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MÖRĀN 'ETHŌ

9

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF SYRIAC LITERATURE

by

Sebastian Paul Brock



ST. EPHREM ECUMENICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SEERI)

BAKER HILL, KOTTAYAM - 686 001

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Preface

This outline of Syriac literature aims to provide no more than an initial orientation to the subject. The number of authors covered has deliberately been limited to the more important (or, in some cases, the more accessible); furthermore, although it is emphasised that the history of Syriac literature is a continuous one, right up to the present day, the focus of this outline has been on the period up to the early fourteenth century. The reasons for this limitation are largely practical ones: Syriac literature of the period up to about 1300 is often of particular significance and importance, and accordingly the editing of Syriac texts has largely been confined to authors of this period; but it should be noted that even here many important works remain unpublished, and reference has on occasion been made to these. On the whole, however, the writers selected and the works specifically mentioned in Chapters III (Syriac authors) and IV (translations into Syriac) are for the most part confined to those which are available in published form; in Chapter III (and likewise VIII) the most important authors are indicated by means of an asterisk¹. Indication is also given of the availability of an English translation (and/or, on occasion, of translations into other modern European languages): thus ET = English translation, FT = French tr., GT = German tr., etc.; details of these are given

¹ It should be noted that in Chapters IV and V the asterisk serves a different purpose: in Chapter IV (Translations into Syriac) it indicates that the Greek original is wholly or largely lost, while in Chapter V (Summary guide to English translations), it indicates that the Syriac original is also provided, as well as the English translation.

later, in Chapter V. In Chapter VI preliminary guidance is given to certain specific types of Syriac literature, while Chapter VII provides a selection of more general secondary literature. In order to give the reader a first impression of the variety to be found within Syriac literature, a selection of short samples in translation is offered in Chapter VIII.

This Brief Outline, first published in 1997, was written primarily in order to meet the needs of students taking the MA course in Syriac language and literature at SEERI, though it was hoped that it might at the same time prove to be of some interest to a wider readership as well. In this second edition the bibliographical information in Chapters V-VII has been updated, and at the same time the opportunity has been taken to re-order certain of the chapters, in order to provide a more logical sequence. Once again, I am most grateful to the indefatigable Director of SEERI, the Revd Dr Jacob Thekeparampil, for undertaking the publication of this new edition.

Sebastian Paul Brock

Oxford, England

Commemoration of Mor Gregorios

Yuhanon bar 'Ebroyo

30th July, 2008

I

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW: THE MAIN PERIODS

Syriac began as the local Aramaic dialect of Edessa (Urhay, modern Urfa in SE Turkey), with its own script, first attested in inscriptions of the first century AD. It must have been adopted as the literary language of Aramaic-speaking Christianity at an early date, and as a result of this its use spread rapidly along with the spread of Christianity in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire and in the Persian Empire further east. Syriac is in fact one of three Late Aramaic dialects which came to produce large surviving literatures, the other two being Jewish Aramaic and Mandaean; both in literary quality and in quantity Syriac easily surpasses these other two large Aramaic literatures.

Syriac literature covers from the second to the twenty-first century AD. This long span of time can conveniently be broken up into six main periods:

- A. The earliest literature; 2nd – 3rd century AD.
- B. Aphrahat, Ephrem, and other 4th century writings.
- C. Fifth to mid seventh century.
- D. Mid seventh to end of the thirteenth century.
- E. Fourteenth century to nineteenth century.
- F. Twentieth and twenty-first century.

Of these six periods B-D(4th – 13th cent.) provide the most extensive and most important literature.

independent at this date from the forms of monasticism which were developing in Egypt at the same time. Subsequently, however, the Egyptian monastic tradition, owing to its great prestige, became dominant in the area of Syriac Christianity as well, and earlier distinctive Syriac ascetic tradition was largely forgotten.

(b) Periods D-F (7th-20th cent.) belongs to the time of Islamic domination in the Middle East.

Period D (7th-13th cent.) belongs to the time of the Omayyads (7th-8th century), Abbasids (750-c. 1100), Seljuks (in Turkey, 11th/12th centuries) and Mongols (from 13th century). Period E (14th-19th cent.) belongs to the time of (successively) Mongol, Mamluk (along with other local dynasties), and Ottoman rule in Western Asia, and opened with a time of great devastation and destruction through war and then the Black Death. Period F (20th -21st cent.) belongs to the time of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the modern nation states in West Asia.

By the time of the Arab invasions the ecclesiastical boundaries between the different Christian communities had already become virtually fixed. The Syrian Orthodox and the Church of the East formed the largest of the Syriac Churches. From the 8th century onwards many writers of the Syriac Churches preferred to write in Arabic, rather than Syriac: thus there is very little Melkite and Maronite writing in Syriac after the 8th Century, though Syriac remained the liturgical language in these Churches for much longer (in the Melkite Church Syriac was in a few localities used liturgically up to about the 17th century; in the Maronite Church it has continued to the present day, but in recent years is largely being replaced by Arabic). As a result of the widespread adoption of Arabic as a literary language especially in the Melkite and Maronite Churches, most Syriac literature in period D (7th –13th cent.), and all Syriac literature in periods E-F (14th-21st cent.) has been produced by writers from the Church of the East and the Syrian Orthodox Churches (and, in the more recent centuries, their Eastern Rite Catholic counterparts).

Especially in the late eighth and the first half of the ninth century scholars from the various Syriac Churches played an important role in the transmission of the Greek philosophy and sciences to the Arab world through their translations and commentaries; best known of these scholars is Hunayn ibn Ishaq, whose normal practice was to translate first from Greek into Syriac, and then from Syriac into Arabic; the reason for this seemingly cumbersome process was that he was able to benefit from the experience of a long tradition of translating such Greek texts into Syriac, while there was no such tradition for translating from Greek into Arabic and so it was easier to work from one Semitic language (Syriac) to another (Arabic). Many of these texts of Greek origin eventually reached western Europe by way of translation from Arabic into Latin made in Spain in the twelfth century. Syriac scholars thus form an important link in the chain of transmission of ancient Greek philosophy and science to Western Europe.

The Byzantine reconquest of north Syria in the late tenth century resulted in renewed Greek influence there, above all in the area of liturgy; this applied especially to the Melkite Church, but also, to some extent, to the Syrian Orthodox. The Crusades (1096-1270) brought the first direct contact with the Western Church, and it was from this period that the Maronite Church accepted the primacy of the Bishop of Rome. It was not until the mid 16th century onwards that the other Eastern Rite Catholic Churches emerged: a schism in the Church of the East led to the creation of an independent Chaldean hierarchy (1551), while the separate Syrian Catholic Church emerged in the course of the second half of the 18th century (1782 marked the definite emergence of a separate hierarchy).

In India Syriac Christianity goes back, according to a very ancient tradition, to St Thomas; in any case Christianity was clearly well established in south India at an early date, and the ecclesiastical links were with the Church of the East, under the Catholicos Patriarch of Seleucia- Ctesiphon. Very little is known about the pre Portuguese period (i.e. up to 1497) since unfortunately very few relevant historical

documents survive. The latter part of the 16th century saw the attempt to latinize the Syriac rite in India and the suppression of many traditional features of the indigenous Church there. In reaction to this in the mid 17th century a group revolted against European ecclesiastical domination and connections were established with the hierarchy of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Ottoman Empire. As a result an Indian hierarchy under the Syrian Orthodox patriarchate came into being and the West Syrian liturgical tradition was gradually introduced, replacing the earlier East Syrian tradition. Around the middle of the 19th century, under the influence of English missionaries, a group within the Syrian Orthodox Church sought to make various reforms, and this led to the emergence towards the end of the century of the independent Mar Thoma Church, which has the distinction of being the only 'Reformed' Church of Orthodox (as opposed to Catholic) origins.

During Period D (mid 7th – 13th century) the main centres of Syriac literature continued to be located in (what is now) E Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and NW Iran. the Syrian Orthodox predominantly in SE Turkey and Syria, but also to be found in Iraq (important centres were Tagrit , and the Monastery of Mar Mattai, SE of Mosul), and the Church of the East primarily in Iraq and NW Iran. The influence of the Church of the East, in particular, stretched along trade routes right across Asia, and a surviving Chinese-Syriac inscription in Xian, dated 781, records the arrival of Christianity in western China in 635.

During Period E (14th – 19th century) the Syrian Orthodox Church has important centers in the area of Malatya (Melitene) and Tur 'Abdin, as well as in northern Syria and northern Iraq; the church of the East is primarily located in northern Iraq; eastern Turkey and NW Iran.

The 20th-21st century (Period F) has witnessed widespread displacements of the population of all the Syriac Churches due to war and (more recently) large-scale emigration to countries all over the world.

III

MAIN AUTHORS AND WRITINGS OF THE SIX PERIODS

A. 2nd – 3rd century AD

This is the most obscure period of Syriac literature. Most texts are anonymous, and of uncertain date and origin; only a very few names of actual authors are known. The following are the most important works of this period:

1* PESHITTA OLD TESTAMENT. This was translated directly from Hebrew into Syriac; different books were translated by different people, and perhaps at different times. Probably at least some books were translated by Syriac-speaking Jews, and then taken over by the early Syriac-speaking Church; others may have been translated by early Jewish converts to Christianity. Certain books, notably the Pentateuch and Chronicles, contain isolated features or interpretations which are characteristic of the Targums (Jewish Aramaic translations of the Old Testament). Probably much of the Peshitta Old Testament had been translated by the end of the second century. Since Syriac is the local Aramaic dialect of Edessa, it is likely that the translation was made in Edessa, or in the region of Edessa. The name Peshitta is first found in period D, when it was used to distinguish this traditional translation from seventh-century translation from Greek (the Syro-hexapla).

2*. The DIATESSARON. Probably the earliest form of the New Testament to get into Syriac was the Diatessaron, or ‘harmony’ of the four Gospels, which provided the material from all four Gospels arranged as a single narrative. The Diatessaron is lost in its original form, and many uncertainties surround it. It is associated with the name of Tatian, who came from Syria or further east, studied in Rome under Justin Martyr, and then returned to the east c.170. If he composed the Diatessaron in Rome then its original language is likely to have been Greek (Latin is less likely), in which case the lost Syriac text was a translation (and could date from considerably later than Tatian’s time): but if Tatian compiled it after his return to the east, then Syriac is likely to have been the original language in which it was written. At present there is insufficient evidence to decide between these two main possibilities.

3*. The OLD SYRIAC GOSPELS. Two fifth-century manuscripts (known as the ‘Curetonian’ and ‘Sinaiticus’) of the Gospels preserve the oldest surviving text of the Syriac New Testament, called today the ‘Old Syriac’ [ET]. This is a comparatively free translation of the four separate Gospels, making use (it seems) here and there of the Diatessaron. The Greek text from which it was translated was very archaic in character and with many interesting features, as a result of which the Old Syriac is a witness of great importance for the study of the early history of the New Testament text. It is not known exactly when or where the Old Syriac translation was made: most scholars date it to the third century, but a few prefer the early fourth. It happens to be the earliest witness to the existence of the Peshitta Old Testament (or at least, specific books of it), since the translators used the Peshitta Old Testament text for quotations from the Old Testament in the Greek Gospels – even in cases where the Greek form of the quotation is rather different from that of the Peshitta Old Testament.

4*. BARDAISAN and the Book of the Laws of the Countries. Bardaisan is the one individual author from this period about whom something is known, including his exact dates (154-222). Bardaisan

lived in Edessa and belonged to the court circles of King Abgar VIII, the Great. He must have been highly educated in Greek as well as in Syriac, but wrote only in Syriac, and was known as ‘the Aramaean philosopher’. Since he was a speculative thinker some of whose ideas (e.g. on cosmology) were later considered unorthodox, his own writings have not survived, but he is known to have written in both prose and poetry. The Syriac Book of the Laws of the Countries, which does survive [ET], is often attributed to him, but in fact was probably written by one of his pupils, Philip. This work is a philosophical dialogue (essentially a Greek literary genre) on the subject of Fate; the speakers are Bardaisan and his various disciples. In the course of the work there is a description of the laws (or rather, customs) of various different ethnic groups; it is from this section that the current title derives. The work was translated into Greek (where it was known as ‘On Fate’ and attributed to Bardaisan himself), and is quoted both in the Clementine Recognitions (IX. 19-29) and in Eusebius’ work *The Preparation of the Gospel* (VI. 10.1-48)

5*. ODES OF SOLOMON [ET]. A group of 42 short lyric poems of great beauty survive almost complete in Syriac; one of these is also preserved in Greek, and five in Coptic. Date, place of origin and original language are all uncertain: some scholars see them as contemporary with the latest New Testament writings, having strong links with the Johannine literature; others place them in the mid or late second century, while others again see them as countering Manichaeism, and thus belonging to the late third century (Mani was put to death in 276). The original language was probably either Greek or Syriac, though Hebrew or another Aramaic dialect has also been suggested. If the Odes were written in Syriac, then they probably originate from the Edessa area; it should be noted, however, that they do not conform to the norms of any known Syriac verse form. Since the Odes of Solomon are highly allusive in character, it is difficult to determine the audience for which they were composed. Many of them evidently celebrate the liberated character of the

baptized life in Christ (they are hardly hymns for the baptismal rite, as was once suggested). In several of the Odes the author appears to have Christ speaking in the first person, while in others the allusions and imagery defy any satisfactory interpretation.

6*. The ACTS OF THOMAS [ET]. There is an extensive apocryphal literature associated with the name of Thomas. The two most important works are the Gospel of Thomas (probably written in Syria in the second century, and known from Greek fragments and a complete Coptic translation), and the Acts of 'Judas Thomas', composed in Syriac probably in the third century (place unknown). The Acts of Thomas survive in both Syriac and an early Greek translation; translations into several other Oriental Christian languages also exist. In general character the work resembles the various Greek apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, which belong to the genre of the novella, or 'romance' (the modern equivalent would be the historical novel). The Acts describe the apostle Thomas's mission to India, and the narrative is set out in thirteen sections (called 'acts'), followed by the Martyrdom of Thomas. Acts I-VI concern his time in North India and the conversion of king Gudnaphar, while Acts VII-XIII and the Martyrdom cover his experience at the court of king Mazdai (evidently in South India). The descriptions, at various points in the Acts, of the liturgical rites of baptism and eucharist (#25-27, 49, 121, 132, 157) are of great importance for students of early Syriac liturgical history. Incorporated into the Acts of Thomas are two famous poems which are probably earlier than the rest of the work; these poems are of an allegorical character, and are often known as the 'Hymn of the Bride' (#6-7) and the 'Hymn of the Pearl' (or, 'of the Soul'; ##108-13).

The topics of the individual acts are: I (#1-16), the allocation of India to Judas Thomas, and his sale, by Christ, to Habban, a merchant of king Gudnaphar: on their arrival at Sandaruk they attend the wedding feast of the local king, during which Judas Thomas sings the song of the Bride of Light (#6-7); II (#17-29), Judas Thomas builds a palace for the king in heaven, rather than on earth; at first

the king is angry, but is eventually won over and he receives baptism; III(#30-38), an episode concerning the Black Snake, where Judas Thomas revives a young man, slain by the snake; IV (#39-41), a colt invites Judas Thomas to ride on it in order to go to the city to preach; V (#42-50), Judas Thomas heals a woman possessed by a devil, and then baptizes her; VI (#51-61) he raises from the dead a young woman who had been murdered by a youth; she describes what she has seen in the underworld, and the torments of the wicked; VII(#62-67), an episode concerning a general (later on named as Sipur) who seeks the Apostle's help in healing his wife and daughter; he entrusts them to his deacon Xanthippos; VIII (#68-81), four wild asses offer their services to Judas Thomas, and they convey him and the general to the city, where the Apostle heals the general's wife and daughter; IX(#82-118) the conversion of Mygdonia, wife of Karish, a kinsman of king Mazdai; when Mygdonia refuses to sleep with Karish, he complains to Mazdai, who throws the Apostle into prison, where he sings the Hymn of the Soul (#108-113); X(#119-133) Mygdonia is baptized, together with her nurse Narkia; subsequently Sipur and his wife and daughter also ask for baptism; XI(#134-138), Mazdai's wife Tertia visits Mygdonia and is won over by the Apostle's teaching - to the dismay of Mazdai; XII (#139-149) Mazdai's son Vizan has various conversations with the Apostle, who is again imprisoned; XIII (#150-158), Vizan, his wife Manashar, and Tertia are all baptized; [XIV]. The Martyrdom (#159-170): king Mazdai sentences the Apostle, orders some soldiers to take him up a nearby mountain and stab him to death. Judas subsequently appears to Sipur and Vizan, and to the women. Later, some dust from the Apostle's grave heals one of Mazdai's sons from demonic possession, and Mazdai himself confesses Christ.

7. A Syriac work attributed to 'MELITO the Philosopher' [ET], claiming to be a Discourse before Antoninus Caesar (i. e. the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, AD 161-180), belongs to the second-century genre of 'Apologies', or defences of Christianity addressed to the Roman Emperor, of which several

examples survive in Greek. Since it envisages a time when the emperor might convert to Christianity, it is more likely to belong to the third, rather than the second century. It is uncertain whether Syriac is the original language; since the work quotes 2 Peter (not in the early Syriac New Testament canon), it may well be that the Syriac is translated from a lost Greek original.

8. The Syriac SENTENCES OF MENANDER [ET] consist of wisdom sayings attributed to Menander the Sage. The work has no clear connection with a Greek collection of Menander Sentences; it is usually thought, however, that the Syriac is a translation and that the work was originally written perhaps in Egypt in the early Roman period. The author has little knowledge of Judaism and there are no traces of Christianity.

9. The LETTER OF MARA [ET] to his son Serapion, which gives various counsels of advice to his son in the face of the vanity of the world. The author purports to be a pagan, and passing mention is made of 'the wise king' (i.e. Jesus) who was killed by the Jews, as a result of which Jerusalem fell. The Letter has been dated variously to the late first century, the third century, or the fourth century; since the link between the destruction of Jerusalem (in AD 70) and the death of Jesus is characteristic of fourth-century Christian anti-Jewish polemic, it is likely that the Letter is in fact a Christian product of that century.

10*. The story of the 'Aramaean Sage' AHIKAR [ET] has the distinction of being the longest-lived piece of Aramaic literature, witnesses to it spanning two and a half millennia; the Aramaic text goes back at least to the fifth century BC, when it is already found in a papyrus from Elephantine (in the south of Egypt), and the work was evidently well known to the author of the book of Tobit, where Ahikar features as a close relative of Tobit (Tobit 1:21). In the Hellenistic period the book was translated into Greek (now lost, apart from a section which was incorporated into the Greek Life of Aesop). It is not known exactly how the story of Ahikar reached Syriac, but this was probably at an early date. Over the course of

time translations have been made into many different languages, among them Arabic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Georgian, Old Turkish, Modern Syriac, and (via the lost Greek) Romanian and Slavonic. The work consists of a narrative framework set in the time of the Assyrian king Sennacherib (704-681 BC), and into this framework two sets of admonitions to Ahikar's nephew Nadan had been incorporated at an early date.

B. THE FOURTH CENTURY

The middle and second half of the fourth century witness the first major Syriac writings to survive: the Demonstrations of Aphrahat, the extensive poetry and prose works by Ephrem, and the anonymous Book of Steps (*Liber Graduum*).

11*. APHRAHAT (also known as 'the Persian Sage') is the author of a collection of 23 short works described as 'Demonstrations' or (sometimes) 'Letters' [FT, GT, ET]. The first 22 form an alphabetic acrostic (the Syriac Alphabet has 22 letters), and 1-10 are specifically dated to AD 337, 11-22 to AD 344, and 23 to August AD 345. The exact identity of the author was unclear to later writers, and in the earliest manuscripts his name is given as 'Jacob', rather than 'Aphrahat', and this gave rise to his being incorrectly identified as Jacob, bishop of Nisibis (obviously impossible, since Jacob of Nisibis died in 338). This confusion must have arisen at an early date, since it is found in the Latin writer Gennadius (late fifth century), as well as in the early Armenian translation of the Demonstrations. In the Middle Ages further confusion was added when he was described as a bishop of the famous monastery of Mar Mattai.

Aphrahat (as he is regularly called today) was certainly writing within the Persian Empire, and must have been a figure of some authority within the Church (this emerges especially from Demonstrations 10 and 14, both of which are addressed to 'the bishops and clergy'). The Demonstrations cover a wide variety of topics, as can be seen from the following list:

- 1, On Faith
- 2, On Love
- 3, On Fasting
- 4, On Prayer
- 5, On Wars
- 6, On the Bnay Qyama
- 7, On Penitents
- 8, On the Resurrection of the Dead
- 9, On Humility
- 10, On the Pastors
- 11, On Circumcision
- 12, On the Pascha
- 13, On the Sabbath
- 14, Exhortation
- 15, On the Distinction between foods
- 16, On the (gentile) Peoples who have taken the place of the (Jewish) People
- 17, On Christ the Son of God
- 18, Against the Jews , on Virginity and on Continence
- 19, Against the Jews who say that they will be gathered together again
- 20, On the Support of the Needy
- 21, On the Persecution
- 22, On Death and the Last Times
- 23, On the Grape in the Cluster, in which there is Blessing (Isaiah 65:8).

The first group of ten Demonstrations is primarily concerned with aspects of the Christian life, while in the second group (11-22) many of the Demonstrations are aimed at Christians who were attracted by Judaism and had adopted various Jewish practices (it is not very likely that Aphrahat was arguing directly with Jews).

Demonstration 4 has the distinction of being the earliest Christian treatise in any language on prayer (as opposed to the Lord's Prayer, on which Origen had written in the third century).

Demonstration 6 is one of the most important sources for knowledge of the early Syriac ascetic tradition, independent of the influence (which was later to prove very strong) of Egyptian monasticism. The work is addressed to certain categories of men and women who had evidently made some sort of ascetic commitment, perhaps at the same time as baptism (which at that time would have been adult, rather than infant, baptism). The key terms used are *ihidaye*, *bnay qyama*, *bthule* and *qaddishe*. In later usage *ihidaya* means 'solitary, hermit' as opposed to *dayraya*, a cenobitic monk; in fourth-century texts, however, it has a much wider sense, covering all of the following: single (in the sense of celibate), singleminded, and follower of Christ the *ihidaya* (*ihidaya* corresponds to Greek *monogenes*, 'Only-Begotten'). *Bnay qyama*, literally 'children of the covenant' (singular *bar qyama* (masc.) and *bath qyama* (fem.)) seems to be another term for the same group; various suggestions have been made for the sense of *qyama* here, but on the whole it seems 'covenant', in the sense of formal commitment, is the most likely. The *ihidaye*, or *bnay qyama*, are made up of two categories, the *bthule* and the *qaddishe*. The term *bthule*, literally 'virgins', refers to unmarried men or women who have committed themselves to celibacy, while *qaddishe*, literally 'holy ones', is used of married people who have decided to refrain from sexual intercourse (the term derives from the Sinai narrative in Exodus 19: compare verse 10 with verse 15).

Demonstrations 5, 14 and 21 all concern contemporary events, and so are of historical significance.

Aphrahat's concern with Judaism in the second group was partly occasioned by external events: in the early 340s (probably 344), at a time of hostilities with the Roman Empire, a persecution took place and a number of prominent Christians, clergy and lay, were martyred. One of the causes of this seems to have been accusations, made by Jews influential in court circles, that the Christians secretly favoured the Romans (an accusation probably not without a grain of truth, as can be seen from the much earlier Dem.5). (Demonstration 21 is specifically on this persecution).

Aphrahat's Demonstrations represent the first extensive piece of Syriac literature to survive. Many passages are written in an artistic and highly poetical form of prose, and his works constitute one of the best models of early Syriac prose style. Though certainly not untouched by Greek influence, Aphrahat is one of the least hellenized of Syriac writers.

12*. EPHREM (c.306-9 vii 373). The date and place of his birth are unknown. His parents were probably both Christian, and most of his life was spent in Nisibis where he served as a deacon under its bishops, beginning with Jacob (James; d.338). In 363, when Nisibis was handed over to the Persian Empire the Christian population had to leave and so Ephrem spent the last ten years of his life in Edessa. It should be noted that the sixth-century biography of Ephrem is full of unreliable details, and gives a misleading portrait of him.

Ephrem wrote in both prose and poetry, and in both these mediums he made use of two separate forms: some of his prose works are in straightforward prose, while others are in a highly artistic form of prose. In his poetry he makes use of both the *memra* and the *madrasha*. The *memra* is employed for narrative poetry, and is written in couplets consisting of 7+7 syllables (later known as the metre of Mar Ephrem), while the *madrasha* is used for lyric poetry written in stanzas, which can be in a variety of different syllabic metres, though for any one poem the same metre is adhered to

throughout. Ephrem has a repertoire of some 50 different syllabic metres, ranging from the very straightforward (e.g. four lines, each of 5 syllables) to the highly complex.

Ephrem's great reputation rests primarily upon his poetry, and he is undoubtedly to be classed as the finest and greatest of all Syriac poets. At the same time Ephrem was a theologian of great insight, and one who deliberately preferred to express his theology through the medium of poetry rather than prose. No doubt as a result of his fame, a very large number of writings came to be transmitted under his name, many of which are certainly not genuinely by him, while uncertainty surrounds some of the others. Those mentioned below are for the most part generally accepted to be the genuine works.

The unsatisfactory eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editions of Ephrem's work have now almost entirely been replaced by better modern editions.

Prose. (1) Ordinary Prose

-Commentary (pushaqa) on Genesis [ET]

-Exposition (turgama) on Exodus [ET]. A set of commentaries on most of the Old Testaments is attributed to Ephrem, but it is only these two that are likely to be genuine (or if not, at least to come from his circle). The biblical text is commented on in sequence, but unevenly; in the Commentary on Genesis a great deal of attention is paid to the early chapters (especially 1-6), while only intermittent comment is made on the rest of the book, with the exception of Gen. 49, for which he offers two different sets of comment. The Interpretation on Exodus is much shorter and incomplete, ending with ch.32. Both works are remarkable for the large number of Jewish traditions to which they allude, and at times Ephrem quotes phrases which coincide with one or other of the Jewish Targums; it is not at all likely, however, that he had direct access to these, and his knowledge of Jewish traditions probably came to him orally.

-Commentary on the Diatessaron [ET]. The Syriac original of most of this work has only come to light within the last few decades; before that, the work was only known from an Armenian translation (which is still the only complete text). In this work Ephrem comments on the harmonized text of the Gospel known as the Diatessaron, rather than on a single Evangelist; besides being a very important witness to the text of the Diatessaron, the Commentary is of particular interest as an extensive fourth-century source for early Syriac exegesis of the Gospel text. The work is very varied in its literary character: some sections read more like notes, while others contain extended theological digressions; others, again take on almost a lyrical character. Since the exegesis of the Commentary sometimes conflicts with that found in the Hymns, it has been suggested that the Commentary may derive from the followers of Ephrem, rather than Ephrem himself; to complicate matters further, there are some notable differences here and there between the Syriac and Armenian texts, and at one point there is a duplication in the text (X.1-2(beginning) and XV.19b). The Commentary also contains the only clear case in the whole of the Ephrem corpus of knowledge of Aphrahat: XVI.25 clearly reflects Aphrahat Dem.23:9.

-Commentary on Acts [LT]. This short work survives only in Armenian translation.

-Commentary on the Pauline Epistles [LT]. This too survives only in Armenian. It includes a commentary on III Corinthians, an apocryphal letter of Paul which had quite wide circulation in the early Syriac Church, but which no longer survives in Syriac.

-Prose Refutations [ET]. Under this modern general title the following works are included: Five Discourses addressed to Hypatius, against false doctrines: Against Bardaisan's Discourse entitled 'Domnus' (the work is also known as Against the Platonists); Against false teaching (or: Against Marcion, I); Two Discourses against Marcion (or: Against Marcion II-III); Discourse against Mani.

Prose (2) Artistic Prose

-Discourse on our Lord [ET].

-Letter to Publius [ET]. Two extensive extracts survive from this letter which consists in a meditation on the Last Judgement.

-Discourse on the Signs which Moses performed in Egypt [FT]. This belongs to a group of discourses under Ephrem's name, and this one alone has been judged to be genuine.

Poetry (1) Narrative verse (memre)

-Six memre on Faith [ET]. Usually thought to be an early work.

-Memre on Nicomedia [FT]. This extensive cycle takes as its topic the devastation by earthquake of Nicomedia in 358. The work survives in Syriac only in a few quotations, but is available almost completely in an early Armenian translation.

-Memre against Bardaisan [ET].

A large number of memre are transmitted under Ephrem's name, only a few of which are likely to be genuine. In the four volumes of Sermones (= memre) in E. Beck's critical edition the following are considered by him as probably genuine:

-I.1-3, On Reproof

-II.1, On Jonah and the Repentance of Nineveh [ET]. This long narrative poem was translated into Greek, Armenian, Georgian, and Ethiopic; many excerpts from it are to be found both in the Syrian Orthodox *Fenqitho* and in the Church of the East's *Hudra*.

-II.4, On the Sinful Woman (Luke 7) [ET]. The core of this influential poem is considered by Beck to be genuine. The narrative introduces the Seller of Unguents and Satan (posing as one of the Woman's former lovers), and these motifs are taken up by many later writers. There is a Greek adaptation, through which these motifs ultimately reached the medieval west.

-IV.2, On Solitaries [ET]. This alone of the texts in Beck's *Sermones III and IV* might possibly be genuine. The memre edited by him in his *Nachträge zu Ephrem* are not likely to be genuine, and the same applies to the many memre published elsewhere under Ephrem's name.

Poetry (2) Lyrical poems (madrashé, or prayer songs; conventionally translated 'hymns')

These constitute Ephrem's most important writings; they come down to us in collections of varying sizes preserved with the poems in their complete form only in a small number of manuscripts of the fifth to seventh century (later manuscripts and the liturgical tradition provide only excerpts). It is uncertain whether these collections go back to Ephrem himself, or to some later editor/collector of his works: in any case, they were already in existence by 485, when Philoxenus refers to several of them (he also mentions some collections which no longer survive).

-madrashé on Faith [ET]. This is the largest collection (87), and it includes the famous group of five poems on the Pearl and its symbolism (81-85).

-madrashé on Nisibis [ET for 1-21, 35-43, 52-68]. This collection of 77 poems is usually known under the Latin title given it by its first editor (Bickell); only the first 34 concern Nisibis and its bishops, while the remainder are for the most part concerned with the theme of the Descent of Christ into the Underworld (Sheol). In a small group of the second half (nos 52-54) Ephrem employs the ancient Mesopotamian genre of the precedence dispute, where two characters (in this case Satan and Death) dispute in alternating verses over which of the two has superior power over human beings; this genre was subsequently taken up and adapted by the authors of the later Dialogue poems between pairs of biblical characters (see 17, below, for these).

-madrashé against Heresies. Most of the poems in this group of 56 madrashe are directed against the teaching of Marcion, Bardaisan

and Mani; they probably belong to Ephrem's last ten years when he was in Edessa.

-madrashē on Virginit̄y [ET]. This collection of 52 poems (a few are lost or damaged) covers many other topics as well (e.g. 4-7 are entitled 'On oil, the olive, and the mysteries of our Lord').

-madrashē on the Church [GT]. This collection, also of 52 poems, covers a variety of topics; there are several gaps where the manuscript is defective.

-madrashē on the Nativity [ET]. This collection was probably originally much larger than the 28 poems in Beck's edition, and is likely to have included a small number of perhaps genuine poems in the collection now entitled 'On Epiphany' (in Ephrem's day the Nativity and Epiphany (Baptism) of Christ were celebrated on the same day, 6th Jan.). Excerpts from a number of them feature in the liturgical texts for the period of Subbara and Nativity in both the Fenqitho and the Hudra.

-madrashē on Unleavened Bread (21), on the Crucifixion (9), and on the Resurrection (5) [FT]. The first group of this Paschal cycle is missing several poems in the middle. A number of stanzas from these madrashe also feature in the Fenqitho and Hudra.

-madrashē on Paradise [ET]. This group of 15 poems probably belong to his time in Nisibis.

-madrashē on the Fast (10).

-madrashē against Julian [ET]. This small collection of four madrashe is concerned with the death of the emperor Julian on campaign in the Persian Empire in 363; this was seen by Ephrem (and by Christian writers in general) as a punishment for his reversion to paganism and his various actions taken against Christianity.

-Three further collections, on the ascetics Abraham of Qidun (15) and Julian the Elder (Saba; 24), and on the Confessors (6) are attributed to Ephrem, but most of these madrashe cannot be by him

for various reasons; those which may be genuine are: On Abraham of Qidun 1-5; on Julian Saba 1-4.

-A collection of 51 hymns [LT] is preserved only in Armenian translation. Some at least of these could well be genuine and represent material belonging to some of the lost collection of *madrashe*.

13*. BOOK OF STEPS (LIBER GRADUUM). This is a work dealing with spiritual direction, consisting in 30 chapters [LT: ET]. The author, who almost certainly lived in the Persian Empire (there is a reference to the river Zab, a tributary of the river Tigris), is unknown: probably he was writing in the late fourth century (or possibly early fifth). Within the Christian community which the anonymous author is addressing a distinction is made between the 'Upright' (*ki'ne*) and the 'Perfect' or 'Mature' (*gmire*): the former observe the 'lesser commandments' and live a life of active charity, while the latter follow the 'greater commandments', which involve a total renunciation of belongings and a radical imitation of the life of Christ.

The Book of Steps was rarely copied as a whole, and most of the (fairly numerous) manuscripts contain only a small number of Discourses (sometimes misattributed: e.g. 14 is wrongly attributed to Evagrius). The Book of Steps' two-fold classification was taken up later by Philoxenus (see 22, below), whereas most subsequent writers preferred the three-fold model developed by John the Solitary (see 16, below).

The 30 chapters have the following headings:

1. On the distinction between the major commandments, for the perfect, and the minor commandments, for the upright.
2. On those who wish to be perfect.
3. The physical and the spiritual ministry.
4. On 'vegetables' for the sick (cp Rom. 14:2).

5. On 'milk' for infants (cp I Cor.3:1-2)
6. On the person who became perfect and continues to grow.
7. On the commandments for the upright.
8. On the person who gives all he has to the poor to eat.
9. On uprightness and on the love of the upright and of the prophets.
10. On the advantage we have when we endure evil while performing good; and on fasting and humiliation of body and soul.
11. On hearing the Scriptures, and when the law is read before us.
12. On the ministry of the hidden and the revealed church.
13. On the way of life of the upright.
14. On the upright and the perfect.
15. On the marriage instinct in Adam.
16. On how a person grows as a result of the major commandments.
17. On the sufferings of our Lord, by which an example is provided for us.
18. On the tears of prayer.
19. On the distinguishing characteristics of the way of perfection.
20. On the hard steps on this way.
21. On the Tree of Adam.
22. On the judgements by which those who make them are not saved.
23. On Satan, Pharoah, and the Children of Israel.

24. On repentance.
25. On the voice of God and that of Satan.
26. On the second law which the Lord laid down for Adam.
27. On the matter of the thief who was saved.
28. On the human soul not being blood.
29. On subduing the body.
30. On the commandments of faith and of love of the Solitaries.

C. FIFTH TO MID SEVENTH CENTURIES

(a) 5th cent.

14. CYRILLONA. (fl. c.400). A small collection of six verse texts (which evidently belong together) include two which are specifically attributed to a Cyrillona, whose identity remains mysterious. Since one of the poems concerns an incursion of the Huns, this can be dated to c.396. Some modern writers have identified him with 'Absamya, the son of Ephrem's sister, solely on the grounds that he is also said to have written a poem on an incursion by the Huns; even more unlikely is the suggestion that he is to be identified as Qiyore (Cyrus), head of the School of Edessa. The six poems are in several different metres and cover the following topics: on locusts and on the incursion of the Huns; on the Washing of the Feet; on the Pasch; on the Crucifixion; on Wheat and its symbolism; and on Zacchaeus (those on the incursion of the Huns and the Crucifixion are the ones specifically attributed to Cyrillona). [GT,FT,IT].

15. BALAI. (fl. first half of 5th cent). Nothing is known of the life of this poet except that he was a chorepiskopos, perhaps in the area around Aleppo.

-Five madrashe in honour of the departed bishop Akakios of Beroea (Aleppo).

-A *madrasha* written for the dedication of a new church in Qenneshrin (Chalkis). [ET. FT. GT].

-Many short liturgical *ba`awata* (supplicatory hymns) in the five-syllable metre (known as the metre of Mar Balai) are attributed to him, but whether correctly or not is uncertain.

-An early manuscript of the epic poem on Joseph (in 12 books, employing the 7+7 syllable metre) attributes this work to Balai, rather than to Ephrem: its true author remains uncertain.

16*. JOHN THE SOLITARY (John of Apamea). (first half 5th cent.). Much uncertainty surrounds the identity of the author of a considerable number of works on spirituality: the manuscripts attribute them variously to John the Solitary, John of Apamea, and John of Lykopolis (or Thebes; d.c.394); the last is certainly incorrect, but it seems quite likely that John the Solitary and John of Apamea are one and the same person who belongs to the first half of the fifth century, and is to be distinguished from 'John the Egyptian', whose teaching Philoxenos opposed, and a later 'John of Apamea', condemned at a East Syrian synod in 786/7. The works published so far under John's name all seem to be genuinely by the same author, and their threefold pattern of the spiritual life, the stages of the body, of the soul and of the spirit, was to prove very influential on later Syriac monastic writers. John must have received his education in both Greek and Syriac, and he may have had some training in medicine. Several of his works are in the form of dialogues, imitating the Greek genre of the philosophical dialogue that had already been used in the Book of the Laws of the Countries. His main works so far published are :

-A dialogue on the soul and the passions [FT; ET forthcoming].

-Commentary on Qohelet (Ecclesiastes).

-Three Letters [GT], the first addressed to Theodoulos and his circle, the other two to Eutropios and Eusebios.

-Six Dialogues with Thaumasio; Letters and treatises addressed to Thaumasio, on the mystery of the economy of Christ [GT, FT].

-Three discourses [ET of 1: GT]; the first is on perfection, or stillness; the second and third on the mystery of baptism.

-Letter to Hesychios, on the monastic life [ET].

-Discourse on Prayer [ET].

A considerable number of works still remain to be published.

17*. ANONYMOUS POETRY. Although it is very difficult to assign a date to anonymous poetry (of which a great deal survives), the following narrative poems (memre) on biblical topics probably belong to the fifth century:

-Memra on Abraham and Sarah in Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20) [ET].

-Two memre on the Sacrifice of Isaac (Gen.22) [ET]. The second of these makes use of the first, and both give a prominent place to Sarah (who is never mentioned in the biblical narrative).

-Four memre on Joseph (attributed to Narsai, but probably not by him) [ET of 3-4].

-Memra on Elijah and the Widow of Sarepta (1 Kings 17) [ET].

-Memra on Mary and Joseph [ET].

It is likely that many of the dialogue soghyatha dealing with biblical characters also belong to the fifth century since they are transmitted in both East and West Syriac manuscripts; among these will be:

-Abel and Cain [GT]; Mary and the Angel [ET]; Mary and the Magi [ET]; John the Baptist and Christ [ET]; the Cherub and the Thief [ET]; the Dispute of the Months [ET].

Many anonymous madrashe, such as three of those on the Virgin Mary [ET], are also likely to belong to the fifth century.

18*. ANONYMOUS PROSE: HAGIOGRAPHY. Very early manuscripts can sometimes assure a fifth-century date for a hagiographical text; in other cases, such dating is less secure, but nevertheless probable. The following are the most notable works:

-Life of Abraham of Qidun and his niece Mary (wrongly attributed to Ephrem) [ET for section on Mary]. This was translated into Greek and thence into Latin; the Latin served as the basis for a play on this subject by the tenth-century nun Hrotswitha of Gandersheim.

-Life of the Man of God [FT, ET]. The earliest form of this work was composed in Syriac, and this was translated into Greek in a re-edited form where the hero is now named Alexis; this amplified Greek story was subsequently translated back into Syriac, as well as into Latin (which served as the basis for one of the earliest pieces of medieval French literature).

-Martyrdoms of Shmona, Gurya and Habbib [ET]. The cult of these Edessene martyrs (probably martyred in 297 and 309) spread widely and the Syriac Acts were translated into Greek.

-Teaching of Addai [ET], Martyrdoms of Sharbel and Barsamya [ET]. The Teaching of Addai recounts in much more extended form the legend of the correspondence between king Abgar the Black of Edessa and Jesus, which is already recorded by Eusebius in Greek translation in his Ecclesiastical History (I.13). Among the additional materials are sermons in Edessa by Addai, and an early account of the Finding of the Cross (by Protonike, wife of the emperor Claudius, rather than by Helena, mother of Constantine, as the standard legend has it). The Teaching of Addai has many features in common with the purely legendary martyrdoms (under Trajan) of Sharbel and Barsamya. It is quite likely that this group of texts was produced in Edessa in the 420s and 430s in circles supporting Ibas against bishop Rabbula.

-Euphemia and the Goth [ET]. This local Edessene narrative concerns the story of a young woman of Edessa forcefully married to a Goth who had billeted in her mother's house.

-Acts of the Persian martyrs under Shapur II. A large number of texts concerning martyrs during Shapur's persecution of Christians in the 340's come down to us; these vary very considerably in

character, date and reliability. It is likely that the oldest ones were written in the early decades of the fifth century, and these include: the older of the two (related) Acts of the Catholicos Simeon bar Sabba'e, the martyrdoms of Miles, of Pusai, of Martha [ET], and those of several other martyrs. In the course of time many further accounts of martyrs from this, the most severe of persecutions under the Sasanians, came to be written.

-Acts of the Persian martyrs under Yezdgerd I and Bahram V. A small group of short but important accounts of martyrdoms in the early 420s survives (one of these is attributed to a certain Abgar); they include the martyrdoms of Narsai (not the poet!), Tataq, Jacob the Notary, the ten martyrs of Beth Garmai, 'Abda, Peroz and Mihrshabur. The martyrdom of 'Abda is incomplete, but further information about it is provided in Greek, in Theodoret's Ecclesiastical History V.39.

-Acts of the Persian martyrs under Yezdgerd II. Several extensive accounts of martyrdoms from the 440s come down, notably the cycle of texts concerning Pethion, where the narratives have taken on legendary proportions [ET of martyrdom of Anahid].

-Life of Symeon the Stylite [ET]. This was composed shortly after Symeon's death in 459 by a monk of the monastery attached to Symeon's Pillar. Together with Theodoret's short eyewitness account in his *Historia Religiosa*, this is the most important source for the life of this influential pillar saint. The Syriac Life survives in at least two slightly different forms.

-'Julian Romance' [ET]. This long work, bitterly hostile to the emperor Julian, slain in battle in 363, is primarily concerned with his successor, Jovian, who is portrayed in highly eulogistic terms. The work (whose opening is lost) was certainly composed in Edessa, and probably belongs to the fifth century (or early sixth cent.).

-Life of Rabbula [ET], bishop of Edessa 411-436. This is in the form of a panegyric. (Rabbula was himself an author who wrote in both Greek and Syriac; of the latter, only his translation of Cyril of

Alexandria's work *On True Faith* and some ecclesiastical canons survive).

-Prose homily on Abraham and Isaac (Gen.22 [ET]).

19*. NARSAI. (E; c.399-c.502). Born in the Persian Empire at 'Ain Dulba in Ma'alta, he was orphaned at an early age and was brought up by an uncle who was superior of the monastery of Kfar Mari, near Beth Zabdai; he also spent 10 years as a student at the Persian School in Edessa, to which he subsequently returned as a teacher, eventually (at an unknown date) becoming its Head. Owing to conflict with the bishop Cyrus, Narsai left Edessa (perhaps c.471) for Nisibis, where, with the help of its bishop Barsauma he reestablished the School (which no doubt took in the staff and students of the Persian School of Edessa when that was closed in 489 by order of the emperor Zeno); he was still alive in 496, the date of the first Statutes of the School of Nisibis [ET]. The date of his death, certainly at a great age, is not known. His surviving works are all in verse, being memre using both the 7:7 and 12:12 metres. Some eighty memre, or verse homilies, are preserved, the majority dealing with biblical topics (both Old and New Testaments); there is also an important group which constitute verse commentaries on the baptismal and eucharistic rites. Although Narsai is probably the most important poet of the East, only a small number of his homilies are so far available in modern translations; these include:

-6 memre on Creation [FT].

-4 memre on baptism and eucharist (one of these, Homily 17, is almost certainly not by Narsai himself, but must date from the sixth century) [ET].

-5 memre on dominical feasts (Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection, Ascension) [ET]. These include several passages of christological concern, where Narsai opposes the position of Cyril of Alexandria.

-6 memre on Old Testament topics [ET]: Enoch and Elijah, Flood, Blessing of Noah, Tower of Babel, Tabernacle, Brazen Serpent.

-5 memre on Gospel Parables [FT]: Ten virgins, Prodigal Son, Rich man and Lazarus, Workers in the Vineyard, Wheat and Tares.

-Memra on the Three Doctors (Diodore, Nestorius, Theodore) [FT].

The dialogue *soghyatha* attributed to Narsai are almost certainly not by him.

(b) 5th/6th cent.

20*. JACOB of SERUGH (W; d.29 Nov 521). Jacob, perhaps the finest Syriac poet after Ephrem, was born at Kurtam on the river Euphrates some time in the middle of the fifth century; he received his education at the Persian School in Edessa, but reacted against its christological teaching. At an unknown date he became chorepiskopos in the Serugh area (to SW of Edessa), and in 519 was appointed bishop of Batnan da-Srugh. He evidently disliked and tried to keep out of the contemporary christological controversies, and it is only from some of his Letters that (under pressure from his correspondents) he openly expresses his disapproval of the doctrinal formula of Chalcedon (451). His fame rests chiefly on a very large number of surviving memre on the 12-syllable metre; some 225 of these have been edited so far, but many more still remain unpublished. The vast majority of the memre deal with biblical topics, often in a highly imaginative way. In several memre (notably those on the Six Days of Creation) the influence of the exegesis of Theodore of Mopsuestia can be discerned, a legacy of Jacob's education at the Persian School in Edessa. A number of homilies are devoted to different aspects of the life of the Virgin Mary, and there are also some which deal with particular saints (e.g. Simeon the Stylite); others cover a variety of other topics, including ascetic, liturgical and eschatological themes. Six prose homilies (*turgame*) also survive, concerned with the Nativity, Epiphany, the Great Fast (Lent), Palm Sunday (*Hosha'na*), the Passion, and the Resurrection. Jacob has also left 43 Letters, prose lives of two contemporary saints (Daniel of Galash and Hannina),

and various *madrashé*; of these only the Letters have so far been published. Three Anaphoras and the Maronite baptismal service are also attributed to Jacob. As with Narsai, only a small number of Jacob's works are yet available in modern translations, notably the following:

-Memre concerning the Virgin Mary [IT, ET].

-7 memre against the Jews [FT]. The sixth of these is in the form of a dispute between the Synagogue and the Church.

-Memre on the dominical Feasts [ET].

-4 memre on Creation [FT]

-Memra on the Veil of Moses [ET, FT, GT. Dutch T].

-Memra on Ephrem [ET].

-Memra on Simeon the Stylite [ET].

-Prose homilies, or *turgame* [FT, ET].

-Various Letters [FT] and other memre [ET, FT].

21. SIMEON the POTTER (*Quqaya*) (W; fl. Early 6th cent.). The poetic talents of this potter from the North Syrian village of *Geshir* were discovered by Jacob of Sarugh. 9 short poems on the Nativity [ET] survive, and these gave rise to a popular genre of short poems known as *quqyoto*.

22*. PHILOXENOS/AKSENOYO of MABBUG (W;d.10 Dec 523). He was born in the Persian Empire, at *Tahel* in *Beth Garmai*. According to a late biography he studied first at the monastery of *Mar Gabriel* in *Tur 'Abdin* before going on to the Persian School in *Edessa*. There he was one of a number of students who reacted against the School's dyophysite, or two-nature, Christological tradition (others included Jacob of Serugh and Simeon of *Beth Arsham*); he became a strong opponent of the Council of Chalcedon and played an active part in the various controversies of the time. In 485 he became metropolitan of *Mabbug* (consecrated on 18 August). After the death of the emperor *Anastasius* in 518 the

anti-Chalcedonian bishops were exiled as a result of the pro-Chalcedonian policy of the new emperor, Justin I. Philoxenos was exiled first to Gangra (in Paphlagonia) and then (c.520/1) to Philippoupolis (in Thrace), where he died, reputedly from suffocation by smoke from the public baths.

Philoxenos was the most important Syrian Orthodox theologian writing in Syriac of his time. Although his own knowledge of Greek was probably not very profound, he became aware of the need to translate key Greek texts, such as the New Testament and the Creed, with greater fidelity to the Greek Original, and so he sponsored revised translations of these (the New Testament revision was undertaken by Polycarp, his chorepiskopos, and completed in 508). The following are his most important works:

- ‘Admonition on (the monastic) way of life’, in 13 memre [ET,FT]. This important work of monastic guidance survives in a large number of manuscripts, indicating its popularity.

- Ten memre on the phrase “One of the holy Trinity was embodied and suffered”; also known as the ‘memre against Habbib’ [LT/FT]. At the end there is an important florilegium, with short excerpts from both Greek and Syriac writers. This is an early work, dating from c.482/4.

- ‘Three memre on the Trinity and on the Incarnation’; also known as ‘the Book of Opinions (Ktaba d-re‘yane)’ [LT].

- Commentary on the Prologue of St John [FT]. This important work is not so much a commentary as a theological treatise focusing on John ch. 1; it must date from shortly after 508, since it mentions the revision of the Peshitta New Testament which he sponsored (Philoxenos also explains why it was necessary).

- Commentary on St Matthew and St Luke [ET]. This only survives in fragmentary form.

- Memra on the Annunciation [GT]. This perhaps belongs to the previous item.

-Memra on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit [ET,FT]. This is concerned with the question whether the Holy Spirit departs from someone who sins.

-Letters. A considerable number of letters survive (sometimes only in excerpts), and some of these constitute lengthy theological treatises. The following have been published:

-Letters on Faith, addressed to the Monks [ET, FT].

-Letters to the emperor Zeno, on the incarnation of God the Word [ET].

-First Letter to the monks of Beth Gaugal [ET].

-Second Letter to the monks of Beth Gaugal [FT].

-Letter to the monks of Senoun [FT].

-Letter to the monks of Tell 'Ada.

-Letter to Patricius of Edessa [FT]. An abbreviated form of this monastic letter was included in the Greek Translation of the 'First Part' of Isaac of Nineveh's writings, featuring there under Isaac's name.

-Letter to Abraham and Orestes, priests of Edessa, concerning Stephen bar Sudhaili [ET].

-Letter to Abu Ya 'far, the stratelates (general) of Hirta d-Na'man. The authenticity of this is uncertain.

-Letter to the Palestinian monks [FT].

-Letter to the Lector Maron from Anazarba [FT]

-Letter to Shem 'on, abbot of the monastery of Tell 'Ada [FT].

-Letter to the orthodox monks in the East [FT].

-Letter to someone recently converted from the world (i.e., a novice) [ET].

-Letter to a convert from Judaism [FT].

A Letter on the three stages of the monastic life is also attributed to Philoxenus, but this is certainly incorrect ; the work probably belongs to Joseph the Seer (see 67. below).

-Excepts on Prayer [ET].

-Three anaphoras and a short baptismal rite are attributed to Philoxenos, but whether he is really the author is far from certain.

23*. ISAAC of ANTIOCH. The conventional designation 'Isaac of Antioch' in fact covers several different poets by the name of Isaac. In the seventh century Jacob of Edessa already distinguished three different people: (1) Isaac of Amid, said to have been a pupil of Ephrem, who visited Rome and who served as a priest in Amid (other sources state that this Isaac was a pupil of Ephrem's pupil Zenobius, and not of Ephrem himself); he is probably the author of a surviving memra on Constantinople; (2) Isaac 'the Great', from Edessa, who flourished at the time of Peter the Fuller, patriarch of Antioch (d.488). This Isaac is probably the author of the long poem on the Parrot in Antioch which sang the Trisagion with Peter the Fuller's additional wording 'who was crucified for us': (3) Another Isaac from Edessa, who began as an anti-Chalcedonian, but under bishop Asklepios of Edessa (522-525) became Chalcedonian. In addition to these three Isaacs, belonging respectively to the first half of the fifth century, the second half of the fifth century and the early sixth century, there was probably a fourth poet Isaac, designated 'Isaac the Solitary'. Nearly 200 memre attributed to one or other Isaac survive, but of these only 69 have been published so far, and for the most part it is unclear to which of the Isaacs these should be allocated. Of the homilies that have been published only very few correspond with those to be found in the earliest manuscripts (sixth century), where the author is simply designated 'Isaac the teacher'. Very little of the corpus of homilies under the name of Isaac is available in modern translation:

-Memra on Constantinople [ET].

-Memra against the Jews [ET].

-Two memre on the Incarnation [FT].

A facing Latin translation is available for the 37 texts by Isaac edited by Bickell (1973); these include some madrashe.

24. SYMMACHUS (W). This otherwise unknown author has left an imaginative Life of Abel [ET]. He is probably not the same man as the Symmachus who wrote a commentary on Song of Songs 6:10 – end (to supplement that of the Syriac translation of Gregory of Nyssa's commentary on the book).

(c) 6th cent.

25. ANONYMOUS CHRONICLE, often known as that of 'Joshua the Stylite' (W; first quarter of 6th cent.). This local Edessene chronicle [ET], which gives a detailed account of events in the Edessa area from 495-507, has been preserved through its incorporation into the late eighth-century Zuqnin Chronicle (= 69 below).

26. STEPHEN bar SUDHAILI (W; fl. Early 6th cent.). A speculative thinker with pantheist tendencies, he was probably the author of the Book of the Holy Hierotheos [ET], which purports to be by Hierotheos, the teacher of Dionysius the Areopagite. He was the recipient of letters from both Philoxenus and Jacob of Serugh.

27. SERGIUS of RESH 'AINA (W; d.536). A priest and archiatros, Sergius received his education in Alexandria; he is chiefly famous for his translations from Greek, which included several of Galen's medical writings and the Dionysian Corpus (Sergius' translation of this was subsequently revised at the end of the seventh century by Phokas of Edessa). (Translations of Porphyry's Eisagoge, or Introduction to Aristotle's Logical works, and of Aristotle's categories have been attributed to Sergius, but this cannot be correct). His surviving original writings include:

-a treatise on the spiritual life, serving as an introduction to his translation of Dionysius the Areopagite [FT].

-Two introductions to Aristotle's Logic, a longer one addressed to Theodore of Karkh Juddan, and a shorter one to Philotheos (unpublished).

28. SHEM'ON (SIMEON) of BETH ARSHAM (W; d.c.548). Syrian Orthodox bishop of Beth Arsham (on the Tigris), to whom are ascribed two letters [ET] of great historical importance concerning the Christian martyrs of Najran (in 518, 522 or 523: the precise date is uncertain), and of a polemical treatise 'On Barsauma [of Nisibis] and the Sect of the Nestorians', which deals with the spread of dyophysite christology in the East, as seen from a hostile perspective. It has been suggested that Shem'on is also the author of the Book of the Himyarites [ET], which is a further, slightly later, account of the martyrdoms (the work is unfortunately not preserved complete): this, however, is doubtful, and indeed the two Letters may be later reworkings of an original letter/ letters by Shem'on.

29. ELIAS (W; fl. mid 6th cent). Author of the Life of John, bishop of Tella [LT], addressed to his spiritual brethren Mar Sergius and Mar Paul.

30*. DANIEL of SALAH (W; fl. mid 6th cent.). Author of an extensive and important commentary on the Psalms. A critical edition with ET is in preparation by D. Taylor.

31*. CYRUS of EDESSA (E; fl. 2nd quarter of 6th cent.) Since he was known as 'of Edessa' he was probably born at Edessa. He was a disciple of Mar Aba (Catholicos 540-552) during the time Mar Aba taught at the School of Nisibis (c.533/8). He taught at the School of Seleucia- Ctesiphon, and became the director there. Subsequently, after Mar Aba's death, he founded a monastery-school at Hirta (al-Hira). He is the author of six 'Explanations' of the main dominical commemorations [ET] (the Fast, Pascha, the Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost).

32. THOMAS of EDESSA (E; fl. 2nd quarter of 6th cent.). Pupil of Mar Aba and successor to him as a teacher at the School of Nisibis. His Expositions of the Feasts of the Nativity and of Epiphany survive (only the former has been edited in full).

33. CHRONICLE of EDESSA (W; mid 6th cent.). This chronicle [ET, GT,LT], which may well be based on the local

Edessene archives, opens with a famous account of a flood in Edessa in November 201, in the course of which, among other buildings, the sanctuary (haykla) of the 'Church of the Christians' was destroyed. The other entries (AD 540 is the latest) are much shorter, and the absence of any mention of Addai is especially to be noted.

34*. JOHN of EPHESUS (W; c.507-c.588). Born near Amid, he entered the monastery of Mar John Urtaya at Amid at the age of 15. In the 530s he traveled to Antioch, Egypt and Constantinople, and became abbot of the monastery of Mar Mare near Constantinople. He was sent by the emperor Justinian to convert pagans in Asia Minor. About 558 he was consecrated metropolitan of Ephesus by Jacob Baradaeus. During the reign of Justin II he was imprisoned for a time, due to his opposition to the Council of Chalcedon. His two surviving works are of the greatest importance for sixth-century Church history.

-Lives of the Eastern Saints [ET]. This work consists of 58 short pieces on contemporary Syrian Orthodox holy men and women, mostly from the Amid region, and many of whom John had known in person.

-Ecclesiastical History [LT]. This work covered from the time of Julius Caesar up to 588, presumably shortly before his death. It was arranged in three books, of which only the third is preserved complete [ET]. Book I, covering up to 449 is completely lost; for Book II, covering 449-571, there is an extensive adaptation, forming the third part of the Chronicle of Zuqnin (= 69 below), as well as a few fragments of the original work.

35. PETER of KALLINIKOS (W; d. 591). Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch (581-591). He appears to have written both in Syriac and in Greek; one work definitely written in Syriac is a verse memra on the Crucifixion [ET], and at least one [ET] of his seven letters that survive (in part) was also written in Syriac. His other letters, and three theological treatises, all of which survive only in Syriac translation, were all originally written in Greek: these are: a

Treatise against Proba and John Barbur: the extensive work in three books against Damian, Patriarch of Alexandria, [ET] (books I and II. 1-5 are lost); and a Treatise against the Tritheists [ET].

36*. Ps.ZACHARIAS RHETOR (W; late 6th cent.). This unknown author of an important Ecclesiastical History incorporated into Books 3-6 of his work an adapted translation of part of an Ecclesiastical History by the Greek writer Zacharias Rhetor [ET for Books 3-12]. Books 1-2 contain (among other things) Syriac translations of the History of Joseph and Aseneth, the Acts of St Silvester of Rome, the Finding of the relics of St Stephen, the Legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, and the Letter of Proclus to the Armenians. Books 3-6 (based on Zacharias) cover the years 450-491; Books 7-8 cover the reigns of the emperors Anastasius (491-518) and Justin I (518-27), while Books 9-12 concern the reigns of Justinian (527-65) and Justin II up to the year 569 (Book 11 is completely lost, and of Book 10 and 12 only fragments are preserved).

37. AHUDEMMEH (W? 6th cent.). The identity of this Ahudemme, author of some short treatises on anthropology, is uncertain; it is possible, but far from certain, that he is to be identified as the Syrian Orthodox metropolitan of the Orient by that name who died in 575, and whose interesting biography survives [FT]. He must have been living in the Sasanian empire, and his anthropology seems to be more influenced by Iranian than by Greek ideas. Two works are known:

-On the composition of man [FT].

-On man as a microcosm [LT]; this latter work is transmitted with a text of quite different (and probably Greek) origin, by a certain Antipatros.

38. ABRAHAM of NATHPAR (E; second half of 6th cent.). Author of several monastic works, the majority of which remain unpublished.

39. ANONYMOUS LITERATURE (6th cent.).

Mention might be made of the following, all probably belonging to the sixth century;

(a) Poetry: Much anonymous poetry is likely to belong to the sixth century, e.g. many of the dialogue *soghyatha*, and a beautiful *madrasha* on Epiphany [ET].

(b) Prose: Amongst the many anonymous works which probably belong to the sixth century the following might be singled out:

-*Cave of Treasures [ET]. This is a collection of legendary biblical traditions, addressed to an unknown Nemesius. The work covers from Creation to Pentecost, a period which is allocated 5500 years, with the end of each millennium specifically indicated. Many non-biblical traditions, often of Jewish origin, are included, such as the appearance of Noah's fourth son, Yonton, who is portrayed as the teacher of wisdom to Nimrod. Though some of its sources go back much earlier, it is generally thought to have reached its present form in about the 6th century; the attribution to Ephrem, found in some manuscripts, is certainly incorrect.

-Three Homilies on Epiphany [FT].

-Three Homilies on the Sinful Woman (Luke 7) [FT].

-Homily on the High Priest (Hebr. 5:7) [FT].

-Life of the East Syrian Catholicos and confessor Mar Aba (d.552), and Lives of two East Syrian martyrs, of Grigor (Piragushnasp) and Yazidpaneh, both put to death under Khosrau I (531-579). These long accounts are of particular interest for the light they shed on Christianity in the Persian Empire in the sixth century.

-Life of Ahudemme (d.575) [FT], Syrian Orthodox metropolitan of the Orient and 'apostle of the Arabs'.

(d) 6th/7th cent.

40. BARHADBESHABBA ʿARBAYA (e; fl.c.600). Barhadbeshabba was a professor at the school of Nisibis, originating from Beth ʿArabaye. Modern Scholars have usually distinguished him from Barhadbeshabba, bishop of Halwan, though this is by no means certain.

-Ecclesiastical History [FT]. This work, in 32 chapters, is entitled in the single surviving manuscript 'History of the holy Fathers who were persecuted for the sake of truth'. Most of the book deals with, first, the Arian controversy of the fourth century, and then the conflict between Nestorius and Cyril over Christology. Several chapters are in fact short biographies of individual figures, such as Athanasius, Gregory the Wonderworker, Basil, Diodore, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Nestorius. The final two chapters are devoted to Narsai and Abraham (d.569).

41. BARHADBESHABBA of HALWAN. (E; fl. Early 7th cent.). He was bishop of Halwan and a signatory of the synod of the Catholicos Gregory in 605; though he is usually distinguished from Barhadbeshabba ʿArbaya, it is possible that they are one and the same person.

-Book of the Cause of the foundation of the Schools [FT; ET forthcoming]. The earlier part concerns 'schools' to be found in the Bible and in Classical Greece, the School of Zoroaster, that of Christ 'the Great Teacher' and the Christian Schools of Alexandria and Antioch; the latter part of the work is devoted to the Persian School of Edessa and (especially) the School of Nisibis, up to the time of the controversial head of that school, Hnana (of whom the author approves). The Statutes of the School of Nisibis (496, revised 604) also survive [ET].

42. SHUBHALMARAN (E; fl. late 6th/early 7th cent.). Author of several monastic texts, including one entitled 'the Book of Gifts' [ET].

43*. BABAI the GREAT (E: c.551-628). He was born in Beth 'Ainatha in Beth Zabdai, and after receiving his basic education there he studied at the School of Nisbis under Abraham of Beth Rabban. Subsequently he entered the 'Great Monastery' on Mount Izla founded in 571 by Abraham of Kashkar (d.588). After some years he left, to found his own monastery and school in neighbouring Beth Zabdai. In 604 he returned to the Great Monastery, having been appointed superior, in succession to Dadisho '. He was strict in his discipline and carried out a number of reforms; these were not always appreciated and many monks left (Babai's Canons survive). On the death of the Catholicos Gregory in 608/9 no new election to the office of Catholicos was allowed by the shah Khosro II; as a result the Church of the East was administered during the interregnum (609-628) jointly by the archdeacon of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, Mar Aba, and by Babai, who was appointed visitor of the monasteries. He died in 628, not long after the death of Khosro II. His surviving works cover Christology, asceticism, hagiography and liturgy:

Christology:

-Book of the Union. [LT]. 'On the divinity and humanity (of Christ) and on the prosopon of the union', in 7 books (memre). The seventh book seems originally to have belonged to a separate work.

-Against those who say 'Just as the body and soul are one qnoma, so too God the Word and the Man are one qnoma' [LT].

-An excerpt, to the effect that two nature implies two qnome, is preserved in a later collection of Christological texts [ET].

Asceticism:

-Commentary on the Centuries of Evagrius [GT].

-Commentary on Mark the Monk's work, The spiritual Law (unpublished).

-Canons for monks [ET].

-Ascetic counsels [ET].

Hagiography:

- Life of Giwargis/Mihramgushnasp, martyred in 615, aged 39.
 - Martyrdom of Christina (only the beginning survives)
- (A number of other biographical works are lost).

Liturgy:

-A number of teshbhata attributed to Babai the Great are to be found in the Hudra.

Babai the Great is to be distinguished from his contemporary Babai bar Nsibnaye ('son of Nisibene parents'), who is the author of some liturgical poems and a monastic Letter [ET] transmitted under the name of the Catholicos Baboi.

44*. MARTYRIUS/SAHDONA. (E: fl. first half of 7th cent.). Born in Halmon, in Beth Nuhadra, his monastic vocation was due to the influence of his mother and a local saintly woman named Shirin. He became a monk at the famous monastery of Beth 'Abe, and c.635/40 was appointed bishop of Beth Garmai. His more Chalcedonian doctrinal position on Christology (advocating one, not two, qnome in the incarnate Christ) came under criticism at a synod and he was deposed, only to be reinstated shortly after, but then once again deposed. Though his Christology is definitely in the East Syrian strongly dyophysite tradition, his Chalcedonian learnings have resulted in his work being transmitted only in Chalcedonian tradition.

-the Book of Perfection [FT]: this long work is his great masterpiece, and one of the finest products of the East Syrian monastic tradition. The beginning is unfortunately lost. The work falls into two parts. In Part I the first two sections (mostly lost) dealt with the dogmatic foundations of the moral life of Christians, while the third and fourth sections provide an introduction to the 'perfect' (i.e. monastic) life, both cenobitic and solitary. Part II, in 14 chapters, is devoted to the individual virtues. The strong biblical basis of the work is very noticeable, and it contains an exceptionally large number of biblical quotations.

-Five Letters [FT].

-Maxims on Wisdom [FT].

45. ISHO‘YAHB II (E; d.646). Catholicos of the Church of the East from 628-646, and author of a Letter to a certain Rabban Abraham on ‘How we should confess the single prosopon of Christ’ [FT].

46. JOHN of the SEDRE (W; d.648). Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch (630/1-648). John acquired his epithet ‘of the Sedre’ (d-Sedraw(hy)) from having composed liturgical prayers known as ‘sedre’ (he may even have introduced the genre himself). Besides the sedre (only a few of which can definitely be ascribed to him) John has left the following works:

-Two ‘plerophoriai’ [GT], or doctrinal polemics; one of these is directed against the followers of Julian of Halicarnassus (and contains an extensive florilegium, or anthology of short patristic excerpts), and the other is against the dyophysites.

-Discourse on the Myron [GT].

-An Anaphora [GT].

-A Letter, describing a dialogue with an unnamed Muslim emir [FT]. this interfaith dialogue is said to have taken place on Sunday May 9th of an unnamed year; both 639 and 644 have been suggested, and if either of these is correct, this represents by far the earliest Muslim-Christian dialogue; it is possible, however, that the work belongs rather later than John’s time.

47. MARUTHA (W; d.649). Born near Balad, he studied for ten years at the monastery of Mar Zakkai, Kallinikos; later he was connected with the monastery of Mar Mattai, and was appointed Maphrian of Tagrit c. 628/9. His Life [FT] was written by his successors as Maphrian, Denha (d. 660), who lists his writings, only some of which survive:

-Homily on the Blessing of the Water at Epiphany [ET].

-An account of the 'Nestorianisation' of the Church of Persia, preserved in Michael the Syrian's Chronicle [FT].

-An anaphora and some prayers are also attributed to him.

Marutha of Tagrit is not to be confused with Marutha of Martyropolis (Maipharqat), who was present at the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon on 410, and who is the supposed author of the 'Canons of Marutha' [ET].

48. GREGORY OF CYPRUS (E: first half 7th cent). Little is known of this Persian monk from Susiana who spent some time in Cyprus before returning to a monastery on Mount Izla. Of his three Letters and seven treatises on the monastic life only the treatise entitled 'On holy contemplation (theoria), which is translated in Syriac as "divine vision"' has been so far published [LT].

49. ANONYMOUS LITERATURE (early 7th cent.).

-Verse homily on Alexander the Great [ET,GT]; this survives in several somewhat different forms, and is sometimes wrongly attributed to Jacob of Serugh, but in fact it must be a product of north Mesopotamia and belong to c.629/30, shortly after Heraclius' successful campaign into the Sasanian Empire, in the course of which he recovered the relic of the Cross (which had been taken by the Persians when they captured Jerusalem in 614).

-Anonymous hagiographical texts from this period include the Life of the East Syrian Catholicos Sabrisho' (d. 604) and the Life of Febronia of Nisibis [ET].

50. GABRIEL of QATAR (E: fl. mid 7th cent.). Author of an important commentary on the liturgy [part ET].

D. MID SEVENTH TO THIRTEENTH CENTURY

Although with hindsight the Arab invasions represent a fundamental political break in the history of Western Asia, there is nevertheless very much a sense of continuity in Syriac writers of the period.

(a) Second half 7th cent.

51. SEVERUS SEBOKHT (W; d.666/7). Bishop of the monastery of Qenneshre, and one of the most learned men of his time in the field of astronomy and philosophy. Several works of his in both these fields survive, notably treatises on the Astrolabe and on the Constellations, letters on points of logic addressed to Aitalaha of Nineveh and to a periodeutes Yaunan, and a treatise on Syllogisms (written in 638); he also translated from Middle Persian a compendium on logic written by Paul the Persian for the Persian shah Khosro I (d.579).

52. ABRAHAM bar LIPEH of QATAR (E; fl. mid 7th cent.). Author of a short commentary on the liturgical Offices [LT]. This is largely an abbreviation of the work by Gabriel of Qatar.

53. ANONYMOUS (E; third quarter of 7th century). Unknown author of the Khuzistan Chronicle [LT; ET in preparation], covering the end of the Sasanian period and the beginning of the Arab conquests. It has been suggested that the author of most of it is Elijah, bishop of Merv.

54*. ISHO 'YAHB III (E; d.659). Son of Bastomag of Kuplana (on the Greater Zab), a prominent landowner. He became a monk at the nearby monastery of Beth 'Abe, and c.627 was appointed bishop of Nineveh. Some ten years later he was raised to metropolitan of Arbela, and in 649 he was appointed Catholicos. Isho'yahb is credited with extensive liturgical reforms, and among other things he limited the number of anaphoras in use to the current three (the Apostles Addai and Mari, Theodore, and Nestorius).

-Letters [LT]. The extensive collection of 106 Letters provide a great deal of information on the life of the Church of the East at a critical time in its history, under the early years of Arab rule. In the manuscripts the letters are divided into three groups; those written while he was bishop (52), those from the time when he was metropolitan (32), and those belonging to his office as Catholicos (22); in some cases, however, the allocation is certainly incorrect.

-Life of Isho` sabran, a martyr from the last years of the Sasanian Empire.

55*. ISAAC of NINEVEH (ISAAC THE SYRIAN). (E; fl. End 7th century). Born and educated in Beth Qatraye, he became a monk and during the catholicosate of George (661-680/1) he was consecrated bishop of Nineveh (Mosul); five months later he resigned and retired as a solitary to the mountains of Khuzistan, where he was associated with the monastery of Rabban Shabur. Through the Greek translation of the 'First Part' of his works he has proved to be the most influential of all Syriac monastic writers, and he continues to exert a strong influence in monastic circles in the twenty-first century, especially on Mount Athos and in the Egyptian desert monasteries. The following are his surviving works:

- 'The First Part' [ET]: this is a collection of 82 discourses of varying length and character (a few are in the form of questions and answers or are letters). Most of these discourses were translated into Greek in the chalcedonian monastery of St Saba in Palestine probably in the eighth century (the translators' names are known: Abramios and Patrikios). For some unexplained reason, five other texts by two other Syriac writers were also included in this translation under Isaac's name: four of these are by John Saba (John of Dalyatha), and one is an abbreviated form of Philoxenos' Letter to Patrikios). Arabic translations were made from both the Syriac and from the Greek; the Greek was the source of many other translations, including Georgian and Slavonic in the Middle Ages, and numerous other languages in modern times.

- 'The Second Part' [FT: IT + FT]: this contains 42 texts, of which the third consists of four 'Centuries' of Kephalaia (or 'Headings') on spiritual knowledge. Though there is evidence that this Second Part was read in Chalcedonian monastic circles, it was never translated into Greek, and indeed it was only in recent years that a complete manuscript of the Syriac original has come to light.

- A 'Third Part' [IT, FT forthcoming], consisting of 17 chapters (three of which are also found in either the First or the Second Part), has also recently come to light.

- 'Book of Grace' [ET of excerpts]: it is uncertain whether this work (not yet published) is really by Isaac: it is quite possible that it is by his contemporary Shem'on 'of the Book of Grace.'

56. SHEM'ON OF (the Book of) GRACE (Shem'on d-taybutheh; E; late 7th century): He gained fame as a medical doctor in the time of the Catholicos Hnanisho' (680-700); He subsequently became a monk and was a disciple of Rabban Shabur. A number of short writings on the spiritual life survive [part ET, IT]. Among the topics he covers are : the withdrawal of grace as a result of error; the three noetic altars according to the teaching of the Fathers; the faculties of the inner person, and their working; different kinds of prayer; the structure of the heart and its working (containing a physical description as well).

57. DADISHO' (E; late 7th cent.). Like Isaac, Dadisho' originated from Beth Qatraye, and was later connected with the Monastery of Rabban Shabur. His surviving works include:

- Commentary on the Asceticon of Abba Isaiah [FT].

- Commentary on the Paradise of the Egyptian Fathers, compiled by 'Enanisho' (unpublished except for a few excerpts).

- On the Solitude of the Seven Weeks [ET]. This deals with the theme of stillness (hesychia) during solitary retreats lasting seven weeks.

- Various other shorter texts on the spiritual life [ET].

58. JOHN/IOHANNAN bar PENKAYE (E; late 7th cent.). His epithet indicates that his parents were from Fenek, on the Tigris (E. of Tur 'Abdin). He was a monk, first of the monastery of Mar John of Kamul, and then of the monastery of Mar Bassima. Later writers confused him with John Saba/John of Dalyatha. Several works of his survive (for the large part unedited); of these the most important is:

-*Ktāba d-rish melle*, or summary history of the world, in 15 books (E1, FT of Book 15). The first four books cover from creation to Herod the Great; book 5 is on demons; 6-8 are largely on typology in the Old Testament; book 9 concerns cults of pagan peoples (with some important information on Zoroastrianism); 10- 13 are devoted to the life of Christ and of his disciples; book 14 covers the history of the Church up to the Arab conquests, while the final book concerns the last decades of the seventh century (for which period it constitutes a rare contemporary local source).

59. ANONYMOUS (Pseudo-Methodius). *Apocalypse* [ET, GT]. This immensely influential apocalypse was probably composed c.691 in north Mesopotamia; it was soon translated into Greek, and then into Latin, where it had a great influence on other apocalyptic writings. Within a brief space it compasses from creation to the writer's present time when he sees the Ishmaelites (i.e. Arabs) as heralding the advent of the last times; it is at this point that the apocalypse proper commences, dealing with last Roman (Byzantine) emperor, the advent of the 'son of perdition', and the final victory over him as the Cross ascends to heaven, together with the imperial crown. The work makes use of a number of earlier Syriac works, notably the *Cave of Treasures*, the 'Julian Romance' and the poem on Alexander.

60. HAGIOGRAPHY

-*Life of Rabban bar 'Idta* (E: d.612). A prose Life by John the Persian (third quarter of 7th cent.) is known only in a verse resumé of the 11th cent. [ET].

-*Life of Rabban Hormizd* (E:6th/7th cent.) A prose life is attributed to a monk Shem'on (7th cent.). [ET]; there are also two much later verse lives.

-*Life of Maximus the Confessor* (W: d.662). A hostile monothelete Life [ET] of this dyothelete confessor was probably produced within a few decades of Maximus' death. According to this life, Maximus originated from Palestine and not Constantinople (as stated in the Greek Life).

(b) 7th/8th cent.

61*. JACOB of EDESSA (W; c.640-5 vi 708). Born at 'En Deba in the Antioch region, he studied first under Severos Sebokht at the monastery of Qenneshre on the Euphrates, and then in Alexandria. He was appointed bishop of Edessa c.684, but resigned owing to the the lax attitude of the hierarchy concerning the observance of the canons. He retired first to a monastery at Kaisum (near Samosata), but was subsequently invited to the monastery of Eusebona where he taught Greek and other subjects for 11 years. The presence there of a group of monks hostile to Greek studies led eventually to his departure for the monastery of Tell 'Ada, where he spent 9 years, during which he worked on his revision of the Syriac Old Testament. On the death of bishop Habbib, his successor in the see of Edessa, Jacob returned to Edessa again as bishop, but 4 months later, on a visit to Tell 'Ada to collect his books, he died. His surviving works are:

-Commentery on the Hexaemeron (six days of creation) [LT]. This learned work, incorporating a great deal of scientific materials, was left unfinished at his death, but was completed by George, bishop of the Arab tribes.

-Scholia on the Old Testament [part ET].

-Liturgical revisions: these include the anaphora of James, the baptismal rite attributed to Severus, and the consecration of the water at Epiphany,

-Exposition of the Liturgy.

-Treatise on the Myron [ET].

-Canons, often in the form of questions and answers. [part ET].

-Chronicle; only fragments survive. Jacob covered upto 691/2, and a later hand supplemented upto 709/10. [LT].

-Letters, on a wide variety of learned subjects. A group of seventeen are addressed to John the Stylite of Litarba.

-A philosophical Enchiridion, or handbook of philosophical terms.

-A Grammar, of which only fragments survive. Jacob was the deviser of a predecessor of the present West Syrian system of vowel signs.

-An apologia against the Chacedonian clergy of Harran (written while he was still a deacon).

-Some verse letters, two of which are addressed to a certain Quirsona.

Jacob was also a translator and careful reviser of earlier translations. His translations include the *Testamentum Domini*, the Acts of the Council of Carthage in 256 (Jacob's translation is dated 686/7), and the History of the Rechabites. His revisions of earlier translation cover Severus' Cathedral Homilies (in 700/1), and Hymns (often misleadingly know as the *Octoechos*), Aristotle's Categories, and several books of the Old Testament; for the last he combined elements of the Peshitta, Syro-Hexapla, and at the same time made use of some Greek manuscripts.

62* . George, bishop of the ARAB TRIBES (W; d. Feb. 724). George was a disciple of Athanasius II, and became Syrian Orthodox bishop of the Christian Arab Tribes in 686. He is the last representative of the Syrian Orthodox scholar bishops of the seventh century who were well grounded in Greek scientific and philosophical studies. His surviving works consists of the following.

-the completion of Book 7 of Jacob of Edessa's Commentary on the Six Days of Creation (Hexaemeron), which Jacob had left unfinished at his death. [LT].

-a revised translation, accompanied by introductions and commentaries, of the earlier books of Aristotle's logical works (the *Organon*).

-scholia on the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus.

-A commentary on the liturgy (comprising baptism and the eucharist[ET]; and the myron [GT]).

-A collection of letters. These are of great interest and deal with a variety of topics, among which are: the identity of Aphrahat, and his views on the human soul and spirit; chronological and astronomical matters; difficult passages in the letters of Jacob of Edessa.[GT].

-A verse homily (memra) on Severus of Antioch [ET]. A number of other memre are attributed to George, but there is uncertainty concerning their authenticity (the one on the myron is also attributed to Jacob of Serugh in some manuscripts).

(c) 8th cent

63. ANONYMOUS author of 'Diyarbekir Commentary' (E; early 8th cent.?) A manuscript once in Diyarbekir contains an important anonymous commentary on Genesis and Exodus 1-9[FT].

64. SERGIUS the STYLITE of Gusit (W; early 8th cent.). Author of an apologetic treatise against the Jews [ET].

65. ELIA (W; first half 8th cent.). Author of a Letter, addressed to Leo of Harran[LT], setting out in 12 sections the reasons why he left the Chalcedonians and became Syrian Orthodox.

66*. JOHN of DALYATHA (JOHNS SABA). (E; fl. mid 8th cent.). There has been considerable confusion over the identity of this monastic writer, but it now appears that John of Dalyatha is the same person as John Saba (the Elder), but quite different from John of Phenek. He seems to have been born in N. Iraq and became a monk in the region of Mount Qardu (where Noah's ark landed, according to the Peshitta, following Jewish tradition). His epithet 'of Dalyatha (the vine tendrils)' probably derives from the name of his monastery. Nothing is known of the details of his life, but his writings indicate that he was someone with a profound experience of the mystical life. Four short texts by him were translated into Greek along with the works of Isaac of Nineveh and so circulate in Greek (and dependent translations) under Isaac's name.

- Letters [FT]: variously numbered as 48 or 51.
- Discourses, or Homilies: again, variously numbered as 25 or 28.
- Kephalalaia, or Headings on Spiritual Knowledge.

Only the first of these three groups of texts has so far been published.

67*. JOSEPH HAZZAYA (the SEER). (E; fl. mid8th cent.) His parents were Zoroastrians. At the age of seven he was taken captive in a raid and sold as a slave, first to an Arab in Sinjar, and then to a Christian in the Qardu area: there, impressed by the life of the monks at the monastery of John of Kamul, he sought baptism, and then, being liberated by his owner, he became a monk in Beth Nuhadra. After a period living as a solitary, he was made superior of the monastery of Mar Bassima in the Qardu region for a while, after which he again spent time as a solitary, but was then again made superior of a monastery (that of Rabban Bokhtisho'). His brother also converted to Christianity, with the name 'Abdisho', and many of Joseph's writings were transmitted under his brother's name. In his Catalogue of Syriac writers 'Abdisho' of Nisibis mentions numerous works by Joseph, but only a few have survived, of which the following have been published):

- Letter on the Three Degrees of the Spiritual Life [ET, FT]. This schematic work, which survives in a longer and a shorter form, has often been attributed to Philoxenus of Mabbug in the manuscripts, but cannot possibly belong to that writer, and Joseph seems most likely to be its true author.

- Shorter texts on different topics of the Spiritual life[ET].

68. ABRAHAM BAR DASHANAD, 'the Lame' (E; fl. mid 8th cent.). Originating from Beth Sayyaade, he became head of the Monastery of Mar Gabriel (later, thanks to his fame, known as 'of Mar Abrham and Mar Gabriel'). He taught both Timothy I and Isho 'bar Nun. He is author of a monastic letter addressed to his younger brother, John[ET].

69*. ANONYMOUS author of the Zuqnin Chronicle (W; fl.c. 776). An unknown monk of the monastery of Zuqnin(near Amid) was the author of an important world Chronicle (sometimes known as the Chronicle of Ps. Dionysius of Tel-mahre) [LT+FT]. The earlier parts of the work draw on many different sources; thus for the biblical period the author makes use notably of the Syriac translation of Eusebius' Chronicle and an intriguing legend about the origin of the Magi; for the years 495-507 a local Edessene chronicle (usually known today as the Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite [ET;=25 above]) is incorporated wholesale; while for the sixth century much is based closely on the lost second part of John of Ephesus' Ecclesiastical History [ET; = 34 above]. For the eighth century the author draws considerably on his own knowledge and experience of events [FT; ET forthcoming].

70*. THEODORE bar KONI(E; late eighth cent.). Teacher at the School of Kashkar in Beth 'Aramaye (near the Arab city of alWait). A single work of his survives:

-Book of the Scholion' [FT], completed in 792. This consists of 11 memre, 1-9 concern specific questions to do with the Old Testament(1-5) and New Testament (6-9). arranged according to the sequence of the books; included within these memre are a number of sections on philosophical terms, so that the work as a whole serves as a kind of introductory text book on theology and philosophy, taking the Bible as its basis. Memre 10 and 11 are probably later additions, 10 being an apology for Christianity directed towards Muslims, while 11 is an account of different heresies (incorporated in this are some important quotations from Mandaean religious texts). The work comes down in two recensions (which may represent two successive editions going back to the author).

(d) 8th /9th cent.

71*. TIMOTHY I. (E; c. 728 – 823). Born in Hazza (in Adiabene), 12 kms SW of Arbela. His education was put in the hands of his father's brother, George, bishop of beth Baghash: he was sent to the famous school at Bashosh run by Abraham bar

Dashandad, and when Abraham moved first to Marga and then to the monastery of Mar Gabriel in Mosul, Timothy followed him. Probably between 766 and 770 he was consecrated bishop of Beth Baghash. After the death of the Catholicos Hnanisho' in 778/9 there were disputes over the succession, and eventually Timothy was elected (779) and consecrated Catholicos (7th May 780). Some opposition remained, but in the end reconciliation with the aggrieved parties was achieved (by c. 782). Timothy's extensive collection of Letters provides some vivid insights into the life of the Church of the East at the time of some of the most famous Abbasid caliphs.

-59 Letters while for 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 21, -25, 46-48, 52-55, 57-59 Sergius is styled 'metropolitan of Elam'. The content of these may be approximately classified as follows:

-ecclesiastical affairs: 3-13, 15-17, 21-25, 27-32, 35, 44-47, 49-58.

-availability of manuscripts of translations from Greek patristic writers: 3, 16-20, 24, 33, 37-39, 43, 47, 49.

-The Hexapla, and the discovery of old Hebrew biblical manuscripts near Jericho, among which are non-canonical Psalms of David [GT]. (Four of these were translated into Syriac and survive; two of them correspond to non-canonical psalms in the Psalms scroll of Qumran Cave XI): 47.

-new translations from Greek into Syriac of Greek philosophical texts (esp. Aristotle, Topics): 43, 48 [ET].

-A discussion with an Aristotelian philosopher at the caliph's court: 40 [FT].

-On theological topics: 34, 39, 41 (addressed to the monks of Mar Maron. [FT]), 42.

-On ecumenical relations (doctrines held in common, primacy, the five patriarchal sees): 26.

-various: 1 (baptism), 2 (the soul), 14 (letter of consolation), 19 (a new grammar), 36 (miscellaneous topics).

-A collection of 48 Canons [LT GT]. Timothy may also have been responsible for collecting together the texts of earlier synods and their canons into the collections known today as the *Synodicon Orientale*.

72*. ISHO 'BAR NUN. (E; c.744 –1 Apr 828). Born at Bet Gabbare on the river Tigris, near Mosul. He studied (along with Timothy I) under Abraham bar Dashandad. Subsequently he briefly taught at the School in Seleucia Ctesiphon, but then left to become a monk at the monastery of mar Abraham on the mountain of Izla; later he was active in Baghdad, and then for a long period in Mosul.

It is uncertain whether he is to be identified as the Isho 'dad bar Nun, bishop of Ram Hormizd, mentioned in Timothy's Letters. He was consecrated Catholicos on 6 July 823. His surviving works (only a few of which have been published) are:

-Select Questions on the Old and New Testaments [ET for some of those on Pentateuch]. This may be just a selection from a larger work now lost.

-Juridical decisions concerning marriage, inheritance etc. [GT].

-A grammatical work.

-Consolatory homilies (fragments only).

-Letters to the periodeutes Ishaq of Beth Qatraye, and to the deacon Makarios, on liturgical matters.

-Four questions on works of the Solitary Fathers.

(e) 9th cent.

73*. Job of EDESSA (E; fl. Early 9th cent.). He is known to have been born in Edessa, and to have been a contemporary of the Catholicos Timothy I (d.823). Hunayn ibn Ishaq mentions him as a translator into Syriac of works by Galen. The two works by Job that survive are both scientific in character:

-The Book of Treasures [ET], in six books, covering metaphysics, psychology, physiology, medicine, chemistry, physics, mathematics, meteorology and astronomy.

-On Canine Hydrophobia (unpublished).

In the course of the Book of Treasures Job mentions various other works that he had written, on cosmology, the soul, syllogisms, the senses, medicine (on urine), and the Faith. None of these, however, survive.

74*. JOHN(IWANNIS) of DARA. (W; flourished first half of 9th cent.). Nothing is known of his life, except that the Patriarch Dionysius of Tellmahre (d.845) dedicated his Ecclesiastical History (lost) to him. Only the first of the works listed below has been published so far.

-Commentary on the Liturgy, in four books [FT].

-On the Soul.

-On the Resurrection of bodies.

-On Priesthood.

-Commentary on the Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies by Dionysius the Areopagite.

-On Paradise.

-On Creation.

-Against heretics.

-The Resurrection of Christ.

-On Pentecost.

-On the Finding of the Cross

-On the Divine Economy.

-On Demons.

-On the Doctrine of the Christians.

75 *. ISHO ·DAD of MERV (E; fl.mid 9th cent.). Bishop of Hdatta, who was a candidate for the Catholicosate in 852. He is the author of one of the most extensive commentaries on the entire Bible, Old [FT] and New Testaments [ET], drawing together much older material. For the Old Testament part he is the first East Syrian writer

to draw on readings of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion, to be found in the margin of the Syrohexapla.

76. NONNUS (W; fl. mid 9th cent.). Archdeacon of Nisibis; his chief fame lay in his successfully combating the Chalcedonian teaching of Theodore Abu Qurra at the court of the Armenian Bagratid king Ashot. At Ashot's request he wrote a Commentary on John (in Arabic, but based on Syriac sources) which was then translated into Armenian (in which alone it survives). Four other theological works, all written in Syriac, are extant:

-Apologetic treatise [LT], responding to three questions concerning the Trinity and Incarnation (the standpoint of the questioner is unclear).

-A treatise against Thomas of Marga (on whom see 79 below), in 4 books.

-Two letters.

Only the first of these texts has been published.

77*. ANTON of TAGRIT (W; probably 9th cent.).

Barhebraeus supposed that Anton (whom he calls a monk) was a contemporary of the patriarch Dionysius of Tell Mahre (d. 22 Aug. 845), but it seems that he had nothing beyond oral tradition to go on for this; nevertheless, a ninth-century date seems quite likely. His surviving works are:

-On the Science of Rhetoric, in five books [ET for Book 5]. Anton states that his aim in writing this important work was to refute those 'who call our Syriac language meagre, narrow, stunted and feeble, and who designate our literature as poor and niggardly'. So far, only Book 5, on metres and on rhetorical figures, has been published.

-On Providence (unpublished).

-On the Myron (unpublished).

-Consolatory letters (unpublished).

-Prayers. Some of these are in verse, and probably constitute one of the earliest pieces of evidence for the use of rhyme.

78*. ANONYMOUS (Ps. George of Arbela) (E; 9th cent. ?). The name and date of the author of an extensive and important Commentary on the East Syrian Liturgical rites [LT] are unknown: he is certainly writing after Abraham bar Lipeh (7th cent.; = 52, above), whom he quotes, and Isho 'dad III's liturgical reforms; on the other hand, he is certainly not the tenth-century George, metropolitan of Mosul and Arbela, with whom Assemani identified him. The work is divided into 7 books; these cover: 1, the liturgical year; 2, various liturgical practices (e.g. division of Psalter, use of the Our Father in different services, on the 'onyata); 3, on Lilya; on provisions for specific parts of the liturgical year; 4, on the (eucharistic) Mysteries; 5, on baptism; 6, on the place of Quddash 'idta (consecration of the church) at the beginning of the liturgical year, and on various liturgical practices ; 7, on funeral and marriage rites.

79*. THOMAS, bishop of MARGA (E; fl. mid 9th cent.)

-Book of Superiors (Abbots) [ET]. This extensive work for the large part concerns figures connected with his own monastery of Beth ' Abe. Of the present six books, Book 6 is a separate earlier work, mainly concerned with the monastery of Rabban Cyprian.

80. ISHO 'DNAH (E; fl. C. 860). Metropolitan of PraddMaishan (Basra).

-'Book of Chastity', or 'History of the founders of monasteries in the realms of the Persians and the Arabs' [FT]. This is a collection of 140 short notices concerning monastic figures, covering from Mar Augen (reputedly fourth century) to the mid ninth century.

81. ANONYMOUS (E; late 9th cent.) author of commentary on Old and New Testaments, of which only the section covering Gen. 1-18 has so far been published [ET].

82*. MOSHE BAR KEPHA (W; b. c.833; d.12 Feb. 903). He was born in Balad (modern Eski Mosul) in N Iraq, and educated at

the Monastery of Mar Sargis (known as 'the Hanging Monastery') in the 'Dry Mountain' some 15 kms NE of Balad. c.863 he was made bishop of Beth Raman, Beth Kiyonaye and Mosul (i.e. his diocese covered the area along the Tigris S of Mosul and N of Tagrit). An extensive number of writings survive, in three main fields, exegesis, theology, and liturgy; many of these have not yet been published.

Exegetical:

-Commentary on the Six Days of Creation (Hexaemeron), in 5 books. [Only parts of the Syriac text have been published, but there is a complete GT].

-Commentary on Paradise, in 3 books. (This was one of the earliest Syriac texts to be studied by European scholars, and was translated into Latin by Andreas Masius in 1569; the Syriac text remains unpublished). [LT].

-Introduction to the Psalter. [FT].

-Commentary on Matthew, Luke, John, Acts and the Pauline Epistles. [Only those on John and on Romans have so far been published, with GT].

Theological (Syriac texts all unpublished).

-On the Soul (41 chapters). [GT only].

-On Resurrection (34 chapters).

-On the creation of angels (45 chapters).

-On the hierarchy of angels (16 chapters).

-On predestination and free will.

-On priesthood (this work is also attributed to John of Dara).

Liturgical (only the Syriac texts of the second, third, and a few of the Homilies are published):

-Commentary on the baptismal rite. [ET].

- Commentary on the eucharistic liturgy. [ET].
- Commentary on the consecration of the myron. [GT].
- Commentary on the ordination rites (for bishops, priests, deacons). [LT].
- Commentary on the clothing of monks.
- Commentary on rite for the dedication of a church.
- Commentary on the funeral rites.
- Commentary on the heavenly and earthly priesthood.
- An instruction to the members of the Church.
- A collection of 38 homilies. [ET, FT in part].
- A Book on the Cause of the Feasts.

Several works are known to be lost: a Church History, a commentary on Gregory of Nazianzus' Homilies, a work against heresies, and a commentary on Aristotle's Categories (an excerpt of the last survives).

(f) 10th cent.

83. ELIJAH of ANBAR (E; fl. first half of 10th cent.). Bishop of Anbar (Peroz Shabur), and author of an extensive work in verse entitled *Ktaba d-durrasha* (Book of Instruction), or *Book of Centuries*, in three parts, consisting of 10 memre in all [GT of Part I]. The content, which could be described as gnomic, is strongly influenced by the Dionysian Corpus.

84*. ANONYMOUS author (W; 10th cent.?) of the *Book of the Cause of Causes* [GT]. The author identifies himself as a bishop of Edessa who resigned and retired to a contemplative life; as a result he has sometimes been identified as Jacob of Edessa, but this is impossible, as the author clearly lived several centuries later. The work seeks to be 'a book in common for all people under heaven, on knowledge of truth, how it is known'; it deals with wide theological problems of the relationship between God and humanity,

and, in a remarkable attempt at inter-faith dialogue, seeks to present specifically Christian doctrines, such as the Trinity, in a way that might be acceptable to Jews and Muslims.

85. EMMANUEL bar SHAHHARE (E: fl. Second half 10th cent.). Author of an extensive unpublished verse commentary on the Hexaemeron (Six days of Creation).

(g) 11th cent.

86. ELIJAH of NISIBIS (e; 11 Feb 975 – 18 July 1046). Born at Shenna (hence sometimes known as Elia bar Shinaya), he was ordained priest in 994, and studied at the monastery of Mar Michael, near Mosul. In 1002 he was appointed bishop of Beth Nuhadra, and in 1008 as Metropolitan of Nisibis. He wrote primarily in Arabic, but used Syriac in composing a number of liturgical prayers (still in use). Both Syriac and Arabic feature in two works:

-Chronography [FT, LT]. This important work contains short excerpts from many earlier sources otherwise lost; much of it is taken up with elaborate tables.

-An Arabic-Syriac glossary, entitled 'The Interpreter', to facilitate the teaching of Syriac.

(h) 12th cent.

87*. DIONYSIUS BAR SALIBI (W; d.1171). He was probably born in Melitene (Malatya), a meeting point for Greek and Syriac culture in the late 12th century, his baptismal name being Jacob. He was appointed bishop of Mar'ash (Germanikia), with the episcopal name Dionysius, in 1148. After the accession of Michael I to the patriarchate (1166) he became metropolitan of Amid. Known to his contemporaries as 'the eloquent doctor, the star of his generation and a philoponos like Jacob of Edessa', he was one of the most learned and voluminous Syrian Orthodox writers of the twelfth century. His main surviving works are:

-Commentary on the Old Testament (mostly unpublished; ET of Comm. Pss. 73-82).

-Commentary on the New Testament [LT].

Dionysius bar Salibi was the first Syrian Orthodox to provide a commentary on the entire Bible: he draws on a great variety of earlier commenatators, both Greek (in Syriac translation) and Syriac (including commentators of the Church of the East). Much of the commentary on the Old Testament is arranged in two sections, factual or material (su`rana`it) and spiritual (ruhana`it).

-Commentary on the Liturgy [ET, LT].

-Commentary on the Baptismal liturgy (ET).

-Three anaphoras.

-Polemical works against the Muslims (unpublished), Jews, Armenians [ET], Melkites [ET], and Nestorians (unpublished).

-Commentary on Evagrius` Centuries.

-Commentary on Porphyry`s Eisagoge and on Aristotle`s Logical works, or Organon (completed in 1148; unpublished).

-Penitential Canons [LT].

Among works by Dionysius bar Salibi which have been lost are: a chronicle, a treatise on Providence, a compendium of theology, commentaries on the works of various Greek Fathers, letters and poems.

88. ELIJAH III ABU HALIM (E; d. 12 Apr 1190). Bishop of Maipherqat, then metropolitan of Nisibis, and finally Catholicos (1176). He wrote in both Arabic and Syriac, the latter being used for his collection of prayers for the morning Office throughout the liturgical year (manuscripts containing these are simply called 'Abu Halim').

89*. MICHAEL the GREAT (W; d. 1199). Syrian Orthodox Patriarch from 1166-1199. He was born in Melitene, and before being elected Patriarch was Superior of the Monastery of Barsauma in the region of Melitene. Besides revising the Syrian Orthodox Pontifical and editing the Life of Abhai, bishop of Nicaea, he is the

author of the most extensive of all Syriac world Chronicles [FT], covering from Creation to his own day. Incorporated into this massive work are many documents not preserved in other sources. For the seventh and early eighth centuries he made considerable use of the lost Ecclesiastical History by one of his predecessors as Patriarch, Dionysius of Tel-Mahre (818-22 August 845).

(i) 13th cent.

90. IOHANNAN BAR ZO'BI (E; late 12th/early 13th cent.) Monk of the monastery of Beth Qoqa in Adiabene, and one of the most learned East Syriac writers of his time. Very few of his writings have yet been edited; these include a verse commentary of baptism and the eucharist, and various works on grammar and philosophy, in both prose and verse.

91. SOLOMON of BOSRA (E; late 12th/early 13th century) .Born at Akhlat on Lake Van at an unknown date, he was already metropolitan of Prath d- Maishan, or Basra, in 1222. Although he also wrote a number of smaller works, he is chiefly famous for his compilation of biblical traditions entitled the Book of the Bee [ET].

92. GIWARGIS WARDA (E; fl. first half of 13th cent.) This famous poet, from Arbela, lived in the turbulent period of the Mongol invasions, and several of his poems deal with contemporary events (e.g. On the devastation of Karamlais by the Mongols in 1235/6). Many of his hymns were adopted for liturgical use and manuscripts containing these are known by the name 'Warda' (Rose). Topics covered are mostly hagiographical or dealing with liturgical feasts. Only 23 of his c.150 poems have so far been published. On man as a microcosm [FT]; On the Childhood of Christ [ET] autobiographical [ET].

93*. ANONYMOUS (W; fl. first half of 13th cent.)

This unknown author of one of the most important and extensive Syriac world Chronicles, running from Creation to c.1234 [LT+FT], probably came from Edessa. The work(which unfortunately contains several gaps) is in two parts, one devoted to ecclesiastical matters,

the other to secular. Among the sources he uses for the early biblical period is the Book of Jubilees (not certainly quoted in any other Syriac writer). For the seventh and eight centuries much use is made of the lost Ecclesiastical History by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre.

94*. JACOB SEVERUS bar SHAKKO (W; d.1241). Born in Bartella (near Mosul), he studied under the East Syriac scholar Iohannan bar Zo'bi (at the monastery of Beth Qoqe) and under a Muslim scholar in Mosul, Kamal al-Din Musa ibn Yunus (for dialectics and philosophy). He subsequently became bishop of the Monastery of Mar Mattai, with the episcopal name Severus. His surviving works are:

-Ktobo d-Simoto, 'Book of Treasures'. This theological compendium is set out in four parts: 1, on the Triune God; 2, on the incarnation; 3, on divine providence; and 4, on the creation of the world (covering angels, stars, geography, natural history, etc., ending up with the constitution of the human person and the soul, antichrist, the resurrection of the body, and the last judgement). The work remains unpublished.

-Ktobo d-Dialogu, 'Book of Dialogues'. This is arranged in two books; the first covers: 1, grammar; 2, rhetoric; 3, poetry and metres; 4, eloquence and the richness of the Syriac language. The second book deals with: 1, logic and syllogisms; and 2, philosophy (divided up into five sections: (a) definitions and divisions of philosophy; (b) philosophical life and conduct; (c) physics and physiology; (d) arithmetic, music, geometry, mathematics; and (e) metaphysics and theology). Only excerpts of this work have so far been published.

-Two letters written in verse.

-A symbol of faith.

95*. BAR 'EBROYO/ABU 'L FARAJ/ BARHEBRAEUS (W; 1225/6-30 vii 1286). Alongside Ephrem, perhaps the most famous of all Syriac writers. He was born in Melitene and was the son of a doctor Ahron who has been assumed (probably wrongly)

to have been a convert from Judaism (hence the name Barhebraeus); his baptismal name was Yuhanon, but he subsequently took the name Gregorius when he was appointed at a very young age as bishop of Gubos (1246); he later became bishop of Aleppo (1253), and was eventually appointed Maphrian of the East (1264). He died in Maragha (NW Iran). He was a polymath of extraordinary wide learning in virtually every subject that was studied in his time. He wrote both in Syriac and in Arabic, and had a good knowledge of Greek, Armenian, Persian, and perhaps some of Coptic and Hebrew. In his Ecclesiastical History (II,431-486) he has left a considerable amount of autobiographical information, and this was supplemented after his death by his brother Barsauma, who also gives a list of his writings (another list is to be found in the verse panegyric on Barhebraeus by Dioscorus of Gozarto, [=98, below]). His extensive surviving writings cover theology, philosophy, ethics, astronomy, grammar, exegesis, liturgy, canon law, history, and much more. Several of his important works have not yet been published. He draws on Greek, Syriac, Arabic and Persian sources in his various compendia. For several topics he provides works on three different levels, elementary, intermediary and advanced. His most important surviving writings are:

-Mnorat Qudsho, 'Candelabra of the Sanctuary' [FT I-V, VII-XII; GT VI]. This large-scale theological compendium is arranged in 12 books (called 'foundations'), with the following titles:

- I, On knowledge, straightforwardly.
- II, On the nature of the universe.
- III, On theology (i.e. on the Trinity)
- IV, On the incarnation of God the Word.
- V, On knowledge of the heavenly beings, namely the angels.
- VI, On the earthly priesthood.
- VII, On the evil spirits, or demons.
- VIII, On the rational soul.

- IX, On freewill and liberty, and on fate, deteminism, and the end.
- X, On the resurrection of the dead.
- XI, On the end, on judgement, and on the reward of the good and the evil.
- XII, On the paradise of Eden.

-Ktobo d- Zalge. This is his medium-size compendium of theology, divided up into ten parts:

- I, On the Creation in six days.
- II, On theology (i.e.. on the Trinity).
- III, On the incarnation.
- IV, On angels.
- V, On evil spirits.
- VI, On the soul.
- VII, On priesthood.
- IX, On the end of the two worlds, microcosm and macrocosm and on the beginnig of the New World.
- X, On Paradise [FT].

-‘Osar Rose, ‘Treasure of Mysteries’ [ET for Pentateuch and New Testament]. This is more a systematic collection of notes, rather than a commentary, on all the books of the Syriac Bible. There is a strong philological and textual interest.

-Ktobo d- Hudoye, ‘Book of Guides’ (also known as the Nomocanon) [LT]. This is a collection of Canon Law, arranged thematically for convenience of use. The work is set out in 40 chapters, the earlier ones concerning ecclesiastical matters, and the later ones concerning lay affairs (inheritance, business dealings, interest, irrigation rights, theft, homicide etc.).

-Ktobo d- Itiqon, ‘Book of Ethics’, with the sub- title ‘on excellence of conduct, according to the opinion of the desert fathers

and the tested teachers'. The work is set out in four discourses, the first two dealing with exterior knowledge ('the work of the limbs'), the last two with interior knowledge ('the work of the heart'):

I (with 9 chapters), on liturgical prayer, manual work, scriptural reading, vigils, psalmody, fasts, pilgrimage etc. [FT].

II (with 6 chapters), on foods, marriage and celibacy, the cleansing of the body, the different ages of man, manual work, commerce, and almsgiving.

III (with 12 chapters), 'On the purification of the soul from the base passions'.

IV (with 16 chapters), 'On the adornment of the soul with excellent qualities'.

Barhebraeus' main model and source for this work was the *Ihya 'ulum al-din* by al-Ghazali (d. 1111).

-Ktobo d-Yawno, 'Book of the Dove' [ET]. This work, in four chapters, describes the various forms of the ascetic life; the fourth chapter contains material based on his own spiritual experiences.

-Commentary on the Book of the Holy Hierotheos (a sixth-century mystical work by Stephen bar Sudhaili).

-Ktobo d-He' wat Hekmto' 'Book of the Crean of Wisdom'. This is a vast encyclopaedia of Aristotelian philosophy, set out in four books:

I, on Logic, in 9 parts, following the order of Aristotle's logical works ('the Organon') as studied from at least the sixth century, i.e. 1, Porphyry's *Eisagoge* or Introduction; 2, Categories; 3, On Interpretation (*Peri hermeneias*); 4, Prior Analytics; 5, *Apodeiktike*, or Posterior Analytics; 6, Topics; 7, Sophistics; 8, Rhetorics; 9, Poetics.

II, on the physical world, in 13 parts.

III, on Metaphysics, in 2 parts.

IV, on practical philosophy (covering Aristotle's Ethics, Economics, and Politics: also deals with physiognomy).

Barhebraes makes considerable use of Ibn Sina's (Avicenna's) *Shifa'*, and (for the fourth book) of al Tusi's *Ahlq-e Nasiri*; he also preserves a number of quotations from Greek writers whose works are otherwise lost. Only parts of this important work have so far been published. [ET of some parts]

-Ktobo da-Swod Sufya [FT], 'Book of the Conversation of wisdom'. This is his middle-sized treatise on logic, the physical world, and philosophy.

-Ktobo d- Tegrat Tegroto, 'Book of the Treatise of Treatises'. This deals with logic, the physical world, and philosophy.

-Ktobo d Boboto, 'Book of the Pupils (sc. of the eye)'. This is a summary introduction to logic.

-Ecclesiastical History [LT]. This is arranged in two parts, the first dealing with the patriarchs of Antioch and the more westerly area (up to 1285), and the second with the area further east, covering both the Catholicoi of the Church of the East and the Syrian Orthodox Maphrians. The work also includes an autobiographical section.

-Chronicle [ET]. This covers, in summary fashion, from Creation to Barhebraeus' own days. He also made an Arabic adaptation of this work for the benefit of a Muslim friend.

-Ktobo d-Semhe, 'Book of Splendours' [GT]. This is Barhebraeus' largest and most important work on grammar.

-Ktobo d-Gramatiqi', 'Book of Grammar'. This is a grammar written in the seven-syllable metre.

-Ktobo d-Balsusyoto, 'Book of Sparks'. This is a short grammar.

-Ktobo d-Suloqo Hawannoyo [FT], 'Book of intellectual ascent'. This work, composed in 1279, deals with astronomy.

-Ktobo d-Tunoye Mgahkone, 'Book of amusing stories' [ET].

This is a collection of short narratives and sayings derived from earlier sources; much use has been made of a work by Abu Sa 'al-Abi(d. c. 1030).

-Poems (Mushhoto). Besides the verse grammar, Barhebraeus wrote a considerable number of poems, among which the longest is entitled 'On wisdom'.

-An Anaphora.

E. FOURTEENTH TO NINETEENTH CENTURIES

13th/14th cent.

96*. 'ABDISHO 'BAR BRIKA(E; d. 1318). Bishop of Sinjar and Bet 'Arbaye, and then Metropolitan of Soba (or Nisibis). He wrote in both Arabic and Syriac; his surviving Syriac works are:

-Nomocanon [LT], or collection of synodical canons, arranged thematically.

-Rules of ecclesiastical judgements [LT], designed as a handbook for use in ecclesiastical courts.

-Marganitha.or 'Pearl', with the subtitle 'the Truth of the Faith' [ET]. This short and influential exposition of East Syrian theology was written in 1298.

-Paradise of Eden. This is a collection of 50 poems, first circulated in 1291, but later (1316) provided by the author himself with a commentary, seeing that he made use of a large number of rare and obscure words.

-Metrical catalogue of Syriac writers [ET,LT]. This work is an invaluable source of information, especially about lost works by Syriac authors. In the course of this work (arranged chronologically) he mentions a number of his own works which have not come down to us, notably a commentary on the Bible, a work on the dispensation of the life of Christ on earth, and one on heresies and on philosophy.

97. KHAMIS bar QARDAHE (E: late 13th/early 14th cent.). Served as priest in Arbela, and was a prolific poet, writing both

religious and secular verse. Among other things he wrote a supplement to Barhebraeus' poem on Wisdom. His liturgical poetry (especially his 'Onyatha) are transmitted in volumes specifically entitled 'Khamis'.

98. DIOSCORUS of GOZARTO (W; late 13th/early 14th cent.). Monk of a monastery in Bartelli, he was consecrated bishop of Gozarto d-Qardu in 1285/6 by Barhebraeus; author of a verse life of Barhebraeus.

-Anaphora.

99. ANONYMOUS (E). An anonymous writer composed the History of Yahballaha and Rabban Sauma [ET, FT, IT] shortly after the death of Yahballaha III in 1317. This is a vivid account of how two monks from China were sent to the west as emissaries of the Mongol Il Khan, one of whom was elected Catholicos, while the other (Rabban Sauma) journeyed on to Europe. The author was evidently an eyewitness of many of the events related, while for Rabban Sauma's journey to Europe he was able to make use of the latter's diary, which he sometimes reproduces verbatim.

100. TIMOTHY II (E; d. 1353) Metropolitan of Mosul, and then (in 1318) Catholocos, in succession to Yahballaha

On the ecclesiastical mysteries. The work is in seven chapters: 1, on priesthood; 2, on the consecration of a church; 3, on baptism [ET]; 4, on the Eucharist; 5, on monastic profession; 6, on funeral rites; 7, on betrothal and marriage rites.

14th- 19th Century

A considerable amount of both prose and poetry continued to be written in Syriac during these centuries, but so far the literature of this period had been very little studied by scholars, and only a small number of writings from it have been published. From the 15th century, mention might be made of the priest Isaiah of Bet Sbirina (Tur `Abdin) and his son Yeshu '(W; d. 1492); among the former's poems are several on contemporary events (including the

devastations of Timur Leng, d. 1407). To the mid 15th century belongs Ishaq Qardahe Sbadnaya (E), author of several acrostic 'Onyata and of a 12-syllable poem on the Divine Economy, accompanied by a prose commentary containing many quotations from old writers. From the end of the 15th century come Mas'ud, also of Tur 'Abdin (W), author of a theological poem entitled 'The Spiritual Ship' [LT]. Three important poets of the turn of the 15th/16th century are the Patriarch Nuh (W; d. 1509), David 'the Phoenician' (W) and Sargis bar Wahle (E), who wrote a verse life of Rabban Hormizd [ET]. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth century saw the beginnings of written literature in modern Syriac, and several poems in the dialect of Alqosh survive [ET]; otherwise, it was not until the nineteenth century and the influence of the American missionary press at Urmiah that Modern Syriac (mainly in the Urmiah dialect) came to be quite widely used as a written language.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries several translations into Syriac were made of classics of western spirituality, such as *The Imitation of Christ* attributed to Thomas a Kempis (this translation was made by the Maphrian Basil Ishaq Gobeyr (W; d. 1721). Two outstanding writers in Syriac from this period are the Chaldean Patriarch Joseph II residing in Amid/Diarbekir (E; d. 1731), author of *The Magnet* and *The Shining Mirror*, both widely read and Metropolitan Basileios Shem'un of Tur 'Abdin (W; martyred in 1740). author of a *Book of Theology* (1714), *The Ship of Mysteries* (verse, on theological topics; 1727/9), *The Armour of Thanksgiving and Hope of Faith* (1723, subsequently translated into Arabic), and many homilies and poems; Shem'un also compiled a dictionary based on the much earlier one by Bar Bahlul (late 10th cent.).

F. TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The late 19th century witnessed a considerable revival of literary activity in Syriac. One outstanding figure was T'oma Audo, Chaldean metropolitan of Urmia (E: 1853-1917), who, amongst many other things, was the compiler of an extremely valuable Syriac

dictionary(1896; reprinted 1985). Other notable figures include the Syrian Catholic Patriarch Rahmani (W; 1848-1929), the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Ephrem Barsaum (W; 1887-1957), and Metropolitan Philoxenos Yuhanon Dolabani (w; 1885-1969); it was Dolabani who translated into Syriac Barsaum's important History of Syriac Literature and Paulos Behnam's drama Theodora, both of which were originally written in Arabic.

Several writers of the 20th century have used Syriac as a vehicle for secular literature; a pioneer in this field was Na 'um Fa' yeq (W; 1868-1930), who founded the periodical Star of the East in 1908. A number of translations into Syriac of western secular literature has also been made , such as Bernardin de Saint Pierre's romantic novel Paul et Virginie, translated by Paulos Gabriel (W; d. 1971) and Ghattas Maqdasi Elyas (W; d.2008) and published (in 1955) under the title Myatruto ('Virtue'), and Racine's play Athalie (translated by Abrohom Isu (Baghdad,1978). More recent translations include Machiavelli's Prince (by Gabriel Afram), published in Sweden in 1995. A considerable amount of writing in Classical Syriac, in both prose and verse, continues today, both in the Middle East and (above all) in the Diaspora, now scattered all over the world.

APPENDIX : CHRONOLOGICAL
TABLE OF AUTHORS (2nd- 13th cent.)

Century

2nd/3rd cent.

- * Peshitta OT
- * Diatessaron
- * Old Syriac Gospels
- * Book of the Laws of the

Countries

- * Odes of Solomon
- * Acts of Thomas

Melito 'the philosopher'

Menander sentences

Mara

- * Ahikar

4th cent.

- * Aphrahat (fl. 337-345)
- * Ephrem (d. 373)
- * Book of Steps

4th / 5th cent.

Cyrrillona

Balai

5th cent.

- * John the Solitary
- * Anonymous poetry
(soghyatha, memre, madrashe)

- * Anonymous prose

(hagiography):

Abraham of Qidun

The Man of God (Alexis)

- Edessan Martyrs (Shmona,
Gurya, Habbib)
- Teaching of Addai
- Legendary Edessan Martyrs
(Barsamya, Sharbel)
- Euphemia and the Goth
- Persian Martyrs
- Symeon the Stylite
- ‘Julian Romance’
- Rabbula
- Hom. On Abraham and Isaac
- * Narsai(E)
- 5th /6th cent. *Jacob of Serugh (W; d.521)
- Simeon the Potter (W)
- *Philoxenus / Aksenoyo (W; d. 523)
- * ‘Isaac of Antioch’(W)
- Symmachus(W)
- 6th cent. ANON., Chron. Of ‘Joshua the
Stylite’ (W)
- Stephen bar Sudhaili(W)
- Sergius of Resh ‘aina (W; d. 536)
- Simeon of Beth Arsham (W)
- Elias (W)
- * Daniel of Salah (W)
- *Cyrus of Edessa (E)
- Thomas of Edessa(E)

- ANON, Chron. Of Edessa (W)
*John of Ephesus (W)
Peter of Kallinikos (W)
ANON. Chronicle of Pseudo
–Zacharias
Ahudemme (W?)
Abraham of Nathpar (E)
ANON., *Cave of Treasures etc.
6th /7th cent. Barhadbeshabba ‘Arbaya(E)
Barhadbeshabba of Halwan (E)
Shubhalmaran(E)
*Babai the Great (E; d. 628)
* Sahdona /Martyrius (E)
Gabriel Qatraya (E)
Isho ‘yahb II (E; d. 646)
John of the Sedre (W; d. 648)
Marutha (W; d. 649)
Gregory of Cyprus (E)
ANON., memra on Alexander
the Great etc.
Later 7th cent. Severus Sebokht (W; d.
666/7)
Abraham bar Lipeh (E)
ANON., Khuzistan
Chronicle (E)
* Isho ‘yahb III (E; d. 659)

- * Isaac of Nineveh (E)
 Shem 'on the Graceful (E)
 Dadisho '(E)
 John bar Penkaye (E)
 ANON., Apocalypse of Ps.
 Methodius;
 hagiography
- 7th /8th cent. * Jacob of Edessa (W; d. 708)
 *George, bishop of the Arab
 tribes (W; d. 724)
- 8th cent. ANON., 'Diyarbekir
 Commentary'(E)
 Sergius the Stylite (W)
 Elia(W)
 * John of Dalyatha/John
 Saba (E)
 *Joseph Hazzaya/ ' the
 Seer ' (E)
 Abraham bar Dashandad (E)
 ANON ., author of
 Zuqnin Chronicle
 (W; c. 776)
 * Theodore bar Koni (E)
- 8th /9th cent. * Timothy I (E; d 823)
 * Isho 'barnun (E; 828)
- 9th cent. * Job of Edessa (E)
 *Isho 'dad of Merv (E)

- Nonnus of Nisibis (W)
* Anton of Tagrit (W)
*Thomas of Marga (E)
Isho'dnah(E)
ANON., Commentary
on OT, NT
*Moshe bar Kepha (W; d. 903)
- 10th cent. Elia (Elijah) of Anbar (E)
*ANON., author of Book of the Cause
of Causes (W)
Emmanuel bar Shahhare (E)
- 11th cent. Elia (Elijah) of Nisibis (E; d.1046)
- 12th cent. *Dionysius bar Salibi (W; d. 1171)
Elia (Elijah) III Abu Halim
(E; d. 1190)
*Michael I, 'the Great '
(W;d. 1199)
- 13th cent. Iohannan bar Zo'bi (E)
Solomon of Bosra (E)
Giwargis Warda (E)
*ANON., author of Chronicle
to year 1234(W)
*Jacob Severus bar
Shakko (W; d. 1241)
*Barhebraeus / Bar 'Ebroyo/
Abu 'I Farag (W;d. 1286)

13th /14th cent.

* 'Abdisho' (E; d. 1318)

Khamis bar Qardahe(E)

Dioscorus of Gozarto (W)

ANON., History of Yahballaha

III ad Rabban Sauma (E)

Timothy II (E; d. 1353)

IV

TRANSLATIONS INTO SYRIAC

A vast number of translations, mainly from Greek, were made into Syriac, above all during the 5th-9th centuries. The earliest translations are often quite free (and are sometimes much expanded), but in the 6th and especially the 7th century a much more literal style of translation came into favour, and many older translations were then revised (or sometimes, completely new ones provided); a further wave of translations came in the late eighth and ninth centuries, as part of the general interest at that time in translating Greek philosophical and scientific literature into Arabic (often done by way of Syriac).

The following are the main surviving translations into Syriac (from Greek unless otherwise stated; *denotes that the Greek original is wholly or mostly lost).

2nd cent.(?)	Peshitta OT (from Hebrew)
	Diatessaron (lost, apart from quotations)
3rd cent.(?)	Old Syriac Gospels [ET]
	Much of OT 'apocrypha'
Before 411	Clementine Recognitions
	*Titus of Bostra, Against the Manichaeans

- *Eusebius, Theophania
- *Eusebius, Palestinian Martyrs [ET]
- 4th/5th cent. Eusebius, Church History
Josephus, Wars Book VI
- 5th cent. *Didascalia [ET]
Basil, On the Holy Spirit, On the Hexaemeron [ET], various Homilies
*Theodore of Mopsuestia, Commentary on John [LT]
*Theodore of Mopsuestia, Catechetical Homilies [ET]
- 5th/6th cent. *Syro-Roman Law Book [GT]
*Aristeides, Apology [ET]
*Evagrius, various works
*Epiphanius, On Weights and Measures [ET]
John Chrysostom, Commentaries and various other works
Gregory of Nyssa, Comm. on Song of Songs, various other works
Gregory of Nazianzus, Homilies (1st translation)
Athanasius, Life of Antony [ET], various other works [ET]
Cyril of Alexandria, various works
Macarius, Homilies [GT]
Ignatius of Antioch, Letters [ET]

Nilus, monastic writings [IT]

Palladius, Lausiaca History [ET]

Historia Monachorum[ET]

Apophthegmata (Sayings of the Desert Fathers) [ET]

Ammonius, Letters [ET]

Abba Isaiah, Asceticon [FT]

Themistius, Lucian, Ps. Plutarch
(various works)

6th cent. Dionysius the Areopagite (1st
translation, by Sergius of Resh'aina)

*Severus of Antioch, Cathedral
Homilies

(1st translation, by Paul of Kallinikos)

* Severus of Antioch, various other
works

Joseph and Aseneth [ET]

*Life of Peter the Iberian [GT ; ET forthcoming]

*Zacharias, Life of Severus[FT, ET forthcoming]

*Nestorius, Bazaar of

Heracleides[ET,FT]

Mark the Monk

Kalilah and Dimnah (from Middle
Persian) [ET]

Alexander Romance (from Middle
Persian ?) [ET]

- Porphyry, Eisagoge (1st translation)
- Galen, various works (tr. by Sergius of Resh`aina)
- Aristotle, early books of Organon (1st translation)
- 7th cent. Syrohexapla OT (tr. by Paul of Tella)
- Harklean NT (tr. by Thomas of Harkel)
- Basil, Homilies (2nd translation)
- *Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Luke [ET,FT]
- Gregory of Nazianzus, Homilies (2nd translation, by Paul of Edessa).
- *Athanasius, Festal Letters [ET]
- *Severus, Homilies (revised translation by Jacob of Edessa) [FT]
- *Severus, Select Letters (tr. by Athanasius of Balad) [ET]
- Porphyry, Eisagoge (2nd translation, by Athanasius of Balad)
- Dionysius the Areopagite (2nd translation, by Phokas of Edessa)
- John Klimakos, The Ladder.
- Late 8th/9th cent. (This was a period of great translation activity from Greek into

Arabic, especially of philosophical, medical and scientific work although the names of many of the translators are known; the intermediary Syriac translations of this period are for the most part lost).

11th cent.(?)

Kalilah and Dimnah

(from Arabic) [ET]

Sindbad (from Arabic)[ET]

V

SUMMARY GUIDE TO ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

The following provides a guide to translations available for the authors covered in Section III and translations into Syriac mentioned in Section V; only where English translations are absent or inadequate is reference made to translations into other modern languages. The numbers for Syriac authors are those of Section III; an asterisk in the present chapter indicates that an edition of the Syriac original is included. Fuller bibliographical details can be found by consulting the Syriac bibliographies by C.Moss (covering up to 1960) and S.P.Brock (1960-1990), for whose titles see Section VIII.

(4) BOOK of the LAWS of the COUNTRIES (School of BARDAISAN): * W.Cureton, *Spicilegium Syriacum* (1855), 3-34, and *H.J.W.Drijvers (1965).

(5) ODES of SOLOMON: *J.H.Charlesworth (1973); a better translation, by J.A.Emerton, in H.F.D.Sparks (ed.), *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (Oxford, 1884), 683 -731.

(6) ACTS of THOMAS: * W.Wright (1871); A.F.J.Klijn (1962), with introduction.

(7) MELITO, Apology: * W.Curcton, *Spicilegium Syriacum* (1855), 41-51.

(8) MENANDER, Sayings: T.Baarda, in J.H.Charlesworth

(ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha II* (1985), 591-606 (with good introduction).

(9) MARA, Letter to Serapion: *W.Cureton, *Spicilegium Syriacum* (1855), 70-76. Cp K.Mc Vey, in *V Symposium Syriacum* (1990), 257-72.

(10) AHIKAR: *J.R.Harris, F.C.Conybeare, A.S. Lewis, *The Story of Ahikar* (1913).

(11) K. Valavanolickal, *Aphrahat, Demonstrations, I-II* (Moran Etho 23-24; 2005. Complete French translation by M-J.Pierre in *Sources Chretiennes* 349 and 359; complete German translation by P.Bruns (1991-2).

(12) EPHREM. The following are the main English translations available (in chronological order):

-J.B. Morris, *Select Works of St Ephrem the Syrian* (1847). Includes the only complete English translation of Hymns on Faith.

-H.Burgess, *Select Metrical Hymns and Homilies of Ephrem Syrus* (1853); *The Repentance of Nineveh* (1853).

- J.Gwynn (ed.), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers II.13* (1898). Includes Nisibene Hymns 1-21, 35-42, 62-68; Hymns on Epiphany.

-*C.W. Mitchell, *Prose Refutations I-II* (1912, 1921).

-S.P.Brock, *The Harp of the Spirit. Poems of St.Ephrem* (1975; selection of 12 poems; 2nd edn 1983; 18 poems).

-J.Lieu, in S.N.C. Lieu, *The Emperor Julian* (1986, 2nd edn 1989). Hymns on Julian.

- K.Mc Vey, *Ephrem the Syrian, Hymns* (1989). Includes Hymns on Nativity, on Virginitly, and on Julian.

-S.P.Brock, *St Ephrem the Syrian, Hymns on Paradise* (1990).

-C. McCarthy, *St Ephrem, Commentary on the Diatessaron* (1993).

-E.G. Mathews and J.P.Amar, St Ephrem the Syrian. Selected Prose works. Includes Commentaries on Genesis and on Exodus, Homily on our Lord, and Letter to Publius.

-A.G.Salvesen, Ephrem, Commentary on Exodus (1995).

S.P. Brock and G. Kiraz, Ephrem the Syrian, Select Poems (Provo, 2006).

For further details, consult S.P.Brock, 'A brief guide to the main editions and translations of the works of Saint Ephrem', *The Harp* 3 (1990), 1-29, updated in *Saint Ephrem. un poète pour notre temps* (Antélias, 2007), 281-307.

(13) BOOK of STEPS: Complete translation by R.Kitchen (2004). ch. 12: in R.Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (1975), 264-8; ch. 12 and 18 : in S.Brock, *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer* (1987), 45-59

(14) CYRILLONA: FT by D. Cerbelaud, *Cyrillonas, L'Agneau véritable* (1984).

(15) BALAI: On dedication of church in Qenneshrin. K.Mc Vey, in *Aram* 5 (1993), 359-67.

(16) JOHN the SOLITARY:

-Dialogue on Soul, FT by I. Hausherr (OCA 120, 1939); ET by Mary Hansbury in preparation.

- Three Letters, GT by * L.G. Rignell (1942).

-Six Dialogues etc., G.T.by * W. Strothmann (1972); FT by R.Lavenant (*Sources chrétiennes* 311, 1984).

-Three Discourses, GT(or summary) by *L.G.Rignell (1960); ET of no. 1 by [D.Miller], *Ascetic Homilies of St Isaac the Syrian* (1984), 461-6.

-Letter to Hesychius, S.P.Brock, *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer* (1987), 81 -98.

On Prayer, * S.P.Brock in *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1979), 84 -101; ET repr. in *Ascetic Homilies of St Isaac the Syrian* (1984), 466-8.

(17) ANONYMOUS POETRY: - On Abraham and Sarah in Egypt, * S.P.Brock, *Le Muséon* 105 (1992), 104-32.

-On Sacrifice of Isaac, * S.P.Brock, *LeMuséon* 99 (1986), 108-12, 122-5.

-On Joseph, nos 3-4, A.S.Rodrigues Pereira, *Jaarbericht Ex Oriente Lux* 31 (1989/90), 95-120.

-On Elijah, * S.P.Brock, *Le Muséon* 89 (102), 106-10.

-Memra on Mary and Joseph, S.P.Brock, *Bride of Light* (1994), 146-60.

-Soghitho on Abel and Cain, *S.P. Brock, *Le Muséon* 113 (2000), 333-47; on Mary and Angel, Mary and Magi, S.P.Brock, *Bride of Light* (1994), 111-32; John the Baptist and Christ, Cherub and Thief, S.P.Brock, *Syriac Dialogue Hymns* (1987); Dispute of Months, *S.P.Brock, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 30 (1985), 193-6. Sinful Women and Satan, * S. P. Brock, *Oriens Christianus* 72 (1988), 21-62.

(18) ANONYMOUS PROSE: - (Abraham of Qidun and Mary, S.P.Brock and S.A. Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient* (1987), 29-36.

- Man of God, R. Doran (2006); ET (of FT) by C.J. Odenkirchen (1978).

-Shmona, Gurya and Habbib, *F.C.Burkitt, *Euphemia and the Goth* (1993)

-Teaching of Addai, *G.Philips (1876) and *W.Howard (1981); Martyrdoms of Sharbel and Barsamya, *W.Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents* (1864), 41-72.

-Euphemia and the Goth, *F.C.Burkitt, *Euphemia and the Goth* (1913).

-Martyrdom of Martha etc., Brock and Harvey. Holy Women, 67-81.

-Martyrdom of Anahid, Brock and Harvey, Holy Women, 82-99.

-Symeon the Stylite, R.Doran (1992).

-Julian Romance, H.Gollancz, Julian the Apostate (1928).

-Life of Rabbula, R Doran (2006).

-On Abraham and Isaac, * S.P.Brock, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 12 (1981), 225-60.

(19) NARSAI: - memre on Creation, FT by *P.Gignoux, PO 34 (1968).

-memre on liturgy, R.H.Connolly (1908); memra 17, G.Vavanikunnel, *Homilies...on Qurbana* (1977) 55-84;

-memre on dominical feasts, *F.G.McLeod, PO 40 (1979);

-memre on OT topics, *J.Frushman (diss. Leiden 1992).

-memre on Gospel parables, *FT by E.P. Siman (1984).

-memre on Three Doctors, FT by *F.Martin, *Journal asiatique* 15 (1900), 469-525.

(20) JACOB of SERUGH:

-memre on Virgin Mary, M. Hansbury (1998)

-memre against Jews, FT by *M.Albert, PO38 (1976);

-memre on dominal feasts, T.Kollamparambil (1997)

-memre on Creation, FT by *Kh.Alwan, *CSCO Syr* 214-5(1989);

-memra on the Veil of Moses, S.P.Brock, *Sobornost/ECR* 3(1981), 70-85;

-memra on Simeon the Stylite, S.A.Harvey, in V.L.Wimbush (ed.), *Ascetic Behaviour ..A Sourcebook* (1990), 15-28;

- memra on Ephrem, *J.Amar, PO 47 (1995);
- prose homilies, FT by F.Rilliet, PO 43 (1986); partial ET by T. Kollamparambil (1997)
- memre on Thomas, GT by W.Strothmann, GOFS 12 (1976);
- memra on Melkizedek, J. Thekeparampil, Harp 6 (1993), 53-64.
- memra on the Red Heifer, D. Lane, Harp 15 (2002), 279-315.
- Letters, FT by M. Albert (2004)
- A number of memre are to be found translated in *The True Vine* 1-(1989-);
- (21) SIMEON the POTTER: S.P.Brock, *A Garland of Hymns from the Early Church* (1989), 94-102.
- (22) PHILOXENUS:
 - Ascetical Discourses, *E.A.Budge (1894); FT E.Lemoine (*Sources chrétiennes* 44, 1956);
 - Memre against Habib, LT/FT by * M.Brière and F.Graffin, PO 15, 38-41 (1920, 1977-82);
 - Memre on Trinity, LT by *A. Vaschalde, CSCO Syr 9-10 (1907)
 - Commentary on the Prologue of John, FT by *A.de Halleux, CSCO Syr 165-6 (1977);
 - Commentary on Matthew and Luke, *J. Watt, CSCO Syr 171-2 (1978);
 - Memra on the Annunciation, GT by P.Kruger, OCP 20 (1954), 153-65;
 - On Indwelling of the Holy Spirit, S.P.Brock, *Syriac Fathers on Prayer*, 106-27.

-Letters (see entries on Philoxenus in the bibliographies cited in Section VIII).

(23) ISAAC of ANTIOCH:

-Memra on Constantinople, *C.Moss, *Zeitschrift für Semitistik* 7 (1929), 298-306.

-Against the Jews, *S.Kazan, *OC* 46(1962), 87-98;

-On incarnation, FT by P.Feghali, *PdO* 10 (1981/2), 79-102; 11 (1983), 201-22;

-LT of 37 texts (including some *madrasha*) by *G.Bickell (1873).

(24) SYMMACHUS: *S.P.Brock, *Le Muséon* 87 (1974), 467-92.

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(37) AHUDEMMEH:

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-Cave of Treasures, E.A.W.Budge (1927);

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(40) BARHADBESHABBA 'ARBAYA: FT by *F. Nau, PO 9, 23 (1913,1932).

(41) BARHADBESHABBA of HALWAN: FT by *A.Scher, PO 4 (1907) ET by A. Becker forthcoming.

(42) SHUBHALMARAN: D. Lane, CSCO Syr. 236-7 (2004)

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-Dialogue with Emir, FT by *F.Nau, Journal asiatique 11:5 (1915), 225-79.

(47) MARUTHA of TAGRIT:

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-Life of Febronia, S.P.Brock and S.A.Harvey, Holy Women of the Syrian Orient, 152-76.

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(56) SHEM‘OND-TAYBUTHEH: (selections), *A.Mingana, Early Christian Mystics (1934); IT by P. Bettiolo (1992).

-Book of Grace (selections), [D.Miller], Ascetic Homilies of St Isaac the Syrian (1984), 397-426.

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(58) JOHN bar PENKAYE : (Book 15) S.P.Brock, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9(1987), 51-75 = *Studies in Syriac Christianity* (1992), ch.2.

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(65) ELIA: LT by * A.Van Roey, CSCO Syr 201-2 (1985).

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W.Witakowski (1996); FT of Vol.II, 145-376, FT by J.B.Chabot (1895); ET of Vol.II (complete) by A.Harrak, (1999).

(70) THEODORE bar KONI:

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(71) TIMOTHY I

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(81) ANONYMOUS COMMENTATOR: On Gen 1-18: * A.Levine, Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis (1951).

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(91) SOLOMON of BOSRA: *E.A.W.Budge (1886).

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(95) BARHEBRAEUS

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FT by *M.Albert. PO 30; VIII. FT by *J.Bakos (1948); IX, FT by *P.-H.Poirier, PO 43; X, FT by *E.Zigmund, PO 35; XI, FT by *N.Sed, PO 41; XII, FT by *N.Sed, PO 40;

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(100) TIMOTHY II

-Comm.on Baptismal liturgy, *P.B.Kadicheeni (1980)

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF WORKS TRANSLATED INTO SYRIAC

(The sequence follows the chronological order given in Section V)

-Old Syriac Gospels: *F.C.Burkitt (1904).

-Eusebius, Palestinian Martyrs: *W.Cureton (1861).

-Didascalia: R.H.Connolly (1929); *A.Vööbus, CSCO Syr 175-6, 179-80 (1979).

-Basil, Hexaameron: *R.W.Thomson, CSCO Syr 222-3 (1995).

-Theodore of Mopsuestia, Comm.on John: LT by *I-M.Vosté, CSCO Syr 62-3 (1940).

-Theodore of Mopsuestia, Catechetical Homilies: *A.Mingana, Woodbrooke Studies 5-6 (1932-3); FT by *R.Tonneau (1949), and by M.Debić and others (1996); GT by P.Bruns (1995).

Aristeides, Apology: *J.R.Harris (1891).

-Epiphanius, On Weights and Measures: *J. E. Dean (1935).

-Athanasius, Life of Antony: *E.A.W.Budge, Paradise of the Fathers (1904); FT by *R. Draguet CSCO 183-4 (1980).

-Athanasius, various works: *R.W.Thomson, CSCO Syr 114-5, 118-9, 141-2, 167-8 (1965-77).

-Macarius, Homilies: GT by *W.Strothmann (1981).

-Ignatius of Antioch: *W.Cureton (1983).

-Nilus: IT by *P.Bettiolo (1983).

- Palladius, Lausiaca History: in *E.A.W. Budge, *Paradise of the Fathers* (1904).
- Historia Monachorum: in Budge, *Paradise*.
- Apophthegmata/Saying, in *Budge, *Paradise*.
- Ammonius, Letters: D.J.Chitty (1979).
- Abba Isaiah, Asceticon: FT by *R.Draguet, *CSCO Syr* 120-3 (1968).
- Severus, Correspondence with Sergius: I.R.Torrance (1988).
- Life of Peter the Iberian: GT by *R.Raabe (1895); ET by C. Horn and R. Phenix forthcoming
- Zacharias, Life of Severus: FT by *M.A.Kugener, *PO* 2 (1904).
- Nestorius, Bazaar of Heracleides: G.R.Driver and L.Hodgson (1925); FT by F.Nau (1910).
- Kalilah and Dimnah (earlier version): GT by *F.Schultess (1911).
- Ps.Callisthenes, Alexander: *E.A.W.Budge (1889).
- Cyril of Alexandria, Homilies on Luke: R.Payne Smith (1869).
- Severus, Hymns: *E.W.Brooks, *PO* 6-7 (1910-11).
- Athanasius, Festal Letters: *W.Cureton (1848).
- Severus, Select Letters: * E.W.Brooks (1902-4), and *PO* 12,14 (1919-20).
- Severus, Homilies (tr.Jacob of Edessa): FT by *M.Brière, F.Graffin, *PO* 4,8,12,16,16,20,22,23,25,29,36-38 (1906-77).
- Kalilah and Dimnah (later version): I.G.N.Keith-Falconer (1885).
- Sindbad: H.Gollancz, in *Transactions of the Folklore Society* 8 (1897), 99-130; FT by F.Macler (1903).

VI

PARTICULAR TOPICS

(a) BIBLE

The earliest printed edition of the Syriac New Testament was prepared by Johann Widmanstetter with the help of the Syrian Orthodox priest Moses of Mardin; this was published in Vienna in 1555. The main subsequent editions of the complete Syriac Bible (Peshitta) are:

Paris Polyglot Bible (W; 1645); the Syriac was prepared by the Maronite Gabriel Sionita)

London Polyglot Bible (W; 1657); edited by Brian Walton)

Edition by Samüel Lee (W; 1823)

Edition published by the American mission's press in Urmiah (E; 1852)

Edition published by the Dominican press in Mosul (E; 1887-1892)

Trinitarian Bible Society's edition (E; 1913 and reprints), edited by Joseph d-Qelayta and based on the Urmiah edition

Edition published in Beirut (E; 1951), based on the Mosul edition.

United Bible Societies Edition (W; 1979). The original edition is a photographic reprint of S. Lee's edition of both Old and New Testaments, with the Apocrypha added (handwritten, and probably based on the Mosul edition, which alone of the earlier editions includes the 'deuterocanonical' books); in the reprints of 1988 onwards, however, the New Testament text has been taken from the British and Foreign Bible Society's edition of the New Testament.

Old Testament

(i) Peshitta

A critical edition of the Peshitta translation of the Hebrew Bible is in the course of publication by the Peshitta Institute in Leiden (the Netherlands). The text is based on a manuscript of the 6th/7th century in the Ambrosian Library, Milan (siglum: 7 a1), and the variants of manuscripts prior to the 13th century are given in the apparatus (a few volumes include later manuscripts). The volumes that have been published so far are:

I.1 Genesis, Exodus (1977)

I.2 and II. 1b Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; Joshua (1991)

II. 1a Job (1982)

II. 2 Judges, I-II Samuel (1978)

II. 3 Psalms (1980)

II. 4 I-II Kings (1976)

II.5 Proverbs, Wisdom, Ecclesiastes (Qohelet), Song of Songs (1979)

III.1 Isaiah (1987)

III.3 Ezekiel (1985)

III.4 Twelve Prophets, Daniel (1980)

IV.2 I-II Chronicles (1998)

IV.3 Apocalypse of Baruch: IV Ezra (1973)

IV.6 Odes, Apocryphal Psalms . Psalms of Solomon, Tobit, 1 (3) Ezra (1972).

(ii) Syrohexapla

This does not survive complete (parts of the Pentateuch and historical books are lost). The following are the principal editions:

A. Ceriani, *Codex Syro-Hexaplaris* ... (1874); a photolithographic edition of a huge manuscript of the second half of the Syrohexapla in the Ambrosian Library, Milan.

P. de Lagarde, *Bibliothecae Syriacae*.. (1892); contains what survives of the Pentateuch and historical books.

W. Baars, *New Syro- Hexaplaric Texts* (1968); contains material additional to de Lagarde's edition.

A. Vööbus, *The Pentateuch in the Version of the Syro-Hexapla* (CSCO Subsidia 45, 1975): a photographic edition of a manuscript containing otherwise lost parts of the Pentateuch.

(iii) 'Syro- Lucianic'

This sixth- century translation from the Septuagint survives only in fragments and may never have covered more than a few books: it is very possible that the translation was commissioned by Philoxenus (alongside the 'Philoxenian' NT), since he specifically quotes it at one point in his Commentary on the Prologue of John. The surviving fragments were edited by A. Ceriani, in *Monumenta Sacra et Profana* 5 (1875).

Part of another sixth-century translation, of the Song of Songs also survives; this combines material from Peshitta and translation of the Septuagint.

(iv) Jacob of Edessa (d. 708)

Towards the end of his life Jacob made a revision of certain books of the Old Testament, combining materials from the Peshitta,

the Syrohexapla, and his own translation of a Greek Septuagint manuscript (or manuscripts). [ET of I-II Samuel]

Apocrypha/ Deuterocanonical Books

These were all translated from Greek, with the exception of Bar Sira (Ecclesiasticus), which derives direct from the largely lost Hebrew original. The standard edition is by P.de Lagarde (1961), but the texts will be found in the Mosul and United Bible Societies' edition of the Peshitta.

New Testament

(i) Peshitta

The best edition, based on old manuscripts, is that by the British and Foreign Bible Societies (1920 and reprints) ; its text is incorporated into the United Bible Societies' edition of the whole Syriac Bible (1988; see above). This includes the minor Catholic epistles (2 Peter, 2-3 John, Jude) and the Apocalypse in an anonymous sixth-century translation(these books are absent from the Peshitta translation).Peshitta of Mardin (2007)

(ii) Old Syriac

The most convenient edition, with facing English translation, is by F.C, Burkitt, Evangelion da-Mepharreshe I-II (1904); this gives in the text the Curetonianus manuscript, and in the apparatus the variants to be found in the Sinaiticus.

(iii) Harklean

The only edition of the whole NT is still that of J. White, with the misleading title Sacrorum Evangeliorum... versio Syriaca Philoxeniana I-II (1778,1799/1803). For recent editions of parts of the Harklean NT, see (d), below.

(iv) Comparative editions

For the Gospels, the text of the Old Syriac, Peshitta and Harklean are very conveniently aligned in G. Kiraz, Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels I-IV(1996).

For the Epistles, the texts of the Peshitta and Harklean are aligned, together with quotations from Syriac writers (and Syriac translations from Greek texts) in B. Aland and A. Juckel, *Das Neue Testament in syrischer Überlieferung*, I (1886; Catholic Epistles); II.1, (1991; Romans, I Corinthians); II.2. (1995; II Corinthians-Colossians); II.3 (2002; I-II Thess. -Hebrews).

Tools

(i) Concordances

Concordances are available for the following books:

-Peshitta OT. Pentateuch: W. Strothmann (1986); Historical Books: W. Strothmann (1995); Prophets: W. Strothmann (1984); Psalms: N. Sprenger (1976); Ecclesiastes (Pesh. And Syrohexapla): W. Strothmann (1973); Ben Sira: M. Winter (1976). A complete concordance for the Peshitta OT is in preparation by the Peshitta Institute, Leiden; (I, Pentateuch, 1997)

-Peshitta NT. G.Kiraz. *A Computer- Generated Concordance to the Syriac NT I-VI* (1993).

(ii) Dictionaries (NT)

W.Jennigs, *Lexicon to the Syriac NT* (1926);

T.Falla, *A Key to the Peshitta Gospels I (alaph to dalath)* (1991);

G.Kiraz, *Lexical Tools to the Syriac New Testament* (1994). II (he to yudh; 2000)

(iii) Basic introductions

A. Vööbus, in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplement*(1976), 848-54;

B. M. Metzger, *Early Versions of the NT* (1977), ch. 1;

P.B. Dirksen, *The OT Peshitta*, in M.J. Mulder (ed.), *Miqra*(1988), 255-97:

S.P.Brock, in *Anchor Dictionary of the Bible*, 6 (1992), 794-9;
“, *The Bible in the Syriac Tradition* (SEERI Correspondence Course 1; 1989; expanded edition, Gorgias Press, Piscataway NJ, 2006).

(b) EXEGESIS

Several different genres were used for commentaries:

Commentaries on individual books: e.g. Ephrem, John of Apamea, Daniel of Salah etc.

Commentaries on entire Bible: Isho‘dad, Anonymous, Dionysius bar Salibi, Barhebraeus

Commentaries on Hexaemeron : Narsai (verse), Jacob of Serugh (verse), Jacob of Edessa, Moshe bar Kepha, Emmanuel bar Shahhare (verse).

Verse homilies on episodes : Narsai, Jacob of Serugh.

Scholia: Jacob of Edessa, Theodore bar Koni.

Questions and Answers: Isho‘barnun. Theological: Philoxenus.

Commentary on the Lectionary: Gannat Bussame (‘Garden of Delights’; E).

The main translations of Greek exegetical works in Syriac translation which survive are as follows (given here in alphabetical order):

Athanasius, *On Psalms*;

Basil, *On Hexaemeron*; various homilies on particular passages;

Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* (on Pentateuch); *Homilies on Luke*;

Eusebius, *Questions and Answers on Gospel*;

Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on Song of Songs*;

John Chrysostom, *Homilies on New Testament* (only a few

fragments of those on books of the OT, and of some parts of the NT, survive):

Theodore of Mopsuestia: Commentaries on Genesis (fragments), Psalms (incomplete), Ecclesiastes, John;

The following give an approximate chronological table (and includes some works not mentioned in Ch.II; works by names in brackets do not survive). There is considerable interaction between the E and W Syrian exegetical traditions, and through Ibn at Tayyib's Arabic commentaries the East Syrian exegetical tradition reaches the later Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox traditions.

4th CENT. Ephrem

5th CENT.	Tr from Greek	Syriac authors
	Basil,	John of Apamea
	Theodore	Narsai
5th/6th CENT.	John Chrysostom	Jacob of Serugh
	Eusebius	Philoxenus
	Athanasius	John bar Aphthonia
	Gregory of Nyssa	
	Cyril of Alexandria	

6th CENT. Daniel of Salah (Ahob) (Hnana)

7th CENT. Syrohexapla Jacob of Edessa (Gabriel of Qatar)

8th CENT. George of Be'eltan Anon, Comm. Gen- Ex.9

Theodore bar Koni

9th CENT. John of Dara Isho'dad of Merv

Anon, Comm. OT, NT

10th CENT.

Emmanuel bar Shahhare

11th CENT. Ibn at Tayyib (Arabic)

12th CENT. Dionysius bar Salibi

13th CENT. Barhebraeus Gannat Bussame (Comm. On Lectionary).

A good introductory guide to Syriac exegetical literature on the Old Testament is provided by L. van Rompay, in M. Saebo(ed.), *Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation*, I, i (Göttingen, 1996), 612-41 and I. ii (Göttingen, 2000)559-77; and in his 'La littérature exegetique syriaque et le rapprochement des traditions syrienne orientale et syrienne occidentale', *Parole de l' Orient* 20 (1995), 221-35. for the New Testament a survey is given by J.C. McCullough, in *Near East School of Theology, Theological Review* 5 (1982), 14-33, 79-126.

(c) LITURGY

Anaphoras

(1) Church of the East: three Anaphoras are in use, the principal one being that of Addai and Mari (or 'the Apostles'); this is the oldest surviving Christian anaphora still in use. The other two anaphoras (both probably translated from Greek) are attributed to Theodore of Mopsuestia and to Nestorius. There is a critical edition (with a study) of the anaphora of Addai and Mari by A. Gelston, *The Eucharistic Prayer of Addai and Mari* (1991), and of the anaphora of Theodore by J. Vadakkal, *The East Syriac Anaphora of Mar Theodore of Mopsuestia* (1989). Several translations of the three anaphoras exist, e.g. K.A. Paul and G. Mookan (1967).

(2) Syrian Orthodox (and Maronite): over 70 anaphoras survive (a list is given in A. Raes, *Anaphorae Syriacae* I. i (1939), xi-xiv; also in *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 102 (1988), 441-45). Attributions are to names from the apostolic times to the middle ages, and in several cases the attribution may vary in the different manuscripts. Some anaphoras are related to anaphoras in other liturgical traditions; thus the Syrian Orthodox anaphora of the XII

Apostles is related to the Greek anaphora of John Chrysostom, and the (Maronite) anaphora known as the Sharrar(or Peter III) is related to the East Syrian anaphora of Addai and Mari. A critical edition of 22 anaphoras, with facing Latin translations, is to be found in the series *Anaphorae Syriacae* (Rome, 1939-); the volumes published contain:

I. i (1939), Timothy of Alexandria. Severus of Antioch; I.ii (1940) Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, XII Apostles I-II; I. iii (1944)Dioscorus I- II, Cyril; II .i (1951) Jacob of Serugh I-III, John Saba; II.ii (1953) James I-II, Gregory John; II. iii(1973) Celestine, Peter III(=Sharrar), Thomas; III.i (1981) John of Bosra, Jacob of Edessa, Julius. Latin translations of many other unpublished anaphoras can be found in E.Renaudot, *Liturgiarum Orientalium Collectio II* (1716, repr. 1847, 1970).

Two current bilingual editions contain quite a large selection of anaphoras:

A.Konat (ed.; Pampakuda 1986), Syriac – Malayalam, :James(short), Dionysius bar Salibi I, John Chrysostom [=John of Harran], John the Evangelist, Mattai the Shepherd, Eustathius I, Julius, Xystus, Peter II, XII Apostles II, Isaac,Abraham the Hunter, and one compiled from different anaphoras.

Mar Athanasius Samuel (ed.; Lodi, NJ, 1991), Syriac- English: James, Mark, Peter II,XII Apostles II, John the Evangelist, Xystus, Julius, John Chrysostom [= John of Harran in Raes' list], Cyril of Alexandria, Jacob of Serugh I, Philoxenus I, Severus, Dionysius bar Salibi I.

Baptism

(1) Church of the East. The present service is said to goes back to Isho‘yahb III (d. 659); a translation can be found in Paul and Mookan (see above, under anaphoras).

(2) Syrian Orthodox. The present service is attributed to Severus of Antioch; it exists in two somewhat different forms, one associated

with Antioch, the other with Tagrit. Two other baptismal services also survive but are no longer in use, one attributed to Timothy of Alexandria, the other anonymous; these have several links with the Maronite rite.

There is a bilingual, Syriac- English, edition of the Antioch rite by A.Y.Samuel(1974), who also published bilingual editions of the marriage and funeral services (1974); an English translation of the Tagrit rite (also in use in India) is to be found in M. Elenjikal, *Baptism in the Malankara Church* (1974). The other two old services are translated by S.P.Brock in *Le Muséon* 63 (1970), 367-431 [Timothy], and *Parole de l' Orient* 8 (1977/8), 311-46[anon].

(3) Maronite. The service is attributed to Jacob of Serugh (and indeed there are many parallels with his writings). A photographic edition of the oldest manuscripts, with French translations, is given by A. Mouhanna, *les rites de l' initiation dans l'Église maronite* (1978); a revised text (of 1942) is in current use.

(4) Melkite. The earliest form of the service, before the rite was Byzantinised in the middle ages, survives in a few manuscripts and is attributed to Basil. A short text with some very archaic features is also preserved, (ed. and tr. S.P.Brock, *Parole in l' Orient* (1972), 119-30).

Weekday Office and Festal Hymnary(Hudra/ Fenqitho)

(1) Church of the East. ET of weekday office by A.J.Maclean, *East Syrian Daily Offices* (1894, repr.1969). ET of specific parts of the Hudra are to be found in J.Moolan, *The Period of Annuciation Nativity...*(1985); P. Kuruthukulangara, *The Feast of the Nativity...* (1989) and V. Pathikulangara, *Resurrection, Life and Renewal...*(1982).

(2) Syrian Orthodox. ET of weekday office (Shehimo) by Bede Griffiths, *Book of Common Prayer of the Syrian Church* (1965); bilingual edition (SEERI, 2005) adapted ET by Francis Acharya, *Prayer with the Harp of the Spirit* (1980). Adapted ET of Fenqitho by Francis Acharya, *The Crown of the Year I-III* (1982-6).

(3) Maronite. ET of Fenqitho, The Prayer of the Faithful according to the Maronite Liturgical Year I-III (1982-5).

(d) CANON LAW

East Syrian

The most important collection is a vast corpus of some 80 texts whose final redaction has been associated with Catholicos Elia I (d. 1049), but which may in fact be somewhat later. The texts are arranged in approximate chronological order, and the most important constituent parts are:

- Pseudo-Apostolic canons (in two collections, of 27 and 83 canons);

- Canons of Ancyra, Neocaesarea, Nicaea, Gangra, Antioch, Laodicaea, Constantinople I, Carthage, Chalcedon;

- Letter of Marutha and 73 canons [ET];

- Various synodal and other letters;

- Synods of the Church of the East (often known as the 'Synodicon Orientale') [FT,ET forthcoming]); this consists of: Synod of Isaac (410); Synod of Yahballaha I (419/20); Synod of Dadisho ' (423/4); Synod of Aqaq (485,486); Synod of Baboi (497); Synod of Aba (543/4); Synod of Joseph (554); Synod of Ezekiel (576); Synod of Isho 'yahb I (585/6); Synod of Sabrisho ' (596); Synod of Gregory (605); Synod of Giwargis (George) (676). Some further documents are also included.

- Various monastic rules [ET];

- Statutes of the School of Nisibis [ET];

- Legal decisions of Hnanisho ' (773-780), Timothy I (780-823); Isho ' barnun (823-28);

- Legal compendia by Simeon of Revardashir (7th cen.), Isho ' bokht (8th /9th cent.) and 'Abdisho ' bar Bahriz (9th cent.);

- Syro-Roman Law Book;

- Various documents of Timothy I;
- Various treatises on inheritance.

Other East Syrian compendia include those of Gabriel of Basra (884/91), which does not survive complete; the Nomocanon [LT] and Rules of ecclesiastical judgements, [LT] compiled by ‘Abdisho’, metropolitan of Soba (Nisibis; =96 above); and the Book of the Fathers (Liber Patrum [LT]), attributed to the fourth-century Catholicos Simeon bar Sabba‘e, but belonging probably to the 13th/ 14th century. An important East Syrian compendium of canon law was produced in Arabic by Ibn at Tayyib (d. 1043), entitled *Fiqh an-Nasraniya* (Law of Christianity).

Helpful guides to the legal texts of the Church of the East can be found in A. Thazhat, *The Juridical Sources of the Syro-Malabar Church* (Kottayam 1987), and in W.Selb, *Orientalisches Kirchenrecht, I, Die Geschichte des Kirchenrechts der Nestorianer* (Wien, 1981). In French there is a fine survey article on the canon law of the Church of the East by J. Dauvillier in *Dictionnaire de droit canonique*.

West Syrian

Several large collections of canons survive, of somewhat varying content. One of these manuscripts (Damascus Patr. 8/11 of 1204) has been published in full under the title ‘The Synodicon...’[ET]; among the constituent elements of this particular collection are the following:

- Apostolic canon;
- Apostolic ordinances through Hippolytus;
- Canons of Nicaea, Ancyra, Neocaesarea, Gangra, Antioch, Laodicaea, Constantinople I, Ephesus I, Chalceodon;
- Canons of John bar Qursos;
- Canons of Rabbula;
- Excerpts from Severus’ Letters;

-Excerpts from Jacob of Edessa;

-Canons of the patriarchs George, Quryaqos, Dionysius, John, and Ignatius;

-Texts on various topics, e.g. unlawful marriage and inheritance, derived from Muslim law:

-Syro- Roman Law Book;

-Many further excerpts from Severus and others;

-Canons of the monastery of Mar Mattai;

- Canons of John of Mardin for the monastery of Mar Hnanya (= modern Deir ez-Za`faran, outside Mardin).

Other important collections are the fourth - century Didascalia Apostolorum [ET] (lost in Greek), which is incorporated into some of the synodical collections; and the Acts of the Second Council of Ephesus(449) [GT,ET], preserved in a single early manuscript. Barhebraeus' Nomocanon provides a collection of canons arranged thematically.

The best guides to the West Syrian texts are A. Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonensammlungen, I A,B Westsyrische Originalurkunde* (CSCO 307,317; 1970),

And W. Selb, *Orientalisches Kirchenrecht, 2, Die Geschichte des Kirchenrechts der Westsyrer* (Wien, 1989).

(c) MONASTIC LITERATURE AND SPIRITUALITY

It is convenient to distinguish between several different periods:

(1) 3rd/ 4th century

In this period the native Syriac ascetic tradition took on certain characteristics which distinguish it from early monastic developments at the same time in Egypt; the best witness to this 'proto-monasticism' (as it may be called) is provided by Aphrahat, *Demonstrations* 6-7. The consecrated life is lived within the Christian community, either in common households, or within the family itself,

and not physically withdrawn from it (as was the case in Egypt), and evidently certain ascetic vows were undertaken (perhaps at baptism, which in those days normally took place in adulthood). Two terms in particular are used of people, *ihidaye* and *bnay qyama*; although later on *ihidaya* came to mean ‘solitary’, or just ‘monk’ (translating Greek *monachos*). In the fourth century the term had much wider connotations, notably ‘single’ (celibate), ‘single-minded’, and (above all) follower and imitator of Christ the *Ihidaya* (the term which translates Greek *monogenes*). The origins and semantic background of the other term, *bnay qyama* (singular *bar/bath qyama*), are disputed and the conventional translation ‘sons (i.e. members) of the covenant’ is not certain. It would appear that the terms *ihidaye* and *bnay qyama* both refer to individuals who live a consecrated life; within this group the *bthule/bthulatha*, ‘virgins’ (male and female) are the unmarried, while the *qaddishe* (literally ‘holy’) are the married couples who have renounced sexual intercourse (the term derives from Exodus 19, verses 10, 15). An important text from the end of this period is the *Book of Steps* (*Liber Graduum*).

(2) 5th /6th century

In this period the indigenous Syrian protomonastic tradition became absorbed into the mainstream monastic tradition that originated in Egypt in two different forms, the cenobitic tradition of Pachomius, and the eremitical tradition of Antony. In the course of these two centuries Egyptian monastic tradition gained more and more prestige, and all the main texts concerning early Egyptian monasticism were translated from Greek into Syriac (notably Athanasius’ *Life of Antony*, Palladius’ *Lausiatic History*, the *Historia Monachorum*, and various collections of *Apophthegmata*, or *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*). In due course memory of the Syriac protomonastic tradition faded away and was forgotten; as a result of this new origins for Syrian monasticism were sought out, and the foundation of Syrian and Mesopotomian monasticism came to be accredited to the Egyptian Mar Awgen (Eugenius) and his disciples. Also translated into Syriac in this period were many other Greek

monastic writings, notably many works by Evagrius (d.399), the Macarian Homilies, Basil's ascetic writings, the Areopagite, the Asceticon of Abba Isaiah, works by Mark the Monk and others.

The earliest Syriac author of this period is John of Apameia (who seems to belong to the early fifth century). Though many of his works still remain to be published, John is emerging as a figure of major importance, both in his own right, and for the influence he evidently had on the later Syriac tradition (he is the originator of what became the standard three-fold pattern of the spiritual life, the stages of the body, of the soul and of the spirit).

From the 6th century the most important relevant writers are Philoxenus and Stephen bar Sudhaili in the West Syriac tradition, and Babai the Great in the East (the mid 6th century had witnessed a monastic revival, led by Abraham of Kashkar in the Church of the East).

(3) 7th /8th century

This is the period of the flowering of the East Syrian monastic tradition, which produced a large number of famous authors writing on various aspects of the spiritual life, notably Sahdona/Martyrius, Isaac of Nineveh, John of Dalyatha (John the Elder, or Saba), and Joseph the Seer (Hazzaya). In the 7th century 'Ananisho' collected together into single volume, entitled *The Paradise of the Fathers*, the classic Egyptian monastic texts; commentaries on various earlier monastic texts were also provided (notably by Dadisho', on Abba Isaiah's Asceticon, and on various Apophthegmata). Several of these East Syriac monastic texts evidently reached Palestine in the 8th century; the homilies forming the 'First Part' of Isaac's works (along with a short form of Philoxenus' Letter to Patricius and four homilies by John of Dalyatha) were translated into Greek at the monastery of Mar Saba, while works by a number of different East Syriac monastic authors of this period were read and copied in Syriac by Chalcedonian Orthodox monks (and survive in the Library of St Catherine's Monastery, Sinai).

West Syriac monastic authors of this period appear to have concentrated their energies in different directions: instead of writing on monastic topics they engaged in translating and commenting on texts of Greek provenance (biblical, ecclesiastical and secular). Most famous of these scholar-monks is Jacob of Edessa (d.708). (It should be remembered that over the centuries it has normally been monastic copyists who have transmitted to us the Syriac texts that survive to this day).

(4) 9th century

Two important monastic histories, by Isho'dnah and Thomas of Marga, belong to this century.

(5) 12th /13th century

This was a period of revived literary activity in Syriac, and a notable feature is the use of Muslim religious works by some Syriac writers: thus, for example, Barhebraeus in his *Ethicon* makes considerable use of an influential work by al-Ghazzali.

Many relevant texts of this, and later periods, remain unpublished, let alone studied.

The following are the main relevant authors/works, in chronological order (numbers in brackets refer to Section III):

4th century

Aphrahat, *Demonstrations* 6-7(=11)

Liber Graduum/ Book of Steps(=13).

5th /6th centuries

(i) Syriac writers

John of Apamea (John the Solitary) (=16).

Jacob of Serugh (=20), various memre and letters

Philoxenus(=22), *Discourses*, *Letter to Patricius*, and other letters.

Isaac of Antioch (=23), various memre.

Stephen bar Sudhaili(=26), Book of the Holy Hierotheos.

Sergius of Resh `aina(=27), On the spiritual life.

(ii) Translations from Greek

Evagrius, numerous works

Macarian Homilies

Athanasius, Life of Antony

Palladius, Lausiaca History

Historia Monachorum

Apophthegmata/Saying of the Desert Fathers

Ammonas, Letters

Abba Isaiah, Asceticon

Mark the Monk, various works

‘Dionysius the Areopagite’ (first translation, by Sergius)

Theodore of Mopsuestia, lost book on ‘the Perfection of the Way of Life’.

6th /7th centuries

(i) Syriac writers

Abraham of Nathpar (=38).

Shubhalmaran(=42)

Babai (=43), Commentary on Evagrius’ Centuries; (lost ‘Book of Perfection’)

Martyrius/Sahdona (=44), Book of Perfection.

Gregory of Cyprus (=48)

‘Ananisho’, compiler of Book of the Paradise (of Egyptian Fathers).

Isaac of Nineveh(=55).

Shem'on d-Taybutheh(=56).

Dadisho' (=57).

(ii) Translations from Greek

'Dionysius the Areopagite' (second translation, by Phokas, late 7th cent)

John Climacus, *The Spiritual Ladder*.

8th century

John of Dalyatha (John the Elder/ Saba) (=66).

Joseph Hazzaya(=67)

9th century

Monastic histories by Thomas of Marga (=79) and Isho'dnah(=80).

13th century

Barhebraeus (=95), *Book of the Dove*, *Ethicon*.

(Many monastic writings from the 7th century onwards remain unpublished).

Excerpts in translation can be found in:

S.P.Brock, *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (Kalamazoo 1987).

A. Mingana, *Early Christian Mystics* (Woodbrooke Studies 7, 1934).

The following works provide a general orientation:

S. Beggiani, *Introduction to Eastern Christian Spirituality: the Syriac Tradition* (Scranton 1991)

R.Beulay, *La lumière sans forme. Introduction à l'étude de la mystique chrétienne syro- orientale* (Chevetogne 1987).

G. Blum, *Mysticism in the Syriac Tradition* (SEERI Correspondence Course 7, 1990).

R. C. Bondi, 'The spirituality of Syriac-speaking Christians', in B. McGinn and J. Meyendorf (eds), *Christian Spirituality. Origins to Twelfth Century* (London 1986), 152-61.

S. P. Brock, 'Syriac spirituality', in C.P.M. Jones and others (eds), *The Study of Spirituality* (London 1986), 199-215.

-, 'Spirituality in the Syriac Tradition' (SEERI, Moran Etho series 2, 1989 ;2nd edn 2005).

A. Guillaumont and I.H. Dalmais, *Syriaque (spiritualité)*, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 14 (1990), 1429-50.

A. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient* (3 vols, CSCO Subs.; 1958, 1960, 1988).

P. Yousif, 'An introduction to the East Syrian Spirituality', in A. Thottakara (ed.), *East Syrian Spirituality* (Bangalore 1990), 1-97.

For the early period (especially 4th cent.) and the distinctive Syriac 'proto-monastic' tradition the following are helpful:

S. Abouzayd, *Ihidayutha: a study of the life of singleness in the Syrian Orient* (Oxford 1993).

E. Beck, 'Asceticisme et monachisme chez s. Ephrem', *L'Orient Syrien* 3 (1958), 273-98.

S.P. Brock, 'Early Syrian 'asceticism'', *Numen* 20 (1973), 1-19, reprinted in *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (London 1984).

-, 'The ascetic ideal: St Ephrem and proto-monasticism', in his *The Luminous Eye* (Rome 1985 / Kalamazoo 1992), ch.8.

S. Griffith, 'Singles in God's service...', *The Harp* 4 (1991), 145-59.

-, 'Monks, "Singles" and the "Sons of the Covenant"...', in *Eulogema: Studies in honor of R. Taft* (Studia Anselmiana 110, 1994), 141-60.

“, Asceticism in the Church of Syria. The hermeneutics of early Syrian monasticism”, in V.L. Wimbush and R. Valantasis (eds), *Asceticism* (1995), 220-48).

A. Guillaumont, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien* (Abbaye de Bellefontaine 1979).

T. Koonammakkal, ‘Early Christian monastic origins. A general introduction in the context of Syriac Orient’, *The Christian Orient* 13 (1992), 139-62.

R. Murray, ‘The exhortation to candidates for ascetical vows at baptism in the ancient Syriac Church’, *New Testament Studies* 21 (1974/5), 59-80.

-, ‘The characteristics of the earliest Syriac Christianity’, in N. Garsoian and others (eds), *East of Byzantium. Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington DC 1982), 3-16.

G. Nedungatt, ‘The covenanters of the early Syriac-speaking church’, *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 39 (1973), 191-215, 419-44.

C. Stewart, *Working the Earth of the Heart: the Messalian Controversy in History, Texts and Language to AD 431* (Oxford 1991). [Of relevance to the Book of Steps].

Many good articles on individual authors of all periods can be found in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*. A collection of some surviving monastic rules can be found in A. Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic Documents regarding Legislation relative to Syrian Asceticism* (Stockholm 1960).

(f) CHRONICLES

Historical writing in Syriac has taken on several different forms. For World History (beginning with Creation) and for Church History the models were provided by Eusebius of Caesarea, whose *Chronicon* and *Church History* were both translated into Syriac (though neither survives in complete form). The earliest Syriac writer

to compose a World History was Jacob of Edessa (= 61; d.708), but of this only fragments survive; for Ecclesiastical History the earliest Syriac writer was John of Ephesus (=34; late 6th cent.) Earlier historical writing in Syriac took the form of local histories, the earliest to survive being the work usually known today as that of 'Joshua the Stylite' (=25), belonging to the early sixth century.

Many Syriac chronicles and other historical works no longer survive, or are only partially known through their re-use by later writers. A particularly important chronicle which is now lost is that of the Syrian Orthodox patriarch Dionysius of Telmahre (d.845), covering AD 582-842; considerable use of it, however, was made by both Michael the Great (=89) and the anonymous author of the chronicle to the year 1234 (=93), so that a certain amount of it can be approximately reconstructed.

The seventh century, in particular, produced a number of apocalyptic texts, where descriptions of contemporary events are provided with an apocalyptic outcome; notable examples are the poem on Alexander the Great (=49), from the late 620s, and the Apocalypse of Ps. Methodius (=59), of c. 691/2.

-Surviving World Histories (covering from Creation to the time of the author):

Ps. Dionysius of Telmahre/Zuqnin Chronicle (=69).

Michael the Great (=89)

Anonymous (=93), Chronicle up to the year 1234.

Barhebraeus (=95), Chronicon.

-Ecclesiastical Histories:

John of Ephesus (=34).

Ps.Zacharias Rhetor (=36).

Barhadbeshabba 'Arbaya (=40).

Barhebraeus (=95), Ecclesiastical History.

-Local histories:

‘Joshua the Stylite’ (=25).

Chronicle of Edessa(=33).

[Chronicle of Arbela: great uncertainty surrounds this work: the editor (Mingana) claimed it as a sixth-century work, but according to some it could be the work of Mingana himself; at present the matter remains unresolved].

Khuzistan Chronicle (=53).

Many shorter, or fragmentary, chronicles also survive. For monastic histories, see (e) above.

For a general orientation the following are useful: S.P.Brock, ‘Syriac sources for seventh-century history’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 2 (1976), 17-36, reprinted in *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (1984),ch. 7.

-, ‘Syriac historical writing: a survey of the main sources’, *Journal of the Iraqi Academy (Syriac Corporation)* 5 (1979/80), 297-326, reprinted in *Studies in Syriac Christianity* (1992),ch. 1.

L.Conrad, ‘Syriac perspectives on Bilad al- Sham during the Abbasid period’, in M.A. Al- Bakhit and R.Schick (eds), *Bilad al-Sham during the Abbasid Period: 5th International Conference (Amman1991)*,1-44.

J-M. Fiey, ‘Les chroniquers syriaques avaient-ils le sens critique?’ *Parole de l’Orient* 12 (1984/5), 253-64.

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R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw it* (Princeton, 1997), 116-215

A.N.Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (1993). [Translations of excerpts with introductions].

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of Islamic peoples', in B. Lewis and P.M. Holt (eds), *Historians of the Middle East* (1962), 246-58.

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(g) SECULAR LITERATURE

This can conveniently be divided into (1) popular, and (2) learned

(1) Popular literature

Much of this literature is international in character, and can be found translated into many different languages. Notable examples are:

-The Story of Ahikar (=III. 10). Originating probably in the sixth or fifth century BC, this Aramaic story was translated into Greek in the Hellenistic period; though this Greek version does not survive, it provided the source for a section, based on Ahikar, in the extant Greek *Life of Aesop*; it also served as the basis for the later translations of the Story of Ahikar into Slavonic. The Syriac form of the story survives in several slightly different forms, and it was from Syriac that the other oriental versions ultimately arrive (Arabic, Armenian, Old Turkish, Modern Syriac etc.).

-Aesop's Fables. The Fables of Aesop are much older than the *Life of Aesop*, and they are transmitted in a number of different forms. A collection of them came to be translated into Syriac (ed. + FT, B. Lefevre, 1941) and there the name Aisopos came to be corrupted into Iosipos (i.e. Josephus!). The Syriac in turn served as the basis for a translation into Arabic (where Aesop now takes on the name Loqman), and back (!) into Greek (at Melitene, end of the 11th century) where the work is attributed to 'Syntipas' - since it was translated at the same time as the story of Sindbad (=Greek Syntipas), another popular work, perhaps of Middle Persian origin.

-Kalilah and Dimnah. This collection of delightful Indian animal stories (which are preserved in the *Pancatantra*) was translated into Middle Persian (lost) in the sixth century, and thence (by a certain

Budh) into Syriac; this first Syriac translation is the earliest extant witness to the collection in the Middle East/West Asia. The Middle Persian text was translated into Arabic in the 9th century by Ibn al Muqaffa, and from this Arabic version a second Syriac translation was made (at an unknown date). The Arabic was also the source for many other medieval translations, into Persian, Greek, Spanish and Hebrew, and it was through these translations that the work reached western Europe in the 16th and 17th century (under the name 'Bidpay' or 'Pilpay'), where it was to enjoy immense popularity. (For translations of the two Syriac versions, see Section V).

-The History of Alexander the Great, by Pseudo-Callisthenes, was another text which caught the popular imagination and so got translated (from Greek) into many different languages, both oriental and western. The Syriac version (ed.+ET, E.A.W. Budge, 1889) surprisingly was not translated direct from Greek, but may come by way of a lost Middle Persian version; the work gave rise to a number of Syriac works devoted to the theme of Alexander, notably a long apocalyptic poem of the early seventh century (=III.49), which is often wrongly attributed to Jacob of Serugh.

(2) Learned literature

This may concern a variety of different fields, natural science, geography, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, rhetoric etc. It needs to be remembered that many works in these areas have been lost. Surviving works devoted specifically to natural sciences are rare (Job of Edessa's Book of Treasures, (=73), is exceptional in this respect), and for the most part these topics (and geography) are dealt with in the course of commentaries on the Six Days of Creation (Hexaemeron): thus the Hexaemeron commentaries by Jacob of Edessa and Moshe bar Kephah, in particular, contain a great deal of material relevant to these subjects. On astronomy works by Sergius of Resh'aina, Severus Sebokht and (above all) Barhebraeus survive. In the Abbasid period (especially 8th/9th century) Gundishapor (Beth Lapat) was famous for its Syriac medical school, and many medical works in Syriac

were produced at this period, although only very few of these survive. One particularly influential work was Hunayn ibn Ishaq's *Medical Questions*: this work which is extant in both Syriac and Arabic, was translated into Latin, where it was known as the *Eisagoge* (Introduction) of Ioannitius, and has been described as 'one of the most widely diffused early translations of Arabic medicine' in western Europe.

The first Syriac author to pay serious attention to Greek philosophy was Sergius of Resh'aina (III. 27), who provided Syriac readers with introductions to the earlier of Aristotle's logical works (the *Organon*), which formed the basis of all higher education in Late Antiquity. Many subsequent writers dealt with similar topics, and several provided commentaries, either to specific books within the *Organon* (thus Probus, who perhaps belongs to the 6th century), or to the entire *Organon* (thus Dionysius bar Salibi and Barhebraeus). Others, like Severus Sebokht, Athanasius of Balad and Jacob of Edessa in the seventh century, provided introductory materials for the benefit of Syriac readers embarking on philosophical studies. The 12th and 13th centuries witnessed a great deal of activity of an encyclopaedic nature, covering all areas of human knowledge; many of the relevant texts still await proper publication and study: remarkably, this even applies to Barhebraeus' largest and most important encyclopedic works on philosophy, the *Cream of Sciences*. (For translations from Greek, see below).

In the field of rhetoric the main works are by Anton of Tagrit, Jacob bar Shakko, and Barhebraeus. The standard Greek grammar of Late Antiquity, by Dionysius Thrax, was translated (and adapted) into Syriac as early as the sixth century.

TRANSLATIONS

Syriac writers also played a very important role in translating Greek Scientific, medical and philosophical works. This took place in three main phases: (1) sixth-century translations, sometimes fairly interpretative in character; (2) seventh-century revisions, or new translations, usually aiming to reproduce the original Greek very

accurately; and (3) ninth-century translations (and revisions), usually serving as a stepping-stone to translation into Arabic.

One of the earliest Syriac writers to undertake this sort of work was Sergius of Resh'aina who, besides translating the Dionysian Corpus into Syriac, also translated an influential pseudo-Aristotelian treatise 'On the Universe', and Alexander of Aphrodisias' 'Causes of the Universe' (lost in the Greek original), together with a considerable number of works by Galen. Various anonymous translations of more popular Greek philosophical literature of an ethical nature were probably undertaken in this earlier period: these include translations of treatises by Isocrates, Lucian, Plutarch, Themistius, as well as a pseudo-Platonic dialogue on the soul (whose Greek original is lost), various sayings of Greek philosophers (among them, the Pythagorean woman philosopher Theano). Also belonging to this first period will be the earliest translations of Aristotle's logical works (which forms the basis of higher education in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages), together with Porphyry's Introduction (Eisagoge) to them (these translations have sometimes been attributed to Sergius, but for no good reason).

During the second period a number of revised (and more literal) translations were made of books of the Organon; many of the scholars engaged in this work seem to have had connections with the monastery of Qenneshre (on the Euphrates); prominent among them was the Syrian Orthodox patriarch Athanasius II (d.687) and George, bishop of the Arab Tribes (d.724)

The third period (late eighth and especially, ninth century) witnessed a great flurry of translation activity from Greek into both Syriac and Arabic, thanks to the general patronage of a number of the Abbasid caliphs and the growing interest of Arab scholars in the heritage of Greek philosophy and science. Many of the earlier translators belonged to one or other of the Syriac Churches, and frequently they found it more convenient to translate first from Greek into Syriac (for which there was the advantage of several centuries of translation experience), and then from Syriac into Arabic (for which

there was no prior experience). The most famous of these translators was Hunayn ibn Ishaq (d.c.873), whose translation work covered biblical, medical and philosophical texts (he was also an author in his own right).

Since Arabic tended to replace Syriac as a vehicle for learned secular literature in the Middle Ages, many Syriac translations ceased to be copied (this seems to apply especially to those made in the third period); thus it is known from quotations in Syriac authors such as Moshe bar Kepha, John of Dara, Dionysius bar Salibi, Jacob bar Shakko, Barhebraeus and others, that many Greek scientific, medical and philosophical works must once have existed in Syriac translation, even though no manuscripts of these survive- or where they do, they are in a very fragmentary state (this applies, for example, to the Syriac versions of Euclid and of Theophrastus' Meteorology).

General orientations, and guides to particular topics, can be found in the following:

S.P.Brock, 'Greek into Syriac and Syriac into Greek', = ch.2 in SPB, *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (London 1984).

-, 'From antagonism to assimilation: Syriac attitudes to Greek learning', = ch 5 in *Syriac Perspectives*.

-, 'Towards a history of Syriac translation technique'. III Symposium Syriacum (OCA 221,1982). 1-14, = *Studies in Syriac Christianity* (Aldershot 1992), ch.

-, 'The Syriac Background to Hunayn's translation techniques', *Aram* 3 (1991), 139-62.

-, 'The Syriac Commentary tradition' [on Aristotle's *Organon*], in C.Burnett (ed.), *Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts* (London 1993), 3-18.

-, 'Syriac translations of Greek popular philosophy', in P. Bruns (ed.), *Von Athen nach Bagdad* (Bonn, 2003), 9-28.

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historisches Journal 7 (1972). 114- 22.

-, 'Galen im syrischen', in V.Nutton (ed), *Galen: Problems and Prospectus* (London 1981), 131-66.

De Lacy o' Leary, *How Greek Science passed to the Arabs* (1949).

M.Dols, 'Syriac into Arabic: the transmission of Greek medicine' *Aram* 1 (1989),45-52.

G.Endress, 'Philosophie und Wissenschaften bei den Syrern', in H.Gaetje, *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie II* (Wiesbaden 1987),407-12.

H.Hugonnard- Roche, *La logique d' Aristote: du grec au syriaque* (Paris, 2004).

-, 'La philosophie syriaque à l' époque des Omeyyades', in *Les Syriaques, transmetteurs de civilisations* (Antélias, 2005), 37-50.

-, 'Textes philosophiques et scientifiques', in *Nos sources. Arts et Littérature syriaques* (Antélias, 2005), 475-509.

G.Panicker, 'The Book of Treasures' [by Job of Edessa], *The Harp* 8/9 (1995/6),151-9.

F.E.Peters, 'The Greek and Syriac background', in S.Hossein Nasr and O.Leaman (eds), *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London 1996),40-51.

G.Strohmaier, 'Hunayn ibn Ishaq – an Arab scholar translating into Syriac', *Aram* 3 (1991), 163-70.

G.Troupeau, 'Le role des syriaques dans la transmission et l' exploitation du patrimoine philosophique et scientifique grec', *Arabica* 38 (1991), 1-10

J.Watt, ' Grammar, rhetoric and the Enkylios Paideia in Syriac', *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 143 (1993), 45-71.

-, 'The Syriac reception of Platonic and Aristotelian rhetoric', *Aram* 5 (1993), 579 – 601.

-, 'Syriac and Syrians as mediators of Greek political thought to Islam', *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 57 (2004), 121-49.

M.Zonta, *Fonti greche e orientali dell' Economia di Bar-Hebraeus nell' opera La Crema della Scienza*', (Naples 1992).

VII

SELECT GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

For the most part the following is largely restricted to works in English.

(a) Introductions to Syriac literature

An initial orientation is given by S.P.Brock, 'An introduction to Syriac Studies', (revised edition, Piscataway NJ, 2006); and 'Syriac sources and resources for Byzantinists', in Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantinists, I (Ashgate, 2006), 192-210. More detailed introductory guidance can be found in the chapters on Syriac literature in two very useful handbooks: (1) by M.Albert, in A.Guillamont and others, *Christianismes orientaux* (Paris 1993), 297-372; and (2) by P.Bettiolo, in A. di Berardino, *Patrology: The Eastern Fathers* (ET, Cambridge, 2006), 407-90. Introductory booklets covering various aspects of Syriac studies are available as part of SEERI's Correspondence Course [1990].

The standard histories of Syriac literature in western languages are (in chronological order):

-J.S.Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* (3 vols, Rome 1718-28; repr. Hildesheim 1975, and piscataway NJ, 2002). This monumental work (by a Maronite scholar) provided the foundation for all subsequent histories of Syriac literature, and although much is now out of date, it remains the sole source for a great deal of basic information.

-W.Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London 1894, repr. Piscataway NJ, 2001). Wright had an extensive knowledge of Syriac literature as a result of his having catalogued the large collection of Syriac manuscripts in the British Museum, and this still remains a useful book for the more advanced student of the subject; it is not suitable, however, as an introductory work.

-R.Duval, *La littérature syriaque* (3rd ed. Paris 1907); this remains the best general introduction.

-De Lacy O'Leary, *The Syriac Church and Fathers* (London 1909). A summary treatment, and rather outdated.

-A. Baumstark, *Die christlichen Literaturen des Ostens, I* (Leipzig 1911). The selection on Syriac literature is a helpful general orientation, and much more readable than the following work.

-A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (Bonn 1922). This remains the standard work, indispensable for all serious study of the subject; it has by far the most detailed coverage (including details of manuscripts), but the presentation and cramped German style makes for difficult reading (indeed, it is primarily a work for reference, rather than continuous reading).

-J.B.Chabot, *La littérature syriaque* (Paris 1934). Much shorter than Duval, but a useful introductory work by a scholar who had an exceptionally wide knowledge of Syriac literature.

-A. Baumstark and A. Rucker, in *Handbuch der Orientalistik III, Semitistik* (Leiden 1954), 169-204. Useful, but inevitably rather selective.

-I. Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca* (2nd ed. Rome 1965). This Latin handbook is an extremely useful work of reference; it is clearly set out and has succinct (but now often outdated) bibliographies. A French translation (by R. Lavenant), bringing it up to date, has been promised.

-R. Macuch, *Geschichte der spät-und neusyrischen Literatur* (Berlin 1976). This covers literature in both Classical and Modern

Syriac up to the present day; coverage of Classical Syriac is from c. 14th century onwards, the period neglected in other histories of Syriac literature. The book is in fact based on three important histories of Syriac literature by scholars from Syria (E. Barsaüm, 2nd edn. 1956), Iraq (A. Abouna, 1970) and Iran (P. Sarmas, 1969-70). Barsaüm's book is now available in English translation (by M. Moosa), *The Scattered Pearls: A History of Syriac Literature and Sciences* (2nd edn., Piscataway, 2003). A useful collection of chapters on main genres and topics is to be found in *Nos Sources: Arts et littérature syriaques* (Antelias, 2005).

A great deal of information on particular authors can be found in the three volumes of A. Vööbus' *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient* (CSCO Subs. 14.17.81 (1958, 1960, 1988)).

(b) Monographs on some individual Syriac authors (in alphabetical order)

BARDAISAN : H.J.W. Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa* (Assen 1965).

BARHEBRAEUS: H. Takahashi, *Barhebraeus, a Bio-Bibliography* (Piscataway NJ, 2005).

EARLY WRITERS : R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: a study in early Syriac tradition* (Cambridge 1975; revised edition Piscataway NJ, 2004); S.J. Beggiani, *Early Syriac Theology* (Lanham 1979).

EPHREM: S.P. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: the Spiritual World Vision of St Ephrem* (Rome 1985 V; Kalamazoo 1992); T. Bou Mansour, *La pensée symbolique de saint Ephrem* (Kaslik 1988). U. Possek, *Evidence of Greek Philosophical Concepts in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian* (CSCO Subs. 102, 1999); K. den Biesen, *Simple and Bold. ephrem's Art of Symbolic Thought* (Piscataway NJ, 2006); S. Ephrem: *un poète pour notre temps* (Antelias, 2007).

ISAAC of NINEVEH: H. Alfeyev, *The Spiritual World of Isaac the Syrian* (Kalamazoo, 2000); S. Chialà, *Dall' asceti eemitica alla*

misericordia infinita. Ricerche su Isacco di Ninive e la sua fortuna (Florence, 2002).

JACOB OF SERUGH: T.Bou Mansour, La théologie de Jacques de Saroug, I -II(Kaslik 1993, 2000). T Kollampampil, Salvation in Christ according to Jacob of Serugh (Bangalore, 2001).

JOHN SABA (JOHN OF DALYATHA): R.Beulay, L'enseignement spirituel de Jean de Dalyatha (Paris 1990).

PHILOXENUS: A. de Halleux, Philoxène de Mabboug. Sa vie, ses écrits, sa théologie (Louvain 1963).

TIMOTHY I: R.Bidawid, Les Lettres du patriarche nestorien Timothée I (Studi e Testi 187, 1956).

(c) Specific Topics

(1) Early History of Syriac Churches

The following are the main works available in English (in chronological order)

W.Wigram, An Introduction to the History of the Assyrian Church (London 1910). Covers up till the end of the Sasanian period; this remains a very helpful introduction.

W.A.Wigram, The Separation of the Monophysites (London 1923). A very detailed account, based on Syriac sources, concerning the Syrian Orthodox Church in the sixth century.

W.H.C.Frend, The Rise of the Monophysite Movement (Cambridge 1972). Developments in Church History in the Eastern Roman Empire from the mid 5th century to the Arab invasions; primarily based on Greek sources.

W.G.Young, Patriarch, Shah and Caliph (Rawalpindi 1974). A very helpful account of the history of the Church of the East up to and including the early Abbasid period.

J.Spencer Trimingham. Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times (London 1979). This frequently touches on Syriac Church history.

W.S.McCullough, *A Short History of Syriac Christianity to the Rise of Islam* (Chico 1982). Special attention is paid to the Church in the Persian Empire.

S.H.Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia, I, to 1500* (San Francisco 1992). Gives extensive coverage to the Syriac Churches.

J.C.England, *The Hidden History of Christianity in Asia before 1500* (Delhi/Hong Kong 1996). A helpful introduction for the general reader.

I. Gillman and H-J. Klimkeit, *Christians in Asia before 1500* (Richmond, 1999).

In French and German, the following works are important:

J.Labourt, *Le christianisme dans l'empire perse* (Paris 1904). This remains the fullest account.

P.Kawerau, *Die jakobitische Kirche im Zeitalter der syrischen Renaissance* (Berlin 1960). Deals with 12th- 13th centuries.

W.Hage, *Die syrisch-jakobitische Kirche in fruhislamischen Zeit* (Wiesbaden 1966).

J-M.Fiey, *Jalons pour une histoire de l'église en Iraq* (CSCO Subs. 36; 1970). Covers the Sasanian period and supplements Labourt.

- , *Chrétien syriaques sous les Mongols* (CSCO Subs. 44, 1975).

- , *Chrétien syriaques sous les Abbasides* (CSCO Subs. 59, 1980).

(2) Topography

E. Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites au VI e siècle* (CSCO Subs. 7, 1951).

- , *Le couvent de Barsauma et le patriarcat jacobite* (CSCO Subs. 7, 1954).

J.B.Segal. *Edessa. the Blessed City* (Oxford 1971).

J-M.Fiey, *Assyrie chétienne I-III* (Beirut 1965-8).

-, *Pour un Oriens Christianus novus. Répertoire des diocèses syriaques orientaux et occidentaux* (Beirut, 1993).

-, *Nisibe, métropole syriaque orientale* (CSCO Subs, 54, 1977).

-, *Communautés syriaques en Iran et des origins à 1552* (London 1979).

(3) Spirituality

S.Abouzayd, *Ihidayuta: a study of the life of singleness in the Syrian Orient* (Oxford, 1993).

S.Beggiani, *Early Syriac Theology* (Lanham 1983).

-, *Introduction to Eastern Christian Spirituality: the Syriac Tradition* (Toronto/London 1991).

R.Beulay, *La lumière sans forme. Introduction a l'étude de la mystique chrétienne syro-orientale* (Chevetogne 1987).

GBlum, *Mysticism in the Syriac Tradition* (SEERI Correspondence Course, 7).

S.P.Brock, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition* (Syrian Churches Series 9, 1979).

S. Chialà, *Abramo di Kashkar e la sua comunità. La rinascita del monachesimo siro-orientale* (Magnano, 2005).

-, *The Syrian Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (Kalamazoo 1987). Contains a collection of translations, with brief introductions.

-, *Studies in Syriac Spirituality* (Syrian Churches Series 13, 1988). Collection of articles reprinted mainly from *Sobornost/ Eastern Churches Review*.

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S.Griffith, 'Asceticism in the Church of Syria', in V.L.Wimbush and Valentasis (eds), *Asceticism* (1995), 220-48.

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A.Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, I-III (see under (a)).

(4) Hagiography

The standard reference work is P.Peeters, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis* (Bruxelles 1914); J.M.Fiey, *Les saints syriaques* (Princeton, 2004). Entries on several Syriac saints can be found in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* I-XIII (Rome 1961-70), Short guides can be found in S. P. Brock, 'Saints in Syriac: a little-tapped resource', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 (2008), 181-96; and 'Syriac hagiography', in S. Efthymiades (ed.), *Byzantine Hagiography* (forthcoming).

A number of English translations of Lives of Syriac saints are available, notably:

S.P.Brock and S.A.Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient* (Berkeley 1987).

E.W.Brooks, *John of Ephesus, Lives of the Eastern Saints*, PO 17-19 (1923-4)

E.A.W.Budge, *The Histories of Rabban Hormizd and Rabban Bar 'Idta* (London 1902).

F.C.Burkitt , Euphemia and the Goth (London 1913).

R.Doran, The Lives of Symeon Stylites (Kalamazoo 1992).

- , Stewards of the Poor: The Man of God, Rabbula, and Hibas of Edessa (Kalamazoo. 2006).

C. Horn and R. Phenix, The Life of Peter the Iberian (Atlanta, forthcoming).

L. Ambjörn, Zacharias Rhetor, The Life of Severus (Piscataway NJ, forthcoming).

(d) Series of Texts; main relevant periodicals and encyclopaedias.

Series of texts and monograph series

Although they never formed a specific series, mention should be made at the outset of the numerous volumes of Syriac texts published (at Leipzig, between 1888 and 1910) by the Chaldean priest, Father Paul Bedjan (1838-1920).

-Patrologia Syriaca (PS); only three volumes ever appeared (1897, 1907, 1927). The vocalized serito texts are accompanied by a Latin translation, and a full index of words is provided for each text.

-Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium (CSCO), Scriptorum Syri (Paris/ Louvain/ Leuven); the series began in 1903, and by now well over 200 volumes of Syriac texts and translations have appeared. The texts are all printed in estrangelo; the translations are in separate volumes: earlier ones were in Latin, but more recent ones are in the main modern European languages.

-Patrologia Orientalis (PO). This series also began in 1903, and many fascicles are devoted to Syriac texts. The script used is serito, and the text is accompanied on the same page by a translation (Latin in earlier volumes, mainly French in later volumes).

-Woodbrooke Studies, I-VII (1927-1934). These are publications by A.Mingana of Syriac (and a few Arabic) texts found in

manuscripts in the Mingana Collection, Selly Oak Collages. Birmingham, England. English translations are always included.

-Göttinger Orientforschungen, Reihe Syriaca (GOFS). Many volumes in this series, begun 1971, are publications of Syriac texts, most of which are accompanied by a German translation.

-Barhebraeus Verlag (Monastery of St Ephrem, Holland). A large number of Syriac texts, literary as well as liturgical, have been published by the Syrian Orthodox monastery of St Ephrem in Glane/Losser, in eastern Holland.

-Moran Etho series (Kottayam; 1988-). These are primarily monographs, though a few volumes contain editions of text.

-Syriac dialogue 1-6 (1994-2004): these are volumes with papers from ecumenical meetings between all the Syriac Churches, organised by the Pro Oriente Foundation in Vienna.

-Patrimoine syriaque (1993-). The Centre d'Études et de Recherches Orientales (CERO) in Antelias (Lebanon) arranges a series of Colloques on the Syriac heritage.

-Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte (Münster). The series has several volumes of Syriac interest, in particular those containing papers from the annual meetings of the Deutsche Syrologen Symposia.

Among other monograph series which sometimes have contents of Syriac concern are: *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* (Rome); Oriental Institute of Religious Studies India (Kottayam);

Periodicals.

Very few periodicals are specifically devoted to Syriac studies, but several frequently have articles of relevance. Those which are primarily, or largely concerned with Syriac studies are:

-*L'Orient Syrien* (Paris; 12 vols., 1956-67). Many useful articles, some introductory, some more specialized, are to be found in these volumes, edited by Mgr G. Khouri-Sarkis. An index to the

complete series is to be found in the Memorial to G. Khouri-Sarkis (Louvain, 1969).

-Melto (Kaslik; 1-5; 1965-9) and Parole de l'Orient (Kaslik; 1-; 1970-). Initially designed as a successor to L'Orient Syrien, Melto and its successor Parole de l'Orient include many important publications of Syriac texts, as well as studies. More recent volumes also cover Christian Arabic studies. An index to vols 1-20 is to be found in vol. 23 (1998).

-Journal (Bulletin) of the Syriac Section (Corporation) of the Iraqi Academy (Baghdad; 1-1975-); the majority of articles are in Arabic.

-The Harp: A Review of Syriac and Oriental Studies (Kottayam; 1-; 1987-). Papers from the series of international Syriac conferences organized by SEERI are also published in The Harp.

-Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies (1998-) This internet journal (www.bethmrdutho.cua.edu/Hugoye) will also soon be available in printed form.

-Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies (2001-).

-Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies: although this is mainly concerned with Modern Syriac, it also sometimes contains important articles of Classical Syriac interest.

Periodicals whose coverage is much wider, but which often include articles relevant to Syriac literature, are: *Analecta Bollandiana* (1882-), dealing with hagiography; *Le Muséon* (1882-) with index for 1882-1931 in vol. 44; index for 1932-1973 by G. Lafontaine (1975); *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* (1896-1946), with indexes at the end of every ten volumes; *Oriens Christianus* (1901-), with index for 1901-1986 by H. Kaufhold (1989); *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* (1935-), with index for 1960-1984 in vol. 52 (1986); *Aram* (1989-). *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* (whose volume 56 (2004) includes some of the main papers from the 8th International Symposium Syriacum).

Encyclopaedias

The only encyclopaedia devoted solely to Syriac studies is in Arabic (with Syriac title *Hudra d-seprayuta suryayta*), of which only the first volume, covering part of alif, has appeared (Baghdad 1990); much of relevance can be found in the *Encyclopedie Maronite*, of which again only one volume (covering A) has so far appeared (Kaslik 1992). The *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, with about 500 entries (including short bibliographies) is planned to be published by the Gorgias Press (Piscataway NJ) in 2009. The three-volume *The Hidden Pearl: the Syrian Orthodox Church and its Ancient Aramaic Heritage* (with 3 documentaries, Rome, 2001) in some way serves as a mini-encyclopaedia in narrative form; for the pre-modern period its coverage includes all the Syriac Churches.

The following more general encyclopedias and dictionaries often have good articles on Syriac authors: in English, *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, in two volumes (Cambridge 1992); E.A. Livingstone, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, in a single volume (3rd edn, 1997); *The Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity* (Oxford, 1999); *Encyclopedia Iranica* (14 volumes to date, A-J; in French, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (1932-1995, 17 volumes), *Dictionnaire d' Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques* (1912-, 29 volumes to date, reaching only the letter L!); and in German: *Kleines Wörterbuch des christlichen Orients* (1975; revised edition, ed. H. Kaufhold, 2007), with a French translation (Turnhout 1991); *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (2nd edn. 1993-2001), in 11 volumes; (Syriac authors are rather well represented); *Marienlexikon* (1988-1994), in 6 volumes; *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (1976-2005); in 36 volumes.

(e) Collected volumes

Since 1972 there have been Syriac Conferences every four years; the proceedings have mostly been published in *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* (OCA) as follows:

[I] Symposium Syriacum 1972 (ed. I. Ortiz de Urbina; OCA 197, 1974);

II Symposium Syriacum 1976 (ed. F. Graffin and A. Guillaumont; OCA 205, 1978);

III Symposium Syriacum 1980 (ed. R. Lavenant; OCA 221, 1983);

IV Symposium Syriacum 1984 (ed. H.J.W. Drijvers, R. Lavenant and others; OCA 229 (1987));

V Symposium Syriacum 1988 (ed. R. Lavenant; OCA 236, 1990);

VI Symposium Syriacum 1992 (ed. R. Lavenant; OCA 247, 1994);

VII Symposium Syriacum (ed. R. Lavenant; OCA 256, 1998). Select papers from the VIII Symposium Syriacum are published in the *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 56 (2004), and those from the IX Symposium Syriacum are published in *Parole de l'Orient* 31 (2006).

The following contain contributions wholly or largely concerned with Syriac studies (in chronological order):

Göttinger Arbeitskreis für syrische Kirchengeschichte (eds), *Paul de Lagarde und die syrische Kirchengeschichte* (Göttingen 1968).

A. Dietrich (ed), *Synkretismus im syrisch-persischen Kulturgebiet* (Göttingen 1975).

N. Garsoian, R. Thomson, T. Mathews (eds), *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (Washington DC 1982).

M. Schmidt (ed.), *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter* (Regensburg 1982).

M. Tamcke (ed.), *Syriaca I, II* (Studien zur Ostkirchengeschichte 17, 33; 2002, 2004).

Collected articles, Festschriften and Memorial volumes (in alphabetical order).

(J.Assfalg), *Lingua Restituta Orientalis: Festgabe für J.Assfalg* (ed. R.Schulz and M.Gorg; Wiesbaden 1990).

S.P.Brock, *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (London 1984);

- , *Studies in Syriac Christianity* (Aldershot 1992)

- , *From Ephrem to Romanos: Interactions between Syriac and Greek in Late Antiquity* (Aldershot, 1999).

- , *Fire from Heaven: Studies in Syriac Theology and Liturgy* (Aldershot, 2006).

- , *A Festschrift for Sebastian Brock* (ed. S.Abouzayd) = *Aram* 5 (1993).

A.de Halleux, *Patrologie et ecumenisme. Recueil d' études* (Louvain 1990).

H.J.W.Drijvers, *East of Antioch* (London 1984) (Festschrift): G.J. Reinink and A.C. Klugkist (eds), *Studies on Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity in Honour of Professor Han J. W. Drijvers* (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 89; 1999).

- , *History and Religion in Late Antique Syria* (Aldershot 1994)

J-M.Fiey, *Communautés syriaques en Iran et Iraq des origines à 1552* (London 1979).

- , *In Memoriam Jean Maurice Fiey o.p. 1914-1995* = *Annales du Département des Lettres Arabes, Université Saint Joseph, 6-B* (1991- 2[1996]).

(F.Graffin), *Mélanges offerts au R.P.Francois Graffin* = *Parole de l'Orient* 6/7 (1978).

(A.Guillaumont), *Mélanges Antoine Guillaumont: Contributions à l'étude des christianismes orientaux* (Geneva 1988).

(W. Hage), *Syrische Christentum weltweit. Studien zur syrischen Kirchengeschichte. Festschrift W.Hage* (ed. M.Tamcke, W.Schwaigert, E.Schlarb: Munster 1995).

H. Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d'Aristote du grec au syriaque* (Paris, 2004).

(G.Khoury-Sarkis), *Mémorial Mgr G.Khoury-Sarkis* (ed. F.Graffin; Louvain 1969).

J. Madey (Festschrift) = *The Harp* 19 (2006)

G. Reinink (Festschrift). = W. J. van Bekkum, J. W. Drijvers and A.C. Klugkist (eds). *Syriac Polemics: Studies in Honour of Gerrit J. Reinink* (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 170; 2007).

(A. Van Roey), *After Chalcedon: Studies in Theology and Church History* (ed.C.Laga, J.A.Munitiz, L.Van Rompay: *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 18, 1985).

(A. Vööbus), *A Tribute to Arthur Voobus* (ed. R.Fischer; Chicago 1977).

(W.Strothmann), *Erkenntnisse und Meinungen II* (ed. G.Wiessner; *GOFS* 17, 1978).

J-M. Sauget (ed. F. Rilliet). *Littératures et manuscrits des chrétientés syriaques et arabes* (*Studi e Testi* 389; 1998).

J. Thekeparampil (Festschrift) = *The Harp* 20 (2006)

E. Thelly (Festschrift) = *The Harp* 21 (2006)

M. van Esbroeck, *Memorial volume* = *Scrinium* (St Petersburg) 3 (2006).

(f) History of Syriac Studies

An overview of Syriac studies in Europe is given by S.P.Brock, 'The development of Syriac studies', in K.Cathcart (ed.), *The Edward Hincks Bicentenary Lectures* (Dublin 1994), 94-113. For surveys of Syriac studies in recent decades, see S.P.Brock, 'Syriac studies in the last three decades: some reflections', VI Symposium

Syriacum (OCA 247, 1994), 13-29, and A. de Halleux, 'Vingt ans d'étude critique des Eglises syriaques', in R. Taft (ed.), *The Christian East: its Institutions and Thought* (OCA 251, 1996), 145-79; also S.P. Brock, 'The contribution of departed Syriacists, (1997-2006)' in *Hugoye* 10:1 (2007).

(g) Bibliography

Almost complete coverage of western publications on Syriac literature can be found in two books: (1) for publications of texts and studies up to c. 1960: C. Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books and Related Literature in the British Museum* (London 1962); this is arranged alphabetically by the author (ancient and modern); and (2) for publications for the period 1960-1990, S.P. Brock, *Syriac Studies: a Classified Bibliography (1960-1990)* (Kaslik 1996); this is arranged alphabetically by Syriac author and subject, with an index of names of modern authors. (The latter work was originally published in four parts, in *Parole de l'Orient* 4 (1973) [for 1960-70], 10 (1960-70), 10 (1980/1) [for 1971-80], 14 (1987) [for 1981-1985], and 17 (1992) [for 1986-90]).

Continuations are published in *Parole de l'Orient* as follows: 1991-1995, in *Parole de l'Orient* 23 (1998); 1996-2000, in *Parole de l'Orient* 29 (2004); 2001-2005, in *Parole de l'Orient* 33 (2008). There are specialised bibliographies for Barhebraeus (H. Takahashi, 2005); Ephrem (K. den Biesen, 2002); Isaac of Antioch (E. Mathews, in *Hugoye* 5:1, 2002); Jacob of Edessa (D. Kruisheer and L. van Rompay in *Hugoye* 1:1, 1998); Jacob of Serugh (Kh. Alwan, in *Parole de l'Orient* 13, 1986); and Peshitta OT (P.B. Dirksen, 1989).

(h) Syriac manuscript collections

An invaluable guide to Syriac manuscript collections is provided by A. Desreumaux and F. Briquel-Chatonnet, *Repertoire des bibliothèques et des catalogues de manuscrits syriaques* (Paris, 1991). For illustrated manuscripts there is a standard work by J. Leroy. W.P. Hatch's *An Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts* (Boston,

1945; repr. with introduction by L. van Rompay, Piscataway NJ, 2002) is an essential guide for help in dating undated manuscripts. *Les manuscrits syriaques a à peintures* (2 vols, Paris, 1964).

Almost all surviving Syriac manuscripts which are older than about the 11th century derive ultimately from the Syrian monastery in the Nitrian Desert, in Egypt, where they were collected by the early tenth-century abbot, Moses of Nisibis; a few of these manuscripts still remain in the monastery (now Coptic Orthodox), the majority having been acquired by either the Vatican Library in the 18th century, or the British Museum in the 19th century. (The oldest dated Syriac manuscript was written in Edessa in November AD 411). For Syriac manuscripts in India, see J.P.M. van der Ploeg, *The Christians of St Thomas in South India and their Syriac Manuscripts* (Bangalore 1983)

(i) Grammars and Dictionaries

INTRODUCTORY GRAMMARS

Several are available in English, notably:

T.H. Robinson, *Paradigms and Exercises in Syriac Grammar* (revised edition by J.F. Coakley, Oxford, 2002). Serto script is used.

J. Healey, *First Studies in Syriac* (revised edition with CD (Piscataway NJ, 2005); this otherwise helpful introduction (with good exercises) rather gives out when it comes to the weak verbs. There is a selection of annotated texts at the end.

T. Muraoka, *Classical Syriac for Hebraists* (Wiesbaden 1987). This will be especially useful for those who come to Syriac with some knowledge of Hebrew. It contains exercises and uses the serto script.

W.M. Thackston, *Introduction to Syriac: An elementary grammar with readings in Syriac*] (Bethesda, 1999). The Syriac is unvocalized, but transcriptions are given as well.

G. Kiraz, *The New Syriac Primer. Introduction to Syriac with a CD* (Piscataway NJ, 2007).

In other languages, mention might be made of A.Ungnad, *Syrische Grammatik* (Munich 1913; reprinted Hildesheim 1992); L.Palacios, *Grammatica Syriaca* (Rome 1954); and J-B.Frey, *Petite grammaire syriaque* (Fribourg 1984). Many introductions have been produced within the Syriac Churches for the purpose of teaching children (and others) Syriac as a liturgical and/or as a spoken language, e.g. Abrohom Nouro, *Suloko, I* (St Ephrem Monastery, Holland, 1989); A.El-Khoury, *Companion* (Beirut 1972).

REFERENCE GRAMMARS

The standard reference grammars are:

R.Duval, *Traité de grammaire syriaque* (Paris 1881).

Th. Nöldeke (tr. J.A.Crichton) *Compendious Syriac Grammar* (London 1904; reprinted Winona Lake, 2001, with supplementary notes).

T. Arayathinal, *Aramaic Grammar I-II* (1957-9; repr. Piscataway NJ, 2007, in 3 vols).

Three useful grammars of an intermediary size are:

C.Brockelmann, *Syrische Grammatik* (Leipzig 1899, with many subsequent editions); this contains a good selection of texts, for which a separate Syriac-English glossary was provided by M.H.Goshen-Gottstein (Wiesbaden 1970).

L.Costaz, *Grammaire syriaque* (2nd edn., Beirut 1964).

T. Muraoka, *Classical Syriac, a Basic Grammar with a Chrestomathy* (2nd edn. Wiesbaden, 2005).

Dictionaries

The two most practical dictionaries for ordinary use are:

J.Payne Smith (Mrs Margoliouth), *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford 1903, with many reprints). This is arranged alpha-

betically, rather than by Syriac (triliteral) root, and so is much more convenient for the less experienced reader of Syriac. It is especially helpful for phrases and idioms.

Mrs Margoliouth's *Compendious Syriac-English Dictionary* is now available as a searchable CD, ed. G. Kiraz (2007; available from Gorgias Press, Piscataway NJ).

L. Costaz, *Dictionnaire syro-français-arabe-anglais* (Beirut 1963, repr. 1986). This handy Syriac-French-Arabic-English dictionary is arranged by root and covers all but the most specialized vocabulary.

None of the above give any references to passages in Syriac writers (sometimes a matter of importance and interest); for these one needs to consult two more extensive dictionaries:

C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum* (2nd edn., Halle 1928). Syriac-Latin, arranged by root. This only gives a small number of phrases and idioms, but is especially good for references to rarer words. The first edition (1895) has a Latin-Syriac index, but in the second edition page numbers only are given for the Syriac, and so one has to look up the entry each time.

R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, 2 volumes (Oxford 1879, 1901). Syriac-Latin, arranged by root. This magnificent work (and exceptionally fine piece of printing) gives ample quotations of phrases and idioms (many of which are taken over in his daughter's *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, but without the references).

A *Supplement to the Thesaurus of R. Payne Smith* was published by J. Payne Smith (Oxford, 1927), where the entries (Syriac-English) are arranged alphabetically, rather than by root. This is based on texts published subsequent to the *Thesaurus*. In view of the many further new texts that have been published since the date of these dictionaries, a further supplement is very much a desideratum, but it would be a formidable task to undertake. There is also a valuable Syriac-Syriac dictionary by T. Audo, *Dictionnaire de la langue*

chaldéenne (Mosul 1897, repr. St Ephrem Monastery 1985).

A considerable number of dictionaries have been produced in recent years by members of the different Syriac communities in Western Europe and the Middle East. Some recent discussions of Syriac lexicography can be found in A.D. Forbes and D.G. Taylor (eds), *Foundations for Syriac Lexicography, I* (Piscataway NJ, 2005).

(j) Anthologies

Many of the introductory grammars contain anthologies of texts. Two extensive older anthologies are:

Ktaba d-Partute (Urmi, 1898);

E. Manna, *Morceaux choisis de littérature araméenne* (2 vols, Mosul, 1901).

Two good more recent ones are L. Costaz and P. Mouterde, *Anthologie syriaque* (Beirut, 1955), and M. Zammit, *'Enbe men karmo suryoyo: a Syriac Chrestomathy* (Piscataway NJ, 2006). A large collection of excerpts, including examples from twentieth-century authors, is to be found in Mar Theophilus George Saliba's *Way of Teaching Syriac* (2nd edn, Mount Lebanon, 2007).

VIII

SAMPLE PASSAGES FROM SOME MORE IMPORTANT WRITINGS

4* School of BARDAISAN, Book of the Laws of the Countries.

The book takes the form of a philosophical dialogue; the opening narrative (given below) introduces the topic which the work discusses, namely the problem of the tension between freewill and predestination, or fate.

A few days ago we went up to visit our brother Shamshgram, and Bardaisan came and found us there. After he had examined him, and seen that he was well, he asked us, "What were you talking about, for I heard the sound of your voices outside as I was coming in?" Now it was his habit, whenever he found that we had been talking about something before his arrival, to ask us "What were you talking about?", so that he might join in the discussion. We told him, "Awida here was saying to us, 'If God is one as you claim, and it is he who has fashioned human beings, and his will is that you should act as you are bidden, why did he not fashion human beings so that they would not be able to do wrong, and instead always do what is good? For in this way his will would be accomplished.'"

5*. ODES of SOLOMON.

The following Ode (no. 40) is a good example of the more straightforward of this collection of lyric poems.

As honey drips from a honeycomb,

and as milk flows from a woman full of love for her children,
so is my hope upon you, my God.

As a fountain gushes forth its water,
so does my heart gush forth the praise of the Lord,
and my lips issue praise to him.

My tongue is sweet from converse with him.
my limbs grow strong with singing of him,
my countenance exults at the jubilation he brings,
and my spirit is jubilant at his love,
and by him my soul is illumined.

He who holds the Lord in awe may have confidence,
for his salvation is assured:
he will gain immortal life
and those who receive this are incorruptible.

Halleluiah.

6 *. THE ACTS OF THOMAS.

Chapters 26-7 describe the baptism by Judas Thomas of the Indian king Gundaphar and his brother Gad.

They were exulting with holy songs of praise, attaching themselves to the Apostle and never leaving his company. Everyone who was in need received something to relieve him. They asked if they might receive the baptismal mark, saying "Seeing that our souls are turned towards God, let us receive the baptismal mark, for we have heard that the God whom you are preaching recognizes all his sheep by means of such a mark". Judas says to them, "I too rejoice, and I ask of you to share in the Eucharist and the blessing of this Christ whom I preach".

The king then gave orders that the bathhouse be closed for seven days, and that no one should bathe there. Once the seven

days were up, on the eighth day, the three of them entered the bathhouse by night so that Judas might baptize them. There were many lamps lit in the bathhouse, and as they entered the room with the pool Judas led the way in front of them. Our Lord appeared and spoke to them, "Peace be with you, brothers". They just heard the voice, but they did not see anyone or realize who it was, for they had not yet been baptized. Judas then went up and stood on the edge of the pool. He cast some oil on their heads, saying, "Come, holy name of Christ; come, Power of compassion from on high; come, O perfect Mercy; come, exalted Gift; come, Sharer of the blessing; come, Revealer of hidden mysteries; come, Mother of the seven houses, so that your rest may be upon the eighth house; come, Messenger of reconciliation, and purify their reins and hearts". He then baptized them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

As they came up out of the water, there appeared to them a young man, holding a lighted candle: the light of the other torches was dim in comparison to the light he shed. But when they went outside, he was hidden from them. The Apostle then said, "We were not even able to endure your light, for it is too much for our vision". Once it had dawned and morning had come, he broke the Eucharist and let them partake in the Table of Christ, at which they were full of joy and exultation.

10 *. AHIKAR

In the Story of Ahikar, Ahikar 'the Armaean Sage' was slandered by his nephew Nadan, as a result of which the Assyrian king, whom he served, ordered his execution. A friend substitutes a condemned slave and hides Ahikar. Years later, the king of Egypt challenges the king of Assyria to solve a set of riddles: if he fails to solve them, he must pay Egypt three years' tribute, but if he solves them Egypt will pay him the tribute. When no one at the Assyrian court is able to solve the riddles, Ahikar's friend produces Ahikar, who rises to the occasion and solves the riddles, which are set out in the following extract; Ahikar himself is represented as the narrator.

The king of Egypt said to me, "Ahikar, explain to me this parable: there is a column on the top of which are twelve cedars; in each cedar are thirty wheels, and in every wheel there are two sections,

one white and the other black”. I replied, “My lord king, the oxherds in our country know the parable which you tell. The column of which you told me is the year, the twelve cedars are the twelve months of the year, the thirty wheels are the thirty days in the month, and the two sections, one white and the other black, are the daytime and the nighttime.

The king spoke to me again, “Ahikar, twine together five ropes out of river sand”. I told him, “My lord, give instructions for a sand rope to be brought to me out of your treasury, and then I shall make one like it”. At this he said to me, “If you do not do this, I will not give you the tribute of Egypt”. I then sat down and pondered in my heart how I could do it. I went outside the king’s palace and bored five holes in a wall on the east of the palace; when the sun came into the holes I scattered some sand in them, and the furrow caused by the sun began to appear as though the sand was being spun in the holes. At that point I said to the king, “My lord, give orders that they take these ropes away, and I will twine some more for you in their place”. When the king and his nobles saw this, they were astonished.

The king again gave orders that a broken upper mill-stone be brought to me. He said to me, “Ahikar, sew up this broken mill-stone for us”. I then went and brought along a bottom part of a mill-stone and laid it in front of the king, saying, “My lord king, seeing that I am a foreigner here and I have not got the tools of craft with me, order the cobblers to cut strips out of this lower mill-stone, since it is the mate which goes with the upper one, then I will immediately sew it up.

On hearing this, the king laughed and said, “Let the day upon which Ahikar was born be blessed before the god of Egypt. And since I have seen you still alive, I will make this into a special day with a banquet”. He then gave me three years’ tribute from Egypt, where upon I at once returned back to my lord Sennacherib the king.

11 * APHRAHAT

(a) Demonstration VI (on the Bnay Qyama, i.e. those who have undertaken to live a life consecrated to Christ), sections 7- 10. Aphrahat opens (#7) by warning the women members of the Qyama against exploitation by the male members: he then provides guidelines for the conduct of all members of the Qyama (8#), whose aim should be the imitation of Christ. In #9 Aphrahat breaks into artistic prose, as he enumerates some of the paradoxes involved in the incarnation. In # 10 he goes on to describe the 'exchange' between God and humanity which is effected through the incarnation: at the incarnation the divine Word 'borrows' his human body from humanity (whose Creator he of course also is), and at the Ascension raises this up to his Father's throne as a 'hostage' (in antiquity a hostage was voluntarily given as a pledge of good conduct - contrary to modern usage where a hostage is seized by force): in exchange, the divine Word sent his Spirit, who is in particular present in the Eucharist as the 'King's Son'; his Spirit thus remains with humanity, and is to be held in honour, as in a temple, in each individual human being. Since Aphrahat's thought may be somewhat unfamiliar in this last section, some elucidation is provided in square brackets.

7. O virgins who have betrothed your souls to Christ, when one of the bnay qyama says to one of you, "I will live with you, and you shall minister to me", you should reply, "I am betrothed to a man who is King, and he is the person to whom I minister: then my betrothed will become angry with me, write a letter of divorce, and dismiss me from his house. If you want to be held in honour by me, and I too want to be held in honour by you, take care to prevent harm coming to both me and you: do not put fire in your lap, lest you burn your clothes [Prov.6:27-8]. Rather, remain alone in an honourable state and I too will be alone in my honourable state. Make yourself a wedding gift out of the things which the Bridegroom has prepared for his everlasting wedding feast, and prepare yourself to meet him; I, in turn will make ready the oil so that I may enter with the wise virgins, and not be kept back outside with the foolish virgins[Matt.25:1-12]".

8. Listen, therefore, my beloved, to what I am writing to you about - matters that are appropriate for ihidaye, bnay qyama, virgins (male and female), and qaddishe. Above all else, it is appropriate

that the man upon whom the yoke of Christ is laid should have a sound faith, in accordance with what I wrote to you in the first letter [=Demonstration 1, on Faith]; he should be assiduous in fasting and in prayer; he should be fervent in love of Christ, he should be humble, composed and alert; his speech should be gentle and kind, he should be sincere-minded with everyone, he should speak carefully weighing his words, he should make a barrier for his mouth against any harmful word, he should distance himself from hasty laughter; he should not have a liking for finery in clothing, nor again should he let his hair grow and adorn it, nor is it appropriate for him to use on it scented unguents; nor should he take a seat at banquets. It is not appropriate for him to wear ornate clothing, nor should he impetuously go too far in drinking wine.

He should banish any haughty thought, and it is inappropriate for him to see ornate clothing or wear veils.

He should rid himself of deceitful speech, and remove from himself overzealousness and quarrelsomeness; he should banish from himself deceitful words, and let him not listen to, or accept without first investigating, any words spoken against someone who is not present, otherwise he will fall into sin.

Jeering is an odious fault, and it is not appropriate that it should reach the heart.

He should not lend and receive interest, and he should not love greed.

Let him be wronged, rather than wrong someone. Let him also keep away from commotion, and let him not utter any scurrilous words.

Let him not scoff at a person who repents of his sins, or mock at his brother who is fasting. Nor should he make someone who is unable to fast feel ashamed.

Let him give reproof where he will be accepted, but where people do not accept him let him recognize his own dignity. On the

occasion when his words will be accepted, let him speak; otherwise he should remain in silence.

Let him not despise himself because of his stomach's demands.

Let him reveal his secrets to a person who fears God, but let him guard himself against a bad person. He should not say anything in reply to a bad person, not even to his enemy. In this way let him strive not to have any enemy at all.

When people are indignant with him over something good, let him simply add to his action, and not feel harmed because of jealousy.

When he has something and gives it to the poor, let him rejoice. When he has nothing, let him not be sad.

Let him have not association with an evil person, and let him not speak with an abusive man, lest he give himself over to abuse [cp Prov. 1:11; Sir. 11:33-4].

Let him not argue with a blasphemer, lest his Lord be reviled as a result of him.

Let him keep false accusation at a distance, and let him not seek to please anyone at all through flattery.

These are the things appropriate for the ihidaye who are receiving the heavenly yoke and are becoming disciples to Christ; for thus is it appropriate for the disciples of Christ to imitate Christ their master.

9. Let us take on the likeness from our Saviour, my beloved:

being rich, he made himself poor [2 Cor. 8:9];

though he was exalted, he brought low his Majesty,

though his abode was in the heights, there was nowhere for him to lay his head (Matt. 8:20),

though he was going to come on the clouds [Dam. 7: 13, Matt. 26:64], he rode on an ass [John 12:15] and so entered Jerusalem ;

though he is God, the Son of God, he took on the likeness of a servant [Phil. 2:7];

though he was the resting place from all labours, yet he became weary from the labour of the journey [John 4:6]

though he was a fountain which assuages thirst, he became thirsty and asked for water to drink [John 4:7];

though he is the source of satisfaction and has satisfied our hunger, yet he hungered and went out to the wilderness to be tempted [Matt. 4:22ff];

though he was the Watchful One who does not slumber [Ps. 121:4], yet he slumbered and slept in the boat in the midst of the sea [Matt. 8:24ff];

though he was someone ministered to in the Tabernacle of his Father, he was ministered to by the hands of human beings;

though he was the physician of all sick human beings, yet nails were fixed in his hands,

and though his mouth uttered only good, yet they gave him bitter food to eat [Matt. 27:34],

and though he neither hurt nor harmed anyone, he was struck by blows and endured ignominy [Matt. 26:67 etc],

and though he is Life-Giver of all mortals, he handed himself over to the death of the Cross.

10. Such great humility did our Life-Giver manifest to us in himself! Let us therefore make ourselves humble as well, my beloved. When our Lord came, he went about in our condition, but outside his true condition. Let us remain in our true condition, so that on the day of justice he will make us share in his condition.

The Lord took from us a pledge [sc. his human body], and went off [2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5; Eph. 1:14]. and he left for us a pledge [sc. The Paraclete] that comes from him, while he himself was raised up.

He who had no need, proved to be the means for fulfilling our need.

What belongs to us was his from the very beginning, but as for what belongs to him, who else could have given it to us?

For it is true what our Lord promised us: “Where I am, you too shall be” [John 14:3]- because what he has taken from us [sc. humanity] is placed in honour with him, and a crown is set upon his head [Heb.2: 9].

Likewise we should hold in honour what we have received of his: what belongs to us is held in honour with him, though it is not now existing in our human condition. Let us honour what belongs to him which is in its own nature.

If we hold him in honour, we will go to him, since he took of what belonged to us and ascended. But if we despise him, he will take away from us what he has given us.

If we renege on his pledge, then he will take what belongs to himself and deprive us of what he promised us.

Let us magnify as is due the King’s Son who is with us [sc. Christ’s eucharistic presence], for a hostage [sc. Christ’s human body] has been taken away from us in exchange for him. Whoever holds the King’s Son in honour will discover many gifts emanating from the King.

What belongs to us which is now with him sits there in honour with a crown set upon his head, for he has seated him with the King. But as for us who are so poor, what can we do for the King’s Son who is with us? Nothing else is required by him of us except that we should adorn our temples for him, so that when the time is completed and he goes to his Father, he may acknowledge us to him, in that we have held him in honour.

When he came to us, he did not have anything of ours, nor did we have anything of his, though the two natures belonged to him and his Father.

Now when Gabriel announced to the blessed Mary who gave him birth, the Word set off from the height and came, “and the Word became body and dwelt in us” [John 1:14]; and when he went back to his Sender, he took off what he had not brought, as the Apostle said, “He has raised us up and caused us to sit with him in heaven” [Eph. 2:6]. And when he went to his Father, he sent us his Spirit, telling us, “I am with you until the world comes to an end” [Matt.28:20]. For Christ is seated at the right hand of his Father, and Christ dwells in human beings.

He is capable of being above and below through the wisdom of his Father, and he dwells in many, while yet being one; and he overshadows all the faithful, each with a portion of himself, without his being diminished, as is written, “I will divide him up among many” [Isaiah 53:12 Peshitta]. And he is in us, and we are in him, just 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).

(b) Demonstration XXIII, sections 48-52.

This takes up again the theme of the incarnation, describing how salvation is thereby effected for humanity. The imagery which Aphrahat uses is characteristic of early Syriac writers, and at the end of #51 he reintroduces the theme of Christ’s body as a ‘hostage’ (i.e. pledge) raised up to heaven, serving as a token of our resurrection. In # 52 Aphrahat breaks into prayer addressed directly to Christ. Much of this extract is in a carefully balanced form of artistic prose.

48. Great is the gift of the Good God towards us: although he was under no constraint, yet in response to our sins he wants us to be put in the right; and although he is not benefited by our actions, yet he exhorts us to act nobly in his presence. But when we refuse to ask from him, then he is angry with us, for he invites us continually, saying “Ask, and receive” [Matt.7:7], and “when you ask, you shall find” [cp Matt. 21:22].

His riches provide fully when there is need, there is no one who will say “I have received sufficient” when he takes from God’s glorious treasure.

He desires people to throng to receive from him – for whoever tastes of his riches will want to take again from them. For who is there like him, who says “Ask, and receive”, and who only gets angry with us when we do not ask of him?

49. And even when we had not asked him, he sent us his Gift, one which had never previously been found among us – sending us the Messiah as a human being who might laugh at the Evil One and his armies, and chase away from us that guilty power.

He sent the Innocent One to us, to be judged and condemned, so that the guilty might become innocent by means of his innocent judgement.

He sent the Valiant One under the likeness of our sick state, in order to strengthen our weakness against the power of the Evil One.

He put on the body that comes from dust, and so drew it to his own nature.

He hid in us the salt that dissolves what is rotten, so that when the serpent wanted to approach to consume the rottenness, it might be filled with loathing at the salt which it is unable to eat.

He sent the Innocent One, his own Son, to us, to die in accordance with our death, so that death might be put to shame by him.

Great is the Gift of the Good God that he has given to the insignificant. What more excellent a gift than his Son would it have been appropriate to give us?

When we were even greater sinners than we are now he sent us this gift; when we shall have been put in the right, what will he give us, if not life with him who came to us- seeing that he did not spare his own Son, sending him to dishonour? [cp Rom.5:7; 8:32].

How amazing and munificent is his gift to us ! For the King left his own country to provide a means for our healing: he conducted himself in the steps of the feeble body by means of a birth like ours,

and by means of dishonour much greater than ours. All these he endured for our sake, while we received his gift as a pledge of our salvation. As for me, this is what I have to say: God did not have any gift greater than this to send us. When he came, he received from us a pledge, and he went off to his own country and told us, “ You are in me, and I am in you” [John 14:20]; while the Apostle said, “He raised us up and seated us with him in heaven”[Eph. 2:6]. The body which he put on from us is the beginning of our resurrection: he has freed it from servitude and raised it up to himself.

He has assured us of his promises that we should be with him. He said quite clearly, “Where I am, so too shall you be” [John 14:3]. Henceforth, let us rejoice at the hostage [Christ’s human body] who has been led off from us and who sits in glory with the glorious King. Great is the gift of the Good God towards us, seeing that a hostage has been led off from us by the King who became like us, and he made him a friend and guardian of the border. This is none other than the Son of Adam, the body which comes from Mary, which was led off from with us to the place of Life. Thus, the feeble body became strong and received glory which is greater and more wonderful than the glory which Adam stripped off when he became debilitated.

52. We rejoice in you, beloved Child, who have trodden out for us path to the place where we would be;

we acknowledge you, the Healer of our illnesses, who have hidden within us your Spirit as the medicine for our bodies;

we worship you and your exalted Father who have exalted us through you and called us to himself;

we acknowledge you in the mercies of him who sent you, who wished that we might live through the death of his Only-Begotten;

we praise in you the divine Being who separated you from his Essence and sent you to us;

we magnify you who dwell in his holiness that has sanctified our bodies for himself through the pledge that we have received;

let us acknowledge with our mouths, to our best ability, the Power that came to give life to the weak;

let us be wakeful each day to utter praise through the beloved Son to the Father who sent him;

let us rejoice in his gift, that he too may have joy in us;

let us acknowledge in him the Father, that he too may acknowledge us [cp Matt. 10:32].

Let us ask for that gift from his treasury that we have need of, for his own need is to give life to the needy;

great and glorious is his gift to us, in that he has asked for praise from us who are wholly unworthy.

He is praised, even if we fail to praise him; he is magnified, even if we fail to magnify him.

His need is to give, and his desire is that we should ask, in order that through our asking he can give us the salvation he has promised, so that we may live with his only-begotten Son.

His part is to give, ours to ask; to him belongs salvation, ours is the opportunity to escape from death; to him belongs salvation, and it is us whom he invites to take it; to him belongs grace, and this is laid in our hands so that we may escape from the Evil One; to him belongs salvation, with him is light, while us he has warned to escape from the darkness of death. No one can find a limit to his treasures, no one can comprehend the depth of his wisdom.

12*. EPHREM

(a) Commentary on Genesis II.23.

According to Ephrem's understanding, Adam and Eve were created in an intermediary position, neither mortal nor immortal. God gave them the 'tiny commandment' not to eat of the Tree of knowledge in order that they might exercise their free will by choosing between obedience and disobedience; if they chose obedience, then God could 'confer on them, out of Justice, immortal life' as a reward, having hitherto given them everything 'out of Grace'.

If the serpent had been rejected, along with the sin, then Adam and Eve would have eaten of the Tree of Life, and the Tree of Knowledge would not have been withheld from them any longer: from the latter they would have acquired infallible knowledge, while from the former they would have received immortal life: they would have acquired divinity in their human state: if they had thus acquired infallible knowledge and immortal life, they would have done so in this body.

Thus, by what it promised, the serpent annulled what they were to have had: it made them think that they would receive this by transgressing the commandment, thus effecting that they would not receive it as a result of keeping the commandment. It withheld divinity from them by means of the divinity which it promised them, and it brought about that those to whom it had promised enlightenment from the Tree of Knowledge, should not have their eyes illumined by the Tree of Life, as promised.

Now had they been willing to repent after transgressing the commandment, even though they would not have received back what they had possessed prior to their transgression, nevertheless they would have escaped from the curses pronounced over the earth and over themselves. For the whole reason for God's delay in coming down to them was in case they might rebuke one another and so, when the Judge did come to them, they might ask for mercy. The serpent's arrival was not delayed, so that their temptation at the beautiful sight of the Tree might not be too great; the Judge, on the other hand, did delay in coming to them, in order to give them an opportunity to prepare a plea. However, the haste on the part of the tempter did not help them, even though this haste was designed to help them; nor did they profit from the Judge's delay, even though his delay, too, was intended for that very purpose.

(b) Commentary on the Diatessaron XXI. 9-10.

While much of the Commentary is in straightforward prose (and sometimes consists of little more than a series of notes), several passages make use of artistic prose and take on a lyrical character, as happens in section 10 of the passage below.

9. The symbols of the Wood [of the Cross] and the Lamb began to be depicted with Abraham: in the case of the sacrifice of Isaac there is the symbol of the lamb with the tree [Gen. 22], while Jacob made manifest the wood that is related to the water [Gen. 30:37ff]. Thus the wood was worthy that Christ should be hung upon it, for 'no bone was broken in him' [John 19:36].

The earth's fruits are ripened on wood, and the treasures of the sea are mastered by wood [i.e. ships]; likewise those of the body and the soul [sc. require wood, i.e. the Cross]. This is the Wood which was sculpted by the wrath of madmen; it was like a dumb man in its silence, and it became a means of growth up to the heights for humanity by means of its lightness.

10. One of the soldiers struck him with a lance [John 19:34].

Now through the abuse done to him

he honoured his friends

and cast dishonour on those who dishonoured him,

so that his enemies might learn his justice,

and his friends his grace.

For the fountain from his side manifested the blood which made complaint, while the water issued in haste so as to forgive:

the blood, by its very sight,

cried out against his killers,

while the water, by what it symbolized,

was to purify his friends,

so that they might realize

that after he had died he was alive,

and however much they increased their torturing him,

hidden treasures would be revealed in him.

Heavenly riches abounded in each one of his limbs
and when the destroyers touched them
his limbs were breached
so as to enrich his friends
and accuse his crucifiers.

I have run to all your limbs,
and from them all I have received every kind of gift.

Through the side pierced with the sword
I entered the garden fenced in by the sword [Gen. 3:24].
Let us enter in through the side that was transfixed,
for we were stripped naked
by the counsel of the rib that was extracted [Gen.2:21-22].

For the fire which burnt in Adam
burnt him in that rib of his.

For this reason the side of the Second Adam has been pierced,
and from it comes a flow of water
to quench the fire of the first Adam.

(c) Letter to Publius 22-25.

Part of the letter consists in a meditation on the nature of Gehenna, insofar as it can be perceived with the help of 'the mirror' of the Gospel.

22. Maybe the Gehenna of the wicked consists in what they see, and it is their own awareness of separation that burns them, and their mind acts as the flame. The hidden judge who is seated in the discerning mind has spoken, and has become for them there the righteous judge who beats them without mercy with the torments of contrition. Perhaps it is this which separates them out, sending each one to the appropriate place; perhaps it is this which grasps the good with its just right hand, sending them to that Right Hand of

mercy; and it again which takes the wicked in its upright left hand, casting them into the place called 'the left-hand' [Matt. 25:41]; maybe it is this which silently accuses them, and quietly pronounces sentence upon them.

23. My opinion is that this inner intelligence has been made the judge and the law, for it is the embodiment of the shadow of the law, and it is the shadow of the Lord of the Law. For this reason such authority has been given to it so that it may be divided up in every generation and yet remain one; be marked out in every body, yet remain not divided; be depicted in every heart, yet remain not split up. It can fly unwearied over all, rebuking everyone without shame, teaching everyone, yet using no force; giving counsel, but employing no compulsion; reminding everyone of the judgement to come by means of warnings; bringing to their mind the Kingdom of heaven, so that they may desire it: explaining the rewards of the good, so that they may restrain themselves: telling them of the gentleness of the Only-Begotten, so that they may take courage; running with them after every good thing, and strengthening them, hovering over them and rebuking them as they stoop to do something that is hateful. For its mercy resembles that of its Lord, in that it does not depart from them when they are soiled in filth, and it is not ashamed of them when they lie wallowing in the mud. Those who listen to it, it will remind; those who disobey, it will overtake. Here on earth it is mingled with them in every way, while there, at the day of judgment, it stands up in front of them.

24. When I beheld all this in that clear mirror of the holy Gospel of my Lord, my soul grew feeble, and my spirit was quenched; I bowed down my full stature to the dust, and my heart was filled with bitter groans, in the hope that somehow my stains might be washed white in my tears. I remembered the good Lord and the gentle God who wipes out the bond of the debtors' debts through tears, who accepts weeping in place of burnt sacrifices, and when I reached this point I took refuge in penitence, and sheltered under the wings of repentance; I took cover in the shade of humility, saying 'what else do

I need henceforth to offer to him who has no need of burnt sacrifices, apart from a meek spirit, for this constitutes the perfect sacrifice that can make propitiation for shortcomings and a broken heart in place of burnt offerings is something that God will not reject [cp Ps. 51:17-18]. Instead of a libation of wine, I will offer tears that propitiate'.

25. This, then, is what I beheld in that eloquent and living mirror, in which the images of all humanity's actions vibrate, from Adam up to the end of the world, and from the resurrection until the day of the just judgement. And what I heard from that blessed voice which was audible from within the mirror I have recorded in this letter, my beloved brother.

(d) In order to illustrate Ephrem's stanzaic poetry (madrashe), two comparatively short poems are selected here.

Hymns on Faith 49.

1. How splendid was Noah, whose example surpassed all his contemporaries: they were weighed in the scales of justice and were found wanting; a single soul, with its armour of chastity, outbalanced them all. They were drowned in the Flood, having proved too light in the scales, while in the Ark the chaste and weighty Noah was lifted up. Glory be to God who took pleasure in Noah.

REFRAIN: Praises to your Dominion!

2. Noah extended his ministry either side of the Flood, depicting two types, sealing up the one that had past, opening up that which followed. Between these two generations he ministered to two symbols, dismissing the former, making preparations for the latter. He buried the generation grown old, and nurtured the youthful one. Praises be to God who chose him.

3. Over the Flood the ship of the Lord of all flew, it left the east, rested in the west, flew off to the south, and measured out the north; its flight over the water served as a prophecy for the dry land, preaching how its progeny would be fruitful in every quarter, abounding in every region. Praises to his Saviour.

4. The Ark marked out by its course the sign of the Preserver, the Cross of its Steersman, and the Wood of its Sailor, who has come to fashion for us a Church in the waters of baptism: with the threefold name he rescues those who reside in her, and in place of the dove, the Spirit administers her anointing and the mystery of her salvation. Praises to her Saviour.

5. His symbols are in the law, his types are in the Ark: each bears testimony to the other – just as the Ark’s recesses were emptied out, so too are the types in the Scriptures emptied out, for by his coming he embraced the symbol of the Law, and in his churches he brought to completion the types of the Ark. Praise to your coming.

6. My mind wanders, having fallen into the flood of our Saviour’s power. Blessed is Noah, who, though his ship, the Ark, floated around over the Flood waters, yet his soul was recollected. May my faith, Lord, be a ship for my weakness, for the foolish are drowned in the depths of their own prying into you. Praises be to him who begot you.

Hymns on the Fast, no 3.

1. Who has peered back to see Adam and Eve, and the crafty serpent, with cunning in his heart but peace on his lips, stretching out as he beguiles childlike Adam and simple Eve? The Tree shines out, its fruit glistens, the fault is great, while Justice remains resplendent and mighty. Blessed is he who mixed into his just sentence a flood of mercy when he showed compassion on the guilty.
2. Who can endure to look upon that honoured pair who were stripped naked all of a sudden?

The Evil One stood there, a happy onlooker, while the Good One saw him and watched.

Who can fail to weep, seeing the great Adam thus brought low, the chaste man covering his shame with the leaves?[Gen.3:7]

Blessed is he who had pity on Adam’s leaves and sent a Robe of Glory to cover his naked state.

3. Who is there who can expound that Tree which causes those who sought it to go astray?

It is an invisible target, hidden from the eyes, which wearies those who aim at it.

It is both the Tree of Knowledge, and of the opposite: it is the cause of knowledge, for by it humanity knows what was the gift that was lost, and the punishment that took its place.

Blessed is that Fruit which has mingled a knowledge of the Tree of Life into mortals.

4. The serpent peered out and saw that the dove in Paradise was hungry; the pernicious one turned himself into a dove, he who is utterly accursed became like her, so that she might become his; he sung to her pleasant song, so that she might fly off amid laments.

Blessed is that voice of the Father which came down to give comfort and to remove our mother's woe.

4. Let not our fast provide delight for the Evil One as we use back-biting on our friends; for of old they proclaimed a fast – and stoned Naboth to death: the Evil One was delighted with their fasts! O fasters, who instead of bread, devoured the flesh of a man! During the fast they lapped up blood. Because they devoured human flesh, they became food for the dogs. [1 Kings 21:1-19].

Blessed is he who gives his own Body to our crazed mouths, so that might cease from back-biting!

5. The Merciful One peered out, saw a soul in the pit, and devised how to draw it up. Through his mere nod he could have saved that soul, yet he girded up his love in readiness for his labour, and put on humanity; he acquired its childlike state so that he might bring it to true knowledge; he sang to it with his lyre lowly songs, inviting it to be raised up. His Cross raised him up to the heights – so that Eve's children might likewise be raised up on high.

(c) At the beginning of the second of his memre on Faith Ephrem provides an analogy from the natural world to illustrate the relationship of the Father to the Son, and at the same time to show how knowledge of the Father (here indicated by the 'Blessed Root') is only possible through 'tasting' him in the Son, the Fruit of the Root.

Perfect is the Father in his Being, so too is the First- Born in his being begotten:

perfect Father of perfect Son. perfect in his birth, like his Begetter.

Very perfect, too, is a tree's root-stock, and perfect like it is its fruit:

the root does not hide from its fruit the sweet taste that exists in the tree.

Though the root cannot be contained, its sweet taste resides in its offspring.

If roots do not hide their treasures from their fruits

how could the Blessed Root hide his riches from his Fruit?

Look at the tree: in its bosom it hides away its sweet taste from all,

yet its sweet taste that is hidden from all is poured forth in the bosom of its fruit:

once its fruit has received this sweet taste, it distributes it to those who eat of it.

Through the Fruit there has been given to us the sweetness that exists in the Root.

Had the Fruit not received it, it would not have been possible for anyone to reach it.

The Root has given it to his Fruit, for he loves this more than anything else;

the Fruit has given the sweetness to the needy, because he loves them.

Just as much as the Father loves his Fruit, so does the Fruit love those who consume him.

It is possible to taste in the Fruit that hiddenness of the Root.

13*. BOOK of STEPS.

(a) In Homily 12 entitled 'On the ministry of the hidden and the manifest church' the author describes the proper interrelationship between 'the three churches'. that is. the visible church, the church of the heart, and the heavenly church. The passage is taken from sections 2-3.

If we should have doubts and despise this visible church, with its visible altar, and visible priesthood, and this baptism which brings forgiveness, then our bodies will not become temples, neither will our hearts become altars or well-springs of praise. Nor shall we have revealed to us that church on high with its altar, its light and its priesthood, where are gathered all the saints who are pure in heart, who dwell in its glory, exulting in its light, seeing that they do not despise this blessed nurse who daily gives birth and brings up fair children whom she sends on to that great church on high.

This visible church can be seen by everyone: its altar, baptism and priesthood were instituted by our Lord; for in it our lord prayed, and his apostles were both baptized in it and they sacrificed his Body and Blood in it, truly serving as priests. It is the church in truth, and the blessed mother who brings up everyone as children. Likewise that body and heart in which our Lord dwells - because the Spirit resides there - is in truth a temple and an altar, seeing that our Lord resides there, as it is written, "Your bodies are temples of the Lord and Christ dwells in your inner person"[1Cor. 6:19].

As for the church in heaven, all that is good takes its beginning from there, and from there light has shone out upon us in all directions. After its likeness the church on earth came into being, along with its priests and its altar; according to the pattern of its ministry the body ministers outwardly, while the heart acts as a priest inwardly. Those who are diligent in this visible church become like that heavenly church as they follow after it. This is why the visible church is supremely important, being the mother of all those who are baptized; but in particular, because the face of our Lord shines upon her and illuminates her.

This church, with its altar and baptism, gives birth to men and women as children, and they suck her milk until they are weaned. Then they come to growth and to knowledge that belongs both to the body and to the heart, whereupon they make their bodies temples and their hearts altars: they consume solid food, superior to milk, until they become perfect and consume our Lord himself in truth, just as he himself said, “whoever shall consume me shall be alive because of me” [John 6:58]. Once they have eaten the true food – as the Apostle said, “the true food belongs to the fully mature who are trained in strength to know what is the height, depth, length and breadth” [Heb. 5:14; Eph. 3:18]- then they attain to that church on high which makes them fully mature, and they enter the city of Jesus our King. There they worship in that great and perfect palace which is the mother of all the living and the fully mature.

Accordingly we should not despise the visible church which brings up everyone as children. Nor should we despise this church of the heart, seeing that she strengthens all who are sick. And we should yearn for the church on high, for she makes all the saints fully mature.

(b) The Book of Steps distinguishes between two groups of Christians, those who follow Christ’s ‘lesser commandments’ (of active charity), and those who follow his ‘greater commandments’ (of total renunciation of the world and the radical imitation of Christ). The former are described as the ‘upright’, and the latter as the ‘fully mature(or: perfect)’. In the imagery of the present homily (19), the fully mature (who are explicitly associated with the ihidaya) travel to the city of the Kingdom by a steep and difficult path, while the upright, who are also described as being children or infirm, can do so by the easier, but indirect, side roads. The passage is taken from the opening of Homily 19.

1. If you wish to become an ihidaya, and are eager to go quickly to the city of our Lord Jesus, then lend me the ears of your mind and I will show you how to reach the city of our King by a direct way- provided you have the strength to travel in the way I shall show you, for the gradients which I shall direct you to go up are very steep. Furthermore there are many side roads which lead off the direct

road; these take you on a circuit around many mountains: day after day you will be held back, until the day of your departure from this life arrives and you find yourself still on the side roads which lead off the direct road to one side or another, simply because you do not know how to go directly on the road that leads to the city. And if you fail during your lifetime to investigate how to put yourself upon that road, so as to go along it eagerly and reach that city, you will not be able to travel on it once you have departed from this world.

Now the end of your road is full maturity (or: perfection), and it commences when you begin to uproot from yourself all your failings. It is like the case of a road to cities that are to be seen in this world: if there is no one to direct you to cities you have never seen and which you do not know, then side roads leading off the roads to them will lead you astray, and you will travel circuitously for a long time and fail to reach the place to which you wish to go. So it is with the hidden road which goes to the hidden city: many side roads lead off it in all sorts of directions, and if there is no one who knows the road which goes to that country who can direct you and point out to you all the side roads that lead off it, you will be unable to travel directly, and you will miss the swift route in pursuit of full maturity; you will depart from this world without having become fully mature, and you will no longer be able to be with our Lord in his city and kingdom in that world, nor will you enter that city of the saints.

2. These side roads which lead off the mature road to the country where our Lord is to be seen face to face are certainly not bad; but our Lord and those who preach him have directed people off that high road for their own sake if they are children or sickly, seeing that steep gradients and narrow confines will be encountered by anyone on that road leading direct to the city. For you will feel oppressed because of the great height above and the depth below; if you veer to one side, there is fire, and if you veer to the other side there is much water. If someone falls, he will be broken to pieces; whoever enters the fire will be burnt up, and whoever falls into the water will be drowned – while above, the ascent is arduous, steep

and narrow. If you wish to travel to that city, then force yourself when you are at such a height to stick to the climb, without veering either to the right or to the left, or to the depth, lest you perish; climb straight on up, so that you may suddenly arrive in that great and glorious country.

Let me explain to you these parables about the steep ascents, the fire, the water, and the great depth. If you have believed the words of Jesus and established with him a covenant that you will listen to his words and keep his greater commandments, from that very moment, either in body or in spirit, you will be travelling on this road of the commandments and you will be starting on these ascents. If you are willing to climb them so as to confirm your covenant with Jesus, then you will see him and receive from him what he has promised you, namely, “with me you will have delight at the table of the Kingdom” [cp Luke 22:30]. Unless you humble yourself, as a servant, before all people, both good and bad, you will be unable to climb these ascents, or to complete the road by which you are travelling to that country where our Lord promised you that you would find delight. Once you turn back from your covenant you will fall into the great depth which leads down to Sheol; and if you transgress his commandments, then you will go to Gehenna, that is, the fire; and if you deny him, you will be suffocated, like Iscariot, in the suffocating hidden water, that is, the Evil one’s teaching.

3. Rather, listen to what our Lord has said, “The road leading to life is narrow” [Matt. 7:14]. So how much more narrow is the one which leads to full maturity and outstanding glory. Scripture further has said, “Humble yourself, lower than everything on earth; for if you have given yourself over to the fear of God, then you have given yourself over to all sorts of trials” [Ben Sira 2:1]. Humble yourself, then, lower than all other human beings, and endure the affliction that lasts for a short while, so that you may come to the rest which never pass away. Do not break your covenant, otherwise you will come to tribulation that cannot be contained.

4. The side roads leading off on one side or the other from the direct ascent were provided by our Lord and his preachers, not so that the strong might be prevented from ascending, but for the sake of the sick and the children who are unable to make such a climb as long as they are either too young or sick. For this reason he provided for them side roads which travel over the foothills of the ascent, so that they can travel by them and eventually meet the road which ascends to the height, once they are strong enough or have grown up sufficiently and have the strength in them to make the ascent by that narrow road with its steep climb, without any fear at all of having to turn back or of becoming dizzy as a result of their youth or sickness and so either falling into that great depth, or losing their balance to one side or the other and perishing. And because the tribulation that accompanies these side paths is not as great as it is for the highroad, people like to take them, not realizing that if they do not go along this narrow road, they will not enter that city of great rest. Let us not, then, prolong our sickness and greatly delay our growing up, but let us eagerly recover and grow up, so we can enter on the road upon which the strong travel. For as long as we dawdle on the side roads that we find easy-going, we are made barren in our souls; for if we do not go along the narrow road we will not become fully mature.

5. The side roads are the small commandments which are provided as milk for children, or as vegetables for the sick, since they are not able to accept the solid food of the great commandments. "Solid food is for those who are trained in strength" [Heb. 5:14]. You see how the sick and the children are not able to climb these ascents. "Brethren, I have not been able to speak with you as with people who are in the Spirit; instead, I have given you milk to drink since you are but children in Christ" [1 Cor. 3:1]. Go on, therefore, to solid food. "When I was a child I acted like a child, basing myself on the small commandments; when I became an adult I ceased my childish mentality" [cp 1 Cor. 13:11], that is, I abandoned the easy side roads of the small commandments, "and I became an adult and grew fully mature. Imitate me, brethren, just as I have imitated Christ [1 Cor.

4:16] and become fully mature". You see how he could not, as long as they were young and sick, show them how to ascend to that height; instead he showed them these small commandments, but once they have grown strong and recovered he calls out to them: Come, go on the direct road of the great commandments for the fully mature who are strong eat of this food and travel along this highway.

16*. JOHN the SOLITARY (John of Apamea).

(a) From his short treatise on prayer.

God is silence, and in silence he is sung by means of that psalmody which is worthy of him. I am not speaking of the silence of the tongue, for if someone merely keeps his tongue silent, without knowing how to sing in mind and spirit, then he is simply unoccupied and he becomes filled with evil thoughts: he is just keeping an exterior silence and he does not know how to sing in an interior way, seeing that the tongue of his hidden person has not yet learnt to stretch itself out even in order to babble. You should look on the spiritual infant that is within you in the same way as you look on an ordinary child or infant: just as the tongue in an infant's mouth is still because it does not yet know speech or the right movements to make for speaking, so it is with that interior tongue of the mind: it will be still from all speech and from all thought, it will be simply placed there, ready to learn the first babblings of spiritual utterance.

Thus there is a silence of the tongue, there is a silence of the whole body, there is the silence of the soul, and there is the silence of the mind, and there is the silence of the spirit. The silence of the tongue is merely when it is not incited to evil speech; the silence of the entire body is when all its senses are unoccupied; the silence of the soul is when there are no ugly thoughts bursting forth from within it; the silence of the mind is when it is not reflecting on any harmful knowledge or wisdom; the silence of the spirit is when the mind ceases even from stirrings caused by created spiritual beings, and all its movements are stirred solely by the divine Being, at the wondrous awe of the silence which surrounds this Being.

(b) The third of John's Three discourses is on the topic of baptism, and opens with a dialogue between Chrysthenes and Soterianus in which Soterianus tries to convince his friend that he should get baptized, even though Chrysthenes can see no merit in this. In due course the conversation breaks off and John the Solitary provides a discourse on the meaning of baptism: it is from this section (ed. Rignell, pp. 20-1) that the following extract is taken.

Again, the mystery of baptism is this: because our human nature had become spattered by every kind of impurity of the passions and of the demons. Thus, up to the time when someone comes to baptism it is as though the nature of his soul was commingled with and soiled by these impurities; accordingly, Christ provided baptism to be like a furnace, so that, just as objects are refined and purified in fire and air, so by means of Fire and the living Spirit, souls might be purified from every working of the devil. For this reason, John names Christ's baptism 'fire', saying "He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in the Fire" [Matt.3:11], since, like fire, it refines the souls of human beings and purifies them from the error and rust of sins.

For just as objects enter the fire and leave behind there the waste and rust that is on them, and emerge cleansed of every impurity, so too the baptism of Christ has drawn near to the human race, and cleansed and purified it of all the impurity that leads to corruption.

We might also say this: Why is it said of John that he baptized in water, but of our Lord that he baptized with Fire and the Spirit. You know that water is also a cleansing agent, but not completely so: for what is cleansed in water is still subject to corruption, whereas objects which do not become corrupted have been purified in fire. Now there are also cases where things again get corrupted by impurity even after they have been purified by fire- as is the case with iron when it is associated with soil, resulting in rusting.

Again, when water cleanses others, it is unable to escape from impurity over a long period; for since it has a nature that is receptive of impurity and so can be made impure, it may end up in impurity. But fire does away with impurity and remains as it was. Furthermore,

water does not destroy impurity, but separates it; fire, however, does not behave like that, for it completely destroys the impurity.

For this reason the mystery of John's baptism was described as baptizing in water alone, since his baptism did not effect purity of soul, nor did it remove the impurity of sins from the soul; nor again do those baptized by him receive the incorruptible image.

Christ's baptism, on the other hand, has provided us with invincible armour against every kind of rebellious power. In the case of John's baptism, because people did not receive through it a second birth and a new image, for that reason his baptism was not called 'of fire and Spirit', whereas Christ's baptism is justly named as being of water and fire and Spirit.

Just as, by means of water, fire and Spirit our corruptible body is depicted, shaped and fashioned with colour, beauty and form in the womb, so too, because we are a living seed and were corrupted in the place of error, the divine agency, by means of hidden fire and Spirit, has once again depicted and fashioned with an abundance of holy beauty our resplendent souls in the womb of baptism, so that henceforth we should not be children of the Evil One, but children of God the Father.

(c) From his Dialogue on the passions of the soul (ed. Dederling, p.6).

Eusebius: What is the beginning of the manner of life of the inner person?

The Solitary: Self-emptying of love of money; after self-emptying of the love of money it is absolutely necessary that one empty oneself of the passion of the love of praise. Then afterwards such a person has the possibility of existing in virtue of mind, in humility and endurance, in serenity and mental awareness, in joy at the hope of God and of human beings. For it is by these things that a person approaches purity of soul, which is the sum of the entire way of life which God bade human beings to follow during this life. For all his commandments bring a person as far as luminosity of soul. Now once someone has done battle and overcome all the evil passions,

and he is standing in purity of mind, then he leaves the entire way of life that is commanded by God in his life. and henceforth he begins, starting from luminosity of soul, to enter into the way of life of the 'New Person': no longer is he a servant subject to a law, but a beloved son who is liberated from everything that belongs to this world.

17* ANONYMOUS POETRY

(a) Verse Homily on Genesis 22. Two (related) anonymous verse homilies on this topic survive, and the latter of the two is remarkable for its presentation of Sarah (who receives no mention in Gen. 22) as the true heroine of the episode; not only is she portrayed as being aware of God's command to Abraham, and as sharing in her husband's immense faith in, and love of, God, but she undergoes a second testing when Abraham and Isaac returned home:

Once they had arrived and reached home, Abraham said to his son,

"My son, please stay back for a little, while I go in and return to your mother.

I will see how she receives me; I will spy out her mind and her thought".

The old man returned and entered in peace. Sarah rose up to receive him;

she brought in a bowl to wash his feet, and she began to speak as follows,

"Welcome, blessed old man, husband who has loved God;
welcome, happy man, who has sacrificed my only child on the pyre;

welcome, o slaughterer, who did not spare the body of my only child,

Did he weep when he was bound, or groan as he died?

He was eagerly looking out for me, but I was not there to come to his side;

His eyes were wandering over the mountains, but I was not there to deliver him.

By the God whom you worship, relate to me the whole affair”.

Abraham answered and said to Sarah, in reply to her words,

“Your son did not weep when he was bound, he gave no groan as he died.

You have put me under oath by God, saying, ‘Did he ask to see you on the pyre?’

When the pyre was built and set up, and the bonds were on his hands,

and the knife above his head, then did he remember you there, and he asked to see you on the pyre”.

“May the soul of my only child be accepted, for he hearkened to the words of his mother.

If only I were an eagle, or had the speed of a turtle-dove,

so that I might go and behold that place where my only child, my beloved, was sacrificed,

so that I might see the place of his ashes, the site where he was bound,

and bring back a little of his blood to be comforted by its smell.

I had some of his hair to put in a place inside my clothes,

and when grief overcame me, I placed it over my eyes.

I had some of his garments, so that I might imagine him,

as I placed them in front of my eyes.

and when suffering sorrow overcame me, I gained relief through gazing upon them.

I wished I could see his pyre and the place where his bones were burnt,

and could bring a little of his ashes, to gaze on them always and be comforted”.

As she stood there, her heart mourning, her mind and thought intent,

greatly upset with emotion, her mind dazed as she grieved,
the child came in, returning safe and sound.

Sarah arose to receive him, she embraced him
and kissed him amidst tears, and she began to address him as follows:

“Welcome, my son, my beloved; welcome, child of my vows;
welcome, o dead one who has come back to life”.

The child began to speak, saying as follows,

“A son does not last for ever, nor do wealth and possessions,
but God endures for ever for whosoever performs his will.

But for the voice which called out, ‘Abraham, hold off from the child’

I would yesterday have died and my bones would have been
consumed by fire”.

Then Sarah began to repay, with utterances of thanksgiving,
the Good God who had brought back her only child:

“I give thanks to God who has given you to me a second time;
I do obeisance to that voice which delivered you, my son, from
the knife.

I praise him who saved you from burning on the pyre.

Henceforth, my son, it will not be ‘Sarah’s son’ that people will
call you, but ‘child of the pyre’,

an ‘offering which died and was resurrected’.

And to you be glory, O God, for all pass away, but you endure”.

(b) The dialogue poems (soghyatha) follow a fairly regular pattern and consist of three elements: a short introduction, an extended dialogue between two characters, speaking in alternating verses, and a brief conclusion. The dialogue itself often has an alphabetic acrostic. The following is the opening of the dialogue between Cain and Abel, based on Genesis 4: as often in these soghyatha, the

dialogue takes as its starting point a single verse in the biblical text, and explores the implications of this: in this case the verse is Gen. 4:7, where God says to Cain ‘Had you done well, would you not have been accepted?’ (explicitly taken up by Abel in verse 36, where he tells Cain “God would have chosen you, had you acted well”). The extract below represents verse 13-20 of the poem as a whole (the total number of verses in this *soghitha* is 56).

CAIN [Alaph] Cain says: Since the Lord has taken delight in your sacrifice, but rejected mine, I will kill you. Since he has preferred you, I will get my own back on you, his ‘friend’.

ABEL [Alaph] Abel says: What wrong have I done if the Lord has been pleased with me? He searches out hearts and so has the right to choose or reject as he likes.

CAIN [Beth] I am the eldest, and so it is right that he should accept me, rather than you: but he has preferred yours, and mine he has abhorred: he has rejected my offering and chosen yours.

ABEL [Beth] In all the offerings that are made it is love that he wants to see, and if good intention is not mingled in, then the sacrifice is ugly, and so gets rejected.

CAIN [Gamal] I will deprive you of your ‘friend’, for the earth will not hold us both: then he will have to accept a sacrifice from me, since there is no one else beside me.

ABEL [Gamal] Grant me as a favour some small corner in the world, and do not kill me. The whole world shall be yours, then you can offer up your sacrifice, just as you like.

CAIN [Dalath] Tears and weeping will not sway me, nor will your groans, however plentiful. The moment he accepted your sacrifice I thought of you as already dead and buried.

ABEL [Dalath] You may have the world to yourself, but grant me the favour of remaining in it: lay the yoke of your rule on my neck, but let me have my fill of the life to which I have come.

18*. ANONYMOUS PROSE

(a) Teaching of Addai,

The following extract concerns the famous correspondence between king Abgar of Edessa and Christ.

Abgar wrote a letter and sent it to Christ by the hand of Hannan the archivist. Hannan left Edessa on the 14th March, and entered Jerusalem on 12th April, a Wednesday. There he found Christ in the house of Gamaliel the leader of the Jews, and the letter, which was written as follows, was read out before him.

“Abgar the Black to Jesus the Good physician who has appeared in the region of Jerusalem: greetings, my lord! I have heard report of you and of your healing, how you do not heal by means of medicines and herbal preparations; instead, by your very utterance you give sight to the blind, make the lame walk, give cleansing to lepers, and cause the deaf to hear. Those troubled by spirits and demons, and the tormented, you heal by your very word. You even raise the dead. When I heard of these great wonders which you are performing, I supposed that either you are God who have come down from heaven and performed these things, or you are the Son of God who are doing all this. For this reason I have written to ask you to come to me, seeing that I reverence you, and heal a particular illness that I have, for I have faith in you. I have also heard that the Jews are murmuring against you and persecuting you, and that they even want to crucify you, being intent on harming you. Now I possess a small and charming town, which would suffice for both of us to live here in quiet”.

On receiving this letter in the house of the High Priest of the Jews, Jesus said to Hannan the archivist, “Go and tell your lord who has sent you to me, ‘Blessed are you, for without having seen me you have had faith in me. For it is written of me, Those who see me will not have faith in me, but it is those who do not see me who will have faith in me. As to what you wrote, saying that I should come to you: the matter over which I was sent here has now reached an end, and I am about to ascend to my Father who sent me. Once I have

ascended to him I will send you one of my disciples, who will heal and cure the illness which you have; and he will convert everyone who is with you to eternal life. Your town, too, shall be blessed, and no enemy shall ever again take control of it”.

(b) From the Martyrdom of Martha (ed. Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, II, pp.223-8).

Both Martha and her father Posi were martyred during the fiercest of all the persecutions endured by the Church in the Persian Empire; this took place in the 340s in the reign of the shah Shapur II. The following extract is taken from Martha’s trial, where the narrator provides an imaginative reconstruction of what was said by Martha and the Mobed (Zoroastrian official) who was interrogating her.

The chief Mobed started to interrogate the glorious Martha as follows: “What are you?” -to which the blessed Martha replies in derision, “I am a woman, as you can see”. Those who happened to be there in the presence of the chief Mobed blushed and bent their heads when they heard the wise Martha’s reply to his question, while the Mobed’s face became green with anger and shame. But he controlled his feelings and said, “Reply to my question”, to which the wise Martha said, “I did reply to the question I was asked”.

The Mobed then said, “What did I ask you, and what reply did you give?”. Martha said, “Your honour asked ‘What are you?’, and I replied ‘I am a woman as you can see’”.

“I asked you what is your religion”, said the Mobed. The glorious Martha replied, “I am a Christian, as my clothing indicates”. The Mobed went on, “Tell me the truth, are you the daughter of that crazy Posi who went out of his mind and opposed the king, with the result that he was put to an evil death?” To this the blessed girl replied, “Humanly speaking, I am his daughter, but also by faith I am the daughter of the Posi who is wise in his God and sane in the firm stand he took on behalf of the king of Kings, the King of truth, the Posi who yesterday acquired everlasting life by means of his dying for his God. If only God would hold me worthy to be a true

daughter of this blessed Posi, who is now with the saints in light and eternal rest, while I am still among sinners in this world of sorrows”.

The Mobed then said, “Listen to me, and I will advise you what is your best course: the king of kings is merciful and he does not desire anyone’s death, but in his goodness he wishes all his friends to become fellow-religionists of his, and so be honoured by him. So it was in the case of your father: because the king liked him, he honoured him and gave him advancement; but your father acted foolishly and said things which were quite out of place, whereupon the king of kings urged him not to be stubborn, but to no effect. This was the reason why he was put to death. And now in your case, do not act stubbornly as your father did, but do the will of Shapur, king of kings and lord of all regions. As a result you will be greatly honoured, and whatever you ask for, your request will be granted by the king”.

The glorious Martha replied, “May king Shapur live, may his graciousness never leave him, may his compassion continue; may his graciousness be preserved by his children, and his compassion redound to himself and on the people who deserve it. May the life that he loves be accorded to all his brethren and friends, but let all who imitate my father meet the evil death which you said my father died. As for me, a wretched handmaid, the dregs of the handmaids of God and of the king, why should any transient honour come to me? I have decided to become an object of abuse like my father for the sake of my father’s God, and I will die like him because of my faith in God”.

The Mobed said, “I am aware of the hardness of heart which you Christians have – a people guilty of death. Furthermore, no obedient offspring is likely to come from a rebellious man like Posi. Nevertheless, simply so that I shall not be held guilty before God of not having done my best to warn you, I am taking all this trouble over you in order to bring you over to the religion of the excellent gods who care for the world”.

The holy Martha replied, “You have said your part, and I have said mine – unless you are quite blind and are paying no attention to the true state of affairs that I have described. Otherwise you have both heard and seen which exhortation is profitable and which harmful: which leads to the Kingdom of heaven, which leads to the fire of Gehenna, which provides life, and which engenders death”.

The Mobed went on, “Listen to me and do not be stubborn and obstinate following your own perverted wishes in everything. Instead, seeing that you are set on not giving up your religion, act as you like, but do this one thing only: and you shall live and not die: you are a young girl, and a very pretty one – find a husband and get married, have sons and daughters, and do not hold on to the disgusting pretext of the covenant”.

The wise Martha replied, “If a virgin is betrothed to a man, does the natural law command that someone else should come along, attack her fiancé, and snatch away this girl who has already been betrothed? Or does it say that such a virgin should give herself up to marry a man to whom she is not betrothed?”

“No”, answered the Mobed. The betrothed of Christ, Martha, then said, “So how can your authority order me to marry a man to whom I am not betrothed, seeing that I am already betrothed to someone else?”

To which the Mobed said, “Are you really betrothed, then?” And the blessed Martha replied, “I am in truth betrothed”. “To whom?”, asked the Mobed. “Is your honour not aware of him?”, said the glorious Martha. “Where is he?”, asked the Mobed. Wise in our Lord, she replied, “He has set out on a long journey on business, but he is close by and is on the point of coming back”. “What is his name?”, inquired the Mobed. “Jesus”, replied the blessed Martha.

Still not understanding, the Mobed went on, “What country has he gone to? In which city is he now?” The splendid Martha replied, “He has gone off to heaven, and he is now in Jerusalem on high”.

At this point the Mobed realized that she was speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereupon he exclaimed, “Did I not say at the very beginning that this was a stubborn people, not open to persuasion? I will spatter you with blood from head to toe, and then your fiancé can come along to find you turned into dust and rubbish: let him marry you then”.

The courageous Martha replied, “He will indeed come in glory, riding on the chariot of the clouds, accompanied by the angels and powers of heaven, and all that is appropriate for his wedding feast; he will shake from the dust the bodies of all those who are betrothed to him, wash them in the dew of heaven, anoint them with the oil of gladness, and clothe them in the garment of righteousness, which consists of glorious light; he will place on their fingers rings as a surety of his grace, while on their heads he will put a crown of splendour, that is to say, unfading glory. He will allow them to sit on his chariot – the glorious cloud – and will raise them up into the air, bringing them into the heavenly bridal chamber that has been set up in a place not made by hands, but built in Jerusalem, the free city on high”.

When the Mobed heard this, he left her in his palace and went in to inform the king of everything. The king then gave orders for the impudent girl and daughter of an impudent father to be taken outside the city and immolated on the very spot where her father had been killed.

19*. NARSAI.

In the course of the first of his verse homilies (memre) Narsai recounts the ordeal of Abraham when God bade him offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen.22). After stressing the magnitude of Abraham’s agony on receiving this command, Narsai continues:

[.....] The Hidden Power gave strength to the mind of the mindful man

And he never weakened in the conflict of emotions of both body and soul.

The sweetness of passionate love for his Lord enabled the just man

to constrain and neutralize the poison that was mingled in his natural feelings.

O Abraham, true friend of faith, who forgot all the lovely things that nature had acquired.

Well did God choose you when he chose you from all the Peoples,

making you an example for anyone wanting to imitate your passionate love.

Through love for his Master did the fervent man carry out his Master's will,

taking his son to go to the place that had been shown him.

The voice bade him make his sacrifice in a distant place, so that he might be observed by the inhabitants of both earth and heaven:

to the sight of all creation was God demonstrating his fortitude of soul.

how resolute he was, showing no weakness in the labour of his journey.

Three days did he travel, silent, without doubt in his mind.

He did not reveal the secret of his Master's will to his household;

from everyone did he hide the secret between him and his Lord, not even revealing to Sarah the preparations he had in mind.

He kept the secret between his Lord and himself hidden, so that the genuineness of his love might be assured for the Lord who had chosen him.

His Lord's command was weighty upon him above all other, but he made ready his own will in accordance with his Lord's: by that will his soul's emotions were held fast.

while he was looking to the outcome at the end of his journey.
The three days' course of his journey came to an end,
and raising up his eyes he beheld the place, whereat he rejoiced:

for with bodily eyes God showed him the place of his son's sacrifice,

while in his mind God revealed the type of what was to come,
for on that symbolic site Christ was to become a sacrifice,
and God foretold him, before these things took place,
by means of the symbol of the sacrifice,
since Isaac's sacrifice was a symbol of that of Christ.

Most appropriate it was that the one sacrifice should resemble the other.

The Creator's power made similar love's intent,
so that those who hear these words may not show doubt at what was carried out.

Such was Abraham's mind on his three-day journey,
so that one sacrifice might prove a witness to the other, the symbol to the reality.

Abraham directed his mind to this intention and his soul found rest

at the site of the sacrifice that his Lord had shown him.

On this sacrificial site he brought to perfection his own will and that of his Lord.

He built the altar, laid out the wood, bound his son, drew out the knife –

and with the knife he drew out his will.

But a voice held him back, checking his hand from his beloved one:

'Abram, Abram!', did the spiritual being call out to the mortal;
'Hold back your hand. stop from your son's sacrificial death;

stop from the sacrifice of mortal blood that I requested of you.

Take and offer to me the blood of a dumb animal instead of a rational being;

I do not ask for the blood of a human being at this time,

for he is insufficient to wipe out with his blood the document of debt:

humanity's debts cannot be repaid with human blood until the time that,

from humanity, there shall come the Perfect Man.

I know when the time will be appropriate for fulfilling this:

when Man shall deliver mankind does not escape me.

I have revealed to you, Abram, by means of this sacrifice, the delivery of mankind.

so that all may know to watch for the time of humanity's salvation.

By what has occurred with you I have trodden the path that leads to what is to come.

so that humanity may travel to meet hope of death's annulment.

By this affair I have arranged affairs, asking for a sacrifice

so that I might reveal to humanity my hidden will:

in you, Abraham, I have revealed to created being my will for all.

Listen, understand, and in your own wisdom make men wise.

Do not imagine that I have rejected your sacrifice as imperfect:

see, I have provided you with the means to carry out my will by sacrificing a lamb;

I am giving you a dumb lamb in place of one endowed with speech ...` [...]

21*. JACOB OF SERUGH

(a) In no. 109 of his verse homilies Jacob treats the same subject of Abraham's ordeal and the sacrifice of Isaac, but in a much more extended way; the

following two excerpts are taken from pp.73-77. and pp.99-101 of vol. IV of Bedjan's edition of Jacob's homilies.

[...] And when the third day arrived – the day that belongs to the Son - and the journey, full of symbols of the Only-Begotten, had reached its end,

Abraham looked up and saw the mountain towards which he was travelling, whereupon the sign of the Son indicated to him 'Thus far, old man'.

Once the journey to the site of slaughter had been trodden out, along all its milestones, where the only resting place along it was the site of the whole offering, then the symbol indicated to him,

'Come, ascend to me, for here I am; this is the mountain upon which salvation for the world shall take place.

Come, ascend, and behold the live victim set out upon the pyre, the sacrifice that is slain by the knife, but does not die.

Come, I will show you the day of the Son [John 8:56] by means of hints, and I will indicate to you concerning the slaughter of the Only-Begotten.

Approach me and behold the type of true things to come; examine me closely and you will have encountered the exact truth.

Parables are set out here: come and depict them yourself, and bring down with you the great image for the Son of God.

This is the goal of your journey, o man; now enter into rest.

Come to me, and do not pass by like some stranger, it is to this harbour that you should steer your ship, o sailor full of symbols, for here is stored the cargo of treasures by which you will be enriched.

Come, o painter, and take up the divine colours, and with choice paint bring out a portrait for the Son. This is the site where true things shall be carried out; do not go beyond any further milestone, lest you get lost.

This is the place where holy blood shall be outpoured. Come, sprinkle in it the blood of the Son's symbol, then pass on.

This is the mountain on which the sword is sharpened, ready for the slaughter; come and test out there the knife that your love has sharpened`.

According to what they say, Isaac`s mountain was Golgotha, and his father bound him on the site of the crucifixion.

Where Sion fixed firm the wood to crucify the Son, there the symbol-bearing tree sprang up.

In the place where the hands of the Son were pierced by nails, there too the bonds were offered up to Isaac.

Where the sword was lifted up against the Saviour [John 19:34], there another sword was sharpened for use against an only-begotten child.

It was appropriate that a servant should prepare the way for his Master who came to be a sacrifice on behalf of sinners.

The symbol of the crucifixion peered out from the summit of the mountain, and as Abraham travelled he saw it and turned aside in its direction.

The type stood there on Golgotha and manifested itself; as though by a mere hint it led Isaac towards the knife.

Abraham saw the watch-post on the top of the mountain as it made its signals, and he understood where the symbol`s camp was pitched.

Had it not been thus, in the way I am telling, who was it who showed him which mountain he was aiming for?

The Lord had just told him to sacrifice his son `on one of the mountains`, without explaining to him `on such and such a mountain make your sacrifice`.

Had Abraham not seen by the eye of prophecy where it was he would not have known which mountain to travel to.

If he had not received some revelation before he reached it, why did he not just pass by it, like all the rest of the mountains?

Had he not seen some sign offering some hint, on what agreement did he turn aside to that specific place?

‘Sacrifice your son on one of the mountains that I shall tell you’:-so it is evident that God told him ‘This is the mountain’.

He hinted to him in a hidden way that it was on Golgotha that he should sacrifice Isaac, so that the symbol might be performed on the mountain of the crucifixion.

[...] The valiant priest was all ready for the whole sacrifice; he stretched out his hand, took the knife ready for the slaughter; he washed his mind in the sprinkled blood that he was to pour out there.

In his mind he placed the corpse beside himself, without any sorrow. His thoughts ran ahead and sacrificed the boy before the actual act: in his mind Isaac was already slain without feeling pain.

And when his will had performed his part without flinching, and he had shed the blood of his only-begotten as though in reality;

and when the entire type had been brought to completion in the child of barren parents, and the mighty portrait was ready to be sealed with all its colours;

and when the depiction of the Mysteries of Christ had been completed, with only the blood along with the knife holding back,

and when the blade was raised up on high, to bring down death,
- a voice bridled his hand as it raced to carry out the slaughter, a double utterance checked the hand from descending: two times was the voice raised, and the hand was then held back.

The voice came between the knife and the neck of the boy, receiving the blade from Sarah’s son, to prevent his being struck.

By means of two utterances, emitted one after the other, only just did the old man’s hand fall short of slaughter.

Two mediators came to urge him to hold back his hand, for he would not listen to one petitioner alone:

he was so eager to slay that two had to grab hold of him – and then he desisted.

Mediation had been made: he stood there and held back his hand from his beloved.

The Father called out to him, through the angel, and spoke with him. ‘Do not stretch out your hand against the boy; do not touch him.

You have travelled along the path of the mysteries right up to the slaughter: do not proceed further in the direction of death, for you have no power to do so.

Salvation will not come through Isaac by your shedding his blood; hold back your sword from the helpless boy; untie him and let him descend.

The world’s captivity will not be rescued by means of his feeble blood; why then should you sacrifice Isaac when he will not effect salvation?

Be patient, for it is the Kingdom’s own Son who will deliver his own’.

Abraham rejoiced at the day of the Son [John 8:56] which he saw in his own son.

Hidden mysteries were expounded in the sacrifice of his son [...].

(b) The sixth of Jacob’s Prose Homilies (turgame) is on the Resurrection, and most remarkably, use has been made of the opening sections in the Church of the East’s Hudra at the Feast of the Resurrection. The excerpt is taken from the middle of the homily.

21. In order to act as witnesses to his resurrection he did not send his friends to his enemies, lest out of hostility their words would be despised, since they would be supposed to be prejudiced:

Caiaphas would not listen to Cephas, Hannan would not be persuaded by Iohannan. This is the reason why he manifested his resurrection to the executioners, since these men who had crucified him spoke of him in amazement in the presence of those people who had handed him over to Pilate's officials. For the company of the crucifiers and the executioners turned out to be apostles of the resurrection of Christ, and the latter were readily accepted since they had been in alliance with the crucifiers, and had not been friends of the man crucified.

22. All our Lord's enemies were gathered secretly with them to learn from them what they had seen at the tomb of the slain man; and the executioners would secretly relate what they had seen, warning one another lest anyone else hear of it apart from those who were party to the secret, guarding it so that outsiders would not become aware of it.

By these means the resurrection turned out to be luminously apparent to both enemies and friends, and Christ's rising from the dead became firmly known to the crucifiers, as well as to the disciples - so that his friends might rejoice, while the heart of his enemies would be shattered.

23. The cloud of grief which yesterday, with all its storm of sufferings, had caused the disciples to flee, today batters hard on the crucifiers with its wintry blasts. The seasons have been reversed, with the result that today for the disciples there is a bright clear sky full of joys, while for the crucifiers there is gloomy winter, full of grief. The wheel that on Friday had been immersed in blood, so as to bring down the Slain One to Sheol, today has yoked to it life, and the resurrection causes it to turn, so that it raises up the Living One from the tomb to heaven.

22*. PHILOXENUS

(a) In several places in the course of his writings on christology Philoxenus compares the action of the Holy Spirit at the Incarnation with the same Spirit's action in the Eucharistic Mysteries. The extract below is from the Three memre on the Trinity and the Incarnation (Tractatus tres. p.122).

Concerning how the Word became flesh we add a further demonstration, taken from something performed daily amongst us, namely the Sacred Mysteries.

The ordinary species of bread and wine are, according to custom, placed upon the holy altar. but once the Spirit has descended upon them – just as he also came at the Annunciation upon the Virgin – he makes the two of them the Body and Blood of him who became inhuman. Just as there the Spirit, by giving body to the Word, showed forth a human body, so here he makes the bread and the wine the Body and Blood of the Word, in order that they may be able to effect in us all those things which his own body effected. For there too [during Christ's time on earth] everyone who approached his body in faith received from it strength for whatever was required. But not even here in the case of the Mysteries can we say, if we are asked, by what means the bread becomes the Body and the wine the Blood. Rather, we simply acknowledge that this is the case, preserving silence about the 'how'.

If someone should ask us to investigate the matter scientifically, all he will hear from us is that these matters are beyond our reach: how they take place is something revealed only to God the Creator. For our part, faith concerning them needs to prevail – and faith too is something given by grace, enabling us to lay hold of, by its means, the entire tradition of the Mysteries which we have received. But knowledge about them, as I have just said, is something above nature, and so it should be reserved for the Creator, seeing that it is highly appropriate and fitting that knowledge of such matters as these should be accorded to him to whom they belong.

(b) Commentary on the Prologue of John # 23.

At several points in his commentary Philoxenus complains that the translators of the Peshitta New Testament did not follow the Greek with sufficient exactitude, thus inadvertently giving scope to Philoxenus' dyophysite opponents. This applies in particular to certain passages of importance for the christological controversies of the time, and it is in order to rectify this situation that Philoxenus sponsored a revised translation of the Syriac New Testament, as he tells us in the passage below. This version, today known

as the ‘Philoxenian’ and which alas does not survive, was undertaken by his chorepiscopus Polycarp and was completed in AD 508. (Philoxenus’ discussion here of Hebrews 2:9 reflects a famous variant reading in Greek. Peshitta manuscripts are divided on this point; for a discussion, see *Novum Testamentum* 27 (1985), pp.236-44).

The Apostle Paul too spoke well, saying “He became [flesh]”, and not “He was born” in the flesh [Rom. 1:3] – which was how it pleased those first translators [sc. of the Peshitta] who translated from the Greek to interpret, thus giving strength to the heretics to understand that one being was born in another. The Apostle also concurs here as well with the Evangelists and the angel, each of whom spoke first of a ‘becoming’ and then of birth.

If those who translated supposed that it was not elegant in the Syriac language to speak of the ‘becoming’ of Christ, or of God, or of the Son, they should have realized that someone who is concerned to translate the truth ought not to select those words which are appropriate for each particular language, but to seek out what are the utterances and terms which come from God or from his Spirit and were spoken through the prophets and apostles. For things placed in the holy Scriptures are not the offspring of human thoughts, so that they should receive correction or adjustment by means of human knowledge.

Among the Greeks, each one of these words and terms, which we have mentioned as having been spoken by the Evangelists and the Apostle, is put exactly as we have said, namely, “He came into being from the seed of David in the flesh” [Rom. 1:3], and not “he was born in the flesh”; and again, “The book of the coming into being of Jesus Christ” [Matt. 1:1], and “Of Jesus Christ the coming into being is as follows” [Matt. 1:18]. And because the books of the New Testament were uttered in their own tongue, it is all the more fitting to incline towards what is set down in Greek with them, and not to those things which were interpreted by just anyone – things which merely belong to that person’s supposition, and are not part of the teaching that comes from the Spirit.

Consequently everyone who alters, or interprets differently, the words and terms spoken by the Spirit, is not only reprehensible and to be rebuked, but is also an impious blasphemer, and a companion of the Marcionites and Manichaeans – people who themselves removed from the Scriptures things that had been spoken by God, and furthermore changed certain things, replacing them by others that were considered by them to be an improvement. Having fallen into this impiety, Theodore and Nestorius, the leaders of the heresy of man-worshippers, also audaciously altered certain words of Scripture, and gave a contrary interpretation to others.

[...] Likewise with the passage in the Letter to the Hebrews which reads, “Jesus the Son, by grace of God” – that is, of the Father – “on behalf of everyone tasted death” [Heb. 2:9]: they altered this and wrote “apart from God”, and their concern was to transmit that this Jesus, who received death on our behalf, is not God.

Also, instead of what the Evangelist wrote, namely “The Word became flesh and tabernacled in us” [John 1:14], Nestorius understood and read it as follows: “Flesh came into being, and the Word tabernacled in it”.

By inclining towards views such as these, those who originally translated the Scriptures into Syriac erred in many things – whether intentionally or through ignorance. This was not just in matters which teach concerning the economy in the flesh, but various other things that are written concerning other topics. It was for this reason that we have now taken the trouble to have the holy books of the New Testament interpreted anew from Greek into Syriac.

23*. ISAAC OF ANTIOCH

(a) The first extract, from the opening of an unpublished memra on Abel and Cain, probably belongs to the earliest of the Isaacs.

I was pondering on creation and reading the account of the generation when there met me that pair of brothers, one of whom killed the other.

I decided to wait and see, and to listen to the court case between the two: what was the cause of the strife, and why killing was resorted to,

for one brother was killing the other in the valley, in the midst of the wilderness; there was no one to rescue the one slain nor to judge the deceitful one.

Scripture disclosed to me the action, but hid from me the cause of the killing. The matter is exalted, and our understanding is too feeble to explain it. [...]

Let the person who is filled with love approach, listen and give praise, but if anyone should give birth to dispute, let him not remain lest he be put to shame. Scripture, like a teacher, begins by opening the door to knowledge, enticing us with its knowledge to expound for ourselves its parables.

The love of learning has invited me to relate to you their stories; I summon the Book as a witness, so that by it the Evil One may be condemned.

Abel was shepherding sheep, while Cain was working on the land, and the firstlings of their possessions they offered up as an offering to the Just God.

Abel brought from his sheep a lamb, innocent like himself, while Cain offered from the ground a sheaf of grass that resembled himself.

Along with the discernment of their hands, their hearts were weighed in the balance, and in God's scales the upright outweighed the wicked.

When they offered their offerings before God in the wilderness God rejected the false Cain and chose Abel the righteous.

It was not the offering he rejected, but he uncovered the deceitful intention; nor, in the case of Abel, would he have been pleased with the offering without the will.

Now the wicked man's anger ascended against God, so as to grieve him because he had rejected his sacrifice on the grounds he was defiled in his will.

Many a threat did Cain utter against the Creator, acting impetuously so as to fight with him: he was thinking of a law suit on high, where he would speak against the Judge of all!

(b) This second extract is likely to belong to one of the later Isaacs. Probably the same author wrote an entire memra (no.57) on a phrase of a pagan poet (unidentified) where a young man laments his lost virginity:

I heard a poet of the world magnifying virginity, and I rejoiced that even with pagans the choice of virginity is something of weight; I heard a young man singing one day "Would that someone would pull me down and rebuild me, and make me a virgin once again!"

I told him, "The request of yours is possible with Jesus".

In the passage translated below (Homily 35; ed. Bedjan, p. 452) Isaac explains further how, even though physical virginity may have been lost, it is still possible to attain to a better kind of virginity, through repentance and the right use of the gift of free will.

Human beings can come to birth twice, without any dispute;

Once in the natural womb, the other time as a result of free will.

For those who have corrupted or destroyed their natural virginity,

it is possible to come and acknowledge a virginity that comes from the will.

This virginity of the will is greater than that of nature, and it is the true seal for the virginity that exists in nature.

Grant me, O Lord, virginity in a firm mind and instead of natural virginity may I acquire virginity that comes from free will.

O Lord, may I not destroy both kinds, lest I perish as a result of them both.

Since I have already corrupted the body's virginity, may I become a virgin in the mind.

Blessed is he who has caused to be born from us the medicine and healing for our wound, and who, as a result of our willing it, has renewed for us another virginity, without any doubt.

Blessed is he who has appointed for us repentance in order to renew us, and who has shown us that, as a result of our free will, both death and life are in our hands.

(c) Extended descriptions, taken from the natural world, are a characteristic of the author of several poems under Isaac's name. The present excerpt, concerning an eagle and a fish, is from Homily 41 (ed. Bedjan, p. 503-4). The eagle, over-ambitious, ends up by being drowned by the fish it tries to catch; so too, the recluse whom Isaac addresses, is in danger of attempting more in the ascetic life than he has the strength for. (Isaac subsequently goes on to portray the eagle as successfully catching the fish, and this time explains the eagle as Christ and the fish as humanity which he then whisks away to heaven).

I will depict for you a struggle between an eagle and a fish that I saw.

A fish was sporting in the Euphrates, leaping up above the water; an eagle soared above, ready to descend and whisk it away as it leapt:

the eagle weighed up its course, measuring the distance of its descent, it looked and perceived how, in its descent, it might coincide with the fish in its leap,

then, folding its wings, it came down from the sky like a stone, and as the fish leapt up it clasped it, fixing in it firmly its claws.

I saw how the fish proved difficult for the eagle in the element of the water: firstly, because it was large, and sincere it was in its own fortress;

For the fish had put on the armour of water- whereas the eagle had stripped off the armour of the wind.

The sight was astonishing – and it resembles your own situation, feeble man: the eagle came down to catch- but the water caught it, and it did not turn out as it had hoped.

The same thing will happen to you, if you do not control your mind: the fish was enticing the eagle, and it ended up by drowning it!

25. ANONYMOUS CHRONICLE ('Joshua the Stylite')

The extract below is given under the year 808 of the Seleucid era (= October AD 496-September 497).

29. Anastasius the governor[*of Edessa*] was dismissed, and Alexander came in his place at the end of the year. He cleared the streets of rubbish, removed the stalls that had been put up by tradesmen in the arcades and streets. He also put a chest in front of his official residence with a slit in its lid and a notice to the effect that, if anyone wanted to inform him of anything and could not openly do so, he should put this in writing and insert this in the chest, without having any fear. In this way he learnt of all sorts of things, for many people put in messages. He used to take his seat regularly every Friday at the martyrion of St John the Baptist and St Addai the Apostle, and there he would settle legal cases without any expenses being involved. The oppressed took strength against their oppressors, as did those plundered against those who had plundered their belongings: they brought their cases before him, and he gave judgement. Cases which were more than fifty years old and had never been investigated were brought before him and were settled. He built the covered walk next to the Gate of the Arches, and he began on the building of the public baths: this had been planned many years earlier to be built adjoining the grain warehouse. He gave instructions that on the eve of Sundays tradesmen should hang up in their stalls five lighted lamps arranged in the form of a cross.

27. 'SERGIUS OF RESH'AINA.

The following is the opening and ending of Sergius' Introduction to Aristotle's *Categories*, addressed to Theodore (who is known from another source to have been bishop of Karkh Juddan). It illustrates very well the importance attached to Aristotle's logical works for every field of learning, including biblical studies: at the same time it sheds some incidental light on how Sergius went about his work of translating Galen. If the book on the cause of the universe, which he mentions that he wrote, is the same work as

the surviving treatise with that title under his name, then it was little more than a slightly adapted translation of a work by Alexander of Aphrodisias (3rd century AD). The passage is translated from the unpublished text, for the most part preserved in British Library, Add. 14658.

The treatise composed by Sergius the Archiatros concerning the purpose of the Categories of Aristotle the Stagirite by family and philosopher by profession.

There is a saying uttered by the Ancients, my brother Theodore, that the bird called the stork [Syriac: hurba] rejoices and becomes strong when it separates itself from cultivated ground and moves off to the wilderness [Syriac: hurba] to live in its former lair until the time when its life comes to an end. In the same way, it seems to me, no one can understand the opinions of the Ancients or enter into the mysteries of the knowledge contained in their writings unless he has separated himself from the entire world and its dealings, and distanced himself from the body as well - not in space, but in mind - leaving behind him all its delights. Only then will the mind be emptied in order to turn towards its own being, and gaze at its self, seeing clearly the things that have been written by the Ancients, and judging well which have been said correctly, and which have not been set down in this way. That is, once there is nothing present from the things which oppose a person's swift progress as a result of the body's inclinations which hinder him in the course of such a journey.

When we were translating certain works of the doctor Galen from Greek into Syriac, I used to translate, while you would write it down after me, correcting the Syriac wording, in accordance with the requirements of the idiom of this language. And when you saw the fine divisions of the speech that are to be found in the writings of this man, along with the definitions and demonstrations which occur so frequently and excellently in it, you asked me "From where did this man receive the source and beginning of his education? Did he acquire such a fullness of knowledge from himself, or from some other writer before his time?"

I replied to the question which you, in your love of learning, had put: “The ultimate source and beginning of all education was Aristotle. This does not just apply to Galen and his fellow doctors, but to all the writers and renowned philosophers who came after him. For up to the time when nature had brought this man into the world inhabited by humans, all the parts of philosophy and education were extended like roots, scattered and dispersed chaotically and ignorantly among all sorts of authors. But this man alone, like a wise doctor, assembled all the scattered writings and put them together in a craftsmanlike and intelligent way, seasoning them with the unique and complete assistance of his teaching. For in the case of those who approach his writings diligently, he uproots and removes from their souls the sickness of ignorance, whether these be serious or less so. It is like the case of people who make statues: they cast each part of the image separately, and only then do they put them together, each piece in turn, as their skill demands, thus completing the statue. So too did Aristotle fit and put together each of the parts of philosophy in the place required by its nature, forging out of them in all his writings a complete and wondrous portrait of the knowledge of all things that come into being”.

When you heard this from me, my brother Theodore, you immediately wanted to know what was the purpose of this man’s teaching, and what was the order of his writings, and the sequence of his ideas. I attempted to tell you a little of what you had mentioned, and now you have asked me to commit to writing something of what I related to you orally. In view of the exalted nature of the subject I excused myself from this, saying that I had already composed a brief treatise [addressed to Philotheos] on the purpose of Aristotle’s writings, and that this would suffice for anyone who encountered it to make them aware, as far as is possible, of the man’s views. But you were not persuaded by this; instead, you lovingly urged me to make- not a general work concerning the Sage’s entire teaching on the cause of the universe, such as I have already done- but individual brief introductions to each of his writings in turn. There-

fore, since I am unable to escape from your request, before I commence on this, I urge you and all who may come across this work, not to turn at once, after just a single reading, to unpleasant charges and complaints, but to persevere reading and taking it in, once, twice, three times, and even four times over, should the subject matter require it. If even so something appears obscure, then he should not neglect to go to someone who can instruct and show him what he does not know; in this way he will save himself from the confusion that exists in the mind of those who do not understand what they are reading; and he will, furthermore, restrain himself from laying accusations and complaints - which are of no help at all to the author of the words.

[...] Without all this [i.e. Aristotle's works on logic] neither can the meaning of writings on medicine be grasped, nor can the opinions of the philosophers be known, nor indeed the true sense of the divine Scriptures in which the hope of our salvation is revealed – unless a person receive divine power as a result of the exalted nature of his way of life, with the result that he has no need of human training. As far as human power is concerned, however, there can be no other course or path to all the areas of knowledge except by way of training in logic.

30 *. DANIEL OF SALAH.

The following is the opening of Daniel's Commentary, covering the first verse of Psalm 1; it provides a good example of the combination of historical and spiritual exegesis to be found in this Commentary.

Those who are desirous of the blessings granted by the Holy Spirit should proffer the ear of their soul to listen to what has been granted through the divine psalmist David. Keeping away from the things in which the Holy Spirit takes no pleasure, let them approach the spiritual occupation which draws God's will to them. For any approach to the divine blessings involves complete separation from the works of wickedness: just as participation in the divine light effects in us a distancing from the darkness of sin, so too, by means of desire for the heavenly blessings we distance ourselves from any

association with the ‘woes’ that apply to the wicked. Now it is impossible for anyone to enjoy the blessings unless he escapes from any occupation to which ‘woes’ are attached – this occupation to which ‘woe’ is attached being the wicked way of life of evil-doers. This is why the blessed David - who knew of the divine blessings through the revelation of the Holy Spirit which he received in his soul, and who was aware, too, of the punishments which had come upon evil-doers by means of just judgements- made a beginning of his psalmody with the blessed state of the upright.

Now we should enquire into the reason why he sang this first psalm, so that in this way it may prove easy for us to look fully at the aim of its interpretation.

It is said by those who are acquainted with the Hebrew language that David uttered it with reference to Saul when he went to raise Samuel by witchcraft [1 Sam. 28], that is, when the king of Israel abandoned the path of uprightness and walked in the path of the wicked, in other words, in the path that leads to the darkness of the error of demons: this was when he descended from the throne of righteousness and sat upon the seat of the woman who worked witchcraft in ‘Ado’ir.

For this reason the blessed David was stirred, uttering this song of praise in flight, in response to the change that had come over Saul. Without any hesitation he openly cried out to the king who had been called by him ‘anointed of the Lord’, singing “Blessed is the man who has not walked in the path of the wicked, and has not stood with the mind of sinners, and has not sat upon the seat of scorners” [Ps. 1:1] – in contrast to Saul, who had abandoned the path of uprightness, having previously spurned, nullified and abandoned the company of the prophets who speak in the Spirit: a man who believed in the demons who rose up from the ground and prophesied to him what was going to happen to him.

Maybe you will object and say, “It was not the demons, but Samuel that the woman said that she had seen”. Listen, O wise and

discerning reader, look carefully at what the woman said when Saul asked her “What have you seen?” [1 Sam. 28:13]: she said “I have seen gods ascending from the earth” – that is, demons who were considered by her to be gods, and whom she worshipped; these were in the habit of appearing to her when she used incantations and thus they deceived those who erred after her. Then subsequently she said, “An old man has come up, wrapped in a cloak” [1 Sam. 28:14], to which Saul said, “It is Samuel”, for the demon which had come up and deceived Saul had changed appearances and taken on that of the prophet in order to deceive the sinful king.

It was on seeing and hearing this hateful deed that the blessed David accorded blessing to the man who had not walked in the path of the wicked.

Now when we ascend towards the height of the spiritual understanding [theoria] of this first “Blessed”, we find the divine David looking in prophecy to the first-formed human being: Adam existed in a realm exalted above woes when he was in Paradise, but once he had turned his footsteps away from that luminous path which travels amidst the luminous plants of Paradise, he left for the outer fence of Paradise on a pathless course of wandering, having become a disciple of the serpent, through Eve’s counsel - just as Saul became a disciple to witchcraft that leads astray by means of the woman’s teaching. So that first human being left the Garden of Life and Incorruptibility. Now Saul, who was called ‘Adam’ by David, fell from kingship over that holy people after he had been initiated into witchcraft.

These two spiritual meanings, therefore, have we taken from the beginning of this psalm. But let us expend a little sweat on these first three phrases.

Every human being is divided up separately into body, soul and mind, and his occupation is likewise separated out as having three goals: when we attribute the ‘walking’ to the soul, the ‘standing’ to the mind, and the ‘seat’ to the body, then we discover that the blessed

David has uttered these verses in a sage way. The words “Blessed is the man who has not walked in the path of the wicked” is fulfilled and completed when the feet of the soul are restrained from walking in the dark path of the workers of evil. The wise Qohelet, too, realizing that ‘walking’ applies to the soul, used to say ‘The sight of the eyes is preferable to the walking about of the soul’ [Eccles. 6:9]

Now a person who ‘stands in the mind of sinners’ is someone who has stopped from ‘walking’ and who has reached the point of action. And the person who ‘sits on the seat of scorers’ is someone who ends up in an occupation of despair, having alighted upon the occupation of evil-doers that is filled with scorn.

31*. CYRUS OF EDESSA

Explanation of the Ascension, II. 4. According to the understanding of the nature of the universe current among scholars of the School of Nisibis the ‘firmament’ which separates earth (and sky) from heaven constituted a solid barrier, and so this could provide a practical problem for the Ascension: Cyrus here offers his solution.

If someone comes back, arguing against us, “How, pray, did our Lord manage to enter heaven when he was not seen to have rent it asunder or opened it?”. our reply is this.

It took place in a divine manner, just as when he entered the upper chamber through closed doors [John 20:19]. Nevertheless, in order that his mind may be set at rest and so that he will not doubt something that took place miraculously, we will adduce for him an insignificant demonstration. Just as water is taken up in the roots of olives and other trees and then circulates in their young branches and clusters, as though through ducts, even though there are no hollows or channels bored in them, in a similar way, by an ineffable miracle, Christ entered heaven without rending it. Or again, take the case of us human beings in summer time: when we take a drink of water or of wine, our body bursts out with sweat, even though our flesh is not scratched and our skin has not been pierced. How very much easier was it for the mighty power of Christ to enter

within the firmament of heaven without splitting or rending it – thanks to the divine power with which he was clothed.

34*. JOHN OF EPHESUS

The following episode is taken from his *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (PO 17, p.250- 54): it occurred in the monastery near Amid where John himself was living in the 530s. The extract provides a good example of John’s conversational style and gives some interesting sidelights on life in a monastic community at that time.

One day an old man, poor and a stranger, stayed at the monastery where I was. When he had been questioned concerning the faith and had made a satisfactory reply – he had come in during Vespers, right at the end of the service – in accordance with the custom they have they pressed him to sit at the table of the Elders, that is, with the Abbot. He, however, on hearing this, fell on his face and begged them saying, “Forgive me, fathers, for the sake of Christ: I am but a poor man and not worthy of this”. Now the man had sparse hair and a clipped beard. Many people, as well as the abbot, got up in the effort to make him sit with them, but he said, keeping his eyes on the ground, “Do me a favour, my lord, and allow me to sit at one of the other tables”. When the abbot saw his firm resolve, he said, “Allow him to do as he pleases”. In this way he was persuaded to get up from the ground and, as if by the grace of God, he made straight for the table at which I was sitting, even though it was right in the middle, and we were sitting between other tables. We all got up, received the old man gladly and then took our seats again. When the dish of cooked food was set down, the head of the table asked him to say the blessing, but he again begged, saying “Forgive me”. Despite his being pressed a great deal, he would not accept the invitation, and we were astonished by the resistance put up by the old man, as a result of his humility.

Now every time the blessed man reached out with his spoon he furtively raised his eyes up, little by little, and his lips would move, as though he was making a small sign. In this way every time a morsel of food entered his mouth, this sign of thanksgiving would ascend

from his heart, manifesting itself by the muttering of his lips and the movement of his eyes.

When the order was given by the abbot for the cup of wine mixed with water to go round – it was the custom that this should take place three times a week as well as on Sundays – the steward came round and the old man received a cup as did everyone else. Now the wine was mixed with cold water and was circulated quickly, one cupful only a person, and then it was collected; everyone said a blessing and once he had drunk the wine he placed the cup in its place. But this blessed man took just a sip at a time, as if the wine was so hot that one could not drink it. This was how he drank, and he could not be induced to drink all at once, instead sipping continuously; rather, he divided the cupful into as many sips as it pleased him to offer up praise for, and even though the cup was very small, he divided it up into more than a hundred sips. On observing this the abbot remarked, “Perhaps the old man prefers to drink it with warm water, and that is the reason why he is afraid, because of the cold”. Accordingly he addressed him, “Would you like us to bring you some warm water, father?” “No”, he replied, “forgive me: whether it is cold or warm, my habit is to drink a little at a time”.

As we were seated there we asked the old man, “Whence does your reverence come?” But he, as though someone fully occupied with eating, silently bent down his head all the lower and kept silent. This happened a second and a third time, then finally he made this reply: “Forgive me, fathers, I am hungry and need to eat”. Whereupon we took the blessed man’s hint and left him alone.

When we had finished eating, the old man’s gaze was still directed downwards, though he kept secretly making signs heavenwards. Then, as we spoke to him once, twice and three times, asking where he had come from, all of a sudden he burst into tears, and he could not contain himself any longer. He bent down his face to his knees and covered his head: even so he only just managed to constrain himself and to stop sobbing. And so we got up from the table, the old man standing in the midst with his head covered.

When we had given praise for the meal, the old man washed, as was the custom, and a rug was arranged for him in the chapel. On seeing this, however, he begged, saying, “Because I am weak and exhausted I cannot rise for the night service. For the sake of God, please put my bedding outside, in some corner”. Accordingly, in order that he might not in actual fact be disturbed by the Office, they put his bedding where he asked. Now because there were some blessed monks who were eager to investigate such things, they watched the old man to discover his true purpose. He, however, immediately fell into bed, and it was as though he had already gone to sleep. When there was no longer a sound from anyone and all had gone off to bed, the blessed man turned over on his bedding, face downwards, and knelt there weeping. This lasted from the evening until the semandron sounded for the night service, he not realizing that anyone was aware of him – though those watching him had got tired and dropped off to sleep two or three times. This is how they found the holy man – until the semandron sounded, at which he covered himself over like an infirm person and lay there until the end of the Office. Then the same thing happened until the morning, though not in the same way as the evening before, for he was on his guard against those who were looking after the books(?) at the Office, and those who were learning the Psalms.

In the morning he asked to say farewell and leave, but the abbot would not let him, saying, “Rest for five days, father, and bless us; and then you can go”. The old man was thus prevented from leaving. He went out into the garden to take a stroll, and when I learnt about him from those who had been watching him, I went out after him. He saw me and stopped. I entered into conversation with him and said, “Why, father, did you hide from us what sort of person you are? What monastery are you from?” He immediately burst into tears and kept silent. However I said to him, “If you are a Christian and a servant of Christ I will not let you depart unless you tell me why you wept both last night and again now. I make bold, if you are God’s servant, to adjure you by him whom you serve: for the sake of the salvation of my soul, inform me about this and about your way of life”.

The blessed man was grieved and annoyed: “There was no need for any such adjuration”, he said. “I put you under oath so that I might profit, whereas you will not loose anything”, I replied. The old man imposed on me an oath that not a word of what he was going to say should pass my lips until three years had passed. He then said. “I have by now spent thirty years in this discipleship, my son, and during these years God will not judge me for having opened my mouth over sustenance that comes from God’s gift without extending my thoughts to give praise for his graciousness”.

36*. Ps. ZACHARIAS RHETOR

The excerpt, taken from Book XII, chapter 7, tells how the Bible came to be translated into the language of the Huns.

In the land of the Huns about twenty or more years ago some people translated some books into the native language. The circumstances of this – which the Lord brought about – I will relate as I heard it from certain truthful men, namely John of Resh ‘aina, who was in the monastery founded by Isho‘koni close to Amid, and Thomas the tanner. These two had both been taken into captivity when Kawad carried away captives fifty years ago or more; once they had reached Persian territory they were sold again to the Huns, so they had to travel beyond the Caspian Gates and they spent more than thirty years in their country, marrying and begetting children there. At the end of this time they returned, and told us the story with their own mouths. It was as follows:

After the arrival of captives whom the Huns had taken from Roman territory, while they themselves had been in their country for thirty-four years, an angel appeared to a man named Kardutsat, bishop of the region of Arran, and said to him – so the bishop told them:

“Take three pious priests and go out into the plain and there receive from me a message sent to you from the Lord of spirits, for I am the guardian of the captives who have left Roman territory to go to the land of foreign peoples, and who have offered up their

prayer to God". When this Kardutsat – whose name, translated into Greek, means Theokletos [i.e. called by God] – had zealously gone out to the plain together with three priests, and called upon God, the angel said to him, "Come, set off to the land of foreign peoples, and give warning to the children of the dead; ordain priests for them, give them the Mysteries and strengthen them. I am with you and will deal graciously with you there: you shall perform signs there among the foreign peoples, and you will find all that is needed for your ministry".

Four others travelled with them, and in a country where no peace is to be found, these seven priests found lodging every evening, and seven loaves of bread and a jar of water, They did not enter by way of the Caspian Gates, but were guided over the mountains. On reaching the place, they related everything to the captives, and many were baptized; they also made converts among the Huns. They were there for a full seven years, and while there they translated the Scriptures into the language of the Huns.

37. AHUDEMMEH

Ahudemmeh's work in the Composition of Man combines elements from both Greek and Persian tradition. In this passage the Syriac word for 'anger' may in fact reflect the wider semantic range of Greek thymos, which has the sense of 'strong feeling, spiritedness' etc., as well as 'anger'. (The passage is from PO 3, pp.103-4).

The soul has two faculties, of reason and of life. The faculty of life has two operative agents, which themselves exist on the faculty, anger and desire. Now desire stands between two other operative agents, namely moderation and excess. The bad aspect of desire is excess, while the good aspect is moderation. Anger, too, stands between fear and valour. This latter operative agent that is brought about by the faculty of anger is good, but if the operative agent is defeated in the face of the passions, and is fearful of death, then it is bad.

The faculty of reason has other faculties which manifest themselves and are fulfilled in their operation: mind (mad'a), thought (hushaba), intellect (hawna) and conception (tar'ita). Thought is

situated between desire and anger; mind between intellect and thought; intellect between calm and agitation; concept (re`yana) between obedience and disobedience. Each one of them is a helper and assistant to its mate that is connected with the operation of the act - an operation which brings out into the open the faculties that are hidden in the soul. Desire and anger stir us to all actions-either so that we should draw near to them. or that we should keep away from them. Each action is situated between two agencies: desire brings us close, while anger keeps us at a distance.

39*. ANONYMOUS, *Cave of Treasures*

Nimrod receives only a bare mention in Genesis [Gen. 10:8-12], while Noah's son Yonton (who plays an important role in several later works) is not to be found there at all and the *Cave of Treasures* is the earliest work in which he is mentioned. The present passage purports to describe the origin of various Zoroastrian practices.

In the days of the mighty warrior Nimrod fire was seen coming up out of the earth. Nimrod went to see this: he worshipped the fire and established priests to minister there and throw incense into the fire. It was from this time that the Persians began to worship fire, a practice which they continue up to this day. King Sisan discovered a spring of water in Derogin: he placed beside it a white horse that he had made and those who bathed there worshipped that horse.

Nimrod went to Yoqdora, belonging to Nod, and on reaching the lake of `TRS he found there Noah's son Yonton. Having gone down and bathed in the lake he did obeisance to Yonton. Yonton said to him, 'Do you, who are a king, do obeisance to me?' Nimrod replied, 'It was because of you that I came down here'. He stayed with him for three years, during which Yonton instructed Nimrod in wisdom and the Book of Revelation. He told him, 'Do not return again to me'.

Having come up from the east he began making use of this Revelation, and many were amazed at him. Ardashir the priest who

was ministering to the fire which rose up out of the earth, on seeing Nimrod practicing these exalted arts, begged the demon who used to appear in the vicinity of the fire to instruct him in Nimrod's wisdom. Now it is the habit of demons to destroy those who approach them by means of sin; accordingly the demon told the priest, 'A person cannot become a priest or a Magian unless he first sleeps with his mother and sister'. The priest did as he was told, and from then on priests, Magians and Persians took their mothers, sisters and daughters in marriage.

43*. BABAI THE GREAT

(a) In the course of the christological controversies of the fifth and sixth centuries each side tried to point out the illogicality of the other side's position, and sometimes this took the form of putting a set of questions to one's opponents that were aimed at reducing him to the choice of either an absurdity, or having to agree with the questioner's position. The sort of process involved is illustrated by Babai in this first excerpt. Both this and the second passage also illustrate how the two sides had very different understandings of the key terms 'nature' and 'qnoma'. For Babai the former is generic and close in sense of Greek 'ousia', 'essence', 'being', whereas for the Syrian Orthodox it was understood as particular and close in sense to 'hypostasis'. Greek 'hypostasis' is translated into Syriac as 'qnoma', but 'qnoma' happens to have a different semantic range from hypostasis, and for Babai it has more the sense of 'set of individual characteristics' (hence his frequent christological formulation 'two natures and their qnome'). The dilemma below comes from Babai's *Against those who say that, as the body and soul are one qnoma, so God the Word and the Man are one qnoma* (Babai objected to this analogy since it represented a necessary, and not a voluntary, union). (Ed. Vaschalde, pp.293-4)

Let them tell us now, did Christ, this one qnoma, acquire any renewal at the resurrection when he became the first-fruit of those that sleep [Col. 1:18]? If they deny that this is the case, then [at the incarnation] he took an immortal body and an inerrant soul, which makes a falsehood of the statement that "He became like us in everything, apart from sin" [Heb. 4:15], and "the physical, and then the spiritual" [I Cor. 15:46].

But they say that he was renewed – as indeed he was - then let them tell us: Was his divinity renewed along with his humanity hypostatically, in one *qnoma*, just as all human beings acquire renewal in each person's entire *qnoma*?

At this point, one of two things will happen with them: either they will agree, or they will deny this. If they agree, then you have the impious idea that the divinity has been renewed – and they will prove to be even worse than the Arians. Whereas if they deny that Christ has been renewed in accordance with the Church's confession of him as the first-fruit from the dead in his humanity, separately from his divinity, then they are anathema, in that it is [in their view] the same *qnoma* from which he both acquires renewal and does not do so – which is impossible. But if they say that he acquired renewal in his humanity, they have fallen into our net, dividing [into two *qnome*] him whom they say is not thus to be divided up.

Our own opinion is that the *qnoma* of his humanity – the Second Adam – was renewed by his divinity.

(b) Babai here explains some of the reasons why the Church of the East prefers not to use the term 'bearer of God' (Greek 'Theotokos') for Mary. (From the Book of the Union [i.e. of the two natures in Christ], ed. Vaschalde, p.264).

The flesh [of the incarnate Word], then, is of the same nature as her who bore him, whereas God, the Word, is of the same nature as his Father. Because of the union [of the two natures] the blessed Mary is called both 'bearer of God' and 'bearer of Man': she gave birth to Man in that he is from her own nature, and she gave birth to God, because of the union that took place with his humanity, which is his 'temple' [John 2:19], at the very inception of his being formed in the womb and being born in united fashion.

Likewise, because the appellation 'Christ' is an indicator of the two natures with their particular characteristics, namely of his divinity and of his humanity - , the Scriptures say that the blessed Mary gave birth to 'Christ' [Matt. 1:18], and not simply 'God', without

reference to the union, nor just ‘Man’, without God the Word being clothed in him. Again, it is just as we say that a woman has given birth to a human being, and we do not say that she has given birth to a soul, or that she has given birth to a soul that has become enfleshed, or that she has given birth to a body.

44*. MARTYRIUS/SAHDONA

On several occasions in his Book of Perfection Sahdona sets before his readers the examples of people who have devoted their life to Christ, and among these is Shirin, a remarkable woman whom he knew in his childhood and youth, and to whom he owed his own monastic vocation. (Book of Perfection I.iii.64, 69-79)

64. But why should I just talk about men? Let us examine the weak nature of the frail female sex to see whether the beauty of the virtuous life is not also revealed to us in the godlike women who have trampled on sin and Satan [cp Gen.3:15]. I myself am ashamed to gaze on their valiant deeds when I consider the laxity of us men; but it is right that this beauty should be made public – to our greater confusion, and to the glory of those women. [...]

69. Out of all these women let the example of just one suffice, the holy Shirin, blessed among women. Like Jael [Judges 5:24-7], whom God answered, she pulled out desire like a tentpeg from the tent of her body, brandished it, and laid low at her knees the hidden enemy who fights against the saints: by means of visible hardships and hidden prayer she brought down his entire valour, knocking his head into the ground. For the Evil One is greatly shamed: having first of all vanquished a woman and managed to sow his error, he is now himself vanquished by women, thanks to Him who was born of a Virgin and who gave strength to women’s nature.

70. This Shirin was an aged woman whom I myself saw when she was in the region of eighty years old. To tell of all the labours she engaged in from her youth up to the final years of the course of her life would be a difficult task and would require a lengthy book on its own. It is not our intention to do this here; rather, we shall just ad-

duce a few examples of the beauty of her virtues as a testimony of what we want to say. By way of demonstration, for everyone to behold, of complete perfection of way of life, we are going to highlight a number of details concerning her spiritual beauty in order to corroborate our narrative, just as we did previously in the case of the holy men whose own beauty of life we briefly highlighted as an incitement to ourselves to imitate them. In their cases too it would have required thousands of lengthy paragraphs to relate the entire story of their exploits.

71. Once this woman had set her desire upon imitating them, she began to manifest in herself their likeness. The very sight of her moved everyone to wonder, and her admirable deeds were the cause for praise to God. To such an extent was she held in honour and respect by everyone that all the monastic abbots of the time – men of perfection whose glories we have told of earlier – considered her as a blessed spiritual mother, worthy of heavenly bliss. From afar they would give her greeting, entreating her to pray for them, and when once in a while she went to see those who lived in the vicinity, so that she too might receive blessing from them in accordance with the law of love, they would minister to her needs like eager disciples, holding her in great respect, for they considered her, who was much honoured by God, to be greatly worthy of honour.

72. Despising the whole world out of love for God and considering it as mere refuse, in order to gain Christ [Phil. 3:8] she rejected and pushed aside everything else, attaching herself totally to him with a love that was without any guile as she lived out the perfect life of asceticism in all its rigour. Things that had been hard for others – even those well exercised in virtue – were straightforward to her who from the very first was well acquainted with the goal of perfection.

73. Having completely stilled the desires of the stomach – which prove extremely troublesome to most people – by means of sheer scorn, very much in conformity with her outstanding self-will, she appeased her stomach's continual hunger by just enough to support

her body, and not at all in response to its desires. Each evening she sustained herself with a small cake made out of pulse, and some boiled vegetables. By means of this food, along with a drink of water, she supported her frame, while all the while her face was radiant with the grace of the Spirit who nourished her – so that everyone imagined that she was living off dainties [cp Dan. 1:8-15], whereas in actual fact for much of the time she ate only once every four days, or even just once a week.

74. As someone who had chosen the way of life of Daniel and his companions, it was appropriate that she should also receive the power of grace like them; for their faces surpassed in radiance and beauty those of all their companions [Dan. 1:15]. For who could behold her standing during the long hours of the Office despite the fatigue of old age, without at once feeling quite sure that she was fortified by the grace of the Spirit so as to withstand the desires of her own will? I myself went to visit her many times in order to pluck blessings from her, and I would gaze upon her in great astonishment at the ease with which she performed the hardest tasks.

75. So immensely eager was she in prayer and so attentive during the long drawn-out Offices that one would not be far off the mark if one said that she was occupied in this continuously. Her unremitting labour consisted in the Office of the Psalms and in heartfelt prayers intermingled with groans, to such an extent that she would spend most nights without any sleep, being occupied with continual singing of Psalms and with prayer. During the daytime, however, she would divide her time between this and reading the Scriptures, the lives of upright men, and uplifting works written for the guidance of the monastic life and for instruction in true religion.

76. Only someone who had actually seen her can fully know how serene and gentle she was, how pure and full of simplicity, how she brimmed over with compassionate love for everyone, and how deeply joyous she was to receive strangers and to see to their comfort.

77. Monks and other strangers to the world who shared her reverence for our Lord used to come to visit her from all over the place, for they held her as a holy spiritual mother. They would gather from different places as children coming for lessons in sanctity with her, wanting to receive her blessing and to gain benefit from her. She, for her part, would receive them lovingly and would minister diligently to their needs, providing both bodily sustenance as well as spiritual food: for while she saw to their bodily comfort, she would give joy to their souls at the same time, both by her words and by her actions. In this way they would depart from her giving thanks to God and carrying with them all sorts of beneficial provisions as a result of what they had seen and heard.

78. Women in particular frequented her company, seeing that she was someone to whom they found access easy, in view of the status they held in common. They greatly profited from her, both from talking with her and from just seeing her; and they were drawn to imitate her zealously, in so far as was possible. This was something that could be observed in my own blessed mother: set on fire by the very sight of her, my mother was consumed by a zeal for her way of life, which she wanted to imitate as far as she had the strength to do so. And ever since I was a child she would exhort me to choose to live a life that conformed with Shirin's.

79. My mother was greatly afraid that physical love might cause me to slip toward the world, and so she told me continually, "I would rather die than live were I to see you – God forbid! – tangled in the world like so many others". She would bring me to see this blessed woman regularly, since she lived on our village; in this way she would draw the holy woman's blessings upon myself and instill in my heart all the greater ardour for the life of perfection as a result of seeing and hearing her. This ardour grew stronger every day, until my desire that originated from that source as it were consumed my youthful days.

50. SEVERUS SEBOKHT

In the following passage Severus Sebokht inveighs against Greek cultural chauvinism, and in the process pays tribute to the excellence of Indian astronomy and mathematics.

On the subject of the tardiness in knowledge, and the lack of learning of the Greek, let them listen to what the Greeks themselves have to say; I am referring to Plato the first philosopher of such renown among them, and what he writes in the *Timaeus*: “On returning from Egypt, Solon, the wisest of the wise, told Arkitanis [Critias] what he had heard from an Egyptian priest who was of great age. He said to him, O Solon, you Greeks are children all the time. There is not a Greek who has grown to old age’. Later, he further said, ‘You Greeks are all babes in your souls: you do not have a single ancient opinion in them, or any doctrine aged by time [Plato, *Timaeus* 22b]. Writing passed you by for many generations, and you have died without a voice” [Plato, *Timaeus* 23c]. This quotation shows that the Greeks did not even know writing for many generations, but “they all died without a voice”, that is, in a dumb way, and unintelligent. How then do some of them boast that they were the first discoverers of the science of mathematics and astronomy? Neither is the case!

At this point I shall refrain from speaking about the science of the Indians, who were not even Syrians, or about their exact discoveries in the science of astronomy – discoveries which are far more skilled than those of the Greeks or Babylonians – and the logical method of their calculations and the way of counting which surpasses description: I am speaking of the method which uses nine signs. Had they been aware of these, the people who imagine of themselves that they alone have reached the summit of wisdom just because they speak Greek, would perhaps have been persuaded, even though rather late in the day, that there are other people who have some knowledge: it is not just the Greeks, but also some of the peoples who speak different languages as well.

54*. ISHO`YAHB III

The Catholicos Isho`yahb III here rebukes Shem`on, metropolitan of Revardashir (in Fars) for certain unspecified uncanonical acts of insubordination: since it was the metropolitan of Revardashir who consecrated bishops for India, Isho`yahb points out that the people of India are also harmed by his actions. The passage comes from Letter 14.

Along with this, my God-loving brother, remember this as well: If our predecessors had closed the door of the gift of the Lord [ie. episcopal ordination] in the face of your need, in the way that you have closed the door of episcopal ordination in the face of the many peoples in India, depriving them of the gift of God for the sake of advantages that are subject to corruption and which feed the body's lusts, then maybe you would realize in what desperation the present general state of affairs has now reached.

But insofar as the gift of God has travelled, and does travel, by canonical paths, by way of good transmitters, see how the world has been filled with bishops, priests and faithful – like the stars in the sky, being increased day by day. Whereas in your region, from the time when you grabbed for yourselves rebellion against the ecclesiastical canons, the priestly transmission has been cut off from the peoples in India, and it has sat in darkness, deprived of the light of divine teaching which comes through true bishops.

This does not just apply to India, which stretches from the edge of the boundaries of the kingdom of Persia as far as the place called QLH, a land of 1200 parasangs, but it also applies to your own region, Fars. You will have an opportunity to realise the loss and misfortune that arises from disobedience such as this on that fearsome day when repentance is of no use to those who proffer it.

Look carefully at all this, our brother, and consider well the danger in which we are standing – I am not going to say 'you', for you personally are free from the compulsion of secular servitude, and you possess as well, so people say, a mind that loves virtue. Strive with all your strength to put aright the past and the recent harmful events which have occurred in your midst and at your hands

– events which have been harmful for a long time to ecclesiastical law. Consider whence sin took its commencement – in the corruption of the canons; and how this was transmitted to the present state of weak faith and lax way of life. It is from that point, that the eager course of your setting affairs to right should run accompanied by labours induced by the fear of God.

55*. ISAAC OF NINEVEH

(a) From Homily 3 (of the ‘First Part’).

Make your request to God in accordance with his glorious nature, then he will hold you in greater honour and will rejoice at you.

When someone asks a human king for a load of manure, not only will such a person be despised because of his despicable request – seeing that he has accused himself by means of his own ignorance – but he has also offered an insult to the king by means of his stupid request. Exactly the same applies when someone asks God for the things of the body in prayer.

If God is slow in answering your request, and you ask but do not promptly receive anything, do not be upset, for you are not wiser than God. When you remain as you were before, without anything happening, it is either because your behaviour is not worthy of your request, or because the paths in which your heart was traveling were far removed from the aim of your prayer, or because your interior state is far too childish, when compared with the magnitude of the things for which you have asked.

(b) The following extract is from the fourth of the set of Headings on Spiritual Knowledge which constitute the third chapter of the recently recovered ‘Second Part’ of Isaac’s works. (Kephalaia IV. 25).

There is a certain divine activation which may accompany the pure worship of solitaries. From time to time this overshadows the solitary in the stillness of his cell, and a kind of ineffable joy, for reasons of which he is not aware, all of a sudden falls on his heart, clearing it of all its customary thoughts. Certain of the Fathers

name this moment “the luminous sphere”: another calls it “the air of freedom”, while yet another speaks of it as “the pure natural sphere”. It is as though a person is in the New World, inebriated with God in every action he undertakes. This delight and stillness from spiritual warfare may last with some people for several days: many have experienced it for six or even seven days, after which this gift is withdrawn from them, and they grow dark. Then, after some days, they discover it again, and are filled with delight.

As long as a solitary finds himself in this state of grace, he should not be subject to any rule of law, or to the Office, or to the use of specific prayers or the regular reading of the Bible, or indeed to any of the canons which have been laid down for created beings. This is because the gift does not come of his own volition. But after leaving that sphere, should he despise the canons that are customarily laid down for solitaries, then he will be handed over to the demons. The only things that exempt him are pressing circumstances beyond his control, or the requirements of an illness. This applies even if he becomes like an angel in his way of life. Although this may not take place immediately, it will certainly do so after a short while.

57. DADISHO’.

In the course of his extensive Commentary on Abba Isaiah’s Asceticon Dadisho’ defends the spiritual exegesis of the Bible as practised by many monastic writers (XI. 17-18).

Having reached the end of the discourse Abba Isaiah wishes to teach us that the entire conduct of solitaries – this being divided up into three distinct parts, the bodily labours, the conduct of the mind, and spiritual contemplation – is depicted in symbol in the holy Scriptures in what was done by, and to, various holy persons. Here I will set down three of them by way of demonstration, namely the blessed old man Jacob, Moses and Elijah.

No one, either educated or ignorant, will jeer when he sees Abba Isaiah or the solitary Fathers introduce some demonstration

concerning virtue taken from people mentioned in the holy Scriptures, or from affairs of the world; for the divine Scriptures were written down for this purpose, and this is also why the creation of the world took place; this is indeed the purpose of its being governed by providence. Furthermore, our very coming into this world occurred for this same purpose, so that, as a result of what we learn from the Scriptures and from the natural creation, and from the providential wisdom to be discovered in them, we may come to know our Creator, give him praise, and keep his commandments; for in this way we shall gather in advantage from them at the appropriate time.

Thus, in all the outward aspects of Scripture and in the entire natural world there lies hidden a spiritual understanding which teaches us concerning godliness and virtue. If this were not the case, what would we gain from reading the divine Scripture when it tells of Lot's two daughters who slept with their father [Gen. 19:31-38]; or of the blessed Jacob, for whom two wives were not enough, so he also had two maidservants in addition as concubines [Gen. 30:4, 9] – and even if it was because Rachel was prevented from giving birth that she gave him her maid Bilhah, what necessity was there for Jacob to take Zilpah, Leah's maid, when he had already had four sons from Leah, namely Ruben, Simeon, Levi and Judah?

No, it is clear that all these outward actions, which took place by providence in connection with these holy men of old, convey a hint of hidden spiritual actions carried out by solitaries and holy people in the spiritual way of life. The blessed Paul provided an example of such an interpretation in the case of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac [Gal. 4:22-25].

Similarly, in connection with the creation of the world and the divine economy surrounding it, there lie hidden potent symbols which point to righteousness and a godly way of life.

[...] The blessed Theodore the Interpreter says the following in connection with the Psalms of David: "When they are sung in prayer

by holy people with their appropriate intention, they drive the demons away from our midst, and they bring the holy angels, and the Lord of the angels, Christ our Lord, close to us". It is clear that by "the psalms' appropriate intention" he is not speaking of his own historical exegesis, or the homiletic exegesis of people like Basil and John [Chrysostom] – historical exegesis being something suitable for students, and homiletic exegesis for lay people; rather, he designates as "their appropriate intention" the spiritual exegesis of the psalms, something which only takes place with solitaries and holy people at the time of the recitation of the Psalms.

I have set all this down here in order to defend the practice of the Solitary Fathers, and in particular Abba Isaiah, so that I may thereby muzzle the mouths of certain stupid exegetes who, thanks to their knowledge of the jargon that they have learnt – jargon that is totally divorced from any idea of good conduct -, hold the saints in contempt when these latter introduce examples from the Scriptures and from the natural world, and take them to refer spiritually to godliness and righteousness.

18. The blessed Abba Isaiah, in accordance with his custom, makes a comparison between what was done in connection with the blessed Jacob, his wives, concubines and children, with this way of life of singleness, showing that these things which were openly done by Jacob, and occurred in connection with Jacob, are also to be understood spiritually in connection with this particular way of life. Since Abba Isaiah put it all down at length, I will set out the meaning in abbreviated form.

[...] 'Jacob went to the house of Laban, took two wives in marriage, toiling for them for seven years: one had tender eyes, and the other was beautiful'. This indicates that, even though spiritual knowledge is more desirable and delectable than virtue, yet a person will not attain to either of these unless he has first completely fulfilled all the labours and struggles needed for them.

'Although he loved Rachel, nevertheless she was not given to

him before Leah. Nor did Rachel bear children for him until Leah had given birth to all her children'. This indicates that, even if the solitary yearns for the spiritual vision, nevertheless he will not attain to it without having first completed all the labours of both the body and the soul.

59. APOCALYPSE OF PSEUDO-METHODIUS

The climax of this influential apocalypse describes the appearance of the Son of Perdition: concurrently with this the Byzantine emperor (whose genealogy has earlier been provided with a link with Kush. or Ethiopia) places his crown on top of the Cross on Golgotha, whereupon the Cross is raised up to heaven. After the excerpt below (XIV 1-60), the author continues with a detailed exegesis of Gen. 49:17, and states that the Son of Perdition will enter Jerusalem and take his seat in God's temple, 'acting as if he were God' – though 'at the Second Coming of our Lord from heaven he will be delivered over to the Gehenna of fire and to outer darkness' (the author does not disclose how much later this will take place).

1. Then the Son of Perdition will appear, the False Messiah. He will be conceived and born in Chorazin, brought up in Bethsaida, and will reign in Capernaum. Chorazin will boast of him, because he was born there, Bethsaida because he was brought up there, and Capernaum because he reigned there. For this reason our Lord applied 'Woe' to the three of them in his Gospel, saying "Woe to you, Chorazin, woe to you, Bethsaida, and you, Capernaum who was raised up to heaven: you shall be brought down to lowest Sheol" [Matt. 11:21, 23].

2. The moment the Son of Perdition appears, the king of the Greeks will go up and stand on Golgotha, and the holy Cross will be placed on that spot where it had been fixed when it bore Christ. 3. The king of the Greeks will place his crown on the top of the holy Cross, stretch out his two hands towards heaven, and hand over the kingdom to God the Father. 4. And the holy Cross upon which Christ was crucified will be raised up to heaven, together with the royal crown. For the Cross upon which Christ was crucified – it was for the salvation of all people who believe in him that he was crucified – is the sign which will be seen prior to the Second Coming of our Lord,

to the confusion of the unbelievers. 5. And the word of the blessed David, when he prophesied concerning the end of times, saying “Kush shall hand over to God” [Ps. 68:31], will be fulfilled, for a son of Kushyat, daughter of Pil, king of the Kushites, is the person who will “hand over to God” 6. At the moment the holy Cross is raised up to heaven and the king of the Greeks yields up his soul to his Creator, then all rule, sovereignty and power will be rendered void. Then suddenly the Son of Perdition will be revealed. He is from the tribe of Dan, according to the prophecy of Jacob, who prophesied concerning him saying, “Dan will be a deadly snake lying by the road [Gen. 49:17] that leads to the Kingdom of heaven.

61*. JACOB OF EDESSA

(a) At various places in his revised translation of Severus’ Homilies Jacob provides extended scholia, or comments; one of these is of particular interest in that it correctly describes Jewish usage over the pronunciation and writing of the Tetragrammaton (YHWH). Towards the end of this extended discussion Jacob mentions the treatment of the Tetragrammaton in translations of the Hebrew Bible.

The scholion is attached to Severus’ Homily 123 (PO 29, pp. 194-202).

By way of further explanation I would add the following: all those who have translated the holy Scriptures from the Hebrew tongue into Greek have treated this name with respect: some, like the Seventy, preserved it in all its honour, not translating it at all, without even altering the shapes of the Hebrew script in which it was written: others, even though they did not keep the Hebrew characters in which it was written, nevertheless placed in the body of the Greek Scriptures that Hebrew term which the Hebrews employ in substitution for the revered name, that is, ‘Adonay’. This tradition they have handed down, not daring either to translate the name and provide a Greek equivalent, or even to translate the term ‘Adonay’ used instead of it, by putting ‘Kyrios’, that is, ‘Lord’, in the body of the scriptural text: rather, as I have just said, they put the word ‘Adonay’ in the body of the text, placing in the margin, facing it, ‘Lord’, out of honour for the columns of the scriptural text.

As a result, when Lucian, that lover of labour and the holy martyr, applied himself with care to the holy Scriptures, making corrections here and there, or altering odd words used by the translators who had gone before him, whenever he saw the term ‘Adonay’ in the text and ‘Lord’ in the margin, he joined the two and put them together. This is what he handed down in the Old Testament which he left behind, with the result that you can find written in many places, “Thus says Adonay the Lord”, where the term adjoining it is ‘Lord’, the two being read, as it were, as a single name, with those who read saying, as I have mentioned, “These things has Adonay the Lord said”, “Adonay the Lord commanded”, “Adonay the Lord did, or said, or performed, such and such”.

(b) As one of the most learned men of his day, Jacob was frequently consulted on a variety of different topics, notably, exegetical, literary and to do with matters of canon law. In the following excerpt (from Letter 12) Jacob provides the answer to an unnamed correspondent who has asked him about a passage in Ephrem’s Hymns against Heresies (2:6).

You asked about the woman of whom the holy Mar Ephrem spoke in his works against false doctrines, where he tells how she enslaved the Shabbataye, who bent their head beneath her hand. You ask who she was and who the Shabbataye were. I will reply very straightforwardly and quickly. She was a woman in Edessa who from her youth loved chastity and the ascetic life. She joined in with a crowd of young boys and was educated with them in a school, learning what young children learn. She was called Qamsu by her parents. Deceiving those who saw her, she even changed her name, making herself so that everyone thought she was male: no one realized she was really female. She was given a male education among males, everyone imagining she was a eunuch, either having been born as such from her mother’s womb, or having been made a eunuch by human agency. Finally she had herself accepted, as a man, in the ranks of the clergy in the heresy of those called Sambatianoï, or Shabbataye – so called since they observed and honoured the Sabbath [Saturday] as well as Sunday. They have survivors today in the regions of Galatia and Phrygia.

She was thus numbered among the clergy in the church of the Sambatianoï which existed then in the town of Edessa, and being renowned and acclaimed both for chastity and asceticism, and for her sharpwittedness and learning, she was also much more eloquent in speaking than many of her companions. so they elected her to become their bishop, imagining that she was in fact a man. In this way she became bishop of the Sambatianoï in Edessa, taking her seat on the throne on the bema. as the teacher Mar Ephrem says, preaching before them. and making a mockery of their beards: her true nature did not rebuke her or make her feel ashamed.

The site of their church still survives to this day, and the place in Edessa is known now as 'the ekklesia of the Sambatianoï': I. who am telling you these things, know it and have seen it.

Such is the case of this woman. and such is the heresy of the Shabbataye, or Sabbath observers to which she belonged. You should realize that there are two breakaway sects called 'Sambatianoï': one belongs to ancient time, to the days of the Apostles, while the other came later. being the schism resulting from the followers of Noetus, who shut the door on sinners who repent. These people are now in Galatia.

So much for Qamsu and the Shabbataye, of whom she made a mockery.

62*. GEORGE, Bishop of the Arab tribes.

(a) George's succinct Commentary on the baptismal rite is based closely on an anonymous commentary of the early fifth century.

The font represents the tomb of Christ, and the water in it, the womb that brings forth children who are spiritual, immortal and not subject to corruption, as will happen at the resurrection of the dead.

The baptism in the font of the person being baptized is a re-birth. His being dipped three times is a symbol of the three days our Lord spent in the tomb. The right hand of the priest is a sign of the hidden refashioning of the person being baptized.

By saying “So and so is baptized”, and not “I baptize”, the priest indicates by his humility that this awesome affair is not his, but a gift has been bestowed upon him by grace to administer these Mysteries.

The ascent from the font is a sign of his ascent to heaven – like the ascent of our Saviour from the grave to heaven.

(b) Besides revising the Syriac translations of several books of Aristotle’s *Organon* (logical works) George also provided an introduction of his own, though based on traditional school materials that go back to sixth-century Alexandria. The following extracts give a flavour of the work.

Before the study of every treatise by Aristotle there are six headings which need to be mentioned first. These are: the aim of the work, its usefulness, the reason for its title, the order of reading, whether the work is genuinely by the philosopher, and the division into chapters.

[...] Now we also enquire whether a book really has Aristotle as author. There are three reasons why writings might be falsely under Aristotle’s name: firstly, due to two people sharing the same name; secondly, as a result of writings having the same title; and thirdly, for the purpose of base profit. Because Ptolemy used to give a great deal of money to acquire books by Aristotle, for this reason many people had the audacity to write under the philosopher’s name.

66*. JOHN OF DALYATHA (JOHN SABA)

The present short letter (Letter 38) provides a good illustration of the fervour that is typical of his writing.

I know you, O man valiant in the Lord: you hide your treasure and go around begging from a poor man like me. Blessed is the person whose treasure lies within him, who is not nourished from outside. Blessed is the person whose sun shines out from within, thus preventing those who accept only the external sun from seeing it – people who cause harm to those who accept the interior sun. Blessed is the person whose hearing is sealed from those who listen

only to what is silly: instead, he turns aside to listen for the movements of the fiery beings and the sound of their cries of 'Holy'. Blessed is the person whose very breath is of the Holy Spirit, the fragrance of whose body is mingled with him who 'took delight in fragrant scents' [Cant. 4:10].

Blessed is the person whose soul has been dipped in the sweetness of his God, and whose bones have thereby acquired strength. Who is there to expound this blessed state? Not even the spiritual can do so. Blessed is the person to whom is revealed the place to which he is travelling, who burns with desire for it. Blessed is the person who recognizes the place of awareness, and has realized that there are none who have knowledge there: he has understood a great mystery. Blessed is the person who has gained permission to enter that place, and who has henceforth made into his companions those whom he finds there. Blessed is the person who has been stunned by the beauty of these things, and who has himself become ignorant, having forgotten him who fills with error those who go astray.

How wonderful are your hidden mysteries, O our God. Who could ever believe them? My heart is transported at the recollection of them: the limbs of my body are cut off at their sweetness. I forget all that I am when I meditate on these things with which I have no affinity: in my desire I try to compel the Giver, forgetting all that he is; yet it is him that I have been struggling to take hold of: I grasp him, but he is not to be grasped: I catch him, but he is not be caught. Having my fill, yet I am empty. When I grasp him, he is not there. As I live in him, he lives in me.

Being hidden from me, I am hidden in him; when I want to see him, I see that he is within: whence he comes, I do not know. When I would convey him somewhere, he withdraws from me. When he is clothed [sc. by my visualizing him], he does not stay. When he goes with me to some place, he does not stir from any place. When I catch him, he is pleased, but when I leave go of him, he hides. When I listen to him, he speaks with me; when I touch him, he does not move. When I walk in him, he resides in

me, even though he is extended outside me. When I breathe him, he comes out from within; when I look at him, he is utterly interior. Clothed in all, he veils all. When I behold him carrying everything, I carry him around!

In what possible way can the external sun indicate to you anything of his hiddenness which shines out over all? Just as you carry the sun's rays upon your shoulder, so you carry him, but within you. Just as you can see the sun here on earth, so too he is everywhere.

Glory to you who are hidden from all, who shine out incessantly for those who love you. O Darkness that is multiradiant, O Light which is described as opaqueness because of its intense brightness: praise to you from all – and upon us be mercy, amen.

67*. JOSEPH HAZZAYA (Joseph the Seer)

Prayers of various lengths are quite frequently to be found interspersed among the writing of many monastic writers. The following, written in artistic prose, is a meditative prayer for use before Communion.

To you be praise, First-born of Being, exalted and full of awe, for by the sacrifice of your body you have effected salvation for the world.

O Christ, Son from the holy Father, to you do I pray at this time; of you, Lord, do I ask your will and beseech your compassion, that my whole person may be made holy through your grace, and that the Enemy's constraint upon me may be rendered ineffective.

Purify my understanding in your compassion, so that my hands may stretch out in purity to receive your holy and fearful Body and Blood.

Cleanse my hidden mind with the hyssop of your grace, for I draw near to the Holy of Holies of your Mystereis.

Wash from me all understanding that belongs to the flesh, and may an understanding that belongs to your Spirit be mingled within my soul.

Cause to reside in me a faith that beholds your Mysteries, so that I may behold your sacrifice as you are, and not as I am.

Create eyes in me, so that I may see with your eyes, for I cannot see with my own eyes.

May my mind travel inwards towards the hiddenness of your sacrifice, just as you have traveled out into the open and been conjoined to your Mysteries.

At this moment may I be totally forgetful of myself, and remain utterly unmindful of my own person.

May every bodily image be wiped away from my mind's eye, and may you alone be depicted before the eye of my mind.

And now, when your Spirit descends from heaven upon your Mysteries, may I ascend in spirit from earth to heaven.

At this time when your power is mingled in with the bread, may my life be commingled with your life of the spirit.

At this moment when the wine is changed and becomes your blood, may my thoughts be inebriated with the commixture of your love.

At this time when your Lamb is lying slain on the altar, may sin cease and be utterly removed from all my limbs.

At this moment when your Body is being offered as a sacrifice to your Father, may I too be a holy sacrifice to you and to him who sent you, and may my prayer ascend before you together with the prayer of the priest.

Provide me with hidden hands, so that with them I may carry the fiery Coal.

Create in me a pure heart, so that your holy power may reside within me, so that, through the power of your Spirit, I may inhale your salvation.

Fashion in me, Lord, eyes within my eyes, so that with new eyes I may complete your divine sacrifice.

Lord, may I not see the outward aspect of what I am now to receive, but hold me worthy to see and recognize, as did Simon the fisherman, who was called blessed for his faith.

Lord, may I taste not just the bread in your Body, or just the cup in your Blood: give me the faith so that I may see your Body, and not the bread, and drink your living Blood from the cup.

Grant me that spiritual palate which is able to taste your Blood, and not the wine.

Wipe out from me all the signs of my bodily nature, and mark in me the sign of your spiritual nature.

May I draw near to you, and you alone be seen by me; may I not perceive whoever may be next to me, but may I walk in the house of prayer as though in heaven, and may I receive you who live in the highest heaven.

You made me into a spiritual being when you gave me rebirth from the baptismal water; make me a spiritual being now too, as I draw near to receive you.

It is a matter of great awe, Lord, that your Body and your Blood, O Christ our Saviour, should be consumed and drunk with that same mouth which receives ordinary natural food and drink.

Lord, you did not give to the spiritual being what I am receiving now: stir up within me at this time, Lord, the sense of wonder at your Cross; fill me with a fervour of faith at this moment, so that my thoughts may be inflamed with the fire of your love; and may my eyes become for you rivulets of water to wash all my limbs; may your hidden love be infused into my thoughts, so that my hidden thoughts may flow for you with tears and groans.

May my body be sanctified by you, may my soul shine out for you. May my body be purified by you of every image and form here on earth, and may my thoughts be cleansed by you, and may my limbs be sanctified by you; may my understanding shine out, and may

my mind be illumined by you. May my person become a holy temple for you; may I become aware in my whole being of your majesty.

May I become a womb for you in secret: then do you come and dwell in me by night and I will receive you openly, taking delight spiritually in the Holy of Holies of my thoughts. Then I shall find delight in your Body and your Blood in my limbs.

You have revealed to me your hiddenness in the Bread and in the Wine, reveal in me your love: cause a desire for you to shine out in me, so that I may receive your Body in love for you, and in desire for you may I drink your Blood.

With the fulfillment of the sacrifice of yourself, fulfil my request and accept my prayer; harken to my words and sign all my limbs, hidden and revealed.

Lord, I shall openly sign all my limbs with the sign of your Cross; as you have said, Lord, mark me in a hidden way with the truth of your Cross.

May I receive you, not into the stomach which belongs to the body's limbs, but into the womb of my mind, so that you may be conceived there, as in the womb of the virgin. And may you be revealed in me through spiritual works and good deeds that are pleasing to your will.

Through consuming you, may all my lusts be brought to an end; through drinking your cup, may all my passions be quenched. May my thoughts take strength from your sustenance, and through the living Blood of your revered Passion may I receive strength for the course of the service of righteousness.

May I grow in a hidden way, and openly prevail. May I run eagerly, and attain the measure of the Hidden Person. May I become someone perfected, made complete in all my spiritual limbs, my head crowned with the crown of perfection of all the spiritual limbs.

May I become a royal diadem in your hands, as you promised,

O true Lord, Sovereign of all stirrings, Lord of all powers, God Almighty.

May I be intermingled with you, and with your love and your longing, on that day when your majesty will shine out, and when the words find fulfillment that say “To you shall every knee bow, and it is you that every tongue in heaven and on earth and beneath the earth shall confess” [cp Phil. 2:10]..

And along with the spiritual beings and all who have loved your revelation in spirit, may I confess you, praise you, exalt you, in the Kingdom which does not ever dissolve or pass away, now and always.

69*. **ANONYMOUS**, Zuqnin Chronicle (Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel Mahre).

For the final years he covered (i.e. up to AD 775) the author was an eye witness, and his account of the economic and social troubles of the early Abbasid period is particularly valuable; this was a time when many Christians in north Mesopotamia were driven by economic and social pressures to convert to Islam. The following passage, clearly intended as a warning to others, tells of one case where a deacon converts of his own free will – but with dire consequences.

It happened that I was in Edessa on some business there, and while I was there some people came and said in our presence, relating it in front of everyone, that a certain deacon from the valley of Edessa had slid down into this chasm and pit of destruction. The man having the intention of renouncing Christianity, all the notables and people of the village took hold of him and used much persuasion on him, but he was unmoved. They besought him to turn back from his present evil, amidst heart-felt tears, as well as offering gifts as they impressed on him above all the rank of sacred priesthood that he held, but he was adamant, and so they left him.

He then went off and took refuge with one of the Arabs who was there, and asked to become a Muslim at his hands. The Arab used no compulsion, and even urged him not to do this lest he should

repent either today or tomorrow and return back to the Christian faith, since this would incur great punishments. But he said, “Even if I have to die, I will not turn back from your faith, for God has shown me that I should come to it”. The Arab then said, “Have you renounced Christ?”, and he said “Yes”; next he said “And have you renounced baptism?”, and he replied “I do renounce it”. He went on, “Have you renounced the Cross, the Eucharist, and everything that the Christians acknowledge?” He replied, “I renounce them”. Besides this, the son of the Accuser uttered words of insult, without any compulsion from the Arab.

Having made him renounce in this way, the Arab next ordered him, saying, “Do you acknowledge that Muhammad is the messenger (rasula) of God, and that his book came down from heaven upon him?”. He replied, “I acknowledge this”. The Arab went on, “Do you acknowledge that Isa is the Word and Spirit of God, and a prophet, but not God?” And he said, “Yes”.

Having made him renounce Christianity of his own free will – for none of these people was driven by force from others to renounce his faith, only by the Accuser, his father; though indeed many of them renounced Christianity for no reason at all.

Then the Arab told him, “Undo your belt, and pray towards the south”. Now God did not hold back from washing the feet of the betrayer [Judas], or stop him partaking in the Mystical Supper, but specifically gave him dipped and de-consecrated bread, separate from the other apostles, thus showing that he was the traitor; in like manner God acted with this wretched man: even more than the Spirit – whom he had put on at baptism – had been despised by him, was he himself despised by the Holy Spirit, who made him a fearful example for others. In the same way we too set him as a mirror for later generations, so that all the faithful who read this book may see what happened to the wretch, and so take care of the gift they have received, lest the same happen to them too.

Having undone his belt and knelt to pray, his body shook; and as he bent down, there went forth from his mouth what looked like a beautiful white dove, which was raised up to heaven. When the wretch saw this, he gave a terrible wail, like a woman, and it shook all those present. “Alas for me ,alas for me, alas for me”, he uttered; “What has happened to me?” Once they had quietened him down from his cries, he related in the presence of all what he had seen and what had happened to him. Furthermore he related openly before everyone, with many tears. People who had heard this from his very mouth related all this to me. Because I was not very involved in the concerns of this affair at the time, I have forgotten the man’s name, and his father’s, and that of his village.

70*. THEODORE BAR KONI

Book of Scholia IV.7. Theodore’s historical approach to literary criticism of the Bible is very much in the tradition of Theodore of Mopsuestia. In the case of the Psalms, Theodore bar Koni is making use of the East Syriac Psalm titles which provide the supposed historical setting for each psalm.

Why are the pericopes of the prophets not set out in chronological order? For some pericopes are recorded at an earlier point, even though they were composed later, while others, which were written first, have been related at a later point.

It was not the prophets themselves who wrote the books under their name, or who handed down the order of narratives and teachings. Rather, it was others after them who selected pericopes from their prophecy and put down in written form whatever they found. They had no idea which pericope came earlier and which belonged later. This does not just apply to the matter of context: they did not even know the period when each was uttered. Now it was not the prophets’ intention to write down an entire book all together, for in each prophet’s case the various revelations were not made at one and the same time, as we learn from Baruch’s words, when he says “all of these utterances came to me from the mouth of Jeremiah, and I used to write them down” [Jer. 36:18]. The scroll which Zekekiah

tore up and threw into the fire [Jer. 36:23] testifies to this, and so does the letter which Jeremiah wrote and sent to the captives in Babylon, which he instructed them to throw into the Euphrates once they had read it [Jer. 51:13]

Again, seeing that all the books of the prophets had become corrupted and damaged amongst the Babylonian captivity, after the return Ezra the Scribe wrote and set them down in writing in accordance with his wisdom, all thanks to the grace that had been granted him. In some cases he did this from memory, in others from written texts and pericopes preserved in Egypt. As a result, a variety of different periods are to be found in the prophetic books. One can learn this very precisely by examining the books in detail. This can equally be found in the Psalms, as well as in the other books. We take as an illustration Psalm 17, which is chronologically prior to Psalm 6, seeing that Saul's persecution of David took place earlier than David's sin over Bathsheba. This can be seen even better in the case of Psalms 22 and 18: the former was uttered when he was being chased by Absalom, whereas he composed the latter in gratitude at the end of his life.

71*. TIMOTHY I

Letter 47: this letter, written towards the end of Timothy's life (he died in 828) is of particular interest: it deals with two main topics, the Syriac translation of Origen's Hexapla (known today as the Syrohexapla), made by the Syrian Orthodox scholar Paul of Tella c.615; and the discovery, ten years earlier, of ancient Hebrew manuscripts in the region of Jericho – a discovery anticipating that of the 'Dead Sea Scrolls' at Qumran by over a thousand years! Timothy's Letter is the earliest evidence of knowledge of the Syrohexapla among scholars of the Church of the East, and it also provides many important insights into how manuscripts were copied and circulated. The information about the finds of Hebrew manuscripts explain (among other things) the appearance in Syriac of the so-called 'Apocryphal Psalms, 152-5' – some of which have now turned up in their Hebrew original in the Psalms Scroll from Qumran Cave 11. Right at the end of the letter Timothy turns to the matter of ecclesiastical appointments, giving a glimpse of the wide extent covered by the Church of the east in the early ninth century.

To the revered bishop Mar Sergius, metropolitan of Elam, the sinner Timothy does obeisance to your reverence and asks for your prayer.

We have read the letters which your reverence sent to us on the subject of the Hexapla, and we have learnt from all that you wrote therein. We give thanks to God for your good health and the fair course of your Episcopal governance, and we, who are sinners, ask God's mercy that your affairs may have a successful and glorious outcome.

On the subject of the book of the Hexapla about which your reverence wrote, we have already written and informed you last year that a copy of the Hexapla, written on sheets using the Nisibene format, was sent to us through the diligence of our brother Gabriel, synkellos of the resplendent caliph (lit. king). We hired six scribes and two people to dictate, who dictated to the scribes from the text of the exemplar. We wrote out the entire Old Testament, with Chronicles, Ezra, Susanna, Esther and Judith, producing three manuscripts, one for us and two for the resplendent Gabriel; Of those two, one was for Gabriel himself, and the other for Beth Lapat, for this is what Gabriel had instructed in writing. The manuscripts have now been written out with much diligence and care, at the expense of great trouble and much labour, over six months more or less; for no text is so difficult to copy out to read as this, seeing that there are so many things in the margin, I mean readings of Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus and others, taking up almost as much space as the text of the Septuagint in the body of the manuscript. There are also a large number of different signs above them – how many, it is not possible for anyone to say. But we had bad and greedy scribes, eight men for just under six months. The copying was done as far as possible using correction, seeing that it had been made from dictation; the copies were gone over a second time and read out. As a result of the excessive labour and work of correction my eyes were harmed and I nearly lost my sight – you can get an idea of the weakness of our vision from these shapeless letters that we are writing now.

Even the exemplar from which we were copying, however, contained errors, and most of the Greek names were written in reverse: the person who wrote them must have had a knowledge of Greek as weak as our own, apart only from the fact that he was not aware of the reversal of the characters he was writing, whereas we were at least aware of that! For he had not noticed the replacement and interchange of the characters, sometimes writing the letter chi in place of kappa, and zeta in place of chi, as well as putting all sorts of other things. We, however, recognized the situation.

At the end of every biblical book the following was written: “This was written, collated and compared with the exemplar of Eusebius, Pamphilus, and Origen”.

This, then, is the way the Hexapla had been copied. It has endless differences from the text which we employ [sc. The Peshitta]. I am of the opinion that the person who translated this exemplar in our possession was working from the versions of Theodotion, Aquila and Symmachus, since for the most part there is a greater resemblance to them than to the Septuagint. I had imagined that a copy of the Hexapla had already been sent to your reverence, so when you wrote we immediately wrote off to the noble Gabriel, telling him to fulfil his promise to you; but if he does not want to send it to you, let him write to us, for we will copy it out again and send it to you. So much for that topic.

We have learnt from certain Jews who are worthy of credence, who have recently been converted to Christianity, that ten years ago some books were discovered in the vicinity of Jericho, in a cave-dwelling in the mountain. They say that the dog of an Arab who was hunting game went into a cleft after an animal and did not come out; his owner then went in after him and found a chamber inside the mountain containing many books. The huntsman went to Jerusalem and reported this to some Jews. A lot of people set off and arrived there; they found books of the Old Testament, and, apart from that, other books in Hebrew script. Because the person who told me this knows the script and is skilled in reading it, I asked him about

certain verses adduced in our New Testament as being from the Old Testament, but of which there is no mention at all in the Old Testament, neither among us Christians, nor among the Jews. He told me that they were to be found in the books that had been discovered there.

When I heard this from that catechumen, I asked other people as well, besides him, and I discovered the same story without any difference. I wrote about the matter to the resplendent Gabriel, and also to Shubhalmaran, metropolitan of Damascus, in order that they might make investigation into these books and see if there is to be found in the prophets that 'seal', "He will be called Nazarene" [Matt. 2:23], or "That which eye has not seen and ear has not heard" [1 Cor. 2:9], or "Cursed is everyone who is hung on the wood" [Gal. 3:13], or "He turned back the boundary to Israel, in accordance with the word of the Lord which he spoke through Jonah the Prophet from Gad Hfar", and other passages like them which were adduced by the New Testament and the Old Testament but which are not to be found at all in the Bible we possess. I further asked him, if they found these phrases in those books, by all means to translate them. For it is written in the Psalm beginning "Have mercy, O God, according to your grace" [Ps.51], "Sprinkle upon me with the hyssop of the blood of your cross and cleanse me". This phrase is not in the Septuagint, nor in the other versions, nor in the Hebrew. Now that Hebrew man told me, "We found a David [i.e. a Psalter] among those books, containing more than two hundred psalms". I wrote concerning all this to them.

I suppose that these books may have been deposited either by Jeremiah the prophet, or by Baruch, or by someone else from those who heard the word and trembled at it; for when the prophets learnt through divine revelations of the captivity, plunder and burning that was going to come upon the people as a result of their sins, being men who were firmly assured that not one of God's words would fall to the earth. they hid the books in the mountains and caves to prevent their being burnt by fire or taken as plunder by captors.

Then those who had hidden them died after a period of seventy or fewer years, and when the people returned from Babylon there was no one surviving of those who had deposited the books. This was why Ezra and others had to make investigations, thus discovering what books the Hebrews possessed. The Bible among the Hebrews consists of three volumes, one [sc. The Pentateuch] being the volume which the Seventy Interpreters subsequently translated for king Ptolemy – who is worthy of a wreath of accolades; another was the volume from which others translated at a later time, while the third is preserved amongst them.

If any of these phrases are to be found in the aforementioned books it will be evident that they are more reliable than the texts in currency among the Hebrews and among us. Although I wrote, I have received no answer from them on this matter. I have not got anyone sufficiently capable with me whom I can send. The matter has been like a burning fire in my heart and it has set my bones alight.

Pray for me: my frame is very weak, my hands are not very good at writing, and my eyes are feeble. Such things are indications and messengers of death. Pray for me that I may not be condemned at our Lord's judgement.

The Holy Spirit recently anointed a metropolitan for Turkestan, and we are making preparations to anoint another for Beth Tuptaye [Tibet]. We have sent another to Shiarzur and another for Radan, since Nestorius the metropolitan of Radan has died. We are also making preparations for another at Ray [Tehran region], since Theodorus has died; another for Gurgan, another for Balad – Cyriacus of the Beth 'Abe; another for Dasen since Jacob has sunk into the pit from which there is no resurrection; another for Beth Nuhadra, which has no bishop. So pray with us to the Lord of the harvest that he may send out labourers for his harvest.

Subhalisho' of Beth Daylamaye has plaited a crown of martyrdom. We have sent in his place ten monks from Beth 'Abe. Pray for me, reverend father in God my Lord.

Send me the Apologia for Origen by Eusebius of Caesarea, so that I may read it and then send it back. Make a search for the Discourses on the Soul by the great patriarch Mar Aba: there are three of them, but only one is available here. And copy out and send the Homilies of Mar Narsai, since we have not got them: for Mar Ephrem, of holy memory, wrote to us to say that there is a great deal there with you which is not available here. Write to 'the Tyrant of Fars' and inform him that every metropolitan who is appointed by a bishop with his co-ordainers is subject to the canon of the Church of God, the Synod of the 318 Fathers [sc. The Council of Nicaea], and the canons of Mar Aba.

72*. ISHO'BARNUN, Questions and Answers on the Old and New Testaments.

John the Baptist's diet of 'locusts and wild honey' was a topic of much speculation in the early centuries of the Church. Isho'barnun rejects a widespread view that sought (by various means) to make John into a vegetarian, preferring instead a spiritual interpretation (for which he used the Greek term 'theoria', literally 'contemplation'). (A discussion of Syriac views on John's diet can be found in *Oriens Christianus* 54 (1970), 113-24).

Question: what are the spiritual indications (theorias) hidden in John's clothing and in the honey and locusts that he ate? (Matt. 3:4).

Solution: In the camel-hair garment that he wore one can properly see a spiritual indication of the repentance he was preaching. In the sweetness of the honey he ate the sweetness of the bliss to come is hinted at, and in the locusts' ability to fly one can see the ability to fly of the bodies of the saints, who will fly on the clouds to meet our Lord [1 Thess. 4:17].

Those who say that the word for 'locusts' really means 'roots' etc. are ineptly introducing allegorical usage. To make the matter clearer, let me compare all the other things connected with John. In the annunciation of his conception on the Day of Atonement [10 September, deduced from the supposition that Zacharias was high priest], there is the spiritual indication of the atonement that

is given to everyone in Christ: in the loosing of his father's tongue on the day of his birth there is an indication of the release from error and deviation etc. which we receive in Jesus: in his departure to the desert our departure from earth to heaven is hinted at: in the knowledge of Scripture that he acquired in the desert, the perfect knowledge which we shall receive in the world to come is to be seen, in the desolate wilderness of Judaea where he was preaching, he was hinting at the desolation of mortality, seeing that this will be dissolved, in the girdle with which his waist was bound he was hinting at the chastity, firmness, and bliss which are with Christ.

73*. JOB OF EDESSA, Book of Treasures, II. 15

The observation that human hair turns white in old age, but animal hair does not, requires an explanation: Job provides one on the basis of Galen's doctrine of the 'four humours', all pervasive in Late Antiquity and in the European Middle Ages.

Why only human hair turns white in old age.

The reason is as follows, human beings make use of quantities of different kinds of foods: furthermore, even after hunger has been satisfied they go on eating and drinking. This produces many superfluties which get attached to the skin. Now that external area of the body is soft and tender, easily liable to change. This lasts as long as someone is at a young age: then, after puberty, heat is joined to humidity, and its burning flame parches up the excess humidity, and this produce black hair all over the body. But when a man reaches the final stages of life, old age, then the heat to be found in the humidity is diminished, and it quickly evaporates owing to the separating out of the pores and the displacement of the humidity. Then cold begins to predominate, and as a result of the coolness and humidity the hair starts growing white: once the coolness has predominated over the moisture, it solidifies and grows white. First of all the head and beard go white, because it is there that the great superfluity which produces the hair accumulates.

The hair of other animals does not grow white in old age because they do not make use of quantities of different kinds of food, and they do not go on eating after their hunger has been satisfied. This is the reason why they have less of a superfluity accumulating by the skin, and this hardens and dries up, thus pressing and squeezing the pores, making the superfluity less liable to change. Also, what does accumulate is small in quantity. Because the nature of animals is dense, and the superfluity which accumulates by the skin is dry, their pores are narrow. This explains why in old age they do not experience evaporation; since their heat is preserved together with their superfluity, without receiving any increase, their hair remains black, and does not turn white in old age.

This is also the reason why their hair does not grow very long, staying much the same from childhood to old age. Exceptions are goats and sheep, and some other species; because of the greater humidity and heat which their nature possesses, compared with other species, their hair undergoes a daily growth.

74*. JOHN OF DARA

In this extract from his Commentary on the Liturgy (1.7) it is interesting that John uses, in connection with the Incarnation, the characteristic early Syriac phraseology of the Word 'putting on the body': after the christological controversies of the fifth and sixth centuries Syrian Orthodox writers tended to drop the use of this phrase, seeing it as too dyophysite in implication (see 22(b)), whereas writers of the Church of the East of course continued to employ it.

Furthermore, when priests and deacons put on their vestments they should understand and realize that they are putting them on in the same way that the divine Word put on his body; for just as God the Word took our body and then brought it to his Begetter by means of his raising it up, so too in the case of priests and deacons when they put on their vestments; and it is as if they were bringing the body of the Word to the Father for a second time. How greatly, therefore, should they be in a state of awe and trembling.

75*. ISHO'DAD OF MERV

Isho'dad's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments collects together earlier options. In the excerpt below (on Gen. 22) he includes a brief quotation of the passage from Narsai, given above.

'Gods tested Abraham' [Gen. 22:1]. This is spoken in human terms, as is the custom of Scripture: just as in the case of the passage 'An angel encountered Moses and sought to kill him' etc. [Exod. 4:24] It also resembles the passage 'God has come to test you, to bring you low and to test you' [Deut. 8:2].

Here too, wishing to establish in the world an image of Abraham's virtue, and to show that he (God) had not chosen him to no purpose, but rather, justly, and because of the purity of his love etc, he commanded him to sacrifice his son.

Even though the prophet [Moses] spoke of the event in a story-telling manner, after the custom of Scripture, describing what is seen, rather than what is actually the case – just as the passage 'Three men were seen by Abraham' [Gen. 18:2], and other similar passages – nevertheless he depicted beforehand the signification of the Revelation, in that the Clothing [i.e. body] of the Word was going to be sacrificed on the wood, using as a type Isaac, from whose progeny he was going to shine forth.

'Abraham your father was yearning . . . ' [John 8:56], and Paul 'It was given to him in a parable' [Heb. 11:19], etc. likewise refer.

Some people say that Sarah was not aware that Abraham was going to sacrifice her son, on the grounds that he did not reveal this to her; for he was convinced of the feeble nature of women: what a commotion she would make: perhaps she would stop the whole affair. Just as Mar Narsai also said: 'He did not reveal the secret of his Lord either to the members of his household, or to Sarah, out of fervour of love towards his Lord'.

Others, however, not wanting to rob Sarah of sharing in Abraham's virtuous action, say that she did know, etc.

‘He chopped wood’ [v.3] – that is to say. two or three bits of wood, only in order that the fire could catch on them, for he was going to the land of Palestine [see Gen. 21:34], which is full of many trees.

Now that ‘mountain’ [v.2] is the mountain of Sion, and the location Golgotha.

‘For three days’ [v.4]. Some reckon from the Wednesday on which the Jews took counsel to crucify him, seeing that he was reckoned as dead from that day, with the Thursday and the Friday.

‘They saw the place from afar’ [v.4]. That is, only after a long time would these things take their fulfillment.

The question is raised of what it was that Abraham saw, so that he might thereby recognize the place where he would make the sacrifice:

-some have said that God fixed in his mind an idea of the place, without any external sign;

-others say that he saw a column of light in that place, stretching as far as heaven;

-others say he saw a column of light in the form of a cross.

77*. ANTON OF TAGRIT

From his book on Rhetoric V.12.2.

Similar to an aphorism (or: parable) is a riddle; or rather, a riddle is an aphorism whose meaning is particularly hidden away and secret; generally it is put together without the use of any similitude, as in the case of Samson’s riddle:

Out of the eater there issued something to eat; and out of what is bitter there issued something sweet [Judges 14:14].

Or again, the one that was presented to Homer by the Arcadian fishermen who were picking out lice by the edge of a river; he was asking about fish, but they replied with the lice in mind:

“O Arcadian men”, he said, “fishermen by trade, have you caught anything?”

“What we have caught we have destroyed”, they replied, “but what has not been caught we carry about in our clothes”.

Or like the one which some other people composed concerning a shadow:

From three one searches for it,
 from five one catches it,
 four contains its name,
 and seventy provide its interpretation.
 If it goes in front, it is not caught up,
 If it stays behind, it never remains behind.

Similar to these is the kind of aphorism which Evagrius, most excellent of the ‘Mourners’, composed:

The chariot of knowledge is fire and air,
 that of ignorance is air and water [Kephalaia Gnostica II.51].
 Or again,

When bearers of children cease to bear, then the guardians of the house will tremble; then both heads will gather the rose and the fine linen [Keph. Gnostica II.50].

78*. Ps. GEORGE OF ARBELA

Section V of this anonymous author’s extensive commentary on the liturgical offices concerns the baptismal rite. In the early Church baptisms took place either at Epiphany or at Easter, depending on local tradition; in his liturgical reforms in the mid seventh century, however, Isho’yahb III specified that baptisms should only take place on the eve of the feast of the Resurrection: the rationale behind this is given in the following excerpt taken from the beginning of the first chapter of this section (ed. Connolly, pp. 96-97).

First chapter: Why was it that Isho `yahb [III] arranged baptism on the eve of the feast of the Resurrection when our Lord was baptised at Epiphany?

Through the assistance of our Lord and at your prayers, our brother, we have come out of the mighty ordeal of commenting on the liturgy of the Mysteries, and our terror in this respect has been dissipated, even though the explanations given are inept; nevertheless, in accordance with our strength we have completed them, in order to keep our promise to you.

So at this point let us turn to commenting on the rite of holy Baptism. You asked, our brother, concerning the day of baptism. Because our Lord's baptism mystically symbolized death to him, but to us nothing of the sort-his death symbolizes our baptism, seeing that at his death and resurrection we are baptized so that, like him, we may finally rise - consequently, it is quite right that we are not baptized along with our Lord at Epiphany, for the blessed Paul said, "Do you not realize that those of us who have been baptized in Christ have been baptized in his death, so that it may be for us a symbol of our resurrection" [Rom. 6:3-4]. Just as he was baptized and then completed his divine purpose, so it was only then that we received his coming. And just as, when he was baptized, he symbolized his death, and then after this symbolic death he died a physical death and arose, so let us too leave off our baptizing until the liturgical season of his death. The chief reason is because he is different from us; another reason is that he arose ahead of us in actual fact, while it was with a promise that he promised us resurrection. Again, because it was by his death that we have been saved, and he was not glorified except at his death. For when we are baptized we also vanquish Satan together with his death, whereas he did not openly conquer Satan on the day of his baptism, in that he fasted after he was baptized and it was during his fast that he vanquished Satan.

Thus let us delay until he depicts his death in baptism, and thus conquers Satan, and in this way, also death. And let us go down with him in the Jordan [i.e. also in the sense of 'the font'] as though in

Sheol, so that, along with his resurrection, which is in actual fact, we may depict our own resurrection in symbol, for this provides us with a type of his baptism.

This is why we carry out the rite of our baptism at the time of the Resurrection, and not on the day when he was baptized- in order that, when he rises from the grave, we may rise from the ‘Jordan’ [i.e. the font].

79 *. THOMAS OF MARGA

In his chapter on Mar Narses, bishop of Shenna (end of the eighth century), Thomas points out that it was not only Christian saints who have commended, and benefited from, a life of stillness and silence, but also several pre-Christian Greek philosophers; he then goes on to list some examples – clearly taken from a source in which these philosophers have undergone some surprising transformations (thus Homer has become an alchemist!) (Book of Superiors V.13).

Pythagoras, great among philosophers, said as a result of the experience he had gained over a long period, “Without the stilling of the body in reclusion and the silence of the tongue from speaking, philosophy cannot be acquired”. He instructed everyone who was being taught in his school to keep silence for five years, and the entry into wisdom was instilled by him in that school by means of hearing and sight only.

The wise Homer, after having lived in the desert for many years, causing his intellect to fly about collecting knowledge, arrived at a subtle perception which he received through stillness and silence. By means of various ingredients, fire and a furnace, he transmuted lead into silver, bronze into gold, and formed precious stones through the use of herbal preparations; starting from these common things, he likewise produced other things from other materials.

Concerning Plato who was wiser in philosophy than all others, and who obtained a glorious reputation among the Athenians, it is said, and also written, that he built himself a cell in the inner desert, beyond the bounds of habitation and cultivation; there he took the

Testament of the blessed Moses and meditated on the verse “Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one” [Deut. 6:4] for three years, until God, the Lord of all, saw his labour and trouble and granted him his mercy. And he wrote, saying “The God of the Jews is single in nature and threefold in persons”. This composition of his, on the similarity of nature and God’s unity, and on the Trinity of Persons and their attributes is extant among the books of the Church. A further thing is said of him: once, when his mind was occupied with the contemplation of created things, he laboured in his intellect with acumen and fell into great toil and affliction; but once he had plucked out his desires and become aware of the stirring of his contemplation, and been persuaded from within, he said “Verily I have attained to part of it”. Where upon he remained silent in his joy three whole nights and days without any movement whatsoever.

The master of physicians, the archiatros [chief doctor] Hippocrates, the philosopher, along with all the wisdom which he received from stillness and silence, dived in his mind, deep in thought, entered the struggle of mental investigation, and so grasped how a child is nourished in its mother’s womb.

And if God, the Lord of all, has bestowed upon pagans who are removed from spiritual knowledge, the wisdom they sought after, either to give them joy by reason of their affliction, or as it were for the benefit of others by means of their labour of profound stillness, silence and separation from mankind, how much more will he do so in the case of holy people who keep his commandments and have followed after his will amid hunger, thirst, suffering, tears and prayers night and day.

80. ISHO‘DNAH

In his Book of Chastity (#125[124]) Isho‘dnah has left one of the few surviving biographical accounts of Isaac of Nineveh.

On the holy Mar Isaac, bishop of Nineveh, who left the episcopacy and composed writings on the way of life for solitaries.

He was made bishop for Nineveh by Mar Giwargis the Catholicos [661-681] in the monastery of Beth `Abe. After he had spent five months in the office of Pastor of Nineveh in succession to Mar Moses, the previous bishop, he left the episcopate for a reason that is known to God, and went and lived in the mountains.

After the see had remained vacant for a time, the blessed Sabrisho` was appointed in succession to him. He too abandoned his episcopacy and became an anchorite in the days of the Catholicos Hnanisho` [686-700]. He died in the monastery of Mar Shahin in the district of Qardu.

Isaac, then after having abandoned the throne of Nineveh, went up to the mountain of Matut which is encompassed by the region of Beth Huzaye, and lived in stillness together with the anchorites there. He then came to the monastery of Rabban Shabur. He was exceptionally well acquainted with the divine Scriptures - so much so that he lost the sight of his eyes as a result of his reading and asceticism. He was well advanced in the divine mysteries, and wrote books on the solitaires' way of life. He spoke of three matters which were not accepted by many: Daniel son of Tubanitha, bishop of Garmai, was scandalized by him as a result of these matters he spoke about. He departed this temporal life in deep old age, and his body was laid to rest in the monastery of Shabur. Now his family was from Beth Qatraye.

I think that envy was stirred up against him by people inside the monastery, as happened in the cases of Joseph the Seer, John of Apamea and John of Dalyatha.

82*. MOSHE BAR KEPHA

(a) In the course of his Introduction to the Psalter Moshe bar Kepha enumerates the various biblical versions, beginning with the Greek, and going on to the Syriac; on the origin of the Peshitta Old Testament he mentions only one out of several different traditions that were current (some took it back to the time of Solomon, others-wisely!- stated it was unknown). He also records two different opinions concerning which Syriac Old Testament translation has the greater authority, the Peshitta or Syrohexapla (here called the 'Seventy Two').

In our own Syriac tongue there are two translations of the Old Testament. One is the Peshitta, which we read; this was translated from Hebrew into Syriac. The Peshitta was translated from Hebrew into Syriac in the time of king Abgar of Edessa, as Mar Jacob has said. Mar Jacob says that Addai the Apostle and the believing king Abgar sent a man to Jerusalem and the region of Palestine, and they translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into Syriac. The version of the Seventy Two was translated from Greek into Syriac by Paul, bishop of Tella d-Mauzelat, in the time of the emperor Heraclius, according to some people. Of all these translations the Peshitta, which was translated from Hebrew into Syriac, is the most exact, in that they say that the Hebrew tongue is closely related to Syriac. But Philoxenus of Mabbug says that of all the versions that of the Seventy Two is the most exact: this is clear from the fact our Lord and his disciples adduced testimonies from it in the Gospel and Acts, and so too did Paul.

(b) In his Commentary on the baptismal rite Moshe bar Kepha makes us of, and expands on, a number of earlier commentaries on the service.

15. The priest puts his hand on the head of the person being baptized and says, ‘So and so is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’. The face of the baptized should be looking to the east, while the priest’s face should be looking to the west, as he faces the person being baptized.

The priest puts his hand on the head of the person who is being baptized for the following reasons. Firstly: just as God fashioned Adam with his hands at the original creation, so too does the priest at this second creation. Secondly: to correspond to John who put his hand on the head of the Son at the Baptism. Thirdly: the hand of the priest indicates the person being baptized, as though pointing with a finger, while the Father cries out “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” [Matt. 3:17]. Fourthly: the hand of the priest is a mystical sign that the person being baptized is born again.

The priest says “So and so is baptized”, and not “I baptize”, since the baptism is not his doing, but God’s, and he has just been chosen by grace to be a minister to the Mysteries of Baptism.

83. ELIJAH OF ANBAR

Book of Centuries, Memra iii. 63-65.

63. It is but a single look-out that the intellect needs – however many may be around – who, like some glorious sovereign, will reign over the thoughts of the soul, and if, being valiant, he is able to subdue the waves of the sea, he will prove a wise pilot to the ship of the soul.

64. There is nothing in creation belonging to this world of the senses which is not a symbol and type of that spiritual world, and he who is willing to depict in his heart a portrait of the world to come, will, on the basis of this transient world, portray a symbol that bears a likeness of the next.

65. He who wishes to inherit the Kingdom which the Saviour has promised us should prepare for it in himself by constant reflection on insights into the world to come. These insights into the symbol of Reality are like torches of light that give illumination before the intellect so that it can see to travel to the Kingdom.

84*. ANONYMOUS, Book of the Cause of Causes.

The unknown author sets out the circumstances surrounding the writing of this extensive work (ed. Kayser, pp. 7-10).

The reason for this work, why it came about, by whom it is, and for whom it was written.

To all the peoples under the heavens, all brethren, relatives and members of one another, all part of a single family and race, sharing in a common rational and spiritual soul that has the capability of intelligence and understanding, and sharing too in a body formed and composed out of the four material elements - greetings! May there be peace upon you all from the Lord of true peace, along with

perfect health, well-being and preservation in a life that is lived in the light of the knowledge of truth; for without this there is no true life, no well-being, no perfect health, but only darkness, falsehood, the wandering astray of error and death of perdition – from which may we all, along with all of us, be preserved, amen.

May we live in the light of the knowledge of truth, and may we all enjoy the grace and the compassion of the good Lord of us all, the wise Guide of our souls, the generous Provisioner of our lives, to whom be continual praise from us all, together with upright confession and true and spiritual worship, at all times and in all generations to eternal ages, amen.

Your brother, the least of you all, an insignificant member who shares with you all in the human family, a feeble person from Edessa, the chief city of Mesopotamia that is situated between the mighty rivers of the Euphrates and the Tigris, makes acknowledgement of your honour and true wisdom, having as his intention true love and divine affection.

Somehow or other I, your insignificant brother, came to hold the post of leadership of the people, whether by God's will, or by human agency – praise be to him who alone knows everything. I remained in this ministry at the head of my people for some thirty years, during which I was tried in many things and had to bear immense anguish and many afflictions, along with vexation and troubles, as I conducted myself in this world that causes confusion and darkness, experiencing what leaders of the people and pastors customarily have to put up with from the people and flocks committed into their hands. I fell many times, and picked myself up; I suffered and was tried, I ran far away but was then called back, so I returned, only to be overcome by the turbulence of the world. I thought to myself, if I do not escape for good, and remove myself completely from the world and what goes on in it, my soul will become darkened and my intellect blinded, and will perish from the True Life. Once again I was tested in my thoughts and fell into doubt:

maybe this idea does not correspond to the power of truth: or, maybe, after I have left, I will be forced once again, either by the love of my fellow human beings, or by compulsion, or by temptation, to return once again to the world.

Being greatly wearied by these thoughts I supplicated the good Lord, who takes care of his creation, to confirm my thoughts in the direction of whatever was pleasing to him and in accordance with his will, as well as being beneficial to my soul and likely to bring me to the light of the knowledge of truth. Then my thoughts became firmly fixed on flight and on distancing myself from the world.

[...] I turned my back on the world and fled, departing for the desolate mountain and the lonely wilderness, a place destitute of human beings, hidden away and far removed from any highways or coming and going, and with no human habitation nearby. There I lived in stillness and solitude, in the vicinity of two or three solitaries living the same kind of life. Whenever I recalled the world and remembered its mode of conduct and the judgement involved in it, I would shake and tremble: it was as if I was in fear and terror of a burning fire, or a rough sea that threatened destruction. But as long as I endured in stillness and solitude, far removed from the concerns of the world and its importunity, my heart was fortified and took strength, and my mind was confirmed, as great joy and deep comfort began to reign over me, in that the light of truth had begun to shine out over me.

Once my thoughts had been strengthened, I would prostrate myself before the good Lord, and give thanks to his great and ineffable grace that he had effected for me who am so despicable; and my heart became full of love for those who had persecuted or afflicted me, or caused me much grief, and I would pray and supplicate that they might be assisted and delivered from the darkness of ignorance.

[After much prayer I came to realize that] just as the sun shines on both the good and the bad, so God's compassion is spread over

all human beings, and everyone who asks well, will receive from him most excellently and abundantly – provided, that is, he asks well. So when the Lord had visited and assisted my feeble state with his grace, as a result of my wretched soul's experience I came to perceive and understand the vast love and immense concern that the good Lord, the wise Creator and lavish Provider, has for his beloved creation. And once I had become aware of the great honour granted to human beings, from what origin and descent they are, the purpose of their being preserved, and the transformation that will occur for them after the final end of this world which is the place of their training, I was smitten with a great love towards them, and this love for all human beings under the sky became a fierce burning fire within me.

[...] I resolved to write these things down for all peoples, so that wherever there is anyone slothful and negligent like myself, he may read and hear about them and be roused from the slumber of neglectfulness, and escape from the dark night of ignorance, walking instead in the path of the light of truth, and so arrive at the city of the heavenly Kingdom, to have joy and delight there with the great Sovereign and Lord of glory, whose door is open to everyone who knocks, and whose Kingdom receives all ages, being capable of holding all creation.

87*. DIONYSIUS BAR SALIBI

Introduction to his Commentary on the Apocalypse

Dionysius' Commentary on the whole Bible includes those New Testament books, such as the Revelation, which were absent from the Peshitta and were only translated into Syriac at a later date in Syrian Orthodox circles. In his discussion of the authorship of the Revelation Dionysius cites a number of works by early Christian authors which do not survive (notably Hippolytus' Chapters against Gaius, of which only small fragments of the Syriac translation survive in the library of St. Catherine's Monastery, Sinai).

At the outset, we observe that the majority of teachers have had their doubts about the Revelation of John and have said that it is not really his. This is what Eusebius of Caesarea indicates in his

work entitled *Ekklesiastike*, that is, Church History. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, says that the Revelation is not by John the Apostle, but by another John, a priest (or: elder) living in Asia; for the impression, or stamp, of the style of the Gospel is unlike that of the Revelation. Further, John never mentions his name at all in the Gospel, whereas this other man places his name both at the beginning and at the end of the Revelation. But we acknowledge that the person who wrote it received the Revelation from our Lord.

Irenaeus the bishop and Hippolytus of Bosra say that the Revelation is indeed by John the Evangelist, and that it was revealed to him at the end of the reign of Diocletian. Eusebius of Caesarea agrees with this, and goes on to say that “if someone does not accept it as the Revelation of John the Apostle and Evangelist, we would then say that it is by John the priest (or: elder) who lived in the time of John the Apostle. There are two tombs in Asia, one belonging to the Evangelist, the other to John the priest (or: elder).

Hippolytus of Rome said that a certain person called Gaius appeared, who used to say that neither the Gospel nor the Revelation was by John, but instead they were by the heretic Cerinthus. The blessed Hippolytus took his stand against this Gaius and showed that the teaching of John in the Gospel and in the Revelation was quite different from that of Cerinthus: this Cerinthus used to teach circumcision, and he became angry with Paul for not circumcising Titus. In one of his letters he calls the Apostle and his disciples “false apostles and deceitful workers”. He also taught that the world was created by angels, that our Lord was not born of a Virgin, and that he did not consume corporeal food and drink – along with many other blasphemies. The Gospel and the Revelation of John, however, go along with the view of the other Scriptures, and so those who say that the Revelation is by Cerinthus and not by John the Apostle are wrong.

We agree with Hippolytus. The holy Cyril and Saint Severus also testify that the Revelation is by John the Evangelist. So do all

the teachers who adduce quotations from it in their various books. Gregory the Theologian also adduces evidence from it in his work called *Syntakterion* [=Or.42], where he says, “Just as John teaches me in his Revelation, Make a way for my people and throw out these stones...”, calling heretics and their teaching stones”.

89*. MICHAEL THE GREAT

Michael's Chronicle incorporates numerous earlier documents, and among them a short life of Jacob of Edessa (Book XI. 14).

On Jacob of Edessa. His family was from the territory of Antioch, from a village called 'Ein Di'ba, in the region of Gomah. During his youth he was brought up in the entourage of Cyriacus, a chaste old man who was the Visitor of the region. He read all the books of the Old and New Testament, and the Teachers [of the Church], and gained a good command of them. He then went to the monastery of Aphtonia, where he received the monastic habit. He made a deep study there of the Psalms in Greek, and the reading of the Scriptures, as well as the [Greek] language in detail. From there he set off for Alexandria: having stayed a certain time there and amassed knowledge of the sciences there, he returned once more to Syria and came to Edessa, where he made his monastic retreat.

Having acquired a great reputation amongst everyone, he was called to the episcopal throne of the city of Edessa and was consecrated by the Patriarch Athanasius, 'the Interpreter of books' [683/4-687]. He remained on his episcopal throne for four years. He was subjected to many troubles by people who had been banned by him from exercising their ministry because of their uncanonical actions, and also by others whom he had expelled and driven out from the Church of God. Since his zeal and fervour of mind did not allow him to put up with this, he resigned from his pastoral office, and committed the episcopal throne to the Patriarch Mar Julian [687-707/8], and set off with his two disciples, Daniel and Constantine. Before going, he had an argument with the Patriarch and the bish-

ops over the proper keeping of the ecclesiastical canons, but no one listened to him at all: instead, they all urged him to make concessions to the time and the situation. This is the reason why he brought along the book of the ecclesiastical canons and set fire to it, burning it in front of the gate of the Patriarch's monastery, crying out as he did so, "The canons are being trampled on by you and are not being observed, so I am burning them in the fire as being redundant and of no further use".

He then straightway made his monastic retreat in the monastery of Mar Jacob of Kayshum. There he composed two discourses of reprimand: one against the pastors of the Church, and the other against those who had transgressed ecclesiastical law and the canons.

A serene and kind old man named Habbib was consecrated bishop of Edessa.

As for Jacob, the monks of Eusebona requested him to come over to them to teach and renew there the study of the Greek language which had died out. In that monastery he taught the Greek Psalms, the reading of the Scriptures, and the [Greek] language for eleven years. Certain brethren, however, out of jealousy hated the Greeks and stirred up a conflict with him, and so he left, transferring to the great monastery of Tel 'Ada, along with seven of his disciples.

His disciple Constantine was consecrated [bishop] for the faithful of Bithynia, but when for various reasons he did not go there, they transferred him to the territory of Homs.

Jacob resided there for nine years. In this monastery he corrected [the translation of] the Old Testament.

When Habbib, their bishop, died, the Edessenese- and especially the aged Athanasius the teacher – set off in zeal to the Patriarch and demanded that he compel Jacob to return to them [as bishop]. So he came back and sat on his episcopal throne. He administered the see for four months, and then set off westwards, to

collect his books and disciples, intending then to return to his church. On reaching the monastery, he loaded up his books and sent them off ahead of him, but at that point fate overtook him and he ended his life in the monastery. His body was deposited in it. This was in the year 1015 [=AD 704, but the date here is erroneous and elsewhere Michael gives the correct date, 1019=AD 708], on the 5th June. Many miracles occur from his sarcophagus.

91. SOLOMON OF BOSRA

Book of the Bee, ch.30

Numerous legends grew up over time concerning the subsequent, history, or in some cases, the ancestry, of material objects that play a role in biblical history. An example well-known in both eastern and western Christian tradition is the wood of the cross, which is traced backwards in time, through Solomon's Temple to Noah's Ark and even earlier. In the following example, characteristic of the Book of the Bee, we learn that the wood of Moses' staff had both a prehistory and an afterlife, eventually ending up as part of the wood of the cross.

Concerning the history of the staff of Moses.

When Adam and Eve left Paradise, Adam, as though realizing that he would not return again to his original home, broke off a branch from the Tree of Good and Evil-which was a fig tree- and took it with him as he left. It served as his staff all the days of his life. After Adam's death his son Seth received it; there were no weapons yet at that time. This staff passed on from hand to hand down till Noah. From Noah it came to Shem, and from Shem it was handed on as a blessed relic from God's Paradise, down to Abraham. Abraham used it to break the carved statues and idols which his father used to make; this was the reason why God said to him, "Depart from your father's house", etc. [Gen. 12:1]. He had it in his hand everywhere, taking it as far as Egypt, and from Egypt he took it to Palestine.

Afterwards Isaac received it, and from Isaac it came to Jacob, who used it while shepherding the flocks of Laban the Armaean in

Padan Aram. Jacob's fourth son, Judah, then received it. This was the staff which Judah gave to his daughter-in-law Tamar, along with his ring and scarf, in payment for what he had done [Gen. 38:18]. From him it came to Peres. There were then wars everywhere, and an angel took the staff away and placed it in the Cave of Treasures in the mountains of Moab, until Midian should be built. Now in Midian there was a man who was upright and just before God, whose name was Jethro. While he was shepherding his flocks in the mountains, he came upon the cave and, through divine agency, took the staff. He used it while shepherding his flocks until his old age. When Jethro gave his daughter to Moses in marriage, he told him, "Come in, my son, take the staff, and go forth to your flocks". The moment Moses stepped on the threshold of the door, an angel caused the staff to move and it came out of its own accord to meet Moses. Moses took the staff and kept it with him until the time when God spoke with him on Mount Sinai. When God told him, "Throw the staff on the ground" [Exod. 4:3], he did so, and it became a large snake. The Lord then said "Pick it up", and when he picked it up it became a staff, as before.

This is the staff which God gave him by way of assistance and deliverance, to become an object of wonder with which to deliver Israel from slavery to the Egyptians. It turned into a snake in Egypt, at the bidding of the living God. With it God spoke to Moses, and it swallowed up the staff of Posdi, the Egyptians' sorceress. With it he smote the length and breadth of the Red Sea, and the depths contracted in the very heart of the sea. This staff was in Moses' hands in the wilderness of Ashimon, and with it he smote the rocky stone, whereupon water flowed forth [Num. 20:11]. God then gave power to serpents to destroy the Israelites because they had provoked him to anger over the Waters of Disputes [Meribah]. Moses then prayed before the Lord, and God told him, "Make yourself a bronze serpent and set it upon the staff, so that the Israelites can gaze on it and get healing" [Num. 21:8]. Moses did as the Lord had instructed him and placed the bronze serpent in the sight of all the Israelites in the wilderness. When they gazed on it they were healed.

After all the Israelites, apart from Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Yephunnah, had died, these two entered the Land of Promise taking the staff with them because of the wars with the Philistines and the Amalekites.

Phineas then hid the staff in the wilderness, in the dust at the gate of Jerusalem. It was there until our Lord Christ was born. He, by the will of his divinity, showed it to Joseph the husband of Mary, keeping it until he returned to Nazareth. From Joseph his son James- the one who is named “the brother of the Lord” – received it. Judas Iscariot, being a thief, stole it from James. When the Jews crucified our Lord they did not have enough wood for our Lord’s arms, so Judas, in his wickedness, gave them the staff. So it became for them a cause of judgement and downfall, and for many, a raising up. (luke 2:34)

93*. ANONYMOUS, Chronicle to year 1234

In the sections covering the biblical period, the authors of world chronicles often draw on non-biblical sources, as well as biblical. Thus the following passage, which concerns Moses’ Ethiopian wife [Num. 12:1], draws on material from two different sources, the Hellenistic writer Artapanus, and Josephus’ Antiquities (II. 217-57).

(A discussion of these sources in Syriac chronicles can be found in the *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 (1982), 237-55).

Concerning the Ethiopian wife whom Moses married.

The diviners and enchanters of Pharaoh king of Egypt informed him that someone from the people of Israel would rise up and rule over the kingdom of the Egyptians. On hearing this, Pharaoh king of Egypt assumed hostility in his heart, ordering every male child born to the Israelites to be thrown into the river.

At this time Moses was born, and his mother devised and made him a chest, in which she placed Moses, and threw the chest into the river.

Now king Pharaoh had a daughter called Merris, and he gave her in marriage to Chenephres, king of Memphis.

She went down in those days to divert herself by the river, and seeing the chest, took it off the surface of the water. On opening it, she saw the child inside it. She took him and brought him up as her son.

One day, king Pharaoh took him and lifted him up on his knees so as to honour his daughter ; and he took out the royal diadem and placed it on the child's head. Through the agency of God, the child took the diadem from off his head, put it on the ground in front of Pharaoh, and trampled on it, being as yet unaware of what was good and what bad.

Now when the king saw what had happened because of Moses, he imagined that it must be he who would reign over the kingdom of the Egyptians, as his diviners had said; and so he wanted to kill him, but out of respect for his daughter he did not do so; for he was waiting for an occasion to kill him. When his daughter became aware of this, she took Moses and hid him until he had grown up.

When he had grown up, she handed him over to learn the wisdom of the Egyptians from Jannes and Jambres, the wise men who later withstood him with their enchantments. From them, he learnt all types of wisdom, through the care of Pharaoh's daughter. He learnt augury and divination, and every art of enchantment. And Pharaoh heard of his wisdom.

Then at that time the Cushites came to make war with the Egyptians, and Pharaoh said to his daughter, " I have heard that Moses is wise and skilled in all the sciences; I will send him against our enemies, and if he conquers them I will make him king during my lifetime". She, however, suspected there was guile in his heart, and so she made her father swear. Her father then swore he would not kill him, but rather would increase his status. Then she brought Moses before the seat of Pharaoh her father. Having made him leader and commander of the forces, he sent him off to war, to go down by sea to Cush; for no one could go by dry land to Cush because of the multitude of snakes and serpents there.

Now Moses brought a bird which is a destroyer of that evil kind of reptile: wherever any evil reptile hears its cry, it flees and removes itself far off. Now this bird's name is the 'ibis'. Moses brought this bird and made a bronze cage for it, and took it with him. and so they set out to go down by the desert, since the Cushites were in control of the sea. The moment that the bird caught the scent of a reptile it gave a cry, and every reptile would run away. In this way they were able to go down to Cush.

On arriving at the city, they saw that it was surrounded by a river, and they did not know how to enter the city. A certain Cushite woman looked out from the wall – she was the king's daughter - and she saw how fair and handsome Moses was. And she fell in love with him. She then sent to him by an interpreter saying, "If you swear to me that you will marry me, then I will show you how to enter the city". He then captured the city and destroyed it, while he took the woman in marriage, as he had sworn to do, and brought her to Egypt.

94*. JACOB SEVERUS bar SHAKKO

Definitions of philosophy, and other related questions, were standard fare of higher education in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and many Syriac texts deal with these topics, the roots of which are usually to be found in Greek writings of the Alexandrian school of the sixth and early seventh century. The extract below is from *The Book of Dialogues II. 7.*

Sixth Question: Why is Philosophy divided up into two parts?

Reply: Because the soul has two modes of life, according to the two faculties it possesses by its nature, namely those of cognition and action. For the aim of philosophy is this: to adorn the life of the soul. For this reason it has two parts, contemplation and action. This is in order that, through action, it might adorn the active life of the soul, and through contemplation, it might adorn the cognitive life of the soul. This is why philosophy is divided up into two parts.

Again, we possess by nature faculties of cognition and of action. Cognitive ones, seeing that all human beings desire to know, and there is nothing more pleasing and delectable for them than to

know everything. Take the following example: a person is continually asking for news from all over the place; and he wants to get a precise understanding of everything that he sees. Thus, when the soul sees a crowd of people in the distance, then a person will ask and enquire what is the reason for their gathering together; and if he learns, then he is pleased and delighted; whereas if he is not told the reason, then he is upset because he has been deprived of the knowledge of what has happened.

Then there is the faculty of action, for neither when we are proceeding along happily, nor when we find ourselves thrown into difficulty, are we able to rest from action: sometimes we will pick up a piece of straw, or a pebble, from the ground; or we will pull on a bit of our hair, or else do something else of this sort. All the time we are never without some sort of activity.

Consequently it is for these reasons that philosophy has been divided up into two parts, contemplation and activity.

95*. BAR 'EBROYO/BARHEBRAEUS

(a) Ecclesiastical History

Barhebraeus' Ecclesiastical History covers the Church of the East as well as his own Syrian Orthodox Church. In the following excerpt he describes a contemporary event, the election of the Uighur monk Markos as Catholicos, with the name Yahballaha III.

In the year 1592 of the Greeks [=AD 1280/1], while the Catholicos [of the Church of the East] Mar Iohannan Denha was on his way down to Baghdad he fell sick during the journey. On arrival there he remained in great pain for a few days, and then departed this life during the night before Monday 24th February, the [first] morning of the Great Fast. While Mar Denha was still alive two Uighur monks came from China on their way to worship in Jerusalem. When they arrived in these regions they could not find out how to continue their journey, so they turned aside to visit Mar Denha. In order to prevent his adversary Bar Qaligh going to China, Mar Denha consecrated one of the Uighur, or Turkoman, monks as metropolitan for China,

giving him the name Yahballaha. Now when they were getting ready to return back home, Denha died. Thereupon the Emir Ashot, who was of the same race, told the king of kings about Yahballaha, saying, “the Christians want him to be their Catholicos: the people of Baghdad too are happy with him”, hoping that, because he had close connections both in race and in language with the Mongols, they will get some benefit from him. As a result the royal order went out that he should be made Catholicos. Having assembled twenty-four bishops, these men went down to Seleucia Ctesiphon and consecrated him Catholicos. This Mar Yahballaha was weak in Syriac learning and letters, but he was a man with a renown for his religious way of life, and he showed great love for the Jacobites.

(b) Candelabra of the Sanctuary I (PO 22, p. 595-7).

Both ancient and modern translators and exegetes have disputed over the meaning of the Hebrew words *ruah elohim* in Gen. 1:2, some taking *ruah* (Syriac *ruha*) to refer to the Holy Spirit, others claiming that the Holy Spirit is not meant, and that *ruah* here simply means ‘wind’. Barhebraeus describes the different interpretations current in Syriac circles; his observation concerning Ephrem’s views is entirely correct, and the same point that Barhebraeus makes at the end has been made independently by modern scholars! In the following section Barhebraeus goes on to discuss the physical nature of air, clouds, rain, snow etc.

Concerning the *ruha* (Spirit/wind) who was hovering (or: brooding) over the surface of the water [Gen. 1:2]. The holy Basil said, in the second homily of his *Hexaemeron* [Commentary on the Six Days of Creation], that there was a discussion among our predecessors concerning this word *ruha* here. He himself said it was the Holy Spirit, and this is something we should accept as our own opinion. He said that he learnt of this understanding of the ‘hovering’ from a certain excellent man, a Syrian- for the Aramaic language is related to Hebrew. This man said, “The Spirit of God was brooding over the surface of the water so that they might be made ready to give birth to the living soul after its kind, in the same manner as a hen which in its love broods over the eggs beneath it, keeping them warm, so as to provide life in them and instill movement in them”.

Jacob, bishop of Edessa, concurs with this view, while Mar Ephrem, in his factual commentary on Genesis, Mar Jacob of Serugh in his Hexaemeron, and Theodore the Interpreter of the Nestorians, have all said that the ruha in question is not the Holy Spirit, but this ordinary created wind, consisting of air. Mar Jacob said:

There was darkness, and the wind blew over the water,
-the created wind, and not the Holy Sprit. as has been supposed.

Moses called it 'the wind of the Lord', as has been said, something created by God which over creation.

It is the first opinion which is correct. This is clear from the fact that if ruha had not been the Holy Spirit here, it would not have been called 'the ruha of God', for never at all is any mention ever made of 'the air of God', or 'the water of God', or 'the earth, or fire, of God'; whereas it is often spoken of the Holy Spirit in this way, as with "You send your Spirit, and they are created" [Ps. 104:30]. Likewise of the Son, as with "I will praise the Word of God" [Ps.56:11]. Many others have spoken in confirmation of this view, but this brief discussion is too short for me to mention them. The holy Severus, in his Book against the Grammarian, said that the 'Syrian man' was Ephrem. That this is not the case is clear from the fact that this saint did not hold to this view.

(c) In his Book of Amusing Stories Barhebraeus collects material together from a variety of different sources, ranging from sayings of Greek philosophers, through the Desert Fathers, to an early eleventh-century collection by Abu Sa'd al-Abi (Barhebraeus' dependence on this last source has only recently been pointed out).

252. One of the teachers used to say, "A large part of learning has escaped me, namely, what I was too ashamed to learn from people who are my inferiors. Accordingly, my pupils, do not consider it a disgrace if you ask those who are your inferiors how you may become perfect and accomplished".

515. A woman enquired of her neighbour, “Why should a man be allowed to buy a maidservant and then go and sleep with her and do whatever he likes, while a woman is not allowed to do such thing openly?” The neighbour replied, “It is because all kings, judges and lawgivers have been men, and so they have advocated their own interests, and treated women unjustly”.

96*. ‘ABDISHO‘ BAR BRIKA

‘Abdisho‘ included in his collection of poems entitled ‘The Paradise’ one which takes the form of a dialogue between the body and the soul. This was, by his time, a traditional topic, and three other poems treating it also survive. ‘Abdisho‘ makes use of an elaborate alphabetic acrostic, where the penultimate letter of each line is the same as the letter of the alphabet which opens that particular verse.

1. I heard report of a contest taking place between the body and the soul; like someone with discernment, I wanted to see which of them would hit the mark.

SOUL [Alaph] 2. The soul says: however much I toil, offering assistance and comfort, yet the body overwhelms me with its torrent of horrible actions, and it wearies my nature.

BODY [Alaph] 3. The body replied: it is neither proper nor fitting that I should disclose your evil deeds, in that you have suggested to me to revel in all sorts of harmful actions.

SOUL [Beth] 4. The Son, who has saved us both in his love and who feels out the hidden secrets of the heart, is witness to me that you have waged a mighty war on me from every side.

BODY [Beth] 5. In your hands are traps and snares, and it is you who thrust the simple into the pit.

Through the multitude of your evil enticements even cultivated land will turn into wilderness because of you.

SOUL [Gamal] 6. It is clear that in your audacity you are devising how to break through the allotted boundary, taking captive the faculty of desire by means of lust mixed with anger.

BODY [Gamal] 7. The truth is manifest, without any doubt, that a body that is dead knows no incitement: thus, as long as it is sentiment, then it is you who incite it.

SOUL [Dalath] 8. Pure and luminous likewise did the Maker create me at the beginning: it is your passions, O foul body, that disfigured my state when we were joined.

BODY [Dalath] 9. I am to you as a disciple is to a master, or a slave to an owner, in subjugation: this is well testified, and you accepted it without any feeling of shame.

99. ANONYMOUS, History of Rabban Sauma and Yahballaha III.

Soon after the arrival in Baghdad of the two Uighur monks, Markos and Sauma, from Khan-Baligh [=Peking/Beijing], the Catholicos of the Church of the East, Denha III, consecrated the former as metropolitan with the name Yahballaha, and the latter as 'General Visitor' (sa'ora). On a subsequent visit to Baghdad Mar Yahballaha happens to arrive just after Denha had died. The ensuing extract, which describes his election as the new catholicos, provides a parallel to the account given by Barhebraeus (translated above).

The following day the fathers assembled to elect a suitable person to sit upon the patriarchal Throne. The following were present: Maran'ammeh metropolitan of Elam, another metropolitan, of Tangut, another of Tirhan, another of the mountains, together with the nobles, chief men, secretaries, lawyers and doctors in Baghdad. One person said it should be this man, another that man. Eventually they all agreed that Mar Yahballaha should be head and leader for the Throne of Seleucia Ctesiphon. The reason for his election was this: the kings who held the helm of the government of the entire world were Mongols, and none of the metropolitans, apart from Yahballaha, was acquainted with their way of life, their customs and their language. When they told him this, Yahballaha made excuses, giving as a reason, "I am lacking in education and ecclesiastical learning; furthermore my linguistic ability is impaired, so how can I do this? I do not even know your Syriac language, and this is something universally needed". They persisted in their arguments and he finally came round

and accepted. Everyone gave their consent to him- bishops, priests, nobles, secretaries, as well as the doctors of Baghdad.

He then arose and came to the holy Monastery of Mar Michael of Tar'el, to see Rabban Sauma. The monks had already heard of the decease of the holy father, Mar Denha. On Mar Yahballaha's arrival they received him with joy, and gave him encouragement, agreeing that he should be the Catholicos: "It was at God's instigation, and the outcome stems from him; so the entire creation works to its accomplishment by necessity". And when he spoke with Rabban Sauma, the latter said, "The whole thing comes from God; you cannot beg off from it. We should go now to king Abaga, and if he gives permission, we will accomplish this".

So they arose and set off for Adhorbaigan, together with the bishops and monks who were accompanying them, since it was there that the princes were spending the summer. On reaching the king at the Black Mountain – which is called in Persian Siyah Kuh – the emirs ushered them in and they presented their request as follows: "May the king live for ever! The Catholicos has died, and all the Christians have unanimously agreed that his place should be taken by the metropolitan who has come from the region of the East in order to go to Jerusalem. What does the king bid?" The king replied, "Worthy of admiration is this purity of thought and conscience: God is with those who seek him and who do his will. This man and his companion have come from the east to travel to Jerusalem, and now this event has happened to them through the will of God. We too will carry out the divine will and the request of the Christians. Let him be their head, and let him sit upon the patriarchal Throne". He then took the hand of Mar Yahballaha and said to him, "Take strength and govern: and may God be with you and support you". He covered his head with the hood (ma'pra), for his hood was lying on his shoulders; and he gave him his sandali – which is a small seat – and likewise a canopy (shatar), which is called sukur in Mongolian: this is something which is raised above the heads of kings and queens, and their children, its purpose being to protect

them from the force of the sun and of the rain, but most frequently it is provided for them as a sign of honour. He also gave him a paiza of gold: this is a token of these kings; and the customary mandates, to the effect that he has full jurisdiction; together with the great seal that had belonged to the Catholicoi before him. He furthermore allocated him the considerable expenses that would be required for his consecration as Catholicos.

They then set off and came to Baghdad. They went to the great church of Kokhe, and Mar Yahballaha received the cheirotonia, or imposition of hands, so that he might take hold of the helm of government of the Church of the East. Thus he sat on the throne of Seleucia Ctesiphon, surrounded by the following: the holy father Maran`ammeh, metropolitan of Elam, the consecrator and guardian of the apostolic Throne; mar Isho`zkha, metropolitan of Soba [=Nisibis] and Armenia; Mar Moshe, metropolitan of Arbela; Mar Gabriel, metropolitan of Mosul and Nineveh; Mar Elia, metropolitan of Daqoq and Beth Garmai; Mar Abraham, metropolitan of Tripolis and Jerusalem; Mar Jacob, metropolitan of Samarkand; Mar Iohannan, metropolitan of Adhorbaigan, along with the rest of the bishops, who were twenty-four in number. This consecration took place in November, on the first Sunday of the season of Quddash `Idta [Consecration of the Church], in the year 1593 of the Greeks [=AD 1281], when Yahballaha was 37 years old.

*

TRANSLATIONS INTO SYRIAC

Three examples are given here, one from the Peshitta New Testament, a second from the expansive Syriac translation of Athanasius's *Life of St Antony*, and the third from the sixth-century Syriac translation (made from Middle Persian) of the Indian collections of stories known as *Kalilah as Kalilah and Dimnah*.

(1) 1 Peter 3:9 – 21, Peshitta. It will prove instructive to compare this with the Revised Standard Version (or some other good modern translation) of the Greek New Testament.

9. For the reason why you have been called is in order that you may inherit the blessing. 10. Therefore, whoever wishes for life [or :salvation] and desires to see good times, he should guard his tongue from evil, and let his lips not utter any deceit. 11. Let him cross over from evil, and do what is good; let him seek for peace, and chase after it. 12. For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, his ears are [there] to hear them; but the Lord's face is [also] upon the wicked. 13. Who will do evil to you if you are zealous for what is good? 13. And if you should suffer for the sake of justice, blessed are you; and have no fear of those who try to frighten you, and do not be upset. 15. Instead, cry "Holy" to the Lord Christ in your hearts, and be prepared to make a defence to all who require of you some word concerning the hope of your faith, 16 [doing so] in humility and in fear, having a good conscience, so that those who speak against you, as if against wicked people, may be ashamed as people who abuse your beautiful way of life in Christ. 17. For it is beneficial for you that, while performing good works, you should endure evil, if this is the will of God, rather than when you are doing evil. 18. For Christ too once died for our sins: a just person on behalf of sinners, in order to bring you close to God. He both died in the body and came to life in spirit. 19. And he preached to the souls which were held in Sheol, 20. the ones which of old had not been obedient in the days of Noah, when God's patience gave orders that there should be the Ark, in the hope of their repentance- but only eight souls entered it and were saved amidst the water. 21. You too in that same manner [lit. : type] are alive [or: saved] in baptism – not washing your body of dirt, but acknowledging God with a pure conscience, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ who was raised up to heaven, where he is at the right hand of God; and the angels, authorities and powers have been subjected to him.

(2) Some have supposed that the Syriac translation of the Life of Antony is a witness to an earlier and more original form of the Life than that provided by the extant Greek text attributed to St Athanasius. This, however, seems unlikely to be the case, and it is much more probable that the Syriac

translator was providing an expanded paraphrase, rather than a literal translation, of the work: this type of free translation is characteristic of several fifth-century translations from Greek (sixth – and especially seventh – century translations tend to keep much more closely to their Greek originals). In Chapter 74, translated here, the Syriac translator both expands and (unusually) contracts: the expansions are denoted by {...}.

Ch. 74:1. It happened again that there came to him some wise men – as they were considered in the world – who were greatly accepted among the Greeks. When {they began} demanding from him an enquiry concerning our faith in {our Lord Jesus} Christ, 2. wanting to put him in the wrong over the matter of the Cross and the preaching {of our Lord}, on seeing that they were getting ready for mockery {and insult}, he paid no attention to them for a little. Then, {after having gazed at them for a long time}, he became angry {in his heart} at the falsehood {that resided} in them. He spoke to them through an interpreter who translated the words well {from the Egyptian into the Greek language}.

3. {Now he said to them this at the beginning of his utterance}: “Which is more appropriate, that someone should confess the Cross, or that someone should believe the adultery, {fornication}, and foul acts with males which have been performed by those who are named ‘gods’ amongst you? What is spoken of {and believed} by us is an example and model of people to whom death is contemptible {and by whom the world is despised}. Whereas your preaching consists in the practice of impurity and a willingness towards the foul lusts.

4. “What then is more beneficial, that it should be believed by us that truly with of the Son of God {it was not the case that he was altered from what he was in his divinity}: for the sake of the salvation which he undertook for human beings he took the body of our humanity {and was commingled with our humanity}, so that by the attachment to our humanity he might commingle our humanity with his divinity: 5. or, alternatively, that we should make God resemble wild animals {and cattle}, and as a result {one would be inclined} to worship the likenesses of wild animals or of a human being, and the earth’s reptiles?

[The Greek text has some material (5b, 6, 7a) absent from the Syriac].

7. Now our faith proclaims the coming of Christ for the salvation of humanity, {and not that we should have an excuse for fornication or falsehood or oppression or gluttony or drunkenness or debauchery and other kinds of lechery, as happens in the world. For from all these we are bidden and warned to keep away, and a sentence of punishment is laid down for everyone who dares transgress in any one of these things. You, however, by means of words of deceit, toil over works of abomination, while we, relying on the strength and compassion of God, believe that even this matter of the Cross was easy for him. You, however, without discernment, attribute all kinds of hateful actions to your gods, so that you do everything without thought}.

[The Syriac has nothing corresponding to 8 in Greek].

9. On the subject of the soul, you say that it is the image of the mind, but once you have had this good idea, you turn round and say of the soul that it is dissolved. And then, with this discussion in your thoughts, you also posit that the mind is divided and changed.

10. According to what an image is like, it is necessary that thus should be that of which the image is, {in that it is a created depiction}. Now when you think this of the mind, realize that you are blaspheming both it and the Father of mind”.

(3) In the sixth and seventh centuries a number of Middle Persian texts, both specifically Christian (such as the *Life of the Catholicos and Confessor Mar Aba*) and secular, were translated into Syriac. The sixth-century translation of *Kalilah and Dimnah* is the earliest extant witness to this very popular cycle of stories outside their Indian homeland. The lost Middle Persian version was later translated into Arabic, and it is from adaptations of the Arabic that all other versions derive; among these are two later Syriac translations, of about the tenth and of the nineteenth century, and many European translations (especially of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries).

There were some merchants in such and such a place who were partners and friends. One was sharp-witted whereas the other was

simple-minded. They planned to go to a particular country on business, and before they had gone far, the simpleton found a purse containing 1000 dinars. He went and showed it to his crafty companion, and they returned home. On approaching the town, they sat down to divide up the money, and the simpleton said to the crafty one, "Half for me, and half for you". But the crafty man, who wanted if possible to take the lot from the simpleton, said, "Let's not divide up the coins, for as long as they are all together, so we too will be in harmony and not be separated; instead, for the present, let us just take what we need from them, each taking a hundred dinars". They buried the remainder among the roots of a tree, and went off. The crafty one then returned secretly, took the dinars and, having smoothed over the place, left.

Some time later the simpleton said to his crafty companion, "I am in need of some funds: come, let's go and fetch some of those dinars". So they set off together. When they had uncovered the place and failed to find the coins there, the cunning one beat his head and chest violently and gave a howl, saying to the simpleton, "It's totally impossible for anyone to trust his friend, for it is you who have taken these dinars, since there was no one else who knew of them apart from you and me".

So they rose up and went to a judge. The crafty man accused the simpleton before the judge, saying "You have taken the coins". The judge asked the crafty man for witnesses, to which he replies, "I have witnesses". The judge asked, "Where are your witnesses?" "The tree is my witness", replied the crafty man. The judge wondered how a tree could bear witness, but nevertheless he appointed a surety for the crafty man, to ensure that he would turn up the next day and establish his testimony.

The crafty man then asked permission from his surety and went off home to tell his father everything that had happened: "I have taken the coins, and if my father is willing, I shall win the case". His father said to him, "And what am I to do?". He replied, "The tree is hollowed out, and there is a hole in it: if tonight dad gets in the

hole and sits inside, then, when I and the judge come tomorrow and the judge interrogates the tree, you shall say, "These dinars were hidden in my roots: the simpleton took them". His father said to him, "Even a wise man with a good defence can come to harm, and this defence will not work. Take care lest some loss come from this plan, as was the case with the heron". He asked, "What was the loss which the heron incurred?". His father told him:

"There was a heron and his mate, and near them lived a snake. Whenever they had chicks, the snake would eat them up. Since the heron was accustomed to that place it was hard for him to change, and in his grief he refused to eat or drink. A crab resolved to ask him, "What is wrong with you that you are sitting here in misery?" The heron told him all that he had suffered from the snake. The crab said, "I will show you the way to get your revenge on the snake". "What is it?", the other asked. The crab showed him a weasel's hole, and said, "Lay a few fishes in a row from the weasel's hole to the snake's hole; when the weasel comes out to eat the fishes, the snake will also come out to eat them". He acted accordingly, and the weasel came out of his hole after the fish; the snake met it, and the weasel killed it, thus delivering the chicks from the snakes. This is the reason I told you that a wise person takes heed not to fall into harm".

The crafty man said, "Dad, I've heard all this; but don't you be afraid in this matter". So, in accordance with his son's wish, he went out and sat down inside the tree. The following day the judge came along and questioned the tree, whereupon the crafty man's father spoke from inside the tree, saying "The simpleton took the coins from my roots". The judge was astounded and amazed, saying, "Such a thing cannot happen in the natural course of events". They made a search and saw the hole. The judge peeped in and ordered that it be filled with dry straw and set alight. The father was unable to bear the smoke and, crying out bitterly, he expired. The judge had him brought out, gave the crafty man a beating, and handed over the dinars in their entirety to the simpleton, while the crafty man carried off his father on a bier.

[...] There was a poor merchant who came on business to some other place, having with him a hundred small iron coins. Having no relations there, he deposited them with an acquaintance to look after, while he himself set off. On his return, he asked his acquaintance for the iron coins. Now the man had sold the iron, and spent the proceeds on himself, so he said to the merchant, “Mice have eaten the iron”. The merchant, not wishing to make him afraid or frighten him, said, “Then it is true what they say, that there is nothing on four feet or on two that has sharper teeth than a mouse. But seeing what has happened, and I have found you yourself safe and sound, I will forget the loss which the mice have brought about”. The other man was delighted that the merchant had been persuaded by his words.

On being invited that day to eat at his house, the merchant took his friend’s son and hid him. His friend said to him, “When you took my son, what did you do with him?” The merchant replied, “I did not take your son: he followed me, and I saw a falcon swoop down and grab him”. His friend gave a wail and cried out for the king’s protection, beating his head and breast, saying, “Where has it been seen or heard of that a falcon can snatch up a young boy?” The merchant said to him, “Where mice can eat a hundred iron coins it would be no surprising thing for a falcon to snatch up an elephant”. At this his acquaintance confessed, “I ate up your iron, and I consumed bitterness. Take their value, and give me back my son”.

Just as the sailor rejoices once his ship has reached harbour, so does the scribe rejoice at the last line that he writes.

[This colophon, which is still used by some contemporary Syriac scribes, can be traced back to the sixth century in Syriac manuscripts; Latin and Greek forms of it also exist, through all of these are later than the earliest Syriac example, which is dated AD 543].

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