

COMMENTARY ON GENESIS

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His word that seventh day which His works had not exalted so that, because of the honor accorded that day, it might be united to its companions, and that the reckoning of the week, which is required for the service of the world, might be completed.

II: 97-123

Section II

1. After Moses spoke of the sabbath rest, of how God blessed and sanctified this day, he returned to the account of how the Creation was first fashioned, briefly passing over those things of which he had already spoken, while recounting in detail those things that he had left out. He then began to write about the creation account a second time, saying, *These are the generations of heaven and earth when they were created. In the day that God made heaven and earth, when no tree of the field existed and no vegetation had sprouted—for God had not brought down rain upon the earth and Adam was not there*¹⁰⁸ *to till the earth; but a spring rose up and watered the whole face of the earth.*¹⁰⁹

2. Understand, O hearer, that although the days of creation were finished and [God] had blessed the Sabbath day which was sanctified and he had completed [his account], Moses still returned to tell the story of the beginning of Creation even after the days of creation had been finished.

(2) *These are the generations of heaven and earth,*¹¹⁰ that is, this is the account of the fashioning of heaven and earth on the day when the Lord made heaven and earth for as yet *no tree of the field existed and no vegetation had sprouted.*¹¹¹ Even if¹¹² these things were not actually created on the first day—for

108. Whereas in Hebrew the word Adam could mean either “man” or “anyone” as well as indicating a proper name [see R. S. Hess, “Splitting the Adam: the Usage of *’adam* in Genesis i–v,” in *Studies in the Pentateuch*, ed. J. A. Emerton, Supplement to *Vetus Testamentum*, no. 41 (Leiden, 1990) 1–15], when one finds it in Syriac it can only be taken as a proper name. Similarly, Adam occurs as a proper name at Gen 2.5 in *Targum Neofiti*.

109. Gen 2.5–6.

110. Gen 2.4.

111. Gen 2.5.

112. Read *’pn* for *’p* with Jansma, “Beiträge,” 62.

they had been made on the third day—still [Moses] did not rashly introduce, on the first day, the report of those things that were created on the third day.

3. For [Moses] said, *no trees existed and no vegetation had sprouted—for the Lord had not brought down rain upon the earth; but a spring rose up out of the earth and watered the whole face of the earth.*¹¹³ Because everything that has been born and will be born from the earth [will be] through the conjunction of water and earth, [Moses] undertook to show that no tree nor vegetation had been created along with the earth, because the rain had not yet come down. But after the great spring rose up from the great abyss and watered the whole face of the earth, and after the waters had been gathered together on the third day, then the earth brought forth all the vegetation.

(2) These waters, then, over which the darkness had been spread on the first day are the same ones that rose up from the spring and, in the blink of an eye, covered the entire earth. This was also the [same spring] that was opened in the days of Noah and that covered the surface of all the mountains on the earth. This spring did not rise up from below the earth but out of the earth, for [Moses] said, *the spring rose up* not from below the earth but, *out of the earth*. The earth itself, which bears these waters in its womb, bears witness that these waters were not prior to the earth.¹¹⁴

(3) *The spring then rose up out of the earth*, as Scripture says, *and watered the whole face of the earth*. Thus [the earth] produced trees, grasses, and plants. It was not that God was unable to bring forth everything from the earth in any other way. Rather, it was His will that [the earth] should bring forth by means of water. [God] began the creation [of the vegetation] this way right from the beginning so that this procedure would be perpetuated until the end of time.

4. After [Moses] spoke about those things that had been

¹¹³. Gen 2.5–6.

¹¹⁴. Ephrem seems to be basing his interpretation here on such biblical passages as Ps 24.2, where the Lord “founded the earth upon the seas.”

omitted and that had not been recounted on the first day, he turned to write about how Adam was fashioned saying, *Adam was not there to till the earth*. Obviously, Adam did not exist in the days that preceded the sixth day, since he was created on the sixth day. *Then, on the sixth day the Lord formed Adam from the dust of the earth and blew into his nostrils the breath of life; and Adam became a living being.*¹¹⁵ Even though the beasts, the cattle, and the birds were equal [to Adam] in their ability to procreate and in that they had life, God still gave honor to Adam in many ways: first, in that it was said, *God formed*¹¹⁶ *him with His own hands and breathed life into him;*¹¹⁷ God then set him as ruler over Paradise and over all that is outside of Paradise; God clothed Adam in glory; and God gave him reason and thought so that he might perceive the majesty [of God].¹¹⁸

5. After Moses spoke of how Adam was so gloriously fashioned, he turned to write about Paradise and Adam's entry therein saying, *The Lord had previously planted Paradise in Eden and there He placed Adam whom He had fashioned.*¹¹⁹

(2) Eden is the land of Paradise and [Moses] said *previously*¹²⁰ because God had [already] planted it on the third day. He explains this by saying, *the Lord caused every tree that is*

115. Gen 2.7.

116. The Syriac verb used here, *gbl*, is used of forming something from existing material, such as a sculpture. See *Hymns against Heresies* 48.2.

117. Gen 2.7. This divine breath is what distinguishes humanity from the animals, a theme which Ephrem develops more fully in his hymns; see Kronholm, *Motifs*, 57–67.

118. The special love and care that God took for Adam, evident throughout this section of the *Commentary*, is also prominent in Ephrem's hymns. In *Hymns on Faith* 67.19, Ephrem says that "from the very beginning God opened up the treasury of His Mercy when He formed Adam." For the great importance of God's special love for Adam in Ephrem's hymns, see also discussion in Kronholm, *Motifs*, 57–81.

119. Gen 2.8.

120. The Syriac word *qdm* can also mean "in the East," but Ephrem's comments here clearly militate against this translation. The normal English rendering "of old," would also be unsuitable here. In Jewish tradition, Paradise was also created "previously," on the third day; see *Genesis Rabbah* 15.3, 21.9; and Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:18–20.

*pleasant to the sight and good for food to sprout forth from the earth.*¹²¹ And to show that he was talking about Paradise, [Moses] said, *and the tree of life was in the midst of Paradise, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*¹²²

6. After [Moses] spoke about Paradise and about which day it had been planted, about Adam's entry therein, and about the tree of life and its companion, he turned to write about the river that flowed out from Paradise and which, once outside of it, divided into four distinct sources, saying, *A river flowed out of Eden to water Paradise.*¹²³

(2) Here too Moses calls that delightful land of Paradise *Eden*. If that river had indeed watered Paradise, it would not have divided into the four rivers outside it. I would suggest that it was perhaps due to convention that it is said *to water*; since the spiritual trees of Paradise had no need of water. But if [someone should say that] because they are spiritual, they drink from the blessed and spiritual waters there, I would not quarrel over this.

(3) The four rivers that flowed from that river were not similar in taste to the head spring. For if the waters of our lands vary, all being placed under the sentence of a curse, how much more distinct should the taste of the blessed land of Eden be from the taste of that land which had been placed under the curse of the Just One due to Adam's transgression of the commandment?¹²⁴

(4) The four rivers, then, are these: the Pishon, which is the Danube;¹²⁵ the Gihon, which is the Nile; and then the

121. Gen 2.9.

122. Gen 2.9. In *Hymns on Paradise* 3.2, all the other trees bowed down to the tree of life for it was "the captain of the host and the king of the trees." In 3.3, the tree of knowledge of good and evil was "endowed with awe and hedged with dread so that it may serve as a boundary to the inner edge of Paradise." See also 12.15, and *Hymns on Faith* 6.14.

123. Gen 2.10.

124. Ephrem has a particularly descriptive passage concerning the fragrances of Paradise in his *Hymns on Paradise* 11.9–15.

125. The identification of the Pishon with the Danube is fairly common in Syriac commentaries. It is found, for example, in Severus of Antioch and the commentaries of Mošê bar Kêphâ and of Išô'dad of Merw as well as in Severian

Tigris and the Euphrates, between which we dwell.¹²⁶ Although the places from which they flow are known, the source of the spring is not [known]. Because Paradise is set on a great height,¹²⁷ the rivers are swallowed up again and they go down to the sea as if through a tall water duct¹²⁸ and so they pass through the earth which is under the sea into this land.¹²⁹ The earth then spits out each one of them: the Danube, which is the Pishon, in the west; the Gihon in the south; and the Euphrates and the Tigris in the north.

7. After [Moses] spoke about Paradise and the rivers that were divided outside of it, he turned to speak about Adam's entry into Paradise and about the law that was laid down for him saying, *The Lord God took Adam and put him in the Paradise of Eden to till it and to guard it.*¹³⁰

(2) But with what did Adam till the garden since he had no tools for tilling? How could he have tilled it since he was not capable of tilling it by himself? What did he have to till since there were no thorns or briars there? Moreover, how could he have guarded it as he could not possibly encompass it? And from what did he guard it since there were no thieves

of Gabala. For an overview of various Greek interpretations, see Alexandre, *Le commencement*, 259–60.

126. In his hymns, Ephrem is more inclined to interpret these rivers in more typological fashion; see, for example, *Hymns on Virginity* 4.14, and *Hymns on Faith* 48.10, where the Gospels are compared to these four rivers.

127. Ephrem conceived of Paradise as a mountain higher than all other mountains (see *Hymns on Paradise* 1.4), perhaps deriving his imagery from such passages as Isa 2.2, Ezek 28.13–14, and Ps 15.1, 24.3. See Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 49–57; Sed, “Les hymnes sur le paradis de saint Ephrem,” 457–59; and, for the importance of the Near Eastern mytho-religious background of this concept, see G. A. Anderson, “The Cosmic Mountain: Eden and its Early Interpreters in Syriac Christianity,” in *Genesis 1–3 in the History of Exegesis*, ed. G. A. Robbins (Lewiston, 1988) 187–224.

128. This loan word, in Greek, *κάνθαρος*, normally means “a drinking cup,” “a beetle,” or “a boat.” The translation *cantharus* of R. Tonneau, *In Genesim et Exodum*, 21, is, therefore, not satisfactory. Kronholm, *Motifs*, 70, n. 81, suggests *aquaeductus*, *canalis*, which is closer to the meaning required here.

129. Thus, the earth receives blessing and healing from Paradise; see *Hymns on Paradise* 11.11.

130. Gen 2.15.

to enter it? Indeed, the fence that was erected after the transgression of the commandment bears witness that as long as Adam kept the commandment, no guard was required.

(3) Adam had nothing to guard then except the law that had been set down for him. Nor was any other “tilling” entrusted to him except to fulfill the commandment that had been commanded him. But if [someone were to say that Adam] had or would have these two things [to perform] along with the commandment, I would not oppose this [interpretation].¹³¹

8. After he spoke about Adam’s entry into Paradise and why he had been put there, [Moses] turned to write about the law that was set down for him, saying, *and the Lord God commanded Adam, saying, “You may eat of every tree that is in Paradise; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for on the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*¹³²

(2) This commandment was an easy one, for God gave to Adam all of Paradise and withheld from him only one tree. If a single tree were sufficient to provide nourishment for someone and many were withheld, [that single tree] would offer relief from the torment [of hunger] by providing nourishment for one’s hunger. But if God gave Adam many trees instead of a single one which would have been sufficient for him, any transgression would be due not to any constraint but to disdain.¹³³

(3) [God] withheld from Adam a single tree and set death around it, so that if Adam would not keep the law out of love for the One who had set down the law, then at least the fear of death that was set around the tree would frighten him away from overstepping the law.

131. The idea that Adam was to “till” the commandment plays on the double meaning of *plh*—“to till, labor; to serve, worship.” The word *šmr*—“to guard, keep”—more readily lends itself to Ephrem’s interpretation. See *Hymns on Paradise* 3.16, 4.1–5. This same interpretation of this verse is also found in Jewish tradition. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:70, 5:92, n.54, and *Genesis Rabbah* 16.5. For this verse, the texts of *Targum Neofiti* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* specifically state the objects “the law” and “the commandments.”

132. Gen 2.16–17.

133. Compare *Hymns against Heresies* 11.7, where Ephrem makes clear that God did all he could for Adam.

9. After he spoke about Adam's entry into Paradise and about the law that had been set down for him, Moses turned to write about the names that [Adam] gave to the animals saying, *the Lord formed out of the ground every beast of the field and every bird of the sky and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them.*¹³⁴

(2) They were not really *formed*,¹³⁵ for the earth brought forth the animals and the water the birds.¹³⁶ When he said, "*He formed,*" [Moses] wished to make known that every animal, reptile, beast, and bird comes into being from the conjunction of earth and water.

(3) That [Moses] said, *He brought them to Adam*, is so that God might make known the wisdom of Adam and the harmony that existed between the animals and Adam before he transgressed the commandment. The animals came to Adam as to a loving shepherd. Without fear they passed before him in orderly fashion, by kinds and by species. They were neither afraid of him nor were they afraid of each other. A species of predatory animals would pass by with a species of animal that is preyed upon following safely right behind.

10. Adam thus began his rule over the earth when he became lord over all on that day according to the blessing he was given.¹³⁷ The word of the Creator came to pass in actuality and His blessing was indeed fulfilled on the same day that he was made ruler over everything, even though he would soon rebel against the Lord of everything. For God gave Adam not only rule over everything, which had been promised to him, but He also allowed him to bestow names [on the animals], which had not been promised to him. If then God did for Adam even more than he had expected, how could God have deprived Adam of these things unless Adam had sinned?

(2) For someone to give a few names to be remembered

134. Gen 2.19.

135. I.e., not in the same sense that Adam was "formed" by God's hands. See above II.4, and note *ad loc.*

136. Cf. Gen 1.20, 24.

137. See Kronholm, *Motifs*, 67–81, for the theme of Adam's lordship.

is not a great thing, but it is too large and too great a thing for any human being to bestow thousands of names in a single moment, without repeating any. It is possible for someone to bestow many names on many kinds of insects, animals, beasts, and birds, but never to name one kind by the name of another belongs either to God or to someone to whom it has been granted by God.¹³⁸

(3) If God did indeed give Adam ruling authority, make him a participant in creation, clothe him with glory, and give him a garden, what else should God have done that Adam heed the commandment but did not do?¹³⁹

11. After he spoke of the formation of the animals and of the names they received, [Moses] turned to write of Adam's sleep and of the rib that was taken from him and made into a woman, saying, *But for Adam there was not found a helper like him*. Moses called Eve *helper* because even though Adam had helpers among the beasts and animals he still required one like him of his own kind. Inside,¹⁴⁰ Eve was very diligent; she was also attentive to the sheep and cattle, the herds, and droves which were in the fields. She would also help Adam with the buildings, pens, and with any other task that Adam was capable of doing. The animals, even though they were subservient, were not able to help him with these things. For this reason God made for Adam a helper who would be solicitous for everything for which he was [solicitous] and who would indeed help him in many things.¹⁴¹

12. *And the Lord cast sleep upon Adam and he slept. God took*

138. The naming of all the animals without a single repetition was the sign of Adam's divine wisdom in Jewish tradition; see *Genesis Rabbah* 17.4, *Numbers Rabbah* 19.3; and Kronholm, *Motifs*, 80, n. 103 for other references. There is also a tradition, found in Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:63, whereby it was by his inability to name any creatures that Satan was cast out of the heavenly court.

139. Compare *Hymns against Heresies* 20.8 (read 'bd for 'br), *Armenian Hymns* 42.9–11, *Hymns on Faith* 62.2, and *Hymns on the Church* 48.9, where Ephrem is again amazed at Adam's fall after God did so much to make him happy.

140. I.e., within the gates of Paradise. The contrast here is inside and outside of Paradise as the animals were not permitted inside the gates of Paradise. See *Hymns on Paradise* 3.4.

141. See Kronholm, *Motifs*, 83–84.

*one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the Lord fashioned the rib which He had taken from Adam into a woman and brought her to Adam.*¹⁴² That man, awake,¹⁴³ anointed with splendor, and who did not yet know sleep, fell on the earth naked and slept. It is likely that Adam saw in his dream what was done to him as if he were awake. After Adam's rib had been taken out in the twinkling of an eye, God closed up the flesh in its place in the blink of an eyelash. After the extracted rib had been fashioned with all sorts of beautiful things to adorn it, God then brought her to Adam, who was both one and two. He was one in that he was Adam and he was two because he had been created male and female.¹⁴⁴

13. After he spoke of Adam's sleep, of the rib that had been taken out, and of the woman who had been fashioned from it and brought to [Adam], [Moses] wrote that Adam said, "*This time she is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.*"¹⁴⁵

(2) *This time*—that is, this one who came after the animals was not like them for they were from the earth, but this one *is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh*. Adam said this either as a prophecy or because he had seen it and knew it from the vision in his dream, as we just said above.

(3) Just as each animal had received from Adam the name of its species on that day, Adam did not call the rib that was fashioned [into the woman] *Eve*, by her own name, but named her *woman*, the name that was set down for all her kind. Then [Adam] said, *Let the man leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife so that they might be joined and the*

142. Gen 2.21–22.

143. The word used here, *irâ*, is also the early Syriac word for "angel, watcher," that is, one who is always wakeful and watchful. For etymology, see R. Murray, "The Origin of Aramaic 'ir,'" *Or* 53 (1984): 303–17.

144. Cf. Gen 1.27. This thought is also amply represented in Jewish tradition; see Kronholm, *Motifs*, 81, n. 106, for references.

145. Gen 2.23. The word-play in Hebrew, *is*—"man" from *isâ*—"woman," does not work in Syriac nor in English.

*two might become one*¹⁴⁶ without division as they were from the beginning.

14. After these things Moses said, *The two of them were naked and were not ashamed*.¹⁴⁷ That they were not ashamed does not mean that they did not know what shame was. If they were children, as [the pagans]¹⁴⁸ say, [Moses] would neither have said, *They were naked and were not ashamed*, nor, *Adam and his wife*, if they had not been young adults.¹⁴⁹ The names that Adam bestowed should be sufficient to convince us of [the level of] his wisdom. And the fact that [Moses] said, *he will till it and keep it*, should make known to us Adam's strength. The law that was set for them testifies to their full maturity and their transgression of the commandment should bear witness to their arrogance.

(2) It was because of the glory with which they were clothed that *they were not ashamed*. It was when this glory was stripped from them after they had transgressed the commandment that they were ashamed because they were naked.¹⁵⁰ The two of them then hastened to cover themselves with leaves—not their entire bodies but only their shameful members.

15. After [Moses] spoke of how their nakedness had been adorned with a heavenly garment and was no cause for shame, he turned to write about the cunning of the serpent, saying, *and the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the*

146. Gen 2.24.

147. Gen 2.25.

148. Syriac *brāyê* = Greek οἱ ἔξω “those outside,” i.e., “those not of our party.” The term could refer to pagans, heretics, Jews, or even Jewish Christians. I have not been able to discern exactly who is meant here.

149. In his hymns, Ephrem uses the same term, in Syriac, *šbr̄y*, as he uses here, but he seems to be referring to the innocence of their minds rather than to their physical ages; see *Hymns on the Nativity* 26.8, *Hymns on Virginity* 12.12, and *Hymns on the Church* 46.7. The Jewish tradition is that Adam and Eve were born 20 years old. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:59, 5:78, n.21.

150. For the importance of the garment of glory in the thought of Ephrem, see Brock, “Clothing Metaphors,” 11–40; idem, *The Luminous Eye*, 65–76; and idem, *Hymns on Paradise*, 66–72. The vocabulary stems from Ps 8.6, Peshitta.

*field that the Lord had made.*¹⁵¹ Although the serpent was cunning, it was [only] more cunning than the dumb animals that were governed by Adam; it is not true that because [the serpent] surpassed the level of animals in cleverness, it was immediately raised up to the level of mankind. It was [only] more clever than those animals that lack reason and was [only] more crafty than the animals that had no mind. For, it is clear that the serpent, who did not have the mind of man, did not possess the wisdom of mankind. Adam was also greater than the serpent by the way he was formed, by his soul, by his mind, by his glory, and by his place.¹⁵² Therefore, it is evident that in cunning also Adam was infinitely greater than the serpent.¹⁵³

(2) Adam, who was set up as ruler and governor over all the animals, was wiser than all the animals. He who set down names for them all is more clever than any of them. Just as Israel, without a veil, was unable to look upon the face of Moses,¹⁵⁴ neither were the animals able to look upon the splendor of Adam and Eve;¹⁵⁵ when the beasts passed before Adam and they received their names from him, they would cast their eyes downwards, for their eyes could not endure Adam's glory. Although the serpent was more clever than all the animals, before Adam and Eve, who were the rulers over the animals, it was a fool.

16. After he spoke of the cleverness of the serpent, Moses turned to write about how that deceitful one came to Eve, saying, *the serpent said to the woman, "Did God truly say, 'You shall not eat of any of the trees of Paradise?'"*¹⁵⁶ As for the ser-

151. Gen 3.1.

152. I.e., Paradise, outside of which the serpent had to dwell. See note 140, above.

153. Similar emphasis on the serpent's relative lack of intelligence vis-à-vis Adam and Eve is found in *Hymns on the Church* 46.10, 47 *passim*, and 48.1. For the considerable attention that Ephrem gives to the cunning of the serpent in his hymns, see Kronholm, *Motifs*, 86–94.

154. Cf. Exod 34.33–35.

155. Literally, "the house of Adam," but, of course, Adam and Eve were the only two human beings alive at this time.

156. Gen 3.1. See also note 75 above.

pent's speech, either Adam understood the serpent's own mode of communication, or Satan spoke through it, or the serpent posed the question in his mind and speech was given to it, or Satan sought from God that speech be given to the serpent for a short time.¹⁵⁷ The words of the tempter would not have caused those two to be tempted to sin if their avarice had not been so helpful to the tempter. Even if the tempter had not come, the tree itself, by its beauty, would have caused them a great struggle due to their avarice. Their avarice then was the reason that they followed the counsel of the serpent. The avarice of Adam and Eve was far more injurious to them than the counsel of the serpent.¹⁵⁸

17. For [Moses] said, *when the woman saw that the tree was good to eat and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to look at, she took of its fruit and she ate.*¹⁵⁹ Indeed, she was overcome by the beauty of the tree and by desire for its fruit. She was not overcome by the counsel that came into her ear; rather, she succumbed to the avarice that came from within herself.

(2) Because a commandment had been set down for those who were to be tempted, it was fitting that the tempter come along soon after. Because God, in his goodness, had given Adam all that was in Paradise and all that was outside of Paradise, demanding nothing of him, either by reason of his being created or because of the glory with which God had clothed him.

(3) God, in His justice, withheld one tree from that one

157. Despite these unresolved choices, at II.19, below, and in his hymns, Ephrem presumes that it was Satan who spoke through the serpent. In *Hymns on Paradise* 15.14, "the serpent is the instrument of the Evil One." In *Hymns against Heresies* 20.1, the serpent is "the harp on which Satan's melodies were played." See also *Hymns on Paradise* 3.4, 15.13; *Hymns on Nisibis* 77.6; *Hymns against Heresies* 11.7, 21.6–11, 43.1–6; and *Prose Refutations* 1:88. See discussion in Kronholm, *Motifs*, 86–95, and Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:95, where Satan persuaded the serpent to be his vessel.

158. The Syriac text is confusing here, but the sense seems to be as translated.

159. Gen 3.6.

(2) And when the serpent came, it performed no signs that could be trusted nor did it fashion some deceitful vision, but it came alone, lowly, eyes cast down because it was unable to look upon the splendor of that one who would be tempted by it. Out of fear it did not go to Adam but went rather to Eve so that it might make her eat more quickly from the tree from which she was commanded not to eat. Prior to this she had tasted nothing from the thousands and millions [of trees] that were permitted her. That she had not yet tasted from them was not because she was fasting, but rather that hunger had not yet exerted any power over her for she had just been created at that very moment.

(3) The serpent was completely unhindered from coming in all haste because even the serpent's haste [worked] against the serpent. For, since Eve had just been created, she did not yet know what hunger was, nor had she yet been engaged in any inner struggle caused by the beauty of the tree. Therefore, because she was neither fasting nor had been engaged in any contest due to the tree, the serpent was completely unhindered from coming to tempt her.

(4) If [Eve] had been victorious in that momentary battle, in that brief contest, the serpent and that one who was in the serpent would [still] have received the punishment that they received, while she, together with her husband, would have eaten of the tree of life and would have lived for ever. Along with this promised life that [Adam and Eve] would have acquired, they would also have had by Justice all that had previously been given to them by Grace.

(5) The tempter, then, came in haste and was not hindered so that because it came, as tempter, at the time the commandment was given, [Adam and Eve] might know that it was the tempter and they might take precautions against his cunning. Then that one who was unable to give himself even the smallest of names offered them great counsel.¹⁶³

19. That one who was in the serpent then spoke to the

163. See II.10, above, for Adam's bestowal of the names of all the animals, and note *ad loc.* for the underlying Jewish tradition of Satan's inability to bestow a single name.

woman, through the serpent, saying, “*Did God truly say, ‘You shall not eat of any of the trees of Paradise?’*” We ought to understand here that if they had been commanded [not to eat] from all the trees, as the serpent said, then the commandment would have been great. The fact is, they had been commanded just the opposite; it was hardly a commandment at all, because it was so small, and it had been given to them for only that short time before the tempter departed from them.

(2) Eve responded and *said to the serpent*, “*We may eat of the fruit of the trees in Paradise; but [God] said, ‘You shall not eat from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of Paradise, neither shall you draw near to it, lest you die.’*”¹⁶⁴ When the serpent and that one who was in the serpent heard that [Adam and Eve] were permitted to eat from any of the trees of Paradise and that only one had been withheld from them, they seemed covered in shame for they saw no opportunity to offer their counsel.

20. The tempter then turned its mind to the commandment of Him who had set down the commandment, that [Adam and Eve] were not only commanded not to eat from one single tree, but they were not even to draw near to it. The serpent then realized that God had forewarned them about even looking at it lest they become entrapped by its beauty.¹⁶⁵ With this in mind, the serpent said, enticing Eve to look upon it, “*You will surely not die. For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*”¹⁶⁶ But Eve failed to discern the import of the words of the serpent, who as tempter, had said the opposite of what God had said. She also failed to respond to

164. Gen 3.2–3. The Syriac word *qrb*, can also mean to touch, as it is normally translated in English texts of this passage. As is clear, however, from Ephrem’s ensuing comments, he means they were not even to draw near the tree.

165. The tempter’s apprehension of the meaning of this commandment is more fully developed in Ephrem’s hymns; see *Hymns on Paradise* 3.5, 12.2–3, and discussion in Kronholm, *Motifs*, 97–98, especially n. 31, for Jewish parallels.

166. Gen 3.4–5.

the serpent by saying, “How can my eyes be opened when they are not closed? How will I, by eating of the fruit, come to know between good and evil when, even before I have eaten, they are here in my presence?”¹⁶⁷ But she neglected these things that she ought to have said to the serpent and, just as the serpent desired, she directed her eyes away from the serpent who was before her and began to look upon the tree to which she had been commanded not to draw near.

(2) The serpent remained silent, for it perceived immediately that Eve was about to succumb. It was not so much the serpent’s counsel that entered her ear and provoked her to eat from the tree as it was her gaze, which she directed toward the tree, that lured her to pluck and eat of its fruit. She could have said to the serpent, “If I cannot see, how is it that I see all that is to be seen? And if I do not know between good and evil, how can I discern whether your counsel is good or evil? How will I come to know whether the divinity is good or that having [my] eyes opened is good? And whence am I to discern that death is evil? If I already possess these things, why have you come to me? Your coming unto us is testimony that we have these things. Therefore, by the sight that I possess and by the ability to discern between good and evil that I have, I will examine your counsel. And if I do possess these things that you counsel me, where is all your craftiness that is unable to disguise your deceit?” She, however, said none of these things to the serpent so as to overcome it, but instead fixed her gaze on the tree and thus quickly brought about her own defeat.¹⁶⁸

(3) She then went after that which her eyes desired and, being enticed by the divinity that the serpent had promised her, she stole away from her husband and ate. Afterwards, she gave some to her husband and he ate with her. Because she believed the serpent she ate first, thinking that she would be clothed with divinity in the presence of that one

167. Compare *Hymns on the Church* 47.3: “She did not ask it ‘Are you a servant or a freeman? A heavenly being, a beast, or an angel?’” See also 48.3; and *Hymns on Paradise* 3.6.

168. See *Hymns on the Church* 47.3, 48.3; and Kronholm, *Motifs*, 99 ff.

from whom she, as woman, had been separated.¹⁶⁹ She hastened to eat before her husband that she might become head over her head, that she might become the one to give command to that one by whom she was to be commanded and that she might be older in divinity than that one who was older than she in humanity.

21. After she ate, Eve neither grew nor did she shrink, nor were her eyes opened. She neither received the divinity for which she had been looking, nor did she find that the opening of [her] eyes had taken her to Paradise. She then brought the fruit to her husband and made him eat after much entreaty, even if it is not written that she had to persuade him. After Eve ate, she did not surely die, as God had said, nor did she find divinity, as the serpent had said. And, if Eve had been stripped naked Adam would have been afraid and would not have eaten. Although Adam would not have been guilty, since he had not eaten, he would not have been victorious, either, for he would not really have been tempted. It would have been the nakedness of his wife that made him desist from eating and not the love or fear of his Commander. Thus, Adam was to be tested immediately by the seductive pleas of Eve who, having been tested by the counsel of the serpent, had drawn near and eaten, but had not become naked.

22. Then, after [Eve] had enticed Adam into eating, Scripture says, *the eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked.*¹⁷⁰ The opening of their eyes was not so that they would become like God as the serpent had said but so that they would see their nakedness as that enemy had expected.

(2) Before, their eyes had been both open and closed: open in that they could see everything, but closed in that they could see neither the tree of life nor their own naked-

¹⁶⁹. That is, on the sixth day when Eve was made from the rib extracted from Adam. See *Hymns on Nisibis* 75,8, where the same verb is used to express the rib being extracted from Adam.

¹⁷⁰. Gen 3,7.

ness.¹⁷¹ The enemy was also jealous because [Adam and Eve] were richer in glory and reason than any other creature on the earth and because they alone had been promised the eternal life that is given by the tree of life.¹⁷² The enemy, jealous of Adam and Eve both for the things that belonged to them and also for the things that they were soon to receive, set its traps, and in a momentary battle took from [Adam and Eve] those things they ought not to have lost even in a great battle.

23. If the serpent had been rejected along with sin, Adam and Eve would have eaten from the tree of life and the tree of knowledge would not have been withheld from them; from the one they would have gained infallible knowledge and from the other they would have received immortal life. They would have acquired divinity with their humanity, and if they had acquired infallible knowledge and immortal life, they would have possessed them in those same bodies. Thus, by its counsel, the serpent brought to nought everything that was soon to have become theirs. The serpent made them think that they would receive these things when they transgressed the commandment so that the transgression would be committed and they would not receive what they would have received if they had kept the commandment.¹⁷³ Thus, the serpent, through the divinity that he promised them, prevented them [from receiving] divinity. The serpent also brought it about that those to whom it had been promised that their eyes would be opened by the tree of knowledge, would not have their eyes opened by the promise of the tree of life.

(2) If Adam and Eve had sought to repent after they had transgressed the commandment, even though they would

¹⁷¹. Compare *Hymns on Paradise* 3.6.

¹⁷². As he does in his hymns, Ephrem here maintains that Satan's fall is due to his jealousy at humanity's exalted position in creation; see *Hymns on the Church* 11.1, *Hymns on Faith* 50.5–6, *Hymns on the Nativity* 21.15, and *Hymns on Nicomedia* 10.22, and discussion in Kronholm, *Motifs*, 90–92. See also II.26, 32, below.

¹⁷³. Compare *Hymns on Paradise* 3.12.

not have regained that which they had possessed before their transgression of the commandment, they would have escaped from the curses that were decreed on the earth and upon them. God tarried in coming down to them for the sole reason that they might admonish each other and so plead for mercy when the judge came to them. The coming of the serpent had not been delayed lest their trial be too great when they looked upon the sight of that beautiful tree, whereas the judge delayed His coming to them so that He might give them an occasion to prepare their entreaty. But the haste of the tempter did not help them, even though its haste was for the purpose of helping them, nor did they benefit by the delay of the Judge, although His delay was for this same reason.

24. *And they heard the sound of the Lord walking in Paradise in the cool of the day and they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees in Paradise.*¹⁷⁴ It was not only by the patience He exhibited that God wished to help them, He also wished to benefit them by the sound of His feet. God endowed His silent footsteps with sound so that Adam and Eve might be prepared, at that sound, to make supplication before Him who made the sound. But since they did not come before Him in supplication, neither because of His delay nor because of the sound that was sent before Him, God then made a sound with His lips, just as He had made a sound for His footsteps and said, *“Where are you, Adam?”*¹⁷⁵ But Adam, instead of confessing his folly and asking for mercy before the judgment came upon him, said, *“I heard the sound of your [feet] in Paradise and I was afraid because I saw that I was naked and I hid myself.”*¹⁷⁶ Now the sound of feet that went before God, who would soon reveal Himself in the punishment upon the house of Adam, prefigured the voice of John, who was to come before the Son, holding a winnowing fork in his hands in order to clean out His granaries,

174. Gen 3.8.

175. Gen 3.8.

176. Gen 3.10.

burning the straw in fire and purifying the wheat to bring into His granaries.¹⁷⁷

25. *“I heard the sound of your [feet] and I hid myself.”* When did you hear any sound from Him as you did now? For when He formed you, brought you into Paradise, cast sleep on you, took out your rib, formed and brought to you a woman, you did not hear any sound from Him. If you heard a sound from Him now for the first time, understand that the sound of His steps was bestowed for the purpose of a supplication from your lips. Speak to God now, before he asks you about the coming of the serpent and about the transgression that you and Eve committed. Perhaps then, the confession of your lips will absolve you from the sin of [eating] the fruit that your fingers plucked. But Adam and Eve refused to confess that thing which they had done and they related to Him who knows all only what had been done to them.

26. *“Where are you, Adam?”* In the divinity that the serpent promised you? Or in subjection to the death that I decreed for you? Would that you had considered the fruits!¹⁷⁸ Suppose, Adam, that instead of a serpent, the most despicable creature of all, an angel or some other god had come to you? Would you have despised the commandment of Him who gave you all these things, heeding instead the counsel of one who had not yet done you any good? Would you have considered evil the one who formed you from nothing and made you a second god over Creation while considering good the one who gave you only a verbal promise of some good?

(2) If another god were to come to you in power, should you not have rejected his advice? How much more then in the case of a serpent who came to you with no power, with no wonderous deeds but with only the empty word that it

177. Cf. Matt 3.11–12, and parallels.

178. See *Hymns on Heresies* 26:4 where Ephrem says, “The fruit is the goal of the right way that runs from this tree to the Cross.” These trees were two crowns in Adam’s contest. See *Hymns on Paradise* 3.10, 9.1, 12.17–18; *Hymns on the Church* 19.7; *Hymns on Nisibis* 68.3; *Hymns against Heresies* 21.6; *Sermons on Faith* 3.1–38.

spoke to you? You have been unfaithful to your God and you have believed your betrayer. You have denied Him who has done good things for you, who made you ruler over everything, and you have put your faith in that crafty one who, by its cunning, has taken away your rule completely.¹⁷⁹

(3) If the serpent had been withheld from coming to test Adam, those who complain about its having come would now complain about its being hindered from coming. For they say that it was out of jealousy that the serpent was hindered from coming so that [Adam], after a momentary trial, might acquire eternal life. Those who say that if the serpent had not come Adam would not have erred would now be saying that if the serpent had come, Adam and Eve would not have erred; just as those who say that if the serpent had not come Adam would not have sinned, would now think they are all the more right when they say, “If the serpent had come, Adam and Eve would not have gone astray.” For who would have believed, if it had not actually happened, that Adam would listen to Eve¹⁸⁰ or that Eve would be persuaded by a reptile?

27. “I heard the sound of [your feet] and I was afraid and hid myself.” Because Adam forgot what was required of him and said instead that which was not required—for, instead of confessing what he had done, which would have helped him, he related what had been done to him, which did not help him at all—God said to him, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you then eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”¹⁸¹ Did you see that you were naked with the sight bestowed on you by that tree, from which you were promised that glorious divine sight?

(2) Adam again failed to confess his folly and blamed the woman who was like him, saying, “The woman whom you set

179. That Adam and Eve rejected God so quickly and without reflection is also found in *Hymns on the Church* 48.3–9, *Hymns on the Nativity* 5.5, *Hymns on Nisibis* 35.4, and *Hymns against Heresies* 11.7.

180. Read *hw*—“Eve” for *hwy*—“serpent,” which would make no sense here, as Jansma, “Beiträge,” 63.

181. Gen 3.11.

*with me gave me of the tree and I ate.*¹⁸² I neither drew near to the tree myself nor did I dare to stretch out my hand towards the fruit.” It is for this reason the Apostle said, *Adam did not sin but Eve transgressed the commandment.*¹⁸³ If God gave you the woman, O Adam, He gave her to you to help you, not to cause you harm, and as one to be commanded, not one to give command.¹⁸⁴

28. Since Adam did not wish to confess his folly, God came down to question Eve *and said to her, “What is this that you have done?”*¹⁸⁵ Eve too, instead of making supplication with her tears and bearing the fault herself so that mercy might take hold of both her and her husband responded, not by saying, “The serpent counseled or seduced me,” but simply said, *“The serpent deceived me and I ate.”*¹⁸⁶

29. When the two of them had been questioned and were both found to be wanting in remorse or true contrition, God went down to the serpent, not to make inquiry but to render punishment. For where there is opportunity for repentance, it would be right to inquire, but to one who is a stranger to repentance judgment is fitting. It is so that you might know that the serpent is not capable of repentance, that when *God said to it, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above every beast,”*¹⁸⁷ the serpent did not say, “I did not do it,” because it was afraid to lie, nor did it say, “I did it,” because it was a stranger to repentance.

(2) *“Cursed are you are above every beast,”* because you deceived those who rule over all the beasts. Instead of being more clever than all the beasts you will be more cursed than all the beasts and *“on your belly shall you go,”*¹⁸⁸ because you brought birth pangs upon the race of women. And *“dust you*

182. Gen 3.12.

183. 1 Tim 2.14.

184. Compare Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:77, where an attempted reversal of roles is depicted as the reason for Eve’s taking the fruit.

185. Gen 3.13.

186. Gen 3.13.

187. Gen 3.14.

188. Gen 3.14. Compare *Hymns on Paradise* 3.15; see also Kronholm, *Motifs*, 113, n. 72.

*shall eat all the days of your life,*¹⁸⁹ because you deprived Adam and Eve from eating of the tree of life. *“I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed,”*¹⁹⁰ for in your pretence of love you have deceived and subjected to death both her and her offspring.

(3) Then [God] made known the enmity that was put between the serpent and the woman and between its seed and her seed when He said, *“He will tread on your head,”* that is, that one who wishes to escape the subjection of her seed [to death], *“and you will strike him,”* not in his ear, but *“in his heel.”*¹⁹¹

30. Even though the punishment decreed against the serpent was justly decreed—because to the place where folly begins, the punishment also returns—the entire reason God began with this impious creature was so that, when Justice appeased its anger on this creature, Adam and Eve should grow afraid and repent so that there might be a possibility for Grace to preserve them from the curses of Justice.¹⁹² But when the serpent had been cursed and Adam and Eve had still made no supplication, God came [to them] with punishment. He came to Eve first, because it was through her that the sin was handed on to Adam.

(2) God then rendered his judgment against Eve saying, *“I will greatly multiply your pains and your conceptions. With pangs you shall bring forth children.”*¹⁹³ Even though she would have given birth because she had received the blessing of birth along with all the animals, she would not have given birth to many, for those to whom she would have given birth would have remained immortal. She would have been preserved from the pangs of their births, from the ignominy of having to raise them, and from wailing over their deaths. *“You shall turn toward your husband,”* to be counseled and not

189. Gen 3.14.

190. Gen 3.15.

191. Gen 3.15. See also Kronholm, *Motifs*, 112–18.

192. See *Hymns on the Church* 45.33, where “God had compassion on Adam and gave him opportunity for conversion.”

193. Gen 3.16.

to give counsel and “*he shall rule over you,*”¹⁹⁴ because you thought that by eating of the fruit you would then rule over him.

31. After God had set down His judgment against Eve and still no repentance had risen up in Adam, He then turned to him, too, with punishment and said, “*Because you listened to the voice of your wife and were deceived into eating of the tree of which I said to you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you.*”¹⁹⁵ Although the earth, which had committed no folly, was struck on account of Adam, [God] still made Adam, who could suffer, suffer by the curse of [the earth], which could not suffer. For it was in that earth, which received the curse, that he, who did not receive the curse, was, in fact, cursed.

(2) Adam did not escape direct punishment by the fact that the earth received this curse. God also decreed against him, saying, “*All the days of your life you shall eat in pain,*”¹⁹⁶ that which, had you kept the commandment, you would have eaten without pain. “*Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you,*”¹⁹⁷ after the sin; had there been no sin, it would not have brought forth these things. “*You shall eat the plants of the field,*”¹⁹⁸ because on account of a trifling enticement on the part of your wife you have rejected the most pleasing fruits of Paradise. “*In the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread,*”¹⁹⁹ for you were not pleased to enjoy yourself in the garden without toil. These things will come upon you “*until you return to the earth from which you were taken,*”²⁰⁰ because you have despised the commandment which now could have given you eternal life through the fruit of the tree of life which would have been lawful for you to eat. Because “*you are from the dust,*”²⁰¹ and have forgotten yourself, “*you shall return to your dust,*”²⁰² so that, through your state of humiliation, you shall come to know your true essence.²⁰³

194. Gen 3.16.

196. Gen 3.17.

198. Gen 3.18.

200. Gen 3.19.

202. Gen 3.19.

203. In Syriac, *qnōmut?*. See Beck, *Reden*, 8–14.

195. Gen 3.17.

197. Gen 3.18.

199. Gen 3.19.

201. Gen 3.19.

32. Even Satan, who was created, along with his deep abyss, within those six days, was fair until the sixth day, like Adam and Eve who were fair until they transgressed the commandment. Satan, who secretly became Satan on that sixth day, was, on that same day, secretly judged and condemned. For God did not wish to make known Satan's condemnation in the presence of those who had not even perceived that he was the tempter. Remember, the woman said, "*the serpent,*" and not Satan, "*deceived me.*"²⁰⁴

(2) Therefore, Satan was judged in secret and all his hosts were condemned along with him, because the sin was a great one and to condemn any of them alone would have been too small a punishment. Therefore, just as pangs were decreed against Eve and her daughters, and thorns and death against Adam and his posterity, and just as it [was decreed] against the serpent that he and all his seed were to be trod upon, so it was also decreed against him who was in the serpent that he go to the fire together with all his hosts. For our Lord revealed in the New Testament that which had been hidden in the Old Testament when He said that "*concerning the judgment of the ruler of this world, this one is condemned.*"²⁰⁵

33. After he spoke of the punishments that both the tempter and the tempted received, Moses wrote, *the Lord made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin, and clothed them.*²⁰⁶ Were these garments from the skins of animals or were they created like the thistles and thorns that were created after the other works of creation had been completed? Because it was said that *the Lord made . . . and clothed them,* it seems most likely that when their hands were placed over their leaves they found themselves clothed in garments of skin. Why would beasts have been killed in their presence? Perhaps, it was so that by the animal's flesh Adam and Eve might nourish their own persons, and that with the skins they might cover their nakedness, and also so that by the

204. Gen 3.13.

205. John 16.11.

206. Gen 3.20.

death [of the animals] Adam and Eve might see the death of their own bodies.

34. After he finished these things [God] said, "*Behold, Adam has become like one of us, knowing good and evil.*"²⁰⁷ Even though by saying, "*He has become like one of us,*" he symbolically reveals the Trinity, [the point is] rather that [God] was mocking Adam in that Adam had previously been told, "*You will become like God knowing good and evil.*"²⁰⁸

(2) Now, even though after they ate the fruit Adam and Eve came to know these two things, before [they ate] the fruit they had perceived, in reality, only good and they heard about evil only by hearsay. After they ate, however, a change occurred so that now they would only hear about good by hearsay, whereas in reality they would taste only evil. For the glory with which they had been clothed passed away from them, while pain and disease which had been kept away from them now came to hold sway over them.

35. "*And now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever. . .*"²⁰⁹ If Adam had rashly eaten from the one tree he was commanded not to eat, how much faster would he hasten to that one about which he had not been so commanded? But it was now decreed that they should live in toil, in sweat, in pains, and in pangs. Therefore, lest [Adam and Eve], after having eaten of this tree, live forever and remain in eternal lives of suffering, [God] forbade them to eat, while they were clothed with a curse, that which He had been prepared to give them before they incurred the curse and when they were still clothed with glory.

(2) [God did this,] lest this life-giving gift that they would receive through the tree of life become misery, and thus bring worse evil upon them than what they had already obtained from the tree of knowledge. From the latter [tree] they obtained temporal pains, whereas the former [tree] would have made those pains eternal. From the latter they

²⁰⁷. Gen 3.22.

²⁰⁸. Gen 3.5.

²⁰⁹. Gen 3.22.

that a son of a handmaid should have any inheritance together with that son of the promise, to whom it was promised by God. It is not right that you be opposed to God and make an heir him whom God has not made an heir.”⁴⁰⁹

2. As for Abraham, who had determined to do [what Sarah feared] because he made no distinction between his sons, [Moses] wrote that *the thing was very displeasing in the eyes of Abram on account of his son. Then God said to him, “All that Sarah says to you, heed her voice, for through Isaac shall your descendants be named. I will also make a great nation of the son of the slave woman, because he is your offspring.”*⁴¹⁰

3. So Abraham rose early and gave Hagar and the child bread and water and sent them off. [Hagar] went and wandered in the wilderness and *an angel called from heaven to Hagar and said to her, “Behold, God has heard the cry of the child, so hold him fast with your hands; for I will make him a great nation.” Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water and she filled [her skin] and gave the child a drink.*⁴¹¹

Section XIX

1. After these things, Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, for they saw that God was with him and had helped him in the wars of the kings and had also promised him the land of the Canaanites. They also feared that after Abraham destroyed the Canaanites he would also destroy their own land, so they hastened to make a covenant with him and the two of them made a covenant with Abraham.⁴¹²

Section XX

XX: 167-169

1. *God again tested Abraham and said to him, “Take your son and go to the land of the Amorites and offer him up as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”*⁴¹³ But lest it

409. See the fragmentary *Hymns on the Nativity* 20, which is devoted to this theme.

410. Gen 21.11–13.

411. Cf. Gen 21.14, 17–18.

412. Cf. Gen 21.22–24.

413. Gen 22.1–2. For the Aqedah in Syriac tradition, see S. P. Brock,

be said that God had greatly alarmed Abraham, God detained him for three days.

(2) Abraham rose early, cut some wood, and took two of his slave boys and Isaac and went out. But he did not inform Sarah because he had not been commanded to inform her. She would have persuaded him to let her go and participate in his sacrifice just as she had participated in the promise of his son. And he also [did not inform her] lest the inhabitants of his house stand against him and the women wail in mourning in his tent, and lest those who dwelt in that place gather together and snatch the youth from him or make him put off the day of his sacrifice. If he did not inform those two whom he took with him but did not bring up the mountain because he was afraid, how much more would he, who out of fear was unwilling to reveal it to those two, have been afraid [to inform] many?

2. While they were climbing Isaac inquired about the sacrifice. Abraham then made the same prophecy while they were ascending the mountain that he had made to the servants whom he left behind at the base of the mountain. Then, when he had bound Isaac, set him on the altar, and drawn out his knife, the angel of the Lord restrained him.⁴¹⁴

(2) Lest Abraham think that [his sacrifice] was lacking anything and had thus been rejected, *the angel said to Abraham, "Now I know that you fear God, for in this one who is more beloved to you than anything, your love toward the Lord of all is made known."*⁴¹⁵

(3) In two things then was Abraham victorious: that he killed his son although he did not kill him and that he believed that after Isaac died he would be raised up again and would go back down with him. For Abraham was firmly con-

"Sarah and the Aqedah," *LM* 87 (1974): 67–77; idem, "Genesis 22 in Syriac Tradition," in *Mélanges Dominique Barthélemy*, ed. P. Casetti *et al.*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis*, no. 38 (Fribourg-Göttingen, 1981) 2–30; and idem, "Two Syriac Verse Homilies on the Binding of Isaac," *LM* 99 (1986): 61–129.

414. Cf. Gen 22.7–11.

415. Cf. Gen 22.12.

vinced that He who said to him, *through Isaac shall your descendants be named*,⁴¹⁶ was not lying.

3. *Then Abraham saw a ram in a tree, took it, and offered it upon the altar in place of his son.*⁴¹⁷ The question that Isaac had asked about the lamb attests to the fact that there had been no ram there. The wood that was on Isaac's shoulders proves that there had been no tree there. The mountain spit out the tree and the tree the ram,⁴¹⁸ so that in the ram that hung in the tree and had become the sacrifice in the place of Abraham's son, there might be depicted the day of Him who was to hang upon the wood like a ram and was to taste death for the sake of the whole world.

(2) *Then the angel spoke to him a second time, "By myself I have sworn," says the Lord, "that I will indeed multiply your seed and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in your seed,"*⁴¹⁹ who is Christ.

Section XXI

1. After these things, Sarah died in Hebron, one hundred and twenty-seven years old, and Abraham buried her in the cave that he had bought from the Hittites.⁴²⁰

2. After three years, *Abraham said to his eldest servant, "Put your hand under my thigh and I will make you swear that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites."*⁴²¹ Abraham made him swear by the covenant of circumcision. Because God saw that the two heads of the world had dishonored this member, He set the sign of the covenant on it so that that member which was the most despised of all the limbs would now be the most honored of all the limbs. The

⁴¹⁶. Gen 21.12.

⁴¹⁷. Gen 22.13. Ephrem reads "tree" here against the Peshitta, which reads "bush." This reading, "tree," is also found in Targums *Onkelos*, *Neofiti*, and *Pseudo-Jonathan*. See B. Levy, *Targum Neophyti 1. A Textual Study* (New York, 1986) 1:164–66.

⁴¹⁸. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:282, where the ram "was created in the twilight of Sabbath eve in the week of creation."

⁴¹⁹. Cf. Gen 22.15–18.

⁴²⁰. Cf. Gen 23.1–2, 19–20.

⁴²¹. Gen 24.2–3.