon and at the same time associating him with the Persian fire-worship as in the *Book of the Cave of Treasures*.[20]

Eighth Kingdom (80,20–29): the birth of Mithra from the rock, as recognised by A. Böhlig. He cites also a folk-tradition where Mithra in the mountains is nurtured by heavenly manna.[21] The nourishing substance dropping from the cloud recalls the legend of the clouds raining down Zarathustra's substance in *Dēnkart* VII,2,37ff., which is apparently identical with *haoma*, perhaps forming a link to the grapes conventionally shown in the birth-scenes of Mithra on Western monuments. Duchesne-Guillemin notes the much greater prominence of Mithra in the Magusaean apocalyptic materials uncontrolled by the orthodox Zoroastrian tradition, and even in the *Vahman Yašt* VII,34 where he still takes over at least some of the functions that orthodoxy concentrated in the Saošyant.[22] In that role he may be the basis of the "great king" (*rex magnus de caelo*) of the fundamentally Zoroastrian *Oracle of Hystaspes*, though overlaid with Hellenistic elements. It is quite appropriate therefore that Mithra should here be regarded as part of the cycle, though he is not its climax. (Böhlig generally exaggerates the Mithraic affinities of the materials in AAd.)

Ninth Kingdom: the Greek or Proconnesian Zoroaster (Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* XXX,8) associated with Orphic-Pythagorean tradition, cf. the Aristeas of Proconnesus in Herodotus IV,13; 16.[23] Pythagoras is said to have sat at the feet of Zaratas (= Zaradušt, Zarathustra) in Babylon according to Porphyry, *vita Pythagorae* 12 and a number of other well-known sources. Pythagorean interest in Zarathustra was extensive and evidently was not a one-way phenomenon. The claim to a Greek Zoroaster must additionally indicate contact by the Magians with and a resulting interest in Greek thought. The context of the references (such as Scholiast on Plato's *Alcibiades* 122a) indicates that the prophet in this guise was regarded as teaching philosophic lore.

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[20] Bidez-Cumont, *t.* II pp. 121–125; cf. *t.* I pp. 42–44. Iranian-Babylonian (Semitic) syncretism is the subject of Widengren's study which has repeatedly been cited; and cf. R.N. Frye, *Heritage of Persia* pp. 64ff.

[21] Böhlig, "Jüdisches und iranisches", pp. 155–156.

[22] Duchesne-Guillemin, *Religion* pp. 232–233.

[23] There is really nothing to support the idea of J.D.P. Bolton however that the Proconnesian Zoroaster is supposed to be a *reincarnation* of this Aristeas. He does doubtless belong though to the Pythagorean or neo-Pythagorean tradition which Bolton explores: see his *Aristeas* (Oxford 1962) pp. 142ff. ("Aristeas Pythagoricus"); and for Zoroaster: p. 160.

Tenth Kingdom (81,14–23): a Pharaonic incarnation. "The underlying myth," explains G. MacRae, "is a common description of the creation of other beings by the god Atum."[24] As one divinely born, the Pharaoh "sits on the throne of Atum", i.e. is his son and rules by his primordial power. Almost certainly the figure alluded to is the "last of the Pharaohs", Nectanebo who is famed as a magus in late Egyptian literature and associated e.g. with the Alexander legend. Since the time of Darius, the mythical language of the Pharaohs had been adopted in Egypt by the Achaemenid overlords. That we need not therefore be outside the Magian orbit for the formation of the legend is indicated by M. Boyce when she cites examples such as Darius' statue erected in the temple of Atum at Heliopolis: his inscription orders that "his person should be remembered beside his father Atum … for the length of eternity".[25]

Eleventh Kingdom (CG V 81,24 – 82,4): "In 11 haben wir die Erzeugung des Mithra durch Ahura Mazdah mit Spenta Armaiti (> Spandarmat), seiner Tochter, vor uns," wrote A. Böhlig.[26] But in the *Dēnkart* IX,36,5–6 it is not Mithra who is begotten of their primal incest but Vohumanah, the "good mind" who is present in properly worshipful human beings, and cf. *Dātastān-ī Dēnīk* III,13 where the reference is again apparently to Gayōmart. Since in our text the resulting figure is apparently cast out for dead into the desert (i.e. exposed in archetypal Zoroastrian manner), he seems more like the First Man in the myth prostrated by the attack by Ahriman, and I have preferred the latter interpretation. Gayōmart as a late and syncretistic figure belongs to the elaboration of the myths used in the Saošyant cycle. In the myth the dying Gayōmart becomes the bringer of life; as he dies, his seed enters the earth and produces the first human pair (mythic variation on the Saošyant and the seed in the waters: Spendarmat is in this sense mentioned as a "co-worker" with Anāhitā who protects the seed of Zarathustra in the waters, as well as with the human virgin-mother who bathes in the lake). The surface emphasis on mortality may therefore not be the whole story. In the context of the present cycle we should think more particularly of the eschatological use to which the figure of Gayōmart was put in the mythology: as first human being to have died, he will also be first to be raised by the Saošyant (*Greater Bundahišn* XXXIV,6–9). It seems that precisely as Gayōmart the prophet unites the past and the future, death and life, natural humanity and spiritual revelation, and one may suppose that he represents the original climax of the series. "The religion of Zarathustra is the nature of Gayōmart, and the nature of Gayōmart

[24] G. MacRae in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* I, p. 717 n.M.

[25] Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism* vol. II (Leiden and Köln 1982) p. 125.

[26] Böhlig, "Jüdisches und iranisches" p. 156; the clue to the context is given in the Zoroastrian catechism, which makes every adherent a child of Spendarmat, with Ohrmazd as heavenly father: see H. Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth. From Mazdean Iran to Shiite Iran* (Princeton 1977) pp. 15ff., 47ff.

is the religion of Zarathustra" (*Greater Bundahišn* XXXV,1). His curious "life" and death take place in Eran Vej, the Aryan homeland mythically located at the centre of the world.

Twelfth Kingdom (CG V 82,4–10): Egyptian myth of birth from "the two luminaries"—Egyptian terminology for sun and moon. Evidently a cosmic birth in the Mysteries which surpasses even the previous appearance. The "knowledge of the two stars" is secret knowledge which was ascribed, as G. Fowden indicates, to the wisdom-divinity Thoth-Hermes and stored e.g. in the temple of Horus at Edfu.[27] Hellenistic sources also allegorise Osiris and Isis as sun and moon, and their child, i.e. Horus, would again indicate a royal figure. "King" Nechepso and his priestly satellite Petosiris (both prob. second century B.C.) constantly stress sun and moon in the synthesis of late Egyptian lore for which they stand as authority.[28] Possibly Nechepso is indicated here. Legendary indications of an Egyptian Zoroaster are not lacking, e.g. in the Clementine *Recognitions* IV,27 and, of course, there is the precedent of the Eighth Kingdom above.

It is important to stress that in my view there is nothing yet resembling the Gnostic idea of the *Urmensch* and his cyclic redemption,[29] but an elaboration of old Iranian and Zoroastrian legends concerning various heroes who "bore the glory", and were seen as types of the eschatological hero, the Saošyant. Kingdoms 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 11 convey stories from the legendry of Iran, or from India drawing on the same background ideas, and I shall show a Zoroastrian interest in the story given for Kingdom 4. Kingdom 7 shows how Babylonian ideas were important for the development of the wider picture, with the Herakles-type providing the link and possibly the symbolism of an astrological cycle. Kingdoms 10 and 12 may likewise have come in under the umbrella of the Herakles-concept, since the "Egyptian Hercules" is also one way of characterising the mythic attributes of the Pharaohs. The equivalence of the Egyptian myth of Atum and the representation of Persian power in Egypt had already been stated by the inscriptions of the Achaemenians, and no doubt had a further mythological life in the thought of the

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[27] Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* (Cambridge 1986) p. 57.

[28] General survey in J. Lindsay, *Origins of Astrology* (London 1971) pp. 184–190; Fowden notes the difficulties in dating the material, but it is referred to familiarly by astrologers in the earlier first century A.D. (Fowden, op. cit. p. 3 n. 11) and undoubtedly reflects the sort of ideas of "Egyptian wisdom" current around the time of our *Apocalypse*. The continuing probability that it reaches back to c. 150 B.C. rests on the striking analogy between Nechepso's (fr. 1 Riess) vision and parts of Daniel, etc.: M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* vol. I pp. 214–215.

[29] Duchesne-Guillemin, *Religion* p. 146.

Western Magi in the domains of the Empire, and afterwards. In Justin's *Baruch*, the mission of "the prophet Herakles" is pre-eminently the form in which Baruch-Zarathustra's message is conveyed to the nations.

Altogether the regions covered by the more syncretistic birth-stories coincide rather exactly with the diffusion of Zoroastrianism by the imperial conquests prior to the catastrophe of Alexander: Armenia, Babylonia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ionian Greece and extending even to India. Among the increasingly widely diffused Magians, the Zoroastrian revelation and the person of the prophet have become a message to be conveyed to the entire known world. In this context, and since his story seems integral to the themes of the transmission of the glory and the prophetic "seed", it is significant that Gayōmart is often perceived as a late-coming mythological figure. S. Hartman has argued with some plausibility that he is even a composite figure, a focus of universal religious interest on the one hand, but a more nationalistically conceived "first king" on the other, whose place of origin at the centre of the world would correspond to the simultaneous tendencies of expansion/enhancement of syncretistic possibilities, and a counterpull of centralisation, both inevitable as the Zoroastrian world grew.[30]

What is important for us in general terms is that the twelve legends of the Illuminator are best understood as a unified development. Starting from Zoroastrian first principles (the myth of the *xvarenah* and those who bore it, the Saošyant(s), the prophecy of Zarathustra and the means of its fulfilment), they express the need to create a more all-inclusive mythology culminating in Hellenistic times in a fusion with "Heraklean" or oriental hero-figures of a range of loosely related cults. The universalising tendencies sometimes seem to stretch the framework rather far: in our sequence, the Twelfth Kingdom in particular, coming after the apparent climax of Gayōmart, whose appearance marks the time of the Transfiguration, almost throws down the gauntlet: whether the underlying approach retains its specific focus or turns into some sort of "Mystery of universal illumination" wherein the primary tradition no longer has any special place.[31] The trajectory that would indeed trigger the shift from an eschatological figure such as Gayōmart into the *Anthropos*-myths of Gnosticism perhaps even has one of its beginnings here—though the sharper clash with Judaism and its complex defensive

[30] S. Hartman, *Gayōmart. Étude sur le syncrétisme dans l'ancien Iran* (Uppsala 1953).
[31] Cf. my remarks in "Iranian Prophetology", p. 4779.

reaction was necessary too for any such radical transformation. Other powerful trends, such as the exaltation of Mithra, could clearly also break out into independent developments under foreign influence, as happened in the Mithraism of the West, though there is no reason to associate our cycle with this one tendency in isolation (*contra* Böhlig's recurrent claim).

The Twelvefold Cycle: Symbolic Geography (Jubilees, Sibyllines)

Although the esoteric tendency to claim Zarathustra as the source of the world's religious truth and its inner meaning could not be fully contained within the traditions of orthodoxy, there are many signs that the mainstream of Zoroastrianism was affected by many or all of the tendencies dramatised in the legends, and resolved them in its own way. Thus the *Dātastān-ī Dēnīk* 36,3–6 presents the picture of six Saošyants, which correspond to the six other *kešvars* or continents of sacred geography in Zoroastrianism. These continents are arranged in a circle around the central world-mountain, and each one is said to have its spiritual chief. Geographers continually updated their understanding of these mysterious other lands as knowledge of the empirical world expanded; H. Corbin points out the use of the schema still in al-Biruni and other later authors.[32] Zarathustra is the spiritual chief of our own, central *kešvar*—and of the whole world. At the end of time, the six Saošyants of the other continents will come together around the figure of *the* Saošyant, who stands for the tradition of Zarathustra and our own continent, to perform the sacrifice that brings in the Transfiguration of the world. Here quite clearly the idea of the successive births of the "spiritual sons" of Zarathustra is translated into a pattern of appearances in different places, so as to culminate in a universal redemptive act. Moreover, the supremacy of Zarathustra and his tradition (on the analogy of Ohrmazd as one of the Heptad and also as its totality) implies a viewpoint that is essentially in accord with that of our cycle of twelve: Zarathustra is one of the cycle and also, in his role as Saošyant, the meaning and active "spiritual chief" of the whole.[33]

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[32] H. Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* pp. 17–24.

[33] M. Boyce has argued that the idea of a correspondence to the heavenly pattern and the consequent expectation of several world-saviours is the result of Babylonian influence: *Zoroastrians. Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* pp. 74–75. Earthly history was

It remains unclear whether a twelvefold cycle was ever accepted in Iran, as H. Jonas among others has surmised.[34] Sevenfold cycles are more in accord with Mazdaism, and among the Western Magi these could be correlated with the seven planets of astrology.[35] In such lore the regions of the earth could be divided to correspond, according to Bardaisan of Edessa in his *Book of the Laws of the Countries*:

> The astrologers say that the earth is divided into seven portions, called zones, and that over each portion one of the seven stars has authority; that in each of the said portions the will of its ruler prevails, and this is called its Law.

A division of the earth into twelve regions is also known, "according to the signs of the zodiac".[36] Other Syrian writers surely understood the import of Zarathustra's mission to all the regions of the earth when they reproduced traditions that he had composed the Avesta in seven languages. Later Syriac authors (Išodad of Merv, Solomon of Basra) identify him as Baruch—but now in a confused fashion as the Baruch who was a scribe of Jeremiah—and his learning of *twelve* languages apparently echoes a version of the myth of the prophet's mission to the twelve corresponding Gentile nations. In Zoroastrian sources proper, on the other hand, we hear of zodiacal divisions of world-time only occasionally, and never of twelve Saošyants; so that the twelvefold sequence may have been a step toward universalism that was never accommodated in orthodox Zoroastrianism despite the evidence there of the ideas which facilitated its development (Saošyants of the other *kešvars*, twelvefold-zodiacal divisions of world-time).[37] Perhaps they smacked too much of Zervanite heresy, where the working-out of the cycles became a central

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the reflection of a cosmic "great year", originally six millennia finally increased to twelve cosmic "months"; for the division of the originally unified Earth into continents, and their correspondences with the heavens in Mazdeism, Corbin, op. cit. pp. 17; 20.

[34] H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston 1958) p. 306 even thought the doctrine might come originally from Iran, but this seems unlikely.

[35] Duchesne-Guillemin, *Religion of Ancient Iran* pp. 230–231 who notes that the *Vahman Yašt* "recasts the myth of *four* ages into a myth of *seven* metallic ages, an amplification which must have been made under the influence of a planetary system"; similarly in the *Oracle of Hystaspes* "in the original text it was a matter of planetary ages".

[36] Bardaisan, *Books of the Laws of the Countries* in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol. 8, p. 732 col. 2. See further Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology" pp. 4758–4760.

[37] Bidez-Cumont, t.I p. 40 and n. 2; p. 49 and n. 4. Also I, p. 237 for planetary and zodiacal divisions of time in Zoroastrian sources. *Bundahišn* XXXIV assigns the twelve millennia of world-existence to the signs; the *Ulema-ī Islam* is quoted for the view that "chacun des signes du zodiaque est regent du temps pendant mille ans" (p. 237 n. 3).

feature of divinity rather than the decisive struggle of Light and Darkness central to the message of Zoroastrianism. But in the Magian dispersion there is every reason to think that such cyclic tendencies were given full expression.

It accords well enough, then, with what we know of the elaboration of Zoroastrian ideas among the Magusaeans, and of the diffusion of relevant cults (Herakles-Verethraghna, Mithra, etc.) that the writer of ApocAd could already have encountered a myth concerning the twelve i.e. "universal" appearances of the Illuminator. He responded to the implied message of the mythology, as we have seen, in eminently Jewish fashion. In the first place, he interpreted the prophetic cycle as incomplete without the addition of a final, definitive appearance, a new manifestation of the prophetic cycle which is the Jewish-apocalyptic version of the Messiah (82,10–19). The text alludes to the idea that, among the words spoken by God in the beginning, some were not be be actualised until the appropriate time in the future, among which was the name of the Messiah (I *Enoch* 48,2; etc.), here "given form" through birth into earthly reality, or perhaps "receiving a mandate" of divine authority direct from God.[38] The content is convincingly Jewish and straightforwardly apocalyptic here, and I find no trace of the notion imported by Böhlig, MacRae and others concerning a "suffering Messiah" with Christian overtones. Jewish also, as we have seen, is the reference to "fulfilment" (82,18–19), lacking in any of the previous legends.

This different structural role of the thirteenth prophecy, not just adding to or completing a universal mission but taking it into eschatological fulfilment, confirms that it did not come to the writer with the legendary cycle of the twelve. Rather it lies in the real future for the writer, and indicates the apocalyptic nature of the document's message. In typical fashion, the pseudepigraphic past figure, Adam, who in the frame-narration foretells the Flood and the sequence of further prophecies to his son Seth, demonstrates the divine pattern, the whole grand design of (actually past) history, whose final meaning is yet to be revealed, however, and in a form that is still-to-come for the real author.

In the author's perspective, the twelvefold cycle evidently represents the pagan wisdom which has dominated the world since the Flood. Moreover, the report from the Thirteenth Kingdom, when we first

[38] Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology" p. 4783 for rabbinic and other parallels, and for considerations of the possible meaning of the Coptic text ("receive a mandate" or "be given form") by G. MacRae.

meet it, is unexpected. In the text, only the twelve kingdoms have so far been mentioned (V 73,25–27), from the sons of Ham and Japheth. The further prophecy is an apocalyptic "secret", the sense of which we can only deduce when we take the step of putting the twelvefold cycle into the story-frame of AAd. It is for us to work out that the mysterious further report must be an allusion to the kingdom of Noah's other son, Shem, i.e. it is the prophecy concerning the Semites, with a specifically Jewish meaning that completes and transforms the universalism of the vision. The reference to "their ruler", God himself, contrasts with the disparate kingdoms of the nations, the "generations" or Gentiles (70,19), who apparently each worship one or other of the zodiacal stars (= constellations), the one which dominates their zone and gives them its laws, rather than the ultimate true God. Their partial wisdom is to make sense with the coming of the Messianic key (we must also not forget that Judaism without the backdrop of the universal revelation is likewise slavery (65,20; 72,20–22; 73,10–12)). That, on one level, is why the prophecy of the Thirteenth Kingdom must be supplemented and clarified in turn by the Fourteenth Statement (82,19 – 83,3) from the "kingless generation"—the true Israel rather than a Gnostic "spiritual race".[39] The absence of the refrain, the difference in form and content show that the text is not speaking of a further manifestation, but a higher view of the fulfilment, one that is profounder than Jewish Messianism *per se*. In it is to be sought, not a further event but the meaning of the whole work. The significance of the number 14 for the writer of ApocAd, and for Mt., will be a further subject of investigation.

Similar background ideas are already to be found in several Jewish-related intertestamental writings where apocalypticism is applied to the reinterpreting of bibical-universal history. Qumran ideas about the Messiahs have already been surveyed (above, pp. 38–40). Here we must turn to developments in *Jubilees*, the *Sibylline Oracles*, and the fragmentary remains of the "anonymous Samaritan" if they are not genuine Eupolemus; all show analogies. As well as relating to ideas of biblical interpretation, ApocAd can be placed in a tradition of developing myth-history about the world after the Flood which evolved in response to biblical and also other, semi-biblical conceptions that were important at the time it must have been written.

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[39] Above pp. 40–41.

In *Jubilees* as in ApocAd the dividing of the earth among the sons of Noah is an important theme (8,10ff.). After Noah's death, however, and in the confusion of tongues following the overthrow of the Tower of Babel, their offspring begin to make war upon each other and to seize territory, confusing the original inheritance (11,1ff.). They build fortified cities, of which the first is Ur of the Chaldees. At the same time, they start to make "images" (11,1), and each worships what he has made, the meaning of which is clarified when their descendants pursue "the researches of the Chaldaeans in order to practise divination and astrology according to the signs of heaven" (11,8). Abram, on the other hand, challenges the worship of the idols and recommends worship of "the God of Heaven" (12,2–4). By the second century B.C., therefore, at least in esoteric Jewish quarters, the themes of astrology, idolatry (worship of the zodiac signs), the great warring kingdoms of the Middle East (the sons of Ham and Japheth), the Tower of Babel and the violation of the proper divisions of the earth have been woven together into a saga of early human history.

There are nowadays several theories concerning the historical material preserved by Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* IX,17–18.[40] Quite likely it belongs at least in part to Palestinian tradition, rather than to syncretistic circles or to a Samaritan historical writer. It testifies to other developments along the lines of *Jubilees*—with a significantly different slant. Abraham has now emerged as a culture-hero and the teacher of astrology to the pagan nations, both Phoenicia and Egypt acquiring it as a result of his travels. This role need not clash utterly with his adherence to monotheism. "For Josephus [*Ant.* I,155; 167–168] and Philo [*de Abr.* 69–71]," points out R. Doran, "Abraham's astrology was a means of knowing the true God, and conflict arose with the Chaldaean astrologers when they would not go beyond their science to this knowledge of God."[41] But Eupolemus takes the syncretism a step further, when the Jewish patriarchs are identified with the mythical founders of pagan lore: "The Greeks say that Atlas discovered astrology; how-

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[40] Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* vol. I pp. 88–93; J. Freudenthal, *Hellenistische Studien* vol. I (Breslau 1875) pp. 82–103.

[41] Doran, in Charlesworth. *Pseudepigrapha* vol. II p. 877. Cf. Eusebius IX,17,3. This passage places Abraham "in the thirteenth generation", a comment which does not make sense in context but which Doran argues is too bound up with the text to be excised (p. 881 n.e). Could this have reference to a schema like that of ApocAd, which refers to the twelve kingdoms as "the generations of the powers" (77,20) and knows also a thirteenth?

ever, Atlas is the same as Enoch" (*apud* Eusebius IX,17,9; cf. the assimilation, on a very similar level, in CG V 70,17–19: "Noah—whom the generations will call Deucalion"). Hengel's and Freudenthal's efforts to find elaborate syncretism are probably misguided: the tendency is historicising, and elaborately pro-Jewish in its interpretation of Hellenistic-oriental *histoire universelle*. But Babylonian traditions are utilised, as are traditions about the giants who escaped the Flood and built Babylon; when the tower was destroyed the giants were scattered over the earth, and some have seen here a reminiscence of the titanomachy, since the giants may be connected with astrology (cf. Eusebius IX,18,2). The same basic ideas—astrology and cosmic-mythical wars euhemerised as struggles among the corresponding earthly kingdoms after the Flood; Greek, Phoenician, Babylonian and Egyptian culture derived from primordial culture-heroes of Judaism (Enoch, Abraham): except that here the Messianic impetus is lacking, we have the basics of the same world-picture as we find developed in CG V/5. Indeed Abraham in his role of travelling culture-hero (also known in the *Genesis Apocryphon*) almost single-handedly rivals the achievement of the Illuminator, in being hailed as the inspirer of every major ancient culture. With this interest in him and indeed the evidence from several sources (Philo, Josephus, Eupolemus) we can see that there were Jewish circles strongly interested in astrological schematisations interpreted as primal history. In *Jubilees* the astrological theme seems suppressed rather than absent(cf. 8,1–4), having been replaced by another powerful but biblically derived tool for the periodisation of world-events.

The version in *Jubilees* is also interesting on the geographical front since, as we mentioned, the primordial wars after the Flood violate the proper inheritance of the world-regions as bequeathed by Noah to his sons (cf. CG V 73,25–29: "The seed of Ham and Japheth will form twelve kingdoms" and note the significant comment "they will enter into the kingdom of another people"). The hostile nations in particular have obtruded upon the inheritance of Shem, which is schematised as the whole central temperate zone ("neither hot nor cold": 8,50) around Paradise at the centre of the earth. It includes a vast swathe of territory which Shem distributes among his sons (9,2ff.), reaching to India (9,3) and including Elam, "all the territory of Asshur and Nineveh", "Chaldaea toward the east of the Euphrates", "all the land of Mesopotamia" and as far north as Arara(t) (9,5); we have earlier been told, in more physical terms, that his division is bounded by the River Don in the north, and extends down to include even Egypt (as far as the

Nile = Gihon: 8,12–15). This "central" area together with its outlying regions coincides rather closely to the domain of the cyclic appearances in ApocAd, and the picture of Gayōmart (Kingdom 11) at the centre of the earth with the other appearances taking place in a circle around, under the signs of the zodiac, produces a not dissimilar geographical model.

The notion of finding the true, i.e. Jewish meaning of all the kingdoms in this domain is tackled differently in *Jubilees*, but the knowledge of God's intentions revealed by the quasi-testament from Noah to his favourite son is another way of saying fundamentally the same thing as the apocalyptic version in CG V/5. In *Jubilees* it is represented retrospectively, as midrashic commentary, clarifying the esoteric meaning of history that is discovered by going back to Noah. At the very least, such histories which sought to give a primacy to Jewish culture could have furnished a basis for the author of our *Apocalypse* to give a Messianic and apocalyptic version that would bring the implicit challenge and Jewish self-assertion they register to a head.

Astrological ideas in Judaism are elsewhere mainly demonstrated by the Qumran horoscopes and cryptic texts, but J.H. Charlesworth has shown in connection with the *Treatise of Shem* that they were nevertheless "more than a Qumranite or sectarian aberration".[42] In general, the appeal of astrology in the period around the second-first century B.C. was considerable, with many variations but often pointing to the coming of a saviour and establisher of peace. The Egyptian-Jewish *Sibylline Oracles* Book III is in many ways closest of all to CG V/5. It has a version of the post-diluvian history, Tower of Babel, the titanomachy, a list of kingdoms schematised as the Sibylline ten in time's "cyclic course" if we include the future kingdom still to come, and so on (III,97–161); in its mythological references it may be dependent on the (ps.-)Eupolemus (or simply make more use of Hesiod): it then culminates in the prophecy of a universal "king from the sun" (652–656), and there is a close parallel to this in the *Potter's Oracle* (col. 2). The *Treatise of Shem* (if Charlesworth is right) points to Augustus as bringer of universal peace, and he points to the obvious parallel in Virgil's Sibylline *Fourth Eclogue*. Duchesne-Guillemin adds the eschatological ideas of Mithraic depictions according to Celsus (in Origen, *c.Celsum* VI,22), the *Vahman*

[42] In Charlesworth (ed.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* I, pp. 473–486 (p. 477); also his "Jewish Astrology", *Harvard Theological Revue* 70(1977),183–200; J. Carmignac, "Les Horoscopes de Qumran," *Revue de Qumran* 5(1965), 199–217.

Yašt and Lactantius' account of the *rex magnus de caelo* from the *Oracle of Hystaspes*: "There is no question but it is Apollo's reign, of which Celsus and Virgil spoke."[43] It would appear, then, that many astrological (zodiacal or planetary) schematisations provided a model for prophecies concerning a restoration of primal order, and the intervention of a divine king who brought together features of Iranian and Jewish eschatology, among others. We may well associate the "Fourteenth Statement" of AAd (V 82,19 – 83,4) with precisely such ideas. It fuses Messianic language recalling Daniel 12,3 with the enhanced conception of the ultimate prophet as a "Great Luminary", which G. MacRae has pointed out could at this juncture be solar language. He comes from "eternity" or a "transcendent realm" (cf. the "king from the sun" in *Sib. Or.* III).[44]

If ApocAd represents an elaboration of these ideas, its response to the twelvefold prophetic cycle would be much in line with a development we can follow from the second century B.C., reaching full expression in the first century B.C. A date around that time, based on the ideas it employs, would agree well with its literary character as an apocalyptic Testament.

From the studies undertaken in our chapters 1–3, we may recapitulate briefly our conclusion that, although the nature of the document is still contested, conclusive Christian influence has not been demonstrated; while the document seems more like an earlier stage or even simply a source for the kind of avowedly Gnostic treatment of similar themes, as found in the Nag Hammadi *Gospel of the Egyptians*, rather than itself being a "Gnostic" writing. Meanwhile there is abundant evidence to support the case, tentatively advanced already by a number of scholars, that the roots of *ApocAd* lie, not in the later Gnosticism sometimes proposed, but in an apocalyptic Judaism of the intertestamental period. There are important connections with apocryphal Adam-literature, and the cycle of twelve appearances indicated for its central figure, the φωστήρ of knowledge (V 76,9–10) seems closely related to the Jewish and Jewish-Christian theology of the "true Prophet" (cf. the twelve prophetic manifestations indicated in II *Enoch* 71,33–35; *Test. Isaac* 3,17–19 etc.) quite as much as to the early Gnostic usage in Justin's

[43] Duchesne-Guillemin, *Religion of Ancient Iran* p. 231. Hinnells, "Oracle of Hystaspes" in *Man and his Salvation*.

[44] MacRae, in Charlesworth (ed.), *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* vol. I p. 715 n.B.; Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology" pp. 4790–4791.

Baruch (Hippolytus, *Ref.* V,26,1 – 27,5). In the absence of definitely Christian elements it is most likely the Jewish materials which can help us determine the meaning of the cycle of revelations, and in particular the allusion from the Thirteenth Kingdom to a final "Messianic" appearance of the Illuminator. The original background to several of the legends, however, as was pointed out originally by Böhlig and amply confirmed by further investigation, lies in Iranian religion and heroic saga, focussed on the Saošyant(s), or prophesied World Saviours. Relevant above all are the mythologically more amplified and syncretistic versions related to the theme, mostly current in the "Zoroastrian apocrypha". Astrological influences, seen elsewhere in Zoroastrian eschatology of Hellenistic times, brought new meaning to such "universalistic" expectations. A cycle of stories was subsequently taken over and reinterpreted through its incorporation into the biblically and apocalyptically-patterned frame-story of Adam's prophecy, relating it to a version of the history and geography of mankind after the Flood close to that found in second-first century B.C. Jewish works like the *Sibyllines* and *Jubilees*.

Further research suggests that the legends as originally assembled constitute an early stage of the developing Zarathustra-legend, and that it was in this form that they probably influenced the creator of ApocAd. Several of the legends mention virgin birth, the main motif in the stories of Zarathustra and his "posthumous sons", the Saošyants, although it is still only one version of the wider mythological theme of disruptive or paradoxical birth, expressing the overturning of the old order and a new cycle beginning. When the legends were assembled into a cycle, the idea of virgin-birth probably became more important as the central thread linking together the whole. It is well-known that the Old Testament offers no basis for expecting a Messiah who would be born in a supernatural or extraordinary manner. CG V/5 offers valuable insight therefore into the way the virgin-birth and a number of related or mythologically equivalent themes became involved in the elaboration of Messianic legends. In the background of ApocAd, Old Testament materials were touched by outside influences similar to those we find elsewhere influencing esoteric and Essene Jewish sources. There were certainly disruptive tendencies, which the mythology itself is partly designed to express, though without diverting the interest entirely from central Jewish concerns; and quite possibly (as I shall now hope to demonstrate) it may furnish a glimpse into the background of earliest Christianity's expectations and the Gospel of Matthew in particular.

PART TWO

THE INFANCY NARRATIVES AND THE VIRGIN BIRTH

CHAPTER FOUR

AN UNNATURAL BIRTH
(MT. 1,18–21 AND CG V 78,6–17)

A Disturbing Nativity

Against this enriched backdrop, we may therefore return to the observation from which we began: the close narrative resemblances between the stories of the first four "Kingdoms" (CG V 78,7 – 79,19) and the sources which apparently shaped Mt. in its treatment of Jesus' infancy. We have found no reason to suppose that any one of them, as they appear in ApocAd, has been influenced by the related Christian conceptions from the Gospels. In fact, the original legendary-mythical form of these particular stories can be identified with considerable certainty: they are the birth-stories of Zāl, Farīdūn and of Solomon's child by the Queen of the South. So that with their appearance in ApocAd their sources, and to some extent even the history of their development, from pagan originals through to becoming Jewish-Messianic legends which influenced the Gospel, can be brought into relatively sharp focus—and their meaning in the Gospel-context hopefully reassessed against the new background.

Because the literary-critical analysis of the Gospel indicates differentiated pre-Matthaean materials, moreover, the form of their occurrence in ApocAd can be employed, for historical and textual purposes, to test and modify existing results. In fact, the existence of stories with just such plots as these and with "Messianic" implications most strongly confirms many important results of literary analysis previously undertaken upon the infancy chapters. And since the stories are so similar in kind to ones frequently posited behind the Matthaean stories, we may assume that by revealing their background, the latter too can better be seen in relation to the underlying religious ideas behind the virgin birth, the persecution of Jesus' family, or the visit of the Magi.

Important here too is the fact that parallels occur together in an concentrated block of materials already brought together in the Nag Hammadi text. If it is rightly argued (above) that the legends were

already organised into a cycle prior to their inclusion in ApocAd, these narratives plots were also presumably linked in the form in which they reached the evangelist. They had been utilised in works such as ApocAd to serve as pointers to the future fulfilment of the entire cycle—by the Messiah. Is the resulting concentration of similar, if not identical narrative themes, brought together in Mt. 1–2, merely accidental?

From the side of Gospel studies, I shall start from the most convincing results of a tradition of analysis concerning the presence of "pre-Matthaean materials", going back through W.L. Knox, C.T. Davis, R.E. Brown and others. The other possible view, that the evangelist simply composed the infancy stories, which exhibit many features of his style (so, for example, J.C. Fenton), seems a much less easily credible alternative.[1] The infancy narratives, after all, do not fit easily into the rest of the Gospel. We would be better supposing, from the disparity between the infancy stories and the presentation of Jesus' ministry, where Jesus' supernatural origins, acclamation by the Magi etc., are not mentioned, that the evangelist includes special sources which must have been highly valued by the community for which he wrote.

Synthesizing the best results of previous analysis, Brown concludes that the "main narrative" (which henceforth I therefore call A) concerned Joseph's dream-instruction by an angel concerning the child who was to be born; how Herod learned (originally in a dream) about the child and massacred the infants; how an angel told Joseph in a dream to go into hiding in Egypt, and how similarly he was later instructed to return. The "episode" of the Magi comes from a different source (which I call therefore B); and the doubts over the legitimacy of the child and the reassurance from the angel that Mary's child is of the Holy Spirit comes from a third source (which I call C). Source C is supposedly the one which referred to a virgin birth, and which Brown

[1] W.L. Knox, *The Sources of the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge 1957) II, pp. 121–128; C.T Davis, "Tradition and Redaction in Matthew 1:18 – 2,23" *JBL* 90(1971), 404–421; R.E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (London 1978), pp. 104–121. Contrary view based on the distinctive features of the evangelist's style in the chapters: Fenton. *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Harmondsworth 1963) pp. 34–35; 44. The problem however is not limited to the early chapters. There is the same difficulty in separating the evangelist's redaction from M-material throughout the Gospel as we now have it, cf. B. Hubbard, *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning. Matthew 28:16–20* (Missoula, Mont. 1974) and the further comments of J.P. Meier, "Two Disputed Questions in Matt. 28:16–20", in JBL 96(1977), 407–424. Source material, we must readily admit, is filtered both by the evangelist's style and the Gospel's ideas.

would liken to Luke's nativity source. The recognition of originally separate stories, Brown adds, "does not prejudice the possibility that they may have already been joined in the pre-Matthaean stage."[2]

At the same time the way in which the analysts propose to reconstruct the sources seems frequently unsatisfactory; in particular, for example, Brown's wish to find the influence of an "annunciation source" behind 1,20–21; 24–25, similar in content to the Lukan account of the nativity, seems strained. In contrast, Brown deals peremptorily with actually existing parallels in oriental or Hellenistic texts, including the *Apocalypse of Adam*.[3] Though rejecting the "midrashic" interpretation of the infancy narratives in his book, he still adhered in a subsequent article to the conclusion that Matthew and the other evangelists need not have known any stories from outside their own immediate biblical and Christian circles, and "could have written their infancy narratives without having read such [literature] …LXX forms of the stories of the Patriarchs … plus some Jesus tradition and theological reflection could have given the orientation".[4]

No one denies that an array of suitable allusions, at least as regards the separate motifs, can readily be found to the Old Testament narratives concerning Isaac, Samuel, Moses or Joseph, and their haggadic developments; and as we shall see J.E. Bruns has made an especially perceptive case for a relationship between the incident of the Magi and the episode of Solomon and the Queen of the South.[5] Yet fundamentally, and even when we take into account known developments in the haggadah, Old Testament background to the "infancy narratives" is significantly limited. Moreover it is widely conceded that the fulfilment citations, rather than indicating sources, are to be considered secondary and reflective,[6] so that relating the stories to the Old Testament appears to be rather a way of interpreting the stories, as distinct from the initial formative stage. The more we follow the increasingly established view that the explicit OT features are among the latest features of the Matthaean text, best related to the "theology of the evangelist", so much the more does the nature and origin of the "pre-Matthaean"

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[2] Brown, op. cit. p. 110. The "main" narrative is reconstructed, p. 109.

[3] Brown, op. cit. pp. 116–117; pp. 522–523 and esp. p. 524n21.

[4] Brown, "Gospel Infancy Narrative Research 1976–1986", *CBQ* 48(1986), 477.

[5] J.E. Bruns, "The Magi Episode in Matthew 2" CBQ 23(1961), 51–54.

[6] W. Rothfuchs, *Die Erfüllungszitate des Matthäusevangeliums* (Stuttgart 1969); and R.S. McConnell, *Law and Prophecy in Matthew's Gospel* (Basel 1969). Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (London 1978), pp. 559ff.

narratives which house them become enigmatic once again and the use of *a priori* criteria for their reconstruction often appears dubious.

At the very least, when we turn to the Matthaean infancy stories it is hard not to feel that the allusions to Old Testament episodes have already had to be both transformed, even transvalued before they could be made to serve new purposes in what we may rightly call, as part of the evangelist's construction, an "infancy gospel". The stories proclaim the nature of the child who has been born. D.C. Allison has recently stressed once more the echoes in specific detail from Moses-legends, for example, but the lack of structural or narrative prototypes leaves us, however we may look at it, with a distinct hermeneutic gap. Stories about two quite different Pharaohs have to be crossed to create a "parallel" to the New Testament. This merely returns us to the question of what factor determined the selection and rearrangement of the OT motifs.[7]

The shortcomings of the "midrashic" and related interpretations only throw into relief once more the striking extra-biblical analogies to the birth-stories of Jesus. And yet the leap to free comparison with oriental, notably Buddhist parallels, such as has recently been undertaken once more by Z.P. Thundy, unfortunately leaves us in the dark about the historical routes by which motifs concerning a miraculously born sage could reached the evangelist—and so, more importantly about the meaning they could have had for him. Thundy is right to point to the urgent need for a convincing explanation of the material, but his "circumstantial evidence" of an oriental connection through Gnostic literature hardly suffices to produce one.[8]

CG V 78,7 – 79,19 offers a group of non-biblical stories, already partially accommodated to a biblical background: Messianically interpreted by their place in the document's apocalyptic scheme, they seem

[7] For this particular instance Brown, op.cit. p. 112: moreover the objectors to this hermeneutic procedure are asked to swallow the excuse that Moses here has been crossed in turn with Joseph, the dreamer of dreams—on the grounds that Jesus' father Joseph was little known in the Gospel tradition, so his significance was filled in from Genesis (p. 111)! The real problem is not just that this is appealing to a vacuity, so that the story has no constraints, merely existing in a gap; it is that the entire hermeneutic here presupposes the end-product, i.e. the creators of the legend are treated as if they know already that they have to find a story of going down into Egypt, but they also know they have to find an oppressive tyrant. But how did they know what they were supposed to come up with?

[8] Z.P. Thundy, *Buddha and Christ. Nativity Stories and Indian Traditions* (Leiden 1993) esp. pp. 79ff.

to me strikingly suitable for consderation as sources or near-sources for the Matthaean infancy tales. The legend of Zāl is fundamentally that of a disturbing nativity, with a reassuring message to the boy's father from a god or magical guardian-figure; the story of Farīdūn is that of a virgin-born child escaping from the clutches of a ruler who seeks his life, fleeing into the wilderness with his mother to return later as hero and king; the story of the Queen of the South has also been transformed into a legendary tale which could serve as the prototype of a miraculous virginal birth, enhancing the possibility that it should be taken as the basis for an acknowledgment of the Messiah's birth by the oriental Magi.

The narrative similarities and overall conjunction with Mt. 1–2 seem too great to be fortuitous. And the discovery of these stories in their adapted (apocalyptic-Messianic) context offers a real chance to cross the hermeneutic divide. Because, as we shall see, they are so close to predicted features of the sources, analytic prototypes can for the first time be compared and adjusted to historically existing narratives. Likewise, we may hope to see something of how the meaning of the mythologies evolved and changed as they came to be adapted into apocalyptic expectations. We shall deal initially with the myth of Zāl, which can be traced in detail through its impact on pseudepigraphic material already known to stand in close relationship to the stories in the infancy narratives.

The legend or myth of Zāl (CG V 78,6–17) concerns a wondrous child whose strange appearance causes it to be rejected by a shocked and uncertain father. ApocAd gives, in the document's usual laconic way with the birth-legends, a succinct and precise summary.[9] The more we restore its narrative details and background of ideas, however, the more interesting it becomes. Absent from Avestan sources but preserved in its essentials by Firdausi in the *Shahnameh*, the original tale relates how the humanly rejected child is watched over in the remote Elburz mountains, and indeed miraculously watched over afterwards, by the fabulous bird called the Sīmurgh. But the actual drama of the tale centres more on the father Sām (= Sāma Kerešāsp) and his agonised soul—a wider theme in the stories concerning him. Relenting, the father seeks his son once more and decides to accept him, and is reassured by the Sīmurgh (or probably originally by a heavenly

[9] Identification of the myth, see Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology", pp. 4766–4767.

messenger-god) that the child is truly begotten, and destined to bear the "Glory",—the sign of spiritual truth and divinely ordained dominion—as a great ruler. Also during the course of this visionary proclamation, he is given the significant name Zāl.

The myth of the *xvarenah* would have enabled the story to the drawn into the developed version, the mythological cycle of the Saošyants; this we see in ApocAd, even though the story probably does not belong to mainline Zoroastrian tradition, and survived only in the epic version. Its use in ApocAd also indicates that the story was already understood by the latter's author in relation to the Jewish-apocalyptic vision of world-history, and its hero was one manifestation along the way of the several revelations of the Illuminator, i.e. on the way to the coming of the Messiah.

Versions of a Tale

In order to appreciate how this story can help us, we must return to the analysis which distinguishes several different strands in the story of Jesus' birth in the Gospel of Matthew. For the "main source" I shall propose—in the next chapter—that the Third Kingdom story offers striking analogies. However, the additional source (which I call C), posited by Brown behind Mt. 1,20–21; 24–25, would be a birth legend which focussed more on the disturbing aspects of the nativity to Joseph, including also reassurance given to him by an angelic messenger, and: a "virginal conception was clearly implied in the begetting through a Holy Spirit motif" which he believes the story must already have contained.[10] The same scholar wishes, for rather obviously tendentious reasons, to bring the underlying source as close as possible to the Lukan nativity account. We obtain subtly different though related results, however, if we model our assumptions on documents which we know actually existed prior to the Matthaean account, and those like ApocAd which can be used where there is support for the probability that it too could be a source.

In fact there is a remarkable story of the birth of Noah, which Brown totally ignores, though it contains much closer analogies to the Matthaean scene overall than does the Lukan nativity. It is found in

[10] Brown, *Birth of the Messiah* p. 118; and for the "annunciation" source: pp. 154–161.

1QApGen ii (prob. 2nd century BC), an Aramaic work based on Genesis of which some shorter and longer fragments survive.[11] As matters stood, there was little reason to think of it as a direct source, but the further analysis of its development made possible through the *Apocalypse of Adam* indicates that there has been a parallel evolution to the Gospel story—and perhaps more.

In particular it stresses the doubts in the mind of Lamech: his suspicion of a non-human origin of the child and his reproaches to his wife, and anticipates the reassurance he will receive from Enoch, here called the seer "who shared the lot of the angels" and who will reveal all things truthfully—in this case, the true paternity of the child and the significance of the name he will be given. We can be confident in reconstructing the outline of the whole because parts of its rather damaged text correspond almost word for word to the complete but more summary version found in the Noachic fragment I *Enoch* 106–107. This lacks the dramatic scene between Lamech and Bathenosh, but is otherwise substantially identical and fills in many details e.g. of the child's disturbing appearance. The tale, comments G.W.E. Nickelsburg, "stands in the tradition of similar stories about the conception, birth, and naming of other important figures in biblical history: Isaac, Samson and Samuel. In the details of its plot, however, it is closer to Matthew's story of the conception and birth of Jesus."[12]

Nickelsburg's remark on the biblical background casually glosses over what must still be perceived as an immense gulf between the type of story to which he refers from the thought-world of the Old Testament, which hardly acknowledges the idea of miraculous or superhuman generation. We feel once more that the stories which told there about the birth and naming of the patriarchs have been touched by alien influences before they could become what we find in 1QApGen, presumably in intertestamental times. O. Betz examined a number of parallels to the striking appearance of Noah;[13] but in fact the story is clearly recognisable as that of Zāl, as we can see instantly if we turn to include the aspects of character and motivation rather than just the bare outlines of the plot. For this purpose we must turn to a full

[11] J.A. Fitzmyer (ed.), *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I* (Rome 1971).

[12] Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded" in M.E. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (Assen and Philadelphia) pp. 89–156 (94).

[13] Betz, "Die geistliche Schönheit", in *Die Leibhaftigkeit des Wortes* (Hamburg 1958) pp. 76ff. (p. 81).

recounting of the saga in its traditional form by the later Persian poet Firdausi in his *Shahnameh*. (We shall show later that the relevant features are attested also in older fragments of the tale, and so could have been available to the writer of the text found at Qumran). It is details of the borrowed plot such as the child's white hair which put the identity of the two stories beyond doubt:

1 Enoch 106–107	Zāl (*Shahnameh* trans. R. Levy pp. 35–39)
Lamech's wife bears him a son of strange appearance: (106,1)	Sām (Kerešāsp) fathers a son of strange appearance:
"And his hair was white like wool … and when he opened his eyes all the house glowed like the sun, or even more exceedingly." (106,2).	"When the child was severed from his mother his face was beautiful as the sun but his hair was entirely white."
Lamech "was afraid of him and fled and … said: I have begotten a strange son; he is not like a human being, but like the children of the angels." (106,4–5)	"On seeing his son thus, with his white hair, Sām in great fear … strayed" and said: "My blackened soul writhes with shame because of this child which … resembles a child of Ahriman."
(1QApGen: "I thought within my heart that conception was (due) to the Watchers and … to the *nephilim*"; it then adds a dialogue in which Lamech rebukes his wife, and she protests her innocence.)	
He rejects the child, (106,6)	He casts out the child which is brought up by the Sīmurgh in the Elburz.
and sends Methuselah to visit Enoch on the mountain of Paradise at the ends of the earth, "for his dwelling place is among the angels." (106,7)	Subsequently Sām comes to the mountain. He prays:
There he "cried aloud and I [Enoch] came to him." (106,8)	
He tells him that Lamech "did not believe the child was his, but of the image of the angels" (106,12)	"If this child indeed comes from my loins undefiled and not from the seed of evil souled Ahriman, then help thy servant ascend here …"

Enoch assures him that	Sīmurgh restores the child, and promises that if called on, "I will come, like a storm cloud, with speed."
he has seen in a vision (106,13) "that the son who has been born is indeed righteous … and (you shall) call his name Noah" (106,18)	The Sīmurgh (in *Apocalypse of Adam*: an angel which "came forth", i.e. in a vision) promises that he will be a great world-ruler. Sām bestows on the child the name Zāl.
"and he shall be saved from … all the sin and oppression … and	(He will fight against the world-domination of
it will be fulfilled upon the earth in his days. And after that shall occur still greater oppression … (106,18–19)	the evil Azidahāk. Azidahāk cannot be finally defeated until the end-time,
"And each generation shall be more wicked than the other, until a righteous generation shall arise. Then, sin shall disappear from on earth. …" (107,1)	when Sām will rise again to destroy him at the "Transfiguration" of the earth.)

Several observations may be made. The surprising appropriation of the myth, and above all its application to Noah, would hardly be what anyone would have predicted! It suggests that the Zāl-story came in a context already like that of ApocAd, where biblical history has been schematised into apocalyptic periods (Fall, Flood, etc.). Zāl was seen in that setting as a hero-figure from the time immediately after the Flood, as in ApocAd, or even at the time of the Flood, as Noah. And then, in consequence, the whole Noah story has been fundamentally transformed, although it contains elements of Old Testament story-types, because the overall frame is now apocalyptic. In contrast to Genesis, the story reaches its climax in the revelation of the child's future destiny and even more in its extension into the struggle of the last days. Nickelsburg notes the child Noah's "double role in God's redemptive activity. He is the saved one … He is also a saviour figure, who will cleanse the earth from corruption and bring joy to it after its destruction."[14] The ultimate cleansing of the earth from sin, however, cannot be brought about straight away. Indeed, the struggle will be intensified until the final and complete victory of righteousness. Likewise in the

[14] Nickelsburg, loc. cit.

Iranian myth, the characters involved are portrayed as forerunners of events that will be decisively enacted at the Transfiguration. The analogy between the stories is thus not one merely of particulars, but of fundamental orientation; and the new role of Noah as saviour-figure rather than as the one saved from the Flood, as in Genesis, probably derives directly from this altered framework, i.e. from the transformation of Old Testament story by the Iranian myth.

At this point parallels with Mt.'s Jesus "who will save his people from their sins" (1,21) need not be pressed too far. For the moment it will be best to examine in a little more detail the mythological resonances, which were able so radically to transform the outlook of 1QApGen, as they have come down in our various accounts.

Sām, in ancient sources is called by his personal name Kerešāsp or by his epithet Nariman (Old Iranian *nairyō-manah*, "the manly minded"). He is a strangely ambivalent figure in mythological stories going back to the Avesta (*Yasna* 9,30–39). According to *Dēnkart* VII,1,32 he possesses the Glory (*xvarr*), and specifically that of the warrior caste. Since we also hear that the Glory assumed the form of a bird when it deserted Yima (or Jamshid), the first king, and came to Kerešāsp (*Yašt* 19,35–38), the magic bird Simurgh in the later story apparently has some connection with his archaic mythological function, or, at the very least, stands in intimate connection with the Glory. The hero's mythology perhaps originally expressed tensions within Indo-European society between the need for the virtues of the warrior and the need for settled society (religion etc.). Such tensions the assumed new forms when Zoroastrianism came to predominate, e.g. tensions between the Religion and the ideology of power, kingship. Again and again Sām's heroic deeds lead to apparent contradictions within the Zoroastrian framework.

His descendants Zāl and Rostam who play a part in the Persian epic continue to represent elements seemingly alien to Zoroastrian tradition, and their virtual absence from the religious literature has often been taken to indicate that they were suppressed in orthodox Zoroastrianism. This does not necessarily mean that they are foreign to the Iranian tradition as such: it has been plausibly suggested that they are rather important and even intrinsic to the mythology, in the sense that they have precisely the function of representing the "other", the contradictory.[15] Zoroastrianism itself is founded on the struggle of

[15] O.M. Davidson, *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings* (Cornell 1994) pp. 101 ff. On

opposites, and such a continuing valuation of the marginal, the liminal, would not be untypical of Mysteries, ecstatic or esoteric movements. Lost mythological accounts of Kerešāsp are also known in summary from the *Dēnkart* or as partly preserved in a Pahlavi Rivayat which precedes the *Dātastān-ī Dēnīk* in some surviving manuscripts.

A feature attested in many of the myths, and relevant to his role in the present study is his agonised soul, apparently expressing the Zoroastrians' horror at his destructive acts, which are nevertheless upheld in the interpretation of his mythology—indeed shown to be necessary for the very survival of Ohrmazd's creation.[16] He himself is shown as only too aware of his crimes against the creatures and especially against the sacred element of fire. He committed the sacrilege of extinguishing the fire; yet it transpires that with this fire he destroyed by drowning the sea-monster which would otherwise have devoured all men and beasts (*Yasna* 9,34–39; *Zamyad Yašt* 40). The paradox is portrayed in a harrowing scene of judgment before Ohrmazd, in which he is barely justified and initially denied a place in the Zoroastrian heaven. Eventually, however, Ohrmazd not only promises him salvation, but grants also that he will rise again in the last days and slay Azidahāk, the embodiment of evil who could not previously by killed without destroying the whole world.

An important general pattern thus emerges, and is repeated in many of the details of his mythology, which are summarily recalled in the judgment scene: an apparently sinful or morally repulsive deed turns out to be a source of good, or is resolved for the good in an eschatological setting. Many elements in the myth evoke resonances which are still to be heard in Christianity: the saviour/hero's connection with the "Fall" and sin (loss of the Glory by Yima through the lie, so that it could come to Kerešāsp); the outwardly marginal or outcast as a source of salvation; and more precisely the agony of a soul at his own apparent sin, yet the affirmation of it by God as leading to redemption or ultimately to the eschatological triumph of good; a disturbing nativity as a wonder, a revelation of glory overturning established values or ideas—these motifs form the basis of a comparison which can still be recognised in

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the "functional" warrior role of Kerešāsp, she compares G. Dumezil, *Mythe et epopée* II (Paris 1971) pp. 282–289 (= *The Destiny of a King* (Chicago and London 1973) pp. 40–42); for the "ambivalent" solar hero, id. III (Paris 1973) p. 76.

[16] Cf. the comments on the parallel case in J. de Menasce, "La promotion de Varhan", RHR 133(?)(1947) pp. 5ff.; S. Wikander, *Vayu* (Lund 1941) p. 133.

a fundamental sense, mediated through Jewish sources, in the infancy narratives of the Gospels.

The link of Kereśāsp and his offspring to eschatological salvation which seems to have formed the basis for these developments is also entwined in a further aspect of his ambiguity—unfortunately little documented—namely, his relationship with the woman, or "witch", Knathaiti. *Vendidad* I,36 tells how she attached herself to the hero, although we lack the details of her bad effects; XIX,18 adds moreover the extraordinary statement that it was specifically to destroy her influence that Zarathustra promised the Saošyant who should be born hereafter! A negative relationship to an outwardly evil figure, who nevertheless produces the typical Zoroastrian effect of drawing forth God's redemptive act, in the coming of the future Saviour, is a striking instance which still fits the general pattern of Kereśāsp's mythology.

This part of his legend is absent from I *Enoch* 106, but it suggests that the scene of Lamech's reproach to his wife in 1QApGen may well also reflect the direct influence of parts of the original story. The recognition of the original myth now makes it unwise to suppose that the episode is mere literary elaboration departing from the written version in I *Enoch*, or that it originated in the specialised attitudes of the Essenes.[17] We certainly do not know enough to establish the relations of the presently existing texts. Was the disturbing woman-figure once the mythological mother of the child? Since Knathaiti is described as a "witch", a tale concerning the Kereśāsp's suspicions that she has been meddling with evil spirits would be an obvious part of the story. At any rate, the theme of heavenly or prophetic reassurance, in connection with a future child who is to save the world, and following a rebuke to a woman accused (rightly or wrongly) of involvement with wicked spirits, thus emerges as what seems to be a basic datum of the myth.[18]

One important way in which the attributes of many hero-figures from mythology could be incorporated and concentrated within a Zo-

[17] Contrary to J.W. Doeve, "Lamech's achterdocht in 1Q Genesis Apokryphon," NTT 15 (1960–1961), 401–415 (411–414). The fact that this aspect had a basis in the original myth perhaps supports G. Vermes' inclination to consider 1QApGen older than the literature with which it is obviously connected, such as the *Book of Jubilees* (Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Harmondsworth 1987) p. 252).

[18] Note that in the version focussed around Zarathustra alone in the orthodox tradition, the mother of Zarathustra was similarly accused of witchcraft; but this was in fact a sign of the divine grace shown to her in the sending down to her of the Glory (*Dēnkart* VII,2,6).

roastrian framework was, as we have seen, through the developing myth of the World-Saviour. The Zoroastrian theological idea, points out J. Duchesne-Guillemin, was "enriched by legendary motifs. Hence the Saoshyant Astvat-ereta, Justice Incarnate, despite his abstract name, is armed with the mace of mythical heroes."[19] Conversely, Kerešasp's presence alongside the Saošyant at the Transfiguration (*fraškart*) in the Zoroastrian versions indicates that these particular mythological episodes were here a notable source of ideas, and it appears that the mythic story of Kerešasp's mysterious and disturbing child Zāl, when suppressed in the orthodox tradition, was substituted by the promise of the Zoroastrian redeemer—of whom he would thus constitute an important prototype.

It was, however, almost certainly the apocalyptist-author of ApocAd who subsequently projected the ultimate historical realisation of these hopes, and thereby changed their orientation with his allusion to "fulfilment" (V 82,18–19). It is hardly conceivable that Zoroastrianism would of itself have shifted its emphasis from a mythological and cyclic prophetology, in which a variety of figures appear and reappear, to a definitive apocalyptic event.[20]

One disturbing fact, however—and it is one which might even appear to imperil the interpretation of the whole—is the absence from 1QApGen and I *Enoch* alike of the fabulous bird, the Sīmurgh. It is tempting to guess, nonetheless, that Noah's association with the messenger birds of Gen. 8,6–12, together with his receiving of the divine promise, was part of the initial attractive force between the two legends. The *Apocalypse of Adam* refers to these, "the bird/s of heaven" by the same phrase (CG V 70,14; and at 78,13). Links with the Flood or primal waters (cf. those into which the Glory fled) with human sin and punishment, and existing features suggestive of apocalyptic-eschatological ideas in Noachic literature, would readily have consolidated the thematic connection. In a typical Zoroastrian-influenced fashion, the elaboration of these themes in a birth-story meant that the important features of his later life would already be made to appear encapsulated, prophetically-mythically, in the story of his first appearance. Unfortu-

[19] J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *Religion of Ancient Iran* (Bombay 1973) p. 150.

[20] The Pahlavi "apocalypse" called the *Bahman Yasht* shows the typical variety and recurrence of eschatological figures. Duchesne-Guillemin notes its "very exact parallels" with the *Oracle of Hystaspes* (1st century B.C.); where the latter differs, it is most likely because it reflects alien influences in details: *Religion of Ancient Iran* p. 231.

nately we know nothing of how the later part of the story was treated in the extensive lacuna which separates the birth of Noah-story in the *Genesis Apocryphon* from its resumption with Abram in col. xix. But in the texts as we have them the Sīmurgh's main roles, both as a magical protector or substitute parent and as heavenly revealer, have been taken over by Enoch.

In his turn, Enoch has become an elusive being, "whose lot is with the angels", dwelling in Paradise (cf. I *Enoch* 12, 1–2). When Methuselah travels to find him, he cries out and Enoch becomes present to assist him; in the Zāl-story this exact role is attributed to the Sīmurgh (see table above). More generally, Enoch plays the part of a tutelary spiritual-angelic figure who watches over and has knowledge of the hero, sees his destiny, and so on. It is perhaps the case that the Sīmurgh had itself taken on this role in a secondary development. *The Apocalypse of Adam* (CG V 78,13–16) gives what is almost certainly a more original and authentic version of the story than does the *Shahnameh*: an "angel" (= messenger god?) is said to have "come forth", the term for a spirit manifestation or visionary appearance, to announce the glorious future of the child. This would correspond rather exactly to Enoch's vision (106,13).

The Sīmurgh's primary function in the original story, i.e. to associate the hero with the sacred Elburz mountain or magic realm at the world's edge, has also been complicated when the figures were identified with Old Testament characters. For one thing, the Noah-story has too many father-figures and the rewritten version of the Zāl-myth evidently has had to use them all as far as it could. Properly speaking, Methuselah not Enoch is next in line to be consulted by Lamech, and since he could not simply be passed over he has evidently been given part of the father's role of going to find news of his son. He has also been rather artificially involved in the moment of the begetting of the child in 106,1. In these versions, of course, the rejected or suspected child is not literally to be found at the world's edge, but only the prophetic knowledge of him and his meaning—which for religious purposes is much the same thing.

We can perhaps see the remains of efforts to incorporate them more simply in the closely related passages of I *Enoch* 65–67 and 83–84. Nickelsburg already noted that these contain "significant parallels to the story of Noah's birth".[21] In 65–67, it is Noah who stands central,

[21] Nickelsburg loc. cit.

and who is transported rather mysteriously "to the ends of the earth": the Ethiopic text says literally "he lifted off his feet from there and went …" (as if flying through the air?) Once arrived he summons Enoch by a triple invocation, and receives from him prophetic reassurance (with dark allusion to the "secrets" of the Watcher angels). Noah then himself receives a revelation from God about the angels who are making the ark in which he will be saved and save mankind. In 83–84 Enoch's visions, and the anxieties about them which he describes to Mahalalel, overlap very substantially in content with Noah's actual experiences, so much so that presumably they derive from the same original matrix of material. The complexities and implausibilities of these works are therefore better understood when seen as adaptations of a stronger-lined narrative or mythic original.

But a more serious obstacle than the Sīmurgh which stands in the way of applying these analogies directly to an understanding of Mt. 1–2 is the very fact of that allusion to the Flood and Noah, which apparently furnished the matrix for adapting the "disturbing nativity" story into Jewish tradition, but is there completely lacking.[22] Hence we would have to assume, if we are to continue this line of argument, that the pattern had in the interim been extended beyond its original context. Relevant here is the process whereby the eschatological figure of the True Prophet came to be associated with Adam, Noah, Melchizedek, Isaac, Jacob and Moses, etc. The alien concept of the prophetological cycle was taken over into Jewish apocalypticism, and each stage is typically associated with the perspective of a patriarchal figure, just as in the pseudonymous apocalypses—with the additional factor that these are now bound together by the chain of the True Prophet. Evidence of such developments is provided by II *Enoch* 70–72. F.I. Anderson is only the latest of a series of editors who have indicated the connections between the legend of Melkisedek here and the parentage, birth and prodigious acts of the infant Jesus in the canonical and apocryphal Gospels.[23]

In this otherwise unattested story, greater freedom of treatment was obtained through the invention of a "younger brother" of Noah, called

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[22] Brown, *Birth of the Messiah* notes however that the placing of the phrase used in Mt. 1,1(βιβλὸς γενέσεως) has a biblical precedent: "In Matthew the genealogy opens the story of Jesus, a localization resembling the sequence in Gen 5–9 where a genealogy prefaces the story of Noah" (p. 66 and see p. 67 and n. 8).

[23] See his notes *in extenso* in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* vol. I (London 1983) pp. 204–211.

Nir (70,4), through whom a version of the story could be elaborated without the constraints of the biblical parallel, whilst presumably retaining in the author's mind the features of the Noachic legend which had led to the initial assimilation. We find the same disturbing conception of a child, this time by the aged and sterile wife of Nir (71,5), the father's mistaken and violent rebuking of her (71,6–11), the same pattern of journey and consultation, here of Noe (Noah) himself, and reassuring words (71,12–14). The extraordinary event of the nativity is further heightened—into birth from the corpse of the dead mother. The prematurely developed child is here said to be "fully formed" in body and is immediately able to speak intelligible words (71,17–18); Noe prophesies that future generations will become more and more treacherous, but refers to the special destiny of the child (71,23–26)), and the child is first concealed in secret then carried off to the "Paradise of Edem" by an angel (in different texts called Michael or Gabriel). The angel flies down and appears to Nir in a dream-vision (71,27) before taking the child "on his wings" (72,9) so that he will avoid the punishment of sinful mankind by the Flood. Afterwards, the angel will return him to the world when he will be a great "head of priests" ("A"—text 72,2). The child will be called Melkisedek.

It is evident that the same elements of narrative have been treated here more freely, yet still reveal their common prototype. The evolution of the Saviour-aspect of the child is furthered by removing him, rather more fundamentally than was Noah, from the dangers of the Flood: no longer needing to be saved, he is the object of a hoped-for return when he will save future generations, and a guardian of priestly-esoteric knowledge, which is characteristically supposed to be preserved from antediluvian times. The origin of the story in the same syncretistic absorption of the Zāl-myth is further confirmed, moreover, by the presence in the ApocAd once more of very similar ideas. In this version the thematic kernel of the mythology (continued access for the privileged to paradisal knowledge and the "Glory", despite the "fall" and the discontinuities of fallen history such as the Flood) still remains constant. In this instance we hear of the preservation of the "knowledge" by the representatives of the true Israel or "kingless race", when these are caught up by angels from the Flood to "the place where the spirit [of] life dwells" (i.e. Paradise) (CG V 69,20–24). Afterwards they will return, and "come from heaven to earth" again (70,3–4). They play the precise role of Melkisedek in II *Enoch*: preserving esoteric wisdom; and the whole narrative of the Flood in CG V 69,2 – 70,6 has close parallels

in Jewish apocalyptic, Noachic literature and II *Enoch* especially.[24] The parallels can be extended, moreover, since in one manuscript (R) of II *Enoch* the well-known prophecy concerning Melkisedek makes him the "thirteenth", heading up a cycle of twelve priests. After him will come another twelve, to be completed by the "great archpriest, the Word and Power of God" who is the thirteenth or head of the future cycle (71,33–34). Here we not only have ideas closely related to the prophecy of the twelve "Great Ones" or prophetic incarnations preceding Christ in the *Testament of Isaac* 3,17–18, but even more closely a parallel to the successive appearances by the Illuminator to the sequence of thirteen Kingdoms, the last of which is his incarnation as the Messiah, in CG V 77,27 – 82,19. Anderson notes that II *Enoch* at this point shows direct links with Adam-legends.[25] All this would also tend to confirm that II *Enoch*'s disturbing nativity story was indeed evolved from the Zāl-legend in a milieu much like that which, under the same influence, developed the Adam-material and Flood-myth of Genesis into the history of esoteric wisdom which we know as ApocAd.

Perhaps the "R" prophecy was a special development of the material: or perhaps, more likely, the tradition was steered away from this direction in accordance with the less coherent but less challenging version in the "J" text 72,6: this tells how a different Melkisedek (!) will be found on the mountain where Noah's ark comes to rest, who will meet Abraham etc. and be a priest "after the manner of this [i.e. antediluvian] Melkisedek". The representative of the esoteric-priestly knowledge is now no sooner miraculously born before the Flood, than he is immediately rendered redundant: and by making the "other" Melkisedek who replaces him subsequent to and associated with the more usual survivor of the Flood, the ark of Noah, the story appears to insist after all upon identifying the true Israel with the descendants of the exoterically narrated lineage, not the bearers of the mysterious angelic wisdom claimed by ApocAd. But since this effectively destroys the whole meaning of the story, it is scarcely likely to be the original point, and rather seems to indicate a retreat from too radical implications—implications, however, elaborated at length in the *Apocalypse of Adam*, which thus stands closer to the original myth.

In summary, then: the stories of a disturbing nativity which are introduced into Jewish literature, under alien influence, in the second to first

[24] Above, pp. 45–48.
[25] Anderson op.cit. pp. 208–209.

centuries B.C. (I *Enoch*, 1Q ApGen) appear to be in essentials a reworking of the Iranian myth describing the birth of a strange son, Zāl, to the hero Sam (i.e. Kerešāsp). Detailed thematic correspondences support this, and the existence of the story in something extremely close to its later epic form is now proven by its appearance in the legendary cycle concerning the appearances of the Messianic "Illuminator of knowledge" of ApocAd. The development of the story in intertestamental literature (including II *Enoch*) evidences the emergence in Judaism of an esoteric saviour-figure, who can be identified with various patriarchs (Noah, Melchizedek, etc.), coloured by the syncretistic influences and mythological implications of the tale. Though the evidence shows that Jewish religious thought was open to such implications at the time, it also confirms that there was a strong urge to develop a linkage between these developments and the major themes of Old Testament history, based around the special destiny of the Jewish people (or a smaller group with a claim to be the "true Israel", thus identified with an esoteric community).

The "disturbing nativity" component which has long been supposed to be a separate strand in the pre-Matthaean sources of the infancy narratives shows that it was precisely such ideas which furnished a starting-point for the Christian development of similar Messianic birth-stories. The story reproduced in CG V 78,6–17 provides everything that we need for the posited pre-Matthean "annunciation" story. The agonised soul of a father, false suspicions, an angelic message of reassurance likewise to the father, and a saviour-child with an eschatological role are all features that derive from the prototype, the myth of Zāl. By the time Mt. was written, at any rate, pseudepigraphical treatments had already related them to a new interpretation of Old Testament figures: who are now important, it seems, because they play a role at decisive (redemptive) moments in apocalyptic history. CG V 78,6–17 shows that the story had already been attracted into an apocalyptically interpreted cycle of stories leading to the appearance of the Messiah, in circles which may not be far removed from Christian origins.

From 1QApGen and I *Enoch* there was not enough evidence directly to link the tale of Lamech, Noah and the angelic-visionary figure of Enoch to Mt. However, once we see that the essential transforming elements in it are those from the Iranian myth in a context basically that of ApocAd, i.e. as a proto-saviour- or prophet-figure in a sequence pointing to the Messiah, I believe there is sufficient evidence, and I conclude that this is in fact a version of the Zāl-story.

Relationship to Mt. 1,18–25

a. *An Agonised Soul (1,18–19)*

We may readily agree with Brown's analysis, that the pattern of dream-revelations to Joseph which is so prominent in the "main" source mainly represented in Mt. 2, is interfered with by some additional factor or narrative in the part of it which concrns the news of Mary's pregnancy, and the message of the angel.[26] It would be a large leap to compare the story from 1QApGen and I *Enoch*, if we did not have the prophetological frame in which the story could be seen as a link in the chain leading to the Messiah. We also need to redistribute some of the material which Brown assigns to the main narrative—and, most importantly, we need to put aside the wish to find the virgin birth in this material, since it belongs, as we shall see, to the story behind the "main" narrative (A). The main source is certainly supplemented, however, by what may be recognised as another summary version of the Zāl story. The agonised soul of a father; false suspicions; an angelic message of reassurance, likewise to the father; and a saviour-child with an eschatological role, given a significant name, are all features that we find in the several versions, and all derive directly from the mythic prototype. We have seen that the myth may also have included a reproach to the mother of communing with evil spirits.

By the time Mt. was written, at any rate, pseudepigraphical treatments had already related these themes to a new interpretation of Old Testament figures: who are now important, it seems, because they play a role at decisive (redemptive) moments in earthly-apocalyptic history. CG V 78,6–17 shows that the story had already been attracted into an apocalyptically interpreted cycle of stories leading to the appearance of the Messiah, in circles which may not be far removed from Christian origins. The Zāl (or Noah) story "means" that Jesus is born in the manner of one who comes at a crisis or turning-point comparable to the Flood, both as one who has to be saved (by divine intervention from human sin and misunderstanding) and as a saviour preserving the human race for the future, a role which receives its full scope in the apocalyptic versions of the Messiah. If we accept the more eso-

[26] Vögtle, *Messias und Gottessohn. Herkunft und Sinn der matthäischen Geburts- und Kindheitsgeschichte* (Düsseldorf 1971) p. 85 proposes rather than in Mt. 1 the evangelist is simply elaborating the angelic appearance-motif in his own terms.

teric implications, it implies also the fulfilment of the Adamic knowledge preserved from "before the Flood", containing the perspective of mankind's whole subsequent history and restoration, exile and return, as spelled out in ApocAd.

Mt. 1,18 reports the disturbing news of Mary being with child before going to live with her husband. Although the evangelist is not interested in narration, and contrives to destroy any suspense with his intrusive comment that all was "through the Holy Spirit", the condensed tale evokes familiar themes. Kerešāsp's agonised uncertainty belonged to a mythology of such misunderstandings, reflected it now appears in the Qumran version where Lamech is similarly troubled. The feature common to all the stories is that the apparently sinful situation is revealed by heavenly reassurance to be part of a divine "disturbance" of the settled ways of things. Mt. reflects this further in his repeated reference to disturbing women as links in the Genealogy, serving to show how God has intervened in a special way to bring about the Messianic heritage: "there is something extraordinary or irregular in their union with their partners—a union which, though it may have appeared scandalous to outsiders, continued the blessed lineage of the Messiah."[27] The breaking-in of a higher, divine purpose is mythologically represented through an "unnatural" situation, resulting in a birth that sweeps away the established order to bring in or restore to mankind an awareness of God's intervention.

The scandal affects Joseph as it does his mythological prototypes. Zāl's mother is too fearful to go to Sām, because of the father's doubts and shame about the child; in the Zarathustra-legend, the father is fearful and suspicious of the child and actually won over to the views of Durasrab and the *karaps*, and the child is only saved by heavenly intervention (*Dēnkart* VII,3,8–12). Lamech's doubts are assuaged by sending Methuselah to learn the truth from Enoch, much as in the Zāl-story Sām goes to the Sīmurgh. Only in the II *Enoch* version (71,9) does the scandal of the shamed husband and his rebuke actually go so far as to precipitate the death of the mother, Sopanim. The "unnatural" and scandalous birth-motif is perhaps raised to its highest possible pitch here: but it is also the version closest to Mt. 1,19 in the wishes of Nir to avoid any public scandal and keep the whole affair secret (71,14). The II *Enoch* story is also relevant here in that it shows how the line between

[27] Brown, op. cit. p. 73. I shall argue later that the Genealogy also reflects the thought-world of ApocAd or near relations to its viewpoint.

different versions is easily blurred. One might object, for example, that the Iranian myth and its closest reflection in 1QApGen/I *Enoch* deals with a child who shocks his father when he is born. In Mt. however, the child has not yet been born; it is the fact of his conception which disturbs. However, it is to be noted that in the II *Enoch* version the entire drama of the shamed father, the rebuked mother, and the wish to keep the matter quiet, all happen before the child is born in 71,17; the explanatory revelation reassuring Nir about the child does not come until 71,27, explaining that he will be under angelic protection. In the Zarathustra-legend too, the hostility of the people and scandal concerning the mother likewise concern the phase before the prophet's birth and even before her coming to live with Purušasp (*Dēnkart* VII,2,12).

The story told in Mt.1,18–19 reproduces mythological patterns, much as we find them in ApocAd domiciled in the perspective of Jewish apocalyptic and Messianism. The story concerns human doubts, sinfulness and failure to understand the greatness of divine purposes which cut across normal categories, and prophesies Jesus' role as an agent of those designs. Old Testament parallels to these stories are largely absent; the themes originated in the absorption of stories like that of Zāl here, already combined with a relationship to eschatological and "salvific" conceptions which transformed Judaism in the last centuries B.C. among the Essenes and other esoteric groups.

The story manifestly gives us no access to information about the psychology, attitudes or actions of a "real-life" Joseph and Mary, so that it would be meaningless to speculate on Joseph's intentions e.g. regarding the consequences of divorcing Mary, in terms of divorce-practice at the time of Jesus. The actions, ideas and feelings belong entirely to figures within the thought-world of the Jewish sectarians who took up these particular myths and hoped to find them fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah. If we wish to draw any "historical" conclusion at all, it might be that through the story, Mary and Joseph would clearly be recognisable as belonging to such a sect, in which alone their ideas and feelings and the plot itself have meaning. Compare in this context the evangelist's citation in 1,23 of an otherwise unknown prophecy relating to the "Nazorene" sect.

Outside such a context, it does not even make sense to wonder whether a child's birth is "unnatural", or to see in that idea a possible religious significance. Indeed in II *Enoch* the child is reared completely in secret (71,23) until he is spirited away to Paradise to await his future destiny as the "thirteenth": the whole event has no outward sig-

nificance for the "sinful" world, but is known only to insiders through Enoch's revelatory book. There and in Mt., the meaning of the tale is ultimately the same, therefore as in 1QApGen, even though the unnaturalness of the birth is not expressed in the same way. Joseph has to choose between a public "scandal" and the revelatory voice of an angel, between the blindness he temporarily shared with the uncomprehending world and the acceptance of divine disclosure. The meaning of Joseph and Mary's doubts, fears and hopes all concern the spiritual reality they may see come into being through sharing in God's apocalyptic plan. As the evangelist abruptly reminds us in that intrusive remark, the issue is, in short, all about recognising the Spirit.

b. *A Spirit—Evil or Holy (1,20)*

Not at issue is the child's paternity: Sām and Lamech are reassured on this point, but it is the strangeness of the child which they need to understand as carrying divine, rather than demonic or sinful significance. Joseph is likewise assured that he can take Mary as his wife, and from the fact that we have the genealogy of Joseph it appears that Jesus is accepted as his son, on the Semitic principle of acknowledgment conferring legitimacy. In II *Enoch* the unnaturalness has become a strange conception (after the age of sexual relations) as well as praeternormal birth and development; in Mt. the story has been linked to that of virgin-birth; but all these things figure as yet, in this framework, primarily as signifying in one way or another the unnaturalness of the event.

Totally irrelevant, of course, is the modern biological concept of paternity. It is well-known that for Jewish thought every successful marital union involves father, mother and God; the transmission of the "image" is a direct fulfilment of God's declared purpose in Gen. 1,26, rather than a biological process based on genetics. The "unnatural" aspect of the birth in the legend is therefore special in the way it draws attention to God's activity among men, rather than being unique as such. The effect of all the birth-legends is to draw attention to the special quality of birth as a new beginning, ending an old cycle and bringing a new start. The death of Sopanim, and origin of the child from her corpse, is a striking way of saying this. So is the Zarathustra-legend where all the wonderful aspects of the myths are concentrated together in truly startling fashion—yet he, and even the Saošyants, are humanly begotten too (*Dēnkart* VII,2,48; *Bundahišn* XXXII,5,8).

Yet the disturbing aspects of the birth can also evoke images of the destructive and frightening. Zarathuštra's mother is wrongfully accused of witchcraft because she bears the *xvarenah* of the future prophet; in accordance with his major role in dramatising these ambiguities, Sām is associated with a "witch", while also being promised the Saošyant, and wonders whether his child comes from the evil, Ahrimanic spirits. Lamech wonders whether his son is from the Watcher-angels or *Nephilim*, and the Iranian legends furnish a basis for supposing that this material has a basis in the original form of the story, rather than simply being an Essene elaboration. At the same time angel-figures abound in good as well as evil forms. A winged supernatural being protects Zāl, and was understood in Jewish tradition as equivalent to the supernaturally translated Enoch, "whose lot is with the angels" in Paradise: he watches over and foretells the destiny of the wonder-child. Melkisedek is taken by an angel up to Paradise; Mt.'s child and family are diligently watched over and guided by angels.

No directly ambiguous implications are met with in Mt.; but that may because the evangelist has suppressed them, just as he suppressed any implications of scandal with his forceful comment "giving away" the story in 1,18. There is a problem in exegesis at Mt. 1,20, where modern commentators have found it hard to say why the angel tells Joseph not to be afraid. Is some secret still lurking here from the story he has curtailed? Where might we seek for evidence? If the stories utilised by the evangelist were already combined, as referring to Jesus' Messianic status, by the evangelist's community, we might expect to find traces of their influence in the apocryphal infancy Gospels.

And indeed, in the *Protevangelium* 14,1 we find the distraught Joseph expressing a fear that "what is in her may have sprung from the angels" (the text is closest to I *Enoch* 106,6: "it seems … that he is not sprung from me but from the angels"). The meaning has again been modified away from any scandal—being justified by the cross-reference to "innocent blood" in canonical Mt. 27,4. But since the passage can scarcely have arisen on the basis of that text, it might well be presumed that the author is still drawing on accounts known to him, which he seeks to bring under the control, if not yet of the "canon", then of what were rapidly becoming the highly prestigious literary versions of Matthew and Luke. Many scholars have noted the continuing influence of oral tradition e.g. in the birth of Jesus in a cave, also familiar to Justin, *Dial.* 78,5; and there is a strong sense that for the writer of the *Protevangelium* the canon is as yet unfixed. These facts

combine to suggest a conclusion different from that of H. Koester, who comments on the canonical infancy accounts that "there seems to be no older story in any apocryphal gospel that has survived independently."[28] On the contrary: I would say the story that Jesus was thought to be an angelic offspring is shown by I *Enoch*, 1QApGen and its Iranian prototypes to be part of an original story, surviving in apocryphal form though suppressed and reinterpreted in the canonical account.

Did the *Protevangelium* 14,1 rightly solve the exegetical problem of Mt. 1,20? It may at least preserve part of the meaning. For consider the rest of the angelic message of reassurance:

> Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. What is begotten in her is from a spirit that is holy (ἐκ πνεύματός ἐστιν ἁγίου). She will bear a son …

Can the reference to a spirit bear the weight of the capitals usually added in translations? More likely the angel originally responded directly to the uncertainty of Joseph—like that of Lamech and his prototypes, his fear that the unnatural child was from a sinful spirit rather than a holy one. Even if the reference was already to the (Holy) Spirit, or so taken in a pre-Matthaean Jewish-Christian context, it is still unlikely to have borne the meaning of the begetting of God's Son that has come to be associated with the passage in Christian theology. Rather, for the evangelist or his sources, it would be the Spirit which has incomprehensibly guided human destinies and by strange ways brought about the birth of a saviour-child, like the Noah-figure of 1QApGen through whose birth God's decisive action at a turning-point in history is wondrously brought to human attention.

Still more precisely, it would the Spirit which has made him the True Prophet, now appearing in a Messianic recapitulation of all his former manifestations. For in all this we are dealing as much with a renewal of revelation as with the birth of a natural child. Sometimes it is simply portrayed as a new source of knowledge. In *Jubilees* 8,1–2 Noah's grandson discovers a rock-inscription (which we have previously compared to ApocAd 85,3–11):

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[28] Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels* (London and Philadelphia 1990) p. 308. It is possible of course that the apocryphal version introduces an extraneous motif here: but why, since it goes on to back the canonical story? The whole passage with the distraught Joseph in *Protevangelium* 13–14 gives full rein to the drama of uncertainty which the evangelist undercut at 1,18. It looks more probable therefore that it echoes earlier versions. The reinterpretation in Mt. belongs to the evangelist's redaction and

> And he saw from it that it contained the teaching of the Watchers … And he wrote it down and said nothing regarding it. For he was afraid to speak to Noah about it lest he should be angry with him about it.

The secret knowledge of the Watchers included, as M. Hengel says, "all the wisdom of the pagans and the refined culture of the Hellenistic period." We are at the heart of the "double revelation" theory. In Essene and similar literature of the Hellenistic-Roman time, the problem arises of interpreting the wider knowledge that became available: we have seen how it can be made part of the original revelation (e.g. from Abraham), or seen as ultimately revealing its place in the future "angelic" wisdom that will unite the whole picture, as in ApocAd. But either way, it is necessary to explain its alien, pagan or partial form. *Jubilees* and the Essene tradition regard the partial forms as "demonic wisdom stemming from the betrayal of divine secrets",[29] from the Watcher-angels just as in ApocAd the twelve kingdoms each worship one fragment of the cosmic powers. The myth of Zāl as taken up in Jewish esotericism, and especially in II *Enoch*'s Melkisedek, is paralleled there (CG V 69,20 – 70,4) in the account of those with true knowledge preserving their angelic true revelation through the time of sinful humanity and the Flood, which in the Enochian tradition was caused by the teaching of the Watchers (I *Enoch*).[30]

To anyone from an Essene or similar esoteric background the meaning of Joseph's fear would surely suggest a spiritual dilemma. Is the new revelation promised by this child's unnatural appearance/conception a "demonic" betrayal, a mystery stolen by the Watchers and given wrongfully to human beings, or is it one of those true "counter-revelations" (Hengel) by which God revealed to Noah, Enoch, Abraham and the Essenes themselves the original wisdom of which it was a part? The story in Mt. assigns to Jesus a birth like one of the patriarchs from their apocalypses, now a sort of saviour-figures, and representative of the true wisdom which they had preserved from primeval times, around which all the wisdom of the world would cohere into the final revelation. He is the True Prophet: but for Jewish-Christian religion that itself poses the problem. Are such universalising ideas a concession to paganism, or are they the primeval, patriarchal truth of which paganism is a dis-

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theology. As Brown noted, the infancy gospel here anticipates the theme of "sonship", looking forward to the working of the Holy Spirit in 3,16–17: Brown, p. 135 and n. 9.

[29] Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (London 1974), I, p. 243.

[30] Cf. above pp. 103 ff.

tortion and betrayed form? Zarathustra and his prophecy can be either the source of all alien wisdom since the Flood—the anti-divine inspiration he became in the pseudo-Clementines: or, he can be taken as the model for a "counter-revelation" of the coming Messianic embodiment as he was in ApocAd. Joseph was indeed wrestling with large issues.

c. *A Significant Name (1,21)*

The strongest part of Brown's case for an "annunciation of birth" narrative is based on the common pattern he claims to find, modifying the "basic narrative", in 1,18–25. We have already dealt with some aspects, such as the "begetting through the Holy Spirit", and suggested that they may have had a less christological meaning at least in the story as the evangelist took it up. Also important to Brown's argument, however, is the naming command, which is an integral part of the Old Testament model he proposes of a "five-step" biblical annunciation.[31] Accordingly, he omits the naming commandment from the "A" narrative, but he retains the clause "for he shall save his people from their sins" in the main narrative. Although he does not say so, and in a defensive footnote seeks to use the passage in two ways at once, it is clear that it disturbs the similarity he would find here with Lk. 1,30–31.[32]

However, I think it much more likely that both the expression "he will save his people from their sins" and the naming formed part of the Zāl story/Noah story which modified the basic narrative. Brown already has to admit that "Matthew does not meet the five-step pattern nearly so well as Luke" and has to account for "the absence of steps 2,4 and 5 in Matthew" in terms of general "deformation". What remains, apart from the revelation setting, is fundamentally step 3—the naming, with its various subdivisions. It would be easier to assume that what we have is a pattern of a naming story, not necessarily foretelling a birth.[33]

In the Zāl-story and its derivatives, the naming is not an annunciation of birth. But in all the versions of the tale, peculiarly elaborate naming procedures are evident. After he has been born but temporarily rejected by his father, Zāl is given a name by his quasi-angelic guardian-figure, the Simurgh: Dastān. The name is a reproach to his father, since

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[31] Brown, op. cit. pp. 155–159 (157).
[32] Op. cit. pp. 109,154. For the parallel with Lk., p. 158 and n. 71.
[33] Brown, p. 157.

it means deceit or trickery. Sām suspected deceit and "enchantment"—but according to the Sīmurgh it was he who:

> practised *dastān* and enchantment on you. When you return to your own place, command the warrior who will be your counsellor to call you by that name.

The moral ambiguities are typical of Sām (Kerešasp): his good deeds regularly have the character of sinful actions, his sins turn out to save the creatures of Ohrmazd. On his reconciliation to his son, however, he gives him the name Zāl, or Zāl-zar ("golden Zāl") as his own son and heir.[34] Thematically, there are already interesting parallels with Joseph in Mt. After all, he, the "righteous", has just suspected Mary of sin, and in the prototype narrative there must have been more of his suspicion about her "deceit" than the evangelist permitted to remain (cf. 1,18). In the angel's assertion that, on the contrary, "he will save his people from their sins" there is something of the sharp reversal as in the mythical tale. There is also the complex issue of the child as Joseph's son—yet something more. Though Zal is indeed his father's child, there is still the anomaly of his appearance, showing him divinely destined (though not demonically begotten) which has to be accepted by his struggling father. The angel's address to Joseph as "son of David" stresses that he must have a part in bringing about the child's Messianic destiny by accepting him as his own.

In the Noah-story, the naming again comes well after the birth of the child, when the semi-angelic Enoch is consulted. He narrates his visionary experience of the child's destiny. If J.T. Milik is right, the original text of I *Enoch* 106,18 contained an elaborate threefold explanation of the name of Noah, which Lamech must be told to give his child—including the interpretation based on "rest" which is implied by ApocAd 70,8.[35] It is then said that "he and his sons shall be saved from the destruction which shall come upon the earth on account of all the sin, and the unrighteousness …". This is rather close to Mt. 1,21—and we have seen that Noah is a sort of saviour as well as being saved. Once again the expression in 1,21 probably had a basis in the prototype story that was less "high", theologically, than the shaping by the evangelist now implies to us. The popular etymology connecting Jesus with "save" probably still helped bring out the esoteric aspect of

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[34] *Shahnameh* (ed. Levy) pp. 38–39.

[35] J.T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch. Aramaic Fragments from Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford 1976) pp. 213–216. For the interpretation of Noah as "rest", cf. above, pp. 44–45.

his birth, but it is unlikely that it originally implied more than a status comparable to one of the "patriarchal" saviour-figures.

The case of II *Enoch* 71 is exceptional among the stories, though less so on close analysis. The situation is complicated slightly by an unexpected appearance of the angel Gabriel with a message for Nir, only in some texts between vv. 11 and 12. However, it is not a genuine annunciation of birth, but a displaced angelic reassurance: "The child which is to be born in her is a righteous fruit. …" (Perhaps a scribe found it hard that the authentic text delays its version of the *denouement* so long, until 72,5 as we noted previously when discussing this tale.) There is no instruction to name the child, so in our present context the passage can best be ignored.[36]

The child however is named as soon as he is born, Melkisedek. Almost bizarrely, given the immense fascination which the name of Melchizedek held for the Jewish tradition, no apparent interpretation of the name is given,[37] but the phrase describing him, at 71,29 echoes I *Enoch* 106,18 almost word for word. Perhaps the absence of "significant naming" is to be explained by the fact that the precociously developing child himself speaks immediately after birth to bless the Lord (71,19; cf. I *Enoch* 106,3). In conjunction with his amazing appearance (interpreted as his "badge of priesthood"), this establishes his credentials as a priest, making any oracular sentence foretelling his role more than redundant. So perhaps the interpretative declaration has now passed from the angel-figure directly to the child himself. The structure of the story looks as though it has also been reversed in some sense, in that the child ends by being separated from his father totally (taken up into Paradise), rather than restored to him as in the other versions. But probably what we have here is another feature produced by the extraordinary intensification of all the motifs (death of the rebuked Sopanim; birth from death; total concealment of the child and of the fate of the mother; etc.). Yet the father after all *is* reconciled with his child, whose divinely ordained uniqueness he has acknowledged; and the child *will* return after his separation at the magic edge-of-the-world domain (Elburz/Paradise)—only it will be in the far future. The role of the separation-motif is the same, simply more intense.

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[36] The editor F.I. Anderson dismisses it as "clearly secondary in [texts] A U; it is not in B Rum R": in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (London 1986) p. 206 n.*j*.

[37] For dualistic developments based on the interpretation of *-zedek* in the name as

Apparently reversed too is the double-name theme, since Melkisedek is to all effects and purposes a non-person here-and-now and another person in the future, linked only by a name; in the "J" version, he really is two different people. If we see the basic pattern as a child with a special, oracular name in addition to (or displacing) the name given in the normal way by the father, however, we can again view Melkisedek as an extreme rather than an exceptional case. In the other cases the child has a human name as son-of-his-father (or is acknowledged so as to be known as his son), but also and more significantly an angelically or divinely bestowed name (priestly name), which he will in time fulfil. Melkisedek's significant name has obliterated any trace of a fatherly given-name, given his birth-circumstances and his totally secret existence in his father's house which hardly requires him to be addressed by any ordinary people: his significant name is still a pointer to his foretold future as a "head of priests", but it also fills the void of his present existence on earth, from the very moment just after birth when he prophesies the priestly one and at the same instant fulfils it by uttering his benediction.

Appendix

Pseudo-Matthew 14 adds to the surviving motifs that of the light shining from the mother of the miracle child: this is a strikingly closer parallel to the Iranian prototype than the biblically influenced "cloud of light" in the *Protevangelium*. The same description is given of the mother of Zarathustra in the *Dēnkart* VII,2,8. It is surely unlikely that so marginal a feature of Christian tradition would have been adopted into Zoroastrian texts (though it has sometimes been supposed). Moreover, we know from *Apocalypse of Adam* 64,7–12 etc. that the transmission of the "Glory", *xvarenah* interpreted as paradisal radiance and associated with royalty and spiritual knowledge, was already connected there with esoteric teachings and with Messianic conceptions (the Thirteenth Kingdom). It is more probable that we have therefore a survival from legendary ideas, given Christian form and surviving via oral tradition into the NT apocrypha.

"rightneousness" at Qumran and later sources, see: J.T. Milik, "*Milkî-Sedeq* et *Milkî-reša'* dans les anciens écrits juifs et chrétiens", in *Journal of Jewish Studies* 23 (1972), 95–144.

CHAPTER FIVE

A VIRGIN BIRTH AND A PERSECUTED CHILD (MT. 1–2 AND CG V 78,18–26)

A Virgin Birth and a Persecuted Child

Its editor J.A. Fitzmyer noted that "with reference to the infancy narratives it is surprising how little the first part of *Genesis Apocryphon* has been exploited for the type of literature found there." The reason of course, as he himself notes, is that "this Qumran parallel does not solve the problem about the origin of the notion of the virginal conception of Jesus or its *religionsgeschichtliche* background."[1] The recognition of the story's role in shaping Mt. 1,18–25 shows, however, that the expectation of Brown and others that the virgin-birth belonged to the pre-Matthaean source-material at this point was misplaced. That is unlikely to mean, on the other hand, that the evangelist himself introduced the virgin birth theme, e.g. as a theological reflection, nor that he has arrived at it by weaving disparate materials and ideas together from the Old Testament. In fact, as we have previously mentioned, there is widespread acceptance that the citations (such as the celebrated Is. 7,14 in 1,22–23) are to be understood as secondary commentary on the traditions the evangelist has used, rather than their original determinants. One would still expect therefore that the origins of the idea should be found in the sources which underlie the infancy narratives. In fact, the inclusion of the 1QApGen story only becomes relevant to explaining the infancy narrative if it was already joined with material which corresponds to Brown's a "main narrative" story. Otherwise, after all, the doubts and reassurance in the Qumran text are not specific enough to be certainly those behind Mt.

If Mt.'s source was more or less closely similar to the story-cycle in ApocAd, we have seen reason to think that virgin birth, as a special case of mythological themes concerning an unnatural or paradoxical

[1] J.A. Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramaean* (London 1979) p. 98.

birth, was one of the basic ideas which had drawn the legendary tales together in the first place (i.e. the legend of the virgin-born Saošyants, already appropriated to point to the Messiah). Though it does not appear in connection with the Second Kingdom, it features several times in the material which immediately follows, notably the stories of the Third and Fourth Kingdoms. I have argued that these were already joined together as they are in ApocAd, and formed a unit, by the time they reached the evangelist. The "unnatural" birth motif of the Second Kingdom was already understood as pointing to the virginal motif belonging to core theme of the cycle, made explicit in the two joined stories that follow. It is to the first of these that we must now turn.

We have already noted that the "Third Kingdom" story bears strikingly upon certain narrative features in the Gospel story:

> The third kingdom says
> of him that he came
> from a virgin womb.
> He was cast out of his city,
> he and his mother; he was brought
> to a desert place. He nourished himself
> there. He came and received
> Glory and power. (CG V 78,18–25)

In our preliminary observations we noted the general similarity of the story to materials from what Brown terms Mt.'s "main" infancy narrative (which I designate therefore "A"), materials commonly supposed from literary analysis to have once existed independently.[2]

ApocAd now attests a very similar if not identical story's presence in a Jewish-syncretistic setting close to the time of Christian origins, and very probably the version in ApocAd could be early enough to antedate the Gospel.

Points of comparison may be treated briefly as follows.

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[2] Thus Brown, op. cit. p. 109: based on Mt. 1,20–21; 2,1a; 2,2–3; 2,13–14; 2,16b; 2,19–21. C.T. Davis, "Tradition and Redaction in Matthew 1:18 – 2:23", in JBL 90(1971), 404–421 offers a somewhat less convincing analysis whereby the "massacre of the children" episode does not belong to this particular block, but the "visit of the Magi" does. I shall suggest below there may be an element of truth here, in that a suggestion of the plot relating to the Magi was already contained in the tale behind the Third Kingdom story. However, the case for the Magi-episode being influenced by a separate story is actually strong (cf. next chapter), and since the massacre does not show obvious signs of other affinities, it seems most natural to group it with the contents of the "Herod" story as does Brown. Needless to say, it would be a mistake to distance the massacre-story from this block because historical evidence for the incident is not forthcoming.

a. *Virgin Birth*

If the theme came in with this part of the pre-Matthaean material, there is no need to suppose a hypothetical "annunciation of birth" story which Mt. has in common with Luke (Brown pp. 106; 116–117; also 34–35) and which he has melded with the "shocking nativity" story. However, unless we can identify our own story more closely, and determine its background, the mere outline cannot yet help us much with the meaning of the virgin birth. It can only suggest that it bears little resemblance to Lukan material and belongs to the background cycle of stories utilised in the formation of Mt. But we are thus able to reduce the complexity of the model, and derive the important elements of the stories from a narrower range of already related material.

b. *Persecution of Mother and Child*

This theme is also central to the development of these legendary types into the narratives of the childhood of Zarathustra, and already of his mother (*Dēnkart* VII,3,8 ff.; VII,2,3; etc.).

c. *The Family Leave their Home to Go into Alien Territory*

This is again a theme which which plays a major part in the Zarathustra-legend. The mother's persecution and forced removal to another locality because she is destined to bear the child whose Glory already appears, is outwardly contrived by the malice of the *devs* and *karaps* but is ultimately brought about through the "miraculous power" of the good *yazatas (Dēnkart* VII,2,1O).

In Mt. the indication of the locality as Egypt is not surprising if the story-cycle came to the evangelist in a context similar to ApocAd. The course of history foreseen by Adam is based on the Jewish biblical categories of exile and return (above, pp. 43–52). The parallels with Moses should not be forced. Subsequent legends applied to the Illuminator by the tenth and twelfth kingdoms evince an independent interest in Egypt as part of the prophetological cycle.[3] A development of the infancy story

[3] See above, pp. 72–74. The case for an Egyptian connection would of course be strengthened if we could accept G. MacRae's contention that the legend of the "third kingdom" is related to the celebrated mythical scene of the birth of the Messiah in Rev. 12,1–6 (in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* I (London 1983) p. 716 marg. The

which would include Egyptian connections is therefore also predictable from the *Apocalypse* prior to the Gospel text. Brown has argued extensively for the influence of *midrashim* adapting the stories of Joseph and Moses, each involving Egypt and the Pharaoh. None of them provides a convincing prototype for the mythologised Herod of the Gospel or its sources, however; and it is worth remembering that we would have been unlikely to foresee the use of Noah, or Melchizedek in connection with the "shocking nativity" story before the Qumran discovery of 1QApGen. It remains very probable that before it came to the evangelist the story would have been homologised with an episode from the Old Testament, but failing discoveries such as brought us the Qumran adaptation of the Second Kingdom narrative, we cannot be sure which.[4]

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background there has been shown by A. Yarbro-Collins to include Egyptian influences: *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula 1976), pp. 56–71; 245–270. But on close study any similarities seem to me to evaporate: see my discussion in Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology" pp. 4767–4768. The use of Rev. 12,1–6 as support for the historicity of the Matthaean account of Herod's persecution of Jesus is rightly dismissed by Brown, pp. 226–227.

[4] The mass of biblical motifs and legends is actually the least stable ground for determining the meaning and significance of the Gospel stories. Brown's derivation of the Herod/flight-into-Egypt story from biblical and post-biblical midrashic materials is a bravura display of his technique, which in the end also shows its limitations. He begins by conflating parallels from what may be called the Joseph/benevolent Pharaoh saga, and the Moses/wicked Pharaoh saga, somewhat tenuously linked to the Matthaean context via a typology of Exodus and a supposed parallelism between the Old Testament and New Testament Joseph. He follows G. Strecker and G.Erdmann in adding materials from Josephus, *Antt.* II, ix (205–237) and Philo, de *vita Mosis* and by this means he is able to account for virtually every motif individually in this part of the pre-Matthaean narrative. The difficulty is that no single one of his parallel scenarios can be extrapolated into a narrative schema determining the plot as a whole. This is the advantage of the sources proposed here from ApocAd. We need not contradict Brown, but we do need to supplement his appeal to mere motifs.

Exempli gratia: the Pharaoh in the Joseph saga cannot be assimilated to the wicked tyrant, prototype of Herod, because his character does not fit; hence to make a similar story-line he has to be crossed with the quite different Pharaoh of Ex.1,8.

Or again: the later Jewish legends from the Talmud (*b.Sanh.* 101a) and *Exodus Rabbah* I,18 furnish additional parallel motifs, but again do not develop them in a consistently similar narrative structure: being in the employ of the Pharaoh, the Egyptian "magi" of these stories are hostile to the child. And although the latter is foreseen to be a "saviour of Israel" (*b.Sotah* 12b), in this Egyptian setting that simply does not amount to an implied threat to the ruler's own crown, which is needed to explain in Mt. 2,3. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah* pp. 111–116 and esp. nn. 43–44. The same problems apply to the other parallels in Jewish legend, especially about Moses, and the targums: these had been emphasised by G.Erdmann, *Die Vorgeschichten des Lukas- und Matthäusevangeliums* (Goettingen 1932) pp. 58ff.; and G.Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit* (Goettingen 1966)

d. *Preparation for Return in Glory and Power*

The myth invests the "exiled" child with suggestion of divine assistance and/or royal right, and in both Gospel and its source this in turn is given eschatological and even cosmic significance. The sense that the story's outline is close in detail to that of the pre-Matthean main infancy narrative or "dream"-source (A) is greatly heightened, however, if we identify the story as that of another Iranian hero who "bore the Glory", Farīdūn (Frēdūn, Frēdōn, etc.: more recent forms of the Avestan name of the hero Thraētaona).[5] We are then able to restore fuller detail to the story out of the epic tradition. Important details emerge which strengthen the comparison as follows.

e. *Dream Visions*

In Brown's reconstruction of the A-source, he proposes that Herod most likely learned of Jesus' birth in a dream (based on the analogy of the other dream-revelations in the text as well as some related subsequent legends). The recurring pattern of dream oracles, he concludes, was only later disrupted by the insertion of the "coming of the Magi").[6]

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pp. 51–55. For the later-attested Jewish legends, see R. Bloch, "La naissance de Moïse dans la tradition aggadique" in *Moïse, l'Homme* de *l'Alliance* (Paris 1955) pp. 102–118, esp. 115–116 for the star-legend applied to Moses.

H. Koester rightly draws attention to the methodological problems here: Brown's study of the infancy stories is limited to displaying the repertoire of "forms, themes and language for these narratives"—rather than the actual basis. He himself is inclined to look to religious patterns from Egypt for the determining factors in their use: "Unfortunately, Brown does not place these narratives into the wider context of the continuing influence of the Egyptian throne-language and its resurgence in the language of political and religious expectation in the Hellenistic and Roman world" (*Ancient Christian Gospels* (London and Philadelphia 1990) p. 305n. 2). However, his evidence (following E. Norden) for the Egyptian origins of the nativity-scene, essentially the inclusion of the animals, and the message of peace on earth, rather belong to the proclamation of the divine child who is the "Christ-Lord" in Lk. 2, 6–14, rather than to Mt. who is basing himself on a prophetology. At any rate, it is unlikely that this type of (ultimately) Egyptian influence operating on Luke was what swayed Mt.'s presentation of Egypt as the place of refuge for the child Jesus prior to his maturity and mission in Palestine.

[5] *The Epic of the Kings*, select. and trans. Levy (London 1967) pp. 16–28; reconstruction of the ritual setting of the myth in M. Boyce, "Iranian Festivals" in E. Yarshater (ed.), *Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge 1983) III.2 pp. 792ff.; Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology" pp. 4768–4769.

[6] Brown, op. cit. pp. 114–115.

Such a reconstruction finds much to support it if the ApocAd material is expanded from Iranian tradition.

We find there that the persecutor who caused the child to be cast out was the dragon-king, or Azidahāk. According to the epic account, he learned of the hero-child's existence in a dream, and sent his forces to seek him out in the hope of preventing his future seizure of the throne.[7] Dreams are certainly a major mode of divine communication in the "A" source of Mt.1–2, and the competing idea of astrological divination belonging to the Magi story obviously belongs to another line. That they were a feature of the source is more likely than the proposal of B.T.D. Smith, that they were introduced directly by the evangelist.[8] The evangelist clearly did favour the idea, on the other hand, and may himself have been responsible for tipping the balance so strongly toward dream-revelation his account of the holy family.

f. *The motif of the "Massacre of the Innocents"*

This is present in highly dramatic form, since in the Iranian myth the dragon-king preys upon the children of his subjects, devouring their brains. Although in a slightly different way, this motif is also directly connected with the circumstances of his search for the foreseen royal child.

In the *Epic*, Azidahāk tries to learn of the whereabouts of the child from a suppliant, the blacksmith Kāva, who has lost eighteen children to the dragon-king's rapacity. One theme stressed, reminiscent of the Gospel, is the humble artisan's innocence and honesty as against the ruthless tyranny of the king. In the episode we may also have a basis for the narrative feature which Brown regards as an anomaly, concerning

[7] Levy, pp. 17–18. Absent on the Iranian side, however, are any "good dreams" to aid the holy family. Quite the reverse: the removal to safety is attributed in the *Epic* to the vigilance and cleverness of Farānak, Farīdūn's mother. Zarathustra's birth and survival of the persecution by Durusrob and the *karaps* is similarly effected by a mixture of direct miracle and the family's wise handling *of* the situation, rather than by revealed divine guidance. We must assume therefore that this distinctive feature of the Matthaean narrative was introduced when it was schematised in terms of an Old Testament story.

[8] Smith, *The Gospel according to S. Matthew* (Cambridge 1927) p. 77. Smith cites in support the Matthaean episode in Mt. 27,19. Even Brown has to concede that the evangelist uses his own distinctive phrase κατ' ὄναρ both there and in ch. 1 (see his note to Mt. 1,20).

the disparate ways of discovering where the child is located. He finds "internal tensions" in 2,1–3; and 9:

> where the star and the Scriptures constitute competing divine indicators of where Jesus might be found, and where implausibly the king cannot find Jesus although the magi have led the way.[9]

The ambiguity, however, may have been in the prototype. In a manner resembling the part played in the Gospel by the Magi, the innocent messenger does not lead Azidahāk to victory over the child as he had hoped, but subsequently sides with the family and arranges aid toward the young hero's survival, enabling his ultimate triumphal return. Influence of the Farīdūn story would thus explain the Magi-episode less as an intrusion, involving an alien story drawn in and roughly attached: it might be more a case of weaving it in on the basis of existing themes. Note too that Kāva in the myth has mystical, royal and initiatory associations, since he and his followers bear the emblematic "Kaviani banner".[10] His association in the story with such a group, whether or not they stand for an original men's religious society, might have paved the way for the Magi, whose significance however was greatly enhanced by the themes of another story (see next chapter).

g. *The Virgin Birth*

In the Iranian context virgin birth would be equated, in a general way, with the bearing of the *xvarenah*. But it is precisely the role of this idea which demands further study. If the evidence of connection between the "main" pre-Matthaean narrative and the Farīdūn-legend is cogent, it remains distinctly problematic that the virgin-birth of the hero is explicitly mentioned only in the ApocAd version of his myth.

Farīdūn and the Virgin Birth

"He came from a virgin womb", says the Third Kingdom's story. But no such statement is to be found in the Iranian traditions about Farīdūn. Yet there is much to suggest that the version in ApocAd is doing no more than make explicit implications that must have been

[9] Brown, p. 111 n. 31.
[10] *Shahnameh* trans. Levy pp. 34–35.

realised earlier—at the very least, when the special resonance of the Saošyant mythology was elaborated from the older myths such as this one.

One of the most important pieces of evidence for the development of the Farīdūn-myth is preserved in the *Bundahišn* XXXI, on the race and genealogy of the Kayanid dynasty. XXXI,323 cites a mythological fragment, in some apparent confusion, but essentially relating to the hero's mother Farānak:

> This too [the Religion] says, that the Glory of Frēdūn settled on the root of a reed in the wide-formed ocean; and Noktarga, through sorcery, formed a cow for tillage, and begat children there; three years he carried the reeds there, and gave them to the cow, until the Glory went on to the cow; he brought the cow, milked her milk and gave it to his three sons; as their walking was on hoofs, the Glory did not go to the sons, but to Farānak. Noktarga wished to injure Farānak, but Farānak went with the Glory away from the fierce father, and made a vow thus: "I will give my first son to Aushbaum".[11]

Despite the obscure narrative-line and the otherwise unknown sorceror Noktarga with his semi-animal sons, the imagery and general significance of the story are relatively easy to interpret. All the motifs are familiar from the mythology of the Saošyants and the heroes who bear the Glory, and appear here much as they are finally woven into the Zarathustra legend.

This more basic myth evidently concerns the "first born son" of Farānak, i.e. Farīdūn, and relates how the Glory came to him, much as is done for the prophet himself in the Zarathustra-legend. We stand close to the original mythological ideas which underlie the whole development. The Glory has been hidden in the depths of the ocean, whence it fled from Jamšid ("shining Yima") at the moment of his "Fall", when he told the Lie and lost his divine aura:

> Then when he brought the lying untrue word into his mind, Xvarenah was seen to depart from him …
>
> Then the three-headed Dragon (*Dahāk*) rushed forward, thinking thus, "I shall lay hold of this Xvarenah …" Then Fire rose up from behind, saying thus aloud, "Back! learn this, O three-headed Dragon! If you should reach for this Xvarenah … I shall flame up upon your jaws.

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[11] E.W. West, *Pahlavi Texts*, vol. 5 (Oxford 1880; repr. Delhi 1977) pp. 138–139; and see p. 138nn. 2 and 5, p. 139 n. 1 for the confusion over the reading of the mother's name and alternative identifications (Farhang, Freni).

> Never hereafter shall you rush forth upon the Ahura-created earth for the destruction of the creatures of *asha* [righteousness]."
>
> Then the Dragon drew his forepaws back again, foreseeing a risk to his life, for Fire was terrifying. Xvarenah departed to the Vourukasha Sea. Forthwith Apām Napāt [the Son of the Waters], having swift horses, laid hold of it. And Apām Napāt, having swift horses, desires this: "I shall lay hold of this Xvarenah at the bottom of the deep sea, at the bottom of its deep gulfs."[12]

The close connection of the Glory with protective, fiery energy and its concealment in the depths of the Waters is reproduced in the myth of the Saosyants, where the fiery seed containing the *xvarenah* of Zarathustra is hidden in the depths of Lake Hamun until the virgins come at the predestined time. The association of fire with the stem of a watery plant such as a reed is another primitive mythological feature. The ability of sticks to produce fire is likened to lightning flash, or the revelation of a secret force. In the Zarathustra-legend the spiritual form, or *fravahr*, of the prophet passes to his parents in a haoma plant (*Dēnkart* VII,2,22). Even closer to the present myth, the heavenly "substance" of Zarathustra is first sent down to the clouds, and falls in miraculous rain to produce succulent grass-stems "at a season when other grasses were bent and dry, in the cattle-pasture of Pourušasp" (VII,2,38). Then:

> And lo! a great miracle was manifested. The Religion says: of those cows, two which had not borne a calf became with milk. And the bodily "substance" of Zardušt passed from the grasses to those cows, and was blended with the cows' milk. And Purušasp drove the cows back; and Purušasp said to Dugdov: "Dugdov! These two cows which have not borne a calf have become with milk. Milk these two cows." Then Dugdov…milked them. And the "substance" of Zaradusht was in the milk. It is revealed that Purušasp then asked Dugdov for the hom. And he poured it and mixed it with the cows' milk into which the "substance" of Zardušt had entered…And it is revealed that after the hom and the milk had been mixed together and consecrated to Ohrmazd, Purušasp and Dugdov drank them. And thus the Glory, *fravahr* and "substance" of Zardusht were united in his parents.[13]

The Glory, it will be recalled, came to Dugdov before she married Pourušasp, and was the cause of her persecution so that she had to leave her home.

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[12] *Yašt* 19,34–35; 49–51 (following M. Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (Manchester 1984) p. 30. For further analysis of this text and Boyce's reconstruction, see Appendix, below pp. 181–207.

[13] *Dēnkart* VII,2,40–47 (following M. Boyce, *Textual Sources* pp. 73–74).

It is clear from this that the Zarathustra-legend is an elaboration of the myth of the Glory. Elements of its original role in bringing about the birth of a spiritual hero-figure are assigned to the *fravahr* and/or the celestial "substance" which marks him out from ordinary mortals. Nurture by animals is also an heroic motif, apparently closely connected with the mystique of the Glory. The Zarathustra-legend uses it to draw attention by analogy to the notion of virgin-birth: the woman who nurtures the Glory which will be manifest in her future child carries a mysterious substance or energy that derives from no human father. In mythical terms, the cows produce milk, though they are yet heifers, showing that they are a stage in the supernatural transmission of the hero's unique qualities. In the more primitive version of the Farīdūn-fragment, all this is narrated of the x*varenah*: the Glory settles on the reeds, from the reeds is conveyed to the cow, passes into the milk, and thence into the mother, Farānak. Pourušasp's role in the elaborated tale remains rather redundant, since he does little more than draw Dugdov's attention to the miraculous milk of the cows. It is she who is closely assimilated to the miraculous virgin animals by milking them, symbolically sharing in their production of the motherly milk.

The Farīdūn-fragment offers a more consistent and unitary view of another major theme from the later elaborations too: the sorcerors (*karaps*) and their efforts to destroy the child. In the fragment, the aim is specifically to seize the divine Glory, which is in accord with the mythical prototype in *Yašt* 19, where the Dragon (Dahāk) seeks to do just that as the Glory is fleeing to the ocean depths. In his unsuccessful attempt to do so, the sorceror Noktarga performs a grotesque inversion of the myth we have just examined. His children are a symbolic reversal of the role of the Glory, which humanises and develops: here, instead, his children represent a reversion to animality (*Dēnkart* VII,2,40–47—following M. Boyce, *Textual Sources* pp. 73–74). Here we have typical mythological transformations. In the Zarathustra-legend, the animal aspects of motherhood (such as lactation) are symbolically raised to virgin purity in the figure of Dugdov who drinks the milk, even though there is no attempt to assert her literal virginity. In Noktarga's case, human reproduction is degraded to the level of "going on hoofs".

The mythical equivalence of the sorceror to Dahāk, the Dragon, is significant in view of the later episodes in the Farīdūn-saga already discussed, where he is persecuted by the Dragon-king, another degraded half-human half-animal evil avatar. The persecution begins already, with Noktarga posing a threat to Farānak on behalf of his sons, whom

he wishes to prefer to royal power, and so also a threat to the Glory which she now carries within her in token of her future "first-born son". Precise relationships, e.g. of Farānak to Noktarga, are hard to make out, and the situation is unfortunately not helped by the confusion of the *Bundahišn* about the identity of the characters.

The alternative versions of the myth reflect the background of the Farīdūn-stories in nature-mythology. Farīdūn is the functional hero above all of husbandry. The Dragon-king is on one fundamental level the destructive drought which in the inevitable cycle of the year gains possession of the land, and banishes the beneficent spiritual forces. As part of the cycle, he cannot be killed, but only again and again overcome in the ritual of renewal which Farīdūn performs in the festival on the day of Mithra (2 October). Zoroastrianism could not completely displace such perspectives, though it could reinterpret them in terms of its eschatological vision of the final victory. The hero Kerešāsp, father of Zāl, is destined to be one of the first to be raised by the Saošyant. He will at last destroy the Dragon; in the meantime, in the mythological picture-language, Farīdūn can only push him back, restrain him so to speak "at the ends of the Ahura-created earth", so that he cannot destroy the creatures of asha.

> Dahāk was smitten by him … ravage and mischief were removed from the region of Xvanīras, and the region of Xvanīras was preserved for his three sons.[14]

On a fundamental level, however, this heroic mythology signifies merely the inevitable fact of natural life resurgent with the seasons, but as yet unable to overcome the retarding power of wilderness, *xrafstras*, etc. with finality; and so, in terms of religious history, it means the incomplete victory of Zoroastrianism, its temporary failure to displace the older Iranian nature-perspective with its vision of final victory. A similar view seems to be expressed by the Fifth Kingdom story of Vahagn-Herakles, who falls victim to the female power, whom Justin calls Nature or Edem.[15]

Zoroastrianism's attempt to sublimate the struggle expressed in the natural cycle, and to turn it into a pre-vision of the final, decisive struggle, is part of its much wider attempt to spiritualise and transform elements from the old Iranian religion, begun by Zarathustra himself who

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[14] *Dēnkart* VII,1,25.

[15] See Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology"; Zoroastrian elements in Justin (Hippolytus, *Ref.* V,26–27), cf. M. Marcovich, cited above, p. 70.

had been both priest and reformer. It employed powerful imaginative means to transmute the stories of heroes and nature-powers into figures who could express its own hope for the Future World, as we can see in the development of the Farīdūn-myth into one complex within the very legend of Zarathustra, bearer of the crucial revelation which can enable mankind to share in the great struggle directly. In the period of greater syncretism after the worldly expansion of Persian power, not only figures of the pagan Iranian past but also those of other cultures could be conceived as stages in the process of universal revelation. Gayōmart, Universal Man, was a central concept based on many of the same mythological ideas (cf. above, pp. 72–73). In the prophetological cycle which was adopted by ApocAd, we see the same fundamental ambition applied on the scale of the Hellenistic world.

It belongs to the nature of the Zoroastrian project that versions of the same myth must be alternatively divine or demonic, religion or sorcery. The Zoroastrian reform shows the way to integrate the older mythology into a spiritual vision. To refuse acceptance of the reformed myth is to affirm the demonic version; the "evolutionary" time-concept of Zoroastrianism means that we either move on, or atrophy with "Ahriman and his abortions". The Glory of the heroes itself needs to be rescued from the Dragon. It can be redeemed for the Future World, in the myth, by the Saošyant, Zarathustra's spiritual son, who at the Restoration will bring about the "renovation" in which the archaic heroes can successfully come back to life. Zarathustra himself will later absorb their myths more thoroughly into his own myth—although we may be tempted to treat that in part as a withdrawal from the challenge of the wider viewpoint still underlying ApocAd's cycle, where all the great cultural revelations are to be shown, through the idea of the Saosyants, in relation to the greatest prophet of the world. Only the Messiah would outdo him in significance, when identified as his climactic thirteenth appearance by the author of our *Apocalypse*.

In Zoroastrian terms, Farīdūn's mythology, with his struggle against the Dragon-king, was understandable as a partial expression of the prophetic Zoroastrian truth still waiting to be revealed: the struggle of Light and Darkness. In modern historical terms, he furnished a prototype for the adaptation of the old royal legendry of the Glory into a spiritual vision based on the figures of the Saošyants, Gayōmart and Zarathustra himself. Zorostrianism looked for allies in the myths of heroes and royalty in the conviction that it could harness them to its greater vision; at the same time Zoroastrianism aspired through them

to become a universal religious vision at the time of the great Empires. The cycle underlying ApocAd is evidently a reflection of a hitherto lost stage in its evolution.

In the process, ancient mythological ideas which expressed the birth of the hero were utilised and adapted, and sifted so as to bring out more distinctly the themes which Zoroastrianism wanted to "heighten" for its own vision. In the twelvefold cycle, mythic parallels and analogies are exploited to link together the religions of the ancient world. At the same time, the pulling-together of the central ideas gives a more unified meaning to the myths—a Zoroastrian meaning. The concept of the virgin-born Saošyant has become the particular version which now forms the model for the whole. Hitherto, virgin-birth was one expression of the more general notion of "paradoxical" birth: the same mythology appears in the story of the seed of Śiva in the lake, from the lotus-flowers of which emerges the wonder-child Skanda, whose mission, while still a youth, is to destroy the demon Taraka. Here in Indian fashion the element of paradox is allowed to determine the meaning of the whole: themes of virgin-birth are only part of the "unnatural" way the ascetic god can have a son. In ApocAd's cycle, the Saošyant myth of virgin-birth now becomes definitive in the sense of a means to bend all the stories (and pagan analogues, Egyptian, Orphic, etc.) to a single end—all highlighting one, prominent theme of universal salvation. It is a quintessentially Zoroastrian phenomenon, though carried into syncretistic realms: a reformed version of an older mythology, from which Zoroastrianism itself emerged, comes to dominate and redefine the archaic myths.

As part of that tendency the myth of Farīdūn, which had evidently played a considerable role in creating the mythology, would naturally have been told in such a way as to emphasise the link to the new version, the Saošyant-theme: the implications of virgin-birth, contained in the Saošyant mythology of the Glory which comes to the womb of the mother from mysterious depths or miraculous heights, would naturally be prominent. It is said in the *Dēnkart* that the Glory already "came, at another time, by command of the Creator, to Frēdūn the Aspigan when he was [still] in the pregnant womb (VII,1,25)." It was not far, evidently, from the idea of the hero's birth "from his mother's womb"—under the influence of the *xvarenah* that fled from Yim, though later supplemented by normal begetting—to a model like that of the Saosyant. The phrase "He came from a virgin womb", attached to Farīdūn's story in ApocAd's twelvefold cycle, attaches his mythology

to the new form of Zoroastrian expectation, and serves to make it the embodiment of the world-wide aspirations behind the powerful eschatological vision of the Saošyant(s). Farīdūn has become, in short, a version of the Saošyant and now bears his emphases notably as regards virgin-birth.

But equally, by incorporating him in the cycle, the Saošyant has become a version of Farīdūn, who is considered one of his incarnations: hence the mythology of the resurgence of the absconded Glory; persecution of his mother and himself, from the womb onward, by his Dragon opponent; his escape to foreign territory; his recognition and support by a symbolic group (prototypes of the Magi?); and his return to claim his kingdom, with tones not so much of immediate but rather of eschatological triumph, pointing forward to the Renovation when the Dragon-king will finally be destroyed. Some links form part of the orthodox Zoroastrian mythology too: if not identical with Farīdūn in the Renovation-accounts, Sōšyāns bears his famous mace and specifically bears *his* Glory (*Dēnkart* VII,11,3). Much of his mythology would also go into the making of the Zarathustra-legend, with its themes of the outcast mother, the persecution of the child by Durasrab and the sorcerors; and some of it went into the making of the Matthaean infancy-narratives, via an apocalyptic and Messianic interpretation comparable to ApocAd.

CHAPTER SIX

THE MAGI IN BETHLEHEM AND THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH (MT. 2,1–12 AND CG V 78,27 – 79,19)

Narrative Linkage and the pre-Matthaean Basis

There has been more than one attempt to analyse the confluence of traditions found in the episode of the Magi (Mt. 2,1–12). This section of Mt. has been divided into distinct thematic strands by M. Hengel and H. Merkel,[1] and by scholars such as E. Lohmeyer, C.T. Davis and others.[2] As a result the theological significance of the Magi-episode has been rather thoroughly examined. And a conclusion has been reached with surprising (almost unprecedented!) unanimity:—namely, that the arrival of these mysterious visitors to "do reverence" indicates for the evangelist a Gentile parallel to the fulfilment of prophecies from the biblical world. In his theological framework they form almost the perfect exemplification of the central message, a saviour born for all mankind: and the further themes and tensions which we shall find in our own examination will continue to reflect the associated challenge of that message to Jewish and Jewish-esoteric thought.

The arrival of the Magi "following a star" immediately raises the problem of the basis of their religious hope in its natural/cosmic dimension; their connection with Zoroastrianism, as indicated by their name, raises that of the background of ideas and the possible influence of the Saošyant-prophecy of Zarathustra prior to the evangelist's theological synthesis; and there is the related possibility that the virgin-birth expectation may have played a part in attracting their story to the infancy narratives. The discovery of the birth-legends in CG V/5 (specifically

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[1] M. Hengel and H. Merkel, "Die Magier aus dem Osten und die Flucht nach Ägypten (Mt 2) im Rahmen der antiken Religionsgeschichte und der Theologie des Matthäus", in P. Hoffmann (ed.), *Orientierung an Jesus. Festschrift Josef Schmidt* (Freiburg 1973), pp. 139–169 (141–142).

[2] For these and for the development of Lohmeyer's views by A. Paul, see further Brown, *Birth of the Messiah* pp. 111 and n. 32; 178 ff.; 191–192.

Kingdom 4) helps clarify and resolve several of the issues involved, and particularly the matter of a virgin-birth.

First of all, however, we have already noticed that the prototype of the "main" Matthaean infancy-narrative, the Farīdūn-legend, contained a figure, Kāva the Blacksmith: he first goes to petition the Dragon-king, is interrogated by Azidahāk, but does not lead him to the hero-child—rather he takes the child's side and later helps in his triumphant return, carrying a banner with religious and royal associations and hailing him as the Ruler of the world in place of the evil usurper (above, pp. 122–123).[3] We may therefore freely recognize the truth of Davis' stress on the close narrative link between the Magi-story and Mt.'s main storyline. It is too simple, from the standpoint of our source-analysis too, to think of a mere intrusive addition by the evangelist. At the same time, we can hardly overlook the expansion of the narrative by extensive material that stems from a different source or, better, from a partly independent "section" of an already composite *Vorlage*. We can equally agree on the other hand with R.E. Brown on the need (*contra* the schematisation by Hengel and Merkel) to balance the weight of each episode, subordinating some of the material to the fundamental narration rather than treating it all on a level. The theme of the Magi, in short, needs to be fitted into the established framework, the outline already built up.

Brown at any rate substantially concedes that it must be right to suppose a distinctive background to the Magi-material, which does break the line of the "main" Matthaean narration. It is somewhat ironic, however, that he distances his reading here from further possible Moses-associations, insisting now on the *difference* between beneficent and hostile Magi in the plots, when he has just conspicuously argued in the just the opposite way about Pharaoh.[4] As for the actual source to be posited, J.E. Bruns has pointed perceptively to the story of the Queen of the South in IKgs. 10 as a close model for the Magi's visit.[5] The Queen of Sheba comes "from the ends of the earth" (Mt. 12,42) to hear the wisdom of Solomon; the Magi's wisdom finds its goal in bringing them to the newborn King of the Jews. The gifts

[3] Whether or not one believes in the once fashionable idea of an ancient Iranian *Männerbund* (popularised by S. Wikander), the rallying to the "Kaviani" banner does seem to indicate some affirmation of religious and national loyalty.

[4] Brown op. cit. p. 114 n. 43.

[5] J.E. Bruns, "The Magi Episode in Matthew 2", *CBQ* 23(1961), 51–54.

correspond to the gifts in IKgs. 10,2 and even more exactly to the prophecy in Is. 60,6 that "those from Sheba will come bringing gold and frankincense". Scholars have had some difficulties with his analysis, however, not least because his proposed original lacks the element of a new-born child: but many of the objections are easily overcome when we recognise that the template for Mt. was not the version in IKgs. directly, but a legendary development of the tale whose religious-historical character we must next examine and reconstruct. The evidence for doing so is now at hand following the rediscovery of ApocAd with its account of Solomon, his magic, and a "virgin" who gives birth to a child and rears him far away "on the border of the desert" (78,27 – 79,19).

I have argued elsewhere already that the story is recognisably that of the birth of Menyelek, Solomon's child by the Queen as famously told in the Ethiopic "national epic", the *Kebra Nagast*.[6] A number of anomalies remain to be explained, but ApocAd's version can plausibly be fitted into a reconstruction of the legend's early evolution.

In the story told by the Fourth Kingdom we have a version of the Queen of Sheba-story which a) contains a birth-legend, and b) one that is compatible with the virgin-birth that had come to be connected with the Farīdūn-figure, to whose prototype-legend the motif was already attached in the sequence of the ApocAd cycle and in that form is applied to Jesus. The Magi-episode appears to be interpolated into the Farīdūn-legend in Mt.'s narrative analogue (see Introduction, Fig. 1). In the story of Farīdūn there was already a possibility of narrative linkage in the minor story of Kāva which could have helped bring the stories closer to the synthesised form they possess in Mt. In accordance with our fundamental view on the origins of the infancy-narrative, the stories told of the cyclic revealer (the Illuminator) are treated as fulfilled and epitomised by Jesus, whose birth therefore establishes him as the climax

[6] Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology", p. 4777. The Ethiopic work was translated by E.A.W. Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and her Only Son Menyelek* (London 1922). Plausible attempts have been made to trace the remote origins of the story: P. Särkiö, *Die Weisheit und Macht Salomos* (Helsinki and Göttingen 1994) pp. 186–191. But there is no reason to quarrel with Budge's view that the *Kebra Nagast* itself is a largely secondary work, put together to glorify the "Solomonian" dynasty: it perhaps contains some archaic Ethiopian ideas, but "the principal groundwork of its earliest form was the traditions that were current in Syria, Palestine, Arabia, and Egypt during the first four centuries of the Christian era" (Introduction). ApocAd's version should add to our understanding of the formation of the groundwork, and of its early Christian use.

of revelation, the universal Saviour. The Fourth Kingdom story could readily be incorporated as a further testimony to the fulfilment-process by the pre-Matthaean developers of the legendary complex of ideas around the concept of the True Prophet and his spiritually extraordinary nativity. The Magi bringing their gifts recapitulate the visit of the Queen and so point to Jesus as one like Solomon's son: a "virgin-born", a source of wisdom, and a world-saviour like all the figures in the Illuminator/Saošyant-cycle in that they point to the primal source and final uniting of all the revelations.

The account just given unfortunately suffers from at least three extreme difficulties.

1) Magi do not come from Ethiopia. Or to make the same point in a different form: the story of Solomon's son by the Queen of Sheba is not a Zoroastrian legend.
2) Solomon's son is not born of a virgin: the story of Menyelek is based on Solomon's successful seduction of the Queen.
3) The Queen does not come to Solomon following a star, and astrology plays no part in the story of her child.

These difficulties we must tackle one by one as we reconstruct the process by which the story in IKgs. has been transformed before it came to be incorporated in ApocAd. In that modified form, it may help explain the last major element in the composite story Matthew tells of the birth of Jesus.

Magi from Sheba and Seba

ApocAd's story differs considerably from the literary version in the *Kebra Nagast*, in several prominent details. Several of them make sense, however, as soon as we trace the story back to the groundwork of traditions in Syria, Egypt and Arabia from which the literary text was drawn. In that milieu, it is by no means clear that Magi do not come from Ethiopia, since Isho'dad of Merv knows a variety of traditions that were still current in his day, including the following account ("some say"):

> that Magian men came from Sheba to Babylon, to the palace, during the time when Nebuchadnezzar reigned, to offer gifts to the king and to learn Chaldaism, and it was said to them by Daniel, that when the Messiah should be born, the kings of Sheba and Seba ought to bring

> Him gifts; but these wrote in a library (βιβλιοθήκη), that is to say in their own archives, and in their records (ὑπομνήματα), that is to say in a book of remembrances.[7]

From this we see that in the eyes of some oriental Christians, the visiting "kings of Sheba and Seba" with their gifts at the nativity had indeed been re-enacting an earlier contact between pagan and biblical wisdom. Originally, "Magian men" had come from Ethiopia to Babylon in order to acquire the secrets of astrology, and unexpectedly learned from the biblical revelation about the future birth of the Messiah. Several features of the story are interesting. Firstly, it seems to reflect the dispersion of the Magi through the lands of the Persian conquests since the time of Cambyses, extending tenuously as far as Ethiopia: in the propaganda of the "marchpast of the nations" at Persepolis, the Ethiopians continued to be represented as members of the Empire. The Magians are depicted absorbing the star-knowledge of Babylon and spreading it through the lands under their influence, and as acquiring contact with Jewish religion. Whereas modern scholarly tendencies suggest that Jewish religion was indeed a part of that milieu and to some extent influenced by it, especially around the time that the Book of Daniel was actually written, the legend follows the trend we have repeatedly noticed, whereby the pagan wisdom is represented as a partial expression deriving from a more primordial Jewish source or culture-hero (Daniel set in the seventh-sixth century B.C.). What they thereby learn is not, of course, star-wisdom: but their quest for star-knowledge which brings them to the knowledge of the Messiah must certainly be read as a further "prefiguration" of the coming of the Magi in Mt.2 following the mysterious star.

It is impossible to judge the antiquity of the tradition, but its concerns are those of the milieu we have been exploring, and it attests to the notion of a link between "Sheba", Magian traditions and star-wisdom, and the visit of the "kings". It is supposed to answer the question which Isho'dad repeats: "Whence did the Magians receive that, when the star was shown to them, the King of Kings was born, and that they ought to bring him threeefold gifts?" The question seems to be slightly at odds with the answer, however, since here it is apparently the Babylonian Magi who have the tradition that they ought to follow the star. Their acquisition of this knowledge *via* fellow-religionists

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[7] In: Bidez-Cumont, *Les Mages Hellénisés, t.* II, p. 131.

from Ethiopia, and the tradition of a royal visit as the prototype of honouring the Messiah with gifts, might at first simply suggest that tradition has later been made to accommodate, without quite displacing the common notion that the Magi were Zoroastrians from Babylonia, an interpretation based on a link to Sheba and a royal visit. However, the notion of visiting "kings" has come in with an implicit citation of Ps. 72,10–11 ("May the kings of Sheba and Saba bring gifts …"), whereas the story originally told only of "Magian men from Sheba". Many early Christian exegetes detected an allusion to Ps.72 in Mt. 2,11: this element, since it does not fit the framework, is therefore probably a secondary Christianisation making the story echo Christian biblical exegesis.[8] The elaborate appeal to (extra-biblical) literary records is also intriguing: the memory of the events is supposedly enshrined in religious literature (the memorials of the Magi), but was also written "in their own archives", presumably indicating a reference to legendary chronicles of Ethiopia.

At any rate, the tradition recognises that the usual Magian star-wisdom needed the help of further specific instruction in order to respond fully to the situation of the Saviour's birth, exactly as in Mt. 2,4. In the way of these legends, it expounds the dilemma by retrojecting a series of prefigurements: the *rapprochement* between Gentile and pagan hopes is already implicit, for the legendary mentality, in a supposedly "historical" series of encounters which show that they were destined to converge all along. But from our point of view what is interesting is the suggestion that a story with all the elements of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon bringing gifts, was thought to have been known to the Magians and interpreted prophetically, so that when the star appeared they knew that they had to make a "royal" visit bearing gifts likewise. The parallel episode of the Magi from Sheba visiting Daniel is intended to show how the story came into the orbit of Magian ideas, along with the astrological hint about a star, and that both story and star "really" pointed to the birth of the King of Kings exactly as would be told in Mt. 2. Could this have any relation to the story which is now found in ApocAd, incorporated with "Magian" ideas into

[8] Moreover, the keeping separate of "the kings of Sheba and Saba" and the Magi would indicate that the story does not simply come out of popular tradition, which made the visitors into kings without more ado. We can see this development fully accomplished in the *Cave of Treasures* and the Ethiopic *Book of Adam and Eve* 4,15: see B. Metzger, "Names for the Nameless" in P. Granfield and J.A. Jungmann (eds.), *Kyriakon. Festschrift Joahannes Quasten* (Münster 1970) p. 82.

a prophetic framework with certain astrological elements, and an overall design of pointing to the Messiah as the universal truth? The document of course goes back neither to Adam nor even to the fictitious Daniel of the sixth century: the apocalyptic ideas governing its use are themselves part of the product, in the last centuries B.C., of the mixture of ideas whose confluence was "foreseen" by these culture-heroes and patriarchs. The "foreseeing" is a visionary experience of one who stands, in reality, just before the end, not at the beginning of the apocalyptic sequence.

The indications of a connection with the Magi story, even if they belong to a distinctive "Ethiopian" interpretation, are very late. Can we draw any lines of relation between those indications and the story in ApocAd? All depends, essentially, on establishing the real factors which have affected the story between its early formulation in IKgs. 10,1–13 and its incorporation in CG V/5. Does it show any signs of modification by Magian-Zoroastrian ideas before going on to assume the shape it had in mediaeval times? We need to examine the version in ApocAd more precisely.

The Fourth Kingdom Story (CG V 78,27 – 79,19) *and Sura* XXVII

[The Fourth] Kingdom says
[of him that] he came
[from a virgin. …]
[… Solomon]
[sought] her, he and Phersalo
and Sauel and his armies
which had been sent out. Solomon
himself sent his army
of demons to seek out the
virgin. And they did not find
the one whom they sought. But
the virgin who was given to them,
it was she whom they brought (and)
Solomon took her.
But the virgin conceived and gave birth to
the child there. She nurtured him on the border
of the desert. When
he had been nourished, he received glory
and power from the seed
from which he had been begotten.
And thus he came on the
water.

In order to bridge the gap, we may note first of all several features which show that the Fourth Kingdom's formulation stands, despite its oddities, in the mainstream of the evolution of the legend.

In disagreement with the Bible stands the statement "Solomon sought her": but this element in the narrative, along with others, is reproduced from legendary retellings which must lie behind the *Qur'an* in Sura XXVII (XXVII,28). Also congruent is the context of military threat (XXVII,37); cf. Solomon's "armies which had been sent out" and the theme of the capture or otherwise of the virgin (Queen). Also common to the versions is the use of Solomon's "army of demons" (cf. XXVII,39–40). In the Qur'anic version, the biblical theme of the visit by the Queen has been almost completely subordinated: the giving of the (singular) "gift" is deputed to an embassy—and even this is rejected by Solomon (XXVII,35–36), since a response to it would mean his losing the initiative which is so entirely his in the whole telling of the tale.

The thematic emphases of the ApocAd and Qur'anic versions are thus far strikingly similar. It is true that there is only one Queen in Sura XXVII, not two women as in ApocAd. But there is a second representation of what *makes* her a Queen—namely, her throne, which is miraculously transported by the *Ifrīt* to Israel before she arrives (cf. the capture of one of the women by Solomon's armies in ApocAd). It is then magically transformed so that on her arrival she will have difficulty recognising it, in order to test whether she will be "guided to the truth" or judge only by outward appearances (a major thematic in many versions of the story, as we shall see). However, she passes the test and recognises the throne, having known in advance from God of Solomon's design. In a sense she escapes him, therefore, for the time being. Solomon has gained power over her throne in its altered state, but not thereby of the Queen: but she retains her connection to her royalty in its original form which she still recognises, and is still freely able to discern the truth out of her own wisdom, not yet needing to depend on Solomon's. Of course this is not quite the same as Solomon capturing one of the women and "taking her", while the true mother of the future child eludes him. But then, the erotic element has been almost totally suppressed in the *Qur'an*, in which the story has been lightly moralised in the manner of a parable: Solomon is there out to "possess" the Queen for the true faith rather than erotically, bringing her to a knowledge of the true God. The seduction motif was certainly there, however, since it comes out in the final episode, where the Queen fails to discern the nature of the glass in Solomon's grand

palace, thinking it is water and lifting her skirts, being tricked into an erotic gesture (XXVII,44). And on the spiritual level, now she is out of her own wisdom, and has to learn the truth from Solomon.

We may infer, then, that a version of the Queen of the South story shaped by all the themes and emphases that dominate the account in ApocAd lies behind Sura XXVII. In the *Qur'an*, it is true, Solomon finally does master/seduce the Queen, whereas in ApocAd he possesses only the other virgin. However, in a certain way he clearly does, in some non-literal sense, possess the Queen in the Fourth Kingdom version because she does bear the royal child "from the seed from which he had been begotten" (79,16–17), even if that fact has been "spiritualised" as a birth of the Illuminator. The structure of the tale is therefore fundamentally identical. Solomon does not gain her by his armies, nor by his demon-based powers of natural magic, which she can match; but only by mastering her spiritually does he achieve his goal and beget in her the child of a higher revelation. In the versions where the seduction is more literally treated, the same idea appears in close connection with virginity:

> She would not surrender herself to him, and she said unto him, "I came to thee a maiden, a virgin; shall I go back despoiled of my virginity, and suffer disgrace in my kingdom?" And Solomon said unto her … "Strike a covenant with me that I am only to take thee to wife of thine own free will—this shall be the condition between us: when thou shalt come to me by night as I am lying on the cushions of my bed …"[9]

The famous trick with the spices and the Queen's craving for water follows. In other versions, she agrees to yield to him if she takes a precious thing from his palace. Once again we have a variant use of the same motifs that we met previously: a misunderstanding about water, which she did not realise was included as a "precious thing" in the King's palace, leading to an unintendedly erotic gesture, and instruction from the wisdom of Solomon (cf. Sura XXVII,44).

The trick (as often in myth and folklore) symbolically mediates incompatibles: the need for Solomon to possess the Queen, and her need not to be "despoiled of her virginity". She does not give up her "determination that she would preserve her virginity from him", and he does not force her (cf. the way he cannot capture her by his armies or by his magical-demonic powers): but she yields to him in accord with her recognition of a higher wisdom (for what is more precious

[9] Budge, op. cit. p. xlvi

than water?). The "trick" is symbolically equivalent to the ApocAd story of the two virgins: the Queen avoids being "despoiled" and in some sense retains her spiritual integrity despite outwardly seeming to yield herself up, whether by an apparent gesture of consent (coming to the King's bed) or in exchange for a precious treasure. There is a seduction, but there is a higher level on which the Queen does not sell herself or give in to compulsion, and an indication of a higher wisdom at work. The Fourth Kingdom has simply dramatised the underlying concerns of the myth in two different narrative lines, in one of which the Queen's virginity is not despoiled. The ideas and even the narrative logic, however, remain the same. The outward events (cf. the "trick") are are made to conceal rather than openly show the underlying significance, i.e. the way that Solomon's true "child" can be begotten. To understand the story, we like the Queen must be able to see through external appearances.

At any rate the theme of the Queen's "virginity", which is a major discrepancy in the Fourth Kingdom version, turns out not to be very far from the symbolism of the account behind Sura XXVII and its related (especially Arabic) versions. The form in which the story was handed down to mediaeval and Islamic times, in fact, is clearly fashioned from the same materials and forces which are at work behind ApocAd's version of the story. Very little of it can be derived from the Bible, where there is no trace of the seduction, of the theme of outward appearance versus inner reality, of military aggression or demonic-magical power, still less of virginity. The biblical elements of the bringing of gifts, the Queen's wish to come to test Solomon's power and wisdom, have indeed been pushed to the margins.

Sura XXVII uses the story, along with other components of popular "Solomonic" wisdom (the parable of the ant, the hoopoe, etc.), to demonstrate the path from idolatrous worship of nature to the true God. The hoopoe found the Queen and her people worshipping the outward light of the sun, rather than the God "who brings to light what is hidden in the heavens and the earth" (24–25). But was this the original meaning of the appearance/hidden reality theme? Hardly so. Indeed when we turn to other transmissions of the story, we find still the same motifs and narrative lines, but they do not always slope so conveniently in Solomon's direction.

Other Literary and Oral Parallels

In the *Kebra Nagast*, the themes of military and spiritual conquest, of opposites and look-alikes, turn the tables on Solomon—or at least imaginatively balance the perspectives in a less doctrinal and moralistic way.

It relates that the Queen's son Meneyelek returns to be acknowledged by his father. When he landed at Gaza, all the people took him for Solomon the King. Solomon's agents, thinking that the newcomer was an impersonator of the King, reported his coming as a threat to the peace of the country: but what seemed a threat is soon converted to joy in the recognition of a son.[10] We have an exact mirror-picture of Sura XXVII's story of the Queen. The setting is a threatened overthrow of his kingdom, as opposed to a sending out of Solomon's own army against the Queen; Solomon does not seek this representative's coming; there is no advance warning (in contrast to the capture of the throne, and the Queen's foreknowledge of it); it is Solomon, not the vistor, who has to recognise the truth behind the appearance, which is not a deceit but a mark of true sonship. However, the recognition of his son as therefore no threat turns out to be illusory (in contrast to the Queen, whose recognition of the true wisdom leads to positive consequences). Menyelek's most celebrated deed in the *Kebra Nagast* rather fulfils the initial sense of threat: for when he departed again for Ethiopia, he took with him the Ark of the Covenant, leaving behind in Israel only a replica, outwardly identical but devoid of the indwelling glory.[11] Once again the motif of look-alikes and inner opposition. Moreover, there is a symbolic equivalent to the resolution to incompatible appearances through a trick, making gestures mean things they do-yet-do-not-really mean: in this reversed case, we have an elaborate non-trick, i.e. Solomon turns a blind eye to the theft by asking Menyelek to leave without telling him, so that he can honestly say he did not know anything about his son's departure. For in this instance too there is a higher wisdom lurking behind events, pointing to the "glory of the kings" who will possess the Ark in Ethiopia in times to come. Thus all the motifs and narrative logic now work against Solomon, but in his deepest wisdom of all it turns out that his apparent or even true "ignorance" of the theft is really his highest knowledge.

[10] Budge, op. cit. pp. 41–2; cf. 46–7
[11] Budge, op. cit. pp. 50–51; and see pp. li–lv

Such patternings and variations on a theme are characteristic not so much of literary works as of oral transmission. They are typical for myth and saga, where the underlying meaning is reinforced through repetition and variants. The *Kebra Nagast* is a late and derivative writing, and presumably drew its stories from oral tradition as well as fragments of older literature. It is not surprising therefore to find that folklore versions of the story, also examined by Budge, reveal still more variations on essentially the same motifs and story-line. In an unexpected way, however, they tend still further to confirm that a version based on a prototype close to the Fourth Kingdom's outline must have been handed down and influenced the several literary treatments over the centuries.

Budge's oral versions were recorded in northern Abyssinia around the end of the nineteenth century.[12] Most striking of all, they know of two women, unlike any of the literary forms before the discovery of ApocAd. The other woman is a sort of Amazonian chief-of-staff who came with the Queen to Israel. She too bore Solomon a child; but he was a fool, whereas the Queen's child had wisdom like his father. The difference between them was revealed in the following way. The child of the Queen looked exactly like Solomon, and she had given him a mirror. When the two boys arrived from Ethiopia to be acknowledged by their father, Solomon tricked them by dressing up a friend in his kingly robes. The child of the Queen's minister made obeisance to him, but Menyelek saw that he did not at all resemble the image he had seen of himself in the mirror. Only Solomon, likewise disguised and in rags in the stable, looked like the face he saw there, so the boy at once went to the stable and did homage to him as king. Solomon greeted him in return, calling him "My true son! The other is also my son but he is a fool."

Of course the ApocAd story and the north Abyssinian oral variants with the two women could simply be deviant forms. The doubling of the Queen by her throne/attendant minister, the doubling of Solomon by his look-alike son/disguised friend, etc. are features that arise out of the inner logic of the story and could have happened in the oral tradition independent of a prototype equivalent to that in ApocAd. But all the literary versions show explicit moralising and tendentious interference, whether in the interest of religious-moral propaganda as in Sura XXVII, or nationalistic emphasis as in the *Kebra Nagast.* In both

[12] Budge, op. cit. pp. lx–lxiv

there has been an obvious selection of features and narrowing of the story to make a single point. It seems more likely that the early outline in CG V 78,27 – 79,19 is close to the story which with many variations has been handed down orally, and influenced the presentations by Islamic and Ethiopian writers of the legend.

The character of the story thus defined is distinctly unbiblical; at the same time it presents a coherent world of ideas and motifs through which it explores appearance and reality; wisdom and folly; true princedom and mere descent; spiritual integrity and outer compulsion. Is there anywhere that we find a similar story or stories that would suggest the background of this way of thinking and the distinctive motifs?

One of the strangest stories in history—or perhaps only in legend—is the rise to kingship of Darius the Great, narrated in his own Behistun inscription, by Herodotus, and other Greek historians. Fortunately we do not need to assess its plausibility here as an account of what really took place.[13] If it is just a story, it yet tells us the kind of ideas and symbolism which were employed to justify and explain Darius' succession to the throne. Darius evidently found a most strange situation. Setting out on the return from Ethiopia, Cambyses had heard that his brother was reigning in Persia in his stead, but died on the way home before he could take steps to regain power. What Darius knew, however, is that the usurper was not really Cambyses' brother at all, but a look-alike, an imposter called Gaumāta the Magus. According to Herodotus III,62, not only did the imposter look exactly like Cambyses' brother Bardiya (Gk. Smerdis), but he had borne the same name from birth as the dead prince. Darius would have us believe that the false Bardiya/Gaumāta the Magus was not a real king who would have carried his people by the charisma, the glory, of the Achaemenians, but governed by mere terror and slaughtered anyone who could have given away his false identity. Everything that he, Darius, did on the other hand was sanctioned by Ahuramazdā ("Ahuramazdā bore me aid … by the will of Ahuramazdā I became king")—otherwise how could he with only a few noble friends have seized the throne against what he himself tells us was massive opposition?

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[13] There is still fundamental scholarly disagreement. M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism* vol. 2 (Leiden 1975) pp. 80–83 finds the whole business completely implausible (and see her p. 80 n. 8 for bibliography; R.N. Frye, *Heritage of Persia* (London 1976) p. 97 and generally pp. 95–100 finds on the other hand that there is no real evidence to contradict the inscription and its related historical accounts; trans. of the inscription, pp. 96–97.

Darius needed to legitimise his rule by marrying Atossa, who had been sister-wife to both Cambyses and Bardiya. She would presumably have been in a position to confirm whether or not the Bardiya who took power was her real brother, or, to put it another way, whether Darius was to be accepted as the legitimate next ruler or regarded as a threat to the undisputed king (following Cambyses' death). The fact that she vouched for Darius is the severest of the difficulties for those historians who doubt the "double" story. He also needed the story: putting the claim of his (actually rather remote) descent from Cyrus, his role as dispelling "the Lie" (*drauga*) and still more exhibiting his role as a reflection of Ahuramazdā's will, with himself quite literally reflecting the divinity on earth, since his six noble companions around him evoke the image of the six Bounteous Immortals who surround the Zoroastrian Godhead.

So we have a story of a sending out of armies; of a prince whose succession depends on a story of his royal descent, but still more on the charisma of his divinely willed and supported accession; a Queen who is sought, and must be able to discern between a false "double" who might seem to the people the true king, and the future king by the divine will; indeed there is a danger the people will (and do) rise up against the true king because they have accepted this "Lie", this false appearance of a king as the truth; yet in the end the legitimate prince succeeds, and appears almost as God reflected on earth, founding a great dynasty of kings.

Naturally there are many significant differences in the story-line too. But many of the scenes appear to anticipate moments or episodes in the Queen of Sheba legend. Although the historical reality of Darius' accession is hard to discern, it is not difficult to understand the basic religious idea that a society where rule has lost its legitimacy has become an Ahrimanic "Lie" and its king only an impersonation of the King (cf. the replica Ark left behind, without the Presence; the ordinary man dressed in the robes of Solomon). Or at any rate, that is the perspective that needs to be established by a dynamic ruler who in the people's minds will establish himself with "divine" energy as the starter of a new imperial age; and it is hard to see how Darius' professions of hatred of the "Lie", of establishing the true rule descended from Cyrus under the direct guidance of Ahuramazdā, etc., can be seen as other than religious declarations. (There may well be religious implications in the role of Gaumāta, designated the Magus, too, but we know so little of the religious circumstances of the period that it is possible to

think either of a prior Zoroastrian *coup* supporting Bardiya, led by the influential Magians at the Persian court but subsequently put down by Darius, or of Darius leading a Zoroastrian revolt directed against older practices carried on by the conservative Magi.) It certainly appears that he felt his rule also brought with it the restoration of the places of worship (whatever precisely we understand the *āyadanā* to be). M. Boyce points out that there can be no question of the literal destruction of temples or places of worship by Bardiya, and she therefore thinks of "purely formal" charges levelled against a predecessor king;[14] but it may rather imply that the use of religious observances and sites was invalid while the "Lie" prevailed (cf. once more the spiritually empty replica of the Ark, and the "true" religion restored by serving the future dynasty of Ethiopia).

Did the myth of a miracle-king in Ethiopia emerge as the expression of the oriental aspiration for a true "divine" king, so potent in the Hellenistic and Roman period? Apocalypticism in the Jewish world pointed to a crisis and a vision of a future Messianic rule. But the development of the Menyelek myth turns initially in a more mythological direction. Its protagonists after all would not want to depict themselves as merely subject to Israel by right of its great ruler, though claiming descent: the legendary versions that crystallised round the birth of Menyelek both connect and distance Solomon from the begetting and acknowledging of his "first born" son. The mere subjection to Israel and her culture is dramatised in the imagined threat of military invasion and dominance, but the legends depict the emergence of something new, not a continuation or expansion of Solomon's earthly rule. The Persian mythology of look-alikes and doubles, of a higher wisdom that contrives to govern events, and a divinely ordained ruler who himself has divine qualities, could have come to hand as a way of representing the emergence of a new dynastic force: it could have been applied to traditional materials such as the old story from 1Kgs. 10 of the Queen of the South, with results such as we have seen.

The literal connection of the story with Ethiopia may really be tangential, and it would probably not be wise to see in Solomon's initial quest for the Queen any sort of allegory of Cambyses' overstretched expedition. But anyway, the story had long entered mythology and folklore, partly through the Persian propaganda first orchestrated by Dar-

[14] Boyce, op. cit. pp. 88–89.

ius himself, and partly through popular expansions where the themes blossom further into plots involving more doublings—a further brother (for Bardiya), two Magi, etc. The process was far advanced even in Herodotus' time.[15] Ethiopia could subsequently have shaped its cultural heritage, however, out of ideas which linked it to celebrated episodes of its past (Cambyses, etc.) and on its own terms to the world-order of the Iranian "dispersion", via emerging ideas of a kind similar to those of ApocAd. The Magi of Syria and Asia Minor could certainly have recognised in Solomon's wonder-child a figure whose mythology could be devloped in terms of their cyclic vision of the revelations centered on the φωστήρ.

There are further indications that the legendary materials of Ethiopia have been touched by the influence of the Iranian mythology in a form close to Apoc Ad. The Solomonic line was of course not only significant for Ethiopia, but for the genealogy of Jesus (Mt. 1,7). Ethiopian tradition brought to this certain ideas of its own, summarised as follows by Budge:

> When God made Adam He placed in his body a 'Pearl', which he intended should pass from it into the bodies of a series of holy men, one after another, until the appointed time when it should enter the body of Hanna, and form the substance of her daughter the Virgin Mary. Now this 'Pearl' passed through the body of Solomon, an ancestor of Christ.[16]

The somewhat bizarre concept of the "pearl" comes to make sense when we discover that "in Persian the word *gohr* means both 'pearl or jewel' and 'substance or essence'" (S. Wikander).[17] We are thus enabled to recognise that the myth is that of the heavenly "substance" which features so largely in the Zarathustra-legend, being transmitted to the parents of the prophet: it is therefore also closely related to the "spiritual seed" which is deposited in the waters, from which the Saošyants will be engendered. The intimate association of the "pearl" with the *xvarenah* in the setting of these ideas is also pointed out by Wikander, when he indicates the scene at the coronation of Key

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[15] With these come obviously folkloric additions already in Herodotus (III,69): the impostor is so completely identical that he cannot be distinguished in any way from Smerdis-Bardiya—except that he had been deprived of his ears; so a lady of the court has to go to his bed in order to find out whether he is the true prince while he sleeps. Boyce, op. cit. p. 86; citing A. Demandt, "Die Ohren des falschen Smerdis", in *Iranica Antiqua* 9(1972), 94–101 for the folktale origins of this episode.

[16] Budge, op. cit. citing *History of Hannā*, (p.x).

[17] Cited in J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *Religion of Ancient Iran* (Bombay 1973) p. 185.

Xosrau in Firdausi's *Shahnameh*: there a pearl actually issues from the heavenly *xvarenah*.

The notion of the glory/heavenly substance coming to the mother of the Virgin Mary is thus a close parallel to the myth of the birth of Zarathustra's mother. Of course the developed tradition involving figures from the Bible and popular Christian piety is later: but the connection of the "pearl" with Adam points to a background where a perspective similar to that of ApocAd provided the original setting. The concept of a series of "holy men", all of whom embodied the heavenly substance from which Christ's body would be formed, also belongs there.

The actual designation of Menyelek as a virgin-born, however, remains surprising. As we have seen, an emphasis on her virginity was part of the legend of the Queen of the South, as it was handed down in various parts of the Middle East. All the literary expressions of the legend show traces of motifs and forms like those of the Fourth Kingdom's version; nevertheless, the heightening of the motif into virgin-birth was most probably a feature (as in the case of Faridun) which belongs to the special use of the story as part of the Saošyant-cycle. Normally, the implications of virgin-birth, i.e. indicating that the child is not the result of a human father but of a "spiritual seed", divine prophecy, etc., remain more muted. In summary, therefore, we may say that the history of the Queen of Sheba-legend provides ample evidence of an interest from the side of Zoroastrian-Magian mythology. Ishoʿdad's report of a link between the Magians and prophecies concerning the "kings of Sheba" comes as late confirmation. ApocAd 78,27 – 79,19 probably represents a special development of the story under the influence of the Saošyant idea. The prime reason for supposing that virgin-birth already featured in the story as Matthew used it for the episode of the Magi is that the stories came to him already grouped together with versions of those in CG V 77,27 – 78,26: and already with a Messianic interpretation.[18]

There remains the problem that none of the accounts of Meneyelek's birth mention a star.

[18] It is hard to know how much can be read into the scene in Mt. 2,11 where the Magi find "the child with his mother Mary". It is certainly disconcerting after the emphasis on Joseph in the "basic narrative", showing that it comes from a distinctive background. The absence of the father has been silently "corrected" by centuries of Christian art.

The Star and the Astrology of CG V/5

> *"For we have seen his star in the ascendant …"*
>
> Mt. 2,2

> *And it is asked: "Whence did the Magians receive that, when the star was shown to them, the King of Kings was born, and that they ought to bring him threefold gifts?"*
>
> Isho'dad of Merv

An especially fascinating part of the Magi-story is the celebrated star, which continues to cause controversy of many kinds. Quite recently D.C. Allison refused to believe that a literal star could be meant at all, and that the story must really be about a guiding angel.[19] It may well be true that a star could be thought of in this way (cf. Rev. 1,20). Allison thinks particularly of the angel of the presence which guided the people at the Exodus, in connection with heavenly phenomena (pillars of cloud and fire). We have seen that ApocAd 75,17 – 76,7 has a version related to *Jubilees*, mentioning especially "clouds of light" and angelic beings who descend to rescue the true Israel. However, there may still be in addition ideas concerning an actual star. In fact, ApocAd seems to indicate that the geography of God's successive revelations could be associated by esoteric Judaism with patterns in time and space that are related to astrology.

The relationship is not necessarily straightforward. In ApocAd the angelic guidance actually places those who are "with the holy angels" "above the aeons and the rulers of the [powers]", i.e. the zodiacal influences,[20] and the legendary analogues such as the story of Melkisedek in II *Enoch* 71–72 which we have examined suggests that they are the "imperishable seed" (CG V 76,7) for the next cycle, not in the sense that they are pre-destined, but that they will emerge to form some-

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[19] Allison, "Matthew", p. 849; the view was shared by Isho'dad of Merv, bar Hebraeus and others.

[20] Above, pp. 51–52. The mention of Gamaliel in V 75,23 is related no doubt to the use of material from ApocAd and similar sources in CG III/2: in the latter at 57,6 "[the great] angel Gamaliel" is described together with Gabriel as ministering to one of the four great Lights, Oroiael, which would make him part of a twelvefold sequence of angels under those powers. As a reflection of their archetypal world the "twelve aeons come into being" (57,22–23) which are the zodiac. Although the material relating to them is then lifted from the Gnostic mythology, the context of the zodiac may be the underlying idea on which the varied materials used in CG III/2 have here been hung.

thing new when the sequence of cyclic ages will have run its determined course. Such a conception of the true Israel, a holy community "whose lot is with the angels" (IQS XI,7–8; etc.), and the use of astrology itself instantly reminds us, of course, of Qumran. And the idea of a community "already living in the age to come" (e.g. IQH III,20–22), but preparing for the unfolding of God's design in outer history when the time will arrive, is no doubt the reality which is suggested in more pictorial terms by the legends and stories.

So although it would seem to be true that in ApocAd the time-to-come and so the "passing-by of the Illuminator … in great glory" (V 76,9–11) could be calculated in terms of the zodiac, in the thought-world of the document, it should be noted, this is definitely *not* because it is astrologically determined; rather it is because he represents the truth that will stand revealed when all that is fixed and "under the authority of death" will pass away. He on the contrary represents the spiritual reality that is there "above the aeons and the powers", but which the world in general cannot yet attain; it is perceived only by the esoteric few "who reflect upon the knowledge of the eternal God in their hearts" as in the Essene community (cf. 4Q *Flor* II on the last days: "The people who know God shall be strong, they are the masters who understand"), or the related group which produced our *Apocalypse*. They accordingly will not perish on the "day of death" (76,20–23) but see the restoration promised by God, which begins (presumably) from the Messiah's birth.

In each of the appearances of the φωστήρ God provides, following the pattern of esoteric Jewish thinking, a counter-revelation to the worldly wisdom which has been given by the powers. Knowledge is thereby wrested from the powers of the world and restored to the "true Israel". The same theology of the double-revelation that determined the assimilation of Hellenistic culture is applied to astrology. When the wisdom relating to all the twelve signs has been revealed, it can be seen once again in its Adamic wholeness, and in the Thirteenth Kingdom it can become the Messianic fulfilment.

Astrology, then, need not be ruled out from the Jewish-Christian background of Mt.2,1–12, especially if it is astrology interpreted from such a Jewish esoteric point of view rather than as mere determinism. But is there any evidence that it was? J.H. Charlesworth thinks that at the very least "discussing the obviously striking parallels between these verses and the tradition about Balaam as recorded in Numbers 22:1 – 24:25, which have been demonstrated by A. Paul and R.E. Brown, does

not totally exhaust the rich complexities in Matthew … Astrological speculation could well have been linked with Jesus' birth by Jewish Christians before Matthew wrote."[21] What we do know is that the star and the Magi became part of the lore relating to Zarathustra and his prophecy of Christ. In ApocAd we have zodiacal patterning and Zarathustra in an apocalyptic frame. But can we trace any connections between the two, so as to suggest that any of the star-lore material connected with Zarathustra might have been early enough to lie behind the Gospel account itself?

Definite linking material may be provided by the Syriac *Book of the Cave of Treasures*.[22] It certainly knows the Matthaean Magi-story, and may in part be simply later elaboration. However, the first part of this work goes back evidently to earlier sources and in particular to an Adam-book of the second-third century, which Bidez-Cumont and others would associate with Gnostic Sethians.[23] However that may be, what is of concern here is the possibility that the content of such a Gnostic apocryphon may conserve some Adam-traditions like those in ApocAd. It certainly has a number of strong allusions to Iranian ideas: it describes the origin of Persian royalty and fire-worship in legends deriving from Iranian conceptions of the *xvarenah*; Zoroastrian close-kin marriages; the association of the Saošyant with the genius of Victory riding on a white horse; and perhaps alludes to the mountain lake in Azerbaijan which is the symbolic centre of the world; all together with the prophecy of Zoroaster-Nimrod.[24] Important for us is the passage on the Magi:

> Zwei Jahre aber vor der Messias geboren wurde, erschien den Magiern der Stern; sie sahen aber einen Stern am Firmament, welcher in einem helleren Lichte als alle (anderen) Sterne strahlte. Und in seiner Mitte war ein Mädchen, welches einen Knaben trug, und auf dessen Haupt war eine Krone gesezt. Es war nämlich eine Gewohnheit der früheren

[21] Charlesworth, "The Treatise of Shem" in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. I (London 1983) p. 479, citing A. Paul, *L'Évangile de l'enfance selon Saint Matthieu* (Paris 1968) pp. 100–104; Brown, *Birth of the Messiah* pp. 190–196. For the attribution to Jewish Christian layers of tradition, Charlesworth follows E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew* (Atlanta 1975) pp. 36–37, where Schweizer rightly notes that the astrological material has come in from a different source to the "main" Herod-and-persecuted-child narrative ("A"). He may be wrong to suppose that "Matthew was probably the first to link the two traditions", however, in the light of ApocAd.

[22] Ed. and trans. C. Bezold, *Die Schatzhöhle* (Leipzig 1883).

[23] J. Bidez – F. Cumont, *Les Mages Hellénisés t.* I (Paris 1938) pp. 46, 155.

[24] Bidez – Cumont, *t.* II, pp. 120–122.

> Könige und chaldäischen Magier, alle ihre Zustände aus den Sternbildern zu erforschen. Und als jene den Stern sahen, da gerieten sie in Verwirrung und Furcht, und ganz Persien ward aufgeregt … Eilends lasen die Magier und Chaldäer in ihren gelehrten Büchern, und durch die Kraft der Weisheit ihrer Schriften erreichten sie ihren Zweck. … Denn in Wahrheit wurde das von den chaldäischen Magiern gefunden, dass durch den Lauf derjenigen Sterne, welche sie Tierkreiszeichen nannten, sie die Kraft der Tatsachen voraus erkannten, noch ehe dieselben eintraten. … So fanden auch diese Magier, als sie zusahen und in dem Orakel des Nimrod lasen, in demselben dass ein König in Judas geboren werden würde; und der ganze Weg der Heilsordnung des Messias wurde ihnen geoffenbart.[25]

There are several clear indicators here of astrological meaning. Firstly there is an unmistakable allusion to the spectacular conjunction of Venus and Jupiter on 17 June, 2 B.C., which may well constitute the astronomical basis of the so-called "star of Bethlehem". There is widespread scholarly agreement that Jupiter is the star of the Messiah. Hence it was this striking event which mythologically speaking set the Magi on their journey—or more prosaically began the series of astrological calculations leading them to the time of the Saviour's birth.[26] As an indication of the framework in which it was interpreted, we have first and foremost the zodiac, in reference to whose succession it was possible to predict future events. More exactly, we have the emblem of the Virgin (♍). The usual astrological depictions show the Maiden holding a sheaf of wheat, containing the bright star Spica, to her bosom: here it has become a star-child, and the sheaf a radiant crown of glory. Other versions of this story related to the *Cave of Treasures* subsequently assimilate the star-picture to a variety of iconographical symbols, including the Cross (ps.-Chrysostom, *opus imperfectum in Matthaeum* II,2,2); or others say they saw in it a heavenly script "which made known His arising" (bar Hebraeus)—i.e. presumably they saw realised in the star the horoscope of the Messiah. Still others refer to its being recognised from the prediction of Zarathustra, or even as identical with Zarathustra himself (bar Konaï).[27] Using the evidence also from the Syriac *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, a good case has been made by G. Widengren that these are different ideas which have been imposed upon the

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[25] *Die Schatzhöhle*, (ed. Bezold) p. 156.

[26] Charlesworth cites W. Sinnott: op. cit. p. 479 n. 34; see also O. Edwards, *The Time of Christ* (Edinburgh 1986) pp. 64–67.

[27] Bar Hebraeus in Bidez – Cumont, *t.* II. p. 135 (S21); bar Konaï, pp. 126–129 (S15).

originally Iranian symbolism, which will have spoken of a heavenly radiance denoting the *xvarenah*, and of a "pillar of light" rather than the Cross, like the lightning-flash or the shooting-star linking heaven and earth in the myths.[28]

The astrology does not belong to the primary level of the myth. It too is a later accretion. But the question is: How early did the astrological interpretation arise? Did it come about only substantially later, enabling a subsequent meeting of Christian tradition with Iranian hopes for a star-born Saviour? That is one possibility. On the other hand, if it entered the picture early enough, we might see the astrology as one of the factors through which the story was turned into the legend we have in the Gospel of Matthew and the Syriac writers, where the Iranian star-Saviour is interpreted as a prophetic picture that finds its fulfilment in the birth of Jesus. The star-cult is known shortly before Jesus' time in expectations focussed around the figures of kings such as Mithradates, or Antiochus of Commagene in the first century B.C. And that restless and uncertain period is also when Charlesworth sees the spread of astrological ideas into Judaism. The question is, therefore, whether the astrological aspect of ApocAd coheres significantly with the elements we can trace to the early versions of the star-story: e.g. those belonging to the "Gnostic" lore from Adam-tradition which lies behind the *Cave of Treasures* account? If so, then it is possible that the astrology there may in principle be early enough to have affected the Gospel.

A related point we must first establish is: How integral is the astrology in ApocAd and did it belong to the original shaping of material in the cycle? The answer probably is that it *is* integral, and belongs to the structuring of the material that came to the author of ApocAd. The astrology of ApocAd is already presupposed, it seems to me, in the fundamental idea: the interpretation of the cycle of revelations as referring to the twelve kingdoms after the Flood, each worshipping one of the cosmic "powers" (zodiac signs). The general picture of the earth and its division into climes, similar to *Jubilees* and the *Sibylline Oracles*, and the fragmentary histories which asserted the centrality of Jewish land and culture (above, pp. 75–83), suggests such a "cosmic" patterning and an issue with "idolatry" and star-worship. In other words, it seems that we have at the foundation an astrological/apocalyptic frame story, which

[28] Widengren, *Iranisch-semitische Kulturbegegnung in parthischer Zeit* (Köln–Opladen 1960) pp. 66–73; connections with the Zarathustra-legend, p. 68 and n. 238.

must have been conceived from the outset as a unified response to the zodiacal symbolism of the mythology which the author of ApocAd had before him.

The myths concern a universal Saviour who bears the "glory" and with it the secret knowledge from primeval times, magically born from the hidden seed. The astrology would naturally have been worked out in symbolic terms, based directly on the cyclic mythology which gives direction to the geographical and temporal sequence of the revelations so as to restore the full Adamic meaning. The mythology of the Saošyant and of the *xvarenah* is grounded on the symbolism of the light in the watery depths, and this gives the astrological orientation we need—in fact it makes sense in many details of ApocAd in its overall design. We must envisage the circle of the zodiac signs, six above the horizon and six below: in the east just over the horizon we have Aquarius, the outpoured waters from a boundless source, presided over by Saturn, dark ruler of the beginning of time; opposite, just under the horizon we have Leo, sign of royalty with its star Regulus, presided over by the sun: its fiery energy is thus imaginatively being born from the dark depths, and beginning the sequence of the signs. (Commencing with Leo in this way, rather than with Aries, is in fact one of the standard presentations in ancient astrology.) Also, I consider that the sign farthest in the east, Aquarius (♒), corresponds to the First Kingdom and denotes the original revelation, Zarathustra; and the sign of Leo (♌) opposite would represent the Twelfth Kingdom, the climax of cosmic revelation, symbolised by the child of the "two luminaries", which I have assigned to Egypt.[29]

If we place this axis across a map of the world—a world, that is, conceived in the manner of *Jubilees* or the mythic world-picture of the *kešvars* from Iranian sources—we will naturally also establish a

[29] Above, p. 73. The other Kingdoms can also be placed on the chart, but this is a subject requiring detailed argument and need not concern us here. A full presentation requires correlation with the astrological information contained in the astrological system of Justin's *Baruch*. The broad symbolism in outline is all that we need to understand the basis of the astrological lore in ApocAd. (Note that in "human" time or daily movement of the sky, the signs rise in the east and move across the sky; however, in "cosmic" time, to which the chart doubtless refers, because of the "precession of the equinoxes", the sun is actually moving gradually back through the signs, each in 2,160 years. By schematising history as three ages, ApocAd may mean to indicate that the scope of Adam's vision and the events narrated comprises three of these, or a span of some 6,500 years.)

"centre of the world". And that will be the site of the original Paradise, as in the conception of *Jubilees* (8,16), around which was the central territory which God intended for his people. In the mythic content of the Illuminator-cycle which the frame-story is designed to interpret in Jewish-apocalyptic terms, the Primal Man or Gayōmart was likewise created at the centre of the world, and would doubtless have been symbolically equated with Adam in Paradise at a fundamental stage in the emergence of the ideas.

Crucial to the Jewish-apocalyptic interpretation of the whole is the Thirteenth Kingdom, and the Messiah who represents the eternal "Name" that God named before the creation (I *Enoch* 48,2). One might expect that as a version of the pre-existing or eternal truth in its wholeness, known to the esotericists, though only empowered externally—"given a mandate" (CG V 82,14–15)—when all God's cyclic revelations are complete, the Messiah would be the figure at the centre of the circle. Perhaps this puzzle goes with that about the apparent displacement of Primal Man from climax of the series to Eleventh Kingdom. If the "Adamic revelation" ever existed in this simplified form, it would obviously have been very unsatisfactory in its implications. For neither in the Saošyant mythology, nor in the "apocalypse" which our author devised in Jewish terms, is it possible to contain those implications within the bounds of a simple return to the start: but that is all that a Primal Man, or a Messiah conceived purely as a counter-revelation to all of fallen history, would be. There has to be an element of transcendence. However, in a funny way the solution of the Thirteenth just as the sum of the twelve would also make the intervening history irrelevant, since it would imply that the whole answer had been there from the beginning, concealed at the centre.

Perhaps Gnosticism went down this route, since in its version of events, all the Saviour-figures become merely avatars of the Primal Man, and the meaning of history does lie simply in the abolishing of history, revealing what was there all along. But ApocAd surely means to add a specifically apocalyptic dimension to the cycle when it projects beyond the twelve a Thirteenth (the Messiah), not just to continue it with one more appearance equivalent in status to the previous ones. In ApocAd the impetus of history continues forward, propelling us still on into the eschatological phase when the "struggle against the powers" will be fought (83,5–6). In symbolic-apocalyptic terms it is right, therefore, that Primal Man (Kingdom 11) is restored actually just prior to the apocalyptic intensification of the whole struggle, so that

it ultimately goes beyond a return to the primordial wisdom into the domain of "fulfilment". And it is right also that the Thirteenth forms an integral part of history, avoiding any suggestion of a leap to some Gnostic wholeness of vision outside the world. The Messiah's role is rather to bring history to its fulfilment (82,18–19). (The eternal aspect is made sufficiently plain, of course, in the "Fourteenth Statement" which is then additionally required (82,19 – 83,4).)

So in the system of ApocAd I believe we have the Thirteenth assigned to one of the zodiacal signs, which is "free" because the Eleventh Kingdom is assigned to the centre. It remains now to see whether we can correlate the elements from the Adam-source of the *Cave of Treasures*, or the zodiacal symbolism in ApocAd.

Several obvious observations may be made. Firstly, the symbolic chart of the world mapped out by ApocAd mirroring the circle of the zodiac is just the sort of astrological tool that would have to be utilised by the Magi in the Gospel story and the *Cave of Treasures*, who are intent on finding the *locale* in which the Messiah is to be born. Secondly, the succession of signs is likewise the key way in which "it was discovered by the Chaldaean Magi that through the progression of what they call the signs of the zodiac they had the power to find out events before they happened". In ApocAd the Illuminator brings a revelation to each of the zodiacal climes. The Magi are concerned therefore with:

a) a stellar phenomenon to be interpreted (furnished by the exceptionally bright conjunction of 2 B.C.);
b) a schema of successive appearances or revelations connected with the zodiacal signs and correlated thereby with different geographical segments raying out from the "paradisal" centre of the earth; and
c) a time-indicator for the actual birth of the child, to which we shall come shortly.

In fact, given the starting-point of the conjunction, and the symbolic framework from ApocAd, we are be able to specify rather exactly what it was that the Magi were seeking in order to bring their search to fulfilment.

Important for the astrological geography of the appearance is the fact that, in various ways, the stories indicate that the significance, or "message" carried by the star, referred to Virgo, even though the conjunction in 2 B.C. actually took place in the adjoining sign of Leo.

Now, if the story does indeed come out of a tradition similar to that of ApocAd with its schema of 12 + 1, it would have been known that since the Messianic revelation is to come after the Twelfth (= ♌), *in this case*, at least, that means looking from Leo to the next sign in the sequence—namely Virgo (♍). The Nile, in the "centred" geography of *Jubilees*, represents the westernmost point of the central domain, which is the theatre of God's people in their struggles and successive oppressions by the other kingdoms (8,15). If the author of ApocAd is using a similar world-picture, we should not expect any appearance of the Illuminator further west than the Nile. Rather, Leo/Egypt is the westernmost point of the cycle, which begins now to curve back toward the east through the upper semicircle of the signs. Virgo is the next sign to Leo, and its segment can hardly be localised anywhere other than the eastern coast of the Mediterranean: in Palestine. If we were in any doubt how to interpret the location, we would only need to draw upon the "apocalyptic" schematism, since we know that at this juncture all the twelve kingdoms of Ham and Japhet have spoken—the remaining one, with the Messianic birth-story, can only belong to the Kingdom of Shem. Even without specifying the other correspondences, these identifications are the strongest in the reconstruction of the system.

So far then: We have the "star",—Jupiter made brilliant by its conjunction with Venus in Leo in 2 B.C. But as it is presented, it stands in the minds of the Magi as a portent that takes place in Leo, yet points in its significance to Virgo. In terms of the geography behind ApocAd, that means they knew that the next manifestation after the Twelfth had to be one last turn of the cycle, from Egypt to Palestine. In temporal terms, the birth of the Thirteenth would take place when the Messianic star Jupiter, having been in Leo, moved into Virgo. Their vision of the Virgin-emblem presumably means, as bar Hebraeus' more prosaic version suggests, that they knew its movement from calculations beforehand—a horoscope.

The Magi had therefore to watch, expectantly, for the star which had already announced something of importance relating to royalty in 2 B.C., to move from Leo to Virgo, which would signify that the next revelation was approaching. According to bar Hebraeus, the stellar script the Magi saw in the star seemed to "spell out" to them "the time of his arising". But to what are they referring? O. Edwards has summarised the celestial events which followed the conjunction of 17 June, 2 B.C.:

> During the following months, Jupiter moved forward through the sign of Leo and into Virgo, entering the sign of Virgo on October 17, 2 B.C., coming to rest between December 24, 2 B.C. and January 3, 1 B.C.[30]

On their astrological "itinerary", the Magi would now have followed the star as it moved into Virgo/Palestine. They had "started out" with the dramatic conjunction, and then watched over the next months for further clarification of the celestial signs. Jupiter moving into Virgo would tell them the moment was drawing near, and that the place would be Palestine. The apparent "coming to rest" of the star would tell them the precise time, to within a few days, of the birth they were seeking. It is precisely the action reported of the star in Mt. 2,9 which has so perplexed the commentators: first "leading the way" and then "standing" over "where the child was". But astronomically (in terms of observed motion) it makes perfect sense; and the astrology of ApocAd tells us for the first time how the Magi would have known from this phenomenon where and when the Thirteenth was to be born.

According to O. Edwards, we have in this last stellar event of the "standing" star an indication of the date of the Matthaean nativity.[31] We need only add that, if the above reconstruction is valid, the astrological content and so the calculation of the time belongs already to the pre-Matthaean synthesis. A set of connected arguments has shown this to be so. Mt.'s narrative of the Magi, as we have seen, is based on the visit by the Queen of Sheba, and in ApocAd she is a virgin who gives birth to Solomon's spiritual son. This demonstrates that the "virgin"-imagery which is taken up astrologically in the *Cave of Treasures* had already been there in the Magi-section in the "True Prophet" story-sequence which the evangelist wove into his infancy gospel. The Magi came to honour a child born from a virgin. The star which the Magi followed for their calculations would thus already have been associated with the virgin-birth theme, present in the ApocAd summary (78,27 – 79,19). As well as identifying the Queen of the South story, in a mythologised version like this one, as the basis of Mt.'s episode of the Magi, we have also brought Mt. through the star into connection with the framework-story of ApocAd. This is justified, on the grounds that the latter provides the very information necessary to understand the *Cave of Treasures*' interpretation of Mt.'s episode in terms of astrology. Our conclusion

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[30] O. Edwards, *The Time of Christ* (Edinburgh 1986) p. 67.

[31] Edwards, op. cit. pp. 77–81. Jupiter "came to rest" in the last week of December 2 B.C., and Jesus would be born early in the following January (1 B.C.).

must be, therefore, that the virgin-Queen material was already part of a Messianic cycle when it came to the evangelist, and with a background complex of ideas resembling ApocAd—including its astrology: for in a sense, the whole frame-story of ApocAd is an apocalypse that serves as a horoscope of the Messiah.

Probably, then, the Adam-source behind the *Cave of Treasures* contained ideas which grew from a Messianic astrology that is old enough to precede and inform the Gospel. (It is as old, at any rate, as we allow ApocAd to be.) Nor would it be surprising that wider elements of this legendary and esoteric material survived in Syriac sources.

The development of these legends depends, however, on the prior existence of star-associations connected with the Messiah—developments which we must probably trace through lines of interpretation of the Old Testament from Balaam's prophecy, through its use in Essene writings, etc. All the Syriac sources reveal how loosely the concepts of horoscope, star-child, Zarathustra's prophecy, biblical contacts (with Daniel, etc.) were correlated. The Queen of the South-story has no original connection with the astrology, but through the virgin-motif allows the Messianic star-motif to be attached there, although the astrology really relates to the Thirteenth Kingdom and the ApocAd frame. The background of the astrology as such, therefore, is best associated with developments like those we find at Qumran, with its Messianic horoscopes and apocalyptic periodisations in time and space.

It was star-associations which permitted the Messiah to become part of the esoteric wisdom concerning the geographical space and time of God's revelatory activity, astrologically determined; but by being incorporated into it, the Messiah transformed its meaning in turn. Mt.'s tale of the star-following Magi acknowledges the pagan wisdom—but in the full context of the Gospel the virgin-born Messiah is, in comparison with the Queen of the South, the Greater One (12,42)—whose revelation brings all astrology to an end.[32] We are at once naive and condescending if we suppose that the story in Mt. 2,1–12 is a fairy-tale to be taken with excessively literal import. Its point is surely not a royal delegation wandering among the hovels of Bethlehem.

[32] R.M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (London 1974) concluded that "Matthew's magi are connected with astrology and with the ancient religious traditions of the Persian magi which were respected and revered" (p. 126); nevertheless, he shows that in Mt. what we have is precisely "the tradition purified of magic", including the predictions of astrologers (pp. 116ff.).

It tells us that astrology brought to the wise men of paganism an awareness of patterns and cycles of divine activity, and that these came to be seen as containing also a higher meaning—or historically, that they had been absorbed into the Jewish encyclopaedic revelation of the Essenes and *Hasidim*. The elements of conflict and convergence between universalism and the religion of the scriptures are dramatised in the legend (Mt. 2,4–5). What esoteric Judaism offered, in order to resolve it, was the true apocalypse, the counter-revelation which all partial human efforts could only obscure until they were united in the light of "the undefiled one of truth" (CG V 82,24).

In Matthew, the double-revelation theory of Essene origin also seems the best clue to his attitude to the Magi. The demonstration that the wisdom of the Magi "brought them to Jesus", which he so effectively compresses into the infancy narrative, evidently accepts their astrology in so far as it shows that the Messiah was to be recognised as one born at a cosmic turning-point in history. Yet in that he is like all the other prophets, born in the cycle, who preceded him. As the Greater One, he changed the meaning of history—by revealing the apocalyptic truth which history cannot contain but which it does bring us finally to confront when history reaches its fulfilment—and so changed the very meaning of their predictions and their astrology as well.

CONCLUSION

THE VIRGIN BIRTH: SOME REFLECTIONS ON ITS MEANING

A. In the Apocalypse of Adam

After our ranging through numerous mythologies in quest of the "virgin birth" motif, in order to understand its role the *Apocalypse of Adam*, a number of reflections inevitably suggest themselves, and a number of conclusions need to be drawn. I believe it is now possible to do so with some conviction.

First of all, we may say that the occurrence of the motif in the stories from several of the "kingdoms" concerning the Illuminator is almost certainly independent of the Gospels and of Christian theology. ApocAd is best explained as an apocalypse in testamentary form, belonging to a rather distinctive phase in the history of Jewish visionary literature, with several other surviving examples to which it has manifold links in content and form. Nothing in the framework of its ideas requires a Christian derivation, and the apocalyptic structure of the document (which we may take seriously as a guide to its meaning) rules it out decisively since it requires a still future realisation of the final events (the "fulfilment" of CG V 82,19–20).[1]

As with much apocalyptic writing, there is evidence of great internal stress-and-strain within the thought-world of the visionary/writer, and criticism of established religious leaders and their God, with hope extended rather toward a prophesied spiritual figure, and his followers in a coming "generation". But the argument within ApocAd over the recognition of God by his distinctive titles and names, and over the nature of the true worship that should be offered, does not in any way break with the bounds of Jewish aspiration, aiming to reveal the true God in a manner that will be in future be acknowledged by the greater inhabited world—in other words, the tension does not extend

[1] Above, pp. 41–42.

to a Gnostic rejection of the Jewish God *per se*. The term "God" is indeed applied in a unitary way to the deity revealed in various events and stages throughout the work. It seems misguided therefore to derive the content of ApocAd from a supposed slipping from apocalyptic into a Gnostic crisis (so especially G. MacRae). Gnostic tendencies could certainly come to be elaborated on the foundation of its teachings, as the closely related texts such as the Nag Hammadi *Sacred Book of the Invisible Spirit* or the fragmentary *Book of Baruch* (Hippolytus, *Ref.* V,26,1–27,5) show. But the results there are noticeably different from the *Apocalypse of Adam* itself. A date already in the first century B.C. for the latter is therefore quite likely, above all on literary grounds and in view of shared legendary materials found in other apocalypses (I *Enoch* etc.) already by that time.[2] But even if it cannot absolutely be shown in its entirety to be pre-Christian, it certainly represents the kind of ideas which were early on taken up in Jewish-Christianity as well as in Jewish-Christian Gnosticism concerning a universal revelation, and a "true prophet" who had been a constant presence through the trials and wanderings of God's people—supplementing the serial-historical revelation of the Bible. Exile and return had become a myth of the gathering together of the primal truth known to Adam, and restored again in the last times. Connections to the Adam-literature, as noted by G.W.E. Nickelsburg, and the "encyclopaedic" approach to understanding the biblical revelation again show strongly the Jewish and Hasidic roots of this development.

Some crucial elements in the myth, however, first noted by A. Böhlig, were derived from Zoroastrian expectations of a World-Saviour or *Saošyant*, who would be born "on the water" from a pure virgin. Apocalyptic circles were of course notably open in certain respects to Zoroastrian-dualistic ideas, especially concerning eschatology, and the intertestamental picture of the Messiah as a major actor in the events of the Last Days, as Hinnells showed, echoes the results of Parthian cultural influence in the 2nd–1st centuries B.C. Zarathustra himself had probably by then come to play a prominent role not only as founder of the Religion but as prophet and agent in those expectations—a Saošyant or first in a sequence of such virgin-born "Saviours". The expansion of the Persian power had brought religious assimilations along with the spread of the Magian priesthood in its wake, and per-

[2] Above, pp. 61–67.

haps furnished already the idea of a supreme prophet as a key to the unity behind the great world-religions. Within Zoroastrianism, syncretistic tendencies are already apparent in the tardive mythology of Gayōmart, who will be raised up in the end-time and is otherwise closely connected in turn to the thematics of the Saošyant-myth. But tendencies toward universalism were also already being supplemented and countered, perhaps, by those which focussed attention increasingly on the figure of Zarathustra himself, i.e. the beginnings of the Zarathustra-legend as we know it from later summaries of the Sassanian *Avesta* and from Pahlavi sources. These tendencies are not necessarily opposed: a strong assertion of "Zoroastrian" identity is a natural aspect of an expanding and universalising of the religion.[3]

Several of the stories utilised in the sequence concerning the φωστήρ in ApocAd are precisely those legends which were being elaborated into this eschatological and Zoroastrian mythology—where the end-Saviour was closely connected to the original prophet. The Saošyant is a theological being, whose empirical reality is a composite drawing details from previous legendary figures (especially Farīdūn), as stressed by Duchesne-Guillemin, and in the myths of Zāl, Farīdūn, Gayōmart, etc. as well as that of Zarathustra, we can study related and overlapping materials from which the fully developed doctrines of his appearance at the Transfiguration or *fraškart* were being shaped. These legends are still recognisably preserved in ApocAd in the stories told by the several Kingdoms about the Illuminator. Zarathustra still appears alongside the heroes, as in the Younger Avestan sources that had been absorbed into Zoroastrianism. The theme of virgin birth, however, is shown by analysis to become attached to the legends only as they were assimilated to phases of the Saošyant. Though the "virgin birth" is itself a variant of the "unnatural birth" mythology indicating a remarkable prophetic or heroic figure, born at the turning-point of a cycle, analysis reveals that it has been superimposed in ApocAd on the legends of Farīdūn, for instance, and on that of the child in the Menyelek-myth, etc., since it turns out to be lacking in the Zāl-legend which was however originally the most influential in forming a link with Judaism (with versions in the Enoch-literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls).[4]

Concerning the notion of a "virgin birth" we may conclude therefore in regard to the *Apocalypse of Adam* as follows:

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[3] Above, pp. 71–75.
[4] Above, pp. 123–130.

1) The virgin-birth motif needs to be interpreted in relation to the *framework* of the legends and appears in them as a superadded feature, even though it was evolved from the same kind of mythologies which the legends represent (paradoxical or "unnatural" birth). The basis of that framework in ApocAd is evidently, as Böhlig saw, the Saošyant-myth. The virgin-born heroes still appear separately alongside Zarathustra, though later his birth-legend will incorporate from them allusions to virgin-motherhood (the heifers giving milk, etc.). Virgin-birth must be seen therefore as a key concept in the mythology as it was taking shape around the universal-prophetic role of Zarathustra at that time.
2) In the designation of various figures as born "from a virgin womb", or similar phrases, in fact, the primary function of the idea is to indicate their place in a universal scheme of revelation/redemption. It identifies them as related to a figure who will draw together the "Adamic" truth of all ages and times, and of whom virgin birth is the distinctive sign. Adam (or his legendary correlatives) remains however just one embodiment or prophetic link (as in the doctrine of the pseudo-Clementines) rather than a properly cosmic and redemptive figure himself, as happens in Gnosticism.
3) In ApocAd the prophetic figure has already been identified (by the Thirteenth Kingdom) with the Messiah, drawing on Enochic traditions about the pre-existent name/divine word. However, virgin-birth is not predicated specifically of his Messianic appearance. Where ideas of virgin birth find their way into other sources, therefore, we have no warrant for supposing that the idea had simply been absorbed by the Messiah into his own identity: it indicates rather the penetration into Judaism of universalistic ideas, akin to those in ApocAd, of a cyclic-prophetological nature, in whose formation the Messianic expectation plays only one—though climactic—part. (In Christianity therefore the assimilation has needed to go a step further, and not all Christian versions of the recurring "True Prophet" take up virgin-birth.)
4) Important also in ApocAd is the idea of a birth that happens in fulfilment of an inspired prophecy, rather than of human will or events. The notion of the Saošyant as foretold by Zarathustra, and the virginal conception as the mythological mechanism of its fulfilment, would seem to depend upon the close involvement of the original prophet in the subsequent figures, his "posthumous

sons", i.e. the tendency toward the formation of the Zarathustra-legend which centralised all the tendencies in his own person. It in no way depends upon the later external identification of the Saošyant with Christ, as utilised by Clement, Lactantius and others.

5) The old conception of the *xvarenah* ("Glory") which marks out a destined hero and comes to the mother, is intimately connected with the mythology, and already carries some suggestions of birth independent of normal paternity. Its rising from the water to accompany the Saošyant in the nineteenth *Yašt* indeed forms the mythological starting-point for much of the later Zoroastrian elaboration of the ideas. The receiving of the "Glory" is repeatedly emphasised in ApocAd in the "refrain" common to most of the Kingdoms in ApocAd.

The idea of the virgin birth in the *Apocalypse of Adam* equally does *NOT* involve:

1) Divine birth—even the priestly-Messianic expansion (the "Fourteenth Statement", 82,19–83,4) speaks only of his eternal election and the super-earthly realm from which he "came forth" (i.e. manifested his spirituality), with a strong parallel in *Test. Levi* 18,7–8. The cosmic aspect of Messianic doctrine in the Thirteenth/Fourteenth Kingdom (i.e. exoteric and esoteric Judaism) is adequately understood on the basis of ideas like I *Enoch* 48,2–4; Dan. 12,3; etc. and does not involve reference to the Christian Logos-doctrine. The Zarathustra-legend (First Kingdom) involves heavenly origins but, as we can tell in the light of the Iranian tradition, the partly fragmentary text 77,26–78,6 speaks of celestial preparation and nourishment, not divine generation.[5] Other materials indicate Mystery-conceptions of assimilation to a god, royal authority and initiation as a way to quasi-identity with a divinity—not divine incarnation.
2) There is no special religious exaltation of the mother in the legends, though she is singled out by destiny to bear a chosen son, but the emphasis falls on the virgin-born quality of the hero himself, and defines his special revelatory role.

[5] Above, pp. 61–64.

B. In the Tradition behind Mt. 1–2

The ideas contained in ApocAd are thus probably old enough to testify to conceptions already circulating in "esoteric" or apocalyptic groupings in the earliest Christian times, including virgin birth predicated of a Saviour-figure essentially modelled on the Saošyant and partially on the Messiah. It would probably be inaccurate to talk of them having been actually assimilated to Judaism, since the Messiah is not yet said to be virgin-born but to actualise the secret name created for him by God at the beginning (later Rabbinic parallels show that this doctrine probably had been taken up more widely). It is the universalistic-cyclic framework that is taken up in Jewish and Jewish-Christian Messianic thought (the "True Prophet" etc.)—and brings along with it certain legendary contents, related overall to the figure of Zarathustra rather than the Saošyant *per se*. These stories as first assimilated into Judaism, as in 1QApGen, do not include the virgin birth as such, but still represent the more original "anomalous" or disturbing nativities of the heroic type; this wider background to the virgin-birth-motif has been overlooked when trying to understanding its meaning, but it is brought out very clearly by the *Apocalypse*'s diversity of stories. The story of Solomon and the virgin Queen has been reinterpreted along legendary lines under non-Jewish, Zoroastrian influence before acquiring the motif, and provides a model for the transfer of the motif (with other features) from the cyclic framework to a Semitic narrative that is probably prior to the case of Mt. In the Gospel the feature of virgin-birth remains an element belonging to a special framework of ideas. That conclusion is reinforced by the fact that not only individual stories or motifs have influenced Mt.'s stories, but a connected cycle of stories linked in close association and referring to virgin-birth, independently documented together in ApocAd (Kingdoms 1–4). In versions of the cyclic-Messianic idea taken up in the Alexandrian milieu, the idea does not feature. This strengthens the conviction that Mt.'s tradition is a singular and distinctive one deriving from his Jewish-Christian (Syrian?) community. If we are inclined to accept M. Goulder's "new paradigm", Mt.'s rendering of the tradition would in turn be that taken up and utilised by Luke in his own fashion. (Or of course, more radically, if we follow J.A. Fitzmyer there is no virgin birth in Luke at all.) Brown's attempt to attach the virgin birth to an "annunciation of birth" narrative common to both Mt. and Lk. fails, since its equivalent in the source-

legends shows that this material consistently lacked the virgin-birth motif in all its known transpositions.[6] It would appear then from our investigations that:

1) Mt.'s attribution of a virgin birth to Jesus belongs originally within a special "sectarian" understanding, no doubt belonging to the Jewish-Christian ("Nazorene") group from which he came. Nevertheless this set of ideas was influential in Jewish-Christianity, and it is almost certainly wrong to try to limit its appearance to a "Gnostic" strain. Certainly ApocAd cannot be utilised as evidence of a late and Gnosticising background, since clear Gnostic connections are impossible to demonstrate, and any analogies are best understood as resulting from its own subsequent influence or re-handling by the Gnostics. The near-identity of its narrative traditions in the first four Kingdoms with the motifs in Mt. only shows still further how remote we are from any "Gnostic" milieu. Above all, the virgin birth in Mt. indicates that Jesus is the fulfilment of a pattern of existing expectations and patterns, which had already been expressed in "patriarchal" birth-legends, as in 1QAp-Gen, ApocAd, I *Enoch* 106–107. These then came to be connected with the Messiah on a "cyclic" model. Scholarship has unduly narrowed its sights to search for other instances of virgin birth, and so missed strong indicators of the general background. Some of the other closest parallels to the scenes in Mt. 1–2, for example, are to be found in the patriarchal but rather syncretistic romance *Joseph and Aseneth*—with its unusual emphasis on the "virgin" Aseneth, an angelic visitation and sort of annunciation-scene of her future marriage to Joseph, the "son of God", with prominent symbolism of a "star" (chs. 14–15). Nothing here resembles Mt. sufficiently that it could actually be the source of the Gospel, but early readers of Mt.'s stories in chs. 1–2 would surely have recognised their kinship with "esoteric romances" of this kind and the sort of "Mystery"-Judaism that lay behind them. Whatever its exact background, *Joseph and Aseneth* is hinting at mysteries in Jewish form that are to be a universal revelation. At the same time, it purports to show the deeper truth in the Old Testament story, and would not have been read as mere fiction. The same kind of processes are thus at work. Mt.'s Joseph and Mary would have seemed to such readers, at least, to stand for the hopes of such sects relating to a new, more

[6] Above, pp. 88–89; cf. 112–113.

universal revelation that was yet "true" to Jewish monotheism. (Mary is not, obviously, a pagan woman convert—but she is like the converted Aseneth "humbled", an "outsider"- figure, Galilean, persecuted.) Mt.'s purpose in drawing on such imaginative tendencies was presumably in the same way to build bridges to the wider world whilst showing its centrally Jewish import—an aim which paradoxically is the same as that of the "encyclopaedic" esotericism within the Judaic sects e.g. among the Essenes. Not only the Magi's visit, which suggests pagans can draw near to the Christ-child and find their own background fulfilled, but the aura of the supernatural about the nativity events would have demonstrated that the true divinely sent prophet to all the world (as claimed, it seems, for Zarathustra) was really the one represented in esoteric Jewish thought (cf. the "double revelation"). Mt.'s nativity not only demonstrates the superiority of Jewish wisdom (which tells the Magi where the child will be born), but represents in a further prophetic manner the beginning of the actual flocking of the gentiles to its universal source and central figure. I shall touch shortly once more on the anxieties and shadow-themes which belong to this same universalising tendency.

2) Mt.'s weaving of the stories together in this way clearly has a special meaning for his church in which actual mingling of Jews and gentiles must be supposed; but it also presupposes the idea of the virgin birth as attaching to the unifying component which determines the whole frame, combining the several birth-stories in his unique person. It requires us to suppose more than the influence of individual stories such as that in 1QApGen/I *Enoch* 106–107. It is anyway not possible to find in such sources the actual virgin-birth motif itself. Thus we must postulate that the legends already belonged for Mt. within a frame like that of ApocAd, or at least Kingdoms 1–4. It shows that Jesus is the climax and fulfilment of revelation through the Holy Spirit over the whole course of history, not just one in the cycle.

The Holy Spirit in Mt.'s source or community is understood in an unproblematic way as inspiring the ever-present, periodically born Prophet and as guiding events toward their fulfilment. The perspective here is identical, I have argued, with that of the well-known fragment from the Jewish-Christian *Gospel of the Hebrews* given in Jerome *On Isaiah*, IV (on Is. 11,2). Once again therefore, virgin birth seems to be attached here to the fundamental frame in a legendary-apocalyptic fashion, and functions as a sign of cyclic completion and a new age beginning, rather than having been given a strictly or specifically "Messianic"

meaning. The enigma of the Jewish-Christian Gospels, and their much paraded links to Mt. according to the early Fathers, has never been satisfactorily solved. But perhaps they represent materials "left over" from the background to the Gospel rather than heretical derivatives, as usually thought.

At any rate it seems clear that in Mt.'s doctrine of Jesus' virgin birth we have neither a divine begetting, nor a Messianic prophecy. Brown's reading of the miraculous birth as a backward projection of the resurrection, a divine action later found already operative in Jesus' birth, is thus misguided; moreover, it fails to clarify the role of the Holy Spirit, which needs to be understood as central to the evangelist's validation and theological affirmation of the stories (Mt. 1,18).

Gnostic sources may be relevant here, not to explain ApocAd but nevertheless reflecting the early Syrian-Christian milieu, and they tend to confirm that the virgin birth was *not* primarily understood there in terms of a unique divine begetting of the Son. The Nag Hammadi *Gospel of Philip*, which uses Gospel-traditions basically identical with Mt. except in one isolated case, regards the virgin birth as a central mystery, but does not limit it to Jesus (Saying 82 Schenke); moreover it denies the "paternity" of the Spirit, which in Jewish-Christian fashion is still interpreted as feminine (Saying 17 Schenke)—it is rather the agent of our virginal "rebirth" on the model of Adam (from the "virgin earth") (Saying 74 Schenke). The so-called Ophites in Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* I,30,11–12 describe how divine powers, including Sophia (still identified with Holy Spirit), providentially arrange the birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus, the latter "from Mary the virgin"; "thus Jesus was born from a virgin by divine working" (*operationem*) and was "wiser and purer and more just than all men". It was in that capacity that he received the Christ sent out from the higher worlds. These early heretics betray no hint that they knew that virginal birth was supposed to indicate Jesus' divine birth as Son of God.

The so-called "Messianic" use of Is. 7,14 in Mt. is also a misnomer. The evangelist would doubtless have been aware that the passage was not referred to the Messiah in Jewish exegesis, and Jesus' fulfilling it could not establish him in that role. Once more we must assume a wider frame of ideas concerning a figure who was the traditional Messiah only in one aspect of his expanded roles. It is well known that Mt.'s formulaic citations of passages to explain Jesus' significance have no exact prototype in the Jewish world, and far exceed the Jewish Messianic textual basis in the Bible.

ApocAd does include the notion of being born from a prophetic word, which was already present, in all probability, in the Zoroastrian versions of the mythology of the Saošyant, unifying the old heroic legends into a theology of the cosmic struggle. Thus Zarathustra's prophecy "Let Righteousness be embodied" was fulfilled. The Thirteenth Kingdom's "Every birth of their Ruler [i.e. God] is a word" (CG V 82,12–13) refers to this idea and also to the creative words spoken by God, including the name of the Messiah. We may surmise that it points to the Judaism of its time in some specific apocalyptic form, and may also imply that everything which happens has its prototype in the word of God, i.e. indicating a kind of expanded interpretative activity like that of the Messianic Qumran sect where everything that is or happens is assumed to be indicated in the OT, and to relate to its own history. Mt. however clearly goes beyond this kind of interpretation too, and gives a definitely Christian, retrospectively illumined cast to the Old Testament materials he utilises rather than building in any straightforward sense on the Messianic idea. But his techniques presumably grew out of the hermeneutics of sectarian Judaism. In 1QApGen we can certainly see how a story that occurs in ApocAd's cycle, namely that of Zāl, has been "found" in the Old Testament figure of Noah, just as versions of the legends were elsewhere "found" to be other biblical characters or doublets of them such as Melkisedek in II *Enoch*. In the pseudo-Clementines the stages of salvation-history are marked out by OT figures identified with its cycles in a similar way (and cf., a step further back, say *The Book of Jubilees*). I assume that all the legends outlined in ApocAd, by the time they reached the evangelist, had already been attached to OT figures. Here, just possibly, is a prototype for Mt.'s techniques of looking in the OT to find existing patterns or ideas. It was only at that final stage that they were strictly identified as Messianic, however. Mt.'s original title (1,1) suggests that Messiahship was an important concept to the evangelist. Probably he has centred his theological ideas more thoroughly in the idea of the Messiah than did those who formed his community, for whom Jesus may have been more significantly the (True) Prophet. Perhaps he wanted either to challenge mainstream Judaism to recognise Jesus, or to bring his community together with Christians from other backgrounds. Thus neither a virgin birth nor the citation of Is. 7,14 are likely to have pre-existed Mt. as a way of pointing to Jesus' *Messiahship*. If the evangelist did intend them to have a Messianic meaning, this still depends upon the Messiah having come to share a wider frame of reference as D. Flusser intuited,

i.e. having been one in a cycle like that of ApocAd, and where the figures have subsequently been "discovered" in the OT stories, including those which were interpreted of the Messiah.

3) To say that Jesus was virgin-born is thus essentially to indicate his place in a complex of expectations, not to record a "fact of history". That does not mean that it was applied to him at random, with no basis at all in events. But it functions in a fundamentally mythological way. By way of analogy: To say of someone from an underprivileged background that he or she "beat the system" by succeeding is a way of expressing a view of society and of certain people who manage to do unusual things. We know perfectly well what it means, even though we know that no literal *event* occurred when society as a system and was beaten by an individual. The picture of those who manage to beat the system is rather "mythological" and evokes a range of imaginative feelings, and may be exemplified in hero-figures of widely differing achievements. A person may qualify in many ways: by winning a place at College, by keeping his sense of humour, by making a mixed-race marriage, etc. etc. To those familiar with the mythic language, and in any particular case, it will have meant something quite definite and important; and Jesus must have exhibited qualities which proved in some eyes that he fitted the indications of the mythology. I want to offer some brief final thoughts on the meaning that a Messiah born of a virgin seems to have had within the world of connections we have uncovered.

In the first place, the conception presumes an understanding for a mythological mode of expression—which is what we would rather be led to expect from the close association of the idea with a coming revelation, a new age beginning, etc. Moreover, the association with the notion of a cyclic manifestation of the Spirit in a "true Prophet" or similar figure for each age likewise shows that the traditional Jewish sense of continuing the historical destiny of God's people had proved inadequate, at least for many, and certainly in inadequate to account for the amazing transformation of Messianism we find in Christianity. God's showing of himself in the past and, by extension, a trust in the future vindication of his purposes is already strained to the limit in many versions of apocalyptic, has to be supplemented by the picture of God's constant presence to those special few who are thereby the true Israel at all times. Close analogies might be found in the treatment

of the patriarchs as living presences, anticipated in some ways in the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs* which stand close to ApocAd in its origins, later carried further e.g. in the *Prayer of Joseph* (first century A.D.?); it is well known that Jesus speaks naturally of the patriarchs as alive and their God as the God of the "living".

The presence of the Spirit shows itself within the frame of this picture not simply as presiding over and guiding the course of history, but rather as a miraculous and amazing intervention in human existence—qualities not naturally emphasised, of course, in the Old Testament ideas concerning the Messiah. In fact the virgin-birth is the most striking feature of a mythological complex which has thereby profoundly transformed the OT expectations, not in any sense added to them as fulfilment or anchored within them as the evangelist no doubt wished to believe when he elaborated his system of OT citations. (Thus his technique appears as a control and counterweight to the extensive possibilities unleashed.) Where the OT prophecies were significantly lacking in the notion of a wondrous transformation of the conditions of earthly existence, the Zoroastrian legends emphasised this very quality of the *Fraškart*; central to it is the *xvarenah*, belonging first of all to the all-prolific power of Ahura Mazda, "who is wont to create the creatures numerous and good, numerous and beautiful, numerous and wonderful, numerous and marvelous, numerous and radiant" (*Yašt* 19,10). The *xvarenah*:

> will accompany the victorious Saoshyant and the other companions, so that he will make life marvelous (so that it may be) unaging, undying, not decaying, not putrefying, ever living, ever prospering, autonomous. When the departed shall rise up again (from the dead), nondestruction shall come for the living. By the will (of Ahura Mazdā) (the Saoshyant) makes life marvelous.[7]

The dazzling radiance of the *xvarenah* is on the most basic of levels the light of wonder, of the world being seen as living and rejoicing in the presence of the Creator, or of its renewal, and above all its liberation from history (the struggle with the Dark, death, decay). Its association with birth belongs closely with this sense of the marvellous, and the legends which seek to express it naturally focus on the birth of a *Wunderkind*, so alien to the OT. In the birth of such a child the world is made new and God-given once more—yet it is so in

[7] *Yašt* 19,89 in W.B. Malandra, *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion* (Minneapolis 1983) p. 96.

relation to a determinate person, rather than in the sense of the older cosmic mythology. Traces of specifically Zoroastrian legends are, as we have seen, to be detected in the Qumran literature and apocalyptic; and much more extensively in the sequence of the birth-stories of the Illuminator in ApocAd, showing that the story of Zarathustra, and its framework, determined this development to a considerable degree. Both the Zoroastrian and the Christian traditions can be seen to have assimilated much from this development, focussing the themes on their own central prophetic figure—this explanation seems to me much more satisfactory than the attempts to derive the Zarathustra-legend, for example, partly from Christian ideas. But with this figure of wonder and renewal also came into Christianity much else from the mythological (as opposed to OT or historical) vision, and it is worth considering how great a role themes associated with Jesus' virgin-birth, which we have now identified as part of these inherited stories, may be judged to have played in conveying and upholding the attraction of the Christian revelation. The Church today would be well advised to do so. At the same time this has little relation to the main line of development of the Christian theological tradition of the *Son of God*—with which indeed W. Pannenberg contends it stands in direct contradiction.[8] Christian mythology needs to be understood—but it is not reducible to pictorial metaphors for theological ideas.

The moving idea of the "outcast" mother (and to some extent father) of the wonder-child seems especially close to the Zoroastrian versions, particularly in the Zarathustra-legend where the driving out of the destined girl, the work of the evil devs, is turned to the spiritual good of mankind through the birth of her *xvarenah*-bearing child. A prototype legend is conveyed in ApocAd CG V 78,18–26, that of Farīdūn as we have seen.[9] In ApocAd the prototype myths have already been drawn into the orbit of Zarathustra's cyclic revelation, as has the Saošyant-prophet himself who begins the sequence; whether they were already synthesised in addition into the birth-legend of his original appearance is unclear, but the idea of the Glory coming "to the bosom of his mother" (78,4) is strikingly close to the "Glory of Farīdūn" legend preserved in the *Bundahišn* and is suggestive of the virgin-birth strand in the symbolism. Note too that in the Zarathustra-legend, the future mother has already received the Glory before meeting the father. In

[8] W. Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (Philadelphia 1968) pp. 143ff.
[9] Above, pp. 119–120.

all versions, Christian and Zoroastrian, the revelation leads to initial estrangement and humiliation, with accusations of sinfulness, which is then turned to the vindication of the good—an emotionally powerful mythical element that lends much of the character to the infancy-narrative of Mt. and its subsequent Christian analogues. Did the mythic theme also inspire Mt.'s creative exegesis of the "sinful" (or at least ambivalent) women in the genealogy?[10]

The theme of the good woman outwardly humbled and regarded as sinful is complemented by the Kerešāsp-motif of the agonised hero who is nevertheless striving to do the good. The discoveries in the field of the Dead Sea Scrolls here help show that the idea had already proved fertile in bringing the legend over into Judaism (1QApGen). Now that we know the myth belongs to a tradition which was affecting Jewish sectarian circles in pre-Christian times, we need to consider seriously the possibility that its reflection in the agonised Joseph of the *Protevangelium* 13,1 ff. may well preserve part of the infancy-tradition that has been toned down already in the condensed narrative of Mt.1,18 ff., where the human story is rapidly swallowed up in a whole barrage of reflections and citations. As against the whitewashed Joseph of subsequent pious tradition who could not possibly have considered divorcing Mary, the *Protevangelium* still offers a Joseph who out of fear of shame nearly refuses to take her at all (9,2) except under dire threat, and feels seriously polluted by her apparent sin.

In ApocAd the figure of the primordial hero with the tortured soul is substituted by that of his "golden" child, Zal. The roots of the substitution most likely lie in the Zoroastrian tradition itself, where the promise of the advent of the Saošyant made to the hero has been assimilated to this mysterious child, watched over by a heavenly/magic being, and sent by God to reclaim his kingdom and receive the royal *xvarenah*. The paradox of the "sinful" or marginal behaviour that yet preserves the very existence of the world, and leads to the coming of a prophetic Saviour-figure, was no doubt intuitively appreciated in the early days of Christianity, when the message of the first becoming last, and the shocking force of the crucified criminal being also the Messiah who

[10] R.E. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah* pp. 71–72 considers it possible that the evangelist would be defending the apparent "sinner" Mary by "pointing to irregularities on the part of women in the acknowledged genealogy of the Messiah", but adds that the logic is not entirely convincing as a "cryptic apologetic" (n. 23): however, it is very much the sort of way that mythology works by elaborating variants and analogies.

will come in glory, had not yet been softened or made familiar. Again the mythology must have brought out for Matthew a central aspect of the Christian message, later overlaid by concerns of dogma and respectability. A development in the Iranian and specifically Zoroastrian mythology, linking the agonised figure's mysterious golden child to the Saošyant prophecy prior to its utilisation in the *Apocalypse of Adam*, provided the remote symbolic and narrative basis for a subsequent Christian reinterpretation.

Perhaps most significant of all is the *marginal* character of the mythologies, emphasised by O.M. Davidson. The revelatory figures represent the "other"—not however as a genuine alien intrusion, but within the system, so functioning as the limit or boundary concept, a point of transformation.[11] Myth is typically concerned with paradigmatic patterns which can be recognised and recreated on many different levels within a culture, or in its relations to the environment or order of the world. Variations in the narrative over time and oral retelling to suit particular audiences also mean that the underlying assumptions of myth are not brought into consciousness through comparison, but that change is unconsciously assimilated. But the "paradoxical birth" theme may possibly be described as myth examining its own boundaries: it describes the origination of essentially unique figures, who are born in ways which overturn the normal patterns. Change of pattern is not normally made conscious in myth, but this is myth dealing with the forces of change that can best be described as history—yet in a mythical way. Of course *de facto* the oral-mythological world already recognised the importance of individual factors which change existing ideas or embody new forces of cultural development, but it did not view them in the way we do in our highly individualistic, historically aware societies. It felt them as vitally important, indeed supernatural and "heroic" beings from outside the settled ordering of the world. They do not accordingly belong to reality as we know it from day to day, but redefine the world at times of crisis—especially the ultimate marginal crises of creation, or the end-time. The heroes such as Kerešāsp or Farīdūn, or their heir the Saošyant within the Zoroastrian development, are connected with both the creation and destruction of the world that is "normal", or relatively settled in-between. Just as on the one hand events and patterns within an oral-mythological culture do not cohere into fixed "history",

[11] Above, p. 98.

but are constantly re-imagined and retold to accommodate present perspectives and values, so conversely in oral-mythological cultures the individual agents of change do not assume the distinctness of historical individualities, but are themselves mythologised, absorbed into mythic types—but from the mythic point of view as paradoxes, impossibilities, contradictions. We do not get to see individuality, but rather the mythic acknowledgment of individual historical existence, i.e. disruption, unnatural events, etc. This, if we extend Davidson's insight, is the oral-mythological representation of the extra-mythological, which nevertheless has to be acknowledged as part of the cultural make-up. Literacy and historical awareness bring the sense of a past as a pattern of interpreted facts, that has been fixed and can be consciously distinguished from the present; at the same time, individuals emerge more clearly in their own right who can be distinguished from those who went before. In myth, such figures are still part of the fluid retelling, and therefore also less clearly defined. They are assimilated to marginal types of disruptive/creative, divine/demonic, vital/sinful heroes.

Even a Saviour-figure like the Saošyant mythologically carries with him the sense of threat and disturbance to the order of things: with him are conjured up Azi-Dahāk, now let loose from his imprisonment, etc., and the violent struggles of the end-time. (In Indian versions of the fiery *xvarenah* in the waters, the fiery essence is the "submarine mare" who will break loose and burn up the universe; similar myths attached themselves also to the energies of Śiva, god of spiritual birth but also of material destruction. A version of one of these too is found in ApocAd (CG V 79,29 – 80,9).) But in the Saošyant framework it seems as though the idea has been spiritualised. The special form taken by the archaic "paradoxical birth" motif, the virgin birth, belongs to him alone—even when he assimilates the other figures to prior versions of himself as in ApocAd. And the "virgin birth" seems especially fitted to express the pure idea of individual uniqueness, still mythologically, but in its simplest and almost analytic form. In his "posthumous sons", Zarathustra begets himself anew, renewing the original revelation, also pointing toward the final time when the "wonder" of the revelation will be absolute and everywhere apparent.

The idea of a concluding revelation brought by a unique Saviour-figure was obviously grasped in a more fundamental way *as history* in early Christianity. Yet the mythology which brings out its significance is a spiritualisation of the older marginal-disruptive symbolism. And one may see its influence directly, I have tried to show, in the early tra-

ditions, already foreshadowed in ApocAd. Christianity in some ways revived in considerable measure the mythological meanings of these traditions, even though it simultaneously historicised its redeemer as the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy. He was also the True Prophet whose influx of the Spirit opened momentary revelations and periodically overturned the existing order, to renew the message that history had not managed fully to sustain. Christianity can hardly be demythologised with impunity; it is more the case, perhaps, that it represents a specific new understanding between myth and history.[12] The "virgin birth" was of all mythological motifs one particularly suited, in its marginality, to express the coincidence of a mythic and a historical-individual event. Christianity offers the mythic experience of redemption, an anticipation of the Last Times and the renewal of the world; but it offers it in a completely novel way to individuals, who enter the Christian *ekklesia* through personal commitment and irrespective of any shared origins or common culture, such as sustained the old impersonal myths. Quispel has rightly spoken of the spiritually democratising effect inherent in Christianity.[13] Anyone could become a part of God's people in Christ, apart from any special history—or with each his own special history. The myth of virgin birth must have had a very direct appeal for those making the transition from the still heavily collective forms of culture of the Middle East—not in the sense of setting Jesus apart but of establishing the possibility for all of a birth *sui generis*: in the Jewish-Christian literature we can see the power of this idea evolving in terms of the "True Prophet", who renews the revelation through the Spirit, to the final birth, establishing the type of a birth from God alone.[14] Here perhaps we have the point at which the prophetological background to the virgin-birth idea makes the Christian transition to the idea of

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[12] See further reflections in my *Transformations of Religious Experience* (Lampeter 2006).

[13] Quispel, 'The Birth of the Child', in G. Quispel and G. Scholem, *Jewish and Gnostic Man. Eranos Lectures, 3)* (Dallas 1986) pp. 21–22.

[14] Cf. pseudo-Clementine *Hom.* XI,24,2. Here one of the most valuable ways of reading ApocAd was already suggested by A. Böhlig, who noted the progression from human parents in the first four Kingdoms, through cosmic powers in Kingdoms 5 to 8, to divine beings in Kingdoms 9 to 11: Böhlig and Labib, *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen aus Kodex V* pp. 92–93. The Twelfth Kingdom (child of the Sun and Moon) was evidently a climax to the sequence (perhaps already a new perspective after Gayōmart), before it was displaced by the Messianic prophecy of the Thirteenth Kingdom. The document apparently reads religious history as a mythological progression from disruptive-individualistic myths of human birth to the spiritualised image of the individual's birth as the image of divine birth.

divine birth, which already in Luke has been read into the nativity of the "Messiah-Kyrios", as he will be shown to be and so, for Luke, in a mythic sense already *is* at his angelically proclaimed birth. But we should recall that through baptism and anointing, the Jewish Christians were united with the Messiah. Once again, we should not assume that the unique divine birth sets him over and apart from the individual believer. Quite the contrary, the individualism inherent in the development expresses a democratisation and opens the possibility of personal regeneration.

Many of these conceptions still seem to hold for the writer or compiler of the Codex II *Gospel of Philip* (Antioch? second century?), in which the mystery of the virgin birth, as we have mentioned, occupies a prominent place. In controversy with ideas which imply a divine begetting of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, the *Gospel* reaffirms the Jewish-Christian doctrine of the Spirit as feminine and contrasts the purity of Mary with the story of the fallen angels where supernatural "begetting" was evidently something very different (CG II 55,23–36). Christ's birth was parallel and antithetical to that of Adam, who was likewise born from the virgin Spirit and from the virgin earth: therefore Jesus was born of a virgin (71,16–21). His birth is a Mystery of regeneration, although throughout the *Gospel* Christ's coming into the world is also treated as a definite historical event, and indeed as the foundation of the Mysteries. In the spiritual rebirth the believer becomes a Christ (61,30–31; 67,26–27). Mary's giving birth is analogised to the coming of human beings to Wisdom (cf. 59,30–60,1), a symbolism which has been further synthesised with Jewish-pagan Mystery-ideas, probably very similar to Mandaeism (on the basis of the sacraments studied by H.G. Gaffron).[15]

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[15] Gaffron, *Studien zum koptischen Philippusevangelium* (Ev.theol. Diss Bonn 1969); see further E. Segelberg, 'The Antiochene Background of the *Gospel of Philip*' in *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique Copte* 18(1965–1966),205–223. The ascription of the *Gospel* to a Valentinian sect is widely assumed (Layton, Schenke) but remains highly questionable: technical terms are not used in specifically Valentinian way, and the existence of Valentinians who celebrated a sacrament of the "Bridal Chamber" (Irenaeus *Adv.Haer.* I,21,3) is not sufficient to establish a provenance; such a practice seems rather an alien element grafted on to Valentinianism. R. McL. Wilson originally and rightly stressed the Jewish-Christian characteristics; various scholars have noted the unusually high regard of this "Gnostic" document for the OT, and Segelberg has pointed rather in the direction of Jewish Wisdom-sources for the mention of Ekhamoth, etc. For rebirth in the Bridal Chamber, see M. Franzmann, "The Concept of Rebirth as the Christ and Initiatory Rituals of the Bridal Chamber in the *Gospel of Philip*", *Antichthon* 30(1996), 34–48.

The central statement on the rebirth-process in the *Gospel* again features virgin Wisdom who comes down in the mystic "marriage-chamber" (where baptismal and anointing rites take place), and in a passage which has been somewhat variously reconstructed we have possibly allusion to the "star" (71,3–15). Parallels with Ignatius of Antioch *Ephesians* 18–19, together with the general cast of the Gospel-traditions utilised by *Philip* have suggested that it draws directly on the tradition of Mt. or its background.[16] The fulfilment of Jesus' Messiahship evidently came at his baptism in the Jordan, which also forms the basis of his redeeming others (70,34–71,3). That happens in the "marriage chamber" rite, which confers a divine birth from the Father of the All. Explicitly, "It is fitting that each one of his disciples should enter into his rest" (71,14–15). In all this, one may suggest, we may see evidence of the way that Jewish-Christian conceptions essentially identical with those behind Mt. could be taken up into a sacramental form of Christianity. The uniqueness of the virgin birth-experience can thereby readily become the basis of a divine birth conferred through initiation into the Christian sacramental life.[17] In this, as in a great many aspects, the *Gospel of Philip* shows itself to belong in the mainstream of early Church history, though presumably having fallen foul of later orthodoxy it was preserved only in Gnostic circles.

Luke's presentation of the nativity is likewise a "divine birth", in a way that it certainly is not in Mt. The process by which it became so may well be fundamentally similar to that we have just traced, since Luke too is the representative of a more sacramental line, and his treatment of the infancy has been shown to be affected by Mystery-language and the mystique of Egyptian royalty (presence of the animals, heavenly proclamation, peace on earth etc.).[18] Jesus' birth telescopically anticipates his manifestation as Lord and Christ, which will be experienced in baptism, in the sacramental breaking of bread and the presence to the community of the Risen One. Luke may well have taken over the virgin-birth from Mt. and transformed it in the light of this orientation, much as happened in CG II/3. For our recovery of Mt.'s sources has shown that, contrary to the claim of R.E. Brown, the particular story-

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[16] C. Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi and the Gospel Tradition* (Edinburgh 1986) p. 81.

[17] In modern times, I think, R. Steiner has been the only interpreter to stress the democratising, individualistic aspect of the virgin-birth symbolism: see his *Das Lukasevangelium* (Dornach 1985) pp. 198ff.

[18] H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels* (London and Philadelphia 1990) pp. 304–305 (following E. Norden).

line which he supposes might have independently influenced Luke, as well as Mt., did not in fact contain the motif of virgin birth.[19] It must be said that our analysis strengthens the view that Luke may therefore not have had an independent version of the virgin birth at all, supporting more recent perspectives like that of M. Goulder that he was here literarily dependent on Mt.

At the same time, Luke belongs to the ecclesiastical tradition which increasingly opens a chasm between the divine Lord and the ordinary believer, rather than laying claim to Christ-status for the initiated Christian. Further steps in the development of this doctrine took place when the influence of Jn. 1,14 shifted the focus of Christian thought toward the incarnation of the Logos, the pre-existent Christ taking on flesh in the Virgin's womb. The virgin birth became a theological mystery remote from human experience. But for a period, at least, the extraordinary symbolism had helped to bridge the vision of a prophetological cycle and the possibility of the individual Christian's spiritual birth as the foundation of the sacramental life. Truly a concept of remarkable symbolic resonance, some of whose roots in the ancient thought-patterns of the Middle East have now come to light through the *Apocalypse of Adam.*

[19] Above, p. 117.

APPENDIX

THE ZARATHUŠTRA-LEGEND AND CG V/5 77,26–78,26

The Zarathuštra Legend

The celebrated Zarathuštra-legend—essentially the story of the miraculous birth and upbringing of the prophet—is narrated in considerable detail in the late Pahlavi and mediaeval books, especially *Dēnkart* Book VII (some material also in Books V and IX, the *Dātastān-ī Dēnīk* and *Selections of Zātsparam*), which purport to summarise the relevant contents of the Sassanian *Avesta*. The major Pahlavi texts have been ably presented by M. Molé.[1] J. Duchesne-Guillemin concludes that 'the lost portions of the *Avesta*, notably the *Spand, Vištāsp Sāst* and the *Cihrdāt*, must have contained the elements of a legendary life' in which 'Zarathuštra is the perfect man, simultaneously first priest, first warrior and first shepherd, whose birth was miraculously prepared by the union of three principles, *xvarr, fravahr* and *tan i gōhr*, in the womb of his mother; his sons will be the future saviours'.[2] A surprising new perspective on its evolution is now made possible, as we have seen, by the materials preserved in the Nag Hammadi *Apocalypse of Adam* (CG V/5). It has however been necessary in this book to reconstruct *in tandem*, so to speak, the doctrine of ApocAd and the components of the Zarathuštra-legend which appear to have influenced it. The danger of a circular hermeneutic is best fended off, in such circumstances, by the objective testing of the materials against the primary set of data. In this Appendix I test my reconstruction, according to which in Hellenistic times the various legendary components were coming to be centred more and more on the figure of Zarathuštra himself, against the Iranian

[1] M. Molé, *La légende de Zoroastre selon les textes péhlevis* (Paris 1967). The main texts are *Dēnkart* V,2; VII,2–3; IX,24,1–18; *Selections of Zātsparam* XII–XX. Mediaeval retelling of the legend: F. Rosenberg (ed.), *Le livre de Zoroastre* (St. Petersburg 1904). Jackson's attempt to recover traditional biographical materials is now rightly abandoned.

[2] J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *Religion of Ancient Iran* (Bombay 1973) p. 226.

evidences for the development of the Zarathuštra-legend. I propose that here too, the situation as we have interpreted it in ApocAd is the best explanation of the subsequent state of the mythology.

The purely mythic nature and relatively late content of the material is not in dispute. Nevertheless, they are important evidence about the understanding of the prophet's nature and role within Zoroastrianism itself. The balance of forces between traditional Iranian ideas and the Zoroastrian reform is at all phases of the religion a problem to be wrestled with, and by no means a one-way process. For instance: we have seen that some of the motifs in the stories are adopted from royal ideology, as was noted by Widengren.[3] On the other hand, it remains somewhat unclear whether there is a strong relationship between the three components of the birth legend and the tripartite ideology.[4] There is often a suggestion of extraneous influence if not syncretism. Perhaps the most obvious connections are to the figures of Gayōmart and more especially to the eschatological Man, the Saošyant (or Saošyants), both often associated with syncretistic developments.[5] Through his legendary treatment within this over-arching frame, Zarathuštra takes his place in the grand millennial design as we know it, for example, in the *Bundahišn* and in the writings of Manušcihr, for whom his revelation stands at the very centre of time. Contrastingly, in older sources Zarathuštra seems to be understood more as a founder *magus* and primal priest (*Athravan*).[6] The final legend concerning his long (three thousand-year or even six thousand-year) pre-existence, prior to his earthly appearance, perhaps serves to reconcile the two ideas. Understanding the leg-

[3] G. Widengren, *Iranisch-semitische Kulturbegegnung in parthischer Zeit* (Köln–Opladen 1960) pp. 68–69; further instances noted by G. Dumézil and others below.

[4] Duchesne-Guillemin points out, for instance, that Aša and Vohūmanah do not feature in the roles that would be expected of them in the 'tripartite' scheme.

[5] Gayōmart is a figure whose mythology is partly a product of later syncretism, perhaps connected with the contacts made during the imperial expansion of Zoroastrianism: S. Hartman, *Gayōmart. Étude sur le syncrétisme dans l'ancien Iran* (Uppsala 1953). H. Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* (Princeton 1977) has brought out the many correspondences and interrelationships of these two figures within the Mazdaean framework: pp. 47 ff.

[6] For traditions giving Zarathuštra archaic priestly status, which 'also connects him … to a class of priests from pre-Zoroastrian times, conferring the Zoroastrian religious tradition's continuity', see P. Clark, *Zoroastrianism* (Brighton and Portland 1998) p. 68; a similar antiquity and role was of course in general terms ascribed to him in the classical sources, on which see now A. de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi. Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* (Leiden 1997). He cites in particular Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 36,41; and for Zoroaster as founder magus, Plutarch, Herodotus I,101 and Lucian *Menippus* 6–8.

end should tell us much about the continuities and innovations within Zoroastrian thought.

Theories

About the origins of the legend there has been very little scholarly agreement.

a) Following Nyberg, J. Duchesne-Guillemin has treated the whole construction as late and derivative, prompted by rivalry with Christianity and modelled on the Christian Gospels (especially Luke). Yet his case for Zoroastrianism's need to counter Christian lives of Jesus is flimsily argued. The holy fear attending divine revelation, to which he specifically points as an influence from Luke is biblical or even Semitic rather than specific to Luke's nativity (cf. for that matter his own reference to influence from Daniel). Extraneous influences there may have been. But certainly this tenuous evidence cannot 'prove' the very late origin of all the Avestan features involved.[7]

b) At the other extreme, scholars such as G. Dumézil, E. Benveniste and K. Barr have focussed on what they regard as archaic, Indo-European patterns surviving in or transferred to the conception of Zarathuštra as a 'perfect man'.[8] The prophet becomes the idealised representative of the priests, warriors and husbandmen, and functionally replaces, according to these investigators, the original 'universal king' Yima from whom the different 'castes' were mythically descended. The close analogies to some aspects of Gayōmart's mythology—a later version of the 'first man' and in some aspects also royal—might make sense from this perspective. But the approach leaves a great deal unclear, even if we accept its basic premise, and 'primal man' theories were certainly pushed beyond their powers by some scholars.[9] For example: Why do the prophet's posthumous sons finally bear no rela-

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[7] Duchesne-Guillemin, op. cit. p. 227.

[8] The idea that Zarathuštra took over aspects from the role of the 'first man'-figure Yima was advanced by G. Dumézil, 'La préhistoire indo-iranienne des castes', *Journal Asiatique* 216(1930), pp. 109–130 and supported by E. Benveniste, 'Les classes sociales dans la tradition avestique', in the same journal 221(1932), p. 119; also K. Barr, 'Zarathustra som *teleios Anthropos*', in *Festskrift Hammerich* (Copenhagen 1955).

[9] See the discussion in Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History* (London 1967) pp. 76–88; C. Colpe, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (Göttingen 1961) pp. 140ff.

tionship to the tripartite scheme, despite being three in number and intimately connected to the motifs of the legend?

c) The pattern of Zarathuštra's birth bears an obvious relationship to the scheme of the creations and the divine beings associated with them in the prophet's revelation. The fire which is sent down from above to his mother, the animal creation which conveys his material substance in the form of milk to both parents, and the plant-creation which in the haoma contains his pre-existing *fravahr*, with the human act of conception standing in for Ohrmazd and man. Thus it is true that in some ways Zarathuštra's birth reads like a reflection of the central *yasna* ritual in which the creations are renewed and revalorised. Undeniably to this level belong the mixing of the haoma and milk, the notion that Zarathuštra's birth benefited the waters and plants (*Yašt* 13,93) and that Ahriman and the devs were banished under ground at his birth (*Yašt* 17,19; *Yasna* 9,15): for precisely these things—the renewal of the cosmos through the plant-'sacrifice', and the banishing of the demons especially through the 'blows' struck in the pounding of the haoma in the mortar—are central to the meaning of the Zoroastrian rite.[10]

Yet M. Molé's radical version of the liturgical theory, that 'Zarathuštra' is simply the offering 'born' from the mixing of the sacramental substances of haoma and milk, seems oversimplified[11]—and it is doubtful whether the very isolated remarks in *Dātastān-ī Dēnīk* 48,16; 48,30 about the presence of the prophet's *fravahr* in the haoma-plant can bear sufficient weight to show that his waiting to be born as a spirit-being meant that he only became real in the *yasna* rite.

Indeed, far from emerging organically out of the liturgical core of Zoroastrian worship, itself originally continuous with older Indo-European rites, one has the impression that the legend of the prophet is actually rather artificial, secondary and composite.[12] Several quite disparate mythic strands seem to be juxtaposed. If we turn to the Avestan evidence about the status and authority of the prophet that impression is only strengthened further, in that features which will be combined in the legend are still found not yet connected. We hear, for instance,

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[10] For the rite in the later period by see S. Shaked, 'The Yasna Ritual in Pahlavi Literature' in M. Stausberg (ed.), *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context* (Leiden 2004).

[11] Duchesne-Guillemin rightly objects to the sweeping nature of Molé's purely ritual argument, ignoring of the rest of the evidence: *Religion of Ancient Iran* pp. 102–103.

[12] The gods' explicit motive of producing a *pièce de résistance* in Zarathuštra (*Dēnkart* VII,2,20) only confirms this secondary and contrived feeling.

of the Saošyants—but they are not yet Zarathuštra's spiritual sons; the myths of a spark descending from above, or nurtured in the waters, and even the formation of an heroic soul in milk from impregnated grasses, are all separately attested.[13] We find Zarathuštra repeatedly associated with heroic representatives connected with the classes, such as the functional types Kerešāsp (= warrior) and Thraētaona (Frēdōn, Farīdūn etc., = husbandman), who each inherited a measure of the charisma or 'Glory' (*xvarenah*, *xvarr*) from the first man Yima (see e.g. *Yašt* 5,25–42; 9,5–13; 15,15–29; 49–50; etc.). But his relationship to them (as we shall see) often seems contentious or unclear rather than straightforward—in very much the same way, we might think, as is his connection to the yazads whose worship he is made to authorise in the *Yašts*.[14] Aspects of the legend are explicable along the lines of each of the scholarly theories, which perhaps indicates that overall it is a product of the Zoroastrian synthesis of 'reformed' teaching with many older practices that still survived. Zarathuštra comes to be interpreted as the original behind the revelation of powers and charismata which originally had a separate mythological history. ApocAd reproduces a variety of familiar mythological materials, still treated separately though held together by the initial identification of the reappearing Illuminator-Zarathuštra, and the framework of the Saošyants, with the 'Glory' that comes to them 'on the water'. I shall propose that it precisely reflects the state

[13] For the Saošyants in Iranian sources see the references in C. Colpe, 'Sethian and Zoroastrian Ages of the World' in B. Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* vol. II (Leiden 1981) pp. 540–552 (p. 545); pre-Zoroastrian myths: e.g. Dumézil, *The Destiny of a Kīng* (Chicago and London 1973) p. 144 n. 27.

[14] Though there are several divergent reconstructions, it is generally agreed by scholars that Mazdean Zoroastrianism does not derive in a simple, linear fashion from the teaching of Zarathuštra. The prophet's reforms were partially successful and produced a new religion; yet his success may have been geographically limited (e.g. to the East), and older elements of the cult (represented by the Yašts, or 'Hymns' to the old gods) persisted or made a return as different tribes or dynasties (e.g. the Persians) came to dominate the Iranian countries. Debate still rages as to whether the Achaemenians were Zoroastrian. References to a written *Avesta* date only from Sassanian times (2nd century A.D.–), though the much greater antiquity of some of its content in admitted. M. Boyce in particular has stressed that some of the Yašts at least rival in venerable age the Gathas, though they continued being used and eventually acquired typical insertions in which Zarathuštra conveys divine approval of their use in worship. Malandra, *Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion* (Minneapolis 1983) very plausibly conjectures that prior to the Achaemenid expansion, Zarathuštra's teaching had already established itself in Eastern Iran by an accommodation to the older religious deities, and that it successfully utilised the imperial Persian policy of toleration to move into Media and Persis (pp. 24–26).

of the legend in Hellenistic times, and that it likewise represents the same tendencies which figure behind the subsequent developments in the later Pahlavi books.

The Prophet and xvarenah *(Yašt* 19*)*

The starting-point for the elaboration of the Zarathuštra-legend is evidently the prophet's possession of the charismatic *xvarenah*, which in the Iranian sources he receives directly from Ohrmazd.[15] We noted that the myths about it are concerned above all with the royal figure of primordial times, Yima, and also that they contain a number of curious discrepancies. G. Dumézil already made significant use of these anomalies to restore what he believed to be the older tripartite ideological significance of the *xvarenah* mythology.[16] For him, this would have been central in a framework which preceded the more eschatologically orientated Saošyant ideas. His reconstruction has not convinced all the scholars, however.[17] From a somewhat different perspective but with essentially similar results M. Boyce has also tried to restore what she believes to be the original structure of the *xvarenah*-myth, for which our primary source is now the so-called *Zamyād Yašt* (= *Yašt* 19).

The underlying ideas about Yima are without doubt ancient, yet a number of secondary features are also immediately evident. The Glory flees from Yima at his 'fall' and goes to the representative early heroic figures, Thraētaona:

> because he was the most victorious among victorious men other than the victorious Zarathuštra.

and Kerešāsp:

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[15] For the basic material on *Xvarenah* see Malandra, op. cit. pp. 88–97; *Dēnkart* VII,1,7ff. contains a list of primal heroes who 'bore the Glory', commencing with Gayōmart and including Yima, Frēdōn, Kerešāsp etc. M. Molé, *Culte, Mythe et Cosmologie dans l'Iran Ancien* (Paris 1963) p. 436, describes how in Zoroastrian cosmology the creative energy of *xvarenah* is produced by Ohrmazd in the Boundless Light, is distributed in the lower world by time, and is a force of reintegration helping to bring about *fraškart*, the eschatological spiritualisation of the world; cf. also the comments of R.C. Zaehner, *Zurvan. A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Oxford 1955) p. 370. In Hellenistic times it comes to be ever more closely associated with Zarathuštra himself, almost like an 'eternal soul of the prophet': R. Reitzenstein – H.H. Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland* (Leipzig and Berlin 1926) p. 230 and n. 1.

[16] Dumézil, *The Destiny of a King* pp. 38ff., 108ff., 138–139.

[17] Malandra, op. cit. p. 89.

> because he was the most powerful among strong men, except for Zarathuštra, because of (his) manly valour. *Yašt* 19,36; 38.

The allusions to Zarathuštra here appear secondary and intrusive, and it must originally have been the meaning of the myth that the Glory passed, after the 'fall', to the most prevailing and to the most valorous hero. Zarathuštra's overriding claim to it is a theological adjustment which shows the imposition of a subsequent Zoroastrian framework. The claim is emphasised again when the non-Iranian usurpers, Frangrasyab and Azi Dahāk, attempt to take possession of the *xvarenah*. It eludes them, and is first called 'belonging to the Aryan countries in all present and future generations'—but this is immediately supplemented and implicitly corrected by the phrase 'which belongs to the righteous Zarathuštra' (19,56; 57; 63; etc.): here quite blatantly allegiance to an heroic tradition, and to the Aryan ideal of the functional types, is being replaced by a commitment to Zoroastrianism. By the time the Avesta was redacted in its present form, therefore, Zarathuštra's status had evidently exalted him above the traditional heroes, whose characteristics he now himself embodied κατ' ἐξοχήν.

In ApocAd the two heroes' legends—or strictly, that of Faridun and Kerešāsp's son Zal—appear still separately in the Second and Third Kingdoms, though they have become dependent manifestations of Zarathuštra's Glory. In Iranian sources, the prophet possesses a triple portion of the Glory, as summing up in his own person the ideal for all the social castes (*Yašt* 13,89). That is why it may appear that he has taken over the 'first man'-role of Yima. Yet such is shown by the *Apocalypse of Adam* not really to have been the case. It seems rather more that he is challenging and absorbing the traditionally separate functional figures who came after Yima for their roles.[18]

There is a further passage from the *Yašt* (see 19,53) in which Ohrmazd still more confusingly urges Zarathuštra on the subject of striving for that very *xvarenah* which, under the new regime, he already has in such abundance. The passage ought to be helpful—but it has been corrupted to such an extent that parts of it can no longer be clearly deciphered. The situation is the more tangled, as Zarathuštra seems to be exhorting himself. It is best explained on the basis that the prophet's usual function as receiving from Ohrmazd the divin-

[18] Dumézil, *Destiny of a King* p. 139. He notes the secondary qualities and 'improprieties' of the 19th *Yašt* in comparison with *Dēnkart* VII,1,25–27, especially the erosion and blurring of the functional characteristics.

ity's supposed approval of older materials in the Yašts for incorporation into the Religion, has here unfortunately proved at cross-purposes with a modification on the very subject of Zarathuštra himself.[19] ApocAd once again proves helpful, since it provides evidence that at one stage Zarathuštra (as we shall see) was substituted into the first place of a threefold representative series, making one of the three embodiments of the *xvarenah* along with the two heroes, prior to his final pre-eminence in Zoroastrian orthodoxy.[20] One way of understanding the confusion here would thus be to suppose that a priestly representative-figure of the first function, who like the heroes should aspire to participate in the *xvarenah*, has been suppressed in favour of the prophet. The material is no longer fitting for one who has, in the meantime, assumed this and all the other functional charismata into himself.

This stage in the mythology, suggested by the *Apocalypse*, also chimes well with the indications from the anomalies that have crept into the accounts of the partition of the Glory.

Partition of the Glory

M. Boyce has sought to restore the fundamental pattern of the ancient myth as follows.[21] When Yima 'brought the lying untrue word into his mind', *xvarenah* was seen to depart from him in the shape of a bird (falcon, *vāregna*):

> Mithra of wide pastures, with listening ears and a thousand perceptions, laid hold of this *xvarenah* …
> Then the three headed dragon rushed forward, thinking thus: 'I shall lay hold of this *xvarenah*'…
> Then Fire rose up at him from behind, saying thus aloud:

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[19] Cf. Malandra, op. cit. pp. 46–47; and for his comments on the obscurity of the passage at *Yašt* 19,53—p. 93.

[20] Similarly in the *Hōm Yašt* (= Yasna 9–11) Zarathuštra stands alongside Yima and the two traditional heroes as benefiting from the intoxicant (9,3–13).

[21] Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (Manchester 1984) p. 30 = stanzas 35, 49, 50, 51. Though omitting the heroes, she largely agrees in narrative content with the reconstruction work of Darmesteter, developed by Christensen, *Les types du premier homme et du premier roi dans l'histoire légendaire des Iraniens* t.II (Leiden 1934) pp. 53–54; and others. They establish the pattern underlying the passage, but Christensen supposed that this whole basic myth must originally have been thrice repeated, with, in effect, three Glories—a mistaken approach as Dumézil shows: rather after the initial crisis, the single 'Glory' of Yima is divided among the three types who are its defenders: Dumézil, *Destiny of a King* pp. 110–112.

> 'Back! Learn this, O three-headed dragon! If you should reach for this *xvarenah* … I shall blaze up. I shall blaze up on your jaws. Never thereafter shall you rush forth upon the Ahura-created earth for the destruction of the creatures of *aša*.'
> Terrified by the Fire, the dragon [Dahāk] drew back his claws, fearful for his life.

The Glory flees into the depths of the Vouroukaša sea before going subsequently to the heroes Thraētaona and Kerešāsp. These are also both connected in mythology with the dragon, Dahāk, since his usurped reign is overthrown by the former, who binds him in chains at the ends of the earth, and he is finally destroyed in the eschatological battle by the latter. Several motifs recall very archaic Indo-European mythology: with the Dragon's eventual death compare the wolf Fenrir chained until the Judgment Day when he breaks out, to be killed by Vidar;[22] but while he is chained the rule of the gods is assured until the end of the world. S. Wikander has argued slightly differently that the sequence Yima-Dahāk-Thraētaona is a version of a dynastic myth with parallels in Greek and Hittite sources, according to which an original good state of things is upset by a violent rule (e.g. of a Kronos), but restored by the conquering successor.[23] Cosmogonic motifs connected with the beginning and end of the world, joined with these mythic patterns, suggest that we might have here, therefore, a reflection of an ancient cyclic theory of the universe, of the kind proposed for ancient Iran too by G. Widengren.[24] However, the theories of Wikander and Widengren both run into difficulties—the former lacking convincing parallels, for example, in India where we might expect them most obviously. Rather than build too detailed a theory on them in turn, we may do best initially to keep strongly to M. Boyce's indication of the basic pattern: the lost Glory defended from the usurping Dragon by Mithra and the Fire—and subsequently by the two outstanding heroes. Within this, some connection with the idea of preserving the world-order ('the creatures of *aša*') and of the cyclic schematisation of legendary time into foundation (Fire), middle (Thraētaona) and end (Kerešāsp) of the world undeniably seem, somehow, to be present.

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[22] G. Dumézil, *Les dieux des Germains* (Paris 1969) pp. 96–97.

[23] S. Wikander, 'Histoire des Ouranides', in *Cahiers du Sud* 36(1952), 9–17; critical remarks) in Duchesne-Guillemin, op. cit. p. 225; an important attempt to develop this analysis in N.J. Allen, 'Bhisma and Hesiod's Succession Myth', *International Journal of Hindu Studies* (2005).

[24] Widengren, *Stand und Aufgaben der iranischen Religionsgeschichte* (Leiden 1955), p. 42.

Dumézil notes the incongruity of the Glory fleeing to two mortals and a god (= Mithra, who seems to double the role of the Fire). His own theoretical attempt to justify Mithra as an idealised guardian, a 'safe' substitute in Zoroastrianism for a rejected, Indra-like warrior-figure related to the energy of the *xvarenah*, on the other hand, sounds a little desperate.[25] Probably, therefore, we should look at the division differently. Discounting the supposed connection with a hypothetical war-like Mithra, we may note that in this mythological context the god seems rather to be present as a vestige of archaic materials, along with Apām Napāt (= Varuna?)—otherwise virtually unknown in Iranian contexts. And for the Fire, we might consider it instead more in its priestly connotations.

At this juncture, we can appeal to an illuminating parallel documentation of the material. On the basis of the significant parallel reference to the myth in *Dātastān-ī Dēnīk* 37,35 we arrive at a similar though slightly different sequence of 'perfect ones':

> He who is full of *xvarenah* like Yim; he who is full of healing like Frēdūn; he who has both wisdoms like the righteous Manušcihr; he who is full of strength like Kerešāsp.

The sequence consists now of human heroes: Frēdūn—Manušcihr—Kerešasp. Frēdūn (Thraētaona) is as ever representative of the agriculturalists, in charge of maintaining a wholesome society, as Kerešasp stands for the virile strength of the warriors.

Manušcihr then evidently stands for the first function: he is 'endowed with the two wisdoms' (cf. the Vedic 'twice-born'). He has, that is to say, the inherent wisdom of a sacred person as well as normally acquired memory-learning. A similar distinction (*śruti/smriti*) is well known in Indian literature. Here the distinction is likened in priestly symbolism to the double tying of the sacred cord, with the twofold duties owed to the sacred beings (*Dātastān-ī Dēnīk* 40,3). Elsewhere Manušcihr is a priestly sage and, from a doublet episode in which the name is interpreted Manuš-i Xoršēd-vinīk (*Lesser Bundahišn* XXXI,11), he is rather obviously a vestigial equivalent of the figure known in Indian mythology as Manu son of the Sun, lawgiver, first priest, and sacrificer who made the first fire after the flood.[26] The *Bundahišn*'s version relates that he was touched by a ray of the sun (Xoršēd) at his birth—only slightly toned down

[25] Dumézil, *Destiny of a King* p. 139 n. 49.

[26] Cf. A. Christensen, 'Reste von Manu-Legenden in der iranischen Sagenwelt', in *Festschrift Andreas* (Leipzig 1916), pp. 62ff.

from the mythology wherein many solar and royal figures are born on a high mountain from the sun's rays where they first strike the earth.[27] As the ancestor of the Aryan dynasty he is only lightly demythologised from Manu, the Vedic brother of Yāma/Yima and actual child of the Vivasvat, the Sun.[28] In Iran we find much vestigial older mythology preserved in the legendary history of the Kavian dynasty. The legends about them clearly preserved in secularised, saga-form much material rejected by 'the Religion' after the Zoroastrian reworking of the sacred traditions. In its account of Manušcihr, Farīdūn very artificially brings about a deferment of the birth of this priestly term in the series until eight generations have passed, keeping his mother preserved in secret. This motif is in line with the basic myth of a specially prepared mother-figure for the *xvarenah*-bearing heroes, but here seems so exaggerated as to alter the original shape of the myth, actually displacing Manušcihr from his original place of honour. Perhaps however it indicates a prototype for the pre-existence of Zarathuštra, waiting for his long-deferred birth.[29] Manušcihr, representative of the priestly fire, is thus lost from his original place at the beginning of the functional myth, where he will have been connected (like Manu) with the Flood (or submersion of the *xvarenah*). This made it possible, in a Zoroastrian version, for Zarathuštra to be inserted in his stead—the mythic situation found in ApocAd. Later still, however, the elevation of the prophet to pre-eminence in all three functional powers meant that he could not at the same time hold this single role, and the verses in the *Yašt* became confused.

In the nineteenth *Yašt*, addressed to the *xvarenah*, therefore, if we now discount the archaic divine guardians Mithra and Apām Napāt, this leaves us with the sequence Fire(= Manušcihr, priest-function)-Thraētaona (husbandman-function)-Kerešāsp (warrior-function). The mythology concerning them is now thematically consistent and repeats a fundamental pattern:

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[27] The mention of the nose (vinīk) in the story may have some relation likewise to the closely connected Indian story of the Nāsatyas, often the subject of 'nasal' puns, who are also sons of Vivasvat and the same mother as Manu: see *Mārkandeya Purāna* 105,1–20.

[28] For the original form of the Yama-Manu story see B. Lincoln, 'The Indo-European Myth of Creation', in *History of Religions* 15(1975). Attempts like that of Zaehner to make Yima and Mithra the original twins may now be abandoned.

[29] *Lesser Bundahišn* XXXI,10–12; also mentioned in XXXIV,6. *Dēnkart* VII,1,36–37 shows another substitute figure, the hero Ōšnar, postponed to the time of Kai Ūs.

a) the Fire is able to intimidate the Dragon and drives him back in fear by its blaze, but cannot destroy him or make him cease from his striving to lay hold on the Glory during the long legendary warfare of the primaeval age;
b) the Dragon is defeated but not destroyed by Thraētaona—in the myths, the hero is himself at first cast out, but later takes possession again of his realm. He pushes the Dragon back, as it were, to the existential margins, to the edge of the world, where he is chained until the End;[30]
c) Kerešāsp does finally defeat the Dragon, but his feats are the most ambiguous of all, for though he is needed to save the world of *aša* from utter destruction by the evil powers of drought, disaster, etc., he lets the fire go out, is seduced by the 'witch' Knathaiti, and only at the End of the world achieves the feat of slaying the Dragon outright.[31]

An analysis of the prophet's relationship to the *xvarenah*-mythology thus suggests itself. The older form of the mythology concerned the three social classes and represented them by a sequence of functional figures, who inherited the *xvarenah* from Yima after the idealised first age. They represent world-order in the "mixed" time: the first established it after the Flood/immersion; the second, or husbandman maintained its prosperity and health through fighting usurpers within; and the third promises it final victory by defeating enemies without, on the model of a legendary world-history somewhat as envisaged by Wikander and Widengren (without needing, however, to appeal to foreign e.g. Hittite prototypes). Subsequently in Zoroastrianism the old priestly dispensation was displaced in favour of the coming of the Revelation of the prophet and in the surviving Yašt 19, which is still basically the old Indo-European mythology, only the attenuated mythological role of the Fire was allowed to remain.

Finally, it would seem that this triple mythology which we have laid out in its various strands was transferred completely to Zarathuštra, in

[30] The basis of the myth is undoubtedly seasonal and agricultural: cf. M. Boyce, 'Iranian Festivals' in E. Yarshater (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran* vol. III.2 (Cambridge 1983) p. 802; Widengren, *Iranisch-semitische Kulturbegegnung* pp. 51–52.

[31] Cf. the material collected in 'Legends of Kerešāsp' in *Pahlavi Texts* (repr. Delhi 1977) vol. II Appendix 1; N.S. Nyberg, 'La légende de Keresāspa' in *Oriental Studies in Honour of C.E. Pavry* (London 1933), pp. 337–352; and cf. the remarks of O.M. Davidson, *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings* (Cornell 1994) pp. 101 ff.

the legend as we find it in the Pahlavi books. In *Denkart* VII,2,3–4 the descending Glory initially takes the form of a miraculously blazing Fire in the house where his future mother lives (cf. the flight of the Glory), against which the devs now marshal a triple attack:

> Because the devs were harmed by that *xvarenah*, they brought three hostile armies upon the land in order to assail that girl, namely winter, a great plague and powerful foes. And they put it in the minds of the people of that land that this harm had come to the land through the girl's witchcraft …

Zarathuštra, or his Glory still supernaturally hovering over the chosen woman who will be his mother, has here taken over the thematics of all the myths. There is the fire (against winter); need for defence against plague (cf. the 'healer', second function);—and, though naturally the actual goodness of his mother is clear, her role is mixed up with accusations of witchcraft as we find in the legend of Zal's father Kerešāsp and the 'witch' (*parīk*) Knathaiti.[32] Interestingly, this sequence corresponds closely with Darius' Ahura-Mazda-honouring inscription at Persepolis (DPd 15–18), which indicates the same identification that we find in *Yašt* 19,56 etc. between the *xvarenah* of Zarathuštra and that which in its several aspects had traditionally belonged to the Aryan people.[33]

These stories are not the myths about Yima, but about the three separate representatives who inherit his *xvarenah*. Zarathuštra is not being constructed as a substitute for the ideal 'first man', but one might better hypothesise that he is absorbing, in a somewhat secondary way as his reform became dominant, myths about the partition and distribution of the Glory, and the manner in which the order of the world was thereby maintained. The core sequence of ApocAd 77,27 – 78,26 shows a stage comparable to the Younger Avestan texts; the larger structure in which it is embedded is comparable to the mythology of *Yašt* 19 though with

[32] In confirmation of our view, the Fire is symbolically associated here with the domestic fire whose cultivation is a basic 'priestly' Zoroastrian duty, and the ability of fire to drive back demons is perhaps one of the most fundamental components in the fire-mystique of Iran. The notion of the fire as a gateway from the heavenly world to this lower existence taken by the gods also seems to be involved. On the other hand it would be wrong to project back the grandeur of the Sassanian cultus and the 'great fires', which arose from the close links of Church and State under the later dynasty: see A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen 1936) pp. 165–167. Darmesteter exaggerated the role of the major fires for interpreting the whole mythology of the *xvarenah*—as did still Dumézil, *Destiny of a Warrior* (Chicago 1970) pp. 130–131.

[33] See M. Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism* vol. II p. 120: Darius writes, 'Ahuramazda protect this country from a hostile army, from famine, and from *drauga*.'

many further, including syncretistic developments. Through his partial identity with the Saošyants, Zarathuštra was subsequently able to dominate the whole series more and more—as we shall see from the component legends which go to make up his birth-story in the late Pahlavi books.

The Saošyants

A. Böhlig's analysis of the core cycle of manifestations of the φωστήρ in 77,27 – 82,19—which can be confirmed in many further details—already showed that significant elements of Iranian mythology are present in ApocAd, though the main framework of the document is Jewish (Adam, Seth, the Flood, testamentary features etc.). Böhlig pointed in particular, we recall, to the refrain linking the birth-stories of the Illuminator together, which involves receiving 'Power and Glory' in a mysterious manner 'on the water'. This seems to refer to the motif of the Saošyant's birth and receiving of the charismatic Glory. The Iranian stories, and indeed the other stories summarised by the twelve Kingdoms of post-diluvian times, can be identified as legends known from the Zoroastrian 'apocrypha'.[34] Although they have a sometimes syncretistic character, the core of the development behind them is clearly the Zoroastrian idea that Zarathuštra prophesied a World-Saviour, who will be his 'posthumous son'. Subsequently, the seed and/or Glory of the prophet was considered to pass into three (or more: six or even twelve) Saošyants who fulfil his prophecy; miraculously, virginally-born, the last in the sequence brings about the spiritualisation or Transfiguration of the world. That the universalism of this redemptive vision influenced Jewish apocalyptic literature alongside CG V/5, and that its mythic language is evoked in the infancy narratives of Mt. 1–2, I have argued above.[35] Here we must focus on the impact of these ideas within the Iranian religious tradition.

The presence of the archaic guardian-divinities Mithra and Apām Napāt in *Yašt* 19 draws attention to the antiquity of the fire-and-water

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[34] A.J. Welburn, 'Iranian Prophetology and the Birth of the Messiah', *ANRW* II. vol. 25.4.

[35] P. Clark has recently renewed the suggestion that the virgin-birth motif may have arrived from the Saošyant mythology into early Christian circles, and even that Matthew may have aimed at proselytizing Zoroastrians from the Syrian area. P. Clark, *Zoroastrianism* pp. 155–156.

mythology, which is of course well-known in India but which also survived e.g. in Mithraism in the West.[36] Its fundamental symbolism concerns the creative balance of opposites, the establishment of cosmic order and eventual eschatological destruction-and-renewal. Human and social order exists in close relationship to the cosmic mythology, as the stories about those who 'bore the *xvarenah*' and in some manner maintain the world in existence for the creatures of *aša*, show. The heroic birth-legends are concerned with this cosmic dimension of human existence, social order and salvation. The mythology of the Saošyants takes up themes we have already encountered, especially in terms of the Glory, the fire-in-the-water, etc.

When we meet it in the later books, the originally cosmic and eschatological myth has been transformed into a complex *prophetological* mechanism, serving the redemptive work initiated by Zarathuštra which will culminate in the Last Days:

> There were three posthumous sons of Zarathuštra, namely Ušedar, Ušedarmah and the Saošyant [proper] … Three times Zarathuštra approached his wife, Hvov. Each time his seed fell to the ground. The god Nēryōsang took all the light and power of that seed … and it was consigned to the Kāsaoya Sea, in the care of the Waters … It is said that even now three lamps are seen shining at night in the depths of the lake. And for each, when his own time comes, it will be thus: A virgin will go to the Kāsaoya Sea to bathe, and she will become with child. And so one by one, the three will be born thus in succession, each in his own time. *Greater Bundahišn* XXXIII,36; XXXV,60

The mythology of the creative energy coming from the waters to the heroes is a constant. Each of the Saošyants is now born from the *xvarenah* of the prophet, his 'spiritual seed' in the waters just as Zarathuštra himself originates from the *xvarenah* in the heavens, pre-existing just as the prophet pre-existed and waiting to be born at the proper moment in the cycles of time. In this context, pre-existence of the *xvarenah*/seed of Zarathuštra in the waters, or of his Glory in the heavens are mere mythical variants. The most important point is that we find the pat-

[36] In Mithraism Caelus and Oceanus are still sometimes shown together at the light-god's birth, which as M.J. Vermaseren points out is a 'reflection of the time when the God of Heaven and the Water-God were regarded as one': *Mithras. The Secret God* (London 1963) p. 78; and for background see J. Przyluski, 'Varuna, God of the Sea and the Sky' in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1931), pp. 613–622; W. O'Flaherty, 'The Submarine Mare in the Mythology of Siva', JRAS (1971)1, 9–27. Versions of the myth in ApocAd: Mithra born from the sky and rock (V 80,20–28); Verethraghna (Vahagn) from the heaven and ocean (79,19–27).

tern established firstly for the prophet now repeated for each of the Saošyant figures. But thereby the old functional significances, already somewhat eroded in *Yašt* 19, are further blurred. The outline of this prophetic schema was complete, it appears, by the end of the Achaemenian period.[37]

Basically, it would appear, two things have happened. Firstly, Zarathuštra has been adopted into the company of the heroes who bore the Glory, and the fire-in-the water mythology has come to be associated closely with him. Then, the specific part of the legend relating to Zarathuštra's own birth, which tells how the Glory came from heavenly or cosmic-watery depths to priestly figure, has been made to serve as the prototype for the whole fourfold prophetology, of which the prophet himself is the first term. Zarathuštra thereby took on, as P. Clark says, a 'new position as a Saošyant'. Probably the term still had at that period the connotation of a priestly role, and his fundamental legend is clearly analogous to that of Manušcihr touched by a solar ray, Manu born from the Sun etc. Whatever may have been the original meaning of the prophet's use of the term, Zarathuštra himself had now become in effect the first in a sequence and the mystic progenitor of the 'future saviours'. Clark speculates that it was the result of a need to elevate the prophet to quasi-divine status—perhaps, he suspects, in connection with the greater claim to authority associated with Iranian political expansion.[38] Zoroastrianism is a reform religion, and we can see how the scheme of the Saošyants grew up out of the older Iranian myths and ideas about the successive figures (heroes, prophets, princes) who 'bore the Glory'. Now not just inserted into the sequence but functioning as its primary term, Zarathuštra naturally became ever more closely connected with the roles of these figures as the Glory was ever more closely associated with him.

In their eschatological roles, the older heroes are already in some sense prototypes of the Saošyants. The historical reality is probably that the more abstract, theological Zoroastrian scheme of the Saošyants never succeeded in fully absorbing or displacing the more mythical portrayal of the transmission of the Glory, of which it represented a spiritualisation, nor in fully dominating the related conceptions of the End-Time and its spiritualisation as *fraškart*. Thus we have the irony touched on by Duchesne-Guillemin that the theological abstraction

[37] M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism* vol. II (Leiden 1975) pp. 242–243.
[38] P. Clark, *Zoroastrianism* (Brighton and Portland 1998) pp. 67–68.

Astvat-ereta, 'Righteousness Incarnate', rises from the waters still wielding the mace of ancient Iranian heroes—specifically that of Farīdūn. This prestigious mace has, it is true, managed to acquire an additional lengthy Zoroastrian pedigree. It had subsequently been borne, for instance, by *kavi* Vištāsp as he led the armies of Truth after his conversion.[39] Even so the Saošyants themselves remain essentially rather colourless and abstract, while on the other hand as we shall see, Zarathuštra's own figure will be enhanced by ever-growing legendary features.

The *Apocalypse of Adam* still reproduces a partly mythical framework, even though the prophet now occupies the first place in the series and dominates the meaning of the whole. Alongside the Saošyant in the Iranian legends of the future Transfiguration, the hero Kerešāsp is reborn to slay the dragon, Azi Dahāk, and from the evidence of the Hellenistic and early Christian writers such as Lactantius who mention the Iranian eschatology (e.g. of the *Oracle of Hystaspes*), it appears that a number of other figures continued to vie for position alongside the official Saviours as such: again it is notable that many of these are included in the *Apocalypse of Adam*, such as Verethraghna (perhaps in his specifically Armenian form Vahagn—V 79,19–27); Mithra (80,20–29); and Gayōmart too is reborn in the End-time (cf. *Apocalypse of Adam* V 81,24 – 82,4).[40] Thus the *Apocalypse*'s cycle reflects, as do the *Bahman Yašt* and the classical sources, the still persisting association, alongside the Saošyant figures, of eschatological heroes of the older mythology. In principle it shows exactly what we would expect, namely the partial evolution of the older sequence of heroes into the reformed, spiritualised version of Zoroastrian theology. ApocAd gives a snapshot, so to speak, of that process at around the turn of the Christian era. In the basic sequence Zarathuštra (First Kingdom)-Frēdōn (Second Kingdom)-Kerešāšp/Zāl (Third Kingdom), the embodiments of Zarathuštra's transmitted *xvarenah* are still given the myths of the archaic functional heroes, yet they are assigned also features from the new Saošyant-framework such as origination 'from a virgin womb' (V 78,20) and birth for all of them 'coming on the

[39] *Yašt* 19,92–93; Duchesne-Guillemin, op. cit. p. 150.

[40] For the identifications, Welburn, op. cit. pp. 4766–4770, 4773–4776; 4788–4789. Verethraghna (Varhrān, Bahrām) plays a prominent role alongside the Saviours especially in the *Bāhman Yašt*: For the Hellenistic-period Zoroastrian eschatology see Duchesne-Guillemin, op. cit., pp. 232–233 essentially based on correlations between the *Oracle of Hystaspes* and the *Bāhman Yašt* (the originally greater role of Mithra in the eschatology), and p. 235 (continuing prominence of Varhrān, etc.).

water' (78,17; 26; etc.). In so far as the Illuminator-section implies that the manifestations are somehow all the same figure, the φωστήρ, the heroes have become something like secondary personalities, all manifesting the re-embodied spirit or Glory of the original prophet, and thus on the way to becoming the purely reformed abstractions of Zoroastrian orthodoxy. In official theology the Saošyants became no more than shadows or clones of the prophet, whose function will be simply to renew the Zoroastrian revelation at the turning-point of each cycle. Here however, they still retain something of the identity of their heroic forerunners in the terse mythic narratives of the *Apocalypse*.

M. Boyce has stressed that the Saošyants were essentially a schematic and theological conception, used to project the theory of the world-epochs in the struggle of Light and Darkness. They were largely a concern for the priestly few.[41] Through them in the Zoroastrian theology the functional meaning of the heroes was gradually eclipsed, replaced by the Saošyants with their eschatological and cyclic significance. Yet the old heroes were not entirely banished. In fact, displaced from their role in the functional mythology, their stories came to be attracted to the central figure of Zarathuštra ever more strongly.

The 'snapshot' provided by the *Apocalypse*, especially the core block of stories, allows us almost to see this to see this in the process of happening. The underlying tendency which enables it is, indeed, the same tendency which led in the more syncretistic setting to the notion that Zarathuštra stood behind all the religious teachings of antiquity. The same principle, in short, can be seen operating in ApocAd's cycle of Illuminator-stories altogether. Its effect was not to lose itself in syncretism but to fashion a universalist teaching with the prophet at its heart, which finally combined with Jewish Messianism (the Thirteenth Kingdom). Applied within the Iranian sphere proper, it led to the religion with Zarathuštra at its centre and at the centre of its world.

The Legend of the Prophet

In the threefold story of Zarathuštra of the Sassanian Avesta, we can readily recognise the displaced mythologies that are still spelt out separately in ApocAd.

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[41] M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians* (London 1979) pp. 74–75: "There are … grounds for thinking that the original figure [for the world epochs] was 6000 years, which was increased

a. *The first-functional, priestly myth*

Heavenly origin, and identification with the Glory, becomes the central strand in Zarathuštra's legend through being applied to the celestial preformation and conservation of his essence ('he was nurtured in the heavens'), prior to his earthly birth, long ages before 'he came to the bosom of his mother'. In the Pahlavi legend, this material remained strongly associated with the special preparation and destiny of the prophet's mother (*Dēnkart* VII,2,6 ff.). The Glory comes to his mother before her marriage, or even her meeting with the child's future father. But only when the prototype is heightened into the Saošyant-mythology will we hear of birth from a virgin womb. There are, however, so many resonances of the theme that it may have had some prior role in the stories (*Dēnkart* VII,2,47–52).[42]

b. *Transformation of the Warrior: Zāl (for Kerešāsp)*

We have already signalled that some aspects of Kerešāsp's mythology passed into the thematics of the Zarathuštra-legend. The issue is interestingly complicated, however, by the *Apocalypse*'s substitution of the story concerning his son Zāl. The warrior-type is that most alien to

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as priestly scholars developed the scheme … The whole scheme … seems to have remained, however, a matter for the learned."

[42] The prototypical myth behind the *sequence*—the pattern of the Saošyant-myth—may itself be very old, at least Indo-Iranian. Though we cannot pursue this theme here, it may be mentioned that in the *Mahābhārata* king Yayāti's daughter is Mādhavi, who has the ability to become a virgin again and again. From four different fathers she gives birth to a sequence of sons: 'To you is born a son,' the holy man Gālava tells her, 'who is master of alms, a second who is a hero, another who is devoted to justice and truth, and yet another who is a sacrificer … Thanks to these sons, you have saved us: not only your father, but also four kings and myself' (*Mhb*. V,117,4023). Dumézil is reticent about the Zoroastrian analogies. But Indian parallels to the Zoroastrian episodes are actually quite extensive: the basic priestly/Fire-myth, which becomes in Iran the Glory descending to the fire in the prophet's mother's dwelling, is very like some versions of Agni among the Brahman-sages' wives, where he enters the domestic fire to obtain/seduce them. They remain chaste but he begets the paradoxical child Skanda on their image in a symbolic priestly union with the 'offering' (III,213,3 – 216,15). The miraculously-born Skanda (in ApocAd = Sixth Kingdom) has many cyclic features, such as his six heads, sometimes interpreted as multiple rebirths etc. Moreover, in the oldest version of the Agni-myth (*Taittirīya Samhitā* 5.5.4.1) the women who arouse Agni are not the sages' wives but the wives of Varuna, god of the waters: thus we are very close to the myth of *xvarenah* in the waters, and its association with Apām Napāt, whom M. Boyce, for example, has equated with Varuna. The relationships between these Indian and Iranian materials need further investigation.

the spirit of the Zoroastrian reform: perhaps one may think of the 'spiritualised' warrior Zāl as a sort of Galahad to his violent and ambiguous Lancelot of a father. The story reflects the tension in the form of the father's doubts about the legitimacy of his quasi-supernatural son, and initial rejection of him. The child is reared by the magic bird Sīmurgh.[43]

Several key features of the legendary figure of Kerešāsp and his son are taken over directly into the Zarathuštra legend. Firstly, there is the surprising development in the story when, after the child's divinely contrived birth, his father is struck with doubts about him and is open to the insinuations of the karaps—see especially *Selections of Zātsparam* XVIII,1–3. Indeed the powers of Untruth try to claim possession of the child by entering into his mind from the moment of birth, being fended off only the intervention of Vohūmanah (id. XIV,8–10). Purušasp rejects the child, his mind full of fears and doubts concerning him, placing him in the path of trampling oxen, of fire, etc… But fire will not harm him, the beasts stand still before him, and he is ever rescued by the good powers, especially Srōš and Vohūmanah (*Dēnkart* VII,3,8–19). Each episode actually leads either to his mother's further insight into the special nature of her son—in typical Zoroastrian fashion defeating the demons and turning all to good; or, it enables the young Zarathuštra to find the good in all things, as an antitype to the acts of the karaps (*Zātsparam* XVIII,7). The mythology here preserves the outline story of paternal rejection, to be followed by later convincing evidence of his being a divinely favoured child. The version in the Zarathuštra-legend seems almost consciously to answer the heroic motif of Kerešāsp's ambiguous violence (slaying wild beasts, monsters etc.) and seduction by the evil witch, with its highly Zoroastrian version trust in divine intervention, of patience before evil and turning it to higher purpose.

Zarathuštra, of course, has a superhuman lineage in a semi-literal sense in the legend, having been incubated, as it were, in the heavens. But some elements of his legendary ancestry remain obscure, as when he is counted 'of good lineage of both natures [human and divine], both of Nēryōsang who is of the archangels, and of Yim who is of mankind' (*Dēnkart* VII,2,19). This feature again seems to be copied directly from the story of Zāl, who is reared by a divine being, the

[43] The story in the *Apocalypse* V 78,5–17 is very close indeed to Firdausi's narrative: cf. *Šahnameh* ed. trans Levy (London 1967) pp. 35–39; detailed comparison, Welburn art. cit. pp. 4766–4767. On the notably spiritual significance accorded to Zāl, cf. H. Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* (Princeton 1977).

Sīmurgh, on the holy mountain. Perhaps the magic bird is conceived like the messenger-god as an intermediary with the divine world. From it he receives the name Dastān, but on being taken back by his father receives the appellation of Zāl or 'golden Zāl'.[44] I have pointed out elsewhere that in the story as told by the *Apocalypse*, the final speech vouching for the child to his father and announcing his destiny is spoken, not by the 'bird of heaven', equivalent to Firdausi's Sīmurgh, but by an 'angel', probably once Nēryōsang:

> An angel came forth there [i.e. appeared in a vision], and said to him, 'Arise! God has given the Glory to you.'
>
> (CG V 78,13–16)

The Muslim poet's version may well deliberately play down such an element of the pagan supernatural. Poetically speaking, the fantasy-bird the Sīmurgh itself may be little more than a cover for the fostering of the child by the heavenly messenger god. Being so closely associated with the transmission of the Glory, he is in effect a father-figure to the child who will bear it. The pure virgin-mother who bathes in the lake is presumably implicitly a personification of the Waters.

c. *Spiritual Recycling: the Legend of Farīdūn*

The sources which tell the full story of Farīdūn are unfortunately late—essentially the epic treatment by Firdausi. The *Apocalypse of Adam* therefore presents important confirmation of the state of the legend at an earlier date. For our immediate purpose of understanding the Zarathuštra-legend, the narrative pattern of a mother being forced into exile because of her child who will bear the Glory is clearly attested in ApocAd. In the Zarathuštra-legend, the mother's being driven out is interpreted providentially, probably a Zoroastrian touch. But in any case this aspect of the narrative line is clearly alien to a priestly birth-story, and belongs to a royal or heroic protagonist, showing a syncretism of the legends. The stories placed side-by-side in ApocAdam are precisely those fused into the bravura narrative of Zarathuštra's threefold birth.

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[44] The precise importance of Nēryōsang is further clarified by *Dēnkart* VII,1,29 where it seems he is closely linked with the transmission of the 'Kavian' Glory through the royal Iranian line. And we note that in *Greater Bundahišn* XXXV,56–60 when the myth of the triple *xvarenah* is transferrred to Zarathuštra in its entirety, the guardians of the triple seed (replacing the *xvarenah*) have become Nēryōsang together with the goddess of the Waters.

Assimilations from the Farīdūn story are by no means limited, however, to those portions indicated in the laconic summaries of the *Apocalypse*. We have independent evidence of a traditional version, displaced, presumably as Zoroastrianism took over from the older accounts. Fragments of the legend in some of its earlier episodes are still extant, especially in an obscure and partially confused section in *Lesser Bundahišn* XXXI,32–33. This relates how 'the Glory of Frēdūn' came to his mother, Farānak.[45] (Even if this is contested, all that matters here is that the myth belonged to the cycle of materials about Frēdūn.) The mythological materials about his birth again show how it is conceived as a kind of 'prehistory' of the Glory before his actual birth (cf. 'virgin birth'). The *xvarenah* is first found attaching itself to a reed stem from the ocean depths. Then follows a curious tale indeed:

> the Glory of Frēdūn settled on the root of a reed in the wide-formed ocean. And Noktarga, through sorcery, formed a cow for tillage, and begat children there. Three years he carried the reeds there, and gave them to the cow, until the Glory went on to the cow. And he brought the cow, milked her milk, and gave it to his three sons. As their walking was on hoofs, the Glory did not go to the sons but to Farānak.
>
> Noktarga wished to injure Farānak, but Farānak went away with the Glory.

The storyline is superficially different but structurally akin to Firdausi's: a mother is compelled to go away, bearing the Glory of her future son, because of a desire to harm her on account of her child. Nothing is known of the rest of the story's cast (the sorcerer Noktarga, etc.). However, the theme of sorcerers, karaps, devs, etc., attempting to interfere with the child is prominent in the accounts of the infancy of Zarathuštra. The Glory is strongly dissociated from the semi-animal sons of Noktarga, recalling however its role in the accounts of Mašyē and Mašyanē, hovering over their embryonic plant-like, semi-human state and bringing them to human form (*Lesser Bundahišn* XV,2–7).

But the connection with the reed stems and the story of the cow is another component, as Dumezil saw, taken over wholesale into the Zarathuštra legend (*Dēnkart* VII,2,36–42).[46] The story is now told, how-

[45] Confusion over the reading of the names means that the mother in the story can be read Farhank and was identified with Farhang, the mother of Kaī-Kāvūs when and the story was adopted into that legendry. But the Pahlavi word is doubtless originally to be taken as Farānak, i.e. the usual name for the mother of Farīdūn.

[46] Dumezil, *Destiny of a King* p. 144; Molé, *La Légende* p. 159 cites a version (applied to Zoroaster) from al-Shahrastani.

ever, of the *tan-i gōhr* or material substance of Zarathuštra. This too has descended out of heaven (another variation of its origination in the primal waters, since it descends in watery drops). It becomes attached to the miraculously growing grass-stems on which the virginal cows of Purušasp are grazing. Miraculously once more, two of the heifers produce milk in which the substance of the heavenly prophet is mixed. Noktarga's lone cow, magically produced, presumably also gives milk by a miraculous virginal process, having absorbed the Glory from the reed-vegetation it has eaten.[47] That must be how it could transmit the Glory to the hero's mother. Here then we have a myth distinct in type from the priestly or the warrior-type. This notion of birth as a sort of recycling (the pre-existent soul having previously gone out into the plant-substances and growth of nature) is an old agriculturalists' perspective that also left its record in Indian thought (cf. *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* 6,2,15–16). At the same time, the fundamental symbolism is the same: the fire-and-water polarity and that of heaven-earth, the energy in the water realised whether in sacrificial offering, conflict with storm or sea-monster, or through its absorption into plant-sap and nourishing milk.[48] Each of the social functions participates in these energies which, despite their paradoxical nature and sometimes contradictory tendencies, maintain the living order of things. Zarathuštra shares in and even epitomises the paradox of such an understanding—shown especially through the deliberate miracle of his birth wrought by the gods to bring his revelation to humanity.

It cannot be accidental that so many narrative features can be explained from the exact legends in the core-block from ApocAd. In the final legend's complex story-line, however, the functional roles have

[47] A close parallel to the Farīdūn myth again comes from the mythology in India about Skanda, Śiva's paradoxical child. In one version he is born when the six Pleiades drink water from the lotus-flowers supernaturally growing in the lake deriving from the god's heavenly 'seed'—or some say Parvatī drank it, but the Pleiades become his substitute mothers. Her breasts flow with milk nevertheless, in a miraculous fashion. In al-Shahrastani (previous note) the substance of the prophet first becomes 'seed' in the potion or mixture. The Zoroastrian heifers as substitute parents/milk-providers probably belong to this mythic symbolism. The 'purifying' of the mythic notion into virgin-birth (attested for Farīdūn only in the *Apocalypse of Adam*) still most likely belongs to the elevation of the myths into the theology of the world-saviours, especially since it is also introduced into other mythic contexts where it is not otherwise known.

[48] Zoroastrian thought knows several kinds of fire, heavenly and earthly. One of them, *urvāzišta*, is said to be that 'which is in plants', i.e. the life-force in them: Malandra, *Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion* p. 160.

clearly been thoroughly displaced. Yet the fact that Zarathuštra had absorbed the myth of Farīdūn into his own does serve to explain the reason why his natural sons are assigned to the three spheres. We need not see a reminiscence here of Yima. Their vestigial reappearance in the prophet's three natural sons is merely taken over from Farīdūn, to whom such sons were originally attributed (*Lesser Bundahišn* XXXII,5; also *Abiyātkār-ī Zāmāspīk* 4,40 ff.).[49] But the Glory goes, not to them, but to those paradoxical other sons who will be born to fulfil the prophetic promise, 'Let Righteousness be embodied'.

Priestly Synthesis

In the Mazdean universe all spiritual momentum is now carried by Zarathuštra himself, the centrepiece of creation, and his 'posthumous sons', in whom no functional differentiation is discernible: rather they are likened to the complete Avesta, the priestly canon (*Dātestān-i Dēnīk* XXXVII,36). Historical and social realities must undoubtedly lie behind these changes. In texts where the prophet is said to contain all the functions, therefore (*Yašt* 17,89; etc.), we may assume that a situation is presupposed in which everyone, under the Sassanian national Church, now looks to one and the same ideal figure and to a highly unified, shared religion (cf. *Yašt* 17,91). ApocAd reflects a prior stage when Iranian and Zoroastrian horizons were expanding, yet in which the prophet retains centrality. The prophet stands alongside traditional heroes of social order and of eschatology. The stage at which he absorbs the legends under his single, undifferentiated authority presumably corresponds to a position of secure dominance, in which the traditional threefold social order has also given way to a more monolithic rule. Unity of state and religion formed the fundamental policy of Sassanian times. R.C. Zaehner notes the evidence from Mardan-Farrukh which well illustrates the Sassanian new social hierarchy. Traditional strata are no longer mentioned, but administrative organisation is now based clearly on regional chiefs. These in turn are topped by the Zarathuštrotmi, or earthly representative of Zarathuštra himself. Allegiance is no longer to the charismatic authority 'of the Aryan peoples', and to functional values, but to the Religion which bound together the

[49] On the latter work (a text in Pahlavi restored from a Parsi transcription) see Dumézil, *Destiny of a King* p. 134 n. 23 (with parallels in Firdausi).

Empire, mediated by local representatives of the imperial power.[50] At every stage, the Zarathuštra-legend has faithfully reflected the religious needs and perspectives of its time. The snapshot of the situation in Hellenistic times in ApocAd helps demonstrate how it evolved to meet those needs and fashioned a vision appropriate to the religious aspirations of his followers.

There is however one important strand in the Pahlavi legend which as yet has hardly been touched on: the part of the story concerning the prophet's *fravahr*, which is lodged in a haoma plant (*Dēnkart* VII,2,46–52). This identification of the prophet with the ritual offering of the haoma plant mixed with milk, which seemed crucial for the meaning of the whole to Molé, has no obvious relationship to the myths we have elucidated from the *Apocalypse of Adam*.

If we take the *Apocalypse* seriously as evidence of the state of the legend in Parthian times, we may naturally conclude that this portion of the story is a late-comer, and indeed the final component-layer of the legend—even if it too may draw upon old traditions.[51] It may provide a key, however, to the process by which the earlier sequence of mythological figures could finally be amalgamated so completely into the central figure of Zoroastrianism. Its absence from the earlier range of legends may indicate that it is a final priestly addition made in Sassanian times. An essential feature of the *yasna*, or central priestly rite, is that it involves all the creations and their presiding Beings, the *Amahraspandān*. This association is no doubt ancient; but the programmatic announcement of Zarathuštra's creation through these same elements (*Dēnkart* VII,2,20) does not smack of ancient myth but a priestly-theological programme. If the Zarathuštra-legend in the Pahlavi sources weaves

[50] For the change in social organisation, see the material cited and comments in R.C. Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (London 1961) pp. 284ff. At this period Zoroastrianism also acquired its great fire-temples and must have expanded its priesthood considerably to maintain them.

[51] The association of Zarathuštra with the haoma-juice as it appears in the *Hōm Yašt* itself is clearly secondary, even though it is not certain whether the prophet in reality polemicised against the 'devic' soma-cult as associated, for instance with Indra. The legendary figures who are supposed to have pressed and consumed the haoma and so gained heroic progeny are (after Yima): Āthvya, Thrita the Sāman, and Purušasp (*Yasna* 9,6–13). But this list is entirely artificial, being designed simply to generate the primary sequence which is similar to that invoked in many of the Yašts: Thraētaona (son of Āthvya), Kerešāsp (son of Thrita) and, here, Zarathuštra (son of Purušasp). Zarathuštra has already moved to the climax of the series—a feature that belongs to the later stages of his evolution.

together all the disparate entities which once had a heroic life of their own, and finally mixes them in a providential concoction that joins all together in the union of his parents—what better model, in priestly eyes, for such cosmic interaction than the ritual mixing of milk and haoma, in a setting that involves all the cosmic creations, which effects the banishing of the demons and renewal of the world? It is a natural priestly response to the question: How do the loyalties formerly owed to those who bore the Glory fuse into adherence to the one religious authority, Zarathuštra himself? Answer: They do so around the observance of the *yasna*. The unmistakable allusion to ritual in the mixing of the haoma and milk identifies most forcefully the locus of all the previous mythology henceforth in the Sassanian Church, in mythological terms making the one who is born and his revelation virtually identical with the standing practice of the priests. In this sense Molé's intuition is fully confirmed; and much of the artistic construction of the 'biography' is priestly work done in this light (e.g. referring the different legends to the three essential natures combined in the prophet).[52] The older assimilations which were based on the Saošyant-mythology, with a prophetic revelation unfolding toward *fraškart*, are replaced in Sassanian times by a more settled religion under state patronage.[53]

Historically, then, the weaving-together of the Zarathuštra legend naturally mirrors changing perspectives on the founder, from the expanding horizons of the late Achaemenid time and syncretism of the Hellenistic period to the consolidation and institutionalisation of the Religion and society under Sassanian rule. In a sense, however, the material remained utterly traditional. The prophet was initially fitted into, and later subsumed into himself the older mythologies of those who 'bore the *xvarenah*'. A probably archaic mythologem of a virgin who gives birth to a series of functional heroes was spiritualised into the scheme of the future mothers of the world-saviours. Such ideas were cultivated by the priestly few, no doubt, to begin with. But they

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[52] The allusion to the prophet's *fravahr* may illustrate the rising importance of this conception: P. Clark notes that the *Farvardīn Yašt* in which they are centrally treated was redacted after the formation of the 'Lake legend' concerning the Saošyants: *Zoroastrianism* p. 69. The *fravaši* gradually comes to be associated more closely with the 'soul' of an individual, his *urvan*, and its fate after death. The two are frequently confused in the Pahlavi books.

[53] The Zoroastrian *yasna*-ceremony should probably not be interpreted in an 'eschatological' sense. Though 'proleptic' of the final state, it brings about present renewal rather than future—P. Clark, op. cit. p. 103. S. Shaked, art. cit. stresses that it is eschatological strictly in the sense that it completes the creation.

also enabled Zoroastrianism to develop a universal vision. Ultimately the same principles (and the same core-narratives) are at work, I hope to have shown, in the Zarathuštra-figure we find developing on Iranian soil as in the extended meanings given to him in the syncretistic environment which produced ApocAd, and, in due course Christian derivatives in Mt. and later legends. There was at every point both assimilation and consolidation. Later the consolidating aspect won out, and the stage represented by the *Apocalypse*'s mythology was left behind. At each stage too—or perhaps it is the same thing—there was interaction between popular, traditional ideas and the work of the priests and of esoteric circles.[54] The final legendary synthesis was made in Sassanian times. Its nature is clarified by contrast with the *Apocalypse*. The eschatological and universalistic framework was now consolidated into a more homogeneous, but also more closed, 'orthodox' theology of the definitive Zoroastrian revelation, and harmonised through allusion the most conservative priestly component of religious practice, the *yasna* ceremony.

[54] One does not need to accept the whole of Molé's structural theory to recognise that in essence the Zoroastrian 'reform' and spiritualisation-process naturally originates in such inner circles: cf. *Culte, mythe et cosmologie* pp. 58 ff., 70.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
ET	Evangelische Theologie
HJ	Heythrop Journal
HR	History of Religions
JA	Journal Asiatique
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism
NTT	Nederlands Teologisch Tijdschrift
OC	Oriens Christianus
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions
RSR	Revue des sciences religieuses
TR	Theologische Rundschau
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie
ZA	Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

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Chief mythological and historical figures are generally referred to under forms of convenience, e.g. Melchizedek because of the bibical norm; Zarathustra unless in technical contexts or quotations; Farīdūn because it is only under this later form of his name that the full story of the hero's birth and heroism is extant, etc. There is necessarily some variation according to context, e.g. in comparing different Iranian materials in the Appendix.

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