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NOTES AND STUDIES

THE MANDAEANS[1]

THE *Mandæan Studies* of Dr S. A. Pallis were first published in 1919 in Danish: he has now brought out a second edition in English, which demands very careful consideration from every one interested in the still existing religion of the Mandaeans. There has been lately a revival of interest in this curious faith, partly perhaps because so many British army men came across Mandaeans in Kut and other places on the banks of the Tigris, but still more from the fact that M. Lidzbarski brought out a German translation of the *Johannesbuch* in 1915 and of the *Ginza rabba* in 1925. Before this one had to use the transcript of the Paris MS by Petermann (1867), or the pre-scientific edition of Norberg (1815–1816) in which the Mandaean text was conjecturally 'restored' into a sort of Syriac.

The Mandaeans live on the banks of the Tigris. They must live near running water where they can practise their continual baptismal rites. When they were first discovered by Europeans in the 17th century, and it was found that they were neither Catholics nor Protestants but that they made much of baptism and honoured John the Baptist, they were called Christians of St John, in the belief that they were a direct survival of the Baptist's disciples. Further research, however, made it quite clear that they were not Christians or Jews at all, in any ordinary sense of the word. They regard 'Jesus Messiah' as a false prophet, and 'the Holy Spirit' as a female demon, and they denounce the Jews and all their ways. The language in which their sacred books are written is akin to Syriac, and seems to represent the Aramaic current in lower Babylonia. The gutturals have disappeared, very much as in the old Babylonian language, now familiar to us from cuneiform tablets.

[1] *Ginza . . . das Grosse Buch der Mandäer*, übersetzt von Mark Lidzbarski. (Göttingen, 1925.) *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*, von Mark Lidzbarski. (Giessen, 1905–1915.) *Mandæan Studies*, by Svend Aage Pallis. (Milford, London, 1926.)

It is very likely that the Mandaeans are physically descended from the old Babylonians, and it would cause no surprise if their anti-Christian, anti-Moslem religion had been found to be a survival of the old religion of Babylonia. As a matter of fact, it is nothing of the kind. It is bitterly opposed to the astrology into which late Babylonian religion developed. The Mandaean mythology is partly without near parallels in other known systems, partly occupied with beings whose names, often in slightly different forms, occur in the Old and New Testaments. What then is the spiritual ancestry of these people? From whence did they derive their ideas, whether by way of inheritance, or of repulsion? It is with this question that Dr Pallis's book is concerned.

Dr Pallis begins by emphasizing the heterogeneous character of the Mandaean writings, in order to make it clear that their religious ideas must have been derived from several sources. This indeed is generally acknowledged, but there are two main and incompatible explanations. The one regards Mandaism as essentially an Eastern-Oriental religion, whose connexion with Christianity is more or less superficial; the other regards it as an immigrant into Mesopotamia from the West, as a Gnostic system coeval with Christianity, if not older, as parallel to Christianity, as a product of late-Jewish speculation, and so possibly containing elements from which certain features of Christianity are actually derived. This latter theory is the modern version of the old idea that the Mandaeans are the degenerate descendants of disciples of John the Baptist, and it sometimes takes the form of theories that the Gospel of 'John' (or some parts of it) is to be regarded as a Christian version of a work about John the Baptist, traces of which, including the figure of the Good Shepherd, are said to be recognizable in the Mandaean sacred books! It is this group of theories that has excited during the last few years a certain popular interest in Mandaism.

It was necessary to point this out, but very little of it finds an echo in Dr Pallis's sober pages. He begins by discussing the alleged dependence of Mandaism on ancient Babylonian religion (as maintained by Brandt and others), and shews that there is little evidence for it. Some superstitious survivals of ancient 'Babylonian' customs may be traced among Mandaean women, but not as a part of the Mandaean doctrine (p. 14 ff: see Herodotus i 199). Further, to the Babylonians this world was a good place, the work of beneficent deities; to Mandaeans it was on the whole an evil place, the work of demons. To the Babylonians death was a terror, and the dead (like Homer's heroes) live on in the gloomy desolate underworld from whence there is no return; to Mandaeans death is a release, at least for the righteous and enlightened man, whose spirit flies up through the spheres to the realm of pure light and cannot be detained on the way by Fate or the Demons of the

Planets.[1] That the Mandaeans regard the North as the best part and the upper part, the home of good beings, was almost inevitable, seeing that, as the *Ginza* itself points out,[2] the indispensable and cleansing waters come from that quarter. It is worth remark that the Manichees also, who arose in Babylonia, regarded the burning South as the bad quarter. Surely in such a matter climate and topography count for more than mythological tradition.

Pallis's chap. III deals with the Persian elements in Mandaism: we may note the reserves with which he formulates his conclusion on p. 68. But by way of passing on to consider his chap. IV, which deals with Judaism and the Old Testament in Mandaean writings, let us consider the 'Persian names of divine beings or religious conceptions' that we find in them. Dr Pallis notes seven (pp. 104–114). The first is *zīwā* 'splendour', which as he acknowledges is found in most Aramaic dialects, including Syriac. The second is *parwānḳā*, a sort of guardian spirit[3]: this word occurs in the very same sense in the 'Hymn of the Soul', line 16 *b*, i. e. in the masterpiece of the old classical Syriac literature. The third is the demon *Gew* mentioned in G R v, and also in the *Shāhnāmā*, but (to quote Dr Pallis, p. 105) 'as the two Mandaean passages merely mention his name we have no means to decide whether more than this is Persian'. The fourth is *Javar* (*Yawar*), which does seem to be the Persian 'friend' or 'helper', a by-name for *Mandā d'Ḥayyē* or of *Hibil*: this word is no doubt of Persian etymology. Similarly the use of the name 'Bihram, the great one', in a Mandaean baptismal formula (in *Qolasta*, the Mandaean Hymn-book) is the use of a Persian name, but Dr Pallis points out that there is reason to believe that this name was only introduced at a comparatively late period.

'Far greater problems are offered by *mānā*, one of the most prominent cosmological primeval beings in G R vi and viii' (Pallis, p. 107): *mana* also means the cult-garment in which baptism is received. But as Dr Pallis arrives at the conclusion that all the Mandaean meanings of *mana* come ultimately from the meaning 'garment', which it also has in ordinary Syriac, it does not really illustrate the Persian element in Mandaism.

Finally Dr Pallis discusses the derivations proposed by Brandt and by Prof. Andreas for *Abatur*, and shews that each has philological

[1] The names of the Planets and of the Signs of the Zodiac (*malwāshē*) seem to be regarded by Dr Pallis as ultimately Babylonian. Ultimately perhaps: but it should have been pointed out on p. 20 that the Mandaeans simply use the well-known Syriac names, commonly ascribed by Syrians to Bardaiṣan. On p. 20, note 4, Dr Pallis has quoted the Signs in the wrong order: Wright *C B M* 1215, in agreement with G R 379, has *Embra*, *Taura*, &c.

[2] G R 282[26].

[3] See especially *Johannesbuch* 120[2].

reasons against it: his conclusion is that 'the name *Abatur* has absolutely no relation to the Iranian languages and that the figure only secondarily became influenced by Persian elements of religion (the judgement and the balance)'.[1]

We come then to the Biblical elements in Mandaism; from whence are they derived? Dr Pallis's chapter on Judaism in Mandaean writings (pp. 115–150) seems to me decisive, one of the most important in the book. He does not believe that there is any direct connexion between Mandaism and Judaism: 'the Mandaeans have made no distinction between Jews and Christians, or rather when they speak of *Yahūḏayyē*[2]... they always think of the Christians and call them by this name' (p. 141).[3] Moreover, Dr Pallis goes on to say, their ideas were confused by the fact that the Old Testament was a holy book of the Christians. I even venture to suggest that Dr Pallis does not go far enough, and that a closer examination of the vocabulary of the Syriac Bible (the Peshiṭta) shews that the Mandaeans got their ideas about these things from the scriptures of the Syriac Christians, i. e. from the Bible as current in Mesopotamia and not as current in the Mediterranean lands.[4] Words like *rḳiha*, *shiul*, *tibil*, are Mandaean transliterations of the Peshiṭta terms ܪܩܝܥܐ, ܫܐܘܠ, ܬܒܝܠ: there is no need to go to the Hebrew original for them, while their Greek equivalents, such as Gnostics in Greek-speaking lands would have used, are στερέωμα, ᾅδης, ἡ οἰκουμένη.

On one point surely Dr Pallis is wrong. The Mandaeans call all fresh running water, in which one can be baptized, 'Jordan'. Opposed to this is the pernicious sea in which the wicked perish which they call 'Suf, the Sea' (G L 55[5]), or 'the Sea of Suf' (*iamā d'suf*, G R 368[3]), or 'the Great Sea of Suf'. It is clear from the transposition in G L 55[5] that 'Suf' is a proper name, not an appellative. Lidzbarski, following Norberg and others, regards this as derived from יַם סוּף, the Hebrew name for the Red Sea, but Pallis prefers to think that *suf* has nothing to do with this. When, however, it is noticed that the Syriac for the Red Sea is ܝܡܐ ܕܣܘܦ (*yamā dsof*), it is clear not only that the corresponding Mandaean term does mean 'Red Sea', but also that it is derived from the Syriac Bible, not the Hebrew original.[5] The

[1] Pallis p. 114.

[2] Mandaean distortion of *Yahūdayyē*, distorted to suggest 'abortions' and 'sinners'.

[3] Note that Lidzbarski himself remarks about a Mandaean protest against the use of trumpets in worship: 'danach vermute ich, dass der Verfasser Jüdisches und Christliches durcheinander geworfen hat' (*Johannesbuch* p. 104 note 2).

[4] For an argument that the Mandaean poem which is based on Psalms cxiv and xxix (G R 174 f) derives its imagery from the Peshiṭta alone, see the separate Note.

[5] Strictly speaking, it might come of course from the Jewish Targums, which agree letter for letter here with the Syriac.

term, it need hardly be added, is always used in a mythological sense, for of the real topography of Palestine and Egypt the Mandaeans clearly know nothing.

Of the six proper names which Pallis collects as implying 'a more accurate knowledge of the Old Testament' (p. 122) it should be noted that they all occur in the Peshiṭta. *Tanīnā* (dragon) occurs, e. g., in Ps. lxxiv 13 as well as in Gen. i 20, and *Lewiāthān* occurs in Ps. civ 26 and Isa. xxvii 1.[1]

We come now, the ground having been somewhat cleared, to the relation of the Mandaean Religion to Christianity. We ought not to be too much influenced by the fact that to the Mandaeans *Eshu mshiha* (Jesus Christ) is a false prophet, who is also *Nbu*, i. e. Nebo-Hermes, the planet Mercury, or that his mother is *Ruha d'Ḳudsha* (the Holy Spirit), an evil demon who is also *Dlibat*, the planet Venus. We are all in this age of books and diffused education too much influenced by our own personal knowledge of the beginnings of Christianity, derived from our own reading of the New Testament itself, and we tend to think that for those who do not accept the orthodox Church theology there is always the alternative of a sort of modernist, more or less naturalistic, view of Jesus Christ who went about doing good. But for those who are not familiar with the Gospels, who hear of 'Jesus Christ' or 'Holy Spirit' only as the sacred deities of a hostile and persecuting Church, this alternative is not open. And a very little investigation makes it quite clear that the Mandaean hostility to *Eshu mshiha* is hostility to the fully developed post-Nicene Church. In several places 'Christ' is actually called 'the Byzantine' (*Rumaia*), and further we are told that the disciples of this Christ become 'Christians', and turn into monks and nuns who have no children and who keep fasts and never wear white clothes like the Mandaeans (G R ii 55). In a word, it is not the Christ of the Gospels, but the Christ of fully developed ecclesiastical organization and policy to which Mandaism is so hostile.

When were Mandaeans persecuted by Christians? It can only have been during the Sasanian Empire, when Christianity was a more or less tolerated religion, whose head—alone recognized as such by the King of Kings—was the Nestorian Catholicus of Seleucia. The Mandaean Religion, as such, was not recognized by the Persian government: they must have been reckoned as a variety of 'Christians', as in fact they are. '*Amuneil* (i. e. Emmanuel) is his name, *Eshu mahiana* he calls himself, . . . when he oppresses you, tell him "We belong to thee". But in your hearts confess him not, and fall not away from the word of

[1] In Pallis p. 122, l. 12, 'G R vi' is a misprint for G R iii. Why 'Carmel' should be the mount of destruction is clear from the story of Elijah, in which it is a hill where 400 prophets of the foreign God performed their rites and were slaughtered.

your Lord, the high King of Light' (G R i 28). Surely this reflects a time when Mandaeans were willing to let themselves be formally inscribed as Churchmen, when they were not really such.

Words like *Eshu* and *Amuneil* shew that Mandaean transcriptions of Biblical names are often inaccurate. This is no doubt due to ignorance or (in some cases, as in *Shum* for Shem, i. e. 'name') to the phonetic laws of the Mandaean language. But occasionally their peculiar religious use of names makes the ordinary use of familiar terms impossible, and other words have to be substituted. *Ruha*, as we have seen, is used by the Mandaeans exclusively for the evil spirit, so they no longer use it, as all other Aramaic dialects do, for 'wind': they use *ziḳa* instead, a word which in Syriac means 'storm'. *Alāha* (i. e. God) has to them the meaning 'false god', so for the true Divine Being they use various substitutes such as 'the Great *Māna*' or '*Manda d'Ḥayyē*' (lit. the Knowledge of Life). Similarly 'Jesus Christ' was to the Mandaeans only the Pseudo-messiah worshipped by the official Christians. Had they then a name for the true Jesus? The answer is, yes; they called Him *Anush* or *Enush*. In G R ii 53 and G R i 29 we read that Anush-Utra[1] comes into the world in the days of Piliatus (or Paltus, i. e. Pilate) the king of the world; he heals the sick, makes the blind to see, cleanses the lepers, raises the cripples so that they can walk, and makes the deaf and dumb to speak. With the power of the high King of Light he raises the dead. Those who believe in him among the Jews he teaches that there is Life and Death, Light and Darkness and burning Fire, Truth and Error. Three hundred and sixty Prophets go out of Jerusalem and preach in the name of the Lord of Glory[2]: then Anush-Utra ascends to the Mandaean Paradise and will not be seen again by mankind till the End comes. Before he ascended, however, we read in another place that Anush-Utra will unmask the Deceiver, the Byzantine Christ, who will confess that he is only one of the deceiving Seven Planets: he will be seized by the Jews and crucified (G R ii 58).

That this tale of the preaching and of the miracles of Anush-Utra in Jerusalem is no isolated patch in the Mandaean construction appears from G R xiv 288 f, where true religion is represented as being the doctrine taught by Anush-Utra, and still more from G R xv, where Anush-Utra himself sings of his coming into the world. He calls himself the Stranger (*nukraya*, G R 328, last line) and says: 'I took a bodily form and appeared in Jerusalem. I spoke with my voice and preached,

[1] *Utra* (i. e.), lit. wealth, treasure) is the Mandaean name for a good spirit, so that *Anush-Utra* might almost be rendered 'St Enōsh'.

[2] Or 'greatness': it seems to reflect the name used by the Manichees for the Monarch of the realm of Light.

and became a Healer for Miriai: a Healer for Miriai I became, and healed her from head to foot. I was called Healer of the Truth (*kushṭa*), who heals and takes no fee' (GR 331 f).[1] This is followed among other things by the mission of the 365 disciples. Clearly this is a parallel to what we read in GR i and ii, and sets forth the same doctrine.

The Mandaeans, then, rejected the Christ of the Catholic Church, born of a woman and crucified, but they accepted the Stranger who appeared in Jerusalem in the days of Pilate, who healed the sick and taught the true and life-giving doctrine, and who ascended in due course when his work was done to his own place in the world of Light. This Personage is called the Stranger, but he is no stranger to the modern student of Christian antiquity: it is clearly the Manichaean Jesus, a personage adopted by Mani from the Jesus of Marcion.[2] In other words it is no new controversial figment of the Mandaeans.

What, meanwhile, did contemporary Churchmen say of the Mandaeans? For this we have to go to the *Scholion* of Theodore bar Konai (A.D. 792).[3] In this work there is a section on the Mandaeans, who are there called Dositheans.[4] Theodore tells us they are called Mandaeans in Mesene, i. e. in Babylonia, but Naṣaraeans in the districts further north. That they really are our Mandaeans is evident from what he subsequently tells us about Abatur (ܐܒܛܘܪ, *Abitur*) and Ptaḥil (ܦܬܚܝܠ). 'Dositheans' must be nothing more than a learned nick-name, for Dositheus is the name of a legendary contemporary of Simon Magus, and the Mandaeans themselves know nothing of such a person.

What Theodore says of Mandaism is that its founder was one Ado, a beggar from Adiabene, who had come into Babylonia with companions who all bore names of a Mandaean type,[5] and that the doctrine of the Mandaeans is borrowed from the Marcionites, from the Manichees, and from the Kantaeans or Knāthaeans (ܟܢܝܐ). As for these last,

[1] Lidzbarski (*Johannesbuch* p. 125) considers Miriai, the faithful convert and disciple, to have been developed out of Mary the mother of Jesus. Surely she is not that, but a reminiscence of Mary Magdalene (see Lk. viii 2).

[2] Several passages in Ephraim's *Prose Refutations of Marcion* seem to indicate a Marcionite doctrine of two Messiahs, the false and the true: see Mitchell, vol. ii, p. xxxviii, l. 14; p. xlviii, l. 18; p. xlix, l. 24.

[3] *Konai* according to *CUL* Add. 1998 (16th cent.), *Kuni* according to *CUL* Add. 2812 (19th cent.): E. Sachau has suggested that the name was really *Kēwāni* = Saturninus.

[4] See H. Pognon *Coupes de Khouabir* (1898) p. 224 ff.

[5] e.g. *Em-kushṭa*, ܐܡ̈ܩܫܛ, mother of Ado; also Shimlai (*sic*) and Nidbai his brothers: see Lidzbarski, *Johannesbuch* p. xx.

Theodore tells us (p. 220) that the foolish ܚܒܝܐ (? = 'associates') say their doctrine comes from Abel (in Syriac ܗܒܠ): so do the Mandaeans in part. What Theodore further says about their origin and practices is not enlightening, and in all cases spiteful tales by Church writers about the founders of heresies must be received with suspicion. But I think Theodore's account of the Mandaeans may be reasonably interpreted.

Firstly, the Mandaeans are not immemorial but a sect about the origin of which something is known. There is little need to doubt the existence of Ado. Only we must not import into the word 'beggar' the associations which this word has in modern English. All the Elect among the Manichees were 'beggars', i. e. wandering fakirs without a settled home, who might not possess more than 'food for a day and clothes for a year'. This does not mean that they were uneducated: they might be full of legendary lore and might even be carrying about sacred writings in their pack. At the same time this kind of life is not favourable for the accurate preservation of ancient literature. Of course Ado and his family were not 'orthodox' Manichees or Marcionites, but I do suggest that they stood in relation to these respectable societies in something of the relation that the Fraticelli of the 13th and 14th centuries stood to the true Franciscans. What I mean more particularly is that they had inherited from the Manichees and the Marcionites a Christian tradition parallel to, but very different from, the tradition of the Catholic Church.

The Marcionites in the 5th and 6th centuries were an unlicensed and vanishing society. But they had been once a great factor in the Christianity of the Euphrates Valley, as is clear from the polemics of Ephraim and still more from the influence which they had on the new theology of Mani. I am not suggesting that the Mandaeans are Marcionites: what I am suggesting is that Theodore bar Konai was right when he tells us their doctrines are partly derived from the Marcionites, and I think we can say with confidence that that part is their 'Christology', that Anush-Utra is the Marcionite Jesus.

From Manichaeism the Mandaeans derived their conception of the High King of Light and His glorious and peaceful realm far beyond the heaven and earth of this evil world. His Five good attributes, His seat in the North, and other details, seem to come direct from Mani's presentation of the King of the Paradises of Light. Further, the Mandaean formula of Confession in G R ii 61 ff (especially 63, end) recalls the Manichaean *Khuastuanift*. But the connexion of Mandaism with Manichaeism does not seem to me so intimate as with the religion of Marcion.

In one point, of course, Mandaism differs from the organization both of the Marcionites and the Manichees, in that marriage is not only permitted but commanded. Mandaism further differs from most forms of Christian practice, in that Baptism is not administered once and for all, but is often repeated, as often as required. According to Epiphanius, the Marcionites permitted a second and third baptism. The Mandaean repeated baptism might be reconciled to Marcionite theory as an extension of their custom, and it is noteworthy that particular lustrations are commanded to Mandaeans in connexion both with marriage and cohabitation (G R i 14, and elsewhere).

But of course it would be a hopeless perversion to attempt to derive all Mandaean mythology and praxis from Mesopotamian Marcionite Christianity alone. There is the 'Gnostic' doctrine of the ascent of the soul after its separation from the body through the 'custodies', i. e. guarded frontiers, through which only those provided with the seal acquired in Mandaean baptism can pass. Further there is the peculiar Mandaean mythology—Abatur, Ptahil, Or (or Ur),[1] a series of Demiurgic beings unlike in name and function from anything known elsewhere. These may indeed be of Mesopotamian origin: no one has yet suggested a satisfactory derivation for 'Abatur' or 'Ptahil', who occupy something the same place in the Mandaean system (or rather systems) as Jaldabaoth does in some Western Gnostic systems. It may be noted that 'Crun, the great mountain of flesh', that tries to swallow Hibil-Ziwa (G R 143), seems to be a far-off reminiscence of Κρόνος, of Saturn, not the planet but the banished father who used to swallow his children and now sits in Tartarus. There is therefore a Greek, i. e. Western, element in Mandaean mythology.

As for what may be called more particularly the 'Gnostic' part, the doctrine that the human soul is imprisoned in an alien, non-redeemable body, from which it escapes at death but even then cannot win its way to its true home outside the spheres which encompass this world, save only if it have assimilated the true knowledge during this life, this also can be traced in the Euphrates Valley in ancient Christian circles, for it is the doctrine of Bardaiṣan. Bardaiṣan was a philosopher, a man of culture and science, as such things were understood in his days, with some astronomical knowledge of his own. So far as his ideas have been transmitted to us, he does not speak of monstrous genii with fantastic forms and names, but of Fate and Free-will, of the Planets, of the Heavenly Powers on the right or the left: what may be called the fairy-tale element is absent. But his mythology does speak of souls

[1] I should like to suggest that Ur, the demon of Darkness, is a corruption of ὕλη (ܗܘܠܐ), a figment which plays so great a part in Marcionite doctrine.

hindered at the crossing,[1] and kept in seven Limbos (ܡܚܫܟܐ),[2] which correspond in intention at least to the Mandaean *maṭṭartas*. Moreover *madd'a* (ܡܕܥ), the Syriac word from which *manda* is actually derived, was the name Bardaiṣan gave to the Divine Reason or Gnosis that dwells in man.[3]

I venture to think that modern writers about 'the Gnosis' have not always considered that some of the resemblances between some of the very different 'Gnostic' systems may come from a common understanding of the actual facts which ultimately gave rise to the pseudo-science of Astrology, facts that had to be taken account of when once they had been apprehended. The Ptolemaic system, though now antiquated, was in its day up-to-date science, based on actual observation of facts. When 'the meek-eyed Peace . . . came softly sliding Down through the turning sphere' from Heaven, it was really through a series of spheres that she had to pass. The discovery of the regular but independent motion of the Planets was accounted for by the doctrine that they were fixed each in its own sphere, which apparently no other star could penetrate. Heaven therefore was not open as it seemed: it was surrounded by crystal spheres, transparent indeed but impenetrable. Granted that the Soul when released from the Body flew up towards Heaven, how could it get through the spheres on its way home?

My point is that this difficulty presents itself naturally, is a natural question to be asked. It is not wonderful that several systems have a doctrine of 'wards' to be passed, in number corresponding generally with the number of the Planets. Sometimes the stress was laid on past good conduct, sometimes on the possession of secret knowledge: what seemed evident was that some passport was necessary before the soul could read its title clear to mansions in the skies—or rather, beyond the skies. Wherever therefore the doctrine of the 'spheres' was accepted we find doctrines of how to get past them, corresponding in part to old tales of how to pass the fabled rivers of Hades.

In any case, what we know of Bardaiṣan's cosmogony is enough to shew analogies with the substructure underlying the fantastic and complicated Mandaean fairy-tales. The important thing is, that Bardaiṣan belongs to the region of the Euphrates Valley. In the past, I venture to think, too much attention has been given by expositors of Mandaism to sects of Gnostics described by Irenaeus and Hippolytus and Epiphanius and other Western writers. The Mandaeans live in Lower Babylonia. Their sacred writings were compiled some seventy years

[1] Mitchell, vol. ii, p. lxxvii: see also p. cxxx.
[2] Mitchell, pp. lxxvii and xcvii.
[3] Mitchell, p. lxxiii.

after the coming of Islam, i. e. not before A.D. 700. Their founder, that is to say, the founder of Mandaism 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 Peshiṭta, 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 Manichaean) 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 Bardaiṣan we have an educated Gnostic's doctrine of a modified astrological Fate, including the soul's fate after death. In Mandaism 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, Mandaism may be interesting in itself, but it is useless to go to it as a key to unlock the mysteries of early Christian developement.

F. C. BURKITT.

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