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Astrology in the Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions

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The Pseudo-Clementines contain a lengthy debate about astrology that stands in some literary relationship to Bardaisan's writings. Connections with earlier works are important, but the Recognitions' *fourth-century Syrian context – much neglected by earlier scholarship – reveals why it devotes such a large amount of narrative space to a dialogue about astrology, fate and free will. This article argues that such material is more than just a remnant of the past carelessly appropriated by the Pseudo-Clementines. Astrology plays a crucial role in the* Recognitions' *polemical agenda, which reflects a complex rivalry between several groups in fourth-century Syria.*

In the history of scholarship on Christianity in ancient Syria, there exists a pervasive assumption that the origins and nature of Syrian Christianity are fundamentally 'Jewish-Christian'.[1] As a result, Syria figures prominently in attempts to trace the history of Jewish Christianity, which often make use of fourth- and fifth-century writings as evidence for historical developments near the very beginning of Christian history.[2] These late

BLC = *Book of the laws of countries*; *Rec.* = *Recognitions*

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[1] The first half of this paragraph is indebted to Christine C. Shepardson, 'In the service of orthodoxy: anti-Jewish language and intra-Christian conflict in the writings of Ephrem the Syrian', unpubl. PhD diss. Duke 2003, 51–3. For a recent discussion of the definitional problem of 'Jewish Christianity' see, for example, Annette Yoshiko Reed, '"Jewish Christianity" after the "parting of the ways": approaches to historiography and self-definition in the Pseudo-Clementines', in Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (eds), *The ways that never parted: Jews and Christians in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages*, Tübingen 2003, 189–231.

[2] See, for example, A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic evidence for Jewish-Christian sects*, Leiden 1973, where the polemics of heresiologists such as Epiphanius are presented rather straightforwardly as evidence for earlier Jewish-Christian groups.

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antique sources include the work of patristic authors such as Epiphanius and Ephrem, who polemicise against the perceived heterodoxy of Jewish-Christian groups, as well as texts such as the Pseudo-Clementines, fourth-century Christian novellas that are believed to provide first-hand evidence of the early history of Jewish Christianity.[3]

In her recent work on Ephrem, Christine Shepardson has argued convincingly that attention should be paid to the late antique rhetorical contexts of patristic writings that address historical developments in Syrian Christianity and Judaism.[4] Her argument reflects a methodological concern about how later evidence might be harnessed to give us more reliable data about early Christianity: given the polemical aims of many of these writers, it is simply not sufficient to take their testimonies at face value or treat them as disinterested descriptions of historical realities. At the same time, it deals with the problem of scholarly myopia: as Shepardson sees it, early scholars' interest in describing Ephrem 'in relation to Syria's "Jewish-Christian" origins' caused them to overlook his attempt to shape his local Syrian Christianity along the lines of an imperially-sanctioned Nicene Christianity.[5]

There is a lesson in all of this for those who would use the Pseudo-Clementines to reconstruct the early history of Christianity (and especially 'Jewish Christianity'). This corpus of texts certainly has suffered from the same kind of benign neglect that Shepardson mentions in regard to Ephrem. Until recently, few scholars paid much attention to them in their fourth-century Syrian contexts, preferring instead to use the *Homilies* and *Recognitions*, the two major works of Pseudo-Clementine literature, and their putative sources, as evidence for much earlier stages of Christian history.[6] As with Ephrem, this nearsightedness often can be attributed to an interest in recovering the original Syrian 'Jewish Christianity' thought to lie behind the Pseudo-Clementines. But in many cases these texts suffer an even more acute form of neglect than Ephrem, because there is a tendency to regard them as mere repositories of earlier materials, with little evidence of conscientious or consistent redactional activity on the part of their compilers. This, for example, is the judgement of M. J. Edwards regarding the *Recognitions*: 'The editor of the *Recognitions* (one whom it would be equally uncritical and unkind to style the author) convicts himself of incompetence when he recapitulates

[3] The Pseudo-Clementines, which remain relatively obscure due in large part to their complicated textual and redactional histories, are best known for preserving Jewish Christian traditions. See, for example, Georg Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen*, 2nd rev. edn, Berlin 1981, and H. J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums*, Tübingen 1949. [4] Shepardson, 'In the service of orthodoxy', passim. [5] Ibid. 56.

[6] There are exceptions. See, for example, Charles Bigg, 'The Clementine homilies', in *Studia biblica et ecclesiastica*, ii, Oxford 1890, 157–93, and E. Schwartz, 'Unzeitgemässe Beobachtungen zu den Clementinen', *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* xxxi (1932), 151–99.

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a series of homilies as though they occurred in the novel, though in fact he has retailed the plan and content of a rather different work (3.85 [*sic*]).'[7] Such views seem to be further justified by the texts' apparent preoccupation with first- and second-century figures such as Paul and Marcion, which suggests a set of concerns characteristic of early, rather than late antique, Christianity.

It is true that the Pseudo-Clementines incorporate several sources that derive from earlier periods of Christian history, often without attempting to erase the resulting literary and theological seams. However, the *Homilies* and *Recognitions*, like their patristic counterparts, should be treated as texts in their own right and interpreted as products of fourth-century Syria. When seen in this light, the Pseudo-Clementines reveal quite a bit about the complex relationships that existed between varieties of Syrian Christians and Jews. The recent studies of Albert Baumgarten and Annette Reed, for instance, have suggested that the *Homilies* may offer a window onto the processes of negotiating and constructing religious identity that took place among and between fourth-century Jews and Christians.[8]

While the *Homilies* has begun to be considered in light of its late antique context, the *Recognitions* has received less attention. This is probably because it lacks the very qualities that have made the *Homilies* interesting to scholars of late ancient Syria (specifically, its preoccupation with Arianism as well as its 'Jewish Christian' elements, which define correct religious belief and practice in the language of late antique, possibly rabbinic,[9] Judaism). This article, which seeks to draw attention to the *Recognitions* as a resource for understanding fourth-century Syria, focuses on Rufinus' early fifth-century Latin translation of the original (lost) Greek version. More specifically, it concerns a single source layer of this version of the *Recognitions*, which is drawn from an early third-century Bardesanite text attested in the Syriac *Book of the laws of countries* and Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica*. It is possible to understand the text's interest in Bardaisan as a carelessly-appropriated remnant of the *Grundschrift*, a common source for the *Homilies* and *Recognitions*; if this is the case, it is of little importance for understanding late antique Christianity. This article, however, will argue that the *Recognitions* used this earlier material to make a statement about religious life in fourth-century Syria, which was characterised by intense competition among many Christian and non-Christian religious groups.

[7] M. J. Edwards, 'The *Clementina*: a Christian response to the pagan novel', *Classical Quarterly* xlii (1992), 461. See also Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte*, 38–41, and Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 256, 259.

[8] Reed, '"Jewish Christianity"', 189–231; Albert Baumgarten, 'Literary evidence for Jewish Christianity in the Galilee', in L. Levine (ed.), *The Galilee in late antiquity*, New York 1992, 39–50.

[9] On this see Baumgarten, 'Literary evidence', 41–7.

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Bardaisan

To understand Bardaisan's use of the *Recognitions*, a brief examination of the man and his thought is required. Bardaisan of Edessa (*c.* 154–222), a prolific writer of Syriac hymns and other works, was a prominent philosopher and theologian who eventually came to identify himself as a Christian.[10] He appears to have spent his early life at or near the court of Osrhoene, and was known as a critic of the Marcionites. Caracalla's defeat of Edessa in 216 resulted in his exile to Armenia, and he died shortly thereafter, probably in 222.[11] Little more than this can be said with any certainty about Bardaisan's life.

None of Bardaisan's written works has survived, although some information can be gleaned from the testimony of other authors. One of the main sources is Ephrem Syrus (306–73), who wrote extensively against Bardaisan and his followers. There are other sources such as the Chronicle of Edessa and the *Book of the laws of countries*, as well as Greek, Arabic and Armenian traditions regarding Bardaisan and Bardesanites.[12] These reports are of varying degrees of reliability, in part because many of them originated long after Bardaisan himself passed from the scene, but they reveal much about Bardaisan's philosophical and theological views.

Bardaisan's teachings reflect his Edessene location as well as his overlapping interests in astrology, philosophy, cosmology and ethnography.[13] His cosmology teaches that the four pure elements (light, wind, fire and water) were altogether free, but by chance became mingled with each other and with darkness (either an element itself or the result of the mingling of the four pure elements).[14] The Lord of the pure elements then sent the Word of Thought to create order from this chaos, which resulted in the formation of the world out of a mixture of the elements.[15] The world is itself partly free and partly unfree. Human beings were given liberty as a gift at the moment

[10] Tim Hegedus, 'Necessity and free will in the thought of Bardaisan of Edessa', *Laval théologique et philosophique* lix (2003), 333; H. J. W. Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa*, Assen 1966, 217. The character Bardaisan refers to 'the new people of us Christians' (*BLC* 607). All references to the *Book of the laws of countries* use the column numbering of F. Nau, *Patrologia syriaca*, i/2, Paris 1907, 490–658; English translations are from H. J. W. Drijvers, *The book of the laws of countries: dialogue on fate of Bardaisan of Edessa*, Assen 1964.

[11] Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 217–18; Hegedus, 'Necessity and free will', 333.

[12] An in-depth survey and analysis of these traditions is offered in Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 96–212.

[13] The following paragraphs rely on Drijvers's far more detailed and nuanced account, ibid. 218–27.

[14] *S Ephraim's prose refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan*, ed. and trans. C. W. Mitchell, London, 1912–21, i. 56; Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 134.

[15] Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 98–110, discusses the reports of Moses bar Kepha, Theodore bar Khonai and others on these points.

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of creation, but remain unfree insofar as they are subject to nature and the horoscope.[16] The creation of the world also involved the positioning of the seven planets in the firmament, where they were to be used by God to influence the fortune of human lives.[17]

Bardaisan's anthropology is tripartite: human beings are composed of spirit, soul and body.[18] The spirit, itself of divine origin, is joined to the soul when the soul descends 'through the seven spheres of the planets to the human body at the moment of birth'.[19] As a result of the position of the stars at the moment of a person's birth, the seven planets bestow various qualities on the soul that determine certain aspects of human life (wealth or poverty, a long or short life, health or illness).[20] While the spirit remains essentially free, the soul is subject to outward fortunes such as those just mentioned, and the body is itself subject to laws of nature that are specific to humankind.[21] There is no resurrection of the body.[22] Though Adam misused his freedom, thereby preventing the soul from returning to its divine origin, the coming of Christ allowed the soul to return to its source once more.[23]

Bardaisan's Christology is difficult to determine, but it appears that he equated Christ with the Word of Thought which played a role in creation.[24] Hippolytus, whose information agrees with that of Ephrem, Philoxenos of Mabbug and others, reports that Bardaisan believed 'that the body of the Saviour was pneumatic'.[25] Bardaisan appears to have emphasised Jesus' role as a teacher because he believed that salvation was to be found in knowledge.[26]

The Book of the laws of countries

One particularly important source for the life and teachings of Bardaisan is the *Book of the laws of countries* which was probably composed in or around Edessa some time shortly after Bardaisan's death. The *Book of the laws* consists

[16] *BLC* 560; Drijvers, *Book of the laws of countries*, 23–5.
[17] Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 220.
[18] The character Bardaisan speaks of a body, soul and spirit in *BLC* 555; Drijvers, *Book of the laws of countries*, 19.
[19] Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 133, 219.
[20] *BLC* 572; Drijvers, *Book of the laws of countries*, 33. For discussion of this point see Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 86, 133–5, 219.
[21] Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 219; Hegedus, 'Necessity and free will', 333–44. Tim Hegedus, *Early Christianity and ancient astrology*, New York 2007, 320, rightly points out that 'this role of nature is not explicitly evident in the Pseudo-Clementine narrative'.
[22] Ephrem, *Hymns* LI.2, 3, 4 and LIII.4, as discussed in Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 132–3, 152.
[23] *Prose refutations*, ii. 77; Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 154–5, 219.
[24] Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 197, 220.
[25] Hippolytus, *Philosophoumena* VI.35; Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 168.
[26] Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 220–1.

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of a dialogue between Bardaisan and several interlocutors, including his students Awida and Philippus. In the course of this dialogue Bardaisan teaches about the workings of nature, fate and free will in human life. He asserts that though fate does have some power over life events, its influence is restricted. Bardaisan demonstrates this through an ethnographical survey of laws and customs in many countries around the world, which he argues are stronger than fate.

The *Book of the laws* survives in a Syriac manuscript from the seventh or sixth century. The existence of Greek parallels in Eusebius and elsewhere caused Bernhard Rehm and Adolf Hilgenfeld to speculate that there may have been a Greek original, but the current consensus seems to be that the *Book of the laws* was originally composed in Syriac.[27] It was written by Bardaisan's pupil Philippus rather than by Bardaisan himself,[28] prompting some scholars to wonder if it represents a later development of Bardesanite thought rather than an accurate representation of his teaching. Levi della Vida, for example, has argued (rather unsuccessfully) that the *Book of the laws* is a later revision of one of Bardaisan's works that is designed to make his teachings more orthodox.[29] This article adopts the view of H. J. W. Drijvers, who argues that the *Book of the laws* 'faithfully renders the ideas of Bardaisan'.[30]

The matter of Bardaisan's relationship to the *Book of the laws* is connected to a thorny set of literary problems that can only be discussed briefly.[31] The *Book of the laws* stands in some sort of literary relationship to a passage in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* (9.19–29) and also to two passages from Eusebius (*Praeparatio evangelica* 6.10.1–48; *Historia ecclesiastica* 4.30) that quote Bardaisan and mention a lost work of his entitled *Dialogue on fate* (διάλογος περὶ εἱμαρμένης). First, is Eusebius' quotation of Bardaisan in his *Praeparatio evangelica*, which very closely resembles *Book of the laws* 559.11–563.1, and 583.5–611.8, actually quoting the *Dialogue on fate* that he mentions in the *Historia ecclesiastica*? In other words, are the *Book of the laws* and the *Dialogue on fate* identical (or at least very similar)? Second, since Eusebius appears to know a Greek version of the *Dialogue on fate*/*Book of the*

[27] T. Nöldeke, 'Zum "Buch der Gesetze der Länder"', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* lxiv (1910), 555–60; H. H. Schaeder, 'Bardesanes von Edessa in der Überlieferung der griechischen und syrischen Kirche', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* li (1932), 21–74; Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 66; cf. B. Rehm, 'Bardesanes in den Pseudoclementinen', *Philologus* xciii (1938) 227, and A. Hilgenfeld, *Bardesanes, der letzte Gnostiker*, Leipzig 1864, 78.

[28] Drijvers, *Book of the laws of countries*, 1.

[29] G. Levi della Vida, 'Bardesane e il Dialogo delle leggi dei paesi', *Rivista di studi filosofici e religiosi* i (1920), 399–430. For a similar view see Hilgenfeld, *Bardesanes*, 78.

[30] Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 76.

[31] For a more detailed discussion of these and other closely related issues see Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 60–76, and F. Stanley Jones, 'The Pseudo-Clementines: a history of research part 1', *Second Century* ii (1982), 20–4.

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laws, what is the origin of the Greek text, and how is it related to the extant Syriac text of the *Book of the laws*? Third, does the *Recognitions* (or more probably the *Grundschrift*) quote from one of Bardaisan's works, did Bardaisan borrow from the *Grundschrift* or did both Bardaisan and the *Grundschrift* independently use a common source? If they did use such a source, what were its contents?

The first and second of these questions may be answered together. The close parallels between the *Book of the laws* and Eusebius' *Preparatio evangelica* indicate that Eusebius must have seen the *Book of the laws* in a Greek translation, and that he was using just such a Greek translation in this case. Eusebius himself says in *Historia ecclesiastica* 4.30 that Bardaisan's pupils translated his dialogues from Syriac into Greek, and it is well known that many works produced in or circulated around Syria were available in both Syriac and Greek versions. Eusebius does introduce Bardaisan's work as ὁ … περὶ εἱμαρμένης διάλογος ('the dialogue on fate') in *Historia ecclesiastica* 4.30, and as τοῖς πρὸς τοὺς ἑταίρους διαλόγοις ('the dialogues [or: conversations] with his friends') in *Preparatio evangelica* 6.9.32, which has prompted some interpreters to argue that the different descriptions refer to two distinct works. This postulation of two separate works seems unnecessary, however, since the *Book of the laws* is quite obviously a dialogue about fate conducted by Bardaisan and his companions Philippus, Awida and Bar Jamma.[32] In other words, in both the *Historia ecclesiastica* and the *Preparatio evangelica* Eusebius is refering to a single text, a Greek translation of the *Book of the laws*, which is 'practically identical' to Bardaisan's *Dialogue on fate*.[33]

The third question is more difficult to answer, and a number of suggestions have been advanced over the years. It is possible to give a considerably simplified summary wherein two main options emerge. Interpreters such as Werner Heintze, Hans Joachim Schoeps, Oscar Cullmann, Adolf Hilgenfeld, Hans Waitz and Carl Schmidt have argued that the Pseudo-Clementines and the Bardesanite materials both derive from a common source, which is described variously as a Jewish apologetic work, a Jewish book of disputations, or an anti-astrological work.[34] Schoeps, for example, argues that

[32] Schaeder, 'Bardesanes von Edessa', 41; Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 68–9.

[33] Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 72. This is also the view of William Cureton, *Spicilegium syriacum: containing remains of Bardesan, Meliton, Ambrose and Mara bar Serapion*, London 1855, pp. i–iii.

[34] W. Heintze, *Der Klemensroman und seine griechischen Quellen*, TU 40.2, Leipzig 1914, 42–51, 101–5; H. J. Schoeps, 'Astrologisches im pseudoklementinischen Roman', *Vigiliae Christianae* v (1951), 88–100; C. Schmidt, *Studien zu den Pseudo-Clementinen*, Leipzig 1929, 155–7; O. Cullmann, *Le Problème littéraire et historique du roman pseudo-clémentin: étude sur le rapport entre le Gnosticisme et le Judéo-Christianisme*, Paris 1930, 35; Hilgenfeld, *Bardesanes*, 74–8, 148; H. Waitz, 'Die Pseudoklementinen und ihre Quellenschriften', *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* xxviii (1929), 269 (this represents a modification of his earlier views). Heintze, followed by Schoeps, Schmidt and Cullmann, argues that the *Book of the laws* drew upon another dialogue

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the reference in *Recognitions* 9.28.1 to the circumcision of Jewish boys on the eighth day of life points to a Jewish source. He further suggests that the author of the *Grundschrift* only used Jewish and Jewish-Christian sources, thereby making it unlikely that he would have used the work of a Gnostic such as Bardaisan.[35] As Drijvers has pointed out, however, the Jewish flavour of Syrian Christianity makes the supposition of a Jewish source for the mention of circumcision entirely unnecessary. And the great diversity of Christian belief in second- and third-century Syria likewise demonstrates that Schoeps's argument about the *Grundschrift*'s avoidance of Gnostic materials is unfounded.[36]

These considerations suggest that the *Grundschrift* and the *Book of the laws* may not rely on a common source. Only one real option hence remains: that the *Grundschrift* depends on the *Book of the laws*. Adalbert Merx, Fenton Hort, Adolph Schliemann, Joseph Langen, Rendel Harris, Gerhard Uhlhorn, Bernhard Rehm and Georg Strecker have put forward arguments to this effect, contending that the Pseudo-Clementines are directly dependent on a Greek version of the *Book of the laws* or on Bardaisan's *Dialogue on fate*.[37]

of Philippus, which in turn was dependent on the *Grundschrift*; the *Grundschrift* was itself based upon a Jewish book of disputations. Waitz believes that a Jewish apologetic work was a common source for the *Grundschrift* and Bardaisan's *Dialogue on fate*. Hilgenfeld, on the other hand, argues that the *Book of the laws* depends on the Pseudo-Clementines; the *Recognitions* and Bardaisan's *Dialogue on fate* both depend on an earlier anti-astrological text. Other scholars have explored the similarities between the material in the *Book of the laws* and the *Recognitions* and various Jewish and pagan texts. For example, Wendland compares the *Book of the laws to* Philo's *De providentia*, and Boll traces its νόμιμα βαρβαρικά argument back to Carneades: P. Wendland, *Philos Schrift über die Vorsehung: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der nacharistotelischen Philosophie*, Berlin 1892, 27–33; F. Boll, 'Studien über Claudius Ptolemäus: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie und Astrologie', *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie* xxi, supplementary vol. (1894), 181.

[35] Schoeps, 'Astrologisches', 88–90.

[36] Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and heresy in earliest Christianity*, 2nd edn, trans. Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins, Philadelphia 1971, 1–43; Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 73. Drijvers has also argued that there is no external evidence for an apologetic work or book of disputations of this sort, and that it is unnecessary to posit the existence of such a work to explain the relationship between the extant texts.

[37] A. Merx, *Bardesanes von Edessa, nebst einer Untersuchung über das Verhältnis der clementinischen Recognitionen zu dem Buche der Gesetze der Länder*, Halle 1863, 112–13; F. J. A. Hort, 'Bardaisan', in W. Smith and H. Wace (eds), *A dictionary of Christian biography, literature, sects and doctrines*, i, London 1877, 258; A. Schliemann, *Die Clementinen nebst den verwandten Schriften und der Ebionitismus*, Hamburg 1844, 269 n. 10; J. Langen, *Die Klemensromane: ihre Entstehung und ihre Tendenzen aufs neue untersucht*, Gotha 1890, 147–50; G. Uhlhorn, *Die Homilien und Recognitionen des Clemens Romanus nach ihrem Ursprung und Inhalt dargestellt*, Göttingen 1854, 368–9; R. Harris, 'Notes on the Clementine romances', *Journal of Biblical Literature* xl (1921), 132–3; Rehm, 'Bardesanes', 233–5; Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 256.There is some variation here: while Schliemann and Uhlhorn believe that the *Recognitions* used Bardaisan's *Dialogue on fate*, Hort and Harris think that the *Recognitions* depends on a Greek version of the *Book of the laws*. Merx's view concurs with that expressed by Hort and Harris, though Merx believes that material from the *Book of the laws* in the *Recognitions* was added by a later interpolator and was not

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The analyses of Merx and Rehm have demonstrated convincingly that elements of Bardaisan's thought appear throughout the Pseudo-Clementines and are not limited to the ninth book of the *Recognitions*.[38] As Drijvers notes:

> In the BLC we find all of these elements constituting an organic whole in the framework of a logical argumentation. In the Ps Clem. Recogn. they often do not quite fit the context, or we see that the author has misunderstood them. This points to their having been taken from a work in which these passages were organically connected, and as far as we know this is only the case in the BLC.[39]

This means that it is very likely that the *Recognitions*, probably by way of the *Grundschrift*, was dependent on a Greek translation of the *Book of the laws*. The remainder of this article will be based on this assumption.

Recognitions *9.19–29*

As Merx and Rehm have suggested, concerns about astrology and astral fate appear throughout Pseudo-Clementine literature. Stanley Jones has argued that astrology is the key to the narrative of the *Grundschrift*, which adopted Bardaisan's belief that it could be used theologically to explain why events happened in people's lives. As Jones notes, however, the *Recognitions* has attempted to obscure this idea by omitting its source's references to the power of fate. For example, the *Recognitions* omits a passage from the *Grundschrift* (*Homilies* 19.23.5) which states that events happen to human beings as a result of fate. As it is preserved in the *Homilies*, this section suggests that astral determinism is in control from the moment of birth until baptism, which ritual enables one to escape the grip of fate.[40] Here Peter tells Simon, 'If their humiliation were eternal, their misfortune would be very great. But the humiliations and exaltations of men take place according to lot (πρὸς τῷ κλήρῳ).'[41] A parallel to this passage should appear in *Recognitions* 9.7.1-6, but

original to the *Recognitions*. Rehm and Strecker argue that the *Grundschrift* and the *Book of the laws* borrowed from Bardaisan's *Dialogue on fate*, though the borrowing in the *Book of the laws* was indirect: its immediate source was another dialogue by Philippus.

[38] Merx, *Bardesanes*, 88–114. [39] Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 73.

[40] This idea resembles views expressed by other ancient Christians, and gives at least a limited role to the power of fate: F. Stanley Jones, 'Eros and astrology in the *Periodoi Petrou*: the sense of the Pseudo-Clementine novel', *Apocrypha* xii (2001), 76–7. See, for example, Clement of Alexandria's *Excerpta ex Theodoto* 78.1: 'Until baptism, they say, Fate is real, but after it the astrologers are no longer right': Robert Pierce Casey, *The* Excerpta ex Theodoto *of Clement of Alexandria*, Cambridge, MA 1934, 88–9. [41] Jones, 'Eros and astrology', 63.

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it has apparently been left out: there is no such statement by Peter in that text. *Recognitions* 9.25.8 likewise leaves out a passage from the *Book of the laws* that contains a similar idea.

At the same time, the *Recognitions* assigns a prominent place to astrological materials. *Recognitions* 1.28.1–2 states that God created the sun and moon to serve as signs of earthly events, and *Recognitions* 1.32.2–4 depicts Abraham as an astrologer. Moreover, the events predicted by Mattidia's horoscope in *Recognitions* 9.32.5 largely come to pass. *Recognitions* 9 also retains an extended debate about astrological knowledge and doctrines that has no real parallel in the *Homilies* (although it is usually thought to derive from the *Grundschrift*). In *Recognitions* 9.19.1–29.2, Clement provides a series of examples of laws and customs in other countries that challenge ideas associated with astrally-determined fate, or *genesis*. What exactly does this lengthy dialogue about astrology, fate and free will accomplish for the *Recognitions*? And what, if anything, does the inclusion of such a dialogue within an even longer narrative reveal about the fourth-century context of the text? A closer examination of the content and function of *Recognitions* 9.19.1–29.2 is required.

In *Recognitions* 8.2.2–3, the protagonists' interlocutor Faustinianus outlines his intellectual position on fate and providence:

> there is neither God, nor is there any worship here at all, nor [is there] providence in the world, but fortuitous chance and astral fate drive all things (*sed fortuitus casus et genesis agunt omnia*) … Therefore, make no mistake, for whether you pray or you do not pray, whatever your horoscope contains, this will happen to you.[42]

His belief in astral determinism is rooted not only in his astrological training (*Rec.* 8.2.2), but also in his intellectual suspicions about providence (*Rec.* 8.4.6; 8.40.6–8), which revolve around the idea that injustice and disorder disprove the existence of providence. Moreover, the old man's belief in astral determinism stems from his own personal experience of its power (*Rec.* 8.57.1–2): Faustinianus, who as the reader knows will turn out to be Clement's long-lost father, is convinced that his family's separation happened as a result of his wife's natal horoscope (*Rec.* 9.32.5–6).

In *Recognitions* 9 and 10, Clement, Niceta and Aquila respond to Faustinianus' belief in astral determinism. Their general argument is that 'it is not the course of the stars, but the operation of demons, that regulates'

[42] All translations of the Pseudo-Clementines are my own unless otherwise noted. Translations have been made in consultation with Thomas Smith's dated and somewhat unreliable English version of the Pseudo-Clementines in A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, viii, Grand Rapids, MI 1975.

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the vicissitudes of human life. Human beings have the capacity to resist evil inclinations through the power of their own free will, but to the extent that they give in to such impulses, demonic forces are given the power to cause suffering. Astrologers are mistaken in thinking that events in people's lives are under the control of the stars, because there is no such thing as astral determinism. The protagonists attempt to refute Faustinianus' views on astral determinism by using five major arguments against fate, each designed to address both the intellectual and experiential rationales underlying the old man's point of view. They are (1) that *genesis*, or astral determinism, means that prayer, worship and virtuous practices are useless, and renders absurd the idea of God's righteousness (*Rec.* 8.12.2–3); (2) that when interpreted properly, the sun, moon and stars – the movements of which are purportedly signs of fate – actually point to and participate in God's righteous and providential care for the world (*Rec.* 5.29.2; 8.20.8); (3) that fate only appears to be real because demonic activity perpetuates and supports it (*Rec.* 9.12.3); (4) that Faustinianus' personal experience of fate is an illusion produced by incorrect interpretation of events (*Rec.* 9.32.2–3; 9.34.3–6); and (5) that careful study of laws and customs from around the world reveals that they cannot be explained on the basis of astral fate (*Rec.* 9.19.1–29.2).[43] It is the last of these five arguments, that astral fate cannot explain the variety of laws and customs that exist around the world, that is important here.

Clement's speech in *Recognitions* 9.19–29 is, on the whole, designed to make one point obvious: that astral determinism simply cannot be real given the wealth of empirical evidence that argues against it. Here Clement cites a large number of ethnographic examples, starting with the Seres, whose laws against murder and adultery are more powerful than the influence of Venus and Mars (*Rec.* 9.19.2–3), and concluding with the example of the Jews, who live all over the world yet retain customs different from those of their Gentile neighbors (*Rec.* 9.28.1–6). The discourse follows the contours of the *Book of the laws* fairly closely, and draws a similar set of conclusions from the evidence: people's fear of their own laws and customs, which they follow according to their own individual free will, is more powerful than astral fatalism. If people can choose to obey local laws and customs, thereby superseding fate's control over their lives, fate cannot be that powerful in the first place. Moreover, that people choose to obey laws necessarily means that human free will exists, and plays a role in human affairs.

[43] On these arguments see Hegedus, *Early Christianity*, 29–124, 125–38, 319–28.

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However, Clement's speech differs from the *Book of the laws* in one significant regard. Compare Clement's statement in *Recognitions* 9.25.6–8 with Bardaisan's parallel discourse in *Book of the laws* 598 line 9ff:[44]

Clement	Bardaisan
From all this it is evident that the fear of the laws is in control in every region, and the freedom of will that is implanted in human beings by the spirit complies with the laws; and astral fate can neither compel the Seres to commit murder, nor the Brahmans to eat flesh, nor the Persians to avoid incest, nor the Indians not to burn, nor the Medes not to be devoured by dogs, nor the Parthians not to have many wives … but, as we have said, each nation observes its own laws according to free will, and repels the decrees of astral fate by the strictness of laws.	In all places, every day and each hour, people are born with different nativities, but the laws of men are stronger than Fate, and they lead their lives according to their own customs. Fate does not force the Seres to commit murder if they do not want to, nor the Brahmans to eat meat; it does not prevent the Persians from marrying their daughters and sisters, the Hindus from being cremated, the Medes from being eaten by dogs, the Parthians from marrying many wives … But, as I have already said, in each country and each nation people use the liberty belonging to their nature as they please. Yet they are subject to Fate and to nature, because of the body they are endowed with, sometimes according to their desire and sometimes against it; for in every country and in every nation there are rich and poor, masters and servants, healthy and sick, as Fate and their nativity happen to fall out for each person.

Here Philippus depicts Bardaisan as disagreeing with the view of the 'Chaldaeans' that everything is subject to the control of fate, just as Clement takes issue with Faustinianus' assertion of the same idea. However, Bardaisan's statement does affirm the existence of fate, assigning to it

[44] Compare also the parallel passage preserved in Eusebius, *Preparatio evangelica* 6.10.35–6.

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(as well as nature and freedom) a limited measure of control over human life.[45] *Recognitions* 9.25.8 omits this conclusion, making it clear that it does not accept the Bardesanite position that the human body is subject to fate and nature. This raises an obvious question: why would the *Recognitions*, a text intent on arguing against the power of astral fate, make use of the *Book of the laws*, a source that asserts that fate has power over the human body?

Use of the Book of the laws *in the* Recognitions

It may well be that the Pseudo-Clementines are using the *Book of the laws* as part of a deliberate rhetorical agenda, wherein Clement's speech is intended to be recognised as material taken from an outside source. This makes sense in light of the text's historical context. After all, the *Recognitions* is a Syrian text, and its audience may have been familiar with Bardaisan and his views on fate. Moreover, the contents of *Recognitions* 9.19–29 probably would have been familiar to the *Recognitions*' audience because they employ the classic argument of the νόμιμα βαρβαρικά, the point of which is to demonstrate 'that the manners and customs of whole peoples are the same, so that the course of life and the qualities of an individual cannot be determined by the constellation of the stars at the hour of his birth'.[46] This argument was used not just by Bardaisan, but by many ancient authors going back as far as Carneades, to challenge claims that astral fate has complete control over human destiny.[47] Such familiarity may mean that the *Recognitions* knowingly uses an argument that will be recognised by its audience, a possibility that seems more likely given that the text makes no effort to disguise the boundaries of the source or to integrate it more thoroughly into the immediate context.

But why would the *Recognitions* make use of the *Book of the laws*? What purpose does this material serve for the Pseudo-Clementines? One possible explanation is to be found in Bardaisan's reputation as an opponent of Marcion and Marcionites. His anti-Marcionite line of argumentation was widely known in antiquity, not only among Bardesanites but also by authors such as Hippolytus, Adamantius, Eusebius and (later) Ephrem.

While Bardaisan and Marcion shared the view that matter is evil, they disagreed in their understanding of God. Marcion, of course, insisted on the existence of both a good God and an entirely separate and fallible creator

[45] *BLC* 18–19; F. Stanley Jones, 'The astrological trajectory in ancient Syriac-speaking Christianity (Elchasai, Bardaisan, and Mani)', in Luigi Cirillo and Aloïs van Tongerloo (eds), *Atti del terzo congresso internazionale di studi 'Manicheismo e oriente cristiano antico'*, Louvain–Naples 1997, 190.

[46] Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 19.

[47] On this see Boll, 'Studien über Claudius Ptolemäus', 181–2. See also David Amand, *Fatalisme et liberté dans l'antiquité grecque*, Amsterdam 1973, 55–60.

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God.[48] In contrast, Bardaisan believed in one God who created the world and was essentially good, along with 'other powers of lower rank and restricted freedom [who were] responsible for evil and deficiency' in the imperfect material world.[49] Though Bardaisan is attacked by Ephrem for his supposedly polytheistic views, the *Book of the laws* represents his views as monotheistic. Consider, for instance, the opening salvo of Bardaisan's conversation-partner Awida:

> If God is One, as you say he is, and he has created mankind intending you to do what you are charged to, why did he not create mankind in such wise that they could not sin, but always did what is right? Thereby his desire would have been fulfilled.[50]

Though it does not explicitly state that Bardaisan opposes the views of Marcion, the *Book of the laws* does clearly portray Bardaisan as a monotheist, and monotheism is a cornerstone of the Pseudo-Clementines' opposition to Marcionism. Bardaisan's anti-Marcionite reputation, coupled with the *Book of the laws*' representation of Bardaisan as a monotheist, makes it plausible to argue that the Pseudo-Clementines, beginning with the third-century *Grundschrift*, employ a Greek version of the *Book of the laws* as part of their own polemical stance *vis à vis* Marcionite belief.

The *Grundschrift*'s anti-Marcionite tendencies are well-established,[51] but less attention has been paid to the *Recognitions*. Several elements of this later text suggest that the *Recognitions* has retained some of the *Grundschrift*'s interest in opposing Marcionism. The views of Simon Magus, as expressed in *Recognitions* 2.53.1-3, sound strikingly similar to those of Marcion:

> It is evident to all … that there is one God, who is better than all, from whom everything that is took its beginning; whence also necessarily, all things that are after him are subject to him, as the originator and most eminent of all. Therefore, when I had learned that the god who created the world, according to what the law teaches, is weak in many ways (but weakness is very much inconsistent with a perfect god), and I saw that he is not perfect, I understood that there must be another who is perfect.[52]

In their arguments against Simon and in their discussions with one another, Peter and his companions make several points repeatedly. They assert that

[48] H. J. W. Drijvers, 'Marcionism in Syria: principles, problems, polemics', *Second Century* vi (1987–8), 154–5.

[49] Ibid. 154.

[50] Idem, *Book of the laws of countries*, 4–5. Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 4.30, confirms the view that the *Dialogue on fate/Book of the laws* was directed against Marcionites.

[51] See, for example, H. J. W. Drijvers, 'Adam and the true prophet in the Pseudo-Clementines', in *Loyalitatskonflikte in der Religionsgeschichte: Festschrift für Carsten Colpe*, Würzburg 1990, 314–23. The anti-Marcionite character of the *Homilies*, which reproduces much of the *Grundschrift*'s polemic, also seems obvious given the extended debates between Peter and Simon Magus over such problems as God and creation.

[52] See also *Recognitions* 2.38.3.

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there is only one God, and that the one God is also responsible for the creation of the world (for example, *Rec.* 1.25.4; 2.43.3; 2.44.2; 2.68.2; 3.52.2; 5.13.4; 5.19.1; 6.6.2). Peter states this explicitly in *Recognitions* 2.36.5: 'There is one God; and he is the maker of the world, a just judge, giving back to everyone at one time or other according to his deeds.' According to the protagonists, the one God who created the world is a good God (*Rec.* 1.21.5; 2.57.1–2; 2.58.2, 5; 2.59.3; 2.60.2; 3.37.6; 3.45.2; 4.14.4; 6.5.4). Moreover, they explicitly reject the notion of a multiplicity of gods (*Rec.* 2.38.3; 2.39.1–11; 2.41.1; 2.44.8; 3.42.3; 3.75.4).

Simon, like Marcion, deduces from Scripture the separate existence of the demiurge and the highest god. He tells Peter, 'Therefore, because my knowledge is most fully concordant with the law, I correctly announced that there are many gods, of whom one is more eminent and incomprehensible, he who is god of gods. But the law itself has taught me that there are many gods' (*Rec.* 2.39.4–5). Simon goes on to state that Jesus himself declared as much in Matthew xi.27: 'Thus, therefore, even your Jesus acknowledges that there is another God, unknown and incomprehensible to all' (*Rec.* 2.47.4). Peter's rebuttal of Simon appeals to the prophetic connections between Jesus and the Jewish patriarchs, whom Simon had claimed were unaware of the highest god: 'On the contrary, if our Jesus knows him, then Moses also, who prophesied that Jesus was to come, undoubtedly was not himself unacquainted with him. For he was a prophet; and he who prophesied about the Son undoubtedly knew the Father' (*Rec.* 2.48.2). More evidence could be cited in this regard, but these examples demonstrate that it is plausible to consider the *Recognitions* as anti-Marcionite.

It is certainly possible to argue that the text is thoughtlessly constructed using the scaffolding of the *Grundschrift*, and that the *Recognitions* is just echoing its predecessor's attack on Marcion. This would mean that its use of a Greek version of the *Book of the laws* is not an indication of the *Recognitions*' own religious or social context in the fourth century. This conclusion is problematic for two reasons. In the first place, it does not take the *Recognitions* seriously as a text, insofar as it assumes that the text's appropriation and redaction of its sources is of little significance. In the second place, it does not take seriously the *Recognitions*' late antique *Sitz im Leben*: texts such as the *Odes of Solomon* clearly demonstrate that followers of Marcion were a formidable force at the time of the third-century writing of the *Grundschrift*, and texts such as Adamantius' *De recta fide in deum* and the heresiological hymns of Ephrem demonstrate that Marcionites continued to be an important part of the religious scene in both Antioch and Edessa into the fourth century and beyond.[53] This historical reality means that the *Recognitions* could easily have appropriated the anti-Marcionite

[53] Drijvers, 'Marcionism in Syria', 156.

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polemics of the *Grundschrift* in order to combat the threat of Marcionism in its own day.

While the *Recognitions* apparently opposes Marcionite views, its main polemical target is astrology. This becomes clear from an examination of what Clement says in *Recognitions* 9.30.1 (this section is a Pseudo-Clementine addition to Bardaisan's sentiments in the *Book of the laws*). Here Clement offers a conclusion about astral determinism: it does not make sense in a world created and governed by a just and righteous God. He tells Faustinianus:

> Since God is just, and since he himself made the nature of human beings, how could it happen that he should place astral fate in opposition to us, which should compel us to sin, and again that he himself should punish those who sin? … But it is most absurd to say that it befalls us by nature to suffer evils, if sins had not gone before (*Rec.* 9.30.2, 5).

Clement's conclusion makes one thing evident: as it stands in the *Recognitions*, the debate that takes place between Faustinianus and his interlocutors is fundamentally about the power of astral fate and the stars, rather than the oneness or goodness of God. In fact, this is true of the larger discussion with Faustinianus, which includes not only the section in *Recognitions* 9.19–29 but also a considerable portion of *Recognitions* 10 as well: the primary concern seems to be astrology, which the *Recognitions* associates with demonic forces and idolatry (*Rec.* 9.31.1). Drijvers, who believes that the *Grundschrift* probably used the *Book of the laws* because of Bardaisan's reputation as a 'strong opponent of Marcion and Marcionites', also notes that 'the context in which Bardaisan's writings and arguments were used is a philosophical discussion on cosmological and astrological questions'.[54]

This provides a second explanation for the *Recognitions*' use of a Greek version of the *Book of the laws*: it is targeting not only Marcionites, but also devotees of astrology. These proponents of astrology no doubt represent a range of opinions about the power of astral fate. On the one hand, the most obvious target of the *Recognitions*' polemic against astrology are those who – like the 'Chaldaeans' of the *Book of the laws* – believe that 'all things are done by fortuitous chance and fate' ('fortuitus casus et genesis'), as Faustinianus asserts in *Recognitions* 8.2.2. On the other hand, based on the *Recognitions*' redaction of the *Book of the laws* it would appear that the text also targets others, such as Bardesanites, who would ascribe even a limited power to astral fate.

This would explain the Pseudo-Clementines' decision to employ the *Book of the laws*, which seems to be an unusual choice on at least two counts. In the first place the *Recognitions* (especially as it has survived in Rufinus' Latin version) has an interest in presenting its teachings as orthodox, and by the

[54] Ibid. 155.

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time that the *Recognitions* appeared in the fourth century the ideas of Bardaisan and his followers were anything but orthodox – the diversity of Syrian religious belief and practice notwithstanding. More specifically, it is remarkable that the Pseudo-Clementines use the *Book of the laws*, which allows some room for the workings of fate in human life, as the source of a dialogue in which Clement denies that fate has any power at all. The decision of the compiler of the *Recognitions* to use the work of an opponent makes sense, however, if it is understood as a deliberate strategy: the material is being used because it is familiar to its intended audience, because when placed in the mouths of protagonists such as Clement it creates the illusion of astrological expertise, and because it argues against those whom the *Recognitions* itself opposes: Marcionites and those who believe in the ultimate power of astral fate. But the text does not simply adopt the *Book of the laws* wholesale, it redacts the dialogue to eliminate even the limited power of astral fate acknowledged by Bardaisan. This appropriation of the *Book of the laws*, then, involves 'correcting' some of its conclusions to bring them more into line with the *Recognitions*' vision of orthodox Christianity.

The Recognitions in *fourth-century Syria*

The multifaceted polemical agenda of the *Recognitions*, which targets not only Marcionites and devotees of astrology but other groups as well, makes sense when the text's late antique Syrian provenance is taken into account. Both Antioch and Edessa (or somewhere inbetween) seem plausible candidates for the text's location.[55] There can be no certainty about where in Syria it was produced, but Antioch probably should be preferred because of its association with traditions about Petrine authority.[56] Although the circumstances that obtained in these two cities should not be conflated, it remains true that Antioch and Edessa faced similar theological, philosophical and sociological challenges in late antiquity.[57] Both cities were competitive

[55] On the *Grundschrift* and the *Homilies* see Uhlhorn, *Homilien und Recognitionen*, 381–429. On the *Recognitions* see Strecker, *Judenchristentum*, 255ff; Langen, *Klemensromane*, 146; and Waitz, *Pseudoklementinen*, 372.

[56] As is well known, the *Recognitions* (and indeed the Pseudo-Clementines generally) place a tremendous amount of emphasis on the authority of the Apostle Peter. The western Syrian interest in Petrine authority (for example in the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Peter and the so-called Kerygmata Petrou) is examined by Helmut Koester in his influential essay 'GNOMAI DIAPHOROI: the origin and nature of diversification in the history of early Christianity', *Harvard Theological Review* lviii (1965), 284–90.

[57] H. J. W. Drijvers speaks repeatedly of a 'continuous exchange of ideas' between Antioch and Edessa. See, for example, 'East of Antioch: forces and structures in the development of early Syriac theology', in his *East of Antioch: studies in early Syriac Christianity*, London 1984, i. 3–4, 13–14, 17; cf. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and heresy*, 19–20, and Koester, 'GNOMAI DIAPHOROI', 299.

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religious environments which involved conflict, competition and conversation among Christians, Jews and pagans of many stripes.

In late antique Edessa, for example, there was a variety of competing Christian communities, some of them already well-established by the second century.[58] Stephen K. Ross captures this diversity when he describes Edessa as 'a laboratory in which the thinking of philosophers including Marcion, Bardaisan and Mani was further developed and then propagated'.[59] The hallmark of Edessan Christianity was a series of extended theological contests waged by different heterodox groups, as Ephrem (*c.* 306–73) realised when he arrived there after Rome surrendered his native Nisibis to the Persians in 363 CE.[60] Much to Ephrem's dismay, he discovered that Christians of his stripe 'were lost among a throng of followers of other teachers of a more or less "heretical" bent', with each group taking the name of its founder.[61] Ephrem was particularly vexed by the followers of Bardaisan, Marcion and Mani,[62] but so-called 'Arians'[63] and 'Jewish-Christians'[64] were also important factors in the religious landscape.

[58] Bauer, *Orthodoxy and heresy*, 1–43, esp. pp. 28ff.

[59] Steven K. Ross, *Roman Edessa: politics and culture on the eastern fringes of the Roman empire, 114–242 CE*, London–New York 2001, 127. The *Chronicon Edessenum* mentions Marcion, Bardaisan and Mani in its list of important religious developments in Edessa: Drijvers, 'East of Antioch', i.1–27 at p. 4.

[60] H. J. W. Drijvers, *Cults and beliefs at Edessa*, Leiden 1980 194; Ross, *Roman Edessa*, 118. For biographical information about Ephrem see E. Beck, 'Ephrem le syrien (saint)', in Marcel Viller, *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, Paris 1937–95, iv, cols 788–90; Sidney H. Griffith, 'Ephraem, the deacon of Edessa, and the Church of the empire', in Thomas Halton and Joseph P. Williman (eds), *Diakonia: studies in honor of Robert T. Meyer*, Washington, DC 1986, 22–52, esp. pp. 24–9; and Shepardson, 'In the service of orthodoxy', 5–16.

[61] Ross goes on to note (correctly) that Ephrem's need to assert his own group's primacy 'makes clear for us that "orthodox" Christians, if not in the minority, were still only a shaky majority at that time in Edessa': *Roman Edessa*, 123–4.

[62] Ephrem writes a number of hymns directed against Marcion, Mani and Bardaisan. See Tanios Bou Mansour, 'La Défense éphrémienne de la liberté contre les doctrines marcionite, bardesanite et manichéenne', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* l (1984) 331–46. In particular, Ephrem seems to know of a community of fourth-century Bardesanites: E. Beck, 'Bardaisan und seine Schule bei Ephram', *Le Muséon* xci (1978), 271–333.

[63] On Arianism in Antioch see Rowan Williams, *Arius: heresy and tradition*, rev. edn, Grand Rapids, MI 2001, 158–66. Terminological problems associated with 'Arianism', which tends to ascribe all subordinationist Christologies indiscriminately to Arius, are addressed in Joseph T. Lienhard, 'The "Arian" controversy: some categories reconsidered', *Theological Studies* xlviii (1987), 415–37, and Rebecca Lyman, 'A topography of heresy: mapping the rhetorical creation of Arianism', in Michael R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (eds), *Arianism after Arius*, Edinburgh 1993, 45–62. Ephrem's views on Arius and his followers are addressed in Griffith, 'Ephraem, the deacon of Edessa', 37–47.

[64] On the existence of Jewish Christians in the fourth century, as well as the definitional problems associated with the term Jewish Christianity, see Reed, '"Jewish Christianity"', passim.

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Christians were not the only groups vying for preeminence and converts. Philosophical schools, adherents of native Syrian religions[65] and Jews[66] must also be viewed as competitors in the religious marketplace of fourth-century Syria. Astrology appears to have been particularly influential. The eponymous hero of the early fifth-century *Doctrina Addai*, for example, exhorts his followers to 'be ye indeed far removed from … magic arts, which are without mercy, and from soothsaying, and divination, and fortune-tellers; and from fate and nativities, in which the erring Chaldaeans boast; and from planets and signs of the Zodiac, on which the foolish trust'.[67] This injunction against astrological practices, as well as the various pagan and Christian accounts of Bardaisan and the Bardesanites (most notably Ephrem's polemical writings), provides evidence of the continuing appeal of astrology in cities such as Edessa.[68]

While it may seem obvious, it is worth saying that astrological doctrines – belief in astral fate, the power of the planets and signs of the Zodiac and so forth – were important for several late antique religious groups. In addition to the Bardesanites, who by this time had begun to assign an even greater role to astrology than before,[69] Manichees relied rather heavily on astrological elements. The Cologne Mani Codex states that Mani was raised as a member of the Elchasaite sect, whose *Book of Elchasai* espouses katarchic astrology and encourages believers to organise their Christian practices around the alignment of the stars and planets.[70] As a result of Mani's use of astrology, the Manichaean cosmogony 'abounds in astrological details'.[71] By the time of Augustine's early fifth-century squabbles with the Manichees, members of the sect in the west had acquired a reputation as

[65] Drijvers gives a more complete picture of the indigenous religions of Edessa in his *Cults and beliefs at Edessa*, passim; cf. Kevin Butcher, *Roman Syria and the near East*, London 2003, 335–98.

[66] Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: rhetoric and reality in the late 4th century*, Berkeley 1983; Wayne A. Meeks and Robert L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the first four centuries of the common era*, Missoula, MT 1978.

[67] This translation is from *Ancient Syriac documents: relative to the earliest establishment of Christianity in Edessa and the neighbouring countries, from the year after our Lord's ascension to the beginning of the fourth century*, ed. and trans. William Cureton, London 1864, repr. Piscataway, NJ 2005, 15, lines 7–13.

[68] See, for example, Hippolytus, *Philosophoumena* 6.35; the *Vita* of Aberkios; Adamantius, *De recta fide in deum*; Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum* 2.14; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 56; and Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.16. On these and others see Drijvers, *Cults and beliefs at Edessa*, 167–209.

[69] Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 227; Bedjan, *Acta martyrum et sanctorum*, iv, Paris 1890–7, 431–2.

[70] Cologne Mani Codex 94.10–12. See also Samuel N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the later Roman empire and medieval China: a historical survey*, Manchester 1985, 28–37. Katarchic astrology 'deals with determining whether a particular moment … is appropriate for commencing an action': Jones, 'Astrological trajectory', 186. This paragraph depends upon Jones's treatment of Mani, ibid. 194–9.

[71] Lieu, *Manichaeism*, 141.

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astrologers.[72] That the Manichees had a strong presence in fourth-century Antioch and Edessa is established by the polemical writings of John Chrysostom and Ephrem, among others.[73]

Beyond these arguably Christian groups, there existed a variety of native Syrian religious beliefs and practices for which astrological ideas were important if not fundamental.[74] The prominence of Nebo and Bel, gods in whose worship astrological practices were involved, is clear in the *Doctrina Addai*, where Addai gives a speech against idolatry and performs signs that cause the chief priests of the city to 'thr[o]w down the altars on which they sacrificed before Nebu and Bel, their gods, except the great altar in the midst of the city'.[75] The persistence of these beliefs is confirmed by Ephrem, who argues against practices such as astrology and the use of amulets.[76] Ephrem's concern for these customs suggests that Christians in Edessa were drawn to them.

Might it be the case that the *Recognitions*, which was probably written at some point in the mid-fourth century, is targeting, with its anti-astrological rhetoric, not only Marcionites, but also the followers of Bardaisan and Mani and the devotees of Nebo and Bel? It is a strong possibility. Moreover, no specific group should be pinpointed as the 'real' target of that polemic. Put another way, when the function that this material performs for the *Recognitions* is examined closely, it is clear that it works on various levels to differentiate the author's beliefs from those held by several other groups in late antique Syria. As is the case with analyses of the role of Simon Magus, a spokesperson for several unacceptable beliefs (including Paulinism and Marcionism) in the Pseudo-Clementines, it is not sufficient to identify a single group as the object of this polemic.[77] The *Recognitions*' fourth-century context demands a more multivalent interpretation. Even a cursory look at the goings-on in late antique Edessa and Antioch suggests that the *Recognitions* can be read as a response to a situation that involved intense

[72] Ibid. 141–2.

[73] See, for example, John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Matthaeum*, *PG* 58.975–1058, and *Prose refutations*. On Manichaeism in Syria generally see Samuel N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in Mesopotamia and the Roman east*, Leiden 1994, 38–53.

[74] As Drijvers notes, evidence for these beliefs and practices is less than ideal: 'The persistence of pagan cults and practices in Christian Syria', in his *East of Antioch*, XVI.35.

[75] Translation from Cureton, *Ancient Syriac documents*, 14, lines 11–15.

[76] Drijvers, *Cults and beliefs at Edessa*, 195. See, for example, Ephrem, *Hymnen contra haereses* 5.14, 19; 8; 9.8.

[77] Strecker, for example, maintained that the very early *Kerygmata Petrou* contained a polemic against Paul alone, but that other textual layers have included additional polemics against opponents like Simon and Marcion: *Judenchristentum*, 154 n. 1, 187ff. M. J. Edwards likewise notes that '[T]he novels are intended to annihilate many foes with a single weapon': 'Clementina', 462 n. 8.

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competition and occasional conflict between and among Christian and non-Christian groups.

Four observations may be made. First, the argument that the *Recognitions* is using the Bardesanite dialogue to polemicise against multiple groups fits nicely with another well-known rhetorical strategy in the text's repertoire, namely its use of Simon Magus as a spokesperson for a number of competing views that are more or less lumped together. At various points the Pseudo-Clementine Simon serves as a substitute for the Apostle Paul, Marcion and Arius, though he is never explicitly identified with any of these figures. When taken together, these two very similar strategies reveal that the *Recognitions* functioned as a multi-pronged attack not just against one group such as the Marcionites or astrologers or Pauline Christians, but against several different varieties of belief, in an environment characterised by a multitude of competing religious and philosophical ideas.

In the second place, the text's religiously competitive Syrian environment may explain, at least in part, the *Recognitions*' use of sources such as the Bardesanite dialogue that seem to be poorly integrated into the narrative as a whole.[78] It is not unreasonable to think that the text's haphazard integration of sources produces a reading that is not haphazard at all: the *Recognitions* is, in a sense, designed to demonstrate recognisable sources and readily identifiable themes and *topoi*.[79] The redactor(s) of the text may be faulted for a lack of originality and editorial finesse, but these all-too-apparent connections serve an important purpose: they prompt readers to re-situate, and to reevaluate unfavourably, familiar but competing religious texts and claims to the truth.

In the third place, the *Recognitions*' anti-astrological polemic ought to be understood in the context of the rather diverse array of religious commitments, many of them linked in one way or another to astrology, that were to be found in fourth-century Syria. In light of this, it is surely not insignificant that Christian authors roughly contemporary with the *Recognitions*, such as Ephrem[80] and Aphrahat,[81] also direct so much of their polemical energy at second- and third-century figures such as Marcion

[78] Not every apparent redactional difficulty in the Pseudo-Clementines can be explained on these grounds. I agree with previous scholars who have identified any number of literary seams and temporal difficulties created by the author's rather careless editorial practices. I suggest only that some larger narrative purpose may have been served by the text's awkward juxtaposition of such sources.

[79] In addition to the *Recognitions*' use of the *Book of the laws/Dialogue on fate*, there are several other examples of readily-identifiable source material: Jones, 'Pseudo-Clementines', 14–33.

[80] Drijvers, *Cults and beliefs at Edessa*, 195; cf. Shepardson, 'In the service of orthodoxy', 163–210 and passim.

[81] Much like Ephrem his contemporary, Aphrahat condemns Marcion, Valentinus and Mani in his *On fasting* 9 (written *c.* 336–7).

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and Bardaisan whose thought has continued to be influential well into the fourth century. This suggests that the *Recognitions*' polemical agenda, which is likewise oriented around concerns raised by the same second- and third-century persons,[82] is not merely a vestige of its debt to the *Grundschrift*. The text's interest in providence, astral fate and the justice of God reflects the author's own situation in fourth-century Syria, which was characterised by the continued existence and power of religious movements begun in earlier times and a 'general pattern … where philosophical and religious debates on body and soul, God and the world, freedom of will and determinism, and related matters were common practice in large groups of the population'.[83] In other words, the *Recognitions* demonstrates that topics attributed to the 'age of the apologists' continued to be relevant in new ways for late antique Christians: its concern with the nature of God reflects an ongoing concern with Marcionite beliefs, and its interest in fate and providence makes sense in light of the continued influence of Bardaisan's ideas.

Finally, it is worth asking whether the *Recognitions*' multivalent polemical agenda might have any connection with Rufinus' decision to translate the text from its original Greek into Latin. Did Rufinus believe that the *Recognitions* somehow spoke to conditions in the west in the late fourth or early fifth century? It is difficult to say; after all, one of Rufinus' major literary activities was the translation of the writings of the Greek Fathers into Latin, and he clearly regarded the *Recognitions* as a genuine work of Clement of Rome. Hence he may have made the translation simply to make the Greek writings of Clement available to a Latin-speaking audience, without regard for the specific contents of the text.

In his preface to the *Recognitions* Rufinus reveals less than one would like about these matters. He tells his addressee, Bishop Gaudentius, that by translating the text into the vernacular:

> thus we contribute to the use and profit of our people, no small spoil, as I think, taken from the libraries of the Greeks, so that we may feed with foreign nourishment those whom we cannot with our own. … In short, almost everything is foreign that brings healing to our bodies, that opposes diseases, and neutralizes poisons.[84]

Rufinus' reference to 'diseases' and 'poisons' could reasonably be interpreted as an oblique reference to heretical views that he believed the

[82] An important treatment of the Pseudo-Clementine portrait of Peter and Simon in the light of second- and third-century ideas about magic and philosophy is to be found in Dominique Côté, *Le Thème de l'opposition entre Pierre et Simon dans les Pseudo-Clémentines*, Paris 2001, 95–134.

[83] Drijvers, 'Marcionism in Syria', 172.

[84] Translations of the preface are from Smith's version in Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, viii. 95.

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Recognitions could be used to combat. After all, it is known that astrological ideas, particularly those associated with Manichaeism, posed theological problems for Christians in the west during the late fourth and early fifth centuries.[85] But it is more difficult to make a case for the persistence of Marcionism in the west during Rufinus' day; the most that can be said with any confidence is that he has translated the *Recognitions* as a genuine work of Clement of Rome, and in the process modified it with an eye toward orthodox teaching.[86] Rufinus does seem to regard the *Recognitions* as an expression of correct Christian belief and practice, but it is difficult to say whether he considered it a weapon against the theological challenges that existed in his own day and time.

[85] L. C. Ferrari, 'Augustine and astrology', *Laval théologique et philosophique* xxxiii (1977), 241–51, and 'Astronomy and Augustine's break with the Manichees', *Revue des études augustiniennes* xix (1973), 263–76. There is evidence that Marcionites continued to exist during the period in question, but most of this material comes from writers such as Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Ephrem Syrus and Epiphanius of Salamis.

[86] Rufinus tells Gaudentius that he has 'chosen to reserve for others, rather than to produce in an imperfect state', that is, he has not included in his translation 'some dissertations concerning the unbegotten God and the begotten, and on some other subjects, which, to say nothing more, are beyond our comprehension'. Stanley Jones notes that Rufinus has modified *Recognitions* 1.69.6–7, which appears to be a Eunomian interpolation: *An ancient Jewish Christian source on the history of Christianity: Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions 1.27–71*, Atlanta 1995, 48–49. On Rufinus' preface see Ernst Bammel, 'Rufins Einleitung zu den Klemens zugeschriebenen Wiedererkennungen', in *Storia ed esegesi in Rufino di Concordia*, Udine 1992, 151–63. On Rufinus' translation practices generally see E. C. Brooks, 'The translation techniques of Rufinus of Aquileia', in *Studia patristica*, XVII: Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), *Papers presented at the eighth international conference on patristic studies, Oxford, Sept. 3–8, 1979*, Elmsford, NY 1982, i. 357–64.

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