

CHALDEAN AND NEO-PLATONIC THEOLOGY

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Ihr Städte des Euphrats!
Ihr Gassen von Palmyra!
Ihr Säulenwälder in der Ebne der Wüste,
Was seid ihr?
Euch hat die Kronen,
Dieweil ihr über die Grenze
Der Othmenden seid gegangen,
Von Himmlischen der Rauchdampf und
Hinweg das Feuer genommen;
Jetzt aber sitz ich unter Wolken (deren
Ein jedes eine Ruh hat eigen),
und fremd
Erscheinen und gestorben mir
Der Seligen Geister.
Friedrich Hölderlin, *Lebensalter*

ABSTRACT: In the present paper, the meanings the term “Chaldeans” obtained during the Antiquity and the early Middle Ages are presented, but mainly the role the *Chaldean Oracles* played inside the movement of Neo-Platonism is emphasized. The stratification of Being according to the theology of *Chaldean Oracles*, suggests a reformation of the ancient Chaldean dogmas by the Neo-Platonists. The kernel of this paper is the demonstration of the similarity between the name “En” that the ancient Babylonians used as the first part of many compound words for their gods, with the One (“Ev=En), the first theological principle in the Neo-Platonic system. Yet, a comparison between the Chaldean theology and the Plotinian views on Mysticism and religiosity follows. As it is well known, the later Neo-Platonism will be led to the creation of a way of thought and practice as impacts from the ancient tradition.

KEY WORDS: Chaldeans, Oracles, Neo-Platonism, Plotinus, Theology, Ancient Religions.

Introduction

The name “Chaldeans” refers generally to the Chaldean people who lived in the land of Babylonia,¹ and especially to the Chaldean “magi” of Babylon.² The Chaldeans were connected to Neo-Platonism, the philosophical movement founded by Plotinus in the 3rd century A.D., through the dark and strange verses entitled *Chaldean Oracles* or *Chaldean Logia*. The disciples and successors of Plotinus commented on these verses, put them into the curriculum of their schools, and proceeded to the implementation of their teachings to the theurgic rituals. Although the direct continuity of the religion of the Sumerians, the Accadians, and the Babylonians into the era of Neo-Platonism is disputed, there is some evidence, mostly of religious character, which could lead towards such a direction. The evolution of Theurgy after the time of Plotinus and the revival of the ancient Chaldean magic are complex issues, which will be examined briefly here. Rather, we are going to explore the Neo-Platonic view of the ancient Chaldean theology through the *Chaldean Oracles*. The main argument of this paper is related to the indeterminacy of the first principle’s name and the homonymy of the prefix “En” of some Babylonian gods with the Neo-Platonic One (En). Furthermore, we are going to compare the meanings of the first principle as they developed inside the frames of the ancient Chaldaism and the Neo-Platonism. The point of view is that the primary unifying and undefined nature of the name “En” did not disappear, but remained in memory, coming from the depth of time. Yet, we detect evidence for supporting the view that Plotinus had a partial knowledge of many Chaldean and other Eastern doctrines, which are latent in various forms in his work. The approach proposed here is based on the highlight of the historical-philosophical dimension of the subject and on the elaboration of data from the history of ideas, names, and beliefs.

THE RECEPTION OF THE NAME “CHALDEANS” AND ITS RELATION TO THE *CHALDEAN ORACLES*

The “Chaldeans” were the guardians of the sacred science: the astrological knowledge and the divination mixed with religion and magic. They were considered

¹ F. M. Fabes, “Arameans and Chaldeans: Environment and society,” in G. Leick (ed.), *The Babylonian World* (New York/London 2007) 290. The name Chaldeans (Kaldu) does not appear in sources before 878 BC.

² P. A. Beaulieu, “Late Babylonian Intellectual Life,” in G. Leick (ed.), *The Babylonian World* (New York/London 2007) 482 and 475.

the last representatives of the Babylonian sages, of whom the pre-scientific information passed into the ancient world and maintained until the Middle Ages.³ They were the first mathematicians and the way they treated the numbers had a degree of simplicity, consistency, and abstraction, which never was going to be surpassed.⁴ They appeared in the third millennium BC⁵ and for the first time they were led to a global synthesis of the information they held, making the vision of unification of knowledge possible. Henceforth, they are the inspirers of every similar effort. They lived in the land of the Sumerians and the Accadians, making Babylon the home of the ancient wisdom. Their language was probably Acadian, from which the Babylonian, Assyrian and other languages derived, but maybe they expressed themselves in Sumerian, which differs in the verbal roots, the suffixes and prefixes, as an “Asianic” language.⁶

In Classical Antiquity, the name “Chaldeans” primarily stood for the priests of the Babylonian temples. The Greek historian Diodorus Siculus compared them with the Egyptian priests.⁷ Since the word “Chaldean” used for members not only of the Babylonian priesthood, but for all the Mesopotamian sages,⁸ soon enough it became a title of honor for the Greeks who studied in the Babylonian schools. In the era of the prophet Daniel, the word “Chaldean” meant “magic”, while it is mentioned that the magician Balthazar of Nebuchadnezzar II’s court was the “lord of the incantations” («ἄρχων τῶν ἐπαοιδῶν») and the interpreter of dreams.⁹ In Hellenistic times, the term “Chaldeos” was synonymous with the words “mathematician” and “astrologer”. However, in the Roman times the term had already acquired negative connotations.¹⁰ The Byzantines believed that the origins of magic and pagan religion went back to

³ M. Rutten, *La science des Chaldéens* (Paris 1970) 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵ This dating generally refers to the people who appeared in Mesopotamia in this period, in relation to the subsequent perception of the term “Chaldeans”, and should not be confused with the dating given by historians, around the 9th century BC, exclusively for a people with this name.

⁶ M. Rutten, *La science des Chaldéens*, op. cit., 13-15.

⁷ Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, A', 28, 1. Cf. A. Uzdavinys, “Chaldean Divination and the Ascent to Heaven,” in P. Curry-A. Voss (eds), *Seeing with Different Eyes: Essays in Astrology and Divination* (Newcastle 2007) 21.

⁸ Algis Uzdavinys, “Chaldean Divination and the Ascent to Heaven,” op. cit., 32.

⁹ Ammonius of Alexandria, *Fragmenta in Denielem*, P.G. 85, 1376A. Cf. A. Βακαλούδη, *Η μαγεία ως κοινωνικό φαινόμενο στο πρώιμο Βυζάντιο (4^{ος} -7^{ος} αι. μ. Χ.)* (Αθήνα 2001) 55 note 75.

¹⁰ Cf. A. Uzdavinys, “Chaldean Divination and the Ascent to Heaven,” op. cit., 21 and 32, note 4.

Africa, and the tribes founded by the sons of Noah, Ham (his tribe spread in Babylonia, Persia and India) and Japheth (his tribe spread in Greece).¹¹ In Byzantium dominated the view that there are not all people able to communicate with supernatural forces. Thus, they believed that there are some chosen nations, like the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Jews, and the Persians, which are loved by the spirits. The reason for this love is that these nations were on earth when the demons lived here. The Byzantines did not separate the kinds of religions of these peoples, but they considered them “creators of statues, interpreters, and participants in mysteries” («ποιηταὶ ἀγαλμάτων καὶ ἐξηγηταὶ καὶ τελεσταὶ μυστηρίων»)¹² From the *Old Testament* it was known that Abraham traveled up and down Mesopotamia, Canaan, and Egypt. However, the view prevailed that the Biblical Patriarchs were not descendants from the land of Canaan. In *Genesis* it is written that Abraham came from the Ur of the Chaldeans.¹³ The Christians did not consider Abraham as a magician and an astrologer, but as a true astronomer and an augur under the guidance of God.¹⁴ From a point after on, the term “Chaldeos” became synonymous with the diviner and the sorcerer, the one who practices the occult sciences. The Church Father John Chrysostom (349–407) complained that the Babylonians practiced debauchery and black magic.¹⁵ In the 11th century, the Byzantine scholar Michael Psellos, during his controversy with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Michael I Cerularius (1000–1059), accused his opponent of “Hellenism and Chaldaism” («ἐπ’ ἑλληνισμῶ καὶ χαλδαϊσμῶ»)¹⁶ Generally speaking, the name “Chaldeans” had a prestige, but it was connected with magic and quackery during the Middle Ages.¹⁷

The verses of the *Chaldean Oracles* do not directly originate from the ancient Chaldea. It is well known that they were written in the 2 century AD during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. The sources refer to two Juliani, father and son, as writers, under the names “Chaldean” and “Theurgist” respectively, who practiced the magical arts to gain contact with the divine. Probably, the *Chaldean Oracles* were created through the

¹¹ A. Βακαλούδη, *Η μαγεία ως κοινωνικό φαινόμενο*, op. cit., 46.

¹² A. Βακαλούδη, *Η μαγεία ως κοινωνικό φαινόμενο*, op. cit., 46, note 7.

¹³ C. F. Mariottini, “Ur and Haran: Abraham’s Background,” *Biblical Illustrator* 27/1 (Fall 1997) 50-53.

¹⁴ A. Βακαλούδη, *Η μαγεία ως κοινωνικό φαινόμενο*, op. cit., 55.

¹⁵ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on First Corinthians*, Homily ΜΔ’, P.G. 61, 413. Cf. A. Βακαλούδη, *Η μαγεία ως κοινωνικό φαινόμενο*, op. cit., 55-56 and note 76.

¹⁶ Β. Τατάκης, *Η Βυζαντινή Φιλοσοφία* (Αθήνα 1997) 166.

¹⁷ M. Rutten, *La science des Chaldéens*, op. cit., 5.

theurgic technique practiced by mediums (channeling), a form of spiritualism. The later is found in the Babylonian prophecy and the ecstasy of the Assyrian followers of Ishtar and Hecate. The *Chaldean Oracles* influenced the Neo-Platonism, because the latter had already partly accepted the dogma of Zoroastrian dualism in the 2nd century AD. The Middle-Platonist philosopher Numenius, who influenced the early formation of the Neo-Platonism, and lived in the city of Apamea,¹⁸ was a radical dualist. Searching for the direct revelation of truth, Numenius was of the opinion that there is a harmonious relation of Platonists, Pythagoreans, Brahmans, Jews, Persians and Egyptians,¹⁹ and he was favorably disposed to accept the *Chaldean Oracles*. Also, the teacher of Plotinus, Ammonius Sakkas, who is credited with the first teaching of Neo-Platonic doctrines, had awakened the interest of his students in Zoroastrianism. Thus, Plotinus decided to travel to Persia, and to learn the doctrines of the sages of this country. Moreover, Origen, a student of Ammonius (questionable whether he was the Christian Origen or another Platonic Origen), reproduced the doctrines of the Zoroastrians in his work *On Daemons*,²⁰ and a third student, Antoninus, cites a Persian doctrine for the cognitive principles.²¹ Porphyry, Plotinus's favorite student, was aware of the *Chaldean Oracles*, and supplied them with comments – which have not survived – in which he tried to harmonize the Chaldean wisdom with the teachings of Neo-Platonism.²² Iamblichus, another Neo-Platonist, considered *Chaldean Oracles* particularly significant and he was the author of a now lost commentary on them. In his work *On the Egyptian Mysteries*, he described the means of union with God,²³ and raised the *Chaldean Oracles* to supreme authority. He believed that the latter surpassed the works of Plato. Actually, he did think that the *Chaldean Oracles* really convey “the

¹⁸ J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists. 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca/New York 1996) 361.

¹⁹ É. d. Places, Numénius, *Fragments* (Paris 1973) fr. II. Cf. Ἰάμβλιχος, *Περὶ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων μυστηρίων* (Θεσσαλονίκη 2005) 519, note 9.

²⁰ Πορφύριου, *Περὶ τοῦ Πλωτίνου Βίου καὶ τῆς τάξεως τῶν βιβλίων αὐτοῦ* (Αθήναι 1991) 3.31.

²¹ Antoninos and not Antonius as Hans Lewy erroneously writes in *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy. Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in Late Roman Empire* (Paris 2011) 395-4 and note 301. Cf. Πρόκλου, *Εἰς τὸν Τίμαιον Πλάτωνος* II.154.9: Ernst Diehl (ed.), *In Platonis Timeum Commentaria* (Leipzig 1903, Amsterdam 1965).

²² R. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London 1972) 105-6.

²³ A. Sheppard, “Proclus’ Attitude to Theurgy,” *The Classical Quarterly* 32/1 (1982) 212. This position is strengthened from the passage of Damascus, in his commentary *Εἰς Φαίδωνα*, Leendert Gerrit Westernink (ed.), *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo: Damascius* (Amsterdam 1977) 172: «οἱ μὲν τὴν φιλοσοφίαν προτιμῶσιν, ὡς Πορφύριος καὶ Πλωτίνος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ φιλόσοφοι· οἱ δὲ τὴν ἱερατικὴν, ὡς Ἰάμβλιχος καὶ Συριανὸς καὶ Πρόκλος καὶ οἱ ἱερατικοὶ πάντες».

Assyrian ancestral doctrines” («τὰ Ασσυρίων πάτρια δόγματα»)²⁴. The philosophers of the School of Athens considered the *Chaldean Oracles* as works of theologians and the culmination of studies. Nevertheless, according to these philosophers, the student owed to approach the *Chaldean Oracles* only after careful research on the works of Aristotle and Plato.²⁵

Also, the connection of the *Chaldean Oracles* with the followers of Zoroaster – a religion spread in Mesopotamia in the 2nd millennium BC onwards – appeared in the literature of Antiquity and the Middle Ages. This connection can be found in the manuscripts of the Neo-Platonic scholar George Gemistos Plethon in the 15th century.²⁶ In these manuscripts there are comments on the *Chaldean Oracles* by Proclus and Michael Psellos. However, only the comments of the latter were completely maintained.²⁷ Plethon’s main objective was to acceptably present his theological otherness. Thus, he replaced the pagan deity Hecate with the person of Zoroaster, connecting the *Chaldean Oracles* with the asceticism of the Chaldeans. The introduction of Zoroaster in the history of Western Esotericism created a historical continuity of Theurgists from the ancient Chaldea or Persia until the Juliani, the Sufi mystic Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi,²⁸ and Plethon. Although this continuity cannot be confirmed as to the truth of its origin, eventually feed the stream of European magic until nowadays.²⁹

²⁴ Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* (Atlanta 2003) I.2 (p. 8).

²⁵ R. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, op. cit., 106.

²⁶ B. Tambrun-Krasker (Éd.-intr.-trad.-comm.), *Μαγικά λόγια τῶν ἀπὸ Ζωροάστρου μάγων. Γεωργίου Γεμιστοῦ Πλήθωνος. Ἐξήγησις εἰς τὰ αὐτὰ λόγια. Oracles Chaldaïques. Recension de Georges Gémiste Pléthon, La recension arabe des Μαγικά Λόγια par Michel Tardieu. Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi. Βυζαντινοὶ Φιλόσοφοι – Philosophi Byzantini (Ἀθήναι/Paris/Bruxelles 1995) 44.*

²⁷ Dylan Burns, “The Chaldean Oracles of Zoroaster, Hecate’s Couch, and Platonic Orientalism in Psellos and Plethon,” in *Aries* 6:2 (2006) 158-179, where the author presents convincing arguments for this position.

²⁸ Henri Corbin, and other modern scholars, supported the view that Islamic mysticism influenced the work of Plethon through the Sufi Suhrawardi (see S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages. Avicenna-Suhrawardi-Ibn ‘Arabi* (Delmar/New York 1997) 62), when the Byzantine scholar lived in Bursa or Hadrianopolis (Edirne), and studied with the Jew Elissaios, according to the writings of Scholarios. See W. G. Hanegraff, “The Pagan who came from the East: George Gemistos Plethon and Platonic Orientalism,” in W. Hanegraff-J. Pinenburg (eds), *Hermes in the Academy. Ten Years’ Study of Western Esotericism at the University of Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 2009) 33-49. It was further suggested that perhaps the mystic teacher Elissaios is identified with Sheikh Bedreddin. See N Siniosoglou, “Sect and Utopia in shifting empires: Plethon, Elissaios, Bedreddin,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 36/1 (2012) 38-55.

²⁹ For this general point, see J. Godwin, *The Golden Thread: The Ageless Wisdom of the Western Mystery Traditions* (Wheaton, Illinois 2007) 8. The author refers the view of the eighteenth-century Platonist and

Despite all the above, the Chaldean magicians of Babylon cannot be identified *stricto sensu* with the creators of the *Chaldean Oracles*. Thus, the latter cannot be considered as a god given wisdom derived without interruption from the third millennium BC. Nevertheless, probably the *Chaldean Oracles* carry excerpts from the ancient Chaldean knowledge, the value of which was very important to be completely lost without a trace.³⁰ Some scholars considered the emphasis given to the *Chaldean Oracles* from the movement of Neo-Platonism as a gradual transition from philosophy to magic and religiosity.³¹ The answer to the question of God was necessary to be given as much with meditation and research, as through a revealed truth, complemented with the practical implementation of ritual (Mystery Religions). Thus, the choice of the *Chaldean Oracles* can be explained due to their religious impact and their relation with the internal composition of the Neo-platonic movement. The Neo-Platonists connected the *Chaldean Oracles* with the ancient Chaldeans, obtaining a prestige coming from the East and legitimizing their existence as bearers and successors of an ancient tradition.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE *CHALDEAN ORACLES*

The first god of the *Chaldean Oracles* is identified with the Paternal monad and it is supposed that he reigns silently from the abyss, from where he created the world with the Power and the Intelligence. The Power is usually identified with the Son, the central element, while the Intelligence is equivalent to Hecate. Hecate is the live fire, and is identified with the Soul of the World,³² a third god which has an intermediate position, separating and joining the two first hypostases, also called “Once and Twice beyond” («Ἄπαξ καὶ Δὶς ἑπέκεινα»). However, from the content of the fragmentary verses of the *Chaldean Oracles* it can sometimes be inferred that the Intelligence is the second demiurgic god and the Power is identified with Hecate. The first triad corresponds to the world of supramundane light and it is absolutely inconceivable and eternal.

translator Thomas Taylor, who believed that some of the *Chaldean Oracles* went back to the original Zoroaster.

³⁰ A. Uzdavinys, “Chaldean Divination,” op. cit., 21-2.

³¹ C. Zintzen, *Die Philosophie des Neuplatonismus*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (Darmstadt 1977) 391-426.

³² É. d. Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques. Avec un choix de Commentaires Anciens* (Paris 1971) 14.

The *Chaldean Oracles* attributed to Iynges, which are a kind of messengers or the thoughts of God, the same role that Plato attributed to demons. Furthermore, Iynges can be corresponded to the Platonic Ideas and they form a triad, along with the Maintainers («Συνοχεῖς») and the “Teletarches”. Demons may be good or bad or irrational. They appear during the ceremonies, having the ability to convert the soul. These mediating creatures live in the intelligible world and they are characterized by power and exceptional abilities.³³ This second triad is placed in the empyrean zone, having a beginning but not an end.

As regards the hypostasis of the Soul, it has a mediating and ascending role. When the Soul fell to the bodies, it was forced to become a slave of them. By descending to the bodies, it became captive of the matter, but without ceasing to be a fluid reality, maintaining a non-fallen part of it in the intelligible world. Ultimately, it is destined to reach the place of its origin, the heavenly vault, escaping from the oblivion of the sensible world. This return causes to the soul so great happiness that she is ravished. The soul during its ascent is divested of the earthly vestments («χιτώνας»), or spirits or vehicles, chanting the paean, and it achieves the salvation.³⁴ It lies to the soul to abandon the herd existence, which is subjected to Hemarmene. Its aim is the dominance of the passions and the rise with the help of Theurgy, which may even save the body, this mortal enclosure of “bitter matter” («πικρᾶς ὕλης»).³⁵ The upper region of the Soul is ethereal, encompassing the Noeric («Νοεροί»), the Cosmagogical («Κοσμοαγωγοί»), and the Relentless («Ἀμείλικτοι»). The importance of fire is highlighted here, as it is opposed to the material darkness.

Beneath the Soul there is the material world, where the Demiurge – who is called “Hypezokos” or the Flower of Fire – and the Mother Earth reign. Here the higher demons, the human souls, the elementary or lower demons (fiery, aerial, ethereal, and aquatic), and the evil demons have their dwelling. Finally, the underworld for the Chaldeans was the post-mortem world, located inside the earth. The underworld is the home of the sinful souls, which extend their sentences after death in a kind of first matter. In fact, this world corresponds to Tartarus.³⁶

³³ Ibid., 14.

³⁴ Ibid., 15.

³⁵ Ibid., 16.

³⁶ Ibid., 298.

A fundamental dualism between the material world and the world of the intelligence dominates in the theology of the *Chaldean Oracles*. Moreover, their demonology and their attribution of the cause of evil to matter imply pessimism about the human being. Thus, their cosmological dualism corresponds to an ethical attitude since the matter is identified with Hades and his demons. The oriental condemnation of the sensible world is obvious,³⁷ more than it is in the Neo-Platonic thought.³⁸ Furthermore, according to the *Chaldean Oracles* the descent and ascent of the Soul imply that it is not something stable, where the experiences are recorded, but a “wanderer of the metaphysical world” (in the Neo-Platonic sense).³⁹

THE ANCIENT CHALDEAN GOD AND THE NEO-PLATONIC ONE

The first principle according to Neo-Platonism, the One, has the position of a name that implies domination and power. Perhaps, it could be compared to the word “En” of the ancient Chaldeans and Babylonians, as in their cuneiform scripture means the Lord or the Priest.⁴⁰ There are many elements that lead us to believe that this homonymy is not just a coincidence. Originally the Babylonian word “En” attributed to the very high priest or priestess of a deity who protected a Sumerian city-state – position which involved political power. Perhaps, it was the original title of the leader of Uruk, one of the first cities in history. The word “En” was used even in the Amarna Letters of 1350 BC for the word Bêlu, while it was a formal salutation of Pharaoh, meaning “king”.⁴¹ Also, a name often given to the divine by the Babylonians is a

³⁷ H. Lewis, *The Chaldean Oracles*, op. cit., 390. He highlights: «the Chaldeans limit their “hylophobia” to the sublunar world, a point of decided difference from the Gnostics, who gave up the entire creation as a *massa perditionis*».

³⁸ *Enneads* II.9.8.22. Cf. Πλωτίνου, *Ἐννεάς Πρώτη* (Αθήναι 1994) 125 (*Enneads* I.8.3.4-7).

³⁹ W. R. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* 1 (New York 1968) 203.

⁴⁰ R. Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon* (Münster 2003) nr. 164. Ut 12097. Cf. F. Lenormant, *Chaldean Magic its Origin and Development* (2010) 15, where it is noted that the word: ên is an ideogram with a complex character formed of the sign “su”, which represents the idea of “gathering” and “cohibition”, and the sign “an”, god”. Lenormant concludes that the formation of this character proceeds from an *dea* analogous to that of the “gods’ necessities” («θεῶν ἀνάγκαι») of the Neo-platonic Theurgy. Cf. Ἰάμβλιχος, *Περὶ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων μυστηρίων*, op. cit., I.14

⁴¹ W. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore/London 1992) 239, 307, 323. Some examples of letters which use the cuneiform writing “EN” is EA (for “El Amarna”) 152, EA 254, EA and 282. Usually it is used in the introduction of the letter, when it is addressed to Pharaoh, and calls him “King, my Lord”. This address is called Bêlu or Veli as well (*ibid.*, 144, note 7). Also, Baal is sometimes identified with the Adad (*ibid.*, 386).

circumlocution with the prefix “En”: En-lil (master of storm), En-Zu (lord of knowledge). Also, En-lil was the god of the waters of the Abyss, which is written in Sumerian En-Ki, having also as a component the word “En”. The symbolism of this god derived from the Sumerian-Akkadian mythology and cosmology, according to which the earth had the form of a plateau that once sank into the abyss of waters.⁴² The son of this god, the Marduk, was represented by the “solar bull”, and he dominated in the Babylonian pantheon of the second millennium.⁴³

The Neo-Platonist philosopher Damascius (6th century AD) has noted that the Babylonians knew that there was a single authority for all that is the One.⁴⁴ Also, the Neo-Platonist philosopher Proclus in his *Commentary on Parmenides* (Ἑπόμνημα εἰς Παρμενίδην) supported the view that the Chaldeans (the true theologians) called the first principle Ad, which meant “one”, and Adad, which meant “one-one”.⁴⁵ The Once beyond («Ἄπαξ ἐπέκεινα»),⁴⁶ the first principle of the *Chaldean Oracles*, goes back to Ad, while the god Adad was equivalent to Twice beyond («Δίς ἐπέκεινα»),⁴⁷ the creator of the intelligible world. The word Adad is connected with the Assyrians, in a passage of Macrobius (early fifth century AD), where it is emphasized that these people worshiped the power of the sun, which they linked to the highest and greatest god (summum maxime), called Adad.⁴⁸ The word Adad or for the accuracy Addu, is one of the fifty names given to Marduk, in the ancient Babylonian epic *Enûma Eliš*, and the link between Marduk and the sun is plausible in the interpretation of his name as Māri

⁴² G. Contenau, *La Magie chez les Assyriens et les Babyloniens* (Paris 1947) 59-60.

⁴³ A. George (transl.), *Epic of Gilgamesh. The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian* (London 1999) 224.

⁴⁴ S. A. Rappe (transl.), *Damascius' problems and solutions concerning first principles* (Oxford 2010) 418 and note 99.

⁴⁵ S. Dalley-A. T. Reyes, “Mesopotamian Contact and Influence in the Greek World,” in Stephanie Dalley (ed.), *The Legacy of Mesopotamia* (Oxford 1998) 85-124. Πρβλ. R. Klibansky-C. Labowsky, *Plato Latinus 3 Parmenides usque ad finem primae hypothesis nec non Procli Commentarium in Parmenidem, pars ultima adhuc inedita interprete Guillelmo de Moerbeka* (London 1953) 274.

⁴⁶ É. d. Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques*, fr. 5-6.

⁴⁷ The Once beyond is identified with the Monad in the *Chaldean Oracles*. See R. Majercik, “Chaldean Triads in Neo-Platonic exegesis: some reconsiderations,” *The Classical Quarterly* 51/1 (2001) 274.

⁴⁸ Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1/1-2, R. A. Kaster (ed.) (Harvard 2011) 304. Cf. R. Klibansky-C. Labowky, *Plato Latinus*, op. cit., 95 and P. Talon, “Enûma Eliš and the Transmission of Babylonian Cosmology to the West,” R. M. Whiting (ed.), *Melammu Symposia 2. Mythology and Mythologies. Methodological Approaches to Intercultural Influences. Proceedings of the Second Annual Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project* (Paris 1999) 274-5.

Utu, son of the Sun.⁴⁹ In addition, Marduk is equated with the god Aššur, so called in many Assyrian and Babylonian texts. The god Aššur is also written Aš which means “the One”.⁵⁰

Also, the god Adad was at top of the pantheon of many Syrian cities, where he was commonly called Bel. In Apamea of Syria, the Chaldeans were identified with the hieratic class of the religion of Bel, who corresponds to the Greek god Zeus. An inscription from the Roman Palmyra mentions the word KLDY, which reads as “Chaldeans”. But also a Greek inscription on an altar of Apamea from some Sextus Varius Marcellus, which refers to the “logia in Apamea”, is considered to be related to the *Chaldean Oracles*.⁵¹ In Apamea lived Amelius, the disciple of Plotinus and Iamblichus, who continued the tradition of the *Chaldean Oracles*.⁵²

The phenomenon of the syncretism of goddesses was common in antiquity. A god could have more than one name, even if this is confusing at least to us. Damascius refers that the “Twice beyond” («Δίς ἐπέκεινα») that is the Demiurge God, exists as completeness and the source of all beings, and he is called Zeus. This god is equivalent to the universal principle or hypostasis, which produces all other hypostases.⁵³ According to Damascius, there is an ambiguity between the primary hypostasis and those derived from it, even if all are called with the same name. Thus, there is a diffusion of one hypostasis to another since they are interdependent and are subjected to the first hypostasis. The three hypostases of the primary triad were named with the same or different names, as the god Aššur was illustrated with more than one wings and forms.⁵⁴

The ancient Babylonians had a wide pantheon and a special attachment to the names of their deities. They believed that by the use of their names, the gods interfere, making the magical-religious practices to be successful. If one possessed the true name of God, it was believed that he could influence the God himself.⁵⁵ The same happened

⁴⁹ W. C. Lambert-S. B. Parker, *Enûma Eliš. The Babylonian Epic of Creation* (Oxford 1966) 101-102.

⁵⁰ S. Parpola, “The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52/3 (July 1993) 206.

⁵¹ P. Athanassiadi, “The Chaldean Oracles: Theology and Theurgy,” in P. Athanassiadi – M. Frede (ed.), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 1999) 155.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 156.

⁵³ S. A. Rappe (transl.), *Damascius' problems and solutions concerning first principles*, 315.

⁵⁴ P. Talon, “Enûma Eliš and the Transmission of Babylonian Cosmology to the West,” *op. cit.*, 275.

⁵⁵ G. Contenau, *La Magie chez les Assyriens et les Babyloniens*, *op. cit.*, 135-137.

with regard to the gods Isis and Osiris. The Egyptians considered that the “name” (ren) has a significant relationship with what it was named. The essence of a god, a human being or a sensible thing, was contained in its name. The Egyptian sacred names had a theurgic power that could reveal the divine reality.⁵⁶ This syncretism of the names of the deities, on the one hand seems to support the view of a “theological koine” between the peoples⁵⁷ in the ancient world, and on the other hand indicates the obvious indeterminacy of the divine level.

The ancient Chaldeans considered the true name of God as much unspeakable and ineffable, as unapproachable was the divine level itself. Equally, the Neo-Platonists viewed the first principle as ineffable and unapproachable through the knowledge; the only approach to it was through the mystical experience. Also, the indefinite and numeric name given to the first principle implies its nameless nature. Plotinus himself stated that we do not find the true, but the potential name of the first principle.⁵⁸

ADDITIONAL POINTS OF CONVERGENCE BETWEEN CHALDAISM AND NEO-PLATONISM

It is a plausible conjecture, that the philosopher Plotinus was aware of the Babylonian doctrines, because of his journey to Persia, following the campaign of the Emperor Gordian.⁵⁹ If Plotinus actually talked to the representatives of the Babylonian people, he would have heard them mention the name “En” for their rulers and their priests and as a prefix for their gods. Thus, he would be related with the Chaldean doctrines not only through his successors, who commented on the *Chaldean Oracles* and link them to Theurgy, but more directly, as a hearsay witness of the ancient tradition. If Plotinus had some Chaldean knowledge, as much as he did not keep secret the teachings of Ammonius Sakkas,⁶⁰ as he would include this information in his oral teaching – although there is little literary evidence, which could lead to such a conclusion.⁶¹ Moreover, it is believed that his student Amelius Gentilianus, previously

⁵⁶ A. Uždavinys, *Philosophy as a Rite of Rebirth. From Ancient Egypt to Neo-Platonism* (Wiltshire 2008) 204 and 316. Cf. J. Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt. History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs* (Cambridge/Massachusetts and London 2002) 57 and 71.

⁵⁷ P. Athanasiadi, “The Chaldean Oracles: Theology and Theurgy,” op. cit., 177-182.

⁵⁸ *Enneads* V.3.13.1-7

⁵⁹ Πορφύριος, *Περὶ τοῦ Πλωτίνου Βίου*, op. cit., 3.15-22.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.25-38 and 4.10-16.

⁶¹ The only reference that Plotinus was aware of the *Chaldean Oracles* is found in the work of Michael Psellos (*Patrologia Graeca* 122, 1125d1-2. Cf. É. d. Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques*, op. cit., 165), and regards the

a student of Numenius from Apamea in Syria, returned again in this city,⁶² attracted by the cult of the god Baal, before the bishop Marcellus destroyed the temple in 380 AD.⁶³

As Porphyry noted in *On the Life of Plotinus* (Περὶ τοῦ Πλωτίνου Βίου), his teacher did not often visited temples and religious rites.⁶⁴ Plotinus' personal experience suggests that he aimed for directness, which the participation in temples and rites could not ensure. Nevertheless, he compared the mystical union with a man who enters into a sanctuary and leaves behind the statues in the outer shrine, so as the initiate to see and to become in ecstasy with the divine.⁶⁵ Thus, he said that a wise priest, who understands the truth of mystery, may make the contemplation real by entering the sanctuary. But even if he has not been there, and thinks that this sanctuary is something invisible, and the source and the principle, he will know that he sees principle by principle and that the similar is united with the similar.⁶⁶ The goal is to capture the divine, which is reflected in the soul and the mind.

Chaldean's theory of ascension implies a union of the initiative with the divine. In *Chaldean Oracles* the ascension is guided by the goddess Hecate, who leads to the first principle. The Chaldeans, the Neo-Platonists, and other sects and groups shared the widespread belief that the stars are deities.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the ancient Chaldeans were considered the founders of astrology. Even the Theurgists considered the process of

beginning of the rudimentary treatise of the *Enneads* I.9: «μὴ ἐξάξεις, ἵνα μὴ ἐξίῃ ἔχουσα τι» (you shall not take out your soul, so that it not goes having something). The following text is very contradictory and it is difficult to be reconstructed. E. R. Dodds (*The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1951) 301, note 26) concluded that it could not have come from hexameter verse. However, most likely is that Plotinus actually had in mind the Chaldean verses, and Psellos' information is correct (See Πλωτίνου, *Ἐννεάς Πρώτη*, op. cit., 317-8. Cf. especially the argumentation by J. F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul* (Chico/California 1985) 8 and note 10).

⁶² Πορφύριος, *Περὶ τοῦ Πλωτίνου Βίου*, op. cit., 19.20-32.

⁶³ P. Athanasiadi, "The Chaldean Oracles: Theology and Theurgy," op. cit., 156.

⁶⁴ With the exception of the invocation in the Iseum according to the testimony of Porphyry (Περὶ τοῦ Πλωτίνου Βίου, op. cit., 10). When Amelios invited Plotinus to the festival of the new moon, the latter refused, giving his famous answer: «the gods ought to come to me, not I to go to them».

⁶⁵ *Enneads* VI.9.11.18-25.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, VI.9.11.28-33. Actually, Zeke Mazur presented Plotinus' mysticism as an inner magic and Theurgy. See "Unio Magica, Part 1: On the Magical Origins of Plotinus' Mysticism," *Dionysius* 21 (2003) 23-52 and "Unio Magica, Part 2: Plotinus, Theurgy, and the Question of Ritual," *Dionysius* 22 (2004) 29-56.

⁶⁷ "Gods Emperors" («Θεοὺς αὐτοκράτορας»), as Philo of Alexandria called them (see *De specialibus legibus* - Περὶ τῶν ἐν μέρει διαταγμάτων I.13).

ascension as a journey to the skies through the magic-religious acts. For the Chaldeans, the stars are self-willed divine beings in the skies and are affected by the theurgic ceremonies to satisfy the human desires.⁶⁸ According to the Neo-Platonists, the soul was initially embarked on the illuminated cosmic boat of the sky for descending into the world of senses.⁶⁹ Next, it followed the spinning of the cosmic spindle and it boarded an individual boat,⁷⁰ which defined its fate in the world.⁷¹ By boarding its “vehicle”, the soul would be exposed to the environmental influences and the inevitability of fate.⁷² Eventually, it would be renounced its corporeality, which in no way could by nature to accept it forever.⁷³ The soul is incorporeal and immaterial, and as a substance and a hypostasis does not communicate itself with the body. It is the energy of the soul that makes the bodies to move and to act. The incorporeal entities vitalize the bodies through their actions.⁷⁴ In the Neo-Platonic metaphysical system there are not only the human souls, but the “greater kinds” («κρείττονα γένη»), i.e. gods, angels, archangels, demons, and heroes as well.⁷⁵ The souls of all these beings move in an intermediary space between the earthly and the unearthly place. Nevertheless, some Neo-Platonists believed that the soul does not fall as a whole into the bodies, so as to derive more power for its metempsychosis and for its astral

⁶⁸ Πλωτίνου, *Ἐννεάς Δευτέρα* (Αθήνα 1997) 223.

⁶⁹ Plato in the myth of the *Republic* likened the cosmic boat to the hypozōmata (undergirding) of triremes. See Plato, *Republic*, 616c 3. It is an image similar to that of God as ruler of the universe. See Numenius, *Fragments*, É. d. Places (ed.), (Paris 1973) fr. 18 (p. 58).

⁷⁰ Evolution of the vehicle of the Platonic *Timaeus* (41e1-2).

⁷¹ Perhaps we can trace here an impact of the Egyptian doctrine of the “boat of the soul”. See Πλωτίνου, *Ἐννεάς Τρίτη* (Αθήνα 2004) 404.

⁷² See *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Timaeus I/1: Proclus on the Socratic State of Atlantis* (Cambridge 2006) 96, 98, 207, 209, 235, 240 – *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Timaeus II/2: Proclus on the Causes of the Cosmos and its Creation* (Cambridge 2008) 155 – *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Timaeus III/3 Proclus on the World's Body* (Cambridge 2007) 23, 45, 59, 114, 129, 141, and 145.

⁷³ The interpretation of the passage IV.3.24 of the *Enneads* by Ioan Couliano is not correct (*Expériences de l'extase: Extase, ascension et récit visionnaire de l'hellénisme au Moyen Age* (Paris 1984), since Plotinus does not claim that the soul in its ascent does not need the astral body, but that by its nature it is destined to divest itself of corporeality.

⁷⁴ By this division Porphyry was placed between Plotinus' view that the upper part of the soul does not descend into the bodies, and Proclus' view that the whole soul descends into the earthly world. His thought will eventually influence the work of Iamblichus, who considered the soul-vehicle as a median between the rational soul and the body. See M. Zambon, “Le significato filosofico della dottrina dell'ochêma dell'anima,” in R. Chiaradonna (ed.), *Studi sull'anima in Plotino* (Naples 2005) 305-337.

⁷⁵ J. F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle*, op. cit., 39.

journey.⁷⁶ In any case, the human being keeps the possibility of freedom hoping to return to the divine kingdom.

Ancient Chaldeans' magical practices consisted of a formula and of specific acts, which properly repeated in a ritual.⁷⁷ Babylonians, Egyptians, and Neo-Platonists attempted to give names to the divine, based on the theory of sympathy and the panpsychism, according to which the heaven is reflected on the earth: every action here has implications in the upper world,⁷⁸ the stars and the supernatural beings. Neo-Platonists used various theurgic objects, which they connected to the metaphysical level. In Neo-Platonic Theurgy the objects have symbolic meanings, they are cosmic tools.⁷⁹ These objects symbolized the deities of the world beyond, where the initiate's soul intended to travel. The doctrine of sympathy of all things goes back to the Chaldeans and is related to the Neo-Platonists, who mainly drew from the pantheistic conception of nature and the determinism of the Stoics.⁸⁰

Chaldean magician's instrument of knowledge is extended outwardly in order to receive the divine light. The Chaldean and the Theurgist used the fire, aiming at the attraction upward during the initiation ceremony. Sometimes the fire is identified with the god himself that is the Paternal Monad of the *Chaldean Oracles*, which affected the initiated. The mysterious power of the fire, which the second god creator carries to the sun, gives light to the planets. Thus, the initiate becomes part of the harmony of the whole; he is connected with the secret ray of god and the repetitive rotation of the sun. In ancient Babylonian and Hellenistic theology, the sun has a special role, it

⁷⁶ *Enneads* VI.8.7.1-2. For Plotinus the higher self of man remains unaffected from the influences of both the world of becoming and of any attempt to be damaged due to magical practices. Even the influence of the stars does not affect the superior soul of man, which always remains high near the Intelligence and does not fall down here. This means that man is prepared to rise through the hypostases to the beginning of all beings, the One. Conversely, according to Proclus, it is the whole soul which falls into the world of bodies. See Proclus, *The Elements of Theology* (Oxford 1963) 309. This is not because of Proclus' pessimism, but because the soul has to use all of its powers to rise again through the stellar road to the intelligible kingdom. Thus, a larger responsibility and freedom is attributed to man in relation to the earlier Neo-Platonism of Plotinus. Cf. T. Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists. A Study in the history of Hellenism* (New York 1970) 180.

⁷⁷ G. Contenau, *La Magie chez les Assyriens et le Babyloniens*, op. cit., 127.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 154. Cf. M. Eliade, *Cosmologie et Alchimie Babyloniennes* (Paris 1991) 24-29.

⁷⁹ M. Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas. From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries* 1 (London 1979) 61-2. Cf. G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul. The Neo-Platonism of Iamblichus* (Pennsylvania 1995) 28 sq.

⁸⁰ F. Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans* (New York/ London 1912) 32, 40.

approaches the divine kingdom. According to the *Chaldean Oracles* the sun is the heart of the world, the generator of life. Its rays clean the soul of the initiate, making him to join with the primary light.⁸¹

The Neo-Platonists extensively used the image of light, to the point of developing an aesthetic of light. Furthermore, they often linked the One as Good to the sun, which spreads its rays to the world. The Neo-Platonic philosophy led to a vision of the divine level by using logical categories, concepts and many poetic images. The Chaldeans Theurgists used magic names, “sunthēmata” and “symbols” to influence the divine.⁸² Nevertheless, an identification of the seeing subject with the seen object was presupposed to achieve the vision of the One as an illumination of the soul. In this way a higher totality can be formed. The Chaldeans believed in an outside illumination of the human being based on rites, while the Neo-Platonists mainly believed in an internalization of the light. Nevertheless, both ultimately aimed at transforming the body, the soul and the spirit through a process of perfection.

However, the Neo-Platonists indeed believed that the soul returns to the One and to the blessedness of the paradise of souls through Theurgy. Similarly, the ancient Chaldeans considered that the return of the soul to the god En-Ki is signified by the repetition of the mythical time of Origins⁸³. The main mystery for the Chaldeans and the Neo-Platonists was the immortalization or ascend.⁸⁴ The true purpose of the initiation was the rebirth of the soul through its journey in an invisible realm inhabited by spiritual beings. The neophyte, who achieved the ultimate initiation of the mystery, surpassed the world of necessity, which governs humanity; he rises to the first principle and gains immortality.⁸⁵

The comparison of the Neo-Platonism with the Chaldean wisdom and practice does not necessarily imply the knowledge of the ancient Chaldean doctrines and ceremonies – a statement that cannot be proved true or false with certainty. Nevertheless, by suggesting the similarities between them, it becomes clear why the disciples and successors of Plotinus adopted the *Chaldean Oracles*. The main reason was

⁸¹ H. Lewis, *Chaldean Oracles*, op. cit., 409-410.

⁸² R. D. Majercik, *Chaldean Oracles: text, translation and commentary* (Leiden 1989) 215.

⁸³ M. Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, op. cit., 58.

⁸⁴ This mystery is not adequately described. See Eric Robertson Dodds, “New Light on the Chaldean Oracles,” in H. Lewis, *Chaldean Oracles*, op. cit., 698.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 213.

to contrast as much as possible strongly and equally the Christianity and the mystery cults of the Late Antiquity. Thus, they forced to supplement the philosophy of the founder of Neo-Platonism with the practical dimension of spiritual experience. Nevertheless, the practical aspect of spirituality could not be followed, if Plotinus did not express his mystical experience in a context that required the integration of many ancient teachings. Among the latter, there are three main tenets: a) the division of hypostases, b) the extensive demonology – Plotinus wrote the treatise “On our allotted guardian spirit” (Περὶ τοῦ Εἰληχότου ἡμᾶς δαίμονος, III.4), identifying the demons’ dwelling space at the levels of Soul and matter – and c) the description of the motion of the human soul in a downward and upward path between the stars.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the highlighting of elements that connect the ancient Chaldeans with the *Chaldean Oracles* and the Neo-Platonism became clear that: a) this connection is neither necessary nor plausible, b) the reasons for which the Neo-Platonists traced their philosophy to the Chaldeans of Babylon was first, the prestige the latter had acquired in Classical and Hellenistic Antiquity, before their name to be identified with quackery and witchcraft during the early Middle Ages, and second – as a consequence of the first – the fact that the Eastern philosophy and religion were fashionable in Late Antiquity.

However, a consequence of the above is the not altogether hypothetical conclusion that some nuggets of religion of the Eastern peoples contemporary to the Neo-Platonists, and perhaps of the ancient Chaldeans, preserved in the hexameter verses of the *Chaldean Oracles*. Some arguments supporting this conclusion are: a) the similarity of the ancient cosmology and the division of Being in the *Chaldean Oracles* with the ancient Chaldean cosmology, b) the relevance of the magical practices of the ancient Chaldeans with the Neo-Platonic Theurgy, c) the “fear of matter” in *Chaldean Oracles*, as a result of an ascetic morality and a devaluation of the material world, which are similar to the Neo-Platonic placement of matter in the lower level of the axiological and ontological climax.

Nevertheless, there is a particularly significant element in support of the position that the Eastern Chaldean wisdom influenced the Neo-Platonism. This is the non-accidental homonymy of the first principle of Neo-Platonism (En=One) with the word “En” of the ancient Chaldeans and Babylonians since in their cuneiform writing

it means the Lord or the Priest, and it is used as the first part of many compound words for their gods, such as En-Lil (Lord of the Storm), En-Ki (deity of crafts, mischief, water, intelligence and creation) etc. The significance of this fact is accentuated by: a) the recognition by both sides of the indeterminacy of the first principle, which allowed the hope of ascending to the divine infinity, and the consequent possibility of the divine influence through the magical practices, and b) the existence of a “theological koine” of the Eastern Mediterranean peoples, which supported the syncretism of deities of different religions.

Moreover, although the knowledge of the *Chaldean Oracles* by the founder of Neo-Platonism is a controversial issue due to lack of sufficient philological and historical evidence, there are some elements that could support it. First, Plotinus’ journey to Persia as a follower of the Emperor Gordian and the relation of his student Amelius to Apamea in Syria – where the cult of the god Baal was worshiped – suggest that he was not completely unaware of the ancient Chaldean teachings. Second, though Plotinus did not participated often in religious ceremonies, he expressed his personal experience through the language of the mystery cults of his time. Moreover, Plotinus described the union of the initiate with the divine as an ascent to heaven through a bright cosmic ship, which corresponds to the astral ascent of the ancient Chaldeans and the *Chaldean Oracles*. According to the latter the goddess Hecate – equivalent to the Neo-Platonic hypostasis of Soul – mediates so as the ascent through a vehicle to be accomplished. Third, the light symbolism in the *Enneads* is particularly significant since it is used as an illustration of the Good or the One. Similarly, the light symbolism is frequently mentioned in the *Chaldean Oracles*. According to the latter the light through the Creator God moved into the sun, illuminating the Earth’s surface and guiding the divine path of the mystic. Also, the Chaldean magician used the fire as a symbol of the divine light in the ceremonies. Fourth, in the thought of Plotinus and in that of his followers, there is an Underworld, where the souls are punished. Moreover, the Neo-Platonists accepted the existence of an intelligible place of the blessed gods.⁸⁶ In the same way, according to the *Chaldean Oracles*, the Earth contains an interior world of postmortem punishment of the souls. However, the principal mystery of the *Chaldean Oracles* is the immortalization of the soul on its return to the higher realms beyond the Earth. Also, according to the ancient Babylonian and Chaldean beliefs,

⁸⁶ *Enneads* I.8.2.26, VI.7.35.38, III.5.9.39.

there is an Underworld, understood as a dark place of death, without punishments and rewards. Nevertheless, the soul in this life has a way out during the recurrence of religious actions and thoughts: this is the revival of the mythical time of the Origins and the ascent to the god En-Ki.

EPILOGUE

If we were going to give an epilogue to the subject of this paper, it would be related to a general historical significance. In other words, it should be pointed out that the successors and the heirs of the founder of Neo-Platonism will accomplish the step he did not make, which is an obvious and close connection of philosophy with religion. The spread of the Neo-Platonic Theurgy caused by the *Chaldean Oracles* is a witness and a proof of this connection. The closure of the Platonic Academy of Athens in 529 AD by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian closed a cycle of life and thought as well. The latter began with the first appearance of the mathematics, the Chaldeans, at the third millennium BC, who by their religious perceptions influenced the Neo-Platonic movement, especially through the *Chaldean Oracles*. This cycle was symbolically and essentially completed by the emigration of the last Neo-Platonists philosophers, who with their leader Damascius flee to Haran of Mesopotamia.⁸⁷ Thus, the representatives of the Neo-Platonism will find themselves once again near the source of Chaldaism, and generally the Eastern wisdom, which inoculated into the last phase of Greek philosophy.

⁸⁷ P. Chuvin, *Chronique des derniers païens* (Paris 1990) 144.