



## BAR KŌNAY, THEODORE

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**BAR KŌNAY, THEODORE** (Kēwānāy = Saturninus, not Kōnī, according to Cambridge University Library ms. Add. 1998; cf. Burkitt, p. 14 n. 1), an 8th-9th-century Nestorian teacher (doctor, *malfānā*, in a ms. from Mosul; Pognon, p. 105) and writer from Kaškar in Mesopotamia (Babylonia; cf. Alfaric, p. 24 n. 7), not to be confused with his namesake, an uncle ordained as Bishop of Lāšōm in 893 (Baumstark, 1922, p. 218; Ortiz de Urbina, p. 202, with references; Pognon, p. 105; mistaken by Duval, p. 214). Theodore Bar Kōnay is referred to as the author of a number of funeral orations and a church history (Baumstark, op. cit., p. 219), but is above all known as the author of the *Book of Scholia* (*k<sup>e</sup>tābā deskōlyōn*), composed in 791-92 and dedicated to his “brother” Yōḥannān. The work is an impressive mixture of fantastic and remarkably sound pieces of information in “11 *mēmre* (discourses) with a thematic treatment of the entire Bible accompanied by a logical-grammatical, speculative-theological, and anti-heretical commentary, including in particular an apology presented in the form of a catechism for Christian teaching and a valuable overview of such heretical dogmas as Chaldean, Greek, and Persian forms of paganism; this was supplemented by objective exegesis of selected biblical passages from each book supported by exact contributions to lexicology” (Baumstark, 1922, pp. 218f.). Of special importance for Iranian studies is book 11, dealing with heretical sects and religions, Christian as well as non-Christian, e.g., Simon Magus (cf. Acts 8), Menandros, Basilides, the Carpocrates, the Ebionites, Valentinus, the Ophites, Tatian, the Montanists, Alchasai (with important, but imprecisely placed details; see [alchasai](#)), Bardesanes, Arius, Origen, the Mandeans, the Zoroastrians, and, first and



foremost, the Manicheans (see Baumstark, 1954, pp. 188f., for further references). The most important extracts of book 11 were published and translated by Pognon, and the whole text was edited by Addai Scher (*CSCO, Scriptorum Syri* 65-66, Paris and Leipzig, 1912; on his manuscripts, including M.-A. Kugener's collation of the Berlin ms. Orient. Quart. 871 [Cumont, app. III, pp. 76-80], see vol. 66, pp. 1-2).

*The Book of Scholia* is not an entirely independent piece of work; Bar Kōnay's primary source is Epiphanius of Salamis (4th cent.), not the *Panarion* ("Medicine basket," i.e., against all heresies), but the summary of this work, the *Anakephalaiōsis*, and, no doubt, only in a Syriac translation (Pognon, pp. 106-07). Among his other sources are the Apology falsely attributed to Meliton of Sardes (2nd cent.) and, directly or indirectly, the Nestorian Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 360-428; his now lost *Peri tēs en Persīdi magikēs* [On the teaching of the Magians in Persia], the original text of which was still known by Photios [9th cent.]), both well-known in Syriac tradition (Baumstark, 1922, pp. 27, 103).

The section on Zarathustra (*l zrdwšt mgwš*), "this impure one" (*hn' tnp*), and his teachings (Pognon, pp. 111ff., 161ff.) has been thoroughly examined by Benveniste. While the biography is filled with legendary details taken from non-Zoroastrian sources, Theodore Bar Kōnay's survey of the teachings pretends to be based on a writing by Zarathustra himself ("he says that," "about x he says") (Benveniste, pp. 175ff.). It contains inter alia the story of Zurvān's giving birth to Ohrmazd and Ahriman, of which three further versions are preserved (another Syriac version and two in Armenian), and allusions in Manichean, Syriac, and Arabic texts (cf. R. C. Zaehner, *Zurvan. A Zoroastrian Dilemma*, Oxford, 1955, pp. 418ff.) and in this connection also the epitheta of Zurvān (*šwqr, pršqr, zrwqr, zrwn*, Pognon, p. 111, line 10 from the bottom; cf. Benveniste, p. 176; Zaehner, pp. 435, 439, 441; and *EIr*, I, p. 430).

Most significant in the *Book of Scholia*, however, is the section on Manichean cosmogony, as it gives direct quotations from Mani and thus forms an obvious contrast to Theodore's own more or less fantastic notes on the biography of Mani. In quoting Mani, Theodore reveals that his own Syriac language, far from being the language of Edessa, is closely related to the Aramaic of Mani himself, so in the important rendering of the name of the Great Builder as Bān Rabbā (Mandaic *ban*, "official" Syriac *bānāya*, Arabic *al-bannā'*, thus understood by Th. Nöldeke, *ZDMG* 43, 1889, p. 546; cf. Adam p. 17 n. 22, with a reference to *Kephalaia*, p. 49, line 24; and especially H. J. Polotsky,



“Manichäismus,” in Pauly-Wissowa, Suppl. VI, 1935, col. 242 [= *Collected Papers*, Jerusalem, 1971, p. 699]).

Beside the translation of Pognon both translations and commentaries have been published by Cumont, Schaeder, Jackson, Adam, and Böhlig. As a contribution to the understanding of essential parts of the teaching of Mani, the *Book of Scholia* is of primary value. According to Schaeder (p. 245), “only Theod. B. K. had the insight to fathom the insoluble interrelationship between cosmology and soteriology in Mani.” But riddles still remain, e.g., the “Angel (*malakā*), whose name is Nḥšbt” (Pognon, p. 127, lines 20-21, and pp. 185-86; see Jackson, p. 225; the latest attempt at interpreting the word is Hermann Stocks, “Manichäische Miszellen IV, Nahaschbat,” *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 4, 1952, pp. 77f.).

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