

# Chapter 5

## The Abolition of the Law and of the Actual Father: Marcion of Sinope

In his book *Moses and Monotheism*, Sigmund Freud remarked on the frequent recurrence of the motif of double paternity in religion and fairy tale. As one would expect, he interpreted the suppression of the actual father and the emphasis on the divine Father as a form of the Oedipus complex. Examples of people who struggle with their actual father abound, as well as with the divine Father. Famous among the former was Franz Kafka; among the latter is Elie Wiesel. The early Christian theologian Marcion found a rather strange way to struggle with both, by establishing a difference between the Demiurge, actual father of humankind, and the supreme and unknown God, Father to nothing.

### 1. Sources

The discussion here will not focus on the problem of the sources—always indirect—concerning Marcion and his movement. The bulk of the Marcionite file was collected by Adolf von Harnack in the 444 pages (marked with asterisks) of the appendix (*Beilagen*) to his basic work *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*.<sup>1</sup> Even those scholars who, like Barbara Aland, tried to explore new paths in the interpretation of Marcion have to admit that Harnack collected an exhaustive file on Marcionism.<sup>2</sup> Decisive new evidence has not so far been discovered.

Marcion was aged and influential around 150, when Justin Martyr mentioned him in his *Apology*.<sup>3</sup> The great heresiologists of the second half of the II<sup>nd</sup> century and the first half of the III<sup>rd</sup> (Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus of Rome, or the author of the *Refutation of All Heresies*, Origen of Alexandria) provide further information. From the

IVth century Marcionism disappeared in the West and became the target of attacks by Eastern Christian apologists, mainly Syrians like Adamantius, Aphraates, Ephraem, Maruta, Isidore of Pelusium, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, but also Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis on Cyprus, and the Armenian Eznik of Kolb. However, the capital work on Marcion remains the long polemical tractate in five books *Against Marcion* redacted by the Montanist apologist Tertullian of Carthage over the course of a few years after 207–8.<sup>4</sup>

As was shown by Jean-Claude Fredouille,<sup>5</sup> Tertullian was a rhetor in the classical tradition. The largest part of his work consists of clichés and denunciations of the abominable Marcion, this heretic “more repellent than the Scythian, more erratic than the Hamaxobian, more inhuman than the Massagete, more outrageous than the Amazon, darker than the cloud, colder than winter, flimsier than ice, more perfid than the Hister, more precipitous than the Caucasus.”<sup>6</sup> We should not expect from Tertullian a refutation like the one written during the same period by Hippolytus, a conscientious collector of heretical doctrines oftentimes reported verbatim. Relevant information is scant and, although probably reliable, deformed by a heavy polemical bias that goes so far as to contradict Tertullian’s own opinions maintained elsewhere, whenever they might show a suspiciously Marcionite flavor.

## 2. Tertullian’s Marcion

Marcion’s starting point is theodicy. The basic question he asks is “where does evil come from”—*unde malum?*<sup>7</sup> He finds the answer in Luke 6:43, the parable of the two trees: No good tree bears bad fruit, and no bad tree bears good fruit. *Good and evil do not have a common origin.*

In Isa. 45:7 God claims to be creator of Light and Darkness, Good and Evil. Such a god, thinks Marcion, could only be the *bad tree*.<sup>8</sup> He is known by us through the Bible, and he is known to be just but not good.<sup>9</sup> The good God is unknowable and *naturaliter ignotus*; unknown by natural means.<sup>10</sup>

The biblical god is not actually evil. But his creation, this world and humanity, is indeed such because of the low quality of Matter and of the Opponent that dwells in it. In effect, asserts Tertullian, Marcion does not preach *two* principles, as one might believe, but *nine*. One is the good God whose residence is the third heaven. But, in order to have a residence, he needs Space to dwell in and heavenly Matter to build his mansion. These are three principles. The fourth is the Savior, Christ, who

proclaims in the lower world the existence of the good God. The fifth is the Demiurge; the sixth, the Space of his residence; the seventh, worldly Matter; the eighth, the malignant Opponent; and the ninth is the Messiah of the Jews announced by the Demiurge. This Messiah has nothing to do with Christ; the latter became manifest, the former is still to come (and will).

Logically Tertullian seems to be right. If by any chance some essential point of Marcion's doctrine still escapes notice, his thinking still seems to be flawed by contradictions. But this doesn't quite fit with another polemical passage in Tertullian: "Is there on the Pontus a more voracious rodent than the one who eroded the Gospels? Surely, Euxinus, you produced a wild beast *more delightful to philosophers than to Christians.*"<sup>11</sup> Marcion appears to be a thinker yet not a philosopher in the sense that he would belong to any school or would attempt to be systematic.

Evidence shows that Marcion indeed envisaged Matter as a principle, thereby incurring a contradiction that was corrected by his disciples (as we shall see) and also, as we saw in the preceding chapter, by Valentinian and other gnostics. Another problem stems from the admission that Evil is separate from Matter, which would make it into a further principle. Anonymous disciples became aware of the multiplication of entities beyond necessity as effected by their master, and they criticized it.<sup>12</sup> To a certain extent Marcion is certainly close to Middle Platonism in his distinction between the two gods, as noticed by R. M. Grant,<sup>13</sup> yet, despite Tertullian's assertion, he remains a formidable rationalistic exegete of the Bible, not a philosopher. His interest lies in establishing the correct tradition, not in the internal coherence of his system.

Rationalism leads Marcion to a hermeneutic of suspicion that extracts arguments against the creator god from the innumerable logical contradictions of the Bible. Obviously since God asks in Gen. 3:9, "Adam, where art thou?" he cannot be omniscient. Tertullian here interjects a painful explanation:<sup>14</sup> The Bible being deprived of punctuation, what we interpret as a question mark must be read as an exclamation mark, expressing God's disappointment. "Adam, where art thou?" becomes "Where art thou, Adam!" Tertullian is not the least bit embarrassed by Gen. 3:11, the admission that God did not know that Adam had sinned and therefore did not know he would sin (or if he did, he was a *deceptor potentissimus*, as Descartes put it).<sup>15</sup>

Another argument of Marcion against the Demiurge consists in the fact that the latter *swears an oath*, the famous Covenant. According to

Marcion, an oath can be sworn only if there is a higher instance that guarantees its validity. If there is nothing above the Demiurge, then he could only be his own warrant.<sup>16</sup> Tertullian, with his juridical education, is by no means embarrassed by this either. Yet it is unclear whether Marcion meant that the Demiurge had some knowledge of the higher God or simply intended to suggest that his procedures were dubious. It seems improbable that the Demiurge could have been acquainted with the existence of the higher realm, for elsewhere Tertullian asserts that before the coming of Jesus Christ the good God was not known to anyone. Christ manifested himself in the fifteenth year of Tiberius's reign—that is, sixty-five years six months and two weeks before Marcion, whose activity peaked under the reign of Antoninus Pius (138–61).<sup>17</sup>

Christ did not have a body made up of material elements (*haec paupertina elementa*),<sup>18</sup> for he could not assume a "flesh stuffed with excrements" (*caro stercoribus infersa*).<sup>19</sup> Marcion appeared to be a docetist of the phantasiastic kind: He maintained that Christ's body was a deceiving apparition.<sup>20</sup> For Tertullian this means that Christ did not die and, worse, that he did not rise from the dead. Yet elsewhere he declares that Marcion admits the real suffering of Christ. For Tertullian the emphasis lay on the redemptive effect of Christ's resurrection, whereas for Marcion it obviously lay in Christ's message that *suffering* opens undeserved access to the upper realm for the apostles and all those true believers who, marked on their foreheads with the letter *tau* (symbol of the cross), would individually resume the Passion undergone by Christ for the sake of the good God.<sup>21</sup>

Whereas Christ came to reveal the hidden God, the Messiah will come from the known god, the Demiurge, and will be a warrior<sup>22</sup> who will save exclusively the people of the Covenant.<sup>23</sup>

How is it possible to escape from the world, the "prison cell of the Demiurge" (*haec cellula creatoris*)?<sup>24</sup> Only rigorous asceticism, including encratism (rejection of marriage), might help achieve such a breakout,<sup>25</sup> reason for which Tertullian, who was not keen on marriage,<sup>26</sup> would here defend holy matrimony.<sup>27</sup> The polemicist even suggests that the Marcionites would kill themselves by starvation (*apocarteresis*) in order to show their contempt for the Demiurge.<sup>28</sup>

This, according to Tertullian, is the very essence of Marcion's doctrine as exposed in his work aptly called *Antitheses*, which endeavors "to show the discordance between the New Testament and the Old Testament, *discordia euangelii cum lege*."<sup>29</sup> By what procedures is this accomplished? On the one hand, as already shown, by a hermeneutic of suspicion applied to the Old Testament; on the other, through repudia-

tion of the New Testament canon.<sup>30</sup> Among the Gospels, Marcion accepts only Luke, which he retains for being based on the Gospel mentioned by Paul in Gal. 2:2ff, though adulterated by ignorant Jewish Christians, people led astray by the twelve apostles, who "remained unaware of the truth" (*non cognoverunt veritatem*),<sup>31</sup> and especially by Peter, "the man of the Law," *legis homo*.<sup>32</sup> The Marcionite canon further includes ten out of the fourteen orthodox epistles of Paul (Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Laodiceans = Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon).<sup>33</sup> A number of reconstructions of Marcion's philological procedures, by which he modified the text of his New Testament canon, exist, none so thorough as Harnack's.<sup>34</sup> Yet this thorny problem will not detain us here.<sup>35</sup>

### 3. Harnack's Marcion

Contemporary research on Marcion is still overshadowed by the imposing work (1921–23) of the Lutheran scholar Adolf von Harnack, who sees in the navigator of Sinope a radical biblical theologian and a reformer (indeed, a precursor of Luther himself) who does not shrink from the most revolutionary consequences of the Christian message.

According to Harnack, Marcionite exegesis starts from the principle of the "discord between the New and Old Testament," founded first on an intentional reading of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, which opens Marcion's canon. According to the *incipit* of the letter, Marcion deduces that the thirteenth apostle, elected directly by Jesus Christ and by God and not *per hominem*, that is, by the man Jesus, is superior to the twelve "superapostles," as they are often called.<sup>36</sup> Paul complains that the Galatians had adopted a gospel different from that which he himself had preached (Gal. 1:6–8). In Greek, *to euangelion* means "good news" and only derivatively "written gospel." Paul means probably that the revealed content of his preaching (*to euangelion*) has been found sound by the ancients in Jerusalem. In Latin *to euangelium* is translated simply by the same Greek word *euangelium*, which may lead to further misunderstanding. A candid reading of the passage would yield that Paul submitted a *written gospel* to the approval of the elders in Jerusalem, and this is how Marcion obviously interprets it. That gospel could only be an earlier form of the one attributed to Paul's disciple Luke.

Yet the Epistle to the Galatians holds in store more embarrassment for a candid reader. Paul asserts that the leaders of Jerusalem recognized his apostleship to the gentiles, as opposed to Peter's apostleship to the

Jews.<sup>37</sup> In Jerusalem "false brothers" wanted to circumcise Paul's companion the gentile Titus; yet, with the approval of the elders, Titus has not been "taken into the slavery" of circumcision, of which Jesus Christ had freed him.<sup>38</sup> And yet on other occasions the attitude of the brethren from Jerusalem was, to say the least, ambivalent. Visiting Paul in Antioch, Cephas first ate next to the gentiles but left them as soon as messengers from James arrived, who could have objected to that. Barnabas's behavior was no less equivocal.<sup>39</sup> Paul's reaction was quick: He explained to Cephas and the whole world that Faith in Jesus Christ abolished the Law, and to fall again under the slavery of the Law would mean giving up the new Law of the gospel.<sup>40</sup> "For I, through the [new] Law, died to the Law [in order] to live with God."<sup>41</sup> And "if justification is obtained by the Law [only], then Christ died in vain."<sup>42</sup>

In a crescendo, Paul further emphasizes the abyss that separates Faith from the Law. Oppositions are extremely sharp: The Law is defined as a "curse,"<sup>43</sup> whereas Faith is a "blessing."<sup>44</sup> Christ has freed his followers from the slavery of the Law, paying the high price of crucifixion.<sup>45</sup> The Law was not useless; yet after the coming of the Mediator, the promise of truth contained in it has been fulfilled.<sup>46</sup> Therefore in Jesus Christ Faith has abolished the Law,<sup>47</sup> in such a way that Christian baptism takes away all distinctions of race or sex and collapses social barriers, for any baptized individual is indiscriminately promoted to child of God.<sup>48</sup> The slavery of the Law is the slavery of the earthly Jerusalem (under Roman occupation); the freedom of Faith is the freedom of the heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>49</sup>

Paul's message is unequivocal. Should anyone, argued Harnack, base Christianity on Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, that Christianity would inevitably look like Marcionism. Or, Harnack contended, like Lutheranism.

The Pauline antithesis of Faith and Law becomes the basis for Marcion's biblical interpretation. Yet there is more. In the conflict of authority that opposed Paul to the Mother Church of Jerusalem, Marcion sees the opposition between the true apostle and the false apostles (*pseudapostoloi*),<sup>50</sup> whom he holds in very low esteem, especially Peter.<sup>51</sup> The twelve ostensibly ignored the Truth. Paul was the only apostle of Jesus Christ, and his message the only true gospel. Yet false Christians had concocted the other gospels and had adulterated Paul's own until it became unrecognizable as the "gospel of Luke."

Why was Marcion so certain that he had solved the riddle of the falsification of the true gospel of Jesus Christ? Contrary to the common practice of his period, Marcion did not claim any direct revelation that would infallibly point out to him what was true and what was false in the New Testament. He simply performed a painstaking logical and philological operation on the texts he had inherited, attempting to smooth away all contradictions according to the principle that the God preached by the New Testament was different from the god of the Old Testament. Consequently, not only did the Old Testament become the deceiving product of the Demiurge and his servants through history but also the largest part of what we call the New Testament.<sup>52</sup> Marcion's *Antitheses*, which were part of the Marcionite biblical canon, were probably intended to supply the reasons for the omission of the entire Old Testament and most of the New in the form of a system of sharp oppositions between Faith and Law, which leads to the opposition of two Gods and two Worlds. Marcion does not hesitate to turn Paul's arguments against Paul himself, for, where the apostle had recommended allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament, Marcion denies that the Old Testament could have been a systematic forecast of the coming of Christ. (The Old Testament contains prophecies about the Jewish Messiah which, not corresponding with the description of Jesus Christ, will be fulfilled only through the future coming of that Messiah. This hermeneutical literalism has since Harnack been read as evidence of Marcion's Jewish background.)

For Marcion the Old Testament is a perfectly *historical* document about this shabby world and its shabby creator god, an inferior tyrant who promulgates the law of vengeance and hatred (an eye for an eye). He accumulates all the attributes of an inferior, yet not evil, being: boastfulness, lack of omniscience or omnipotence, love for publicity, and bravado. Obviously the god of Israel, delineated by many generations of seminomadic shepherds of a remote past, was not made to be measured by Marcion's cold rationalism or his lack of philosophical refinements. For, had he been subtler, Marcion would naturally have come upon the idea, common among gnostics, that once the characteristics of a logical object exist in the consciousness, that object must exist in its dimension; and thus, since humankind is able to puzzle out the good God, his existence could not have been either entirely separate from this world or entirely hidden to it.

Marcion is a Kafka of biblical theology. He revolts against the actual father of the world, its Demiurge, and criticizes him for his vulgarity, selfishness, and whims. It seems reasonable that he should discredit this

irrational father. The invention of *double fatherhood* allows Marcion to be reborn a free man. Harnack shows that the most frequent word in Marcion's (and Martin Luther's) work seems to be *novum*, "new." The revelation of the new God brings about a "new alliance," revealing a "new life," a "new bounty," a "new lavishness."<sup>53</sup> The good news (*euangelium*) consists in reversing the perverted values of an old world and replacing them with the new values of a new world, recently discovered through Christ's revelation. No new alliance is possible with an old god, the phantasm of the actual father. The alliance is new in so far as it has been established between humankind and a new partner. For something to be new, it must have been unknown forever before. The divine, unreal Father bursts suddenly out of his eternal anonymity through the good news announced by Christ.

The most infamous act of the cosmic tragedy in Marcion's view was not the creation of this world but the creation of humankind, made by the Demiurge *in his image*, out of low-quality materials—that "flesh stuffed with excrements" that makes humanity the slave of procreation. In so far as multiplication perpetuates enslavement to the Demiurge, there is no excuse for it, whether it takes place within or without that "shameful commerce" (*negotium impudicitiae*) which is marriage. The tragedy of humankind, whose conditions were set by the clumsy Demiurge and worsened by Matter, comes to an unexpected low with the fall of the Devil, the angel of the Demiurge who, expelled from heaven, settles down in Matter and lures humankind into his own slavery. The irony is that once this is accomplished, the low Demiurge himself becomes angry with humankind, and thus all three principles of this world—the Devil, Matter, and the creator god—compete in torturing humans according to their particular ways. Yet through this bias Marcion comes to accept the necessity of the Law, promulgated by the Demiurge against the Devil and his intervention with humankind. Contrary to the gnostic view, which maintains that humanity is superior to the world and its creators for being consubstantial with the higher God, *Marcion's human being is the lowest and most unhappy creature that mind can conceive of*. Marcion's anthropology is indeed profoundly pessimistic.

The revelation of the good God is not deserved by humans in any way, either as a result of relation or of any particular merit. The good God is totally alien to the world and has not been announced by anyone before Christ. Whereas the inferior Demiurge dwells in the first heaven, the good God, defined as *superior* and *sublimior*, dwells in the third. He deserves the title "Father" not because he is the Father of humankind



but because he is the Father (Creator) of an immaterial and inaccessible World. An infinite distance separates this God, who reigns at the top of the universe, from the lower Demiurge, the god of this time period, *deus saeculi huius*. Whereas the Demiurge is primarily *just*, the superior God is *good*. He does not judge. Only pity moves him to reveal himself through Christ and make an end to the terrible Law. Although deprived of a physical body, Christ suffered and died on the cross, after which he went to hell, a place divided into a compartment where sinners are tormented, and a purgatory (*refrigerium*) for the righteous according to the Demiurge's conception of justice. In the first he saved a few people who underwent cruel and unnecessary punishment.<sup>54</sup> Marcionite biblical interpretation embraces the principle of inverse exegesis that gnostics were using liberally. Thus the righteous according to the Old Testament—Abel, Abraham, and Moses—were not saved by Christ, for they had endorsed the merciless law of vengeance (an eye for an eye) of the Demiurge. But Christ did save all those who, according to the Demiurge's code, had deserved terrible torments. The place of torture was emptied of its inhabitants by Christ, whereas the *refrigerium* remained filled with those who had met the approval and posthumous favors of the Demiurge: the patriarchs, Moses, the prophets, and their followers.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, Christ's death on the cross freed humankind (*liberavit genus humanum*),<sup>56</sup> who had been a perennial target for the Demiurge's persecutions. But Christ's message met with a feeble reception among Jews and Jewish Christians, most of whom will remain banned from salvation ("non omnes salvi fiunt, sed pauciores omnibus et Judaeis et Christianis creatoris").<sup>57</sup>

The patent antinomianism of the Marcionite good God could generate, according to a logic that the heresiologists did not fail to observe, complete libertinism. Confronted with such a hypothesis, Marcion gives an answer that, although not very philosophical, is however very clear: *Absit, absit*, "Far from this, far from this." Marcionism is not libertine but, on the contrary, encratite. For the message of redemption brought by Christ refers not to the present but to the future: *de futuro, non de praesenti*.<sup>58</sup> The present of Marcion's community is vowed to persecution and denigration. The Marcionites find their authenticity through an uncompromising attitude toward the Demiurge. They not only accept but seek out martyrdom. Their freedom will be definitive only with the final judgment of the Demiurge (whose world has an end), upon which the subjects of the good Father will be promoted to the eternal life of the upper angels, while sinners will be delivered to the Demiurge, who will chase them into the fire of destruction. In this eschatological conflagration the Demiurge

will self-destruct, for his existence is not conceivable outside his world. Over this nothingness will extend the world without end of the alien and merciful God.

The Marcionite church was no community of prophets. It was endowed with a functional hierarchy submitted to the same rigorous discipline as the rest of the faithful. Given that the sexuality of those who had been redeemed was supposed to be extinguished, women had access to the magisterium of the church. Members of the community practiced strict asceticism and were bound to give up marriage. Meat and wine were banned from their diet, but fish was accepted. Strict weekly fasts included the sabbath. Marcionite ethics were heroic in all respects.

This missionary church, which during the second half of the II<sup>nd</sup> century was the only serious competitor to the Catholic, did not differ externally from it. One century later the Marcionite movement was in complete decline in the West. Later on, the remainders of the Western Marcionite communities would be absorbed into Manichaeism. In the East the situation was different. Marcionism continued to exist to the mid-IV<sup>th</sup> century, and even when persecutions would uproot urban communities, rural ones would survive. In the V<sup>th</sup> century Theodoret of Cyrrhus converted eight Marcionite villages of his diocese to orthodoxy. After this the traces of Marcionism disappeared for two centuries.

#### 4. Interpretations

To this day Harnack's passionate interpretation of Marcion as rationalistic reformer has found many supporters.<sup>59</sup> Recently R. Joseph Hoffmann radicalized Harnack's position even further:<sup>60</sup> Marcion would come to the conclusion that the Old and the New Testaments are incompatible and would preach two distinct gods by the strict use of two hermeneutical principles—rationalism and literalism.<sup>61</sup> The intervention of any external factor in explaining Marcion thus becomes unnecessary.

A second scholarly tradition, represented by E. C. Blackman,<sup>62</sup> F. M. Braun,<sup>63</sup> Ugo Bianchi,<sup>64</sup> Barbara Aland,<sup>65</sup> E. Muehlenberg,<sup>66</sup> and others, prefers to see in Marcion a gnostic. The arguments of these scholars are of different kinds. The only one that seems to have some weight concerns not Marcion himself but V<sup>th</sup>-century Marcionism in Armenia as

described by the heresiologist Eznik of Kolb; it might have incorporated some gnostic elements.<sup>67</sup>

A third direction gives weight to Tertullian's allegation that Marcion was a philosopher. We have already seen that R. M. Grant emphasizes Middle Platonic influence, whereas J. G. Gager shows the presence of some elements of Epicurus's philosophy in Marcion's thought.<sup>68</sup>

### 5. Marcion's Dualism

Marcion's system is founded upon the opposition between the good God and the inferior Demiurge, just but not good. A first contradiction shows as soon as Matter appears on the stage. This low-quality substance must be interpreted as a third principle. The good God and Matter are thus radically opposed; the Demiurge is only an intermediary. So far Marcion is close to Middle Platonism and Gnosticism, although he denies any relation between the Father and the Demiurge.

On the other hand, Marcion applies to the lower world the perfectly "orthodox" story of the fall of Lucifer, a third inferior hypostasis, who defies the Demiurge and becomes the ally of Matter, conferring upon the latter the dangerous qualities of his craft. While the fall of the Devil could occur without resorting to a multiplication of entities, Matter had a primordial character and no origin at all. We know that gnostics strove to explain the origin of Matter. Marcion's heedless insertion of Matter as a principle shows that he did not care much for the systematicity of his thought, being primarily a rationalistic philologist and theologian.

Marcion's doctrine can be defined by "distinctive traits" as dualistic, anti-Judaic, encratite, docetist, and even vegetarian. But his dualism is very complex. Two systems—the upper world of the good God and the lower world of the Demiurge—are opposed to each other yet have no connection to each other. In terms of space, a radical opposition exists between the upper God, who reigns at the top of the third heaven, and Matter, with the Devil, which abides in the lowest regions of the Demiurge, under the first heaven. Evil appears according to a "mitigated" formula (he is an angel of the Demiurge) but settles down within Matter.

Despite the opposition between the upper God and the duo Matter-Devil, the tension between the extremes is feeble. Explosive tension internally divides the lower world, in which the Demiurge is strongly opposed by and strongly opposes the Devil.

Marcion makes use of the inverse exegesis of the Bible like the gnostics, yet he accepts the historical truth, integral and literal, of the Old

Testament. Gnostics, by contrast, apply it at first circularly to find arguments for the Demiurge's inferiority and then to use this inferiority as a hermeneutical tool in the interpretation of other episodes of the Bible. Confronted with what seems to be the gnostic free play of imagination (but what is, as we saw, a multiple-choice game of logic), Marcion's system appears stern and somewhat unsophisticated. His inability to narrate is expressed in the abrupt gap between the two worlds, for gnostic myth would proliferate *precisely* in order to explain the relation of the two worlds.

Yet what separates Marcion from the gnostics is not only his poor performance as a narrator. It is primarily the fact that, unlike them, he *does not deny the anthropic principle*. The result is something to be reckoned with: Humankind is created in totality by the Demiurge from Matter and thus belongs in totality to the Demiurge and suffers the consequences of the low quality of Matter. *Humankind is made for this world, and this world is made for it*, precisely according to the words of Genesis, which is a historical document. No consubstantiality exists between humanity and the upper God, and therefore the latter's gift to humanity is perfectly gratuitous and undeserved. Soteriological optimism does not negate the circumstances of human origins and rightful expectations.

Whereas the denial of the intelligence of the creator of the ecosystem combined with the denial of the anthropic principle led gnostics to an *anthropological optimism* that remains unequaled in Western metaphysics, Marcion's combination—the denial of the ecosystemic intelligence and the acceptance of the anthropic principle—leads to one of the most pessimistic concoctions of Western metaphysics.

The starting point for both the gnostics and Marcion was the inferiority of the Demiurge, but they deduced it from different principles. The gnostics were unwilling to believe that the Platonic Logos/Sophia could have been ignorant of the Supreme God, as the biblical god seems to be. Marcion borrowed his argument from what seemed to be Paul's radical opposition between Law and Faith and used biblical arguments to enforce it. The gnostics were born from reasoning, Marcion from tradition.

After having ascertained the inferiority of the Demiurge, Marcion and the gnostics went two different ways. Marcion was too much a literalist and too little a philosopher to build a coherent system. He preferred to incur contradiction rather than to expand hypothetical interpretations.

Gnostics would perhaps have recognized in Marcion a brother with limited mental resources; Marcion would certainly have denounced the gnostics as fablemakers.

## 6. Marcion's Disciples

Due to Marcion's incoherence and contradictions, his system has multiple possibilities for expansion. His disciples would exploit a number of them.

Tertullian already objected to Marcion that his doctrine had not two but nine principles.<sup>69</sup> While Marcion had not given this problem sufficient attention, his disciples tried to find new solutions. All of them seem to betray Marcion to the extent that they qualify the good God as *archē*, "first principle," whereas in Marcion's intention he was principle of nothing, at least of nothing in this world.

Megetius posits the existence of three *archai* instead of two: the good God, the intermediary Demiurge, and the Devil or the evil god. They correspond respectively to Christians, Jews, and pagans.<sup>70</sup> This rationalization of the Marcionite system was predictable and was meant to eliminate one of its most patent contradictions. Some heresiologists more candid than sophisticated already attributed to Marcion himself three principles.<sup>71</sup> Hippolytus<sup>72</sup> mentions Marcionites who profess four principles: the good God, the Demiurge, Matter, and Evil, which is another way of eliminating contradictions from Marcion's doctrine.

Another problem is raised by the existence of two Messiahs, representing the good God and the Demiurge. The Assyrian Marcionite Prepon<sup>73</sup> conflates them into one Christ, "mediator between good and evil" (*mesos tis on kakou kai agathou*), who is neither good nor evil.<sup>74</sup>

Among Marcion's disciples the most important was Apelles, who had his own doctrine and preached it in Alexandria.<sup>75</sup> The reports of the heresiologists have deformed it. The Christian Rhodon, who denounced Apelles' lack of coherent argumentation, was apparently unprepared to deal with a subtler opponent.

Apelles wrote a work in thirty-eight books called *Syllogisms*, whose purpose was to refute, through obstinate rationalism, all the fables of the Old Testament. Against Marcion, Apelles denied the existence of two principles and emphasized God's monarchy. Reverting to the protognostic party, he ascribed the creation of the world to an angel called Lord. This angel was not Marcion's Demiurge. In an anti-Judaic rage, Apelles made the Angel of Evil himself, *praeses mali*, into the deceptive Spirit who is the god of the Old Testament and of the Jewish Christians.

In conformity with the current doctrine of the astral vehicle of the soul,<sup>76</sup> Apelles made Christ's body consist of pure stellar elements.

Apelles sent on a mission to Rome his prophetess Philoumene, whose revelations he appreciated to the point that he wrote them down in a work called *Phanerōseis*.<sup>77</sup>

Apelles continued Marcionite preaching in a spirit that was both more radically anti-Judaic and less anticosmic, for this world was not the creation of Evil. From Paul to Marcion to Apelles, the Law was judged in increasingly harsh terms.

## Notes

1. Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom Fremden Gott. Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlagen der katholischen Kirche* (1921, 1924<sup>2</sup>) and *Neue Studien zu Marcion* (1923), available together in reprint (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft: Darmstadt, 1985). Despite the fact that this is perhaps Harnack's only book whose documentation is almost definitive and whose conclusions are still compelling, it is among his few works that, to my knowledge, have not been translated into English.
2. Barbara Aland, "Marcion: Versuch einer neuen Interpretation," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 70 (1973), 420–27.
3. Just. Mart., *Apol.* I 26–58.
4. For the dating, see Harnack, 329\*. The modern edition used here is Tertullianis, *Adversus Marcionem*, cura et studio Aem. Kroymann (CCL 1: Tertulliani Opera, Pars I) (Brepols: Turnhout, Belgium, 1954), 437–726.
5. J.-Cl. Fredouille, *Tertullien et la conversion de la culture antique* (Études Augustiniennes: Paris, 1972).
6. Tert., *Adv. Marc.* I.1.4, translation mine.
7. Tert. I.2.
8. Tert. I.2.
9. Tert. I.6.9.
10. Tert. V.16.
11. I.36.5, translation and emphasis mine.
12. Hipp. X.19.
13. R. M. Grant, *Gods and the One God* (Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1986), 86, 113, 131, 139, 167.
14. I.25; IV.20.
15. Descartes, *Meditations* III.4.
16. Tert. II.26.
17. Tert. I.19; IV.7.
18. Tert. I.14.
19. Tert. III.10.
20. Tert. III.8.
21. Tert. III.22.
22. Tert. III.13; IV.6.
23. Tert. III.21.
24. Tert. I.14.
25. Tert. I.28.
26. See Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (Columbia Univ. Press: New York, 1988). More details in my "A Corpus for the Body," *Journal of Modern History*, March 1991.
27. Tert. I.29.

28. Tert. I.14.
29. Tert. I.19.
30. Tert. IV.2.
31. Iren. III.13.2.
32. Tert. IV.11.
33. Tert. V.2–21.
34. Harnack, 40\*–255\*.
35. Recently R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Marcion: On the Restitution of Christianity. An Essay on the Development of Radical Paulinist Theology in the Second Century* (AAR 46) (Scholars Press: Chico, CA, 1982), has attempted to show that Marcion was not modifying the *textus receptus* of the NT (as there was no such text during his time), but the *textus receptus* was modified by orthodoxy to meet Marcion's challenge.
36. On the system of oppositions between New and Old Testaments used by Paul, see E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1983).
37. Gal. 2.8.
38. Gal. 2.4.
39. Gal. 2.11–13.
40. Gal. 2.18.
41. Gal. 2.19.
42. Gal. 2.21.
43. Gal. 3.10; "curse" refers to legal precepts.
44. Gal. 3.9; Faith leads to salvation.
45. Gal. 3.13.
46. Gal. 3.19–21.
47. Gal. 3.23–25.
48. Gal. 3.27–4.7.
49. Gal. 4.24–6.
50. 2 Cor. 11.13.
51. Tert. IV.11.
52. On the formation of the New Testament canon, see esp. Helmut Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity (Introduction to the New Testament, 2)* (Fortress and De Gruyter: Philadelphia, Berlin, New York, 1982), 1–70. On Paul, see Koester, 97–146.
53. Harnack, 126.
54. Tert. IV.34.
55. Harnack, 131.
56. Tert. V.11.
57. Tert. I.24.
58. Tert. I.24.
59. Robert Smith Wilson, *Marcion: A Study of a Second Century Heretic* (James Clarke & Co.: London, 1933).
60. Hoffmann, *Marcion*, 287–90.
61. Hoffmann, like Harnack (*Marcion*, 22; *Neue Studien*, 15) and Wilson (*Marcion*, 45–46), believes in Marcion's Jewish background.
62. E. C. Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence* (SPCK: London, 1948; reprint, AMS Press: New York, 1978).
63. F. M. Braun, "Marcion et la gnose simonienne," *Byzantion* 25–27 (1955–57), 632–48.
64. U. Bianchi, "Marcion, théologien biblique ou docteur gnostique?" in *Selected Essays on Gnosticism, Dualism and Mysteriesophy* (Brill: Leiden, 1978), 320–27.
65. B. Aland, "Versuch."
66. E. Muehlenberg, "Marcion's Jealous God," in D. F. Winslow, ed., *Disciplina nostra: Essays in Memory of Robert F. Evans* (Philadelphia Patristic Foundation: Cambridge, MA, 1979), 93–113 and 203–5.
67. Harnack, 374\*–80\*.

68. J. G. Gager, "Marcion and Philosophy," *Vigiliae Christianae* 26 (1972), 53-59.
69. Tert. I.15.
70. Harnack, 165.
71. Harnack, 166-67.
72. Hipp. X.19.
73. Hipp. VII.31; X.19.
74. Harnack, 167, 333.
75. Harnack, 177-96.
76. See my *Expériences de l'extase, de l'Hellénisme au Moyen Age* (Payot: Paris, 1984), 119-44.
77. Harnack, 190-94.



# Chapter 6

## Manichæan Myth

Nous tremblons au-dessus de vous, livide armée,  
Et de votre feu noir nous sommes la fumée.

—VICTOR HUGO

### 1. Cosmogony

In the beginning were two substances divided from each other [*in exordio fuerunt duae substantiae a sese divisae*]. First God the Father, dwelling in the Kingdom of Light, eternal as to his origin, magnificent in his power, true in his nature, always exulting in his eternity, possessing wisdom and the attributes of life, by which are meant the twelve members of his Light, that is, the overflowing riches of his Kingdom. And in each of the members, innumerable treasures of great immensity are contained. Now the Father, first in his glory and incomprehensible in his grandness, possesses, united with him, the happy and glorious aeons whose number and length in time cannot be assessed. With them the very Father and Creator lives, and in his illustrious Kingdoms there is neither indigent nor infirm. His resplendent Kingdoms have been so well built on a luminous and happy earth [*supra lucidam et beatam terram*] that no one can ever shake or overturn them.

Bordering on one part or side with this holy and luminous earth, there was an earth of Darkness, deep and huge in size [*tenebrarum terra profunda et immensa magnitudine*], where fiery bodies, that is, all kinds of pestiferous beings dwelt. There endless Darknesses range, stemming from the same nature, with their innumerable misfits, and beyond them muddy and angry Waters with their inhabitants, shuddered by winds of awesome fury raised by their Archon and their Fathers. Then follows the region of Fire and destruction with its leaders and nations. And

likewise, in the middle of this region, there was a race of Fog and Smoke, with its awesome Archon and leader, surrounded by innumerable archons of whom he was the source and the origin. These were the five natures of the pestiferous earth [*terrae pestiferae*]. . .

. . . The Father of the happy Light knew of the threat of a great and devastating defilement lurching over from Darkness to his holy aeons [*saecula*], should he not oppose to it some extraordinary and illustrious deity, strong in his power, which would submit and destroy the plot of Darkness, thereby bringing everlasting peace to the inhabitants of Light.<sup>1</sup>

This passages come from a Latin translation of the Manichaean Genesis used by Augustine, *Mani's Epistula Fundamenti, or Letter on the Foundation of the World*. Among the many treatments of this Manichaean myth, the narrative of the XIth Book of *Scholies* of Theodore bar Kōnāi, Nestorian bishop of Kashkar in the VIth–VIIth centuries, makes use of the same source:<sup>2</sup> "Before the heaven and the earth and all that is in them existed, there were two principles, one Good and the other one Evil. The Good principle dwells in the Kingdom of Light [*athrā de muhrā*] and is called Father of Greatness."<sup>3</sup> Severus of Antioch adds that Light occupies the regions situated in the east, west, and north, whereas Darkness, the Tree of Death, occupies the southern regions. It is usually represented as a black triangle whose tip penetrates the infinite extension of Light from beneath it and whose mass continues southward. "The difference between the two principles," says Severus's source, "is as big as that between a king and a pig. One dwells in the place that fits him as in a palace, the other like a pig wallows in mud, feeds upon rotteness and delights in it, or like a snake coils in its hole."<sup>4</sup> The nature of Light is wisdom, the nature of Darkness is madness, says a Manichaean text translated into Chinese.<sup>5</sup>

"Substances" or "principles" (*arkhai*), Light and Darkness are uncreated and without beginning<sup>6</sup> and are not "roots" (*rhiza*) of each other.<sup>7</sup> Augustine and Ibn al-Nadīm<sup>8</sup> do not speak of any barrier between the two Kingdoms, but Severus<sup>9</sup> asserts that the southern side of the Tree of Life is separated from the Tree of Death by a wall, "in order not to give any occasion for covetousness to the Evil Tree which is in the south" and to avoid the Tree of Evil being tormented and "exposed to danger."<sup>10</sup> Severus means here that the Kingdom of Light does not conceal itself for defensive purposes but in order not to arouse the covetousness of the Kingdom of Darkness, thereby leading the latter into temptation. Titus of Bostra speaks likewise of an iron wall.<sup>11</sup>

The *terra lucida* (*athrā de nuhrā*) of the Father, a.k.a. King of the Garden (or World) of Light (*maliku janāni* [*'ālamī*] *'n-nūr*), has five compartments or "dwellings" (*shekinātā*): Intelligence, Reason, Thought, Reflection, and Will, which Epiphanius renders in Greek with *nous*, *ennoia*, *phrōnēsis* *enthymēsis*, *logismos*, and the Latin translation of the *Acts of Archelaus* with *mens*, *sensus*, *prudentia*, *intellectus*, *cogitatio*.<sup>12</sup> A slightly different list occurs in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*.<sup>13</sup>

These Pentads, which, as Michel Tardieu astutely noticed,<sup>14</sup> internally organize the whole Manichaean system, do not seem to fit into the twelve aeons of which the *Epistula Fundamenti* speaks. These form a Tetrad of aeons grouped by threes,<sup>15</sup> which explains why the Father is elsewhere called *tetraprosōpos* (Four-faced) or is ascribed four attributes by a Parthian source: Divinity, Light, Power, and Wisdom.<sup>16</sup> Yet there is no such thing as a Dyad Father–Great Spirit or a Triad of aeons or a second Pentad of elements (*stoicheia*);<sup>17</sup> all of this comes later, after the Father emanates (*proballein*, *produxit*) the Mother of the Living (*ēmā de hayyē*).<sup>18</sup>

The Kingdom of Darkness is a symmetrical antithesis of the Luminous Earth. Called Matter,<sup>19</sup> it has five Members, Worlds, "Five compartments of Evil,"<sup>20</sup> or *antra elementorum* (elemental recesses): Smoke, Fire, Wind, Waters, Darkness. As Augustine puts it,<sup>21</sup> "aliud tenebris, aliud aquis, aliud ventis, aliud igni, aliud fumo plenum, malum esse animalia in illis singulis nata elementis, serpentina in tenebris, natantia in aquis, volatilia in ventis, quadrupedia in igne, bipedia in fumo" (reptiles are born in Darkness, fish in Water, birds in Wind, quadrupeds in Fire, bipeds in Smoke).<sup>22</sup>

As for the King of Darkness in his Kingdom, object of an excellent study by Henri-Charles Puech,<sup>23</sup> this is how the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm describes him: "His head is the head of a lion and his body like the body of a dragon (great serpent). His wing is like the wing of a bird, his tail like the tail of a great fish, and his feet like the feet of a beast of burden."<sup>24</sup>

He is obviously the same Ialdabaoth that the *Apocryphon of John* introduced as a "lion-faced serpent with sparkling eyes of fire," adapted to the Pentad of elements of which he is the Lord: "His head is like that of a lion from the World of Fire; his wings and his shoulders look like those of an eagle, according to the image of the children of Wind; his hands and feet are like those of demons, according to the image of the children of Smoke; his belly, like a serpent's, according to the image of the children of Darkness; his tail, like a fish's belonging to the World of the children of Water."<sup>25</sup>

Each of the five Worlds of Darkness has its own Archon, its own metal, its own taste, and its own religious error, according to the following table:<sup>26</sup>

<i>World</i>	<i>Archon</i>	<i>Metal</i>	<i>Taste</i>	<i>Error</i>
1. Smoke	?	gold	salty	astrolatry
2. Fire	lion	tin	sour	fire-worshippers
3. Wind	eagle	iron	hot	idolatry
4. Water	fish	silver	sweet	baptists
5. Darkness	serpent	lead/tin	bitter	soothsaying

The five Archons are like the worms of the Five Trees of Evil,<sup>27</sup> each according to his own element. The supreme Archon is the quintessence of all five types of animals, elements, and provincial Archons who rule over each element. Yet sometimes he is supposed to be the bipedal Archon of the World of Smoke.<sup>28</sup>

The inhabitants of the Kingdom of Darkness are like our basest instincts. They are evil and stupid. They barely know one another, and, being "filled with perfect wickedness,"<sup>29</sup> they are divided against one another<sup>30</sup> and in perpetual war among themselves.<sup>31</sup> Thus fighting, the powers of Darkness reached the border of the Kingdom of Light, and their covetousness for Light proved even stronger than their mutual hatred. Reconciled with one another, they joined forces in an assault against the resplendent Earth:

All the limbs of the Tree of Darkness, which is Matter that perverts, arose and went up with powers so numerous that it is impossible to tell their numbers. All were clad in fiery matter.<sup>32</sup> And these limbs were different. Some had hard bodies and endless length; some others, incorporeal and intangible, had nevertheless a slight tangibility like demons and ghosts. After arising, all Matter rose with its winds, storms, waters, demons, ghosts, archons, and powers, all seeking carefully how to penetrate Light.<sup>33</sup>

Whether or not he was worried, as both Theodore and Simplicius insinuate,<sup>34</sup> the Father of Greatness was faced with a choice: either to send his five aeons of Light into battle or to create new warriors. Theodore bar Kōnāi believes that the five aeons, being made for times of peace, could not have intervened; Ibn al-Nadīm, on the contrary, that "these warriors of his were able to defeat him [the King of Darkness], but he wished to gain mastery in this affair by himself."<sup>35</sup> Eventually he decides to fight the enemy on his own and therefore proceeds to the First of three successive Creations, calling into being the Mother of the Living (*emmā de hayyē*) who in turn calls into being First Man (*'nashū qadmāyā*),

who calls his five Sons, the pure elements opposed to the impure elements of the King of Darkness: "Clear Air opposed to Smoke, refreshing Wind to burning Wind, Light to Darkness, invigorating Water to stagnant Water, heating Fire to devouring Fire."<sup>36</sup> According to Ibn al-Nadīm (trans. Dodge),

The Primal Man clad himself with five principles, which are the five deities: the ether (zephyr), wind, light, water, and fire. He took them as armament. The first thing that he put on was the ether, then he harnessed over the vast ether (zephyr) the courageous light, grinding over the light the water-possessing dust, and covering it with blowing wind. Then, taking the fire in his hand as a shield and spear, he descended rapidly until he stopped at the brink, close to the belligerents.

Thereupon the Ancient Devil (Iblīs al-Qadīm) repaired to his five principles, which are smoke, flame, obscurity, pestilential wind, and clouds, arming himself with them and making them a protection for him.<sup>37</sup>

The King of Darkness gets the better of the messengers of Light and swallows them without realizing that such food is highly toxic for one like himself. In turn the five Sons of God black out as if they had been bitten by a rabid dog or a poisonous snake. When he recovers, First Man addresses the Father of Greatness seven times. The Father proceeds therefore to a Second Creation, calling into being the Friend of Lights (*habbīb nahirē*), who calls the Great Architect (*bān rabbā*),<sup>38</sup> who calls Living Spirit (*ruhā hayyā*).<sup>39</sup> Living Spirit, who like the Father is endowed with five limbs (Intelligence, Reason, and so forth), extracts a Son from each of his limbs as follows:

- from Intelligence the Splenditenens;<sup>40</sup>
- from Reason the Great King of Honor (*malkā rabbā d' igārā*);
- from Thought Adamas of Light (*Adamas nuhrā*);
- from Reflection the King of Glory (*melēkh shubhā*);
- from Will the Porter (*sāblā*), a.k.a. Homophorus<sup>41</sup> and, commonly, as the kneeling Atlas who holds the earth on his shoulders.<sup>42</sup>

The five warriors of the Second Creation reach the Land of Darkness and find there First Man and his five Sons, who had been swallowed by the powers of Evil. Living Spirit emits a cry or Call; his voice becomes like a sharp sword when he talks to First Man. First Man hears and gives him Answer. The deities' Call and Answer rise up to Living Spirit and the Mother of the Living.<sup>43</sup> The *Acts of Archelaus*, though more succinct

than Theodore bar Kōnaī, adds here that Living Spirit drew First Man out of Darkness by stretching his right hand toward him, "and this is why when Manichaeans meet they give each other their right hand by virtue of this sign [*sēmeiou charin*], [to show] that they had been freed from Darkness; for in Darkness are all heresies, *in tenebris omnis haeresis esse.*"<sup>44</sup>

Having killed the Archons of Darkness, the Sons of the Living Spirit brought their corpses to the Mother of the Living, who flayed them and built eleven (or ten)<sup>45</sup> heavens out of their skins, flinging their bodies down into Darkness, where they formed eight earths. Whereas Theodore attributes to the Mother of the Living the role of the World Creator, the *Acts of Archelaus*<sup>46</sup> and other sources<sup>47</sup> ascribe it to the Living Spirit, who splits in three the substance of Light that had been in Darkness with First Man: one part, not contaminated by any mixture with Darkness, serves him to create the Sun and the Moon; another part, only slightly mixed with Darkness, to make the stars; and a third part, heavily affected by mixture, cannot be drawn out of the World (the dead Archons) and the living Archons active in it if not by a complex and lengthy process.<sup>48</sup>

According to John of Damascus,<sup>49</sup> the element earth derives from the flesh of the dead Archons, whereas mountains and rocks are their bones. This Manichaean World made Franz Cumont sigh, "Thus all parts of the nature surrounding us originate from the unclean corpses of the powers of evil. Pessimism has only seldom found a more appropriate image."<sup>50</sup> Hans Jonas ups the ante: "Manichaean pessimism has here devised the extreme imaginative expression of a negative view of the world: all the parts of nature that surround us come from the impure cadavers of the powers of evil."<sup>51</sup> This judgment is certainly too hasty; we will see why shortly (see sec. 5 below).

After Living Spirit has completed his demiurgic mission and the World has come into being, each of the five Sons of Spirit is allotted a function in the system. The Great King of Honor becomes its heavenly overseer. Splenditenens holds the reins of the "five resplendent gods," which are the five pure elements or the five Sons of First Man still imprisoned in the corpses of the Archons that now constitute the World and in the astral Archons that hold our earth in their grip.<sup>52</sup> Kneeling Atlas holds the earths on his shoulders.

The structure of the Manichaean cosmos is complex and must have been "scientifically" convincing for its adherents. Manichaeism indeed enhances the scientological tendency present in Gnosticism. Details of the cosmic mechanism intended to recover the particles of Light imprisoned in Darkness will be offered later.

According to Theodore bar Kōnāī, the Light from which the Sun and Moon are made is recovered by Living Spirit, who shows himself to the Archons, thus anticipating the episode of the “seduction of the Archons” described by other sources (see sec. 2 below). Be this as it may, from good Fire (*ex igne bono*) Living Spirit makes the Sun, from good Water (*ex bona aqua*),<sup>53</sup> the Moon, “Ship of Living Waters,” *navis vitalium aquarum*.<sup>54</sup> Besides these two glowing cosmic Ships, *lucidae naves*, he builds the three Wheels of Wind, Water, and Fire, set in motion by the King of Glory: “Gloriosum regem tres rotas impellentem ignis aquae et venti.”<sup>55</sup> The function of these Wheels, together forming a sort of water mill, is to recover the Light scattered in the World and bring it up to the Ships and at the same time to cast down into the lowest parts of the universe the litter of the heavenly Archons. A similar process, based on Manichaeism, was described in the gnostic (end of the IIIrd century or IVth century) treatise *Pistis Sophia*.

The system, whose goal is to recover the third part of Light still held in Darkness, is entrusted to the beings of the Third Creation, who know how to exploit the lowest propensities of the Archons and manipulate their unleashed, disorderly sexuality. The Third Creation is produced by the Supreme Father upon request from the Mother of Living, First Man, and Living Spirit and begins with the calling into being of the Third Messenger,<sup>56</sup> a.k.a. Virgin of Light,<sup>57</sup> Androgyne,<sup>58</sup> Malefemale.<sup>59</sup> The Third Messenger calls into being the Twelve Virgins or Virtues:<sup>60</sup> Kingship, Wisdom, Victory, Persuasion, Purity, Truth, Faith, Patience, Uprightness, Bounty, Justice, Light. The Messenger’s residence is the Sun, and the Twelve Virgins are the pilots of his heavenly Ship.<sup>61</sup> The first thing the Messenger does, according to Theodore bar Kōnāī, is to order the Great Architect to build a new earth and to raise there the three Wheels, which are now set in motion, while the Ships sail along. The momentous process of recovery of the Light scattered in the World has thereby begun.

## 2. The Seduction of the Archons

The following myth, whose gnostic counterparts (in SST and PS) derive from Manichaeism, is reported by several sources.<sup>62</sup>

In the most common version, in order to drive the living Archons to expel part of the Light they swallowed, the Messenger appears in the middle of the sky. To the male Archons he appears as a naked Virgin of Light of extraordinary beauty; and to the female Archons, as a seduc-

tive, naked young man. Augustine and his disciple Evodius know a version according to which this function is fulfilled by the Twelve Virtues.<sup>63</sup> In both cases the outcome is similar: the Archons' lustful propensities are heightened. The males, who would like to possess immediately the Virgin of Light, "scream out of lasciviousness and sweat runs from their gigantic bodies: this is the rain falling to the earth during thunderstorms."<sup>64</sup> Augustine's description gives further details of the aim of the whole operation:

Confronted with this attractive vision, the evil Powers' fervor and concupiscence redouble. The bonds of their loathsome reason are loosened, and suddenly all living soul that was still enclosed in their limbs breaks free and mixes with pure air. She gets completely purified, then rises to the luminous ships prepared to take her aboard and lead her to her homeland. The refuse containing the waste of the enemies falls in bits with the fire and the heat and mix with the trees, the plants and all the seeds, getting tinted in various colors.<sup>65</sup>

Evodius's version, which specifies that the Light substance is ejaculated by the Archons *per genitalia*, does not contradict the sources that insist on the Archons' sweat.<sup>66</sup> After all, all archontic emissions contain a part of Light, along with a part of Sin. The Messenger, who withdraws from the sky, separates Light from Sin and drops the Sin over the Archons, who reject it. Sin splits up into a part that falls onto dry ground, transforming itself into the Five Trees, ancestors of all plants, and a part that falls in water and gives birth to a monster, earthly embodiment of the King of Darkness.<sup>67</sup> Adamas kills the monster.

In terms of crudeness, vegetal life comes first. It is the worst part of the seed of the five male Archons and their male troops, ejaculated in the heat of concupiscence and even without a partner.

Animal life follows: It is the result of the aberrant exercise of sexuality on the part of the female Archons chained to the wheel of the Zodiac. These are fertilized by the luminous vision of the Messenger in the middle of the sky and find themselves pregnant with fatherless, monstrous children. Feeling unwell because of the spinning of the zodiacal wheel to which they are chained, the female Archons miscarry, and their progeny fall to the earth, eat the fruits of the Five Trees, copulate, and give birth to all animals. "This is the origin of all flesh that moves over the earth, in water and in the air" ("hinc est dicunt originem carniū omnium, quae moventur in terra, in aqua, in aere").<sup>68</sup> Having eaten from the Sin of concupiscence enclosed in the Trees, the abortive offspring of the archontesses become monsters and Asrēshtārs, a class of unidentified female ghouls.<sup>69</sup> At this point, the King of Darkness involves all of this



infernal fauna in a plot whose goal is the creation of man, which comes after a gigantic orgy and is the product of endless defilements.

### 3. The Creation of Man

"In his perverse plottings," the Great Archon Saklas (Syriac Ashaqlun, Pahlavi Az like the Zoroastrian primordial monster Azi Dahaka) "told those around him: What do you think of this great, rising Light? Do you see how it shakes heaven, how it overthrows most of the Powers! Under these circumstances it is better if you entrust me with the part of Light that you have in your custody. With it, I will produce an image of that great being [that is, the Messenger] that appeared to us in the full of his glory. In this way kingship will be ours, and we will eventually be freed from the life of Darkness."<sup>70</sup> Similarly in two Pahlavi fragments,<sup>71</sup> the angry Az sets out to create beings according to the male and female shapes of the Messenger, called Narisah or, more frequently in other texts, Rōshnshahr, "the God whose Kingdom is Light." Suffering and misery will be the lot of these creatures.

To gain possession of a concentration of their Light, Az teaches the male monsters and the Asrēshtārs to copulate. Rapidly learning the art of intercourse, the monsters generate offspring, which are immediately swallowed by Az, who thus incorporates most of the Light from their parents. Inciting to intercourse two particularly hateful lion-shaped demons of which he had made his own "garment," Az takes the product of their union and gives it the shape of man.<sup>72</sup>

Because of the Light stored in him, the first man, Gēhmurd, is related to the Kingdom of Light; yet because of the obscene ways in which he has been brought about, he is filled with all wickedness. Gēhmurd, who takes on the name of the Zoroastrian Primordial Man (Gayōmard),<sup>73</sup> is followed by his partner, Murdiyānag, "Woman of Glories."<sup>74</sup> Repeating the biblical blessings over the first human pair (Gen. 1:28–29), Az, like a consummate politician, delivers a deceiving speech before the two: "For you I made the earth and the heaven, Sun and Moon, Water and Fire, the Trees and plants, wild and tame animals, that they might bring you joy in the world, that you may become happy and joyful and follow my will."

The installment of the primordial pair on the earth takes place under the sign of ecological destruction. Springs are sullied, plants and animals are slain, for the humans had no idea of the existence of the Gods of Light.

When the five godly world rulers see the tragedy of Adam and Eve—for this is how they are called in Western testimonies—divine

substance imprisoned in flesh, they pity them and ask the Mother of the Living to send someone to their rescue.<sup>75</sup> This mission is entrusted to Jesus the Splendor, the God dwelling in the Ship of Living Waters (the Moon), whose function is to oversee the mechanism of recovery of the Light. Jesus (Arabic 'Isā), whom the Pahlavi texts designate as Xradēshahr, "God whose Kingdom is Reason,"<sup>76</sup> wakes Adam from his deathly sleep, confers upon him the ability to walk, and keeps the Archon and his female partner away from him. Telling him the history of creation, he teaches the man his own origin: "Jesus showed Adam the Fathers in the [heavenly] heights and his own [Jesus'] person exposed to everything, to the panther's teeth and to the elephant's tusks, devoured by the voracious, swallowed by the gluttons, mixed and imprisoned in all that exists, tied to the stench of Darkness."<sup>77</sup>

The revelation made by Jesus, who is the Tree of Knowledge,<sup>78</sup> allows Adam to acknowledge his pitiful state. The story is continued by Ibn al-Nadīm according to a pattern we already encountered in gnostic writings.

The Archon, who is the father of Eve, lusts after his own daughter and has intercourse with her. She gives birth to Cain, who in his turn has intercourse with his mother Eve, and the product of this circular incest is Abel, followed by two twin daughters, Wise of the Ages, who becomes Abel's wife, and Daughter of Corruption, who becomes Cain's wife. Wise of the Ages, seduced by an Archon, gives birth to Lamentation (Faryād) and Laden with Lamentation (Pur-Faryād). Her husband, Abel, suspecting Cain of being the father of his wife's offspring, leaves Wise of the Ages and complains before Eve. Offended (and for once legitimately so), Cain breaks Abel's skull with a boulder and takes Wise of the Ages for his wife. The Archon Sindīd teaches Eve magic so that she can seduce Adam, who upon 'Isā's commandment had not approached her anymore. From their conjugal union the Stranger, Shātil-Seth, is born, whom Adam protects with three circles, upon which he pronounces the sacred Name of the King of the Gardens, of First Man, and of Living Spirit. He receives a crown from heaven as a sign that Seth has been recognized as sinless. When Eve lures Adam again into intercourse, Seth takes his father away eastward, to prevent other defilements. After his death, Adam goes to Paradise, whereas "Shātil, with Lamentation and Laden with Lamentation and their mother, Wise of the Ages, accomplished good works with one idea of right and one way of life until the time of their deaths, but Eve, Cain, and the Daughter of Corruption went to Hell."<sup>79</sup>

Sethel, son of Adam, is mentioned in the Coptic *Kephalaia*,<sup>80</sup> in the list of prophets according to al-Shahrastānī (Adam, Seth, Noah, Abraham,

Buddha, Zarathustra, Christ, Paul, and Mani) and in other Manichaean sources.<sup>81</sup> Parthian and Pahlavi fragments confirm the authenticity of Ibn al-Nadīm's source.<sup>82</sup> Among the apocrypha used by Mani<sup>83</sup> must have been the no longer extant<sup>84</sup> *Apocalypse of Seth* mentioned by the Cologne Mani Codex.<sup>85</sup>

Mani's system, as it appears now, is connected in more than one way to the form of Gnosticism professed by Hippolytus's Sethians. In the history of humankind containing the "immovable race" of the Stranger Seth (*sperma heteron*: Gen. 4:25) must have played a prominent role.

In the Manichaean narrative of creation, horrendous episodes of unheard-of debauchery are multiplied according to the overall logic of Manichaeism, which consists of rejecting sexuality as the archontic activity par excellence. Thus sexuality derives from our share of Darkness and shows our strong relation with Darkness. The repetition of tremendous obscenities is made to display the extent to which humankind is fallen and the sin accumulated upon it mighty. The hypothesis that humankind evolved from a single pair necessarily points to incest as the only possibility for the multiplication of the species. Yet in Mani incest becomes system, in so far as the Archon Yahveh has intercourse with his own daughter Eve, Cain has intercourse with his mother, he weds his own daughter who is at the same time his sister, and so on, in such a way that Manichaean primordial parenthood is deliberately difficult to grasp: Abel is Cain's brother but also his son, Eve being his mother and his sister-in-law; in *Wise of the Ages* Abel weds his own sister, his cousin (daughter of his aunt Eve) and his niece! This says it all: To the extent that humankind originates from a series of incredible abominations and multiplies in lamentable ignorance of the most elementary taboos of incest, its situation must be truly desperate.

#### 4. Eschatology

The Manichaean system, as we already saw, was in its author's intention a *scientology*, whose purpose was to offer exhaustive answers to all questions concerning the origin and destiny of the world and humankind. At the very core of this scientology is *gnostic anti-astrological polemic*. This explains why Manichaeism, like Gnosticism, was a form of *counterculture*, and it sheds some light on Mani's personal disaster. In the eyes of the Sassanian ruler Bahrām I, Mani was a dangerous antinomian. Having

him wait at the door until he finished his meal, Bahrām eventually addressed Mani with the following words: "You are not welcome. . . . What are you good for, since you are neither a wrestler nor a hunter? Maybe you are useful as a physician or a healer? But how, since you do not practice?"<sup>86</sup>

It will be impossible to describe here all of the astrological subtleties of Mani's system. Only a few of them will be examined here, in order to understand the functioning of the "Pillar of Glory" set in motion by Jesus.

Mānī said, "The King of the World of Light commanded one of his angels to create this world and to build it from those mixed particles, so as to rescue the particles of Light from those of darkness. So they built ten heavens and eight earths. He made one angel responsible for bearing the heavens and another for raising up the earths. For each heaven he made twelve gates and vestibules, large and broad. Each one of the gates was similar to its companion and facing it, with two doors for each one of the vestibules. For each one of the doors of these vestibules he made six thresholds, with thirty lanes (ways) for each threshold and twelve rows for each lane. . . ."

He said, "He caused the sky on the lowest of the earths to reach the heavens, and he made a trench around this world into which to throw the Darkness which was sifted out from the Light. Behind that trench he formed a wall, so that none of the Darkness separated from the Light could get out."

Mānī said, "Then he created the sun and the moon for sifting out whatever there was of Light in the world. The sun sifted out the Light which was mixed with the devils (i.e., archons) of heat, while the moon sifted out the Light which was mixed with the devils of cold. This [Light] rises up on a Column of Praise [Arabic *subuh*, probably from Syr. *shubhā*, corresponding to the Greek *doxa*, "Glory"; it is actually a "Pillar of Glory," *stylos tēs doxēs*], together with what there are of prayers, good words and good works."

He said, "This is thrust into the sun, then the sun thrusts it to the Light above it, in the world of praise (or Glory), in which world it proceeds to the highest unsullied Light. This action continues until what remains of the Light which is bound [to Darkness] is only what the sun and the moon have been able to extract. At this point the angel who is bearing up the earths [Atlas] rises up, while the other angel [Splenditenens] relaxes his hold on the heavens, so that the highest mixes with the lowest and a fire flares up, which blazes among these things (i.e., remaining Light), continuing to burn until what is left among them of the Light is set free."

Mānī said, "This conflagration will last for a period of one thousand, four hundred and sixty-eight years." He said, "If the state of

affairs comes to an end and the bold chieftainess, the Spirit of Darkness, sees the rescue of Light and the exaltation of the angels while the warriors and the guards [of Darkness] are surrendering, and if she sees the battle and the warriors about her accusing her, she will retreat to a tomb prepared for her and this tomb will be blocked with a rock the size of the world, which will barricade her in it."<sup>87</sup>

The gates, vestibules, doors, thresholds, and lanes, confirmed by a Sogdian fragment,<sup>88</sup> seem to refer to the solar year.<sup>89</sup> The reference is used elsewhere as well, for example, in the Coptic *Kephalaion* 57, *On Adam's Conception*:

There are five kinds of Rulers and Leaders in the Sphere of the Zodiac and beneath it. The first is Year, the second Month, the third Day, the fourth Hour, the fifth Minute. These five places and five houses are in the Sphere and in the heavens, and these places have five Powers who are their Lords. There is the Lord of the Year, the Lord of the Month, the Lord of the Day, the Lord of the Hour, and the Lord of the Minute. Each one of them commands over those who are like him, and the superiors command over the inferiors [for instance, Hour over Minute]. Humans and mammals are generated by these Powers. And these Powers are in charge from the beginning of creation to the end of the world.<sup>90</sup>

The text further specifies that during the period of Adam and his son Sethel, time was administered by the Lord of the Year. Then the turn of the Lord of the Month came, and "by the same ratio that the Month is shorter than the Year, the lifespan of those born [during the administration of the Lord of the Month] became shorter than the lifespan of those born during the administration of the Lord of the Year."

According to the same mechanism of progressively decreasing rulers of time, human life has recently become quite precarious under the administration of the shortest of all Lords, the Lord of the Minute. People are ever uglier and shorter, "their doctrines and their thoughts are full of wickedness." And it is fitting that it should be so, for the Light imprisoned in the world is now close to the minimum that will soon trigger the end of it all.

Al-Shahrastānī, who wrote in 521 H./1143 C.E., reports the calculations performed by the Manichaean leader Abū Sa'īd in 217 H./839 C.E., according to which the total timespan of the world would be 12,000 years. By his time, 11,700 years had already gone by, and Abū Sa'īd concluded that the final conflagration would take place in 300 years.<sup>91</sup> Shahrastānī should therefore have been witness to the eschatological judgment.

All sources confirm that the conflagration, the *Frashegird*, would last 1,468 years, during which the remaining imprisoned Light should reach the Moon and the Sun and then the Kingdom of Light. From the balcony of Paradise, the Gods will contemplate the Black Fire that consummates Matter.<sup>92</sup> Another fragment in Pahlavi specifies that Rōshnshahr orders the Creator-of-the-New-World to build in the far south a prison where all demons will be jailed forever after *Frashegird*.<sup>93</sup> The Coptic Manichaean *Psalm 233* gives further details of the scene: "Beside the whole world, which will exist for a while, there is a great building built outside of this world. When the Builder will be ready, the whole world will be dissolved, will be set on fire so that flame may consume it."<sup>94</sup>

The Light leftovers will be assembled into the last Statue, *andrias*, whereas Darkness and its Archons will mass into a Ball, *Bōlos, globus* in Augustine,<sup>95</sup> swallowed forever behind the gate of the eternal Prison.<sup>96</sup>

## 5. Manichaean Astrology

The history of humankind now, during the "intermediate period" that will last to the conflagration, which will neutralize the aggressive Powers of Darkness, is dominated by the great machinery, the water mill (that is, the Zodiac) with twelve buckets (the twelve astrological signs) set in motion by the Third Messenger. The first fifteen days of every month, the Light freed from Darkness in the form of souls of the dead rises along the Pillar of Glory (a.k.a. Perfect Man), which is the Milky Way, to the Ship of the Moon, which gradually fills up and becomes the full Moon. During the last fifteen days of the month the Ship of the Moon gradually pours all its cargo of Light into the Ship of the Sun, which transmits it to the Kingdom of Light. The Moon is emptied until it disappears, then fills again.<sup>97</sup>

Mani probably thought of the planets as moving on a plane, the *zōnē* or zodiacal belt, among the twelve signs.<sup>98</sup> This means that the first seven among the ten heavens are *not* the planetary heavens. Mani singles out the Sun and Moon, which are manifestly good, but significantly resumes an idea that had already been expressed by the "protognostics," Simon and his successors: that the planets (Leaders) are responsible for all evil in the world: "All that occurs in the world, above and below, wars, confusion, deportation, famine, avarice, and property, all this increases and decreases according to the action of the Leaders. They set in motion all creation."<sup>99</sup>

Like Gnosticism of which it is a late outcome, Manichaeism never tires of polemicizing against astrology, which thwarts human free will.

The five planets and the twelve signs of the Zodiac are Archons of Darkness.<sup>100</sup>

According to *Kephalaion 47, On the Four Great Things*,<sup>101</sup> there are four classes of Archons: One consists of the Powers that dwell in the ten heavens under the starry Wheel of the Zodiac; another one is made up of the Archons of the eight earths, four mixed and four frankly evil, beneath the human earth; a third one consists of the walls—four mountains and three Vehicles—that surround the world; and the last one, of the firstborns and the leaders of the former three classes of Archons, who are chained to the Wheel of the Zodiac.

*Kephalaion 69, On the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac and the Five Stars*,<sup>102</sup> puts the twelve zodiacal signs and the five Leaders of the Archons tied to the Zodiac (which are nothing but the five planets, that is, seven minus the Sun and Moon) under supervision of an *apaitêlês* (an overseer, lit. tax collector—the word is synonymous with *paralêmtês*, used in the gnostic tractate *Pistis Sophia*, which underwent heavy influence from Manichaeism).

The five Archons are the Dark Rulers of the five elements: Jupiter rules over Smoke, Venus over Fire (this is ironical from the viewpoint of traditional astrology),<sup>103</sup> Mars over Wind, Mercury over Water, Saturn over Darkness. Two other elements are added to the list, which are not the Sun and the Moon (the good Ships that collect light) but are probably the constellations Caput and Cauda Draconis, here generically called *Katabibazontes*.

The five Archons are the Rulers of the twelve signs of the Zodiac according to an order of distribution that is again quite singular, no doubt made up by Mani himself. Smoke rules over Gemini and Sagittarius; Fire over Aries and Leo; Wind over Taurus, Aquarius, and Libra; Water over Cancer, Virgo, and Pisces; Darkness over Capricorn and Scorpio. The Sun and Moon, as already stated, are entirely beneficent.

Now that we know who the five and the twelve are, we can return to the Manichaean Genesis and analyze its profound astrological implications. We remember that the Twelve Virtues or the bisexual Messenger appeared in the middle of heaven in order to instill desire in the Archons. When their purpose was achieved, the male Archons went amok. Evodius further specifies that this state of sexual arousal ends up in ejaculation *per genitalia*. This seed (or soul) of the archons contained Light, which was picked up by the Third Messenger, who separated Light from Darkness and dropped the residual substance over the earth. There the substance was further divided up into a part that fell on dry land and gave birth to the Five Trees, which are nothing but *antimimon pneuma*, defined in gnostic texts as the Tree of Iniquity—that

is, the negative influences of the five evil planets, of the twelve evil signs of the Zodiac, and of all troops of heavenly Archons. Being a quintessence of the worst of vegetal and animal life, human beings are also a quintessence of the *counterfeit spirit*.

As we well know, the number five serves as a constant basis for classification in Manichaeism: we have five Trees, five Archons, five Elements, five planets, and so on. This is the systematic expression of what the gnostics called *antimimon pneuma*, the negative aspects derived from the planets. Thus the five planets become central in the Manichaean system and force their number upon other realms of reality that were not commonly classified according to a pentadic scheme, such as the four elements (which, obviously, in Manichaeism became five).

Thus the number five was first the number of Darkness, of the evil planetary rulers. It was further extended to the World of Light, which is seen as a *typos* to which Darkness is the *antitypos* or mold.

If in the Manichaean system Light and Darkness were coeternal, in Mani's mind, we can tell with certainty, Darkness came first.

## 6. Anthropology and Ethics

It will be impossible to examine here anything but a very few of the subtleties of Manichaean anthropology and of the ethical consequences that derive from it. Manichaeism fills the checklist of "distinctive traits" associated with dualism: anticosmism, antisomatism, antinomianism, encratism, vegetarianism, and docetism. Scholars chose it, therefore, to represent the ideal type of all dualisms and pessimisms. Needless to say, Manichaeism is hardly pessimistic. The theory of the double nature of humanity and cosmos can lead to various attitudes, including the perfectly optimistic one according to which the world reveals itself *every day* as an epiphany of the Kingdom of Light.

"When we came to know the true God and the pure Law," says the Uigur *Xuāstvánift*, "we knew the Two Roots and the Three Moments."<sup>104</sup> The Three Moments—prior, middle, and posterior—refer to the primordial state in which Light and Darkness were distinct, to their mixture, and to their final separation.<sup>105</sup> The Two Roots are the two principles, also present in human nature and in the nature that surrounds us, in which the Manichaean "awakened" is supposed to discern them uninterruptedly. As a matter of fact, human-microcosmos is the faithful image of the macrocosmos. Sin occupies in them exactly the same place that the Archons of the Zodiac, those who cause earthquakes and all



wickedness, occupy in the universe. The human body was built with the five material elements of the Archons of Darkness, whereas the human soul was fashioned from the five limbs of Light. It is endowed with a skeleton made by Intelligence, a nervous system made by Reason, a circulatory system made by Thought, a "flesh" made by Reflection, and a "skin" made by Will.<sup>106</sup> Besides, the soul possesses Intelligence, Reason, and so forth from the luminous aeons.

Imprisoned in the body of Darkness, the soul is delivered unto sin, which exposes her to all errors and makes her forget her origin. The Intelligence-Light frees the soul from the jail of the body, chaining the five limbs of sin. A "New Man," "Son of Justice," replaces the former fallen man, and the five components of his soul are thenceforth Love (Intelligence), Faith (Reason), Perfection (Thought), Patience (Reflection), and Wisdom (Will). This state of tranquility must be accompanied by total submission to the rules of the Manichaean community, otherwise a brother may incur sin anew.<sup>107</sup>

Obviously this does not at all imply the conception of "two souls"—a good and an evil one—invented by Augustine in one of his innumerable attempts to slander his former coreligionists.<sup>108</sup> The game is played between soul and body. The soul (*anima viva*) is awakened, strengthened, and enlivened by Jesus, whose brother the "New Man" thus becomes.<sup>109</sup> Jesus himself, besides his cosmic aspect as Moon God, has another hypostasis, which is the *Jesus patibilis*, or suffering Jesus, "crucified on every piece of wood" (*omni suspensus a ligno*),<sup>110</sup> who displays the wounds of the Passion suffered by every soul that splits successfully from Darkness.<sup>111</sup> Thus the whole world is the "Cross of Light" on which Jesus is crucified.<sup>112</sup>

Besides these two aspects—cosmic and soteriological—Jesus is also the great prophet who precedes Mani as he will precede Mohammed, a historical apparition of which the Moon is the epiphany of Light. Mani was a docetist of the phantasiastic kind, thus holding that Jesus' flesh was not real.<sup>113</sup> Contrary to Marcion, he denied any reality to the Savior's Passion and death:

The enemy who hoped to have crucified the very Savior, Father of the Righteous, found himself crucified in his stead. For it was the Archon of Darkness who was tied on to the cross, he who wore the crown of thorns with his companions, he who was clad in a purple mantle. He alone drank the vinegar and the bile that the Lord was supposed to have drunk. All that the Lord seemed to undergo was (actually) undergone by the Powers of Darkness. And it was them whom the nails and the spear perforated.<sup>114</sup>

When, living the cosmic Passion of Jesus *omni suspensus a ligno*, the Old Man would change into a New Man, his soul becoming "alive" and united in brotherhood with the aeon Jesus, the adept was bound to exercise a continual process of discrimination toward both himself and the surrounding world, separating the actions of Light from the actions of Darkness. This became an ethical "golden rule" enounced by a Sogdian fragment: *the body must always be sacrificed in the interest of the soul.*<sup>115</sup> More generally, the "thought of death," the dark thought that clings to physicality, must be avoided, for it is that which produces all sin: greed, desire, vengeance, anger, wrath, furor, hatred.<sup>116</sup>

The Manichaeans were encratite. They rejected marriage, which according to them went back to Saklas's project for Adam and Eve,<sup>117</sup> and execrated sexuality and procreation. Yet these rules only extended to the elect (*electi*):

He who would enter the cult must examine his soul. If he finds that he can subdue lust and covetousness, refrain from eating meats, drinking wine, as well as from marriage, and if he can also avoid [causing] injury to water, fire, trees, and living things, then let him enter the cult. But if he is unable to do all of these things, he shall not enter the cult. If, however, he loves the cult, but is unable to subdue lust and craving, let him seize upon guarding the cult and the Elect, that there may be an offsetting of his unworthy actions, and times in which he devotes himself to work and righteousness, nighttime prayer, intercession, and pious humility (supplication). That will defend him during his transitory life and at his appointed time, so that his status will be the second status in the life to come.<sup>118</sup>

Does this mean that the *auditores* will become *electi* in their last life, before reaching the Paradise of Light, as Augustine suggests?<sup>119</sup> Is it true, as Augustine asserts, that the Manichaean doctrine of reincarnation states that everyone will return in the guise of a plant or an animal, with the exception of the Manichaean auditors and elect? This would indeed furnish an explanation for the deep Manichaean respect for life: "They believe that the herbs and the trees are alive and the life that is in them is endowed with sensibility and able to suffer when hurt. This is why no one can sever or pluck anything without inflicting suffering upon it. For this reason they believe that it is not permissible to prune cultivated ground. In their stupidity, they accuse agriculture, the most innocent of all techniques, of multiple crimes."<sup>120</sup>

Elsewhere Augustine indicates that the Manichaeans rejected the idea that a human soul could be reincarnated in a being smaller than a

fox.<sup>121</sup> Whether or not it was based on a reincarnation theory, Manichaean vegetarianism was a fact: "They believe that the substance of God is mixed with food as it is mixed with the whole world. This substance, they believe, is purified by their elect through their own lifestyle, which is holier and better than that of the auditors."<sup>122</sup>

Interspersed with frequent fasts,<sup>123</sup> the diet of the elect (one of the important parts of the "Seal of the Mouth") is meant to free the Light contained in those plants that are richer in divine substance, such as melon.<sup>124</sup>

Whereas the catechumens are supposed to fast every Sunday for fifty weeks of every year, the elect also fast on Mondays.<sup>125</sup> Fast punishes the Archons dwelling in the human body, purifies the soul from Darkness, prevents the Light contained in food from being harmed, and contributes to the construction of the Cross of Light.<sup>126</sup> The great collective fast took place during the Bēma (Gk. *bēma*, "throne") celebration, when Mani's empty throne was displayed in commemoration of his death.<sup>127</sup>

While the elect were supposed to practice the Three Seals—of the bosom (perpetual celibacy), of the hand (avoiding contact with matter), and of the mouth (speech and food discipline)<sup>128</sup>—the auditors had to fast every Sunday, recite prayers to the Sun and Moon, give alms, dedicate to the church a member of their family or a slave to become elect, and contribute to the building of monasteries.<sup>129</sup> Augustine's tendentious assertion that the Manichaeans "would not give bread to a beggar" must apply to the elect, not to the auditors.<sup>130</sup> Likewise, Manichaean labor ethics do not seem to be as revolutionary as Augustine would imply, saying that it is better to be a usurer than a farmer, for "whoever lends money does not hurt the Cross of Light." In reality, as Prosper Alfaric noticed, although better than agriculture, money lending is anyway a sort of theft absolutely contrary to the "Seal of the Hand."<sup>131</sup> The same Seal leads to antinomian attitudes such as the rejection of war, hunting, and agriculture:

Before passing over into plants and trees, the divine substance abducted by the demons lies all over the ground. It is also spread in the air and even in the depth of the earth. Even stones have the faculty of feeling and thinking. Thus a perfect Manichaean would strive to live in peace with the whole nature. He knows that everything in it leads to the triumph of the good. Therefore he will refrain from upsetting its harmony. He will not plow, for he could not do it without torturing God's limbs. He would not even take a bath, out of fear of bursting water.<sup>132</sup>

## 7. Manichaeism

Manichaeism is an original re-elaboration of the type of Gnosticism called Sethian by Hippolytus, entailing radical dualism of Light and Darkness, attenuated by the presence of the Spirit (*pneuma*) in the midst of all this. Mani equally gave credit to the gnostic stories concerning the "immovable race" of Seth the Stranger.

At the core of Mani's system we find the gnostic conception of the antimimon *pneuma* (counterfeit spirit), an expression of complete rejection of the curtailment of free will entailed by astrology. This explains the abundance of Pentads used by Mani, which derive from the five planets of astrology (minus the Sun and the Moon) submitted to a singular interpretation.

It seems more than probable, as several scholars believe, that Mani had a special reverence for Marcion. Like Marcion, he shows remarkable fondness for the parable of the two trees in Luke 6:43 (and Matt. 7:18), which opens the exposition of the Manichaeism doctrine according to the *Acts of Archelaus*:<sup>133</sup> God could not be the creator of Satan. Likewise, Manichaeism docetism, which asserts that Christ was born from the bosom of the Father (John 1:18) and not from "the blood and flesh and the other miseries of a woman" (*ex sanguine et carne ac reliquis mulierum spurcitiis*),<sup>134</sup> bears Marcion's imprint even in the choice of words. Without being named, Marcion seems to be the righteous one after Paul, of whom *Kephalaion* 1 speaks.<sup>135</sup> And without being listed among the prophets who advance the true religion until the coming of Mani himself,<sup>136</sup> Marcion is the object of particular respect.

Resuming Marcionite arguments, Manichaeism shows a strong anti-Judaic tendency. The main theme of the rather monotonous Manichaeism Bishop Faustus of Milevum, refuted by Augustine in a large treatise in thirty-three books (400 C.E.), is simply the Marcionite antithesis between the Old and New Testaments. Augustine himself<sup>137</sup> was forced to recognize in him "a penetrating intelligence and elegance of style," as well as the unstained reputation for exemplary living.<sup>138</sup>

Whereas Gnosticism covers a very wide spectrum of options and attitudes about the Old and the New Testament, Manichaeism is unambiguous: The biblical god is the Great Archon Saklas, who produces man together with his female partner, Nebrōel. He is a hypostasis of the King of Darkness and has no part in the creation of the world. Mainstream Christianity, accused of Judaism and vulgarity, is not spared either. In particular, the Manichaeism go even further than Marcion in denying Christ any sort of physicality or suffering; the true Christ is, according to

them, a cosmic and salvific entity dwelling in the Moon and at the same time present as *Jesus patibilis* everywhere in the form of scattered, suffering Light. To allege the death of this God on the cross is blasphemy.

The constant discrimination exerted by the Manichaean elect consists in the separation of actions and thoughts belonging to Light from those belonging to Darkness. This entails abstention from the darkest of all among human acts, fornication (encratism), and from the darkest of all foods, the flesh of animals (vegetarianism).

Manichaean dualism is radical and will be resolved by the final victory of Light over Darkness. Nevertheless, Darkness in itself is indestructible and irreducible: It will be imprisoned not eliminated, evicted not suppressed.

Contrary to Gnosticism, Manichaeism does not deny the principle of ecosystemic intelligence, in so far as the Demiurge of this world is the Living Spirit. The biblical god has only shaped the first human couple. The structure of the universe reveals the wisdom of the aeons of Light. The world's body is made of Darkness, but its Light soul is indissolubly mixed with it. Suffering as it may be in the embrace of Matter, Light nevertheless shows in every blade of grass. Moreover, the Sun and Moon are a constant, beneficent presence that reveals in this world the coming Paradise of Light.

This notwithstanding, the Manichaean universe cannot be said to be "good" in the Platonic sense of the word. Its disappearance, which will mark the completion of the recovery of Light, is viewed as a liberating event. Thus Manichaeism is antic cosmic yet all the contrary of pessimism.

This absence of pessimism follows not only from the final eviction of Darkness but also and especially from the immediate experience of the world, which is far from traumatic despite the many interdictions and abstentions. The Manichaean does not cultivate that absence of reverence before creation that some gnostics do. That part of nature which is an epiphany of Light constitutes a mystery to the Manichaean, the object of endless astonishment.

This Manichaean awareness of the miracle of nature is magnificently described in a Pahlavi text: "The sages and the righteous are able to recognize the pure goodness of Paradise, infinite in space and time, in the mixed, limited and transient goodness of this world. And, likewise, in the itemized and limited evil of this world, the global and unlimited evil of hell."<sup>139</sup>

As far as the anthropic principle is concerned, Manichaeism is a form of Gnosticism. Human beings are endowed with body and soul

only, not with body, soul, *and* spirit. Like the gnostic human being, the Manichaeon is superior to his producers. Gnostic anthropological optimism seems to reach its most democratic and triumphant expression in Manichaeism: Every human being is endowed with a soul that will eventually partake of salvation. However, Mani admits that after the final judgment there will be damned souls, who will be compressed in the dark and poisonous Ball and imprisoned for all eternity.<sup>140</sup>

The use of Marcionite anti-Judaic arguments in Manichaeism should not mask the great differences between Mani and Marcion. For the latter, the two Realms are by definition separated; for the former, they are by definition mixed.

To the extent that Mani had recourse to biblical materials, he used gnostic inverse exegesis, sometimes, perhaps, with a certain originality. He shares with gnostics the ideas that Saklas is the Old Testament god, that he is the father of Adam and Eve, that he has intercourse with his daughter, that Jesus is the Snake and the Tree of Knowledge. Yet the history of the human race after Cain, full of disgusting surprises, is not borrowed from any extant gnostic source.

With Manichaeism, the history of ancient dualistic trends is concluded. Next we will move to the Middle Ages, first in the Byzantine Empire, then in Europe.

So far we have been able to ascertain a number of differences among Gnosticism, Marcionism, and Manichaeism. These distinctions can easily be summarized in a table that shows how each assesses ecosystemic intelligence, the anthropic principle, and the superiority of humankind to the world and its creators.

	Ecosystemic Intelligence	Anthropic Principle	Superiority of Humankind
Gnosticism	-	-	+
Marcionism	-	+	-
Manichaeism	+	-	+

## Notes

1. Augustine, *Contra Epistolam Fundamenti XIII*.182-83, pp. 423-25; XV.184, pp. 429-30; *Contra Fel.* XIX.533, p. 695 (Eng. trans. mine), from *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin*, vol. 17: *Six traités anti-manichéens*, ed. and trans. R. Jolivet and M. Jourjon (Desclée de Brouwer: Paris, 1961). This edition does not contain the bulkiest anti-Manichaeon tract by

Augustine (*Contra Faustum Manichaeum libri XXXIII*, ed. J. Zycha, CSEL 25, 249–797) or *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum lib. II*, PL 32 col. 1309–78. English translations of several anti-Manichaean writings of Augustine are available in Philip Shaff, ed., *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7: *Saint Augustine: The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists* (reprint of the 1887 edition, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI, 1979). The best introduction to Augustine's relation to Manichaeism is still Prosper Alfaric's *L'Évolution intellectuelle de Saint Augustin* (Nourry: Paris, 1918).

2. A French translation of this text by H. Pognon is available in Franz Cumont, *Recherches sur le Manichéisme I: La Cosmogonie manichéenne d'après Théodore bar Khôni* (Lamertin: Brussels, 1908). M. A. Kugener and F. Cumont, *Recherches sur le Manichéisme II: Extrait de la CXXIII<sup>e</sup> Homélie de Sévère d'Antioche; III: L'Inscription de Salone* (Lamertin: Brussels, 1912), made a number of other anti-Manichaean writings available in translation.

Homily CXXIII of Severus, monophysite patriarch of Antioch (512–18) condemned by the 536 Synod of Constantinople, was based on another version of the Manichaean Genesis (the *Book of Giants?*), also used by Titus of Bostra in his anti-Manichaean tract written after 370, copied by Epiphanius, *Pan.* 66.14 (text in Kugener, *Recherches II*, 154–56) and by Theodoret of Cyrhus (*Haereticarum fabularum compendium* L26; text in Kugener, 152–53). As Kugener notices (p. 172), "Severus received a singular reward for the trouble" he had taken in refuting Mani: In 536 he was anathematized as a *Manichaean!* His Homilies were preserved by the Syrian Jacobites in two versions. Homily CXXIII was translated from Syriac into Greek and retranslated from Greek into Syriac in the VIth century. James of Edessa revised the translation in 700–701, probably using the Greek text.

3. Cumont, *Recherches I*, 7–8.
4. Kugener, *Recherches II*, 97.
5. *Traité* 1913, 114–16. Three Manichaean texts in Chinese were discovered in the "Cave of the Thousand Buddhas" close to Dūnhuang in Xinjiāng by Sir Aurel Stein. Two of the documents were later bought by Aurel Stein and Paul Pelliot, whereas the third was taken to Peking and published in 1909 by Luo Zhenyn under the title *Bōsījūo cānjīng* ("Incomplete Scripture of a Persian Religion"). This text was translated in 1911–13 by Édouard Chavannes and Paul Pelliot, "Un Traité manichéen retrouvé en Chine," *Journal Asiatique*, November–December 1911, 499–617; January–February 1913, 99–199; and March–April 1913, 261–394.

The manuscript of A. Stein is deposited in the British Library. It contains hymns, translated by Waldschmidt and Lentz in 1926 (*Die Stellung Jesu im Manichäismus*) and 1933 (*Manichäische Dogmatik*) and translated again by Tsui Chi in 1943, with annotations by W. Henning.

The third text, translated into Chinese in 731 from an Iranian (probably Parthian) original, is divided between the British Library and Paris (the "Pelliot Fragment," published together with the *Traité*). The two parts were published together in Chinese in 1928. The first part was translated by Haloun and Henning in 1952.

The recent edition and German translation of these texts belongs to H. Schmidt-Glntzer, *Chinesische Manichaica* (Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1987).

6. Titus of Bostra *Adv. Man.* I.16.
7. Severus, p. 90 Kugener.
8. Ibn Abī Ya'qūb al-Nadīm is the most important Muslim doxographer and heresiologist. He devotes to Manichaeism a chapter (IX:1) of his *Fihrist* (ca. 989), ed. and trans. Gustav Flügel, *Mani, seine Lehre und seine Schriften: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Manichäismus* (Brockhaus: Leipzig, 1862). An English translation is available in Bayard Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture* (Columbia Univ. Press: New York, 1970), vol. 2, 773–806.

Another Arabic doxographer who gives important information on Manichaeism is al-Shahrastānī, *Book of Religious and Philosophical Sects*, ed. W. Cureton (London, 1846; reprint, Leipzig, 1923). The best recent translation of this work belongs to Jean-Claude Vadet: M. b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-milal: Les Dissidences de l'Islam* (P. Geuthner: Paris, 1984).

9. Severus, p. 103 Kugener.
10. Severus, p. 104 Kugener.
11. Titus of Bostra L7, quoted in Prosper Alfarić, *Les Écritures manichéennes, II: Étude analytique* (Nourry: Paris, 1919), 24. The first volume of Alfarić's fundamental work (*Vue générale*) appeared in 1918.
12. *Acts of Archelaus* X.1 p. 15.10–11.24. The *Acts of Archelaus* was composed before 377 by an unknown writer called (H)Egemonius and contains a fictitious report of two encounters between Mani himself and the fierce Bishop Archelaus of the city of Carchas (or Kashkar, in Mesopotamia). Only a complete Latin translation made before 400 is extant, *Acta Archelai*, ed. Charles Henry Beeson (GCS 16) (Hinrichs: Leipzig, 1906). Epiphanius (*Pan.* 66.6–7 and 25–31) preserved Greek fragments concerning Manichaeism cosmology, edited by Beeson with the Latin version, 5–22.  
Ironically enough, Archelaus was no less a heretic than Mani himself, being afflicted with a crude form of adoptionism (see Introduction above). Fortunately for the preservation of the manuscript, the learned Catholic readers of the *Acts* never seemed to notice this.
13. *Fihrist* IX.1 p. 777 Dodge.
14. Michel Tardieu, *Le Manichéisme* (PUF: Paris, 1981).
15. And not a Triad of aeons grouped by four, as believes S. N. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey* (Manchester Univ. Press: Manchester, 1985), 9. See Augustine, *C. Faust.* XV.5.
16. Lieu, *Manichaeism*, 9–10.
17. As believes Licu, *Manichaeism*, 9–10.
18. *Acta Archelai* VII p. 10 Beeson.
19. *Hylē* Severus, p. 90 Kugener; Theodoret, PG 83 col. 377b.
20. *Ta pente tou kakou tamieia* according to the late Neoplatonist Simplicius (*In Enchiridion Epicteti* 27), who wrote a *Commentary on the Manual of Epictetus* in Harran (northern Mesopotamia) after 533, probably basing his refutation of Manichaeism on local sources, as believes Michel Tardieu, "Sabiens coraniques, et 'Sabiens' de Harran," *Journal Asiatique* 274 (1986), 24, n. 105. Simplicius's refutation has been analyzed by Ilsetraut Hadot, "Die Wiederlegung des Manichäismus im Epiktetkommentar des Simplicios," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 51 (1969), 31–57.
21. Aug, *De mor. Man.* II.9.14.
22. Two different lists are given by al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* p. 777 Dodge.
23. H.-Ch. Puech, *Sur le Manichéisme et autres essais* (Flammarion: Paris, 1979), 103–51. This book continues and corrects Puech's short presentation of Manichaeism *Le Manichéisme: Son fondateur, sa doctrine* (Civilisations du Sud: Paris, 1949).
24. *Fihrist* p. 778 Dodge.
25. *Coptic Kephalaion* 27, vol. I 77.25ff. See, for a shorter but substantially identical description, *Kephalaion* 6, vol. I 39.12f, and Puech, *Sur le Manichéisme*, 105–7.

The Coptic testimonies in Subakhmimic (Assiutic) dialect were discovered in 1930 at Medinet Madi in the Faiyūm (Egypt) and acquired by the Irish collector A. Chester Beatty of Dublin and by the Berlin State Museum. So far 620 pages of Coptic Manichaeism fragments have been restored. The unrestored pages of the Berlin Museum were lost in 1945. The principal collections of Coptic testimonies have been published as follows:

*Manichäische Handschriften der staatlichen Museen Berlin*, vol. I: *Kephalaia*, first half (Lieferung 1–10), ed. Hans Jacob Polotsky (p. 1–103) and Alexander Böhlig (p. 103ff) with a contribution by Hugo Ibscher (W. Kohlhammer: Stuttgart, 1935–40).



*Manichaean Manuscripts in the Chester Beatty Collection*, vol. I: *Manichäische Homilien*, ed. Hans Jacob Polotsky with a contribution by Hugo Ibscher (W. Kohlhammer: Stuttgart, 1934).

*A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, ed. C. R. C. Allberry with a contribution by Hugo Ibscher (W. Kohlhammer: Stuttgart, 1938).

A facsimile edition of the manuscripts in the Chester Beatty collection has been recently completed by Søren Giversen, *The Manichaean Coptic Papyri in the Chester Beatty Library: Facsimile Edition*, 4 vols. (Patrick Cramer: Geneva, 1986–88). See A. Guillaumont's review in *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 207 (1990), 82–85.

An excellent German translation of the most important Manichaean texts, with a good introduction, has been published by Alexander Böhlig (with the assistance of Jes Peter Asmussen) as a third volume of Foerster's anthology of gnostic texts: *Gnosis III: Der Manichäismus* (Artemis: Zurich and Munich, 1980) (with extensive bibliography, 354–62).

26. After Puech, *Sur le Manichéisme*, 108–9. The forms of the Archons fit into Augustine's classification, repeated by him in *De haeresibus* 46; cf. Puech, *Sur le Manichéisme*, 127.
27. Aug., *C. Faust.* VI.8.
28. Puech, *Sur le Manichéisme*, 138–39.
29. Severus, p. 121–23 Kugener.
30. Severus, p. 117–18.
31. Theodoret, PG 83 col. 377b.
32. Or "matter and fire" (*puri kai skotō*) in Titus of Bostra I.22.
33. Severus, p. 125–26 Kugener.
34. Simpl., *In Enchirid. Epict.* 27.
35. *Fihrist*, p. 778–79 Dodge.
36. Cumont, *Recherches I*, 172; variant in *Acta Arch.* VII p. 10 Beeson.
37. *Fihrist* p. 779 Dodge.
38. Sogdian B'myzd, "God Splendor"—b'm probably mistaken for bān, Pahlavi *nwgsr' pwrzyd*, "The God who creates new aeons," Parthian *nwgs[s] [hr'fwrzydgy]*, Chinese *zao xin xiang*, "Builder of the New Glory"; see Peter Bryder, *The Chinese Transformation of Manichaeism: A Study of Chinese Manichaean Terminology* (Plus Ultra: Löberöd, 1985), 99.
39. Epiphanius: *zōn pneuma*, *Acta Archelai: Spiritus vivens*; Pahlavi *Mihr Yazd*, Chinese *jing feng*, Pure Wind.
40. Aug., *C. Faust.* XV.5–6; *Syr. sēfath zivōā*.
41. *Acta Arch.* VIII p. 13 Beeson; Cumont, *Recherches I*, 69–75.
42. Augustine summarizes thus (*C. Faust.* XV.6; cf. XX.10): "*Splenditenentem magnum sex vultus et ora ferentem micantemque lumine, et alterum regem honoris angelorum exercitibus circumdatum, et alterum Adamantem heroam belligerum, dextra hasta tenentem et sinistra clipeum, et alterum gloriosum regem tres rotas impellentem ignis aquae et venti, et maximum Atlantem mundum ferentem humeris, et eum, genu flexo, brachiis utrimque secum fulcientem.*"
43. Puech, *Sur le Manichéisme*, 38.
44. *Acta Arch.* VII.4–5 p. 10–11 Beeson (Latin citation p. 11.3.15).
45. Al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* p. 781 Dodge.
46. *Acta Arch.* VIII.1 p. 11 Beeson.
47. Puech, *Sur le Manichéisme*, 43.
48. Puech, *Sur le Manichéisme*, 43, based on Alexander of Lycopolis.
49. *Contra Man.* 29.
50. Cumont, *Recherches I*, 27.
51. Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Beacon Press: Boston, 1963<sup>2</sup>), 224.
52. "*Splenditenentem ponderatorem dicis capita elementorum tenere mundumque suspendere*" (Aug., *C. Faust.* XV.5; cf. XX.9). See Cumont, *Recherches I*, 28.

53. Aug., *De haer.* 46.
54. Aug., *De nat. boni* 44.
55. Aug., *C. Faust.* XV.6.
56. Lat. *Tertius Legatus* (Evodius, *De fide* 17); Syr. *izgaddâ*; Gk. *presbytês ho tritos*.
57. The Abjuration Formula calls him/her *ho parthenos tou phôs*.
58. *Tên arrhenikên parthenon, hê tôn phxtos legomenê thygatêr*: Theodoret of Cyrillus I.26.
59. *Masculofemina*: Filastrius, *De haer.* 61.
60. *Virtutes* in Augustine; Greek *aretai*; Syriac 'yâdê.
61. *Acta Arch.* XIII p. 21.11 Beeson.
62. *Acta Arch.* IX p. 13 Beeson, with Epiph., *Pan.* 66.32; Theodoret V.10; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* VI.34; Titus of Bostra I.17; II.56; Abjuration Formula; Ephrem Syrus; Orosius's *Commonitorium* 2 about the Spanish Priscillianists, actually based on Augustine; and esp. Augustine, *C. Faust.* XX.6 and his disciple Evodius, *De fide* 14-17. The myth is analyzed by Cumont, *Recherches I*, 54-68.
63. Alfarc, *Écritures II*, 45f.
64. Cumont, *Recherches I*, 54.
65. Alfarc, *Écritures II*, 45f.
66. *De fide* 14-16.
67. This account of creation is confirmed by a Pahlavi fragment, M7981, which deals further with the destiny of the monster. Between 1902 and 1914, researchers of the Anthropology Museum of Berlin dug up many texts in the oasis Turfan in eastern Turkistan, which were redacted in Uigur Turk, Sogdian, Parthian, Pahlavi, and even in New Persian.

The most important Uigur text has been edited and translated by Jes P. Asmussen, *Xuâstâništ: Studies in Manichaeism* (Prostant Apud Munksgaard: Copenhagen, 1965). It contains a formula of collective confession for Manichaean auditors.

The texts in different Iranian languages are described by Mary Boyce in *A Catalogue of the Iranian Manuscripts in Manichaean Script in the German Turfan Collection* (Berlin, 1960) and published by Boyce in *A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian* (Brill: Leiden, 1975). They are translated by Jes P. Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature: Representative Texts Chiefly from Middle Persian and Parthian Writings* (Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints: Delmar, NY, 1975).

Texts in Middle Persian have been edited and translated by Werner Sündermann, *Mitteliranische manichäische Texte kirchengeschichtlichen Inhalts* (Akademie: Berlin [East], 1981).

The Pahlavi fragment M7981 I = T III 260b1 is translated in Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature*, 124-25.

68. Aug., *C. Faust.* VI.8; see *De mor. Man.* II.9.14; 18; 61.
69. Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature*, 125.
70. Aug., *De nat. boni* 46.
71. M7984 = T III 260ef and M7981 cit.; Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature*, 127.
72. This process is different in Theodore bar Kōnai, Augustine, and Michael Syrus (Cumont, *Recherches I*, 42): the chief Archon Saklas feeds upon the male monsters and his wife Nebrōel on the female ones, after which they have intercourse and Nebrōel bears Adam and then Eve.
73. Reason for which, of course, the German-Swedish school of history of religions was firmly convinced that Manichaeism was the finest example of an "Iranian salvation mystery"! Some scholars still maintain that Manichaeism is Iranian, although it is manifestly an original form of Gnosticism, very close at the same time to those gnostic sources that Mani certainly knew and assumed as premise before he devised his own system. Even though certain texts were translated into Iranian languages, Manichaeism is no more Iranian than it is, say, Chinese; the Chinese translations are so filled with Buddhist terminology that Manichaeism could be interpreted as a transformation of

- Buddhism. Vice versa, it appears now that Manichaean influence on Buddhism was not negligible, and the same applies to late Zoroastrian Pahlavi texts.
74. M7983 = T III 260dI in Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature*, 130–31.
  75. *Fihrist* p. 783 Dodge.
  76. See Alexander Böhlig, *Gnosis III*, 108–9.
  77. Theodore bar Kōnāi; Cumont, *Recherches I*, 48.
  78. *Acta Arch.* XL1 p. 18.18 Beeson.
  79. *Fihrist*, 784–86, trans. Dodge.
  80. *Kephalaia I* p. 12.9 Polotsky and 57, p. 144.13–47.20 Böhlig.
  81. See Gedaliahu A. G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (NHS 24), 1984, 147ff.
  82. Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 148.
  83. See Aug., *De haer.* 46, PL 42 col. 37–38.
  84. Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 146.
  85. CMC 50.8–52.7. The Cologne Mani Codex is a tiny but thick codex of 99 pages owned by the University of Cologne, whose existence was announced in 1970 by A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, who published and translated it in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 19 (1975), 1–85, and 32 (1978), 87–200. Another edition with English translation became available in 1979: *The Cologne Mani Codex* (P.Colon. inv. nr. 4780) "Concerning the Origin of His Body," trans. Ron Cameron and Arthur J. Dewey (Scholars Press: Missoula, MT, 1979). A recent facsimile and diplomatic edition, edited by L. Koenen and Cornelia Römer, *Der Kölner Mani-Codex: Abbildungen und diplomatischer Text* (Habelt: Bonn, 1985), allows scholars to make their own textual conjectures.
  86. M3 Pahl., after L. J. R. Ort, *Mani A Religio-Historical Description of His Personality* (Brill: Leiden, 1967), 52–54 (Eng. adaptation mine).
  87. *Fihrist* 781–83 Dodge, with my interpolations.
  88. M178r.66–129, after Böhlig, *Gnosis III*, 327, n. 140.
  89. See Dodge, *Fihrist* 782 n. 184.
  90. *Kephalaia I* p. 144.13–47.20 Böhlig.
  91. *Shahrastāni I* 192.
  92. Alexander of Lycopolis, *C. Man. opin.* 6.15–16 and Pahl. fragment in Boyce, *Reader*, 80–81, trans. in Böhlig, *Gnosis III*, 239.
  93. M7981 I = T III 260bI, in Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature*, 125.
  94. *Psalms* 233 p. 9.2–11.32 Allberry (Eng. adaptation mine).
  95. *De haer.* 38.
  96. On the restoration that will follow Frashgird, see Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature*, 125–27.
  97. Puech, *Sur le Manichéisme*, 43–44. This operation is performed against the background of the known cosmology, with its eight earths, ten heavens, two cosmic Ships and the Wheel of the Zodiac; cf. M7984 II = T III 260eII Pahl., in Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature*, 122–24.
  98. *Kephalaion 69*, p. 167 Böhlig.
  99. *Kephalaion 69*.
  100. *Kephalaion 69* p. 166.31–169.22 Böhlig.
  101. P. 118.13–120.20 Böhlig.
  102. P. 166.31–169.22 Böhlig. See also Victor Stegemann, "Zu Kapitel 69 der Kephalaia des Mani" (1939), now in Geo Widengren, ed., *Der Manichäismus* (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft: Darmstadt, 1977), 214–24.
  103. See my article "Astrology," in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Macmillan: New York, 1987).
  104. Trans in Chavannes and Pelliot, *Journal Asiatique* 1913, 139.
  105. Chavannes and Pelliot, *Journal Asiatique* 1913, 114–16.
  106. *Kephalaion 38*, p. 94–95 Polotsky. Compare this text with the melothesia in AJ.

107. *Kephalaion* 38, p. 89.18–102.12 Polotsky.
108. Alfarc, *L'Évolution intellectuelle*, 117; Puech, *Sur le Manichéisme*, 53.
109. Puech, *Sur le Manichéisme* 53–56.
110. Aug., *C. Faust*. XX.4.
111. Aug., *C. Faust*. XXXII.7.
112. Aug., *Enarr. in Ps. CXL*:12.
113. Aug., *De haer.* 46, PL 42 col. 37–38.
114. Aug., *De fide contra Man.* 27; Alfarc, *Écritures II*, 64 (my translation).
115. M 1391, after Böhlig, *Gnosis III*, 197–98.
116. M 131 IA, Böhlig, *Gnosis III*, 197.
117. Aug., *De haer.* 46, PL 42 col. 37.
118. *Fihrist*, 788, trans. Dodge.
119. Aug., *De haer.* 46.
120. Aug., *De haer.* 46.
121. Aug., *C. Adinant*. XII.2.
122. Aug., *De haer.* 46, PL 42 col. 35.
123. See Asmussen, *Xuâstvânîft*, 224–27.
124. Aug., *De mor. Man.* 39; Alfarc, *L'Évolution intellectuelle*, 126–31.
125. *Kephalaion* 109, p. 262.10–264.19 Böhlig.
126. *Kephalaion* 79, p. 191.9–192.3 Böhlig.
127. See Asmussen, *Xuâstvânîft*, 198ff.
128. See François Decret, *Mani et la tradition manichéenne* (Seuil: Paris, 1974), 109–10.
129. *Kephalaion* 80, p. 192.3–193.22 Böhlig.
130. Aug., *Enarr. in Ps. CCL* 12.
131. Alfarc, *L'Évolution intellectuelle*, 138.
132. Alfarc, *L'Évolution intellectuelle*, 136.
133. VI.4 p. 7 Beeson.
134. *Acta Arch.* VII.5.
135. P. 13.21–14.1 Polotsky; see Ort, *Mani*, 121.
136. Böhlig, *Gnosis III*, 80–81.
137. *C. Faust*. I.1.
138. Alfarc, *L'Évolution intellectuelle*, 83.
139. M 91, after Ort, *Mani*, 141 (Eng. adaptation mine).
140. Aug., *De haer.* 38; cf. *Fihrist* p. 796 Dodge.

# Chapter 7

## Paulicianism or Popular Marcionism

The real joy of God is to be defeated by  
man.

—ELIE WIESEL

### 1. Sources

Only one source for the Paulician doctrine exists: the *Useful History, Refutation and Overthrowing of the Void and Idle Heresy of the Manichaeans a.k.a. Paulicians*, redacted in 870–71 by an otherwise unknown Byzantine writer, Peter of Sicily,<sup>1</sup> and followed by three *Sermons* by the same author, whose purpose is to refute the three principal theses of the Paulicians: dualism, docetism, and the denial of transubstantiation. The *Sermons* add nothing significant to the data already furnished by the *History*.

Peter of Sicily wrote an epitome of his *History* in 871–72, most manuscripts of which feature Peter the Higoumenos as author.<sup>2</sup> Obviously the solution to this riddle, as shown by Paul Lemerle, is very simple: Peter of Sicily was a monk and higoumenos.<sup>3</sup> About 871–72,<sup>4</sup> Patriarch Photius of Constantinople wrote down a *Summary Exposure of the Recent Reappearance of the Manichaeans*,<sup>5</sup> based exclusively on Peter the Higoumenos of Sicily's *Epitome* and *History*. Other information is contained in the four Formulas of Recantation used by the Byzantine church to convert Paulicians, more frequently yet erroneously called Manichaeans for being dualists.<sup>6</sup>

### 2. Paulician Doctrine

"There is only one thing that separates us from the Romans," confessed the Paulicians to Peter of Sicily: "We say that there is a god who is a heavenly father and has no power in this world, but in the world to

come, and there is another god, the world creator, who has power over the present world; whereas the Romans recognize the existence of one sole god, who is both heavenly father and creator of the whole universe." The Paulicians called themselves Christians; they called the common Christians Romans.<sup>7</sup>

After having defined Paulician dualism in the same terms, Peter's *History* specifies five more basic points of Paulician doctrine: They do not recognize the virginity of Mary, who, after having given birth to Jesus (whose body, though, was celestial), "still gave other sons to Joseph"; they do not recognize the mystery of transubstantiation; they reject the symbol of the cross; they reject the Old Testament entirely, accusing the Prophets of being "liars and thieves" (*plani kai lēstai*), and possess a New Testament canon (whose structure will be analyzed shortly); and, finally, they reject the priests of the Church.<sup>8</sup> The *Epitome* adds nothing significant to these accusations, whereas the first Recantation Formula<sup>9</sup> mentions a familiar belief, according to which the Lord "used the womb of the Mother of God as a purse [*balantion*]," meaning that he had gone through Mary as if through a pipe, without touching her or being touched by her body. Concerning Christ's virginal birth, Photius comments: "Having brought his body with him from on high too, he went through her (i.e., the Virgin) as if through a pipe (*hōs dia sōlēnos*), and [they say] that this pure and immaculate Virgin after the birth of the Savior gave birth to other sons from Joseph."<sup>10</sup>

Concise and apparently correct, the second Formula anathematizes:

1. Whoever says and believes that there are two principles, good and evil, one the author of Light the other of Night, one author of humans the other of angels and other living beings . . .
2. Those who enounce this absurdity, that is, that the perverse Devil is the author and Archon of Matter and of all the visible world and of our bodies . . .
3. Those who denigrate the Mosaic Law and say that the Prophets do not derive from the good [principle] . . .
4. Those who reject legitimate marriage and have this scandalous thing to say about it, that the multiplication and propagation of our species comes from the Demon . . .
5. Those who proffer this blasphemy, that is, that the one [member] of the Holy Trinity, namely, the Son and Word consubstantial with God the Father, became man [only] apparently and illusorily (*kata phantasian kai dokēsēin*), and not man in reality although sinless . . .

6. Those who present the cross and the death of Christ and his resurrection as an appearance . . .
7. Those who do not actually believe that what Christ gave to the Apostles while saying "Take and eat" is not his body and blood actually, but instead proffer this enormity, namely, that it is the Gospel and the Apostle.<sup>11</sup>

Interesting likewise is the fourth Formula,<sup>12</sup> although it is late and may refer to Bogomils instead.<sup>13</sup> They call Satan the creator God, "confess that our Lord suffered, yet profess that he is not actually born from the holy, ever-virgin, and immaculate Mother of God, but only in appearance, *dokēsei*."<sup>14</sup>

Following an episode of Peter's *History*, all other sources speak of the *reservatio mentalis* of the heretics, capable of confessing overtly the orthodox faith yet privately giving a symbolic meaning to the words of the credo; and about their concealment and public simulation of the faith and cult of the orthodox. The *Epitome* also attributes to them promiscuous fellowships;<sup>15</sup> in the Recantation Formulas<sup>16</sup> this readily became the stereotypical unlit New Year's Eve orgy, hardly plausible.

The structure of the Paulician New Testament canon is described by Peter of Sicily in chapters 42–44 of his *History*:

They accept only the fourfold of the Holy Gospels and the fourteen Epistles of the Apostle Paul and the catholic of James and the three of John and the catholic of Saint Jude and the Acts of the Apostles, the text being the same as ours, word for word. They also have epistles, accursed by God, of their teacher Sergius, filled with pride and impiety. Thus they do not accept the two catholic [epistles] of Peter, the prince of the apostles, whom they hold in dislike and cover with innumerable insults and offenses, with what thoughts in mind I do not know.<sup>17</sup>

A scholia to chapter 42 of the *History* adds that later Paulicians "recognize only the four Gospels, Luke's by preference, and the fifteen epistles of Saint Paul, for they also have an Epistle to the Laodiceans."<sup>18</sup>

These are all the data concerning the doctrine of the Paulicians. The dualism they profess is the Marcionite opposition of the two gods (*de futuro* versus *de praesenti*), stripped of all complication and contradiction: the Demiurge and Archon of this world, who is publicly known and reigns over the present age, and the hidden God of the coming age. Between the two ages, present and coming, is the end of the world. The Demiurge is the god of the Old Testament, a text rejected by the Paulicians in its entirety. All this looks like popular Marcionism, cultivated under difficult circumstances and with meager means, using an

orthodox New Testament canon deprived of the letters of Peter, the same one whom Marcion held for a false apostle.<sup>19</sup>

Paulician dualism is a regression of Marcionite dualism to its primary components: the two gods. All the distinctive attitudes of the Paulicians—their anti-Judaic tendency, docetism, rejection of the sacraments and the cross—derive from this simple premise, which endows them with an infallible *principle for biblical exegesis*.

### 3. Armenian Hypothesis

The name of the Paulicians obviously refers to someone—the founder of the sect or an important leader—called Paul. Yet the regular Greek derivate in such a case would be *pauliano* not *paulikiano*. And indeed the followers of the IIIrd-century adoptionist Paul of Samosata, once bishop of Antioch, are called *pauliano*.

*Paulikiano* seems to be a construct with the Armenian deprecativ suffix *ik*; as Runciman has it,<sup>20</sup> they must therefore be the adepts of a contemptible Paul or the contemptible adepts of Paul. Which Paul? This is only one of the (wrong) questions that for a while maintained the illusion that the particularly transparent sect of the Paulicians may hold some mystery *in petto*.

Paulicianism used to be extremely important in the history of Western dualistic trends, for according to the common diffusionistic hypothesis, it was the only link in the chain that could have explained how Gnosticism was later resumed by Ismailism, Bogomilism, and Catharism. This was the classical thesis of Ignaz von Döllinger, further resumed and developed by Steven Runciman, Raoul Manselli, Milan Loos, Henri-Charles Puech, Heinz Halm, and others yet fiercely opposed by certain scholars of Armenian literature such as F. C. Conybeare (1898) and more recently Nina G. Garsoian.<sup>21</sup> The reason for this Armenian intermezzo was the discovery during the first half of the XIXth century of the Scripture of an Armenian sect that seemed to go back to an ancient group sometimes identified with the Messalians, whose name appeared to be close to that of *paulikiano*. All of this, as Paul Lemerle has emphasized,<sup>22</sup> rests on an unfortunate misunderstanding. The data of the problem are briefly outlined below only in the hope that this may contribute toward eliminating further confusion.

Armenian documents completely ignore the Paulicians yet mention a heresy phonetically close to their name: the *payl-i-keank*. This expression does not seem to refer to any Paul:<sup>23</sup> *payl* means "filth," and the



*payl-i-keank* mentioned for the first time in 555<sup>24</sup> are simply "the filthy ones" or "those who are filthy in their lives."<sup>25</sup> These sectarians were more seriously refuted at the Dvin Council of 719 by the *katholikos* John of Ojun,<sup>26</sup> after which their name vanishes. Yet N. G. Garsoian believes that the *payl-i-keank* must be the same as the *mclnēut'iun* (from *mclnē*, "filth") condemned in 447 by the Great Synod of Shahapivan.<sup>27</sup> These *mclnēut'iun* had always been taken for Messalians (Syr. *metsalleyānē*; the Armenian *c* is likewise pronounced *ts*), the "dirtiest" heretics known by ancient sources, which went so far as to say that they spent all their time in depravity, revels, and exchange of partners.<sup>28</sup> Since Armenian adaptations might very well have been based on puns expressing the ironical intention of the honorable Fathers, the *mclēut'iun* might very well have been Messalians. Anyway, they could not have been Paulicians even if they were indeed, as N. G. Garsoian believes, *payl-i-keank*.

The latter have nothing to do with the Messalians, nor with the Paulicians for that matter, although they *are* the adepts of a contemptible Paul—the adoptionist Paul of Samosata. Under a different name, this heresy continued to exist well after John of Ojun's refutation. At the beginning of the XIth century, Gregory Magistros, governor of the Vaspuragan and Taron, persecuted the followers of a sect established between 836 and 855 in the region of T'ondrak, north of Lake Van and known as T'ondrakeci. In the mid-XIth century the T'ondrakeci fled to Syria and are not mentioned by Armenian sources after 1166. It is interesting for the history of all persecuted groups, including our Western dualists, to find out that T'ondrakeci still existed between 1833 and 1847 at Ark'weli and were amenable to furnishing scholarship with an important document: a 1782 manuscript copy of an ancient writing called *Key of Truth*. The analysis of this text proves beyond a doubt that the T'ondrakeci were adoptionists and equally disproves beyond a doubt that they might have been Paulicians. They believed that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, that his conception had not been immaculate, his birth had not been virginal, and God had adopted him as Son at the age of thirty during his baptism in the Jordan. Consequently the orthodox infant baptism was to be abolished and only adults were to be baptized.<sup>29</sup> This doctrine is a simplified version of the sophisticated form of adoptionism that Paul of Samosata might have preached in the IIIrd century and was identical with the beliefs of the *payl-i-keank* in the VIIIth century.

The conclusion is clear: The *payl-i-keank*, adepts of the contemptible Paul of Samosata, have nothing to do with the Byzantine *paulikianoi*, "contemptible adepts of Paul." This latter Paul is simply Paul the apostle, worshiped by Marcion and by the Paulicians themselves (see chapter

1 above). Any further speculation concerning the evolution of the Paulicians based on the false premise that at some point they might have been identical with the *payl-i-keank* must be likewise dismissed as idle.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, both the adoptionists and the dualistic Paulicians held a few things in common, such as the denial of the virginal birth of Jesus Christ and the rejection of the cross and sacraments. We may assume that, despite strong analogies between a number of antinomian tenets of the two sects, they had come to these beliefs walking on completely separate ways.

An adoptionist of the simple kind (which, needless to say, the Antiochene theologians, and certainly Paul of Samosata, never were) would certainly dismiss the fable of the virgin birth for being completely useless to the picture: Until the age of thirty, Jesus was just a human being, born from a woman like any other.

It is also quite clear why docetists would hold the symbol of the cross in contempt, for it entails the belief that Christ died on the cross, which they reject. It is far less clear why an adoptionist would do the same, but it is anyway excluded that a docetist would borrow it from an adoptionist, as N. G. Garsoian suggests.

Sacraments may be equally scorned by both docetists and adoptionists for different reasons. Docetists would doubt their efficacy, which is based on what they take to be the wrong scenario of Christ's death held by vulgar Christians (the "Romans"). Adoptionists may reject all sacraments as a consequence of their quite logical rejection of infant baptism, especially if constant persecution drives them into the usual antinomian mood.

Both adoptionism and dualism are *systems*. Possible communications between them cannot explain the historical occurrences of dualism as deriving from adoptionism or vice versa. Dualism continues to cross history only because it continues to exist *as a system* in the minds of people who cultivate its principle and transform and multiply its outcomes.

#### 4. Paulician Dualism

More cautious than his predecessors, who took the Paulicians for actual Marcionites, Adolf von Harnack considered them as *halbschlüchtige Marcioniten*—only halfway so.<sup>31</sup> Dmitri Obolensky notices that there is no mention of encratism and vegetarianism among the Paulicians.<sup>32</sup> However, one of the Recantation Formulas ascribes to them the (improbable)

rejection of marriage.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, the strong Paulician rejection of the Church sacraments has no parallel among the Marcionites. The latter practiced baptism, the eucharist (with water instead of wine), and unction, and their liturgy was similar to that of the ancient Church.<sup>34</sup>

However, the fact that all these elements of Paulicianism did not exist in Marcionism, which is supposed to be the "origin" of Paulicianism, does not mean that the Paulicians had to "borrow" them from somewhere.

The present-day theory of historical transmission is wrong in so far as it hypothesizes that anything must have a historical precedent from which it derives. On the contrary, cognitive transmission simply means that *principles* are communicated, even in the elusive or allusive modes,<sup>35</sup> from human mind to human mind, where they continue to work according to the specific patterns of the human mind. It is *historically* plausible to believe that the contact of the Paulicians with Marcionism was reduced to the few oral lessons in Marcionite Bible exegesis (on an orthodox yet reduced canon) received by Constantine of Mananali from some Syriac monk still deeply convinced of the inanity of the Old Testament and of the opposition of the two gods. Thus Mananali possessed *some* of the Marcionite outcomes of this hypothesis, but his mind had to devise, according to the logical paths accessible to all of us and still unchanged for perhaps sixty thousand years, other solutions for those questions his teacher did not have time to answer.

The Paulicians did not have the heroic, superhuman option of the Marcionites, who had practically helped their persecutors exterminate them. They lived under the vigilant eye of a powerful Church. Their only choice was to activate the antinomian option and fight the Church in such a way that they would not become victims.

Their docetism, entailing the passage of Christ through Mary *sicut per fistulam* and the actual suffering of his ghostly body although not his death on the cross, derives directly from Marcionism.

Their rejection of the eucharist is obviously a consequence of the same denial of Christ's physical body. A phantasiast who does not ascribe to Christ's body any physical reality would naturally deny the presence of this body in a piece of bread. Complete rejection may however be avoided by some further interpretation of the eucharist in symbolic terms (as commemoration of Christ's last supper with the apostles, of Christ's presence in the Christian community, or something else). Yet the Paulicians take the stand of repudiating the eucharist, interpreting symbolically the words *hoc est corpus meum* as referring to the Word of Christ that inspires his disciples.<sup>36</sup>

Confronted with the cross, phantasiasts do not have many choices: They either spurn it because of the impossibility of Christ's death or accept it under pretext that it has a symbolic, commemorative function. The Paulicians assert "that this piece of wood and cursed instrument" must not be worshiped, for the true cross is Christ himself.<sup>37</sup> They were nevertheless able to pay reverence to the cross with *reservatio mentalis*,<sup>38</sup> but they did not attach any positive function to it, for they did not conceive of Christ's death as having a salvific function.

It is not clear why the Paulicians repudiated baptism, which they interpreted symbolically.<sup>39</sup> P. Lemerle believes that they shunned baptism with water because Christ, as the Gospels say (Matt. 3:11 = Luke 3:16; John 1:26, 33), baptizes "with the Holy Spirit and with fire."<sup>40</sup>

Denying so many facets of orthodox dogma, it should come as no surprise that Paulicians detested priests and did not recognize orthodox saints.<sup>41</sup> After all, it wasn't for nothing that they held the "Romans" to be on the wrong path.

All of this indicates that the Paulicians were late, popular Marcionites, who from very simple dualistic principles were able to draw their own antinomian conclusions concerning the authority of the orthodox Church.

## Notes

1. Most sources for the history of Paulicianism are now collected, edited, and translated in *Les Sources grecques pour l'histoire des pauliciens d'Asie Mineure: Texte critique et traduction*, by Ch. Astruc, W. Conus-Wolska, J. Gouillard, P. Lemerle, D. Papachrysantou, J. Paramelle, in *Travaux et Mémoires* 4 (Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation Byzantines) (De Boccard: Paris, 1970), 1-227.

The three *Sermons* (the last one incomplete) of Peter of Sicily follow after the *Historia* in the edition of Migne, PG 104: Photii, *Opera Omnia*, followed by the works of Petri Agrorum Episcopi, Bartholomaei Edesseni Opuscula. Edited by J.-P. Migne. Tomus 4 (*Patrologiae cursus completus*, Series Graeca, edited by J.-P. Migne, Tomus 54), col. 1305/6-1349/50.

The basic scholarly study on Paulicianism is Paul Lemerle's *L'Histoire des pauliciens d'Asie Mineure d'après les sources grecques*, in *Travaux et Mémoires* 5 (1973), 1-144, with an annotated bibliography containing twenty-eight titles (2-15).

Notices on the Paulicians are also included in the classic works of Ignaz von Döllinger (*Beiträge* I, 1-33), Dmitri Obolensky (*The Bogomils*, 46-48), Steven Runciman (*Medieval Manichee*), Raoul Manselli (*L'Eresia*, 65ff), and Milan Loos (*Dualist Heresy*, 32-40). They reflect a state of knowledge that has been radically surpassed and modified by Paul Lemerle and the work of the French team.

2. *Sources grecques*, 8-97.
3. Lemerle, *Histoire*, 31.
4. Lemerle, *Histoire*, 47.
5. *Sources*, 99-183.

6. *Sources*, 185–207.
7. *Précis* 9, p. 85; *Historia*, 36–37, p. 19–20.
8. *Historia* 39–45, p. 20–22.
9. *Form. abj.* I.4, p. 191.
10. Photius 20 p. 126–27.
11. *Form. abj.* II.1–7, p. 194–97.
12. *Sources*, 202–7.
13. *Sources*, 189–90.
14. *Form. abj.* IV.2, p. 203.
15. *Epitome* 24 p. 92.
16. *Form. abj.* III.9, p. 201; IV.7, p. 205.
17. *Sources*, 20–23.
18. Lemerle, *Histoire*, 132. This is not the same as the Marcionite Epistle to the Laodiceans (which corresponds to Ephesians in the orthodox canon) but a forgery published by A. von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium von Fremden Gott* (reprint, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft: Darmstadt, 1985), 137\*ff.
19. Harnack, *Marcion*, 45.
20. Runciman, *Medieval Manichee*, 48.
21. The Armenian thesis is condensed in the work, full of logical contradictions yet endowed with a good bibliography (241–55), of Nina G. Garsoian, *The Paulician Heresy: A Study of the Origin and Development of Paulicianism in Armenia and the Eastern Provinces of the Byzantine Empire* (Mouton: The Hague and Paris, 1967).
22. Lemerle, *Histoire*, 12–14.
23. Unless it contains a pun, which may be the case; yet N. G. Garsoian fails to detect it. Her demonstration is even more flawed by this omission.
24. Garsoian, *Paulician Heresy*, 89; text in her second appendix, 236–38.
25. Garsoian, *Paulician Heresy*, 210.
26. Garsoian, *Paulician Heresy*, 94.
27. Garsoian, *Paulician Heresy*, 207–8.
28. Maximus, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* 6, col. CCXXX Kmosko.
29. Garsoian, *Paulician Heresy*, 151–57.
30. See, e.g., Garsoian, *Paulician Heresy*, 184.
31. Harnack, *Marcion*, 383\*.
32. Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, 47.
33. *Form. abj.* II.4.
34. Harnack, *Marcion*, 144–45.
35. “Translepsis,” to use Harold Bloom’s word, is the usual mode of communication between human beings, which is only seldom based on direct and unequivocal statements, and even when it is may still not illuminate the hidden motivations of such statements.
36. Lemerle, *Histoire*, 130.
37. *Précis* 13; Lemerle, *Histoire*, 129.
38. Peter of Sicily, *Historia* 116; Photius 22; 76.
39. Lemerle, *Histoire*, 130.
40. Lemerle, *Histoire*, 129, n. 43.
41. Lemerle, *Histoire*, 130.

# Chapter 8

## Bogomilism: A Pseudodualism

If we believe that Satan is the ruler of the world . . . then  
. . . there can be no such thing as free choice.

—MARTIN LUTHER, *De servo arbitrio*

### 1. Sources

Only one direct source on Bogomilism exists, the *Questions of John* (*Interrogatio Iohannis*), an apocryphal text brought from Bulgaria about 1190, during the period when Nazarius of Concorezzo was Cathar bishop in Lombardy, and translated into Latin. Three manuscripts and one printed text are extant, belonging to two redactions: one called the Vienna redaction or V (Vienna, ms. BN Lat. 1137 fol. 158 v–160), the other called the Carcassonne redaction from a lost original belonging to the Inquisition of Carcassonne (earliest manuscript: D, in Dôle).<sup>1</sup>

The first indirect sources refer to Bulgarian Bogomilism: the second letter of Theophylactus, patriarch of Constantinople, to Peter, tsar of Bulgaria (940–50), and the *Treatise Against the Bogomils* by Cosmas the Priest, written shortly after 972.<sup>2</sup>

Byzantine sources are comparatively richer in information concerning Bogomil mythology, the most ancient of them being the letter of the monk Euthymius of the Monastery of Our Most Venerable Lady (*[Theotokou] tēs Peribleptou*) of Constantinople. Euthymius came from Asia Minor, from the Theme of Opsikion (*tou opsikiou*), diocese of Acmonia in Phrygia, where the Bogomils were known under the name of *phoundagiagites* or *phoundaites*, from the Latin word *funda*, “bag,” adopted into Greek and referring to the object in which these “bag-rags” gathered alms. In Bulgarian they were known as *torbeshi* from *torba*, likewise meaning “bag.”<sup>3</sup> Euthymius of Our Lady wrote around 1050,<sup>4</sup> dur-

ing the same period in which Michael Psellus composed his *Dialogus de daemonum operatione* containing perhaps questionable information on some "Euchites" (Messalians), who appeared similar to the Bogomils.

One century later the entrapment of Basil, the impenitent leader of the Constantinople Bogomils, is told with all its picturesque details in Anna Comnena's *Alexiad* (1148). Emperor Alexius used deceit to obtain from Basil a full account of Bogomil beliefs. Written down by a hidden secretary, the Church historian Euthymius Zigabenus, the confession became part of his *Panoplia dogmatica*, a variant of which was edited by Gerhard Ficker (1908) under the title *De haeresi Bogomilorum narratio* (hereinafter *Narratio*) and published together with Euthymus of Our Lady's *Epistula invectiva*.<sup>5</sup> For the study of myth, the other extant sources are less important.<sup>6</sup> Bogomil mythology interfered with popular dualistic legends all over Eastern Europe,<sup>7</sup> yet although those popular materials have undergone a visible Bogomil influence at a certain stage, they may be much earlier than Bogomilism itself.

## 2. Prologue in Heaven

Two sources agree on the existence of seven heavens,<sup>8</sup> eight if one counts the visible sky produced by Satan.<sup>9</sup> Euthymius Zigabenus mentions only one heaven and one earth created by God and one heaven and earth created by Satanael (Samael) in imitation of God, which suggests radical dualism.<sup>10</sup>

Sathanas, identified with the dishonest steward from Christ's parable (Luke 16:1-8),<sup>11</sup> is the administrator of the whole universe and can freely come and go from the throne of the invisible Father down into Hell.<sup>12</sup> The universe, according to the *Interrogatio*, consists of seven heavens and, underneath, of the zones of Air, Upper Waters, Lower Waters, Earth (resting on two Fishes), Clouds "that restrain the Ocean" (*tenentes pelagum maris*),<sup>13</sup> and a last zone occupied by Hell, *geenna ignis*. The total is of seven upper stories (heavens) and seven lower.

Pride is the cause of Satan's fall. He apes the creative power of the Father and wants to reign over a kingdom like his. Therefore he looks for a space in which to build it and visits the seven lower layers, moving first through the Gate of Air and then through the Gate of Water, which are opened to him by the angels who oversee the elements Air and Water.<sup>14</sup> Underneath the Upper Waters, the world is somewhat organized yet lacks angels, which means that the Father's control does not reach that far down. This is why Sathanas, going back to the upper

angels in heaven, proclaims himself chief of the lower preexistent yet unclaimed kingdom and tries to persuade the angels to follow him. His arguments are directly drawn from Luke (16:1ff): as dishonest steward, he misuses his power and reduces the angels' debts toward God, thus gaining an angelic retinue "seducing the angels of the invisible Father" up to the fifth heaven.<sup>15</sup> At this point God, annoyed, orders his faithful angels to strip the rebels of all tokens of their celestial ranks and dignities (garments, thrones, crowns). Sathanas is severely punished, for the light of his divine glory (*lumen glorie sue*) is taken away from him, "and his face became like glowing iron, and his traits became completely similar to man's, and he had seven tails<sup>16</sup> with which he dragged [down with him] a third of God's angels."<sup>17</sup> Chased away from his post of command and from his celestial residences, Sathanas settles with his mutinous angels in the firmament and asks God to have mercy on him. "And the Father showed mercy and gave them respite for seven days to do whatever they wished."<sup>18</sup>

Obviously the episode is meant not only to show that the ex-dishonest steward is no better now and will keep exploiting God's weakness (which is God's goodness) but also to emphasize the parallelism between the creation of the world in seven days (Gen. 2:2) and the mock creation of Sathanas, also in seven days. For Sathanas uses this truce to build the world he had dreamed of, a world of which he is the architect, not creator. The angels of Air and Waters take two thirds of the water covering the earth up to heaven, and what remains of the water forms the seas. And although Sathanas is in command, the partition of the waters takes place at the direct order of the Father (*sed precepto patris*),<sup>19</sup> who thereby gets his say in the creation of the lower world. Is it not then by misunderstanding that the heresiologists attribute to the Devil the creation of the lower world? The *Interrogatio* is formally correct: The Devil *believes* himself to be creating, yet God intervenes. Understood in these terms, Bogomil antic cosmism is quite relative.

Standing on the two Fishes (the sign of Pisces?), the angel of Waters raised the earth, "and dry land appeared."<sup>20</sup> Then, taking the crown of the angel of the Air, Sathanas fabricates his throne from half of it and the light of the Sun from the other half. The crown of the angel of Waters serves him likewise in making the light of the Moon and that of day (or stars), whereas he makes the crown jewels of both crowns into the "militia of the stars" (*omnes militias stellarum*).<sup>21</sup> From these he further fashions the angels who oversee meteorological phenomena: wind, thunder, rain, hail, and snow.<sup>22</sup> "And he ordered the earth to produce all living beings, animals, trees and herbs, and he ordered the sea to produce fishes and



[probably: <he ordered> the air <to produce>] the birds of the sky."<sup>23</sup> The anonymous gloss adds: "Birds and fish do not have soul, neither do animals have human souls, but birds and fish receive what they have from water and air, animals from earth and air."<sup>24</sup>

The other sources are less precise: Cosmas ascribes to the Devil's creation "the sky, the sun, the stars, the earth, man";<sup>25</sup> Euthymius of Our Lady makes the Devil into the creator of the visible world except for the Sun and the human soul;<sup>26</sup> Psellus assigns to the Father government of the zone above the universe (*ta hyperkosmia*), to the younger Son (= Christ) the heavenly zone (*ta ourania*), and to the older Son (= Satanael) the world (*ta enkosmia*).<sup>27</sup> Euthymius Zigabenus identifies the Devil with the Old Testament god, who makes for himself a second heaven and a second earth, separated from the Kingdom of God; yet all sources seem to imply this identification.<sup>28</sup>

The tripartition of the universe in Psellus corresponds to a myth mentioned in other sources: The Father has two Sons, Satanael the firstborn (*prōtotokos*), who governs over the earth, and Jesus the youngest (*neōteros*), who governs over heaven.<sup>29</sup> Euthymius Zigabenus specifies that the firstborn Samael-Satanael is superior to the younger Jesus-Logos,<sup>30</sup> elsewhere identified with the archangel Michael.<sup>31</sup> Cosmas contradicts these data by asserting that Jesus is the firstborn and the Devil is the younger.<sup>32</sup> Psellus separates the Euchites into three groups: one that worships both Sons of God, one that worships Jesus, and one that worships Satanael, "creator (*dēmiourgos*) of the plants, the animals, and of all composite bodies," while ascribing to Jesus the heavenly brother unfavorable meteorological phenomena produced out of jealousy of the good order of Satanael.<sup>33</sup>

Finally the Bogomil Trinity becomes the object of Zigabenus's narrative, and he detects in it Sabellian influences: The Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct hypostases *only* during the thirty-three years of Jesus' life (5500 to 5533 from the creation of the world), after which they conflate again. The image of this Trinity was that of a human-faced Father with the Son to his right and the Spirit to his left represented as beams emanated through his eyes.<sup>34</sup>

### 3. Anthropogony

In several variants anthropogony is certainly the core of Bogomil mythology. According to the *Interrogatio*, Sathanas fabricates man in his own image from mud and orders the angel of the third or second heaven to

enter the new body; he does the same with woman, using the angel of the first (or second) heaven instead.<sup>35</sup> The two angels, regardless of their previous fall, are quite confused and shed bitter tears over having been imprisoned in frames that are not only mortal but even sexually differentiated (*in divisis formis; dissimiles forma*). They, who were not acquainted with such awkward distinctions, attempt in vain to have sexual intercourse at Sathanas's order, for they obviously "did not know how to do [such] sin," *nesciebant facere peccatum*.<sup>36</sup>

Then Sathanas resorts to an interesting trick, for it adds to our already large repertory of interpretations of Genesis: He makes Paradise, he places the human couple there, and he plants in the middle a straw (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil) in which he hides the fluid Snake, which is nothing but Sathanas's own spit.<sup>37</sup> The Bogomils were not content with whatever gnostic solutions they may have been acquainted with from heresiological literature. They devised a new scenario in which the Tree of Knowledge *and* the Snake are nothing but the Demiurge himself! Showing an excess of subtlety, the Devil's trick consists of driving the humans to violate the interdiction against eating from the Tree of Knowledge which he had formulated himself. He makes the rule and at the same time pushes the incarnated angels to break it.

Entering the Snake, the Evil One seduces Eve and impregnates her with his tail: "This is why humans are not called sons of God, but sons of the Devil and the Snake, accomplishing the diabolical plans of their father to the end of the centuries."<sup>38</sup> Becoming slaves to diabolical concupiscence, Adam and Eve give birth to a satanic race that propagates according to the ancient doctrine of Traducianism: New souls derive from the psychic copulation of the parents. In our case, the fallen spirits multiply in heaven and enter the clayish bodies of women, *corpora feminea lutosa*.<sup>39</sup>

Euthymius of Our Lady knows a different version of the myth:<sup>40</sup> the Archon of this world fashions Adam's body and wants to set in it the soul stolen from God (together with the Sun). As soon as the soul enters through the mouth, it comes out through the anus, and the reversed operation leads to a reverse, yet no less disappointing, result. For three hundred years Adam's body remains soulless, until the Ruler has the brilliant idea of eating unclean animals, such as the serpent, the scorpion, the dog, the cat, and the frog, and spitting this awful mixture over the soul. Then, plugging up Adam's anus, he blows the soul into his mouth. Due to its disgusting wrapping, the soul stays in the body.

One is rather puzzled by this crude myth, until one recognizes in it a garbled version of the ancient doctrine of the antimimon pneuma. We

have here a popular and negative version of the clean, intellectual, Neoplatonic *ochēma*, or vehicle of the soul, and ultimately of the Aristotelian *prōton organon*, the astral body that wraps the soul before it can be introduced into the body.<sup>41</sup>

Zigabenus's version is simpler:<sup>42</sup> Samael-Satanael attempts to animate Adam's moist body with his own spirit (*pneuma*), but the spirit immediately escapes through his right big toe, dragging moisture along with it, which becomes the Snake. Only after begging God to send him some of his Spirit could Satanael make Adam stand. Here too, as in the version of the other Euthymius, where the human soul was *stolen* from God, the soul derives directly from God. And likewise in the *Interrogatio* the soul is an innocent angel, free of any wickedness.

#### 4. History of Humankind

Euthymius Zigabenus is the only author who expands on the posterity of the Archon and Adam. God had agreed to send Samael the human soul because Samael had promised that the purpose of the new race was to fill up the places left vacant in heaven by the fall of the angels. It is clear then that the human soul is angelic as well. Yet, jealous of God, Samael does not keep his promise and has intercourse with Eve, thus spoiling all future human generations. The product of this crime is Cain and his sister Calomēnē.<sup>43</sup> From Adam, Eve gives birth to Abel, who is killed by Cain.

To punish Satanael, God strips him of his divine particle *-el*, depriving him of any creative power. Satan thus becomes a dark and deformed being (*skoteinos kai dyseidēs*), yet God in his goodness allows him to continue to reign over the world.<sup>44</sup>

Further on, the angels have intercourse with the daughters of men; and their sons, the Giants, oppose the Archon, who destroys them through the deluge, sparing only Noah, his sincere worshiper.<sup>45</sup>

The *Interrogatio* does not follow up on the intercourse of the Devil with Eve. The world is governed by Sathanas from his residence above the clouds, and through his servants. To fabricate a deceiving world history, the Archon abducts Enoch to his heaven. Enoch writes down seventy-six books containing the description of this lower heavenly realm, and thus humans forget the seven upper heavens of the Father. Moreover, Enoch teaches his sons "the order of sacrifices and impious rituals."<sup>46</sup> Therefore the Father decides to send Jesus, his Son who sits beside him, to reveal the truth. Sathanas gets wind of his intention and delivers to Moses

pieces of three trees from which to make Jesus' cross. At the same time, he gives Moses the Law and helps him cross the Red Sea. Nevertheless, the Father does not give up his plan. To prepare Jesus' way, he first dispatches the angel Mary to the world. Jesus enters and exits through her ear (the right one, specifies Zigabenus), a sequence attested among ancient orthodox Fathers. Zigabenus adds that Mary was not conscious of Jesus' passage: he crossed her like water through a pipe.<sup>47</sup>

Jesus does not have a physical (that is, clayish) body. He puts on only an immaterial body, which he abandons in the zone of Air when he reverts to the fatherly realm. He does not need food; his death and resurrection are not real.<sup>48</sup>

Having heard about Christ's descent to the world but not knowing his whereabouts, the Archon sends his own angel Elias, alias John the Baptist, who baptizes in water and is able to identify Christ because of the dove that lands on him. Only Jesus' baptism with Spirit can save. The expressions "my body" and "my blood" refer metaphorically to the Lord's Prayer. The Bogomils reject the Church sacraments, which they associate with bad Christians, disciples of John the Baptist who "wed and are wed," whereas Jesus' disciples are encratite: "they are like the angels of God in heaven, in the Kingdom of heaven, they are *eunuchi propter regnum celorum*" (Matt. 19:10-12).<sup>49</sup>

The world will last as long as the number of Righteous admitted to heaven remains lower than the number of seats left vacant by the fallen angels. Eschatology is based on the Revelation of John. Christ will come with the apostles to judge the universe; the demons and their followers will be dispatched to the eternal fire, the Righteous will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. "And then, with the Father's permission, an obscure Darkness and a Gehenna of fire [*obscuritas tenebrosa et geenna ignis*] will burst from the depth of the earth to the air of the firmament."<sup>50</sup> Sathanas and his demonic militia will be cast into a lake of fire so deep that a rock thrown down by a thirty-year-old man would reach the bottom only after three years. There the Devil will be tied with "indestructible chains," whereas "the Righteous will glow like the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father" and the Son of God will sit at his Father's right.<sup>51</sup>

## 5. Doctrinal and Ethical Consequences of the Bogomil Myth

Living in an encratite fashion in order to emulate the life of angels, and abstemious of all things that derive *ex coitu* or from things that, like wine, have been invented by the Devil to stimulate procreation,<sup>52</sup> the

Bogomils also have a very clearly antinomian stand in relation to the doctrine, sacraments, and ethics of the Church.

Cosmas the Priest ascribes to them the belief that the author of Jesus' miracles was the Devil himself.<sup>53</sup> According to H.-Ch. Puech, this means that they interpret the miracles symbolically, not literally.

The other data expounded by Cosmas are confirmed by other sources. The Bogomils repudiate baptism, the eucharist, the cult of the cross, the cult of the Virgin and saints, icons and relics, the Church hierarchy, orthodox liturgy and prayers. The only prayer they accept is the Our Father. They believe that the material edifices of the churches are Satan's resorts. They hold riches and authority in contempt and incite to civil disobedience. Despite all this, they feign being exemplary Christians.<sup>54</sup> Euthymius of Our Lady adds to this already impressive repertory of antinomianism the rejection of the dogmas of the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment.<sup>55</sup> Zigabenus, our most complete source on Byzantine Bogomilism, adds further information on the practices and rites of the Bogomil community, which have no place in this chapter.<sup>56</sup>

According to Cosmas, Bulgarian Bogomils dismiss the Law and the Prophets,<sup>57</sup> while Byzantine Bogomils, according to Zigabenus, accept an orthodox New Testament canon plus the sixteen books of the Prophets and the Psalms.<sup>58</sup> Their interpretation of the Scriptures is allegorical. Zigabenus gives a few interesting examples.<sup>59</sup> Perhaps the most salient of them concerns the description of John the Baptist's summary clothing in the desert—the loincloth made of camel hair and the leather belt—and of his diet (locusts and wild honey, according to Matt. 3:14): the hair of the camel stands for the numerous commandments of the Mosaic Law (*tas entolas tou mosaikou nomou*), unclean like the camel, for it allows a meat diet (*kreōphagia*), oaths, sacrifice, murder, and so on; the leather belt, by contrast, stands for the Holy Gospel, which was written down on sheepskin; the locusts are again the Law's commandments, unable to distinguish good from evil, whereas wild honey is once more the Holy Gospel, sweet like honey for those who receive it.<sup>60</sup> This kind of exegesis, the result of considerable hermeneutical effort, shows that Bogomilism grew out of a climate of intellectual sophistication that very well fits the Byzantine monks of the period.

## 6. The Christians of Bosnia

This heresy deriving from Byzantium was attested for the first time in Bosnia in 1199. Yet already in 1167 the priest Niketas/Niquinta, present at the Cathar Council of Saint-Félix-du-Lauragais, mentioned a Cathar

Dalmatian church, and *De haeresi catharorum in Lombardia* (about 1200) refers to the direct relation between the Cathar communities of Mantua and Vicenza and "Sclavenia" or "Sclavania," identified by Anselm of Alexandria as *terra (quae) dicitur Bossoria* (Bosnia, part of Croatia, called "Slavonia" in medieval documents).<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, evidence concerning these Bosnian heretics, who, like the Bogomils, call themselves Christians by excluding all others from that name, is very scant. According to a XIVth-century Glagolitic manuscript, their faith would be similar to the Bogomils': "They say that our Lord Jesus Christ did not have an actual human body, that the Virgin Mary was an angel and many other errors against the Catholic faith. . . . They condemn marriage, certain foods, and many other things."<sup>62</sup>

A letter of June 1223, by the papal legate in Burgundia, Cardinal Conrad of Urach, reports the existence of a Cathar "antipope" residing "in Bulgarian territory, in Croatia and Dalmatia, bordering on the Hungarian nation," who allegedly bestowed investiture upon Barthélemy of Carcassonne so that the latter himself could confirm Cathar bishops in the region of Agen. Could this mysterious Slavic "antipope" be, as Christine Thouzellier and F. Sanjek both believe, the *djed*, "Elder," *Magister*, or *Abbas* of the Bosnian Patarene church? Difficult to say, the more so that there is no evidence that the Christians of Bosnia were dualists.<sup>63</sup>

The only positive facts known about these "Christians who repudiate sin," probably a religious order,<sup>64</sup> are the dismissal of the Romans' baptism with water (replaced by a "baptism of the Book"), the denial of the value of charity, and (according to a 1454 source) the refusal to make any oath.<sup>65</sup> The *Dubia ecclesiastica* (after 1373) of the Franciscan Barthélemy d'Auvergne, vicar of the Order in Bosnia (1366-75), confirms the rejection of baptism, adding that the Bosnians neglect the sacrament of matrimony and take a spouse on the condition that she be faithful to her husband. All this sounds similar to the ethnic laws of the Germans, for example, and does not entail any dualistic negation of this world.

With the exception of the Glagolitic manuscript, which could take inspiration from some Byzantine source on the Bogomils, the testimonies concerning the dualism or pseudodualism of the Patarenes, as they were called,<sup>66</sup> are very late. One of them comes from James of Marchia, vicar of the Bosnian Franciscans (1435-38), after a summary of his *Dialogue Against the Manichaeans of Bosnia* redacted in 1697 for his canonization.<sup>67</sup> Confirming their rejection of the sacraments and eucharist, the summary adds:•

*De creatione visibilium et de animalibus iugulat haeresim Patarenorum, qui visibilium creatorem putabant esse diabolum, stultaque persuasione docebant, hominum animas esse daemones, qui olim de caelo ceciderunt et illuc tandem erant reversuri. (On the creation of the visible world and of the animals the heresy of the Patarenes raves, saying that the creator of the visible world was the Devil and taught a stupid doctrine according to which the souls of human beings were demons who once fell from heaven and would return there.)<sup>68</sup>*

They would likewise refuse to make any oath, and would assert that the Law was given by the Devil.

What did their Bible canon look like? The most complete Bible codex of the Bosnian Christians, copied in 1404 by a certain Hval during the period of *djed* Radomer for Hrvoje, duke of Spalato, is very close to the canon of the Byzantine Bogomils. It contains an unabridged New Testament, four apocrypha, the Decalogue (Exod. 20:1-7), 151 Psalms (the last one apocryphal), eight Odes of the Old Testament, and the Magnificat.<sup>69</sup> This indeed means that at the beginning of the XVth century the Christians of Bosnia dismissed most of the Old Testament, and their reason for this must have been akin to the Bogomils'. It seems, therefore, that we may admit the testimony of the XIVth-century Glagolitic manuscript as authentic. Nevertheless, the dualist doctrine of the Bosnians is known only from a few Latin documents, the last one from 1461, which show quite disturbing contradictions. F. Sanjek and other authors could explain them only by dismissing the testimony of Cardinal Juan de Torquemada, which will be analyzed shortly.

A XIVth-century list of errors (prior to James of Marchia) shows besides other Bogomil practices the following beliefs of the Patarenes:

They say that there are two Gods and the higher of them created things spiritual and invisible whereas the lower, Lucifer, all things corporeal and visible. . . . They deny Christ's humanness and say he had a phantastic and aerial body. . . . They say that Holy Mary was an angel, not a human being. . . . That Christ did not actually die, resurrect, and ascend to heaven with his true body. Likewise, they reject the Old Testament, with the exception of the Psalms, and assert that all the Fathers of the Old Testament, Patriarchs and Prophets, are cursed, as are all those who came before Christ. . . . They condemn John the Baptist and say he is cursed. . . . They say that the Law of Moses was given by the Devil, and it was the latter who showed before Moses in the burning [bush]. . . . They say that Lucifer went to heaven and seduced God's angels, who descended to the earth where Lucifer encased them in human bodies. . . . That the souls of men are demons

who fell from heaven and will return to heaven after making penitence in one or more bodies.<sup>70</sup>

One point in which this early text differs from Bogomilism is in the idea of reincarnation, which only one Byzantine, John Italos, had previously held.<sup>71</sup> It is difficult to understand what the Patarenes meant by penitence *in corporibus uno vel pluribus*. As we will see in the next chapter, it was probably the Origenist doctrine of the assumption of different bodies. One thing seems clear: that the Patarenes had abandoned Bogomil Traducianism for the preexistence of the soul.

This testimony is corroborated by Juan de Torquemada (1461), usually considered spurious:

There are two gods, the good Lord and the Lord of evil. There are two principles, one of things spiritual and incorporeal, the other one of things corruptible, corporeal, and visible. The first is the God of Light, the second the God of Darkness. The angels were evil by nature and could not have not sinned. Lucifer rose to heaven, fought God, and caused many angels to fall. Souls are demons encased in bodies. The evil angels, encased in bodies, will revert to heaven through baptism, purification (*purgationem*) and penitence. Rejecting and reproving the Old Testament, they say it belongs to the Prince of Darkness.<sup>72</sup>

This seems to be a rather awkward form of Origenism combined with Manichaeism and holding onto the ethical and practical consequences of a revised Bogomilism. All in all, this fits rather well with the pattern of radical Catharism (see next chapter). Traces of the radical doctrines in Dalmatia may thus explain the westward spread of this second movement from Byzantium.

There is only one problem with this interpretation: *Radical Catharism existed much earlier (1167 in Provence) than the testimonies that ascribe it to the Bosnian Patarenes*, and therefore, if the latter ever held it, it may very well be derived from a late Provençal source.

## 7. Bogomil Dualism

The question of Bogomil dualism is among the most difficult to confront us so far. In fact, we not only have to describe a manifestly dualistic doctrine but must first decide *whether the Bogomils were dualist* or not. We defined dualism as the opposition of two principles. Bogomilism acknowledges the opposition God the Father versus Satan. Yet can we be certain that Satan is here the principle of anything?



The *creation* of the world is ascribed to him by rather unscrupulous heresiologists. Several versions of the Bogomil Genesis, on the contrary, emphasize the fact that Satan, a very high angel chased from heaven for having wanted to imitate God the Father, is not the *author* of the lower world but only the Craftsman (*dēmiourgos*), the artisan who fashions it from preexisting elements. Moreover, the Father himself intervenes. In one variant the diabolic universe is a copy of the godly one, but the elements of the former were created by God. In another variant there are seven upper stories of the universe and seven lower, devoid of angels. But the lower had equally been created by God, and so, probably, was the lowest, Hell.

At first sight we may as well admit to "mitigated dualism"; yet, when we take a closer look, the position of the Bogomils does not seem dualistic at all and does not differ much from that of the Church, which makes of Lucifer a real opponent, yet subordinated to God. Like the Church, the Bogomils take care to emphasize God's monarchy and omnipotence. Through sheer goodness God allows Satan to rule over the world he had taken so much trouble to organize and to spoil it. Thus, given that the Devil is the architect of the world but principle of nothing, that he is subordinated to God and does evil only with God's permission (God in no way being the author of evil), then we may conclude that *Bogomilism is not dualistic*.

It would be so if we could trust Zigabenus,<sup>73</sup> who asserts that the Devil is the creator of animals and plants. Yet again their only original and authentic text, the *Interrogatio*, intervenes to specify that all living beings are produced by earth and water (and probably air), the gloss adding that animals do not possess soul but have an essence from the elements. Now, as we well know, *the elements have been created by God*, not by the Devil. It is thus quite probable that the heresiologists do not understand the subtlety of the Bogomil doctrine and wrongly call the Devil "creator" of something of which he is only a steward.

In Gnosticism in general the matter of the world has no divine origin, or if it does, it is some refuse or negative emotion. For Marcion matter is likewise negative and ungodly. Manichaeism Darkness is an evil principle coeternal with God. Despite its colorful creation myth, Bogomilism is very far from these ancient forms of dualism.

Could Bogomilism derive from Paulicianism? This again seems impossible. Paulicianism professes the radical dualism of two gods and two worlds, like Marcion; ironically enough, it does not entail manifest contempt for the body.

In conclusion, Bogomilism appears to be original and not dualistic. Yet when it comes to the human body, Satan displays effective creative

powers. Although clay is not *created* by the Devil, the body is entirely fabricated by him and in his image, from a moist matter containing much water (the most inferior element) and related to the fluid shape of the Snake—quite an original expression of antisomatism. This notwithstanding, the Bogomils show less horror for matter than many early Church Fathers.

Are Bogomils anticosmic? This seems to be excluded. Even if the Devil has organized the world, the Father has intervened as well. Living beings sprang from the elements themselves. Animals are contemptible only for their coital procreation, but plants are not, not even the vine. According to a gloss of the Vienna manuscript, the vine was among the twenty species that the Devil planted in Paradise, which is an evil place. Yet the plants themselves are not intrinsically evil; the vine in particular is accursed only because "the Devil secretly put (*latenter*) his savor in it."<sup>74</sup>

The only thing that in all safety can be defined as evil in the Bogomil worldview is *concupiscence*, of which the Devil is the quintessence. The Bogomils abstain from meat and sex in order to abate sinful desire. Concupiscence comes with the body fabricated by the Devil. Only Mary and Jesus were able to avoid it *because they did not possess a physical body*; they were angels as our souls are, only not trapped in bodies. And what is more appropriate for angelic conception and birth than the ear?

The identification of the Devil with the Old Testament god has a definite gnostic flavor. Yet the Bogomils prove that it is not a simple bookish reminiscence by the fact that they apply the principle of inverse exegesis very creatively to the Book of Genesis, activating logical possibilities that had not been contemplated by the gnostics. Thus Satan is both the Tree of Knowledge and the Snake; he impregnates Eve with his tail, engendering the archontic race of Cain, the only extant race, since Cain immediately kills Abel, and there is no mention among Bogomils of the "immovable race" of Seth. The only better race that ever existed, the Nephilim, or Giants, who oppose the Archon of the world, are all destroyed by the deluge. Noah, Enoch, Elias, Moses, and John the Baptist are all the Archon's men. Jesus Christ is the Son of the good God, dispatched by his Father to reveal truth. The Archon crucifies him, but his passion and death are not real. When the Righteous will occupy all the thrones made vacant by the fall of the angels, the world will be consumed by fire, and the Devil will be chained in the deepest recess of the Gehenna. The doctrine that the number of seats in heaven is equal to the number of fallen angels derives from Augustine and is perfectly orthodox. Luther revived it at the beginning of the XVIth century.

The Bogomil attitude toward ecosystemic intelligence is ambiguous. The architect of the ecosystem is the Devil, but the creator of its material is God. However, the Bogomil Devil seems to have more creative power than Lucifer in Origen or Milton.

Since the essence of the human being is an angelic soul that is divine although fallen, Bogomilism denies the anthropic principle that requires the world to be for humans and humans for the world. Only the body is of this world, the soul is not. Yet the Bogomil denial is not the same as the gnostic or Manichaeic denial: Humanity is not superior to the Demiurge, the Devil, for the Devil is likewise an angel.

Contrary to Gnosticism and Manichaeism, but for another reason than in Marcionism, Bogomilism is pessimistic. The innocent angel has been the dupe of the cunning one and cannot evade the accursed condition of his race other than by renouncing concupiscence and the other works of the Archon, that is, the beliefs and practices of the evil Romans.

## Notes

1. The best edition of the *Interrogatio*, with a French translation and commentary, belongs to Edina Bozóki, *Le Livre secret des Cathares: Interrogatio Iohannis, apocryphe d'origine bogomile*, preface by Émile Turdeanu (Beauchesne: Paris, 1980).
2. *Le Traité contre les Bogomiles de Cosmas le Prêtre*, trans. André Vaillant, with an excellent study by H.-Ch. Puech. (Travaux Inst. Ét. Slaves. 21) (Imprimerie Nationale-Droz: Paris, 1945).
3. For other names, see Dmitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (1948; Hall: Twickenham, 1972), 166–67.
4. Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, 174.
5. Gerhard Ficker, *Die Phundagiagiten: Ein Beitrag zur Ketzergeschichte des byzantinischen Mittelalters* (J. A. Barth: Leipzig, 1908). Euthymius Zigabenus's *Panoplia dogmatica* is published in PG 130 col. 1289–1322a.
6. The anathemata against Bogomils are contained in the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, a special ritual for the first Sunday of Lent, a celebration reinstated by the Council of Constantinople in 843 at the end of the iconoclastic controversy. The ritual commemorates the end of persecution against icons and their supporters. The 843 text was successively revised by Alexis I Comnenus (emperor 1081–1118), Manuel I Comnenus (emperor 1143–80), and in the XVth century. It was published and translated by Jean Gouillard, *Le Synodikon de l'orthodoxie: Édition et commentaire*, in *Travaux et Mémoires 2* (1967), 1–316. Anathemata against the Bogomils: 228–37.
7. See esp. the very outdated book by Jordan Ivanov, *Livres et légendes bogomiles*, trans. M. Ribeyrol, preface by René Nelli (Maisonneuve-Larose: Paris, 1976), 255ff.
8. *I.Ioh* 173 V = 157 D, p. 72 Boz.
9. *Epist.* 33 and Ficker's comm., 162.
10. *Pan.* col. 1296 = *Narr.* 92,11 Ficker.
11. *Cosmas* 74 Vaillant; *Narr.* 91 = *Pan.* col. 1296.
12. *I.Ioh* 45 Boz.
13. *I.Ioh* 45 Boz.
14. *I.Ioh* 46–47 Boz.

15. *I.Ioh* 51 Boz.
16. One tail in D.
17. *I.Ioh* 60–63 V, p. 52 Boz. A gloss of the Vienna ms. adds: "The seven tails are the seven sins or vices by which he [Sathanas] still seduces humans, i.e., lie, adultery, avarice, theft, blasphemy, hatred and discord" (p. 88–89 Boz.).
18. *I.Ioh* 61–63 D, p. 54–55 Boz. "Seven days" is interpreted as seven divine days, i.e., seven centuries; *ib.*, 64.
19. *I.Ioh* 67 D.
20. *I.Ioh* 54 Boz.
21. *I.Ioh* 72 D.
22. About the origin of the meteorological angels, see my *Expériences de l'extase, de l'Hellénisme au Moyen Age* (Payot: Paris, 1984), 158.
23. Neither V nor D (p. 56–57) mentions the air.
24. V gloss, p. 90–91 Boz.
25. Cosmas 26,4 Vaillant.
26. *Narr.* 33–34 Ficker.
27. Puech, in Puech and Vaillant, *Traité*, 183–84.
28. Puech, *Traité*, 202.
29. *Op. daem.*, PG 122 col. 824a.
30. *Narr.* 95,21ff = *Pan.* col. 1293–95.
31. *Pan.* col. 1301b.
32. Puech, *Traité*, 190–92; see also Giulia Sfameni-Gasparro, "Il Mito bogomilo dei due figli di Dio: Osservazioni storico-religiose," in *Umanità e storia: Scritti in onore di Adelchi Attisani* (F. Giannini: Naples, n.d.), 3, or in *Gnostica et Hermetica* (Ateneo: Rome, 1982).
33. PG 122 col. 825.
34. *Narr.* 94ff = *Pan.* col. 1292–93; Puech, *Traité*, 178–81.
35. *I.Ioh* 58 Boz.
36. *I.Ioh* 93 V.
37. *I.Ioh* 58–60 Boz.
38. *I.Ioh* 104–6 V p. 60–61 Boz.
39. *I.Ioh* 125 V p. 64 Boz.
40. *Epist.* 35f Ficker.
41. See my *Out of This World: A History of Otherworldly Journeys and Out-of-Body Experiences, from Gilgamesh to Albert Einstein* (Shambhalā: Boston, 1991).
42. *Narr.* 92 = *Pan.* col. 1297.
43. *Narr.* 93.3 Ficker.
44. On the loss of the divine particle -*ā*, see Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, 200.
45. *Narr.* 98–99 Ficker = *Pan.* col. 1305.
46. *I.Ioh* 131 D p. 66–67 Boz.
47. *Narr.* 93 = *Pan.* col. 1301.
48. *Narr.* 93 = *Pan.* col. 1301.
49. *I.Ioh* 186–88 V, p. 74–75 Boz.
50. *I.Ioh* 240–42 V, p. 82–83 Boz.; Puech, *Traité* 211, compares this *obscuritas tenebrosa* with the Black Fire of Manichaean eschatology.
51. *I.Ioh* 84–85 Boz.
52. Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, 127–29.
53. Cosmas 32.12–18 V; Puech, *Traité*, 209f; Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, 131f.
54. Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, 130–38; Puech, *Traité*, 213–37, 260–77.
55. *Epist.* 38; see Ficker, 167–70.
56. See Puech, *Traité*, 237–60.
57. Puech, *Traité*, 168–77.
58. *Narr.* 98.10–20 = *Pan.* col. 1292–93; Ficker, 265; Puech, *Traité*, 168–77; Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, 212.

59. *Narr.* 103ff Ficker.
60. *Narr.* 104.4–18 Ficker = *Pan.* col. 1321–22.
61. Franjo Sanjek, *Les Chrétiens bosniaques et le mouvement cathare XII–XV siècle* (Nauwelaerts-Vander-Oyez: Brussels, Paris, Louvain, 1976), 19–43.
62. Sanjek, *Chrétiens bosniaques*, 28–29.
63. Against Sanjek's rather weak arguments, *Chrétiens bosniaques*, 95ff.
64. Sanjek, *Chrétiens bosniaques*, 88–90.
65. Sanjek, *Chrétiens bosniaques*, 97–124.
66. According to Christine Thouzellier, the origin of this word is Milanese.
67. Sanjek, *Chrétiens bosniaques*, 145.
68. *Fol.* 242v.
69. Sanjek, *Chrétiens bosniaques*, 172.
70. Döllinger, vol. 1, 242–43, n. 1, from Venice, Bibl. Marciana, fund Nanni.
71. According to Anna Comnenos's *Alexiad*; see Jean Duvernoy, *Le Catharisme: La Religion des cathares* (Privat: Toulouse, 1976), 345.
72. The following summary derives from Duvernoy, *Le Catharisme*, 353, who accepts the testimony as authentic.
73. *Narr.* 92.13–16 = *Pan.* col. 1296–97.
74. *Lloh* 90–91 Boz.