Extract on Bardesan

Jacob the Persian Philosopher (4th century)

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Extract on Bardesan

Bardesan, a man of antiquity, and renowned for the knowledge of events, has written in a treatise composed by him touching the synods of the heavenly luminaries with one another, saying thus: Two circuits of Saturn are 60 years; 5 circuits of Jupiter 60 years; 40 circuits of Mars 60 years; 60 circuits of the Sun 60 years; 72 circuits of Venus 60 years; 150 circuits of Mercury 60 years; 720 circuits of the moon 60 years; and this is one synod of them all, that is to say, the time of one synod of them; so that hence it appears, that for 100 of such synods there would be six thousand years, in this manner: 200 circuits of Saturn 6 thousand years; 500 circuits of Jupiter 6 thousand years; 4 thousand circuits of Mars 6 thousand years; six thousand circuits of the Sun six thousand years; 7 thousand and 200 circuits of Venus 6 thousand years; 12 thousand circuits of Mercury 6 thousand years; 72 thousand circuits of the Moon 6 thousand years: and Bardesan made these calculations when he was desirous of shewing that this world would stand only six thousand years.

[Endnotes moved here] 1. P. 40, L. 16. 150 circuits of Mercury 60 years. This will not agree with the calculation a few lines below, 12 thousand circuits of Mercury 6 thousand years. There is therefore an error in the manuscript in the first instance reading 150 for 120, or in the latter 12 for 15. Additional Note to page 40. The extract given here is cited from Add. MS. in the British Museum, 12,154, f. 248, b, respecting which see my Corpus Ignatianum, p. 359. The passage is quoted from a writer known as the Persian Philosopher, whose real name was Jacob: see subscription to Add. MS. 17,182, transcribed A.G. 785, or A.D. 473. There is another copy of this work of nearly as early date, Add. MS. 14,619. The author wrote the last of his treatises in the year of Alexander, 656, or A.D. 342. These treatises, both from their antiquity and the matter contained in them, are very important; but as I am preparing them for publication, I abstain at present from any further observations. [Note to the online text: which strange reticence, even buried at the end of the volume in the wrong place, leaves the reader none the wiser as to the identity of the writer. Steven Ring has kindly emailed me that in fact 'Jacob' is Aphrahat.]

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chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Footnotes are left out, and Greek or Latin words, square brackets and any transcription error are as the source prints them. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.

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