Syriac Idiosyncrasies

Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture

Editors

Guy G. Stroumsa
David Shulman
Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Department of Comparative Religion

VOLUME 11

Syriac Idiosyncrasies

Theology and Hermeneutics in
Early Syriac Literature

by

Serge Ruzer
Aryeh Kofsky

BRILL

In memory of
Ze'ev Kofsky and Anna Borshchevskaya

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The study of early Syriac Christianity has for decades been steadily expanding, with significant achievements and highlights along the way; yet its scope still lags way behind that of research relating to Greek and Latin Christianity. While many important texts have appeared in critical editions, been translated into European languages, and received scholarly treatment, there is clearly still much room for the thematic investigation of various aspects of this literature. One of the intriguing and understudied topics here is the nature of Syriac Christianity's autonomous identity and the extent of its independence from Greek Christianity in late antiquity. This question is intrinsically connected to Syriac Christianity's genesis from an indigenous Christian Aramaic background as well as its interaction with the neighboring Jewish milieu. The geographical and cultural affinity of the two communities—with the Aramaic (Syriac) language being common to both of them—strongly suggests the possibility of religious and cultural contacts between them.

The independent Christian Syriac identity that can be discerned in early Syriac literature later succumbed totally to Greek patristic hegemony. Yet at the end of the 7th century the forces of that identity paradoxically rallied again, this time largely motivated by opposition to Byzantium and Chalcedon, and facilitated by the divide created by the Islamic conquest.[1] But this "new" identity retained few of the salient early Syriac features, becoming to a large extent a Greek Christianity in Syriac garb. Curiously, however, a form of group identity that looks back to its Syriac Christian roots vis-à-vis the "negative" Greek influence is reemerging as part of their religious self-perception among leaders of various modern Syrian Christian communities. A striking example of this trend is the East Syrian Catholicos Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII, who refers to his forerunners as "the Semitic, Hebraic, Aramaic speaking Church":

---

[1] See B. ter Haar Romeny, "Les Pères grecs dans les florilèges exégétiques syriaques"; A. Juckel, "La réception des Pères grecs pendant la «Renaissance» syriaque: Renaissance—acculturation—identité," in A. Schmidt and D. Gonnet (eds.), *Les Pères grecs dans la tradition syriaque* (Paris, 2007), pp. 63–76; 89–126.

The message of the Christian faith which was totally alien to the Western people, such as Greek, Latin and other races, to the Semitic people of the Middle East, who also spoke the Aramaic language, this faith was merely a completion and perfection of the faith of the Old Testament, and, therefore, they were able to understand, accept and embrace it without reservation....

"And in Persia from the time of the apostles to this day, no heretics have risen in it and challenged this faith. But in the territories of the Roman Empire from the time of the apostles many heresies and changes have taken place, and they have defiled many...." (Quoting a statement of faith by the Church of the East from 612 C.E.)

The Church of the East, on the other hand—having received the Scriptures from the hands of the apostles, in a language common to both, namely, to them and the Assyrians, and free from the pagan philosophies and political pressures which plagued the Church within the Roman Empire—never compromised its faith and kept it in its purity to this very day....[2]

The altogether different time and historical setting, and the programmatic character of the above manifesto are fairly clear. Nevertheless the special cultural circumstances of the emergence of a Syriac-speaking Church—before the onslaught of Greek hegemony, accompanied by voluminous translations of Greek patristic literature in the 5th–6th centuries—did indeed engender the peculiar traits of thought and expression to be found in early Syriac sources. It is some of these idiosyncrasies—mainly pertaining to trinitarian theology, christology and hermeneutics—that our study pursues. As for hermeneutics, we focus especially on the foundational story of paradise and its intricate nexus with theology, which finds expression in uncommon anthropological and soteriological perceptions.

It goes without saying that we have not attempted an exhaustive study of the subject; we merely present here a number of case studies. The choice of the texts studied naturally derives to a certain extent from our own idiosyncratic preferences, our regarding them as gems of early Syriac literature. Nevertheless, most of them—from the *Old Syriac Gospels* to Aphrahat's *Demonstrations*, and from Ephrem to Philoxenus of Mabbug—are also clearly landmarks of early Syriac thought, marking its development from the late 2nd to the early 6th centuries.

---

[2] Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII, Introduction to Mar Odishoo, Metropolitan of Suwa (Nisibin) and AREmentia, *The Book of Marganita (the Pearl) on the Truth of Christianity* (Kerala, 1965), pp. III–VIII.

The book sums up the years of our joint investigations and incorporates earlier as well as more recent research.[3] Chronologically, we should have opened the volume with the discussion of the *Old Syriac Gospels* (*OSG*), which predate all the other writings discussed here. An early translation of the Greek text, made before the latter acquired its fully canonical status, the *OSG* is also among the earliest extant literary works in Syriac. However, due to the highly technical nature of that section, we deemed it more reader-friendly to append it at the end of the book. Nevertheless, it forms an important component of the emerging perspective of our inquiry. In that appendix we examine the strategies of the *OSG* with regard to Old Testament quotations and allusions in the Gospels, employed by the Syriac translators. The question of the hierarchy between the established authoritative text of the Old Testament Peshitta and the Greek Gospel is discussed, with unexpected results bearing on the independent self-awareness of nascent Syriac Christianity vis-à-vis the foundational Greek Gospel.

A discussion of Aphrahat's theology constitutes Chapter 1 of the book. Aphrahat's rudimentary and seemingly pre-trinitarian theological outlook has attracted the attention of scholars. Underlying some of their appraisals one discerns a desire—conscious or unconscious—to overcome the inherent theological dissonance by somehow adjusting Aphrahat's views to mainstream Nicene theology and post-Nicene christology. Our discussion traces the embryonic theological notions—apparently stemming from a lack of awareness of Nicaea—dispersed throughout Aphrahat's corpus, attempting to reassess his primitive theology as representing an independent Syriac legacy. Although certain common motifs of contemporaneous Christian discourse do surface in Aphrahat, we argue that it is not Aphrahat's common terminology but rather his emphases and his reinterpretation of those elements that distinguish his outlook. An outstanding feature of Aphrahat's theological discourse—compared to other early Syriac writers—is that it is presented as molded to a large extent in the context of a

---

[3] Chapters 1, 2 and 5 are based on previous works, whereas the rest of the book represents new studies. See A. Kofsky and S. Ruzer, "Logos, Holy Spirit and Messiah: Aspects of Aphrahat's Theology Reconsidered," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 73 (2007), pp. 347–378; "Justice, Free Will, and Divine Mercy in Ephrem's Commentary on Genesis 2–3," *Le Muséon* 113 (2000), pp. 315–332; "Christology and Hermeneutics in Philoxenus' Commentary on John 1:14," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 71 (2005), pp. 343–362. The topics of Chapter 4 were partially dealt with in S. Ruzer, "*The Cave of Treasures* on Swearing by Abel's Blood and Expulsion from Paradise: Two Exegetical Motifs in Context," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001), pp. 251–271.

Christian-Jewish matrix. This pertains especially to the questions of
the sonship and divinity of the Messiah-Christ and his preexistence.

Whereas Ephrem, Aphrahat's younger contemporary, is already
heavily indebted to Nicene theological influence, he retains considerable
independence in his biblical exegesis. Chapter 2 deals with Ephrem's
interpretation of the Garden of Eden story in his *Commentary on Gen-
esis*, which appears as an instructive test case for his uncommon reli-
gious anthropology and demythologizing tendencies. We also focus on
Ephrem's insistence—somewhat peculiar for a Christian author—on a
balanced interaction between divine mercy and justice in God's deal-
ings with humanity. Our discussion avoids the temptation of harmo-
nization, distinguishing instead between Ephrem's "low anthropology"
stance in the *Commentary* and the position he takes in his *Hymns on
Paradise*, and it attempts to understand the differences in light of their
respective literary genres and possible polemical agenda. A discussion
of Jewish midrashic parallels and their possible meaning constitutes
another focus of this section. If in theology Ephrem does not refer
explicitly to "Jewish concerns," in his treatment of the protoplasts he
still evinces a notable awareness of quasi-midrashic baggage, which
he does not hesitate to employ when this suits his purpose in spite of
its possible collision with common Christian views. In fact, rabbinic
sources predating Ephrem or contemporaneous with him provide par-
allels to most of the exegetical motifs invoked in his commentary on
the story of Adam and Eve.

Notwithstanding its peculiar features, the anonymous *Liber Graduum*
(*LG*), commonly dated to the late fourth—early fifth century, expresses
the centrality of the ascetic imperative also characteristic of the broader
Syriac tradition notably attested in both Aphrahat and Ephrem. Thus,
as in the case of Ephrem, religious anthropology becomes a major
concern in *LG*'s interpretation of paradise. In Chapter 3 we analyze
the author's unique perception of paradise as a *locus asceticus*, which
shapes his concept of primordial sin as a shift in the inner intellectual
focus and, correspondingly, of the way to regain the "paradise lost."
We further examine the exegetical role of Adam's paradisiacal pre-
dicament in the author's portrayal of the Messiah-Christ as Adam's
ascetic corrective and a role model for *imitatio dei* through *kenosis*.
The socioreligious context of the *Liber Graduum*'s ascetic emphasis—
already devoid of any Jewish points of reference, unlike Aphrahat and
Ephrem—is further elaborated, and the idiosyncratic hermeneutical

strategies it employs are outlined. The perception of the author's fellow ascetics as a spiritual elite in a Christian society divided between perfect and upright is poignantly enhanced here by the idea of a dual paradise. It is this ascetic agenda that informs the *LG*'s hermeneutical approach.

Distinct from the *Liber Graduum*, with its existential ahistoric personal salvation through ascetic rejection, the *Cave of Treasures* (*CT*), finally redacted in the early sixth century, elaborates on a mythical historical drama of humanity's expulsion first from paradise and then from the primordial cave in the East, prolonged exile and eventual redemption. This treatise represents an outstanding example of the genre of the "rewritten Bible" attested already in early Jewish and Christian sources. The discussion in Chapter 4 focuses, inter alia, on *CT*'s peculiar perception of Jerusalem as the place of exile versus Syria as the true home of humanity and the locus of earthly paradise. This perception is clearly at odds with the centrality and salvific role attributed to Jerusalem and Golgotha in the common Christian narrative, and we examine the author's dialectical solutions for this antinomy. In this context, *CT*'s dual polemic, directed at Jews as well as Greek and Latin Christians, emerges as a salient feature of our treatise, reflecting a nascent opposition to the rise of Greek hegemony. We relate to the restorative messianic tendency of the composition, akin to Jewish patterns, and the inculcation of a proud Syrian ethnic identity based on territory, language and traditional cult.

The theological discourse of the early sixth century anti-Chalcedonian Philoxenus already reflects the increasing Greek dominance in Syriac thought, possibly signaling an end to independent Syriac traditions. We try, however, to discern in him certain idiosyncratic traits that can be attributed to his particular cultural background. In Chapter 5, we trace hermeneutical concerns in his *Commentary on the Prologue of John*, focusing on his exegetical treatment of Old Testament miracles, revelations and prophecies vis-à-vis the ultimate miracle of the "miaphysite" incarnation. We suggest that it is mainly in relation to his miaphysite-colored interpretation of the Old Testament's christological passages and related verses that Philoxenus' exegetic originality can be discerned. Following our discussion of religious anthropology in Ephrem and the *Liber Graduum*, we probe Philoxenus' anthropology in light of his miaphysite theology—and reach a surprising conclusion.

Chapter 5 goes on to study Philoxenus' consistent efforts to unearth the miaphysite content of the non-Johannine New Testament writings, which are admittedly far from susceptible to such an interpretation. In tackling this difficulty, Philoxenus also criticizes the earlier Syriac translation of certain New Testament passages as "Nestorian" and as doing an injustice to the theological precision of the Greek text. He may thereby be indirectly attesting to a long-standing indigenous tradition of Syriac exegesis.

To what extent do all the idiosyncrasies traced in this study amount to a peculiar Syriac brand of early Christianity? Can it be distinguished by its Aramaic background, its affinity to Jewish milieu and, on the other hand, its relative detachment from Greek Christianity? These questions are tentatively addressed in the book's conclusion.

<div align="center">*   *   *   *   *</div>

CHAPTER ONE

APHRAHAT: A WITNESS OF PRE-NICENE
SYRIAN THEOLOGY

In the past, various scholars have attempted to discern a primitive creed in the writings of the early fourth-century author Aphrahat—the first Syriac Church Father. To this end, a comparison with other Syriac authors was conducted to discover the traits of a quasi-creedal formula shared by early Syriac Christianity—designed primarily as a baptismal proclamation—distinct from those known from the Greek tradition.[1] There seems to be a scholarly consensus regarding the basic absence of explicit trinitarian and Nicene theology in Aphrahat's writings and their merely rudimentary christology, which has prompted remarks concerning their "biblical" or "Jewish" character, and thus their theological inadequacy.[2] Nevertheless, the Aphrahatian corpus is not entirely devoid of theology; moreover, "heterodox" theological

---

[1] See R. H. Connolly, "The Early Syriac Creed," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamenliche Wissenschaft* (1906), pp. 202–223, who discerns allusions to an actually existing Syriac symbol similar to those attested in the *Acts of Judas Thomas* and *Doctrine of Addai* (pp. 202–203); idem, "In Aphraates *Hom.* I 19," *Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (1908), pp. 572–576; P. Schwen, *Afrahat: Seine Person und sein Verständnis des Christentums. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Kirche in Osten* (Berlin, 1907), pp. 56–59. Cf. H. L. Pass, "The Creed of Aphraates," *Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (1908), pp. 267–284. Pass suggests that Aphrahat's creed derives primarily from an old Jewish (non-Christian) creedal formula that did not survive in the rabbinic literature. See also M.-J. Pierre, *Aphraate le sage persan: Les exposés*, SC 359 (Paris, 1989), pp. 153–156.

[2] See Connolly ("Early Syriac Creed," pp. 202–203), who even sees some points in Aphrahat's argument as anti-Nicene. According to Schwen (*Afrahat*, pp. 59, 62, 91), although Aphrahat's church had a "tripartite" knowledge of faith, its form and content cannot be ascertained, and this knowledge in itself was not highly valued. Thus the trinitarian formulas, baptismal and otherwise, that nevertheless appear in Aphrahat should be understood as elements of a foreign outlook and as taken from the liturgy. See also F. Loofs (*Theophilus von Antiochien Adversus Marcionem und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenaeus* [Leipzig, 1930], pp. 258, 260), who regards Aphrahat's christology as a basically Messsianic-Johannine one; J. Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Christian Jewish Argument in Fourth-Century Iran* (Leiden, 1971), pp. 130–131; Pierre, *Aphraate*, pp. 144–145, 156–162. For a more complex background to Aphrahat's thought, which may have included elements of Jewish Hellenistic and Greco-Roman culture, see R. Murray, "Hellenistic-Jewish Rhetoric in Aphrahat," in R. Lavenant (ed.), *III Symposium Syriacum: Les contacts du monde syriaque avec les autres cultures* (Rome, 1983), pp. 79–85.

notions are evident, dispersed throughout the *Demonstrations*, his only surviving work.[3]

Various explanations have been offered for this situation. Some scholars regarded Aphrahat's unelaborated statements as conditioned by the particular context of his expositions: be it a response to the theological query of his correspondent, possibly bewildered by Bardaisan's (ca.154–222) heterodox views, or a polemical agenda aimed at refuting Jewish arguments, with the apologetic framework dictating tactical appropriation of the rival's notions.[4] Another *ad hominem* explanation relates to the non-theological hortatory context of many expositions directed toward Aphrahat's fellow ascetics.[5] Underlying some of these appraisals one may discern a motivation—conscious or unconscious—to overcome the inherent theological dissonance by viewing Aphrahat in light of mainstream theological tradition, particularly Nicene theology and post-Nicene christology.[6]

---

[3] Twenty three Demonstrations altogether have survived. For the Syriac text of *Demonstrations* 1–22, see ed. and Latin trans. I. Parisot, Patrologia Syriaca 1 (Paris, 1894). For *Demonstration* 23, see Parisot, Patrologia Syriaca 2 (Paris, 1907), cols. 1–150. For a French translation of the text, see M.-J. Pierre, *Aphraate le sage persan: Les exposés*, SC 349 (Paris, 1988), SC 359 (Paris, 1989). For an English trans., see W. Wright, *The Homilies of Aphraates, the Persian Sage* (London, 1869); for partial translations, see J. Gwynn, NPNF 13 (1898), pp. 345–412; Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, pp. 19–119.

[4] See, for example, Connolly, "Early Syriac Creed," pp. 203–206; Pass, "The Creed of Aphraates," pp. 267–284; I. Ortiz de Urbina, "La controversia di Afraate coi Giudei," *Studia missionalia* 3 (1947), pp. 85–106; Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, pp. 130–131; A. H. Becker, "Anti-Judaism and Care for the Poor in Aphrahat's *Demonstration* 20," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002), pp. 305–327. I. Stuckenbruck ("The 'Demonstration on Love' by Aphrahat the Sage: A Translation with Introduction," in P. J. Harland and C. T. R. Hayward [eds.], *New Heaven and New Earth: Essays in Honour of Anthony Gelston* [Leiden: Brill, 1999], pp. 250–253) discusses possible reasons for Aphrahat's shift in later *Demonstrations* to anti-Jewish polemics.

[5] For Aphrahat's ascetic orientation, see, for example, S. H. Griffith, "Asceticism in the Church of Syria: The Hermeneutics of Early Syrian Monasticism," in V. L. Wimbush and R. Valantasis (eds.), *Asceticism* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 220–245; D. Juhl, *Die Askese im Liber Graduum und bei Afrahat: Eine vergleichende Studie zur frühsyrischen Frömigkeit* (Wiesbaden, 1996); A. I. Lehto, *Divine Law, Asceticism and Gender in Aphrahat's 'Demonstrations'* (Toronto, 2003).

[6] See for example, F. P. Ridolfini ("Problema trinitario e problema cristologico nelle 'dimostrazioni' del 'sapiente persiano,'" *Studi e richerche sull'oriente cristiano* 2 [1979], p. 101), who claims that in Aphrahat "there is nothing explicitly contrary to orthodox doctrine." For an overview of apologetic approaches to Aphrahat' theology, see W. L. Petersen, "The Christology of Aphrahat, the Persian Sage: an Excursus on the 17th Demonstration," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992), pp. 241–256. According to Petersen, Aphrahat's Christianity is "orthodox" in the sense that it represents a "normative"

However, since it is almost impossible to trace in Aphrahat acquaintance with earlier Christian Greek literature, let alone apologetic writings, it may be alternatively suggested that Aphrahat's concepts represent, at least partially, an original line of thinking rooted in an independent ancient Oriental tradition.[7] This stance was indeed advocated by various scholars, who also argued that Aphrahat's statements in what may seem a clearly polemic context do not in fact contradict or deviate from his views elsewhere. These scholars, notably Friedrich Loofs, Ignatius Ortiz de Urbina and Peter Bruns, further attempted a basic reconstruction of the pristine theology present in Aphrahat.[8]

In this study we adopt the basic orientation of these scholars, that despite the non-theological nature of the *Demonstrations* it is possible to discern in Aphrahat certain core notions reflecting a basic theological outlook—beyond the exigencies of polemical discourse—and representing an independent tradition. We thus aim to reassess Aphrahat's theology while reexamining the principal views of our predecessors and offering some new suggestions. Focusing on explicit and implicit theological notions in Aphrahat's corpus, we deem it advantageous, however, to eschew further attempts to reconstruct a quasi-creedal formula underlying his thought. It should be borne in mind that Aphrahat not only did not supply us with any systematic theological discussion, but that he may in fact not have entertained a coherent theological outlook at all. This may account for various contradictory notions coexisting in his thought, which may in turn reflect the relatively fluid state characteristic of his native tradition. This observation should inform any attempt to reconstruct Aphrahat's theological views; nevertheless, it should not discourage such an endeavor.

Judaic-Christian outlook, offering a glimpse of a christology confessed by early Syriac Christians, a relic inherited from primitive Christianity.

[7] See, for example, Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien*, pp. 258–259, 296. According to Loofs there is in fact no Greek influence on Aphrahat's Syriac and no explicit evidence for his use of LXX. Schwen (*Afrahat*, p. 61), however, argues for a specific affinity between Origen and Aphrahat on a certain point.

[8] See F. Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien*, pp. 257–299; I. Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gotteit Christi bei Afrahat*, Orientalia Christiana 31.1 (Rome, 1933); P. Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats des Persischen Weisen*, Hereditas. Studien zur Alten Kirchengeschichte 4 (Bonn, 1990). Ridolfini, however distinguishes among various groups of demonstrations regarding their theological stance. See Ridolfini, "Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," p. 100. For an early attempt at reconstructing Aphrahat's christology, see A. Hudal, "Zur Christologie bei Afrahates Syrus," *Theologie und Glaube* 3 (1911), pp. 477–487.

The Godhead

The following baptismal formula is attested in Aphrahat's *Demonstrations*:

> If you regard as true the three sovereign and glorious names pronounced over your head: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (ܐܒܐ ܘܒܪܐ ܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ) when you received your sign of life (ܐܬܘܬܐ ܕܚܝܐ), and if you hold as true the baptism, you will not commit perjury by your head.[9]

This formula, appearing also elsewhere in Aphrahat in a non-baptismal laudatory context,[10] might arguably be no more than a mere attestation of baptismal ritual tradition going back to Matt 28:19, without necessarily indicating a trinitarian concept. This is especially so in light of its variation—devoid of a particular trinitarian import—attested in the same *Demonstration*: "God is one, and one is his Christ (ܡܫܝܚܗ), and one is the Spirit (ܪܘܚܐ), one is the faith, and one is the baptism."[11] It may be cautiously asserted, then, that while the recurrence of the formula in Aphrahat is theologically charged, the exact meaning of the underlying notion remains undefined.

Aphrahat clearly ascribes importance to the Johannine foundational logos prologue. It should be kept in mind that for him these logos verses institute the beginning of his *Diatessaron* gospel tradition.[12] Moreover, in his reference to John 1:1, he seems to refer to the logos as Christ: "And also the word and discourse of the Lord is Christ (ܘܡܠܬܗ ܘܡܐܡܪܗ ܕܡܪܝܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܗܘ), as is written in the beginning of the Gospel of our Saviour (ܡܣܒܪܢ): 'in the beginning was the Word (ܡܠܬܐ)' (John 1:1)."[13] Elsewhere, it clearly appears that for Aphrahat the logos of John is the external voice of God and the proclamation of his soteriological revelation, rather than God's inner thought. More specifically, in *Dem.* 8 it pertains to the revelation of the eschatologi-

---

[9] *Demonstrations* (*Dem.*) 23.63.

[10] *Dem.* 23.61.

[11] *Dem.* 23.60.

[12] See Ephrem's *Commentary on the Diatessaron*, pp. 2–7, ed. and Latin trans. L. Leloir (Dublin, 1963); Eng. trans. C. McCarthy (Oxford, 1993). It is generally believed that the *Diatessaron* was still the common form of the Gospels used in the Syriac-speaking Churches of the fourth century.

[13] *Dem.* 1.10. On Aphrahat's use of John, see T. Baarda, *The Gospel Quotations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage*, vol. 1: *Aphrahat's Text of the Fourth Gospel* (Amsterdam, 1975).

cal resurrection, with Christ as the living word of God to men and the embodiment of his speech.[14]

> So the word (ܗܘ ܝܠܬܐ) that He shall send through his Christ, who is himself the Word and the message (ܦܬܓܡܐ ܘܗܘ ܝܠܬܐ), shall return to him with great power.... As it is written, "In the beginning was the voice," (ܒܪܫܝܬ ܩܠܐ ܗܘܐ) that is the Word (ܗܢܘ ܡܠܬܐ). Again he said, "The Word became a body (ܓܫܡܐ)[15] and dwelt among us." And this is that voice of God which shall sound from on high and raise up all the dead.

Beyond this, not much can be found in Aphrahat's writings regarding his understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Logos-Son-Christ.[16] It seems, however, that he does regard the logos as divine, originating from the light[17] or even from the essence (ܐܝܬܘܬܐ) of the Father: "We praise in you (Christ) Him who is of Himself, who separated you (ܦܪܫܟ) from his essence and sent you to us."[18] One should note that Aphrahat's usage of the word "essence" here is isolated and does not necessarily designate a technical term applied in a definitive theological context; hence it is not sufficient to indicate acquaintance with the Nicene formula.[19] In fact it is used here to refer to the sending of Christ by the Father to redeem humanity, and not to the Father-Son ontological relationship.[20] The idiom "light from light" attested in *Dem.* 17.2 may readily recall the Nicene creed; the context, however, is a list of titles of Christ and not of the pre-cosmic Logos-Son; moreover, this is the only title in the list coinciding with the Nicene triad ("God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God"). It is possible, then, that this title is included in Aphrahat's list

---

[14] *Dem.* 8.15–16. See Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien*, pp. 262–263; Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gotheit Christi*, pp. 86–87; Ridolfini, "Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," pp. 107–108; Bruns (*Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 139), who also adduces *The Acts of Thomas* as an early witness to the idea of Christ as the voice of God. For discussion of the various terms used by Aphrahat to denote the logos (ܗܘ ܝܠܬܐ, ܩܠܐ, ܡܐܡܪܐ, ܡܠܬܐ), see Schwen, *Afrahat*, p. 84; Bruns, ibid.

[15] In the Pesh. "flesh" (ܒܣܪܐ).

[16] See also Ridolfini, "Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," p. 123; Pierre, *Aphraate*, vol. 1, pp. 167–170.

[17] *Dem.* 17.2.

[18] *Dem.* 23.52.

[19] Schwen, *Afrahat*, p. 83. Ridolfini ("Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," p. 118), however, sees this expression as equal to the Nicene "homoousios"—though still with a residue of modalism, reminding us that the term "homoousios" itself was previously suspected of modalism.

[20] See Schwen, *Afrahat*, p. 83. But see also Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gotheit Christi*, p. 89; Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 146.

due to its revelatory aspect, similar to his appeal to the theme of Christ as the light of revelation in *Dem.* 1.10 referred to above, elaborating on "light" verses from Isaiah 49:6, Psalms 118:105 and John 1:5–10. Thus it is doubtful whether this idiom is indicative of Aphrahat's knowledge of Nicaea.[21]

The lack of trinitarian elaboration notwithstanding, Aphrahat does use the title "firstborn son" (ܒܪ ܒܘܟܪܐ), though its meaning remains unclear. It cannot be excluded that Aphrahat here presents Christ literally as the "firstborn son" of Mary, as may be surmised from the sentence "firstborn son, child of Mary" (ܒܪ ܒܘܟܪܐ ܝܠܕܐ ܕܡܢ ܡܪܝܡ), which may refer to Matt 1:25, where the expression "firstborn son" has precisely this meaning.[22] Yet it cannot be excluded that Aphrahat's words also bear the theological idea of Christ's divine sonship, as indicated by the extensive usage of the appellation "son of God" in relation to Christ elsewhere in the *Demonstrations*. Even when such a hypothesis is considered, however, it is further unclear what this theological idea in fact means. As will be suggested below, it may well be that Aphrahat did not think here of a primordial divine birth as postulated by Nicaea but rather understood the divine birth in connection with the mission of the Son, namely, coinciding with the "second," earthly birth of Christ.[23]

---

[21] Cf., however, Connolly ("Early Syriac Creed," pp. 212, 216), who discerns a connection in Aphrahat not only with Nicaea but also with earlier Greek creeds. On Aphrahat's ignorance of the Arian controversy and the Nicene creed, see Schwen, *Afrahat*, p. 82. Ortiz de Urbina (*Die Gotheit Christi*, pp. 49–50) also regards as a quasi-Nicene formula the concluding phrase of the quoted passage (according to his own translation): "He [Christ] is the son of God and God who came from God" but here again he does not see any confirmation of Aphrahat's acquaintance with Nicaea. For a similar reading of this sentence, see Pierre, *Aphraate*, v. 2, p. 731; Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 135. It seems, moreover, that the context of *Dem.* 17 is more amenable to the alternative translation preferred by other scholars, among them Gwynn and Neusner: "We shall argue [in the course of the demonstration] concerning him that he who came from God is [rightfully called] son of God and God." See Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, v. 13 (reprint, Grand Rapids), p. 387; Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, p. 69. It should be noted also that the idiom "light from light" appears already in Hippolytus, *Adv. Noetum* 10–11, ed. R. Butterworth (London, 1977).

[22] *Dem.* 14.39. Ridolfini regards this expression, as well as some others, as reflecting an Antiochene christological tendency and also Aphrahat's adoptionist milieu. See Ridolfini, "Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," pp. 110–111.

[23] See Pierre, *Aphraate*, vol. 1, pp. 167–170. Ridolfini ("Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," pp. 115, 125) sees here a reflection of the reality of an adoptionist milieu. The Nicene definition of the eternal coexistence of the Father and the Son seems to be reflected in the late fourth-century *Liber Graduum* 30.24, ed. M. Kmosko, Patrologia Syriaca, vol. 3 (Paris, 1926). Eng. trans. R. A. Kitchen and M. F. G. Parmentier (Kalamazoo, 2004).

This issue is intrinsically connected with Aphrahat's understanding of the Logos-Christ's divine preexistence. This concept of preexistence seems to be reflected also elsewhere in Aphrahat's writings. For example, he states with regard to Christ that "From the beginning he was with his Father" (ܡܢ ܪܝܫܝܬܐ ܠܘܬ ܐܒܘܗܝ، ܐܝܬܘܗܝ، ܗܘܐ),[24] "His dwelling place was in heaven";[25] or he portrays Christ's historical appearance in terms of a king who leaves "his place" (ܐܬܪܗ).[26] While there is scarcely any doubt that Aphrahat speaks here about the preexistence of Christ, it is quite possible that he intends the preexistence of Christ in the mind of God and not a distinct quasi-hypostatic one.[27] This was interpreted by Ridolfini as indicating a residue of a "modalist" theology in Aphrahat.[28] Further on we shall see that Aphrahat postulates just such a mode of divine noetic existence for Adam, as the first to be conceived in God's mind before actual creation,[29] and it may be surmised that Aphrahat assumed a similar preexistence for Christ.[30]

Views advocating the noetic preexistence of the patriarchs and the Messiah are well attested in early Jewish sources.[31] Thus in 1 Enoch we find a tradition in which the Messiah was "called by name" before creation;[32] and an early rabbinic midrash attested in *Genesis Rabbah* states emphatically that:

> "In the beginning God created." Six things preceded the creation of the world; some of them were actually created while the creation of the others was already contemplated. The Torah and the throne of glory were created.... The patriarchs, Israel, the temple and the name of Messiah were contemplated.[33]

---

[24] *Dem*. 1.8.

[25] *Dem*. 6.9.

[26] *Dem*. 23.50.

[27] Cf. Ortiz de Urbina (*Die Gottheit Christi*, pp. 83–85), who argues for a hypostatic interpretation of Aphrahat's idea of the logos' preexistence. See also Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 137.

[28] Ridolfini, "Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," pp. 110, 114, 125. See, however, Pierre, *Aphraate*, vol. 1, pp. 156–162.

[29] *Dem*. 17.7.

[30] See also Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 135.

[31] For a discussion of the heavenly existence of both Old Testament and contemporaneous charismatic figures in the late Second Temple period, see M. Navon, "Messianic Figures in Second Temple Judaism: Relationship between the Charismatic Leader and His Adherents" (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2004).

[32] 1 Enoch 48:1–9.

[33] *Gen. R.* 1.4. English translation by H. Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah. Genesis*, v. 1 (Soncino's third edition, London and New York, 1983).

These and similar ideas should be taken into account when discussing Aphrahat's stance; it is against this backdrop that his position can be properly appreciated. Yet there is also at least one saying which indicates that Aphrahat may have entertained a notion of a pre-cosmic individual existence of the Christ-Logos. Unlike the picture of the resurrected Christ as the high priest of the heavenly tabernacle in the Epistle to the Hebrews and elsewhere in Aphrahat's own writings,[34] here Aphrahat's Christ dwells in God's tabernacle already before his earthly mission, being worshiped by the celestial host: "He had been ministered to in the Tabernacle of His Father, yet let himself be served by the hands of men."[35] This isolated saying, appearing in a hymn-like passage, does not seem to integrate into the overall tentative reconstruction of Aphrahat's thought, and it may be another indication of the somewhat fluid state of his theological thinking. It is also possible that liberties of the poetic genre allowed Aphrahat a certain amount of theological space and flexibility here.[36]

Although, as noted, Aphrahat has little to say regarding the relationship between the Father and the Son, it seems that when he does so he presupposes a hierarchical concept of subordination.[37] This comes amply to the fore in the following passage, where Aphrahat interprets Jacob's ladder as a prefiguration of the Cross:

> This is the mystery of our Saviour whom Jacob saw. The gate (ܬܪܥܐ) of heaven is Christ (Messiah ܡܫܝܚܐ) as he (Jesus) said: "I am the gate of life; whoever enters through me shall live for ever" (John 10:9);[38] as David also said: "This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it." (Ps 118:20). And again the ladder that Jacob saw is the mystery (ܐܪܙܐ) of our Saviour (ܦܪܘܩܢ) upon which the righteous climb from below to the height, and again, this is the mystery of our Saviour's

---

[34] See, e.g., *Dem.* 2.6; 20.16.

[35] *Dem.* 6.9.

[36] For such a distinction of genres affecting theological stances, see, e.g., Chapter 2 below.

[37] See also Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gotheit Christi*, pp. 78–80; Petersen, "The Christology of Aphrahat," pp. 243, 250–251. Ridolfini ("Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," p. 109), however, discerns in Aphrahat a notion of equality between the divinity of the Father and that of the Son—not supported, to our mind, by Aphrahat's text.

[38] This is slightly different both from the *textus receptus*, which has: "I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved," and from the Peshitta: "I am the gate, whoever enters by me shall live/be saved." For Aphrahat's New Testament quotations, see O. E. Evans, *Syriac New Testament Quotations in the Works of Aphraates and Contemporary Sources* (Leeds, 1951).

cross that was raised up as the ladder. "And the Lord is standing above him" (Gen 28:13), meaning that the Lord of All is above the Messiah, as also the blessed apostle said: "The head of Christ is God" (1 Cor 11:3).[39]

The above examples pertaining to the ontological status of the Messiah-Logos are not part of a systematic theological elaboration. Aphrahat nowhere connects the logos concept to a pre-cosmic divine reality. The focus is rather on the mission of Christ as savior. Moreover, it is striking that although Aphrahat must have been familiar with the Johannine doctrine, the Christ-Logos is not mentioned in his classical role as the agent of creation even in Aphrahat's explicit reference to the prologue to John in a passage from *Demonstration* 1 briefly related to earlier. Aphrahat's emphasis here is rather on the light imagery of the logos as mediator of revelation:

> And also with reference to Christ was this said…that he was given as a light to all the Gentiles as the prophet Isaiah said: "I have given you as light to all the Gentiles, that you should be my redemption to the ends of the earth" (Isa 49:6). And furthermore David also said: "Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my paths" (Ps 119:105). And also the word and discourse of the Lord is Christ, as is written in the beginning of the gospel of our savior: "In the beginning was the word" (John 1:1). And with regard to the light there again he bore witness: "The light was shining in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:5). What then is this?…Clearly Christ, whose light shone in the midst of the people of the house of Israel.[40]

Furthermore, as certain core passages indicate, Aphrahat seems to emphasize exclusively the Father as creator without ascribing any role to the Logos-Christ in the process of creation.[41] Thus in his programmatic response to the creed proposed by his anonymous friend in the same *Demonstration*, Aphrahat establishes as true faith that "when a man believes in God the Lord of all, who made the heaven and earth and the seas and all that is in them; and He made Adam in his image; and he gave the law to Moses; He sent of his spirit upon the prophets; He further sent his Christ into the world."[42] Here too the role of Christ is clearly limited to his revelatory mission, in continuation of the previous stages of divine revelations to the prophets. Yet in light of

---

[39] *Dem.* 4.5.
[40] *Dem*. 1.10.
[41] For a radically different, more "traditional" understanding of the Son as creator in Aphrahat, see, for example, Pierre, *Aphraate*, vol. 1, pp. 151–152.
[42] *Dem* 1.19.

the foregoing discussion it appears that Aphrahat identifies here Christ
with the logos. Thus the logos also seems to be understood in his "indi-
vidual" existence as connected exclusively with messianic soteriology.[43]
It seems, then, that Aphrahat, unlike such authors as Justin, Irenaeus
and Eusebius,[44] knew nothing about the activity of the logos in Old
Testament revelations commonly ascribed by him to the Spirit.[45]

   The suppression of the mediating role of the logos at creation empha-
sizing the exclusive role of the Father—attested implicitly already in the
Old Syriac Gospels (see Appendix)—distinguishes Aphrahat's outlook
from later Syriac writers. This is evident especially in his concept of
Adam's creation. Even Ephrem, who opposes attempts—derived from
the exegetical need to explain the plural of "Let us make man in our
image…" (Gen 1:26)—to read trinitarian exegesis into the first stages
of the Genesis narrative, nevertheless embraces such an exegesis when
it concerns the creation of Adam.[46] Not so Aphrahat, for whom the
logos plays no part whatever even at this stage.[47] The limiting concept
of the logos is particularly emphasized in *Demonstration* 17, where
the Christ-Logos is absent from any discussion of creation attributed
solely to God the Father. Thus, arguing for the legitimacy of worship-
ing Christ, Aphrahat claims:

> Now if they worship and honor with the name of worship (ܣܓܕܬܐ)
> the evil men, those who in their iniquity even deny the name of God,
> but they do not worship them as their maker (ܠܒܪܘܝܗܘܢ), as though
> they worshipped them alone, and so do not sin, how much the more is
> it appropriate for us to worship and honor Jesus who turned our stub-

---

[43] See also Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 141. Loofs (*Theophilus von Anti-
ochien*, p. 262) argues that Aphrahat had no knowledge of a concept of the hypostatic
logos whatsoever. Ortiz de Urbina (*Die Gotheit Christi*, pp. 90–92), however, discerns
in Aphrahat the primordial hypostatic generation of the Son-Logos.

[44] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 56, ed. E. J. Goodspeed (Göttingen, 1914);
Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3.11.8, 4.5.2–3, 4.7.2–4, 4.9.1, 4.10.1, ed. A. Rous-
seau, L. Doutreleau, B. Hemmerdinger, C. Mercier, SC 100, 152f., 210f., 263f., 293f.
(Paris, 1965–1982); Eusebius of Caesarea, *Eclogae Propheticae* 1.3, PG 22; *Hist. Eccl.*
1.2.7–8, ed. E. Schwartz, GCS 2/1–3 (Leipzig, 1903–1908); *Demonstratio Evangelica*
5.9.8, ed. I. A. Heikel, GCS 6 (Leipzig, 1913). This motif, however, was not common
among early Christian writers.

[45] See also Schwen, *Afrahat*, p. 83; Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien*, p. 263. Bruns
(*Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 137), in contrast, discerns in *Dem.* 4.6 the concept of
Christ's power active in the patriarchs.

[46] Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis* 1.28, ed. R.-M. Tonneau, CSCO 153, Scriptores
Syri 72 (Louvain, 1955). See the discussion in Chapter 2, below.

[47] See also *Dem.* 17.7. In *Dem.* 18.10, however, Aphrahat refers to the Holy Spirit
as Adam's mother. For the Spirit (ܪܘܚܐ) as feminine in early Syriac usage, see Ortiz
de Urbina, *Die Gotheit Christi*, p. 126.

born minds from all our worship of vain error and taught us to worship, serve, and work for one God, our father and our maker (ܥܒܘܕܢ).[48]

Aphrahat, then, clearly justifies here the worship of Christ, provided that Christ is not ascribed any role in creation, God the Father being the sole creator.[49] The anti-Jewish polemical context of this demonstration should naturally be taken into account; yet it would be far-fetched to assume that this heterodox ("Judaized") line of thought, constituting the *core element* of our author's argument aimed at his home audience, would be a merely tactical device. It should be added that when Aphrahat elsewhere in *Demonstration* 17 does employ a rhetorical maneuver contradicting his own theological stance, he explicitly says so:

> But if you should say that the Messiah has not yet come, I will grant this also to your contentiousness. For when he comes, it is written, "Peoples will hope in him" (Gen 49:10). Lo, I who am of the peoples have heard that the Messiah has come. And before he had yet come, I went ahead and believed in him. And through him I worship the God of Israel. Perhaps when he comes, he will censure me that before he came, I already believed in him? But, O fool, the prophets have not permitted you to say that the Messiah has not yet come, for Daniel confutes you saying.…[50]

Our conclusion is, therefore, that, viewed in the context of the broader Aphrahatian corpus, the concept of the non-creating Logos-Christ reflects Aphrahat's true theological stance.[51] This conclusion depends, however, on the understanding of Christ's title (ܒܪܐ) in *Dem* 17.2, appearing in a creed-like formulation, which was understood by some scholars as the participle form of the verb "create" (*bare*)— hence "creator"[52]—whereas others preferred the reading *bra*, meaning "son."[53] In light of the foregoing discussion, we tend to accept the latter reading as better suiting the overall argument in *Demonstration*

---

[48] *Dem*. 17.8. See discussion, below.

[49] See Connolly, "Early Syriac Creed," p. 206. For adoption of the "Johannine-orthodox" view of the Son-Logos' role in creation in Syriac literature shortly after Aphrahat's time, see *Liber Graduum* 30.23 and passim.

[50] *Dem*. 17.10.

[51] Aphrahat, however, seems eager to emphasize that it is the same one God who revealed himself in creation, in the prophets and in Christ. According to Schwen (*Afrahat*, pp. 72–73), this emphasis should be understood in light of contemporaneous dualistic heresies.

[52] See Gwynn's translation, p. 387; Parisot's translation, col. 788; Newsner's translation, p. 68; Pierre's translation, vol. 2, p. 731; Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gotheit Christi*, p. 49; Petersen, "The Christology of Aphrahat," p. 243.

[53] See Connolly, "The Early Syriac Creed," p. 206, n. 1; Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 123.

17 as well as being consistent with the evidence throughout the *Dem-onstrations*. If such a position was indeed advocated by Aphrahat, as argued, it may point to his possible idiosyncratic understanding of John 1:3—clearly part of Aphrahat's *Diatessaron* reading—as indicating creation by God the Father and not by the logos.

We therefore venture the hypothesis that while the doctrine of the logos as God's thought and emanated speech constituted a natural background of Aphrahat's thinking, for him the distinct quasi-hypostatic reality of the Christ-Logos is generated only in the context of Christ's revelatory and soteriological mission.[54] Such a concept seems to leave no room for the traditional role of the hypostatic logos as a medium of creation. This outlook emphasizes the ontological uniqueness and unity of God the creator through a subordinationist concept of the relationship between the Christ-Logos and the Father. Moreover, Aphrahat seems to advocate a quasi-hypostatic existence of the logos that was generated in time from the essence of the Father.[55] This view is somehow reminiscent of that ascribed to Paul of Samosata regarding the monarchic existence of the Father before the incarnation.[56] Paul of Samosata allegedly taught a form of dynamic monarchianism in which the Godhead was a closely knit Trinity of Father, Wisdom and Word, and before creation formed a single hypostasis. In christology he was a precursor of Nestorius, holding that the Word rested on the human Jesus as one person upon another, and also that the incarnate Christ differed only in degree from the prophets.[57] To some extent Aphrahat's position may also recall Arius' view of the logos as created in time, though Arius' doctrine maintained the creation of the logos *ex nihilo*, did not associate it with the incarnation and ascribed to it a role in creation.

*   *   *   *   *

---

[54] In fact the terms "hypostasis" (ܩܢܘܡܐ) and "Trinity" (ܬܠܝܬܝܘܬܐ) were not known to Aphrahat. See Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 143.

[55] Cf. Bruns (*Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 140), who perceives a concept of monarchic dynamism in Aphrahat and regards the evidence for a hypostatic preexistence of the logos as inconclusive.

[56] See Schwen, *Afrahat*, p. 83. Against this assessment, see, e.g., Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gotheit Christi*, p. 123.

[57] See G. Bardy, *Paul de Samosate: Étude historique*, SSL 4 (Louvain, 1923); F. Loofs, *Paulus von Samosata*, TU 40 (Leipzig, 1924); H. D. Riedmatten, *Les Actes du procès de Paul de Samosate: Étude sur la christologie du IIIe au IVe siècle*, Paradosis 6 (Fribourg, 1952).

As with his unelaborated logos concept, Aphrahat did not have a clearly defined pneumatology. Yet certain notions indicate salient particularities of his overall view of the Holy Spirit and its divine character. Aphrahat's interest in pneumatology is almost to be expected in light of his heavy emphasis on the revelatory dimension of soteriology. Thus in response to the creed-like proposal of his friend, that it was God himself who "spoke in all the prophets," Aphrahat amended the suggested formula, emphasizing that "God sent of his spirit upon the prophets" (ܗܘ ܫܕܪ ܡܢ ܪܘܚܗ ܥܠ ܢܒܝܐ).[58] This in itself may seem no more than a general traditional statement regarding the intermediary role of the Spirit. Yet elsewhere Aphrahat declares explicitly that in baptism the believer receives "the Holy Spirit from a particle of the Godhead (ܪܘܚܐ ܩܘܕܫܐ ܡܢ ܚܕ ܪܙܐ ܕܐܠܗܘܬܐ) and it is not again subject to death."[59] He further specifies that at the time of death the "Spirit goes back again to Christ according to its nature."[60] These seem to be unequivocal statements regarding the divinity of the Spirit.[61] Moreover, it can be plausibly argued that while Aphrahat envisioned the Holy Spirit, like the logos, as derived from the essence of the Father, yet unlike the logos, the Spirit was perceived by him as a particle of the Godhead diffused among many, possibly indicating the subordinated status of the Spirit in relation to the Christ-Logos.[62] Here, however, there is as yet no indication of either the individual distinct existence or the preexistence of the Spirit.[63] Given that Aphrahat

---

[58] *Dem.* 1.19.

[59] *Dem.* 6.14.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Cf. Ridolfini, "Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," p. 109. According to Ridolfini, for Aphrahat, Christ and the Holy Spirit are not distinguished from one another in the trinitarian context.

[62] Cf. Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gotheit Christi*, p. 132. Schwen (*Afrahat*, p. 92), however, regards Aphrahat's stance as basically binitarian—God and Christ, or God and the Holy Spirit—viewing the Logos-Christ and the Holy Spirit as essentially one. See also Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien*, pp. 260–261, 279–280, who further argues that according to Aphrahat the divine in Christ comes from the essence of God and is to be identified as the Spirit of God, namely the Holy Spirit. Aphrahat's ancient concept is thus near to *dynamic monarchianism*, and his Christology should be viewed as a spirit Christology (ibid., pp. 268–269, 278).

[63] See Schwen (*Afrahat*, pp. 90–92), who argues that for Aphrahat the Holy Spirit is not perceived as a divine person in the sense of the later Council of Constantinople (381)—according to the Trinitarian formula of equality and identity of essence. Moreover, the Holy Spirit is for Aphrahat either subordinate to Christ or one with him. Cf. Ridolfini ("Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," p. 121), who even sees here a modalist impression regarding the relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit.

does not refer to God's spirit in the context of creation, and that for Ephrem, his younger contemporary, God's spirit of Genesis 1:2 is not the Holy Spirit but a sort of a natural physical wind,[64] it may be that for Aphrahat, not unlike the individuation of the logos in its earthly mission, the spirit acquires a truly individual existence *ad hoc* upon its mission to prophets, its union with Christ, its acquisition by believers in baptism and ultimately at the resurrection.[65]

CHRISTOLOGY

Unlike later Syriac authors such as Philoxenus of Mabbug, Aphrahat throughout his *Demonstrations* refers only twice to the foundational incarnation verse of John 1:14, a fact that in itself may be indicative of his lack of emphasis on the doctrine of the incarnation.[66] The first instance is in *Dem.* 6.10, where Aphrahat expounds John 1:14 as a divine utterance coming from above, articulated in the words of the verse: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," with reference to the annunciation episode (Luke 1:26–38). He thus assigns to Gabriel an active role in the incarnation, perhaps even that of transporter of the logos, the logos representing mainly the divine message to Mary. It seems that here Gabriel plays the role of the herald in an Old Testament sense as prophetic bearer of the word of God.[67] The second reference to John 1:14 is in *Dem.* 8.15, quoted above, where the logos

---

[64] Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis* 1:2.

[65] See Oritz de Urbina (*Die Gotheit Christi*, p. 138), who concludes that it is impossible to discern in Aphrahat hypostatic existence of the Spirit. He nevertheless discusses the possibility (ibid., pp. 127–129) that the Spirit in Aphrahat can be identified with the feminine divine Wisdom (ܚܟܡܬܐ).

[66] See *Philoxène de Mabbog, Commentaire du prologue johannique*, ed. and French trans. A. de Halleux, CSCO 380–381, Scriptores Syri 165–166 (Louvain, 1977). See also Chapter 5, below. Ridolfini states emphatically that in Aphrahat nothing is in fact said on the incarnation of the logos. See Ridolfini, "Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," p. 121; see also Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 192. Loofs (*Theophilus von Antiochien*, p. 271), moreover, denies the very concept of the incarnation of the logos in Aphrahat, and further argues that even the foundational incarnation verse (John 1:14) and the *kenosis* verses (Phil 2:6ff, 2 Cor 8:9) are understood by Aphrahat as referring to the historical Jesus and the spirit inside him, as well as to the presence of the spirit in human beings in general, indicating the entrance of the divine into the world. For an opposite view, however, see Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gotheit Christi*, pp. 104–105.

[67] See Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 138. Aphrahat's words, however, were also interpreted by some scholars as more compatible with the logos incarnation doctrine, where the logos in fact descended into Mary, Gabriel serving solely as herald of

of the Johannine passage is interpreted as relating to God's "voice" that, having been sounded from heaven, further "dwells in our body" and "from within" brings our bodies to resurrection. The general context of this passage is a chain of prophetic utterances pertaining to cases of resurrection: Ezekiel's general prophecy (37:1–10), Elijah and Elisha, and Jesus himself (Luke 7:14, Mark 5:47, John 11:43). All this may further strengthen the impression of the subordinate status of the logos, its predominant character as the divine vocal message and its quasi-hypostatic being as pertaining only to the post-incarnation scene. Moreover, at this latter phase, the logos seems "to dwell in the flesh"—not only of Christ but of each believer destined for resurrection. One may say, therefore, that Aphrahat's understanding of John 1:14 undermines the hypostatic potential of John 1:1–3.

The peculiarity of Aphrahat's stance becomes all the more clear when compared with Ephrem's commentary to the same Johannine passage incorporated in the *Diatessaron*. It should first be noted that Ephrem's elaboration contains what seems to be explicit polemics against some of the ideas propagated earlier by Aphrahat. Thus Ephrem rejects the notion of the logos being the Father's voice, stating instead that the logos is the Father's image: "Thus he was not the voice (ܩܠܐ), he was the likeness (ܕܡܘܬܐ) of his Father. He was not the voice of the Father, but his image (ܨܠܡܗ)."[68] Likewise Ephrem rejects the presentation of the Son as the Father's thought (ܚܘܫܒܐ), adducing ingenious arguments against this notion.[69] Ephrem is already clearly influenced by Nicene trinitarian theology, advocating a quasi-hypostatic understanding of the logos and its role in creation.[70] Regarding John 1:14, Ephrem's emphasis is decisively on the incarnation motif, on "The Word that clothed itself with a body." Unlike Aphrahat, the logos for Ephrem here signifies neither the divine voice and message concerning the birth of Christ and the resurrection of the dead, nor the divine power dwelling "in us" active in the resurrection, but primarily the incarnation of the hypostatic preexistent logos:

---

the incarnation event. See the English and French translations by Gwynn (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, v.13 p. 369) and Pierre (*Les Exposés*, v. 1, p. 392) respectively.

[68] Ephrem, *Commentary on the Diatessaron* I.3. On the meaning of (ܕܡܘܬܐ) in Aphrahat and Ephrem, see E. Beck, "Symbolum-Mysterium bei Aphraat und Ephräm," *Oriens Christianus* 42 (1958), pp. 19–40.

[69] Ephrem, *Commentary on the Diatessaron* I.3, 5.

[70] Ephrem, *Commentary on the Diatessaron* I.4–5.

> After having completed the account concerning the Word, under what form, up to what point and for what motive it lowered itself, [the evangelist] said elsewhere, "The Word itself became a body and dwelt among us." Now, all that you hear after the completion of the account of this Word, you should not understand it in relation to the Word merely in itself, but to the Word that clothed itself with a body. Consequently, these are mixed accounts, they are divine in their entirety, and they are also human, apart from that [Word] which is the first and the beginning of everything.[71]

All differences notwithstanding, it seems that Aphrahat did entertain a certain notion of incarnation, albeit undeveloped, reflected mainly in his usage of the language of clothing or putting on a body by the logos. Yet it is not possible to apply Aphrahat's christology of putting on the body to the schemes of logos/sarx and logos/anthropos. This ambiguity led both miaphysite and Nestorian theologians to use Aphrahat in support for their views.[72] Although various scholars asserted that the idiom "putting on a body" (ܠܒܫ ܦܓܪܐ) reflects a typical technical Syriac usage denoting the incarnation,[73] the exact meaning of most of these expressions in Aphrahat remains somewhat elusive, lacking the explicit technical terms used by later Syriac writers, such as ܐܬܒܣܪ, ܐܬܓܫܡ, ܐܬܒܪܢܫ.[74] In some instances, Aphrahat's usage clearly signifies the clothing of the soul with a human body common to all newborns, the Messiah included, as in the following: "Our lord Jesus the Messiah was the only innocent (ܙܟܝܐ) among all the newly born (ܝܠܘܕܐ), those who put on a body (ܕܠܒܫܘ ܦܓܪܐ)."[75] The Syriac pun used further on in this passage leaves no doubt that the innocence

---

[71] Ephrem, *Commentary on the Diatessaron* I.8.

[72] See S. Brock, "Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition," in M. Schmidt (ed.), *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Väter und ihren parallelen im Mittelalter* (Eichstatt, 1981), p. 25.

[73] R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 69, 310–312; Ridolfini, "Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," pp. 113, 117, 125. For the opposite understanding, see Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien*, p. 271; Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gotheit Christi*, p. 107. For Aphrahat's predilection for clothing metaphors in general and for the wider Syriac usage of such metaphors, see Brock, "Clothing Metaphors," pp. 11–40; Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 191.

[74] See Connolly, "Early Syriac Creed," p. 212; Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 189.

[75] See also Bruns (*Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 193), who regards this lack of distinction between Christ's incarnation and the "incarnation" (e.g., becoming human) of other men, as understandable in light of Aphrahat's close connection between anthropology and Christology.

pertains to the Messiah's earthly life, not to a kind of pre-incarnation stage: "As he (Jesus) bears witness on himself, saying: 'I have overcome (ܙܟܝܬ) the world' (John 16:33). And also the prophet witnessed concerning him: 'He committed no sin and no wrong was found in his mouth.' "[76]

In *Demonstration* 23, however, Aphrahat several times refers specifically to putting on a body by the Messiah in a way that seems to be intrinsically connected to the sending of the Christ-Logos into the world and hence to his salvific mission. Thus while repeatedly emphasizing the identity of Christ's body with that of the rest of humanity[77]—a common soteriological motif—he distinguishes its putting on by the Messiah from the broader application of the clothing metaphor to all humans:[78] "He (Christ) put on a body made of dust and drew it to his own nature, and he planted in us the salt that annuls putrefaction."[79] Paradoxically, the very need to demonstrate the full humanity of Christ's body indicates that Aphrahat shares the notion of the divinity of Christ as essentially distinguished from humanity:

> Had he been heard when he asked to [escape] death being clothed with a body, who would have assured us our resurrection (ܢܘܚܡܐ)? .... When he trembled before death, he did it with wisdom, to bring us help, in order to demonstrate clearly to all humanity the weakness of the body that he had clothed like us. For if he had not been born like us the path of death would not have been imposed on him.... Had the Messiah not died in a body taken from us (humanity), he would have no guarantee (ܪܗܒܘܢܐ) to give us that we could receive with confidence that we should be resurrected.[80]

This pattern of thought, still no more than implicit in this passage, becomes apparent in *Demonstration* 6, where Aphrahat clearly distinguishes between the different "natures" of Christ's existence before and after his birth and the putting on of a body:

---

[76] *Dem.* 7.1, alluding to Mal 2:6.

[77] According to Bruns, in Aphrahat the body of Christ is not important as an individual body, but rather as representing humanity and human history, in contradistinction to quasi-docetic expressions of early Syrian tradition. Aphrahat maintains the full humanity of Christ, emphasizing his passion and his mortality (*Dem* 23.11). See Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 193.

[78] Cf. Ridolfini, "Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," p. 102.

[79] *Dem.* 23.49.

[80] *Dem.* 23.11. For a similar usage of the clothing metaphor in Aphrahat, see also *Dem.* 23.50. See also *Dem.* 6.10, where Christ's human body after the resurrection is described by Aphrahat as a "hostage" for him that was taken from humanity.

When our Lord went outside of his nature (ܐܘܬ ܡܢ ܠܬ ܡܢ ܟܝܢܗ), he walked in our nature. Let us abide in our nature, that in the Day of Judgment (ܒܝܘܡ ܕܝܢܐ) he may cause us to partake of his nature (ܕܢܫܘܬܦ ܠܟܝܢܗ)....If we honor him, we shall go to him (ܢܐܙܠ ܠܘܬܗ), who took upon him of our nature and so ascended.[81]

The exact meaning of Aphrahat's ܟܝܢܐ here has been much debated. In non-theological usage it may point to a particular property; denote things created or signify a status, position or situation or, alternatively, a proper natural condition. In a theological context, Ortiz de Urbina and Klijn argue that Aphrahat perceives the word "nature" in a spatial sense, as dealing not with a way of being or its essence but with a situation in which Christ and men happen to be. Thus it may refer also to the possibility for Christ to "change nature," meaning to "change place" from heaven to earth, and for men inversely to partake in a heavenly existence. Such an outlook may be termed the "christology of exchange"; in this sense both Christ and men have a double nature/situation. Hence "nature" in fact indicates the existence of somebody or something as defined by the way it appears; consequently God's nature is observed in the act of redemption.[82] It should be emphasized that such an interpretation pertains to the term "nature" per se and does not exclude the possibility of Aphrahat's adherence to a traditional incarnation theology advocating an essential unity of natures without a fixed technical terminology, which would characterize later patristic elaborations.

Ridolfini—unlike Ortiz de Urbina and Klijn—regards Aphrahat's usage of the term "nature" as essentialist and close to that of patristic theology. He further perceives Aphrahat's stance as basically conservative Antiochene—namely, two perfect natures united in the one persona of Christ.[83] Bruns, however, adopts a middle course, arguing that Aphrahat's *kyana* has both spatial and metaphysical dimensions. This

---

[81] *Dem.* 6.10.

[82] See Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gotheit Christi*, pp. 98–103; A. F. J. Klijn, "The Word Kejân in Aphraates," *Vigiliae Christianae* 12 (1958), pp. 58–65.

[83] Ridolfini, "Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," pp. 107–109. According to Loofs (*Theophilus von Antiochien*, pp. 274–275, 297), though for Aphrahat the united person of the historical Jesus was larger than the one prosopon of the Antiochene union, he certainly did not think of a union of natures. Loofs, too, seems to cast Aphrahat here in an "orthodox" mold, avoiding suspicion of quasi-Nestorian associations. Thus Loofs admits the "diprosopic" character of Aphrahat's Christological expression—derived however from West Syrian/Antiochene influence—but subordinates it to a basic concept of hypostatic unity in Christ.

allows for a dynamic of essential interrelation between the divinity and humanity in Christ. According to Bruns, then, it is not a situation of a parallel existence but rather an introduction of the human earthly life into the divine form of being through Christ.[84]

We tend to side with those who believe that the usage here is not necessarily the technical christological one prevalent later, in the fifth century.[85] Two additional arguments in this direction may be deduced from the same *Dem.* 6.10 just quoted. First, no distinction seems to be presupposed there between partaking of the Logos-Messiah's pre-incarnation nature (ܚܝܠܐ) and "going to him" in resurrection. Second, it appears that Aphrahat in fact speaks here of two distinct natures, of Father and Son, both distinct from the human nature, a fact previously overlooked in Aphrahatian scholarship:

> When he came to us, he had nothing of ours, and also we had nothing of his, *the two natures being his and his Father's* (ܗܕ ܟܝܢܐ ܗܘܘܬ ܕܝܠܗ ܐܘܝ ܘܕܐܒܘܗܝ،)....And when he returned to him that sent him, he took away when he went, that which he had not brought (ܕܠܐ ܐܝܬܝ،).[86]

We can therefore discern here an indication of a *triphysite* concept of sorts; though amorphous and unelaborated, it is definitely a far cry from common patristic notions.

Yet it seems apparent that Aphahat's thinking presupposes a certain basic notion of the Christ-Logos adopting a nature that was not originally his, and hence prone to be interpreted in terms of incarnation. It is, however, important to reiterate Aphrahat's emphasis on the soteriological function of the Messiah-Logos putting on a body, as well as his readiness to blur the distinction between the divine birth of Christ and the general human predicament of entering an earthly existence. The overall ensuing impression is, then, that although Aphrahat may have generally accepted some primitive form of incarnation doctrine and language, it nevertheless did not occupy an important place in

---

[84] This metaphysical essential change of nature is paralleled, according to Bruns, in the change of the earthly nature to the spiritual one in the resurrection (*Dem.* 8.2)—against Klijn who regards also this change as an external spatial change of place. See discussion in Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, pp. 144–149.

[85] See also Ortiz de Urbina (*Die Gotheit Christi*, p. 121), who asserts that the divine-human connection in Christ is not addressed by Aphrahat, since in his time it had not yet become an important issue in Christological speculation. For another unspecified usage of "nature" terminology in early Syriac literature, see, e.g., *Liber Graduum* 22.13.

[86] *Dem.* 6.10.

his christology, which primarily aims at clarifying its soteriological content. The recurring notion of the Messiah putting on a body, and its analogy to ordinary human birth, may indicate an understanding of the relation between the incarnate logos and the human body, or the human body and the soul of Christ, where Aphrahat reflects some sort of a "proto-Nestorian" concept regarding this issue.

The Messiah and Messianic Salvation

Christ according to Aphrahat, then, is the logos that was sent into the world by God the Father, albeit with an emphasis mainly on the subordinate soteriological context of the messianic event rather then its pre-cosmic dimension. Aphrahat focuses on the atoning and redeeming death of Christ in his human body, but he also relates to other motifs and themes from the messianic repertoire. He thus elaborates in *Dem.* 23.20 on both Christ's royal descent and his priestly one—motifs inherited by Christianity from Jewish Second Temple messianism.[87] Aphrahat regards Christ's royal Davidic descent "in flesh"[88] as going through Mary, who is presented as the carrier of the Davidic line: "Jesus was born from the virgin Mary, from the seed of the House of David, from the Holy Spirit, as it is written: 'And Joseph and Mary his espoused, both of them of the house of David' (ܡܢ ܐܝܬܘܗܝ ܒܝܬ ܕܘܝܕ)."[89] This seems in fact to have been the reading of Luke 2:4–5 in the *Diatessaron*.[90] Such interpretation further allows Aphrahat to ingeniously interpolate Mary's motherhood into his quotation from Romans 1:3–4: "The apostle testifies: 'Jesus Christ was made *of Mary* of the seed of David through the Holy Spirit.'"[91]

---

[87] See, for example, D. Flusser, "Reflection of Jewish Messianic Beliefs in Earliest Christianity," in Z. Baras (ed.), *Messianism and Eschatology* (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 103–134 (in Hebrew); L. Schiffman, "Messianic Figures and Ideas in the Qumran Scrolls," in J. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis, 1992), pp. 116–129; J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York, 1995), esp. pp. 75–77; P. Schäfer, "Diversity and Interactions: Messiahs in Early Judaism," in P. Schäfer and M. Cohen (eds.), *Toward the Millennium* (Leiden, 1998), pp. 15–35.

[88] *Dem* 23.50.

[89] *Dem*. 23.20.

[90] Cf. L. Leloir, *Le Témoignage d'Éphrem sur le Diatessaron*, CSCO 227 (1962), pp. 84–88.

[91] *Dem.* 23.20.

The notion of Davidic descent via Mary was already known in Aphrahat's time as indicated by the diatessaric evidence and Irenaeus;[92] another existing tradition may be discerned in Aphrahat's dealing with the Messiah's priestly function: "From Joseph he got the name of fatherhood, whereas from John [the Baptist] he got the name of the priesthood, and from Mary he donned a body and got the name of being born."[93] The notion of Jesus' priestly Aaronic descent coexisted in early Christianity with the seemingly more established tradition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, stating explicitly that Jesus had no Aaronic ancestry but was a high priest of the order of Melchizedek.[94] Aphrahat, however, seems to express here a variant view—namely, that Jesus received his priesthood spiritually from the house of Aaron through John the Baptist. This tradition combines the Aaronic descent of John the Baptist with the idea of a spiritual transmission of this priesthood in the act of Jesus' baptism.[95] It is noteworthy that although Aphrahat often refers to Hebrews, it is never to the Melchizedek passages. Apparently deriving from the Lucan presentation of John as descendent of a priestly family, this tradition may reflect a more "conservative" stance, preserving an echo of the old Jewish motif of the Aaronic Messiah. This tradition is also compatible with Aphrahat's more general tendency to emphasize the full humanity of Christ, which will be discussed below.

Having outlined Aphrahat's elaboration of the Messiah's kingly and priestly attributes, we now turn to our author's treatment of the divine ones, central to Christian belief—namely Christ's titles of "God" and "Son of God"—constituting the core topic of *Demonstration* 17. As noted, Aphrahat focuses on the salvific content of Christ's mission;

---

[92] See J. R. Harrris, *Fragments of the Commentary of Ephrem Syrus upon the Diatessaron* (London, 1895), p. 30, where Aphrahat's younger contemporary explains: "The series of kings is written according to the names of men, instead of women, Joseph, the son of David, betroths the daughter of David, because the child cannot be enrolled in the name of its mother"; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.21.5.

[93] *Dem.* 23.20.

[94] See D. Stökl, "Yom Kippur in the Apocalyptic *Imaginaire* and the Roots of Jesus' High Priesthood," in J. Assmann and G. G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions* (Leiden, 1999), p. 364.

[95] On this tradition in Aphrahat and Ephrem (e.g. *Hymns Against Heresies* 22.19, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 169–170, Script. Syr. 76–77 [1957]), see Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 55, 178–182. In Ephrem there is also a variation on this theme: transferring the priesthood to Jesus through Simeon at the Temple, after Luke 2:25–35 (Ephrem, *Sermo de Domino Nostro* 53–54, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 270–271, Script. Syr. 116–117 (1966).

moreover, in *Demonstration* 17 he also explicitly denies to the Christ-Logos the role of creator. We have argued that since this is a central point in Aphrahat's apologetic endeavor, complemented by similar notions external to the polemical context of this *Demonstration*, it could hardly be seen as an *ad hominem* argumentation; rather, it represents an essential theological stance.[96]

The collation of the two attributes, "God" and "Son of God," is introduced in the beginning of *Demonstration* 17 as part of a long list of attributes describing the soteriological traits of Christ's image:

> Jesus our Lord is God son of God, the king son of the king, light of the light, son (ܒܪܐ)[97] and counselor, guide and way, redeemer, shepherd, gatherer, gate, pearl, and lamp. With many names he is called. We shall leave them all, and we shall argue concerning him that he who came from God is son of God and God. The honored title of divinity also has been applied to righteous men and they have been deemed worthy to be called by it. Men whom God approved he called "my sons" and "my friends." When he chose Moses as his friend and beloved and made him the head, teacher, and priest of his people, he called him God.[98]

Although "God" and "son of God" appear here at the head of the list, it may be surmised that their non-scriptural presentation as part of a sequence[99]—clearly penned by Aphrahat himself—reflects what may be called a consciously moderate concept of Christ's divinity expressed in these two attributes.[100] As will be argued below, the application of

---

[96] Aprahat's argumentation here is presented as refuting a somewhat general accusation by the author's Jewish opponents: "This apology is against the Jews…for thus they say, you worship and serve a man who was born, a son of man who was crucified, and you call a son of man God." Its thrust, however, may be directed against a more pointed criticism, attested among pagan writers of the third and fourth centuries, against the Christian belief in the divine messiah as the creator of the world. See, e.g., Porphyry in Augustine, *On the Harmony of the Gospels* 1.11, ed. J. Weihrich, CSEL 43; Julian, *Against the Galileans* 213b-c, ed. W. C. Wright, LCL (London, 1923), p. 381. Yet according to D. Boyarin, the opposition to the doctrine of the logos as agent of creation was also common in rabbinic circles (*Border Lines: Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* [Leiden, 2004], pp. 87–137). If one accepts Boyarin's thesis, then this could be another possible source for Aphrahat's logos concept.

[97] As noted, we prefer the reading "son" to "creator" suggested by several scholars. See discussion above.

[98] *Dem*. 17.2–3.

[99] Cf., for example, the sequence in John 14:6. See also John 6:35, 8:12, 10:7–14, 10:36, 11:15, 15:1–5, Matt 5:14–15.

[100] It is noteworthy that an extended list of soteriological titles, lacking explicit divine attributes, appears in a non-polemical context where Christ's relation to God is described as "the herald and the apostle of the Most High" (*Dem.* 14.39), and his soteriological function as that of a mediator between humanity and God: "Therefore

these attributes to outstanding biblical personalities—the apologetic strategy adopted throughout the *Demonstration*—constitutes another avenue of relativizing the divinity of Christ.[101]

A similar, albeit not identical, list of attributes closes the *Demonstration* with the same moderating tendency to present the explicitly divine attributes as part of the wider spectrum of messianic names: "And he (Jesus) said to us: 'I am the good shepherd, the gate, the way, the vineyard, the sower, the bridegroom, the pearl, the lamp, the light, the king, God, lifegiver, and redeemer.' By many names he is called."[102] According to our reading, this again clearly indicates Aphrahat's tendency to relativize the divine status of the Messiah.

As part of his general approach and apologetic strategy, Aphrahat applies the attribute "son of God" to Solomon (2 Sam 7:14), the people of Israel (Exod 4:22–23; Deut 14:1; Isa 1:2; Hos 11:1–2) and Adam.[103] The attribution of the title to Solomon and the people of Israel, based on corresponding biblical texts, is explained by Aphrahat in light of their vocation to combat polytheism. This is explicitly compared to Christ's teaching of God to non-Jews (ܥܡܡܐ), in line with Aphrahat's emphasis elsewhere[104] on Christ as the medium for knowledge of God and belief among the Gentiles: "So we also call this Messiah (ܗܢܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ) the son of God, for by him we know God, just as he called Israel 'my son, my firstborn,' and just as he said concerning Solomon, 'He will be a son to me.'"[105] Yet even in the time of Christ as

---

through him let us give thanks to the Father, through him let us worship his Appointer, through him let us cry 'holy' to his Sender" (ibid.). For a discussion of the lists of titles in *Dem.* 14, see Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 162–166, who compares it to the Jewish Day of Atonement prayer *ki anu amekha*, and to similar lists in Ephrem.

[101] For comparisons of biblical figures to Jesus in Aphrahat and Ephrem, see Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 51–53; idem, "Some Rhetorical Patterns in Early Syriac Literature," in R. H. Fischer (ed.), *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus: Studies in Early Christian Literature and Its Environment, Primarily in the Syrian East* (Chicago, 1977), pp. 109–131. On Aphrahat's hermeneutical strategy, see J. C. McCullough, "Aphrahat the Biblical Exegete," *Studia Patristica* 18.4 (1990), pp. 263–268. See also L. Haefeli, *Stilmittel bei Afrahat, dem persischen Weisen* (Leipzig, 1932); R. J. Owens, *The Genesis and Exodus Citations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage* (Leiden, 1983).

[102] *Dem.* 17.11.

[103] Aphrahat's obvious disregard here of Matt 2:15, where Hos 11:1 is quoted differently from the Peshitta and applied to Jesus, may be explained by the apologetic nature of the *Demonstration*, avoiding as far as possible New Testament evidence as proof, a well-known Christian polemical trait.

[104] *Dem.* 17.10. Cf. Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gotheit Christi*, p. 67.

[105] *Dem.* 17.4.

well as afterward this title was not exclusive to the Messiah. Elsewhere
in his *Demonstrations*, outside the anti-Jewish polemical context char-
acterizing *Demonstration* 17, Aphrahat states—in accordance with
Matt 5:9—that it is those who associate with Christ—namely, men of
peace—who become his brothers and sons of God.[106]

Whereas Solomon's and the people of Israel's sonship is derived
from the explicit biblical usage, that of Adam is based on the afore-
mentioned notion of Adam's preexistence in God's thought.[107] Accord-
ing to this idea, while Adam was the last creature and hence the crown
of creation, as the biblical narrative maintains, he had in fact been
the first to be conceived in God's mind. This, rather than the fact that
he had no human parents, bestowed on him the title "son of God."
Adam's image as the firstborn son is graphically illustrated by Aphra-
hat's pun on the word ܐܬܒܠ (was conceived), which may denote
both mental and physical conception: "Man was conceived (ܐܬܒܠ)
and dwelt in the thought of God (ܒܡܚܫܒܬܗ).... So after the concep-
tion of Adam (ܒܠܝܘܬܗ) He gave birth to him (ܐܘܠܕܗ)."[108]

This notion of the noetic conception of Adam in God's mind as
preceding his actual creation parallels roughly contemporaneous
midrashic traditions regarding the pre-cosmic divine noetic concep-
tion of not only Adam but also the patriarchs, the Messiah and even
the collective entity of Israel.[109] This may serve as an indication of
Aphrahat's actual contacts with a Jewish milieu. The same holds true
regarding the parable that follows in the *Demonstration*, depicting
the created world as the marriage feast prepared by God for his son
Adam.[110] As the explicit aim of this parable is to supply an analogy for

---

[106] *Dem.* 14.31.

[107] *Dem.* 17.7. See Schwen, *Afrahat*, p. 76.

[108] *Dem.* 17.7. Cf. Dem. 23.22 where the noetic conception of Adam is described as
creation by God (ܐܠܗܐ ܒܪܐ). This, however, seems to indicate a general idea attested
already in Jub 2:2 rather than a fixed technical terminology. See Pierre, *Aphraate*,
vol. 2, p. 916, n. 171.

[109] See *Gen. R.* 1; *b. Sanh.* 38b; *Midrash Psalms* 139. Cf. *Gen. R.* 8; *Lev. R.* 29.
Cf. 1 Enoch 48:1–9. On the possible midrashic background of Aphrahat's thought,
see F. Gavin, *Aphraates and the Jews* (Toronto, 1923), pp. 38–58; Nuesner, *Aphrahat
and Judaism*, pp. 150–154.

[110] *Dem.* 17.7. For rabbinic parallels depicting the creation as preparation for the
feast of Adam and Eve, see *y. Sanh.* 4.9 [22c]; *b. Sanh.* 38a. For a pioneering study
of possible rabbinic elements in Aphrahat, see S. Funk, *Die haggadischen Elemente in
den Homilien des Aphraates, des persischen Weisen* (Vienna, 1891). For a recent topical
discussion, see N. Koltun-Fromm, "Aphrahat and the Rabbis on Noah's Righteous-
ness in Light of Jewish-Christian Polemic," in J. Frishman and L. van Rompay (eds.),

Jesus' sonship,[111] it should be noted that here, too, Christ the son is not directly associated with the beginning of creation but rather with the consummation of the process—which includes the whole history of salvation. However, unlike the rabbinic traditions noted above, in Aphrahat, the pre-cosmic divine conception is never applied explicitly to the Logos-Christ, though this may well be surmised.

Other rabbinic parallels speak of the world as being created for the sake of, alternatively, prominent figures in Israel's history, the righteous, the people of Israel as a whole, or the Torah—another possible indication of Aphrahat's acquaintance with contemporaneous Jewish thought.[112] To sum up, the nature of Aphrahat's argument here is such that all the analogies he uses (Adam, Solomon, Israel) point to the Messiah as a human son of God. Yet in light of his concept of the divinity of the Logos-Son-Christ—albeit subordinated and limited to a soteriological framework, as discussed earlier—we tend to understand this exclusive emphasis on the humanity of the Son in *Demonstration* 17, and the resulting christological ambiguity, as deriving from the *Demonstration*'s apologetic context and hence not implying a rejection of the doctrine of divine sonship.

In this *Demonstration*, Aphrahat similarly explains the title of divinity applied to Christ with reference to the biblical employment of the title "god" as a human attribute of great men such as Moses (Exod 7:1–2) and even wicked gentile rulers, such as Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 27:8).[113] It should be noted that elsewhere in the *Demonstrations* even the salvific function of Christ's blood is relativized—and that outside the anti-Jewish polemical context!—through a typology of the spilled blood of the murdered prophets, of whose rank Christ becomes the ultimate example.[114] One of Aphrahat's idiosyncratic

---

The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretations (Louvain, 1997), pp. 57–72.

[111] See the concluding remark in *Dem.* 17.12: "This brief argument I have written to you, my beloved, so you may reply to the Jews on account of their saying that God has no son, and [on account of] our calling him God son of God, king, first-born of all creatures. The demonstration which is on the Messiah, the son of God is completed."

[112] See, e.g., *Mas. Gerim* 1.1; *Gen. R.* 16.12, 83.5; *Lev. R.* 23.3; *Cant. R.* 2.3, 7.3; *Pesiq. R.* 3.

[113] *Dem.* 17.3; 17.6. Cf. the traditional comparison between Moses and Jesus in *Dem.* 23.12.

[114] *Dem.* 4.19. Cf. *Dem.* 21, which comprises a comparison between Jesus and a list of biblical figures—earlier victims of persecution—thus relativizing the persecution of Jesus.

interpretations of the title "god" as applied to humans is that they may serve as a dwelling place and temple for God:

> More than all his creatures has he honored, exalted, and praised the sons of man; for with his holy hands he formed them and from his spirit he breathed into them, and he was a dwelling place (ܐܠܗܐ ܡܥܡܪܐ) for them of old.... After God gave birth (ܐܘܠܕ) to Adam from his thought (ܡܢ ܚܘܫܒܗ ܘܡܬܘܡܗ), he shaped him, blew into him of his breath, and gave him knowledge of discernment, so that he might distinguish good from evil and know that God had made him. And as he knew his Maker, God was formed and conceived (ܐܬܬܨܝܪ ܘܐܬܒܛܢ) in the midst of the thought of man. So he [man] became a temple for God his Maker, as it is written, "You are the Temple of God" (1 Cor 3:16).... But if the sons of man do not know their maker, he is not formed in their midst, does not dwell with them, and is not conceived in their thought. But they are regarded before him like the beasts, like the rest of the creatures.[115]

This is indeed an unusual and perhaps even bold idea—namely, that God is conceived in man's mind in an identical manner, and described with identical terminology, as man is conceived and formed in God's mind.[116] One can of course argue that Aphrahat does not really create a full equation between the divine and human noetic process, but refers rather to the conceptual human dynamics of generating the idea of God. Nevertheless, the explanation he propagates diminishes the uniqueness of the divine presence in Christ. Again, in the context of *Dem.* 17 it is always possible to ascribe this stance to Aphrahat's apologetic agenda; yet there may be more to it than that, since, as noted, he nowhere elaborates a clear understanding of the nature of the incarnation. Moreover, elsewhere, in a passage devoid of anti-Jewish apologetic context, Aphrahat suggests—modifying a Pauline idea—that the ascetics or priests are the brothers of the Messiah and the temple of the Spirit.[117] Aphrahat also interprets various New Testament verses,

---

[115] *Demonstration* 17.6–7. Cf. *Dem.* 23.59, where Aphrahat seems to go a step further and claim that man can become perfect and divine by restoring the original Adam that was conceived in God's mind.

[116] On this idea, see also Schwen, *Afrahat*, p. 76.

[117] *Dem.* 14.38; 14.50. For Aphrahat's reception of Paul, see S. S. Taylor, "Paul and the Persian Sage: Some Observations on Aphrahat's Use of the Pauline Corpus," in C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders (eds.), *The Function of Scripture in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Sheffield, 1998), pp. 312–331. For the divinization of the ascetics in Aphrahat and other early Syriac writers, see A. Golitzin, "Recovering the 'Glory of Adam': 'Divine Light' Traditions in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Ascetical Literature of Fourth-Century Syro-Mesopotamia," in J. R. Davila (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden, 2003),

most notably Matt 18:20 ("For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them"), as indicating that since God is in Christ (John 14:11) and hence both are simultaneously present in the believer during prayer, it makes for three.[118] This amounts to constituting a "psychological trinity" of sorts, likewise devaluing the uniqueness of the divine presence in Christ.[119]

Moreover, a clear distinction in the application of various attributes of God to human figures is asserted by Aphrahat in this *Demonstration*. He emphatically declares the attributes "I am that I am, God Almighty" (ܐܗܝܐ ܐܫܪ ܐܗܝܐ ܐܠܫܕܝ)[120] and "The Lord of Hosts" (ܐܪܝܐ ܨܒܐܘܬ), to be exclusive to the divinity.[121] In this context it seems that Aphrahat also withholds these divine titles from Christ himself. Moreover, it appears that this stance is not limited in Aphrahat to the apologetic framework of *Dem.* 17 but is generally valid to his christology—these titles are nowhere else used by him. This is somewhat similar to the case of Aphrahat's view regarding the absence of Christ's role in creation—a position enhanced in *Dem.* 17 for polemic purposes, albeit supported in other *Demonstrations* as well.

We have thus discerned in *Dem.* 17 a number of basic notions devaluating the divine status of Christ: first, the denial of Christ's agency in creation; second, the relativization of the divine presence in Christ analogous to its presence in humanity in general; third, the common use of divine appellations alongside the exclusive assignation of the ultimate titles to God the Father and creator.[122] The entire focus of *Dem.* 17 is the issue of Christ's divine titles and names as commonly

---

pp. 275–308. See also *Dem.* 23.3, where Aphrahat presupposes that every person is potentially capable of sharing the triple power of the Messiah. Parallels between the concept of the dwelling of the Spirit and the Shekhina can be readily discerned. See also Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien*, p. 278; Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 187. For a similar parallel in Ephrem, see Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 141–142.

[118] *Dem.* 4.11.

[119] Cf. Ridolfini, "Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," p. 103. For a different, somewhat more traditional, somatic-psychological trinity of body, soul and the Holy Spirit, see *Liber Graduum* 28.5.

[120] The Syriac version in Aphrahat, referring to Exod 3:14, includes the addition of "God Almighty" (ܐܠܫܕܝ), apparently adapted from Gen 17:1.

[121] *Dem.* 17.5. It is worth noting that these attributes are taken verbatim from the original biblical Hebrew.

[122] Cf. Ortiz de Urbina (*Die Gotheit Christi*, p. 68), who concludes that in *Demonstration* 17 Aphrahat, *stricto sensu*, does not present Christ's divinity.

applied to other human figures.[123] This is explicitly stated both at the beginning and at the end of the *Demonstration*:

> This apology is against the Jews who blaspheme…, for thus they say, you worship and serve a man who was born, a son of man who was crucified and you *call* (ﻣﺬﺏ) a son of man God (17.1).
>
> I shall expound for you while we grant them that he is a man, and [still] we honor and *call* him God and Lord, it is not strange that we thus *call* him, and we do not give him a strange *name*, something which they themselves do not make use of (17.2).
>
> This brief argument I have written to you, my beloved, so you may reply to the Jews on account of their saying that God has no son, and [on account of] our *calling* him God son of God.… The demonstration which is on the Messiah, the son of God, is completed (17.12).[124]

However, we cannot exclude the possibility that when Aphrahat makes a general statement such as that the Messiah is "the son of God" he is in fact reflecting the traditional belief in the heavenly divine sonship of Christ.[125] Yet it seems important that in *Dem.* 17 the emphasis of his argument clearly goes against this notion. Thus in light of Aphrahat's stance in other *Demonstrations*, noted above, we may view his position in *Dem.* 17 as apologetic yet corroborating his overall outlook regarding the divine status of the Christ-Logos as subordinated, hierarchic, detached from the act of creation and limited to the soteriological framework, coalescing with the historical appearance of Christ in the incarnation.[126]

---

[123] See Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gotheit Christi*, p. 66.

[124] One may wonder whether Aphrahat's repeated use of the verb "to call" (ﻣﺬﺏ) in connection with the divine titles of Christ also indicates a limited sense of his divine status. Cf. 4Q246 *Aramaic Apocalypse*.

[125] See, e.g., Schwen, *Afrahat*, p. 84; Pass, "The Creed of Aphraates," p. 283; and Ridolfini ("Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," pp. 115, 124), who forcefully advocates this appraisal. Elsewhere, however, Schwen (*Afrahat*, p. 93) plays down the importance for Aphrahat of the notion of Christ's divinity (see following note). Loofs (*Theophilus von Antiochien*, p. 266), moreover, argues that the idiom "son of God" in Aphrahat does not stem from the concept of the eternal Son, of which he was unaware, but rather from the honorific attribute of the historical and post-resurrection Jesus! This is in line with his overall quasi-adoptionist understanding of Aphrahat's christology.

[126] For a similar conclusion, see Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien*, p. 265; Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gotheit Christi*, pp. 68–69. According to Schwen (*Afrahat*, p. 93), Aphrahat—unlike his Greek and Roman contemporaries—was not entirely convinced regarding the claim of Christ's divinity, and in any case the metaphysical divinity of the redeemer was less important for Aphrahat's soteriology and religiosity than his real humanity. However, Pass ("The Creed of Aphraates," pp. 282–284), Ridolfini ("Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," p. 112) and Bruns (*Das Christusbild*

CHRIST'S DIVINITY IN A SOTERIOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Although Aphrahat maintained a form of logos theology, it seems that in his christology there is no distinct mention of the Son-Logos as the divine component in the incarnate Christ;[127] whenever he refers to the divine presence or power in Christ the reference is exclusively to the Holy Spirit according to its various aspects. Moreover, it appears that the exact relationship between divinity and humanity in Christ in the incarnation is of no particular interest to Aphrahat.[128]

Thus in *Dem.* 1.9 Aphrahat states that it was "clearly the Spirit of God that abode on Christ with seven operations, as Isaiah the prophet said (Isa 11:1–2): 'The Spirit of God shall rest and dwell upon him, (a spirit) of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and of courage, of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.'" As for the moment of reception of the Holy Spirit by Christ, two different opinions are juxtaposed by Aphrahat in *Dem.* 6.17: at the miraculous birth of the Son through the Holy Spirit and at his baptism in the Jordan.[129] It appears, moreover, that Christ not only receives but also appropriates the Holy Spirit as the active divine element, which therefore is elsewhere termed the "Spirit of Christ" (ܪܘܚܗ ܗܘ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ) explicitly identified with the Holy Spirit that was generated from the Godhead (ܡܢ ܓܘ ܐܝܬܘ ܕܐܠܗܘܬܐ).[130] It is noteworthy that the latter expression is not restricted to the presence of the Holy Spirit in Christ but

---

Aphrahats, p. 124) see in *Dem.* 17 nothing but an anti-Jewish polemical tract employing for tactical reasons arguments taken from a Jewish-Christian adoptionist milieu. Neusner (*Aphrahat and Judaism*, pp. 130–131) even suggests that Aphrahat's Christology in *Dem.* 17 was addressed to new converts from a milieu that he characterizes as scriptural-targumic Judaism. See also A. Baumstark, "Ps-Jonathan zu Dtn 34,6 und die Pentateuchzitate Afrahats," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 18 (1942/3), pp. 99–111; J. Ouellette, "Sens et portée de l'argument scriptuaire chez Aphraate," in Fischer (ed.), *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus*, pp. 191–202; J. G. Snaith, "Aphrahat and the Jews," in J. A. Emerton and S. C. Reif (eds.), *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honour of E. I. J. Rosenthal* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 235–250. Cf. N. Koltun-Fromm ("A Jewish-Christian Conversation in Fourth-Century Persian Mesopotamia," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47 [1996], pp. 45–63), who does not exclude the possibility of Aphrahat's contact also with rabbinic circles.

[127] See also Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 192.

[128] See, e.g., *Dem.* 3.16; Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 195.

[129] See Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, p. 188.

[130] *Dem.* 6.14. It is not clear, however, whether or not Aphrahat holds that the Holy Spirit replaces the human spirit of Christ, as in the later Apollinarian concept.

is employed in relation to its reception by believers undergoing their second birth through baptism:[131]

> From baptism do we receive the spirit of Christ....And those that are baptized are clothed in it....For in the first birth they are born with an animal soul which is created within man and is thereafter subject to death, as he said: "Adam became a living soul" (Gen 2:7). But in the second birth, that through baptism, they received the Holy Spirit from a particle of the Godhead, and it is not again subject to death.[132]

The continuation of the Holy Spirit's presence in the believer depends, however, upon his faithfulness to the Spirit. This principle is expressed in Aphrahat's notion of the conditional character of Christian redemption through the Spirit:

> And whatever man there is that receives the Spirit from the water (of baptism) and grieves it, it departs from him until he dies, and returns according to its nature to Christ, and accuses that man of having grieved it.[133]

As noted, Aphrahat singles out the ascetics as "brothers of the Messiah and the temple of the Spirit,"[134] regarding them as an elite inner circle with the Holy Spirit continually dwelling in them. Celibate ascetics are thus presented as having an edge on lay Christians as well as on biblical Israel, who at Sinai had abstained from intercourse with their wives for three days only and whose exposure to God's revelation was therefore a singular event. In this context—similar to Aphrahat's concept of the Godhead discussed above—the Spirit's function seems to be undistinguished from that of God's speech (logos).[135] Whatever categorization of Christian society is implied here, Aphrahat's view of the Holy Spirit as the active divine force in Christ appears to be intrinsically connected to its soteriological function. This is manifest in

---

[131] For Aphrahat's treatment of baptism, see Schwen, *Afrahat*, pp. 103–104, 114–115; E. J. Duncan, *Baptism in the Demonstrations of Aphraates* (Washington, 1945); G. G. Willis, "What was the Earliest Syrian Baptismal Tradition?" *Studia Evangelica* 6, TU 112 (1973), pp. 651–654; F. P. Ridolfini, "Battesimo e penitenza negli scritti del 'sapiente persiano,'" *Catechesi battesimale e riconciliazione nei Padri del IV secolo*, Convegno di Studio Pontificio Salesiano (Rome, 1984), pp. 119–129; Pierre, *Aphraate*, vol. 1, pp. 174–177.

[132] *Dem.* 6.14. Cf. Ridolfini, "Problema trinitario e problema cristologico," pp. 104–105.

[133] *Dem.* 6.14.

[134] *Dem.* 14.38.

[135] *Dem.* 18.5.

the bestowal of the Holy Spirit (=Christ's spirit) on believers, whether through baptism, ascetic life or resurrection.[136]

Indeed there is a strong emphasis in Aphrahat on the role of the Spirit as a guarantor and active divine agent in the resurrection.[137] Here also a comparison with *Dem.* 8, discussed above, indicates a certain blurring and even lack of distinction between the Spirit and the logos: In this *Demonstration* Aphrahat clearly presents the logos of John's prologue as being actually God's speech (ܡܠܬܗ ܕܐܠܗܐ) proclaiming the revelation of the eschatological resurrection, Christ being the living word of God revealed to men.[138] Thus although it is mostly the Spirit that appears in Aphrahat as the active divine agent in Christ, it may well be qualified by the lack of a functional distinction between the Spirit and the logos. This can also be readily gleaned from Aphrahat's uncharacteristic albeit still rudimentary theological discussion in *Dem.* 6 regarding the ubiquity of the Son:

> "I will divide him among many" (Is 53:12). And though he is divided among many, yet he sits at the right hand of his Father. And he is in us and we are in him, as he said: "You are in me and I am in you" (John 14:20). And in another place he said: "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30).[139]

This clearly indicates Aphrahat's awareness of the presence of the divine Son in Christ as well as in believers, parallel to Aphrahat's ascription of a similar function to the Holy Spirit.[140] Thus in the final analysis,

---

[136] See *Dem.* 6.14: "Then the cornet shall summon, and the trumpets shall sound, and the Spirit that waits for the (resurrection) shout shall hear, and quickly shall open the tombs, and raise up the bodies.... And (the Spirit) shall be within for the resurrection of the body.... And the animal spirit shall be swallowed up in the heavenly Spirit, and the whole man shall become spiritual, since his body is possessed by it (the Spirit)." Cf. *Dem.* 6.14, where Aphrahat relates to the fate of those who will not be changed in nature and remain with their original animal spirit. For a discussion of this aspect, see W. Cramer, *Der Geist Gottes und des Menschen in frühsyrischer Theologie* (Münster, 1979), pp. 73–85; Pierre, *Aphraate*, vol. 1, pp. 170–173, 191–199; Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, pp. 126, 184–186.

[137] *Dem.* 6.14, 6.18, *Dem.* 23.11; cf. 23.49.

[138] *Dem.* 8.15–16. For a general discussion of Aphrahat's eschatology, see Schwen, *Afrahat*, pp. 135–141; A. Vogel, *Zur Lehre von der Erlösung in den Homilien Afrahats* (Hof, 1966); F. P. Ridolfini, "Note sull' antropologia e sull' escatologia del 'sapiente persiano,'" *Studi e Richerche sull' Oriente Cristiano* 1 (1978), pp. 5–17. D. J. Lane ("Of Wars and Rumors of Peace: Apocalyptic Material in Aphrahat and Šubhalmaran," in Harland and Hayward [eds.], *New Heaven and New Earth*, pp. 229–245, esp. 244–245) discerns targumic elements in Aphrahat's apocalyptic reading of Scripture.

[139] *Dem.* 6.10.

[140] See Schwen, *Afrahat*, pp. 114–115. Loofs (*Theophilus von Antiochien*, p. 295) discerns a certain proximity in thought between Tatian and Aphrahat, yet they differ

though Aphrahat demonstrates a notable predilection for what may be termed "Spirit christology," the Spirit and the Son-Logos turn out to be quite interchangeable in the soteriological context.[141]

Conclusion

The ambiguity of, and the difficulty in evaluating, Aphrahat's rudimentary and so-called "Jewish" Christology, especially in an explicitly polemical context (e.g., *Dem*. 17), has been duly acknowledged by scholars. One may possibly discern in some studies a sort of scholarly apologetics that prevented accepting at face value those of Aphrahat's sayings that did not fall into line with normative Nicene theology, ascribing them instead to the tactical constraints of his polemics. This chapter has aimed at reassessing Aphrahat's main theological views regarding both trinitarian and Christological notions as they may be gleaned from the entire Aphrahatian corpus. Special emphasis was given to a comparative investigation of Aphrahat's positions on the divinity of Christ in different contexts—polemical and otherwise— and their ramifications for evaluating Aphrahat's essential outlook. We arrived at the conclusion that although some positions are clearly enhanced, modified and accentuated by the necessities of anti-Jewish polemics, a basic unity of thought nevertheless underlies Aphrahat's *Demonstrations*.

Our analysis shows that Aphrahat's theology is essentially a hierarchic one, where the logos is neither the creator nor the agent of creation. Moreover, the logos' generation from the Father appears to depend on the soteriological context of Christ's mission. Although Aphrahat is clearly using a traditional trinitarian terminology a lack of functional distinction between the logos and the Holy Spirit is apparent, resulting in a picture of a loose and undefined hierarchic

---

entirely regarding their logos concept. According to Bruns (*Das Christusbild Aphrahats*, pp. 118, 186) Aphrahat's pneumatology is different from that of Tatian, in whose eschatology the logos plays no role at all.

[141] Thus we differ from Loofs, who argues for an exclusively spirit christology in Aphrahat (derived from Judaism, the Synoptics and the Gospel of the Hebrews). See Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien*, pp. 268–269, 290–291. Cf. *Liber Graduum* 20.10, Patrologia Syriaca 3, cols. 552–556. Though Christ and the Holy Spirit are certainly separate entities in this passage, there is a measure of functional identity between the two, as they are joined together. This identity is enhanced by the terminology applied: the Spirit-Paraclete (ܪܘܚ ܦܪܩܠܛܐ) is here referred to as "the Savior" (ܦܪܘܩܐ).

relationship. The lack of a clear incarnation theology is coupled in Aphrahat with a marked predilection for spirit christology. Yet the principle of salvific unification between the Son-Logos and humanity is evident, resulting in a similar confusion between the heavenly logos and the Holy Spirit also in the sphere of christology. This may possibly reflect the lack of an elaborated distinction between the two, inherent in early Christian thought.[142]

Dem. 17 is distinguished by a clear tendency to devalue the divine status of Christ, not only through denial of his agency in creation but also by relativizing the divine presence in Christ and his divine attributes, as well as by restricting the ultimate divine titles to God the creator. In light of Aphrahat's stance in other *Demonstrations*, his position in *Dem.* 17 should be viewed as apologetically enhanced yet nevertheless corroborating his overall outlook of the Christ-Logos' divine status as subordinated, hierarchic, detached from the act of creation and limited to the soteriological framework, coalescing with the historical appearance of Christ in the incarnation. Aphrahat's stance regarding the divinity of Christ and the title "God" attributed to him similarly to its attribution to other human beings may thus be perceived as a quasi-"Arian" hierarchic concept lacking a developed terminology.

We have seen that some elements of what may be perceived as a common terminology of contemporaneous Christian discourse surface repeatedly in the *Demonstrations*. Some of the previous studies, relying on these sporadic instances of common terminology, attempted to cast Aphrahat's thought in a generally "orthodox" mold. We argue, however, that it is not Aphrahat's common terminological baggage but rather his emphases and idiosyncratic reinterpretation of those elements that truly distinguish his thought. As for the emphasis on the humanity of Christ—comparable with that of various biblical figures—it should not necessarily be regarded as polemical and peculiar to our author; rather, it may reflect a particular tradition that, again, had interpreted the commonly used attributes in this vein. This stance, combined with a terminology of donning a human nature, may further reflect a sort of Antiochene or even "proto-Nestorian" Christological tendency widespread in Aphrahat's region.

---

[142] On this confusion in early Christian theology, see A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* (London, 1975), pp. 55–57.

EPHREM ON JUSTICE, FREE WILL AND DIVINE MERCY IN
THE STORY OF THE FALL

In his theology, Ephrem, Aphrahat's younger contemporary, is already heavily indebted to Nicene influence. Yet, it seems that in biblical exegesis he retains much of his independence. During the last three decades Ephrem's commentary on Genesis has received considerable scholarly attention.[1] Different studies were devoted, inter alia, to the first chapters of Ephrem's commentary dealing with the creation of the world and man and with paradise. Among the motifs that have been investigated are Ephrem's cosmogony in the context of polemic against Gnostic doctrines and especially with that of Bardesanes, Ephrem's concept of paradise and its eschatological and typological aspects as well as a number of more specific themes such as the garments of glory of Adam and Eve and the trees of paradise. According to Ephrem himself, his commentary is mainly a condensed discussion of themes that he elaborated elsewhere.[2] As far as themes of Genesis 1–3 are concerned, this statement seems to refer, at least partly, to his *Hymns on Paradise* dealing with similar topics in considerable detail. Indeed, these topics in the *Hymns* were studied more intensively compared to the *Commentary*. The differences of approach between Ephrem the commentator and Ephrem the poet, and the question of possible points of contact with contemporary Christian and Jewish exegesis in Ephrem's commentary were not overlooked but do seem to deserve further attention.

In this chapter we focus on Ephrem's commentary and discuss a cluster of motifs pertaining to the story of Adam and Eve in paradise

---

[1] For the text, see ed. R.-M. Tonneau, *CSCO* 153, Scriptores Syri 72 (Louvain, 1955). For the English translation and bibliography, see *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works*, trans. E. G. Mathews Jr. and J. P. Amar, ed. by K. McVey, Fathers of Church Series (Washington D.C., 1994). A general discussion of Ephrem's commentary on Genesis may be found in S. Hidal, *Interpretatio Syriaca: Die Kommentare des heiligen Ephräm des syrers zu Genesis und Exodus mit besondere Berücksichtigung ihrer auslegungsgeschichtlichen Stellung* (Lund, 1974), pp. 8–28.

[2] *Gen. Com.* Prologue 1.

which have not been much discussed in the context of Ephrem's commentary. Those motifs, taken as a whole, may present an appropriate framework for delineating traits of Ephrem's religious anthropology and exegesis.

Let Us Make a Man in Our Image

It seems that by the time Ephrem was writing his commentary Genesis 1:26 ("Let us make man in our image…") had long been a focus of intensive exegetical treatment by both Jews and Christians. Philo had already identified the object of God's appellation as his angelic entourage,[3] an idea that would be reiterated in rabbinic midrash.[4] Philo also allowed for the presence of God's word/thought (logos) at the creation of man.[5] This line of exegesis was adopted by many Christian commentators. As early as the second century, Justin Martyr offered a number of possible interpretations to the verse. According to him, God might have spoken to either himself or his Logos/Wisdom or the elements. Justin in fact rebuts the notion that the plural in the verse refers to angels.[6] The logos-centered interpretation was further elaborated by later patristic writers such as of Basil of Caesarea.[7] Justin's disciple, Tatian, further explained why the Logos, equated by him with the Spirit, appeared for the first time only in the creation of Adam.[8] The idea of a divine mediating entity in Genesis 1:26 was not foreign to rabbinic exegesis either. In *Gen. R.* 8.3, for example, God is interpreted as addressing his Power of Mercy (מידת הרחמים). In his *Commentary on Genesis*, Ephrem follows what seems to have become a traditional Christian interpretation, stating that "Here, as in every place where He creates, it is clear that He was speaking to his Son."[9]

---

[3] See Philo, *De opificio mundi* 24, ed. F. H. Colson, LCL (London, 1929).

[4] See *Gen. R.* 8.4.

[5] Philo, *De opificio mundi* 23; *Quaest. in Gen.* 1.4, ed. R. Marcus, LCL (London, 1953).

[6] Justin, *Dialogue with Tripho* 62.1. See also S. Pines, "God, Glory and Angels According to a Second-Century Theology," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6 (1987), pp. 1–14 (in Hebrew).

[7] See e.g., Basil, *The Hexaemeron* 9.5–6, ed. E. A. de Mendieta and S. Y. Rudberg, GCS, NF 2 (1997).

[8] Tatian, *Address to the Greeks* 7, ed. M. Whittaker (Oxford, 1982); see also Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.21.

[9] *Gen. Com.* 1.28.

This interpretation is common in Ephrem's other works as well.[10] It seems, however, that this is not a major exegetical concern for him, as he never refers to the creative role of the Son in the preceding discussion of creation, until compelled by the exegetical need to explain the plural form of the sentence.[11]

Ephrem next tackles the second obvious exegetical problem of the same verse, namely, the meaning of "in our image [and our likeness] (ܒܨܠܡܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܘܬܢ)". In the commentary to this part of the verse, the logos is never mentioned and it appears that Ephrem is not concerned with integrating his understanding of the "image" into a particular trinitarian concept; he rather attributes it to the deity in general.[12] He thus seems to focus on the question "in what way we are the image of God."[13]

Let us first describe some exegetical options with which Ephrem could have been familiar. With Philo, for example, the image in which man was created or, in other words, the divine element which man shares with God, is the upper part of man's soul, the mind (*nous*) for which the logos is the heavenly archetype. Thus the image is the image of the logos acting as the divine intermediary in creation.[14] Tatian, at least some of whose writings were known to Ephrem, follows Philo in the sense that the divine image in Genesis 1:26 stands for the image of the Son-Logos as the creative divine power, an exegesis that seems to have become standard by Ephrem's time.[15] But Tatian identifies the nature of this divine image not with reason, as Philo and the later

---

[10] See T. Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11 in the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian* (Upsala, 1978), pp. 39–43; n. 93 to the English translation of Ephrem's commentary.

[11] Ephrem further states that this was also Paul's understanding of creation, referring to Col 1:16 as his proof text (*Gen. Com.* 1.28).

[12] *Gen. Com.* 1.29. In the Midrash the plural form of "in our image" is indeed interpreted, inter alia, as indicating that the birth of a human being reflects a trinitarian model of sorts, namely, the three agents involved in the generation of human beings: a father, a mother, and the *Shekhina*. See e.g., *Gen. R.* 8.26; cf. *Lev. R.* 14.

[13] *Gen. Com.* 1.29.

[14] Philo, *De opificio mundi* 23. On Philo's concept of the logos, see H. A. Wolfson, *Philo, Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, revised edition (Boston, 1962), vol. 1, pp. 200–294.

[15] See, e.g., Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 10, ed. M. Marcovich (Leiden, 1995); Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.63, ed. M. Borret, SC 132, 136, 147, 150, 227 (1967–1976); Basil, *Hexaemeron* 9.6

Pseudo-Clementine homilies did,[16] but rather with immortality.[17] A similar idea, namely that the divine quality in question is immortality, is attested by the Midrash. Here, however, man was supposed to share immortality not with the divine logos but with the angels.[18] The Midrash also stresses that the gift of immortality was to be granted to Adam only as a reward for moral perfection: "If he sins he will die; while if he does not sin, he will live (i.e. forever)."[19] An additional reward for Adam's moral perfection, according to the Midrash, is the gift of dominion over the animal world. This reward is not directly associated by the Midrash with the concept of the image but seems to belong to the same conceptual cluster. The Midrash offers yet another exegetical option, namely that the divine image here stands for the cosmic dimensions of Adam's body reflecting an anthropomorphic concept of the deity; hence the ministering angels mistook Adam for God and wanted to adore him as such.[20] Anthropomorphic concepts of the deity were still widespread in Christian circles in the fourth century.[21]

   Ephrem's solution here is that "It is the dominion that Adam received over the earth and over all that is in it that constitutes the likeness of God who has dominion over the heavenly things and the earthly things."[22] Ephrem further solves the seeming contradiction between Adam's sojourn in paradise and his dominion over the earth and sea, i.e., the whole world, by stating that God's blessing was given to Adam with the foreknowledge of Adam's imminent expulsion from paradise.[23]

---

[16] *Ps. Clem. Hom.* 10.6, ed. B. Rehm, GCS 42 (1953), 3rd ed. G. Strecker (1992).

[17] Tatian, *Address to the Greeks* 7.

[18] *Gen. R.* 8.27.

[19] Ibid.; English tr. by H. Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah. Genesis*, vol. 1, Soncino's 3rd ed. (London and New York, 1983).

[20] See, e.g., *b. Hag.* 12a: "R. Judah said that Rab said: The first man [extended] from one end of the world to the other, for it is said: '*Since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from one end of heaven to the other*' (Deut 4:32). See also *Gen. R.* 8.26; *Lev. R.* 14. For further rabbinic evidence and discussion of this concept in rabbinic tradition, see E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, 2nd enlarged ed., vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 229–230.

[21] See, for example, E. A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, 1992), pp. 43–84.

[22] *Gen. Com.* 1.29.

[23] In the *Hymns on Paradise*, however, Adam's dominion is interpreted by Ephrem as referring to his royal and priestly status in paradise. See Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11*, p. 75. The author of the *Cave of Treasures* follows a somewhat expanded tradition bestowing a third "crown" on Adam in paradise, namely, the crown of prophecy. See *Cave of Treasures* 4.1, ed. S. M. Ri, *La Caverne des Trésors: Les deux*

Here, unlike some other instances in his commentary,[24] Ephrem does not allow for additional exegetical options. Moreover, his opinion is spelled out with a somewhat polemical stress: Ephrem claims that the solution he offers is based on the explicit will of God to make it clearly understood this way. The target of Ephrem's polemical stance here is not specified but it seems that he aims to preclude any attempt at symbolical and allegorical interpretation, and possibly anthropomorphic speculations as found in various Christian and Gnostic circles. Ephrem might have had in mind here an earlier Christian notion found in the Pseudo-Clementine homilies[25] as well as in contemporary Christian writers,[26] a notion which later characterized the Antiochene Christian tradition.[27] Ephrem's explanation of the "likeness and image" as dominion, however, is in fact, closer to one of the midrashic options mentioned above—in the sense that both ignore allusions to a divine nature of Adam's noetic faculties or *imitatio dei* as the vocation of Adam on his path to holiness and divinization.[28] If Ephrem was indeed influenced here by this particular midrashic exegetic option, it seems that by so doing he consciously excluded other interpretations that less suited his exegetical line. Further in the *Commentary*, Ephrem strives to portray Adam as a morally autonomous being with its full inherent human weakness. Attribution of any divine traits or faculties, e.g., derived from the logos, to Adam, could impede his full human autonomy.[29] Ephrem also probably could not choose immortality as the essence of the divine image in Adam, because further in the *Commentary* immortality would be presented as a reward for humankind and not a precondition of its existence: "When God created Adam, He did not make him mortal, nor did he fashion him immortal, so that

---

recensions Syriaques, CSCO 486; Scriptores Syri 207 (Louvain, 1987). Ephrem seems to be aware, nonetheless, of the three crowns tradition. But for him only the first crown, namely, the royal one, was actually given to Adam in paradise, whereas the two other crowns were potential ones "for which Adam had to strive" (*Hymns on Paradise* 12.17, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 174–175 [Louvain, 1957], English trans. S. Brock, *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise* [New York, 1990]). These two crowns are the crown of knowledge and wisdom paralleling the above-mentioned crown of prophecy, and the crown of high priesthood.

[24] Cf. *Gen. Com.* 2.7.

[25] *Ps. Clem. Hom.* 10.3.

[26] Basil, *Hexaemeron* 9.5–6.

[27] See *Gen. Com.* (English), p. 94, n. 98 with further literature.

[28] Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagog.* 1.12, ed. M. Harl, C. Mondésert, and H. I. Marrou, SC 70, 108, 158 (1960–1970).

[29] This may reflect an anti-Apollinarian stance.

Adam, by either keeping or transgressing the commandment, might acquire…the [life] that he preferred."[30] In this also our author follows one of the midrashic exegetical positions noted above.

   As for the creation of Eve, Ephrem harmonizes the two creation accounts, namely, "male and female He created them" (Gen 1:27) and the creation of Eve out of Adam's rib (Gen 2:21–23). He claims that Eve had somehow a full physical and spiritual existence in Adam's rib before its separation from his body,[31] although Adam was not conscious of the fact.[32] God merely "restructured" the rib giving it its human feminine appearance. Kronholm, who addressed this issue, concluded that in Ephrem the *sensus moralis* of the original unity of Adam and Eve was that man and woman are bound to each other and evenly accountable.[33] This in turn serves Ephrem, as we shall see further, in his interpretation of Eve's role in the chain of events that led to the fall.

THE VOCATION OF ADAM

Discussions of Adam's vocation in paradise normally evolved around the verse "The Lord God took Adam and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and guard it" (Gen 2:15). Thus, for example, both Philo and the Midrash elaborate on the meaning of the words "till" and "guard" that preoccupied Ephrem as well. In most cases the interpreters excluded the literal understanding of these words. For Philo the garden itself is a spiritual entity of virtue or wisdom and hence the tilling stands for the aspiration for moral perfection.[34] A somewhat similar interpretation is found later in patristic exegesis of Ephrem's time.[35] Rabbinic exegesis offers several interpretations for the words in

---

[30] *Gen. Com.* 2.17.

[31] Ephrem's harmonizing exegesis reflects a hermeneutic difficulty similar to the one addressed by the Midrash claiming that Adam of Gen 1:27 ("Male and female He created them") was created as an androgynous creature. See *Gen. R.* 8.1.

[32] It seems that Ephrem addresses here the exegetical problem stemming from the fact that the biblical text does not mention the creation of Eve's soul.

[33] Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11*, p. 82. For midrashic parallels for a harmonizing interpretation of these accounts, see *Gen. R.* 19.12.

[34] Philo, *Legum Allegoria* 1.14, ed. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, LCL (London, 1929).

[35] See, for example, Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 38.12 (On the Theophany), ed. C. Moreschini and P. Gallay, SC 358 (1990).

question. Some of these seem to exploit the feminine endings of the Hebrew verbal forms used here (לעבדה; לשמרה literally "to till her" and "to guard her") and the grammatical discrepancy between these forms and the masculine גן (garden). One of the solutions offered is that Adam should in fact till and guard the Torah (feminine)—אוריתא in the Aramaic Targums where this solution is attested.[36] An alternative midrashic interpretation identifies the object of these verbs as a specific commandment (מצוה, also feminine), e.g., the observance of the Sabbath.[37] According to another midrashic interpretation both verbs refer to Adam's duty to offer sacrifices to God.[38]

In his *Hymns on Paradise* Ephrem seems to adopt a variation of the last exegetical option, but with a significant modification, namely that Adam's priestly functions do not include animal sacrifices but only "sweet incense." Paradise itself is commonly described in the hymns as a tripartite sanctuary corresponding to the tabernacle, the tree of knowledge forming the "sanctuary curtain" and the tree of life the holy of holies (ܩܕܘܫ ܩܘܕܫܐ).[39] Ephrem combines, however, this priestly task with the commandment not to eat from the tree of knowledge.[40] This would become a common motif in later Syriac exegesis.[41] In his imagery of paradise as the heavenly sanctuary and Adam as the priest, it is important for Ephrem to emphasize that Adam should not be identified as the high priest who enters the holy of holies. This is reserved for the potential divinization of Adam—bearing on his success in his predicament—which would be accomplished eventually by Christ.[42] In his *Commentary on Genesis*, however, Ephrem completely ignores the priestly vocation of Adam and concentrates exclusively on the

---

[36] *Tg. Neofiti, Tg. Yer., Tg. Frag.* ad locum. See Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11*, p. 76, n. 96.

[37] See, e.g., *Gen. R.* 16.15.

[38] Ibid.

[39] *Hymns on Paradise* 3.2–3; 3.5,13–14; 2.10–13. See I. Ortiz de Urbina, "Le Paradis eschatologique d'après Saint Ephrem," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 21 (1956), pp. 467–472; N. Séd, "Les hymnes sur le paradis de saint Ephrem et les traditions juives," *Le Muséon* 81 (1968), pp. 455–501; T. Kronholm, "The Trees of Paradise in the Hymns of Ephraem Syrus," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 11 (1977/1978), pp. 48–56; Brock, *St. Ephrem: Hymns on Paradise*, pp. 52–53.

[40] *Hymns on Paradise* 3.16; Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11*, pp. 76–77.

[41] See, e.g., *The Cave of Treasures* 4.1. See also Chapter 4 below.

[42] *Hymns on Paradise* 3.9; 3.14; 3.16; 12.4. See also Brock's note in his edition, p. 191, n. 1.

observance of God's law (ܢܡܘܣܐ) and commandment (ܦܘܩܕܢܐ) given to Adam regarding the tree of knowledge.[43]

It seems that Ephrem is consciously trying here to exclude notions of Adam's elevated priestly and royal status in paradise. He does this in clear contradistinction to his own tendency in the *Hymns* where Adam's status in paradise is described in those terms.[44] This is in fact conceived of in the *Hymns* as the meaning of the "image of God."[45] Ephrem's description of Adam's position in paradise in the *Commentary* seems to be influenced by his previously mentioned tendency to present Adam as an autonomous and frail being whose challenge is neither priestly nor royal but moral. Moreover, an emphasis on Adam's *imago dei* qualities, e.g., kingship and priesthood, would have weakened Ephrem's exegetical stance on the nature of Adam's fall.

Human Predicament and Divine Mercy

The general approach of Ephrem to the story of the fall is characterized by an ongoing attempt to exculpate God from any vicious intent toward Adam and Eve. The opening remark in the *Commentary* states that the commandment not to eat from the tree of knowledge "was an easy one." Since God allowed them to eat from the rest of the trees there was absolutely no need to eat from that tree. Thus to abstain from

---

[43] The understanding of the verb "to till" as relating to the observance of God's commandment is attested in an undeveloped form as early as the last quarter of the second century. See Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus* 24, ed. R. M. Grant (Oxford, 1970).

[44] It may be argued that Ephrem distinguishes between priestly traditions adopted in his hymns and non-priestly exegetic tendency applied in his commentary. This may parallel a similar dichotomy which, as recently suggested by some scholars, can be discerned in early rabbinic literature. See, e.g., *m. Yoma* 1.1; 1.3; 1.5 (anti-priestly); *Tos. Yoma (Kip.)* 1.6–7, ed. S. Lieberman (pro-priestly); *y. Yoma* 1.3 (=39a, combination). On pro-priestly traditions surviving on the fringes of rabbinic literature, see M. D. Swartz, "Ritual about Myth about Ritual: Towards an Understanding of the 'Avodah' in the Rabbinic Period," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 6 (1997), pp. 135–155; E. Reiner, "From Joshua to Jesus: The Transformation of a Biblical Story to a Local Myth," in A. Kofsky and G. G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1998), pp. 223–271.

[45] On Adam's priestly and royal status in paradise according to Ephrem's hymns, see n. 9 above. For Adam's status in paradise in Ephrem's commentary, see also G. Anderson, "The Cosmic Mountain: Eden and its Early Interpreters in Syriac Christianity," in G. A. Robbins (ed.), *Genesis 1–3 in the History of Exegesis* (Lewiston, 1988), p. 208.

eating its fruit was not a difficult command to follow. Therefore, states Ephrem, "any transgression would be due not to any constraint but to disdain."[46] Ephrem further develops this idea by stating that God set death around the forbidden tree to make sure that Adam kept the law at least out of the fear of death if not out of love for his Creator.[47] In his wish to stress God's mercy toward Adam and humanity Ephrem is even ready to waive the prevailing New Testament emphasis on the pre-requisition of love and adopt a rabbinic-like stand, namely, that both love and fear are legitimate motivations for religious praxis.[48]

While explaining the silence of the biblical text regarding the tree of life, namely not explicitly forbidding Adam to eat from it, Epherm asserts that God completely hid the tree of life from Adam and Eve, as a measure to alleviate their temptation.[49] According to Ephrem God also commanded Adam and Eve not to even look at the tree of knowledge as a precaution against temptation. Hence the first action of the serpent was, according to the *Commentary*, to persuade Eve to look at the tree.[50]

The tendency underpinning Ephrem's exegesis seems to be that man must act as an autonomous moral being out of free will.[51] This concept entails the capability of assuming responsibility for his decision. Thus man cannot be worthy of divine reward by force of grace alone, but must undergo a moral test. Ephrem's strong emphasis on Adam's sin as derived from an act of free will, may reflect a polemical stance vis-à-vis opinions expressed by people such as Bardesanes, who ascribe the responsibility for the primordial sin to Satan.[52] Such an interpretation

---

[46] *Gen. Com.* 2.8.

[47] Ibid. See also Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4, ed. E. Evans (Oxford, 1972).

[48] See, e.g., *b. Sot.* 22b; *y. Ber.* 13b. For a discussion of this topic, see D. Flusser, *Jesus* (Jerusalem, 2001), pp. 70, n. 32, 89; Urbach, *The Sages*, vol. 1, pp. 400–419.

[49] *Gen. Com.* 2.17.

[50] *Gen. Com.* 2.20. The difference between eating, touching and looking at the tree of knowledge is elaborated in the Midrash. See, e.g., *Gen. R.* 19.3. Here, though, it is suggested that Eve herself added the prohibition to touch the tree or to approach it. In contradistinction to Ephrem God did not forbid it and moreover, Eve's initiative was exploited by the serpent to snare her. See also *Tg. Yer.* ad locum which translates "…and a tree to be desired to make one wise (להשכיל)(Gen 3:6)," a tree to be desired to look at (לאיסתכלא ביה).

[51] For a similar emphasis, see Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 38.12.

[52] See T. B. Mansour, "La défence éphrémienne de la liberté contre les doctrines marcionite, bardesanite et manichéenne," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 50 (1984), pp. 331–346. For a discussion of Ephrem's opinion regarding free will, see also Hidal, *Interpretatio Syriaca*, pp. 82–88.

can be found in earlier Jewish—both Hellenistic and midrashic—and
Christian sources. Thus, according to the *Mekhilta*, "God set before him
(Adam) two ways, one of death and another of life. And he (Adam)
chose the way of death."[53] For Ephrem, however, it was important to
present this moral requirement as "minimal." This reflects Ephrem's
peculiar understanding of the interplay between God's grace and jus-
tice (ﬓﬗ﬏﬐﬑﬒ﬓ ﬔﬕﬖﬗ) in his relation to mankind.[54] It explains
the necessity for Adam and Eve to "earn" the reward of immortality
coming from the fruit of the tree of life, by passing the "easy" test of
keeping the simple commandment of refraining from eating from the
tree of knowledge.[55] Such understanding of Adam's commandment
is also reflected in the Midrash which states that Adam was expelled
from paradise because of a "light" commandment.[56] The motif of a
pre-conditional deed that merits God's mercy—which may be seen as
somewhat unusual in early Christian exegesis[57]—features prominently
in early rabbinical exegesis that could have been familiar to Ephrem.
Thus, for example, the exodus from Egypt—seen as an ultimate case of
divine mercy—demands, according to a midrash, a minimal precondi-
tion, a voluntary performance of at least one commandment on the
part of the people of Israel.[58]

   In fact, according to Ephrem, even the serpent with Satan hiding
inside him, did not believe they could succeed to seduce Adam and
Eve because the test was too easy.[59] Ephrem continues to elaborate

---

[53] *Mekhilta R. Ishmael* to Exod 13:29; *Mekhilta R. Shimon b. Yohai* to Exod 13:29;
cf. Ps.-Philo, *Biblical Antiquities* 13.8–9; 2 Enoch 2:15. See also Theophilus of Antioch,
To Autolycus 25, 27.

[54] Cf. Irenaeus' emphasis on humanity's extreme weakness and total dependence on
God's mercy and goodness (*Against Heresies* 4.38).

[55] *Gen. Com.* 2.17–18.

[56] *Gen. R.* 21.3.

[57] See, for example, Ephrem, *Gen. Com.* 2.8; Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.

[58] The commandment referred to is usually circumcision seen as hinted at by Exod
12:7 with a midrashic reference to Ez 16:6–7. See, e.g., *Mek. R. Ishm.* Bo 5 (to Exod
12), "'You were naked and bare' (Ez 16:7), i.e., naked from any commandment. God
therefore gave them two commandments: the blood of Passover and the blood of
circumcision, so that they occupy themselves with those commandments for the sake
of redemption. 'And when I passed by you, and saw you polluted in your own blood
etc.' (Ez 16:6), namely, through the blood of the covenant I released your prisoners
from the pit. One does not take his reward other than through a deed." According
to Urbach (*The* Sages, vol. 1, pp. 365–366) a more general trend may be discerned in
rabbinical sources, namely that one of the reasons for the whole set of commandments
is God's will to reward his servants.

[59] *Gen. Com.* 2.19.

the minimalist interpretation of the temptation. He argues that the serpent was introduced to perform this task as one being least capable of succeeding. Neither Satan himself nor an angel or some other wondrous creature was allowed to tempt Adam and Eve or to appear in a human or divine form as Satan later appeared to Jesus.[60] For Ephrem this serves as another sign of the divine mercy toward the weak first Adam.[61] Moreover, Ephrem claims that the serpent's acts of temptation were virtually nominal. Namely, the serpent was just a catalyst for the manifestation of Adam and Eve's own avarice. So that the real motive behind their sin was an inner one and the serpent's role was merely ancillary. Ephrem seems to claim that even without the serpent the terms of temptation would have remained basically the same.[62] One may further argue that Ephrem's serpent—being "despicable and hideous" as he was—was in fact supposed to confront them with the revolting outward image of their mental temptation, and by that to actually deter them from transgressing the divine commandment.[63]

Ephrem's emphasis on both Adam's and Eve's complete moral autonomy and God's mercy is further spelled out. The serpent's appearance is juxtaposed to the announcement of the commandment. It is explained as a premeditated act of God so Adam and Eve "might know that it [the serpent] was the tempter and they might take precautions against his cunning."[64]

Ephrem's tendency of emphasizing the divine mercy toward Adam and Eve is further applied to the events following the fall. Divine mercy is now directed toward the possibility of repentance and alleviation of punishment. Adam and Eve were given, according to Ephrem, many

---

[60] For a peculiar elaboration of this parallelism in *Liber Graduum*, see Chapter 3 below.

[61] *Gen. Com.* 2.18.

[62] *Gen. Com.* 2.16; 2.18. See also discussion in Chapter 3 below.

[63] This tendency may also explain the absence of the well-known motif of the sexual seduction of Eve by the serpent-Satan found in Gnostic and rabbinic texts and known to Christian authors. See, e.g., Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 3.17, ed. O. Stälin, GCS 1–3 (1905–1909), rev. by L. Früchtel and U. Treu (1960–1972). For a discussion of this motif, see, e.g., G. G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythologoy* (Leiden, 1984), pp. 38–49. According to Clement, certain Gnostics actually argued that the act of eating from the tree in itself stands for the sexual act (*Stromateis* 3.17). Clement, however, suggested that Adam's sin could have been that he had not been able to restrain his lust until the preordained time for his marriage (ibid. 3.14). Cf. Tertullian, who describes Adam's sin as the lust for food proper (*On Fasting* 3, ed. E. Dekkers, CCSL [1954]). For further discussion of this motif, see Chapter 3 below.

[64] *Gen. Com.* 2.18.

opportunities to repent, but time and again they failed. Thus, had they
repented "they would have escaped from the curses that were decreed
on the earth and upon them."[65] Moreover, in a sense the ways of God's
mercy after the fall mirror its ways beforehand. Ephrem creates an
inverted symmetry between the serpent's arrival without delay "lest
their trial be too great when they looked upon…that beautiful tree,"
and God's delayed appearance after the fall in order to give Adam and
Eve an occasion to repent,[66] again a motif attested in the Midrash.[67] In
both cases the time factor serves as means to help Adam to cope with
his human predicament.[68]

   Ephrem's underlying concept of the divine mercy toward Adam
and Eve parallels the midrashic motif of the deliberation among the
Creator's powers (מידות) of mercy and justice (the latter sometimes
represented by the angels) regarding God's intention to create Adam.[69]
In both cases it is conditioned by the inherent weakness of the human
character. In the Midrash, however, the creation of Adam—God's pre-
science of humanity's frail moral fiber notwithstanding—is presented
as the ultimate act of mercy. Thus the exegesis of mercy in the Midrash
is focused on the pre-creation interplay between God and his heavenly
powers,[70] whereas in Ephrem it is integrated into an anthropological
framework reflecting Ephrem's emphasis on the moral drama as the
axis of the story of the fall and the subsequent human predicament.

---

   [65] *Gen. Com.* 2.23. See also Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus* 26. According to
Theophilus, even the expulsion from paradise was nothing but a means to atone for
Adam's sin and enable him to return to paradise (ibid.).
   [66] *Gen. Com.* 2.23.
   [67] *Gen. R.* 21.5.
   [68] For further examples of this tendency, see *Gen. Com.* 2.24–27. In 2.31 Ephrem
adds that Adam still had an opportunity to repent after the punishment to Eve was
spelled out.
   [69] *Gen. R.* 8.3–9. For Ephrem's fondness of balancing the two divine attributes of
mercy and justice in parallel to the midrashic motif of the *middot* of mercy and justice
regarding divine providence, see Brock, *St. Ephrem: Hymns on Paradise*, p. 59, n. 41;
L. Van Rompay, "Memories of Paradise: The Greek 'Life of Adam and Eve' and Early
Syriac Tradition," *Aram* 5 (1993), pp. 566–567. In this case, however, Ephrem seems
to have been influenced specifically by rabbinic deliberations on the interplay between
the two divine powers at the time of creation. For discussion of such rabbinic tradi-
tions, see Urbach, *The Sages*, vol. 1, pp. 448–461.
   [70] In some pseudepigraphic writings and Qumranic texts the actual fall of human-
ity takes place only close to the flood. There angels act as perpetrators of the fall of
humanity. For a discussion of this topic see M. E. Stone, "The Axis of History at
Qumran," in E. G. Chazon and M. E. Stone (eds.), *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives: The
Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden, 1999), pp.
133–149.

In order to stay with his plan to present the story of the fall as first and foremost a moral drama, Ephrem claims that in fact Eve and Adam had the faculty of distinguishing between good and evil before eating from the tree. In other words, they were already created with a developed moral judgment. The serpent's promise to Eve that they will be able to know "good and evil," was therefore redundant, and hence did not constitute a temptation at all. Subsequently Eve's action did not depend on the serpent but on her voluntary inclination or lack of self-discipline.[71] Here Ephrem continues the exegetic tendency treated earlier in this chapter.

Having stated that gaining knowledge was not the motivation behind Eve's action, Ephrem goes on to assert that what really pushed her to succumb to sin was a deep-seated desire, induced by the serpent's promise to "be like God." Namely, Ephrem argues—in line with his interpretation of God's image, in which man was created, as the dominion over the world—that Eve was moved by her desire to bypass Adam in the quest for absolute dominion,[72] thus becoming herself a "second god" (ܐܠܗܐ ܐܚܪܢܐ).[73] Thus she was determined to gain domination over her spouse, or in Ephrem's Pauline wording, "that she might become head over her head."[74] In fact Eve acted in what may have seemed to Ephrem as a revolt against her own nature and thus against the divine will or preordained human reality that the husband should rule over or be the head of his wife.[75] Thus Eve "fixed her gaze

---

[71] *Gen. Com.* 2.20.

[72] Ibid. According to Clement of Rome, Eve acted out of jealousy of Adam (*I Clement* 6, ed. K. Lake, LCL (London, 1912).

[73] *Gen. Com.* 2.26. In the *Hymns on Paradise* Ephrem emphasizes an alternative interpretation where the promise of divinity reflects the religious ideal of the Christian ascetic, namely achieving the divine status destined for Adam and humanity in paradise. See Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise* 7. See also S. Brock's introduction to his English edition of the *Hymns*, pp. 25–33, 72–74. For an elaboration of the ascetic ideal of paradise in *Liber Graduum*, see Chapter 3 below.

[74] *Gen. Com.* 2.20; 1 Cor 11:3: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."

[75] *Gen. Com.* 2.20. The Midrash states the principle that dominion belongs to the last one in the order of creation (*Gen. R.* 19.4). Hence it entails the theoretic possibility of Eve's (woman's) domination over her spouse. This notion might have constituted an exegetic challenge for Ephrem.

on the tree"[76] and was caught by its magnetic power which, like the singing of the Sirens, could not be resisted.

Eve's expectations were frustrated, since she did not gain the "divinity for which she had been looking." Ephrem proceeds to interpret Eve's attempt to persuade her spouse to partake of the forbidden fruit.[77] Ephrem claims that this task demanded "much entreaty" on Eve's part, stating, however, that Eve's strenuous attempts to persuade Adam are not mentioned by the biblical text. It therefore seems that he relies here on an existing traditional exegesis.[78] Ephrem ignores, however, the obvious question of Eve's motives for seducing Adam, an issue routinely discussed in contemporary Christian and Jewish sources. A telling example is provided by the Midrash where Eve's motives are portrayed either as jealousy for another woman that might be created to replace her following her imminent death after her sin, or for Adam's remaining alone in paradise.[79] Ephrem's silence regarding this question apparently derives from his desire to emphasize the principal argument that both Adam and Eve must be tested, receiving—every one of them—their reward or punishment through an act of free will in response to this test. Since Eve had already faced the test, Adam had now to be tried as well. An elaboration of Eve's motives for seducing Adam may have impinged on the force and adroitness of this argument.

The need for Adam to be tested helps Ephrem to explain why Eve's "garment of glory," an attribute of the protoplasts' paradisiacal existence prior to the fall, was not taken from her immediately following her sin. According to Ephrem, Eve temporarily retained her garment in order not to alert and frightgen Adam by her nakedness. This might have led him to desist from succumbing to temptation for the wrong reasons, namely from distraction rather than love or fear of God.[80]

The role of the garments of glory seems to be restricted in the *Commentary* to covering the nakedness of Adam and Eve. Referring to Genesis 2:25 ("The two of them were naked and were not ashamed") Ephrem explains that this does not mean that "they did not know what

---

[76] *Gen. Com.* 2.20.
[77] *Gen. Com.* 2.21.
[78] See e.g., *Gen. R.* 19.5 where Eve is described as entreating Adam, sobbing and begging him to comply with her wish.
[79] Ibid.
[80] *Gen. Com.* 2.21.

shame was." They were actually mature young adults with a developed moral awareness.[81] In this situation, the garment of glory prevented them from feeling ashamed.[82] Their moral judgment, however, was not impeded by the garment. It is worth noting that in his hymns Ephrem develops the motif of the garments of glory with a different emphasis. The garments of glory stand here first and foremost for the link between Adam and Eve before the fall and the future divinization of humanity and its restoration to the ideal state in paradise through Christ, the Second Adam.[83] Thus Ephrem's *Hymns on Paradise* reflect an exegetical stance of "high anthropology" regarding the garments of glory—a stance common to both Jewish and Christian exegetes of Ephrem's time.[84] In contradistinction to this exegesis Ephrem's interpretation in the *Commentary* further serves him in his emphasis on the absolute moral responsibility of Adam for his sin through an act of free will.[85] In this last scheme, Ephrem abandons the exegetical concept

---

[81] *Gen. Com.* 2.14. Ephrem may be following here the midrashic motif regarding the maturity of Adam and Eve. See L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia, 1909–1938), vol. 1, p. 59, vol.5, p. 78, n. 21. See also A. Salvesen, "Infants or Fools in the Garden of Eden? An Ambiguity in Early Syriac Tradition," in M. F. J. Baasten and W. Th. Van Peursen (eds.), *Hamlet on a Hill: Semitic and Greek Studies Presented to Professor T. Muraoka on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Leuven-Paris, 2003), pp. 433–440. In the *Cave of Treasures*, on the other hand, the garment of glory is not understood as a cover for bodily shame. There the body of Adam as the Cosmic Man is glorious in itself and is described as a visible image of the deity. See *Cave of Treasures* 2. 3–4 (R. Or.), 2.13–14 (R. Occ.).

[82] According to Origen, before the fall Adam and Eve saw with the eyes of the mind, whereas following the fall those eyes were closed and they began to see with the eyes of the senses (*Contra Celsum* 7.39).

[83] For the motif of Adam and Eve's garments of glory and its Jewish background, see S. Brock, "Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition," in M. Schmidt (ed.), *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter* (Eichstatt, 1981), pp. 11–40; idem, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of St. Ephrem* (Rome, 1985), pp. 65–76; idem, *St. Ephrem: Hymns on Paradise*, pp. 66–72; Van Rompay, "Memories of Paradise," pp. 556–558; A. Goshen, "The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature," *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994), pp. 171–195. It is noteworthy, however, that even in the *Hymns on Paradise* Ephrem qualifies at some point his understanding of the garments of glory given to Adam and Eve by stating that the radiance of the garments did not yet bestow divine perfection but only contained the potential for its realization: "Had Adam conquered, he would have acquired glory upon his limbs" (*Hymns on Paradise* 3.12). In this Ephrem is actually expressing a view regarding the potential of human divinization similar to his position in the *Commentary*.

[84] See G. Anderson, "The Garments of Skin in Apocryphal Narrative and Biblical Commentary," in J. Kugel (ed.), *Studies in Ancient Midrash* (Cambridge, Mass, 2001), pp. 101–143.

[85] *Gen. Com.* 2.14.

of high anthropology, advocating in its stead what may be termed "low anthropology," divorced from any supernatural gifts associated with the garments of glory.

Nevertheless, divinization as an ascetic ideal represented by Ephrem through the promised divinization of Adam and Eve in their humanity in paradise—with Christ, the second Adam as a model for human divinization in the human body—finds its way into the *Commentary* as well. Thus we can understand Ephrem's insistence that Adam and Eve (humanity as a whole) were destined to eat from the trees of knowledge and life after passing their test and acquire "infallible knowledge and immortal life…in those same bodies."[86] It is noteworthy that in the *Hymns on Paradise* Ephrem states that the forbidden fruit was not evil at all, in itself, but was a "fair fruit."[87] Moreover, he adds that Christians actually eat daily from the tree of knowledge in the form of the Eucharist.[88] In midrashic sources, however, the prohibition to eat from the tree of knowledge represents absolute prohibitions of idolatry, murder, incest, robbery and other essential pre-Mosaic commandments given to humanity by God. In this context the commandment to abstain from the tree of knowledge is not provisional; it does not seem to have eschatological connotations either.[89]

Measure for Measure

It is important for Ephrem to present the divine punishment meted out to all the characters who participated in the drama of the fall as fair retribution corresponding to the nature of their sinful conduct. Ephrem takes pains to demonstrate that the punishment never exceeds the measure of the transgression. This principle of "measure for mea-

---

[86] *Gen. Com.* 2.23. According to Gregory of Nazianzus, Adam and Eve were supposed to enjoy the fruit of the tree of knowledge, signifying contemplation, after reaching maturity (*Oration* 39.12). For the ascetic ideal of divinization in Ephrem (especially in the *Hymns of Paradise*), see Brock, *St. Ephrem: Hymns on Paradise*, pp. 72–74.

[87] *Hymns on Paradise* 15.11: "Since it was through the fair fruit that Adam became odious, he has made that fruit an object of hate, considering it to be harmful."

[88] *Hymns on Paradise* 6.7–8, 12.7, 12.15. In Chapter 3, we will encounter a completely different appraisal of the tree of knowledge and the Eucharist.

[89] *Gen. R.* 16.6.

sure" or *lex talionis* is conceived of as a form of mercy.[90] This may point to rabbinical influence as it served as a common exegetic devise in contemporary Midrash. This motif suits well Ephrem's general tendency to emphasize the interaction of God's mercy and justice in his dealings with man and the world.

Discussing the punishment of the serpent Ephrem presents a series of instances, indicating that every detail of the punishment fits the "measure for measure" principle of justice. This elaboration of details, uncharacteristic of the *Commentary*, seems to reflect the importance Ephrem assigns to this principle. God tells the serpent: "'Cursed are you above every beast' (Gen 3:14), because you deceived those who rule over all the beasts. Instead of being more clever than all the beasts you will be more cursed than all the beasts."[91] Ephrem further claims that the curse "on your belly shall you go," i.e., the amputation of the serpent's limbs—a traditional motif known already to Philo and attested in the Midrash[92]—corresponds appropriately to Eve's punishment of birth pangs caused by the serpent's temptation.[93] Two other curses, namely "dust you shall eat all the days of your life," and "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed," are likewise presented as measure for measure punishment for the serpent's misdeeds. The swallowing of dust is a measure for depriving Adam from eating from the tree of life, whereas the enmity is a just measure for the serpent's claim that he was acting out of love for Adam and Eve.[94]

The same pattern of measure-for-measure employed here by Ephrem may also be discerned further in discussing the details of Eve's punishment. God's verdict "you shall turn toward your husband" and "he shall rule over you," is thus presented as a countermeasure for Eve's attempt to achieve dominion over her husband by eating the forbidden fruit.[95]

---

[90] Gregory of Nazianzus states that the punishment itself was an act of mercy toward Adam and Eve. The expulsion of Evil from paradise prevented its possibility of becoming eternal (*Oration* 38.12).

[91] *Gen. Com.* 2.29.

[92] Philo, *De opificio mundi* 157–163; *Quaes. in Gen.* 1.48; cf. *Apoc. Mos.* 26. For further discussion of this motif, see S. Ruzer, "The Seat of Sin in Early Jewish and Christian Sources," in J. Assmann and G. G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Transformation of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 367–391.

[93] *Gen. Com.* 2.29.

[94] Ibid.

[95] *Gen. Com.* 2.30.

Having emphasized God's mercy even at this stage, namely his expectation that Adam would repent, following the pronouncement of the verdict regarding Eve,[96] Ephrem addresses Adam's punishment. Adhering to the measure-for-measure pattern Epherm explains here the details of Adam's predicament as mirroring those of his disobedience to the divine command. For example, the verdict that Adam "shall eat the plants of the field" (Gen 3:18) corresponds to his rejection of "the most pleasing fruits of Paradise." The necessity of Adam's descendants to labor for their sustenance ("In the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread" [Gen 3:19]) is interpreted as mirroring his discontent with the enjoyable exemption from toil in paradise, as manifested in his acts.[97]

Similarly, Ephrem's contemporary Cyril of Jerusalem developed a variation of the measure-for-measure motif in interpreting the punishment of Adam and Eve. With Cyril, however, the focus becomes the comparison between the details of Adam's punishment and the passion of Jesus. Thus Jesus' crown of thorns came to nullify the curse of "thorns and thistles" (Gen 3:18) and his burial in the ground was destined to cancel the curse of the earth (ibid.).[98]

Finally, it is noteworthy that in the framework of discussing Adam's sin and the divine punishment meted out to the protagonists of the story Ephrem virtually disregards the complex of motifs regarding the role of Satan and other angelic forces common in Jewish-Christian-Gnostic explications on the fall. Our author cannot help mentioning Satan in this context, but he restricts Satan's appearances to absolute minimum. Thus he does refer to the traditional belief that Satan was behind the serpent's conspiracy,[99] but does not supply any motive for Satan's acts, unlike other common traditions that ascribed to Satan such motives as jealousy.[100] Likewise, Ephrem briefly dispenses with Satan's punishment as an afterthought to the whole discussion of the punishments. This fits his general emphasis on the moral understand-

---

[96] *Gen. Com.* 2.31. Ephrem may hint here at the possibility of Adam's repentance without Eve. This opens up intriguing exegetical avenues. Ephrem, however, avoids developing them here.

[97] *Gen. Com.* 2.31.

[98] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 13.18, 13.35, ed. A. A. Stephenson (Washington, 1970).

[99] See e.g. *Gen. Com.* 2.18; cf. *Apoc. Mos.* 16–17.

[100] For a developed Syriac tradition of this motif see *The Cave of Treasures* 3.1–7.

ing of the story, marginalizing the role of the heavenly powers. This emphasis is further enhanced by Ephrem's claim that Satan and his host were judged and punished in secret, thus, they were not really an integral part of the drama. One may also say that this exegesis corresponds to Ephrem's general inclination toward "Antiochene," literal interpretation of Scripture.

Conclusion

It appears that Ephrem emphasized in his commentary on Genesis 2–3 his view of religious anthropology that forms the core of his exegesis. According to the Syrian father, the crux of Adam and Eve's drama revolves around the issue of their moral autonomy and moral choice vis-à-vis God's commandment. This basic tendency affected the pronounced demythologization of Ephrem's exegesis and the avoidance of familiar mythological motifs, such as his radical devaluation of Satan's role, and his general lack of interest in angelology and demonology. Moreover, it seems to have also affected his disinterest in the common traditional understanding of Adam's vocation in cultic terms.

Another exegetical aspect discerned in the *Commentary* is Ephrem's persistent emphasis on the interaction between divine mercy and justice in God's dealings with humanity. We have seen that Ephrem carries his emphasis on divine mercy to new boundaries. Contrary to common Christian exegesis, however, he retains the importance of divine justice and the necessity of a moral test of obedience to a commandment as a precondition for salvation. This is, in fact, related to Ephrem's view of the story of the fall within his overall religious anthropology.

Regarding Ephrem's exegesis in the *Commentary* vis-à-vis his *Hymns on Paradise*, it seems to us preferable to distinguish between the works rather than to try and harmonize them. Thus, while in the *Hymns* Ephrem seems to express such traditional motifs as the cultic understanding of paradise and the "garment of glory," in the *Commentary* he develops an adroit and highly selective approach dictated by his "low anthropology" and his possible polemical agenda.

We have tried to demonstrate that in some instances Ephrem may have had unmediated access to rabbinic traditions. In fact it is possible to find in rabbinic literature—predating Ephrem or contemporary

with him—parallels or similar traditions to almost all the exegetical motifs appearing in Ephrem's commentary on the story of Adam and Eve. Moreover, it seems that Ephrem did not hesitate to use these traditions when they suited his exegetical purposes, ignoring the possibly problematic polemical connotations of such motifs as the emphasis on divine justice, or the salvific value of obedience to God's commandments.

Ephrem indeed polemicized with the Jews elsewhere. One may, however, say that as exegete of the fall, his choice of exegetical options and his ways of shaping them were dictated first and foremost by his overall "low anthropology" stance. The origin of the traditions he adopted—either Jewish or Christian—seems to have been of little if any importance to the Syrian Father.

LIBER GRADUUM:
THE HEAVENLY GARDEN OF ASCETIC DELIGHTS

Notwithstanding its peculiar features, the *Liber Graduum* (*LG*),[1] commonly dated to the late fourth—early fifth century, expresses the centrality of the ascetic imperative also characteristic of the broader Syriac tradition, notably attested in both Aphrahat and Ephrem. Thus similarly to Ephrem, religious anthropology becomes a major concern in *LG*'s interpretation of paradise. *LG* reflects the transition from proto-monastic Syrian asceticism—also primarily familiar to us from Aphrahat and Ephrem—to the subsequent phase influenced by Egyptian and Basilian monasticism.[2] Thus the asceticism of *LG* still reflects proto-monastic ascetic patterns though there was already a significant development of anchoritic and coenobitic monasticism also in Syria at that time.[3] The socioreligious context of the *Liber Graduum*, already devoid of any Jewish points of reference, is characterized by its sharp internal division of Christian society into the upright (ܟܺܐܢܶܐ)—representing the mass of ordinary believers—and the perfect (ܓܡܺܝܪܶܐ) ascetics. The former are those not detached from the world. They deal with

---

[1] For the Syriac edition of the text, see M. Kmosko, Patrologia Syriaca, vol. 3 (Paris, 1926). For an English translation, see R. A. Kitchen and M. F. G. Parmentier, *The Book of Steps: The Syriac Liber Graduum* (Kalamazoo, 2004).

[2] See A. Vööbus, "The Institution of the *Benai Qeiama* and the *Benat Qeiama* in the Ancient Syrian Church," Church History 30 (1961), pp. 19–27; S. P. Brock, "Early Syrian Asceticism," *Numen* 20 (1970), pp. 1–19 (= *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity*, London, 1984, chapter 1); S. H. Griffith, "'Singles' in God's Service: Thoughts on *Ihidaye* from the Works of Aphrahat and Ephraem the Syrian," *The Harp* 4 (1991), pp. 145–159; idem, "Monks, 'Singles', and the 'Sons of the Covenant': Reflections on Syriac Ascetic Terminology," in E. Carr, A. A. Thiermeyer and E. Velkovska (eds.), *Euloghema: Studies in Honor of R. Taft* (Rome, 1993), pp. 141–160; idem, "Asceticism in the Church of Syria: The Hermeneutics of Early Syrian Monasticism," in: V. L. Wimbush and R. Valantasis, *Asceticism* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 220–245; Kitchen and Parmentier, *The Book of Steps*, pp. xlix–l. On asceticism in *Liber Graduum*, see also R. A. Ratcliff, *Steps Along the Way of Perfection: The Liber Graduum and Early Syriac Monasticism* (Washington, 1988); D. Juhl, *Die Askese im Liber Graduum und bei Afrahat: eine vergleichende Studie zur frühsyrischen Frömmigkeit* (Wiesbaden, 1996).

[3] See Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Religious History*, ed. P. Canivet and A. Leroy-Molingen, SC 234, 257 (1977, 1979).

the "minor commandments" pertaining to the charities of active life, while the latter are those that deal with the "grand commandments" of detachment from the world, become "strangers to the world," "leave the earth," and thus take up the cross in imitation of Christ.[4] Within this socioreligious division the upright are further perceived as those in whom—unlike the perfect—a demonic presence persists alongside the activity of the Holy Spirit.[5] This trait—mentioned also by Ephrem—is reminiscent of messalianic tenets, though the author of *LG* never suggests that Satan dwells substantively in the soul of the upright, who is regarded as a full member of the liturgical community, destined for the final triumph of the Spirit and redemption.[6]

The treatise contains thirty chapters, or *memre* (sing. *memra*), our focus being on *memra* 21, which portrays the original setting of Adam and Eve in paradise as essentially an ascetic situation, and Adam and Eve before the fall as models of perfect ascetics.[7] This seems to be a peculiar trait of *LG*, especially highlighted in *memra* 21, compared both to early monastic literature and to Christian early literature at large. The special emphasis on Adam and Eve in this context thus provides an additional theological dimension to the ascetic discourse in *LG*. The insistence on the primordial biblical foundation for asceticism also determines the centrality of the hermeneutics of Genesis 1–3 in *memra* 21.

Relying on earlier scholarship on this topic, notably Aleksander Kowalski's pioneering work,[8] we intend to analyze some of the core motifs employed in this *memra*. We hope, inter alia, to clarify the uncommon hermeneutic strategies of the author, still belonging to an early, unapologetically independent phase of Syriac Christianity. We

---

[4] *LG* 3.11, 5.16, 5.18; A. Guillaumont, "Les 'Arrhes de l'Esprit' dans le Livre des Degrés," in *Memorial Mgr Gabriel Kouri-Sarkis* (Louvain, 1969), pp. 107–113.

[5] See, e.g., *LG* 3.11; Guillaumont, "Les 'Arrhes de l'Esprit'," pp. 107–113.

[6] See Ephrem, *Hymns on Faith* 6.3–4, CSCO 154–155, Syr. 73–74 (Louvain, 1955); Kitchen and Parmentier, *The Book of Steps*, pp. 48–49; C. Stewart, *'Working the Earth of the Heart': The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to AD 431* (Oxford, 1991).

[7] The ascetic portrayal of the protoplasts' existence in paradise stands in contrast to the biblical motif of the richness of paradise expressed in *LG* as "heavenly wealth" (ܥܘܬܪܐ ܫܡܝܢܐ). See *LG* 21.11 (col. 613.22); cf. *LG* 21.10 (col. 612.21–23). On this motif, see A. Baker, "The Gospel of Thomas and the Syriac Liber Graduum," *New Testament Studies* 12 (1965/6), p. 52.

[8] A. Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia di Adamo nel Liber Graduum*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 232 (Rome, 1989).

do not aim here to provide a comprehensive analysis of the *memra*, but rather to focus on its explicit and implicit exegetical devices.

* * *

The author of *LG* entertains a concept of a dual paradise—an earthly physical and a heavenly spiritual—as the setting of Adam and Eve's life before the fall. Their physical existence takes place in the earthly paradise while their mind dwells in the spiritual one.[9] Various concepts of such a dual paradise were common in early Christian thought.[10] The collation of this perception with the concept of paradise as *locus asceticus*, however, seems to constitute a peculiar trait of *LG* and determines the different aspects of its discussion. One of the core aspects of the theme is the nature of primordial sin and, correspondingly, the ascetic way of restoring the "paradise lost," propagated by *LG*.

Adam and Eve's state before the fall is portrayed as perfect innocence and ignorance of evil, since when God created them he taught them only good (ܪܬܒܐ ܗܘ ܡܠܦ ܐܠܟ ܐܢܘܢ ܐܠܡܐ).[11] This innocence signifies the total spiritual preoccupation with heavenly things in immortal existence. Yet in *LG* this blissful state is not identical to the final consummation of man's destiny: man is called upon to choose—out of the freedom granted to him by the Creator—to resist temptation and remain in heavenly bliss and, in the words of the author, to "eat our Lord (ܘܐܟܠܘܗܝ، ܠܡ ܠܡܪܢ) and live and become great and be perfected (ܘܗܝ ܐܬܓܡܪܘ) through him."[12] "The consummation of the Lord" refers to the spiritual consummation of the tree of life—identified by the author with Christ[13]—which would have been Adam's lot had he not sinned. We will return later to the peculiarity of such an understanding of the consummation of the Lord

---

[9] *LG* 21.7 (cols. 600–604).

[10] See J. Daniélou, "Terre et paradis chez les Pères de l'Église," *Eranos Jahrbuch* 22 (1953), pp. 433–472; A. Louth, "Paradies: IV Theologiegeschichtlich," in G. Müller (ed.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. xxv (Berlin and New York, 1995), cols. 714–719.

[11] *LG* 21.1 (col. 585.1–2). According to Martikainen, *LG* differs here from Ephrem, for whom the twofold knowledge of Adam of good and evil exists unconditionally, already in the state of bliss. See J. Martikainen, "Das Böse in den Schriften des Syrers Ephraem, im Stufenbuch und im Corpus Macarianum," in W. Strothmann (ed.), *Makarios-Symposium über das Böse: Vorträge der Finnisch-Deutschen Theologentagung in Goslar 1980*, Göttinger Orientforschungen: Reihe 1, Syriaca 24 (Wiesbaden, 1983), pp. 36–46, esp. p. 40.

[12] *LG* 21.1 (col. 588.8–9).

[13] *LG* 21.2 (col. 589.3–5).

and its Eucharistic connotations. The above unfulfilled reality would have led in turn to the final transformation of human existence, when physical existence would have united with the spiritual one in the heavenly paradise.[14]

Like Ephrem in his commentary on Genesis, the author of *LG* perceives the primordial sin as essentially an act of free will, which could therefore have been avoided: "However, in the end, Adam had a will, and if he had not so desired, the evil one would not have oppressed him [during] the thousand years he lived on the earth."[15] But whereas in Ephrem the sin is conceived of in general terms of disobedience, according to *LG* it is portrayed as a shift in the inner intellectual focus from heavenly to earthly concerns:

> …the thought of transitory things by which Adam and Eve tasted death. For through it they came to know evil (ܒܝܫܬܐ), which they had not known…. After they obeyed the evil one (ܒܝܫܐ) and observed the earth and saw this thing on [the earth] and loved it, evil (ܒܝܫܬܐ) had power over them and they knew it.[16]

Earthly concerns are in fact equated here with both evil and death and are introduced by Satan through Adam and Eve's voluntary decision.[17] Their own decision thus constituted a precondition for their submission to Satan's power and to earthly concerns. Consequently his role in the paradisiacal narrative is substantially marginalized; he merely performs a supporting role in the pivotal drama of the ascetic psyche—the author's concept of the heavenly paradise being thus primarily metaphorical, as distinct from many other early Christian and Jewish traditions.[18] This is further manifested in the internalization of evil by Adam and Eve as a psychological entity distinct from Satan;

---

[14] *LG* 21.7 (col. 604.1–3).

[15] *LG* 21.10 (col. 612.9–14). See Chapter 2 above.

[16] *LG* 21.1 (col. 584.4–12). Cf. *LG* 21.10 (col. 612.12–24), *LG* 21.17 (col. 625.20–26).

[17] *LG* 21.20 (col. 632). In Syriac literature, free will is often identified with celibate and ascetic life, in opposition to Satan. See, e.g., Aphrahat, *Dem.* 7.25; P. Bettiolo, "Adamo in Eden e la liturgia celeste: temi della meditazione cristiana nella Siria del IV secolo, tra Afraate e il Liber Graduum," *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 37 (2001), pp. 3–27, esp. p. 4.

[18] For a discussion of the figure of Satan in the context of the biblical account of paradise in early Christian and Jewish sources, see G. A. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, 2001), pp. 21–42.

it is this psychological entity (ܟܝܢܐ) rather than Satan as the "evil one" (ܒܝܫܐ) that is said to overpower the protoplasts.

Satan, however, is still regarded by *LG* as the epistemic source of evil, identified peculiarly with the tree of knowledge—another sign of his metaphorical devaluation.[19] This notion is presented as dichotomous to the more traditional identification of Christ with the tree of life.[20] It should be noted that, somewhat unexpectedly, Augustine's view here is akin to that of *LG*. In line with his generally negative appraisal of free will, he identifies the tree of knowledge with the exercise of free will as disobedience.[21] *LG*, however, seems also to perceive free will as a source for the underlying principles guiding the upright in their mundane existence and thus to discern certain positive aspects of the tree.[22] But its author claims that knowledge of good was taught to the protoplasts by God himself prior to the fall, and according to his idiosyncratic interpretation the tree of knowledge signifies in fact the additional ungodly knowledge of evil:

> Because God had only taught what is good (ܛܒܬܐ ܒܠܚܘܕ) to Adam and Eve when he created them.... Because of this Satan is called the "Tree," through which Adam and Eve knew evil and good (ܝܕܥܘ ܒܗ ܒܝܫܬܐ ܘܛܒܬܐ). They learned good from God (ܝܠܦܘ ܛܒܬܐ ܡܢ ܐܠܗܐ) and evil from Satan. They became "knowers of good and evil," and from there the enmity of impiety (ܣܢܐܬܐ ܕܪܘܫܥܐ) bound Adam and his children.[23]

---

[19] *LG* 21.1 (col. 585.5). Unlike Ephrem, however, who also devalues the original status of Satan before his fall, our author retains Satan's original heavenly status. See Martikainen, "Das Böse," p. 38. According to Hippolytus, Justin the Gnostic identified the tree of knowledge with the serpent. See Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 5.21, ed. M. Marcovich, Patristische Texte und Studien 25 (1986). The question as to whether the tree of knowledge is Satan appears in ps. Macarius, although his own concept is different. See H. Dörries, *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon*. AAG. Philologisch-historische Klasse. Dritte Folge 105 (Göttingen, 1978), p. 42.

[20] *LG* 21.2 (col. 589.3–6); Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise* 3.2.15; Augustine *De Civ. Dei* 13.21; Louth, "Paradies," p. 716.

[21] For Augustine's general concept of free will, see, e.g., *De spiritu et littera* 5; *Ep.* 217 (to Vitalis); *De correptione et gratia* 34–38. His negative view of free will is also similar in principle to that of Evagrius Ponticus. See, e.g., Evagrius, *Chapters on Prayer* 31, PG 79, cols. 1165–1200; Eng. trans., R. E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford, 2003). On Augustine's identification of the tree of knowledge with free will, cf. *De Civ. Dei* 13.21; Louth, "Paradies," p. 716. For additional patristic views on free will, see Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia*, p. 124.

[22] *LG* 21.8 (col. 604.17–25).

[23] *LG* 21.1 (col. 585.4–9).

According to our author, earthly concerns are a general category of thought of what he terms "transitory" things (ܥܒܘܪܬܐ)—such things as labor and anxiety regarding food, property, beauty, honor, clothes and sex—namely, concerns alien to the ascetic ideal, all branded as lust (ܪܓܬܐ). It deserves notice that though undeniably belonging to the story of Adam and Eve, sex is here no more than one aspect of the human yearning for mundane existence.[24] The very concept of primordial sin as an act of free will and its inescapable consequences encompasses the above list of transitory interests, reflecting *LG*'s ascetic perception of paradise. This approach allows *LG* to entertain a twofold understanding of the commandment not to eat from the tree: as symbolically representing a general prohibition of lust for material possessions, as well as literally sanctioning against the "lustful anxiety" for food.[25] The latter emphasis appears as also applying to the rest of earthly concerns, in a sense encapsulating the concept of primordial sin. This approach is strikingly reminiscent of similar attitudes attested already in Tertullian and prevalent in early Egyptian monasticism—as highlighted by Peter Brown—where it was widely believed that the first sin of Adam and Eve had been lust for food rather than for the sexual act.[26] Moreover, such an attitude is also found in early Syriac ascetic tradition, notably in Aphrahat.[27]

Thus, in a number of contexts in *LG*, the act of eating functions as an allegorical representation of sin—namely, of the fateful change in spiritual/intellectual orientation. The sin is thus perceived essentially as being of a spiritual character.[28] This is explicit, inter alia, in the following passage: "But after they ate from the tree, that is, after they had abandoned heaven and loved the earth, their mind came from heaven

---

[24] *LG* 21.1 (col. 584.5), 21.4 (col. 596.1); 21.7 (col. 600.25–26). See also R. A. Kitchen, "Syriac Additions to Anderson: The Garden of Eden in the Book of Steps and Philoxenus of Mabbug," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 6.1 (2003), par. 22 (e-journal).

[25] *LG* 21.7. In this context *LG* also uses the idiom "fasting to the world" (ܨܝܡܝܢ ܠܥܠܡܐ), otherwise attested in Oxyrhynchus papyrus (*Oxy.* I,2) and the *Gospel of Thomas* 27. See A. Guillaumont, "Nêsteuein ton kosmon," *Bulletin de l'institut français d'archéologie orientale* 61 (1962), pp. 15–23; A. Baker, "Fasting to the World," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84.3 (1965), pp. 291–294.

[26] See Tertullian, *On Fasting* 3, ed. A. Reifferscheid, G. Wissowa, CSEL 20, pp. 274–297; P. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), pp. 220–221.

[27] *Dem.* 14.40.

[28] See Kovalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia di Adamo*, pp. 206–207.

to their bodies (ܐܬܪ ܢܦܫ̈ܘܗܝ ܡܢ ܪܚܡܐ ܕܠܘܬ ܦܓܖ̈ܝܗܘܢ), [and] then they saw that they were naked."[29] Therefore, the result of the initial attention they paid to earthly desires or—according to the *LG* imagery—their initial consumption of the illicit fruit is humanity's enslavement to those desires. This is in contradistinction to the spiritual food—namely, the "life-giving words of our Lord," represented by the tree of life. Had Adam and Eve chosen this latter path, it would have allowed them to realize their potential immortality and "be bound up" with the Lord (ܐܬܐܣܖ̈ܘ ܗܘܘ ܕܝܢ ܥܡ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܥܠܬ ܒܗ ܒܚܝ̈ܐ).[30] One may discern here an interesting parallel, *mutatis mutandis*, to Ludwig Feuerbach's famous interpretation of an old dictum: "Der Mensch ist, was er isst (One is what one eats)." In Feuerbach's context the consumption relates not to food but rather to the particularities of man's socio-cultural environment that define his world outlook.[31]

In light of his perception of the dual paradisiacal reality, the author of *LG* distinguishes between the spiritual/allegorical nourishment and the material nourishment of the physical body of Adam and Eve in their pre-fall existence. This paradisiacal food is referred to as heavenly bread (ܠܚܡܐ ܫܡܝܢܐ), identical with that of the angels (ܠܚܡܐ ܕܡܠܐܟ̈ܐ).[32] This heavenly bread—apparently referring to Ps 78:24–25—is associated with the manna that is the food both of the primordial state in paradise and of the perfect ascetic.[33] In contrast to the notion that the physical food in paradise came from the various trees—as implied by the biblical verse (Gen 2:16, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, you may freely eat of every tree of the garden") and endorsed by common Christian exegesis, including Ephrem[34]—*LG*'s author, focusing exclusively on the manna, gives no indication of the fruit trees in paradise being a source of physical nutrition. In this blissful state Adam is fully absorbed in the contemplation

---

[29] *LG* 21.8, col. 605.8–12.

[30] *LG* 21.1, col. 588.5–9. Compare this peculiar idiom with the biblical verse which later became a Jewish liturgical formula expressing the soul's immortality: "To be bound up in the bundle of life" (1 Sam 25:29) and the Hebrew prayer for the dead "*El male rachamim*" (merciful God).

[31] L. Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig, 1904) pp. 67–93; Eng. trans. G. Eliot (New York, 1957).

[32] *LG* 21.7, col. 601.1–2; Kovalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia di Adamo*, pp. 103–105.

[33] *LG* 25.8, cols. 752.24–753.4. This idea differs from the understanding of the manna as purely spiritual food as suggested in 1 Cor 10:3.

[34] See Ephrem, *Gen. Com.* 2.8 and our discussion in Chapter 2, above.

of heaven while his physical needs are supplied by God: "He looked into heaven and not on earth and rejoiced with the heavenly angels without anxiety and pains, and was concerned neither about clothing nor about food. But God fed him, as was appropriate to the wealth of his kindness (ܒܥܘܬܪܐ ܕܒܣܝܡܘܬܗ) with heavenly bread."[35]

The author emphasizes, in this context as elsewhere in the treatise,[36] that the heavenly bread is gained by Adam and the perfect ascetics without labor (ܕܠܐ ܠܐ ܗܘܘ ܗܘܘ),[37] denoting his radical anti-labor ascetical concept, where labor is regarded essentially as an impediment to a truly spiritual existence and hence on a par with the rest of earthly concerns: "However, Adam chose labor, which is the opposite of perfection, and through his own choice he bore anxiety—something that stifles those who seek to ascend to the higher realm."[38]

This concept is manifestly distinct from the more common monastic approach, where minimal labor is considered essential to the monk's ideal of autarky. Moreover, since the need for material nourishment is common to both the pre-fall and the post-fall modes of existence, it is precisley the exigency of labor that determines here the essential difference between the two types of material food—namely, the heavenly and the earthly. The author of *LG* thus associates the cessation of heavenly bread with the fall and the beginning of the need for human labor to produce food: "They saw that the heavenly bread was withheld (ܐܬܟܠܝ) and went on to labor (ܠܡܠܐܐ) on the earth for food."[39]

*   *   *

The exegetical strategy here is founded upon two biblical passages employed to define both the nature of the ideal physical existence—be it of the protoplasts in paradise or the perfect ascetics—and the consequences of the fall. The first is obviously the verdict: "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread" (Gen 3:19), while the second is the Exodus description of the divine gift of manna in the desert and its

---

[35] *LG* 21.7, cols. 600.23–601.2; see also *LG* 23.1 (col. 692.11–13). The motif of contemplation of heaven before the fall has antecedents and parallels in Greek Christian literature. See Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia*, p. 54, n. 55. The angelic state of Adam and Eve is an old motif found already in Jewish Pseudepigrapha and early Christian literature. See ibid., p. 84, n. 144.

[36] See, for example, *LG* 25.8, cols. 752.1–753.8.

[37] *LG* 21.7, col. 601.3–4.

[38] *LG* 21.20 (col. 632. 7–11).

[39] *LG* 21.10, col. 613.10–11.

abuse by the Children of Israel, expressed in the exagerated care for the food and the consequent punishment (Exod 16:14–27). From the *LG*'s perspective, this misconduct might have been interpreted as excessive attention to earthly concerns and a lack of spiritual focus.

This anti-labor stance may be perceived as contradicting the dictum in Genesis 2:15, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to *work* it and keep it." It may not be accidental that our author, in the whole of his lengthy work, does not relate to this verse. It is plausible that he is relying on an old and common exegetical tradition, which interpreted "to work it" not literally as physical labor, but rather as either intellectual contemplation of divine truths and the performing of the celestial liturgy or as generally observing God's commandments. These patterns of exegesis—ignoring the literal sense of the verse, which implies physical labor—are found already, for example, in Philo,[40] in later targumic and rabbinic sources[41] and in Ephrem, who combines the interpretation of "work" as observing the commandment not to eat from the tree with its identification as Adam's priestly ministry.[42]

As noted, this idea of real material paradisiacal nourishment is complemented in *LG* by the notion of spiritual sustenance—an idea that in itself was widely known both in the Jewish Hellenistic and early Christian traditions. An illustrative example is found in Philo's elaboration on the spiritual food consumed by the elect among the Children of Israel on Mount Sinai. Relating to Exodus 24:11 ("And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank"), Philo interprets beholding God (ויחזו את האלהים) as seeing God with the keen-sighted eyes of the mind; this vision is, according to him, the food of souls, of which a true partaking results in immortality. Thus the ascent to Mount Sinai is perceived as a heavenly ascent to the tree of life, to a holy and divine place identified as

---

[40] Philo, *Legum Allegoria* 1.14.

[41] *Tg. Neofiti, Tg. Yer., Tg. Frag.* ad locum. See T. Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11, in the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian* (Upsala, 1978), p. 76, n.96; *Gen. R.* 16,15, ed. J. Theodor and Ch. Albeck (Jerusalem, 1965).

[42] *Hymns on Paradise* III.2,3; III.5,13–14; III.16; II.10–13. See Ortiz de Urbina, "Le Paradis eschatologique d'aprés Saint Ephrem," pp. 467–472; Séd, "Les Hymnes sur le Paradis de Saint Ephrem et les Traditions Juives," pp. 455–501; Kronholm, "The Trees of Paradise in the Hymns of Ephraem Syrus," pp. 48–56; Brock, *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*, pp. 52–53; Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis*, pp. 76–77. See also discussion in Chapter 2, above.

God's logos. In Philo's context, the sacrificial meal of the biblical nar-
rative is entirely spiritualized and replaced by an ecstatic vision of God
that provides "food for the soul" without any physical food consumed!
Sacrificial cult is thus replaced by ecstatic vision. All this is connected
in Philo to Israel's privileged status, recognized in their divine gifts of
"seeing" God (a Philonic pseudo-etymology of the name Israel) and
later enjoying the heavenly manna.[43]

The general concept of spiritual food as the true nourishment of the
human soul appears in *LG* in the peculiar form of a spiritual consum-
mation of the tree of life. Unlike Philo, for whom it is the Sinai rev-
elation that is intrinsically connected to the tree of life, for the Syriac
author the archetypal metaphor of spiritual sustenance is grounded in
the pre-cosmic reality of the heavenly paradise. Moreover, the primor-
dial tree of life is perceived as a purely spiritual entity identified in the
context of Christian theological discourse with the eternal Messiah-
Christ. According to *LG*, then, the spiritual food is in fact the "words
of our Lord (Jesus)," tantamount here to the Lord himself and to the
tree of life:

> In that world in which there is no death,...they will eat the life-giving
> words of our Lord (ܡܠܘܗܝ, ܕܡܪܢ ܚܝ̈ܬܐ ܢܐܟܠܘܢ). They shall
> eat our Lord (ܘܢܐܟܠܘܢܝܗܝ ܠܡܪܢ ܘܢܚܘܢ) and live.... The good tree, in that
> world of light invisible to the eyes of flesh, is our Lord Jesus. He is the
> tree of life (ܗܘܝܘ ܐܝܠܢܐ ܕܚܝ̈ܐ) who gives everything life by its fruit
> wherever the perfect will of God is.[44]

This logos-centered interpretation is reminiscent of Philo, though
here, as noted, it is clearly part of the Christian discourse. Moreover,
both traditions seem to refer to the biblical dictum "man does not live
by bread alone, but...by everything that proceeds out of the mouth
of the Lord" (Deut 8:3). This may have served as a scriptural founda-
tion for *LG*'s concept of the double nourishment in paradise, the spiri-

---

[43] See Philo, *Quaesiones et solutiones in Exodum* to Exod 24:11–12 (ed. LCL, trans.
R. Marcus, 1953), pp. 80–83. Various noetic nourishment traditions according to
which angels do not consume material sustenance are attested in pseudepigraphic,
rabbinic and patristic writings. Manna and ecstatic vision as both sources of divine
knowledge and angelic sustenance are attested also in Jewish Hellenistic writings. For
discussion, see A. Lieber, "Jewish and Christian Heavenly Meal Traditions," in A. D.
DeConick (ed.), *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, SBL
Symposium Series 11 (Atlanta, 2006), pp. 313–339, esp. pp. 315–320.
[44] LG 21.1-2, cols. 588.6–589.7. The appellation "our Lord" (ܡܪܢ) is a regular title
for Jesus among Syriac writers. See Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia*, p. 47.

tual one being identified with the words of the Lord or even with the divine logos symbolically represented by the tree of life. The identification of the tree of life with Christ, albeit without the consummation motif peculiar to *LG*, was apparently a common feature of early Syriac thought as evident in Ephrem.[45]

The purely spiritual interpretation suggested here for the "eating of the Lord" is complemented by the negative spiritual alternative of eating from the tree of knowledge, identified with Satan:

> Because of this Satan is called the "Tree" (ܕܐܝܠܢܐ ܗܘ ܐܝܠܢ ܐܝܠܢܐ) through which Adam and Eve knew evil and good. They learned good from God, and evil from Satan.... Because of this, God said to them: "Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," that is, do not listen to it because it will teach you all sorts of evil things and take you away from heavenly things (ܫܡܝ̈ܢܝܬܐ) and from the kindness of your Creator.[46]

It seems that this elaboration of the paradisiacal spiritual consummation of the tree of life, understood as the consummation of the Lord, has implicit Eucharistic connotations.[47] In other words, the spiritual nourishment in the heavenly paradise is identified with the Eucharistic communion. Consequently, in this emphasis on the equation of "eating the Lord" with hearing his words, one may see how the general focus of *LG* on the inner intellectual preoccupation with heavenly things, is further enhanced by symbolic understanding of the Eucharist, a tendency rather common in early Christianity, that coexisted peacefully with "literal" interpretations.[48] It is worth noting that such clearly metaphorical usage of the idiom "eating the Messiah" is not restricted to Christian sources but is also found in a contemporaneous rabbinic tradition, albeit in a different context and with a different meaning. According to this tradition, "Israel has no Messiah, because

---

[45] See Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise* 3.2.15; *Hymns on Faith* 6.14.9–11, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 154, 29. See also Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 113–129, 320–324; Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11*, p. 74. This identification is also found in Augustine (*De Civ. Dei* 13.21). See also Louth, "Paradies," p. 716.

[46] *LG* 21.1, col. 585.4–15.

[47] It is noteworthy that for Ephrem it is rather the tree of knowledge which bears Eucharistic connotations. According to him, the Eucharist is a form of eating from the tree of knowledge. See Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise* VI.7–8; XII.7; XII.15 and our discussion in Chapter 2, above.

[48] J. Betz, *Eucharistie in der Schrift und Patristik* (Freiburg, 1979).

they have *consumed* him already in the days of Hezekiah (אין להם
משיח לישראל שכבר אכלוהו בימי חזקיה).[49]

<p style="text-align: center;">*   *   *</p>

The perception of the consequent earthly existence of humanity as
virtual death, in contrast to the paradisiacal one, corresponds to the
ascetic imperative where death to the world constitutes true life. This
informs *LG*'s idiosyncratic interpretation of Genesis 2:17: "But of the
tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the
day that you eat of it you shall surely die." God, then, according to
LG—in contradistinction to a common Jewish and Christian exegeti-
cal pattern[50]—does not inform Adam here about an impending pun-
ishment of death at the end of human life span, but simply warns him
of the inevitable transformation ensuing immediately after the change
of inner disposition. We can further notice here the hermeneutical
aspect of *LG*'s elaboration of the subject, expressed in its idiosyncratic
interpretation of the story of paradise in Genesis, according to the
general ascetic paradigm.

Memra 21 also links the protoplasts' enchantment with earthly
concerns with their desire—either triggered or enhanced by Satan's
instigation—to "become like God" (Gen 3:5), a desire branded by *LG*
as silly and infantile (ܛܠܝܐ) and in fact perceived as a manifestation
of the sin of pride.[51] In this the author further unfolds the uncom-
mon parallelism between Adam's sin and Satan's earlier sin and fall,
reflected in his notion that in Adam Satan was looking for a soul mate
of a sort.[52]

The Genesis narrative itself (Gen 1:26–27) contains an inherent ten-
sion between the divine proclamation that man is created in God's
image followed by the clear mandate to rule over the natural world
and multiply—this dominion is understood by Ephrem as the ultimate

---

[49] *b. Sanh.* 98b
[50] See Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection*, pp. 155–176.
[51] *LG* 21.11 (col. 616.2–5, 25). For a discussion of the nuances of the terms ܛܠܝܐ
and ܛܠܝܘܬܐ in the context of early Syriac traditions about the state of Adam and Eve
before the fall, see Salvesen, "Infants or Fools in the Garden of Eden?" pp. 433–440.
Salvesen notes that though childhood is elsewhere used as a simile of humanity's per-
fect innocence before the fall, in *LG* Adam's state of perfection is contrasted with
ܛܠܝܘܬܐ in its meaning of immaturity and foolishness, regardless of his actual age.
[52] *LG* 21.18 (col. 628.20–23). See also, Kitchen, "Syriac Additions to Anderson,"
par. 7.

expression of being in God's image[53]—and Satan's/the serpent's entice-
ment to become like God (Gen 2:4–5). The author of *LG* is manifestly
aware of this inherent tension, due inter alia to his strong emphasis
on the ascetic rejection of the earthly world. He highlights this tension
by further adapting Satan's speech to God's proclamation: "The evil
one (ܒܝܫܐ) counseled: Possess and enjoy yourself; rule, increase, and
multiply. Cast off from yourself asceticism (ܡܙܕܗܪ ܐܢܬ ܢܟܦܘܬܐ)
and renunciation (ܡܣܪܩܘܬܐ) and holiness, also lowliness (ܐܦ
ܡܟܝܟܘܬܐ), and know evil as well as good things and grow and become
like God who created you."[54] The call to "rule, increase, and multiply"
echoes then the divine mandate in Genesis 1:26–28 ("Be fruitful and
multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion....").

According to the author, Adam perceived earthly paradise as the
realm of his dominion, where he could hide from God, who was
restricted, as it were, to his heavenly domain.[55] The author suggests
that the way to dominion lies not in the pursuit of earthly wealth and
power—advocated by Satan—but in renunciation of the world in imi-
tation of Christ's *kenosis*. Namely, the possibility of *imitatio Dei* is
here restricted to an imitation of Christ in his condescending state
and not in his function as creator and *Pantokrator*. The idea of deifi-
cation, common in Ephrem and in Greek patristic literature, is totally
unknown to the author; according to him, it is impossible—a vain,
childish arrogance—to aspire to be like God and act like God the King
and Creator.[56]

Moreover, God's commandment in Genesis 1:28 is idiosyncratically
reinterpreted as a law given "for the aid of his soul *lest he let go of
heaven and inherit the earth*."[57] Thus the protoplasts' desire to be like
God—following the earlier revolt of Satan—signifies a total rebellion
against God and a rejection of his will regarding certain precepts of
ascetic perfection.[58] Yet in *LG* the achievement of a limited degree of

---

[53] See Ephrem, *Gen. Com.* 1.29 and Chapter 2, above.

[54] *LG* 21.9 (col. 609.7–12).

[55] *LG* 21.17 (col. 625.3–15). Kitchen sees here a comic element introduced by
the author into the biblical narrative. See Kitchen, "Syriac Additions to Anderson,"
par. 25.

[56] On the idea of deification in Ephrem, see *Hymns on the Church* 45.32.1, ed.
E. Beck, CSCO 198, 117; *Carmina Nisibena* 69.12.1, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 240, 112.

[57] *LG* 21.8 (cols. 604.26–605.1). See also P. Bettiolo, "Confessare Dio in perfetta
spogliazione. La via del discernimento dei comandmenti nel Liber Graduum," *Cris-
tianesimo nella storia* 19 (1998), pp. 631–651.

[58] See Kovalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia di Adamo*, pp. 206–207.

imitatio Christi is in fact tantamount to a deification of sorts, where humanity is able to be a true image of God or to "become like God," and partake in his dominion. Such a "low" notion of deification— alongside "higher" deification concepts—is also common in Greek patristic literature.[59]

This is how *LG* resolves the inherent tension, retaining both the ascetic imperative and the state of dominion from Genesis 1 or, as *LG* restates it elsewhere:

> Thus people would have been on earth physically and in heaven spiritually until it pleased their Creator to elevate them to on high. Nothing on earth would have harmed them: neither reptile, nor wild beast, nor Satan.... For he said to them on the day he created them, "I will throw the fear and dread of you upon all that exists on the earth" (Gen 9:2).The hand of the Lord was on Adam and the hand of Adam tamed (ܗܘܐ ܚܒܫ) all there was on the earth beneath him by the power of our omnipotent (ܐܚܝܕ ܟܠ) Lord.[60]

*   *   *

Another conspicuous motif in the Genesis 1:26–28 divine call to humanity involves the mandate to procreate and multiply. This maxim seemingly contradicts the manifest ascetic program of the author, forcing him to adapt his exegesis correspondingly.[61] His hermeneutical solution is the claim that had the protoplasts kept God's commandments they would have multiplied in the earthly paradise in a non-sexual mode of procreation, one resembling the creation of Eve from Adam's rib:

> But if they had kept the commandments of our Lord and made supplication to him...our Lord would have made (ܥܒܕ) for them children as he had made Eve from Adam, without lust (ܪܓܬܐ) and without intercourse (ܢܩܘܠ), or if he had wanted he could have made children by the hairs of their heads or by the fingernails, and the people would have become the image (ܕܡܘܬܐ) of angels.[62]

---

[59] See, e.g., N. Russel, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford, 2005).

[60] *LG* 21.7 (col. 604.1–12).

[61] The difficulty regarding the existence of male and female genitalia—similarly contradicting the ascetic agenda of the author—is also addressed by him. See Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia*, pp. 63, 68.

[62] *LG* 21.7 (col. 601.11–19). For Adam's similarity to angels in his pristine state, see also *LG* 23.1 (col. 692.11–13). Gregory of Nysa also expresses the idea of an angelic

This mode of procreation, then, somewhat resembles the natural veg-etative mode of reproduction, or even a primitive form of the idea of cloning. The absence of lust is emphasized as characterizing this neu-tral mode of procreation. Elsewhere the author refers to Eve as Adam's daughter who was created out of him in a non-sexual way.[63] The idea that Adam generated Eve and hence has a kind of parental relation to her has some equivalent in Aphrahat who says that Adam "gave birth" (ܐܘܠܕ) to Eve, whereas Ephrem explicitly denies that Eve was Adam's daughter.[64] In *LG* this ideal form of reproduction appears to be restricted to Eve and hence to the female sex, and is initiated by a divine word: "he (God) would have made Eve fruitful by the word of our Lord without lust" (ܗܘܐ ܗܟܢܐ ܠܗ ܥܒܕ ܚܘܐ ܠܚܘܐ ܡܦܪܐ ܒܡܠܬܐ ܕܡܪܢ ܕܠܐ ܪܓܬܐ).[65] This seems to connote Mary's conception of Jesus without lust or intercourse.[66] The concept of heavenly bliss without lust was known also to Aphrahat and Ephrem.[67]

In propagating this non-sexual, quasi-angelic form of reproduc-tion, the author deliberately avoids the common verb ܐܘܠܕ, which is for him connected with sexual and animal procreation which Adam and Eve engaged in only after the fall.[68] Adam and Eve in fact sin sexually after *watching* the animals.[69] Before that, concupisence did not enter their hearts, as they were like children. The motif of the

---

mode of procreation, which Adam and Eve lost (*De hominis opificio* 17, PG 44, col. 189).

[63] *LG* 25.3 (cols. 737.26–740.2).

[64] Aphrahat, *Dem*. 18.9, PS 1, col. 837.15; Ephrem, *Commentary on the Diatessa-ron*, Arm. 19.5, ed. L. Leloir, CSCO 137, 277. See Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia di Adamo*, p. 69.

[65] *LG* 15.6 (col. 348.18–21).

[66] Cf. John 1:13, where it is applied to the believers at large. See also *LG* 25.3.

[67] Aphrahat, *Dem*. 22.12–13; Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise* 7.5.4, 14.11.3.

[68] Kovalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia di Adamo*, p. 71. Cf. Philo, who regards Adam before the creation of Eve as an ascetic, imitating the solitary asceticism of God (*De opificio mundi* 151, 153; Bettiolo, "Adamo in Eden e la liturgia celeste," p. 6. For an overview of Jewish and Christian traditions regarding the possibility of sexual rela-tions between the protoplasts in paradise, see G. Anderson, "Celibacy or Consumma-tion in the Garden? Reflections on Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden," *Harvard Theological Review* 82 (1989), pp. 121–148.

[69] *LG* 21.10 (col. 613.15–19). The idea that Adam and Eve and their first descen-dants learned basic human functions by observing the animal world is found also in Ephrem, as well as in rabbinic and early Muslim sources. See Ephrem, *Hymns on Faith* 34.2–4; Martikainen, "Das Böse," pp. 41–42; G. Friedlander, *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer (The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great)* (New York, 1965), chap. 21, p. 156; Quran 5:31; A. Geiger, *Judaism and Islam* (Madras, 1898), pp. 80–81.

ideal innocence of childhood is combined here with that of nudity.[70] It should be noted that Eve's role in the sin and fall is not developed in *LG* beyond repetition of the biblical details. She is not the actual cause of Adam's sin—in sharp contrast to Aphrahat and Ephrem, where Eve plays a major role in the fall.[71]

All this is in line with the author's concept of the parallel dual existence, when the mind is totally absorbed in its heavenly contemplation and the body exercises its biological functions without sensation. This undoubtedly reflects the ascetic agenda of the author, espousing the idea of a passionless physical existence in paradise without abolishing the literal aspect of procreation.[72] We suggest that this balancing act is derived from the hermeneutical framework of harmonizing Genesis 1:26–28 with the author's ascetic ideal.

*   *   *

The description of Adam's paradisiacal existence and of the nature of his fall provides the author of *LG* with the necessary backdrop for his portrayal of the Messiah-Christ (ܡܫܝܚܐ) as one who fulfills the original perfection of the Adamic ascetic ideal. This is clearly an idiosyncratic elaboration of the Pauline motif of Jesus as the second Adam (Rom 5:14–19), where Paul seems to relate to the two phases in the creation of Adam depicted in Genesis 2:7—namely, his formation from the dust of the earth, followed by the breathing of the spirit of life into him.[73]

---

[70] *LG* 15.3 (col. 341.1–6). For a discussion of this motif, see Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia.*, pp. 64, 74–77.

[71] See Chapter 2, above; Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection*, pp. 99–116; Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia di Adamo*, pp. 208–209.

[72] See Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia di Adamo*, pp. 63–67.

[73] In *LG* there is no first creation of Adam in the Origenian sense of a double creation. On the distinction between the "first" and "second" Adam in Paul, and its possible midrashic setting, see M. Kister, "'In Adam': 1 Cor 15:21–22; 12:27 in Their Jewish Setting," in A. Hilhorst, É. Puech and E. Tigchelaar (eds.), *Flores Florentino: Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 687–690; idem, "'First Adam' and 'Second Adam' According to Paul (1 Cor 15) in the light of Midrashic Exegesis and Hebrew Usage" (forthcoming). The motif of a "second Eve," common among Syriac authors, does not appear explicitly in *LG*. See Kovalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia*, p. 209. According to *LG* 28.1, in addition to the created spirit God also breathed into Adam something of the non-created Holy Spirit, the same spirit that Christ gave the apostles after his resurrection. This was already a traditional Syriac motif found in various stages of development in Tatian, the *Acts of Judah Thomas*, Aphrahat and Ephrem. See A. Tanghe, "Memra de Philoxène de Mabboug sur l'inhabitation du Saint Esprit," *Le*

In *LG*, Adam's sin is posited as the opposite of Christ's achievement. What failed in Adam succeeded in the Messiah: God wanted that Adam should not transgress his commandment, and that wish was fulfilled in the Messiah. Christ and Adam both started from the same point—that is, both were made according to the image (ܕܡܘܬܐ) of God. Moreover, Christ is clearly presented as created in the image of the "true primitive Adam before the fall."[74] But from the moment of sin, their paths diverged dramatically. Adam betrayed his original state of perfection in his foolish hope to become like God, whereas Christ adhered to it. The difference between the two consists in their relation to God: Christ assumed Adam's existential situation and was able—by adopting a different stance than Adam—to realize via his *kenosis* God's plan for the state of ascetic perfection.[75] Christ, in fact, came to show people their original nature and teach them how to return to their original form; this seems to be the major purpose of the incarnation.[76] Indeed, there seems to be no special emphasis in *LG* on the death of Christ as a redeeming sacrifice; rather, it is on his crucifixion as an ultimate ascetic example of the detachment of the perfect from earthly existence.[77] We shall return to this ideal of self-crucifixion below.

The author of *LG* is distinguished by his uncommon elaboration of the comparison between Jesus and Adam, based mainly on the description of the temptation of Christ by Satan in Matthew 4:1–11 (cf. Mark 1:12–13, Luke 4:1–13).[78] Jesus' temptation by Satan is in fact presented as a replay of Adam's temptation. This hermeneutical choice presents itself as ideally befitting *LG*'s agenda. In addition to the ascetic setting of the scene in the desert, two of the temptations relate to food and

---

Muséon (1960), pp. 39–71, esp. p. 41; S. Brock, *The Holy Spirit in Syrian Baptismal Tradition* (Kottayam, 1979), pp. 46–48; Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia*, pp. 105–110. Here, too, the author of *LG* has in mind the identity between the primordial state of Adam and the state of the perfect. The Holy Spirit dwells in a person only as long as he follows the right ascetic way (*LG* 28.1).

[74] *LG* 21.11 (col. 616.2–24), based on Phil 2:6–7. See A. Louf, "Une ancienne exégèse de Phil 2,6 dans le Ketābâ deMasqātâ (Livre des degrees)," in *Studiorum Paulinorum Congressus Internationalis Catholicus*, AB 17–18 (Rome, 1963), vol. 2, pp. 523–533.

[75] See Louf, "Une ancienne exégèse de Phil. 2,6 dans le Kᵉtābâ dᵉMasqātâ," pp. 523–533; Kovalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia*, pp. 139–141. Cf. Aphrahat, *Dem.* 23.51.

[76] *LG* 21.3–4, 23.1, 26.1 (cf. Eph 1:10).

[77] See *LG* 21.3 (col. 593.7–9).

[78] *LG* 21.4 (cols. 593–596). On the pre-Nicene motif of comparison between Adam and Christ, see Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia*, p. 127, n. 20.

dominion over the world, the latter being explicitly exploited in our treatise. Thus according to *LG*:

> "He approached and was tempted [by Satan]" (Matt 4:3) in order to show us how Adam was tempted (ܐܬܢܣܝ) in the first place. It is written, "He defeated Satan" (Matt 4:10–11) in order to show us how if Adam had wished by a [single] word (ܒܡܠܬܐ), he would have been able to demolish (ܣܚܦ ܗܘܐ ܠܗ) [Satan]...by that word (ܗܝ ܕܒܠܚܘܕ) to which he (Christ) did not listen when [Satan] cajoled him to look out over the earth like Adam so that he might lust (ܢܪܓ) for the wealth of the earth and its transitory beauty (ܫܘܦܪܗ ܕܥܒܪ) as Adam and Eve had yearned for.[79]

This hermeneutical device recurs further on in the *memra*, where the seduction of Adam—and here also Eve—by Satan is paralleled by his attempt to seduce Jesus:

> But when the deceitful one (ܢܟܝܠܐ) approached Eve and Adam..., he seduced (ܫܕܠ) them as he would have seduced Jesus, and said to the Creator of the universe, "Look, see how the earth is attractive with its possession and its kingdoms. Listen to me and take possession (ܘܚܡܣܢ ܥܠܝܗ) and rule (ܐܫܠܛ) and you will not become *poor* (ܘܠܐ ܬܬܡܣܟܢ) and *empty yourself* (ܘܬܣܬܪܩ) and become a *stranger* (ܘܬܗܘܐ ܢܘܟܪܝܐ) on the earth.[80]

This parallel contains more than a shred of irony, since Christ who is being tempted by earthly possessions is emphatically called here "the Creator of the universe" (ܒܪܘܝܐ ܕܟܠܗ ܥܠܡܐ), demonstrating the absurdity of Satan's scheme. Christ is similarly described further as "that one who is the Creator and who is our Lord Jesus Christ."[81] It is worth noting that the trinitarian identification of Christ as the creator of the universe was not self-evident in earlier Syriac theology, as is clearly attested by both Aphrahat and Ephrem.[82] Thus *LG* may be regarded as an early instance of adapting to Greek Nicene Trinitarian theology, albeit in an undeveloped form.[83]

We may also note here the ascetic terminology of Satan's temptation, such as "become *poor*," "*empty yourself*" and "become a *stranger*

---

[79] *LG* 21.4 (col. 593.19–col. 596.2).
[80] *LG* 21.9 (col. 608.19–24).
[81] LG 21.11. (col. 616.4–5).
[82] See Chapter 1, above.
[83] See also Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia*, pp. 115, 201–203.

on the earth."[84] In Christ's victory over Satan through his unwavering humility, crowned by the crucifixion, he had broken down "the fence of enmity (ܣܝܓܐ ܕܒܥܠܕܒܒܘܬܐ) and 'Everything is made new again in Christ' (Eph 1:10), as [God] had wanted Adam to become, and as he had been created before he transgressed."[85] In other words, Christ carries out God's eschatological (last) will, which is identified by the author with God's original will envisioned for human paradisiacal existence but rejected by Adam, who "had done away with [it] at creation."[86]

The Christ-Adam opposition—integral to their parallelism—is further accentuated by the radical contrast in their perception of the vocation of humanity, created in God's image. Adam's misinterpretation of the nature of his divine image as one of majesty is contrasted with Christ's adherence to the original ascetic virtue of humility as the only avenue open for humans to "become like God." In other words, the only way to *imitatio dei* is that of humility and *kenosis*. This is exegetically linked in *LG* to the famous passage in Philippians 2:6, depicting Christ's semi-divine status as derived from his humility. Contrary to Adam, who desired to become equal to God, Christ "took the example of a servant while he was in the image of that creation of the first human being.... He took the image of servant so that he might obey his father like a servant (cf. Ph 2:6)—not in the way Adam took the image of majesty in order to be the opposite and adversary to his Lord and Creator."[87]

* * *

In line with his general view of Christ's death, as an ultimate ascetic example of detachment from earthly existence rather than as an atoning sacrifice, the author states that the Messiah showed the way up to the perfect; as he dwells in the upper heavens, they also should strive to achieve this goal through humility, ascetic detachment, and

---

[84] On the ascetic virtue of *xeniteia*, see A. Guillaumont, "Le dépaysement comme form d'ascèse dans le monachism ancient," in idem, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien. Pour une phénoménologie du monachisme*, Spiritualité Orientale 30 (Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1979), pp. 89–116; B. Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred: The Debate on Christian Pilgrimage in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2005), pp. 146–160.

[85] *LG* 21.3 (col. 592.14–20).

[86] *LG* 21.8 (col. 605.15–16).

[87] *LG* 21.11 (col. 616.14–23). See also Louf, "Une ancienne exégèse de Phil 2,6 dans le Kᵉtābâ dᵉMasqātâ," pp. 523–533.

obedience.[88] In other words, the perfect ascetic faces the same challenge: to die in his thoughts to earthly things (ܡܘܬܐ ܡܢ ܐܪܥܐ ܘܪܓܝܓܬܗ) and the way is open for him here and now to follow Christ and not Adam.[89] This apparently explains the lack of eschatological emphasis on Christ's second coming, since the ascetic imperative is now envisioned as the ultimate avenue for salvation.[90]

The ideal of ascetic humility as the vehicle for *imitatio dei* is further enhanced by the notion that a chain of Old and New Testament figures had exemplified this virtue, including Noah, Moses, Job, Daniel, Mary, Paul and the apostles. Moses (Exod 32:33) and Paul (Rom 9:3), in fact, were willing to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their brethren.[91] It is significant that the author here changes the biblical attribute of Noah in Genesis 6:9 and 7:2 from "righteous" (ܙܕܝܩ) to "humble" (ܡܟܝܟ) and calls him "the most humble of all the earth" (ܡܟܝܟ ܡܢ ܟܠܗ ܐܪܥܐ).[92] *LG* seems to discern an exegetical link between Noah and Moses in the verb "to blot out" ܠܡܚܐ, used in both Genesis 6:7 and Exodus 32:33, denoting God's readiness to annihilate the rest of humanity or the people of Israel.[93] He thus attributes a similar status to Noah as that of Paul and Moses, as an advocate for the sinners.[94]

According to *LG*, Moses was chosen precisely because he was the humblest. God weighed Moses against all the other 600,000 Israelites and their families, who sinned in pride, and in his lowliness and humility he outweighed them all.[95] A similar motif—the scales of pride versus humility—appears in connection with Noah, whose lowliness

---

[88] *LG* 21.4 (col. 596.13–17), 21.11 (col. 616.16–17).

[89] *LG* 21.5 (col. 597).

[90] According to Naeh, one may discern in certain Talmudic traditions a salvific dimension of celibacy influenced by Syriac early asceticism. See S. Naeh, "Freedom and Celibacy: A Talmudic Variation on Tales of Temptation and Fall in Genesis and Its Syriac Background," in J. Frishman and L. Van Rompay (eds.), *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation*, Trad. Exeg. Graeca 5 (Louvain, 1997), p. 80, n. 28. On sexuality in general in rabbinic literature, see D. Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford, 1993).

[91] *LG* 21.12–16 (cols. 617–625). On Moses' plea for his brethren in Jewish and Christian literature, see Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection*, pp. 168–170.

[92] *LG* 21.13 (col. 620.21–22).

[93] *LG* 21.12 (col. 620.8–10), 21.13 (col. 620.23–24).

[94] *LG* 21.13 (cols. 620.19–621.6). The motif of Noah's negotiation with God for the sake of humanity is manifestly adopted from the story of Abraham and Sodom (Gen 18:23–36).

[95] *LG* 21.12 (cols. 617.23–620.6). For this motif, see *Syriac Acts of Thomas* 9.

outweighed all the rest of humanity.[96] This type of humility is repre-
sented in various generations, so that a clear shift of emphasis from the
biblical virtue of righteousness to the ascetic virtue of humility can be
discerned.[97] Moreover, the author also singles out Mary's humility as
the prime motive for her election as the mother of the Messiah, going
so far as to state that "if there had been another woman who was more
humble (ܡܟܝܟܐ) than Mary, Christ would have been given birth to
by her!"[98] The ascetic ideal of perfection through humility, then, is
expanded to include outstanding figures from the whole range of pre-
monastic sacred history and thus relativized in preparing the ground
for contemporary ascetics.[99]

The contemporary notion of ascetics as a spiritual elite is molded
into the author's paradigm of the dual division of Christian society
between the perfect and the upright—compatible with his idea of a
dual paradise.[100] The upright represent the situation of Adam after the
fall and in the physical paradise, whereas the perfect achieve in their
lives Adam's original state of existing in the earthly paradise while
dwelling spiritually in the heavenly one. The double existence of Adam
and Eve—mind in heaven, body on earth—is thus likened to "spiritual
people" of today—namely, ascetics (ܥܡ ܕܡܫܡܠܝܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܐܢܫܐ
ܪܘܚܢܐ)—whose mind is "with our Lord in heaven."[101] According to
this conceptual framework Satan harms the upright because they are
tied to transitory things. The perfect, by contrast, are bound spiritu-
ally to the world of light. Thus a perfect ascetic liberates himself from
Satan in this life through asceticism, perceived as following the way
of Jesus:

> Therefore…[if] you do not wish to die, renounce and distance yourself
> from Satan and his teaching: that is, from Satan, from everything evil,
> from the world, from its anxiety, and from everything that Jesus had
> said to abandon through lowliness, prayer, and fasting, while keeping the
> commandments. Moreover…the teaching of the evil one…who harms

---

[96] *LG* 21.13. Noah's humility vis-à-vis the contempt and abuse of his contempo-
raries as he was building the ark is also found in rabbinic midrash. See, *Tanhuma*
Noah 5 (Warsaw, 1878).

[97] For the application of this motif to Job and Daniel, see *LG* 21.14.

[98] *LG* 21.16 (cols. 624.22–625.4).

[99] See also *LG* 21.3 (cols. 592.22–593.3).

[100] *LG* 21.1 (cols. 584–585).

[101] *LG* 21.8 (cols. 605.22–608.8–9).

the upright ones because they are held fast in this world by transitory things and are far removed from the perfect.[102]

The ideal of *imitatio Christi* is exemplified by a number of basic images—living like angels in the upper heaven as Adam did before the fall, as the Messiah[103] and, more prominently, the self-crucifixion of the ascetic as representing his/her dying to all things earthly: "Whoever does not get far away from the evil one and abandon everything on earth and look into heaven while being crucified (ܘܢܚܘܪ ܒܫܡܝܐ ܟܕ ܨܠܝܒ) will not attain that thing which Adam lost."[104] This ideal of self-crucifixion is in fact presented by the author as a cardinal commandment given by Christ to the apostles and further enjoined by them to all future believers.[105] Self-crucifixion is perceived as the ultimate expression of humility. It would appear, then, that it was achieved by the biblical paragons of humility, though the author attributes it explicitly only to Paul.[106] Here too we may discern the relativization of the ideal of ascetic perfection, preparing the ground for its realization by contemporary ascetics. The author even goes a step further and claims that there are a handful of ascetics in his own generation who are closer to the full achievement of the ideal than their biblical predecessors.[107]

These contemporary ascetics, however, might also, like Adam and Eve, fall into the sin of pride and "return to the earth in order to possess and use it…and the door will be closed in their faces. They will depart from the heavenly Jerusalem just like Adam from the spiritual Eden, which is the spiritual Jerusalem, the city of God."[108] Nevertheless, the way of return through repentance (ܬܝܒܘܬܐ, lit. "return"; cf., the Hebrew תשובה) is still open to the ascetic—a manifestation

---

[102] *LG* 21.2 (col. 588.10–21).

[103] *LG* 21.4 (cols. 596.26–597.4); 21.7 (col. 601.18–19). Cf. *LG* 21.17 (col. 625.10–11).

[104] *LG* 21.3 (col. 593.6–9).

[105] *LG* 21.3 (cols. 592.16–593.1); 21.5 (col. 597.5–17). According to *LG* 9.13, 28.1, the restoration of the original perfection of Adam begins, following Christ, with the apostles. See also Stewart, *Working the Earth of the Heart*, p. 91; Bettiolo, "Adamo in Eden e la liturgia celeste," p. 25.

[106] *LG* 21.6.

[107] *LG* 21.14 (cols. 621.15–624.4).

[108] *LG* 21.8 (col. 608.9-15). Paradise as the spiritual and heavenly Jerusalem of the perfect signifies the identity of the primordial and eschatological reality in contradistinction to the tradition deriving from the Johannine Apocalypse—apparently unknown to or rejected by the early Syriac Church—which does not associate it with paradise. See Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, pp. 261–262.

of God's mercy—as it was originally open to Adam and Eve.[109] This possibility was further facilitated by a law (ܢܡܘܣܐ) that God "established...for them *on earth* (ܒܐܪܥܐ), for if a person does it he will be saved thereby."[110] This auxiliary law thus differs from the sublime law given to the protoplasts in paradise consisting of the epitomizing commandment to abandon all earthly concerns. This duality of the law apparently corresponds to the socioreligious division of Christian society espoused by the author, the second law destined to govern the conduct of the upright.[111]

It is according to this perception of the perfect ascetics, whose will and desires are entirely focused on heaven, in imitation of Christ, that the author interprets the Lord's Prayer. In the prayer the ascetic should ask that:

> He might dwell spiritually in heaven with the angels while his mind is clothed with the glory of his Creator and the earth is not seen by him.... wherever the perfect will of God is, as our Lord said: Pray so that the will of God might be on earth as it is in heaven (Matt 6:10).[112]

It seems that the hermeneutical choice in this context was influenced no less by the earth-heaven duality found in the Lord's Prayer than by the motif of God's will. The prayer is thus turned into a petition for achieving the ideal mode of human existence, existing in heaven according to God's initial will with regard to Adam while dwelling on earth. Doing so is facilitated by the divine glory that constitutes an existential buffer between the perfect ascetic and earthly reality; or rather, in the author's imagery, it blinds the perfect from seeing that reality (ܘܠܐ ܡܬܚܙܝܐ ܠܗ).[113]

A further means of reaching and maintaining ascetic perfection is an imitation of Adam's consumption of the Lord identified as the tree of life and interpreted as consumption of the "life-giving words of Christ" with its clear Eucharistic connotations. The existential

---

[109] According already to certain ancient midrashic traditions, Adam and Eve have repented. See, e.g., *The Life of Adam and Eve* 9, 30; *Gen. R.* 22.13. Cf. *Num. R.* 13.3.

[110] *LG* 21.18 (cols. 628.23–629.1).

[111] See also Kitchen, "Syriac Additions to Anderson," pars. 30–32; Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia*, pp. 210–211.

[112] *LG* 21.2 (col. 589.1–9).

[113] The emphasis here differs from the common ascetic interpretation of giving up one's will in order to follow God's will. See A. Kofsky, "The Renunciation of Will in the Monastic School of Gaza," *Liber Annuus* 56 (2006), pp. 321–346. Cf. *m. Avot* 2.4: "Do his will as if it was your will, that He may do your will as if it was his will."

alternative would be eating from the tree of knowledge of evil identi-
fied with Satan and the transitory world:

> Today the children of Adam still eat with the hardness of their heart
> from this tree, which makes known [to them] evil and teaches them
> to be bound on the earth by transitory things.... Neither do they learn
> from God nor from a person of God how they may be bound up with
> our Lord in that world in which there is no death where they will eat
> the life-giving words (ܚܠܐܘܗ، ܪܡܬܐ ܕܐܘܢܕܘܗܡ ܣܝܟ ܚܣܝܟܐ) of our
> Lord. They shall eat our Lord and live and become great and be perfected
> through him.[114]

This imagery of the "life-giving words" of Christ as the spiritual fruits
of the tree of life is complemented by perceiving the ascetics them-
selves as those who in turn yield these fruits as part of their perfection:
"Everyone who imitates [our Lord] yields these fruits and becomes
perfect."[115] Thus the *imitatio Christi* of the perfect ascetics not only
restores in their lifetime the lost status of Adam in paradise but in fact
transcends his original state, becoming as it were a branch for diffus-
ing the spiritual gifts of the tree of life.

Conclusion

The author of *LG* harbors the concept of a dual paradise as the set-
ting of Adam and Eve before the fall. The perception of paradise as
locus asceticus constitutes a peculiar trait of *LG* and determines the
various aspects of its discussion. Core aspects here are the nature of
primordial sin and the ascetic way of restoring the "paradise lost."
In *LG*, primordial sin is peculiarly portrayed as a shift in the inner
intellectual focus from heavenly to earthly concerns, epitomized by the
lust for food. The author is also distinguished by his radical anti-labor
ascetic concept. Earthly concerns are equated with evil and death, and
are introduced through the protoplasts' voluntary decision; conse-
quently Satan's role in the paradisiacal narrative is substantially mar-
ginalized. Moreover, the primordial tree of life and tree of knowledge
are perceived as purely spiritual principles, identified respectively with
Christ and Satan. The spiritual existence in paradise is tantamount to

---

[114] *LG* 21.1 (cols. 585.20–587.9). Cf. John 6:53–58.
[115] *LG* 21.3 (col. 589.18–20).

the consummation of the tree of life—namely, the Lord; it thus has implicit Eucharistic connotations.

The description of Adam's paradisiacal existence and of the nature of his fall provides the author with the backdrop for his portrayal of the Messiah-Christ as Adam's corrective, as the one who fulfills the original ideal of Adamic ascetic perfection. Though Christ is identified with the tree of life and the logos, his primary function in the redemption of the ascetic is to show the way to the restoration of that perfection—this seems to be the major purpose of the incarnation. There is no special emphasis in *LG* on the death of Christ as a redeeming sacrifice; rather, it is on his crucifixion as an ultimate example of the detachment from earthly existence. In other words, the only way to *imitatio dei* is that of humility and *kenosis*. The way is open for the perfect ascetic here and now to follow Christ and not Adam. Hence the lack of eschatological emphasis on Christ's second coming.

The ideal of ascetic humility as the vehicle for *imitatio dei* is further enhanced by the notion that a chain of pre-monastic Old and New Testament figures exemplified this virtue; it is thus relativized as preparing the ground for contemporary ascetics. The contemporary notion of ascetics as spiritual elite is molded into the author's paradigm of a dual Christian society—a society divided between perfect and upright—compatible with his idea of a dual paradise.

This chapter has focused on the way the ascetic agenda of *LG* informs its author's hermeneutical approach to the biblical narrative on the Garden of Eden. Whereas some particularities of the narrative fit readily into this mold, others clearly contradict it and demand creative, idiosyncratic, exegetical solutions. These include the author's interpretation of both the dominion over the earth and human procreation in Genesis 1:26–28 as relating to kenotic humility and non-sexual procreation respectively. A major hermeneutical key for interpreting the story of the fall is provided by Satan's temptation of Jesus; the latter's ascetic elements are projected backwards to Adam's temptation. The author also invokes the Lord's Prayer, a central liturgical text of the community, as epitomizing his ascetic existential vision of overcoming the cosmic spiritual dichotomy. It is precisely because *LG* is not an exegetical treatise but an ascetic manifesto that its hermeneutical strategies stand out as an illuminating example of exegetical "acts of power." A different exegetical tour de force with regard to the story of paradise is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE *CAVE OF TREASURES*:
CALVARY VERSUS EARTHLY PARADISE

In late antiquity the story of Adam and Eve's expulsion from paradise drew the attention of both Jewish and Christian writers,[1] among them early Syriac authors such as Ephrem and the anonymous writer of *Liber Graduum* discussed earlier in Chapters 2 and 3. Closely connected to it was interest in the biblical account of Cain's crime and punishment, which might itself have functioned as a reiteration of sorts both of Adam's original sin and of his expulsion from paradise.[2] No wonder then that according to some early Jewish traditions the primordial disaster to the human race had to do not so much with the expulsion from paradise but with Cain's crime (or, alternatively, his hideous nature).[3] Traditions of this kind were further developed in a number of Gnostic sources from late antiquity.[4] Related motifs and themes attested in Greek and Syriac texts have been studied in detail by J. B. Glenthoj,[5] whose work has provided very useful data for further comparative study. On the Syriac side we have, in addition to a number of relevant passages in biblical commentaries and homilies by such authors as Ephrem and Jacob of Serugh, a *Syriac Life of Abel* published by S. Brock[6] and an untitled composition published by A. Levene.[7]

---

[1] See, for example, G. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection*; B. L. Visotsky, *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures* (Tübingen, 1995).

[2] See P. R. Davies, "Sons of Cain," in J. D. Martin and P. R. Davies (eds.), *A Word in Season: Essays in Honour of William McKane,* Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 42 (1986), pp. 35–56.

[3] E.g., attested in Philo (*Questions on Genesis* 60; *On the Posterity and Exile of Cain* 2–4) and Aramaic Targums (e.g., *Tg. Ps.-J.* to Gen 6:4).

[4] See B. A. Pearson, "Cain and Cainites," in idem, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis, 1990), pp. 95–107, esp. 103.

[5] J. B. Glenthoj, *Cain and Abel in Syriac and Greek Writers (4th–6th centuries)* (Louvain, 1997).

[6] See S. P. Brock, "A Syriac Life of Abel," *Le Muséon* 87 (1974), pp. 467–492, who suggested a late fifth or early sixth century date for its composition.

[7] A. Levene, *The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis* (London, 1951).

This chapter deals with *The Cave of Treasures* (*CT*), another original Syriac work that in its opening sections extensively addresses both the story of the protoplasts and that of Cain and Abel. There seems to be a scholarly consensus that *CT* was originally composed in Syriac; the text has been presented by Ri as extant in two—West-Syriac and East-Syriac—recensions (R. Oc. and R. Or. respectively).[8] The fourth century has often been seen as the time of compilation of an earlier version of the text; Ri in his edition of *CT* proposes the first half of the third century, but in any case it is plausible that earlier traditions found their way into the text. A final redaction at the beginning of the sixth century by an East-Syrian scholar is usually assumed.[9]

As a whole, *CT* narrates the history of salvation from the days of the creation and Adam's fall all the way to Jesus' death and resurrection and the Pentecost. Our investigation focuses on the salient narrative strategies of *CT*, employing a number of unique motifs, such as playing down the negative effects of Adam's sin and the expulsion from paradise, presenting the ritual swearing by Abel's innocent blood as a self-sufficient salvific act, and highlighting the remoteness of Jerusalem and Golgotha—the traditional arena of Christian redemption discourse—from the initial *locus* of earthly bliss in the East. Some of these peculiar motifs are backed in *CT* by references to certain oddities in the Old Testament text itself. *CT* seems to be aware of both the exegetical problems posed by the biblical source and a spectrum of existing exegetical solutions. The unique trends attested in *CT* will be outlined vis-à-vis relevant traditions in both Christian and Jewish exegesis of late antiquity; this analysis will make possible a better appreciation of the polemical stance of the cult-oriented community behind *CT*.

Expulsion or Orderly Exodus?

The notion that having been expelled from paradise Adam continued to dwell in its vicinity is strongly present in the Greek *Life of Adam*

---

[8] S.-M. Ri, *La Caverne des Tresors. Les deux recensions Syriaces*, CSCO (Louvain, 1987).

[9] For a recent discussion of the *status quaestionis* and new suggestions, see C. Leonhard, "Observations on the Date of the Syriac Cave of Treasures," in M. Daviau, J. W. Wevers, and M. Weigl (eds.), *The World of the Arameans III. Studies in Language and Literature in Honour of Paul-Eugène Dion* (Sheffield, 2001), pp. 255–294.

and Eve; this motif is also attested—with various modifications—in the Syriac tradition. The latter adopted the idea according to which paradise was situated at the top of the highest mountain,[10] and beginning with Ephrem, if not earlier, attempts were made to alleviate the shock of the expulsion from paradise by having Adam stay after the expulsion close to the Garden of Eden. Ephrem in his *Hymns on Paradise*, however, is not consistent. On the one hand, he speaks of casting Adam out "in the region of wild beasts…in the wilderness," and then of Adam's returning—after he repents—"to his former abode and kingship" (*Hymns* 13.6).[11] On the other hand, Ephrem suggests that Adam was settled—by God's grace—"in the valley below the foothills of Paradise" but later "when mankind even there continued to sin they were blotted out…there [then?] the families of the two brothers had separated" (*Hymns* 1.10).[12] That "valley below the foothills of Paradise" becomes in another context a higher ground on the slopes of the mountain.[13] There is a particular significance in Ephrem for the proximity of the repentant Adam's dwelling to his original abode in paradise. Paradise is seen by the Syrian father as a type of future human condition; according to Ephrem, sinners "who have done wrong out of ignorance, once they have been punished and paid their debt" must be allowed "to dwell in some remote corner of Paradise" (*Hymns* 1.16).[14]

Even if one bears in mind these exegetical tendencies, the stance of *The Cave of Treasures* on the issue still seems somewhat extraordinary. The author of *CT* goes out of his way to turn the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise into an orderly and peaceful exodus. Of course, the narrative has to relate to Adam's grief on leaving the Garden of Eden; but it depicts God himself as consoling the first couple

---

[10] For discussion of the cosmic mountain theme in relation to descriptions of paradise, see G. Anderson, "The Cosmic Mountain: Eden and Its Early Interpreters in Syriac Christianity," in G. A. Robbins (ed.), *Genesis 1–3 in the History of Exegesis: Intrigue in the Garden* (Lewiston, 1988), pp. 187–223.

[11] Trans. Brock, *Saint Ephrem, Hymns on Paradise*.

[12] For a horizontal rather than vertical segregation, see also Levene, *The Early Syrian Fathers*, p. 56. Cf. Josephus (*Antiquities* 1.1–2), who distinguishes between the two expulsions: first God removed Adam and Eve out of the garden into "another place," and later Cain—also together with his wife—was cast "out of that land."

[13] Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, pp. 55–57 and note, p. 189. See also *Hymns on Paradise* 1.12.

[14] See also *Hymns on Paradise* 8.11, 10.14–15. Elsewhere in the *Hymns* Ephrem goes even further, making a claim for paradise being in proximity to hell so that the terrible cries of the wicked mingle with the praise of the good in the Garden of Eden (*Hymns* 7.29).

and highlighting the positive aspects of their existential change (*CT* 5.3–4):

> R. Or.
>
> ܠܐ ܬܥܘܩ ܠܟ ܐܕܡ ܡܛܠ ܓܙܪ ܕܝܢܐ ܕܐܢܬ ܥܬܝܕ ܕܬܦܘܩ ܡܢ ܦܪܕܝܣܐ ܗܐ ܡܫܕܪ
> ܠܘܬܝܪܬܘܬܟ ܘܚܙܝ ܟܡܐ ܡܪܚܡ ܐܢܐ ܥܠܝܟ ܕܗܐ ܠܐܪܥܐ ܠܛܬ ܡܛܠܬܟ
> ܘܠܟ ܠܐ ܠܛܬ
> (R .Oc:. ܠܐ ܬܥܘܩ ܠܟ ܐܕܡ ܗܐ ܡܫܕܪ ܐܢܐ ܠܘܬܝܪܬܘܬܟ ܥܠ ܗܐ ...ܘܚܙܝ
> ܟܡܐ ܡܪܚܡ)

Do not be saddened, Adam (R.Or.: + because of the verdict that you are to exit Paradise), I am sending you to your inheritance, and see how merciful am I towards you: I cursed the land for your sake, but I did not curse you.

As some scholars see a literary connection between *CT* and the *Testament of Adam* (*TA*)—a pseudepigraphic composition compiled, probably originally in Syriac, before the fifth century—a comparison is appropriate here. In both texts God is said to have comforted Adam in view of his imminent expulsion. Yet the difference is rather telling: While in *TA* the words of consolation relate exclusively to a distant future ("after a space of many years"), to the salvation in Christ, God-incarnate, who will bring about the deification of Adam himself,[15] the consolation in *CT* relates to the immediate future—that is, to the continuation of Adam's existence outside paradise. It is also worth noting that unlike the *Testament of Adam*, our text provides an exegetical link to the Bible, presenting its version of events as an interpretation of Genesis 3:17 ("cursed is the ground because of you").

In fact, in *CT* God provides Adam with a *second paradise*; thus the cave of treasures is situated not "in the valley" (where according to Ephrem and others Adam dwelled after the expulsion), but rather at the top of the holy mountain in closest proximity to paradise (*CT* 5.10). It seems, then, that God managed to persuade Adam that his loss was not too significant: When addressing his sons, Adam concentrates exclusively on the future. At this point in the biblical narrative, extensively exploited by pseudepigraphic expansions on the story with a view to emphasizing Adam's repentance and grief about paradise lost,[16]

---

[15] *Testament of Adam* 3.2. For an English translation, see S. E. Robinson, "Testament of Adam," in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (New York, 1983), pp. 993–995.

[16] See, for example, *The Life of Adam and Eve* 6–9. In some versions of this text the story begins with the "penitence narrative." See Anderson, "The Garments of Skin."

CT in contrast is completely silent about Adam's "change of heart."[17] If in *CT*'s emphasis on God's merciful grace in his dealing with Adam, one can discern a continuation of Ephrem's exegetical thought,[18] this basic similarity to Ephrem makes the peculiarity of the *CT* exegesis all the more stunning: In our text Adam's repentance is not mentioned at all![19] Further on it will become manifest that the absence Adam's repentance, as well as the portrayal of the protoplasts' existence outside paradise as one of complete harmony and hence their being there in no need of divine salvific intervention, are among the most salient features of *CT*'s narrative.

The Second Paradise and Its Cultic Dimension

We have related to God's consolation to Adam, formulated in general terms: "Do not be saddened, Adam, I am sending you to your inheritance, and see how merciful am I towards you." Let us turn to some particularities of this inheritance. In paradise, according to *CT,* Adam enjoyed the status of king, prophet, and high priest (*CT* 4.1). It is clear that *CT* borrowed this motif from an existing tradition that most probably originated in Jewish sources.[20] Ephrem also was aware of this "three crowns" motif. He emphasized the kingly vocation of Adam as fully developed but claimed that the crowns of priesthood and prophetic knowledge/wisdom were Adam's only potentially—he would have received them had he managed to resist temptation.[21] In

---

[17] Cf. *Syriac Life of Abel* 7, where Abel speaks of the tremendous loss his parents suffered.

[18] The motif of God's grace toward Adam (and of its interaction with God's justice) might have been known to Ephrem from, inter alia, midrashic sources, where its presence was significant. In contradistinction to Ephrem, however, the emphasis there is on God's grace as the decisive factor in the creation of Adam and not in God's dealing with him in paradise and after the fall. See *Gen R.* 8. See also Chapter 2, above.

[19] As opposed to such exegetes as Eusebius of Emesa, who would claim that Adam's dwelling in the vicinity of paradise was supposed to bring about his repentance and imbue him with a constant penitential mood. See L. Van Rompay, "Memories of Paradise: The Greek 'Life of Adam and Eve', and Early Syriac Tradition," *Aram* 5.1–2 (1993): 362 and n. 30 there.

[20] See *m. Abot* 4; Philo, *De Vita Mosis* 2.3,187,292. See also D. Flusser, "Jewish Messianic Beliefs and Their Reflections in Early Christianity," in Z. Baras (ed.), *Messianism and Eschatology* (Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 119–120 (in Hebrew); Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, note to 3.14 (p. 191). As the Book of Jubilees (3.27) testifies, the notion of Adam's priestly vocation had already taken hold in the second century BCE.

[21] See Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis* 2.23; *Hymns on Paradise* 12.17.

the meantime, access to the Holy of Holies was blocked by the tree of knowledge.[22] The emphasis on this tradition in our text is, however, quite different. Unlike Ephrem, having mentioned the three vocations traditionally assigned to Adam, *CT* completely ignores two of them further on. The author never elaborates on what kingship and prophecy stand for, concentrating instead exclusively on Adam's priestly function. According to *CT*, the priestly function was Adam's ultimate calling in paradise, paired with the duty of abstaining from the forbidden fruit:

> And as Adam was the priest, the king and the prophet, God brought him into Paradise so that he might worship inside the Garden of Eden as a priest in the Church. And the blessed Moses bears witness to this saying, "to toil it", "ܕܢܦܠܚܝܗ" (Gen 2:15)—meaning by priestly worship in glory, and "to keep it", "ܘܕܢܛܪܝܗ" (ibid.)—meaning the commandment.... (*CT* 4.1).[23]

According to *CT*, this priestly vocation continued uninterrupted after the exodus from paradise. Adam's first act outside the Garden of Eden—right before consummating his marriage with Eve—would be to consecrate the cave of treasures, which would serve as the sanctuary for Adam and his descendants (*CT* 5.17–18). As Lucas Van Rompay has demonstrated, traditions claiming that after their expulsion the first family remained for some time in the vicinity of paradise have as their basic emotion the longing to regain their former state. Only later did this emotion come to be accompanied by a gradually developed awareness that re-entering paradise during their lifetime would not be possible and that their hopes should be directed toward the eschatological restoration.[24] The fact that *CT* adopts this traditional motif of longing only further highlights the peculiarity of the text under discussion: It

---

[22] On Ephrem's concept of the inner structure of paradise as sanctuary, see I. Ortiz de Urbina, "Le Paradis eschatologique d'après Saint Ephrem," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 21 (1956), pp. 467–472; N. Séd, "Les hymnes sur le paradis de saint Ephrem et les tradition juives," *Le Muséon* 81 (1968), pp. 455–501; T. Kronholm, "The Trees of Paradise in the Hymns of Ephraem Syrus," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 11 (1977/8), pp. 48–56; *Hymns on Paradise*, pp. 52–53.

[23] The difference from Ephrem's approach is noteworthy. In his *Commentary on Genesis* Ephrem concentrates on the same verbs (ܘܕܢܛܪܝܗ ,ܕܢܦܠܚܝܗ) but avoids mentioning the priestly function: With him, both verbs relate to different aspects of observing the commandment not to eat from the tree of knowledge (*Gen. Com.* 2.7). Ephrem seems to be dependent here on rabbinic exegesis. See, for example, *Gen. R.* 16.15 (p. 149).

[24] See Van Rompay, "Memories of Paradise," pp. 565, 567.

is not paradise itself any more but the cave of treasures that is the true object of longing. To return to the blessed cave, rather than leaving it for the sake of regaining the paradisiacal state, is at the core of *CT* nostalgia. The loss of the cave, that "second paradise," will be lamented in our text simultaneously with the loss of the original one. At the time of Adam's "second expulsion," when his body was removed from the cave, Adam's descendants "were smitten sorely with grief, and they wept in agony because they were to be deprived of that holy place, and [also] raised their eyes in the direction of Paradise…"[25]

To be sure, the marital relations between Adam and Eve are described as a novelty pertaining to their existence outside paradise, but *CT* takes pains to present the consummation of the protoplasts' marriage as a *holy union*, not as a sign of the pitiful change in their status (*CT* 5.17–18). In Ephrem's *Hymns* there is a vivid description of the "lower abode of Paradise," where voices of praise from above mingle with cries of suffering from Gehenna—yet another expression of this abode's proximity to paradise.[26] In *CT* this motif is given a very peculiar twist: Adam's descendants worshiping in the cave would be able to join the choir of angels singing in paradise. In fact, as far as the worship of God is concerned, they would become part of the angelic order (*tagma*), taking the place of the fallen angels (*CT* 7.4):

ܘܣܠܩ ܗܘ ܗ̈ܠܠܐ ܢܦܠ ܡܢ ܪܫܝܬܐ ܪܫܐܪܝܬܐ ܥܠܡܐ ܗܘܘ ܗܘܘ ܘܢܗܘܘܝ ܡܚܬܣܡ ܚܩܗܠܕ ܩܢ̈ܝܫܐ. ܐܪ̈ܘܚܐ ܘܗ̈ܘ ܗܘܘ ܚܠܟܐ ܚܕܣܟܝ. ܥܠܝܗܘܢ ܠܡ ܗܘܘ ܐܢܘܢ ܐܢܐ ܘܐܢܬܘܢ ܐܝܣܪܐ ܕܪܒܝܢ ܘܢܣܒܘܢ ܘܢܘܠܠܘܢ ܠܐܠܗܐ ܚܢ ܥܠܗܐ ܕܫܩܠܬ ܚܩ̈ܝܫܐ ܕܡܚܬܣܡ ܚܦܪ̈ܫܡܐ ܕܥܠܠ

ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܡܫܒܚ ܥܡܗܘܢ ܗܘܘ ܡܠܐ ܕܬܫܒܘܚܬܐ ... ܘܒܫܢܝܐ ܗܘܘ ܗܘܘ ܡܢ ܟܐ
.ܗܘܘ ܦܪܕܝܣܐ ܡܬܚܡܝܢ ܗܘܘ

> And in stead of that order of demons that had fallen down from heaven,
> they were going up to praise [God] from the outskirts of Paradise. And
> they were dwelling there in peace and calm … so that they might praise
> and glorify God together with the angels which praise God in Paradise,
> as they could verily hear the voices of angels [from where they were
> put to dwell] … since Paradise was situated at no great height above
> them—in fact, only about thirty spans—according to the measure of the
> spirit. They suffered neither toil nor fatigue, they had neither seed [time]
> nor harvest, but they fed themselves with the delectable fruits of glorious
> trees of all kinds, and they enjoyed the sweet scent and perfume … which
> were wafted forth to them from Paradise.

In the same passage, it is stated that:

> They lived in that mountain in all purity and holiness and in the fear
> of God … [Thus lived] those holy men, who were indeed holy, and their
> wives were pure, and their sons were virtuous, and their daughters were
> chaste and undefiled. In them there was no rebellious thought, no envy,
> no anger, no enmity. In their wives and daughters there was no impure
> longing, and neither lasciviousness, nor cursing, nor lying was heard
> among them. And they went up on the skirts of [the mountain] of Para-
> dise …

CT thus describes the first generations' dwelling on the slopes of that
mountain as a state of sinless bliss. Moreover, the *locus* itself is repeat-
edly defined as the "pure/sacred mountain" and "pure blessed land."[27]
Those who, like Cain, committed a sin, were expelled from this land
of bliss to the "evil land"—namely, to the outside regions beyond the
perimeter of the holy mountain.

Such descriptions support the above suggestion that, in a sense, *CT*
provides for Adam and some of his descendants a *second paradise*—as
opposed to the position of such exegetes as Eusebius of Emesa, who
would claim that Adam's dwelling in the vicinity of paradise was
supposed to evoke his nostalgia and put him in a penitential mood.[28]
The true sacred center of this second paradise is the cave of treasures
(ܡܥܪܬ ܓܙܐ, *m'arath gazze*), where the mountain dwellers gather
for holy worship. In the beginning, the efficacy of the worship in the
cave is provided exclusively by the proximity to paradise proper; fur-

---

[27] See, e.g., *CT* 6.23 [R. Or.]; 5.10 [R. Oc.]; 8.3; 9.5; 14.1; 16.7; cf. *CT* 17.9.
[28] See note 19, above.

ther on, after Adam's death and Abel's murder by Cain, two core litur-
gical features—to be discussed below—are introduced: a table-altar
erected over the burial place of Adam in the cave and a ritual oath by
the blood of the slain Abel.

As noted, Ephrem had certain reservations regarding the fulfill-
ment of Adam's priestly vocation even while in paradise. In the *Syriac
Life of Abel* either Adam is considered unworthy of performing his
priestly function after his fall or the priesthood in general is relegated
to the reality "after and outside Paradise," with Cain and Abel given
the appellation "ܟܗܢܐ ܩܕܡܝܐ" ("first priests").[29] There is no place for
such misgivings in our text: According to *CT*, Adam's priestly vocation
was not only fully realized in paradise[30] but, in fact, continued uninter-
rupted after the expulsion and the transition to the cave of treasures
and was passed on in an orderly fashion to Adam's descendants.

CT further claims an uninterrupted chain for the high priestly tra-
dition. This chain begins not with Melchizedek but with Adam him-
self, the first high priest (ܟܗܢܐ-ܪܒܐ). Thus *CT* cannot accept
the tradition, propagated by the Epistle to the Hebrews (e.g., Heb
6:20), which sees Melchizedek as the prototype of the true high priest-
hood. Neither can *CT* accept the literal meaning of Hebrews 7:3 (that
Melchizedek "did not have either father or mother,")—those who do
accept that claim are branded as "illiterate simpletons (ܗܕܝܘܛܐ)."[31]
Instead, *CT* strives to somehow provide him with a proper genealogy
(*CT* 16.22; 20.8). This emphasis on the genealogy of Melchizedek is
not at all surprising as, according to *CT*, proof of a sound priestly (and
royal) descent is crucial even for the Messiah himself.[32]

According to *CT*, the high priesthood worship of antediluvian
times—until the very end of the flood—continued to be centered on
the altar erected over Adam's body and the oath by Abel's blood.[33] It is
noteworthy that, according to *CT*, these ancient liturgical elements are
sufficient for salvation and are not considered simply as prefiguring

---

[29] See Brock, "A Syriac Life," pp. 472, 486.

[30] In contradistinction to the *Syriac Life of Abel,* in *CT* Adam is referred to as the
"first priest (ܟܗܢܐ ܩܕܡ ܟܠ)" (5.27).

[31] See *CT* 30.17.

[32] See *CT* 32.11–16; 33.5–16. For a discussion of Christian traditions concerning
Jesus' Aaronic descent, see W. Adler, "Exodus 6:23 and the High Priest from the
Tribe of Judah," *Journal of Theological Studies* 8 (1997), pp. 24–47. See also Chapter
1, above, notes 87, 93, 94.

[33] See, for instance, *CT* 7.11–14,19–20; 9.5–8; 10.8; 13.6–7; 16.14,19–20.

Christ's body and blood. Thus in *CT*, Melchizedek is presented as merely a link in the priestly chain; he does not inaugurate the true worship of God but rather renews it after a period of neglect.[34] There is even an attempt to play down the importance of the Eucharistic connotations of the bread-and-wine offering introduced by Melchizedek by presenting these elements as nothing but provisions to sustain Shem and Melchizedek on their journey westward.[35]

As the high priesthood is presented in our text as having a salvific function, a summary of some of *CT*'s pertinent ideas on salvation seems called for here. According to *CT*'s overall outline, Adam's fall caused both the expulsion from Eden and a simultaneous outpouring of God's mercy (grace), so that divine grace essentially nullified the effects of the fall—ignoring the need for Adam and Eve's repentance. To be sure, not unlike the *Testament of Adam*, the motif of future salvation in Christ as additional grounds for Adam's consolation is also present in *CT*. In due time God will send his Son to bring salvation to humanity (5.7–9). However, as already hinted above, in *CT* the need for salvation seems to be related not to Adam himself nor to his immediate progeny but rather to Adam's later descendants, who would abandon the cave and migrate to the "cursed land":

> Exit [Paradise] and do not be saddened, as when the times for your dwelling in the cursed land according to my decree are fulfilled I will send my Son. Order…that after your death they embalm…your body and put it in this Cave where now I put you to dwell. [You will remain here] until your descendants' exit from the vicinity of Paradise to that evil land. (5.6–10)

Those people who dwell in the "cursed land" are said to be in need of salvation, whereas those who worship in the cave of treasures and participate with the angels in the celestial choir praising the Lord and, even outside paradise proper, continue to be nourished by its delightful fruits (ܐ̈ܪܐ ܕ̈ܚܠܝܐ)[36] are already saved. As *CT* repeatedly states, they are not prisoners of their own fallen nature but spend their days

---

[34] See *CT* 28.11.
[35] Ibid. 22.4.
[36] Ibid., 7.6. Cf. *The Life of Adam and Eve* 1–5. See Anderson, "Garments of Skin."

in peace and harmony.[37] In other words, the Adam of *CT* even when expelled from paradise is not yet the Adam of Paul.[38]

Adam's Glorious Image

It may be remarked that this peculiar mitigation of the effects of the fall fits the *CT* concept of Adam's nature. Like Ephrem, in his *Commentary on Genesis*, *CT* discusses Adam's nature in connection with Genesis 1:26–27. *CT* similarly states that the plural form of "Let us create man in our image and in our likeness" relates to God's hypostases[39] or, specifically, to the persons of the Trinity. Here also, however, the basic indebtedness to Ephrem highlights all the more the peculiarities of *CT*.

First, *CT* suggests a complementing interpretation for the plural form of "let us make (ܢܥܒܕ)"—namely, that it relates to the heavenly host of angels. This exegesis had apparently been current in Jewish circles long before Ephrem; among Christians it enjoyed the reputation of being a "Jewish folly."[40] Unlike the Syrian father, who ignores this exegetical option in his *Commentary*, *CT* combines it with the "hypostatic" interpretation. The adoption of this "angelic host" motif clearly serves *CT*'s general outline of the paradise story, where—again in contradistinction to Ephrem's *Commentary*—angels play a pivotal role. On the one hand, there are angels in *CT* who belong to Satan's *tagma* and on account of their envy of Adam do everything to bring about his fall. On the other hand, there are angels who belong to a

---

[37] See, for example, *CT* 6.2, 22; 7.1–4.

[38] For discussion of Adam's elevated status in certain early Christian and Gnostic circles, see F. H. Borsch, "Further Reflections on 'The Son of Man': The Origins and Development of the Title," in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah. Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis, 1992), p. 137. For an analogous elevated status of Adam's son Seth, see A. F. J. Klijn, *Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature*, Supplementum Novum Testamentum 46 (Leiden, 1977); G. G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed* (Leiden, 1984); Borsch, "Further Reflections," p. 139. Rather tellingly, in *CT* it is Adam, not Seth, who remains the key figure—a possible additional indication that *CT* does not perceive Adam as a failure.

[39] Different modifications of this exegesis had been known to both Jewish and Christian exegetes long before Ephrem. See, for example, Philo, *De opificio mundi* 69; Tatian, *Address to the Greeks* 7. Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 8. See discussion in Pines, "God, Glory and Angels."

[40] See, for example, Justin, *Dialoque with Tripho* 62.1.

completely different order and with whom Adam joins in a heavenly choir to praise the Lord.

Second, Ephrem interprets the problematic "likeness of image" in a restrictive way. He claims that it pertains exclusively to the dominion given to Adam over the rest of God's creatures. This dominion-centered interpretation was known in Ephrem's time in both Jewish and Christian exegesis, and according to the Syrian father, it is only in this functional sense that Adam is "like God."[41] *CT*, however, interprets the "likeness" literally: In our text the created Adam is not only lord of the earth but also a man in whom the awesome image of the triune God is revealed to the world:

> (R.Or.) "Let us make (ܢܥܒܕ) man (ܐܢܫܐ) in our image, as our likeness (ܐܝܟ ܕܡܘܬܢ)"—making known by this [usage] of the letter *nun* instead of the letter *alaph* the [inclusion of the] blessed persons of the Son and the Spirit. And when the angels heard that, they became full of awe and told one another: the great wonder will be revealed to us today—[we are about to see] the very image of God our creator (*CT* 2.3–4).

Further on, the Western recension is even more specific, describing Adam's body as that of the cosmic man, similar to the primordial Adam (*Adam Kadmon*) of the Jewish Midrash:[42]

> And when the angels saw the image and the glorious sight of Adam, they trembled because of its beauty. They saw the sight of Adam's face, glowing with glorious light like the face of the sun, and the spark of his eyes was like the rays of the sun, while his body was like the glorious shining of crystal. (*CT* 2.13–14)

Again, as opposed to Ephrem's commentary, wherein the glory of Adam comes from the garment of glory that covered and hid his shameful bodily parts,[43] in *CT* the first man's body is itself a glorious image of God. To be sure, the traditional clothing motif is present here as well, but in our text the robe is described as a royal garment (ܠܒܘܫܐ ܕܡܠܟܘܬܐ); by no means is it tailored to compensate for the inadequacies of Adam's body.[44]

---

[41] See *Gen. Com.* 1.29.
[42] See *b. Hag.* 12a; *Gen. Rab.* 8; *Lev. Rab.* 14.
[43] See *Gen. Com.* 2.21.
[44] *CT*, however, does refer to Adam's crown as "the crown of glory (ܟܠܝܠܐ ܕܬܫܒܘܚܬܐ)" (2.17).

To sum up, whereas in Ephrem Adam is presented in all his human weakness, upon which his eventual fall is predicated,[45] in *CT* we are dealing with a figure of cosmic dimensions.[46] Unlike some apocalyptic and Gnostic or semi-Gnostic schemes, where this cosmic figure undergoes a fall that is also of cosmic proportions, in *CT*'s exegesis the basically glorious nature of the first man somehow remains intact. In contradistinction to rabbinic traditions, which also speak of his cosmic dimensions,[47] *CT* does not mention Adam's body being diminished in size as the result of his sin. We suggest that this peculiarity complements the trend evident in the *CT* narrative discussed above—namely, the ignoring of the immediate effects of Adam's fall and a complete lack of interest in Adam's repentance.

Cain's Sin and the Ritual Swearing by Abel's Blood

Our focus now shifts to the second act of the drama—that of Cain's crime of fratricide. Cain's hideous deed was perceived in some traditions—possibly including the biblical account itself—as an amplified replay of the original sin and the true reason for the ultimate expulsion. It should be noted, however, that such an interpretation is found neither in Jubilees, a book on which *CT* is clearly dependent, nor in the *Testament of Adam*—another pseudepigraphic composition that seems also literally linked with *CT*.[48] This motif is absent from the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* as well.

As for *CT*, the cancellation of the effects of Adam's fall observed here seems to be logically connected with presenting, instead, Abel's archetypal murder as the real motive for the tragic expulsion—not from paradise itself but from its periphery or, more specifically, from the hilltop cave of treasures. In *CT*, however, this second, fatal expulsion

---

[45] Accordingly, God's mercy was to be incessantly employed to improve Adam's odds of succeeding in his trial. Moreover, from Ephrem's point of view every step of the test was specially designed not to be exceedingly difficult, not to overwhelm Adam but rather to help him prevail. See also Chapter 2, above.

[46] On communities emphasizing Adamic lore as opposed to those focusing on the heavenly figure of Enoch and the generation of Genesis 6, see Stone, "The Axis of History at Qumran," pp. 133–149.

[47] See note 42, above.

[48] S.-M. Ri, "Le Testament d'Adam et la Caverne de Tresors," in R. Lavenant (ed.), *V Symposium Syriacum, 1988, Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, 29–31 août 1988*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 236 (Rome, 1990), pp. 111–122.

of the sons of Seth occurred not immediately after Cain's fratricide—
nor even as its *immediate* result—but a few generations later, after
Seth's sons became involved with the daughters of Cain. This second
expulsion is presented in *CT* as a preemptive strike preceding the
flood. It is worth noting that the motif of the second expulsion as a
preemptive strike is conspicuously absent from Jubilees and the *Tes-
tament of Adam*, as well as from Ephrem's *Commentary on Genesis*.
According to the Syrian father, it was Cain himself who decided to
leave his native land:

> Because Cain sought to escape from reproach.... Those who would find
> him were the sons of Seth, who were compelled to seek revenge for the
> blood of Abel, their uncle. They cut themselves off from Cain and did
> not intermarry with him because of their fear of him; but they did not
> dare to kill him because of his sign. After Cain received the punishment
> and the sign had been added to it...Cain separated himself from his
> parents and his kin because he saw that they would not intermarry with
> him.... [and went to the land of Nod].[49]

In *CT*, prior to the liaison with the daughters of Cain, the sons of
Seth had been pure and holy—that is why the Bible calls them "sons
of God" (Gen 6:2). Here *CT* follows an earlier tradition;[50] but as we
shall see there is a peculiar twist to the *CT* exegesis: The delay of the
expulsion—from Abel's murder until the days of Yared—is presented
in our text as connected with, or rather secured by, a ritual swearing
by Abel's innocent blood performed by the leader of every successive
generation.

   Before approaching this peculiar motif, let us first review a number
of important exegetical trends from late antiquity connected with the
story of Abel's murder. In Genesis 4:10 God says to Cain: "What have
you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the
ground." The verse posed a problem for early Jewish and Christian
exegesis. The Midrash sees here mainly two problematic points: (1)
Why does the Hebrew text use the plural דמי (*deme*, literally *bloods*)?
and (2) How should one understand the biblical metaphor of the "cry-
ing blood"; that is to say, what does the blood's voice represent here?
The first question was irrelevant for most Greek and Syrian authors
because in the translations of Genesis they used, the plural form had

---

[49] Ephrem, *Gen. Com.* 3.10–11.
[50] See, for example, *Gen. Rab* 26.5; Ephrem, *Gen. Com.* 6.3. Cf. Jubilees 5:1; Philo,
Questions on Genesis 92.

long since been turn into a singular;[51] but in the Midrash the plural form of blood (*deme*) was usually explained as pointing to Abel's future descendants, who were, in a sense, murdered together with him. This tradition, attested in the Targums and Mishnah,[52] and later incorporated into *Genesis Rabbah*, fits an important development in rabbinic thought where the value of every individual human life was greatly emphasized.[53] A particular sub-development may be discerned here: In other targumic witnesses, *Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Neofiti*, the plural form "bloods" represents not Abel's potential descendants in general but specifically the just ones among them.[54] This midrashic pattern is also present in traditions about God's decision—in spite of reservations expressed both by the angels and by God himself—to create man. One decisive argument in favor of the creation seemed to be that among Adam's future descendants there would be righteous people as well.[55] The motif of murder and the plural form "bloods" have no function in the latter tradition, as here, unlike in the case of Abel, the Midrash is talking about Adam's actual descendants—namely, those who will eventually be born.

The second peculiarity, the metaphor of the "blood crying out," was explained already in Jubilees as a demand for God's intervention and vengeance: "And he killed him in the field, and his blood cried out *from the earth to heaven*, making accusation."[56] Philo, with his emphasis on incorporeal life as the true life, avoids mentioning both vengeance and Abel's blood:

> What is the meaning of the words "The voice of thy brother calls me from the earth"? This is most exemplary, for the Deity hears the deserving even though they are dead, knowing that they live an incorporeal life.[57]

---

[51] LXX Gen 4:10: "καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός· Τί ἐποίησας; φωνὴ αἵματος τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου βοᾷ πρός με ἐκ τῆς γῆς"; Peshitta: "ܡܐ ܕܥܒܕܬ ܩܠܐ ܕܕܡܗ ܕܐܚܘܟ ܓܥܐ ܠܘܬܝ ܡܢ ܐܪܥܐ". See, for example, Ephrem's *Gen. Com.* 4.6–7: "What then would you say, Cain? Should Justice take vengeance for the blood (sing.!) which cried out or not?"

[52] See *Tg. Onq.* to Gen 4:10; *m. Sanh.* 5

[53] See, for example, the discussion in *m. Sanh.* 5.

[54] See *Tg. Ps.-J.* and *Tg. Neof.* to Gen 4:10. See Glenthoj, *Cain and Abel*, p. 11.

[55] The discussion of the different types among Adam's progeny may be found in *Gen. Rab.* 8.

[56] Jub 4:2–3. English translation by O. S. Wintermute in Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2.

[57] *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 70, English translation by R. Marcus, LCL (Harvard, 1953), p. 42. Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 55–57) avoids the issue altogether.

The motif of vengeance, however, survives in a rabbinic Midrash, where it is attributed to a famous second-century sage and expressed in a rather forceful fashion:

> R. Simeon b. Yohai said: It is difficult to say this thing, and the mouth cannot utter it plainly. Think of two athletes wrestling before the king; had the king wished, he could have separated them. But he did not so desire, and one overcame the other and killed him, he [the victim] crying out [before he died], "Let my cause be pleaded before the king!" Even so, *The voice of thy brother's blood cries out against Me.*[58]

Although "the mouth cannot utter it," the Midrash does manage to articulate the almost inconceivable thought: Abel condemns God himself for not sparing him; and since God did not intervene to prevent the murder, the pure blood that was spilled should urge him to wreak vengeance speedily. This tendency to see a pure martyr's death as a "trigger" for God's vengeful intervention and speedy visitation of his wrath on the evil ones was further developed in later Jewish sources.[59]

It is illuminating to see how the different sub-motifs reviewed above are already conflated and modified in the logion found in Matthew and Luke:

> Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, "I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute," that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be required from this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it shall be required from this generation (Luke 11:49–51).[60]

On the one hand, we see that according to the Gospel the pure blood shed is not only Abel's but also, as in Targums *Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Neofiti*, that of the righteous men of God—here, the prophets of future generations. On the other hand, these are not the righteous ones who "died in Abel" but—in line with midrashic expositions on Adam's progeny—those who were actually born (sons of Seth) and carried on Abel's vocation. The motif of vengeance is central to the Gospel peri-

---

[58] *Gen. Rab.* 22.9, English translation by H. Freedman, Soncino Press 3rd edition of *Midrash Rabbah* (London-New York, 1983). אלי (*elay*, "to me") is understood here as "against me." Cf. *Tanh.* Ber. 1.9. See J. Levinsohn, "Athlete of Faith: Bloody Plots and Imaginary Plots," *Tarbiz* 78 (1999), pp. 61–86 (in Hebrew).

[59] See I. Yuval, "Vengeance and Curse: From Sanctification of the Name to Blood Libel", *Zion* 58 (1993), pp. 33–90 (in Hebrew).

[60] Cf. Matt 23:33–35.

cope exactly as it is central to the midrashic exegesis. Moreover, the blood shed is clearly presented here as a catalyst for God's wreaking vengeance.

The motif of vengeance continues to feature prominently in the later Christian—both Greek and Syriac—exegesis of Genesis 4:10. Thus John Chrysostom explains Abel's blood "crying out" as the "voice" of the blood that flies up, ascends to heaven and there "rushes through the heaven of heaven" in order to lament the murder and bring accusation before the heavenly court.[61]

The same line of exegesis is adopted a century later by Jacob of Serugh: "The blood which was shed provoked the high place against the murderer. Abel was alive and his blood spoke like thunder among the angels."[62] The difficulty in attributing a voice to blood is also fully recognized in the *Syriac Life of Abel* 13: "*The sound of your brother's blood groans out towards me from the earth.* Who is it who has given a voice to the blood, for blood has no voice, blood has no ability to differentiate, having no intelligence?" The word ܩܠܐ (voice) is used abundantly throughout this text and by different speakers—e.g., Abel while still alive (par. 20) and Eve lamenting Abel (par. 21, 23). This may point to an alternative exegetical solution vis-à-vis the call for vengeance. In any case, the examples of Jacob of Serugh and the *Syriac Life of Abel* bear witness to the awareness of Syriac writers—from the period close to the *CT* final redaction—of the exegetical problem inherent in Genesis 4:10: the expression "the voice of your brother's blood" calls for an explanation.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is another New Testament text where Abel's death features prominently (Heb 11:4):

> By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts; he died, but through his faith he is still speaking.

We see that the Epistle adopts the same exegesis attested elsewhere in pre-Christian Jewish sources,[63] according to which the expression "[Abel's] blood cries out" hints at the continuation of individual

---

[61] John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 161. See Glenthoj, *Cain and Abel*, p. 172.
[62] Jacob of Serugh, *Homilies 147–50 on Cain and Abel* 26–27, cf. ibid., 20. See Glenthoj, *Cain and Abel*, p. 174. See also S. Brock, "Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30 (1979), pp. 212–232, esp. pp. 226–27.
[63] See the discussion on Philo's position and note 57, above.

existence after physical death. According to the Epistle, it is Abel's faith that allows him to overcome death. This exegesis, as in Philo, seems to be centered on spiritual existence as a means to "survive death"; therefore, it has no use for "blood." Speaking of the first hero of faith in human history, the Epistle—exactly like Philo in *Questions on Genesis*[64]—avoids mentioning Abel's blood; it is Abel himself and not his blood that goes on "speaking out" even after his physical death.

On the other hand, Abel's blood does feature prominently in Hebrews 12, where the key theme is not so much faith as vengeance, the punishment for apostasy (Heb 12:22–25):

> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels…and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that *speaks more powerfully* (κρεῖττον λαλοῦντι, RSV: more graciously) *than the blood of Abel*. See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. *For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.*

The passage contains the strongest possible warning against leaving the newly acquired faith, and the vengeful character of this admonition is rather obvious.[65] Another motif, however, is combined here with that of vengeance: The blood of revenge turns out to be at the same time the blood of the new covenant that in the context of Hebrews stands for remission of sins and salvation.

As noted, unlike the authors of the Midrash—and possibly some New Testament traditions—exegetes disconnected from the Hebrew-speaking milieu were generally not concerned with the plural *deme* (bloods) of the Hebrew text of Genesis 4:10, because in both Greek and Syriac translations the singular form had been substituted for the

---

[64] See note 57, above.
[65] Cf. Heb 12:15–17. There are various suggestions regarding the identity of the community addressed here: Gentile Christians, former Essenes, members of Jerusalem priestly families joining the Jesus movement. See M. Bourke, "The Epistle to the Hebrews: Introduction," in R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer, and R. E. Murphy (eds.), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1990), pp. 920–921. Cf. the interpretation by Cyril of Alexandria discussed by Glenthoj (*Cain and Abel*, p. 175). According to Cyril, while Abel's blood cried out against Cain, the blood of Christ cries out against the cruelty and ingratitude of the Jews. This interpretation may be seen as highly partisan, and it hardly fits the context of Hebrews, although it is certainly true to the vengeful spirit of the Epistle.

plural one.[66] On the other hand, we have seen among all exegetes recognition of the other peculiarity of Genesis 4:10—namely, the description of Abel's blood as having a voice and "speaking out" after being shed by Cain. Moreover, the motif of vengeance was central to most exegeses: the pure blood was supposed to expedite God's vengeance. This last motif was only partly mitigated in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It stands to reason that at least some of the questions raised by the exegetes, and some of their solutions, were known to the *CT* compiler(s), who had great interest in the story of Cain and Abel. The Epistle to the Hebrews was definitely known to the transmitters of the *CT* tradition: Our text quotes the Epistle several times. Ephrem's writings undoubtedly exercised considerable influence on *CT*; Jacob of Serugh as well as the author of the *Syriac Life of Abel* might have been contemporaries of *CT*'s final redaction; and, finally, the compilers/transmitters of the *CT* material are generally believed to have had access to rabbinic traditions of the time.[67]

Now, with the exegetic expositions reviewed above forming a background of sorts, the *CT* treatment of the problem may be better appreciated. In line with other exegeses, *CT* finds it necessary to provide an explanation for Abel's blood "speaking" after his death; in our text, however, the blood's "crying out to heaven from earth" represents the solemn oath instituted by Seth on his deathbed (*CT* 7.18):

ܡܘܡܐ ܠܟܘܢ ܒܕܡܗ ܕܟܝܐ ܕܗܒܝܠ ܕܠܐ ܐܢܫ ܡܢܟܘܢ ܢܚܘܬ ܡܢ ܛܘܪܐ ܗܢܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܐܠܐ ܬܚܘܡܘ ܠܐܢܫ ܡܢ ܒܢܝ̈ܟܘܢ ܕܢܚܘܬ ܠܘܬ ܒܢܝ̈ ܩܐܝܢ ܩܛܘܠܐ ܡܛܠ ܕܝܕܥܝܢ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܟܠܟܘܢ ܐܝܕܐ ܒܥܠܕܒܒܘܬܐ ܐܝܬ ܠܢ ܥܡܗ ܡܢ ܝܘܡܐ ܕܩܛܠ ܠܗܒܝܠ

I put you under oath by the pure blood of Abel that no one of you will descend from this sacred mountain. Do not allow anyone of your descendants to go down to the sons of Cain, the murderer, as you all know what an enmity there is between us and him since the day when he killed Abel.

---

[66] See note 51, above.

[67] See G. Stemberger, "Exegetical Contacts between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire," in M. Sæbo (ed.), *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 1, part 1 (Göttingen, 1996), p. 585. Stemberger regards *CT* as "certainly the richest source for Jewish traditions." For a possible connection between *CT* and rabbinic exegesis, see S. Brock, "Jewish Traditions," p. 228. It is noteworthy that the case discussed by Brock is also connected to the story of Cain and Abel.

The description of the relations between the sons of Seth and the sons of Cain ("an enmity [ܒܥܠܕܒܒܘܬܐ] there is between us and him") is reminiscent of the biblical description of the relations between humans and the serpent.[68] That fits the *CT*'s observed tendency to view Cain's crime, and not Adam's fall, as the primordial debacle. It may also be noted that although in *CT* the exegetical problem—the archetypal martyr's blood having a voice—is not mentioned explicitly,[69] swearing by Abel's pure blood clearly stands here for the blood's "speaking out," thus providing a solution to the problem. In comparison to Hebrews, the motif of vengeance is here further subdued, the emphasis being on the salvific quality of Abel's blood.[70] It comes as no surprise then that according to *CT* this will be true also regarding Jesus' blood. Swearing by Abel's blood, however, is presented in our text as *sufficient* for the salvation of the sons of Seth: those who dwell—thanks to their oath—on the holy mountain need no further salvation. The subsequent salvation through Christ pertains only to later generations, who broke the oath.

We have so far discussed *CT*'s exegetical exposition on Abel's blood "crying out." But there is yet another intriguing element in *CT*' exegesis: the reenactment of the oath ("Abel's blood speaking out") in the successive generations of the sons of Seth.[71] Thanks to this reenactment the sons of Seth remained *pure and holy*, up to the days of Yared, when the men of Seth's tribe failed to keep the oath, went down to Cain's daughters, and were prevented from returning.[72] It is likely that this emphasis on the repetition of the blood's "crying out" and its connection with the righteous of successive generations points to another exegetical difficulty, imbedded in the Hebrew version of Genesis 4:10 with its plural form of *deme* ("bloods"). As observed, this exegetical motif is not found in other Syriac, or Greek, Christian exegeses known

---

[68] See Gen 3:15: "I will put enmity (Syr.: ܒܥܠܕܒܒܘܬܐ)…between your seed and her seed".

[69] Unlike in the *Syriac Life of Abel*; see the discussion above.

[70] Thus the emphasis is on Abel's own death and not on his animal offering being accepted by God. For the latter exegetical motif attested also in Syriac literature, see S. P. Brock, "Fire from Heaven: From Abel's Sacrifice to the Eucharist. A Theme in Syriac Christianity," *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993), pp. 229–243.

[71] See, e.g., *CT* 7.19; 8.13; 9.5.

[72] See *CT* 10.14; 12.18–20. Barred from climbing the mountain, the expelled tried to resume swearing by Abel's blood, but to no avail.

to us. It cannot thus be excluded that it bears witness to a contemporary exegetical contact with rabbinic tradition.

*   *   *   *   *

Our discussion has focused on the *CT* version of the expulsion from Eden and the story of Cain and Abel. This version was analyzed vis-à-vis other relevant traditions—both Jewish and Christian—that might have been known to *CT*'s compilers/redactors. It was observed that *CT*'s treatment of the issue is characterized, inter alia, by a strong exegetical trend: both the canceling (or, at least, softening) of the effects of Adam's fall and the introduction of the salvific swearing by Abel's blood are backed by references to certain peculiarities in the biblical texts. In most instances *CT* seems to be aware of both the exegetical problems posed by the text and a range of existing exegetical solutions. *CT* adopts some of those solutions, transforming them to suit its particular agenda. It has been also suggested that at least one of its exegetical moves—the story of the oath on Abel's blood by the righteous of later generations—although appearing in *CT* with obvious Christian connotations, may indicate an exegetical contact with rabbinic tradition.

In overview, the composition speaks in terms of the Golden Age of righteous forefathers, who knew the secret of true worship of God and lived with their families in a blissful state on the holy mountain. The traditional motif of a "second expulsion" is developed here in a rather peculiar fashion: The life on the holy mountain is presented as quasi-paradisiacal existence. Their cult also was perfect, it even included the sacred elements of body (Adam's) and blood (Abel's), which had in themselves—and not only as a pre-figuration of Jesus' body and blood!—a sufficient salvific force so that the need for salvation through Christ pertained only to those who would eventually leave the mountain. The background for Abel's portrayal as a redemptive figure deserves notice. Such a motif appears in the Jewish pseudepigraphic *Testament of Abraham,* where the eschatological Son of Man (= son of Adam, Dan 7:13) is identified with Abel, the son of the first Adam.[73]

The question of *CT*'s milieu is intriguing. The composition seems to address a cult-oriented community characterized by a peculiar

---

[73] See Flusser, *Jesus*, p. 128.

polemical emphasis on an independent alternative "pre-Christian" path to salvation, served by the idiosyncratic hermeneutics discussed above. Additional polemical trends attested in *CT*—namely, geographical and linguistic exclusiveness and the recriminations not only against the Jews, the "usual suspects" of Christian polemics, but also against Greek- and Latin-speaking Christianity[74]—will be addressed further on in this chapter.

<div align="center">JERUSALEM AS THE CENTER OF THE WORLD</div>

CT's peculiar stance on sacred geography and the sanctity of Jerusalem, interesting in its own right, may also inform our appreciation of the *variety* of Christian attitudes toward Jerusalem. A brief excursus into the history of veneration of Jerusalem and its problematic aspects may be helpful here.

In pre-Davidic times, Jerusalem was apparently not conceived of as a revealed sacred place or *axis mundi*;[75] moreover, early biblical traditions bear witness to the sacred status of a number of alternative sites, among them Shechem, Beth-el, and Hebron.[76] As for Jerusalem, it is never mentioned by name either in Genesis or in the rest of the Pentateuch. It also deserves notice that in the Pentateuch the list of possible locations of the *axis mundi*—or, properly speaking, of the gates of heaven—is not restricted to sites located in the land of Canaan. Thus, having described Moses' numinous experience in the desert,[77] the Book of Exodus speaks further on of Mount Sinai as the *locus* of the ultimate theophany. Another, primordial *locus* of sanctity outside Canaan/Israel is precisely that mysterious garden, "somewhere in the east" (paradise).[78]

This absence of a long-standing Jerusalem-centered notion of sacredness became a grave liability after the division of the kingdom, when the northern tribes resumed their separate (inter alia, geographically) sacral worship. In response to that development, novel traditions were propagated in Judah that claimed a sacred status for Jerusalem going

---

[74] E.g., *CT* 24.10–11; 45.4–15; 53.21–26.
[75] See M. Eliade: *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York 1957/1959), pp. 24–42.
[76] See, for example, Gen 12:6–7, 8; 15:8–17; 18:1; 26:1–2; 28:11–19.
[77] Exod 3:1–5.
[78] Gen 2:8. This motif was obviously inherited from a broader pre-Israel tradition.

back to the time of Abraham.[79] Jerusalem thus attained sacred status at a relatively late stage of Israel's ancient history as the result of a development engendered by David's establishment of his new capital there. The sanctity of the city consequently became associated with the divine presence,—an association that was later reinforced with the building of the temple.[80] Although prophets at the time of the Babylonian exile were not particularly enthusiastic about the temple, they did emphasize the centrality of Jerusalem—not consistently presented as the city of David's dynasty—thus contributing greatly to elevating its status in Israel's religious/national outlook.[81]

Second Temple Judaism inherited this trend of reverence, and that period saw the establishment of well-defined pilgrimage patterns. However, both the exclusive sacredness of Jerusalem and the pilgrimage imperative had their detractors. Certain tendencies in Hellenistic Jewry—both those allowing for an alternative, local place of worship[82] and those calling for internalization of the sacred space—should be mentioned in this context. It stands to reason that Philo's spiritualizing tendency—claiming one's heart as the true altar and one's sins, vanquished on that altar, as the true offering[83]—represented a widespread perception rather than Philo's personal elitist outlook. The Qumran scrolls bear witness to the existence of a Palestinian Jewish community that saw the place of its dwelling, and not Jerusalem, as the current *locus* of sacredness.[84] Nevertheless, even Jerusalem's detractors believed that in the eschatological era the city would become the

---

[79] See Y. Zakovitch, "The First Stages of Jerusalem's Sanctification under David: A Literary and Ideological Analysis," in L. I. Levine (ed.), *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York, 1999), pp. 16–35, esp. p. 33).

[80] See ibid.

[81] See A. Rofé, *Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Sheffield, 1997), pp. 76–80.

[82] See L. H. Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism* (New Jersey, 1991), pp. 84–85; E. J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988/94), p. 145.

[83] See, for example, Philo, *Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Soleat* 55–56; *De Specialibus Legibus* 1.287–288. For the influence of the temple's conceptualization in the Hellenistic Near East on the role played by the Temple in contemporary Judaism, see D. Mendels, "The Temple in the Hellenistic Period and in Judaism," in B. Z. Kedar and R. J. Z. Werblowsky (eds.), *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land* (London, 1998), pp. 73–83.

[84] See, for example, *Rule of the Community* 8:11–16; 4Q*Florilegium* 1:2–7.

sacral center for the whole world.[85] The attraction exercised during the Second Temple period by Sinai sacredness, propagated in the Pentateuch—or, mutatis mutandis, that of the Garden of Eden—remained mostly dormant.

Early followers of Jesus were recruited from a variety of Palestinian and Hellenistic Jewish circles, and they seem to have brought with them a wide range of attitudes toward the sanctity of Jerusalem. Thus the author of Acts describes the birth of the new religious movement as intrinsically connected with Shavuoth (Pentecost), one of the three main pilgrimage festivals.[86] He also emphasizes the sanctuary-centered piety of Peter, John, and others, who saw Jerusalem and perhaps the Temple in particular as the *locus* of the triumphal return of the Messiah.[87] This tendency, transformed into Christian anticipation of rebuilding the Temple, did not fade away. Albeit harshly criticized already in the Epistle of Barnabas (16:3–4), it may be found, inter alia, in Irenaeus in the late second to early third century and in chiliastic Christian speculations later on.[88]

On the other hand, the author of Acts reports a denial of the Temple's sacredness by the Hellenized Stephen.[89] And elsewhere in early Christian writings, the idea of Jesus as an eternal high priest officiating in the heavenly temple makes its appearance.[90] This idea, apparently related to post-destruction religious insights attested in some apocalyptic Jewish texts,[91] and of course the shock of the destruction of the

---

[85] See 4QFlor 1:1–8; Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition*, pp. 84–85; H. A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Mass., 1947), pp. 95, 405–418.

[86] See Acts 2.

[87] See, for example, Acts 1:4, 8, 10–12; 2:46; 3:1,11. See S. Ruzer: *Mapping the New Testament: Early Christian Writings as a Witness for Jewish Biblical Exegesis* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 190–192.

[88] See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.25–30. See also L. Vianès-Abou Samra, "L'eschatologie d'Apolinaire de Laodicée à travers les fragments sur les Psaumes," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 21.1 (2004), pp. 331–371; G. G. Stroumsa, "False Prophet, False Messiah and the Religious Scene in Seventh-Century Jerusalem," in M. Bockmuehl and J. C. Paget (eds.), *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (London/New York, 2007), pp. 285–296.

[89] See Acts 7; Ruzer, *Mapping the New Testament*, pp. 193–199.

[90] This idea is developed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, usually dated to the 70s or even late 60s of the first century.

[91] See J. J. Collins, *Jerusalem and the Temple in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature of the Second Temple Period*, Bar-Ilan University, International Rennert Guest Lecture Series 1 (Ramat Gan, 1998).

Temple itself, were among the most important factors that contributed to the development of distinctively Christian attitudes toward Jerusalem.

The complex nature of these attitudes cannot be discussed here in detail. However, a number of well-studied main tendencies, attested already in the first centuries C.E., may be outlined. While Jerusalem—now first and foremost as the place of Jesus' last days—attracted Christian pilgrims already in pre-Constantinian times, there were continuous attempts on the part of Church leaders to suppress the ties with earthly Jerusalem in favor of the heavenly sanctuary. It is in this heavenly sanctuary that Jesus officiates as the eternal high priest, and it is toward it that the believers orient themselves in the course of the liturgy, regardless of their geographical location.[92] This remained very much on the agenda of Greek and Latin Christian writers in the 4th and the 5th centuries,[93] and similar trends may be observed in Syriac sources from the fifth century onward.[94] This mystically flavored tendency was later complemented by another—namely, the establishment of tangible replicas of Jerusalem, or "new Jerusalems," in different cities of Christendom.[95] Within all these developments, however, even when they aimed at annulling the exclusive sanctity of the physical reality of the historical Holy City and its Golgotha, Jerusalem remained the point of reference and emulation.

---

[92] See J. Prawer, "Christianity between Heavenly and Earthly Jerusalem," in J. Aviram (ed.), *Jerusalem through the Ages* (Jerusalem, 1969), pp. 179–192 (in Hebrew).

[93] See B. Bitton-Ashkelony, "The Attitudes of Church Fathers toward Pilgrimage to Jerusalem," in Levine (ed.), *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality*, pp. 188–203. Establishing local holy places by means of holy relics was but one expression of this general tendency (ibid., p. 193). On the ambivalence regarding pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which characterized monastic circles, see B. Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred: The Debate on Christian Pilgrimage in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2005), pp. 184–206.

[94] See H. G. B. Teule, "The Perception of the Jerusalem Pilgrimage in Syriac Monastic Circles," in R. Lavenant (ed.), *VI Symposium Syriacum 1992*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 247 (Rome, 1994), pp. 311–321, who also discusses a possible Muslim influence here.

[95] See G. G. Stroumsa, "Mystical Jerusalems," in Levine (ed.), *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality*, pp. 349–370. On the development of cults around alternative holy places in the Holy Land proper, such as Hebron, and interaction in this context among Jews, Christians, and pagans, see A. Kofsky, "Mamre: A Case of Regional Cult?" in A. Kofsky and G. G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contact and Conflicts in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1998), pp. 19–30.

Jerusalem as Remote Exile

The compilation of *CT* was contemporary with the development of Christian attitudes outlined above; the latter thus provide a necessary background for the appraisal of *CT*'s stance toward Jerusalem. Having given an account of the creation of the world, the angels' rebellion, and Adam's fall, the first part of our treatise narrates at length not only the protoplasts' expulsion from paradise but also the further migration of their descendants; thus the issue of symbolic geography—or rather, topography—is at the very heart of the narrative here. We have seen how, dramatically enhancing an inherited earlier tradition attested in the *Testament of Adam*,[96] *CT* emphasizes that after the expulsion, Adam, Eve, and their immediate progeny remained for a considerable time on the slopes of the holy mountain with the sacred cave on its summit.[97] There, in close vicinity to paradise, they could still listen to hymns sung by the angels and—by joining the angelic choir—participate in the heavenly liturgy. Moreover, *CT* describes this intermediate state of existence as one of sinless bliss, where the substantial elements of the paradisiacal cult are still present and functioning (*CT* 5.17):

> And Adam took from the skirts of the mountain of paradise, gold, and myrrh, and frankincense, and he placed them in the cave, and he blessed the cave, and consecrated it that it might be the house of prayer for himself and his sons. And he called the cave "Me'ârath Gazzê" (ܡܥܪܬ ܓܙ̈ܐ, i.e. "Cave of Treasures")…

Moreover, the *locus* itself is repeatedly defined as the "pure/sacred mountain" (ܛܘܪܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ / ܕܟܝܐ) and "pure blessed land" (ܐܪܥܐ ܗܿܝ ܒܪܝܟܬܐ), whereas the sinners are said to have been expelled from this land of bliss to the "evil/barren land" (ܐܪܥܐ ܗܿܝ ܠܝܛܬܐ)[98]—i.e., all other regions beyond the periphery of the holy mountain itself.

---

[96] *Test. Adam* 3.2. For an English translation, see Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, pp. 993–995. The motif of God's grace toward Adam (even after the fall) is prominent in Ephrem's thought. See A. Kofsky and S. Ruzer, "Justice, Free Will and Divine Mercy in Ephrem's Commentary on Genesis 2–3," *Le Muséon* 113 (2000), pp. 315–332.

[97] For a discussion of the cosmic mountain theme in relation to descriptions of paradise, see G. Anderson, "The Cosmic Mountain: Eden and Its Early Interpreters in Syriac Christianity," in G. A. Robbins (ed.), *Genesis 1–3 in the History of Exegesis: Intrigue in the Garden*, ed. Gregory (Lewiston, N.Y., 1988), pp. 187–223.

[98] See, for example, *CT* 6.23 [R. Or.]; 5.10 [R. Oc.]; 9.5; 14.1; 16.7; cf. *CT* 17.9.

By contrast with the first heavenly paradise, which after the expulsion of Adam and Eve became again the exclusive abode of God and his angels, the "second paradise" of the holy mountain is clearly situated on earth and thus belongs to the earthly topographical continuum.[99] It is this terrestrial paradise that, according to *CT*, is the true inheritance of mankind, and it is the cave of treasures rather than paradise proper that is referred to when Adam's descendants are grieving the loss of their sacred abode (*CT* 17.8):

> And as they were coming down from that holy mountain (ܡܢ ܛܘܪܐ ܗܘ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܟܕ ܗܘܘ ܢܚܬܝܢ) they were smitten sorely with grief: and they wept in agony because they were to be deprived of that holy place, and the habitation of their fathers. And weeping painfully, and wailing sorrowfully, and enveloped in gloom, they raised their eyes in the direction of paradise (ܘܗܘܘ ܚܝܪܝܢ ܠܘܬ ܦܪܕܝܣܐ) and cried and lamented in sadness saying: Farewell to you, holy paradise, the holy dwelling place of our father Adam who went forth from thee… (ܘܗܢܘ ܫܠܡ ܠܟܝ ܐܘ ܦܪܕܝܣܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܡܥܡܪܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܐܒܘܢ ܐܕܡ ܕܢܦܩ ܡܢܟܝ)"

It should be emphasized that the utterance of this cry occurred not after the expulsion from the first, heavenly, paradise but much later—when the proper demarcation between the sons of Seth and the sons of Cain was violated and the descendants of Adam had to move to the "cursed land"[100] and could no longer climb the holy mountain in a pilgrimage that would erase their transgressions.[101] This constituted ipso facto a second and truly traumatic expulsion for nascent humanity: Adam's body was removed from the cave and carried into exile.[102] From now on, Adam's remains will provide the sacral basis for holy worship at different stages of that exile: on board the Ark, on dry ground after the flood, and on the migration of Noah's descendants westward toward its final exilic destination in Jerusalem, where they will remain in anticipation of Christ's resurrection.[103] The long saga of

---

[99] For a different, synchronic, dual perception of paradise in *Liber Graduum*, see Chapter 3 above.

[100] *CT* 5.7, 10.

[101] *CT* 12.13, 20.

[102] *CT* 13.6. This resonates with the biblical veneration of ancestors reflected, inter alia, in the *translatio* of Joseph's relics. See Exod 13:19; Josh 24:32.

[103] *CT* 5.10–12; 16.14,19–21,26; 22.7. This Christian motif of Adam's burial at Golgotha mentioned by Origen (*Commentariorum in Matthaeum*, Ser. 126, 27.32–33, PG 13, col. 1777) and Jerome (*Letter* 46.3 [to Marcella]) is an adaptation of a common midrashic theme of the Temple Mount as the navel of the earth and the locus of Adam's creation and burial. See, for example, *y. Naz.* 7.2 [56b]; *Gen. R.* 14.8.

humanity on its journey from the cave in the East toward Jerusalem—reinterpreting the biblical narrative—is presented in our composition as a tragic, prolonged exile, albeit with the comforting promise that redemption will spring forth precisely at Golgotha, this remotest post of exile.

The compiler perceives the cave on the mountain as the closest place on earth to biblical paradise, the true *axis mundi* compared with which all other regions are nothing but abodes of inane existence. Moreover, we have seen that according to *CT*, long before the "Christ event" made salvific worship possible for the rest of humanity, such redemptive liturgy had already been conducted in the cave of treasures. Thus, in a sense, what the Calvary event in fact achieved was the restoration of the blissful state enjoyed long ago by the elect descendants of Adam on the holy mountain.

Whether this peculiar stance reflects a personal fancy of the compiler or the outlook of a certain Syriac Christian community seeing itself as *geographically close* to the cosmic mountain remains anybody's guess. The latter possibility seems more plausible, given that the geographical exclusiveness is bolstered in *CT* by a linguistic one: *CT* claims that Syriac was the language of creation and the primordial language of humanity. This tradition was popular in Syriac-speaking Christianity in late antiquity,[104] but our composition gives it a further polemical and, admittedly, rather enigmatic bend: Not only is Syriac the most ancient and the holiest tongue, the original universal language of humanity, but the very form of its right-side oriented script indicates its closeness to God, whereas the form of the Hebrew, Greek, and Roman scripts are characterized by their opposite "bend sinister":

> And in the days of Peleg all the tribes and families of the children of Noah gathered together, and went up from the East. And they found a plain in the land of Sên`ar (Shinar ?), and they all sat down there; and from Adam until this time they were all of one speech and one language. They all spoke this language, that is to say, SŪRYÂYÂ (Syrian), which is ÂRÂMÂYÂ (Aramean), and this language is the king of all languages.…

ܡܟܬܒܬܐ ܕܝܢ ܡܬܩܪܝܐ ܐܬܟܢܫܘ ܠܗ ܗܘ، ܘܥܕܗܘ ܕܒܪܚ̈ܝ ܦܠܓ ܘܐܘܣܦܘ،
ܡܬܟܒܐ...ܠܚܝܠܐ ܠܟܠ ܐܬܟ ܕܐܘܪ ܐ̈ܪܝܕ ܐ̈ܪܝܐ ܗܡ ܗܘܐܘ ܥܡܠܡ ܐ̈ܪܝܘܡ ܗܡܩ

ܣܠܡܝܢ ܒܬܫܥܝܬܐ ܕܢܝܠܘܣ ܗܘܘ ܪܘܣܟܐ ܪܝܚܟܐ ܪܝܐܘܬܐ ܘܐܘܢܐ
ܚܟܡܬܝܐ ܠܬܫܢܐ ܘܚܘܩܐܬܝܡ ܠܬܫܢܐ ܪܐܟ ܐܘܐܠܢܐ ܢܟ ܗܘܐ ܗܕ
ܗܘܐܬ ܘܝܢܐ ܚܢ ܕܝ ܚܬܢܐ ܪܝܐܘܚܢܘ ܬܫܢܐ ܠܚܘܪܐ ܘܚܟܡܬܐ ܬܫܢܐ.

Now, ancient writers have erred in that they said that Hebrew was the
first [language], and in this matter they have mingled an ignorant mis-
take with their writing. For all the languages there are in the world are
derived from Syrian, and all the languages in books are mingled with it.
In the writing of the Syrians the left hand stretches out to the right hand,
and all the children of the left hand (*i.e.* the heathen) draw nigh to the
right hand of God; now with the Greeks, and Romans, and the Hebrews,
the right hand stretches out to the left. (*CT* 24.10–11; cf. 45:4–15)

CT also states emphatically that it was only Hebrew-, Greek-, and
Latin-speakers—and not Syriac-speakers!—who played an active role
in Jesus' passion and crucifixion. Moreover, the land of Israel is called
here the land of the Gentiles (ܚܢܦܐ)—with clearly negative con-
notations derived from the meanings of the term in the Syriac version
of the Hebrew Bible:

And when Joseph brought Him down from the Cross, he took away that
inscription which was spread out above His head…because it had been
written by Pilate in Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew.

ܘܗܘ ܒܐܪܥܐ ܪܚܢܦܐ ܪܐܬܙܩܦ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܠܐ ܟܬܒ ܒܗ ܦܝܠܛܘܣ ܚܠܬܐ
ܪܣܘܪܝܐ ܡܛܠ ܪܣܘܪܝܐ ܒܚܕܐ ܚܫܬܐ ܐܚܪܝܢ ܦܬܪ ܒܪܡܗ ܪܡܫܝܚܐ
ܘܠܐ ܗܘܐ ܪܚܐܒܐ ܘܦܝܠܛܘܣ. ܚܟܝܡ ܘܪܚܡ ܐܢܝܢ ܪܪܚܠܐ ܐܠܐ ܐܝܟ
ܪܟܬܝܒ ܒܢܡܘܣܐ ܪܡܘܫܐ ܪܡܢ ܕܝܢ ܕܚܝܒܐ ܠܡܘܬ ܒܝܕ ܪܚܐܡ ܠܚܕ
ܘܡܣܐ ܡܪܐܝܢ ܢܦܫܗ ܦܝܠܛܘܣ ܘܗܕܐ ܘܡܣܐ ܚܬܒܐ. ܗܘܐ
ܗܘ ܐܝܕ ܗܘܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܠܣܘܪܝܐ ܕܚܡܘܬܐ.

And when Christ was crucified in the land of the peoples/Gentiles, why
did Pilate write in it no word of the Syrians? Because the Syrians par-
ticipated in no way whatsoever in the [shedding of the] blood of Christ.
And Pilate, a wise man and a lover of the truth, did not wish to write
a lie as wicked judges do, but he did according to what is written in
the Law of Moses: those who condemn the innocent to death will die
themselves. Pilate wrote in the inscription [the names of the languages
of] the slayers of Christ, and he hung the writing above Him. Herod was
a Greek, Caiaphas was a Hebrew, and Pilate a Roman. Now the Syrians
had no part in the murder of Christ, and to this testifies Abhgar, king
of Edessa, who wished to take Jerusalem and destroy it because the Jews
crucified Christ…(*CT* 53.21–26)

The motif of a pre-Christian ancient community that providentially
did not take part in Jesus' crucifixion deserves notice here. As such, it

does not belong exclusively to *CT*; a somewhat similar claim is found in an early chronicle narrating the conversion of Kartli Georgia to Christianity.[105] In this chronicle, the absence of Georgian Jews from the passion events is predicated to a degree on the geographical remoteness from Jerusalem. The righteous Jews of Kartli, who had been summoned—along with representatives of other Jewish communities—to participate in Jesus' trial (and, hence, his execution), used the pretext of their great distance from Jerusalem to justify their inability to arrive there in time. They thus avoided participating in the evil deed committed by their coreligionists. It goes without saying that this similarity is restricted merely to the absolution of the respective communities from the guilt.

Returning to *CT*, the harsh polemical outbursts directed not only at Jews, habitual objects of Christian invective,[106] but also obviously at the Greek- and Latin-speaking world—i.e. Western Christianity—seem to point to exclusiveness in the self-perception of the author's community. Paradoxically, in the *CT* narrative the geographical and cultural remoteness of the Syrians from Jerusalem and their very closeness to the holy mountain in the East, the ultimate focus of Christian nostalgia, becomes the token of Syriac self-identity as the true spiritual elite vis-à-vis a hegemonic Greco-Roman Christendom.

The *Cave of Treasures* and the Common Christian Narrative

All this topographical and linguistic exclusiveness notwithstanding, the author of *CT* cannot ignore the salvific role attributed to Jerusalem and Golgotha in the common Christian narrative. It is there that the Savior was crucified and resurrected, and he ascended from there to heaven. It is there that his followers received the gift of the Holy Spirit at the feast of Pentecost; it is to there that he would return in the *parousia*. Here is the dilemma that underlies the *CT* narrative: On the one hand, the way to Jerusalem as seen from the cave is the way to the farthest point of exile; on the other hand, it is precisely there

---

[105] For English translation and discussion, see C. B. Lerner, *The Wellspring of Georgian Historiography: The Early Medieval Historical Chronicle, The Conversion of K'art'li and the Life of St.* Nino (London, 2003).

[106] Cf., for example, *CT* 21.22; 54.1–3.

that salvation is bestowed on the descendants of Adam, annulling the effects of exile.

A number of strategies employed in the *CT* narrative are tailored to solve, or at least, mitigate the dilemma. First, the expulsion from the slopes of the cave mountain is presented as ordained by God in view of the future salvation in Christ, although no explicit rationale for God's decision is provided.[107] Second, as noted earlier, there was, according to *CT*, an unbroken chain of cultic tradition starting in the cave of treasures and carried on all the way to Golgotha: Adam's remains were finally buried at the same spot where Jesus would later be crucified. So the primordial cult of the cave and that of the Christian Eucharist are intrinsically connected.[108] Third, in *CT* the Magi pointedly find the newborn Jesus and his family dwelling in a *cave* in Bethlehem, whereas in Matthew 2:11 the place is defined as ἡ οἰκία, "the house."[109] Jesus' birthplace is already described as a cave in the *Protevangelium of James* 18.1 and in the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* 13, so the author of *CT* might have relied here to a certain extent on an existing tradition. But the link of the nativity cave to a "mysterious cave in the East" seems to have been his original contribution. Moreover, according to *CT* the three precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh brought by the Magi from the East and presented—with reference to Matthew 2:11—to Jesus at his birth are the same "treasures" that in the beginning of the treatise imparted sanctity to the original cave.[110] Such a balancing act is clearly meant to contribute to the presentation of Jesus as providing not only for redemption but emphatically also for a return to the primordial blissful state of the cave dwellers:

> Be not sorrowful, O Adam, for I will restore unto thee your inheritance. Behold, see how greatly I have loved thee, for though I have cursed the earth for thy sake, yet have I withdrawn thee from the operation of the curse…Inasmuch as thou hast transgressed my commandments get thee forth, but do not be sad. After the fulfillment of the times which I have allotted that you shall be in exile outside [Paradise], in the land which is

---

[107] See, for example, *CT* 5.10–12.
[108] Melchizedek is presented by *CT* (22.4) as one who introduces the visible elements, bread and wine, to the sacred liturgy.
[109] *CT* 46.9.
[110] *CT* 46.12; *CT* 5.17. There is one more possible strategy indicated in the beginning of *CT*—namely, a suggestion that while Adam's blissful *abode* was in the East, his creation took place in Jerusalem (*CT* 2.15–16). This motif, however, is neither developed nor evoked further on in the treatise when the status of Jerusalem is related to.

under the curse, behold, I will send my Son…and through Him redemption and a *return* shall be effected for thee. But command thy sons, and order them to embalm thy body after thy death with myrrh…]

And the author continues:

ܟܬܒܖܐ ܠܝܬܟܐ ܟܬܟܬܐ ܟܬܟܬܐ ܟܠܟܐ ܐܠܟ ܟܬܒܖܐ ܟܖܐ ܗܝܐ ܒܖܐܬܒ
ܟܬܒܖܐ ܟܬܒ ܗܡ ܟܬܐ ܟܗ ܟܬܟܐ ܟܟܐ ܟܬܟܝܗܗ ܟܗܟܬܒܬܗ ܟܬܒܒ
(other mss.: ܟܬܟܝܖܐ) ܟܬܒ ܐܬ ܟܬܒܗ ܟܖ ܟܬܒ ܟܖ ܟܐ ܬܒ ܗܟ
ܟܐܬܒ ܟܗ ܟܬܒ ܟܬܒ ܟܬܒ (other mss.: ܟܬܟܝܖܐ ܟܬܟܒ)
ܒܝܖܬܡ ܟܡܒܠܟܬܐ ܠܝ.

And they shall place thee in this cave, wherein I am making you to dwell this day, until the time when your expulsion shall take place from the regions of Paradise to that earth which is outside it. And whosoever shall be left in those days shall take thy body with him, and shall deposit it on the spot which I shall show him, in the exile (*other mss:* center, middle) of the earth; for in that place shall redemption be effected for you and for all your children."[111]

The *CT* stance on the issue of the sanctity of Jerusalem shows itself as truly extraordinary. Unlike many other documented traditions, from both Greek and Latin Christianity, the text engages an inverted symbolism: not the local shrine as a replica of faraway Golgotha or as a "new Jerusalem," but the remote Golgotha as the *second cave of treasures*. The first chapters of Genesis are conveniently recruited to provide a scriptural anchor, whereas the historical journey westward from the blessed mountain to Jerusalem is presented as a chain of exiles, resulting from the sins committed. Tension between what may be termed Syrian "local patriotism" and obligations toward the general Christian narrative informs the entire structure of *CT*. But perhaps nowhere is it reflected with such ironic clarity as in the textual variants of the ending of the episode quoted above, where God addresses Adam before the protoplasts' exit from paradise. It is here (*CT* 5.10–11) that, having prepared Adam for the transition from paradise to the blissful cave of treasures, God also warns him that when, in the future, Adam's descendants are expelled from the holy mountain "in the periphery of paradise" (ܟܬܒܝܖܐ ܟܬܒ ܗܡ), they should take Adam's body with them in order to eventually rebury it at the spot indicated by God—the spot where salvation will be granted to Adam's progeny. Some

important manuscripts characterize this distant place of salvation as "the exile of the earth"—a clear Syriac pun on Golgotha: ܓܠܘܬܐ ܕܐܪܥܐ (*galuthah darʿa*).[112] Such seems to have been the perception of Jerusalem by those who dwelled in the vicinity of the true *omphalos* of the earth.

Other manuscripts, however, as the result of a deliberate editorial amendment, prefer to characterize Golgotha as "the middle of the earth" (ܡܨܥܬܐ ܕܐܪܥܐ), following the common Christian motif.

Unlike the representations of Jerusalem in European cities and churches that derived their sacredness from the original, in *CT* the Christ event is perceived as having taken place in the land of not only the remotest exile but also of an unholy linguistic/cultural setting. The *locus* of Jerusalem with Golgotha in its midst is thus in need of a rehabilitation that may be achieved only via establishing a link to the true primordial sanctity: the same treasures, the same cult, and the archetypal cave.

Postscript

Discussing the history of the Jewish messianic idea and its origins, Gershom Scholem suggested an instructive distinction between two basic patterns of messianic belief usually intertwined in the historical manifestations of the phenomenon. The first is the restorative pattern, of which the dominating aspiration is the return to an ideal state of affairs that was already realized in the distant past of Israel's national history. The other pattern, characterized by Scholem as utopian messianism, is based on the hope to reach a state of redemption that has never before been realized.[113] Scholem emphasized that one of the distinguishing features of Jewish messianism is the unresolved tension between the above two tendencies, constantly present in the historical-national aspect of the messianic aspiration.

In our mind, the *Cave of Treasures* provides, mutatis mutandis, an illuminating example of a Christian brand of the "characteristically

---

[112] R.Oc. a,b,c. according to Ri's classification.
[113] See G. Scholem, "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," in idem, *The Messianic Idea in Israel and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York, 1971), pp. 1–36. See also A. Palmer, "Paradise Restored," *Oriens Christianus* 87 (2003), pp. 1–46.

Jewish" inherent tension between restorative and utopian patterns of messianic expectation. Moreover, some of its core motifs clearly express a restorative messianic tendency—sometimes in a rather extreme fashion. And this is not all: The restorative messianism of *CT* focuses not on the private world of each individual—viewed by Scholem as distinguishing Christian redemption—but rather on outstanding features of ethnic identity, such as territory, language, and traditional cult. The *Cave of Treasures* may thus be viewed as a polemical literary reaction to the overwhelming patristic influence on Syriac Christianity in the 6th century.

PHILOXENUS OF MABBUG:
HERMENEUTICS OF INCARNATION

In contradistinction to the *Cave of Treasures*, Philoxenus of Mabbug (d. 523) represents the climax of the wholehearted adoption of Greek patristic hegemony by Syriac Christianity. He thus provides a useful borderline test-case for our study. The theology of this anti-Chalcedonian leader and prolific author and its polemical context have been carefully analyzed by André de Halleux in his magisterial study of Philoxenus.[1] The main tenets of Philoxenus' theology were further reviewed and discussed by Roberta Chesnut and Tanios Bou Mansour.[2] According to Philoxenus' christology, Christ is God by nature and man by a miracle of his will. He has one divine nature or hypostasis in the incarnation, but two modes of existence: a natural, divine one, and a non-natural, human one. In the incarnation, the logos remains God by nature with all his divine attributes. Yet simultaneously the divine hypostasis voluntarily becomes man by a miracle. The theme of divine becoming human dominates Philoxenus' theology. For Philoxenus, this concept of double being parallels the inverse double being of the believer becoming the adopted son of God through baptism.[3] The transformation into a spiritual man is not regarded as a change—a loss of his humanity—but rather as a miraculous addition of a different mode of existence simultaneous with the old natural mode.[4] The double mode of the logos' existence is often expressed in

---

[1] A. de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog: sa vie, ses écrits, sa théologie* (Louvain, 1963), pp. 311–505.

[2] R. C. Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies: Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug, and Jacob of Sarug* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 57–112; T. Bou Mansour, "Die Christologie des Philoxenus von Mabbug," in A. Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, vol. 2/3, *Die Kirchen von Jerusalem und Antiochien nach 451 bis 600* (Freiburg, Basel, and Vienna, 2002), pp. 500–569.

[3] On Philoxenus' concept of baptism, see A. Grillmeier, "Die Taufe Christi und die Taufe der Christen, Tauftheologie des Philoxenus von Mabbug und ihrer Bedeutung für die christliche Spiritualität," in H. J. Auf der Maur et al. (eds.), *Fides Sacramenti* (Assen, 1981), pp. 137–175.

[4] De Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, pp. 351–405; Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies*, pp. 57–62; Bou Mansour, "Die Christologie des Philoxenus von Mabbug," pp. 505–520.

terms of a double birth: The eternal and incomprehensible birth of
the logos from the Father and the miraculous and incomprehensible
birth of its humanity in the hypostasis of the logos from Mary. The
perseverance without change of the divine existence of the logos in the
incarnation determines Christ's unique human existence. The human-
ity of Christ belongs as well to the realm of the miraculous. But it is
the personal humanity and flesh of the logos. It is thus possible to
say that the immortal logos was born, suffered and died. Neverthe-
less, like Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus maintains a certain distinc-
tion between humanity and divinity in the hypostatic union of the
incarnation,[5] albeit advocating a concept of mixture that runs through
various aspects of his theology. This concept—reminiscent of the Stoic
materialist concept of κρᾶσις δι' ὅλων, a popular explanatory model
among patristic writers—explains for him the inseparable unity of the
unchangeable humanity and divinity in Christ.[6]

The verse "The Word became flesh and dwelt in/among us" (John
1:14) is pivotal in Philoxenus' christological discussion of the concept
of indwelling. He regards the use of this term by two-nature Chalce-
donian theologians as implying a prosopic union of two hypostases.
According to Philoxenus, such a union further implied that the logos
indwelt specifically in Jesus and not "in us," thus diminishing the sote-
riological dimension of the incarnation, namely—that following the
incarnation the logos could dwell in any human being, thus guarantee-
ing the universal potential of salvation.[7] It was this and other aspects
of Philoxenus' theology that were analyzed by de Halleux, Chesnut,
and Bou Mansour, whereas exegetical aspects of Philoxenus' theologi-
cal reasoning have so far received only scant attention. In this chap-
ter, therefore, we focus on key hermeneutical patterns and exegetical

---

[5] De Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, pp. 385–389; Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies*, pp. 62–65; Bou Mansour, "Die Christologie des Philoxenus von Mab-bug," pp. 520–525, 537–540.
[6] De Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, pp. 387–388; Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies*, pp. 65–70; Bou Mansour, "Die Christologie des Philoxenus von Mab-bug," pp. 541–548. For a discussion of the Aristotelian and Stoic concepts and termi-nology of mixture and their adaptation to Christological discourse, see I. R. Torrance, *Christology After Chalcedon: Severus of Antioch and Sergius the Monophysite* (Norwich, 1988), pp. 59–74; A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2/2, *The Church of Constantinople in the Sixth Century* (London, 1995), pp. 40–45.
[7] De Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, pp. 376–377; Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies*, pp. 81–85; Bou Mansour, "Die Christologie des Philoxenus von Mab-bug," pp. 524–525, 548–555.

motifs of Philoxenus' christology as applied and elaborated in his *Commentary on the Prologue of John*,[8] written, according to de Halleux, circa 505.[9]

The emphasis on exegesis finds its expression first and foremost in our author's insistence on constantly proving the various details of his christological scheme from John 1:14 ("The Word became flesh and dwelt among us"). However, this overwhelming reliance on this single passage—a peculiar trait characteristic of Philoxenus' *Commentary*—does not exclude his recurrent references to various biblical verses from both the New and Old Testament, defining their stance vis-à-vis John 1:14. It is Philoxenus' awareness of the multifaceted nature of the canon and consequent hermeneutical problems that are the focus of the discussion that follows. Philoxenus' hermeneutical efforts to establish his John 1:14–oriented christology in relation to other parts of the canon are presented here as divisible into three main directions: (1) Old Testament precedents (2) Synoptic Gospels evidence (3) the Pauline epistles.

Old Testament Precedents

In the *Commentary*, Old Testament material is for the most part used in two different ways:

1. Our author relates to a number of biblical verses as bearing witness to the revelation of God's trinitarian nature already to the Israelites of ancient times. Thus the *sanctus* passage from Isa 6:1–2 is interpreted as indicating that the Trinity, and particularly the Son, were made known in this prophecy:

---

[8] *Philoxène de Mabbog. Commentaire du prologue johannique*, ed. and French trans. A. de Halleux, CSCO 380–381, Scriptores Syri 165–166 (Louvain, 1977) (hereafter referred to as *Comm.*). For a general discussion of Philoxenus' miaphysite spirituality attested in that work, see A. De Halleux, "Monophysitismus und Spiritualität nach dem Johanneskommentar des Philoxenus von Mabbug," *Theologie und Philosophie* 53 (1978), pp. 353–366.

[9] De Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, pp. 121–124, 132–135, 151; *Comm.*, introduction to the Syriac text (CSCO 165), p. X; *Comm.* Introduction to the French translation (CSCO 166), p. XV.

It is on behalf of the Son that Isaiah the prophet stated that, saying: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his glory[10] filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings…" and he also indicated that they were proclaiming and glorifying thrice.…So, while he said that there was but one Lord, he also revealed to us that the Lord was triply sanctified, and by that he clearly revealed the three hypostases (ܩܢܘܡܐ) of the same *ousia* (ܐܘܣܝܐ).[11]

It is worth noting that Philoxenus perceives Isaiah here as aware of the trinitarian mystery and intentionally describing his vision in such a form as to reveal the mystery to future Christian readers of his book. In like manner, the Book of Daniel is invoked, as well as passages from 1 Kings, Ezekiel, and Amos.[12] Dan 7:9 ("As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat") is interpreted as meaning that while there is forever one, and only one, "ancient of days," "thrones" (the plural indicating three, according to Philoxenus) refer again to the number of hypostases.

Thus according to Philoxenus these visions represent the heavenly reality of God's inner existence perceived already by the prophets in terms of a trinitarian theology. This uncommon concept of pre-Christian trinitarian revelations may be connected to an earlier idea of the appearance of the logos to the patriarchs as an angel in human form before the incarnation.[13] The latter concept did not gain much popularity; however it seems to have resurfaced in Philoxenus, serving his exegetical purposes. While subscribing to the notion that the Trinity was somehow revealed in ancient times, Philoxenus, as will be shown, is primarily interested in past revelations of the logos, distinguishing between the logos' early, essentially docetic appearances and his ultimate appearance in the incarnation.[14] He also distinguishes between the past revelations of the logos through prophets—John the Baptist included—involving as it were "assumption" of the prophet by the divine power and its ultimate revelation in the incarnation through "becoming."[15] Philoxenus ascribes to the Nestorians an incar-

---

[10] Peshitta: "train (ܫܘܠܝ ܕܢܚܬܘܗܝ)." Philoxenus may be quoting the verse from memory. "Glory (ܬܫܒܘܚܬܗ)" appears, though, in the following verse of Isa 6:3.

[11] *Comm.* 4, p. 8, lines 11–22.

[12] Ibid. 4, p. 8, line 10—p. 9, line 5.

[13] On this early Christian motif, see Chapter 1, notes 44–45.

[14] *Comm.* 4, p. 7, lines 5–16. Cf. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homilies* 5.8, ed. R. Tonneau and R. Devreesse, Studi e Testi 145 (Vatican, 1949), p. 110.

[15] Elsewhere, however, Philoxenus ascribes the divine revelations to the prophets to the Holy Spirit. See, Philoxenus, *Commentary on Matthew and Luke*, ms. Brit. Mus.

nation concept of assumption that in fact annuls the above categorical distinction.[16] It is worth noting that unlike his stance regarding the incarnation of the logos, our exegete nowhere claims explicitly that the New Testament contains a new or higher revelation of God's trinitarian nature as compared to the Old Testament; the trinitarian pattern was fully revealed already in the Old Testament passages adduced by Philoxenus.

2. Philoxenus, however, also tries to discern in biblical proof texts certain indications regarding the nature of the incarnation,[17] the major concern of his theological agenda. The christological emphasis of Philoxenus' exegesis in the *Commentary* heavily outweighs the trinitrian one. Philoxenus relates to a variety of Old Testament passages—partly the same proof texts as those employed in his trinitarian exegesis—as describing either incomplete precedents for, or indications as to the ultimate incarnation of, the logos in Christ. His exegesis here is tailored to attain three main objectives: (a) to use the incomprehensibility of biblical miracles as an *a fortiori* argument for the incomprehensibility of the ultimate miracle of the incarnation; (b) to depict Old Testament precedents for combining two distinctive natures—e.g. fire and water—as "miaphysite," thus strengthening the main argument of the treatise; and (c) to describe the Old Testament precedents of God-Logos revelations through union with visible material forms, as weaker than the ultimate logos-anthropos "union in nature."

(a) The discussion of miracles, then, provides Philoxenus with an illustration of the fundamental incomprehensibility of God's miraculous acts—"it is impossible to comprehend how" (ܦܠܝܕ ܠܡܕܪܟܘ ܐܝܟܢܐ)—*a fortiori* serving the author's interpretation of the incarnation.[18] The basic feature of a miracle is that it happens for the first time in history, contradicting the natural order of the factors

---

Add. 17, 126, fol. 5, in de Halleux, *Comm.*, French translation, p. 6, n. 3. Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Nestorius reflectred a more "Antiochene" approach, attributing these revelations to angels. See de Halleux, ibid.

[16] *Comm.* 56, p. 142, lines 12–21.

[17] Ibid. 4, p. 8, lines 23–28.

[18] Ibid. 6, p. 13, lines 4–5, 10. Philoxenus adduces here a few biblical *exempla*, mostly from the Exodus story, including exegetical traditions of a seemingly midrashic nature. Cf. Ephrem, *Sermons on Faith* 1.275–280, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 212 (Louvain, 1961), p. 6; Basil of Caesarea, *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* 5, ed. S. Giet, SC 26, p. 316; Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio* 30c, PG 44.

involved—hence, the impossibility of its proper apprehension.[19] It is telling that Philoxenus readily combines Old and New Testament miracles (ܬܕܡܪܬܐ) into one category, distinguished from "ordinary" contemporary ones occuring in the midst of the Church, such as miraculous cleansing and sanctifying powers of baptmismal waters and oil.[20] Thus miracles performed by prophets, apostles and Christ himself in his earlthy life belong to one and the same chain of evidence.

It appears that even miracles pertaining to the crucified and post-resurrection body of Christ belong to this same category.[21] Hence the wonders performed by Jesus, the logos-incarnate, represent as it were, a retreat from the ultimate miracle of the incarnation to the Old Testament pattern. Philoxenus in fact argues that since in his time there is no longer a need to bring people to faith through miracles, God does not work any signs (ܐܬܘܬܐ) in the present.[22] Thus the incarnation is conceived of as a unique wonder,[23] whereas the miracles related in the Gospels, such as the reviving of Lazarus (John 11:39–44) and the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes (Matt 14:19–20, 15: 36–37) are essentially percieved as a repetition of biblical precedents.[24] A similar stance, viewing Christian miracles largely as part of a totality encompassing the Old and New Testaments and contemporary miracles was already advocated by Eusebius of Caesarea. Eusebius seems to distinguish between relatively "reasonable" miracles in general and intractable miracles that underlie teachings such as the incarnation and the resrurrection. He paradoxically determined that it is precisely those intractable wonders that underpin the dogmas, constituting the great and formative miracles. In fact, according to him all miracles follow on from the great foundational wonder of the incarnation and nativity.[25]

---

[19] *Comm.* 6, p. 14, lines 25–30.
[20] Ibid. 6, p. 15, lines 1–2.
[21] Ibid. 6, p. 14, lines 10–24.
[22] Ibid. 53, p. 131, lines 7–14.
[23] Ibid. 43, p. 102, lines 7–17; 44, p. 106, line 15—p. 107, line 4; 48, p. 116, lines 27—p. 117, line 2; 78, p. 193, lines 21—p. 194, line 3. Cf. Ephrem, *Sermons on Faith* 4.7–8, pp. 11–12; 5.2–3, pp. 16–17.
[24] *Comm.* 6, p. 14, lines 1–3.
[25] Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 7.1.92. On Eusebius' concept of miracles, see A. Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea Against Paganism* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 165–214. For a general view on miracles in early Christian apologetics, see G. W. H. Lampe, "Miracles and Early Christian Apologetic," in C. F. D. Moule (ed.), *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in Their Philosophy and History* (London, 1965), pp. 205–218.

(b) A passage on the fire and water (hail) in Exodus 9:23–24 serves Philoxenus as an Old Testament *exemplum* of two distinctive natures mixing and adopting each other:

> And the elements, established by the Creator in such a way as to constitute two natures, were miraculously shown to be of one nature…also by their power and acts: Fire assuming the body (ﬡﬡﬡﬡ) of water and, water, on the other hand, acquiring the nature of fire. Fire was like water and, water, on the other hand, seemed to have the likeness of fire.[26]

In the case of water and fire, Philoxenus is at pains to demostrate that the mixture of natures had a substantial (hypostatic) character. In other wonders in the Exodus narrative, however, he emphasizes that the incoprehensible miraculous element pertains first and foremost to their visionary character. The pillar of fire, for example, was seen differently by the people of Israel and by the Egyptians.[27]

(c) This visionary aspect becomes Philoxenus' main theme when he comes to discuss God's revelations in the Old Testament. Unlike the hypostatic union in the metamorphosis of the natures of water and fire, biblical theophanies are emphatically presented by our exegete as essentially docetic—not true unions of the Godhead with its revealed form.[28] The latter is reserved for the ultimate divine manifestation in the incarnation:

> While the prophets revealed to us concerning his forms [of appearence], the apostles proclaimed to us his corporality. But there[29] since it was only about the forms [of appearance], it is not written that he *became* that which was revealed, but only that he was manifested: "I saw (ﬡﬡﬡ) the Lord sitting on a throne"(Isa 6:1); and "This is what I saw (ﬡﬡﬡ): the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line" (Am 7:7); and "This is what I saw (ﬡﬡﬡ), a great cloud came out of the north" (Ez 1:4); and "This is what I saw (ﬡﬡﬡ): thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne"(Dan 7:9); and "This is what I saw (ﬡﬡﬡ): one like a human being (ﬡﬡﬡ ﬡﬡﬡ) coming to the Ancient One" (Dan 7:13).

---

[26] *Comm.* 48, p. 115, lines 19–24. For an analogous typology concerning the three youths in the furnace (Dan 3:48–50), see Theodotus of Ancyra, *Homilies* 1.6, ed. E. Schwartz, ACO 1.1.2 (Leipzig and Berlin, 1927), p. 84.

[27] *Comm.* 6, p. 13, lines 17–19.

[28] On the docetic nature of Old Testament revelations, see also de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, pp. 369–370. See, however, Philoxenus' employment of the term form (ﬡﬡﬡﬡ) regarding the incarnation, where the logos enters without form into the virgin and receives the form of man (*Comm.* 27, p. 62, lines 6–10).

[29] I.e., in the Old Testament.

Whereas here[30] it is not like that; the evangelist begins with the following statement: "the Word became (ܗܘܐ) flesh," and only afterwards he adds that "we have seen (ܚܙܝܢ) his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).[31]

This visionary aspect of the logos' Old Testament revelations clearly indicates their inferiority in comparison to the incarnation. In contradistinction, our exegete regards the visionary revelatory aspect in the incarnation as complementary to the main incarnation event without ascribing to it any inferiority as was the case concerning the Old Testament revelations. Thus the same pivotal proof text of John 1:14 provides for Philoxenus an evidence for both types of revelation: true "becoming" on the level of "nature," accompanied, as it were, by the traditional effects of the *vision* of glory. It is perhaps noteworthy that God's heavenly Old Testament manifestations addressed above are discussed at much greater length in the *Commentary* than God's image as manifested in Adam. Unlike some of his predecessors, who elaborated the theme of Adam's divine stature,[32] in the *Commentary* Philoxenus downplays the issue and refers to Adam only in passing,[33] stating the superiority of Christ:

> He is God with God (John 1:1), not creature with Creator; he is God's exact image and complete, immutable likeness. This image of God [in the Son-Logos] is not as it was in Adam but as of an equal, who created everything with God and like Him. Not as one who is only a servant of God's will, but as one who is hypostatically the Word of God—i.e., not lacking hypostasis as the word which comes from the [human] soul.[34]

It may therefore be surmised that Philoxenus deliberately confines the notion of Adam's divine image to the realm of the protoplast's voca-

---

[30] I.e., in the New Testament.

[31] *Comm.* 4, p. 9, line 20—p. 10, line 2. See also ibid., 4, p. 7, lines 2–16. Cf. Severus of Antioch, *Cathedral Homilies* 70, p. 30, ed. M. Brière, PO 12 (1911).

[32] See e.g., Ephrem's *Hymns on Paradise* 3.9, 3.14, 3.16, 12.4; *The Cave of Treasures* 2.3–4 (R. Or.), 2.13–14 (R. Oc.). For a discussion of this motif, see Chapters 2 and 4, above; G. Anderson, "The Punishment of Adam and Eve in the *Life of Adam and Eve*," in G. Anderson, M. Stone and J. Tromp (eds.), *Literature on Adam and Eve* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 57–81.

[33] A similar attitude, downplaying the stature of Adam in paradise, was already advocated by Ephrem in his *Commentary on Genesis*, unlike his own position in the *Hymns on Paradise* (see note 32, above). See Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis* 2 and discussion in Chapter 2, above.

[34] *Comm.* 9, p. 21, lines 15–21. See also ibid., 19, p. 47, line 27—p. 48, line 3.

tion to serve God's will, as part of his overall strategy to highlight the uniqueness of the hypostatic union in the incarnation.

Thus according to Philoxenus the established precedents—i.e., revelations that had actually occurred and were documented in the Old Testament—were definitely of an inferior kind. Yet Philoxenus adheres to the traditional concept that biblical prophets did prophesy the future ultimate incarnation. Isaiah 7:14, for example, one of the classical proof texts of Christian exegesis, is recurrently and idiosyncratically interpreted in the *Commentatry* as establishing the true, namely miaphysite nature of the incarnation:

> And Isaiah said that the virgin would become pregnant and afterwards give birth. And [what] further confirms the fact that it was God that was conceived and born, and not a man in whom God only resided, is the name given by the Spirit to the one who had been born—the name, which according to the evangelist means *God is with us*. He was called Immanuel to demonstrate that he is *God who is with us* (ܐܠܗܐ ܕܥܡܢ)—not that *God is with him* (ܐܠܗܐ ܕܥܡܗ ܗܘ ܐܝܬ), namely with a certain man (i.e. Jesus) as it is written that God was with Moses and Joshua and as he himself (Jesus) promises that he will be with every one of his disciples.…And they claim in their vain stupidity that the name Immanuel indicates that God was with [a] man.[35]

It is not entirely clear whether Philoxenus makes a distinction in principle between the presence of God with Old Testament figures such as Moses and Joshua and his presence among the disciples of Jesus. God's presence, however, in the midst of the disciples and hence of humanity at large is conditioned by the "miaphysite" union of the logos and humanity in the incarnation. To substantiate his notion of incarnation Philoxenus couples Isaiah 7:14 with another proof text from Baruch 3:35–36:

> Again, prophet Jeremiah said in the epistle of Baruch that "He is our God and that there is no *other* to be counted with Him. He founded the

---

[35] Ibid., 24, p. 54, lines 14–25. Cf. ibid. 16, p. 42, lines 9–17; 18, p. 46, lines 5–8. Philoxenus polemicizes here as elsewhere against Chalcedonian interpretations, which he regularly refers to as "Nestorian." See also, Philoxenus, *Tractatus tres de trinitate et incarnatione* 3.1, pp. 168–169, ed. A. Vaschalde, CSCO, Scriptores Syri 9 (Paris, 1907); idem, *Letter to the Monks of Senoun*, ed. and French trans., A. de Halleux, CSCO, Scriptores Syri 98–99 (Louvain, 1963), pp. 4–5. Cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Nestorius*, ed. E. Schwartz, ACO 1.1.6 (Berlin and Leipzig, 1928), 1.8, p. 30; 4.1, p. 77.

way of wisdom and gave it to Jacob his servant and to Israel his chosen. And after all this He appeared on earth and wandered among men."[36]

Though otherwise critical of earlier Syriac translators, Philoxenus prefers the Syriac version to the Septuagint's since the Syriac clearly interprets Baruch 3:36–38 ("and after all this He appeared on earth") as referring to God and not to the feminine divine wisdom as may be surmised from the Greek.[37] For Philoxenus, though, God in these verses clearly denotes the logos thus enabling the verse to be interpreted as referring to the incarnation with a distinct soteriological emphasis. Philoxenus further seems to interpret idiosyncratically the common biblical reproof against polytheism, "there is no other to be counted with Him" also in a christological context as excluding any duality within the logos incarnate.

Here also, then, Philoxenus confirms the fullness of the Old Testament prophecy. However, unlike the Trinity-centered elements of his Old Testament exegesis, he claims that the revelation of incarnation—though prophesied—was not fulfiled until the incarnation of the logos in Jesus. Thus both the miaphysite character of the Old Testament evidence and the New Testament supercessionist stance are secured. Before the incarnation, the logos was present in angels and other celestial powers but was uncircumscribed and in fact was omnipresent in all of creation. In the incarnation, however, the divine nature of the logos undergoing *kenosis* (ܕܐܬܡܣܟܢ ܗܘ ܠܗ) did not appear in its fulness in order to enable unification with the human nature. Thus the incarnate logos somehow becomes circumscribed, though Philoxenus avoids any clear limiting terminology. This argument is made possible by Philoxenus postulating—somewhat paradoxically—that only part of the logos appears in the incarnation.[38]

It seems, then, that it is mainly with relation to Philoxenus' miaphysite-colored interpretation of the Old Testament's christological passages and related verses that his exegetic originality is to be discerned.

---

[36] *Comm.* 18, p. 46, lines 1–4.
[37] Οὗτος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν...καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτὴν Ιακωβ τῷ παιδὶ αὐτοῦ...μετὰ τοῦτο ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ὤφθη.
[38] *Comm.* 15, p. 37, lines 7–27; 29, p. 69, line 27—p. 70, line 2. This somewhat paradoxical notion seems to be absent from de Halleux's comprehensive discussion of Philoxenus' theology. Cf. however, de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, pp. 426–431. For the notion of *kenosis* as an exclusive channel for *imitatio dei*, see Chapter 3, above.

Synoptic Gospels Evidence

As one who discovers miaphysite doctrines in Old Testament texts, Philoxenus is naturally keen on unearthing also the miaphysite content of the non-Johanine New Testament writings. He seems to identify the main problem of both the Matthean and the Lukan accounts of Jesus' birth as what may be perceived as an emphasis on the participation of a heavenly power (Holy Spirit) in the natural process of conception and childbearing.

He shows awareness of the diphysite potential of these descriptions, and his exegesis aims at resolving the difficulty. Philoxenus' solution essentially amounts to an attempt to locate the event of the incarnation—spelled out in John 1:14—in the very initial moment of Mary's pregnancy, preceding the fetus' natural development, whose various stages are described in the Synoptic Gospels.[39] The supporting exegetical device he employs for this end is his suggestion that the γένεσις in the Synoptic description of Jesus' birth (Matt 1:18), indicates not the full course of Mary's miraculous pregnancy (Matt 1:19–25), but rather the precise moment of the incarnation initiating the pregnancy—as denoted by the verb ἐγένετο in John 1:14![40] Philoxenus also proposes another argument to substantiate his claim that Matthew did in fact convey the Johannine notion of the incarnation in his account. He argues that miraculous birth through God's active participation in each and every pregnancy (ܐܠܗܐ ܒܪܐ ܟܠ ܒܪ ܢܫܐ) is a universal phenomenon. Hence, according to Philoxenus, the only reason for Matthew to relate the birth narrative was to proclaim something new—namely, a new ultimate type of miraculous birth, the incarnation.[41] Philoxenus further suggests a dual exegetical division of

---

[39] Jesus' develpment—both pre-natal and post-natal—was, according to Philoxenus, nothing but a chain of changes in the form (ܕܡܘܬܐ) of revelation and not in the divine hypostasis of the logos. This notion was directed against the idea of change in the divine Christ. See *Comm.* 4, p. 9, lines 10–19.

[40] Ibid., 17, p. 42, lines 18–28. This suggestion was discussed by de Halleux, and we will limit ourselves to a number of observations pertaining to the present discussion. See de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, pp. 22, 123–124.

[41] *Comm.* 20-21, p. 49, lines 1–19. For the similar motif of the presence of God in the moment of conception and during pregnancy, in midrashic literature, see *Leviticus Rabbah* 14, pp. 295–305, ed. M. Margulies (Jerusalem, 1972). According to Galit Hasan-Rokem, this notion is employed by the Midrash in the context of a Jewish-Christian polemic. See G. Hasan-Rokem, "Memoirs of Birth—The Birth of Memory: Experience and Myth in Midrash," *Vestnik* 7 (2002), pp. 267–280 (in Russian).

John 1:14, where "became flesh" signifies the moment of conception, i.e. the incarnation proper, whereas "dwelt among us" stands for the whole process of pregnancy and birth:

> Having spoken about the essence and eternity of the Logos, he (John) immidiately wrote also about becoming (ܗܘܐ) saying: "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." Thus [John] first mentioned becoming because it preceded pregnancy (ܒܛܢܐ) and birth (ܡܘܠܕܐ).[42]

In this way, Philoxenus simultanously tackles two hermeneutical difficulties: the lack of any explicit reference to the incarntion in the Synoptic Gospels and the absence of a pregnancy-birth narrative in John. This distinction seems to be also expressed in Philoxenus' incarnation terminology, where "becoming flesh" (ܐܬܒܣܪ) refers to the initial moment of incarnation, followed by pregnancy and birth. The complementary term "becoming human" (ܐܬܒܪܢܫ) indicates the full adoption of humanity by the logos.[43]

It is exactly at this point that Philoxenus' criticism of the Syriac Peshitta version of the Gospels and a bold suggestion for its revision, are documented. Philoxenus claims that the Syriac translators either misapprehended the distinction between *genesis* (becoming), and *gennêsis* (birth) or, alternatively, thought that "becoming" (ܗܘܐ) is not appropriate for God, preferring the term "birth" (ܝܠܕ). The translators thus opted for their personal theological understanding, missing the true message of the word of God expressed explicity in John but clearly discernable also in the Synoptic tradition—namely, in Matthew 1:1, 1:18–20 and Luke 1:35, 3:23—and speaking, according to Philoxenus, not only of being born but also of the earlier phase of becoming, denoting the incarnation.[44] Philoxenus even states that these transla-

---

[42] *Comm*. 18, p. 45, lines 19–23.

[43] Ibid. 16, p. 42 lines 2–3. For Philoxenus' theological use of these two terms in the *Commentary*, see our discussion, below. Philoxenus seems to have invented these Syriac neologisms. See A. de Halleux, "La philoxénienne du symbole," *Symposium Syriacum* 1976, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 205 (Rome, 1978), pp. 295–315; L. Van Rompay, "*Malpânâ dilan Suryâyâ*. Ephrem in the Works of Philoxenus of Mabbog: Respect and Distance," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 7.1 (2004).

[44] *Comm*. 16, p. 41, line 9—17, p. 42, line 28; 19, p. 47, lines 2–10; 23, p. 51, line 30—p. 52, line 8; 23, p. 24, lines 1–5. In his *Against Habib* 4 and 9, however, Philoxenus still used the word ܡܘܠܕܐ for Matt 1:1, as do the Syriac translators of Nestorius and Theodore of Mopsuestia. See de Halleux, *Commentary*, French trans., p. 42, n. 4. The reading ܗܘܐ is also found in Severus, *Cathedral Homilies* 94, p. 53, ed. M. Brière, PO 25 (1935).

tors have adhered to the ideas of Nestorius.[45] His criticism of earlier Syriac writers and translators of the New Testament appears also in other of his writings. In his *Letter to the Monks of Senoun* he bewails the imprecision of the Syriac terms used by his predecessors, including the great Ephrem himself.[46] This criticism seems to have been the prime motive driving Philoxenus to create a new Syriac translation of the New Testament, and the ammendment suggested here remains one of the very few certain examples of his editing activity.[47]

Philoxenus furhter elaborates on the distinction between becoming and birth in the Synoptic Gospels' usage to substantiate his notion of a three-stage process: incarnation, pregnancy and birth. According to him, Matthew speaks of these three stages: becoming (ܗܘܐ), signifying incarnation (Matt 1:18), pregnancy (ܒܛܢ, Matt 1:18), and birth (ܐܬܝܠܕ, Matt 2:1–2).[48] Luke 1:30–31 is interpreted by our author in a similar fashion.[49] The fact that Philoxenus' interpretation of *becoming* and his precise definition of incarnation as the moment of conception are not spelled out in the text of Matthew—where becoming may be understood to imply the whole process—prompts our author's further explication. In *becoming* the evangelist in fact assumed also the initial moment of the process, which he felt superfluous to specify since it belongs to the well-known natural order of things, whereas the star of Bethlehem relates to the date of Christ's birth and not to the date of

---

[45] *Comm.* 23, p. 53, lines 24–25. Cf. his *Commentary on Matthew* (on Matt 3:4), where he suggests that the Syriac translators misunderstood the Greek word describing John the Baptist's diet.

[46] Philoxenus, *Letter to the Monks of Senoun*, p. 54, line 23—p. 55, line 11; Van Rompay, "Ephrem in the Works of Philoxenus." On Philoxenus' criticism of traditional Syriac terminology and his preference for neologisms derived from Greek theological vocabulary, see S. P. Brock, "L'apport des pères grecs à la littérature syriaque," in A. Schmidt and D. Gonnet (eds.), *Les Pères grecs dans le tradition syriaque*, Études syriaques 4 (Paris, 2007), pp. 13–14.

[47] See De Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, pp. 43, 121–125, 510. For a detailed discussion of the possible scope of the translating enterprize initiated by Philoxenus and his actual contribution, see J. Lebon, "La version philoxénienne de la Bible," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 12 (1911), pp. 413–436; S. Brock, "The Syriac Euthalian Material and the Philoxenian Version of the New Testament," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 70 (1979), pp. 120–130; idem, "The Resolution of the Philoxenian/Harclean problem," *New Testament Textual Criticism* 62 (1981), pp. 259–271; B. Aland, "Die philoxenianisch-harklensische Übersetzungstradition: Ergebnisse einer Untersuchung der neutestamentliche Zitate in der syrischen Literatur," *Le Muséon* 94 (1981), pp. 321–383.

[48] *Comm.* 17, p. 43, lines 3–15.

[49] Ibid. 17, p. 45 lines 6–15.

conception. The same logic applies to Isaiah 7:14, speaking explicitly of only two stages, pregnancy and birth, where the initial stage of conception, according to Philoxenus, is assumed.[50]

Nevertheless, Philoxenus is fully aware of the difference between the Synoptic presentation, especially Matthew's, and that of John. He is in fact compelled to elaborate on this difference by distinguishing progressive degrees of divine condescendence in revealing the true nature of the incarnation.[51] Thus in the Synoptic Gospels only the "external mechanism" of incarnation, i.e. Mary's conception through the Holy Spirit, is disclosed to Joseph, and not the mysterious identity of the one to be born, namely the logos incarnate.[52] Yet Philoxenus, along the lines of his harmonizing strategy, further asserts that it was the same angel—representing divine wisdom—who spoke to Mary, Joseph and the shepherds, and announced to John the evangelist the words: "Became flesh and dwelt among us."[53] Both Matthew and Luke, then, intentionally presented the incarnation theology in only a partial and indirect way, being aware that at that stage it was supposed to remain a mystery concealed in God's mind. Here Philoxenus establishes the hermeneutical principle: Since the Synoptic evangelists did not reveal the full content of the incarnation in their account, it later became necessary (ܐܬܒܥܝܬ) for John to spell out the true incarnate nature of Christ.[54]

---

[50] Ibid. 17, p. 43, line 23—p. 44, line 26. For an interpretation of the star of Bethlehem in a similar vein, see Ephrem, *Hymns Against Heresies*, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 169/170 (1957), 6.5, p. 24.

[51] For a similar hermeneutical distinction regarding progressive understanding of theologoumena from the Old Testament to the Gospels, see *Comm*. 89, p. 212, lines 1–6. See also Philoxenus, *Tractatus tres* 2.6, pp. 83–84.

[52] *Comm*. 12, p. 29, lines 19–25. See also ibid. 5, p. 10, lines 2–9. It seems, though, that according to Ephrem, Joseph did comprehend the mystery of Jesus' divine conception. See Ephrem, *Commentary on the Diatessaron*, ed. L. Leloir, CSCO 137/145 (1953–54), 2.4–5 (Armenian), pp. 25–26.

[53] *Comm*. 18, p. 45, lines 16–21.

[54] Ibid., 12, p. 29, lines 26–29; 16, p. 41, lines 1–17. Elsewhere Philoxenus qualifies his claim, arguing that even John did not grasp the full, profound mystery of the incarnation (ibid. 78, p. 193, line 28—p. 194, line 12). See also Philoxenus, *Tractatus tres* 2.5, pp. 72–73; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on John*, ed. J.-M. Vosté, CSCO 115/116 (1940), 1, p. 11.

New Testament Epistles

As in his hermeneutical treatment of the birth narratives in the Synoptic Gospels, Philoxenus ventures to deal with the absence of explicit references to incarnation theology in Paul's writings and the epistles of John. The main difficulty for our author seems to lie in Paul's programmatic opening statement concerning Jesus' filial status in Romans 1:1–4 (according to Philoxenus' idiosyncratic translation):

> Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, which he had promised before by his prophets in the holy sciptures. Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who *became* of the seed of David in the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

Earlier, we have discussed Old Testament passages interpreted by Philoxenus as referring to the incarnation. In his discussion of Romans 1:1–4 he relies heavily on these precedents, claiming that the expectation of God's incarnation remained the only unfulfilled prophecy and hence the central hope of "all the prophets and the righteous."[55] In other words this was the "gospel of God" (Rom 1:1) they all longed for. This allows Philoxenus to interpret Paul's reference to the "gospel of God" as distinct from "a gospel of man," and therefore as the gospel of the logos incarnate, thus indirectly indicating the incarnation. The words "became…in flesh" (ܗܘܐ…ܒܒܣܪ, Gr. γενομένου…κατὰ σάρκα) (Rom 1:3)—like his interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels—denote for Philoxenus incarnation, and Paul's use of the verb "became" and not "was" is interpreted as further proof that becoming flesh is something new that happened to the logos. Here Philoxenus reiterates his criticism of the existing Syriac translation of the New Testament rendering τοῦ γενομένου of Romans 1:3 as "was born" (ܐܬܝܠܕ) instead of "became" (ܗܘܐ). The Syriac translators thus fail—as in the case of their translation of the birth narrative in the Synoptic Gospels—to recognize the essential role of γενομένου as indicating incarnation. Philoxenus sums up his argument by stating that Paul in fact confirms what was said in the Synoptic

---

[55] *Comm.* 22, p. 50, lines 24–26.

Gospels—namely, that the incarnation, signified by "becoming," was the first stage of the pregnancy, followed by growth and birth.[56]

Philoxenus has less difficulty with the Johannine epistles, since for him they represent the teachings of the same author of the Gospel of John. He thus treats the Johannine writings harmonizingly:

> But it also seems to me that this other saying of the evangelist in the opening statement of his epistle is of significance to our discussion: "That which was from the *beginning* (ܪܫܝܬܐ), which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, the *Word* of life (ܡܠܬܐ ܕܚܝܐ); for the *life* was manifested and we have seen it and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which *was with the Father* (ܠܘܬ ܐܒܐ) and was manifested unto us" (1 John 1:1–2). And this affirmation that the life was manifested indicates that the Logos was born (ܡܠܬܐ ܐܬܝܠܕ), appeared, and walked among men according to the flesh…and *dwelt among us* (ܐܓܢ ܒܢ) (John 1:14).[57]

Thus Philoxenus' concern here is to demonstrate that the major dogma of the incarnation of the logos—only indirectly assumed by the author of the epistle—can be read into 1 John 1: 1–2 in light of John 1:1–14. It seems that, according to Philoxenus, the phrases "that which was from the beginning" and "was with the Father," refer to John 1:1–2, the "Word of life" to John 1:4, whereas the description of human perception (what was heard, seen, handled) refers to John 1:14.

As noted, Philoxenus allows for a measure of development in revelation from the Synoptic Gospels that make explicit the birth, from the virgin and the Holy Spirit, to John, who discloses the nature of the incarnate one to be born (logos). In a somewhat similar—albeit partially inverse—manner, Philoxenus speaks of the creed of Nicaea (325) being complemented by the statements of the Council of Constantinople (381). In the Nicene formula it was mentioned first that the logos underwent incarnation, "was made flesh" (σαρκωθέντα, ܐܬܓܫܡ), and only afterwards that it became man (ἐνανθρωπήσαντα, ܐܬܒܪܢܫ). The Council of Constantinople then added and specified that the incarnation and becoming man issued from the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary. Philoxenus interprets the fomulation of Constantinople "was made flesh of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became

---

[56] Ibid. 23, p. 51, lines 15–27. See also Philoxenus' reference to Rom 8:3 and Gal 4:4, ibid. 49, p. 120, lines 2–5.
[57] Ibid. 18, p. 46, lines 17–24.

man…" as indicating two simultaneous acts (ܐܢܫܐ ܗܘܐܬ ܐܘ ܒ ܐܬ ܒ ܐܬ ܘܡܘܗܐ ܩܘ ܒ ܐܬ ܒ ܐܬ).[58] Hence according to him the logos took the flesh and humanity from the virgin simultaneously. Philoxenus concludes his harmonizing interpretation of the conciliar creeds by asserting that the Council of Nicaea based its formulation on John 1:14, whereas the Council of Constantinople complemented it on the basis of Matthew and Paul's references to the Holy Spirit and Mary.[59] It should be noted, though, that Philoxenus' emphasis here is not so much on the precise moment of incarnation in the moment of conception, as before, but rather on the simultaneous occurrence of incarnation and "inhumanization." Although his theological motivation is not spelled out, it seems that his concern here is twofold: First, to exclude any possible notion of temporal separation between the events of incarnation and inhumanization that may imply a quasi-adoptionist stance on the one hand and a *logos/sarx* "Apolinarian" incarnation concept on the other; second, to emphasize the human source of the flesh from Mary—as against radical Miaphysitism-Eutichianism, advocating a supernatural origin of Christ's "human" flesh,[60] and as against a possible litteral "miaphysite" interpretation of the Nicene creed, which does not refer to any human agent in the incarnation.

Philoxenus' hermeneutical logic of progressive revelation naturally establishes the incarnation in John 1:14 as the climax of the redemptive process. However, the traditional twofold concept of Christ's appearance, first in weakness and humility and later, in his *parousia* in glory, is somewhat comtradictory to the miaphysite concept of the ongoing presence of the logos in Christ's passion, death, and resurrection—hence the exegetical paradox propagated by Philoxenus, interpreting the weakness and humility of the incarnated logos as its true glory and honor. The suffering and death, in fact the very flesh of the logos, are, to Philoxenus, "called glory":

---

[58] Cf. Philoxenus, *Tractatus tres* 2.3, p. 56.

[59] *Comm.* 11, p. 27, line 25—p. 29, line 12. It is worth noting that a parallel between the Gospels and the ecumenical councils was also invoked as a polemical slogan by Chalcedonian monastic leaders in Palestine in the same period, who naturally emphasized the four councils: "The four councils even as the four Gospels." See Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Sabae* 56, ed. E. Schwartz (Leipzig, 1939).

[60] On this concept, see, for example, Severus of Antioch, *Ad Nephalium*, Oration 1, ed. J. Lebon, CSCO, Scriptores Syri 4.7 (1949), p. 8; Torrance, *Christology After Chalcedon*, pp. 69–70; Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 2/2, p. 81.

> He (the evangelist) said: *We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father* (John 1:14). And he called his (the logos) becoming (ܗܘܳܐ) as well as his passion (ܚܫܐ), glory (ܬܫܒܘܚܬܐ). Because he (the evangelist) said: *We beheld his glory*—and it is clear that what was seen was the flesh (ܒܣܪܐ)—it follows that he called his (the logos) flesh glory…And if the flesh of the Logos was called glory, indeed his passion and his death (ܡܘܬܗ) were called glory.[61]

This glory motif provides a solution to the problem of the passion and humiliation of God. Unlike docetic concepts, the weakness here is real, but unlike the Nestorian position, Philoxenus understands it as part of God's glory and not as part of human nature "adjusted" to the logos. According to Philoxenus the belief in the incarnation, passion, and death of the logos is axiomatic and neither devaluates the divine essence of the logos nor jeopardizes God's omnipotence and immutability. The proud ascribe greatness to God, and natural human perception grasps God as omnipotent. Yet they are unable to penetrate the true nature of the divine power and glory underlying the weakness of Christ as revealed in Scriptures.[62] This paradoxical concept of the "weak power" or the "power of weakness" may naturally have an additional edifying value, being *ipso facto* a miaphysite apology for the weakness of Christ.

Philoxenus pursues his apology for weakness with an alternative argument of a pedagogic-didactic nature. He ascribes to the common wisdom that faith is born together with simplicity of nature. Thus a child is naturally disposed to accept axiomatic, even if paradoxical, dogmas of faith. Since human beings could not truly grasp God's infinite wisdom and power, and rationally comprehend the divine mystery of the power of weakness, only their predisposed faith could reveal it to them.[63] A complementary argument is also put forward: Philoxenus opposes the common case for the proof of divine power via miracles— e.g., the ten plagues of Egypt—by demonstrating that miracles have

---

[61] *Comm.* 12, p. 30, lines 2–9. See also ibid. 50, p. 122, line 16—p. 123, line 5; 62, p. 153, lines 12–24; 66, p. 167, line 15—p. 168, line 2; 80, p. 198, lines 5–17; 106, p. 244, line 25—p. 145, line 2. For this motif, see also John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John* 12.3, PG 59:84.

[62] *Comm.* 12, p. 30, lines 14–28.

[63] Ibid. 12, p. 31, lines 1–27. On children's natural disposition for axiomatic and paradoxical dogmas of faith, see Ephrem, Sermons on Faith 5.1–22, pp. 36–37; Philoxenus, Letter to Patricius, ed. R. Lavenant, PO 30 (1963), 29, p. 774; idem, Discourses, ed. E. A. W. Budge (London, 1894), 2, pp. 28–30; 4, p. 74.

in fact not enhanced understanding at all.[64] But as noted Philoxenus presents the incarnation as the ultimate divine miracle. Thus it is only this ultimate miracle, distinguished by the "glorious" weakness of the logos, that brings about faith in the paradoxical truth of religion.

This emphasis on the "glorious" weakness of the logos sits well with the miaphysite insistence on the full hypostatic unity of natures and the absolute divine presence in the incarnation. In concluding this part of his discussion, Philoxenus refutes anti-miaphysite claims that the logos' appearance in weakness may suggest its mutability due to the miaphysite insistence on the absolute unity of natures. For him, the divine immutability of the logos is axiomatic and sustained throughout the incarnation, the weakness being but an external aspect of the all-encompassing divine power and absolute unity of natures.[65]

Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to outline some of Philoxenus' hermeneutical concerns deriving from his anti-Chalcedonian christology and attested in the *Commentary on the Prologue of John*. The Christological emphasis of Philoxenus' Old Testament exegesis heavily outweighs the trinitarian one. He relates to a variety of biblical passages as describing either incomplete precedents or indications of the ultimate incarnation of the logos in Christ. His exegesis emphasizes the incomprehensibility of biblical miracles as an *a fortiori* argument for the incomprehensibility of the ultimate miracle of the incarnation. Philoxenus depicts Old Testament miracles entailing the unification of two distinctive natures as precedents for the "miaphysite" incarnation. He furter describes the Old Testament precedents of God-Logos revelations through union with visible material forms as a "weaker mode" of the ultimate logos-anthropos "union in nature." As part of his overall strategy to highlight the uniqueness of the hypostatic union in the incarnation, Philoxenus deliberately restricts the notion of Adam's divine image to his vocation to obey God's will.

Philoxenus adheres to the traditional concept that although the biblical prophets did not live to witness the incarnation, they did prophesy the ultimate logos event. The famous oracle from Isaiah 7:14, a classical

---

[64] *Comm.* 12, p. 31, lines 1–27.
[65] Ibid. 12, p. 32, lines 9–18.

proof text of Christian exegesis, is recurrently and idiosyncratically interpreted in the *Commentatry* as establishing the true—namely miaphysite—nature of the incarnation. According to Philoxenus the Immanuel (God is with us) of the verse from Isaiah indicates that God's presence in the midst of the disciples and hence of humanity at large is conditioned by the "miaphysite" union of the logos and humanity in the incarnation. The same verse provides Philoxenus with the precise means to identify the timing of the incarnation as the initial moment of conception—another major concept of his christological exegesis. Thus it is mainly with relation to his miaphysite-colored interpretation of the Old Testament's christological passages and related verses that Philoxenus' exegetic originality may be discerned.

Harmonization is a natural and traditional task of a biblical exegete. It is the exegete's particular agenda that determines the choice of passages to be expounded. As an anti-Chalcedonian theologian who discovers miaphysite doctrines in Old Testament texts, Philoxenus is keen on unearthing also the miaphysite content of the non-Johannine New Testament writings. The latter are less prone to miaphysite interpretation than the Johannine tradition, and this fact clearly constitutes a major hermeneutical concern of our exegete. Here the application of the progressive revelation argument is problematic, since these writings are supposed to express already the entire theological content of divine revelation. Aware of the inherent hermeneutical difficulty, and in line with his flamboyant personality, Philoxenus opts to assail head on the most problematic passages, suggesting two complementary—albeit somewhat contradictory—solutions. On the one hand he asserts that the Synoptic birth narratives and Pauline writings, primarily Romans 1:2–4, indeed contain references to the incarnation in its Philoxenian miaphysite understanding. It is here that he criticizes the existing Syriac translation of these "christological passages" in the New Testament as unintentionally "Nestorian." It should be noted, however, that there is no critique of the Peshitta version of the Old Testament in the *Commentary*; moreover, the Peshitta translation is conveniently exploited to advance Philoxenus' argument. On the other hand, he does allow for a certain measure of progress in the New Testament revelation, establishing the hermeneutical principle that since the Synoptic evangelists did not reveal the full content of the incarnation, it later became necessary for John to spell out the true incarnate nature of Christ.

CONCLUSION

This book deals with a number of early Syriac compositions from the 2nd to the early 6th centuries. We have tried to indicate certain peculiar traits of Aramaic-speaking Syrian Christianity from the period when it was still relatively free of the hegemonic influence of the Greek-speaking Church. Even in a later author such as Philoxenus, well versed in early Byzantine theology, one can still discern both salient indigenous features and an awareness of the gap between the Syriac and Greek branches of the Christian tradition. However, the traffic of ideas and perceptions between Syriac and Greek discourse in Syria apparently did not flow only one way; it appears that some fundamental attitudes and theological notions prevalent among Aramaic-speaking Christians were absorbed by their Greek brethren, eventually attested in the context of what is called the Antiochene school. The latter issue was only cursorily referred to in the book, and it definitely warrants a special study.

Our investigation focused, on the one hand, on core theological and christological questions and, on the other hand, on certain hermeneutical strategies mainly relating to the story of Adam and Eve, their expulsion from paradise, and the fate of their descendants. In some of the texts studied these two foci are intertwined, as the paradigmatic themes of the Garden of Eden are intrinsically connected to Christology and eschatology.

Our investigation of Aphrahat, the first Syriac Father, aimed at reassessing his somewhat unelaborated trinitarian and christological notions dispersed throughout the entire Aphrahatian corpus. We paid special attention to Aphrahat's views on the divinity of Christ in different contexts—polemical and otherwise—and their implications for evaluating Aphrahat's essential outlook. Our conclusion was that although some positions are clearly modified or accentuated according to the exigencies of anti-Jewish polemics, one can nevertheless detect a basic unity of thought underlying Aphrahat's *Demonstrations*.

Aphrahat's theology emerges as essentially hierarchic, the logos being neither the creator nor the agent of creation. Moreover, the logos' generation from the Father appears to depend on Christ's soteriological mission. Although Aphrahat is clearly using traditional trinitarian

terminology, his pneumatology lacks a functional distinction between the logos and the Holy Spirit, resulting in a picture of a loose and undefined hierarchic relationship. The absence of a clear incarnation theology is coupled in Aphrahat with a marked predilection for spirit christology. Yet the principle of salvific unification between the Son-Logos and humanity is evident, resulting in a similar confusion between the heavenly logos and the Holy Spirit also in the sphere of christology. This seems to reflect the lack of an elaborated distinction between the two, endemic to early Christian thought.

Contrary, however, to the ascendant tendency prevalent in contemporaneous Greek theology, Aphrahat's *Demonstration* 17 is distinguished by a clear propensity to devalue the divine status of Christ by a denial of his agency in creation and relativizing the divine presence in Christ and his divine attributes, as well as by restricting the ultimate divine titles to God the creator. Aphrahat's stance in other *Demonstrations* shows that *Demonstration* 17 should be viewed as apologetically enhanced yet nevertheless corroborating his overall outlook of the Christ-Logos status as subordinated, detached from the act of creation, and intrinsically linked to the historical appearance of Christ in the soteriological context of the incarnation. Aphrahat's understanding of Christ's divinity and the title "God" attributed to him similarly to its attribution to other human beings thus stands out as a salient, "quasi-Arian" hierarchic concept, albeit lacking a precise terminology.

Certain common elements of contemporaneous Christian discourse do surface in Aphrahat. Consequently, most previous studies cast his thought in a generally "orthodox" mold. We argue, however, that it is not Aphrahat's common terminological baggage but rather his emphases and idiosyncratic reinterpretation of those elements that truly distinguish his thought. As for his emphasis on the humanity of Christ, it should not be regarded as polemical and peculiar to Aphrahat; rather, it may reflect a broader tradition that had interpreted the common Christian terms in this vein. Combined with a terminology of donning a human nature, this stance further indicates an affinity with a sort of Antiochene, "proto-Nestorian" christology that seems to have been widespread in Aphrahat's region.

Whereas the chapter on Aphrahat focused on his theology, Ephrem's commentary on Genesis 2–3 reveals itself as an ideal test case for this prominent sage's religious anthropology, which forms the core of his exegesis. According to Ephrem, the crux of Adam and Eve's drama revolves around their moral autonomy vis-à-vis God's commandment.

This affected not only his demythologizing exegetical tendency but also his disinterest in the traditional understanding of Adam's vocation in cultic terms. Another uncommon aspect of the *Commentary* is the author's insistence on the interaction between divine mercy and justice in God's dealings with humanity. Whereas Ephrem carries his emphasis on divine mercy to new limits, he also retains—contrary to common Christian exegesis—the importance of divine justice and the necessity of a moral test of obedience as a precondition for salvation.

In our view it seems expedient to distinguish between Ephrem's exegesis in the *Commentary* and his stance in the *Hymns on Paradise*, rather than harmonize them. Whereas Ephrem in the *Hymns* expresses such traditional motifs as the cultic understanding of paradise and the "garment of glory," in the *Commentary* he develops an adroit and highly selective approach attuned to his idiosyncratic "low anthropology" and possible polemical agenda.

In some instances Ephrem may have had unmediated access to rabbinic traditions. It is possible to find in rabbinic sources predating Ephrem or contemporaneous with him parallels to almost all the exegetical motifs appearing in his commentary on the story of Adam and Eve. Ephrem did not hesitate to use these traditions when this suited his exegetical needs, ignoring their possibly problematic connotations. Indeed, Ephrem elsewhere polemicized with the Jews. However, as an exegete of the fall, his choice of exegetical options and his ways of shaping them were dictated first and foremost by his overall "low anthropology" stance. The provenance of the traditions he employed—either Jewish or Christian—seems to have been of little if any concern to the Syrian Father.

Religious anthropology is also the prime concern of the *Liber Graduum* interpretation of paradise. *LG* propounds the concept of a dual paradise as the setting of human existence before the fall. The author's peculiar perception of paradise as *locus asceticus* determines the specifics of his discussion such as the nature of primordial sin and the ascetic way of restoring the "paradise lost." Primordial sin is portrayed as a shift of inner intellectual focus from heavenly to earthly concerns. The treatise is also marked by its radical anti-labor ascetic concept—labor being perceived as an expression of wordly entanglements. Earthly concerns, equated with evil and death, are introduced through the protoplasts' voluntary decision; consequently, as with Ephrem, Satan's role in the paradisiacal narrative is substantially marginalized.

Adam's paradisiacal trial provides the backdrop for the portrayal of the Messiah-Christ as Adam's corrective, who fulfills the original ideal of ascetic perfection. Though Christ is identified with the tree of life and the logos, the major purpose of the incarnation is to point the way to the restoration of the lost Adamic perfection. There is no special emphasis on the death of Christ as a redeeming sacrifice; rather, it is on the crucifixion as an ultimate example of ascetic detachment from earthly existence. In other words, the only way to *imitatio dei* is that of humility and *kenosis*. The possibility of ascetic restoration "here and now" explains the lack of eschatological emphasis on Christ's second coming. The notion of contemporary ascetics as a spiritual elite is molded into the author's paradigm of a dual Christian society—a society divided between perfect and upright—compatible with his idea of a dual paradise.

The ascetic agenda of *LG* informs its hermeneutical approach to the biblical narrative of the Garden of Eden. Some particularities of the narrative clearly contradict the ascetic imperative and demand creative, idiosyncratic, exegetical solutions. These include interpretation of both dominion over the earth and human procreation in Genesis 1:26–28 as referring to kenotic humility and non-sexual reproduction. Satan's temptation of Jesus provides the hermeneutical key for interpreting the story of the fall; the former's ascetic overtones are projected backward to Adam's temptation. The author also invokes the Lord's Prayer as epitomizing his ascetic existential vision of overcoming the cosmic spiritual dichotomy. It is precisely because the *Liber Graduum* is not an exegetical treatise but an ascetic manifesto that its hermeneutical strategies stand out as an illuminating example of exegetical "acts of power."

Unlike the *Liber Graduum* with its existential ahistoric personal salvation through ascetic rejection, the *Cave of Treasures* elaborates a mythical historical drama of humanity's expulsion, prolonged exile, and eventual redemption. This involves a peculiar perception of Jerusalem as the remotest place of exile versus the cave of treasures in Syria as the true homeland of humanity and the locus of earthly paradise. The concept of a synchronic dual—heavenly and earthly—paradise is replaced here by a diachronic dual, that of the heavenly Eden and the cave of treasures. Consequently, the redemption pattern in the *CT*, envisioning the restoration of the golden age of humanity and the lost cave of treasures, corresponds to the restorative messianic pattern—with its inherent unresolved tension with the utopian one—described by Gershom Scholem as characteristic of Jewish messianism.

The *Cave of Treasures* provides, mutatis mutandis, an illuminating example of a Christian brand of this inherent tension; moreover, it clearly expresses a restorative messianic tendency. And that is not all: The restorative messianism of *CT* focuses not on the private world of each individual—as does, for example, *Liber Graduum*—but rather on the outstanding features of a proud Syrian ethnic identity, such as territory, language, and traditional cult.

Although the theological discourse of Philoxenus already reflects the increasing Greek dominance in Syriac thought, he still bears witness to certain idiosyncratic traits that can be attributed to his particular cultural background; he thus constitutes an illuminating case for our study. Philoxenus' hermeneutical concerns, attested in the *Commentary on the Prologue of John*, derive from his anti-Chalcedonian christology. His exegesis emphasizes the incomprehensibility of Old Testament miracles as an *a fortiori* argument for the incomprehensibility of the ultimate miracle of the incarnation. These Old Testament miracles entail the unification of two distinctive natures serving as precedents for the "miaphysite" incarnation of the logos. He further describes the Old Testament precedents of God-Logos revelations through union with visible material forms as a "weaker mode" of the ultimate logos-anthropos "union in nature." It is noteworthy that all theological differences notwithstanding, Philoxenus' overall strategy to highlight the uniqueness of the hypostatic union in the incarnation caused him to deliberately restrict the notion of Adam's divine image to his vocation to obey God's will, thus remaining within the contours of the notion of Adam's "low anthropology" discerned in Ephrem and the *Liber Graduum*.

Adhering to the traditional concept that biblical prophets did prophesy the ultimate logos event, Philoxenus idiosyncratically interprets the classical proof text of Christian exegesis of Isaiah 7:14 as establishing the true—namely miaphysite—nature of the incarnation. The same verse provides Philoxenus with the precise means to identify the timing of the incarnation as the initial moment of conception. It is mainly with relation to his miaphysite-colored interpretation of the Old Testament's christological passages and related verses that Philoxenus' exegetic originality can be discerned.

Philoxenus is naturally also eager to unearth the miaphysite content of the non-Johannine New Testament writings, which are less prone to miaphysite interpretation than the Johannine tradition, thus constituting a major hermeneutical concern. Aware of the inherent hermeneutical difficulty, and in line with his flamboyant

personality, Philoxenus assails head-on the most problematic passages, suggesting two complementary solutions. On the one hand, he asserts that the Synoptic birth narratives and Pauline writings indeed contain references to the incarnation in its Philoxenian miaphysite understanding. It is here that he criticizes the existing Syriac translation of these New Testament passages as unintentionally "Nestorian" and contradicting the theological precision of the Greek text. On the other hand, he allows for a measure of progress in the New Testament revelation, establishing an important hermeneutical principle—namely, that since the Synoptic evangelists did not reveal the full content of the incarnation, it later became necessary for John to spell out the true incarnate nature of Christ.

Chronologically, our discussion of the *Old Syriac Gospels* (*OSG*) treatment of Old Testament quotations should have opened the volume. In view of its highly technical character, however, we deemed it more appropriate—and reader-friendly—to include it as an appendix. This arrangement notwithstanding, we regard this chapter as intrinsically belonging to our investigation and pertinent to an understanding of the idiosyncrasies of the "Syriac Way."

We discovered that the *OSG* tend to amend "deviations" from the OT version in the Greek Gospels citations; moreover, the Syriac compilers often prefer to restore the Old Testament Peshitta form of the verse cited. As a rule, these amendments have no support in any Greek manuscript of the Gospels. Far from showing a predilection for a "free, idiomatically correct rendering," the *OSG* demonstrates a clear preference for the *peculiar wording* of the OT Peshitta *ad locum*, which may differ both from the usual Syriac idiom and from the OT Peshitta version elsewhere. The urge to comply with the OT Peshitta sometimes even overcomes the allegiance to Jesus' *ipsissima verba*. This inclination to restore the OT Peshitta quotation form is absent in the New Testament Peshitta and other Syriac versions of the Gospels composed after the *OSG*. Our investigation also revealed the limitations of the above tendency: for instance, the *OSG* avoid amending a "deviation" when it is instrumental to the New Testament hermeneutics or backed by the authority of Jesus himself.

In contradistinction to the thesis that the *OSG as a whole* bear witness to the diatessaric tradition, our discussion highlighted the cases where Tatian's influence seems unlikely. Moreover, the exegetical evidence reviewed strengthens the claim that the *OSG* represent an independent attempt to render the Greek Gospel into Syriac.

All this seems to imply that the situation of the *OSG* is substantially different from that of the Greek Gospel writers. The New Testament authors, in their attempts to prove certain claims concerning Jesus, on the basis of Scripture, turned freely to both the Old Testament text and its targumic/hermeneutic modifications. The *OSG* translators, however, seem already to have lost contact with the initial exegetic context, and their allegiance was first and foremost to the established text of the Old Testament Peshitta, which enjoyed authoritative status in their milieu. Hence, in the case of OT quotations, it turns out that for the *OSG* compilers the authority of the OT Peshitta was greater than that of the Greek Gospel. This undoubtedly outstanding characteristic of the *Vetus Syra* reflects a peculiar religious-cultural situation of the translation enterprise.

The compilers' strategies regarding OT quotations indicate a relatively early date of composition, when the process of New Testament canonization was still under way, accompanied by attempts to define the relation between the two parts of what would eventually become the Christian Bible (ca 200). These strategies may also indicate an ongoing dispute with the Jewish milieu or a discourse within the biblically oriented Syriac Christian community itself.

In conclusion, the texts discussed in this book engender a number of general observations. To begin with, early Syriac sources still retain distinctive traditions apparently reflecting native Syrian Christian culture—among them the strong emphasis on low anthropology and christology evident in the works of Aphrahat and Ephrem, and in the *Liber Graduum*, which might have influenced the emerging school of Antioch. Some of these texts—namely, those by Aphrahat and Ephrem, and the *Cave of Treasures*—are also characterized by an abundance of quasi-midrashic motifs, bearing witness to contacts and polemics with Jews. The latter trait, however, is manifestly absent from the *Liber Graduum* and Philoxenus of Mabbug.

The above traits are complemented by the ramifications in the complex attitudes of our authors toward Greek Christianity. We can observe here a variety of reactions, starting with the *Old Syriac Gospels*, that give precedence to the textual authority of the Old Testament Syriac Peshitta over the Greek Gospels. Some one and a half centuries later, Aphrahat appears to be ignorant of—and untroubled by—developments that had meanwhile taken place in the Greek-speaking Church, including the Council of Nicaea and its creed. Slightly later, Ephrem already adopts some of the "Greek patterns." This trend culminates in

the early sixth century with Philoxenus, who is zealous to present the Greeks as the champions of true theology and highly critical of some of his Syrian predecessors. The *Cave of Treasures*, on the other hand, is strongly critical of the Greeks and the Romans, possibly reflecting a reaction to this "rush to the West," in an attempt to build a proud Syrian identity. One more aspect of this early unapologetic self-reli-ance is the attitude to Syriac as not only the sacred tongue of their Scripture but also the fountainhead of Christian theology. In addition to the *OSG*, this attitude is manifest in Aphrahat and Ephrem, who use Syriac puns to substantiate their theological statements. Philox-enus, however, later categorically denies any value to the independent "Syriac linguistic intuition" compared to the "Greek theological truth." Thus our findings confirm a plausible model of an indigenous early Syriac Christianity gradually entering into a dynamic interaction with the Greek tradition mediated by Greek Christianity in Syria, with the latter's influence eventually becoming dominant.

THE OLD SYRIAC GOSPELS:
TEXTUAL AUTHORITY AND HERMENEUTICS

Introduction: Old Testament Prooftexts in the Gospels and the Vetus Syra

One of the core objectives of early Christian discourse was to establish the revealed truth of the *kerygma* concerning Jesus as the Davidic Messiah and of the broader Gospel tradition as grounded in and fulfilling ancient biblical prophecy. Preoccupation with this task—with the underlying claim for faithfulness to the true tenets of biblical Judaism—started already with nascent oral tradition, and it continued with the compilers of written Gospel accounts.

The same preoccupation also characterized many Christian thinkers and writers in the following centuries, who had to take into account the approaches employed by their predecessors and especially the authoritative testimony of the New Testament itself. A most troubling problem for many of them seemed to be the discrepancies between the canonical text form of certain biblical verses and their New Testament quotations. This problem was repeatedly addressed in a theological context and later also in scholarly research. The eighteenth-century polemic between W. Whiston and J. G. Carpzov provides an illuminating point of transition from the former to the latter. Continuing a traditional polemical argument, Whiston claimed that the discrepancies are the result of manipulation by the Jewish transmitters of the Old Testament text, who intentionally doctored the corresponding verses in order to undermine the credibility of Christianity.[1] Alternatively, Carpzov assigned the responsibility for creating discrepancies to the Gospel writers themselves, who—according to Carpzov—treated

---

[1] W. Whiston, *An Essay toward Restoring the True Text of the Old Testament* (London, 1722). A similar claim was put forward by Justin Martyr in mid-second century; according to him, proto-rabbinic scribes either disseminated wrong interpretations of the biblical passages that spoke of the Messiah or simply erased them, thus creating the illusion of unreliability of the biblical exegesis propagated in the New Testament. See Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 71.

their prooftexts in a free midrashic manner, as was the practice in their Jewish milieu.[2]

The latter suggestion gained prominence in the scholarship of the second half of the twentieth century. Earlier, the emphasis had been on the study of the quotations' text form, with the professed aim of establishing which biblical version the compilers of the Gospels had before them—with an understandable tendency to identify that version with the Septuagint. From the early fifties on, however—here Krister Stendahl's work is of seminal importance[3]—more scholars were ready to discern patterns of midrashic exegesis in the New Testament treatment of biblical material. According to some of these scholars, the biblical authority for the nascent Jesus movement was grounded not exclusively in a written Old Testament text but rather in the text as perceived in its fluid contemporary interpretations. The expression "the School of Matthew," coined by Stendahl, was intended to designate, inter alia, the systematic application and adaptation of existing exegetic techniques.

In other words, the originators of the Gospel tradition of OT quotations did not act out of loyalty to a certain written version of the Bible, Hebrew or Greek; instead, they related to the reflection of the biblical passages in question in a broader exegetical tradition inherited from their Jewish milieu and developed—by means of what may be called a "targumizing procedure"[4]—in accordance with their particular messianic beliefs. Sermons delivered in synagogues have been singled out by scholars as one of the main avenues for transmitting exegetical traditions.[5] As suggested in a recent study, this might also have been the *Sitz im Leben* of the earliest exegetical patterns developed within the Synoptic tradition.[6] This context of oral elaboration on biblical passages might explain then the lack of differentiation, observed in the

---

[2] J. G. Carpzov, *Defense of the Hebrew Bible* (London, 1729).

[3] K. Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1968).

[4] See M. Wilcox, "Text Form," in D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson (eds.), *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture*, *Essays in honour of Barnabas Lindars* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 195.

[5] See, for example, M. McNamara, *Targum and Testament* (Shannon, 1972), pp. 25–26; see also R. Y. Kumlush, "Jewish Aramaic Targums," in H. Rabin (ed.), *Targume ha-Miqra: Pirqe Mavo* (Jerusalem, 1984), p. 10 (in Hebrew).

[6] See Di Luccio G, "An Examination of the Synoptic Problem in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew in Light of the Aramaic Targums to the Pentateuch" (Ph. D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2007).

New Testament, between the quoted Old Testament passage itself and its "midrashic envelope."

The solutions offered by scholars do not necessarily alleviate the problems of those who even today—albeit in a quite different cultural context—have to cope, on either a theological or a literary level, with the noted discrepancies. An illuminating example would be the attempts at translating the Greek text of the New Testament into Hebrew, Frantz Delitzsch's nineteenth-century enterprise being an important landmark. In these translation enterprises the problem becomes even more acute because the traditional text form of the Hebrew Bible is now regarded as sacrosanct even among the non-Orthodox segments of the envisaged Jewish audience. This particular cultural situation differs greatly from that of the first century C.E., with its plurality of textual variants and homiletic rather than book-centered approach to the Holy Writ. In the case of Delitzsch and more recent Hebrew translations, what may be called midrashic discrepancies threaten to undermine the credibility of the New Testament instead of strengthening it with the originally built-in midrashic links whose exact nature has long ago become obscure.

This Appendix focuses on the Old Syriac Gospels (*Vetus Syra, OSG, OS*) as witness to one of the earliest conscious attempts to cope with the modes of employing biblical materials, characteristic of the writers of the Greek Gospels—including the problem of discrepancies. Some observations on textual data will be followed by a brief discussion of their possible implications for understanding the cultural context of the *Vetus Syra*, as well as the possibility that this cultural context engendered certain solutions endemic to a Syriac-speaking Christianity.

The *OSG* tradition is represented by two extant codices: codex *Cureton*,[7] containing incomplete Syriac versions of Matthew, Mark, John and Luke (in this order), and the *Sinaitic* palimpsest, discovered by Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson in 1892 in the St. Catherine monastery in southern Sinai[8] and containing Syriac

---

[7] This codex was discovered by William Cureton among manuscripts from Egypt purchased by the British Museum in 1842. Cureton translated the text into English and added an introduction: *Remains of a Very Antient Recension of the Four Gospels in Syriac, Hitherto Unknown in Europe* (London, 1858).

[8] First published by F. C. Burkitt, R. L. Bensly and J. R. Harris (Cambridge, 1894). See also the later authoritative edition by A. S. Lewis, *The Old Syriac Gospels, or Evangelion da-Mepharreshe; being the text of the Sinai or Syro-Antiochian Palimpsest,*

versions (with lacunae) of the four Gospels in the regular order. Multiple textual variants notwithstanding, the two manuscripts have enough in common to warrant having been regarded by many scholars as either belonging to the same tradition or even stemming from a common source.[9] Although Cureton himself at first suggested that the version of Matthew he had discovered represented an original Aramaic Gospel, there is now a scholarly consensus that the *OSG* were translated from a Greek Gospel source[10] with possible access to extra-canonical traditions. The language of these texts is Eastern Syriac with some elements—appearing mainly in Jesus' sayings in the *Sinaitic*—of Palestinian Aramaic.[11] Some scholars believe that the individual Greek Gospels were translated independently.[12] The *OSG* are generally seen as earlier than other Syriac translations of the Gospels: NT Peshitta (4th–5th century) and its consequent reworking into the Philoxeniana (507/508) and the Harklensis (615/616) redactions. Some scholars believed that in many instances the translation tradition represented in both the *Curetonian* and the *Sinaitic* was of early provenance (second century);[13] others, more recently, date the *OSG* to a period much closer to the composition of the NT Peshitta—namely, the mid-fourth century.[14] The introduction to the Nestle-Aland edition of the New Testament takes a middle ground, dating *Vetus Syra* to "ca 3–4 cent."

The nature of the extra-canonical sources used in the *OSG*, as well as that of the *OSG* provenance, continue to be debated.[15] More specifically, a question arises concerning the relationship between the *OSG*

---

including the latest additions and emendations, with the variants of the Curetonian text (London, 1910).

[9] No Syriac versions of other New Testament compositions that could be ascribed to the same tradition have as yet been discovered.

[10] Affinity may be discerned mainly with the Western text represented by Codex Bezae (D), but there are also points of kinship with the tradition of A.

[11] Thus Antioch has been suggested as a possible place of provenance for at least part of the *OSG*. See S. P. Brock, "The Syriac Versions," in B. M. Metzger (ed.), *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Oxford, 1977), p. 39.

[12] See Brock, "The Syriac Versions," p. 43 and n. 6.

[13] See Burkitt et al., *Evangelion*, 19.

[14] See, for example, M. Black, "The Syriac Versional Tradition," in K. Aland (ed.), *Die alten Übersetzungen des Neuen Testaments, die Kirchenväterzitate und Lektionare* (Berlin-New York, 1972), p. 130.

[15] For example, according to Torrey, Sinaitic is characterized by its preference for words and idioms typical of Palestinian Aramaic rather than of Edessene Syriac—a feature suggesting Antiochian origin of the text form preserved here; see C. C. Torrey, *Documents of Primitive Church* (New York-London, 1941), pp. 250–269.

and the *Diatessaron* of Tatian, a second-century Syriac harmony of the Gospels that survived only in later translations.[16] Many scholars see in the *Diatessaron* the first Syriac version of the Gospel that was known in Syriac-speaking churches and regard the *OSG* as a later composition dependent on the *Diatessaron*. There are also those who advocate the priority of the *OSG*. Finally, a third model may be suggested—namely, that the *Diatessaron* and the *OSG* represent basically independent attempts at a Syriac translation of the Gospels.[17]

Attempts to resolve the problem of the relationship between the *OSG* and the *Diatessaron* have generally been based on an analysis of the linguistic peculiarities of the former. This Appendix will highlight additional relevant aspects, such as the biblical quotations' text form and the exegetical strategies employed in the *OSG*.[18]

*   *   *

It is generally assumed that the *OSG* compilers must have been familiar with an authoritative Syriac version of the main parts of the Old Testament, the Peshitta of the Pentateuch being in existence as early as mid-second century CE.[19] The Greek Gospel text they were translating

---

[16] The *Diatessaron* had been in liturgical use in Syriac-speaking churches for more than two centuries before it was suppressed by the separate Gospels of the NT Peshitta. The original Syriac version has not survived. The main witnesses for Tatian's harmony are of two kinds: (1) Later translations, among which the most important are the Arabic (P. A. Ciasca, *Tatiani Evangeliorum Harmoniae Arabice* [Rome, 1888]; A.-S. Marmardji, *Diatessaron de Tatien* [Beirut, 1935]) and Persian (G. Messina, *Diatessaron Persiano*, Biblica et orientalia 14 [Rome, 1951]) harmonies (Eastern family); and Western witnesses, such as the Latin Codex Fuldensis [E. Ranke, *Codex Fuldensis. Novum Testamentum latine interpreto Hieronimo ex manuscripto Victoris Capuani* (Marburg-Leipzig, 1868)] and the Liège *Diatessaron* [D. Plooij et al., *The Liège Diatessaron*, Verhandelingen der Nederlandse Academie van Wetenschappen 31 (Amsterdam, 1929–70)]. For a full list of western sources of the *Diatessaron*, see W. L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship*, VCS 25 (Leiden, 1994), pp. 483–489. (2) Gospel quotations and allusions in Syriac compositions from the second to the fifth centuries—before the separate Syriac Gospels superseded the *Diatessaron* in liturgical practice. See I. Ortiz de Urbina, *Vetus evangelium Syrorum et…exinde excerptum Diatessaron Tatiani*, Biblia Polyglotta Matritensia 6 (Madrid, 1967).

[17] See Brock, "The Syriac Versions," pp. 45–46.

[18] For an extensive treatment of these issues, see S. Ruzer, *Biblical Quotations in the Old Syriac Gospels: Peshitta Influence and Hermeneutical Constraints* (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996) (in Hebrew).

[19] See M. P. Weitzman, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 1999), esp. pp. 248–259; J. Joosten, "Tatian's Diatessaron and the Old Testament Peshitta," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120 (2001), pp. 501–523, esp. p. 509; S. Brock, "The Peshitta Old Testament: Between Judaism and Christianity,"

included quite a few Old Testament quotations that did not corre-
spond to the Syriac Old Testament text known to them. These discrep-
ancies will be discussed below. In addition, according to a widespread
contemporaneous belief, the Greek source of the *OSG* compilers was
in fact a translation of an original "Jewish"—Aramaic or Hebrew—
Gospel.[20] The *OSG* enterprise may thus be seen as an attempt to restore
the original Semitic version of the Gospel. But were the Syriac com-
pilers themselves consciously aiming at such a restoration? Further
investigation of the *OSG* handling of these problematic quotations
may shed some light on this difficult question. It is, however, beyond
the scope of the present study.

   The discussion will focus on five selected test cases, first three of
them belonging to the triple synoptic tradition shared by Matthew,
Mark and Luke.[21]

1. *Isa 40:3: Matt 3:3—Mark 1:3—Luke 3:4 (cf. John 1:23)*

The biblical verse and its various ancient renderings are as follows:

MT (Isa 40:3)   קול קורא במדבר פנו דרך ה׳
                               ישרו בערבה מסלה לאלהינו

                (RSV: *A voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of the*
                LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.)

Tg. Jon.   קל דמכלי במדברא פנו אורחא קדם עמא דה׳
                        כבישו במישרא כבשין קדם כנשתא דאלהנא

Pesh.[22]   ܩܠܐ ܕܩܪܐ ܒܡܕܒܪܐ ܦܢܘ ܐܘܪܚܐ ܠܡܪܝܐ
               ܘܬܪܘܨܘ ܒܦܩܥܬܐ ܫܒܝܠܐ ܠܐܠܗܢ

LXX   φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ Ἑτοιμάσατε (Aq.: ἀποσκευσάτε)
             τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ
             ἡμῶν·

Christianismo nella Storia 19 (1998), pp. 483–502. M. Goshen-Gottstein ("Syriac Tar-
gums," in Rabin [ed.], *Targume ha-Miqra*, p. 150) suggested an even earlier date, the
end of the first century CE, for the OT Peshitta composition.
    [20] See Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (mid-second century), quoted by Eusebius, *His-
toria Ecclesiastica* 3.39.16 (ed. K. Lake, LCL, 1926).
    [21] For a detailed discussion of fifty-six such quotations, of which thirteen belong to
the triple tradition, see Ruzer, *Biblical Quotations in the Old Syriac Gospels*.
    [22] The OT Peshitta is quoted according to *The Old Testament in Syriac According
to the Peshitta Version* (Leiden, 1972–1998).

Unlike a syntactical division of the Hebrew text, already attested in Qumran,[23] the Septuagint understands the "wilderness" as the locus of the voice "crying out." Thus "wilderness" and "desert" become synonyms, and the latter is altogether omitted in LXX,[24] whereas *Tg. Jonathan* and the OT Peshitta both retain "desert," thus allowing for two commandments, parallel yet distinct, to be discerned here. The Peshitta enhances the parallelism by turning "the way of the LORD" into *l-urha l-marya (the way for the LORD)*—similar to *shvile l-alahan* of the second half of the verse. The same approach is found in *Tg. Jonathan* (*kdam—kdam*), with the midrashic extensions "people of the LORD" and "congregation of God" for "LORD" and "God" respectively. The Septuagint, in turn, enhances the parallelism by twice using the genitive form: κυρίου—θεοῦ.

Another trait characterizes the Aramaic and Syriac renderings: both *Tg. Jonathan* and Peshitta use (following the Hebrew) the verb *p-n-ʿ* (憐ﬨ) for "prepare," whereas LXX employs ἑτοιμάσατε, which is closer to the Syriac *ṭ-y-b* (ﭏ﬩): the latter verb appears regularly in the OT Peshitta with the meaning "to prepare"—in places where LXX as a rule uses ἑτοιμάζω.[25] Alternatively, Aquila translates *p-n-ʿ* of Isaiah 40:3 literally as ἀποσκευάσατε. Unlike *ṭ-y-b*, *p-n-ʿ* (in *paʿel*) normally stands in the OT Peshitta for "to return, bring back"[26]—with three notable exceptions (including our case), all of them in Isaiah,[27] where it is used to render the expression "to prepare the way." What we have here may therefore be seen as a characteristic trait of the Peshitta treatment of the Isaiah material.

Synoptic versions of the quotation from Isaiah 40:3 are identical (with variants only in the opening formula):

Luke 3:4 (=Matt 3:3=Mark 1:3)

> ὡς γέγραπται ἐν βίβλῳ λόγων Ἠσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου, Φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, Ἑτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ:

---

[23] 1QS 8:11–17; 9:19–20.

[24] See, however, D. Flusser (*Jesus* [Jerusalem, 2001], pp. 37–38 and n. 2 there), who was of the opinion that the Greek text of the Septuagint was originally in agreement here with the Hebrew of Isaiah.

[25] For example, Gen 24:14, 44; Exod 16:5; Num 23:1,4; Isa 21:8.

[26] For example, Gen 20:14; Lev 5:23; Deut 4:39; Ezek 18:7; Hos 12:14 (15).

[27] Isa 40:3, 57:14, 62:10.

(RSV: As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.")

Most of the characteristic features of the quotation betray closeness to LXX. Four discrepancies with the tradition of Aramaic-Syriac renderings may be discerned here:

1. Like LXX, the Gospel uses ἑτοιμάσατε (= *ṭ-y-b*).
2. A parallelism of *genitive*—again, as in LXX—is produced.
3. "Desert" is omitted—a distinctive LXX feature: John the Baptist is the one who cries out in the wilderness. It seems, however, that for the Gospel writers the *content* of his call is not necessarily connected with the desert.
4. At variance with LXX and without any parallel in known targumic traditions, the "[highway] for our God" is shortened to [τρίβους] αὐτοῦ.

The *OSG* versions of the quotation in Matthew, Mark and Luke show a complete lack of harmonization, but in all of them the tendency to restore elements of the OT Peshitta form may be discerned. The compiler of the *Cureton* Luke is the most thorough in his efforts:

OSG Luke 3:4 (*Cur.*)

<div dir="rtl">ܩܠܐ ܕܩܪܐ ܒܡܕܒܪܐ ܗܘ ܐܘܪܚܐ ܠܡܪܝܐ
ܘܬܩܢܘ ܫܒܝܠܐ ܠܐܠܗܢ</div>

Cf.: *OSG Luke* 3:4 (*Sin.*)

<div dir="rtl">ܩܠܐ ܕܩܪܐ ܒܡܕܒܪܐ ܛܝܒܘ ܐܘܪܚܐ ܠܡܪܝܐ
ܘܬܪܘܨܘ ܫܒܝܠܐ ܠܐܠܗܢ</div>

OS Matt 3:3 (*Cur.* and *Sin.*)   <div dir="rtl">(ܕ)ܛܒܘ ܐܘܪܚܐ ܠܡܪܝܐ…</div>…

It can be seen that the compiler of the *Cureton* version of Luke amends all four deviations mentioned above, thus bringing the quotation into agreement with the OT Peshitta; none of these adaptations can be derived from a surviving textual variant of the Greek Gospel. *Cureton* uses the characteristically Peshittaic ܗܘ (from *p-n-ʿ*, cf. *ṭ-y-b* in the *Sinaitic* version), substitutes the parallelism of the *dative* for that of the *genitive*, turning αὐτου into ܐܠܗܢ ("for our God")[28] and, finally,

---

[28] Cf. Joosten, "Tatian's Diatessaron," p. 506.

restores the "desert" (ܚܘܪܒܐ). This restorative tendency is lacking in later Syriac Gospel versions—e.g., the NT Peshitta, which faithfully follows the Greek New Testament:[29]

NT Pesh Luke 3:4

ܩܠܐ ܕܩܪܐ ܒܡܕܒܪܐ ܠܒܘ ܐܘܪܚܐ ܕܡܪܝܐ
ܘܐܘܝܢܘ ܫܒܝܠܘܗܝ ܠܟܘܢ

(The voice of one crying in the *waste land* (hurba): Prepare (ṭ-b-y) the way *of* the Lord, make his paths straight)

One may also note a telling difference in the rendering of the opening formula: free and idiomatic in the *OSG*, awkward and slavishly adapted to the Greek in the NT Peshitta:

OSG Luke 3:4 (*Cur.* and *Sin.*)

ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܟܬܝܒ ܒܢܒܝܘܬܐ(ܗ) ܕܐܫܥܝܐ ܢܒܝܐ

(As it is written in the *prophecy* of Isaiah the prophet)

NT Pesh Luke 3:4

ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܟܬܝܒ ܒܟܬܒܐ ܕܡܠܘܗܝ ܕܐܫܥܝܐ ܢܒܝܐ

(As it is written in the *book of the words* of Isaiah the prophet)

Jan Joosten has argued that some of the restoration elements characteristic of the *OSG may* go back to the original *Diatessaron*.[30] There is, however, no evidence in the surviving Syriac sources from the relevant period that the *full-scale* restoration attempted in *Cureton* Luke was present in Tatian's harmony. Moreover, there are instances where these sources bear witness to the opposite. One such instance—not discussed by Joosten—is found in Ephrem's Commentary on the *Diatessaron*, where he relates in passing to Isaiah 40:3 while commenting on the Prologue of John:[31]

---

[29] Only *peka'tha* is added here, as in the Arabic *Diatessaron*. Thus the exegesis suggested for Isa 40:3 in the Greek Gospel is ignored.

[30] Joosten, "Tatian's *Diatessaron*," p. 508.

[31] L. Leloir, *Saint Éphrem: Commentaire de l'évangile concordant. Chester Beatty MS 709* (Dublin, 1963) 1.10, p. 8. The English translation is by C. McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron*, Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 2 (Oxford, 1993), p. 44.

And you, little child, you shall be called the prophet of the Most High (Luke 1:76), since the Spirit was in the little child as well as in the old man. *You will go before the face of our Lord* (ibid.), taking the place of the prophets who had heralded his fame (ܛܒܗ).... *For grace* (ܛܝܒܘܬܐ) *[came] through Jesus* (John 1:17), so that a *path* be *prepared* for him (Luke 4:3). What is this path? That he might destroy sin and render the curse void, and give knowledge of God and the promise of the resurrection, and the kingdom of heaven. Concerning this path therefore he said, *Prepare* (ܛܝܒܘ) *Ye* (idem).... Prepare (ܛܝܒܘ) your ears and get your hearts ready (ܐܬܟܢܘ).

The Syriac father presents John the Baptist as a prophet following in the footsteps of the biblical prophets who proclaimed the fame (*ṭebeh*) of Jesus coming from the mercy/grace (*ṭaybutha*) given through him. It is for Jesus, then, that one should prepare the path. "What is this path?.... Concerning this path therefore he said, Prepare, ...prepare (*ṭayeb[u]*) your ears and get your hearts ready (*athken[u]*)". Since the root *ṭ-y-b* seems to be instrumental for the exegetical connection Ephrem makes with Jesus' fame and grace, one may surmise that the *Diatessaron* he knew used this form rather than *p-n-ʿ*.[32]

Furthermore, the lack of harmonization among the compilers of the various *OS* Gospels[33] indicates that the spectrum of their restoration activity cannot be explained as the result of "taking apart" the *Diatessaron* tradition. Therefore the peculiarities of the *OSG* treatment of the quotation in question cannot be plausibly attributed to Tatian's influence.

2. *Ps 118:22–23: Matt 21:42—Mark 12:10–11—Luke 20:17*

MT (Ps 118:22–23)

אבן מאסו הבונים היתה לראש פנה
מאת ה׳ היתה זאת היא נפלאת בעינינו

(RSV: *The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.*)

---

[32] Moreover, since, according to Ephrem, preparing the path for God takes place in one's heart, there is no place for *pka'tha* (desert). It stands to reason therefore that the "desert" also did not appear in the version of Tatian's harmony known to Ephrem.

[33] I.e., between Matthew and Luke (the Marcan parallel is missing in both *Cureton* and *Sinaitic*).

Pesh.

ܟܐܦܐ ܕܐܣܠܝܘ ܒܢܝܐ ܗܘܐ ܗܝ ܠܪܝܫ ܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܒܢܝܐ
ܡܢ ܩܕܡ ܡܪܝܐ ܗܘܐ ܗܕܐ ܘܬܕܡܘܪܬܐ ܗܝ ܒܥܝܢܝܢ

LXX

> λίθον, ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες, οὗτος ἐγενήθη
> εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας· παρὰ κυρίου ἐγένετο αὕτη καὶ ἔστιν
> θαυμαστὴ ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν.

Syro-Hexapla

ܟܐܦܐ ܗܝ ܕܐܣܠܝܘܗܝ ܒܢܝܐ ܗܕܐ ܗܘܐ ܠܪܝܫ ܕܓܘܢܝܐ

The OT Peshitta contains the only targumic version of the bibli-
cal verse that uses a paraphrase for the "head of the corner": *risheh
d'benyana* (ܪܝܫܐ ܕܒܢܝܢܐ, the main [corner]stone of the *building*).[34]
The use of this paraphrase is restricted in the OT Peshitta to the verse
in question[35] and may, therefore, be seen as a unique feature of its
textual tradition for Psalm 118. The text form of the first part of the
quotation (Ps 118:22) in the New Testament is identical in all three
Synoptic Gospels[36] and also to that of LXX, whereas the *OSG* versions
of the quotation read as follows:

Matt 21:42=Mark 12:10–11 (the *Cureton* readings that differ from the
Sinaitic are noted in brackets):

ܕܟܐܦܐ (+ܗܝ) ܕܐܣܠܝܘ ܒܢܝܐ ܗܝ ܗܘܐ ܠܪܝܫ ܕܙܘܝܬܐ (ܠܪܝܫ ܕܙܘܝܬܐ)܀

Luke 20:17:

ܗܘ ܕܝܢ ܚܪ ܒܗܘܢ ܘܐܡܪ ܐܝܟܐ ܗܘ ܗܟܝܠ (ܡܕܝܢ) ܗܢܐ ܡܐ ܕܟܬܝܒ
ܕܟܐܦܐ ܕܐܣܠܝܘ ܒܢܝܐ ܗܝ ܗܘܐ ܠܪܝܫ ܡܢܗ (ܠܪܝܫ ܕܒܢܝܢܐ)

The quotations in Matthew and Mark are thus basically identical and
show clear signs of dependence on the Greek Gospel text. The depen-
dence may be discerned, inter alia, in the use of such parallels for
κεφαλὴν γωνίας as *rish d'zawitha* (ܪܝܫ ܕܙܘܝܬܐ) and *risha d'zawitha*
(ܪܝܫܐ ܕܙܘܝܬܐ). Conversely, in the *Cureton* version of Luke, restora-
tion activity seems to be at work—the Syriac translator even uses the
paraphrase *risheh d'benyana*, thus making his quotation distinctively

---

[34] Cf. *risha d'gunya* in *Syro-hexapla*.

[35] Cf. Jer 51:26, where "ולא-יקחו ממך אבן לפנה" (RSV: No stone shall be taken from
you for a corner) is rendered by the Peshitta as *w'la nesbun minakh kifa l'zawitha*.

[36] In Matt and Mark the quotation is longer and includes also Ps 118:23.

OT Peshittaic in form. This restoration tendency is foreign to other Syriac versions of the Gospels, such as NT Peshitta and the Philoxenian redaction, which remain faithful to the Greek text:

NT Pesh. (Luke 20:17)

ܕܕܟܬܒܐ܆ ܟܐܦܐ ܕܐܣܠܝܘ ܒܢܝ̈ܐ ܗܘ ܗܘܐ ܠܪܝܫ ܙܘܝܬܐ܂ ܗܢܐ ܕܝܢ…

Philox.

…ܗܘ… ܕܐܣܠܝܘ… ܗܘ ܗܘܐ ܠܪܝܫ ܕܙܘܝܬܐܘ…

The paraphrase *risheh d'benyana* found in both OT Peshitta for Ps 118:22 and *Cureton* Luke is attested neither in other Syriac compositions from the period when the *Diatessaron* was in common use[37] nor in the surviving translations of Tatian's harmony, except for an ambiguous testimony in the late Haag *Diatessaron*.[38] However, in view of the variant possibly hinted in the Haag *Diatessaron,* as well as the fact that the relevant comment of Ephrem survived only in Armenian,[39] one should view the evidence here with caution. This may further strengthen the arguments doubting the value of the fourth-century Syriac sources, such as Ephrem, as evidence for the original text of the *Diatessaron*, claiming that by Ephrem's time it had already been reworked with greater adjustment to the Greek Gospel.

The discrepancies with the OT Peshitta text discerned in the *Diatessaron* OT references would thus reflect that later process of adjustment and not Tatian's original approach. In fact, Joosten would posit that as far as Tatian is concerned, he could not help trying to mitigate the discrepancies in the biblical quotations—he might well have been the first Syriac author who tried to cope with the problem.[40] Hence, according to Joosten, the restoration activity of the *OSG* compilers may and even should be ascribed to their dependence on Tatian.

Although Joosten's conjunction cannot be supported by textual evidence, his claim that Tatian must have been aware of the discrepancy problem and therefore had to cope with it certainly deserves consideration. This claim is conditioned by a relatively early dating for OT

---

[37] See Ortiz de Urbina, *Vetus evangelium Syrorum*, p. 1626.

[38] "The stone....has been laid at the top of the **castle** (in dat ouerste van den slotte)." See Joosten, "Tatian's *Diatessaron*," p. 515.

[39] See L. Leloir, *Saint Ephrem: Commentaire de l'evangile concordant. Version armenienne* (traduction latine), CSCO 145 (Louvain, 1954), p. 168: "Lapis quem...ipse factum est caput anguli."

[40] See Joosten, "Tatian's Diatessaron," p. 519.

Peshitta. In agreement with other scholars, Joosten is of the opinion that by the time Tatian began his work on the *Diatessaron* (ca 170) the Old Testament Peshitta had already been widely used and had acquired an authoritative status in Syriac-speaking churches. All these considerations notwithstanding, the analysis below provides a further indication *against* dependence on Tatian in the case under discussion.

It is generally believed that the surviving translated versions of the *Diatessaron*, rather than bearing witness to the original Syriac text mainly inform us regarding the order of the fragments in Tatian—namely, the choice and arrangement of passages from the different Gospels into a consecutive narrative.[41] It may then be instructive to consider the structure of the relevant fragments in the main surviving versions of the *Diatessaron*. In the Arabic version, the order of fragments immediately preceding the passage in question is the following:[42]

a) Matt 21:28–31: the Parable of the Two Sons ("Which of the two did the will of his father?")—unparalleled in Mark and Luke
b) Matt 21:32: on John the Baptist, the opening of the Parable of the Vineyard and the Tenants—unparalleled in Mark and Luke
c) Luke 20:9b: "…and let it out to tenants, and went into another country for a long while"—wording peculiar to Luke
d) Matt 21:34–36: "he sent his servants…" etc.—"servants" in pl. peculiar to Matthew
e) Luke 20:13: "Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do?'"—addition unparalleled in Matthew and Mark (absent in the Liège *Diatessaron*)
f) Mark 12:6a: "He had still one other, a beloved son"—addition unparalleled in Matthew and Luke (absent in the Liège *Diatessaron*)
g) Matt 21:38–39/Mark12:7–8/Luke 20:14–15—a composite version
h) Matt 21:40–41: "'When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?' They said to him, 'He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons'"—Matthew's peculiar wording

---

[41] See Brock, "The Syriac Versions," p. 26.
[42] See Ciasca, XXXIII and parallel in Marmardji, and Plooij (see n. 16 above), pp. 447–454.

In *Codex Fuldensis* this section in its entirety is taken from Matthew,[43] whereas in the Persian *Diatessaron* a number of passages from Luke are also inserted—albeit not in the order attested in the Arabic *Diatessaron*.[44] In the corresponding section in the Liège *Diatessaron*, eight distinct Matthean readings unparalleled in the other Synoptics are incorporated, against only one Lucan and one Marcan reading (and one common to both Matthew and Luke versus Mark).[45]

The *Diatessaric* section under discussion is immediately followed by the quotation from Ps 118:22, whose surviving translations are presented in the table below (*A=Arabic Diatessaron*; *F=Fuldensis*; *P=Persian*; *L=Liège*):

	A (mss. A, B)[46]	*A* (ms. E)[47]	*F*[48]	*P*[49]	*L*[50]
Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:	Matt 21:42a	Matt (=A, B)	Matt (=A, B)	Matt (=A, B)	Matt (=A, B)
'The very stone which the builders rejected	Matt 21:42b (Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17)	Matt 21:42b (Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17)	Matt 21:42b (Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17)	Matt 21:42b (Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17)	Matt 21:42b (Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17)
has become the head of the corner;	Luke 20:17b (Matt 21:42, Mark 12:10)	Luke (=A, B) (Matt 21:42, Mark 12:10)	Matt 21:42c (Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17)	Matt 21:42c (Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17)	Matt 21:42c (Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17)
this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?	Matt 21:42d (Mark 12:11)	Matt (=A, B) (Mark 12:11)	Matt (=A, B) (Mark 12:11)	Matt (=A, B) (Mark 12:11)	Matt (=A, B) (Mark 12:11)
Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it."	Matt 21:43	Matt (=A, B)	Matt (=A, B)	Matt (=A, B)	Matt (=A, B)

---

[43] See Ranke (n. 16 above), CXXV.
[44] See Messina (n. 16 above), III 47–54.
[45] See Plooij (n. 16 above), pp. 447–454.
[46] See Ciasca (n. 42 above), ibid.
[47] See Marmardji (n. 16 above), ibid.
[48] See Ranke (n. 43 above), ibid.
[49] See Messina (n. 44 above), ibid.
[50] See Plooij (n. 16 above), p. 454.

It may be observed that the opening and the conclusion of this sec-
tion reflect the peculiar Matthean readings whereas the quotation
itself (regardless of the marker in the surviving versions) represents
the common Synoptic tradition. The comparison therefore induces
the following evaluation: It is Matthew's narrative that seems to have
constituted here the basis for the original Diatessaric account, which
might also have included a limited number of passages derived from
Synoptic parallels, including Luke. This, in turn, leads us to the con-
clusion that the restoration of an OT Peshitta text form attested in
Cureton Luke vis-à-vis the complete absence of the Old Testament
Peshitta influence in the *OS* parallels in Matthew cannot be explained
as a result of "taking apart" the original *Diatessaron*. Or, to put it dif-
ferently: If the restoration activity attested in *OS* Luke is ascribed to
Tatian's influence, then why was that same influence not exercised in
OS Matthew?

3. *Deut 6:5 (+ Lev 19:18): Matt 22:37—Mark 12:29—Luke 10:27*

MT (Deut 6:5)

ואהבת את ה׳ אלהיך בכל-לבבך ובכל-נפשך ובכל-מאדך...

(RSV: *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your*
heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.)

Onq.

ותרחם ית ה׳ אלהך בכל ליבך ובכל נפשך ובכל נכסך...

Neof.

ותרחמון ית אולפן אורייתה דה׳ בכל לבבכון ובכל נפשיכון ובכל...
ממוניכון

Pesh.

ܘܬܪܚܡ ܠܡܪܝܐ ܐܠܗܟ ܡܢ ܟܠܗ ܠܒܟ ܘܡܢ ܟܠܗ ܢܦܫܟ ܘܡܢ ܟܠܗ...
ܚܝܠܟ

LXX

καὶ ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου
καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς δυνάμεώς σου.

The OT Peshitta version is characterized by a midrashic rendering of
me'od (LXX: δύναμις=might) as *kenyanakh* (property) attested also in
Aramaic Targums and in the Mishnah.[51] The Greek Gospels, however,

---

[51] *m. Ber.* 9:8.

do not adopt this exegesis. Moreover, in both Mark 12:30 and Luke 10:27 the three-part precept of Deut 6:5 is transformed into a four-part one:[52]

> καὶ ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεὸν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου.

> (RSV: And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind.)

Notwithstanding the evident discrepancy with the OT text form of the verse, in this case no attempt at restoration was made by the *OSG* compilers, including *Cureton* Luke, who in other cases, as we have seen, showed great sensibility to the deviations from the OT source of a quotation.

OS Luke 10:27

ܡܪܝܐ ܐܠܗܟ ܠܡܪܚܡ ܐܠܗܟ ܡܢ ܟܠܗ ܠܒܟ ܂ ܘܡܢ ܟܠܗ ܢܦܫܟ ܂ ܘܡܢ ܟܠܗ ܚܝܠܟ ܘܡܢ ܟܠܗ ܪܥܝܢܟ

Two complementary explanations may be suggested: (1) Unlike previously discussed cases, the quotation here—with its deviation from the OT source—is not only ascribed to Jesus himself but is presented moreover as expressing a fundamental element of his religious teaching and hence its greater authority. (2) The context is not that of a proper quotation but rather of a summary of the Torah commandments. Accordingly, the opening formula is of a somewhat loose character: "He said to him, 'What is written in the law? How do you read?' And he answered…" (Luke 10:26–27). An additional example of this kind—namely, a Gospel saying representing a summary rather than a proper OT quotation—where the *OSG* compilers do not attempt a restoration is discussed below.[53]

Unlike the three cases reviewed above, the next two instances of the *OSG* treatment of the OT material found in the Greek Gospels, reflect allusions rather than quotations proper and involve a considerable

---

[52] For a discussion of the exegetic background of this expansion, see S. Ruzer, "The Double Love Precept: Between Pharisees, Jesus and Qumran Covenanters," in idem, *Mapping the New Testament: Early Christian Writings as a Witness for Jewish Biblical Exegesis* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 71–100, esp. pp. 72–86, 97–99.

[53] See also S. Ruzer, "Reflections of Genesis 1–2 in the Old Syriac Gospels," in Frishman and Rompay (eds.), *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation*, pp. 92–102. See also n. 18 above.

measure of idiosyncratic exegesis on the part of the Syriac translators. While the first example relates to an OT reference shared by Matthew and Mark, the second is a passage from the Prologue of John—admittedly a far cry from a textual quotation, being itself a "targumizing elaboration"[54] on the opening verses of Genesis.

4. *Matt 19:4–5—Mark 10:6–8 (with reference to Gen 1:27; 2:24)*

The reference to the creation of Adam and Eve is intertwined in Matthew 19:4–5 with the discussion on divorce: "And Pharisees came up and testing him (Jesus) asked, 'Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause? (Matt 19:3; cf: Mark 10:2: 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?')." Divorce was one of the questions keenly debated in the days of Jesus; e.g., the Qumran Covenanters and the Pharisees were in disagreement about it.[55] There seems to have been a disagreement also within proto-rabbinic circles themselves described by a later tradition as a difference of opinion between the School of Hillel and the School of Shammai.[56] Unlike Mark, whose version seems to deny any legitimacy whatsoever to divorce,[57] according to Matthew, Jesus sided here with the School of Shammai, making the wife's adultery the sole lawful ground for divorce (Matt 19:9): "And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity (μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ), and marries another, commits adultery (μοιχᾶται)." In his answer, however, Jesus did not mention Deuteronomy 24:1 ("…because he has found some **indecency** in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce…"), the verse that engendered conflicting interpretations by some leading authorities of the time.[58] He preferred instead to base his argument on the creation account in Genesis (Matt 19:4–6):

> He answered, "Have you not read that he who created/made them from the beginning male and female made them (ὁ κτίσας/ποιήσας ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς), 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two

---

[54] See *School of St. Matthew*, pp. 126–127.
[55] See S. Ruzer, "Negotiating the Proper Attitude to Marriage and Divorce," in idem, *Mapping the New Testament: Early Christian Writings as a Witness for Jewish Biblical Exegesis* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 131–148.
[56] The debate is reported in *m. Git.* 9:10. See also S. Ruzer, "Antitheses in Matthew 5: Midrashic Aspects of Exegetical Techniques," in idem, *Mapping the New Testament*, pp. 22–31.
[57] See Mark 10:5–9.
[58] See Ruzer, "Antitheses in Matthew 5."

shall become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

All Greek witnesses to Matthew 19:4 agree on the ending of the verse (ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς, "male and female made them"), an ending that is exactly the LXX form of Genesis 1:27.[59]

The quotation from Genesis 2:24 that follows ("For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'") establishes a midrashic connection between the two Genesis accounts of the creation of the protoplasts (Gen 1:26–29 and Gen 2:7, 18–24 respectively). It stands to reason that by the time this Gospel tradition was formed, the problem of the relationship between the two creation accounts had already been addressed, not only by Philo[60] but also by proto-rabbinic exegesis. Thus the midrash *Genesis Rabbah*, for one, provides a later testimony to that influential exegetical motif which—encouraged by the wording of Genesis 1:27 (=Gen 5:2)—read the androgynous theme into the creation story: "When the Holy One…created the first man, He created him an androgynous creature, as it is written, 'male and female He created them.'"[61]

According to this line of reasoning, the creation of Eve described in Genesis 2 is to be seen as an act of separation, dividing the hermaphrodite into two distinct creatures, male and female. Therefore, reuniting the couple "in one flesh" (Gen 2:24) represents a restoration of the primordial androgynous unity of Genesis 1:27. The dominant position of the androgynous-oriented exegesis in *Genesis Rabbah* suggests its broad acceptance. In that case, the logion in Matthew 19:4–6 might have reflected this notion, found in Philo and rabbinic sources, or was at least open to this kind of interpretation.

---

[59] For a discussion of the text form of the quotation in the Greek Gospel, see Stendahl, *School of St. Matthew*, pp. 59–60; R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 18 (Leiden, 1967), pp. 16–17.

[60] See *De opificio mundi* 75–76: "And when Moses had called the genus 'man', quite admirably did he distinguish its species, adding that it had been created 'male and female', and this though its individual members had not yet taken shape. For the primary species are in the genus to begin with, and reveal themselves as in a mirror to those who have the faculty of keen vision." For the original Greek version and English translation by F. H. Colson, see *Philo* (The Loeb Classical Library), vol. 1, p. 61.

[61] *Gen. R.* 8.1 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, p. 55). The English translation is indebted to J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah. The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis*, Brown Judaic Studies (Atlanta, 1985).

An examination of the extant Syriac versions of the logion demonstrates the affinity between the Greek Gospel and the New Testament Peshitta tradition: in the latter, the ending, giving the reference its peculiar, androgynous-oriented coloring, is left intact:

NT Peshitta (=Philoxenian)

ܐܠ.... ܩܪܝܬܘܢ ܗܘܐ ܕܡܢ ܒܪܝܫܝܬ ܕܟܪܐ ܘܢܩܒܬܐ ܥܒܕ ܐܢܘܢ

…have you not read that he who made from the beginning, male and female made them?

The *OSG*, however, can be shown to be at odds in this instance both with the Greek text of the Gospel and the NT Peshitta tradition. The *OS* rendering of the saying runs as follows:

ܗܘ ܕܝܢ ܥܢܐ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢ: ܠܐ ܩܪܝܬܘܢ ܕܗܘ ܕܥܒܕ ܠܕܟܪܐ* ܐܦ
ܠܢܩܒܬܐ ܗܘ ܥܒܕ.

* *Cureton* adds here: ܡܢ ܒܪܝܫܝܬ.
He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that the same one who created the male (*Cureton*: + from the beginning), created also the female?'

The order of words in the *Curetonian* version highlights the change in interpretation: According to the *OS* we are dealing with two separate acts of creation: the creation of the female following that of the male. The female is of equal standing to her male counterpart, having been made by the same Creator. The real issue in the *OS* version then seems to be Eve's creation by the same God, and not man's androgynous nature. In this context Matthew 19:6 (=Mark 10:9), "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder," are to be understood as relating to the union of the first couple in Genesis 2:18–24, where God brings Eve to Adam. Thus the possible allusion to the androgynous motif is eliminated in the *OS*; "oneness in flesh" is based here exclusively on the second creation account.

The exegesis suggested by the *OSG* compilers is not attested in any extant Greek or Latin versions of Matthew.[62] We have seen that the NT Peshitta follows faithfully the Greek Gospel, which duplicates the LXX form of the quotation. The same is true for all extant versions

---

[62] A somewhat similar form may be found in the fourth century Latin Codex Vercellensis, "…qua qui fecit ab initio masculum et feminam fecit," but positioning "ab initio" before "masculum" (in clear contradistinction to *Cureton*) seems to preclude the kind of interpretation attested in the *OSG*.

of the *Diatessaron*, mostly rendering the verse as, "He who created at the beginning, male and female made them."[63] Only in the Liège Diatessaron may a vaguely anti-androgynous tendency be discerned: "In the beginning, when God had made male and female, he joined them together."[64] But it is still a far cry from the *tour de force* of the *OS*.

Admittedly, the extant witnesses for the *Diatessaron* represent later stages in the development of the Gospel harmony tradition and cannot testify to the original form of the saying as it appeared in Tatian's text.[65] As Tatian's harmony was in use from the second to the fifth century, Gospel quotations in extant Syriac texts from that period might have been of help here; but, unfortunately, not one of these extant texts contains a reference to Matthew 9:4 (=Mark 10:6).[66] Irenaeus of Lyons, however, writing a few decades after Tatian, provides us with the following characteristic of the latter's thinking, which testifies to his negative ascetic assessment of the marital union:

> Thus, for example, people called Encratites ("continent"), inspired by Saturninus and Marcion, have proclaimed abstinence from marriage, rejecting the ancient work of God and implicitly accusing him who made male and female for procreation (Gen 1:27–28), and they have introduced abstinence from what they call "animated," being ungrateful to the God who made everything. They also deny the salvation of the first-formed man. This last point was invented among them in our own time when a certain Tatian first introduced this blasphemy…like Marcion and Saturninus he called marriage corruption and debauchery, and finally he rejected the salvation of Adam.[67]

Later on this assessment is corroborated by Jerome's statement:

> Tatian, who maintaining the imaginary flesh of Christ (*putativam Christi carnem*), pronounces all sexual connection impure…[and] employs an argument of this sort: "If any one who sows to the flesh, from the flesh will reap corruption, but he sows to the flesh who is joined (*jungitur*)

---

[63] For the Arabic, Latin and Persian versions of the Diatessaron, see Ciasca, *Tatiani Evangeliorum Harmoniae Arabice*; Marmardji, *Diatessaron de Tatien*; Ranke, *Codex Fuldensis*; Messina, *Diatessaron persiano*.

[64] See *Diatessaron Leodiense* (The Liège Diatessaron), ed. C. C. De Bruin (Leiden, 1970), pp. 138–139.

[65] See Brock, "The Syriac Versions," pp. 26–27.

[66] For witnesses to the original *Diatessaron* tradition, see I. Ortiz de Urbina, *Vetus evangelium Syrorum et exinde excerptum Diatessaron Tatiani*, Biblia Polyglotta Matritensia VI (Madrid, 1967).

[67] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.28.1 (English translation according to R. M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* [London/New York, 1997]).

to a woman; therefore he who takes a wife and sows to the flesh, of the flesh he shall reap corruption."[68]

The evidence supplied by Irenaeus and Jerome clearly indicates that the *OSG* exegetical peculiarity in Matthew 19:4–5—emphasizing both male and female as being created by God and united by him in marital union based on the "oneness of flesh"—cannot be reasonably attributed to Tatian's influence. Hence, if there is any relation at all between the *OSG* reading of Matthew 19:4–5 and Tatian's thinking, it is rather one of opposition.

Thus the *OS* rendering stressing the equal status of Eve in regard to creation—while ignoring the midrashic, androgynous theme connecting Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24, adopted, as it seems, in the Greek Gospel—represents a distinct and unparalleled exegetical approach. The *OS* Matthew compilers focus on the second creation account in Genesis 2 and turn it into the sole biblical source for Jesus' opinion on divorce. Their hermeneutical presupposition here polemically opposes the misogynist tendency of Tatian.

5. *The Old Syriac Version of John 1:1–10*

By the time the Greek text of the Prologue of John appeared, the first verses of Genesis, and even more pointedly its opening "in the beginning (בראשית)," had long been a focal point of intensive exegetical elaboration. Two complementary motifs, repeatedly surfacing in this context, deserve special mention: (a) Wisdom as the agent of creation; and (b) the Logos as Platonic archetype of the created world.

A connection between the ראשית ("beginning") of Genesis 1:1 and the notion of preexistent Wisdom as the agent of creation was already indicated in Proverbs 8:1, 22–31. Ben Sira bears witness to the later identification of Wisdom in this context with the Torah.[69] This connection was further elaborated on and firmly established in the earliest strata of the Midrash, as exemplified by *Tg. Neofiti* and the *Fragmentary Targum*,[70] as well as by *Genesis Rabba*.[71] While stressing that the

---

[68] The English translation of the fragment follows A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (reprinted; Michigan, 1989), vol. 2, p. 82.

[69] See Ben Sira 1:4–5, 24:1–26.

[70] For a discussion of the variety of exegetical approaches to Gen 1:1, attested in targumic sources, see G. Anderson, "The Interpretation of Genesis 1:1 in the Targums," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52.1 (1990), pp. 21–29.

[71] See, for instance, *Gen. R.* 1.1.

world was created "with wisdom," *Tg. Neofiti* adds that the creation was accomplished "by the word of God" (ממרא). One can therefore safely assume that Wisdom and Logos are related concepts in the interpretation of Genesis 1:1.

In some instances of Genesis 1:1 exegesis, however, along with the notion of Wisdom-Logos as mediator, a Platonic notion of the Logos as archetype of the created world may be discerned. Thus the Midrash refers to a number of basic archetypical elements of the created order "present in the thought of God" before creation.[72] According to Philo, it is to the creation of such an archetypical "inner structure" of the Logos that "in the beginning" of Genesis 1:1 refers. Only later, in Genesis 2, does Philo interpret scripture as providing an account of the creation of the visible world, a copy of the heavenly prototype:

> So when He willed to create this visible world He first fully formed the intelligible world, in order that He might have the use of a pattern wholly God-like and incorporeal in producing the material world, as a later creation, the very image of an earlier.... As, then, the city which was fashioned beforehand within the mind of the architect...even so the universe that consisted of ideas would have no other location than the Divine Reason, which was the Author of this ordered frame.[73]

It is in view of the distinction—and tension—between the notions of Logos as mediator and Logos as archetype, both put forward in the exegetical treatment of Genesis 1:1, that the Old Syriac version of John's Prologue will be discussed. More specifically, an attempt will be made to determine which of the two notions underlies the *OS* rendering and whether in this respect the *Vetus Syra* follows the Greek Gospel or an alternative textual and/or exegetical tradition.

First, the Greek version of the Prologue should be considered:

> 1 In the beginning (ἐν ἀρχῇ) was the Word (ὁ λόγος) and the Word was with God...3 All things were made through him (δι' αὐτοῦ), and without him (χωρὶς αὐτοῦ was not anything made that was made. 4 In him (ἐν αὐτῷ) was life...the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness (ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ)...6 There was a man...7 He came...that all might believe through him (δι' αὐτοῦ). 8 He was not the light...9 The true light...10 He was in the world (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ), and the world was made through him (δι' αὐτοῦ)...17 For the law was given through Moses

---

[72] See *Gen. R.* 1.4.
[73] Philo, *De opificio mundi* 16, 20 (cf. *ibid.*, 49–50); see also *ibid.* 15,17,43–54.

(διὰ Μωϋσέως); grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).

The construction δι' αὐτοῦ (through him) in 1:3 and 1:10 clearly indicates the notion of the Logos as mediator.[74] All that comes into being is created through (διά) the Logos, whereas the preposition ἐν is reserved for defining a location either in space ("*in him* was life," "the life shines *in* the darkness," "he was *in* the world") or in time ("in the beginning"). The text uses διά when speaking both of the creation of the world through the Logos and of the historical mission of John the Baptist (v. 7), Moses and Jesus (v. 17)—as mediators of revelation!

As in the cases discussed earlier, the NT Peshitta tradition (including its Philoxenian redaction) closely follows the Greek, thereby making the clear-cut distinction between "in him" (ܒܗ) and "through him" (ܒܗ, ܒܐܝܕܗ). Likewise, in the NT Peshitta, the Word (ܡܠܬܐ) is an instrument, a mediator, of creation:

> …All things were made through him (ܒܐܝܕܗ)…In him (ܒܗ) was life…The light shines in darkness (ܒܚܫܘܟܐ)…that all might believe through him (ܒܐܝܕܗ)…He was in the world (ܒܥܠܡܐ), and the world was made through him (ܒܐܝܕܗ)…through (ܒܝܕ) Moses…through (ܒܝܕ) Jesus Christ.

The only extant *OS* version of the Prologue is the *Curetonian*:

ܒܗ (4)…ܗܘܐ ܒܗ ܡܕܡܠ (3)…ܡܠܬܐ ܗܘܐ ܐܝܬܘܗܝ, ܒܪܝܫܝܬ (1)
ܘܕ̈ܝܠ…(7)…ܗܘܐ ܢܗܪ̈ܐ ܒܚܫܘܟܐ ܢܘܗܪܐ ܗܘܐ (5)…ܗܘܐ ܐܝܟ
ܒܗ ܥܠܡܐ ܗܘܐ ܐܝܬܘܗܝ ܒܥܠܡܐ (10)…ܒܐܝܕܗ ܢܗܝܡܢܘܢ ܐܝܟ
ܗܘܐ…(17)…ܕܝܢ ܒܝܕ ܡܘܫܐ…ܒܝܕ ܝܫܘܥ ܡܫܝܚܐ

1 In the beginning (ܒܪܝܫܝܬ) there was the Word…3 All things were in him (ܒܗ)…4 In him (ܒܗ) was life…5 And the light was shining in the darkness (ܒܚܫܘܟܐ)…7…that all might believe through him (ܒܐܝܕܗ)…10 He was in the world (ܒܥܠܡܐ), and the world was in

---

[74] We will not look into the problem of the immediate exegetical source(s) of the Johannine notion of the Logos. Some scholars believe it is derived from the targumic concept of Memra. For an attempt to reconstruct the Aramaic *Vorlage* of the Prologue, see C. Burney, *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford, 1922). Conversely, others see Jewish Hellenistic speculation behind the Logos concept of John 1:1–10. The analysis of G. Anderson seems to lend support to the former opinion. See Anderson, "The Interpretation of Genesis 1:1," pp. 27–28 and nn. 15, 16. There is also a telling parallel in the Dead Sea Scrolls. See *The Community Rule* 11:11. For a discussion of a possible Qumran link, see D. Flusser, "Messianology and Christology in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in idem, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem, 1988), pp. 267–268.

him (ܒܗ)…17…through Moses (ܡܘܫܐ ܒܝܕ)…through Jesus Christ
(ܝܫܘܥ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܒܝܕ).

We see that the *OS* textual tradition differs considerably from the NT
Peshitta. The *Curetonian* uses the preposition—ܒ, or its affixed form
ܒܗ (in him) indiscriminately whenever the Logos is involved (vv. 1,
3, 4, 10a, 10b). Admittedly, the Semitic preposition "b-" can also stand
for "through/by," but there are two strong indications that underlying
the Syriac translation here is an alternative Logos concept—namely,
the quasi Middle-Platonic (or quasi-Philonic, for that matter) notion
of the Logos as an archetype with ܒܗ as a locative ("in him"). First,
the *OS* elsewhere uses the form ܐܝܒܝܕܗ (through him), or without the
suffix ܒܝܕ, when indicating the agent of an action (vv. 7, 17). Second,
the symmetrical structure of verse 10 ("He was in the world, and the
world was in him") eliminates the distinction in Greek text between
"dwelling" and "coming into being" and strongly suggests the arche-
type-oriented thinking behind this parallelism: He was in the world as
in the beginning the world was in him.

  The Greek text of John does not explicitly relate to a Logos-arche-
type interpretation. Yet traces of such an interpretation may be found
in Col 1:15–17, a passage that seems to elaborate on the same Logos
hymn on which the Prologue of John might have been based:[75]

> 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation;
> 16 for in him (ἐν αὐτῷ) all things were created, in heaven and on earth,
> visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or
> authorities—all things were created through him (δι' αὐτοῦ) and for
> him (εἰς αὐτόν). 17 He is before all things, and in him (ἐν αὐτῷ) all
> things hold together (συνέστηκεν).

In this passage one may discern an ambiguity similar to the one that
characterizes the discussion of the concept of the Logos/Torah as an
agent of creation in the Midrash (see above). The ending of verse 16
("all things were created through him") clearly aligns with the Logos-
mediator option, whereas the beginning of the same verse in conjunc-

---

[75] The importance of the passage for delineating the exegetical history of בראשית
(in the beginning) from Gen 1:1 has been recognized for a long time. See C. Burney,
"Christ as the APXH of Creation," *Journal of Theological Studies* 27 (1926), pp.
160–177; W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London, 1948), pp. 151–152,
172–174.

tion with "τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν" in verse 17 ("in him all things hold together") suggests the idea of the Logos-archetype.[76]

The option of the archetype interpretation of Col 1:15–17 was not overlooked by Christian exegetes. Gregory of Nyssa in his *Life of Moses* states that the "tabernacle" shown to Moses on Mount Sinai represented none other than the inner structure of the Logos (identified as Christ), constituting the heavenly archetype of the world in general and, especially, of its spiritual sphere. Speaking of "the tabernacle which encompasses the universe…encompasses everything within itself,"[77] Gregory seems to have Philo's notion of the "first creation" in mind, and he anchors his idea on Colossians 1:15–17, discussed above:

> We can gain clarity about the figures pertaining to the tabernacle from the very words of the Apostle. For he says…with reference to the Only Begotten, whom we have perceived in place of the tabernacle that "in him were created all things, everything visible and invisible, thrones, dominations, sovereignties, powers or forces."[78]

It is telling that Gregory cuts short the quotation from Colossians, disregarding the ending of verse 16 with its "all things were created through him." Gregory, therefore, may be seen as emphasizing the Logos-archetype rather than the Logos-mediator interpretation.

---

[76] Of course, the possibility that the words "all things were created through him (δι' αὐτοῦ)" were intended to provide an explanation for the formula "in him (ἐν αὐτῷ) all things were created" cannot be altogether excluded. Even in this case, however, the passage betrays a certain ambiguity present in the exegetical tradition to which the author of the epistle refers here. That tradition, it seems, did not clearly distinguished between "in him" and "through him," and thus both Logos-centered interpretations remained possible. The fact that the Semitic prefix "b-" may stand for both "in" and "by/through," and that the midrashic discourse on Gen 1:1 is partly based on this ambiguity (see, e.g., *Tg. Neofiti* ad loc.)—which is lost in Greek—may suggest that the tradition in question was a Semitic one.

[77] For the original Greek version of the text, see J. Daniélou (ed.), *Grégoire de Nysse. La Vie de Moïse* (Paris, 1968), par. 174–177, pp. 220–222. The English translation used here is from A. L. Malherbe and E. Ferguson (trans., introd. and notes), *Gregory of Nyssa. The Life of Moses*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York, 1978), pp. 98–99. The same idea may be discerned in the Dedication Creed (341 CE) as reported by Athanasius in *De synodis* 23. The Creed states not only that "everything came into being through" the Logos (δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο) but also that "all things consist in him" (ἐν ᾧ τὰ πάντα συνέστηκε). See *St. Athanasius' Historical Writings*, with introduction by W. Bright (Oxford, 1881), p. 268.

[78] *Gregory of Nyssa. The Life of Moses* par. 179, p. 100 (p. 224 in Daniélou's edition) and n. 225, p. 180.

The suppression of the mediating role of the Logos at creation attested in *OSG* finds a forceful proponent in Aphrahat in the early fourth century, possibly still retaining an indigenous Syriac tradition.[79] However, already in Ephrem, exegesis of John's Prologue seems to have gone in the opposite direction, apparently adapted to the Greek version of the Prologue.[80] Thus, commenting on Tatian's *Diatessaron*, Ephrem writes:

ܟܠ ܡܕܡ ܒܗ ܗܘܐ—ܕܟܠ ܥܒܕܐ ܐܬܒܪܝ ܒܐܝܕܘܗܝ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܗܘ ܫܠܝܚܐ
ܕܒܗ ܐܦ ܥܒܕ ܠܥܠܡܐ

"All things were made in him (ܒܗ)"—meaning that through him (ܒܐܝܕܘܗܝ) were created the works [of creation] according to the words of the Apostle,[81] "…by whom also he made the worlds."[82]

Ephrem explicates the form ܒܗ as having, in fact, the same meaning as ܒܐܝܕܘܗܝ.[83] This signifies: (a) that the form was still in Tatian's harmony which Ephrem had—in the extant versions of the *Diatessaron* we find in its stead various analogues of ܒܐܝܕܘܗܝ (through him);[84] and (b) that as far as Ephrem was concerned, the appearance of ܒܗ here demanded clarification. Noteworthy is that the interpretation Ephrem chose (the Logos as mediator) seems to be true to the thinking of Tatian himself: in his description of the creation of things visible and invisible, the author of the *Diatessaron* speaks of both acts as having been performed "by the Logos," not "in the Logos."[85]

A fourth-century Syriac translation of a tractate by Eusebius of Caesarea, referring to the Prologue of John, corroborates the nature of the exegetical process at work here:

---

[79] See discussion in Chapter 1 above.

[80] This shift apparently represents a wider phenomenon characterizing the transformation taking place in Syriac thought affected by Greek Nicene theology—noticeable in the divide between Aphrahat and Ephrem. See Chapter 1 above.

[81] Heb 1:2.

[82] L. Leloir (ed.), *Saint Ephrem. Commentaire de l'évangile concordant. Texte syriaque, Ms. Chester Beatty 709* (Dublin, 1963), 1.6.

[83] The tension between Tatian's version of John 1:3 and Ephrem's explanation is somewhat obscured in the recent English translation of Ephrem's Commentary. See C. McCarthy (trans.), *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron*, Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 2 (Oxford, 1993), p. 43.

[84] Codex Fuldensis, for example, has here "Omnia per ipsum facta sunt." Similar in meaning are the Arabic and Persian versions (see note 16 above). Cf. *The Liège Diatessaron*, which reads here "all things were made with that Word (met din warde)"

[85] See Tatian, *Address to the Greeks* 4–5, ed. M. Whittaker (Oxford, 1982).

ܡܠܟܐ... ܕܒܥܠܡܐ ܗܘܐ...ܘܥܠܡܐ ܒܐܝܕܘܗܝ، ܗܘܐ ܘܥܠܡܐ ܐܝܟܪ܇ܡܫ
...ܗܘܐ

> …all things were in him…He was in the world, and the world was made
> through him…[86]

While the text form of John 1:3 is still the same as found in the *OSG*
("all things were in him"), presupposing a Logos-archetype under-
standing, the problematic statement in verse 10 has undergone an
important development: A distinction between the Logos "dwelling in
the world" (ܒܥܠܡܐ ܐܝܕܘܗܝ، ܗܘܐ) and the world "coming into
being through" the Logos (ܐܝܟܪ܇ܡܫ ܗܘܐ) can already be clearly dis-
cerned.[87]

The above discussion shows that in the *Curetonian* version of the
Prologue, traces of an earlier Syriac tradition may be distinguished in
which strong emphasis was placed—as far as interpretation of Genesis
1:1 and the opening verses of the Gospel of John is concerned—on the
concept of the "first creation" taking place within the Logos, the Logos
being the archetype of the created order. This tradition surfaced also in
Colossians 1 and was later developed by Gregory of Nyssa. Conversely,
Syriac texts from the mid-fourth century on, including Ephrem and
the NT Peshitta, testify to the transition, via reinterpretation, from the
exegetical position attested in the *OSG* to the Logos-mediator concept
characterizing the Greek Gospel.

<div align="center">CONCLUSION</div>

Five representative test cases exemplifying the treatment of Old Testa-
ment material in the Greek New Testament by the Old Syriac Gospels
have been discussed in this Appendix. Four of them belong to the
Synoptic tradition.[88] The fifth is a famous passage from the Prologue
of John—by no means an OT quotation in the proper sense but rather
a "targumizing elaboration" on the opening verses of Genesis.

In cases where the *OSG* amend what may be seen as a "deviation"
in the Greek Gospel from the OT source, the activity of the Syriac

---

[86] S. Lee (ed.), *Eusebius Caesarienis. Theophania (in versione syriaca)* (London,
1842) 1.24; 35.

[87] See also Ortiz de Orbina, *Vetus evangelium Syrorum*, par. 1–33.

[88] For more examples of the kind, thirteen altogether, see Ruzer, *Biblical Quotations
in the Old Syriac Gospels*, pp. 16–107.

compilers is often directed toward the restoration (full or partial) of the Old Testament Peshitta form of the verse cited. As a rule, these amendments have no support in any Greek manuscript of the Gospels (including the Western tradition represented by Codex Bezae).

This tendency does not fit the usual description of *Vetus Syra* as a "free, idiomatically correct rendering." Instead, it demonstrates a clear preference for the *peculiar wording* of the OT Peshitta tradition in the quoted passage, which may differ both from the usual Syriac idiom and from the Peshitta version elsewhere. As the second example demonstrates, the urge to comply with the OT Peshitta text form may sometimes even overcome the allegiance to Jesus' *ipsissima verba*. Whether such a notion indeed played a role in the *OS* compilers' translation strategies needs further deliberation.[89] The inclination to restore the OT Peshitta form of the quotations is absent in New Testament Peshitta and other Syriac versions of the Gospels, which came into existence later than the *OSG*.[90]

The investigation demonstrated not only the above general tendency but also its limitations: the *OSG* compilers do not amend a "deviation" when it is instrumental to the New Testament hermeneutic stance and/or is backed by the authority of Jesus himself. On the basis of the discussion of the third and fourth examples, it was suggested that the *OSG* compilers show more readiness to give vent to *licentia exegetica* on the account of allegiance to the OT Peshitta text form when the opening formula is of a loose type, indicating a general reference rather than a quotation proper.

---

[89] Another question that warrants further investigation is whether the *OSG* show any indication of attempting to restore the "original" Aramaic (=Syriac) sayings of Jesus. The explicit idea of Syriac being the language of Jesus seems to be attested only much later in Dionysius bar Salibi (12th century).

[90] According to the introduction to the Nestle-Aland edition of the Greek New Testament (*Novum Testamentum Graece,* 27 revised edition [Stuttgart, 2001], 65*–66*), "the various Syriac versions (*Vetus Syra* ca 3–4 cent.; *Peshitta* ca 4–5 cent.; Philoxeniana A.D. 507/508; Harklensis A. D. 615/616) are characterized by different translation principles, from a very free, idiomatically correct rendering at the beginning, to a degree of fidelity to the Greek text so extreme that it violates natural Syriac idiom". Cf. Philoxenus' critique at the beginning of the sixth century: earlier Syriac translators are presented as seduced to follow what they saw as correct Syriac idiom and thus missing the theological truth (i.e., the Monophysite one) expressed in the exactness of the Greek text form. See A. de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog. Commentaire du prologue johannique*, CSCO 380–381 (Louvain, 1977), 41–42. See also L. Van Rompay, "*Malpânâ dilan Suryâyâ, Ephrem in the Works of Philoxenus of Mabbog: Respect and Distance*" (forthcoming). See also Chapter 5 above.

In contradistinction to the thesis that the *OSG as a whole* bear witness to the Diatessaric tradition,[91] our discussion highlighted the cases where Tatian's influence seems unlikely. This conclusion is based (a) on textual evidence (like that of Ephrem's Commentary), (b) on external evidence concerning Tatian's views and (c) first and foremost, on the observed lack of harmonization in the restoration between the *Cureton* and the *Sinaitic*, and between the Synoptics within the same codex. Thus we have seen that in the first two instances discussed, the *Curetonian* version of Luke is distinguished by the scope of its restoration activity. This indicates that the view of the *OSG* compilers' activity as "taking apart" the *Diatessaron* cannot apply to their treatment of the Old Testament quotations. At least in those instances where the "restoration campaign" of the *Cureton* Luke far surpasses the scope of the amendments suggested by other *OSG* compilers, it seems to reflect a personal sensitivity and not a dependence on a common Diatessaric source.[92]

All this seems to imply that, compared to the Greek Gospel writers, the situation of the compiler of the *Cureton* Luke (and, apparently, other *OSG* compilers as well), is substantially different. The New Testament authors, in their attempts to prove certain claims concerning Jesus, on the basis of Scripture, turned freely to both the Old Testament text and its targumic/hermeneutic modifications. The *OSG* translators, however, seem already to have lost contact with the initial exegetic context, and their allegiance is given first and foremost to the established text of the Old Testament Peshitta, which enjoyed authoritative status in their milieu. Their objective was to edit OT material found in the Greek Gospels so that quotations would be easily recognized as such by the reader. Hence, in the case of OT quotations, the authority of the OT Peshitta turns out to be greater for the *OSG* compilers than that of the Greek Gospel. This undoubtedly constitutes the outstanding characteristic of the *Vetus Syra*, reflecting a peculiar religious-cultural situation of the translation enterprise.

---

[91] The thesis that allowed Joosten ("Tatian's *Diatessaron*," 512–519) to use the *OSG* as one of the Eastern witnesses of the *Diatessaron*!

[92] With regard to quotations proper, this Appendix focuses on those belonging to the triple Synoptic tradition. The investigation of other segments of OT quotations in the Old Syriac Gospels, conducted elsewhere (see n. 18 above), especially formula-quotations in Matthew, highlights additional independent features of the *OSG* approach to the Old Testament material.

The observed characteristics of the *OSG* compilers' strategies with regard to biblical quotations seem to indicate a relatively early time of composition, when the process of New Testament canonization was still under way, a process accompanied by attempts to define the relation between the two parts of what would eventually become the Christian Bible (ca 200). The interest shown by the *OSG* in strengthening the textual link between the Old Testament and its reflection in the Gospels may also indicate either an ongoing dispute with the Jewish world or an attempt to clarify issues within the biblically oriented Syriac-speaking Christian community. A systematic study of *OSG* hermeneutical peculiarities, not necessarily connected with the use of biblical citations and allusions, may help to throw additional light on this issue.[93]

In both the fourth and fifth examples, the *OS* rendering bears witness to a distinctive exegetical approach, which differs not only from the one attested in the Greek New Testament but also from that of Tatian. In their interpretation of Genesis 1–2, the compilers of the *OSG* do not show any dependency on the *Diatessaron*. Thus exegetical evidence strengthens the claim for the *OSG* as representing—at least, with respect to its treatment of the OT material in the Greek Gospels—an independent attempt to render the latter's text into Syriac. In the case of John 1, it was also suggested that the *OS* version may point to an early Semitic layer of this particular Gospel tradition; this point may thus contribute to a better understanding of the process by which various Logos-centered interpretations of Genesis 1:1 were transmitted from Jewish to Christian exegesis.

---

[93] It would be instructive to compare the *OSG* approach with that of modern Hebrew translations of the Gospels. As indicated, in the latter case, too, the translations have been carried out under the shadow of the established and revered text of the Old Testament—here, the Hebrew one—which exercises primary authority over potential readers (here, Jewish), exposed to the Gospel text with quotations and deviations from the biblical source.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Syriac sources

Vetus Syra

W. Cureton, *Remains of a Very Ancient Recension of the Four Gospels in Syriac, Hitherto Unknown in Europe* (London, 1858).

F. C. Burkitt, *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe: The Curetonian version of the Four Gospels, with the readings of the Sinai Palimpsest and the early Syriac patristic evidence,* vol. 1 Text and Translation, vol. 2 Introduction and Notes (Cambridge, 1904).

A. S. Lewis, *The Old Syriac Gospels, or Evangelion da-Mepharreshe; being the text of the Sinai or Syro-Antiochian Palimpsest, including the latest additions and emendations, with the variants of the Curetonian text* (London, 1910).

Diatessaron

P. A. Ciasca, *Tatiani Evangeliorum Harmoniae Arabice* (Rome, 1888).

A.-S. Marmardji, *Diatessaron de Tatien* (Beirut, 1935).

G. Messina, *Diatessaron Persiano*, Biblica et orientalia 14 (Rome, 1951).

E. Ranke, *Codex Fuldensis. Novum Testamentum latine interpreto Hieronimo ex manuscripto Victoris Capuani* (Marburg-Leipzig, 1868).

D. Plooij et al., *The Liège Diatessaron*, Verhandelingen der Nederlandse Academie van Wetenschappen 31 (Amsterdam, 1929–70).

Peshitta

The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version (Leiden, 1972–1998).

G. A. Kiraz, *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels: Aligning the Old Syriac Sinaiticus, Curet, Peshitta and Harklean Versions* (Piscataway, NJ, 2002).

P. Pusey, G. H. Gwilliam, *Tetraevangelium sanctum iuxta simplicem Syrorum versionem* (Oxford, 1901).

J. White, *Sacrorum evangeliorum versio Syriaca Philoxeniana* (Oxford, 1778).

Syriac *Acts of Thomas*, ed. A. F. J. Klijn (Leiden, 2003).

Aphrahat
Demonstrations:
Ed. I. Parisot, Patrologia Syriaca 1 (Paris, 1894). *Demonstration* 23, Parisot, Patrologia Syriaca 2 (Paris, 1907), cols. 1–150.

Translations: French, M.-J. Pierre, *Aphraate le sage persan: Les exposés*, SC 349 (Paris, 1988), SC 359 (Paris, 1989). English: W. Wright, *The Homilies of Aphraates, the Persian Sage* (London, 1869); partial translations, J. Gwynn, NPNF 13 (1898), pp. 345–412; Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, pp. 19–119.

The Cave of Treasures, ed. S. M. Ri, *La Caverne des Trésors: Les deux recensions Syriaques* (Louvain, 1987).

Ephrem
Carmina Nisibena, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 240 (Louvain, 1963) .
Commentary on the Diatessaron, ed. and Latin trans. L. Leloir (Dublin, 1963). English
    trans., C. McCarthy (Oxford, 1993).
Commentaire de l'evangile concordant. Version armenienne, ed. and Latin trans. L.
    Leloir, CSCO 145 (Louvain, 1954).
Commentary on Genesis, ed. R.-M. Tonneau, CSCO 153 (Louvain, 1955). English trans-
    lation in *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works*, trans. By E. G. Mathews Jr.
    and J. P. Amar, ed. by K. McVey (Washington D.C., 1994), The Fathers of Church
    Series.
Hymns Against Heresies, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 169–170 (Louvain, 1957).
Hymns on the Church, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 198 (Louvain, 1959).
Hymns on Faith, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 154–155 (Louvain, 1955).
Hymns on Paradise, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 174–175 (Louvain, 1957). English trans. S.
    Brock, *St, Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise* (New York, 1990).
Sermo de Domino Nostro, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 270–271 (Louvain, 1966).
Sermons on Faith, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 212 (Louvain, 1961).

Jacob of Sarug
Homilies, ed. P. Bedjan (Paris, 1905–10).

Liber Graduum, ed. M. Kmosko, Patrologia Syriaca, vol. 3 (Paris, 1926).
English trans., R. A. Kitchen and M. F. G. Parmentier, *The Book of Steps: The Syriac
    Liber Graduum* (Kalamazoo, 2004).

Syriac Life of Abel, ed. S. Brock, Le Muséon. 87 (1974), pp. 467–492.

Philoxenus of Mabbug
Commentary on the Prologue of John, ed. A. de Halleux, CSCO 380–381 (Louvain,
    1977).
Discourses, ed. E. A. W. Budge (London, 1894).
Letter to the Monks of Senoun, ed. A. de Halleux, CSCO (Louvain, 1963).
Letter to Patricius, ed. R. Lavenant, PO 30 (1963).
Tractatus tres de trinitate et incarnatione, ed. A. Vaschalde, CSCO (Paris, 1907).

                        SECONDARY SOURCES

Adler, W., "Exodus 6:23 and the High Priest from the Tribe of Judah," *Journal of
    Theological Studies* 8 (1997), pp. 24–47.
Aland, B., "Die philoxenianisch-harklensische Übersetzungstradition: Ergebnisse einer
    Untersuchung der neutestamentliche Zitate in der syrischen Literatur," *Le Muséon*
    94 (1981), pp. 321–383.
Anderson, G., "The Cosmic Mountain: Eden and its Early Interpreters in Syriac Chris-
    tianity," in G. A. Robbins (ed.), *Genesis 1–3 in the History of Exegesis* (Lewiston,
    1988), pp. 187–224.
——, "Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden? Reflections on Early Jewish and
    Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden," *Harvard Theological Review* 82
    (1989), pp. 121–148.
——, "The Interpretation of Genesis 1:1 in the Targums," *The Catholic Biblical Quar-
    terly* 52 (1990), pp. 21–29.
——, "The Punishment of Adam and Eve in the *Life of Adam and Eve*," in G. Ander-
    son, M. Stone, and J. Tromp (eds.), *Literature on Adam and Eve* (Leiden, 2000),
    pp. 57–81.

——, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, 2001).

——, "The Garments of Skin in Apocryphal Narrative and Biblical Commentary," in J. Kugel (ed.), *Studies in Ancient Midrash* (Cambridge, Mass, 2001), pp. 101–143.

Baarda, T., *The Gospel Quotations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage*, vol. 1: *Aphrahat's Text of the Fourth Gospel* (Amsterdam, 1975).

Baker, A., "Fasting to the World," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84.3 (1965), pp. 291–294.

——, "The Gospel of Thomas and the Syriac Liber Graduum," *New Testament Studies* 12 (1965/6), pp. 49–55.

Bardy, G., *Paul de Samosate: Étude historique*, SSL 4 (Louvain, 1923).

Baumstark, A., «Ps-Jonathan zu Dtn 34,6 und die Pentateuchzitate Afrahats,» *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 18 (1942/3), pp. 99–111.

Beck, E., "Symbolum-Mysterium bei Aphraat und Ephräm," *Oriens Christianus* 42 (1958), pp. 19–40.

Becker, A. H., "Anti-Judaism and Care for the Poor in Aphrahat's *Demonstration* 20," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002), pp. 305–327.

Bettiolo, P., "Confessare Dio in perfetta spogliazione. La via del discernimento dei comandmenti nel Liber Graduum," *Cristianesimo nella storia* 19 (1998), pp. 631–651.

——, "Adamo in Eden e la liturgia celeste: temi della meditazione cristiana nella Siria del IV secolo, tra Afraate e il Liber Graduum," *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 37 (2001), pp. 3–27.

Betz, J., *Eucharistie in der Schrift und Patristik* (Freiburg, 1979).

Bickerman, E. J., *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Boston, 94).

Bitton-Ashkelony, B., "The Attitudes of Church Fathers toward Pilgrimage to Jerusalem," in L. I. Levine (ed.), *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York, 1999), pp. 188–203.

——, *Encountering the Sacred: The Debate on Christian Pilgrimage in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2005).

Black, M., "The Syriac Versional Tradition," in K. Aland (ed.), *Die alten Übersetzungen des Neuen Testaments, die Kirchenväterzitate und Lektionare* (Berlin-New York, 1972).

Borsch, F. H., "Further Reflections on 'The Son of Man:' The Origins and Development of the Title," in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (New York, 1992), pp. 130–144.

Bou Mansour, T., "La défence éphrémienne de la liberté contre les doctrines marcionite, bardesanite et manichéenne," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 50 (1984), pp. 331–346.

——, "Die Christologie des Philoxenus von Mabbug," in A. Grillmeier, *Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, vol. 2/3, *Die Kirchen von Jerusalem und Antiochien nach 451 bis 600* (Freiburg, Basel, and Vienna, 2002), pp. 500–569.

Bourke, M., "The Epistle to the Hebrews: Introduction," in R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer, and R. E. Murphy (eds.), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1990), pp. 920–21.

Boyarin, D., *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford, 1993).

——, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia, 2004).

Brock, S., "A Syriac Life of Abel," *Le Muséon* 87 (1974), pp. 467–492.

——, "The Syriac Versions," in B. M. Metzger (ed.), *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 3–98.

——, *The Holy Spirit in Syrian Baptismal Tradition* (Kottayam, 1979).

——, "The Syriac Euthalian Material and the Philoxenian Version of the New Testament," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 70 (1979), pp. 120–130.

——, "Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30 (1979), pp. 212–232.

——, "The Resolution of the Philoxenian/Harclean Problem," *New Testament Textual Criticism* 62 (1981), pp. 259–271.

——, "Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition," in M. Schmidt (ed.), *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Väter und ihren parallelen im Mittelalter* (Eichstatt, 1981), pp. 11–40.

——, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of St. Ephrem* (Rome, 1985).

——, "Fire from Heaven: From Abel's Sacrifice to the Eucharist. A Theme in Syriac Christianity," *Studia Patristica* XXV (1993), pp. 229–43.

——, "The Peshitta Old Testament: Between Judaism and Christianity," *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 19 (1998), pp. 483–502.

——, "L'apport des pères grecs à la littérature syriaque," in A. Schmidt and D. Gonnet (eds.), *Les Pères grecs dans la tradition syriaque*, Études syriaques 4 (Paris, 2007), pp. 9–26.

Brown, P., *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988).

Bruns, P., *Das Christusbild Aphrahats des Persischen Weisen*, Hereditas. Studien zur Alten Kirchengeschichte 4 (Bonn, 1990).

Burney, C., *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford, 1922).

——, "Christ as the ΑΡΧΗ of Creation," *Journal of Theological Studies* 27 (1926), pp. 160–177.

Carpzov, J. G., *Defense of the Hebrew Bible* (London, 1729).

Chesnut, R. C., *Three Monophysite Christologies: Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug, and Jacob of Sarug* (Oxford, 1976).

Clark, E. A., *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, 1992).

Collins, J. J., *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York, 1995).

——, *Jerusalem and the Temple in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature of the Second Temple Period* (Ramat-Gan, 1998).

Connolly, R. H., "The Early Syriac Creed," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamenliche Wissenschaft* 7 (1906), pp. 202–223.

——, "In Aphraates *Hom.* I 19," *Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (1908), pp. 572–576.

Cramer, W., *Der Geist Gottes und des Menschen in frühsyrischer Theologie* (Münster, 1979).

Daniélou, J., "Terre et paradis chez les Pères de l'Église," *Eranos Jahrbuch* 22 (1953), pp. 433–472.

Davies, P. R., "Sons of Cain," in J. D. Martin and P. R. Davies (eds.), *A Word in Season. The William McKane Volume* JSOT, Supplement Series 42 (1986), pp. 35–56.

Davies, W. D., *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London, 1948).

Di Luccio, G., "An Examination of the Synoptic Problem in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew in Light of the Aramaic Targums to the Pentateuch" (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2007).

Dörries, H., *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon*. AAG. Philologisch-historische Klasse. Dritte Folge 105 (Göttingen, 1978).

Duncan, E. J., *Baptism in the Demonstrations of Aphraates* (Washington, 1945).

Eliade, M., *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York, 1959).

Evans, O. E., *Syriac New Testament Quotations in the Works of Aphraates and Contemporary Sources* (Leeds, 1951).

Feuerbach, L. *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig, 1904).

Flusser, D., "Reflection of Jewish Messianic Beliefs in Earliest Christianity," in Z. Baras (ed.), *Messianism and Eschatology* (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 103–134 (in Hebrew).
——, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem, 1988).
——, *Jesus* (Jerusalem, 2001).
Funk, S., *Die haggadischen Elemente in den Homilien des Aphraates, des persischen Weisen* (Vienna, 1891).
Gavin, F., *Aphraates and the Jews* (Toronto, 1923).
Geiger, A., *Judaism and Islam* (Madras, 1898).
Ginzberg, L., *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1946).
Glenthoj, J. B., *Cain and Abel in Syriac and Greek Writers (4th–6th centuries)* (Louvain, 1997).
Golitzin, A., "Recovering the 'Glory of Adam': 'Divine Light' Traditions in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Ascetical Literature of Fourth-Century Syro-Mesopotamia," in J. R. Davila (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 275–308.
Goshen, A., "The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature," *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994), pp. 171–195.
Goshen-Gottstein, M., "Syriac Targums," in H. Rabin (ed.), *Bible Translations: An Introduction* (Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 149–156.
Griffith, S. H., "'Singles' in God's Service: Thoughts on *Ihidaye* from the Works of Aphrahat and Ephraem the Syrian," *The Harp* 4 (1991), pp. 145–159.
——, "Monks, 'Singles', and the 'Sons of the Covenant': Reflections on Syriac Ascetic Terminology," in E. Carr, A. A. Thiermeyer and E. Velkovska (eds.), *Euloghema: Studies in Honor of R. Taft* (Rome, 1993), pp. 141–160.
——, "Asceticism in the Church of Syria: The Hermeneutics of Early Syrian Monasticism," in V. L. Wimbush and R. Valantasis (eds.), *Asceticism* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 220–245.
Grillmeier, A., *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* (London, 1975).
——, "Die Taufe Christi und die Taufe der Christen, Tauftheologie des Philoxenus von Mabbug und ihrer Bedeutung für die christliche Spiritualität," in H. J. Auf der Maur et al. (eds.), *Fides Sacramenti* (Assen, 1981), pp. 137–175.
——, *Christ in Christian Tradition* vol. 2/2, *The Church of Constantinople in the Sixth Century* (London, 1995).
Guillaumont, A., "Nêsteuein ton kosmon," *Bulletin de l'institut français d'archéologie orientale* 61 (1962), pp. 15–23.
——, "Les 'Arrhes de l'Esprit' dans le Livre des Degrés," in *Memorial Mgr Gabriel Kouri-Sarkis* (Louvain, 1969), pp. 107–113.
——, "Le dépaysement comme form d'ascèse dans le monachisme ancient," in idem, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien. Pour une phénoménologie du monachisme*, Spiritualité Orientale 30 (Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1979), pp. 89–116.
Gundry, R. H., *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel* (Leiden, 1967).
Haefeli, L., *Stilmittel bei Afrahat, dem persischen Weisen* (Leipzig, 1932).
Halleux, A. de, *Philoxène de Mabbog: sa vie, ses écrits, sa théologie* (Louvain, 1963).
——, "Monohysitismus und Spiritualität nach dem Johanneskommentar des Philoxenus von Mabbug," *Theologie und Philosophie* 53 (1978), pp. 353–366.
——, "La philoxénienne du symbole," *Symposium Syriacum* 1976, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 205 (Rome, 1978), pp. 295–315.
Harrris, J. R., "*Fragments of the Commentary of Ephrem Syrus upon the Diatessaron* (London, 1895).
Hasan-Rokem, G., "Memoirs of Birth—The Birth of Memory: Experience and Myth in Midrash," *Vestnik* 7 (2002), pp. 267-80 (in Russian).
Hidal, S., *Interpretatio Syriaca: Die Kommentare des heiligen Ephräm des syrers zu Genesis und Exodus mit besondere Berücksichtigung ihrer auslegungsgeschichtlichen Stellung* (Lund, 1974).

Hudal, A., "Zur Christologie bei Afrahates Syrus," *Theologie und Glaube* 3 (1911), pp. 477–487.

Joosten, J., "Tatian's Diatessaron and the Old Testament Peshitta," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120 (2001), pp. 501–523.

Juhl, D., *Die Askese im Liber Graduum und bei Afrahat: Eine vergleichende Studie zur frühsyrischen Frömigkeit* (Wiesbaden, 1996).

Juckel, A., "La réception des Pères grecs pendant la «Renaissance» syriaque: Renaissance—acculturation—identité," in A. Schmidt and D. Gonnet (eds.), *Les Pères grecs dans la tradition syriaque* (Paris, 2007), pp. 89–126.

Kister, M., "'In Adam': 1 Cor 15:21–22; 12:27 in Their Jewish Setting," in A. Hilhorst, É. Puech and E. Tigchelaar (eds.), *Flores Florentino: Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez* (Leiden, 2007), pp. 685–690.

——, "'First Adam' and 'Second Adam' According to Paul (1 Cor 15) in the light of Midrashic Exegesis and Hebrew Usage" (forthcoming).

Kitchen, R. A., "Syriac Additions to Anderson: The Garden of Eden in the Book of Steps and Philoxenus of Mabbug," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 6:1 (2003) (e-journal).

Klijn, A. F. J., "The Word Kejân in Aphraates," *Vigiliae Christianae* 12 (1958), pp. 58–65.

——, *Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature*, Supplementum Novum Testamentum 46 (Leiden, 1977).

Kofsky, A., "Mamre: A Case of Regional Cult?" in A. Kofsky and G. G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1998), pp. 19–30.

——, *Eusebius of Caesarea against Paganism* (Leiden, 2000).

——, "The Renunciation of Will in the Monastic School of Gaza," *Liber Annuus* 56 (2006), pp. 321–346.

Kofsky, A. and S. Ruzer, "Justice, Free Will, and Divine Mercy in Ephrem's Commentary on Genesis 2–3," *Le Muséon* 113 (2000), pp. 315–332.

——, "Christology and Hermeneutics in Philoxenus' Commentary on John 1:14," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 71 (2005), pp. 343–362.

——, "Logos, Holy Spirit and Messiah: Aspects of Aphrahat's Theology Reconsidered," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 73 (2007), pp. 347–378.

Koltun-Fromm, N., "A Jewish-Christian Conversation in Fourth-Century Persian Mesopotamia," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47 (1996), pp. 45–63.

——, "Aphrahat and the Rabbis on Noah's Righteousness in Light of Jewish-Christian Polemic," in J. Frishman and L. van Rompay (eds.), *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretations* (Louvain, 1997), pp. 57–72.

Kowalski, A., *Perfezione e Giustizia di Adamo nel Liber Graduum* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 232; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1989).

Kronholm, T., "The Trees of Paradise in the Hymns of Ephraem Syrus," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 11 (1977/8), pp. 48–56.

——, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11 in the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian* (Upsala, 1978).

Kumlush, R. Y., "Jewish Aramaic Targums," in H. Rabin (ed.), *Bible Translations: An Introduction* (Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 5–44 (in Hebrew).

Lampe, G. W. H., "Miracles and Early Christian Apologetic," in C. F. D. Moule (ed.), *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in Their Philosophy and History* (London, 1965), pp. 205–218.

Lane, D. J., "Of Wars and Rumors of Peace: Apocalyptic Material in Aphrahat and Šubhalmaran," in P. J. Harland and C. T. R. Hayward (eds.), *New Heaven and New Earth: Essays in Honour of Anthony Gelston* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 229–245.

Lebon, J., "La version philoxénienne de la Bible," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 12 (1911), pp. 413–436.

Lehto, A. I., *Divine Law, Asceticism and Gender in Aphrahat's 'Demonstrations'* (Toronto, 2003).

Leloir, L., *Le Témoignage d'Éphrem sur le Diatessaron*, CSCO 227 (Louvain, 1962).

Leonhard, C., "Observations on the Date of the Syriac Cave of Treasures," in M. Daviau, J. W. Wevers, and M. Weigl (eds), *The World of the Arameans III. Studies in Language and Literature in Honour of Paul-Eugène Dion* (Sheffield, 2001), pp. 255–294.

Lerner, C. B., *The Wellspring of Georgian Historiography: The Early Medieval Historical Chronicle, The Conversion of K'art'li and the Life of St. Nino* (London, 2003).

Levene, A., *The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis* (London, 1951).

Lieber, A., "Jewish and Christian Heavenly Meal Traditions," in A. D. DeConick (ed.), *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, SBL Symposium Series 11 (Atlanta, 2006), pp. 313–339.

Loofs, F., *Paulus von Samosata*, TU 40 (Leipzig, 1924).

——, *Theophilus von Antiochien Adversus Marcionem und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenaeus* (Leipzig, 1930).

Louf, A., "Une ancienne exégèse de Phil 2,6 dans le Ketābâ deMasqâtâ (Livre des degrees)," in *Studiorum Paulinorum Congressus Internationalis Catholicus*, AB 17–18 (Rome, 1963), vol. 2, pp. 523–533.

Louth, A., "Paradies: IV Theologiegeschichtlich," in G. Müller (ed.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, xxv (Berlin and New York, 1995), cols. 714–719.

Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII, "Introduction to Mar Odishoo, Metropolitan of Suwa (Nisibin) and Arementia," *The Book of Marganita (the Pearl) on the Truth of Chirstianity* (Kerala, 1965).

Martikainen, J., "Das Böse in den Schriften des Syrers Ephraem, im Stufenbuch und im Corpus Macarianum," in W. Strothmann (ed.), *Makarios-Symposium über das Böse: Vorträge der Finnisch-Deutschen Theologentagung in Goslar 1980* (Göttinger Orientforschungen: Reihe 1, Syriaca 24 (Wiesbaden, 1983), pp. 36–46.

McCullough, J. C., "Aphrahat the Biblical Exegete," *Studia Patristica* XVIII.4 (1990), pp. 263–268.

McNamara, M., *Targum and Testament* (Shannon, 1972).

Mendels, M., "The Temple in Hellenistic Period and in Judaism," in B. Z. Kedar and R. J. Z. Werblowsky (eds.), *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land* (London, 1998), pp. 73–83.

Murray, R., *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge, 1975).

——, "Some Rhetorical Patterns in Early Syriac Literature," in R. H. Fischer (ed.), *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus: Studies in Early Christian Literature and Its Environment, Primarily in the Syrian East* (Chicago, 1977), pp. 109–131.

——, "Hellenistic-Jewish Rhetoric in Aphrahat," in R. Lavenant (ed.), *III Symposium Syriacum: Les contacts du monde syriaque avec les autres cultures* (Rome, 1983), pp. 79–85.

Naeh, S., "Freedom and Celibacy: A Talmudic Variation on Tales of Temptation and Fall in Genesis and Its Syriac Background," in J. Frishman and L. Van Rompay (eds.), *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation*, Trad. Exeg. Graeca 5 (Louvain, 1997), pp. 73–89.

Navon, M., "Messianic Figures in Second Temple Judaism: Relationship between the Charismatic Leader and His Adherents" (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2004).

Neusner, J., *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Christian Jewish Argument in Fourth-Century Iran* (Leiden, 1971).

Ortiz de Urbina, I., *Die Gotheit Christi bei Afrahat*, Orientalia Christiana 31.1 (Rome, 1933).

——, "La controversia di Afraate coi Giudei," *Studia missionalia* 3 (1947), pp. 85–106.

——, "Le Paradis eschatologique d'après Saint Ephrem," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 21 (1956), pp. 467–472.

——, *Vetus evangelium Syrorum et…exinde excerptum Diatessaron Tatiani*, Biblia Polyglotta Matritensia 6 (Madrid, 1967).

Ouellette, J., "Sens et portée de l'argument scriptuaire chez Aphraate," in R. H. Fischer (ed.), *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus: Studies in Early Christian Literature and Its Evironment, Primarily in the Syrian East* (Chicago, 1977), pp. 191–202.

Owens, R. J., *The Genesis and Exodus Citations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage* (Leiden, 1983).

Palmer, A., "Paradise Restored," *Oriens Christianus* 87 (2003), pp. 1–46.

Pass, H. L., "The Creed of Aphraates," *Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (1908), pp. 267-284.

Pearson, B. A., *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis, 1990).

Petersen, W. L., "The Christology of Aphrahat, the Persian Sage: an Excursus on the 17th Demonstration," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992), pp. 241–256.

——, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (Leiden, 1994).

Pines, S., "God, Glory and Angels According to a Second-Century Theology," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6 (1987), pp. 1–14 (in Hebrew).

Prawer, J., "Christianity between Heavenly and Earthly Jerusalem," in J. Aviram (ed), *Jerusalem through the Ages* (Jerusalem, 1969), pp. 179–192 (in Hebrew).

Reiner, E., "From Joshua to Jesus: The Transformation of a Biblical Story to a Local Myth," in A. Kofsky and G. G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1998), pp. 223–271.

Ri, S.-M., "Le Testament d'Adam et la Caverne de Tresors," in R. Lavenant (ed.), *V Symposium Syriacum, 1988, Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, 29–31 août 1988*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 236 (Rome, 1990), pp. 111–122.

Ridolfini, F. P., Note sull' antropologia e sull' escatologia del 'Sapiente Persiano,'" *Studi e Ricerche sull' Oriente Cristiano* 1 (1978), pp. 5–17.

——, "Problema trinitario e problema cristologico nelle 'dimostrazioni' del 'sapiente persiano,'" *Studi e richerche sull'oriente cristiano* 2 [1979], pp. 99–125.

——, "Battesimo e penitenza negli scritti del "sapiente persiano," *Catechesi battesimale e riconciliazione nei Padri del IV secolo*, Convegno di Stuido Pontificio Salesiano (Rome, 1984), pp. 119–129.

Riedmatten, H. D., *Les Actes du procès de Paul de Samosate: Étude sur la christologie du IIIe au IVe siècle*, Paradosis 6 (Fribourg, 1952).

Rofé, A., *Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Sheffield, 1997).

Rubin, M., "The Language of Creation or the Primordial Language: A Case of Cultural Polemics in Antiquity," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 49 (1998), pp. 306–333.

Russel, N., *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford, 2005).

Ruzer, S., *Biblical Quotations in the Old Syriac Gospels: Peshitta Influence and Hermeneutical Constraints* (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996) (in Hebrew).

——, "Reflections of Genesis 1–2 in the Old Syriac Gospels," in J. Frishman and L. Van Rompay (eds.), *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation* (Louvain, 1997), pp. 92–102.

——, "The Seat of Sin in Early Jewish and Christian Sources," in J. Assmann and G. G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 367–391.

——, "*The Cave of Treasures* on Swearing by Abel's Blood and Expulsion from Paradise: Two Exegetical Motifs in Context," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001), pp. 257–277.

——, *Mapping the New Testament: Early Christian Writings as a Witness for Jewish Biblical Exegesis* (Leiden, 2007).

Salvesen, A., "Infants or Fools in the Garden of Eden? An Ambiguity in Early Syriac Tradition," in M. F. J. Baasten and W. Th. Van Peursen (eds.), *Hamlet on a Hill: Semitic and Greek Studies Presented to Professor T. Muraoka on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Leuven-Paris, 2003), pp. 433–440.

Schäfer, P., "Diversity and Interactions: Messiahs in Early Judaism," in P. Schäfer and M. Cohen (eds.), *Toward the Millennium* (Leiden, 1998), pp. 15–35.

Schiffman, L. H., *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism*, New Jersey 1991.

——, "Messianic Figures and Ideas in the Qumran Scrolls," in J. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis, 1992), pp. 116–129.

Scholem, G., *The Messianic Idea in Israel and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York, 1971).

Schwen, P., *Afrahat: Seine Person und sein Verständnis des Christentums. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Kirche in Osten* (Berlin, 1907).

Séd, N., "Les hymnes sur le paradis de saint Ephrem et les traditions juives," *Le Muséon* 81 (1968), pp. 455–501.

Snaith, J. G., "Aphrahat and the Jews," in J. A. Emerton and S. C. Reif (eds.), *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honour of E. I. J. Rosenthal* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 235–250.

Stemberger, G., "Exegetical Contacts between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire," in M. Sæbo (ed.), *Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. I, part 1 (Göttingen, 1996), pp. 569–611.

Stendahl, K., *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1968).

Stökl, D., "Yom Kippur in the Apocalyptic *imaginaire* and the Roots of Jesus' High Priesthood," in J. Assmann and G.G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 349–366.

Stone, M. E., "The Axis of History at Qumran," in E. G. Chazon and M. Stone (eds.), *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives: The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 133–149.

Stroumsa, G. G., *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Leiden, 1984).

——, "Mystical Jerusalems," in L. I. Levine (ed.), *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York, 1999), pp. 349–370.

——, "False Prophet, False Messiah and the Religious Scene in Seventh-Century Jerusalem," in M. Bockmuehl and J. Carleton Paget (eds.), *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (London-New York, 2007), pp. 285–296.

Stuckenbruck, L., "The 'Demonstration on Love' by Aphrahat the Sage: A Translation with Introduction," in P. J. Harland and C. T. R. Hayward (eds.), *New Heaven and New Earth: Essays in Honour of Anthony Gelston* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 247–270.

Stewart, C., *'Working the Earth of the Heart': The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts, and Language to AD 431* (Oxford, 1991).

Swartz, M. D., "Ritual about Myth about Ritual: Towards an Understanding of the 'Avodah' in the Rabbinic Period," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 6 (1997), pp. 135–155.

Tanghe, A., "Memra de Philoxène de Mabboug sur l'inhabitation du Saint Esprit," *Le Muséon* (1960), pp. 39–71.

Taylor, S. S., "Paul and the Persian Sage: Some Observations on Aphrahat's Use of the Pauline Corpus," in C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders (eds.), *The Function of Scripture in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Sheffield, 1998), pp. 312–331.

Ter Haar Romeny, B., "Les Pères grecs dans les florilèges exégétiques syriaques," in A. Schmidt and D. Gonnet (eds.), *Les Pères grecs dans la tradition syriaque* (Paris, 2007), pp. 63–76.

Teule, H. G. B., "The Perception of the Jerusalem Pilgrimage in Syriac Monastic Circles," in R. Lavenant (ed.), *VI Symposium Syriacum 1992*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 247 (Rome, 1994), pp. 311–321.

Torrance, I. R., *Christology after Chalcedon: Severus of Antioch and Sergius the Monophysite* (Norwich, 1988).

Torrey, C. C., *Documents of the Primitive Church* (New York-London, 1941).

Urbach, E. E., *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (second, enlarged edition, Jerusalem, 1977).

Van Rompay, L., "Memories of Paradise: The Greek 'Life of Adam and Eve' and Early Syriac Tradition." *Aram* 5 (1993), pp. 555–570.

——, "*Malpânâ dilan Suryâyâ*. Ephrem in the Works of Philoxenus of Mabbog: Respect and Distance," Hugoye: *Journal of Syriac Studies* 7.1 (2004).

VanderKam, J. C., "The Angel Story in the Book of Jubilees," in E. G. Chazon and M. Stone (eds.), *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives: The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 151–70.

Vianès-Abou Samra, L., "L'eschatologie d'Apolinaire de Laodicée à travers les Fragments sur les Psaumes," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 21 (2004), pp. 331–371.

Visotsky, B. L., *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures* (Tübingen, 1995).

Vogel, A., *Zur Lehre von der Erlösung in den Homilien Afrahats* (Hof, 1966).

Weitzman, M. P., *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 1999).

Whiston, W., *An Essay toward Restoring the True Text of the Old Testament* (London, 1722).

Wilcox, M., "Text Form," in D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson (eds.), *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture*, *Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 193–203.

Willis, G. G., "What was the Earliest Syrian Baptismal Tradition?" *Studia Evangelica* 6, TU 112 (1973), pp. 651–654.

Wolfson, H. A., *Philo, Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (revised edition, Boston, 1962).

Yuval, I., "Vengeance and Curse: From Sanctification of the Name to Blood Libel," *Zion* 58 (1993), pp. 33–90 (in Hebrew).

Zakovitch, Y., "The First Stages of Jerusalem's Sanctification under David: A Literary and Ideological Analysis," in L. I. Levine (ed.), *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York, 1999), pp. 16–35.

INDEX OF NAMES AND SUBJECTS

INDEX OF BIBLICAL VERSES

OLD TESTAMENT PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

New Testament