

“The HYMN of the PEARL”

This typed copy has additions in brackets by me, and, for ease of reading, is slightly changed from its printed source, which is: Hdgar Hennecki (Edited by Wilhelm Schneemelcher, English translation edited by R. McL. Wilson), *New Testament Apocrypha, Writings Relating to the Apostles; Apocalypses and Related Subjects*, Vol. 2, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, p. 498-504.

- 1      When I was a little child  
        And dwelt in my kingdom, the house of my father,
- 2      And enjoyed the wealth and the luxuries  
        Of those who brought me up,
- 3      From the East, our homeland,  
                                [the “east” is the place from which the sun rises. It is heaven.]  
        My parents provisioned and sent me;
- 4      And from the wealth of our treasury  
        They had already bound up for me a load.
- 5      Great it was, but so light  
        That I could carry it alone:
- 6      Gold from Beth 'Ellaye  
        And silver from great Gazak
- 7      And chalcedonies of India  
        And opals of the realm of Kushan.
- 8      And they girded me with adamant,  
        Which crushes iron.  
                                [some scholars suggest adamant may be diamond]
- 9      And they took off from me the splendid robe  
        Which in their love they had wrought for me,
- 10     And the purple toga,  
        Which was woven to the measure of my stature,  
                                [That it was woven to fit him becomes important later on]
- 11     And they made with me a covenant

And wrote it in my heart, that I might not forget:

[That the covenant is written in his heart is also important later]

12 "If thou go down to Egypt  
And bring the one pearl

[Many scholars believe the pearl is the boy himself ]

13 Which is in the midst of the sea,  
In the abode of the loud-breathing Serpent,

[some translations say "dragon." ]

14 Thou shalt put on again thy splendid robe  
And thy toga which lies over it,

15 And with thy brother, our next in rank,  
Thou shalt be heir in our kingdom."

16 I quitted the East and went down,  
Led by two couriers,

17 For the way was dangerous and difficult  
And I was very young to travel it.

18 I passed over the borders of Mesene,  
The meeting-place of the merchants of the East,

19 And reached the land of Babel,  
And entered in to the walls of Sarburg.

20 I went down into Egypt  
And my companions parted from me.

21 I went straight to the serpent,  
Near by his abode I stayed,

22 Until lie should slumber and sleep,  
That I might take my pearl from him.

23 And since I was all alone  
I was a stranger to my companions of my hostelry.

[note: he was all alone, not because there were no other people,  
but because he was not like the other people]

24 But one of my race I saw there,  
A nobleman out of the East,

- 25 A youth fair and lovable,  
26 An anointed one,  
And he came and attached himself to me  
27 And I made him my intimate friend,  
My companion to whom I communicated my business.  
28 We warned each other against the Egyptians  
And against consorting with the unclean.  
29 But I clothed myself in garments like theirs,  
That they might not suspect that I was come from without  
30 To take the pearl,  
And so might waken the serpent against me.  
31 But from some cause or other  
They perceived that I was not their countryman,  
32 And they dealt with me treacherously  
And gave me to eat of their food.  
33 And I forgot that I was a king's son  
And served their king.  
34 And I forgot the pearl  
For which my parents had sent me.  
35 And because of the heaviness of their food  
I fell into a deep sleep.  
36 And all this that befell me  
My parents observed and were grieved for me.  
37 And a proclamation was published in our kingdom  
That all should come to our gate,  
38 The kings and chieftains of Parthia  
And all the great ones of the East.  
39 They made a resolve concerning me,  
That I should not be left in Egypt,  
40 And they wrote to me a letter And every noble

Set his name thereto:

- 41 "From thy father, the king of kings,  
And thy mother, the mistress of the East,
- 42 And from thy brother, our other son,  
To thee, our son in Egypt, greeting!
- 43 Awake and rise up from thy sleep,  
[You have heard those words before]  
And hearken to the words of our letter.
- 44 Remember that thou art a son of kings.  
See the slavery -- Him whom thou dost serve!
- 45 Remember the pearl  
For which thou didst journey into Egypt
- 46 Remember thy splendid robe,  
And think of thy glorious toga,
- 47 That thou mayest put them on and deck thyself therewith,  
That thy name may be read in the book of the heroes
- 48 And thou with thy brother, our crown prince,  
Be heir in our kingdom."
- 49 And the letter was a letter  
Which the king had sealed with his right hand
- 50 Against the wicked, the people of Babel  
And the rebellious demons of Sarburg.
- 51 It [the letter, which is the endowment] flew in the form of an eagle,  
The king of all birds,
- 52 It flew and alighted beside me  
And became all speech.
- 53 At its voice and the sound of its rustling  
I awoke and stood up from my sleep, [note those words]
- 54 I took it and kissed it,  
Broke its seal and read.

- 55 And even as it was engraven in my heart  
Were the words of my letter written.  
[He knew it was true because it was the same as the covenant  
which had been written on his heart in the premortal existence.]
- 56 I remembered that I was a son of kings  
And my noble birth asserted itself.
- 57 I remembered the pearl  
For which I was sent to Egypt,
- 58 And I began to cast a spell  
On the terrible loud-breathing serpent.
- 59 I brought him to slumber and sleep  
By naming my father's name over him,
- 60 And the name of our next in rank  
And of my mother, the queen of the East.
- 61 And I snatched away the pearl  
And turned about, to go to my father's house.
- 62 And their dirty and unclean garment  
I took off and left in their land,
- 63 And directed my way that I might come  
To the light of our homeland, the East.
- 64 And my letter, my awakener,  
I found before me on the way;
- 65 As with its voice it had awakened me,  
So it led me further with its light,
- 66 Written on Chinese tissue with ruddle,  
[fine paper with gold lettering]  
Gleaming before me with its aspect
- 67 And with its voice and its guidance  
Encouraging me to speed,
- 68 And drawing me with its love.
- 69 I went forth, passed through Sarburg,

Left Babel on my left hand

70 And came to the great city  
Mesene, The haven of the merchants,

71 Which lies on the shore of the sea.

72 And my splendid robe which I had taken off,  
And my toga with which it was wrapped about,

73 From the heights of Hyrcania  
My parents sent thither

74 By the hand of their treasurers,  
Who for their faithfulness were trusted therewith.

75 Indeed I remembered no more its dignity,  
For I had left it in my childhood in my father's house,

76 But suddenly, when I saw it over against me,  
The splendid robe became like me, as my reflection in a mirror;

77 I saw it wholly in me,  
And in it I saw myself quite apart from myself,

78 So that we were two in distinction  
And again one in a single form.

[That is, he sees himself as two people in one. There is the person who had the experiences on the earth, and the person of glory who he was, is, and will be. These two come together to make the one person which is his total Self. ]

79 And the treasurers too  
Who had brought it to me, I saw in like manner,

80 That they were two of a single form,  
For one sign of the king was impressed upon them,

81 [There is a tear in the original manuscript here so it cannot be read.  
Apparently it says, referring to the king,]  
He who restored to me through them  
my pledge [covenant] and my riches,

82 My splendid robe adorned  
Gleaming in glorious colours,

- 83 With gold and beryls,  
Chalcedonies and opals,
- 84 And sardonyxes of varied colour,  
This also made ready in its grandeur,
- 85 And with stones of adamant  
Were all its seams fastened.
- 86 And the likeness of the king of kings  
Was completely embroidered all over it  
[That is important. The rob (the inner garment) had symbols on it  
which represented the boy's being like God.]
- 87 And like stones of sapphire again in its  
Grandeur resplendent with manifold hues.
- 88 And again I saw that all over it  
The motions of knowledge were Stirring.
- 89 And I saw too  
That it was preparing as for speech.
- 90 I heard the sound of its songs  
Which it whispered at its descent:
- 91 "I belong to the most valiant servant,  
For whom they reared me before my father,
- 92 And I perceived also in myself  
That my stature grew according to his labours."  
[While the boy was wallowing in the muck of this world, the robe  
had to grow so it would still be able to fit the boy when he returned.  
His experiences were the source of this growth.]
- 93 And with its royal movements  
It poured itself entirely toward me,
- 94 And in the hands of its bringers  
It hastened, that I might take it;
- 95 And my love also spurred me  
To run to meet it and receive it,
- 96 And I stretched out and took it.

With the beauty of its colours I adorned myself.

- 97 And my toga of brilliant colours  
I drew completely over myself.
- 98 I clothed myself with it and mounted up  
To the gate of greeting and homage.
- 99 I bowed my head and worshipped  
The splendour of the father  
who had sent the robe to me,
- 100 Whose commands I had accomplished,  
As he also had done what he promised.
- 101 And at the gate of his satraps  
I mingled among his great ones.
- 102 For he rejoiced over me and received me,  
And I was with him in his kingdom.
- 103 And with the sound of the organ  
All his servants praise him.
- 104 And he promised me that to the gate  
Of the king of kings I should journey with him again
- 105 And with my gift and my pearl  
With him appear before our king.