



Planet Ages

The ages of the past, between the successive catastrophes, are called in many diverse sources “sun ages.” I have tried to show why this designation is meaningful.⁽¹⁾ But the ancients also maintained that the successive ages were initiated by planets: Moon, Saturn, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Mars. Therefore the sun-ages could also have been called planet ages.

Hesiod ascribed the Golden age to the time when the planet Saturn was ruling, and the Silver and Iron ages to the time of the planet Jupiter.⁽²⁾ The same concept is found in Vergil, who says that “before Jove’s day [i.e., in the Golden age when Saturn reigned] no tillers subdued the land—even to mark the field or divide it with bounds was unlawful.”⁽³⁾

The idea that the Earth was under the sway of different planets at different ages is also the teaching of the Pythagoreans, the Magi, Gnostic sects and other secret societies.

In numerous astrological texts the same concept is repeated, that seven millennia were dominated by seven planets, one after the other.⁽⁴⁾

The worshipers of the devil, the Syrian sect of the Yezidis, believed that seven thousand years had passed since the Deluge; at the end of every millennium one of the seven planet-gods descends on the earth, establishes a new order and new laws, and then retreats to his place.⁽⁵⁾

An identical tradition is found in the writings of Julius Africanus: the ages of the ancestors passed under the government of the planets, each in its turn.⁽⁶⁾ Also according to the Ethiopian text of the *First Book of Enoch*, the seven world-ages were each dominated by one planet.⁽⁷⁾

The gnostic sect of the Mandaeans taught in its holy book *Sidra Rabba* that the history of mankind is composed of seven epochs, that these epochs were terminated by catastrophes, and that one of the planets ruled in each epoch.⁽⁸⁾

The length of the ages in the *Sidra Rabba* is made very long, but the concept is, nevertheless, common to many ancient creeds.

References

1. *Worlds in Collision*, sections “The World Ages,” “The Sun Ages.”
2. *Works and Days*, transl. by H. Evelyn-White (Loeb Classical Library: London, 1914), lines 109-201.
3. *Georgics* I. 125, transl. by H. R. Fairclough (Loeb Classical Library: London, 1920).
4. [*“L’idée de sept périodes soumises aux sept planètes est commune a plusieurs religions.”* (Cumont, *La Fin du monde selon les mages occidentaux*,” *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions* [1931], p. 48). See also W. Bousset, “Die Himmelreise der Seele,” *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* vol. IV (1901), pp. 240-244. Similarly writes F. Boll, *Stern Glaube und Sterndeutung*, fourth ed. by W. Gundel (Berlin, 1931), p. 158: “Die übliche chaldäische Lehre unterscheidet

sieben Weltalter; jeder Planet, darunter also auch Sonne und Mond, herrscht als Chronokrator über eine Periode von tausend Jahren.”].

5. Cumont, “La Fin du monde selon les mages occidentaux,” p. 49.
6. H. Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus* (Leipzig, 1898), pp. ??; see also E. Hommel in *Journal of the Society of Oriental Research* (1927), p. 183.
7. R. H. Charles transl. and ed., *The Book of Enoch, or 1 Enoch* (Oxford, 1912), LII 2-9 (pp. 102ff.); cf. Bousset, “Die Himmelfahrt der Seele,” p. 244.
8. *Ginza: Codex Nasareus, Liber Adami Apellatus*, M. Norberg transl. and ed., vol. III (London, 1815), pp. 69-73; K. Kessler, “Mandäer,” *Realencyclopädie für protestantische Theologie*, Herzog-Nauck, 3rd ed. (1903), vol. 12, pp. 170ff.

