

THE CONCEPTION OF REDEMPTION IN THE GNOSTIC THEOLOGIES OF  
THE FIRST AND SECOND CENTURIES.

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## P R E F A C E

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The present study is an attempt to trace the development of the Gnostic conception of redemption from the almost pagan systems of the Ophites to the classical Christian Gnostic schools of Marcion, Basilides and Valentinus. The earlier forms of Gnosticism are connected with various elements of Oriental mythology: the more developed Christian systems emphasize Christ as sole redeemer, and set forth something of the mystery of the love of God, which sets men free from the evil of this world. Gnosticism approaches closely to Christianity in the fragments of Heracleon, and also in the Odes of Solomon, which I believe to have been hymns of redemption composed by a Christian Gnostic writer. The Gnostics, however, always regarded redemption as an enlightenment which was limited to a certain number of chosen spirits. This exclusiveness which Gnosticism shared with the mystery religions was the cause of its later departure from Christianity, and of its reversion to paganism under the influence of Egyptian magic and the Oriental cults of the dead.

In Chapter 2 I have sought to derive certain pagan elements of Gnosticism from early Babylonian and Persian sources. I have drawn upon the monumental findings of Bousset and Reitzenstein in this field of inquiry: yet I feel that neither of these scholars has sufficiently explained the way by which these ancient religions reached the later period of

the Gnostics. I believe that certain of the early myths of the primitive Mandaean religion constituted a media via for the transference of the ancient Babylonian and Persian myths of a descending redeemer, and also of the widely-held theory of the ascent of the soul, into the Gnostic systems. The Gnostic belief in redemption through Gnosis, a form of mystical enlightenment which was granted by a Supreme Being, appears to have distinct affinities with the Hermetic religions of ancient Egypt.

The chief sources of my investigations have been the Patristic writings on Gnosticism, and the remains of certain of the Gnostic writers. My indebtedness to such modern scholars as Bousset, Anz, De Faye, and Reitzenstein is apparent throughout this thesis. I also wish to acknowledge the helpful suggestions and kind encouragement which I have received from Professor W. Manson in the course of my studies.

John B. Corston.

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Chapter I. The Gnostic World - Sources and Con-  
temporaries of Gnosticism.

1 - 38.

## Chapter I.

The Gnostic systems bear the stamp and character of the age in which they were produced. They represent a deeply rooted feeling of dissatisfaction with the existing world order, a consciousness of the power of evil, and a longing for a higher form of existence.

The most profound source of this pessimistic view of the universe is to be found in the fatalism of contemporary astrology. Astrology, invested with the authority of theology, proclaimed man's complete dependence upon the stars and upon the physical elements. The stars act upon the vast organism of the world as inexhaustible sources of energy, and therefore they exert a peculiar effect upon man, since man is a microcosm in whom each element has a relation to some part of the starry heavens. Human history and human morals reflect the strife of the elements and the changing of the planets. Human life, with all its misery, is fatalistically determined, under the power of *Ἐιμαρμένη*. Human freedom is really only empty madness, since the laws of fate compel each soul to submit to bondage. Man, with his sinful corporeal nature, becomes a prey and a plaything in the hands of evil divinities, and "the sum and substance of the religion and morality of this world philosophy is fulfilled in willing submission to the caprices of chance, in abandoning faith and hope, and in obeying the commandment of *Ἐιμαρμένη* as its soldier and slave."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Wendland: Die Hellenistische-Römische Kultur. P. 171.

This conception of the starry heavens and the whole visible universe as an evil and demonic whole stands in great contrast to the religious ideas of the Hellenic world. Since Plato's time the stars had held sway as beneficent deities in the religion of the educated Greeks; and the upper world, where these light beings had their proper sphere, was regarded as a peculiarly divine entity. Posidonius constantly describes the ecstasy of those who were transported to the stars and who felt themselves entering into communion with these higher deities. "In these transports the soul did not only win to infinite power, but also received from heaven the revelation of the nature and cause of the celestial revolutions. Thus even in this life it had a foretaste of the beatitude which would belong to it after death when reason, rid of the weak organs of the senses, would directly perceive all the splendours<sup>2</sup> of the divine world, and would know its mysteries completely." The igneous substance of the human soul is regarded as being closely related to the stars above. The man who contemplates the stars is not crushed by any sense of inferiority or pettiness, for he knows he is united to these visible deities by a deep identity of nature.<sup>3</sup> This communion with the higher astral deities enabled men to understand the nature of heaven and earth, the existence of God, and the destiny

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2. F. Cumont: After Life in Roman Paganism. P. 30.

3. Vettius Valens: IX. 8.

of their own lives.<sup>4</sup> According to Cumont<sup>5</sup> these astrological doctrines were derived principally from the Chaldaeans, and many of these writers even insert moral and mystical thoughts into their technical theories. Critodemus promises that the truths which he will reveal to his readers will raise them to<sup>6</sup> immortality, and provide them with a refuge from the world. Vettius Valens implores his readers not to divulge his secret<sup>7</sup> teachings to the ignorant and irreligious masses.

The transition from this astral worship to the radical dualism of the Gnostics is very marked indeed. Various influences contributed to this development, all of which are Oriental in origin. The most powerful of these forces is evidently to be found in the widely disseminated doctrine of the descent of the soul into the lower world. According to this theory, which is ultimately derived from Babylonian and Iranian sources (c.f. Chapter II), the human soul at birth descended to this earth from its heavenly home, passing through the series of the seven planets, and acquiring certain qualities from each of these in the course of its passage. After death it returned to its original abode by the same route, and after casting off all its accretions of sensuality and passion it penetrated to the highest heaven as a pure essence, there to live forever in bliss, free from the tyranny of fate. During its abode here on earth, however, the soul was subject to all

4. Manilius: II. 115. Quis caelum possit, nisi caeli munere, nosse, et reperire deum, nisi qui pars ipse Dei est.  
 5. F. Cumont: Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism. P. 170  
 6. Vettius Valens: III. 12.  
 7. Ibid: IV. 11.

the bitter necessities of fate, and especially to the captivity of the human body, which enclosed it like a prison or tomb. The Neopythagoreans regarded generation as a fall, and as a danger for the soul, which afterwards ran the risk of corruption or of complete destruction. Life on earth was a trial and a chastisement. "The constant care of the sage was to keep his soul from pollution by its contact with the flesh. He abstained from meat and from other foods which might corrupt it; a series of tabus protected it from all contagion. Ritual purifications restored to it its purity, which was continually threatened." <sup>8</sup> This separation of spirit from matter is particularly evident in Gnosticism. The Syrian Gnostics regarded matter as an active power of evil, encroaching on the kingdom of light and infecting it with an abominable mixture. There is a dualism common to all Gnostic sects which emphasizes a fundamental opposition between God and the world, between soul and body, between life and death. Above is the eternal kingdom of light and goodness, and below is the perishable realm of darkness and evil. The earth is a mixture of both kingdoms, and occupies an intermediate position. Man himself is connected with both of these kingdoms. His spirit belongs to the upper world of light, and he is essentially a part of the radiance of the Divine Being: yet at the same time he is imprisoned in the lower world of darkness and in sinful matter. From his spiritual connection with God he derives all that is good and

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8. Cumont: After Life in Roman Paganism. P. 24.



virtuous within himself; but as a result of his material separation from God he is heir to all evil and sorrow. He is subject to life or to death according to the arbitrary supremacy of the light-element or of the dark-element, the spiritual or the material, within himself.

This astrological dualism was very closely connected with the Ptolemaic system. According to Ptolemy, the terrestrial world formed the centre of the universe, and the atmosphere which surrounded it was composed of the three primary elements, air, fire and water. Near the earth the atmosphere was dense and dark, but the higher air was purer and lighter, being influenced by the "higher fires". Above this higher air were the seven planets, seven concentric spheres surrounded by ether. The fixed stars formed an inclusive sphere outside these seven wandering planets, and beyond this sphere there was only a void, or ether. This conception of the universe was therefore a strictly limited one, and the depths of the firmament were never regarded as unfathomable. "The conception formed of the world was static, not dynamic. It was a machine whose wheels turned according to inscrutable laws, an organism in which all the parts were united by reciprocal sympathy as they acted and reacted on each other."

This view of the earth as being surrounded by a series of rigid spheres gave to the planets a very important function. The planets became rulers over these spheres, and these in

turn exercised a powerful influence upon the earth. The heavenly bodies, including the planets, all moved in regular succession within their appointed orbits. "If then the planets (or other spheres) had an influence on men, that influence came inevitably and inexorably. Astrology as a doctrine is a doctrine of Fate, of inevitable and inexorable Fate."<sup>10</sup> Astrology therefore led to a deeply rooted pessimism. The idea of an inflexible necessity which ruled the universe precluded the idea of a host of starry deities whose natures were united to human souls by bonds of sympathy. Only the masses continued to worship planets and constellations; the philosopher who realized the full implications of the Ptolemaic system saw that the postulates of its astrology implied an absolute determinism. "Man felt himself dominated and crushed by blind forces that dragged him on as irresistibly as they kept the celestial spheres in motion. His soul tried to escape the oppression of the cosmic mechanism and to leave the slavery of Ananke. But he no longer had confidence in the ceremonies of his old religion."<sup>11</sup> Bousset<sup>12</sup> thus describes the contrast of this "sidereal piety", of Hellenism, and the religion of the Gnostics: "There, the starry gods, here, the demonic powers: there, submissive acceptance of the fate sent by the gods, here, the Heimarmene.....to flee from whose strong overruling is the longing of the pious: there the aim

10. F.C. Burkitt: Church and Gnosis, P. 23.

11. Cumont: Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism. PP. 181-2.  
C.f. Seneca, Quaest. Nat. II. 35. Expiationes et procur-  
ationes nihil aliud esse quam aegrae mentis solatia.

12. W. Bousset: Kyrios Christos. P. 186.

is the ascent of the soul to the stars, here the chief concern of the mystic is how his soul after death can escape the evil powers, the planets....there, the highest gods are the stars and the shining visible heaven, here, there is the great longing after the "Agnostos Theos."

The Gnostic therefore felt that he was a stranger in a foreign land. He regarded this present world as a far country in which men were forced to sojourn under the dominion of hostile deities. <sup>13</sup> He longed to be free from this yoke of matter, and from the bondage of the starry powers. He yearned for strengthening and for deification, and for a blessed life in some far-off future state of existence. He was conscious of a divine principle within him, at present estranged and imprisoned within this world of shadows, but originally derived from a higher world of light and from a Divine Being who is above all things. His highest aspiration was that this divine principle might return to the higher regions whence it had come. <sup>14</sup> Herein consisted the true and final salvation of the human soul: that it should return to the God who was above all things. Only a revelation of right knowledge could enable the soul to be free from the demonic forces and to attain to eternal life.

This aspiration and longing to return to the Unknown God was part of the philosophical and religious thought of this

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13. Cl. Alex. Strom. IV. 26.

14. De Faye: Gnostiques et Gnosticisme. P. 455.

Le rêve de tout vrai gnostique est de s'élever jusqu'à Dieu.....La rédemption consistera dans le retour à Dieu.

time. The conception of Agnostos Theos has been carefully studied by Edouard Norden. He finds that it is a definitely un-Hellenic theory,<sup>15</sup> but that it is common in the Roman literature of the Hellenistic age, as well as in the Oriental and syncretistic religions.<sup>16</sup> It also occurs frequently in the magic papyri, where the magician uses the name of the Unknown God or gods as a magic talisman.<sup>17</sup> Norden points out that the Jews were represented by pagan writers as worshippers of an "Unknown God". The late Roman writer, Laurentius Lydos ascribes a statement to this effect to Livy.<sup>18</sup> Norden believes that Lydos merely uses the quotation which he makes from Livy in

15. E. Norden: *Agnostos Theos*. Pp. 83-87.

16. E. Norden: *Op. cit.*, Pp. 87 ff.

Cf. Cicero: *De leg.* I. 27. also *Tusc.* I. 70.

*Mentem hominis, quamvis eam non videas, ut deum non vides, tamen ut deum agnoscis ex operibus ejus sic ex memoria rerum.*

17. Norden: *Op. cit.*, P. 116.

Cf. Ovid: *Metamorphoses* XIV. 365 ff.

*Concipit illa preces et verba precantia dicit Ignotosque deos ignoto carmine adorat.*

Cf. Lucan: *Pharsalia* III. 415 ff.

.....non volgatis sacrata figuris  
Numina sic metuunt: tantum terroribus addit,  
Quos timeant, non nosse, deos .....

18. Λίβιος ἐν τῇ καθόλου Ῥωμαϊκῇ ἱστορίᾳ ἀγνώστον τὸν ἐκεῖ τιμώμενον φησὶ. τούτῳ δὲ ἀκολουθῶν ὁ Λουκανὸς ἀδήλου Θεοῦ τὸν ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ναὸν εἶναι λέγει.

(Quoted by Norden, *Op. cit.*, P. 59.)

Cf. Lucan: *Pharsalia* II. 592-3:

*Cappadoces mea signa timent et dedita sacris  
Incerti Iudaea dei .....*

order to confirm an impression which was prevalent in his own time, and which thinkers then generally accepted. The theory is confirmed by an examination of the Scriptures. The Septuagint contains many instances of the phrases  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$   $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ ,  $\gamma\iota\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\kappa\epsilon\iota\nu$   $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\nu$ , etc., and ignorance of God is represented as a penalty, or defect, in human life. The New Testament constantly represents knowledge of God as blessedness and ignorance of Him as misery.

The Gnostics shared with these Scriptural writers in their search for transcendent knowledge of a Supreme Being. They differed from all Christian and Jewish writers, however, in their dualistic separation of the world-creator, who was an inferior and evil being, from the Highest Deity, the Unknown God, who was exalted above all things. (Cf. Marcion, Valentinus, Basilides, etc.) Irenaeus' discussion of the Gnostic interpretation of the Logion in Matthew 11:27 illustrates this difference very fully. In opposition to the Gnostics generally, Irenaeus here seeks to prove the identity of the Creator-God of the Old Testament and the higher "Agnostos Theos". He points out that "they who would be wiser than the apostles" (i.e. the Gnostics) "write this verse as follows: No man knew the Father, but the Son, nor the Son, but the Father, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." They interpret this to mean that no man knew the

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19. Cf. Hosea 4:6.

Isaiah 1:3.

20. I. Cor. 15:34  $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\upsilon\eta\psi\alpha\tau\epsilon$   $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omega\varsigma$   $\kappa\alpha\iota$   $\mu\eta$   
 $\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ .  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\alpha\nu$   $\gamma\alpha\rho$   $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$   $\tau\iota\upsilon\epsilon\varsigma$   
 $\acute{\epsilon}\chi\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota$ .

21. Irenaeus: Adversus Haeresos. IV. 6. 1.

true God at all before the coming of Christ, and that the prophets proclaimed a God who was not the Father of Christ. Irenaeus maintains that "this Father is maker of heaven and earth." He denies that this God is Agnostos, for, since they themselves profess to know Him, He cannot be unknown to all men. Christ did not come simply to say: "Forbear seeking after God, for He is unknown, and ye shall not find Him"..... "Rather did the Lord teach that no man is capable of knowing God unless he be taught of God: and that God cannot be known without God: but it is the express will of the Father that God should be known. For they shall know Him."<sup>22</sup> The aim of Irenaeus thus appears to be the correction of a false impression regarding the Unknown God which the Gnostics already possessed: and Norden ascribes this "central idea of Gnosis" to "a spiritualized Jewish Christianity of a very early date."<sup>23</sup> He makes a survey of Gnostic literature and finds that the conception is common among the various writers, and that the later Gnostics regard this theory of an Agnostos Theos as belonging to the oldest sources of their systems.<sup>24</sup> The Gnostics came to conceive of the Unknown God as one who revealed himself to men, and this revelation was his own gracious gift, and not merely

22. Iren. Adv. Haer. IV. 6.7.

23. Norden: Op. cit., P. 77. The Clementine Homilies contain a description of a controversy between the Apostle Peter and Simon, a contemporary of the earliest apostles, concerning this very subject: and Norden says that from a chronological point of view this might be quite possible.

24. Norden: Op. cit., Pp. 70-71.

a self-elevation of the human intellect. "The idea of the  
 Unknown God presupposes the possibility of Gnosis".<sup>25</sup>

It is this Gnosis which brings to the true believer the enlightenment which enables his soul to find its way back to God. It is essentially a supernatural endowment, communicated from above, wherein the ultimate union of the soul with God is anticipated. Man comes to possess something of the knowledge which God Himself possesses. Cosmic secrets are revealed to him, and he gains an insight into the whole order of the universe, and thus he enters into the very  
<sup>26</sup>  
 nature of God Himself.

This affirmation of the possibility of man's redemption through knowledge of God constitutes the very essence of

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25. Norden: Op. cit., P. 87.

Das Gemeinsame aller oben aus gnostischer literatur angeführten Zeugnisse für den **ἀγνώστου Θεός** ist dies, dass dieser Gott, den die Menschen aus sich selbst heraus nicht zu erkennen vermögen, sich ihnen durch Offenbarung zu erkennen gab: diese Offenbarung ist sein Gnadenbeweis für die in **ἀγνώσει** dahinlebende Menschheit. Die **γνώσις Θεού** kann also gar nicht eine Errungenschaft des Intellekts sein, sondern sie ist das Gnadengeschenk Gottes für ein seiner Sündhaftigkeit sich bewusstes und daher für diese Gnade Gottes empfängliches Gemüt. So werden wir von der Betrachtung des negativen Begriffs zu dem positiven hingeführt: der Begriff **ἀγνώστου Θεός** setzt die Möglichkeit der **γνώσις** voraus.

26. A. Drews: Die Entstehung des Christenthums aus dem Gnostizismus. P.70. Die Erkenntnis Gottes (Obj. Gen.) ist die Erkenntnis Gottes (Subj. Gen.): die Erkenntnis die wir von Gott besitzen ist die Erkenntnis die Gott selbst besitzt: durch die Erkenntnis wird der Mensch vergöttet.

Gnosticism. Here again the Gnostics were only emphasizing a form of thought which was characteristic of their own age. It appears in Platonism and in Alexandrian philosophy as a speculative idea: the Wisdom-literature of Pseudo-Solomon sought to express it in the doctrine of Sophia: Philo incorporated it symbolically in his conception of the Logos: and it is a fundamental theory in much of the Indian<sup>27</sup> and Oriental philosophy of religion.<sup>28</sup> De Faye points out that the philosophy of this period is all "religiously orientated". Stoicism itself did not escape the influence of the new spirit. Epictetus desired to end his days in singing to God his acknowledgment of Him. Plutarch's philosophy is essentially religious: he is at pains to prove that God lives in contact with men. Gnosticism is therefore to be regarded, not as an isolated phenomenon, but rather as a movement closely related to its own surroundings within the world of thought.

The Gnostic movement, however, was by no means purely philosophical. Mysterious religious observances were regarded as essential and efficacious in securing the soul's ascent to the Divine Being. The Gnostic did not believe that the Divine spark in man which had been half-extinguished could rekindle itself and flame up again of its own nature and power. Gnosticism is more than the reflection of the intellect or of the "Spiritual Ego" upon itself: it is

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27. A. Drews: Op. cit., P. 70.  
 28. De Faye: Op. cit., P. 456.



mysterious, accomplishing revelation and redemption through initiation and sacrament. The "mystagogue" rather than the philosopher often becomes the real leader of the Gnostic soul.<sup>29</sup> Before the soul can realize her highest aspiration and become united to God, she must be set free from the demons and the other material hindrances which beset her way. The mysteries were regarded as powerful factors in accomplishing this separation of spiritual from material.<sup>30</sup> Baptism was especially emphasized by the Marcosites, and by the Valentinians of the Excerpta ex Theodoto. Magic was extremely important, especially repetitions of formulae and charms. The Naasene Hymn tells of the redeemer's descent to bring seals and signs to the faithful in order that they might escape the evil angels who prevented their access to the Father.<sup>31</sup> The Gnostic mysteries reach their fullest development in the Books of Jeu, where Gnosticism itself becomes almost a mystery-religion, and where at the very

29. Bousset: *Kyrios Christos*. P. 202.

Es bedarf einer Erlösung von oben herunter und von aussen herein. Gnosis ist nicht die Besinnung des Intellekts, oder des besseren geistigen Ich auf sich selbst; Gnosis ist geheimnisvolle, in Vision und Ekstase durch Weihe und Sakrament sich vollziehende Offenbarung und Erlösung. Nicht der Philosoph ist der Führer der Gnostiker, sondern der Mystagoge, und nicht philosophisches Studium rettet die Seele, sondern die Teilnahme an dem Mysterienverband und der Weihe.

Cf. Epiphanius: *Haer.* 31.

30. Cf. W.R. Inge: *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems*. p. 97. 'Redemption to the Gnostic meant the separation of what had been unnaturally conjoined: to the Christian it meant the reunion of what has been unnaturally separated'.

31. Hippolytus: *Philosophumena*. V. 10.

beginning of the treatise mention is specially made of a **λόγος κατὰ μυστήριον**. "In all these Gnostic mysteries the participant entered into communion with a praesens numen, which in mysterious ways promotes the process of raising the spiritual above the sensual."<sup>32</sup> Asceticism and abstinences of various kinds were also regarded as aids to the accomplishment of this end.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, some of the Gnostics, such as the Nicolaitans, taught that men ought to live beyond good and evil in a realm of perfect freedom, completely disregarding the laws of morality and the ordinary conventions of society.<sup>34</sup> In either case, the desired end is the deliverance of the soul from a world that was intrinsically evil, and its translation into a higher world of life and freedom.

Gnosticism in the first and second centuries was definitely associated with Christianity. Even within the Pauline churches certain of the more radical elements revealed an affinity with the pseudo-scientific speculations of Gnosticism, and sought to substitute "theosophies" for the apostolic tradition. On the other hand, the greater Gnostic systems of the second century were rooted and grounded in some form of Christian philosophy, which they had wrongly interpreted, but which at any rate they had sought to apply

32. Harnack: History of Dogma, Eng. Transl., Vol. 1, P. 232.

33. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. I. 24.2. Nubere et generasse a Satana dicunt esse. Multi autem....et ab animalibus abstinent.

34. Iren: Adv. Haer. I. 24.5. I. 28.2

to their own speculations as a complementary and confirmatory element.

The New Testament contains traces of "incipient Gnosticism" which several of its writers seek to combat. The heresy of the Colossians is a case in point. Teachers at Colossae were beginning to do what the Gnostics sought to do later on a more ambitious scale: that is, "they took fragments of the Christian message and tried to fit them into a structure which was mainly composed of pagan mythology and metaphysic."<sup>35</sup> The question of the exact classification of this heresy is still unsettled. Lightfoot regards it as a Judaeo-Gnostic sect, having marked affinities with Essenism. The asceticism of the Essenes regarding marriage, food, and oil for anointing, their tendency to sun-worship, their esoteric doctrine of angels, their use of magic and charms, their abomination of matter, are, according to Lightfoot, all parallel to similar Gnostic tendencies and practices.<sup>36</sup> Lightfoot therefore regards Essenism as a Gnostic form of Judaism, which flourished especially in Palestine, but which was also widely spread throughout Asia Minor in variously developed forms. The Christian Church of the Lycus valley was affected by one of these forms, and Lightfoot<sup>37</sup> believes that the Gnostic Cerinthus

35. E.F. Scott: Colossians, Philippians and Ephesians (Moffatt New Testament Commentaries) Pp. 9-10.

36. Lightfoot: Colossians and Philemon (Commentary) Pp. 83-91.

37. Lightfoot: Op. cit., P. 104 ff.

was a later follower in this line of development, since he too represents an intermediate link between the Judaizing and the Gnostic sects, i.e., between the incipient Gnosis of the Colossian heretics and the mature Gnosis of the second century.<sup>38</sup> Lightfoot, however, gives no definite evidence to show that Cerinthus was connected with Colossae, or even to show that Essenism itself was established in the Lycus valley. It seems impossible to call the Colossian heresy anything more definite than "incipient Gnosticism". St. Paul recognizes its perils and false teachings, and combats them individually as well as collectively. He refers to the Colossian angel-worship, and to their subjection to the elemental spirits of this world and not to Christ, and in contrast to this he sets the doctrine of the Eternal Son Christ, who is above every ruler and power. Christ is invested with cosmic significance,<sup>39</sup> since He alone is the beginning and the end of all things. He includes in Himself all divinity and power, since the Pleroma itself dwells within him, "all the fulness of the Godhead, bodily."<sup>40</sup> The Valentinians especially used this word Pleroma with great frequency, and regarded it as the abode of the Aeons, who are celestial beings having earthly counterparts in the lower sphere. St. Paul implies that Christ is Lord of all the lower powers, and thus he implicitly condemns the worship of angels as wrong in principle. Christ

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38. Ibid: P. 108.

39. Colossians 1:15-17 2:8-15.

40. Col. 2:9. 1:19.

is the only Mediator between heaven and earth; He alone can communicate the Pleroma to man, and bridge the gap between God and the world.<sup>41</sup>

The Epistle of Jude is directed against a group of heretics who show definite affinities with Gnosticism. They are antinomians; they divide between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New,<sup>42</sup> they maintain Docetic views of Christ's person, and they rely upon visions as sources of inspiration.<sup>43</sup> They regard themselves as spiritual and others as carnal, "setting up divisions and distinctions, sensuous creatures, destitute of the spirit".<sup>44</sup> Thus they are the precursors of those Gnostics who divided men into three classes.<sup>45</sup> "They pervert God's grace into immorality," and maintain that a truly spiritual person is above the moral law, and free to indulge the impulses and instincts of life, since nothing done in the flesh can stain the inner spirit.<sup>46</sup> They represent that other extreme attitude toward matter, which is in strong contrast to the rigorous asceticism characteristic of the heretics of I. Timothy, Colossians, etc. The thorough-going pessimism of the later Gnostics always resulted in these alternative attitudes to matter: either a rigorous asceticism or an unbridled libertinism. Matter was indifferent and evil,

41. Col. 2:10 Cf. Lightfoot: Op. cit., P. 101.

42. Jude 4.

43. Jude 8.

44. Jude 19.

45. Cf. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 6.2.

46. Moffatt: The General Epistles (Moffatt N.T. Commentaries) P. 23.

and the soul could only shake off its influence by disregarding it and by refusing to account for it altogether.

Various attempts have been made to identify these false teachers of Jude with definite Gnostic sects. Clement of Alexandria regards Jude 8, 16 as being almost prophetic of the Carpocratians, but he does not limit the reference to this sect.<sup>47</sup> Others have sought to identify them with the Cainites, who held that the Creator was evil, and who regarded Cain and Esau as semi-divine beings (c.f. Chapter III.) This interpretation is derived from the statement in Jude 11, that these teachers "went in the way of Cain". This verse, however, is not thus to be isolated from the rest of the Epistle; and although there is an allusion to the judgment of Sodom in verse 7, and although in the short Epistle three of the Cainite heroes happen to be mentioned as a warning, yet the parallels can scarcely be pressed further.<sup>48</sup> Harnack regards these teachers as primitive members of the Ophite Gnostics and relates them to the Archontici, whom he considers to have been an old sect in the time of Epiphanius. The Archontici, however, were confined to a very limited area and "there is no evidence that this sect ever existed in Asia, though it may have been akin to Arian Gnosticism. Its late appearance in the lists of heresies, and its restricted area, would appear to shut it out

47. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata. III. 2.

48. Chronologie. I. P. 466 ff.

from being the heresy referred to in this Epistle." <sup>49</sup> It has  
 been maintained by T. Barns <sup>50</sup> that this heresy described in  
 Jude is connected with the Marcosites who are described by  
 Irenaeus. <sup>51</sup> He agrees with Massuet that the Marcosites arose  
 about 160 A.D., and he assigns the Epistle of Jude to this  
 period also. The Marcosites' use of magic, their pretensions  
 to superior knowledge of liturgical formulae, their abuse of  
 baptism and their love-feast are, according to Barns, all  
 parallel to features of the heresy which is set forth in this  
 Epistle. These "abuses", however, are not peculiar to the  
 Marcosites, and evidences of more definite relationship are  
 lacking. It therefore seems impossible to identify the false  
 teachers of Jude with any particular Gnostic sect; but their  
 Gnostic tendencies are unmistakable. They are closely  
 connected with the false teachers of II Peter. Both are  
 essentially libertine in their doctrines, and to this libertin-  
 ism they have added certain apocalyptic teachings concerning  
 angels. <sup>52</sup> <sup>53</sup> Windisch regards these teachers as part of a  
 Gnostic tendency which first appears in I. and II. Corinthians,  
 and in Colossians. He affirms that their "Gnosis" is that of  
 the apostolic age: they have a "Gnostic" teaching concerning  
 Christ, and a half-gnostic, half-spiritual eschatology.

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49. T. Barns, in Journal of Theological Studies. VI. P. 397.

50. Ibid: Pp. 399-411.

51. Iren: Adv. Haer. I. 21.

52. II. Peter 2:10 ff., 18. Jude: 8, 10-16.

53. Windisch: Die Katholischen Briefe (Handbuch zum N.T.15) P.99.

Windisch says, however, that the attempts to connect these teachers with a definite Gnostic school must fail because of the lack of definite information.<sup>54</sup>

The teachers mentioned in I. Timothy, who emphasize "genealogies" and "unworthy legends", have been identified by Irenaeus with definite Gnostic teachers, especially with Valentinus.<sup>55</sup> W. Lock<sup>56</sup> notes, however, that Irenaeus merely applies these words to the teaching of Valentinus. Tertullian supposes St. Paul to anticipate these teachers and to meet the germs of their teaching with counter-arguments.<sup>57</sup> The Gnostic belief that matter is essentially evil is to be found in an incipient form among the heretics of I. and II. Timothy.<sup>58</sup> This same conception led certain of these false teachers to deny the reality of the resurrection, and to affirm that it is only a spiritual transformation which takes place at baptism, when the

54. Windisch, loc. cit., Doch können Sie keiner der dort benannten Schulen mit Sicherheit zugewiesen werden; dazu sind die Angaben viel zu allgemein und vielleicht zu unvollständig. (Es fehlen die für die verschiedenen grossen gnostischen Schulen so wesentlichen Hinweise auf die Kosmologie, Christologie, und Schriftbeurteilung.) Wahrscheinlich haben wir es hier mit einem Anfangsstadium der Gnosis zu tun, indem noch nicht alle Lehren gleichmässig in ihren Konsequenzen ausgeführt und bekannt gemacht waren.

55. Iren. Adv. Haer., Praef. l. De Praescr. Haer., 7 & 33.

56. Lock: The Pastoral Epistles (Commentary). P. 9.

57. Tert. Adv. Valentinianos. 3.

His iam pullulantibus seminibus haereticis damnare praeventit.

58. I. Tim. 4:1-5. Cf. II. Tim. 2:18.



Christian rises to new life and to knowledge of the truth.

The "liar who denies that Jesus is the Christ", mentioned  
 in the First Epistle of John,<sup>60</sup> has been identified with  
 Cerinthus. According to Cerinthus' teaching, Jesus is separ-  
 ated from the heavenly Christ and the latter descends upon the  
 former in baptism in the form of a dove in order to proclaim the  
 Unknown Father.<sup>61</sup> Windisch<sup>62</sup> points out that Cerinthus could  
 only have been one of many such teachers, and that the false  
 teaching in I. John is not the product of a leader or of a  
 single teacher, but that it is proclaimed by a great number  
 of the prophets of the Antichrist. He claims that it may be  
 a Cerinthian Christology which has been modified by others,  
 or that it may be Ebionism or Docetism. There is at any rate  
 nothing in this false teaching to exclude a reference to  
 Cerinthus, or to similar teaching, and Polycarp's famous account  
 of the meeting between John of Ephesus and Cerinthus in the  
 bath-house might serve to substantiate the resemblance already  
 noted. These heretics clothed their teaching in a higher  
 Gnosis, which caused them to regard sin as an indifferent  
 matter.<sup>63</sup> They did not advocate open libertinism, as did the  
 teachers who are combatted by Jude and II Peter; but they are

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59. Cf. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 23. 5. (Menander) Resurrectionem per id quod est in eum baptisma accipere ejus discipulos et ultra non posse mori sed perseverare non senescentes et immortales.

60. I. John 2:22.

61. Iren. I. 26. 1. Cf. Hippol. Philos. VII. 33.

62. Windisch: Die Kathol. Briefe, P. 127.

63. I. John 1:5 ff. 2:1 ff. 3:4 ff.

charged with disobedience to the commandments, and with lack of love. All of these errors are grounded in their false Christological teachings: "the master lie is the denial of the true nature of the Incarnate Christ, as the writer and his fellow Christians had come to know Him."<sup>64</sup>

These aberrations of doctrine which these New Testament writers opposed were the precursors of the Gnostic challenge which was to face the Church during the next century. The danger which threatened Christianity was the greater because the Gentile churches still had only a feeble conception of the ideas which properly belonged to the Christian faith. The Monotheistic doctrine of God was assailed by the Gnostic doctrines of a Demiurge, a Pleroma, and a series of Aeons. The Christian conception of the Incarnation was imperilled by various forms of Gnostic Docetism. The ethical basis of Christianity was contradicted by the Gnostic distinction of two or three races of mankind, and especially by their view of redemption as an impartation of true Gnosis to those who were predestined to receive it, i.e., the Pneumatici, while the Psychici and Choici, or Hylici, could look for nothing but complete annihilation, according to the teaching of the Valentiniâns. Thus the Christian Church was forced to distinguish what was heathen from what was Christian, and the ultimate result was the revival of the fundamental teachings of Christ and of St. Paul in the theology of the third century.

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64. Brooke: The Johannine Epistles (Commentary) P. 53.

The influence of this primitive Gnosticism on the Christian Church, however, is more than equalled by the effect which Christianity itself exerted on the developed Gnostic systems of the second century. Gnosticism as a child of its own time was very greatly influenced by Christianity. The Gnostics were the first to attempt to construct a religious philosophy on a Christian basis. Their mythological interpretations concealed what was in many cases a correct historical and scientific appreciation of Christianity. F.C. Burkitt points out that the Gnostics come before us historically as Christians. Valentinus and other Gnostic thinkers are regarded by the Church Fathers as heretics who possessed a version of Christianity which was different from the orthodox one. This is not to say that Gnosticism had no connection with pre-Christian sources. "Gnosticism, when it appeared within the Christian Church as a dangerous heresy, was not a novel attempt to pervert by a new doctrine the orthodox system of Christian belief; it was rather an effort to harmonize that system, before its intellectual expression had hardened into fixed moulds, with a whole complex of conceptions and aspirations by which the Gentile world of the day was dominated."

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65. Burkitt: Church and Gnosis, PP. 9-10.

66. Burkitt: Op. cit., P. 10. Valentinus and his fellows started from Christian ideas, and they were attempting to formulate a Christian theory of God and man; the contest between Catholics and Gnostics was a struggle between persons who felt themselves to be Christians, not between Christians and heathens.

67. MacGregor and Purdy: Jew and Greek, Tutors unto Christ, Pp. 309-310.

Burkitt believes that the problems presented by Christian eschatology influenced the development of the Gnostic systems considerably.<sup>68</sup> Christian eschatology in its literal "Jewish" interpretation was foreign to Greek philosophical thought; yet, since it formed part of the Gospel record, the Gnostics did not wish to reject it. They, therefore, as the "enlightened ones" sought to explain these eschatological teachings according to their true meaning which was not revealed to the mass of men, and thus to set forth a form of the Christian religion which would be more akin to the categories of contemporary philosophy and science. "Without Christianity, without the growth and success of the Christian Church, there would have been no Gnosticism."<sup>69</sup> It must not be forgotten, however, that Gnosticism was originally dependent upon pre-Christian sources. The investigations of Bousset and Reitzenstein have gone far in establishing the theory that Gnosticism was not so much derived from mystical elements of Hellenistic speculation applied to Christianity in the field of eschatology as it was an outcome of that tendency towards Oriental philosophical speculation which was especially prevalent in the first two centuries of the Christian era.<sup>70</sup> Harnack regards the second century as a century of religious fusion, of "theocracy" or syncretism. "The problem was to bring Christianity into the realm of the 'theocracy' as one element among others, although the chief." The Gnostics

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68. Burkitt: Op. cit., Pp. 21, 57, etc.

69. Burkitt: Op. cit., Pp. 57-58.

70. Harnack: What is Christianity. P. 205.

were impressed by the sublime character of the Christian religion: they wished to bring the whole stream of the Christian movement into their own channel, and to introduce it as the ruling element into a ready made theory of the world, and into a scheme of mysteries which had already been developed.

The Gnostics sought to explain what they conceived to be the great mystery which the Gospel did not clarify: i.e., the question of the origin and destiny of the world-order. Redemption for the Gnostic is a process of restoration within the whole order of the universe: it is a drama which begins in the world above and which is carried out in the world below. Christ restores the broken harmony in the world of Aeons, and acts as a maintaining and uniting principle for them: and in the lower world Jesus the Son of

Mary has the similar task of **ἰσχύρωσις** or **ἐπιανόρθωσις**  
<sup>71</sup> for human souls. In the most important of the Gnostic

systems, (i.e. those of Valentinus, Heracleon, Marcion, etc.) Jesus is given a most important and essential position.

<sup>72</sup> De Faye points out that in the writings of the Church Fathers (Irenaeus, Hippolytus, etc.) this role of Jesus in the Gnostic systems is not at all clearly defined. Jesus is represented as merely unus inter pares, as one of the redeemers, but not as the most important one. In the original documents, however, as they have been preserved, Jesus is differently

71. Hippolytus: Philosophumena. VI. 19. VI. 32.

72. De Faye: Gnostiques et Gnosticisme. P. 463.

described: e.g. Heracleon's commentary on St. John's Gospel represents Jesus as carrying out redemption fully and solely; indeed, at a later time Origen was to approve of the general idea of Jesus which this Gnostic author possessed. In the Coptic writings the Risen One reveals to the disciples the mysteries and charms which will guarantee their salvation, and he alone is the Revealer and the Saviour. The Gnostics found in Jesus Christ a figure whom they welcomed as a completing and enlightening addition to their speculations concerning redemption.

It was the Christian doctrine of redemption which modified the Gnostic attitude to the evil world and which shaped the Gnostic philosophy most decisively. The "Christian Gnostics", with their acute consciousness of the power of evil, their longing for the adjustment of the disturbed harmony of the universe, and their desire for the revelation to men of a new godlike life which should transcend the limits of human nature, produced "the first of a long series of heterodox philosophies, inside and outside the Church, which could not refuse to see the centre of the world's history in 'that Jesus whom they crucified'." <sup>73</sup>

One of the most important and most characteristic tenets of Gnosticism was the belief that there was a godlike, higher nature inherent in the elect from their very origin. Redemption means the awakening of this divine soul which has sunken down

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73. H. M. Gwatkin: Early Church History to 313 A.D.  
Vol. 2. P. 21.

into this world of matter: it means the kindling of the divine spark which still exists, although nearly extinct, within human nature.<sup>74</sup> Hermes Anthropos is described by the Naasenes as the god who "enchants the eyes of the dead and raises up again those that are slumbering, after having been roused from sleep, and after having been suitors".<sup>75</sup> The Sethians represent the "beam of light", after it has attained a suitable place in a human soul, as "striving after the word which comes down from above."<sup>76</sup> Just as the Greek philosopher remembers the "better part" within himself, so the Gnostic remembers the godlike light-element within him. The human spirit contains this heavenly element in material surroundings: and the exalted power who delivers it from these surroundings is Christ. He appears in this world of confusion in order to enlighten the spirit about itself: and this enlightenment is life. Redemption is not merely being set free from bondage: it is "the knowledge of who we were, what we have become.....whither we are going, whence we are re-<sup>77</sup> deemed, what is begetting, what is rebirth."

74. Excerpta Ex Theod. Sect. 3. Ἐλθὼν οὖν ὁ Σωτὴρ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐξύπνισεν, ἐξηψεν δὲ τὸν σπινθῆρα ..... τὸν μὲν χοῦν καθάπερ τέφραν ἀπέφυσε καὶ ἐχώρισεν, ἐξήπτε δὲ τὸν σπινθῆρα καὶ ἐζωπύρει.

75. Hippolytus: Philosophumena., V. 7. P. 154. Cf. Hermetica XIII. 2.

76. Hippolytus: Phil. V. 21. P. 212.

77. Exc. Ex Theod. Sect. 78. Ἔστιν δὲ οὐ τὸ λουτρὸν μόνον τὸ ἐλευθεροῦν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ γνῶσις, τίνες ἦμεν, τί γεγόναμεν, ποῦ ἦμεν, ποῦ ἐνεβλήθημεν, ποῦ σπεύδομεν, πόθεν λυτρώμεθα, τί γέννησις, τί ἀναγέννησις

This enlightenment is therefore dependent on revelation, and it demands the practice of and the surrender to the mysteries which Christ imparts. "Christianity appears as a speculative philosophy, which redeems the spirit by enlightening it and consecrating it and instructing it in the right conduct of life."<sup>78</sup> Gnosis thus aims to be a **γνώσις σωτηρίας**. The powers which convey life and strength to the human spirit belong to the region of the suprarational: and these powers are to be attained, not by any exact philosophical procedure, but only by a **μάθησις** united with a **μυσταγωγία**. Thus the Gnostic Carpocrates and his school taught that Jesus, because he had had "an immoveable and pure soul," had been able to remember all that he had seen in the higher world. For this reason God had sent to Him a power whereby he could despise the world rulers and could penetrate through their spheres into the higher world. The same thing was true of those who had received a similar soul from Jesus.<sup>79</sup>

Jesus Christ as the redeemer who occupies the central position in the Gnostic systems is really divided into two beings, an earthly Jesus, and a higher spiritual Christ, which descended upon the earthly Jesus at baptism. The general tendency of the Gnostics is to deny the reality of his humanity

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78. Harnack: History of Dogma. Vol. I. P. 231.

79. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. I. 25. 1 ff.

Animas enim ipsorum ex eadem circumlacione devenientes et ideo similiter contemntes mundi fabricatores, eadem dignas habitas esse virtute et rursus in idem abire. Cf. also Epiphanius: Haer. 26. 10.



as something which is incompatible with the evil nature of matter; and thus he becomes invested with a special kind of "corporeality". The Christology of the Gnostics generally is characterized by its variety and its complexity. The teaching of one of the primitive Gnostic systems described by Irenaeus represents Jesus as being born of a virgin through the mediation of God, and Sophia as having prepared the body long beforehand so that it would be a pure vessel for the Christ who would enter it. In some of the Gnostic systems the redeemer is represented as a being capable of change who participates in the natures of all those whom he has come to redeem. He is of many forms, and he passes through all things and is to be found everywhere. He thus becomes a kind of cosmological principle who leads the world back to its origin, and a kind of symbol of the return of the spirit to itself and to its own fulness of self-possession. In the late Gnostic work Pistis Sophia Christ becomes the

80. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. I. 30. 12.

Cognoscentem autem eam, quae deorsum est Sophiam, descendere ad fratrem ejus, et annuntiasse ejus adventum per Ioannem et praeparasse baptismum poenitentiae et ante adaptasse Iesum, uti descendens Christus inveniat vas mundum....etc.

81. Epiphanius: Haer. 26. 9. (After the completion of certain mysterious religious ceremonies the Gnostic is taught to say: **ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ Ο ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ, ΕΠΕΙΔΗ ΑΝΩΘΕΝ ΚΑΤΑΒΕΒΗΚΑ ΔΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΑΡΧΟΝΤΩΝ.**

82. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. I. 24. 4. Quoniam enim virtus incorporalis erat et Nus innati Patris, transfiguratum quemadmodum vellet, et sic ascendisse ad eum, qui miserat eum.

Cf. Poimandres (Reitzenstein, P. 105), **ΕΓΩ ΣΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΣΟΥ ΕΓΩ, ΚΑΙ ΟΠΟΥ ΕΑΝ ΗΣ, ΕΓΩ ΕΚΕΙ ΕΙΜΙ ΚΑΙ ΕΝ ΑΠΑΣΙΝ ΕΙΜΙ ΕΣΠΑΡΜΕΝΟΣ.**

Ineffable One, and the Soter is constituted as follows:

(1) A body from the 13th Aeon, born as hyllic through Mary;  
 (2) a ψυχή (3) a πνεύμα (4) The power of the Soter. The redeemer in primitive times frees Pistis Sophia from her affliction and from the power of the demons: but this is only a prelude to the final redemption, which ensues after Jesus has accomplished his life on earth. In this cosmological process the earthly life of Jesus is merely an episode.

It is evident that the Gnostics apprehended the Christian doctrine of redemption only in certain aspects, and not in all its compass and consequences. Gnosticism made redemption a process of deliverance from matter rather than the deliverance of mankind from the power of sin. "Gnosticism was much more at home in the cosmogonies than in a world of sinners." <sup>83</sup> Christ is a cosmic principle rather than the author of salvation. The Gnostics place Christ at the central point of their systems, but they fail to grasp the significance of His redeeming work. Christ's becoming man, his death on the Cross, his resurrection, are not to be regarded as acts of Jesus: in all these events the Gnostic sees only a type or picture of the sunken, suffering and rising soul. Redemption for the Gnostic is something which is constantly being fulfilled, not something which was accomplished at a definite point in time. The soul finds the way

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83. H. M. Gwatkin: Op. cit., Vol. 2, P. 21.

to her goal always by the same process: she is first freed from the lower elements, and then she passes into the higher heavenly world. A historical redeemer figure has significance and value for the soul's redemption only if his experience, his "myth", can be experienced in turn by the Gnostic in a sacramental, mystical manner.<sup>84</sup>

Certain pre-Christian legends of redeemer-gods who descended from the higher world to free souls from matter and to restore order instead of chaos within the cosmogony have been artificially joined to the Christian account of redemption in many of the Gnostic systems. Bousset distinguishes three such 'myths' in their general outlines. The first he calls the doctrine of the Primitive Man.<sup>85</sup> At the beginning of creation a divine being descended from the higher world into the world of matter. He passed through the planet spheres, which communicated to him their harmful and sensual properties, and finally he lost a part of his own nature. With much difficulty he raised himself again out of matter, and laid aside his lower nature, restoring to the planetary powers what had originally belonged to them. This "primitive man" really is a type of humanity, since one part of human nature is derived from the upper world and is immortal, while the other part is mortal, and has fallen into captivity to the planetary powers and to fate. Man must constantly

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84. Bousset: *Kyrios Christos*. P. 203 ff.

85. Cf. Bousset: *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*. Pp. 160-223.

remember that he is derived from this world of light and life, and under the guidance of reason he must seek to make his way thither. After death his spirit will pass through the planetspheres, and he will cast off his material covering and enter the world of the highest deity. Meanwhile, by mystery and by initiation, he can provide for the journey of the soul through the heavens, and for its future existence. The soul does not find its own way, however; it must be united with its own prototype, its own primitive man, and it must realize itself as a part of his being.

The second great myth particularly influenced those Gnostics who are considered to be the forerunners of the Valentinian school.<sup>86</sup> The Gnostics are regarded as Sons of a Heavenly Mother. This Mother-goddess once left the upper heavenly world in a violent passion of love, and deserted her heavenly bridegroom. She sank into the world of darkness and tarried in captivity, besieged by dark demonic forms. A higher being, a Saviour, followed her and redeemed her from her forlorn condition. She covered her shame when she first saw her redeemer; but afterwards she joyfully hastened to meet him, and consummated with him the *ἕρως γάμος*.<sup>87</sup> What was here originally effected is constantly being accomplished; for each Gnostic soul has its Syzygos,<sup>88</sup> and is

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86. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. I. 30.

87. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. I. 4.5.

Cf. Bousset: Hauptprobleme, Pp. 267 ff.

88. Exc. Ex Theod. Passim.

Cf. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 7.1.

the bride of a heavenly "alter ego" which is its angel. Just as the **Μήτηρ** found her Saviour, so the soul will embrace her bridegroom, the angel, and through this association she will be raised into the higher world and freed from the lower elements. This "heavenly marriage" is the final aim of the soul.<sup>89</sup> The Gnostic believer attains redemption by being united with the **Μήτηρ** by being supported through the redeeming power that comes from her, and by partaking in the sacrament of the **ἱερός γάμος**.<sup>90</sup>

In the third myth described by Bousset a divine redeemer-hero descends from the heights of heaven into the depths of the lower world. He struggles with the demons and is able to outwit them and to deprive them of the secrets of their power. He assumes many different forms to deceive the demons, and thus he becomes like them, and after he has overcome the power of the demons he returns in glory to the heights of heaven.<sup>91</sup> The believer who is identified and united with the saving deity experiences with him the terrors of the journey to hell, the triumph of victory over the demons, and the transformation into a being of light.

It becomes a problem of the utmost importance to determine the relationship between the Soter of these proto-Gnostic myths and the figure of Jesus Christ as He occurs

89. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. I. 6.4.

90. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. I. 21. 3.

91. The Myth of the descent to hell of Manda d' Hayye, or Hibil Ziwa, seems to be a definite example of such a descent. (Cf. Chapter 2.)

in the systems of the "Christian" Gnostics. E. Bevan states the question as follows: "Whether 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>92</sup> Bevan regards the second alternative<sup>93</sup> as the more probable one. He points out<sup>93</sup> that those sections of Hellenistic theology which have not been influenced by Christianity (e.g. Posidonius, and the Hermetic writings) have no Redeemer-figure: in these circles the possession of knowledge, regarded either as intellectual enlightenment, according to Plato, or conceived as mere familiarity with magical formulae and mystic practices, is enough to secure the ascent of the soul to the heavenly regions. Even the Christian Gnostic systems require the memorization of lists of names and magical charms which will give the soul power over her adversaries along the upward way: and there is evidently a tendency to regard such magical "apparatus" as sufficient in itself without a redeemer. "Salvation by gnosis and salvation by Christ present the appearance of two alternative schemes which have been im-<sup>94</sup>perfectly joined together." Bevan regards the Gnostic account of the descending and ascending redeemer as a re-duplication of the Hellenistic story of the descending and

92. E. Bevan: Hellenism and Christianity, P. 95.

93. E. Bevan: Op. cit., P. 101.

94. E. Bevan: Op. cit., P. 101.

ascending soul. Christ as enlightener and revealer may be the one who brings to the soul the gnosis which enables her to rise, as in the Hermetic writings. In any case, his message is more important than himself. His work is to do what the Light-Element in man ought to do, i.e. to triumph over the world-rulers of the darkness. His history is thus the reiteration of the soul's ascent and progress, but it is an actual accomplishment instead of a mere ideal. His work of redemption seems to consist in bringing power to man's fallen spirit by a process of "sympathetic magic", so that what Christ performs can also be performed by the divine nature which is hidden in man. Bevan concludes that the facts seem to point to the figure of the personal redeemer not being an original part of the Hellenistic theology; and he affirms that there are really no conceptions in current paganism which are parallel to the belief which was shared by Christian and Gnostic that the Divine Being took upon himself the form of a servant and came into the sphere of darkness to redeem mankind.<sup>95</sup>

It would appear that Bevan, like Burkitt,<sup>96</sup> has not sufficiently considered the pagan aspect of the so-called Christian Gnostic systems. Christianity was seized upon by the essentially syncretistic Gnostic movement to consolidate and to make valid the speculations of an Oriental paganism. It is true that no Redeemer-figure is to be

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95. E. Bevan: Op. cit., P. 106.

96. F.C. Burkitt: Church and Gnosis, passim.

found either in Hellenistic thought or in the Hermetic writings: Hermeticism represents a pure and enlightened form of redemption through gnosis. These important sources are, however, by no means the sole precursors of Gnosticism. In the following chapter of the present study an attempt will be made to show that Gnosticism is definitely dependent on Mandaean, Babylonian and Persian sources (as well as the Hermetic writings); and that these Oriental speculations are based upon fundamental myths of very great antiquity. Bousset's classification of these myths as given previously in this chapter is very helpful, and serves to set them forth in a brief preliminary manner; but they will be studied at greater length and in more detail in the pages which are to follow. It seems clear that the Gnostics, instead of "introducing the Christian redeemer into a scheme which had originally been found without one", rather added the Christian conception as something complementary to these very ancient myths, and that they purified and transcended these myths to the extent that they themselves approached to Christianity. There is, e.g., a vast difference between the theories of redemption which were originally developed among the Ophite sects and those which were accepted by the Valentinians; and this difference is certainly due to the worthier conception of Jesus Christ which came to have a wider influence.

A good example of this development of Gnostic Soteriology under the influence of Christianity is seen in the account given by Irenaeus of an early sect whom he calls



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simply the "Gnostics." Their account of the Redeemer's work constitutes the second of the "myths" classified by Bousset. According to these teachers, the original mystery of redemption consisted in the union of the Soter with Sophia. This mystery originally had nothing to do with the history of Jesus of Nazareth: yet in some way the Soter-figure is combined with Jesus and with his appearance on earth. Thus when Sophia in her forlorn condition calls upon her heavenly mother for aid, the latter sends the Christ to her, and he descends through all the heavens to her and is united to her. He is also joined to the earthly Jesus, who is a man of outstanding excellence among his fellows, and the resulting figure is Jesus-Christ.<sup>98</sup> The important feature of this passage is that the Redeemer is here called **Χριστός** instead of **Ἄνθρωπος**. The conception of a man, a hero, who descends into matter is a familiar proto-Gnostic conception.<sup>99</sup> Here, however, the higher and lower being, redeemer and redeemed, are specifically called **Χριστός** and **Σοφία**, and **Χριστός**, instead of assuming the role of one who sinks into the material world unwillingly, has become a redeemer who descends of his own free will into matter for the

97. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. I. 30. 12 ff.

98. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. I. 30. 12. Et descendente[m] Christum in hunc mundum, induisse primum sororem suam Sophiam.....Iesum autem, quippe ex virgine per operationem Dei generatum, sapientio[re]m et mundio[re]m et iustio[re]m hominibus omnibus fuisse: Christum perplexum Sophiae descendisse, et sic factum esse Iesum Christum.

99. Bousset: Hauptprobleme, P. 242.

Es muss den gnostischen spekulativen die Erzählung von einem Erlöser-Heros zugrunde gelegen haben, der sich unerkannt in die Welten der bösen Mächte begab, um diese zu überlisten, um ihnen ein Höheres Gut, einen wertvollen Besitz oder ein angstlich gehütetes Geheimnis zu entreissen.

redemption of Sophia.

The fact that Gnosticism had many of its sources in Eastern speculations does not mean that Christianity was similarly influenced by these proto-Gnostic forms. Scholars such as Reitzenstein, Bultmann and Walter Bauer have sought to find early Mandaean parallels for the Redeemer of the Fourth Gospel, but the consideration of this topic is outside the scope of this present study. The solution of Dr. Vincent Taylor seems, however, to afford the most satisfactory answer to this problem. He believes that "the evangelist and the Mandaean authors have independently drawn upon the same stock of common forms, symbols, and figures, and to some extent of ideas as well."<sup>100</sup> Gnosticism was rooted in Christian as well as pre-Christian soil: it rose and developed side by side with Christianity. It is a particularly impressive testimony to the uniqueness of Christianity that the Gnostics sought so earnestly to assimilate it into their own philosophical and theological thinking.

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100. V. Taylor in Hibbert Journal Vol. XXVIII. P. 539.  
(Quoted by MacGregor & Purdy, Op. cit., P. 327.)

Chapter II. The Pre-Christian Sources of the  
Gnostic Theory of Redemption.

P a g e s .

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Chapter 2.

There is a growing tendency among present-day scholars to regard Gnosticism as "a startling manifestation of the process of Orientalization to which Graeco-Roman culture was subjected before the rise of Christianity."<sup>1</sup> Some of these Oriental influences have already been generally considered in Chapter I. of this present study. It is proposed now to examine these influences in a more detailed manner, and, if possible, to trace them more definitely to their proper sources.

It has been maintained by Anz<sup>2</sup> that the primary source of the astrological and magical conceptions which influenced Gnosticism so powerfully is to be found in the religion of ancient Babylon. Here there are numerous prayers to a Sun god, Samas, and a lofty hymn to a moon-god, Sin; Istar is deified as the enlightener of the night, and Marduk is worshipped as the star Jupiter. By the time of Diodorus the whole Babylonian religion was astrologically determined, and the seven planets and the circle of the Zodiac became the overruling powers. The Babylonian lived in continual fear of the dark powers which surrounded him on all sides: "they know no forbearance and benevolence, and they hear neither prayer nor supplication."<sup>3</sup> Only magic could avail against them. Each

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1. E. Buonaiuti: Gnostic Fragments. p. 2.
  2. W. Anz: Zur Frage nach dem Ursprung des Gnostizismus. (Texte und Untersuchungen. XV. 5. 1897). P. 67 ff.
  3. Sir H.C. Rawlinson: The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia. Vol. IV. P. 2. Col. V. 76 ff.

man stands under the protection of his god and goddess, whose son he is: and as long as he does what is right, a good spirit dwells within him. If he sins, however, the god and goddess depart from him in anger, and the good spirit leaves him, and he is delivered up to all the evil spirits and to their sorceries.<sup>4</sup> Only the offended deities can rescue him from the demons of destruction. He must offer confession of sin to the angry gods, and he must beseech forgiveness: but he must also resist the hostile demons by magical performances.<sup>5</sup> The result is the indication that the gods are appeased. Religion and magic therefore go hand in hand in these Babylonian observances, as they do in many of the Gnostic sects.

Certain objections to Anz's findings have been pointed out by E.F. Scott.<sup>6</sup> In the first century A.D. the Babylonian religion belonged to a remote past, and although its superstitions survived in the general tendencies of this period, they should not be regarded as having been specially perpetuated in the Gnostic systems. The planetary deities occupy a different place in Gnosticism from that which was held by the Babylonian divinities. They are no longer supreme deities, but rather inferior and antagonistic powers to which man is in bondage. His one endeavour is to throw off this bondage (Cf. Chapter I.) and to secure true life for himself. Scott

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4. Rawlinson: Op. cit., Vol. IV. pp. 7, 8, 13, etc.  
 5. Anz notes a "complaint" in Rawlinson, Vol. IV., 60:  
 "No magician through his sorcery has freed me from the oppressive anger." Cf. also Rawlinson, Vol. IV. 22. 2. 15:  
 "No sorcerer produces peace for him through his charm".  
 6. E.F. Scott: Art. "Gnosticism", in Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. 6, p. 233.

concludes that there are elements in Gnosticism which have undoubtedly been derived from Babylonian origins, but he maintains that these elements must have reached the Gnostic theologies through an intermediate channel.

The thesis which this present chapter will seek to substantiate is that this "intermediate channel" principally comprises the early forms of the Mandaean religion, as well as certain definite Iranian tendencies. The Babylonian sources which lay behind these developments will be considered in their relation to these intermediate connections, as well as to their final outcome in the Gnostic theologies of the first and second centuries.

Mandaism may be described in general terms as "a universal<sup>7</sup> transcendental religion of redemption and revelation". It is impossible, however, to construct a single system from the various documents which have survived: and some of them, e.g. the Book of John and the Qolasta, are definitely post-<sup>8</sup>Christian in their date. The Genza, or Thesaurus, however, is of much earlier origin, and it incorporates elements of very ancient religious practices. It is essentially dualistic in its world-philosophy. The kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness oppose each other as metaphysical contradictions. The former is peopled by a series of higher beings called Utras, who are of the same nature as "the Life". The lower world is called simply "the black water": it is the abode

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7. J.P. Steffes: Das Wesen des Gnostizismus. P. 35.

8. Brandt: Art. "Mandaeans", in Hastings' E.R.E. Vol. 8, P. 380.

of darkness, which is evil, and it includes many lesser worlds within itself. The earth is above this "black water" and above it is the firmament. These were created by Ptahil, who arose out of the black water, and who acted by authority of "the Life". He overstepped his orders, however, and accepted the help of evil spirits; and thus, after he had performed his work, evil came into the world. Ptahil also created man, but his soul was breathed into him by a being from the higher world, Manda d' Hayye. He is the personified Gnosis, knowledge of salvation or of life; and his rôle is that of a revealer or enlightener in the lower creation. After this creation of man the wicked spirits of the lower world create evil and harmful influences around him, and introduce evil passions and false beliefs into the creation. These evil spirits are the Ruha (i.e. the Mother, the world-mother) and her children (i.e. the spirits of the seven planets)<sup>9</sup>. They constantly struggle for supremacy over the spirit of man, and Manda d' Hayye therefore descends a second time in order to fortify mankind in the true path and to reveal the secrets of the heavenly gnosis. He also descends into the world of darkness and overcomes the monster Ur, who was the husband of Ruha, and who exerted a baneful influence over all human affairs.

The problem of the origin of Mandaeism and of its relation to Gnosticism has been a source of much controversy.

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9. Cf. Chapter I.

It has been maintained by Lidzbarski that Judaism exercised a great influence over the Mandaeans, especially the Judaism of certain heterodox sects such as the Sampsaean, the Essenes, and the Elkesaites.<sup>10</sup> The majority of scholars however, such as Brandt, Bousset, Kessler, etc., regard primitive Mandaism as a development of the later Babylonian religion, with definite traces of Persian influences.<sup>11</sup> Kessler<sup>12</sup> identifies Manda d'Hayye, the Mandaean redeemer, with Marduk, the Babylonian mediator between light and darkness and the redeemer from the power of the primeval monster Tiamat.

<sup>13</sup> Brandt sees in the Mandaean myth of the redeeming work of Manda d'Hayye a philosophical-allegorical interpretation of the old Babylonian myth of Istar's journey to Hell and of her being set free by Uddusnamir. Bousset traces many forms of Persian thought in early Mandaean writings: he believes that the Mandaean divinity Mana, who was regarded as the highest being in the world of light, corresponds to the Persian Mainjo: that the Mandaean doctrine of the soul's fate after death is almost entirely borrowed from Parsism:

10. M. Lidzbarski: Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer. Introd. P. XVI. Die Mandäische Religion muss ihre wesentliche Ausbildung bei Juden oder einer judaisierenden Sekte erhalten haben...Aber die jüdischen Elemente weisen nicht auf das Kanonische sondern ein heterodoxes Judentum mit heidnischem Einschlag hin.
11. Cf. Seeberg: Dogmengeschichte. Vol. I. P. 277. Hier liegt ein synkretistische Religion vor, die in der Weise der späteren Gnosis ein kosmogonisches System aus babylonischen und persischen Elementen hergestellt und mit mancherlei Sakramenten, besonders Taufen, verbunden hat.
12. Kessler: Die Mandäer. P. 182.
13. Brandt: Die Mandäische Religion. P. 191.



and that such Persian concepts as the ascent of the soul into the world of light, the "Tschinvat-bridge", and the judge who holds the scales, have distinct counterparts in Mandaism generally.<sup>14</sup> Reitzenstein restates these findings of Bousset, and maintains that both the Mandaeans and<sup>15</sup> Manichaeans were influenced by Iranian sources.<sup>16</sup> Pallis agrees with Bousset that the Mandaeans were influenced by Babylonian astrology, and he suggests that the Persians may represent an intermediate link in the process. Pallis finds evidence of Persian influence in the account of the soul's ascent to the world of light;<sup>17</sup> in the Mandaean contrast of light and darkness, which corresponds to the opposition between the worlds of Ormuzd and Ahriman;<sup>18</sup> and in the Mandaean conception of the earth resting on a primeval sea below the firmament, which corresponds to the Persian account of the world rising out of a wide ocean and lying beneath the semi-globular vault of heaven, which rests on a crest of mountains surrounding the ocean and the earth.<sup>19</sup> Other Persian influences are noted by Bousset<sup>20</sup> in the Mandaean redemption-myths. The

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14. Bousset: Hauptprobleme der Gnosis. P. 40.

15. R. Reitzenstein: Das Iranische Erlösungsmysterium. P. 60. Sicher steht zunächst, dass die astrologische Vorstellungswweise durch babylonische Vermittlung eingedrungen ist; tragen doch die Sieben alle die alten babylonischen Namen. Wenn diese babylonischen Sterngottheiten alle als Teufel erscheinen, so zeigt das am besten, dass die Mandäische Religion in ihren Grundgedanken auf die iranische zurückgeht.

16. Pallis. Mandaean Studies. Pp. 19-20.

17. Left Genza: (GL) 88:23 - 90:12.

18. Pallis: Mandaean Studies. P. 178, P. 50.

19. Pallis: Op. cit., Pp. 55-59.

20. Bousset: Hauptprobleme der Gnosis. P. 39 ff.

attack of Ur upon the world of light, and his conquest and imprisonment by the divine Redeemer, as described in the sixth Tractate of the Genza, correspond to the attack of Ahriman<sup>21</sup> against the world of light, as described in the Bundehesh. Just as Ur was incited by Ruha to the attack, so also a female demon stands near Ahriman and urges him to undertake the assault against the light-world. The history of the conquest and enchainment of Ur is also compared by Bousset with the Persian legend of the victory of Fredans over the dragon Azi-Dahak, who lives in chains on the mountain Demavend.

The relation of Mandaism to Gnosticism must now be considered. It is proposed to investigate the earliest forms of Mandaeen thought, since these are in many ways precursors of Gnostic speculations. The earliest Mandaeans seem to have formed a pre-Christian Gnostic community, which emphasized the possession of Gnosis, conveyed by a redeemer-figure, as conferring Salvation.<sup>22</sup> Brandt traces certain of the Gnostic

21. I. 9-10, & 3.

22. W. Kohler: Die Gnosis. P. 12.

Die Existenz vorchristlicher gnostischer Gemeinden, d.h. Religionsgemeinschaften, in denen die Gnosis Zentralbegriff war, wird nicht bestritten werden können. Jene Stichworte setzen Gemeinden voraus. Und eine vorchristliche gnostische Gemeinschaft wenigstens ist für uns greifbar: die sogenannte Mandäer, d.h. die Erkennenden, die Gnostiker..... Die älteste Form zeigt Elemente, die uns später bei der Christlichen Gnosis wieder begegnen werden: Theogonie und Kosmogonie (Gottes und Welt Entstehungslehre) emanierende Aeonen, eine Erlöserfigur, die Person gewordene Gnosis des Lebens: Sie ist der Weltschöpfer und Erlöser von der Macht der bösen finsternen Urmacht, des Chaosungeheuers Tiamat, etc.

sects to definite Mandaean sources. He points out that the primitive Ophites are called  $\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\omicron\iota$ <sup>23</sup> both by Hippolytus and by Irenaeus<sup>24</sup> and that this name is exactly equivalent to the title  $\text{א'א'ט'א'א'}$ <sup>25</sup>. The creation of the world by Ptahil, as described by the Mandaeans, is regarded by Brandt as a prototype of the Barbelo-Gnostic account of creation as described by Irenaeus.<sup>26</sup> Ptahil is not really the creator of the universe, but merely a sort of "demiurge" who resembles the beings who are higher than himself: he creates only the earth, which lies in the black water, and the firmament which is over it. According to Brandt, Ptahil corresponds to the world-creator of the Barbelo-Gnostics, who is the offspring of Sophia, or Prunikos, and Monogenes.<sup>27</sup> The Gnostic doctrine that the soul is the spark of light which comes from the light-world above to illumine the lifeless body of man and which returns to its source of being after man's death<sup>28</sup> is compared with the Mandaean conception of the soul as the part of man belonging to the light-world.

(Compare the figure of Adam Raba, and the designation of Manda d' Hayye as the  $\text{ב'א'ב'ר'א' ק'א'ד'א'י'א'}$  in the Qolasta.) Brandt notes a further resemblance in the analogy between

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23. Hippolytus: *Philosophumena*. V. 2. 6.

24. Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I. 30.

25. Brandt: *Die Mandäische Religion*. P. 192.

26. Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I. 29. 7.

27. Brandt: *Op. cit.*, P. 188.

28. Cf. Hippol. *Philos.* VII. 28 (Satornilus) and Iren. *Adv. Haer.* I. 30.

the ancient Mandaean fragment in Tractate 18 of the Genza, which describes the deliverance of Adam by Adakas-Mana, and a fragment of Valentinus which is preserved by Clement of Alexandria. According to this Valentinian fragment, the first Man Adam is fashioned in the name of Anthropos by an invisible σπέρμα within him which compels power from above.<sup>29</sup> In the 18th Tractate Adakas Mana is described as "the one who came from secret places and who entered into Adam and his wife and set them upon their feet and opened their eyes for them to see". This Adakas Mana. is also identified with Manda d' Hayye: "Manda d' Hayye lived in the treasure of the heart of Adam, and in Adakas Mana, who came and entered into him. And Adakas Mana spoke to the Seven, and to all the worlds, If I had not come and entered into Adam and his wife, this mystery would not have raised them through the spirit which Ptahil put into him and which his father Abatur gave to him."<sup>30</sup> These and other parallels of Brandt are dismissed by Pallis<sup>31</sup> as unconvincing, but the latter gives no definite reasons for this summary rejection. They appear to the present writer as satisfactory demonstrations of the hypothesis which has already been noted, namely that Gnosticism was influenced by Mandaeism considerably, and that

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29. Cl. Alex. II. 8. 36. διὰ τοῦ ἀοράτως ἐν αὐτῷ σπέρμα βεβωκότα τῆς ἄνωθεν οὐσίας . . . . Εἰς γὰρ ὄνομα Ἀνθρώπου πλασθεὶς Ἀδάμ φόβον παρέσχεν προόντος Ἀνθρώπου ὡς δὴ αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ καθεστῶτος.

30. Genza. 18th Tractate. Pp. 243-45. (Quoted by Brandt, Op. cit., P. 36.)

31. Pallis: Op. cit., p. 152.

definite traces of a pre-Christian Gnosis appear in the early Mandaean treatises. The Gnostic theories of redemption especially are paralleled by many prototypes and analogies in the early Mandaean myths of a redeemer-figure who descends into the lower world.

A most important myth of redemption is contained in the Sixth and Eighth Tractates of the Genza, which are of definitely pre-Christian origin. Manda d' Hayye is sent forth from the upper world to contend with the world of darkness, at the very beginning of the world's history. He is baptized with holy water and is invested in light garments and in living fire and water. He meets the powers of darkness, Ur and Ruha, and conquers them after a short struggle. Thereupon seven, five and twelve monsters are created by Ur and Ruha, who try to stir up revolt against the heavenly powers, but Ptahil succeeds in carrying out his creative plans with the help of the sons of Ruha, who even offer their services for this work and who are consequently pardoned. <sup>32</sup> Bousset compares this myth with the Christian Gnostic accounts of a redeemer-figure who contends with hostile powers, but notes two differences: (1) The seven powers are here regarded as "powers of hell": (2) The struggle in the Mandaean account takes place at the

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32. Right Genza: Sects. 80-98.  
Cf. Brandt, Op. cit., Pp. 34-36.

very beginning of time, and not at the turning point of human  
<sup>33</sup>  
 history.

The Eighth Tractate is without doubt related to the  
<sup>34</sup>  
 Sixth, but is more complicated, and contains traces of more  
 than one myth, so that the resulting amalgam is rather confusing.  
 This Tractate presupposes that the heavenly powers have learned  
 that one who originates from the demons of darkness is prepared  
 to struggle against the powers of light. In order to forestall  
 this plan, Manda d'Hayye sends his son Hibil Ziwa to the as-  
 sembly of the primeval gods. They welcome him warmly, and he  
 is commissioned to descend into the lower world and to see  
 that all things are in order. He descends in the company of  
 "the great Raza", (i.e., the mystery.) Raza is the embodiment  
 of the mysterious power or name whereby the redeemer fulfils  
 his descent into the subterranean world.  
<sup>35</sup>  
 Hibil Ziwa thus  
 passes through seven hells or underworlds, and in the seventh  
 he meets with the great monster Krun. He approaches him,  
 and the monster repulses him: Hibil Ziwa then sits in a box  
 of "swords, spears, knives and blades", and the monster swallows

33. Bousset: Hauptprobleme der Gnosis. P. 244. Auch hier  
 handelt es sich übrigens um einen Kampf des Erlösers mit  
 den Sieben wie in den christlich-gnostischen Spekulationen,  
 nur dass die Sieben hier als höllische Mächte gedacht sind  
 und auch mit dem Unterschied, dass dieser Kampf am Anfang  
 aller Weltentwicklung vor sich geht, bald nach der Schöpfung  
 Adams, nicht auf der Höhe der menschlichen Geschichte.

34. Bousset: Op. cit., P. 244.

Pallis: Op. cit., P. 189.

35. Bousset: Op. cit., P. 245.

him, but is compelled to spit him forth again, because his internal organs have been cut to pieces.<sup>36</sup> Krun is thereby conquered, and he surrenders to Hibil the "passport" with which he can ascend unhindered by the demons, as well as the signet ring on which is written "the name of the great darkness". Then the light-hero descends into the underworld, and remains there unrecognized, and thus he obtains the mysterious secret which guarantees to the whole light-world victory over the realm of darkness.

The derivation of this ancient redemption-myth has been variously interpreted. Bousset accepts Schmidt's explanation that it originated with the worship of the Sun. The Sun-hero follows each detail of the myth to completion: he descends every evening into the jaws of the monster in order to cut his internal organs to pieces with his sword, and on the next morning he rises again. This process which men saw before their own eyes daily at sunrise and sunset came to be mythically interpreted. This "prehistoric" myth in turn came to be amalgamated with the Babylonian myth of the struggle of the light-god Marduk with the chaos-monster Tiamat. Briefly this myth is as follows: the youngest of the gods, the light-god Marduk, is warmly greeted by the other gods and prepared for his work, which is to fight against the chaos-monster Tiamat, who is in league with the other demons, and who threatens the

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36. G.R. VIII. 142. 23 ff.

Cf. Bousset: *Op. cit.*, P. 245-6.

Pallis: *Op. cit.*, P. 12.

light-world. Marduk descends for the struggle, entangles Tiamat in his net, and causes a hurricane to enter her jaws and open her mouth, so that her body is filled with wind. He then drives a sword into her open mouth and cuts up her intestines, and thus he overcomes the monster. Bousset quotes Schmidt, and also Gunkel, who sees a definite relationship between the Babylonian and Persian myths.<sup>37</sup> Bousset's detailed comparison seems to show clearly that the Mandaean myth is ultimately dependent upon the Babylonian account. Pallis, however, maintains that there is no correspondence between the Babylonian and Mandaean myths.<sup>38</sup> He finds that in the former the female being, Tiamat, is killed only after a storm has opened her mouth, and the creation immediately ensues: whereas in the latter Hibil mutilates the prince of the Abyss and then ascends to the upper world, and no creation follows immediately. These variations must be admitted: yet they do not by any means serve to invalidate Bousset's discovery of the many similarities between the two accounts.

The question of the relation of this early myth to the Gnostic myth of a descending redeemer is worthy of careful consideration. In Chapter I, Bousset's hypothesis of the three myths which form the basis of all Gnostic speculations was briefly set forth. The third of these myths was the

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37. Bousset: *Op. cit.*, P. 247.

38. Pallis: *Op. cit.*, Pp. 12-13.



Mandaean account of Manda d'Hayye's (or Hibil Ziwa's) journey to the lower world, which has just been described. Bousset definitely connects this myth with the Gnostic conception of a redeemer who descends into the lower world. He quotes many examples of such a belief from the Gnostic writings,<sup>39</sup> and he seeks to find an origin for such a doctrine. Christian premises, however, do not supply a proper parallel, in spite of the fragmentary reference in I Corinthians 2. The mystery religions and the "cults" of the Gnostics refer to the ascent of the soul, but not to a descending redeemer. Such a conception, Bousset concludes, is to be found only in these early Mandaean myths, which in turn are connected with primitive Babylonian sources. These myths came to be artificially joined to certain aspects of the Christian doctrine of redemption: and thus it was that the Gnostics elaborated their own redemption theories.<sup>40</sup>

This Mandaean myth might be called a myth of "primitive

39. Bousset: Op. cit., Pp. 239-41. E.g., he quotes Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 23.3. (Simon Magus' descent to rescue Helena) I.24.2. (Satornilos' account of hostility between the higher and lower powers.) I.24.3. (The magic properties of the name Caulacau, in which the redeemer descends).

40. Bousset: Op. cit., P. 276.  
 Wo die Mythologie überwiegt und der Erlösungsheros noch nicht oder nicht ausschliesslich mit dem Menschen Jesus identifiziert wird, ist die Erlösung zugleich in die Urzeit verlegt: und wir werden nach allen Beobachtungen die Behauptung aufstellen dürfen, dass der Erlösungsmythus oder die Erlösungsmythen der gnostischen Religion nicht erst aus dem Gedankenkreis der Christlichen Religion abgeleitet sind, sondern dass sie vorher vorhanden waren und nur künstlich mit diesem Gedankenkreise kombiniert wurden, dass in der Gnosis fremde mythische Erlösergestalten mit der Gestalt Christi nachträglich und künstlich identifiziert sind.

revelation" rather than of redemption. The Gnostic theories of redemption have been influenced by the Christian conception of a Redeemer who appears at a definite point in history to perform his redemptive work: whereas the descent of Manda d'Hayye occurs before the creation, and is a kind of preparation for all that is to follow. "Mankind is enlightened concerning his membership in the world of the "First Life" and the practice of a religion which corresponds to this participation is enjoined upon him."<sup>41</sup> The believer who through faith participates in this "primitive revelation" receives the assurance that the power of the demons has been overcome. Complete appropriation of redemption, however, is secured only by participation in prescribed sacraments and mysteries. The most ancient Mandaean sacraments, and those which are essentially connected with Gnosticism, are described in the Genza. The soul of the Mandaean dwells on this earth as in a foreign land: and death is eagerly awaited because it provides a release from the power of *Ἐμαρμένη*. During this present evil life, however, the believer is sustained by ritual and by sacramental symbolism which typifies his final redemption. The rite of baptism was of the utmost

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41. W. Brandt: Die Mandäische Religion. P. 191. Der grosse Unterschied zwischen den gnostischen und den Mandäischen Schriften besteht darin, dass die christliche Erlösungslehre letzteren gänzlich abgeht. Dafür erscheint hier die Uroffenbarung durch welche der Mensch über seine Zugehörigkeit zu der Welt des ersten Lebens aufgeklärt und ihm die entsprechende, diese Verbindung erhaltende Religionsübung mitgetheilt wird.

importance. The Mandaean is baptized in living water whose prototype exists in the world of Light.<sup>42</sup> Hibil Jawar's baptism by his father before his descent to the lower world is a type of the baptism which the Mandaean believer must receive.<sup>43</sup> The priest then lays his hand on the head of the baptized person, pronouncing the name of the Great First Life. Baptism was followed by Kusta, a hand-clasp given by the priest to the baptized person, whereby he received power to conquer the evil demons. This corresponded to the Kusta received by Manda d'Hayye when he set out for the lower world.

These mysteries are pledges that the soul shall reach the abode of life after death, and that nothing can hinder her in her ascent. After death has released her from her bondage she must pass the dreaded Mattartas on her way to the world of light. These consist of seven stages or stations in which evil doers and false believers are retained for punishment. Brandt refers this Mattarta doctrine to Persian influences, and claims that the number and names of these stations were changed in the process of derivation, so that "the Mandaean-Persian conception of five stations was prior to the idea

42. Right Genza: XVII. 17-20. 24: Let the Jordan blossom forth and baptize yourselves, baptize your souls with the living baptism which I have brought you from the Realm of Light, so that every perfect and pious man may be baptized in it.

43. G.R. VIII. 136. 8.9.  
Cf. Pallis: Op. cit., P. 165.

of seven stations, due to Babylonian influence, which occurs in other tractates.<sup>44</sup> Pallis regards the doctrine as derived from Babylonian (and from "Proto-Gnostic") sources, and this is also the opinion of Anz.<sup>45</sup> It is, however, useless to attempt to trace the ultimate source of this conception; it can only be said to have been connected with the widely spread doctrine of the Ascent of the Soul, which is "of too remote antiquity definitely to date, and too universal to assign to the religious thinking and mythical symbolism of one race."<sup>46</sup> It is most probable that the Mandaeans were dependent on Persian and Babylonian sources for their particular version of the Ascent of the Soul.

In order to pass these Mattartas baptism is necessary, and also "good deeds", as well as the sign of "the life". The recitation of Maskatas (or Masseqtas), (literally "ascents", or "litanies" describing the manner of the soul's ascent,) is also a powerful source of help. When Hibil journeys to the lower world the beings of light recite a Maskata every day for him,<sup>47</sup> and believers are enjoined to do likewise for their fellow-Mandaeans.

This conception of the ascent of the redeemed soul through various spheres to a higher world is also a very

44. Pallis: Op. cit., P. 82.

45. Anz: Op. cit., P. 78. Die acht Matartas der Mandäer waren ursprünglich an die Sieben und ihre Mutter, die Ruha, verteilt.

46. S. Angus: The Religious Quests of the Graeco-Roman World, P. 295.

47. Right Genza VIII. 157.7.

Cf. Pallis: Op. cit., P. 76.

important feature in most of the Gnostic sects. There are many evidences to show that this Gnostic conception may be closely connected with and derived from the Mandaean conception of the soul's ascent through the Mattartas: i.e. that the doctrine of the Ascent of the Soul reached Gnosticism primarily through this primitive Mandaean interpretation.

A careful study of the theory of the Ascent of the Soul in Gnosticism has been made by Anz,<sup>48</sup> who traces many parallels between the different systems. In the Naasene hymn Jesus descends with seals in his hand to reveal to the faithful the secrets of the holy way.<sup>49</sup> These seals are apparently sacraments, which are necessary for the ascending soul in Gnosticism as also in Mandaeism. The seven stations through which the soul must pass are definitely mentioned in the Ophite system described by Origen.<sup>50</sup> At the point of death the soul must pass through the fence of iniquity, the ever-closed doors of the Archons. There are seven of these doors, and at the entrance to each is an archon, and to each of these the soul must repeat its appropriate formula.<sup>51</sup> Seven

48. Anz: Op. cit., Pp. 9-58.

49. Hippolytus: Philos. V. 10.

50. Origen: Contra Celsum. VI. 31.

51. Pallis (Mandaean Studies. P. 185) rejects the idea of a connection between the Ophites and the Mandaeans on two grounds: (1) The Ophites did not emphasize baptism as a sacrament (2) The Mandaeans did not require the soul to know the names of the Mattartas. These grounds are surely insufficient reasons for denying such a relationship. Pallis himself admits that "among the Ophites and the sects which issued from them, we find the best parallel to the doctrine of the seven archons and the ascent of the soul past these."

archons also occur in the Ophite Sect described by Irenaeus but nothing is said here regarding an ascent of the soul. It is noteworthy, however, that the Archons form an ascending series in heaven, like the series of the Mattartas.<sup>52</sup> Another important parallel is found in the account of the "Gnostics" which is given by Epiphanius. These Gnostics are rather indefinitely classified by Epiphanius: but Anz points out that they are really not strictly separated from other sects, such as the Nicolaitans, Sethians, etc., and that their doctrine really represents that of these various cognate systems. In this passage of Epiphanius the "world-structure" consists of seven heavens piled one above the other, and in each heaven is concealed an archon, who seeks to prevent the soul from rising higher. Only Gnosis can help man to pass upwards and reach the pleroma: with this Gnosis he can tread underfoot<sup>53</sup> the hostile Sabaoth and vanquish all the Aeons. Anz points out that this Gnosis is closely connected with sacramental observances, and that it is really a combination of these two elements which ensures redemption, i.e., a passage to the Pleroma. The same conception is to be found in later Gnostic

52. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 30. 4. Hos autem coelos et areothas et virtutes et angelos et conditores subiiciunt, per ordinem sedentes in coelo secundum generationem ipsorum.

53. Epiphanius: Haer. 26:10. (Quoted by Anz: Op. cit., P. 20.)

τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἐν τῷ ἐξέρχασθαι ἐρτεῦσθαι  
 διαβαίνειν διὰ τῶν ἀρχόντων τούτων μὴ  
 δύνασθαι δὲ διαπερᾶσαι εἰ μὴ τι ἀν  
 τῆς γνώσεως ταύτης . . . . ἐν πληρώματι  
 γένηται καὶ ἐμφορηθεῖσα διαδράσει τῶν  
 ἀρχόντων καὶ τῶν ἐξουσιῶν τὰς χεῖρας.

writings. The Archontici and the Cainites, as described by Epiphanius, have a similar conception of seven heavens and of ἀπολογία<sup>54</sup> which must be repeated by the ascending soul. The Pistis Sophia tells of five mysteries which the soul must use against the five great archons of the Middle Way, and of seals which the soul must receive as marks, and the mystery of the Forgiveness of Sins affords means of access to the higher regions, and to the door of the Light-treasure. The Books of Jeu contain hundreds of mysteries which are expressly given to conduct the souls of the dead from station to station until they reach the highest God.

Further evidences of the doctrine of seven heavens or heavenly beings are noted by Anz in the systems of the Valentinians. Ptolemy begins his system by presupposing seven heavens; he also spiritualizes this conception and calls them angels.<sup>55</sup> The Excerpta Ex Theodoto also describe the ascent of the soul in full detail. Souls of sinners are punished in the "left places", while the Topos of the Demiurge keeps the righteous Psychici in their course through the created world. The pneumatic soul attains to a higher position, because Jesus remains in the Topos with the Demiurge and makes possible for the Pneumatici a passage to

54. Epiphanius: Haer. 38:2. 40:2.

55. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. V.2. ἑπτὰ γὰρ οὐρανοῦς  
κατεσκευακένα ὧν ἐπάνω τὸν δημιουργόν  
εἶναι λέγουσι . . . τοὺς δὲ ἑπτὰ οὐρανοῦς  
εἶναι νοερούς φασιν . . . ἀγγέλους δὲ  
αὐτοῦς ὑποτίθενται

the Pleroma.<sup>56</sup> Baptism is most important: it is the charm which conducts the soul past the Horos and into the Pleroma, and it is accompanied by a  $\gamma\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\iota\varsigma$  which comprehends man's origin and destiny.<sup>57</sup> The Marcosites presuppose the necessity of an  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\tau\rho\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  which will conduct those who have received the perfect Gnosis into a higher world, the Pleroma, through a process of rebirth.<sup>58</sup> Their Sacrament for the dead makes the soul "incomprehensible and invisible to the principalities and powers", and their inner man is "enabled to ascend above the invisible things". They also have a formula with which to address the various powers.

The Basilidians place great importance upon the name Caulacau, in which name the Saviour ascends and descends, and this name is also to be learned by the believer, who thus becomes invisible to the higher powers. He must also learn the names of the 365 heavens and their inhabitants, in order to ascend to the upper world. Below these 365 heavens, however, are the seven Archons and their heavens, and the soul must first pass through these in the course of her ascent.<sup>59</sup>

Anz concludes his detailed survey with a summary of the main points of his thesis.<sup>60</sup> The Gnostic systems presuppose the creation of the world by seven Archons, who keep mankind

56. Excerpta Ex Theodoto: 37.38.

57. Ibid. 78. 80.

58. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 14. 1 ff.  
Cf. Anz: Op. cit., P. 49.

59. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 24.5.

60. Anz. Op. cit., P. 56.



in subjection to their power. The significance of Gnosis is that it affords redemption from this tyranny, and communicates to mankind the mysteries of the holy way whereby the soul may attain to the Pleroma. She must learn certain sacred formulas and mysteries: the mysteries assure her final access to the Supreme God, and the sacred formulas enable her to triumph over the world-rulers; and magical observances confer power on her even while she is still on earth.

It is possible that Anz over-estimates the importance of the doctrine of the Ascent of the Soul in Gnosticism. He singles it out as being the chief, if not the sole message of all the Gnostic sects; whereas there are certain systems in which this conception occupies a relatively minor position. In the main, however, his conclusions are to be accepted as quite correct. Bousset<sup>61</sup> confirms and enlarges upon his findings as to the importance of the theory of the seven archons in Gnosticism, which he regards as being always connected with the ancient worship of a higher female divinity, the Great Mother, or Sophia. He agrees with Anz that the theory is probably derived from ancient Babylonian sources (influenced by Persian forms of thought) but he recognizes the difficulty of finding definite instances of a direct development from these. The later Babylonian sect of the Ssabians seems to be based on this theory of the seven archons, which shows that the doctrine did undergo certain changes in

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61. Bousset: Hauptprobleme der Gnosis. Pp. 9-21.

its form of application. The early Mandaean emphasis of the Mother, Ruha, and the seven archons is regarded by Bousset as a most striking example of the extension of the influence which the doctrine came to possess.<sup>62</sup>

It is evident that the pre-Christian forms of Mandaeism are closely connected with the corresponding elements in the Gnostic theologies of the first and second centuries. The early Mandaean religion may therefore be regarded as a media via between the myths and cosmogonies of ancient Babylonia and Persia and the fully developed Gnostic speculations which are the final outcome of this more or less continuous process.

This brief study of the early Mandaean religion has sought to establish the following conclusions: The Mandaean conception of redemption is derived from very early Babylonian and Persian sources. These include the doctrine of the ascent of the soul through the seven heavens and past the seven world-rulers: the conception of a redeemer who descends to bring redemption to souls in the lower world: and the emphasis on sacramental observances which will assure the soul's final ascent, as well as the present participation of the believer in divine grace. The influence of these conceptions on Gnosticism has also been fully traced.<sup>63</sup> It was through the

62. Bousset: *Op. cit.*, Pp. 27-32.

63. Reitzenstein sees further influences of Mandaeism in the Odes of Solomon, which he regards as Christian-Gnostic hymns of redemption. Cf. *Das Iranische Erlösungsmysterium*, P. 9: Um eine Darstellung der Erlösung, handelt es sich überall. Die Mandäischen und Manichäischen Texte erst bieten wirklich die Erklärung für das redende Ich, und sie stechen in einem festem liturgischen Zusammenhang und schliessen ursprünglich an eine Kulthandlung. In den Oden Salomos ist das nicht mehr der Fall. Schon das wiese, wie ich denke, auf die Priorität der heidnischen Texte.

close connection of Mandaeism with Gnosticism that this influence was so widely and powerfully exerted.

The Hermetic literature represents a form of pre-Christian Gnosticism in which Egyptian and Hellenistic influences are prominent. Many of the ideas which became current in later Gnostic systems are to be found within its various documents. According to Reitzenstein the Corpus Hermeticum was compiled from more ancient collections and from single manuscripts as an anthology for the Emperor Diocletian, about 300 A.D.<sup>64</sup> Walter Scott believes that most of the Hermetica were written in the third century A.D., and that probably none were written so early as the first century.<sup>65</sup> The origins of Hermeticism, however, are generally believed to be much earlier than the written documents, and it is probable that they go back at least to the second century B.C.<sup>66</sup>

The origin of Hermeticism has been traced principally to two sources: Egyptian religion and Greek philosophy. Angus regards the system as fundamentally Platonic, and "on this Platonic basis is built a superstructure of Stoicism from different periods with its different views".<sup>67</sup> Scott also mentions that the bulk of the teaching of the Corpus is derived from Greek philosophy: yet he admits that the spirit

64. Reitzenstein, in *Studien der Bibliothek Warburg*, VII, 1926. P. 9.

65. W. Scott: *Hermetica*. Vol. I. Introduction. P. 10.

66. S. Angus: *The Religious Quests of the Graeco-Roman World*. P. 331.

67. S. Angus: *Op. cit.*, P. 321.

and temperament of its writers show evidences of definite Egyptian influences. These writers were probably almost all Egyptians by race, though Greek by education. The Hermetic writers are distinguished from the Greek philosophers, however, by their greater intensity of religious fervour; "what we have in them is the effect that was produced by Greek philosophy when it was adopted by men of Egyptian temperament."<sup>68</sup>

The dualistic conception of the universe which affected Gnosticism so greatly is found in many of the Hermetic writings. There is on the one hand a higher world of  $\phi\omega\varsigma$  and  $\gamma\omega\eta$ <sup>69</sup> and on the other the corporeal world of the four elements. There is no mention in Hermeticism of man's elevation to the starry beings, but rather there is a striving to attain to the one and only Good Being. "Having seen the Good, they deem their sojourn here on earth a thing to be deplored; and scorning all things corporeal, they press on to reach that which alone is good"<sup>70</sup>. Just as the Gnostic sought to be free from the material world and from  $\epsilon\iota\mu\alpha\rho\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta$  so the Hermetic believer sought for  $\sigma\upsilon\sigma\iota\acute{\omega}\delta\eta\varsigma \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\sigma\omega$  and an entrance into an immortal body. It is assumed that mankind, or at least a certain class of men, is possessed of a higher and better nature which is not derived from the world of  $\epsilon\iota\mu\alpha\rho\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta$ . This better nature has sunk into this present

68. W. Scott: Op. cit., P. 11.

69. Asclepius I. 2. (References to the Hermetica are according to Scott's edition, unless otherwise specified.)

70. Herm. IV. 5.

evil world, but it has the power to rise again into the world of light and life.

The soul became invested in "animal coverings" in the course of her descent into this world, as she passed through the planetary spheres. It is her aim to ascend out of this vale of tears and to be set free from this evil investiture, so that she may be purified and filled with the divine nature, and that she may return rejoicing to the holy world of the Ogdoas. Hermes thus addresses his son Tat: "You see, my son, through how many bodily things in succession we have to make our way, and through how many troops of daemons and courses of stars, that we may press on to the one and only <sup>71</sup> God."

In order to be redeemed, man must first of all be freed from the evil influences of his bodily nature. Hermes thus instructs man: "You must tear off this garment which you wear, this cloak of darkness, this web of ignorance, this prop of evil, this bond of corruption. . . . Such is the garment in which you have clothed yourself; and it grips you to itself and holds you down that you may not look upward and behold the beauty of the Truth, and the Good that abides above, and hate the evil of this thing, discovering its <sup>72</sup> ill designs against you." This garment or tunic (χιτών) is the body with which the mind or soul is clothed, and in

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71. Herm. IV.

72. Herm. VII. 2-3.

which it is imprisoned: it is a σκοτεινὸς περίβολος. "To put off the tunic means to forsake the body, not necessarily in the sense of dying, but in the sense of practice in dying."<sup>73</sup> This use of χιτῶν referring to the body is also found in the writings of the Gnostic Valentinus and his followers. The Demiurge is described as having made Choic man of invisible matter: then he breathed into him τὸν ψυχικόν and finally clothed him with the tunic of skin, which is sensible flesh.<sup>74</sup> A striking parallel is also found in the 25th Ode in Rendel Harris' Collection of the Odes of Solomon. Rendel Harris calls this Ode "a song of personal redemption and illumination". The redeemed one says: "I acquire strength from thyself, and help. . . . and I was covered with the covering of thy spirit, and I removed from me the raiment of skins."<sup>75</sup>

Knowledge of oneself is the prerequisite of redemption. "He who has recognized himself enters into the good."<sup>76</sup> The man who knows himself is he who has become aware that one part of him is immortal, and that this incorporeal part constitutes his true self. He who thus realizes his true nature

73. C.H. Dodd: The Bible and the Greeks. P. 182.

Cf. Plato: Phaedo, 67.

74. Cf. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 5. 5. τὸν δερμάτινον χιτῶνα  
 .... τοῦτο δὲ τὸ αἰσθητὸν σαρκίον εἶναι λέγουσι

75. Odes & Psalms of Solomon, by Harris & Mingana. Vol. 2.  
 P. 346 ff.

76. Herm. I. 19.

"enters into the good", because "the Father of all consists of Light and Life, and from him Man has sprung. . . . If then, being made of Life and Light, you learn to know that you are made of them, you will go back into Life and Light."<sup>77</sup>

The essence of evil consists in *ἀγνοσία* of the pure spiritual being, i.e., of God; and because of this ignorance the soul falls under the power of sensuality and corruption. "The vice of the soul is lack of knowledge. A soul that has gained no knowledge of things as they are, and has not come to know their nature, nor to know the Good, but is blind-- such a soul is tossed about among the passions which the body breeds: it carries the body as a burden, and is ruled by it instead of ruling it. That is the vice of the soul. On the other hand, the virtue of the soul is knowledge. He who has got knowledge is good and pious: he is already divine."<sup>78</sup>

"This alone, even the knowledge of God, is man's salvation; this is the ascent to Olympus; and by this alone can a soul become good."<sup>79</sup> Man knows God because he knows himself, i.e., because he realizes himself as a part of God.

It is Nous that reveals to man the way to heaven. In the Hermetic writings Nous is exalted above every other name. He, the Father of all, consists of *φῶς* and *ζωή* in his inmost nature, and these are also the essential attributes<sup>80</sup> of those who are called to be his favourite children. Nous is

77. Herm. 1:21.

78. Herm. X. 8. Cf. also XI. 21. VI. 4. IX. 4. VII. 4.

79. Herm. X. 15a.

80. Herm. I. 9. 12. 17.

the light which shines upon the prophet in darkness, and  
 which consists of innumerable powers.<sup>81</sup> God set Nous in  
 the midst of men as a prize to be attained by them: "He filled  
 a great basin with Mind (Nous) and sent it down to earth: and  
 he appointed a herald, and bade him make proclamation to the  
 hearts of men: 'Hearken, each human heart: dip yourself in  
 this basin if you can, recognizing for what purpose you have  
 been made, and believing that you shall ascend to Him who  
 sent the basin down.' Now those who gave heed to the pro-  
 clamations, and dipped themselves in the bath of mind, these  
 men got a share of gnosis; they received mind, and so became  
 complete men."<sup>82</sup> Thus men became immortal: "they embraced  
 in their own mind all things that are, the things on earth,  
 and the things in heaven," and thus they discovered **τὴν**  
**πρὸς τὰ ἄνω δόξιν.**<sup>83</sup>

It is not given to every human soul to possess Nous..  
 Nous comes only to a chosen few. A distinction is made be-  
 tween rational and irrational men; and in one passage<sup>84</sup> the  
 chosen class of men are called the pious ones. (**εὐσεβεῖς**).  
 It is said of the soul of the 'pious' that after it is freed  
 from the body, and after it has fought the struggle of  
 piety, it becomes 'mind throughout' These

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81. Herm. I. 7.

82. Herm. IV. 4.

83. Herm. IV. 11 b.

84. Herm. X. 19 a.



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souls, however, are definitely in a minority. The majority of men are incapable of participating in this exalted blessing. "Those human souls which have not got mind to guide them are in the same case as the souls of the irrational animals." In another passage it is stated that Nous receives the pure and holy souls, but that he will be far from those who are evil. "I, even Mind, come to those men who are holy and good and pure and merciful: and my coming is a succour to them, and forthwith they recognize all things, and win the Father's grace by loving worship, and give thanks for Him, praising Him . . . . . But from men that are foolish and evil and wicked. . . I keep far aloof." <sup>86</sup> <sup>87</sup>

The Experience of Rebirth, described in Tractate 13 of the Corpus Hermeticum, is necessary for all those who are to be saved. Through this Experience the soul enters into an immortal body, and is mystically born again in Nous. Hermes thus describes it to Tat: "I can tell you nothing but this; I see that by God's mercy there has come to be in me a form which is not fashioned out of matter, and I have passed forth out of myself, and entered into an immortal body. I am not

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85. Cf. Asclepius III. 22a. Sunt etiam non multi, aut admodum pauci, ita ut numerari etiam in mundo possint, religiosi, unde contigit in multis remanere malitiam.

Ascl. III. 23a. Sed de hominibus istud dictum paucis sit pia mente praeditis.

Ascl. III. 18b. Sensus autem his accedit, quo dono caelesti sola felix sit humanitas; neque enim omnes, sed pauci, quorum ita mens est, ut tanti beneficii capax esse possit.

86. Herm. XII. 4.

87. Herm. I. 22-23.

now the man I was; I have been born again in Mind, and the  
 bodily shape which was mine before has been put away from  
 me." <sup>88</sup> The ministrant of this Experience may be "some man <sup>89</sup>  
 who is a Son of God, working in subordination to God's will."  
 Hermes thus instructs Tat as to the manner in which this  
 Experience may be realized: "Draw it into you, and it will  
 come; will it, and it comes to be. Stop the working of your  
 bodily sense, and then will deity be born in you. If you  
 would be born again, you must cleanse yourself from the irra-  
 tional torments of matter." <sup>90</sup> The believer is cleansed by  
 the Powers of God from the twelve evil sensual passions,  
 Ignorance, Grief, Incontinence, Desire, etc. When these are  
 purged away, "the knowledge of God has come to us; and at its  
 coming ignorance has been driven out." <sup>91</sup>

The soul passes through the structure of the heavens,  
 seven in all, in the ascent to the Divine being, until man is  
 "stripped of all that is wrought upon him by the structure  
 of the heavens, and ascends to the substance of the eighth  
 sphere, being now possessed of his own proper power." <sup>92</sup>  
 Bousset regards this teaching of planetary influences as a  
 link between the Hermetic writings and the astrological  
 speculations of the time, (cf. Chapter I.) and considers

88. Herm. XIII. 3.  
 89. Herm. XIII. 2.  
 90. Herm. XIII. 7a.  
 91. Herm. 8 b.  
 92. Herm. I. 25-26.

this to be a primary source of the Hermetic dualism and  
<sup>93</sup>  
 pessimism.

The soul that has attained to  $\gamma\upsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$   $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  is truly redeemed and is set apart from the majority of mankind. "Piety is the knowledge of God, and he who has come to know God is filled with all things good: his thoughts are divine and are not like those of the many."<sup>94</sup> The Good, that which is divine, exercises a powerful attraction over the soul: "it takes possession of those who have attained to the sight of it,<sup>95</sup> and draws them upward even as the lodestone draws the iron." Finally, when the soul comes to see God, her  $\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\iota\varsigma$   $\delta\epsilon\upsilon\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma$  is set free, and man becomes a god himself, entering into God. "Thereafter, each in his turn, they mount upward to the Father: they give themselves up to the Powers, and becoming Powers themselves, they enter into God. "This is the Good; this is the consummation, for those who have got<sup>96</sup> gnosis." Then the redeemed one must be a leader for other souls who are worthy, so that mankind may be saved. "Seeing that you have received all, why do you not make yourself a

93. Bousset, in Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen, (1914) P. 735. Die Lehre von der Planetengaben ist aus der gräzisierten siderischen Religion herübergenommen. Andererseits zeigt sich die überwältigende Kraft des hermetischen Dualismus und Pessimismus. Das Werturteil über die Planetengaben ist in sein Gegenteil verkehrt.

94. Herm. IX. 4a.

95. Herm. IV. 11b.

96. Herm. I. 26a.

guide to those who are worthy of the boon, that so mankind may  
through you be saved by God?"<sup>97</sup>

It is notable that in the Hermetic account of the soul's redemption there is no conception of a Saviour who is a divine or supra-cosmic person coming down to earth to redeem mankind. Man is saved only by the operation of the divine Nous within him, and Nous is incarnated upon earth only in the sense that he enters into every man who is worthy to receive him.

"When the mind has entered a pious soul, it leads that soul  
to the light of knowledge."<sup>98</sup> The Hermetic religion was a religion of revelation rather than of sacrament. "This venerable faith was essentially a religion of salvation, yet without a Saviour. Its salvation is of a high order and comprehensive for the needs of man, but a definite personal Saviour like the Galilean, or the Stoic Wise Man, or the Gnostic Redeemer, or the Saviour-god of the Mysteries, does not emerge."<sup>99</sup>

Hermeticism is like Gnosticism in that it is a religion wherein men were justified by a piety based on gnosis. The Hermetic writers differ in doctrine, since they have borrowed

97. Herm. I. 26b.

98. Herm. X. 21. It is significant that the redeemer in the Gnostic systems often actually receives the title  $\phi\omega\varsigma$ . Cf. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. I. 29. 1. Barbelon . . . . . generasse simile ei lumen . . . . et videntem Patrem lumen hoc unxisse illud sua benignitate. . . hunc autem dicunt esse Christum.

Origen: Contra Celsum. VI. 31. (The Ophites) ἔνθεν εἰλικρινῆς πέμπεται φῶτος ἤδη μέρος υἱοῦ καὶ πατρός.

99. S. Angus: Op. cit., P. 374.

from various sources, and it is impossible to reduce their thought to a dogmatic system. They agree, however, in regarding  $\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  Θεοῦ as the summum bonum for mankind. This conception is also fundamental in the Gnostic theologies of the first and second centuries (Cf. Chapter I) but in these it has been somewhat artificially connected with sacramentalism and with the account of a descending redeemer who imparts salvation through the mysteries. The peculiar contribution of Hermeticism to Gnosticism seems to consist in the Hermetic emphasis on the importance of Gnosis. Gnosis came to signify much more than mere knowledge: it was an inner apprehension and realization of God: a mystical-ecstatic experience of the divine Being.<sup>100</sup> Deification is the final consummation of bliss for those who possess gnosis in Hermeticism, but this prize was given only to the favoured few. Hermeticism, like Gnosticism, was thus an aristocratic religion: but "it could not vie with the latter in combining its gnostic-<sup>101</sup> mystery character and pretensions to catholicity".

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100. Reitzenstein: Poimandres, P. 158.

Die  $\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  Θεοῦ um welche Christ und Heide betet, ist weit weniger ein Wissen als ein inneres Schauen oder Fühlen.

..... Das Wort  $\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  im Poimandres....fast den Sinn des ekstatischen Schauens annimmt.

Cf. W. Kohler: Die Gnosis. P. 11.

Gnosis heisst Erkenntnis.....Gottes, Gotteserkenntnis ist sie. Aber der Begriff Erkenntnis ist missverständlich und hat zu Missverständnissen geführt. Es handelt sich nicht um intellektuelles Begreifen des Verstandes, um Philosophie und Spekulation, vielmehr ist die synkretistische Gotteserkenntnis das Schauen und mystisch-ekstatische Ergreifen Gottes.....

..... Wer Gott "erkennt", der hat ihn als Kraft, die stetig wieder erworben werden muss um sie zu besitzen, bis der Akt der Gnosis zum Zustand, zum "Leben in Gott", wird.

101. Angus: Op. cit., P. 351.

	P a g e s .
Chapter III. The Conception of Redemption in the Ophite Theologies.	73 - 109

Chapter 3.

The Gnostic theologies of the first and second centuries reveal a gradual process of development in their doctrine of redemption, which leads from more primitive to more Christianized forms. This process will be traced in the following chapters within the various Gnostic sects. The earliest conceptions of redemption which may properly be called Gnostic and which belong to the first two Christian centuries are those which are found in the theologies of the Ophites.

The name Ophite was applied to certain early sects of the Gnostics who made the  $\text{ὄφεις}$ , or serpent, a more or less prominent feature in their teaching. Some of these groups, such as the Naasenes, emphasized the idea of the serpent quite extensively: but in certain other systems the serpent occupied a definitely subordinate position.

The serpent was generally employed in the ancient mysteries and theologies as a medium of expression for various cosmological and spiritual ideas.<sup>1</sup> The serpent biting itself in the tail is the symbol of the rotation of all being: it represents the development of the one into the all, and the return of the all into the one. God himself enters into man in the form of a serpent; and in the mysteries a serpent is often drawn into the bosom.<sup>2</sup> If a man dies the soul is said

1. Cf. H. Leisegang: Die Gnosis. P. 111.

2. Clement of Alexandria: Protrepticus. II. 16. 2.

to leave the body in the form of a serpent. Biblical<sup>3</sup> references to the serpent are also significant. The serpent in the Old Testament is represented as Leviathan, the evil world-spirit:<sup>4</sup> a serpent tempts Eve: the staff of Moses is changed into a serpent: Moses lifts up a brazen serpent in the wilderness: etc.<sup>5</sup> Leisegang also quotes John 3:14-15 as of especial significance: "As Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." The serpent is indeed regarded by some Ophite sects, (e.g., the Peratae and the Sethians) as being identical with the Logos-principle which manifested itself in Jesus: and for the most part, though not invariably, it is regarded as the enlightener and benefactor of mankind, or even as the Holy Spirit which enters into man and makes him become a Pneumatic being. It is "a symbol of the vitalizing principle of nature, or the soul of the world".<sup>6</sup> The Naasenes regarded the serpent as a moist substance which informed all existence: the Sethians thought of it as a wind in the form of a substance which entered into the world of light mingled with darkness to beget Nous: the Ophites who are described by Origen conceived of it as revealed in the Leviathan, the circle which<sup>7</sup> enclosed the concentric spheres of the Archons. Scott says

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3. Porphyr. Vita Plotini. Ch. 2.

4. Isaiah 27:9.

5. H. Leisegang: Op. cit., P. 112.

6. E.F. Scott: Art. 'Ophitism', in Hastings' E.R.E. Vol. 9. P. 499.

7. Scott, loc. cit.



that "it is probable that this cosmical conception was the earlier one, and that the Biblical interpretation was adopted later as the result of Christian influence." The Ophite systems however have not been influenced by Christian ideas to the same extent as have the classical Gnostic writers. In the Ophite sect described by Origen in the Contra Celsum the figure of Jesus Christ is entirely absent: and other sects, such as the Peratae, give no historical function to the Redeemer, who is merely a mythological or "metaphysical" being. Scott observes that "even in the systems which assume the identity of the Redeemer with Jesus, the Christian elements seem to be little more than an embroidery on a pagan groundwork".

It is proposed to consider the Ophite sects in relation to the doctrine of redemption which each of them sets forth. This examination will be an endeavour to trace the doctrine from its primitive manifestations to its more developed and Christianized forms.

The sect which is usually regarded as the original Ophite group is described by Irenaeus and by Origen, who are supplemented by Epiphanius. Irenaeus calls these teachers simply "Gnostics". Their teaching has already been briefly mentioned (in Chapter I.) as representing an important stage in Christological development, since they apparently are the first to attempt to combine the half-understood figure of Jesus Christ with a primitive myth of the descending redeemer. Their complicated system must now be considered at somewhat

greater length.

Irenaeus' account of these "Ophites" or "Gnostics"<sup>8</sup> may be summarized as follows: The father of all, the primary light, is the first or primeval man: his Ennoea, which proceeded from him, produced a Son, which is the second man. Below these is the Holy Spirit, and under this superior Spirit the elements were separated from each other. Afterwards the first man shed light upon the Spirit, and begat by her an incorruptible light, the third male, whom they call Christ, the son of the first and second man and of the Holy Spirit, the first woman. From this woman proceeded another power, Prunicus or Sophia, who assumed a body by descending into the lower world. From her also proceeded a Son, and this line was continued to seven generations, whereby the so-called Hebdomad was formed. The son, the first descendant of the Mother, was called Ialdabaoth. He fixed his desire upon matter and thus Nous was begotten, twisted into the form of a serpent. From Nous were derived spirit and soul and all mundane things,<sup>9</sup> as well as oblivion, envy and death.

The narrative continues by describing the enmity between Ialdabaoth and Prunicus, or Sophia. Ialdabaoth proclaims himself to be supreme God and Father, and creates Adam and

8. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 30.

9. "The 'Gnostics' of Irenaeus view the Serpent under two contrary aspects. At first it was the benefactor of men: but it shared in the punishment inflicted on him by the hostile God, and henceforth became his enemy."  
(Scott, loc. cit.)

Eve, and then he drives them out of Paradise and sends the Flood upon all men. In all these activities he is opposed by Prunicus or Sophia. Finally Ialdabaoth sends a whole series of false prophets. Prunicus finds no rest, either in heaven or in earth, and she invokes her mother, the First Woman, to assist her in her distress. Her mother was moved with compassion, and begged the First Man that Christ should be sent to the assistance of her sister: and Christ therefore descended to her through the seven heavens, depriving them of their powers. He redeemed his sister Sophia by clothing her in the "sprinkling of light", and he becomes united to her as her bridegroom. He then descends into the earthly Jesus, and thus Jesus Christ is produced. He begins to work miracles, and to announce the Unknown Father, and openly to confess himself to be the Son of the First Man. This arouses the anger of the powers and of the father of Jesus, and he is crucified; whereupon Christ and Sophia depart from him into the state of an incorruptible Aeon. Christ then sends a certain energy from above which raises him (Jesus) in the body which is both animal and spiritual: and after his resurrection he tarries on earth eighteen months. Knowledge descends upon him from above: he teaches and instructs those among the disciples who are capable of receiving the mysteries of the spiritual life. Afterwards he sits at the right hand of his father Ialdabaoth and receives the souls who have understood the mysteries. As he enriches himself with souls Ialdabaoth is deprived of power,

and is no longer able to send holy souls back to earth, but only those of his own substance. The consummation of all things ensues when the light is once more gathered up and stored in the treasure of the Aeon, which is incorruptible.

Origen's account of the Ophite sect differs from that of Irenaeus in ascribing definitely anti-Christian tendencies to these believers. "Those who have espoused the cause of the serpent. . . and who are on this account called Ophites, are so far from being Christians, that they bring accusations against Jesus to as great a degree as Celsus himself; and they do not admit anyone into their assembly until he has uttered maledictions against Jesus."<sup>10</sup> Origen's account gives even greater prominence than that of Irenaeus to the conception<sup>11</sup> of seven ruling demons, or planetary powers, the Hebdomad. These were set forth in a diagram, which has been lost, but in which there were described 10 circles, distinct from each other but united to each other by one circle which was said to be the<sup>12</sup> soul of all things and which was called Leviathan. Origen believes that Celsus was acquainted with this diagram; at any rate he gives names to the seven rulers of the Hebdomad which are said to correspond to the names given in the diagram.

Initiates who seek for redemption must first pass through the "fence of wickedness", and the "gates which are subjected to the world of ruling spirits". Then they must learn certain

10. Origen: *Contra Celsum*, VI. 28.

11. *Ibid.*, VI. 30.

12. *Ibid.*, VI. 25.

important formulae in order to pass through the confines of the Hebdomad. At first they repeat this formula: "I salute the one formed king, the first power, preserved by the spirit of providence and by wisdom, from whom I am sent forth pure, being already part of the light of the son and of the father: grace be with me: yea, O father, let it be with me." Then they pass through Ialdabaoth, and are taught to say as follows: "Thous, O first and seventh, who are born to command with confidence, thou, O Ialdabaoth, who art the rational ruler of pure mind and a perfect work to son and father, bearing the symbol of life in the character of a type, and opening to the world the gate which thou didst close against thy kingdom, I pass again through thy realm in freedom. Let grace be with me: yea O father, let it be with me." Similar formulae are to be repeated when passing through Iao, Sabaoth, Astaphaeus, Aloaeus, and Horaeus. They are, indeed, like the formulas of the mystery religions: they are the passwords which render the doorkeepers powerless, and the keys with which the doors are opened.

It is contended by Anz that the Ophites possessed some sort of secret sacrament.<sup>13</sup> "Gnosis is manifest in the believer who gives their own names to the Aeons, and who sets limits to their powers, and who feels himself in possession

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13. Anz: Op. cit., P. 12. Mit diesen aus der Mysteriensprache entnommenen Bezeichnungen soll unzweifelhaft hingewiesen werden auf den Besitz der Sakramente.

of a higher assistance, i.e., those 'symbols' which came from the μήτηρ or the παρ Θεός or from the υἱός καὶ πατήρ.<sup>14</sup>

The archons are world rulers, like the seven planets: and being made free from them corresponds to being redeemed from<sup>15</sup> the planetary powers and their fatal oppression. Origen also states that there is a series of heavenly doorkeepers whose names must be memorized; this list of names constitutes an important feature of the Gnosis required for redemption.

<sup>16</sup> Anz is convinced that the Ophites, even in their most primitive forms, possessed a well-developed system, describing the ascent of the soul to the upper world, past the seven archons, and emphasizing the importance of a Gnosis whereby they might overcome these seven rulers. This Gnosis included the higher world, the archons themselves, and the holy formulas and sacraments which the soul must appropriate to herself. This theory seems to bear distinct resemblances to the Mattarta doctrine of the Mandaeans (described in chapter 2) which has already been shown to be of very ancient derivation. There is no reason to doubt that the Ophite and the Mandaean conceptions are closely related at this particular point.

The classification of the remaining sects which are also known as Ophites is difficult because of the vast uncertainty which surrounds them. Little or nothing is known of the time and circumstances of many of these systems, and there

14. Anz: Op. cit., P. 12.

15. Origen: Op. cit., VII. 40

16. Anz: Op. cit., P. 15.

seems to be a complete absence of definite landmarks of the usual kind, which would indicate authorship, place of origin, etc. It is evident, however, that some of the sects are definitely outside the range of Christian influence, and that some may even belong to a pre-Christian body of the Gnosis: while others have been definitely affected by Christianity. This is especially notable in the theory of redemption, which appears in extremely primitive forms or in more spiritualized conceptions according to the extent of the contact of Ophitism with Christian sources. It is proposed to consider the various systems in their interpretations of this theory, beginning with the more primitive schools and advancing to the more developed teachings.

The Barbelo-Gnostics represent a very early form of Ophitism, and are among the most primitive of the Gnostics of the first and second centuries. They include the Barbeliotes, the Nicolaitans, the Cainites, and several smaller sects.

The Barbeliotes are briefly described by Irenaeus,<sup>17</sup> but nothing is said by him regarding their cosmology or their soteriology or their theory of redemption. They are called Barbeliotes because "some of them set forth a certain Aeon who never grows old and exists in a virgin spirit whom they style Barbelos."<sup>18</sup> Irenaeus' brief description may be

17. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. I. 29. 1.

18. Iren., loc. cit. The name Barbelo is supposed to be derived from **בארבע אלוהים** ('God in Four'). Bousset (Hauptprobleme, P. 14) relates the word to the Greek ("Ich mochte die Vermutung wagen, dass Barbelo nichts anderes ist als eine Verstümmelung von **παρθένος** ")

regarded as being generally true of the Barbelo-Gnostics.

The Nicolaitans are also classified under this heading,<sup>19</sup> since there were those among them who worshipped the Barbelo. They are described by Pseudo-Tertullian, Philaster, Irenaeus,<sup>20</sup> and Epiphanius. Philaster<sup>20</sup> describes the Nicolaitan system briefly as follows: The shadows entered into spirit and produced the four aeons (a Tetras) and these four generated other four (an Ogdoad). From Noreia were born the gods and men and angels, and seven demoniacal spirits, and Noreia also sent forth prophets in human history, such as Barabbas. A brief reference to the Nicolaitans by Irenaeus<sup>21</sup> states that they are "the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the apostles." They live lives of unrestrained indulgence.<sup>22</sup> Pseudo-Tertullian<sup>22</sup> describes the Nicolaitan teaching as "disgusting throughout. Certain aeons are born of lewdness, and there are disgraceful minglings and obscene unitings." The fullest account of the Nicolaitan teaching is given by Epiphanius.<sup>23</sup> They honour a certain Barbelo, who they say lives in the eighth heaven and who has emanated from the Father. She, as some say, is the mother of Ialdabaoth, or as others think, the mother of Sabaoth. Her son exercised lordship over the seventh heaven in tyrannical pride, and said to those below him: "I am the lord and beside

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19. Philaster: Haer..33. Isti Barbelo venerantur et Noriam.  
Cf. Epiphanius: Haer. XXV.

20. Philaster, Op. cit.

21. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 26. 3.

22. Pseudo-Tertullian: 5.

23. Epiphanius: Haer. XXV. 2.



me there is no other god." Barbelo was grieved at this and sought to redeem mankind from the power of the evil ruler of this world. A series of unclean mysteries were devised in order to accomplish this end. Redemption means that the Pneuma which is in man is to be restored to its original place. This Pneuma originally came to be in man because the Archon of this world, the son of Barbelo, stole it out of the world of Light in order to instil it into man as a soul. Epiphanius goes on to distinguish various sects of the Nicolaitans which flourished at the time he wrote, i.e., during the last quarter of the fourth century. The Phibionites, e.g., are among these: they distinguish 365 degrees of immorality, and he who has fulfilled these has become like the redeemer Jesus Christ.<sup>24</sup> Epiphanius' account, however, here as elsewhere, must be accepted with reservations, because of "his almost boundless credulity."<sup>25</sup> His reliability "is often open to grave suspicion owing to his great faculty of inventing or retailing scandals and all kinds of foulness."<sup>26</sup> In any case, these sects are later than the period to be covered by this present study. Of the Nicolaitans it may be affirmed that they were a libertine sect, and that they sought redemption in casting aside all restraint and prohibition.

A libertine doctrine of redemption is also found among the Cainites. Practically the only source of information

24. Epiphanius: Op. cit., XXVI. 10.

25. Buonaiuti: Gnostic Fragments, P. 9.

26. G.R.S. Mead: Fragments of a Faith Forgotten, P. 150.

regarding this sect is the account of Irenaeus.<sup>27</sup> Epiphanius also gives an account of them, but he merely adds a few reflections of his own to the description of Irenaeus. They seem to have been distinguished by the honour which they paid to Cain, and Judas is also an important figure, "he knowing the truth as no others did."<sup>28</sup> The creator of this world was Hystera, the God of generation, and apparently also the Old Testament God of the Jews. In order to be set free from this god, who is an inferior and evil power, man must pass through all kinds of experience. "An angel attends them in every one of their sinful and abominable actions, and urges them to venture on audacity and to incur pollution. . . . and they maintain that this is 'perfect knowledge', without shrinking to rush into such actions as it is not lawful even to name."<sup>29</sup>

The same kind of libertinism and anti-Judaism as that of the Cainites is found in certain obscure sects of the Ophites, described only by Epiphanius: e.g., the Antitacti, and the Prodiciani, who represent the God of the law as the source of all evil. These sects, however, were most probably later than the second century.

Five schools of the Ophites, which are of much greater importance than the rudimentary sects which have just been described, are set forth by Hippolytus in the Philosophumena.

27. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 31.

28. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 31. 1.

29. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 31. 2.

These are the Sethians, the Peratae, the Naasenes, the Justinians, and the Docetae.

The Sethians are described by Hippolytus, Pseudo-<sup>30</sup>Tertullian, and Epiphanius. These authors attribute somewhat varied teachings to these Gnostics: Epiphanius makes them an Egyptian sect and does not attribute serpent-worship to them; while Pseudo-Tertullian connects them with an attempt to identify Christ with the Seth of Genesis. Hippolytus derives many of their doctrines from Musaeus, Linnaeus and Orpheus. The Sethians seem to have little, if anything, in common with Christianity; Legge believes that they represent a pre-<sup>31</sup>Christian form of Ophitism.

The doctrine of the Sethians as it is set forth by Hippolytus presupposes three pre-existent universal principles. The substance of the principles is light and darkness, and between these there is uncontaminated spirit, which is a vapour; but this is not like a mind perceptible to sense, but rather "a certain subtle fragrance." Then the light pours its rays on the underlying darkness, and the fragrance of the spirit is shed abroad. "The darkness is a fearful water, into which the light with the spirit is drawn down" and transformed into such a nature (as the water.) "From this conjunction of the three principles there came into being a certain great form

30. Hippolytus: Philosophumena. V. 19 ff.

Pseudo-Tertullian: ch. 2.

Epiphanius: Haer. 39. 1 & 3.

31. F. Legge: Translation of Hippolytus' Philosophumena, Vol. 1. P. 161, footnote.

of a seal, that is, heaven and earth." <sup>32</sup> Between heaven and earth there are an infinite number of powers, and between these powers similar conjunctions occurred, producing similar seals or "wombs". From these boundless seals were formed the ideas of the different kinds of living creatures. These were brought into being from the water through the first born principle, "a wind violent and turbulent, and the cause <sup>33</sup> of all generation." This wind is in the form of a serpent, and it begets man and all things by entering into the "unpurified womb": thereafter the "unpurified womb" will admit no form but that of the serpent. Within this womb, however, is imprisoned the light which is scattered from on high, together with the fragrance of the spirit. "There is mind which is given shape in the different species: it is a perfect God who is brought down from the unbegotten light on high and into man's nature by the movement of the wind..... Therefore every thought and every care of the light on high is how and in what way the mind may be set free from the death of the wicked and dark body." <sup>35</sup>

Redemption is therefore effected by deceiving the unpurified womb. The perfect word of the Light on high beguiles it by assuming the likeness of a serpent. It enters into the womb in order to release the imprisoned elements, "so that it

32. Philos. V. 19. P. 212. (The pages quoted are according to the numbering of Cruice: the translation is that of F. Legge.)

33. Phil. V. 19. P. 215.

34. Phil. V. 19. P. 213.

35. Phil. V. 19. P. 214.

might loose the bonds which encircle the Perfect Mind which was begotten in the impurity of the womb by the first born of the water, i.e., the serpent, the beast."<sup>36</sup> "Thus, too, the Word of God descended into the womb of a Virgin and loosed the pangs which were in that darkness: but after entering into the mysteries of that womb he was washed and drank of the cup of living bubbling water, which he must needs drink who was about to do off the slave-like form and do on a heavenly garment."<sup>37</sup>

Like the Peratae, the Sethians teach a theory of composition and mixture. "Like runs to like, as the iron to the magnet, the straw to the amber, and the gold to the sea-hawk's spine. And thus the ray of light, which was mingled with the water, having received from teaching and learning the knowledge of its own proper place, hastens to the Word come from on high in slave-like form and becomes with the Word another Word."<sup>38</sup>

According to Epiphanius' account of the Sethians, there are two different classes of men; those who are "mingled with each other", who are descended from Cain and Abel, and those of the race of Seth, who are descended from a higher order. The race of Sethians belongs to Jesus Christ the Redeemer; he entered miraculously into this world, not after the manner of natural birth.<sup>39</sup> He is in reality nothing but the

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36. Phil. V. 19. P. 205.

37. Phil. V. 17. P. 216.

38. Phil. V. 21. P. 222.

39. Epiphanius: Haer. 39. 3.

reappearance of Seth, whom the Mother Sophia sends to the help of mankind.<sup>40</sup> It will also be his duty to keep his race in purity and to bring them back to their original condition of separation from men of other extraction. This constitutes the redemption of mankind: i.e., their restoration to their place of origin.

The Peratae give great prominence to the serpent in their doctrine of redemption. They call him the Son and make him an intermediate power between the Father of all and matter. Gnosis of him brings redemption and insight into the laws of the Universe.

The Peratae suppose the cosmos to be one, yet divided into three parts: the ingenerable, the self-generable, and the generable. There are also three gods, three logoi, three minds, and three men. From on high, from the unbegottenness and the first section of the Cosmos, there came down a triple-bodied and triple-powered man called Christ, containing within Himself all the compounds and powers from the three parts of the Cosmos.<sup>41</sup> This was in accordance with the Pauline saying: "It pleased Him that in Him should dwell all the fulness of the Pleroma bodily."<sup>42</sup> It was in order that through His descent all the threefold divisions should be saved that Christ was brought down from on high, from unbegottenness; the elements which descended from above are by him enabled to

40. Epiphan. Haer. 39. 1 & 3.

Cf. Philaster: Haer. 3.

Pseudo-Tertullian: 2.

41. Philos. V. 12. P. 186.

42. Col. 1:19 & 2:9.

return, while those elements which plotted against the higher ones are to be separated and left for punishment. The Peratae believed that "nothing which has its foundations in generation can escape the fate determined from birth for the begotten," (i.e., that it perishes wholly).<sup>43</sup> Only the man who knows the "compulsion of birth" and the paths through which men have entered into the world can pass through and transcend destruction. This destruction is "water", which is the "generation of men". Hippolytus quotes a fragment of Heraclitus which reads: "Water becomes death to souls." This death seizes the Egyptians in the Red Sea with their chariots: the ignorant are the Egyptians, and the going out from Egypt is the going forth from the body. "The gods of destruction are the stars, who bring upon those coming into being the necessity of mutable generation. These Moses called the serpents of the desert which bite and cause to perish those who think they have crossed the Red Sea. Therefore, he says, to those sons of Israel who were bitten in the desert Moses displayed the true and perfect serpent, those who believed on which were not bitten in the desert, i.e., by the Powers. None then, he says, can save and set free those brought forth from the land of Egypt, i.e., from the body and from this world, save only the perfect serpent, the full of the full."<sup>44</sup>

The Peratae quote freely from the Old Testament, yet they

43. Phil. V. 14. P. 198.

44. Phil. V. 16. P. 200.

regarded its God as a bloodthirsty despot: "The lord of this world delights in blood."<sup>45</sup> The redeemer, however, in the form of a serpent, worked constantly even in pre-Christian times. He was the mark which protected Cain from death when the God of this world rejected him. He was the power of Nimrod, the protector of Esau, and the enemy of Jacob; and his counterpart, the brazen serpent which Moses set up, overcame the gods of destruction. This redeemer-serpent is the Logos who is continually with God, and who is the source of all life. He is the ὄφις καθολικός. "And if the eyes of any are blessed, he says, he will see when he looks upward to heaven the fair image of the serpent in the great summit of heaven turning about and becoming the source of all movement and of all present things. And the beholder will know that without him there is nothing framed, of heavenly or of earthly things,<sup>46</sup> or of things below the earth."<sup>47</sup>

Redemption therefore brings Gnosis: he who has Gnosis understands the laws of necessity and the ways of origin, and knows the means of escape from fate, and from the past, and from corruption.<sup>47</sup> Subjectively, redemption is the awakening of consciousness, and of the knowledge of the being and origin of the world and the nature of Spirit and its alienation from matter. Thereby the Spirit is shaped and formed and freed

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45. Phil. V. 16. P. 201.

46. Phil. V. 16. P. 203.

47. Phil. V. 16. P. 199.



from all unreality, and from all shadows. This process is governed by the ascending and descending  $\delta\phi\iota\varsigma$ .<sup>48</sup> "He on whom the Gnosis does not shine is lost: but he who has strength enough to comprehend that he is a type from the Father on high, transferred hither and made into a body..... he becomes white and wholly of one substance with the Father, and returns thither."<sup>49</sup>

When the Saviour comes into the world, he, as the Serpent, attracts to himself those who are capable by nature of receiving his influence. He attracts these souls "as amber attracts chaff, as the magnet draws the iron, as the spine of the sea-hawk attracts gold."<sup>50</sup> (Compare the Sethian doctrine, that "Like attracts like"; see P. 91 above.) Thus the perfect race is formed, consubstantial with the Father; these are called the Peratae, because they have learned safely to pass through ( $\pi\epsilon\rho\alpha\tau\alpha\iota$ ) the corruption to which everything that is generated is subject.<sup>51</sup>

The Naasenes are very closely related to the Peratae: indeed, the number of resemblances between these systems would suggest that they interpenetrated to a considerable extent.<sup>52</sup> Salmon affirms that in both accounts the doctrines of the same sect are described: and also that there is a literary dependence of the work of one sect upon that of the other. "If

48. Phil. V. 17. P. 205.

49. Phil. V. 17. P. 206.

50. Phil. V. 17. P. 207.

51. Phil. V. 16. P. 199.

52. Salmon: Article "Ophites", in Smith & Wace's Dictionary of Christian Biography. (D.C.B.) Vol. IV. P. 86.

the two had not the same author," he says, "it seems to us that the Peratic work is the elder, and that it was made use of by the writer who uses the name Naasene." This hypothesis seems to be supported by many considerations. It is evident, however, that the Naasenes have been influenced by Christianity to a much greater extent than have the Peratae and the Sethians. F. Legge regards the Naasenes as a comparatively late form among the Ophite heresies, since they directly incorporate certain conceptions from the catholic Church into their system. They assert the existence of a Supreme Being who revealed Himself through His Son and they admit the substantial truth of the Gospel narrative. The real origin of the Naasene system, Legge believes, is to be found in "a combination of the corrupt Judaism practised in Asia Minor with the pagan myths or legends prevalent all over Western Asia, which may some day be traced back to the Sumerians and to the earliest civilization of which we have any record."<sup>53</sup>

The name Naasene is derived from the Hebrew **נָחָשׁ** a serpent, and "the priests and chiefs of the doctrine were called Naasenes because they dared to sing the praises of the serpent, who is the cause of the error through certain systems invented by his action."<sup>54</sup>

The Naasenes worshipped, as the beginning of all things, a Man and the Son of Man. This man, Adamas, was androgynous, and

53. F. Legge: *Philosophumena*, Transl. Vol. I. P. 118 fn.

See also Legge: *Forerunners & Rivals of Christianity*, Pp32-37

54. Phil. V. 3.

united in himself three elements, the spiritual, the material, and the psychical. He it is "from whom every fatherhood named on earth and in the heavens is framed."<sup>55</sup> Knowledge of this Man is the beginning of the capacity to know God: for the beginning of perfection is the knowledge of Man, but the knowledge of God is completed perfection.<sup>56</sup> Just as the Great Man unites in himself three natures, spiritual, psychical, and material, so all mankind is divided into three classes, i.e. spiritual, psychic and choic, according to the predominance of one or other of these three natures. Yet every individual also comprehends these three natures within himself, so that each human being is threefold, yet also a unity. The soul is the animal nature of man, in which his mind or spirit is imprisoned: and this soul is in turn imprisoned within the body.

The various mysteries of the Naasenes, which Hippolytus sets forth in detail, are all mysteries of redemption: they seek to provide means whereby man's real nature may be restored to its original place in the divine nature. Sacramental observances of an elaborate nature are prescribed, and these are derived from many different sources.

The Assyrians, according to Hippolytus' account, were the first to teach that man was "threefold and yet a unity". They taught also that the "real man" within the human nature was

55. Ephesians 3:14.

56. Phil. V. 6. P. 140.

masculo-feminine, devoid of sex, and that this "real nature" becomes transformed from the earthly parts of the lower creation to the eternal substance on high, where there is neither male nor female, but a new creature.<sup>57</sup> Baptism is of the utmost importance in accomplishing this end: "it is the leading to unfading pleasure him who is baptized according to them in living water, and anointed with silent ointment."<sup>58</sup> This baptism was no mere symbolical washing with physical water, but rather a definite admission of the candidate to the eternal world, where the real man dwelt.

The Greek mysteries honour Hermes as the Logos, and also as "the leader of souls, and a sender forth of them, and a cause of souls."<sup>59</sup> These souls came down from the Heavenly Man above into the form of clay so that they may be made slaves to the demiurge of the world, the fashioner of creation. Thus it is that Hermes "holds in his hands the rod, fair and golden, wherewith he lulls to sleep the eyes of men, whomso he will, while others, though sleeping, he rouses."<sup>60</sup> To these souls is applied the Scriptural saying: "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee."<sup>61</sup> This is the Christ who in all begotten things is the Son of Man. All souls came from Ocean, "the source of gods and source of men", but all such birth, birth below, is deadly: it is only

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57. Phil. V. 7. P. 146.

58. Phil. V. 7. P. 148.

59. Phil. V. 7. P. 152.

60. Homer: Odyssey, XXIV. 3 ff.

61. Eph. 5. 14.

that which is born above which is deathless, for it is born of water alone, and of the spirit, and it is spiritual and not fleshly. This is the spiritual birth.

The Samothracian mysteries teach that Adam is the Arch-man or Heavenly Man. In their temples are two statues, representing the Heavenly Man and the redeemed or spiritual human soul which is in all things of one substance with that man. Christ was such a soul, but his disciples had not attained to such perfection. Thus it was that He said to them "Unless ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of the heavens: but even though, He says, ye drink the cup which I drink when I go forth, you will not be able to enter there". Christ said this "because he knew of what nature each of His disciples was, and that it needs must be that each of them should go to his own nature."<sup>62</sup>

The Phrygians or Thracians allegorize many Old Testament passages to demonstrate the way of redemption or rebirth. "A shape or form (the Logos) comes down from on high from the Un-portrayable One and passes through the sources of underlying things, but we know not how or in what fashion he comes."<sup>63</sup> He must reascend and be born again as a spiritual, not a fleshly, being. This ascent of the soul is illustrated or typified by the verse in Psalm 24: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, that the King of Glory may come in. . . . This is

62. Phil. V. 8. P. 161. Cf. John 6:53. Mark 10:38.

63. Phil. V. 8. P. 162.

the King of Glory, he who is mighty in battle." The "battle" here refers to the war within the body: the soul must rise above the warring elements and enter in by the gate of heaven which Jacob saw in his dream.<sup>64</sup> "Wherefore, he says, the saying of Jesus, I am the true gate". (John 10:7, 9.) Now He who says this is, he says, the Perfect Man who has been impressed above (with the image) of the Unportrayable One. Therefore, he says, the perfect man will not be saved unless born again by entering in through the gate."<sup>65</sup> The saying of St. Paul that the dead shall leap forth from their graves means that the spiritual man, not the fleshly man, shall be born again from the bodies of the earthly. "This is the resurrection which comes through the gate of the heavens, through which if they do not enter all remain dead. And the same Phrygians, he says again, say that this same one is by reason of the change a god. For he becomes God when he arises from the dead and enters into heaven through the same gate."<sup>66</sup> Paul the Apostle also knew this gate, and entered into heaven by it. (2 Corinthians 12: 3, 4) The Phrygians distinguish between the Greater and the Lesser Mysteries, which are to be apprehended by different classes of believers. The Lesser Mysteries pertain to "fleshly generation": they are the Mysteries of Persephone below and of the leading thither.<sup>67</sup> After having been initiated into these, men ought to cease (from the small)

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64. Genesis. 28:17.

65. Phil. V. 8. P. 165.

66. Ibid.

67. Phil. V. 8. P. 172.

and be initiated into the great and heavenly ones. "This is the gate of heaven, and this the house of God, where the good God dwells alone, into which will not enter any unpurified, any psychic or fleshly one: but it is kept for the spiritual only, where those who are must cast aside their garments, and all become bridegrooms, having come to maturity through the virgin spirit."<sup>68</sup>

The Naasenes also frequented the mysteries of the Great Mother, "thinking especially that by means of what is enacted there they perceive the whole mystery," (i.e., the mystery of rebirth and redemption).<sup>69</sup> They were rigid ascetics in sexual life. The Naas, or Serpent, whom they worship, is the moist principle of the universe, without whom nothing that has being can possibly exist, either beings with souls or inanimate objects. The Serpent is compared symbolically to the river which proceeded out of Eden, dividing itself into four streams. (Genesis 2:10). In man, they say, Eden is the brain, "as it were bound and enlaced in the surrounding coverings as in the heavens"; and Paradise is the man "as far as the head only." The four streams are sight, hearing, smell and taste. The spiritual are those who choose for themselves that which is their own out of the living waters of the Euphrates (i.e. the subtle world which flows through the gross world of Babylon, i.e., the body). Thus it is that these spiritual ones enter in through the true gate, which is Jesus the Blessed One. They

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68. Phil. V. 8. P. 173.

69. Phil. V. 9. P. 178.

alone of all men are true Christians, because they have been redeemed and made perfect by "the mystery in the third gate,"<sup>70</sup> having been anointed there with silent ointment from the horn.

The Naasene hymn which is quoted by Hippolytus<sup>71</sup> is of the utmost importance and value for this present study.

It may be said to set forth in brief the whole of the Naasene doctrine of redemption in its essential features.

It will be of advantage to quote the hymn in full, according to the translation of F. Legge.

"The generic law of the Universe was the primordial mind:  
But the Second was the poured forth Light (or Chaos) of the First born:

And the third toiling soul received the Law as its portion,

Whence clothed in watery shape

The loved one subject to toil and death,

Now having lordship she beholds the light,

Now cast forth in piteous state, she weeps.

Now she weeps and now rejoices.

Now laments and now is judged.

Now she is judged and now is dying.

Now no outlet is left, for she wandering

The labyrinth of woes has entered.

But Jesus said: Father, behold,

A strife of woes upon earth

From thy breath has fallen,

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70. Phil. V. 9. P. 181.

71. Phil. V. 10. Pp. 182-184.



But she seeks to flee malignant chaos  
 And knows not how to win through it.  
 For thus cause send me, O Father;  
 Holding seals I will go down,  
 Through entire aeons I will pass,  
 All mysteries I will disclose;  
 The forms of the gods I will display;  
 The secrets of the holy way  
 Called Gnosis, I will hand down."

In this psalm are gathered up the chief outlines of the Naasene system: the World-mind, the masculine primordial spirit, the feminine principle Chaos, which proceeded from him; and between both of these is the Soul, whose higher part is spiritual, belonging to Jesus the Logos, and whose lower part is sunken into matter. The position of the soul is intolerable. Situated between spirit and matter, between light and darkness, she is the scene of all sorrows and struggles. In her vary pity and joy, laughter and sorrow, doubt and fear of death. The sad condition of the soul aroused the pity of Jesus, and he begged the Father to be allowed to bring help to her. Jesus brings about the soul's redemption through his descent from the spiritual world to earth. Through the act of redemption the circle of events is completed: Jesus comes from the spirit and descends to the soul in an earthly body in order to free the soul from the earthly, and to spiritualize it. He is thus the pneumatic, the psychic and the choic man

in one person, and unites in himself also both sexes.

In this process of redemption the self-realization of the Primitive Man who is the primordial Naas is implied. He descends naturally in the  $\text{Κένωσις}$  which Jesus performs, and loses himself in individuals: but at the same time he remains the rescuer and redeemer. In the whole of the Naasene teaching concerning this Primitive Man and his descent there are traces of a very early myth which seems to lie behind many of the Gnostic systems. (See Chapter 1.) This Primitive Man is always described as sinking down from the Heavenly Aeon in primitive times and entering into matter. Thereupon he is conquered and held fast, but he struggles again to free himself from matter, and in so doing he becomes the prototype of all men. After this Primitive Man has freed himself from the world of matter, he identifies himself with the highest god, who is above all material things and free from sexual passion, being masculo-feminine. The Naasenes set this forth allegorically as being derived from the mysteries of the Assyrians. The love of Attis or Adonis for the nymph Aphrodite (i.e. for generation) symbolizes the sinking of the Primitive Man into matter: but the mother of the gods castrates Attis, thereby rendering him masculo-feminine, and thus he is rescued from matter and brought back to the spiritual world.

These affinities of the Naasene system with pagan

mythology, however, do not alter the fact that in general the tone of this system is much more Christian than that of the Ophite heresies which precede it and which are grouped with it by Hippolytus. The source from which Hippolytus derived his knowledge of the Naasenes is unknown. Extensive quotations from the Scriptures are prominent throughout the account: and this has led Legge to suppose that Hippolytus may have taken down his history of Naasene doctrines from the lips of some convert, "which would account for the extreme wildness of the quotations and the incoherence with which he jumps about from one subject to another."<sup>73</sup> This is of course only a conjecture: yet it is not at all an impossible supposition.

The affinities which exist between the Sethians, the Peratae and the Naasenes are obvious, and nowhere are these more evident than in the doctrine of redemption which these three sects maintain.<sup>74</sup> These systems all define and describe carefully the powers which exist between the higher and the lower world, and they all deal with the necessity of reconciliation between these two worlds. This preoccupation with the need

73. F. Legge: Translation of the Philosophumena. Vol. 1. P.145.

74. De Faye: Gnostiques et Gnosticisme. P. 444. Les systèmes du Naasene, du Perate et du Séthien sont évidemment les trois rameaux d'un même tronc . . . . Elle se caractérisait encore par le soin avec lequel on y définissait les forces intermédiaires entre le domaine supérieur et le domaine inférieur, celui de l'esprit et celui de la matière. . . . Cette préoccupation des relations des deux domaines opposés semble avoir eu pour conséquence que l'auteur et les adeptes de ce système ont approfondi le problème de la rédemption. Le Séthien en donne une doctrine qui, pour ne pas être formulée en termes abstraits, n'en est pas moins complète et imposante.

for redemption was at the very heart of Gnosticism, even in its most primitive forms: and under the influence of Christianity it came to be an even more prominent feature of the more developed Gnostic systems.

The Gnostic Justinus, who is described only by Hippolytus among patristic writers, is closely related to the three schools which have just been described. His time and circumstances are in complete uncertainty. G. R. S. Mead regards the Justinian system as "one of the oldest forms of the Gnosis of which we have any record," and places it before any of the other Ophite sects in point of time.<sup>75</sup> This position, however, has been disputed by Salmon, and it seems to be unsupported by definite evidence. The Justinians, on the whole, seem to have been influenced considerably by Christianity, and Jesus Christ is given a prominent place in their system, although His rôle as redeemer is rather vague and undefined.

Justinus was the author of several books, but he is known only by abstracts from one of them, i.e. the book of Baruch, described by Hippolytus.<sup>76</sup> Justinus taught that there were three unbegotten principles of the universals: (1) The Good One, who has foreknowledge of all things: (2) The Father of all begotten things, without foreknowledge, unknowable and invisible: (that is, Elohim): (3) Edën, or Israel, a feminine principle half serpent and half virgin. (In her double form

75. G.R.S. Mead: Fragments of a Faith Forgotten. P. 193.

76. Phil. V. 23 ff.

Eden is like the Sophia Prunikos of the Ophite sect described by Irenaeus.) Of Elohim and Eden are born twenty-four angels, among which Baruch is the chief minister of good and the serpent, Naas, is the chief agent of evil. These angels people the earth, making man of the upper parts of Eden and the animals of her lower or snaky parts.

After heaven and earth have been created, evil enters into the world. The twelve angels of Eden, the Mother, were divided into four quarters: and these companies dominate the world, bringing famine and war and all evil. This comes about because Elohim visited the loftiest heaven, in company with Eden, and passing through the gate of the righteous he entered into the presence of the Good One, and saw "what eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man". Elohim asks the Good One for permission to overturn the world which he has made, and to liberate his spirit which was bound up in it: but the Good One says that Elohim must abide in heaven with him, and do no evil, and that Eden might hold the creation while she would. Eden therefore felt herself abandoned: and she caused Baruch to bring about dissolutions of marriage among men, so that they might suffer as she had suffered. She gave power also to her angel Naas to afflict the spirit of Elohim that was among men. Thereupon Elohim sent his angel Baruch to the help of his threatened spirits. With him begins revelation: for Baruch forbids men to obey the Naas, and to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

He comes to Naas and the prophets, but the Naas works directly against him, and "darkens the commandments of Baruch"<sup>77</sup>. The consequence is a continuous strife between Spirit and Soul (i.e. between Elohim and Eden) whose essence exists in all men. Then Elohim sends Heracles, a prophet of the uncircumcision, whose twelve labours are so many victories over the power of the material angels. He too, however, is led astray, the instrument of his seduction being Aphrodite or Omphale.

After all these fruitless attempts Baruch was sent to Jesus of Nazareth in the days of Herod. He, the son of Joseph and Mary, was at that time twelve years old. Baruch taught him all things concerning Eden and Elohim and the things which shall be hereafter, and he said "Strive therefore, O Jesus, Son of Man, that thou be not led astray, but preach this word unto men, and proclaim to them the things touching the Father and the Good One, and go on high to the Good One, and sit there with Elohim the Father of us all."<sup>78</sup> Jesus listened to Baruch, and fulfilled his instructions. He remained steadfast against all the allurements of the Naas. The Naas, however, "angered because he could not lead him astray, made him to be crucified." Jesus hung on the Cross and resigned his life with the words "Woman, behold thy son", i.e. the lower, natural and earthly man: and thereafter, commending his

77. Phil. V. 26. P. 235.

78. Phil. V. 26. P. 227.

spirit into the hands of his Father, he ascended to the Good.

This ascent of Jesus to the Good is a prototype of the redemption of all mankind from the bonds of matter. The Justinian doctrine of redemption is esoteric: it is required of those who are to attain to the Good that they take a solemn oath not to divulge any of the secrets, and never to turn away from the Good to Creation.<sup>79</sup> This is the oath required of those "who are about to bear these mysteries, and to be perfected by the Good One": Elohim himself swore this same oath when he came to the presence of the Good One. After the initiate has sworn this oath he enters into the presence of the Good One, and beholds what no eye has seen: and then he drinks of the living water. This is the water which is above the firmament, which is for the spiritual man, whereas the water under the firmament is only for the earthly and psychical man.<sup>80</sup> In this water the spiritual man is washed, even as Elohim was washed and did not repent. The context here shows that the word "washed" (λούεσθαι) refers to baptism, which played such an important part in all the mystery religions of the time, (e.g. those of Isis, Mithras, etc.)

Although the Justinian system has no real redeemer-figure, yet both Jesus and Elohim came to assume a kind of role as redeemer. Both of these beings, the one in need of redemption and the other himself redeemed, show to the humanity the way to

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79. Phil. V. 27. P. 239.

80. Phil. V. 27. P. 240.

perfection of spirit, i.e., the freedom of spirit from the sensual world. Jesus, without the power of Christ existing in him, appears as a pure man, but he has a purer and stronger  $\pi\upsilon\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$  than other men. Elohim is exalted to the Good One, but he anxiously desires that his spirit, which is in mankind, may be redeemed.

Hilgenfeld refers to R.A. Lipsius' attempt (Gnosticismus, P. 74 ff.) to find in the Elohim of Justinus the oldest form of the Gnostic Demiurge, since the name Elohim is that of the God of the Old Testament, and since Elohim here, like the God of the Old Testament, is not only one of the world-creating angels, but also one who stands above the angels. Hilgenfeld, however, says that Elohim here is not essentially different from the Archon of Basilides, the Ialdabaoth of the Ophites of Irenaeus, and the Demiurge or Archon of the Peratae (Phil. V. 17). The Elohim of Justinus is creator of men and of the corporeal world; but he is also far below the perfect  
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God and has no connection with Him.

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One other sect, the Docetae, remains to be considered in this chapter as a kind of an "appendage" to the Ophite systems.

81. Hilgenfeld: Die Ketzergeschichte des Urchristenthums. Der Elohim Justin's steht dem bekannten Demiurgen der Gnostiker darin ganz gleich, dass er ebensowohl Schöpfer der Körperwelt und des Menschen ist, als auch tief unter dem vollkommenen Gotte und ausser aller Gemeinschaft mit ihm steht.
82. These Docetae have nothing to do with the Docetic heretics who maintained that the body of Christ existed in appearance only. They are a separate sect, whose appellation is something of a mystery. Hippolytus in the opening sentence of Chapter 8 mentions a  $\delta\omicron\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$  or beam in the brother's eye - but this is a fanciful derivation.



The Docetae are not usually classified with the Ophites, and indeed their system shows traces of a development later than any of the sects which have so far been considered. Their doctrines bear a strong resemblance to those of the Basilidian and Valentinian schools, and it is probable that they belong to the last quarter of the second century.<sup>83</sup> Yet in many ways their tenets are similar to those of the three "Ophite" schools which have just been described: and the doctrine of redemption which they set forth seems in many ways to be the purified and completed outcome of the more primitive ones which were held by the Ophites of Hippolytus.

The Docetae postulate the existence of a Primal Being, a first God, who is "the seed of a fig, in size altogether of the smallest, but in power boundless, a magnitude unreckoned in quantity."<sup>84</sup> The growth of the fig tree is symbolic of the development of all creation: just as three things first come into being from the seed of the fig -- stem, leaves and fruit-- so also "three Aeons come into being as principles from the First Principle of the Universals."<sup>85</sup> Then each of these three Aeons, receiving a principle of generation, produced a further series of "sub-Aeons", male and female. The power of generation varies in the three Aeons in proportion to the

83. Salmon: Art. 'Docetae', in Dictionary of Christian Biography, Vol. 1., P. 865.

84. Phil. VIII. 8. P. 399.

85. Phil. VIII. 8. P. 399.

position which each occupies in relation to the First God, the Immeasurable One. The Aeon nearest the Deity has the greatest productive power, the second has less, the third has least of all, as being most removed. These Aeons together, "having increased and become great, and all of them being from that one first seed of their concord and unity, and all becoming together one Aeon, they all begat from the one Virgin Mary, the begettal common to them all, a Saviour in the midst of them all, of equal power in everything with the seed of the fig, save that he was begotten." <sup>86</sup> This was the perfect Aeon, the Saviour of the Universe, containing in himself all the powers of the ideal world of the Aeons.

The visible universe was formed by the Third Aeon, who tripled himself: the types ( *ΧΑΡΑΚΤΗΡΕΣ* ) which were his became intercepted in the underlying darkness below, and the impress ( *ἑκτύπωμα* ) of the Great Aeon was stamped upon that darkness. "Then a living fire came from the light whence the great Ruler came into being." This fiery god "made the Cosmos. . . he being substanceless and darkness having the substance" <sup>87</sup>. By reason of the God of the Light, the fiery Demiurge, souls continued to wander in darkness and change from body to body. Then the Only Begotten Son, beholding from on high the forms of the Aeons changing about in the darksome <sup>88</sup> bodies, willed to come down for their deliverance. He descended through the three Aeons, assuming a form corresponding

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86. Phil. VIII. 9. Pp. 400-401.

87. Phil. VIII. 10. P. 403.

88. Phil. VIII. 10. P. 404.

to each: and finally he was incorporated in the Outer Darkness, i.e. the flesh, being born of Mary. He was baptized and lived on earth thirty years. There are many interpretations of Jesus Christ, but "he is seen differently from the different places." It is only those on high who know Jesus the Saviour, not in part but wholly: "they alone are the Perfect from above,<sup>89</sup> while the others are only partly so."

The conception of redemption in the system of the Docetae is like that of the Ophites described by Hippolytus, in that it deals with the restoration of the divine elements from the world of darkness to their rightful place on high. The manner whereby this is accomplished, however, differs from that which is characteristic of the earlier sects. Here there is no ascending and descending  $\delta\phi\iota\varsigma$ ; no "beguiling of the unpurified womb"; no angry Naas who causes Jesus to be crucified. Redemption for the Docetae is accomplished by the Only-Begotten Son, who draws himself together in a very small body like light, the light of the eye.<sup>90</sup> It is only by Jesus the Saviour that change of bodies has been made to cease, and faith is preached for the putting away of transgressions.

89. Phil. VIII. 10. P. 407.

90. De Faye: Op. cit., P. 237.

Comme dans tous les autres systèmes (i.e. of Hippolytus) la rédemption consiste à récupérer ces idées ou éléments divins égarés dans le Cosmos. C'est la lumière qui va accomplir cette oeuvre par l'intermédiaire du Monogène. . . Ce Monogène s'identifiera avec Jésus, fils de Marie.

P a g e s .

Chapter IV. The Conception of Redemption in the Early Gnostic schools - Simon Magus to Satornilos. 110-124

#### Chapter 4.

The course of development which was observed in the doctrine of redemption among the Ophites led from more primitive conceptions to a more Christianized belief in which Jesus Christ came to occupy an increasingly central position as redeemer. The same process of gradual approach to Christianity is also to be traced among the earliest Gnostic schools which are to be ascribed to definite teachers. These schools are, like the Ophites, very difficult to classify, since no written remains of their teachings have survived, and since the polemical accounts of the Fathers are therefore the only sources for an understanding of their doctrines. It is proposed, however, to attempt to follow their speculations concerning redemption according to their progressive approach to the central truth of Christianity. In the following chapters, the culmination of this process will be observed in the "classical" Gnostic schools of Basilides and Valentinus, and also in the teachings of Marcion.

Simon Magus is generally recognized as having been the leader of one of the most primitive Gnostic Schools belonging to the first two Christian centuries. He was for long regarded as the most important precursor of Gnosticism, and indeed as the father of all the Gnostics.<sup>1</sup> Among the Church Fathers

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1. H. Leisegang: Op. cit., P. 60. Die Christlichen Ketzerbekämpfer führen fast übereinstimmend den Ursprung der Haeretischen Gnosis auf den Magier Simon zurück.

(especially Irenaeus) it was customary to ascribe to him most of the Gnostic doctrines, at least in the earlier stages of their development. The resulting chronology, however, is a hopeless one: "if Simon were the originator of all the doctrines which the Fathers ascribe to him we should have to date the rise of Gnosticism at a time when, according to all historical indications, it was still in the future."<sup>2</sup>

Yet it is certainly true that in the history of Gnosticism Simon and his companion Helena must be regarded as beings of considerable importance. In this couple is symbolized the Gnostic idea of a syzygy, i.e. of the division of Divine emanations into pairs, male and female,<sup>3</sup> and of the emancipation of the human spirit, which is of divine origin, from the bonds of finitude. Simon was influenced by the conceptions of heathen cosmogony, especially by those of Syro-Phoenicia, and by the astrological view, which was so firmly rooted in the East, that man and all the lower creation was under the influence of the starry powers (Cf. Chapter 1.) Ideas of Jewish origin also formed Simon's system, and from certain of the Jewish sects which were touched with syncretism Simon derived his impression of God's world-creative and revealing action by divine powers of revelation, behind which the Godhead itself remains in secret. It is probable that Simon himself was also influenced

2. Baur: Church History. (Menzies' Translation, P. 199).  
 3. Phil. VI. 18. P. 173.

by the Jewish and Judaeo-Christian concept of Adam Kadman as being a returning bearer of revelation.<sup>4</sup>

The earliest and best known reference to Simon is found in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 8, verses 9-24. From this passage it appears that the earliest apostles in Samaria met with a religious movement there which was connected with a certain Simon, who was regarded as "the great power of God", i.e., the Holy Ghost. It is unnecessary to quote the passage at further length here. Leisegang makes the interesting observation that this account of Simon's teaching represents "the history of Gnosis in miniature,"<sup>5</sup> because of the approach to Christianity which it implies.

A further reference to Simon in early Christian literature is found in the Recognitiones and Homilies of Pseudo-Clement.<sup>6</sup> Here he is represented as the false apostle who carries his teaching through the whole world as far as Rome. He is "the standing one", Christ under another name, the highest virtue of the supreme God.<sup>7</sup> His companion, Luna, is derived from heaven;<sup>8</sup> she is the mother of all, and is equivalent to Wisdom. Thus

4. Moeller: History of the Christian Church. Vol. 1. P. 133.
5. H. Leisegang: Op. cit., P. 62. So spiegelt dieser Bericht im kleinen die Geschichte der haeretischen Gnosis wider. Sie war eher da als Christentum; sie wurde christlich: die Christen stiessen sie zurueck; sie wollte aber dennoch christlich bleiben und fuer christlich gehalten werden.
6. Recogn. II. 7 ff. Homil. II. 22 ff.
7. Recogn. I. 72. Se esse quendam stantem hoc est alio nomine, Christum, et virtutem summam excelsi Dei, qui sit supra conditorem mundi.
8. Recogn. II. 12. Lunam vero, quae secum est, esse de superioribus caelis deductam eandemque cunctorum genetricem asserit esse sapientiam.

a father-god and a mother-divinity begat the universe or its Creator, which is a familiar Gnostic thought.

Pseudo-Clement's account continues by relating how in the seventh year after the death of Jesus Simon meets Peter in Caesarea, to hold a three day discussion with him. Simon combats the teaching of the Old Testament, according to which the world-Creator is the one and the highest Good. There are many gods: but there is one above them all, the incomprehensible and unknowable, whose being is goodness. The God of the Old Testament, however, is not the god of goodness, but the god of legality, an evil god. The Law and the Creation<sup>9</sup> both come from an incomplete creator. This creator was once sent forth by the good God to create the world, but he announced himself as the highest God. Men have to suffer under the command of this evil god. Their souls are descended from the unknown good God, but they are held captive in the world.<sup>10</sup> The soul languishes in prison within the human body: "Darker than all darkness and worse than all filthiness is this our<sup>11</sup> body, in which the soul is enclosed." Only knowledge of the good God and of his wisdom can redeem Mankind. In Simon and Helena the unknown God has revealed himself in his wisdom: that is the Gnostic "gospel" which Simon bears to the world.

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9. Recogn. II. 53 & 54.

10. Recogn. II. 57.

11. Recogn. II. 58. Omnibus enim tenebris tetrius et omni luto gravius est corpus hoc, quo circumdatur anima.



It is he, "the standing one," who brings redemption and who  
 frees the spirit from its prison in the body.<sup>12</sup>

In Irenaeus' account of Simon<sup>13</sup> and of Helena<sup>14</sup> it is  
 stated that among the Jews Simon introduced himself as the  
 manifestation of the Son of God, among the Samaritans as the  
 Father come down from heaven, and among the other nations as  
 the coming of the Holy Ghost. Irenaeus gives special attention  
 to Helena, Simon's consort: "She is the first thought of the  
 spirit of God: through her the Spirit of God first determined  
 to create angels and archangels. She is the Ennoia, who  
 proceeded from him: when she understood the will of the Father,  
 she descended into the lower regions and created the angels  
 and powers by whom the world was created," etc.<sup>15</sup> Then she  
 became so far alienated from God that she was enclosed in a  
 human body, and suffered a process of reincarnation for cen-  
 turies, wherein she became Helen of Troy. Finally, after  
 sinking step by step, she arrived at the brothel in Tyre. She  
 is the lost sheep who is now to be redeemed by the Father.  
 He descended through all the heavens, and assumed in succession  
 the forms of principalities and powers and angels, without  
 being observed by them, and finally he became a man in the

12. *Recogn.* III. 47. *Quia ego sum filius dei stans in aeternum,  
 et credentes mihi similiter stare in perpetuum faciam.*

13. *Iren. Adv. Haer.* I. 23, 1-4.

14. *Ibid.* I. 23. 1.

15. *Ibid.* I. 23. 1-2.

body of Simon, "to fulfil redemption, to break the rule of the angels, to loose the world and to set free the soul of man."<sup>16</sup>

Hippolytus provides another description of Simon's system in the Philosophumena,<sup>17</sup> in which he repeats Irenaeus' account of the history of Helena, and of Simon's appearance as God and as world-redeemer. Hippolytus, however, also gives an important notice regarding the cultus of Simon's followers. The mystery which they celebrate consists in an imitation of the redeeming work of their prophet, which itself corresponds to the act of creation. At the beginning of the world-process it was the procreative seed that flowed into the Ennoia: So also Simon, when he came to earth, made Helena fruitful and thereby redeemed her. The disciples therefore infer that they may have universal intercourse with women. Epiphanius recognizes a similar "mystery" of the Simonians.<sup>18</sup>

Simon Magus is a type of the Gnostic prophets generally, since he is the incarnation of the Holy Spirit and of the power of God. He does not preach repentance and atonement: his ancestors are the ancient Greek prophets and wonder workers who sought to interpret the mysteries of the world's

16. Iren. I. 23. 3. Quapropter et ipsum (Simon) venisse uti eam assumeret primam et liberaret eam a vinculis; hominibus autem salutem praestaret per suam agnitionem. Quum enim male moderarentur angeli mundum, quoniam unusquisque eorum concupisceret principatum, ad emendationem venisse rerum et descendisse eum transfiguratum et assimilatum Virtutibus et Potestatibus et Angelis, ut et in hominibus homo appareret ipse, quum non esset homo. . . . .  
 . . . Et solvi mundum et liberari eos, qui sunt ejus, ab imperio eorum qui mundum fecerunt, repromisit.
17. Phil. VI. 7-18. X. 12.
18. Epiphanius: Haer. 21. 4. 1-2.

origin and composition. It is difficult to assign him to any definite set of historical circumstances. H. Leisegang makes an interesting comparison between Simon and his contemporary Philo. Both interpret the Old Testament allegorically, and both use Greek philosophy and its kindred forms as media of interpretation. In the Hellenistic Judaism of Philo, however, Jahweh of the Old Testament remains the good God who has created the Cosmos out of pure good, together with its wisdom, whereas Simon denies that the Creator God of the Old Testament is a good Being. Both Simon and Philo interpret the Old Testament allegorically, but they do this in different ways; e.g., Simon regards Moses as the Incarnation of the Logos in the same way as he himself is an incarnate power: and this would be quite inconceivable in Philo's teaching. It is especially to be noted, however, that the whole conception of redemption is lacking in Philo's thought: whereas in Simon's system this doctrine is absolutely central. For Simon redemption is not merely an individual historical action, but rather a natural fulfilment of the cosmic process, which is carried on and perpetuated in the "mystery" of procreation.

Menander is expressly stated to have been a disciple of Simon: he is said by Justin Martyr to have come from Samaria and to have taught in Antioch.<sup>19</sup> He seems to have been a

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19. Justin Martyr: Apology. I. 26. 2.

"magician", like Simon, and to have retained Simon's doctrine of the Ennoia and of the world-creating powers.<sup>20</sup> Menander and Simon differ, however, in their "self-consciousness" regarding their role as redeemer: for while Simon proclaimed himself to be the embodiment of the Great Power, his disciple is content to be a messenger, not of the great Power himself, but of the "invisible spiritual beings." In Menander also the idea of Gnosis is more accurately defined: it is "magic knowledge or science", through which the world-creating angels may be overcome, and it possesses a sacrament of its own, which produces immortality. This sacrament is baptism in the Redeemer,<sup>21</sup> who is sent from the heavenly powers. Menander's doctrine of redemption is not so "libertine" as that of Simon. It is rather an inner exaltation to eternal youth and to spiritual immortality.<sup>22</sup> There is no mention of the name of

20. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 23. 5. Huius (Simonis) successor fuit Menander, Samaritas genere, qui et ipse ad summum magiae pervenit. Qui primam quidem virtutem incognitam ait omnibus, se autem eum esse, qui missus sit ab invisibilibus, salvatorem pro salute hominum, mundum autem factum ab angelis, quos et ipse, similiter ut Simon, ab Ennoia emissos dicit.
21. Irenaeus: loc. cit. Dare quoque per eam, quae a se doceatur, magicam scientiam addidit ut et ipsos, qui mundum fecerunt, vincat angelos. Resurrectionem enim per id quod est in eum baptismum accipere ejus discipulos et ultra non posse mori, sed perseverare non senescentes et immortales.
22. Tertullian: De Anima. 50.  
Sed haeretici Magi Menandri Samaritani furor conspuatur, dicentis mortem ad suos non modo non pertinere, verum nec pervenire: in hoc scilicet se a superna et arcana potestate legatum, ut immortales, et incorruptibiles, et statim resurrectionis compotes fiant, qui baptismum ejus induerint.

Jesus in either Simon or Menander: and apparently neither of them had any particular affinities with Christianity.

Carpocrates follows in the line of the Simonian Gnosis, and his doctrine seems to represent a Hellenic heathenism which came into very external contact with Christian thought. "Of all the systems called Gnostic," says Salmon, "that of Carpocrates is the one in which the Hellenic element is the most strongly marked, and which contains the least of what we are forced to ascribe to Jewish and Oriental sources."<sup>23</sup>

Irenaeus and Tertullian furnish the best accounts of Carpocrates' teaching, in the complete absence of remains of the school itself. The world was created by angels, inferior to the One God, who is Father of all. Jesus was the Son of Joseph, and like other men, except that his soul was "more stedfast and pure." He remembered what he had witnessed within the sphere of the unbegotten God: thus it was that a power descended on him from the Father, so that he might escape the creators of the world. The soul of Jesus regarded the practices of the Jews, in which he had been instructed, with great contempt: thus he was endowed with faculties whereby he destroyed the passions which dwelt in men. "The soul therefore which is like that of Christ can despise those rulers which were the creators of the world, and, in like manner, it received power for accomplishing the same results." Souls

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23. Salmon. Art. Carpocrates, in D.C.B. Vol. 1. P. 407.

of this nature are not only similar to Jesus, but may even become superior to him and to his disciples. "For their souls, descending from the same sphere as his, and therefore despising in like manner the creators of the world, are deemed worthy of the same power, and again depart to the same place. But if any one shall have despised the things in this world more than he did, he thus proves himself superior to him." <sup>24</sup> Some souls, however, must undergo a process of transmigration from body to body until they have completed the cycle of experience and have suffered the attack of all the angels who created the world; and then they are able to pass upward to the God who is above these angels. "Thus it is that all souls are saved, whether their own which, guarding against all delay, participate in all sorts of actions during one incarnation, or those again who by passing from body to body are set free, or fulfilling and accomplishing what is requisite in every form of life into which they are sent, so that at length they shall no longer be (shut up) in the body." <sup>25</sup>

The result of this theory is, according to Irenaeus, a libertine attitude in conduct and morals. The soul is bound to experience and to suffer everything; and if a man dies before he has lived through the complete circle of events in this world, his soul will be again confined within the prison

24. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 25. 1-2.

Cf. Tertullian: De Anima, 23. Sed et Carpocrates tantundem sibi de superioribus vindicat, ut discipuli ejus animas suas iam et Christo, nedum apostolis, et peraequent, et cum volunt praeferant, quas proinde de sublimi virtute conceperint, despetrice mundipotentium principatum.

25. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 25. 4.

Cf. Tertullian: De Anima, 35.

of the body until she has passed through the long process of successive reincarnations. The final aim and outcome of the process is the return of the soul to the God who is above all things.

Redemption is therefore brought about through experience of all things, which confers a higher kind of Gnosis upon the believer.

In Cerinthus the Christian aspects of Gnosticism become more fully developed. He also represents an intermediate link between Judaism and Gnosticism, and was apparently "the earliest among the Gnostics who was disposed to look favourably upon the Jewish religion, regarding it as imperfect but not as evil."<sup>26</sup> According to the account of Irenaeus, which was derived from that of Polycarp, he was personally acquainted with the Apostle John, and lived at least as early as the close of the first century.

The distinguishing feature of Cerinthus' teaching was his contention that this world was not created by the highest God, but was the work of a much inferior power who is represented as an angelic being. This is very like Marcion's conception of the world-Creator, or Demiurge, who is the God of the Old Testament.<sup>27</sup>

The Christology of Cerinthus is in effect Ebionistic. Jesus was not born of a Virgin, but was the Son of Joseph and Mary. His divine attributes were conferred upon him at baptism, when Christ descended upon him from the higher world in

26. Mansel: The Gnostic Heresies. P. 116.

27. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 26. 1.

the form of a dove. "He announced to men the Unknown Father, and completed their virtues, but finally the Christ removed again from Jesus, and Jesus suffered and rose again, while the Christ remained without suffering, existing as Spirit."<sup>28</sup>

Cerinthus therefore makes the redeeming work of Christ consist in his enlightening of the minds of men by proclaiming to them the Supreme God. Redemption consists in the reception of the revelation brought by Christ. The passion and death of the Saviour have no connection with the forgiveness of sins: it is the resurrection of the Spiritual Christ which is all important. "Christ is not so much a redeemer as a teacher, and a teacher not so much of righteousness as of speculative knowledge."<sup>29</sup>

Satornilos (or Saturninus) is traced back to the influence of Menander by Irenaeus and Tertullian. There is, indeed, a definite similarity of doctrine between the two teachers: but it is extremely doubtful whether Menander was the teacher of Satornilos, as Irenaeus supposed him to have been. Moeller<sup>30</sup> accepts Irenaeus' statement with reservations, and assigns Satornilos to "a Judaeo-Samaritan mixed sphere, which afforded in any case an important intermediary". Notices of his life or

28. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 26. 1. Et post baptismum descendisse in eum, ab ea principalitate, quae est super omnia, Christum, figura columbae; et tunc annunciasse incognitum Patrem et virtutes perfecisse. In fine autem revolasse iterum Christum de Iesu, et Iesum passum esse et resurrexisse, Christum autem impassibilem perseverasse, existentem spiritalem.

29. Mansel: The Gnostic Heresies. P. 116.

30. Moeller: Op. cit., P. 135.



nationality are entirely lacking.

Like Menander, Saturnilos taught that the Highest God, the one Father, created "angels, archangels, powers and dominions." The lowest of these powers are the seven angels who created the cosmos, and all that is therein, and man is therefore a crea-  
<sup>31</sup>tion of these angels. From these evil angels is derived man's corporeal nature. Because of this evil nature which oppressed mankind the powers from above took pity on man, and sent a spark of life from above; this raised man up, and gave him  
<sup>32</sup>members and life. After death, however, the spark of life returned again on high, and the other constituents of the body were dissolved.

In the world there are two classes of men: one good, the other evil. The angels are similarly classified. On the one side are the world-creating angels, or Archontes, of which the God of the Jews is one; on the other side are the demons, who stand beside sinful men, and under them is Satan, also an angel, who strives against the cosmic angels and who opposes the God of the Jews. The Supreme God determines to "do away with" the Archons, especially the God of the Jews, and Christ the redeemer therefore appears to rescue those who believe on

31. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 24. 1.

32. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 24. 1. Cf. Hippol. Philos. VII. 28. Cf. Philaster: Haer. 31. Et cogitasse eos (angelos) ut facerent hominem: fecerunt itaque hominem et opus ipsorum, inquit, erat homo: de virtute enim superna lumen dicunt fuisse dimissum, quod illuminavit mundum istum et ad concupiscentiam adduxit angelos statimque ascendit in caelum.

him, i.e., those who have the spark of life within themselves.

It is especially to be noted that in the system of Saturnilos Jesus Christ as redeemer occupies the distinctive and principal position in the drama of the world's history. Saturnilos is the first definitely "Christian Gnostic", because he recognizes Jesus Christ as the Holy One who is sent by the Father. In this system there is no Helena or Ennoia in heaven: the angels do not seek to banish a feminine being into matter: the image which comes down from heaven and which awakens man's desire is not a woman, but the masculine Logos, the image of God Himself, after which the earthly man is formed. This removal of the feminine members from the series of pre-existent beings represents the result of a "Christianizing" influence which tended to correct the abuses of the school of Simon. Jesus Christ the redeemer in the Saturnilian Gnosis is without corporeality (for the body is the creation of the cosmic powers) and therefore without birth or form: he has only

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33. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 24. 2. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο βούλεσθαι τὸν Πατέρα καταλύσαι πάντας τοὺς ἄρχοντας, παραγενέσθαι τὸν Χριστὸν ἐπὶ καταλύσει τοῦ τῶν Ιουδαίων Θεοῦ, καὶ ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ τῶν πειθομένων αὐτῷ· εἶναι δὲ τούτους ἔχοντας τὸν σπινθήρα τῆς ζωῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς. Δύο γὰρ γένη τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγγέλων πεπλάσθαι ἔφη, τὸν μὲν πονηρὸν τὸν δὲ ἀγαθόν. καὶ ἐπειδὴ οἱ δαιμόνες τοῖς πονηροῖς ἐβοήθουν, ἐληλυθέναί τὸν Σωτῆρα ἐπὶ καταλύσει τῶν φαύλων ἀνθρώπων καὶ δαιμόνων, ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ δὲ τῶν ἀγαθῶν

the appearance of humanity.

With this Docetic conception of the Redeemer is connected a strictly ascetic manner of living. Just as Christ did not belong to the corporeal world, so the Christian must separate himself from the material world as much as possible. Most of Saturnilos' disciples refrained from eating flesh, and regarded marriage and procreation as of the devil.<sup>35</sup> Here the libertinism of the earlier Gnostics, the Simonians, e.g., and the Carpocratians, passes into the opposite extreme of asceticism. Whereas in the school of Simon free sexual intercourse was said to have a mysterious redemptive significance, in the Saturnilian Gnosis the body with all its works is despised as inferior and unworthy. Gnosticism always tended to these two extremes -- either unbridled libertinism or extreme asceticism.

34. Irenaeus: loc. cit., τὸν δὲ Σωτῆρα ἀγέννητον ὑπέθετο καὶ ἀσώματον καὶ ἀνείδεον, δοκῆσαι δὲ ἐπιπεφηνέναι ἄνθρωπον

35. Irenaeus: loc. cit., τὸ δὲ γαμεῖν καὶ γεννᾶν ἀπὸ τοῦ σατανᾶ φησὶν εἶναι. οἱ πλείους τε τῶν ἀπ' ἐκείνου καὶ ἐμψύχων ἀπέχονται διὰ τῆς προσποιήτου ταύτης ἐγκρατείας.

Chapter V. The Gnostic conception of Redemption in its approach to Christianity: Basilides and Marcion.	P a g e s. 125-160
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### Chapter 5.

The approach to Christianity which is evident in the system of Saturnilos continued in the teaching of Basilides, who was among the most influential and important of all Gnostic teachers. Irenaeus connects these two Gnostics and implies that certain important points of affinity exist between them. The doctrine of redemption which Saturnilos briefly affirms is enlarged and developed by his successor; Christ continues to be the only important redeemer-figure, and escape from the material world becomes more and more emphasized.

The extreme divergence of the accounts of the system of Basilides which have survived in the Patristic writers makes the study of his system a perplexing problem. Varieties of interpretation and information are to be found in each of the sources, and it is difficult to combine these differences to form a consistent whole. Textual considerations also put the validity of certain of the accounts severely in question, and some are to be preferred above others on the ground of historical accuracy.

The sources of information regarding Basilides and his system are as follows:- The seventh book of Hippolytus' Philosophumena; the fragments or extracts from the works of Basilides and his son Isidore, to be found in Clement of Alexandria as well as in Origen and the Acta Archelai; and the

account of Irenaeus. These accounts will be considered in this given order.

Hippolytus' account of Basilides differs fundamentally from the others, especially from that of Irenaeus, and it has been regarded by many scholars, especially by Hilgenfeld, Lipsius and Harnack, as being practically valueless for the reconstruction of Basilides' system. It is a very full account, and its claim to authenticity must be carefully considered.

The question of the authenticity of Hippolytus' history of Basilides was first raised by Salmon<sup>1</sup> and was further investigated by Stähelin.<sup>2</sup> Stähelin's thesis, like that of Salmon, was that Hippolytus was well known in antiquity as an enthusiastic collector of documents, and that he had been imposed upon by some forger who invented a certain number of "Gnostic" treatises.<sup>3</sup> Stähelin points out that there are many resemblances between the system of Basilides and other systems, especially that of the Sethians. The Sethians speak of two principles of light and darkness, with pure spirit between, this spirit being "like an odour of an unguent or of incense:"<sup>4</sup> while Basilides also says that the Holy Spirit retains an odour of the Sonship which had left it, as an empty vessel retains "an odour of an unguent", which was once within it.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Salmon: Art. "The Cross References in the Philosophumena" (in the *Hermathena*, 1885.)
  2. *Die Gnostischen Quellen Hippolyts*. (Texte und Untersuchungen. VI. 1890)
  3. *Ibid.*, P. 27.
  4. *Phil.* VI. 19.
  5. *Phil.* VII. 22.

The Sethians refer to the coming of Christ as taking place "in order to disunite and separate the things which have been mingled,"<sup>6</sup> and Basilides also refers to Jesus as "the first-fruits of the sorting of the things that have been confused." Such similarities between the documents of the *Philosophumena*, however, hardly serve to establish Stähelin's theory. James Drummond points out that "forms of opinion and speech are apt to become current at any given time, and there is no improbability in the supposition that successive heretics were acquainted with the writings of their predecessors, and may even have unconsciously borrowed from them many a phrase or metaphor".<sup>7</sup> A.S. Peake summarizes his own judgment in this matter from his previous notice of Stähelin's work in the *Classical Review* of 1892, and concludes that "the coincidences may readily be accounted for by the fact, which Stähelin himself admits, that Gnostic documents circulated freely from one school to another." Peake regards Hippolytus' account as "a genuine Gnostic treatise which circulated among the later Basilidians," but considers it to be practically valueless for the reconstruction of Basilides' own system. This is also in substance the opinion of De Faye, who maintains that this history of Hippolytus is one which supposes several

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6. Phil. VI. 21.

7. James Drummond: *An Inquiry into the Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel*, P. 316.

8. A.S. Peake: Art. 'Basilides', in *Hastings' E.R.E.*, Vol. 2., P. 427.

systems of gnosis before it, like a river formed by more than one tributary. He connects this narrative of Basilides' system with the accounts which Hippolytus gives concerning the Naasenes, the Peratae, and the Sethians.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, however, Hort<sup>10</sup> maintains that "eight chapters of Hippolytus (Philosophumena VII. 20-27) represent faithfully, though imperfectly, the contents of at least part of the Exegetica of Basilides." Hort bases this conclusion on a comparison of Hippolytus with Clement of Alexandria, whom he regards as "the surest criterion by which to test other authorities," since he (Clement) quotes a long passage directly from the Exegetica itself, and apparently had access to Basilides' own works. Clement professes to describe only the ethical system of Basilides rather than his theological or cosmological theories: and it is therefore the more remarkable that so many similarities of thought and language do exist between him and Hippolytus in their different spheres of description. Hort points out some of the phrases which are common to both writers: especially in the passage which describes the amazement of the Archon on receiving "the utterance of the Ministering Spirit" or "Minister" as being that fear of the Lord which is called the beginning of wisdom,

9. De Faye: *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme*. P. 227 ff.

10. Hort: Art. 'Basilides', in *D.C.B.* Vol. 1. P. 268 ff.



this utterance being itself a Gospel.<sup>11</sup> The interpretation of the same passage in Hippolytus tells of the amazement of the Great Archon on receiving "the Gospel", a revelation of things unknown, through his Son, who had received it through "a power" within the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> Hort concludes that Clement and Hippolytus had the same materials before them. James Drummond<sup>13</sup> gives further instances of resemblances between Hippolytus and Clement: e.g., Both distinguish the *κόσμος* and the *ὑπερκόσμιον* : both distinguish different *διαστήματα* or stages of being: and both refer to the position of the Ogdoad in a similar manner. Drummond concludes that "the Basilides of Hippolytus is the same as the Basilides of Clement."<sup>14</sup>

It is proposed to accept the findings of Hort regarding Hippolytus as being on the whole the most satisfactory solution of this difficult and complicated problem. Hippolytus' account of Basilides will therefore now be considered as being a comparatively genuine tradition of this "classic" Gnostic author.

Basilides presupposes the existence of a God "before all things that were", and "this God-who-was-not made the Cosmos from things which were not, casting down and planting a certain single seed containing within itself the whole

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11. Cl. Alex. Strom. II. 448.

12. Phil. VII. 26.

13. J. Drummond: Op. cit., Pp. 307-312.

14. J. Drummond: Op. cit., P. 312.

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seed-mass of the Cosmos." Within this seed existed a triple Sonhood, one part being subtle, one coarse, and one requiring purification. The subtle part immediately ascended to the One-who-was-not, with the swiftness of Light, and after the coarser part had equipped himself with a wing, i.e., the Holy Spirit, he followed the First Sonhood. The Holy Spirit, however, could not abide with this Sonhood, and it remained by itself, becoming "the firmament which is above the heaven," retaining the fragrance of the Sonhood.<sup>16</sup> The third Sonhood, however, still remained behind in the Seed-Mass, "giving and receiving benefits." From the Cosmical Seed and the Seed-Mass there was then engendered the Great Ruler who is the head of the Cosmos; he ascended as far as the firmament, but imagined that this was the limit of space. He imagined himself to be Lord and King, and wise Architect, and he set about the Creation of the ordered world. "He engendered from the things which lay below him a Son much better and wiser than himself."<sup>17</sup> Another Ruler then ascends from the Seed-Mass, much inferior to the first Ruler, and also creates from the Seed-Mass a Son who is more foreseeing and wiser than himself.

After the "whole cosmos" had been completed and the "hypercosmic things" had been fully arranged, the third sonhood still remained, which had been left in the Seed-Mass to give and to receive benefits. It now became necessary that

15. Phil. VII. 21. P. 346-7.

16. Phil. VII. 23. Cf. Phil. VI. 16.

17. Phil. VII. 27. P. 354.

this Sonhood should be redeemed: "it had to be revealed and again established on high above the Boundary Spirit in the presence of the subtler Sonhood and the one that resembles it and the non-existent One."<sup>18</sup> In the Seed-Mixture also there remain the spiritual men who are the Sons of God: these are left behind so that they may perfect and complete the souls who have to remain in the Seed-Mass. "When therefore the Sons of God (i.e. the followers of Basilides) had to be revealed, the Gospel came into the Cosmos. . . . . . . . . . . and it came indeed, although nothing descended from on high, nor did the Blessed Sonhood come forth from that Incomprehensible and Blessed God who-was-not: but as the Indian Naphtha, when only kindled from afar it takes fire, so from the formlessness of the heap below do the powers of the Sonhood extend upward."<sup>19</sup> The Son of the Great Ruler then receives the concepts from the blessed Sonhood which is beyond the Holy Spirit, as if he were the Naphtha; and the power of the Sonhood which exists in the Holy Spirit shares the rushing and flowing concepts with the Son of the Great Ruler.

The Son of the Great Ruler then conveyed the "Gospel" to his father, and the latter, having learned that he was not the God of the Universals, confessed the sin he had committed in

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18. Phil. VII. 25.

19. Phil. VII. 25.

magnifying himself. Then the Hebdomad (the world below the Ogdoad) was similarly enlightened; and from the Hebdomad the light shone down into this present world, and was received by Jesus the Son of Mary. The redemption of this world is then accomplished. "The Sonhood which was left behind in the Formlessness to benefit souls and (itself) to receive benefits shall be transferred and follow Jesus, and shall go on high and come forth purified, and shall become most subtle as it might do by Ascension like the First(Sonhood). For it possesses all the power of attaching itself naturally to the Light which shines downward from on high."<sup>20</sup>

The consummation of the redemption of all things is reached when every Sonhood has been established in its own place. God then brings upon the Cosmos the Great Ignorance,"so that all things shall remain as they are by nature, and none shall desire any of these things beyond (its) nature."<sup>21</sup> Thus the Restoration of all things is brought about. Ignorance of any order superior to their own will cause all creatures to live in a state of universal contentment, each in its own appointed cycle.

Hippolytus' account of Basilides' doctrine of redemption is unique because of its emphasis of the ascent of the Redeemer from lower worlds to higher. Salvation is a process of the uplifting of lower powers rather than of the degradation

20. Phil. VII. 26.

21. Phil. VII. 27.

of higher beings to accomplish this end, for the natural tendency of all being is upwards and not downwards. The Basilides of Hippolytus differs from other Gnostic teachers in his rejection of any doctrine of emanation. In the original seed everything is mingled together, and the object of the whole historical process is the ordering of this conglomeration. Hippolytus' account has been condemned as untrustworthy by some scholars, such as Carl Schmidt, because it does not describe the theory of emanation which is so characteristic of the Gnostic systems generally. A.S. Peake,<sup>22</sup> however, maintains that "there is no reason why Basilides could not have followed the line which Hippolytus ascribes to him. If to do so is to forfeit one's title to be a Gnostic, that is after all a matter of terminology."

In Hippolytus' description of Basilides, therefore, redemption is accomplished by a sort of "sublimation-process", and there is no sinking of the spiritual into the material. In the restored world all the pains and restless desires of the temporal spirit will be forgotten; each being rests in its own proper sphere through the "cessation of all will and

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22. A.S. Peake: Op. cit., P. 430.

Cf. also Bousset: Hauptprobleme der Gnosis, P. 329 ff. Gewöhnlich ist Man geneigt, diesen Emanationsgedanken als spezifisch charakteristisch für die Gnosis anzusehen. Ich kann nicht finden, dass das mit Recht geschieht. Er kehrt nur in einigen wenigen Systemen wieder und tritt nirgends mehr so rein auf wie im basilidianischen System.

knowledge." Pfleiderer<sup>23</sup> sees in this conception of the final restoration of all things traces of a Buddhist influence upon the early Christian hope of a general "apokatastasis". "Their affinity with the Indian doctrine of Deliverance is so striking that it is hardly possible to avoid supposing a direct influence from that quarter." Pfleiderer seeks to confirm this theory by adducing other Indian influences in the Basilidean account of the transmigration of souls which is given by Clement. Clement interpreted the saying about "retribution to the third and fourth generation" as a reference to the fate of souls in their successive reincarnations: and the ethical maxim of Basilides, quoted by Clement,<sup>24</sup> that a man should love all things because all things have a relation to the whole, and that he should desire nothing and hate nothing, is really the quintessence of Buddhist ethics. These parallels of Pfleiderer are striking: yet, as A.S. Peake points out, "the question of Indian influence can hardly be settled apart from the wider problem of the diffusion of Indian thought in the Near East: and on this subject it is safest at present to keep judgment in suspense."<sup>25</sup>

Hippolytus concludes his history of the Basilidian system by setting forth briefly "what they say about a Gospel,"

23. Pfleiderer; Primitive Christianity.  
Vol. III. P. 149. (English Translation).

24. Cl. Alex. Strom. IV. 12. 28.

25. A.S. Peake: Op. cit., P. 432.

i.e., "the knowledge of hypercosmic things which the Great Ruler did not understand." The events of the Gospel, culminating in the Crucifixion, took place in order that Jesus the Saviour might become "the first fruits of the sorting out of the things of the Confusion."<sup>26</sup> The Redeemer contained within himself constituent parts from every section of the universe. Each part returned to its own place at his death; his bodily part to the Formlessness whence it sprung, his psychical part to the Hebdomad, and the part which was from the Great Ruler was restored thither. Through him also the Third Sonhood was purified, and it passed upwards through the various intermediary principles until finally it attained to the blessed Sonhood. Jesus the redeemer is the perfected Man, and the manifestation of Deity, and in Himself he fulfils the process of purification and of restoration which brings perfection of consciousness or completed Gnosis to all mankind.

A most important source of information regarding the teaching of Basilides is found in the Stromata of Clement of Alexandria, which includes a collection of passages from the Exegetica of Basilides himself. The trustworthiness and reliability of Clement's quotations is universally admitted by scholars, and consequently any references to the doctrine of redemption which occur within them will be of great value and importance. On the whole, however, these quotations deal

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26. Phil. VII. 27.

with practical moral issues rather than with theoretical problems, and consequently there is no detailed exposition of Basilides' redemption theory to be found in Clement's writings. There are only certain special passages which partially touch upon aspects of this subject, and these are of the utmost significance.

Redemption in Clement's account of Basilides is accomplished through faith, and through an election which corresponds to and is governed by each interval or stage of being. "Basilides," says Clement, "conceives of election as foreign to the world, being of a supercosmic nature." Basilides conceives of faith as something which is deposited in the intellect by the good will of the Father, and as an entity whereby man is able to comprehend the divine. "Faith is an essence, and not a capacity. . . . . Salvation is for those who by a natural gift are believers and elect. It would then be possible, independently of the coming of the Saviour, and in time, and at a given moment, for nature to arrive at the fulness of splendour. But if they say that the Saviour on earth was necessary, there immediately vanish out of their hands all the pretended properties of nature. For, according to such an hypothesis, it is not by virtue of nature, but rather by the merit of teaching, of interior purification and the performance of good deeds, that election is achieved."

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27. Cl. Alex. Strom. V. 1-3.

(Quoted in Buonaiuti: Gnostic Fragments. Pp. 30-31.)



An important reference to the person of the Redeemer occurs in the fragment which Clement quotes from Book 23 of Basilides' Exegetica.<sup>28</sup> In this passage Basilides is concerned with the problem of pain, and particularly with the sufferings of the virtuous elect, and he asks how it is possible to reconcile the idea of such mental and physical suffering with the doctrine of moral responsibility. He concludes that "in such cases the perfect man will suffer as a child would suffer, who seems not to have sinned." This position is maintained even in considering the sufferings of Jesus the Redeemer. "If then, leaving aside all these discourses, you seek to confound me by saying, e.g., in respect of certain individuals, This man has then sinned, for this man has suffered, you will permit me to make answer: He has not sinned, but was like a child suffering. And if you still were to insist in your argument, I would say, The man you speak of is man, and only God is just. None indeed, as one says (Job. 14:7) is free from corruption."<sup>29</sup> Buonaiuti says that Clement has here assumed an allusion to Christ which must have been far from the intention of Basilides. "Christ held too high a place in the mystical speculations of the Gnostics for it to be possible for Basilides to attribute to the Passion an expiatory significance on account of personal sin,

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28. Cl. Alex. Strom. IV. 12-81.

29. Buonaiuti: Op. cit., P. 34.

either of commission or of intention." <sup>30</sup> Bousset, however, who recognizes a decidedly dualistic element in Basilides which Buonaiuti tends to underestimate, says that Basilides tended to deny the sinlessness of Jesus to a certain degree because of his dualistic premises; and he refers to the present section in Clement, as well as to a passage in Hippolytus, to show that the teaching of Basilides was fundamentally concerned with a final restitution of opposing elements. <sup>31</sup> The point is that Basilides insists on the full manhood of Jesus, even at the cost of denying his sinlessness. Jesus shared with all men a dualistic constitution; he suffered, moreover, and suffering always presupposes some kind of fault; and thus Jesus Christ, even as redeemer, partakes of the nature of sinful man.

In other quotations from the Exegetica there are certain important teachings concerning the origin of evil. Even a child has within him the capacity for sinning. <sup>32</sup> Apparently Basilides also believed in metempsychosis, and taught that present suffering is sometimes to be regarded as a "glorious expiation" for sin committed in some former existence. <sup>33</sup> De Faye regards three conceptions as of great importance for

30. Ibid.

31. Bousset: Op. cit., P. 95. Interessant ist noch, dass Basilides in der Konsequenz der dualistischen Auffassung entschlossen genug war, die Sündlosigkeit des irdischen Jesus bis zu einem gewissen Grade zu leugnen.

32. Cl. Alex. Strom. IV. 12. 32.

33. Cl. Alex. Strom. IV. 12. 83.

the understanding of Basilides' doctrine of redemption: namely, the idea of natural sin, the idea of entailed penalty, and the idea of amendment through suffering.<sup>34</sup> In another passage<sup>35</sup> the redemption of mankind seems to be conceived as a very limited process: forgiveness was not to be granted for every kind of sin, but only for sins committed in ignorance.

With the appearance of the Redeemer in the world there begins "the separation of contradictions." By his descent through the heaven of the Archon the latter receives the first notice of him, and trembles; "and such stupor was called fear, the beginning of all wisdom, as much that which recognizes affinities, as that which makes perfect and that which restores."<sup>36</sup> Clement differs sharply from Hippolytus here in that he describes a higher being who comes down from above,<sup>37</sup> whereas Hippolytus expressly states: οὐδὲν κατήλθεν ἄνωθεν<sup>37</sup> This higher being is designated as the "servant" or the "ministering spirit" of "the God who is above all." The impression made upon the Archon by the preaching of redemption is shown in the quotation, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and this "fear" is also recognized by

34. De Faye. Op. cit., P. 48. Quoique un peu confuses, on discerne aisément dans ces réflexions trois idées essentielles: (1) L'idée du péché original, ou du moins d'une disposition naturelle à la faute (2) L'idée de la pénalité. Le péché entraîne le châtimeut. (3) L'idée de l'amendement et de l'éducation par la souffrance. Ce sont là les éléments d'une doctrine de la Rédemption.

35. Cl. Alex. Strom. IV. 24.

36. Cl. Alex. Strom. II. 8.36.

37. Phil. VII. 25.

Hippolytus in the case of both Archons, the first and the second. This heavenly "Diakonos" or servant of the future finds in Jesus the human instrument of his earthly appearance, and enters into Jesus in the form of a dove.<sup>38</sup> This is another indication that Basilides according to Clement opposed a Docetic conception of the person of the Redeemer, and regarded Jesus as truly a man, with whom the Diakonos or Nous of the "God above all" was united from baptism to the Crucifixion.<sup>39</sup>

This important passage raises the question as to whether Basilides was a dualist, a point which is of fundamental importance for the understanding of his doctrine of redemption. The reference to an Archon who is "stupefied" at the first communication of a being from a higher world seems to point to a conception of opposing deities and of a higher and lower world which are at opposite extremes. The short account of Basilides which survives in the Acta Archelai et Manetis seems to confirm this opinion very strongly. This work has come down to the present time in a late fourth century Latin version, but it was probably written originally in Greek in the first half of the same century. It states that "Basilides, a certain preacher among the Persians. . . . decided to proclaim

38. Cl. Alex. Excerpta Ex Theodoto. Sect. 16.

39. Cf. Hilgenfeld: Ketzergeschichte, Pp. 227-28.

So doketisch. . . . lässt Clemens den Christus des Basilides allerdings nicht unter den Menschen auftreten. Es ist der wirkliche Mensch Jesus, mit welchem sich der Nus oder Diakonos des "Gottes über alles" von der Taufe bis zum Leiden vereinigt. Jesus, abgesehen von der hohen Geist, dessen Träger er ward, bleibt Mensch.

the same dualism dear to Scythianus." He professed to give an account of the opinions of the barbarians concerning good and evil. These two principles had no beginning and were not generated; and each of them led its own proper life; then when the darkness saw the light it began to press on to have intercourse with the light. Light however, was not moved by a corresponding desire, and darkness received from the light only a "fleeting glimpse," only "the appearance and an indication of goodness". . . . "For this reason complete goodness does not exist in this world, and the goodness which is to be found in it is of a miserably small quantity, because small was the portion of goodness which was originally incorporated in it. And yet, nevertheless, by means of this small element of light, or, rather, by virtue of such an appearance of lights, creatures were able to engender a resemblance aspiring to these nuptials which they had consummated with the light."<sup>40</sup> Bousset sees in this passage a true picture of the elementary dualism of Basilides, as distinct from the systems of his followers, who obscured the sharp contrast between the world of good and the world of evil by introducing many intermed-<sup>41</sup>iary powers. In further support of this theory Bousset

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40. Acta Archelai. 13. Unde nec perfectum bonum est in hoc mundo, et quod est, valde est exiguum, quia parum fuit etiam illud, quod initio conceptum est. Verumtamen per hoc ipsum exiguum lucis, immo potius per speciem quandam lucis, creaturae valuerunt generare similitudinem perferentem ad illam, quam de luce conceperant, permixtionem.

41. Bousset. Hauptprobleme. P. 94.

quotes sections from Clement of Alexandria which expressly state that Basilides was not a monotheist, and that he even deified the devil.<sup>42</sup> The dualism of Basilides, like that of Gnosticism generally, is traced by Bousset to Persian origins: it bears a close likeness to the system of Mani, which in turn is connected closely with Persia. "Just as the present world is the scene of a struggle between Ahriman and Ormuzd and their good and evil creations, so the world also is created out of a mingling of light and darkness; just as the end of the process is the cessation of the contest, the victory over Ahriman and his removal from this world, so also the aim is the uniting of disparate elements and the removing or denial of the elements of darkness." Bousset points out that in Basilides the mythological elements in the antithesis are lacking: it is the abstract powers of light and darkness who oppose one another, and these have no personal designation. This philosophical development is to be explained by the influence of Greek concepts.<sup>43</sup> There are certain traces of dualism even in Hippolytus' account of Basilides, and the evidences of such a philosophy in Clement's fragmentary references which Bousset quotes are also convincing. It seems probable, then, that Basilides,

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42. Cl. Alex. Strom. V. 11. 75. IV. 12.87.

43. Bousset: Op. cit., P. 117.

"at a time when Oriental culture was bidding for Western favour,"<sup>44</sup> was influenced to a considerable extent by the same kind of dualistic premises which almost a century later were to exercise such a profound effect upon the philosophy of Mani; and "it cannot be denied that Gnostic speculation borrowed some elements even from the barbarians, and that, in consequence, some Persian dualistic ideas are to be expected in the syncretizing efforts of Basilides and his school."<sup>45</sup> It is probable, however, that Bousset over-emphasises the influence which the dualism of Persia exerted upon Basilides. The Acta Archelai does not give a deliberately adapted account of the Basilidian system: and Hegemonius may have edited the Basilidian fragment so as to render it more in keeping with the doctrines of Mani. In Persian dualism, moreover, light and darkness are two equally matched forces, whereas in Basilides darkness is palpably inferior, and even the little good which exists in the world originated solely because darkness sought to imitate the superior light.

Irenaeus professes to give a further account of the system of Basilides, but most authorities consider that Irenaeus describes a spurious or degenerate form of Basilidianism, which was current among Basilides' followers during the

44. Buonaiuti: Gnostic Fragments. P. 40.

45. Buonaiuti: Op. cit., P. 41.

next century. <sup>46</sup> Mansel <sup>47</sup> quotes a number of authorities who regard Irenaeus as more or less unreliable and who accept the account of Hippolytus as more genuine. Hilgenfeld holds that the exposition of Irenaeus represents the earlier doctrine, but he is decidedly representing a minority view which is difficult to substantiate. <sup>48</sup> Ueberweg summarizes points of agreement and difference between Irenaeus and Hippolytus. They agree in the idea that the God worshipped by the Jews had only a limited sphere of influence, and that the redemption accomplished by Christ originated with the Supreme God. They differ, however, most essentially in their account of the intermediate beings. According to Irenaeus these were Nous, Phronesis, Sophia, and Dynamis: according to Hippolytus they were the three Sonships. Irenaeus, moreover, attributes to Basilides a theory of emanations, whereas Hippolytus denies that there is anything in the nature of a "descent" from above; and it is for this reason especially that Irenaeus' account of Basilides is regarded as a description of certain late modifications of his disciples.

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46. Matter: Histoire Critique du Gnosticisme. Vol. 2. P. 20. Il est à croire qu'une partie des données de S. Irénée, d'Eusèbe, de S' Epiphane et de Theodoret sur ce système, se rapportent plutôt aux opinions des disciples qu' à celles du maître. La principe que la critique doit adopter à cet égard, c'est que les opinions simples, celles qui renferment les éléments des autres, doivent être celles du maître.

47. Mansel: The Gnostic Heresies. P. 145 (footnote).

48. Ueberweg: History of Philosophy. P. 287.



Mansel makes the interesting suggestion that "though it is scarcely possible that Basilides himself could have held the theory in the form in which it is attributed to him" (i.e., the theory of emanations) "it is by no means improbable that he may have prepared the way for it, by recognizing something like the personification of spiritual attributes which head the above list, though not in the form of successive emanations."<sup>49</sup>

Irenaeus ascribes to Basilides a very complicated theory of emanations. Nous was an emanation from the unborn Father, and Logos was an emanation from Nous. From Logos in turn came Phronesis, and from Phronesis came Sophia and Dynamis. From the latter came the series of powers and angels who made the first heaven. Others from these made the second heaven, and so on until 365 heavens came into existence. The angels in the lowest heaven created the world. Their chief was the God of the Jews, and he desired to make all other nations subject to his own people: but this aroused the hostility of the other powers. This was the occasion for the work of the Redeemer. The unbegotten Father now sent his first-born, Nous, i.e., Christ, to deliver the believing from subjection to the powers

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49. Mansel. Op. cit., P. 161.  
 Cf. De Faye, Op. cit., P. 48. La notice d'Irénée.....  
 Ne nous fait connaître en définitive que les doctrines  
 des successeurs de Basilide. Il se peut même que les  
 adeptes de cette école raffinaient beaucoup sur les  
 titres et les noms des entités que d'après eux peu-  
 plaient le monde suprasensible.

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that rule the world. Nous appeared in human form and taught, but at the Crucifixion Simon of Cyrene was substituted. No one who really knows this truth will confess the Crucified One: it is necessary rather to believe in the Eternal Nous, who was only in appearance subjected to the death of the Cross. They who know all this are set free from the powers which rule the world.

Redemption according to the Basilidian Gnosis of Irenaeus' account is a purely intellectual process. Salvation consists in a knowledge of the powers which exist in the different heavens and which form the underlying "mechanism" of the Universe. This knowledge is apparently brought to men by Jesus the Redeemer. Those who are saved must be enlightened regarding the Caulacau, "the magic name wherein the Saviour ascends and descends." He who knows all these things, and all the angels and powers with their origins, will be invisible to all the hostile powers, and will be as intangible as Caulacau. Thus he attains to salvation.

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In commenting on Irenaeus' description of Basilides, De Faye<sup>52</sup> observes that the conceptions which are found in this account are central in the Gnosticism of the third

50. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 24.4. Innatum autem et innominatum Patrem videntem perditionem ipsorum misisse primogenitum Nun suum et hunc esse qui dicitur Christus, in libertatem credentium ei a potestate eorum qui mundum fabricaverunt.

51. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 24. 6. Igitur qui haec didicerit, et Angelos omnes cognoverit et causas eorum, invisibilem et incomprehensibilem eum angelis et potestatibus universis fieri, quemadmodum et Caulacau fuisse.

52. De Faye: Op. cit., P. 55.

century, and especially in the Coptic writings: and he asks whether Basilides could have anticipated these within his own time. On the whole, De Faye thinks that Basilides' primary concern is with the moral aspect of redemption: yet he does not deny that he may have considered the cosmic relations of the theory as well. As a child of his own time he may well have extended his idea of redemption to include an invisible world peopled by abstract beings.

The above study of Basilides has sought to reveal a Gnostic teacher who was definitely influenced by Christianity in the formation of his theory of redemption. De Faye<sup>53</sup> regards Basilides as a profoundly religious spirit, who saw in human life the misery of a soul in bondage to dark and powerful forces, and who was preoccupied with the problem of the soul's deliverance from these powers. He found the truest source of redemption in Christianity, and, says De Faye, he is for this reason essentially a Christian. It can hardly be maintained, however, that Basilides accepted the Christian doctrine of redemption in all its implications; for he seems to have held views of the person of the Redeemer which resemble Ebionism. In any case, he rejects the orthodox doctrine of a God-Man in whom divine and human elements were inseparably blended. The man Jesus was not the Redeemer: he

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53. Loc. cit., P. 56.

differed from other men only in degree as being the instrument selected by God in which to reveal himself through Christ.

Basilides approaches Christianity closely because he represents redemption as a definitely historical fact, and not merely as a process or as an ideal. In Clement's account the actual entrance of the Nous from the higher world was necessary in order that any being within the kingdom of the Archon might be redeemed; and it was through the medium of the historical man Jesus that the entrance of this Nous <sup>54</sup> into the terrestrial and phenomenal world was accomplished. In the account of Hippolytus, redemption is brought about by Jesus the Son of Mary, and this is the event from which <sup>55</sup> everything proceeds to the final restoration of the universe. "Basilides, partly from a profound insight into the essential character of Christianity and of history, partly judging from these effects of Christianity before his eyes, foresees a mighty movement and a sifting process introduced into humanity. Thus the sensitive minds among every people, freed from the power that had held their consciousness in fetters, redeemed from all dependence on the creature and raised to communion with their original source, would become <sup>56</sup> united with one another in a higher unity."

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54. Ch. Alex. Strom. II. 8. 36.

55. Hippol. Phil. VII. 26.

56. Neander: Church History. Vol. II. P. 64.

The influence of Christianity upon Gnosticism is further developed and illustrated in the teaching of Marcion. Unlike those contemporaries of his own who were immersed in philosophical speculations, and to whom Christianity was only one Gnosis out of many, Marcion had a definitely biblical theology. "He found the keys to an interpretation of past history, present experience and future destiny in the literal understanding of a book."<sup>57</sup> Some writers refuse to assign him to the Gnostics at all: Burkitt says that "whereas fifty years ago Marcion was treated as one of the Gnostics, we are only beginning to realize that he was not one of any company, but a great and original religious genius,<sup>58</sup> the most remarkable Christian of the second century." This statement, however, must be accepted with considerable reservation. The philosophy which underlies Marcion's religion was grounded in Gnostic dualism, and Bousset points out that "the polemic of Marcion against the Old Testament represents the grafting of Pauline shoots upon a foreign stem: Marcion's sharp separation of the deus iudex and the deus bonus is the fruit of a rugged dualism which rests generally upon the same basis as that of the rest of the Gnostics; and one certainly does not understand the whole of Marcion if one sees in him only a developed Paulinist."<sup>59</sup>

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57. R.S. Wilson: *Marcion, a Study of a Second Century Heretic*.  
 58. Burkitt: *The Religion of the Manichees*. P. 80.  
 59. Bousset: *Kyrios Christos*. P. 191.

Bousset also observes that there has been too great a tendency among critics to study and to judge Marcion only from the practical side of his piety, and to overlook the speculative and philosophical aspects of his system. He regards Marcion as "one who transferred the absolute Oriental-Persian Dualism and the opposition of the good god and the evil god over to the contradiction between the highest unknown God, the Father of Jesus Christ, and the God of the Old Testament. The latter has become for him (Marcion) Ahriman or Satan." "Marcion", continues Bousset, "has greatly clarified and simplified the Oriental dualism and the Oriental mythology, and has completed a relationship between these and the Christian religion, which for a time might appear capable of rivalling the bond between Christianity and Hellenism".<sup>60</sup> It is evident that the dualism of Marcion is more sharply defined than that of the other Gnostics: Marcion recognizes simply two opposing deities, and between these there are no intermediary beings, no Pleroma, no Aeons, no Syzygies or suffering Sophias, which characterize so many of the Gnostic systems.

At the outset of his system Marcion presupposes a fundamental distinction between the supremely Good God and the World Creator.<sup>61</sup> "He asserts the far-reaching opposition of

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60. Bousset: *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*. P. 109, fn.

61. Tertullian: *Adversus Marcionem*. I. 19. *Separatio legis et evangelii proprium et principale opus est Marcionis.*

known and unknown, of the new and the old God, of the Creator<sup>62</sup>  
and Ruler of this world and the God who redeems Mankind."

The highest God is good in his inmost nature:<sup>63</sup> he is  
nothing else but good, being goodness itself in his very  
being.<sup>64</sup> Opposed to this supreme and Good God is the evil  
world-creator, who is the lawgiver and the god of the revela-  
tion of the Old Testament. He knew that men could not keep  
his commandment, since he had formed them evil; yet he gave  
them the law, and brought it about that humanity should vio-  
late it and thereby become unhappy.<sup>65</sup> The redeemer of this  
God of the Old Testament is a warlike being: "he takes the  
riches of Damascus and the spoils of Assyria."<sup>66</sup> He is the  
Jewish Christ, "ordained by the Creator for the restoration  
of the Jews alone from the dispersion."<sup>67</sup> There is no  
salvation by this god, and humanity, which is under his power,  
is under the rule of sin and evil, and is doomed to eternal  
punishment.<sup>68</sup> These passages from Tertullian are con-  
firmed by references in other authorities. The God of the  
Old Testament is "a doer of evil and one desirous of war."<sup>69</sup>

62. Bousset: *Kyrios Christos*. P. 232.

63. Tert. Adv. Marc. IV. 36. *Optimus et ultro bonus*.

64. Tert. Adv. Marc. I. 2. *Sola et pura benignitas*.  
Ibid., I. 26. *Solitaria bonitas*.

65. Tert. Adv. Marc. II. 4. *Porro si legis imponendae ratio  
praecessit, sequebatur etiam observandae, ut poena trans-  
gressioni adscriberetur, quam tamen evenire noluit qui  
ante praedixit*.

66. Isaiah 8:4. Tert. Adv. Marc. III. 12.

67. Tert. Adv. Marc. III. 21.

68. Ibid. IV. 34.

69. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 27. 2.

The disciples of Marcion are said to "blaspheme the creator, saying that he is a doer of evil," and they speak of two opposing principles of good and evil.<sup>70</sup> Hippolytus also says that Marcion presupposes two beginnings for all things, one good and the other evil,<sup>71</sup> and that he claims that the "Demiurge" of this world is evil.

The Supreme God, who is opposed to the Demiurge, is supremely and absolutely good: and indeed no other activity can be attributed to him except one which will be in harmony with his essential goodness, which itself is Love. He is neither creator, nor lawgiver, nor judge, but he is the embodiment of redeeming love. He reveals himself to men, and this revelation in itself constitutes redemption for those who receive it.<sup>72</sup> Before the coming of Christ, however, this Good God had no communication whatever with mankind. The revelation of God in Christ freed mankind from the bondage of this world and its Creator, and enabled men to comprehend their true relationship to the Supreme God who had previously been unknown to them.

Jesus Christ the Redeemer is the agent through which the Supreme God reveals himself to men.<sup>73</sup> Just as the World-Creator, the Demiurge, had a son whom he sent to the earth,

70. Iren. Adv. Haer. III. 12.2.

Blasphemant fabricatorem dicentes eum malorum factorem.

71. Hippolytus: Philos. VII. 29: VII. 30.

72. Tert. Adv. Marc. I. 17. Sufficit unum hoc opus deo nostro, quod hominem liberavit summa et praecipua bonitate sua.

73. Tert. Adv. Marc. I. 19. Deus Noster, etsi non ab initio, etsi non per condicionem, sed per semetipsum revelatus est in Christo Iesu.



so also the Good God had a Son who descended to the world of men. According to Hippolytus' account, "Jesus came down without generation in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, a middle being, separate from the good (God) and from the evil."<sup>74</sup> Epiphanius notes that Christ was regarded by some as the Son of the Good God, and by some as Son of the Evil God.<sup>75</sup> Marcion, however, seems to have speculated little concerning the pre-existence of Christ. After he came to earth he went about doing good: and he "legitimized" himself through his great miracles, and not through his fulfilment of prophecies. His mission was to do away with the prophets and the law, and with all the works of the world-creator.<sup>76</sup> He freed men from the fear under which they had been enslaved by the Old Testament, and instead of the fear of God he preached to them God's absolute love.<sup>77</sup>

Mankind was at first alien to the Christ, being under the dominion of the world-creator, and Christ had therefore to buy mankind from this ruler. Marcion substitutes *ἀγοράσαντος* for *ἀγαπήσαντος* in his version of Galatians 2:20, which comes to mean that Christ has bought mankind as strangers, since no one buys those who belong to him. It is

74. Hippol. Phil. VII. 31.

75. Epiphanius: Haer. XIV.

76. Tert. Adv. Marc. IV. 4. Primo quidem adventu processerit adversus creatorem, legem et prophetas destruens ejus.

77. Tert. Adv. Marc. I. 27. Atque adeo prae se ferunt Marcionitae, quod deum suum omnino non timeant.

the world-creator who is the seller, and the price is the blood of Christ. The sacrifice of Christ does not apply to the forgiveness of sins, but brings to mankind freedom from bondage. Christ suffered upon the Cross, and thereby proved himself to be other than the son of the world-creator: for the latter had pronounced a curse upon such a death, and it could not therefore be possible for his own Christ to suffer thus.<sup>78</sup> The suffering of the true Christ, as distinguished from that of the Jewish Christ, was the unending proof of his love for the whole of mankind.<sup>79</sup> By his very suffering he showed his authority and superiority, because he willingly chose this course for himself.

The redemption brought by the true Christ was far-reaching in its extent. It applied not only to the sinners of his own time, but also to those who were held captive by sin in the lower world before the coming of Christ.<sup>80</sup> The work of the redeemer extended to the whole of the human race, with the exception of those who had been justified by the world-creator.<sup>81</sup> The Old Testament prophets, including

78. Tert. Adv. Marc. V. 3. Neque quia Creator pronuntiavit, 'Maledictus omnis ligno suspensus' ideo videbitur alterius dei esse Christus et idcirco a creatore iam tunc in lege maledictus.

79. Tert. Adv. Marc. III. 21.

80. Harnack: Marcion, das Evangelium vom Fremden Gott. P. 130. Die Universalität der Erlösung hing davon ab, dass nicht nur die Zeitgenossen Jesus und der Apostel und die Nachgeboren das Evangelium hören, sondern die ganze Menschheit.

81. Tert. Adv. Marc. I. 24. Non enim omnes salvi fiunt, sed pauciores omnibus et Judaeis et Christianis creatoris.

Moses, could not be saved because their observance of morality was a serving of the god who was the enemy of the good God, and whose standard was "an eye for an eye". In fact, only those who had openly transgressed the commandments of the Creator God and who had completely disregarded his law could be fully saved.<sup>82</sup>

The condition of redemption therefore is faith in Christ, i.e. to rely upon the undeserved love of God in Christ, and therefore to despise and to pass over the law, which hinders faith.<sup>83</sup> Fear is therefore done away, and slavish obedience to the law is finally superseded: nothing except faith can be brought to the good God.<sup>84</sup> The saved are those who believe in the revelation of God's love which is brought by Christ. The opponents of Marcion, especially Tertullian, regarded such a doctrine as being conducive to immorality,<sup>85</sup> and Tertullian asks Marcion why he does not sin, since his God was not to be feared and did not punish. Marcion's significant answer is simply, "Absit, absit;" that is to say, he regards those who have been redeemed as having been raised above the sphere of legalism "into a realm where

82. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 27.2. Omnes omnino gentes, quae in omni permixtione malignitatis ambulaverunt, salvatas esse a Domino, cum descendisset ad inferos, et accurrissent ei, et in suum assumpsisse regnum.

83. Iren. Adv. Haer. IV. 2.7. Lex prohibet credere in filium dei.

84. Tert. Adv. Marc. IV. 8. Deus bonus timendus non est.

85. Tert. Adv. Marc. I. 27.

the 'norms' of morality are no longer necessary, because God makes good out of evil, through faith."<sup>86</sup> Harnack regards this phrase "absit, absit", as "a document of the utmost importance in the history of religion."

In conformity with the usual Gnostic conception that matter was sua natura Marcion taught that only the souls of men could be saved, and not their bodies.<sup>87</sup> Marcion's opponents charged him with teaching that only a part of man is saved, and that he is therefore imperfectly redeemed. His teaching is, however, quite consistent, for he assumed that flesh is a most unworthy substance. It is not even the product of the world-creator; it belongs to matter, and in itself there exists nothing that is essentially human. It is not therefore a part of man at all, and it is doomed to final extinction. After death the whole of man's personality is redeemed by being transformed into an angelic substance.<sup>88</sup>

Marcion's religion is therefore "the paradoxical news of the strange and unknown God;" it is "an exclusive intelligence from the God who is the redeemer." Marcion sought primarily

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86. Harnack. Marcion. P. 135.

87. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 27.2. Salutem autem solum animarum esse futuram, earum quae ejus doctrinam didicissent; corpus autem, videlicet quoniam a terra sit sumptum, impossibile est participare salutem.

88. Tert. Adv. Marc. III. 9. Deus tuus veram quandoquidem substantiam angelorum hominibus pollicetur; "Erunt enim" inquit, "sicut angeli."

to answer the question which arises from mankind's deepest longing, the longing for redemption. "To the question, 'From what has Christ redeemed mankind,' Marcion gives a radical answer: 'He has redeemed us from creation and from its God, to make us children of a new and unknown God.'" <sup>89</sup>

Marcionism spread considerably after the death of its founder, both in the West and in the East, although in the West the doctrine was probably overcome by the powerful <sup>90</sup>propaganda of Manichaeism. The influence of this teaching in the East may be inferred from the account of Eznik, an Armenian writer of the fifth century. Eznik professes to describe the doctrines of Marcion himself, and it is probable that he was acquainted with sources of an original nature. The brief account of his teaching which follows is summarized from the translation of N. Maclean.

The God of the Law created Adam by conjunction with Hyle, (Matter), but afterwards he sought to separate man entirely from Hyle. He therefore gave man a new commandment, and said that there was no other God but himself. Out of revenge Hyle created many gods and filled the earth with them. All refused obedience to the God of the Law, and the latter therefore cast them into hell. Out of compassion for them

89. Harnack: Marcion, P. 33.

90. N. Maclean: Art. "Marcionism" in Hastings' E.R.E. Vol. 8. P. 409.

the good and strange God sent them his son as Redeemer. He took upon himself the form of a man among the sons of the God of the Law. The God of the Jews nailed him to the Cross, out of envy; and at his death he descended into hell to redeem the souls there, and conducted them to the third heaven. He (Jesus) descended the second time in the form of his godhead, and entered into judgment with the Lord of Creation concerning his death. According to the latter's own law, which states that he who kills a righteous man shall die, the Lord of Creation is found guilty of murder. Now, however, the Lord of Creation knows that the higher God has conquered him, and he prays for indulgence because he has acted in ignorance. "Because I have sinned and killed thee in ignorance, because I knew not that thou art a God, but reckoned thee a man, it is given thee as a satisfaction for that to carry off where thou wilt all those who shall be willing to believe on thee." Jesus then leaves him, and goes to Paul to reveal all this to him, and sends him to preach thus: "We are bought with a price: and everyone that believes in Jesus has been sold by the Just to the Good".

Eznik's account of the redemption of souls is evidently based on an essential antithesis between law and grace, and is thus very similar to the doctrine of Marcion which the Patristic accounts set forth. The Gnostic tendencies of the Marcionite tradition are more apparent in this treatise of Eznik, and it is clear that Marcion cannot be divorced from

the Gnostic movement, and that he must have been considerably influenced by Gnostic predecessors. It is difficult, however, to connect him with any one school. Mead<sup>91</sup> points out that Eznik's account resembles the teaching of the Gnostic Justinus, but he does not venture to draw any further conclusions from this resemblance.

Marcion's chief disciple was Apelles, whose doctrines may be inferred chiefly from the writings of Tertullian, Epiphanius, Hippolytus and Origen. He lived and taught at about the end of the second century.

Apelles seems to have modified Marcion's dualism: he regarded the highest Divine Being as a Unity, but beneath Him he recognized two angels, one being the World-Creator, and the other the Lawgiver, the God of Fire.<sup>92</sup> The World-Creator therefore owed his existence to the Supreme God: and the material world was created by him as by a ministering spirit to the glory of God. Afterwards, however, he becomes conscious of imperfection and repents of his crea-<sup>93</sup>tion. The good God then sends his son to be the redeemer of mankind. This redeemer is the sole messenger of God to humanity. He comes down in a body derived from the stars,

91. G.R.S. Mead: *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*. P. 246.

92. Tert. *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*. 34. Apelles creatorem angelum nescio quem gloriosum superioris dei faceret, deum legis et Israelis illum igneum affirmans.

93. Tert. *De Carne Christi*, 8.

Apelleiaci angelum quendam inclytum nominant, qui mundum hunc instituerit et instituto eo poenitentiam admiserit.

and enters the world without being born.<sup>94</sup> He remains hidden in the cosmic powers until the Jews crucify him. After three days he rises again, and appears to the disciples, convincing them of his corporeality.<sup>95</sup> Then he lays aside his earthly appearance and restores the individual constituent parts to their proper elements, and returns to heaven, whence he had come.

The redeeming work of this Son of the Good God is described only by Epiphanius, who says that "he imparted to us the higher Gnosis, i.e., to despise the Demiurge and to deny his works."<sup>96</sup> Redemption is therefore freedom from the tyranny of the "fiery god", the god of Israel: and this redemption is the gift of the higher God, who is Love. Apelles appears therefore to have reproduced his teacher's doctrine without notable modification.

94. Tertullian: De Carne Christi, 6.  
 Confitentur vere corpus habuisse Christum.....de sideribus, inquiunt, et de substantiis superioris mundi mutuatus est carnem.

95. Hippol. Phil. VII. 38.

96. Epiphanius: Haer. 44. 2.



P a g e s

Chapter VI. The Valentinian conception of Redemp- 161-201  
tion.

Chapter 6.

In Valentinianism it is evident that Gnosticism and Christianity are closely drawn together. Valentinus sincerely tried to mediate between these two modes of thought. In many ways he is the most important of all the Gnostics, especially if the influence and extent of his school are considered as results of his own initial teaching. He himself borrowed from many of the earliest forms of Gnosticism: indeed, as E.F. Scott remarks,<sup>1</sup> "it seems to have been his purpose to form a comprehensive system which should gather up in itself all the more valuable elements of all previous Gnosis." It is because of this fact, as Scott goes on to say, that the Valentinian Gnosis became so widely diffused, since "all the Gnostic sects were able to recognize in it their own characteristic tenets, brought into a larger context and impregnated with a deeper meaning."

Valentinus himself seems to have flourished about the middle of the second century, but of his life little is known. He is thought to have had some personal connection with orthodox Christianity, and this affiliation with the Church no doubt did much to widen the scope of his teaching. R. A. Lipsius<sup>2</sup> summarizes the brief information of Epiphanius and

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1. E.F. Scott: Art. 'Valentinus,' in Hastings' E.R.E. Vol. 12. P. 573.
  2. R.A. Lipsius: Art. 'Valentinus' in D.C.B. Vol. IV. P. 1078.

Pseudo-Tertullian by stating that Valentinus appeared as a teacher in Egypt and in Cyprus, towards the end of Hadrian's reign (C. 130) and that he taught in Rome during the reign of Antonius Pius.

The chief sources for knowledge of the Valentinian teaching are as follows:-

(1) The fragments to be found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, both in the Stromata and in the Excerpta Ex Theodoto. These are of the greatest importance, and have almost the value of original sources, but it is difficult to arrange them to form any connected system of doctrine.

(2) The passage in Irenaeus, Book 1, Chapters 11-13, which Harnack says is "the best guide for the original form of Valentinianism". It may be that Irenaeus here preserves the outline which was originally given in the lost Syntagma of Justin.

(3) Tertullian's Adversus Valentinianos. This author cannot be considered as an independent authority, since his whole account is merely a paraphrase of Irenaeus.

(4) Hippolytus' Philosophumena, Book 6. This clear and brief account of Valentinus has sometimes been preferred to that of Irenaeus.<sup>3</sup> Harnack, however, says that Hippolytus gives an account of a later Valentinian system, which is possibly connected with the school of Ptolemy,<sup>4</sup> and E.F.

3. G.R.S. Mead: Op. cit., P. 332.

4. Harnack: Art. 'Valentinus' in Encyclopaedia Britannica. Vol. 22. P. 950 (14th Edition).

<sup>5</sup> Scott says that it is almost certain that Irenaeus is closer to original sources. Lipsius <sup>6</sup> says that the account given by Hippolytus refers most probably to the teaching of the school of Heracleon, and he claims the support of Hilgenfeld for this position. In many points, however, there is a considerable amount of agreement between Irenaeus and Hippolytus, and it may well be, as E.F. Scott tacitly admits, <sup>7</sup> that these two writers used the same sources, though they worked quite independently of one another.

In view of these considerations, it is proposed to take Irenaeus as a primary authority, and Clement as a secondary authority, for the investigation of Valentinus' original system. The account of Hippolytus will be accepted and retained to the extent that it agrees with these other descriptions.

Irenaeus gives the first account of Valentinus' system of Aeons. By a process of development from the supreme Aeon, which is a Dyad, the primary Ogdoad was produced. Christ was brought forth by the mother who had been excluded from the Pleroma.... "but not without a kind of shadow." He indeed, as being masculine, returned to the Pleroma. <sup>8</sup> Then the mother, being left with the shadow, and being deprived

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5. E.F. Scott: Op. cit., P. 572.
  6. Lipsius: Op. cit., P. 1085.
  7. E.F. Scott: loc. cit.
  8. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 11. 1.

of her spiritual substance, brought forth the Demiurge, the supreme ruler of all things subject to him. There are also two beings called Horus: one of these divides the Aeons from the uncreated Father, while the other separates the mother from the Pleroma. Names are given to the series of Aeons, and they are variously classified. It will not be necessary to give these here in detail.

This short passage in Irenaeus gives no definite information concerning Valentinus' theory of redemption: but one of the earliest accounts of the Valentinians, which Irenaeus gives elsewhere, is very probably a true representation of the doctrine of the founder of the system. The importance of these early chapters of Irenaeus' Adversus Haeresos is generally recognized: and as Mansel points out, "the doctrines of Valentinus himself. . . . are noticed in the course of the work": and "the main principles of the system remain in the subsequent schools as they were invented by the master, varying only in some subordinate details." These chapters contain an account of what must have been a Ptolemean school of Valentinianism, which was very closely related to Valentinus himself. They are of importance because they set forth

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9. Mansel: *The Gnostic Heresies*. P. 167.

10. Lipsius (*Ant. D.C.B.*, loc. cit., P. 1080) makes a detailed analysis of these chapters, and finds that Irenaeus here made use of three different sources, which he denotes as A, B and C. One of these, C, was an authority common to himself and to Clement, and this source is the basis of Chapters 4-6. There are also certain additions to these sources which have been made by Irenaeus himself, and certain oral traditions have been incorporated.

in detail the Valentinian conception of redemption.

The first three chapters of this account of Irenaeus tell that Sophia desired to come into contact with the first father and to comprehend his greatness. Horos, however, the "limiter," restrained her progress, and convinced her that the supreme God was incomprehensible.<sup>11</sup> Thereupon she gave birth to an imperfect being, without the aid of a male consort, the birth being an amorphous substance. The sight of this imperfection which she had produced filled her with grief, and she became harassed by all the evil passions.<sup>12</sup> At this point Horos again intervenes: he purifies and re-establishes Sophia, and separates her imperfect "enthymesis" from her, expelling it from the Pleroma.<sup>13</sup> This "enthymesis" who is called Achamoth, being separated from Sophia, lay outside the Pleroma, without form or figure, being herself a defective birth. "Thereupon the Christ, dwelling on high, took pity on her, and having extended himself through and beyond Stauros he imparted a figure to her, but merely as respected substance, and not so as to convey knowledge."<sup>14</sup> Achamoth was not enlightened like the Aeons in order that she might seek after higher knowledge. Christ then withdrew from Achamoth, leaving within her a desire for better

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11. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 2.2.  
 12. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 2.3.  
 13. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 2.4.  
 14. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 4.1.

things and an "odour of immortality."<sup>15</sup> Her desire prompted Achamoth to seek the Pleroma and to re-discover the Light which had forsaken her. She was prevented by Horus, however, and was unable to enter the Pleroma. Thereupon she became afflicted with various passions, from which later the substance of the visible world was formed.

"After the mother Achamoth had passed through all forms of passion, and had escaped from them with difficulty, she turned to Christ, the light which had forsaken her."<sup>16</sup> He, however, having returned to the Pleroma, sent forth to her the Paraclete, i.e., the Saviour. (This was the Saviour sprung from all the Acons, who was inferior to the Saviour who was derived from Nous.) He imparted knowledge to the suffering Achamoth, and healed her passions, whereupon she brought forth new beings, "spiritual progeny, after the image of the Saviour's attendants."<sup>17</sup> Three kinds of substance were thus brought into being: Material, or Hylic, derived from her passions: Animal, or Psychic, from her conversion: and Spiritual, or Pneumatic, from herself, i.e., from her joy at the angelic light. From animal substance she formed the Demiurge, who created the visible world and also mankind. In the creation of man the Demiurge

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15. Cf. Hippol. Phil. VII. 22. (Basilides).

16. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 4.4.

17. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 4.5.

supplied his animal and his material nature: his spiritual nature was infused into a select few by the mother Achamoth.<sup>18</sup> In the first man, Adam, these three natures existed side by side. Since Adam, however, "these three natures are no longer found in one person, but constitute various kinds of men." The three classes of men, typified by Cain, Abel and Seth,<sup>19</sup> are the material, the animal, and the spiritual. Man's capacity for redemption is determined by his adherence to one or the other of these three classes. "The material goes, as a matter of course, into corruption. The animal, if it make choice of the better part, finds repose in the intermediate place; but if the worse, it too shall pass into destruction. But the spiritual principles which have been sown by Achamoth, being disciplined and nourished here. . . . at last attaining to perfection shall be given as brides to the angels of the Saviour."<sup>20</sup>

Perfect redemption, therefore, is only granted to the spiritual, or pneumatic, natures: and it is imparted "when all that is spiritual has been formed and perfected by Gnosis: and by this they mean spiritual men who have attained

18. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 5. 6-7.

19. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 7.5. Harnack (op. cit., P. 951) points out that all other Gnostic systems recognize only a dual division of children of light and children of darkness. The fact that Valentinus placed the animal natures (psychici) between the spiritual (pneumatici) and the material (hylici) signifies a certain recognition of the Christian Church and its adherents.

20. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 7.5.



to the perfect knowledge of God, and who have been initiated into the mysteries by Achamoth."<sup>21</sup> Such men are saved because they are spiritual by nature, and not because of their good conduct. Just as it is impossible for material substance to participate in salvation, so also it is impossible that spiritual substance should ever come under the power of corruption, whatever were the kind of actions which spiritual men committed. Good works were necessary only for the animal natures, who by nature stood in need of being perfected.<sup>22</sup>

It is probable, as Irenaeus observes, that the moral results of this teaching may have been pernicious among the followers of Valentinus. "The most perfect among them addict themselves to all kinds of forbidden deeds," and "they yield themselves up to the lusts of the flesh with the utmost greediness, maintaining that carnal things should be allowed to the carnal nature, while spiritual things are provided for the spiritual."<sup>23</sup> These latter statements, however, must be applied to certain members of the Ptolemean school rather than to Valentinus himself. It is generally agreed that the founder conceived of redemption in a highly spiritual and ethical sense. De Faye points out that Valentinus was a Platonist, and that as such he opposed spirit to body, and

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21. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 6.1.  
 22. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 6.2.  
 23. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 6.3.

regarded the body as an enemy which was to be overcome by asceticism and by mortification of the flesh. The spiritual men were privileged to realize this ideal in their own lives. 24

This view of the original teaching of Valentinus is confirmed by an examination of the fragments which are preserved in Clement's Stromata. Here redemption is mediated by a redeemer who is in the highest degree Docetic. The body and its passions are throughout regarded as evil appendages to man's essential nature, which is spiritual: and redemption is therefore essentially an inner development of the spirit through knowledge, an enlightenment, a revelation.

In a fragment which deals with the origin of mankind Clement quotes Valentinus as maintaining that at the creation an element of the "supernal essence" entered into mankind, "and a kind of terror filled the angels at this creature, because he uttered things greater than those which proceeded from his higher formation." <sup>25</sup> Buonaiuti notes here "the obvious analogy between the Valentinian conception of the Aeon Man, an element of whom dwells within the human organism,

24. De Faye, Op. cit., P. 48. Valentin est platonicien: Tertullian l'appelle platonicus Valentinus. . . . .  
 . . . . . Et tant que platonicien il oppose l'esprit à la chair, l'âme au corps. . . . . le corps est l'ennemi. . . . . Avec ces vues, Valentin ne pouvait manquer d'être ascète en morale. La rédemption consistait en dernière analyse dans la mortification de la chair, dans une sorte de mort intérieure. Réaliser cet idéal, est le privilège des hommes spirituels.

25. Cl. Alex. Strom. II. 8.36.

and the Manichaeian idea of the First Man, who is conquered by the King of Darkness, and who leaves prisoner in his hands elements of himself and his five sons." <sup>26</sup> Hilgenfeld <sup>27</sup> also points out that it was a Valentinian teaching that a masculine Aeon, the Soter, originally established the Pneumatic nature in the souls of men. When this Pneumatic nature had been removed, a Masculine Aeon in turn, the Logos, breathed into Adam in sleep the σπέρμα ἀρσενικόν (Cf. Genesis 2:21) an emanation of the ἀγγελικόν (Cf. Cl. Alex. Exc. Ex Theod. 2) Thereupon Adam gave utterances to speeches which filled his creators with fear and trembling. (Cf. also Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 7. 3 and 4.)

Man's need for redemption therefore arises from the fact that he is a being who bears within himself a spark of the Divine Being which is bound and almost extinguished by the forces of evil. Clement compares the heart to "an inn which is impure, and the dwelling of many demons. But when the Alone-Good Father visits it, it is made holy and shines with life: and he who possesses such a heart is so blessed that he shall see God." This state of redemption is brought about by Christ alone. "There is one good, in whose presence is the manifestation which is the Son, and by him alone can the heart become pure, by the expulsion of every evil spirit

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26. Buonaiuti: Gnostic Fragments. P. 65.  
 27. Hilgenfeld: Ketzergeschichte. P. 294.

from the heart. For the multitude of spirits dwelling  
 within it keep it from being pure."<sup>28</sup>

The Son in whom God was present to mankind was mediated or conveyed to earth in the person of Jesus. He, the Redeemer, overcomes the sensual man within himself by great continence, and brings to pass his own divinity. In him divinity and humanity, invisible and visible, were indissolubly blended in one person. His appearance was definitely Docetic: he did not eat and drink as an ordinary man, and he was not subject to physical laws like the rest of mankind.<sup>29</sup> The Redeemer also founded a church among humanity, which was dependent not upon outward written laws, but upon the inner bond of a mutual love between it and the Son of God. This reveals itself in the law written upon the heart. The efficacy of the Redeemer consists in his uniting of men in his love, i.e., in the association of an inner knowledge.

The spiritual nature of the Redeemer is fully comprehended and realized by those who are redeemed. He in whom the divine nature is developed and cultivated has laid aside and overcome that which is perishable. He has put on mortality only that he may conquer it. "In a homily Valentinus writes

28. Cl. Alex. Strom. II. 20. 114. Buonaiuti finds in this passage an echo of Philo of Alexandria. Cf. De Somniis, I. 23. "It is clear that every large number of undesirable guests must be dislodged, in order that the one only who is good may make his entrance. Strive, then, O Soul, to become the house of God." Hilgenfeld (Op. cit., P. 297) also compares the Epistle of Barnabas, C. 16. P. 40. 18 sq.

29. Cl. Alex. Strom. III. 7.59.

these words: 'You are immortal, and the children of life eternal from the beginning. Yet ye would that death was shared among you, to spend and squander it, that death might die in you and by you dissolve the world, without allowing yourselves to be dissolved, you are the lords of Creation, and supreme over all that hath corruption'.<sup>30</sup>" The redeemer who combines in himself divinity and humanity is thus a type of the spiritual man, and also of that unity which pervades the whole creation. Not only once does the Logos become human: this process is repeated whenever the Spirit of God enters into Man.

<sup>31</sup>  
In an obscure and difficult fragment Clement seems to some extent to oppose the Valentinian doctrine that there is a certain group of men, the Pneumatici, who are predestined by nature to salvation. "If in order to abolish death the peculiar race has come, it is not Christ who has abolished death, unless he also is said to be of the same essence with them. And if he abolished it to this end, that it might not touch the peculiar race, it is not they, the rivals of the Creator, who breathe into the image of their intermediate spirit the life from above - in accordance with the principle of the dogma that abolished death. But they should say that this takes place by his Mother." Here it seems to be argued that the race of the elect were originally introduced into the world by a

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30. Cl. Alex. Strom. IV. 13. 91.

31. Cl. Alex. Strom. IV. 13. 92.

feminine principle, and that, through her, death (i.e., ignorance) may be abolished. Only by conjunction with this feminine spirit can man be redeemed, and attain to blessedness. It is possible that this feminine principle may represent Sophia: and that the reference of Clement here is connected with the Valentinian belief, which was to be more fully developed among the Marcosites and others, that just as the Cosmic redemption was accomplished by the union of the heavenly Soter with the fallen Sophia, so also the concern of the pious Valentinian was mystically to repeat the experience of the celestial union of Soter and Sophia.

The teaching of Valentinus may also be inferred from the series of passages which are preserved by Clement under the title Excerpta Ex Theodoto. Lipsius considers that this account of Theodotus "stands much nearer to the views of Valentinus than the detailed account of Ptolmeny's doctrines in Irenaeus, I. 1-8,"<sup>32</sup> and Buonaiuti affirms that "Theodotus does not depart substantially from the tradition of Valentinus, unless it is by a more acute sense of the importance of ritual in the religious life, and by the stress which he lays on the idea of destiny."<sup>33</sup> Theodotus himself appears to have belonged to the Eastern or Anatolic school of Valentinianism,

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32. Lipsius: Art. 'Valentinus' in D.C.B. Vol. 4. P. 1090.

33. Buonaiuti: Gnostic Fragments. P. 98.

but nothing is known of his personal history.

The account of the Aeons and of the Pleroma which is given in the Excerpta is similar to that which Irenaeus connects with the Ptolemean school. "Being unknowable, the Father willed to be known by the Aeons, and by virtue of his own thought, he being himself all thought and the essence of that knowledge which is all knowledge, he engendered the Alone-Begotten."<sup>34</sup> Then the πνεύμα ἀγάπης mingles itself with the πνεύμα γνώσεως as the Father with the Son; Enthymesis proceeds from Aletheia as Gnosis proceeds from the Enthymesis; and the μονογενῆς υἱός declares the Enthymesis, through Gnosis, to the Aeons. Suffering entered the Pleroma first through the sympathy of the Father for his consort Sige: and then through the suffering of the twelfth Aeon, Sophia, the whole Pleroma suffers also to restore its suffering member. Sophia's suffering was the result of her longing for forbidden knowledge, whereby she became involved in ignorance and formlessness. Christ is emanated by Sophia as the Image of the Pleroma: and he, being of pneumatic nature, leaves this lower world and ascends to the Pleroma, mingling with the Aeons.<sup>35</sup> He receives the name of Son, as being the elect and first born of the lower world. He leads into the pneumatic kingdom the pneumatic descendants

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34. Cl. Alex. Exc. Ex. Theod. 29.

35. Exc. Ex Theod. 33.

who are called the Church, who have been chosen before the world and who were already redeemed before any historical act of redemption took place.<sup>36</sup>

The process of redemption begins when Christ implores the Aeons to aid his mother, whom he has left outside the Pleroma. Thereupon they consent, and Jesus goes forth to be the "Paraclete" of the fallen Aeon.<sup>37</sup> He passes over the boundary (ὄρος) between the Pleroma and the Kenoma, taking with him the angels of the "differing seed" in order to redeem the σπέρμα i.e., the Pneumatic Souls. He is possessed of λύτρωσις which the angels receive from him in baptism: and each of the Pneumatici who is destined to be united with the angels is baptized into the same name as that of the angel corresponding to himself, so that he may not be prevented by the boundary, Horus (also called Stauros) from entering the Pleroma. The angels themselves have a kind of redeeming work to perform: for, since they are of the same essence as the Pneumatici, they cannot return to the Pleroma until they bring the Pneumatici themselves as a reward to the heavenly marriage feast. It would appear that the διορθώσεις mediated by the angels was the only redemption necessary for the Pneumatici, who required only a development of their natural wisdom: the λύτρωσις brought by Jesus was necessary for the redemption

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36. Exc. Ex Theod. 41. 2.

37. Exc. Ex Theod. 23 & 31.



of the Psychici.

The coming of Jesus into the world marks the separation of believers from unbelievers. This separation is mystically effected by the Cross, or Stauros, which is the sign of Horus within the Pleroma. As Horus, the Boundary, divides the lower world from the Pleroma, so Stauros divides believers from unbelievers. The Pneumatici are carried by Jesus on his shoulders upon the Cross and into the Pleroma; and thus Jesus is called the shoulders of the seed, and Christ is called their head.

The Soteriology of the Excerpta represents the redeemer, Jesus, as one who was himself in need of redemption. At baptism; therefore, a "redeeming name" came upon him, whereby the angels also were redeemed. This name comes down, in the form of a dove, upon the Pneumatic body formed by Sophia, and upon the pneumatic seed. Little is said regarding the suffering of Jesus, except that the σπέρματα which are taken up by Jesus also suffer, and then the whole Universe is drawn into sympathy. One Excerpt represents the suffering as a necessary process of being divided, in order that sundered parts may be reunited. "The indivisible must be divided in order that the pneumatici may be united to their angel consorts, and so we, the many being made one, may all

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38. Exc. Ex Theod. 41. and 42.  
 39. Exc. Ex Theod. 22.7.  
 40. Exc. Ex Theod. 22.6.  
 41. Exc. Ex Theod. 31.

be commingled with the One who for ourselves has been divid-  
<sup>42</sup>  
 ed." After his resurrection, Jesus, the psychical Christ,  
 "sits at the right hand of the Demiurge in order to help the  
 pneumatic souls in their entrance into the Pleroma, and to  
 prepare and to guard their access thither."  
<sup>43</sup>

The doctrine of redemption which this first group of  
 the Excerpta sets forth is one which includes the whole of  
 the universe within its scope. Salvation was not only an  
 individual matter: it meant the establishment of order  
 in the higher world by the restoration of Sophia as well as  
<sup>44</sup>  
 the deliverance of human souls.

In the second group of the Excerpta (42, ff.) certain  
 differences from the doctrines of the first series are im-  
 mediately noted. It is thought that this second series  
 represents the teaching of the later "Italian" school of the  
 Valentinians, and that these Excerpts have been artificially  
<sup>45</sup>  
 joined to the first group by Clement himself. The doc-  
 trine of redemption in this second series presents some sig-  
 nificant points of difference and development. In Excerpt 41,

42. Exc. Ex Theod. 36.

43. Exc. Ex Theod. 38.3.

44. De Faye: *Gnostiques et Gnosticisme*. Pp. 260-61.  
 Il ne s'agit pas simplement de sauver des âmes individ-  
 uelles. L'auteur n'est nullement paulinien. L'oeuvre  
 rédemptrice doit consister à rétablir d'abord l'ordre  
 dans le monde supérieur. On y parvient en réintégrant  
 Sophia dans le plerôme et en conjurant les effets fâcheux  
 de son égarement. L'oeuvre se continuera ensuite dans le  
 Cosmos visible par la délivrance des âmes sur lesquelles  
 pèse la fatalité. Enfin le Sauveur restaurera les âmes  
 chacune dans le domaine et la sphère qui lui conviennent.  
 Ainsi l'oeuvre rédemptrice embrasse tant le monde invis-  
 ible que le monde visible.

45. R.A. Lipsius: *Op. cit.*, P. 1094.

as above, it was stated that Christ the Son of Sophia, in ascending to the Pleroma, took with him a part of the Pneumatic seed, which, at its entrance into the perfect Aeon-world, experienced redemption from the weaknesses and deficiencies of the Kenoma; and this process was regarded as a symbolic representation of the redemption of the entire Church. According to the second group of the Excerpta, however, redemption begins with the creative act of the Soter, wherein he definitely reveals his purpose of bringing the world to the point of redemption. The redeemer also includes in his own nature the pneumatic and psychic substances which were destined for salvation, and he sanctifies and redeems these substances. According to the first account the work of redemption commences at the descent of Jesus, and union is the aim of the process, i.e., restoration to the unity of the Pleroma. (Exc. 21, 36, etc.) In the second group, however, redemption is conceived as a development, a *μόρφωσις*, a gradual unfolding and formation of that which is spiritual.<sup>46</sup>

The light from the Pleroma imparts to the *κάτω Σοφία* a *μόρφωσις κατ' οὐσίαν*; then the Soter, at the bidding of Christ, comes to Sophia and imparts to her a *μόρφωσις κατὰ γνῶσιν*.<sup>47</sup> This *μόρφωσις*, however, is only the commencement of creation: the work of redemption is a gradual process, and cannot be fulfilled until much later.

The third and last section of the Excerpta, (65 ff.)

46. Exc. Ex Theod. 54. 68. 79.

47. Exc. Ex Theod. 45.

introduces the question of destiny and its influence on the process of salvation. Theodotus seems to have been influenced by the astrological ideas of his time to a greater extent than any other of the Valentinians. These latter Excerpts reveal a consciousness of an inescapable necessity which envelops and oppresses the whole of human life, and which is revealed only by the movements of the stars. "Destiny is none other than the struggle between a multitude of contending, invisible and hidden powers, which control the movements of the stars, and by means of them rule the universe."<sup>48</sup> Certain demons and archons are opposed to mankind and are at enmity with all humanity. They pursue man relentlessly, and they endeavour to destroy his soul even at the moment when he is plunging into the baptismal waters.<sup>49</sup> These important passages demonstrate clearly that influence of Oriental dualism and pessimism upon Gnosticism, which has already been noted in Chapter I. Man longed to be free from these shadowy powers which haunted him in life and in death. Christ came to redeem mankind from this slavery, and from his imprisonment within the struggling στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου: and redemption consists in being set free from this subjection. "There arose a new and extraordinary star, which did away with the spell of the old astral boundaries, and which, shining with a new light which was very different from cosmic light, pointed the

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48. Exc. Ex Theod. 69.

49. Exc. Ex Theod. 83-85.

way of salvation from the moment that the Lord in person came down to earth as the guide of men, and transferred those who believed in Christ from bondage to the liberty of his Providence.<sup>50</sup>"

The fulfilment or completion of this process of redemption was assured by sacramental observances. Baptism especially was regarded as conferring extraordinary powers upon the participant. The "evil powers" were forced to relinquish their hold upon the newly baptized believer, and to recognize him as a servant of God with fear and trembling.<sup>51</sup> Through the act of baptismal initiation light is given by the Spirit, and this spiritual illumination quenches the fires of evil within the soul.<sup>52</sup> Other sacramental observances also possessed a redeeming significance: e.g., bread and water in the sacramental meal, oil for anointing, exorcisms and charms of various kinds were of great importance in overcoming the forces of evil.<sup>53</sup> These observances were accompanied by an ascetic system of morality: the body was regarded as an evil thing which was to be tamed and subjected by those who sought to be redeemed from all material bondage. The doctrine of redemption in these later passages from Theodotus becomes an extremely practical and "urgent" means of

50. Exc. Ex Theod. 74.

51. Exc. Ex Theod. 76-77.

52. Exc. Ex Theod. 81.

53. Exc. Ex Theod. 82, 86.

escape from the constant and oppressive bondage of evil.

Hippolytus' account of Valentinus now remains to be considered. In many particulars it corresponds with the description of the Ptolemean school in the early chapters of Irenaeus, Book 1; and it has sometimes been assumed that these two authorities were interdependent. Lipsius, however, has shown that the differences between them are sufficient to prove that they worked independently.<sup>54</sup> Hippolytus uses a different terminology, and the series of Aeons is differently related. Other differences occur in the description of the fall of Sophia, and of her restoration, and of the formation of the lower world out of the <sup>"</sup>ἐκτρύμα which was born of her.<sup>55</sup> Lipsius follows Hilgenfeld in relating this account of Hippolytus to the school of Heracleon, and there are many similarities which serve to support this theory.

Hippolytus' account of the Aeons of the Valentinians postulates "an unbegotten, incorruptible, incomprehensible,<sup>56</sup> fruitful Monad as the beginning of all things". He, the Father, was moved by love to beget a dyad, Nous and Aletheia, Mind and Truth. They in turn gave birth to Logos and Zoe, the Word and Life: and these in turn produced Man and the Church. Then ten Aeons descended from the Word and Life, and twelve Aeons from Man and the Church. The youngest of

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54. Lipsius: Op. cit., P. 1085.

55. Hilgenfeld: Op. cit., P. 499.

56. Hippol. Philos. VI. 29.

these twelve Aeons was Sophia: "she wished to imitate the Father, and gave birth by herself and apart from her spouse, . . . . . being ignorant that only the unbegotten principle and root and height and depth of the universals can possibly bring forth alone. . . . Therefore Sophia projected only what she could, a substance formless and shapeless."<sup>57</sup>

Thus confusion resulted within the Pleroma, the world of the Aeons; and Sophia mourned over the abortion which she had brought forth.

The redemption of Sophia is brought about by the Father as the result of the prayers of the sorrowing Aeons. He caused Nous and Aletheia to project Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Ektroma of Sophia is separated from the Aeons: and then the Father projects one Aeon, the Cross, who becomes the limit of the Pleroma and the guard of the Aeons. He is called variously Horus (limiter) Metocheus (partaker, i.e., in the Hysterema) and Stauros (i.e., fixed.)

As a thank-offering for this redemption the Aeons contribute a glorious form to the Father. This common fruit of the Pleroma is Jesus: he is sent by the Aeons to be a spouse to the wandering Sophia, who is in perplexity and who is still enthralled by her passions. Jesus finds Sophia, and removes her passions from her, making them into the separate existences

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57. Hippol. Philos. VI. 30.

of fear, grief and perplexity.

The redemption of this terrestrial world is accomplished by Jesus, Son of Mary. Through him the world is set free from its subjection to the power of the Demiurge, under whose guidance all the prophets and lawgivers of the Old Testament had taught mankind in error. "When, therefore, creation was brought to completion, and the revelation of the sons of God, i.e., of the Demiurge, at length became necessary, which had been before concealed, he says, the psychic man was veiled and had a veil on his heart. Then when it was time that the veil should be taken away and that these mysteries should be seen, Jesus was born through Mary the Virgin." 58  
The Demiurge and Sophia also co-operated in his birth, giving to him the mould and constitution and "essence" of his body. His earthly manifestation was Docetic.

It is expressly stated by Hippolytus 59 that the Valentinians recognized three redeemers: (1) The Christ of the Pleroma, derived from Nous and Aletheia and the Holy Spirit; (2) Jesus the common fruit of the Pleroma and the consort of Sophia; and (3) Jesus born of Mary for the redemption of this present world.

Redemption therefore includes both the Pleroma and

58. Hippol. Philos. VI. 35.

F. Legge, (Philosophumena, translation. Vol. 2. P. 33 fn.) notes the reference here to the doctrine, which was common in Gnostic circles, that Jesus at birth received nothing from his Mother, but passed through her "as through a pipe or conduit."

59. Phil. VI. 36.



the world outside of the Pleroma. In the Pleroma itself the rôle of redeemer is conferred upon Horus as well as upon Christ and the Holy Spirit; and these beings perform their redeeming work in separating Sophia from her abortion and in pacifying the Aeons. The redeeming work of Jesus in the world outside the Pleroma is accomplished by his rejection of the affections of his consort and by his forming of Sophia's passions into separate essences after these have been separated from her. Jesus Son of Mary comes to this terrestrial world to bring to mankind knowledge of higher things. "Redemption consists in the correction of the whole extra-hylic being. The end of the process is the restoration of full identity between generated and ungenerated, a relationship so formed that all things outside the  $\beta\upsilon\theta\acute{o}\varsigma$ , like the aeons of the  $\pi\lambda\acute{\eta}\rho\omega\mu\alpha$  inside the  $\acute{o}\rho\omicron\varsigma$ , are no longer consistent hypostases independent of finite things, but moments of consciousness of the infinite, united with this through  $\gamma\nu\acute{\omega}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ." <sup>60</sup>

In the Valentinian systems generally, as Harnack points out, <sup>61</sup> matter is not irretrievably and originally separated from the higher celestial world. The material world comes into existence as the result of a disturbance or a fall within the celestial world. The Valentinian doctrine of redemption is a doctrine of the restoration of all things within the universe,

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60. Steffes: Op. cit., P. 165.

61. Harnack: Art. 'Valentinus' in Encyclopaedia Britannica. Vol. 22. P. 950.

each to its own proper place.

The foregoing brief survey of the chief accounts of Valentinianism has very evidently revealed two strata or stages of development in the Valentinian doctrine of redemption. Certain features in the conception are due to Christian influences, and certain other details are derived from pre-Christian sources of great antiquity. Such figures as Horus and Bythos have evidently been assimilated from pagan Gnostic sources; yet on the other hand the celestial Soter who accomplishes the redemption of Sophia and becomes her bridegroom corresponds to a certain extent with the earthly figure of Jesus of Nazareth. In Valentinianism something in the nature of a compromise between Gnosticism and Christianity is apparently reached.

The Valentinian redeemer is evidently connected with pre-Christian as well as Christian forms of thought. Harnack sees in the original Valentinian Christos a celestial Primal Man sinking into matter and rising from it again. In the later Valentinian systems the origin of Christos is obscured, and Christ and the Holy Spirit become the later offspring of the world of Aeons, thus approximating to the Christian doctrine.<sup>62</sup> C. Barth regards the Valentinian redeemer, who embodies in himself the image of the First Father and who becomes his

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62. Harnack: Op. cit., P. 950.

revealer, as a "pre-Christian figure, who bears the essential characteristics of the Philonian Logos."<sup>63</sup> Bousset maintains that the Valentinian "myth" of redemption originally had nothing to do with the idea of redemption through Jesus. "In the centre of the Valentinian Gnosis is a heathen myth which deals with the heavenly nuptials of two gods, the Soter and the Sophia. In this myth the Gnostics found the original representation of the desired union of their higher immortal being with the spiritual forces of the heavenly world."<sup>64</sup> Bousset considers it probable that the doctrine of redemption through the Jesus of history was artificially joined to this ancient myth in the course of the process of assimilation between Gnosticism and Christianity.<sup>65</sup> Bousset underestimates certain Christian elements which influenced the Valentinians very definitely: yet his theory of this ancient Gnostic myth, which has already been mentioned in Chapter I, is of much value and assistance in classifying and considering the pagan elements which also formed these various systems. The story of the redeemer who descends to free Sophia by uniting himself with her is a myth of unquestionable antiquity, which may ultimately have been

63. C. Barth: Die Interpretation des Neuen Testaments in der Valentinianischen Gnosis. P. 86.

64. Bousset: Hauptprobleme. P. 269.

65. Bousset: Op. cit., Pp. 269-70. Es scheint klar zu sein, wie nun erst um des Anschlusses an den gemeinchristlichen Glauben willen mit diesem Erlösungsmythus ganz künstlich und mechanisch die Lehre von der Erlösung durch den historischen Jesus Christus verbunden wurde.

derived from the widely disseminated worship of the Great Mother. This myth also forms the basis of the primitive Ophite sect which is described by Irenaeus (Adv. Haer. I. 30), and this fact seems to indicate some sort of relationship between the Valentinian doctrine of redemption and the teaching of this early Ophite School. In Valentinianism this pre-historic Soter is connected with the historical Jesus. Bousset thus distinguishes two separate stages of the Soter's activity in "the exoteric representation of the Valentinian Gnosis:" first, the redemption of primeval history, according to which the Saviour freed Sophia from the underworld: and, second, the redemption of historical times, whereby the figure of the Soter is connected with the man Jesus.

The figure of Horus, or Horus-Stauros, which is prominent in the accounts of Irenaeus and Hippolytus, is peculiar to the Valentinian Gnosis, and represents a special aspect of the redeemer's activity. Horus, the "limiter," must separate the fallen Aeons from the Aeons of the upper world: he constructs an orderly world out of Sophia and her passions, and so consolidates this world that any further fall will be impossible. He also serves to accentuate the principle of limitation in the Valentinian Gnosis. Each created being is destined to its proper sphere, and must remain within the bounds of its own personality. Horus is the genius of limitation who fixes and guards the bounds of individual existence; e.g., he preserves men in their categories of Pneumatici,

Psychici, and Hylici. Since the forming and the redeeming of existence are related conceptions, and since the principle of limitation was of such importance in each of these functions, Horus came to be regarded as a type of the Redeemer, and was called *λυτρωτής* and *σωτήρ*.

The redeeming function of Horus is particularly emphasized when he is combined with the figure Stauros. Stauros, or the Cross, is the Aeon upon whom depends the ordering of the world and the life of the Universe. He is a personal being, begotten after the image of the Father, who becomes the Saviour of Sophia. Stauros, the Cross, comes to be considered as "the symbol of power which purifies every being from foreign elements and leads it to limitation within the bounds of its own nature." <sup>66</sup> In historical time the psychical Messiah took part in the sufferings of humanity by his death upon the Cross: and this death was regarded as a symbol of the first redeeming act, whereby the Soter received the suffering Sophia, stretched himself over her, and purified her from every foreign element, restoring her to her proper place.

The Valentinian redeemer therefore combines within himself these three aspects, Horus, Stauros and Soter, and redemption becomes a cosmic and supra-cosmic process, as well as an individual participation. It is taken for granted in the Valentinian systems that the supra-cosmic events of pre-historic times must be repeated in the life of the individual

believer. Just as Cosmic redemption was accomplished by the union of the Soter with Sophia, so also the pious Valentinian must repeat the experience of this celestial union: he must "constantly strive after the mystery of the union."<sup>67</sup> "The thrice-unhappy (Valentinians) celebrate the fleshly and common mystery of union, and they believe that this conducts them into the kingdom of God."<sup>68</sup> As this theory of mystical and sacramental observances became further developed, e.g., by the Marcosite Valentinians, the angels who were the sons of the Soter and Sophia came to be regarded as males who were betrothed to the Gnostic souls. Thus every Gnostic had his own angel standing in the presence of God: and his aim and desire was to experience an inner union with this heavenly being.<sup>69</sup>

In spite of these affinities with pre-Christian mythologies, there are certain definitely Christian elements in the Valentinian doctrine of redemption. De Faye, indeed, affirms without qualification that "Valentinus gave to Jesus Christ the principal rôle in the work of redemption,"<sup>70</sup> and he regards the short account which Epiphanius gives of the Valentinian system as being of special importance in confirming this

67. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 6.4.

68. Clem. Alex. Strom. III. 4.27.

69. Iren. III. 15.2. Neque in caelo neque in terra putat se esse, sed intra Pleroma introisse, et complexum iam angelum suum.

70. De Faye: Op. cit., P. 66 ff.

supposition.<sup>71</sup> Authorities agree that these sections of Epiphanius are derived from the lost Syntagma of Hippolytus, a document which would have described Valentinianism according to very early sources.<sup>72</sup> In considering these brief sections which have been preserved by Epiphanius, De Faye makes the interesting suggestion that Valentinus' silence on the subject of Jesus' efficacy in the redemption of the psychici shows that he was influenced by the Christian doctrine to an extent which Epiphanius could hardly express without actually describing the heretic as a Christian.<sup>73</sup> De Faye regards the Valentinian statement that the psychici could not save themselves as being a tacit admission that Jesus Christ was essential for their salvation. He points out that Valentinus and Origen agree completely in their account of the salvation of the perfected spiritual beings, and that it is therefore reasonable that Valentinus' account of the redemption of ordinary men should also be similar to that of Origen, who said that the work and cross of Jesus were necessary for these common mortals.<sup>74</sup> De Faye is of the opinion that it was because of this strong Christian tendency within his writings that Valentinus exercised his unmistakable influence upon the thought of Origen.

It is difficult, however, to accept the conclusion that

71. Epiphanius: Haer. 31. 7-8.

72. Lipsius: Art. 'Valentinus'. D.C.B. Vol. 4. P. 1086.  
Harnack: Art. in Encycl. Britt., loc. cit.

73. De Faye: Op. cit., P. 66.

74. De Faye: Op. cit., P. 71.

the historical redemption wrought by Christ formed the original centre of the Valentinian teaching. Valentinianism, as Seeberg points out, represents rather "the consummation of a philosophical Gnosticism which sought to interpret various elements of the ancient religions as being the fundamental principles of a revelation whose aim or end is Christ."<sup>75</sup> The positive influence of Christianity becomes assimilated into that stream of development wherein semi-historical, semi-mythological elements are reduced to a kind of speculative mysticism. The Valentinian Gnosis arose, like Neoplatonism, out of the syncretism of its time. It recognized the redemption through Christ as one revelation among many, and even as a revelation of peculiar significance: but it never fully advanced beyond the sphere of the ancient myths and practices from which it was originally derived.<sup>76</sup>

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Valentinianism approached most closely to Christianity in the teaching of Heracleon, who is known by his commentary on the Fourth Gospel, which is the earliest commentary on any book of the New Testament which has been preserved to modern times.

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75. Seeberg: Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte. Vol. 1. P. 295.

76. Seeberg: Op. cit., P. 297. Daher kann die Gnosis, trotz ihrer Anerkennung der Erlösung durch Christus, nicht heraus aus dem Bannkreis der alten Probleme und Ideale, die Kirche lehrte neue Fragen stellen und ein neues Leben führen.



Heracleon probably exercised his greatest influence during the period 155-180 A.D. It is probable that Irenaeus had heard of Heracleon when he came to Rome (C. 176). The lectures of Irenaeus could hardly have been delivered later than 177 A.D., and on these lectures the Compendium of Hippolytus was based, in which work the heresy of Heracleon was described. In the opinion of A.E. Brooke there is therefore no evidence that Heracleon taught earlier than 170: yet the statement of Origen, which is prefaced to the first of the fragments of the Commentary on St. John, describes Heracleon as "one who professed to be a friend of Valentinus": and this seems to point to a date somewhat earlier, which was not far removed from the death of Valentinus.<sup>77</sup>

The fragments of Heracleon's Commentary on St. John's Gospel, which have been preserved by Origen, constitute the main source of information for his system of doctrine. These fragments have been accurately and authoritatively edited by A.E. Brooke, and quotations in the following pages will be according to his arrangement.

Like Valentinus, Heracleon distinguishes three classes of men, the Pneumatici, the Psychici, and the Hyllici. "The Pneumatici correspond to God the Father, and are identical

77. A.E. Brooke: Fragments of Heracleon. P. 34.

with the Logos, who gave them their first configuration, imposing and revealing his own physiognomy, brilliance and essence on as many as have received his seed." <sup>78</sup> The Psychici are children of the Demiurge, or the Creator. They are many in number, and are represented by the Jews, who wrongly supposed that they knew and worshipped the true God. They are sick, and in trespasses and sins. <sup>79</sup> They have the capacity for being saved: they seem to have a certain freedom of choice, standing between those saved by nature (the Pneumatici) and those hopelessly lost (the Hylici). <sup>80</sup> The Hylici, or Choici, are by nature "of the earth, earthy:" they are the sons of the devil. <sup>81</sup> The Psychici may degenerate into Choici, sons of the devil, if they allow themselves to do his works. <sup>82</sup> It seems inevitable that the Choici should be doomed to destruction, since souls who dwell in ignorance and unbelief cannot be redeemed to immortal life. <sup>83</sup>

Redemption, therefore, is for the Pneumatici and for those Psychici who are capable of salvation. It is conveyed by the Saviour who is also the Logos, and who is present to every man as an invisible deity. <sup>84</sup> The Logos was the cause of the Creation of the world by the Demiurge. The Demiurge is the

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78. Heracleon: Fragment 2.  
 79. Heracleon: Fragment 40. 1. 11 ff.  
 80. Heracleon: Fragment 40. 1. 15 ff.  
 81. Heracleon: Fragment 46. 1. 10.  
 82. Heracleon: Fragment 46. 1. 12.  
 83. Heracleon: Fragment 41.  
 84. Heracleon: Fragment 7.

workman who with his own hands constructed the world according to the pattern which was given him by the Logos.<sup>85</sup> The Logos, the Saviour, came into this world and was made manifest in the Jesus of history: at one point, Heracleon<sup>86</sup> expressly identifies the Logos and Christ. He has come to accomplish one definite purpose, i.e., the redemption of the elect. He travels even to Capernaum, which is the lower part of the Hyllic world, in his search for souls to be redeemed.<sup>87</sup> Thence he ascends to Jerusalem, which is a type of the region in which the Psychici dwell.<sup>88</sup> Here he cleanses the Holy of Holies, which is the home of the Pneumatici, as well as the Levites' Court, which belongs to the Psychici.<sup>89</sup>

The redemption of the Spiritual Church, the Pneumatici, is regarded by Heracleon as being allegorically set forth in the story of the woman at the well of Samaria.<sup>90</sup> The woman comes to the well to draw water; but the water in the well has a "cosmic symbolism" because the animals of Jacob drank of it. This water therefore confers only a partial Gnosis, a Gnosis of the Cosmic existence which man shares with the inferior animals. The water which the

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85. Heracleon: Frag. 1. 11. 23-25.  
 86. Heracleon: Frag. 22. 1. 19.  
 87. Heracleon: Frag. 11. Cf. John. 2:12.  
 88. Heracleon: Frag. 13. 11. 1-3.  
 89. Heracleon: Frag. 13. 11. 5-18.  
 90. Heracleon: Frag. 17.

Saviour gives, however, is "part of his Spirit and his power." The saying "He shall never thirst" is thus interpreted: "For his life is eternal and not corruptible (as was the first which was from the well) but permanent. For the grace and the gift of our Saviour is to be received, and it is not destroyed or corrupted in him who receives it." The Samaritan woman receives the water gladly: "He praises the Samaritan woman, who reveals the faith which is not distinguishable from her own nature, and which is not merely decided by the words which he spoke to her." The woman is therefore a Pneumatic, who is destined to salvation by election: and although she has fallen into the psychic world of matter, the "divine element" within her responds to the call of the Saviour. She recognizes the barrenness and uselessness of her former existence, and comes to hate her surroundings, and to seek after newness of life.<sup>91</sup> This story is a parable of the Pneumatic soul which has fallen into the world of the Psychici. The function of the Saviour consists in reminding her of her connection with the Pleroma, which is in such contrast to the wretched conditions in which she now exists. The soul then remembers her origin and destiny, and her redemption is accomplished by a sort of "interior illumination."<sup>92</sup>

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91. Heracleon: Frag. 17. l. 38 ff.

92. De Faye: Op. cit., P. 94.

Thereupon the woman herself becomes an agent in redeeming others: she goes to tell her husband and he becomes the co-operator and participant in her redemption.<sup>93</sup> So every Pneumatic, after having been saved himself, must return into the world to evangelize the psychici. This is clearly shown by Fragment 27: "Heracleon supposes the water pot which receives life to be her own disposition, and a symbol of the power from the Saviour. Having received from the Saviour the same water pot with which she came to receive the living water, she turned back to the world, preaching to the elect the 'parousia' of Christ. For because of the spirit, and by the spirit, her soul is brought to the Saviour."<sup>94</sup> The woman's former associates come out of the city, i.e., out of their former behaviour, which was cosmic: they renounce their former life to come to the Saviour. Thus, although all souls are "brought to the Saviour of and by the Spirit" yet the redeemed Pneumatic does have a limited function in bringing his fellows out of the world of matter.

The redemption of the Psychici is allegorically described in Heracleon's interpretation of the healing of the son of the ruler. (John 4:46-54) The ruler here corresponds to the Demiurge, because, like him, he exercises authority.<sup>95</sup> The Demiurge is an inferior power, "like a kind of petty king who rules a small kingdom under a king who is over all."<sup>96</sup>

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93. Heracleon: Frag. 18. l. 3. ff.

94. John 4:29-30.

95. Heracleon: Frag. 40.

96. Heracleon: Frag. 40-46.

The ruler's sick son represents the subjects of the Demiurge. This class of men owe their existence exclusively to him, and receive nothing of the Divine Spark of Life at the Creation. The Son of the Demiurge lives in Capernaum, at the shore of the sea: this signifies the dwelling of the Psychici, who occupy a place intermediate between the higher and lower regions. The proximity to the sea represents the connection of the Psychici with the world of matter.<sup>97</sup> The illness of the ruler's son represents the weakness, ignorance and sin of the Psychici, the creatures of the Demiurge.

The Saviour then appears to rescue the sick and suffering soul. The Gospel statement that he came from Judea and from Galilee is a symbol of the descent of Christ from the higher regions. His coming to Capernaum represents his descent into the lowest parts of the Cosmos to search for souls there. This region was so contrary to his nature that he could do nothing there: nevertheless he proceeded<sup>98</sup> thither.

The ruler tells the Saviour that his son is at the point of death. This is again a figurative account of the condition of the Psychici. The sons of the Demiurge have not immortal souls by nature: although their souls have a tendency towards salvation,<sup>99</sup> they cannot attain to it.

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97. Heracleon: Frag. 40. l. 8.  
 98. Heracleon: Frag. 11. 1-5. 15-17.  
 99. Heracleon: Frag. 40. l. 16 ff.

Jesus replies to the ruler: "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe." (John 4:48). (It is characteristic of the Demiurge and his Sons to obey Perception rather than Reason.)<sup>100</sup> The Ruler then cries out "Come down, before my son dies." (John 4:49.) The Psychic, says Heracleon, is assuredly in danger of death, because death is the end of the law, which produces death because of sin. In this extremity the Demiurge implores the help of the Saviour. "He, coming down to the sick one and having healed him from his disease, i.e., from his sins, and having given him life by this forgiveness, said "Thy son liveth"<sup>101</sup> (John 4:50). Thereupon the man believed (John 4:53). The man here represents the Demiurge, and "the Demiurge is assured that the Saviour is able to heal, even though he is not present."<sup>102</sup> The servants of the ruler are the angels of the Demiurge, and their announcement that the son is saved means that he is now in his right mind and no longer works things that are unseemly. "The Angels are the first who observe the doings of men in the world, whether they live more vigourously or more purely as a result of the coming of the Saviour."<sup>103</sup> The Demiurge thus seems to be desirous that his children may be saved, and he opposes no obstacle to the process. "Rather he

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100. Heracleon: Frag. 40.11. 22-23.  
 101. Heracleon: Frag. 40.11. 31-34.  
 102. Heracleon: Frag. 40.11. 35-37.  
 103. Heracleon: Frag. 40.11. 42-45.

is satisfied that his children should pass into the absolute dominion of the Logos and the Father." Heracleon's conception of the Demiurge is quite different from that of Marcion, who regarded him as an evil power opposed to the Father. "His doctrine of redemption is quite consonant with the Valentinian belief that salvation is accomplished quietly, and without effort or resistance."<sup>104</sup>

The Soteriology and Christology of Heracleon varies strangely between Docetism and a most literal conception of the Passion and work of Christ. The "Lamb of God" (John 1:29) refers to the body which Christ took upon himself. "As the lamb is imperfect in the genus of sheep, so also the body is imperfect in relation to him who inhabits it."<sup>105</sup> The Saviour is also represented as "descending from the heights of heaven, and taking upon himself flesh, like a shoe."<sup>106</sup> He comes down to heal the ruler's sick son: his food is to do the will of him that sent him (John 4:34) and "the will of the Father is that men should know Him (the Father) and be saved."<sup>107</sup> Apparently the Saviour requires no other "food, or repose, or strength" than this work which

104. Buonaiuti: Gnostic Fragments. Pp. 88-89.

105. Heracleon: Frag. 10. ll. 7-9. This passage, however, is not interpreted in an explicitly Docetic manner by Heracleon. W. Foerster (Von Valentin zu Herakleon, p.72) points out that Christ's body is not condemned here, as it is by some Gnostic writers: it is merely esteemed of slight value in connection with something else, i.e., with the Saviour's real nature.

106. Heracleon: Frag. 8. l. 30.

107. Heracleon: Frag. 31. ll. 5-9.



has been committed to him.<sup>108</sup> Yet Heracleon appears to regard the Passion in a literal manner. It was an important dividing point in the life of Christ: "after its completion he turned many more souls to faith."<sup>109</sup> The Great Feast (i.e. Easter) was "a type of the suffering of the Saviour, when not only was the Lamb slain, but it was also eaten, and afforded peace: its sacrifice signified the suffering of the Saviour in the world, and its being eaten signified the bliss of the marriage feast which was to come."<sup>110</sup>

The "Marriage" which is here mentioned seems to complete the process of redemption. Heracleon says little regarding eschatology: but it may be conjectured that the Hylici and the unredeemed Psychici are destined to destruction, and that the Pneumatici "are given as brides to the angels of the Saviour, and enter the Pleroma to partake of the eternal rest of the Marriage Feast and the highest worship of the Father in spirit and in truth."<sup>111</sup> It would seem natural, in view of Fragment 12, as above, that some sort of Heavenly Marriage would complete the system of Heracleon, and that, just as in other Valentinian systems the passions of Sophia were corrected by means of her union with the common fruit of the

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108. Heracleon: Frag. 31. 1. 9.  
 109. Heracleon: Frag. 38. Passim.  
 110. Heracleon: Frag. 12. 11. 1-6.  
 111. A.E. Brooke: Heracleon. P. 47.

Pleroma, so also here the Pneumatici would naturally receive<sup>112</sup> the final "correction" by marriage with their destined angels. Redemption, according to Heracleon's doctrine, meant two things: knowledge of the Father, and immortality. It was really a mystical apprehension of the path of inner salvation through the illumination bestowed upon the soul by Christ. The approach of Heracleon to the New Testament is evident: he may be said to have come nearer to a sympathetic understanding of the New Testament than any other Gnostic. Yet the Pauline idea of redemption is completely lacking in his teaching. He refers to a pardon for sins which Christ can afford to the Psychici: but this forgiveness is nowhere derived from the death of Jesus upon the Cross. Christ the redeemer is<sup>113</sup> the enlightener of mankind.

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112. A.E. Brooke: Heracleon, P. 67.

113. De Faye: Op. cit., P. 100.

Chapter VII. The Gnostic Hymns of Redemption.

P a g e s .

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Chapter 7.

The hymns of the Gnostics supply an important source of knowledge of their doctrine of redemption, but they do not set forth this conception in any "technical" or detailed form of exposition. These hymns are the outcome of an inner religious experience which only the initiated soul could fully comprehend. Herein the Gnostic sings his redemption, and sets forth his own direct and immediate experience of the way of salvation. Strange and varied figures of speech abound within these hymns, and for the uninitiated they are sometimes extremely perplexing. They are "mystery hymns in mysterious language", in which dragons are overcome, waters speak, footsteps in water form a magic bridge, and the letter or tablet from the hand of God floats between heaven and earth.<sup>1</sup> In spite of these connections with mystery observances, however, the Gnostic hymns contain a theory of redemption which has evidently come in contact with Christianity, and many of these primitive mythological concepts have here been transformed by the influence of Christianity.

The collection of hymns known as the Odes of Solomon contains many such references to a redemption for truly initiated souls. The discovery of the Syriac version of these Odes by Dr. Rendel Harris in 1906 was an event of great importance in the development of scholarship dealing with the

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1. W. Kohler: Die Gnosis. P. 35.

first two Christian centuries. Various hypotheses were immediately advanced as to the nature and purpose of these Odes. Rendel Harris himself believes that they are the composition of a devout Jewish Christian who had a high and mystical conception of Christ, believing Him to be the Only Begotten Son who was miraculously born.<sup>2</sup> Harnack regards them as composing a Jewish Psalter which belonged to the earliest days of the Christian era. They were written by a Jewish mystic, whose original work was then transformed by a Christian "interpolator" who introduced Christ into the Odes as the Son of God and produced a complicated Christology.<sup>3</sup> Rendel Harris notes, however, that Harnack assumes a Jewish author who is free from all traces of Judaism (!) and that "the necessary deduction is that the assumed non-ritualistic, undogmatic mystical Jew suffered interpolation at the hands of an equally non-ritualistic, undogmatic and mystical Christian."<sup>4</sup> Both figures are unlikely. J.H. Bernard interprets the Odes as a series of baptismal hymns which were to be sung by the catechumen during the Lenten period. He finds in them

2. Rendel Harris (and Mingana): The Odes and Psalms of Solomon. Vol. 2. P. 81. Cf. Ode 28:16. "I was not their brother, nor my birth like theirs."
3. Harnack: Die Oden Salomos, Ein Jüdisch-Christliches Psalm-buch. (Texte und Untersuchungen. 35. 1910.) Pp. 1-4. P. 106.
4. Rendel Harris: Op. cit., P. 198.

constant allusions to baptismal doctrine and ritual: e.g., the illumination of the soul by the Divine light, the crowning of the neophytes with garlands, and the administration of milk and honey to the newly-baptized. He concludes that "the Odist frequently alludes to baptism and its ceremonial, and to the beliefs which were associated with it by the early Eastern Church, and that the Odes are distinctively Christian."<sup>5</sup> Bernard himself, however, admits a difficulty in his own theory, since it assumes that the baptismal ritual of the Eastern Church was fully developed at the time when the Odes were composed (about 170-180 A.D.).<sup>6</sup> Rendel Harris also points out this fact,<sup>7</sup> and finds that many of Bernard's parallels are not to be accepted. He identifies the language of the Odes with that of the Wisdom Literature rather than with that of the baptismal formulae of the Early Church. The theories of these various scholars thus seem to contradict each other, and to lead to no satisfactory solution of the problem.

The theory that the Odes are Gnostic hymns was at one time maintained by several scholars, such as Gunkel and Preuschen, and although its assumptions have been criticized by Rendel Harris and others, it has once again been carefully

5. J.H. Bernard: The Odes of Solomon. Pp. 5-6.
6. Bernard: Op. cit., P. 44.
7. Rendel Harris: Op. cit., P. 194.

considered and adopted by several recent writers. R.A. Abramowski regards the Odes as Gnostic-Christian compositions, which are a produce of "middle-Oriental culture". He does not connect them with any individual Gnostic sect, but re-<sup>8</sup>gards them as definitely Gnostic in their style and outlook. H. Schlier believes that the baptismal rites of the Odes are largely derived from Gnostic baptismal customs, and that many of them have a connection with very primitive Mandaean practices.<sup>9</sup> Pallis assumes that the Odes of Solomon are "a collection of Gnostic hymns which have been influenced by Christianity,"<sup>10</sup> and he finds numerous parallels between these Odes and the Mandaean writings: e.g., the clothing of the soul in light, the mention of the "waters of life"; the anthropological dualism of both systems, and, especially, the fact that in Ode 5:4-6 the Saviour is said to have been concealed from his persecutors in the abyss, which corresponds to a similar saying concerning the journey of Hibil through the underworld.<sup>11</sup> Pallis does not derive the Odes of Solomon from Mandaean sources, but he definitely asserts that the author of the Odes was acquainted with the Mandaean version of this Proto-Gnostic myth of the descending redeemer, and

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8. R. Abramowski: Article, 'Der Christus der Salomonden', (Zeitschrift für die Neuentestamentliche Wissenschaft, 1936. 35 Band. Heft. 1-2. P. 44 ff.)  
 9. H. Schlier: Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den Ignatius Briefen. P. 147. P. 89. (Quoted by Abramowski, loc. cit.)  
 10. Pallis: Op. cit., P. 153.  
 11. Right Genza: 138:2-3. 10-11: 139: 20-21.

he claims that "the Odes, as well as the Mandaean writings,<sup>12</sup> belonged to the Gnostic movement."

The findings of these recent scholars serve to complete and confirm the investigations of Gunkel and Preuschen, who affirm that the Odes constituted a Gnostic hymn book. Gunkel makes a careful study of various Odes with this hypothesis<sup>13</sup> in mind. He finds constant references to aspects of the Gnostic conception of redemption, e.g., the ascent of the soul, the descent of the redeemer, the heavenly marriage, etc.

R.A. Abramowski claims definitely that the central purpose of the Odes is to praise God for the redemption brought to mankind,<sup>14</sup> and to describe the nature of this redemption. He notes, however, that the central point of this theory of redemption is not the Crucifixion, but rather the descent of Christ into the lower world. "Knowledge and thanksgiving are the aims of redemption, which brings us out of ignorance and bondage." The word sin hardly occurs in the Odes, and redemption is not an ethical conception, as it is in Christianity. The Odes therefore appear to be closely connected with some form of Gnosticism. Buonaiuti derives them directly from Valentinus. He describes the Valentinian gnosis as "an illusion entertained by certain Christians whose eyes were fixed not so much on the vision of an early Parousia as on the actual attainment of individual<sup>15</sup> salvation;" and he sees definite traces of this

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12. Pallis: Op. cit., P. 154.

13. Gunkel, in Preuschen's Zeitschrift für die N.T. Wissenschaft. Vol. XI. 1910. Pp. 291-328.

14. Abramowski: Op. cit., P. 45.

15. Buonaiuti: Op. cit., P. 74.



feeling in the Odes, which themselves "contain expressions of a singularly elevated mysticism, heralding the near redemption of individual pneumatics."<sup>16</sup> He notes the importance which the Odes attach to Gnosis in the redemption of the elect, (Odes 10, 15, 20), and observes the recurrence of the Gnostic idea of a class who were predestined to salvation and to deification (Odes 7, 8, 15), as well as certain traces of the Valentinian cosmogony (Ode 11). On the whole, Buonaiuti's parallels are quite convincing, and the Odes of Solomon appear to be more closely connected with the Valentinian system than they are with many other Gnostic schools. In the Odes, however, there is no trace of Gnostic dualism and the complicated aeon-system of the Valentinians is lacking. They have apparently been influenced to a considerable extent by Christianity: e.g., in Ode 16, line 11, God Himself is said to have gained the world; and in Ode 22, line 11, He brings the world to corruption "that everything might be dissolved and renewed."

The conception of redemption which is fundamental in the Odes is naturally revealed more fully in certain individual hymns than in others. The most important of these Odes of redemption must now be considered, these being selected from the extensive collection of Rendel Harris.

Ode 22 is a description of the descent of the Redeemer

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16. Buonaiuti, loc. cit.

into the lower world, and of his triumphal victory over the lower powers. In Sheol he conquers a dragon with seven heads and destroys his seed through the help of his Father. Thus a way is prepared for those who follow the redeemer and who trust in him.<sup>17</sup> Ode 42 also describes the descent of the redeemer to liberate the souls in the underworld. The redeemer speaks thus: "Sheol saw me and was in distress: Death cast me up and many along with me. , , . . . . . And those who had died ran towards me; and they cried and said, Son of God, pity us; and do with us according to thy kindness, and bring us out from the bonds of darkness, and open to us the door by which we shall come out to thee: for we perceive that death does not touch thee. Let us also be saved with thee; for thou art our Saviour."<sup>18</sup> By this descent of the Redeemer a way is opened for the fallen souls by which they can ascend to God: "thy right hand levelled the way for those who believe in thee."<sup>19</sup> The redeemer leads over the wild waters which confront the soul, and there "a way has been appointed for those who cross after him."<sup>20</sup> Ode 17 also describes the redemption of the souls who are imprisoned in the underworld, which is accomplished by Christ, who imparts to them his knowledge. He is sent down by the Father for the salvation of souls: "He gave me the way

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17. Odes of Solomon 22. Vs. 5-7.

18. Ode 42. Vs. 11, 15-18.

19. Ode 22. Vs. 7.

20. Ode 39. Vs. 13.

of his steps, and I opened the doors that were closed: And I broke in pieces the bars of iron: . . . . . And I went towards all the bondsmen to loose them; that I might not leave any man bound and binding: And I imparted my knowledge without grudging; and their request to me with my love. And I sowed my fruits in their hearts, and transformed them through myself: And they received my blessing and lived: And they were gathered to me, and were saved." Only those who are defective in wisdom are cast away from the presence of the Lord; understanding or Gnosis of the revelation of the Redeemer is the pre-requisite of salvation. "The Lord destroyed the imaginations of all them that had not the truth with them; for they were defective in wisdom. . . . And they were rejected, because the truth was not with them. For the Lord disclosed His way, and spread abroad His grace, and those who understand it know his holiness."<sup>21</sup>

The ascent of the soul, (which has been already noted as a fundamental Gnostic conception: Cf. Chapter 2, and passim) is described at length in Ode 38. The soul's redeemer is Truth, who protects her from all evil influences, and the soul ascends "in the Light of Truth as in a chariot". "The Truth led and brought me, and carried me across hollows and gulfs, and from the cliffs and reefs it preserved me; and it became to me a Haven of Salvation, and set me on the arms of immortal

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21. Ode 24. Vs. 10-14.

life."<sup>22</sup> Truth also acts as an interpreter to the soul, and reveals to her the mysteries of the sacred way.

"But Truth was proceeding in the right way, and whatever I did not know he made clear to me."<sup>23</sup> Truth reveals to the soul the Arch-fiend, an Aeon-pair, the Deceiver and the Error: "as these imitate the Beloved and his Bride, and they lead astray and corrupt the world."<sup>24</sup> Thus the soul is warned and does not succumb to the wiles of this evil pair: "And I was made wise so as not to all into the hands of the Deceiver; and I congratulated myself that the Truth had gone with me; and I was established, and lived, and was redeemed."<sup>25</sup> Redemption is therefore attained through the Gnosis which is imparted by the redeemer. Ode 17 contains a triumphant hymn of the soul who has been redeemed and who has ascended to God: "I was crowned by God, and my crown is living: And I was justified by my Lord, and my salvation is incorruptible. I was loosed from vanities, and I am not condemned. The choking bonds were cut off by His hand. I received the face and the fashion of a new person; and I walked in him and was redeemed. And the thought of truth led me; and I walked after it and did not wander."<sup>26</sup>

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22. Ode 38. Vs. 1-3.  
 23. Ode 38. Vs. 7.  
 24. Ode 38. Vs. 11.  
 25. Ode 38. Vs. 15-16.  
 26. Ode 17. Vs. 1-5.

The Song of the Pearl, or the Hymn of the Robe of Glory, contains one of the most striking allegorical accounts of redemption which exists in the whole of Gnostic literature. As A.A. Bevan remarks; "It will always deserve careful study on account of the light which it throws upon one of the most remarkable phases in the religious history of mankind. Gnosticism is here displayed to us, not as it appeared to its enemies, not as a tissue of fantastic speculations, but as it was in reality, at least to some of its adherents, a new religion."<sup>27</sup>

The Hymn occurs in the Syriac version of the Acts of Thomas, but it is irrelevant to its context, and its author-<sup>28</sup>ship must be traced to another source. It is generally agreed that the author of the Hymn was the Gnostic Bardesanes who had lived from 155 A.D. to 234 A.D. Little is known of him except for the polemical account of Ephraim Syrus. According to Ephraim he taught that there was no resurrection of the body, since the body was an evil thing composed of an evil essence. The soul was separate from the body, and was<sup>29</sup> produced from seven principles.<sup>30</sup> Bevan notes two other doctrines of Bardesanes which are described by Ephraim: he

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27. A.A. Bevan: Cambridge Texts and Studies. V. 3. 1897. Introd. P. 45.  
 28. M.R. James: The Apocryphal New Testament. P. 364.  
 29. S. Ephraim Syri: Omnia Opera. Vol. II. P. 553 ff. Corpora nostra ab eo, quod malum principium appellant, compacta fuisse docuerunt, negant autem ea post casum aliquando resurrectura, animas vero a septem principiis existere et produci.  
 30. Bevan: Op. cit., P. 5.

taught that a divine Mother gave birth to "the Son of the Living" in conjunction with "the Father of Life":<sup>31</sup> and he believed in a series of lesser "gods", subordinate to the Supreme Being.<sup>32</sup> All these teachings of Bardesanes are traced by Bevan within the Hymn of the Soul. The King's Son leaves his unclean garment in the country to which he is sent: and the only true clothing of the soul is the heavenly form which it will reassume after death. The King of Kings, the Queen of the East, and the Brother, correspond to the Father of Life, the Mother, and the Son of the Living. The lesser gods are the "kings" who obey the command of their superior monarch. Bevan concludes that the hymn is at least derived from Bardesanian circles, if it is not actually the product of Bardesanes himself.

The Hymn itself, as it is presented in the authoritative translation of A.A. Bevan, tells of a prince who as a small child is sent by his parents from his home in an eastern kingdom into the far west in search of a pearl of great price. His parents take from him his bright robe and purple toga before he goes forth, and they enjoin him as follows: "If thou goest down into Egypt and bringest the one pearl which is in the midst of the sea, hard by the loud-breathing serpent, (then) shalt thou put on thy bright robe and thy toga, which is laid over it; and with thy brother, our next in rank, shalt

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31. Ephraim: Vol. II. P. 557. ff.

32. Ibid., Pp. 443, 554, 558.

be heir in our kingdom." (Vs. 12-15). The prince passes through the various heavenly spheres and finally comes to Egypt. He finds the pearl in possession of the Serpent and intends to acquire it, but the Egyptians see that he is not one of them, and they deal with him treacherously. They give him food to eat, and he forgets his royal birth and his quest of the pearl, and falls into a deep sleep. (Vs. 32-35) Then he receives a letter from his parents, reproaching him for his submission to slavery, and calling him to remember his royal origin, and his important mission. Thereupon the son comes to himself, and remembers that he is the son of kings: and his free soul longs for its natural state. (Vs. 56) He charms the serpent, lulling him into slumber by repeating over him the names of the Father, and of the next in rank, and of his mother, Queen of the East. (Vs. 59-60) Thus he wins the pearl from the serpent, and after stripping off the unclean Egyptian garments, which he leaves in their country, he begins his return to his father's house. (Vs. 62-63) After long wandering he reaches the borders of his native land, and receives again his gorgeous robes, which now become to him a mirror of his whole self. (Vs. 76) He clothes himself in this garment and ascends "the gate of salvation and homage" (Vs. 98): there he does homage to the majesty of his father, and enters the gate to glorify the King of Kings and to present to him the pearl. (Vs. 99-105).

This allegorical narrative has been interpreted in two different ways. It is regarded by some scholars as the symbolical account of the descent of the human soul into a mortal body, and of her forgetfulness of her heavenly origin, and of her subsequent remembrance and return. This is the view of Nöldeke, which Bevan quotes with approval.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, Preuschen and Reitzenstein contend that the King's Son represents, not the human soul, but rather Christ the Redeemer, who descends through the Aeons, changes his appearance, frees the light spark which has sunk into matter, and ascends again to heaven. Bousset<sup>34</sup> claims that this interpretation is more satisfactory, since it explains such details as the pearl itself more convincingly. The pearl which the Son who is sent from the Light-World must acquire is really the mysterious source of power of the forces of darkness, and for this reason it is guarded jealously by the dragon. Bousset notes parallels between this hymn and the description of the redeemer Hibil Ziwa in the Genza of the Mandaeans: e.g., two comrades accompany the

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33. Bevan: Op. cit., P. 2.

See Nöldeke: Zeitschrift der deutschmorgenland - Gesellschaft XXV. P. 677. Wir haben hier das alte gnostische Lied von der Seele, die von himmlischen Ursprung, auf die Erde gesandt wird und hier ihren Ursprung und ihre Aufgabe vergisst, bis sie durch höhere Offenbarung erweckt wird, ihren Auftrag vollzieht, und nun nach oben zurückkehrt, wo sie das himmlische Kleid, ihr ideales Ebenbild, wieder findet, und in die Nähe der höchsten Himmelsmächte gelangt.

34. Bousset: Hauptprobleme, P. 255.



redeemer in both cases on his journey to the lower world (Hymn, Vs. 16): and just as the King's Son assumed the garments of the Egyptians in order to become inconspicuous among them (Vs. 29) so also Hibil Ziwa assumed the appearance of the powers of darkness in order to enter unknown into their world.<sup>35</sup> Further parallels are noted by Reitzenstein: e.g., the King's Son here receives equipment similar to that which is bestowed on Manda d'Hayye at the time of his descent into the lower regions: and the formula whereby he is awakened from slumber corresponds to the old Iranian formula of the Mandaean and Manichae<sup>36</sup>an texts.

It is not necessary, however to choose between these two interpretations, since both are probably correct. The Hymn of the Soul seems to have been applied both to the Redeemer and to the redeemed soul: the latter becomes like the former, and is able to ascend to the home of light because the Redeemer has already gone before. This double interpretation is consistent with "the close parallel between the Soter and the soul," which is a characteristic of the Gnostic theory of redemption in most of the sects.<sup>37</sup>

The Gnostic poem which is generally known as the Hymn to Sophia is also found in the Acts of Thomas. It has also been assigned by some scholars to Bardesanes, but this is merely a

35. Bousset: Hauptprobleme, P. 253.

36. Reitzenstein: Das Iranische Erlösungs-Mysterium. P. 70.

37. Edwyn Bevan: Hellenism and Christianity. P. 105.

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conjecture. The hymn tells of the marriage of the daughter of the King of Light, "in whom consisteth and dwelleth the proud brightness of kings." Thirty-two singers praise her, and seven groomsmen and bridesmaids attend her. "Twelve in number are they that serve before her and are subject unto her, which have their aim and look toward the bridegroom, that at the sight of him they may be enlightened, and forever shall they be with her in that eternal joy, and shall be at that marriage whereto the princes are gathered together."

G.R.S. Mead sees various Gnostic figures within this Hymn: e.g., the seven bridesmaids or groomsmen are seven pairs or syzygies of powers, which conduct the purified soul aloft, while the twelve are her servants, who are now raised aloft above the evil world. The thirty-two singers represent the whole Pleroma, who are constrained to sing praises at this happy consummation. These traces of Gnostic influence show, according to Mead, that "the hymn looks back to the sacred marriage of the Sophia with her bridegroom, like Christ." The hymn is evidently based on the Gnostic theory that earthly redemption is consummated in the heavenly marriage of the soul.

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38. Quoted from the translation of M.R. James: The Apocryphal New Testament, Pp. 367-8.

39. G.R.S. Mead: Op. cit., P. 419.

Chapter VIII. Redemption through Mysteries - the  
Marcosites, the Pistis Sophia, and  
the Books of Jeu.

P a g e s

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Chapter 8.

The development of the Gnostic theory of redemption under the influence of Christianity reached its culmination in the systems of Valentinus and his immediate successors. It is here that both the speculative and the ritualistic aspects of Gnosticism approach most nearly to Christianity. The universe in its various divisions is restored and completed through the redeeming work of Christ, and individuals who participate symbolically in this process attain to a Gnosis of this restoration, thus becoming redeemed themselves. In the later Valentinian writings, however, the mythological and ritualistic elements of redemption are again given an exaggerated emphasis, and there is a definite return to more primitive ideas. The Marcosites, with their intricate magical machinery of symbolism and numbers, developed a system of anointings with oil and invented a series of magical formulae, which were destined to control the powers of the invisible world and to assist the soul in her ascent to the heavenly places. The later Gnostic work Pistis Sophia has many affinities with the mystery religions of the time: Barbelo the Light Mother occupies a prominent position, and there are evidences of a recurrence of some of the most primitive of the Ophite mysteries. As a result of this tendency to stress the mysteries as means of salvation the ethical implications of redemption become more and more unworthy. "There is an

appeal to the lowest motives of fear and the selfish desire to obtain higher privileges than ordinary men. . . . .  
 . . . . . Rejection of the mysteries is the unpardonable sin." <sup>1</sup> The Gnostic Soteriology also undergoes a progressive degeneration, until in the Texts of the Saviour, or Books of Jeu, Jesus the redeemer becomes transformed into a mere mystagogue and a revealer of secret formulae.

The increasing importance of mystical observances is very evident in the Valentinian School of the Marcosites which is described at great length by Irenaeus. <sup>2</sup> Marcus, the founder of the school, seems to have taught about the middle of the second century: but nothing is known of him or his school outside of the information in Irenaeus' account, which was copied by Hippolytus and Epiphanius.

The need of the world for redemption was intensified, according to Marcus, by the depths of ignorance in which it was enveloped. The Father willed to penetrate this darkness, and to destroy death: but this could come about only through the intervention of his knowledge. In order to bring this redeeming Gnosis to pass, the Anthropos was chosen and generated from the powers above, (i.e., from the Tetrad, Anthropos, Ecclesia, Logos and Zoe.) Marcus'

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1. F. Legge: Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity. Vol. 2. P. 198.
  2. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 13-21.

Christology is like that of the other Valentinians: Jesus "passes through" Mary at birth, and the higher Christ descends upon him at baptism in the form of a dove.<sup>3</sup>

Two kinds of redemption, two theories of salvation, were apparently taught by separate sections of the Marcosite school. One group stressed the importance of perfect knowledge or Gnosis. "They hold that the knowledge of the unspeakable Goodness is itself perfect redemption. For since both defect and passion flowed from ignorance, the whole substance of what was thus formed is destroyed by knowledge; and therefore knowledge is the redemption of the inner man."<sup>4</sup> This "redemption unto perfection" is brought by the Christ who descends upon the visible Jesus at baptism.<sup>5</sup> The larger number of the Marcosites, however, held that ritual performances were necessary for the soul who strove to enter the Pleroma and they emphasized the baptism which was instituted by the visible Jesus for the remission of sins.

This majority group of the Marcosites, therefore, believed in an animal redemption as opposed to a spiritual redemption,<sup>6</sup> and they set forth many and varied mysteries which possessed a redeeming significance. "Some perform a sort of mystic rite (pronouncing certain expressions) with those who are being

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3. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 15. 2-3.  
 4. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 21.4.  
 5. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 21.2.  
 6. Iren. Adv. Haer. I. 21.2

initiated; and they affirm that it is a spiritual marriage which is celebrated by them, after the likeness of the conjunctions above," i.e., this union is symbolic of unions of couples within the Pleroma, and is therefore a "spiritual marriage." Others baptize the initiate and utter the following words over him: "Into the name of the unknown Father of the Universe: into truth, the mother of all things: into Him who descended on Jesus: into union, and redemption, and communion with the powers." <sup>7</sup> Another mysterious formula gives an invocation which is to be addressed to the highest power. "I invoke that which is above every power of the Father which is called Light, and good Spirit, and Life, because thou hast reigned in the body". The formula of restitution, i.e., of final restoration, must be repeated as follows: "I do not divide the Spirit of Christ, neither the heart nor the supercelestial power, which is merciful: may I enjoy thy name, O Saviour of truth". This is said by the initiators, and the initiate then replies: "I am confirmed and redeemed: I redeem my soul from this age (world) and from all things connected with it in the name of Iao, who redeemed his own soul into

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7. Bousset (Hauptprobleme. P. 292) here compares the statement that "at the baptism of Jesus the name came down in the form of a dove," (Exc. Ex Theod. 22) and notes the significance of a similarly mysterious redeemer-figure in several Gnostic sects, the name of this redeemer being known only to the initiated. He also quotes a similar baptismal formula from the Mandaean writings: "The name of life and the name of Manda d'Hayye is pronounced over thee."

redemption in Christ who liveth."<sup>8</sup> Others conduct a ceremony<sup>9</sup> of anointing the initiates with oil, water, and balsam. Those who thus believe in anointing "continue to redeem persons even to the moment of death, by placing on their heads oil and water. . . . . using at the same time the above named invocations, that the persons referred to may become incapable of being seized or seen by the principalities and powers, and that their inner man may ascend on high in an invisible manner."<sup>10</sup> After reaching the principalities and powers on high, the redeemed one has certain formulas which must be repeated there. He "affirms his sonship with the Father who had a pre-existence," and he calls upon the incorruptible Sophia, Mother of all being, to aid him. The "companions of the Demiurge" are then overcome: and he finally "goes into his own place, having thrown off his own chain, i.e., his animal nature."<sup>11</sup>

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8. Bousset (Op. cit., P. 292) notes that this invocation of Jao is also found in Valentinianism, and in the Pistis Sophia: Horos uses this name to deter Achamoth as she pursues Christ out of the Pleroma.

9. Iren. I. 21.4.

10. Iren. A. 21.5.

11. Iren. I. 21.5.



The post-Valentinian supremacy of ritual and magic over philosophical speculation within the Gnostic schools is particularly evident in the late Gnostic work known as the Pistis Sophia. The date of its composition is uncertain: the manuscript itself, which is probably a translation from Greek into Sahidic, is generally assigned to the end of the fourth or the opening of the fifth century. Since the Epistles of the New Testament are quoted, the ultimate origin of the work cannot be regarded as having been earlier than the middle of the second century. Harnack maintains that it is of Egyptian origin, and that it was written in the second half of the third century: he claims that its Gnosticism is Ophite in character, and that it originated in the Syrian rather than in the Egyptian school.<sup>12</sup> These views of Harnack are accepted and quoted by Rendel Harris.<sup>13</sup> Moffatt also stresses the affinities with Ophitism, and observes the recurrence of the mystic figure Barbelo. He also finds traces of Ophitism in the insistence on the efficacy of certain mysteries for salvation and in the description of the Highest Power as a Being of Light.<sup>14</sup> Further parallels to Ophitism are noted by F. Legge in the figure of the First Man, the names Sabaoth, Iao, and Ialdabaoth, and the work of the

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12. Harnack: *Texte und Untersuchungen*. Vol. VIII. 2: "Ueber das Gnostisches Buch Pistis Sophia".

13. Rendel Harris: *Odes and Psalms of Solomon*. P. 17.

14. Moffatt: *Art. Pistis Sophia*, in *Hastings' E.R.E.*, Vol. 10. P. 46.

Virgin of Light as an agent in the salvation of Mankind, which corresponds to the work of "Sophia - without" in the Ophite system.<sup>15</sup> Legge, however, sees in the Pistis Sophia more connections with the theology of Valentinus than with Ophitism. Jesus is completely identified with the First Mystery: (Cf. the Valentinian account of Jesus as "the joint fruit of the Pleroma, a summary of the perfections of the Godhead," in Hippolytus: *Philosophumena*, VI.). Each of the lower worlds has its own "saviour": and the cause of the descent of light into matter in the first instance is no accident, as with the Ophites, but "a part of the large scheme for the evolution or the emanation of the universe which was devised and watched over in its smallest details by the First Mystery".<sup>16</sup> Legge even ascribes the authorship of the Pistis Sophia to Valentinus himself: he believes that the Greek original from which the Coptic version was translated must have been written by another "who, though an Egyptian and acquainted with the native Egyptian religion, would naturally have written in Greek: and on the whole there is no one who fulfils these requirements so well as Valentinus himself."<sup>17</sup> Legge is apparently alone in his support of such an early date for the composition of the Pistis Sophia, and his conclusion seems insufficiently supported. It is to be noted that the

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15. F. Legge: *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, P. 158.  
 16. F. Legge: *Op. cit.*, P. 159, ff.  
 17. F. Legge: *Op. cit.*, P. 177.

Sophia of the Pistis Sophia is never regarded as the mother or sister of Christ, but rather as a sinful being whose redemption is brought about by Christ. She is the primary object of the Saviour's redeeming work, but she does not correspond to the Sophia Achamoth of the Valentinians, who participates in the origin and creation of matter, and who herself becomes a medium of redemption.

The Pistis Sophia, therefore, seems to show many affinities with the Ophite sects, and also with Valentinian theology. It is probable that the influences of the former were transmitted through the medium of the latter. There is admittedly a connection between Valentinian and Ophite thought, and the primitive Ophite sect described by Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* I. 30) contains in its teaching many Valentinian conceptions "in embryo". The tendency toward mystery and cultus comes to its full fruition in this later work, which is a product of both of these Gnostic systems. It is a one-sided development of the Ophite and Valentinian sacramental observances, which now come to be invested with increasing importance.

The narrative of the Pistis Sophia is introduced by an account of the previous work of Jesus the Redeemer. After his resurrection he had spent eleven years in teaching his disciples. He had, however, only instructed them "as far as the places of the First Mystery", and the disciples were ignorant of the fact that this Mystery was the lowest of a series of still higher mysteries.

In the twelfth year, therefore, Jesus is carried away into heaven by a "power of light", and after his return he tells the disciples that the power was "a vesture of light", i.e., his heavenly nature, the "robe of glory" which he had laid aside and left with the First Mystery before his descent into this world.<sup>18</sup> He then tells them how he had instilled powers within them for their "election", as well as in Mary and in John the Baptist: these were transmitted to them at birth. After describing his own incarnation, he continues by expounding to them five mysterious words which he had found written in his "vesture of light": these signify "the mystery which is outside of the world, this because of which the universe became". It is "because of this mystery that every mystery became, and with all their places."<sup>19</sup> Then he tells them of hymns which were sung by the powers on the day of his investiture, which set forth the mysteries of the higher world, and which explain the whole order of the universe. After having put on the Robe of Glory, the Saviour begins his journey to heaven. He passes through the First Sphere and the Second Sphere, and overcomes the hostile powers, so that they worship before him. Then he arrives at the space

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18. Pistis Sophia (Coptic): P. 10 b. (Translation by G. Horner, P. 5) Cf. F. Legge: Op. cit., P. 136 fn., who quotes Ascensio Iesaiiae, Ch. 4, 16-17. "But the saints will come with the Lord with their garments which are now stored up on high in the seventh heaven; with the Lord will they come, whose spirits are clothed. . . . And afterwards they will turn themselves upwards in their garments, and their body will be left in this world."
19. Pistis Sophia: P. 16 b. (Horner, P. 8.)

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of the twelve Aeons, who are ruled by a power called Adamas. Before the coming of the Master these Aeons had all fought against the light; but now he takes from them a third of their power, that they may no longer prevail in their evil doings: and he changes the "fate-sphere" over which they were lords, removing the "Destiny with the Sphere, which is lord unto them."<sup>21</sup>

Philip here interrupts the narrative of the Master, and asks him why he has removed the binding of the Rulers with their Aeons, with their Destiny, with their Sphere. "In confusion thou causedst them to be confused in their paths, and they erred in their course. Didst thou this therefore to them because of the salvation of the world, or otherwise?" Jesus answers this question as follows: "I altered their path unto the salvation of all the souls. Amen, Amen, I say unto you that except that I altered their path they would have destroyed a multitude of souls. . . . . And the souls would have spent a great deal of time outside this (place?) and they would have delayed from completion the number of the perfect souls, those which will be reckoned unto the inheritance of the Height by the mysteries, and become in the Treasury of the Light." Further questioning

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20. Cf. Pistis Sophia. P. 157. (Horner P. 84).  
 21. Pistis Sophia. Pp. 23-26. (Horner. Pp. 12-13.)  
 22. Pistis Sophia. Pp. 30-32. (Horner. Pp. 16-17.)

by Mary reveals the fact that before the coming of the Master the Rulers had begun to devour their own matter, so that it should not be made into the souls of men, and thereby they sought to delay the completion of the redemption of the perfect: it was for this reason that a third part of their power was taken away from them.<sup>23</sup>

The Master then continues the narrative of his journey; passing upward to the thirteenth Aeon he comes upon Pistis Sophia herself, dwelling in a place below that Aeon. He recounts to the disciples the mystic history of her suffering. She had gazed from her own place into the light of the Treasure House, and thenceforth she became seized with longing to ascend toward it, so that she constantly sang praises to the Light. The rulers of the Twelve Aeons hated her, because she had ceased from their mysteries, and Self-Willed, or Arrogant, the Disobedient One, led the attack against her. He sent forth "a Ruler of face of lion in the Chaos, whose (one) half became fire and whose other half became darkness," this ruler being called Ialdabaoth.<sup>24</sup> This Ruler descended into the Chaos, and Sophia, looking down into these lower regions, mistakenly supposed his light to be the true light of the Treasure House, and descended toward it into matter. Ialdabaoth and the other powers then seized her, and attempted to consume the light power within her, Ialdabaoth himself

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23. Pistis Sophia. Pp. 36-38. (Horner P. 20).  
 24. Pistis Sophia. Pp. 43-44. (Horner P. 24).

being the Light-Power of the Arrogant or Self-Willed One. Sophia was thus grievously tormented and weakened, and she cried out to the Light of Lights on high, and began to sing hymns of repentance. These consist of thirteen songs or Psalms, eight of which are mystical interpretations of Scriptural Psalms, and five of which are elaborations of the Odes of Solomon. After the ninth of these hymns, the First Mystery sent Jesus in the form of Light to redeem Sophia. "She cried also up unto the Light, saying, O Light, whom I believed from at first, because of whom I suffered these great tribulations, help me. And they accepted from her her repentance at that hour: heard her the First Mystery, and they dispatched me by his command, I came to help her, I brought her up from the Chaos because she repented, and also because that she believed the Light."<sup>25</sup> After the thirteenth repentance of Pistis Sophia the Power of Light sent by Jesus raises her to her place below the thirteenth Aeon, and becomes a crown to her head. "I caused the Power of Light which I sent for her to deliver her, I caused it to make a crown of light unto her head, that should not be able to prevail against her from this hour the emanation of the self-willed. And it having made a crown of light moved all the matter which (are) evil, which (are) in her, and they were all purged from her."<sup>26</sup>

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25. Pistis Sophia P. 89a. (Horner. Pp. 48-49).  
 26. Pistis Sophia P. 104a. (Horner. Pp. 56-57).

In the Second Document or Book Jesus tells how Pistis Sophia was again overcome by her enemies and driven down again into Chaos. The Self-Willed One dispatched certain emanations together with his own power of light, and they pursued and afflicted Pistis Sophia. "But it happened the power of the Adamas having come down into the Chaos (close) to all the emanations of the Self-Willed, it happened therefore, that demon having come down unto the Chaos he thrust the Pistis Sophia down, and the power of force of lion, with the face of serpent. . . . . and with all the other emanations of the Self-Willed which are many greatly, they all surrounded the Pistis Sophia, wishing to take away the powers which (are) in her another time. And they oppressed the Pistis Sophia greatly, and they threatened her." <sup>27</sup> Jesus thereupon "sends Gabriel and Mikhael with the ten great effluences of light, that they should help the Pistis Sophia." They surround her with the effluence of light, so that she no longer fears the Self-Willed and his emanations, and she is once more invested with the powers of light and raised out of the Chaos. Then she sings a series of hymns to the upper regions, giving thanks for her redemption.

The Second Book continues with an elaborate account of Aeons and spheres, and of the series of Upper Worlds which lead finally to the Ineffable One. The Master explains to the disciples the twenty-four Invisibles, the places of the Rulers



of Destiny, the place of the thirteenth Aeon, and the Place of  
 the Treasury of Light.<sup>28</sup> The twelve apostles who have received  
 the mysteries will be established as kings with Jesus in the  
 Place of the Inheritance of Light.<sup>29</sup> Certain "mysteries  
 which are lower" are also revealed to confer blessing upon  
 mankind in general and to deliver them from the Rulers of  
 the Darkness. The "Mystery of the Ineffable" is above all  
 these other mysteries: it consists of one word, wherein  
 is contained the knowledge of the Universe.<sup>30</sup>

The remainder of the treatise (i.e., the latter part of  
 Book 2, and Books 3 and 4) continues to set forth the  
 mysteries which are necessary for the redemption of mankind.  
 The question of the date and arrangement of these later books  
 has been a source of controversy among scholars. De Faye  
 claims that the fourth book of the Pistis Sophia is older  
 than any of the other three, and that it should be placed  
 first in the series. In the fourth book the disciples feel  
 that they are constantly in danger, since they have not yet  
 been redeemed: whereas in the first three books they are no  
 longer afraid because they have received the necessary mys-  
 teries, and are protected by seals and sacraments from the  
 fatal powers of the upper world.<sup>31</sup> This is also in substance  
 the view of Schmidt who claims that "the fourth book must

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28. Pistis Sophia. Pp. 170-75. (Horner Pp. 91-94).  
 29. Pistis Sophia. Pp. 176-79. (Horner Pp. 95-96).  
 30. Pistis Sophia. Pp. 213-14. (Horner P. 115).  
 31. De Faye: Op. cit., P. 310.

reflect an earlier stage of the Gnostic theosophy, at which the lower mysteries as yet consisted mainly of a baptismal sacramentalism."<sup>32</sup> R.A. Lipsius also says that "the fourth book presents a simpler form of Gnostic doctrine, variously connected with older systems such as those of Saturnilos, the Ophites, Basilides, etc."<sup>33</sup> All of these views are set aside by the theory of Legge, that the two final books are definitely later in origin than the two others, and that they were written by "degenerate successors of the school of Valentinus."<sup>34</sup> Legge sees in the series of books a "successive degradation" from the comparatively lofty history of the redemption of Pistis Sophia to the jumble of charms and formulas which only serve to secure immunity from eternal torture.<sup>35</sup> He notes that in the First Book the terrors of hell are hardly touched upon, and that magic and astrology are condemned as unlawful knowledge. It is also remarkable that the First Document contains no quotations from the Fourth Gospel, although there are places which would have suggested quotations from this Gospel instead of the Synoptic ones which are used. On the other hand, the Fourth Book contains the conversation of Jesus with the Samaritan woman, and the account of the spear which

32. Quoted by Moffatt: Hastings' E.R.E. Vol. 10. P. 48.  
 33. R.A. Lipsius: Art. Pistis Sophia in D.C.B. Vol. 4. P. 412.  
 34. F. Legge: Introduction to Horner's Translation of the Pistis Sophia, P. XLVIII.  
 35. Ibid., Pp. XXXIV - XXXVII.

pierced Jesus' side at the Crucifixion, both of which are Johannine incidents. These findings of Legge are, on the whole, convincing. The mysteries of redemption which fill the latter part of the treatise are evidently the result of the tendency towards "ritualism" and magic which has already been noted among the Marcosites, and which shaped the course of the whole of the later development, or rather the degeneration of Gnosticism into a mere compendium of magical and cabalistic lore.

The mysteries of light, which are described at the beginning of the Third Book, are revealed to all men for the redemption of individual souls. Men must earnestly seek after these mysteries, and must renounce the world and the sins of the world in order to make themselves worthy of them. Jesus thus enjoins his disciples: "Whenever I should go unto the Light, preach ye to all the World, say unto them, Desist not in the day with the night seeking, and hold not yourselves back even until ye find the mysteries of the kingdom of the Light, these which will purify you and make you pure light, and take you unto the kingdom of the Light. Say unto them, Renounce all this World with all the matter which (is) in it, and with all its cares, and with all its sins, . . . . that ye may be worthy of the mysteries of the Light, and be delivered from all the punishments which (are) in the judgments." <sup>36</sup>

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36. Pistis Sophia. P. 235 a. (Horner. P. 128).

There are also mysteries of the forgiveness of sins, which confer redemption according to a person's ability to forgive great or trifling sins.<sup>37</sup> The soul who passes from this life before having been completely instructed and initiated in the mysteries of light must undergo a long series of incarnations and purifications. "The Virgin of Light is wont to prove that soul, and find it being a sinful soul. . . . And is wont the Virgin of the Light, she is wont to seal that soul and lay on her one of the Receivers and causeth them to cast her into a body worthy of the Sins which she did: And Amen I say unto you that she shall not release that soul from the changes of the body."<sup>38</sup> Then "defences" and "seals" are given to the soul, and she is freed from the "Rulers of the Middle" the "Aeons of Destiny", and the "Rulers of the Places of the Left", and finally she is delivered. The Virgin of Light with seven other Virgins proves the soul still further, and they find seals and signs within her. Finally Sabaoth the good seals her with his seals and the Receivers of Melchisedek receive her into the Treasury of Light, whence she goes to the place of her inheritance.<sup>39</sup> The mysteries of Baptism are also efficacious

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37. Pistis Sophia. P. 245-246. (Horner. P. 134).  
 38. Pistis Sophia. P. 260-61. (Horner. P. 143).  
 39. Pistis Sophia. P. 264-266. (Horner. P. 146).

in overcoming sin: they consume and burn up all sin within the soul, and they separate and purify the soul from the counterfeit Spirit, and from Fate, and from the body.<sup>40</sup>

The mysteries of redemption, as it has already been stated, culminate in the Ineffable Mystery; and this is preceded by twelve lesser mysteries. He who transgresses these lesser mysteries will be forgiven: but he who having received the Ineffable Mystery, falls again into sin, and does not repent, is cast into outer darkness to be consumed and annihilated. Even then, however, deliverance is possible through the intercession of others, and the Virgin of Light may purify and redeem even such an abandoned soul: she causes her to return to earth, and to find the Mysteries of Light, after being clothed again in a righteous body.<sup>41</sup>

When the pre-determined number of perfect souls has been received and redeemed, the gate of Light will be closed, and no other souls will be permitted to enter. The Outer Darkness which is outside of the World of Light is composed of various places of punishment which are presided over by rulers in the form of dragons, snakes, etc. Jesus describes these places and their tortures in detail, and tells his disciples that he came expressly to impart the mysteries to mankind, that they might escape these tortures and enter into

40. Pistis Sophia. P. 272. (Horner. P. 150).

41. Pistis Sophia. P. 292-294. (Horner. P. 164).

the kingdom of Light. "Because of this therefore I brought the key of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens; or otherwise there was no flesh which will be saved upon the world, for without mysteries there is not any (who) will go unto the kingdom of the Light, either righteous (or) when he had done sin."<sup>42</sup>

The Fourth Book describes at further length the mysteries of redemption which Jesus came to impart to men. Jesus shows to his disciples the five torture-chambers, presided over by various rulers. Then on the Mount of Galilee he offers an oblation to the Father on behalf of the disciples, which is composed of wine and water, over which mystical and unintelligible phrases are repeated. This "sacrament" results in forgiveness of sins for the disciples. "If therefore my Father thou heardest me and forgavest the sins to these souls and blottedst out their unlawfulness, and thou causedst them to be worthy of being numbered in unto my kingdom, thou shalt give to me a sign in this Oblation. And happened the sign which Jesus said. Said Jesus toward his disciples, Rejoice and be glad; because they forgave your sins, they blotted out your unlawfulness, and ye were numbered in unto the kingdom of my Father."<sup>43</sup> He also mentions other Baptisms of Fire and of the Seven Sounds, etc. The short document

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42. Pistis Sophia. P. 313a. (Horner. P. 176).

43. Pistis Sophia. Pp. 334-35. (Horner. P. 190).

which Horner classifies as the Fifth Book describes the various punishments which are prescribed for different kinds of sins, and the places of punishment are also described at greater length. The question of the redemption of the dead who have committed no sin but who have not been initiated into the mysteries is raised by Johannes: Jesus answers that such a soul will be met by the receivers and punished for a while in the lower places of Amente, and then a "cup of watchfulness" will be given to the soul, so that she will be able to find the mysteries of the Light.<sup>44</sup>

The conception of redemption in these latter books shows more affinities with the mystery religions than with Gnosticism generally. The sacraments are entirely magical in their significance, and serve only to avert punishments from those who participate in them. Legge remarks: "Nothing is wanting to show that the sect which put forth these documents had slipped back into the preoccupation with the terrors of hell which is the prevailing feature of the Egyptian religion of the last native dynasties, and that the belief in magic and astrology into which Hellenic paganism had sunk during the third and fourth centuries had taken the place of the loftier,<sup>45</sup> if vain, speculations of the earlier documents of our text." Even in the earlier books complete salvation and perfect union with God is a privilege reserved for the very few who

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44. Pistis Sophia. P. 352-3. (Horner. P. 198).

45. F. Legge: Introduction to Horner's Translation. P. XXXVII.

have been perfectly initiated into the Mystery of the Ineffable. De Faye points out that whereas in other Gnostic systems Gnosis is regarded as a condition of Salvation, in the Pistis Sophia it is a kind of reward which is promised to those who have already overcome sin through the efficacy of the mysteries.<sup>46</sup>

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The emphasis of magical observances continues in the Books of Jeu, which are later than the Pistis Sophia, but which are probably connected with it. These books have been translated and edited from the original Coptic of the Bruce Papyrus by Dr. Carl Schmidt,<sup>47</sup> who agrees with Amelineau that the Coptic Papyrus is a translation from Greek originals, none of which are earlier than the first half of the third century.<sup>48</sup>

In these books God is an unapproachable being (P. 48, ff - pages quoted are according to Schmidt's translation). He is the father of all fatherhood (P. 67) whose being is conceived of as light: and therefore the emanation which proceeds from him is also regarded as the treasure of light. (P. 56). The chief of this treasure is Jeu (P. 5): he is the father of all Jeu, which themselves are sources of other emanations. Jesus is equal to the father Jeu, and he is the governing principle

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46. De Faye: Op. cit., Pp. 306-307.

47. Texte and Untersuchungen. VIII. 1892. Also Translation in Koptische-Gnostische Schriften, Vol. 1. (Leipzig. 1905).

48. Schmidt: Op. cit., P. 26. (Quoted by Legge: Forerunners, etc., P. 194).



of the world-process. He, the **ἔννοια** of the father, besought the father to incite the true God to emanation. This emanation consists altogether of sixty light treasures, each one being filled again with various beings. (Pp. 9, 43, 47)

In these manuscripts Jesus is merely a mystagogue: he arms his disciples with mysteries, charms and magic cryptograms which are necessary for their salvation. At the beginning of the second book he communicates to them the great mysteries: if they have fulfilled these, the **παραλήμπτους** of the light-treasure will conduct them to the place of the light-treasure after their death. Because the disciples have left all for him, Jesus vouchsafes to them knowledge of these mysteries, and bestows upon them the baptism of water, fire and spirit. (Pp. 54-55).

### Conclusion.

The foregoing survey of the conception of redemption in the Gnostic theologies has revealed two aspects or tendencies, the one speculative, or philosophical, the other practical, or sacramental. The former was destined to be eclipsed by the latter. Gnosticism never completely escaped from the unstable dualistic premises which lay at its very foundation. The doctrine of the soul's ascent to God through enlightenment and revelation was from the first strangely joined with systems of occult rites and formulas, and in the end this materialistic praxis triumphed over the elements of philosophical speculation. Gnosticism thus degenerated into the magic from which it was originally derived in such large measure. The promise of its approach to Christianity was never fulfilled. The Christian Church in the third century opposed it vigorously and systematically, and it was finally overwhelmed and transformed by the superior nature of this stronger spiritual force, whose essential truth it had so pathetically failed to comprehend.

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