

ETHNICAL SCRIPTURES.

CHALDÆAN ORACLES.

WE owe to that eminent benefactor of scholars and philosophers, the late Thomas Taylor, who, we hope, will not long want a biographer, the collection of the "Oracles of Zoroaster and the Theurgists," from which we extract all the sentences ascribed to Zoroaster, and a part of the remainder. We prefix a portion of Mr. Taylor's preface:—

"These remains of Chaldæan theology are not only venerable for their antiquity, but inestimably valuable for the unequalled sublimity of the doctrines they contain. They will doubtless, too, be held in the highest estimation by every liberal mind, when it is considered that some of them are the sources whence the sublime conceptions of Plato flowed, and that others are perfectly conformable to his most abstruse dogmas.

"I add, for the sake of those readers that are unacquainted with the scientific theology of the ancients, that as the highest principle of things is a nature truly ineffable and unknown, it is impossible that this visible world could have been produced by him without mediums; and this not through any impotency, but, on the contrary, through transcendency of power. For if he had produced all things without the agency of intermediate beings, all things must have been, like himself, ineffable and unknown. It is necessary, therefore, that there should be certain mighty powers between the supreme principle of things and us: for we, in reality, are nothing more than the dregs of the universe. These mighty powers, from their surpassing similitude to the first god, were very properly called by the ancients, gods; and were considered by them as perpetually subsisting in the most admirable and profound union with each other, and the first cause; yet so as amidst this union to preserve their own energy distinct from that of the highest god. For it would be absurd in the extreme, to allow that man has a peculiar energy of his own, and to deny that this is the case with the most exalted beings. Hence, as Proclus beautifully observes, the gods may be

compared to trees rooted in the earth: for as these, by their roots, are united with the earth, and become earthly in an eminent degree, without being earth itself; so the gods, by their summits, are profoundly united to the first cause, and by this means are transcendently similar to, without being the first cause.

"Lines, too, emanating from the centre of a circle, afford us a conspicuous image of the manner in which these mighty powers proceed from, and subsist in, the ineffable principle of things. For here, the lines are evidently things different from the centre, to which, at the same time, by their summits, they are exquisitely allied. And these summits, which are indescribably absorbed in the centre, are yet no parts (*i. e.* powers) of it: for the centre has a subsistence prior to them, as being their cause."

ORACLES OF ZOROASTER.

There is also a portion for the image (*a*) in the place (*b*) every way splendid.

Nor should you leave the dregs of matter (*c*) in the precipice (*d*).

Nor should you expel the soul from the body, lest in departing it retain something (*e*).

(*f*) Direct not your attention to the immense measures of the earth; for the plant of truth is not in the earth. Nor measure the dimensions of the sun, by means of collected rules; for it revolves by the eternal will of the Father, and not for our sake. Dismiss the sounding course of the moon; for it perpetually runs through the exertions of necessity. The advancing procession of the stars was not generated for your sake. The wide-spread aerial wing of birds, and the sections of victims and viscera are never true: but all these are mere puerile sports, the foundations

(*a*) That is, the irrational soul, which is the image of the rational.

(*b*) That is, the region above the moon.

(*c*) *i. e.* The human body.

(*d*) *i. e.* This terrestrial region.

(*e*) *i. e.* Lest it retain something of the more passive life.

(*f*) This oracle is conformable to what Plato says in his Republic, that a philosopher must astronomize above the heavens: that is to say, he must speculate the celestial orbs, as nothing more than images of forms in the intelligible world.

of mercantile deception. Fly from these, if you intend to open the sacred paradise of piety, where virtue, wisdom, and equity, are collected together.

Explore the river (*a*) of the soul, whence, or in what order, having become a servant to body, you may again rise to that order from which you flowed, uniting operation to sacred reason (*b*).

Verge not downward, a precipice lies under the earth, which draws through a descent of seven steps (*c*), and under which lies the throne of dire necessity.

You should never change barbarous names (*d*).

In a certain respect, the world possesses intellectual, inflexible sustainers (*e*).

Energize about the Hecatic sphere (*f*).

If you invoke *me* (*g*), all things will appear to you to be a lion. For neither will the convex bulk of heaven then be visible; the stars will not shine; the light of the moon will be concealed; the earth will not stand firm; but all things will be seen in thunder.

On all sides, with an unfigured (*h*) soul, extend the reins of fire.

O man, thou subtle production (*i*), that art of a bold nature!

In the left hand inward parts of Hecate (*j*) is the foun-

(*a*) *i. e.* The producing cause of the soul.

(*b*) By sacred reason, is meant the summit, or principal power of the soul, which Zoroaster, in another place, calls the flower of intellect.

(*c*) *i. e.* The orbs of the seven planets.

(*d*) For in every nation there are names of divine origin, and which possess an ineffable power in mystic operations.

(*e*) *i. e.* The fountal fathers, or intellectual gods. By *inflexible*, understand stable power.

(*f*) This sphere was of gold. In the middle of it there was a sapphire; and the sphere itself was turned round by means of a thong, made of the hide of an ox. It was likewise every where inscribed with characters; and the Chaldæans turning it round, made certain invocations. But it is called Hecatine, because dedicated to Hecate.

(*g*) By *me* is meant the fountain or cause of the celestial constellation called the lion.

(*h*) By *unfigured*, understand most simple and pure; and by the reins of fire, the unimpeded energy of the theurgic life of such a soul.

(*i*) Man is a *subtle* production, considered as the work of the *secret* art of divinity. But he is of a bold nature, as exploring things more excellent than himself.

(*j*) Hecate, according to the Chaldæans, is the centre of the intellectual gods: and they say, that in her right hand parts she contains the fountain of souls; and in her left, the fountain of the virtues.

tain of virtue, which wholly abides within, and does not emit its virginal nature.

When you behold a sacred fire (*a*) without form, shining with a leaping splendor through the profundities of the whole world, hear the voice of fire.

You should not invoke the self-conspicuous image of nature (*b*).

Nature persuades us that there are holy dæmons, and that the blossoms of depraved matter (*c*) are useful and good.

(*d*) The soul of mortals compels, in a certain respect, divinity into itself, possessing nothing mortal, and is wholly inebriated from deity; for it glories in the harmony (*e*) under which the mortal body subsists.

The immortal depth (*f*) of the soul should be the leader; but vehemently extend all your eyes (*g*) upwards.

You should not defile the spirit (*h*), nor give depth to a superficies.

Seek Paradise (*i*).

(*j*) The wild beasts of the earth shall inhabit thy vessel.

By extending a fiery intellect (*k*) to the work of piety, you will also preserve the flowing body.

From the bosom therefore of the earth, terrestrial dogs (*l*) leap forth, who never exhibit a true sign to mortal man.

The Father (*m*) perfected all things, and delivered them

(*a*) This oracle relates to the vision of divine light.

(*b*) *i. e.* The image, to be invoked in the mysteries, must be intelligible, and not sensible.

(*c*) By the blossoms of depraved matter, understand the dæmons called *Evil*; but which are not so essentially, but from their office.

(*d*) That is, the human soul, through its immortality and purity, becomes replete with a more excellent life, and divine illumination; and is, as it were, raised above itself.

(*e*) *i. e.* Unapparent and intelligible harmony.

(*f*) *i. e.* The summit or flower of its nature.

(*g*) *i. e.* All the gnostic powers of the soul.

(*h*) Understand by the *spirit*, the aerial vehicle of the soul; and by the *superficies*, the ethereal and lucid vehicle.

(*i*) The Chaldaic Paradise is the choir of divine powers about the Father of the universe; and the empyrean beauties of the demiurgic fountains.

(*j*) By the vessel is meant the composite temperature of the soul; and by the wild beasts of the earth, terrestrial dæmons. These, therefore, will reside in the soul which is replete with irrational affections.

(*k*) *i. e.* An intellect full of divine light.

(*l*) *i. e.* Material dæmons.

(*m*) *i. e.* Saturn.

to the second intellect (*a*) which the nations of men call the first.

The furies are the bonds of men (*b*).

The paternal intellect disseminated symbols (*c*) in souls.

(*d*) Those souls that leave the body with violence are the most pure.

The soul being a splendid fire, through the power of the father remains immortal, is the mistress (*e*) of life, and possesses many perfections of the bosoms of the world.

The Father did not hurl forth fear, but infused persuasion (*f*).

The Father (*g*) has hastily withdrawn himself, but has not shut up his proper fire, in his own intellectual power.

There is a certain intelligible (*h*) which it becomes you to understand with the flower of intellect.

The expelling powers (*i*) of the soul which cause her to respire, are of an unrestrained nature.

It becomes you to hasten to the light and the rays of the Father, whence a soul was imparted to you, invested with an abundance of intellect.

All things are the progeny of one fire (*j*).

(*k*) That which intellect says, it undoubtedly says by intellection.

(*a*) *i. e.* Jupiter.

(*b*) That is, the powers that punish guilty souls, bind them to their material passions, and in these, as it were, suffocate them; such punishment being finally the means of purification. Nor do these powers only afflict the vicious, but even such as convert themselves to an immaterial essence; for these, through their connection with matter, require a purification of this kind.

(*c*) That is, symbols of all the divine natures.

(*d*) This oracle praises a violent death, because the soul, in this case, is induced to hate the body, and rejoice in a liberation from it.

(*e*) The soul is the mistress of life, because it extends vital illuminations to the body, which is, of itself, destitute of life.

(*f*) That is, as divinity is not of a tyrannical nature, he draws every thing to himself by persuasion, and not by fear.

(*g*) That is, Saturn, the summit of the intellectual order, is perfectly separated from all connection with matter; but, at the same time, imparts his divinity to inferior natures.

(*h*) Meaning the intelligible, which immediately subsists after the highest God.

(*i*) That is, those powers of the soul which separate it from the body.

(*j*) That is, of one divine nature.

(*k*) That is, the voice of intellect is an intellectual, or, in other words, an immaterial and indivisible energy.

(a) Ha! ha! the earth from beneath bellows at these as far as to their children.

You should not increase your fate (b).

Nothing imperfect proceeds, according to a circular energy, from a paternal principle (c).

But the paternal intellect will not receive the will of the soul, till she has departed from oblivion (d); and has spoken the word, assuming the memory of her paternal sacred impression.

When you behold the terrestrial (e) dæmon approaching, vociferate and sacrifice the stone MNIZURIM.

Learn the intelligible, for it subsists beyond intellect (f).

The intelligible Iynges possess intellection themselves from the Father, so far as they energize intellectually, being moved by ineffable counsels.

He who knows himself, knows all things in himself, as Zoroaster first asserted, and afterwards Plato in the first Alcibiades. — *Pici Mirand, Op. tom. 1, p. 211.*

Since the soul perpetually runs, in a certain space of time it passes through all things, which circulation being accomplished, it is compelled to run back again through

(a) The meaning of the oracle is, that even the very children of the impious are destined to subterranean punishments; and this, with the greatest propriety; for those who, in a former life, have perpetrated similar crimes, become, through the wise administration of Providence, the members of one family.

(b) Fate is the full perfection of those divine illuminations which are received by Nature; but Providence is the immediate energy of deity. Hence, when we energize intellectually, we are under the dominion of Providence; but when corporeally, under that of Fate. The oracle, therefore, admonishes to withdraw ourselves from corporeal energy.

(c) For divinity is self-perfect; and the imperfect cannot proceed from the perfect.

(d) That is, till she has recovered her knowledge of the divine symbols, and sacred reasons, from which she is composed; the former of which she receives from the divine unities, and the latter from sacred ideas.

(e) Terrestrial dæmons are full of deceit, as being remote from divine knowledge, and replete with dark matter; he, therefore, who desires to receive any true information from one of these, must prepare an altar, and sacrifice the stone *Mnizurim*, which has the power of causing another greater dæmon to appear, who, approaching invisible to the material dæmon, will give a true answer to the proposed question; and this to the interrogator himself.

(f) The intelligible is twofold; one kind being coordinate with intellect, but the other being of a super-essential characteristic.

all things, and unfold the same web of generation in the world, according to Zoroaster; who is of opinion, that the same causes, on a time returning, the same effects will, in a similar manner, return.—*Ficin. de Immortal. Anim. p. 123.*

ORACLES BY THE THEURGISTS.

Our voluntary sorrows germinate in us as the growth of the particular life we lead.

On beholding yourself, fear.

Believe yourself to be above body, and you are.

Those robust souls perceive truth through themselves, and are of a more inventive nature; such a soul being saved through its own strength.

We should fly from the multitude of men going along in a herd.

The powers build up the body of a holy man.

Not knowing that every god is good, ye are fruitlessly vigilant.

Fiery hope should nourish you in the angelic region.

Ascending souls sing pæan.

To the persevering mortal the blessed immortals are swift.

All things are governed and subsist in faith, truth, and love.

The oracle says, Divinity is never so much turned away from man, and never so much sends him in novel paths, as when we make an ascent to the most divine of speculations or works, in a confused and disordered manner, and, as it adds, with unhallowed lips or unbathed feet. For, of those who are thus negligent, the progressions are imperfect, the impulses are vain, and the paths are blind.

The orders prior to Heaven possess mystic silence.

Every intellect apprehends deity.

The intelligible is food to that which understands.

You will not apprehend it by an intellectual energy as when understanding some particular thing.

It is not proper to understand that intelligible with vehemence, but with the extended flame of an extended intellect; a flame which measures all things, except that intelligible. But it is requisite to understand this. For if you incline your mind, you will understand it, though not vehe-

mently. It becomes you therefore, bringing with you the pure convertible eye of your soul, to extend the void intellect to the intelligible, that you may learn its nature, because it has a subsistence above intellect.

SAYINGS OF PYTHAGORAS AND OF THE PYTHAGOREANS.

Follow God.

All things are possible to the Gods.

Choose the most excellent life, and custom will make it pleasant.

This is the law of God, that virtue is the only thing that is strong.

Abstain from such things as are an impediment to prophecy, or to the purity and chastity of the soul, or to the habit of temperance or of virtue.

It is necessary to beget children, for it is necessary to leave those that may worship the Gods after us.

Other compacts are engraved in tables and pillars, but those with wives are inserted in children.

It is holy for a woman, after having been connected with her husband, to perform sacred rites on the same day, but this is never holy after she has been connected with any other man.

It is requisite to be silent, or to say something better than silence.

The possessions of friends are common.

The animal which is not naturally noxious to the human race should neither be injured nor slain.

Intoxication is the meditation of insanity.

The beginning is the half of the whole.

An oath should be taken religiously, since that which is behind is long.

Be sober, and remember to be disposed to believe, for these are the nerves of wisdom.

All the parts of human life, in the same manner as those of a statue, ought to be beautiful.

When the wise man opens his mouth, the beauties of his soul present themselves to the view, like the statues in a temple.