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The  
'Heavenly Redeemer'  
in Mandaeism and in  
Primitive Christianity.

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a thesis  
presented to the  
University of St. Andrews  
for the degree of  
Master of Theology.

by  
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April 1969.



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DECLARATION.

I hereby declare that the following thesis is based on the results of research carried out by me over a period of four terms spent as a research student in St. Mary's College, the University of St. Andrews, that the thesis is my own composition and that it has not been previously submitted for a higher degree.

CERTIFICATE.

I certify that Jane Weston Stokoe has spent four terms in research work at St. Mary's College in the University of St. Andrews under my supervision and that she has fulfilled the requirements of the University Court Ordinance No. LXI. and is qualified to submit the following thesis in application for the degree of Master of Theology.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

In submitting this thesis for the degree of Master of Theology I must acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. M. Wilcox of the Department of Religious Studies, the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, who suggested the title and provided much encouragement throughout the period of study; Dr. R. McL. Wilson who was my kind and conscientious supervisor during my four terms at St. Mary's College; and Dr. J. M. Loughridge of the German Department of the University of St. Andrews who patiently taught me German.

FOREWORD.

In this thesis an attempt has been made to describe the beliefs concerning the heavenly redeemer figure in the Mandaean literature, to compare these with the Christian ideas as they developed on the subject, and to determine from such a comparison the relationship, if any, between Mandaeism and Christianity on this particular issue.

It was considered a necessary preliminary firstly to consider the origins of the Mandaeans in the light of recent scholarship, and to see whether the general investigations of chapter one would be corroborated by the more particular examination in the later chapters.

The study of the Mandaeans and their beliefs 'in depth' has been subject to fluctuations in scholarly fashion in the past, but it is probably true to say that at the present time it is becoming - as in the twenties and thirties - the focus of increasing attention. This is mainly due to the great increase in the amount of first-hand material which is now available as a result of the invaluable work of Lady E.S. Drower.

On general reading the Mandaean texts appear to reflect the beliefs of a Gnostic sect. There are indications within the texts themselves that the Mandaeans were not originally Gnostic in their beliefs, however, and that they were influenced by an already defined Gnostic system.<sup>1</sup> Interest in Mandaeism especially by German scholars, however, has led to the acceptance of the view - on the part of the Bultmann school in general and Hans Jonas in particular<sup>2</sup> - that Mandaeism can be adequately seen to be normative for the study of Gnosticism. From a study of the texts this position does not appear to be valid, for there are several aspects of Mandaeism, including its soteriology, which single it out for consideration as a different, rather than typical, manifestation of that phenomenon which is usually described as Gnosticism. Some of the more striking differences are as follows:-

1. The total anti-world bias of the typical Gnostic groups which

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1. It will be apparent in this study that, at several points, further research into specific Gnostic parallels might have been conducted had there been sufficient time. Where possible, I have drawn attention to such parallels and am always aware that the conclusions I have drawn are still only tentative and may be altered in the light of further research in the future.

2. H. Jonas. "Gnosis und spätantiker Geist." Göttingen 1934. "The Gnostic Religion." Boston 1958. cf. J. Munck's criticism of Jonas in Studia Theologica 15-16. 1961. "...the view of Gnosticism as a unity comes from an uncritical adoption of the tradition of the Church Fathers who classed these various movements together... because they were heretical." Also W.C. van Unnik. "Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings." ET 1960. pp24-25. C. Colpe. "Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule." Göttingen 1961.

was demonstrated in a hostile attitude to marriage and family life is missing from Mandaeism. Instead marriage is seen as a religious duty and failure to marry is failure to obey the instructions of the supreme god, the 'Life'.<sup>1</sup>

2. There is an elaborate, realistic ethical code in contrast with the ascetic or libertine tendencies of 'classical' Gnostic groups.

3. Mandaeism is characterised by an essential lack of Hellenistic influence owing to its geographical remoteness from the West and in this it is totally dissimilar to 'classical' Gnostic systems.

4. Mandaeism has no place for the figure of Jesus in its soteriology. Unlike those Gnostic systems which equate Jesus and the aeon Logos the Mandaeans completely reject the figure of Jesus. Consequently Mandaeism is not a Christian-Gnostic phenomenon as are several of the 'classical' Gnostic groups.<sup>2</sup>

5. Mandaeism was not seen to be worthy of the Church Fathers' condemnation, either because it was unknown to the Early Church, or because it was known but not feared - that is, not equated with the Gnostic threat - or else it was not in existence.

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1. Only one reference in the entire Mandaean corpus is capable of the usual Gnostic interpretation - see Ginza 387.9. References to the Ginza are based throughout on the German translation by M.Lidzbarski and are quoted by page and line number in his 1925 edition.

2. For a full discussion of the development of Mandaeism and its connections with Christianity see chapter one.

6. Mandaicism has demonstrated its uniqueness by surviving until the present day while the 'classical' systems of which it is said to be representative and normative did not.

7. In 'classical' Gnosticism the journey of the heavenly redeemer is characterised by a descent through hostile planetary forces. In Mandaicism the reverse is the case, the redeemer's ascent being characterised by the need to overcome hostile forces.

Because of the difficult nature of the Mandaean texts a brief survey of their history and contents has been included in the second chapter. For the same reason it has been necessary to quote the Mandaean sources at length in chapters three and four. The Mandaic texts have not been used but Lidzbarski's German translations of the Ginza and John Book together with the English translations by Lady Drower have been cited throughout.

Chapter three contains an account of the Mandaean redeemer in his roles as pre-cosmic victor over the powers of darkness, as creator of the earth, and his 'descent' to the earth to bring comfort and teaching (gnosis) to Adam and his sons. Because the Mandaean concept of redemption includes that of a salvator salvandus chapter four considers the redeemer as the soul on earth and his return to the kingdom of light. The need to relate so much of the Mandaean accounts of their soteriology has resulted in these two chapters containing rather large accounts of story-

like material which, had the source material been so well known

generally as the literature of the Early Church, would not have needed to be included. The difference in presentation is, as a result, quite marked when these two chapters are seen alongside chapter five which deals with the Christian concept of Jesus as redeemer and its development in the Early Church. In this chapter the Christologies considered are those found in the New Testament and only where secondary sources have drawn attention to particular Patristic developments has this boundary been exceeded.

In chapter six the Mandaean and Christian ideas surrounding the concept of the redeemer in their respective traditions are compared under the general headings:-

1. Who is redeemed?
2. From what is redemption effected?
3. How is redemption achieved?
4. Why is redemption necessary?

A glossary of technical terms relating to the Mandaean side of the study has been included before the bibliography.

CHAPTER ONE.

The debate concerning the exact definition of Gnosticism has been both spirited and protracted.<sup>1</sup> Several positions have been taken up, the main protagonists forming two distinctive groups. The general debate concerns the chronological development of Gnosticism, that is whether it is pre- or post-Christian in origin. To this is added the question of the existence of a 'redeemer myth' in the pre-Christian period and, if so, did Christianity either adopt or become influenced in part by this myth. If Christianity was the first to develop this concept, it is then asked whether Gnostic groups were influenced by the Christian motif as from the outside, or did the Gnostics actually break away from Christian origins?

With regard to the dating of the emergence of Gnosticism it is pointed out by those who argue that it is a post-Christian phenomenon that all the textual evidence belongs to the Christian era.<sup>2</sup> While individual concepts can be traced back to the pre-

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1. For a full discussion of the terms involved in this debate see the account of the Messina Colloquium in the NUMEN supplement Studies in the History of Religions XII/1967.

R.McL.Wilson. "Gnosis and the New Testament." Oxford.1968. p4ff  
 2. Most recently S. Petrement. "Le Problem du Gnosticisme".  
La Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale. July-Sept. 1967.

Christian era, for example to sixth century Athens, the essential synthesis of a multiplicity of ideas from several disparate cultures cannot be held to be pre-Christian. In opposition to this Bultmann and his followers, largely on the basis of Reitzenstein's work<sup>1</sup>, assume the existence of a pre-Christian Gnostic system. This system, it is claimed, contained a coherent myth of salvation and agent of salvation and in fact it is Christianity which borrowed from the existing Gnostic system and not the reverse.<sup>2</sup>

E.R.Bevan, writing some four years before Bultmann, had

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1. Reitzenstein. "Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium." Bonn.1921  
 R.Bultmann. Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen mandäischen Quellen für das Verständnis des Johannesevangeliums. ZNTW 24.1925 pp100-146. Schmithals. "Die Gnosis in Korinth" Göttingen 1956. Bultmann "in continuation of Reitzenstein has set forth the myth underlying the Gospel of St. John, and gives us the key to its correct interpretation. Bultmann assumes that the myth in question has already been established and confines himself to proving that this myth forms the basis of the Gospel of St. John, by producing parallels to single sentences in the Gospel from Mandaeen and Manichaean sources, the Jewish Wisdom literature, the Odes of Solomon, and the Gnostic texts, especially the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles." J.Munck. The New Testament and Gnosticism. Studia Theologica. 15-16. 1961-62. In his article in "Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation" pp224-238, Munck goes on to criticise Bultmann for failing to evaluate the material he has collected,".....the author does not distinguish between probable dependence, the use of the same terminus technicus in the same sense, and the use of the same imagery in the same sense and in quite another, and therefore probably entirely irrelevant, sense. For these reasons the data so meritoriously assembled form only a kind of valuable raw material for defining concepts and have not the power of a proof as Bultmann believed."
2. K.Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." Vol.I. Göttingen. 1960. p101-102. K.Rudolph. NUMEN Supplement. Studies in the History of Religions. XII/1967. pp302-305.

himself considered the question "whether Christianity and Gnosticism fitted to Jesus of Nazareth the conception of a Redeemer older than Christianity, a conception which existed originally apart from him, or whether it was the Christian belief in Jesus which induced the Gnostics to introduce the figure of a redeemer into a scheme which had originally been framed without one."<sup>1</sup> His own reply was that "it was the clinging of the Christian community to Jesus which caused the Soter to hold a prominent place in the Gnostic version of current Hellenistic theology, and not a previous belief in a divine saviour which caused the first generation of disciples to invest Jesus with that character."<sup>2</sup>

Schenke goes so far as to conclude that there was no redeemer myth in the full sense at all before Manichaeism which he sees as the climax of development before which disparate elements only existed in isolated sources.<sup>3</sup> However, the fact remains that many disparate elements would be unintelligible apart from the context of the myth, and the fact that these elements can be traced may equally well indicate that the myth was so well-known as to be understandable without having to be referred to in full on all occasions, as well as perhaps indicating the lack of a coherent myth until a late date.

Bultmann and his followers maintain that the reverse is in fact the case. Of special reference to this study is Kurt Rudolph's

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1. E.R.Bevan. "Hellenism and Christianity." London. 1921. p95
  2. *ibid.*
  3. H.M.Schenke. "Der Gott 'Mensch' in der Gnosis." Göttingen.1962

statement that "Die Erlöserlehre ist ein zentrales Thema der frühen Gnosis und wird vom Christentum vorausgesetzt."<sup>1</sup> This is repeated with reference to Mandaeism in particular in his two volume work on the Mandaeans. "Den mandäischen Erlöserglauben auf den christlichen zurückzuführen.....hälte ich für ungerechtfertigt. Es ist m.E. heute Gemeingut der Wissenschaft, dass der gnostische Erlöserglaube (zu dem der mandäische gehört) vorchristlich ist und vom Urchristentum vorausgesetzt wird. Ausserdem ist der Sinn der mandäischen Erlösungslehre nicht aus dem Christlichen ableitbar."<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this study is, therefore, to examine the claim that Christianity is indebted to Mandaeism for its concept of Jesus as the redeemer. As has already been indicated there appear to be strong arguments for regarding Mandaeism as a distinct entity apart from 'classical' Gnosticism, so that Rudolph's belief that Mandaeism is normative for Gnosticism is disregarded. The issue is, then, whether it is probable, or possible, that Christianity is indebted to Mandaean concepts for the development of its beliefs about the role of Jesus or not.

The first commentator to become interested in Mandaeism experienced no doubt that they were Gnostics. Richard Simon,<sup>3</sup> Pretre de la Congregation de l'Oratoire, was the first to

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1. K.Rudolph. in supplement to NUMEN. Studies in the History of Religions." XII/1967.

2. K.Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." Vol.I. Göttingen. 1960. pl01-102.

3. R. Simon. "Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament."

describe the Mandaeans as Gnostics in the seventeenth century.

He wrote:

".....apres avoir examine quelques-uns de leurs livres, qui sont ecrits en Caldeen assez pur et en caracteres anciens qui approchent de celui qu'on appelle Estranghelo, il m'a paru que ces Sabaites ou Mandaites sont un reste des anciens Gnostiques: et le mot Mandai en Caldeen est le meme que le mot grec

Simon also noted an apparent connection between the Mandaeans and the Manichaeans, and also with the ancient Babylonian astrological practices and speculations.

However, about ten years later, in 1687, Barthelémy d'Herbelot<sup>1</sup> published a work in which he wrote:

".....Les disciples de Saint Jean Baptiste qui furent appelez dans le premiers tems de l'Eglise, Hemero-baptistes, et dont le nombre est considerable parmi les Juifs, ont fait depuis ce tems-la une secte, ou plutot une Religion a part sous le nom de Mendia Iahia."

This idea of the western origin of the Mandaeans, as opposed to Simon's views on the eastern origin of the group, and the belief that they were connected in some way with the Jewish sects of the Christian era, has found considerable support among scholars, though it is not seen as the final solution.<sup>2</sup>

The idea was rejected as early as 1771 when Nicolaus Barkey

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1. B.d'Herbelot. "Bibliothèque Orientale."

2. eg. K.Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." Göttingen. 1960. He begins a discussion of origins by considering the question "Ost oder West?" p59ff.

claimed that the Ophites were the original Mandaeans.<sup>1</sup> This was the first time a definitely acknowledged Gnostic sect was held to be the fons et origo of the Mandaeans, while d'Herbelot's idea connecting them with the Hemerobaptists was dismissed.

Tychsen<sup>2</sup> took the argument back to Babylonia, but he argued that the Mandaeans were a ninth century development as demonstrated by their script, language and ideas. He suggested that perhaps a Nestorian monk, converted to Islam, was the founder. In this way he accounted for the inclusion of ideas in the Mandaean writings which he traced back to Arabic, Christian and Iranian models.

The common ground shared by Mandaicism and Manichaeism, already noted by Simon, was again pointed out by A. Jacques Matter<sup>3</sup> who did, however, refrain from any decision on the right of priority or dependence as regards these ideas. He drew a very sharp distinction between the Mandaeans and 'la secte chretienne des Nazarenes', and between them and the 'secte musulmane des Nousairiens', and arrived at the conclusion that the origin of the Mandaeans is to be found in the *Naḡwariōi* mentioned by Epiphanius.<sup>4</sup> He ascribes the differences between Epiphanius' description and the Mandaeans to "l'influence du gnosticisme

1. Nicolaus Barkey. "Commentatio de scope Evangelii, quod est secundum Joannem qua variis quoque evangelii locis lux ad funditur."

2. Tychsen. "Von der Sekte der Sabaer und Nassairier in Syrien."

3. A.J.Matter. "Histoire critique du Gnosticisme." Vol.II

4. Epiphanius. "Panarion." M.P.G. XLI.

qui domina toutes les doctrines des premiers siècles."

While A.J. Matter refrained from making any pronouncement on the priority of the Mandaeans and Manichaeans, Flügel<sup>1</sup>, the editor of Ibn Nadim's Kitab-al-Fihrist, equated the Mandaeans with the Mughtasila. These were a baptizing group whom Mani's father is supposed to have joined a short time before the birth of his son. If the Mandaeans and Mughtasila were identical then the case generally made out for Mandaean dependence on the Manichees is considerably weakened or even rendered untenable.<sup>2</sup> However, some scholars like A.A. Bevan will concede only that "the two sects had much in common."<sup>3</sup>

From the rather limited survey above it can be seen that although the Mandaean literature available is no earlier than the seventh or eighth centuries most scholars are agreed that the origins of the sect can be traced back to a much earlier period. Very little notice is taken of the catalogue of heretics composed c792AD by Theodore bar Khonai in which he portrays the Mandaeans as a comparatively recent sect founded by a certain beggar named Ado. Nöldeke<sup>4</sup> suggested that the name Ado is a corruption for Adam, and that Theodore probably misunderstood the claims of the Mandaeans he had met who no doubt held that Adam was their founder.

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1. J. Flügel. Ed. Kitab al Fihrist. Leipzig. 1871-72. p328.15ff  
See further Brandt. Elchasai pl37.

2. Other, more recent, arguments for the priority of the Mandaeans are considered later in the text.

3. A.A. Bevan. Article on Manichaeism in H.E.R.E. See further p59.

4. Theodor Nöldeke. "Mandäische Grammatik." Halle 1875.

The Problem of Mandaean origins is complicated and conclusions arrived at are usually biased by the interests and specialised fields of knowledge of the investigators. Consequently the biblical scholars who investigate the subject argue for the Palestinian origin of the sect under the influence of their specialist knowledge of Baptist and Christian origins. On the other hand, Iranian scholars favour the theory of Babylonian or eastern origin.<sup>1</sup> The attempt of a non-specialist to come to a decision on this issue, therefore, has the 'virtue' of being unbiased in this way. Also, the writer feels that any decision on the origins of the Mandaeans must have an inevitable bearing on the ultimate issue, that of the connections, if any, between the ideas of redemption in Mandaeism and Christianity.

On the subject of ultimate origins the Mandaeans themselves have no single, well-defined tradition. Many strands of tradition

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1. Representative of the biblical scholars who favour a western origin are:

Mowinckel. "He that Cometh." p426. "There can be little doubt that Mandaeism goes back to a Jewish or Jewish-Christian sect."  
 Bornkamm. "Jesus of Nazareth." p47. "We probably have a last remnant of the Jewish baptismal sects of Palestine in the Gnostic community of the Mandaeans, which, however, cannot be conclusively proved to be a remnant of John's sect."

Those who advocate a hypothesis of eastern origin include:

Brandt. The origins of the Mandaeans lie in old Mesopotamia.

Albright. "Stone Age to Christianity." p366. "The Mandaean system arose in southern Iraq about the fifth century AD....."

C.H.Scobie. "John the Baptist." p29. comments that Mandaeism was most probably "last in the line" of development, after Manichaeism even.

have been collected together (for possible reasons see the section on Mandaean literature) in an unsystematic fashion, and any attempt to unravel the knots is only tenuous. The problem is aggravated further by the failure by specialists in this area of study to agree on the probable sequence of development of the Mandaean faith. For example, Kraeling<sup>1</sup> thinks that the gnostic-type creation story which is of a decidedly dualistic nature is, in fact, secondary to an earlier conception of creation and cosmogony "which, by reason of its intimate connection with the Mandaic conception of deity as Life, and by reason of its explanation of the nature and origin of Ptahil<sup>2</sup>, must be considered more ancient and more truly Mandaic than that previously mentioned..... This cosmogony operates with the primitive idea of the primordial egg or tanna (container).....and the fruit that sprang from the egg." Kraeling, therefore, thinks that the history of the Mandaeans can be traced back to the pre-gnostic period.

According to R. Macuch<sup>3</sup>, on the other hand, it has been established by K. Rudolph that the dualist elements of Mandaic tradition are older than the monistic elements, thus reversing the older thesis of German scholars like Brandt. In spite of this, however, Rudolph thinks the Mandaeans were connected in the

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1. C.H. Kraeling. "The origin and antiquity of the Mandaeans." J.A.O.S. 49. 1929.

2. Kraeling suggests that the name of the Mandaean 'демиург' reflects the verb **תתח** (to open) rather than Ptah plus El. See further pp79-80.

3. R. Macuch. "Der Gegenwartige Stand der Mandäerforschung und ihre Aufgaben." O.L.Z. Jan/Feb.1968. LXII 1/2.

earliest stages of their development with the Jews. It is the supposed connections with the Jews that we shall examine first.

### Mandaicism and the Jews.

The Mandaeans possess only one 'history' of their group - the Haran Gawaita.<sup>1</sup> The fact that they were Jews until the emergence of Christianity is implied at the beginning of the narrative.

"And they (the Nasoraean) loved the Lord, that is Adonai, until in the house of Israel there was created something which was not placed in the womb of Mary, a daughter of Moses. It was hidden in her womb for nine months and bewitched her until the nine months were fulfilled and she was in labour and brought forth a messiah.....and he called the people to himself and spoke of his death and took away some of the mysteries of the (sacred?) meal and abstained from the food. And he took to himself a people and was called by the name of the false Messiah. And he perverted them all and made them like himself who perverted words of life and changed them into darkness and even perverted those accounted mine. And he overturned all the rites. And he and his brother dwelt on Mt. Sinai, and he joined all races to him, and perverteth and joineth to himself a people, and they are called Christians."

Yet the implication is curiously overshadowed by the rest of the text which is an undisguised attack on Christianity and its founder, and later on the Jews themselves together with the Mahommendans. And the author of the text makes a distinction between those whom the false Messiah perverted and 'those

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1. Haran Gawaita and Baptism of Hibil-Ziwa. Translated and edited by E.S.Drower. Studi e Testi. 176/177.

accounted mine' which is most naturally understood as a distinction between the Jews who were converted to Christianity and the Nasoraean/Mandaeans. This would be more in keeping with the usual attitude of hatred and discrimination towards the Jews (Ginza 25.7ff). Loisy<sup>1</sup> thinks this antipathy towards the Jews is not a hatred of the Jews per se but is the result of contact with Christians whom the Mandaeans saw as being an off-shoot of the Jews. This would be in support of the interpretation of the Haran Gawaita as originally being a polemic against the Christians and only incidentally against the Jews. Such a viewpoint, that the Mandaeans knew of the Jews only through the Christians with whom they came into contact, is endorsed by S.A.Pallis<sup>2</sup> whose arguments are taken a step further by F.C. Burkitt<sup>3</sup>. Burkitt suggests that "a closer examination of the vocabulary of the Syriac Bible (the Peshitta) shows that the Mandaeans got their ideas about these things (ie Judaism) from the scriptures of the Syriac Christians, ie from the Bible as current in Mesopotamia and not as current in the Mediterranean lands." He cites the examples rkiha, shiul, and tibil which are Mandaean transliterations of Syriac words: "there is no need to go to the Hebrew original for them." He points out that of the six proper names which Pallis collects as evidence of "a more

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1. A.F. Loisy. "Le Mandéisme at les origines Chrétiennes." Paris 1934.

2. S.A. Pallis. "Mandaean Studies." London. 1926.

3. F.C. Burkitt. "The Mandaeans." J.T.S. 29 (1928-29) pp225-235.

accurate knowledge of the Old Testament",<sup>1</sup> "it should be noted that they all occur in the Peshitta." Burkitt, therefore, concludes that the Mandaeans became aware of Judaism through contact with Christianity, which he further defined as contact with the Marcionite Church. This does not indicate, however, that contact was made between Mandaeans and Christianity in the second century; according to Burkitt the Mandaeans were influenced by the Manichaeon presentation of the Marcionite Gospel, the figure of Anosh uthra being "clearly the Manichaeon Jesus, a personage adopted by Mani from the Jesus of Marcion."<sup>2</sup>

A radical connection between the Mandaeans and the Jews is posited by Mowinckel<sup>3</sup> and others but on examination of the evidence is seen to be based on no solid foundation. Rudolph even enters the realms of speculation on this issue. Having concluded that as far as he can determine nothing further than a probability of first century origin among the baptizing sectaries of Judaea can be postulated, he goes on to suggest that the original Mandaeans were lower priests and members of the Wisdom schools as would be most likely to be influenced by foreign ideas especially those relating to eschatology and cosmic beginnings.<sup>4</sup> Yet references to the Jews, their traditions and beliefs, are characterised by inaccuracy and either a lack or misunderstanding of the facts.

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1. Pallis. op.cit. pl22

2. Burkitt. op.cit. cf. H.Lietzmann. "Ein Beitrag zur Mandäerfrage." pl27ff. Schenke. "Der Gott 'Mensch' in der Gnosis." Schlier. "Zur Mandäerfrage." Theologische Rundschau. NF.5/1933.

3. Mowinckel. op.cit.

4. K.Rudolph. NUMEN supplement XII/1967. pp583-596.

Knowledge of Jewish names is not first-hand knowledge but comes from written sources which have been shown to be the Syrian Peshitta. The words were seen as foreign to the Mandaean tradition and consequently were both rendered incorrectly and included in the tradition without any alterations to basic Mandaean belief being made. For example, Moses is rendered as Mesha, Miriam as Mirjai, and Abraham as Bihram. Such Old Testament figures are of no fundamental importance to Mandaean theology and have been inserted into the Mandaean writings only for reasons of polemic. For in all cases where these references occur they have been used to indicate that the Jews have renounced what good there was in their tradition and are now either inferior to the Mandaeans or have realised their errors and become Mandaeans.

The story of the conversion of Mirjai, supposedly a Jewish princess, is told in more than one place in the Mandaean corpus.<sup>1</sup> Mirjai is portrayed as both converted Jewess and representative of the Mandaean people. As such the story, if historical rather than polemical, ought to give at least a clue to the original formation of the Mandaean group, that is if it really was Jewish at its beginning. However, we are told that Mirjai, the Jewess/personified Mandaean community was converted by Manda d Haiia in the time of Pilate the Emperor. Not only does this fail to give any information about the nature of the conversion, it also reveals a lack of knowledge about Judaea at the time of Pilate and

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1. John Book 126-129. Liturgies 210-212. Ginza, 341.

and Jesus - which is demonstrated elsewhere also. The inevitable is that here again we have an example of polemic rather than historic writing. In this instance the motive is shared with the account of the career of Anosh uthra in Jerusalem, that of asserting a rivalry with Christianity in the field of conversion and simultaneously delivering an affront to Judaism with the fall of Jerusalem in the Anosh story and the taunt of unfaithfulness from within the ranks in the Mirjai story.

That these figures have been taken from and used against an alien and hostile tradition is further demonstrated by the attendant errors in the Mandaean descriptions of the figures concerned. For example, Abraham is called "the prophet of Ruha" and associated with Jerusalem and Mt. Sinai.<sup>1</sup> This association of Abraham with Sinai is a repeated tradition in the Mandaean writings and during a garbled history of the Jews the Exodus is associated with Abraham and it appears that Moses was unknown in this connection. The time given for the period between the Exodus and the birth of Jesus is also given - as four hundred years. Hardly accuracy!

There is also a marked lack of Jewish practices in Mandaeism and a complementary absence of anything remotely resembling Mandaean practices in Judaism. Circumcision and Sabbath observance are conspicuously absent and are not even alluded to for denunciation.<sup>2</sup> Judaism condones and praises those who fast while

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1. Ginza, 43.6-23

2. Ginza 25.7-31

the practice is condemned by the Mandaeans. Judaism has nothing comparable with the Masiqta (mass for the dead), the wearing of white clothing<sup>1</sup>, the prohibition of mourning for the dead, and so on.

The ignorance of the Mandaeans as regards the Jews, even in the earliest stages of their development, is demonstrated in the eclectic area of magic. In marked contrast to the use of Scripture verses in Aramaic bowl texts there are no quotations from the Hebrew Old Testament in Mandaic bowl texts.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the Jews, the Mandaeans regard the home of the 'King of Light' as being in the north. In opposition to this the Jews think that evil spirits have their home there. Only in a very ancient psalm do we find a belief parallel with that expressed in the Ginza. Compare these descriptions:

"Er sitzt im hohen Norden, machtvoll, schon und prangend,  
der Urbehalter aller Leuchtenden, den Vater aller Uthras."  
(Ginza/p7.3-6.)

"His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy  
of all the earth, Mount Zion, in the far north, the city  
of the great King."

(Psalm 48.2.)

In the Ginza Bk.V pt.2 there is evidence that Psalm 14 was actually known to the Mandaeans. However, the text indicates that the original was misunderstood by the adapters and, in fact,

1. Ginza, p37.1ff. Here, orthodox Judaism is being considered. For consideration of the Essenes see further pp24-27.

2. Zechariah 3.2. is a favourite and is quoted in Montgomery's texts nos. 3,5,16,26, and Gordon's text no.7. See further the unpublished Ph.D.dissertation by E. Yamauchi on Mandaic Incantation texts.

the entire section could be removed without any obvious interruption to the description of Manda d Haiia's coming to the "men of proven righteousness" being detected.

That the Mandaeans were not originally connected with the Jews seems also to be indicated by their failure to make use of what would have provided a very adequate contrast between Good and Evil/Light and Darkness, that is the Old Testament figures of Cain and Abel. However, these figures only occur as duplicates of earlier Mandaean characters. Hibil, one of the Mandaean soters, is essentially a reflection of Manda d Haiia; Qin, "the Mother of Darkness" who is mentioned on very few occasions<sup>1</sup>, is a rather weak duplicate of Ruha. The conclusion is, therefore, that not only were the Mandaeans independent of the Jews at the beginning of their development but also that when contact was effected - whether by means of Christianity or otherwise - the Mandaeans remained fundamentally free from Jewish influence.

This is also true of the Mandaean ethic. Though Macrae has tried to argue otherwise<sup>2</sup>, similarities between the Mandaean and Jewish ethic are due to the common Semitic background of the two groups.<sup>3</sup>

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1. eg Ginza pl55.10-18, pl58.15ff. cf Lidzbarski's Intro.VII.
  2. G.W.Macrae. New Catholic Encyclopaedia. He comments in his article on the Mandaeans that "the strict moral code of the Mandaeans is of Jewish origin."
  3. Supported by S.A. Pallis. "Mandaean Studies". London. 1926.

That the Mandaeans were connected with an heretical Jewish group is a popular suggestion, though, the most frequent comparisons being made with the following:-

1. The Samaritans.<sup>1</sup>
2. The Qumran Community.<sup>2</sup>
3. Baptist Groups of the Jordan Valley.<sup>3</sup>
4. Christianity in particular.<sup>4</sup>

### The Samaritans.

The Mandaeans use as an alternative self-designation the title "Nasoraean".<sup>5</sup> In its Aramaic form, as was recognized by Lidzbarski<sup>6</sup>, it had the meaning 'keepers' or 'guardians'. Consequently it is interesting to note that the Samaritans do not derive their name from Shemer, the original owner of the site of Samaria (I Kings 16.24.), but from the root שמר meaning 'to keep or guard'. Thus, as M.Black has observed, "the Aramaic equivalent of 'shomerim' is 'Natarin' or 'Natarayya',

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1. See M.Gaster. "The Samaritans." Schweich Lecture. 1923
  - M.Black. "The Scrolls and Christian Origins." London 196.
  2. See F.M.Braun. "Le Mandéisme et la secte essénienne de Qumran." (L'Ancient Testament et l'Orient) Louvain Publications Universitaires. 1957. (Unfortunately not available to the present writer).
  3. See J.Thomas. "Le mouvement baptiste en Palestine et Syrie." Gembloux. 1938.
  4. M.Black. "The Scrolls and Christian Origins." London. 1961.
  5. See further P.Winter. N.T.S. 3. pl36ff. R.Macuch. Th.Lz. 82. T.W.N.T. Vol.4. p881ff. B.Gärtner. "Die rätselhaften Termini Nazoräer und Iškarjot." Uppsala. 1957. p33. cf. W.Sundberg. "What is the meaning of 'Mandaeans'?" Lund Vetenskaps societetens Årsbok. pl39-146.
  6. M.Lidzbarski. Ginza Intro. pix.

and since Samaria was Aramaic speaking it would not be surprising to find an Aramaic name either for the Samaritans in general or for a sect or group of Samaritans."<sup>1</sup>

From this it would seem possible, even probable, that the origins of the Mandaeans are to be traced back to the Samaritans. As we know from II Kings 17.24 Samaria was a melting pot for the nations from the time of the Assyrian conquest of Israel so there would be every opportunity for a syncretistic faith such as Mandaeism appears to be to have developed. But we are later told that though a very cosmopolitan city Samaria was not the home of a syncretistic religion for "every nation still made gods of its own." (II Kings 17.29.) Also, the name 'Nasoraean' could have been applied to any strict Jewish sect and may even have been a term of praise for more than one group of Jewish dissidents, especially if they possessed any form of secret teaching. (See Isaiah 48.6: 65.4).

The fact that the names 'Nasoraean' and 'Shomerim' have the same root meaning is, therefore, no adequate foundation for the claim that the Mandaeans may be traced back to an original provenance in Samaria.<sup>2</sup> This view is confirmed by the knowledge that

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1. M.Black. op.cit.

2. cf. E.S.Drower. "The Secret Adam-a study in Nasoraean Gnosis." p101.

the name 'Nasoraean' is the Aramaic form of the Arabic name by which the Christians were known to the Muslims.<sup>1</sup> This is of significance because at one stage when the Christians were pursuing a policy of conversion in the area in which the Mandaeans live (under Nestorian rule) the Mandaeans were told by their spiritual leaders to pretend to be Christians but to "confess him (ie Jesus) not in your hearts."<sup>2</sup> By pretending to be a Christian group, therefore, the Mandaeans gained a certain amount of toleration and freedom from outside pressures. The adoption of the name 'Nasoraean' - with the added meaning of 'Guardian' (which no doubt appealed to the Mandaeans' appreciation of irony) - was a small price to pay for survival.

#### The Essenes.

"It is not difficult to imagine a group like that represented by the Dead Sea Scrolls migrating in the course of the first century, adopting some elements of the teaching of Marcion or of Gnosticism in the second century, or of Manichaeism in the third century, reacting violently against persecution by more 'orthodox' neighbours at another stage, and finally emerging after several centuries with a collection of treasured documents which to

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1. Muslims refer to Christians as an-Nasara.

2. Ginza p29.19ff. A.T.S. p.291. Drower's translation - "But my Lord Manda d Haiia will be the Adversary of those who hate our name and who persecute us in the world! The Life knoweth and perceiveth what they did to us, with persecution and smitings." See also pp 39-46.

some extent reflected their chequered history, but were no longer fully understood even by the wisest of their number."

The most recent work on the supposed connections between Mandaeism and the Essene Community at Khirbet Qumran in particular has been that of F.M. Braun<sup>2</sup> who has attempted to make what is seen by R.McL.Wilson as a hypothesis into a more certain probability.

Admittedly there appear to be several similarities between the two groups and comparison of the two must be made in order to determine the validity of such a hypothesis. Similarities include the following:-

1. the practice of immersion and lustration rather than sacrifice.
2. the doctrine of the soul's imprisonment in the body.
3. the use of white vestments.
4. the confession of sins by baptismal candidates.
5. the conflict between powers of Good and Evil and man's relation to this.
6. the conjunction of fire and darkness as punishment.
7. the use of the term 'righteousness' to describe legitimacy of status rather than ethical superiority.<sup>3</sup>

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1. R.McL.Wilson. "Gnosis and the New Testament." Oxford. 1968. pl4. cf. R.Macuch. T.L.Z. 1957. cols.401ff. 1965. cols.649ff. K.Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." Vol.I. Göttingen. 1960. p252ff. W.F. Albright. "From the Stone Age to Christianity." p366.

2. F.M.Braun. Op.cit.

3. The Qumran Community refer to themselves as **בני הצדק** while the Mandaeans are 'men of proven Righteousness.' For general background see D.Hill. "Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings." Cambridge 1967 p82-162.

However, these similarities need some qualifications. Firstly, the Essenes did not condemn sacrifice per se but rather its mismanagement in Jerusalem. The Mandaeans, on the other hand, do not even condemn sacrifice as it forms no part of their general ritual. The sacrifice of a dove, which has been seen to occur among the Mandaeans by Lady Drower, is completely alien to the original Mandaean practices. Its slaughter is never mentioned in any of the Mandaean texts - either the Ginza or liturgical texts - and as Drower remarks<sup>1</sup>, "its silent killing before the Masiqta and the tiny goblet of its flesh placed with the ritual fruit and nuts on the fatiria, like the tradition that it is called the ba, are inexplicable." According to E.R. Goodenough, however, the dove was the symbol of both the divinity and the soul in the Near East.<sup>2</sup> The possibility exists, therefore, that the Mandaeans see in the dove a soul which has been unable to pass through the mataratas by itself, and by sacrificing it before the burial rites for another dead soul are said they may be trying to give this soul a second chance in the company of a fellow 'traveller'.

Secondly, Mandaean baptism cannot be said to be a substitute for sacrifice or a parallel with the similar rite at Qumran. While the baptism of the Essenes took place in cisterns, Mandaean baptism takes place in 'living water'. Also, the significance of

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1. E.S. Drower. "The Secret Adam." p32.

2. E.R. Goodenough. "Jewish Symbols in the Graeco-Roman Period." Vol. VIII, p27-46.

The rite is different for the two groups, Baptism effected an initiation into the Community and further ritual purity for the people of Qumran while for the Mandaeans it is a symbol of the true nature of humanity and a preparation for ascent to the soul's proper abode in the skinta of the Great Life.

The Mandaeans preserve no knowledge of that vast quantity of literature which was so precious to the Qumran Community, and while the Qumran sectaries appear to have acquiesced in the general Essene rejection of marriage the Mandaeans view marriage as an essential religious duty and it is exhorted as such in the Ginza 23.25ff: 62.1ff. et.al.

The dualism which characterises the original writings of the qumran group is of the Iranian type. It is indigenous to the area in which the Mandaeans are found. Consequently a more natural interpretation than that usually adopted would be that the influence of Iranian thought effected the adoption of such a dualism in some heretical sect like that at Qumran, while the Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran reflect the original Iranian influence.

The most natural conclusion is, therefore, that the characteristics shared by the two groups are insufficient to outweigh the differences, and in view of the lack of any evidence to corroborate a theory of migration any fundamental connections between the community at Khirbet Qumran and the Mandaeans remains not only hypothetical but also improbable.

Baptist groups of the Jordan Valley.

"It is not the bath (baptism) alone which liberates, but it is the knowledge of who we were, what we have become where we were, into what we have been cast, whither we hasten, whence we are redeemed, what birth is, and what rebirth is."

(Excerpta ex Theodoto. no.78.2)<sup>1</sup>

The necessity for such a statement indicates that baptism was as important, if not more important, than gnosis in some Gnostic communities. As regards the actual practice of baptism among the Gnostics in general we are lacking in first-hand information for all groups except the Mandaeans who alone preserve both speculative myths and ritual instructions among their writings.

The history of baptism is significant in considering the supposed connection between the Mandaean rite, and consequently Mandaean origins, and that of the baptising groups of the Jordan Valley in the first century of this era.

It is now known that the Euphrates was the centre of a water cult in the upper Euphrates Valley from about 2800 BC. to the third century AD. when we have a mosaic showing the river god Euphrates with an accompanying bi-lingual caption in Greek and Syriac:

"King (river) Euphrates."<sup>2</sup> Also, in the second century AD. there was a sect of baptizing Gnostics whose cult of the 'living water' of the Euphrates is illustrated thus by Hippolytus:-

1. Excerpta ex Theodoto. Edited and translated by R.P. Casey. London 1934. Text p88, translation p89, commentary p158.

2. W.F. Albright. "From the Stone Age to Christianity." p376ff.

"We are the chosen pneumatics from the living  
Euphrates which flows through the midst of Babylon."

and

"Mesopotamia is the stream of the great Ocean  
flowing from the midst of the perfect Man."

The chances are, therefore, that the Mandaean ritual is an example of that type of baptism practised in Mesopotamia from ancient times.<sup>1</sup> This view is encouraged by the fact that the water goddess Anahita is still invoked under the name of Nanai or Nanaia in Mandaean exorcism formulae. According to A.D.Nock "Artaxerxes II set up images of Anahita in Babylon, Susa, Ecbatana, and established cults in Persia, Bactria, Damascus, and Sardis."<sup>2</sup> And E.S.Drower goes so far as to admit that "I cannot see that it is possible to doubt that the Mandaean water-cult, carried on at the very sites of the early water-cults, is, at bottom, an aboriginal cult persisting under successive religions and maintaining a continuous and unbroken ritual tradition."<sup>3</sup> The fact that this 'aboriginal' cult was originally a water-cult as opposed to a fertility-cult is possibly endorsed by the fact that Mandaeism does not possess a divine pair representing the Isis/Osiris or Asherah/Eshmun group, that is, there is originally no rising-dying Lord with a Magna Mater consort.

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1. cf. G.Widengren. "Heavenly Enthronement and Baptism: Studies in Mandaean Baptism." NUMEN Supplement Studies in the History of Religions. XIV/1968. pp551-582.

2. A.D.Nock. "Conversion." p355.

3. E.S.Drower. "The Madaeans of Iraq and Iran." p118.n2

The most recent and detailed study of the matter has been made by the Swedish scholar, Eric Segelberg.<sup>1</sup> He argues that parallels exist between Mandaean and Roman baptismal rites and concludes that they both had a common pre-Christian background in Palestine. But a common pre-Christian background is not only to be found in Palestine or with the river Jordan in particular as Segelberg argues. As we have seen, baptismal rites were common in several places in the ancient world and a more correct conclusion would surely be that while Mandaean and Roman baptismal rites share a common background, this background cannot be traced to a specific area at all. The possibility also exists that they may both be independently parallel developments in any case.

That this last hypothesis may, in fact, be the case is supported by an examination of the texts relating to Mandaean baptism. We find that the claim put forward by Loisy, that "the Mandaean baptism in its traditional form depends on the Christian baptism"<sup>2</sup> does not prove to be very obvious.

The sequence of events as recorded in the Diwan d Masbuta d

1. E. Segelberg. "Masbuta: Studies in the Ritual of Mandaean Baptism." Uppsala. 1958. (teol. Diss. 1958) cf. K. Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." Vol. II Göttingen. 1961. cf. Widengren *op. cit.* In opposition to Segelberg he concludes that Mandaean baptismal rites indicate a synthesis of Iranian and gnostic ideas with the ancient Mesopotamian myth and ritual pattern.
2. Loisy. "Le Mandéisme et les origines chrétiennes." p119.

Hibil-Ziwa<sup>1</sup> is totally unlike that of a Christian baptism.<sup>2</sup> The candidate for baptism is submerged three times. A special staff is used to help the person ascend out of the water and only then does the candidate receive the "Sign of the Father" on his head. He goes on to drink three palmsful of water and the baptism is concluded by the ritual handshake (kusta) and the anointing of the baptized person with oil. The sequence re-enacts the 'birth' of the Uthras<sup>3</sup>, the companions of the Life, the helping out of the water reflecting and paralleling the helping of the individual Uthras - who were originally the reflection of the Life in the primal waters - to emerge as separate entities and companions for their creator.<sup>4</sup> Mandaean baptism, therefore, is not an initiation ceremony like the Christian version of the rite but a regular and repeated reminder of the true nature of the individual Mandaean as part of the Life, which will ultimately return to its original home. It is, in one sense, then, a preparation for

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1. Diwan d Masbuta d Hibil-Ziwa. The Mandaic text with translation, notes and commentary by E.S.Drower. Citta del Vaticano. 1953. Studi e Testi. 176.

2. On Christian baptism see the following:- O. Cullmann. "Baptism in the New Testament." London.1950. pp9-22. "Early Christian Worship." London.1953. pp59-66. J.A.T. Robinson. "Baptism as a category of New Testament Soteriology." Scottish Journal of Theology. 1953. p257ff. H.Chadwick. "The Early Church." Pelican History of the Church. Vol.I. pp260-261. R.C.Tannehill. "Dying and Rising with Christ." Berlin.1967.

3. The close connection between baptism and birth is indicated also in the text A.T.S. pl18. Section 25.

4. cf.Kraeling. "The Mandaic God Ptahil." J.A.O.S. 1933 pp152-165.

'Life' above and beyond this earth, not an entry into a new life here.<sup>1</sup> Only in the sense that the baptized person has become aware of his 'real' status is Mandaean baptism a symbolic re-birth from sin, corruption and the powers of evil. However, grace, as the agent of further and sustained purification, does not enter the Mandaean system. The two types of baptism are further distinguished by the use of 'living water' by the Mandaeans and water that is 'cut off', ie. not free flowing, in the Christian rite.

But the failure to equate Mandaean and Christian baptism does not automatically eliminate any connection with the pre-Christian baptism of John.<sup>2</sup> This connection is, in fact, favoured by several scholars who would deny contact between the Mandaeans and Christianity until the time of the Nestorian Church or even later.

The basis of this equation is two-fold: the description of the 'living water' as yardna or Jordan and the mention of Yahia-Yuhana or John the Baptist in some of the Mandaean texts.

When the New Testament texts are examined we see that John the Baptist did not use the Jordan to the exclusion of all other rivers. We are told that he also baptized at Aenon and Bethany beyond the Jordan (John 3.23: 1.28:). The inevitable conclusion

1. cf. Tannehill, op.cit.

2. K. Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." Vol.I, pp62-66. He thinks that the Mandaeans originally belonged to the Jordan valley but that it is impossible to determine whether they were connected with John the Baptist in any way or not.

is, therefore, that John himself was more concerned with the need for running water rather than with a particular river. Consequently, the Mandaeans cannot be held to be dependent on John for their veneration of yardna - if it is held to be the Jordan. However, the equation of yardna with the Jordan is explicitly denied by the Mandaeans who claim that they derive all rivers and waters from the heavenly prototype, the Frat-Ziwa, the Light Euphrates.<sup>1</sup> Also, the actual river Jordan is not venerated but referred to as a sewer by the Mandaeans: it is the river which was polluted by the baptism of Nebu-Christ.

If the Mandaeans are correct and yardna cannot be equated with the Palestinian river, how are we to account for the undoubted similarity in the names? Philologists have pointed out that the meaning of the word need not be derived from the semitic root דג meaning to go down or descend but can be understood as an Indo-Aryan word made up of yor (year) plus den (river) and thus meaning 'perennial river'. The Sumerians had an exact equivalent in their name Idigna for the river Tigris. G.H.Gordon<sup>2</sup> has suggested another alternative. He has pointed out that the word Jordan is not a proper noun in the Old Testament except in two instances, otherwise it always appears with the definite article or some other qualifier. He notes that it may be related to the

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1. cf. Genesis 2.14. The ancient name for the Euphrates is פרת. Note that Rudolph "Die Mandaer" Vol I. p65. thinks the Frat-Ziwa concept is secondary; he thinks the evidence for the Jordan motif is superior.

2. C.H. Gordon. "Before the Bible." London.1962. pp284-285.

streams of Iardanus on Crete referred to in the Odyssey 3.291-92 and Iardanus in Elis on the Greek mainland which is mentioned in the Iliad 7.135. In conclusion he remarks that "in fact iardan seems to be an East Mediterranean word for river."<sup>1</sup>

Either of these suggestions is to be preferred to that of Loisy<sup>2</sup> that the name Jordan may have entered Mandaean tradition only as the result of contact with the Nestorian Church where the baptismal font was called the Jordan in remembrance of the baptism of Jesus. For veneration of rivers is very ancient, even the Palestinian Jordan being regarded as possessing magical qualities in early times (eg. II Kings 5.10.).

Yahia-Yuhana<sup>3</sup> is mentioned often enough in connection with Mandaean baptism to excite the suspicion that perhaps the Mandaeans were connected in some way with John the Baptist and his followers.<sup>4</sup> However, the most important tractates in the Ginza and Diwan d Masbuta d Hibil-Ziwa never mention Yahia in this connection. In spite of this, though, several scholars consider the matter to be virtually concluded.

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1. *ibid.* Gordon also suggests further connections between the Cretans and the Mandaeans elsewhere. For example, in the American Journal of Archaeology LXVIII. 1964. pp194-195, he translates a libation text from Palaikastro as "to Yasaslam that the city may thrive." ( re-ya-sa (sa-ra-mu...) ki-te-te-pi ki-re-ya-tu He equates Yasaslam with the Mandaic Sislam. With objections to this, however, see E.S.Drower "The Secret Adam" p60ff.

2. Loisy. *op.cit.* p65ff.

3. See Ginza 189.1; 190.20-21. John Book 74.4-5; 76.7-8; 30.108-109. Yahia is the Arabic equivalent for the Semitic Yohana. Ginza 51-52 speaks of Yohana without the secondary elaboration as do other early tractates. The earliest of all, however, do not mention either Yohana or Yahia-Yohana in connection with baptism.

4. cf. Acts 19.3; 18.5.

One issue which is still hotly debated, however, is the question of where John got his ideas about baptism. Does John's baptism represent a pagan influence, a borrowing from a mystery cult, an adaptation of proselyte baptism, or was it an original creation on John's part? Brownlee<sup>1</sup> and Kraeling<sup>2</sup> prefer to allow for John's originality and think this lies in his application of the ideas behind proselyte baptism to the whole Jewish race, i.e. that the Jews themselves were apostate and needed to submit to the baptism of repentance in order to enter the 'malkuth' of the Lord.<sup>3</sup> Scobie, however, after a careful examination of the relations between John's and proselyte baptism doubts "whether proselyte baptism could have provided the basis of John's baptism, since it almost certainly arose too late to have influenced John."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, he sets out the connections between John's and the Essenes' baptism very convincingly.<sup>5</sup> And surely it is unnecessary to deny John's originality of application while casting doubt on his originality as founder or inventor of the rite, the type of which was popular and practised from the Tigris to Rome. As Scobie again remarks: "It is this baptist movement which forms the background of John's life and work, John appears in the middle of the movement both geographically and chronologically."<sup>6</sup>

1. Brownlee. "John the Baptist in the New Light of Ancient Scrolls." in "The Scrolls and the New Testament." edited by K. Stendahl.

2. Kraeling. "John the Baptist."

3. See Matthew 3.7 and cf. Luke 3.7. For a full description of proselyte baptism and the baptism of John see C.H. Scobie's "John the Baptist." pp95-102.

4. C.H. Scobie. "John the Baptist." pl01.

5. Scobie op.cit. pp104-110.

6. Scobie op.cit. p59.

John's daring originality in applying a rite alien to the Jews to his own countrymen does not, however, lead to the conclusion that he must have influenced the rite as practised by the Mandaeans. This is upheld by an examination of the two rites. For John baptism was an act of eschatological importance, a single immersion in preparation for the final judgment. This is in marked contrast to the Mandaean ceremony which is an oft-repeated ceremony ensuring ritual purification and true 'self' awareness. In the Alf Trisar Suialia<sup>1</sup> in reply to questions on uncleanness,

"Whereupon Nbat-Rba spoke and said to Nsab-Rba:  
 "O my good child, as to these questions which  
 thou hast asked, (know) that the Jordan cleanseth all  
 (faults): it is the father of all worldé, celestial,  
 central and lower: it is a medicine transcending  
 all means of healing."<sup>2</sup>

The number of baptisms varies according to the offence and its seriousness.

The supposed connecting link of the Jordan has already been shown to be fallacious. But what are we to make of the name Yahia-Yuhana in the Mandaean texts?

Brandt thinks references to John the Baptist were added to the Mandaean writings as the result of the lesson constantly impressed upon the Mandaeans by the Roman Catholic missionaries during the seventeenth century, i.e. that their baptism was only

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1. Alf Trisar Suialia: the Thousand and Twelve Questions, edited in transliteration and translation by E.S.Drower, Berlin, 1960. pl.50. section 167. See also ATS p.126. section 53.

2. Ignatius' use of the same image of 'medicine', in his case to describe the Eucharist, cannot be said to carry any significant weight as evidence for Mandaean dependence on Christianity. "See Ignatius' Epistle to the Ephesians. XX.

the baptism of John mentioned in Acts 18.15 and 19.3 and as a counterstroke to the attempts to bring them into the Catholic fold.<sup>1</sup> Whether Brandt is correct in dating knowledge of John on the part of the Mandaeans to the seventeenth century or not, he is undoubtedly right in his general assumption that their knowledge of John is not first-hand. Throughout the Mandaean literature there is no additional information about the Baptist which one could legitimately expect in the writings of a sect reputedly stemming from the Baptist himself. However, Loisy<sup>2</sup> demonstrates how the birth story of John the Baptist has been taken over from the Evangelists and re-interpreted to suit Mandaean conceptions. The traditions in the John Book add nothing to our accurate knowledge of John. Consequently, Loisy writes: "Pretendre expliquer la legende evangelique de Jean par les fantaisies mandeenes est le renversement de toute critique raisonnable et scientifique."<sup>3</sup> He also notes that John is not mentioned either in the Liturgies or the account of the Mandaeans and their supposed origins by Theodore bar Khonai.

In actual fact the Mandaeans do not even seem to possess as much information about John as we are given in the Gospels. For example, there is no tradition of his death by beheading at the command of Herod. Instead, according to a tradition in the Ginza<sup>4</sup>

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1. Brandt. "The Mandaeans." H.E.R.E.
  2. Loisy. op.cit. p45ff.
  3. Loisy. op.cit. p45.
  4. Ginza 195.25ff.

he is held to have been translated into heaven like Enoch to whom he is compared.<sup>1</sup> If J. Skinner<sup>2</sup> is correct in maintaining that the origin of the Enoch tradition is probably to be found in Babylonia and that "when or how this myth became known to the Jews we cannot tell", then even this comparison is of no significance in any consideration of the relationship of Mandaicism with Judaism (or Christianity).

Loisy thinks that the Mandaeans saw John as the "incarnation of Anosh" but the generally secondary significance of John in the Mandaean tradition and the fact that the two figures are never connected in the tradition militates against this view.

The fact is that the Mandaeans actually regard the Life as the true baptist and he is held to have declared that:

"Ich bin der ershe Täufer, der an die Kusta  
und diese Taufe glaubte. Ein jeder, der zu  
mir hält, an meine Kusta und diese meine Taufe  
glaubt, wird in die Gemeinschaft mit mir eingehen  
und in meiner Skina Platz finden."<sup>3</sup>

Eisler<sup>4</sup> puts forward the not incredible theory that knowledge of John the Baptist may have spread to the lowlands of Southern Babylonia because of the resemblance of his name to that of the primeval Babylonian fisher-god Oannes-Hani. That the Mandaeans were aware of this Babylonian deity and traditions about him is

1. Ginza 191.12

2. J. Skinner. "Enoch" "Dictionary of the Bible." 2nd edition. 1963 edited by F.C. Grant and H.H. Rowley.

3. Ginza 240.18ff.

4. R. Eisler. "Orpheus the Fisher." London. 1921. p152.

indicated by the series of fragments about a divine being called the 'fisher of souls' in the John Book.<sup>1</sup>

It would appear, then, that the Mandaeans were originally ignorant of the existence of John the Baptist and of the Baptist Movement in the Jordan Valley generally.<sup>2</sup> While some knowledge of John is present in some of the Mandaean texts at the present available, there is ample evidence to indicate that the acquiring of this knowledge took place at a fairly late stage in the development of Mandaeism and most certainly later than its formative period, whenever that may have been. It has been suggested that the information about John that the Mandaeans possess came via Christian sources: this is most probably accurate as far as one can determine. However, there has been no agreement on the date of this acquisition, scholars having suggested contact between the Mandaeans and either the Nestorian, the Byzantine, or the later Roman Catholic Church.

### Christianity.

An examination of their connections with Christianity is invited by the Mandaeans who give themselves the name 'Christians of St. John' when questioned by strangers, and who have been so-

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1. cf. C.H.Scobie's criticism of Eisler's general theories in "John the Baptist" pp86-89.

2. cf. K. Rudolph. "Die Mandäer" Vol.I. He thinks Mandaeism did not originate with John the Baptist or his group but disagrees on the issue of the Jordan.

called by visiting missionaries and scholars ever since the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore necessary to determine whether this indirect claim to be somehow connected with the forerunner of the Christian faith<sup>2</sup> and Christianity itself is based on any firm foundation, or was merely adopted by the Mandaean community at a time - possibly when persecution by Muslims was taking place - when there were notable advantages to be gained from such an association.<sup>3</sup> Such a development could not be dated before the emergence of a Christianity which was strong enough to resist persecution by a foe common to both itself and Mandaeism, or else was able to gain recognition by the persecutors who would be left persecuting the Mandaeans if they did not adopt a sort of 'disguise'. Such a situation arose only under Islamic rule, toleration being granted to the Christians especially by the Abbasid caliphate of

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1. In Diversi avvisi particolari dall'Indie di Portogallo riceuti (1560) it is stated that in the year 1555 all at Basra were Christians but not perfect, and that St. John the Evangelist had preached there. As Pallis remarks in "A Mandaean Bibliography": "That the author was here thinking of the Mandaeans, but owing to insufficient knowledge or inaccurate information mentioned St. John the Evangelist instead of St. John the Baptist in this connection, seems to me beyond all doubt." pl7. Also, Thevenot gives a summary of the information collected by Ignatius a Jesu (1652) and entitles it "Relation des Chrestiens de St. Jean, faite par le Pere Ignace de Iesus Carne Dechaux.." (1663).

2. See pp

3. There is no evidence that the Nestorians ever so persecuted the Mandaeans that they needed to resort to the adoption of the name Christians as a means of protection. However, active persecution of both Christians and Mandaeans occurred under Muslim rule and while Christians gained toleration there is no evidence to associate the Mandaeans with the Subbi of the Koran. See further Pedersen. "The Sabians." pp383-391 E.G. Browne Memorial Volume.

the eighth century onwards. Several scholars have assumed that the Mandaeans may be automatically equated with the Subbi or Sabians who are also granted toleration in the Koran, but Pedersen points out that Mahomet himself is called a Sabian and the name is sometimes used not of a distinct group but of those who go over from another faith to Islam.<sup>1</sup>

The adoption of the name 'Christians of St. John' may not have occurred at the first occasion of contact between Mandaeism and Christianity though. An examination of the Mandaean texts indicates that there were several stages of contact between the two groups. In the Ginza we are told:

"Er betört Leute unter den Juden, machte sie zu "Gottesfürchtern" und zeigt ihnen Zaubererscheinungen, an die sie glauben. Er legt ihnen einen farbigen Rock an, er scheert ihnen eine Tonsur am Kopfe und bekleidet sie der Finsternis gleich. Am Sonntag halten sie ihre Hände still."

This is important as demonstrating the kind of Christianity with which the Mandaeans came into contact. Here we are told that the Christians were originally Jews, that they believe in magical appearances - presumably the resurrection appearances - that their heads are tonsured and their clothes are like the darkness, i.e. black. They do not work on Sundays. This description indicates that the Christians with whom the Mandaeans have come into contact are most probably monastic. We are also led to believe that at this particular stage the Mandaeans did not have

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1. Pedersen, op.cit.  
2. Ginza 50.22-25.

any particular regard for Sundays as such. This is, therefore, a fairly early stage as later we are informed in other sources that Sunday was a personified ruler of one of the mataratas and that Sunday had become a sacred day to be observed by refraining from sexual intercourse, dancing and singing, and by the more positive practice of prayer.<sup>1</sup>

The Ginza passage goes on to relate that:

"Er spricht zu ihnen: 'Ich bin der wahre Gott, den mich mein Vater hierher gesandt hat. Ich bin der erste, ich bin der Letzte Gesandte; ich bin der Vater, ich bin der Sohn, ich bin der Heilige Geist, der ich aus der Stadt Nazareth ausgezogen bin.'"<sup>2</sup>

From this we are able to determine that these Christians made use of the Trinitarian formula in their preaching, a formula which was only formally established at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. Consequently, it would appear that contact between the Mandaeans and this group of Christians in particular occurred in the fourth century at the earliest. This conclusion is corroborated by an examination of the development of monasticism in Mesopotamia.

Under Egyptian influence it seems that a current of anchoritism manifested itself in the eastern Orient c360 AD. Their most notable centres were located near the Persian border, in Edessa, Amida, and Tur-Abdin.<sup>3</sup> Generally, however, "the origin of Monasticism in Mesopotamia cannot be looked upon as a trans-

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1. Diwan Abatur. pp17,25,31.

2. Ginza 50.26-29.

3. See J.Gribomont. "Monasticism". New Catholic Encyclopaedia. Vol.9. pp1032-1037.

planting of the monarchical ideas from Egypt into the lands of the Tigris and Euphrates. Primitive monasticism in Mesopotamia is too different from what we know of monasticism in Egypt."<sup>1</sup> Voßbus inclines to think that monasticism in Mesopotamia was influenced by Christianity via Manichaeism, for "the Christians were intermixed with Marcionites and Manichees and made things from their works."<sup>2</sup> He later comments that "investigation of religious conditions in Mesopotamia shows that an extensive movement existed in that area, ranging from Manichaeism of a Christian hue to a Christianity of Manichaeic elements....Mandaean hostility to Christianity may therefore be to Manichaean Christianity essentially and not Christianity proper."<sup>3</sup>

However, while this is possible, another line of contact between the two groups also exists. The fact remains that alongside the existence of Marcion or Mani-dominated Christian groups in the area, there also existed Nestorian groups who, in spite of schism within and persecution from without, were very active in founding monasteries and whose mission extended not only as far as Iran but also to China.<sup>4</sup>

That contact was made between Christianity and Mandaeism is

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1. Voßbus. "History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient." Vol. II p350.

2. Voßbus. op.cit.

3. Voßbus. op.cit. pp164-166.

4. See J.Rypka. "History of Iranian Literature." (E.T.1968 Dordrecht Holland.) Unfortunately Rypka fails to consider Mandaeism at all.

incontrovertible. What is in dispute is firstly, the type of Christianity with which Mandaeism came into contact, and secondly, when contact of significance was effected.

As far as this particular study is concerned, however, it is of only relatively slight importance to know which type of Christianity came into contact with Mandaeism. The important issue is to decide whether Christianity and Mandaeism are fundamentally connected.

While there are several examples of similarities between the two groups, in ritual and language, it is the present writer's belief that these are superficial similarities dependent on historical contact belonging to a period after Mandaeism had become an organised entity totally independent of Christianity.

The most important similarities are as follows. The use of water and wine in the Masiqta ceremony has certain affinities with the same usage in the Christian Eucharist. However, though in both ceremonies 'blood' is referred to, in the Mandaean rite the 'blood' is a mixture of crushed fruit and water which represents the blood and sperm in the womb while the Christian rite uses water and wine to represent the blood of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

In both ceremonies the mixture is drunk by the celebrant who, in both instances, is thought to become in some way united with a departed soul, with that of Jesus in the Eucharist, with that of

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1. See, however, C.H. Dodd's comments on γέννημα τῆς ἀμπέλου in his "Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel." p411

the dead Mandaean for whom the service is being held in the Mandaean ritual.

Certain similarities of language also exist. Hibil-Ziwa, for example, is referred to as the 'First and Last'<sup>1</sup> (cf. Revelation I.17: 2.8: 22.13:) the Mandaean priest is 'clothed'<sup>2</sup> (a pun on 'mana' which means either soul or garment) in the soul of the departed. This idiomatic simile is also found in the New Testament where the Christian is told to 'put on' the body of Christ (Ephesians 4.24: 6.11.).

However, in spite of such parallels, the Mandaeans, as with Judaism, show a remarkable degree of ignorance concerning Christianity - and especially so if the claims of scholars like Mowinckel, for example, are to be taken seriously.<sup>3</sup>

The Mandaeans' ignorance of what constituted basic Christianity is demonstrated by their belief that all Christians were celibate, hence their invective against this state in the Ginza and elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> The description of Christians as those "who set up the Cross"<sup>5</sup> indicates a lack of awareness of the true emphasis of Christianity which is not on death alone but on life through death. Their basic lack of information with regard to the historical genesis of Christianity is further shown by the references

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1. Diwan d Masbuta d Hibil-Ziwa. p37
  2. Coronation of the Great Sislam.
  3. S.Mowinckel. "He that Cometh." p426.
  4. Ginza 62.1-6.
  5. Diwan Abatur pl6.

to Pilate as the 'King/Ruler of the World' and to Jesus as the 'Rhommer, a description which Rudolph describes thus: "Dies ware nur nach Konstantin MÜglich."<sup>1</sup>

There remains only one important issue in this debate, the question of the origin and use of the term Nasoraean for the priestly element of Mandaeism. For some students of Mandaeism this has provided an ostensibly unassailable link between Mandaeism and Christianity. But the whole issue is extremely confused on both sides. Epiphanius tells us that the first Christians "did not call themselves Nasoraean for the Nasoraean heresy was before Christ and knew not Christ."<sup>2</sup> And as the Mandaeans do not appear to have been originally connected with first-century or earlier Judaism we cannot accept such a questionable identification. The origin and use of the word Nasorean/Nazarene in a Jewish/Christian context, though important, is of no concern for this study. It is sufficient for our case that a perfectly acceptable derivation relating to the Mandaean usage exists. It seems perfectly natural to assume that the Mandaeans came to use the name as a result of Muslim persecution. The disguise adopted was the taking over of the name an-Nasar by which term the Christ-

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1. K. Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." Vol.I. p111. Note Lidzbarski comments on the possible existence of a pun between רוֹמְמֵר and רֹמְמֵר ie. Byzantine and imposter. p49.n3.
  2. Epiphanius. Adversus Haereses M.P.G. XLI. cols.400,257, Paris 1863.

ians were known in Muslim countries.<sup>1</sup>

Having decided that there is no proof of a migration of the Mandaeans from the West to the East, that they were originally independent of both Jews - either orthodox or heretical - and Christians, and that contact was made with Christianity no earlier than the third century and possibly quite a lot later, it is now necessary to support more positively the hitherto implied hypothesis that the Mandaeans are of Babylonian origin.<sup>2</sup>

"It is very likely that the Mandaeans are physically descended from the old Babylonians, and it would cause no surprise if their anti-Christian, anti-Muslim religion had been found to be a survival of the old religion of Babylonia."

Thus wrote F.C. Burkitt<sup>3</sup> with the additional remark that "as a matter of fact, it is nothing of the kind." However, he does at least agree that the Mandaeans are indigenous to Southern Iraq and not to Palestine originally. With this Albright<sup>4</sup> agrees, saying that:

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1. For further discussion of this important issue see the following: P.Winter. N.T.S. 3. pl36ff. Schaefer. Ναζωραῖος. T.W.N.T. p881ff. Lidzbarski. Intro. to Ginza p1x. "Mandäische Liturgien." pxviff. W.B.Smith. "The meaning of the epithet 'Nazoraean'. The Monist. 15.(1905).pp25-45. B. Görtner. "Die rätselhaften Termini Nazoräer und Iskariot." Uppsala. 1957. He connects Epiphanius' Ναζωραῖος with the Mandaean Nasoraiia, Rabbinical Nosrim, and the Qumran sectaries. K. Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." Vol.I. Göttingen. 1960.ppl12-118. C.H. Scobie. "John the Baptist." pp35-39.

2. On Babylonian influence in Gnosticism generally see: K.Rudolph. "Zum Problem:Mesopotamien (Babylonien) und Gnostizismus." in the supplement to NUMEN XII/1967. pp302-305.

3. F.C.Burkitt. "The Mandaeans." J.T.S. 29.1928.p225-237. See also "Church and Gnosis." Cambridge 1932.

4. W.F.Albright. op.cit. p366.

"the Mandaean system arose in Southern Iraq about the fifth century AD. under the influence of Dosithaeon, Marcionite, and Manichaeon teachings."

This dating of the emergence of Mandaeism must be revised, however, since the Swedish scholar Torgny SÄve-Söderbergh<sup>1</sup> has shown that the Manichaeon Psalms of Thomas were based upon some extant Mandaean hymns, thus indicating that the Madaeans are pre-Manichaeon and have a longer history in Iran and Iraq than is usually admitted.<sup>2</sup>

The oldest Mandaean texts are bowl texts which reveal much about the popular magic and astrology resorted to by many Madaeans in times of personal difficulties. It is in this field of Madaean studies that the most pronounced Babylonian influence is to be seen, as is recognized by Rudolph who is, otherwise, loth to admit the presence of such influence.<sup>3</sup>

E.Yamauchi, who has made a special study of Mandaean Incant-

1. T.SÄve-Söderbergh. "Studies in the Coptic Manichaeon Psalm-book." Cambridge. 1949.

2. N.B. This is not synonymous with the claim that the Madaeans were pre-Christian or even synchronise in their emergence. The attempt is being made to prove Babylonian origin only at this stage; questions of the date of emergence are obviously important but are dealt with elsewhere.

3. K. Rudolph. "The clearest Babylonian element is found in the magical texts and stock of loan words. Neither in the central doctrines nor in the actual cult is there proof of an unambiguous Babylonian element." "Zum Problem....." Messina Colloquium." Supplement to NUMEN.

ation Texts<sup>1</sup> concludes that "Mandaean magic owes its greatest debt to the Mesopotamian world..... The entire realm of the Zodiac and of astrology is derived from Babylonian sources. It cannot be said to be derived from Egypt for there magic was thought to prepare a man for the next world while according to Mandaean belief his religion did that, magic having a purely temporal efficacy."<sup>2</sup> Further, he tells us that the very frequently occurring figure of the lilith is a direct descendent of the Sumerian and Akkadian lilitu or ardat lili: her male counterpart is a descendent of the lilu.<sup>3</sup>

A further connection with the ancient world of Babylonia was first suggested by Brandt<sup>4</sup> but strongly disputed by Pallis.<sup>5</sup> The hypothesis put forward was that there was a definite link between the very ancient myth recorded in Enuma elish<sup>6</sup> and the story of the descent of Manda d Haia<sup>7</sup> (see also the parallel

1. E.M.Yamauchi. "Mandaean Incantation Texts." Unpublished Ph.D. diss. Brandeis University, U.S.A. 1964.
2. Yamauchi. op.cit. p76-77.
3. Yamauchi. op.cit. p37-38 See glossary.
4. A.J.H.W.Brandt. "Die mandäische Religion." Leipzig.1889.p182f.
5. S.A.Pallis. "Mandaean Studies." London.1926.
6. Enuma elish. Summary of contents found in "The Babylonian Genesis" by E.Heidel. 2nd edition London and Chicago.1963. Dated at c1000 BC. but if Gelb's contention that the Agum inscription is a forgery is incorrect, it may be dated as early as c1500 BC. See I.J.Gelb. J.N.E.S. VIII (1949) p348 n12.
7. Manda d Haia. This is the traditional European transcription (following Lidzbarski). But see also Macuch (Manda (a)d Heyyi) in O.L.Z. Jan/Feb 1968. Col.7.n3. and his "Handbook of Classical and Modern Mandaic." Berlin. 1965. pl1:22.

description with Hibil-Ziwa as the leading protagonist) into the realms of darkness and his subsequent victory over the powers of evil. Pallis writes: "it is entirely by chance that it (ie. the Mandaean version) happens to resemble Enuma elish in the arrangement of the events" and because "the two peoples had entirely different conceptions of death.....every comparison is precluded."<sup>1</sup> However, I submit that there is rather more than chance or coincidence involved in the relation between the two myths, and that Pallis' rejection of any comparison between them as invalid on the basis of a difference in attitude towards death is unsound. For in stating this he has failed to see that the Mandaean version is not an exact duplicate of Enuma elish but a further development of it in the light of a new situation and general 'atmosphere' (Weltanschauung). The Mandaeans composed their myth in the same 'atmosphere' that produced the hitherto unprecedented attitude to man and death that characterises the beginning of the present era - ie. a new pessimism about the world itself.<sup>2</sup> Therefore the defeat and death of Tiamat and Apsu are altered in the Mandaean tradition to the defeat and enchainment of Ptahil, Abatur, and Joshamin. In this way the true situation of man is thought to be reflected. For because the world was evil, and evil existed in the world, the powers of evil could not have been annihilated in the pre-cosmic battle between the powers of Good and Evil. They must still exist,

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1. S.A.Pallis. op.cit.

2. cf.R.Bultmann. "Theology of the New Testament." Vol.I.pl65. "The essence of Gnosticism does not lie in its syncretistic mythology but rather a new understanding - new in the ancient world - of man and the world."

though in a state of subservience to the forces of Goodness. The different presentation reflects the pessimism which had developed between the centuries, therefore, and comparison of other aspects of the two myths is thus made valid.

Several similarities, or rather parallels, exist between the two narratives:-

1. Both Marduk and Manda d Haia are described as the youngest gods.<sup>1</sup> Marduk claims supremacy over the other gods, however, and supremacy is automatically attributed to Manda d Haia who is seen more clearly as an hypostasis of the Life, but see <sup>1</sup>.
2. The gods, in both traditions, are images of the first god. (The implications of this are realised more clearly in the Mandaeen narrative where superiority is accorded to Manda d Haia automatically.). A process of emanation is necessary in order to form the pleroma of the godhead. (Here pleroma is used in the sense of 'entirety of god's attributes' rather than as a technical term for 'the total hierarchy of aeons'.)<sup>2</sup>

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1. Enuma elish, line 81ff in "Documents from Old Testament times," edited D.W.Thomas. Ginza 67.19ff.

2. It is recognised that there are certain distinguishing features of emanation in the various systems which speak of it. The main possibilities are thus:

- 1) that Gnostic and Mandaean conceptions and associations (eg. emanation - speech/logos) go together, excluding Babylonian ideas.
- 2) that the Gnostic framework is different from the Babylonian and Mandaean, which go together.
- 3) that the Babylonian and Gnostic bypass the Mandaean.
- 4) that all three types are independent.

The present writer favours the opinion that the Mandaean and Gnostic concept is a development of the Babylonian, though what the line of development might be in detail cannot be known on the basis of the evidence at present.

3. Evil arises from rebellion within the godhead. In Enuma elish Tiamat is urged to revolt against the murderers of her husband Apsu by a collection of the other gods led by Kingu. In the Ginza we are told that the Uthras have abandoned the House of Light and "have moved their countenance towards the world of darkness."<sup>1</sup> Later we find that:

"Sie verliessen die Süßigkeit,  
Gingen hin und liebten die Bitterkeit."<sup>2</sup>

4. The magic Tablets of Destiny are the equivalent of the gimra umrara and may, in fact, provide a clue to the meaning of these problematic words. The 'pearl and bitterness' may symbolise the sweetness and bitterness of life as revealed in the Tablets of Destiny.

5. The giving of a robe to the champion features in both accounts.<sup>3</sup>

6. Both Marduk and Manda d Haiia are given an unidentified weapon/helper for the coming battle.

Where precise equivalents are lacking and slight changes occur, this does not represent dissimilarity but development of the original tradition. That the tradition was undoubtedly known to the Mandaeans in more than one context has been demonstrated by E.Yamauchi<sup>4</sup>

1. Ginza 69.14ff.

2. 'Sweetness' is used in Gnostic writings generally in this sense, though 'Bitterness' in this definitive sense is rare. R.McL.Wilson therefore suggests that it is possibly a crystallisation of earlier Gnostic circumlocutions.

3. cf. Hymn of the Pearl.

4. E.M.Yamauchi. "Mandaean Incantation Texts." unpublished Ph.D. thesis. Brandeis Univ. USA. 1964.

who found the Marduk-Ea formula used in one of the bowl texts which he examined.

Study of the influence of Zoroastrianism on the creeds, manners and customs of the Mandaeans by J.J.Modi has led him to conclude that "the Mandaeans, if not originally a Zoroastrian sect, were a sect very much influenced by Zoroastrianism."<sup>1</sup> He points that while the Mandaean texts disparage or at least report inaccurately the words and works of Moses, Jesus and Mahomet, in no way do they vilify Zoroaster. Admittedly this is an argument from silence, but sometimes 'negative evidence' reflects the truth more accurately than a series of statements based on speculation. To this rather negative approach, however, is added the fact that while the Sassanians are reported to have persecuted the Manichees and Christians, they did not persecute the Mandaeans - most probably because of the similarities in belief and custom between the two groups. Also, as in the Bundahism, the Diwan Abatur reflects the story of the Primal Man and his ox-companion<sup>2</sup>, and the dominance of the High King of Light and Life in Mandaicism may well go back to the figure of Ahura Mazda who is also spoken of as 'Brilliant' 'radiant' (Ziwa) as are Mandaean 'modes' of the Life. Similarly, the three hundred and sixty Uthras in Mandaicism correspond with the three hundred and sixty 'aeons' emanating from Ahura Mazda.

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1. J.J. Modi. Journal of K.R.Cama Oriental Institute. 23.1932.p28

2 Diwan Abatur. pl5. The Bundahism is available in translation in "Sacred Books of the East." Vol. XI.

Hatred of fasting and monasticism is also shared with Zoroastrianism. Both groups believe that fasting ought to be from sin and not from food, and that one has a duty to marry and procreate; in this respect the *Ginza* and *Vendidad* speak as one.<sup>1</sup>

Both Modi and Drower speak of the similarity in function between the Mandaean and ancient Persian and Babylonian priests, Modi points out the existence of an ancient Persian priestly office known as the ganjobar (cf. Mandaean ganzivri)<sup>2</sup>, and Drower thinks that the Mandaean rituals go back to Babylonian rather than Christian originals.<sup>3</sup>

Rather more concrete evidence is furnished by anthropologists who have conducted thorough, scientific investigations into the ethnic aspects of Mandaean studies. These have confirmed the existence of two physical types as observed by Drower. However, this does not provide evidence that a section of the Mandaeans migrated from the West, thus proving the Haran Gawaita testimony could apply in part at least, but only that the Mandaeans were not so rigorously segregationalist at an earlier stage in their history and that they did intermarry with their neighbours.<sup>4</sup> There is no reason to dispute the findings of the anthropological survey led

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1. Modi, loc.cit. refers to and quotes *Vendidad* IV 47, III 1. Herodotus also speaks of Iranian love of married life. Bk.I.136.

2. Modi. loc.cit. p52.

3. Drower. M.M.I.I.

4. See Salim. "Marsh Dwellers of the Euphrates Delta." L.S.E. Monographs on Social Anthropology. no.23. London.1962.

by H. Field in the 1940's which concluded that "the Subba<sup>1</sup> are connected racially with western Iran.....(further) their affinities are with the peoples of Iran rather than with any groups in the southern, central, or northern sections of Iraq."<sup>2</sup>

While elements in the Mandaean tradition have also been held to demonstrate Egyptian and Cretan affinities<sup>3</sup>, this eclectic aspect of Mandaeism does not detract from the conclusion that the Babylonian origin of the Mandaeans is a much more assured fact than any other hypothesis, and does more to reconcile the known facts with probability than any of the other suggestions that have been advanced.

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1. The Mandaeans are frequently referred to as Subba because of their frequent lustrations - the verbal root 'sb' means to baptise.
  2. H. Field. "The Anthropology of Iraq." Chicago Field Museum of Natural History. 1949. Part I. No.2. p310.
  3. See C.H. Gordon. American Journal of Archaeology. LXVIII. 1964. p194-195. "Adventures in the Nearest East." London 1957. ppl60-195.

## CHAPTER TWO.

Our information regarding Mandaean beliefs and practices is gleaned from a careful study of the now fairly extensive Mandaean textual and related material. However, no Mandaean manuscript older than the sixteenth century exists<sup>1</sup>, though some colophons indicate a pedigree going back at least as far as the seventh and eighth centuries, and no European library has a truly representative collection. In 1905, A.L.B.Hardcastle wrote that only a few fragments were available for study<sup>2</sup>; now, largely owing to the work of N.Lidzbarski and E.S.Drower, the amount of evidence is

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1. The Alma Risaia Zuta (D.C.48.) dated 972 AH. To convert AH into AD it is necessary to add 622 (the date of the Hejira, Mahomet's flight from Mecca to Medina) to the date in AH., then subtract 3 yrs. for every century of the date in AH from the total (to account for the difference between the length of lunar and solar years). e.g. 1386 AH + 622 - (3 x 13) = 1969 AD.
  2. A.L.B.Hardcastle. "A Mandaean version of the baptism of Jesus." Theosophical Review. 36. 1905. p429ff.

greatly increased and available in German and English translations.

The earliest text is an inscribed lead amulet which was published by Lidzbarski in 1910.<sup>1</sup> He dated it on orthographical grounds at c400 AD. The text is inscribed on a narrow piece of lead - most probably with a nail. The text begins with a plea to Manda d Haiia to rid the village, in which Yokabar, son of Anosag, lives, of "the evil destroyer". Hibil-Ziwa promises to "shatter the seals of death and to shatter the knots of destruction" which the Planets "are loosing against us in fury". Yawar is then sent to be "a great seal in support for the threshold of Nukraya and of Bar-Haiye." The text concludes with the promise of delivery from the demons and the assertion that "Life is victorious over all things".

Drower suggests that the charm and others like it were worn as talismans, having firstly been immersed in water which was then drunk.

Other early texts are found on bowls.<sup>2</sup> These texts, mostly dating from the Sassanian period (c600 AD.), are usually of magical content revealing an amalgamation of names and ideas from many areas.

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1. M.Lidzbarski. "Ein mandäisches Amulett." Florilegium Melchior de Vogue. Paris. 1910. pp247-375.  
 2. See H.Pognon. "Inscriptions mandaites des coupes de Khouabir." Paris. 1898. J.A.Montgomery. "Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur." Philadelphia. 1913. E.M.Yamauchi. "Mandaean Incantation Texts." (Unpublished PhD. thesis. Brandeis University. USA. 1964.). Parts of this thesis have been published in the author's article "The present status of Mandaean Studies." J.N.E.S. 25. 1966. pp88-96. Cf. R.Macuch. "Der Gegenwartige Stand der Mandäerforschung und ihre Aufgaben." O.L.Z. Jan/Feb. 1968. col.14. nl.

Several names are Jewish and Adonai is portrayed as king of the demons, but other names - e.g. Hindu, Hindiuta, and Timotheos<sup>1</sup> - indicate the cosmopolitan nature of the trade in talismans. It is noteworthy that in this earliest material Christian influence is negligible, a reference to a certain Jesus in a few of the texts being to Jesus bar Perahia<sup>2</sup>, and not to Jesus of Nazareth, and neither is there any evidence of substantial Egyptian or Hellenistic influence.

S.A.Pallis<sup>3</sup> thinks the Mandaean scriptures were finally collected together at the beginning of the Islamic invasion of Persia. With the intention of gaining toleration as a "People of the Book" the Mandaeans, it is held, decided to gather together their various sacred traditions.<sup>4</sup> In reply to the question found in the John Book

1. See E.M.Yamauchi. op.cit. texts no's. 34,39,41.

2. Commenting on Montgomery's text 37 which has a reference to "the virtue of Jesus healer", Yamauchi writes: "This is probably not a reference to Jesus Christ, but to Jesus bar Perahia, the famous Jewish magician, who appears in the Syriac text no.32 as well as in a number of the Aramaic texts." ( pl7 of thesis.). C.H.Gordon, in "Adventures in the Nearest East." London. 1957. pl72, comments: "A great expert in serving bills of divorcement on lilihs was Joshua son of Perahaya, well-known in Rabbinic literature, and whose authority is often cited in the bowls. The fame of Jesus of Nazareth as a master exorcist induced Jewish magical circles to build up the reputation of Joshua (= Jesus) son of Perahaya. The Jews were not to be outdone!"

3. S.A.Pallis. op.cit.

4. Toleration was granted to "those who are Jews, and Christians, and Sabaeans - whoever believeth in Allah and the Last Day and doeth right." Koran. Surah II.62. See also Surahs V.19,69,82; XXII.17 in "The Meaning of the Glorious Koran." edited and translated by M.M.Pickthall. New York. 1953. That toleration was only tenuous, however, is indicated by the comment that "Some of them (i.e. Peoples of the Book) are believers, but most of them are evil-livers."

(Sidra d Yahya) : "Tell us, who is your prophet? Tell us, who your prophet is, what your holy writing is, and say whom you worship"<sup>1</sup> the Mandaeans compiled the Ginza as we now have it, defined John the Baptist/Yahya as their prophet, and Melka d Nhura as their one and only god. This does not mean that the Mandaeans had no written traditions prior to the Islamic invasion of Persia though. T.Säve-Söderbergh has demonstrated that "...if we find a parallel between a Mandaean text and a Psalm of Thomas.....we have strong reason to assert - despite the comparatively scanty amount of early Syrian poetry from other religions - that the text in question is of Mandaean origin and belongs to a stratum in the Mandaean books to be dated before the last quarter of the third century."<sup>2</sup> And in K.Rudolph's opinion<sup>3</sup> it has been satisfactorily demonstrated by Macuch<sup>4</sup> that "schon vor dem Einbruch des Islams grössere Sammlungen der mand. Literatur bestanden haben, so dass schon zu Mohammed der Ruf der "Büchern" besitzenden Sübiern dringen konnte. Es war dafür sowohl innere Gründe (Umschrift der empfindlichen Rollen in die haltbaren Codices) als auch äussere (Gemeindezerfall) massgebend, die unter dem Islam noch verstärkt wurden."

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1. John Book. in Lidzbarski's edition of "Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer." p89.

2. T.Säve-Söderbergh. "Studies in the Coptic Manichaean Psalmbook." ET. Cambridge. 1949. p85ff. Cf. Supplement to Numen XII/1967. p557. H.Jonas agrees that "Manichaean hymn-poetry shows the distinct influence of Mandaean models." "The Gnostic Religion." Boston. 1958.

3. K.Rudolph. Numen Supplement XII/1967. p588.

4. See Altheim-Stiehl. "Die Araber in der alten Welt." Band II., Macuch's article "Anfänge der Mandäer." pp76-190.

Macuch dates the Mandaeans even more precisely by means of script analysis.<sup>1</sup> He thinks the Mandaeans emigrated to Babylonia in the last years of the reign of the Parthian king Artabanus III (c12 BC - c38 AD). To confirm this he cites Elymaean inscriptions which show resemblances to Mandaic letters and which probably date from the second century AD. Lidzbarski interprets coins from Characene in Southern Babylonia to indicate Mandaean presence there in about 150 AD.

A.L.B.Hardcastle argues on the basis of vocabulary that the traditions are at least as old as the Avesta which was established as the official canonical text of Zoroastrianism by Ardashir in

1. Mandaean script analysis has interested scholars from the 17th century until the present day. Different theories, as recounted by S.A.Pallis in his "Mandaean Bibliography" pp27-31 include some of the following :-

- a) The Mandaean alphabet is similar to Estrngelo. R.Simon. (1685).
- b) It is the earliest Syriac alphabet from which Estrangelo derived its origin. Hyde (1700), La Croze (1714), Baumgarten (1745), Michaelis (1763).
- c) The Mandaean script is derived from Estrangelo. Ravius (1775).
- d) Similarities between Mandaean and Mongolian alphabets were pointed out by Bayerus (1731), accepted by Fritz (1748), and Petity (1767).
- e) It shows similarities with the Uigurian script according to Klaproth (1820, 1832).
- f) Paulus (1794) thought it was derived from Hebrew and quoted for comparison from Palmyrene monuments.
- g) Nöldeke assumes a connection between Mandaean and earliest forms of Pahlevi alphabet.
- h) Brandt conjectured a relationship between the Mandaean and Nabataean script but thought they were even more like the inscriptions at El-Hajr (1st century AD.).
- i) Rudolph thinks the Mandaean script may be the link between Nabataean and Elymaean scripts but suggests that they might have developed such a script from southern Babylonian cursive. "Die Mandäer." Vol. I pp29-31.

226 AD. This king, having defeated Artabanus V, the last Parthian ruler, founded the neo-Achaemenid Empire with the primary intention of restoring the oriental empire which Alexander the Great had overthrown. Consequently, even in religious matters they returned to the faith of their forefathers. Hence the claim that the traditions of the Avesta are very old helps to position some sections of the Mandaean tradition very far back in time too.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, however early or late the datings given for the various texts, whether on bowls, coins, or in manuscript form, some scholars would agree that some of the ideas found therein are most definitely datable at least as early as the first and second centuries AD., while individual concepts may be considerably older.<sup>2</sup>

The Mandaean scrolls can be divided into two basic types - ordinary or 'open', and secret. The ordinary scrolls are available to laymen - Mandaiia - while the secret scrolls - sarhs or explanations - are not, these being available to the priests - Nasoraia - only. The secret scrolls are usually liturgical and only allude to the myths and legends found in the open literature like the Ginza,

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1. See A.L.B. Hardcastle. "The Mandaean Book of John the Baptist." ThR. 1908-9. Commenting on the description of the abode of Ur, the ruler of the powers of evil, as siaia mia (the black waters), she claims that the word siaia is a very old Persian form of the word siah meaning black or dark. W. Manson, in "Jesus the Messiah", sees "no reason to doubt that the Avesta and the still later Pehlevi literature preserve a mass of ancient material." (pl79).

2. The same conclusion can, of course, be applied to 'classical' Gnosticism also.

if they do not contradict them. The form assumed is almost always that of a description of a heavenly rite, e.g. in the Sarh d Qabin d Sislam Rba (explanation of the marriage of Sislam the Great), which forms the prototype and example of Mandaean rites to be enacted by the priests in the lower world. It is significant that neither Jesus of Nazareth nor John the Baptist is mentioned in the secret literature of the Mandaeans, not even for the purpose of polemic as in the open literature.

Most of the scrolls examined by Lady Drower can be traced back to scrolls copied by the liturgist Ramuia and his helpers who were very influential in collecting and preserving manuscripts in the eighth century. Ramuia's editing is characterised by an emphasis on ritual rather than theology and he did not attempt to reconcile conflicting theological ideas.

In a few cases a colophon includes a specific reference to the date of copying. For example, the Coronation Prayers and Hymns<sup>1</sup> are followed by a colophon which tells us that the scroll was completed "on Friday (yuma d rahatia) which is rufta (Friday), the fourth of the month Akir-Paiiz (Last-of-Autumn) which is Tabit, Capricornus, in the year of Wednesday (i.e. which began on Wednesday) in the year 1217 by Arab computation....."<sup>2</sup> Other colophons give us the names of the copyists, as does that of the Alf Trisar Suialia.<sup>3</sup> However,

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1. See "The Canonical Prayer-Book of the Mandaeans." pp220-232.

2. See p54 nl.

3. Alf Trisar Suialia. Translated as "The Thousand and Twelve Questions." by E.S.Drower. Akademie Verlag. Berlin. 1960. p289.

something of greater importance is also stated in this particular colophon which reads :

"Then said Ramuia son of Qaimat : "When I wrote this Diwan it was in separate treatises. I wrote them down and collected these reliable mysteries one by one, and combined them into fourteen writings, (making) two or three discourses into one. I made the writings like a scroll (phylactery), from here to below and from here to above - I made it all into a single scroll so that they might be kept in association with one another and lest one day they might become separated from one another, for I felt in my mind that (thus?) no hand would be laid on them (to injure them), or fire or something I wot not of."

Here we are given definite proof that before the time of Ramuia and his colleagues the Mandaeen writings existed in their essential forms. The compilation - not the composition - took place in the eighth century onwards.

Ginza Rba.<sup>1</sup> (also called the Sidra Rba).

The Ginza or Treasury is a large collection of originally separate pieces of tradition, the names of some of which are scattered throughout the collection, e.g. "The Book of the Lord of Greatness" (Ginza 54.20) and "The Book of the Jordan" (Ginza 57.27). It is divided into two parts known as the Right Ginza and Left Ginza respectively. The Right Ginza is made up of eighteen books or tractates which are further sub-divided into sixty-two individual pieces. The Left Ginza is about one quarter of the length of the first part of the collection and comprises three books made up

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1. The Ginza is available in a German translation by M. Lidzbarski. "Ginza : der Schatz oder das grosse Buch der Mandäer." Göttingen. 1925.

of ninety-four pieces some of which are very short. Taken as a whole, the Ginza contains a diverse range of material ranging from theological and ethical to historical, mythical, and polemical issues with no apparent order or internal motives. W.F.Howard's comment on the Mandaean literature in general applies most fittingly to the Ginza in particular : "The great difficulty that meets us in attempting to read the sacred writings of the Mandaeans is that there is no indication of chronological order, but a most bewildering variety of ideas from the most diverse sources and periods of history, assembled with a sublime disregard of internal consistency."<sup>1</sup>

The Left Ginza is less open to this charge than the Right, however, as it is mostly concerned with the fate of the soul and its ascent to the upper world. It is sometimes referred to as "The Book of the Dead" and several of the hymns found therein do also feature in the Masiqta, the Mandaean mass for the dead. These hymns demonstrate most clearly the  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha - \sigma\eta\mu\alpha$  philosophy which was taken over by the 'classical' Gnostic systems from earlier thinkers- perhaps from Orpheus (6th. century BC.). They follow a fairly rigid form in approximately five parts :)

1. A statement describing the soul - "I am a mana of the Great Life"- and sometimes the command of the Life instructing the soul to go into the body.
2. The complaint of the soul from the body.

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1. W.F.Howard. "The Fourth Gospel and Mandaean Gnosticism." London Quarterly Review. 1927. pp72-85.

3. The arrival of the 'Helper' either spontaneously or at the specific request of the soul.
4. Consolation given to the soul.
5. The ascent of the soul, or promise that ascent to the original home will soon be effected.

With regard to the dating of the material in the Ginza there is no real consensus of opinion. Lady Drower<sup>1</sup> thinks the Left Ginza contains the most ancient part of the collection while Lidzbarski and Pallis prefer to date the Right Ginza as earliest - though they do not agree on which parts of the Right Ginza are first.<sup>2</sup>

The last tractate of the Right Ginza - The Kings' Book - contains an account of cosmic events as seen by a Mandaean who thought the eschaton would come soon after the end of the Arab dominion which would only last for seventy-one years.<sup>3</sup> This part of the collection, therefore, can be dated in the eighth century AD., but only this particular section. One must always remember that the Ginza is a collection of many distinct texts and the dating proper to one part cannot be applied to others, if any. Difficulties in dating the material abound and historical references do not always give the necessary clue one would wish, e.g. some of the references to "Mahomet the Arab" as one who lived in the past - possibly two or three centuries previous - are added to the material in a very arbitrary manner, and it is possible that such material is pre-

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1. E.S.Drower. "Mandaean Polemic." B.S.O.A.S. 25. 1962. p438-448.  
 2. Lidzbarski reckons that Right Ginza tractates I and II are oldest, Pallis says tractates VI and VIII of the Right Ginza are oldest.  
 3. Ginza 414.18.

Mahommedan - and equally possible that the reverse is the case. G.R.S.Mead thinks the whole collection "is indubitably prior to the Mohammedan conquest (c651 AD.) and its sources are far more ancient."<sup>1</sup> However, the whole issue is very complicated and generalisations such as Mead's cannot be applied with any accuracy. Sweeping statements about any entire collection of literature such as the Ginza are inapplicable and inaccurate in connection with the individual parts.

The Ginza is available to laymen - Mandaia - as it is 'open' literature. It is also used by the priests - Nasoraia - in some ceremonies where both Right and Left Ginzas are read simultaneously by readers facing one another. In some copies the two sides are reversed. Though officially 'open' literature, the secret idiom does enter occasionally. The word pihta, which normally refers to the sacramental bread used in the Masiqta ceremony, is used in the sense of 'revealed knowledge' or gnosis in Ginza 238.11.

Sidra d Yahya. (also called the Drashe d Melke).

The John Book<sup>2</sup>, or Discourses of the (heavenly) Kings, can be sub-divided into thirty-seven sections, not all of which, however, deal with or even mention the life and teachings of John the Baptist as they are known to the Mandaeans. Where John is mentioned the Arabic and Mandaean-Arabic forms of the name alternate. This

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1. G.R.S.Mead. "The Gnostic John the Baptizer." London. 1924.

2. The text is available in Lidzbarski's German edition entitled "Das Johannesbuch." Giessen. 1915.

may not be used to support the view that the traditions were committed to writing only after the beginning of the Islamic domination of the area, for the Arabic equivalent may have been inserted into an earlier text. On the other hand, the traditions themselves do not indicate that the Mandaeans' knowledge of John the Baptist was first-hand. All that can be stated with certainty about the collection is that in its final form it is undoubtedly later than the Ginza - Macuch says its editing took place "deep in the Islamic age"<sup>1</sup> - but that some of its component parts are much earlier. The same caution in dating the material in the Ginza must be applied also to this book.

The contents of the collection are varied, but clearly divided. There is not the confusion and cementing together of conflicting strata as in the Ginza; each subdivision is an entity in itself.

### Diwans.

There is a tradition that there are twenty-four of these Diwans but whether it is correct or not is unknown. It has been suggested that the number may have been given as a symbol of perfection regardless of fact as it corresponds to the 'perfect' number of letters in the Mandaean alphabet ( when *o* is counted at

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1. Macuch's comment - which he also makes in reference to the Ginza in Alteim-Stiehl : "Die Araber in der alten Welt" Bd. II. p184 and the Alma Risaia Zuta and Alma Risaia Rba in his article in O.L.Z. Jan/Feb. 1968. col.10 - is ambiguous. Does he mean 'deep' looking back from the present or forward from the beginning of Islam? One's general impression is that he means deep in the Islamic age as seen from its inception, i.e. 12th century.

both the beginning and end of the list and  $\Delta$  included as a separate letter).<sup>1</sup>

Some of the Diwans which are available - though not always in book form or translation - are illustrated. The Diwan Nahrawatha has a chart with an explanatory text describing the rivers of the world. They all flow from the Frat-Ziwa or Light-Euphrates. It is noteworthy that the Jordan (yardna) does not figure here at all. The Diwan Abatur<sup>2</sup> deals with the progress of the soul after death through the mataratas or houses of purification, its arrival at the scales of Abatur<sup>3</sup> where it is weighed and balanced against the purity of Seth<sup>4</sup>, and its transit in a ship of light to its heavenly home. It is illustrated with drawings of ferocious dogs, deities, and the ship of light. Also contained in the text is a description of the individual purgatories, not all of which are said to be controlled by powers of evil, and information on procedure for cer-

1. Cf. Hennecke. "New Testament Apocrypha". ET R.McL.Wilson. London 1963. p355-356. The Syriac alphabet has twenty-two letters. Mani's "Gospel of the Living" -  $\tau\omicron\ \zeta\omega\nu\ \epsilon\upsilon\alpha\gamma\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\iota\omicron\nu$  - was divided into twenty-two books or  $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\iota$  to correspond with the number of letters of the alphabet.

2. Diwan Abatur. Translated by E.S.Drower. Rome 1950. Studi e Testi 151.

3. Abatur is connected with Bhaq-uthra in tractate 14 of the Ginza and his name explained as "Father of the uthras". The explanation of the name as aba (he that has) plus tura (balance, scales) does not explain why an addition - d muzania (of the scales) should have been necessary to describe Abatur's function as judge; it merely duplicates the root meaning. Consequently it seems more likely that Abatur was probably the original description of the Life in his function as father of the uthras. Cf. Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." I pl24n1

4. See Ginza 424-429.

tain ceremonial offences. A version of the creation myth is also introduced an pl4ff though it is not complete. It is interesting for several reasons. The gods are described as having built Msunia Kusta when Ptahil, helped by subservient demons which he has created, builds the earth. Ptahil is portrayed throughout as pure and asks his father Abatur for help when the demons try to "sully the clothing of Ptahil", i.e. when they try to corrupt him. Abatur advises Ptahil to send and instal his (i.e. Ptahil's) son, Adam, on the earth together with the bull Qadiael. Nothing further is told, however. The story is of note because of the unconscious parallel with the story of Gayomart and his primal ox companion, and because Ptahil is nowhere said to be an evil demiurge.

Another Diwan is the Diwan d Masbuta d Hibil-Ziwa<sup>1</sup> (the Diwan of the baptism of Hibil-Ziwa). This text is of importance as its complete failure to mention John the Baptist and its description of the use of myrtle in the baptismal rite - which shows strong affinities with the Zoroastrian use of barsom - indicate that the Mandaeans' affinities are with the east rather than the west, as we have tried to show earlier.<sup>2</sup> The text has included in it also a group of hymns to which Lady Drower has parallels in an unpublished manuscript entitled Sarh d Masbuta Rabtia d h'tlatma ushitin Masbutiata (a commentary on the great baptism which is three hundred and sixty baptisms) which is D.C.50 in the Bodleian Catalogue.

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1. Diwan d Masbuta d Hibil-Ziwa, translated by E.S.Drower. Studi e Testi 176/177. Rome 1963.

2. See chapter one.

Haran Gawaita.<sup>1</sup>

The text entitled the Haran Gawaita is a legendary account of the development of the Mandaean community. It begins at the time of the emergence of Christianity which is ascribed to the work of Ruha and the powers of evil. As a result of the rise of the new religion "The First Life conceived a plan for gaining a grasp (i.e. for gaining a group of supporters or believers) in order to destroy the mysteries of Adonai from the seas and to destroy the plot of Ruha and Adonai which came from the House of Ruha; to ruin the scheme of Ruha before the presence of the great Father of Glory and to propagate the mysteries..." The first part of this plan necessitates the birth of John (Yahya-Yuhana). The sequence is interesting in the light of scholarly claims about the first-hand knowledge of the Baptist on the part of the Mandaeans. The ministry of John is described in words which parallel those used in the Ginza<sup>2</sup> to describe the work of Anosh uthra in the time of Pilate. After forty-two years he was translated into heaven, "and a time arrived, sixty years after Yahia-Yuhana had departed the body.....the Jews, just as their former strength (returned) to Ruha and Adonai, who became arrogant ....Hence, after sixty years, Ruha and Adonai planned to erect.... the fallen House (Temple) and spoke to Moses the prophet and the children of Israel who had built the House (Temple)." This suggests

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1. Haran Gawaita. translated by E.S.Drower. Studi e Testi 176/177. Rome 1963.

2. Ginza 29-30.

that the rebellion of Bar Cochba in 135 AD might be referred to. The reference to Moses - if the context is correct - again demonstrates the singular lack of accurate information about the Jews from whom the Mandaeans are supposed to have developed. The text goes on to tell us that as a result "Hibil-Ziwa came and burnt and destroyed Jerusalem and made it like a heap of ruins." Lady Drower thinks this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. If this is so, all that can be said is "note the sequence of events according to the Mandaeans!" The destruction of the Jews who had ruled in Baghdad for eight hundred years - from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah? - is described next and then the installation of the Nasuraila in Babylonia. It is possibly of some significance that "Anosh uthra installed one whose name was Papa son of Guda upon the Great Tigris." A certain Papa, son of Tinis, is mentioned in the Scholion of Bar Khonai.<sup>1</sup> This work is of late date and of no historical worth in connection with the Mandaeans. It is possible, therefore, that in this instance the two works reflect an equally late and worthless tradition.

"About eighty-six years before the Son of Slaughter, the Arab, went out and prophesied" a Mandaean was deceived by Ruha. This could conceivably refer to the beginnings of contact with Christianity. The dispute is blamed on Ruha who is elsewhere held responsible for the emergence of Christianity.

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1. See the translation in Kraeling's article "The Origins and Antiquity of the Mandaeans." J.A.O.S. 49. 1929.

Pages 15 and 16 record in a semi-veiled manner the attainment of toleration from the Muslims. "It was not permitted to the Son of Slaughter, the Arab, to harm the congregation of Souls, owing to the protection afforded by these explanations of the Great Revelation - praised be its name." This appears to confirm the theory that protection from Muslim persecution was achieved by the Mandaeans collecting their sacred literature together into a 'canon' of equal standing with the Christian Bible.

The book concludes with predictions of the future which indicate that the Haran Gawaita was composed no earlier than the time of the granting of tolerance to the Mandaeans by the Muslims - Mahomet lived from 570-632 AD.

In an examination of the title of the book alone, disregarding the contents, it is interesting to note the other uses of the word 'Haran' in the Mandaean literature. It occurs three times in the form 'Hauraran', twice in the Ginza and once in the John Book.<sup>1</sup> In all three places it could be a synonym for Msunia Kusta, the general impression being that it is the Kingdom of Light to which the text is referring.<sup>2</sup> In line 75 of Lidzbarski's amulet<sup>3</sup> there is a reference to "the power of Bar-Hauraran" which may point to a use of the word as the proper name of some heavenly being.

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1. Ginza 302.28;593.2; John Book 232.

2. Cf. E.S.Drower. "Mandaean Polemic." B.S.A.O.S. 25. 1962. p441. She thinks a place of refuge is referred to and that the Haran Gawaita reflects a basically correct tradition - though she also describes it as "unfortunately undependable".

3. Quoted by Yamauchi. "Mandaean Incantation Texts." p320-342.

The epithet Gawaita meaning 'inner' taken together with Haran as used in the rest of the Mandaean literature seems to indicate that in the title of this particular text we have a similar usage of the word. However, how this came to be originally applied to the present text remains a mystery.

Sarh d Qabin d Sislam Rba.<sup>1</sup>

This explanatory commentary on the marriage ceremony of the Great Sislam includes a description of the actual ritual and procedure at a Mandaean wedding and an astrological appendix because no Mandaean wedding can be consummated until an astrologically propitious time. It states the planetary influences for each hour of the day and whether it is good or bad for certain actions.

For example :

Sunday - "The eighth hour is under the Sun : auspicious for taking a bride. The ninth hour is under Venus : favourable for commercial transactions. The tenth hour is under Mercury and good for nothing."

The tense of the verb alters throughout as it is a manual of instruction for the priest as well as a description of the marriage in heaven.

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1. Sarh d Qabin d Sislam Rba. Explanatory Commentary on the Marriage Ceremony of the Great Sislam. edited by E.S.Drower. Biblica et Orientalia. no.12. Rome 1950.

Sfar Malwasha.<sup>1</sup>

The Sfar Malwasha or Book of the Zodiac is a collection of astrological material from many parts of the world. From the place-names mentioned it is clear that the original sources came from such regions as the Volga area, Andalusia, Armenia, Afghanistan and Greece, as well as well as Babylon. As in the other collections, e.g. the Ginza and John Book, the various strata come from different epochs and social conditions. Much of the book shows undoubted Babylonian influence and the priestly practice of consulting the book at every New Year reflects the traditions of ancient Babylon, but there is also much that is totally alien to this tradition. Some sections of the book have become acceptable to the Mandaeans only by means of fairly extensive glosses. Such sections are often translations from a foreign tongue. On page 197 we are clearly told that "this (is) a compilation from a Greek miscellany, (comprising) calculations about the stars and horoscopes and information about what there is in the heavens according to days, months, and years." The latest material is approaching modern Mandaic and the date of the final compilation of the manuscript is given as 1247 AH. which makes it very recent, i.e. nineteenth century. The book demonstrates the existence of a popular astrology among the Mandaeans even up to modern times : the more academic astronomy was never so favoured.

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1. Sfar Malwasha : The Book of the Zodiac. translated by E.S.Drower. Oriental Translation Fund Volume XXXVI. (Royal Asiatic Society). London. 1949.

Coronation of the Great Sislam.<sup>1</sup>

This contains a description of the ordination ceremony of a Mandaean priest plus a short account of the Mandaean eucharist which takes place as the culmination of the rite. Sislam is the heavenly prototype of the priest - and also of the bridegroom - so the Mandaean ritual is enacted as a copy or reflection of the ritual which took place in heaven at the initiation of Sislam into the priesthood of the upper world.

A Pair of Nasoraean Commentaries. Alma Risaia Zuta : Alma Risaia Rba.

Lady Drower has published two of the secret texts in her collection<sup>3</sup> which deal with the sacred mysteries in a manner which is often slightly different from the presentation in the open literature. The two scrolls are called Alma Risaia Zuta (The Lesser First World) and the Alma Risaia Rba (The Great First World) respectively. The former is dated at 972 AH and the latter was copied in 1224 AH. As regards contents Lady Drower thinks the Alma Risaia Rba, though copied later than the other manuscript, is, in fact, of earlier origin. It contains a version of the creation myth which is characterised by its primitive and gnostic strands which have been conflated. The 'Wellspring' and 'Datepalm' form the two principles of creation from which the first Seed was formed. The Seed

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1. Coronation of the Great Sislam. translated by E.S.Drower. Leiden 1963.

2. A Pair of Nasoraean Commentaries. translated by E.S.Drower. Leiden 1963.

3. The Drower Collection is housed in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. These two texts are catalogued as DC 41 and DC 48.

"planned to create Adam, his first born son, whom the worlds worship. And from him (i.e. Adam) proceeded a multitudinous host: it came into existence for his sake." (p5). The heavenly Adam emerged from the Wellspring/womb after three hundred and sixty days. "And he arose and sat at the wellspring of Vain-Imaginings and said "I am a king without peer : I am lord of all the world." (p6).<sup>1</sup> However, he sees a stream of living, white waters and on the basis of this hitherto unknown phenomenon decides that there must be a higher power responsible for it. He is not, therefore, the "king without peer" as he had imagined. A voice comes from above and Adam falls to the ground "and was without power to rise up." He remains fallen on his face until a letter is brought to him by one of the uthras. "And he (Adam) took the letter with his right hand, and smelt it and sneezed..."

From this we can see that the primitive concept of creation from the water and datepalm, the first being the determining force of creation in the desert scene and thus a feminine symbol, the second being the result of contact with water and a symbol of masculine virility, has been joined together with the familiar gnostic story of creation with primal man, Adam, being the first-born of all creation. But there has also been a curious conflation of associations. The words of Adam echo those of Ialdabaoth in the

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1. Cf. Apocryphon of John, translated and edited by S.Giversen. Copenhagen 1963. plate 59; page 67.

Ophite system<sup>1</sup>, his inability to raise himself from the ground is reminiscent of the struggles of the earthly Adam in the account of Saturninus' teaching given by Irenaeus<sup>2</sup>, and the heavenly Adam's reception of the soul in the Apocryphon of John is also met with a sneeze like that of Adam in this Mandaean text. Throughout this section, then, Gnostic influence on a more primitive and earlier Mandaeanism seems to be demonstrated.

The Alma Risaia Zuta does not describe the act of primal creation but the debate in heaven about the nature and necessity of the help given to the "Nasoraean and priests" in order to facilitate their ascent to the upper world. Mara d Rabutha<sup>3</sup> (Lord of Greatness) wishes to take some of the radiance from the treasure chest which the uthras guard. They do not want him to "take away this kingliness" but he asks them why it should be refused. If it is not used in this way it will have been created to no avail. "The strength of those chosen ones whom I prepared and destined to come into the world of the Second (Life) (fits them) to mount upwards, towards us. Yet, should we not give them our help and not raise them up a mountain, the mountain of Darkness will engulf them. Unless we give the Nasoraean and priests this upbuilding, this (Ginza),

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1. See Irenaeus. Adversus Haereses. I.24.

2. See Irenaeus. Adversus Haereses. I 30.

3. Drower notes on p.ix. n1 that the name Mar d Rabuta occurs also in the Genesis Apocryphon found at Qumran, translated by N. Avigad and Y. Yadin. Magnes Press, Jerusalem. A "Father of Greatness" also features in the Coptic Manichaean texts.

how can they rise towards us?" He goes on to tell the uthras that an intermediate world exists in which there are those who need the help from above and that "we cannot allow the soul to be sent back into gloomy darkness." Consequently, "in the treasure (Ginza) I will give them, (the means exists) to overthrow the Seven and the Twelve and their mother, in prayer which will divide them from them and (sever) light from darkness. And we will take up a good soul by showing it the road by which our chosen can ascend."

Here the emphasis is not on the origin of the soul but on its need to be brought to the upper world and out of the clutches of the powers of evil. The heavenly origin of the soul, so clearly emphasised in other parts of the Mandaean writings, is almost denied by implication in the statement that the soul cannot be allowed to "be sent back" into gloomy darkness, as if it had never known anything of the realms of light.

Alf Trisar Suialia.<sup>1</sup>

This text is, like the Ginza and John Book, a collection of originally independent tractates, the title being taken from the first section. The scroll is consulted on matters of ritual, the gravity of uncleanness being demonstrated by the statements that those who are ritually unclean at death and remain so because of

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1. Alf Trisar Suialia. translated as "The Thousand and Twelve Questions" by E.S.Drower. Akademie Verlag. Berlin 1960. For a summary of the contents see Drower in J.R.A.S. 1941. pp101-126.

negligence on the part of the living relatives "will wander in clouds of darkness and sleep in their place (i.e. will not ascend to the place of light)." The Alf Trisar Suialia was composed in order to provide a series of instructions to deal with "all the mistakes which priests commit." A mistake is cited and the resultant punishment to the priest and whoever else is involved in the ceremony, then the method of remedying the defect, e.g. if a mistake is made in the masigta ceremony "a deafness will form itself in the priest's right ear and in that of the soul (for whom the masigta is being celebrated)." The result of a second mistake is that "the right eye of the priest and the left eye of the soul will have incurred injury thereby and that priest is polluted."

The second tractate is known as the Tafsir Paghra. This contains still different creation stories to those seen elsewhere. The figure of Ptahil is dominant. Here he is described as "he who openeth the mouth of the womb and receiveth seed into the earth." This association of the name with the verb 'pth' is argument for the understanding of the name as "the god who opens (the womb)" and for seeing in Ptahil the creative aspect of the Life.<sup>1</sup> There is no substantial evidence that the Mandaeans thought of Ptahil as essentially evil, though he is made responsible for the existence of evil, and it seems reasonable to see in the name Ptahil an original description of the Life in his creative role rather than

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1. Ptahil - The Aramaic origin of the name, from  $\text{ܡܬܗܝܠ}$ , was first suggested by Norberg. The Egyptian origin, from Ptah plus El, was suggested by Lidzbarski.

the name of a demiurge - though one cannot deny that in some texts Ptahil has become the name of a lower creator god (often where Ptahil is equated with Bhaq).<sup>1</sup> This secondary use of the name has been emphasised by several scholars who have tried to link the Mandaeans with Egypt but with no real success. Lidzbarski was the first to suggest a connection between the Mandaean god and Ptah, and both Reitzenstein and Festugière are cited by Drower<sup>2</sup> as mentioning an Hermetic community whose founder was an Egyptian priest who combined the doctrine of the creation of the world by Ptah with an oriental revelation about the enslavement and redemption of man. Jonas, too, thinks "that the name of the demiurge was taken over from the Egyptian pantheon is doubtless connected with the symbolic role of Egypt as the representative of the material world."<sup>3</sup> However, the fact that the name is most readily comprehensible primarily as a description of the Life and is used only secondarily as the name of a subordinate deity precludes the necessity to associate it with outside influences in order to arrive at the root meaning of the word.

A description of Adam as the sky and Eve as the body reflects the idea, commonly held in primitive religions, that creation was first effected through rain falling on the earth.

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1. Cf. W.Brandt. "Die mandäische Religion." Leipzig 1889. pp34-39. Section 1B. "Die Weltschöpfung."

2. E.S.Drower. "The Secret Adam : A Study in Nasoraean Gnosis." p37-38.

3. H.Jonas. "The Gnostic Religion." Boston 1958. Ch.3.

Creation from a cosmic egg is also mentioned in this section. "...the white and the yellow of an egg (are) the Father and the Mother, they are the spirit and the soul, and the shell is their (outward) covering, it is their body ; similarly, it is the whole earth." <sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of the journey of the soul back to the heavenly home is distinguished in this section from the rest of Mandaean literature by not having any apparent knowledge of the doctrine of the mataratas, but instead "the gate of mercies which is in the centre of Msunia Kusta" is mentioned.

The third tractate is a fairly long description of what is to be done if errors in ritual are committed either by a priest, the novices in training under his supervision, or relatives of both. Baptism is emphasised as a protection against sinning and, by extension, as sin is the result of seduction by the powers of darkness, from Ruha and the planets.

A description of what happens to the soul if various ritual acts are not enacted at death follows, e.g. if a person dies without having dressed in the rasta.

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1. In Hinduism "the evolution of religious thought led to the conception of a creator or originator of the universe, distinct from, and inferior to, the Vedic gods. In the cosmogonic hymns he appears sometimes as Prajapati (lord of creation), sometimes as Hiranyagarbha (golden egg) and sometimes as Purusha (man, cf. the conception of Adam)." G.T.Manley & A.S.Neech. "The World's Religions." 3rd. edition. London 1963. (General editor J.N.D. Anderson).

The fourth section of the collection is entitled "The agreed form of the Masiqta of Sital, of the Dabahata and of the Dukrania." It describes the ritual associated with the belief that the period spent by the soul between leaving the body and attaining its home is like the nine months of gestation. Each month is represented in the ritual by a fatira - a piece of unsalted and unleavened bread. The tenth fatira symbolises the actual emergence of the soul from the womb of the Mother into the world of the Father, i.e. from the earthly world into the spiritual dwelling.

The extent of the importance of ritual for the Mandaeans is indicated after the enumeration of the central rites - coronation, marriage, baptism, masiqta, rahmia, ngirta, dukrania. "Over any man who hath perfected himself in these seven the planets have no dominion, nor are they permitted to overlook him. Amongst uthras he is peerless." Ritual is of equal, if not greater, importance than belief to the Mandaean.<sup>1</sup>

As with the other collections in the Mandaean canon the dating of the material can never be more than tentative. Clues are only apparent. G.R.S.Mead, for instance, saw in the mention of the silk moth an apparent clue to the terminus a quo of the writing.<sup>2</sup> There is a legend that monks smuggled silk moth eggs from China to the west in the sixth century AD. This might have been used to indic-

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1. Cf. the Gospel of Philip. "Perfection" is achieved through ritual here also.

2. ATS. pl89. "For the speech of the worm is of silk, whereas the the speech of the soul is prayer and praise."

ate that the writing of the material could not have taken place before the sixth century if there had not been mentioned in Ezekiel 16.13 the fact that silk was worn in Israel in the sixth century BC. Any attempt at dating on such slight evidence is futile.

The Canonical Prayer Book of the Mandaeans.<sup>1</sup>

The Canonical Prayer Book of the Mandaeans as presented and translated by E.S.Drower contains the full liturgy as used by the Mandaean priests. Lidzbarski's "Mandäische Liturgien", published in Berlin in 1920, is only about one third as long and important sections such as the Blessed Oblation Prayers and Coronation Prayers are missing. Most of this collection belongs to the secret section of Mandaean literature. The myths and legends of the Ginza and other open literature are alluded to only and the emphasis is on the ascent of the soul in general rather than its manner of descent.

In general terms, the open literature may be said to be "creation-centred" while the secret literature is "redemption-centred".

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1. "The Canonical Prayer Book of the Mandaeans." translated and arranged by E.S.Drower. Leiden 1959.

## CHAPTER THREE.

The root of all Gnostic speculations is the belief that the soul is alien to this world, a spark of divinity trapped in the tomb of the body until such time as its return to its original home can be effected. How the soul became thus placed and the means by which it can escape its bondage are the essence of gnosis. As Clement summarises it in his *Excerpta ex Theodoto* (no.78.2) gnosis is "...the knowledge of who we were, what we have become, where we were, into what we have been cast, whither we hasten...." Ideas on creation and redemption are thus inextricably linked in gnostic thought.

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1. Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria. Edited and translated by R.P.Casey. London 1934. Text p88, translation p89, notes p158.

There are several accounts of creation ascribed to the different groups of Gnostics remarked upon by the early Church Fathers, but three things are common to all these systems :-

1. belief in a creator who is not the Almighty God,
2. belief in the merciful nature of the Almighty God,
3. belief that, owing to the oppressive nature of the creator spirit(s), man cannot effect his own salvation without some sort of help from the Almighty God - it is how this help is to be effected which, in general, leads to the emergence of differences among the systems.

There are further differences between these 'classical' Gnostic systems as described by Irenaeus and Hippolytus and the Mandaean system as revealed in their substantial corpus of texts. For the Mandaean literature reveals not only a Gnostic layer of tradition but also an originally independent, pre-Gnostic layer<sup>1</sup>, and, rather than being an example of the most recent type of Gnostic sect as bar Khonai thought, Mandaeism is, in fact, an example of an early non-Gnostic sect which has been influenced at a subsequent stage in its development by an established and originally alien Gnostic system.

Among the several accounts of creation in their literature

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1. Cf. K. Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." Vol. I p27. He thinks we can speak "von einem 'prämandäischen' oder 'urmandäischen' Stadium" on the basis of an examination of the Hymns in the Ginza and Liturgy.

the account which shows least dependence on external ideas is the description of the creation of the Life itself from the heavenly water which emerges from the primal fruit or egg. In the Alf Trisar Suialia<sup>1</sup> we are given the following description by the Life of his own origin :

"Praised is that first great Jordan, for the Jordan was my father, (and) because all worlds, upper, central and lower, came forth from that Jordan."

Here 'Jordan' (yardna) is used in its radical sense as 'water' and not as the name of the Palestinian river. The fact that all worlds are said to have come from the heavenly yardna reinforces the idea that Mandaeism was originally a water cult based on primitive ideas on fertility, creation and survival.<sup>2</sup> No value judgments are passed on the three worlds and no distinction as to their essential nature is made. This indicates that the attitude to the world is not yet pessimistic and is most probably pre-Gnostic. In fact, it may be argued that failure to comment indicates the existence of an under-lying tolerance - if not whole-hearted acceptance - of the human state and its position in the world, and if this interpretation is correct this earlier attitude helps to explain the paradoxical Mandaean acceptance of marriage and child-bearing as religious duties while the influence of Gnosticism led them to come to see the world as a temporary prison for the soul.

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1. ATS. plll. Cf. Ginza 239-240.

2. In ATS p206 we are told that "the water of his phial is semen and the wine (hamra) is the mystery of the Womb of the Mother." See also E.S.Drower. "The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran." pl00. and E.R.Goodenough. "Jewish Symbols in the Graeco-Roman World." Vol.VII.

This earlier creation narrative has been largely superseded, however, by a series of narratives some of which reflect details found in the so-called 'classical' Gnostic systems and occasionally the Nag Hammadi texts. The supposed confusion in the Mandaean texts is, therefore, more correctly seen as the reflection of several stages of outside influence on the Mandaean traditions. While it has been customary to claim that the Mandaean tradition is confused theologically and all the emphasis has been placed on ritual, this is not wholly accurate. For such ostensibly confused strata really reflect the successive waves of influence on the Mandaeans which have been unsystematically joined together by the group.<sup>2</sup>

It is true to say that in the earlier cosmogony of the Mandaeans there was no emphasis on individual aspects of creation while the later creation narratives show an undisguised interest in the creation of the world and man in particular, as well as the world of the Life and his 'companions'.

Before the creation of the lower elements including mankind, we are told "die Uthras, Engel, Boten, Erscheinungen, Gestalten,

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1. E.S.Drower remarks that "The Mandaean or Nasoraean religion is a system with no definite theology." "Mandaean Polemic." B.S.A.O.S. 25. 1962. pp438-448. This is a distortion, for Mandaeanism reflects rather a series of theologies.

2. It is the present writer's opinion that the analysis of the several strands in the Mandaean literature, and especially in the composite books like the Ginza, could reveal much about the spread of Gnosticism in the East as well as the development of Mandaeanism.

Erden, Skinas, Burgen, Gebaude, Jordane, und Bäume, sowie der Glanz, der auf ihnen ruht, wurden vom Lichtkönig geschaffen."<sup>1</sup>

The King of Light is the first principle of Life - in contra-distinction to the earlier narratives<sup>2</sup> - we are told that "Er hat keinen Vater, der älter wäre als er, keinen Erstgeborenen, der vor ihm gewesen wäre."<sup>3</sup> He is the embodiment of both male and female elements, the First, Great Life who is both father and mother.<sup>4</sup>

From among the numerous 'companion' uthras one is chosen for the task of creating the earth and its first inhabitants.

"Gabriel, der Gesandte, kam, hob den Himmel hoch und spannte ihn aus, dichtete die Erde Tibil und gründete sie fest (und die ganze Welt durch die Kraft des hohen Lichtkönigs). Adam der Mann und Hawwa sein Weib wurden gebildet, und die Seele fiel in den Körper. Als die Seele in den Körper gefallen war, begriffen und verstanden sie jegliches Ding."<sup>5</sup>

It is obvious that Gnostic influence is not very marked at this stage. There is no statement about the nature of the body - whether it is evil or not<sup>6</sup> - and it is probably safe to say that the body is actually seen as the god-given receptacle of the soul (which 'fell' and was not 'thrown' into the body as is related in later accounts). The soul itself is viewed as the source of understanding and comprehension. There is no indication that at this stage the

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1. Ginza 13.7ff.

2. Cf. the earlier narrative and comments on p 75, 81.

3. Ginza 9.29.

4. ATS. p112.

5. Ginza 15.21-26. The influence of Genesis is mediated via Gnosticism proper to the Mandaeans and is seen in all those accounts which reflect Gnostic influence.

6. The ignorance rather than the evil nature of the body is pointed out, hence the comment about the enlightenment through the coming of the soul into the body.

Mandaeans thought of the soul as an actual part of the godhead, rather it seems to have been seen as a gift, from but not 'of' the creator. The passage ends with ethical and cultic instructions and guidance being given to Adam as representative of the Mandaeans.

The account of creation found in the second tractate of the Ginza has been regarded as a parallel passage to the account in the first. However, there are too many small but significant alterations to make this comment accurate. It seems more likely that it is a variant of the very long description in the third tractate.

According to the Ginza 14.26 Hibil-Ziwa and Gabriel are one and the same uthra. It is as Hibil-Ziwa that the agent of creation is known in tractate two. He is instructed by the 'high king of light' to go to the world of darkness which is full of evil. The darkness itself is seen as evil, for the powers who later inhabit the realm of darkness have not yet been created. The creation of these "angels of fire" together with the planets, the earth, and finally Adam and Eve is ordained. Ptahil is introduced without any explanation, the logical inference being that the name describes the function of Hibil-Ziwa in this particular situation.<sup>1</sup>

What on first sight appears to be a parallel passage describing the creation of the cosmos and the first human pair is then recounted.

"Ptahil kam, hob den Himmel des Wassers in die Höhe, spannte das Firmament aus, und die Erde Tibil wurde gedichtet....

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1. For a full discussion of the meaning and significance of this name/title see p79-80, 99-101.

Adam und Hawwa wurden gebildet; durch die Kraft des hohen Lichtkönigs fiel die Seele in Adam und Hawwa. Als die Seele in sie fiel, waren sie im Paradiese. Als sie im Paradiese waren, begriffen und verstanden sie nichts."<sup>1</sup>

Here the soul is described as being in the body because of the will of the high king of light. Also the idea of Paradise is introduced with radical alteration to the doctrine of the soul as found in the earlier passage. Here the fact that the soul is the vehicle of comprehension and understanding is set aside while Adam and Hawwa are in Paradise.

This leads to the view that in this passage we have an underlying doctrine of the 'Fall' of the first human pair which results in their expulsion from Paradise and only then does the soul become capable of comprehending gnosis.<sup>2</sup> It is not the 'Fall' of Adam and Hawwa that is related though. Instead we are told that the Evil One, "Als er sich nicht nach dem Worte seines Herrn richtete, wurde er in seinem Wagen mit Gottes Fessel gefesselt."<sup>3</sup> As in the first tractate Hibil-Ziwa/Gabriel is instructed to teach Adam and Hawwa about the kingdom above. An ethical code is described even though the world is, by contrast with the world above, only transitory and not everlasting. A heavenly messenger comes to Adam and Hawwa and instructs them about the cult and general attitudes of charity and kindness.

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1. Ginza 34.1-2,10-13. As before the Genesis story is reflected.
  2. This presumably reflects the state of Adam and Eve before they ate of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil.
  3. Ginza 34.18-20.

This type of descent on the part of the heavenly being must be carefully distinguished from other descriptions of journeys to a sphere different from the Kingdom of Light undertaken by so-called redeemer figures. A clear distinction must be made between accounts describing the bringing of ethical instructions to the earth and other, more prominent accounts of the descent into the lower regions of evil and darkness by Manda d Haiia/Hibil-Ziwa. The two types of descent are distinguished not only in space but also in time. The descent to the earth is described as happening after the creation of the cosmos and man, and teaching is brought by the same heavenly uthra who was the agent of creation. On the other hand, the descent to the regions of darkness is portrayed as occurring in the pre-cosmic period and the purpose of the descent is very different.<sup>1</sup> Creation of the cosmos is viewed in a completely different way in those accounts which connect the two types of descent. In these passages the forces of evil play a prominent role not only in the descensus ad inferos but also in the subsequent creation narrative, and especially in connection with the creation of Adam and Hawwa.

It is only in this more complicated account - which really combines two separate myths - that a clearly 'Gnostic' attitude is found and various details are held in common with other sects whose

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1. See further p93, 113, 215ff.

literature we only know via reports made by the early Church Fathers whose concern was not with objective narrative but polemic.<sup>1</sup>

However, we can include both types of descent as described in the Mandaean literature as examples of the journey of redemption if we adopt the categorisation of Jonas.<sup>2</sup> He believes that the "call to awaken" made by the redeemer to the soul trapped in the body is made up of three distinct parts :-

1. the reminder of the heavenly origin and transcendent history of man,
2. the promise of redemption, which also includes the redeemer's account of his mission and descent to the world,
3. the practical instructions on how to live in the world in conformity with the newly found knowledge and in preparation for the actual ascent to the heavenly home.

The descent to the earth to give ethical and cultic instructions fits into the third division while the pre-cosmic descent and subsidiary account of creation after the 'classical' Gnostic manner fits into groups one and two.

The only common characteristic of the two types of narrative as found in the Mandaean literature, however, is that in both cases the descent is that of a representative of the Good. In opposition to Rudolph<sup>3</sup> who equates the world of darkness with the earth, the

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1. Cf. W. Schmithals. "Die Gnosis in Korinth : Ein Untersuchung zu den Korintherbriefen." Göttingen. 1956. p82ff.

2. H. Jonas. "The Gnostic Religion." Boston. 1958. p81.

3. K. Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." Vol. I. p103 n.1.

distinction between the pre-cosmic and cosmic descent seems to the present writer to militate against this equation - though it is recognized that the earth (and occasionally the body) came to be described in terms originally applied to the world of the powers of darkness and evil. Even the type of descent is dissimilar: in the case of the descent to the earth it is to a god-created earth and the aim is to bring instructions to the first human pair; in the case of the descensus ad inferos, though, the descent is firstly to the realms of evil in order to prevent an unspecified catastrophe and only secondarily to deliver knowledge and comfort to the inhabitants of a world created at least in part by the powers of evil.<sup>1</sup>

The figure of the redeemer in Mandaeism is not, therefore, a straightforward concept. What significance it held for the Mandaeans themselves seems to have depended on the stage which had been reached in their religious development. Yet several scholars have tried to maintain the position that the idea of the redeemer in Mandaeism - which we have seen to be a variable rather than a constant idea - is not only normative for the rest of the Gnostic sects in general, but also that it provided the "key to the origin and development of the concept of redemption as it found expression in nascent Christianity and in Hellenistic syncretism."<sup>2</sup>

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1. See further p 215ff.

2. C.H.Kraeling. "The Origin and Antiquity of the Mandaeans." J.A.O.S. 49. 1929. pp195-218.

One reason why Mandaeism is sometimes considered as a contributory factor in the development of the Christian concept of the redeemer is undoubtedly "the presence in Mandaic thought of so much that is primitive and the lack of it in so many other gnostic faiths, (which) shows that in the Mandaic theology we are not dealing, as bar Khonai thought, with one of the later stages of the gnostic movement, but with a religion that wells up directly and spontaneously out of the subsoil of the oriental religious genius, and may well belong to the very beginning of the gnostic era."<sup>1</sup> But this subsoil is, as we have seen, non-Gnostic and whether it is pre-Gnostic or otherwise is of subsidiary importance only. Mandaeism was affected and altered by contact with the 'classical' Gnostic sects - this is the only possible explanation of the various conflicting and confused strata to be found in the Mandaean literature, for it is only when the faith was changed gradually from its original basis in water veneration - water being seen as the great symbol of fertility and prosperity - into a hybrid combination of a fertility cult which simultaneously tried to maintain a doctrine of alienation from an evil world, that the confusion arises. The claim of scholars like Bultmann<sup>2</sup> that the Christian concept of the redeemer is based on a Gnostic (here Bultmann uses 'Gnostic' and 'Mandaean' as synonyms) prototype cannot, therefore,

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1. C.H.Kraeling. J.A.O.S. 49. 1929. pp195-218.

2. R.Bultmann. Z.N.T.W. 24. 1925. pp100-146. Cf. C.H.Dodd's criticisms in "The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel".

be allowed to stand. If the correct distinction between the Gnostic sects as described by the Church Fathers and in the Nag Hammadi texts and Mandaeism is made, then the issue may legitimately be raised. But that is not the issue of this thesis.

As far as the writer can see, Mandaeism was originally a Babylonian fertility cult with links with Zoroastrianism which was influenced by 'classical' Gnosticism in the second century and later. The idea of the redeemer's descent into the lower world of evil in Mandaeism is the product of Babylonian ideas to which Gnostic concepts have been added especially in connection with the myth of creation. That Babylonian ideas may have influenced Christianity is possible but this does not mean that Mandaeism was the responsible agent. That the Gnostic groups were influenced by Babylonian ideas is certain but this does not mean that Mandaeism can be seen as normative for these groups, or for Gnosticism generally.

The most important Mandaean texts at this stage in the argument are to be found in the Right Ginza. Book three is of special importance. Here an account of the descent of the redeemer to the lower regions of darkness is given together with that of his position in creation which takes place as a result of his initial descent.

Three unnamed uthras plan to create a world for themselves and their father. This is opposed by some of the other uthras who request Manda d Hailia : "Steige fr̄ther zur Welt hinab, bevor die Uthras dahingehen und etwas tun, das f̄r uns h̄sslich und unsch̄n dem Leben nicht recht und dir, Manda d Haije, nicht lieb ist."

(Ginza 68.7-9). As a result of this Manda d Haiia prepares for a journey into the lower world - not the earth but the demonic realm, the home of the uthras who have turned away from the "sweetness" to the "bitterness".<sup>1</sup> He is ensured of the necessary help - "Wir sind bei dir, denn das Leben ist der Güte zu dir voll. Es schuf dir Helfer, es schuf dir sanfte und gefestigte Uthras, sanfte und gefestigte Uthras, damit sie dir Helfer seien."<sup>2</sup> Then, as with the hero in both the Enuma elish and the "Hymn of the Pearl", he is given "ein weites Gewand, wundersam und endlos."<sup>3</sup> Before the uthras can get there, Manda d Haiia arrives in the world of darkness. He first encounters Hewath/Ruha who is described at length in the text. She speaks with the King of Darkness who announces that there is no one to rival him in power and position. This motif is very common in Gnostic texts, it is also applied to several figures. The claim to preeminence is found on the lips of Ialdabaoth in the Θphite gnosis, Ialdabaoth/Saclas in the Apocryphon of John, and the pre-cosmic Adam in the Mandaean Alma Risaia Rba. It is generally agreed that such claims originated with the God of the Old Testament - Deuteronomy 5.9 ; Exodus 20.3 - but there is no means of determining the manner or time of connection, whether it was direct or indirect, or from a parallel though independent tradition, i.e. from an unorthodox tradition like that of the Samaritians which ran along-

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1. Ginza 69.14-17.
  2. Ginza 68.20-22.
  3. Ginza 68.28-29.

side that of orthodox Judaism.<sup>1</sup>

As in the other versions where this idea is found, Ur, the king of the lower region, is reprimanded by Ruha who here parallels Sophia in the Ophite gnosis, Sophia the Mother in the Epocryphon of John, and the unpersonified wisdom or insight of Adam himself in the Mandaean text.<sup>2</sup> She tells him that there is a world equal to his and creatures as powerful as himself. Ruha is here called by the name Namrus and this, together with the duplication of the name Manda d Haiia by Kbar-Ziwa, suggests that there were two originally separate versions which have been conflated at some time even before the collecting together of the various tractates in the eighth century.

When he hears this, Ur becomes "voll böser Bitterkeit" and decides that he will ascend out of his world and take control of the earth. At this stage the author seems to have forgotten that according to the previous part of the narrative the earth had not yet been created and it is clear that an assault on the Kingdom of Light is not meant - though the reaction of Manda d Haiia, who had been listening unobserved, could have applied to such a suggestion. He appears before Ur "im Gewande des gewaltigen (Lebens)"<sup>3</sup> and

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1. Cf. Isaiah 44.8; 45.5; 46.9. The theory of the Babylonian provenance of Deutero-Isaiah may be important here. Secret ideas in Babylonian Judaism may have become known to outsiders.

2. It is noteworthy that on other occasions it is the soul which is equivalent to Sophia in 'classical' Gnosticism. Unfortunately it was not possible to pursue this further.

3. Ginza 82.36.

"zeigte ich ihm den Olivenstab lebenden Wassers,  
den mein Vater mir verliehen.  
Ich zeigte ihm den Olivenstab lebenden Wassers,  
mit dem die Rebellen niedergestreckt werden.  
Ich zeigte ihm den Kranz lebenden Feuers,  
bei dessen Anblick die Dämonen erschrecken."<sup>1</sup>

Battle ensues and Ur is forced to admit to Namrus/Ruha that

"Der Mann, der mir dies angetan,  
ist grosser als alle Welt."<sup>2</sup>

Manda d Haiia is victorious in his battle against the forces of  
evil which he enchains.

"Mit einem Reifen umgab ich ihn....  
Ich schuf und machte eine Mauer für ihn, eine eiserne Mauer,  
und umgab damit seine ganze Wohnung.  
Über die Mauer, mit der ich ihn umgab,  
setzte ich Hüter ein,  
Hüter, die auf sein Lager achtgeben sollten.  
Vierundzwanzig Tore schuf ich in ihr,  
durch die seine Welt bewacht wird."<sup>3</sup>

Ur begs for forgiveness and says that he will do anything that  
Manda d Haiia commands. In reply he is told that the cosmos is  
to be created and that

"Wenn das Firmament ausgespannt wird,  
wird sich die Glut auf dich senken."<sup>4</sup>

The creation of the world by Manda d Haiia, the "beloved son" of  
the Life, is described quite briefly and culminates in the creation  
of "a king for the world", that is Adam, into whose body he throws  
a soul.

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1. Ginza 83.1-6.
  2. Ginza 86.24-25.
  3. Ginza 87.15-23.
  4. Ginza 89.28-29.

In this section of the third tractate of the Ginza, therefore, we have what may be briefly described as the defeat of the powers of evil led by Ur and Namrus/Ruha by Manda d Haiia/Kbar-Ziwa who then proceeds to create the cosmos and Adam, to whom he gives a soul. The victorious representative of the Good is also the creator of the world and its inhabitants.

When the enchained powers of evil hear what has happened they shake the chains and hoops encircling them in a vain attempt to free themselves. Manda d Haiia, therefore, is given permission by the Great Life to erect yet another wall around them.

However, although the tractate has not ended at this stage, the myth which has been described so far suddenly stops and a new situation is assumed. This probably reflects the original seam in the tractate even before it was joined with the rest of the collection making up the "Treasury". Some attempt at conflation does appear to have been made, however.<sup>1</sup>

In the next section of the tractate the supreme deity is called the "Second". His uthras decide that they wish to create a world. Bhaq-Ziwa, who claims to be the father of the uthras<sup>2</sup>, calls Ptahil to his side, gives him the name Gabriel - this name figures as the name of the creator in the first two accounts of creation in the Ginza - and tells him: "Schaffe und mache dir eine Welt."<sup>3</sup>

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1. See Ginza 99.10-14.

2. Possibly a somewhat weaker parallel to the Ialdabaoth-type claim commented on earlier. See p76, 96-97.

3. Ginza 98.15.

But "er rüstete ihn nicht und belehrte ihn nicht."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, it is not very surprising to learn that in this account the powers of evil play a substantial part in the action.

Ruha gives birth to the Seven and Twelve. She overhears Ptahil having misgivings about creating the world - "Ich will die Welt verlassen" - and so, with her offspring, she goes to him saying :

"Wir kommen, wir wollen deine Diener sein,  
wir wollen hintreten und dir Helfer sein."<sup>2</sup>

The world is built and then Ptahil returns to the place of Light above. While he is away, Ruha and the planets decide that it would be better for the creation of Adam to be left to them "denn er gehört zu uns."<sup>3</sup> Ptahil, on his return, however, states that "Adam ist mein Sohn, der König dieser Welt."<sup>4</sup> Yet he allows them to create Adam's body "ohne dass eine Seele in ihm war."<sup>5</sup> When the planets see that Adam cannot stand upright they go to Ptahil and ask him to allow them to place some of the "spirit" which he has brought from his father's house into Adam's body. Without telling Ptahil's reply to this request the text goes on to relate how he returns to the true father of the uthras (presumably not Bhaq-Ziwa) and informs him that

"Was ich sonst geschaffen, ist gelungen,  
doch mein und dein Abbild ist nicht gelungen."<sup>6</sup>

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1. Ginza 98.21.
  2. Ginza 104.29-30.
  3. Ginza 107.25.
  4. Ginza 107.31-32.
  5. Ginza 108.5. Cf. Genesis 2.7 and Gnostic texts generally.
  6. Ginza 109.2-3.

This is the first mention of a "Spiegelungsmotiv" in this particular narrative and it is most surprising in this context for we have only recently been informed that the planets were allowed to create the body of Adam. Such an anomaly is, however, characteristic of the text at this point. We are given the curious information that Ptahil, who has already brought "von dem Geist" from his father's house, is now given the mana to place in Adam's body. And not only this, though, for the Life is next distinguished from the father of the uthras and refers to Ptahil as "the evil Ptahil" who must not be allowed to find out how the soul gets into the body. The three uthras, Hibil, Sital, and Anos are introduced as vigilants to guard against Ptahil finding out about the soul. Here the most likely explanation is that the text reflects an attempt to combine a pre-Gnostic realistic or semi-Gnostic creation narrative in which it is acknowledged that the powers of evil had a hand in creation - though restrained by the powers of good - and a more thoroughly Gnostic narrative which claimed that the physical creation was wholly the work of the powers of evil, only the soul being of good origin.

So far, then, we have seen that the Mandaean accounts of creation range over the whole spectrum, from the belief that it was wholly the work of the good god to the idea that both good and evil powers were involved, the evil being servant to the good, and finally to the idea that creation was wholly bad, the product of powers of evil.

The concept of the redeemer is likewise variable. In the earliest creation narrative, where creation is seen as wholly good, there is no redeemer doctrine. The role of man is to perform the cultic acts ordained by the Life to the best of his ability. Consequently we find passages like this one in the Alf Trisar Suialia where Sislam Rba asks his rba, Adam-Shaq :

"....I pray thee that thou wilt instruct me in such manner that I (may be able to teach) my offspring, elect righteous (men), the uthras and kings who will live in the world of Hibil-Ziwa, that is (to say) the earthly world, the abode which Hibil-Ziwa founded."<sub>1</sub>

The need for these instructions is stated as being in order to prevent "all the mistakes which priests commit."

Yet even in the same text<sup>2</sup>, we find passages where a development has occurred in the thinking about creation and the place of evil in the world of men. Manda d Haia speaks to Hibil-Ziwa about the world and its inhabitants and says :

"For I brought the physical Adam (and Eve) so that offspring might be born from them and be called to life (through them). But they will sink into darkness and the deeds of each one will hold him back, and his works will destroy him, for the Planets demand a share in the root of Adam."

But even here it is noteworthy that creation is not seen as wholly evil : the Planets have only a share in the "root of Adam".

In the parallel situation in the Ginza, that is in the account where the planets and evil powers are seen as having only a part share in the creation of the world and Adam, the concept of the

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1. ATS. p127.

2. ATS. p134.

redeemer is embodied in the description of what happens after creation has been effected. Manda d Haiia, distrustful of the evil powers swears

".....beim grossen Mysterium,  
 dass sie sich nicht an der Seele verständigigen sollten,  
 Ich verbarg mich vor den Sieben, ich bezwang mich,  
 ich nahm Körpergestalt an.  
 Ich nahm Körpergestalt an  
 und sagte mir, ich wolle die Seele nicht Ängstigen.  
 Die Seele will ich nicht Ängstigen,  
 und sie Ängstige sich nicht in ihrem Gewande.  
 Ich erschien ihr in Körpergestalt  
 und setzte mich zu ihr in Glanz.  
 Ich breitete Glanz vom grossen Mana über sie,  
 aus dem er geschaffen worden war.  
 Ich setzte mich zu Ihm und belehrte ihn über das,  
 was das Leben mir aufgetragen."<sup>1</sup>

Here we are given the first clear indication that the soul is an actual part "vom grossen Mana" and that action against the soul on the part of the planets can be interpreted as aggression against the mana or Life himself. As Jonas puts it : "In the last analysis he who comes is identical with him to whom he comes : Life the Saviour with the life to be saved. The Alien from without comes to him who is alien in the world, and the same descriptive terms can in a striking way alternate between the two."<sup>2</sup>

It is significant - in the future context of a comparison with Christian ideas on the subject - that the appearance of Manda d Haiia is portrayed as docetic, he merely assumes a bodily form for the purpose of appearing to Adam without frightening him.

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1. Ginza 112.12-25.

2. H. Jonas. op.cit. p81.

There is absolutely no question of a real incarnation.

Manda d Haia promises that "wenn sein Mass voll ist, ihn (Adam) emporhebe und in seinem Bau aufrichte...."<sup>1</sup> But when the evil planets and Ruha hear this

"sassen sie alle in Klage da.  
 Alle sassen sie in Klage da,  
 dann begannen sie (böse) Pläne zu schmieden.  
 Sie begannen Pläne zu schmieden und sprachen:  
 "Wir wollen Adam einfangen und packen.  
 Einfangen und packen wollen wir Adam  
 und ihn bei uns in der Welt zurückhalten."<sup>2</sup>

In order to defeat the plans of the evil powers Manda d Haia and his fellow uthras decide that Adam shall be given a wife and family and through this added support he "soll über sie alle triumphieren."<sup>3</sup> When Hawwa has been created and the couple established "an ihrem Orte", the planets come with costly gifts for them, but Manda d Haia and his fellow uthras "machten ihre Schlechtigkeit zunichte."<sup>4</sup> This creation/redemption narrative closes with the promise that the Life "wird sie erlösen und in die Höhe heben aus dieser Welt der Bösen."<sup>5</sup>

The redeemer figure in this section, therefore, is portrayed as the bringer of a promise of return to the soul's original home. He appears to Adam before the powers of evil have attempted to seduce him and before Hawwa has been created. She and the future

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1. Ginza 113.24-25.
  2. Ginza 113.29-35.
  3. Ginza 115.18.
  4. Ginza 117.2.
  5. Ginza 117.30-31.

family of mankind are seen, in fact, as supports for Adam and there is no suggestion at all that Hawwa/Eve was, in any way at all, responsible for the existence of evil in the world or for original sin, a concept which is completely meaningless in Gnosticism.<sup>1</sup> The promise is then repeated after an attempt has been made by the planets and Ruha to seduce Adam only but this time it is applied to both Adam, Hawwa, and the "Stamm des Lebens", that is the Mandaeans themselves.

The most important facts about this particular narrative with regard to the redeemer figure are three in number :-

1. the redeemer figure, Manda d Haia, is a messenger only,
2. the redemption is essentially the return of the soul to its original home,
3. the promise of redemption is made in cosmic time when the soul is already in the body.

There are other important narratives in the Ginza, however,

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1. The position of Hawwa in Mandaeism is different from the role of Eve both in Judaism and 'classical' Gnosticism. In Genesis, Eve is responsible for Adam's fall and expulsion from the Garden of Eden, having been created to be his help-mate. In the Apocryphon of John we have two Eves - the real one and her counterfeit. Elsewhere she seems to be a creation of the evil powers to lead Adam astray. She is generally described as being subordinate - and inferior - to Adam. In "Vita Adae" xii-xvii we find that Adam is created in the image of God to be worshipped by all the angels. Satan refuses to worship Adam and goes out and seduces and overcomes Eve instead. Again, in II (Slavonic) Enoch Adam is created as a "second angel, honourable, great, and glorious" and while the devil seduced Eve he left Adam untouched.

In Mandaeism, on the other hand, Hawwa is not seen in a bad light at all and the seduction of Adam is attempted not by Hawwa herself but by Ruha disguised as Hawwa.

which give a completely different account of redemption. They are the detailed accounts of the pre-cosmic descent of Manda d Haiia/Hibil-Ziwa<sup>1</sup> into the realms of darkness as found in tractates three and five and in precis-form in tractate four. A further source of detail is also to be found in the Diwan d Masbuta d Hibil-Ziwa.

In the Ginza tractate three we are told that Hibil-Ziwa, here described as the son of Manda d Haiia, went down into the three worlds of darkness ruled by Krun/Ur. There "dieser Uthra packt ihn, drückt ihn nieder, fesselt und bindet ihn, überliefert ihn der unteren Kupfererde, und umgibt ihn mit sieben eisernen Mauern."<sup>2</sup> While additional details are not given in the Ginza narrative we are able to supplement our information from this point by considering the account in the Diwan d Masbuta d Hibil-Ziwa.

According to this source, when Hibil-Ziwa descended into the worlds of darkness he became polluted by contact with the lower powers and was consequently unable to re-ascend to his heavenly

1. The two Mandaean redeemer figures are Manda d Haiia (Knowledge of Life) and Hibil-Ziwa (Radiant/Dazzling Hibil). However, the two are often substituted the one for the other and it is possible that essentially we are dealing with only one redeemer/godhead, the various names being actual descriptions of the various characteristics of the godhead in various situations. For example, at the end of the Diwan d Masbuta d Hibil-Ziwa (p60.), it is said: "Thus was (performed) the heavenly baptism of Manda d Haiia." Also, on p50, it is reported that "This is the voice of Hibil-Ziwa who is Manda d Haiia, who made the armies of darkness withdraw to the furthest ends of the worlds of darkness." Further, the identification of Manda d Haiia with the Life himself is made explicit in the Mandaean Prayer Book where Manda d Haiia is called "the source of Life".

2. Ginza 143.13-15.

home. So he "offered up sublime and worthy devotional prayers, and he worshipped and praised the King of Light and said : 'May there be sent for me, Hibil-Ziwa, by the mercy of the Life, a messenger from the Great Life (since) it was by your will that I went to the place of Darkness?'"

"Then said the great Primal Mana to the First Occult Drop : 'Our son mourneth in the darkness and hath not the strength to rise.<sup>1</sup> Summon his father, Manda d Haiia, in order that he may send him strength, so that he may arise and come from the darkness and be raised to our presence.'

So word came to Manda d Haiia : 'Arise, write a letter of kusta<sup>2</sup> and furnish it with a seal and send it to Hibil-Ziwa.'<sup>3</sup> However, this was insufficient to bring him from the powers of darkness and it was necessary for Manda d Haiia to read a masigta for his 'son'. Finally, Hibil-Ziwa is able to return to his home, announcing that he is "the stranger, the messenger that came from the place of darkness and vanquished the armies of all the rebels and champions of darkness."<sup>4</sup>

This last self-portrait relies on the description of the descensus ad inferos which is described in detail in part five of the Right Ginza. Here, although the tractate is not very satisfactorily arranged, the juxtaposition of only superficially parallel

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1. Cf. the Hymn of the Pearl.

2. See ngirta and kusta in the glossary.

3. Diwan d Masbuta d Hibil-Ziwa. p35.

4. Diwan d Masbuta d Hibil-Ziwa. p38.

passages and a curious ambivalence in the identity of the narrator who is sometimes Hibil-Ziwa and sometimes not, causing a certain amount of confusion, a reasonably basic picture of the journey emerges.

The aim of the journey, however, is not brought out at all clearly at the beginning of the narrative. Only later are we told that a being who will oppose the Kingdom of Light needs to be defeated before too much damage can be effected against the heavenly powers. The birth of evil appears to be inevitable as far as the Kingdom of Light is concerned.<sup>1</sup> The duty of the heavenly messengers, and especially Manda d Haiia (or Hibil-Ziwa according to the rescension) is, therefore, not to avert the emergence of evil but, rather, to render it harmless as far as possible.

The story<sup>2</sup> begins with the baptism of Hibil-Ziwa after which he is given his father's cloak and "auch ein verborgenes Mysterium" to protect him from the dangers awaiting him and the lower powers in particular. Manda d Haiia warns his son and informs him that "Generationen über Generationen wirst du da bleiben, bis wir dich vergessen. Deine Gestalt wird dort bleiben, bis wir dir die Totenmesse lesen."<sup>3</sup> His father and two brothers - a reference to Sital

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1. The birth of evil is not only inevitable, it is also the result of a rebellion within the godhead itself, see p52. For the significance of this in connection with the redemption of the soul see also p134ff. Cf. K. Rudolph. "Kosmogonie, Theogonie und Anthropogonie." p224ff.

2. Lidzbarski comments that the level of narrative here reaches a peak "die sonst in der mandäischen Literatur nicht erreicht ist." Ginza 149.13.

3. Ginza 152.33-153.2. Cf. Diwan d Masbuta d Hibil-Ziwa. p34-38.

and Anos - accompany Hibil to the boundary area between the worlds of light and darkness. Then "mit eurer, meiner Eltern, Kraft und mit der Kraft des grossen Mysteriums und der Helfer, die mich begleiten" Hibil descends into the black waters, remaining hidden from the eyes of the inhabitants through the power of the "grosse Mysterium."

The first realm of darkness to which they come is that of Zartai and Zartanai. Soon, however, they progress to the domain of Hag and Mag, the most powerful wizards in the underworld. Gaf and Gafan, two giants, are the rulers of the third realm of darkness and it is while in their mysterious abode that Hibil's mysterious helper suggests that they proceed to the world of Anatan and Qin who are described in such a manner as to suggest that they are Ur and Ruha of the other, earlier account. Before this, however, they first encounter Sdum, one of the several rulers of the world of darkness. Hibil assumes a beautiful and dazzling form and approaches Sdum who at first does not see him because of the brilliant aura surrounding him. Finally, though, he asks him to speak and Hibil tells him that one of his sons will rise up against him. But Sdum does not believe this and replies that he knows nothing about such a matter. The same negative response is given to the information that this same son will "gegen die Lichtwelten Kämpfen."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ginza 156.35.

Next Hibil travels to the world of Krun "der grosse ~~Fleisch-~~berge" and tells him that "Ein Sohn, der von euch, eurer Wurzel, eurem Stamme und eurer Begattung hervorgeht, will Aufruhr in die Lichtwelten gegen uns werfen."<sup>1</sup> On being asked what he thought in reply to this information Krun tells Hibil to go away otherwise he will swallow him. By a happy coincidence Hibil happens to be sitting in a box full of swords, sabres, steel spears, knives and assorted blades. When he replies to Krun with the challenge to swallow him, therefore, he knows he will be safe. Krun, on the other hand, attempts to swallow Hibil and is forced to vomit him back and spit him out.<sup>2</sup> After this demonstration of his invulnerability it is easy for Hibil to obtain a passport from Krun. With this pass Hibil will be able to travel unmolested through the lower regions. Krun also gives him a precious seal-ring which Hibil hides in the folds of his seven cloaks along with the pass.

An opportunity is soon found for using the pass as Hibil again passes through the world of Sdum. This incident seems to have been inserted either to demonstrate the efficacy of the pass - Sdum is so impressed that he even exclaims "Gesegnet sei der Tag, an dem du gekommen bist"<sup>3</sup> - or else the previous Sdum episode has been placed out of its correct sequence.

Next Hibil travels to the world of Anatan and Qin. When he

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1. Ginza 157.17-19.

2. Cf. Hades in the Acts of Pilate XX. A translation is available in E.Hennecke's "New Testament Apocrypha" ET R.McL.Wilson. London 1963. Vol.I. p473.

3. Ginza 158.10-11.

finally arrives there, Hibil assumes the form of Anatan and goes to speak with Qin.<sup>1</sup> He asks her to show him "woraus wir entstanden, woraus wir geformt und entstanden sind."<sup>2</sup> Thinking that she is speaking with her husband Qin takes him and shows him the black waters from which they came and lying in the waters is the gimra umrara which the great mysterious helper tells Hibil is the strength of the world of darkness. On being told this, Hibil makes Qin's eyes blind and her ears deaf and steals the gimra umrara. Hibil then abandons Qin and her realm, making certain that the door of her world is securely locked behind him. He ensures that he will not be pursued by reciting three magic names over the locks which no-one from the worlds of darkness can render void.

The main reason why this particular narrative can be included under the heading "Journeys of Redemption" hinges on the stealing, by the heavenly adversary of the powers of darkness, of the gimra umrara.<sup>3</sup> The whiteness of the gimra and several references to it

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1. Cf. Ginza 129 where Ruha assumes the form of Hawwa in which to speak with Adam and the  $\epsilon\pi\iota\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$  of Light in the Apocryphon of John plate 68, line 17ff. edited and translated by S. Giversen. Copenhagen 1963. page 85ff in his edition.

2. Ginza 158.18-19. Cf. Excerpta ex Theodoto quoted on p84.

3. Cf. the Hymn of the Pearl. See also E. Percy. "Untersuchungen über den Ursprung der johanneischen Theologie: Der Ursprung des Gnosticismus." pp287-299. His views are described by R.P. Martin in "Carmen Christi" pl26. Percy is reported as stating that the Mandaeen writings either speak of a redeemer who descends from the heavens and appears in human history, thus showing Christian influence upon their thought, or else they speak of a descent of a divine son and no doctrine of redemption is mentioned. This means, according to Percy, that where there is any notion of redemption in the Mandaean texts it is a Christian importation.

in various contexts indicate that it is often used as a synonym for a pearl, which in turn is a synonym for the soul or mana.<sup>1</sup> For example, on page eleven of the Mandaean Canonical Prayer Book we find the following description of the soul : "I am a perfected gem : into the midst of worlds and ages I am cast down." Here the word translated as "gem" is, in the original Mandaic, the word gimra. The fact that in the Prayer Book context the soul has been cast into the world and in the Ginza the gimra is stolen from the regions of darkness is of little significance for the Mandaeans have included in their text the interesting admission by Krun, after his encounter with Hibil, that "Ihr seid Recken, wir sind Schwächlinge, ihr seid Götter, wir sind Menschen, ihr seid Grosse, wir sind Kleine."<sup>2</sup> The distinction between the world of man and the regions of darkness is a relative one only.

In an allusion to the Ginza account of the stealing of the gimra umrara in the Alf Trisar Suialia<sup>3</sup>, however, an extension of meaning is found. Here we are told that they (the gimra umrara) are the "egg", the embodiment of that creative energy which empowers the creatures of darkness.<sup>4</sup> And the rather complex narrative goes on to relate that "she, his (i.e. Ur's) mother, Ruha by name, was the Egg which Hibil-Ziwa took by stealth from the place where the

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1. In general Gnostic symbolism the pearl is trapped in the sea; i.e. the soul is trapped in the body/earth, the world of matter and darkness. The equation of the world of matter with that of darkness is not to be assumed at all times in Mandaicism, however.

2. Ginza 157.27-29.

3. ATS. p183.

4. Cf. p81.

great Qin.....laid it. (yea), he took it, placed it upon his head, brought it and buried it in the world of Lacking.<sup>1</sup> For the might of darkness was lacking from the (very) day on which the Egg departed from their midst ; its name was gimra umrara, for within it was Dragon-seed that moved and floundered about in that well of black water. Thus the Well of Lacking is the Well of the Womb..<sup>1</sup> Later in the same text (p185) the egg/Ruha/gimra umrara is described as "the mother of all mysteries and that there is nothing more venerable than its form."

The meaning of this passage is that the gimra umrara was removed from the place of darkness and given into the womb - and thence into the body - and that whereas previously it had been the motive power of the forces of evil, it has become the motive power within man. Two interpretations are now open to us : either the soul is seen here as basically evil and has been "converted" into a more useful entity, or else it originally belonged to the world of light - hence the bother to extract it from its evil surroundings - and the world of darkness evolved from the world of light. As we have seen elsewhere, this latter idea is in line with the other indications that the evil came into existence through a revolt within the pleroma of the godhead, what Jonas calls "a tragic split within the Deity and the concept of the fallen god."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Cf. the prominence of 'deficiency' in Gnostic texts generally, e.g. ὕστερημα .

2. H. Jonas. "The Bible and Modern Scholarship" edited by J.P. Hyatt. p279-293.

The association of the gimra umrara with Ruha in particular is a difficulty which is increased by consideration of a reference in the Ginza to Ur. In a second, slightly different account of the descent to the lower regions which follows immediately after the account just described, an account of the birth of Ur is included. Here it is related that "Alsdann bekam Ruha die Wehen und sollte Ur den Herrn der Finsternis, gebären. Als sie ihn gebar, sah ich ihn, und er glich einem kleinen Gimra. Ich sah ihn."<sup>1</sup>

The true significance of this is uncertain and it is possible that the original emphasis was moral, the fact emphasised being that Ur, the personification of evil, was like the gimra and that evil often had/has a pleasant aspect -- but it is not essentially pleasant in itself. The lesson which might, therefore, be inferred from this particular piece of the text is that appearance and reality are not always synonymous.

In a consideration of the meaning of gimra attention must also be paid to the almost inseparable umrara. According to Drower-Macuch<sup>2</sup> the word means 'bitterness', 'grief', 'affliction', 'poison', 'venom' when occurring alone. In connection with gimra it is "completely obscure". Consultation of other dictionaries of cognate languages produced an assortment of suggestions.<sup>3</sup> In the Targum

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1. Ginza 167.31-33.

2. Drower-Macuch. "A Mandaic Dictionary." Oxford 1963.

3. Levy. Chaldisches Wörterbuch. Leipzig 1867. Gesenius. Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch. Berlin/Göttingen/Heidelberg 1962. Schulthess. Syro-Palestinian Lexicon. Berlin 1903. Jastrow. Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature. New York (etc.) 1926. Brown, Driver & Briggs. A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament. Oxford 1906.

Onkelos the root gmr has the association of trouble and cursing, and the noun means 'bitter herb'. In Assyrian the same root means 'to finish or complete'. According to both Levy and Schulthess it can mean 'coal', and Jastrow thinks the noun form means 'tradition or perfection'. The associations pertaining to this word, therefore, have to do with the blackness (of coal), bitterness, and perfection - in the sense of completion, i.e. inability to develop further.

The phrase gimra umrara, therefore, combines the ideas of whiteness and blackness, sweetness (by association) and bitterness, and pearl-like and coal-like qualities. The gimra umrara can be said to represent 'totality', the sweetness and the bitterness of experience in life.<sup>1</sup> Without the gimra umrara both man and the powers of the kingdom of light are, of necessity, incomplete; to rob the powers of darkness of them is to do them a grave injury. The stealing of the gimra umrara is, in actual fact, therefore, the redemption of the essential motive forces for both the powers of light and their creation, namely man.

It is significant though that in the narrative this act of redemption takes place before the soul/gimra has been thrown into Adam's body. Redemption is pre-cosmic and involves the salvation of an integral part of the godhead. In this sense we have here the doctrine of the *erlöst erlöser*, the *salvator salvandus*.

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1. That the Mandaeans themselves do not always think of the gimra as an objective reality but as something abstract - even metaphysical - is seen at Ginza 271.24 where kusta is described as "a perfected, selected gimra."

A narrative which combines the pre-cosmic and the cosmic aspects of redemption follows on immediately after the somewhat abrupt ending of the last story. Here, in what at times amounts to a duplicate recension of the previous myth, Hibil-Ziwa is given the name Jawar. Again he assumes a different form in which to appear to Qin but this time it is one of such dazzling magnificence that Qin falls in love with him. She arranges for him to marry the most beautiful of her many daughters, Zahrel, who alone is as beautiful as he. Unlike the prince in the Hymn of the Pearl<sup>1</sup>, Hibil-Ziwa/Jawar does not eat any of the food or drink offered to him in the lower kingdom though he allows them to think otherwise.

After the wedding night - the wedding is not consummated<sup>2</sup>, so that there is no pollution of Hibil-Ziwa by contact with his spouse- Hibil-Ziwa asks Qin to show him the ultimate source of the powers of evil. "In jener Quelle lag ein Spiegel, in dem sie ihr Antlitz schauten und danach wussten, was sie tun sollten."<sup>3</sup> Hibil hides the mirror<sup>4</sup> from Qin's sight and takes it and hides it. Qin searches for the mirror which she knows ought to be there but does not tell Hibil what she is looking for. Then they return to the others and

1. The Hymn of the Pearl lines 32-36. A full translation is available in Grant's "Gnosticism: an anthology". London 1961., also Hennecke's "New Testament Apocrypha" Vol.II. Cf. the Acts of Thomas.
2. Cf. the Acts of Thomas where Thomas neither eats nor consummates his marriage. See "New Testament Apocrypha" Vol.II. p444ff.
3. Ginza 161.40-41.
4. In the ATS p113, the knowledge that is imparted in the scroll is said to be revealed and explained "in this polished mirror."



Hibil receives a joyous reception during which he is baptised. His father Manda d Haia performs the ceremony. There is no mention of the stolen mirror. He then returns to speak with Ruha to whom he appears in the shape of her brother, Gaf, as before, and, keeping up the original pretence, tells her that her parents have said that she must return to her own world.

For the second time Hibil returns to his proper home and yet again he leaves to speak with Ruha. She asks him how long she must remain pregnant and Hibil tells her that she will remain so for seventeen thousand myriad years and eleven days and then Ur will be born. This seems to indicate that, although the emergence of evil was inevitable, the birth of their most active opponent could at least be regulated by the powers of good.

The creation of the cosmos and man is also under the watchful eye of the powers of good, and Hibil remarks to himself: "Jetzt verwicklicht sich der grosse Plan des Josamin. Er wurde geschaffen, er entstand und schuf Söhne."<sup>1</sup>

Ur is born and, having failed to find a way back to his mother's home, creates a horde of demons to be his helpers for what is, at this stage, an unspecified event. Ruha then shows her son a magic mirror. In it he sees not only his own reflection but also images of his parents, the world of darkness and the world of light. Ruha tells him that: "Dieser Spiegel und die Krone - von dem Zeitpunkte an, da ich in die Höhe brachte, war deine Krone, dein Spiegel und

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1. Ginza 167.28-29. On Josamin see further p 122-123.

dieses eine Gimra bei mir, und ich sagte mir, dass wenn du geboren würdest, sie dir gehören sollten."<sup>1</sup> The mirror which Hibil is reported to have stolen from Qin was not mentioned at all in the account of Hibil's reception by the powers in the kingdom of light and it is probable that it is the same mirror to which reference is made here, the first theft having been forgotten.

When Ur is asked what he has seen, he replies in tones of great regret and envy when he tells his mother that he has seen the world of light "which is not ours". When Ruha herself looks into the mirror she does not know what to do but tells her son, however, "Auf deinen Herkunftsort und auf deine eigenen Eltern richte deine Augen, doch gegen jene Lichtwelten unternimm keinen Kampf."<sup>2</sup>

At this stage the drama with the powers of light is resumed. Hibil-Ziwa/Jawar, who has been listening unseen to Ruha and Ur - who has been our narrator - is approached by the Life who bids him go to Ur, "the proud lord of darkness".

Ur's first reaction on seeing Jawar is to hide in the black waters. Having spoken with his mother, though, he decides that "was über mich kommen soll, mag kommen".<sup>3</sup> Consequently, he attacks in great anger assisted by a thousand myriad Dews. However, as the Dews see Jawar they die. Ruha again tells Ur that he will not defeat the powers of light and leads him away.

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1. Ginza 170.21-25.  
2. Ginza 170.36-37.  
3. Ginza 171.27-28.

During their talk, Ruha tells Ur of a certain pearl which, if he places it "on high", will increase his strength. He decides to do what she advises with regard to the pearl, but then announces that he will arise to the light and great source of water above<sup>1</sup>, disregarding Ruha's earlier warning. At this moment Jawar appears before Ur who crumples up before him and is unable to prevent Jawar from removing the pearl from him.<sup>2</sup> Jawar then returns to his companions above.

As in the earlier story, the pearl which has been successfully stolen from the powers of darkness and taken to the kingdom of light is the means of strength for the powers of darkness. However, in this particular narrative it is carefully distinguished from the gimra.<sup>3</sup> When Ur tells Ruha that the pearl has been taken from him, Ruha, having again told him that "du kannst gegen diesen Mann<sup>4</sup> nichts ausrichten"<sup>5</sup>, goes on to tell him that if they go into the black waters, there, in secter, she will show him the gimra which is hidden within her and then they will be able to see what they

1. This emphasises his decision "Ich will gegen das Licht kämpfen, nicht gegen die Finsternis." Ginza 170.41-42.

2. Cf. Sarh d Qabin d Sislam Rba p92. "(Of) the secret things hidden therein one shall be a pearl that enlighteneth all darkened hearts." The pearl will be hidden "in a pure crystal" established somewhere on the banks of the Euphrates and guarded by Hibil. "And those that are stumbling blocks will be corrected thereby." Here the pearl is the gnosis itself. Cf. the use of "pearl" in Matthew 7.6, 13.46, Rev. 18.11-12, Acts of Thomas and Gospel of Thomas. See further H. Jonas. "The Gnostic Religion." ppl25-129. Essays by Quispel, Jonas and Wilson in "The Bible and Modern Scholarship." (ed. Hyatt).

3. See plllff.

4. For possible connections with Ophites see p 77.

5. Ginza 172.21.

can do. They go into the black waters, therefore, and Ruha takes the gimra from her hiding place. Unfortunately for Ruha and Ur it falls into the water and before they can recover it Jawar has seized it. When the evil pair cannot find the gimra Ruha laments the loss of "unsere Zauberei und Hexerei.....und Rede und Erhörung..."<sup>1</sup>

The gimra is now described not as a pearl, with its associations of whiteness and purity, but rather with the associations seen to be connected with the mrara<sup>2</sup> its loss to Ruha and Ur being the loss of their instructions (Rede) and assurance (Erhörung) of the success of their magic (Zauberei) and witchcraft (Hexerei), which, because of the association with Ruha and Ur, must be evil. This cannot be a description of the same gimra as we have described it earlier but yet it is stolen from the evil pair. The question must, therefore, be asked "Why?". The answer to this must surely be that it represents the motive power for evil which has to be seized by the powers of good - represented by Jawar - in order to preserve their own realm from attack, and also to prepare in advance for the protection of their Elect on earth. The redemptive act in this part of the narrative, therefore, is of a completely different nature to the other description of the stealing of the gimra umrara. Earlier the taking back of something essential to the Life and all his creation - including mankind in this particular passage - was effected; here it is the stealing of something alien but threatening - if left in

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1. Ginza 172.36-37.

2. Ginza 158. See also pll4ff.

its true owners' possession - to the Life and his creation. That we are justified in regarding this act as one of redemption is confirmed by its essential nature as an act of protection for the future and by any definition of the idea of redemption which must include not only the concept of reinstatement but also that of protection from external trials.

As far as Ur is concerned the loss of the gimra confirms his desire to oppose the powers of light : "Ich will mich erheben und Krieg führen."<sup>1</sup> Before he can put his plan into operation, however, Jawar-Ziwa seizes him and binds him in chains, the last one being "the strongest in all his world, which is ten thousand times stronger than he himself."<sup>2</sup> He sets four watchers to guard Ur and then returns to the House of Life above and is able to inform the Life, his father, that "Ur is conquered and overthrown."<sup>3</sup>

In the next section Manda d Haiia is referred to as the Life and Jawar is once again called Hibil. No sooner has Hibil informed his father of his success against Ur than he is informed that Josamin has created three sons, one of whom, Abatur, has gone into the world of darkness from which Hibil has just returned. There "er sieht sein Gesicht im schwarzen Wasser, und sein Abbild und Sohn wird ihm aus dem schwarzen Wasser gebildet."<sup>4</sup> This introduction of Josamin into the text is significant. The name itself is a diminutive form of

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1. Ginza 172.40.

2. Ginza 173.12.

3. Ginza 173.33.

4. Ginza 173.38-40. Cf. Poimandres in Grant's Anthology p212.

יְהוָה plus ד'שׁוּ, that is Yahu of heavens, a description of the God of the Jews. This, together with the following account of creation after the 'classical' Gnostic manner as opposed to the creation narratives examined at the beginning of this chapter, indicates the emergence of the Gnostic - as opposed to the original Mandaean - stratum.<sup>1</sup> For, as we saw in Chapter One, the Mandaeans have no first-hand knowledge of the Jews, any indications of acquaintance with Judaism being obtained from outside sources - in this instance 'classical' Gnosticism where the Jewish god, as here, is seen in a derogatory light.<sup>2</sup> That the Mandaeans were not completely "taken over" by the established Gnostic systems, however, is indicated by their failure to emphasise the role of Josamin and the fact that they see the creator god still in terms of their own original beliefs and thus describe him as Abatur and Ptahil.<sup>3</sup>

Abatur gives Ptahil the commission to make a solid mass within the black waters. This he tries to accomplish but is not successful. He appeals to Abatur who reprimands him and tells him what to do (Ginza 174.30ff). The cosmos is then created having the black waters as its boundary. Hibil speaks out against Ptahil and his act of creation and tells him to go and complete what he has done. However,

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1. See Ginza tractate 14 for a second account of Josamin's activity. Cf. K. Rudolph. "Theogonie, Kosmogonie und Anthropogonie." pp103-121.  
 2. Ginza 361. Here Josamin is reprimanded for thinking he and his works are greater than the Life. Cf. Ialdabaoth-motif. Ginza 304. the creation of evil is attributed to Josamin. Cf. "der böse Ptahil".  
 3. See also p69.

Hibil surrounds the creation with seven walls (the planetary spheres are most probably meant) thus equating it with the kingdom of darkness which he previously encircled in a similar way. The belief that this creation is evil is confirmed when we are told that when Ruha sees it she decides to join Ptahil and help him with his task. First, though, she lies with Ur and eventually gives birth to seven sons (the planets) and then a further twelve sons (the zodiac). Hibil comes back onto the scene and, having restored some order, decides that he will create Adam. Gnostic influence is very marked here for he delegates the work of making the body to the planets, the sons of Ruha and Ur. Then he, himself, brings the soul from the treasure house of the Life and throws it into Adam's body. He describes himself as the "Ubermittler" of the soul into the body - the complete reversal of the usual concept of a deliverer of the soul from the bondage of the body as in the 'classical' Gnostic systems.

In this examination of the myths of the descensus ad inferos and the cosmic creation we have seen that sometimes the two myths have been kept separate by the Mandaeans and at other times they have been fused together, the creation having been seen as a consequence of the original descent.

In the myth of the descent to the underworld the heavenly figure goes primarily to prevent not the emergence of evil itself - which seems to have been accepted as inevitable and in some way proceeding from the good itself - but the effects of evil action -

more specifically rebellion - against both the other powers of evil (Sdum and Krun are warned by Hibil) and the kingdom of light itself. It is for this reason that Rudolph can, quite correctly, distinguish two separate purposes for the descent,

1. "Der Descensus Manda d Haijes mit dem Ziel, den Unterweltherrscher zu bändigen, und
2. der Descensus zu den Böses planenden oder bereits abgefallenen Utras des Zweiten Lebens, die zur Raison gebracht werden sollen."<sup>1</sup>

In both cases the evil most to be feared is personified in Ur who features in all the accounts. It is noteworthy, though, that while the defeat and enchainment of Ur is constant in all four accounts the attempt to bring the powers of evil to a course of action agreeable to the powers of good - by the removal of 'something' which either belongs to the evil powers by right but which is harmful to the good, or by the removal of 'something' which originally belonged to the good and which the evil powers are trying to use against them - is mentioned in the last two accounts only. And even here there is no substantial agreement on what was taken by the messenger back to the kingdom of light - or even whether one or more than one 'thing' was involved. It is also significant that none of these articles can be technically referred to as the soul, for, as we have seen, although gimra is sometimes translated as "pearl", which can represent the soul, in these particular myths

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1. K. Rudolph. "Theogonie, Kosmogonie und Anthropogonie." Göttingen 1965. p220.

it seems to represent something more than the soul which is given to man - even though this same soul is part of the godhead itself. For, in the case of the soul of man, it was placed into man through the agency and with the agreement of the godhead itself, something which could hardly have been allowed to happen to the 'thing' or 'things' that had just been recovered.

As we have also seen, the precosmic journey of redemption as applied to the godhead itself has become associated with the creation of the cosmos and man. And in several accounts the heavenly redeemer is the creator himself, though, as remarked previously, the whole span of ideas is included from that ~~in~~ which the creation is seen as wholly good to that wherein it is wholly evil or a mixture of the two. In most cases, however, in the Mandaean texts - here in significant distinction to the 'classical' Gnostic texts - the narratives which say that creation is the work of evil powers are open to criticism on the grounds of their originality. For in the other Mandaean texts the creation is held to be the work of the Life and the sudden change is suspicious. A close examination of the texts also reveals slight discrepancies which all seem to point to the conclusion that we have an original narrative of the creation of the cosmos by the Life in his role as the "god who opens (the womb of creation)" which has suddenly been altered to take in beliefs which have arisen through the growing influence of Gnosticism. For example, there is the very sudden description of Ptahil as "der bÜse Ptahil"; he is described as having brought some 'spirit' from

the house of Life before the creation of Adam's body but suddenly we are told that he has to go back to obtain the soul - this seems to indicate the introduction of the Gnostic distinction between  $\Piνεϋμα$  and  $\psiυχη$  into the text. And even though the planets have created the body of Adam, Ptahil tells the Life that his image is incomplete, so that even while Ptahil is supposedly evil the creation of Adam is a reflection of the Life himself (at this stage without the soul) and therefore, of necessity, good. These serve to indicate the attempt to embrace Gnostic concepts in an originally independent narrative.

The redeemer figure so far considered is thus :-

1. the successful vanquisher of the powers of evil which threatened to attack the powers of light in the precosmic period,
2. he is the successful rescuer of the gimra umrara which probably originally belonged to the powers of good but which had been stolen by the powers of evil when they 'defected',
3. he is the successful robber of some other object or objects which were a source of strength to the powers of evil and which would have been used against the powers of good had they (or it) not been removed from their possession,
4. he is the agent - if not actual artificer - of creation,
5. he is the deliverer of the soul into the body of man by which means man is enlightened about his origins and by which the god-head actually comes to be in the body on earth.

With regard to this last point, surely it indicates that the Mandaeans could not think of the body as a tomb in their original tradition because otherwise the redeemer figure would not have voluntarily placed the soul into a tomb from which he was obliged to rescue it by means of knowledge?

6. there is essentially only one redeemer who goes by a number of names - or rather descriptions - and he is none other than the Life himself. Manda d Haiia and the others are aspects of the Life rather than essentially individual components of a polytheistic pantheon,

7. he is the revealer of a saving gnosis to mankind which ensures the ascent of the soul back to the heavenly home after a cultically and ethically correct sojourn on the earth has passed its full course. (This aspect of the redeemer's work will be considered in the context of the soul's place in the scheme of redemption in the next chapter).

## CHAPTER FOUR.

According to N.W.Porteous<sup>1</sup>, the נפש] of Adam in the Genesis narrative, and in Hebrew thought in general, is the life-force of Adam's body. Adam is both body and נפש]. He did not have a body in the sense that the essential Adam is distinct from his bodily frame, but was an animated body, a complete unit of life manifesting itself in bodily form. The principle of life in man is sometimes linked with the blood, e.g. Genesis 9.4; Leviticus 17.11,14; Deuteronomy 12.23.

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1. N.W.Porteous. The article on the "Soul" in the Interpreter's Dictionary." New York/Nashville 1962. pp428-429.

By the time of the compilation of the Apocrypha, however, and especially in the Wisdom Literature - the Wisdom of Solomon in particular - "there are clear traces of Greek conceptions - e.g. reference to pre-existence of the soul (8.19); immortality of soul (3.1); soul as burdened by the body (9.15); ethical qualities attributed to the soul (1.4; 2.22; 7.27; 10.7; 17.1); the idea that the soul goes to Hades (16.14). In II Esdras 7.102-115 there is evidence for belief in reservation of souls after death for judgment."<sup>1</sup>

The influence of Greek - in particular Orphic and Platonic - thought affected not only the Jews but also the Gnostics. However, the first investigations of the origins of the concepts associated with the soul in the Gnostic writings emphasised not the Greek but the Babylonian connections.<sup>2</sup> For example, Anz believed that the conception originated in Mesopotamia because the Gnostic description of the soul's journey through the hostile planetary spheres presupposed much of the Babylonian astronomical theology. It can also be pointed out in this connection that Zoroaster taught that individual judgment took place at death, the good being admitted to the place of infinite light and the damned being hurled into Hell.

According to Kraeling, Bousset was the first to broaden the

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1. N.W.Porteous. Interpreter's Dictionary. p428-429.

2. This account relies heavily on the resumé of the work done in this particular subject given by C.H.Kraeling in his "Anthropos and the Son of Man". New York 1927.

field of enquiry by investigating Greek, Christian, Jewish and Babylonian ideas in connection with the concept. He maintained that the concept of the soul exists outside the influence of Babylon though he also thought that the ultimate origin of the concept was Iranian. On the issue of Greek parallels he maintained that they were either the result of independent speculation or else ultimately dependent on Persian ideas.

Reitzenstein, in his investigation, found that the fate of the individual soul was but a rehearsal of the fate of the world soul and that the journey to the heavenly home was but one element in a myth of the primordial descent and imprisonment of the soul on earth. But Kraeling points out that the Iranian elements - as far as they can be individually recovered - do not include the idea of the soul being imprisoned in the body and that man, at all times, exercises free-will and finds about him a world that is not wholly evil.

The Gnostic concept of the soul drama is, therefore, the result of conflation from several sources which have become dominated - in toto - by the pessimism regarding the world which characterised ancient thought in the centuries just before and after the birth of Jesus of Nazareth.

Because the Mandaeans' religion has been used as the normative representative of other Gnostic groups (which we have referred to as 'classical' Gnostic systems) their concept of the soul deserves consideration. In this study it is an essential part of the investigation as it does, in fact, represent the redeemer in one of his

roles on earth.

That the soul of man and the godhead itself - of which the redeemer figure is one aspect - are fundamentally one is emphasised many times throughout the Mandaeen writings.

"Ein Mana bin ich des grossen Lebens,  
ein Mana bin ich des gewaltigen Lebens...."<sup>1</sup>

is the frequent introduction of the soul especially in the Left Ginza. That the mana or soul is also the highest being is made clear in this section from the Right Ginza :

"Wir wollen den Boten rufen,  
den Boten, die Pflanzung des gewaltigen (Lebens).  
Wir wollen ihn beauftragen und dorthin senden:  
was dort ist, soll er hierher emporbringen.  
Er erlöse die sanften Manas,  
erlöse den teuren Mana.  
Den teuren Mana erlöse er,  
und dieser sei ein Guter im Hause der Vollendung."<sup>2</sup>

The same idea is further reinforced by this couplet:

"Das Leben stützte das Leben,  
das Leben fand das Seinige."<sup>3</sup>

That the Life does indeed find what is his own and not adopted is ensured by this description of the soul given by the "Man", the helper of the soul on earth:

"Nicht bist du ein Anteil des Leids, dass du darüber grübelst,  
nicht bist du ein Anteil des Finsternis, die dir ein  
Ende mache.  
Nicht bist du ein Anteil des Feuers,  
dass du das lodernde Feuer schauest.  
Nicht bist du ein Anteil der Trübung,  
dass deine Gestalt gleich ihnen trübe werde.  
Du bist ein Anteil der Helligkeit,  
die ohne Trübung ist.

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1. Cf. K. Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." Vol. I. p26. Irenaeus Adv. Haer. 1.21.  
θευός ἐπὶ ἐντίμον . Possible Gnostic influence on Mandaeans?  
2. Ginza 333.19-26.  
3. Ginza 510.35-36. Cf. M.P.G. pp63,96,100,120.

Du bist ein Anteil der Lichterde,  
 an der keine Finsternis ist, die dir ein Ende mache.  
 Du wirst gewinnen, Mana,  
 und deine eigene Gestalt wird dich erleuchten."<sup>1</sup>

Because of the certain identity of the soul which is to be redeemed with the Life himself, and with the redeemer, it is interesting to see what reasons were put forward by the Mandaeans to account for the position of the soul on earth, a position from which it was necessary for it to be redeemed - here in a sense of 'return'.

According to one version of the cosmic creation of a slightly different nature again from those discussed in chapter three<sup>2</sup>, after Ptahil had created the world and Adam after his own image, despite the fact that he had cast some of his own spirit and also some of the 'mystery' of each of his planetary helpers into Adam's frame, he was not able to make Adam rise up and walk. Consequently he had to go to Abatur - here distinguished as the Life - and receive from him a secret mana to place into Adam's body. That this is an early passage is indicated by the fact that Abatur has not been denigrated to his place as Abatur of the Scales but is still the Life in his role as Father of the Uthras, and that Ptahil is not specified as the evil Ptahil or prevented from knowing how the mana is put into the body of his creation. Ptahil, however, is portrayed as being unsuccessful as the guiding power behind the world and as being unable to perform the work of creating Adam completely himself. For this reason Ptahil deserts the world and hands its safe-keeping over to

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1. Ginza 458.14-25.  
 2. Ginza 242ff.

Hibil. For this act of desertion, therefore, he is placed in a footblock and, according to a later section<sup>1</sup>, he is enchained for as long as Tibil endures and a curtain is placed between him and Abatur so that only vocal communications are possible between them. Ptahil will, however, be released and reinstated in his original position and it is this tradition that is of importance with regard to the soul. For in several instances the fate of Ptahil is linked with that of the soul:

"Dann wird Ptahil und du, Mana,  
in einer Skina löhen,

dann wird er dein König,  
O Mana, genannt werden."<sup>2</sup>

This suggests that the soul, like Ptahil, must have originally done something which merited punishment, in this case the placing in the body being equivalent to Ptahil's enchainment.

While the messenger recalls how he was called and commissioned for the task of redemption we are told that it is his "friends" who are to be released and redeemed, that they will be redeemed from the imperfection which they have created themselves.<sup>3</sup> The soul's position on earth is thus seen - from the redeemer's stand-point - as the result of its own actions. But the soul itself does not either acknowledge or remember this and its laments are characterised by appeals against the injustice of its position:

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1. Ginza 349.33ff.  
2. Ginza 478.33-36.  
3. Ginza 333.27ff.

"Wer hat mich aus meiner Stätte und meinem Orte weg  
 gefangen genommen,  
 aus dem Kreise meiner Eltern, die mich grossgezogen?  
 Wer brachte mich zu den Schuldigen,  
 den Söhnen der nichtigen Wohnung?  
 Wer brachte mich zu den Rebellen,  
 die tagtäglich Krieg führen?  
 Wer zeigte mir die Bitterkeit,  
 an der keine Süßigkeit ist?  
 Wer zeigte mir die Finsternis,  
 an der kein Lichtstrahl ist?  
 Wer zeigte mir das stinkende Wasser,  
 das sich auf Rädern dreht."<sup>1</sup>

and also,

"Der Mana sprach zum Leben,  
 das in seiner Skina thronet:  
 'Worin habe ich gegen dich gestündigt,  
 dass man mich zum Wohnsitze der Sünder gesandt hat?'"<sup>2</sup>

This last lament of the soul is curiously echoed by Ptahil and  
 again one is obliged to see some significance in the similarity:

"Was habe ich gegen meinen Vater Abathur verbrochen,  
 dass er mich hierher leitete und sandte  
 zur Tiefe, die ganz Gestank ist,  
 in der niemand wohnen kann,  
 zu den Gewässern, die einander verzehren,  
 die den Namen des Lebens nicht annehmen wollen?"<sup>3</sup>

In some parts of the text we are told that the soul cannot  
 remember, or never knew, who had thrown it into the trunk (stuna)  
 of the body.<sup>4</sup> However, on other occasions, specific - and often  
 conflicting - accounts of the actual 'incarceration' are given.  
 In several parts of the text we are told that the soul is in the  
 body at the specific bidding of the Life<sup>5</sup> yet in at least one section

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1. Ginza 328.11-28.

2. Ginza 347.22-25.

3. Ginza 349.33-38.

4. Ginza 454.16-19.

5. Ginza - various creation narratives.

the soul asks why he is in this present position and remarks that he will complain to Manda d Haiia/Life himself, which seems to indicate that the soul at least thought that his plight was unknown to the Life.<sup>1</sup> The idea that the soul was put into the body by force is included at some points:

"Ein Mana bin ich des grossen Lebens,  
 ein Mana bin ich des gewaltigen Lebens,  
 ein Mana bin ich des grossen Lebens.  
 Sie trieben ihn fort aus dem Hause seiner Bruder  
 und sandten ihn in diese Welt."<sup>2</sup>

This can again be linked with the idea that, like Ptahil, the soul had done something which warranted its enforced removal from the kingdom of light and punishment in the tomb of the body.

In the first creation narrative examined in chapter three we saw that the soul was the means of illumination of Adam and Eve, and that when the soul fell into their bodies - and not before - they saw and understood everything. This concept of the didactic or illuminatory function of the soul is found again in the various explanations of its position given in the later parts of the Ginza, where the mana is thus instructed by the Life:

"Auf, geh zum Hause der Sieben!  
 Auf, zum Hause der Sieben geh,  
 der nichtigen Rebellen der Finsternis.  
 Die nichtigen Rebellen der Finsternis sind finster,  
 und kein Licht ist unter ihnen."<sup>3</sup>

Here the aim of the descent is obviously to 'enlighten' the powers

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1. Ginza 506.27.  
 2. Ginza 477.1-6.  
 3. Ginza 479.25-29.

of darkness - in this respect the mana and redeemer are spoken of in exactly the same way and described as having the same function. The 'enlightning' of mankind in general is also referred to:

"Geh hin, wachse auf im Körper,  
in jenem Gewande, das man dir anbefohlen.  
Geh hin und wachse unter den Mysterien auf,  
und die Mysterien sollten durch dich leuchten."<sup>1</sup>

That the soul was deceived in some way and that it went into the body 'under false pretences' as it were is implied in this passage:

"Die Seele spricht zu den Uthras:  
'Meine Brüder, ihr Uthras, die ihr dort sitztet,  
bei eurem Leben, ihr Uthras, meine Brüder,  
saget mir, woher Hibil-Ziwa's Wohnsitz ist.  
Er betörte mich und führte mich in den Körper ein,  
dann liess er mich zurück und stieg an seinen Ort empor."<sup>2</sup>

The completely opposite idea, that the soul is privileged to be in the body is also, however, included. In one part of the Left Ginza we are told that after the creation of the Seven the Twelve are made. These latter create Adam and lay the soul into his body.

"Aus dem Hause des grossen Lebens kam die Seele,  
und die drei Uthras kamen mit ihr.  
Mit ihr kamen die drei Uthras  
und stellten sie ausserhalb des Körpers hin.  
Ausserhalb des Körpers stellten sie sie hin;  
sie wollen sie in den Körper einführen, doch sie tritt  
nicht ein."<sup>3</sup>

Here the three un-named Uthras wish to go into the body also but they remain, apparently unwillingly, outside.

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1. Ginza 483.17-20.

2. Ginza 511.1-6. Cf. Ginza 329.2-13,34;330.14;331.5 where the soul is spoken of as an Uthra, and ATS pl34 where the soul is carefully distinguished from the Uthras.

3. Ginza 506.9-14.

These three Uthras are most certainly the triad known as Hibil, Sitil and Anosh. Several scholars - who favour the western theory of Mandaean origins - claim that these names reflect the influence of Judaism and the Old Testament on the Mandaeans ; this can be successfully disputed.

The name Hibil actually means 'breath' in Mandaic and it would seem to be perfectly natural to see in the Mandaean figure the hypostasised 'Breath of Life', a figure comparable with Manda d Haiia, the 'Knowledge of Life', with whom, in fact, Hibil is often identified.

The root  $\text{ܫܢܘ}$  which forms the basis of the name of the second of the triad means 'to transplant'. Sitil is, therefore, the transplanted soul. This meaning is, in fact, borne out by an examination of the story of Sitil found in the opening part of the Left Ginza. Here we are told of the Life's intention to bring Adam's soul back to the Kingdom of Light. He instructs the angel of death, Sauriel, to go to Adam, inform him of the decision which has been made concerning him, and to take the soul forthwith from its earthly shell. Adam, on learning of the Life's intentions, requests a stay of 'execution' and then suggests that the soul of his son Sitil should be taken instead.<sup>1</sup> He points out the facts that Sitil is only eighty and has no wife and therefore has no real ties to prevent

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1. See chapter one for consideration of the suggested connections between Jews and Mandaeans generally. E.S.Drower points out - on p36 n.3. of "The Secret Adam - a study in Nasoraean Gnosis" that the roots  $\text{ܫܢܘ}$  and  $\text{ܫܢܘ}$  make identification of Sitil with the O.T. Seth rather tenuous. See further J.Doresse. "The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics." esp. ppl47-156 and 249ff.

him from leaving the earth immediately. Sital is, therefore, approached by the angel of Death who has informed the Life of Adam's reluctance to leave the earth and he willingly ascends to his rightful home above. For this reason Sital became the symbol of obedience and selflessness for the Mandaeans and it is against the weight of this pure soul that all souls are measured when they reach the entrance to the kingdom of light.

The library of a group of Sethians has been discovered in Egypt.<sup>1</sup> Apparently the figure of Seth was widely venerated and known to several ancient groups. Whether the Egyptian figure is related directly either to the Jewish Old Testament figure or that known to the Mandaeans has not, however, been fully determined.

As we have seen previously<sup>2</sup> the figure of Anosh belongs to the world of Babylon from which it was probably taken over into Judaism in a manner which cannot now be traced or dated. In the light of this and the probable Babylonian origins of the Mandaeans<sup>3</sup>, then, there is no need to postulate Mandaean borrowing from the Jews, nor is it very likely. Like the figure of Sital, Anosh is portrayed both as a redeemer of souls and also as an earthly character who appeared during the reign of Pilate in Jerusalem; he has both a heavenly and earthly identity. In his case, however, he is a deliverer even in his human guise, unlike Sital, but, as we shall

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1. See J. Doresse, *op.cit.* Unfortunately an examination of the possible connections between the Mandaean Sital and the Egyptian Seth was not possible for the present writer.

2. See p

3. See chapter I.

see further on, even heavenly figures need to be redeemed by the primary embodiment of redemption, Manda d Haiia.

As redemptive agents themselves the three Uthras are portrayed as revealers of gnosis in this passage:

"Who was it (that) revealed our secret  
And broadcast our wisdom in the highways?

Three Uthras not of this world revealed it;  
They confirm one another in rank and consecrate one  
another in office."<sup>1</sup>

The triad are left in the world to be the guardians of the faithful souls in the world.<sup>2</sup> But the powers of evil do not want the souls to be protected from their attacks and attempts to pervert and seduce them from the Way of the Life. As a result they concentrate their attack on the three Uthras. They take swords against Hibil, fire against Sital and water against Anosh. This is referred to not only in the Ginza narrative but also in the Baptismal Liturgy:

"Hibil, Sital, and Anus, sons of the living, brilliant, healthy and steadfast stock, beings not removed by sword, nor burnt by flames of fire, nor drowned by water floods; whose (very) sandal-straps on their feet are unwetted by water. They sought and found, went to judgment and were vindicated, spoke and were heard. They are complete, lacking in nought; perfect are they and not imperfect. They came from a pure place and go to a pure place."<sup>3</sup>

The powers of evil are unsuccessful in their attack on the three Uthras because they are helped by Manda d Haiia. He rescues Hibil

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1. Sarh d Qabin d Sislam Rba. p60.

2. Ginza 252ff.

3. M.P.G. p6.

from the swords of the evil powers, clothes him with primal (urerstes) fire and, thus fortified, Hibil is able to continue. Again unknown to the planets, Manda d Haia promises his support to Sital and tells him that he will never be far away from him in times of danger and alarm. Sital, also, is clothed in a garment of light. Anosh, who is referred to as Manda d Haia's son, the little Anosh, is told by Manda d Haia that "ich will kommen und dich von den Bösen und Sündern dieser Welt befreien".<sup>1</sup> Together the three are referred to as "diese drei Männer".<sup>2</sup> From this we can see that for the Mandaeans there is no essential difference between Uthras and "men of proven righteousness" and that both are in need of redemption by Manda d Haia, even though the Uthras themselves are also sometimes seen as agents of redemption. This belief in the fundamental same-ness of the divine Uthra and the earth-bound soul is again indicated by the equation of all three Uthras with Adam without regard for numerical differences, for we find in the Baptismal Liturgy again the exhortation to praise "our father Hibil-Sital-Anus, the head of the whole race."<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to find not only a reference to the "little Anosh" but also one to the "little Sital" further on in the Ginza narrative. Here<sup>4</sup> we are told that this little Sital, in this case

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1. Ginza 268.4-5.

2. Ginza 268.18.

3. M.P.B. p22.

4. Ginza 443.

Adam's son (cf. little Anosh as Manda d Haiia's son), is redeemed and rises to the kingdom of light above. And in another part of the text we are told that Hibil, in the form of a young boy, (the youth being still further disguised as Adam) lay with Eve and that from this union the first humans were born. This seems to have been the way in which the Mandaeans accounted for their position as 'men of proven righteousness' - as the offspring of Eve and Hibil - and the rest of the human population who were thus the result of the union of the true Adam with Eve,

That the Mandaeans make a careful distinction between themselves and the rest of humanity is indicated in the Mandaean Prayer Book where we find the petition to Manda d Haiia to:

"Deliver us from this world which is all sinners and from the sorceries of the children of Adam and Eve."

The distinction is implicitly between the Mandaeans as offspring of Eve and Hibil (in the form of the youth/Adam) and the 'true' humanity, the progeny of the earthly Adam and Eve.

The general interest in the idea of young boys as redemptive agents<sup>1</sup> is not common, but certainly frequent in Gnosticism in general. As well as the Ginza narrative in which Manda d Haiia appears to Yahya-Yohana as a child of three years and a day - at which revelation Yahya recognises him as "the predestined One who was

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1. This is possibly due to a misunderstanding of  $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$  = servant which became translated as  $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$  = child. "Servant of God" concept may have been meant; the concept of a divine child is found, however, in Egypt, Phoenicia and Orphism. Cf. Ginza 234-238.

foreordained to come" - there is the account in the Apocryphon of John in which a little child appears - rather paradoxically - in "the form of an old man" to John the son of Zebedee.<sup>1</sup> In the Hymn of the Pearl this motif is repeated with the descent of "the little child" from his heavenly home into 'Egypt'.

In connection with the Hymn of the Pearl, the Iranian provenance of the story is indicated by the presence of Iranian words in the Syriac text and the general attitude towards Egypt as the hostile world. That there may have been some - even slight - connection between the group which produced this hymn and the Mandaeans may be indicated by the presence in the Mandaean Sarh d Qabin d Sislam Rba of an account of the descent of the heavenly redeemer into the world which shows several similarities with the story in the Hymn of the Pearl. It is all the more striking because in the usual Mandaean account of the descent there is no hint that the redeemer was at any time defeated or suffered at all at the hands of the planets. It may be argued, then, that we have in this passage an indication of the nature and origins of the Gnostic influence which infiltrated into the Mandaean tradition. The passage begins with the intimation that what is to be told is not part of the open tradition but belongs to the "secrets told by the Uthras".

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1. See E.Hennecke. "New Testament Apocrypha". ET. R.McL.Wilson. London 1963. p322. R.M.Grant. "Gnosticism; an anthology." London 1961. p70.

"When the Proven One, the Pure One goeth  
 To the place where Perfection dwelleth,  
 (He saith), 'I will speak to thee, Mystic Perfection,  
 That art hidden and protected by thy veillings,  
 I will tell thee, Mystic Perfection,  
 Secrets told by the Uthras.  
 One that I had created according to thy plan  
 I sent to that world. How hideous  
 And without beauty was everything  
 That he saw in that world! A world of sons of salvation  
 Who were cause of harm!  
 He that was noble here, they made him a slave yonder,  
 Yonder they made him a slave  
 And he suffered from the seven planets.  
 From the seven planets he suffered  
 And was tormented in the world.  
 He that went from hence rich  
 Was reduced to need in the world;  
 Yonder they made him their fellow  
 And he suffered at the hand of the seven planets.  
 At the hand of the seven planets he suffered  
 And was reduced to misery in the world."<sup>1</sup>

That the influence that resulted in the composition of this section of the text was of a Christian-Gnostic kind is also demonstrated by a passage a little later in the Sarh,<sup>2</sup> where we find this:

"Grant to me a servant,  
 A servant give to me,  
 In whom there is no lacking or fault.  
 And through him bring to me all my sons,  
 My children bring to me.  
 (So that) by him and by thee they may be restored,  
 And be raised up in the resurrection  
 (And) be blessed with the blessing  
 That proceedeth from thyself."

Here the 'Proven Pure One' has requested the Great Life to give a servant to him by which means the redemption of his 'sons' can be effected. Together, therefore, the Life, Manda d Haia and the agent

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1. Sarh d Qabin d Sislam Rba. p84.

2. ibid. p90-91.

of redemption - who is carefully distinguished from Manda d Haia - form a trinity. This, together with the completely alien conception of the resurrection - that is, alien to the Mandaeans - confirms the suspicion that this part of the Sarh at least was composed under the influence of either Christianity itself or, more probably, that of a Christianised Gnosticism which was also linked in some way with the circle that produced the Hymn of the Pearl.

That the Mandaeans were also possibly influenced by the Ophites in particular is suggested by the frequent description of the redeemer figures in Mandaicism as "the alien Man". This description is applied to the various heavenly messengers who descend into the 'alien' darkness - i.e. Hibil-Ziwa, Jawar, and Manda d Haia. In the early strata where Ptahil is the descriptive name for the Life in his creative aspect rather than the name of a distinct demiurge after the Gnostic pattern this description is also applied to Ptahil and again by the powers of darkness.

The epithet 'Man' alone is also used as a synonym for Manda d Haia/Life himself by the worshippers in the Mandaean cult.<sup>1</sup> For example, in the Book of Souls - the Baptismal Liturgy - the safety of the "perfected gem" (gimra used as a synonym for the soul) which has been cast down "into the midst of the worlds and ages" will be preserved by "the strength of the Man the Healer".<sup>2</sup> And in the same

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1. Cf. H-M. Schenke. "Der Gott 'Mensch' in der Gnosis." Göttingen. 1962.

2. M.P.B. ppl-32.

Liturgy we find a description of Manda d Haia as "the father of the Uthras, the Ancient, Lofty, Occult, and Guarded, the Man who is high (yet) remaineth deep and hidden." According to Irenaeus' account of the Ophite system they also thought of the godhead as 'Man'. But the nature of the connection is not quite so tenuous as this. In the Masiqta ceremony<sup>1</sup> the ascent of the soul is described. Having passed safely through the seven mataratas and crossed the "ferry which ferries over the Elect"<sup>2</sup> the soul is then told that a "saviour will come forth towards you" with the new robes of light and life.<sup>3</sup> Then the soul is questioned about her ultimate origins. "The edified and well-constructed soul spoke" and replied that the 'One', the 'Being', both constructed and transplanted her, "and gave me over to Adam." However, "Adam, in his simplicity, whilst he knew not nor understood, took and cast me into a physical body."

From this it is clear that Adam the first earthly man cannot be meant as he could not be said to have cast his own soul into his body; neither, however, is the supreme god meant, for he would not be described as being in a state of ignorance and incomprehension. Here, Adam - which is a synonym for Man - must therefore represent the son of Man - Anthropos whom we find in the Ophite system. However, it is also clear that the Mandaeans were not so completely

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1. M.P.B. pp33-61.

2. Cf. the ferry of Charon; the idea of a ferry is also found in Zoroastrianism.

3. The concept of a new heavenly robe for the soul is found throughout the Gnostic systems. Cf. especially the Hymn of the Pearl.

influenced by the Ophites that they adopted part of their system - in fact the reverse is more probable, for the Mandaeans reveal their understanding of this particular system to be incomplete and confused on this issue. For according to Irenaeus, the actual Ophite equivalent in connection with the casting of the soul into the body by an ignorant divine figure is Ialdabaoth rather than the son of Anthropos, the second Man - Adam. Rudolph, however, because of his opinion that the Mandaeans are the first, western group of Gnostics, believes that it was the Ophites who were influenced by the Mandaeans.<sup>1</sup>

That the Mandaeans were influenced from outside is, however, demonstrated by some of their descriptions of the redeemer figures on earth. As heavenly figures the Uthras, Sital and Anosh, are both referred to in terms which suggest that the concept of the Saashyant has been borrowed from Zoroastrianism (from which source also it was taken over into Manichaeism). For example, we are told that

"Als Sital der Hüter des Zeitalters war,  
kam des Nasardertum in die Welt."<sup>2</sup>

The idea that this heavenly figure was a guardian of the earth in a particular age is also found in application to Anosh. During the denunciation of Christianity and polemic found in the early part of the Ginza - which is thought by several scholars to be the oldest part of the collection - we are told that Hibil-Ziwa does not appear

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1. K. Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." pl53.  
2. Ginza 320.9-10.

in that age (though apparently he does so in another time)<sup>1</sup> but that Anosh Uthra is relevant as messenger at that time.

"Hibil-Ziwa ist nicht mit Feuer bekleidet, Hibil-Ziwa offenbart sich in jenem Zeitalter nicht. Vielmehr Enos-Uthra kommt und begibt sich nach Jerusalem, mit einem Gewande von Wasserwolken bekleidet. In körperlicher Gestalt schreitet er, doch ist er mit keinem körperlichen Gewande bekleidet. Glut und Wut ist an ihm nicht."<sup>2</sup>

The idea that there is a different redeemer figure - or different manifestation of the same figure - is apparently included by the Mandaeans not as an integral and basic part of their soteriological system but as an added piece of polemic against the Christian idea of a redeemer who has appeared once and for all times. For the information about Anosh in particular is found in the middle of a large-scale polemic against the Christian faith. In this section Anosh is described as having an earthly ministry in the time of Pilate, the king of the world.<sup>3</sup> Also, the deeds he is said to have performed, the acts of healing and so on, are described in terms which parallel the account of Jesus' ministry in the Synoptics. He is, therefore, portrayed as the rival - and even as the superior - to Jesus who is, throughout the Mandaean literature, seen as a treacherous magician and a mere man. That the Mandaeans would not accept that salvation could be effected by a human being - albeit the God-Man of Christianity - is reflected in the emphatic manner

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1. Ginza 319.28-29.

2. Ginza 29.31-36.

3. The appearance of the Mandaean soter in historical times and in Jerusalem itself is also found in connection with Manda d Haiia. See further Ginza 181.27-30.

in which it is announced that Anosh is only in the form of a man as if in the cloak of humanity, and in the fact that the Mandaeans - in this respect unique among the other Gnostic groups with which they are usually linked - reject completely even the suggestion of the docetic appearance of Jesus, the device resorted to by the Christian-Gnostic groups who wished to retain the belief in Jesus' appearance on earth in a specifically determined point of time yet, because of their loathing of the flesh and rejection of the idea of the incarnation of the godhead, could not accept that Jesus was a true man among men.

While it has been suggested in connection with this particular passage that Anosh is the result of the Mandaeans' adoption of the "Manichaeian Jesus, a personage adopted by Mani from the Jesus of Marcion"<sup>1</sup>, the presence of so much that cannot be seen as anything but polemic and the failure of the Mandaeans to give Anosh as such a more central role, suggests rather that the opposite is true; that is, the Mandaeans show through their presentation of Anosh that they rejected completely the Christian or Christian-Gnostic presentation of Jesus.

Some of the ideas surrounding the redeemer figures are indubitably paralleled in the Christian writings and the fact that similar terminology, for example, is used cannot be denied. However, as V. Taylor remarks : "The Mandaean authors use forms of religious

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1. F.C. Burkitt. J.T.S. 29. 1928. pp225-237.

expression which have a long history behind them.....It must be remembered that similar forms of religious expression appear in the writings of Philo, the Odes of Solomon, the Manichaeian fragments, and the Hermetica.....the number and variety of these works prove the antiquity of the forms and conceptions they so freely use."<sup>1</sup> The similarity of expression between the Christian and Mandaean traditions cannot be cited, therefore, as evidence of dependence one way or the other.<sup>2</sup> All that may be concluded is that certain aspects of religious language are universal and are seen as peculiarly apt to the description of religious beliefs even though those beliefs themselves may be different.<sup>3</sup> For example, the bringer of saving gnosis, Manda d Haiia, is described in terms of healing and medicine on several occasions in the Mandaean literature.

"I worship, laud and praise Manda d Haiia, lord of healings, the being whom Life summoned and bade him heal the congregation of souls, divesting the congregation of souls of (their) darkness and clothing them with light; raising (them) and showing them that a great restoration of life exists."<sup>4</sup>

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1. V. Taylor. "The Mandaeans and the Fourth Gospel." Hibbert Journal. 28. 1928-29. p531-546.

2. See M.P.B. p35. "Those who seek of him find, and to those who ask of him it will be given." Cf. Matthew 7.7 and Luke 11.9.

M.P.B. p37. "From them and from those uthras proceeded one uthra whose name is the Great Countenance of Glory, who is (at once) less than his brethren and more venerable than his parents." Cf. Hebrews 2.7. M.P.B. p38. "He arose and broke bread in secret and gave thereof to the sons of man and established his abode in secret." Cf. Mark 14.22; Matthew 26.26; Luke 24.19.

3. Cf. C.G. Jung's theory of universal 'archetypes' especially as applied by Frazer's "The Golden Bough".

4. M.P.B. p8.

Also, in the Alphabet Psalm<sup>1</sup>, Manda d Haiia is described as the 'medicine', an unusual word in a religious context. However, the same word is used by Ignatius of Antioch to describe the effect of the Eucharist.<sup>2</sup> The same striking metaphor is therefore used in both cases but with different applications. Because the application is different the metaphor cannot be cited as a possible indication of any dependence of either Ignatius on the Mandaeans or vice-versa. All that can be concluded is that in both instances the idea was thought to be particularly expressive and apt in context.

The idea of Manda d Haiia as the bringer of healing knowledge and the concept of the Eucharist as being "a medicine of immortality and antidote of death" are linked in a somewhat indirect manner, though, by the fact that the saving knowledge involves instructions about the cult which, as Ignatius also believed, was a necessary part of salvation.

In the Mandaean cult a great deal of emphasis is placed on the service for the dead, the Masiqta, in which there is repeated an account of Manda d Haiia's descent to the world, his defeat of the evil powers, and his successful ascent. This is thought to have the almost magical effect of ensuring the successful ascent of the soul of the dead person into the kingdom of light above.

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1. M.P.B. p161-162.

2. Cf. Irenaeus Adversus Haereses. IV.18.5. & Ignatius ad Eph. XX. See also R.H.Pfeiffer. "History of New Testament Times." London. 1963 edition. p157.n97. R.Bultmann. "Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting." p227.n46. W.F.Howard. "Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism." p155ff. and London Quarterly Review. Jan. 1927.

"Mandad Haiia went to the stars. His appearance loosed the bound (souls) : he knit them into the communion that is without parting and without limit or number, by his word which issued from him in that place. All the worlds were confounded : the works of the House were destroyed and there was security for the sons of the Great Family of Life.

He planted his planting and descended to the earth (where) the hand of evil of the Lord of the House lay heavy upon them. And when wickednesses oppressed them, they beheld his radiance and some of the celestial fruits appeared to them, the strength and name of the ineffable one who is all light was revealed to them and some of his glory was communicated to them and Manda d Haiia was revealed to all who believe and love his name of Truth at the place which is wholly (inhabited by) those convicted of sin."<sup>1</sup>

Here we have reflected the belief that as well as having defeated the powers of evil in the pre-cosmic battle, Manda d Haiia has also successfully defeated the same powers of darkness who rule the earth and try to rule men. The defeat of the powers or planetary forces which are hostile to mankind is of a completely different nature to that which Jesus is held to have effected. Here the defeat is effected merely through the appearance of Manda d Haiia to the planets - as also in the Ginza tractate five, part two.

"Der Glanz und das Licht des Lebens ist aufgegangen, und Manda d Haije hat sich offenbart, um alle Welten zu beschämen. Er stürzte die ganze Götterschaft des Hauses um und brachte Zwietracht unter alle Herren dieser Welt. Als sie den Glanz und das Licht des Manda d Haije erblickten, (und den Glanz und die Helligkeit), mit denen die Männer von erprobter Gerechtigkeit gekleidet wurden, knickten die Throne ihrer Götter unter ihnen zusammen. Ihre Reihen waren daran, auf das Gesicht hinzustürzen, und sie standen beschämt da. Alle Welten, die ihn erblickten, stürzten hin und fielen auf ihr Antlitz."<sup>2</sup>

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1. M.P.B. p42.

2. Ginza 177.22-30.

The complete defeat of the powers of evil cannot be effected, however, until each soul of the 'men of proven righteousness' has been redeemed/returned to its rightful home. In order for this to happen each soul, having been tempted and tormented by hostile forces, must fulfil all the ritual requirements and be able to complete successfully the journey through the mataratas and back into the kingdom of light.

Before this happens, though, the soul is seen to be the prey of opposing forces. Despite the fact that a messenger has given comfort and guidance to the soul and is always with it as a protector, the evil planets attack both guardian and soul. As we have seen, the messenger/guardians Hibil, Sital, and Anosh were themselves saved by Manda d Haiia. In other accounts, however, the (unidentified) messenger/guardian remains impervious to the attacks of the planets and Ruha - as was Hibil in the underworld when he neither ate the food offered to him nor consummated his marriage with Zahrel, the most beautiful of Qin's daughters.<sup>1</sup>

Concerning the attack on the soul we are told that

"Die Sieben neigten ihr Haupt  
und tuschelten miteinander:  
'Lasset uns den Mana packen,  
wir wollen ihn binden und in unser Netz werfen.  
Wir wollen ihn in unser Wurfnetz einschliessen,  
in unser Blei und unsere Finsternis legen."<sup>2</sup>

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1. See pll6.

2. Ginza 480.33-481.2.

And not only is there a direct attack made on the individual soul, Ruha even states her determination to seduce the souls of those faithful to Manda d Haiia himself and she announces that "Tage, Monate, Stunden, Augenblicke und Zeiten sollen kommen, in denen die Männer von erprobter Gerechtigkeit getötet und (hier) gehemmt werden, so dass keiner von ihnen zum Lichteemporsteigt."<sup>1</sup>

The Life will not forsake the world, however, because of the men of proven righteousness, and as soon as the soul asks for help against the opposing forces a messenger/helper is sent to give the necessary aid and comfort.<sup>2</sup>

The pleas for assistance from the soul fall into several categories which can be broadly divided into requests for knowledge and requests for companions. The soul on earth suffers from ignorance and loneliness. For example,

"Der sanfte Mana sprach  
und belehrte seinen ganzen Stamm:  
'Ich bin ein einsamer Rebstock,  
der in der Welt steht.  
Ich habe keinen hohen Beistand,  
habe keinen Ernährer,  
habe keinen sanften Helfer,  
der komme und mich über jegliches Ding belehre."<sup>3</sup>

As a result of this plea we find that

"Als das grosse (Leben) den Mana vernahm,  
schuf es und sandte ihm einen Helfer."<sup>4</sup>

And the messenger himself speaks of his mission thus :

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1. Ginza 220.16-19.

2. Cf. Sophia in Valentinianism. Punishment, the need to be helped to return successfully to original home and journey back through planetary spheres is shared by both figures.

3. Ginza 346.15-22.

4. Ginza 346.23-24.

"Vom Grossen bin ich hierher gekommen,  
vom Auserwählten ging ich her.  
Das Grosse wünschte mich und sandte mich aus;  
ich bin gekommen, um die Seinigen zu belehren."<sup>1</sup>

What was actually taught to the soul included not only the accounts of the precosmic descent of the redeemer and his defeat of the evil powers there and then, but also many instructions on how these evil powers were to be defeated on earth and thus these instructions also deal with the manner of the soul's eventual ascent to the kingdom of light. Consequently there is a great emphasis on the cult and its requirements in the Mandaean gnosis. It is not surprising, therefore, to find release from the body and cultic matters spoken of side by side with no sense of incongruity<sup>2</sup>:

"Mein grosser Helfer Kam  
und liess mich den Körper des Todes ausziehen.  
Den Körper des Todes liess er mich ausziehen  
und kleidete mich in den Glanz seiner Strahlen.  
Er belehrte mich über die Totenmesse,  
die sie jeglichen Ortes abhielten."<sup>3</sup>

The last statement in the quotation apparently refers to the belief that all Mandaean rituals have their prototype in the heavenly world of the Uthras. This belief, when applied to the whole concept of redemption, provides the basis for the Mandaean belief that even the heavenly beings themselves - like Hibil, Sitil, and Anosh - had to be redeemed also for what happens to the soul on earth is, of

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1. Ginza 353.27-30.

2. "There is a blend of a doctrine of salvation through virtue and a doctrine of salvation through rites, and both virtue and rites are held to be essential." M. Boyce's description of "The pious foundations of the Zoroastrians" applies also to the Mandaeans. B.S.O.A.S. 31.

2. 1968. pp270-289.

3. Ginza 468.19-24.

necessity, previewed in heaven (Msunia Kusta).

As far as the Mandaean is concerned, then, his cult represents an earthly re-enactment of the precosmic events involving the heavenly beings among whom is his soul's rightful place. This is inevitably reflected in the two main rituals of the masbuta and the masiqta.

The masbuta is the baptismal ritual in which the heavenly origin of the soul is remembered and the whole basis of Mandaean baptism reflects the ideas held by the Mandaeans on the evocation of divine beings. The baptismal ceremony, therefore, asserts the belief that the soul of the Mandaean being baptised is, in essence, a divine being equal with the Uthras. Kraeling describes it thus:

"The process may be described as one in which the paternal power takes his stand over or at a body of water, regards his image in the water, extends to it his right hand, grasps the right hand of the image which has of course moved towards the extended right hand of the mirrored person, calls to the image, and raises it out of the water by the hand."<sup>1</sup>

It is this act which is reflected and in a sense re-enacted by the soul in the Mandaean rite.

While the masbuta may be said to parallel the creation of the Uthras among whom is the redeemer, the masiqta reflects and re-enacts the beliefs associated with his defeat of the evil powers and return to the kingdom of light above. Thus the two rites together cover

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1. C.H.Kraeling. "The Mandaic god Ptahil." J.A.O.S. 1933. pp152-165.  
Cf. M.Boyce. "The pious foundations of the Zoroastrians." B.S.O.A.S.  
31. 2. 1968. pp270-289.

the complete span of the redeemed redeemer's activity both in heaven and in earth.

When death occurs the soul is believed to begin its ascent to its heavenly home through the hostile powers in charge of the mataratas or purgatories. That death itself is seen as a release from evil and bondage is demonstrated by this exclamation made by the soul at the moment of death :

"Ich verliess die Welt der Finsternis,  
den Mischkrug des Todes."<sup>1</sup>

Here the world of darkness and the world of human existence are seen as synonymous.<sup>2</sup>

Several descriptions of the mataratas can be found in the Mandaeen literature though they are not all identical. According to the Diwan Abatur (which is aptly sub-titled 'Progress through the Purgatories') there are "seven watch-houses (purgatories) and hell-beasts and purgatory-demons" which have been set up on the road up to the house of light. They have been set there by Ptahil - here described as the son of Hibil-Ziwa - to be occupied by the children of darkness after death. The actual number of purgatories is rather more than seven when we consult the description of them given further on in this same text. Here we are told of the purgatories of Ptahil, Sunday, Great Bihram, Anosh son of Ptahil, Hibil

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1. Ginza 183.27-28.

2. Cf. K.Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." Vol.I. pl03 nl.

son of Ptahil, Kanziel son of Ptahil, Raglil son of Ptahil, Sarhabiel son of Ptahil, El-Sfar son of Ptahil, Nbat son of Ptahil, Bhaq son of Ptahil, Saturn, Mars, Sitil son of Ptahil, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, the Moon, and the Sun. However, in the Ginza narrative (tractate five, part three) the number is much fewer. The actual descriptions are also completely different and there are none of the astral associations as found in the previous text. There is the "Wachthause der Jungfrau", "des Zan-Hazazban", "des Jur, Jahur und Arhum", "des Pilpin-Pipin", and "des nichtigen Jesus Christus". The mention of this last purgatory is the signal for a large-scale polemic against Christianity and its founder's adherents "der das Leben verleugnet und Christum bekennt".<sup>1</sup>

During this tirade it is emphasised continually that only through adherence to "der Mann von erprobter Gerechtigkeit" - that is Manda d Haia - can the family of souls, the Mandaeans, succeed in returning to their original home. The temptations of leaving Mandaism and adhering to Christianity are implicitly acknowledged in the polemic where Jesus is made to say that he is "der nichtige Messias, gerieben für die Bedrängnis, weise zum Bösen, der die Pforten des Schlafes verändert, die Werke des Geistes verdreht, die frommen Männer betört und sie in die gewaltigen Nebelwolken der Finsternis wirft. Als ich euch Pflöcke und Schlüssel zeigte"<sup>2</sup>,

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1. Ginza 187.2.

2. Awareness of the tradition of Peter as the guardian of the keys?

betürte ich euch und machte euch gierig. Gold und Silber<sup>1</sup> schenkte ich euch, damit ihr mir in der Finsternis, in jenem Orte, an dem wir stehen, Gesellschaft leistet."<sup>2</sup>

Although the number of the mataratas differs according to the various traditions, one constant factor is the belief that even the souls of the Mandaeans must somehow brave these purgatories in order to reach the kingdom of light. The journey can be made easier or harder according to the actions of the soul on earth. For example, Hibil-Ziwa informs Bihram in the Diwan Abatur (p22) that "if it is (the soul of) a righteous elect person, it will rise up by means of (holy) books and prayers. If it be the soul of a priest or the soul of a worthy Mandaean, they will raise it by the border of its (ritual) dress. If it is the soul of an unworthy Mandaean, it will rise in trembling and fear. If it be the soul of a kisiaia (crypto-Mandaeans) to manas will come at it (attack it), one Bihram and the other Yuzataq. And those two Manas will attack them because sin hath apportioned in them (the kisiaia). They will not take it because they know about them. And (as for) those souls of the Twelve Gates, three manas will attack them, Bihram, Yuzataq and Sin, and they will hold them fast and loose them not, because their garments are fouled."

However, when the soul has left the bonds of the body and successfully overcome the obstacle of the mataratas we are told

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1. Indicates that church with which Mandaeans came into contact was past first stages of poverty.  
2. Ginza 188.17-22.

that :

"When she (the soul) reached the House of Life  
 She uttered a cry to the House of Life  
 And when he heard her call, the Life  
 Sent a messenger towards her  
 (Who) grasped her by the palm of her hand,  
 Conducted her, (came) to support her,  
 In the likeness of the Life, to the place  
 Of radiance, light, and beams of effulgence."<sup>1</sup>

The messenger who is "in the likeness of the Life" is Manda d  
 Haia - who is elsewhere referred to as the 'Abbild' of the Life.  
 The failure to mention the helper by name may indicate, however,  
 that the specific identity of the saviour/helper/redeemer was not  
 always a significant detail in the Mandaeans' soteriology.

On return to the original home the soul is dressed in garments  
 of light and reinstated into her rightful position.

The victory of the powers of good over the powers of evil is  
 often mentioned in connection with the safe return of the soul.

A favourite refrain is

"Life is harmonious, Life is victorious,  
 And victorious the Man who goeth hence"<sup>2</sup>.

In the Sarh d Qabin d Sislam Rba we also find

"Harmonized is Life and victorious,  
 And victorious is Manda d Haia,  
 And those that love his name."<sup>3</sup>

Here the victorious 'Man' is specifically identified as Manda d

1. M.P.B. p63. (the Ngirta).

2. This refrain occurs seven times in the Niania alone (M.P.B.  
 pp88-102) and over thirty times in the rest of the M.P.B. It also  
 occurs in the Sarh d Qabin d Sislam Rba - pp43, 55, 59, 60, 62(2X), 63,  
 80, 83, 87, 88, 95, 96(2X). "Life is victorious" alone occurs many times  
 in the entire Mandaean corpus - especially Ginza, M.P.B., Sarh.

3. Sarh. p79.

Haia. "Those that love his name" are the Mandaeans, the victorious souls who have returned to their home. The redeemer and redeemed are equally victorious, the one being essentially an aspect of the other. In distinction to the Christians who are the adopted sons of God, the Mandaeans are ontologically divine as their souls are part of the godhead itself. In the Ginza "those that love his name" are further distinguished as "das Volk der Nasoräer....die Priester und Mandäer".<sup>1</sup>

In a few 'eschatological' sections we are told that when the entire family of souls has returned to their home then

"Das Haus<sup>2</sup> vernichte er bald,  
und alle ihre Werke sollen vernichtet und zerstört werden.  
Der rechte Teil der Männer von erprobter Gerechtigkeit  
steige empor,  
der in dem Orte der Wahrhaften wohnt....

Emporsteigen sollen die Seelen der Nasoräer,  
die die Speise der Kinder der Tibil nicht genossen."<sup>3</sup>

The essential facts concerning the redeemer on earth in his role as the soul are thus :

1. he is essentially one with the godhead and the Mandaean religion can thus be said to embody the doctrine of the redeemed-redeemer,
2. the soul was cast into the body either by means of deception, as a punishment, as a privilege, or as a teacher and bringer of enlightenment (gnosis),
3. the soul is guarded by heavenly beings who watch over it on

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1. Ginza 268.34-35. See also p46-47, esp. p47. nl.  
2. the earth.  
3. Ginza 306.22-25,34-35.

earth. These guardians are attacked by the powers of evil, just as the soul is. In like manner also both the guardians of the soul and the soul itself are redeemed by the 'highest' of the heavenly beings, Manda d Haiia,

4. salvation is effected through the delivery of knowledge on ethical and cultic matters both of which are important. In some accounts the soul itself becomes aware of this knowledge - presumably through an innate wisdom which has become re-awakened into awareness of its true nature and duty. In other accounts, however, the wisdom is revealed by either one or a group of heavenly messengers who either appear docetically or in visions. The redeemer as a figure on earth is not considered a subject worthy of interest by the Mandaeans who reject completely the concept of the incarnation after the Christian fashion. Rather, when any appearance of a heavenly being is said to have occurred in historical times the interest is always a polemic one and shows the obvious influence of Christianity. Consequently it does not reflect any basic belief held by the Mandaeans, rather the reverse,

5. on the death of the body, the soul ascends through the mataratas up to its heavenly home. Again it is helped by a redeemer/saviour figure to overcome the barriers to its ascent now that it is free from the confines of the body (stuna).

## CHAPTER FIVE.

Any attempt to write on the concept of Jesus as redeemer among the first Christians is an ambitious undertaking and one fraught with difficulties in several directions. The physical limitation of only one chapter in a thesis concerned predominantly with Mandaean material is overwhelming when considering a topic on which many scholars have written countless books and articles. The presence in the New Testament itself<sup>1</sup> of more than one doctrine

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1. The discussion in this chapter has purposely been kept within the bounds of the New Testament except where secondary sources have drawn attention to Patristic material of an illuminating nature. This may perhaps be justified by the present writer on grounds of expediency and because of lack of agreement by Patristic scholars on the development of the idea of the Atonement. Cf. G. Aulen. "Christus Victor" p52 and J.N.D. Kelly. "Early Christian Doctrines" p163.

of Christ, doctrines (Christologies) which often contradict each other, is an added complication.<sup>1</sup> To this is added the difficulty of deciding on chronology and development within the New Testament which, like the Gnostic and Mandaean sources themselves, is made up of originally separate and badly dated pieces written for various audiences and in response to differing local conditions.<sup>2</sup> Any attempt to deduce the ideas concerning Jesus as the redeemer which were held by 'primitive' Christians is, therefore, extremely difficult.<sup>3</sup> The epithet 'primitive' is itself an obstacle of sorts, for who can say, on the basis of present knowledge and research techniques, which ideas contained in the New Testament corpus do actually reflect the thoughts of the earliest Christians on the matter?

Professor Zaehner, in his Gifford Lectures at the University of St. Andrews in 1968, commented that all the great world religions offer salvation to their devotees. The essential differences between them lie not in the cult but in the ideas concerning the means of attaining and the object of salvation. Thus we find that the dominant concept associated with salvation in the Eastern religions - the Indian religions and, significantly, Mandaeism<sup>4</sup> - is that of release, through knowledge or awareness of one's essen-

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1. Cf. R.S. Franks. "The Work of Christ." p34. C.Colpé. "New Testament and Gnostic Christology." Numen Supplement XIV. pp227-243.

2. See E.F.Scott. "The Varieties of New Testament Religion." pl-2.

3. Most recent examinations of the problem are by R.H.Fuller "The Foundations of New Testament Christology.", H.A.Hodges "The Pattern of Atonement." J.D.Knox "The Death of Jesus."

4. See chapters three and four.

tial being, from the confines of the body. Whether Nirvana may be attained while on earth or in the body, or re-integration with the Life belongs to the 'time' after death and escape from the body, is not so fundamental a difference as that between these religions and the dominant Western religion, Christianity. Here we find the concept that salvation involves release from sin and its effects through the death, the shedding of the blood, of the founder of the faith. Thus the story of the Passion is prominent in all four Canonical Gospels while the teaching of Jesus, his statement of what one ought and needs to 'know', varies from version to version and receives generally less emphasis than the death of Jesus and its significance for believers. What seems to have happened is that the ethical aspect of what came to be Christianity was stressed during Jesus' own lifetime but as soon as belief in his resurrection became more accepted this ethical emphasis was subordinated to the more explicit soteriological claims of the new faith.<sup>1</sup> Consequently the centrality of salvation/redemption to modern Christian theology is held to be disproportionate to its basis in the New Testament by R.C.Dentan<sup>2</sup> who attributes this unfounded place of centrality to the work of Luther. However, an examination of the New Testament with regard to this statement, while indicating that references to salvation/redemption are numerically smaller than one might expect,

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1. Hence the reversion in the so-called "New Theology" to an emphasis on the 'Message' rather than the 'Myth' of Jesus - Christianity comes to be seen as the religion of rather than about Jesus.  
 2. R.C.Dentan, article in the "Interpreter's Dictionary."

also shows that the issue was one of importance in the early Church and one on which there was a great deal of debate and disagreement.

The verb *σώζειν* - to save - occurs several times in the New Testament with approximately one half of these occurrences in the Gospels. The use of the verb is of great interest in the light of the generally accepted premise that the evangelists, while writing at a later time, do attempt to record faithfully the events of Jesus' ministry as they actually occurred, and to record, as far as they are able, the actual words used by Jesus and those with whom he came into contact. For the verb *σώζειν* is used in two distinct ways. Firstly, in contrast with the LXX use of the verb, it is used with the meaning 'to heal'. For example, Jesus tells the woman healed of a haemorrhage : *ἡ πίστις σου σεσωκέν σε* (Luke 8.48). Secondly, we find this verb in contexts referring to rescue from physical danger. For example, the disciples call out to Jesus : *Κυριε, σῶσον, ἀπολλυμεθα* when they are at sea during a great storm through which Jesus sleeps (Matthew 8.25). Even in the Passion narrative it is in this second sense that the verb is used, for example see Luke 23.35; Matthew 27.42. It is significant that for the evangelists the emphasis with regard to the death and resurrection of Jesus is not on the saving effect - in a theological sense - but on the fact that the Christian claim about Jesus is, in fact, true and, therefore, ought to be believed. Hence the frequent use of *πιστάειν* - to believe or accept as true - in the Passion narrative. See, for example, Luke 24.11,25,41; John 19.35;

20.8,25,29,31.

The noun σωτήρ<sup>1</sup> - saviour - is also much less frequently attested in the Gospels than in the rest of the New Testament. It occurs twice in the Gospel of Luke where it is found as a description of God in 1.47, and as a description of Christ the Lord - Jesus is not specifically named - in 2.11. In John's Gospel the word occurs at 4.42 where it is used by the Samaritan woman whose concept of salvation and the person of the saviour was of a different nature to that of Jesus and his followers.<sup>2</sup> It may be significant that the word is not found at all in Mark's Gospel which is generally held to contain the earliest record of Jesus' ministry.

With regard to the rest of the New Testament the word is mostly found in the non-Pauline writings.<sup>3</sup> Where it occurs in the Pauline corpus - Philipians 3.20, Ephesians 5.23 - the passages have either been disputed and held to be non-Pauline additions or else have been seen as indications of the use of the title σωτήρ from a very early time. For example, Bultmann<sup>4</sup> argues that the presence of the word in Phil. 3.20 reflects familiar usage. It does appear to be generally agreed, however, that Jesus was not called σωτήρ either by himself or others during his life-time and it must be admitted that it is not certainly known when and where the title came to be

1. See further T.W.N.T. pp966-1024, lexicons generally.

2. See further M.Gaster "The Samaritans" Schweich Lecture 1923 and J.MacDonald "The Theology of the Samaritans."

3. Referring to Jesus - Acts 5.31, II Tim.1.10, Tit.1.4,2.13,3.6, II Peter 1.1,11,2.20,3.2,18. I John 4.14 and referring to God - I Tim.1.1,2.3,4.10, Tit. 1.3,2.10,3.4. Jude 25.

4. R.Bultmann. "Theology of the New Testament" Vol.I. p79. Cf. Eph.5.23

used in the first place. V. Taylor<sup>1</sup> suggests that it came into currency quite late "and the explanation which seems most probable is that the use of the name in Greek religion, and above all in Caesar worship<sup>2</sup>, restricted and delayed its currency in the primitive tradition." In connection with the use of σωτήρ in pagan ruler worship Cullmann<sup>3</sup> points out that "it is in a certain sense a variant of the title κύριος ." It may, therefore, be possible that the title σωτήρ, in Christianity as well, came to be used as a variant for the earlier title κύριος which is very popular in the Pauline writings.

A further suggestion may also be made. Though disputed by many scholars the theory that the title σωτήρ was adopted as a result of Gnostic influence on Christianity must be mentioned. V. Taylor suggests that it was rather from Christianity that the Gnostics adopted the term<sup>4</sup> and this is generally accepted, at least by British scholars. For example, Richardson, commenting on the fact that most of the New Testament usages of the title σωτήρ most probably belong to the period after the life of Paul, writes: "It is not obvious whether any inference should be drawn from this fact - such as that it was not until toward the end of the first century that, perhaps under the influence of Gnosticism, the title

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1. V. Taylor. "The Names of Jesus." p109.

2. Hadrian was often called σωτήρ τοῦ κόσμου . Cf. John 4.42, I John 4.14. See further R. McL. Wilson. "The Gnostic Problem." p85. n4, p89. n56.

3. O. Cullmann. "The Christology of the New Testament." p240.

4. V. Taylor. op.cit. p109.

began to be commonly used of Christ."<sup>1</sup> However, it is perhaps prudent to bear in mind the comments of T. Sève-Süderbergh<sup>2</sup> when considering the subject of the relationship of Christianity and Gnosticism. He wisely points out the fact that a conflict with Gnosticism is firstly commented on by the first Christian apologists and polemicists in the second century does not necessarily indicate that Gnosticism developed only in the second century. First century Christianity, which may well have not been the same as second century orthodoxy, may not have been in opposition to an already extant Gnosticism. He reminds us that both Christian and Gnostic sources are vaguely dated, often fragmentary, and difficult to use for purely historical analysis. Consequently, on the basis of available evidence and methods, it cannot be categorically stated that Christianity could not have adopted titles and modes of expression from an independently existing Gnosticism in the first century, or that Gnosticism is a secondary development emerging either later than or out of an earlier Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

As we have seen, the verb *σωθεῖν* and noun *σωτήρ* are found comparatively rarely in the New Testament. However, other words may be found which express the idea of salvation/redemption and it is to these that we must now turn.

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1. A. Richardson. article on Salvation in the Interpreter's Dictionary. Vol. IV. pp168-181.

2. T. Sève-Süderbergh. Numen Supplement XII/1967. pp552-562.

3. Cf. R. McL. Wilson. "Gnosis and the New Testament." Oxford 1968. S. Petrement. La Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale. pp385-421. July/Sept. 1967. "Le Probleme du Gnosticisme."

Although Jesus is never described as "the Redeemer"<sup>1</sup> his life, death and resurrection are spoken of in connection with three verbs meaning 'to redeem' - ἀγοράζω (Revelation 5.9,14.3,4)  
 ἐξαγοράζω (Galatians 3.13,4.5) λυτρόω (Luke 24.21, Titus 2.14, I Peter 1.18).<sup>2</sup>

When we consider these references we find that the actual understanding of the nature of redemption is different in almost every reference. If we take the Lukan reference as reflecting a true historical incident we see that the contemporaries of Jesus, or at least the two men travelling to Emmaeus, thought of the hoped-for redemption as a political deliverance - this seems to me to be the most straightforward interpretation of the passage. The two Pauline references picture redemption as deliverance from the observance of the Law (Mosaic Torah) and Galatians 4.5 goes on to refer to the purpose of the death of Jesus as a means by which mankind might become adopted as God's sons. I Peter 1.18 refers to redemption from the futility of the past, a ransom in the form of the blood of Christ - as that of a lamb - having been paid. This blood motif is also found in the Revelation 5.9 passage which also shares the reference to Christ as a lamb. Titus 2.14 tells us that men have been redeemed from iniquity or sin and that the further purpose of the redemptive act of Jesus was not to enable us to become

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1. λυτρωτής is used of Moses as the deliverer of the Jews in Acts 7.35. The word occurs in the LXX only at Pss. 18(19).14, 77(78).35.
  2. For general background on this word and its cognates see D.Hill. "Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings." Cambridge 1967. esp.pp23-81.

adopted as sons of God, as in the Galatians reference, but to effect the purification of a people zealous for good deeds. The redemption is here seen in ethical terms which may reflect concepts associated with the Jewish Day of Atonement. This emphasis on conduct is seen again in the reference at Revelation 14.3-4. Here the redeemed are numbered at 144,000, all of whom have remained sexually chaste - this number appears to refer to men only as it is specifically stated that they have not defiled themselves with women.

It appears that the concept of redemption was thought of in several ways by the first Christians. Did Jesus himself give his followers any encouragement in this respect, did he in fact think of his life and self-foretold death as having any redemptive purpose?

From the Gospel records it is clear that Jesus preferred to speak of himself as the Son of Man.<sup>1</sup> However the number of diffi-

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1. For the most recent opinions on the whole problem of the Son of Man title see H.E.Tödt "The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition." ET London. 1963. F.H.Borsch "The Son of Man in Myth and History." ET London. 1967. A.J.B.Higgins "Jesus and the Son of Man." London 1964. M.D.Hooker "The Son of Man in Mark." London 1967. A.J.B. Higgins "Son of Man Forschung since "The Teaching of Jesus". New Testament Essays. (T.W.Manson Memorial Volume) pl31 .1. Manchester 1959. J.Knox "The Death of Jesus." London 1959. Knox points out (p87ff) that Jesus own descriptions of himself can be divided into two categories: (i) predictions of exaltation and coming in glory, (ii) predictions of suffering. After an examination of these two categories he concludes that "whereas the allusions to the glorified Son of Man are found in all strata of the Synoptic Gospel tradition, the references to the suffering Son of Man are found originally in Mark." Cf. M.D.Hooker "Jesus and the Servant." London 1959.

culties attached to the understanding of the term both as used by Jesus and understood by his followers - not necessarily the same, see for example Mark 9.32 - is tremendous. For example, it is often remarked that on several occasions Jesus appears to be referring to someone else as the Son of Man, or to mean that he is not the Son of Man yet but will become the Son of Man - in his role as eschatological judge - after his death.<sup>1</sup> This latter claim associates the Son of Man and Jesus himself with the idea of judgment and ethics.<sup>2</sup> If this was Jesus' meaning perhaps we have a more authentic reflection of Jesus' own concept of himself reflected in Titus 2.14 and Revelation 14.3-4 rather than the other New Testament passages also examined above. The natural conclusion would then be that the concept of Jesus as of more than an earthly and ethical significance is the result of some sort of external influence on the early Church. That this influence may have been Gnostic is, of course, possible even though unproven.

An examination of the attitudes towards Jesus and the several ideas concerning his essential nature do, in fact, indicate that the earliest understanding was of Jesus as a man in all the simplicity of the thought.<sup>3</sup> Originally there was no concept of Jesus as

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1. See also Mark 8.38=Luke 9.26, Luke 12.8-9.

2. At this stage mention must also be made of the theory that implied in the title Son of Man is the doctrine of Jesus' pre-existence. This is usually deduced from evidence in Enoch 48.3, 43.6, 62.7. Yet if this background was current why were the disciples unaware of the significance of the title? Why was it necessary for adoptionist tendencies to develop in the early Church?

3. Cf. J.Knox. op.cit. pp123-125.

a god descended from heaven or even of a man adopted by God. Consequently when the early Christians began to try to understand the significance of their claims that Jesus had, unlike any other and in complete contradiction of the natural laws, risen from the dead, there was not total agreement concerning his nature while he was on earth. Fuller<sup>1</sup> comments that "the very idea of incarnation, with its corollary of pre-existence, was quite foreign to the Christology of the earliest Church." However, as we shall see, the idea was taken over eventually and is reflected in the New Testament.

The first attempts to explain Jesus' nature were inevitably of the adoptionist variety. There are, in fact, three variants of this idea in the New Testament sources.

1. Mark 1.9-12. Here we are told about Jesus' baptism at the hand of John the Baptist, and the descent upon Jesus of a spirit like a dove - an ancient Near Eastern symbol of divinity.<sup>2</sup> A voice announces from heaven that from this moment Jesus is God's beloved son, or God's son, the Beloved. Some scholars therefore see reflected the belief that Jesus was adopted by God from the moment of his baptism.

2. Matthew 1.18-25=Luke 1.26-35. The view is here maintained that Jesus was adopted from the moment of his conception. In this way the evangelists have presumably attempted to account for the con-

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1. R.H.Fuller "The Foundations of New Testament Christology." p205.

2. For general background on this matter see E.R.Goodenough "Jewish Symbols in the Graeco-Roman world." 12 vols.

flicting claims that Jesus was born of a virgin and, on the other hand, that his father was Joseph but in some unique way his father was God too.

3. Acts 2.14-36 and Romans 1.3-4.<sup>1</sup> The word *ἐπισθέντος* in Romans 1.3 means 'appointed' or 'installed' rather than 'declared'. Consequently this particular passage is adoptionist in meaning and the view that the moment of adoption was that of Jesus' resurrection is maintained. The same interpretation is applicable to Peter's speech recorded in Acts 2. Here the salient verses are 2.22 where Jesus is referred to as a man, *ἄνθρωπος* not *ἄνθρωπος*, and v32 and v33 in which his resurrection and exaltation, effected not of his own volition but by God himself, are described.

Thus we have reflected in the earliest strata of the New Testament the belief that Jesus, an ordinary man, was adopted either from the moment of his conception, baptism, or resurrection. In all three instances Jesus is seen as passive, it is God who acts.

This attribution of passivity to Jesus was not accepted by all the early Christian thinkers, however, and also reflected in the New Testament sources is the belief that Jesus was pre-existent as Son of God and that he played an active part in the decision to descend to the world of men. This Christological development is usually referred to as the Kenotic theory<sup>2</sup>, from the crucial Greek

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1. Cf. A.M. Hunter "Paul and his predecessors." 2nd. ed. 1961. p26ff. Whether this passage is in fact Pauline or pre-Pauline is not of primary importance in the present discussion but in view of the 'primitive' nature of the Christology the present writer considers that it is probably pre-Pauline.

ἑκένωσεν 'he emptied himself' (Phil. 2.7).<sup>1</sup> A similar attribution of decisive activity on the part of the pre-existent Jesus - seen as the Logos - may be claimed for John 1.9 where ἐρχόμενον can be seen to imply conscious purpose on the part of the Logos. The fact that ἐρχομαι rather than πέντειν has been used by the author of the Prologue seems to justify this particular analysis.

The growing concentration on the idea of the pre-existence of Jesus is reflected in the frequency with which the name Jesus - reflecting a belief in the existence of a human so-called - is supplemented by various titles implying pre-existence, for example 'Lord'.<sup>2</sup> The earliest title 'Christ', which is used even in the Gospel narratives and with which ideas of the bearer's pre-existence are not associated, is found in the rest of the New Testament in the form of a surname, the original significance being lost to pagan converts.<sup>3</sup>

As we have already seen, the concept of pre-existence implied to some of the early Christians that this pre-existent being was active in taking the initiative regarding his descent to the earth.

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1. See further R.P.Martin "Carmen Christi." Cambridge 1967. V.Taylor "The Person of Christ." London 1958. especially pp260-276. J.Knox. op.cit. and "The Humanity and Divinity of Christ." Cambridge 1967. The poetic description of the descent to the earth in terms of richness and poverty is found also in II Corinthians 8.9.  
 2. See further Foerster & Quell "Kurios". Kittel's Bible Key Words. V.H.Neufeld "The Earliest Christian Confessions." (NT Tools & Studies Vol. V.) Leiden 1963. J.N.D.Kelly "Early Christian Creeds." p23.  
 3. J.Knox. op.cit. p78. He suggests that "Jesus actually rejected it (the title 'Christ') together with its associations (and adopted the idea of suffering instead). However, Jesus' political-type death implies some measure of connection with the political side of the Christos title." Cf. W.Manson "Jesus the Messiah." pp91-107, V.Taylor "The Person of Christ." esp. pl25.

That this belief did not extend to include equality with God, however, is seen when the ideas relating to the role of the pre-existent Lord in creation are considered. Here we find that rather than being seen as equal with God - and all that that implies with regard to co-existence etc. - he is described as "the first-born of all creation" and therefore cannot be co-eternal with God.<sup>1</sup> The concept of creation, therefore, included the pre-existent Lord himself. With regard to the creation of the world, however, the belief came to be held that it was effected  $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha$  Christ the Lord while being God. Manson points out the significance thus: "he (Jesus) has a cosmological relation to the world and to men, but this he has as the organ of creation ( $\delta\iota' \omicron\upsilon\tilde{\epsilon}$  1 Corinthians 8.6), not as the ontological source of being ( $\epsilon\tilde{\epsilon}\gamma \omicron\upsilon\tilde{\epsilon}$ )." <sup>2</sup> Cullmann's claim that the earliest confessions "make no distinction between God as the creator and Christ as the redeemer, since creation and redemption belong together as God's communication of himself to the world"<sup>3</sup> is not, therefore, quite accurate. There is, in fact, only one instance where the same formula referring to creation is applied to Christ where previously it was used to describe God only - compare Colossians 1.16 and Romans 11.36.

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1. Subordinationism is also reflected in I Corinthians 3.23, 11.3, 15.28.

2. W.Manson. op.cit. p186.

3. O.Cullmann "The Christology of the New Testament." p326.

Cf. H-F.Weiss "Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie des hellenistischen und palästnischen Judentums." Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur. Band 97. Berlin 1966. esp. pp139-166, 305-317.

The conception of a pre-existent Lord who was active either in taking the initiative regarding his own descent to the earth, or as the agent of creation was not universal, however, in the early Church. Fuller points out that the "conception of inactive pre-existence and sending lies behind Galatians 4.4; Romans 8.3,32 and John 3.16. All of these passages are traditional formulae. Their intention is not to speculate about the Redeemer's pre-existence, but to assert that the historical mission of Jesus rests on the divine initiative."<sup>1</sup>

As speculation grew regarding the pre-existence of Jesus, ideas about his appearance on earth needed to be revised. For it was no longer correct to see Jesus as a mere man who had been adopted as his son by God. He had actually come to mankind from his place beside God. How was this effected? The early Christians now had to decide whether the earthly Jesus was God's incarnate son or a docetic epiphany.

The crucial statement in Philippians 2.7 :

ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφῆν δούλου λαβὼν,  
ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος.

is actually capable of both interpretations. The idea of a self-emptying of divinity on the part of the redeemer urges one to interpret the passage as speaking of an incarnation by which the divine became human - not divine/human. However, the intimation that the

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1. R.H.Fuller. op.cit. pl95.

redeemer was in the likeness/image (ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων) of man suggests that, like a reflection in a mirror, only an image as opposed to the reality was being seen on earth. In effect, then, we have in this particular passage a reflection of the confusion and uncertainty on the issue which has continued even until the present time.<sup>1</sup>

Other New Testament passages are similar in that they reflect an ambiguity which cannot be resolved by any other means than a reversal to some theory of adoptionism. For example, John 1.14 reads *ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο*. As Barrett remarks in his commentary on John's Gospel, the verb *ἐγένετο* does not mean 'became' "since the Word continues to be the subject of further statements".<sup>2</sup> The most natural rendering would therefore seem to be 'assumed' - in the sense of taking on a mantle so as to obscure the divinity by means of a fleshly cloak.<sup>3</sup> Thus the Word appeared to men without losing or giving up any of his essential nature - he merely added to it for the immediate purpose in hand, that of appearing to mankind.

A similar ambiguity is attached to the verb *ἐφανερώθη* - as used in I Timothy 3.16. The poetic description of the descent is of no help in this issue though it is usually regarded as a general

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1. See further R.P.Martin "Carmen Christi." V.Taylor "The Person of Christ." esp. pp62-79.

2. C.K.Barrett "The Gospel according to St. John." an introduction with commentary and notes on the Greek text. London 1965. pl38.

3. Cf. the Hymn of the Pearl and Ginza narrative

parallel to Philippians 2.5-9.

While the concept of the redeemer's descent to this earth is thus tardily dealt with in the New Testament sources, the ascent from this earth - via a further descent into Hades according to certain strata - is dealt with more fully.

During the three days between the death of Jesus and his resurrection it was believed by some Christians that he further descended into "the lower parts of the earth" (Ephesians 4.9) where he went "and preached to the spirits in prison" (I Peter 3.19). This has been variously interpreted. It is possible to see in the passage a reference to the dead who have been obliged to remain in waiting until the coming of the redeemer to the earth. However, it could also be a reference to the myth of the defeat of Death and his powers who are seen by Paul - and no doubt by many others among his fellow Christians - as demonic rulers of this age (II Corinthians 4.4; I Corinthians 2.6-8) who will yet become subject to the Lord (Philippians 2.10; Revelation 5.13). Yet another interpretation is suggested by Bultmann<sup>1</sup> who thinks that the idea of descent always refers to descent to the earth and that the spirits in prison are not the dead or the demonic powers but rather the living who are in thrall to the powers of evil who control the earth. He, therefore, claims that the original meaning of I Peter 2.19 and Ephesians 4.9 "no more deals with the descent into Hell ..... (but)

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1. R. Bultmann. "Theology of the New Testament." Vol. I. p175.  
"Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting." p197.  
 Cf. Fuller. op.cit. p204ff.

follows the gnostic myth, according to which the prison of the dead is not in the interior of the earth, but in the region of the air, where the spirits of the stars, or of the firmament, keep them confined." However, the very clear reference to the "lower parts of the earth" - it is noteworthy that the actual words used are *τὰ κατώτερα τῆς γῆς* rather than *τὰ κατώτερα τοῦ κοσμοῦ* - in Ephesians 4.9 would argue against Bultmann's interpretation at least with regard to the place within which the powers of evil were dealt with by Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

By the time of Ignatius and Irenaeus, however, it was believed that Christ had brought life to the Old Testament saints by his descent to Hades when he manifested himself and preached to them. Longenecker writes, though, that "in the canonical katabasis-anabasis passages there is, on the one hand, an ambivalence which defies precise designation of the nature of the descent involved, and, on the other, a comprehensiveness which allows for the amalgamation of the two aspects of a 'descent from heaven to earth' and a 'descent from earth to Hades' - and for the development of the latter."<sup>2</sup> That it was not a belief of the very first generation of Christians may be reflected in Luke 23.43. Here we are told of Jesus' promise to the penitent thief that "Today you will be with

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1. In the New Testament a certain difference of opinion on this issue is apparent. Sometimes victory is held to have occurred with the Temptation, and at other times the Cross is seen as the place of decisive battle.

2. R.N.Longenecker "Early Christological Motifs." N.T.S. 14. no.4. 1968. pp526-545.

me in Paradise." The general impression is thus of a belief that Jesus went straight to Paradise after his ordeal on the Cross.

If this is a correct interpretation of the original thoughts of the new sectarians then this would account for the need to emphasise belief in the resurrection appearances<sup>1</sup>, and the consequent debate about the nature of the resurrection body.

According to I Peter 3.18-19 Jesus had preached to the spirits in prison not in bodily but in spiritual form. The Corinthians had, apparently, objected to the idea of physical resurrection as gross and unnatural (I Corinthians 15.51) and Paul decided only then to consider the nature of the resurrection body. Apparently earlier he had comforted them by saying that members of the Corinthian ekklesia who had died before the Parousia had dawned would be resurrected like Jesus - i.e. physically. Paul, however, was not necessarily correctly reflecting his or his colleagues original teaching on this matter<sup>2</sup>, as we find the belief in a physical resurrection body reflected in John 20.17,27 and the words of Jesus himself as found in Luke 24.39-40 would help to encourage this belief. We even find that Ignatius in his Smyrna Epistle 3.1 and II Clement 14 share this belief in the resurrection of the physical body.<sup>3</sup>

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1. vide supra.

2. See J.C.Hurd "The Origins of I Corinthians." London 1965. p229.

3. Cf. G.H.Boobyer "St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story." Edinburgh 1942. p17ff. O.Cullmann "Immortality of the Soul or resurrection of the Dead?" London 1958. (The Ingersoll Lecture 1954-1955 at Harvard University.).

Forty days after the resurrection the Ascension of Jesus into heaven took place - according to the author of Acts and possibly Luke 24.51 though this verse is subject to textual variation on this issue. The idea of Jesus' resurrection followed by his Ascension is, in fact, ignored in several New Testament sources where the emphasis is rather on the concept of an assumption and, sometimes, exaltation of the redeemer immediately after death. According to Hahn<sup>1</sup> the view of the earliest community was that Jesus was taken up to heaven by God and was waiting in a state of inactivity until his manifestation as the Son of God at the Parousia. The idea of exaltation probably arose, therefore, as a result of the development either of the concept of the pre-existent redeemer who, on accomplishment of his 'mission', was rewarded by God, or that of the exaltation of the adopted Son of God. Exaltation, therefore, can either be conceived as the re-instatement at a higher level than before of the pre-existent redeemer or as the installation into heaven of the adopted Son of God. In either case the initiative for the action is ascribed to God. (See Romans 4.24; 8.11; II Corinthians 4.14; Galatians 1.1; Philippians 2.9; I Peter 1.21).

Fuller claims to have discovered three strata in the New Testament Christologies which he has designated "Earliest Palestinian", "Hellenistic Jewish", and "Gentile Mission" respectively.<sup>2</sup> Whether

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1. Hahn - quoted in Fuller. op.cit. p198 n9.

2. Fuller. op.cit. p243ff.

we agree with his analysis or not, it is evident that there were at least two major Christological patterns in the New Testament sources which diverge at the two most controversial points in the discussions of Jesus' nature, namely his nature both before and after his death. These two systems may be generally held to maintain either that Jesus was pre-existent or that he was adopted by God and that after his death he was re-instated - to a higher rank than that held previously? - or exalted to a place of honour as God's adopted son. Inevitably several refinements of these two main systems were themselves often disputed, for example whether the pre-existent redeemer was sent or came down to earth on his own initiative. Belief in Jesus' earthly ministry and death were inevitably maintained by holders of both general Christologies though with differing emphases.

Having examined the ideas connected with the nature and actions of Jesus, we must now consider the ideas on his significance for mankind. Again we shall see that several theories were advanced by the several groups within the early Christian community.

There is evidence within the New Testament and in the writings of some of the Fathers that Jesus was held up as an example to Christians in certain situations. The emphasis is on Jesus' death as an example of obedience, courage, and self-sacrifice through self-discipline. For example, in I Peter 2.21 the author, in order to encourage the recipients of the letter who are facing - or about to face - some sort of ordeal (not necessarily persecution) urges

that "to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." Also the Kenotic Christological passage in Philippians 2.5-11, while its original purpose as a separate hymn was no doubt of a different nature, in its present position in the epistle is there to serve a didactic function as reviewing the humility and obedience of the redeemer as an example to his followers.<sup>1</sup> The Ephesian epistle also contains this motif in the passage in which Paul exhorts the converts to give up their pagan practices which they "did not learn from Christ." Augustine further describes Jesus' whole life as one of example : "Tota itaque vita eius per hominem quem suscipere dignatus est, disciplina morum fuit."<sup>2</sup>

This ethical view of the Christ-event, however, reflects only one of the emphases placed on the understanding of Jesus by the early Church. While it does not exclude other ideas it fails to reflect or imply them to any great degree, especially in connection with what was probably the most important conception of Christ's death as that of a ransom. This concept saw the death of Jesus not so much as an example of self-sacrifice to be heeded or not by those who thought about such things, but more positively as an act which took effect whether man realised it or not. This idea has been the subject of much debate and investigation and it must be examined in detail in order to reflect its importance for the early

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1. See R.P.Martin. op.cit. pp71-76.

2. Augustine. De ver. relig. XVI 32 quoted by H.E.W.Turner in "The Patristic Doctrine of the Redemption." London 1955. p46.

Church.

The concept of a ransom<sup>1</sup> involves the ideas of restoration and enfranchisement, which are not quite the same. A ransom has to be paid by an external source in order either to procure the restoration of someone to his original position or to free someone who has never been free before. In one sense the ransom payment is the enslaved person's due, in another sense it is a gift, e.g. see Romans 3.24. The ransom is either offered to or demanded by the person holding the prisoner captive.<sup>2</sup>

In the New Testament the word ransom - λύτρον - is found only at Matthew 20.28 and Mark 10.45. However, the word ἀντίλυτρον is found at I Timothy 26; ἀπολύτρωσις is used at Hebrews 9.16; Colossians 1.14; Romans 3.24, 8.23; I Corinthians 1.30; Ephesians 1.7, 14; 4.30, and the verb λυτρόω occurs at Titus 2.14; I Peter 1.18-19 and Luke 24.21.

The word λύτρον in Matthew 20.28 occurs in the third prediction of the Passion made by Jesus. In all three cases he speaks of the suffering of the Son of Man to which the idea of the resurrection is added in the second prediction and the idea of the death as a λύτρον in the third. In opposition to F.V.Filson, who thinks the passage means that Jesus, as the Suffering Servant,

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1. Cf. Büchsel. T.W.N.T. 'λύτρον'. Vol.IV. ET 1967. pp340-356.

2. See further D.Hill "Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings." Cambridge 1967. He draws a distinction between voluntary self-sacrifice and self-sacrifice on demand from an external agency. Because for him ransom is always demanded by an external agency he sees as meaning not ransom but rather "atoning substitute." (p81).

will save the people from their sins,<sup>1</sup> T.H.Robinson who suggests that the context is to be understood in the light of the sacrificial animals killed as sin offerings with which he compares Jesus<sup>2</sup>, and A.W.Argyle who, like Filson, brings into his understanding of this passage the idea of release from sin and bondage to sin<sup>3</sup>, it must be pointed out that nowhere in the passage is there any warrant for equating the Son of Man and the Suffering Servant<sup>4</sup> or for introducing the idea of sin. The most natural interpretation of the passage is to see in it a plea for humility and service<sup>5</sup> after the example of Jesus who is prepared to die ἀντὶ πολλῶν, that is as a substitute for his many disciples. In this light the origin of the saying probably lies in the decision to die for the sake of saving his followers from being executed for the political crimes with which he realises he is going to be charged. Only in this light can he be seen as a scapegoat. In this sense also, the ransom is paid to the authorities who will kill him and will ensure the free-

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1. F.V.Filson "A Commentary on Matthew." London 1960. p217.

2. T.H.Robinson "Matthew" London 1937. ppl67-168.

3. A.W.Argyle "Matthew." Cambridge 1963.

4. See further M.D.Hooker "Jesus and the Servant." London 1959. especially pp92-102, 134-146. C.K.Barrett in "New Testament Essays" (T.W.Manson Memorial Volume) ppl-18. J.Knox "The Death of Jesus." pp87-109. R.H.Fuller. op.cit. p46. "Jewish precedent for the messianic interpretation of the atoning power of the vicarious suffering of the messiah is patently lacking. This means that unless we can find in the New Testament specific allusions to atoning suffering for many (for which there is no Jewish precedent) we cannot possibly postulate the influence of the characteristic features of Isaiah 53. And wherever we find the title 'Servant' or other allusions to the Servant Songs, we must avoid reading into these passages the concept of the atoning power of vicarious suffering."

5. vide supra.

dom of his companions. In this instance, therefore, the ransom is surety against the threat to his companions rather than a means of effecting their actual release. These comments inevitably apply also to the Markan parallel which repeats the same information verbatim.<sup>1</sup>

In I Timothy 2.6 the word ἀπολύτρωσις is of less significance than the word μεσίτης in the verse above, for it is only by considering this word that one can come to any understanding of ἀπολύτρωσις in this context. Here we have the idea of Jesus as a ransom ὑπέρ and not ἀντὶ πολλῶν.<sup>2</sup> The concept is not of a substitute but rather of a representative (mediator).<sup>3</sup> Whereas the idea underlying the use of λύτρον in the Gospel passages was one of Jesus "embodying" the many, here it is of Jesus "symbolising" the many. As mediator he represents but does not stand as a substitute for his followers.

In the rest of the New Testament passages we find that - as when the verb σώζειν was being discussed - that the predominant conception is one of release - either from sin/iniquity and its bondage as in Colossians 1.14; Ephesians 1.7; Titus 2.14, from the Old Covenant and its demands according to Hebrews 9.15 and I Peter 1.18-19 (which can be interpreted as meaning that) or from the

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1. Cf. C.B.Cranfield. "St. Mark." Cambridge 1959. S.E.Johnson. "A Commentary on Mark." London 1960. C.F.D.Moule. "Commentary on Mark." Cambridge 1965. B.H.Branscombe. "The Gospel of Mark." London 1937.

2. Cf. H.A.Hodges. "The Pattern of the Atonement." London 1955. p46. n

3. Cf. D.Hill. op.cit. p81.

pagan customs which many Christians renounced on conversion, depending on one's interpretation relating to the recipients of the letter. Romans 8.23 can also be held to refer to a release from the effects of evil committed by man while in his human form.

As Michael correctly points out : "The meaning of redemption in the New Testament is distinguished from that which the word acquired in later doctrine..."<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, the predominant motif is one of release rather than ransom in its true sense - a realisation of this even prompts New Testament scholars to comment that "in the light of this general meaning it is unfair to press the more usual specific meaning and to ask to whom the ransom was thought to be paid".<sup>2</sup> For the early Christians it was sufficient that they had been delivered from sin and its effects - note that the idea of release from death is probably a secondary development owing to Hellenistic influence - which, according to the general Biblical emphasis ought to result in a new ethical and practical awareness, a new Christian life, and details of the process of how and why were left for the speculation of later generations of Christians.

These later Christians were given some hints on the issues involved, however, by the New Testament writers themselves. For example, John 12.31 tells of the defeat of the world ruler, the Devil. The means by which this defeat was effected, therefore,

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1. F. Michael. T.W.N.T. ET. 1967. Vol. IV. pp340-356.  
2. B.H. Branscombe. op.cit. p191.

became the object of speculation resulting in a fairly constant theme. This involved the idea of Jesus as firstly the apparent victim of the Devil through his death and secondly of Jesus as the victor through his defeat of Death and the Devil himself through his resurrection. The concept of Jesus as a ransom therefore came to be understood as that of a payment to the Devil by his death, a ransom which therefore secured the release of mankind from the bonds of Sin and Death, for by his resurrection Jesus had also defeated Death itself. This latter belief, while being implicit in the New Testament, e.g. I Corinthians 15.21, was made explicit in the writings of later generations of Christians. Athanasius, for example, describes the cross as the "monument to His victory".<sup>1</sup>

How the victory was actually effected was subject to a certain amount of debate though. It is generally agreed that the Devil was rightly and reasonably overcome but there is disagreement about his right to control over mankind in the first place. It was most commonly held that the Fall of Adam resulted in a 'right' to have power over men on the part of the Devil. By his fall Adam had caused all successive generations of men to be subject to Sin, Death and the Devil.<sup>2</sup> Certain of the Fathers like Gregory of Nazianzus, however,

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1. Athanasius. De Incarnatione Verbi. 30.

2. In connection with this it is necessary to consider the meaning of the phrase ἐφ' ᾧ in Romans 5.12. Lyonnet argues that the correct interpretation is ἐν ᾧ, following the Latin versions generally where they read en quo. See Biblica 36 1955 pp436-456. It seems more likely though that one should translate causally as in the Peshitta, Origen and most old Greek exegetes, i.e. as ἐπὶ τούτοις ὅτι because. The possibilities are thus (i) Death came because all men sinned i.e. all men are their own Adams, or (ii) Death came to men as an inevitable consequence of Sin.

argued that the Devil had no rights at all as he had tricked Adam. There could never be any notion of a transaction between God represented by Jesus and the Devil. The Devil was a thief who stole what was not originally his. The idea of Jesus' death as a ransom paid by God to the Devil in order to effect the restoration of his rightful property, mankind, is therefore neither accurate nor reasonable. This attitude is held by modern scholars as well as the Ancients and Hodges, for example, comments that the Devil has no legitimate claim to a ransom as we were not captured by legitimate means. Neither can Satan be seen as a brigand for a brigand, while demanding a ransom, loses nothing himself. Satan, however, did not demand a ransom yet he lost what he still desired. Consequently, "our salvation has nothing in common with the paying of a ransom except this, that we are delivered from slavery at a great personal cost to the deliverer."<sup>1</sup>

Variations on the idea of a ransom being paid to the Devil do occur though, in spite of the general popularity of the concept. Often the belief that the Devil had over-reached himself in his treatment of Jesus is reflected. The background to this belief that Jesus was mistreated lies in the understanding of mankind as sinful and therefore legitimate prey for Satan and, in contrast with us, the sinless figure of Jesus against whom, therefore, the Devil has no legitimate claims. This concept is occasionally embroidered by

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1. H.A.Hodges. "The Pattern of Atonement." pp38-39.

the idea of the deception of the Devil who could not have known with whom he was dealing, Jesus being in disguise.<sup>1</sup> According to Aulen "this idea enjoyed great popularity and seems to have met with little serious criticism."<sup>2</sup>

Belief in Jesus as sinless man inevitably suggested an Adam-Christ typology to the early Church, who found the general arguments in this connection already set out by Paul.<sup>3</sup> See, for example, I Corinthians 15.45; Romans 5.12ff; Ephesians 2.15; Colossians 3.10. The lack of emphasis on this concept until Irenaeus and the comment in II Peter 3.16 indicate that Paul was in advance of his time and that only later were his ideas understood and, in some cases, used as the starting point for further speculation.

Paul represents Christ as the founder of a second creation of free men newly restored to their rightful position as before the Fall. Just as Adam was the originator of a race doomed to Sin and Death, so Jesus was the founder of a new creation of redeemed men free from the chains of Sin and Death.

Paul's concept of a renewed mankind is interpreted in two ways. The earliest view is that of a return to the pre-Fall state.<sup>4</sup> Man was thus returned to that state of immortality for which God had intended him. A second development - with New Testament sanction

1. Cf. the Gospel of Nicodemus. See Hennecke "New Testament Apocrypha." ET London 1963.

2. G.Aulen. "Christus Victor." ET London 1937. p64. See also his account of the work of M.Riviere on p52.

3. See further M.Black. S.J.Th. 1954. pl70ff. C.K.Barrett. "Christ and Adam." R.Scroggs. "The Last Adam."

4. See D.Hill. op.cit. ppl63-201.

at II Peter 1.4 - was that of belief not merely in immortality as men but in immortality as God's adopted sons. This was not a claim to belief in man's equality with God through the work of his son but a claim to deification via adoption. Athanasius, reflecting this view, speaks of υἱοποίησις rather than θεοποίησις.<sup>1</sup>

Like almost every other belief this one was also challenged by equally orthodox members of the Faith. In this instance Justin claimed that immortality in the second sense was the prerogative of God alone. Because man could never become God, he could never become divine through adoption.<sup>2</sup> And even Justin could claim New Testament support in the words of I Timothy 6.16.

Even on the extent of Jesus' redemptive power there is disagreement. The two stands were either that of universal redemption or the salvation of an elect. The general New Testament teaching is universalist in tone - for example, I Timothy 2.6; Romans 11.32; I Corinthians 15.22-28; I John 2.2 - and Fathers like Origen and Gregory of Nazianzus believed that at the Final Judgment even Satan and the rest of the damned would be saved. There are exceptions to this view however and it would appear that the first small group of Christians believed that they were the Chosen Ones of God and the question of admittance of Gentiles into the ranks of the Church met with much opposition on certain fronts. Even Augustine taught that owing to the rebellion in Heaven when Satan and his angels were cast into

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1. Athanasius. De Inc. 54.

2. Justin. Dialogue 88.

Hell the numbers available in Heaven were limited to the number of those cast out. Only this number of men would, therefore, fill the spaces in Heaven, the rest being predestined to eternal damnation together with Satan and his companions.

Having considered the nature and significance of Jesus as the Redeemer as understood by the first generations of Christians we see that no central doctrine emerged to be held by all Christians and accepted in all details. Rather, the fact of redemption and of the redemptive work of Jesus came to be asserted generally without agreement on all details being necessary to the Church's existence.

The main concepts are as follows:-

1. Jesus was either adopted as the Son of God or was the pre-existent Son of God.
2. If pre-existent, he was either passive and therefore sent to the earth by God, or active and came of his own initiative.
3. Before his descent (if pre-existent) he may or may not have been instrumental in the act of creation of the earth and man, but if he was it was as the agent of creation and not as the ontological source of being.
4. His death at the hands of men was a sacrifice either on behalf of or in the place of his followers. He was, therefore, either a substitute or a mediator for mankind.
5. His death was possibly followed by a further descent into Hades, the reason for this being subject to various interpretations.

6. His ascent from the dead is in the form either of a physical or a spiritual resurrection body.
7. After forty days - according to Lukan writings only - he is held to have ascended into heaven. This ascension can be viewed either as an exaltation or as an assumption.
8. Jesus' redemptive work is seen either in a substitutionary or mediatory light. In the former case, therefore, man is absolved of all the results of his sin; in the latter, he is defended but is still held accountable for his actions at the Last Judgment.
9. The effects of Jesus' death are seen to apply either universally or selectively, the earliest belief being in the selective application of the redemption - hence the development of the Gentile issue among the first apostles.

## CHAPTER SIX.

The question of the type and date of the connections between the redeemed-redeemer figure in 'classical' Gnosticism and the figure of Jesus as redeemer in Christianity is extremely complex. On the basis of textual evidence Christianity appears to be the older system historically, yet certain features of Christianity are most easily explained in the light of an hypothetical dependence on an earlier Gnostic system. On the other hand, 'classical' Gnostic texts are not available for the pre-Christian period - if they ever existed - and it remains as a hypothesis only to suggest that 'classical' Gnosticism as witnessed to in the second century AD is really a pre-Christian phenomenon which, though possibly enriched by Christian concepts, was not substantially altered.

To attempt to compare the redeemer concept in Christianity with that in Mandaëism - and to formulate conclusions on the basis of such a comparison - is to introduce yet another complication into the debate. For as we have seen earlier<sup>1</sup>, Mandaëism cannot accurately be held to be normative for 'classical' Gnosticism nor 'classical' Gnosticism as normative for Mandaëan studies. For Mandaëism appears to have been originally a primitive water cult with links with the old religion of Babylonia which was influenced by and itself exerted influence on - an alien Gnostic system at a later date.<sup>2</sup> As a result of this the Mandaëans altered their attitude to the world but in such a way that their earlier, more optimistic acceptance of the world can still be detected.

This raises the question of the origin of the redeemer myth not only in Christianity but also in 'classical' Gnosticism. For if the Mandaëans, already possessing their own particular ideas on salvation, were merely influenced by the Gnostic pessimism and disregard of the world, is it not possible that the 'classical' Gnostic groups witnessed to in the second century became influenced by the Mandaëan hope of redemption/return from the world to their original home in the Kingdom of Light?<sup>3</sup> As Kraeling wrote as early as 1929: The issue might be formulated in the words: Have we in the religious

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1. See pp2-4.

2. See p48ff., pl47.

3. Cf. K.Rudolph. "Die Mandäer." Vol.I. pl02 nl. "Wir im Mandäischen die mythologische Primärform des gnostischen Erlösungsglaubens vor uns haben."

tradition and thought of the Mandaic sect the key to the origin and development of the concept of redemption as it found expression in nascent Christianity and in Hellenistic syncretism?"<sup>1</sup> It is with the first part of this question that we are concerned<sup>2</sup> and in order to facilitate comparison of the Mandaic and Christian concepts the material has been subdivided into four main sections:-

1. Who is redeemed?
2. From what is redemption effected?
3. How is redemption achieved?
4. Why is redemption necessary?

#### 1. Who is redeemed?

Before considering the specific question of the identity of those believed to be redeemed in the two systems it is necessary to point out that the very use of the word 'redemption' and its cognates is different within the two traditions. For the Mandaeans the word means predominantly 'return' while to the early Christian the word had associations of release from a certain type of bondage, release which, in certain contexts, may be understood as 'ransom'.

The 'redeemed' in the Mandaean system can be divided into three specific groups. Initially, because the godhead was  $\tau\omicron\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ ,

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1. C.H.Kraeling. "The Origin and Antiquity of the Mandaeans." J.A.O.S. 49. 1929. pp195-218.

2. The present writer is continuously aware of the limited scope of this study.

redemption is of those who broke away from the godhead. The internal revolt within the pleroma of the godhead resulted in the production of a faction opposed to yet derived from the pleroma. The need to reinstate this faction led to the necessity of evolving a means whereby the pleroma could be made whole once more. Mandaeism, therefore, witnesses to the belief in a pre-cosmic split within the godhead<sup>1</sup> with the subsequent need to 'redeem' the rebellious elements. This redemption is thus the means of effecting a 'return' to 'wholeness' of the godhead. The myth of the pre-cosmic redemption therefore involves the basic notion of a redeemed redeemer (salvator salvandus/erlöst erlöser).

When the myth of the pre-cosmic redemption of the rebellious Uthras is considered in detail<sup>2</sup> we also find that together with redemption seen as a 'return' it is also viewed as 'recovery'. For as well as attempting to re-instate the rebellious 'aspects' of the godhead, the heavenly redeemer (Hibil-Ziwa/Manda d Haiia) also recovers and brings back to the Kingdom of Light the gimra umrara.<sup>3</sup> The heading for this particular section might therefore read "Who and what is redeemed?" - at least with regard to the Mandaean side of our study.

The redemption/return of the godhead in pre-cosmic times is paralleled in cosmic times by the redemption of the soul<sup>4</sup> and its

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1. Cf. H. Jonas. "The Gnostic Religion." & "The Bible in Modern Scholarship." (ed. Hyatt). He makes this one of the criteria for 'classical' Gnosticism - of which he thinks Mandaeism is normative.

2. See chapter three.

3. See ppl11-122.

4. See Bevan. "Hellenism and Christianity." Cf. Sophia in Valentinianism. (pl54 n2).

guardians. It is a faecture of Mandaeism that all cosmic events have been fore-shadowed and 'mirrored' in pre-cosmic times in the Kingdom of Light.<sup>1</sup>

As we saw in chapters three and four, the soul, itself essentially one with the godhead, is cast into the body for one of several reasons. According to one stratum of the tradition the soul is deceived into entering the body which is seen as a place of punishment. Here the parallelism with events in pre-cosmic times is preserved, the soul is the equivalent of the rebellious Uthras and the body seen as the equivalent to the Kingdom of Darkness. However, because the rebellious Uthras were visited by a heavenly redeemer, the soul also is visited in like manner. In the most primitive tradition the soul is itself the heavenly redeemer through possession of an integral Wisdom or insight. Elsewhere, the Mandaean tradition demonstrates its independence of the Christian tradition even in later traditions where the concept of the redeemed-redeemer is continually maintained and the concept of an incarnate deliverer continually rejected. Only in a very few instances in generally later strata is there any idea of a redeemer coming to earth in physical form, and even in these instances the appearances are docetic and described in language which clearly reflects Christian influence whether it be orthodox or not.

Lack of Christian associations in the development of the

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1. See p31 for description of the application of this view to the Baptismal ceremony of the Mandaeans.

central ideas associated with redemption is also demonstrated in the attitude of the Mandaeans towards the salvation of the body. Throughout the Mandaean writings we find that the body is regarded as a mere shell once a person has died. Salvation is not of the body but of the soul. Consequently, when hindrances to redemption are discussed they always relate to the state of the soul on its journey outside the stuna or body through the various mataratas or purgatories - though the promise of redemption is given to the soul while still in the body.

"Those 'Drops' who depart the body without a Letter will remain in the purgatory of Libat (Venus) and will be put to the question until a saviour goeth to (aid) them."<sup>1</sup>

"We, the Great Life, made all the mysteries and we freed the soul so that she should not remain encaged (in the dead body). That which we brought out of our midst will come (back) and return to her place, but not in that appearance in which she went forth from among us. When she cometh hither (to be) with us, she will not return."<sup>2</sup>

Unlike Paul, who asserts a belief in the physical body as the seed from which the spiritual body will develop ( ICor. 15.35ff), the Mandaeans have absolutely no regard for the body once its 'occupant' has died. For it is at this point, all due ceremonial having been observed, that the soul can begin its long journey through the purgatories. Sometimes the journey goes smoothly but on other occasions a soul may be held up in a particular matarata. As we have

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1. ATS. p225-226. (Drower's translation).

2. ATS. p188. (Drower's translation). Cf. the position of Sophia in Gnostic systems generally and Valentinianism in particular.

seen in the quotation above, those 'Drops' (females) who have died before the Ngirta or Letter ceremony has been performed are obliged to stay in the purgatory of Venus until a saviour goes to their aid. Here the redeemer figure is an un-named Uthra who helps the souls which have already begun their journey to the Kingdom of Light above.

The question must now be asked: Do the Mandaeans believe that every single soul will ultimately be redeemed? In reply we can answer that, as in the Christian tradition, two strata are apparent. According to one stratum in the Ginza, for example, the distinction between the Mandaeans and the rest of the world for soteriological purposes is blurred. "Manda d Haije offenbarte sich allen Menschen kindern und erlöst sie von der Finsternis zum Lichte, von der Dunkelheit zum Lichte des Lebens."<sup>1</sup> On other occasions, however, the Mandaean is favourably contrasted with and distinguished from the rest of mankind who are described as "fat worldlings" in the Diwan Abatur (p6). Again we find the Mandaeans believing that they were singled out by the Life himself and on many occasions they are described as "meine Auserwählten" and "Männer von erprobter Gerechtigkeit". The Life is described as the "Redeemer of all the faithful". The Mandaeans' assertion that mankind can be divided into two groups, themselves, the offspring of Eve and Hibil disguised as Adam, and the offspring of Adam and Eve, the rest of mankind, prevents any apparent paradox in their separatist beliefs from becoming indefensible. The exclusive nature of those who will be redeemed reaches

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1. Ginza 182.28-30.

a peak in the assertion that

"Einer steigt von tausend empor,  
zwei von zehntausend.  
Zur Skina des gewaltigen, ersten Lebens  
steigen die Seelen der Mischung und der Lüge nicht empor."<sup>1</sup>

In conclusion, it may be said that the Mandaean beliefs with regard to the question: Who is redeemed? are as follows:-

1. The godhead itself which, in certain guises is the redeemer figure, the soul and its guardians, is redeemed. Redemption, therefore, involves the process of returning from a state of rebellion on the part of certain aspects of the godhead - whether pre-cosmic Uthras or cosmically-orientated souls - to a state of unity as existed originally. (Cf. the 'classical' Gnostic concept of ἀποκατάστασις).

2. A certain ambiguity may have originally existed with regard to the extent of the redeemed. Mandaeism, however, seems to have remedied this at some stage by positing the theory/belief that mankind is made up of the children of Eva and Hibil, i.e. the Mandaeans, and the offspring of the first human pair, Adam and Hawwa.<sup>2</sup>

In comparison with this, however, the Christian views on the same subject are of a completely different nature. There is no parallel concept to the belief in the fall of a divine spark from the godhead into matter with the consequent need for the spark/soul

1. Ginza 310.36-40. See also Ginza 179.24ff.

2. N.B. Eve = Hawwa. Cf. Valentinianism which distinguishes between πνευματικοί - saved by nature - ὀλικοί or σαρκικοί - irrevocably doomed - ψυχικοί - either to experience limited salvation or be either saved or damned depending on actions.

to return to its origin. Neither is there any radical dichotomy between the body and the soul. As we saw in connection with Paul, the general Christian view was that the body could be - and often was - the agent of evil, but was not inherently evil itself. As a result of this the description of the body as a seed from which a new spiritual growth could develop was possible in Christianity but could never have been entertained in Mandaeism - or 'classical' Gnosticism.

In Christianity, as with Mandaeism, we do find, however, a similar sort of confusion over the extent of the redeemed. The same confusion exists between the thought of a universal hope of redemption and that of a limited elect who, alone, would be redeemed. Consequently, on the one hand we find the Judaistic belief that redemption is offered only to those who are under the Law, redemption being for those Jews who accept their Messiah in Jesus and for those pagans who have duly become proselytes within the Jewish faith before making the transition to the status of Christian. In contrast with this the Pauline theology proclaims salvation for all on the basis of faith alone - see especially Romans - and I Timothy 2.1-5 informs us that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

## 2. From what is redemption effected?

Mandaeism shares with 'classical' Gnosticism the radical dualism of Light and Darkness. (This does not indicate Mandaean

dependence or otherwise on Gnosticism, both systems being most probably dependent on the Zoroastrian contrast between Ahura Mazda and his realm of Light and the opposing lord of Darkness, Ahriman.) Both systems describe redemption in terms of escape from Darkness to the Light.

"....von der Finsternis zum Lichte, vom Irrtum zur Wahrheit, von der Untreue und Auflehnung zum Gebet und Lobpreis, vom Unglauben zum Glauben an euren Herrn."<sup>1</sup>

This Darkness is further described in terms of the world and more exactly as the body. With reference to the world the Mandaeans pray thus :

"Deliver us from this world which is all sinners and from the sorceries of the children of Adam and Eve."<sup>2</sup>

Here the world with its inhabitants - those offspring of Adam and Eve in distinction to the offspring of Hibil disguised as Adam and Eve - is seen as a place of sin and sorceries which aim at trapping the soul and turning it from its true salvation.

The guilt associated with such sorceries and sins is also to be escaped if at all possible :

"Thou wilt raise us up as sinless and not as guilty, As virtuous and not as vicious before thee, Manda d Haiia."<sup>3</sup>

"And the Mighty Life will be our Support, Deliverer and Saviour, and Manda d Haiia will redeem us from sin and lift us out of the clutch of the planets."<sup>4</sup>

In this second quotation a direct link is made between the

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1. Ginza 17.21-23.

2. M.P.B. p22.

3. M.P.B. p35.

4. ATS. p291. Cf. *εἰσπαρμένη* in Gnosticism generally and in earlier Hellenistic astrological fatalism.

evil, which besets the world in general and the Mandaeans in particular, and the powers of the Planets. Here again a link with 'classical' Gnosticism exists and once more the origin of the concept in both cases is most probably Babylonian astrology which, in the Hellenistic world, combined together with Greek fatalism - Stoic εἰσαρπένη - and apparently had the same effect on the Greek world as "some new disease falls upon a remote island people"!

Here the Planets are believed to be the visible manifestations of the powers of evil which, in the Mandaean myth, were born of Ruha and her son and paramour, Ur. They are seen as the rulers of the world, the perverters of all goodness and the seducers of the weak and faithless.

Not only to be avoided on earth, they are to be shunned as much as possible during the journey back to the Kingdom of Light. The journey involves passing through the various purgatories which they unfortunately control. In connection with this particular hazard, therefore, the Mandaeans pray for "a deliverer<sup>1</sup> (to save them) from the twin pits which Ruha dug on the road."<sup>2</sup> These "twin pits" are not the earthly pitfalls and snares with which the Mandaean comes into contact on earth; they are those a-terrestrial traps which his soul must overcome in order to regain his rightful place in the Kingdom of Light.<sup>3</sup> For redemption is not automatic at death

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1. Parwanga means guide. Often a pun on paruka/deliverer/redeemer is possibly to be detected - as here.

2. ATS. p246, p83 in transliteration.

3. Some 'classical' Gnostic systems include passwords for the soul to secure its safe passage through the planetary spheres.

even if the necessary ritual has been carefully observed. And while redemption from the earthly persecution of the Planets can be mitigated by a proper deference to the priests and Nasoraeans<sup>1</sup> a saviour is necessary at this more advanced stage in the redemptive process.

As intimated earlier, the Darkness from which the Mandaean desires to be released is also seen in terms of confinement in the stuna or body. Redemption - here in the sense of 'escape' - from the body is also, therefore, desirable. For the body is the means of temporarily confining the soul on earth and preventing it from making the return journey back to its true home. Escape from the body by death is not, therefore, one of the things from which the Mandaean seeks release or salvation. Death is no enemy but rather a friend. For only through death can the soul become liberated and hope to achieve its true destiny.

With regard to those things from which redemption saves him, the Mandaean would, therefore, list the following: Darkness which symbolises the world and the body, the heimarmene of the Planets, the sin and associated guilt which the Planets work to produce in man, and those traps set by the Planets and their originator (Ruha) to seduce the soul from his destiny on his ascent from the body and the general confines of the earth up to his home in the Kingdom of Light.

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1. ATS. p275.

In comparison with the Mandaean myth-dominated system of redemption with its relatively meagre stress on sin and guilt, the Christian soteriology lays great emphasis on this aspect of redemption. Throughout the Gospel narratives we are told of the forgiveness of sins and its desirability.<sup>1</sup> It is this aspect which is placed in a mythological framework by Paul. In the Epistles we are told of the lordship of Sin (Romans 5.12;6.12;6.14), of Sin as a world-dominating power (Romans 3.9), how Sin dwells within man and spiritually maims him (Romans 7.11ff), how, together with Death, it rules in the world (Romans 5.12ff). This sin is described as having entered the world with the original sin of Adam - a concept which has no place in Mandaeism - and as having produced death by which to exercise control over mankind. Sin was in the world from the time of Adam but not recognised or reckoned as such until the advent of the Law (Romans 5.13). Consequently redemption for Paul is from the hold of Sin and Death over mankind. This is in radical contrast with the Mandaean soteriology where, as we have seen, Death is welcomed as an ally in the movement away from the earth and all its limitations. The parallels between the two systems at this point are, therefore, only very superficial.

### 3. How is redemption achieved?

According to the Mandaean literature the supreme means of achieving redemption, that means which embraces every other, is

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1. See Mark 2.10;Matthew 6.12;9.6,13.

through gnosis/knowledge. The Mandaean gnosis is a secret knowledge which embraces information about the redeemer figure himself, the soul and its origins in pre-cosmic times, its ethical and cultic needs in cosmic circumstances, and finally its needs relating to its ascent from the confines of the body back to its heavenly home.

The secrecy attached to the Mandaean gnosis is found in those strata which speak of Mandaeism as a separatist, non-universalist system of redemption. We are accordingly informed that ;

"The First Life declaimed (against) and Manda d Haiia cried out against any Nasoraean man who revealeth the secrets of his fathers, (and) I, the Father of Uthras, will expunge him from my scroll because he separated himself(from) the worlds of light, (from) Nasirutha and from my Garment."<sup>1</sup>

"Anyone who discloseth to all men that which is contained within the bounds of this pure Mirror will incur dire disgrace."<sup>2</sup>

This secret gnosis is revealed to the Mandaeans, however, for

"The Father sent them a revelation, that is a messenger, one that called them and sent them forth and said to them : Reveal this mystery to them, this great commentary, (this) Lamp which enlighteneth darkened hearts. It giveth judgment, (decideth) between road and road, boundary and boundary, and path and path for (the benefit of) any Nasoraean man who seeth (consults) this mystery."<sup>3</sup>

Here the word meaning 'revelation' also means 'scroll' and the 'agent' of revelation also. The agent of revelation therefore brings the means of redemption which is contained in a scroll which

1. ATS. p111. Cf. the Apocryphon of John.

2. ATS. p113. Sentiments like this were to cause extreme difficulty to E.S.Drower in her search for scrolls. See further MMII.

3. ATS. p275. Cf. the Letter in the Hymn of the Pearl.

itself assumes a certain reflected sanctity as the container of a God-given revelation.

The true means of redemption is thus the Life himself who is apostrophised as the "Redeemer of all true believers"<sup>1</sup>, but for practical purposes the revealed gnosis is the means available to the Mandaeans.

The gnosis, therefore, tells the recipients not only about the godhead but also about their own true origin. In this sense the gnosis is therefore a revelation of self-knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

Self-knowledge embraces not only knowledge about one's origins but also a code by which to live in one's present state and instructions on how to ensure one's ultimate return to the Kingdom of Light above. Consequently, Mandaean gnosis contains an elaborate realistic ethical code dealing with daily life in the confines of the body.<sup>3</sup> The rituals enjoined upon the Mandaean during his earthly sojourn are thus an integral part of his process of salvation. He is reminded that

"Every man who observeth faithfully these esoteric injunctions shall come to my Dwelling and shall abide (therein)."<sup>4</sup>

These "esoteric injunctions" include the seven important rites in the Mandaean ceremonial : the coronation of priests, marriage, baptism, masigta, rahmia, ngirta, dukrania.

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1. Ginza 5.20;31.16 et.al.

2. Cf. Numen Supplement XII/1967.

3. Cf. libertine/ascetic views of 'classical' Gnostic sects.

4. ATS. p116.

"Over any man who hath perfected himself in these seven the planets have no dominion, nor are they permitted to overlook him. Amongst Uthras he is peerless."<sup>1</sup>

Through the correct enaction of the masiqta "spirit and soul are delivered from darkness into light."<sup>2</sup> And with reference to the ngirta also, "over(a soul) which beareth a Letter (ngirta) in her treasury, they (i.e. the purgatory demons) have no dominion. They said : "Because of the masiqta we will not torture her."<sup>3</sup>

If a mistake is made in the ritual the worship is then directed not to the Life as originally intended but becomes re-channeled to the rulers of the world, the planets, who probably caused the mistake to be made in the first place. Inevitably this hinders the soul's ascent heavenwards.

"Euch sage ich, meine Auserwählten, euch lehre ich, meine Gläubigen. Lobpreiset nicht die Sieben und Zwölf, die Leiter der Welt, die bei Tag und nacht wandern. Denn sie verleiten zu Verfehlungen den Stamm der Seelen, der aus dem Hause des Lebens hierher verlegt wurde."<sup>4</sup>

The soul is thus helped by observing the correct ritual and code of behaviour while on earth. Faith in his true knowledge relating to his own origins and destiny is, therefore, linked with an ethical awareness and duty towards the community of which he is a temporary member only.

Faith in his own origins and destiny is also synonymous with faith in the Life. The Mandaean gnosis is essentially self-gnosis.

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1. ATS. p255.

2. ATS. p260.

3. ATS. p275.

4. Ginza 24.26-25.2.

"Meine Auserwählten! Habet Vertrauen auf den hohen Lichtkönig, den Herrn aller Welten, auf die rechte Weisheit, die Kusta und den Glauben, die erhabenen Reden und die wundersamen Befehle, die euer Herr gegeben. Denn durch sie kommt euch Sieghaftigkeit, durch sie wird eure Seele erlöst."<sup>1</sup>

At this stage it becomes necessary to consider the nature of the heavenly redeemer who brings the secret gnosis to the Mandaeans. As we saw earlier<sup>2</sup>, the scroll, its contents and the agent by which the contents were mediated were each given due respect. For the essential factor relating to the Mandaean heavenly redeemer figure is that he is seen throughout as a mediator of gnosis - insofar as redemption applies to the soul in the cosmic period and on earth. His activity is that of mediation through revelation. Very occasionally something approaching the concept of a docetic appearance is intimated but this is rare. Only in the Ginza tractate IX and later in tractate XI (Right Ginza) is the so-called 'earthly' ministry of Manda d Haiia mentioned. Here the usual assertion that the true doctrine was proclaimed to Adam himself is disregarded. The attempt to indicate their superiority over Christianity, a threat to their traditions, has here resulted in an unwitting compromisation of their own canonical beliefs.

The usual mode of revelation, whether named or otherwise, is described in terms suggesting the materialised, personified nature of what is essentially an abstract 'aspect' of the godhead. The heavenly redeemer figure in Mandaeism can, therefore, be seen in

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1. Ginza 40.15-19.  
2. See pp210-211.

several guises, each of which plays its part in explaining and clarifying the general system of Mandaeism but which is generally subordinate to the general knowledge that the Mandaean gnosis is supremely a self-gnosis. Thus the figures of Manda d Haiia, Hibil-Ziwa, the several un-named saviours, and the soul itself are all forms of the heavenly redeemer in Mandaeism - and each is an 'aspect' of the supreme godhead.

In contrast with this, the Christian message is not one of self-knowledge but rather of the Love of God for his erring people. This message is mediated not via the souls of men or docetic revelations but through the adopted or incarnate son of God, the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth. Men are unable to achieve their own salvation without the atoning work of Jesus. Self-knowledge, therefore, plays a wholly subordinate role in the Christian scheme of redemption. Only in those sections where Jesus is put forward as an example, with the implication that through true self-knowledge one could be like him, is there any intimation of this belief. More usually redemption is held to be effected by belief in the death of Jesus on the Cross as the necessary sacrifice to effect a reconciliation between man and God. A historical incident is, thus, put forward as having supreme notoriological significance for the world.

Even in those parts of the New Testament where a mythological approach to the question in hand has been used, the structure is only superficially like that of the Mandaean myth on the same subject.

For while the Mandaean myth is largely dominated by the account of a pre-cosmic descent into the world of rebellious Uthras where the heavenly redeemer effects the rescue/ return of a part of the godhead, his return through the mataratas and subsequent reception back into the Kingdom of Light, the Christian myth is dominated by the historical nature of Jesus' ministry with the result that the myth is limited to the cosmic sphere and subject to speculative differences when any attempt to depart from the historical circumstances is attempted.<sup>1</sup> Thus the New Testament itself is characterised by the existence of internally conflicting Christologies which are unable to agree on such a-historical questions as Jesus' position and activity before his appearance on earth and after his crucifixion.

#### 4. Why is redemption necessary?

In Mandaeism the need for redemption is directly related to and, infact results from, the belief in the identity of the soul of man and the godhead itself.

The concept of an internal rebellion in the pleroma of the godhead goes back at least as far as the Enuma elish with which the Mandaean were undoubtedly acquainted.<sup>2</sup> As a result of the rebellion there ensued a split within the godhead. In pre-cosmic times, there-

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1. "The difference between the Christian hope of resurrection and the mythological hope is that the Christian hope sends a man back to his life on earth in a wholly new way which is more sharply defined than even in the Old Testament." Bonhoeffer quoted by Ved Mehta. "The New Theologian." London 1965. p192. While the Mandaean myth emphasises ascent from the earth, Christianity emphasises renewed life on earth.  
2. See pp49-52.

fore, the godhead itself needed to effect its own re-unification, a return to its original state. Thus, in Mandaicism, this is described in a mythological form which tells of the revolt and the resultant formation of the Kingdom of Darkness opposed to the Kingdom of Light, the descensus ad inferos of Manda d Haiia/Hibil-Ziwa, 'modes' or 'soteriological aspects' of the godhead, and the redemption or return of at least part of the original fullness of the godhead.

Mandaicism is characterised by the belief that events and existence itself on earth are reflections of situations in a heavenly context. Also, the belief accepts that temporal reality reflects a pre-temporal, pre-cosmic state. As a result of this the soul is held to be the cosmic equivalent of that part of the godhead which fell into the Kingdom of Darkness and which was subsequently redeemed/returned by the saving action of the heavenly redeemer. In order for the soul to be able to return to its true place within the godhead, therefore, it is necessary for information about its true origin and destiny to be made known. Mandaicism, therefore, is essentially a saving gnosis, a gnosis of true self-knowledge.

Mandaean gnosis (Nasirutha), therefore, consists of three main sections : firstly, knowledge of the origin of the soul and its pre-cosmic redemption; secondly, information about its needs and duties during its temporary sojourn in the world<sup>1</sup> and, more specifically,

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1. The Apocryphon of John and other Gnostic texts also relate a myth of cosmic origins, sometimes including pass-words for the journey back through the planetary spheres, but there is little on ethical matters. Extreme libertarian, anti-ethical conclusions were sometimes justified by belief that world was created by the demiurge, creator God of the Old Testament Law. A Gnostic was, therefore, obliged to act contrary to the ethical standards of the Law.

the body; thirdly, instructions and comfort relating to its journey back to its true home in the Kingdom of Light.

Like the saving action of the heavenly redeemer in pre-cosmic circumstances this saving gnosis is mediated by the heavenly redeemer or saviour who, as we saw previously, can be portrayed either as Manda d Hailia, Hibil-Ziwa, an un-named Uthra, or the soul itself. The Mandaean need for redemption, therefore, evolves out of the essential heavenly or divine nature of the soul, the return of which to the Kingdom of Light effects the re-unification, the salvation, of the godhead itself. The general mythological description of how redemption was effected is, therefore, of less importance than a realisation of the reasons why it is necessary and how it may be effected in the cosmic situation.

When we turn to consider Christianity on this particular issue we see yet again the many dissimilarities between the two systems, dissimilarities of a radical nature and depending on a root difference in initial conception and design.

Christianity, not possessing any doctrine of the equality, indeed the unity, of the soul with the godhead, does not share the same basic premise as Mandaeism with reference to its scheme of salvation. Redemption is not viewed as an ontological re-union of soul and godhead but as a resumption of an entente cordiale. Even Jesus, the heavenly redeemer, is not seen as an essential part of the godhead until well after the early Christian period. In distinction from the Mandaean view of the heavenly redeemer - in any of

his guises - Jesus is not seen as equal with God but rather as his agent, either adopted in cosmic times or created by God - and therefore not equal with God - in pre-cosmic time.<sup>1</sup>

Just as those things from which salvation is effected are different, so the reasons making salvation necessary are different. According to the Gospel writers and to Paul, the root reason for the necessity of salvation lies in the existence of sin - and, as a result of sin, death. Salvation, therefore, aims not at a re-unification of soul and godhead but rather at a return to that state of existence which appertained to human life before the original sin of Adam. While Mandaean redemption can be seen as a return to a state of bliss like that in the pre-cosmic, pre-temporal state in the Kingdom of Light, Christianity's view of redemption can be seen as a return to a cosmic and temporal state of innocence, good and evil existing but not known rather than the root and cause of the need for a system of redemption.<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion, the words of Bauer writing on the relationship between the Johannine writings in particular and Mandaeism in general may be quoted :

"In no case is the similarity of such a kind that we are obliged to assert the dependence of the one entity upon the other."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Here a reminder that the period being considered is that of the 'primitive' stages of Christianity, well before the Christological debates of the third and fourth centuries. See p164.

2. Cf. p215 nl.

3. W. Bauer. "Das Johannesevangelium." p4. Quoted by V. Taylor in the Hibbert Journal. 28. 1929-30. pp531-546.

With the next part of his conclusion, however, agreement must be suspended. He goes on to write :

"Rather must both have sprung from the same cycle of thought (view), and have shared in the same store of terms, symbols,<sup>1</sup> and figures, especially of religious conception and speech."<sup>2</sup>

For we have tried to show that where similarities between Mandaeism and Christianity do exist<sup>2</sup>, they relate not to a common store of terms and presuppositions but rather to a Mandaean desire to assert its equality - if not superiority - with Christianity. Throughout our study we have seen that the presuppositions of the two groups are dissimilar - even mutually exclusive - and Mandaeism, not apparently coming into contact with Christianity - whether orthodox or otherwise - until the third century or thereabouts (certainly not very much earlier) cannot be said to owe its redeemer myth in its essential form to Christianity - or vice versa.

The relationship between Christianity and 'classical' Gnosticism and Mandaeism and 'classical' Gnosticism is, however, still uncertain. It would appear to the present writer that it is in this sphere of connections and inter-connections that dependence of one group on another must be sought, and despite much contemporary German scholarship in this area of study generally much still remains to be clarified and systemmatized.

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1. *ibid.*

2. See pp149-151.

## GLOSSARY.

Abatur. Father of the Uthras. The name was probably a modalistic or functional description of the Life or God of the original Mandaean. His denigration from his original high position to his place as Abatur of the Scales, the dispenser of justice to the souls returning to their original home, shows the influence of foreign religions on the Mandaeans. In his new role as Abatur of the Scales he is the Mandaean equivalent to the Persian Meher Davar - Mithra the Judge - at the Cinvat Bridge. See also p

Anosh. One of the many Uthras in the Mandaean pleroma. In some accounts he appears on earth in the time of Pilate. His work on earth is described in terms parallel to those used of Jesus' earthly ministry in the Gospels. In these passages Anosh is intended as a rival to Jesus, the whole point of the passages being polemical. E.S.Drower - in ATS p293 - thinks that "he seems to be a personification of the human race", but there does not seem to be any reason for this unless  $\text{W}]\text{X}$  is equated with  $\text{X}\text{W}]\text{X}$  which means a "human being".

Anatan. One of the lords of the underworld, the Kingdom of Darkness.

Assanda. An apprentice priest or novice.

Ayar Rba. The personification of pure air or ether. E.S.Drower - in ATS p293 - thinks 'he' corresponds to the Zoroastrian Ram-Khvastra and the Iranian Vayah. cf. also the "most thin air" of the Essenes.

Ba. This is the name given to the dove which is sacrificed before a masiqta or at the service of initiation into the priesthood. There is no mention of this practice in the Liturgy or texts like the Ginza and any transcriptions of a late date have 'bh' - 'in her' - which is not very satisfactory. Oral tradition maintains that it represents the sensual or emotional spirit in mankind which, at birth, becomes joined with the mana. In some instances, though, the ba is equated with the mana itself. E.S.Drower thinks the name may indicate Egyptian influence as the bird which is portrayed as hovering over a mummy in Egyptian funereal art is also called the ba. Together with the ka the Egyptian ba also portrays an aspect of the human spirit. It is perhaps significant, in respect of the apparently late adoption of the dove into its tradition by the Mandaeans, that Christian tradition pictures the spirit of God as a dove - see Mark 1.10 for example.

Bimanda. The Mandaean cult hut. It literally means "house of

knowledge" and is synonymous with skinta.

Dabahata. literally "of the fathers".

Dews. These are spirits of the underworld, usually the helpers of the numerous lords of the underworld. Like the Persian "daevas" they are sometimes said to be fifty-four in number. The Ginza (p223) speaks of them as the male counterparts of liliths.

Diwan. a scroll.

Dukrana. Literally the word means a "mentioning". It is the name of the ceremony of the commemoration of the dead during the five intercalary days.

Fatira. This is a disc of unleavened bread of no particular size which is used in the masiqta ceremony.

Frat-Ziwa. The name of the heavenly river from which come all things including the Life himself. The name of the river is literally the "dazzling or radiant Euphrates". cf. Genesis 2.14 where the name פֶּרַת is given to the earthly Euphrates river.

Gaf and Gafan. These are two of the rulers of the underworld. Unlike the powers of light who are always mentioned as distinct

entities or individuals the powers of darkness are often mentioned in pairs - cf. the syzygies of 'classical' Gnostic systems.

Ganzibra. The name literally means "treasurer". A ganzibra is a high priest, one rank above a tarmida or ordinary priest.

Gimra. This word is of varied and uncertain meaning. It is fully discussed on pp III - II5.

Ginza. As a noun it means a "treasure" or "treasury" and by extension can be applied to cult objects generally and the food and drink at ritual meals. It is the title of the largest collection of Mandaean writings.

Habsaba. Sunday - the day or a personified spirit. The earliest strata of Mandaean tradition have no knowledge of Sunday as a special day and later tradition shows signs of contact with a well-developed Christianity by which the Mandaeans were influenced in this respect. When spoken of as a spirit it is as the ruler of one of the mataratas though not as one of the powers of darkness who have control over the most important mataratas.

Hag and Mag. Two rulers of the underworld. See the comments on

Gaf and Gafan.

Hibil-Ziwa. Sometimes referred to as Jawar-Ziwa, this Uthra is also identified with Gabriel as creator spirit of the world and Manda d Haia as redeemer spirit of both man and the godhead. His name means the "dazzling or radiant Hibil".

Jawar-Ziwa. Literally the name of this Uthra means "dazzling radiance".

Joshamin. The word is derived from יהושמינ meaning "God of Heaven". For further information see pp 122-123.

Kana d Zidqa. Literally the "receptacle/container of righteousness/charity." In the Sarh d Qabin d Sislam Rba (p37) it is personified together with Habsaba and the pair are described as witnesses to the marriage of Sislam Rba.

Krun. A king of the underworld. He is otherwise described as "the great mountain of flesh".

Kusta. Faithfulness, sincerity, truth. Sometimes personified but most frequently the word is found in the context of the ceremonial handshake and kiss which demonstrates one's true friendship and bond. The ritual handshake takes place at ceremonies like baptism and marriage. Originally the handshake most probably represented and re-enacted the raising of the image of the god from the heavenly waters in which the image was first seen.

Lilith. A female spirit most often mentioned in connection with magic but not always possessing evil intent. The word also occurs in the Old Testament - Isaiah 34.14 - where it is sometimes translated as "night owl". This reflects the Jewish tradition that the name was derived from לַיְלִית - night. While the etymology is doubtful the associations are clear. According to Brown, Driver and Briggs it is the name of a female night demon which haunted desolate Edom and they state that it was probably "borrowed from Babylon". Late Rabbinic tradition said that Lilith was Adam's first wife and that together they begat strange children. For further information see G.Parrinder's "Witchcraft : European and African." London 1963. ppl23ff.

Mana. The word means a "vessel or container" and has become used as a word meaning intelligence, mind or soul while originally it was more correctly understood as the container of that mind. (a process of concretum pro abstracto.). It is of Iranian origin.

Manda d Haiia. Literally "knowledge of life", the regular equivalent of the Greek Γνωσις τῆς ζωῆς and the Coptic π-ειπε-ν-(ρη) which C.H.Dodd suggests as an equivalent to "Poimandres". Nöldeke pointed out that here we have an example of the dissimulation of 'n' instead of reduplication which is found elsewhere in Mandaic derivatives of the root יט' .

Drower and Macuch have noted that the dissimulated Western-Aramaic

form is always used as a religious term while the reduplicated form is used for the simple noun 'knowledge'. Pallis has tried to argue that the dissimulated form indicates that the name was a secondary borrowing from a foreign source - which he does not specify. However, Nöldeke writes : "Bei einigen Worten bleibt es jedoch zweifelhaft, ob ein solches ']' ursprünglich oder secundar ist." (Mandäische Grammatik." p75).

The Mandaean term Manda d Haiia actually occurs in the Syriac text of the Benedictus (Luke 1.77) and Manda was the name given to the divine reason by Bardaisan. (See further R.Macuch's "Handbook of Classical and Modern Mandaic." pl1:22.).

Mandaia. The Mandaean laymen, an exact equivalent of the Greek  
 ἱερωστικοί '.

Mara d Rabuta. Lord of Greatness, one of the titles of God.

Masbuta. Baptism in 'living' i.e. flowing water. This is always distinguished from the Christian rite which is known as manudita.

Masiqta. Literally an 'ascent'. The mass for the dead; it assists the ascent of the soul to the world of Light. Communion meal - which is part of the ceremony - can be compared not only with the Christian Eucharist but also with the Zoroastrian Chasni.

Matarata. Purgatory - conceived as being in several layers.

Melka. A king - used to describe the earthly priest, a bridegroom, a heavenly being, with certain demonstratives - e.g. Melka d Nhura (King of Light) - the godhead itself.

Mrara. Of uncertain meaning. See further on Gimra and p

Msunia Kusta. "A world of ideas in which the prototypes of all earthly things and beings exist." A kind of Mandaean heaven. Drower-Macuch suggest translating as "roughly 'the sublimated of Truth'".

Namrus. One of the names of Ruha.

Nasirutha. That which is known and guarded - the true gnosis.

Nasoraia. The priests of the Mandaeans, those possessing Nasirutha. Zimmern suggests that the name comes from the Akkadian 'nasir piristi' - guardian of mysteries. The idea of guardianship is dear to religious groups, e.g. the Shomerim - Samaritans - Guardians (of the true tradition).

Ngirta. The 'Letter', a ceremony performed for a dying Mandaean. A small phial of holy oil is placed in the clothes of the dying

person. An apprentice priest (asganda) acts as proxy for the dying person and makes the ritual handshake (kusta) with the officiating priest. See further MMII. ppl69-173.

Nisimta. A semitic name for the soul, sometimes used as a synonym or parallel with mana.

Paruga. Reddemer, saviour.

Paruanqa. Messenger, guide. Often used to make a pun with paruga. Pallis suggests it was assimilated - it is a Persian loan word - because of similarity (phonetic) with paruga. See also Nöldeke's "Mandäische Grammatik" p418.

Pihta. The sacramental bread at the masigta ceremony.

Ptahil. The theophoric ending identifies a heavenly figure but there is debate about the meaning of the first element - whether it reflects the Egyptian name Ptah or the verbal root 'pth' meaning 'to open'. See also p

Qin. One of the female demons of the underworld, consort of Anatan. If a demonic heirarchy can be said to exist she is the grandmother of Ur, though she is sometimes identified with Ruha his mother and paramour.

Rahmia. Devotions.

Rasta. The complete ritual dress of the Mandaean to which the priest adds a ritual staff, a ring and a silken 'crown'.

Rba. As a noun it means a priest - c.f. Rabbi - as an adjective it means great (rabuta - greatness).

Rkiha. Sky, firmament.

Ruha. Most prominent evil female demon, mother and paramour of Ur, associated with Venus (Libat). As a personification of the human spirit she typifies the lower, sensual side of human nature. As Ruha d Qudsa she embodies a very polemical reference to the Holy Spirit of Christianity. (Incidentally this last reference demonstrates the Mandaean view of the Christian trinity as a family of Father, Son and Mother, which hardly reflects a knowledgeable attitude to Christianity and its beliefs.).

Sarh. An explanatory commentary used by the priests in matters of ritual and belief.

Sdum. One of the lords of the underworld.

Sidra. order, row, system, book.

Sislam. The heavenly prototype of the Mandaean priest and bridegroom. C.H.Gordon thinks the name reflects Cretan influence. In a libation tablet from Palaikastro which he has translated we have - re ya-sa (sa-ra-mu...) ki-te-te-pi ki-re-ya-tu - "to Yasaslam, that the city may thrive." This Yasaslam occurs on one third (six out of eighteen) of the cult objects and Gordon thinks he can be equated with the Mandaean Sislam. Drower points out that Sislam is not mentioned in the Ginza which suggests to her that the figure may be "a late aggrandisement of the sacerdotal caste" and an accretion "due to an Iranian environment after emigration to the south-east." The meaning of the name - 'consummated perfection' - is characteristic of Mandaean naming of the deity in his various aspects.

Sitil. The name is often described as the theophoric ending plus the name Seth. Cf. Ptahil. This particular figure is sometimes portrayed as an uthra in the triad of Hibil, Sitil and Anosh. More often he is described as the earthly Adam's son who offers himself to the Life when his father, Adam, is reluctant to leave the earth. This description, in fact, provides the more correct explanation of the name : it is derived from the root 'stl' - to transplant. Sitil is thus the transplanted soul. There is no need to stray beyond Mandaeism itself for an explanation of its mythical characters, at least not in this case.

Skinta. The dwelling place, the abode of heavenly beings. It is occasionally used to refer to the bimanda or cult hut.

Tana. A word of uncertain meaning. The various contexts suggest to Drewer (ATS. p15) that it might be either a place of glowing heat, a crucible, a matrix, or heavenly beings (possibly personified smoke or vapour of some sort).

Tarnida. An ordinary priest.

Tibil. The earth.

Ur. One of the lords of the underworld. He is a prominent opponent of Hibil-Ziwa. He is both the son and paramour of Ruha.

Uthra. A spirit of light, always good.

Yahia-Yuhana. John the Baptist.

Yardna. Water, not the Jordan. The heavenly yardna from which everything proceeds is called the Frat-Ziwa, the light or brilliant Euphrates.

Zahrel. A beautiful demon in the lower world. She is offered to Hibil-Ziwa in marriage by her mother, Qin.

Zartai - Zartanai. Two of the rulers of the underworld. See on Gaf and Gafan.

Ziwa. Light, brightness, radiance. It is often used as an attribute of heavenly beings, e.g. Hibil-Ziwa - Hibil the Bright or the dazzling Hibil. Drower (ATS. p16) remarks that "This appears to be an active and male power of light in the mystical teaching or inner gnosis of Mandaeans ; whereas nhura (light) represents its female complement." But this is too arbitrary a distinction as is witnessed by the description of the Life as Melka d Nhura - King of Light.

## ABBREVIATIONS.

- ATS : Alf Trisar Suialia - the Thousand and Twelve Questions.  
A Mandaean text edited in Transliteration and Translation  
by E.S.Drower. Berlin 1960.
- BSOAS : Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies.
- HERE : Hasting's Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. Edinburgh  
1926.
- JAOS : Journal of the American Oriental Society.
- JNES : Journal of Near Eastern Studies.
- JTS : Journal of Theological Studies.
- MMII : The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran. E.S.Drower. Oxford 1937.
- MPG : The Canonical Prayer Book of the Mandaeans. edited and  
translated by E.S.Drower. Leiden 1959.
- NTS : New Testament Studies.
- NUMEN Supplement : Studies in the History of Religions.  
Volumes XII and XIV. Leiden 1967 and 1968.
- OLZ : Orientalistische Literaturzeitung.
- SJTh : Scottish Journal of Theology.
- TLZ : Theologische Literaturzeitung.
- ThR : Theosophical Review.
- TWNT : Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament. edt.  
G.Kittel. 8 vols. Stuttgart 1933. ET 5 vols. Michigan 1967.
- ZRGG : Zeitschrift für Religions und Geistesgeschichte.

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