

**Syrians and the Others:
Cultures of the Christian Orient
in the Middle Ages**

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Journal of Patrology, Critical Hagiography,
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on Eastern Christianity, while not excluding developments
in the Western Christianity.

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Edited by

Basil Lourié

Nikolai N. Seleznyov

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ТОДРА	<i>Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы</i>
XB	<i>Христианский Восток</i>
AB	<i>Analecta bollandiana</i>
BMGS	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca
CE	<i>Coptic Encyclopaedia</i> , ed. by A. S. Atiya, 8 vols., New York, 1991
CFHB	Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
ER	<i>The Ecclesiastical Review</i>
HTR	<i>The Harvard Theological Review</i>
JCRT	<i>Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory</i>
J ECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
OC	<i>Oriens Christianus</i>
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
PG	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca</i> , acc. J. P. MIGNE, tt. 1–161, Parisiis, 1857–1866
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
SC	Sources chrétiennes
Scr	<i>Scrinium. Revue de patrologie, d'hagiographie critique et d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

Seth's race. He moved him to paradise and made angels and people find hope and comfort in him. He made it in such a way that he may live a life of joy there. [p. 14^{SYR}/f. 10v] The end of the first chapter.

SUMMARY

The present article deals with the work *The History of the Temporal World* of an East-Syriac monk John (Yōḥannān) bar Penkāyē (end of 7th century). The first chapter of *the History* narrates the beginning of the world and human history, generally following the book of Genesis, and describes events of Gen 1–5:24. This chapter of Bar Penkāyē's work is discussed in connection with other East-Syriac works concerning the exegesis of the book of Genesis as well as the works that influenced East-Syriac authors. The edition of the hitherto unedited chapter is based on six manuscripts and includes its English translation.

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ZEUS, ARTEMIS, APOLLO: JOHN BAR PENKĀYĒ ON ANCIENT MYTHS AND CULTS*

INTRODUCTION

John bar Penkāyē completes the first part of his work *The History of the Temporal World* (*taššīṭā šal šālmā d-zabnā*), or as he entitled it *The Book of the Main Points* (*ktābā d-rēš mellē*),¹ with the ninth chapter, in which he provides a summary of cults and beliefs that “had taken hold” of mankind before the coming of Jesus Christ. The peoples that stand at the centre of Bar Penkāyē’s work are the Jews, the Greeks, the Chaldeans, and the Magi (i. e., the Persians). John also provides short notes on some other nations without indicating their names. Presumably, he meant the Romans and the ancient Arabs.

The question that naturally emerges is what sources Bar Penkāyē used while compiling the ninth chapter. Anton Baumstark attempted to give a brief answer to this question in his survey of Bar Penkāyē’s work.² He suggested that John might have used early Christian apologetic works containing mythological material and drew some parallels between John’s writing and the preserved works of Aristides, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras, Ambrose, and Pseudo-Melito. Baumstark assumed that a lost apology of Quadratus could be a source for the ninth chapter as well. However, it is doubtful if Bar

(*) I am grateful to Dr. Alexander Treiger (Dalhousie University) for reading an earlier draft of this publication and suggesting some improvements.

(1) For more detailed information about John bar Penkāyē and his writings with further references see Yu. FURMAN, “The origins of the temporal world: The first *mē’mrā* of the *Ktābā d-rēš mellē* of John bar Penkāyē” in the present volume.

(2) A. BAUMSTARK, “Eine syrische Weltgeschichte des siebten Jahrh.s.,” *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Alterthumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte* (1901), S. 279.

Penkāyē could read these original Greek writings. He does not exhibit knowledge of Greek anywhere in *The Book of the Main Points*. Moreover, at the beginning of the sixth chapter he provides a list of the “sacred books of the Old Testament” and concludes it with the following remark: “I know these [books]. I read all of them in Syriac. Whether there are others or not I do not know.”³ This allows us to suggest that John could not read Greek and hence only used literature available in Syriac as sources for the ninth chapter. Therefore, it is works composed before the seventh century and known to have been available in Syriac that need to be taken into consideration in this paper, as we attempt to identify parallels and sources of Bar Penkāyē’s ninth chapter.

PSEUDO-NONNOS’ MYTHOLOGICAL SCHOLIA

The most striking textual parallels to the ninth chapter can be found in the *Mythological Scholia* of Pseudo-Nonnos. These scholia were composed in the sixth century with a view to explaining mythological allusions made by Gregory of Nazianzus in four of his homilies, namely: the *Oratio in sancta Lumina* (Or. 39), the *Oratio funebris in laudem Basilii Magni* (Or. 43) and the two *Invectives adversus Iulianum* (Or. 4 and 5). Gregory’s *Homilies* along with the *Mythological Scholia* were translated into Syriac probably in the sixth century. The first version survived only in part. The second recension of the Syriac version of the *Homilies* and the *Scholia* was prepared by the Monophysite bishop of Edessa, Paula, in 623/4. Paula’s recension survived for the most part and became the basis for Sebastian Brock’s edition of the *Mythological Scholia*.⁴

The “Greek-related” paragraph of the ninth chapter follows in many of its details the myths found in the *Scholia to the Oratio in sancta Lumina*. These are the myths of Kronos and Zeus’s birth, the birth of Dionysus and Aphrodite, Hekate-Artemis, Apollo and his oracles. The slightly modified myths of Aphrodite and Dionysus’s birth are repeated in the *Scholia to Invective I* and the *Scholia to Invective II* respectively.

(3) BL Or. 9385, f. 47r:9–11.

(4) S. BROCK, *The Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Nonnos Mythological Scholia*, Cambridge, 1971.

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For it is said that Aphrodite had her birth from the testicles of Heaven. For Kronos, he says, the son of Heaven, took a sickle and cut off his father's testicles and threw them into the sea. And when the testicles fell and gathered foam they gave birth to Aphrodite <...> For thus both the honours and festivals connected with her are performed with shameful deeds and sensuousness and harlotry, Aphrodite being the establisher of harlotry.¹³

Bar Penkāyē retells this story as follows:

Let us tell [a story] about Aphrodite, the goddess of the heathen. People say that she was born in the following way. They say that when Earth became angry with her husband Heaven for binding her children, she brought Kronos, her son, gave him a sickle and told him: "When your father is going to descend from heaven to sleep with me, cut his testicles." He cut [the testicles] off as she had ordered him and threw them into the sea. Foam appeared [on the surface of the sea] and Aphrodite was born from it. Due to her debauchery she is quite honoured by the heathen. The blessed Paul teaches what they perform during their feasts: "For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret."¹⁴

Unlike the *Scholia*, Bar Penkāyē points out the reason for Uranus' castration. Apart from this, the ninth chapter follows the *Scholia* very closely. It is worth noting that both stories end with the same concluding remark on the obscene nature of the feast celebrated by the heathen in honour of Aphrodite.

Hekate-Artemis

One of the most interesting parallels between the *Scholia* and the ninth chapter is the story concerning Hekate.

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(13) BROCK, *The Syriac Version*, pp. 181 (Syriac text), 64 (English translation).

(14) BL Or. 9385, f. 85r:7–17.

למה יזכר הדיקטור: הפך כזכר הפך זוכר: כזכר נזכר נזכר
 הזכר הזכר לזכר נזכר.

The pagans consider Hekate to be a goddess, and some of them say she is Artemis, but others the moon, and others a certain specific goddess, who, by means of certain foul shades, appears to those who summon her. But especially they say that she appears to those who are accursed. Her shades appear (as) men, having dragons' heads which are very long and very large, so that at the sight of her she amazes and terrifies those who see (her).¹⁵

Bar Penkāyē represents this story as a story about the Greek goddess Artemis:

Now, let us tell [a story] about Artemis, the goddess of the Ephesians. People say that she sends visions and fearful demons to magicians. Therefore, she is honoured as the one who is able to reveal the hidden.¹⁶

Bar Penkāyē's endowing Artemis with these merits seems to be quite uncommon since in the observed Syriac works she is usually represented as a huntress, virgin, or at least as the one who was seen by Actaeon.¹⁷ The text of the *Scholia* is of great interest, for it connects the names of Hekate and Artemis together and makes clear whom Bar Penkāyē treats in this passage. As far as we know, there are no other sources in Syriac literature that would mention Hekate and Artemis in the same context. Since this connection does not seem to be trivial, it gives us an additional reason to suppose that Bar Penkāyē was to some degree familiar with the text of the *Scholia*.

Apollo and his oracles

כחזק ונפסו סבלו כחזק ונפסו: גבסו כחזק ונפסו: גבסו כחזק ונפסו:
 מי הזכיר נפסו סבלו. סבלו מי הזכיר ונפסו כחזק ונפסו: גבסו
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(15) BROCK, *The Syriac Version*, pp. 184 (Syriac text), 66 (English translation).
 (16) BL Or. 9385, f. 85r:17–19.
 (17) Cf. BROCK, *The Syriac Version*, pp. 195–196, 214, 301 (Syriac text); *The Apology of Aristides on Behalf of the Christians*, ed. J. R. HARRIS, Cambridge, 21893, 2.

**CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA
AND THE EXHORTATION TO THE GREEKS**

One of the most striking parallels to the ninth chapter of Bar Penkāyē's work is found in the apologetic work of the early Christian author Clement of Alexandria, the *Exhortation to the Greeks*, which was written at the end of the second century CE. Clement rebukes the Greeks and mocks them for their absurd tradition of mystery cults and worship of false gods. He reveals a deep knowledge of Greek mythology, and his descriptions of it somehow found a way into Bar Penkāyē's work. As far as we can judge, there are no known Syriac translations of Clement's writings. If the supposed textual relationships can be proven it would give us reason to assume that there once existed a translation of Clement's work into Syriac which is either no longer preserved or has not yet been discovered.

Below we shall cite several passages from Clement's work that the ninth chapter reproduced very closely to the source.

Zeus and Demeter

Δηοῦς δὲ μυστήρια αἰ Διὸς πρὸς μητέρα Δήμητρα ἀφροδίσιοι συμπλοκαὶ καὶ μῆνις τῆς Δηοῦς, ἧς δὴ χάριν Βριμῶ προσ-αγορευθῆναι λέγεται <...> ταῦτὰ οἱ Φρύγες τελίσκουσιν Ἄττιδι καὶ Κυβέλη καὶ Κορύβασιν· τεθουλήκασιν δὲ ὡς ἄρα ἀποσπάσας ὁ Ζεὺς τοῦ κριοῦ τοὺς διδύμους φέρων ἐν μέσοις ἔρριψε τοῖς κόλποις τῆς Δηοῦς, τιμωρίαν ψευδῆ τῆς βιαίας συμπλοκῆς ἐκτινύων, ὡς ἑαυτὸν δῆθεν ἐκτεμῶν.

The mysteries of Demeter commemorate the amorous embraces of Zeus with his mother Demeter and wrath of Demeter on account which she is said to have received the name Brimo <...> The same rites are performed in honour of Attis and Cybele and the Corybantes by the Phrygians, who have spread it abroad how that Zeus tore off the testicles of a ram, and then brought and flung them into the midst of Demeter's lap, thus paying a sham penalty for his violent embrace by pretending that he had mutilated himself.²⁴

Bar Penkāyē's account of a similar variant of the myth is as follows:

(24) Clement of Alexandria, *The Exhortation to the Greeks. The Rich Man's Salvation. To the Newly Baptized (fragment)*, ed. G. W. BUTTERWORTH, London, New York, 1919, pp. 34 (Greek text), 35 (English translation); I cite G. W. Butterworth's English translation.

Nevertheless, let us see what people say about Zeus after this and let us investigate what good deeds he committed to pay his mother back. People say that after he had grown and matured (oh, if only he had not been born — since if he had not been born he would not have existed at all!) — he came lasciviously with unsatisfied desire [to his mother], violated her, and slept with her. She bore a girl from him whose name was Persephone. The mother of Zeus became furious for he had dishonored her. Therefore, when he decided to please her, he found a ram and cut off its testicles, brought them and threw them on her lap as if he took vengeance on himself. This was done to show her that she might not fear him in the future.²⁵

The texts have two significant details in common. This proves a connection between them. The first such detail is a story of how Zeus managed to appease Demeter's wrath by his manipulations with a ram's testicles. I was able to find this detail only in the work of Clement, while there is no hint of it in the Syriac texts taken into consideration. The second detail is that Clement unambiguously designates Demeter as the mother of Zeus. Exactly the same role is ascribed to Demeter throughout the ninth chapter. This seems to be important since other available writings claim that Rhea was the mother of Zeus.

One further detail which points to a probable connection between the two texts appears in the continuation of the story. After Persephone grew up, Zeus abused her as well assuming the guise of a serpent.

κυεῖ μὲν ἡ Δημήτηρ, ἀνατρέφεται δὲ ἡ Κόρη, μίγνυται δ' αὐθις ὁ γεννήσας οὐτοσὶ Ζεὺς τῇ Φερεφάττῃ, τῇ ἰδίᾳ θυγατρὶ, μετὰ τὴν μητέρα τὴν Δηῶ, ἐκλαθόμενος τοῦ προτέρου μύσους (πατὴρ καὶ φθορεὺς κόρης ὁ Ζεὺς) καὶ μίγνυται δράκων γενόμενος, ὃς ἦν, ἐλεγχθεῖς.

Demeter becomes pregnant; the Maiden grows up; and this Zeus who begat her has further intercourse, this time with Persephone herself, his own daughter, after his union with her mother Demeter. Totally forgetful of his former pollution Zeus becomes

(25) BL Or. 9385, f. 84r:13–21.

the ravisher as well as father of the maiden, meeting her under the form of a serpent, his true nature being revealed.²⁶

The same feature can be found in the ninth chapter of Bar Penkāyē's work:

However, Demeter did not stop fearing the lasciviousness of Zeus. She took care lest he might assault the girl and abuse her. Despite the fact she had hidden her most safely, he turned into a dragon (ܕܡܝܬܐ) and abused her as well.²⁷

Though it is known from ancient literature that Zeus used to assume various guises to get hold of his victims,²⁸ it is nowhere else mentioned that he became a serpent (or dragon) in the story with Persephone. This could also be a witness to the possible connection between the two texts.

Demeter and Persephone

The myth of Demeter and Persephone retold by bar Penkāyē reveals some other features also found in Clement's writing. For example, Clement relates how Persephone was abducted by Pluto and how Demeter started searching her daughter.

ἀλωμένη γὰρ ἡ Δηὼ κατὰ ζήτησιν τῆς θυγατρὸς τῆς Κόρης περὶ τὴν Ἐλευσίνα (τῆς Ἀττικῆς δέ ἐστι τοῦτο τὸ χωρίον) ἀποκάμνει καὶ φρέατι ἐπικαθίζει λυπουμένη.

It tells how Demeter, wandering through Eleusis, which is a part of Attica, in search of her daughter the Maiden, becomes exhausted and sits down at a well in deep distress.²⁹

This part of the myth is almost literally retold in the ninth chapter of Bar Penkāyē's work.

Demeter did not stop searching for her daughter who was stolen by Pluto. After wandering and roaming along the roads, she came up and sat wearily by a well of water.³⁰

(26) Clement of Alexandria, *The Exhortation*, ed. BUTTERWORTH, pp. 34 (Greek text), 35 (English translation).

(27) BL Or. 9385, f. 84r:23–f. 84v:2.

(28) Cf. BROCK, *The Syriac Version*, p. 274 (Syriac text).

(29) Clement of Alexandria, *The Exhortation*, ed. BUTTERWORTH, pp. 40, 41 (English translation).

(30) BL Or. 9385, f. 84r:9–12.

Moreover, Bar Penkāyē mentions a certain swineherd who helped Demeter to find Persephone and whom Demeter granted a gift of seeds of wheat. It is noteworthy that Clement lists inhabitants of Eleusis among whom he names Eubouleus, a swineherd. This detail is also a feature exclusively common to both the ninth chapter and Clement's *Exhortation to the Greeks*.

Taking into consideration the parallels discussed above, we may assume that some parts of Clement's writing were circulating in Syriac literature. However, we are unable to state whether this was an integral translation of his work or Syriac readers were familiar with them indirectly in a paraphrase or epitome of some sort. Bar Penkāyē himself could have incorporated these myths in the plot of his chapter. However, it is more probable that John used some one concrete source for the 'Greek' section of his book. He could have used a revision of the Mythological Scholia unknown to us where parts of Clement's *Exhortation* were interspersed. This, however, must remain a conjecture, since none of possible 'mediators' between Clement and Bar Penkāyē is known to us.

THE APOLOGY OF ARISTIDES

The *Apology* of Aristides is an early Christian apologetic work written originally in Greek in the mid-2nd century CE. It is preserved mainly in Armenian and Syriac versions. The original Greek text of the *Apology* is not extant independently. However, it is embedded in the Greek version of the romance *Barlaam and Josaphat*, where it is transmitted with some modifications.

The Syriac version of the *Apology* was discovered in a manuscript of the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai in the late 19th century and edited by J. Rendel Harris. The manuscript itself dates to the 7th century and contains a number of separate treatises of ethical character.

It could be suggested that Bar Penkāyē knew the *Apology* (or at least some text related to it) and elaborated on its material while compiling the ninth chapter of *The Book of the Main Points*. Similarity between the *Apology* and the ninth chapter could be observed on three different textual levels: structure, rhetorical devices, and content.

From the point of view of structure, the *Apology* has a very simple, fivefold division. First, the author proves that the four elements of the

Barbarians (earth, water, fire, and wind) cannot possibly be gods. Then he recalls Greek mythology beginning with Kronos and ending with Persephone. Egyptian myths and beliefs follow. The Jews are said to be much nearer the true knowledge of God. However, they are reported to be worshippers of angels. Finally, the author describes the Christians as those who alone worship the true God.

Bar Penkāyē's ninth chapter seems to follow a similar pattern. While describing the condition of mankind deluded with various kinds of false gods, Bar Penkāyē begins with the Jews. Their impiety is argued from numerous citations from the Old Testament. Then John moves on to tell some of the stories of the heathen. First come Greek myths which begin with Kronos and end with a woman soothsayer in the sanctuary of Apollo. Next comes a paragraph on Egyptian beliefs where the myth of Isis, Osiris and Typhon along with some stories illustrating the Egyptian tendency to worship almost all created matter are told. Thereafter beliefs of the Chaldeans and the Magi (i. e., the Persians) are described. Some short notices on other, unspecified nations are also provided. Finally, Bar Penkāyē returns to the Jews and discusses their attitudes to Jesus Christ by citing the New Testament.

Although the ninth chapter does not reproduce the structure of the *Apology* in detail, some common features can be outlined. First, in both sources there is a division of mankind into religious groups, which are then described one after another. The repertoire of these groups is, however, subject to change depending on the purpose and the cultural background of the author. Even the fivefold division of the *Apology* was changed when the work was incorporated in the *Barlaam and Josaphat* romance where only three groups of mankind are represented: the worshippers of false gods (Chaldeans, Greeks, and Egyptians), the Jews, and the Christians.³¹ Possibly Bar Penkāyē imitated this structure in order to create an impression of some kind of apologetic work; yet he redesigned it according to his own purposes and ideas. Second, the inner structure of the separate paragraphs of the ninth chapter resembles that of the *Apology*. Aristides' refutation of the Greek myths begins with Kronos and lists the Greek gods and goddesses by seniority. Bar Penkāyē does exactly the same. His re-telling of Greek mythology also opens with a story about Kronos and discusses the gods in the order of their appearance. However, the

(31) *The Apology of Aristides*, ed. HARRIS, p. 70.

ruptible and dissoluble <...> Great then is the error which their philosophers have brought upon their followers.³³

It should be noted that the passage of Aristides refers first of all to the logical skills of the wise people of the past which he assumed they possessed.³⁴ Bar Penkāyē, on the other hand, mentions repeatedly the natural law that the heathen followed in contrast to the written one.³⁵ One of Bar Penkāyē's main arguments for accusing the heathen of impious life is that the gods they invented performed abominable actions and permitted those who worshipped them to perform the same, being their role model. He writes: "Indeed, those who say that their gods (as they call them) easily took part in adultery and debauchery, in insane dancing and satanic singing, and all the other repugnant and abominable [deeds] obviously performed the same [deeds] themselves, [being] their (i. e., the gods') creators."³⁶ Moreover, at the end of some Greek myths he introduces a didactic conclusion. Thus, after telling the story of how Demeter deceived Kronos and substituted a stone for the newborn Zeus, he concludes: "This was the reason for the erring to mislead and to be misled exactly as their gods [did]."³⁷ The stories about Zeus, Persephone, and Aphrodite end with similar conclusions.

(33) *The Apology of Aristides*, ed. HARRIS, pp. 7–11; 17–18 (Syriac text), 37 (English translation).

(34) Cf. the following passage from the Apology: "For if a little part of the element be dissolved or corrupted, all of it is dissolved and corrupted. If then these elements are dissolved and corrupted, and compelled to be subject to another harder than themselves, and are not in their nature gods, how can they call gods those likenesses which are made in their honour?" (*The Apology of Aristides*, ed. HARRIS, p. 37).

(35) Bar Penkāyē maintains that people had been given a natural law before they received a written one. He points this out several times in the ninth chapter and throughout the *Book of the Main Points*. For example: "Neither the natural law nor the written one helped them (i. e., the heathens and the Jews)" (BL Or. 9385, f.87r:7). "The world did not want to know its Benefactor with the natural wisdom that God had given it" (BL Or. 9385, f. 87r: 21–23). "God multiplied laws, those laws which were written in nature. They were torn in pieces in the sea of evil. He engraved them upon the scrolls and put them forward" (BL Or. 9385, f. 45r:16–18), etc.

(36) BL Or. 9385, f. 82v:22 – f. 83r:1.

(37) BL Or. 9385, f. 84r:12.

and others **garlic, onions, and thorns**, and others the leopard, and the like.⁴¹

Despite the fact that Bar Penkāyē's list is nowhere as detailed, both texts name the garlic and the onion as Egyptian gods. Theoretically, Bar Penkāyē could have elaborated on the passage from Numbers 11:5 where the Israelites are said to have remembered "the leeks, the onions, and the garlic" (ܠܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ) which they had eaten in Egypt. This passage would help explain why 'the leek' was introduced in Bar Penkāyē's list. However, Bar Penkāyē must have read about this notion elsewhere for he did not incorporate the entire list of Numbers 5:11 in his text.

The commonalities between the *Apology* and the ninth chapter are insufficient to establish the latter's direct dependence on the former. Thus, Bar Penkāyē probably did not use the *Apology* of Aristides directly. However, he could have known some texts related to the *Apology* which are no longer extant.

THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA, *CONTRA MAGOS*⁴²

Bar Penkāyē introduces his discussion of Persian beliefs with the myth of Zurvan. This myth or at least its fragments are well known in East-Syriac literature. Several records of it are found in the Syriac *Acts of the Persian Martyrs*,⁴³ in the treatise of Mār Āḇā,⁴⁴ and in *The Cause of the Foundation of the Schools* of Barḥadḅšabbā of Ḥalwān.⁴⁵ The most detailed versions of the myth are represented in Bar Penkāyē's *Book of*

(41) *The Apology of Aristides*, ed. HARRIS, pp. ܘܘ:4-7, ܘܘ:6-15; 45, 46 (English translation).

(42) The Zurvanite myth in Syriac literature and its relationship with Theodore of Mopsuestia's *Contra Magos* have been discussed in detail in Ю. В. ФУРМАН, [Yulia V. FURMAN], "Персы и их религия в «Истории» Йоханнана бар Пенкайе" ["Persians and their religion in the *History* of John bar Penkāyē"], *Символ*, 61: *Syriaca · Arabica · Iranica* (2012), pp. 122-146. Here, only a short summary of the issue will be given.

(43) *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, ed. P. BEDJAN, vols. 1-7, Parisiis, Lipsiæ, 1890-1897, vol. 2, p. 577:3, 7-11.

(44) O. BRAUN, "Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der persischen Gotteslehre," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 57 (1903), SS. 562-565.

(45) *Cause de la fondation des Écoles [de] Mar Barḥadḅšabba 'Arbaya, évêque de Ḥalwan*, ed. A. SCHER (PO, IV.4.18), Paris, 1908, pp. 365:13-366:1, 366:4-6.

*the Main Points*⁴⁶ and Theodore bar Kōnī's *Scholia*.⁴⁷ It seems that the main source of borrowing for all these writings was Theodore of Mopsuestia's work *Contra Magos*. Until 1968 it had only been known from a short account of the Patriarch of Constantinople, Photios.⁴⁸ According to Photios, the treatise *Contra Magos* consisted of three books: the Zurvanite myth was expounded in the first book, while the two other books dealt with the Christian teachings. Two Syriac fragments of the last two books were published by H. Scheinhardt⁴⁹ in 1968 and by G. J. Reinink in 1997.⁵⁰ The fact that the Zurvanite myth first appeared in the East-Syriac literature in the fifth century and that its early Syriac accounts are similar to Theodore of Mopsuestia's account (as preserved Photius) allows us to suggest that the treatise *Contra Magos* was the main source from which the Zurvanite myth spread within the East-Syriac tradition, which always held Theodore in great esteem.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The evidence presented above demonstrates some commonalities between the section on cults and mythologies in the ninth chapter of Bar Penkāyē's *Book of the Main Points*, on the one hand, and the *Scholia to the Oratio in sancta Lumina*, the *Exhortation to the Greeks*, the *Apology of Aristides*, and the lost treatise *Contra Magos* of Theodore of Mopsuestia, on the other. Unfortunately, Bar Penkāyē did not indicate his sources, with the exception of the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, we are unable to answer the question of whether he borrowed the material from any or all the writings presented above or was acquainted with them through another author's secondary renderings.

(46) P. DE MENASCE, "Autour d'un texte syriaque inédit sur la religion des Mages," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 9:3 (1938), pp. 587–601.

(47) H. POGNON, *Inscriptions Mandaites des coupes de Khouabir. Texte, traduction et commentaire philologique avec quatre appendices et un glossaire. Deuxième partie*, Paris, 1899, pp. 111–112.

(48) Photius, *Bibliothèque*, éd. R. HENRY, t. I («codices» 1–84), Paris, 1959, p. 187.

(49) H. SCHEINHARDT, "Zitate aus drei verlorenen Schriften des Theodor von Mopsuestia," in: *Paul de Lagarde und die syrische Kirchengeschichte*, Göttingen, 1968, SS. 189–198.

(50) G. J. REININK, "A New Fragment of Theodore of Mopsuestia's *Contra Magos*," *Le Muséon*, 110:1 (1997), pp. 63–71.

We are also unsure to what degree the ninth chapter reflects creative revision and compilation of the material. It is possible that answers to these questions will never be found. However, further inquiries may allow us more accurately to outline connections between the ninth chapter and the other relevant works both within the Syriac tradition and outside it.

John bar Penkāyē

THE BOOK OF THE MAIN POINTS. THE NINTH CHAPTER

The present edition of the ninth chapter is based on six manuscripts: **L** — MS London, The British Library, BL.Or.9385 (19th century),⁵¹ fol. 81v–89v/^{syr}p.171; **M** — MS Mingana, Library of the Selly Oak Colleges, Mingana 179 (20th century),⁵² fol. ^{syr}76v–^{syr}84v; **P** — MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Syr.406 (20th century),⁵³ fol. ^{syr}190v–^{syr}210r; **S** — MS Strasbourg, Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg, Strasbourg, MS. 4133 (19th century),⁵⁴ fol. ^{syr}98r/98v–^{syr}108v/ 110r; **V** — MS Vatican 497, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.Syr.497 (20th century),⁵⁵ fol. ^{syr}151v–^{syr}167v; **Ŵ** — MS Vatican 592, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.Syr.592 (20th century),⁵⁶ fol. 216r/p.^{ar}435–222v/p.^{ar}448. While setting the type, I indicated the ends of lines in **L**. Since the signs for *rbāšā karyā* and *rbāšā ʔarrīkā* are used

(51) See description of the Ms. in an unpublished handwritten catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum acquired since 1899.

(52) A. MINGANA, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts now in the Possession of the Trustees of the Woodbrooke Settlement, Selly Oak, Birmingham*, 3 vols. (Woodbrooke Catalogues, 1–3), Cambridge, 1933, 1936, 1939, vol. 1 (1933), pp. 395–396.

(53) F. BRIQUEL-CHATONNET, *Manuscrits syriaques de la Bibliothèque nationale de France (nos 356–435, entrés depuis 1911), de la bibliothèque Méjanes d’Aix-en-Provence, de la bibliothèque municipale de Lyon et de la Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg. Catalogue*, Paris, 1997, pp. 139–141.

(54) *Ibid.*, pp. 219–220.

(55) A. VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Inventaire des Manuscrits Syriaques des Fonds Vatican (490–631), Barberini oriental et Neofiti*, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, 1965, pp. 28–29; see also J.-M. VOSTE, “Manuscrits Syro-Chaldéens récemment acquis par la Bibliothèque Vaticane,” *Angelicum*, 6 (1929), pp. 39–40.

(56) VAN LANTSCHOOT, *Inventaire des Manuscrits Syriaques*, pp. 119–121.

inconsistently in these manuscripts they are normalized in the following edition.

TEXT

57 [f.81v] מַחֲמָדָה / דִּמְחָה * 58 דִּמְחָה קִלְקַל [דְּמַחְבֵּה תַלְמִיד] 59 דּוֹחֵת * חֲפֵטָה
 זֶה / דְּחַתָּה זֶה דְּחַלֵּם דְּחַה דְּחַה יִזְחָה: מַחְבֵּה חֲכָמִים לֵה / חֲלִים דְּחַ
 דְּחַה: יִזְחָה לֵה דְּחַ דְּחַ דְּחַ דְּחַ: דְּחַה [5] תַּחֲמֵה יַחֲמֵה לֵה
 חֲלִים דְּחַחֲחֵה. מַחְמָל זֶה לֵה / דְּחַחֲחֵה מַחְמָל. דְּחַ לֵה זֶה דְּחַה
 לֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה 60 יִזְחָה / יִזְחָה מַחְמָל דְּחַה יִזְחָה: מַחְמָל דְּחַחֲחֵה
 חֲחַ / דְּחַה דְּחַה חֲחַחֲחֵה דְּחַה חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה: / דְּחַה דְּחַחֲחֵה
 מַחְמָל יִזְחָה: מַחְמָל חֲחַחֲחֵה 61 חֲחַחֲחֵה דְּחַה [10] דְּחַחֲחֵה יִזְחָה חֲחַחֲחֵה
 זֶה חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה: מַחְמָל דְּחַה חֲחַחֲחֵה 62 מַחְמָל חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה
 מַחְמָל / דְּחַחֲחֵה דְּחַחֲחֵה. דְּחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה זֶה חֲחַחֲחֵה. מַחְמָל חֲחַחֲחֵה
 [P.סח/f.82r] דְּחַחֲחֵה מַחְמָל חֲחַחֲחֵה. חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה 63 חֲחַחֲחֵה /
 חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה דְּחַחֲחֵה. חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה: / מַחְמָל חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה
 דְּחַחֲחֵה. חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה 64 / מַחְמָל חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה. מַחְמָל חֲחַחֲחֵה
 יִזְחָה חֲחַחֲחֵה [5] מַחְמָל חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה
 חֲחַחֲחֵה / דְּחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה 65 מַחְמָל חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה. חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה
 חֲחַחֲחֵה 66 חֲחַחֲחֵה: מַחְמָל חֲחַחֲחֵה 67 חֲחַחֲחֵה / חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה
 חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה: מַחְמָל חֲחַחֲחֵה 68 חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה

(57) Add. M, V, P, S חֲחַחֲחֵה V
 (58) Add. M חֲחַחֲחֵה
 (59) M, V, S חֲחַחֲחֵה וְחֲחַחֲחֵה חֲחַחֲחֵה
 (60) M, V, V, P, S חֲחַחֲחֵה
 (61) V, V, P, S חֲחַחֲחֵה
 (62) M, P, S חֲחַחֲחֵה
 (63) M, S חֲחַחֲחֵה V, P חֲחַחֲחֵה V
 (64) V, V חֲחַחֲחֵה
 (65) V, V חֲחַחֲחֵה
 (66) M, P, S חֲחַחֲחֵה
 (67) Abs. V, V.
 (68) M, P, S חֲחַחֲחֵה V חֲחַחֲחֵה V חֲחַחֲחֵה

לְסֵתִיב דִּבְּ לִמְהֵרָה [-] [10] חֲמִיּוֹת בְּתֵיבָה דְּבִנְיָהּ זְקֵינָהּ זְעִירָהּ יַעֲרֵם. זֵלְקָהּ מִיַּד
 דְּבִלְקָהּ דְּמֵהָ / מְכַסְּתָהּ דְּמֵהָ עָרְבָהּ. תִּבְּרָהּ יִלְתִּישׁ דְּבִנְיָהּ דְּבִלְקָהּ מִלְּבָהּ עָרְבָהּ / זֵלְקָהּ
 תֵּה דְּבִנְיָהּ זֵעַ עֵדֶנְתָּהּ דְּמֵהָ עָרְבָהּ לִבְּ מַחְּ עָרְבָהּ. מַחְּ / זֵלְקָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ לִבְּ
 לְכַסְּתָהּ. דְּבִנְיָהּ זְעִירָהּ תֵּה / דְּבִנְיָהּ מִדְּבִנְיָהּ מִדְּבִנְיָהּ דְּמֵהָ. מְכַסְּתָהּ
 זְעִירָהּ תֵּה. תֵּה [15] לִבְּ זְעִירָהּ מִדְּבִנְיָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ. מְכַסְּתָהּ לִבְּ
 מִלְּבָהּ / מְכַסְּתָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ זְעִירָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ: דְּמֵהָ עָרְבָהּ יִלְתִּישׁ / תִּבְּרָהּ
 מְכַסְּתָהּ מִחְּ. מִחְּ לִבְּ מִיַּד עֵדֶנְתָּהּ דְּמֵהָ עָרְבָהּ / מְכַסְּתָהּ זֵלְקָהּ. מְכַסְּתָהּ
 דְּבִנְיָהּ: תֵּה דְּבִנְיָהּ דְּבִנְיָהּ דְּבִנְיָהּ / תִּבְּרָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ. מִיַּד
 לִבְּ זֵלְקָהּ מִחְּ. דְּבִנְיָהּ זְעִירָהּ [20] מְכַסְּתָהּ מִדְּבִנְיָהּ דְּמֵהָ זְעִירָהּ. מִחְּ
 דְּמֵהָ עָרְבָהּ / תֵּה: מְכַסְּתָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ: זֵעַ מִחְּ
 תֵּה / תֵּה זְעִירָהּ דְּבִנְיָהּ. תֵּה לִבְּ דְּבִנְיָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ / מְכַסְּתָהּ: תִּבְּרָהּ
 מְכַסְּתָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ דְּבִנְיָהּ דְּבִנְיָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ ⁸¹ מְכַסְּתָהּ: / מְכַסְּתָהּ דְּבִנְיָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ
 לְכַסְּתָהּ דְּבִנְיָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ [P. 83r/f. 83r] תֵּה: לִבְּ תֵּה דְּבִנְיָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ
 תֵּה תֵּה. זֵעַ זְעִירָהּ / תֵּה דְּבִנְיָהּ דְּבִנְיָהּ זְעִירָהּ. מְכַסְּתָהּ לִבְּ. מְכַסְּתָהּ זְעִירָהּ
 תֵּה / זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ. מִיַּד דְּבִנְיָהּ תֵּה זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ / זֵעַ.
 זְעִירָהּ ⁸³ זֵעַ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ. דְּמֵהָ לִבְּ תִּבְּרָהּ תִּבְּרָהּ [5] לִבְּ זְעִירָהּ.
 זְעִירָהּ. לִבְּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ / מְכַסְּתָהּ דְּבִנְיָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ. מְכַסְּתָהּ לִבְּ
 תֵּה מְכַסְּתָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ / מְכַסְּתָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ. זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ /
 מְכַסְּתָהּ: דְּבִנְיָהּ זְעִירָהּ תֵּה. מְכַסְּתָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ. זְעִירָהּ לִבְּ ⁸⁴ [10]
 לִבְּ זֵעַ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ. מְכַסְּתָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ זְעִירָהּ. / מְכַסְּתָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ
 תֵּה תֵּה. זְעִירָהּ לִבְּ לִבְּ / מְכַסְּתָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ. מְכַסְּתָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ
 מְכַסְּתָהּ לִבְּ. תֵּה ⁸⁵ / מְכַסְּתָהּ מְכַסְּתָהּ לִבְּ מְכַסְּתָהּ ⁸⁶ מְכַסְּתָהּ. זְעִירָהּ
 מְכַסְּתָהּ / מְכַסְּתָהּ דְּבִנְיָהּ. זֵעַ דְּבִנְיָהּ תֵּה מְכַסְּתָהּ זְעִירָהּ זְעִירָהּ [15] מְכַסְּתָהּ:

(80) M וְלִמְהֵרָה V, P, S דְּבִנְיָהּ חֲמִיּוֹת
 (81) M, V מְכַסְּתָהּ P, S מְכַסְּתָהּ
 (82) V מִלְּבָהּ
 (83) L דְּבִנְיָהּ
 (84) Abs. L.
 (85) Add. L.
 (86) M, V, S מְכַסְּתָהּ V, P זֵעַ מְכַסְּתָהּ

لهوه / جيه زهجه. ديه زيه كه⁸⁷ زهجه ههه. ههههه / ههههه / ههههه / ههههه
 هههههه كه هههه. ههههه ههه ههههه / ههه هه ههههه هههه ههههه ههههه
 هههههه / هههههه ههه / ههههه هههههه ههه ههه / هههههه / هههههه
 هههههه / ههههه ههههه. ههههه هههههه⁸⁹. ههه ههه ههههه⁹⁰ / هههههه [20] هههههه
 ههههههه ههههه. ههههه هه هههههه⁹¹ ههههه. ههههه / هههههه ههه ههههه
 هههههههه / هههههههه. ههههه هههههه / هههههه ههههه هههههه ههههه
 هههههه / ههههه ههه. ههه هههههه. ههه هههههه. ههه ههههههه. ههه هه
 [P. 83v/f. 83v] ههههه لهوه هههه ههههه هههههه. ههههه ههه ههههههه /
 هههه ههه هههه هههههه ههه ههههه. ههههه ههه ههههههه. / هههههه هههه
 هههههه ههههههه. هههه ههههههه. ههه هههه / ههههههه. هههه ههه ههه
 ههههه⁹² هههه هه هههه [5] هههههه ههه. ههههه هههه ههههه. ههههه ههه
 هههه / ههههه هههههه هههههه هههههه ههههه. ههههه / ههههه / هههه
 ههههههه هههه ههههه هههههه. ههه هههه / ههههه هههه. ههه. ههه
 هههههه هههه ههههه. ههههه / ههههه هههههه ههههه ههه ههههههههه.
 ههههه ههههه [10] هههههه هههههه ههههه. هههههه ههه هههههه هههههه /
 هههه ههههه. هههه ههه ههههه هههههه هههههه / هههه هههه ههههه ههه
 ههههه ههههه. هههههه / هههههه هههههه هههههه. ههههه [15] هههه
 ههههه هههههه. ههه هه هههه ههههه. هههه / هههه هههههه. هههه
 هههههه: ههههه ههههه. ههه ههههه هه / هههه هه: ههههه هه ههههههه.
 هههههه هههههههههه / هههه: لهههههه ههههههه. هههههههههه ههههههه.
 هه / هههههه هههههه هه هههههه هههههههه. هه هه هههههه [20] ههههههه
 ههه هههه هههههه ههه ههههه: ههه ههههه / ههههه ههههه: هههههه

(87) Abs. V, V̄.
 (88) Abs. L.
 (89) In M, V, V̄, P, S interchanged.
 (90) Add. L.
 (91) M, V, P, S هههههه V̄ ههههههه
 (92) M, V, P لهههه V̄ هههههه
 (93) P ههههه

וְלִמְעַלְמָא. יִלְכּוּ בְּיָמֵי / פְּהִלְמֵהוּ: נִיבָה מִן מְבֻלְתֵהוּ אִתְּרָה / בְּלִתְעַרְ
 בְּחִיבָה / מַעְבְּרָה מִן יַמְלָא דְלִתְרָה דְּמִתְקִיבָה. אִתְּרָה דִּיעַרְ / מְבַחְסָב
 מִדְּעַמָּה: דְּמִן מְהִיבָה אִתְּרָה מִן אִתְּרָה. אִתְּרָה [P. M. f. 84r] מִן יַלְכָה מִסְתַּיָּה
 אִתְּרָה תְּבִעְתָּ: אִתְּרָה יִלְכּוּ תְּלִיבְהוּ. אִתְּרָה / אִתְּרָה דְּבִבְהוּ אִתְּרָה⁹⁴ אִתְּרָה⁹⁵
 אִתְּרָה דְּמִתְעַרְבָה דְּבִבְהוּ. אִתְּרָה מְעַרְבָה מִסְתַּיָּה / דְּמִתְקִיבָה אִתְּרָה. אִתְּרָה⁹⁶ אִתְּרָה דְּמִתְעַרְבָה
 דְּבִבְהוּ דְּמִתְעַרְבָה אִתְּרָה / אִתְּרָה דְּבִבְהוּ מְבַחְסָב. אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה
 מִדְּעַמָּה: מִיַּלְכָה דְּבִבְהוּ [5] אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה דְּבִבְהוּ: דְּאִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה דְּבִבְהוּ אִתְּרָה. אִתְּרָה
 אִתְּרָה / בִּלְדִיבָה אִתְּרָה: אִתְּרָה דְּבִבְהוּ אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה דְּבִבְהוּ אִתְּרָה /
 אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה. אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה דְּבִבְהוּ אִתְּרָה דְּבִבְהוּ: / אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה
 אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה: / יִלְכּוּ אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה
 אִתְּרָה⁹⁷ דְּבִבְהוּ דְּבִבְהוּ [10] אִתְּרָה. אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה
 אִתְּרָה. / אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה⁹⁸ אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה /
 אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה⁹⁹ אִתְּרָה¹⁰⁰ אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה דְּבִבְהוּ אִתְּרָה: אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה. / יִלְכּוּ
 אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה. אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה /
 אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה. אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה [15] אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה
 אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה. יִלְכּוּ / אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה. אִתְּרָה¹⁰² אִתְּרָה
 אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה. / אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה. אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה
 אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה. אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה. / יִלְכּוּ
 אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה. אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה [20] אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה
 אִתְּרָה. אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה / אִתְּרָה. אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה. /
 אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה / אִתְּרָה: אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה: אִתְּרָה אִתְּרָה /

(94) M, V, P, S אִתְּרָה
 (95) Add. M, V, V אִתְּרָה
 (96) M, V, P, S אִתְּרָה
 (97) M, V, P אִתְּרָה
 (98) M, V, S אִתְּרָה
 (99) M, V, P, S אִתְּרָה
 (100) Add. L.
 (101) M, V, V, P, S אִתְּרָה
 (102) M אִתְּרָה V, P אִתְּרָה
 (103) M, P, S אִתְּרָה
 (104) P, S אִתְּרָה

פּוֹדֵם. תְּבִיבָה / חֵב זֶיץ עֲבָדָה¹¹³ מְלִי אֵת. יִמְצֵי לֵה לֹהֵם דַּי אֲוֵד יִלְיֵד.
 / וְחֵב בָּל לִמְדָה זֶיץ דִּיבְלֵי תְבַמְרֵה תְבַמְרֵה. תְּבִיבָה אֵי מַבְרֵי. [5] בְּלֵתָה דֵי
 דִּיבְרֵתָה אֲוֵד. לֵה מְרֵה. מֵימֵל לֵה זָלָה מְזִיבָל¹¹⁴ בְּלָב / אֲוֵד וְיִיֵשׁ
 דִּיבְרֵי: בְּמִלֵּה וְהֵם מְרֵדָה בְּמִלֵּה מְשִׁמֵּה תֵה¹¹⁵ / מְזִבָה זֶיץ¹¹⁶ דִּיבְרֵתָה:
 בְּלָב וְיִיֵשׁ מֵיבְרֵי. יִמְצֵד דֵי זֵי / בָל זִקְדֵה דִּיבְרֵי זִקְדֵה דִּיבְרֵי. אֲוֵד לֵה
 אֲוֵדָה מְצָב / דִּיבְרֵי בְרֵי. זִמְצָב לֵה. דִּיבְרֵי יִבְרֵמְרֵי לֵה זִמְצָב בָּל עֲבָדָה. [10]
 תְּבִיבָה: בָּל דִּיבְרֵה אֲוֵד מִיֵּתֵה. זִמְצָבֵה לֵה מְשִׁמֵּה תֵה. / מְזִיבֵיֵה מְזִיבָל
 מֵימְצֵי לֵה: דְּמָה לֵה דִיבְרֵי מֵי¹¹⁷ עֲבָדָה זִבְרֵי / דִּיבְרֵי בְּמֵד. אֲוֵד קִיֵּשׁ
 יִעֲקֹה. אֲוֵד דֵי חֵב¹¹⁸ קִיֵּשׁ זֶיץ / דִּימְצֵי לֵה. בְּבֵל מְבָדָה זִיֵּת תְּבַמְרֵה. אֲוֵד
 דֵהֲרֵה מְצָבָה / יִבְרֵי זִקְדֵה דִּיבְרֵי. אֲוֵד דִּימֵל¹¹⁹ דְּבִסְוֵהֲרֵה¹²⁰ מְרֵב מֵיבְרֵה
 [15] מֵי בְּתֵי. דִּיבְרֵי דֵי מְצָב חֵב מְבַמְרֵי יִבְרֵתֵה. מְצָבָה / קִיֵּשׁ
 בְּלֵה. דִּיבְרֵי לֵה דִּיבְרֵי מְצָב. מְבִיֵה זֵי / לִיבְרֵיֵה. יִמְצֵד מֵב
 זֵי¹²¹ בָל זִבְרֵיֵה זִקְדֵה דִּיבְרֵי. / אֲוֵד דֵי יִיֵוֵה מֵיבְרֵיֵה דִּיבְרֵיֵה מְשִׁמֵּה
 זֶיץ דִּימְצָב לֵה¹²². / תְּבִיבָה מֵיבְרֵה זֶיץ מֵי דִיבְרֵי לֵה דִיבְרֵיֵה מְצָבָה.
 מֵב דֵי [20] זִמְצָבֵה מְצָב אֲוֵה מֵימֵל זִקְדֵה. דִּיבְרֵי לֵה זִמְצָב יִבְרֵי /
 לֵה¹²³ זִקְדֵה דֵהֲרֵה מְרֵב דִּיבְרֵי אֲוֵה מִיֵּתֵה דֵהֲרֵה דִּיבְרֵי. / מְצָב מְצָב אֲוֵה
 מְצָב. מְבִיֵה מְבִיֵהֲרֵה זִמְצָב דִּיבְרֵי / מְצָבֵה זִמְצָבֵה. מְצָבֵה אֲוֵה מְצָב
 מְצָבֵה מְבִיֵהֲרֵה. / תְּבִיבָה מֵיבְרֵה זִקְדֵה דִּיבְרֵיֵה. מֵיבְרֵהֲרֵה מְצָבָה.
 [P. 85v/f. 85v] חֵב לֵהֲרֵה לֵה תְּבִיבָה לֵה מְצָבֵה. יִמְצֵד דֵי זִמְצָבֵה מֵי /
 דִּיבְרֵה זֵי מְבִיֵה. מְבִיֵה לֵה אֲוֵה דִּיבְרֵיֵה. זִמְצָב לֵה דִּיבְרֵיֵה לֵה מְצָבָה
 מֵי לֵהֲרֵה זִמְצָבֵה מְצָבֵה אֲוֵה. מְצָבֵה דִּיבְרֵיֵה לֵה / אֲוֵה מְשִׁמֵּה. מְצָבָה

(113) L עֲבָדָה
 (114) L מְזִיבָל
 (115) P מְצָבָה
 (116) L דִּיבְרֵי
 (117) Add. L.
 (118) Abs. L.
 (119) L מֵימֵל
 (120) L דְּבִסְוֵהֲרֵה
 (121) Abs. V, V̄.
 (122) M, P לִיבְרֵיֵה
 (123) Abs. V, V̄.

דָּהַתּוּ דְּבַלְּ מַלְחָסֵהוּ. מִסְּבֵב ¹³² לְמַלְחָב מַלְחָסֵהוּ. דְּבַד / דְּבִדָּ קִדְעָה, תְּבִדָּ תִבְדָּ
 בְּהִיבָּ מִכְּחִישֵׁהּ בְּלָתֵהּ תִבְלָה דְּהִסָּ / תִּסְפָּה דְּקִבְעָה מַלְּ בְּוֹלָם בְּחִישָׁה: חִדּ בְּוֹ
 מִיָּדָּ דְּבִבְדָּ לֵהּ בְּלִבְחִישֵׁהּ. [10] חִלְבִּד מִסְּבֵב, כְּבִבְדָּהּ תֵּה דְּבִבְחִישָׁה תֵּה מַלְּ בְּוֹלָ
 חִר קִדְעָה / לָהּ בְּבִדָּהּ מְהִיבָּ. בְּעִ מַר דְּבִלְחָה מִבְּדָּתֵהּ תֵּה לֵהּ מִבְּדָּתֵהּ. /
 בְּחִלְבִּד מְחִיבָּ מִבְּדָּתֵהּ בְּסִבְבָּ תֵּה מְחִיבָּתֵהּ. מַלְּ תֵּה מְחִיבָּ מַר / תֵּה לֵהּ בְּוֹלָם.
 דָּלָם דְּבִעִ בְּלָתֵהּ מְחִיבָּ תֵּה לָהּ. מְחִיבָּ דְּבִ מַלְּחָב / בְּלָ חִלְבִּתֵּהּ מַלְּ תֵּה לֵהּ
 דְּבִסְבֵבֵהּ: לְחָבָּ לָתֵהּ דְּבִ בְּלָ ¹³³ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ. [15] חִלְבִּתֵּהּ דְּבִ לְחִבְחִתֵּהּ בְּלִבְחִישָׁה
 מִבְּדָּתֵהּ תֵּה חִלְבָּהּ מִבְּדָּתֵהּ / דְּבִלְחָה. מַר חִלְבָּ מְחִיבָּהּ דְּבִ תֵּה דְּבִלְחָה תֵּה
 דְּהַתּוּ לִסְפָּה ¹³⁴ דְּבִסְפָּה. / בְּלָ בִיבָּ בְּלָתֵהּ מַלְּ יִלְחָה: בְּחִ בְּחִדָּ דְּבִסְפָּה.
 חִדּ לְחָבָּ מַר / תֵּה חִלְבָּ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ ¹³⁵ תֵּה דְּבִעִ מִיָּדָּ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ. בְּלָ דְּוֵה מַר /
 חִלְבָּהּ מַר תֵּה מְחִיבָּתֵהּ לֵהּ חִדּ בְּבִדָּהּ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ. תֵּה לֵהּ [20] דְּבִבְחִישָׁה מְחִיבָּתֵהּ
 בְּלָ בְּחִישָׁה מְחִיבָּתֵהּ דְּבִסְבֵבֵהּ ¹³⁶ דְּבִסְבֵבֵהּ יִסְפָּה. / מְחִיבָּתֵהּ דְּבִ מַר מַר תֵּה
 יִסְפָּה: תֵּה מְחִיבָּתֵהּ דְּבִ קִדְעָה מִסְּבֵב. / מַר מְחִיבָּתֵהּ יִסְפָּה מְחִיבָּתֵהּ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ
 יִסְפָּה. בְּבִדָּהּ דְּבִ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ / לְחִבְחִתֵּהּ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ דְּבִסְפָּה: בְּעִ מַר דְּבִבְחִישָׁה
 מִיָּדָּ לָהּ / בְּלָתֵהּ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ. בְּעִ לֵהּ לֵהּ יִלְחָה מְחִיבָּתֵהּ: בְּלִבְחִישָׁה מְחִיבָּתֵהּ
 [P. 86v/f.86v] בְּלָתֵהּ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ לֵהּ דְּבִבְחִישָׁה דְּבִבְחִישָׁה מְחִיבָּתֵהּ. /
 לְמַלְחָב לֵהּ דְּבִ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ: דְּוֵה, בְּלָ ¹³⁷ / מְחִיבָּתֵהּ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ
 בְּלָתֵהּ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ תֵּה: חִלְבָּהּ חִלְבָּהּ דְּבִסְבֵבֵהּ לֵהּ חִדּ / מְחִיבָּתֵהּ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ
 מְחִיבָּתֵהּ. מַר תְּבִדָּ לֵהּ דְּבִ חִלְבָּ תֵּה מְחִיבָּתֵהּ ¹³⁸ [5] דְּבִבְחִישָׁה: יִבְחִישָׁה חִלְבָּהּ חִדּ לְחָבָּ:
 דְּבִדָּהּ ¹³⁹ לֵהּ חִדּ / מְחִיבָּתֵהּ מַר תֵּה לֵהּ דְּבִבְחִישָׁה: לֵהּ תֵּה חִלְבָּהּ חִדּ לְחָבָּ. מְחִיבָּתֵהּ
 לֵהּ חִלְבָּהּ / בְּחִ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ: יִבְחִישָׁה מְחִיבָּתֵהּ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ. מְחִיבָּתֵהּ מַר / מְחִיבָּתֵהּ:
 מְחִיבָּתֵהּ מַר מְחִיבָּתֵהּ. חִדּ לֵהּ בְּלָתֵהּ תֵּה חִדּ ¹⁴⁰ / מְחִיבָּתֵהּ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ. בְּלָתֵהּ לֵהּ דְּבִבְחִישָׁה

(132) P, S מִסְּבֵב
 (133) Abs. P, S.
 (134) In M, V, V̄, P, S interchanged.
 (135) V, V̄ מְחִיבָּתֵהּ
 (136) L דְּבִבְחִישָׁה
 (137) V, V̄ בְּלָתֵהּ
 (138) Abs. L.
 (139) L חִדּ לֵהּ
 (140) L חִדּ לֵהּ

part of them was scattered. [We told] about the building of the Tower [of Babel]. [We discussed] where kingly rule began; how and when idolatry started and the reason for it. [We told] about Abraham's election and the succession of his descendants. We gradually narrated what was done by the Jews and to the Jews, among the heathen and to the heathen in all times and histories. According to the order of our narrative we will mention only a small part of it in order not to burden our work with undue labour retelling all of [the histories]. For order and arrangement are worth adhering to.¹⁷⁸ Thus, we swiftly went through many things in our work and mentioned only the signs demonstrating divine concern for us, humans, [which He showed] from the very beginning. [We mentioned] what He did to us in His mercy looking at our transformation and how all of us remained contentious and stubborn from the very beginning. He had already been aware of it before He brought us to life. [He had been aware of] the evilness of our nature and of our disobedience as if He had already seen this. His goodness was not reasonable. Nevertheless, He brought us to life because of His goodness and created those who were not worthy. He honoured those who despised Him. He did everything with His concern looking at the transformation of those who had been disobedient from generation to generation. [P. 92v/f.82v] These chapters which we have already written with our Lord's help show all these [deeds]. We have already demonstrated the [existence of] evil demons who are set as adversaries against themselves and against all mankind; how greatly concerned the Merciful God is not to allow demons to steal our freedom. [We have demonstrated] that human beings obeyed [demons'] will and were tempted by various kinds of delusions. The [demons] have persuaded some people that there is no God at all. [They have persuaded] others that there is a God who has no concern [for them]. They have propelled others to the insanity of [worshipping] the stars. They have caused some of them to fall into the trap of the idols. They have persuaded others to call silent elements [their] gods.

Nevertheless, I am ready to narrate a story about the great blessing which has happened to us through the appearance of God the Word in the flesh, with the help He granted to me. It seemed necessary for me to demonstrate how the human race had lived before our Lord came and how [the human race] lives now. Thus, the great

(178) Lit.: order and arrangement are good for all [things].

blessing, transcending one's thought, given to the human race with [the coming] of Christ, our Lord, would appear to be all the greater and more amazing. Hence, the mouth of impious Jews and the rest of evil [people] who still prefer to remain in delusion like in night dreams shall be shut. Who does not know that before the Christ's shining forth the Jews together with the heathen had lived under delusions of all kinds [and had led] a disgusting and filthy life following the laws of their ancestors? Indeed, those who say that their gods (as they call them) easily took part in adultery and debauchery, in insane dancing and satanic singing, and all the other repugnant and abominable [deeds] [P. 83r/f.83r] obviously performed the same [deeds] themselves, [being] their (i. e., the gods') creators. David, the sound of the spiritual lyre, justly calls these [gods'] worshippers their creators, since people made them out to be gods while they were not. Similarly also the prophet Jeremiah who said: "Behold, people made gods."¹⁷⁹ For indeed, they are children of a perverted mind and a foolish fiction. Not only the heathen were living this way, the Jews [were living this way] as well. Only a few [of them] like some kind of backbone¹⁸⁰ were staying out of every human formation in the fear of God. Prophets testify concerning the life that the Jews led. The first prophet Moses [says]: "They sacrificed to demons who are not gods"¹⁸¹ etc. The blessed David remembers the first and the last [things] one by one: "They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image."¹⁸² And more: "They sacrificed their own sons and daughters to the devils."¹⁸³ And this also: "They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works,"¹⁸⁴ and other things. One of the prophets shows that the Jews were even worse than the heathen: "I swear — says the Lord — that Sodom and her daughters did not commit half of your sins."¹⁸⁵ He mentions Sodom as having been entirely filled with evil in its time. He also [mentions this] to demon-

(179) Cf. Jer 16:20. The biblical quotations are translated as they appear in the Syriac text of the memra; usually, Bar Penkāyē follows the Peshitta readings.

(180) Lit.: leaven.

(181) Deut 32:17.

(182) Ps 106:19.

(183) Ps 106: 37.

(184) Ps 106: 35.

(185) Cf. Ez 16:48, 51.

strate that God did not honour the Jews for their righteousness but due to another reason which we will discuss [below] with the help of our Lord. So Elijah's reproaches inform everyone of the impious lifestyle of the Jews. Likewise, Isaiah [says] that "they sacrifice in gardens"¹⁸⁶ and divine upon the roofs. "They defile their vessels with carcasses"¹⁸⁷. The worst thing is what they say to the other nations: "Stay away from us, do not approach us for we are the holy ones"¹⁸⁸ as if [P. ۱۰۰/f.83v] only the [pretentious] name of friendship with God is enough for them [to be called the elected ones]. However, God is not indifferent; He cries and moans cursing His life and talking about their impiety. He demonstrates that a number of their gods was equal to the number of their towns along with other [things]. Though called the nation of the elect much more often than the others, they behaved this way.

The history of diverse heathen beliefs with which they were afflicted surpasses speech. How did it happen that even those who were the most intelligent and the most brilliant among them taught them nothing but to thoughtlessly sacrifice fetid offerings to dumb idols with a great zeal and to wrongfully and facilely call the created things using the merciful, fearful, and venerated name of the only one God? This is a fruit of the heathen poets' mind. It all appeared with the vain investigations which were an evil trap and painful fetters of the Devil. He bound the soul and [tempted it] with empty delusions; he depraved the flesh with debauches of every kind. They turned out to be the same as their gods — dead for justice and alive for evil. Nothing can hold us back from telling their shallow stories or from inscribing [them] in this book as a demonstration of their impiety and the emptiness of their wisdom which they supposed to gain during thoughtful investigations. However, they were unable to perceive that the created and mortal nature could not dare to come nearer to that Nature which is unbounded and uncreated. We shall tell some of their tales, which they allege to be true, in order to demonstrate their ignorance.

The first [one] we will introduce is the god of the Cretans whom they call Kronos. Due to his envy or gluttony or for [P. ۱۰۰/f.84r] some other reason, which I do not know, he swallowed his children one by

(186) Is 65:3.

(187) Is 65:4.

(188) Cf. Is 65:5.

one. People say that he had a wife called Demeter (it was one of her names by which she was called, for it was their will to create gods for themselves and to name them). Demeter knew that this Kronos had eaten his own children. Therefore, after she had given birth to Zeus, their god, it is said that she entrusted him to some people who were able to hide him. They made noise by jerking, singing and clanging their swords so that the cry of the child could not be heard. So, they brought him and hid on a mountain which was abundant with trees. His mother wrapped a stone in swaddles and laid it instead of [Zeus] so that when Kronos would come, he would swallow the stone instead of the child without hesitation. This was the reason for the erring to mislead and to be misled exactly as their gods [did].

Nevertheless, let us see what people say about Zeus after this and let us investigate what good deeds he [committed] to pay his mother back. People say that after he had grown and matured (oh, if only he had not been born — since if he had not been born he wouldn't not have existed at all!) — He came lasciviously with unsatisfied desire [to his mother], violated her and slept with her. She bore a girl from him whose name was Persephone. The mother of Zeus became furious for he had dishonored her. Therefore, when he decided to please her, he found a ram and cut off its testicles, brought them and threw them on her lap as if he took vengeance on himself. [This was done to show her] that she might not fear him in the future. He learned this trick from his father who, as the heathen say, had cut the testicles of Heaven. Therefore, [Zeus] stopped begetting [children]. However, Demeter did not stop fearing the lasciviousness of Zeus. She took care lest he might assault the girl [P. ~~100~~/f.84v] and abuse her. Despite the fact she had hidden her most safely, he turned into a dragon and abused her as well. As their gods are violators and violated [at the same time], thus they perform all the same [to one another] without any shame as if it is of necessity.

Nevertheless, let us see what happened to [the girl] who was abused by her own father. People say that Death came and abducted her and she became a wife for him. He is called Pluto. The place where he took her is called Sheol. We will describe the impiety of the Greeks and then, gradually, the rest of the heathen. Indeed, the great blessing which will appear afterwards will seem much greater. Anyway, Demeter did not stop searching for her daughter who was stolen by Pluto. After wandering and roaming along the roads, she came up and sat wearily by a well of water. I will keep silent about the

other things people say happened there, since they are not worth mentioning. They say that a swineherd came there and told her about the daughter. After he had done this, she loved him very much. The Greeks say that she gave him [seeds of] wheat and taught him to spread¹⁸⁹ the skill [of agriculture] among the people¹⁹⁰ for they did not yet have the food of wheat bread. Such are the stories about Demeter and Kronos.

Let us relate another impious [story] which is about Dionysus, the god of the Greeks. He was born from Zeus in adultery as well. People say that once Zeus met a woman and fell in love with her. Then he slept with her and she conceived. When the wife of Zeus found it out, she became jealous. Since she wanted her to punish herself, she came [to her place] and told her: "When Zeus comes to you, tell him: 'If [P. ~~...~~/f.85r] you love me, come to me in the same disguise you come to your wife, Hera'." He was used to come to her as a lightning. Therefore, she was led astray like a child and told Zeus to do this. And when he came to her the way she had asked — as a lightning — she was wounded and died. However, the child she bore did not die. As the time for [the child] had not yet come, Zeus took him, tore his own hip, and put him inside till the appointed time came and he was born.

Let us tell [a story] about Aphrodite, the goddess of the heathen. People say that she was born in the following way. They say, that when Earth became angry with her husband Heaven for binding her children, she brought Kronos, her son, gave him a sickle and told him: "When your father is going to descend from heaven to sleep with me, cut his testicles." He cut [the testicles] off as she had ordered him and threw them into the sea. Foam appeared [on the surface of the sea] and Aphrodite was born from it. Due to her debauchery she is quite honoured by the heathen. The blessed Paul teaches what they perform during their feasts: "For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret."¹⁹¹

Now, let us tell [a story] about Artemis, the goddess of the Ephesians. People say that she sends visions and fearful demons to magicians. Therefore, she is honoured as the one who is able to reveal the hidden. Also, other people tell [us] about Apollo that he found a

(189) Lit.: to show.

(190) Lit.: the world.

(191) Cf. Eph 5:12.

place in this country where a spirit of divination was ascending from. He sat and divined over it. He divined on the past, the present, and the future with a tripod where he laid his pipes. Therefore, Apollo is honoured as a master of the hidden. He is honoured among the Greeks [P. ~~400~~/f.85v] though he is not able to perform any of these.¹⁹²

We will tell another disgusting [story] and pass to those [stories] of the Egyptians. People say that a woman served [as a priest] instead of a man in that divine place. She bared her privy parts during divination, stood over the entrance to that abyss, and divined this way.

Since there are many Greek stories and tales beyond number as their gods and goddesses are numerous, let us consider the rest of the nations now.

We will tell about the Egyptians since we forgot everything that was told. People say that Isis, the mother of the Egyptian gods, had a husband whose name was Osiris. Once, Typhon, his brother, made war against him and killed him. He cut off his members and scattered them everywhere. When Isis came to know this, she gathered troops and killed Typhon, the brother of her husband. She made a careful search of her husband Osiris' members and gathered them. Only his phallus was lost. When she joined the gathered members together — each of them being honoured by priests — she made up a model of the phallus and joined it [to the other members] instead of the phallus that was lost. From that time there was a custom in Egypt to worship and honour the phalli like gods. They worshipped wild and domestic animals, even disgusting reptiles. Divination and witchcraft were held in honour too, according to what the books say. They also worshipped trees, roots, and stones. They called garlic, onion, leek, and other similar things too with the fearful name [of God].

Let us reveal the reason why the Prince of the World bound them. People say that the Egyptians were a wild and disobedient nation. [P. ~~400~~/f.86r] Thus, they constantly rebelled against their ruler. Once they had a cunning king. He established a law and a custom for them to worship various animals. This land [would worship] this [animal] and that [land would worship] another. The animal that was worshipped in one place was slaughtered and eaten in another. And the [animal] that was honoured in one city was held to be repugnant in another. Therefore, [the king] incited them against one another and they stopped struggling with their ruler.

(192) Lit.: none of these things are typical of him.

Also, people say [the following] about them. When Pharaoh pursued the Israelites, God drowned him in the Red Sea. And when those who stayed behind and did not come with him saw what had happened to him and all his troops, [they began] to honour and worship that thing which prevented them from joining the Pharaoh as if [that object] had brought salvation to them. So, the Egyptians were seized with these abominable habits. And there was no item from among the variety of things that they did not worship like a god.

What shall we say about the Chaldeans and those who followed them (I mean the Magi)? The Chaldeans ascribed divine economy to the stars and to the signs of the zodiac. They believed that the spirit of divination inspired them to compile horoscopes and fates and other [things].¹⁹³ Hence, they assumed that there was no other [superior power] except this one. However, “the world by itself is moved with the seven [planets] and the twelve [signs of the zodiac]”. This [notion] perniciously cast them out into the abyss of ignorance and into the delusion of sorcery.

The Magi, who descended from them, were different in other ways. They regarded all the signs of the zodiac as being substantial and living. Most of all they honoured fire, the sun, and the rest of the celestial bodies as if these had acquired divinity by nature. Also, they have incantations¹⁹⁴ and barsoms,¹⁹⁵ stories based on their inventions which they tell and which I also consider necessary to recount. They say that before the heavens and the earth were created Zurvan had been offering libations to God for a thousand years wishing to have a son called Hormizd who would create the heavens and the earth. After this many years had passed, he thought and said to himself: “What is the use of this sacrifice? Maybe, I labour in vain.” At that very moment, Hormizd and Ahreman were conceived along with the thought. Hormizd came from the libations and Ahreman [came] from the doubts. When [Zurvan] understood that, he made a vow and said: “I will give these sticks (which they call ‘barsoms’) to the one who will be the firstborn. And I will give him the power to create the heavens and the earth.” When Ahreman heard this he at once tore the

(193) Lit.: was blowing to them [knowledge] about horoscopes, fates and other [things].

(194) Lit.: murmurings.

(195) Barsom – a bundle of twigs held by the officiating Zoroastrian priest at acts of worship.

womb of his mother, came out, and stood before Zurvan, his father. When [Zurvan] saw him he said: "Who are you?" Ahreman lied to him: "I am your son, Hormizd." When Zurvan became angry because of this and they began to argue, the turn of Hormizd came and he was born. Hormizd was given the power to create everything that is good and beautiful. And Ahreman made all the rest, which is harmful. Such were the stories that the Magi invented about creation.

Some said that the world came from two sources: the good and the evil. Some worshipped Tammuz. Others offered libations to Venus. However, I will stop describing the impiety which was served by some people at the high places of the Edomites. Other people cherished the memory of their elders by creating statues and carved images of them after their death. Finally, they obtained the useless inventions of idols. Such are [P. ~~ms.~~/f.87r] the rest of the heathen. Earlier we showed the [relevant] things as far as the Jews are concerned.

There was no further kind of evil or delusion which Satan had not invented and there was no one over whom Satan had not spread [his evil influence and delusions] in accordance with their disposition to his harmful advice. Thereby, he cut them from any kind of decency so that their [dignity] would not be superior to that of cattle. Thus, death put a yoke over them and they were descending hopelessly to Sheol like cattle. Neither the natural law nor the written one could help them. Neither the Pentateuch nor the Prophets [comforted them]. Nor did the miracles calm their fury — such as those shown in Egypt, on the Red Sea and in the desert, in the promised land, in Assyria, and in Babylonia¹⁹⁶ which God performed from time to time with the help of the prophets both among the Jews and among the heathen. However, despite all those things that God did and more than those as the Scripture teaches us, humans preferred to stay in their delusion. Therefore, [God] committed them to their desires so that they had to worship the hosts of heavens. As it is said: "And they worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator."¹⁹⁷ And even as they did not like to retain the true God in their knowledge,¹⁹⁸ as the apostle said, nevertheless by His grace He did not leave them without witness¹⁹⁹ and never stopped caring for them. Indeed, the

(196) Lit.: among Assyrians and Babylonians.

(197) Cf. Rom 1:25.

(198) Cf. Rom 1:28.

(199) Cf. Act 14:17.

Jews did not ask, "Where is the Lord who had taken us out of Egypt?" The heathen did not think, "Who is he who gives us rain (in its time), grows fruits in our lands, and fills our hearts with gladness?"²⁰⁰ The world did not want to know its Benefactor with the natural wisdom which God had given it. However, their minds were blinded with love for passions. They had made their passions their gods again. Thus, [P. ~~ms.~~/f.87v] the blessed Paul said, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind."²⁰¹ And by "reprobate" he calls all the evil a fraction of which we have described earlier and in which all the humans had lived before [the coming of] Christ.

What is to follow? Oh, wonderful Paul! "They will do those things which are not convenient being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness; [full of] envy, murder, contention, deceit, malice, whisper, and backbiting, hated by God, impudent, boasters, proud, haughty, inventors of evil things, half-witted, disobedient to parents, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful..."²⁰² They do all these; however, they are not deprived of natural discretion which is able by nature to blame all of these [things] which put their creators under accusation. This is evident from the fact that they did these [things] to others while judging, blaming and accusing others who did all the same things²⁰³. Therefore, they will have no defense on the Judgment Day.

Thus, so as not to extend this chapter by relating too many things, we shall extract a small fraction from the big [amount of material] and reveal the object of our thought. We spoke about the beginning of man's formation: the way in which he came into existence [by the will] of God, with great care and honour and how the Deceiver appeared on the same day. Step by step, we described God's care for man or for mankind and their disobedience. It seemed necessary for us to speak about the times and the signs which occurred²⁰⁴ then. We did this following the sequence of when this happened. [P. ~~ms.~~/f.88r] We demonstrated the beautiful harmony evident within all this, as all this to a great degree points out the abundance of God's mercy upon us. We also showed the reasons for [God's] electing the nation of Is-

(200) Cf. Act 14:17.

(201) Rom 1:28.

(202) Cf. Rom 1:28–31.

(203) Cf. Rom 2:1–3.

(204) Lit.: occur.

rael. [We showed] that neither did they abide by the written law given to them nor did the heathen [obey] the natural law which was hidden among them. Also in accordance with our power, we spoke about the demons' plot and their evil envy which they developed against humans. Despite our weakness, we shed light on the words of the prophets, which had alluded beforehand to the [future] shining forth of Christ the Saviour, our Lord. [We explained the words] of the Law and the Prophets, the signs and the symbols of the Christians which He performed. We briefly showed the demons' delusion with which both the Jews and the heathen were enfeebled before the shining forth and the appearance of our Lord. We did this in order to shut the mouth of those who do not understand that the coming of our Lord offered us many reasons for goodness. Indeed, despite the fact that the entire Law along with its judgments was proclaimed by the fearful sight of the fiery pillar, in the cloud, with voices of trumpets and on the smoking mountain, and was announced by God, its Giver, it could not perfect "the humans with that which was desired".²⁰⁵ [The Law] remained with its recipients as long as the fearful voice of its Giver was hammering in their ears. I think that this explains that which was shown to the blessed Elijah on the mountain. The angel said to him: there will be an earthquake. And the Lord was not in the earthquake. And more: I will make a wind which rends the mountains asunder and moves the earth. And the Lord was not in the wind. He revealed Himself neither in the fire nor in one of these [things] but in the voice which speaks softly²⁰⁶ that we may acknowledge the wonderful lowliness with which [P. ~~...~~/f.88v] God, by His grace, condescended towards the human race with the humble acceptance of our origin. He shiningly, peacefully, humbly, and softly caught the world in a salutary net and by His mercy brought it near to those things which are good. As Isaiah said: "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench till He brings forth judgment unto victory and nations believe in His name."²⁰⁷ And more: "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before a shearer was dumb, so did He not open His mouth

(205) Absent from Mss. **M**, **V**, **Ź**, **S**.

(206) Cf. 1 Kings 19:11–12.

(207) Cf. Is 42:2–4.

in His humility."²⁰⁸ And more: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He sent me to bind up the brokenhearted"²⁰⁹ and so on. We were healed with nothing but His wounds.²¹⁰ He spoke with us neither in the pillar nor in the cloud nor in the fire nor in the voice of the trumpet nor by the crying which they heard. They asked [Him] not to speak with them anymore lest they should die. Not common people were saying this, but those who thought themselves to be consecrated. As Moses said: "I exceedingly fear and quake."²¹¹ What is the use of these severe [signs] if [there appeared] at once the worship of the calf and cymbals and whispering and [the desire] to return back to Egypt? What will you say, Jew? Are these things true or not? I do not think that you will argue.

Now, let us see [how] He speaks with us in our humility with His soft speech. The tax gatherers will rush [to Him] and be made better; the whores will be kissed and purified; the common people and the fools will receive instruction and become wiser; the poor will be sat-ed; the sick will be healed; the lepers will be made clean; the blind will regain sight; the lame will walk; the sinners will become just; the erring will repent; nations will live in peace. Such is [His] soft speech. [Earlier signs] are the voice of the trumpets [P. ١٨٩/f.89r], the earthquake, and the strong wind. These, on other hand, are from grace. The [earlier] ones are from the Law. What can you say against it lest you blame Beelzebub again? And this is because of your stubbornness which cannot be softened and because of your obstinate heart which does not believe. As it is written about you: "They blinded their eyes, and darkened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor listen with their ears, and understand with their heart, and repent, and I should heal them."²¹² And more: "Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not."²¹³ And more: "Let their table become a snare before them."²¹⁴ Thus, let the praise of God increase on account of His grace and let shame descend upon the unjust. Despite the fact

(208) Is 53:7.

(209) Lk 4:18; cf. Is 61:1.

(210) Cf. Is 53:5; 1 Pet 2:24.

(211) Heb 12:21.

(212) Cf. John 12:40; cf. Is 6:10.

(213) Ps 69:23.

(214) Ps 69:22.

that He unbound the fetters with which the Devil had fastened both the Jews and the heathen, some of them still persist in their stubbornness, do not raise their eyes and see the sun of justice which rose for them by grace. Instead, they prefer to remain in the darkness of delusion like eyeless moles. For everything about the Christ, our Lord, happened the way the prophets [had prophesied] about Him.

Most of the delusions which took hold of the Jews and the heathen at that time have already been exposed. So, it only remains to discuss the ideas which the Jews had held about Christ, our Lord. Indeed, they had always rebelled against the Holy Spirit according to the word of Stephen.²¹⁵ Therefore, they do not understand it since they do not believe it. "Their God is their belly, and their glory is in their shame."²¹⁶ They had the following idea about the Messiah: A man is going to come who will be granted the name of sonship²¹⁷ on account of his friendship [with God] and his excellence (the same way kings and righteous ones were also called ['sons']). Then God would give victory to the Jews with his help and they would be gathered from every place. So, he would make abundant for them [P. ~~ms~~/f.89v] the [blessings] of this [life] so that they might live without labour and put the yoke upon the heathen, who will provide service to their bellies. They were not at all ashamed to frame the whole teaching of Christ up to their bellies' needs. It seems that the Pharisee told our Saviour the same things at once while [...] ²¹⁸ from heaviness of his belly and wishing to eat bread in the kingdom of God.²¹⁹ From their expectations it could be understood that the whole teaching of Christ was restricted to the palate and the belly. In the same bodily way they thought about the Resurrection as well. When they are resurrected [they believed] they would return to the weak and lowly elements again.²²⁰ They would marry and be given in marriage.²²¹ The Sadducees said that nothing like this existed: neither the Resurrection, nor the angels, nor the Spirit. Therefore, our Lord said to them: "You err,

(215) Cf. Acts 7:51.

(216) Phil 3:19.

(217) Cf. Ps 2:6–9.

(218) The text seems to be corrupted and does not give a satisfactory reading.

(219) Cf. Lk 14:15.

(220) Cf. Gal 4:9.

(221) Cf. Mt 22:30.

not knowing the scriptures or the power of God.”²²² “They are the blind leaders of the blind.”²²³

In this way, my beloved, in this book I described a select few of the many [things] concerning the delusions that had gripped the people before the coming of our Lord in order to show how goodness flourished where previously sin had been abundant, for one can behold the beauty of light in comparison with darkness, [just as we get to know] sweetness in comparison with bitterness, wealth with poverty, healing with illness, life with the death, glad tidings with upsetting news. However, impious people do not wish to observe these. We, O my beloved, will keep in mind both the first and the last so as to confess and give praise to That Who has fully brought us salvation forever and ever, Amen.

This is the end of the ninth chapter. The first part of the *Book of the Main Points* by Mār Yōḥannān bar Penkāyē is complete.

SUMMARY

The present paper deals with *The Book of the Main Points* of the East-Syriac monk John (Yōḥannān) bar Penkāyē (7th c.). In the ninth chapter of this treatise, John provides a survey of the erroneous cults and beliefs of the various nations (the Jews, the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, and the Persians) practiced before the coming of Jesus Christ. The paper attempts to find parallels and sources of the ninth chapter in works mainly known in Syriac and composed prior to the seventh century. It also offers a critical edition of this hitherto unpublished chapter, based on six manuscripts, and an English translation.

(222) Mt 22:29.

(223) Mt 15:14.