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MANICHAICA ARAMAICA? ADAM AND THE MAGICAL DELIVERANCE OF SETH

JOHN C. REEVES

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHARLOTTE

Ibn al-Nadīm's tenth-century *Fihrist*, long recognized as the purveyor of much valuable Manichaean lore, includes a Manichaean exposition of Genesis 2–4 that exhibits numerous affinities with both Jewish aggadic and gnostic exegetical traditions. One of the more intriguing episodes featured in the exposition involves the deliverance of the infant Seth from demonic assault by a magically adept Adam. Some parallels to this specific narrative episode were subsequently discovered within the gradually expanding corpus of Middle Iranian Manichaean literature. The present essay seeks to direct attention to a heretofore unrecognized reflex of this mytheme within an Aramaic incantation stemming from lower Mesopotamia. The implications of this correspondence are explored.

ONE OF OUR MOST valuable witnesses to authentic traditions surrounding the life and teachings of Mani, as well as to the subsequent history of Manichaeism within the Islamicate cultural sphere, is contained in the ninth chapter of the *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, or "Bibliographic Compendium," of Ibn al-Nadīm, a book merchant and encyclopaedist who lived and wrote in Baghdad during the late tenth century of the Common Era.¹ His lengthy, detailed report on Manichaeism was first made available to Western scholars in 1862 by Gustav Flügel in a special monograph that featured an initial edition of the Arabic text, a translation, and a detailed commentary.² Subsequent discoveries and studies of oriental sources pertaining to Manichaeism (Arabic, Syriac, and Persian), coupled with the fortunate recovery of genuine Manichaean manuscripts from Central Asia and Egypt, have gradually confirmed the general reliability of Ibn al-Nadīm's information about Mani and his religion.³

¹ See J. Fück, "Ibn al-Nadīm," in *Arabische Kultur und Islam im Mittelalter: Ausgewählte Schriften* (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1981), 27–30; *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, ed. B. Dodge, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1970), 1: xv–xxiii.

² G. Flügel, *Mani: Seine Lehre und seine Schriften* (Leipzig, 1862; reprinted, Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1969).

³ The literature documenting and explicating these "subsequent discoveries and studies" is immense. Essential guides are J. Ries, *Les Études manichéennes: Des controverses de la Réforme aux découvertes du XX^e siècle* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Centre d'histoire des religions, 1988); and S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, 2d ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992). For discussion and publication of the recent manuscript finds at Kellis in Egypt,

A MANICHAEAN VERSION OF THE STORY OF ADAM AND EVE

One of the more intriguing passages contained within Ibn al-Nadīm's entry is a Manichaean exposition of Genesis 2–4 which exhibits numerous affinities with Jewish aggadic and gnostic exegetical traditions.⁴ Astonishingly, this version of the story of Adam and Eve has attracted little attention from students of the history of biblical interpretation, a circumstance perhaps more indicative of the exposition's relative obscurity than of a program of deliberate neglect.⁵ While the entire narrative is worthy

see especially I. M. F. Gardner and S. N. C. Lieu, "From Narmouthis (Medinet Madi) to Kellis (Ismant el-Kharab): Manichaean Documents from Roman Egypt," *Journal of Roman Studies* 86 (1996): 146–69; I. Gardner and K. A. Worp, "Leaves from a Manichaean Codex," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 117 (1997): 139 n. 2; K. A. Worp, *Greek Papyri from Kellis, I (P. Kell. Gr. 1–90)*, Dakhleh Oasis Project Monograph, no. 3 (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1995); *Kellis Literary Texts*, vol. 1, ed. I. Gardner et al., Dakhleh Oasis Project Monograph, no. 4 (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1996).

⁴ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* (apud Flügel, *Mani*), 58.11–61.13 (text); 90–93 (translation). This exposition is introduced with the heading "The Beginning of Sexual Reproduction According to the Teaching of Mani." Additional translations of this exposition can be found in K. Kessler, *Mani: Forschungen über die manichäische Religion* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1889), 393–96; Dodge, *Fihrist*, 2.783–86; J. C. Reeves, *Heralds of That Good Realm: Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis and Jewish Traditions*, NHMS 41 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 79–81.

⁵ Flügel's meticulous commentary (*Mani*, 242–71) remains valuable. For more recent discussions, see G. G. Stroumsa,

of extensive discussion, the section of particular relevance to the present investigation occurs near the end of this passage. It deals with the events surrounding the birth of Seth, the biological son of Adam the protoplast. The passage reads as follows:

Mani said: "Then those archons and this al-Şindid⁶ and Eve were troubled at (the behavior) they saw (exhibited) by Cain.⁷ Al-Şindid then taught Eve magical syllables in order that she might infatuate Adam.⁸ She proceeded to act (by) presenting him with a garland from a flowering tree, and when Adam saw her, he lustfully united with

Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology, NHS 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 149–52; B. A. Pearson, "The Figure of Seth in Manichaean Literature," in *Manichaean Studies: Proceedings of the First International Conference on Manichaeism*, ed. P. Bryder (Lund: Plus Ultra, 1988), 147–55; I. P. Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992), 169–71; Reeves, *Heralds*, 100–104.

⁶ الصنديد. This is the name used for the principal archon initially ruling the created order in Ibn al-Nadim's account of Manichaean anthropogonic traditions. Its meaning and etymology are obscure; see Flügel, *Mani*, 262–63. Other primary sources (Syriac, Coptic, Middle Persian) employ recognizable forms of the name "Sakla(s)," a popular designation for the demiurgic archon of classical gnostic literature probably deriving from Aramaic *skl*? "fool." Reeves (*Heralds*, 98 n. 72) provides a representative sampling of the evidence. Interestingly, the ninth-century writer al-Jāhiz knows both designations; note the quotation from his *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* cited by C. Pellat, "Le témoignage d'al-Jāhiz sur les manichéens," in *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1989), 274; the Arabic text of this passage is available in Kessler, *Mani*, 368.

⁷ The text reads literally "... were troubled about what they saw from Cain"; I have supplied conceptual glides in parentheses to smooth the transition from the preceding pericope (which gave details about Cain's troubling behavior) to the present passage. Compare the translations of Flügel, *Mani*, 92; Kessler, *Mani*, 395; Dodge, *Fihrist*, 2.785.

⁸ Note especially *1 Enoch* 7:1c: "And they [the corrupt angels] taught them [the women] charms and spells, and showed to them the cutting of roots and trees"; translation is that of M. A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 2: 77. The specific combination of techniques mentioned in this verse is quite arresting in light of this Manichaean version of Eve's seduction of Adam. It is of course well documented that Enochic literature exerted an enormous influence upon the articulation of the Manichaean myth; see, for example, W. Sundermann, "Mani's *Book of the Giants* and

her, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a handsome male child of radiant appearance. When al-Şindid learned about this, he was distressed and fell ill, and said to Eve, 'This infant is not one of us; he is a stranger.' Then she wished to kill him, but Adam seized him and said to Eve, 'I will feed him cow's milk and the fruit of trees!' Thus taking him he departed. But al-Şindid sent the archons to carry off the trees and cattle, moving them away from Adam.⁹ When Adam saw this, he took the infant and encircled him within three rings. He pronounced over the first (ring) the name of the King of the Gardens, over the second the name of Primal Man, and over the third the name of the Living Spirit. He spoke to and implored God, may His name be glorified, saying, 'Even though I have sinned before you, what offense has this infant committed?' Then one of the three (invoked deities) hurried (to Adam bearing) a crown of radiance,¹⁰ extending it in his hand to Adam. When al-Şindid and the archons saw this, they departed (and went) away."

He [Mani] said, "Then there appeared to Adam a tree called the lotus, and milk flowed from it, and he fed the boy with it. He named him [the boy] after its name, but sometime later he renamed him Shāthil [i.e., Seth].¹¹ Then that al-Şindid declared enmity against Adam and those who were born . . ."¹²

A close reading of this passage reveals a number of interesting structural motifs. Some of these motifs derive

the Jewish Books of Enoch: A Case of Terminological Differences and What It Implies," in *Irano-Judaica III: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages*, ed. S. Shaked and A. Netzer (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1994), 40–48.

⁹ Thus rendering it impossible for Adam to procure fruit or milk with which to nourish the child.

¹⁰ With regard to the second crown worn by Adam, the "crown of radiance," compare IQS 4:7–8, which recounts that among the rewards to be bestowed upon the "sons of Truth" are "a crown of glory (*klyl kbwd*) with a garment of splendor in eternal light." Text of IQS cited from *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations*, vol. 1: *Rule of the Community and Related Documents*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth et al. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994), 16. See also Reeves, *Heralds*, 104 n. 112.

¹¹ Adam first named the child "L-ṭ-s" after the name of the tree (لوطيس) which miraculously suckled the infant, and later reversed and manipulated the sounds of the name to form the new name "Ş- ṭ-l" (شائل). For discussion of this unusual name, found only in texts with Syro-Mesopotamian gnostic roots, see Reeves, *Heralds*, 112–17.

¹² Ibn al-Nadim, *Fihrist* (apud Flügel, *Mani*), 60.7–61.13. Translation is that of Reeves, *Heralds*, 80–81.

directly from the passage's biblical prototype, while others display distinctively Manichaean interests, but all of them represent creative exegesis of the highest order. This portion of the narrative exhibits a carefully balanced structure which juxtaposes the magical praxis of Eve with that of Adam, the efficacious powers associated with two types of trees, and Adam's receipt of two kinds of headgear, one baleful and the other auspicious, both of which are termed "crown(s)" (الكليل).

Of especial interest for the present study is the final portion of the episode. Therein Adam rescues a young Seth from imminent demonic assault via the expeditious employment of concentric magic circles in conjunction with an invocation of the deity (or dieties).¹³ There is, of course, no biblical precedent for this particular narrative event, nor does there appear to be an exegetical "trigger" within the terse biblical narrative, regardless of version, for the generation of such a scene.¹⁴ Traditional commentators and collections of midrash, whether Jewish or Christian, provide no parallels. The extant extrabiblical *Adamschriften*, as well as other apocryphal or pseudepigraphical compositions that include discussion of the protoplasts and their

progeny, are likewise innocent of this narrative event.¹⁵ It would thus appear to be a unique development of the Genesis legend that is distinctively Manichaean in provenance.

The mortal threat posed to the infant Seth by one of his biological parents is remotely paralleled by the Mazdean legends surrounding the birth and infancy of Zoroaster.¹⁶ Demons and malevolent wizards vainly attempt to murder the newborn child, aided in several instances by the boy's father. Interestingly, it is Zoroaster's mother who sometimes functions as an agent of deliverance during these successive assaults.¹⁷ According to certain versions of these traditions, the prenatal formation of the Persian prophet was also associated with a marvelous tree (the *hōm*-stalk) and cow's milk. A convenient exposition of this latter material occurs within al-Shahrastānī's discussion of Zoroastrianism in his *Kitāb al-milal wa-al-nihāl*, a treatment which, despite its heresiographical context, displays an accurate knowledge of its subject.¹⁸

Then he [i.e., God] placed the spirit of Zardušt in a tree (which) he made grow higher than the heavenly heights,¹⁹ and surrounded it with seventy noble angels. He planted

¹³ "Circle-magic" periodically surfaces in both Jewish and Muslim sources, although the present scene would seem to be the sole instance where Adam is portrayed as endorsing it. For some other instances of this practice, see *m. Ta'an.* 3:8; *b. Ta'an.* 23a; Tosefta Targum and Rashi to Hab 2:1; *Deut. Rab.* 11; 'Abot R. Natan A, *hosaphah beth*, ed. S. Schechter (*Massekhet 'Abot de-Rabbi Natan* [Wien: C. D. Lippe, 1887]), 156. These examples however do not emphasize the protective power of the circle. The apotropaic character of Adam's circles finds its closest analogue in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* §11, where the adept seeking to consult the angelic *Šar šel Torah* is admonished: *wy'šh lw 'wgh [b'rš] wy'mwd bh kdy šl' ybw'w hmzyqyn wydmw lw kml'kym wyhrgwhw* "and he (the adept) shall make for himself a circle [on the ground] and remain within it, so that the demons might not come, appearing to him as (if they were) angels, and kill him." Text cited from the edition of G. G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkavah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, 2d ed. (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965), 109; compare *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, ed. P. Schäfer (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981), §562. Note also the legends pertaining to Abū 'Isā al-Iṣfahānī, as well as the brother of 'Alī, referenced by S. M. Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1995), 76 and n. 127; also Y. Erder, "The Doctrine of Abū 'Isā al-Iṣfahānī and its Sources," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996): 186.

¹⁴ The birth of Seth is found in Gen 4:25. Aside from the listing of his name in various genealogies, Seth plays no distinctive role within biblical literature.

¹⁵ For an "attack on Seth," one might compare *Vita Adae et Evae* (Latin) 37:1–39:2; *Apoc. Mos.* 10:1–12:2. Therein a wild animal, glossed by the *Vita* as a "serpent," accosts and bites Seth while he and his mother are traveling to Paradise in an ultimately vain quest to procure pain-relieving oil for Adam. Aside from the physical threat posed to Seth, nothing else connects these two narrative events.

¹⁶ See *Dēnkard* 7.2.4–13, 7.2.53–55, 7.3.5–45; *Zātspram* 14.1–5, 16.1–11, 18.1–7, 19.1–8, as rendered by E. W. West, *Pahlavi Texts*, part V: *Marvels of Zoroastrianism*, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 47 (repr., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969). Text and translation of the *Dēnkard* passages cited above are also provided by M. Molé, *La Légende de Zoroastre selon les textes pehlevi* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1967), 15–17, 22–25, 29–39. For a perceptive discussion of these birth traditions, see W. R. Darrow, "Zoroaster Amalgamated: Notes on Iranian Prophetology," *History of Religions* 27 (1987–88): 109–32.

¹⁷ *Dēnkard* 7.3.4–19. Cf. Molé, *Zoroastre*, 29–33. Darrow points out that the name of Zoroaster's mother, Dugdav, is etymologically linked to the word for "milkmaid" ("Zoroaster Amalgamated," 113 n. 16).

¹⁸ The importance of al-Shahrastānī's testimony has lately been underscored by S. Shaked, "Some Islamic Reports Concerning Zoroastrianism," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 17 (1994): 43–84, esp. pp. 52–73. See also Darrow, "Zoroaster Amalgamated," 131–32.

¹⁹ D. Gimaret and G. Monnot (*Shahrastani: Livre des religions et des sectes*, I [Leuven: Peeters/UNESCO, 1986], 643 n. 44) appeal to Qur'ān S. 83:18–20 for the explication of this phrase.

it at the top of one of the mountains of Azarbajjan, the one known as Asmavidh-khar.²⁰ Then he mixed the bodily nature of Zardušt with cow's milk. The father of Zardušt drank it, and it formed sperm (and) then a fetus in the womb of his mother. Then Satan approached her and made her sick, but his mother heard a voice from heaven relaying instructions regarding her recovery, and she became well.²¹

It is intriguing that the prenatal protection of Zoroaster involves, like the postpartum protection of Seth, an analogous manipulation of a miraculous tree and the consumption of cow's milk. This structural similarity may not be coincidental. From the perspective of Manichaean prophetology, Seth and Zoroaster are ultimately the same heavenly entity (the Apostle of Light) cloaked in two divergent bodily forms, and hence their respective "hagiographies" may have invited reverberative harmonization by creative tradents.²²

MIDDLE IRANIAN EVIDENCE

Independent confirmation for the reliability of Ibn al-Nadīm's report concerning the Manichaean version of the seduction of Adam and his subsequent defense of Seth against demonic assault first surfaced in a Manichaean Sogdian fragment recovered from Turfan during the early part of the present century. The fragment, published by W. B. Henning in 1936 as an appendix to his "Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch," consists of the bottom portion of a single manuscript leaf (M 528 Fragment II), with approximately five lines surviving on the recto and verso sides. The passage reads as follows:

(R) . . . [lacuna of approximately 14 lines] . . . he appeared before Šaqlōn, and addressed him thusly: "Com-

mand that she give him milk immediately!" Then Šaqlōn sought to make Adam an apostate from the (correct) religion (V) . . . [lacuna of approximately 20 lines] . . . he saw the demons. He then quickly laid the child on the ground, and drew (around him) seven times a very wide circle, and prayed to the gods . . .²³

Despite its damaged condition, it is apparent that this Sogdian fragment once presented a parallel version of Ibn al-Nadīm's "Manichaean" story about Adam and the birth of Seth, who clearly correspond to the "he" and "the child" featured in this fragmentary vignette.²⁴ Yet it is also clear that the Arabic and Sogdian versions are not simply duplicate renditions of an earlier textual archetype. For example, Ibn al-Nadīm's narrative depicts Adam inscribing three magic circles, whereas the Sogdian version speaks of seven such figures. Moreover, the Sogdian fragment preserves a meeting and a verbal confrontation between Adam and Šaqlōn which are absent from the Arabic account, but which seem nevertheless presupposed by that account's internal narrative movement.²⁵ The *Fihrist* text states that Eve wished to kill the newborn child, but does not provide any verbal clues as to

²³ W. B. Henning, "Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch," *Abhandlungen der königlichen preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, no. 10 (Berlin, 1936), 48. This monograph was reprinted in W. B. Henning, *Selected Papers*, Acta Iranica, vols. 14–15 (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 417–557; the quotation here is from p. 462.

²⁴ Note Henning, "Beichtbuch," 101–2, who also recognized the connection of this Sogdian piece to the story found in the *Fihrist*.

²⁵ The use of this designation—Šaqlōn—for the principal anthropogenic archon suggests that the Sogdian version of the tale derives ultimately (via Middle Persian) from a Syriac textual tradition, one linguistically tied to the exegetical genius of Mani himself. The name "(A)šaq̄lūn," a transparent reflex of "Sakla(s)," is used for this entity by the eighth-century Nestorian heresiographer Theodore bar Konai in his authoritative description of Manichaean cosmogonic and anthropogonic teachings. Hence the Sogdian employment of the identical cognomen guarantees the relative antiquity of this Manichaean "rewriting" of Genesis 3–4. Moreover, this evidence also indicates that Ibn al-Nadīm's Genesis material did not originate among Arabophone Manichaeans, but was a translation of earlier, presumably genuine, traditions. Compare Augustine, *De moribus Manichaeorum* 19.73 (quoted by Flügel, *Mani*, 265–66), wherein a laconic summary of the Manichaean version of the Adam and Eve story is sketched. Although narrative details are lacking, it seems probable that Augustine knew, thanks to his own Manichaean tenure, the same traditions that are later recounted by Ibn al-Nadīm.

²⁰ Pahlavi Asnavand-gar. Compare *Zātspram* 22.9–11 (West, *Pahlavi Texts*, 161–62), as well as A. V. W. Jackson, *Zoroaster: The Prophet of Ancient Iran* (reprinted, New York: AMS Press, 1965), 48–49; Gimaret-Monnot, *Shahrestani*, 643 n. 45.

²¹ Shahrestānī, *Kitāb al-milal wa-al-nihāl*, ed. M. S. Kilani, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dar el-Maʿrefah, n.d.), 1.237.7–10. For translations, see also Molé, *Zoroastre*, 159; Gimaret-Monnot, *Shahrestani*, 643; Shaked, "Some Islamic Reports," 60. The episode wherein the *fravahr* of Zoroaster is deposited in a *hōm*-stem and then grafted onto the crown of a tree can be found in *Dēnkard* 7.2.22–28 (West, *Pahlavi Texts*, 23–25); the final portion of the citation (beginning with "Satan approached her . . .") is paralleled in *Zātspram* 14.1–5 (West, *Pahlavi Texts*, 140–41).

²² See especially Reeves, *Heralds*, 126–29.

how she planned to accomplish the murder. The Arabic text then immediately reports: "but Adam seized him and said to Eve, 'I will feed him cow's milk and the fruit of trees!'" This is a rather puzzling reaction to Eve's sinister resolution: in what way does the intended consumption of milk and fruit respond to Eve's assassination plot? However, the Sogdian fragment supplies the narrative events which bridge this suspected lacuna. We can surmise from the latter manuscript that Eve had apparently decided to slay the infant by refusing to nurse it. Adam thereupon makes an appeal to Šaqlōn, requesting that he compel Eve to feed the child. Realizing eventually, however, that this appeal had fallen upon deaf ears, Adam himself took steps to deliver the child from this threat: ". . . Adam seized him and said to Eve, 'I will feed him cow's milk and the fruit of trees!'" Intelligibility is thus restored to this puzzling episode. One might tentatively propose that Ibn al-Nadīm's version of Adam's rescue of Seth is an abbreviated form of what must have been a fuller rendition of the story, evidence for which remains visible in the Sogdian fragment.

Further evidence for the essential reliability of Ibn al-Nadīm's testimony regarding the Manichaean version of Genesis 2–4 is available in a series of Manichaean cosmogonic fragments extant in Middle Persian, also recovered from Turfan earlier in this century, which were published by W. Sundermann in 1973.²⁶ In these fragments (M 4500; M 5566 + M 4501), the names of the biblical characters "Adam" and "Eve" have been replaced with those of Iranian analogues, respectively Gēhmurd and Murdiyānag,²⁷ an adaptation to local cultural traditions that

²⁶ W. Sundermann, *Mittelpersische und parthische kosmogonische und Parabeltexte der Manichäer* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1973), 70–77. Subsequent references to this work are coded as Sundermann, *KuP*. See also Henning, "Beichtbuch," 101, where a small section from these texts (then unpublished) is quoted.

²⁷ Compare the Manichaean story of the creation of the first human couple found in F. C. Andreas and W. B. Henning, "Mitteliranische Manichaica aus Chinesisch-Turkestan I," *Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Kl.*, 10 (Berlin, 1932): 193–201; or Henning, *Selected Papers*, 1: 19–27. Revised editions of the Middle Persian text are found in M. Boyce, *A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian*, Acta Iranica 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 71–74; and M. Hutter, *Manis kosmogonische Šābuhragān-Texte: Edition, Kommentar und literaturgeschichtliche Einordnung der manichäisch-mittelpersischen Handschriften M 98/99 I und M 7980–7984* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 81–99; recent English translations in H.-J. Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road: Gnostic Texts from Central Asia* (San Francisco: Harper-San Francisco, 1993), 232–34; Reeves, *Heralds*, 81–83.

is often manifested in Middle Iranian Manichaean texts.²⁸ Despite the extremely fragmentary condition of these manuscripts, the underlying story is clearly recognizable:

M 4500

Verso column II

1.
2. [] M[u]rdiy[ānag]
3. [] and naked
4. before Gēhmurd []
5. she stood []
6. and was ador[ned with(?)] magical charms
7. and []
8. when Gēhmurd []
9. then he []
10.
11.

M 5566 + M 4501

Recto column I

1.
2. [] in anger. And
3. they came after [him]. Then he
4. immediately (brought) that child
5. forward and placed (him) on the ground
6. and drew seven lines around
7. the child.
8. And he [invoked] over (him)
9. the name of the Living and
10. Holy One. And he spoke thusly:
11. '[] and escaped(?)
12. [] were all
13.

Recto column II

1.
2. [] desirous. Then
3. [] they stood
4. and from afar (his) son
5. [], in order that when
6. Gēhmurd removed him from
7. those lines, then they
8. could kidnap
9. him. []
10. Gēhmurd turned [his] face []

²⁸ This phenomenon is widely recognized by students of eastern Manichaeism. Note S. Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation: Varieties of Religion in Sasanian Iran* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1994), 20: ". . . the Manichaeans . . . used different sets of divine names to render their own story of creation in the various Iranian languages spoken in different regions. . . ."

11. to the Realm of Light.
12. And he spoke thusly:
13. '... you (pl.) ... []

Verso column I

1.
2.
3. and str[ong]
4.
5. [] was made
6. [] also that curse and
7. oa[th] he annulled
8. [] that child milk
9. [gi]ven. And
10. Gēhmurd [bent himself] down
11. and lifted that child
12. up from the ground
13. [and] said . . . ²⁹

This passage provides us with a number of links to those previously outlined above. Here there is clear reference made to Eve's magical seduction of Adam, the demonic threat to the newborn Seth, Adam's rescue of the child by the construction of magic circles (like the Sogdian account, *seven* in number), the invocation of deity, and even the eventual successful nursing of the infant, although the salvific role of the lotus-tree appears to be absent.³⁰ We are thus in possession of three mutually corroborative witnesses that the Manichaean story about Adam, Eve, and Seth features a distinctive mytheme involving the deliverance of the infant Seth from demonic assault by a magically adept Adam.

MANICHAICA ARAMAICA?

Interestingly, there may be a further reference to this

²⁹ Texts in Sundermann, *KuP*, 72–73; translation is that of Reeves, *Heralds*, 85–86. I have excerpted only those portions which directly pertain to the Manichaean story about Adam, Eve, and the early life of Seth.

³⁰ Since the primary role of the lotus is to provide a “mid-rashic” explanation for the naming of the child, it is possible that this particular event was not presented in this version of the story. Nevertheless, the name “Sethel” is attested within Middle Iranian Manichaean literature: see M 1859 apud Sundermann, *KuP*, 77; M 22 apud W. B. Henning, “Ein manichäisches Henochbuch,” *Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, phil.-hist. Kl., 5 (Berlin, 1934): 28 n. 7 (Henning, *Selected Papers*, 1: 342 n. 7); M 101 apud W. B. Henning, “The Book of the Giants,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 11 (1943–46): 58, 63 (Henning, *Selected Papers* 2: 121, 126).

distinctive Manichaean mytheme that has heretofore escaped notice. In 1913, James A. Montgomery published his remarkable *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, a collection of magical incantations inscribed largely on ceramic bowls which had been recovered by archaeological teams working at the site of ancient Nippur, a prominent urban center in lower Mesopotamia.³¹ These inscriptions, produced in at least three eastern Aramaic dialects (labeled by their editor “Rabbinic,” i.e., Talmudic; Syriac; and Mandaic³²), were dated by Montgomery on the basis of their archaeological context and his linguistic analysis as emanating from “a period not later than the sixth or the beginning of the seventh century . . . approximately 600 A.D.”³³

Montgomery's no. 10 is the inscription which should engage our attention. A rather short incantation comprising only seven lines, it was produced as an amulet for Nēwandūk bat Kafni and her family in order to protect her household from hostile infiltration by demonic forces. While the proper names of the clients are Persian, the orthography of the inscription places it among those which Montgomery labeled “rabbinic.” Permutations of the Tetragram are invoked among the protective roster of divine names, as is that of the biblical angel Gabriel. Neither of these “Judaizing” features is especially remarkable within the incantational bowl corpus.³⁴ However, this particular inscription also refers to

³¹ J. A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1913).

³² Montgomery, *AIT*, 26–39.

³³ Montgomery, *AIT*, 105. E. C. D. Hunter suggests that a later date “in the eighth century . . . could also be proposed. . . .”; see her “Combat and Conflict in Incantation Bowls: Studies on Two Aramaic Specimens from Nippur,” in *Studia Aramaica: New Sources and New Approaches*, ed. M. J. Geller, J. C. Greenfield, and M. P. Weitzman, *JSS Supplement* 4 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), 61.

³⁴ Or for that matter within late-antique magical literature in general. Both the Tetragram and biblical angelic names are widely used in incantations emanating from a number of distinct religious communities, not all of which are biblically grounded. As B. A. Levine remarks: “It is clear, in any event, that Jewish and non-Jewish inscriptions of this type do not represent separate phenomena, but rather variations on the same theme What we have is a common idiom and mentality, and little typological distinctiveness.” (“The Language of the Magical Bowls,” apud J. Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*, V: *Later Sasanian Times* [Leiden: Brill, 1970], 343.) See also the observations of S. Wasserstrom, “The Moving Finger Writes: Mughira b. Sa'id's Islamic Gnosis and the Myths of its Rejection,” *History of Religions* 25 (1985–86): 5–11; Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation*, 82–84.

two ostensibly biblical episodes, and it is the first of these invocations that seems particularly intriguing in light of our discussion above:

This amulet is for the health of Nēwandūk bat Kafni, and her husband Kafni bar Šarqōy, and Zadō(y) her son, and her house, and her entire threshold, in the name of YH, YHW, ʔH. . . (2) Sealed and countersealed are this house and this threshold; ʔyhyd hydʔ wyʔhydʔ (?) in the name(s) of LLZRYWN, ŠBYʔL, Gabriel, ʔYLYʔ[L]. . . (3) and Nēwandūk and Zadōy [are sealed] and countersealed with that seal with which the First Adam sealed his son Seth, and he was protected from d[emons], (4) devils, tormentors, and satans.³⁵ Again, sealed and countersealed are bar Šarqōy and his wife Nēwandūk bat (5) Kafni and Zadōy her son, with that seal with which Noah sealed his ark from the waters of the Flood. (6) They shall be expelled, be neutralized, driven out, and removed from them, their house, their lodging, (7) and their bedchamber, from this (very) day and forevermore. Amen, amen!³⁶

Nēwandūk wishes to insure that her household, and especially her son Zadōy, remain free from demonic infestation. Following the recitation of a series of powerful vocables, two pseudoscriptural precedents³⁷ are invoked by the incantation: the magical deliverance of Seth from demonic assault by his father, Adam, and Noah's magical protection of his boat from the destructive deluge-waters. Although neither incident is mentioned in the Bible, various extrabiblical expansions and retellings, or postbiblical commentaries, both would appear to be familiar, even authoritative, examples to cite when seeking to protect an individual (Seth/Zadōy) or a locale (the ark/Nēwandūk's household) from harmful entities.³⁸

Montgomery sought to justify this incantation's cryptic allusion to magically adept forefathers by a vague appeal

³⁵ *bhhwʔ ḥtmʔ dḥtmh ʔdm qdmʔh lšt brh wʔyntyr mn š[ydyn] wmn dywyn wmn mbklyn wmn styn.*

³⁶ Text cited and translated from the edition of Montgomery, *AIT*, 165, with the emendations and corrected readings of J. N. Epstein, "Gloses babylo-araméennes," *Revue des études juives* 73 (1921): 40.

³⁷ "Scriptural" insofar as the names invoked are actual biblical characters, but "pseudo-" in terms of narrative authenticity.

³⁸ However, a similar reference to Noah's magical sealing of the ark is found in a recently published Syriac incantation bowl. The text there reads: *wbḥtmʔ dḥtmh nwḥ lkywlh* "and with the seal with which Noah sealed his ark." See J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993), Bowl 26 (p. 139.11).

to the occasional presence within the bowls' contents of references "to ancient myth and apocrypha."³⁹ As it turns out, his explanation is not far from the truth, at least with regard to the first pseudoscriptural precedent cited by the incantation. The Adamic episode referenced by this incantation is reminiscent of the *Manichaean* story of Adam's deliverance of his son Seth from the clutches of Šaqlōn/al-Šindid's emissaries. Present in *both* narrative contexts (Manichaean and incantational) are Adam, Seth, demonic assassins, and magical praxis on the part of the protoplast—the central components of the Manichaean mytheme. This correspondence of characters and actions can hardly be coincidental. It appears likely, then, that the Aramaic incantation alludes to a specific "ancient apocryphon," namely, the Manichaean edition of the initial chapters of the book of Genesis, which features the story of Adam's rescue of a beleaguered Seth.

Additional support for the Manichaean flavor of this incantational allusion comes from its designation of Adam as "First Adam" (*ʔdm qdmʔh*), i.e., "Adam the Protoplast." While this particular title for the first human being is common within rabbinic literature,⁴⁰ it also was demonstrably popular among Syro-Mesopotamian gnostic tradents of biblical lore: philologically equivalent expressions are employed for the corporeal Adam in the *Cologne Mani Codex*, in Middle Iranian Manichaean texts, and in Mandaean literature.⁴¹ This distinctive nomenclature is necessary within Manichaeism because it is the heir of a dual heavenly/earthly anthropos motif found in certain strands of late antique and medieval Judaism that envisions the production of a "heavenly Adam" or "original Adam" (termed Primal Man by Manichaeism) prior to the manufacture of the "material Adam" (termed "the first human being," or "Adam the Protoplast" by Manichaeism). The use of this particular epithet in conjunction with the name of Adam in our incantation may offer corroborating evidence for the Manichaean provenance of this passage.

The presence of a Manichaean mytheme within the Mesopotamian Aramaic bowl corpus should not prove a surprising discovery. Mesopotamia was the homeland of Manichaeism, and Manichaeism maintained a visible presence there throughout late antiquity well into the

³⁹ Montgomery, *AIT*, 64; see also p. 166. Similarly, Levine, "Language," 373: ". . . expressions of . . . mythological motifs . . . [which] really warrant a more comprehensive treatment than we are giving them here."

⁴⁰ See L. Ginzberg, "Adam Qadmon," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 12 vols. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901–6), 1: 181–83.

⁴¹ Reeves, *Heralds*, 68–69 presents the textual evidence.

‘Abbāsīd period.⁴² Manichaean magical incantations have been recovered from central Asia, and as some have pointed out, these Middle Iranian incantations exhibit a close relationship to the Aramaic incantation bowls produced by various Mesopotamian religious communities in late antiquity.⁴³ To be perfectly frank, it would be occasion for surprise were there *no* indications of Manichaean activity or doctrinal lore in this popular sphere of activity. The conspicuous employment of the so-called “proto-,” “pre-,” or simply “Manichaean” script on a number of these bowls is surely suggestive in itself,⁴⁴ given the proliferation of distinctive scripts for different religious communities within late antique Mesopotamia.⁴⁵ However, as J. N. Epstein has correctly

pointed out, it is the content of the text that is the deciding factor when attempting to determine the religious affiliation of its author.⁴⁶ One might add, moreover, that it is the undisguised use of distinctive phraseology and mythemes that allows one to classify these texts and assign them to a particular religious background.⁴⁷ While Montgomery opined that “the bowls [from Nippur] themselves contain no traces of Manichaeism,”⁴⁸ today we can say that his statement was too categorical. We might even confidently anticipate the identification of further Manichaean elements within the growing corpus of incantation bowls.

⁴² A careful study of Manichaeism within Muslim lands is urgently needed. For now, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* (apud Flügel, *Mani*), 66.8–69.5; 76.7–80.6; Dodge, *Fihrist*, 2.791–94, 801–5; C. Colpe, “Anpassung des Manichäismus an den Islam (Abū ‘Isā al-Warrāq),” *ZDMG* 109 (1959): 82–91; A. Abel, “Les sources arabes sur le manichéisme,” *Annuaire de l’Institut de philologie et d’histoire orientales et slaves (Bruxelles)* 16 (1961–62): 31–73; M. Chokr, *Zandaqa et zindiqs en Islam au second siècle de l’Hégire* (Damas: Institut français de Damas, 1993), 49–56.

⁴³ See W. B. Henning, “Two Manichaean Magical Texts, with an Excursus on the Parthian Ending -ēndēh,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 12 (1947–48): 39–66 (Henning, *Selected Papers*, 2: 273–300); Boyce, *Reader*, 187–92; H.-J. Klimkeit, *Hymnen und Gebete der Religion des Lichts: Iranische und türkische liturgische Texte der Manichäer Zentralasiens* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1989), 198–201, 206–10; idem, *Silk Road*, 158–64; J. D. BeDuhn, “Magic Bowls and Manichaeans,” *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 419–34. An unpublished study by David A. Utz entitled “A Parthian Amulet and Manichaean *Yakṣas*” constructs a strong case for the interrelationship between central Asian and Mesopotamian Manichaean magic. I am grateful to the author for sharing with me a copy of his paper prior to its publication.

⁴⁴ At least twenty-one such bowls have been identified. BeDuhn lists nineteen (“Magical bowls and Manichaeans,” 427 nn. 32–33), to which bowls 16 and 17 of Naveh-Shaked, *Magic Spells* can be added.

⁴⁵ One thinks of Jewish Aramaic, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Palmyrene (pagan), Edessene (also pagan, then Chris-

tian), Nestorian Syriac, Jacobite Syriac, Mandaic, Pahlavi (Mazdaean), Nabataean (pagan Arabic), Kufic Arabic (early Muslim), etc. Note the responsum of Hai Gaon apud L. Ginzberg, *Geonica*, 2 vols. (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1909), 2: 174.11–12: *wlšwn swrsy wktb swrsy šhw ʿkšw byd nšrym bbbl wqwr ʿyn ʿwtw swry ʿny* “the Syrian (i.e., Aramaic) language and scripts are now used by the Christians of Babylonia, and they term it *sūryāni*,” also cited by Epstein, *REJ* 74 (1922): 41; for the Hebrew and Arabic nomenclature employed by Hai Gaon, see T. Nöldeke, “Die Namen der aramäischen Nation und Sprache,” *ZDMG* 25 (1871): 116–17. See further J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985), 17–19; also T. Harviainen, “Pagan Incantations in Aramaic Magic Bowls,” *Studia Aramaica* (n. 33 above), 53: “In the ancient Near East there was a close connection between religion and the alphabetical script system.”

⁴⁶ Epstein, *REJ* 74 (1922): 41. For example, Montgomery no. 4 displays some close parallels with Mandaean expressions and ideology, but it is inscribed with the “Jewish” script! See Epstein, *REJ* 73 (1921): 33; J. C. Greenfield, “Notes on Some Aramaic and Mandaic Magic Bowls,” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 5 (1973): 151. Note also the cautionary remarks of E. C. D. Hunter, “Two Mandaic Incantation Bowls from Nippur,” *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 25 (1994): 608.

⁴⁷ See the important article of Greenfield, *JANESCU* 5 (1973): 149–56, where this point is repeatedly and brilliantly made.

⁴⁸ J. A. Montgomery, “A Magical Bowl-Text and the Original Script of the Manichaeans,” *JAOS* 32 (1912): 438; see also idem, *AIT*, 35.