

The Hymn of the Pearl And Why I Believe in Santa Claus

David White for Topical Seminars
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I once asked a class of fifth-grade students to prepare for a performance of a cover of Alabama's "Santa Claus, I Still Believe in You" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCpfBFmcy7M>) for the Holiday Pageant in which they were to appear. Not surprisingly, these 10-year-olds were very reluctant, at first, to have a part in this idea. They had worked hard to win their idea of themselves as rapidly-growing rational people who no longer had patience for such things as Santa Claus and the like.

But I was ready for them. I challenged them. "What do you mean, you don't believe in Santa Claus? How can anybody not believe in Santa Claus? What are you saying?"

The children were accustomed to me being a bit out of the norm, and they felt comfortable not only in answering back but also in hearing what I had to say. And I told them this story.

When I was 6 years old, my parents' relationship was rapidly heading for divorce. My father had moved out and things were a bit stressful around the house. In the midst of this, I decided I no longer believed in Santa Claus. However, my older brother challenged me and assured me that, although Santa didn't really ride around in a sleigh with reindeer any longer (he assured me that Santa had some time prior traded in this old fashioned method of conveyance and now drove a Volkswagen Beetle), he was still very real.

Given that there seemed little to be lost in doing so and that Santa Claus gave some stability to the uncertain times, I decided I'd hold on to the idea of him for at least one more year. Oh sure, my rationality was set and I didn't *literally* believe, but I enjoyed the humor of Santa driving a Volkswagen Beetle and I enjoyed thinking about a generous spirit visiting the households of children all around the world with a sense of good will. And there seemed little harm in holding onto this idea the next year, and the next, and on and on until I realized that my belief in this concept had become a permanent part of who I am.

As I shared this story with my students, I could see their faces lighting up a bit (even those whose families didn't celebrate Christmas, but who had experienced Santa Claus throughout their lives in stores, on TV, and such) and, in short order, they were willing to take a chance on the song. In fact, during the weeks leading up to the pageant, several shared with me that our doing this song had generated some dinner time discussions in their homes and that they had held the line on believing in Santa Claus, at least in the spirit if not in the flesh.

Recently, I was reviewing the Hymn of the Pearl:

<http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/The%20Hymn%20of%20the%20Pearl.pdf>

Or, the following- a translation by Bentley Layton which, while less poetic, is likely a more accurate translation: See Attachment B

For a historical explanation of this piece see Attachment A:

I realized that much of the allegory I was using in my presentation to those students all those years ago is reflected in the concepts embedded in this work.

What is this pearl after which the hero is sent? Clearly the kingdom described has abounding wealth, so what purpose would be served by the acquisition of such a pearl? The parents and kingdom generally understand that there is great risk in sending the child on this mission, as they outfit him with treasures and arm him for protection (“They girt me with Adamant [also] That hath power to cut even iron” (II) is translated by Bentley Layton as “And they armed me with steel”). What is this danger?

And why is the pearl kept by a serpent or dragon in Egypt? We learn from the experiences of the hero that those in Egypt are a danger to him, in that he feels the need to disguise himself and his true intentions. And, in fact, when the Egyptians do learn that he is not from their land, they overcome his defenses with cunning and treachery. Why are these details included, why are they important to the story?

I believe that my answers, as well as the key to the story, might also apply to my same deeply-seated need to believe in Santa Claus. To explain this, it is important that the reader have at least a rudimentary idea of Christian Gnostic mysticism, from which the Hymn is derived.

The Hymn of the Pearl is not specifically Christian Gnostic in that it doesn’t address the cosmology for which the Christian Gnostic tradition is known (Bentley Layton, in the article attached above, refers to the Hymn as being “Hellenistic”). But it does share with Gnosticism the idea of seeking for a lost light (in the case of the Hymn, a pearl). There is a relatively simple explanation of this belief in Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosticism>). The relevant passage in this article (note, the article conflates Manichaeism with Gnosticism) is:

***Radical dualism or absolute dualism**, posits two co-equal divine forces. Manichaeism conceives of two previously coexistent realms of light and darkness that become embroiled in conflict, owing to the chaotic actions of the latter. Subsequently, certain elements of the light became entrapped within darkness; the purpose of material creation is to enact the slow process of extraction of these individual elements, at the end of which the kingdom of light will prevail over darkness. [Manicheanism](#) inherit this dualistic mythology from [Zurvanist Zoroastrianism](#), in which the eternal spirit [Ahura Mazda](#) is opposed by his antithesis, [Angra Mainyu](#); the two are engaged in a cosmic struggle, the conclusion of which will likewise see Ahura Mazda triumphant.*

There are echoes of this belief as well in the Jewish mystic tradition of Kabbalah. When the vessels of the Sefirot are shattered (according to God’s plan), shards of holiness are spread throughout creation and it is part of man’s purpose to gather these up and elevate them to their original level. See: <http://www.breslov.org/breslov-kabbalah-the-shattering-of-the-vessels/>

These lights, while referred to in a variety of ways, are metaphysically ill-defined in these traditions. What are these lights? What is the pearl?

From my experiences with Santa Claus, I'm wondering if the sense of magic and wonder that is such a vital part of our early childhood might just be the light, the pearl, the thing of great value that is symbolically lost in our embrace of the world of the mundane. The child-like wonder, the ability to experience joy unbounded, is, most certainly, something of great value. But, as we grow intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally, as we become increasingly independent of our parents and traditions, as we seek the worldly strength to keep fear and vulnerability at bay, we more and more accept the whisperings of the cynical, the physical, and the temporal.

But this pearl is essential to our humanity. Our parents, whether these be those directly imposed with caring for us or whether these be they who came before and whose memory lives on in our consciousness, urge us to reclaim this pearl. Their wisdom demands that we set out on our own, as the pearl's value may only hold if it be claimed, not if it is given. That our life may have meaning beyond simple survival, we are sent to seek our purpose, to understand our destiny, and, most importantly, to seek our joy.

We are armed and imbued with provisions by our parents to prepare for the journey. We are accompanied by Couriers- the teachers, mentors, and other guides who can share of their wisdom to help us on our way. But, in time, our guides must also bid us farewell as we journey into the world to our task before the Serpent independently.

In time, even as we have left our guides behind as we enter Egypt- the land of profane materialism and human-based reality- we yet can recognize the kinsman (Layton translates this as the Cousin), the kindred spirit, in others who are also in attendance in the guise of Egyptian reality yet who maintain the wonder of the kingdom.

We enter Egypt in disguise as the hero of the Hymn of the Pearl does. We believe the disguise to be essential, as we fear that to express our true nature would seem to make us vulnerable to the unknown terrors that inhabit the outer world.

We intend to maintain our integrity but, in our attempt to meet the cunning of the profane, we extend our disguise to the extent that we accept the rewards, the food, of the adversary. Thus we stumble and are overcome by the sleep of false reality when we partake of the physical offerings of the rational. Once asleep, the light of our reality and the purpose of our quest is forgotten, and we are lost.

(An additional work pseudographically attributed to St. Thomas and found most easily today in Christian Gnostic traditions- The Gospel of Thomas: <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/gthlamb.html> - picks up the symbolism of eating with regard to that which we have eaten overcoming us. The relevant passage number 7:

Jesus said, "Blessed is the lion which becomes man when consumed by man; and cursed is the man whom the lion consumes, and the lion becomes man."

In the interest of transparency, I need to report that scholars have interpreted this passage somewhat differently, but not to the point of undermining the credence of my idea. See: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/thomas/gospelthomas7.html>. However, Funk and Hoover as well as Meyer all reflect on the idea of the lion representing "passion." The passion reflected upon could well be the mundane world of rationality and matter.)

Our parents, our distant ancestors, and/or our genetic memories call to us in our slumber, reminding us of our quest. We are awakened to the child who lives, forever, within each of us. And, once reminded of our childhood selves, we may continue with our quest. We sooth the dragon of chaos and are away again. With the Pearl, we return to our childhood selves, clothed in the raiment of our birthright, and live according to our destiny.

I see this as an allegory for our introduction to the rational in our upbringing and our subsequent embrace of this at the expense of the poetic sense of wonder that imbues our early childhood. We are sent into the world by our parents, not to taste of the food therein and become drowsy, but to seek a pearl which we are to acquire and return to our home. The journey holds great risk, as we see in the Hymn. But, if we may overcome the limitations of the mundane, if we may be called to awaken to remember our quest, we may yet discover and acquire the pearl. And, once we do so, we are returned to our true selves, we are given back the clothing, the trappings of our true self- those of our childhood, and live according to the promise of the joy of our childhood.

Plato quotes Socrates in saying “.....wonder is the only beginning of philosophy” (Theaetetus, 155 d4).
<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/theatu.html>

Walt Whitman reflects on the relationship of wonder to rational thought in “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer:

*When I heard the learn’d astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander’d off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look’d up in perfect silence at the stars.*

Which takes me back to my thoughts on Santa Claus. As I am a product of the dominant culture in my home country, Santa Claus has been a ubiquitous presence during the autumn and early winter months throughout my life. Generally, he symbolizes generosity, humor, good will, and boundless flows of magic and mystery.

Cultural and religious interests clash over the origins of the winter festival of gift-giving and festivities in the face of winter’s violence. Politicians and the television networks that give them credence trade barbs on the meaning of holiday greetings. Commercial interests hijack the spirit of generosity through the hawking of their wares to meet the needs of the gift-giving traditions of the season.

But in American culture, Santa Claus, even when used in materialistic ventures, maintains the symbolism of joy and generosity. I believe that the enduring goodness of his character is why his image is used in such a variety of ways. And his spirit transcends even the crassest abuse of his symbolism.

The meaning of the Hymn of the Pearl, as I interpret it, is that there dwells within each human spirit a light of goodness and wonder which endures in spite of our embrace of the physical, of the mundane, of the mortality of the human condition. The magic that held the seat of our sense of wonder yet remains, even if it is covered over and hidden by our cynicism in the face of the disappointments we face in our daily interaction with the challenges of the physical world. And, when we are reminded of our purpose, of our need to continue our quest for the pearl, we may yet dress ourselves in the raiment of the promise of our childhood. We may yet dwell again in the splendor that is our true selves.

In my world, Santa Claus is he who calls to me in my slumber, reminding me to return to my childhood purpose, to claim the pearl of childhood wonder and joy, and to do so with hope, with generosity, and with the understanding that the answers might well live within.

“Happy Christmas to all and to all a good night!”

Additional Notes

Some reference materials on Santa Claus that I found fun to read:

<http://www.stnicholascenter.org/pages/origin-of-santa/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinterklaas>

And, of course:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/43171>

A thought on the interpretation of the Serpent or Dragon:

It is unclear what the Serpent or Dragon represents in this Hymn. It may represent chaos, in keeping with Mesopotamian mythological symbolism. This would work in keeping with my thread of thought. Might the sense of wonder be carefully guarded and need liberation from chaos? The hero is waiting for the dragon to slumber so that he may snatch the pearl unmolested. Allowing chaos to subside allows us to embrace our sense of wonder with less risk.

Given that the Serpent is left rather undefined in the Hymn, and that the hero doesn't really confront it straight on, I recognize that I am stretching in my interpretation here. However, the Hymn does indicate that the Serpent is a creature best approached in stealth and cunning rather than in direct confrontation, maintaining some of my interpretation above.

Although I stand at risk of belaboring a point, it cannot escape our notice that slumber is referred to both in the loss of the sense of purpose of the hero once having eaten of the profane and in the awaited sleep of the Serpent. However we are to interpret the symbolism of the Serpent, the Hero may slip away with the Pearl once the Serpent falls into the same state of forgetful unconsciousness that he, the Hero, had experienced.

Attachment A

THE HYMN OF THE PEARL Or THE HYMN OF JUDE THOMAS THE APOSTLE IN THE COUNTRY OF THE INDIANS IN THE GREEK VERSION

(HPrl)

The Hymn of the Pearl ("The Hymn of the Soul") or The Hymn of Jude Thomas the Apostle in the Country of the Indians presents a Hellenistic myth of the human soul's entry into bodily incarnation and its eventual disengagement from the body. The mythic tale of salvation is recounted by the protagonist (the soul) in the form of an autobiographical reminiscence. The myth does not directly demand a religious response from the reader, for it is a general description of salvation. Nevertheless, quoted within the story (verses 41-48) is a classic homiletic appeal for conversion, phrased in the traditional language of sleep and awakening. This has been identified as a special type of material (often loosely termed the "gnostic call"), which in fact transcends narrow sectarian and philosophical boundaries.

For the most part, the myth of salvation is not expressed literally in HPrl but, rather, is hidden behind a figurative fairy tale or folktale. To perceive the myth, an ancient reader would have needed to reinterpret the tale allegorically. The process of reinterpretation begins within the text of HPrl itself (verses 76-78, 88, 98); the prince's garment, given to him in reward for conquering the dragon of Egypt, is equated with self-acquaintance (gnosis of the self); by putting on the garment the prince knows himself and "arises" into the realm of peace. Starting from this clue, an ancient reader could work back through the story at another level, retelling it as an account or model of the quest for self knowledge and salvation. It must be emphasized that, except for the one explicit clue, the text itself provided ancient readers no more than a figurative representation of this hidden message. Readers had to supply or construct the rest of the deeper interpretation.

The titles The Hymn of the Pearl and The Hymn of the Soul, by which the present work is generally known, are the creation of modern scholarship. Neither one is found in any ancient manuscript of the work.

Both popular belief and certain kinds of academic philosophy (especially Platonism and Pythagoreanism) accepted that the soul had its "origin" in a nonphysical "realm" from which it "had come"; that its incarnation in a material body hindered it from contemplating the good or god, and was generally harmful; that it might be saved from this unfortunate fate, e.g. by acquiring the self-knowledge taught by wisdom or philosophy; and that the result might be an existence free of the body's influence. The problem of why in the first place the soul had ever "fallen" into existence in a body was a topic of philosophical discussion. The outlines of this commonplace myth of the soul are parallel to the story line of HPrl. They also agree with the mythic elements in the Gospel of Thomas (GTh) and The Book of Thomas the Contender Writing to the Perfect (BTh) (the latter two works are overtly Christian while HPrl, as a figurative text, has no place to mention the Christian savior as such). The parallelism can be expressed as follows.

Story line

The (1) king of (2) the East (Parthia) sends (3) a royal prince by way of (4) the satrapy of Mesene ("Meson") to (5) Egypt, in order to (6) get a precious pearl. The prince (7) is poisoned and made intoxicated by (8) Egyptians. But he (9) is awakened by (10) a message from the king. He (11) takes the pearl and (12) returns to the East, where he puts on (13) a robe of gnosis and (14) ascends to the king's palace, (15) entering the realm of peace.

Allegorical meaning (myth). The (1) first principle of (2) the spiritual realm providentially causes (3) the individual soul to descend past (4) the heavenly bodies (?) into (5) incarnate life in a material body, in order to (6) be educated (get salvation). The soul (7) becomes unconscious and inert because of (8) matter. But it (9) disengages itself in response to (10) the savior or message of philosophy (wisdom). It (11) becomes acquainted with itself and its career and (12) is metaphysically reunited with (13) itself (i.e, becomes integral) and with (14) the first principle, (15) gaining true repose.

Deduction of this myth from the story line of HPrl is confirmed by comparison of HPrl with other works of Thomas scripture. The results of such a comparison describe a specifically Edessene interpretation of HPrl within the school of St. Thomas. But it remains possible that HPrl was originally composed elsewhere and that this interpretation was historically secondary; cf. below "Literary background." The total lack of any specifically Christian or Jewish details or characters also raises the possibility that HPrl was first written for a non-Christian readership.

Only specific historical information about the circumstances of its composition could clarify these questions. In the absence of such information it is not surprising that modern scholars have substantially disagreed on the interpretation of HPrl. Given the importance of the myth for one's life and conduct, why is the philosophical sense of the text not stated more explicitly? No definite answer to such a question is possible, but three factors are worth noting. First, HPrl is formally a work of art, not philosophy; a fairy tale and not a philosophical myth. Second, as a piece of religious art it may have had the secondary function of religious propaganda, that is, to attract interested external readers into a particular school of religious thought by its artistry). Third, by incorporating within the text a clue to a parallel allegorical reading, HPrl engages the reader in a lesson in interpretation; this would not be possible if the philosophical meaning were stated explicitly and completely. The other two works included in Part Four also insist on the importance of textual interpretation in the acquisition of salvation; an act of textual interpretation on the part of the believer seems to be an integral part of the idea of salvation in the school of St. Thomas.

Literary background The author of HPrl is unknown." Since the text is only attested as a part of The Acts of Thomas (probably written in Edessa, A.D. ca. 200-25) any deductions about the date and place of composition of HPrl must rest upon two prior questions: (a) whether HPrl was composed by the author of The Acts of Thomas; (b) whether HPrl presupposes a model of divine twinship based on the name Didymus Jude Thomas. To the first of these questions (a) most scholars have answered no; both its style (mainly in the Syriac) and its content suggest that HPrl was composed independent of The Acts of Thomas and was either incorporated in the Acts by their author or interpolated in them by a subsequent editor. The second question (b) is harder to answer. If HPrl was composed in Edessa, comparison of its structure with the mythic background of GTh and BTh should indicate the original sense of HPrl. In such a case, HPrl could have provided 'the model, even if it were a non-Christian one, on which the Christian Thomas tradition was based; alternatively, HPrl might have presupposed the Thomas tradition and might represent an apologetic popularization of that tradition in the form of a folktale. The crucial factor here is the order in which the three works HPrl, GTh, and BTh-were composed, But if HPrl was not composed in Edessa, its original meaning might have been something quite different from the theology

of divine twinship; the allegorical obscurity of the text would completely hide any such meaning unless further information could be obtained about the religious context in which the text originally was read. In such a case HPrI would have been imported to Edessa and secondarily adopted by the school of St. Thomas for its own purposes.

The date of composition is presumably sometime during the Parthian dynasty of Persia (247 B.C.-A.D. 224), since Parthia is mentioned by name and favorably (HPrI 38). If the work was composed in Edessa, it would have been composed during the Parthian control of that city, which ended in A.D. 165. The original language of composition is a matter of debate- Greek, Syriac, or a simultaneous publication in both languages. The Greek version, which is translated here, is in an unclassical and often obscure prose style, reflecting perhaps the taste of the late-Hellenistic period with some regional peculiarity due to the bilingualism of Edessa. HPrI is, in the words of the Greek Acts of Thomas, a "hymn" (psalmos), implying that it is designed to be sung, perhaps with instrumental accompaniment. It has the strophic form typical of Semitic poetry (neither the Greek version nor the Syriac is written in strictly controlled meter or with a fixed number of syllables per unit, nor is either version rhymed). In narrative structure HPrI resembles a classic folktale or fairy tale; in this sense, its genre is characteristic of oral, popular literature. The allegorical motif of the pearl (cf. Mt 13:45-46, GTh 76) was widely used not only by Mesopotamian Christian authors, but also in ancient world literature in general..

Mythic characters

Inhabitants of the East

The KING OF KINGS, the Great King, the prince's father His wife Other KINGS (satraps) and royal officials of the Parthian empire The PRINCE, son of the King of Kings A noble boy of high rank, who accompanies him in Egypt. Called BROTHER and COUSIN. Two GUIDES along the road to Egypt Two TREASURERS who bring the garment to the prince A FEMALE BEING who guides the prince back from Egypt to the East.

Intermediates

The MOSANI, inhabitants of Meson (Maison)

Inhabitants of Egypt

The EGYPTIANS, also called BABYLONIANS The TYRANNICAL DEMONS of the Egyptian Labyrinth. A ravenous DRAGON that guards the pearl. The KING OF EGYPT, perhaps identical with the dragon

Text

In its known form, HPrI is part of a much larger work, The Acts of Thomas, which recounts the wanderings and adventures of an ascetic preacher Didymus Jude Thomas and the miracles he performed with the aid of his twin brother Jesus. The Acts of Thomas (including HPrI) exist in both Greek and Syriac. The Acts consists of a series of narrative episodes with which poetry and prayers have been amalgamated; but the manuscripts of the Acts (six Syriac, seventy-five Greek) substantially differ as to which episodes, poems, and prayers they include, for throughout its history the text was constantly being reshaped by successive ancient editors. Thus it happens that only one Greek manuscript (of the eleventh century A.D.) and only one Syriac (A.D. 936) contain HPrI: these two manuscripts are the only surviving evidence for the text, except for an eleventh-century epitome of the Greek version made by Nicephoras, Archbishop of Thessalonica. Scholarship is not agreed on whether HPrI was an original part of the Acts or a secondary addition. Nor is there agreement on whether the Syriac was translated from the Greek or vice versa. Furthermore, the wording of the two versions differs enough to show that they are witnesses of two distinct ancient editions of the text. The Greek is translated here, since it was specifically the Greek edition that was known in the Mediterranean world. Since the single surviving

Greek manuscript contains substantial errors of copying and has many obscure turns of phrase, the wording of the Syriac edition sometimes had to be consulted. Line numbers given below correspond to the customary Syriac numbering; HPri also counts as paragraphs 108-13 of the Greek Acts of Thomas. The translation below [Layton's] is based on Bonnet's critical edition of the Greek (in which the Syriac manuscript and Nicetas's epitome are also collated), but with alterations: M. Bonnet, *Acta Philippi et Acta Thomae Accedunt Acta Barnabae* (*Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, eds. R. Lipsius, M. Bonnet, II/2; Leipzig: Mendelssohn, 1903; reprinted, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1959), 219-24.

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Attachment B

THE HYMN OF JUDE THOMAS THE APOSTLE IN THE COUNTRY OF THE INDIANS

When I was an infant too young to talk, in my father's palace,
Reposing in the wealth and luxury of those who nourished me,
My parents equipped me with supplies and sent me out from the East, our country, on a mission.
From the wealth of their treasuries' they gave me a great cargo,"
Which was light, so that I could carry it by myself
The cargo was gold from the high country," silver plate of the great treasuries,
Emerald jewels of India, and agates of Kosan;
And they armed me with steel.
They took away from me" the jewel-studded garment shot with gold
That they had made out of love for me
And the robe' of yellow color (tailored) to my size)
But they made an agreement with me, Impressed it on" my mind, (so that) I might (not)' forget it, and
said,
"If you go down to Egypt and bring from there the one pearl,
"Which resides there near the ravenous'» dragon,"
"You shall put (back) on that jewel-studded garment and the robe, which you like;
"And you shall be a herald for our kingdom, along with your well-remembered Brother."

So I started out from the East, on a hard and frightening road, accompanied by two guides;
For I was unused to traveling on it.
I passed the borders of the Mosani,' where there is the inn of the Eastern traveling merchants;
And reached the land of the Babylonians.
Since I had entered Egypt the guides departed who had traveled with me,
And I rushed directly to the dragon and camped near its den,
Lying in wait for it to grow drowsy and fall asleep, so that I might make away with the pearl.
Being on my own, I put on a disguise and (would have) seemed alien even to my own people.
But there I saw a Cousins of mine from the East-a free person,
Gracious, handsome, and young, a child of members of court:
Who came and kept me company,
And whom I made my friend and partner in my travels; had as a constant companion;
And exhorted to guard against the Egyptians and against intercourse with their impurities.
So I put on their style of dress: so that I might not look like one who was foreign
And (had come) from abroad to get the pearl,
Lest the Egyptians arouse the dragon against me.
But somehow they learned that I was not from their land
They gave me a mixture of cunning and treachery, and I tasted their food.
I did not (any longer) recognize that I was a child of the (Great) King, but rather acted as servant to their
king.
And I even came to the pearl for which my parents had sent me on the mission
But sank into deep sleep under the heaviness of their food.

Now, my parents also noticed me suffering these things, and they suffered over me.
So a proclamation was heralded in our kingdom, that all should present themselves at our court.
And next the kings of Parthia, those in office, and the leaders of the East

Decided that in my case I should not be left in Egypt.
So, too, the members of court wrote to me declaring as follows:
"From. your father the King of Kings," your mother who rules the East,
"And their Brothers: who are second' after them
"To our child in Egypt. Peace! "Arise, and become sober out of (your) sleep.
"Listen to the words written in this letter.
"Remember that you are a child of kings.
"You have fallen under a servile yoke.
"Call to mind your garment shot with gold.
"Call to mind the pearl for which you were sent on the mission to Egypt.
"Your name has been called (to) the book of life,
"Along with that of your Brother! whom you have taken to yourself, in our kingdom."
So the king confirmed- it, as an ambassador,
Because of (the threat of) the Babylonian children- and the tyrannical demons of the Labyrinth
But for my part I gave a start when I perceived its voice.
And I took it up and kissed it, and I read.
But what was written there concerned that which was engraved in my heart.
And on the spot I remembered that I was a child of kings and that my people demanded my freedom
I also remembered the pearl for which I had been sent on the mission to Egypt,
And the fact that I had been coming against the fearsome dragon for booty.

And I subdued it by calling out my father's name
And I snatched the pearl, and turned to carry it away to my parents.
And I took off the dirty clothing- and left it behind in their land.
Immediately, I went straight (to) the road leading to the light of our Eastern home.
And while on the road I found a female being, who lifted me - up.
So she got me up from sleep, giving as it were an oracle by (her) voice, with which she guided me to the light;
Indeed, at times I had the royal garment of silk before my eyes
And with familial love leading me and drawing me on,
I passed by the Labyrinth,
And leaving Babylon behind, on the left
I reached Meson, which is a great coast,
But I could not recall my splendor;
For, it was while I was still a boy and quite young that I had left it behind in my father's palace.
But when suddenly I saw my garment reflected as in a mirror,
I perceived in it my whole self as well,
And through it I recognized and saw myself.
For, though we derived from one and the same we were partially divided; and then again we were one,
with a single form.
Nay, also the treasurers who had brought the garment
I saw as two beings, but there existed a single form in both,
One single royal token consisting of two halves.
And they had my money and wealth in their hands, and gave me my reward:
The fine garment of bright colors,
Which was embroidered with gold, precious stones, and pearls to give a suitable impression.
It was clasped at the collar,
And the image of the King of Kings was (woven) all through it;

Stones of lapis lazuli had been agreeably fixed to the collar.
And I saw, in turn, that impulses" of acquaintance (gnosis) were rippling throughout it,
And that it was ready to utter discourse.
Then I heard it speaking:
"It is I who belong to the one who is stronger than all human beings and for whose sake I was designed"
by the father himself. "
And for my part, I took note of my mature age.
And all the royal impulses" reposed on me, as its energy increased: Thrust out by that being's hand, it
hastened to the one who was receiving it
And a longing aroused me to rush and meet that being and to receive it.
Spread out ... of colors ... I was brought back,' And I completely clothed myself in my superior royal robe
Return to the royal realm Once I had put it on, I arose into the realm of peace belonging to reverential
awe.
And I bowed my head and prostrated myself before the splendor of the father who had sent it to me.
For, it was I who had 'done his commands,
And likewise it was he who had kept the promise.
And I mingled at the doors of his archaic royal building.
He took delight in me, and received me with him in the palace.
And all his subjects were singing hymns with reverent voices. He suffered me also to be ushered in to
the King's Court in his company:
So that with my gifts and the pearl I might make an appearance before the king himself.