

after the coming of Islam, i. e. not before A.D. 700. Their founder, that is to say, the founder of Mandaeism in its present form, according to the only tradition we have, was a wandering ascetic from Adiabene, whose doctrines were partly borrowed from those of the Manichees and the Marcionites, both known to have been influential in Mesopotamia generally. It requires, I venture to say, strong detailed evidence to make it probable that any parts of the system which do not seem to come from Marcionites or Manichees were derived from a Mediterranean source. The Biblical knowledge of the Mandaeans can all be traced to a study of the Peshitta, the Bible of the official Christians of Babylonia, including their unsympathetic portrait of Jesus Christ. The Mandaean Anush-Utra, on the other hand, is not a mere pale reflexion of the Church's Jesus Christ, but the Marcionite (and Manichaeic) Jesus: all that is said of Anush-Utra, including the figure of Miriai, a queer reminiscence of Mary Magdalene, is ultimately derived from the Lucan Gospel as curtailed and arranged by Marcion.

In Bardaisan we have an educated Gnostic's doctrine of a modified astrological Fate, including the soul's fate after death. In Mandaeism we have a somewhat similar doctrine, as seen through the medium of oral lore and a tradition preserved by wandering mendicants. Even though a feature here and there may be recognized as the lineal descendant of the ancient Gnostic speculation of the age of Valentinus, we cannot expect it to be more faithfully preserved than the features of the Marcionite Jesus are preserved in the Mandaean Anush-Utra. In other words, Mandaeism may be interesting in itself, but it is useless to go to it as a key to unlock the mysteries of early Christian development.

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NOTE ON GINZA RABBA 174

In the Ginza Rabba of the Mandaeans (G R 174 f = Lidzbarski 178) there is a poem which deserves special notice, because of its literary connexion with the Old Testament. It is discussed by Dr S. A. Pallis in his excellent *Mandaean Studies* (Oxford, 1926), pp. 131-133, but I think it will be convenient to quote the poem itself from the original and make on it a few observations of my own.

The poem runs thus:

1 Life revealed itself to the world: brightness dawned and light and Life.

2 The sea that saw it retired: and the Jordan turned backwards.

3 The mountains skip like stags: and the hinds in the country damage

their young : and the hills speak like daughters of the clouds in honour.
 4 The mountains open their mouths and give praise : and the cedars in Lilban are broken.

5 The earth that saw me quivered and trembled : and the king of the sea that saw me retired.

6 Sea, whom sawest thou and thou retiredst : Jordan, whom sawest thou and thou turnedst backwards? 7 Mountains, whom saw ye and ye skipped like stags : and hinds in the field, for whom do ye damage your young : and hills like daughters of the clouds, for whom do ye speak in honour? 8 Mountains, for whom did ye open your mouths in praise : cedars in Lilban, for whom were ye broken?

9 Earth, whom sawest thou and thou didst tremble : king of the sea, whom sawest thou and thou didst retire? 10 And isles of the sea, of whom were ye amazed : and islands of the sea, of whom were ye terrified?

11 Before the brightness and the light of the Gnosis of Life (*Mandā d' Hayyē*), and the brightness and the splendour with which Thou hast clothed the men of proved rectitude, &c.

It was necessary to quote the passage almost in full, in order to exhibit its style and structure. Quite clearly it is an imitation or application of Psalm cxiv, which contains also features imitated from Psalm xxix, *vs.* 5 and 9. But it is a free *imitation*, not a quotation or even a paraphrase. We may discover that the Mandaean imitator has misunderstood his original, and thereby we may be able to infer with practical certainty some of the wording of this original, but we are not bound to refer every feature of the new poem to some feature, understood or misunderstood, of the original : a real paraphrase would not have woven the two Psalms together.

This may appear obvious when thus stated, too obvious to be worth formulating. But as a matter of fact it seems to me that this obvious distinction between an imitation and a true paraphrase has not been borne in mind either by Lidzbarski or Dr Pallis, with the result that they bring parallels from the Jewish Targum, which is not likely to have been a source accessible to a Mandaean writer.

Let us see now how far this Mandaean writing can be explained on the most natural supposition of all, viz. that what was known to the writer was the Peshitta, that and nothing more. It is acknowledged that 'the king of the sea' comes from the Aramaic *mā lāk yamā* ('what ailed thee, sea?') taken as if it were *mlik yamā*.¹ I may observe that

¹ The Mandaeans write **𐤍** for *a*, so that it is obvious that the mistake was more likely to be made by a Mandaean from the Syriac **מַה לְךָ יָמָא**, than from the Targum **מַה לְךָ יָמָא** or the Hebrew **מַה לְךָ הַיָּם**.

it is not likely to have come from Arabic, for Arabic texts of the Psalms have *ما لك ايها البحر*, i. e. they insert 'O' before 'sea'.

3 I translate *ailia* 'stags', because the Peshitta has *ailē* 'stags': the Jewish Targum has *dakrīn* 'rams'. The hinds and their young come from Psalm xxix 9, but the word used for the verb (משאחמטא) is somewhat obscure. It is used in G R 84¹⁹ (Lidzbarski 85²⁵), in the passive, of *being convulsed* with sobs. As for שחמט, there seems to be no Syriac evidence for the Hebrew sense of to 'slaughter' (in sacrifice): חטב means to 'damage' or 'spoil'. Granted that Psalm xxix 9 is the original, this Mandaean line does not mean 'maketh the hinds to calve' (as the Jewish Targum): it is really nearer the Peshitta which says that the voice of the LORD *هلم*, i. e. 'shakes' or 'terrifies', the hinds.

The next clause comes back to Psalm cxiv 4. The 'daughters of the clouds' are derived from another Aramaic blunder. *حبل* (حبل) both in Jewish Aramaic and Syriac means 'flock of sheep', *عننا* (حبل) means 'cloud'. The Jewish Targum has בנין דען 'sons of the flock', i. e. masculine, while the Peshitta has *למב* 'lambs of the flock', also masculine. I venture to suggest that the Peshitta is the original from which the Mandaean was excogitated. Granted that there are hills like daughters of clouds (i. e. very high), why should they speak? This cannot be explained out of the Jewish Targum, but the Peshitta has

וההרים כמו למב,

and I suggest that the Mandaean turned this into

וההרים כמו חבל,

which he wrongly understood to mean 'and the hills like clouds say'. It is not a question of 'corruption' or 'various reading': the Mandaean text is not an exact translation of anything, but we ask how the queer images came into the writer's head.

'In honour' seems to me to come from Psalm xxix 9.

4 The misspelling 'Lilban' for 'Libnān' does not occur elsewhere in the Ginza (see Lidzbarski 263²⁷, 409⁴), but is of a piece with the general distortion of Biblical names in Mandaean writings, e.g. 'Enishbai' for 'Elisabeth' (*ענישבאי* = *عيسى*).

The rest of the poem, consisting largely of repetitions (as in Psalm cxiv itself), does not need comment: I only quoted it to shew that the literary dependence of the Mandaean writer on the two Psalms is quite clear. It may be remarked that just as 'stags' suggested something to him about 'hinds', so in *ver.* 10 we have 'islands' and 'isles' following the 'sea' and the 'king of the sea'.

Thus the whole poem can be explained from the Peshitta, from the Bible current among Christians in Mesopotamia, and from that alone.

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