

On the name "Son of God" in Northern Syria.

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An inscription in Greek characters was recently sent me by my friend Professor Lootfy Levonian, of the American College of 'Ain Tab, which ran as follows:

BAPΛAA
 (Figure of an eagle)
 AΛYITE XAI
 PE
 ETOYCZAY

i. e.: Βαρλάα, ἄλυπε χαίρε' ἔτους Ζλυ' (?) This inscription may serve as the point of departure for the following investigation; it does not contain anything which cannot be paralleled from other quarters, but it contains within its own brief compass several important statements, from which equally important inferences can be drawn; so we will begin by considering it from the side of epigraphic lore.

In the first place, then, it is a funeral inscription. This appears from the conjunction of the name of the person (a) with the figure of an eagle, a common funerary symbol in northern Syria,¹ (b) with a common form of Greek farewell to the departed, (c) with a date which is presumably the date of death.

The next thing we notice is that although the inscription is in Greek, the name of the deceased is transliterated from the Syriac; he is called *Bar 'lâhâ*, or *Son of God*. It is, therefore, the grave of a Syrian. When we have recognised this indisputable fact, of which, strange as it may seem that a Syrian should have such a name, we shall find abundance of confirmation and parallel, we may perhaps be able to clear up an obscurity as to the date. For if the deceased is of Syrian family (though the family were bilingual and had Greek for

¹ Cumont has written at length on the subject of the *Funerary Eagle among the Syrians* in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* for 1910.

a second language), the stone-cutter of the inscription is probably a Syrian, and that would explain why he has written the figures of the date in reverse order, so as to give the year $\text{ΖΛ}'$, where he should have written ΛΖ , i. e. the year 437 of the Seleucid era, corresponding to the Christian date A. D. 125/26.¹

The inscription itself was found not very far from 'Ain Ṭab, and we may, therefore, describe it as a funeral inscription from Commagene in the early part of the second century (the date depending upon the accuracy of the transcription and its interpretation, which I do not think admit of serious question). We shall see presently reasons for believing that it cannot be very far wrong, for we shall be able to refer other Bar-Alaha inscriptions to the same period, and to connect them directly or indirectly, with the same locality. The Greek formula $\alpha\lambda\upsilon\pi\epsilon \chi\alpha\iota\rho\epsilon$ need not detain us long; in this shape and in a somewhat more extended one $\alpha\upsilon\rho\epsilon \kappa\alpha\iota \alpha\lambda\upsilon\pi\epsilon \chi\alpha\iota\rho\epsilon$ we find it in use in the East: I quote an instance from a Palmyrene bust in the possession of a sheikh at Kuryatein, on the road to Palmyra, which appears in Lidzbarski² in the following form:

<i>Greek:</i>	<i>Palmyrene:</i>
ΝΑCΡΑΑ	נצרא בר
ΛΑΘΕΜΑΑ	מלכו בר
ΧΟΥΑΛΥΠΤΕ	נצרא חבל
ΧΑΙΠΕ	

where the Greek is deciphered by Lidzbarski as follows:

$\text{Ναcράλλαθε Μάλχου ἄλυπε χᾶιρε}$

the Palmyrene showing simply *Nasra, son of Malku, son of Nasra, mourning*. The two sides are independent, the Palmyrene giving only the names: but it is reasonable that the names on the two sides should agree. It is quite impossible that the person buried should be called Ναcράλλαθος but he may very well have borne the name Ναcράλλα

¹ Such lapidary reversals are common on the Palmyrene monuments e. g. Lidzbarski, *Handbuch: Palmyrene Inscriptions*. i. p. 458 & sq. we have the Greek dates:

$\xi\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma \nu\upsilon'$ = A. D. 139.

$\xi\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma \rho\upsilon'$ = A. D. 179.

$\xi\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma \delta\phi'$ = A. D. 193.

$\xi\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma \delta\nu\phi'$ = A. D. 242/3 etc.,

where the dates are certified by the Palmyrene texts. The same thing occurs in the trilingual inscription from Zebed, whose date is given, in words, in the Syriac as 823 (i. e. of the Seleucid era), but in Greek in the form $\xi\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma \gamma\kappa\omega'$ (328).

² Lidzbarski. i. 450.

or *Aquila Dei*, in which case we have a suggestive parallel to our Barlaha inscription.¹ The Greek of this inscription, however, needs to be re-examined. We will only use it at present to show how the Greek funeral formulae assert themselves in a bilingual country.

Here is another instance from Membidj (Hierapolis) which lies much nearer to 'Ain Ṭab.²

Βάκχιε χρηστὲ ἄλυπε χαίρε· Βκ Γορπιαίου· β . . . In this inscription we have again the conjunction of the funerary eagle with the Greek formula; and whether we take βκ to represent the Seleucid year or the day of the month (it is almost certainly the latter) the lapidary has again written his figures in the Semitic order, and is therefore probably a Syrian. If the day of the month be the 22nd, then the year which follows and begins with β has also its figures reversed.

Now for a word with regard to the bird whom Cumont calls the funerary eagle. It is commonly represented as holding a crown or garland in its beak, as a symbol of triumph and of the attainment of an immortal life among the blessed. In this form, for example, it is a constant motive upon the tombs at Membidj, the ancient Hierapolis of which Lucian writes. Similar things may be remarked at Balkis on the Euphrates, which Cumont holds to be the real Zeugma, (commonly identified with Biredjik) where the road from 'Ain Ṭab crossed the Euphrates: so that we may see that in this part of Syria, the funerary eagle is conventional; Cumont maintains further that it was from the East that the Romans borrowed their idea of apotheosis of the Emperors, and the fiction that Romulus was carried up to heaven on the back of an eagle. It is probable that the problem of apotheosis by the help of eagles can be solved more simply: for if the eagle should turn out to be not a piece of Syrian ornithology, but the Thunderbird itself, which turns up at the origin of all religions, he will not need to be imported into Rome from the East; he will be at home there already, just as he is in any place where his royalty has displaced the minor claims of the woodpecker to be the birdform of the Thunder.

We shall point out presently that in the case of our Barlaha inscription, the eagle has a nexus with Barlaha, quite independently of

¹ Perhaps Νακράλλαθε means that the stone-cutter began to write θεοῦ after Νακράλλα.

² It will be found in Cumont l. c. p. 120 from Hogarth, *Annual of the British School at Athens* for 1907/8 pp. 186 sqq.

the fact that Barlaha happens to have died: of this we have more to say at a later point. The inscription is non-Christian; we should suspect this from the occurrence of a pagan and hopeless formula, and from the presence of the eagle; but we are quite certain that no Christian in the year 125 would ever have been designated by the title of Son of God, nor is it likely that the term could have been employed by the Jews. The problem before us, then, is to determine the meaning of this pagan formula of nomenclature. Who is the god that is indicated, and how does anyone come to be his son? What honours attach to such sonship and what functions does the son discharge? And by what marks, if any, is he recognised? Is it royalty that is meant by the term, or is it priesthood? Or does the title depend upon physical and moral characteristics? These, and similar questions, are the points that require to be considered; and it will easily be seen that there are similar questions in most of the great religions, and in not a few of the small ones. The relation of kingship, for example, interpreted as sonship, is common in the earlier Judaism: the Psalms are full of it; „Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee“¹, is an adoptionist formula in the older religion, which became an adoptionist formula in the Christian religion: and again, as the writer to the Hebrews would say, „I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son“.² The same exact terms of adoptionism are found in Ps. 89, 27. „I will make him my first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth.“ In all these cases the king is regarded as, by adoption, the Son of God. What is true of Judaism is true of the Syrian Kingdom of Damascus, where we find a decided tendency to name their kings Bar-hadad, that is, to define them as the children of the Thunder-god; for Hadad (Adad) is the Amorite and Mesopotamian god of the Thunder: and in that sense, a Syrian king so named, might be called in the terms of a later day, Son of God.

It is, however, useless to look in this direction for the meaning of Barlaha, for in the first place the country is under Roman rule, and there are no more kings to be affiliated to the gods, and in the next place, as we shall see, the name in question is borne by persons who are politically civilians. Our humble inscription is certainly not the tombstone of a king. Perhaps we shall reach a solution most easily by removing our attention for a while from the first syllable of the name, and fixing it on the remainder. Whatever sonship may mean,

¹ Ps. 2, 7.

² II Sam 7, 14. Heb 1, 5.

there is the question as to the meaning of the word Alaha. What god is meant by this title in Commagene in the year 125 A.D.? The answer to this enquiry is certain: if any god is specially indicated by the name Son of God, it should be the one whom archaeologists know as Jupiter Dolichenus, i. e., the Jupiter worshipped at Dolichē, a town a few hours to the north of 'Ain Ṭab, represented to-day by a wretched Moslem village known as Tel(l) Dülük, with many ruined walls and an occasional Syrian inscription, indicating obscurely the former greatness of the town. This town, whose ruins I have visited, though with no prospect of making excavations, has impressed itself on the whole Western world, chiefly by means of its religion, which soldiers from Commagene carried as far as England, Scotland and Wales, Gaul, Germany, Pannonia, Dacia, und Numidia, to say nothing of countries lying nearer to the centre of civilisation. In fact, Commagene became a recruiting ground of the Antonine emperors, and the soldiers who were thus incorporated with the Roman army carried their religious symbols with them wherever they went, adapting themselves skilfully to the nomenclature of the Roman religion, so as to call their chief deity by the name of Jupiter, and establishing shrines and votive monuments wherever they travelled, much in the same way as did the worshippers of Mithras. The extent of the Dolichene influence can be judged by the number of inscriptions belonging to the cult. Hardly one has been found as yet in Commagene itself, (though no doubt they will turn up when Tell Dülük is excavated), but apart from Commagene they are found all over the Roman Empire. Who then is Jupiter Dolichenus, for it is certain that in an ancient Eastern province, which has formed part of some of the greatest empires of the world, he was not called Jupiter nor was he known by a place-name such as Dolichenus? The answer is that he is a survival from Hittite and Assyrian days. In some ways he resembles the Hittite storm-god Teshub; in others he is like the Amorite Adad, or Hadad, the thunder-god of Northern Mesopotamia, or the Assyrian Ramman, the storm-god of the great empires on the two rivers. From the fact that he is always represented with the double-axe (thunder-axe) in his right hand, and with the bunch of split lightnings in his left, we might be disposed to say that he was simply the Thunder-god of the population of this region, slightly romanised into a Jupiter Optimus Maximus, and accompanied by such religious symbols as we are accustomed to in the Thunder-cults of the East and West. Closer examination shows, however, that the matter is not so simple; for although the figure of

Jupiter Dolichenus himself, in the monuments of the cult, is undoubtedly that of a thunder-god, there are features which suggest that he is Sky-god as well as Thunder-god, exactly as was the case with Zeus himself, who obtains his name from the bright sky, and discharges the functions of the darkened sky. In the Dolichene cult, we shall find the central figure accompanied by lesser figures of the Sun and Moon, sometimes associated with a pair of stars. Sometimes a feminine goddess is added, who passes for Juno, and may be the wife of the Solar deity. The denomination of the cult as that of a thunder-god, is, therefore, not exhaustive. The main idea is certainly that of the Thunder. Jupiter Dolichenus stands on the back of a bull marching from left to right, the bull being his cult-symbol, as it is for Ramman in Assyria; he has the thunder-eagle with him, sometimes perched on the head of the bull, sometimes crouching beneath it, as if to support it, and sometimes flying with garlands symbolic of victory; and as we have said, he always carries the thunderaxe and the bunch of lightnings.

The god, therefore, who is involved in the name Barlaha must be sought for amongst the thunder-gods and sky-gods of the Oriental peoples. That being the case, the nearest equivalent that we can find in ancient history for the term Barlaha is the name Bar-Hadad, (the Benhadad of the Hebrew Bible). Kingship being, however, excluded as an explanation, we must now try priesthood. It is well-known that priests commonly acquire theophoric names, expressive of their relation to the God whom they serve; sometimes they actually pose under the name of the god himself. Let us, then, see whether we can make a priest of Barlaha.

In an inscription, preserved in the Museum at Salona in Dalmatia, we find the following:¹

D(is) M(anibus) / Aurelius Ger/manus Barla/ha
 Sacerdos / I(ovis) O(ptimi) M(aximi) Doli/cheni
 vivus / sibi posuit et / Syre coniugi /
 (Figure of a double axe).

Here there is a votive inscription for the tomb of a priest of Jupiter Dolichenus named Barlaha, with his wife, whose name is simply Syra or Syre, the Syrian lady; and the inscription is accompanied by the symbol of the thunder. It is clear, then, that a priest of Jupiter Dolichenus might be named Barlaha; it does not follow that every one

¹ C. I. L. III. Suppl. II. 8785.

named Barlaha is necessarily a priest of Dolichenus; and it seems to be made out that the Alaha of the Commagene Barlaha really does mean some one attached to Jupiter Dolichenus, or the thunder-god (sky-god) who lies behind him.

Let us now try to find out some more about this Dolichene priesthood; for if the priests are in the habit of wearing theophoric names, as in the instance before us, we may find from the inscriptions some more information about the cult that is betrayed by a scrutiny and study of the surviving Dolichene Sculptures. The simplest way to determine what were the favourite names of Dolichene priests is to work through the collection of the inscriptions of the cult in Kan, *De Jovis Dolicheni cultu*. We shall easily detect five varieties of appellation (omitting names which are clearly Roman, and generally Imperial, like Flavius or Antoninus and the like). These five varieties are as follows:

1. Those priests who bear the name Marinus or Marianus:
2. those who bear the names Castor and Polydeuces:
3. the priestly name of Barlaha:
4. the name Barsamya:
5. the name Aquila.

All of these names are those of priests attached to the service of the god, and they have, to say the least, a theophoric flavour. The evidence is as follows, the numbers of the inscriptions being as in Kan.

- No. 3. Polydeuces Theophili along with Lucius Capito and Flavius Reginus.
- No. 4. Castor and Aquila with Castor and Polydeuces.
- No. 11. Aelius Valentinus veteranus sacerdos.
- No. 14. Marinus Mariani Bassus.
- No. 15. Aurelius Marinus with Adde bar Semei and Oceanus Socratis.
- No. 17. Bassus Aquila and Gai Gaiani.
- No. 22. Aurelius Germanus Barlaha ut supra.
- No. 26. Aurelii Sabinianus et Maximus et Apollinarus.
- No. 33. Aurelius Domittius with the brethren
 Flavius Castor and } brothers, not said positively
 Aurelius Maximus } to be priests.
- No. 44. Antonius.
- No. 48. Antiochus and Marinus.
- (No. 53. Bellicus Marini filius sacerdos.)
- No. 59. Demittius sacerdos.

- No. 64. Sacerdotibus. Sopatrus et Marinus et Calus. (sic.)
 (No. 67. C. Julius Marinus miles), not said to be a priest.
 No. 70. Flavius Marinus and Chrysas Thyrsus.
 No. 72. C. Fabius Germanus.
 No. 75. Aurelius Severus veteranus curator tempuli (in Aventino)
 et Aurelius Antiochus sacerdos etc.:
 No. 83. M. Ulfius Chresimus.
 No. 84. Aurelius Teatecnus filius Hela.
 No. 86. Aurelius Julianus eques Romanus sacerdos.
 No. 99. Antipatrus sacerdos.
 No. 100. Marcus Barsemias.
 No. 104 and 105. C. Julius Flaccus.
 No. 106. L. Aurelius Valerius.
 No. 136. Arcias Marinus.
 (No. 141. G. Julius Marinus [not said to be a priest].)
 No. 152. Lucinus (?) Donatii, Aquila Barsemon and Flavius
 Damas.

It will be seen at a glance that these lists of priestly names are significant. Setting aside a number of imperial names of the time, we have, for the most part a series of theophoric names, which belong to the Dolichene cult, and will help us to understand the nature of the cult. Of these the first is Marinus and its associated Marianus. The name stands for an old Syriac form *Marin*, and its companion (*Maryan*): each formed from the word *Mari*, which becomes *Mar* in later Syriac (with silent *yud*) by the addition of a suffix in the first person plural. The meaning is then "our Lord" and it is an archaic title of honour, probably used both for priests and kings. It becomes the appellation of saints in the Eastern Church. It does not appear from our list of cases that it is exclusively a priestly title, nor that it must be necessarily read in a theophoric sense, though one remembers how common is the doctrine that the honour of the priest is as the honour of God. As it happens, in one case Marinus is described as a soldier, and therefore presumably not a priest.¹ Other instances of

¹ This statement may require qualification, for we do not know that the Dolichene priests accompanied the Syrian legions into foreign countries. Some priestly functions may have been discharged by soldiers; e. g. in the inscription from the Aventine (No. 75 in Kan) the curator of the temple is expressly said to be a *veteranus*. So in the inscription No. 11 of Kan, Aelius Valentinus is expressly said to be both *veteranus* and *sacerdos*. In No. 53 Bellicus the priest is almost certainly a soldier; from the description of him as *filius Marini* it is possible that his father may have been a

similar character can be brought forward. Students of Philo will remember the way in which the mob in Alexandria made a mock king of the poor idiot Carabas and saluted him with cries of Marin. Here the name has its loftiest connotation. We can, however, find a number of persons of humble origin, who bear the name without any sense of elevation or dignity. It appears to have become conventional.¹

The next case is more striking: we have Castor and Pollux in conjunction, and Castor several times separately. There can be no mistake about the meaning of this; the Heavenly Twins are a part of the Dolichene priesthood: and we must conclude that the cult involved not merely the Sky or the Thunder, but the Children of the Sky and the Children of the Thunder. Such priests are in all probability twins, or are acting representatively in a line of priests who have the care of a twin-cult. (A good instance is the priest Amphion at Antioch, for whom Tiberius set up the monument of Zethus and Amphion.) Now this might have been divined: for in Commagene we are in the Hittite country; and it is known from the inscriptions found at Boghaz keöui, that the Hittites had not only a thunder-god (Teshub) but that there was also in the vicinity of the Hittite empire, and perhaps within the empire itself, a pair of twin deities who are called by their Aryan name Nasatīyau in the treaties between the Hittites, the Mitanni &c. Thus every reason for regarding the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus as a survival, is a reason for expecting the survival of the cult of the Twins.

In the light of this important discovery of the existence of a twin element in the Dolichene priesthood, we may ask whether this fact can be used to illustrate the monuments. The answer is that the pair of stars in the Dolichene monuments must be held to be symbols of the twins. Are the twins themselves represented? Not in the Roman or Greek form; it is possible that the sun or the moon may have come in to represent the Twins as they do in some Assyrian inscriptions. What seems to confirm the supposed Assyrian influence at this point

priest also. In No. 67 we have another soldier named Marinus, who may suggest a similar explanation.

Hettner *De Jove Dolicheno* p. 9 says that the cognomen Marinus is found much more often in Dolichene inscriptions than can be explained by chance. As in not less than seven instances the name is that of a priest, he concludes that the Dolichene Marini are connected with the cult.

¹ e. g. at the end of the Edessan Acts of Sharbil, we are told that Marinus was one of the notaries who composed the document. But perhaps this is consistent with dignity.

is the fact that the Dolichene monuments sometimes represent the Sun and Moon as carrying whips. Now the whip is from India westward a well known Dioscuric symbol. The following sentence from Mr. A. B. Cook's recently published *Zeus* will illustrate the point.¹ He is describing one of the Dolichene plates found at Heddernheim: "The upper division contains a bust of Sarapis; the lower, busts of the Sun and Moon. The Sun has the horns of a bull; the Moon, a rayed nimbus: *both bear whips. — Over their heads are two stars.*"

Without laying too much stress on this point, we can see that the reference to Castor and Polydeuces amongst the Dolichene priesthood requires us to admit that the Twins are a fundamental part of the cult, and that their presence on the monument is not due to syncretism.²

But what were their names in Syriac, for after all, Castor and Pollux can only be a translation? It is possible that they may have had names which have come down to us as Cosmas and Damian, the ecclesiastical substitute for Twins in this region, but we have not the means of determining this at present. The names Cosmas (Cosmus) and Damas are both found on the Dolichene monuments, and Damas appears to be a priest. That is as far as we can go with what, for the present, is little more than a suggestion.

There is, however, remarkable evidence in our list of the currency of the word Twin as a name. Twin, in Syriac, as is well known, is *Tauma*, and the similarity of this to the word for Abyss or Ocean (Tehoma) led earlier compilers of Onomastica to derive the name Thomas (or twin) from *Abyssus*. In the same way when pious persons attempted to get rid of the statement in the Syriac Acts of Thomas that Judas Thomas was the Twin of the Messiah, they did it by substituting the Abyss, or (as Wright translates it) the Ocean-flood of the Messiah. Now notice that in our list of priestly names, one man has actually given his name as *Oceanus* Socratis. It is very unlikely that any one ever had such a name in the course of nature:

¹ I. c. p. 620.

² Thus, when we find upon a Roman inscription (No. 71, Kan) that it is dedicated to J(ovi) O(ptimo) s(ancto) p(raestantissimo) D(olichene) et Junoni Sanctae Herae Castoribus et Apollini, we are to regard all these as Roman equivalents for figures in the Dolichene cult. Apollo is here the Sun-god of the East, and the Castors are the Twins.

On the inscription No. 91 of Kan, Juno is expressly called *Juno Assyria regina Dolichena*.

it has come to him artificially; it is translator's Latin, and bad translation at that. In his own country, this priest would have been called Twin, as perhaps Thomas.¹

Our next case is the name with which we started, Bar Alaha, which we have sufficiently explained. Look, however, at No. 84, where Teatecnus (*read* Theotecnos) occurs (= Θεότεκνος). Evidently Theotecnos is an attempt to turn Bar Alaha into Greek: nor is this all; another translation is given into Latin, for the inscription says Teatecnus *filius Hela*, which is only a blundering Latin version of Baralaha by someone who forgot that Alaha was written backward. We shall find this name Theotecnus (Theotecna) in the Edessan literature. In the story of the Martyrdom of Habib the Deacon in the year A. D. 308, mention is made of a certain Theotecna, a veteran and a chief of the governor's band. Although a pagan, he shows himself friendly to Habib. There is nothing definitely to intimate priesthood: he appears to have been simply a military official. On the other hand, we have already pointed out a case in Rome, where the *veteranus* Aurelius Severus is said to have been the warden of the Dolichene temple on the Aventine, and another Italian case of a *veteranus* who is definitely described as *sacerdos*.

So here again we have the Dolichene priest as Son of God with a possible parallel from the not far distant city of Edessa. The priest in question has sought to render this both in Latin and Greek. Such translations are not merely Western adaptations, they occur in Comma-gene, which is a bilingual country, and to some extent trilingual.

The next sacerdotal name occurs under slightly variant forms:

Adde bār Semei

Marcus Barsemias

and Aquila Barsemon.

The three forms are evidently for one Syriac name, which must be bar Šemaya (Son of the Sky).

Here then the Dolichene Alaha is definitely recognised as the Sky-god. The alternative explanation Bar Samya, son of the blind man, is untenable: we could not have three sons of blind men in our lists: but the alternative should be noted because it explains the name of the Edessan bishop Barsamya, who is said to have been the second

¹ Hettner p. 10 thinks that both Marinus and Oceanus may be variant translations of a Syriac word (= lat. mare). We have explained Marin above, and shown that it is altogether Syriac.

catholic bishop of Edessa and successor of Palut. We must take this Barsamya to be a christianisation of an original Bar Šamaya. The Edessan traditions refer him to the times of Fabian, Pope of Rome, and so before 250 A.D. He is probably a convert from paganism.

The name Adde is also Syriac; it is = Addai, the supposed Apostle of the church at Edessa. It is itself perhaps a thunder-name.

Last of all we have three cases of Aquila as a proper name. In view of the connection of the names already discussed with the cult, it is reasonable to suggest that the priest, who bears the name, bears it theophorically, because of the companionship of the eagle with the thunder.

We have now discussed the character of the Dolichene priesthood, the god being accompanied by twins as his assessors, and perhaps by a feminine conjugate. At Commagene, at all events, if any one comes forward with the name Son of God, we identify him as either a priest of the Thunder, or a twin-child of the Thunder, or both.

Reviewing the argument as far as it has gone, we have arrived at the following facts:

A bilingual inscription from Commagene commemorates a Syrian bearing the name Son-of-God, who died in the year 125 A.D. The God after whom he is named must be identified with Jupiter Dolichenus. We actually find the name as a priest's name in the cult in question. On studying the names of Dolichene priests which have come down to us in inscriptions, we find that they were called by such names as the following, all of which express their relation to the cult:

*Our Lord: Son of God: Heavenly Twin: Son of the Sky:
Twin: Eagle (of God?)*

The Dolichene cult was, therefore, a twin-cult as well as a sky-cult and a thunder-cult, and the twins, who here turn up with Zeus, have come down out of ancient times as the children of the Sky or the assessors of the Thunder. This discovery is important for the study of twin-cult in Western Asia; it might have been anticipated from the discovery of the Aryan twins on Hittite monuments.

We have now to cross the Euphrates, in order to find out whether the Barlaha phenomenon reappears in Mesopotamia, and in particular, in the district Osroene with its capital Edessa.

We must be prepared for a change of values in religious symbols when we enter Edessa; for here the Sky counts for more and the Thunder for less. Edessan worship is largely solar, and the twins who

are the solar assessors (Monim and Aziz) are almost certainly the Morning and Evening Stars. Alongside of this there appear traces of old Assyrian worship, but not especially of Ramman or Adad so much as of Bel and Nebo. The first impression is that, on entering Mesopotamia, we have left the Thunder behind us. This is not really the case, for down to the sixth century we can find traces of Thunder cult. One very interesting example will be found in the Scholia of Theodore Bar Koni.¹ He describes a sect in the district of Gozan who worship thunder, and are called Barqayē (i. e. People of the Lightning):

„Barqa is not that which dazzles in the clouds, but once upon a time there was a man at Rkem in Gaya, who was called Barqin. He was rich but childless and he made for himself a statue which he called the Thunder (Lightning) of the people of Gozan.“

Upon which Pognon notes that from what Theodore Bar Koni says, we must conclude that down to his day, or not long before his day, the people of the district of Gozan worshipped a deity whom they called Barqa (the Lightning).

Evidently Bar Koni was puzzled by the accounts given to him of certain Lightning Worshipers: he suggests explanations as to the importation of the statue of the Thunder from abroad, and that it was not really the Thunder, but a certain Mr. Thunder. We need not doubt the existence of a Mesopotamian sect of Thunder-worshippers in the sixth century of our era.

Now let us come to Edessa, and see what we find that is analogous to the Barlaha priest in the district of Commagene.

We have already stumbled upon one parallel, viz: the case of the veteran Theotecnos, who turns up in the story of the Martyrdom of Habib the deacon. Theotecnos is, as we have shown, a Dolichene translation of Barlaha, and there is good probability that the name had the same significance in Edessa. We can, moreover, actually find traces of the name Barlaha untranslated in Edessa.

First of all, there was a gate of the city called the gate of Barlaha; and second, there was a sanctuary outside the city called by the name of Beth Mari Barlaha.

Professor Wright in his edition of the Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite, reproduces Carsten Niebuhr's map of Edessa² with corrections

¹ I quote the Scholia from Pognon, *Coups de Khouabir*, Part ii. Append. ii.

² *Voyage en Arabie et en d'autres Pays circonvoisins*, traduit de l'Allemand, 1780. ii. p. 330.

from Prof. Hoffmann: in this map we find the gate of Barlahā placed, with some hesitation, on the north of the city. As to the sanctuary of Barlahā, which should be connected, one would think, with the gate of the same name, we are in some difficulty, for it is clearly a Christian sanctuary, and Barlahā has the prefixed Marī of the Christian dignity, and ought therefore to be a Christian saint, unless we take this Marī also to be a survival from a pagan Marīn, such as was suggested by the Dolichene inscriptions. Thus we have the perplexity of finding a Christian Barlahā, which appears to contradict what we said of the occurrence of the name in Commagene as a definitely pagan religious name. Let us see what authorities we have for the Son-of-God Sanctuary.

We find in the Edessan Chronicle the following statement:

In the year 720 (= A. D. 409) Mar Diogenes became Bishop of Edessa. He began to build the sanctuary of Barlahā.

Upon which Hallier notes¹ that nothing is known as to the situation of this shrine. The odd thing about this bishop and his building is that his own name is a Greek equivalent of Barlahā! Later references in the Edessene Chronicle only tell us of more bishops being buried there, as if it were a kind of episcopal mausoleum.

In the year 525 A. D. Bishop Asklepios of Edessa died in Antioch and was buried there; his body was translated in the same year to Edessa, and buried in Beth Marī Barlahā, along with Bishop Nonnus. In the year 532 A. D., on Dec. 6th, died Bishop Andreas, and was buried with Bishop Nonnus and Bishop Asklepios in Beth Marī Barlahā.

The sanctuary must have been a place of some importance, at least from the beginning of the fifth century. There appears to be no knowledge of any saint or martyr after whom it could have been named. The natural suggestion is that it was a pagan sanctuary converted to Christian uses, and that Barlahā was either a pagan priest or one of the Heavenly Twins. He may even have been the Bishop Diogenes himself, in a prae-Christian state of existence.

Certainly something like this transfer and modification of pagan terms and cults appears to have taken place in the case of Barsamya, one of the earliest of the Edessan martyrs. Here the Commagene parallel is very close, where we found three separate modifications of the name Bar Šemaya, the Son of the Sky. We have no means of testing the historical value of the Barsamya legends, but if we have

¹ *Edessenische Chronik* p. 106.

conjectured rightly the meaning of the name, it is not very far from Son of the Sky to Son of God. Both names would, in this view, belong to a pagan cult of the Sky and the Heavenly Bodies.

There is another reason for believing that in Edessa Barlaha is a pagan name with a pagan meaning. We can actually find a sepulchral inscription containing the feminine form of the name Barlaha. Readers of my *Cult of the Heavenly Twins* will find a photograph of a sepulchral mosaic, recently discovered on the North of the City of Edessa. It has now been transferred to the museum of Constantinople. It contains a series of portraits of Aphthoniya (if Prof. Burkitt's correction of my first reading be taken) and of his family. This Aphthoniya (or Aphthonius) is the person who is commemorated on one of the Twin Pillars of Edessa as having set up the pillar for Shalmath the Princess. We are discussing what may be described as the central mosaic in a royal mausoleum. The portraits in the mosaic are grouped as follows, with names attached:

Shumu	Aphthonia (?) bar Garmu.
Asu.	Garmu.
Shalmath (Inscription) Barthlaha.	

Clearly this must be regarded as a pagan sepulchre: for two of the persons mentioned in it are connected with the setting up of the Twin Pillars, which cannot be a Christian function. The inscription, too, in which Aphthoniya records the making of the sepulchre for himself and his family, has nothing Christian about it. We may, therefore, feel sure that Barthlaha is a pagan name, and is the exact conjugate of Barlaha which we have been discussing. We cannot speak positively as to how she became entitled to the name Daughter-of-God, i. e. Daughter of the Sky. It does not seem likely *a priori* that she was a priestess, though this is not impossible; perhaps the simplest explanation is that she obtained this name because she was a twin. It seems probable that when this sepulchre was made, Edessa was still pagan.

Reviewing the course of the enquiry, the evidence seems to point to a pagan Sky cult in Edessa: we have drawn attention to (a) Theotecnos; (b) to Barsamya, probably a Christian modification of an original Son of the Sky; (c) to the occurrence of Barlaha as the name of a gate and of a sanctuary at Edessa; (d) to the actual occurrence of the feminine Barthlaha in a pagan sepulchre.

Our real difficulty was to see how such a name as Barlaha could have passed into Christian use at all. It would almost be blasphemous

to a Christian of the Nicene days, if used as a personal appellation. The case of Barhadad is not quite an exact parallel. We are able to find a Christian Bishop of Tella in the sixth century bearing the name Barhadad. His story is told in the Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite. This name might, however, have become colourless, through the disuse of any reference to Hadad as a deity: it was not much worse than Diogenes. But Barlaha could never lose its meaning, as long as Syriac continued to be spoken, and the meaning must have been offensive to Christian ears.

The total impression produced on the mind by the enquiry is that Barlaha, as a personal name, in Edessa, has the same meaning as it had in Commagene, with the exception that the deity involved is the Sky-god to the exclusion of the Thundergod. The next thing to be done is to examine whether traces of similar cults and nomenclatures of priesthoods or twins can be found in other districts, and especially in Palestina or the adjacent countries.
