Against Mani

Ephrem the Syrian (c. AD 306–373)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

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S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan. Transcribed from the Palimpsest B.M. Add. 14623 by the late C. W. MITCHELL, M.A., C.F., volume 2 (1921). Against Mani.

AGAINST MANI.
ANOTHER DISCOURSE AGAINST MANI. [P. 190.]

LET Mani be asked about that Archon, that if he be from the Evil Part, that is, from an essence loving adultery, as they say, why did he say 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' etc. ? (Let him be asked this) that thou mayest know that he (the Archon) commanded that which was approved by him. And because of sins he extirpated the Hebrews altogether . . . and [if] he [1. 15. is a Mixed Being, half and half, he ought to command that . . . how did he say 'There is none beside Me' ? And how [1. 22. again did he kill Jesus ? And if 'men were intoxicated, they would not pay attention to these things, not even if he had commanded,' then a command to sin was really pleasant to [P. 191. the sinners. For if when he said 'Do not commit adultery' they did go on committing adultery, how much more if he had commanded them to commit adultery ! But if he is a lover of Good things and on account of them makes commands, let them say who was annulling his commandments that they should not be performed ? If Satan was annulling them, lo, they are both from the one evil Essence, as they say ! How is it fighting half with the Good and half with the Evil ?

But if because in this one the mixture of Good was greater this very thing is pleasing to him, then evil beings are good beings in whom he has not made another power greater. And lo, evil beings like good ones become related to him ! And why then did that Archon not receive Jesus, the Good ? For lo, as they say, there is a means whereby the Good may be mixed with him and be accepted by him, (so) that if it is mixed with him it is acceptable to him. Till Jesus had come, then, he was mixing (for men) his good words, why did he not mix in them (i.e. in men) Good Parts ? When even those good words that are mixed in him he does not accept, neither therefore can he accept [P. 192. the Parts. For as his evil hearing is strange to the good Word, so also his hateful essence is strange to the better Part. For if with their will the evil ones accept the mixture of Parts, how did they not accept the mixture of Words ? And if by force the Parts are mixed in them, why does the Good expect the Words to be mixed in them of their own (free-)will ?

But see that in fruits and in seeds and in fountains there exists evil that kills, but good that gives life [is also] in them for men, how does the evil overcome the good ? For lo, the good is in the majority. In fruits . . . [P. 193.] [how was the ' mixture ' arranged in wolves and lambs ? If (the Maker) had wished, could not he have arranged for HULE the bodily organs of lambs ?] [1. 40.] ... for it would have been right that He (the Maker) should do to Himself that very thing which He does to others. But [they] say 'Even the Maker does first to [Himself] what He does to [P. 194.] others.' But let them know that the Maker [did] what He did [1. 13.] that is, that it will preserve itself and will destroy the other. That Entity, if it is an Entity, how does it bring forth anything the taste of which is not in its own essence and nature ?

[1. 31.] [If] the Maker [rejoices] in it and also that which is made rejoices in it, that is, God and man, then the Destroyer will be grieved at that destruction and (so will) the destroyed, except things given in legislation on the condition that the chastiser is satisfied by them and the transgressor is grieved by them ? But as when a transgressor becomes of the same will as the chastiser there is no suffering, so when one who is to be destroyed submits to the [P. 195.] will of the destroyer there will be no destruction. And as the will of the chastiser is not that he should suffer, so also will be the will of the destroyer, that is, that he should not be pained. For the just Entity, as it is just in itself, so it is just also towards another : the contrary then of this should be found in the case of the wicked Entity. For the just Entity does not destroy itself nor others ; the wicked Entity, what is it ?—one that preserves itself as a just one and treats one that has not transgressed against it as a wicked one: which very thing with many (others), and more than many, bears witness against it that it is not an Entity but a compound.

And if they should say that the Sons of Darkness are divided one against another, then also about each one of them is said the same that is spoken about all of them, that is, that each one of them is divided also against his own members, as he is divided also against his mates. For if there is concord in each one of them it should be found in all of them, and so division also ; and if they with themselves are at war and do not cease from war one with another, how did they come to make war with the [P. 196.] Light ? For lo, that adversary that they have among themselves, it is either because he is akin to the Light their adversary, or he is a third party made to be an adversary to both of them, to [which] we ought to give a place and essence by itself. And then, in the nature of Light also is there an adversary ? But if there is none, because it is one nature, what I have said above has been verified, that it is because of two natures mingled in one another that division arises, as also Body and Soul bear witness. But which of the natures is greater, O Mani ? The Dark or the Light ? If the Dark was greater, it could not be overcome by Light. But if Sons of the Dark be killed, as they say, why not all of them, if so be that their nature is mortal ? And if so be that at the End it is actually bound, because it does not die, then he is refuted, in that he lied about their death.

And for what reason do the Natures hate one another ? For lo, Body and Soul that are from him (the Archon) are friendly to one another ! And if (it is) because one is mingled with the other, for the mixture can change our nature, then because, lo, in Body and in Soul there has been a change [have they [p. 197. l.4] become one nature ?] . . . [l. 45.] ... for all I require . . . about these mixed things . . . how [P. 198.] [can] Heat receive Cold and be warm like it seeing that this Essence is in Heat ? But if by mixture with its fellow it becomes not-itself, then also [Evil] by mixture with Good becomes not-itself. And what then . . .

[1. 16.] But know that if the strife becomes a discussion about one of the created things, it is from created things their fellows that we will bring an analogy for witness and not from a divine Nature. For God Who is not made—it is not possible for us to take an analogy from Him for things made ; so also about Entities—we do not take from created things an analogy for them, except from their own selves. Now let us take an analogy from this great Entity, about Whom we all bear witness, that if it can be subject to these sufferings it is necessary that we [P. 199.] believe about these other Entities also that they also can be subject to these sufferings ; but if the witness of this Entity (is) that it is not subject to these sufferings, it clears all the Entities that exist, that they also are [not] subject to these sufferings. Therefore by the witness of the True Entity the word of Error has been vanquished which brought Entities into the world. But if without witness thou compellest me to believe thee that there are Entities, be thou also compelled without evidence to believe me that there is no other Entity but the One. I have no witness greater than thy defeat, for what is the victory of the athlete but the vanquishing of his opponent ? Nor again can Entities remove themselves from those places that they are in, for who set them there that he should remove them thence ?

Now as to that thou blamest me, (saying) 'why is Evil found in the midst of the works of the Good, for that Good one that thou speakest about, is not Evil really found in the midst of His works ?' But if Evil in His works is mingled, how hast thou been profited by the new and strange opinion that thou hast [P. 200. brought in ? For is it by the Evil that thou art offended or by the opinion ? If by the Evil thou art offended, how hast thou been profited by the purification whereby thou dost purge out the dregs from the [clear substance], for lo, the poison that is in the midst of His works is killing thee ! But if the opinion offends Freewill, Him that generated the opinion we ought to call the Evil. For see, that if that Evil is still established in our midst, Him therefore we are required to judge and blame for the Evil who was able to take away the Evil from our midst. For if no Evil ought to be found in the midst of His good works, how, lo, is it found ? For it is from that very thing which thou blamest that thou shouldest be blamed. For if it (the Evil) is left as a defect— worse and worse ! And if again it is left as a surplus, it is possible that by some means or other Good will be the cause of Evil.

But if it is so, then the matter would be worse if Evil had not existed, for this would be a great evil, that those Good things should be annulled which are accomplished by means [P. 201. of Evils. Just as therefore when a physician does not do evil things then he does evil,

especially that (thereby) the alleviations are annulled that are accomplished by means of pains and drugs, so when he does the evil, that evil is good, where all the cures are generated by it.

Therefore it is about Diseases that we are having a discussion. The diseases of the Body, are they from mixtures?—let the Mixer be blamed ! But the diseases of the Soul, are they from Freewill ?—let the Giver of it be blamed. But God forbid that He should be blamed, by blaming Whom the blamers of Him are to be blamed, because they have dared to blame Him that is not to be blamed ! But from that which thou sayest to me, that 'Nothing can come to be, except from an Entity,' from this very saying learn that those Entities also cannot come to be. For this opinion of thine is harder than mine. For how will the Entities be found to be not made and not created ? With thy mind taste this that I say. But thou sayest 'Dost thou not believe that the one Entity exists?' Then to Faith thou dost conduct [P. 202.] me, and not to Discussion. Thou therefore that compellest me to concern myself with Faith, what compels thee to compel me to run to Discussion and not to Faith ? But if thou dost turn to Discussion I will leave Faith alone! What do I [acknowledge] ? There exists an Entity, called God. But thou sayest ' Lo, the world exists ; if thou wilt, call it an Entity, and if thou wilt, [set down] that from Entities it is made. Is it not necessary for thee to acknowledge that that essence exists ?' Then that necessity which has bound me to acknowledge this paradox that 'it cannot really be investigated, but it is believed without investigation'—that necessity has bound me to believe that 'from Nothing everything comes to be,' another paradox which without investigation is to be believed !

But instead of all these things which thou hast said above, this which is unexceptionable I say 'How dost thou compel me to believe that there exists a God invisible and intangible?' Wilt thou compel ... [P. 203.] and how Four Entities that are visible . . . Now the Fire devoured the Water and the Dust and the Stones and the Ox,and they became nothing. But a thing that exists in essence cannot become nothing. Now (this came to pass) that God might make known that from nothing created things [will become] nothing. If therefore thou dost not believe this, learn by experiment as a fool, because . . . [l. 33.] Look at this, that God in the Beginning made the Earth from nothing, [and] He turned and generated everything from the Earth. For just as the Earth is from nothing and from it is everything, so in Fire everything (becomes) nothing, and at the last it also turns to nothing. But if thou say that this work is [P. 204.] subtly divided in the midst of the Air, pound and break up anything thou wilt and examine (?) it in the Sun that comes in through the window, and see that it appears to thee that thou dost see [it] ; therefore also the flame of a fire [that] has gone out or Water that is dried up is (more) subtle.

Let us say further against Mani that a thing which by sins was cast down from its place as a thing—by righteousness and by keeping the commandments could it be restored ? If the ZIWANE also through sins were mixed with the Darkness, it is necessary that by means of fasting and prayer they should be 'refined.' But if it was in order that the Darkness might be caught through them that they were mixed (with it); now that it has been caught, by all

means it is required to know how the Sons of the Light may return to their place. And if so they do not go up, never can they return to their place. For if cleansing is required, as they say, 'fountains of refining' as others say, how [blind] is Bardaisan ... to cleanse and to refine that which is mixed in the Sea and in the dry Land and in the Heaven and in the Earth and in all that is in them, and in the Seven Limbos and in the Ten Firmaments, as they both have said ? Therefore these their disciples make their words void. For if the refinings are many and great but their disciples are few [P. 205. and dispersed, how by Five Initiates can that be separated and refined which thousands and myriads do not suffice for ? For if they had been wise they ought to have contrived to find a Teaching suitable for a few, so that it might be believed that a few could suffice for it.

For if any one set out that he with a few workmen would suffice to cut through a great mountain or to dam a mighty river, then by those feeble ones who are with him is it not clear that he is making a mock of himself ? For with many and strong men that on which he set out is to be done, or not at all: how much more (is it absurd) that he set out with Five to do that for which Five Hundred was too few ?

They also actually proclaim a refining and cleansing of all Rivers and Sources and Fountains, when between them all they cannot refine the water of a single Spring ! And so look at everything, at Fruits and Produce and Crops and Vegetables and Fishes and Birds,—how many can eat of all these that are [P. 206.] in all quarters, both by sea and land ? For if it were so as they say, Kings and their countries and Lords and their retinues and Captains of armies and their forces ought to be placed over these matters, so that by many coming from all quarters the Light which is in all quarters might be refined. But the Romans are omitted, who had not heard the news of the Refinings, and the Greeks and the Hebrews and the Barbarians and the Arabs, for they refine more than all, seeing that not even . . . escapes them ! All these therefore are unemployed in Refining, and 'a pair of Initiates refine,' they say, 'and cleanse the mixture' which is too great for all!

For if by the knowledge and the Faith of the school of Bardaisan and Mani the creation is being cleansed and refined, and otherwise there is no way, when do these feeble ones look forward by themselves to finish the creation ? But if they should say that all peoples are refining and cleansing the Light from the Darkness, and the Good Parts from the Evil, know further that for their shame they are compelled to say so, though they on [P. 207.] all sides cannot avoid shame. For how is Light refined in the mouth of the unbelievers, and how are the Parts of the Soul [l. 10.] cleansed . . . how are they ... to proclaim the truth about Refining, for lo, those also who do not believe cleanse and refine ? [l. 32.] that which is in their teaching, for lo, from Adam even unto Bardaisan and to Mani. Vainly then they were going and . . . [P. 208.]

[l. 17. And if they should say for their shame that there were some of old time Teachers of the Truth,—for they say about Hermes in Egypt, and about Plato among the Greeks, and about Jesus who appeared in Judaea, that 'they are Heralds of that Good One to the world,'—(what does it prove)? For if so be that they did proclaim these (doctrines) of the

Manicheans as they say, if Hermes knew the Primal Man, the Father of the ZIWANE, and if he knew the Pillar of Glory and the . . . of Splendour and the Atlas and the rest of the others that Mani proclaimed and even worships and prays to ; and if Plato knew the Virgin of Light . . . and the Mother of the [Living], or the war or . . . ,—but [P. 209. he did know . . . and Hera and Athena and Aphrodite the adulterous Goddess !—and if Jesus proclaimed to them the Refining in Judaea, and if He taught the worship of the Luminaries that Mani worships, he who they say is the Paraclete, that comes after three hundred years : and when we have found that the teachings of these or their followers agree the one to the other, or those of one of them to those of Mani, there is justification ! But if they do not agree, refutation is at hand.

But why is it that Astrology, even though it is a lie, agrees with itself in its teaching, and Magianism with its tradition, and Geometry with its calculation, and Medicine with its book ? And the disciples of Plato learned his teaching and teach it to this day, and the disciples of Jesus both learned and taught what they heard from Him ; and so do the disciples of Marcion and Bardaisan and Mani. If they also with Hermes and Plato and Jesus and others from the Beginning were proclaiming a Refining in succession, as Mani says, how is it their disciples are not proclaiming their teaching in Egypt and in Greece and in Judaea like that which Mani teaches to-day ? For how is what Jesus teaches like what [P. 210. Mani teaches ? So that by this teaching of our Lord, which is open and manifest let that one be convicted who has much wronged God and the Dead.

For Hermes taught that there was a Bowl, filled with whatever it was filled with, and that there are Souls excited by desire, and they come down beside it, and, when they have come close to it, in it and by reason of it they forget their own place. Now Mani teaches that the Darkness made an assault on the Light and desired it, while Hermes teaches that the Souls desired the Bowl; and this is a little (more) probable, even though both are lying, but it is (more) probable, because it, the Soul, desires to remain in the Body and delay in its Habitation and dwell in its House and be fondled in its Bosom. But Mani compels a man to hear him seriously though he is talking nonsense, for 'the Darkness (he says) loved the Light its opposite'—and how does Water love Fire that absorbs it, or Fire Water that quenches it? And how did Fire love Light? How, pray, will it be benefited by it ? For 'Fire loved Fire, and Wind Wind, and Water Water.' Or, perhaps, are these Natures of Darkness [P. 211.] male and those from the Good One. female ? And if not, what is the sense of this, that they loved one another?

These things therefore Hermes did not teach, nor did Jesus, because Jesus taught the opposite of all of them. For He quickened bodies and raised the dead, whereas neither Hermes nor Plato believe in the resurrection of the body.

But indeed how did Water love Water and both went astray ? For, lo, if an evil man sink in water the evil Water drowns him and does not remember that it is of his race, and if a good man be drowned in water the good water does not recognise that it is of his family. And so the Wind loved the Wind and they became one thing—and against the just and the unjust

they come up in the contrary direction and batter their faces ! And so the Light makes no distinction between the unclean and the clean. And how do they worship that which has no discrimination? And if because of His grace,—neither the Water His fellow-kinsman is good which drowns the righteous, nor the Fire which burns the humble! And (see) that even the Sun burns the fruits and torments the reapers, and sees those that are oppressed with [P. 212.] its heat and does not produce the fruits as one that is good ; and in the country of the far East they say three things are at ease in the shade, Men and Cattle and Wild Beasts, for the Sun not to burn them with the fierceness of its rays. And how, pray, did the Sons of the Darkness endure its burning, seeing that bodies are of the same family as they are and they cannot endure its heat? For if this heat is of the same nature as these bodies, how is that which is of one Entity tormenting and being tormented from itself ? And if it is from that other nature, then how could this which is injured endure that which injures ? But it is wonderful and difficult and incredible that it even 'eagerly desired it and was pleased with it.'

And if Fire was mixed with Fire, and Water with Water and Wind with Wind, it necessarily follows that Light also (was mixed) with Light! Now that these Natures are akin one to the other all reasonable beings know, apart from madmen—but perhaps even madmen apart from the Manicheans. For we [P. 213.] know the causes whereby Water is transformed, and witness is borne uniformly to this that, lo, by trees it is transformed into Wine and into Oil and into the many tastes thereof. What therefore shall we say? That Wine is not akin to Water, or that Oil also is not of its family ? And if Wine and Oil that, lo, are very distinct from Water, even though they seem to be strangers are not strangers, how much more is Water akin to Water, though it be bitter ? For as it is diverse in plants so it is diverse in countries, though the true Word of Providence places it and the countries and the plants under the one Will that creates all things.

Furthermore we will confute them from another quarter, in that if Fire has been mixed with Fire, when pray are they being refined and separated one from the other? For if they were being refined they would also be recognised, in that Fire had become dimmer than it was because of the refining away of that other that was separated from it. For there are old men that have lived more than a hundred years and they have not perceived that this Fire after a hundred years is colder or dimmer than [P. 214.] that was, nor was that of a hundred years ago hotter or stronger or brighter or clearer than this ; nor has Water become weaker than Water was, nor Wind than Wind ; and (so) these Natures stir up an unfalsifiable refutation against those who wished to tell all these lies about plain things. For these Natures that have not become weaker and are not becoming weaker prove about Bardaisan and Mani that there is no sense in their teaching.

But if something from behind moved the Element of Wind and impelled it, as Bardaisan says, it would impel it towards its diameter, that is, against the Element of Light it would cast it. For opposite the Western one it is set in the East. For if from the North-West the Wind was hurled by whatever it was that hurled it and cast it on the Fire it did not make

it go down below upon the Darkness in the middle ; for it turned the Fire to the South, and took it away, and it went forth into empty Space. And because they are Atoms, as Bardaisan says, [P. 215.] inasmuch as it is in intention that the distinction between each of them is apprehended, it is clear that the Entities were not also hurled one into the other like bodies into bodies. And it is to be supposed about them in their own selves that Wind cannot set in motion the Light of the Sun.

But if the Elements were impelled from above downwards, what prevented it from impelling the Fire to go down alongside of the Darkness, if the pretext of Darkness was required for the Maker to make ? And if the Wind blew, lo, it would have separated the Atoms, because they had not yet been mixed by the force of creative power. And even that Wind would not have been able to blow, because it had not yet even acquired the faculty of blowing by the regulation (of the Maker) ; for if by reason of creative power the Fire acquired brightness and the Light extension and Water flow, it is clear that before their regulation they did not have these (properties), nor did the Darkness, because it also still consisted of scattered Atoms. For if when [the regulation] was not . . . the Water . . . [P. 216. l. 3[... and the Wind would not have sufficed of itself to blow and the Fire to [glow] and the Darkness to smoke, and the Light and the Fire and the Wind . . .

[l. 12.] and it would have been made more hateful than it was (before) by the regulation of this Maker, who they say really did make things more beautiful than they had been in their original essence. Or should we say the true (constitution) of this Fire is not of that which Bardaisan says ?—for truly indeed it is not of it. It is not as if what I am saying does exist, but on the contrary I assert that it does not exist, not as one that likes it to be so, but as one that is convinced, not without consideration, but by prudent investigation. For if from the very same thing come Light, Wind, Darkness, experiment, vision—let us see therefore if this is established by its own power, without conjunction with anything [P. 217.] else, and let us see if it (the Fire) kindles Wind like chips of wood, or has power with Darkness as with reeds ! And if this defect that it has to-day it did not have of old and that immemorial non-defect it does not have to-day, it is necessary that either the Maker really disturbed things ignorantly—which God forbid !—or that with a mouth that is not ashamed to repeat the truth the true conclusion may be said without shame, which is that that man spoke falsely who constructed Entities that do not exist. So that from these Entities, about which Bardaisan spoke, there is no way for created things like those (around us) to come into being, for they do not allow their natures, being 'bound' in essence, to come to regulation as the artificer asks. For creatures which are from nothing, as and also as much as it pleases the Maker, so He creates and fixes them : He changes, transfers, and dissolves, even illuminates.

But if they are Atoms of essence, as they say, that cannot be dissolved but can be concentrated, let them prove to one who [P. 218.] wishes to ask without contention how Natures that are not constructed can be constructed, unless the fixing of their essence has been dissolved, that is, their Atoms ? But if they (the Atoms) had been actually dispersed, they are collected by wisdom and contracted by diligence, and therefore let us say to him what Bar-

daisan said to another. And if the texture of the essence of these Atoms was really loosely woven and porous, that is, the dispersal of their nature, they can be concentrated by wisdom and condensed by artifice. And if this is all the 'creative power' it is very weak, in that its operation only went as far as putting things together. But if created things also were created out of these atoms, I want to learn how, when atoms cleave to atoms, a Soul comes into being, and when other things cleave to others a Body comes into being ? What is the glue and paste that holds them from being dissolved ? If this bandage also is made of atoms, yet another bandage is required also for the bandage itself to bind it, [seeing that] what is made of sand cannot bind atoms of sand to be one body, because it is not established even [P. 219.] for itself to bind its own self and substance.

For brass that is smelted from sand, as long as thou addest its atoms one to the other it increases and becomes a great heap of sand (only), that is, one does not cleave to the other unless they go into the furnace and are dissolved one by one by Fire from the bond of their nature ; and when the fixing of them one to the other is dissolved, then there comes to all of them one mixing [in] the melting-pot, and one power that moulds, like that of stones, which, if they are not dissolved and turned to lime, cannot be moulded and become one lump of brass. If therefore also these Atoms of Entities can each one of them be smelted, and their essence be destroyed though it be not regulated, and their nature be dissolved though it be not a composition, they have confessed though unwillingly that they were not even Entities but made things, and are not even Natures 'bound' in essence but Natures regulated by creative power, are not Creatures that have come into being from something but from nothing. [P. 220.] And if we adapt ourselves to them, whereas truth does not adapt itself to falsehood at all, if creatures were or are derived from Atoms, how was or is Knowledge and Intention derived from Atoms?

Now, there are some of their wise men, the hidden ones who perversely say something subtly, that 'there are other Atoms, of Reason and of Power and of Intention,' that is, three other Entities, that 'they have been sent from the LORD of All upon the Primal Darkness and upon [this] regulation' and 'some of these Atoms were mingled and are mingled with those others'; as Bardaisan says, that 'the Power of the Primal Utterance which remained in created things, it makes everything.' [l. 35.] of ourselves, when we have no knowledge of ourselves. And therefore human nature is freed from all guiltinesses, and the blame has been attached to One Whom blame does not touch. But if this blasphemy cannot be believed, there is [P. 221.] found as it were a condition belonging to it that knowledge is not . . . from God, not even as heat from Fire. For if it were so, it would be necessary that as the heat of Fire is like itself and is not divided against itself, so also our knowledge would not be divided against God, if it were of God ; and therefore that neither from God nor from the Entities is really his true self, seeing that from nothing the whole man was created. And this one thing bears witness about everything, that it also was created from nothing.

But that thou mayest know that as far as these things assist Bardaisan, so far he draws them after his will, and where they fail him and are obscure, he too sails off in a vague

way. For he declared that the names of the Months were not given without reason, but as allegories, and he began from First Teshri, for (he says) 'About the name of first beginning this Month proclaims with its name,' and not to be lengthy, let us say rapidly that he went on and interpreted the names of the Months as far [P. 222.] as Nisan. And when he arrived at the name of Nisan and saw that its name did not suit his interpretation, nor those of the five other Months after it, he interpreted as far as that point and stayed, and explained as far as Adar and stopped. But if from God allegories had been placed in the names of the Months, in all the Months of the year he would have designed allegories and types in their names. For lo, Nisan, that is greater than all,—and its name does not agree with its activity, that is, its name (does not agree) with the Redemption that took place in it. Because therefore there chanced to be names for the Months which chanced by accident he gathered from them an explanation and persevered and made from them interpretations, and brought things from the dialect of Beth Garmai and from the dialect of Edessa ; and compassed sea and land to make one proselyte!

And see the fruit at variance with its root, in that his son is at variance with his explanation ! For Bardaisan said and declared, that as if by Prophecy the First Month was called TESHRI, and the one after it MARHESHWAN, 'in which all things creep,' and [P. 223.] he did not say 'Teshri and Teshri.' But his son, in order that he also might establish another allegory which he had himself put together, and also that pure lips might speak it and chaste ears hear it, did not say 'Teshri and Marheshwan' but 'Teshri and Teshri.' For he says thus in his Hymn : 'O TESHRI, Mother of the year, Produce for us another TESHRI,' and this he says about the Mother of Life, asking her to produce and leave behind a daughter after her own likeness.

So again Bardaisan said thus about the Entities and their colours ; for he said 'the Light is white, the Fire is red, the Wind is blue, the Water is green,' though these (notions) are stolen by him from the Greeks. As therefore he declared that each of the Entities has a colour of its own, so each of them has its own smell, and its own taste, and its own texture, and its own voice. For five aspects each must be found for each of the Entities, corresponding to the five senses which we have ; as [P. 224.] he said 'Everything that exists has its own Power and its own Colour and its own Aspect, and the rest of whatever belongs to it. Let him declare to us therefore what is the texture of Light, and what is the taste of Wind, and what is the smell of Fire, that thou mayest know that here also with the Natures he goes into them as far as he does go, as in the names of the Months, and he shewed from them as far as he did, so as to shew his Philosophy. And when other sides sank away from him and were hidden, he began sailing off, and when . . . and he did not establish himself upon them he paid no attention to them and passed over and began with something else, and beguiled his hearers to suppose that those other things also that had not been spoken of he knew all about, like those kindred matters which had been spoken of.

So again he put the Darkness because of its weight the lowest of all of them (i.e. of the Entities). And if the Darkness be the heaviest, know that the Water being lighter is above

it in its boundary ; and because Fire also is lighter than Water, it [P. 225.] must be that it is above the Water ; and again because Wind also is lighter than Fire it is clear that it too is above the Fire ; and because Light is lighter than Wind it is manifest that it is above the Wind. For each of them is lighter than the heavier one underneath it, but heavier than the lighter one above it. And in this correct proportion and just balance there is found the element of Water between the Darkness and the Fire, the one cold underneath it, and the other hot above it; and there ended the construction of the Aramaean Philosopher.

For if the Wind smote the Fire which was underneath it and bent it downwards, the Fire did not reach to the Darkness, for the great element of Water stands between it and the Darkness, and therefore that extinguishing Intermediary did not allow the arouser of the Darkness to rub against it and its smoke to diffuse so as to reach to its companion (in Darkness). For it is necessary that if the natures of the Entities are true to their names, if the Fire is a Fire in truth, and not an idle name, then the Water also is Water indeed. And if the opposite to the Fire [P. 226.] was the Water, then it did not let the Fire approach the Darkness. And because the Water was the neighbour of the Darkness, again cold on cold was added to the Darkness, the opposite of what those people designed (when they say) 'the heat melted its cold and its smoke was diffused' ; whereas if it had diffused itself and gone up, because they stand one above the other as their Natures teach us, light and heavy, would not 'the beginning of the lowest part' of all of them alone have been destroyed, as Bardaisan says ? For how can heavy and light things in one rank or in one boundary stand in equilibrium? The scales of a balance, or water and oil put in a vessel, prove that the lighter stands above and the heavier below. And therefore when 'the Darkness sought to go up and reach to the heels and the skirts of the upper Light,' when it 'made an assault to go up,' did it overwhelm completely the Water and the Fire and the Wind, and was 'the beginning [P. 227.] of the lowest part of the Light' only destroyed? And therefore they are refuted, and the School of Bardaisan cannot go on inventing from his principles.

Again the Manicheans say a thing that is refuted from itself ; for their words are wont to quarrel one with the other, because they have not acquired unity from love nor equilibrium from truth. For they say that the Darkness has been mixed with Light, a word that may seem probable to the inexperienced, but to thinkers self-contradictory ; and because that speaker was afraid of what he had said, in that he knew that many . . . [P.228.] For as the Laws reprove the transgressors of the Laws, so [l. 7.] the Holy Scriptures reprove those who transgress beyond the limit of the Scriptures. But as robbers and thieves without law . . . ... to be land for their tares. Therefore let them establish that if there are bound [Natures], that is, Light and Wind and Water and Fire . . . that knowledge is not in them. But if they are corporeal Bodies, things corporeal cannot eat spiritual Natures. But if from their skins are the Heavens, and from their excrement the Earth, and from their bo[nes] the Mountains, lo, they have ...

... If from the sheath-skins again of their bodies came Heaven and Earth, what sheath-skins belong to Light and to Wind and to Fire and to Water and to Darkness ? And therefore if all

these sons of the Darkness . . . The end of this Discourse is not preserved in the Palimpsest, but the missing part was probably not longer than two of these pages : see p. cxi. Note from Vol. 1 Introduction, p. (10): [Short lacunae are indicated in the translation by dots, and longer gaps by asterisks, but in neither case is the number of the dots or asterisks intended to bear any exact relation to the number of the missing words. In respect to this an approximately correct inference may be drawn by consulting the Syriac text. Double inverted commas mark quotations where the original has [Syriac] Single inverted commas are used in numerous cases where the words seem to be quotations or to belong to a special terminology.

Words in italics inside square brackets are to be regarded as conjectural translations or paraphrases. In a few passages, where the text has suffered great mutilation, italics indicate an attempt to summarise the argument from suggestions in the fragments.] [P.101] indicates page 101 of the accompanying Syriac. [l.2] means line 2 of the current page of the accompanying Syriac. [RP] FOOTNOTES I have moved the footnotes to the end. Those consisting of "Read [syriac] for [syriac]" or similar have been omitted, as it has not been possible to transcribe the fragments of Syriac. The pages are numbered with Roman numerals. Arabic numbers and line numbers relate to the Syriac text printed at the back of the paper volume. Greek text is rendered using the Scholars Press SPIonic font, free from here.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.