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Bardaisan and the Odes of Solomon<sup>1</sup>

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THE newly discovered Odes of Solomon present to the student of early Christian literature problems as fascinating as they are difficult. The author is a poet, and a poet of no mean order, but he is much more than that—he feels himself inspired by the Spirit of the Lord and illumined by His light; the resources of language, even when strained to the utmost limits of poetic license, are inadequate to express the richness of that new life which has transfigured his inner self and filled him with the joy and peace that pass all understanding. Yet when one endeavors to see the worlds of matter and of spirit as the singer saw them<sup>2</sup> and to grasp his conception of their mutual relations, in brief, to reconstruct his philosophy and to determine his age, his environment, and the school of thought to which he belonged, one encounters peculiar difficulties. He is as much at home in the Psalms and Wisdom-literature as any Jew, and yet is not in sympathy with the more distinctive tenets of Judaism. He acknowledges no circumcision save that of the heart (xi. 1-2), no sacrifice save that of “God’s thought,” of “righteousness and purity of thought and lips” (xx. 1-7), no peculiar people, for his sympathies are as broad as humanity (vi. 7-17; xiv. 14-29). He is a Christian, familiar with the leading events of Christ’s life—the miraculous birth (xix. 6-10), the baptism (xxiv. 1-3), crucifixion and descent

<sup>1</sup> I desire to acknowledge to the editors my obligations for their kind revision of the proofs during my absence from the country, and in particular Professor Montgomery’s revision of my translations from the Syriac.

<sup>2</sup> The author’s general point of view has been characterized by many; perhaps the best is that of Gunkel, *ZNTW*, xi. 1910, p. 320.

into Hades (xlii. 1-26 *et al.*), yet he absolutely ignores many of the most characteristic doctrines and practices of Christianity. He makes no explicit allusion to the resurrection or ascension of Christ's material body, or to baptism, or the eucharist. He knows of sin and evil as facts (xxxiii. 8; xxxviii. 12 ff. *et al.*), but they seem to lie outside the range of his own present concern; even his conception of redemption seems unconnected with the crucifixion. Moreover, amidst the profusion of poetic and allegorical images in which he expresses his ideas, there are some which one can scarcely regard as merely poetic and allegorical and which fit but ill into the traditional system of Christian theology. The "worlds" (xii. 4 *et al.*), the "garment of light" (xi. 10; xxi. 2), the "perfect virgin" (xxiii. 5), the "abysses" (xxiv. 3; xxxi. 1), — these, and perhaps others, are somewhat more than hints that the author's view of the universe is not that of the orthodox Christian theologian.

The theories proposed to account for this puzzling complex belong to three leading types. The representatives of the first type, led by Rendel Harris, the distinguished discoverer and first editor of the Odes, regard them as belonging to a period when the new life which was stirring men's hearts had not as yet moulded their thoughts after its own image nor found words adequate to its expression, when Christian theology was as yet in the making and clear formulations had no existence, in brief, to the period, approximately, of the New Testament itself.

A second group, led by Harnack, cannot believe that conceptions so disparate as are found in the Odes could ever have coexisted as the elements of the world-view of any single mind. They believe them, therefore, to be a composite product, the original Odes being the work of a Jew of unusually catholic sympathies, into whose text a Christian hand has incorporated a few of the more essential elements of Christianity. But Harnack also refers the Odes in their present form to a very early period — about the end of the first century of our era.

A third group of students regard them as giving imperfect

expression to some peculiar system of Christian theology, accepted by some minor sect, probably of the second century, and endeavor to identify the sect in question with some one of those mentioned by the church historians. But upon this point no agreement has as yet been reached. Gunkel thinks them Gnostic, and Preuschen has announced<sup>3</sup> that he will endeavor to prove them a part of the Valentinian Psalm-book; Batiffol<sup>4</sup> regards them as representing a docetic tendency, perhaps a forerunner of the great Christian Gnostic movement of the second century and akin to that combated by Ignatius. But Conybeare<sup>5</sup> and Fries<sup>6</sup> would have them Montanist.

In my opinion the weight of evidence is distinctly in favor of the third point of view. While the considerations urged by Gunkel and Batiffol are not all of equal force and it is not probable that all will stand the test of further criticism, the main thesis for which they contend seems to me established — that the Odes unmistakably reveal the influence of Gnostic speculation. Yet the evidence falls far short of proving them Gnostic, for many of the leading characteristics of Gnosticism, as of Judaism and of Christianity, are conspicuous by their absence. The system of æons, for example, upon the elaboration of which with every detail suggested by pagan mythology or a perfervid imagination the Gnostic thinkers so loved to dwell, is represented in the Odes by nothing but the “worlds,” and of them so little is said that it is impossible to determine at first glance what the author meant by them. Again, the Gnostic was essentially an exclusive faith. It drew a sharp line of demarcation between the true Gnostic, or, as the Valentinians called him, the “pneumatic” man, and the common herd, whether Christian or not. In the Odes the “elect” (viii. 21; xxiii. 1–3 *et al.*) might be regarded as representing the pneumatic man, but their relation to the mass of men is conceived in a very different and more catholic spirit, for the poet looks forward to the time when all mankind will be numbered among the saved (iii. 12;

<sup>3</sup> *ZNTW*, xi. 1910, p. 323, n. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Rev. Bibl.*, NS, viii. part 2 (1911).

<sup>5</sup> *ZNTW*, xii. 1911, pp. 70–76.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.*, p. 108.

vi. *passim*; vii. 22 ff.). The argument from silence is, it is true, dangerous; one does not turn to a hymnal for a system of theology. But one does expect a hymn writer, if he be not wholly devoid of the poetic gift, to employ those elements of his theological system which lend themselves most readily to poetic treatment, and such, in a preëminent degree, was the stupendous drama of the Valentinian theology. Nor could the true Gnostic, who believed himself divine and regarded all other men as akin either to animals or dead matter, speak of the time when "Nothing that breathes shall be without knowledge, nor shall anything be dumb."<sup>7</sup>

As the author, then, of the Odes we must postulate a man who, while not in the technical sense a Gnostic, was thoroughly familiar with Gnosticism and had borrowed from it much of his imagery and some of his doctrines. He must also have been a man who knew the life of the spirit by immediate personal experience, a man whose heart was full of love for God and his fellowman, a man of deep sympathies, of broad vision, of marked originality. And he was also a gifted poet.

Such a man, so far as our information enables us to judge, was Bardaisan of Edessa.<sup>8</sup>

I cannot better express my own impression of the relation between Bardaisan and the Gnostics than by translating a passage from Haase's recent monograph.<sup>9</sup>

No one who reflects that Bardaisan's youth fell in a period in which Gnosticism was at its height, and that he lived in a land the peculiarity of whose culture made it the mother soil of Gnosticism, will deny that Bardaisan, receptive as he was to all sciences and sensitive to all intellectual influences, must, at least, have been acquainted with the doctrines of the Syrian Gnostics also. One should not forget that it was the most enlightened minds that found something infectious in Gnosticism, the aim of which was essentially nothing other than a solution of the "World-riddle" with the

<sup>7</sup> vii. 27. See the text, p. 178, note 41. Knowledge probably means gnosis.

<sup>8</sup> Born A.D. 154; died 222.

<sup>9</sup> Felix Haase, "Zur Bardesanischen Gnosis," *Texte und Untersuchungen*, 1910, p. 88.

aid of all that the heathen sciences and Christianity had achieved. It cannot indeed be determined at what period of his life Bardaisan had belonged to a Gnostic sect. But if we find in his doctrines passages that unquestionably have a Gnostic ring, we will not, in the age of Gnosticism, make the explanation unnecessarily difficult, but will simply assume Gnostic influence. I therefore regard as natural and credible, at least so far as its second part is concerned, Eusebius' assertion that Bardaisan was at first a disciple of Valentinian, then was converted to the true faith without altogether giving up his old heresy.<sup>10</sup> Bardaisan's keen intellect must have recognized the weak points in the Valentinian or [other] Gnostic system, and he therefore worked out a peculiar doctrine of his own, based upon his own philosophical, theological, and astronomical knowledge. It will remain a hopeless task to pick out, in this doctrine, the "Gnostic" elements; in so far, Nau and Hort are quite right in protesting against reckoning Bardaisan among the Gnostics in the usual sense. One will scarcely find a name that adequately and accurately expresses his teaching; it is enough to maintain that astronomy in particular, and Gnostic influence, laid the foundation of his peculiar doctrine. Bardaisan is, and remains, a heretic, and his *formal* classification with the Gnostics by ancient and modern historians does him no wrong.

To Bardaisan's intellectual ability all our authorities bear witness. Eusebius describes him as "a most able man and a skillful disputant in the Syriac language, who composed and committed to writing in his own tongue, dialogues against the followers of Marcion and certain other representatives of diverse doctrines, besides many other works, which his pupils — of whom he had many, for he was a doughty defender of his doctrine — translated from Syriac into Greek."<sup>11</sup> Epiphanius describes him as "one of the finest

<sup>10</sup> Euseb., *HE*, iv. 30, ap. Harnack, *Gesch. d. altchr. Lit.*, i. 1, p. 185: ἦν δ' ἄρα οὗτος πρότερον τῆς κατὰ Οὐαλεντίνου σχολῆς, καταγνοῦς δὲ ταύτης, πλείστα τε τῆς κατὰ τοῦτον μυθοποιίας ἀπελέγξας, ἰδούκει μὲν πως αὐτὸς αὐτῷ ἐπὶ τῆν ὀρθοτέρων γνώμων μεταθεῖσθαι, οὐ μὴν καὶ παντελῶς γε ἀπερρόφατο τὸν τῆς παλαιᾶς αἰρέσεως ῥῆπον.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* *ibid.*: Βαρδαιάνης ἰκανώτατός τις ἀνὴρ ἔν τε τῇ Σύρων φωνῇ διαλεκτικώτατος, πρὸς τοὺς κατὰ Μαρκίωνα καὶ τινὰς ἑτέρους διαφόρων προΐσταμένους δογμάτων διαλόγους συστησάμενος, τῇ ἰδίᾳ παρέδωκε γλώττη τε καὶ γραφῇ, μετὰ καὶ πλείστων ἑτέρων αὐτοῦ συγγραμμάτων· οὗς οἱ γνώριμοι. — πλείστοι δὲ ἦσαν αὐτῷ δυνατῶς τῷ λόγῳ παρισταμένῳ — ἐπὶ τῆν Ἑλλήνων ἀπὸ τῆς Σύρων μεταβλήκασι φωνῆς.

of men," "eloquent" both in Syriac and in Greek, "highly adorned with all the graces."<sup>12</sup> Jerome says that he was regarded as "distinguished" and that the Syrians extol the ardor of his intellect and his vigor in argument.<sup>13</sup> And again, "such was Bardaisan, whose intellect even philosophers admire."<sup>14</sup>

To Bardaisan's gifts as a poet no trustworthy evidence survives. Ephraem Syrus does indeed frequently speak of the charm which the Bardaisanite hymns exercised upon the minds of the people and attributes them to Bardaisan. For example, he says:

Love for you, brethren, constrains that you bear the repetition of their words,<sup>15</sup> of the impeding substances, the stars, the signs of the zodiac, that the body is of the evil [principle], and that it has no resurrection, — that the soul [consists] of seven [parts],<sup>16</sup> and [all] the rest, that I may not expatiate upon those things which Bardaisan alleges among his doctrines. For he formed hymns and set them to tunes, and composed songs and introduced meters. He divided the words in measures and weights.<sup>16</sup> And [so] he set before the simple folk bitter [mixed] with sweet — sick folk they,

<sup>12</sup> *Haer.* 56; *ap. eund.*, p. 186: ἀριστός τις ἀθήρ . . . λόγιος . . . τὰ πάντα μεγάλως κεκοσμημένος.

<sup>13</sup> *De vir. inl.* 33; *ap. eund.*, p. 186: clarus habitus est . . . ardens eius a Syris praedicatur ingenium et in disputatione vehemens.

<sup>14</sup> *Comm. in Osee*, ii. 10; *ap. eund.*, p. 187: talis Bardisanes, cuius etiam philosophi admirantur ingenium.

<sup>15</sup> *Or. contr. Haer.* 53, Vatican ed. ii. p. 553:

سحلا لحم الحكي؟ لعمري، امت لاني سكتسك، املتا سكتسك  
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<sup>16</sup> Ephraem discusses this doctrine at length, *Ad Hypattum*, etc., in *S. Eph. Syr. et aliorum Opera Selecta*. Ed. Overbeck, Oxon. 1865, p. 63, 14 sqq.

<sup>16</sup> *I.e.* (R. Duval, *La littérature syriaque*, Paris, 1900, p. 18), in rhythmic and accentual measures.

who chose not wholesome food.<sup>17</sup> He wished to make David his model; that he might be adorned with his beauty and praised for his likeness, he, too, composed 150 songs. His [*i.e.*, David's] truth he deserted, my brethren, and imitated his number [only].

But it must be borne in mind that Ephraem is writing about 150 years after Bardaisan's death. There is reason to believe that in the interval Bardaisan's doctrines had been modified by the influence of Manichæism and probably by other influences as well. It is also more than probable that the hymns in use among the Bardaisanites were not of his composition. Sozomen explicitly asserts that Harmonius, Bardaisan's son, "having had a Greek education, was the first to adapt his mother tongue to meters and musical rules," and indeed, if I understand aright the following sentence, he expressly implies that Bardaisan's poems were set to the lyre by Harmonius and not by Bardaisan himself.<sup>18</sup>

These varying accounts are easily reconciled. It is probable that in the Syriac, as in other Christian churches, the canonical Psalms had been used in public worship from the

<sup>17</sup> Duval (*loc. cit.*), "Les malades n'eurent point le choix d'un remède salutaire."

<sup>18</sup> Sozom., *HE*, iii. 16, *ap. Harnack, op. cit.*, p. 187: Οὐκ ἀγνωῶ δέ, ὡς καὶ πάλαι ἐλλογιμώτατοι τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον παρὰ Ὀσροηνοῖς ἐγένοντο, Βαρδισάνης τε, θε τὴν παρ' αὐτοῦ καλουμένην αἰρῆσιν συνεστήσατο, καὶ Ἀρμόνιος ὁ Βαρδισάνου παῖς, ὃν φασὶ διὰ τῶν παρ' Ἑλλήσι λόγων ἀχθέντα πρώτων μέτροις καὶ νόμοις μουσικοῖς τὴν πάτριον φωνὴν ὑπαγαγεῖν καὶ χοροῖς παραδοῦναι, καθάπερ καὶ νῦν πολλάκις οἱ Σύροι ψάλλουσιν, οὐ τοῖς Ἀρμονίου συγγράμμασιν, ἀλλὰ τοῖς μέλοσι χρώμενοι. ἐπεὶ γὰρ οὐ παντάπασιν ἐκτός ἦν τῆς πατρῴας αἰρέσεως, καὶ ὧν περὶ ψυχῆς, γενέσεώς τε καὶ φθορᾶς σώματος καὶ καλιγγεσίας οἱ παρ' Ἑλλήσι φιλοσοφοῦντες δοξάζουσιν, οἷά γε ἐπὶ λύραν ἂν συνεγράφατο συνθεῖς, ταυτασί τὰς δόξας τοῖς οικείοις προσέμιξε γράμμασιν.

"Since he [Harmonius] was not entirely outside the limits of his father's sect and the views entertained by the Greek philosophers regarding the soul, the birth and dissolution of the body and transmigration, seeing that he set to the lyre what he [Bardaisan] had composed, he commingled these views with his own compositions," *i.e.* with the view expressed in his own compositions. The circumstantial character of this account gives it claim to credence. — Theodoret (*HF*, *ap. Harn.*, *op. cit.*, p. 187) also states that Harmonius, as well as Bardaisan, wrote much in Syriac, but does not distinguish his work from that of his father.



earliest times. Whether other psalms and hymns were used along with those "of David" in the other churches is a question into which I need not enter; it is at any rate certain that their introduction into the church at Edessa was ascribed by Ephraem to Bardaisan, and there is every reason to accept his evidence. It is probable on the face of it that Bardaisan, in his earliest efforts to produce hymns acceptable to his congregation, would endeavor closely to imitate the Psalms with which they were already familiar. Just such imitations the "Odes of Solomon" unquestionably are. It may be that Bardaisan was also the first to write hymns in meter similar to those Syriac hymns with which we are familiar, but, in view of Sozomen's evidence, it is more probable that the Bardaisanite hymns in meter known to Ephraem were the work of Harmonius and other writers. Ephraem, who was engaged in a fierce warfare with the Bardaisanite heretics, probably had not the ability and certainly had no desire to distinguish in the mass of heretical psalms and hymns the compositions of Bardaisan from those of his successors, and so ascribes them all indiscriminately to him.

There are also several allusions in the Odes, which, while wholly insufficient of themselves to prove authorship, harmonize singularly well with the little we know of Bardaisan's life and activity. Bardaisan had been converted from Gnosticism to Christianity. The poet says "the way of error I have left" (xv. 6), "I was delivered from vanity" (xvii. 2); the whole of Ode xxxviii. celebrates his deliverance from a form of error portrayed by a "bridegroom who corrupts and is corrupted," and a "bride who is corrupted," and is "adorned," who "lead astray and corrupt the whole world, and invite many to the banquet, and give them to drink of the wine of their intoxication so that they may vomit up their wisdom and knowledge," and so on. This reads like a condensed abstract of the account given by Epiphanius of his own experiences when young among the "Gnostics" of Egypt (*Hæc.* xxvi. 4), and there is no doubt that such practices were widespread among many Gnostic sects. There is no reason to charge the Valentinians with

them, but it is quite possible that the poet, like Epiphanius, had as a youth just escaped the temptations of some such sect.

We are told that Bardaisan came very near suffering martyrdom. "He withstood Apollonius, Antoninus' friend, when exhorted by him to deny that he called himself a Christian, and was almost appointed to the order of confessors, and replied in clever speeches, manfully defending [the true] religion, and declaring that he had no fear of death, for it must necessarily ensue even if he did not disobey the Emperor."<sup>19</sup> There are several Odes which intimate that the speaker has suffered persecution, *e.g.* v., xxv., xxviii., xxix., xxxv., but it is not always possible to distinguish between what he says in his own person and what he says in the person of Christ. Other Odes, *e.g.* viii. 7; ix. 6, suggest that the persons for whom he writes are not unacquainted with persecution, which would be appropriate to the age of the Antonines, but the suggestions are too vague to be of value. The same must be said of the allusion in xx. 1, "I am a priest of the Lord," etc. It would fit in very well with the recorded statement that Bardaisan had been ordained deacon,<sup>20</sup> but the context in Ode xx. rather suggests spiritual than ecclesiastical priesthood. Of more weight is the general impression conveyed by the Odes as to the author's relation to his readers. His "work is the Psalm of the Lord" (xvi. 2), and his addresses to his readers intimate that he anticipates something more than a hearing. One can readily imagine that Odes so beautiful as these, and bearing such clear evidence of deep and sincere religious feeling, might have served to draw a band of devoted followers about their gifted author.

Bardaisan believed himself to be orthodox, and wrote against the heretics, Marcion and others. The much discussed opening verses of the 4th Ode — "No man, O my

<sup>19</sup> Epiphanius, *Haer.* 58, *ap. Harnack, op. cit.*, p. 186: 'Απολλωνίῳ δὲ τῷ τοῦ Ἀττωνίου ἐταίρῳ ἀντὶ τοῦ παραινούμενος ἀρνήσασθαι τὸ Χριστιανὸν ἑαυτὸν λέγειν. ὁ δὲ σχεδὸν ἐν τάξει ὁμολογίας κατέστη, λόγους τε σνίετοῦς ἀπεκρίνατο, ὑπὲρ εὐσεβείας ἀνδρείως ἀπολογούμενος, θάνατον μὴ δεδιέναι φήσας, ὅτι ἀνάγκη ἔσσεσθαι, καὶ τε τῷ βασιλεῖ μὴ ἀντεῖποι.

<sup>20</sup> Nau, *Le livre des lois des pays*, p. 10.

God, changeth thy holy place, and it is not possible that he should change it and put it in another place, because he hath no power over it, for thy sanctuary thou hast designed before thou didst make other places"—in which Conybeare sees Montanism, are much more easily explained as an attack upon the Montanist claim that the holy place, the true Jerusalem which came down from heaven, was to be found at Pepuza in Phrygia.<sup>21</sup>

It appears then that the little we know of Bardaisan's life and activities, and in particular of his relation to the development of Syriac hymnology, distinctly favors the hypothesis that he might have written the Odes of Solomon. But two objections present themselves, the language of the Odes and their title.

Bardaisan is supposed to have written in Syriac, and the Odes are supposed to be translations from a Greek original. But neither of these suppositions is as yet beyond question. Bardaisan was certainly able to write Greek; Epiphanius, indeed, as I have shown, describes him as "eloquent both in Syriac and Greek." It is, moreover, possible that in the last quarter of the second century Greek was a privileged tongue in the church of Edessa, much as it was in the Roman church a little earlier. If Hermas could make his revelation in Greek to the Latin-speaking Roman Christians, surely Bardaisan might have used Greek in Syria, which had been in large measure bilingual for centuries. On the other hand, it is not yet proved that the Odes were first written in Greek. The occurrence of Greek words in the Coptic version proves, of course, no more than that the author of the *Pistis Sophia* was working from a Greek text—not that the text was the original. The words and phrases of the Syriac text upon which Schulthess, Gunkel, and others base their opinion are indeed suggestive, and raise a presumption in favor of the theory that the original was Greek, but they are not sufficient to put the question beyond doubt.<sup>22</sup>

The fact that these Odes, even about the middle of the

<sup>21</sup> Epiphanius, *Hæc.* ii. 48. 14; 49. 1. (Dind., ii. 442, 16; 444, 21.)

<sup>22</sup> I am inclined to believe that the original was Greek.

second century, probably not fifty years after Bardaisan's death, already bore the name of Solomon, were regarded as canonical and used as such by the author of *Pistis Sophia*, has been very generally accepted as proof that they must have originated at least a hundred years earlier. The argument, of course, presupposes good faith on the part of the author of *Pistis Sophia*—he was deceived by the fact that the poems had been long current, he found them in his copy of the Bible, and so on. I can see no force in such considerations. The Gnostic group from which the *Pistis Sophia* emanated, and, indeed, many early sects, forged works in support of their peculiar tenets with the utmost freedom. Moreover, the fact that such works met with easy acceptance proves that the members of these sects were as uncritical as their leaders were unscrupulous. The men who forged books wholesale certainly would not have hesitated, if a stray copy of the Odes fell into their hands and seemed to them capable of being used to support their doctrine, to attach to it the name of Solomon, and there would have been little likelihood that the fraud ever would be detected.

I shall find it necessary to give a fairly complete outline of the "Book of the Laws of the Countries," in order to prepare the way for the interpretation of the Odes. This book contains the only fairly trustworthy evidence as to the views of Bardaisan himself. It was first published by Cureton in 1847, and again, with an English translation, in his "*Spicilegium Syriacum*," in 1855.<sup>23</sup> The book professes to be a record

<sup>23</sup> Besides Cureton's second edition, I have used that of Nau, *Le livre des lois des pays*, Paris, 1899, and Merx's translation (in *Bardesanes von Edessa*, Halle, 1863). Haase (*op. cit.*, pp. 44 sqq.), after a minute comparison of the "Book of the Laws" with the quotations in Eusebius and the Recognitions, concludes that Bardaisan wrote in Greek a dialogue "Against Destiny," which was translated by his pupils into Syriac. From this Syriac version the existing "Book of the Laws" is derived. The Syriac was then again translated into Greek; from the latter version Eusebius' quotations and those of the Recognitions are derived. Bardaisan's original work did not contain the doctrine of planetary influence ascribed to him by the "Book of the Laws." Lack of space prevents me from entering into my reasons for dissenting from this latter conclusion. [*N.B.* the discussion for and against a Greek original by Schulthess and Nöldeke, in *ZDMG*, 1910, pp. 91, 556. Ed.]

made apparently by a certain Philip, of a dialogue held between Bardaisan and his disciple Avida, upon the problems of Destiny and Free-will. It puts into Bardaisan's mouth a theory of marked originality. He accepts the fundamental principles of astrology, but dissents from that form of the doctrine of Destiny or Fate which was so generally associated with it. Man is ruled by three independent principles: Free-will, Nature, and Destiny. Free-will he shares with God and with the angels. "Nature" is the organic principle which governs the development and nutrition of his body. "Destiny" is the influence exerted upon the entire material world, upon man's body as a part of that world, and also upon his soul, by the constellations and planets.<sup>24</sup> These three principles, being independent, may and frequently do clash, whence arise in the world discord and confusion, sickness and sin. But in time, the "great and holy will of God" will put an end to the discord, and introduce a reign of peace and love.

Even granting that the Book of the Laws fairly represents Bardaisan's views, and that he was the author of the Odes, it is obviously unreasonable to anticipate any considerable degree of coincidence between them. Their themes are as unlike as possible. The Book of the Laws is a discussion, in a severely scientific and objective spirit, of the ultimate laws that govern the universe; the Odes are devotional poems of a most intimately personal character. It is only by accident that the two works occasionally touch upon the same topics. Furthermore, the Book of the Laws does not even profess to be from the hand of Bardaisan himself. It is at best based upon one of his works, and it is quite possible, as Haase thinks, that the connection is not immediate.

<sup>24</sup> The theory is obviously eclectic, and confirms the statements of the church historians as to Bardaisan's acquaintance with Greek. The conception of "Nature" (طبیعیة) is unmistakably the Aristotelian φύσις. The conception had become a commonplace of Greek philosophy long before Bardaisan's day, but the word which Bardaisan uses (= φύσις) possibly points to acquaintance with Peripatetic sources, as Stoic writers were more disposed to use Stoic terms (λόγος, ἔξις, πρῶτον).

The number of coincidences that do occur, in phraseology and sequence of ideas, is suggestive, but in default of any evidence to show whether these traits were personal peculiarities of Bardaisan's, or were common in Syriac literature of his age, their value as evidence is not great.

The real significance of the Book of the Laws is this: In the first place, it gives a fairly definite impression of certain traits of Bardaisan's character, and these traits are in striking accord with the character revealed in the Odes. Indeed, it was this that first led me to think of Bardaisan as their possible author. In the second place, the theories of the Book of the Laws, supplemented by information afforded by Ephraem and other writers, offer a very satisfactory interpretation of several difficult Odes.

I have already referred to the singularity of the poet's attitude towards sin and evil. While he is of course aware of its existence, he seems to have no present personal concern with it. Nearly all the Odes are full of joy and thankfulness; his whole nature seems to turn as naturally towards love, goodness, God, as the needle to the pole. Bardaisan regards man as imbued with a natural inclination towards good; good properly belongs to him, and in doing good—which he conceives is, primarily, to “love, bless, to speak the truth, and to pray for that which is good for every one whom he knows”—man finds joy. Bardaisan's conception is very different, indeed, from the notion so prevalent in all Christian ages, that man is naturally inclined to sin; nor could it, I think, have been based in the first instance upon observation of what men actually do. It is, rather, an expression of Bardaisan's own character, and the affinity to that of the poet is manifest. This similarity of character does not, of course, prove that the writers are identical, but it is one of the minor threads in the web of evidence which I am endeavoring to weave.

It is impossible, in a brief article, to quote from the Odes at such length as to give an adequate impression of the author's personality—that can be gained only by thorough familiarity with the Odes themselves. I give here, however,

those passages<sup>26</sup> from the Book of the Laws which are relevant to my present purpose, and have added in footnotes the more striking parallels from the Odes.

Cureton, p. 2, l. 7. Avida said: "I am desirous of learning, but I began first to question these, my brethren, because I was ashamed of asking thee."

Bardaisan said:

Thou speakest becomingly.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, know that he who putteth his inquiries properly, and is willing to be convinced, and draweth near to the way of truth<sup>28</sup> without opposition,<sup>29</sup> needeth not to be ashamed, because he will certainly give pleasure to him to whom the inquiry is directed, by those things which I have mentioned. If, therefore, my son, thou hast anything in thy mind respecting this about which thou wast inquiring, tell it to us all; and if it please us also, we shall agree<sup>30</sup> with thee; and if it please us not, necessity will compel us to show thee why it does not please us. . . .

Avida's brethren say: "Believe firmly, and thou wilt be able to know everything;" to which Avida objects "But I am not able to believe unless I be convinced."

Bardaisan said:

Not Avida alone is unwilling to believe, but also many, because they have in them no faith, nor are they even able to be convinced, but are always pulling down and building up, and are (p. 3) found destitute of all knowledge of the truth. Nevertheless, because Avida is not willing to believe, lo! I will speak to you who do believe concerning this which he inquires, and he will hear something to his advantage.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The translation is that of Cureton, freely modified by suggestions derived both from the Syriac and from Nau. These modifications are not always indicated.

<sup>27</sup> ܐܫܘܪܘܢܐܢܐ "cleverly," C; "d'après les apparences," N.

<sup>28</sup> "Way of truth," and again, p. 10, 9 (C), "fell from the way of truth." Cf. Ode xl. 6: "I ran in the way of his peace, even the way of truth." xxxiii. 8: "I will make you wise in the ways of truth." xv. 6: "The way of error I have left." The simile of a way or path occurs about 17 times in the Odes.

<sup>29</sup> ܕܐܫܘܪܘܢܐܢܐ "obstinacy," C; "querelle," N.

<sup>30</sup> ܕܥܘܢܐܢܐ "participate," C; "serons d'accord," N.

<sup>31</sup> ܕܥܘܢܐܢܐ "something more," C.

And he began to say to us: There are many men who have not faith, and have not received knowledge from the wisdom of the truth. And on this account they are not competent to discuss and to draw conclusions.<sup>21</sup> For they have not the foundation of faith to build upon, and they have no confidence upon which they may hope.<sup>22</sup> . . .

(l. 18) But as to what Avida was saying — “Why did not God create us so that we should not sin and be guilty?” — if man had been created so, he would not have belonged to himself, but would have been the instrument of him that moved him. . . . And how, then, would man differ from a harp<sup>23</sup> which another plays or the cart which another guides? . . .

But God in his kindness did not will that he should create man so. But he exalted him by Free-will above many things, and made him equal with the angels. For observe the sun, and the moon, and the sphere, and the rest of these things which are greater than we in some things, that there is not given to them Free-will of themselves, but they are all bound by the command<sup>24</sup> that they should do only that which was commanded them and nothing else. For the sun (p. 4) never says,<sup>25</sup> “I will not rise at any time,” nor the moon, “I will not change and not wane nor

<sup>21</sup> *كلامه و تعليمه* “to speak and to instruct,” C; “*de discourir et de conclure*,” N.

<sup>22</sup> The conception that faith or belief is the first step in the Christian life occurs frequently in the Odes, but it is nowhere so directly connected with knowledge as here. The closest parallel is perhaps viii. 12-13: “Keep my faith, ye that are kept by it, and know my knowledge, ye that know me in the truth.” Compare, also, xvi. 5: “I am strong in His praise, and I have faith in Him”; xxviii. 4: “I had faith, therefore found I rest, for faithful is He in whom I had faith”; xxxiv. 6: “Believe and live and be saved.” Also, xxix. 6; xxxix. 6, 11; xlii. 12.

<sup>23</sup> The comparison of man to a harp upon which another plays, occurs vi. 1: “As the hand moves over the harp and the strings speak, so speaks in my members the Spirit of the Lord, and I speak by His love.” Compare, also, xiv. 8; xxvi. 3.

<sup>24</sup> *مصباح ايم*, *مصباح*. So N; “fixed by ordinance,” C.

<sup>25</sup> In the Odes, also, the fact that the heavenly bodies never rest is adduced as an illustration of subjection to the command of God, xvi. 14: “And created things run in their courses and do their works”; (15) “They know not how to stand and be idle, and His hosts are subject to His word.” With the next sentence, “They are instruments of the wisdom of God which errs not,” compare the following lines: (16) “The treasury of the light is the sun, and the treasury of the darkness is the night”; (17) “So he made the sun for the day that it may be bright, but night brings darkness over the face of the land.”



increase," nor does any one of the stars say, "I will not rise and I will not set," [—and so of the sea, the hills, the winds, the earth,] but all these things serve and are subject to one command, for they are the instruments of the wisdom of God which errs not. . . . (l. 17) On this account there has been given to him these things in kindness,<sup>36</sup> that they might minister to him for a season. . . .

(l. 27) On this account let it be manifest to you that the goodness<sup>36</sup> of God has been great toward man, and that there has been given to him Free-will more than to all those elements of which we have been speaking; that by this same Free-will he may justify himself, and govern himself in a god-like manner, and associate with the angels, who also are possessed of Free-will for themselves.

Here follows an account of the fall of the angels through their sin with the daughters of men.

(p. 5, l. 3) For everything that exists stands in need of the Lord of All;<sup>37</sup> and there is no end to his bounty.<sup>38</sup>

Avida objects:

(l. 19) The commandments which have been given to men are hard and they are not able to perform them.

Bardaisan said:

This is the answer of such a one as doth not desire to do that which is good; and more especially of him who has obeyed and submitted to his enemy. For men are not commanded to do anything but what they are able to do. For there are two commandments set before us such as are suitable and just

<sup>36</sup> Several passages refer to the goodness (ܥܘܢܘܬܐ), kindness (ܪܥܘܢܐ), and mercies (ܚܘܨܝܘܬܐ) of God as manifested especially in creating man, and endowing him with powers fitted to raise him above his present status and make him more like God. With the above, p. 3, 29 sqq.; and p. 4, 17; 30, compare Ode xxix. 2: "According to His praise He made me, and according to His goodness He gave unto me"; (3) "According to His mercies He exalted me, and according to His excellent beauty He set me on high"; xvii. 7: "He glorified me by His kindness, and raised my mind to the height of His truth"; xiv. 9: "According to the multitude of Thy mercies, so shalt Thou give to me." See, also, note 40. For bounty (ܥܘܢܘܬܐ) see note 38.

<sup>37</sup> Compare iv. 9: "not that Thou wast in need of us, but that we were in need of Thee." But the word used is ܥܘܢܘܬܐ, not ܚܘܨܝܘܬܐ.

<sup>38</sup> "Bounty," ܥܘܢܘܬܐ. xi. 9: "I was enriched by his bounty"; xxv. 7: "I grew great by his bounty." Compare note 40.

for Free-will: one that we separate ourselves from everything that is evil and which we should dislike to be done to ourselves; and the other that we should do that which is good and which we love, and desire that it should be done to us likewise. What man, therefore, is there who is unable to avoid stealing, or to avoid lying or committing adultery and fornication, or that he should be guilty of hatred and falsehood? For lo! all these things are subject to the mind of man, and they lie not in the power of the body, but in the will of the soul. For even if a man be poor and sick and old, or impotent in his limbs, he is able to avoid doing all these things; and as he is able (p. 6) to avoid doing all these things, so is he able to love, and to bless, and to speak the truth, and to pray for that which is good for every one whom he knows: and if he be in health and have the use of his hands, he is able too to give something of that which he has; also to support by the strength of body him who is sick and broken down, and this too he is able to do. Who, therefore, it is that is not able to do what those devoid of faith<sup>39</sup> murmur about I know not. For I think it is in these commandments more than in anything else man has power. For they are easy, and there is nothing that is able to hinder them. For we are not commanded to carry heavy burdens of stones [and so of other tasks]. . . .

(l. 18) But there have been given to us according to the kindness of God commandments without grudging<sup>40</sup> such as every man

<sup>39</sup> "Devoid of faith."  $\text{لَا يَتَّقُونَ}$  =  $\delta\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\iota$ . Ode xviii. 4: "Lord, do not Thou, because of them that are deficient,  $\text{لَا يَتَّقُونَ}$ , take Thy Word from me." Possibly "in faith" has been lost from the text; but the same phrase recurs, xxiv. 7,  $\text{لَا يَتَّقُونَ}$ , in close connection with  $\text{لَا يَتَّقُونَ}$ , and the interpretation of xviii. 4 must be considered in connection with that of xxiv. 7 (see p. 197).

<sup>40</sup> "Without grudging,"  $\text{بِغَيْرِ مَرَدٍّ}$ . It occurs eight times in the Odes, and properly means "without reluctance"; e.g. xxiii. 4: "Walk ye in the knowledge of the Most High *without grudging*." But it is usually found with verbs of giving, and is then equivalent to  $\delta\phi\theta\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ . With the above passage compare xv. 6: "The way of error have I left, and have walked towards Him. And have received *salvation* from Him *without grudging*. And according to His bounty He hath given to me, And according to His excellent beauty He hath made me." — "Commandments,"  $\text{أَمْرًا}$ , and "salvation,"  $\text{نَجَاتًا}$  are easily confused. Moreover, it would be somewhat more appropriate to receive commandments immediately after leaving the way of error, rather than salvation. Should the evidence ever warrant a definite ascription of the Odes to Bardaisan, I should be tempted to emend the text of the Ode.

who possesses a soul within him<sup>41</sup> can do rejoicing; for there is no man who rejoiceth not when he doth that which is good;<sup>42</sup> nor is there any one who doth not delight within himself when he refraineth from wicked things, with the exception of those who were not made for this grace, and who are called tares. For would not that Judge be unjust who should blame a man for such a thing as he is not able to do?

Avida said to him :

Respecting these deeds, O Bardaisan, do you say that they are easy to perform ?

Bardaisan said :

To him who desires, I have said and do say that they are easy; for this is the good conduct of a free mind, and of that soul which has not rebelled against its governors. For there are many things which impede the action of the body, and more especially old age, and sickness, and poverty.

Avida said :

Perhaps a man may be able to avoid wicked things, but to do good things who among men is able ?

<sup>41</sup> "Every man that possesses a soul within him," *i. e.*, every living man. ܘܠܟܠܢܫܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܢܫܐ ܕܢܫܐ. The wording suggests a plausible emendation for vii. 27, which as it stands is unintelligible. The text reads : ܘܠܟܠܢܫܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܢܫܐ ܕܢܫܐ. The words ܘܠܟܠܢܫܐ have been lost after ܕܢܫܐ, and the second ܕܢܫܐ is a corrupt dittograph for ܕܢܫܐ.

<sup>42</sup> This joy in the good is the most characteristic trait both in Bardaisan and in the author of the Odes. But whereas Bardaisan finds it in human nature as such, and conceives "the good" as good deeds, the poet finds it in the redeemed and purified soul, and conceives "the good" as God Himself; not, however, to the exclusion of Bardaisan's conception, for the poet gives no description of human nature as such. There is one passage in Harris's translation which seems to express the doctrine of Bardaisan, vii. 1 : "As the impulse of anger against evil, so is the impulse of joy over what is lovely, And brings in of its fruits without restraint; My joy is the Lord, and my impulse is towards Him." But the word here translated "what is lovely," ܘܠܟܠܢܫܐ, is literally, "the beloved," and a comparison with iii. 5, "I love the Beloved and my soul loves Him," makes it reasonably certain that the passage has no such general application. Bardaisan, again, nowhere definitely states his theory of redemption; hence a direct comparison of the two authors on this vital point is impossible, and the attempt to reconstruct the theories of each from the scattered hints in our possession would lead me far beyond the limits assigned me.

Bardaisan said :

It is more easy to do good than to abstain from (p. 7) evil. For the good is the man's own, and on this account he rejoices whenever he does good ; but the evil is the operation of the enemy and on this account when a man is troubled and not sound in his nature he does wicked things.

After developing in some detail the distinction between the true enjoyment which attends good deeds, and the false enjoyment which attends evil, Bardaisan proceeds :

(l. 24) We ought plainly to understand that the unrestrained ardor of love is called lust, which, although there may be in it rest (*i.e.* contentment, satisfaction) for a moment, nevertheless is far removed from the love which is true, whose rest is forever, incorruptible and indissoluble.<sup>43</sup>

(p. 11, l. 4) I likewise, O Philip, know well that there are men who are called Chaldeans and others who love the knowledge of this art [*i.e.* astrology], as I also once loved it. [Some believe in Destiny, some in Luck, some in Free-will.] (l. 21) But, as for myself, in my humble opinion, it seems to me that these three views are partly true and partly false. They are true in that men speak from the appearance of what they see, and they see as things seem to them ; they are false, in that the wisdom of God is richer than they,<sup>44</sup> which has established the worlds,<sup>45</sup> and created man, and has ordained the governors,<sup>46</sup> and has given to all things the power which is suitable for each one of them.

(p. 12, l. 35) But let us speak now and show with respect to

“ ٢٢ ٢٤ ٢٥ ٢٦ ٢٧ ٢٨ ٢٩ ٣٠ ٣١ ٣٢ ٣٣ ٣٤ ٣٥ ”  
 ٢٥. Compare xxv. 12: “I was justified by His kindness, and His rest is forever and ever”; iii. 5-6: “I love the Beloved, my soul loves Him; Where His rest is, there also am I”; xi. 10: “From above He hath given me rest that is incorruptible,” ٢٥ ٢٦ ٢٧. The conception “rest” or “peace” occurs about seventeen times in the Odes.

<sup>44</sup> For this conception of knowledge or wisdom as riches, compare ix. 4: “Be enriched in God the Father, and receive the thought of the Most High”; xi. 9: “I was enriched by His bounty.”

<sup>45</sup> Compare xvi. 20: “The worlds were made by His Word, and by the thought of His heart”; 12: “He spread out the heavens and fixed the stars, He fixed the creation and established it.”

<sup>46</sup> ٢٥, heads, ٢٦, governors, ٢٧, rulers, each of which, when applied to a planet, signifies a definite astrological function, like the Greek *οικοδομητής, προηγούμενος, επικρατήτωρ*, etc. I cannot determine their precise meanings.

Destiny, that it has not power over everything; for this very thing itself (p. 13) which is called Destiny is a disposition (or arrangement) of the motion<sup>47</sup> which is given to the governors and the elements<sup>48</sup> by God, and according to this motion and disposition, intelligences are changed in their descent to the soul, and souls are changed in their descent to the bodies, and this change is called the Destiny and the Horoscope<sup>49</sup> of this complex which is being sifted and purified for the advantage of that which has been receiving aid and will receive it<sup>50</sup> until the consummation of all.

The next section shows how organisms are normally ruled by their respective natures.

(p. 14, l. 10) And know ye well that, whenever nature is disturbed from its right course, its disturbance is due to Destiny, because those heads and governors upon whom depends the change that is called Horoscope, are opposed one to the other. And those on the right<sup>51</sup> are called "those which assist nature" and add to

<sup>47</sup> Disposition of the motion, [ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܗܘܢܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ], is equivalent to and is, perhaps, a translation of *σχηματισμὸς τῆς οὐρανόθεν κινήσεως*, as used by Ptol.-Procl. *Tetrab.* lii. 1. It signifies the total complex of relations constituted by the position of the heavenly bodies at any given moment.

<sup>48</sup> "Elements," [ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ] = *στοιχεῖα*, but here probably means the signs of the Zodiac. See Otho Brunfels, *De definitionibus et terminis astrologiae* (in Jul. Firm. Mat. *Astron. libb.* viii. ed. N. Pruckner, Basel, 1561), "*οὐράνια στοιχεῖα, caelestia signa.*"

<sup>49</sup> "Destiny," [ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ], *εὐμαρτυρία*. "Horoscope," [ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ], *ὠροσκόπος*. Strictly speaking, the horoscope was the sign of the Zodiac rising at the moment of birth (see the admirably clear summary of the leading doctrines of astrology given by Sextus Emp., *Adv. Astrol.* (v) 12 sqq.), but it is here used of the total effect exerted by the stars upon the infant at birth. — "The complex," probably *σύστασις*.

<sup>50</sup> [ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ ܕܗܘܢܐ ܕܡܘܨܝܘܬܐ].

<sup>51</sup> "Those on the right," etc. Precisely what Bardaisan means by "those on the right," "those on the left," I cannot explain. "Right" and "left" do not seem to bear any definite technical meaning in astrology. Boll has shown (*Sphæra*, p. 383, n. 1; *Corr. & Add.*, pp. 563-564) that "right" sometimes means "north," sometimes "south," sometimes "east," and sometimes perhaps "west." None of these seems to fit the present passage, for clearly "those on the right" are planets or constellations which are always beneficent. In astrology as known to us, Jupiter and Venus are beneficent, Mars and Saturn maleficent, and Mercury neutral. The position of a planet makes its proper influence stronger or weaker — e.g. any planet is more powerful when in its own "house," or when rising in the eastern sky than when situated elsewhere in the Zodiac, or when setting — but it cannot change its proper character.

its excellence whenever their motion helps them<sup>53</sup> and they stand in high places of the sphere in their own degrees. Those on the left are called "bad," and whenever they occupy the high places they are opposed to nature and not only injure men, but also, etc.

(p. 32, l. 4) What, then, shall we say respecting the new race of ourselves who are Christians, whom in every country and in every region the Messiah established at his coming; for lo! wherever we be, all of us are called by the one name of the Messiah—Christians; and upon one day, which is the first, we assemble ourselves together, and on the appointed days we abstain from food. . . .

(p. 33, l. 10) But wherever they be and in whatever place that they are, the laws of the countries do not separate them from the laws of their Messiah; neither does the Destiny of the Governors compel them to make use of things impure to them; but sickness and health, and riches and poverty—this which does not appertain to their Free-will, befalls them wherever they are. As the Free-will of men is not governed by the necessity of the Seven, and whenever it is governed it is able to resist its Governors, so also is this visible man not able readily to deliver himself from the commands of his Governors, for he is a slave and a subject. For if we were able to do everything we should be everything,<sup>54</sup> and if we had no power to do anything, we should be the instruments of others. But whenever God wills, anything can be, without opposition. For there is nothing that can hinder that great (p. 34) and holy will.<sup>55</sup> For even those that think they withstand it, withstand—not by their strength—but by their wickedness and error. This may last for a short time, because He is kind and permits all natures to remain as they are and govern themselves by their own will, though bound none the less by the works that have been made and by the institutions which have been established for their help.<sup>56</sup> For this orderliness and government

<sup>53</sup> "Helps them," etc., *i. e.* when their inherent beneficent influences are reinforced by their positions in the Zodiac and relations to other planets and constellations. "High places," either ἰψώματα, a certain position in the Zodiac fixed for each planet (*Ptol.-Procl.* l. 22), or μεσουρανθήματα, position on or near the meridian. "Their own degrees," each planet has two "houses" or signs properly belonging to it, and in its "houses" it has a certain position. This is the position in which its influence is strongest.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. xxvi. 11-12: "Who is able to interpret the wonders of the Lord? For he who could interpret would be resolved into (ἰεσοῖο (ἰεσοῖο) that which is interpreted."

<sup>55</sup> Cf. xviii. 10: "Thy will is perfection."

<sup>56</sup> The "works" are probably the material universe, especially the stars; the "institutions," probably, in particular, their natures.

which has been given, and mingling of one with another, softens down the violence of the natures, that they should not be altogether injurious or altogether injured, as they were injuring and injured from before the creation of the world. And a time will come when this injuriousness also which remains in them shall be brought to an end by the restraints<sup>36</sup> found in another mingling. And at the establishment of that new world, all evil motions will cease, and all rebellions will be brought to an end, and the foolish will be persuaded, and deficiencies will be filled up, and there will be peace and safety, by the bounty of Him who is the Lord of all natures.

The doctrine of the soul's descent from heaven here sketched by Bardaisan was, in one form or another, widely prevalent in antiquity. Its origin, however, is not known and the diverse forms under which it appeared have been but imperfectly investigated. It was probably always associated with the complementary idea that the soul which has thus fallen from her divine estate should seek again to regain it. It is probable, also, that, in all its forms, the soul was supposed to encounter, both in its ascent and its descent, influences severally appropriate to the several tracts of space through which it passed, although it is not possible to prove, in all cases, the existence of this element. These influences, again, might be conceived as personal or impersonal, good, bad, or both.

The doctrine was probably of Oriental origin and was introduced into the Greek world by the Orphics about the seventh century B.C.; it was adopted by the Pythagoreans, and later by Plato, who probably learned it from the Pythagoreans. But there is good reason for believing that the form in which it appears in Plato's works has been directly influenced by Oriental ideas, for it already contains the essential elements of the astrological form of the doctrine, although astrology as a science was as yet unknown to the Greek world at large. Proclus' interpretations of the myths of the

<sup>36</sup> *تربيت*, lit. "training," "education," "*résultat*," N. The world is a system whose equilibrium is maintained by a balance between opposed but equal tendencies. Its present evils can be corrected by a new combination of its elements.



*Republic* and *Timæus* are therefore correct, in so far as the general outlines are concerned, although, of course, arbitrary and fanciful in detail.

Proclus' own theory is very similar to that of Bardaisan, and I cannot supply a better commentary on Bardaisan's statements than by translating one or two short passages from Proclus' intolerably prolix commentary upon the *Republic*.<sup>67</sup>

. . . the eternally subsisting and inflexible dominion of Necessity to which the soul, when she has proceeded as far as the lowest of the orbits (*i.e.* that of the moon) becomes subject, and as she proceeds thereto she is immersed in all influences [emitted] from the celestial [bodies], in such manner that she is not only a part of the [lower] world, but is one of its lowest parts, and instead of belonging to those things which rule the Universe, she becomes one of the things ruled, just as though a philosopher were to embark in a ship and become a rower, for he would have to take from the sailors such and such orders and obey the pilot and be exposed to gales of wind, [in brief], he would, in a sense, differ in no way from the things which are moved by other things [only]. So also the soul, upon falling wholly into birth, is exposed to material spirits, is subject to the guiding spirit, depends upon the operation of the celestial orbits which severally exert their diverse influences upon her.

This is Bardaisan's doctrine with one important difference. Proclus holds that the embodied soul is absolutely subject to the influences of the stars; Bardaisan that the body only is subjected to them, and the body only in so far as not controlled by its nature; but the soul is governed by Free-will.

In another passage Proclus describes at some length the

<sup>67</sup> Procl. *in Remp.* ed. Kroll, ii. 345, 14: . . . τὴν ἐστῶσαν δεῖ καὶ ἀκίνητον βασιλείαν τῆς Ἀνάγκης, ἣν εἰς τὸ ἔσχατον προελθοῦσα τῶν περιόδων γίνεται ψυχῆ, πρὸς αὐτὴν δὲ εἰς τὸ ἔσχατον ταῖς ἀπὸ τῶν οὐρανίων περιληφθεῖσα ποιήσεσιν. ὥστε μὴ μόνον εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου μέρος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τι τῶν ἐσχάτων μερῶν καὶ τῶν διοικουμένων ἀπὸ τῶν διοικούντων τὸ πᾶν· οἷον εἰ τις φιλόσοφος εἰς ναῦν ἐμβαίη καὶ γένοιτο πλωτῆρ· ἀνάγκη γὰρ τοῦτον καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ναυτῶν τὰ καὶ τὰ ἀκούει καὶ ἔπεισθαι τῷ κυβερνήτῃ καὶ ἀπέμειν ὑποκεισθαι ζῆλαις καὶ εἶναι τρόπον τινα διαφέροντα τῶν ἑτεροκινήτων οὐδέν· οὕτως γὰρ καὶ ψυχῆ πεσοῦσα πάντως εἰς γέσεις ἔκκεται δαίμοσιν ὑλικῶς, ὑπέστρωται τῇ ἄγοντι δαίμονι, τῶν κοσμικῶν περιόδων τῆς ποιήσεως ἐξήρτηται ποιουσῶν ἄλλων ἄλλα εἰς αὐτήν.



way in which the soul's total endowment is derived from the constellations and the planets :<sup>58</sup>

What, then, comes from Klotho? He (Plato) says she ratifies the destiny we have chosen — not merely the kind of life, but also the [influences] imparted to us by the Universe. From Lachesis, indeed, from whom we got life, we get both, but Klotho ratifies them by her own threads, the products of her spinning [or twisting], in that she causes to stream upon us the gifts of the celestial sphere. . . . Not only, then, from the signs of the Zodiac, but from the constellations also which rise simultaneously with each of them there comes to us a generous largess, and from them [the] Chaldean and [the] Egyptian [astrologers] are wont to foretell many events of our lives, upon the ground that they, too, exert a great and effective fateful influence upon nativities. The influence, then, which is twisted and intertwined from all these, the ancients compared to "twisting" and "turning" together with the stretching of the thread from above downwards, and by way of a simile they, for this reason, called this Fate, Klotho (= "Twister").

He then brings [the soul] from Klotho to the spinning of Atropos, which finishes the twisting, and through the threads which it gives, makes what has been twisted incapable of being un-

<sup>58</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 342, 21 : *τί οὖν ἀπὸ τῆς Κλωθοῦς παραγίνεται ; κυρωθῆναι φησὶν ἦν εἰλόμεθα μοῖραν· οὐχὶ τὸ τῆς ζωῆς εἶδος μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἀπονεμόμενα ἡμῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ παντός. ἐκ γὰρ τῆς Λαχέσεως, παρ' ἧς καὶ βίος, τὰ συναμφοτέρα ἔχομεν· ἡ δὲ Κλωθὴ κυροῖ ταῦτα τοῖς ἑαυτῆς νήμασι καὶ κλώσασαι, ἐπιφρόνισα ἡμῖν τὰς ἐκ τῆς ἀπλανοῦς δόσεις. . . . οὐκ οὖν μόνον ἀπὸ τῶν ζωδίων, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν παρακατελλόντων ἔρχεται εἰς ἡμᾶς παντόβλη τις δόσις· ἀφ' ὧν καὶ εἰώθασι Χαλδαῖοι τε καὶ Αἰγύπτιοι πολλὰ περὶ τῶν βίων ἡμῶν προγιγνώσκουσιν, ὡς μεγάλην μοῖραν καὶ τοῦτων ἔχοντων καὶ δραστήριον περὶ τὰς γενέσεις. τὴν οὖν ἀπὸ πάντων τοῦτων εἰρομένην ποιῆσιν καὶ συμπλεκόμενῃ στρέψει καὶ περιστροφῇ μετὰ τῆς ἀνωθεν εἰς τὸ κάτω τοῦ νήματος τάσεως ἀπεικασαν οἱ παλαιοὶ καὶ ἀπεικάζαντες Κλωθὴν διὰ ταῦτα τὴν Μοῖραν ἐκάλεσαν.*

Μετὰ ταῦτα τοῖσιν ἐπὶ τὴν νῆσιν ἀγει τῆς Ἀτρόπου, πέρας ἐπιτιθεῖσαν τῇ κλώσει καὶ δι' ὧν αὐτῆ νημάτων δίδωσιν ἀμετάστροφα τὰ κλωστήνα ποιοῦσαν. παραδειγμαμένη γὰρ αὐτῆ παρὰ τῆς Κλωθοῦς τὴν νῆσιν διὰ τῶν πλανωμένων κύκλων ἀλλὰ ἐπ' ἄλλοις ἡμῖν ἐκείθεν ἐκ τῶν κινήσεων αὐτῶν προξενεῖ. καὶ ὅσῳ δὴ πλεον τὰ δεύτερα ἐπὶ τοῖς πρὸ αὐτῶν εἰς ἡμᾶς δρῶ, τόσῳ μᾶλλον ἀφουκα πάντα γίνεται τὰ μοῖρα. βαθύνοστα γὰρ ἡ ψυχὴ πλεοῖσιν ὑποκατακλίεται περιόδοις, ἀφ' ὧν οὐκέτι δυνατὸν ἀναφυγεῖν μὴ τέλος ἐπιθεῖσαν τοῖς ἀλρηθεῖσιν.

Ὅτε ἄρα δεῖ μόνον ολεσθαι τὰς γενέσεις συμπληροῦσθαι τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἢ τῶν ἄλλων ζῴων ἀπὸ τῶν ἀπλανῶν ἢ ἀπὸ τῶν πλανωμένων μόνων, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ πάντων εἰρμὸν εἶνα γίνεσθαι καὶ τάξιν ἡμῖν ἐφήκουσαν, καὶ διὰ τῶν πλανωμένων ἡμῖν τὰ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀπλανῶν δίδεσθαι, τῶν τε κύκλων τῶν ἐκεῖ καὶ τῶν ἐν ἀνοῖσι μοιρῶν καὶ τῶν ἀστέρων καὶ τῶν ὀλων ζωδίων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων συστάσεων.

twisted. For upon receiving from Klotho the spinning, she contributes to us, by means of the planetary orbits, various [gifts] thence, one upon another, from their motions. And the more these secondary [influences] work upon us on top of those which preceded them, the more inevitable do the decrees of destiny become. For as the soul descends lower, she becomes subject to more and yet more orbits, from which she cannot escape until she has brought what she elected to its completion.

One should not, therefore, suppose that the nativities of men or of other living creatures, are filled up from the fixed stars or the planets exclusively, but that from them all results a single train and series reaching to us, and that the [influence] of the fixed stars, and of the circles on high and of their degrees, and of the stars, and of the signs taken as wholes, and of the other constructions [such as the triangles, etc., inscribed in the Zodiac], are given to us through the planets.

Turning now from Bardaisan to the Odes, I shall endeavor to interpret some of the more difficult Odes in the light of Bardaisan's doctrines.

The twelfth Ode runs as follows :

- (1) The Word <sup>60</sup> of truth hath filled me  
that I may speak of him ; <sup>60</sup>
- (2) As a stream of water streams the truth from my mouth,  
and my lips show forth his fruits.
- (3) He hath increased in me his knowledge;  
For the mouth of the Lord is the true Word,  
and the door of His light.
- (4) The Most High hath given him to His worlds—  
the interpreters of His beauty,  
the narrators of His praise,  
the confessors of His counsel,  
the heralds of His thought,  
the chasteners of His works,<sup>61</sup>
- (5) The subtlety of the Word cannot be told;  
Like his subtlety is his piercingness,<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Read without points.

<sup>60</sup> For  $\text{ܘܠܗܝܘܬܗ}$  read  $\text{ܘܠܗܝܘܬܗܘܢ}$ .

<sup>61</sup> Read plural points.

<sup>62</sup> V. 5 is unintelligible. I have followed, reluctantly, Labourt's reading :  $\text{ܘܠܗܝܘܬܗܘܢ ܘܠܗܝܘܬܗܘܢ ܘܠܗܝܘܬܗܘܢ}$ , which yields excellent sense, but is otherwise difficult to defend. [Cf. *Wisdom*, 7, 22 t. — Ed.]

- (6) and endless is his course.  
 Never doth he fail  
 but steadfast stands,  
 And knows not his fall  
 nor the way of it.
- (7) For as his work is,  
 such is his final end.<sup>63</sup>  
 He is light and the dawning of thought:
- (8) The worlds through him talk one with another,  
 in converse were those who were silent.<sup>64</sup>  
 From him came love and concord,
- (9) and they told one another whatever they had [to tell].  
 They were penetrated by the Word,
- (10) and they knew him that made them,  
 because they were in concord.  
 For [it was] the voice of the Most High [that] spake to them,  
 His meaning sped by his agency.<sup>65</sup>
- (11) For the dwelling-place of the Word is man,  
 and his truth is love ;
- (12) Blessed are they whom he has made to know all things,  
 They know the Lord in His truth.

This beautiful poem might well be entitled "An Ode to the Word." The poet feels himself (vv. 1-3) inspired by the Word which issues forth from the mouth of God, and he is impelled to sing of his nature and his work. He is Light and Thought (v. 7); he pervades the universe (vv. 5, 6<sup>a</sup>); nothing can resist him (v. 6<sup>b-c</sup>); through his influence upon the "worlds" they have become the means of revealing God's beauty, praise, counsel, thought, and of "chastening" His works (v. 4); they have acquired the power of communicating to one another their thoughts. But intelligence, consciousness, is not the only effect of the Word's activity; he also inspires love and concord (v. 9<sup>a</sup>); through that love

<sup>63</sup> "Final end," *i.e.* the Word will continue the work of reconciliation in which he is now engaged until all discord has disappeared.

<sup>64</sup> V. 8. "In converse": for the "Word" the poet has used ~~the~~ consistently throughout this Ode. "Those who were silent" are perhaps those on the "left," see note 51. Or the ppl. may be pluperfect.

<sup>65</sup> *I.e.* by that of the Word. ~~the~~ here seems nearly equivalent to *εμπνετα*.

the worlds become aware of their Creator (v. 10<sup>a</sup> b), for the Word is the voice, the "meaning," the thought of God (v. 10<sup>a</sup> d). Yet the same Word that rules the stars in their courses, dwells in man, and his truth is love (v. 11). Blessed indeed must they be who feel themselves possessed of such knowledge as this (v. 12).<sup>65</sup>

To any one who has any acquaintance with the literature of astrology the "worlds" as described in v. 4 will suggest the planets and constellations as conceived by the pious astrologer, and it will be remembered that "worlds" is the word used by Bardaisan for the planets [note 45]. These are not Valentinian æons. The æons have no such functions; they are shut up within the limits of the Pleroma, cut off from the lower world by the Horos, and have nothing to do immediately with the redemption of the world accomplished by the Soter and by Jesus. But certain elements of the picture certainly are Valentinian. In the western Valentinian system of which Irenæus has preserved the best account, after the æons have been produced by the Propator:<sup>67</sup>

The Holy Spirit taught them to give thanks on being all rendered equal among themselves, and led them to a state of true repose. Thus then they tell us that the æons were constituted equal to each other in form and sentiment, so that all became as Nous, and Logos, and Anthropos, and Christus. The female æons, too, became all as Aletheia, and Zoe, and Spiritus, and Ecclesia.

<sup>65</sup> With this description of the cosmological functions of the Word, compare the Epistle to Diognetus, chap. 7 (Lightfoot-Harmer's translation), [God sent to earth] "not a subaltern, or angel, or ruler, or one of those that direct the affairs of earth, or one of those who have been entrusted with the dispensations in heaven, but the very Artificer and Creator of the universe Himself, by whom He made the heavens, by whom He enclosed the sea in its proper bounds, whose mysteries all the elements faithfully observe, from whom [the sun] hath received even the measure of the courses of the day to keep them, whom the moon obeys as He bids her shine by night, whom the stars obey as they follow the course of the moon, by whom all things are ordered and bounded and placed in subjection, the heavens and the things that are in the heavens, the earth, and the things that are in the earth, the sea, and the things that are in the sea, fire, air, abyss, the things that are in the heights, the things that are in the depths, the things that are between the two."

This Epistle exhibits other points of contact with the sphere of ideas common both to Bardaisan and to the Odes.

<sup>67</sup> *Ante-Nic. Fathers*, Am. ed., vol. i., p. 318.

Everything, then, being thus established and brought into a state of perfect rest, they next tell us that these beings sang praises with great joy to the Propator, who himself shared in the abounding exultation. Then, out of gratitude for the great benefit which had been conferred upon them, the whole Pleroma of the æons, with one design and desire, and with the concurrence of Christ and the Holy Spirit, their Father also setting the seal of his approval on their conduct, brought together whatever each one had in himself of the greatest beauty and preciousness — (and therefrom produced Jesus).

The pictures are similar but not the same, yet they contain striking identities of thought. The Valentinian æons sang praise because Christ and the Holy Spirit have *given them such knowledge of God as they are able to receive, and have made them equal*, and they resolve to contribute each *the best he has*<sup>68</sup> to the nature of Jesus. The Worlds in the Ode receive from the Word *knowledge of God, love and "concord,"* literally "*equality*,"<sup>69</sup> and therefore talk to one another, and tell *each what*<sup>70</sup> *he has*. Certainly, these two pictures are inspired by one and the same original.

I have quoted this Ode partly in order to show how precisely it conforms to what we would expect of Bardaisan as regards its doctrine (compare Haase's summary, p. 164), but chiefly to establish the fact that "worlds," in this passage at least, probably means "planets." It shows no other points of contact with the Book of the Laws.<sup>71</sup>

The nineteenth Ode is one of the most difficult in the collection, and has not yet been satisfactorily interpreted as a whole. A leading difficulty is the first word of v. 6 𐤀𐤃𐤁, for which no good sense has been found. For this I read 𐤀𐤃𐤁, "formed," which, when written in the Estrangela character is easily confused with 𐤀𐤃𐤁. The emendation is further confirmed by Lactantius' quotation:<sup>72</sup> "Salomon


<sup>68</sup> *ἕκαστος εἶχεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ κάλλιστον καὶ ἀσθηρότατον.*

<sup>69</sup> 𐤀𐤃𐤁

<sup>70</sup> 𐤀𐤃𐤁 𐤀𐤃𐤁 𐤀𐤃𐤁 𐤀𐤃𐤁

<sup>71</sup> But note the description of the work of the Word, as conceived by Bardaisan, which is given by Moses bar Cepha, p. 198.

<sup>72</sup> *Inst. Div.*, iv. 12, ap. Harris, p. 8.

ita dicit : Infirmatus est uterus virginis et accepit foetum et gravata est, et facta est in multa miseratione mater virgo." *Infirmatus est* is meaningless, but *informatus est* represents  with a fair degree of accuracy.

- (1) A cup of milk was offered to me,  
and I drank it in the sweetness of the kindness of the Lord.
- (2) The Son is the Cup,  
and He who was milked, the Father.
- (3) And the Holy Spirit milked Him because His breasts were full  
and it was not fitting His milk should go to waste.<sup>73</sup>
- (4) The Holy Spirit opened Her [the Spirit's] bosom,  
and mixed the milk from the two breasts of the Father,  
And gave the mixture to the worlds<sup>74</sup> without their knowing it,  
(5) and they that received in its fullness are they on the right.<sup>75</sup>
- (6) They moulded the body of the virgin  
and she received conception and bore ;  
The virgin became a mother with many mercies.
- (7) She travailed and bore a son without any pain,  
(8) and since there was none, she was empty ;<sup>76</sup>  
And she sought no midwife, for He kept her safe,<sup>77</sup>  
like a man, she bore voluntarily.
- (9) She bore in joy<sup>78</sup>  
and acquired<sup>79</sup> in great power,
- (10) and loved in safety<sup>80</sup>  
and kept in kindness  
and showed forth in majesty.  
Hallelujah.



<sup>73</sup> So also Fleming.

<sup>74</sup> Read plural points as suggested by the pl. part.

<sup>75</sup> See note 51.

<sup>76</sup> Read .

<sup>77</sup> , *ḥṣawwen*, e. g. I Tim. 4 15,  = *σεαυτὸν σώσει*.

<sup>78</sup>  corresponds to *ἔδειξίς*, etc., of which I can make no sense here. I have followed Labourt's suggestion and read .

<sup>79</sup> I suspect that the original text read : *ἐκνήσατο ἐν κράτει μεγάλης, ἔτεκεν ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει*, that *ἐκνήσατο* was corrupted into *ἐκτῆσατο* and the order of the verses changed to suit the sense. For the rare aor. mid. of the verb cf. Himerius, *Or.* vii. 4, *ὡς τὰς εὐτυχεῖς ὠδίνας καὶ κνησαμένην καὶ λύσσαα*.

<sup>80</sup> , *σωτηρία*.

Notwithstanding the strange metaphors, so offensive to our taste, the theory of the Incarnation here set forth is perfectly intelligible. Verses 1 and 2 are introductory and serve as a key to the understanding of what follows. The milk which the poet has received through the Son as the Cup, is the divine influence or Word of which he seems so vividly conscious, and to which he refers so often. In vv. 3 and 4 the Holy Spirit draws from the Father a similar divine influence or substance, mixes it in "her" own bosom and gives it to the planets; those on the right,<sup>51</sup> *i.e.* the beneficent planets, receive it in its fullness. The planets then "mould" or "form" or "shape" the body, literally belly, of the virgin, and she brings forth a son, without pain because she was empty — the precise meaning of this conception I shall discuss presently. She needed no midwife; God protected her from all harm during the process (vv. 6-8). The poem closes with the crescendo of vv. 9-10.

That this theory, and the language in which it is expressed, is in general agreement with the Book of the Laws, is apparent; especially noteworthy are the expressions "the worlds" and "those on the right." It remains to adduce further evidence which will directly connect it with Bardaisan.

Ephraem gives a brief account of Bardaisan's theory: <sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> The fact that this distinction between planets as on the right and on the left, occurs both in Bardaisan and in the Odes, but not, so far as I have been able to discover, in Ptolemy, is significant (see note 51).

<sup>52</sup> Hom. *lv.*, *op. cit.*, li. p. 557:

ܩܪܫܳܐ ܕܳܘܨܳܬܳܐ ܕܳܫܳܘܳܒܳܐ ܕܳܐܳܫܳܘܳܪܳܐ ܕܳܐܳܒܳܐ ܕܳܡܳܪܳܝܳܐ ܕܳܥܳܠܳܘܳܬܳܐ  
ܕܳܐܳܒܳܐ ܕܳܡܳܪܳܝܳܐ ܕܳܥܳܠܳܘܳܬܳܐ ܕܳܐܳܒܳܐ ܕܳܡܳܪܳܝܳܐ ܕܳܥܳܠܳܘܳܬܳܐ  
ܕܳܐܳܒܳܐ ܕܳܡܳܪܳܝܳܐ ܕܳܥܳܠܳܘܳܬܳܐ ܕܳܐܳܒܳܐ ܕܳܡܳܪܳܝܳܐ ܕܳܥܳܠܳܘܳܬܳܐ  
ܕܳܐܳܒܳܐ ܕܳܡܳܪܳܝܳܐ ܕܳܥܳܠܳܘܳܬܳܐ ܕܳܐܳܒܳܐ ܕܳܡܳܪܳܝܳܐ ܕܳܥܳܠܳܘܳܬܳܐ  
ܕܳܐܳܒܳܐ ܕܳܡܳܪܳܝܳܐ ܕܳܥܳܠܳܘܳܬܳܐ ܕܳܐܳܒܳܐ ܕܳܡܳܪܳܝܳܐ ܕܳܥܳܠܳܘܳܬܳܐ  
ܕܳܐܳܒܳܐ ܕܳܡܳܪܳܝܳܐ ܕܳܥܳܠܳܘܳܬܳܐ ܕܳܐܳܒܳܐ ܕܳܡܳܪܳܝܳܐ ܕܳܥܳܠܳܘܳܬܳܐ.

Pray, then, my brethren, for the disciples of Bardaisan, that they may not rave again, as when like children they say something flowed down from the Father of Life and the mother conceived a hidden son and bore him and he was called the Son of the Living<sup>83</sup> One. — Holy Jesus, glory be to Thy Nativity! And in that he said that it was impossible for *one* ever to germinate, sprout, and procreate, our Lord he called a 'Nature born from between two,' in the mystery of a marriage. But even as our Lord's body was not born from between two, how much more pure must His divine nature be, for He is "light from light."

"Something flowed down," literally "flowed and descended," suggests that Ephraem had before him the very milk simile of Ode xix. But too much stress must not be laid upon his phraseology. "Flow" is used in Syriac of almost any easy, unopposed motion, and "something" does not necessarily mean more than that Ephraem found Bardaisan hard to understand. But the allusion to the "mystery of a marriage" is more significant. The word which I have rendered "marriage" may have a more literal sense; it certainly is well fitted to express what the poet describes in v. 4. There then follows an allusion to a widespread notion — "the mixture was given to the worlds without their knowing it." The theory that Christ's Incarnation was concealed from the powers of this world occurs early in the second century in Ignatius' Epistle to the Ephesians: "And hidden from the prince of this world were the virginity of Mary and her child-bearing, and likewise also the death of the Lord<sup>84</sup> — three mysteries to be cried aloud — the which were wrought in the silence of God. How, then, were they made manifest to the æons? *A star shone* forth in the heavens above all the stars; and its light was unutterable, and its strangeness caused amazement; and all the rest of the constellations, with the sun and moon, formed themselves into a chorus about the star; but the star itself far outshone them

<sup>83</sup> "The Son of the Living One." Compare Ode iii. 11: "He who finds pleasure in the Living One, will become living." The context shows that the Living One is Christ, which protects Harris' emendation (the *sing.* for the *pl.*).

<sup>84</sup> Cf. I Cor. 2 s.



all; and there was perplexity to know whence came this strange appearance which was so unlike them.”<sup>85</sup> The notion that souls must encounter the divinities of the planets in their descent and ascent was common among the Gnostics.<sup>86</sup> But here it has a peculiar significance. In Bardaisan’s system, the intelligences in their descent to the souls and the souls in their descent to the bodies, pass through the spheres of the several planets<sup>87</sup> and receive from them certain modifications, the total result of which is determined by the horoscope, or relations of the several heavenly bodies, one to another, at the moment of birth, and is seen in the personal peculiarities of individuals.<sup>88</sup> The divine Christ in his descent must, of course, escape these influences and appear on earth precisely as he left heaven.

Why, then, do the planets act as the instrument of God’s will in bringing about the virgin birth? Because, again, in Bardaisan’s system their influences represent the sum total of what we call nowadays mechanical laws. All that is not under the control of Free-will, which is the law, so to speak, for conscious intelligences, or of nature (*φύσις*), which is the law for organisms, is subject to the control of the planets. The changes in the Virgin’s body which were prerequisite to the accomplishment of the virgin birth would not be produced by the *φύσις* of her body—they must, therefore, be produced by the planets.

The nature of these changes is not further described in the Ode—the “worlds” simply “mould” the body. But other sources complement this statement in a very satisfactory way.

Ephraem in his commentary upon the Epistles of St. Paul, which has been preserved in Armenian, gives quotations from an apocryphal Epistle of the Corinthians to Paul, together with a commentary in which he interprets the doctrines there expressed as those of Bardaisan. (Italics indicate

<sup>85</sup> *Ig. Eph.* ch. 19; tr. Lightfoot.

<sup>86</sup> See above, p. 182.

<sup>87</sup> The influence of the planets is the more important; no doubt that of the signs of the Zodiac and of other constellations was supposed to cooperate.

<sup>88</sup> See above, p. 180.

the quotations, as distinguished by Zahn<sup>89</sup> from Ephraem's commentary.)

"And the words which they speak and teach are erroneous, namely: One should not, say they, accept the Prophets, but the Gospel. And they call God not almighty, that is, they say that he who spoke through the Prophets is no almighty God. And they say there is no resurrection of the body; and of man they say he is not made by God at all, but by the seven Guides. And they say our Lord did not come with an earthly body, but with a heavenly body. And they do not admit that he was born of the Virgin Mary; for they say he went through her as something not [coming] from her. And they regard the world not as the creation of God, but of certain angels, namely, of the seven Guides. But this doctrine is that of the school of Bardaisan."

Evidently Ephraem knew Bardaisanites who held that Christ went through the Virgin's body without receiving anything of her.

In the dialogue "On the right faith in God," formerly ascribed to Origen, a certain Marinus, a Bardaisanite, appears as one of the speakers. The book was written about A.D. 300.<sup>90</sup> It cannot be trusted as evidence for the doctrines of Bardaisan himself; it is not even certain that it faithfully reproduces the views of the Bardaisanites of that age.<sup>91</sup> It is of value only when confirmed by other evidence.

Marinus holds: "that he (Christ) took a heavenly<sup>92</sup> body . . . the Word himself became flesh without taking anything from without in addition . . . he himself suffered in appearance . . . he came from heaven with his body . . . as the angels appeared to Abraham, and ate and drank with him, so also did he . . . we confess that he [came] through

<sup>89</sup> Translated from the German version given by Zahn, *Gesch. d. NT. Kanons*, II. 597.

<sup>90</sup> *Der Dialog des Adamantius περί της εις Θεον όρθής πίστewς. Gr. Chr. Schrift.*, vol. IV., ed. D. W. H. van de Sande Bakhuizen, p. xvi.

<sup>91</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. xvii.

<sup>92</sup> *Op. cit.*, 170. 6: ότι ούρανιον σώμα έλαβε. 174. 9: ό λόγος αυτός σάρξ έγένετο ούδέν έξωθεν προσλαβών. 1. 22: δοκείσει πέπονθεν αυτός. 176. 6: από ούρανών ήλθεν έχων σώμα. 178. 26: ώς και οι άγγελοι τώ 'Αβραάμ ώφθησαν, και έφαγον και έπιων μετ' αυτού, ούτω και αυτός. 190. 24: και ήμεις όμολογουμεν ότι διά Μαρίας, άλλ' ούκ έκ Μαρίας, ώσπερ γάρ ύδωρ διά σωλήνος διέρχεται, μηδέν προσλαμβάνων, ούτω και ό λόγος διά Μαρίας και ούκ έκ Μαρίας.

Mary, but not of Mary, for just as water goes through a pipe without taking on anything, so [came] the Word through Mary, and not of Mary."<sup>88</sup>

Thus it was that "she bore a son without any pain, and since there was none, she was empty"; that is, the absence of pain proved that the conditions to which pain would be due were lacking. The remainder of the Ode calls for no special discussion.

The milk simile is probably a translation into Christian language of an ancient myth, several accounts of which have reached us. The earliest detailed account is that of Porphyry:<sup>84</sup> [Homer speaks of the solstitial signs, Cancer and Capricorn as the "gates of the sun."] "Now Capricorn and Cancer are near the Milky Way, constituting its limits, Cancer the northern and Capricorn the southern. And according to Pythagoras the souls are a 'tribe of dreams,' which, he says [*al.* they say] assemble in the Milky Way, and it is so named from the [souls] which are nourished with milk when they fall into birth. For which reason also, he says, necromancers offer the souls a libation of honey mingled with milk, with the idea that they are induced to come to birth for the sake of the pleasure (or savor), because milk naturally is engendered along with them." Proclus (*in Remp.*, Kroll, ii. p. 129, 14 sqq.) repeats Porphyry's account with some variations. Iamblichus, Porphyry's pupil, gives a clue to the source of the tale<sup>86</sup> — Heraclides of Pontus regarded the Milky Way as the place of the souls, whence

<sup>88</sup> So also Philoxenus, *ap. Cureton, Spic. Syr.* p. vi. : "There are some of them who say that he sent down the Word a body from heaven, as thou saidest just now, and didest assent to thy teacher Bardesan. . . . Because thou hast not comprehended the mind of Bardesan, who assumeth the body of Christ to be from heaven."

<sup>84</sup> *De ant. nympharum*, ch. 28: Αιγόκερος δὲ καὶ Καρκίως περὶ τὸν γαλαξίαν τὰ πέρατα αὐτοῦ εἰληχότες, Καρκίως μὲν τὰ βόρεια Αἰγόκερος δὲ τὰ νότια· δῆμος δ' ὄνειρων κατὰ Πυθαγόραν αἱ ψυχαὶ ἄς συνάγεσθαι φησιν (*al.* φασι) εἰς τὸν γαλαξίαν τὸν οὕτω προσαγορευόμενον ἀπὸ τῶν γάλακτι τρεφόμενων ἕταν εἰς γένεσιν πέσωσιν· ᾧ καὶ σπένδειν αὐταῖς τοῦ ψυχαγωγοῦ μέλι κεκραμένον γάλακτι, ὡς ἂν δὲ ἥδονῆς εἰς γένεσιν μεμελετηκυίας ἔρχεσθαι αἰς συγκυεῖσθαι τὸ γάλα πέφυκεν.

<sup>86</sup> Stobæus, *Ecl. phys.*, i. 52; p. 904, ed. Heeren: καὶ τοῖσι 'Ηρακλείδῃν μὲν τὸν Ποσειδῶνα ἀφορίζειν περὶ τῆς (sic) γαλαξίας.

they came to earth. Heraclides was a pupil of Plato; his interest in the mystical aspect of Pythagoreanism is well known (Zeller, *Phil. d. Gr.* ii. 1, Ed. 4, p. 989, 3 ; 1034 sqq.); he must have had trustworthy sources of information, and I have no doubt that this is a genuine fragment of early Pythagorean doctrine. The Orphics had taught that the soul is "breath"; the Pythagoreans refined the conception — it is a luminous substance, it is nourished by the dim light diffused in the Milky Way, and this is the meaning of the name, for this light is the heavenly milk designed for souls. So in the Orphic burial tablets found in southern Italy and Crete (Miss Harrison, *Proleg. to the Study of Greek Religion*, pp. 660-63) the soul avows itself a "child of Earth and of Starry Heaven" (*γῆς παῖς εἰμι καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἀσπερόεντος*). Upon returning to its proper home the soul will of course again need nourishment, and so I would interpret the sentence found in other, similar tablets, "a kid thou art (or, I have) fallen into milk" — the departed soul has fallen into the "milk" of the sky.

It is not at all impossible that the author of the Odes knew of this myth in its Greek form; Bardaisan probably did, as he was a man of learning.<sup>96a</sup> But he may have drawn it from other sources. The origin of the Orphic-Pythagorean doctrines has not yet been discovered, but it is in my opinion certain that an Oriental element enters into them.

The author of the Odes believed, as at least some Pythagoreans did, that souls consist of light or are robed in a body of light (see p. 203), and it may well be that the ancient explanation of the celestial "milk" as being the light with which souls are fed suggested milk to him as an appropriate simile for the divine substance which proceeded from the Father and Holy Spirit and issued through the Virgin into the world as Jesus.

The theory of the virgin birth presupposed by this Ode is known to be in part Valentinian. Irenæus gives it in almost the words used by Marinus, "he who went through Mary

<sup>96a</sup> Sozomen's language (see note 18) implies some affinity between Bardaisan's doctrine and the Orphic-Pythagorean theories.

like water through a tube."<sup>98</sup> But the doctrine of the Ode is not, as a whole, Valentinian. In the system described by Irenæus, the Jesus who is thus born of the Virgin is not the Son of God, but son of the Demiurge; the divine Christ descends upon him at his baptism. But in the Ode he is the Son of God Himself. Here, again, we have that blending of Gnostic and orthodox elements which I found in Ode xii., and which is believed to have been characteristic of Bardaisan.<sup>98a</sup>

Ode xxiv. can be interpreted if viewed in the same light.

- (1) The Dove flew upon the Messiah,  
because He was her Head;  
She sang over Him,  
and her voice was heard.
- (2) The inhabitants were afraid,  
and the sojourners were moved;
- (3) The birds dropped their wings,  
and the creeping things died in their holes.

<sup>98</sup> *Cont. hæc.*, i. 7; *Gr. ap. Epiph. (Panar.)*, i. 2. 31, 24 (cf. *Hæc.* i. 1, p. 356): *εἶται δὲ τοῦτον τὸν διὰ Μαρίας διοδεύσαντα, καθάπερ ὕδωρ διὰ σωλήνος ὀδεύει.*

<sup>98a</sup> Hippolytus, *Hæc.* vi. 36, says that, according to the western Valentinians, the body of Jesus was "psychic, and therefore, at his baptism, the Spirit as a dove descended, i.e. the Logos of his mother on high, Wisdom (Sophia), and came to be with the (γέγονε τῷ) psychic [Jesus] and raised him from the dead. . . . But those of the East, among whom are Axionicus and Ardesianes [= Bardaisan], hold that the body of the Saviour was spiritual, for the Holy Spirit came upon Mary, that is, Wisdom, and the power of the Highest, the constructive craft (δημιουργικὴ τέχνη) in order that what the Spirit had given to Mary might be moulded (διαπλασθῆ)."  
According to Hippolytus also, then, Bardaisan held the orthodox doctrine, implied in Odes xix. and xxiv., that Christ was divine from his birth and did not acquire divinity at his baptism. The theory of the incarnation which follows is ascribed both to Axionicus and to Bardaisan and may represent Axionicus' conceptions more faithfully than Bardaisan's. But it is closely akin to the theory of Ode xix. The milk is represented by the Holy Spirit, the operation of the "worlds" by the "power of the Highest or constructive craft," which "moulds"—the very word of the Ode if my emendation be correct—"what the Spirit had given Mary." In the Ode the stars mould the body of Mary; the body of Jesus is, it would seem, formed in the bosom of the Spirit.

- The abysses were opened,  
and were spurned :
- (4) They were crying to the Lord like women in labor,  
and no food was given them,  
because there was none for them.
- (5) The abysses were sealed with the seal of the Lord :  
They perished by His Thought,<sup>97</sup>  
that had been from of old,  
For they were corrupt from the beginning,  
and the final end of their corruption was life.
- (7) There perished from among them,  
all things that were defective ;  
Because it was not possible to give them the Word,  
that they might abide.
- (8) The Lord has destroyed the thoughts,  
of all those that had not the truth ;
- (9) For they were defective in wisdom,  
those that were exalted in their hearts,  
And they were rejected,  
because they had not the truth.
- (10) For the Lord has disclosed His way,  
and spread abroad His grace,  
And those that have comprehended it,  
know His holiness. Hallelujah.

As Ode xii. sketches in broad outlines the regenerating work of the Word, so this Ode depicts a certain stage in that work — the stage initiated by the descent of the Dove. But in v. 5, with one of those rapid transitions so characteristic of the writer, his thought leaps forward to its final consummation.

The clearest statement of Bardaisan's theory of the work of the Word is given by Moses bar Cepha.<sup>98</sup> He held that the five elements, fire, air, water, light, and darkness, had become, for some reason not given, commingled one with another ; darkness tried to rise from its place below and

<sup>97</sup> Read *ܐܘܪܘܚܐ*; see the parallel from *Ecclus.*, quoted p. 200.

<sup>98</sup> Translated into French by Nau, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-62.



The "abysses" are the vast gulfs of air, vapor, and fire, remnants of primeval chaos, which separate heaven from earth. . It is a Jewish conception, but is found in this sense in Clement of Alexandria.<sup>100</sup> "'Abyss' is something the essential nature of which is unlimited, although limited by the power of God. So the material substances, from which the several genera and their species come, have been termed 'abysses,' for he would not have called water alone 'abyss.' And yet matter is allegorically described as 'water of the abyss.'" It is reasonably certain that this is a Gnostic, and probably it is a Valentinian definition, as Clement was largely influenced by that sect.<sup>101</sup>

As vv. 2-3<sup>a, b</sup> describe the effect of the Dove's descent upon animals so 3<sup>c</sup> and 4 describe its effect upon the abysses. They open as the Dove descends through them, probably to devour it,—they are "spurned," thrust aside. Verses 3<sup>c</sup> and 4 describe the internecine strife of the elements in a vivid picture, and the effect of the divine influence upon them. Since the days of Heraclitus men had been familiar with the conception of the elements as consisting of opposites which, when brought into contact, mutually destroy one another, thus giving rise to the ceaseless round of transformations which we see.<sup>102</sup> This is, perhaps, the aspect of Bardaisan's theory which Ephraem designates by the word **مضاد**, "opposing" or "conflicting" substances;<sup>103</sup> it is that which is expressed in the Book of the Laws by describing the "natures" as "injuring and injured from before

<sup>100</sup> *Ex Script. Proph. Eclogæ*, ed. Potter, ii., p. 990 : *ἀβυσσοὶ γὰρ τὸ ἀπεράττωτον κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν ὑπόστασιν, περαιούμενον δὲ τῇ θυνάμει τοῦ Θεοῦ. αἱ τοίνυν οὐσίαι ὕλικαι ἀφ' ὧν τὰ ἐπὶ μέρους γένηται καὶ τὰ τούτων εἶδη γίνονται, ἀβυσσοὶ εἰρητταί· ἐπει μόνον τὸ ὕδωρ οὐκ ἐν εἴπεν ἀβυσσον. καίτοι καὶ ὕδωρ ἀβυσσοῦ (ἀβύσσου?) ἢ ὕλη ἀλληγορεῖται.*

<sup>101</sup> So also in the Gnostic "Acts of Philip," the apostle prays just before his death, "Come now, Jesus, and give me the eternal crown of victory over every antagonistic principle and power, and let not their dark mist enwrap me, that I may pass over the waters of fire and all the abyss." *Acta Phil.*, Tisch., p. 98, *op. Anz, op. cit.*, p. 40, n. 2; cf. also note 66.

<sup>102</sup> *E.g. Arist. de gen. et corr.*, II, chapters iii. and iv. *Meteor.*, iv. 1.

<sup>103</sup> See above, p. 166.



the creation of the world."<sup>104</sup> But here the poet depicts it in a vivid image—the abysses have been engaged in devouring one another, they have been checked, they “cry to the Lord” in a state of agonized turmoil and confusion, “like women in travail.” But their cry is unheeded, “as is the Word’s work, such is his final end” (Ode xii. 7, p. 186); finally, the “abysses are sealed with the seal of the Lord,” or, in the words of the Book of the Laws, “this injuriousness<sup>105</sup> also which remains in them, shall be brought to an end by the restraints which are in another mixture.” The Ode proceeds: “They perished by His thought, those that had been of old,” which is almost a translation of Ecclesiasticus 43 23: λογισμῶ αὐτοῦ ἐκώπασεν ἄβυσσον; in Jerome’s translation: “cogitatione sua placavit abyssum,” and the idea is certainly the same. The confused and warring elements are brought to rest, their warfare stayed, by the thought or will of God. “They were corrupt<sup>106</sup> from the beginning, and the completion of their corruption<sup>107</sup> was life”—this present world must pass away to make way for a new heaven and a new earth.<sup>108</sup> “All defective things” must perish; so the Book of the Laws, “deficiencies will be filled up”;<sup>109</sup> “it was not possible to give them the Word that they might abide,” as in Ode xii. 4, the Word was given to the worlds. In vv. 8, 9, 10, the poet turns from the cosmological to the anthropological aspect of the work of the Word.

The chief difficulty of this Ode lies in the opening verses. The descent of the Dove is an event of such commanding import that even the dumb beasts recognize it.<sup>109a</sup> This is a

<sup>104</sup> Note that the word “natures,” φύσεις, *ἕξω*, is the correct technical term for the elements conceived as possessing active properties. Conceived as components they are στοιχεῖα.

<sup>105</sup> See p. 182.

<sup>106</sup> διεφθαρμένα (?).

<sup>107</sup> τὸ τέλος τῆς φθορᾶς (?).

<sup>108</sup> See p. 182, and Ode xxii. 11: “That everything might be dissolved and then renewed.”

<sup>109</sup> *ἕξω* ← *ἕξω*.

<sup>109a</sup> Similar phenomena are described as attending Christ’s birth, Protev. Jac. 18, 2. See Duensing, *Zur 2<sup>ten</sup> Ode Salomos ZNTW*, xii., p. 86.

Gnostic idea, for in the Valentinian system the divine Christ does not come to earth until the moment of the baptism. But the Dove here does not represent the Christ, for "the Messiah," *i.e.* the Christ, is "her head," her superior. Again an indication of the curious blending of orthodox and Gnostic ideas so characteristic of these Odes.

This same group of astrological conceptions affords a perfectly intelligible interpretation of that very difficult Ode, the 23d. As it offers no special difficulties of translation, I give merely a paraphrase. The "thought" or "will" of God which descends like a letter, is the Word descending to be born of the Virgin. "Many hands" of the Powers of the Spaces, the Abysses, rush to seize it,<sup>110</sup> but the seal upon it protects it from them. It is received by a "wheel," the great "wheel of the Zodiac" (ζωδιακὸς κύκλος), which bears the seven planets to which in Ode xix. also the descending Christ is committed.<sup>111</sup> Upon the wheel is a "sign of the Kingdom and the Government," probably the Star of Bethlehem. At v. 12 the poet's prophetic eye looks forward from the moment at which the Word entered into the system of nature, here symbolized by the system of planets revolving in the Zodiac which, according to Bardaisan, govern the operations of mechanical law, to the more remote results of that stupendous event. The regeneration of the system of natural law inevitably carries with it the triumph of the Gospel; it sweeps away all obstacles and makes "a broad path." "The head went down to the feet, for down to the feet ran the wheel and that which was a sign upon it." "The head"<sup>112</sup> is probably Christ as the Head of the Church

<sup>110</sup> Compare the effect of the appearance of the Star upon the other stars in the passage from Ignatius quoted, p. 191.

<sup>111</sup> Porphyry, *de ant. nymph.* ch. 22, ascribes to the θεόλογοι a doctrine that descending souls enter the world through the Zodiac in the sign Cancer; departing souls ascend through Capricorn. But others of the θεόλογοι represent the souls as descending through the moon and ascending through the sun; *ibid.* ch. 29.

<sup>112</sup> xvii. 14: "They were to me as my own members, and I was their head." So in xlii. 18, when Christ descends into Sheol, Death lets go the "feet and the head," *i.e.* Christ and the dead who are to be saved.

— the conception of Christians as the body of Christ frequently recurs in the Odes — the feet are probably the souls in Sheol yet to be redeemed. The revolution of the wheel, which represents the operation of the Gospel under the forms of regenerated natural law, carries Christ there also.

I have, I think, established a certain degree of congruity between the doctrines of the Odes and those of Bardaisan. I am not aware of any demonstrable points of incongruity. It is, indeed, true that the doctrine of Free-will does not definitely appear in the Odes while it is one of the salient features of the Book of the Laws. But this is not, I think, an objection of any force. The poet's thoughts are dominated by the consciousness of the work of grace in his own heart and he has no special occasion to deal with Free-will as such. In only one passage is it, perhaps, implied: x. 3, "to convert the souls of them that were willing to come to Him." Nor is the doctrine of predestination, which is definitely taught in the Odes (*e.g.* viii. 14–22), incompatible with the theory that they are the work of Bardaisan, for believers in predestination are often advocates of Free-will. Bardaisan himself recognizes<sup>113</sup> that Free-will subsists only by the sufferance of God and will prove no obstacle to the final regeneration of all things, and he also recognizes the existence of "tares," "who are not made for this grace."<sup>114</sup> An ancient is not required to be more consistent than a modern theologian.

Another characteristic trait of Bardaisan's teaching was the denial of the resurrection of the body; this, indeed, is the doctrine to which Ephraem pays most attention. In one passage, xxii. 8–10, the poet describes the resurrection of the dry bones, and this Harnack takes as referring to the resurrection of the body; Batiffol objects that it is represented as already accomplished. I do not think this settles the question, for future events are frequently described in these Odes as accomplished. But the context is distinctly against a literal interpretation. The preceding verses speak of the bonds which Christ is to loose, of the dragon with seven heads, his roots, his seed, his poison, and in the following

<sup>113</sup> See p. 181.

<sup>114</sup> See p. 178.

verses we have the rock which is to be the foundation of all things. The presumption is that the clothing of the dry bones with flesh, obviously borrowed from Ezekiel, is also figurative. This presumption is strengthened by the passages which clearly do refer to the state of the redeemed. "I put off darkness and clothed myself with light and my soul acquired members free from pain, affliction or suffering" (xxi. 2); "in me there shall be nothing that is not bright, and I was clothed with the covering of Thy Spirit and Thou didst remove from me my raiment of skin" (xxv. 7<sup>b</sup>, 8); "although a son of man, I was named the Illuminate, the son of God" (xxxvi. 3). These passages unquestionably point to the well-known doctrine, found in many Gnostic sects — and elsewhere — that the redeemed soul possesses a body of pure light, which is, of course, incompatible with the notion of corporeal resurrection. In a similar sense should be interpreted, "the traces of the light were set upon their heart" (x. 7<sup>b</sup>). So Hippolytus in describing the Docetae says that they regarded souls as "the eternal marks (or imprints) left by the light when it shone from above down below."<sup>115</sup> Saturnilus conceived of souls as sparks of light,<sup>116</sup> and the eastern Valentinians used the same word — it is the Saviour's office "to awaken the soul and light the spark."<sup>117</sup> The conception of a corporeal resurrection cannot, then, have found place in the poet's theology.

I have endeavored to show :

(1) That no antecedent improbability precludes the ascription of the Odes to Bardaisan.

(2) That some of the Odes can be readily interpreted in the light of Bardaisan's theories.

But before Bardaisan's authorship can be regarded as established it must be shown that all the Odes can be inter-

<sup>115</sup> Hipp., *Ref.* viii. 10 (D. and S., p. 418. 23): . . . τοῖς κατελημμένοις ἀνοθεῖν κάτω τοῦ φωτὸς αἰωνίοις χαρακτήροι.

<sup>116</sup> *Op. cit.*, vii. 28, p. 380. 56: ἔπειθε σπιθήρα ζωῆς, δε δειψαίει τὸν ἀνθρώπον καὶ ζῆν ἐποίησε.

<sup>117</sup> *Excerpta Theod.* 3, p. 967. 15, Potter: εἰδὼν οὖν ὁ Σωτὴρ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐξέπαισεν, ἐξήψεν δὲ τὸν σπιθήρα.

preted from the same point of view. To this task I shall not be able to address myself for many months to come, and I have therefore thought it best to make public my tentative results, as others have done, in the hope that they may be found to contain some elements of value to the ultimate solution of the problem.

JUNE 5, 1911.

For the following notes I am indebted to suggestions given me by Prof. Franz Cumont, who has been so kind as to read this paper in proof.

(See note 51.) The earlier astrologers termed planets "beneficent" and "maleficent" (Ptol.-Procl. L 5); the later distinguished between the unalterable proper influence, *e.g.* warming, and the good or bad effects of that influence, which, although generally constant for a given planet, might be modified or transformed by circumstances (*ibid.*; cf. also Julius of Laodicea, *Cat. cod. astr.* IV. p. 105). But of the ascription of exclusively beneficent influences to "those on the right," etc., I have as yet found no other illustration.

(See note 52.) "High places" are ἕψωματα. "Their own degrees." The "degrees" are the "limits" (δρια).

The 30° of each sign are apportioned among the five planets and those appropriated to each are termed its "limits."