

Silviu LUPAȘCU\*

### **GNOSTIC DUALISM: THE MYTH OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS**

**Abstract:** Hans Jonas has distinguished the “Syrian-Egyptian” Gnostic systems (the *Nag Hammadi Library*) from the “Iranian” Gnostic systems (Manichaeism, Mandaism). Concerning the first type, the origin of Evil and the Powers of Darkness appertains to the climax of an ontological involution or descending process, from the Primordial or Supreme Divinity to a material level, initially inside the sphere of divinity (*Pleroma*, “Plenitude”), and later beyond its limit (*horos*), inside the new open space of the geocentric cosmos, composed of the eight celestial spheres. The Primordial Divinity, which manifests itself through the ontological-emanationist process, is pictured either as a Masculine Divinity (*Propator*), or as a Feminine Divinity (*Barbelo*). Concerning the second type, the Principles of Good and Evil have coexisted since the beginning of the Universe, they configure two spaces, characterized by the dynamics of a mythological antagonism, separated by a system of limits and reciprocal exclusions, dictated by the divine will: the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness.

The problem of the origin of evil and the strategy of redemption, in a micro-cosmic and macro-cosmic context, are two of the religious grounds of the complex mythological and theological constructions that constitute the Gnostic religious space. The confrontation between Good and Evil, the War between Light and Darkness, configure vast celestial or cosmic landscapes that circumscribe the inextricable labyrinth of the divine-human ontology, the tragic-blissful destiny of the human beings along the way of life, death and salvation, as well as the infinite potentialities of the knowledge to make whole again the theocracy of the Light, after its fall into the inferior regions.

**Keywords:** *gnosticism, dualism, salvator salvatus, Nag Hammadi Library, Kingdom of Light, Kingdom of Darkness, Gnostic redemption.*

### **DUALISMUL GNOSTIC: MITUL ÎNTUNERICULUI ȘI LUMINII**

**Rezumat:** Hans Jonas a diferențiat sistemele gnostice de tip „sirian-egiptean” (*Biblioteca de la Nag Hammadi*) de sistemele gnostice de tip „iranian” (maniheism, mandeism). În cadrul primului tip, originea răului și a puterilor

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\* Universitatea „Dunărea de Jos”, Galați (slupascu@yahoo.com).

Întunericului se află în punctul culminant al unui proces de cădere sau involuție ontologică, de la nivelul Divinității Primordiale, Supreme, la nivelul materiei, inițial în interiorul sferei divinității (*Pleroma*, „Plenitudine”), ulterior dincolo de limita ei (*horos*), în spațiul nou, deschis, al cosmosului geocentric, alcătuit din cele opt sfere celeste. Divinitatea Primordială, care Se comunică prin procesul emanaționist-ontologic, este ipostaziată fie ca Divinitate Masculină (*Propator*), fie ca Divinitate Feminină (*Barbelo*). În cadrul celui de al doilea tip, Principiul Binelui și Principiul Răului coexistă din momentul începutului universului, configurează două spații caracterizate prin dinamica unui antagonism mitologic, despărțite de un sistem de limite și excluziuni reciproce, fixate de voința divină: Împărăția Luminii și Împărăția Întunericului.

Problema originii răului și strategia mântuirii, în context micro-cosmic și macro-cosmic, reprezintă două dintre fundamentele complexelor construcții mitologice și teologice care alcătuiesc spațiul religios gnostic. Înfruntarea dintre Bine și Rău, războiul dintre Lumină și Întuneric, configurează vaste peisaje celeste sau cosmice, care circumscriu labirintul inextricabil al ontologiei divine-umane, destinul tragic-fericit al ființelor omenești pe calea vieții, morții, salvării, precum și potențialitățile infinite ale cunoașterii de a reîntregi teocrația Luminii, după căderea sa în regiunile inferioare.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *gnosticism, dualism, salvator salvatus, corpusul Nag Hammadi, Împărăția Luminii, Împărăția Întunericului, răscumpărare gnostică.*

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Kurt Rudolph defined the Gnostic dualism as “anti-cosmic”, meaning that the Gnostic theology includes an unequivocal negative evaluation of the created world and its Creator, the Evil Demiurge, who is radically different from the Good God, Foreign, Unknown, or Occulted, yet paradoxically almighty in the hierarchy of dualist theocracy. From this point of view, the geocentric cosmos, situated underneath the ninth heaven<sup>1</sup> - where the paradisiacal space is also included, beyond which lies the Kingdom of God -, is identified as a Kingdom of Evil and Darkness, while the matter is valued, following the human-angelic falling into sinfulness, as a receptacle of evil<sup>2</sup>. With his classification, Hans Jonas has

<sup>1</sup> In most of the Gnostic myths, the number of the sub-paradisiacal “heavens” or “spheres” varies between seven and ten.

<sup>2</sup> Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis. The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1984, p.60.

distinguished the “Syrian-Egyptian” Gnostic systems (the *Nag Hammadi Library*<sup>3</sup>) from the “Iranian” Gnostic systems (Manichaeism, Mandaeism). Concerning the first type (the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Paraphrase of Shem*, the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, *Pistis Sophia*, the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the *Gospel of Truth*), the origin of Evil and the Powers of Darkness appertains to the climax of an ontological involution or descending process, from the Primordial or Supreme Divinity to a material level, initially inside the sphere of divinity (*Pleroma*, “Plenitude”), and later beyond its limit (*horos*), inside the new open space of the geocentric cosmos, composed of the eight celestial<sup>4</sup> spheres. The Primordial Divinity, which manifests itself through the ontological-emanationist process, is pictured either as a Masculine Divinity (*Propator*<sup>5</sup>), or as a Feminine Divinity (*Barbelo*<sup>6</sup>)<sup>7</sup>. Concerning the second type (the *Scholia* of Theodor Bar Konai on the doctrine of Mani, the *Kephalaia of the Teacher*, the *Hymn of the Pearl*, *Ginza Rabba*, the *Odes of Solomon*), the Principles of Good and Evil have coexisted since the beginning of the Universe, they configure two spaces, characterized by the dynamics of a mythological antagonism, separated by a system of limits and reciprocal exclusions, dictated by the divine will: the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness. At the level of the Primordial Divinity (“The Father of Greatness”) the pre-cosmogonical crisis consisting of the intrusion of the Darkness into the Light is triggered, a crisis which is countered by the manifestation of the ontological labyrinth that led to the establishment of the Feminine Principle (“Mother of Life”) and the Masculine Principle (“Primordial Man”, *Ohrmazd*). The Masculine Principle, hypostasized as the “*Anthropos* myth”, determines the continuation of the divine ontology through the process of involution which manifests the cosmic-human ontology, at the climax of which the Primordial Man faces the Powers of Darkness, in obedience to the order received from the King of Light. Hans Jonas’ classification couldn’t be more than experimental, because the

<sup>3</sup> The *Nag Hammadi Library* is a collection of Gnostic manuscripts, discovered in 1945, in Egypt, near the village of Al-Qasr, and preserved today in the Coptic Museum of Cairo, under UNESCO supervision.

<sup>4</sup> The eight celestial spheres (*Ogdoada*) of the geocentric cosmos were illustrated in the “diagram of the Ophites” (cf. gr. *ophis*, “snake”, symbol of the cyclic Universe or *ouroboros*, “the snake that bites its own tail”), a Christian-Gnostic sect dated in the II<sup>nd</sup>-IV<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. The “diagram of the Ophites” was described by Origen, in *Contra Celsum*, VI, 25-38 and reconstituted by Herbert Leisegang and Kurt Rudolph. Herbert Leisegang, *La Gnose*, Paris: Payot, 1971, pp. 168-173; Rudolph, *Gnosis*, pp. 67-70.

<sup>5</sup> The Celestial Father.

<sup>6</sup> Herbert Leisegang explains the etymology of the word *Barbelo* through *Barbhe Eloha* (ebr.), “God has four parts”. Leisegang, *La Gnose*, pp. 55-83. Saran Alexandrian described each pair (*syzygya*) of the eons that form the *Pleroma* (Plenitude), the sphere of divinity, in the Valentinian Gnostic theology. Saran Alexandrian, *Histoire de la philosophie occulte*, Paris: Seghers, 1983, pp. 25-97.

<sup>7</sup> Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, I-II, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954-1966, I, pp. 33-37, p. 96, pp. 123-127.

Gnostic theological systems belonging to the “Iranian” and “Syrian-Egyptian” types can be reduced to common narrative-mythological patterns and logics: the ontological involution from the Primordial Divinity to the cosmic-human level, the masculine-feminine hypostasis of the Primordial Divinity, the Good / Evil, Light / Darkness dichotomy, the fall of the human nature’s prototype (the Primordial Man) and the fall of the human nature itself (*Adam*) from the sphere of Good / Light to the sphere of Evil / Darkness, the ontological-substantial continuity, after the fall, between the Primordial Divinity and the human soul, the conceiving of a divine strategy which aims to the redemption of the human soul and of all the particles of Light that have fallen into the Kingdom of Matter, Evil, Darkness, through the Messiah of Light (*Ohrmazd*, Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of the Light, *salvator salvatus*), who is sent over by the Primordial Divinity as the bearer of salvation through knowledge (*Gnosis*) and the embodiment of salvation through knowledge (*Nous*).

The Syrian-Egyptian and the Iranian Gnostic myths can be reduced to a common logical-narrative structure. In fact, they reveal themselves as two versions of the same Great founding Myth, which elucidates the essential matters concerning the Gnostic theogony-theology, cosmogony-cosmology, anthropogony-anthropology, as well as the origin of Evil, the history of salvation and the apocalyptic denouement:

The perfect equilibrium of the Primordial Divinity, the Divine Father (*Propator*, “Father of Greatness”), in the Kingdom of Good and Light;

The act of the external ontological projection of the Divine Mother (*Barbelo*, “Mother of Life”) by the Divine Father;

The act of the external ontological projection of the good eons (in pairs of masculine and feminine eons), as well as the sphere of Divinity (the *Pleroma*, the Powers of the Light, the angels of Good), by the will of the Divine Father;

The preexistence or the accidental coming into being (the chaotic movement of *Barbelo*, the licentiousness of *Sophia*) of the Principle of Evil (*Yaldabaoth*, the “Monarch of Darkness”, the “Evil Demiurge”) and his reign of tyranny over the Kingdom of Darkness and Evil;

The act of the ontological projection, outside the Principle of Evil, of the evil eons, of the hierarchy of Evil (the Archons, the angels of Evil) and of the cosmos (the *Ogdoad*);

The fall of the Light into the Darkness, the intrusion or the invasion of the Darkness into the Light;

The War between Light and Darkness, in order to liberate the Light which is chained inside the Darkness and to save the Primordial Man and the human souls; the descending movement of the Primordial Man, at the vanguard of the Light;

The interlude of demonic sexuality; the fashioning of *Adam* after the divine prototype of the Primordial Man, through the tragic “clear-obscure” mixture between Light and Darkness; the birth of the ancestors of the human race (*Adam* and *Eve*) from the demonic beings that have imprisoned the Light;

The descent of the Messianic Messenger (identified with Jesus Christ in the Christian-Gnostic systems that often contain Docetistic<sup>8</sup> versions of the crucifixion; the Son of the Light or the Son of Greatness, *salvator salvatus*, in the pre-Christian or non-Christian Gnostic systems) from the Primordial Divinity or Divine Father;

The triumph of the Powers of Light over the Powers of Darkness: the salvation of the Primordial Man, the salvation of *Adam* and of all the human souls through the ascending way of the pure Light after an awakening experience consisting of *anamnesis* and the acquiring of *Gnosis*, the redemptive knowledge;

The apocalyptic separation, for the eternity, of the Kingdom of Light and Good from the Kingdom of Darkness and Evil; the eternal damnation of the Principle of Evil.

The endeavor to build a “Gnostic Concordance” is able to identify concordances which are susceptible to throw into relief this logical-narrative structure in most of the Gnostic writings. The spectacular fresco of the Light / Darkness dualism is included in the *Paraphrase of Shem*<sup>9</sup>, which contains a vast pre-cosmogonical passage concerning the Primordial Divinity, named the “Greatness”, and the Savior, named *Derdekeas*, the “Son of the Greatness” and the “Son of the Infinite Light”, the divine prototype of Jesus<sup>10</sup>. Following the prayer that the Savior addresses to the Greatness and to the Infinite Light, the “*Pleroma of the Word*” is vested with the authority to carry the Power of the Light to the “members” of the Light, situated in the Kingdom of Darkness<sup>11</sup>. The Heaven and

<sup>8</sup> A branch of the Christian Gnosticism, the Docetism states that a “copy” ( gr. *Dokeos*) of Jesus was crucified instead of the real Jesus, or even a human substitute (Simon of Cyrene). The *Qur’an*. S. IV – *Women*, vv. 155-157, also contains a Docetistic version of the crucifixion of Jesus, the Son of Mary, *Isa Ibn Myriam*. Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 95.

<sup>9</sup> *The Paraphrase of Shem* is a pseudo-epigraphic Christian-Gnostic writing, written in Coptic, included in the *Nag Hammadi Library*. It is conceived as a dialogue between the Savior and Shem. This Gnostic apocalypse was written between the I<sup>st</sup>-IV<sup>th</sup> centuries CE.

<sup>10</sup> *The Paraphrase of Shem*, VII, 1, 1, 25 – 7, 5, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 324-344: “There was Light (masc.), there was Darkness (masc.), and the Spirit (masc.) was among them. (...) the Light was a thought full of hearing and words. These were united in a single form. And the Darkness was wind inside the waters. He possessed the Mind, which was surrounded by a chaotic fire. And the Spirit that was among them was a gentle and humble Light. These are the three roots. (...) But the Light, because He possessed a great power, experienced the degradation and disorder of Darkness, namely the fact that His root was crooked. The crookedness of Darkness consists of His lack of perception, namely of the illusion that no one else resides above Him. And as long as He (the Darkness) had been endowed with the power to endure His own evil, He (the Darkness) was covered by the water. He (the Darkness) had moved. The Spirit was terrified by the noise. By the will of the Might, the Spirit contemplated the Infinite Light (...) and then (...) I flooded the whole space, I, the Son of the Greatness, like a wave of the brilliant Light, like a whirlpool of the Immortal Spirit.”

<sup>11</sup> *The Paraphrase of Shem*, VII, 1, 12, 25 – 14, 5, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, p. 347.

the Earth are created by the Nature, a hypostasis of the Principle of Darkness, within the “Dark Womb”, in the contemplative presence of the Son of the Greatness, who will reduce the creative attributes of Nature to nothing and will insert the Powers of the Light<sup>12</sup> into the cosmos. An orgiastic episode unites the forms of Nature to the Powers of Darkness into a “sexual act of doom”, as a consequence of which the winds, the demonic creatures and the human beings are brought into being. But the Spirit and the Infinite Light will not allow the creation of man to be accomplished exclusively by the Darkness, thus the Spirit will reflect Himself into the water and the earth, and the human being as a whole will have a “clear-obscure” composition: a part will be constituted by the “winds and demons”, while the other part will be constituted by the “thought of the Light”<sup>13</sup>. Through the Savior’s actions the Infinite Light will triumph over the Darkness, at the level of the human micro-cosmos<sup>14</sup>, as well as at the level of the macro-cosmos<sup>15</sup>. *The Hymn of the Pearl*<sup>16</sup> describes the journey of the “Mother’s and the Father’s Son”,

<sup>12</sup> *The Paraphrase of Shem*, VII, 1, 19, 20 – 21, 15, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 349-350: “They have found Me, the Son of the Greatness, in front of the womb with many shapes. (...) She (Nature) blew over the water. The Sky was created. And out of the Sky’s foam, the Earth was brought into being.”

<sup>13</sup> *The Paraphrase of Shem*, VII, 1, 21, 15 – 24, 10, in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 350-351: “And when her (Nature’s) forms had returned, they rubbed their tongues with one another, they copulated and gave birth to the winds and demons (...). (...) a womb existed together with the winds that resembled the water. And an impure penis was together with the demons (...). But the winds, which are demons (...), committed the sexual act of doom. And through this sexual act, the winds received inside their wombs foam from the penis of the demons. (...) Thanks to you (human beings), the image of the Spirit appeared in the earth and the water. Because you resemble to the Light. Because you possess a part from the winds and demons and a part from the thought of the Light (...).”

<sup>14</sup> *The Paraphrase of Shem*, VII, 1, 42, 25 – 43, 25, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, p. 359: “Those who have a clear conscience will stay away from the mumblings of Nature. (...) they will throw away the burden of Darkness, they will clothe themselves with the Word of the Light and will not be kept anymore in the insignificant place.”

<sup>15</sup> *The Paraphrase of Shem*, VII, 1, 45, 10 – 48, 30, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 360-361: “(...) The evil Darkness will become useless and silent. And in the last day, the forms of Nature will be destroyed along with the winds and all their demons. All these will become a dark heap, as they were in the very beginning. When the annihilation will come, and Nature will be destroyed, their thoughts (of the redeemed human beings) will be separated from the Darkness. Nature had burdened them only for a short time. And they will find themselves in the ineffable Light of the unborn Spirit, without a shape.”

<sup>16</sup> *The Hymn of the Pearl* is a versified tale about the Salvation of the Human Soul and its return to the Universal Soul. Initially indited in Syriac, the text was later translated into Greek and included in the *The Acts of Thomas*, a pseudo-epigraphical Christian writing with strong Gnostic influences, composed at the beginning of the III<sup>rd</sup> century CE, in Syria. Mani was still alive when this writing was added to the spiritual treasury of Manichaeism.

from the “Kingdom of the Orient” (the Kingdom of Light), to Egypt (the Kingdom of Darkness), with the purpose of saving and bringing back to the Oriental homeland the “Pearl” (the human spirit) which was guarded by a snake in the middle of the sea. This *Hymn* of the Gnostic pilgrimage illustrates the redemptive scenario of the *salvator salvatus* or the “redeemed redeemer” type: the First Savior (the Son), who lands as a “stranger” in Egypt, forgets his mission along with his imperial origin and falls asleep; the awakening and recollection through *Gnosis* is initiated within the Son by the Second Messenger, the “letter” that the Father has sent from the Orient, in the form of an eagle. Triumphant in the end, the Son will return to the Orient with the “Pearl”, he will take off his “Egyptian clothes” and wear the imperial garment<sup>17</sup> once again. *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*<sup>18</sup> describes the pre-cosmogonical state as restfulness of the “Perfect Greatness” in the “ineffable Light” and in “the truth of the Mother of all of these things”. *Sophia*’s cosmogonical luxuriousness occurs without the acceptance of the *Pleroma* and the salvation process will be accomplished through the sending of Jesus – the Son of Light from the “ineffable Monad” to the “monads” of the Light which had fallen into the Darkness<sup>19</sup>. Jesus Christ descends as a “stranger” who changes one “form” after another, inside the Kingdom of the Archons, governed by *Yaldabaoth*, the Creator of *Adam*, the Cosmocrator that ignores the infinite theocracy of the “Father of the Truth” and of the “Man of the Greatness”<sup>20</sup>. The

<sup>17</sup> *The Hymn of the Pearl, The Acts of Thomas*, 108-114, in Edgar Hennecke, Wilhelm Schneemelcher (ed.), Robert McLachlan Wilson (trans.) *New Testament Apocrypha*, I-II, Cambridge, UK / Louisville, Kentucky, USA: James Clarke & Co., Westminster / John Knox Press, 1991-1992, II, pp. 380 – 385: “(The Letter) soared like a vulture, the king of the birds. It sat down near me and became language. When I heard its voice and sounds of its movement I woke up from my slumber, I held it and kissed it, I tore it open and started reading from this letter. The letter contained the very words that were in my heart, in order that I may read them. I was reminded that I was the Emperors’ Son and my soul started to long after its own race. I remembered the Pearl for which I came to Egypt (...).”

<sup>18</sup> *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth* is a pseudo-epigraphical Christian-Gnostic writing, indited in Coptic, which is included in the *Nag Hammadi Library*. Conceived in the form of a discourse uttered by Jesus Christ (identified in the title with Seth, although this name isn’t mentioned) in front of an audience of Gnostic believers, this revelation with polemical accents is dated in the I<sup>st</sup>-III<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE.

<sup>19</sup> *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, VII, 2, 49, 15 – 15, 20, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, p. 363: “Because those (the inferior regions) that were found in the world, were prepared by the will our sister *Sophia*, who is a whore (...). And she asked nothing, neither from the Whole, nor from the Greatness of the gathering, or from the *Pleroma*. As long as she was the first one, she came forward in order to prepare monads and places for the coming of the Son of Light (...). But because they came into being into vainglory, these ended up in destruction, in the places where they were situated, because they were prepared by *Sophia*. They are ready to receive the life-giving word from the Ineffable Monad (...).”

<sup>20</sup> *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, VII, 2, 51, 20 – 55, 10, 64, 15 – 65, 5, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 364-365,

attack aimed by *Yaldabaoth* and the Archons against Jesus through the crucifixion is doomed to failure, due to a Docetistic strategy conceived by the Powers of the Light<sup>21</sup>. Jesus, the “altogether Blessed One” by the “Eternal Father” and the “Infinite Light”, will destroy the Archons according to the Father’s will, because the Archons do not have access to the “Knowledge of the Greatness”<sup>22</sup>. When the whole creation will experience the fulfillment of the apocalyptic time, Jesus, the “Son of Man”, the “Monad”, will be triumphant against *Yaldabaoth* and the Archons, because they failed to acknowledge the founding principle of the infinite space inhabited by the Almighty Father, which circumscribes the *Ogdoada*: “light unites with light, and darkness with darkness; the defiled unites with the perishable, and the imperishable unites with the undefiled”<sup>23</sup>. *Ginza Rabba*<sup>24</sup> describes the emanation of the “Life” (*haiyi*, multiplied from the “First Life” to the “Fourth Life”), the “Water of Life” (the Jordan River) and the Living Fire out of the “Kingdom of Light” (descended from the Great Fruit of the Primordial Divinity),

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pp. 368-369: “It was not possible for them to understand who was the Father of Truth, the Man of Greatness. (...) But they, the Archons, those who inhabit together with *Yaldabaoth*, reveal the kingdom of the angels (angels of evil) (...). (...) *Adam*, to whom they (the Archons) gave form, appeared in front of them. (...) And then a voice – of the Cosmocrator – came towards the angels (angels of evil): ‘I am God and no one else stands by my side’. But I (Jesus Christ) laughed joyfully, when I understood his vainglory.”

<sup>21</sup> *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, VII, 2, 55, 10 – 56, 30, 58, 15 – 59, 20, 65, 5 – 65, 20, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 365-366, p. 369: “Yes, they have seen Me, they have punished Me. It was someone else (...), it was not Me. They hit Me with the reed. It was someone else, Simon (of Cyrene), who carried the cross on his shoulders. It was someone else, the one on whose head they put the crown of thorns. But I was rejoicing on high because of all the wealth of the Archons and the fruits of their error, of their vainglory. I was laughing at their ignorance.”

<sup>22</sup> *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, VII, 2, 56, 20 – 61, 15, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 366-367: “Since they (the Archons) did not know the Knowledge of Greatness, which is from on high and from a fountain of Truth (...).”

<sup>23</sup> *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, VII, 2, 65, 15 – 69, 30, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 369-370: “I am Christ, the Son of Man, the One who is from among you, who resides among you. (...) I am Christ, the Son of Man, who is praised above the heavens.”

<sup>24</sup> *Ginza Rabba* (“The Great Treasure”) or *Sidra Rabba* (“The Great Book”) is one of the most important Mandaean sacred writings. The Mandaeans (*mandayi*, “Gnostics”), also called *nasurayi* (“guardians” or “keepers” of the “Gnosis of Life”, *Manda dehaiyi*) or *bhiri zidqa* (“chosen of righteousness”), are known in the history of religions as a Gnostic-Jewish baptismal community which, because of the historical traumas endured during the Roman-Jewish War (66-70 CE), was forced to self-exile from Syria-Palestine to *Tura deMadai* or “the region of the hills of Media”, between Harran and Nisibis, during the reign of the last Arsacids (I<sup>st</sup>-II<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE). Another writing of the sect, the *Harran Gawaita* (the “Inner Harran”), mentions John the Baptist as a Mandaean prophet and a “messenger from the Emperor of Light”. The Mandaeans survive into the XXI<sup>st</sup> century, in the South of Iran and the South of Iraq. Rudolph, *Gnosis*, pp. 343-366.

surrounded by the “beings of the Light” or *uthri*. The fall of the stairs of the Light from the Second Life to the Fourth Life will have as its outcome the founding of the “Dark Place”, ruled by “The Evil Spirit” or *Ruha*, from which the Emperor of Darkness (*Ur* or *Ptahil-Uthra*) will emanate, as entities that have deserted the “Kingdom of Light”. Inside the “Dark Place”, *Ptahil-Uthra* will create the cosmos which contains the Earth (*Tibil*), the seven planetary spheres and the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and he will also create *Adam* whose body is fashioned by the Powers of Darkness, while his soul has its origin in the “Kingdom of Light”, in the divine prototype of *Adam*, named *Adakas*, the “Hidden *Adam*” or the “Estranged Man”. The “Sons of Darkness”, masters of the “Dark Place”, ready their war chariots and weapons for the assault against the “Place of Light”. In order to counter this attack, the Emperor of Light will bring into being the “Messenger of Light”, named *Manda deHaiyi* or the “*Gnosis* of Life”. The Mandaean soteriology is focused on the ascent of the human souls, treasurers of the fallen light, from the “Dark Place” (*Ogdoada*) to the “Place of Light” (*Pleroma*). On the Judgment Day, all the Powers of Darkness will be destroyed, “the Light will ascend and the Darkness will return to its rightful place”<sup>25</sup>. The writing entitled *Pistis Sophia (Belief – Wisdom)*<sup>26</sup> describes the encounter between Jesus and *Sophia*, under the thirteenth eon, and Jesus’ act of salvation which accomplishes the ascent of *Sophia* into the *Pleroma* and reestablishes the celestial harmony. The celestial space is governed by the theocratic order of “the Unnamed God”, under which lies the “treasure of Light” governed by “the Father of the treasure of Light”. The “Great and Unseen Propator” lives along with *Barbelo* in the *kerasmos* or “the world where the Sun sets”. Under this world lie the twelve eons, separated from the world by the sphere

<sup>25</sup> *Ginza Rabba* in Warner Forester (ed.), Robert McLachlan Wilson (trans.), *Gnosis. A selection of Gnostic texts*, I-II, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947, II, p. 156, pp.163-165, pp. 170-179, pp. 187-192: “When the Great Fruit was within the Great Fruit, the Emperor of Light came into being. From the Great and Glorious Emperor of Light, the Great ether of brilliance came into being. From the Great Ether, the Living Fire came into being. (...) The Great Jordan came into being, and with it the Water of Life. The brilliant, sparkling water was born and so I, Life, came into being. I, Life, was brought into being and all of the *uthri* came to being. (...) I looked at the war chariots of the Sons of Darkness (...). I watched the evil rebels mounted on their chariots. (...) They are armed with weapons of great evil and make plans against the Place of the Light. (...) Goodness prevails over the evil of the Evil Place. Kindness prevails over the bitterness of the Evil Place. The Living Fire prevails over the devouring flames of the Evil Place. (...) When they (the evil powers) arrived on the Earth (*Tibil*) and touched *Adam*’s body, when *Ptahil* wanted to throw life inside the body, I (*Manda deHaiyi*) have taken it up from his grasp. When *Ptahil* raised *Adam*, I (*Manda deHaiyi*) am the one that raised his bones. When *Ptahil* put his hand over him (*Adam*), I (*Manda deHaiyi*) am the one who made him breath the breath of Life. (...) In order that he (the Emperor of Light) may take *Adam* to the Place of the Light, along with his father, *Adakas-Ziwa*, and turn him into an *uthra* of the Place of the Light.”

<sup>26</sup> *Codex Aschewianus* contains two Gnostic-Christian Coptic writings, known as the *Pistis Sophia*, both written in Egypt. The first is dated towards 250-300 CE and the second is dated towards 300-350 CE.

*heimarmene*, “destiny”. Through his parables, Jesus points out the “man of Light” hidden within each of his disciples. In the second treatise, Jesus teaches them about the “Archons of destiny” and the tortures that these Archons inflict upon the souls that wish to reach the “treasure of Light” after death. Jesus counters these malefic powers by invoking the sacraments that are able to purify the human souls from sins, first and foremost “the baptizing with water”<sup>27</sup>. In *Pistis Sophia* are included five odes from the *Odes of Solomon*<sup>28</sup>, a collection of Gnostic hymns that emphasize the interdependence between knowledge and salvation<sup>29</sup>. *The Hypostasis of the Archons* or *The Reality of the Archons*<sup>30</sup> rewrites the Biblical myth of the creation of *Adam* from a Gnostic perspective, by inverting the relation between good and evil. Led by *Yaldabaoth*, the Archons will have the initiative to create the Primordial Man out of the “dust from the earth”. Above the limits of the Evil Demiurge’s powers, the “Father of the Whole” will breath the life into *Adam*’s face and will endow him with a soul, while the Spirit descended from the “Land of Diamond” will take shelter within his being. The Archons place *Adam* into the “garden” and forbid him to eat from the “tree of the recognizance of good and evil”. *Eve* is made from the rib of the slumbering *Adam* by the hands of the

<sup>27</sup> *Pistis Sophia*, in Henneke, Scheemelcher, McLachlan Wilson, *New Testament Apocrypha*, I, pp. 361-369: “(...) that’s when the skies had opened (...) and they saw Jesus descending, shining with bright light and the Light that surrounded Him was overwhelming. (...) Then Jesus gathered the splendor of this light inside His body and all of his disciples were encouraged to stand in His presence and worship Him, rejoicing with great enthusiasm. (...) But after He said these things, Jesus added: Oh, Father of Infinite Paternity, hear Me for the sake of My disciples which I brought before You, so that they will believe Your words of truth, grant them all that I asked of You, for I know the Name of the Father that holds the treasure of Light”

<sup>28</sup> *The Odes of Solomon* is a collection of Gnostic Jewish-Christian hymns, a pseudo-epigraphical writing preserved in Syriac and Greek versions, dated in Syria-Palestine in the I<sup>st</sup>-II<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE.

<sup>29</sup> *The Odes of Solomon*, in Barnstone, *The Other Bible*, pp. 267-285. *Ode no. 7*: “The Father of Knowledge is the Word of Knowledge. The Creator of wisdom is wiser than its works (...). (...) His way is knowledge. He expanded it and made it complete. And above it are the signs of His Light, from the beginning to the end. He rested in His Son, He was satisfied with His Son, and due to his salvation, the Lord had taken possession of all things. (...) Hatred will perish from the world, envy will wither, ignorance will be abolished, for the knowledge of the Lord has come. (...) Let there be nothing without life, knowledge or language, for the Lord gave as a gift to His creation a mouth” *The Ode no. 41*: “The Father of Truth has remembered Me. (...) The Savior makes us feel alive and doesn’t forget our souls. (...) The Son of the Almighty appeared in the perfection of the Father. The Light has found its rise within the Word that earlier belonged to It. There is only one Messiah, known since before the dawning of the world. He saves the souls in His Name and Truth.” Also Rendel Harris, Alphonse Mingana (ed.), *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon, I-II*, London: Longman, 1920.

<sup>30</sup> *The Hypostasis of the Archons* is a Christian-Gnostic text, written in Coptic after a Greek *Vorlage*, dated in the III<sup>rd</sup> century CE, included in the *Nag Hammadi Library*.

Archons who will later violate a “resemblance” of Eve. Metamorphosed into a snake, the Spirit will advise *Adam* and *Eve* to eat from the “tree of the recognizance of good and evil”, in order to revolt against the dictatorship that *Yaldabaoth* and the Archons had instituted within both the cosmos and the paradisiacal space. *Sophia* inserts the Light inside the realm of chaos and matter, created by *Yaldabaoth*. *Zoe* (“Life”) and *Pistis Sophia* will defeat *Yaldabaoth*, will throw him in the *Tartaros* and will remind *Adam* that his origin resides in the “Primordial Father”, in the “Everlasting Light”<sup>31</sup>. *The Gospel of Truth*<sup>32</sup> states that the only way to accede to the knowledge of the “Father of Truth” is “the Word that came forth of the *Pleroma*”. “Forgetfulness”, which is the cause of the non-knowledge of the Father, can only be destroyed through the “knowledge of the Father”, preached by Jesus Christ, the Father’s “hidden mystery”, who came and was crucified for the “enlightenment of those who live in darkness”. A human being endowed with *gnosis* is a being whose name was spoken by the Father. To possess the knowledge means to be “called” from “on high”, to accomplish the will of the One who “calls”, to ascend toward Him and find celestial “peace”. The man who was awakened through knowledge knows “where he came from and where he is going”. This is the “knowledge of the Book of Life” that the Father has revealed to the eons, a book written in the “Letters of the Truth”, by the Unity of the Father. The Word reveals the Spirit and the Son, “in the bosom of the Father”, and the “truth” is in the “mouth of the Father”, the Spirit being His “tongue”. The cosmic spaces take “shape” from the knowledge of the Father, who is similar to the “dawn” for those who have been awakened from ignorance. The Father bestows on the human beings the “ways of knowing the knowledge of the Father and the revelation of His Son” and destroys the Powers of Darkness with the “Power of Knowledge”. The Father’s mouth utters Light, Life and Salvation, which the Spirit brings from the Infinite of the Father and the “sons of the inner knowledge” will speak, in their turn, from “the day from on high which has no night” and from the “light that is never submerged, because of its perfection”. The Word of the *Gospel* that unveils “the warm *Pleroma* of love” penetrates inside the souls of the human beings who await for the “salvation from above” and the faith changes their “division” into “unity”. The Father knows the “beginning and the end” of the human beings, whose “end” is the “knowledge of the Father”. All of the Father’s emanations are “*Pleromas*”, including the human souls, and the *Pleroma* is “His only resting place”. The human beings that have found *Gnosis* won’t cross the threshold of death, they will “rest within the One that rests”, the Father is within them and they

<sup>31</sup> *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, II, 4, 86, 25 – 97, 20, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 162-169: “You and your seed altogether, are born from the Primordial Father, from above, from the Eternal Light, whence your souls came.”

<sup>32</sup> *The Gospel of Truth* is a Christian-Gnostic writing, inspired by the Valentinian Gnostic theology, written in Coptic after a Greek *Vorlage*, dated between 140-180 CE, included in the *Nag Hammadi Library*.

are within the Father, they identified themselves to the truth and they will exist into the “eternal life” and the “perfect light”<sup>33</sup>.

The attempt to solve the system of the hermeneutical equations uncovered by the Gnosticism inside the field of the history of the religious ideas justifies the approach which defines the Gnostic spiritual universe as a syncretistic religious space, constituted at the confluence of the Egyptian religious space, the Biblical-Evangelical religious space and the Zoroastrian-Zurvanite religious space, against the background of the Hellenistic religious space<sup>34</sup>. The harmonization of the resemblances and differences which are characteristic to the multiple identities of these religious spaces throws into relief the Gnosticism’s creativity, dynamics and power of synthesis in the evolution of the history of religions.

From the perspective of the history of the religious ideas, numerous elements inserted in the Gnostic religious imagination have their origin in the Egyptian religious imagination. This fact is not surprising by all means, since the Gnostic sects located in the region of Hellenistic Alexandria were recruiting a fair number of followers from the social milieu of the Coptic population, the direct descendants of the Egyptians that lived during the period of the Pharaohs. Hypothetically speaking, we can assume that the ancient spiritual deposit consisting of archaic ideas and mythological narratives enjoyed a long vitality, survived throughout the ages, starting with the First Dynasty and lasting until the Thirty-first Persian Dynasty (approximately from 2925 BCE to 232 CE), and remained latent during the Greek-Roman period, when it also opened its treasure of religious thinking towards the multiple rewritings and forging of new meanings, accomplished from the Gnostic syncretistic perspective. For example the fabulous time of the beginning, the time of the creation purified of evil, between the manifestation of the Creator above the Primordial Waters, and Horus’ ascent to the throne, is named *Tep zepi* (“the First Time”). What follows is the Golden Age of absolute perfection, referred to as “the Age of Râ” or “the age of *Osiris* and *Horus*”<sup>35</sup>. The ancient cosmogonical myths describe the establishing of the Center of the World through the symbolism of the conception of the reality of the shape out of the chaotic shapeless reality: the emergence of the “Primordial Hill” from the “Primordial Waters”; the birth of the “Primordial Egg”, which contains the “Bird of Light”; the coming into being of the “Lotus of Origin” that bears within itself the “infant Sun”. In this context, the God *Atum* is hypostasized in the shape of a Snake in both the chaotic pre-cosmogonical state of the Universe, and the post-cosmic state, when the Universe will regress to its chaotic state. It is plausible that the Snake-*Atum* is

<sup>33</sup> *The Gospel of Truth* I, 3, and XII, 2, 16, 35 – 43, 20 in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 38-51: “And blessed is He who gave sight to blind men.”

<sup>34</sup> Rudolph, *Gnosis*, pp. 275-294; Leisegang, *La Gnose*, pp. 10-52; Henri-Charles Puech, *Enquête de la Gnose*, I-II, Paris: Gallimard, 1978.

<sup>35</sup> Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1978, pp. 250-285.

situated in the position of a religious archetype in relation to the Snake-*Ouroboros* and the Gnostic theology of the Ophites. At the level of the archaic Egyptian cosmogony, *Atum* is designated as the Supreme occult God, while *Râ*, the Sun, has the attributes of the manifested God. The *Râ-Atum-Khepri*<sup>36</sup> triad creates the divine couple *Shu-Tepnut*, the parents of the *Geb-Nut* couple (the Earth and the Sky), out of which emanate the couples of *Osiris-Isis* and *Seth-Nephtis*. These divine couples will be recalled in the Gnostic religious space by the *syzygy*-es or “pairs” of eons. The notion of the “*Ogdoada*” (according to Mircea Eliade) as well originates in the religious milieu of the city of Hermopolis, located in Middle Egypt, where it designated a group of eight gods, to which *Ptah* was added. *Ptah* was also worshiped in Memphis, the capital city of the Pharaohs of the First Dynasty, as the Supreme God who possessed the power to create through his “heart” and “tongue”, whilst *Atum* was only venerated as the author of the first divine couple. The orgiastic incident found in some of the Gnostic writings seems to be foretold by *Atum*’s action of reproducing his substance through the creation of the divine couples out of his spit or sperm, as a consequence of masturbation. Mircea Eliade noticed that “the theogony and the cosmogony are accomplished through the creative power which resides in the thought and speech of a single God”. Subsequent to this, the human being (*erme*) is born from the tears (*erme*) of the solar god *Râ*, the “fascicle of light”<sup>37</sup>. The light does not only serve as a means to the self-revelation of the God (*deus revelatus*), but also to His self-concealing (*deus absconditus*). The concealing of the divine light is hypostasized in the shape of an eagle, which symbolize the eyes of the Celestial Gods (the Eye of the Sun, the Eye of the Moon). The golden color epitomizes the human sensibility towards the light and the capacity of the human eyes to perceive the light: the sunlight determines the power of the human beings to see the world and to move between its spaces. The trialectical positive concept of Light – capacity to see – Life stands in opposition to the trialectical negative concept of Darkness – blindness – the threatening of the Principle of Life by the fading away of the gods. Due to His daily brilliance, The God of Light sustains the continuous existence of creation<sup>38</sup>. The vessel in which the Solar God crosses the Primordial Waters glitters, irradiates light, and the deceased Pharaoh along with the human beings that have crossed the

<sup>36</sup> The Sun at the zenith – the Sun at sunset – the Sun at sunrise.

<sup>37</sup> S. Sauneron, J. Yoyotte, “La Naissance du monde selon l’Égypte ancienne”, in *La Naissance du Monde* (ed. Collective), Paris: Seuil, 1959, pp. 19-91. S. Morenz, *La Religion égyptienne*, Paris: Payot, 1962, pp. 229-245. James B. Pritchard (ed.) *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Related to the Old Testament*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969. R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Oxford: Sandpiper, 1998, pp. 17-127. Mircea Eliade, *Histoire des croyances et des idées religieuses*, I-III, Paris: Payot, 1975-1983, I, pp. 70-107.

<sup>38</sup> Wolfgang Helck, Wolfgang Westendorf (ed.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, III, 1980, pp. 1033-1034.

threshold of death aspire to melt away in the God's luminous body, in order to reach the ultimate goal of becoming consubstantial with the God<sup>39</sup>.

The Biblical narratives (*Aggadoth*)<sup>40</sup> concerning the creation of the Universe (*olam*) and the creation of Man (*Adam*) by the Living God (*Elohyim hayyim*) are vested with a paradigmatic value not only in the Abrahamic religious spaces, but in the Gnostic religious space as well. Through the succession of the theocratic actions accomplished by the Supreme, Primordial and Infinite Divinity, the cosmogonic work is achieved, and the Light is separated from the Darkness<sup>41</sup>. Although the Biblical Text does not elucidate the origin of evil, the Principle of Evil is present in the paradisiacal space, triply hypostasized as the snake, the knowledge of evil, situated in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and also as a certain rational-psychological reality, inserted in the composition of *Adam's* being in the shape of a mysterious anthropogonical attachment, ontological and gnoseological alike, susceptible to trigger the fall of the human beings into sinfulness or to impeach the manifestation of the absolute resistance of the human beings against the temptation of evil. The theocratical condemnation institutes the "curse of the snake", the exile of the Adamic beings beyond the limits of Paradise and their immersion in the strange space of the perishable life, but it doesn't abolish the presence of the Evil Principle inside the space of creation. This malefic secondary presence will accompany all along the Biblical and the Evangelical history<sup>42</sup>, it will always stand as an unseen force that needs to be continuously vanquished by the monarchical, prophetic and messianic hypostasis of the Divine Power, before the historical realization of the ideal of salvation, of the apocalyptic ideal focused on the descent of the Celestial Jerusalem, on the theocratical fashioning of the New Sky and the New Earth. The *Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah*, 12 a, recalls the making of the "ten things" in the first day of Creation: the sky and the earth, the non-form and the chaos, the light and the darkness, the divine breath and the water, the length of the day and the length of

<sup>39</sup> Erik Hornung, *Les Dieux de l'Égypte. Le Un et le Multiple*, Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1986, p. 120.

<sup>40</sup> *Genesis*, 1, 1 – 3, 24, *The Bible or the Holy Scripture*, Bucharest: The Publishing House of the Biblical Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1988, pp. 11-14.

<sup>41</sup> *Genesis*, 1, 1 – 1, 5, *The Bible*, p. 11: "In the beginning, God created the sky and the earth. (...) And so He spoke: Let there be light! And there was light. Then God contemplated the goodness of the light and has separated it from the darkness."

<sup>42</sup> For example, *Genesis*, 4, 2-16 (Abel and Cain); *Genesis*, 6, 1-5 (the fall of the angels into sinfulness, the birth of the giants, the wickedness of the human beings); *Genesis*, 11, 1-9 (the Tower of Babel); *Genesis*, 19, 1-29 (Sodom and Gomorrah); *Exodus*, 32, 1-35 (the golden calf); *III Kings*, 16, 1-34 (the four kings of Israel); *III Kings*, 18, 13 and *Nehemiah*, 9, 26 (the killing of God's prophets); *III Kings*, 21, 1-29 (Ahab and Jezebel); *Job*, 1, 6-12 (the temptation of Job); *Job*, 41, 1-34 (the Leviathan); *Matthew*, 4, 1-11 (the temptation of Jesus); *The Apocalypse of John*, 12, 1 – 13, 18 (the monster, the beast). *The Bible*, pp. 14-15, p. 16, pp. 20-21, pp. 28-29, pp. 103-105, pp. 384-385, p. 387, pp. 391-392, p. 517, p. 534, pp. 563-564, pp. 1099-1100, pp. 1403-1404.

the night. In the *baraita* it is mentioned that the non-form is “the green circle that surrounds the entire world”, out of which the waves of Darkness flow upon the world, and also that the chaos originates in the “polished rocks that are lying at the bottom of the Abyss”, a place wherefrom the waters pour within the precincts of the Universe<sup>43</sup>. Rabbi Eleazar and Rabbi Jacob considered that the light that God created in the first day of the hebdomad of Creation was so powerful, that *Adam* could contemplate the whole world, from beginning to end. But God decided to conceal this light from the generation of the Flood and from the generation of the Tower of Babel, so that He could bestow it on the righteous ones, in the world to come, because the word *tov*, “good”, expresses concomitantly the fact that the light is good<sup>44</sup> and the fact that the righteous human beings are good<sup>45</sup> in the eyes of the Lord<sup>46</sup>. The relationship between Light and Darkness, between Good and Evil, in the Written Law (*torah shebektav*) and in the Oral Law (*torah shebealpe*), represents the adequate exegetical background for the understanding of the “Teaching about the Two Spirits”, included in the *Community Rule* or *IQS*<sup>47</sup>, III, 13 – IV, 26, as well as for the understanding of the *War Rule* or *IQM*, *4QM*<sup>48</sup>, two writings from the category of the *Serakhim* or *Rules*, contained in the corpus of the *Dead Sea Scrolls*<sup>49</sup>. The “Teaching about the Two Spirits” states that God created

<sup>43</sup> *Talmud Bavli, Hagigah*, 12 a, Isidore Epstein (trans.), *The Babylonian Talmud*, London: Soncino Press, 1936-1952. Also *Mishnah, Taanit*, 4: 3, A-O, Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Mishnah / The Mishnah*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1988, p. 314.

<sup>44</sup> *Genesis* 1, 3-4, *The Bible*, p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> *Isaia*, 3, 10, *The Bible*, p. 679.

<sup>46</sup> *Talmud Bavli, Hagigah*, 12 a, Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud*. Also, *Talmud Bavli, Yoma*, 38 b, Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud. Talmud Bavli, Baba Kamma*, 55 a, Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud*, where it is reminded that the letter *teth* is a fortunate letter, because it is used for the first time in the Biblical Text in *Genesis*, 1, 4, in order to express the fact that the world is good, *tov*.

<sup>47</sup> The *Community Rule* is one of the texts that define the spirituality of the Qumran Community. It was discovered in the 1<sup>st</sup> Cave from Khirbet Qumran, and it is dated in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE.

<sup>48</sup> The *War Rule* describes the apocalyptic war between the “Sons of Light” and the “Sons of Darkness”. The text was discovered in the 1<sup>st</sup> Cave and in the 4<sup>th</sup> Cave from Khirbet Qumran and it is dated between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE and the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

<sup>49</sup> The *Dead Sea Scrolls* were discovered between 1947-1956, inside the eleven Caves from Khirbet Qumran, in the Judaean Desert, on the Dead Sea shore. Out of a total of approximately one thousand documents, the great majority of them are preserved only in a fragmentary state. Only nine of the parchment scrolls have intact at least half of their initial surface. These documents are classified in four categories: proto-Masoretic biblical texts, proto-Septuagintic biblical texts, qumranite texts, unclassified texts. The *Dead Sea Scrolls* are dated between the historical interval comprised between the III<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and I<sup>st</sup> century CE. The Community of Khirbet Qumran was destroyed in the year 68 CE by the Roman troops that had conquered Jericho. Hartmut Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran*, Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company &

from the beginning the whole world according to the principle of a perfect equilibrium between the parts of Light and the parts of Darkness. This cosmogonic principle, on which the balance and the dynamics of nature is founded, is at the same time an anthropological and antropogonical principle: the human beings define themselves according to their affiliation to the Light or to the Darkness, by the submission of their souls, bodies and spirits to the rule of the “Prince of Light” or to the rule of the “Angel of Darkness”. The *Horoscopes* (4Q186, 4QMessAr) discovered at Khirbet Qumran established how many out of the nine parts which constituted each and every Adamic being belonged to the Light and how many of them belonged to the Darkness, according to a scale of humanity which had at its positive end the most righteous man (eight parts of Light and one part of Darkness) and at its negative end the most sinful man (eight parts of Darkness and one part Light). In the apocalyptic perspective, the theocratic will of the “God of Knowledge” will destroy for ever all the parts of darkness, evil, deception, and will establish a Kingdom of Light, Good and Truth<sup>50</sup>. The *War Rule* contains a detailed description of the apocalyptic battle to be waged between the “Sons of Light” and the “Sons of Darkness” (*kittim*, the “Caldaeans”), the martial development of which will take place concomitantly in the celestial and terrestrial spaces. God Himself will lead the legions of the “Sons of Light”, in a battle where the righteous men will fight alongside with the angels, under the command of the Priests and Levites, of the Great Priest (*Kohen Gadol*) and the “Prince of the Congregation”. 4Q285 identifies the “Prince of the Congregation” with the Messiah, the Son of David, the Monarchical Anointed One<sup>51</sup>. In concordance with the biblical concept of the “Holy War”<sup>52</sup>, the sounds issued from the priests’ trumpets will cause the defending walls of the Citadel of Evil to collapse and will sing the praise for the

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Leiden / New York / Köln: Brill Academic Publishers, 1998, pp. 1-11. Also, Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, pp. 100-117.

<sup>50</sup> The *Community Rule* or 1QS, III, 13 – IV, 26, in Geza Vermes (ed., trans.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, London: Penguin Books, 1990, pp. 64-67: “From the God of Knowledge comes all that there is and all that will be. (...) He has created man to rule the world and has appointed two Spirits for him, unto whom he will walk until the day of His judgment: the Spirits of Falsehood and Truth. Those who are born from Truth spring from the fountain of Light and those who are born from Falsehood spring from a fountain of Darkness. All the children of justice are led by the Prince of Light and follow the way of the Light, while all the children of Falsehood are led by the Angel of Darkness and follow the way of the Darkness. But the God of Israel and the Angel of His Righteousness will save all the Sons of Light. (...) But in the mysteries of His understanding and in His glorious wisdom, God has decreed an end to Falsehood, and in the day of His judgment, He will destroy it forever. Then the Truth, that has trodden the ways of wickedness during the time when Falsehood reigned, until the appointed time of the judgment, will rise in the world forever.” Also, Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran*, pp. 108-110.

<sup>51</sup> *Isaiah*, 10, 34 – 11, 1.

<sup>52</sup> *Joshua*, 6, 1 – 12, 24; *Judges*, 6, 1 – 12, 15; *Daniel*, 11, 40 – 12, 3.

final triumph of the army of the “Sons of Light”<sup>53</sup>. André Dupont-Sommer<sup>54</sup>, Karl Georg Kuhn<sup>55</sup> and Marc Philonenko<sup>56</sup> have asserted that the “Teaching about the Two Spirits” throws into relief an Iranian influence inside the Qumranit space. The myth of the twin and antagonistic Spirits plays a fundamental role in the religious thinking of Zoroastrism (approximately 628 – 551 BCE) and Zurvanism (approximately 550 – 330 BCE). In *Zend-Avesta, Yasna*, 47, 3, it is mentioned that

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<sup>53</sup> The *War Rule* or 1QM, I – XIX, 4QM, 4Q285, 4Q491, 4Q493, in Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, pp. 101- 127: “(...) then, when the exiled Sons of Light return from the Desert of the Nations, in order to settle their camp in the Desert of Jerusalem, and after the battle they will ascend from there. (...) This will be a time of salvation for the people of God, an age of supremacy for all the members of His camp and an age of eternal destruction for all those that have a part in the camp of *Satan*. (...) There will be no escape for the Sons of Darkness. The Sons of Justice will shine over the whole earth. They will continue to shine until all the seasons of Darkness will be destroyed, and in the season appointed by God, His praised Greatness will shine eternally in the peace, blessing, glory, joy and long life of the Sons of Light. When the *kittim* will fall, there will be battle and terrible carnage before the God of Israel, for that will be the day appointed since the old times for the battle aiming at the destruction of the Sons of Darkness. Then the congregation of the *elim* and the troops of men will fight, they will cause a great bloodshed to happen. In the day of the disaster, the Sons of Light will fight with the congregation of darkness amidst the screaming of a great crowd, and the voices of the angels (*elim*) will be intertwined with the voices of men, in order to manifest the Power of God. (...) By the hand of your Anointed One, who has understood Your testimonies, You have revealed to us the time and the place of the battles fought by Your hands, in order that You may praise Yourself within our enemies, through the annihilation of the armies of *Satan*. (...) You have created us for Yourself, Oh, Lord, so that we can be an eternal people. You have decreed for us a destiny of Light, according to Your Truth. And the Prince of Light You have chosen even since ancient times, so that he could come to our rescue. All the Sons of Righteousness are in his hand and all the Spirits of Truth are at his command. But *Satan*, the Angel of evildoing, You have created him for the abyss. His law is within the Darkness and his purpose is to work evil and injustice. All the spirits that have a part in his congregation, the angels of destruction, walk according to the Precepts of Darkness. (...) Because You have appointed the day of the battle even since the ancient ages, in order to rescue the truth and destroy the injustice, to reduce the Darkness to nothingness and to praise the Light (...) and destroy the Sons of Darkness. (...) The priests, the sons of Aaron, will stay in front of the battle formations and will sound the trumpets of Recollection. After this, they will open the gates for the infantry.” Also, Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran*, pp. 102-104.

<sup>54</sup> André Dupont-Sommer, “L’Instruction sur les deux Esprits dans le *Manuel de Discipline*”, in *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions*, 142, 1952, pp. 5-35.

<sup>55</sup> Karl Georg Kuhn, “Die Sektenschrift und die iranische Religion”, in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 49, 1952, pp. 296-316.

<sup>56</sup> Marc Philonenko, “La doctrine qoumrânienne des deux Esprits: ses origines iraniennes et ses prolongements dans le judaïsme essénien et le christianisme antique”, in Geo Widengren, Anders Hultgård, Marc Philonenko, *Apocalyptique iranienne et dualisme qoumrânien*, Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1995, pp. 163-211.

*Ahura Mazda*, the Supreme God, is the Father of the twin Spirits, the Spirit of Good, *Spenta Mainyu*, and the Spirit of Evil, *Ahra Mainyu*. *Yasna*, 30, 3, states that “originally out of the Two Spirits that were known (...) as twins, one is the perfect Good and the other is the Evil”. The “intelligent” people choose the “Good”, while the “foolish” people choose the “Evil”. *Yasna*, 45, 2, refers to the primordial dialogue between the “Two Spirits”, where “the holly” Spirit addressed the “destructive” Spirit in the following manner: “neither our thoughts, nor our doctrines, nor our mental strengths, nor our choices, nor our words, nor our actions, nor our consciousnesses, nor our souls agree”<sup>57</sup>. *Yasna Haptahāti* associates *Ahura Mazda* with the Light<sup>58</sup>. The Zurvanite theology, which was already constituted in the period of the Achemenids, will substitute *Zurvan* for *Ahura Mazda*, who will be identified with the Spirit of Good. In the period of the Sassanids (224 / 226 – 651 CE), characterized by a syncretistic intertwining of Mazdeism and Zurvanism, the doctrine of the “Two Principles” was completed with the doctrine of the “Three Times”, accepted later on by the Manichaeism as well: *bundahišn*, the “primordial creation”; *gumēčišn*, the “mixture”; *vičarišn*, the “separation”<sup>59</sup>. The Zurvanite doctrine postulates that from the bosom of *Zurvan* emerge the Two Spirits, the Spirit of Evil, *Ahriman*, and the Spirit of Good, *Ohrmazd*. *Ohrmazd* will generate a “good and righteous” creation, while *Ahriman* will bring into being an “evil and dishonest” creation. *Ohrmazd* and *Ahriman* polarize the fundamental antithesis: Light-Darkness, Truth-Falsehood, Perfume-Stench<sup>60</sup>.

Anders Hultgård has asserted that the theology of history, from the religious perspective of Zoroastrianism, presupposes the preexistence of the cosmic dualism. The historical-temporal continuity is determined by the theocratic necessity of a mythological beginning and a mythological end, by a divine plan the purpose of which is the everlasting destruction of the Principle of Evil. The divine act that brings the creation into being envisages the liberation and restoration of the Light that has fallen into the Darkness, and this is the reason why, in Zoroastrian mythology and theology, the cosmogony and the eschatology are intertwined<sup>61</sup>. The balanced and autarchic coexistence, in eternity, of *Ohrmazd* (the Principle of Light and Good) and *Ahriman* (the Principle of Darkness and Evil) is interrupted by the omniscient prediction of *Ohrmazd* concerning *Ahriman*'s attack against the Kingdom of Light. In order to counter this attack even before it was conceived by

<sup>57</sup> J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *Zoroastre. Etude critique avec une traduction commentée des Gāthā*, Paris: Robert Laffont, 1948, pp. 227-253.

<sup>58</sup> Philonenko, “La doctrine qoumrānienne”, in Widengren, Hultgård, Philonenko, *Apocalyptique iranienne*, pp. 171.

<sup>59</sup> H. S. Nyberg, “Questions de cosmogonie et de cosmologie mazdéennes”, I-II, in *Journal asiatique*, 214, pp. 193-310, 219, pp. 1-134, 1929-1931. Also, Geo Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1965.

<sup>60</sup> Philonenko, “La doctrine qoumrānienne”, in Widengren, Hultgård, Philonenko, *Apocalyptique iranienne*, p. 173.

<sup>61</sup> Anders Hultgård, “Mythe et histoire dans l’Iran ancien. Etude de quelques thèmes dans le *Bahman Yašt*”, in Widengren, Hultgård, Philonenko, *Apocalyptique iranienne*, pp.81-85.

the Evil Principle, *Ohrmazd* began the work of creation by fashioning the beings in a spiritual state, *mēnōk*. Fascinated by the contemplation of a beam of Light, *Ahriman* suspends his movement into the Realm of Darkness, and animated by concupiscence, he will ascend towards the brilliant abode of the Supreme Divinity. *Ohrmazd* will step forward, in order to meet him, and will banish him back to Darkness. *Ahriman* fashions a counter-creation and, after an interval of three thousand years, will threaten once more the creation of *Ohrmazd* and the Kingdom of Light. The War between Light and Darkness, circumscribed by a laps of time of nine thousand years, will start with *Ohrmazd*'s incantation of the prayer *ahunvar*, a prayer that celebrates the final defeat of *Ahriman*. During the next laps of time of three thousand years, *Ohrmazd* will continue the *mēnōk* state of creation through the *gētik*, a material state, which also includes the Primordial Man, *Gayōmart*. As a consequence of a new attack, *Ahriman* and his demonic armies will penetrate inside *Ohrmazd*'s creation and will defile it. Nevertheless, they will soon discover that their lodging inside the creation is, in reality, an imprisonment, decreed by the theocratic will of *Ohrmazd*. Having no way out, and no way to gain the upper hand, *Ahriman* has no choice but to fight until his own annihilation, inside the creation that he himself had transformed into a mixture (*gumēčīšn*) of Good and Evil, of Light and Darkness, a mixture that will be metamorphosed into pure Light after the apocalyptic triumph of *Ohrmazd* over *Ahriman* and the eternal separation of the Kingdom of Light from the Kingdom of Darkness. This cosmogonical-antropologic Zoroastrian myth is included in two middle-Iranian texts, written in *pehlevi*, the *Bundahišn*, I, 1-59, I A, 1-21, IV, 1-28 and *Selections from Zātspram*, I, 1-27<sup>62</sup>, both of them founded on the treatises of the *Zend-Avesta*: *Yasna*, 44, 3-5, where *Ahura Mazdā* is decribed as the Father and Creator of the cosmos; *Yašt*, 13, 2 – 3, 9 – 10, where the spiritual beings (*fravaši*) that have assisted *Ahura Mazdā* in accomplishing the work of creation are mentioned; *Vidēvdāt*, 2, 4 – 19, where *Ahura Mazdā*, the initial Creator of the cosmos, entrusts *Yima* with the task of continuing the works of creation, through an act of enlargement in three levels of the terrestrial space<sup>63</sup>.

In the religious syncretistic environment of the Hellenistic period (the battle of Keronea, 338 BCE – the battle of Kinoskefalai, 197 BCE), especially in Egypt and in Syria-Palestine, the Gnostic sects coexist with the mystery sects, the liturgical ceremonies of which were focused on divinities endowed with the mythological identity of having preserved their living principle while passing

<sup>62</sup> Apocalyptic post-Sassanid compilations, written in *pehlevi* between the VII<sup>th</sup> and IX<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, based on Avestic textual sources and Zoroastrian traditions attested even since the IV<sup>th</sup> century AD, a period when the the composition of the *Zend-Avesta* has come to a close.

<sup>63</sup> Hultgård, "Mythe et histoire dans l'Iran ancien", in Widengren, Hultgård, Philonenko, *Apocalyptique iranienne*, pp. 69-85. H.S. Nyberg, "Questions de cosmogonie et de cosmologie mazdéennes", I-II, in *Journal asiatique*, 214, pp. 193-310, 219, pp. 1-134, 1929-1931. Also, R.C. Zaehner, *Zurvan, A Zoroastrian Dilemma*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955.

through the consecutive experiences of death and resurrection. This ritualistic system was suitable to confer upon the communities founded on the relationship between the *myst* and the *mystagog* the religious aim or privilege of the individual redemption. The Gnostic theological nomenclature will be built on a Greek linguistic structure: *Propator*, *Demiourgos*, *aiōn*, *Archontes*, *syzygya*, *Pleroma*, *Sophia*, *Ogdoas*, *Nous*, *Anthropos*, *Epinoia*, *Pronoia* etc., later on translated or transferred into Latin, Coptic, Hebrew, Syriac, Mandaeen, Persian, Arabic, Slavonic. For example, the Hellenistic mysteries of *Isis and Serapis* (*Osiris – Apis*), founded on a theological and cultic system established by the Egyptian priest Manethon and the Greek Timotheos, a descendant of the clan of the Eumolpids from Eleusis, during the reign of Ptolemaeus Soter (304-284 BCE), prove the religious dynamics and the millenary vitality of the archaic myth of *Osiris – Isis – Horus*, its multiple potentialities and its openness towards successive rewritings and elaborations. In the same context, the analytical approach that investigates the appearance of the Gnostic sects and systems of thinking must throw into relief the mutual relationship between the Gnostic spiritual treasure and the *Revelation of Hermes Trismegistus* – “Hermes the thrice Great”, a divine alter-ego of the Egyptian god *Thoth*, the god of the Moon, the patron of the scribes’ guild and of the art of writing, symbolized by the ibis and the baboon, having the cultic headquarters located in the city of Hermopolis –, a collection of texts indited between the III<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and the III<sup>rd</sup> century CE. André-Jean Festugière and Mircea Eliade underlined the difference between the popular hermetism (astrology, magic, occult sciences, alchemy) and the philosophical hermetism (the seventeen treatises of the *Corpus Hermeticum*), and emphasized that in the Hellenistic period *Thoth – Hermes* was worshipped as the patron of all the sciences, as the inventor of the hieroglyphs and as a revered magician, while the Stoics identified him with the *Logos*. Paramount for the exegesis of the hermetical literature is the complementarity of the positive theology and the negative theology, included in the *Corpus Hermeticum*: the first one postulates the existence of a cosmos permeated by the presence of divinity, because the “Great God” or the “Unseen God”, simultaneously the “One”, the “Whole” and the “Father”, manifests Himself through the world, and Man occupies the third place in the triad, after the Primordial God and the Cosmos (*Corpus Hermeticum*, V, 2 and XII, 22); the second one asserts the dualism of Good and Evil, of Light and Darkness, and considers that the matter and the world represent the “totality of Evil”, that the Primordial God is “hidden in the mystery of His own Being” and the creation is defined as a process of descendant ontological emanation, along the vertical axis *Nous* (the androgynous Superior Intellect) – *Demiourgos* (the Creator of the world) – *Anthropos* (the Celestial Man who is intertwined by sexual intercourse to *Physis*, “Nature”) – the bodily man (upon whom *Anthropos* descends, hypostasized as soul and spiritual light). The human beings can save themselves only through the acquiring of “knowledge” (*Gnosis*), which enables the bodily man, who is mortal and immortal alike, to “become a god”, through the acknowledgement of his status as a “stranger” in the mundane space and through the re-absorption of his soul and

spirit within the substance of the Primordial Divinity (*Corpus Hermeticum*, I, *Poimandres*; also VI, 4 and XIII, 1-7). The dualism, the conception of the divine emanation and the principle of the saving knowledge prove the connection between the Hermetic literature and the Gnostic literature. Within the framework of this syncretistic perspective over the hermetism and the gnosticism, it is outstanding to single out the repeated occurrence of the words *Hermes* and *Trismegistus* in a treatise included in the *Nag Hammadi Library*, *The Discourse about the eighth and the ninth*, where the “Unseen God” provides theocratic assistance to the ascent of the *myst* and the *mystagog* through the *Ogdoad*, to the 9<sup>th</sup> heaven<sup>64</sup>. The genealogy of some of the Gnostic ideas and practices concerning the religious initiation indicate, inside the Hellenic-Hellenistic space (VI<sup>th</sup> century BCE – III<sup>rd</sup> century CE), the Orphic spiritual milieu, the Orphic texts and doctrines. A number of versions of the cosmogonical myth describe the creation of the Primordial Egg by the will of *Chronos*, in the *Aither*, and the fashioning of *Eros*, the principle of birth, which bring *Zeus* and the other gods into being, as well as the cosmos; or the emanation of the primordial couple *Uranus – Gaia* from *Nyx*, the “night”, the primordial reality; or the ontological propagation along the structure constituted by *Okeanos – Chronos – Aither – Chaos*; or the multiplication of the One through the primordial conflict, which separates the Earth from the Waters and the Sky. The anthropogony included in the religious thinking of later Orphism will identify the origin of Man within the ashes of the Titans, which is stigmatized by the primordial sin. Nevertheless, in a paradoxical manner the substance of the Titans bears in its very essence the divine substance of the child *Dionysos*, annihilated and revived through fire. This Orphic-Dyonisiac symbolism will become paradigmatic for the later Gnostic theology, which will identify the presence of the fallen Light from the Primordial Divinity inside Adam’s body, fashioned by the Archons, and will organize the entire scenario of the salvation through knowledge around the return of the fallen Light to the Kingdom of Light. The liberation from the theogonical negativity implied the accomplishment of the acts of purification (*katharsis*, *katharmoi*) and rituals of initiation (*teletai*)<sup>65</sup>.

According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, a myth is constituted of the entire ensemble of its versions<sup>66</sup>. The hermeneutical endeavor which aims to analyze the

<sup>64</sup> *The Discourse about the eighth and the ninth*, VI, 6, 56, 15 – 63, 15, in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Codex / The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 324-326.

<sup>65</sup> Rudolph, *Gnosis*, pp. 275-294. S. K. Heyob, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975, pp. 27-155. André-Jean Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2006, pp. 44-377. William Keith Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1971, pp. 316-345. William Keith Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, pp. 18-84. Ivan M. Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1941, pp. 140-155. Carl Schneider, *Kulturgeschichte des Hellenismus*, II, München: C. H. Beck, 1969, pp. 800-885, 989-1106. Eliade, *Histoire des croyances*, II, pp. 163-200, pp. 260-307.

<sup>66</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale*, Paris: Plon, 1958, p. 240.

Gnostic religious space and to elucidate the one and multiple connection concerning the relationship between the Gnostic Primordial Myth and its polymorphous versions must use the theory of the “primordial text”, *Urtext* sau *Urschrift*, formulated in the field of the biblical exegesis<sup>67</sup>. The essential elements of the great Myth of Light and Darkness, accompanied by an impressive number of variations and arrangements, inside the Gnostic religious space, have been vested with new meanings and inserted in a multitude of theological constructions (oft-times heretical, oft-times esoteric), inside the Abrahamic religious spaces. The successive rewritings, the immersions into oblivion and the recollections, its condemnations and its clandestine survival, the alternation of the periods of apparent extinction with the periods of intense efflorescence represent one of the most spectacular cases of occultation and revivification of a great archaic Myth in the history of the religious ideas. The arguments that prove the presence of the Gnostic-Iranian dualism in the spiritual space of Khirbet Qumran have already been mentioned. In the apologetic context of Patristic Christianity, Clement of Alexandria (approximately 140 / 150 – 211 / 215 CE) will value the person and the conduit of the “Gnostic” as the religious ideal of the accomplished Christian believer. Defined as a “confession towards God”, the martyrdom of the Clementine Gnostic is susceptible to transmute each and every soul’s knowledge (*Gnosis*) of God into the testimony of “life and word”, which consists in the shedding of “belief and blood” during the entire earthly existence, until the liberation, parting or “departure” of the breath of life from the body<sup>68</sup>. The doctrine concerning “the two Cities”, a City of Evil, “terrestrial”, founded on the “love of the self” and the “contempt of God”, and a City of Good, “celestial”, founded on the “love of God” and the “contempt of the self”, proves the existence of a certain continuity between the Manichaean period and the Christian period included in the spiritual biography of Augustinus Aurelianus (354-430 CE), the persistence of the Manichaean theology acquired during his discipleship in the School of Faustus of Meleve, as well as a marginal syncretism between Gnostic ideas and Christian ideas in the Latin-African Patristic milieu<sup>69</sup>. The doctrine concerning the confrontation between the Principle of Evil and the Powers of Good (a Holy Pope, *virī spirituales*), intercalated between the second *status* and the third *status*, included in the system of mystical theology conceived by Gioacchino da Fiore (1135-1202), could somehow be suspected of Gnostic influences, as well as the apocalyptic ideal according to which the entire humanity would join the monastic orders, a social

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, pp 164-178.

<sup>68</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, IV, IV, in Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson (ed.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, II, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975, pp. 163-568.

<sup>69</sup> Augustinus Aurelianus, *De Civitate Dei*, XIV, XXVIII; XV, VI; XIX, XIX, Philip Schaff, Henri Wace (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, II, Grand Rapids, Michigan: : William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978, pp. 1-511.

configuration that will determine the end of the world, due to the impossibility of the human bodies to have sexual intercourse and to procreate<sup>70</sup>. The Fatimid Ismaelism will incorporate the archaic Gnostic theology and mythology within the religious space of Islam and will inaugurate a new historical period and a new spiritual structure for the rewriting and spreading of the Gnostic ideas, clothed in the textual garb of the Fatimid or *Sufi* terminology, within a wide geographical area which circumscribed Egypt, Arabia, Persia, India, between the years 296 A. H. / 909 AD (the founding of the Fatimid dynasty by 'Obaydallah al-Mahdi, in Cairo) and 524 A. H. / 1130 AD (the death of Abul'-Qasim al-Tayyib, the last Fatimid *imam*). In the Fatimid *Gnosis*, the Primordial Divinity will be designated as the "Principle" (*Mobdi*) or the "Mystery of Mysteries" (*ghayb al-ghoyub*), while the *Pleroma* will be designated by the syntagms '*alam al-Ibda*' or '*alam al-Amr*, the "World of Being", in contrast with '*alam al-khalq*, the cosmos, the material world. The process of the ontological emanation or descent (*inbi'ah*) has its origin in the "First Intelligence" or the "Universal Intelligence", *deus revelatus*, '*Aql koll*. The tragedy of the fall into sinfulness has as its protagonist the Celestial Archetype of Adam, *Adam ruhani*, who will fall from the third rank (the "Third Intelligence") onto the tenth rank of the celestial hierarchy, as a consequence of his self-blindness, of the temptation to transgress the limit (*hadd*), induced by the shadow of the Principle of Evil (*Iblis, Satan, Ahriman*). The gap consisting in the seven celestial lost steps, symbolized by the "Seven Cherubs" or the "Seven Words of the Light", defines the hiero-history of the Septimanian or Fatimid Shi'ism as a "belated eternity". The Fatimid anthropology is focused on the ontological ascent of the "partial man" (*joz'i*) and the "Primordial Man", *Anthropos (Adam al-awwal al-kolli)*, towards the level of a substantial re-identification (soul, spirit) with *Adam ruhani*, as well as on the theocratical-apocalyptic strategy of the returning of the Light (*Ishraq*) into the *Pleroma*<sup>71</sup>. Shihab-ud-din Yahya Suhrawardi (549 A. H. / 1155 CE – 585 A. H. / 1191 CE) is the author of the famous treatise of illuminative theosophy, entitled *Kitab Hikmat al-Ishraq*, the "Book about the Wisdom of the Light", as well as the founder of the Sufi community of the *Ishraqiyun*<sup>72</sup>. In a

<sup>70</sup> The prophecies of Gioacchino da Fiore (*Liber Concordiae* or *Concordia Novi ac Veteris Testamenti, Expositio in Apocalypsim, Psalterium decem chordarum*) were published in Venice in the XVI<sup>th</sup> century. Pope Alexander the IV<sup>th</sup> condemned the gioacchinism in 1263. Jacob E. Safra, Jorge Aguilar Cauz (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Chicago / Auckland / Geneva / London / Madrid / Manila / Rome / Paris / Seoul / Sydney / Tokyo / Toronto: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 2007, "Joachim of Flore", vol. VI, pp. 558.

<sup>71</sup> Henry Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, I-II, Paris: Gallimard, 1964, I, pp. 112-136. The scholarly fighting against the dualist religions, led by the School of the Mu'tazilites, proves their spreading and their vitality throughout medieval Islam. Guy Monnot translated and edited two treatises of heresiology indited by 'Abd Al-Jabbar (320 A. H. / 932 CE – 415 A. H. / 1025 CE), one of the leaders of the School of the Mu'tazilites: *The Discourse against the dualists* and *The Discourse against the Magi*. Guy Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans et religions iraniennes*, Paris: J. Vrin, 1974, pp. 149-244, pp. 245-260.

<sup>72</sup> Corbin, *Histoire*, I, pp. 284-304.

*risalah* entitled *A Tale about the Occidental Exile*, Suhrawardi will rewrite, with a complex Sufi-Persian lyrical-theosophical arrangement, *The Hymn of the Pearl* and the mystical theology of redemption of the *salvator salvatus*<sup>73</sup> type.

The origin of the redemptive knowledge should be searched for, perhaps, in the proximity of the uncertain space of the beginnings of the history of ideas and the history of human thinking, where the primordial binary thinking has its foundation: day-night, light-darkness, life-death. The systems of the Gnostic theology and mythology have synthesized and developed an impressive spiritual treasure, which reverberated along multiple channels within the civilization of the Hellenistic Antiquity, as well as within the civilization of the Oriental and Occidental Middle Ages. The problem of the origin of evil and the strategy of redemption, in a micro-cosmic and macro-cosmic context, are two of the religious grounds of the complex mythological and theological constructions that constitute the Gnostic religious space. The confrontation between Good and Evil, the War between Light and Darkness, configure vast celestial or cosmic landscapes that circumscribe the inextricable labyrinth of the divine-human ontology, the tragic-blissful destiny of the human beings along the way of life, death and salvation, as well as the infinite potentialities of the knowledge to make whole again the theocracy of the Light, after its fall into the inferior regions. The Gnostic thinking fascinates through its spectacular features, tragic scenes, ingenuous plots, through the breath-taking *suspense* concerning the outcome of the War between Light and Darkness, through a "realism" of a mystical, metaphysical order, that explains *in a different way* the intertwined presence of Good and Evil within the world and within the human being. The savagery of some of the anthropogonical scenes included in the Gnostic mythology seems to recollect a series of ancestral, archetypal gestures, an atavistic, pre-historical ontological treasure, the horrible origins of the human family, *horrenda primordia*, confirmed by the researches of the paleoanthropology and anthropology. The ontological descendant and ascendant trajectories are concluded with the victory of the Light, with an apotheosis of the salvaged Light. Inevitably, in the border-interval between the eras, the confrontation between Gnosticism and Christianity occurred, and the stake of this collision between two religious spaces of such a magnitude was the absolutist rule over the Mediterranean *orbis* and the accomplishment of the theocratical universalism that is intrinsic to the two religions. The initial Gnostic-Christian syncretism, that was relatively amiable at the level of its social and religious hypostasis, has preceded the vehement condemnation of the Gnosticism by the Ecclesiastical councils, its metamorphosis from a Hellenistic religion into a Christian heresy, included within the Christian religious space only in order to be destroyed. Accustomed to be an adversary of the structures of power of the State and opened to any form of syncretism and vicinity with other religious spaces, which were gradually and surreptitiously assimilated through the translucency of

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<sup>73</sup> Shihab-ud-din Yahya Suhrawardi, *Risalah*, IX; W. M. Thackson (trans.), *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Suhrawardi*, London: The Octagon Press, 1982, pp. 100-108.

their limits, the Gnostic religious space could not overpower Christianity, a religion which was “married”, after the age of the persecutions, after the Edict of Milan (313 CE), with the most powerful State of the Mediterranean world (the Roman State, the Byzantine State), towards the end of Antiquity. Nevertheless, the annihilation of Gnosticism was as relative and illusory as its polymorphic efflorescence. Far from being destroyed, the Gnosticism became occult, it metamorphosed itself into a religious *guerilla* and it chooses, with the irresponsible wisdom of a *trickster*, the historical spaces and times for its outstanding resurrections. In the Middle Ages, the Gnosticism ramifies and acquires new meanings within *Kabbalah*<sup>74</sup>, Shi’ism and Sufism. The Bogomil Church will perpetuate the Gnostic ideas in the south-Danubian Slavic space and in the north-Danubian rural space, dominated by folklore spirituality. Through the occidental extension of the community of the Cathari, the Bogomilism will assert itself as the only intellectual “fashion” imported in the Occident of Europe from the region of the Balkans, and not the vice-versa. The Albigensian Crusade (1208-1244), led by Pope Innocent the III<sup>d</sup> and Simon of Montfort against Raymond the IV<sup>th</sup>, the Count of Toulouse, is considered as the only victorious Crusade. The redemptive knowledge, occulted in the background canvas of the universal culture, continues to reverberate through sums of seen and unseen signs.

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<sup>74</sup> Moses Gaster and Gershom Scholem have thrown into relief the existence of a “Jewish Gnosticism”, included in the mystical theology of medieval Judaism. They unveiled the relationship which exists between the Gnostic spiritual universe and the pre-kabbalistic (*Merkabah*) and kabbalistic (*Kabbalah*) spiritual universe. Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York: Schocken Books, 1974, “Second Lecture: *Merkabah* Mysticism and Jewish Gnosticism”, pp. 40-79. Also Gershom G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960.

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