

# THE CHALDEAN MAGI

## According to Ancient Sources

### [HOMEPAGE](#)

[Ammianus Marcellinus](#), [Apuleius](#), [Arnobius](#), [Augustine](#), [Bardasenes](#), [Callisthenes](#), [Chaldean Oracles](#), [Clement of Alexandria](#), [Commodian](#), [Cosmas of Jerusalem](#), [Ctesias](#), [Damascius](#), [Derveni Papyrus](#), [Dio Chrysostom](#) [Diodorus of Sicily](#), [Diogenes Laertes](#), [Dionysius the Areopagite](#), [Dion Cassius](#), [Eudemus of Rhodes](#), [Duris](#), [Eunapius](#), [Eusebius](#), [Firmicus Maternus](#), [Gregory Nazianzus](#), [Herodotus](#), [Himerius](#), [Hippolytus](#), [Iamblichus](#), [Jerome](#), [Julian the Emperor](#), [Justin Martyr](#), [Lactantius Placidus](#), [Lampridius](#), [Lucian](#), [Martian](#), [Mithras Liturgy](#) [Nonnus](#), [Nonnus the Mythographer](#), [Origen](#), [Philo of Alexandria](#), [Philo of Byblos](#), [Pliny the Elder](#), [Plutarch](#), [Porphyry](#), [Proclus](#), [Prudentius](#), [Quintus Curtius](#), [Saint Basil](#), [Socrates](#), [Sozomen](#), [Strabo](#), [Tertullian](#), [Xenophon](#), [Zosimus of Panopolis](#),

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### [CHALDEAN MAGI](#)

The Chaldean Oracles, a work attributed to Zoroaster, were said to have been revealed to Julian the Theurgist, also known as the Chaldean. This work, of which only fragments are preserved, is a theosophical text in verse composed in the second century AD, that combined Platonic elements with others that were Persian or Babylonian. The Chaldean Oracles were regarded by the later Neoplatonists as a sacred text, sometimes, even above Plato himself. Proclus would have withdrawn all books from circulation except the Timaeus and the Chaldean Oracles, to prevent them from harming the uneducated. Referring to the Chaldean Oracles, the emperor Julian mentions the following, in what is generally regarded as one of his few allusions to the doctrine of the Mithraic Mysteries, "And if I should also touch on the secret teachings of the Mysteries in which the Chaldean, divinely frenzied, celebrated the God of the Seven Rays, that god through whom he lifts up the souls of men, I should be saying what is unintelligible, yea wholly unintelligible to the common herd, but familiar to the happy theurgists." (Hymn to the Magna Mater, 172D).

The doctrine of the Chaldean Oracles spoke of emanations from the Father, equated with fire, and of triadic entities. The highest entities mentioned in the Oracles are an absolutely transcendent First Paternal Intellect. A Second Demiurgic Intellect, proceeds from the Father and knows the cosmos as well as himself. Within the First Intellect, a female Power, Hecate, produces or is the mediating World-Soul. At the bottom end of the All lies Matter, made by the Demiurge. The world is a foul tomb and a form which the higher human soul must escape, shedding the lower soul's vehicle or garment, acquired during its descent through the stars and planets. Ascetic conduct and correct ritual will free the soul from the astrological confines of Fate, and defend it against the demonic powers who fill the realm between gods and mortals.

The theurgy of the Chaldean Oracles provided knowledge of the magical formulas to aid the soul on its ascent to union with the god. Some scholars claim that the theory of the passage of the soul through the seven heavens was known to Numenius, who transmitted it to Porphyry. Though, as Culianu as pointed out, in Psychanodia I: A Survey of the Evidence Concerning the Ascension of the Soul and Its Relevance, evidence is lacking, and while Porphyry certainly knew the doctrine, the principle testimonies come from Macrobius and Proclus. According to Proclus:

The vehicle of every particular soul descends by the addition of vestures increasingly material; and ascends in company with the soul through divestment of all that is material and recovery of its proper form, after the analogy of the soul which makes use of it: for the soul descends by the acquisition of irrational principles of life; and ascends by putting off all those faculties tending to temporal process with which it was invested in its descent, and becoming clean and bare of all such faculties as serve the uses of the process. (Elements of Theology, Proposition 209, quoted from Culianu, *Psychanodia*, p. 12.)

Though not considered magic, the theurgy of the Neoplatonists was essentially those procedures of Hellenistic magic. Its aim was that outlined in the Hermetic treatise, the *Asclepius*, that is, the incarnation of a divine power or spirit, either into a material object, such as a statue, or a human being, to bring the subject under a state of prophetic ecstasy. The practice was justified by the idea, first, that each part of the universe reflects every other part, and secondly, that the whole material world is the reflection of the invisible divine powers. Such that, resulting from the network of forces or sympathies linking image to archetype, manipulation of the appropriate material object that corresponds to a divine power, brings the theurgist into contact with it. The principle also justified the production of long lists of stones, plants, animals, expressing the power of the seven planets, and substantiated the belief that the sympathy linking all parts of the universe allowed the magician to attract the power of the divine spheres. (Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 107)

### **The Chaldean Oracles Attributed to Zoroaster**

#### **Eusebius. *Præparatio Evangelica* , Book 1, ch. 10.**

But God is He having the head of the Hawk. The same is the first, incorruptible, eternal, unbegotten, indivisible, dissimilar: the dispenser of all good; indestructible; the best of the good, the Wisest of the wise; He is the Father of Equity and Justice, self-taught, physical, perfect, and wise - He who inspires the Sacred Philosophy.

#### **Proclus. *Commentary on the Timaeus* , 244.**

Theurgists assert that He is a God and celebrate him as both older and younger, as a circulating and eternal God, as understanding the whole number of all things moving in the World, and moreover infinite through his power and energizing a spiral force.

#### **Anonymous.**

The God of the Universe, eternal, limitless, both young and old, having a spiral force.

#### **Proclus. *Theologiam Platonis* , 321.**

Hence the inscrutable God is called silent by the divine ones, and is said to consent with Mind, and to be known to human souls through the power of the Mind alone.

**Lydus. *De Mensibus*, , 83.**

The Chaldeans call the God Dionysos (or Bacchus), Iao in the Phoenician tongue (instead of the Intelligible Light), and he is also called Sabaoth, signifying that he is above the Seven poles, that is the Demiurgos.

**Proclus. *Theologiam Platonis*, , 212.**

Containing all things in the one summit of his own Hyparxis, He Himself subsists wholly beyond.

**Proclus. *Theologiam Platonis*, , 386.**

Measuring and bounding all things.

**Psellus, 38, Pletho.**

For nothing imperfect emanates from the Paternal Principle,

**Pletho.**

The Father effused not Fear, but He infused persuasion.

**Psellus, 30, Pletho, 33.**

The Father hath apprehended Himself and hath not restricted his Fire to his own intellectual power.

**Proclus. *Commentary on the Timaeus*, , 167.**

Such is the Mind which is energized before energy, while yet it had not gone forth, but abode in the Paternal Depth, and in the Adytum of God nourished silence.

**Psellus, 24; Pletho, 30.**

All things have issued from that one Fire. The Father perfected all things, and delivered them over to the Second Mind, whom all Nations of Men call the First.

**Damascius. *De Principiis* .**

The Second Mind conducts the Empyrean World.

**Psellus, 35.**

What the Intelligible saith, it saith by understanding.

**Proclus. *Theologiam Platonis*, , 365.**

Power is with them, but Mind is from Him.

**Proclus. *On the Cratylus of Plato* .**

The Mind of the Father riding on the subtle Guiders, which glitter with the tracings of inflexible and relentless Fire.

**Proclus. *Commentary on the Timaeus*, , 124.**

...After the Paternal Conception I the Soul reside, a heat animating all things. ...For he placed the Intelligible in the Soul, and the Soul in dull body, Even so the Father of Gods and Men placed them in us.

**Proclus. *Commentary on the Timaeus*, , 106.**

Natural works co-exist with the intellectual light of the Father. For it is the Soul which adorned the vast Heaven, and which adorneth it after the Father, but her dominion is established on high.

**Psellus, 28, Pletho, 11.**

The Soul, being a brilliant Fire, by the power of the Father remaineth immortal, and is Mistress of Life, and filleth up the many recesses of the bosom of the World.

**Proclus. *Politica*, , 329.**

The channels being intermixed therein she performeth the works of incorruptible Fire.

**Proclus. *Theologiam Platonis*, , 333, and *Tim.* , 157.**

For not in Matter did the Fire which is in the first beyond enclose His active Power, but in Mind; for the framer of the Fiery World is the Mind of Mind.

**Proclus. *On the Parmenides of Plato* .**

Who first sprang from Mind, clothing the one Fire with the other Fire, binding them together, that he might mingle the fountainous craters, while preserving unsullied the brilliance of His own Fire.

**Proclus. *Theologiam Platonis*, , 171 and 172.**

And thence a Fiery Whirlwind drawing down the brilliance of the flashing flame, penetrating the abysses of the Universe; for from thence downwards do all extend their wondrous rays.

**Proclus. *Euclidem*, , 27.**

The Monad first existed, and the Paternal Monad still subsists.

**Proclus. *Euclidem*, , 27.**

When the Monad is extended, the Dyad is generated.

**Damascius. *De Principiis* .**

Note that "What the Pythagoreans signify by Monad, Duad and Triad, or Plato by Bound, Infinite and Mixed; that the Oracles of the Gods intend by Hyparxis, Power and Energy."

**Proclus. *Theologiam Platonis*, , 376.**

And beside Him is seated the Dyad which glitters with intellectual sections, to govern all things, and to order everything not ordered.

**Proclus. *Parmen* .**

The Mind of the Father said that all things should be cut into Three, whose Will assented, and immediately all things were so divided.

**Proclus. *On the Timaeus of Plato* .**

The Mind of the Eternal Father said into Three, governing all things by Mind.

**Lydus. *De Mensibus* , 20.**

The Father mingled every Spirit from this Triad.

**Lydus. *De Mensibus* , 20.**

All things are supplied from the bosom of this Triad.

**Proclus. *I Alchibiades* .**

All things are governed and subsist in this Triad.

**Damascius. *De Principiis*.**

For thou most know that all things bow before the Three Supernals.

**Anonymous.**

[Source](#)

