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THE LOST WORK OF THEODORET OF CYRUS
AD QVAESITA MAGORUM PERSARUM

In the 4th-5th cc., during the struggle of Christian and Pagan worlds, each apologetic treatise on defense of the true faith had an exceptional importance. The blessed Theodoret of Cyrus, the most eminent Syrian bishop of the 5th c., had been in a constant opposition to various kinds of the heresies and composed few works against them. It became a reason for the Monophysits to condemn some of his writings in the council *Latrocinium Ephesinum* (449). The decision of the *Latrocinium* repeated 5th Ecumenical Council, forced by the emperor Justinian who wished to return Monophysits to the Orthodox Church by this step. The condemnation provoked the loss of Theodoret's some writings, and of the *Ad Quaesita Magorum Persarum* among them.

Theodoret mentions the work in his *Commentaries on Octateuch* (Πρὸς τοὺς μάγους, *Commentaries on Leviticus*, 1) and epistles (Πρὸς τὰς πεύσεις τῶν μάγων, epistle 82; Πρὸς τοὺς ἐν Περσίδι μάγους, epistle 113) and refers to it also in the *Church History*, explaining what the work concerns: 'Magi is the name given by the Persians to the worshippers of the sun and moon, but I have exposed their fabulous system in another treatise and have adduced solutions of their difficulties' (5.39).¹ In the epistles 82 and 113 Theodoret indicates this work as written before the Ephesus Council, that is, before 431 (epistle 82), more precisely, 'twenty years ago', that is before 429 (20 years before 449, when epistle 113 had been composed).

The only extant fragment that had been considered to preserve from the work is a fragment from Greek catenae of the Kings, under the title:

¹ μάγους δὲ καλοῦσιν οἱ Πέρσαι τοὺς τὰ στοιχεῖα θεοποιούντας· τὴν δὲ τούτων μυθολογίαν ἐν ἑτέρῳ συγγράμματι δεδηλώκαμεν, ἐν ᾧ τὴν λύσιν ταῖς τούτων πεύσεσι προσηρέγκαμεν (PG 82, col. 1272C).

θεοδω(ρήτου) ἐκ τοῦ γ' λόγου τοῦ κατὰ Μανιχαίων.² Karo and Lietzmann, Opitz and Bardy indicated to it in the *Coislin. gr.* 8 (115v).³ The fragment in the manuscript is anonymous. It was published under the name of Procopius of Gaza in the Catena Collection of Nicephorus (Nicephorus himself added the name 'Procopius' to the fragment)⁴ and in the PG 80, col. 741-2, n. 71. Brok indicated also 6 manuscripts that preserve same fragment, and the PG edition (PG 87/1, col. 1086), that relies on one of them (*Monacensis* 358).⁵ Brok doubted its authenticity and stated that the fragment does not represent the work of Theodoret, but that of anonymous author, written against Manicheans.⁶

The fragment begins with the refutation of the 3King. 22.20: 'And the Lord said: Who shall persuade Ahab?', and has not a polemical, but exegetical maintenance. The fragment concerns with Lord's revelations, his invisible nature, and concerns with the devil, the God's creature being under God's πρόθεσις and disobedient to the Lord. The magi in the fragment are not mentioned and, according to its maintenance, to connect it with the magi and their 'mythology' is absolutely groundless. Scholars doubt its authenticity and admit that it is uncertain, the excerpt of which work it represents.⁷

No work against Manicheans written by Theodoret and no indication concerning them are known. In the *Haereticarum Fabularum Compendium* (453) he researches in detail this heresy and names the Church fathers who composed the writings against Manicheans and does not mention his own.⁸ Consequently, Brok's statement that fragment does not belong to Theodoret seems to be veritable and, since it has no concern with any

² Brok M., *Le Livre contre les Mages de Théodoret de Cyr, Mélanges de Science Religieuse*, 10, 1953, 181.

³ Karo G., Lietzmann J., *Catenarum Graecarum Catalogus, Nachrichten Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-historische Klasse, heft I, Göttingen 1902*, 18; Opitz H.G., *Theodoretos*, *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertums-Wissenschaft*, ed. G. Wissowa, W. Kroll, Reihe, 5A:2 (1934), 1798; Bardy G., *Theodoret Evêque de Cyr, Dictionnaire Theologique Catholique* 15, 1946, 307; Brok, 181; Théodoret de Cyr, *Thérapeutique des Maladies Helléniques*, ed. P. Canivet, SC 57, vol. I, Paris: Les Editions du Cerf 1958, 27, n. 4.

⁴ Brok, 181-182.

⁵ Brok, 181.

⁶ Brok, 181.

⁷ *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, ed. M. Geerard, t. III, Brepols-Turnhout: Fabrieken Brepols 1979, 205.

⁸ PG 81, col. 381.

question related to magi, it can not represent the excerpt of Theodoret's work against them.

Photius lists Theodoret's few works and does not mention Theodoret's *Ad Quaesita Magorum Persarum*. However he had read the work under similar title. Photius summarizes:

'Read three short treatises by Theodore *On Persian Magic* (*περὶ τῆς ἐν Περσίδι μαγικῆς*) and wherein it differs from Christianity, dedicated to Mastubius, an Armenian and suffragan bishop.⁹ In the first book the accursed doctrine of the Persians, introduced by Zardades, concerning Zuruam, whom he makes the beginning of all things and calls Fortune, is expounded; how that, having offered a libation to beget Hormisdas, he begot both him and Satan. Of the mixing of blood. Having set forth this impious and disgraceful doctrine in plain words he refutes it in the first book. In the other two books he discusses the Christian faith, beginning from the creation of the world and at the same time rapidly going down to the law of grace. This Theodore is believed to be Theodore of Mopsuestia, since he mentions with approval (*κρατύνων*) the heresy of Nestorius, especially in the third book. He also foolishly talks of the restoration of sinners to their former condition (*ἀποκατάστασις*)' (*Bibliotheca* 81, PG 103, col. 281AB).¹⁰

It is well-known that similarity of Theodore's and Theodoret's names (cf. Θεοδ) frequently caused the confusion of their catenae.¹¹ Besides, the

⁹ Among the correspondence of Theodoret appear two epistles to the bishops of Persian Armenia, Eulalius (epistle 77) and Eusebius (epistle 78).

¹⁰ The English translation of the passage is cited from: Fresse J.H., *The Library of Photius*, vol. I, London: SPCK 1920. 'Ανεγνώσθη βιβλιδάριον Θεοδώρου περὶ τῆς ἐν Περσίδι μαγικῆς καὶ τῆς ἢ τῆς εὐσεβείας διαφορά ἐν λόγοις τρισί. Προσφώνει δὲ αὐτοὺς πρὸς Μαστούβιον ἐξ Ἀρμενίας ὁρμώμενον χωρεπίσκοπον δὲ τυγχάνοντα. Καὶ ἐν μὲν τῷ πρώτῳ λόγῳ προτίθεται τὸ μαρὸν Περσῶν δόγμα ὃ Ζαρδάδης εἰσηγήσατο ἧτοι περὶ τοῦ Ζουρουάμ ὃν ἀρχηγὸν πάντων εἰσάγει ὃν καὶ τύχην καλεῖ· καὶ ὅτι σπένδων ἵνα τέκη τὸν Ὁρμίσδαν ἔτεκεν ἐκεῖνον καὶ τὸν Σατανάν· καὶ περὶ τῆς αὐτῶν αἰμομιξίας. Καὶ ἀπλῶς τὸ δυσσεβὲς καὶ υπέραισχρον δόγμα κατὰ λέξιν ἐκθείς ἀνασκευάζει ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ λόγῳ. Ἐν δὲ τοῖς λοιποῖς δυοῖν λόγοις τὰ περὶ τῆς εὐσεβοῦς διέρχεται πίστεως ἀπὸ τῆς κοσμογονίας ἀρξάμενος καὶ περὶ τῆς χάριτος ὁμοίως καὶ ἐπιτροχάδην διελθών. Οὗτος ὁ Θεόδωρος ὁ Μοψουεστίας εἶναι δοκεῖ· τὴν τε γὰρ Νεστορίου αἵρεσιν καὶ μάλιστα ἐν τῷ τρίτῳ λόγῳ κρατύνων προαναφώνει ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν ἀποκατάστασιν τερατεύεται (*Bibliotheca* 81, PG 103, col. 281AB). Theodoret used in his writings the term ἀποκατάστασις, cf. his *Commentaries on Jeremiah* (27.7, PG 81, col. 645) and *Commentaries on Ezekiel* (16. 55, PG 81, col. 953).

¹¹ Fernández Marcos N., Busto Saiz J. R., *Theodoret of Cyrene's Questions in Reges et Paralipomena*, *Textos y Estudios Cardenal Cisneros*, 32. Madrid: Instituto Arias

mention of Nestorius' heresy with approval, while Theodore died before Nestorius was ordained as a patriarch of Constantinople¹² and reveal himself as a heretic, Theodore's writings against Origen, that indicates that Theodore could not have confessed the doctrine of apocatastasis, Theodoret's favorable mentions of Origen¹³ and listing him among other blessed fathers,¹⁴ allows to assume that the work described by Photius could belong in fact to Theodoret and not to Theodore, though Photius knew the book under the former's name (it means that at Photius' time there had been formed already a tradition ascribing this work to the great Interpreter, Theodore of Mopsuestia). This statement does not rule out that Theodore of Mopsuestia wrote his own work on Persian Magicians: Mar Abd Yeshua ascribes to Theodore of Mopsuestia the book against magicians written in two parts,¹⁵ Theodore's book against magicians is mentioned also by the *Seert Chronicle*,¹⁶ and in the treatise *Against Nestorians and Eutychians* by Leontius of Byzance.¹⁷

Relying on Photius's description, it can be stated that two fragments from the book dedicated to Mastubius, published under the name of

Montano Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1984, 237; cf. also, Devreesse R., *Les Anciens Commentateurs Grecs de l'Octateuque et des Rois* (Fragments tires des Chaines), Citta del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1959, 182.

¹² cf. Theodoret's *Church History*, 5.40: 'When the divine Theodorus was the ruler of the church of Antioch, Theodorus, bishop of Mopsuestia... ended this life.' The name of former Theodorus is mentioned by mistake, the author means Theodotus of Antioch (419-428), as for Theodore of Mopsuestia, he died in 428.

¹³ Cf. "Ωριγένην τὸν ἡμέτερον" (*Graecarum Affectionem Curatio*, 6.60, PG 83, col. 977B), "Ωριγένης, ὁ πολυμάθειαν ἀσκήσας" (*Haereticarum Fabularum Compendium*, PG 83, col. 345), 'ἐκ τῶν παλαιῶν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας διδασκάλων... καὶ Ὁριγένους' (ibid, col. 340), '... καὶ Ὁριγένης, τῆς ἀληθείας ὑπερμαχοῦντες' (ibid, col. 349). Scholars indicate to the usage of Origen's writings and origenistic literature by Theodoret (Venables E., Theodoretus, *A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines, during the First Eight Centuries*, ed. W. Smith, H. Wace, t. IV, London 1887, 916; Welsersheimb L., *Das Kirchenbild der Griechischen Väterkommentare zum Hohen Liede*, *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 70/4, 1948, 440, 441; Griffith S., *Asceticism in the Church of Syria: the Hermeneutics of Early Syrian Monasticism*, in: *Asceticism*, ed. V. L. Wimbush, R. Valantasis, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995, 222).

¹⁴ *Explanatio in Canticum Canticozum*, PG 81, col. 32.

¹⁵ 'and two against the Magicians', 'Index of Biblical and Ecclesiastical Writings drawn up by Mar Abd Yeshua, Metropolitan of Nisibis and Armenia, AD 1298', in: G.Badger. *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, London 1852, t. II, 365.

¹⁶ 'another in which he refutes those who practice magic', cf. Yildiz E., *The Literary Activity and Biblical Exegesis of Mar Theodorus the Interpreter*, *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 12/2, 1998, 7.

¹⁷ τὰ τε κατὰ Μαγουσαίων αὐτῶν συγγραφέντα (PG 86/1, 1384C).

Theodore of Mopsuestia in the 2nd half of the 20th century, belong to Theodoret. In 1968 W. Strothmann edited German translation of the fragment found in *Vat.gr.* 496 among commentaries written by Dadišo Qatraya on the writings of Abba Isaïe.¹⁸ After 4 years, in 1972 R. Draguet published the Syrian text of the commentaries of Dadišo, the same fragment with its French translation (15.16).¹⁹ There was mentioned in the fragment 'the Blessed Interpreter' (ܩܘܕܝܫܘܬܐ ܕܩܘܕܝܫܐ) and his 'book composed against magicians (ܩܘܕܝܫܘܬܐ ܕܩܘܕܝܫܐ), that is called *Mstoubyo* (ܩܘܕܝܫܘܬܐ) after the name of a person, who demanded it from him', to reveal that the souls of just people, after they exit their corps, enter the Paradise.²⁰ It is said in the fragment:

'Quand dans cette espérance nous aurons subi les misères de ce monde, c'est dans la jouissance de grands biens (ܩܘܕܝܫܘܬܐ, cf. ἀπόλαυσις)²¹ que nous ferons notre sortie d'ici-bas; en [nous en allant] quant à nos âmes, nous serons en repos (ܩܘܕܝܫܘܬܐ), par notre entrée au Paradis avant de recevoir l'état futur (ܩܘܕܝܫܘܬܐ, ἀποκατάστασις?) qui nous est promis; comme *notre Seigneur fit entrer aussi avec lui le larron*,²² ainsi tous ceux qui seront décédés dans la *bonne espérance* recevront la jouissance de (biens) pareils à ceux-la'.²³ Et voulant montrer qu'il ne parle pas de la jouissance parfaite en ce monde parfait-là, mais de certaines arrhes au Paradis, il dit: 'C'est n'est pas la perfection future, disons-nous, que reçoivent les âmes des justes et des saints au Paradis, pas plus qu'elles ne subissent le travail et le combat (ܩܘܕܝܫܘܬܐ, cf. ἀγών) pour la justice, mais, selon le dessein

¹⁸ Scheinhardt H., *Zitate aus drei verlorenen Schriften des Theodor von Mopsuestia, Paul de Lagarde und die Syrische Kirchengeschichte*, Göttingen 1968, 188, 192-194; Cf. also Reinink G. J., *A New Fragment of Theodore of Mopsuestia's Contra Magos*, *Le Muséon* 110/1-2, 1997, 63.

¹⁹ Draguet R., *Commentaire du Livre d'Abba Isaïe (logoi I-XV) par Dadišo Qatraya*, CSCO 326, *Scriptores Syri* 144, Louvain 1972, 15.16 (Syrian text: 270₂₁-271₁ and 271₃₋₈); Draguet R., *Commentaire du Livre d'Abba Isaïe (logoi I-XV) par Dadišo Qatraya*, CSCO 327, *Scriptores Syri* 145, Louvain 1972, 15.16 (English translation: 208₂₈₋₃₄ and 209₂₋₇).

²⁰ Draguet, 15.16, 270₉₋₁₄/208₁₈₋₂₂; Cf. also Reinink, 63.

²¹ The probable Greek equivalents to the fragments are mainly added after the *Lexicon Syriacum* of C. Brockelmann, *Halis Saxonum* 1928.

²² *Luke*, 23.43.

²³ Draguet, 270₂₁-271₁/208₂₈₋₃₄.

(ܐܠܗܝܐ, cf. πρόθεσις) ineffable de Dieu, elles sont là comme en sommeil et en repos (ܐܢܝܢ) jusqu'au temps de la résurrection (ܡܨܝܗܐ) où elles revêtirent leurs corps (ܠܩܝܡܐ ܡܨܝܗܐ) et monteront au ciel avec eux'.²⁴

There is an indication before the citation that the quotation is made from the last part of the book.

In the same discourse (15.18) the book *Mstoubyo* (ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ) of 'the Interpreter' (ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ) is mentioned once more on account of the term 'bliss' (ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ),²⁵ however the work is not cited.

In 1997 Reinink published the Syrian text of another fragment of the work (p. 68) with its English translation (pp. 69-70) relying on the Christological work written at 12-13th cc. by Simon the Persecuted (ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ), *On the Union* (ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ), preserved in two Syrian manuscripts: *Mingana Syr.* 544 (XIII c.) and *Cambridge Or.* 1317 (XIX c.).²⁶ Simon quoted the fragment, as the citation from the book *Mastubiya* (ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ) written by the blessed Interpreter (ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ) and Teacher (ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ).²⁷ It is cited as a testimony that 'the conjunction (ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ, cf. συνάφεια) of the Word God and Man in Christ made the Man participate in the glory and Sovereignty of the Word to such a degree, that there is not longer any difference between the Word and his 'temple' Christ, except for the properties of the divine nature and the human nature, which remain distinct and without confusion'.²⁸ The fragment is as follows:

'He (= the Word God) gave him (= to the human nature) the conjunction (ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ, cf. συνάφεια),²⁹ with himself to such a degree, that he made him the treasure (ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ, θησαυρός)³⁰ of all 'thoughts' (ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ, cf. λογισμός), by which the (divine) economy (ܡܨܘܒܝܘܗ, cf. οἰκονομία) of the whole creation is wrought, (a treasure) which cannot suffer diminution nor be spoiled, and (also) that he no longer

²⁴ Draguet, 271³⁻⁸/209²⁻⁷.

²⁵ Draguet, 15.18, 275²⁷⁻²⁷⁶⁵/212³¹⁻³⁶.

²⁶ Reinink, 63-64, 66-67.

²⁷ Reinink, 68^{1,3}, 69²⁸.

²⁸ *Mingana Syr.* 544, 96^{r14-24}; Reinink, 66.

²⁹ The probable Greek equivalents to the fragments are added after the *Lexicon Syriacum* and after the scholia of Reinink's English translation (69-70).

³⁰ *Col.* 2.3.

uses human 'thoughts', but has only, through him, divine 'reflections' (ܠܗܘܬܐܝܬܐ, cf. *πρόθεσις*), namely those (divine 'reflections') by which he unceasingly and in an inexpressible way works the (divine) economy of all things. For this happened for a short time also to those who received divine revelations (ܠܗܘܬܐܝܬܐ cf. *ἐπιφάνεια*) – i.e. either the blessed prophets or against the holy apostles – as it is also happened to the blessed Peter, when he saw that vessel of linen cloth descending from heaven, filled with all kinds of beasts.³¹ And since he was in divine trance (ܠܗܘܬܐܝܬܐ, cf. *ἔκστασις*), as also the Lord's Scripture says,³² there was not even the sense of hunger in his soul, although he, being hungry, went up upon the housetop to pray; but he was completely occupied by the seeing of the things which were revealed to him. At that time then there was nothing in his mind (ܡܢ ܠܗܘܬܐܝܬܐ) but only those things which appeared to him in the revelation. However, to our Lord, Christ according to the flesh (ܝܫܘܥ ܒܥܘܕܐܝܢܐ, cf. *ὁ Σωτὴρ ἔνσαρκος*),³³ he who was assumed (ܩܘܥܘܣܐ, cf. *ἔλαβον*) for the sake of these and such good things, this happens unceasingly and in an inexpressible way, because such a seeing departs not at all from his mind, since all things that happened to him exceed and surpass all human comprehension. For he is completely the treasure of divine 'reflections' and 'thoughts', and those 'thoughts' (ܠܗܘܬܐܝܬܐ) are unceasingly and always in him, which are in the divine nature working the (divine) economy of all things'.³⁴

In whole, at the present date 3 fragments on account of Theodoret's *Ad Quaesita Magorum Persarum* can be indicated. The first one has an exegetical maintenance and its provenance from aforementioned work and its authenticity is highly doubtful, the second and the third fragments were known and published under the name of Theodore of Mopsuestia, however their author seems to be Theodoret of Cyrus.

³¹ *Acts*, 10.9-12.

³² *Acts*, 10.10.

³³ τὴν τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἔνσαρκον παρουσίαν (Athanasius of Alexandria, *Against Arians*, PG 26, col. 381); τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ φημι καὶ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν ἔνσαρκον οἰκονομίαν (Theodoret, *Commentaries on Ezekiel*, PG 81, col. 836A. Cf. *Rom.* 9.5).

³⁴ Reinink, 68 (Syrian text) / 69-70 (English translation).