



PAUL THE PERSIAN

PAUL THE PERSIAN, a writer who lived at the time of the Nestorian Patriarch Ezekiel (567-80 C.E.), according to Bar Hebraeus (*Chron. Eccl.* II; ed. Abbeloos and Lamy, 1872, cols. 97-98), and was well versed in ecclesiastical and philosophical matters. Having once aspired to be the metropolitan bishop of Persis, he later converted to Zoroastrianism. Paul's apostasy is described in a similar manner in the Arabic *Chronicle of Séert* (XXIV; ed. Scher, 1911, p. 147), but Teixidor (1996, p. 509, n. 1) has questioned the historical value of these reports.

Bar Hebraeus attributes to Paul "an admirable introduction to the dialectics (of Aristotle)." It is generally agreed that this is identical with the *Treatise on the Logic of Aristotle the Philosopher addressed to King Ƙosrow* (i.e., Ƙosrow I Anušīrvān, r. 531-79), which is extant in a Syriac manuscript in the British Museum (ms. 988 [Add. 14660], foll. 55^v-67^r; Wright, 1872, p. 1161). An edition and Latin translation of the *Treatise* were published by Land (1875). The *Treatise* contains an introduction to philosophy in general, an introduction to Aristotle's logical works (dependent upon Porphyry's *Isagoge*), and concise summaries of the individual books of the *Organon* studied in the Syrian school tradition (*Categoriae*; *De interpretatione*; *Analytica priora* 1.1-7). The first half of the *Treatise* has been translated into French by Teixidor (1992, pp. 129-32; 1998b).

Meskawayh (d. 1030), in his *Tartib al-sa'ādāt*, quotes from an otherwise unknown work of Paul addressed to Ƙosrow which provides a general introduction to the philosophy of Aristotle (Pines, 1971, pp. 123-24; Gutas, 1983,



pp. 233, 244); this type of prolegomenon traditionally formed the first part of a commentary on the *Categoriae* (Gutas, 1983, p. 246).

The two works described above exercised a certain influence upon Islamic philosophical writers of the ninth to eleventh centuries C.E. (Kraus, 1934, pp. 16-20; Pines, 1971; Gutas, 1983; 1985, pp. 119, 123, n. 17). Particularly influential were Paul's classification and division of the parts of philosophy (Gutas, 1983; Teixidor 1996/1997, pp. 733-34) and his claim that knowledge is superior to faith and should be chosen in preference to the latter. Paul argued that through knowledge one may attain certainty, allowing people to reach unanimous agreement. Faith, however, can neither gain exact knowledge nor eliminate doubt, leading to dissension and discord (Gutas, 1983, p. 247; Teixidor, 1996).

This Paul also wrote a short commentary on Aristotle's *De interpretatione*, which is extant in Syriac in Alqoš, ms. Vosté 53 (= Scher 50), cah. 24, pp. 1-15. The prescript asserts that this commentary was translated from Middle Persian into Syriac by Severus Sebokt (d. 667) (Scher, 1906, p. 498; Vosté, 1928, p. 23; Sims-Williams, forthcoming), raising the question of whether the *Treatise* Paul addressed to Kosrow was likewise originally written in Middle Persian (Baumstark, 1922, p. 246 with n. 8; Vööbus, 1965, p. 171 with n. 19; Gutas, 1983, pp. 239, n. 15; 244, n. 29). The *De interpretatione* commentary and its prescript are also known to have survived in pp. 124-55 of a Syriac manuscript formerly in the collection of Paul Bedjan (Van Hoonacker, 1900, p. 73). The relation of this commentary to the summary of the *De interpretatione* given in the *Treatise* has not been established.

Paul the Persian also appears as a literary figure in an early Byzantine Greek anti-Manichean work, the *Debate of Photinus the Manichaeon and Paul the Persian*, which is extant in *Sinaiticus gr.* 513 (383), foll. 130^v-136^v; Athos, *Vatopedinus* 236, foll. 129^v-135^r; and *Vaticanus gr.* 1838, foll. 249^v-258^v. Mai (1847) produced an edition of the text (based upon *Vaticanus gr.* 1838 but with numerous errors) together with a Latin translation; these were reprinted by J.-P. Migne (*Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 88, cols. 529A-552C; [Figure 1](#)). Samuel Lieu and Mark Vermes have prepared an English translation of this work (to appear in the *Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum Series Graeca*), which is based upon Mai's edition but includes some emendations made after examining a microfilm of *Vatopedinus* 236. A critical edition of the Greek text and a new English translation are being prepared by Byard Bennett.



The *Debate* purports to be a transcript of three disputations held in Constantinople at the command of the Emperors Justin I and Justinian I (i.e., between 1 April and 1 August 527 C.E.), with the eparch of the city, Theodorus (Teganistes), presiding. The three disputations deal, respectively, with the origin of human souls, the Manichean doctrine of the two principles, and the nature of the Law and validity of the Old Testament. Lieu (1983, p. 165, n. 107) initially suggested that the *Debate* was fictional, being “composed in the literary tradition of the *Acta Archelai*.” In a later work, however, Lieu (1992, pp. 96, 211-14) appears to have accepted the historicity of the disputations, noting the realistic narration of events and the coincidence in time of this alleged debate with Justinian’s edicts against Manicheism (*Codex Justinianus* 1.5.12.2-3, 1.5.16.2; ed. Krüger, 1929, pp. 53, 56) and persecution of the Manicheans (John Malalas, *Chronographia*, ed. Dindorf, 1831, p. 423, 16-17; reproduced in Theophanes, *Chronographia* A.M. 6016; ed. de Boor, 1883, p. 171, 2-3). The historicity of the disputations has similarly been affirmed by Mercati (1901, p. 191), Richard (1977, p. XLV), and Klein (1991, p. 31). Since, however, there is no evidence that Theodorus held the office of eparch after 1 December 526 (Martindale, 1980, p. 1096; Feissel, 1986) and these disputations are not attested in any other source, their historicity cannot be regarded as established.

The assertion by Labourt (1904, pp. 166-67) and Lieu (1992, p. 212) that the Paul who appears in the *Debate* can be identified with the author of the *Treatise* is implausible. The fact that the Paul who authored the logical treatises is said to have flourished over forty years after the debate with the Manichean is supposed to have taken place suggests caution in identifying these two figures.

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