The specialist in ancient philosophy generally has something to say of relevance to aspects of early Christian philosophy. Even when he has nothing to say, that very fact is of considerable use for those evaluating the originality or Judaic debts of the Christian faith. When it comes to concept of salvation I am not sure whether I have much of relevance to say or not, and such indecision threatens to be rather unhelpful.

The initial problem is the scope of the term salvation: are we to take it in the general sense of the Greek equivalent *soteria*, as meaning any state of being saved, or are we to impose qualifications upon the manner of saving, the identity of the saver, and the situation or threats that one is being saved from? Shall we demand, for instance, that salvation shall be a religious process, that the saver should be a God or other being of divine or semi-divine status, and that one should be saved from the evils of this world (be they sins or circumstances)? Might one also require that salvation applies only where there are others who will not be saved: where many are called but few chosen, or in the words of Plato's *Phaedo* (69c-d): 'Many bear the narthex, but the bacchae are few.'

Platonism, in its more religious and Pythagorizing moods, might have been expected to yield something akin to a concept of salvation, and the *Phaedo* in particular is suggesting that philosophy saves the soul from the impediments and impurities of the physical world, affording them eternal enjoyment of a privileged position in the other world (114b-e). Philosophy holds similar rewards in the *Phaedrus* too (249a). But the language of salvation is not present, and there is no agent of salvation, neither God nor man, other than philosophy herself.

Absence of agents of salvation is one of the principal problems for anybody searching for parallels between Greek philosophy and Christian theology. The very rationality of God signified to the Greeks that he would be concerned with the universal rather than the particular, and that he should be saving all rather than some. Rationality also tended to signify that his behaviour would be intelligible to the philosopher, hence
that any saving process whereby only a proportion were saved would have to have just and humanly intelligible selection processes. But few human individuals could be looked up to as anything like a saviour; Hellenistic monarchs were one exception, Epicurus (of all people) might have been another, since he was appreciatively lauded by his pupils for having rescued them from the twin fears of death and of the Gods. When Lucretius claims that Epicurus' victory nos exaequat ... caelo (1.79) he resorts to language appropriate to a saviour; in the Introduction of book V he will even resort to the language of a God. In other philosophies the emphasis always falls on the need for the individual to save himself from whatever there is to be avoided thus underlining the need for moral responsibility: even in a fatalistic philosophy such as Stoicism.

Occasionally one finds glimmers of a more obviously religious salvation-process in isolated Greek philosophers, and this is most evident in the fragments of Empedocles' poem Purifications. Here we find a good deal of Pythagorizing taboo aimed at ritual purification of the soul, and a clear statement that Empedocles himself has been lifted up beyond the level of a mere mortal to the level of a God (fr.112). Further fragments make it plain that mortal existence is a miserable thing, and thus that the poet himself has 'been saved': a path which others too can apparently tread, achieving divine status and avoiding mortal woes (fr. 146, 147). Empedocles does not promise to save others too, but fr.112 suggests that others may have judged him to possess such powers. Empedocles would be more important to us were it not for the fact that Purifications is clearly a contribution to religious rather than philosophic writing. His salvation is such as the initiates of Orphic or Eleusinian mysteries might seek.

As we move forward to the philosophical writings of the period c.100 B.C. to c.A.D.200 we find uses of the language of soteria which it is interesting to compare and contrast with the religious and particularly the Christian concept. I begin with the celebrated sixth chapter of the spurious but fascinating Aristotelian work, the De Mundo, which presumably dates from this period. I don't wish to become embroiled in the difficulties of determining its origins, but it will suffice to say that the work is well-disposed towards Stoicism and Platonism as well as to Aristotle, that it has something of a Middle Stoic flavour, and that it is useful to compare its ideas with those of Posidonius and Boethus.
Here there is a kind of soteria which emanates from God, a soteria which might be thought of as 'preservation' rather than salvation. The universe itself is idealised, so there is no scope for saving one from the universe; the business of God is rather to be saving the universe itself and all that lies therein. God is at the pinnacle of the universe, and all else is dependent upon him for its continued being; the Aristotelian focus of course emphasises the natural continuity of the species rather than the individual, and it is not particularly problematic that death and destruction exist in the universe, for the author probably had his eye on the Platonic doctrine (Laws X, 903b) that apparent imperfections exist for the sake of the preservation (again soteria) of the whole. More difficult to grasp is the author's combination of the concepts of a providential God with that of the Aristotelian unmoved mover. The glowing language suggests to the reader in a way that God is being praised as our salvation rather than our mere preservation as a species upon this earth. The celebrated kingdom-simile suggests a personal protector, but appears alongside the
law-simile which likens God rather to some impersonal protective shield (400b27ff).

Though an unmoved mover initially seems an improbable source of anything approaching salvation, there are good reasons why the concept crops up in relation to this kind of God. The term soteria does occur among requirements for a divine being in Aristotle's Metaphysics N 1091b18, though it is the Being's own soteria that Aristotle requires rather than that of dependent entities. This helps one to see that it is in the essence of such a God to be stable, always what it is; and that part of its influence on the sublunary world should be the stability that can be imparted to sublunary species. Aristotle had made his demand in a context which highlighted the self-sufficiency of the first-principle, and the first of our passages links the soteria of other things by God with their lack of self-sufficiency.

The third passage shows God's gift of a harmonia and soteria. The former term is here not used in a musical sense, but in the sense of a connecting bond which God himself cements. Though not identical with the bond, one feels that the language used makes God seem all too immanent for Aristotelian theology, and the author strives to overcome such feelings by reiterating his belief that God has the topmost position. There is a struggle between immanence and transcendence throughout the passage, and the second passage tries to overcome the difficulty of postulating a transcendent God with pervasive influence. It sees God's dynamis as the penetrative force, as the vehicle of communication; like Philo's logos it provides an attempted solution to the problem of reconciling a transcendent God with immanent divine power within the overall context of radical monotheism.

In a thinker such as Numenius, however, the monotheism is abandoned as the first God becomes rather unworkably transcendent. A second divinity takes on the role of the maker, if not of the father, of this world (fr. 21dP), leaving the unmoved God a remoter role. Curiously the motive God does not then take all the credit for the organisation of the physical world, but, as appears from fr.15.9-10, the very rest of the first God either is a kind of motion or is inseparably linked with a kind of motion, whereby the order of the cosmos, its fixity, and its soteria arise.
The connexion of soteria with the first God, the unmoved mover, has prevailed because of the tendency to view soteria still as a kind of stability.\(^3\)

In Numenius, however, the existence of the demiurge or organising God between the unmoved mover and us now enables the dispensation of the first God's gifts; whereas the first God sows seed, the second God controls distribution and transplantation (fr.13dP). And the second God resembles the helmsman of Plato's Politicus, in so far as he can turn away from this world and quench the phenomena of life and mind within it much as the sun withdraws its rays by night (fr.12dP), abandoning it to the evils of matter. With a positive doctrine of evil within the world Numenius needs what the optimist author of the De Mundo did not need: a dispensor of soteria who can withhold it, thus accounting for a non-constant and non-universal soteria.

Maximus Tyrius, making use of the De Mundo and its comparison between an unmoved God and the law, adds a different twist, which could be used to explain why soteria might be selective rather than universal. Indeed he offers a principle of selection: it is those who obey who obtain the salvation offered by the law, and those too who obtain salvation from the unmoved God (XI.12.d). Note here how soteria is attached principally to the unmoved God (as in Metaphysics N), and that it is communicated from him to obedient entities. This confirms the connection between soteria and stability. Some debt of both Numenius and Maximus to the De Mundo ought probably to be postulated, but the changes are not insignificant. The author of the De Mundo, for instance, would have avoided any suggestion that his God's law could ever be disobeyed, for plants and wild beasts are all supposed to live in response to God's call (401a1-12).

A different response to the De Mundo is found in the anti-Aristotelian Atticus. Writing a little after Numenius and perhaps contemporary with Maximus, Atticus tailors the concept of cosmic soteria to suit the God of Plato's Timaeus (41b) rather than any unmoved mover: 'There is no greater bond for the soteria of things that have come to be than the will of God' (fr.4.93-95). The sentiment could have been
Christian; the concept of soteria, with its principal reference to physical preservation in this case, could not.

Maximus and the De Mundo both encourage the comparison between the God who offers soteria and the greatest of earthly kings; Numenius and Atticus tend to discourage it. Numenius perhaps thinks of a primarily spiritual soteria, and Atticus has a different concept of God. The De Mundo, however, is so happy with the idea of a salvation that comes from God qua king, that chapter 7 does not shrink from applying to God the title Soter as applied to the Hellenistic monarchs (401a24). Could it be that the unmoved mover, Epicurus, philosophy herself, the Hellenistic monarch, and Christ, have something in common which enables each to be regarded as a saviour by his followers? Just this, I assume, that each is the source of an optimism which could not have prevailed without trust in him: an optimism concerning one's future stability.

Notes

1. The tension between immanence and transcendence has resulted in some inconsistency here. For instance 5, 396b28-34 gives support to this view of the dynamis:

while 6, 398a1-6 explicitly keeps God's dynamis too out of earthly regions:

2. des Places prints the text as follows:

(fr.15.7-10)
I prefer to read \textit{προσέξεις σύμφωνον}, thus avoiding the paradox to some degree.

3. A Neopythagorean predecessor of Numenius, Moderatus, is Porphyry's source at V.Pyth. 49 (pp.44.12), where the Pythagorean One is spoken of as cause of the \textit{soteria} of what is unchangingly the same. The link between stability and \textit{soteria} is preserved, and I would urge that the genitive is not objective (as the unchanging does not need preservation in Platonico-Pythagorism), but indicates rather the \textit{source} of the \textit{soteria}: salvation upon earth owing something to the permanence of the intelligible world. Moderatus is also in debt to the \textit{De Mundo}, principally to 5, 396b23-397a1.