

**Charisma and Spirituality in the Early Church:
A Study of Messalianism and Pseudo-Macarius.**

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**The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that
appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to
the work of others.**

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**To Him be glory, both now and to the day of eternity
2 Peter 3:18**

ABSTRACT

The thesis is an investigation into the concept of Charisma and Spirituality in the Early Church with particular emphasis upon the writings of Ps-Macarius, and of a group of ascetics known as the Messalians, evident in the late fourth / early fifth centuries. The Macarian writings are examined to see what they reveal about the experiential pneumatic theology of the Early Church, the relationship between Syrian and Hellenic traditions of Christian Rhetoric, and the relationship between Ps-Macarius and the Cappadocian Circle. The Macarian corpus as a whole is examined to assess its rhetorical influences and style. The rhetoric of the Macarian corpus is seen to illustrate a high degree of sophistication. This study also gives definition to two terms that have become imprecise and diverse in their use: '*enkrateia*' (self-control), and 'Syrian Christianity'. By isolating the characteristics of *enkrateia* the definitive stages of an encratic lifestyle are identified. The breaking down of the term into *enkrateia, radical enkrateia* and *exclusive enkrateia* enables a much clearer discussion to take place as to the nature of the encratic theology of a group or individual. The final element of this study is a consideration of the distinct Macarian imagery that is evident within the corpus. Two images are considered in detail, the 'flight of the soul' and 'sober intoxication'. Overall this study shows the variety of influences upon Ps-Macarius, and the uniqueness of his expression. The influences upon Ps-Macarius include a context of endemic Syrian spirituality, a radical encratic lifestyle, a Hellenic rhetorical training, and a distinct interpretation of Platonic and Neo-Platonic images, coupled to the wider Judaic / Mesopotamian influences of his Church. It is shown that Ps-Macarius represents an individual voice that is distinct and recognisable amongst the Fathers of the Church.

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D) Milan Colloquium	265
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Abbreviations

- AB *Analecta Bollandiana*, Brussels. 1882-
- ABR *American Benedictine Review*, Richardton 1950-
- ANCL *Anti-Nicene Christian Library*, Edinburgh 1866-1872, 1897
- ANF *Anti-Nicene Fathers* A.Roberts, J.Donaldson (ed) 1885 (reprint 1995)
- AP *Archives de Philosophie*, Paris. 1923
- AsTJ *Asbury Theological Journal*, Wilmore KY 1946-
- Augustin Stud *Augustinian Studies*, Villanova
- Aug *Augustinianum*, Rome.
- AV *Analecta Vladaton*, Greece.
- Bedjan *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* (Syriace) ed. P. Bedjan, 7 vols, Paris 1880-1897
- Byzantion *Byzantion*, Revue Internationale des Etudes Byzantines, Brussels.
- ByzZ *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, Munich. 1892-
- CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Washington 1939-
- CC *Collectanea Cisterciensia*.
- CCG *Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca*, Turnhout 1977-
- CCL *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, Turnhout 1953-
- CE *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York 1907-14
- CH *Church History*, New Jersey 1932-
- CHR *The Catholic Historical Review*, Washington. 1915-
- CQ *Classical Quarterly*, London. 1906-
- CSCO *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Paris et Louvain 1903-
- CWS *Classics of Western Spirituality*.
- Desprez 1980 Desprez V (ed). *Pseudo-Macaire: Oeuvres spirituelles, I. Homélie propre à la Collection III*. (Sch 275); Paris 1980. (FT).
- DOP *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Cambridge. Mass., 1941-
- Dörries 1978 Dörries H. *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. Göttingen. 1978
- Dörries 1941 Dörries H. *Symeon von Mesopotamien. Die Überlieferung der Messalianischen 'Makarios'-Schriften*, Verlag. Leipzig 1941
- DownR *Downside Review*, London 1880-
- Dsp *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique, Doctrine et Histoire*, M.Viller (ed) Paris 1932-95.

- DThC *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, Paris 1903-1970
- EEC *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, A. De Berardino (ed) Cambridge 1992
- EL *Éphemerides Liturgicae*, Rome. 1887t Rome
- EO *Échos d'Orient*, Paris 1897-1942
- EP *Enchiridion Patristicum*, ed M.J.Rouet de Journal, 25th ed. Friedburg. Barcelona 1976
- ET English Translation.
- ETSE *Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile.*
- FC *Fathers of the Church*, ed R.J. Deferrari, New York 1947-
- FT French Translation
- GCS *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der Ersten Drei Jahrhunderte*, Leipzig 1897-
- GL *The Great Letter of Ps-Macarius*, (Collection I, Homily I)
- GOTR *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Brookline 1954
- GR *Greece and Rome*, Oxford 1931
- Heythrop *Heythrop Journal*, Oxford 1960-
- HthR *Harvard Theological Review*, Cambridge Mass. 1908-
- JbAC *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, Münster 1958-
- JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Philadelphia 1889-
- JECS *Journal of Early Christian Studies* (cont. of *The Second Century*), Baltimore 1993-
- JEH *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, London 1950-
- JSSR *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, West Lafayette IN. 1977-
- JRomanStud *Journal of Roman Studies*, London 1910-
- JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*, Oxford 1899-
- Lampe *G.W.H. Lampe, A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford 1976
- LG *Liber Graduum.*
- Maloney *Pseudo-Macarius*, (tr) CWS. New York, 1992
- Mason *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies of Macarius*, (tr) 1920
- MGWJ *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Breslau.
- MH *Museum Helveticum, Revue Suisse pour L'Étude de Antiquité Classique*, Basel.
- Muséon *Le Muséon. Révue des Etudes Orientales*, Louvain. 1881-
- NCE *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, New York 1967
- NPNF *Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* P. Schaff (ed) 1886 (reprint 1995)

- NPNF² *Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers (Second Series)*, P.Schaff H.Wace (edd) 1890 (reprint 1995)
- NovTest *Novum Testamentum, An International Quarterly for New Testament and Related Studies*, Leiden. 1956-
- NTS *New Testament Studies*, Cambridge 1954-
- Numen. *Numen. International Review for the History of Religion*, Leiden. 1954
- OC *Oriens Christianus*, Rome
- OCA *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, Rome 1935-
- OCP *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, Rome 1935-
- ODCC *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, F.L.Cross, E.A.Livingstone (edd) OUP 1974
- PBR *Patristic and Byzantine Review*, Kingston 1982
- PG *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.P. Migne. vol 1-161 Paris 1857-66
- PL *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne. vol 1-221 Paris 1841-64
- PO *Patrologia Orientalis*, ed J. Graffin and F. Nau. Paris 1903-
- PS *Patrologia Syriaca*, ed R. Graffin. Paris 1894-1926
- PTS *Patristische Texte und Studien*, Berlin 1964-
- RAC *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum. hrsg. von Th. Klauser*, Stuttgart 1950-
- RdOC *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*, Paris
- RAM *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, Toulouse.1920-1977
- RHE *Revue de Histoire Écclésiastique*, Louvain 1900-
- RSR *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, Paris 1926-
- SA *Studia Anselmiana*, Rome.
- SC *Second Century*, (Now JECS).
- SchR *Sources Chrétiennes*, ed H. de Lubac and J. Daniélou Paris 1941
- ScotJTh *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 1948-
- Spec *Speculum. Journal of Medieval Studies*, Cambridge Mass. 1926-
- Sour *Sourozh*, Oxford 1980-
- Smon *Studia Monastica*, Montserrat, Barcelona 1959-
- Sob *Sobornost*, incorporating *Eastern Churches Review*, Oxford.
- SP *Studia Patristica*, Oxford 1954-
- SS *Studies in Spirituality*, Kampen. 1997-
- ST *Studi e Testi*, Città del Vaticano 1900-
- St.Th *Studia Theologia*, Scandanavian Journal of Theology. Copenhagen 1947-

- Stewart *Stewart C. Working the Earth of the Heart*, Clarendon Press. Oxford 1991
- St.VTQ *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, Crestwood 1953
- ThLZ *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, Leipzig 1876-
- TU *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur.*
Archiv für die griechisch-christlichen Schriftsteller also der ersten drei
Jahrhunderte, Leipzig/Berlin 1882
- TynBul *Tyndale Bulletin*, Cambridge 1956-
- UJE *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York 1969
- VigChr *Vigiliae Christianae. Review of Early Christian Life and Language*,
 Amsterdam 1947-
- Vsp *Vie Spirituelle*, Paris
- ZKG *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, Stuttgart. 1877-
- ZKT *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie*, Innsbruck. Wien. 1877-

INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Method

This study is an investigation into the concept of Charisma and Spirituality in the Early Church, with particular emphasis upon the writings of Ps-Macarius, and the group of ascetics known as the Messalians. The Macarian corpus was originally ascribed to Macarius of Egypt (d390 A.D.), but is now commonly held to be the work of a Syrian influenced author, who was rendered anonymous at an early stage of the manuscripts transmission, hence the nomenclature Ps-Macarius. Under the name of Macarius of Egypt the writings had become influential within the Church, especially in Eastern Christian tradition. The Messalian issue that was raised at the same time as the authorship debate began in the early part of the twentieth century resulted in a question mark being placed over the value of the Macarian corpus, and the place of the corpus within the Church.¹

Within this thesis the Macarian writings will be examined to see what they reveal about the experiential pneumatic theology of the early Church, and the relationship between the Syrian and Hellenic traditions of Christian Rhetoric. Particular attention will be paid to the ascetic basis of early Christian Spirituality, and the cross-cultural environment to which the Macarian writings relate. The Eustathian heritage of the Messalian movement will be studied, and the encratic similarities between the movements considered, together with a more general investigation into the place of Encratism within early Christian Spirituality. Aspects of the Macarian corpus will be examined in the light of the cross-cultural issues of the day. In particular the relation of the Macarian corpus to wider patterns of Syrian Spirituality will be considered and the Syrian symbolism within the corpus highlighted. The Greek influences upon the corpus will be researched through an investigation into the rhetorical patterns found within the collections. This dual cultural setting for the Macarian corpus will further be

¹ see p24 for detail.

illuminated by an examination into the multifaceted relationship between the Cappadocian Fathers, Ps-Macarius, Encratism and Syrian Spirituality. The research will examine the culture of exchange and integration that was evident within fourth and fifth century Christianity, and the influence that particular aspects of Syrian Spirituality had upon the emerging Monastic movement.

The study begins by giving a summary of the Macarian corpus, focusing in the main on Collections I, II and III. The previous research pertaining to the Messalian issue and Ps-Macarius is reviewed chronologically, with critiques of the main authors' theories given. This review concludes with an examination of the latest work on the Macarian corpus, that of Columba Stewart published in 1991. Stewart brought a new understanding to the origin and Macarian interpretation of some key terms within the corpus, and this present study seeks to extend his findings to a wider setting locating Ps-Macarius at the intersection of Greek and Syrian culture at the end of the fourth Century.

The focus of the thesis on wider aspects of Syrian Spirituality is motivated by a concern to identify more positively what has hitherto often proved to be a loose term of reference. To accomplish this it has been necessary to sketch out some of the major Syrian characters and works, to enable a positive and more accurate definition to be reached. The Jewish heritage of Syrian Christianity is also discussed here, in light of the work of Gilles Quispel. The trends of virginity and asceticism; angelic imitation; the Syrian poetic forms and language; the symbolic place of the heart; and the influence of Tatian, that are evident within Syrian Christianity are all examined and discussed, in interaction with previous research. The thesis highlights the place of Ps-Macarius within this environment, and a closer definition of 'Syrian Spirituality' is thereby offered.

The main substance and original aspect of the thesis concerns an examination of Ps-Macarius and Messalianism through the Macarian corpus, in comparison to Greek and Syrian culture, and in particular to the Cappadocian Fathers. The influence of Greek culture is

highlighted by an examination of the rhetorical devices and techniques within the corpus, particularly Ps-Macarius' use of Biblical proofs and recurrent images. The corpus is examined for rhetorical devices that may suggest that the nature of the work is both persuasive and pedagogic, and thus aimed at both dedicated ascetics and undecided Church followers.

This thesis examines the connection between Eustathian spirituality and practices, and the relationship between Eustathius, the Cappadocian Fathers, and Macrina is studied, and the possible citing of Ps-Macarius within this circle is postulated. Recent scholars' investigations into the precise nature of encratism are examined, and key components of encratism are identified. The wider ascetic *grundschrist* in the theology of Origen, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory Nyssa is also noted. A new definition of Syrian Encratism has emerged recently, given by a separation of the encratic motif into the more precise categories of encratism, radical encratism and exclusive encratism. This thesis develops this insight by an examination of the protology² of the encratic systems. Within the debate concerning Encratism, the role and place of Tatian is examined. The role of the Council of Gangra in Eustathian Spirituality is also highlighted and the connection between Messalianism and Eustathianism is considered, providing an understanding of the distinct Macarian contribution.

Macarian pneumatology and the feminine quality of the Holy Spirit as found in the Macarian corpus are a special interest in this work, and both are highlighted in preparation for a discussion of Macarian community spirituality. Two specific Macarian images are examined. Firstly the Macarian oxymoron that speaks of being 'soberly intoxicated with God' and secondly the concept of 'flying on the wings of the Spirit'. The examination of the phrase 'intoxicated with God' includes a charting of the term's progress from the initial Platonic usage to its Christian assimilation. The historical aspect of both images is examined to

² The primordial persons or events that determine or at least condition the present, substantially as well as existentially. See Bianchi, s.v. *Protology* EEC, p717.

ascertain the influences behind the Macarian corpus, and determine the extent of the cross-cultural fertilization that was occurring in the Church at the end of the fourth century. Within this context the connection between Gregory of Nyssa and Ps-Macarius, that was initially highlighted by Jaeger through the correlating portions of the *Great Letter* of Ps-Macarius and the *De Instituto* of Gregory Nyssa, is discussed, and the similarities within the doctrine of intoxication and divine union that are found in the two authors are compared.

The conclusion of the thesis will draw together the strands of Greek influence in Ps-Macarius as illustrated by his rhetoric, his images of flight, and the location-specific Syrian references. The Macarian community is shown to be an eschatological community, finding its identity through virginity and prayer, within a 'radical encratic' system. Ps-Macarius is shown to have elaborated the asceticism of the gospels and emphasised virginity and prayer as foundational elements of his spiritual outlook. The present work concludes with an overview assessment of the exclusive encratic forces that comprised the Messalian movement. It locates Ps-Macarius as a radical voice within the Church who sought to influence the emergent monastic movement, not least by integrating it towards ecclesiastical acceptability, whilst at the same time attempting to draw a wider fringe of doubting believers into a deeper spiritual commitment.

Text, Sources and Provenance

Study of the Macarian corpus is hindered by the nature of the collections of his work available, and the uncertainty of their origin and date. The earliest reference date, our *terminus ante quem*, is 534. A.D. when an abridged Syriac copy of the *Great Letter* of Ps-Macarius was made, together with seven homilies and seventeen letters, although the authenticity of some of these is questioned.¹ The earliest Greek editions are dated within the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and four collections of Greek manuscripts are now in circulation. Collection I is the longest of the collections containing 64 homilies, the first of which is also known as the *Great Letter*, or *Epistula Magna*. This collection is known to have been edited before the thirteenth century, and is also extant in two other manuscripts.² The second collection, also known as the 'Fifty Spiritual Homilies of Macarius', has been known in the West since 1559 when they were edited by J. Picus, and consists of 50 homilies and logoi.³ The third collection is of 43 logoi and is contained within three manuscripts, two of which are made up of homilies from Collection II.⁴ There are 28 remaining homilies, eight of which are also paralleled in Collection I. This collection was only published in a critical edition in 1961. Collection IV consists of 26 homilies, which are also found in Collection I.⁵ In 1918 Marriott published seven more homilies, purportedly belonging to Collection II,⁶ although these are of dubious authenticity.

Thus the Manuscript collections known today were in all probability collated and assembled in monastic circles between the tenth and the eleventh centuries. Gribomont notes that the collections are anthologies collated at Athos, in Hesychast circles in the eleventh

¹ See Desprez, 1980, p22 fn1,2.

² Berthold, 1973, p.xi-xii; Manuscripts: *Vaticanus Graecus 694 (B)*; *L'Atheniensis B.N.423 (b)*; *Vaticanus gr. 710*; *Athos, Dionysiou 269*.

³ Dörries, Klostermann, Kroeger (edd), 1964, See p. xii-li. 1559. The first French printing was by Morel from a manuscript in the French King's library; Mason, 1921, p.xli.

⁴ See Klostermann, Berthold, 1961. *Atheniensis B. N. 272 (C)*; *Athos, Panteleimon 129, (R)*; *Athos, Iviron 1318 (J)*.

⁵ *Parisinus Gr. 973 (X)*; For an example of the overlap within the text collections see Schulze, 1983, pp85-98.

⁶ Marriott, 1918, (II.51-57).

century. He suggests that it was at this point that the more controversial elements of the homilies were edited out, and only the more edifying portions kept in.⁷ Thus the homilies extant today are not the complete Macarian corpus. However, the volume of the homilies remaining, especially those elements mirrored in more than one collection, and their overall theological position allow a general supposition as to the theological position of the original author to be made, and the common occurrence of stylistic features is sufficient to give an insight into the mindset and motives of Ps-Macarius. Certainly the 'edited' texts of Ps-Macarius are not alone in being a corrupted source for modern scholars but, as has been observed by Stewart, modern scholars have, in all probability, more information available pertaining to the Messalians than was ever available to the compilers of the primary heretical lists.⁸

The homilies found in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* (vol xxxiv cols 449-822) were collated and edited by H.J. Floss in 1850, from which several translations were made, including that of Mason. Collection II was edited by Dörries, Klostermann and Kroeger in 1964,⁹ and an edition of texts unique to Collection III was published by Klostermann and Berthold in 1961. A new edition of this collection was published with a French translation by Desprez in 1980.¹⁰ There are two English translations available of Collection II only, that of Mason (1921) and Maloney (1992). Strothmann in 1981, published his *Textkritische Anmerkungen* which provided variant readings for those texts in Collection II which also appear in Collection I and III. An edition of the *Great Letter* was published in 1954 by W.

⁷ Gribomont, 1972, p618; See also Schulz, 1983.

⁸ Stewart, 1991, p11.

⁹ See also Darrouzes, 1954, LXVII.

¹⁰ Work is presently underway on a critical edition of the texts by Sources Chretiennes. The first edition of this is the publication of Collection III, edited and translated by Vincent Desprez in 1980. Collections I and IV will appear together, followed by Collection III. The recent publication of Collections I, III and the GL have aided study into the whole Macarian question as previous scholarship had been reliant upon only Collection II of Ps-Macarius.

Jaeger, from manuscripts obtained and edited by Dörries.¹¹ The *Great Letter* is also found in Migne (PG 46: 287-306). Staats has latterly produced a definitive edition of the letter, in comparison to Gregory Nyssa's *'De Instituto Christiano'*.¹² Other manuscripts are also in evidence. An Arabic version of Collection IV, dated to circa 1055, possibly from an original ninth Century Greek work, consisting in the main of excerpts from collections I, II, III¹³; a Syriac version, (the earliest known) from 534,¹⁴; a Coptic compilation of portions of the letter and homily II.33; and further Armenian, Georgian, Latin, Ethiopian, and Slav editions.¹⁵ There is also within the Philocalia an eleventh century paraphrase of Collection IV (with elements of Collection II also), by the Byzantine writer Symeon Metaphrastes.¹⁶

The Macarian material as it pertains to the Messalian movement was first collated and discussed by M. Kmosko in 1926, in the preface to the *Liber Graduum*, in *Patrologia Syriaca* 3,¹⁷ and subsequently discussed by Dörries.¹⁸ Gribomont has analyzed the Messalian texts and the Patristic lists of heresy that are at the crux of what is known about the Messalian controversy, as well as examining the relevant texts of Gregory Nyssa.¹⁹ He examined in detail the texts highlighted by Kmosko, and the events leading up to the Messalian condemnation at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. and this is still by far the most comprehensive treatment of the Messalian corpus available. Stewart has recently collated again the Kmosko texts, providing a Concordance of Anti-Messalian lists,²⁰ and a Synopsis of the anti-Messalian lists of Theodoret, Timothy of Constantinople, and John of Damascus.²¹ The status of the editions

¹¹ Dörries' work is unpublished. MS: *Vaticanus Graecus 694 (B)*, *Vaticanus Graecus 710 (A)*, both 13th century. Maloney, 1992, p249.

¹² Staats, 1984.

¹³ See Desprez, 1980, p23; Strothmann, 1975, p4-6.

¹⁴ See Strothmann, 1970, pp96-105.

¹⁵ See Desprez, 1980, pp22-25 for detail.

¹⁶ Palmer, Sherrard, Ware, (edd), 1984, pp282-353.

¹⁷ PS 3, p clxx-ccxciv, cf cxvi-cxxxix col 1-859.

¹⁸ Dörries, 1941.

¹⁹ Gribomont, 1972.

²⁰ Stewart 1991, Appendix 1.

²¹ Stewart 1991 Appendix 2; Theodoret, *Historica Ecclesiastica 4.11*; ed Parmentier 1954 pp229-31; *Haereticum fabularum compendium 4.11* PG 83, cols 336-556; Timothy of

can be seen synoptically as follows :-

THE MACARIAN HOMILY COLLECTIONS

- Collection I (B) H. Berthold (ed) *Reden und Briefe. Die Sammlung I des Vaticanus Graecus 694 (B)*. (2 vols) GCS Berlin 1973
- The Great Letter W. Jaeger. *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature*. Leiden. 1954 (repr 1965)
- R. Staats *Makarios-Symeon: Epistula Magna. Eine Messalianische Monchsregel und ihre Umschrift in Gregors von Nyssa 'De instituto christiano'* Göttingen 1984.
- Collection II (H) H. Dörries, E. Klostermann & M. Kroeger, edd. *Die 50 Geistlichen Homilien des Makarios*. Berlin 1964.
- ET A. J. Mason *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*. London. SPCK New York. Macmillan 1921.
- ET G. Maloney. *Ps-Macarius. The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*. Paulist Press. New York. 1992.
- FT P. Deseille. *Les Homilies Spirituelles de Saint Macaire* Bellefontaine 1984.
- G.L. Marriott, *Macarii Anecdota. (Seven unpublished Homilies of Ps-Macarius)* Harvard Theological Studies 5; Cambridge Mass., 1918
- A. Baker *Corrections in Macarii Anecdota* JTS 22 (1971) 538-41
- Collection III (C) E. Klostermann & H. Berthold, ed. *Neue Homilien des Makarius / Symeon*. Berlin. 1961.
- FT. Desprez V (ed). *Pseudo-Macaire: Oeuvres spirituelles, I. Homélies propres à la Collection III*. (Sch 275); Paris 1980.
- Other: W. Strothmann *Die Syrische Überlieferung der Schriften des Makarios*. 2 vol. Gottinger Orientforschungen. 1. Syriaca 21; Wiesbaden 1981.
- W. Strothmann *Die Arabische Sondergut* Gottinger Orientforschungen 1. Syriaca 11; Wiesbaden 1975.
- W. Strothmann *Schriften des Makarios / Symeon unter dem Namen des Ephraem*. Gottinger Orientforschungen, Im Syriaca, 21, Wiesbaden 1981.

Constantinople, *De iis qui ad ecclesiam ab haereticis accedunt*, (PG 86, cols 45-52); John of Damascus, *De haeresibus* 80, ed Kotter 1981.

W. Strothmann *Textkritische Anmerkungen zu den Geistlichen Homilien des Makarios/Symeon* Gottinger Orientforschungen 1, Syriaca 23; Wiesbaden 1981.

In citing the collections within the text I have followed Stewart's conventions (1991) and cite the Collections as Roman numerals, I, II, III, referring to collection B, H and C respectively, followed by the homily number from the critical editions, and the number of the relevant subsection. In cases where the passage is found in more than one collection the first reference quoted is taken from collection I.

The Macarian Corpus: A Summary Introduction

The Macarian corpus consists of the *Great Letter*, homilies, and question and answer excerpts, collated into a variety of collections and forms.¹ Intellectually the Macarian corpus is a complex interweaving of theological themes and motifs that run throughout the corpus. Our method will be to isolate these themes so as to assist in help to define the essential character of the Ps-Macarian writings, and the reason for their original creation.

Evil and Sin

A prominent theme within the Macarian corpus is that of the provenance of evil. Ps-Macarius constantly refers to the place of evil within the life of a follower of Christ, the role of the Holy Spirit, and the battle that the adherent has, both within himself and against the world. Ideally, for Ps-Macarius the believer would be full of the Holy Spirit and conscious of its operation within his/her soul, and able to discern the taxonomy of evil. Homily II.50.4² explains the Macarian understanding of the depth of the soul, and of the degree to which sin has taken refuge there:

The soul has many members and a great depth, and once sin has entered therein, it takes possession of all these members and of the pastures of the heart.

A chief concern of Ps-Macarius is for the man who, upon committing himself to Christ, assumes that all is then accomplished, and that he is thereby freed from all evil. This, for Ps-Macarius is too simplistic an answer to the issue of evil abiding within the soul, and one that fails to explain the variety of responses to the Holy Spirit found within the Christian Church. The idea that the Spirit has removed all traces of sin from the baptized is, for Ps-Macarius, an elementary mistake.

¹ See above, Texts, Sources and Provenance p9. For an introduction to genre see Dörries, 1941, p392-424 and especially Stewart, 1991, p71-86.

² See also I.4.15.

The inexperienced man, encouraged by grace, thinks that in coming it has taken possession of all the members of the soul and that sin has been uprooted. In fact, the greatest part is dominated by sin, and only one part by grace. It is deceived and does not know it.³

His explanation of the roots of sin remaining within the soul, is that the soul has begun a journey to perfection, which is destined never to be completed this side of paradise, but which all the same is to be sought after and at times may be even partially attained.⁴ Spiritual fullness thus becomes an ambition, seldom attained, but worthily striven for. The goal of the Christian life is ultimately purification from evil, which is achieved by putting to death the serpent that lies inside the mind,⁵ and the only avenue available to do this is: 'through Him who was crucified for us'.⁶

Personal Purification

For Ps-Macarius, the sole way of achieving purification is through Jesus Christ. The Macarian writings were considered heretical by some precisely because of Ps-Macarius' insistence upon the necessary progression of personal ascetical purification, and it was assumed that he was denigrating the all-encompassing sufficiency of the work of Christ. It is clear on a closer reading however, that the emphasis within the corpus is upon the sole sufficiency of Christ for salvation and purification, but to be coupled nevertheless, with a necessary co-operation and discipline on the part of the believer. Thus the goal of the disciple is victory in the battle of the soul, the war with the inner man.⁷ It is only once a heart is cleansed from sin that it is able to enjoy heavenly mysteries.⁸ An accusation previously levelled at Ps-Macarius was that he undervalued the role and efficiency of baptism in salvation, (an

³ II.50.4.

⁴ II.17.6.

⁵ II.17.15.

⁶ II.17.15.

⁷ I.13.2; II 18.10.

⁸ II.46.3.

aspect of the synodical complaints against Messalians in the early church.) Ps-Macarius however, views baptism as the beginning of a journey, rather than the total provision to complete a journey.⁹ In portraying the presence of sin within the soul he thus stands in the Pauline tradition of the conflict between the old man and the new, although within his theology there is a more explicit elaboration of the roots of sin within the depths of the soul.

Free Will

Within Ps-Macarius there are two ways in which the image of God in mankind is presented. Firstly it is in the formal condition of liberty, free will, the faculty of choice which cannot be destroyed by sin.¹⁰ Ps-Macarius stresses the free-will of man as the identifying factor in man being the 'Image and Likeness of God', which also places man above the other created beings in the world,¹¹ and especially relates free will as an explanation for those who have moved away from the lifestyle that he was advocating,¹² and who have fallen in regard to concupiscence.¹³ Secondly the image of God is the 'heavenly image', the positive content of the image, which is that communion with God, whereby before the fall man was clothed with the Word and the Holy Spirit,¹⁴ and after the fall a potential to realize the divine nature within man remains.¹⁵ Ps-Macarius contends that sin cannot destroy the faculty of choice, and as Lossky suggests, this can be seen from the inclination towards the 'world' that is evident within man, and that Ps-Macarius ascribed as due to the presence of evil within the heart of man.¹⁶ Coupled to this inclination towards evil is the ability of mankind to return to a heavenly state due to Christ fulfilling the role of Adam, and thus enabling the mission of the first Adam

⁹ Desprez, 1988, p121-155.

¹⁰ Lossky, 1976, p116.

¹¹ II.15.24.

¹² eg II.27.14-16.

¹³ II.17.6.

¹⁴ Lossky, 1976, p116.

¹⁵ eg. II.12.1,6,7.

¹⁶ II.16.

to be completed.¹⁷ Ps-Macarius contends that man cannot return to the heart of the Godhead without the salvific activity of Christ, and the continuing indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and contends that such a return is the ultimate destination of man. The dual force behind the image of God in the Macarian corpus is further revealed in II.26.18 in sentiments which are similar to the statement of Irenaeus that 'God became man in order that man might become God'.¹⁸ Ps-Macarius states: 'God needs the working of man since the human soul is meant to have fellowship with Him'.¹⁹ Ps-Macarius has a very expressive way of describing the work of evil and the presence of sin within the soul. This imagery can be, and has been, misunderstood. An overly dualistic interpretation of his words is a common error as he speaks of the power of Satan, and the ongoing battle for the soul of man. In particular he mentions the soul being a 'partner and sister of either devils, or God'.²⁰ However this apparent dualism is based more upon a rhetorical desire to communicate the reality of the Christian struggle, than upon any metaphysical foundations. Satan is, within the Macarian homilies, a limited creature who gained entrance to man by the transgression, in which Satan darkened his mind.²¹ He is also limited by God because 'if he (Satan) were allowed to fight as he pleases, he would have demolished all'.²² However,

the devil does not know all man's thought, nor whether he will succumb to temptation when he is tempted. He does however, know humanity's reasoning well, having been with humankind from birth.²³

The tension between humankind and evil is such that on one occasion the side of evil is stronger, and on another occasion mankind's thought is 'more than conqueror'.²⁴ Satan cannot

¹⁷ Lossky, 1976, p74f.

¹⁸ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haereses V.*; See also Athanasius *De Incarnatione Verbi, cap.54*; Gregory Nyssa *Oratio Catechetica, XXV.*

¹⁹ I.7.7-9; II.26.18.

²⁰ I.7.6; II.26.13.

²¹ II.26.1.

²² I.7.3-6; II.26.3.

²³ I.7.3-6; II.26.9. Ps-Macarius dates the Devil as being 6000 years old, based on a rough calculation from the LXX chronology of the Old Testament. (Mason, 1921, p189).

²⁴ I.7.3-6; II.26.10.

act against a person who has the will to cry to God.²⁵ Satan attacks humankind under the pretext of good thoughts, and the soul, lacking discernment, follows such thoughts and falls into the 'snare of the devil'.²⁶ The way for an ascetic to overcome the Devil is to 'hate himself and to deny his own soul, to be angry with it and rebuke it,... to grapple with his thoughts, and fight within himself'.²⁷ When a Christian has received grace, and grace abounds in him, evil is still present, but yet cannot seriously harm a man, nor has it any rage or force against him,²⁸ and an ascetic lifestyle is necessary to battle effectively with the Devil and with sin within the soul. Man cannot live in complete freedom from evil until he reaches 'the city of the saints'.²⁹ Freedom is instigated as the soul is altered from its present evil condition to another divine condition, by the power of the Spirit, which enables it to overcome the 'sea of evil' it must negotiate en route to the heavenly city.³⁰ However, the 'sting of death is still rooted within'³¹ believers, and Christians are 'still the temple of idols and the hold of the spirits of wickedness because of their propensity to the passions'.³² This idea of evil dwelling within the passions of man is a common theme of the homilies. Those who do not receive the Holy Spirit are unwittingly held by the 'serpent who dwells within them, captives and slaves to evil powers'.³³ The demons and evil within the heart are the protagonists of temptation, with the soul as both the stage and the prize. While much of Ps-Macarius' writings on demons speaks of the mingling of evil and sin within man, and stresses the existence of sin within the body, he is careful to assign to sin a lesser place in the cosmic scheme of things. There is no metaphysical dualism in his demonology, rather a belief that mankind's will and discipline regulates the amount of control evil has over one's life. His doctrine of sin, therefore, is realist; his doctrine

²⁵ I.7.3-6; II.26.10.

²⁶ I.7.3-6; II.26.12.

²⁷ I.7.3-6; II.26.12.

²⁸ I.7.7-9; II.26.22.

²⁹ I.6.2,1-5; II.26.23.

³⁰ II.45.5,6.

³¹ II.25.4.

³² II.25.4.

³³ II.45.2.

of salvation is optimistic.

The Holy Spirit

Ps-Macarius' theology is much characterised by the concepts of the mingling or mixing of the Holy Spirit with the cleansed soul,³⁴ and the process of divinization / restoration that occurs through this co-operation between the Spirit and the christian.³⁵ For Ps-Macarius this co-operation is envisaged in the liberation from passions. When sin is uprooted humanity receives again the first creation of the pure Adam,³⁶ and then having arrived at that state, by the Holy Spirit and regeneration (ἀναγέννησις), the believer reaches a greater state than that which Adam possessed, for they are divinized (ἀποθεοῦται). For in the theology of Ps-Macarius, it is the Holy Spirit, living through the believer that makes possible the observance of all the commandments without strain or effort. Participation in the Spirit brings the fruit of the Spirit in the form of empowerment to walk in the commandments of God.³⁷

Ps-Macarius lays great stress upon a necessary discipline of life, and above all a total devotion to God. In Hom II.13.2 he remarks that

he who wishes to be a friend of God, and a brother and son of Christ, must do something more than other men, that is consecrate heart and mind themselves, and to stretch up his thoughts towards God....then the Lord deems him worthy of mysteries, in greater sanctity and purity, and gives him heavenly food and spiritual drink.³⁸

This ascetic ideal is a denial of self in order to draw nearer to God. Asceticism is seen as a positive step, and the world as an obstacle and a chain.³⁹ The reward for denouncing the world is to 'come through without falling', and the ascetic step is seen as necessary because the world has a 'balance tending to the scale of evil'.⁴⁰

³⁴ See Stewart, 1991, p77-79, and Appendix 6.

³⁵ GL 9.1. (tr. Maloney, 1992).

³⁶ I.7.3-6; II.26.2.

³⁷ I.13.1.5; II.18.3.

³⁸ I.13.1-2; II.13.2 (Mason,1921).

³⁹ I.48.1-2; II.5.6, III.26.

⁴⁰ I.48.1-2; II.5.6, III.26.

Asceticism enables man to fight on two fronts, and Ps-Macarius has a distinct understanding of the 'battle ground' of the soul. The man who does not follow the ascetic path, emptying himself of this world, does not recognise the inward wrestling of passions against him, and cannot compete in the inward battle of his soul, as 'he is still bound to the visible order, and entangled with the affairs of this world,'⁴¹ whilst the man who has 'attended constantly to his whole self receives from heaven the armour of the Spirit, and is able to stand against the hidden wiles of the devil'.⁴² The armour of the Lord is available by prayer, perseverance, supplication and fasting, and by all faith. The result is that 'this man will cooperate with the Spirit, and because of his own earnestness in all virtues, he will become fit for eternal life'.⁴³

Discernment

Ps-Macarius speaks at length about the role of the gift of *διάκρισις* (discernment) within the believer and the faculty of discernment and freedom from sin he sees as high Christian ideals.⁴⁴ Humanity was capable of discernment before the fall. After the fall mankind did not have this ability, as Satan had darkened the mind,⁴⁵ and so discernment is now a gift given by God,⁴⁶ according to humanity's capacity for stewardship. As well as being a gift, discernment is to be cultivated as it is the faculty by which *ἀκρίβεια* (thoroughness / exactness) in the Christian life is achieved.⁴⁷

By using the power of discernment as a kind of eye, we may keep free from any union or connection with the suggestions of sin, and thus the heavenly gift may be vouchsafed to us by which we become worthy of the Lord.⁴⁸

⁴¹ I.59,1-2; II.21.4.

⁴² I.59.1-2; II.21.5.

⁴³ II.21.5.

⁴⁴ II.26.1.

⁴⁵ II.26.1.

⁴⁶ I.7.3-6; II.26.4.

⁴⁷ I.49.1-6; II.4.1.

⁴⁸ I.49.1-6; II.4.1.

Discernment is thus comparable to the eye in travelling. The soul possesses discernment for direction amidst the 'thickets and thorns of life', and discernment is connected strongly to the will,⁴⁹ and governs the mind.⁵⁰ Much discretion and discernment is needed in serving God in grace and Spirit, as it is possible to serve God with your own vessels rather than with the vessels of the Spirit.⁵¹ Only when grace is received is there a need for discernment, so that man may serve God acceptably.⁵² The discernment of the difference between grace and evil, consists in that grace is accompanied by joy, peace, love and truth.⁵³ Ps-Macarius states that discretion and discernment are necessary to know what is beneath the surface of others, as well as to ascertain the actions of Satan and the Holy Spirit. For Ps-Macarius discernment is the beginning of the battle, for

When you withdraw from the world and begin to seek God, and to discriminate (discern), you then find yourself at war with your own nature in its old habits.....setting in motion thoughts against thoughts, mind against mind, souls against soul, spirit against spirit, and there the soul is in agony of fear.⁵⁴

Thus discernment has a twofold purpose, firstly to enable the disciple to keep free from any union with the suggestions of sin, by aiding the decisions of the will, and then by enabling them to know by which means one is serving God, ie. by his own efforts or Spirit-inspired ones. Secondly it enables the follower of Christ to know what is beneath the surface of others, to relate better to them, aid them, and be protected from them. The existence of such teaching within the corpus shows the role of Ps-Macarius as a 'guider of souls', and underlines one of the primary purposes for which his texts were composed. The result of discernment in the soul is the knowledge of the presence of God by the Spirit within the soul, together with the sense of the presence of evil already dwelling there.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ I.49.1-6; II.4.3.

⁵⁰ II.6.4.

⁵¹ I.54.6-7; II.15.5.

⁵² I.54.6-7; II.15.6.

⁵³ I.4.19-24; II.7.3.

⁵⁴ II.32.9.

⁵⁵ See also III.12.2.1-4.

Prayer

A final characteristic of Ps-Macarius' theology is his emphasis upon prayer. He describes prayer as 'the head of every good endeavour and the guiding force of right action',⁵⁶ and emphasises the need for perseverance in prayer. Prayer is built on a foundation of τὸ προσέχειν τοῖς λογισμοῖς (vigilance of thought) in tranquillity and peace, and should not be a source of offence to others.⁵⁷ It is conducted in response to an act of the will, and is an opportunity to examine oneself for purity of thought.⁵⁸ Prayer involves the reception of vision, and wisdom, and divine mysteries. These are the reward of having nothing to do with the world,⁵⁹ and the deeper a person's prayer life is the more they are drawn towards God.⁶⁰ It is also a means of destroying demons, for 'even if they are as strong as mighty mountains, they are burned up in prayer'.⁶¹ However Ps-Macarius also cautions that prayer is a means of falling into pride, for the visions and power received can lead to pride in the person who prays.⁶² Thus prayer alone is not sufficient, humility is required. Coupled with prayer a person must seek after humility, charity and meekness.⁶³ Prayer is not to be conducted within a vacuum, and there is a need to pray whilst waiting on God, and not according to custom and habit, with the mind concentrated upon God.⁶⁴ Ps-Macarius speaks of the teaching that the person will receive from the Spirit, and the corresponding gift of worship, and in so doing enlarges upon the reception of visions and dreams that occur while the soul is caught up in the presence of the divine. That is, when the soul is in a state of intoxication.⁶⁵ For Ps-Macarius the Spirit must be

⁵⁶ I.4.1-5; II.40.2.

⁵⁷ II.6.3.

⁵⁸ I.32.1-8; II.15.13.

⁵⁹ I.48.3; II.15.5.

⁶⁰ II.17.5.

⁶¹ I.4.1-5; II.40.3.

⁶² II.17.14.

⁶³ I.56.1-2; II.19.2,4.

⁶⁴ eg. II.33.

⁶⁵ See below chapter 4 'Macarian Imagery of the Holy Spirit' p186-216

present in pure prayer, and act as a teacher in prayer,⁶⁶ teaching the soul not to stray in distraction, but to be attentive, and actively discern the thoughts of the mind.⁶⁷ Prayer then is a means of making the soul a throne of glory for the Lord.⁶⁸ The result of prayer is that the

person who daily forces himself to persevere in prayer is inflamed with divine passion and fiery desire rising from a spiritual love toward God and he receives the grace of the sanctifying perfection of the Spirit.⁶⁹

Prayer in Macarius is more than contemplation. It is an active process, where progress is made in the spiritual life, and visions and wisdom are received from God. To advance in prayer it is necessary to subdue the thoughts by an act of the will, and this is portrayed as a 'battle' in the soul and mind.

Conclusion to the Introduction

Ps-Macarius in a modern context has been called a 'spiritual theologian', a title he would in all probability have found odd and problematic. It is the essence of Ps-Macarius that there is no dichotomy between theology and spirituality. For him there is only the life of being a follower of Christ, under the control of the Holy Spirit, imbued by his power, and gazing directly at God the Father. He does not shy away from the difficulty of living a life in total devotion to God, nor does he ignore those that leave the ascetic way for other pastures. His understanding of the presence of the Spirit within the heart of a believer and the co-operation and discipline required to experience fully the christian life leads to his theological stance. In many ways his practice and experience formulates his theological understanding and teaching, and as such it is a theology based on and grounded within the reality of his faith.

⁶⁶ I.56.1-2; II.19.9.

⁶⁷ II.31.2,6.

⁶⁸ II.33.1,2,3.

⁶⁹ I.4.1-5; II.40.2.

A Review of Previous Scholarship

Early Macarian scholars understood the work in question to be written by Macarius of Egypt, c300-390, a renowned spiritual and ascetic leader,¹ until 1920 when L. Villecourt proposed the view that they were in fact connected with the Messalian heresy.² He had noted similarities between the lists of heresies of John of Damascus and certain passages of the homilies, and drawn a connection between the Messalians and Macarian writings. As a consequence, Villecourt proposed that the homilies had to be dated pre 390, the point at which the Messalians were first condemned,³ and also that they could no longer be accepted as having an Egyptian heritage. However, one of the first English translations of Migne's edition, by Mason published in 1921,⁴ still ascribes the homilies to Macarius of Alexandria, and dismisses Syria as the place of composition, although noting Villecourt's conclusions.⁵

The Macarian writings are now generally accepted as having a Syrian / Mesopotamian origin, but the identity of Pseudo-Macarius⁶ is still a matter of discussion. Macarian scholarship since the work of Villecourt, has generally accepted that Ps-Macarius was associated with the Messalians,⁷ although the precise nature of this connection continues to be debated. Further study of the Macarian homilies by Wilmart in the light of Villecourt's discoveries proposed that the condemned Messalian ascetic book was a florilegium, extracted from the Homilies of Macarius. Wilmart further placed the Messalians within the region of Mesopotamia, mainly because of internal references concerning the Persian and Roman wars, as well as echoing the assertion of Villecourt that references to the Euphrates within the

¹ Quasten, 1950ff vol 3, p161, The manuscripts are generally ascribed to Macarius the Egyptian.

² Villecourt, 1920², pp250-258.

³ Marriott, JTS 22, pp259-262.

⁴ Mason, 1921, is still the best English translation of Collection II available.

⁵ Mason, 1921, p.xliv.

⁶ In regard to the uncertainty of identification for the author of the collections the term Pseudo-Macarius remains the most accurate, and will be utilised throughout this study.

⁷ Scholars contemporary with Villecourt, such as Stiglmayr. ZKT xlix, pp244-260; Marriott, HTR xix, agree with this association.

Homilies places the author's habitat nearby. Willmart reluctantly pronounced the Macarian writings as unorthodox, and wished to rescind the author's title as Doctor of the Catholic Church.⁸ One of the first attempts to systematize the Messalian controversy from the extant lists of heresy and the Macarian writings was that of Hausherr, who anachronistically pronounced the movement as, in essence, Pelagianism and described Messalianism as 'The great spiritual heresy of the Christian East'.⁹ Such a desire so scholastically to systematize the heresy was indicative of much of the following scholarship.

To understand the ambiguity of the nature of Messalianism and its place within the Macarian debate it is necessary briefly to note the historical aspects of the actual historical controversy. A fuller critical exposition of the historical process can be found in Columba Stewart's *Working the Earth of the Heart*.¹⁰ Provided below is a brief summary of the Messalian controversy designed merely to aid understanding of the consequent debate concerning Macarius and his relation to Messalianism.¹¹ Following Stewart we can isolate three stages in the Messalian phenomenon.¹²

The first stage concerns the emergence of Messalianism, from c325-c380. Extant sources from this period include Ephrem's *Contra Haereses* (pre 373), Epiphanius' *Ancoratus* (374) and his *Panarion* (377). These three writings contain lists of heresies and refutations, but not of detailed doctrines, and the Messalians are included as last in each list. Thus a Messalian presence can be deduced from these lists, although the details are very sketchy.

The second period extends from c380 to the Synod of Constantinople in 426, and includes the period of the Synods of Side and Antioch,¹³ and the trial and condemnation of

⁸ Willmart, RAM, (Oct 1920) p364.

⁹ Hausherr, OCP I, p358. It is recorded that Hausherr regretted this assertion in later life.

¹⁰ Stewart, 1991; See also Quasten, 1950ff vol 3, p163-5.

¹¹ An initial examination of the evidence was produced by Kmosko in 1926, PS 1 *Liber Graduum*, pp clxx-cxlix Paris.

¹² Stewart, 1991, p14-69.

¹³ The exact dates of these Synods are a matter of debate. Dörries 1941 initially proposed a literary relationship between the lists of heresies, and this is heavily dependant upon Side being given pre-eminence over Antioch, (pp425-41). Questioned by Stewart 1991 p24, 33f.

Adelphius by Flavian, Bishop of Antioch. There are two accounts of Messalianism which relate to this period, by Theodoret in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.11, (c440) and his *Haereticarum fabularum compendium* 4.11 (c453). In this period Messalianism becomes more distinct, as council records and statutes begin to give some evidence of the Messalian doctrine. However, still no definitive account is given.

The third phase of the Messalian controversy, is from 426 to 431 culminating in the Council of Ephesus. This period sees the emergence of the Messalian text: *Asceticon*, a collection of Messalian writings with many Ps-Macarian characteristics.¹⁴ The greatest concentration of Anti-Messalian activity at this time was in Asia Minor, and so (one presumes) of Messalian activity too. The Messalians were finally condemned at the Council in 431, and the work of two anti-Messalian Bishops, Valerian of Iconium and Amphilochius of Side, was honoured. The Council decreed that any Bishop found to be a Messalian was to be allowed to retain his Bishopric only if he formally anathematized the Messalians. Refusal would result in withdrawal of communion and deposition from rank.¹⁵

This brief summary provides both the evidence for the Messalian classification as a heresy, and highlights the problem of such classification. The evidence against Messalianism is fragmentary and contained in many different manuscripts, not one of which has the explanation of the Messalian heresy as its primary motive. Gribomont provides a succinct summary of the ancient notices which specifically mention Messalianism, and also considers the names which the various writers gave the sect.¹⁶ Ephrem, from before 373, quotes the Syrian word MSLIN' derived from the root SLI, (to pray). The Panarion has *Μασσαλιανός*, (*Massalyane*) and translates the Syrian term by *εὐχόμενη* (*euchomene*). Theodoret writes *Μεσσαλιανός*, (*Messalynoi*) and explains the term by the Greek *εὐχίται* (*euchitai*). The term *πνευματικοί* (*pneumatichoi*) is also found in Theodoret, as is the term *ἐνθουσιασταί*

¹⁴ The *Asceticon* was ascribed Macarian origin by Dörries, 1941, pp425-441.

¹⁵ Tanner, 1990 Vol 1, p66.

¹⁶ Gribomont, 1972, p620f.

(*Enthouusiastai*).¹⁷ In summary Gribomont states that the Council of Side will have written *Μεσαλιανοί*, (*Messalyanoi*) and will have added the translation *εὐχίται*, (*Euchitai*) then the more pejorative *ἐνθουσιασταί* (*Enthouusiastai*). Hesse¹⁸ reminds us of the value that is to be found in the terms given to communities, especially in relation to heretical groups. Such terms are generally given by those outside of the community, and are often unfair to those within the groups under description. So the terms *εὐχίται* (*euchite*), and *Μεσαλιανοί* (*Messalynae*), meaning those who pray, will not have been the terms the adherents of the group called themselves. According to the Macarian writings the group called themselves, ‘Friends of the Truth’, ‘True Christians’, and ‘Spiritual ones’.¹⁹ However the terms given to the group as shown by Gribomont, must have contained reference to their most prominent characteristic albeit possibly stated in a less than positive manner.

Gribomont rightly notes the difficulty in proving any historic continuity between the ascetic group led by Adelphus, and condemned at Side, with the ill-defined groups denounced as heretics by Epiphanius years earlier.²⁰ Once again the enigmatic nature of Messalianism clouds over a potential definitive history. He prefers to judge the ‘*Asceticon*’ as Messalian purely in a historical sense, recognizing that within it was the work that was condemned in 426 and 431 by the Councils of Constantinople and Ephesus, and thus the only value judgement involved in his estimation is that already taken by Valerian of Iconium, based upon the fuller evidence at their disposal.²¹

Initial evidence against the Messalians came in the form of lists of the Messalian doctrines of Theodoret, the nearest contemporary evidence, and similar lists contained in the works of Severus; in a brief list associated with Antioch (6th Century);²² Timothy of

¹⁷ Gribomont, 1972, p620f.

¹⁸ Hesse, 1989, p36-46.

¹⁹ Hesse, 1989, p36-46.

²⁰ Gribomont, 1972, p625.

²¹ Gribomont, 1972, p625.

²² Severus *La Contra Additiones Juliant*, a sixth century writing. See Stewart, 1991, p34 fn47.

Constantinople (c600),²³ and John of Damascus (749).²⁴ Stewart assigns Theodoret's and Severus' lists as belonging to the second phase of the controversy, and Timothy's and John's as belonging to the third phase, stating that: 'there is no doubt that the lists antedate the texts in which they are now found'.²⁵ A synopsis of the lists, as compiled by Stewart,²⁶ suggests there were ten basic Messalian doctrines and practices which were commonly seen to be heretical or objectionable by Asia Minor hierarchs.

1. the presence of an indwelling demon in each human soul;
2. the inefficacy of baptism for the expulsion of the demon;
3. the sole efficacy of prayer for the expulsion of the demon;
4. stress on the coming of the Holy Spirit or the heavenly bridegroom;
5. concern for the practical liberation from the passions.
6. claims about visions and prophecy;
7. avoidance of work, and the desire for sleep;
8. excessive sleep and claims that dreams are prophetic;
9. disregard for ecclesiastical communion and structures;
10. in ecclesiastical conflict a tendency to denial, perjury and prevarication.

Stewart is careful to avoid using the synopsis of the lists to examine the orthodoxy or otherwise of the Messalian movement, and it must be remembered that the individual lists are in no way complete or first hand descriptions of the Messalian phenomenon, rather they are descriptions of the perceived objectionable elements of the movement. In this regard they may have more to tell us of the theological agenda and fears of the 'orthodox' church than they do of the theological position of the Messalians, isolating, as they do, the perceived negative aspects of the group, which in the case of Timothy and John, had already been assigned a

²³ Timothy of Constantinople *De receptione haereticorum*.

²⁴ John of Damascus *De haeresibus* 80.

²⁵ Stewart, 1991, p52f. A synopsis of the Anti-Messalian lists is found in Appendix 2.

²⁶ Stewart, 1991, p55f. Followed by a discussion as to the basis of the lists and a survey of the individual themes.

heretical status at the time of composition of their original lists.²⁷ It must also be remembered that although Stewart assigns three stages to the Messalian controversy, these stages are in no way definitive, and are useful only inasmuch as they aid our understanding. To accept such stages unconditionally would be to enforce a progression on to the Messalian movement which could obscure the very nature of such an enigmatic and evolutionary movement or set of movements and tendencies.

Messalianism and the Macarian Corpus have been connected ever since Villecourt noted similarities between them, and the Messalian connection has always overshadowed the Ps-Macarian homilies. This Messalian phenomenon has been variously assessed and still remains tantalisingly beyond precise definition. Recent scholarship however, has not been ready to accept an uncontaminated 'Messalian heritage' for the Macarian corpus. This uncertainty has partly stemmed from the different viewpoints of the scholars involved. Eastern scholarship has often been more concerned with preserving the integrity of a collection of writings that have historically been highly honoured and widely read in Orthodox circles, whilst other scholars have been at pains to assert the heretical nature of the corpus.²⁸ Indeed, Vööbus notes that: 'there has been too much ado over the Messalian claim',²⁹ and as Stewart has pointed out many of the attempts to defend or prove the Messalian character of the texts have been fundamentally flawed, and based more upon the misunderstanding of unfamiliar terminology and culture,³⁰ and a desire to protect treasured allegiances,³¹ than upon unbiased investigation. Meyendorff ends his investigation into Messalianism and Ps-Macarius with the plea that:

²⁷ Brown, 1988, p334.

²⁸ Scholars sympathetic to the Eastern interpretation of Ps-Macarius include Völker, ThLZ 68, pp129-136; Bouyer, 1963, pp370-380 provides a balanced defence of the orthodoxy of the Eastern tradition.

²⁹ Vööbus, 1972, p8.

³⁰ Stewart, 1991, p69.

³¹ See also Murray, 1975, p35, and Meyendorff, vol II 1970, p586 .

‘it would be more fruitful to interpret the spiritual authors of the Christian East without judging them by the categories of the post-Augustinian Latin West, which were certainly not adequate for the understanding of such writings as Pseudo-Macarius’.³²

It is only in the light of the recent re-appraisal of the exact nature of Messalianism that it is possible to examine the Macarian corpus without ‘fighting one’s corner’. The differences and similarities between Messalianism and Pelagianism are set out in an article by Louth.³³ He asserts that the only point in common seems to be the radical discontinuity between the Christians and the rest. For the Pelagians this discontinuity is found in baptism, whereas for the Messalians it is between those who have received the spirit and those who have not. As Louth remarks, for the Messalians reception of the Spirit has nothing to do with baptism or any other sacrament.³⁴ The Macarian homilies on the other hand show a marked acceptance and recognition of the need for and importance of baptism for spirit reception.³⁵ Such re-appraisal of the exact nature of Messalianism has concluded that the previous attempts to classify Messalianism as in essence Pelagianism,³⁶ or attempts to systematize Messalian beliefs from the Macarian homilies are seriously flawed. The study of an eastern phenomenon through a western theological mindset is always liable to enforce an unsuitable theological grid upon the subject in hand.

A major re-emphasis of the Messalian connection of Ps-Macarius occurred with the work of Dörries. Dörries drew on the work of Villecourt, popularised the findings of that scholar’s work, and examined the whole corpus for similar Messalian links. Whilst Villecourt discovered the connection between Arabic writings of Symeon Stylites and the Greek Migne editions of the Macarian Homilies,³⁷ it was Dörries who came to be associated with the

³² Meyendorff, 1970, p590.

³³ Louth, SP 17.1, p127-135; Wickham, 1989, p200-14.

³⁴ Louth, SP 17.1, p129.

³⁵ See Desprez, EO vol 5, p121-155.

³⁶ See Hausherr, OCP I, p358.

³⁷ Villecourt, RdOC 1918-1919; RdOC 1920. Twenty one Arabic Homilies preserved under the name Symeon Stylites are found in the Migne edition of the Homilies. Villecourt showed that large portions of the homilies were translated into Syriac as early as the beginning of the

discovery. In 1941 Dörries published his influential '*Symeon von Mesopotamien*'. His examination of the '*Überlieferung der Messalianischen*' suggested that the Homilies were intended as a corrective to Messalian teaching, that the contents of the lists of John of Damascus were taken out of context,³⁸ and that the homilies were the basis for the Messalian Asceticon, used as evidence at the council of Ephesus 431.³⁹ Dörries summarised each homily,⁴⁰ and surveyed the collections and versions of the Macarian texts.⁴¹ He ascribed authorship to one Symeon of Mesopotamia, a named Messalian leader,⁴² partly on the basis of limited homiletical ascription,⁴³ and the condemnation of Symeon by Flavian at the Council of Antioch.

In 1958 Arthur Vööbus' influential study on the history of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient appeared. Within his study he noted the adherence to virginity, poverty, fasting and extreme ascetic behaviour within Syriac Christianity, drawing particularly upon the idea of the demonic inhabitation of the desert.⁴⁴ Such study of a hitherto neglected area of Early Christianity raised the profile of Syrian studies. However, Vööbus tended to concentrate upon the extreme examples of Syrian asceticism, and in doing so also perpetuated the idea of Syrian Christianity as individual asceticism taken to extreme lengths, and in essence anti-institutional. However in regards to the Messalian question he rightly notes that pushing our understanding of the language and terminology used too far will result in everyone being seen as Messalian,

sixth Century. An eighteenth century monk, Neophytos Kavsokalivites, had already pointed out the similarities. (see Gribomont, 1972, p618).

³⁸ see Stewart, 1991, p14n; Dörries, 1941.

³⁹ Dörries, 1941, p425-41; Gribomont, 1972, p618.

⁴⁰ Dörries, 1941, p92-391.

⁴¹ Dörries, 1941, p392-424. See also Stewart, 1991, p70-74 and Desprez, Collection III, Introduction.

⁴² Quasten, 1950f vol III, p164; see Dörries, 1941, p6-8.

⁴³ Including the Arab / Copt manuscript version which is preceded by the '*Life*' of Symeon Stylites. The Greek manuscript N contains a marginal mention and the Letter H. 51, in manuscript M, is assigned to Symeon. For a summary of the evidence see Desprez, 1980, p33; and Desprez, s.v. *Pseudo-Macaire (Symeon)*, in DSp 10 (col 27).

⁴⁴ Vööbus, 1960, In particular p258ff.

and that we must be suspicious of the evidence emanating from antagonistic patristic writers.⁴⁵ In doing so he rightly isolates a key problem of Macarian and Messalian studies. The terminology and linguistic style of Syrian Christianity is open to misinterpretation by outside forces. One such distorting force was the Greek-speaking church, another is the lens of our twentieth century categories. Vööbus is at pains to rescue the Macarian homilies from the heretical label assigned to them by Wilmart and others, and he is dismissive of the idea that doctrinal correlations between the Messalian movement and the Macarian corpus had any substance.⁴⁶ Vööbus examines the gradual increase in the heretical elements of the Messalians from the extant sources. The *Panarion* of Epiphanius c377 is noted to cite the Messalians as being similar to monks, and understanding the commands of Jesus to renounce the world 'in their own naive way'.⁴⁷ Jerome, c415, includes the Messalians with the Manichees, Priscillians, and the followers of Evagrius, making no mention of their excesses.⁴⁸ Vööbus does note the appearance of the Messalian practice of male and female 'co-habitation' and the idea of 'spiritual marriage', and firmly places them within a Syrian Ascetic tradition, drawing comparisons with other like-minded movements.⁴⁹ Indeed Vööbus is at pains to highlight the similarity between the Messalian trends and the more general Syrian ascetical practices, proposing that these trends 'received new colour and emphasis and in the eyes of the critics a frightening complexion, because the movement rejected the Church with its institutions'.⁵⁰ It must be emphasised that the critics in question were of a distinct locality, and that it was the local hierarchy that was in danger of rejection, as opposed to the Church universal. Vööbus draws a link between the Messalian movement and the Manichaean tradition through prayer, rejection of the world, and an aversion to manual labour.⁵¹ Thus Vööbus seems to object, not

⁴⁵ Vööbus, 1960, p128.

⁴⁶ Vööbus, 1960, p127f.

⁴⁷ Vööbus, 1960, p133.

⁴⁸ Vööbus, 1960, p133.

⁴⁹ Vööbus, 1960, p134f.

⁵⁰ Vööbus, 1960, p137.

⁵¹ Vööbus, 1960, p139.

to the assignation of Messalianism to the Macarian texts, but to the designation of the heretical nature of Messalianism that was concurrent with such a view.

Then together with an increased awareness of the nature of Syrian asceticism, an understanding of the Syrian provenance of the Macarian corpus, and the enigmatic nature of Messalianism, came the excitement of the discovery of new texts. Werner Jaeger, in 1954, discovered a parallel between the writings of Ps-Macarius' *Great Letter*, and Gregory of Nyssa's *De Instituto Christiano*.⁵² This parallel Jaeger at first held to be due to Ps-Macarius' dependence upon Gregory, but later study postulated the opposite to be the case.⁵³ However, this was not a clear cut issue, and scholars seeking to protect Ps-Macarius from Messalian charges did no more than muddy the water. The apologetics spawned a prolonged debate, which took attention away from the value of the texts themselves, and focused instead upon one small part of the whole.

Jaeger, who was first and foremost a student of Gregory of Nyssa rather than a Syriac scholar, produced the first complete critical edition of the *Great Letter* of Macarius,⁵⁴ and revealed the incomplete condition of Migne's edition. Jean Gribomont, who was a supporter of the Villecourt / Dörries thesis of the identification of Ps-Macarius as Symeon von Mesopotamia, examined in detail the available evidence of the Messalian movement as given by Kmosko, and attempted to create a chronology of the Messalian controversy.⁵⁵ Gribomont also examined the other texts of Gregory of Nyssa which had been affected by the Messalian phenomenon, and shows how the ascetics known to Gregory rejected episcopal directives,⁵⁶ yet

⁵² Jaeger, 1954.

⁵³ The two major works on the issue are Jaeger, 1954, and Gribomont, SP V 1962. Gribomont has been supported by Staats, St.Th 17, pp 120-128. Further examples of support for Jaegers' position include Bouyer, 1963, p371, who saw Gregory Nyssa as influencing Macarius through the Basilian Monastic circles. However he also agrees with Staats idea of a more general mutual Messalian link between Gregory and Macarius, stating that 'The Messalians did nothing but crystallize and exaggerate themes emanating from the more or less Basilian monastic circles of Syria / Mesopotamia, directly influenced by Gregory Nyssa'.

⁵⁴ Dörries discovered the manuscripts, and shared his findings with Jaeger.

⁵⁵ Gribomont, 1972, p615.

⁵⁶ Gribomont, 1972, p621f.

were characteristically 'ascetic, and mystical in the Syrian fashion'.⁵⁷ Gribomont draws on the work of Canévet in giving Ps-Macarius' *Great Letter* priority over Gregory Nyssa's '*De Instituto*', at the expense of a doubt over the latter's Gregorian authorship.⁵⁸ In 1984 Staats produced another edition of the texts in question, rejecting Jaeger's conclusions, and producing a complete critical edition of the *Great Letter*, and the *De Instituto Christiano*, in which he examined the relationship between the two texts, in terms of vocabulary, biblical exegesis, and theology, again before overturning Jaeger's initial proposition.⁵⁹

In amongst the debate concerning the priority of Gregory Nyssa or Ps-Macarius, Gilles Quispel noted that Macarius quoted the *Gospel of Thomas* extensively in his homilies, as did Ephrem, Aphrahat, and the *Didascalia*. He suggested that the *Gospel of Thomas* was popular only in a very special sector of Syrian Christianity, which proclaimed a profound and astonishing encratism.⁶⁰ Unfortunately this encratic link was not pursued as rigorously as the priority debate was. In 1965, Klijn warned against decisive conclusions concerning the priority of Nyssa and Ps-Macarius, whilst drawing attention to the studies of the frequency of quotations in both Macarius and Gregory from the 'Thomas-Diatessaron-group', which can be also found elsewhere in Macarius.⁶¹ Klijn concludes that 'it is not possible to say that Gregory did not use Ps-Macarius in quoting the Gospels. We can only say that Gregory's text of the New Testament does not give rise to the supposition that he has to be dependent'.⁶² Thus, from an initial assertion by Jaeger that Ps-Macarius wrote his *Great Letter* from Gregory Nyssa's *De Instituto*, which was written by Gregory after the condemnation of Messalianism at the Council of Side in 390 and therefore could have no Messalian leanings, the scholarly

⁵⁷ Gribomont, 1972, p622.

⁵⁸ Gribomont, 1972, p623f. However Jaeger, a renowned Gregorian Scholar had no doubts as to the authenticity of the letter.

⁵⁹ Staats, 1984, pp11-82.

⁶⁰ Quispel, VigChr 18, p234. He also notes, in Bianchi (ed), 1985, p50 that it is plausible that the *Gospel of Thomas* could have been known by the Encratites of Alexandria c200.

⁶¹ Klijn, VigChr 19, pp164-168. Klijn was referring to work by Quispel, VigChr 18, and Baker, VigChr 18, pp215-225.

⁶² Klijn, VigChr 19, p168.

consensus has been reached that it is *unlikely* that Macarius was dependent upon Gregory, without this being fully proven. The dating of the Synod of Side is also under scrutiny.⁶³ Certainly there must be no supposition that a Church Council would effectively signify the end of such an endemic and widespread movement as Messalianism, and the view that any writings containing such sympathies had to be completed before the condemnation is not acceptable.⁶⁴ Furthermore precise dating of Gregory Nyssa's writings is difficult, as is the precise dating of the Macarian Homilies. The difficulties in assigning exact dependence between two similar works are not to be underestimated, and as Baker has pointed out conclusions can be too easily determined by the angle from which they start.⁶⁵ A further point of reference between Ps-Macarius and Gregory Nyssa has to be considered. Gribomont has suggested that Gregory Nyssa was an avid supporter of the ascetic lifestyle, if not of the Messalians in particular, and that the Synod of Side was notable for his absence. Whether this was due to his death, illness or other unknown reason, Gregory was not present at the Synod to argue or plead the ascetic's case.⁶⁶

The investigation into the connection between Ps-Macarius and Gregory Nyssa raised the profile of the study of the Macarian corpus once again, but it did not result in a clear advance in our overall understanding of the writings. Indeed if anything the enigmatic nature of the texts was preserved, and the traditional uses of the texts were protected by the ambiguity of the conclusions available. Investigation into the nature of the texts has not been helped by the chameleon nature of the definitions of Messalianism, and attempts to systematize a theology with incomplete evidence.

Meyendorff, in 1970, initiated a re-evaluation of the Macarian issue, from the previous delineation of the tracks of enquiry along theological lines, to a discussion based more upon

⁶³ See below p52f

⁶⁴ Final condemnation took place in 431 A.D. and the Council of Side was limited in its jurisdiction.

⁶⁵ Baker, *VigChr* 20, p227-234.

⁶⁶ Gribomont, 1972, p622.

textual evidence.⁶⁷ In particular Meyendorff remarks on the points of divergence between Ps-Macarius and the Messalians. He notes that Ps-Macarius engages in polemic against the Messalians in regard to baptism, Eucharist, and the Messalian trait of refusing manual work.⁶⁸ Rather than Ps-Macarius being a leader of the Messalian movement, (as Dörries held) Meyendorff suggested that Ps-Macarius was involved in providing the monastic movement with an alternative to Messalianism, by placing common Messalian ideas and terminology in a sacramental and biblical context,⁶⁹ and he rejects the identification of Ps-Macarius with Symeon.⁷⁰ Meyendorff places Ps-Macarius at the beginning of a long period of integration and assimilation of ascetical movements where individualism often dismissed the Church's sacramental institutions, and whose intellectual spiritualism was too markedly elitist.⁷¹ Such an assimilation is evidenced by the eventual triumph of the ascetics and their large scale take-over of the hierarchical posts in the late fourth and following centuries.

Gribomont disagreed with Meyendorff concerning Ps-Macarius' identification with Symeon but clearly defined the argument concerning the connection between the Messalian Asceticon and the Macarian corpus, an argument in which there was agreement between the two scholars.⁷² Gribomont suggested and emphasised a continuity between the monastic work of Basil of Caesarea, who, he suggested, actively supported enthusiastic asceticism seen in, for example, his initial sympathy for the Eustathians, and encouraged the practice of virginity together with an insistence upon religious discipline. This thesis considers the relationship between Basil and Eustathius, and the subsequent cooling of that relationship after Basil's elevation to the episcopate, together with the disintegration of the Eustathian movement.⁷³ The initial integration by Basil of such 'enthusiastic' practices with more 'orthodox' monastic

⁶⁷ Meyendorff, 1970, pp586-590.

⁶⁸ Meyendorff, 1970, p587f.

⁶⁹ Meyendorff, 1970, p587.

⁷⁰ Meyendorff, 1970, p586f, p589 fn19.

⁷¹ Meyendorff, 1970, p590.

⁷² Gribomont, 1972, p618; Meyendorff, 1970, p587.

⁷³ See below chapter 3 p150ff

influences mirrors the attempted integration suggested by Meyendorff, of Ps-Macarius, Messalianism and sacramental Church life. As such we can recognise a period of stylistic interchange and of theological debate, as the radical Messalian tendency met the more conservative monasticism of the West.

Meyendorff investigated Basil of Caesarea and his connections with Eustathius,⁷⁴ and he stated that Basil and Eustathius as hierarchs themselves, were both promoting monasticism, not as a separate order, but as an ideal for 'complete' or 'perfect' Christians, constituting the community of the Church.⁷⁵ Such integration was bound to have both a positive and negative reception amongst those to whom it was directed. Basil opposed the more charismatic style of the Eustathians, welcomed the example of discipleship that the Eustathians brought, but ultimately rejected the opposition to the church hierarchy that Eustathius promoted.⁷⁶

Meyendorff sees within the Messalian movement an element who considered themselves as a spiritual élite, and which recognized only a hierarchy based upon ascetic and spiritual exploits,⁷⁷ and who rejected the sacraments as having no purpose to those who were 'perfect'. The task of Basil, and Gregory amongst others, was to channel the monastic movement into the mainstream of Christianity and preserve it from sectarianism. Meyendorff places Ps-Macarius within the context of this challenge. He suggests that Ps-Macarius most probably lived in Eastern Asia Minor, was Basil's younger contemporary, was not a Messalian, and could have belonged to the circle of Basil's friends,⁷⁸ who were involved in the integration of the monastic movement. It is here that the recent developments in the investigation into the origins of the monastic movement and the terminology involved can lead to assumptions. The accepted understanding of asceticism as pervading Syrian Christianity,

⁷⁴ Meyendorff, St.VTQ 24.4, p216-234.

⁷⁵ Meyendorff, St.VTQ 24.4, p223.

⁷⁶ Eustathius was accused of not recognising the local bishop's authority, nor the legitimacy of a married priest.

⁷⁷ Meyendorff, St.VTQ 24.4, p227.

⁷⁸ Meyendorff, St.VTQ 24.4, p228.

and the recognition that monasticism did not originate in Egypt and spread East, but was in fact evident within Syrian Spirituality from the outset, requires a fresh examination of the integration that Basil, Gregory, and Ps-Macarius amongst others, were involved in. Also the examination into early Syrian Spirituality reveals that so-called Messalian sympathies were in fact a more widely accepted, and more antique phenomenon than previously thought. Thus the crucial understanding of the Macarian issue that was brought by Gribomont and Meyendorff, requires a re-examination in light of recent research.

Into the discussion of the integration and evolution of the emergent monastic movement comes the discoveries of Vööbus of the Syrian provenance of Macarius. Vööbus had previously questioned the assertions of Villecourt and latterly of Dörries as to the Messalian connection of Ps-Macarius and Messalianism, and he also questioned the findings of Jaeger, as to the relationship between Gregory Nyssa and Ps-Macarius. In 1972, he published a short paper on the Syrian provenance of Ps-Macarius,⁷⁹ in which he elucidated some of the Syrian connections within Ps-Macarius and the characteristically Syrian style and terminology used in the homilies.⁸⁰ Furthermore he added to the debate concerning the source of Ps-Macarius' quotations that had taken place some years earlier by Klijn, Quispel and Baker, amongst others, in that he isolated the Syriac renderings of the Gospel quotations, and proved their Syrian background. Comparisons with Ephrem's *Commentary on the Diatessaron* show that Ps-Macarius quotes from the same source as Ephrem,⁸¹ and also on occasion similar renderings are found within the homilies as are found in the *Peshitta*,⁸² suggesting that Ps-Macarius did not habitually use the Greek Bible, but rather the Bible in the form of the *Vetus Syrus*.⁸³ Diatessaronic studies are complicated, and the relationship between

⁷⁹ Vööbus, 1972.

⁸⁰ Vööbus, 1972, p11-20.

⁸¹ Vööbus, 1972, p24 (eg Luke 10:40, Luke 18:7).

⁸² Vööbus, 1972, p25f (eg 1 Cor. 13:1, Phil. 2:4).

⁸³ Vööbus, 1972, p26; Murray, 1975, p18,20 For a Stemma of the Diatessaronic Tradition see Peterson, 1994, Appendix II. See also Vööbus, 1951.

the various Syriac and Greek versions is a complex issue, and still largely hypothetical, but Peterson's recent work on the Diatessaronic tradition has brought clarity to a confusing area of research, demonstrating the Syriac priority.⁸⁴ In addition, Vööbus remarks that Jaeger's conclusions of priority between Gregory Nyssa and Ps-Macarius are based upon misunderstanding. Vööbus asserts that there are far more than just stylistic differences between Gregory and Macarius: there are also differences in culture and the understanding of religion.⁸⁵ This leads him to the conclusion that Gregory was using a text that he was drawn to because of its deep spirituality, that he reworked the *Great Letter* making adjustments and modifications for his own audience.⁸⁶

The connection between the *Diatessaron* of Tatian, and the biblical text utilised by Ps-Macarius was first brought to light by Quispel. He noted that Diatessaronic readings could be detected in the work of Ps-Macarius, which emphasised not only the Syriac provenance of the Macarian corpus, but also the encratic influence within them.⁸⁷ Furthermore it was held that Ps-Macarius was only the second Greek witness to the *Diatessaron*.⁸⁸ Quispel surmised that Ps-Macarius used a Greek *Diatessaron*, due to the bilingual nature of Edessa.⁸⁹ However, it is not necessary for Ps-Macarius to have used solely a Greek version of the *Diatessaron*. Evidence gathered throughout this survey of previous scholarship strongly points to an environment of integration and exchange. Ps-Macarius was at the forefront of that exchange, and being well versed in Syrian spirituality and culture could have used the Syriac text as well as the Greek version, and thus there is no conflict between Quispel and Vööbus on this front.

⁸⁴ It is proposed that the *Diatessaron* was originally written in Syriac, and not Greek as previously thought. Peterson provides a summary of the present position. See Peterson, 1994, chap 8.

⁸⁵ Vööbus, 1972, p28ff.

⁸⁶ Vööbus, 1972, p31.

⁸⁷ Quispel, 1977, p203-9; See also Quispel, VigChr 18, pp 226-235

⁸⁸ At the time of Quispel's writing the only other witness was the *Dura Fragment*. See Peterson, 1994, p331. Peterson adds Romanos to the list of witnesses p434; See also Thuren, 1983, pp9-28 for an example of Ps-Macarius' biblical use within his teaching.

⁸⁹ Quispel, 1977, p201 n164; Peterson, 1994, p331.

Peterson places the *Peshitta*, the *Vetus Syrus* and the *Diatessaron* as coming from the same Syriac stem⁹⁰, and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Ps-Macarius was one of the first notable exponents of a cross-fertilization of the Syrian and Greek sources, within the emergent monastic tradition. Brock has noted the inherent spirituality of the Syrian region that came to be associated with monasticism⁹¹ and Desprez also puts this period within a 'proto-monastic' framework of cultural exchange. He places Ps-Macarius in the 'intermediate period of Christian asceticism, between the primitive conception, which was centred upon the ideal of virginity and which saw in the ascetic a bachelor or solitary person, and the later period where the Egyptian Monastic model would impose itself on the Mediterranean world'.⁹²

In relation to the Syrian themes within the Macarian corpus, Murray⁹³ has shown that there are several key words that can be examined, that relate to the Syrian *ihīdāyā* (single one) and the *bnay qyāmā* (sons or daughters of the covenant).⁹⁴ Following Murray, the *ihīdāyā* and the members of the *bnay qyāmā*, were a recognisable body within the church, not isolated from the laity, but forming a spiritual élite, who were considered to have adopted a consecrated celibate ascetic lifestyle, in a special relationship to *the Ihīdāyā*, Christ.⁹⁵ Some of the words that Murray isolated have counterparts within the writings of Ps-Macarius. Amongst the themes or texts that Murray examines the themes of 'becoming virgin', 'Christ as the rock', 'The Word of God being a sword', 'division', 'μοναχός' (*monachos*), and 'μονογενής' (*monogenes*) are all to be found within the writings of Ps-Macarius.⁹⁶ The main crux of Murray's argument is that there existed a 'cycle of themes that it was proper to mention when

⁹⁰ Peterson, 1994, Appendix II.

⁹¹ Brock, 1989, chap 5 1985, p131ff.

⁹² Desprez, 1980, p48.

⁹³ In Murray's influential article '*The Exhortation to Candidates for Ascetical Vows at Baptism in the Ancient Syriac Church*' (NTS 21: 59-80) he examines the frequency of significant points, phrases or words from a nascent ascetic tradition that relate to the literature of Aphrahat and Ephrem.

⁹⁴ *Bnay qyāmā* is defined as 'members of the Covenant' Brock, 1989, p52, See Murray, NTS 21, pp59-80 for a full examination of the subject.

⁹⁵ See Murray, 1975, p13-16.

⁹⁶ Murray, NTS 21, p68f, Table 1.

candidates were called to join the *Qyamā* at their baptism, not as a liturgical text, but as a standard homily'.⁹⁷ There is no suggestion here of the Macarian homilies being located within strictly baptismal confines, rather, that by the use of such themes as mentioned above, Ps-Macarius can be placed once again within a characteristically Syrian milieu, and as such, there is an increased possibility that the circle to which Ps-Macarius related was of *bnay qyāmā* origin. Appendix 2 shows themes that are prominent in Aphrahat and Ephrem, the two Syrian writers most commonly studied in relation to the *ihīdayā* tradition,⁹⁸ themes which have been isolated by Murray and are also to be found in Ps-Macarius. These themes, mainly of Circumcision of Heart; The Word of God being a Sword; Putting on Christ's Armour; of Fire and Division; Becoming *ihīdayā*; Being a Virgin in Christ; Being a Crown; Christ becoming our Treasure; and being an Athlete of Christ; are all commonly found within the writings of Aphrahat, Ephrem and Ps-Macarius. These recurring themes throughout the Macarian corpus evidently then have a Syrian heritage, and those isolated in the table in Appendix B are examples of this. The circumcision of the heart refers to the inward circumcision and relates to Deuteronomy ch.20. This inward circumcision took place at baptism, and involved a commitment to virginity. The preponderance of references to Ephesians 6 (armour and the Word of God being a sword) throughout Ps-Macarius reveal the idea of battle and warfare, that were held to be of vital importance within Syrian Spirituality. This battle is not so much against the demons and desert dwellers, as the western ascetic tradition would hold, but more against the inward demons and evil that still lived within the heart of a baptised Christian. The Syrian view of the desert was one of a place where man and beast used to live in a state of 'pre-social liberty'⁹⁹ and as such was a place where man could live in nearness to an angelic freedom. The desert was thus a place of opportunity for nearness to God, and of opportunity

⁹⁷ Murray, NTS 21, p60. However Brock 1992 p53 cautions against the baptised community being understood as consisting solely of those who had undertaken ascetic vows.

⁹⁸ Aphrahat's rule (*Demonstration 6*) requires the *ihīdayā* practise faith, fasting, prayer, humility, simplicity. Aphrahat, *Dem.6*.

⁹⁹ Brown, 1988, p332.

for ridding oneself of the inner demons and remaining evil within the heart. Similarly the idea of Christ as the crown, and the treasure of the Christian, is regularly expounded within the homilies, as is the Syriac ‘clothing metaphor’ of putting on Christ. The occurrence of the term *μοναχός* (*monachos*) the Greek translation of *ihīdāyā*, is not so frequent, but does occur.¹⁰⁰ The related term *μονογενής* (*monogenes*) occurs more frequently but not uniquely concerning Christ the *monogenes*, but as a general description of an ‘only-begotten’ child. Within Ephrem *monogenes* is used as a synonym of *ihīdāyā* as a title of Christ the only begotten, and as a pun on the monk, as ‘alone begotten’ or solitary. Similarly Ps-Macarius uses the word in a dual capacity.¹⁰¹ Ps-Macarius speaks of celibacy frequently and lays stress upon the single nature of the ascetic lifestyle, and being singleminded in particular.¹⁰² Ps-Macarius may not have been a member of the *bnay qyāmā*, and the Macarian writings certainly betray other influences and emphases, yet several times he mentions the value of celibacy and the struggle to attain purity within a celibate lifestyle.

There is then, within the Messalian controversy, the *ihīdāyā*, and Encratism, a common thread of celibacy, and an understanding that celibacy enables a deeper experience of the Spirit, and thus reveals a Christian lifestyle more akin to the angelic heavenly realm than the earthly realm, all of which are to be found in the Macarian corpus. Ps-Macarius cannot be said for certain to be a member of the *bnay qyāmā* or *ihīdāyā*, but can be said to share some of the characteristics of that particular group. It is not inconceivable that the earlier tradition of the *bnay qyāmā* could have evolved into circles of discipleship such as those surrounding Ps-Macarius.

A passage that illustrates the Syrian connections of Ps-Macarius, and his diversity, can be seen in Collection II, Homily 15.51 where Ps-Macarius speaks of those who ‘keep their

¹⁰⁰ It is difficult to say for certain whether this term is a later introduction into the writings of Macarius by an editorial hand, and it does occur only in Collection I. (29.1; 30).

¹⁰¹ *μονογενής*; I.4.27; 5.3; 8.4; 40.2; 48.4;

¹⁰² I.16.1; I.40.2 (Which also relates to the *Odes of Solomon*).

mind pure in the face of sexual thoughts', but who are not yet 'confident in such a case', as compared to those who have completely 'withered up' such temptation. Those who have 'embraced the single life' (μονάζοντες / *monazontes*) 'descend into the sea of evil', and
 bring up precious stones suitable for the crown of Christ, for the heavenly church, for a new world, and a city of light, and a people of angels.¹⁰³

The embracing of the 'single life' is a reference to celibacy, drawing from the *ihidāyā* commitment to virginity. It is more than an 'eremitical' lifestyle,¹⁰⁴ in that there is a primary commitment to celibacy that in the pre-monastic period predated the reclusive nature of the eremitical life. Celibacy indeed was inclusive of the eremitical lifestyle, but celibacy was not practised solely by reclusives. Syrian Christianity saw many instances of those committed to the 'single life' living within the mainstream of society.¹⁰⁵

Brown has recently shown the nature of the Cappadocian Christianity to have been dominated by families of old believers, in which Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory Nyssa, and Basil were honoured sons. This style of Christianity was, he contends, stern, ceremonious, and greatly influenced by matriarchal figures, which found a supreme expression within the small towns of Cappadocia.¹⁰⁶ In this circle sexual renunciation of the like propagated by the Macarian writings, was akin to social extinction, and thus the ending of the line of a Christian family, and with it an ancient style of Christian leadership.¹⁰⁷ Basil, with his connections to Eustathius, and Gregory Nyssa with connections to the Messalians and Ps-Macarius were both involved in the progression of Christianity, assimilating the ascetic lifestyle into the formal city Christian practices. Brown notes that ascetic preaching by Eustathius and others, 'did not merely draw the few talented leaders away from city; it threatened to overturn the traditional structures of urban society. For unlike Egypt there was no desert into which radical activity

¹⁰³ II.15.51.

¹⁰⁴ Maloney, 1992, translates μονάζοντες as 'eremitical' p128.

¹⁰⁵ Griffiths, 1985, p223.

¹⁰⁶ Brown, 1988, p285f, p304.

¹⁰⁷ Brown, 1988, p286.

. might be deflected'.¹⁰⁸ In moulding the emergent monastic tradition Basil 'wished to scatter the Christian landscape of Cappadocia and Pontus with carefully organised ascetic brotherhoods'.¹⁰⁹ Gregory continued the interchange and regulation of the 'brotherhoods', and also sought to persuade the populace at large of the legitimacy of an ascetic lifestyle. Gregory's *De Virginitate* was, according to Brown, a 'virtuoso composition that aimed to drench the reader in a fine golden rain of words'.¹¹⁰ He sought to elevate the public conception of the ascetic life and to 'make plain that sexual renunciation did not necessarily lead to Spirit-filled extremes - such as a life of holy vagrancy and indifference to sexual dangers'.¹¹¹ It is at this point that Brown refers to the writings of Ps-Macarius; as a means of informing Gregory Nyssa of the excesses of the North Mesopotamian region. Staats suggests a far closer relationship between the writings of Ps-Macarius and '*De Virginitate*' in particular, than that of Brown.¹¹² Indeed, Brown makes no mention of the Gregorian tract '*De Instituto*', nor the *Great Letter* of Macarius. He presumes a far more distant relationship between the two, which does not attempt to explain the issue,¹¹³ and he thinks of Messalianism as a 'widespread subversive movement'.¹¹⁴

Staats in 1983 noted two main hurdles to be overcome in relation to Macarian study. The first was the need for an agreed chronology, the second the need for the clarification of the place of Messalianism within Eustathian monasticism.¹¹⁵ This thesis seeks primarily to enlarge upon the second issue. Staats affirms the role of Basil within the Messalian / Eustathian movements, and draws a link between the circle of Eustathius and the advent of Messalianism. He remarks that it is difficult clearly to distinguish between the supporters of Messalianism

¹⁰⁸ Brown, 1988, p288.

¹⁰⁹ Brown, 1988, p288.

¹¹⁰ Brown, 1988, p291.

¹¹¹ Brown, 1988, p292.

¹¹² Staats, PBR 2:1, p27-44

¹¹³ Brown refers readers to Staats but makes no comment about the relationship, either literary or personal.

¹¹⁴ Brown, 1988, p333. See especially Chap. 16 'These are our Angels'.

¹¹⁵ Staats, PBR 2.1, p27.

and the opponents of the movement.¹¹⁶ Further, he draws attention to the discrepancy in recognition of Church authority and leadership encountered within the Church, and specifically to the situation whereby a grace endowed cleric can have more authority than a consecrated bishop.¹¹⁷ The conflict between an established hierarchical leadership and a lay 'spiritual' leadership which drew authority from either spiritual experience or celibate status, must also therefore be taken into consideration. This bipolar nature of authority within the Church is another element of the integration and assimilation of the Messalian movement within established ecclesiastical structures, and which must be considered along with the theological assimilation already mentioned above. An example of this tension can be seen in the struggle that Gregory, who was married, experienced in trying to gain an understanding of a group which was so committed to virginity.¹¹⁸ There is also a similarity between Gregory's *'De Virginitate'* and the *'Great Letter'*, in that Ps-Macarius' letter gives warning against the disparagement of work in favour of spiritual experiences, and Gregory's letter reproves some fanatical ascetics for bringing the brotherhood into discredit.¹¹⁹ Whether or not Gregory and Ps-Macarius were addressing the same group or movement is unclear, although it remains a possibility. What is clear is that they were both concerned with protecting the beneficial aspects of a movement from the more fanatical elements within that movement that were threatening the prospect of monastic assimilation into the institutional structures of the Church. As such they were both engaged in an activity of assimilation and integration.

Desprez, in 1980, produced a French translation of the homilies of Collection III, in which he analyzed the author and the tradition of the texts, and suggested that it is possible that Ps-Macarius was to be identified with Symeon, before noting the similarities and discrepancies between the known Messalian theologies and those of Ps-Macarius. Desprez

¹¹⁶ Staats, PBR 2.1, p28.

¹¹⁷ Staats, PBR 2.1, p28.

¹¹⁸ Staats, PBR 2.1, p33f.

¹¹⁹ Staats, PBR 2.1, p39.

remarks that Ps-Macarius could have been connected with the Messalians if they are understood as a rough and popular side of the circles he moved in and of his own doctrine.¹²⁰ Further he recognises in Basil a refusal to separate the monastic / proto-monastic from the Church, a characteristic shared with Ps-Macarius, who viewed 'monks' as 'Christians'¹²¹ rather than as a separate unit. Desprez examines the affinities of Basil and Gregory Nyssa with Ps-Macarius,¹²² and in relation to Gregory notes '*Celui-ci était en contact avec les moines Cappadociens et les Messaliens de la première génération*'.¹²³ Desprez sees the Cappadocian influence as providing a flexible but firm structure for Ps-Macarius' mysticism and theology.¹²⁴ Thus Desprez also sees the fundamental context as one of the integration of the Messalian / ascetic movements of the time into the hierarchically administered Syrian Church.

Desprez also studied the use of 'πληροφορία' (*plerophoria* : fullness, assurance, with certainty) within the Messalian movement and the works of Ps-Macarius. The list of heretical doctrines of the Messalians collected by John Damascene contains criticism of the possibility of a person receiving the Holy Spirit 'in all *plerophoria*: assurance and all energy'.¹²⁵ Desprez noted the idiosyncratic way in which Ps-Macarius used the word, the frequency of the word in the corpus (57 times in verb form) and the lack of use of the word in any corresponding Syrian literature.¹²⁶ As such it is a word that is the product of the integration and assimilation mentioned above. There is no fixed equivalent in Syriac to '*plerophoria*', and Ps-Macarius is the only 'Messalian' who uses the word. However Basil of Caesarea uses '*plerophoria*' frequently, and this leads Desprez to suggest that it was possible that 'there was some communication between the different monastic communities in the Anatolian Peninsula'.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ Desprez, 1980, p51.

¹²¹ Desprez, 1980, p48.

¹²² Desprez, 1980, p47-54.

¹²³ Desprez, 1980, p51.

¹²⁴ Desprez, 1980, p49.

¹²⁵ John of Damascus *De haeresibus* 80 (Following Stewart 1991 p253).

¹²⁶ Desprez, CC 46, p90.

¹²⁷ Desprez, CC 46, p91.

In doing so he affirms the contention of Staats that it is essential to compare the Cappadocians with Ps-Macarius, and notes the role of the Council of Constantinople in 381, in proclaiming the divinity of the Holy Spirit, in the theological progression taking place at the time.¹²⁸ Further Desprez builds upon the connection between Gregory and Ps-Macarius that was initially made through the *Great Letter* and the *De Instituto*, and suggests that this similarity is not an isolated case but a part of a wider flow of exchanges.¹²⁹ As such there would seem to be a linked experience which Ps-Macarius, Basil and Gregory Nyssa share, or are sympathetic toward. It does not ascribe a wholesale acceptance of that experience, but rather, an understanding of the need for the experience within the life of the Christian. Desprez notes the significance of the presence of such a meaningful Greek word, upon a man of distinctly Syrian extraction and sympathies.

We can deduce from this that he has been thinking in Greek for enough time to have received this term, adopted it to the point at which he can make it one of the poles of his doctrine, and to possess it with enough finesse to establish to this day the only known evidence of the fundamental adjective to this family of words.¹³⁰

Desprez then adds, somewhat too simply in my opinion for the enormity of his statement; 'His audience must also have understood Greek'.¹³¹ This statement casts doubt upon the identification of Ps-Macarius with Symeon of Mesopotamia, and Ps-Macarius' characteristic use of '*plerophoria*' is hard to understand if Symeon is indeed the author of the Homilies. Desprez notes that Ps-Macarius is steeped in Syrian religious tradition, but is also well advanced in acquiring a Graeco-Christian culture. The reception of this culture was through the ascetic circles of Basil and Gregory.¹³² Ps-Macarius can thus be seen to be reforming a Syrian Spirituality that was threatening to grow apart from local Church administration, in the form of Messalianism, and integrating the beneficial spirituality witnessed in that movement

¹²⁸ Desprez, CC 46, p94.

¹²⁹ Desprez, CC 46, p95.

¹³⁰ Desprez, CC 46, p110.

¹³¹ Desprez, CC 46, p110.

¹³² Desprez, CC 46, p110.

back into Greco-Christian patterns of Church life. The integration and assimilation is therefore a two way process, and Ps-Macarius must be read with a eye on both cultures, and with an openness to change.¹³³

Further to Desprez' investigation into '*plerophoria*' was his study of the place of the sacraments and particularly of baptism in the writings of Ps-Macarius.¹³⁴ The general picture of the objectionable doctrinal side of Messalianism was chiefly that of an anti-sacramental movement, which deviated from the accepted teaching of the Church,¹³⁵ denigrating the effect of baptism. Davids in particular shows evidence within the Homilies for a concept of a second baptism of Spirit and fire.¹³⁶ However, Dörries also showed many elements of Ps-Macarius' sacramental orthodoxy within Collection II, and Desprez draws upon the evidence within the whole Macarian collection of baptism being spoken of with familiarity,¹³⁷ and the sacraments in general being spoken of simply as 'the mysteries of the Church'.¹³⁸ For Ps-Macarius it is the sacramental aspect of the Church that preconditions the heart of the believer to be worked upon by the Holy Spirit.¹³⁹ Indeed, baptism is seen as the beginning of the action of the Spirit, as opposed to the participation in the death and resurrection of Christ by the believer. This action of the Spirit at baptism is a part of the regenerative progress of the Christian, and is not understood as a sacramental rebirth.¹⁴⁰ Baptism restores the baptismal candidate from all his sins, and enables the Spirit to accompany him through his life.¹⁴¹ Visible baptism enables internal baptism in the Spirit, as the body is the secret temple, and the heart the secret altar.¹⁴² As such Baptism is the beginning of a process towards perfection, of which an ascetic lifestyle

¹³³ Stewart, 1991, built upon the work and suggestions of Desprez, and studied the term *πληροφορία* in greater detail, and in a wider circle.

¹³⁴ Desprez, EO 5, p121-155.

¹³⁵ Desprez, EO 5, p122f.

¹³⁶ Davids, 1968, p109.

¹³⁷ Desprez, EO 5, p26, citing the *Great Letter* and Collection II 43, 52.

¹³⁸ Desprez, EO 5, p128.

¹³⁹ Desprez, EO 5, p129.

¹⁴⁰ Desprez, EO 5, p153.

¹⁴¹ Desprez, EO 5, p153.

¹⁴² Desprez, EO 5, p127.

is essential, and the sacraments are also a part of this process, in that they become gateways for the spirit to work upon the inner heart of man.¹⁴³ The charge against Ps-Macarius that he sees baptism as insufficient for the cleansing of sins must be considered against the understanding of the regenerative progress of the believer, and their ultimate perfection.¹⁴⁴ By a detailed examination of the Macarian texts concerning baptism, Desprez reveals Ps-Macarius' understanding of baptism to be the place where the neophyte affirms his faith in the three divine persons, whose invocation will purify him of his sins, yet who has to co-operate in the grace of baptism, 'according to his faith'.¹⁴⁵ A text that casts doubt upon Ps-Macarius' 'orthodox' understanding of baptism, is I 32, 3:1-2; II 15, 13-15¹⁴⁶ which speaks of the evidences of post-baptismal sin, stating that 'even after baptism, the brigand [evil] then has the freedom to enter and do as he wants'. This may well be the source of the claims of heresy by John Damascene, when he protests that 'Man is consumed by sin even after baptism'.¹⁴⁷ The evidence for post-baptismal sin however does not stretch to the assertion that after baptism sin reigns over the believer, thus denying the power of the sacrament for bringing the believer into the presence of Christ, rather it affirms that sin still has power over the believer, and that the believer, in response to the workings of grace upon their life, can enter into the presence of Christ's salvific work. Desprez finds evidence within the homilies of Ps-Macarius having to defend his position on baptism from those Messalians who consider baptism insufficient and find Ps-Macarius too strict, and from those theologians who consider his position on baptism as too weak.¹⁴⁸ Thus it can be seen once again that Ps-Macarius was in a position of integration and assimilation, and that extremes of both positions could easily misunderstand

¹⁴³ Desprez, EO 5, p129.

¹⁴⁴ Macarius stands in the tradition of Ephrem in Mesopotamia, and Gregory of Nazianzus in Asia, drawing particularly on Ephesians 4.13. Desprez, EO 5, p132.

¹⁴⁵ *G.L.* 1,3 (Staats ed); Desprez 1980 p133, p138. Desprez draws attention to the similarities between this portion of the *Great Letter* and the *De Instituto* of Gregory Nyssa p139.

¹⁴⁶ See also II 19,8-13.22-29.

¹⁴⁷ John of Damascus *De Haer* 80, proposition 5.

¹⁴⁸ Desprez, EO 5, p144.

his position, due to the nature of the ambiguity of his language. The important aspect for Ps-Macarius was not so much the effect of baptism, but the person's response to their baptism, and the on-going working of grace in their lives.

Quispel's suggestion that the *Gospel of Thomas* was partly responsible for the encratic tendencies found within Ps-Macarius has recently been revisited. In 1985 Quispel once again made the suggestion that the *Acts of Thomas* have a relationship with Jewish asceticism,¹⁴⁹ and the *Gospel of Thomas* has links with Alexandrian Encratites.¹⁵⁰ Encratism (from ἐγκράτεια: continence) was a form of extreme *ascesis* which rejected marriage and meat-eating, and emphasised chastity and the fall of Adam.¹⁵¹ Quispel proposed that the Encratic movement within Syria was branded as Messalian, and Messalianism should simply be read as Encratism in the way that it effected Basil and Gregory Nyssa.¹⁵² In effect, he argues that Encratism was evident within Syrian Christianity before Tatian returned to the East (c180), finding its roots within the *Gospel of Thomas* (c140), which was written in Edessa. Quispel asserts that 'it is completely clear that Ps-Macarius is a representative of Syriac Encratism', and he delineates seven stages of development from the *Gospel of Thomas* to the Homilies of Ps-Macarius. The stages being: *The Gospel of Thomas; the Diatessaron; The Odes of Solomon; The Acts of Thomas; the Book of Thomas the Contender; the Liber Graduum; The Homilies of Macarius.*¹⁵³ Quispel's Ps-Macarius thus stands in a stream of Encratism that is an endemic aspect of Syrian Christianity, and which has been profoundly effected by Judaic-Christian foundations.

Quispel is not alone in asserting a Judaic influence upon Syrian Christianity and thus upon Messalianism. Murray, in 1975, stated that Syriac Christianity was regarded by its writers as nothing more than total discipleship of Jesus, approached from a Judeo-Christian

¹⁴⁹ Quispel, 1985, p48.

¹⁵⁰ Quispel, 1985, p50.

¹⁵¹ Bolgiani, s.v. *Encratism* EEC, p271f

¹⁵² Quispel, 1985, p53f.

¹⁵³ Quispel, 1985, p55f.

influence.¹⁵⁴ and Barnard also stated that Syriac Christianity came to reflect the asceticism of Jewish sectarianism.¹⁵⁵ The work of Vööbus which noted how Ps-Macarius' quotations often came from the New Testament *Peshitta* is another example of a latent Jewish influence within Syrian Christianity, as it is generally agreed that the *Peshitta* is a Jewish production, an Aramaic paraphrase,¹⁵⁶ of an original Imperial Aramaic original received from Palestine.¹⁵⁷ The effect of Quispel's study of Encratism however, is that although it allows the Messalians and what Messalianism means out of an historical heresiological category it results in the 'movement' becoming engulfed yet again by an altogether wider phenomenon. Messalianism becomes merely a facet of Encratism, which in turn is seen to pervade more and more of Early Christianity. If Quispel is correct, then the integration that the Messalian movement has come to be associated with, (through Ps-Macarius and the Cappadocians) was taking place on a far larger scale and direction than previously thought. In their relations with Ps-Macarius the Cappadocians were continuing a conversation that had begun centuries earlier, with the relocation of Tatian the prime example. However, Encratism and the definition of ἐγκράτεια (*enkrateia*) in particular has in recent years become very broad, and has on more than one occasion been used interchangeably with *ascesis*, and merely taken to mean an ascetic lifestyle, or predeliction. This tendency dilutes the radical, separatist element within Encratism. Quispel's suggestion of the Judaic influence upon Syrian Christianity, through the encratic writings of the *Acts of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Thomas*, requires refining, particularly in terms of the meaning and understanding given to the terms Encratism and *enkrateia*. This thesis seeks to re-examine the encratic tendency of early church spirituality and proposes a threefold definition of encratism, moving from encratism as *ascesis*, to radical encratism, to exclusive encratism.¹⁵⁸ In so doing the suggestion of the encratic heritage of the Macarian

¹⁵⁴ Murray, 1975, pp 11-17.

¹⁵⁵ Barnard, 1982, p6.

¹⁵⁶ Murray, 1975, p10; Vööbus, 1951.

¹⁵⁷ Murray, 1975, p10; See also McManara, 1972, p66-8.

¹⁵⁸ See below chap. 3 'Macarian Encratism'.

homiles (as Quispel) can be more clearly examined.

The most recent study of Pseudo-Macarius is that of Columba Stewart '*Working the Earth of the Heart*', published in 1991, which goes some way to answering Staats' plea for scholars to arrive at an agreed chronology of the Messalian controversy.¹⁵⁹ This was the first major study on the work of Ps-Macarius and the Messalian Controversy to be produced for some time. In his book Stewart provides detailed appendices comprising the anti-Messalian lists of John of Damascus, Theodoret, and Timothy of Constantinople. Stewart attempts, with some success to refocus Macarian study back on the use of Syrian language within the Macarian corpus. He examines three words in particular, πληροφορία (*plerophoria*), πείρα (*peira*) and αἴσθησις (*aesthesis*), and isolates Ps-Macarius' distinct use of these words in comparison with that commonly accepted. He charts the progress of the Messalian controversy, rather than attempting to isolate the Messalian doctrine, a method which, as he rightly points out, has taken up too much scholarly energy and time, with dubious results, and was based mainly upon a desire to prove or disprove Macarian orthodoxy.¹⁶⁰ Stewart places Macarius firmly within a Syrian milieu, and notes the need for more detailed study of the Syrian and Greek cultural interchange as witnessed within the Macarian corpus. He challenges the accepted dating of the Messalian councils,¹⁶¹ and suggests a different chronology to that of Dörries,¹⁶² whilst recognising the difficulty of isolating the events of such a 'shadowy' heresy as Messalianism. Stewart concludes that Ps-Macarius' use of the studied words is due to a deliberate and definite re-interpretation of them when coupled to the context of his Syrian Christianity. The specific words and their use may be Greek, but the experience being described is Syrian. Stewart thus affirms and strengthens the assertions of Brock and Vööbus

¹⁵⁹ Staats, PBR 2.1, p27.

¹⁶⁰ cf Murray, 1975, p370.

¹⁶¹ Stewart, 1991, p24 fn27.

¹⁶² See also Gribomont, 1972, p615 for a summary of the arguments concerning the dating of the Council of Side. Staats accepts 390, Gribomont, 1972 prefers the more variable 380-394 p615.

amongst others, who had previously suggested a Syrian origin for Ps-Macarius. Stewart has basically completed a detailed word study of unique Macarian vocabulary. He has examined the Greek and Syriac languages in both classical and Christian works. His is a very illuminating study of the Messalian and Macarian problem, and his conclusions are based upon sound research techniques and principles. However, it is by its very nature a narrow survey, and this present study will seek to enlarge upon his findings, and broaden the investigation into the person and problem of Macarius and Messalianism.

Elm, in 1994, agrees with the proposed connection between Basil, Eustathianism, Gregory and Messalianism. She cites Basil and Gregory as

perfect examples for marking the boundaries of a grey area where neither ascetic teachings and practice, nor doctrinal provenance alone account for the dividing line between what was to become orthodox and what heretical.¹⁶³

Elm articulates a growing scholarly sense of the variety of Messalian manifestations of the period. She posits a cycle of radical rupture, in which breakaway groups were forced to adapt themselves to the constraints of nature and society, and to create rudimentary organizations, mirroring more or less precisely the organization of the 'great Church' from which they had broken away, causing a renewed radical schism.¹⁶⁴ Thus the variety in Messalian practices could be explained by the level of development of the radical groups, which would have ranged from the radically extreme to the virtually orthodox. The circle of Ps-Macarius, whom Elm accepts to be Symeon, is thus seen as a near-orthodox form of the Messalian movement.¹⁶⁵ Whilst the notion of evolving radicalism has substance, the idea that Messalianism was a breakaway movement from the 'great Church' at the outset must be questioned. Messalianism is a form of encratic spirituality, nurtured through a Syrian climate and culture, and riddled with other aspects of Syrian spirituality. Such a movement is far more likely to have started

¹⁶³ Elm, 1996, p199.

¹⁶⁴ Elm, 1996, p195; See also Gager, 1975, p67.

¹⁶⁵ Elm, 1996, p196, 212; However, within Elm's discussion it is hard to distinguish between 'Messalianism' and 'asceticism'.

independently within a Syrian milieu, accepting Christian principles, and then beginning to evolve and change when it encountered 'Orthodox' Christianity, than be a breakaway group from the outset. The high level of borrowing witnessed in the spiritual writings of Basil and Gregory is likely to have occurred from an encounter with a 'new' form of asceticism, rather than as a response to a breakaway group from within Orthodox Christianity. However, further consideration must be taken of the role of the interplay between orthodoxy and heresy. Gager and Bauer drew attention to the formulation of orthodoxy and heresy, and challenged the classical view that heresy was the result of deviation from the orthodox view,¹⁶⁶ and proposed that heresy was in many cases the earliest and often the only form of Christianity. Thus, indigenous expressions of primitive beliefs and practices became heresies only at a later time, when Roman Christianity was able to exert its authority in these areas and to establish itself as the norm of true belief.¹⁶⁷ In this view, the integration in which Ps-Macarius was involved was part of a process whereby the 'original' Syrian Christianity, which Gager takes to be 'Jewish Christian', met with an increasingly hostile Greek Imperial Christian stance.¹⁶⁸ It is becoming increasingly clear therefore that the Messalian controversy was not a breakaway organization but a myriad of enthusiastic spiritual practices, some of which closely mirrored Orthodox practices, but some of which were plainly alien. Accordingly it was a heresy only in the sight of the Greek Imperial Church, and it is in the process of assimilation into the 'great Church' that Syrian spirituality was experiencing, that some of these practices became 'heretical'. However, the denunciation of Messalianism by Ephrem and Theodoret must not be discounted. This thesis seeks to bring clarity to the element of Messalianism that was considered objectionable.

A further point of issue made by Elm concerns the role of women within the

¹⁶⁶ Gager, 1975, p77; Bauer, 1971, esp pp1-43.

¹⁶⁷ Gager, 1975, p78.

¹⁶⁸ Gager, 1975, p78. However, it has been shown above that Syrian Christianity was a much wider phenomenon than the term 'Jewish Christianity' allows.

Messalian movement, and asceticism in general. Recent scholarship has increased awareness of the role of women in asceticism, although in relation to Gregory the influence of Macrina upon him was already well known.¹⁶⁹ The Synod of Constantinople in 426 condemned the Messalians for electing women as teachers and leading members of the movement, and co-habitational houses were common if not the norm. Furthermore leadership within both the Eustathian and Messalian movements could be said to be based more upon ascetic achievement and spirit, than upon the familial connections as seen in Cappadocia.¹⁷⁰ As such the tension between grace-endowed leadership, and hierarchical position would have been all the more heightened, particularly so if the encounter was confined to a specific locality.

Seeking to define Messalianism is a similar activity to chasing shadows, wherever a scholarly light is shone the shadowy heresy appears elsewhere. However, the evidences from the church synods and of Antioch (c383), Side (c385-95), Constantinople (426) and finally the Council of Ephesus (431), reveal that Messalianism was a phenomenon that affected and influenced the Church, initially in the form of the local hierarchy of the Osrhoene region at the turn of the 5th Century. Later uses of the term 'Messalian' have been of the more generic type,¹⁷¹ in the same way as the initial term 'gnostic' came to be used with little precision of meaning, so this has further compounded the difficulty in definition. Messalianism came to be understood as anything outside of the ecclesiastical structure, or that questioned ecclesiastical authority, and in particular anything of a charismatic nature. However, the initial phenomenon that gave rise to the term 'Messalian' was extant. For example, Gribomont agrees with Dörries when he suggests that although Bishop Valerian twisted the thought of the author of the *Asceticon*, he did not totally invent the incriminating evidence against Messalianism.¹⁷² Rather they prefer to say that the pronouncement of the *Asceticon* with its Macarius / Symeon

¹⁶⁹ Quasten, 1950 vol 3, p275-6; esp *Vita Macrinae* PG 46: 959-1000.

¹⁷⁰ Elm, 1996, p194f; See also Brown, 1988, chap. 16.

¹⁷¹ Bouyer, 1963, p371 rejects the finding of 'pan-Messalianism' in fifth century writers as an optical illusion.

¹⁷² Gribomont, 1972, p618.

connections as Messalian is due to a historical decision not a theological one, based upon judgements made by Valerian of Iconium and his colleagues c385-95.¹⁷³ Stewart also notes that the lists of Anti-Messalian doctrines, particularly that of Theodoret,

indicates that there was a coherent set of objections [to Messalianism] which may have rested upon misinterpretation, but certainly not upon fantasy.¹⁷⁴

This misinterpretation as has already been mentioned, has been a constant theme throughout the study of the Macarian corpus. Initial Greek supposition developed into Western suspicion, and this in turn was bolstered by intransigent thought protecting vested interests.

As Macarian studies were narrowing down the area of Ps-Macarius' influence, studies into the diversity of Syriac Christianity were increasing. Bundy examined the criteria for being *in communione* in the early Syriac Church,¹⁷⁵ and in doing so advanced the understanding of the orthodoxy of the Syrian Church in comparison to the orthodoxy of the pre-imperial western Church. Bundy points out the diversity of Christian adherents within early Syrian Christianity, when compared to the early western 'communion' of Bishops.¹⁷⁶ No list of accepted teaching existed in Syrian Christianity, and there was intense competition to define what it meant to be a Christian.¹⁷⁷ As such he suggests that the designation of 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' is certainly not an adequate framework of analysis for the phenomenon of the different approaches to the exposition of Christian faith in early Syrian Christianity, suggesting instead that the issue revolved around the sources of knowledge and the philosophical structures acceptable for the articulation of Christian beliefs.¹⁷⁸

Why such integration occurred at this stage of the development of Christianity can be seen from the political occurrences of the third and fourth centuries. Christianity and Roman

¹⁷³ Gribomont, 1972, p625.

¹⁷⁴ Stewart, 1991, p55.

¹⁷⁵ Bundy, Aug 25, pp597-608.

¹⁷⁶ Bundy, Aug 25, p597.

¹⁷⁷ Bundy, Aug 25, p597.

¹⁷⁸ Bundy, Aug 25, p598. See also Elm, 1996, Gager, 1975.

Rule were merging as never before,¹⁷⁹ and the Byzantine co-operation between Church and State begun under Constantine was growing apace under Theodosius. In simplistic terms, the Church was becoming the Church of the Empire, and relationships between Christians of separate nationalities and allegiances took on a different hue. The Syrian/Persian enforced assimilation into the Roman Empire ceased with the signing of a peace treaty by Jovian (c364),¹⁸⁰ and Edessa, at the Eastern edge of the Empire, would have retained its bilingual nature and cultural religious practices. The difficulty of persuading a non-Roman Christian of the authority of the Greek-speaking Imperial Church is not to be underestimated. Conversely the assumption of the Imperial Church of its universal authority must also be taken into consideration. The integration taking place was not only in regard to theological developments, but also of ideological and ethnic allegiances. Notable in regard to Macarian study is the advance of Imperial Christianity. Bundy defines Imperial Christianity as 'Christian doctrine and praxis used as the unifying ideology of empire, determined and enforced from the centre of political power of the empire'.¹⁸¹ He maintains that after the council of Nicea, the direction of Imperial favour became clear, and it became advantageous to associate with the 'orthodox' church.¹⁸² Thus, the Messalian movement was but one of many movements that were suddenly to be assigned an 'unorthodox' label by a foreign influence. Indeed Bundy notes that 'Only after Ephrem's time (306-373) were the 'orthodox' secure enough to insist on 'orthodoxy'.¹⁸³ As the Macarian corpus is held to fit into the latter stages of this time, it is conceivable that the integration and assimilation mentioned before also constituted an element of a battle for orthodoxy, as orthodoxy itself was being defined within the Syrian milieu. The struggle was not only for the Syrian Church to identify her own orthodoxy, but for those Syrian adherents to

¹⁷⁹ Ostrogorsky, 1956, p27-50.

¹⁸⁰ Ostrogorsky, 1956, p51.

¹⁸¹ Bundy, Aug 25, p605 An example of Imperial Christianity is that of Theodosius' (d395) attempt to harmonise beliefs and praxis in the East, which resulted in the strengthening of the position and role of the Bishop.

¹⁸² Bundy, Aug 25, p606.

¹⁸³ Bundy, Aug 25, p606.

the Nicene Faith¹⁸⁴ to communicate their Nicene orthodoxy within the varieties of Syrian tradition. However, first and foremost the Messalian controversy was a local issue, and although the larger picture would impinge upon it, it must not be allowed to cloud the view of what are already shadowy origins.

Throughout this brief survey of previous scholarship it can be seen that there has been a constant move by scholars away from a definitive systematic definition of Messalianism. Scholarship began to underplay the potentially radical edge of the Homilies, and to see Messalianism in a more all-pervading light, almost as the sole characteristic of Syriac Christianity itself. Baker (1970) asserted that the Homilies were in essence non-controversial, non-fanatical,¹⁸⁵ and broadly encratic.¹⁸⁶ Murray (1975) describes the Messalians as a 'movement' rather than a sect, characteristic of Syrian asceticism which laid stress on experience of the Spirit.¹⁸⁷ Meyendorff (1980) saw them as 'a charismatic sect opposing Church order and sacraments' while at the same time noting the difficulty of giving a single definition of Messalianism.¹⁸⁸ Staats (1983) defined Messalianism as 'a dramatic manifestation of Syrian Christianity [that] can be considered utterly heterodox only from the viewpoint of the orthodoxy of an Imperial Church',¹⁸⁹ and Stewart in turn, refined Staats¹⁹⁰ by describing Messalianism as

a dramatic manifestation of Syrian Christianity in Greek guise, [that] can be considered utterly heterodox only from the viewpoint of the orthodoxy of a *Greek-speaking* Imperial Church.¹⁹¹

Perhaps this waters down the radical tendency of Messalianism a touch too far, as even

¹⁸⁴ As Ephrem, Bundy, Aug 25, p607.

¹⁸⁵ Baker, DownR 88, p406.

¹⁸⁶ Baker, DownR 88, p402.

¹⁸⁷ Murray, 1975, p35.

¹⁸⁸ Meyendorff, St. VTQ 24.4, p220, p226.

¹⁸⁹ Staats, 1983², p53.

¹⁹⁰ Stewart, 1991, p8, takes exception to Staats' generalisation of the Messalian character in his *Epistula Magna* 1984, p23-6; See also Staats, 1983², p68-71.

¹⁹¹ Stewart, 1991, p10.

Ephrem, a Syrian writer, included Messalianism within his list of heresies.¹⁹² The very obscurity of the Messalian adherents mitigates against any definitive description of the phenomenon, and stands as a warning against the desire to define. Perhaps Gribomont has the best approach to Messalianism when he describes it simply as a '*hérésie fuyante*'.¹⁹³ However, for the purposes of this study a working definition (as opposed to a definitive one) of Messalianism will be taken as:

A type of Syrian Spirituality, bearing similarities with Eustathianism, having a high regard for virginity and the reception of divine communication, that encouraged prayer and charismata, and whose authority was based upon charisma and experience rather than class, education, or ecclesiastical position, thus leading to potential for conflict with local hierarchs.

Conclusion: The Future Needs of Ps-Macarian Research.

The survey carried out above has shown the clear progression of academic thought concerning the Macarian corpus, and in particular the complex nature of the question of the Messalian relationship. It is inconceivable that the Macarian homilies should ever be thought of as unconnected with the Messalian controversy, but the exact nature of the connection between the two is still a matter of debate. Scholarship has succeeded in isolating a form of Messalianism within the corpus, and agrees upon the generic environment of exchange and integration that is evident within the works of Gregory Nyssa and Ps-Macarius. However, complete agreement is not yet evident, and many questions remain.

The chronology provided by Stewart is an ideal introduction to the Messalian controversy, but it does not attempt to illuminate the beginnings of Messalianism. It may be that these beginnings will remain forever concealed in history, but the suggestions of Quispel

¹⁹² Ephrem, *Contra Haereses* CSCO 169-170, p79; cf Gribomont, 1972, p613f.

¹⁹³ Gribomont, 1972, p611.

as to the Encratic nature of Messalianism deserve closer examination. So too, the relationship between Eustathianism and Messalianism, demands more clarification. Messalianism may have gained a public 'heretical' face and form after c325, but the formative influences behind it were extant well before that date, although not in the precise form that was ultimately condemned. Stewart has answered Staats' plea for an agreed chronology from the point of maximum agreement, as earlier incarnations of the Messalian tendency may well not garner as great a consensus. The council of Side is now suggested to have occurred between 385-395A.D. and without further evidence appearing, that is as close a date as is likely to be acceptable. The related question as to what exactly happened at that council remains unanswered.

The re-appraisal of the origins of Monasticism that has occurred in recent years has considered anew those non-western, and 'non-Christian' areas of spirituality that were so influential within the Syrian region. Of the Cappadocian / Syrian interchange further agreement has been reached concerning the relationship between Gregory Nyssa and Ps-Macarius, with the consensus being that Gregory utilised in some way the *Great Letter* of Ps-Macarius in his *De Instituto*. However, this does not require the wholesale rejection of Gregory Nyssa as a closet Messalian. The realisation that Ps-Macarius was involved in a discussion for the assimilation and exchange of ideas in the proto-monastic period allows Gregory to step around the awaiting straightjacket of the label of 'heretic'. Rather, Gregory and Ps-Macarius were involved in a process which would eventually result in an orthodoxy in terms of monasticism, exactly as the theological arguments were also creating orthodoxy within the oecumenical councils of that century. The picture of Ps-Macarius has changed from being seen as a Syrian leader of the Messalians, albeit attempting reform from within, to his being a dual-culture reformer who was seeking to connect the best of Syrian Spirituality with the best of Greek monastic traditions. The Macarian homilies are not only directed at reforming the Messalian movement, but also integrating that movement into the wider ecclesiastical

environment. It is becoming apparent, from the inter-relation between the Cappadocians and Ps-Macarius, that the integration was a two way process, and that Ps-Macarius was not only reforming a movement, but was also persuading others of the value of that movement.

Thus the present state of research is bereft of detail in the most crucial of areas. What is required is an investigation into the Greek nature of Ps-Macarius as well as into the Syrian background of the homilies. As Stewart has shown, the uniqueness of his language is an opportunity to investigate the formative influences upon him. The form of the Macarian collections must now be examined to ascertain whether there is any common thread that can be isolated as purely Macarian, and whether the hand of the editor can be more clearly recognised. An examination of the rhetoric within the Corpus would contribute to this, as would a complete critical edition of the corpus.

Further areas of correlation between Gregory Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea, and Ps-Macarius must also be sought. In doing so the complex relationship between the Cappadocian circle and the ascetic tendency can be clarified. A hitherto unmentioned question concerns the relationship between Ps-Macarius and the ascetic circles of Macrina, as well as the underdeveloped question of the Eustathian connection. Further, the recent advances and clarification brought to Diatessaronic studies by Peterson highlight the need for an examination of Encratism in relation to Eustathianism.

Identification of Ps-Macarius is no nearer today than it ever has been, and it may be that without further literary discoveries precise identification will remain a mystery. However, this does not detract from the value of the texts themselves as they have much to reveal about the beginnings of Monasticism and the Cappadocian / Syrian interchange of the fourth century. Recent advances in understanding have, as is so often the case, turned up more questions than answers, and more problems than solutions.

In considering the rhetoric of the Macarian corpus this thesis shows the rhetorical education of Ps-Macarius, and the skill that is evident in the construction of his arguments and

teaching. It also highlights the way in which Ps-Macarius seeks to persuade as well as instruct. His use of familiar images is examined and compared with that of Gregory Nyssa. In particular the images of the 'wings of the spirit' and being 'intoxicated with God' are examined and the idea of the progression of the soul considered. The encratic nature of the Macarian movement cannot be fully ascertained without a re-evaluation of the use of Encratism and *enkrateia* in present scholarly activity. Thus, the threefold definition of Encratism arrived at is a structure on which it is possible to place the Eustathian and Messalian movements. The radical encratism, of which Ps-Macarius is a part, is evidently distinct from the exclusive encratism as portrayed by the Eustathians. The council of Gangra is a benchmark for the heretically perceived activities of the Eustathians, with which Ps-Macarius and the lists of the heretical Messalian practices can be compared.

However, it is within the texts themselves that the interchange of Greek and Syrian culture can be best revealed. This is particularly illustrated by the parallels between the imagery of Gregory Nyssa and that of Ps-Macarius. Specifically the concepts of 'flying on the wings of the Spirit', and of being 'intoxicated with God', reveal a mutual understanding of the progressive journey of the Christian to the ultimate union with the Divine. Such an examination reveals the neoplatonic influences within Ps-Macarius, and raises further questions concerning his education and ecclesiastical position.

This thesis attempts to tighten up the definition of encratism, and examines the imagery of the Macarian corpus. It considers the rhetoric within the corpus and compares its findings to the theology of the Cappadocian circle. In doing so Ps-Macarius emerges as a complex figure, in receipt of a variety of influences yet maintaining a distinctive voice. Recent research has identified Messalianism as a shadowy heresy, difficult to isolate and define. This thesis suggests that Messalianism was initially a local issue concerning Church leadership, which escalated through the ecclesiastical structure by means of synods and councils, and spread through the 'ground level' of the Church by word of mouth rather than by personality.

The search for the objectionable element in Messalianism is assisted by the examination of celibacy and encrateia. That there was something objectionable about the movement is not in doubt. The identification of the objectionable element in Messalianism has hitherto been problematic. The initial concern of Messalianism was the experience of the Spirit and prayer. Part of the concern of Ps-Macarius is the authority of the teacher, whether it be charismatic or political, and the life of prayer and discipline necessary to receive the divine experience that enables one to teach. The motivation within the Macarian texts is complex and varied. Spiritual experience and progress, authority and eschatology all vie for attention. Ps-Macarius emerges from the Syrian background as an enigma. One entrenched in Syrian spirituality, yet conversant in Hellenic wisdom, and able to interact both with those within the Church structure and those on the fringe. This thesis considers the Cappadocian connection with Ps-Macarius and suggests that this area is the most likely to reveal clues as to his identity and ecclesiastical position. This consideration of the position of Ps-Macarius will be an important element in any future work concerned with the identity of the author.

CHAPTER 1. SYRIAN SPIRITUALITY.

Towards a Definition of Syrian Christianity

Coupled with the growing awareness of the fluid nature of Messalianism, and a willingness to study the phenomenon without the pre-supposed doctrines of prior scholarship, there has been an increased awareness of the role and nature of Syrian Christianity itself. The concepts 'Messalian' and 'Syrian' have on occasion been used interchangeably, and both are difficult to define precisely. It is therefore necessary for this present stage in our thesis to examine the components of a distinctively Syrian Christianity. That is if one is to be able to assert in any meaningful sense a Syrian provenance for the Macarian corpus, or to examine more carefully the gradual understanding of Messalianism that has emerged from the best of recent research.

Syrian Christianity has, in recent years, become a 'catch all' phrase, used with increasing randomness, and under a range of assumed definitions. To examine adequately what constitutes the Syrian nature of Ps-Macarius it is necessary to create a more focused working definition of Syriac Christianity. The various facets that can be isolated within Syriac Christianity will therefore be examined and a working definition given.

The 'Syriac area' is taken to mean Northern Mesopotamia and Adiabene,¹ with the frontier to the east. The region includes the cities of Antioch (Capital), Damascus, Emesa, Apamea, Epiphania, Laodicea, Sidon, Tyre, Edessa, and the Euphrates region.² The Syrian language is a dialect of Aramaic which was the lingua franca of a wide area. Syriac, as such, was the dialect of the city of Edessa and its province Osrhoëne, and it is here that we find what Barnard terms the 'cradle of Syriac Christianity'.³ Syria was an ancient seat of Christianity, which partly depended upon Antioch, and which may have been evangelized by Jewish-

¹ See map Appendix A.

² Drijvers, 1984, chap.I p1.

³ Barnard, 1991, p13.

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and Adiabene Jews were still numerous in the second century.¹³ Nisibis was the largest Jewish community, which also boasted the existence of a celebrated Jewish academy whose fame spread throughout Mesopotamia and Palestine. The Jews mixed easily with neighbours, even sharing the cemetery. Tannaitic (Judaic Rabbinic teaching)¹⁴ influence was strong in Nisibis, and the centres of Nisibis, Edessa and Adiabene were linked by trade routes as well as common religion. Antioch, the capital of Syria, was a Pagan cult centre, focusing predominantly upon *Ba'al*, a deity common throughout the region.¹⁵ Both the Qumran (1947-56) and Nag Hammadi (1945) discoveries made in recent times revealed that Judaism at the beginning of the Christian era had assumed richly variegated forms which influenced certain early Christian communities.¹⁶ Drijvers distances himself from the thesis that

due to the cultural isolation of the Syriac-speaking area, which protected it against Hellenistic influences from the West, precious authentic words of Jesus himself and the gospel traditions of the Jerusalem congregation have been kept in the cradle of Syriac speaking Christianity and have been lost elsewhere.¹⁷

He asks whether 'this romantic and nostalgic picture will stand firm when it is confronted with the available sources and other historical data'.¹⁸ Certainly the somewhat romanticist view summarised by Drijvers may be responsible for the resurgence of interest in Syriac Christianity, but it gives no detail to a definition, and is generally without foundation.

An Overview of the Major Syrian Influences and Sources.

Early Syrian sources include the *Didache*, written in Western Syria around the beginning to middle of the first century. It reveals a measure of Jewish opposition, and baptism

¹³ Neusner, JBL Vol 83, pp60-66.

¹⁴ Barnard, 1991, p215 notes that where Tannaitic activity was strong in the Jewish diaspora Christianity struggled to establish itself. However, areas not under the Tannaitic influence were more open to the Christian message.

¹⁵ Wallace-Hadrill, 1982, p17.

¹⁶ Barnard, 1991, p14.

¹⁷ Drijvers, 1984, chap.I p2 fn5; Charlesworth, Heythrop 15, p 5-17.

¹⁸ Drijvers, 1984, chap.I p2.

still being performed in running water. There is no universal creed and the liturgy is simple.¹⁹ Wandering 'ministers' were a characteristic of certain Syrian ascetical circles,²⁰ and the regard for wandering prophets is evidently decreasing.²¹ Ignatius of Antioch (c100-125) wrote seven epistles en route to his martyrdom at the beginning of the second century. Ignatius termed himself the 'Bishop of Syria', and Eusebius revealed that Ignatius was the second Bishop of Antioch.²² Tugwell proposes that Ignatius created a strong central church government in Antioch, a church which included a notable body of non-Jewish converts, but which was under a significant Jewish-Christian influence well into the second century.²³ Ignatius himself, through his letters, reveals a debt to contemporary hellenistic religious concepts²⁴ and the myriad religious beliefs within the Syrian region.

Marcion (c.85-160)

Marcion has been termed the 'arch-heretic' of the second and third centuries.²⁵ The son of a Bishop he became a wealthy ship owner and merchant, whose travels took him to Rome.²⁶ There is evidence to suggest that his father excommunicated him, before his leaving,²⁷ and once in Rome it was not long before further excommunication from the Church occurred in 144 A.D. In response Marcion wrote his *Antitheses*, (not preserved), and spent the remaining years of his life seeking to encourage the growth of the original 'pure' church. Marcion was essentially a gnostic,²⁸ in his rejection of Yahweh's identification with God, and

¹⁹ Quasten, 1950f vol 1, p37.

²⁰ Desprez, ABR vol XLII, pt I p166.

²¹ Quasten, 1950f vol 1, p37

²² Eusebius, *Hist Eccl.* 3.22, 3.26.

²³ Tugwell, 1989.

²⁴ Tugwell, 1989, p106.

²⁵ Frend, 1991, p55.

²⁶ Frend, 1991, p55.

²⁷ Quasten, 1950f, vol 1 p269ff.

²⁸ Some have defended Marcion against the charge of Gnosticism. Von Harnack is of the opinion that Marcion was a reformer and the restorer of Paulinism. (Quasten, 1950f vol 1, p269f). However Marcion does share the essentially Gnostic cosmology, and rejection of the

his assertion of the plurality of God. God's redemption of mankind occurred in the abrupt appearance of Christ upon the earth.²⁹ Marcion believed that trust in God's goodness sufficed for salvation, and all Jewish connection was to be rejected. The Marcionite followers were characterized by a rejection of marriage, an ascetic lifestyle, and a concept of Church based upon almost unattainable personal purity.³⁰ The Marcionite Church spread rapidly throughout Syria, and the Marcionites were an influential group in the area.

Gospel of Thomas (c.140)

The *Gospel of Thomas* was first rediscovered and published this century in 1959.³¹ The Gospel is extant in Coptic but strongly suggests a Syrian origin.³² It consists of 114 sayings mainly by Jesus.³³ Judas Thomas could be considered as the first preacher of the gospel in the East of Syria area, centring on Edessa.³⁴ The *Gospel of Thomas* is dated c140, originating probably from Edessa,³⁵ and it is to be noted how closely the sentiments in the *Gospel of Thomas* fit into the picture of Syrian Christianity drawn by Aphrahat early in the fourth century.³⁶ The Gospel represents the most ancient witness of a nascent Syrian Gnosis.³⁷ It manifests a certain ascetic tendency, and represents μοναχοί (*monachoi*) or solitaries, for the Kingdom. Barnard suggests that it is likely that from the outset the Church in Edessa was

Old Testament.

²⁹ Frend, 1991, p56.

³⁰ Frend, 1991, p56.

³¹ Drijvers, SC vol 2:3, p158.

³² Murray, 1982, p4.

³³ Elliott, 1993, p124.

³⁴ Drijvers, SC 2.3, p159. In this instance Addai becomes a product of creative fantasy. Or in origin Judas Thaddaeus was the original apostle of Syria, who became conflated as *Judas Thomas*, and the *Doctrina Addai* is kept intact. In the same period the Addai / Abgar story was invented, under the philosopher Bardaisan. The original references to Thaddeus fell into oblivion, and he became remembered as Addai. Suggested by Gunther, *Muséon* 93, p113-148.

³⁵ Elliott, 1993, p124.

³⁶ Barnard, 1991, p18.

³⁷ Desprez, ABR XLII pt I, p177; McL. Wilson, 1967, p44 suggests that in its present form the Gospel is a gnostic work, especially since it was found in the library of a gnostic group, but that in examining the parallels to the canonical Gospels the Gnostic elements are secondary.

permeated by asceticism of a Jewish-Christian type and that this found an expression, as early as c140, in a slightly Gnosticized or dualistic form in the *Gospel of Thomas*.³⁸ However Elliott points out that although many of the sayings have a Gnosticizing tendency, the practical spirituality that is taught is not one that would have been untenable in catholic Christianity.³⁹ Quispel maintains that the Gospel tradition is a positively Jewish-Christian one, and in this the influence leans more towards the orthodox Judaism than heterodox Judaism⁴⁰ Thus he proposes that Christianity in Edessa was of Palestinian origin,⁴¹ and that the *Gospel of Thomas* contained an independent Jewish Christian tradition.⁴²

The central theme of the theology of the Thomas literature is mankind's regaining of paradise lost through the right use of his mind and will as taught and revealed by Jesus.⁴³ In this work, abstinence from sexual intercourse was not born from hatred of the body, but the desire to return to man's original state: a theology very characteristic of Syrian Encratism.⁴⁴ It has been suggested that the authors of the gospel were simply citing agrapha, vaguely thinking they came from Scripture and having no idea of their presence in the *Gospel of Thomas*. The influence of particular encratic trends in the *Gospel of Thomas* upon our authors may then possibly be nil. However Quispel defends the *Gospel of Thomas* as an essentially encratic writing rather than a gnostic one, and also supports the theory that the Gospel contains clear elements of an extra-canonical Jewish-Christian tradition.⁴⁵

Bardaisan (c.155-223)

Bardaisan was born c.155 of rich parents, in Edessa. He became a Christian in the last

³⁸ Barnard, 1991, p19.

³⁹ Elliott, 1993, p124.

⁴⁰ Quispel, VigChr 22, p85.

⁴¹ Quispel, VigChr 22, p91.

⁴² Quispel, VigChr 22, p88.

⁴³ Drijvers, SC 2.3, p171.

⁴⁴ Drijvers, SC 2.3, p171.

⁴⁵ Elliott, 1993, p125.

quarter of the second century, and was active in Christian circles until he died in 223, by which time he had separated from the Edessan Church. He spent most of his life at the court of Abgar the Great, in Edessa.⁴⁶ He is the first clear personality in Syriac literature,⁴⁷ subsequently regarded as a heretic, but his works have not survived and can only be recreated from sources. He fought against the Valentinian heresy, although he had connections with Valentinian gnostics before his conversion (possibly as a group leader).⁴⁸ Bardaisan disputed with the Marcionites over of the Oneness of God, as opposed to Marcion's doctrine of two Gods, and his dialogues against the Marcionites were widely used by Christians and known in the Syrian area, particularly the '*Book of the Laws of Countries*'.⁴⁹ He took part in the philosophical discussion of the day, and wrote a treatise against the Platonists.⁵⁰ Bardaisan was linked to the philosophy of his time and he has a place in a Hellenistic philosophical tradition where soul and matter, freedom and fate are the focal centres of interest.⁵¹ He has been traditionally represented as the teacher of Mani,⁵² through whom the dualistic potential within Bardaisan's writings took a final form.⁵³ According to Ephrem, Bardaisan is the creator of Syrian Hymnody, as he composed 150 hymns to spread his doctrine.⁵⁴

*The Acts of Thaddaeus / Doctrina Addai.*⁵⁵

The *Doctrina Addai* is a document that purports to record the emergence of

⁴⁶ Drijvers, 1984 chap.XI, p190.

⁴⁷ Murray, 1982, p3.

⁴⁸ Quasten, 1950f vol 1, p263.

⁴⁹ Written by his disciple in which Bardaisan is the speaker. The work is against astrological determinism and stresses free will. Murray, 1982, p4.

⁵⁰ Drijvers, 1984 chap.XI, p192.

⁵¹ Drijvers, 1984 chap.I, p209.

⁵² Drijvers, 1984 chap.XI, p209.

⁵³ Drijvers, 1984 chap.XI, p209.

⁵⁴ Quasten, 1950f vol 1, p263. (Possibly including the '*Hymn of the Soul*' in the *Acts of Thomas*.)

⁵⁵ The *Doctrina Addai* was probably composed c400, and is a Syrian version of the *Acts of Thaddaeus*. However, in the *Doctrina Addai* Jesus does not give a letter to Abgar, but a picture of Jesus is given to Abgar as a present. (Quasten, 1950f vol 1, p142)

Christianity at Edessa.⁵⁶ Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History I, 13*⁵⁷ records the story of Thaddaeus or Addai, one of the 70 disciples of Jesus, who came to Edessa from Palestine in response to a letter from King Abgar V to Jesus, requesting deliverance from a terrible disease. Jesus dispatched one of the 70, with a personal letter. After the resurrection Thomas sent Thaddaeus to Edessa as a herald and evangelist of Christ.⁵⁸ The Doctrine states that part of the merchant community of Jews in the city was converted at the same meeting at which King Abgar became a Christian, and that it was Tobias, a Jew, who introduced Addai to the King. The Jews of Edessa are represented in the *Doctrina* as being friendly to Christianity.

Drijvers places the composition of the *Doctrina Addai* within the second half of the third century, (pre Eusebius), and states that it was extant in both Syriac and Greek, and also places it within Mani's and the Manichaean mission of the period.⁵⁹ He states that

The whole structure and the various motifs of the *Doctrina Addai* should be explained against the background of a historical situation in Edessa in which the Manichaean version and interpretation of Christian belief was the most powerful rival of a nascent 'orthodox' version of the same tradition.⁶⁰

Barnard regards as 'improbable' Drijvers' suggestion that Addai is a borrowing from Manichaeism, where a missionary named Adda was one of Mani's inner circle,⁶¹ and he prefers to say that Addai was a historical figure as, had the Church been looking for a historical founder at the end of the fourth century c400,⁶² Judas Thomas was the most likely candidate. Drijvers states that the Tobias excerpts are wholly legendary and part of a propaganda to convert Jews to Christianity. Barnard notes that the *bulk* of the correspondence is legendary,

⁵⁶ Barnard, 1991, p14.

⁵⁷ Quasten, 1950f vol 1, p140 extant therefore c200.

⁵⁸ The legend is repeated with additions in a Syriac document known as the *Doctrina of Addai* which in its present form dates from c400AD, although Drijvers denies it has any early historical material.

⁵⁹ Drijvers, SC 2.3, p160.

⁶⁰ Drijvers, SC 2.3 p166, see also 1984 chap I, p18. 'The Addai story has clear anti-Manichaean tendencies, and as a historical fiction functioned in a situation in which Manichaeism was a real threat'.

⁶¹ Drijvers, 1984 Chap.IV, pp159-165.

⁶² The date of the *Doctrina Addai*. Quasten, 1950f vol 1, p142.

for if it is authentic none of the early Christian writers knew anything of it.⁶³ However in support of the belief that early traditions are incorporated into the Christ-Abgar traditions is the fact that Eusebius knew that at that time Edessa was outside the Roman Frontier, and that within the *Doctrina* Jesus promises that 'no enemy shall rule over it forever', suggesting a basis in early tradition as Edessa was incorporated into the Empire 216 AD.

Bauer considers the Abgar and Addai legend as pure fantasy, and does not give any attention to the *Acts of Judas Thomas* in the history of Syriac Christianity,⁶⁴ and Segal calls it 'One of the most successful pious frauds of Antiquity'.⁶⁵ Quasten records the Acts of Thaddaeus as 'nothing more than local legends'.⁶⁶ Burkitt in 1924, equated Tatian with Addai, but this is unlikely.⁶⁷

Tatian and the Diatessaron (c200)

Tatian, a Syrian by birth, was of pagan parentage, and was a pupil of Justin Martyr,⁶⁸ who is held to have undergone a profound change at the martyrdom of Justin cA.D.165. In 172-3 he broke with the Church and returned to his own country. He was by temperament an extremist, who had a vivid sense of the power of evil over fallen humanity. He held that only the Holy Spirit can recreate us, and that only those who renounce the world can become converts.⁶⁹

Tatian was a typical representative of Syrian encratism in the second half of the

⁶³ Barnard, 1991, p15, however it may have been written after 216, and given an earlier date as an encouragement to the inhabitants of a newly incorporated city.

⁶⁴ Drijvers, SC 2.3, p160.

⁶⁵ Segal, 1970, p64, also 1980, pp179-91.

⁶⁶ Quasten, 1950f vol 1, p142.

⁶⁷ Barnard, 1991, p16, and fn.13.

⁶⁸ Quasten, 1950f vol 1, p220.

⁶⁹ Desprez, ABR XLII, p171. 'Dead to the world, they refuse the madness that is in it, and turned toward God, they repudiate the old nature by clinging to God.' Tatian *Discourse to the Greeks 11*.

second century.⁷⁰ Quasten regards Tatian as the founder of the Encratite sect, and sees him as a gnostic.⁷¹ Within encratite theology there was a denial of marriage and an understanding of it as a debauchery inspired by the Devil and introduced by Adam. Tatian's argument was not dualistic but based upon baptismal radicalism. Marriage is equivalent to the law, from which baptism has liberated the Christian.⁷² Desprez notes that 'otherwise Tatian is orthodox, and he was never considered a heretic in his homeland. He would have all Christians celibate'.⁷³ Tatian was at the same time an exponent of the Syrian spiritual climate and its powerful promoter.⁷⁴ His best known work was the *Diatessaron*, which became the Gospel par excellence of Syriac speaking Christianity, until early in the fifth century. The *Diatessaron*, a conflation of the Gospel Canon is held to have been produced between 165-180A.D,⁷⁵ and Peterson suggests it was composed by Tatian in (or on his journey to) the East. It appealed to the Edessan Church because its outlook was congruous with an ascetic-encratite tradition which was strong in the Church from its foundation.⁷⁶ It consists of a continuous life of Jesus, integrating all the canonical materials, especially John, and *en passant* it injected into the Syrian Church a strongly encratite tendency.⁷⁷ In the fifth century, when Tatian's heretical position had been widely agreed, bonfires were made of the *Diatessaron*, and not one single line of the Syrian text has ever been found. Extant copies today include Ephrem's Armenian version of his *Commentary on the Diatessaron*, which was translated into Latin in 1841.

⁷⁰ Desprez, ABR XLII, p172.

⁷¹ Quasten, 1950f vol 1, p22. Western sources (Irenaeus, see Murray, 1975, p280), credit Tatian with the founding of the Encratite sect, but Eastern sources do not mention him at all. Drijvers explains this as Tatian's ideas being common currency in the Syriac area, and there was no need to mention his name as a founder of a special sect. (Drijvers, 1984 chap. I, p7). Perhaps it is better to term Tatian as the one who brought Syrian Christian ideas to the attention of the West. See below chapter 3 for a detailed examination of encratism and Tatian.

⁷² Desprez, ABR XLII, p172.

⁷³ Desprez, ABR XLII, p172.

⁷⁴ Drijvers, 1984 chap.I, p7. For a summary of Tatian's theology see Drijvers, 1984 chap.I, p8f.

⁷⁵ Peterson, 1994, p416. Peterson notes that although it is widely held that Tatian composed the *Diatessaron* the evidence is mitigated by a lack of knowledge concerning Ammonious.

⁷⁶ Barnard, 1991, p21.

⁷⁷ Desprez, ABR XLII, p171f.

However the only fragment that has ever been found in Greek was from Dura Europos. This contains only 14 lines on one piece of parchment, part of the passion narrative, with a reading that has never been known before.⁷⁸ Baker draws attention to these interpolations of the Diatessaron, and the assumption that Tatian infiltrated his Encratite ideas into the whole work. Many hold that within the *Diatessaron* there are five sources, the four gospels, and a tradition that was also found in the *Gospel of Thomas*.⁷⁹ While it is clear that Tatian modified parts of the Gospels,⁸⁰ ‘One should not assume Tatians’ intrusive hand at every corner. His ingenuity in managing to get the Synoptic parallels in, shows deep respect for the text.’⁸¹ It also has to be proven that Tatian placed the interpolations himself rather than finding them already there in the text.⁸²

Irenaeus accused Tatian of ‘inventing certain invisible aeons, similar to those of Valentinius, of asserting that marriage was only corruption and fornication, and of devising arguments of his own against the salvation of Adam’.⁸³ Barnard suggests that Irenaeus’ condemnation was harsh, as Tatian’s heresy was a gradual formation, rather than merely a reaction to the death of his mentor Justin, and that within Early Christianity it was possible to hold such diverse views whilst remaining within the confines of the Church.⁸⁴ Barnard also notes that Tatian was an Assyrian who had come to Rome from Mesopotamia, and that he would have been very much at home with the ethos of eastern and oriental groups within the Church at Rome.⁸⁵ Tatian’s Syrian roots would have imbued him with an understanding of singleness, and celibacy. His encounter with Valentinus and the gnostics would have given

⁷⁸ Baker, DownR 88, p398. This manuscript was found in 1933.

⁷⁹ eg Quispel, VigChr 13, pp87-117. Barnard, 1991, p20. Drijvers, SC 2.3, p173, assumes that the author of the *Gospel of Thomas* used the *Diatessaron* and places the date of the *Gospel of Thomas* as A.D. 200.

⁸⁰ Barnard, 1991, p 20.

⁸¹ Baker, DownR 88, p399.

⁸² Baker, DownR 88, p403.

⁸³ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer. I. xxxvi.1*; See also Grant, JTS 9 (ns) 5 1954, p62ff.

⁸⁴ Barnard, 1978, p186.

⁸⁵ Barnard, 1978, p191; Peterson, 1994 ch 2, p67-83.

him access into spiritual explanations from which he could draw inspiration. Furthermore he was also influenced by the traditions and source which found their way into the *Gospel of Thomas*. The uncertainty that surrounds the dating of the *Diatessaron* and of Tatian's *Discourse* further complicates the discussion of Tatian's heretical development. There is little overtly gnostic influence within the *Diatessaron*, unless the inclusion of the *Gospel of John* is taken as an overtly gnostic stance,⁸⁶ whereas the *Discourse* contains a passage on the creation of man, which displays distinctly gnostic elements.⁸⁷ As Peterson points out, one explanation for this could be that the genre of the *Diatessaron* (a gospel harmony) precluded gnostic speculations, but that a further explanation could be that the *Diatessaron* was written before Tatian embraced gnostic ideas.⁸⁸

There is evidence that Ps-Macarius, Aphrahat (c340), and the author of the *Liber Graduum* (c4th century) preserve readings and sayings found in the *Diatessaron*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and the *Apocryphal Acts*.⁸⁹ Some have concluded that there is a line of descent, or at least literary dependence between all these works. But it is ambiguous evidence. However as much as these authors quote the *Diatessaron*, it is difficult to go beyond the evidence and assert that the authors take on board all the Encratite elements of Tatian.⁹⁰

Odes of Solomon (c200-275)

The *Odes of Solomon* are a collection of 42 hymns of an early date,⁹¹ constituting a

⁸⁶ See Peterson, 1994, p77.

⁸⁷ Tatian, *Discourse* 7.1-3 (ANF 2:67f).

⁸⁸ Peterson, 1994, p77.

⁸⁹ Baker, DownR 88, p401, notes especially Quispel, 1967.

⁹⁰ Baker, DownR 88, p412f.

⁹¹ Dating the *Odes* has proved problematical. The consensus seemed to be for a mid-second century hypothesis, but Drijvers prefers a late third century date and a polemic against Marcion and Mani. Murray prefers a late second century date with the *Odes* being written first in Aramaic and translated into Greek and Syriac. Charlesworth (1973, preface) maintains that the *Odes* is the earliest Christian hymn book, and notes the various claims of origin and nature as Qumranic (Testuz), Gnostic (Gunkel), a redaction of a Jewish Grundschrift (Harnack, but rejected by the majority), authored by a disciple of John the Baptist (Smith), Bardaisan

spiritual link to Syriac Christianity's Jewish origins.⁹² The poetic language of the Odes does not lead to an easy determination of their character and theology,⁹³ and the Odes are often considered ecstatic Jewish-Christian hymns of salvation dating back to the very beginnings of the Church. Some Scholars consider the *Odes of Solomon* and the *Gospel of Thomas* as typical representations of Jewish-Christian theology. However, according to Drijvers the Odes are highly symbolic hymns with a very reflective wording which is based upon second century Antiochene theology, and which betray the influence of Tatian's *Diatessaron* and Encratite ideas, also showing signs of earlier anti-Marcionite and anti-Manichean polemic.⁹⁴

Again and again the Odes emphasize that God the creator is also God the saviour, and that the whole process of man's history from creation to the end is guided by divine providence. Only against the background of Marcion's doctrine can such specific phrases and theological accents become understandable and stand in their full meaning.⁹⁵

Drijvers believes that an analysis of the language of the Odes reveals a Christianity that is as accurately and dogmatically defined as in the regions more influenced by Rome.⁹⁶

The thesis of the Jewish origin of the Odes rests upon the juxtaposition of the Odes with the *Psalms of Solomon* in the manuscript discovery,⁹⁷ and also upon the use of a Psalmic idiom.⁹⁸ However these elements may equally be explained as a desire to imitate the style of the Psalms, and not necessarily witness to a direct Jewish origin. The Odes give expression to gnostic ideas but generally lack the characteristic gnostic dualism⁹⁹ (all the images and symbols

(Newbold), but eventually concluded to be totally Christian (Barnard) or Jewish-Christian (Harris-Mingana).

⁹² Drijvers, SC 2.3 p158n4, p170. Scholars include Klijn, Murray, Charlesworth, Culpepper, see Drijvers, p170 fn4. Edessa was not only bilingual but also had a Coptic influence and most Greek copies of a Syrian document would have been translated into Coptic also.

⁹³ Drijvers, 1984 chap.X, p117.

⁹⁴ Drijvers, SC 2.3, p167. Drijvers has dated the Odes in the second half of the third century, but this is not accepted by the majority. For a position contra to Drijvers, and arguing for a second century date see Abramowski, JTS ns38, p218-9

⁹⁵ Drijvers, 1984 chap.I, p6.

⁹⁶ Drijvers, JTS 31, pp337-335, p351; For a fuller analysis of the vocabulary and syntax of the Odes see Franzmann, 1991.

⁹⁷ See Charlesworth, 1973 for an introduction to the four text collections p1-14

⁹⁸ Quasten, 1950f vol 1, p161.

⁹⁹ Quasten, 1950f vol 1, p160.

in Ode 38 have exact parallels and counterparts in the Manichaean (Gnostic) doctrine,¹⁰⁰ and within the Macarian homilies certain similarities also exist.¹⁰¹ The Odes are most likely composed in the city of Edessa, which had an important Manichaean congregation, and also a Marcionite presence. The date of composition is reckoned to be c275,¹⁰² as some doctrinal implications can be drawn which would place it in the latter half of the third century.

Lactantius in the early fourth century is the first Father to quote the Odes.¹⁰³ In studying Ode 19 particularly Drijvers concludes that 'Its theological ideas contain a working out of second century conceptions directed through the text and structure of the *Diatessaron*'.¹⁰⁴ Overall the *Odes of Solomon* attest to the militant character of Syrian Christianity, and to a concept of baptism involving an active engagement in ascetic combat.

Liber Graduum (c4th Century)

The *Liber Graduum* probably dates from the fourth century, and was written in Syriac. It is 'isolated in character', and although it reveals relationships with primitive asceticism, there is hardly any relationship with Aphrahat and Ephrem.¹⁰⁵ It is a thoroughly semitic work, with little evidence of influence from Hellenistic Christianity, and it has a distinctive conception of the progress of human beings from creation, through fall and recovery, and on towards perfection.¹⁰⁶ It has little or no poetic symbolism, and depicts a very harsh sense of discipleship.¹⁰⁷ It is a work of high moral aspiration and rigorous self-

¹⁰⁰ Drijvers, 1984 chap.X, p121 gives a detailed comparison of Ode 38 with Manichaean theology.

¹⁰¹ Note also the similarity of the symbolism within the Odes, the Psalms, and Ps-Macarius.

¹⁰² Quasten, 1950f, places them in the first half of the 2nd century (vol 1 p162); Drijvers, 1984 chap.X, p129 offers A.D.240 as a terminus post quem, and 275 AD as likely and possible.

¹⁰³ Drijvers, SC 2.3, p169.

¹⁰⁴ Drijvers, JTS 31, p355.

¹⁰⁵ Murray, 1975, p34.

¹⁰⁶ Stewart, 1991, p86.

¹⁰⁷ Murray, 1982, p36.

examination, but it also emphasises the qualities of love and humility, as found supremely in the life of Christ. The higher goal within the life of those following the *Liber Graduum* is a life of perfection, when one is in full possession of the Holy Spirit, and thus knows all truth. The progress towards perfection is described in terms of steps or degrees, and the *Liber Graduum* has been known as the '*Book of Steps, or Ascents*'.¹⁰⁸ The *Liber Graduum* has a number of features in common with the Macarian homilies, but no direct literary links.¹⁰⁹ Brock describes the *Liber Graduum* as a product of a charismatic community out of which Messalian tendencies were liable in due time to emerge.¹¹⁰

The *Liber Graduum* describes how there are two kinds of commandments within the Gospel. The 'small commandments' summarised as 'One should not do to anyone else what is hateful to oneself; and what one wishes others to do to oneself, one should do to those whom one meets',¹¹¹ and then the 'Great commandments' for those who seek to become perfect, involving the renunciation of family, marriage and property.¹¹² The steps or degrees within the *Liber Graduum* describe the progress necessary to come into complete possession of the Holy Spirit. The notions of distinction and discernment are necessary for progress in the Christian life. Discernment of God's commandments is aided by the partial indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and it is this which it is necessary to advance along the path to a life of perfection.¹¹³

Aphrahat (c340)

Aphrahat is known as the 'Persian Sage', and is the first major Syrian writer whose works survive.¹¹⁴ Nothing is known of the circumstances of his life except that he witnessed

¹⁰⁸ Stewart, 1991, p86-92.

¹⁰⁹ Brock, 1987, p42.

¹¹⁰ Brock, 1987, p42. However, this description may be made out of a desire to keep the *Liber Graduum* 'orthodox', rather than a desire to legitimize the Messalians.

¹¹¹ *Liber Graduum Discourse I.4.*

¹¹² *Liber Graduum Discourse I.2.*

¹¹³ Stewart, 1991, p88.

¹¹⁴ Brock, 1987, p2.

the beginning of persecution of church leaders by the Sasanian King Shapur II. He was evidently a prominent figure in the Christian Church.¹¹⁵ Aphrahat left 23 *Demonstrations* dealing with the Christian life,¹¹⁶ and the threat posed to the Church by Judaizing tendencies amongst Christians.¹¹⁷ He still calls the ascetics ‘sons and daughters of the covenant’ (*bnay Qyāmā*), and they are defined as people who have committed themselves to continence at baptism.¹¹⁸ Burkitt maintained that Aphrahat understands baptism as: ‘privilege reserved for celibates, or at least for those who intended to live a celibate life in the future’, Vööbus suggests that Aphrahat is quoting an archaic liturgical formula, but Klijn dissents from this view, arguing that Aphrahat is only speaking from the outset to those who were already dedicated to virginity.¹¹⁹

In relation to prayer, Aphrahat is concerned to demonstrate the need for purity of heart if prayer is to be acceptable to God, and the description of prayer as an internalized offering of sacrifice in the inner chamber (which is the heart) is very prominent.¹²⁰ However prayer also involves perfecting the ‘rest of God’ in the form of works of mercy.

Ephrem (c300-373)

Ephrem is renowned as the greatest writer in the history of the Syriac speaking Church, and as a pillar of Syriac Christian literature and culture.¹²¹ According to Palladius he was a deacon in the church at Edessa, who had ‘accomplished the journey of the Spirit in a right and worthy manner’.¹²² Whilst Sozomen records that Ephrem’s writing was ‘so replete with splendid oratory and with richness and temperateness of thought that he surpassed the

¹¹⁵ Brock, 1987, p2.

¹¹⁶ Murray, 1982, p4, dates the 23 as 336,344,345A.D.

¹¹⁷ Brock, 1987, p2.

¹¹⁸ Baker, DownR 88, p401.

¹¹⁹ Summarised in Baker, DownR 88, p401.

¹²⁰ Brock, 1987, p2ff.

¹²¹ McVey (ed), 1994, p3.

¹²² McVey (ed), 1994, p12.

most approved writers of Greece'.¹²³ Sozomen also records that Ephrem began composing hymns as an antidote to the hymns of Bardaisan's son, who was spreading the doctrine of his father throughout the Syrian population.¹²⁴ Recent scholarship has demonstrated that the traditional biography of Ephrem is almost totally inaccurate, representing an Ephrem who was the product of Byzantine hagiographical embellishment, and that Ephrem lived his life not as that of an anchorite, but as an 'unmarried disciple of Christ wholly engaged in helping and advising his bishops by preaching, teaching, writing, and fighting against heresies'.¹²⁵ Murray places Ephrem within the premonastic order of the 'Covenant' (*bnay Qyāmā*).¹²⁶

Ephrem wrote both prose and poetry (which can be divided into *madrāse* (hymns) and *memre* (metrical homilies) and was prolific in both genres.¹²⁷ There is little allegory or typology within his writing, and Ephrem 'seems to be detached from the scholarly, historical, or 'scientific' interests which were in evidence in other contemporary Syro-Palestinian exegesis'.¹²⁸ Ephrem's commentary on Paul and his work upon the *Diatessaron* show traces of allegorical interpretation, but the commentary is almost entirely literal.¹²⁹ Ephrem makes frequent links between the Old and New Testaments. Ephrem also follows Eusebius in his interpretation, of Matt. 21:18-22, which Simonetti perceives as proof of the influence of the 'new' exegetical tendencies arising c 330-370.¹³⁰ Ephrem's exegetical aim seems to be to find openings for teaching and exhortation.¹³¹ He defends marriage as lawful, but positively commends virginity and holiness, the state of married persons who renounce intercourse and live in abstinence as members of the 'covenant' of committed celibates.¹³² Many of Ephrem's

¹²³ Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica III.16*; McVey (ed), 1994, p13.

¹²⁴ McVey (ed), 1994, p13.

¹²⁵ McVey (ed), 1994, p23f.

¹²⁶ Murray, 1982, p7.

¹²⁷ McVey (ed), 1994, p42.

¹²⁸ Simonetti, 1994, p63.

¹²⁹ Simonetti, 1994, p63.

¹³⁰ Simonetti, 1994, p62.

¹³¹ Simonetti, 1994, p63.

¹³² Murray, 1982, p6.

hymns were written for the whole Church community, to strengthen its faith and unity against heretical teachings.¹³³

From the major influences examined above it is possible to highlight several main streams of influence which are characteristically Syrian, and which therefore give definition to the term 'Syrian Christianity'. I will isolate five aspects before moving to a working definition of this key term.

1. Virginity, Asceticism and the Link with Jewish Thought and Practice

That early Syriac Christianity was highly ascetic in tendency is not in doubt. All the major sources analyzed above show at least some predilection towards an ascetic lifestyle. Early Syriac Christianity is permeated with asceticism and particularly a valuing of virginity or celibacy, and there is no recognition, in the earliest sources, of the validity of an ordinary married relationship as a viable Christian way of life.¹³⁴ However, the extreme nature of the extant sources must be noted, and a more common acceptance of the diluted form amongst the populace must be supposed. Where this ascetic influence came from is uncertain and a matter of continuing debate. There is a temptation to see a predominantly Jewish influence over the whole Syriac Christian scene, and even to ascribe Jewish roots to the Syriac Church.¹³⁵ However, the Jewish influence was not a uniform one, and no direct link can be confidently drawn between Judeo-Christianity and Syriac Christianity. Barnard prefers to say that early Syriac Christianity came to reflect a particular *facet* of Judaism: viz, the asceticism of Jewish sectarianism, and he takes Aphrahat as an example of this facet.¹³⁶ Part of his reasoning for doing this is the weight Aphrahat places upon baptism. For him baptism is not the means for

¹³³ Murray, 1982, p7.

¹³⁴ Barnard, 1991, p17.

¹³⁵ For a discussion on the Jewish influence upon the formation of the Church in Antioch see Tugwell, 1989.

¹³⁶ Barnard, 1991, p16.

initiation for every Christian, but a privilege reserved for celibates, whom he terms the 'spiritual aristocracy'.¹³⁷ For Aphrahat the Church consisted of baptized celibates who are the real spiritual athletes, with a larger body of adherents who remain on the fringes of the Christian communities, much like the 'god-fearers' in the Jewish synagogues. From about AD 180 onward documentation on the ascetic life becomes more copious and detailed,¹³⁸ and the view that celibacy was the essential pre-condition for baptism would seem to be the normal practice in the Syrian Churches well into the third Century AD.¹³⁹ An example of the requirement for celibacy in baptism, can be seen in the *bar Qyāmā* and *bath Qyāmā*. These were an important ascetic group within Syrian Christianity, who lived a life of virginity and holiness.¹⁴⁰ The exact translation of *bar Qyāmā* and *bath Qyāmā* has proved difficult and a matter of dispute. Vööbus holds that the term was the equivalent of the Hebrew *berith*, ie 'covenant' or 'pact', and this has been widely followed.¹⁴¹ Nagel prefers to translate the term as 'resurrection', meaning that the *bar Qyāmā* are the ones who anticipate the resurrection in this life,¹⁴² whilst Brock prefers to leave the term untranslated due to the necessary ambiguities involved.¹⁴³ This group included two types of people, the *btûlâ* (the virgins), and the *qaddîšâ* (the marrieds who had renounced marital intercourse.)¹⁴⁴ Whatever the precise meaning of the term it is clear that a select core of the Syrian church, identifiable by their baptism, virginity and asceticism, lived as a spiritual élite within the whole. The formation of this group is suggested to be from a time after Aphrahat, although Murray assigns the first ten of Aphrahat's discourses as being written particularly to the members of this group, to strengthen their morale and sense of commitment.¹⁴⁵ He says of the covenant,

¹³⁷ Barnard, 1991, p16; Aphrahat, PS vol 1.

¹³⁸ Desprez, ABR pt 2, p180-310.

¹³⁹ Barnard, 1991, p16; See below chap.3 for detail.

¹⁴⁰ Brock, 1992, p7.

¹⁴¹ Barnard, 1991, p17; Vööbus, 1958 vol 1, pp97ff.

¹⁴² Barnard, 1991, p17; quoting Nagel, 1966, p41f.

¹⁴³ Brock, 1992, p7.

¹⁴⁴ Brock, 1990.

¹⁴⁵ Murray, 1982, p7.

it was the core or heart of the early Syriac church, and doubtless all Christians regarded it as such. Coenobitical monasticism did not develop until the late fourth century, and previous to that it seemed that the men and women members of the covenant were more closely related to the Church community, often living at home or in small groups, through which much of the pastoral concern of the Bishops was exercised.¹⁴⁶

The 'covenantal' aspect of Syriac Christianity has been traced back to a Jewish milieu,¹⁴⁷ and a specifically Aramaic-Christian movement,¹⁴⁸ as well as particularly to Qumran.¹⁴⁹ However, Brock sounds a warning note, noting that while this connection is intriguing, the evidence that has so far been adduced for any direct links with the Qumran community is so tenuous as to be really worthless.¹⁵⁰ It has been argued that celibacy arose in the Essene movement at Qumran, and subsequently found its way into Judaeo-Christianity by the invocation of the ritual sexual abstinence required for 'holy war'.¹⁵¹ However while the ascetic, celibate life in general, and the 'covenant community' in particular were undoubtedly characteristics of the Syriac church, it would be foolish to assign the advent of this characteristic to a totally Jewish influence. Also, Golitzin has recently drawn attention to the possibility of early monastic texts being influenced by the Second Temple and Judaic apocalyptic theology.¹⁵² It is important to note that the term, 'Judaism' in this context covers many facets of belief and practice. It is not possible to think of a singular belief practice, and assign to it an influence within the formative period of Christianity in Syria. This is due to the fact that it is not possible simply to speak of 'Judaism'. Hostile anti-Jewish groups were in evidence within the area, and 'Jewish Christianity' would have to envelop at least as many types from the critical and dissident Jewish traditions as from those who continued to look to the Jerusalem temple and priesthood as their religious focus.¹⁵³ Indeed Murray prefers the term

¹⁴⁶ Murray, 1982, p8.

¹⁴⁷ Barnard, 1991, p18.

¹⁴⁸ Vööbus, 1958, pp1-10, 102.

¹⁴⁹ Murray, 1975², p8.

¹⁵⁰ Brock, 1984 chap.1, p8.

¹⁵¹ cf Murray, 1975, p17.

¹⁵² Golitzin, 1999. See below p224f.

¹⁵³ Murray, 1982, p5.

'sectarian Palestinian monotheism' to Judaism, as it encompasses more of the variety and pluralism of the period.¹⁵⁴ The make up of this 'Palestinian monotheism' would include Ebionite circles, Jewish-Christian Elkesaites, Qumran and the Adiabene Jews.¹⁵⁵ There is also the latent monotheism of Edessa to take into account, and the predilection of the Edessians to a monotheistic belief system.¹⁵⁶ Within the ascetic connection with Judaism there also is a possible link between Rabbinic exegesis and Christian exegesis of the time,¹⁵⁷ and while 'there were elements of similarity between the asceticism practised by Syrian Christians and that of the fringes of Judaism',¹⁵⁸ a firm link cannot be drawn. Murray notes that the 'fringe Jewish asceticism', in the form of sexual asceticism, was all but universal in the Syriac world,¹⁵⁹ but the emphasis is upon the *fringe* of Judaic tradition, and he views a Jewish sectarian ideology as permeating the Jewish Christian communities in the area.¹⁶⁰ It must also be noted that ascetic practices of the kind that eventually flourished in Syria were alien to mainstream Judaism, and that the main biblical influence for Christian ascetic practices were the Beatitudes, and the New Testament, and

it is worth remembering, in the rush to assign Syriac Christianity and literature to Judeo-Christianity, that Judeo-Christianity is predominantly anti-Pauline, and anti-Pharisaic, and that single minded dedication to Christ is valued above virginity.¹⁶¹

Judaism had many variegated forms within the time period under investigation, and to draw a continuous line, however tentatively, would be to ignore the other ascetic influences within the region.

The re-evaluation of the beginnings of monasticism that has taken place over recent

¹⁵⁴ Murray, 1982, p8f; 1975, p7ff.

¹⁵⁵ Which may account for Aphrahat and Ephrem. Murray, 1975, p8.

¹⁵⁶ Barnard, 1991, p15.

¹⁵⁷ Murray, 1975, p336. 'We can justifiably imagine Ephrem teaching exegesis in the Christian School at Nisibis in ignorance that many of the treasured traditions which he was handing on were being taught at the same moment by the Jews in their own school not far away.'

¹⁵⁸ Wallace-Hadrill, 1982, p19.

¹⁵⁹ Murray, 1975, p11.

¹⁶⁰ Murray, 1975, p17.

¹⁶¹ Baker, DownR 88, p405.

years, has questioned the assumption that Egyptian monasticism was the primary form of the ascetic lifestyle which affected and channelled all other monastic forms.¹⁶² Furthermore the idea that Syrian ascetic behaviour was entirely severe in outlook and practice has also been re-evaluated. Instead, a new appreciation of the place of Syrian Christianity in the history of asceticism, has gained ground, and a re-evaluation of the stereotypical understanding of the asceticism of the Syrian church has been undertaken.¹⁶³ Griffiths has noted that Syrian monastic, or pre-monastic life has a 'stamp of originality' wherein there are 'resonances and nuances which impart a distinctly conceptual flavour'.¹⁶⁴ Rather than looking to the traditional Greek corpus of texts of Ephrem, now understood to include later works, Griffiths prefers to examine the works of Aphrahat and the Syriac Ephremic writings for glimpses into the true history of the Syrian Church.¹⁶⁵ Brock also assigns Aphrahat and Ephrem to the proto-monastic tradition, and explains Ephrem's association with the Egyptian monastic tradition as due to later (sixth century) Byzantine writers connecting Ephrem with the prestige of the Egyptian monastic movement.¹⁶⁶ Similarly Aphrahat has suffered from being associated with Egyptian monasticism when in reality he was part of the Syrian proto-monastic movement. The original Syrian ascetical impetus then, comes not from Egyptian monasticism, but from an integral Syrian asceticism, which was later changed and adapted through other patterns of anchoritic and coenobitic experiences, popularised in text after the Constantinian reign.¹⁶⁷ Brock notes that it was not until after the death of Ephrem that coenobitic monasticism became

¹⁶² See Rubenson, 1995, p55 n.1.

¹⁶³ Texts originally used by Vööbus, 1960, and ascribed to Ephrem, have been questioned as to their authenticity. Griffiths, 1995, p222 holds them to be later works, and thus inadmissible as evidence for the origination of Monasticism within Syrian asceticism. The texts include '*Letter to the Mountaineers*' Beck, 1973, p28-43; '*On the Solitary Life of the Anchorites*'; Beck, Sermones IV, p1-16; '*On Anchorites Hermits and Mourners*' (Beck, Sermones IV, pp16-28). See also Rubenson, 1995, p49ff.

¹⁶⁴ Griffiths, 1995, p222; Murray, NTS 21, p59.

¹⁶⁵ Griffiths, 1995, p222.

¹⁶⁶ Brock, 1987, p49f.

¹⁶⁷ Griffiths, 1995, p222,238.

an important feature of the life of the church in Syria.¹⁶⁸ Thus from the fourth century at least, Syrian ascetical practices and monasticism have been related.¹⁶⁹ Rubenson states that

By 400 AD monasticism was established in the Christian world.... and from the fourth century onward Christian asceticism cannot be studied without reference to monasticism.¹⁷⁰

Furthermore Rubenson affirms that it was within the monastic environs that ascetic practice was provided with a place to develop.¹⁷¹ Asceticism and celibacy were undoubtedly major characteristics within Syriac Christianity, and they formed a continuous stream with the later advent of monasticism, which permeated to some extent, the Christian faith of the whole region. However ascetic discipleship, so deep rooted in Syriac literature did not please everyone, especially the more analytical, theologically minded Grecized bishops of the 'Great world'.¹⁷²

2. Angelic Imitation

To be added to the ascetic lifestyle and trends of celibacy, examined above, is the influence of the related notion of angelic imitation that is found within the Syrian sources, and in particular within those writings concerned with the *bnay Qyāmā*. Within Syriac Christianity there is an understanding of the role of angels within the divine plan that is not as pronounced amongst the more westerly forms of Christianity the Syriac Church encountered. Murray points out that the initial meaning of the Jewish and Syriac words for angels is 'watchers', a

¹⁶⁸ Brock, 1987, p49.

¹⁶⁹ Rubenson, 1995, pp49-57; See fn 175 above; Griffiths, 1995, p220-524, esp p221.

¹⁷⁰ Rubenson, 1995, p49.

¹⁷¹ Rubenson, 1995, p49.

¹⁷² Baker, DownR 88, p406 In the early 5th Century Rabbula, Bishop of Edessa supported the anti-Nestorian side in the controversy. The result was that the Church in Edessa was assimilated on the practical level to Antioch, and other centres of Greek speaking Christianity, and was no longer cut off from other churches by its indigenous Syriac Bible, liturgy and doctrine. Greek theology did not fit easily into the exuberant Syrian Church, and the Syrian Church, lacking the intellectuals needed to sustain a creative synthesis, was the loser, becoming secondary to Greek Christianity. (See also Barnard, 1991, p21).

quite different understanding to the New Testament concept of 'messenger',¹⁷³ that was prevalent in the Greek literature. According to Murray this concept of angels as 'watchers' helped prepare the ground for the idea of monasticism as a '*vita angelica*' on earth.¹⁷⁴ The meaning of *ʾirê* includes to be wakeful,¹⁷⁵ and the idea of angels being ever wakeful in constant praise to God is akin to the ascetic ideal of living a life of permanent continence and worship to God. The understanding of *ʾirê* as 'watchers, or wakeful' originates from the book of Daniel, and as well as having an association with the parable of the virgins (Matt. 25; Luke 20:35f) concerning the equality with angels that comes with a marriageless life.¹⁷⁶ Thus, the link between the ascetic outlook and angelic mimesis is crucial to any inquiry into the characteristics of early Syrian Christianity. Virginity, when understood as angelic imitation illuminates the position of virgins within the Church as the pre-fallen condition of humanity is re-created in their celibate lifestyle. As such virginity was seen as an earthly sign and foretaste of the state of the resurrection,¹⁷⁷ or ultimate apotheosis; a model of purity.¹⁷⁸ This understanding of virginity has long been recognised in the later Patristic writings, but was also evident in the writings of the early Syriac Church.¹⁷⁹ Whereas the later model of virginity for Greek Christians centered on the lack of sexual differentiation of angels,¹⁸⁰ and the notion of a re-creation to an original Adamic position and betrothal to Christ,¹⁸¹ the early Syriac sources show an understanding of virginity conceived as the rejection of sexuality in order to attain individual spiritual perfection. For the Syriacs it was primarily a sign of a present living in the new heavenly kingdom: an eschatological symbol. Brown notes that the desire to 'imitate

¹⁷³ Murray, 1975, p14 fn1. gives the literary construction. Murray, *Orientalia* 53, p303-317.

¹⁷⁴ *ʾirê*: Watchers, wakers, angels. Brock, 1985, p208.

¹⁷⁵ Murray, 1975, p14 fn1; Brock, 1985, p140.

¹⁷⁶ Brock, 1985, p140.

¹⁷⁷ Gasparro, 1995, p135.

¹⁷⁸ AbouZayd, 1993, p97.

¹⁷⁹ Vööbus, 1958, p257; Elm, 1996.

¹⁸⁰ Gasparro, 1995, p135f.

¹⁸¹ See Murray, 1975, p131-158 for a detailed discussion of the betrothal imagery within Syrian Christianity.

angels', as found in the Syriac Church, was fuelled by the belief that the bodies of the celibate would be filled with 'otherworldly power'.¹⁸² This infusion of otherworldly power can be linked to the Syrian practice of restricting baptism to those committed to a life of continence.

However Brown focuses upon the extreme edge of the spiritual tradition of the holy men and women of antiquity, and portrays a more austere portrait of the *ihīdāyā* than does for example Brock.

The Syriac hermits of the 4th century were regarded as citizens of heaven, already residing with the angels, and therefore their equals.¹⁸³ According to AbouZayd Ephrem regards these solitaries as: 'companions of celestial angels, whom they emulate in every deed',¹⁸⁴ and states that praise, as a response, starts out as vocal praise, but through refinement and purification takes on the character of the silent praise of the angels.¹⁸⁵ Brock notes that for Ephrem those who receive the Eucharist do so as almost angelic beings, and are thus shown in the process of being recreated in nature.¹⁸⁶ This notion of transfiguration to an angelic likeness proceeds after the initial baptismal experience. The re-entry into paradise, the regaining of the pre-fall Adamic position and the transfusion of the Spirit, received through baptism, enables such a transfiguration to take place. Thus rejection of marriage in the earthly life is rewarded in paradise.¹⁸⁷ Ephrem's understanding of angels is as fire and spirit,¹⁸⁸ and the transfiguration to an angelic state involves the mingling into the 'whole of Christ'.¹⁸⁹ According to the *Liber Graduum* the hermits are like the angels as they seek to make manifest, in the present, the life of resurrected souls, by their practice of virginity.¹⁹⁰ However, Ashbrook-Harvey draws attention to the communal aspect of earliest Syrian asceticism and in particular the city

¹⁸² Brown, 1988, p330.

¹⁸³ AbouZayd, 1993, p266.

¹⁸⁴ AbouZayd, 1993, p266.

¹⁸⁵ Brock, 1985, p79; Ephrem, *Teaching Songs on Faith* 4.1.

¹⁸⁶ Brock, 1985, p79; Ephrem *Teaching Songs on Faith* 10.9.

¹⁸⁷ Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise* VII.15.

¹⁸⁸ Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise* VI.24.

¹⁸⁹ Ephrem, *De Virginitate* 37.2 ; See Brock, 1985, p104.

¹⁹⁰ AbouZayd, 1993, p268; See also Vööbus, 1954, pp108-128.

location of many ascetic communities,¹⁹¹ asserting that ascetical practices could be founded upon familial contexts alongside the more frequently supposed eremitical ones.¹⁹² Whilst there is little evidence of virginity as an ecclesiological activity, there is overwhelming evidence of virginity conceived as an individualistic ‘spiritual marriage’ with Christ as the heavenly bridegroom.¹⁹³ Coupled to this individualistic spiritual marriage is the ideal of imitating angels, as it is through the consecration of the body in baptism that a mystical relocation into the heavenly city is achieved, and the ongoing transfiguration to angelic status begins.

The value of practising virginity is found lauded throughout the Patristic writings and it is certainly not a theme solely the preserve of the Syrian Church. However, within the Syrian context the acceptance of virginity as an imitation of an angelic position does seem to be more widespread amongst the general populace than in Graeco-Roman circles, and can thus be said to be a defining Syrian characteristic. This distinct slant to the practice of virginity within the Syrian Church focusses on the idea of presently realized heavenly citizenship, and looks towards restoring Adam’s lost glory, even advancing beyond Adam by the virginal betrothal to Christ. The ‘*vita angelica*’ not only prepared the ground for the idea of monasticism as a solitary activity but was very much an integral part of early ascetic activity, spirituality, and community.

3. Poetic Forms / Language

The sources of Syriac Christianity examined above have a common stylistic thread running through them: a richly allusive and poetic form of theological symbolism. Ephrem, the latest of the influences examined, wrote in a hymnodic style that has resulted in his being termed the

¹⁹¹ Ashbrook-Harvey, JSEC 4.1, p34. Harvey notes Vööbus’ attribution of such location to political insecurity.

¹⁹² Ashbrook-Harvey, JSEC 4.1, p34f.

¹⁹³ Murray, 1975, p157f.

pillar of Syriac Christian literature and culture, and the greatest writer in the history of the Syriac Church, [who] stands on the pillar of Syriac Christian literature and culture.¹⁹⁴

Murray calls him the greatest poet of the Patristic age and, perhaps the only theologian-poet to rank beside Dante.¹⁹⁵ It is the term 'poet-theologian' that gives a clue to the style and aims of Ephrem. The anonymous (and in the main unreliable) '*Life of Ephrem*' records how he wrote his hymns and sang them to the harp, teaching them to the 'daughters of the covenant'.¹⁹⁶ Murray notes that Ephrem's style of theologizing hymns was a means of propaganda, a style which he took over from the prior works of Bardaisan.¹⁹⁷ In between Bardaisan and Ephrem were others whose teaching was passed on through one poetic form or another. Aphrahat wrote in a prose style, replete with rhythmic patterns,¹⁹⁸ and list sequences, behind which lies earlier Hellenistic-Jewish synthesis, based on Old Testament forms.¹⁹⁹

Of the other major influences we have examined Bardaisan and the Acts of Thomas both reveal a prose style that has Syriac characteristics, although betraying also a Hellenistic style.²⁰⁰ With the prose of Ephrem and Aphrahat, Syriac *Kunstprosa*, can be first clearly identified.²⁰¹ The poetical forms and use of Mani are also to be noted.²⁰² Indeed both the *Odes of Solomon* and the Manichaean Psalms are exponents of a Syriac hymnology that may go back to Bardaisan or earlier, and which would eventually find its most mature form with the writings of Ephrem Syrus.²⁰³

However, it is not only the written style of the writers that sets it apart as a distinctly Syrian characteristic. It is also the symbolism contained within the literary style. For example

¹⁹⁴ McVey, 1994, p3.

¹⁹⁵ Murray, 1975, p31, p5.

¹⁹⁶ Murray 1975, p30; McVey, 1994, p14f; See Matthews Diakonia 22 p22-23.

¹⁹⁷ Murray, 1975, p30.

¹⁹⁸ Murray, 1975, p30.

¹⁹⁹ Murray, 1977, p124. For a detailed examination of Aphrahat's heritage and in particular the 'list sequences' of Aphrahat's *Demonstrations* style, see Murray, 1977, pp110-125.

²⁰⁰ Murray, 1982, p10.

²⁰¹ Murray, 1982, p10.

²⁰² Drijvers, 1984 chap.I, p17.

²⁰³ Drijvers, 1984 chap.X, p119; see also Murray, 1977.

throughout the Syrian 'corpus' the tenor of all the stories about the heavenly wedding (as found in the *Acts of Thomas*) and the entering of the heavenly bridal chamber is the same, it is a poetical phrasing based upon biblical parables of the concept of the union of soul and spirit (as found in Tatian) which means a return to the state of immortality before Man made wrong use of his will.²⁰⁴ There is a richness and power within the symbolism in early Syriac poetry much of which can be ascribed to the biblical inheritance shared with Judaism, and with the native northern Mesopotamian mythology.²⁰⁵ Such symbolism includes the vision of paradise as a mountain, comparable with both the Genesis story and Near Eastern mythology,²⁰⁶ the three tier mountain of Ephrem's liturgical interpretation, and the tree of life. Another typical Syrian symbolism is the view of the Holy Spirit as feminine and motherly. This particular symbolic mode is found in the *Odes of Solomon*, Aphrahat, and Ps-Macarius.²⁰⁷ The symbolic theme of Christ's descent to Sheol to reclaim the dead, is found in nearly all the Syriac sources.²⁰⁸ Murray notes that very few of the Syriac writers are likely to have seen each other's work, but there is still a uniformity of symbolism and midrashic exegesis within those works.²⁰⁹ While the written style is varied, there is a stream of symbolism that touches the majority of the Syriac writers, that found its form and style by a development from Judaic scriptures and a monotheistic interpretation, Near Eastern mythological tradition, and the complete adherence to the commands of Jesus of total discipleship. Such symbolism is a distinct characteristic of Syrian Christianity.

4. The Place of the Heart in Syrian Christianity

Syrian Christianity has all too often been described as a religion of the heart as

²⁰⁴ Drijvers, 1984 chap.I, p10.

²⁰⁵ Murray, 1982, p12.

²⁰⁶ Murray, 1982, p12.

²⁰⁷ Murray, 1982, p13; 1975, pp312-320.

²⁰⁸ Murray, 1982, p14.

²⁰⁹ Murray, 1975, p340f.

opposed to the mind, and a distinction has been drawn between the two loci within the person. This distinction allows the Syrian Church to practice an affective spirituality alone, and ascribes to the Western Church a more mind based (noetic) spirituality. As neat a definition as this is, it is based largely upon false twentieth century intellectual distinctions read back into the early Church. Part of this modern day colouring may be due to the influence of the Byzantine Hesychast movement which emphasised the place and prayer of the heart, and which have enjoyed a resurgence of popularity in recent times. However, within the sources examined above there is little or no evidence of a dichotomy of head and mind, as understood in the western sense, rather there is the idea of the heart as the central tenet for all of human activity.²¹⁰ It is therefore both the seat of the emotions and the place of discernment, the place of encounter and the place of stillness. The initial ideal noted above, of the heart as a characteristic of Syrian Christianity is true only when the heart is understood from its place in the biblical tradition, and within early eastern anthropology. In the sources examined above, Aphrahat is an example of understanding the heart as being the place of prayer, and as such the locus of the emotions and the intellect. For example he writes that we must pray in secret in our heart and shut the door of our mouths,²¹¹ he also stresses the idea of prayer as a sacrifice, and the need for purity of the heart in prayer.²¹² Similarly the *Odes of Solomon* contain many references to the heart, to the heart's role in the exaltation of the Lord (7.23; 8:1; 11,1; 21.8; 26.2.6; 37.2; 40.2); to the heart being opened by the Lord in salvation (10:1,6); to the nourishment of love given to the heart by God (16.2; 18.1); to the working of the Spirit upon the heart (28.1.2); and to the heart's responsibility to meditate on God's love (41.6). The *Odes* refer to the mind and heart separately only once, in connection to God's creative activity forming 'heart and mind' (8.18). The preponderance of references to the heart within the *Odes*

²¹⁰ Brock, *Sorb* 4.2, p132 notes the Israelite understanding of the heart as the centre of the whole being. See also Adnès, s.v. '*Garde du Coeur*' *DSp* vol 5; Guillaumont, s.v. '*Le Coeur chez les spirituelles Grecs a l'époque ancienne*' *DSp* vol 2; McGuckin, 1999, p3-27.

²¹¹ Brock, *Sorb* 4.2, p134; Aphrahat, *Dem* 4.10.

²¹² Brock, *Sorb* 4.2, p136.

shows the integral nature of the heart to the relationship between the Odist and God. Overall there is no dichotomy of heart and mind to be found within the *Odes of Solomon*, rather a unity of response of the heart which envelops the whole nature and form of humanity. An overview of the sources within Syrian Christianity shows how stress is placed upon the unity of man, and in particular upon the response of the heart, and salvific act upon the heart.

5. The Influence of Tatian and Marcion

The heretical influence of Marcion upon Christianity in general and Syriac Christianity in particular has been shown above. Drijvers suggests that in presenting the Church with a problem to confront, Marcion, through the refutations proposed and published by Tatian, affected the whole spiritual climate of the Syrian world. Thus an anti-Marcionite tendency was a uniting factor within Syriac Christianity and this, allied with a similar adherence to Tatian's teaching, was influential within the growth and development of the belief of the area.²¹³ Marcion's influence was paramount and opposed by Bardaisan as well as Tatian, and the Judas Thomas traditions and the *Odes of Solomon*, contain similar polemics against Marcion.²¹⁴

Furthermore the Tatianic influence with the *Acts of Thomas*, the *Odes of Solomon* and the awareness of Lucian, the 'founder' of the School of Antioch, of this literature suggest a thread of Tatianic theology constantly flowing through the years of Syrian Christianity.²¹⁵ Tatian was deeply influenced by Platonism and Stoicism, and that philosophical flavour can be detected in all Syriac literature based upon his ideas. It can even be considered the first phase of later Antiochene theology, for which the foundations were laid in the Syriac-speaking

²¹³ Drijvers, 1984 chap.I, for a summary of his hypothesis.

²¹⁴ Drijvers, 1984 chap.I, p17.

²¹⁵ cf Drijvers, 1984 chap.I, p14; see also Simonetti, 1994, who sees an Antioch influence in the School.

area.²¹⁶ The Platonic and Stoic division of man into philosophical concepts of body, soul and spirit found expression through Tatian, and this contributed to the theological framework of Syriac-speaking Christianity and linked it with the Greek-speaking west, despite Tatian's mistrust of western influences.²¹⁷ Drijvers sees Tatian as characteristic of the theology of the *Gospel of Thomas*, particularly in his '*Oratio ad Graecos*'.²¹⁸ However, Drijvers has to argue for a later dating for the *Gospel of Thomas* in c200, rather than a pre-Tatian c140. If the Gospel is dated c140, it makes Tatian an inheritor of the Thomas tradition rather than the instigator as Drijvers prefers, and the later date affords the *Gospel of Thomas* a more prominent place in Syriac Christian history. According to Tatian the human soul and the divine pneuma form a syzygy, which implies a return to man's original state. Thus even the symbolism of the bridal chamber may go back to such ideas of the *suzugia* of the soul and pneuma.²¹⁹ It is possible that Tatian took over some of the forms and theology of the Gospel of Thomas and articulated them anew within his work, and his *Diatessaron* in particular.²²⁰ Quispel prefers to place Tatian in a progressive stream of encratism, and he argues for Tatian using a Jewish Christian source in his *Diatessaron*, and that this work was written to replace the *Gospel of the Nazorees*,²²¹ rather than in opposition to the Marcionite tendency within the Church.²²² There is no reason to suppose that these areas are mutually exclusive. Peterson notes that the problem of dependence still defies solution, and that direct dependence seems unlikely. Rather he proposes a mutual dependence upon a common textual tradition. However if, as is generally accepted, the *Diatessaron* is the first gospel in Syriac, this hypothesis concurs with Quispel's theory of dependence rather than with Drijvers.²²³

²¹⁶ Drijvers, 1984 chap.I, p17.

²¹⁷ Drijvers, SC 2.3, p172.

²¹⁸ Drijvers, SC 2.3, p172f; Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 15.1.

²¹⁹ Drijvers, SC 2.3, p172.

²²⁰ Drijvers' proposal was rejected by Klijn. See Peterson, 1994, p297ff for a summary of the argument.

²²¹ Quispel, VigChr 22, p89.

²²² See also Peterson, 1994, Appendix II, and p272-282.

²²³ Peterson, 1994, p299.

It is not possible to focus solely upon the gnostic elements of Tatian's theology, without also noting the foundational and balancing elements within his doctrine. Part of the formation of Tatian's encratism was the gnostic cosmology encountered at Rome, and which is best illustrated by his *Discourse* but this cannot be dissected from his inbuilt predilection for ascetic practices. Tatian's theology is, therefore, the product of many different influences and was formulated over a long period of time, beginning before the death of Justin. Tatian was a part of the spread of encratism, but in the doctrine of Double Creation and the damnation of Adam, he brought to Syrian Christianity a secondary explanation for that which was already recognised, albeit in a different form and language. The original impetus behind Tatian's theology was the role and place of the single ones in Syrian spirituality. The difference between Tatian's motivation for his encratism and Ephrem's eschatological encratic motivation, lies in the balance and emphasis placed upon and within the creation story. Tatian's motivation for encratism came to include the gnostic elements as seen in the '*Discourse*', whereas Ephrem's motivation did not include the understanding that marriage was evil.

However much the origin of Tatian's theology is examined there is no doubting that his anti-Marcion polemical tendency greatly affected Syriac Christianity. Tatian could have been redefining the extant encratic tradition, and bringing it to the attention of the western Church, whilst at the same time assimilating that encratic tendency into a Judaic-Christian outlook by utilising an existing Jewish Christian source. Also Tatian could have been combating the Marcionite tendency by promoting anti-Marcion theology within his work. Whilst this is perhaps assuming a complicated motive, it allows our understanding of Tatian out of a purely anti-Marcionite straight-jacket.

In Tatian there is a move away from an allegorical understanding of the Scriptures to a more literal one, partly, one suggests, due to an overt allegorical interpretation by the gnostics and Marcion in particular. This literal interpretation can be seen more clearly in

Ephrem, who, in taking a literal style of interpretation, finds openings within the Gospel text for teaching and exhortation.²²⁴ Whether this literal understanding of the text was a pure reaction to overt allegorical misuse by Marcion and gnostic circles, or an already extant understanding of a means to interpret scripture, is dependant upon the links to Judaism that we have examined above, and the awareness of and reaction to Origenistic interpretation.²²⁵ Thus Tatian and Marcion were two major influences on Syriac Christianity, opponents from the beginning, who subsequently fixed the structures of early Syriac theology.

A Definition of Syriac Christianity

From the brief investigation carried out above it can be seen that early Syriac Christianity had a strong ascetical tendency. This ascetic 'stream' was evident within Tatian, Mani, the *Acts of Thomas*, and the more general encratite teaching that pervaded the Syrian Church.²²⁶ It can also be seen that a large 'stream' of Palestinian monotheistic influence existed, which was by no means orthodox Judaism, but still Jewish in origin, and which affected Syrian Christian communities. At one stage it would have been incongruous that these streams could exist together. However, within Syria, especially since the discovery of the documents at Qumran and Nag Hammadi, and the reappraisal of other Syriac historical writings, the idea of a merging of these streams has become more acceptable. Murray points out that

it is clear that ascetical doctrine and practice was not alien to all forms of Judaism, but that in the extraordinary variety of the latter (ascetic practice) in the time of Christ the seeds of not merely temporary but permanent celibacy for spiritual combat were present.²²⁷

²²⁴ Simonetti, 1994, p63.

²²⁵ Simonetti, 1994, p54.

²²⁶ McVey, 1994, p11f.

²²⁷ Murray, 1975, p17f.

However, he cautions against a wholesale acceptance of a purely Jewish explanation by stating that

This is not to say, however, that this variety in Judaism explains everything; certainly in the east the seed fell on very fertile and receptive soil, as the response to Marcion and Mani showed.²²⁸

To this Jewish or Palestinian monotheism must be added the characters of Tatian and Marcion. That they were the most influential personalities in the shaping of that typical Syriac theology which gave rise to so many speculations and fantasies, is not in doubt. Drijvers states of them that the whole development (of Syriac Christianity) can be explained as due to their influence on, reactions to, polemics against, and a further, sometimes poetical, elaboration of their individual ideas.²²⁹ However Tatian and Marcion were inheritors of the already extant streams of an ascetic tendency and a Jewish monotheistic heritage. They gave shape to Syriac theology by the ongoing discussions that took place between them and their followers. Building upon the endemic ascetic tendency of the Syrian region, Tatian articulated an encratic lifestyle which had been assumed for years before. Encratic practices were highly ascetic and an encratic heritage cannot be divorced from the general asceticism of Syriac Christianity. Indeed it may be that the encratism given form and shape by Tatian may have Jewish / Palestinian monotheistic roots, and the celibate and ascetic practices found in Tatian are indicative of a Syriac mindset which held ascetic practices in high regard pre-Tatian, and which can be seen in the *Gospel of Thomas*, and within earliest Jewish-Christianity.²³⁰ In combating Marcion, Tatian attempted to prevent an excessive gnostic stream from contaminating the flow of Syriac Christianity. Undoubtedly he failed to prevent a gnostic interpretation of Christian ideas from merging with the nascent Syrian Christian belief. So too, the advent of Manichaeism affected the Syriac environment. To see Tatian as the sole instigator of Encratism, or Marcion as a reactionary architect of Syrian Christianity is to undervalue the traditions and environment that enabled them to articulate

²²⁸ Murray, 1975, p18.

²²⁹ Drijvers, 1984, chap.I p3.

²³⁰ See Quispel, VigChr 22, p85-93.

theologies and theories that in either a positive way (Tatian) or a negative way (Marcion) shaped Syrian Christianity for the years to follow.

The streams, isolated and discussed above, do not give Syriac Christianity a unique position within early Christianity as these contributing factors can be ascribed to all Christendom. For example both East and West had to combat gnosticism in one form or another, and a Jewish heritage can also be ascribed to both. One single characteristic does not adequately describe Syrian Christianity, and other defining factors need to be sought. In regard to these 'streams', a note of caution should be sounded. The gaps in knowledge far outweigh the understanding that has been gained from years of research, and any links established must remain tentative, particularly in the early Syrian era. Abramowski notes that

The anonymous or pseudonymous Syriac literature from the period before Aphrahat and Ephrem is hedged round with so many uncertainties of date and place, of literal and historical connections that conclusions have to be drawn with the utmost care....to draw a map of this world one has to be conscious that the blank spaces would take up most of it.²³¹

Murray prefers to define Syrian Christianity by its lack of cohesion with the rest of Christendom. He notes that Syrian Christianity seemed to have no place for Christian unity, especially towards the West, and the role of the Holy Spirit is not seen as a corporate uniting factor, more of an individualistic activity.²³² Barnard's summary also sounds a note of caution.

We would be unwise to exaggerate the importance of early Syriac Christianity...but it shows that an early Christian tradition existed in Edessa, having its roots in Palestinian sectarianism, which was non-Greek in outlook, and which was permeated at its core by an ascetic outlook, independent of, and prior to, the Christian monasticism which arose in Egypt in the third and fourth centuries.²³³

The nearest to a defining characteristic of Syrian Christianity may be the means of promulgation of the message, coupled with an already extant encratic tendency. The poetic

²³¹ Abramowski, JTS 38, p218.

²³² Murray, 1975, p344f. Murray in his summary of Syrian Christianity seems to concentrate on what it was not, rather than what it was. Perhaps this is indicative of the struggle to identify the major characteristics of what is essentially a free flowing movement, rather than an exact organisation.

²³³ Barnard, 1991, p21.

forms of the Syrian writers, which reached a zenith with Ephrem, and the symbolism contained within them, reveal a distinct understanding of the idea of reverting to the position of the pure first Adam, a union of soul and spirit, and an understanding of Christianity as a total discipleship to Jesus. This total discipleship reveals itself in an acceptance of celibacy as a way of life, with a high regard to an ascetic lifestyle, revealed in an understanding of angelic imitation. The expression of this discipleship is revealed in a symbolic, and poetic form which is a defining characteristic of the Syrian region. The use of symbolism and poetry would seem to allow paradoxical statements of theology, thus creating undefined areas of faith, as opposed to dogmatic statements of theology seeking total theological definition as more commonly found in Hellenistic theology. In analysing the sources and trends of Syrian Christianity we can find a base form of Palestinian monotheism, an ascetic tendency amongst the population at large, an understanding of baptism as entry into paradise together with an infusion of Spirit to enable life to be lived in imitation of angels, a holistic understanding of the person and the loci of personhood within the heart, together with the distinctive stylistic medium for the promulgation of theology. There is also evidence of a spiritual aristocracy in the form of the *ihīdāyá* which became a 'lay monasticism' and a bridge between the laity and church hierarchy, utilised by bishops and living in connection with the community as opposed to the dislocation of later monasticism. There is also an ideal of 'holy war', and an environment that was harsh and politically removed from the Roman Empire, thus leaving a Church independent from imperial interference. The Syriac scriptures in the form of the *Diatessaron* may have encouraged this sense of isolation from the rest of Christendom, but the danger in viewing the Syrian Church as so isolated is that a romantic and idyllic picture of the 'untainted Church' begins to form. The 'Syrian orthodoxy' was also apparent, as seen for example, by Ephrem's defence of the Nicene Creed. A picture of the Syrian Church as the 'true Church' is tempting but inherently false. For example the liturgical structure of the Syrian Church was not markedly different from that of corresponding neighbouring church liturgies, and followed the Antiochene scheme from the mid

fourth century onwards.²³⁴ There are too many converging streams of influence within the Syriac environment for a 'pure' Christian tradition to survive. Perhaps Murray and Abramowski are correct in trying to avoid definitions for what is appearing to be undefinable. As the value of Syrian Christianity to the development of monasticism is being realised, and the artificial boundaries placed by previous generations questioned, it may be better to define Syriac Christianity by what it was not rather than by what it was. Indeed, it may be preferable to speak of a Syrian spirituality rather than a Syrian Christianity when so many converging streams of influence are apparent. The isolated factors of this Syrian spirituality each add an edge to the multi-faceted spirituality of the Syrian region. The major edge of this spirituality was the poetic form of communication, as personified in Ephrem. However, even this can be reduced to the stylistic use of symbols and metaphors.

However, if the Syrian provenance of Ps-Macarius is to be proven and discussed a working definition of Syrian Christianity is required. For the purposes of this thesis Syrian Christianity will be defined as follows:

A convergent spirituality, drawing on an encratic tendency within the populace, and encompassing the whole person, as understood in the biblical concept of the heart. Ascetically sympathetic, with formative proto-monastic adherents. Theologically perpetuated via a linguistic mode that was memorable and accessible to the majority of the population, espoused in paradoxical statements rather than dogma. Showing strong Judaic influence combined with Mesopotamian traditions.

²³⁴ Brightman, 1896; See also 'Early Liturgies, ANF Vol 7, p529-536, 561-568; Murray, 1975, p18

CHAPTER 2. MACARIAN RHETORIC

Scholarly study of the Macarian corpus is made more difficult by the scarcity of information about the authorship and context of composition. For this reason opinions have to be formed from the text alone. As such, it is a difficult proposition to examine the Macarian corpus in the light of rhetorical criticism, as such a process ideally requires some precise knowledge of the situation of the composition of the work, and the designated audience. Furthermore the editorial evolution of the texts and the complexity of the collections of Macarian material render detailed examination of the original versions of the text impossible.¹ However, there is value in such an examination, and an analysis of the rhetorical structure provides evidence of the hellenic influences upon Ps-Macarius.

Strothmann has collated the textual variants found in the homilies which are contained in the B collection, (or Collection II),² and these variants serve to illustrate the complicated textual tradition of the Macarian corpus. He notes

Many Macarian writings are contained in more than (one) collection. The form of the text is not the same in all collections, but differs in variations of form to a greater or lesser degree of significance. These differences are so great that we cannot produce, from the various collections, a uniform version of the individual writings, with the means available to us at the present time.³

Schulze⁴ has shown the intricacies of the textual tradition of collection II homily 4, and in doing so has revealed the steps taken by the collator of Collection II to correct the dogmatically objectionable passages and thus to guarantee the original author his place in the Church. Such

¹ For a detailed account of the Macarian text traditions see Collection I. Berthold H. (ed), *Reden und Briefe* 2 vols Berlin, 1973, I. pxxxix, II pxi; Collection II. Dörries H. Klostermann E. Kroeger M. (eds), *Die 50 Geistlichen Homilien des Makarios* Berlin, 1964, p.xi-xxvii; Collection III. Klostermann E, Berthold H. (eds), *Neue Homilien des Makarius/Symeon*. Berlin, 1961, p.xi-xxvii; see also Desprez (ed), 1980, pp15-21; See also above Introduction: Texts, Sources and Provenance.

² Strothmann, 1981.

³ Strothmann, 1981, p. xi.

⁴ Schulze, 1983, p85-98; Strothmann, 1981, p.xi records that Collection II (the Fifty Spiritual Homilies) was edited by Picus in 1559.; See J. Picus *Macarii Aegyptii Homiliae Quinquaginta*. Ex Bibliotheca Regia. Paris 1559, although it is not suggested that Picus was the primary editor of the collection.

corrections include the introduction of the 'correct' use of Chalcedonian christological terminology.⁵ Schulze's paper illustrates the difficulties of identifying both the original editor of Collection II and the intended audience for whom his edition was prepared, as opposed to the original audience.⁶ Schulze has suggested that Collection II was collated for those already experienced in the way of the ascete, and he notes that the homilies within the collection address the readers as *συνετοί*, and with a Byzantine form of polite address (*ἡ διάθεσις τῆς ὑμετέρας εὐλικρινίας*)⁷. Such editing influences within the textual tradition cloud the original motivation for the delivery of the homilies, and affect the internal rhetorical structures. However, the difficulties inherent in the task do not make the task meaningless, and there is much that can be gained from an examination of Macarian language and structure. As Columba Stewart has shown, linguistic analysis of the vocabulary of Ps-Macarius provides further evidence for the Syrian influence upon the man and his work.⁸ The aim of this present investigation is to analyse the structure and style of the Macarian corpus in regard to rhetoric, and to ascertain whether any further light can be shed upon the *sitz im leben* of Ps-Macarius.

Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criteria

Aristotle defined rhetoric as 'the best possible means of persuasion in regard to any subject whatever',⁹ and Kennedy¹⁰ introduces rhetoric as a form of communication, commonly of persuasion. However, persuasion has a wider application than that used in common parlance, encompassing 'a whole spectrum' from converting hearers to a view opposed to that they previously held, to implanting a conviction not otherwise considered, to the deepening of

⁵ Schulze, 1983, p97f.

⁶ Schulze, 1983, p89ff, suggests that Collection II is clearly intended for readers who are no longer untutored beginners, rather being people of equal or higher rank. This is especially to be noted in the editorial introduction to each homily.

⁷ Schulze, 1983, p89f.

⁸ Stewart, 1991.

⁹ Winterowd, 1968, p14.

¹⁰ Kennedy, 1980, p4-6.

belief in a view favourably entertained, to a demonstration of the cleverness of the author, to teaching or exposition. Classical rhetoric can also be divided into two aspects, primary and secondary rhetoric. Primary rhetoric being the art of persuasive public speaking as part of social and civic life, and the aim of secondary rhetoric being to 'commend a certain view of life or interpretation of past events, using the same techniques and virtues of primary (vocal) rhetoric'.¹¹ An initial scan of the Macarian corpus reveals a mixture of secondary rhetoric, reported in a written format, and a larger series of written rhetorical pieces, designed to be performed in a public setting, and consequentially circulated around interested parties, which could be termed 'primary rhetoric'.

Any definition of rhetoric is in danger of ignoring some part of the entity being defined, such is the breadth of rhetoric in communication. It is well to bear in mind the remark of Fairweather that:

Greek rhetoric was and always has been, more flexible than is suggested by the rigid divisions drawn by most ancient theorists, for the sake of pedagogic clarity.¹²

Averil Cameron has distinguished rhetoric as a 'characteristic means or way of expression',¹³ a wider definition than most, and it is this that will be the working definition for the present investigation. In other words, does the Macarian corpus contain or portray a characteristic means of expression, and if so, to what genre and culture, does this means of expression belong?

In analysing the rhetoric of the Macarian corpus certain criteria and terms will be used, for which a brief explanation is necessary. Each rhetorical unit, in the case of Ps-Macarius each homily, is examined in relation to its situation, before an analysis of the unit takes place. Within the analysis the style and character of each unit is noted, and in particular the frequency and loci of biblical quotations used, metaphorical images presented, and method of persuasion

¹¹ Kennedy, 1980, p4-6; Satterthwaite, 1993, p339.

¹² Fairweather, TynBul 45.1, p14.

¹³ Cameron, 1991, p13.

isolated. Kennedy has provided a helpful guide to the practice of rhetorical criticism, and he outlines five stages of analysis.¹⁴

1. *Isolation of the rhetorical unit*: Within the Macarian corpus each homily was taken as a rhetorical unit, even when a portion of that unit was replicated in a different collection.

2. *The definition of the rhetorical situation*: The basic issue of the unit was identified, and the 'species of rhetoric' defined. The 'species of rhetoric' include:

Forensic: A defence or accusation of someone regarding past actions;

Deliberative: An exhortation or accusation of someone regarding future actions;

Epidictic: An affirmation of communal values by praise or blame in order to effect a present evaluation.

3. *An analysis of the arrangement of material in the unit*. It is at this point that the editorial influence within the Macarian corpus is most obvious. The units were examined in terms of their sub-divisions.

Exordium: The introduction, defines the character of the speaker, and the central issue.

Narration: Narrates events related to the central issue addressed.

Statement: The proposition, or summary of the central thesis.

Proof: The confirmation, the logical argument.

Probatio: The refutation of an opponent's argument.

Epilogue: The conclusion, recapitulation, and call for a sympathetic response.

4. *The Invention and Style in each part of the unit*. The unit was analysed in the following terms.

Ethos: The moral character.

Pathos: The emotions raised.

¹⁴ Kennedy, 1984, pp33-38; See also Winterowd, 1968, pp14-16.

Logos: The logical arguments, divided into inductive (by example), and deductive (by enthymeme: missing either a major or minor premise and having a conclusion).

It is at this point that the occurrence of metaphor, antithesis, chiasm and other devices is noted.

5. *The evaluation of the unit's effectiveness as a whole.*

An Overview of Rhetorical Types Within the Macarian Corpus:

Almost without fail the Macarian homilies begin abruptly with no detail in the exordium about the character of the speaker or the exact situation of the delivery of the homily. Such persistent omission of these details indicates a deliberate removal of this detail from the text. This may have been a deliberative action to preserve the anonymity of the speaker, or it may have been that the identity of the speaker was so well known, and the occasion of delivery so frequent that any introductory remarks were rendered unnecessary. If however, the former suggestion is true, the offending portions of text would have had to have been removed during compilation of the collections. As all collections and individual homilies contain similar omissions, it may be concluded that the deliberate corruption of the text took place at an early stage in their transmission, prior to the editing process that resulted in the compilation of the present Macarian writings.¹⁵ Thus, either the author of the homilies (or the original collator of them¹⁶) required anonymity, or enforced anonymity was a pre-condition for the promulgation of the text. However, the initial anonymity of the texts in no way decreased the authority of the corpus. The unknown Messalian '*Asceticon*' which was anathematized at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D., is held to have been a portion of Ps-Macarius' work, and again, no

¹⁵ For a table of comparison between the extant collections see Collection I, plxxi-lxxviii. Collection III contains only those homilies not published in Collections I and II. The *terminus ante quem* for the corpus has been established as 534 A.D. The initial removal of identifying elements would have occurred before then.

¹⁶ As opposed to the collators of the present collections

author is noted for the collection.¹⁷

The homilies can be separated into two types. Firstly those homilies which follow a clear rhetorical pattern, and secondly those homilies which appear to reject rhetorical presentation, and contain many anonymous questions and consequent answers. A proportion of the homilies, I: 2,4,5,6,7,18,32; II: 7,12,15,26,27, and III:12 are predominantly made up of questions, (a ratio of 1:11 or 9%) and have no overall structure outside of the question / answer boundaries; whilst homilies I:33,36,38,39,45; II:6,8,37,40; III:1 have far fewer questions within the text (ratio 1:13 or 7.5%). The difficulty in assessing the distinctive attributes of each of these 'question homilies' is further compounded by the existence of occasional internal questions within some of the other Macarian homilies, that are not indicated by the 'question / answer' structure.¹⁸ It is at this point that the desire to categorise and analyse meets the unknown hand of the editor and anthologist of the collections. Many of the homilies in Collection I are to be found in partial form, or in another order in Collection II, and vice versa.¹⁹ Some of the apparent anomalies in the focus of the homilies can only be explained by the unknown 'editors' decision.²⁰ One of the few characteristics of the 'question homilies' is a perfunctory ending with a limited epilogue section and little in the way of doxology. However, the overriding concern of the question sections of the homilies concerns the direct circle of influence of Ps-Macarius, with little concern as to the continued progress of his answers after transcription. These homilies may have been preserved for their content but

¹⁷ The connection between the Messalian 'Circles', and Ps-Macarius has been established, the present argument concerns the degree of influence and leadership of the movement. It could be suggested that these Messalian circles were responsible for the consequent anonymity of the homilies. Stewart, 1991, p70.

¹⁸ Strothmann, 1981, p.x; eg II.27.15. The first Syrian translation divided the writings into the two names of Macarius the Egyptian and Macarius the Alexandrian, and also distinguished between homilies and letters.

¹⁹ See Strothmann, 1981.

²⁰ Unrecorded questions may also have altered the course of a homily, however, why some questions were recorded and others were not is not discernable. For example II.12 inserts a seemingly unconnected question as to the reason for head coverings, into a homily more generally concerned with the state of Adam's soul before and after the fall.

the intent would seem to be one of bolstering and explaining ascetic discipline to the direct community. There seems to be no concern to persuade those uncertain of the Macarian spirituality, more of a concern to educate and explain to those already adhering to his teachings. They are unadorned with rhetorical techniques.

The remaining homilies (ratio 5:6 or 83%) are of a more variable tendency. They are not uniform in length, and neither do they show any progression of thought within the collections. Themes recur frequently, and without apparent order, and examination only of the content of the collections will reveal more about the collator's aims than about the immediate compilers of the original works. However, the homilies do have an internal structure. Of the classical rhetorical divisions, the exordium is often brief in the extreme. No character definition is ever present, and neither are there any introductory remarks outside of the summary of the homily that was clearly provided by a later hand. Rather the writer delves straight into the central issue of the homily with a statement. These characteristics are undoubtedly the result of collation over time, together with the requirement to preserve the anonymity of the author when first made available. In the main body of the rhetorical units the 'narration' division of rhetoric is always lacking, and what follows is usually an 'unpacking' of the main statement in the form of a metaphor, familiar example, or biblical text. This is then expounded in the section of 'proof' which follows. Ps-Macarius spends more time asserting proofs for his initial statements, and then expanding those statements, than he does in any 'probatio', although he does on occasion employ devices to refute opinions contrary to his own. The 'epilogue' portions of the homilies, are generally weighted in favour of images and metaphorical examples, and a eulogy in the form of a plea for continuation of the faith. A brief doxology is also usually present.

Ps-Macarius' rhetoric is an example of a Christian interpretation of classical rhetorical structures within which the declaratory aspect was emphasised, but with the emphasis upon persuasion through familiar examples and an understanding of grace. Christian rhetoric itself

had its own distinctive topics and style²¹ of which the homily was a major part. Kennedy defines the homiletic preaching as ‘a projection of the eloquence of Scripture and not an achievement of the eloquence of the preacher,’ and ‘as a conversation, informal address or oral interpretation’.²² Ps-Macarius departs from the homily interpretation as defined by Kennedy, by his reluctance to follow a single text, using instead a variety of texts to confirm his message. However the rhetorical division of ‘homily’ as a ‘conversation or informal address’ still best describes the majority of the Macarian corpus. Kennedy notes that ‘as the fourth century advanced Christian communities were less and less a company of simple folk content with the message of the Gospel’,²³ and Cameron also emphasises the idea that early Christianity as a resort of the poor and underprivileged was a convenient myth.²⁴ So too the Macarian community cannot be held to be an uneducated and poor society. Cameron also notes that

one of the standard techniques of persuasion lies precisely in the deliberative exploitation of areas of ambiguity, the appeal to and subsequent use, that is, of themes and language already familiar.²⁵

As will be shown, familiar themes and images play an important part within the internal structure of Macarian rhetoric.

Ps-Macarius is not a classical rhetorician in the same category as for example, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory Nyssa or Basil of Caesarea.²⁶ He does however, have a ‘characteristic means or way of expression’, and betrays a rhetorical influence in his writings. Ps-Macarius leans heavily upon scriptural quotations for his proofs,²⁷ often using them in a triadic format,

²¹ Kennedy, 1983, p180.

²² Kennedy, 1980, p137.

²³ Kennedy, 1980, p146.

²⁴ Cameron, 1991, p38.

²⁵ Cameron, 1991, p130.

²⁶ Kennedy, 1980, p143 describes Gregory Nazianzen as the ‘most ornate’ of the masters of the panegyric sermon. Cameron calls him the ‘greatest Christian orator of the fourth century’ 1991, p129f.

²⁷ Thuren, 1983, p9 notes that although Makarios/Symeon was an authority among the ‘pray-ers’, the Bible was the only authority that he turned to.

and also relies upon metaphorical examples and familiar images. His is a picture language.

Within the biblical quotations he focuses upon characters,²⁸ predominantly quoting a passage of scripture as part of a broader argument, rather than for exegetical purposes, and in doing so utilises the quotations and references to illustrate his point as well as to provide a proof of the validity of his argument. Stanley notes that:

the decision to introduce a direct quotation into a piece of discourse is a rhetorical act, reflecting not only the author's understanding of the source text, but also certain assumptions about the likely responses of the intended audience.²⁹

An exception to this is Ps-Macarius' teaching on prayer, which involves some exegetical discourse, conveyed in a homiletical setting. In these instances the audience must know the portion of scripture that Ps-Macarius is referencing.³⁰ The overall effect of the use of biblical quotations is to increase the audience's receptivity to the message. Ps-Macarius does not refer to his source by direct reference, but rather by inference in the case of character references, or a general quotation, with the assumption that the majority of his audience are aware of the location of his reference, or of the story contained within his reference. For example, in Homily II.9 Ps-Macarius enlarges upon the patient working of God's grace within the soul, and the requirement of thoroughness and perseverance on the part of man, by illustrating this 'law of action from plain examples in the inspired scriptures'.³¹ He then proceeds to refer in generalisms to Joseph, David, Moses, Abraham and Noah. This selection of 'character quotations' is bolstered by the quotation that it is superior men such as those previously referenced that will

judge all men (1 Cor 2:5), as it is written... but only he who has the like heavenly spirit of the Godhead knows his like, as the apostle says 'Comparing spiritual things with spiritual; but the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness unto him; but he that is spiritual judges all men, yet he himself is judged

²⁸ Stanley, 1997, pp44-58.

²⁹ Stanley, 1997, p57.

³⁰ For a detailed discussion on the Biblical foundation of prayer in Ps-Macarius, see Dörries, 1978, pp125-197; Thuren, 1983, pp19-22.

³¹ II.9.1.

by none' (1 Cor 2:13f).³²

A further quotation in II.9.10 that 'In your patience you possess your souls' (Luke 21.19)³³ is followed by five more single verse / statement quotations over the course of the rest of the homily, none of which is given a detailed reference. Thus the generality of the initial character reference gives way to the specifics of quotations, which Ps-Macarius uses to reinforce his initial argument, which was not founded on a single quotation.

Often the reference used becomes overladen with the meaning that Ps-Macarius wishes to draw from the source, rather than the contextual meaning affecting the Macarian interpretation of the source. In II.26.13 Ps-Macarius speaks about the need for inward incorruptibility as well as outward purity.

So the incorporeal soul, if it holds fellowship with the serpent that lurks within, the wicked spirit, goes a-whoring from God, as it is written, 'Everyone who looks upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery already in his heart', (Matt 5:28). There is fornication effected in the body, and there is a fornication of the soul, when it holds fellowship with Satan. The same soul is partner and sister either of devils, or of God and the angels; and if it commits adultery with the devil, it is unfit for the heavenly Bridegroom.

Thus, for the Macarian audience, the experience with the words of scripture quoted would have been filtered through the interpretative and rhetorical lens of Ps-Macarius.³⁴ His motivational message of the need for purity and a life worthy of union with the Godhead and the battle with the indwelling demon takes precedence over the initial situation of the quotation. His biblical quotations are often taken from the same portion of scripture, but are separated to give three separate proofs.³⁵ His use of familiar proofs, in the form of images or metaphors is also often in triadic form. Furthermore, his use of biblical characters as proofs of his assertions continue this triadic method. On occasion Ps-Macarius strays from this 'triad' formula. Within II.9.5 he introduces five Old Testament characters in a 'pentateuchal'

³² II.9.8.

³³ II.9.10.

³⁴ Stanley, 1997, p53.

³⁵ eg II.4.26.

formula.³⁶ Similarly on occasion he overloads the homily with a plethora of biblical proofs.³⁷

Solitary proofs are generally expanded into statements, and in turn themselves proven by further biblical quotations.³⁸

On occasion the triadic proofs are inter-related and expounded upon, but most often they are purely used as the 'final' proof required. The triadic proofs often refer to the statutory trio of Abraham, Issac and Jacob, but also frequently reference combinations of David, Moses, Adam and Elijah. It appears that it is the triadic formula that is important to Ps-Macarius more than the characters referred to within his references. This 'triadic' formula occurs at least once in over half (90/142 or 63%) of the extant homilies in Collection I, II, III, and on nine occasions at least five times throughout the course of a homily. Ps-Macarius also forms his proofs into lists of five, predominantly Old Testament characters, but also purely scriptural quotations. This 'pentateuchal' formula occurs in approximately 1:4 (25%) of the homilies of Collection I, II, III. Such listings of characters is not unusual in Syrian Christianity. Murray has shown how Aphrahat made use of such lists,³⁹ and that the background to Aphrahat's usage lies within the Jewish model of prayer and exegesis.⁴⁰ Murray also draws attention to a Macarian list sequence.

the sequence is in aetiological form, the subject being Jesus our peace, and the phrases being introduced now by εἰρήνην ἐκείνην, now by masculine participles. Jesus is 'that Peace which received the offering of Abel,...translated Enoch, ...protected Noah in the Ark; He who blessed Abraham, ..made Isaac the heir, ..chose Jacob from the womb, ..was with Joseph in exile, .. appeared to Moses, ...gave him authority, ...gave Joshua strength, ..chose Samuel as peace, ... anointed David, ..made the widow's curse last, ..took Elijah up to heaven, ..gave Elisha a double share of the Spirit, ...made the staff do miracles in Egypt, ..made Aaron's rod flower; that peace which gave Job strength in his trials; he who was with our fathers in Egypt'.⁴¹

This sequence is unusual in Ps-Macarius, for as we have noted he predominantly uses a five-

³⁶ A device also noted in the GL.

³⁷ eg II.5.

³⁸ eg II.11.3f.

³⁹ Murray, 1977; 1983, pp79-85.

⁴⁰ cf Murray, 1977, p124; 1983, p79-85.

⁴¹ Murray, 1977, p119; Marriott (ed), 1918, Hom.1 (II.51) p20.

fold or triadic list, and expands upon the names mentioned, rather than creating a single list of many characters as above. Attention has been paid to the source of the biblical references within the Macarian corpus, particularly by Quispel, Vööbus, Klijn, Baker and more recently Peterson.⁴² Quispel and Klijn have also noted the extensive use of the *Gospel of Thomas* in the Macarian corpus.⁴³ The present consensus being that Ps-Macarius would have used a Greek version of the *Diatessaron* as well as the *Vetus Syrus*, confirming once again the position of Ps-Macarius at an interchange of Christian cultures.

The best known homily within the Macarian corpus is also the longest and requires examination on its own. Homily 1 of Collection I, is known as the *Epistula Magna*, or 'Great Letter'. Much has been made of the similarities within this letter with that of Gregory Nyssa's 'De Instituto', and attempts made to assign priority and dates from the comparison.⁴⁴ The homily itself is consistent in style with the other homilies within the collections, and follows the same rhetorical structure. Statements are introduced and backed up by biblical proofs, familiar images and appeal to biblical characters. Some of the sections of the letter are repeated verbatim elsewhere in the homilies,⁴⁵ and regular Macarian themes are prevalent. The general structure of the letter is of introductory statements, backed up by biblical proofs, and familiar images. The introductory statements are re-emphasised frequently and a 'point of teaching' drawn out from them. The overall tone is one of encouragement and instruction, and it lacks the apologetic edge that can be seen in the other homily collections. Indeed an example of this can be seen in the infrequency of the biblical proofs as the letter progresses. Triadic proofs become less frequent, and singular biblical texts more common, which tend to lead on to further points of instruction. The epilogue section of the letter especially focuses upon the need

⁴² Quispel, 1977, p203-9; Vööbus, 1972, p24; Baker, JTS 20.1, p133-149; Peterson, 1994, chap. 8.

⁴³ Quispel, VigChr 18, (1964) pp164-8. See also Klijn, VigChr 19, p164-8.

⁴⁴ Jaeger, 1954; Staats, St.Th.17, p120-128.

⁴⁵ eg I.40.

for encouragement of those who have not attained the 'highest virtue'.⁴⁶ The purpose of the letter would seem to be one of instruction and encouragement to a fledgling community, or group of catechists.⁴⁷

In general Ps-Macarius is extravagant in his use of metaphors, familiar images, signs, symbols and figures of speech, leaning heavily on picture language and illustration. Such metaphors and familiar images include references to the eyes and the body, sun and wind, flying birds, invading enemies, labouring in the fields and the farmer working the earth, calender times, social situations, gold and silver in fire, and storms at sea, to name but a few. He often introduces the image with the phrase Η ὡσπερ (just as....). Familiar images abound as proofs of the theological position that Ps-Macarius is communicating, and often link further statements of his central thesis, which in turn lead on to a further metaphor or proof. The general sense of Ps-Macarius' structure therefore is one of a spiral or helixical form comprised of statement, a metaphor or imagery proof, leading to an expanded statement, which in turn leads on to a metaphor or imagery proof, and so on until the epilogue recapitulates the major points and appeals for a sympathetic response. Within this spiral structure Ps-Macarius utilises literary devices designed to increase the sense of pathos within his audience. Also prevalent are exhortations towards a moral (overtly ascetic) character, and inductive logical arguments to back up his metaphorical proofs. The overall result is often a homily which falls between the two formal classical rhetoric designations of 'deliberative' (an exhortation or accusation of someone regarding future actions) and 'epideictic', (an affirmation of communal values by praise or blame in order to affect a present evaluation). Often Ps-Macarius is exhorting his audience(s) with regard to future actions, but is also affirming the value of those actions within the community. This dual situation is not without parallel within classical rhetoric.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ GL 13:14ff.

⁴⁷ Desprez, 1980, p26.

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric* 1.9.40-41; 2.20.1 It is difficult to assign 'Christian' rhetoric to an exact type as the social circumstances of the early Christian movements did not correspond to the traditional occasions for each type of speech. Mack, 1990, p34f.

Collection II, Homily 11: A Specific Appraisal.

A brief example of Macarian rhetoric can be seen in Collection II Homily 11. The homily will be examined in a chronological manner and comparisons drawn to the rhetorical criteria given earlier.⁴⁹ The homily begins with a statement that ‘The heavenly power of the Godhead, now received in Christians’ hearts, becomes outward when the body is dissolved and causes a resurrection’ (11.1). This statement is proven by a triadic biblical listing, of 2 Macc 1:19, the examples of Israel and Aaron (Ex 32), and Daniel in the fire (Dan 3:25). The biblical example of Daniel is then expanded in a further statement that ‘faithful souls receive the divine and heavenly fire, in secret, which forms a heavenly image upon their humanity (11.2)’.

Ps-Macarius then introduces his major biblical proof for this statement, from Exodus 32:24 and the casting of gold, drawing the link that: ‘man’s pure thoughts have been buried in the mire of sin’ (11.3). A threefold proof of familiar images is then introduced, all linked to the theme of ‘light within the soul’: of the soul being a dark house in need of a lamp, of the sun of righteousness, and of the woman who lost a coin needing to light her lamp (11.4).

A second proof or image is then introduced, of a captured king who cannot return home (11.5). Ps-Macarius here explains Adam’s position to be one of a captured king, through whom death reigns in every soul. He cites Ps.106:37 as biblical proof of this. Ps-Macarius expands upon his theme until introducing the restoration of Adam as King over death, through Christ (11.6). The images of this restoration are provided, of Moses calling Israel out of Egypt, and this is linked to explain how Christ goes through the hidden places of the soul, and brings it out of ‘dark Egypt’ (11.6). Ps-Macarius then links this image to that of the image of renouncing treasure as a protection for the soul against material things, and towards the treasures of God, with Matt 6:21 as the proof. (11.7) This proof becomes a major restatement of the central issue within the homily. Linking back to Moses and the serpent of brass, the idea

⁴⁹ See above p104.

of which was introduced in 11.6, Ps-Macarius asserts that the serpent was a *οἰκονομία*,⁵⁰ (*oikonomia*) for the people of Israel, just as now the commandment to make oneself poor and gaze upon heavenly treasure, is also a 'domestic economy' (11.8).

Ps-Macarius then asks the question of himself as to the identity or meaning of the dead serpent, and asserts that it is a figure of the body of the Lord (11.9). This leads to a major statement of issue, that,

As no serpent of brass was ever commanded by the Lord to be made in the world until Moses, so a new and sinless body was never seen in the world until the Lord

and Ps-Macarius in a consequential sequence asserts that: 'A dead body overcame the live serpent' (11.9). This major statement is proven by two Biblical proofs, 1 Cor 1:23, and 1 Cor 1:24. Followed with an explanation of 'redemption' (*ἀπολύτρωσις / apolutrosis*), giving proof that the Son of God was without sin, quoting four scriptures, and then the words of Satan, as recorded in Mark 1:24, and Matt 8:29, concluding his proofs with the assertion that three bear witness to the Son. Firstly the voice from heaven, secondly they that are on earth, and thirdly Satan himself. There follows a summary statement that 'The evil powers gave back the imprisoned Adam' (11.10).

Ps-Macarius then begins to draw the homily to a conclusion, starting an epilogue, in which he draws a comparison between the work of Christ in descending to the depths of hell, and the depths and areas of sin within man's soul, wherein lies the 'fountain of mire'. Within this epilogue section Ps-Macarius re-emphasises the way in which God enters the depths of hell and the gulf of the heart to rescue man, and also asserts that death becomes an assistant to the believer, just as water helps the swimmer (11.12,13). Further familiar images are given as proofs of the ability of God to enter into the area of death, such as the rain reaching the lower parts of the earth, and the sun reaching all parts of the house. The epilogue concludes with an

⁵⁰ Mason translates this as 'dispensation' while Maloney prefers 'Salvific economy'. The word can be translated 'domestic economy' (Liddell and Scott) and denotes the idea of good husbandry, furthering the use of husbandry analogies and metaphors within Ps-Macarius.

appeal to live in accordance with God's realm. Two lifestyle options are given. Firstly, the lifestyle of one who is contrite and maintains war against Satan, with grace established within them and consequently experiencing the battle of the heart. In comparison the second lifestyle choice is of one who is not contrite and who is ignorant of what it means to fight as a soldier (11.14). The image of the seed dying in winter only to grow in spring is given as an explanation for this choice. To conclude his homily he gives the example of how Satan talks in the heart of the christian, and how the christian's response can be to remind Satan of the proofs of God's redemption, which Ps-Macarius has given earlier (11.15). He finally ends with an appeal to abide in poverty, as strangers knocking on the door of God, and as God is near his promises will be fulfilled. A brief Doxology brings the homily to a conclusion.

From this brief overview of the structure of the homily it can be seen that Ps-Macarius links his initial statement, by a series of images, metaphors, and familiar proofs, to other statements, each in some way building upon the previous. He supports his argument by means of ethical examples and within the epilogue in particular a large element of pathos is applied. Recurring themes within the homily link his statements together, for example the pure thought of mankind being buried in sin in 11.3, is echoed by his use of the phrase 'fountain of mire' to describe the existence of sin within the soul of the individual in 11.12. The overall situation of the rhetorical unit is predominantly one of an epideictic setting, affirming communal values, but with deliberative exhortation regarding the future actions of the audience present also.

On first reading the homily appears to be a series of unconnected thoughts, from which Ps-Macarius draws limited examples and analogies. Indeed Dörries notes that there is 'no tight thread running through the individual thoughts' whilst also noting that 'they are intertwined'.⁵¹ On closer inspection of this 'intertwining', a pattern of statements can be seen to emerge, from which Ps-Macarius' overall thesis can be constructed. Beginning with an assertion that the power of the Godhead is within the soul, Ps-Macarius progresses to the

⁵¹ Dörries, 1941, p266.

presence within the soul of sin as well as grace. Grace is present because of the actions of God toward humanity. The grace of God is confirmed by examples from the history of Israel and from that present communal ascetic practices are affirmed. Finally the power of the grace of God is once again brought to the fore, and an appeal is made to seek God for that power upon earth. This is emphasised by the comparison of the two possible conditions of mankind. Thus there is a thread of purpose running through the helixical form of the homily.

Macarius and Rhetoric

Within the homilies of Ps-Macarius there are occasional references to those who, in the wider community, use skilled rhetoric in christian discourse or in general discourse. Ps-Macarius' attitude to such is best illustrated by Collection II:17. Within this homily Ps-Macarius utilises all the rhetorical devices as illustrated above, relying upon familiar images, biblical proofs, and frequent, progressive restatements. However within this homily there is a higher than average use of the 'probatio', in that Ps-Macarius turns his attention towards those outside of his immediate audience who speak publicly, and those possibly within his audience who speak knowledgeably of experiences they have not themselves encountered.⁵² Ps-Macarius does not argue against the use of rhetoric as such, but rather against 'empty rhetoric'. He begins by contrasting philosophers who learn to make speeches, with others who are 'rude in speech' but who rejoice in the grace of God. He draws upon 2 Cor 11.6 and 1 Cor 6.20 for proof of this assertion.

The philosophers of the Greeks learn to make speeches; others are rude in speech, but rejoicing and exulting in the grace of God, men of piety. Let us judge which are the better. The kingdom of God, it says, is not in word, but in deed and power.⁵³

From this beginning he argues against those who utter spiritual discourses without 'tasting what they discourse of', comparing them to one 'who travels on a desert plain, being thirsty,

⁵² II.17.10,14.

⁵³ II.17.10.

and who draws a picture of a stream of water, and a sketch of themselves drinking, whilst remaining possessed by thirst'.⁵⁴ Ps-Macarius concludes that when a teacher who has discoursed of things they have not encountered, and when they finally have a personal knowledge of them, that they will say 'I have not found it to be as I supposed. I discoursed in one way, and the Spirit works in another.'⁵⁵ For Ps-Macarius rhetoric only has the power when the Holy Spirit is employed in the delivery of the words. He clearly places the skill of persuasion as subordinate to the power of the cross:

so in the matter of worldly wisdom, if you have knowledge and the force of words, you ought to cast all away, and to esteem them as nothing, so that you may be built up by the foolishness of preaching, which is the true wisdom which has not the pride of words, but has a power that works effectually by means of the holy cross.⁵⁶

Thus Ps-Macarius rejects the powerlessness of empty speech rather than the rhetorical techniques involved in making the speech, and by such analogies he shows an awareness of classical rhetoric and practice that was in use within the surrounding society.

Ps-Macarius is not alone in his use of rhetorical devices to denigrate the 'empty rhetoric' of the wider community.⁵⁷ Kennedy notes that rhetoric had become 'cues to which audiences responded', and Ps-Macarius, in his desire to teach and advance a deeper spirituality within the Church, could not do so without the rhetoric of society. To avoid such rhetoric would have distanced himself from the circle of believers, and enquirers that his message was seeking to influence. For the message to be positively received it was necessary for it to be positively crafted, and fully validated. Ps-Macarius' validation for his teaching on spirituality comes mainly from Biblical texts, and references to biblical characters, with many familiar examples and images alongside.

The view that Ps-Macarius was speaking only to a dedicated group of ascetics,

⁵⁴ II.17.13, see also II.37.12 with the same biblical proof given.

⁵⁵ II.17.13.

⁵⁶ II.17.15, with the proof text of 1 Cor 1:21.

⁵⁷ Cameron, 1991, p85 notes that 'It remained convenient to be able to decry classical rhetoric even while drawing heavily on it', citing Tertullian and Jerome as examples. For further examples see Kennedy, 1980, particularly chap. 7.

commonly assumed to be the Messalians, must be re-evaluated. Whether the teaching of Ps-Macarius is purely Messalian or not, it is likely that he is speaking to both adherents and sceptics. The clear editing, as shown by Schulze⁵⁸, of Collection II, to produce a Macarian anthology to be read and digested by dedicated ascetics, must not be read back into the 'prehistory' of the texts themselves. The frequency of the triadic biblical proofs within his corpus argues strongly for an audience of questioning Christians as well as dedicated ascetics. Further, the frequency of his familiar images and metaphors not only point towards a Syrian location by their type and detail, but also towards a part of the audience as yet uncommitted to a Christian lifestyle or belief. There is within the homilies an apologetic impetus that works alongside the desire for others to adhere to a certain way of spirituality. As the 'best means of persuasion is through that which is already known',⁵⁹ the utilising of known images, practices, and texts, should not be dismissed as purely a device to persuade one type of audience, when in practice audiences are made up of a large variety of people, and never more so than those reading the literature in its role as secondary rhetoric. Ps-Macarius' rhetoric could be described as a uniquely Christian discourse, and as such it is markedly different from the classical rhetoric of Cicero and Aristotle. However, Christian discourse still relied heavily upon classical rhetoric, if emphasising the declaratory⁶⁰ aspect above other more 'traditional' forms of discourse. Kennedy defines Christian preaching not as persuasion, but rather proclamation, based upon concepts of authority and grace rather than on proof,⁶¹ and while there is an element of 'pure' proclamation within Ps-Macarius, there is the further element of persuasion of a particular lifestyle within a defined belief system. As such there is within the homilies a merging of several idioms of rhetorical speech, which give Ps-Macarius his distinctive voice.

Ps-Macarius uses imagery and vocabulary to great effect and he utilises the images

⁵⁸ Schulze, 1983.

⁵⁹ Cameron, 1991, p40.

⁶⁰ Cameron, 1991, p85.

⁶¹ Kennedy, 1980, p127.

with a skilled rhetoric that betrays a high level of education. Whether Ps-Macarius was schooled in classical rhetoric is open to debate. It is not necessary to accept such a level of schooling to regard his homilies as rhetorical. Ps-Macarius would have been open to influence from rhetorical works from an early age, and whether he learnt rhetoric from the classical handbooks; from imitation of written or spoken practice,⁶² or from unconscious borrowing from the practice of others,⁶³ it is clear that the society in which he spent his formative years was very open to Greek culture and education. Ps-Macarius is an enigma, and doubtless so will remain. His provenance has been reviewed greatly in recent years, and his Egyptian origin rejected.⁶⁴ His writings are now held to be of Syrian origin and it is tempting to assign Ps-Macarius a purely Syrian title, and to place him simply within emergent Syrian monasticism struggling to come to terms with an all pervading hellenistic world view. However, this is too simplistic an answer. The society which Ps-Macarius related to was a society in a state of flux.⁶⁵ Furthermore the idea of Syrian Christianity being an isolated and primitive exponent of the faith⁶⁶ is more and more under question. Syrian Christianity itself is almost undefinable and was undergoing constant change and progression through both church and state politics as well as the more overtly theological and classical influences. As Cameron has pointed out, 'translating from one cultural system into another is not a straight forward process; it embraces many shades of relation, from outright conflict to near-total accommodation'.⁶⁷ Ps-Macarius was a part of that progression and change, albeit linked to a change in the form of Messalianism, that would be condemned as a step too far.⁶⁸ He is an example of the complexity

⁶² Tatian is held by Kennedy, 1980, p133 to be the apologist who makes the greatest use of the techniques of classical rhetoric. Tatian's work would have been well known to Ps-Macarius.

⁶³ Classen, 1993, pp265-291. Classen enumerates the ways the Apostle Paul may have been influenced by rhetoric pp268f.

⁶⁴ See Stewart, 1991, for a summary p84.

⁶⁵ Gager, 1975, p76-79; see also Bauer, 1964.

⁶⁶ See for example, Maloney, 1992, p3.

⁶⁷ Cameron, 1991, p122.

⁶⁸ Messalianism was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D.

of spirituality in the early Church. The recent rediscovery of the Syrian provenance of Ps-Macarius must not be allowed to overshadow the other cultural elements within his writings, such as his Greek rhetorical technique and evident schooling. In examining Ps-Macarius' rhetorical structures it can be seen that other influences apart from Syrian spirituality were impinging upon the man and his circle. Ps-Macarius uses rhetoric, but not necessarily in a strictly Greek way. Rather his style represents a rising form of Christian Discourse, directed not only at believers, and unbelievers, but also towards a third category within the Church that was beginning to grow at the latter end of the fourth century: those who believed and who were searching for a deeper spirituality and experience than was available in traditional church circles. Thus his homilies developed an apologetic edge to their devotional concerns, as he sought to influence the greatest number in the most efficient manner. As such Ps-Macarius must be placed in a position of being able to influence others, and to be heard and seen in speech and deed. The role of Bishop would enable Ps-Macarius to wield such influence, and also enable the recording and copying of his primary material. Although his identity is unknown, it is becoming more evidently apparent that Ps-Macarius was an influential and important figure within his locality.

CHAPTER 3. MACARIAN ENCRATISM

Ἐγκράτεια : A Definition

This thesis asserts that Ps-Macarius was seeking to integrate the radical ascete into the ecclesiastical mainstream. The ascetic activities of the Cappadocian and Syrian region resulted in some groups being termed heretical, and in other groups and activities being treated with suspicion. Thus the encratic practices of the ascetics require clarification if the place of Ps-Macarius within the overall scheme is to be made clear. The definition of Syrian Christianity given earlier¹ refers in part to an ‘encratic tendency within the populace’. This ‘encratic tendency’ itself requires further clarification and examination. Encratism is often viewed as an excessive practice, a departure from the accepted norm of an ascetic lifestyle, and a new development rather than a continuation of a tradition.² In part confusion has arisen over the precise meaning of Encratism, and the subsequent use of the term as a generic description of any abstentious behaviour or teaching. The term Ἐγκράτεια (*enkrateia*) simply means ‘self control’³, and as such can be used with a variety of emphases and nuances. The term ‘Encratism’ has come to receive a variety of meanings, and these will be examined below. The term ‘Encratites’ is a heresiological title given to those who adhered to a radical encratic lifestyle, that became known as ‘Encratism’.⁴ Recent scholarship has made several attempts to define ‘*Enkrateia*’ and ‘Encratism’, so as to better facilitate the understanding and investigation of early christian practices. Of these definitions, three will be examined, as representative of the wider picture, before a definition of Encratism is given, and the place of Ps-Macarius within Encratism discussed.

Elm, in a recent publication, gives a definition of *enkrateia* as ‘control of the physical

¹ See above Introduction p100

² See Murray, NTS 21, p79, (especially in relation to the condemnation of marriage) and Quispel, 1985 for arguments in favour of a continuation.

³ Liddell & Scott, 1940, p406.

⁴ Gasparro, 1995, p130.

and emotional self to the point where one remains untouched by 'worldly' passions and concerns'.⁵ She does not speak of 'Encratism', but only of *Enkrateia* and the 'Encratites'. This definition clearly places *enkrateia* within a framework of total dedication to an ascetic lifestyle. The impetus behind the practice of *enkrateia* is the Incarnation. Elm notes that in Egypt, by the late third century marriage and consumption of meat and wine were regarded as becoming obsolete through Christ's Incarnation and therefore salvation could only be assured through a lifelong struggle for purity and perfection.⁶ In relation to Macrina, the sister of Gregory Nazianzen, Elm notes that *enkrateia* was a means to an end, a tool to heighten the virgin's readiness to concentrate upon prayer.⁷ Elm's definition is broad enough to include many abstentious practices, but it is not narrow enough to provide a clear delineation of those that participated in Encratism. Consequently 'encratism' becomes merely a synonym for ascesis. There needs to be a further requirement that moves the practice of *enkrateia* into the realm of 'Encratism'. *Enkrateia* as 'self-control' is little different from the *askesis*, (training and discipline) as practised by Christians of all backgrounds. Furthermore if encratism is seen as radical asceticism there is no room for the differentiation of practices on the grounds of theological motivation. The temptation is to describe early Christianity as having an all pervading ascetic spirituality, of which some practices were simply more radical than others, (which often depended upon place of residence), and which held a homogenous theology of the need for personal discipline in the Christian life.

It becomes apparent that care needs to be taken when speaking of *enkrateia*, and encratism. The two words are not interchangeable, although they may have been used that way in the past. Indeed, Murray notes how the tendency of enthusiasm for sexual asceticism, particularly found within the Syrian world, has been referred to simply as 'encratism'.⁸ Such a

⁵ Elm, 1996, p99.

⁶ Elm, 1996, p340.

⁷ Elm, 1996, p99.

⁸ Murray, 1975, p11.

generic use of the term betrays the depth of the activity it seeks to describe, and in particular, passes over the motivations of participants.

A more detailed attempt to define encratism comes in the final document of the 1982 colloquium on encratism, held in Milan.⁹ This colloquium gave a definition of encratism as follows:

By encratism we understand self-restraint (*enkrateia*) in its radical form, going so far as to repudiate marriage. Marriage is identified from the start with harlotry and corruption, which entails and presupposes a negative estimate of human existence, including birth and procreation. This position is often accompanied by abstention in matters of food, with specific references to meat and wine together with a renunciation of the things of the world. It is usually characterised by a protological motivation, which provides its basis and justification: the doctrine of the virgin Adam, or of the uncorrupted soul, which excludes sexuality from the original nature of man.¹⁰

Giverson defines the term 'Protological' as meaning 'the specific kind of ontological motivation which seeks its basis in what is regarded as primordial condition of man.'¹¹ Thus, the character of the 'beginnings' determine the actual state of the universe and of man.¹² In relation to *enkrateia*, the condition of man before the fall, the actual fall of man, and the consequences of the fall, all combine to create the creation/fall cycle, and effect subsequent teachings regarding the restoration of man, and the eschatological community. The Milan Definition notes that the protological motivation of *enkrateia* with its Encratite and Hellenic emphasis is not the only explanation for the Christian doctrine of continence and asceticism, as

...originally both the doctrine and the practice [of asceticism and continence] were motivated by the eschatological perspective of the Kingdom, by the idea of being entirely motivated to the service of the Lord (with undivided heart), by the imitation of Christ, and by the influence of such texts as Matt 19:12 and 1 Cor 7.¹³

Within this definition *enkrateia* implies the rejection of the post-lapsarian character of marriage, in that marriage presupposes the fall.¹⁴ It is associated with the doctrine of 'double-

⁹ Bianchi, 1985, p.xxvii.

¹⁰ Bianchi, 1985, p.xxvii-xxix. See Appendix D for a full copy of the definition statement.

¹¹ Giverson, 1985, See also Bianchi and Gasparro, s.v. 'Protology' EEC, p717.

¹² Bianchi, s.v. 'Protology' EEC, p717.

¹³ Bianchi, 1985, p.xxix, and Appendix D.

¹⁴ Bianchi, 1985, p.xxxvii.

creation', in which an essential aspect of humanity's present state (sexuality and procreation) was perceived to be the result of original sin, which, while being attributed to the first human couple, created a second level of reality for their descendants that was extraneous to that couple to whom God had given life in his first creative act.¹⁵ This second level of creation was the world of sexuality. Such a definition emphasises the fundamental understanding of the pre-fallen Adamic state as one of perpetual virginity and oneness with the deity. This doctrine of 'Double-Creation' is held to have originated from Tatian's doctrine of the damnation of Adam,¹⁶ which included Adam's responsibility for the process of fornication and corruption, (ie marriage) within the framework of early humanity's original heavenly paradise being lost through sin, and the consequent separation of the divine *pneuma* from the soul, the loss of the soul's wings, leading to a condition of innate mortality, salvation from which could only come by the intervention of a higher spirit.¹⁷

The crucial element of the Milan Definition is the 'repudiation of marriage' as a valid spiritual state as opposed to the voluntary rejection of the good of marriage within an ascetic life of self-control. For a practice to be encratic properly speaking, there needs to be an acceptance of marriage as a second level of reality, coupled with a rejection of the validity of marriage for entrance into the Kingdom of God. The Milan Definition would appear to suggest a 'sliding scale' of *enkrateta*, which, when coupled with a protological motivation such as the doctrine of double creation, culminates in a rejection of the validity of marriage as a fitting state for those entering the Kingdom of God. However, the definition also notes the *original* motivation for continence and asceticism, of an eschatological perspective of the Kingdom, and the allegiance of the whole heart toward an imitation of Christ. It is here that the characterisation of the encratic lifestyle can be generalised to such an extent that it merely becomes synonymous with asceticism. This results in a fluid definition of *enkrateta* and

¹⁵ Gasparro, 1995, p137.

¹⁶ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.28.1.

¹⁷ Gasparro, 1995 p137; Tatian, *Discourse* 7:3-20.

enocratism. There is a requirement for the protological motivation of the doctrine of double creation as well as the motivation of the Incarnation and wholehearted service of the Lord. The danger of the Milan Definition is that it can give the appearance of a definition by committee, in that external boundaries are erected to form the general definition but internal boundaries are left unspecified so that no detail can be confidently placed within the formula. However, the positive aspect of the Milan definition is the inclusion of the requirement of a protological motivation (a creation/fall cycle) for an encratic practice to qualify as 'enocratism'. In so doing the definition moves away from the danger of understanding enocratism merely as asceticism, whilst noting other explanations for the practice of continence.

An attempt to give detail to the 'sliding scale' of *enkrateia* definitions has been made by Gasparro, who in an effort to differentiate between the different practices of *enkrateia* suggests that it is necessary to identify each person's point of ideological reference when calling for total abstinence from sexual activity.¹⁸ He notes that the same behaviour (sexual abstinence) can be based on very different theoretical assumptions, whilst similar principles (of abstinence) can result in different conduct on ethical and practical levels. In relation to sexual abstinence such discrepancies can be gathered under the general heading of 'enocratism', as they hold to the same 'common denominator' of unswerving condemnation of sexual activity and procreation.¹⁹ Gasparro concludes that

Enkrateia can be divided into a moderate camp, which itself had a wide range of interpretations, and a radical camp, which eventually became known as enocratism, which was followed by 'Enocratites', using a term taken from old heresiological sources used in a historical context without any sort of value judgement applied.²⁰

Thus, Gasparro builds upon the requirement of the protological motivation by recognising the plurality of motivations that exist within those that practice *enkrateia*. When Gasparro's definition and plea for the identification of the person's ideological point of reference are taken

¹⁸ Gasparro, 1995, p128.

¹⁹ Gasparro, 1995, p129.

²⁰ Gasparro, 1995, p130.

into account, it can be seen that the association of *enkrateta* with the doctrine of double-creation can, at times, be quite tentative. However, for the practice of *enkrateta* to be more than asceticism, there must be a protological understanding of the sexual consequences of the fall. Other influences may be as pertinent to the practitioner, depending upon varieties of culture and theological understanding, but these influences may require that an 'enocratic' practice is not termed 'enkratism' in the strict use of the term. Within the protological motivations of enkratism there is also a need for refinement of definition. As Gasparro points out 'the rejection of all sexual activity and procreation was shared by both nonditheist Encratites and the numerous followers of gnosticism'.²¹ Thus there is a broad base of the practice of *enkrateta*, from which it is necessary to distinguish those who practiced enkratism, and this is best achieved by an examination of their protological and eschatological motivation.

From the definitions examined above it can be seen that practice of *enkrateta* (self-control) does not qualify the practitioner to be termed a follower of the way of enkratism, or to be labelled an Encratite. For any practice to be termed 'enocratic' there needs to be an understanding of the consequences of the fall of man, and mankind's subsequent restoration, as a motivating factor behind the theology that is the foundation of the encratite actions. It is to be noted that within enkratism itself there is a twofold division comprising of, in Gasparro's terms, moderate enkratism and radical enkratism. This radical enkratism itself, when examined for its protological motivation, may be broadly divided into gnostic forms, and christian forms.²² Gasparro rightly notes that

Within the broad framework of this proposed classification, critical analysis should proceed with the greatest caution and flexibility to make it possible to identify a wide range of positions and their respective motivations....there is a series of shared issues, language, images and most important an ethos that ensures substantial homogeneity in the perception of humanity's sexual dimension and sexual activity.²³

There would thus appear to be several distinct yet related forces behind the notion of

²¹ Gasparro, 1995, p130.

²² Gasparro, 1995, p130.

²³ Gasparro, 1995, p130.

enkratism. Firstly the protological motivation, such as double creation, secondly the eschatological force of the new community on earth and access into the Kingdom of God, and thirdly the Christological force of the presence of Christ within believers, and the desire to imitate Christ, usually through a celibate lifestyle.

Taking account of the differing definitions of enkratism and *enkrateia* given above it can be seen that there is a progression of definition that can be proposed for the practice of *Enkrateia* and of Enkratism.

1. Enkrateia: This is the element of ἐγκράτεια (*enkrateia*) that is synonymous with *askesis*, and is open to the majority of Christians.
2. Radical enkratism, that honours continence and celibacy above marriage, and places the life of virginity as the preferred way, but not the only way to live a Christian life.
3. Exclusive enkratism, which recognises no salvation, or entrance into the Kingdom of God outside of the celibate life, involves a repudiation of marriage to the point of viewing it as illegitimate, moving beyond the point of preference of radical asceticism, to establish a unique and exclusive community of virgins. Thus, in exclusive enkratism, those who are married have no legitimate place within the Kingdom.

It was mentioned above that Quispel argues that enkratism was a continuation of an earlier tradition, whereas Murray views enkratism as a new development.²⁴ The differing views in this area are dependent upon precise definitions, and Murray's is clear. He views enkratism as 'the rejection of marriage and the evaluation of sexual union as evil and defiling'.²⁵ Quispel, who is more vague in his definition, argues that enkratism was a continuation of an old ascetic tradition, while Gasparro asserts that:

'enkrateia should be understood as a broad, though broken line that runs through early Christianity, thereby cohering various experiences regarding questions of sex and procreation.'²⁶

²⁴ Murray, NTS 21, p79. Specifically the condemnation of marriage.

²⁵ Murray, 1975, p11.

²⁶ Gasparro, 1995, p129.

This 'broken line' encompasses both the encratic practices that were practiced by the Church and those that came to be viewed by the Church with suspicion. The encratism that condemned marriage could be seen as a new development in as much as the Church began to differentiate between the various shades of encratic practise particularly in relation to the Church hierarchy. Thus it is important in any discussion of *enkrateia* to differentiate between the degrees of the phenomenon of encratism, and to isolate the varieties of encratic practice within the early Church environment, so that the encratic teaching of Ps-Macarius can be compared.

Syrian Encratism

The question that arises is how Syrian encratism fits into the definition given. As noted above, when seeking to define the practice of *enkrateia* within the early Christian world it is necessary to understand the environment of the people practising the encratic lifestyle. Syrian Spirituality had a predisposition to asceticism, that when coupled with the biblical understanding of the imitation of Christ and being entirely motivated to the service of the Lord, produced behaviour that could be characterised in Hellenic circles as exclusive or radical *enkrateia*.²⁷ To examine Syrian encratism, and hence Macarian encratism the Syrian predilection for an ascetic lifestyle must be introduced into the equation, and examined from the perspective of Syrian, rather than Greek orthodoxy. The Syrian Church always had a profoundly eschatological emphasis within the traditional ascetic practices. This eschatological understanding described the ascetic community as the forerunner of the coming kingdom. It emphasised the place of the encratic community within the Kingdom of God. Beggiani argues that Syrian Spirituality had a distinct theology of creation and Incarnation that left little space for an interpretation of the fall as based on a gnostic cosmology and the resultant introduction of sexuality as a lower level of existence. Rather, Syrian spirituality understood humanity as

²⁷ See the Definition of Syrian Christianity given above p100.

the converging, and highest, point of creation;²⁸ the fall as nothing else than the wrong use of God's gift to humanity of free will;²⁹ sin as error and darkness; resulting in a distortion of the image of God that human beings are; a loss of harmony between the heavens and the earth;³⁰ and salvation as resulting from the ascent of the Son to the Father, triumphant over sin.³¹

Beggiani asserts that 'the Syrian view of creation is more a product of Biblical influence and faith experience, than philosophical speculation'.³² Accordingly the initial protology of Syrian encratism is the creation of man in the image of God, and the rebellion of man's will. Ephrem understood freewill as the quality by which Adam was the image of God, and it is by their capacity of free decision that humans are like God.³³ Furthermore the original image of man was to be restored through the Incarnation, not just to the position of Adam's pre-fallen state, but to the position of honour that Adam would have acquired had he kept the divine commandment ie theosis, or divinization.³⁴

The examination of the place afforded to celibacy, and thus to encratism, within Syrian Christianity is best illustrated by an examination of the tradition of baptism within the Syrian Church.³⁵ Syrian baptismal theology initially emphasised a Johannine rebirth understanding³⁶ over the Pauline understanding of Baptism as death, burial and resurrection³⁷ until the fourth century, when largely through the influence of Theodore Mopsuestia the Pauline tradition began to take precedence.³⁸ However, it is unwise to emphasise the

²⁸ Beggiani, 1983, p13,15.

²⁹ Brock, 1994, p2.

³⁰ Beggiani, 1983, p21.

³¹ Beggiani, 1983, p53.

³² Beggiani, 1983, p13.

³³ Ephrem, *De Epiphania no:10*. See also Jansma, OCP 39, p18.

³⁴ Brock (tr.), 1990, p72; Ephrem, *Com. on Genesis II.23*.

³⁵ Bundy, Aug.25, pp597-608; Nedungatt, OCP vol XXIX, pp419-44.

³⁶ John 3:3 'Unless one is born anew he cannot see the Kingdom of God'. NRSV

³⁷ Romans 6:3 'All of us who were baptized into Jesus were baptized into his death'. NRSV

³⁸ Brock, 1989, p60; (See also Brock, 1979) Brock examines all the Syrian baptismal rites in detail. Theodore of Mopsuestia directed the emphasis more towards the Pauline interpretation of Baptism, emphasising a linear approach to the reception of the spirit, understanding baptism as a pledge of what shall be received, symbolically imitating immortal life, and providing potential for the gifts of the Spirit.

divergence between the Johannine and Pauline tradition within early Syriac baptismal theology, as the richness of the Syriac understanding of baptism comes from an intermingling of both emphases. What ought to be emphasised is the Syriac idea of baptism being an entry into a life of the heavenly kingdom, in that the baptised have gained the potential for continual access to the Kingdom. That is, the baptized are able, provided they allow the Holy Spirit to work within them, to live in paradise while still on earth,³⁹ the Kingdom of Heaven thus being 'within you'. The initial Johannine tradition emphasised the reception of the Spirit within the prebaptismal anointing (*rushma*), containing the imagery of the conferring of the royal priesthood and sonship, and the subsequent baptism was akin to rebirth.⁴⁰ The anointing of the baptismal candidate has been the subject of much investigation, and the baptismal character of the *Odes of Solomon*, and the development of the Syrian Baptismal tradition in particular relation to anointing has been examined by Winkler⁴¹ and Pierce.⁴² The *Odes of Solomon* are interpreted by some to speak of baptism as an engagement in ascetic combat,⁴³ and it has been suggested that parts of the Odes contain a baptismal liturgy, which demands celibacy.⁴⁴ It is suggested that the baptismal liturgy of the Odes developed from the baptismal anointing as the New Testament fulfillment of the divine nomination of membership of the heavenly kingdom (cf Mark 1:9-11). This understanding was eventually superseded by an acceptance of anointing centered around healing and exorcism.⁴⁵ In this argument the early Syrian theme, of the baptised entry into the eschatological kingship of the Messiah is replaced by a view of the anointing as an entry to a battle with Satan.⁴⁶ Thus, in Pierces understanding purification

³⁹ Brock, 1979, p8, 50, 65; *Comm Diat.* 21.25.

⁴⁰ Brock, 1979, p83.

⁴¹ Winkler, *Worship* 52, p24-45.

⁴² Pierce, EL XCVII, pp35-59.

⁴³ eg *Ode 9:5-11*. Pierce EL XCVII, notes the diversity of opinion as to the baptismal character of the Odes, Charlesworth, 1973 regards them as a Jewish-Christian hymn book, and opposes the view that the Odes were of baptismal origin.

⁴⁴ Desprez sees such liturgical allusions in *Odes 9, 11*, ABR XLII, p175.

⁴⁵ Pierce, EL XCVII, p54; Winkler, *Worship* 52, p36.

⁴⁶ Pierce, EL XCVII, p55; Winkler, *Worship* 52, p39.

becomes the fundamental requirement for the coming of the Spirit and the focus of Baptism.⁴⁷ Brock notes how the pre-baptismal anointing eventually gave way to a post-baptismal anointing, and how the charismatic nature of pre-baptismal anointing was gradually replaced by a more 'cathartic' model of identification and cleansing. The reception of the Spirit was thus held to be a post-baptismal experience rather than a pre-baptismal, or baptismal occurrence.⁴⁸ Other Syrian writings that have a baptismal emphasis include *the Acts of Thomas*, in which the ascetics enjoy the same powers as the confessors of the faith in other Churches.⁴⁹ There is within the Syrian pneumatological understanding of baptism the idea of entry into the eschatological community, and of paradise re-opened. A life of virginity allowed a constant access to the divine potential within each believer, and within a sympathetic ascetic environment.

Part of the understanding of the Syrian baptismal tradition can be seen in the customs surrounding marriage in Syria. The idea of betrothal is paramount within the marital process, in that the bride and groom, upon their initial 'engagement', are effectively married, with only the act of consummation to take place after the marriage ceremony. Within late antiquity, and Byzantium in particular, this original Jewish influence of marriage resulted in the acceptance of marriage as an economic transaction rather than an emotional attachment,⁵⁰ wherein the transfer of goods and 'titles' took place at the initial betrothal ceremony, and any breaking of the betrothal agreement was paramount to divorce.⁵¹ The Bridegroom is thus, at the same time legally married and yet still betrothed. When compared with the baptismal rites, similarities can be seen. The candidate, as the Bride of Christ, once baptised is both betrothed and married to Christ. As Brock notes, from early on in Syriac tradition Christ's own baptism was regarded

⁴⁷ Pierce, EL XCVII, p55.

⁴⁸ Brock, 1979, p83.

⁴⁹ Desprez, ABR XLII, p175.

⁵⁰ Ferguson, 1993, p65-70; Leyerle, JECS 5:2, p265f.

⁵¹ By the time of Alexius I (1081) the distinction between betrothal and marriage was limited. (*Dict Byz* 2.1305)

as the betrothal of the Church to Christ, and Christian baptism as the betrothal of the baptized soul to Christ.⁵² The newly baptized therefore are spiritually betrothed to the heavenly Bridegroom and have a legitimate access to paradise, while still awaiting a fuller theosis. In effect, they live in two 'times', that of Ordinary time, and that of Sacred time, having the potential to enter into a present experience of Paradise.⁵³ As shall be shown Ps-Macarius portrays a similar understanding within his corpus.

Another significant element of the baptismal ritual includes the status of the baptismal water, and the 'putting on' of the 'robe of glory'. The Johannine concept of baptism, is echoed within the creation of the baptismal water becoming the water of the river Jordan, in which Christ was baptised, thereby sanctifying all sources of water.⁵⁴ Furthermore the idea of the water becoming the 'womb', which gives rebirth to Christians, also links to the baptismal font being described as the new and spiritual mother,⁵⁵ and of the water as the divine fire, being the link between Christ's own baptism and the Catechumen's baptism as the occasion of the putting on the 'robe of glory' which was previously stolen from Adam.⁵⁶ The close identification of the baptismal water with the water that issued from the side of Christ (John 19:43) accounts for the ability of baptismal water to cleanse sins. Thus purification effected at baptism initiates the process of sanctification, and consequent divinization of man as a son of God.⁵⁷

The encratic motif within the Syrian understanding of baptism concerns the reception of the Spirit as a re-installation of the pre-fall position of Adam into paradise. The 'robe of glory' received at baptism, the re-institution of priestly status, and the adoption of sonship

⁵² Brock, 1979, p51f.

⁵³ Brock, 1979, p8f. There is a distinction between sacred time and earthly time. The concern of sacred time lies in the salvific content and meaning of an event, and the entry into sacred time is effected by the Holy Spirit.

⁵⁴ Brock, 1989, p60.

⁵⁵ Brock, 1989, p60; Theodore Mopsuestia, *Cat Hom.*

⁵⁶ Brock, 1989, p64; Ephrem, *De Nativitate XIII.13.*

⁵⁷ Brock, 1979, p63f.

bestowed on the baptised are all initiated by the reception of the Spirit which re-institutes that divine pneuma that was lost as a result of the fall. Brock notes that there is a tension evident within the concept of baptism, wherein the 'robe of glory' is regained in potential, but not yet fully attained in reality, for this is only to happen at the general resurrection. However, this final reality can to some extent be anticipated in this life by those who preserve their baptismal robe 'unspotted'.⁵⁸ He also notes that within Syrian communities celibacy was regarded as an essential condition for baptism, and this practice was maintained well into the third century, as standard expectation.⁵⁹

Murray has shown the relationship between the *bnay Qyāmā*⁶⁰ and baptismal practice, in Ephrem and Aphrahat, which concerns the practice of celibacy and baptismal commitment, wherein baptism initiates an adherence to a celibate lifestyle.⁶¹ He identifies a cycle of themes which it was proper to mention when candidates were called to join the *bnay Qyāmā* at their baptism.⁶² According to Aphrahat, the *bnay Qyāmā* were asked to choose between marriage and celibacy vows,⁶³ but Aphrahat also left open the possibility of marriage, for those of the *Qyāmā* that developed close relationships.⁶⁴ Murray says of the 'covenant'

it was the core or heart of the early Syriac Church, and doubtless all Christians regarded it as such. Coenobitical Monasticism did not develop in an orderly scheme in Syria until the late fourth century, and previous to that it seemed that the men and women members of the covenant were more closely related to the Church community, often living at home or in small groups, through which much of the pastoral concern of the Bishops was exercised.⁶⁵

There is a similarity between the narrow delineation of the Syriac ideal of *ihīdāyā* and the encratic practices of the wider church. The exact relationship between the *ihīdāyā* and the

⁵⁸ Brock, 1992 chap.XI, p23ff Brock provides an appendix of illustrative texts of the Robe of Glory. Eschatological aspects stress the clothing of the saints in the robe that belongs to Adam and Eve. (See Ephrem, *De Paradiso VI.9*).

⁵⁹ Brock, 1984, p7; See also Griffith, 1985, pp220-245, esp pp223-235.

⁶⁰ See above p 75f.

⁶¹ Murray, NTS 21, pp59-80.

⁶² Murray, NTS 21, p60.

⁶³ Murray, 1982, p7; Aphrahat, *Dem. VII.18-21, VIII.21*.

⁶⁴ Murray, 1982, p8; Aphrahat, *Dem VI.4*.

⁶⁵ Murray, 1982, p8.

enocratic movement is difficult to define adequately given the vagaries of understanding of the term 'Encratism'. It would appear that the praxis of *ihīdāyā* and the *bnay Qyāmā* are a defined aspect of an enocratic tendency that was particularly noticeable in North East Syria, one that could be termed Radical encratism, and which would include the commitment to 'battle' as found within the *Odes of Solomon*.⁶⁶ Exclusive encratism, which condemns marriage, differs from the concept of *ihīdāyā* in that within the *bnay Qyāmā* continence within marriage is applauded. For example both Ephrem and Aphrahat are held to have been celibates and members of the *bnay Qyāmā*, but both recognise the validity of marriage within the Church and the Kingdom of God.⁶⁷ Murray remarks that the praxis of *ihīdāyā* seemed to grow straight out of primitive discipleship.⁶⁸ The Syrian context was one of baptism being the occasion for the receipt of the Holy Spirit, the acquisition of purity,⁶⁹ and of 'becoming virgins and consecrated ones'.⁷⁰

To understand baptism as purely an enocratic event weakens other theological focuses held within the Syrian baptismal tradition. Whilst there was a clear understanding of baptism as a re-entry to paradise, priesthood and sonship, there was no over-emphasis upon the baptised being initiated into a lifestyle of *enkrateta*. Rather it was understood as part of the process of the ascetic lifestyle, a consequence of becoming a priest, and partaking in divine sonship (re-entry into Paradise), taking in the virginal characteristics of angelic life, and becoming the Bride of Christ. Radical *enkrateta* was a means of actively living in the eschatological community, of actualising the potential gained at baptism, and of being a part of sacred time⁷¹ whilst on earth. Thus the 'normal' Syrian protological understanding of the fall of Adam, and the introduction of the life of sexuality, led to some of the baptised (possibly at

⁶⁶ See above p70.

⁶⁷ Brock (tr.), 1990, p33; Ephrem, *De Fide XX.17*; Murray, 1975², p61ff (with translation of Aphrahat, *Dem VII*).

⁶⁸ Murray, NTS 21, p79.

⁶⁹ Murray, NTS 21, p64.

⁷⁰ Ephrem, *Hymn on Epiph. 8.16.5*; Murray, NTS 21, p65.

⁷¹ cf Brock, 1979, p8f; 1985, p92.

times the majority) living a life of strict virginity after baptism.

The question is whether the majority of baptismal candidates would have committed themselves to a life of celibacy *a priori*, and whether or not this was a requirement for a baptismal candidate. Nedungatt has shown how, in the writings of Aphrahat,⁷² entry into the *bnay Qyāmā* initiation involved a three stage process, each stage allowing for those considering adherence to the covenant to reconsider and reject the life of celibacy, before the final stage of baptism, which was immediately followed by the eucharist.⁷³ This allegiance to the covenant is suggested to have taken place before the baptism of other catechumens.⁷⁴ The *Qyāmā* were thus committing themselves to an extra vow over and above that which was required at baptism for the other candidates.⁷⁵ This extra-baptismal allegiance to a celibate lifestyle, thus formed an 'elite' group within early Syriac Christianity, which was still referred to as the *bnay Qyāmā* in the seventh century.⁷⁶ However by the seventh century the Syrian Church had recognised, according to Dadisho, different stages of perfection,⁷⁷ and the *bnay Qyāmā* were those positioned between the layman and the monk.⁷⁸ Nedungatt notes how the

⁷² Particularly *Demonstration VII*. For a detailed discussion of the history of exegesis of this *demonstration* see Murray, NTS 21 and Vööbus, 1951.

⁷³ Nedungatt, 1973, p441; Vööbus, 1951, p49-58 suggested that Aphrahat's *Demonstration VII* was a liturgical text which had survived but whose restrictive implications were no longer in force. See also Vööbus, 1958, p93-5, 175-8; Murray, NTS 21, p59 recognises a standard homily which it was proper to mention when candidates were called to join the *Qyāmā*, rather than a liturgy, and prefers to focus on the commitment to celibacy as 'self-consecration'.

⁷⁴ *Testamentum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi*, (ed. I. Rahmani) 1899, p126; Aphrahat *Dem VII*; Nedungatt, 1973, p441; Sperry-White (tr), 1991, *Testamentum Domini II.8* p27 'Let them be baptised thus: When they come to the water, let the water be pure and flowing. First the infants, then the men, then the women. However, if someone wishes to approach as to virginity, let that person first be baptized by the bishop's hand'.

⁷⁵ Nedungatt, 1973, p441.

⁷⁶ The last known reference to the *Bnay Qyāmā* is by Dadisho Katraya a monk in the monastery of Rab-Kinnare, in the Qatar district of the Persian Gulf. Treatise: *On Solitude*, Mingana, 1943, p71; Nedungatt, 1973, p207.

⁷⁷ Dadisho (tr.), Mingana, 1943, p71.

⁷⁸ Dadisho distinguishes six stages of *ihīdāyā* over the position of the christian layman. Mingana, 1943, p78. The 'Sons of the Pact', the Monks who wear humble garb and do not eat meat or marry; the 'Young Solitaries' who conduct weekday solitude; the 'Desert Solitaries'; the 'Itinerant Solitaries'; and the 'Anchorites'. See also Nedungatt, 1973, p207ff.

ihīdāyā and the *bnay Qyāmā* were almost identical in Aphrahat, and yet by the seventh century were two distinct groups, the *ihīdāyā* occupying a far higher position than the *bnay Qyāmā*.⁷⁹ As Vööbus showed, Aphrahat's *Demonstration VII* contains a remnant of an earlier baptismal liturgy,⁸⁰ and reveals a baptismal tradition that stemmed from the time when celibacy was a 'seal for those aspirants who were expected to forsake marriage, possession and life in the world'.⁸¹ Thus, it was a difference of interpretation of the baptismal liturgy as quoted by Aphrahat in his contemporary church, away from the rigorist celibate requirements of the early tradition. Aphrahat was living in the mid fourth century, as Vööbus notes, in an 'epoch of transition'.⁸² Together with the gradual delineation of those living a life of celibacy towards a clearer progression of the radical encratic lifestyle (which was achieved by the seventh century) was a move away from radical encratism towards a life of what could simply be called *enkrateia*. The willingness of the *Qyāmā* to commit themselves to a more stringent ascetic lifestyle than the majority of the Church was counter-balanced by a number of believers who preferred to postpone their baptism until the end of their sexually active life. Evidences of such a position in the Cappadocian region can be seen in the exhortations to baptism that are found in Gregory Nyssa⁸³ and Gregory Nazianzen⁸⁴. These sermons were written at the end of the fourth century, and give an insight into the view of society towards the necessity of baptism. They were delivered early in the calendar year as the season of preparation for the Easter celebrations (and most appropriate time for baptism) approached.⁸⁵ In a sermon on baptism Gregory Nazianzen gives the most detailed account of the reasons given for the postponement of baptism. In his sermon he encourages his audience to receive baptism, and

⁷⁹ Nedungatt, 1973, p209.

⁸⁰ See Vööbus, 1951.

⁸¹ Vööbus, 1958, p95.

⁸² Vööbus, 1958, p177.

⁸³ Gregory Nyssa, '*On the Baptism of Christ*', '*Oratio Catechetica*'; See also Ferguson, 1997, p121-129.

⁸⁴ Gregory Nazianzen, '*Oratton 40 On Holy Baptism*'.

⁸⁵ Ferguson, 1997, p121.

clearly expounds his opinion that there is no state of life in which baptism is not profitable (Orat 40.xviii). He examines the excuses that are given for delaying baptism (Orat 40.xx), such as cutting oneself off from the pleasures of life, assuming that God knows of their intention to receive baptism and will take that as having received baptism in event of an early death (Orat 40.xx). He rejects and corrects those that have no reverence for baptism, seeing it as a mere gift (xxiii). He reproves those who are too idle or lethargic to receive baptism (Orat 40.xxiv), those that desire to wait for family conversions (Orat 40.xxv), or desire to be baptised by a bishop, or at least a celibate priest who is of an angelic life (Orat 40.xxvi). He reiterates that the baptismal ceremony is a foretype of the future glory, and is an entrance into the Bridechamber, from which the previous excuses will result in exclusion (Orat 40.xlvi).

Of the Syrian writers Ephrem, whilst extolling the virtue and value of baptism, encourages the uninitiated to be enriched, and for the poor to enter the fountain,⁸⁶ whilst also encouraging his audience to receive baptism with discernment.⁸⁷ However, as the majority of Ephrem's baptismal writings are in the form of baptismal hymns, there is not the detailed refutation of excuses as can be found in Gregory Nazianzen. That such an attitude of delay existed can be surmised from Aphrahat (*Demonstration VII*) as well as from the fifth century *Testamentum Domini*, in which celibate candidates are given preference over other catechumens within a baptismal service, or had additional prerequisites to fulfill before baptism,⁸⁸ and from Isaac of Antioch, who in the fifth century pleaded with people to be baptised, as many were remaining unbaptized during their sexually active life.⁸⁹ Thus there was a watering down of allegiance to celibacy, from the initial point where celibacy was an expected result of Baptism (Brock notes that in the third century that was still the case), to the *Qyāmā* being accepted as the 'core' of the Syrian Church as in Aphrahat's

⁸⁶ Ephrem, *De Epiphania xii*.

⁸⁷ Ephrem, *De Epiphania ix*.

⁸⁸ The generally accepted date of the *Testamentum* is the fifth century.

⁸⁹ Isaac of Antioch, *Hom XXXII* (ed. G. Bickell), vol II, p108-141.

liturgical/homiletical source, to the position of the church contemporaneous to Aphrahat whereby celibacy was for those joining the *Qyāmā* only, to the position of the *Testamentum Domini* and Isaac of Antioch, in which a delay before baptism was becoming the norm, with non-celibate baptism being conducted alongside those seeking allegiance to the *Qyāmā*. By the seventh century it was clear that celibacy was not a requirement for baptism, but was a requirement to join the *Qyāmā*, or to progress along the path of the *ihīdāyā*, which was instigated at baptism. Whilst these 'single ones' chose to follow the way of radical encratism, others preferred to delay their baptism until their old age, citing a variety of excuses and reasons, examples of which can be seen from the Cappadocian writers. Thus elite sections of Christian allegiance apart from the laity / clergy division existed within the Syrian Church, and were applauded as opposed to tolerated. It may be that in response to the increasing prevalence of delayed baptism, and the increasing number of celibates who failed to keep their vows⁹⁰ some Radical encratites progressed their understanding of baptism and celibacy to the point of refuting marriage as viable for those wanting to enter the Kingdom of God, and of asserting that salvation was only possible for those within an exclusive community of virgins, and forming, in relation to the earlier definition, exclusive encratism. Thus, to build upon the assertion of Murray,⁹¹ *exclusive encratism* was a new development to be faced, and *radical encratism* a continuation of an earlier tradition. The formative period of the Syrian Church saw a gradual hierarchy develop consisting of laity, celibates and Priests. The celibate 'section' itself gradually developed and formed a way of progression towards a total ascetic lifestyle. However, this remained radical encratism, and it was a part of the 'mainstream' Christianity of the region that still saw marriage as a positive option. It was the offshoots of Syrian Christianity that saw celibacy not as a characteristic of the paradisiacal community, but as a

⁹⁰ It is held that some of Aphraha's demonstrations were written to encourage the *Qyāmā*, in the light of those who had broken their covenant vows. Baker, DownR 88, citing Klijn as the prime example.

⁹¹ Murray, NTS 21, p79, see above p118.

requirement for entrance to that community, that practiced exclusive encratism. As with any heresy the lines of heresiological formation are initially blurred, and hard to distinguish, but the total repudiation of marriage and the rejection of the validity of salvation to those within marriage show a clear heretical stance which mainstream Syrian Christianity rejected, and which heretical movements such as the Encratites were held to have accepted.

In relation to the 'encratic tendency' of the Syrian Church, and how that tendency affected Ps-Macarius, it has been shown that the requirement of a 'protological motivation', as set out in the Milan definition, has been clearly met in that the restoration of the paradisiacal state is of paramount importance to both Syrian encratism and Ps-Macarius. There is within Syrian Christianity the requirement of radical encratism, as evidenced in that it was only a portion of the christian population that followed the radical way of celibacy. The distinct protological motivation within Syrian Christianity was the combination of the eschatological influence of engaging in both sacred time and 'earthly' time simultaneously, and thus heralding the arrival of the Kingdom of God, together with the understanding of the consequences of the creation and the fall of man as a fall from a perfect state. Combined within this motivation is also the desire for, and understanding of, angelic imitation; Paradise re-entry; and becoming the bride of Christ, that is evident within radical encratism.

Wider Encratic Influences upon Ps-Macarius

Syrian encratism was only one of many influences upon Ps-Macarius, and as Staats has suggested

It would be useful...if a comparison were to be drawn with those personalities who, biographically and theologically were definitely in the immediate vicinity of Makarios-Symeon.⁹²

Such personalities include Gregory Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil of Caesarea, Eustathius,

⁹² Staats, 1983, p64.

Macrina, and Alexander the founder of the Acoemete monastery,⁹³ as well as the all pervasive ascetic heritage of Origen. The encratic influences found within all these personalities affected the conduct and doctrine that is portrayed within the Macarian corpus and Messalianism. So the question of the wider encratic theology that shaped Ps-Macarius' ascetic outlook necessitates examination, before the encratic characteristics of Ps-Macarius can be discussed. In this examination the threefold definition of Encratism given earlier must be borne in mind, and the discussion of the personalities involved will be limited to a broadly Encratic theme.

Origen

The heritage of Origen is found throughout Christian ascetic writings and thus effects our understanding of the asceticism and *enkrateia* that may have eventually influenced Ps-Macarius. Such was the influence of Origen upon the Christian Spirituality that elements of his theology, pervaded the furthest reaches of Christendom, and were especially evident within the asceticism of the Cappadocian Fathers. Origen's spirituality has been well researched and a brief summary of his ideas will suffice to give a broad outline of the influence of his mysticism upon subsequent spirituality. Origen's protology is that of a double creation,⁹⁴ the first of which relates to the soul, which was created after the image of the Logos, and the second creation which relates to the body, which is the vessel containing the image.⁹⁵ The initial creation was that of equal rational beings, absorbed in the contemplation of God, forming a unity, whose head was Christ in His pre-existent humanity. The fall was due to *sattetas* (being satiated with the contemplation of the divine), and a decline in fervour and charity,⁹⁶ causing

⁹³ J-M Sauget, s.v. *Alexander the Acoemete* EEC, p22; On the life of Alexander and the Acoemetes see PO 6.645-647, 658-701.

⁹⁴ Crouzel, 1989, p207 notes that Origen's doctrine of the pre-existence of souls constantly governs his thought even when he does not mention it specifically.

⁹⁵ See Hobbel, SP xxi, p303-307.

⁹⁶ Crouzel, 1989, p210; Origen, *P.Arch* 1,3.8, 1,4,1.

the intelligences to grow cold and become souls. This reduction of fervour is a matter of degree and accounts for the differing levels of rational creatures, (angels, men, demons). Thus, the fall is due to free will,⁹⁷ and free will enables the rational creatures to reactivate their contemplation of the divine and achieve their initial unity once more. The soul of Jesus was one who did not sin, and is involved in the gathering of the Church into the pre-existent unity once again. Origen's doctrine of man as a tripartite being (spirit, soul, body) created as a consequence of the fall allows the divine to communicate and participate with the human in the present, post-fall existence. For Origen, the spirit is the divine element within man, a gift of God, and not a part of human personality. It is hindered by man's sin to the point of inertia. The spirit is also the seat of the Holy Spirit, when the Holy Spirit is present in man.⁹⁸ The soul is the seat of free will, which if submitted to the spirit is assimilated and becomes wholly spiritual. The body is that lower element of the soul added to man after the fall, and is the source of the instinct and the passions.⁹⁹ Thus the trichotomy of man reveals the soul to be a spiritual battlefield. As Crouzel states, 'The dominant context...is more moral and ascetic than mystical: it is the spiritual battle. The soul is torn between the spirit and the attraction of the earthly body, the flesh...and it is the soul, with its free will which has to decide for one or the other. In itself, by reason of the two elements that divide it, the soul is in league with both sides.'¹⁰⁰ Therefore within Origen there is an element of ascetic lifestyle that recognises the need for discipline and subservience of the body for the potential participation in the Holy Spirit to be activated. The mystical element within Origen's theology is seen when his understanding of the role of baptism is examined. The ascent of the soul to God, the actualising of the divine potential within man, is achieved through the reception of the Holy Spirit in baptism. The mystical life is a communion between Christ and the soul.¹⁰¹ This

⁹⁷ Origen, *P.Arch I, II*.

⁹⁸ Crouzel, 1989, p88.

⁹⁹ Crouzel, 1989, p89.

¹⁰⁰ Crouzel, 1989, p92.

¹⁰¹ Louth, 1981, p53.

contemplation and communion is bound by spiritual love which draws man away from earthly contemplation toward contemplation of the divine. In particular Origen develops a teaching of the 'Five Spiritual Senses' in which there are two modes of sense perception, one mortal, transient and human, and the other immortal, spiritual and divine,¹⁰² which aid the soul's contemplation of God,¹⁰³ and return to paradise. Origen's desire was that man be 'transformed'¹⁰⁴ to become 'a holy temple' for God.¹⁰⁵

Louth refers to Origen as the founder of intellectualist mysticism that was developed and bequeathed to the Church by Evagrius. However, Louth also notes, that Origen is not simply the precursor of one tradition, but of the whole of the Christian mystical tradition, and that later mystical theology developed within the framework provided by him.¹⁰⁶ Origen's mysticism is not purely that of an intellectual ascent to God, but one that recognises the outworking of that ascent through ascetic practices, including virginity and the repudiation of marriage. Origen commends those who take vows of celibacy,¹⁰⁷ and honours those who deny their bodies to make a living sacrifice to the Lord.¹⁰⁸ The motivation for his asceticism was the principle that the soul should look to the love of the Logos, which is the bridegroom of all souls from pre-existent times.¹⁰⁹ He connects the thought of a development in man with the thought of the fall. From having the possibility for acquiring likeness with God at the time of creation, man can develop full perfection, in likeness with God in the fulfilment.¹¹⁰ Thus

¹⁰² Origen, *Contra Celsum Bk 1.48*.

¹⁰³ Rahner, RAM XIII, p113-145, (ET *Theological Investigations XVI* 81-103); See also Louth, 1981, p68 for a summary. The most important texts in Origen's formulation of the doctrine of the five spiritual senses are isolated by Rahner and include: *P.Arch 1.I; 1.II; Contra Celsum 1.48*.

¹⁰⁴ Origen, *Dialogue with Heraclides 150*, in Chadwick (tr.), 1977, p446.

¹⁰⁵ Brown, 1988, p177; Hobbel, SP XXI, p305. The Temple motif is also present in the *Acts of Judas Thomas, Act 9 para 93*, and the Syriac NT rendering of 1 Peter 2 as 'spiritual temples'. I am indebted to Dr Alexander Golitzin for these references.

¹⁰⁶ Louth, 1981, p74.

¹⁰⁷ McGuckin, 1985, p37.

¹⁰⁸ McGuckin, 1985, p37.

¹⁰⁹ McGuckin, 1985, p37.

¹¹⁰ Hobbel, SP XXI, p306.

within Origen there is not only the intellectual ascent of the soul but the recognition of the necessity of bodily control for that ascent to be activated. Origen's psychological trichotomy allowed him to construct a theology of asceticism, and of self-control, with the underlying motivation being that of domination of the passions for the purpose of contemplation of, and communion with, God.¹¹¹ Crouzel terms Origen's moderation of the passions as '*metriopatheia*'¹¹² ie the restraint to be imposed on the passions, rather than the complete purging of the passions from humanity. *Metriopatheia* is evident in the doctrine of the 'Five Spiritual Senses' within Origen. Special grace is required from God to be able to make use of the spiritual faculties,¹¹³ and the task of the spiritual life is to combat the passions. The spiritual senses cannot be activated without divine grace, and grace cannot be received without mercy. The body must be controlled for the ascent of the soul to be activated, for contemplation of God, and transformation of the soul. Origen's doctrine of the spiritual senses reveals the necessity of self-control (*enkrateta*), allied to an infusion of grace and divine enabling, for the soul to progress in the knowledge of God. Thus a life of *metriopathy* brings control. Crouzel, in describing metriopathy states that 'The natural propensities are good in themselves: sin is exceeding the limit'.¹¹⁴

The most radical encratic act of Origen was his alleged self-castration. Whilst this is held by some to be merely a literary apologetic device (to account for his church difficulties after his ordination, and to mask the doctrinal issues), rather than an actual event,¹¹⁵ there is no doubting the spiritual struggle that it illustrates. The body, for Origen, was not the cause of sin, rather sin was the cause of the body,¹¹⁶ and it was a unique vehicle for the healing of the

¹¹¹ Hobbel, SP XXI, p307.

¹¹² Crouzel, 1989, p7.

¹¹³ Rahner, (ET) Theological Investigations, xvi p95f; Origen, *Comm on Cant. prol 79*.

¹¹⁴ Crouzel, 1989, p52.

¹¹⁵ Chadwick, 1966, p67, is sceptical that the event occurred. Brown, 1988, p168 n44, finds the sources sufficiently reliable, and refers to Origen as one who at the very least viewed himself as one castrated. However, Origen himself never refers to his castration as a literal event, and the peculiarities of Eusebius' sources have been shown by Nautin, 1977.

¹¹⁶ McGuckin, 1985, p35.

spirit of man.¹¹⁷ As such, the body would become transformed throughout diverse and immeasurable ages, of which the present life was one short interlude.¹¹⁸ Ultimately then, through asceticism man would dominate his passion, (*metriopatheia*) and the soul would be liberated into its original destiny, that of being in participation with the Divine.¹¹⁹ Such a view of the body was necessarily fluid, and the attributes of the physical body were no more than provisional. The body would become transformed along with the spirit, as gold was cleansed through a long process. Sexuality was, for Origen, a stage, a part of the body that would vanish with the ultimate deification, as would marriage. Thus Origen was sympathetic to encratism to the extent of the disestablishment of sexual identification. Eunuchs were seen as neither male or female, 'exiled from either gender',¹²⁰ and virginity was a means of preserving an identity from the previous heavenly existence, whilst advancing the future state of communion with the divine. Virginity was then, to be honoured and gained man a higher standing in the incremental hierarchy of the rational creatures. Virgins ranked just below the martyrs, but above the ascetics,¹²¹ whilst those that married twice, for example, were not part of the Church proper.¹²² From Origen's understanding of the type of the body in the resurrection life, as being that of the angels,¹²³ and the lack of relationships akin to earthly relationships (husband to wife, son to father),¹²⁴ the logical conclusion is that there will be no sexual activity, nor marriage in the next world. However, this does not suppose that a lack of sexuality on earth is necessary for entrance into the heavenly realm. Origen's valuation of virginity as an act of controlling the passions, for an instigation of communion with the divine, and transformation of the soul, via the spiritual senses, is a highly defined ascetic outlook. For Origen, the aim of the encratic life

¹¹⁷ Brown, 1988, p163f.

¹¹⁸ Brown, 1988, p167; Origen, *P.Arch* 3.1.23.1025.

¹¹⁹ McGuckin, 1985, p36; *P.Arch* 33.3.

¹²⁰ Origen, *In John* 1.31.183,187; Brown, 1988, p169.

¹²¹ McGuckin, 1985, p37.

¹²² McGuckin, 1985, p37; See also Crouzel, 1962, pp152-160.

¹²³ Origen, *Comm on Matt XVII*, 30; Crouzel, 1989, p251.

¹²⁴ Origen, *Comm on Matt* 17.29-33; Crouzel, 1989, p252.

is an increasing recognition of the secrets of life and of God into the paradise on earth, which constitutes a freeing of the soul from the body.¹²⁵ When combined with the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul and the stages of the regeneration of rational creatures, the doctrine of the spiritual senses places Origen's asceticism within an encratic outlook, in that the life of virginity, in controlling some of the passions, opens doors for acquiring the likeness of God. However, it is tenuous to suggest that Origen was radical in his encratism, particularly if such an assertion is made on the grounds of his alleged self-castration.

Ps-Macarius is clearly indebted to Origen, knows his teaching, and expects his audience to be aware of it also. Origen's mysticism is mirrored in Ps-Macarius' idea of the progression of the soul beyond the stage of baptism, and of the journey the soul must take. Louth points out three stages to Origen's mysticism, the two mentioned above which are also found in Ps-Macarius, and a third, the joyful nature of soul within the journey.¹²⁶ Origen's mysticism whilst being a progressive mysticism, is a mysticism of light,¹²⁷ whereas Ps-Macarius' journey has the underlying ideal of penitence and thanksgiving. His co-operation with the work of grace within the soul, worked out into practical encratic themes within the homilies, depends upon an ongoing thankfulness for salvation joined to an extant eschatological community. Thus whilst Ps-Macarius imbibes some of Origen's teaching and practice he places his own emphasis and understanding upon the received tradition. The most obvious connection between Ps-Macarius and Origen is Ps-Macarius' use of Origen's 'five senses of the soul', in his exegesis of the parable of the five virgins.¹²⁸ In this the five senses are ascribed a spiritual meaning in both Origen and Ps-Macarius,¹²⁹ although Ps-Macarius invests in his exegesis his own interpretation. Similarly the encratic practices of Ps-Macarius

¹²⁵ Hobbel, SP XXI, p307; Origen, *P.Arch.* 2.11.6.

¹²⁶ Louth, 1981, p56f, with specific reference to Origen's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*.

¹²⁷ Louth, 1981, p57.

¹²⁸ Origen, *Comm.on Matt.* 63-4 and Ps-Macarius I.49.2.3; II.4.7; See also Stewart, 1991, p124ff.

¹²⁹ Staats, PTS 8, p95-6.

spring from a mysticism that has an emphasis unique to him, but which has a great deal in common with other encratic practices. He does not merely accept previous generational teaching, but rather uses it as a stepping stone to his own understanding and quest for a meaning which reveals his ascetic priority.

Gregory Nazianzen

Gregory Nazianzen was also influenced by Origen's approach to asceticism, although he is an example of one who deviated from Origen's influence. As one who had much contact with Basil of Caesarea, and would undoubtedly have been aware of the ascetic communities in the area of Annesi, Gregory was drawn to the ascetic life, but hindered in progressing with his solitude due to pressure from his Father, and his subsequent appointments to the Episcopate. Although together with Basil, Gregory Nazianzen had collated a selection of Origen's writings,¹³⁰ his reliance upon Origen and Neoplatonism was more that of a conceptual framework than any strict adherence to doctrine.¹³¹ Gregory, for example, saw the body as fundamental to the progress of the soul, while to Origen the body was much more transient and cumbersome. For Gregory man is a double being consisting of body and soul, spirit and flesh,¹³² made up by earth, united to a breath of God,¹³³ and it is this 'breath of God that' inclines man towards the Godhead.

Gregory's ascetic understanding does show some reliance upon earlier Origenistic thought. However in Gregory the body is the 'lower' element in man,¹³⁴ and as such is both 'friend and enemy'.¹³⁵ Man therefore is to follow the spirit and not the flesh,¹³⁶ and the desire

¹³⁰ Armitage Robinson, 1893.

¹³¹ Louth, 1986, p163.

¹³² Gregory Naz, *Or* 40.8.

¹³³ Ellverson, 1981, p21; Gregory Naz, *Poemata Dogmata* 8.1f; *Or* 38.11.

¹³⁴ Ellverson, 1981, p27.

¹³⁵ Gregory Naz, *Or*. 14.6-7.

¹³⁶ Ellverson, 1981, p29.

of the soul for God must overcome the obstacle of the body, which through its very existence hinders contemplation.¹³⁷ In Gregory *ascesis* is a means of furthering '*philosophia*' (contemplation of the Godhead),¹³⁸ but it is not an end in itself. *Ascesis* is a part of the progress of the soul on a journey to the Godhead. As Ruether remarks

Gregory can simultaneously say that man's salvation is his own work and also that it is entirely the work of God.....Man receives in proportion as he strives, and strives through the power of God that he receives.¹³⁹

There is little to differentiate between the ascesis of Gregory and *enkrateta*. Gregory's ascesis is a means to an end, rather than a goal in itself. Gregory emphasises virginity and continence within marriage, based upon an understanding of angelic disembodiment, and regards the life of chastity as a means of freeing the soul from the reigns of passion, and as a symbol of the 'single life'.¹⁴⁰ However, underlying his understanding of the angelic life and 'singleness', is God's purpose in creating man as being

placed in the physical world to share its physicality, while being granted a share in divine being through genuine participation in the image of God. This affinity with God gives man the ultimate purpose of travelling to God.¹⁴¹

For Gregory the soul contains the truth of God's 'direct creation', but man's journey towards the divine is unstable, uncertain and subject to the passions and ignorance. As such there is an 'ebb and flow' to the progress of the christian. Man was created 'another kind of angel', but was kept at a greater distance from the divine, having 'affection for one of the ways of life because of my earthly component, while I have in my heart a longing for the other life through the divine part in me'.¹⁴² Hence, having leant towards the way of evil, the return voyage to God can only be completed with 'some effort'.¹⁴³ The Fall, in Gregory, is understood as the sin of Adam of tasting the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge too early, an experience for which Adam

¹³⁷ Gregory Naz, *Ep 30; Or 2.7; 28.11-13.*

¹³⁸ Gregory Naz, *Or 2.67.*

¹³⁹ Ruether, 1969, p137f.

¹⁴⁰ Gregory Naz, *Or. 43.62; Ruether, 1969, p147.*

¹⁴¹ Moreschini (ed), 1997, Introduction D. Sykes, p72.

¹⁴² Gregory Naz, *Peri Archon 6:61ff.*

¹⁴³ Gregory Naz, *Peri Archon 7:127.*

was not ready, and in doing so he transgressed the commandment of God. The Fall was therefore a fault and a transgression of his free will.¹⁴⁴ The Incarnation 'bestowed on mortals the twofold cleansing of the everlasting spirit',¹⁴⁵ and baptism provides man with a seal as he approaches maturity, and walks the 'way of return to life'.¹⁴⁶

The ideal behind the transformation of the body was the ultimate salvation of the flesh,¹⁴⁷ in a 'spiritualized body' free from the earthly hindrances that limit man's ability to know God.¹⁴⁸ Behind the idea of the 'resurrection body' is the central thought of Gregory's continual journey toward the Godhead.¹⁴⁹ Gregory's asceticism was more akin to a philosophical outlook than it was to a baptismal regeneration viewpoint, but was still an encratic lifestyle for the purpose of communion and transformation (*theosis*), when encratism is understood as an individual lifestyle as opposed to a community lifestyle. For Gregory, the deification of Christ's human nature (at the Incarnation and through the process of creation) became the principle upon which man's deification is based. The transformation of man 'had its initial roots in the purposes of creation, a purpose recreated in the incarnate life and death of Christ, perfected in the economy of the Holy Spirit, appropriated individually in baptism, as well as in ascetic and philanthropic imitation, and finally realised in the future life.'¹⁵⁰ In many ways Gregory's understanding of salvation is to return man to Adam's first condition,¹⁵¹ and yet Gregory also places man on a higher level than the level attained preceding the fall.¹⁵²

Thus the encratic lifestyle that Gregory so honoured is a part of the theosis of man, the growth of man towards God, and the imitation of the future spiritual state (with no reference to

¹⁴⁴ Gregory Naz, *Or.38.12* ; Ellverson, 1981, p55-7. There are two Falls mentioned in Gregory, the Fall of Adam, and the Fall of Lucifer which occurred pre- Adam's creation.

¹⁴⁵ Gregory Naz, *Peri Archon* 8.75ff.

¹⁴⁶ Gregory Naz, *Peri Archon* 8.95.

¹⁴⁷ Gregory Naz, *Or 2.17; Or 38.13; Or 14.6*; See Ellverson, 1981, p31f; Winslow, 1979, chap. 8

¹⁴⁸ Gregory Naz, *Or 7; 2.19*; Ellverson, 1981 p32.

¹⁴⁹ McGuckin, 1996.

¹⁵⁰ Winslow, 1979, p189.

¹⁵¹ Gregory Naz, *Or 40:7*.

¹⁵² Gregory Naz, *Or 40:7* ; Winslow, 1979, p191.

earthly relations) which, in the course of man's theosis, and journey to God, will become reality. Gregory advocates virginity and celibacy but recognises the value of the married state as a precursor to the heavenly union with the Bridegroom.¹⁵³ His is an individual progression. As Ruether states, 'In relation to virginity, what is most important to Gregory is the inner substance, not the external state.'¹⁵⁴ Virginity is then, a part of *apatheta*, of controlling the passions and will towards the Godhead. Thus marriage is legitimate, but singleness is preferable because it is more conducive to *apatheta*.¹⁵⁵ Gregory's encratism is a radical *enkrateia*, in that his protology posits an advance towards the Godhead, to a position beyond that which was lost, but yet utilises all that God created as necessary for the journey. Gregory's asceticism is first and foremost an internal asceticism, an asceticism of attitude before practice. Thus the noetic element is by far the strongest element of his asceticism and leads and directs the soul Godward, taking with it the body. Gregory's 'continual ascent' does not allow for a delineation of standards of believers, but rather recognises the inward intellectual elements which transcend the boundaries of ascetic practice. Gregory shares Origen's view of life as an ascent, but his ascent is open and continuous rather than reliant upon prescribed stages, with the baptismal event central to the seal of God upon the journey.

Basil of Caesarea and Eustathius of Sebaste

Encratic influences that may also have come to bear upon Ps-Macarius' theology include those that shaped the encratic outlook of Basil of Caesarea. This includes the Origenist link via Macrina the Elder, (Basil's Grandmother) and her tutelage by Gregory Thaumaturgus, a widely respected student of Origen. Basil is often referred to as the 'Father of Eastern Monasticism',¹⁵⁶ and Elm notes that he 'appears to function virtually as a lens, filtering not

¹⁵³ Gregory Naz, *Or 8.14; Or 30.210; Or 40.8.*

¹⁵⁴ Ruether, 1969, p141.

¹⁵⁵ Ruether, 1969, p141.

¹⁵⁶ e.g. Quasten, 1950f Vol 3, p204.

only our vision of what came after him, but also what came before.¹⁵⁷ Thus, to ascertain the origin of his ascetic theology it is necessary to look to the influences upon the man, before looking to the writings of the man himself. Eustathius of Sebaste is such an influence. Before sojourning with Eustathius Basil had travelled extensively from Athens, to Constantinople, Palestinian Caesarea, Syria and Egypt, possibly over the span of a year (c356f).¹⁵⁸ A period during which he had studied various ascetic practices and holy men.¹⁵⁹ Thus he was no 'innocent abroad' when he began to follow Eustathius but rather was one who was searching for instruction and example. The relationship between Basil and Eustathius is one of extremes. Eustathius was an undoubted influence upon Basil, an older man having the role of a master, as well as that of a friend, in a friendship that ultimately failed.¹⁶⁰ Indeed Quispel, describes Eustathius as Basil's: 'Bosom friend and bitter enemy'.¹⁶¹

Eustathius of Sebaste was Bishop of Sebaste from c357 A.D., and was vacillated in his attitude to the Nicene cause, and was a great proponent of emergent monasticism. A man of many positions and allegiances, Eustathius was recognised as extreme in the vicinity of Cappadocia and Pontus, where his radical asceticism, his denigration of the institutions of slavery and refutation of private wealth, caused disquiet amongst the urban churches.¹⁶² Such behaviour was investigated at the council of Gangra¹⁶³ where Eustathius, or some of his followers, were condemned.¹⁶⁴ Those singled out for particular condemnation were ones who

¹⁵⁷ Elm, 1996, p81.

¹⁵⁸ Rousseau, 1994, p73; Basil. *Ep 1*.

¹⁵⁹ Basil, *Ep. 223.2*; Rousseau, 1994, p73.

¹⁶⁰ For an examination of the relationship between Basil and Eustathius see Rousseau, 1994, pp74-76, 239-245.

¹⁶¹ Quispel, 1985, p53.

¹⁶² Brown, 1988, p288. An example of Eustathius' influence upon other ascetics can be seen within Basil of Ancyra's *'De Virginitate'*. Elm has an overview of *'De Virginitate'* pp113-124, despite the lack of a critical edition. p113. fn 19.

¹⁶³ For a discussion concerning the date and make up of the members of the council see below. Present opinion places the council as having occurred c355 A.D.

¹⁶⁴ It has been suggested by Gribomont that it was not Eustathius in person that was condemned at Gangra, but some of his more extreme followers. This interpretation is given credence by the appointment of Eustathius as Bishop of Sebaste by 356 A.D., and the accusation against Eustathius of perjury at Antioch shortly after Gangra; Elm, 1996, p131;

partook of activities such as virginity and disregarding legitimate marriage,¹⁶⁵ and who preserved virginity because of an abhorrence of marriage.¹⁶⁶ Also, women who kept away from their husbands,¹⁶⁷ and deserted their children¹⁶⁸ because they abominated marriage, were anathematised. Furthermore the practice within the Eustathian circle, of women shaving their heads as a symbol of the rejection of their sexuality,¹⁶⁹ who also wore beruses¹⁷⁰ and male apparel, were anathematised. Such practices show the nature of the asceticism that was sweeping the Cappadocian region. The influence of Eustathian monasticism upon Basil would have been most prominent between 358-359 A.D. and 362-365 A.D. when Basil resided at Annesi, close to Eustathius' 'brotherhoods'.¹⁷¹ There are no extant writings of Eustathius so any direct correlation between Eustathius and Basil is difficult to ascertain. However, the condemnations of the Gangra council do provide a benchmark upon which Basil's ascetic theology can be measured. Within Basil's *Ascetica*¹⁷² or rules, there are clear similarities to the Eustathian doctrine. Indeed, Sozomen noted the suggestion that Eustathius was thought by some to be the author of the 'rules', such are the similarities of doctrine.¹⁷³ There would also seem to be a progression of thought within the '*Asceticon*' of Basil, the first, or smaller, *Asceticon* holding more to the radical Eustathian principles, with the second, 'longer' *Asceticon* being more independent.¹⁷⁴ In relation to celibacy Basil recommends a separation between marrieds if one of the parties decides to enter ascetic life,¹⁷⁵ and he gives to the ascetic

Gribomont, SP 2/TU 64, p403f; See also Rousseau, 1994, p74ff.

¹⁶⁵ Canon I NPNF² 14.91.

¹⁶⁶ Canon IX.

¹⁶⁷ Canon XIV.

¹⁶⁸ Canon XV.

¹⁶⁹ Canon XVII.

¹⁷⁰ Canon XVIII. A beruse being a garment worn by men (mainly philosophers) over a tunic to denote contempt for luxury.

¹⁷¹ Brown, 1988, p287f; Basil, *Ep* 223; Courtonne, 1966.

¹⁷² For Shorter and Longer Rules, see PG 31. ET Lowther Clarke, 1925.

¹⁷³ Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl* 3.14.

¹⁷⁴ see Quasten, 1950f Vol 3, p212-3.

¹⁷⁵ Basil, *Longer Rules* 12; See also Meyendorff, St. VTQ 24.4 p222.

within a community a freedom from all social obligations.¹⁷⁶ However, Basil never demands celibacy, never condemns married priests, or exempts the ascetic from works of charity, and he refers his 'rules' simply to 'christians', with no delineation between members of the wider Church and an ascetic core.¹⁷⁷ Meyendorff summarises Basil's asceticism as defining the 'ideals of the 'Eustathians' in the framework of an eschatological and pneumatological conception of the ecclesial community itself'.¹⁷⁸ Thus, Basil sought to integrate the radical ascetic outlook of Eustathius, as seen in extreme form at the Council of Gangra, within the community of the Church. In so doing he emphasised the Church as a community of disciples who were living in an eschatological timescale. Eustathius, for all his radical practices and condemnation at Gangra, was a Bishop when Basil first encountered him, and it is therefore no surprise to see the desire of Basil to keep the radical ascetic element within an extant ecclesiological framework. It is also to be noted that the ultimate severance of relationship concerned the pneumatological debate rather than any ascetical disagreement.¹⁷⁹

In relation to the encratic tendency within both Basil and Eustathius it can be said that Eustathius is more extreme than Basil, and that Basil sought to affirm Eustathian monastic principles within an ecclesiastical setting. Basil affirms the place within Christendom for the married person, and the married priest, while at the same time promoting an ascetic life, and providing opportunities for that ascetic lifestyle, which would have included those committed to a life of celibacy. For Basil the ascetic life is to be lived within the Church, as it is to the Church as a whole that a true knowledge of God is revealed.¹⁸⁰ Thus Basil is a radical encratic, with an emphasis upon the inclusivity of the Church. Eustathius was less inclined towards ecclesiastical structures, especially in relation to the redistribution of wealth and the institution

¹⁷⁶ Meyendorff, St.VTQ 24.4, p222; Fedwick, 1979.

¹⁷⁷ Meyendorff, St.VTQ 24.4, p223.

¹⁷⁸ Meyendorff, St.VTQ 24.4, p224.

¹⁷⁹ Eustathius was a *homoiousian* (of like substance) supporter. Whereas Basil was of the *homoousios* (of the same substance) position. For Basils' *homoiousian* theology and his public pronouncement, see Rousseau, 1994, p97-99, 102-103.

¹⁸⁰ Rousseau, 1994, p180; Basil, *Hom in Psalmum 33*.

of slavery. However, Eustathius remained within the confines of the Church, in spite of being an irritant to it. The Gangra Canons show the accusations levelled at Eustathius.¹⁸¹ In relation to his *enkrateia* Eustathius is more radical than Basil, in that not only does he stand accused of rejecting marriage,¹⁸² he is also accused of denying the validity of the Eucharist when performed by a married priest.¹⁸³ Eustathius then, was evidently crossing the boundary from radical encratism to exclusive encratism, by refuting validity of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the day. Canon 5, in which the Eustathians were accused of holding ‘private assemblies outside of the Church’ and ‘performing ecclesiastical acts’ suggests that the Eustathians were forming a separate ‘pure’ Church in which celibates were of higher standing than marrieds, and in which marriage was not an option for life. Thus Eustathius, on the evidence of the Gangra Canons, (noting the reservations mentioned above), would be designated an exclusive encratic.

The influence of Eustathian spirituality upon Macarian spirituality occurred primarily, although not exclusively, through the intermediaries of the Cappadocian Fathers, particularly Basil of Caesarea and Gregory Nyssa. The ultimate break in relationship between Eustathius and Basil did not lead to enmity between their ascetical communities. Frazee notes that after the death of their founders (Basil 379 A.D. Eustathius, unknown) one group of Eustathian disciples was absorbed into Basil’s followers, whilst the other more radical group ‘fell away to become part of the Messalian sect’.¹⁸⁴ Whether this event actually occurred or not, (and Frazee gives no reference to back up his suggestion), it has been suggested that the Messalians were the ‘spiritual descendants’ of the Eustathians,¹⁸⁵ if not the direct descendants. However, this assertion is open to debate.

¹⁸¹ For an examination of the Gangra Canons and a comparison with Ps-Macarius see below, p161

¹⁸² Canon 1,9,10,14.

¹⁸³ Canon 4.

¹⁸⁴ Frazee, CHR 66, p33. Frazee also refers to the Messalians as spiritual descendants of the Encratites, p17; See also Gribomont, SP 2/TU 64, p400-415.

¹⁸⁵ Frazee, CHR 66, p17.

As is the case with Basil, although there are no extant writings of Eustathius, the condemnations of the council of Gangra do provide a benchmark upon which Ps-Macarius' and Messalian theology and characteristics can be measured. However, the conclusions reached from such an investigation must be held lightly, as not only do the matters of elapsed time and uncertainty of editorial influence preclude firm conclusions being drawn, but also the nature of the Council itself and uncertainty as to the extent of Eustathius' personal involvement.¹⁸⁶ From the Canons it is possible for tentative conclusions to be drawn as to the practices of the Eustathians, and also to ascertain the priorities and concerns of those bishops present at the Council. The identity of the established ecclesiastical hierarchy active at the Council is itself a problematic question that revolves around the date of the council,¹⁸⁷ with only three of the signatories to the Conciliar Letter identifiable.¹⁸⁸ The Council is held to have been a regular meeting of the sees of the neighbouring province of Paphlagonia.¹⁸⁹ There is as yet no definite date agreed for the Gangra Council. The issue revolves around the earliest records of the event, Socrates places the council as convening c365 A.D. whilst Sozomen witnesses to a date twenty years earlier c345 A.D.¹⁹⁰ Opinion has been divided, Tillemont suggesting a date of 340 A.D., a position which has been supported by Gwatkin.¹⁹¹ Meyendorff also suggests c340 A.D., and notes that the council was presided over by Eusebius of Nicomedia, a prominent Arian bishop, and that Eustathius, a moderate homoiousian adherent who together with Basil endorsed the Nicene position in 367 A.D., does not seem to

¹⁸⁶ For concerns as to the exact role of Eustathius within this group see above. Frazee, CHR 66, p19, notes that Eustathius was involved in 'grouping existing ascetics together into loose organisation' and it may be that some extreme ascetics, termed 'Eustathians' after their prominent organiser, were the subject of the council, rather than the activities of Eustathius himself. However, Hefelé, 1876, p337 notes that in the covering letter the Paphlagonian Bishops specifically mention Eustathius 'himself', as if to signify his personal involvement.

¹⁸⁷ For a detailed examination of the debate see Barnes, JTS ns 40, pp121-4.

¹⁸⁸ Barnes, JTS ns 40, p124, Proaeresius of Sinope, Philetus of Juliopolis and Bithynicus of Zela.

¹⁸⁹ Barnes, JTS ns 40, p124.

¹⁹⁰ Sozomen, *HE iv.24-5*.

¹⁹¹ Le Nain de Tillemont, ix 1703; Gwatkin, 1900, pp189-92.

have formally recognised the decrees of the council.¹⁹² Fedwick suggests that as the council discusses issues evident within the later writings of Basil of Caesarea, a date within the mid 370s is plausible¹⁹³ whilst Rousseau cites the possibility that it could have been held mid 350s.¹⁹⁴ Barnes has recently examined the dating and composition of the council and has re-assessed the records of Sozomen,¹⁹⁵ and the identity of three other councils that are held to have condemned Eustathius; Neocaesarea (condemned for a transaction entrusted to him), Antioch (for perjury), and Melitene (Eustathius attempted to overturn the unknown decisions made against him at this council). Barnes concludes that Melitene alone is independently dateable, belonging to 358/9 A.D. and counters the previous view that the Council of Antioch mentioned was the dedication council of 341 A.D.. He holds that this may have been the council that met under Eudoxius in 358 A.D., or indeed it may not have been 'any other known council'. Thus Barnes sets a *terminus ante quem* for the Council of Gangra of 359 A.D.,¹⁹⁶ and has concluded that 355 A.D. is a probable date whilst recognizing the difficulty of precision. Eustathius was established as a bishop c357 A.D. and the council letter sent along with the canons to bishops in Armenia makes no use of his episcopal title. This may have been, as Barnes contends, due to the pique of the thirteen bishops who made up the council,¹⁹⁷ or it may be that Eustathius was merely growing in reputation, and in contention for the episcopate and the bishops were warning their Armenian counterparts of impending strife. In either case a date of 355 A.D. is credible, and also brings Gangra into the immediate sphere of the rise of the Messalian movement, and the initial production of Basil of Caesarea's 'Rules'.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹² Meyendorff, St.VTQ 24.4, pp219-234.

¹⁹³ Fedwick, 1979, (Appendix B); Fedwick, 1981, p14.

¹⁹⁴ Rousseau, 1994, p74.

¹⁹⁵ Sozomen, *HE iv.24-5*.

¹⁹⁶ Barnes, JTS ns 40, p123. Although Socrates was the earliest witness to the council, giving witness to the later date of 365. A.D. Barnes holds that Socrates was more interested in summarizing the letter and canons of the Council of Gangra than of giving precise proceedings of the Council of Constantinople (360 A.D.) Barnes suggests a re-assessment of the accepted view that Sozomen is of the opinion that Gangra occurred in 345. A.D.

¹⁹⁷ Barnes, JTS ns 40, p124.

¹⁹⁸ First dated references 373A.D. (Ephrem), 377A.D. (Epiphanius).

From Table 1 (p158) it can be seen that the prime accusation against the Eustathians was the creation of a separate ecclesiastical structure. Established bishops were being ignored, and the validity of their function depended upon their marital status. In instances where the resident Bishop was not celibate Eustathian meetings took place outside of the Church environment, and the rule of the said bishop was overruled. Furthermore, tithes and offerings were not sent to the bishop, but dispensed amongst the activities of the Eustathian circle. Thus the Eustathians were in the process of either creating a new 'pure' Church, or purifying the existing ecclesiastical structure, and were refusing even to eat with those allied to the existing Church. The activity of fasting on the Lord's day, and disregarding established fast days and feasts further emphasised the isolation of the celibate community, and the formation of a separate identity for the Eustathians. This was the creation of a pure structure for celibates only. Marriage was disregarded, and the breaking of marital and familial ties encouraged. Distinct modes of dress further isolated the Eustathians, and emphasised their theology of the uniformity of the sexes through singleness. However such is the nature of these Eustathian practices, they can be read as having a purely scriptural base and there were within the existing ecclesiastical structure adherents to such principles and who received no condemnation. Indeed the final section of the Council records makes clear that the argument of the council is not against ascetic endeavours *per se*, but rather against 'those who carry the pretence of asceticism to superciliousness....exalting themselves above those who live more simply'.¹⁹⁹ Thus, the crucial aspect of the Eustathian controversy was the disregarding of the validity of the married bishop, and the creation of a separate church structure, (probably with the authorization of their own celibate bishops), and the setting of this 'higher' church against an established ecclesiastical hierarchy. The Paphlagonian bishops, who went out of their way to affirm the place of ascetic practices within the Church, were thus rejecting the extreme ascetic exclusivity of the Eustathians, and especially the creation of a 'higher' church in which only

¹⁹⁹ Gangra *Epilogue*, NPNF² 14.101; Hefel , 1876, 'Epilogue' p1042f.

celibates were legitimate priests.²⁰⁰

Although the Macarian corpus may have been sterilised from traces of overtly heretical practices there are similarities between the condemnations of the Eustathian and the Messalians. As the connection between Ps-Macarius and the Messalians is accepted, with the arguments concerning degree and intention, there is value in a comparison between the two. The table following shows the Gangra Canons, known Eustathian practices, Messalian condemnations and Macarian counterparts. By an examination of the table it can be seen that the Macarian practices as portrayed in the Macarian corpus are markedly different from the condemnations of Eustathianism as revealed through the Gangra Canons.

Table 1.

Gangra Canons	Eustathian Practices	Messalian Condemnations	Ps-Macarius
1. If anyone shall condemn marriage, or abominate and condemn a woman who is a believer and devout, and sleeps with her own husband, as though she could not enter the Kingdom let him be anathema	Support of celibacy and the single life. Salvation for celibates only.	Rejection of marriage. (John 18.f)	Support of celibacy as a means of increased communion. I.48.1f II.5.6 II.17.6
2. If anyone shall condemn him who eats flesh, which is without blood and has not been offered to idols nor strangled, and is faithful and devout, as though the man were without hope [of salvation] because of his eating, let him be anathema.	Salvation only for those who abstain from eating meat.	-	-
3. If anyone shall teach a slave, under pretext of piety, to despise his master and to run away from his service, and not to serve his own master with good-will and all honour, let him be anathema.	Support freedom of will, and rejection of slavery.	Readily receive slaves to their number. (John 18.f)	-

²⁰⁰ See also Murray, 1975, p263 n3. He suggests that Gangra illustrates the background of the higher or heavenly Church level as seen in the LG. *Hom 12*.

Gangra Canons,	Eustathian Practices	Messalian Condemnations.	Macarian Practices
4. If anyone shall maintain, concerning a presbyter, that it is not lawful to partake of the oblation when he offers it, let him be anathema.	Celebate priests only to preside over communion. Eucharist ineffectual when offered by a married priest.	Indifferent to the Eucharist and Baptism (John 18.h, Tim 12. Theo.c)	Spirit is necessary for true worship. I.25.2. 1-4 I.52.2.1f I.15.15
5. If anyone shall teach that the House of God and the assemblies held therein are to be despised, let him be anathema.	Worship in the House of God inadequate due to marital status of participants.	-	Sacraments enable the Spirit to work upon the heart. I.52.2.1f
6. If anyone shall hold private assemblies outside of the Church, and...shall presume to perform ecclesiastical acts, the presbyter with the consent of the bishop refusing his permission, let him be anathema.	Religious services held in their own buildings presided over by Eustathian celibate priests	-	Disaffection for the Institutional Church and a faith in Sacramental economy I.52.1.2-3
7. If anyone shall presume to take the fruits offered to the Church, or to give them out of the Church, without the consent of the Bishop, or of the person charged with such things, and shall refuse to act according to his judgement, let him be anathema.	Give credence to their own leaders over bishop. Financially supported own group only.	-	-
8. If anyone, except the bishop or the person appointed for the stewardship of benefactions, shall either give or receive the revenue, let both....be anathema.	Giving primarily to own circle rather than established Church.	They give everything to themselves claiming to be poor in spirit. (John 18.f)	Riches and desire for riches condemned. II.5.6; 11.7
9. If anyone shall remain virgin, or observe continence, abstaining from marriage because he abhors it, and not on account of the beauty and holiness of virginity itself, let him be anathema.	Follows the way of Celibacy, and rejects the validity of salvation for married.	Rejection of Marriage (John 18.f)	Support of celibacy for communion with God.
10. If anyone of those who are living a virgin life for the Lords sake shall treat arrogantly the married, let him be anathema.	Rejection of the validity of marriage	Support of celibacy and virginity	Support of celibacy for communion with God.

Gangra Canons,	Eustathian Practices	Messalian Condemnations.	Macarian Practices
11. If anyone shall despise those who out of faith make love-feasts and invite the brethren in honour of the Lord, and is not willing to accept these invitations because he despises what is done, let him be anathema.	Spurned communal gatherings with the established Church due to presence of married.	-	-
12. If anyone, under the pretence of asceticism, should wear a periboleum and,shall despise those who with piety wear the beruse and use other common and customary dress, let him be anathema.	Wearing of the peribolum and rejection of the beruse.	-	-
13. If any woman, under pretence of asceticism, shall change her apparel and....shall put on that of a man, let her be anathema.	No present distinction between the sexes.	-	-
14. If any woman shall forsake her husband, and resolve to depart from him because she abhors marriage, let her be anathema.	Rejection of validity of marriage.	Support of celibacy and virginity.	Support of celibacy for communion with God.
15. If anyone shall forsake his own children and shall not nurture them, nor so far as in him lies, rear them in becoming piety, but shall neglect them, under pretence of asceticism, let him be anathema.	Rejection of familial ties.	Persuade Fathers and Mothers to disregard childbearing. (John 18.f)	-
16.If, under the pretence of purity, any children shall forsake their parents, particularly if their parents are believers, and shall withhold becoming reverence from their parents, on the plea that they honour piety more then them, let them be anathema.	Honouring God in asceticism was more worthy than honouring one's parents.	Persuade fathers and mothers to disregard childbearing. (John 18.f)	True fellowship with the Holy Spirit frees from worldly love. II.4.15
17. If any woman from pretended asceticism shall cut off her hair, which God gave her as the reminder of her subjection, thus annulling as it were the ordinance of subjection, let her be anathema.	Rejection of marriage and a rejection of subjection of a woman to her husband.	Equality of women in teaching and as priests. (Tim 18)	-

18.If anyone, on the pretence of asceticism, shall fast on Sunday, let him be anathema.	Fasted on the Lord's day in celebration from the deliverance of human nature.	-	Fasting arms the christian with the armour of the Spirit II.21.5
19. If any of the ascetics, without bodily necessity, shall behave with insolence and disregard the fasts commonly prescribed and observed by the Church, because of his perfect understanding in the matter, let him be anathema.	Celibates saw themselves as distinct from the Church.	-	Fasting arms the christian with the armour of the Spirit II.21.5
20. If anyone, from a presumptuous disposition, condemn and abhor the assemblies in honour of the martyrs, or the services performed there, and the commemoration of them, let him be anathema.	Eustathians already saints, exalted above martyrs. ²⁰¹	-	-
-	Care of Elderly and Infirm. (Epiph. Haer 75.1,) (Bas. Epp.94)	-	Against. Illness the result of sin. II.16.4

The Gangra Canons are taken from NPNF². 14.93, and Hefel  C.J. *Histoire des Conciles* 1.2 pp1029-1045. The Messalian Condemnations are taken from a synopsis of Anti-Messalian Lists, Appendix 2 Stewart 1991. The Macarian practices are from Stewart 1991 Appendix 3 which in turn is based initially upon observations made by Villecourt, D rries and Desprez, supplemented by Stewart, and subsequently by the present writer.

It is possible to reconstruct Eustathian practices from the Canons of the council, although Gribomont's plea for caution should be borne in mind.²⁰² Likewise, the similarities between the Eustathians and the Messalian condemnations must also be viewed with a degree of circumspection. However, as the table shows, similarities between the two do exist, but on several occasions the only witness to the links between the Eustathian practices *condemned at Gangra* and the Messalian condemnations is that of the late heresiologist John Damascene. The majority of his condemnations are from paragraph 18.f (Stewart's key), and are

²⁰¹ See Hefel , 1876.

²⁰² 'It is always difficult (risky) to reconstruct a doctrine from the criticisms made against it, especially when the criticisms do not have any bearing on the formulae drawn up by the accused.' Gribomont, SP2/TU64, p403.

unsubstantiated by the other witnesses, (being outside of the main list of doctrines and practices as isolated by Stewart). The likelihood is that John Damascene has restated the Gangrian characteristics as Messalian characteristics out of ignorance of the specifics of the movement, or unavailability of substantive evidence, and out of a general mistrust of extreme ascetic activity.²⁰³ John Damascene's association of the Eustathians and the Messalians is not unique, Timothy of Constantinople also calls the Messalians Eustathians in his list of heretical groups.²⁰⁴ Of the earliest witnesses to the Messalians, Epiphanius is initially at a loss to explain their origin,²⁰⁵ and focuses upon the disruption caused to the social order by their behaviour, and their perceived immorality.²⁰⁶ Epiphanius' concerns are mainly social, and mirror the earlier Gangra canons in his emphasis upon marriage; breaking of established Church practices; and appearance of women. How much of this connection is convenience on the part of the authors, a simple grouping together of apparent wayward ascetics, and how much of it is based upon known connections and links is a matter of conjecture. What is apparent is the genuine concern of the authors to protect the purity of the established church, and to highlight those tendencies that in their opinion sought to pollute it. However, the paradox is that it was the ascetic tendency itself that sought to purify an impure Church, and to emphasise personal involvement within a corporate faith. Thus the generalisms directed against the Eustathians can also in part be directed against the Messalians. Although they are both difficult to define in detail there is no disguising the similarities between the two movements. Eustathianism displays similar fundamental ideals to the Messalians, and originated in the Cappadocian region, whilst the Messalian generation is held to be of Syrian extraction. However, a direct connection between Eustathianism and Messalianism is too

²⁰³ Elsewhere John Damascene likens the Messalian doctrine with that of the extreme disciples of Eustathius, the followers of Arius. Gribomont, SP2/TU64, p414; See Kmosko, PS III, p. ccxlii. See also Meyendorff, 1970, p586f.

²⁰⁴ Timothy of Constantinople, *De iis qui ad ecclesiam ab haereticis accedunt*; Gribomont, SP2/TU64, p414; See also PS III, p. ccxxi.

²⁰⁵ Epiphanius, *Panarion* (c377) 80.3.3.

²⁰⁶ Epiphanius, *Panarion* 80.9.1-5.

romantic a notion to hold true, and is lacking in substantive proof. Rather, an intermediary is required to dilute the extremes of the Eustathians, and to introduce the fundamental ideals of the Messalians. Gregory Nyssa, or the disciples of Basil of Caesarea would fill this role.

Overall the emerging picture shows that the two spiritualities could be considered to be of the same genre, if not of the same root. Kmosko did see Messalianism as a survival of 2nd Century Encratism,²⁰⁷ which for him in turn includes Eustathianism. Quispel prefers to see Messalianism as the survival and revival of a very old and very archaic spirituality originating in Eddessa.²⁰⁸ However Gribomont refers to the Messalians as the 'heirs' of the Eustathians,²⁰⁹ and suggests that the moderating influence of Basil was responsible for delaying the appearance of the crisis in Cappadocia.²¹⁰ This thesis asserts that the connection between the Messalians and Eustathians was not more than one of genre, and that in its widest form, and as a minimum an intermediary between the two is necessary.

When the Macarian corpus is compared to the Eustathian practices, as well as the Anti-Messalian lists, another picture emerges. Similarities still occur, especially in the support of celibacy, the fight against concupiscence, the denigration of riches, and the necessity for true worship. In relation to the other more practical Eustathian practices Ps-Macarius reveals nothing, neither affirming nor denying their importance to his community. A negative aspect between them is the differing attitudes towards the infirm and elderly. The Eustathian practice of providing hospices and care for the elderly and infirm was copied by Basil, but rejected by Ps-Macarius. Indeed Ps-Macarius ascribes sin as the cause of illness and infirmity.²¹¹ If Ps-Macarius is taken as a moderating Messalian influence (as Dörries), then the connections between Eustathius and Ps-Macarius become more obtuse, and the connections between the Messalians and the Eustathians revolve around the moderating influence of Basil or of his

²⁰⁷ Quispel, VigChr 22, p89.

²⁰⁸ Quispel, VigChr 22, p89; Quispel, 1985, p56.

²⁰⁹ Gribomont, SP2/TU64, p414.

²¹⁰ Gribomont, SP2/TU64, pp404-407; Staats, 1983², p58f (For Gregory Nyssa).

²¹¹ II.16.4.

circle, as suggested by Gribomont. For example, Ps-Macarius recognises the need for the Eucharist to enable the Holy Spirit to act upon the heart of the believer,²¹² and the other 'mystery of the Church', baptism, is the beginning of the activity of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believer,²¹³ allowing the candidate access to the journey of the soul. Ps-Macarius does not state the necessity for the one performing the Eucharist to be celibate (as Eustathius), or for the Eucharist only to be administered to celibates, preferring to emphasise the necessity of the presence of the Holy Spirit. In relation to the Eustathian approach to the Ecclesiastical structure Ps-Macarius refers to 'Christians' in his homilies and does not view monks and Christians as separate units, but rather as part of the ecclesiastical whole.²¹⁴ The crucial difference between them lies in their approach to these Ecclesiastical structures. Ps-Macarius holds a position closer to the Church than the Gangra condemnations would suggest that the Eustathians or the Messalians held. Indeed Meyendorff suggests that the Macarian writings are 'providing the monastic movement with an alternative to Messalianism, by assuming some of the Messalian vocabulary and ideas, replacing them in a sacramental and biblical context, and thus changing their original meaning'.²¹⁵ Eustathius' motivating factor was his insistence upon celibacy. Ps-Macarius' motivating factor was for an external experience of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of each individual Christian. Both motivating factors result in ascetic practices. Eustathius clearly envisages a pure Church, a community of celibates, set aside from the general mix of believers. This exclusive community are practitioners of exclusive encratism, and as such are falling into heresy. This heretical nature is not due to the ascetical practices but due to the exclusive nature of those practices which were the concern of Gangra. The Eustathian creation of separate ecclesiastical structures, of creating rival episcopates, and of rejecting the established Church authority does not find an echo in the Macarian corpus.

²¹² Desprez, EO 5, p129.

²¹³ Desprez, EO 5, p153.

²¹⁴ Desprez, 1980, p48.

²¹⁵ Meyendorff, 1970, p589.

Rather Ps-Macarius stresses the journey towards deification and communion with God, emphasising the real danger of backward steps along the journey. Ps-Macarius recognises the 'now and the not yet' of the Christian life, and advocates Radical Encrateia within an individual Christian, whilst from the available evidence the Eustathians sought to create the pure paradisiacal Church in the present time.

Basil, Macrina and Family Influences

Another influence upon Basil and his brother Gregory Nyssa, was that of their sister, Macrina. Gregory Nyssa wrote a '*Life*' of Macrina, in which the achievements and events of her life are eulogised.²¹⁶ From this it can be ascertained that Macrina was 'the religious conscience of the family', at least in the eyes of Gregory.²¹⁷ The '*Life*' was designed to give prominence to the role of Macrina in the formation of Basil,²¹⁸ and although it must be remembered that the relationship between Basil and Gregory Nyssa was not always convivial, and that other less honourable motivations may have effected the contents, there are distinct pointers within the work to the relationship and influence of Macrina upon the brothers.²¹⁹ Momigliano remarks that the relationship between the three is evidently exceptional, presupposing a combination of high birth, high intellectual power and extraordinary discretion.²²⁰ Ascetic influence was strong, particularly so when Macrina and her brother Naucratus began to live a more overtly ascetic life within the confines of the family estate in Annesi, the former persuading her mother that such a lifestyle was desirable.²²¹ Macrina gathered around her the like-minded and the needy, forming a community within the Annesi

²¹⁶ Gregory Nys, *Vita Macrina*, Lowther Clarke (tr), 1916.

²¹⁷ Momigliano, 1985, p453.

²¹⁸ Rousseau, 1994, p9.

²¹⁹ For a survey of the familial relationships see Pfister, *VigChr* 18, pp 108-113.

²²⁰ Momigliano, 1985, p454.

²²¹ '*Life*' 7.2-8, (Lowther Clarke, 1916, p34); Rousseau, 1994, p10.

estate.²²² Rousseau holds that Naucratiu's adherence to the solitary ascetic life bore some semblance to the teachings of Eustathius,²²³ and it was after Naucratiu's death in a hunting accident in 357A.D. that Basil took up the reins of an ascetic existence. It has been suggested that Naucratiu's death was a major factor in Basil's decision to entertain an ascetic lifestyle, and that Naucratiu's ascetic theology exerted a strong and lasting influence.²²⁴ However, it must be noted that not only is Eustathius held to have played a part in Naucratiu's ascetic development as well as Macrina, but also that the ascetic lifestyle of Naucratiu himself is open to question. Naucratiu was first and foremost a hunter,²²⁵ rather than an ascetic, and lived 'as a hermit in the corner of the family estate',²²⁶ apparently covering substantial distances on hunting expeditions.²²⁷ The hagiographical detail of Naucratiu's ascetic life as found in Gregory's account of the life of Macrina, cannot be taken at face value, as his death in a hunting accident serves as a spur for Macrina's virtue to be displayed, and ascetic prowess to reach fruition. A life 'apart' from close familial contacts does not necessarily equate with a life of dedicated asceticism. However, similarities have been noted between early Eustathian monastic principles and Naucratiu's lifestyle, and Rousseau suggests that Naucratiu 'seems more like (though not so extreme as) the malcontents who later followed Acrius away from Sebaste'.²²⁸ Whatever the influence of Naucratiu was upon Basil it was limited by his death, and it is important not to overestimate his influence upon Basil's ascetic development. Further, Maraval suggests that Macrina may already have told Basil something of Eustathius while her brother was still at Athens,²²⁹ suggesting that Macrina's ascetic lifestyle was of direct consequence to early Eustathian teaching. However, it was through direct contact with

²²² *Life* 6.15-16.

²²³ Rousseau, 1994, p10.

²²⁴ Elm, 1996, p83, pp78-105; Gribomont, s.v. 'Eustathe de Sebaste', DSp 4.2.

²²⁵ Gribomont, s.v. *Naucratiu*, EEC p584.

²²⁶ Momigliano, 1985, p446f.

²²⁷ Elm, 1996, p82 fn 17.

²²⁸ Rousseau, 1994, p76. Acrius was an extreme Eustathian adherent who split from Eustathius, and founded his own monastery.

²²⁹ Rousseau, 1994, p10 n27; Maraval, 1971, p32,53.

Eustathius that Basil formulated his ascetic principles rather than through any second-hand information. It remains that the influence of the family upon Basil was primarily through the person of Macrina rather than Naucratus.

It was Macrina who instigated the move to Annesi and the gradual formation of an ascetic community. Her mother was content to move from the suburban life to the country estate, and it must be questioned how much of her allegiance to the ascetic life was actually a prolonged period of grief in response to the death of her husband and then her son Naucratus.²³⁰ A youth at his father's death, Naucratus died at the age of twenty-one in a hunting accident, having lived 'as a philosopher' for five years.²³¹ During this time he had provided food for the elderly in his vicinity, and 'obeyed his mother's wishes whenever she issued a command'.²³² It is tempting to see Naucratus as the forerunner of Basilian monasticism,²³³ and to regard Basil's ascetic career as emerging from the embers of Naucratus' sacrifice. However, it is uncertain when Basil returned to the family estate, leaving the possibility that he equally could have begun his ascetic lifestyle before the death of Naucratus as after it. If Gregory Nyssa's *Life of Macrina* is taken as the major source of information to the ascetic impetus behind Basil's decision then Naucratus seems to have been a major influence. However the *Life* makes no mention of Eustathius, and it is Eustathius who is predominantly mentioned by Basil as a major influence upon him. One of reasons for this could have been a desire to enhance the role of Macrina in Basil's conversion, thus enhancing her standing as a saint worthy of her heritage.²³⁴ A further reason could have been a desire to limit the standing of Eustathius within the life of Basil, as Eustathius' reputation was

²³⁰ Gregory Nys, *Life*, (Lowther Clarke, 1916, p32).

²³¹ Gregory Nys, *Life*, (Lowther Clarke, 1916, p31).

²³² Gregory Nys, *Life*, (Lowther Clarke, 1916, p31).

²³³ Gribomont, RAM 43, p249-66 suggests that Basil's retreat was identical with the hermitage of Naucratus; See also Momigliano, 1985, p447.

²³⁴ Macrina was said to have been given the name 'Thecla' at her birth, by a heavenly vision. Gregory Nys, *Life*, (Lowther Clarke, 1916, p20f); On Thecla as the exemplary virgin see Momigliano, 1985, p446f.

not always positive and his attitude to the Church at times questionable.²³⁵ Also the familial connections are of concern as any honouring of Basil, Naucratus and Macrina as being a continuous line of ascetic devotion reflects well upon the remainder of the family, and thus upon the author Gregory.

Macrina eventually became the head of the household at Annesi, within the confines of the aristocratic estate, surrounded by former domestic slaves, and new unrelated followers of the ascetic way.²³⁶ Celibacy and virginity were a way of life for the community, and the decision to become a virgin was marked by a new external appearance.²³⁷ Similarly personal poverty was a fundamental aspect of the community, despite familial wealth, and manual work was equated with the requirement for humility and obedience.²³⁸ This manual work was merely preparatory to the main work of the virgins, that of 'the care of divine things and the unceasing round of prayer and endless hymnody, co-extensive with time itself, practised night and day'.²³⁹ Gregory Nyssa notes the likeness of the women to angelic beings, in that

they fell short of the angelic and immaterial nature only in so far as they appeared in bodily form, and were contained within a human frame, and were dependent upon the organs of sense. Perhaps some might even dare to say that the difference was not to their disadvantage. Since living in the body and yet after the likeness of the immaterial beings, they were not bowed down by the weight of the body, but their life was exalted to the skies and they walked on high in company with the powers of heaven.²⁴⁰

Certainly the encratic outlook of the Cappadocian ascetic communities is evident in Gregory's description of the Virgins as angelic beings. The gradual transformation of an ascetic to an angelic participant resulted in a loss of sexual identification, and a present day acceptance of a future angelic state, evidenced by constant prayer. For Gregory this transformation occurs 'through the grace of Christ who frees the body from bondage to corruption, through bodily

²³⁵ See above p150f.

²³⁶ Gregory Nys, *Life*, 11.9; 16.5 5.; Elm, 1996, p92.

²³⁷ Elm, 1996, p98.

²³⁸ Elm, 1996, p99. Gregory Nys, *Life* '5.23-35; (Lowther Clarke, 1916, p35).

²³⁹ Gregory Nys, *Life*, 5, (Lowther Clarke, 1916, p35).

²⁴⁰ Gregory Nys, *Life*, 5, (Lowther Clarke, 1916, p36).

virginity'.²⁴¹

Both Gregory Nyssa and Basil of Caesarea were influenced by the ascetic progression of Macrina, and the institution of the community of virgins that she created. When coupled to the influence of Eustathius it can be seen that far from being the instigator of a new ascetic communal way of life, Basil was the harvester of others' thoughts, intentions, and practices, which were in turn given greater clarity and force by his interpretation and promulgation of them. Similarly Gregory Nyssa did not create his own ascetic outlook in a vacuum, but was influenced by the familial actions, and other ecclesiastical events. Gregory did allow for married women becoming brides of Christ, and also saw marriage as a stabilising process, but with virginity providing participation in the eternal.²⁴² For the Cappadocians in general, the onset of virginity in the Christian life was a salvation event. Adam originally lived in virginity, and Christ, created out of virginity and living a life of virginity that both fulfilled and ended the age of the law, opened the new era of grace, in which the life of virginity was the permanent state, and where marriage was still honoured but was equated with the age before Christ.²⁴³ Macrina's ascetic community is characteristic of radical *enkrateta* in the repudiation of marriage, and the commitment to constant prayer, and although not overtly concerned with the doctrine of double creation, has a clear understanding of the ascetic life of virginity as being an angelic and salvific activity. As such this community can be termed 'radical encratic'.

Gregory Nazianzen, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory Nyssa assimilated Origenist thought into their own distinct world views, and all three have connections with Ps-Macarius. It is highly probable that these connections and influences were two-way. Elm has rightly noted that the inter relationships between the Cappadocians and Ps-Macarius is a 'grey area',²⁴⁴ and the influence of Macrina and especially Eustathius, upon them must not be left

²⁴¹ Harrison, JTS ns 47.1, p52; cf Harrison, JTS ns 41.2, pp441-471.

²⁴² Harrison, JTS ns 47.1, p53.

²⁴³ cf Harrison, JTS ns 47.1, p48.

²⁴⁴ Elm, 1996, p199.

out of any search for clarity.

Alexander and the Acoemetes

A group of ascetics who could be said to be theologically in the same area as Ps-Macarius are the Acoemetes (from the Gk ἀκοίμηται : sleepless ones).²⁴⁵ These were a group of Syrian / Mesopotamian monks who eventually settled in Constantinople c400A.D. They were founded by Alexander (c350-430) who, before moving to Constantinople, had previously established a community near the Euphrates. The practices of the Acoemetes included the observation of poverty, the rejection of manual work, the continual singing of Psalms, and constant prayer and preaching. Gribomont remarks that Alexander would 'be much more representative of the Macarian movement (than Ps-Macarius) though more active on the level of social claims'.²⁴⁶ Alexander underwent a literary education at Constantinople and experienced life in the imperial court before leaving for Syria (c380). His search for a life closer to 'evangelical precepts' resulted in him travelling through Mesopotamia and founding a monastery on the banks of the Euphrates. Sauget notes that this monastery eventually numbered 400 monks. Alexander's extreme views led to him being expelled and his journeys eventually took him to Constantinople with some 24 of his own disciples, where he set up a monastery based upon the practices noted above. It was after the condemnation of the Messalians c426 that Alexander was obliged to return to Syria. He was taken in by Hypatius at Rufiniana and given care, eventually founding a new monastery in Gomon, in Asia.

Alexander and the Acoemete movement show certain similarities with Messalianism, and also with Basilian monasticism. Sollier notes that the feature that distinguished the Acoemete from the other Basilian monks was the uninterrupted service of God.²⁴⁷ The

²⁴⁵ see above p141.

²⁴⁶ Gribomont, s.v. *Macarius/Symeon*, EEC, p514.

²⁴⁷ Sollier, s.v. *Acoemetes*, CE vol 1.

Acoemete practices of continual prayer and poverty certainly bear similarities to the Messalian practices, and it is difficult to distinguish between them on the available evidence. It is easy to see how Alexander could be accused of being Messalian (c426). Staats also notes the connection between Alexander, Hypatius, Macarian theology, and Rufiniana, in the period c395-427.²⁴⁸ The encratic practices of the Acoemetes are not specifically mentioned, but it can be summarised that singleness and virginity were important features of their movement. The radical nature of Acoemetes was not only to be found in their constant prayer and praise rituals, but in their 'evangelical fervour' and their constant charitable works.

Overview

Staats' suggestion of a comparison between Ps-Macarius' contemporaries and the Macarian ideal can only be completed when an examination of Macarian encratism has taken place. However, from the personalities examined above it can be seen that encratism, in its broadest sense, was a widespread phenomenon. Radical encratism was widely practiced amongst the personalities examined, and whilst this does not allow for a description of the Cappadocian / Syrian region as wholly committed to radical encratism, it does suggest a population sympathetic to the aims of the life of virginity. Exclusive encratism was less frequently observed, and is confined to the extreme Eustathian circle that was condemned at Gangra. How much this exclusive encratism pervaded the Acoemetes is uncertain. What can be seen is the move away from exclusive encratism that the embryonic Basilian monasticism made. Basil was at pains to keep his ascetic lifestyle within the confines of the Church, and not to fall into heresy, or move the ascetic lifestyle so far away from normality that it ceased to be of relevance to the population around the ascetic communities. While Eustathius practised charity, his circle still sought a unique position in regards to the eucharist. Each of the

²⁴⁸ Staats, 1983, p65.

contemporaries examined has a unique perspective upon the wider protology of Christianity. However, each regards celibacy and virginity as instrumental in advancing the individual closer to the goal of ultimate theosis, and the 'angelic life'. The practical lifestyle of the eschatological community produced the fruit of celibacy and abstinence. It is clear that within the immediate environment of Ps-Macarius were people sympathetic to radical encratism and a radical interpretation of the christian life. Yet they were also in the throes of discovery and deciding on the legitimacy (or otherwise) of some of the ascetic activities of the day. Brock's term 'emergent monasticism' is very apt. The writings of Ps-Macarius are within the 'grey area' in which ideas were exchanged and assimilated and the emergent monasticism found form and shape. They are reminiscent of the encratic groups within Syrian spirituality, and the radical nature of Messalianism. The question that now arises is exactly how, or if, the Macarian corpus pulled all these elements together.

Macarian Encratism

The beliefs evident within the writings of Ps-Macarius can be understood as orthodox and acceptable, and yet at the same time they demand the impossible, and can be interpreted as heresy. Ascetic instructions and teachings can be understood as exhortations to be aimed at, as well as rules to be strictly adhered to. Several pendula of interest and influence arc through the corpus: encratic notions, ascetic exhortations, practices of prayer, the struggle for a pure Church, and the on going battle within man for total allegiance of the heart to God. It is at the intersection of these arcs that the person of Ps-Macarius stands, and there is the centre of his theology, and the essence of his being. Ps-Macarius stands not as one alone, an extreme voice in a world incapable of hearing his message, but as one at the centre of a debate, at the meeting of the ascetic practices and divergent theologies of the day. Macarian theology is one comprised of many hues and influences and is a theology of synthesis. Elements found within encratism, Messalianism, emergent monasticism, Eustathianism, together with Syrian and

Greek literary structures are to be found within his work.

An examination of the Macarian corpus reveals an assumption on the part of Ps-Macarius of an encratic lifestyle and a life of singleness amongst his disciples. Ps-Macarius clearly envisages a life of self-control, of *'enkrateia'* as an ideal commonly recognised by those he addresses. He refers to the necessity of renouncing wealth and turning away from riches. He mentions the activity of 'entering in' to a higher level of communication, in prayer, that is achieved through self-control.²⁵⁰ Ps-Macarius' understanding of Matthew 25:1-14 shows the importance he places upon self-control in the life of the believer and the necessity for the believer to 'turn away from all else' to 'give satisfaction to the heavenly bridegroom'.²⁵¹ It would appear that for Ps-Macarius the life of sexual renunciation and the life of communication with the Divine are inseparable. This is further illustrated by III.28.3 which emphasises the necessity of a disciplined life after baptism.

Just so the soul committed as a virgin to Christ, even if it has received the betrothal pledges through baptism (for baptism is the perfect betrothal pledge of that inheritance which is to come), even if it receives many gifts after baptism (such as the interpretation of scripture, or healing, or any other charism), but is not counted worthy of union with the immortal bridegroom, so it will remain foreign [lit. incorruptible] to him.

Baptism within Ps-Macarius is the formal engagement of the bride and groom, considered in the form of the deposit of the Holy Spirit, but also a consummation in the form of ultimate deification (theosis) and full communion with God,²⁵² and appears to be conditional upon a worthy life of *enkrateia*. Desprez in his study on baptism in the Macarian corpus concludes that baptism is of value to Ps-Macarius, but that there is an additional requisite action to be taken in the life of the believer after baptism.²⁵³ This bears similarities to the *Qyāma* pre-

²⁵⁰ e.g. I.4,1-5 (II 40.2) II.6.3; II.8.1.

²⁵¹ II.4.4.

²⁵² Ps-Macarius uses a variety of terms for this divinization, including ἀποθεώω, (I.7.3; II.26.2) θεϊκὴ φύσις, (I.14.23; II 39, II 34.2, 44.9) κοινωνία, (I.15.2.3; II 9.12; II 46.3) (cf Stewart, 1991, pp75f, p78f).

²⁵³ Desprez, EO 5, p153.

baptismal vows of celibacy,²⁵⁴ in which baptism is but a step, although irrevocable, along the road to salvation. Although Ps-Macarius does not expressly state that celibacy is a condition of baptism there are similarities within his position to that of the *Qyāmā*. The idea that through baptism Christ recreates the soul as virgin, and the soul then remains virgin in Christ (*παρθενευμένη / partheneumene*) places upon the baptised a responsibility of action: the life of *enkrateia*. Ps-Macarius reveals encratic influences when the list of the work of one who hears the word of God is examined.²⁵⁵ The work of the body is completed ‘on behalf of the soul’, and

Such are the internal marks of those who hear the word of God and produce good fruit: Groaning, weeping, attentiveness, silence, sorrow, steadfastness, rest, bowing the head, painful weeping, this work of the heart is creating more reverence and piety. And these are their works: Vigils and continence (*ἀγρυπνία καὶ ἐγκράτεια*), fasting, meekness, largeheartedness, unbroken prayer, understanding of the Divine scriptures, faith, humility, brotherly love, readiness for hardship, longsuffering, love-obedience, goodness, loveliness and that whole radiance of beauty which is the Lord. (I.2.1)

Such homiletical themes are constant throughout the Macarian corpus. The idea of ‘being watchful and self-controlled’ (vigils and continence) speaks of the necessity to control both the body and the heart. The body is controlled by *enkrateia*, which paves the way for the heart and spirit to engage in *ἀγρυπνία (agrupnia)*. The activity of *agrupnia* is more than mere wakefulness, but encompasses the readiness to hear, and the readiness to see the activity of the divine within the one engaged in the activity. It is a wakefulness that expects interruption, as opposed to a restless sleeplessness.

Ps-Macarius further encourages his hearers to ‘fast and watch’. This is necessary for the eschatological return of Christ, but also for the reception of divine communication and assistance. For Ps-Macarius the divine assistance received in the life of the Christian is in proportion to the denial of the will of the world by the Christian.²⁵⁶ Thus, the Christian

²⁵⁴ See Nedungatt, OCP, p. xxxix.

²⁵⁵ I.2.1. This excerpt is a chapter heading synopsis, and may therefore not necessarily be compiled by Ps-Macarius, but by a later editorial hand. However, the issues summarised are covered in the rest of the chapter and thus examination is still pertinent.

²⁵⁶ I.59.1f (II.21.5).

provides himself with the armour of the Spirit, by means of prayer, fasting and faith, by which he is able to 'overcome the opposing forces by the co-operation of the Spirit and his own earnestness in all virtues'.²⁵⁷ One must therefore 'watch' for the co-operation of the Spirit, in terms of the armour of the Spirit, but must also watch for the eschatological coming of the Lord. Thus the co-operation between the divine and man must be understood in relation to Ps-Macarius' understanding of the Church, and of the Christian as the 'Bride of Christ'. Ps-Macarius understands Church in two ways, firstly the assembly of the faithful, and secondly, when taken spiritually, as the 'compound whole of the individual man'.²⁵⁸ He sees within man five virtues: prayer, followed by '*enkrateia*, alms, poverty, and patience'. The activity of prayer, communication with the divine, is only achievable through *enkrateia*, and the discipline of man. *Enkrateia* within Ps-Macarius is thus a purposeful activity, affecting every aspect of the Christian's life, and shows distinct signs of meeting the criteria of 'radical encratism'. Ps-Macarius also uses the image of the bridal chamber as an illustration of the kind of joy evident within the relationship between God and man.²⁵⁹ This may be because his underlying theology assumes as paramount the understanding of the heavenly bridegroom and the requirement of virginity, within the self-controlled life. The Christian as the 'bride of Christ' is again a common picture throughout Ps-Macarius. The soul is 'made mistress of all the good things of the Lord', and for 'mystical divine fellowship',²⁶⁰ and is to behave accordingly.²⁶¹ In II.47.17 Ps-Macarius reveals the ultimate result of the union of the bride and bridegroom.

The soul is betrothed to the bridegroom for communion (*κοινωνησαι*) with God,²⁶² which is accomplished firstly by the soul being reconciled, cleansed and healed by God, and then by His own power God receives her to Himself, gradually

²⁵⁷ I.59.1f (II.21.5).

²⁵⁸ I.36.4 (II.37.8), cf I.2.37.8, Murray, 1975, p270; See also Desprez, 1970, p201-207 and I.52.

²⁵⁹ I.4.8-10; (II.8.1).

²⁶⁰ II.15.1. (Mason translation 1921) cf I.54.6.

²⁶¹ I.7.10-11; (II.27.2).

²⁶² I.11.5; (II.47.17).

accommodating Himself to her changes...he begets the soul in Himself and increases it through Himself...until she becomes a bride without blemish and worthy of Him...taking her as a perfect bride into the holy, mystical, undefiled fellowship of marriage; and then she reigns with Him to endless age.²⁶³

This transfiguration of the soul by the Divine is a motif of Syrian baptismal theology, and is a gradual transformation over time into the resurrection state, in a renewed body. Similarly John Chrysostom speaks of the potter refining clay, and enlistment into military service alongside marital imagery, to emphasise the cleansing of the bride, and the presentation of the bride by the bridegroom to himself.²⁶⁴

The underlying theology of the fall within the Macarian corpus is difficult to ascertain. There is no clear systematic exposition of his protological motivation, only echoes that have to be put together in a piecemeal fashion. Within such activity there is always the danger of placing emphases upon different areas than those intended in the original. Nevertheless, it is illuminating to examine Ps-Macarius' protology. Ps-Macarius' use of Adam typology is significant. Bianchi understands the Macarian conception of *apatheia* (control of the passions) in the context of the restoration of man to Adam's primordial condition.²⁶⁵ Ps-Macarius speaks of salvation in many ways, one of which is the 'restoration of man to the first created condition of the pure Adam'. Adam's first condition was lost through 'the transgression', and man was 'wounded', yet still possessing a will and discernment.²⁶⁶ The result of the 'transgression of the commandment' by his 'entertainment of evil intentions and thoughts' was that Adam not only lost the pure possession of his nature, which was the image and likeness of God, but also lost 'the very image itself in which was laid up for him, the full heavenly inheritance'. In short, Ps-Macarius states, 'he was lost from God'.²⁶⁷ The exact reason for Adam's transgression is only referred to as his 'entertainment of evil intentions', and the assumption of the placing of

²⁶³ See also I.7.18.

²⁶⁴ See Mitchell, 1973.

²⁶⁵ Bianchi, 1985, p303-5; See also Stewart, 1991, p77.

²⁶⁶ II.26.1.

²⁶⁷ II.12.1.

those evil intentions within his mind is evident. Ps-Macarius does not enlarge on the theme of the creation or origin of Satan. Rather he focuses upon the evident reality of Satan, sin and evil in the life of man, and the struggle with Satan, through sin, that the Christian experiences. He recognises the role of Satan within the world, but is unconcerned with the theological explanation for the presence of evil, being more focussed upon fighting and controlling that evident evil when it is within the heart of man, or is diluting the desire of the bride to be with the bridegroom. Ps-Macarius is concerned with restoration into the divine that occurs through the Holy Spirit, who not only brings in again the first condition of the pure Adam, but also enables man to reach a greater state than he possessed, as man is deified and increases in communion with God.²⁶⁸ It is with the process of deification and emerging *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*) that Ps-Macarius struggles, and which is his pre-occupation.

Ps-Macarius recognises the danger of slipping back into passions once considered defeated, and counsels against pride in accomplishments and complacency. The journey of the soul is described as a series of twelve steps, with the soul having the ability to move both upwards towards God and downwards towards the earth.²⁶⁹ As such Macarian *apatheia* is similar to Crouzel's interpretation of Origen's ascetic position of *metriopatheia* (control of the passions, or the moderation to be imposed upon the passions). Ps-Macarius' struggle is a struggle towards the perfect and uninterrupted communion with the divine, as promised to Adam, but which was unfulfilled due to his sin. Perfection, in the form of ultimate communion, is assured, but immediate communion is available. Having transferred from one era to another, by virtue of baptism, the opportunity for the future communication is available in the present. For Ps-Macarius faith is the beginning of this future communion, and the Holy Spirit, now present in believers, enables the soul to fly on the wings of the Spirit to the

²⁶⁸ I.7.3; (II.26.2).

²⁶⁹ I.4.8-10 (II.8.4-5).

presence of God.²⁷⁰ The believer has the potential to live in 'divine time' rather than earthly time. In this Ps-Macarius reveals a Syrian ascetic heritage in his understanding of the dual nature of the post-baptismal experience.

Ps-Macarius portrays radical encratism in his quest for perfection. Continence is both assumed and applauded, and is necessary for the communion to take place. Concupiscence is acknowledged, and is seen as an interruption to the journey rather than an exclusion activity for the partaking of the journey.²⁷¹ Ps-Macarius himself when questioned about his place on the 'steps' deflects the question towards another, but also acknowledges the variable degrees of the 'burning of grace' within the soul of man,²⁷² and the potential of moving closer to, or further away from, God²⁷³ depending on the way the 'wick is trimmed'.²⁷⁴ This trimming of the wick depends upon the co-operation of man with the grace within him, and upon an allegiance to an encratic lifestyle. In the examples cited above it is clear that there is no uniform approach to the body within those that practice radical encratism. Origen, in his ultimate union with God has no use for the body. The body is seen as an addendum to the spiritual. What is of concern to Origen is how to control the body to the point of overcoming the limitations that it places upon the spirit. Gregory Nazianzen recognises within the body a fundamental aspect of life. The body for Gregory is ultimately involved within salvation and is necessary for salvation to be achieved, but at the same time limits the knowledge of God that man can achieve.²⁷⁵ Basil of Caesarea and Gregory Nyssa both recognise the resurrection of the body as necessary for eternal salvation and union with God. The place of the body within these theologies differs, and yet all have a radical encratic force within their writings. The question that arises is

²⁷⁰ See also II.44.5. The Lord will.... 'make [the soul] light, to take up wings to the heights of heaven and transform and change it out of its own very nature'.

²⁷¹ I.16.1-4; (II.17.6); Ps-Macarius asserts that it is inexperienced Christians, who assert that because they are in grace they are freed from sin, and that even people who had been celibate for 5 or 6 years were amazed when concupiscence burned within them. cf II.38.4-5.

²⁷² I.4.8-10 (II.8.4-5).

²⁷³ II.27.9.

²⁷⁴ II.8.2.

²⁷⁵ Ruether, 1969, p151; Gregory Naz, *Or* 28.17.

whether the ultimate dissolution of the body, is necessary for radical encratism. Ps-Macarius speaks of a full bodily resurrection²⁷⁶ and of the necessity of the body for an ultimate union with the divine.²⁷⁷ Yet he emphasises the need for control of the body and of the passions, and of the requirement of singleness of purpose in the Christian life.²⁷⁸ Nowhere in the present corpus does he explicitly reject marriage, or refer to marriage as evil and defiling. Rather he focuses upon the benefits of celibacy, virginity and wholehearted allegiance to God,²⁷⁹ emphasising the progressive nature of the journey of the soul.

It may be that here the convoluted nature of the Macarian corpus limits the available findings. It is possible that the highly edited collections may have been purged of overtly encratic tendencies by the unknown collators, leaving only 'positive' statements of the benefit of bringing the body under control, without the negative aspects of referring to marriage as 'evil'. Be that as it may, however, there is no evidence, in the surviving manuscripts, of marriage being regarded as 'evil', and if such editing has taken place it would have had to have occurred at a very early stage of the transmission of the texts (pre 540A.D.), to encompass the whole textual tradition. Alternatively, the portions of the texts that spoke of marriage as evil were of marginal significance, and their excision did not have an overtly detrimental effect on the corpus.

Overall the Macarian corpus strikes a positive note of the benefits of asceticism, rather than a more negative warning against the dangers of marriage. Ps-Macarius reveals the struggles encountered in the living in a community of ones who seek after God, and also the struggles of the thoughts of sexuality that those within such a position have.²⁸⁰ The sexual sin is as much an inward sin of the mind as it is of the body,²⁸¹ and for Ps-Macarius radical

²⁷⁶ I.48 (II.5.10f); II.34.2; I.53.1-4 (II.11.3).

²⁷⁷ I.33.2; (II.15.35).

²⁷⁸ II.25.3f.

²⁷⁹ I.33.2; (II.15.35).

²⁸⁰ I.16.1-4 (II.17.6).

²⁸¹ II.17.6; II.15.51.

enocratism transcends the bounds of the control of the body alone, and encompasses the control of the mind and heart also. As such Ps-Macarius honours continence and celibacy above marriage, clearly placing it as the preferred way of living a Christian life, assuming continence within those allied to his cause, but not alienating those outside of his cause whom he wishes to encourage in the Christian life.

Ps-Macarius' approach to asceticism can be seen to be one of controlling the body for the purpose of enabling communication (κοινωνία) with the divine. Of progressing within the life of a Christian, of advancing towards becoming a pure and acceptable bride. Final perfection is achieved within the resurrection of the body, as if the body were transfigured in the same manner as that of Christ.

As the body of the Lord was glorified, when He went up into the mountain, and was transfigured into the divine glory and into the infinite light, so are the bodies of the saints glorified and shine like lightning. The glory that was within Christ was outspread upon his body and shone; and in like manner in the saints, the power of Christ within them shall one day be poured outwardly upon their bodies. For even now they partake of His substance and nature in their minds...As many lamps are lighted from one flame, the bodies of the saints being members of Christ, must needs be what Christ is and nothing else.²⁸²

The body then is necessary for ultimate union with God but, in the mean time, must attempt to be what Christ is and nothing else. That is, one must be devoted to Christ for the ultimate union with him and live in anticipation of that union, in the 'even now' as well as the time to come. The ultimate transfiguration of the mind and body will occur at the resurrection of the body, but in the meantime Christians are to live in desire of this transfiguration, and to seek the 'burning of the Spirit which burns hearts into flame'.²⁸³ In terms of radical enocratism, they must be enocratic for the future, rather than enocratic because of the past. A trait of Ps-Macarius is his pre-occupation with the future state of the Christian. His theology is eschatologically weighted rather than solely protologically motivated, and in the homilies that are available to us, Ps-Macarius is not so concerned with why man is in his present state, but rather is very

²⁸² I.33.2; (II.15.38).

²⁸³ I.4.1-6; (II.4.7-9).

much concerned with how man can extricate himself from this state, and prepare himself for future union and perfection.

This eschatological weighting is compatible with a radical encratic outlook. The Milan Definition²⁸⁴ remarks that 'originally both the doctrine and practice [of asceticism and continence] were motivated by the eschatological perspective of the kingdom, by the idea of being entirely motivated to the service of the Lord (with undivided heart), by the imitation of Christ....'²⁸⁵ Ps-Macarius is harking back to the original encratic impetus of the nearness of the kingdom, and the progress within that kingdom, to those who believe. Part of the uniqueness of his contribution to the emergent monasticism was to re-acquaint asceticism with an eschatological emphasis. From the areas examined above it can be seen that Ps-Macarius' encratism is one of a radical nature, with communion with the divine and ultimate perfection the motivating factors. Virginité is a vital part of the journey towards the Godhead, but failure to adhere to the high principles and desires does not preclude the participant from the journey. Rather the journey is lengthened as opposed to curtailed, providing the desire for ultimate communion is still evident, together with the activity of grace in the heart of the believer.²⁸⁶ Diatessaronic readings in the Macarian corpus have been isolated by Quispel,²⁸⁷ and Baker²⁸⁸ amongst others, and show that 'the author of the Macarian corpus knew and used the *Diatessaron* of Tatian'.²⁸⁹ Indeed Quispel differentiates between the versions of the text,²⁹⁰ which he suggests originated in Mesopotamia in the third century, and was not adapted to the canonical texts of catholicism.²⁹¹

²⁸⁴ See also Bianchi, s.v. 'Protology', EEC, p717,

²⁸⁵ Bianchi, 1985, p. xxvii-xxix.

²⁸⁶ I.16.1-4; (II.17.6).

²⁸⁷ Quispel, 1977, pp203-209; Quispel, VigChr 18, (1964), p226-235; For an assessment of Quispel's argument and style see Peterson, 1994, p331-338.

²⁸⁸ Baker, JTS 20, 133-49.

²⁸⁹ Quispel, 1977, p204.

²⁹⁰ Quispel, 1977, p208, He adds that this would explain why his Ps-Macarius' text is so much cruder than that of Ephrem Syrus, who lived roughly in the same period and area.

²⁹¹ Quispel, 1977, p208.

Ps-Macarius was influenced by Tatian's theology as well as his quotational sources. He shows not only a similarity to Tatianic exclusive encratism via his use of the *Diatessaron*, but also by the teaching underlying the whole of the corpus. Ps-Macarius emphasises the 'single-life' and the need for sobriety,²⁹² two Tatianic traits and distinctly encratic characteristics, without necessarily quoting the *Diatessaron*. Although the influence of Tatian pervades the whole Macarian corpus, he cannot be isolated as the sole instigator of Macarian encratism. Together with the influence of the *Gospel of Thomas* and a Jewish Christian Gospel tradition (that lies behind the *Pseudo-Clementines*) the *Diatessaron* becomes an aid to the isolation of Macarian originality within the corpus, and reveals once more the wide synthesis of sources that took place.²⁹³ Macarian encratism is more than merely re-constituted Tatianic encratism.

If Tatian is regarded as an arch-heretic and founder of the Encratic sect (as Irenaeus²⁹⁴) it is simple to project his theology on to an unsuspecting and gullible Syrian world. In this thesis Ps-Macarius would become simply another adherent to the Exclusive encratic heretical teaching that swept the whole of the region. However, as has been observed earlier,²⁹⁵ Tatian was not the instigator of encratic ideas, nor was he the arch-heretic he has been portrayed as, who suddenly turned on the Church after the death of his mentor Justin. Rather Tatian was indicative of the fluid nature of 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' in early Christianity, and was involved in the formation of Christian practice and theology throughout his lifetime.²⁹⁶ Barnard has shown that Tatian was an 'eclectic' thinker from the beginning,²⁹⁷ drawing from Valentinus as well as Justin, Judaeo-Christian apocryphal sources as well as 'canonical' ones, and thus Tatian was 'an eclectic radical Christian to whom an ascetic-encratite explanation of

²⁹² eg II.16.9.

²⁹³ Quispel, 1977, p209.

²⁹⁴ Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer. I. xxviii.1.*

²⁹⁵ See above 72f, 93f.

²⁹⁶ Barnard, 1978, p181-193.

²⁹⁷ Barnard, 1978, p190.

life appealed from the outset of his career as a Christian'.²⁹⁸ The same could well be said of Ps-Macarius. Ps-Macarius then, becomes a participant in the debate, rather than a recipient of pre-formed theology. Rather than being seen as the instigator of encratism within Syrian spirituality, it would be more accurate to regard Tatian as the provider of a distinct explanation of exclusive encratism to Syrian spirituality. This Syrian spirituality was already practising an ascetic lifestyle within a Judaeo-Christian formulation,²⁹⁹ within the confines of its own extant protological motivation, which itself had been a bearing upon the formation of Tatian's doctrines.

Brock notes that there are three conceptual models for the ascetic ideal as found in Ephrem,³⁰⁰ which are indicative of Syrian encratism. Firstly the idea of Christ as the bridegroom, the Church's betrothal to Christ that took place at Christ's baptism, and how every member of the Church, as well as the whole Church, could be regarded as the Bride of Christ; secondly the idea of 'wakefulness' and the virginal characteristic of the angelic life; and thirdly the idea of baptism as a re-entry into paradise, and the receipt of the fruit of the Tree of Life that was lost by Adam. Tatian's doctrine of double creation comes within the third conceptual model, but has the added element of a gnostically influenced foundation: that of his explanation of the soul being separated from the divine spirit because of its sin, and the loss of the soul's wings and immortality.³⁰¹

Ephrem, writing some 150 years after Tatian, and using Tatian's *Diatessaron* provides a balanced understanding of radical encratism, and a more rounded treatment of the encratic practices that were found in the Syrian region. Ephrem and Aphrahat's encratism was based upon Syrian foundations. Tatian was accused of gnostic inventions and encratism, and it may be that these two accusations were intended to be complementary.³⁰² Certainly the assertion by

²⁹⁸ Barnard, 1978, p190.

²⁹⁹ See Murray, 1982, p4; Barnard, 1978, p189; Quispel, 1977, p203ff.

³⁰⁰ Brock (tr), 1990, p27ff.

³⁰¹ Tatian, '*Discourse*' 7:13-20.

³⁰² Peterson, 1994, p78.

Irenaeus that Tatian was the founder of the Encratites, and the gnostic elements within Tatian's *Discourse*, have resulted in the two being seen to be connected.

Syrian encratism has a protology that is based upon the restoration of man to beyond that which was lost. It is *enkrateta* for restoration, and is coupled to a theology of the divinization of man. It has an eschatological protology focusing upon theosis. Ephrem sees encratism as a gift of God, in that the incarnation restored divinity to humanity, and humanity to divinity,³⁰³ and betrothed man to the heavenly bridegroom. As such, man now has the gift of knowledge and the gift of life, and his ultimate aim is theosis. He has been given immortality, but has not received incorruptibility. The lifestyle of a Christian, in the view of Ephrem, who in this is representative of all Syrian spirituality, is meant to be one that advances the state of the body and soul towards divinity.

Ps-Macarius was a product of many influences, incorporating them into his theology. Yet it would be incorrect to see him only as a collator of other peoples theologies, mysticism and ascetic practices. Ps-Macarius had a unique contribution to make to emergent coenobitic monasticism, and to the mystical life he was so enamoured with. That contribution was threefold. Firstly it was an emphasis upon the emotion and experience of the spiritual journey, especially in relation to the activity of the Holy Spirit upon the life of the individual Christian; secondly it was a rejection of the extreme nature of exclusive encratism; thirdly it was the production of the written texts themselves. Ps-Macarius took elements of Syrian spirituality and wider Christian asceticism and re-interpreted them in relation to his own distinct 'theology of the heart'. His written texts made use of known Christian language, given new meanings. Stewart has shown conclusively how fresh meaning was given by Ps-Macarius to πληροφορία, αἴσθησις, and πειρα,³⁰⁴ and how he adopted and adapted them for his own purposes.³⁰⁵ Similarly the depth of his imagery throughout the corpus, and the frequent use of familiar

³⁰³ Ephrem, *De Fide* 17.

³⁰⁴ Stewart, 1991, chap. 4.

³⁰⁵ Stewart, 1991, p236.

images show how Ps-Macarius was grounding his message repeatedly in the hearts and minds of his readers and direct audience, not only instructing his immediate circle in ascetic ways, but introducing his asceticism into a wider community. That community became a cross-cultural community, based within the surrounds of Edessa and Cappadocia. Ps-Macarius took an indigenous Syrian spirituality, a wider Christian ascetic tradition, added his own elements and emphases, and translated the outcome into understandable and relevant language by the use of familiar images, metaphors and rhetoric.

A primary contribution of Ps-Macarius was the re-introduction into the Church of the idea of being an apocalyptic community, living as angels on earth, within sacred time, and gradually communing with the Godhead. In doing so, Ps-Macarius rejected exclusivity as portrayed by Eustathian encratism, focusing upon the inward working of the Spirit over and above the outward condition of marriage. He also diluted the encratic exclusivity of Tatian, in regard to celibacy, whilst continuing to advance the celibate state as the preferred way for co-operating with grace. It is the distinction between co-operation with grace through celibacy, and the receiving of grace via celibacy that marks Ps-Macarius as different to the adherents of exclusive encratism. Ps-Macarius moderated the exclusive to leave the radical, and yet still sought the 'wings of the spirit' on which the soul could fly to the Godhead. That is, the seeking of ultimate *κοινωνία* (communion) with the Godhead, through the action of the Spirit upon the soul of man in his present state, who co-operates with the spirit by radical *encrateia*, whilst remaining within the bounds of current ecclesial authority structures.

CHAPTER 4. THE MACARIAN IMAGERY

OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The assertion of this thesis, that Ps-Macarius portrays a radical encratic position, and that he can be considered as a member of the wider Cappadocian circle, can be illustrated by an examination of the imagery of the Holy Spirit within the Macarian corpus. This reveals both a distinct Macarian contribution, and a dependence upon previous theological positions.

Ps-Macarius greatly highlights the need for an internal experience of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual Christian, and of the choice that is open to man to embrace either good or evil. Ps-Macarius recounts the varying ways in which grace is experienced within the heart of the believer, and the response of the individual to the internal activity of the Holy Spirit, concluding that 'Grace acts upon the soul differently in order to restore it to the heavenly Father perfect and faultless and pure'.¹ When the role of the Spirit within the life of a believer, as portrayed in the Macarian corpus, is examined a synthesis of Greek and Syrian elements can be seen. For example, one of the Macarian metaphors for describing the activity of the Spirit within the heart of a believer, is that of being 'intoxicated with God',² whilst another draws from the Platonic idea of the soul flying on the wings of the spirit into the presence of the Deity.³ Also the imitation of angels by those living a life of virginity, and the understanding of angels as celestial 'watchers', both characteristics of Syrian Christianity, are very evident within the range of images that Macarius utilises.

Crucial for Ps-Macarius' emphasis upon the internal activity of the Holy Spirit, is the general Syrian understanding of pneumatological soteriology, and the purifying nature of salvation. Ps-Macarius is one who revels in the role of the Spirit within the individual, but who recognises the necessity of the wider ecclesiastical experience also. Ps-Macarius propounds the idea of the necessity of the activity of the Holy Spirit within the life of both a celibate

¹ I.13.1-2; II.18.6-9.

² II.15.40. See below p193 for a detailed examination of the term.

³ II.2.3. See below p216 for a detailed examination of the term.

community, and within the life of the wider Church, whilst emphasising the responsibility of the individual to respond to the said activity. This once again places Ps-Macarius at the centre of the convergence of Syrian and Greek spirituality, as within the Macarian corpus there is a synthesis of the Syrian Spirituality concerning the terminology and imagery of the Holy Spirit together with Greek philosophy and a wider Christian terminology. This chapter will briefly examine the concept of the Holy Spirit in Eastern Christianity, before a detailed examination of the Macarian Spirit analogy is given.

The Concept of the Spirit in Eastern Christianity

The concept of the Spirit in eastern Christianity in regard to salvation, is one of progressive perfection and includes elements pertaining to angelology and anthropology. As has been discussed previously angelic imitation is a strong emphasis in early Syrian asceticism.⁴ Stemming from the interpretation of angels as 'watchers' rather than messengers, being involved in perpetual praise of God, the life of the celibate Syriac ascetic was motivated by a 'wakefulness' and expectancy, and of the potential of living in paradise in the present time.⁵ Brock notes that the basis for angelic imitation in Syrian proto-monasticism comes not only from the book of Daniel, with the description of angels as watchers (*irê*), (as alluded to in Matthew 25), but also from Luke 20:35-36, in which the marriageless life of angels is revealed as something to be anticipated here on earth.⁶ The re-entry into paradise, attained through baptism, progresses by the on going reception of the Spirit, which is achieved through a life of angelic imitation, in the form of celibacy and wakefulness. From baptism the believer is thus re-acquainted with his pre-fallen position, and so becomes 'like the angels'.⁷ Having received baptism the believer must co-operate with grace, through the Holy Spirit, to be able to be

⁴ See above Introduction p86f.

⁵ See above chap. 3 p122f.

⁶ Brock, 1985, p140.

⁷ See Brown, 1988, chap.16 esp p331-3.

perfected and made presentable to the bridegroom. Thus Eastern Christianity reveals the progressive perfection attributed to the working of the Holy Spirit through grace within the believer. The anthropological position within Eastern Christianity is one of mankind being made in the image and likeness of God, and is based upon the notion of 'participation' in God.⁸ Meyendorff explains it thus: 'Man's nature is truly itself only inasmuch as it exists 'in God' or 'in grace'. Grace therefore gives man his 'natural' development'.⁹ Man then, is not an autonomous being, rather his true humanity is realized only when he lives 'in God', and possesses divine qualities.¹⁰ The human creature is called to grow in divine life, which is itself a gift but yet also a task to be accomplished by human effort. This participation in God is not only an intellectual knowledge, but a state of the entire human being, transformed by grace and freely co-operating with it by the efforts of both will and mind.¹¹ The fall resulted in Adam being unable to attain to union with God, and of the potential of the deification of the created order being lost. However, the 'lost' vocation of Adam was fulfilled by Christ, and the way of salvation opened through the cross also opens up the way of deification which is the final end of man.¹² Participation in the divine life restores humanity to its natural state. This progressive perfection is at the hub of the understanding of the gospel within eastern Christianity. The anthropological element, in progressive participation, and the progressive reception of the Holy Spirit, married to wakefulness, praise and celibacy within the imitation of angels, reveals a concept of the Holy Spirit as one who directs and advances the transfiguration of the believer.

Macarian Pneumatology, and the Feminine Nature of the Holy Spirit

Ps-Macarius refers to the feminine quality of the Holy Spirit¹³ predominantly through

⁸ Meyendorff, 1979, p138; Lossky, 1976, chap. 6.

⁹ Meyendorff, 1979, p138.

¹⁰ Meyendorff, 1979, p139.

¹¹ Meyendorff, 1979, p138.

¹² Lossky, 1976, p133.

¹³ I.62.2; II.28.4 (cf III.16.2.3); II.30.2.

his discussion of the rebirth of the soul through grace, and in so doing once again confirms his Syrian heritage. The understanding of the Holy Spirit as feminine is a marked feature of Syriac pneumatology where, although the Spirit is not often expressly referred to as 'Mother',¹⁴ the feminine quality of the Spirit, and of grace, pervades much of the early Syrian writings. The concept of the Spirit as Mother, is found within the writings of Aphrahat,¹⁵ but distinct 'Mother' references as opposed to nuances or feminine references are less common throughout the Syrian writings, particularly the later ones. Early feminine nuances include the baptismal invocations in *Judas Thomas*.¹⁶ However, such references are in relation to individuals, and communal implications in regard to the feminine aspect of the Holy Spirit are scarce. The imagery of the *Odes of Solomon* represent the Spirit's motherhood in relation to Jesus, and again connect this imagery with a baptismal ritual.¹⁷ Charlesworth suggests that the use of the feminine for the Holy Spirit belongs to the odist's conceptuality as much as to his language, and regards the Odes as sharing with early Jewish-Christian gospels (ie the Gospel of the Hebrews) the idea of the feminine 'Holy Spirit'.¹⁸ Murray suggests that the idea of the Holy Spirit as feminine stems from early Judaeo-Christian speculations, the bird imagery of the Spirit (hovering) over the chaos in Genesis and the feminine representation of wisdom.¹⁹ The understanding of the Holy Spirit as feminine (or as Mother) derived partly from the feminine form of the Hebrew term *ruha*, (root *rhp*) and from the verb *rahhef* 'to hover' (Gen 1.2). As Brock notes, this 'hovering' is essentially a feminine action, and *rahhef* is the word that became the technical term for the action of the Holy Spirit within Syriac writers.²⁰ However, Brock cautions against assuming that the 'hovering' aspect of the Spirit is related to the dove

¹⁴ See Brock, 1979; Aphrahat, *Demonstration 18*, commenting on Gen 2:24, mirrored in Ps-Macarius II.16.8; 28.4.; See also Murray, 1975, p318, pp142-50, 312-20.

¹⁵ Brock, 1979, p3; cf Aphrahat, *Demonstration 18*.

¹⁶ Murray, 1975, p80.

¹⁷ Murray, 1975, p314ff, see especially *Ode 19* in Charlesworth, 1973, p82f, 83fn5.

¹⁸ Charlesworth (ed), 1973, p83n5.

¹⁹ Murray, 1975, p314; Wisdom as feminine Prov 8:1-9, Ben Sira 24.

²⁰ Brock, 1979, p4, 6; Murray, 1975, p22, lists the *Odes of Solomon*, the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, Aphrahat and Ephrem as those who use the term *rahhef*.

appearing at Jesus' baptism, preferring *rahhef* as the feminine force behind the vocabulary of 'flying' found in Ps-Macarius in relation to the Spirit.²¹ He notes that although it is possible that the vocabulary of flying derives from the imagery of the Holy Spirit as a dove, there was a pre-Christian cult at Mabbugh that strongly associated with the dove, and possibly for this apologetic reason dove symbolism lacks prominence in later Syriac writers.²² Further to this Murray has shown how Syrian Christianity had a high view of the role of the Spirit within the individual, yet held an underdeveloped understanding of the role of the Spirit within the Universal Church,²³ and suggests that Syriac Christianity was eventually drawn away from the concept of the Spirit as Mother within the Universal Church by a mistrust developed from Gnostic cosmological speculations. However, Ps-Macarius does explicitly refer to the Holy Spirit as 'Mother'. In a passage which effectively summarises his pneumatology (II.28.4,) Ps-Macarius speaks of the fall of Adam, the resultant loss of divine fellowship, and the Godhead:

So when Adam transgressed the commandment and fell from his former glory, and came under the power of the spirit of the world, and the veil of darkness fell upon his soul, from his time and until the last Adam, the Lord, they saw not the true Father in heaven, or the good, kind Mother, the grace of the Spirit, or the sweet and desired Brother, the Lord, or the friends and kindred, the holy angels, with whom He rejoiced, making merry and keeping festival. (II.28.4)

Within this passage Ps-Macarius reveals his perception of the Spirit as Mother, with Christ, not fulfilling the role of Son as may have been supposed, but of Brother. This resonates with the early Syrian '*Hymn of the Pearl*' in the '*Acts of Judas Thomas*', and the familial relationship of Father, Mother and Brother, once more asserting the Syrian heritage of Ps-Macarius.²⁴ Furthermore the holy angels are revealed as part of the heavenly community, feasting and celebrating communion with God before the fall, which is also a role that they

²¹ See below p216 'Wings of the Spirit'.

²² Brock, 1979, p14f.

²³ Murray, 1975, p344.

²⁴ *Hymn of the Pearl*, (*Acts of Thomas 108-113*); Elliott, 1993, Quispel, 1967. See also Klijn, VigChr 14, 1960:154-164.

fulfill within the paradisiacal community. In this it can be seen that Ps-Macarius views the Trinity through the economy of salvation rather than through any theological / metaphysical viewpoint, and portrays a characteristically Syrian viewpoint. The trinitarian functions are conceived primarily through their fellowship functions. That is, God is viewed as the trinity of Father, Mother and Brother of the believer,²⁵ and the relationship with the believer is uppermost in Ps-Macarius' explanation as opposed to any description of the relationships within the Godhead.

In regard to the angels, elsewhere Ps-Macarius refers to the angels weeping because of the soul who turns away from the Deity²⁶ and describes the Holy Spirit as 'Rachel, the true mother, the heavenly grace'.²⁷ The assignation of the name Rachel to the Holy Spirit is drawn from the weeping and lamenting of Rachel in Ramah (Matt 2.18.). Ps-Macarius compares the weeping of Rachel for her children with the weeping of the Holy Spirit for mankind, which is broken off and captive under evil and in darkness. Thus the Holy Spirit is depicted as lamenting because of the portion of mankind that was not enlightened to good, that were not 'spiritual ones'. Coupled to the weeping of the Holy Spirit over lost mankind is the Macarian trait of referring to Christians as 'children' of God, born from the seed of the Godhead, birthed in the desire of Christ 'for them to be born from his seed of the Godhead.'²⁸ The rebirth of the children of God is an action completed by the Spirit, or grace, which in doing so creates 'brothers of light' for Christ.²⁹

Maloney asserts that the Macarian understanding of the progression of the Spirit within the Godhead is similar to that of Athanasius, citing Athanasius' *Letter to Serapion I*, in which he states 'The Son is the image of the invisible God and the Spirit is the image of the

²⁵ cf. The model of the Trinity in Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 31* of 'Adam - Eve - Seth, with Eve fulfilling the place of the Spirit. I am indebted to Alexander Golitzin for this reference. See also McGuckin, GOTR 39.1, pp7-32.

²⁶ I.1.11.

²⁷ I.61.2; III.26.

²⁸ II.30.1ff.

²⁹ II.16.8; cf II.8.6; 16.6; 14.4; 30.2.

Son'.³⁰ This linear progression of the Godhead found in Athanasius is, according to Maloney, a direct influence on Ps-Macarius. However, Athanasius spoke of the Logos being the image of the Father, the Spirit being the image of the Son, and the believers made according to the image and likeness that is Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Ps-Macarius does not explicitly state this, nor does he dwell upon the intricacies of the progression of the Godhead, but rather focusses upon the effects of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the heart of man. His view of the Trinity is governed by his soteriological perspective. Ps-Macarius states that 'The body is a likeness to the soul and the soul is an image of the Spirit'.³¹ He refers to the 'mysteries of the Godhead',³² and of the decision by the Father and the Son to send the Logos for the salvation of man, concealing his divinity so that 'like may be saved by like',³³ but does not elucidate his theology in any systematic way, except in II.18.6 when he speaks of the progression of compassion through the Godhead.

Thus the goodness of the Father was pleased to wish to dwell in every believer who asks this of him. Christ says "He that loves me, he will be loved by the Father and I will love him and I will manifest myself to him (Jn 14:21). And again "I and my Father will come and make our mansion in Him" (Jn 14.23). Thus, the infinite kindness of the Father willed; thus, the inconceivable love of Christ was pleased. Thus, the inexpressible goodness of the Spirit promised. Glory to the inexpressible compassion of the Holy Trinity.³⁴

Once again this illustrates the soteriological perspective of Macarian trinitarian theology. The compassion of the Godhead, which culminates in the restoration of mankind to paradise, overrides the more metaphysical concerns of the relationships within the Trinity. Ps-Macarius speaks of the unity of the Trinity through the Father's kindness, the Son's love and the Spirit's goodness.

Other than this he refers to the relationships within the Trinity only in passing, preferring to concentrate upon the activity of the Holy Spirit dwelling within man, and of the

³⁰ Athanasius, *Ad Serapionem* I.20 (PG 26:577b); Maloney, 1991 (tr.), p283fn 81.

³¹ II.30.3.

³² I.46.2; II.16.5.

³³ II.15.44.

³⁴ II.18.6.

need for man to co-operate with grace along the journey to the Godhead. Most homilies conclude with a formulaic statement glorifying the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, (in one instance giving ‘glory to the consubstantial Trinity’³⁵). Ps-Macarius views the Trinity through the activity of the Holy Spirit, and through the Fatherhood of Christ. He focuses upon the experiential aspect of the Godhead in homilies that stress the progressive perfection of faith, and the ongoing revelation and ‘mingling’ of the soul with the Spirit. The images and metaphors utilised by Ps-Macarius are many, and they reveal some of the characteristics of the progressive perfection of the believer, as well as elucidating the place of the Spirit in relation to the Father and the Son. Two images bear detailed consideration, firstly, the experience of grace described by the term ‘intoxicated with God’, and secondly the Macarian use of the image of the soul flying on the ‘wings of the Spirit’ in relation to the journey of the individual. Both images illustrate the diversity of influences within Macarian theology.

Intoxicated with God.

Ps-Macarius uses the idea of spiritual intoxication within his explanations of the lifestyle of the Christian. The force behind the word, is that of drunkenness and excess, and Ps-Macarius gives additional explanatory characteristics to the word, emphasising that the divine nature is the source of this intoxication. As such, intoxication (μεθύω, μεθύσκων / *methon*) in Ps-Macarius is an illustration not only of a spiritual characteristic of the life of the Christian, but also an illustration of Ps-Macarius’ sense of progressive pneumatic soteriology. Ps-Macarius uses ‘intoxication’ regularly, only once using it in relation to drunkenness alone, in I.14.5, where he speaks of those ‘drunk with the spirit of error’. The other occurrences of the term all combine ‘intoxication’ with an explicitly spiritual element. There is one occurrence of ‘intoxication’ within the corpus, which best illustrates the Macarian concept of spiritual

³⁵ II.17.

intoxication, as opposed to intoxication with wine, and which reveals the force behind the concept of being ‘intoxicated with God’. Homily I.63.6 speaks of ‘sober intoxication’, and it is this oxymoronic metaphor that underpins the Macarian concept of being ‘Intoxicated with God’.

‘μεθυσθῆτε μέθην νηφάλιον καὶ πνευματικὴν,
Ἰν’ ὡσπερ ἐν τοῖς σωματικῶς μεθύουσιν ὁ
οἶνος λαλεῖ.’ (I.63.6)

You were drunk [with] deep sober
intoxication, caused by the Spirit
just as bodies are said [to be]
intoxicated with wine.

Other occurrences of the phrase ‘intoxication’ include :-

μεθυσκόμενοι μέθη πνευματικῇ (I.5.2.8)

deeply intoxicated spiritual ones

μεμεθυσμένοις εἰς τὸ ἀγαθὸν (I.6.4; II.27.9)

intoxicated with good³⁶

μεμεθυσμένοι εἰς τὴν θεότητα (I.45.3; II.15.40)

intoxicated with the Godhead

μεμεθυσμένος εἰς τὰ ἐπουράνια (II.15.36)

intoxicated with heavenly things

μεθύσκον ἐν τῇ ἀγαλλιάσει (I.52.2)

intoxicated in great joy

Ἐν μέθῃ ἐξάπτεται τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ θεοῦ (II.8.2)

it kindles up with intoxication of
the love of God.

μεμεθυσμένον (II.8.4)

have been intoxicated

μεθύοντες τῷ πνεύματι μέθην θείαν
μυστηρίων πνευματικῶν (II.18.7)

being intoxicated in the spirit,
drunk with divine spiritual
mysteries

ὅπου ἐγένετο ἡ ἔκχυσις καὶ ἡ μέθη τοῦ
πνεύματος. (II.50.4)

where the outpouring and
intoxication of the spirit took place

μεθύων εἰς ἀγάπην καὶ χάραν (III.22.3)

intoxicated with goodness and
grace

Before discussing the Macarian use of ‘intoxication’, the history of the term ‘sober intoxication’ (‘νηφάλιος μέθη’ / *nephalios methe*) and ‘intoxication’ in general will be examined. By doing so it will be possible to further place Ps-Macarius in his spiritual context.

³⁶ As opposed to badness. I.6.4 further articulates the comparison between good and evil, whereas II.27.9 shows signs of editorial influence and does not refer to negative intoxication.

Sober intoxication, draws a distinction between the state of intoxication brought on by wine with that state of Christian perfection available through grace³⁷ and it is this concept of sober intoxication that underlies Ps-Macarius' more general use of the term 'intoxication'. Other occurrences of the phrases 'sober intoxication' and 'intoxication' are drawn from the works of Philo and Gregory Nyssa.³⁸ The Christian writers who use it include Dionysius the Areopagite and Isaac of Nineveh, who will be considered briefly in due course, as well as Plato and Plotinus.

There are two formative influences behind the use of the terms 'intoxication', and 'sober intoxication' in Christian literature: Philo and Plato. Of the two Philo is the more influential within Syrian spirituality. An example of this can be seen from the writings of Isaac of Nineveh. Wensinck asserts that Isaac's thoughts are built upon the frame of Alexandrian philosophy, as it is embodied in Philo, and especially within Philo's asceticism. He notes the similarity of meaning behind the phrase Philo uses to denote the highest spiritual state: 'ecstasy' (ἐνθουσιασμός), and that of 'drunkenness' or intoxication (μέθη) as used by Isaac.³⁹ In fact Philo describes the highest spiritual state by the terms ecstasy, intoxication and sober intoxication.⁴⁰ Both Philo and Isaac hold that man's spiritual part has to live at the expense of his body, and stress the 'death of the soul' that is the soul's ability to overcome both the affections and its own inferior part, in order to elevate itself to God.⁴¹ Philo uses the term 'drunkenness' to describe a state of ecstasy, in terms of both prophecy and mystical union.⁴² Philo specifically speaks of a place where the soul reaches communion with God, where 'he is

³⁷ Lewy, 1929; H.J.Sieben - A.Solignac, s.v. 'Ivresse Spirituelle', DSp 7. 2312-2337; Leclercq, s.v. 'Jour d'Ivresse', VSp 76. 574-591; Meloni, s.v. 'Drunkenness', EEC p255.

³⁸ Daniélou, 1944, p290-302.

³⁹ Wensinck, 1969, p.li.

⁴⁰ Philo: cf *Opif.71*; *Leg All.1.84 and 3,82l*; *Mos1.187*; *Ebr.147* (Yonge, 1993).

⁴¹ Wensinck, 1969, p.li.

⁴² Philo, 'Opera' (ed Cohen, 1876-1926) I.103.32; I.60.31; I.16.22.; See Wensinck, 1969, p.li, p33f; Daniélou, 1944, p290-302; Lewy, 1929, p3-41; In relation to prophecy in Philo see Wolfson, 1947, chap 9; See also Louth, 1981.

permeated by fire in giving thanks to God, and is drunk with a sober drunkenness'.⁴³ Louth interprets this Philonic 'sober drunkenness' as 'some sort of ecstatic state' but draws a distinction between one in an ecstatic state, and one who is an ecstatic. One who is in an ecstatic state has become wholly himself, at one with himself and the whole cosmos, as opposed to one in ecstatic union with God.⁴⁴ For Philo drunkenness is the stage whereby the soul passes beyond the stage of seeking. By 'seeking', Philo refers to the reading of the text, which becomes the growing awareness of a spiritual experience which awakes and expresses itself.⁴⁵ Philo alludes to a stream of Sophia (the nursing mother of the universe) which she pours upon those who ask her and through which they get drunk with sober drunkenness, and come to sacred visions, a stream which seems at once milk, honey, and oil.⁴⁶ Elsewhere Philo identifies Sophia with the Logos.⁴⁷ Goodenough remarks that in Jewish imagery the drink offered is to be considered identical with the one who offers it. Thus, in drinking the Sophia one drinks the Logos and thereby gains immortality as opposed to transient ecstasy.⁴⁸ Philo also describes as intoxication the effect of drinking from the sweetened Well of Marah, in a passage that has proved contentious in translation.

They felt as though they had been feeding at a banquet and a merry feast, and had become drunk, not with the drunkenness of wine but with the sober drunkenness of a wine which they had drunk neat, for they took their drinks from the piety of the rule who led them.⁴⁹

Goodenough recognises the difficulty in translation, and Nock, in reviewing Goodenough's

⁴³Philo, *Leg. All.* I,82-84 (Yonge, 1993); Louth, 1981, p34; Goodenough, 1956, vol 6.202; Lewy, 1929, p10-12.

⁴⁴ Louth, 1981, p35; Plotinus would be an example of Intoxication as a union with God. See Gerson, 1996, p55 fn25.

⁴⁵ Crouzel, s.v. 'Philo of Alexandria', EEC p682f.

⁴⁶ Philo, *Quod Deterius*, 115-118; (Yonge, 1993); Goodenough, 1956, 6.199,202; Lewy, 1929, 12-21.

⁴⁷ Philo, *Fug* 97 (Yonge, 1993); The logos being the *rhema* 'word' of God. Nock points out that Logos has many meanings in Philo, but never the meaning of 'Messiah'; Nock, 1972, chap 52-54 esp p900.

⁴⁸ Goodenough, 1956, 6:204.

⁴⁹ Philo, *Mos* 1.187 (tr. Goodenough 1956 6:203); see also Lewy, 1929, p29-30.

volumes, questions the interpretation of the Well of Marah⁵⁰ here correcting Goodenough's assertion of the drink being a *proposis*.⁵¹ Even so, the notion of sober intoxication, and intoxication in general, is a strong and recurrent theme within Philo. Hannah is another of his illustrations of sober intoxication.⁵² Philo remarks that Hannah's whole soul itself became wine which she poured out as a libation to God when she sent it out on the flight through the universe. Philo explains that Hannah's state, although resembling intoxication is really a sober ecstasy, and the result of her encounter with grace.⁵³

When grace fills the soul, that soul thereby rejoices and smiles and dances, for it is possessed with a frenzy, so that to many of the unenlightened it may seem to be drunken, crazy and beside itself.⁵⁴

Philo's use of the term 'sober intoxication' itself draws on the notion of drunkenness of spirit that is found in the Dionysian mystery religion, Judaism and Gnosticism, as well as the similarities found within Plato.⁵⁵

The precise connection between the language of Philo and Plato is difficult to determine, and although a direct connection is an appealing proposition, Daniélou remarks that the phrase 'drunkenness of spirit' was especially widespread in the hellenistic language, especially within the Hermetic writings,⁵⁶ and suggests that this is where Philo himself has borrowed the phrase.⁵⁷ However Wolfson argues that the reference to sober intoxication within Philo rises from a comparison with the ecstasy brought on voluntarily by strong wine in the

⁵⁰ Nock, 1972, p89 counters Goodenough's excesses. See also Smith, JBL 86, p53-68.

⁵¹ A *proposis* (προποσιες) in the strict sense, is a cup which one raises in honour of someone, and which, if it is in honour of an individual one commonly passes to him (Nock, 1972, p899).

⁵² Philo, *Ebr. 143-153*, (Yonge, 1993); Lewy, 1929, p3-8.

⁵³ Philo, *Ebr. 36.145*, (Yonge 1993).

⁵⁴ Philo, *Ebr 36.146*, (Yonge, 1993). Philo also notes the offering of wine to Melchizedek, by Abraham, which he explains as wine which induces sober intoxication. *LA III, 81,82*; Lewy, 1929, 21f; Goodenough, 1956, 6:203.

⁵⁵ Daniélou, 1944, p290. For a detailed discussion of the formulation of 'Sober Intoxication' see Daniélou, and Lewy, 1929.

⁵⁶ Those writings concerning Hermes, circulated under the name Hermes Trismegistus, c3 B.C.

⁵⁷ Daniélou, 1944, p290.

cult of Dionysius.⁵⁸ Either way a direct connection between Plato and Philo is unlikely. It is more probable that Philo gave a general Hellenic term a new religious interpretation and meaning. Whatever the precise origin of the phrase for Philo, it is clear that he did not merely adopt the phrase unaltered from Hellenism, but freighted it with additional interpretations. Part of which was the gnostic theme of μέθη θεία, (*methe theia*, divine intoxication) and the notion of sobriety. The gnostic influence can be seen in the notion of the mixing bowl (κρατήρ) of wisdom, and the invitation (κήρυγμα).⁵⁹ However, as Daniélou points out, these elements were already evident within pre-gnostic Judaism.⁶⁰ The Biblical theme of wisdom is also influential. Daniélou cites Proverbs 9 in the Septuagint, and the Jewish wisdom theology as significant contexts, (and not least the doctrine of inspiration of the Jewish prophet), for the phrase 'sober intoxication'.⁶¹ Proverbs 9:2-5 (LXX) speaks of the mixing bowl of wisdom and her invitation to drink, which is, according to Lewy, the oldest passage of apologetic discourse, part of the propaganda of Jewish Sophia facing Hellenistic wisdom-religion. The invitation to the mixing bowl is meant to offset the invitation to the mixing bowl of mystical Greek religions.⁶² The Dionysian influence is underpinned by an understanding of the role of the Spirit in Judaic prophecy. The prophetic influence survives within the Philonic use of the phrase. Wolfson isolates four basic functions of prophecy which underpin Philo's conceptions:⁶³ Prophecy as the power to predict the future; as the power to know what rites are to be performed and what prayers are to be offered in order to propitiate God and to avert some evil which God has inflicted upon people; as the power to receive from God certain communications by which men were to be guided in their life; and as the power to know things

⁵⁸ Wolfson, 1947, p49f. 'The term used to describe the drunken frolic is 'βεβακχευται' lit. 'Possessed with a Bacchic frenzy' from the festivals of Bacchus or Dionysius, at which frenzy was brought on voluntarily by the drinking of wine'. For Philo's description of the drunken frolics of the heathen cults see *Cher.29.92* (Yonge, 1993).

⁵⁹ Filoramo, s.v 'Gnosticism', EEC p353.

⁶⁰ Daniélou, 1944, p291; See also Lewy, 1929, p73-103.

⁶¹ Daniélou, 1944, p291ff cites Proverbs 10:2-5, but the text referred to is Proverbs 9:2-5.

⁶² Lewy, 1929, p15n3; Lewy gives the Greek and Hebrew equivalents.

⁶³ Wolfson, 1947, vol II p10-12.

which cannot be perceived by the senses. These four elements are mirrored by Plato's four kinds of inspiration which he calls frenzy,⁶⁴ and within Philo they are all covered by his notion of 'prophecy'.⁶⁵ For Philo prophecy is from God, and given by divine grace,⁶⁶ to reveal divine mysteries and communications. Daniélou concludes that, for Philo, νηφάλιος μέθη (*nephalios methe*) denotes true wisdom as opposed to pagan wisdom (the Dionysian mysteries), with μέθη (drunkenness) indicating union with God, and νηφάλιος (sobriety) indicating the spiritual nature of the mystical state.⁶⁷

Platonic influence can also be seen in Plotinus who was influential in popularising Plato's theories. Plotinus also uses the phrase 'intoxication' when he speaks of the soul completing her union with the 'One'. He asserts that the soul, in attaining the revelation of the presence of the divine of which there is nothing higher, becomes one and is 'happy': 'a soul become again what she was in the time of her early joy',⁶⁸ and dismisses 'even the act of Intellect she once so intimately loved'.⁶⁹ This Plotinus illustrates by a man entering a house, who on meeting the master becomes so absorbed in the master that the house, as a consequence, is ignored. Thus, when the soul sees the divine, there is the first grasping of the intellectual content of the vision, but secondly, an advancing and receiving of the divine, of union with the 'One'.

The first seeing is that of Intellect knowing, the second that of Intellect loving; stripped of its wisdom in the intoxication of the nectar, it comes to love; by this excess it is made simple and is happy; and to be drunken is better for it than to be too staid for these revels.⁷⁰

This state is more elevated than that of contemplation, and is reached when the human intellect attains the vision of the source of the intelligible, the one-good, and, carried away by loving

⁶⁴ Wolfson, 1947, vol II p14; Plato, *Phaedrus*, 244 B, 244 D-E, 245 A, 249 Dff.

⁶⁵ Wolfson, 1947, vol II p60.

⁶⁶ Wolfson, 1947, vol II p61.

⁶⁷ Daniélou, 1944, p291.

⁶⁸ Plotinus, *Enneads VI.7.34*.

⁶⁹ Plotinus, *Enneads VI.7.35*.

⁷⁰ Plotinus, *Enneads VI.7.35*.

impulse, aspires to mingle with it, and ceases from all intellectual activity.⁷¹ The Plotinian use of the soul being stripped of wisdom in the ‘intoxication of the nectar’, which occurs in the soul attaining her vision of the One, is utilising a phrase taken from Plato’s *Symposium*.⁷² Plato uses the phrase ‘intoxicated by nectar’ within Socrates’ *Discourse on Love*, which tells how Love was created by the union between Resource and Poverty, after Resource had become ‘intoxicated with nectar’, (there not yet being any wine). The resultant Love was characterised by being, poor, shoeless, homeless, sleeping outdoors, scheming for all that is beautiful and good, brave, impetuous, highly strung, desirous and competent of wisdom, a master of jugglery, witchcraft and artful speech, neither resourceless or wealthy, standing midway between wisdom and ignorance.⁷³ Plato later describes how love is subjected to the process of intellectual purification, becoming love that is intensified and deepened as the soul plunges into ‘the wide ocean of intellectual beauty’.⁷⁴

Plotinus sees release from infatuation with works and materialism as an integral part of the first step in the soul’s turning back towards the One,⁷⁵ and ultimate union with the One. His asceticism and ethics includes ‘a removal of all that might separate us from the One’,⁷⁶ and ‘a waiting in silence’,⁷⁷ together with the possibility of communicating the vision of the One.⁷⁸ Therefore, the union with the One, that Plotinus speaks of, and describes using the term ‘intoxication’, is a state of totally diminished noetic activity.⁷⁹ It is realised through an

⁷¹ Lilla, s.v. *Neoplatonism.II.Plotinus*, EEC p586f; Gerson, 1996, p65 fn27. There is a debate concerning the condition of the identity of the One and the soul in Plotinus. Armstrong, 1979, asserts that the self does not lose its identity in the ultimate union, and that all its lower powers and activities remain in being, ready for use when required. See Bussanich, 1988, for the contra position.

⁷² Plato, *Symposium*, 2035b.

⁷³ Plato, *Symposium*, 203c.d.e.

⁷⁴ Louth, 1981, p19; Plato, *Symposium* 210d.

⁷⁵ O’Meara, 1993, p103f. The stages being (1) The return to one’s true self as soul; (2) attaining the life of divine intellect; (3) union with the One. See also Lilla, s.v. *Neoplatonism.II.Plotinus*, EEC p587.

⁷⁶ Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI.9.7.

⁷⁷ Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI.7.34.

⁷⁸ Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI.9.7.17-28; O’Meara, 1993, p109.

⁷⁹ Plotinus, *Enneads* VI.7.35.

encounter with the vision of the One, that is the culmination of a life of ascetic activity and purification.

When applied to intellect's eternal self-transcendence in vision of a union with the One [intoxication] is powerful and paradoxical. Intellect must be eternally out of its mind with drink or love to be the Divine Mind.⁸⁰

The difference between the Platonic / Plotinic understanding of sober intoxication and the Philonic understanding would seem to be the degree of permanence in the presence of the Deity, not only the different source-identification of the Deity. Philo interprets sober intoxication as a transient state, given primarily for the sake of prophecy and revelation of the divine mysteries that are revealed through the mystical union with the divine. Plotinus is more concerned with the divine union, via a process of purification, which involves the way of the negatives, that is, the ceasing of all knowledge. Crudely put, Philo thinks one receives true wisdom of God, for a time, whereas Plotinus seeks after permanent union with the One for all time, aspiring to a new state of being rather than a specific revelation. It is Philo's use that has most influence on the Christian Fathers, along with his biblical presuppositions and allowances.

Prior to Ps-Macarius and Gregory of Nyssa, the use of the term 'intoxication' within Christianity had mainly been in a condemnatory manner, and the dangers and injustices of intoxication enumerated.⁸¹ The limited occurrences of *methe* to denote spiritual intoxication were predominantly used within a sacramental context. For example Origen⁸² speaks of the sacramental image together with the concept of Christ as the true vine, and in doing so draws again from Philo.⁸³ More contemporary with Ps-Macarius, John Chrysostom talks about: 'that which is called intoxication', in the context of taking the sacramental cup.⁸⁴ Ephrem does

⁸⁰ Plotinus, *Ennead VI.7* (tr) Armstrong, 1966, p197fn3.

⁸¹ Eg. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus.2.2*; Eusebius, *Historica Ecclesiastica.I.2.21*; John Chrysostom, *Hom 29.1 in Gen* (Bareille); See Lampe, 'μέθη' 1961, p838.

⁸² Origen, *John.I.30*.

⁸³ Seiben, s.v *Ivresse Spirituelle*, DSp 7:2313-2322.

⁸⁴ John Chrysostom, *The Resurrection of Christ.2*, Migne, 50.433.

speaking of wine, but never intoxication. However he compares two types of wine: that which provoked Noah to excess, and the wine from the cross of Christ, which returns virtue.⁸⁵ The other Syrian writer to mention sober intoxication is Martyrios (Sahdona) c615.⁸⁶ Dionysius the Areopagite primarily speaks of intoxication in terms of a characteristic of God, but in doing so reveals something of the underlying force beneath the term as used by Ps-Macarius. Dionysius, a contemporary of Proclus, is held to have written his corpus c482-500A.D.⁸⁷ This places him approximately a century after Ps-Macarius and, like him, Dionysius is held to be of Syrian extraction with both Christian and Neoplatonic influences.⁸⁸ In his discourse on *Divine Names* Dionysius refers to God as being 'inebriated' (μεθειν).

Taking holy delight according to this same sacred explication, one says of God the cause of all good, that he is 'inebriated' and this is to convey the quite total and indescribable limitlessness of God's well-being. In our terminology, inebriation has the pejorative meaning of immoderate fullness, being out of one's mind and wits. It has a better meaning when applied to God, and this inebriation must be understood as nothing other than the measureless superabundance of good things which are in him as Cause.⁸⁹

This measureless superabundance of good things conveys in part the force behind Ps-Macarius' sense of intoxication with good, and the sheer abundance of God that he seeks to convey. The Ps-Dionysian idea of inebriation/ecstasy⁹⁰ as applied to God, signifies divine transcendence, and the procession downward in a loving and creative excess of goodness. Ps-Dionysius also speaks of ecstasy in relation to humans who rightly interpret the divine manifestations,⁹¹ and he utilises both the terms 'intoxication' and 'ecstasy' in his description of God and the ultimate spiritual state of the Christian.

Another Syrian author to use the term 'intoxication', (although not 'sober

⁸⁵ Sieben, DSp 7:2320; Ephrem, *De nativitate*, ed. Beck, 1959, p31.

⁸⁶ Seiben, DSp 7:2320.

⁸⁷ Lilla, s.v *Dionysius the Areopagite*, EEC p238f citing Stiglmayr.

⁸⁸ Louth, 1989, p10-14; Luibheid and Rorem (edd), 1987.

⁸⁹ Dionysius, *Letters 9.5 /*; Migne, 1112C; Luibheid & Rorem (edd), 1987, p287; Heil and Ritter (edd), 1991, p204f (1112C).

⁹⁰ Rendered 'ecstasy' by Luibheid and Rorem, 1987, p130fn 266.

⁹¹ Dionysius, *Divine Names*, 4 712A, 7 865D; Luibheid and Rorem, 1987, p130 fn266.

intoxication'), is Isaac of Nineveh. This seventh century author, who was familiar with the writings of Ps-Dionysius,⁹² speaks of intoxication as partaking of faith in God,⁹³ reached through meditation,⁹⁴ and tears,⁹⁵ which draws on the natural longing of the soul towards God,⁹⁶ and which results in a lack of perception of the troubles of the world.⁹⁷ Isaac has echoes of Ps-Macarius when he describes the whole soul being taken up by the 'wings of faith' above the circle of the visible world, to be constantly in a state of ecstatic thought about God, as if drunk, through the activity of prayer.⁹⁸ Yet Isaac also refers to the Messalians in a dismissive manner, deriding their assertion that 'they can pray spiritually whenever they like' as audacious.⁹⁹ He speaks against those with 'Messalian opinions who say that outward forms of worship are unnecessary'.¹⁰⁰ Prayer, for Isaac, requires reverential bodily posture, (for the benefit of the one praying rather than God), and is necessary because of the might of the adversary that the ones praying have to encounter.¹⁰¹ Intoxication is predominantly to be experienced through the liturgy, and as a result of disciplined, repentant prayer.¹⁰²

There has been much debate concerning the relationship between Gregory Nyssa and Ps-Macarius, and this relationship is evident in both Gregory's and Ps-Macarius' use of the

⁹² Wensinck, 1969, translated from Bedjan's Syrian text. p.liii; See also tr. Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1984. References to Bedjan are given below after Wensinck's translation.

⁹³ Wensinck, 1969, II p2. *Six treatises on the behaviour of excellence*. Bedjan, 1909, p3.

⁹⁴ Wensinck, 1969, XXXV p174, *A treatise in questions and answers*. Bedjan, 1909, p259.

⁹⁵ Wensinck, 1969, LXXIX p364, *How the hidden impulses vary along*. Bedjan, 1909, p543.

⁹⁶ Wensinck, 1969, LXXIV p344, *On the discrimination of virtues*. Bedjan, 1909, p511.

⁹⁷ Wensinck, 1969, XLVI p223, *Other considerations*. Bedjan, 1909, p334.

⁹⁸ Wensinck, 1969, LI p253, *On the three degrees*. Bedjan, 1909, p377; Wensinck, 1969, XXII p116, *On experiences during prayer*. Bedjan, 1909, p174; Isaac, *Hom 74* tr. Holy Transfiguration Monastery 1984, p363; See below 'Wings of the Spirit' p200.

⁹⁹ Wensinck, 1969, XXII p110f *On various experiences during prayer*. Bedjan, 1909, p171.

¹⁰⁰ Isaac of Nineveh, *The Second Part*, XIV.22 tr, Brock, 1995; A distinction should be drawn between those whom Isaac terms Messalians, and the historical Messalians of the Macarian period. The term 'Messalian' quickly became a derogatory term used to denote unconventional practices.

¹⁰¹ Isaac of Nineveh, *The Second Part* ch XIV.13, tr. Brock, 1995.

¹⁰² Isaac of Nineveh, *Hom 74.*, tr. Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1984, p363.

terms 'intoxication' and 'sober intoxication'. Daniélou sees Gregory as the founder of Christian mysticism and so gives him the priority,¹⁰³ and certainly in comparison to the other authors we have examined, Gregory reveals an additional level of interpretation of 'sober intoxication' not previously mentioned. Gregory uses 'intoxication' in conjunction with the mystic state of those inebriated by divine wisdom,¹⁰⁴ and refers to 'sober intoxication' in both a sacramental and mystical setting,¹⁰⁵ specifically in connection with Prov 9:3, Song of Songs 5:1-2, and Psalm 22:5.¹⁰⁶ Within Gregory's use of 'intoxication' there is a great deal of Neoplatonic influence, but it is creatively expounded in a newly emergent Christian theology.¹⁰⁷ The Platonic influences within Gregory Nyssa are well attested, and Lilla can state

Nearly every sentence he wrote is a reworking of motifs taken either from Plato or later Platonic tradition and expressed in their characteristic terms.¹⁰⁸

However, Gregory does not fully assimilate Platonism into his mystical theology. Louth remarks that for Gregory the gulf between uncreated and created is such that there is no possibility of the soul passing across it. That is, there is no ecstasy, in which the soul leaves its nature as created and passes into the uncreated,¹⁰⁹ such as found in the form of Platonic and Neoplatonic thought in which ecstasy is a permanent union with the divine. Gregorian mysticism discounts the possibility of such a union because of the 'unbridgeable gulf'¹¹⁰ between the created and uncreated. Instead Gregory relies upon the Incarnation, and the revelation of God to man by God, for the means of communion. The quest for the knowledge of God, that was revealed and instigated by the Incarnation, involves a constant searching and

¹⁰³ Daniélou, 1944, p292; See also Daniélou, 1995, p34.

¹⁰⁴ Lampe, 1961, p838; Greg. Nyssa, *Comm. On the Song V*.

¹⁰⁵ Greg. Nyssa, *Comm. on the Song XII*.

¹⁰⁶ Daniélou, 1995, p33-46.

¹⁰⁷ Gronau, 1908; Heine, 1975; Daniélou, s.v. '*Mystique de la Ténébre chez Grégoire de Nyssa*', DSp 2ii, p1872-1835.

¹⁰⁸ Lilla, s.v. *Neoplatonism*, EEC p692. However, he also notes that Gregory clearly rejects the doctrine of metempsychosis (the fall of the souls from heaven); See also Cherniss, *Classical Philology*, xvi p1-92, esp p58-64; Balas, 1958, p152-157; Balas, 1966.

¹⁰⁹ Louth, 1981, p81.

¹¹⁰ Greg Nys, *In Hex liber*, PG 44.72A-77B; Louth, 1981, p81. Based on the concept of creation *ex nihilo*; See also Callahan, 1993.

reaching out by the believer. Gregory draws from Philippians 3:13 in the quest for perfection, and Daniélou terms this doctrine '*epektasis*',¹¹¹ (from *ἐπεκτείνω* : to reach out towards).

In this way, its present state of perfection, no matter how great and perfect it might be, is merely the beginning of a greater and superior stage. Thus the words of the Apostle are verified: The stretching forth to the things that are before involves the forgetting of what has already been attained. For at each stage the greater and superior good holds the attention of those who enjoy it and does not allow them to look at the past; their enjoyment of the superior perfection erases all memory of that which was inferior.¹¹²

Thus, in Gregory, the soul continually reaches out for God, but is never satisfied, never receiving the ultimate union of ecstasy, 'rather there is simply a deeper and deeper penetration into darkness'.¹¹³ In this longing and penetration into the darkness of the unknowability of God, the soul will always be inspired by its experience of God to long for more.¹¹⁴ Gregory distinguishes three progressive degrees of knowledge of God,¹¹⁵ a) in light, b) in cloud, c) in darkness. The progression is thus that of the removal of the darkness of error by the light of truth, until beyond the cloud, in the stage of darkness, the intellect recognises its capacity to see God-Love; (as revealed in the Incarnation); it goes out of itself (*epektasis*); and man is raised to God on the 'wings of love'.¹¹⁶ Thus the insatiability of the soul for the knowledge of God is tempered by experiences of the ecstatic nature of love, revealed as endless desire, (as opposed to ecstatic union with God). That is, the love which seeks to draw the soul out of itself to union with God as He is in Himself.¹¹⁷ Louth defines ecstasy in Gregory as 'the intense experience of longing, desire, and of love of which *epektasis* (following after God) is the fruit. The fullness of divine existence, which is the darkness, draws close to the soul by slow stages,

¹¹¹ Daniélou, 1944, p309-326 esp 314-316; cf Phil 3:13.; Liddel & Scott, 1940, p520; Lampe, 1961, p513; Greg Nyssa, *Comm on the Song*, XLVI 245c, XLIV 784d-785c. *Life of Moses*, XLIV 401a-b; See also Heine, 1975.

¹¹² Greg Nyssa, *Comm on the Song* XVI, tr. Musurillo, 1995, p196.

¹¹³ Louth, 1981, p88; Greg Nyssa, *Comm. on the Song* XII:1037 tr. McCambley, 1987, p224.

¹¹⁴ Heine, 1975, p78; Louth, 1981, p90.

¹¹⁵ Greg. Nyssa, *Comm on the Song* XI: 1000-1. (Moses' vision of God cf Exod 20:21, See Musurillo (tr.), 1961, p246-250 and *Life of Moses*, II. 22, 24).

¹¹⁶ Spidlik, s.v. 'Ecstasy', in EEC p262; *Comm on the Song* XII 1037 tr McCambley, 1987, p213-225.

¹¹⁷ Louth, 1981, p96.

which Gregory terms 'drops of night'.¹¹⁸ Sober intoxication is a Gregorian oxymoron¹¹⁹ used to describe the soul's experience of God while longing for more of Him. Gregory thus combines an awareness of the Platonic tradition of intoxication as union with the divine, with the concept of the 'unknowability' of God maintaining the biblical gap between created and uncreated. As such he formulates an original element within the Christian mystical tradition: one that rejects the Platonic doctrine of ultimate union,¹²⁰ and introduces a new interpretation into the phrase, overlaying, but not necessarily discounting, previous interpretations. However, for Gregory, faith is the only way by which the soul can be united to the transcendent.¹²¹

The main occurrences of 'sober intoxication' within Gregory occur in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, a collection of 15 homilies written c390. Together with the 'Life of Moses' written around the same time, they reveal something of Gregory's later theology. Daniélou and Lewy have isolated and commented upon the relevant passages. The first passage, in Homily V.2.13¹²² speaks of sober drunkenness in connection with the cup of wisdom.

'The vine, whose wine gladdens the heart of man, will one day fill the cup of wisdom and will be offered to the guests by a call from on high to mix the wine for a good and sober drunkenness, this drunkenness which produces the ecstasy of earthly things into divine things.'¹²³

Here once again is the connection of the Philonic theme of sober drunkenness, together with the banquet of wisdom, the cup and the call. In the second occurrence in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Homily X.5.1¹²⁴ Gregory draws from a sacramental context of the eucharistic wine, which is similar to that of Origen. Gregory regards sober intoxication as occurring within the bounds of this present life, whilst for Origen it is more of a communication

¹¹⁸ Greg Nyssa, *Comm on the Song V.2* tr. McCambley, 1987, p109-124.

¹¹⁹ Daniélou, 1995, cites 'watchful sleep' as another example, p295.

¹²⁰ Daniélou, 1995, p36.

¹²¹ Daniélou, 1995, p36.

¹²² PG 44:873d.

¹²³ tr. Musurillo, 1961, p292; McCambley, 1987, p118.

¹²⁴ PG 44:990b.

that will take place fully in eternity.¹²⁵ Gregory shows how David, Paul and Peter experienced sober intoxication, and how through this intoxication the soul's divine ecstasy comes about.

All intoxication causes the mind, overwhelmed with wine, to go into an ecstasy. Hence what is urged in our text [Song of Songs 5:1] is actually realised in the Gospel through the divine food and drink..... Thus do they become inebriated, as the prophet tells us, with the plenty of God's house, they who drink of the torrent of His pleasure (Ps 35:9).¹²⁶

In addition, Lewy also isolates an occurrence in Gregory's Oratio '*On the Ascension*' (PG 46.692) in which the role of the psalmist in keeping the feasts is praised, (particular mention is made of Psalm 22.5 and 103.15 for their drinking imagery). As Daniélou notes the notion of 'sober intoxication' shows Gregory's clear dependence upon Philo, and emphasises the passivity of true ecstasy as compared with the effects of actual intoxication. He remarks that it is called 'sober' to suggest that the state is not infra-rational but rather supra-rational.¹²⁷

The position of Gregory within the development of the metaphor of 'intoxication', in the inspiration he drew from Philo and Plato, brings the use of 'intoxication' in Ps-Macarius into focus. Ps-Macarius is not utilising a phrase without background, but is taking on a metaphor heavy with development and heritage. The way that Ps-Macarius uses the phrase in comparison to Gregory will reveal something of the relationship between the Gregorian and Macarian corpus, as well as assisting us in locating Ps-Macarius within his cultural milieu. The contexts of the occurrences of 'intoxication' and 'sober intoxication' within Ps-Macarius¹²⁸ are generally of a mystical genre, with only one clearly sacramental element, and this is found in direct connection with sober intoxication.¹²⁹ Whilst there is only this solitary mention of 'sober intoxication' within the homilies, the more profuse occurrences of 'intoxication' show the clear underlying influence behind the phrase.¹³⁰ These occurrences

¹²⁵ Daniélou, 1944, p293.

¹²⁶ Greg Nyssa, *Comm on the Song 5:1,2*, Musurillo, 1995, p239.

¹²⁷ Daniélou, 1995, p36.

¹²⁸ See above p168.

¹²⁹ I.63.6.

¹³⁰ See above p180f. Gregory uses the phrase generally in connection with Prov 9.3, Song of Songs 5.2 Ps 22.5. See Gregory Nys. *Comm on the Song 5.1*, See also Daniélou, 1995, p33.

occur generally in a revelatory context, in that the visions spoken of can be received in the intoxicated state. They are also 'progressive' or dynamic in character, as the major context is of the progression of the Christian, the role of free will in the life of a believer, and the journey towards the ultimate union with the Divine. Intoxication, for Ps-Macarius is a transient experience, and it is not expected that permanent intoxication is available in the present time. Indeed Ps-Macarius casts doubt upon the desirability of such an event.¹³¹

If such a man were constantly experiencing those marvellous things and they were always experientially present to him, he would not be able to preach the word or take on any work...he would only sit in a corner lifted up and intoxicated. As a result the perfect degree of grace is not given him so that he may be concerned with the care of his brethren and in ministering the word. (II.8.4).

This teaching emphasises the need for community duties and an awareness of the result of the neglect of such duties. Intoxication is an event experienced by the individual, but which causes the community to grow and develop, in that the teaching of the leaders of the community stems from the individual visions received while the one who will teach is in an ecstatic state. Ps-Macarius stresses the need for the one teaching to have personal experience of that which he is teaching. This prioritisation of experience gives an insight into the leadership structure of the Macarian communities:

Those who are in a teaching position must be those who have experienced more than those who are being taught. It is one thing to lecture with a certain intellectual knowledge and ideas, and another thing in substance and reality, in full faith and in the inner man and in the consciousness to have the treasure and the grace and the taste and the working of the Holy Spirit.¹³²

Experience then becomes a qualifying issue for Ps-Macarius. The more a community member has experienced, the more they will be able to teach. The longer a member has spent in an ecstatic state, the more honour he is to be given by other members of that community.

In the course of Homily 8 Ps-Macarius reaffirms his position within the community. In II.8.6 the question is asked, 'what stage of spiritual development he himself has reached'.

¹³¹ II.8.4.

¹³² II. 27:12.

This may be a rhetorical device to affirm his community standing, or it may be a legitimate question from a disciple. Either way, Ps-Macarius uses the opportunity to affirm his spiritual experience, his position within the community, and his qualification to teach. If, as has been suggested by Dörries,¹³³ Ps-Macarius was attempting to 'modernise' the Messalian movement from within, then frequent repetition of his spiritual experience and thus authority would have been necessary. If however, Ps-Macarius was speaking to both dedicated ascetics and those more sceptical, then the emphasis upon personal experience and the repetition of his position of authority whilst drawing from that experience is all the more understandable.

From Homily 8 it can be seen that intoxication with the Spirit is caused by the workings of grace upon the heart of the believer. The believer has the free will to co-operate with this working, but also has the opportunity to turn away from it.¹³⁴ Coupled to the operation of the Spirit in grace upon the heart is the recognition that God, for his own purposes and reasons, may withdraw to a measure the 'burning of the lamp of grace'¹³⁵ that the soul may progress further in terms of citizenship of the heavenly kingdom, only later to 'specially trim the lamp' to kindle up the soul with intoxication.¹³⁶ Although Ps-Macarius refers to being intoxicated with the spirit, or with the Godhead, he also uses the terminology of being intoxicated with 'good' and 'joyfulness'. 'Goodness' in this instance, signifying the sheer abundance of God. This is to be contrasted with that of 'badness' or 'evil' intoxication, which he speaks of in I.6.4. There is, therefore, the possibility of being intoxicated with badness, the source of which is evil, rather than with grace, and it is this potential that causes free will to be of such vital importance, and which necessitates the volatile state of Christians in their spiritual progression. Macarian soteriology, as well as being pneumatologically based, is in the first instance a soteriology of progression, and this is illustrated by the transient nature

¹³³ See Dörries, 1978.

¹³⁴ I.45.3.

¹³⁵ II.8.2.

¹³⁶ I.52.2.

of the intoxicated state. Ps-Macarius recognises that being intoxicated with God is an individual state, a precondition of which is a desire of the believer to progress in his journey toward the Godhead. Homily II.8 speaks of the twelve steps of progression to perfection that the believer has to travel.

So it is with the lamp of grace. It is always burning and giving off light, but when it is especially trimmed, it burns more brilliantly as though intoxicated by the love of God... In a manner of speaking, there are twelve steps a person has to pass to reach perfection. At times one may have reached the stage of perfection. But again grace may recede somewhat and he descends to the next lower level, now standing on the eleventh step.¹³⁷

From Homily 8 it can be seen that reaching a visionary experience, becoming intoxicated with the spirit, is the highest level (step 12) that can be attained. The 'perfect degree of grace' is the experience of communion with God, which Ps-Macarius can only describe as a state of 'intoxication',¹³⁸ and which Gregory understands as participation (*μετουσία / metousia*) in the Godhead.¹³⁹ This union, which in paradise will be a permanent state, shows clear Neoplatonic influence, but the reception of visions and revelations whilst in the transient intoxicated state also shows similarities to the understanding of prophecy as found in Philo. Overall, Ps-Macarius follows Gregory in a Christian reinterpretation of the general Hellenistic doctrine of union with the Godhead. Ps-Macarius' understanding of 'perfection' is not a permanent state with the deity and he, like Gregory, rejects the Platonic sense of ultimate union, emphasising instead the transient state of earthly perfection, and the requirement of discipline on the part of a disciple in receiving that condition.

In both Ps-Macarius and Gregory there are areas of agreement over the role of intoxication, and the achievement of ecstasy. Both stress the stages of the journey to ultimate union with the divinity. Gregory expands in detail the three stages of progression (light, cloud and darkness), whereas Ps-Macarius is considerably more vague, even obtuse, concerning the

¹³⁷ II.8.2.

¹³⁸ II.8.4.

¹³⁹ See Balas, 1966, chap. 2.

twelve steps through which a person has to pass in order to reach perfection. However, 'sober intoxication' is the metaphor both use to describe the ecstasy of divine union which is achieved at the highest stage. Both Gregory and Ps-Macarius stress the transient nature of 'sober intoxication' in that the union with the divine is not considered a permanent state. Ps-Macarius in particular stresses the free-will of man to turn away from the pursuit of God, and become intoxicated by bad / evil, a concept and phrase not found in Gregory. In this both draw more from Philo than from Plato, particularly in terms of the reception of visions and knowledge which the transient intoxication enables, though both betray a clear debt to Neoplatonism.

Participation (*metousia*) in Ps-Macarius means essentially a participation in the Holy Spirit, which will lead to participation in eternal life, though the fullness of grace.¹⁴⁰ The advance of spiritual perfection is dependent in part upon the thirst for grace that is evident within the heart of the believer. This mirrors the doctrine of *epektasis* that Daniélou isolates within Gregory Nyssa. In Homily I.51/II.10 Ps-Macarius states

Such souls, which have the love of the Lord ardently and insatiably, are meet for eternal life; for which reason deliverance from the passions is vouchsafed to them, and they obtain perfectly the shining forth and participation of the unspeakable and mystic fellowship of the Holy Ghost, in the fullness of grace.

Thus within both Gregory and Ps-Macarius there is the requirement for an ongoing search for spiritual fulfilment, as found in grace, and personified by faith. Participation in Gregory¹⁴¹ as in Ps-Macarius is characterised by change. Participation is continuous growth, with the possibility of falling back, that is drawn on by the divine and enabled by grace. Ps-Macarius in particular focuses upon the role of the Holy Spirit, and on observance of the commandments, in the progressive participation of the Christian.¹⁴² He speaks of the reaching out (*ἐπεκτεινομενος*) of the mind of the believer towards God in I.31.6 (mirrored in II.29.7), countenances against complacency, and instructs his audience to keep in mind the 'perfect goal

¹⁴⁰ References include, Coll I.18.3; 36.3 (II.37.7); 41; 43. 48 (II.5.1-12); col III 26.1; 27.4,7.

¹⁴¹ Balas, 1958, p155; 1966, chap 2; Harrison, 1992, p30-34, esp p96 contra Balas.

¹⁴² III.27.7.

of liberty and freedom from the passions’.

Within Gregory the impetus behind the journey towards divine union comes from the understanding of the incarnation as the revelation of the knowledge of God, and the instigation of the search for the divine. For Ps-Macarius the crucifixion is the place of the outpouring of the Spirit and of the enabling of the journey towards the divine and the pulling down of the evil that is within the heart of man. He sets within this concept the idea of the soul as the dwelling place of both grace and sin, and argues that it is in proportion to the discipline of life together with the reception of grace, that determines whether mankind will progress on the journey through the twelve levels. Within both Gregory and Ps-Macarius intoxication is a metaphor for divine experience of ecstasy, and is a forerunner of the union with the divine that will occur in paradise. Ps-Macarius lacks the philosophical style of Gregory, and appears to be less influenced by Neoplatonism than his counterpart, however, this may be due to the extant sources and nature of the individual corpus under consideration. Gregory and Ps-Macarius differ in the emphasis they give to the source of the instigation of the spiritual outpouring upon the individual that enables the divine journey to begin. However, both stress the necessity of the experiential reality within the sacramental aspect of the spiritual journey. Gregory regards the ecstasy of partaking of the eucharistic wine as a foretaste of the eternal ecstasy of paradise.

As Lewy puts it:-

With the receiving of the Holy Sacrament, begins according to Gregory, eternal life, whose full blessing may only be expected in eternity but whose taste of the eucharistic elements is for here and now, and in the instant of the ecstasy of communion, is a foretaste.¹⁴³

This is echoed in Ps-Macarian thought by the assertion that the sacraments enable the Spirit to work upon the heart,¹⁴⁴ and that the Spirit is necessary for true worship.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the sacraments (sometimes referred to by Ps-Macarius simply as the ‘mysteries of the Church’),

¹⁴³ Lewy, 1929, p136; cf Daniélou, 1944, p294.

¹⁴⁴ I.52.2-3; Stewart, 1991, p219, Desprez, 1970².

¹⁴⁵ See also Desprez, EO 5, p121-155.

enable the Holy Spirit to illuminate the inner man.¹⁴⁶ This illumination is unavailable to those who only wear the surface apparel of Christianity.¹⁴⁷ Thus, sober intoxication is not only a metaphor for the experience of ecstasy found within Ps-Macarius and Gregory Nyssa, it is also a metaphor for the progressive salvation of which ecstasy and divine union is the ultimate aim.

Individual ecstasy is not the only intoxication that Ps-Macarius is concerned with, and for this to be properly understood, the communal aspect of Ps-Macarius' homilies needs to be borne in mind. Ps-Macarius is not writing purely for individuals, rather his audience was composed of members of his communities, and interested parties. The question and answer format of some of the homilies suggest a discipling pedagogic forum.¹⁴⁸ Certainly within the bounds of the 'intoxication' references, Ps-Macarius is speaking to committed ascetics, and to those desiring to know more about spiritual progression. Whilst individual intoxication is deemed to bring an individual closer to the Godhead, and into the level of perfect grace, communal intoxication is a foretaste of the paradisiacal communal communion which will finally be encountered. Communal intoxication relies upon individual allegiance to the working of grace within the heart within all those that make up the community. The community identity is then strengthened by an awareness of the future paradisiacal position of that community. Macarian communities were based upon a principle of the common good. Homily II.3 gives guidelines for communal living, stressing the need for sincerity, mutual love, peace, and charity toward others, and emphasises that the fundamental intention of the community is to 'live on earth as in heaven', stating that

as the angels in heaven live together in accord with each other in the greatest unanimity, in peace and love, and there is no pride or envy there, but they communicate in mutual love and sincerity, so in the same way the brethren should be among themselves.¹⁴⁹

Such an allegiance to the common good is also echoed in the common benefit that Ps-

¹⁴⁶ Desprez, EO 5, p125-130, esp. fn 44.

¹⁴⁷ For Ps-Macarius' attitude to the ecclesiastical hierarchy see Desprez, EO 5, p127.

¹⁴⁸ See chap. 2 'Rhetoric' p104f; I:2,4,5,6,7,18,32, II:7,12,15,26,27, III:12.

¹⁴⁹ II.3.1.

Macarius says individual prayer gives to the community:

He who reads should regard the one praying with love and joy with the thought 'For me he is praying'. And let him who prays consider that what the one working is doing, is done for the common good.¹⁵⁰

Ps-Macarius makes mention of the Gregorian theme of the overflowing cup as the source of intoxication. This intoxication is caused by the Spirit¹⁵¹ and benefits the community through the revelation of mysteries and visions that are manifested whilst in the intoxicated state, and which may be passed on during the 'preaching of the word'.¹⁵² In Homily I.63 Ps-Macarius draws together the themes of the overflowing cup, the reception of visions, the Eucharist, and sober intoxication.

Therefore this healer and bridegroom stands before [us] calling out and speaking to all those who desire to receive heavenly life in their soul; 'You shall take of eyes that see my glory, you shall take of ears that hear my speaking, for you shall take of my living water that which is for you a source springing up into everlasting life, for you take the heavenly bread from me, from which [you shall be] nourished and not die, drink out of my spiritual wine and you shall rejoice with heavenly rejoicing, drunk with a sober and spiritual intoxication, so that just as wine talks in those who are bodily drunk, just so you also, being drunk spiritually, you shall talk in the Spirit the exegesis of heavenly mysteries, for as it is written, 'your chalice has made me drunk as though the best'.

The use of the analogy of the overflowing cup bears similarities to the banquet of wisdom found in both Philo and Gregory. For Ps-Macarius the transfiguration of the body is a communal goal, and communal living assists in the advance towards it, by instilling the angelic virtues as mentioned above into each individual. Ps-Macarius asserts that one who has experienced the 'intoxicated state' is still capable of turning to evil, and is open to pride and arrogance.¹⁵³ For Ps-Macarius the community is not only a means of acquiring humility and angelic characteristics, it is also an image of the human heart.¹⁵⁴

II.15.32 speaks of the outward appearance of those within the community conforming to the image of Adam, whilst the inward countenance reveals those who:

¹⁵⁰ II.3.2.

¹⁵¹ I.63.4.6.

¹⁵² II.8.3.

¹⁵³ I.33.2 (II.15.36f).

¹⁵⁴ I.15.32.

have fellowship with Christ and his angels, while others have it with Satan and the demons, while all the time all of us appear here as one.

The paradox of Ps-Macarius is that the individual is unable to progress without the community, but it is only as an individually graced and elected member of the community that anyone can progress to the uppermost step. Ps-Macarius sees the instigation of the journey towards the Godhead, and the resultant experience of intoxication, as taking place at the cross, whereby the Spirit previously only given sporadically, became permanently available.

Ps-Macarius' understanding and use of the intoxication theme is a further indication of the unique use of language characteristic of the Macarian Corpus.¹⁵⁵ This non-sacramental connotation largely does not figure in Hellenic Christian literature before c350 A.D. except within Gregory of Nyssa.¹⁵⁶ The synthesis of philosophical structures and ideas that occurred during the 4th century included the appropriation of Neoplatonism into an emergent Christian philosophical language. Gregory Nyssa is, perhaps, the best example of this. Ps-Macarius was also affected by similar influences to Gregory Nyssa, and given that the precise relationship between Gregory and Ps-Macarius has not been fully clarified, a two-way process should not be discounted.

For Ps-Macarius intoxication is the highest level of spiritual awareness, the level whereby the soul has achieved a union, albeit temporarily, with the Godhead, and is the subject of an abundance of grace. With this spiritual awareness comes a recognition of self-knowledge and of the discipline required to achieve the highest level. Such an ecstatic experience is an entry into sacred time, the crossing of the boundary of possibility that has been opened up through the cross and reception of baptism, and which is advanced through discipline and asceticism.

¹⁵⁵ See Stewart, 1991.

¹⁵⁶ Basil of Seleucia, (*Or.37.1*) c444 has a non-sacramental usage, but his works are largely held to be copies or revisions of earlier unattributed works.

Wings of the Spirit.

The second Macarian image to be examined also reveals some of the influences that came to bear upon Ps-Macarius. The flight of the soul into the air of the Godhead speaks of the journey of the soul, and of the heavenly assistance available through grace and the Holy Spirit that Ps-Macarius holds as so important. In using the phrase Ps-Macarius stresses the necessity of spiritual experience within the journey of the soul, and he uses the concept of flight to emphasise the potential of divine communication. In doing so Ps-Macarius instigates a new level of interpretation upon the concept of the 'Wings of the Spirit'.

For Christ was sacrificed and his blood, sprinkling us made us grow wings, for he has given to us wings of the Spirit that we may fly unencumbered into the air of the Godhead.¹⁵⁷

The concept of the soul flying on wings is found throughout early ascetic literature, and a study of the concept reveals the multi faceted background to the use of the phrase. Yet once again Ps-Macarius instills into the phrase a new understanding and personal interpretation. In the words of Desprez, '*Macarie utilise ce thème de manière originale*'.¹⁵⁸ The theme of πτερόω (*pteroō*) 'the provision of wings'¹⁵⁹ is found frequently amongst early Christian writers, and is commonly held to be of Platonic origin. Clement of Alexandria, Gregory Nazianzen, John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria all use the analogy of πτέρυξ (*pteryx*) to describe a spiritual ascent.¹⁶⁰ A connection with Plato could be established through the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. The *Phaedrus* speaks of the soul growing wings, watered by beauty, to enable souls to return to the condition in which they were before they fell to earth.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ II.47.2.

¹⁵⁸ Desprez (ed), 1980, p181.

¹⁵⁹ Liddell & Scott, 1940, p1304.

¹⁶⁰ Clement of Alexandria, *Prot.*10 *Str.*4.26 7.7; Greg. Naz, *Or* 37.11; John Chrysostom, *Hom.*43.5 in *Mt*; *Hom* 17.2 in *1Cor*. See Lampe, 1961, p1204.

¹⁶¹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 248A-E 'The soul's wings are broken by the jostling of the charioteer ...falling to earth...into one of many options...for each soul only returns to the place from which it has come after 10,000 years; for it does not become winged before then, except for that of a man who has united his love for his boy with philosophy; and these souls, with the third circuit of a thousand years, if they chose this life three times in succession, in that condition become

Plato defines the natural property of a wing as to carry what is heavy upwards, lifting it aloft to the region where the race of the gods resides.¹⁶² Thus the *Phaedrus* notes

...with the incoming stream of nourishment the quills of the feathers swell and set to growing from their roots under the whole form of the soul; for formerly the whole of it was winged. Meanwhile, then, all of it throbs and palpitates, and the experience is like that of cutting teeth, the itching and the aching that occur around the gums when the teeth are just coming through: such is the state of the soul of a man who is beginning to sprout wings.¹⁶³

...so the stream of beauty passes back into its possessor through his eyes, which is the natural route to the soul; arriving there and setting him all of a flutter, it waters the passage between the feathers and causes the wings to grow, and fills the soul of the loved one in his turn with love.¹⁶⁴

In the *Phaedrus* myth, divine love requires that man abandon physical desires and acts of love to experience a heavenly desire which will in turn deify him.¹⁶⁵ Thus the human soul, once equipped with wings, is free to fly into the realm of the true and eternal ideas. The reception of wings is dependent upon the soul finding healing through love, and discovering the recollection of beauty.¹⁶⁶ Plotinus does not specifically refer to the wings of the soul, but expands upon the Platonic idea of the soul receiving freedom and flight when he speaks of the ascending soul as participating in the corporeal. He views union with the One as the end of the journey.¹⁶⁷ This occurs through the action of the 'One', where the soul itself is lifted by the giver of its love.¹⁶⁸ Thus the ascent of the soul becomes a powerful image in the restoration of mankind.

The assimilation of the concept of the flight of the soul into the emergent Christian philosophy of the fourth and fifth centuries, was facilitated by the images of birds and flight that were already evident within the biblical symbolism of the Christian faith. Within the Macarian circles, Judaic and Syrian images impinged upon this assimilation just as much as

winged and depart, in the three thousandth year'. See also *Phaedrus*, 246-248.

¹⁶² Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246 D.

¹⁶³ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 251C.

¹⁶⁴ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 255D.

¹⁶⁵ Goodenough, 1956, vol 8 p41.

¹⁶⁶ Hackforth, 1952, p96-98.

¹⁶⁷ Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI.7.34; See also Bussanich, 1996, p38-65.

¹⁶⁸ Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI.7.35.33-34.

the Platonic concept of the winged soul, and all contributed to Ps-Macarius' unique use of the concept. Bird images within Judaism are primarily those of the eagle as a symbol of worship, of royalty, of supernatural power and provision,¹⁶⁹ and of God in the form of an eagle carrying Israel to himself. Goodenough regards the eagle in Judaism as akin to a psychopomp, a bearer of the soul to the next world, and suggests that the very elasticity of the concept of the soul being borne on wings into a heavenly realm allowed for the assimilation of the generic idea into Judaism and Christianity.¹⁷⁰ Part of this assimilation was directed from the East, and Goodenough notes that the eagle is allowed to represent the power of Yahweh partly because of the connotations of the Thunderbird (eagle) as a symbol of the sun in Mesopotamia, (and ultimately as the symbol of the power of the gods).¹⁷¹ Judaic bird images that may impinge upon the Macarian understanding and usage include the Rabbinic tradition of the soul as a bird that normally resides in heaven, flying back there as a dove at death.¹⁷² Rabbinic tradition also regarded the dove as a symbol of chastity, due to its monogamous nature as well as being identified with Israel.¹⁷³ Goodenough notes how Philo refers to the soul as a dove because it is at peace and unified, in contrast to the multiple divisions of the body.¹⁷⁴ Both images of the soul as eagle and as dove find an echo in the Platonic idea of the winged soul, and it can be seen that the use of bird imagery, and that of wings in particular, was a common religious motif in antiquity.

There are examples of bird/wing imagery being linked to the soul in the Syrian Christian tradition. Ephrem, in his '*Hymns to Julian Saba*'¹⁷⁵ celebrates the virgin as a high

¹⁶⁹ Ex 19.4; Deut 32.11; Ps 103.5; Is 40.31.

¹⁷⁰ Goodenough, 1956, vol 8 p121.

¹⁷¹ Goodenough, 1956, vol 8 p127, 129.

¹⁷² Goodenough, 1956, vol 8 p42.

¹⁷³ Goodenough, 1956, vol 8 p44;.2.

¹⁷⁴ Goodenough, 1956, vol 8 p38; Philo, '*Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres*', XXV (125-127).

¹⁷⁵ Beck, 1972, doubts Ephrem's authorship of the majority of the hymns to Julian Saba, preferring to ascribe them to Ephrem's students. For a discussion on Beck's proposals see Griffiths, J ECS 2:2, p185-216, esp. p199ff. Griffiths asserts that the first four hymns of the collection are indeed Ephremic. For an overview of the life of Julian Saba see AbouZayd, 1993, p324-26.

flying eagle,¹⁷⁶ in a passage that speaks of the heavenly encounter with the 'cross of light', an image that occurs in one of the few autobiographical revelations of Ps-Macarius.¹⁷⁷ A further use of the image of the virgin as an eagle is found in '*Hymns for the Feast of Epiphany*' in relation to the role of the Spirit at baptism:

In the beginning the Spirit that brooded
 moved on the waters;
 they conceived and gave birth
 to serpents and fishes and birds.
 The Holy Spirit has brooded in baptism
 and in mystery has given birth to eagles
 virgins and prelates
 and in mystery has given birth to fishes
 celibates and intercessors
 and in mystery of serpents
 lo, the subtle have become simple as doves.¹⁷⁸

Eagle occurrences also include the exhortation to the soul to draw near to the Holy Spirit in Ephrem's *Teaching-Song 75*.

Let the soul, too, attempt in every way it can to reach the proximity of the Holy Spirit!
 You too body! Don't be slack! fly like an eagle to come near to that body which gives
 life to all!¹⁷⁹

Similarly *Teaching-Song 37* speaks of both the wings of heavenly love and the wings of humanity.

Lower the wings of your love, that I may mount like an egret! Holy Wind, become the
 air-stream, on which we beat our wings to attain to our treasures.¹⁸⁰

Teaching-Song 2 also speaks of the 'wings of wind' that enable the body to ascend to heaven.

However, in this instance the wings are identified with the shoulders as opposed to the soul.¹⁸¹

Ephrem also regards the eagle as an image of the sovereignty of God,¹⁸² emphasising once again the royal image of the eagle.

¹⁷⁶ Ephrem, *De Virginitate* XXIV.3; tr. McVey, 1989, p366.

¹⁷⁷ II.8.6.

¹⁷⁸ Ephrem, *De Fide* 8.16; NPNF² 13:278.

¹⁷⁹ Beck, 1955. tr. Palmer, 1999, Teaching song 75.23f.

¹⁸⁰ Ephrem, *De Fide*, 37.9 tr. Palmer, 1999, p80.

¹⁸¹ Ephrem, *De Fide* 2.4,5, tr. Palmer, 1999, p6.

¹⁸² Ephrem, *De Nativitate*, XVII.2. Beck, (ed) 1959.

Other Syrian bird / wing images include those of Aphrahat, who in his *Demonstration VI 'On Monks'* mentions the ascent towards the heavens as a flight from the world: 'Let us lift up our wings as eagles, that we may see the body there where it is'.¹⁸³ He also uses the notion of the eagle's power to emphasise the protection of the spirit upon the ascetic against 'the adversary': 'He that has wings flees from him and the darts that he hurls at him do not reach him'.¹⁸⁴ Similarly the *Odes of Solomon* speak of the wings of the Spirit protecting the heart of the believer.

As the wings of doves over their nestlings,
And the mouths of their nestlings towards their mouths,
So also are the wings of the Spirit over my heart.¹⁸⁵

However as Brock has shown, it is more usual within Syrian Christianity for the dove image to be attributed to Mary than to be used of the soul, and that dove symbolism within Syrian spirituality generally is limited due to the high incidence of dove images within the pre-Christian cult at Mabbugh. For this reason Brock suggests that the vocabulary of 'flying' could have developed from the verb *rahhaf*: to hover in Gen 1:2, or the phrase 'wings of the Spirit / wind' in Ps 104:3, as much as from the image of the Holy Spirit as a dove as seen at Christ's baptism.¹⁸⁶ However, the concept of *πτερῶν* : to provide with wings (*pterow*) is evident within early Syrian Christianity, and it is the notion of power and protection within the journey of the soul as portrayed by the eagle that is uppermost, and that finds echo in the Macarian corpus. The picture of the eagle in flight is the assimilation of the Platonic concept of the empowerment of the soul by contemplation of beauty, and the empowerment of the soul by the contemplation of divine love and grace that leads to the Christian understanding of the 'Flight from the World'.¹⁸⁷ Ps-Macarius regards this flight as dependent upon the grace of God, together with a disciplined life, and above all, as part of the journey of the soul that must

¹⁸³ Aphrahat, *Dem VII.1*, NPNF² 13:363.

¹⁸⁴ Aphrahat, *Dem VIII.2*, NPNF² 13:365.

¹⁸⁵ *Ode 28.1*, Charlesworth, 1973, p108.

¹⁸⁶ Brock, 1979, p14.

¹⁸⁷ Alszegy, s.v. *Fuite du Monde*, DSp 5:1575-1600.

be experienced through prayer, as well as activated through a life of austerity.

Gregory Nyssa regards mankind as having lost the 'wings of immortality' which mankind possessed in his original nature,¹⁸⁸ and he regards the rising of the soul beyond the present world as a stage along the long journey.¹⁸⁹ Flight, for Gregory is an image of that participation which is a 'continuous and everlasting process'.¹⁹⁰ In relation to his doctrine of *epektasis*¹⁹¹ Gregory states that

Once it is released from its earthly attachment, the soul becomes light and swift for its movement upward, soaring from below up to the heights.¹⁹²
The soul ever rises higher and will always make its flight yet higher by its desire of the heavenly things straining ahead for what is to come.¹⁹³

Gregory used the *Phaedrus* as the basis of his expressions of the flight of the soul beyond phenonema and towards the beauty that lies beyond the heavens, in a manner that is, as Cherniss asserts, too Platonic to be missed.¹⁹⁴ From this Gregory develops a Christian understanding of the flight of the soul, basing the flight of the soul to God upon the attraction of like for like.

'The soul grows by its constant participation in that which transcends it; and yet the perfection in which the soul shares remains the same, and is always discovered by the soul to be transcendent to the same degree'.¹⁹⁵

Thus, for Gregory if the soul has been purified of evil, it will be with the fair, that is with the Divine,¹⁹⁶ and yet will continue to receive from the Divine without in any way diminishing the divine. Gregory understands the Divine nature as having wings, which he interprets allegorically to refer to God's power, happiness, and incorruptibility, amongst other things.¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁸ Greg. Nyssa, *Hom. 15 in Cant.* tr. Musurillo, 1995, p284.

¹⁸⁹ Cherniss, 1930, p42. For a discussion on the cosmology of Gregory Nyssa see Daniélou, 1944, p165-168.

¹⁹⁰ Balas, 1966, p165; Ferguson, GOTR 18, p59-78.

¹⁹¹ See above p209.

¹⁹² Greg Nyssa, *Life of Moses II.224.*

¹⁹³ Greg Nyssa, *Life of Moses II.225.*

¹⁹⁴ Cherniss, 1930, p42 esp fn56; Greg. Nyssa, *In Ecclesiasten H1.2*, PG 44: 624C; *De Virginitate chap. 11*, PG 46:364C.

¹⁹⁵ Musurillo, 1995, p198.

¹⁹⁶ Cherniss, 1930, p49.

¹⁹⁷ Greg. Nyssa, *Hom 15 in Cant.* tr. Musurillo, 1995, p284.

Gregory asserts from Ps 16.2-3 that the wings of man are regrown through sanctity and righteousness, as judged though the eyes of God.

When Your eyes look at me, they are averted from what is contrary; nor will Your eyes see in me anything that is contrary to me. Thus by Your eyes, O Lord, I obtain the grace of being winged again, of recovering through virtue the wings of the Dove, by which I may have the power of flight. Now I can fly and rest, and indeed in that rest which the Lord enjoyed when he rested from His creation.¹⁹⁸

Gregory also utilises the image of the dove as a picture of the required perfection, which is the goal of the soul.

Similarly, though the bride is a dove because of her previous perfection, she is ordered to become a dove once more by way of being transformed into what is more perfect.¹⁹⁹

Ps-Macarius uses bird / wing imagery several times in relation to the flight of the soul, and asserts that the wings available to mankind are an additional element to the created nature of man. That is, man was not created with bodily wings, but with the potential to receive wings of the spirit, which will enable him to fly into the heavenly realm.

When God created Adam he did not provide Him with bodily wings, like the birds, but He had designed for him the wings of the Holy Spirit, those wings which He purposes to give him at the resurrection, to lift him up and catch him away wheresoever the Spirit pleases -which holy souls even now are privileged to have, and fly up in mind to the heavenly frame of thought.²⁰⁰

The goal of the flight of the soul is into a 'heavenly frame of thought', and it is here that Ps-Macarius locates the activity of the divine within man. That is, God's grace teaches the mind to fly, and releases the soul into the presence of God through prayer.²⁰¹ Flight is thus the result of petition, built upon desire.

To fly into the divine air and enjoy the liberty of the Holy Spirit may be ones desire, but, if he does not have wings given him he cannot. Let us pray to God that He gives us 'the wings of a dove' of the Holy Spirit so we may fly to him and find rest and that he may separate and take away from our soul and body such an evil wind, namely sin itself, inhabiting the members of our soul and body.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Musurillo, 1995, p286. *Hom 15 in Cant.*

¹⁹⁹ Musurillo, 1995, p191.

²⁰⁰ I.48.6.9.

²⁰¹ Dörries, 1978, p201.

²⁰² II.2.3.

The result of flight is therefore not only entering into the presence of the Divine, but the removal of the 'evil wind of sin' that is evident within the body. This, as noted above, is accomplished by the sacrifice of Christ and the sprinkling of his blood, and actuated by prayer. This prayer is directed by the Spirit, and in it the soul is transformed by grace.

Just as the feet of the birds are the wings, so the heavenly light of the Spirit takes up the wings of thoughts worthy of the soul and leads and directs the soul as he knows best.²⁰³

The Lord will.....make it [the soul] light, to take up wings to the heights of heaven and transform and change it out of its own very nature.²⁰⁴

This change and progression of the soul is a continual process and is subject to grace. Thus the journey is both upward and downward but Ps-Macarius asserts that the soul in flight will not suffer harm by evil spirits.

So the soul going up and down in the fire of the Spirit and in divine light will suffer no harm by any evil spirits.....so the soul receiving the wings of the spirit, and flying into the heights of heaven, is above everything and derides them all.²⁰⁵

There is within Ps-Macarius' imagery clear echoes of previous biblical and patristic usages of the metaphor. The idea of the soul receiving protection from the wings of the Spirit²⁰⁶ draws from the image of power of the eagle, and is also found within both Aphrahat²⁰⁷ and the *Odes of Solomon*.²⁰⁸ So too is the analogy of Aphrahat of the eagle on the wing regarding the earth and the soul in flight regarding the true position of the body.²⁰⁹ The desire for flight, so important within Gregory Nyssa is coupled not with sanctity and righteousness, but here with prayer. It is this insistence upon the role of prayer within the flight of the soul that is the unique contribution of Ps-Macarius. For Ps-Macarius the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is provided by the sacrifice of Christ, is dependent not upon an ascetic lifestyle *per se*, but upon assiduous prayer within that ascetic lifestyle. Thus once again Ps-Macarius reveals the priority

²⁰³ II.1.9.

²⁰⁴ I.44.5.

²⁰⁵ II.30.6.

²⁰⁶ II.2.3.

²⁰⁷ Aphrahat, *Dem VIII.2*, NPNF² 13:365.

²⁰⁸ *Ode 28.1*, Charlesworth, 1973, p108.

²⁰⁹ Aphrahat, *Dem VII.1*, NPNF² 13:363.

of prayer over the discipline of asceticism, whilst not negating the discipline that provides the framework for effective prayer.

Ps-Macarius also uses accessible images to further emphasise his insistence upon the experience of the flight of the soul. In I.14.23 Ps-Macarius compares the eagle who is 'constantly upon the wing' yet with much stillness and rest, with the flight of the soul who receives the wings of the spirit and is πτερύγων : 'furnished with wings' (*pterugon*). This use of the eagle as an image is unconnected with the interpretation of the eagle as a royal icon. Rather it is connected to the power and rest that the bird displays in flight. In doing so Ps-Macarius uses everyday images in illustration of divine realities. Thus the eagle is of secondary importance to the divine reality Ps-Macarius is seeking to convey. The dove image is also subservient to the image of flight, and is used in connection with the Holy Spirit,²¹⁰ in a lesser manner than the Macarian emphasis and reliance upon the image of 'wings'. The image of the dove as the soul in 'perfection' as found in Gregory Nyssa is not found in Ps-Macarius.

Ps-Macarius also speaks of the soul flying into the 'divine air',²¹¹ and into the 'air of the Godhead' (ἀέρα τῆς θεότητος). This phrase occurs only three times within the corpus: I.11.1.2, (mirrored in II.47.2), and III.4.2. The background to this phrase is uncertain, and is reminiscent of both Neoplatonic flight into the 'One' as found in Plotinus,²¹² as well as of the eagle / dove imagery of Judaism, and Judaic apocalyptic ascent.²¹³ Ps-Macarius uses a plethora of metaphors and images within his rhetorical style to convey the trials of the spiritual journey.²¹⁴ This particular phrase is an attempt to explain the destination of the Christian to the disciples seeking instruction and advice. It is a Macarian illustration of union with the Divine, that in Ps-Macarius' view occurs through the interchange of grace / spirit and soul, in a

²¹⁰ II.2.3. See above for the Holy Spirit as a Dove in Syrian Spirituality, p222ff.

²¹¹ II.47.2; II.2.3.

²¹² Plotinus, *Enneads* VI.9.7.17-28.

²¹³ *Testamentum Levi* 2:8 speaks of a third heaven 'far brighter and more brilliant than these two, and infinite in height'. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 15:6-5; *Ascension of Isaiah* 8:1, 9:1. See also Golitzin 1999.

²¹⁴ See above chap 2. Rhetoric p101ff.

concept that is understandable to his direct audience. The merging of Jewish apocalyptic ascent imagery and Neoplatonist thought is difficult to distinguish with any degree of certainty. Within the Macarian use of the 'air of the Godhead' the Neoplatonic thought of a 'mingling' of the 'One' and the soul,²¹⁵ is translated into a Christian setting by means of a connected visual image, drawn from Judaic apocalyptic ascent. Plotinus' 'One' becomes the 'heavenly frame of thought' (I.48.6.9), which is entered by the workings of grace, which in turn is provided by the Holy Spirit. When Ps-Macarius views the Godhead he does so through the Spirit, the foremost accessible part of the Trinity. The 'air of the Godhead' is the activity of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is regarded by Ephrem, as the 'air stream' the 'Holy Wind' that provides uplift to the beating of the wings of the soul. Ps-Macarius' use of flight imagery is unconnected with any exegetical passage or purpose, rather it is of an inspirational exhortative genre. As such it is difficult to draw the inspirational threads together to give an overall interpretation. However, the idea of the soul enabled to fly by the Spirit on the Divine air / air of the Godhead, to the heavenly thoughts, is the Macarian interpretation of participation in the Godhead, and speaks of the ascent to the divine that is so evident within his corpus. The use of the phrase in Ps-Macarius is as Desprez has remarked,²¹⁶ 'original', and the originality is in the way in which Ps-Macarius harnesses the philosophical concept of flight, to the journey of the progression of the soul that is so central to his thought, thus showing once again, the myriad of influences upon his teaching.

The picture of the soul in flight is thus one of the soul in freedom and protection. Freedom from the weights of the earthly distractions to prayer, and protection from evil while on the journey of prayer. The cleansing power of the Godhead is released through prayer, and the soul in such a state communes with God in the 'heavenly frame of thought' and in the power of the 'air of the Godhead'. When coupled to the Macarian understanding of sober

²¹⁵ Lilla, s.v. *Neoplatonism*, EEC p587; Plotinus, *Enneads* I.6.7.

²¹⁶ See above p220.

intoxication, two powerful images of potential divine communication can be seen. That both images portray a temporal state and not a permanent residence is evidenced by the emphasis upon the journey 'up and down' of the soul, and the required protection available for the soul during the time of flight. The flight of the soul enables the soul to reach a state of sober intoxication, and to receive from God visions and prophecy. Ps-Macarius regards the soul as receiving wings at baptism, the believer appropriating what was made available for him by Christ at his crucifixion. The believer is thus equipped for potential flight, potential communication and potential sober intoxication. The life of ascetic discipline and above all the life of prayer within the ascetic lifestyle actuates the potentiality, but is also subject to the vagaries of divine grace. In both the ascent of the steps to perfection and the flight of the soul the believer is open to evil influences, and is liable to sink as much as soar. Ps-Macarius' emphasis is as much on the uniqueness of the place of prayer in his asceticism as it is on his progressive soteriology, and the potential to fly into the presence of God whilst still bound by the earthly body.

The connection between Gregory Nyssa and Ps-Macarius grows more complex. In addition to the priority debate concerning *De Instituto* and the *Great Letter*, which has been accepted to be found in Ps-Macarius favour, there is the correlation of the themes of flight and intoxication that are found within both authors. In regard to the flight of the soul, Gregory is once again the more systematic and precise author, whose influences are plain to see. But similar influences are apparent within Ps-Macarius albeit in a more obtuse manner, and other influences appear in the latter, such as the rules of Aphrahat, and the poetic images of Ephrem. This complicates the picture, yet such complications once more place Ps-Macarius at the centre of an emergent culture of monasticism, and within the wider circle of the Cappadocian Fathers. Whereas Gregory regards the release of the soul into flight as due to sanctity and righteousness, Ps-Macarius regards it as effected through prayer. The two different perspectives bring about the same final picture, that of the winged soul, participating in the Godhead and

caught up in an exhilaration of nearness to the presence.

Ps-Macarius refers to the parable of the virgins and the oil (Matt 25:1-14) and in doing so reveals the association between virginity and the activity of the Spirit that is required to enable the one in prayer to enter divine communication. In discussing the parable, Ps-Macarius draws a distinction between those who are born of the Spirit, and thus were able to give satisfaction to the heavenly bridegroom, and those who estimated themselves to belong to the bridegroom, but who had not been born of the spirit.²¹⁷ Ps-Macarius thus divides those who profess to follow Christ, from those who actually do so. Rather than dividing between those who are in the Church and those who are outside of the Church, Ps-Macarius is here speaking of a division within the Church.²¹⁸ Elsewhere Ps-Macarius rejects the notion that the Lord requires only visible fruits from men, and that he will rectify the interior ones himself, citing the requirement of the Lord that 'you be angry with yourself and engage in battle with your mind, neither consenting to or taking pleasure in wicked thoughts'.²¹⁹ The division is based upon the activity of the Spirit within the heart of man. For Ps-Macarius the activity of the Spirit, and the reception of the 'oil of gladness' (I.49.2.1) (which he takes to be grace), enables entrance into the bridechamber of the bridegroom.²²⁰

Souls who seek the sanctification of the Spirit, which is outside of nature, fasten all their affection upon the Lord, and there they walk, and there they pray, and there they employ their thoughts, turning away from all else; for which they are privileged to receive the oil of heavenly grace, and succeed in coming through unfallen, giving the perfect satisfaction to the spiritual bridegroom²²¹

The division of those who have received the 'oil of gladness' that is the Spirit, from those who have not been born from above, is a division of those who are seen to belong to the Church.

Ps-Macarius has harsh words for those who 'are content with what is natural to them'²²² and

²¹⁷ I.49.2.1 (II.4.6.7).

²¹⁸ For a division between Christians and others, see II.12.32; II.5.4.

²¹⁹ II.3.4.

²²⁰ See also III.28.2.

²²¹ I.49.2.1 (II.4.6).

²²² I.49.2f (II.4.7).

spend their time 'in the world', who at the same time perceive themselves to belong to the bridegroom. This division has led some to contend that Ps-Macarius is anti-ecclesiastical.²²³ However, Ps-Macarius is concerned with the preservation of the purity of the Church, rather than the destruction of it, and it is against Church order and 'empty' formalised sacraments which he rails. Thus it could be said that those who only consider themselves to belong to the bridegroom are those that partake of the sacraments, within existing ecclesiastical structures, but who perceive no spiritual benefit from them because of a lack of discipline and preparedness.

As many as are made partakers of the Spirit of Christ, see that you do not behave contemptuously in anything, small or great, and do no despite to the grace of the Spirit, that you may not be excluded from the life of which you have already been made partakers.²²⁴

The distinction between those who have received the Spirit and those who only think they have is a matter of discipline and ascetic lifestyle, the foremost factor of which is celibacy. Virginité is thus an enabling element for the reception of divine communion. Ps-Macarius refers to virgins in the context of the acceptable bride, who is enabled to communicate with the Godhead.²²⁵ For him it is a life of self-control (*enkrateia*) that enables the soul to receive the divine assistance that is required to 'fly on the wings of the Spirit' and to communicate with the divine. The community that Ps-Macarius seeks to create is a pure Church, a community of believers that are wholehearted in their response to God, and who receive communications from God when in receipt of a prophetic abundance of divine grace, but who acknowledge the transient nature of their position on that journey. As such, Ps-Macarius' brotherhoods are communities of those who partake of the divine,²²⁶ and are 'participators of the secrets of the heavenly King'.²²⁷ Ps-Macarius recognises the danger of not allowing the Spirit to work upon

²²³ For a discussion see Desprez, 1970².

²²⁴ I.54.6-7 (II.15.4).

²²⁵ 'The wise soul is virgin to the Lord, having communication with his Holy Spirit'. II.32.10.

²²⁶ II.17.2.

²²⁷ II.17.2.

the heart because of a lack of discipline and asceticism, but he also counsels against those who having experienced divine grace, and living a life of self-control, assume that they are free from sin.²²⁸ The experience of grace that results in being 'intoxicated with God' and 'flying on the wings of the Spirit' does not bring the Christian into a permanent perfection, and Ps-Macarius is at pains to emphasise this. The Macarian community is thus a community of potential perfection rather than achieved perfection, which is based around an encratic lifestyle.

²²⁸ II.17.6.

CONCLUSION

Synoptic Summary

Our study began by providing working definitions of Syrian Christianity, Messalianism and *enkrateia* in the process isolating key ingredients of Syrian Spirituality. Specific Macarian metaphors were examined to ascertain the respective Greek and Syrian influences upon Ps-Macarius, and the Macarian corpus as a whole was then examined to assess its rhetorical influences and style. It has been shown that the influences upon Ps-Macarius were many, and diverse, and yet Ps-Macarius represents an individual voice that is distinct and recognisable amongst the Fathers of the Church. His particular portrayal of ascetic existence seeks an integration with wider Church life and portrays little or no anti-establishment venom. Ps-Macarius' dominant concern is to seek experiential communion with God, through an ecclesiastically grounded setting, and sets out to draw others into that experiential reality which is so important to him. Prayer is for him the path and the key, both to experience, and to victory in the battle with sin in the heart of humankind.

Through an analysis of previous scholarship it was shown that the scholarly reception of the Macarian corpus has refined its attempt at identification of the author. Yet a definitive identification still remains out of reach. The works remain anonymous even though characteristic Macarian traits and localities can now be isolated. Scholarship builds upon the foundations laid by previous scholars, and it has been a concern of this thesis to show how dangerous such activity is when the foundations may be false, or too slavishly followed, to the detriment of the original context of thought. In the case of Ps-Macarius the designation of him as a Messalianist caused some to dismiss the Macarian corpus as pure heresy and thus of no interest to the Church.¹ The journey of the homilies, from being traditionally recognised writings of an Egyptian Church Father, to pseudonymous re-attribution and subsequent search

¹ See above Introduction p24f.

for a context has resulted in a new scholarly consensus on Ps-Macarius. In the course of this re-assessment preconceived ecclesiastical positions often had more influence than was healthy. The designation of the author as the 'classic Messalian' illustrates the degree of suspicion that arose concerning the corpus with authors either defending or rejecting the orthodoxy of the corpus depending upon their theological heritage. The search for a clear doctrinal basis of the Messalian heresy has eventually reached the place where distinct Macarian thought can be isolated from generic Messalianism as evidenced through the 'heretical lists' of the fourth-sixth century. However the construction of the Messalian belief system has not been possible, although on more than one occasion it has been attempted. Messalianism has been recognized as a 'shadowy' heresy, ill-defined and incapable of being reconstructed in its entirety from the extant lists of heretical movements and characteristics. What is beyond doubt is that there was something objectionable within Messalianism. Ephrem's and Theodoret's rejection of the movement is evidence of that. This study has sought to isolate, as far as possible that objectionable element of Messalianism and posited as exclusive encratism.

This thesis has also sought to give a working definition of the much encountered phrase : Syrian Christianity. The need for a tighter working definition here is illustrated by the vagueness that is often encountered when discussing Syrian Christianity. This 'catch-all' phrase has included the notion that Syrian, and at times all Eastern, Christianity is a faith of the emotions, normally referred to as being of 'the heart'. Similarly Syrian Christianity, and monasticism in general, is often viewed as an extreme example of Christianity. While Peter Brown and Arthur Vööbus have done much to clear the myths surrounding Syrian Christian characteristics, the excesses that they highlight have on more than one occasion been accepted as the norm, and a certain imbalance brought to the study of Syrian Spirituality. This is why there is a need for a restatement of the characteristics of Syrian Spirituality. This in turn entailed our review of some of the major Syrian influences and sources, before the leading characteristics could be isolated. These characteristics were discussed by examining certain key

themes in Syrian Christian thought. When the sources are examined the place of the heart within Syrian Spirituality is seen to be the central tenant of all human activity. Thus the heart as a characteristic of Syrian Spirituality is true only when the heart is understood from its place in the biblical tradition and within wider currents of early eastern anthropology. The ideals of virginity, asceticism and the link with Jewish thought and practice revealed the importance of celibacy and virginity in the lifestyle of the individual believer, and the Church. The 'rediscovery' of the original Syrian ascetic impetus, before the advent of Egyptian monasticism, is an important element within the formation of monasticism. Ps-Macarius, was standing in this 'cauldron of influences' and was as much a part of the progress of emergent monasticism, as were Basil of Caesarea and Ephrem before him. Coupled to the life of virginity is the ideal of angelic imitation within the search for individual spiritual perfection. In the case of Ps-Macarius, the angelic imitation not only concerned the potential communion with God, but also governed the community relationships within his brotherhoods. Thus the motivation of an angelic imitation was the establishment of a paradisiacal community on earth. The prevalence of an allusive and poetic linguistic form of theological communication was also noted as a Syrian characteristic. The rich symbolism employed within the writings contain a distinct theology, much of which can be ascribed to a biblical inheritance fused with elements of Judaism and Mesopotamian mythology. No definition of Syrian Spirituality can be complete without an examination of the role of Tatian. As Barnard has shown² it has been necessary to re-evaluate both the ascribed heretical content of Tatian's theology, and the progression of his thought. Tatian formulated his theology over a period of time, and incorporated a protological explanation for the encratic tendencies already within Syrian Spirituality. Thus the structures within Syrian Spirituality that he helped to form existed before him, and drew from diverse sources, including Judeo monotheism and an integral cultural ascetic predilection.

Such a working definition of Syrian Christianity as given could still be said to be

² See above p72ff.

vague, but it is in the building up of a macro-picture from smaller evidences that the imbalance has occurred in the past. In building upon the previous definitions of Syrian Christianity³ and the call for care to be taken in consideration of 'Syrian Christianity' due to the 'blank spaces within the map' made by Abramowski and Barnard⁴ it is apparent that care is needed in the giving of detail. The definition of Syrian Christianity arrived at in this thesis, uses the term 'spirituality' as opposed to 'Christianity'. This is, in part, an attempt to move away from the preconceived ideas of Syrian Christianity, and the more romantic notion of Syrian Christianity containing the authentic teaching of Christ, preserved in the original language. Instead the term 'Spirituality' is used, not to be taken as something less than 'Christianity', but rather as a term that can be used to express faith, without any additional nuances attached. Furthermore the term 'spirituality' recognises the fluid nature of orthodoxy within the formation of Christianity.

The examination of the rhetoric of the Macarian corpus, and in particular the frequency of the triadic formula of the biblical quotations of Ps-Macarius, has illustrated the high degree of sophistication that is evident within the corpus. The characteristic means of expression of Ps-Macarius is unique. It is a blend of Syriac imagery and Greek rhetorical training. Within this characteristic form of expression, as Stewart has shown, are the unique Macarian uses and interpretations of Syrian words, in a Greek linguistic mode. A closer examination of the rhetoric of the corpus, as well as the preferred imagery, revealed that Ps-Macarius was not only teaching his own community, but was also seeking to persuade other more external observers as to the value of his community's concept of purity, prayer, and the ongoing spiritual journey of the soul. These external observers may be part of the immediate ecclesiastical circle, and would probably include the hierarchy related to that circle, as well as more independent constituents, who might not have any Christian allegiance. In the secondary

³ See above p96f.

⁴ See above p98ff.

stage of the literature, in the context of the widespread use of the homilies, this secondary motivation of persuasion has largely been ignored, the assumption being that Ps-Macarius is speaking to a core group of dedicated ascetics. The teaching of Ps-Macarius is for more than one purpose, and although the didactic leadership element is undoubtedly strongest throughout the corpus, (particularly so in the question and answer homilies⁵), the persuasive element, directed at those not within his community, can always be clearly seen. This element of persuasion affirms the idea of Ps-Macarius as attempting to bridge the cultural barriers between Syrian and Greek thought. However, once more Ps-Macarius refuses to be placed in so neat a box. The cultural exchange is not only between Hellenism and Syriac cultural modes, but also incorporates a Judaic heritage, and the forces of emergent monasticism. The operative concept of cultural exchange is more akin to a 'cauldron of thought' rather than a clear bridge. Examination of the language of the corpus and the rhetorical techniques contained within in it is rendered difficult by the heavy editing that the texts have been subjected to. However, as has been shown, such a perspective does reveal further clues to the position, if not the identity of Ps-Macarius. Specific examples highlighted include the frequent triadic format of the biblical quotations. Furthermore the Macarian community can not be assumed to be an uneducated collection of misfits, prone to excesses. The very nature of the construction of the corpus reveals something of the intended primary audience. The difference in rhetoric (and in particular the frequency of biblical 'proofs' between the question and answer homilies) and the more verbose and crafted homilies, suggest once again, a twofold audience for the delivery of the homilies. The homilies contain crafted rhetorical techniques because of the demands of the audience as well as because the speaker is rhetorically trained. The frequency of 'picture language' within the collection also suggests a broad cultural situation. Uses of the images of the eyes; the body; sun; wind; birds in flight; war; and invasions; labouring and storms are everyday images, selected to convey Ps-Macarius' message in the most accessible manner, to a

⁵ See Desprez, 1989.

large interested audience. Thus within the homilies there is the apologetic element as well as didactic one. Overall the rhetoric of the Macarian corpus suggests a wider audience than hitherto acknowledged.

This study has also sought to give definition to a term that has become imprecise and diverse in its use: *enkrateia* (self-control). By isolating the characteristics of *enkrateia* the definitive stages of an encratic lifestyle can be identified. The breaking down of the term into *enkrateia*, *radical enkrateia* and *exclusive enkrateia* enables a much clearer discussion to take place as to the nature of the encratic theology of a group or individual. It was shown that *enkrateia* is often used in the scholarly literature to connote a synonym for *ascesis* (training and discipline), whereas in reality there is a distinction between the two. The temptation to ascribe early Christianity (and specifically Syrian Spirituality) as having an all pervading ascetic bent, which differentiated merely in strictness and adherence, and which was the result of a homogenous theological viewpoint, must be avoided. *Enkrateia* and encratism are not interchangeable, neither are *enkrateia* and *ascesis*. The distinction lies in the theological motivation of the adherent. That is, in the case of exclusive encratism, the protological motivation is required. This protological motivation is the rejection of marriage as a post-lapsarian entity and in particular the rejection of marriage as a viable way of life for those entering the Kingdom of God. Marriage debars entrance. Thus, for a practice to be encratic properly speaking there is a requirement that the practitioners regard marriage as an inferior level of reality. Entrance into this second level of Church causes the participant to become ineligible for the Kingdom of God. Following Gasparro then, not only is it necessary to identify each person's point of ideological reference when calling for total abstinence of sexual activity,⁶ it is necessary to identify each group's theological motivation when ascribing to them heretical or orthodox theological positions. The protological motivation is but one of several motivations for an encratic lifestyle. Eschatological forces, and the church as the new

⁶ Gasparro, 1995, p128ff.

community on earth are also factors in the encratic lifestyle of individuals and communities. Coupled to this is the Christological force of the desire of the believer to imitate Christ. Ps-Macarius evidences primarily the eschatological force of a new heavenly community on earth in his desire that his brotherhoods should 'live as angels'. However, there is also the motivation of the presence of the Spirit and of the potential participation with the Godhead that is available to the believer. The Macarian corpus reveals a deep desire within the author for union and participation with the divine, coupled to a knowledge that the journey towards the divine is a treacherous one, and that to live in imitation of Christ requires discipline, community and above all prayer. Ps-Macarius' understanding of baptism, as discussed in this study, and elsewhere by Desprez,⁷ reveals that the reception of the Spirit at baptism is but one step along the journey to participation with the divine. Baptism within Ps-Macarius is seen as the formal engagement of the bride and groom considered in the form of the pledge of the Holy Spirit, but it is also seen as a question of 'consummation', in the form of ultimate theosis and full participation with the Godhead. In this Ps-Macarius was echoing the baptismal understanding of the *ihīdāyā* and *bnay Qyāmā* as evidenced in traditional Syrian Spirituality. That is the idea that through baptism, Christ recreates the souls as virgin, and the soul remains virgin in Christ. The soul has a responsibility to participate actively with the Holy Spirit. Overall the study shows, by a consideration of some of the encratic influences upon Ps-Macarius, that encratism, in its broadest sense, was a widespread phenomenon. In particular radical encratism was widely practised. This suggests a Syrian / Cappadocian population at least sympathetic towards the aims of a life of celibacy.

The Encratic influences upon Ps-Macarius referred to in this study include that of Eustathius. The influence of Eustathius upon Ps-Macarius occurred primarily through the intermediaries of the Cappadocian Circle, particularly through Basil of Caesarea and Gregory Nyssa. From an examination of the Canons of the Council of Gangra (355 AD.) it is possible

⁷ Desprez, 1988.

to summarise the main elements of the Eustathian movement that were considered objectionable. However, it is worth noting again, that the council emphasised that it was not against ascetic endeavours *per se*, but against those who ‘carry the pretence of asceticism to superciliousness’ and ‘exalt themselves above those who live more simply’.⁸ This self aggrandisement involved a direct confrontation with the local ecclesiastical leadership. That is the notion that celibate priests were of greater importance and effectiveness than married ones. Gangra thus witnesses to the formation of the higher or heavenly Church level, that based its authority upon celibacy and virginity, over and above that of the established Church structures. It has been suggested that the Messalians were direct descendants of the Eustathians.⁹ Certainly a comparison between the lists of heretical Messalian activities and the condemned Eustathian practices of Gangra leaves room for such a proposal. Celibacy is supported, family ties are rejected, both are accused of being indifferent to the sacraments, and both stress the equality of women in a community role. An examination of the sources of the heretical lists (as Stewart 1991) reveals that the major witness to the link between the Messalians and Eustathians is John of Damascus and thus very late. Furthermore the majority of his condemnations of the Messalians which equate with the Gangra Canons against the Eustathians are unsubstantiated by the other lists that describe the heretical activities of the Messalians. Thus the likelihood is that John of Damascus has restated the Gangrian characteristics as Messalian characteristics out of ignorance of the specifics of the movement, or on the basis of the unavailability of substantiative evidence. Although similarities do exist, this study has shown that the need for an intermediary between the Messalians and Eustathians is necessary, rather than there being any direct connection between the two. Gribomont’s suggestion that the Messalians were the ‘heirs’ of the Eustathians¹⁰ must be taken to mean a link of genre rather of actuality. The delineation of encratic practices (as

⁸ See above p157.

⁹ See above p157f.

¹⁰ Gribomont, SP2/TU64, pp404-7.

above) aids the differentiation between the two movements. In the rejection of marriage as a viable way of life for a priest, and the consequent refusal to receive communion from a married priest, the Eustathians were setting themselves apart and above the existing Church. They can clearly be categorized as 'exclusive encratists'. The extant sources of the Messalians, on the other hand, do not give grounds for them to be clearly placed within the exclusive encratic category. Rather their shadow falls across both radical and exclusive encratism. The diffusing and organising intermediary activity of the Cappadocians was illustrated by a consideration of the place of Macrina in emergent asceticism. The community of Virgins run by Macrina is an illustration of the Radical encratic lifestyle. The rejection of marriage, and the commitment to constant prayer show a clear understanding of the ascetic life as being an angelic and salvific activity without the exclusive encratism of the Eustathian model.

Macarian encratism must then be differentiated from Eustathian encratism and Messalian encratism. From this study, and from the table on p146ff it can be seen that the connection between Eustathianism and the Macarian corpus is tenuous. The details of comparison show that the similarities between them are to be found in many other Cappadocian / Syrian encratic influences. The differences between them, primarily the treatment of the sick and ill, and the attitude to the Church are more distinct. Ps-Macarius was not a Eustathian. Whether he can be classified as a Messalian is another matter.

The final element of this study was the consideration of the distinct Macarian imagery that is evident within the corpus. The two images chosen for detailed consideration, were that of the 'flight of the soul' and 'sober intoxication'. The image of the flight of the soul on the wings of the Spirit speaks of the journey of the soul towards the Godhead, under the power of the Holy Spirit. The image of sober intoxication speaks of the experience of grace upon the believer. The two images connect in that the soul, whilst in flight, seeks to experience grace, and seeks that ultimate intoxicating communion with the Godhead. The transient state of sober intoxication leaves the 'earth-bound' believer yearning for more. Both images are best

understood from the perspective of Syrian Spirituality, the journey of the soul, and the purifying nature of salvation. For Ps-Macarius a life of participation with the Spirit equates to a life of participation with the Godhead. All divine activity is viewed through the experiential activity of the grace of the Spirit. The life of the believer is the life of co-operation with the Holy Spirit, which was received at baptism. Ps-Macarius' progressive soteriology (and in particular his twelve steps) all lead to an ultimate union with the Godhead. The journey prepares the believer for that union, and aids in the purification of their nature.

The study of the terms 'intoxication with God', 'intoxication', and 'sober intoxication' involved a consideration of both the background of the term 'intoxication' and a consideration of the term's wider use. Plato and Plotinus provide the initial understanding of 'sober intoxication' being used to convey spiritual experience. Philo brings to the phrase a Judaic / Hellenic interpretation of the transient nature of experience of the divine. Both forces are necessary and to some extent complementary. The progression of the term 'intoxication' leads to an ultimate union with the 'good' as initially found within Plotinus and Plato, being understood later in the work of Philo as only available as a transient union with the Divine in this life. The subsequent use of the term in Gregory Nyssa provides the best example of the fusion of Platonic thought within generic Christian interpretation.

Similarly study of the concept of flying on the wings of the Spirit reveals that Ps-Macarius has instilled into the phrase a new meaning and personal interpretation drawing from the Platonism of Gregory Nyssa and the Syrian images of flight. For Ps-Macarius flight is dependant upon the grace of God, together with the disciplined life of the believer. A life of prayer is essential for the soul to fly on the wings of the Spirit. Contrary to the Platonic image Ps-Macarius asserts that the wings of the Spirit are not the wings of the soul, but wings of the Godhead. Mankind has the potential to receive these wings of the Spirit, which will enable it to fly, rather than mankind reclaiming wings that were lost. That is, humankind was created with the capacity to receive divine flight, and divine communion. The goal of the soul's flight is into

the 'heavenly frame of thought' and the 'air of the Godhead', and this is received by a life of asceticism and prayer. This Macarian interpretation of participation in the Godhead is an original element in his thought.

Both of the images studied depict the potential divine communion that Ps-Macarius is searching for and teaching about. His brotherhoods provide the framework for a life of prayer, and can be described as communities of those who partake of the divine. The revelations that are received whilst in a state of 'intoxication' are passed on to the brotherhood, and act as a spur to those living an encratic life. It is the emphasis upon the place of prayer that sets Ps-Macarius apart from Gregory Nyssa. Gregory regards the release of the soul into flight as being due to sanctity and righteousness. Ps-Macarius regards it as effected through prayer. Indeed Ps-Macarius' whole rules or guidelines for his communities are concerned with allowing space for prayer to occur.

Overall this study has attempted to show the variety of influences upon Ps-Macarius. These influences included a context of endemic Syrian spirituality, a radical encratic lifestyle, a Hellenic rhetorical training, and a distinct interpretation of Platonic and Neo-Platonic images, coupled to the wider Judaic / Mesopotamian influences of his Church. Ps-Macarius, however, remains an enigma, unidentifiable and still out of reach, yet building upon the previous research considered in the introduction tentative conclusions can be reached on five important points; A) Messalianism, B) Ps-Macarius and Messalianism, C) Greek influences upon Ps-Macarius, D) The distinctive Macarian contribution, E) Ps-Macarius and the Cappadocian Circle.

A) Messalianism.

The charges against Messalianism contained in the heretical lists not only condemn the movement on specific points but also list it with other more obvious and well documented heresies. Yet Messalianism is hard to define, and difficult to isolate. However, the difficulty in

isolating the components of Messalianism can be explained if it is seen as an essentially local dispute, that gained notoriety and then was publicised through the efforts of the local ecclesiastical hierarchy to contain and condemn it. Messalianism became known to a wider audience, outside of the Syrian region of Osrhoene and particularly Antioch and Edessa, primarily through its progression through the synods and councils of the Church, and the subsequent expulsion of extreme adherents. The controversy began in the Syrian area, and spread into Asia Minor at an early stage. The final condemnation of the movement at Ephesus in 431 A.D. specifically mentions the form of the movement that was evident in Pamphylia. This was the end of the conciliar road begun at the councils of Antioch (c380 A.D.) and Side (c385 A.D.)¹¹ However the form of the movement at Pamphylia must not be assumed to be the only representation of Messalianism. The ideas central to Messalianism were also common elsewhere in asceticism, and as with Eustathianism, it is not ascetic activity *per se* that was condemned. Rather it is the extreme and exclusive interpretation of some of the ascetic practices involved.

The local progression and the ephemeral nature of Messalianism has, on occasion led to the movement being seen as basically orthodox, but misinterpreted. The work of Vööbus et al,¹² to highlight the similarity between the Messalians and the more general Syrian ascetical practices has also served to cloud the heretical element of the movement, resulting in Messalianism being seen as essentially 'orthodox' Syrian Spirituality misunderstood. However, a prime factor of the nature of the Messalian heresy that must be taken into consideration is the condemnation of the movement by Theodoret (c440) and Ephrem (c373) both of whom were Syrian. Surely a Syrian of Ephrem's standing could not misunderstand the Syrian spirituality contained within Messalian practices. Either there must have been an objectionable element within Messalianism for such a condemnation to arise, or the issue was

¹¹ For a discussion of the dating of Side see above p52.

¹² See above pp24-59.

of such local significance that they were both acting only upon hearsay. It is the conclusion of this thesis that although primarily a local issue there was an objectionable element to the practices of the Messalians, and that this element concerned the nature of ecclesiastical authority. Part of that accusation concerned the apparent rejection of the validity of the sacraments, with preference being given to the experience of the Holy Spirit.

The much trumpeted (and speculative) connection between Ps-Macarius and Messalianism has also been difficult to isolate. It is apparent however, that Ps-Macarius was certainly not a Messalian in the formal sense as emerges from the anti-Messalian synods. His corpus contains elements that could at least be said to be more moderate than the known Messalian characteristics, and are often in direct conflict. The table on p146ff shows a comparison between the Messalians, Eustathians and Macarian corpus. From this it can be seen for example, that Ps-Macarius regards the experience of the Holy Spirit as essential to the sacrament. Indeed without the experiential confirmation of the presence of the Spirit, the sacrament of the Eucharist was considered invalid. Dörries' suggestion that Ps-Macarius was attempting to reform the movement from within¹³ is credible, but invalidly assumes that Ps-Macarius was a Messalian from the outset. It is equally possible that Ps-Macarius encountered Messalianism through his ecclesiastical position, and attempted to integrate parts of the spirituality of the movement into his emergent communities. Certainly the spread of Messalianism allows for Ps-Macarius, most probably resident in Cappadocia, to encounter Messalianism as it spread from the Syrian regions, and his native Syrian heritage would have enabled him to recognise what was of value in the movement and what was excessive. The table shows that the connections between the Messalians, Eustathians and Ps-Macarius are generic. That is they are of an ascetic type, that could merely be termed an encratic outlook. They are not specific heretical positions of similarity. Our conclusion then is that scholarly attributions of 'Messalianism' to Ps-Macarius must be questioned. As a macro-argument such

¹³ Dörries, 1941.

an approach is too crude to be either accurate or useful.

Staats, in 1983, noted two hurdles to be overcome in relation to Macarian study. The first being an agreed chronology, the second the need for clarification of the place of Messalianism within Eustathian monasticism.¹⁴ Stewart (1991) has gone a great way to answering the first plea, but the latter as yet remains unanswered. As can be seen from the comparisons above, it is the conclusion of this thesis that Eustathianism and Messalianism although similar, are essentially unconnected. Eustathianism was a distinct movement that was found to be canonically objectionable because of the issue of the legitimacy of the married priest, and its assertion of the necessity for celibacy as a requirement for entrance to the Kingdom of God. In the precise terms provided by this thesis, it was an exclusive encratic movement. Within Eustathianism there is a clear personality at the head of the movement, and the identifiable characteristics are obvious. Whilst Messalianism can be said to share some of the themes and emphases of Eustathianism, such as the ascetic focus on prayer and celibacy, there is no clear statement of the exclusive nature of celibacy as is found in Eustathianism. Messalianism is most definitely radical encratism but it is difficult to say with great certainty whether the phenomenon meets the criteria of exclusive encratism. Messalianism commends celibacy, and speaks against marriage. On the available evidence it can be said that Messalianism was a radical encratic movement, that was objectionable even to Syrian Christians, and was *in all likelihood* exclusive in nature. However the evidence to confirm that status is dependent upon the lists of John of Damascus, who has restated the synod of Gangra's description of Eustathianism as synonymous with Messalianism. The corollary to the seventh century lists of John of Damascus is the description of Ephrem in 373 of the Messalians as contemptible.¹⁵ Thus the elusive shadow of Messalianism falls across both the radical and exclusive encratic camps, but the exclusive nature of Messalianism cannot be ruled

¹⁴ See above p44f.

¹⁵ *ezdallal* Ephrem, *Contra haereses*: Madrash 22. Beck, CSCO 169, p79. See also Stewart, 1991, p15.

out, and must not be minimized. Gribomont's assertion of the connection between the Messalians and Eustathians rests in part on the assertions of John of Damascus and the condemnations of the council of Gangra. Gribomont suggests that it was the moderating influence of Basil that kept the Messalians from being condemned in Cappadocia, as opposed to the early condemnation of the movement in the South and East of Caesarea.¹⁶ However, if Messalianism is regarded as an essentially local issue, brought to the fore through Church politics, then any possible direct connection with Eustathianism is even more remote. The option is for the two movements to be of the same genre, but not of the same root. This thesis concludes that Messalianism was a local issue, centred initially around the region of the Osrhoene which was concerned with the authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to adequately confer the felt presence of the Holy Spirit upon those in the Church. Celibacy was seen as a requirement for reception of the Spirit, and as a consequence married priests were disapproved of. This placed the movement on a collision course with Church authorities, and resulted in those such as Ephrem and Theodoret finding the movement objectionable and exclusive in nature. It was this potential exclusivity (of required celibacy) that took it beyond the radically encratic forms of endemic Syrian spirituality, and caused later comparisons and assumed connections with the Eustathians. The movement did not so much spread as was publicised in various places through the efforts of the Church authorities to contain it.

B) Ps-Macarius and Messalianism

The place of Ps-Macarius within Messalianism becomes clearer when the fluid nature of the phenomenon is taken into account. Rather than being a figurehead of the movement, or one attempting to reform the movement from within, Ps-Macarius must be seen as one engaged in the debate as to the role of the encratic within the Church. Ps-Macarius portrays

¹⁶ Gribomont, SP2/TU64, p414f.

some 'enthusiastic' traits which were common to Messalians and attractive to Syrians in general. By the nature of his corpus and the volume of his work we are able to isolate more Macarian theology than we are able to deduce Messalian theology from the extant lists of Messalian traits. Ps-Macarius cannot simply be read as Messalian, particularly so when the whole Messalianism phenomenon is recognised as being so ephemeral in nature.

One example of the large discrepancy between Messalianism and Ps-Macarius is seen in the Messalian approach to work, and the Macarian rules for communal living. Ps-Macarius recognises that communal life is necessary for progression in the life of the believer. He also recognises that prayer is an essential ingredient of that life. However, prayer is not to be engaged in to the detriment of the community. Ps-Macarius writes that the one 'praying must be regarded as praying for the community, and the one working be regarded as working for the community'.¹⁷ This community responsibility and 'collective faith' is unusual, and finds no echo in the Messalian lists. Indeed a criticism of Messalianism concerned their apparent single-mindedness and selfishness in their attitude to prayer.

In relation to virginity it has been shown that Ps-Macarius speaks of celibacy frequently, and lays stress upon the single nature of the ascetic lifestyle, and being single-minded in particular. This however, is a fairly standard focus for any 'monastic' writer. The Macarian corpus does not portray an attitude of exclusive encratism, rather it stresses the progressive nature of the journey of the soul. Concupiscence is acknowledged and due warning of the battle against it is given. However, Ps-Macarius shows an understanding of the process of falling from celibacy, as he considers the issue of fornication within the mind as needing repentance as much as the external act.¹⁸ Those who have been celibate for a long time, and to whom concupiscence is 'completely dried up' are termed the *μεγάλων* :the very great ones.¹⁹ However, Ps-Macarius does not decry the validity of the salvation of those who are not

¹⁷ II.3.2.

¹⁸ II.15.50ff.

¹⁹ II.15.51.

celibate. His is clearly a 'radical encratic' outlook, with a progression through stages of the journey of the soul, in which he concentrates upon the benefits of celibacy, virginity and the requirement of singleness of purpose in the Christian life. Ps-Macarius' approach to the encratic life is one of controlling the body for the reception of divine communication and communion. Celibacy aids the believer in their search for the experience of the Holy Spirit, and aids the community by the subsequent communication of the received spiritual experience.

Within the realm of experience there is a further characteristic of the Macarian community. Experience is a qualification for leadership within the community. Those that teach are to have experienced that which they are teaching about. Thus, those such as Ps-Macarius, that teach have experienced divine communion, and are therefore qualified to teach, but have done so, not only for personal gain, but so that they can teach. The accusation against the Messalians, of selfishness, laziness and prevarication,²⁰ cannot be levelled against Ps-Macarius, as teaching and passing on the divine communications plays such an important part within his community. Indeed in his teaching on intoxication Ps-Macarius is at pains to stress that intoxication is not a permanent experience, or else the one in receipt of the divine communication would not be able to pass on his experience to others. The goal of the Macarian community is communal intoxication, the progression of all members of the community to the level of experience of the Spirit that the teacher has received. The individual can only progress within the confines of the community. Once again this understanding of community life and aims contradicts that which is known about the Messalian movement, whilst still sharing some of the expression and desire for spiritual experience that is seen in that movement.

Within the explanation of the role of the teacher within the community there is an implied criticism that some teachers were teaching without experiencing that which they were

²⁰ Theodoret, *H.E. 4.11*, *Haer Fab Comp 4.11*; Timothy of Constantinople, *De his qui ad ecclesiam ab haereticis accedunt*; John of Damascus, *De Haer 80*.

teaching about. In an ecclesiastical setting the ones teaching were most likely to be bishops and the local Church leadership, and thus there is an understated criticism of the leadership of some of the Churches in the Macarian locality. Rather than this being seen as an anti-ecclesiastical or anti-establishment characteristic, this could be seen as a concern of Ps-Macarius for the genuineness and purity of the teaching within the Church. It is a longstanding aspect of the enduring tension between 'monastic' and 'urban' forms of Church experience and organisation. Ps-Macarius is obviously a person of responsibility within the Macarian communities, and could also be seen so outside of the community structure. That is to suggest that an ecclesiastical position for Ps-Macarius as a Bishop is not out of the question.

C) Greek Influences upon Ps-Macarius

The assertion of Ps-Macarius that the teacher must have experienced that which they are speaking about also finds an echo in his attitude to rhetoric. For Ps-Macarius rhetoric only has power when the Holy Spirit is employed in the delivery of the words. He places the power of speech as subordinate to the power of the Spirit. However, Ps-Macarius rejects empty rhetoric whilst employing rhetorical techniques within his homilies. When allowances are made for the editing of the corpus there remain certain characteristics of expression that point to Ps-Macarius as having received a rhetorical training or education. He leans heavily upon scriptural proofs, often in a triadic format, and the quotations that he uses are primarily for illustration rather than exegesis. Ps-Macarius is not as skilled a rhetor as some, but his homilies are clearly crafted using careful rhetorical constructions. The characteristics of Macarian rhetoric are that of the spiral structure, the picture language and frequency of the familiar proofs of images and metaphors. When these are coupled together with the unique use of language that is often encountered in the homilies it can be seen that Ps-Macarius has a very distinctive and individual style.

A conclusion of this thesis is that Ps-Macarius was not only engaged in speaking to

dedicated ascetics and members of his community, he was also engaged in an apologetic towards sceptical Christians. Ps-Macarius not only seeks to proclaim but also to persuade. As previously stated²¹ it is not necessary to assume that Ps-Macarius received a high level of rhetorical training to regard his homilies as so literarily constructed. It is possible that the environment in which he lived was sufficient to influence his speech and written work. What is clear is that the society was open to Greek culture and education. Desprez, has previously remarked upon the need for the Macarian audience to be able to understand Greek,²² and this thesis has strengthened that assertion. The form of his rhetoric is too pronounced and regular for it to be ignored. Furthermore the very number of homilies ascribed to Ps-Macarius suggest that there was a regular occasion for delivery. It has become apparent through the course of this study that Ps-Macarius was an influential person both within and without his own community. His Christian discourse points to his homilies being delivered both to those who believed and to those who were sceptical. To those dedicated to radical encratism and to those to whom such a move was an anathema, or seen as unnecessary. When this proposal is placed with the assertion noted above, that Messalianism was essentially a local, and ephemeral issue related to the authority of the Church, and the validity of spiritual experience, it can be seen that Ps-Macarius is within two camps. The encratic community, and the wider Ecclesiastical church setting. Thus, Ps-Macarius was in a position whereby he was able to influence others, and affect ecclesiastical reaction and policy. Whether Ps-Macarius was an elite member of a church, as the *ihîdāyā and bnay Qyāmā* is a possibility, so too is the possibility that he was a bishop, or presbyter within a local church.

D) The Distinctive Macarian Contribution.

Coupled to the Hellenic influence as witnessed in the rhetoric of Ps-Macarius are the

²¹ See above p117f.

²² Desprez, CC 46, p110.

distinctive interpretations of Platonic thought that find expression through his writings. The two phrases specifically examined, that of 'Intoxication' and of the 'flight of the soul on the wings of the Spirit', both draw from a Platonic origin. However, Ps-Macarius brings to them both a new interpretation. In the case of 'sober intoxication' Ps-Macarius incorporates into the phrase an understanding of salvation as progressive, of which ecstasy and divine union is the ultimate aim. He uses the phrase as a metaphor for the highest spiritual experience, whereas Gregory Nyssa uses the phrase to describe the ongoing experience of the Divine that is necessary for the believer to seek. For Ps-Macarius, the highest level of spiritual awareness, intoxication, is a transient entity. It is a condition for the reception of revelation, and a temporary entry into sacred time. The Macarian understanding of the potential for the Christian, of living in the presence of the Godhead, in sacred time whilst still on earth, is central to an understanding of the transient nature of intoxication. Intoxication is dependant upon the discipline of the believer, but contrary to the Platonic understanding, is also conditional upon a greater degree of grace being given to the believer by the Divine. Thus the lamp that is 'especially trimmed' is done so not only by prayer but also by the will of God. Ps-Macarius follows the interpretation of Philo for the reception of divine communication, rather than that of Plato, and incorporates an appreciation of the progressive journey of the soul, as found in Syrian Spirituality, into his thought.

Ps-Macarius also adds his distinctive voice to the Syrian poetic image of the 'wings of the Spirit'. The Platonic force behind the phrase concerns the soul rediscovering the wings it lost when it first fell to earth. However Ps-Macarius moves away from that interpretation and states that the soul rather than being formed with wings to begin with, flies not on its own wings, but on the wings of the Spirit. The soul was thus formed with the potential to receive wings for flight, rather than being in possession of wings and already in flight as the Platonic myth.²³ Ps-Macarius therefore portrays a Platonic understanding but overlaid with his personal

²³ See above p217f.

interpretation. A further distinct Macarian contribution to the interpretation of the wings of the Spirit is found in his explanation as to the eventual location of the soul. In Macarian thought, the soul flies into the air of the Godhead. This is the Macarian interpretation of participation in the Godhead, as found predominantly in Gregory Nyssa. Ps-Macarius harnesses the philosophical concept of flight with the idea of the journey of the soul to produce a powerful image of progression. Within the brotherhoods of Ps-Macarius the place of prayer is of paramount importance. Prayer releases the soul to flight, prayer aids the soul in the battle against sin, and prayer is the instigator of intoxication. Yet Ps-Macarius is always careful to note that prayer is only a part of the requirement, and that no matter how encratic the lifestyle, the appearance of divine grace is always crucial. Thus the presence of divine grace, which can be withdrawn by God, acts as a spur to prayer, and results in a tangible experience of the Spirit in the life of a believer. Together with the emphasis upon the journey of the soul it is the stress upon the role of prayer that sets the Macarian interpretation of 'intoxication' and 'flight' apart.

Ps-Macarius stressed the idea of the progressive journey of the soul to ultimate participation with the Godhead. The images of intoxication and flight reveal the temporal nature of the ecstatic experiences whilst on earth. They also reveal the position of the believer as one who has the potential to live in 'Sacred time' as well as earthly time. The community of believers is seen as affiliated to the heavenly community in Paradise. Indeed they will, when presented to the bridegroom as perfect, be one with that paradisiacal community. The tension within the Macarian corpus is similar to the 'Now and not yet' tension evident in the writings of the Apostle Paul. Ps-Macarius stresses the need for the grace of the Holy Spirit to enable the believer to live in 'Sacred time'. Baptism, for Ps-Macarius is the entrance to the paradisiacal community. The encratic lifestyle is the living of the paradisiacal community on earth. Ps-Macarius views the angels as a 'type' of paradisiacal community. The Macarian brotherhoods are to be as communities of angels for the Church. In speaking thus, Ps-Macarius is emphasising the position of the Church as the Bride of Christ, and is looking forward

eschatologically to the ultimate participation with the Godhead.

E) Ps-Macarius and the Cappadocian circle

Throughout this study of Ps-Macarius and Messalianism it has become apparent that the charisma of salvation is in Macarian understanding a progressive revelation, incorporating baptism but recognising the need for a continued disciplined life. Similarly the spirituality of the early church cannot be viewed through the twentieth century western interpretation of spiritual experience. Messalianism is now as isolated as it is likely to be without the discovery of further texts, as an ephemeral movement that was leaning strongly toward objectionable exclusivity, through the requirement for tangible experience of the Holy Spirit in the leadership of the Church. In some instances this exclusive line was crossed (eg in Pamphylia). However, the person of Ps-Macarius remains hidden within the shadows of Messalianism and emergent forms of monasticism in this period.

It is the proposition of this thesis that Ps-Macarius was for some of the time at least resident in the Cappadocian area, and moved in the same circles as, or just after Gregory Nyssa. The most well known connection between Gregory Nyssa and Ps-Macarius is that of the *Great Letter* of Ps-Macarius and *De Instituto* of Gregory Nyssa. Present scholarship accepts that Gregory in some way utilised the *Great Letter* of Ps-Macarius in his *De Instituto*. Although this thesis has not examined the direct relationship between those two documents, the relationship between the two authors has been a constant theme. In regard to the use of Platonism within their individual theologies Gregory Nyssa is by far the most erudite and integrated of the two. Yet this does not necessarily give him priority. Ps-Macarius could be said to be more embryonic or individual in his integration of Platonism into his theology, and he is the more distinctive in the results. However it must be remembered that the connection between Gregory and Ps-Macarius is more than one of simple priority. Both writers could have been using a mutual source, or the work of one could have been brought to the attention of the

other through an intermediary. Direct connection is difficult to prove without an identification of Ps-Macarius. For example Ps-Macarius incorporates the Gregorian explanation of participation in the Godhead, but he does so in his own language and style. The similarity in the use of the metaphor of 'Sober intoxication' is a further pointer to the connection between the two authors. The similarity of use is not sufficient to suggest a connection alone, but when coupled to the results of previous research, it is another example of the interrelation of the Cappadocian circle, and Gregory Nyssa in particular, with Ps-Macarius. Similarly the metaphor of flying on the wings of the Spirit shows the uniqueness of the Macarian contribution and interpretation when compared to Gregory.

This thesis does not positively identify Ps-Macarius. Rather it proposes that the connection between Ps-Macarius and the Cappadocian Circle was real and mutual. Ps-Macarius is soaked in Syrian heritage, but fluent in Hellenic culture. His is a wine fermented from two kinds of grape. The influence of Basil, Macrina and Gregory Nyssa cannot be underestimated. Neither can the assertion that Ps-Macarius must have held some ecclesiastical position to receive ready access to the Cappadocians and also for his homilies to have been recorded and kept on such a large scale. If the production of the homilies of Ps-Macarius took place over a period of time, such as when Ps-Macarius could have held an episcopal position, then at least some of the homilies may have been produced at the same time as the Gregorian texts. Furthermore the earliest homilies could well have been produced in the lifetime of Basil of Caesarea. Indeed Meyendorff suggested that Ps-Macarius was a member of Basil's circle of friends.²⁴ However, Basil died in 379 AD and this does postulate a long time of ecclesiastical service for Ps-Macarius. It is unlikely that such a long period of office would have produced so many pseudographical texts, or the subsequent identification of Ps-Macarius became so problematic. Rather, it is proposed that the influence of Basil upon Ps-Macarius was through the written word. It is therefore more likely that Ps-Macarius was a member of the circle of

²⁴ Meyendorff, St. VTQ 24.4, p228.

friends or colleagues of Gregory Nyssa rather than that of Basil, particularly so when the similarities between the mystical theology of Gregory and the progressive experiential salvation of Ps-Macarius are considered. This relationship could have been one of teacher / disciple, but precise evidence for such a relationship is as yet undiscovered. However, if Ps-Macarius was a contemporary, or near contemporary of Gregory Nyssa it would place the delivery of the homilies between c380-394 AD, the production of the texts taking place either parallel to or just after their delivery. This would give the texts time to circulate and become more well known, before the condemnation of a portion of the homilies at the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. under the guise of the Messalian *Asceticon*.

Whatever the precise relationship between the Cappadocian Circle and Ps-Macarius it is clear that certain similarities do exist between them. Both are clearly concerned with emergent monasticism. Basil particularly with the ordering of the more errant communities of Eustathius. Macrina forming and leading a unique community at the family estate of Annesi. Gregory Nyssa stressing the idea of personal communion with God and channelling the emergent monastic movement into the wider ecclesiastical setting. Ps-Macarius was involved in the same process, influencing ascetic communities in the same direction, stressing personal responsibility for the reception of divine grace, and the progression of the believer, within an ecclesiastical setting.

EPILOGUE

The 'cauldron of influences' that was Cappadocia at the end of the fourth century, and the forms of Syrian Spirituality and Christianity that were contained within it are not easy to distinguish. The role of Ps-Macarius within that area is hard to isolate with any great precision. Yet the Macarian homilies not only contain advice and instructions as to spiritual progression, they also reveal some of the turmoil and interaction that was evident within the Cappadocian area. Moreover in spite of the editing and collating of the homilies that has taken place over the years they still connect the modern reader to the intricacies and debates of the fourth century Christian world. The homilies, with their internalised spirituality, pleas for the protection of the heart and purity of the eye of the soul strike a chord within a wide variety of the present day readership.

Ps-Macarius is significant for his emphasis upon the future state of the believer and of the immediate availability of heavenly communion in the present time. For Ps-Macarius paradise, with the ultimate re-creation of mankind and union with the Divine, is in permanent focus. Nothing can be understood without this eschatological emphasis. The brotherhoods of believers have to be examined in light of their future position in God. The potentiality of heavenly communion in the present, as illustrated by the images of flight and intoxication, can only be properly understood in the light of the future position of the believer. This 'dual-time' emphasis, of living in 'earthly time', yet having the potential to enter the 'sacred time' is not unique to Ps-Macarius. What is unique to him, is the blend of influences which are evident within his corpus. Ps-Macarius does not emphasise the heavenly experience to the detriment of community life, or without acknowledgement of the need of discipline and prayer. He acknowledges the difficulties in attaining the lifestyle necessary for heavenly encounter. Furthermore, he is significant for his explanations as to the presence of grace. Grace is not only necessary, it is crucial. However it is not always available in totality, it is variable. It follows that the experience of the Divine, as revealed and enabled through grace is also variable. Thus Ps-Macarius' emphasis on prayer and work and on individual discipline and community relationships within the context of the Church.

The periods of time when the believer is aware of the lack of grace, and the struggle of the ascetic lifestyle, are explained as symptomatic of God's leading and of the progress of the believer rather than as a failure or sign of weakness.

Ps-Macarius is far from anti-ecclesiastical, yet he shows an obvious dissatisfaction with certain elements within the Church. The Church through the eyes of Ps-Macarius is in danger of losing her heart. The pleas of Ps-Macarius for an internal spirituality and pure heart in mankind could equally be applied to the Church, which is in danger of losing the cross cultural element of the Gospel, preferring instead a homogenous Hellenic view of leadership and belief. Leadership within the Church is regarded with both honour and suspicion. It could be said that Ps-Macarius is anti-establishment but yet in love with the Church, concerned with the purity of the Bride of Christ of which he is a part.

There have been many assumptions made in the past as to the value of the Macarian Corpus. At times this has distorted the value of the texts themselves. Present day Church historians have to be aware of the danger of assumed superiority of their own traditions when studying the corpus. Recent studies, such as Stewart, have begun to reveal a depth in Ps-Macarian theology that in the past has been lost in a desire to ascribe orthodoxy, or heresy, to the overall work. This thesis has added detail to the understanding of the theology of Ps-Macarius, and revealed some of the influences evident within it. By more positively identifying the Cappadocian connections of Ps-Macarius this thesis has sought to bring clarity and confirmation to previous study. The Cappadocian circle is of undoubted influence to the person and work of Ps-Macarius. The assertion that Ps-Macarius was either a bishop or a leading presbyter merits further study. Rather than Ps-Macarius being seen as a maverick ascetic on the fringe of the Church, he should now be understood as a part of the Church, in a position of influence. That influence was not only towards the Syrian and Hellenic cultures but also to the growing cross-cultural population that was in evidence. Further insights into the Macarian corpus remain to be discovered. In particular a complete critical edition and index to the corpus would greatly aid further research. Questions

remain as to the influence of Judaic apocalyptic theology upon the Macarian language of spiritual ascent. Similarly there is scope for an in-depth comparison between the writings of Gregory Nyssa and Ps-Macarius, beyond the bounds of the *De Instituto* and the *Great Letter*. The attitude of the Church to spiritual experience, and the conflict between grace endowed or politically achieved leadership is another area which Ps-Macarian study has a contribution to make.

The Macarian concerns of the purity of the heart, of being intoxicated by the Spirit, and of the soul flying into the air of the Godhead, stress the journey of the soul and the progression of the believer. Such concerns are timeless, yet Ps-Macarius grounds the timeless in the everyday. His desire for a pure Church is as relevant today as it was when he first spoke of the need for a real experience of the Divine in the heart of the Christian. Perhaps that is why the Macarian corpus has had such a profound effect upon both individuals and Christian tradition. Macarius, whoever he has, was certainly a master of prayer and a skilled interpreter of the Christian life, His integrity and whole hearted devotion to the cause of advancing Christians deeper into the experience of sancity, undoubtedly merit him an enduring place in the highest ranks of Christian teachers. His modesty and fire emerge clearly in this representative text, and it is fitting at the end of such a lengthy study, that we leave the last word to our enigmatic subject, that he might speak for himself :

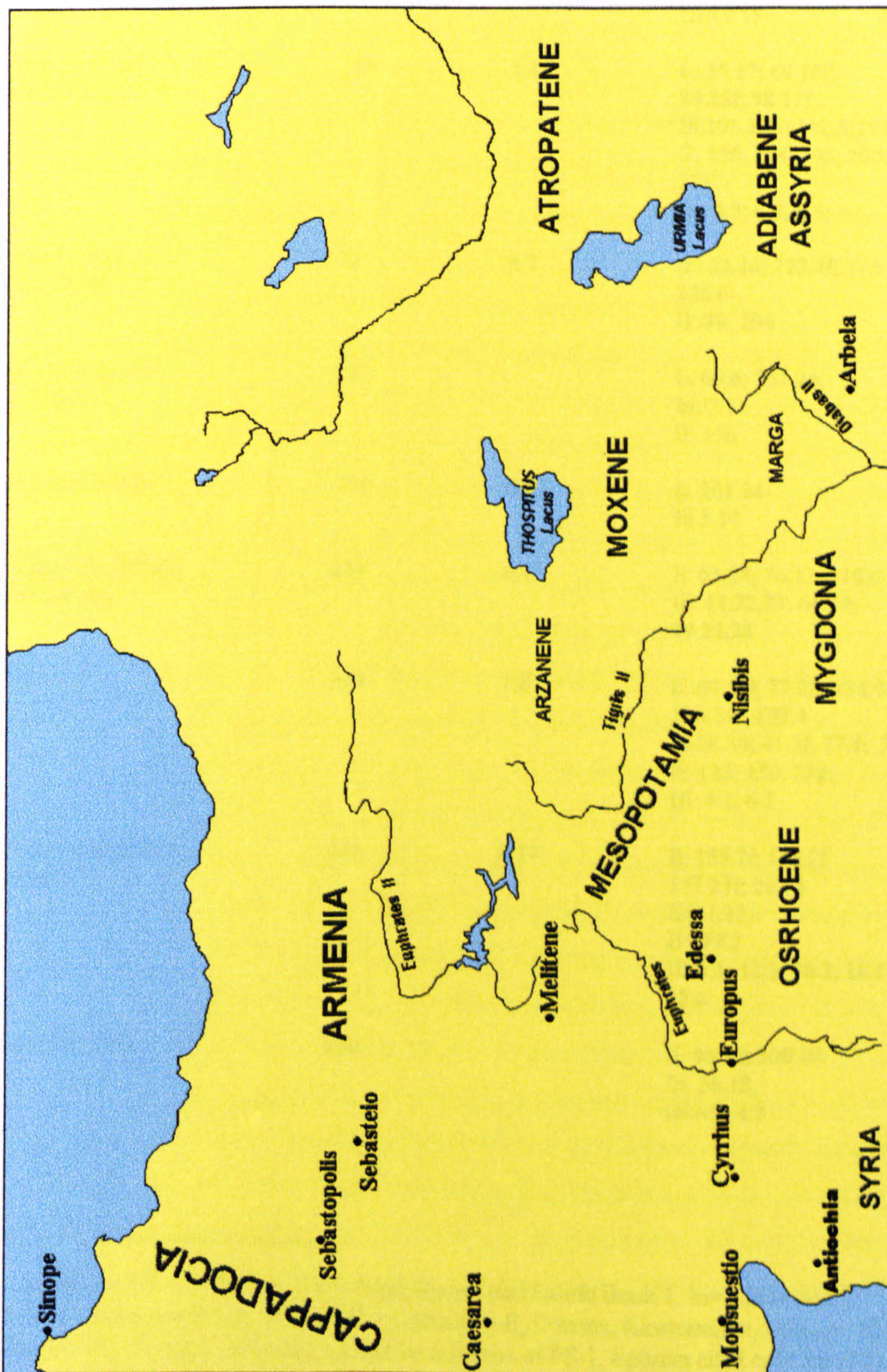
Let us therefore prepare ourselves to travel to the Lord with an undivided will and purpose, and to become followers of Christ, to accomplish whatever He wills, and to think upon His commandments to do them. Let us sever ourselves altogether from the love of the world and attach our souls to Him only as our business and care and quest. If we have to be somewhat busied also in body, with the business laid upon us, and with obedience for God's sake, let not the mind be parted from its love and quest and longing after the Lord; so that striving in such a mind, and journeying along the way of righteousness with an upright intention, and always taking heed to ourselves we may obtain the promise of His Spirit, and may through Grace be delivered from the perdition of the darkness of the passions, by which the soul is exercised, that we may be made meet for the eternal kingdom, and permitted to enjoy all eternity with Christ, glorifying the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit for ever. Amen.¹

¹ II.9.13

APPENDIX

Appendix A.

Armenia and the Surrounding Areas c6th.



Appendix B

Theme / text.	<u>Aphrahat</u>	<u>Ephrem</u>	<u>Ps-Macarius</u> ¹
Circumcision of heart	501	.	II: 304
Word of God = Sword Eph 6:17	525	.	Iii:133.7f; 191.17f II: 194, III:19.15
Putting on Christ's Armour Eph 6.	244	5,11	Ii: 35.17; 68.18f; 89.28f; 98.11f; Iii:191.16ff; 192.5;193.5f; II: 156; 194; 196; 200; 211; 225 III: 4.3; 6.3; 8.3;
Fire and division Luke 12:49	92	8,7	Ii : 33.16; 123.4f; 175.1; 226.6 II :88; 204
Becoming <i>ihîdayâ</i> (μοναχός)	341	.	Ii: 69.6; 261.24; Iii: 3.14 II: 156
Becoming Virgin	341	8,16	Ii: 261.24 Iii 3.14
In Christ the <i>Îhîdayâ</i> (Μονογενής)	269	8,17	Ii: 63.24; 76.11; 119.6 Iii: 11.22,23; 64.19; 99.21,24
Crown	248	7,8	Ii: 69.5,9; 77.28; 134.9.12; 135.14f; 197.4 Iii:28.30; 41.3f; 77.4; 209.23 II: 132; 156; 272; III: 4.1; 6.1
Christ becomes their Treasure	341	8,17	Ii: 155.7f; 155.2f 157.21f; 262.8 Iii:31.12 II:177.2 III:4.1; 12.1; 16.3; 18.1; 25.6
Athlete of Christ	248	.	Ii: 46.12; 208.19 Iii: 56.18, III:6:3; 4.3

¹ References:Ii = Collection I, Berthold, Reden und Briefe Book 1. Iii= Collection I, Berthold, Reden und Briefe Book 2. II = Collection II, Dörries, Klostermann, Kroeger. III= Collection III, Desprez. Aphrahat quoted by columns of PS 1, Ephrem cited only for *H.Eptiph*, from original table, Murray NTS 21p69

Appendix C:**Collection II, Homily 11, (Also Collection I Homily 53:1-4)**

This translation follows Mason 1921 p79ff

1. That heavenly fire of the Godhead, which Christians receive in their hearts now in this present world, that same fire which now ministers inwardly in the heart becomes outward when a body is dissolved, and recomposes the members, and causes a resurrection of the members that had been resolved. As the fire that ministered on the altar at Jerusalem lay buried in a pit during the time of the captivity, and the selfsame fire, when peace came and the captives returned home, was renewed, as it were, and ministered in its accustomed manner, so now the heavenly fire works upon this body that is so near us, which after its dissolution turns to mire, and renews it, and raises up the bodies that had decayed. The inward fire that now dwells in the heart becomes external, and causes a resurrection of the body.
2. The fire in the furnace under Nabuchodnosor was no divine fire, but a creature; but the three Children, because of their righteousness, while they were in the visible fire, had in their hearts the divine and heavenly fire ministering within their thoughts and exerting its energy in them. That very fire showed itself outside them. It stood between them and the visible fire, and restrained it, that it should not burn the righteous, nor do them any manner of hurt. In like manner, when the mind of Israel and their thoughts were bent upon departing far from the living God and turning to idolatry, Aaron was compelled to tell them to bring their golden vessels and ornaments. Then the gold and the vessels, which they cast into the fire, became an idol, and the fire, as it were copied their intention. That was a wonderful thing. They secretly, in purpose and thought, determined upon idolatry, and the fire accordingly fashioned the vessels thrown upon it into an idol, and then they committed idolatry openly. As then, the three Children, having thoughts of righteousness, received in themselves the fire of God, and worshipped the Lord in truth, so now the faithful souls receive that divine and heavenly fire, in this world, in secret; and that fire forms a heavenly image upon their humanity.
3. As the fire formed the golden vessels, and they became an idol, so does the Lord, who copies the intentions of the faithful and good souls, and forms an image even now in the soul according to their desire, and at the resurrection it appears external to them, and glorifies their bodies within and without. But as the bodies of some are at this time decayed for a season, and dead and dissolved, so also are their thoughts decayed by the action of Satan, and are dead to the life indeed, and buried in mire and earth; for their soul is perished. As, therefore, the Israelites cast the golden vessels into the fire, and they become an idol, so now the man has given over his pure and good thoughts to evil, and they have been buried in the mire of sin, and are become an idol. And what shall a man do to discover them, and discern them, and cast

them out of his own fire? Here the soul has need of a divine lamp, even of the Holy Spirit, who sets in order the darkened house. It needs the bright sun of righteousness, which enlightens and rises upon the heart, as an instrument to win the battle.

4. That woman who lost the piece of silver, first lighted a lamp, and then set the house in order, and thus, the house being set in order and the lamp lit, the piece of silver was found, buried in dirt and filth and earth. So now the soul cannot of itself find its own thoughts, and disengage them; but when the divine lamp is lit, it lights up the darkened house, and then the soul beholds its thoughts, how they lie buried in the filth and mire of sin. The sun rises, and then the soul beholds its loss, and begins to recall the thoughts that were mingled among the dirt and uncleanness. For indeed the soul lost her image when she transgressed the commandment.

5. Suppose there is a king, and he has goods and servants under him to minister to him, and he happens to be taken by his enemies and carried captive. When he is taken and removed from his country, his ministers and servants cannot but follow him. Thus Adam was created pure by God for His service, and these creatures were given to him to minister to his wants. He was appointed lord and king of all creatures. But when the evil word came to him, and conversed with him, he first received it by the outward hearing, then it penetrated through his heart, and took possession of all his being. When he was thus seized, creation, which served him and ministered to him, was seized with him. Through him death reigned over every soul, and defaced every image of Adam in consequence of his disobedience, so that men were turned and came to the worship of devils. Lo, the fruits of the earth, which were created good by God, are offered to the devils - bread, wine and oil; and they set animals upon altars; yea they sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils.

6. At this point comes He in person, who fashioned body and soul, and undoes the whole business of the wicked one and his works accomplished in men's thoughts, and renews and forms a heavenly image, and makes a new thing of the soul, that Adam may again be king over death and lord of the creatures. In the shadow of the law, Moses was called the Saviour of Israel, because he brought them out of Egypt. So now the true redeemer, Christ, goes through into the hidden places of the soul, and brings it out of dark Egypt, and the heavy yoke, and the bitter bondage. He commands us, therefore, to come out of the world, and become poor of all visible things, and to have no earthly care, but night and day to stand at the door, and wait for the time when the Lord shall open the closed hearts, and shall pour upon us the gift of the Spirit.

7. He told us therefore to leave gold, silver and kinsfolk, to sell that which we have and distribute to the poor, and to treasure it up and seek it in heaven. For where your treasure is,

there will your heart be also. The Lord knew that in this quarter Satan prevails over the thoughts, to drag them down to anxiety for material, earthly things. For this reason God, in providential care for the soul, told you to renounce all, in order that even against your will you might seek the heavenly riches, and keep your heart Godwards; for even if you should wish to return to the creaturely things, you find nothing visible in your possession. Whether you will it or not, you are compelled to send up your mind to heaven, where you have treasured these things and laid them up, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

8. In the Law, God commanded Moses to make a serpent of brass, and lift it up, and fix it upon the top of a pole, and as many as were stung by the serpents, when they fixed their attention upon the brazen serpent, obtained healing. This was done by way of a dispensation, in order that those who were held by earthly cares, and the worship of idols, and the pleasures of Satan, and all manner of ungodliness, might by this means to some extent look upward to things above, and gaining a respite from things below, might give heed to higher things; and thus advancing little by little to the higher and loftier kind, might learn to know that there is a most highest surpassing all the creation. So likewise He commanded you also to make yourself poor, and to sell all and give to the poor, in order that after that, even if you should wish to sink down upon the earth, it might be impossible. Searching into your heart, you begin to commune with your thoughts. Inasmuch as we have nothing upon earth, let us be getting heavenwards, where our treasure is, where we have set up a business. Your mind begins to uplift an eye to the height, to seek the things above, and in doing so to make progress.

9. What, however, is the dead serpent? The serpent fixed upon the top of the pole healed those that were stung. The dead serpent overcame the live ones. Thus it is a figure of the body of the Lord. The body which He took of the ever Virgin Mary, he offered it up upon the cross, and hung it there, and fastened it upon the tree; and the dead body overcame and slew the live serpent creeping in the heart. Here was a great marvel, how the dead serpent slew the live one; but as Moses made a new thing, when he made a likeness of a live serpent, so also the Lord made a new thing from the Virgin Mary, and put this on, instead of bringing Him a body from heaven. The heavenly Spirit entered in and wrought in Adam, and brought him into combination with the Godhead, put on human flesh, and fashioned it in the womb. As no serpent of brass was ever commanded by the Lord to be made in the world until Moses, so a new and sinless body was never seen in the world until the Lord. For when the first Adam transgressed the commandment, death reigned over his children without exception. So a dead body overcame a live serpent.

10. This wonderful thing is to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Grecks foolishness. But what says the apostle? But we preach Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, to the Jews a stumbling

block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to us that are saved Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. In the dead body is life. Here is redemption, here is light. Here the Lord comes to death, and discourses with him, and bids him bring the souls out of hell and earth, and give them back to Him. Behold then, death, troubled at these things, goes in to his ministers, and gathers together all his powers; and the price of wickedness produces the bond-deeds, and says, 'See, these obeyed my words; see how men worshipped us.' But God, who is a just judge, displays His justice here also, and says to him, 'Adam obeyed you, and you did take possession of all the hearts of him. Humanity obeyed you. What is my body doing here? This is without sin. That body of the first Adam was under obligation to you, and you have a right to keep the bond-deeds of it; but to me all bear witness that I have never sinned. I owe you nothing, and all bear witness that I am the Son of God. Above the heavens came a voice and bore witness upon the earth, 'This is my beloved Son; hear Him'. John witnesses 'Behold, the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world'; and the scripture again, 'Who did no sin, neither was guilt found in him,' and 'The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me'. And you yourself O Satan, bear witness to Me saying 'I know You, who You are, the son of God' and again 'What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to torment us before time?' There are three that bear witness to Me:- He that is above the heavens sent forth a voice; they that are on earth; and you yourself. Therefore I purchase the body that was sold to You through the first Adam; I cancel your bonds. I paid the debts of Adam, when I was crucified and descended into Hell; and I command you, O Hell and darkness and death, bring out the imprisoned souls of Adam.' Thus the evil powers stricken with terror, give back the imprisoned Adam.

11. But when you hear that at that time the Lord delivered the souls from hell and darkness, and went down to hell, and did a glorious work, do not imagine that these things are so very far from your own soul. Man is capable of admitting and receiving the evil one. Death keeps fast hold of the souls of Adam, and the thoughts of the soul lie imprisoned in the darkness. When you hear of sepulchres, do not think only of visible ones; your own heart is a sepulchre and a tomb. When the prince of wickedness and his angels burrow there, and make paths and thoroughfares there, on which the powers of Satan walk into your mind and thoughts, are you not a hell, a tomb, a sepulchre, a dead man towards God? There it was that Satan coined reprobate silver. In this soul he sowed seeds of bitterness. It is leavened with old leaven; a fountain of mire springs there. Well, then, the Lord comes into souls that seek after Him, into the deep of the heart-hell, and there lays His command upon death, saying 'Bring out the imprisoned souls that are seeking after Me, which thou detain by force'. So He breaks through the heavy stones that lie on the soul, opens the sepulchres, raises up the man that is dead

indeed, brings out of the jail the imprisoned soul.

12. Just as if a man were bound hand and foot with chains, and someone came and loosed his hands, and let him walk free without interference, so the Lord looses from its bonds the soul that is bound with the chains of death, and lets it go, and sets the mind free to walk at ease and unhindered into God's air. Suppose a man were in the middle of a river in full flood, and overwhelmed by the water lay lifeless, drowned, with dreadful monsters all round him. If another man, who is not used to swimming, should wish to save the one who fell in, he too is lost, and is drowned with him. Clearly there is a need of a skilled swimmer, an expert, to go out into the depth of the water of the gulf, and dive, and bring up the drowned man there among the monsters. The water itself, when it sees a man skilled and knowing how to navigate it, helps such a man, and bears him up to the surface. The soul, in the same way, has been plunged and drowned in the abyss of darkness and the deep of death, and is dead and parted from God among dreadful monsters; and who is able to go down into those secret chambers and the depths of hell and death, except that expert Workman who fashioned the body? In His own person, He enters into two quarters, into the depth of hell, and into the deep gulf of the heart where the soul with its thoughts is held fast by death, and brings up out of the darksome hole the Adam that lay dead. And death itself, through practice, becomes an assistance to man, like the water to the swimmer.

13. What difficulty is there to God in entering into death, or into the deep gulf of the heart either, and calling up the dead Adam from there? In the natural world there are houses and tenements where mankind dwells, and there are places where wild beasts dwell, lions, or dragons, or other venomous beasts. If the sun, which is but a creature, enters in every direction, through windows, through doors, and into the dens of lions, and into the holes of serpents, and comes out again without taking any harm, how much more does the God and Lord of all enter into the holes and dwelling places where death pitched his tent, and into souls, and rescue Adam from there without being injured by death? The rain, too, comes down from heaven, and reaches down into the lower parts of the earth, and there moistens and renews the dried roots, and makes there a new growth.

14. One man maintains conflict and hardship and war against Satan. This man's heart is contrite; he is in care and mourning and tears. Such a one has come to stand in two separate realms. If then, in this stage of things he perseveres, the Lord is with him for the battle, and protects him; for he seeks in earnest and knocks at the door till He opens to him. Again, if you see here a good brother, it is grace which has established him. But the man without foundation has no such fear of God. His heart is not contrite. He has no fear, nor does he secure his heart and members, not to walk disorderly. This man's soul is altogether free, for he has yet to enter

into conflict. There is then a difference between the man in conflict and hardship, and the man who does not know what battle is. Even the seeds, when cast into the ground, undergo hardship with the frosts, with the winter, with the coldness of the air, and in due season the growth is quickened.

15. It sometimes happens that Satan talks in the heart, 'See how many wrong things you have done! See how many follies your soul is filled with, and you are so weighed down with sins, that you cannot be saved'. This he does to reduce you to despair, and to make you think that your repentance is not acceptable. For since by the transgression wickedness entered in, it talks with the soul every hour, like man with man. Answer him then, 'I have the testimonies of the Lord in writing, that say I desire not the death of the sinner, but his repentance, and that he should turn from his wickedness and live'. It was for this that He came down, to save sinners, to raise the dead, to quicken lost lives, to give light to those in darkness. In truth he came, and called us to the adoption of sons, to a holy city which is ever at peace, to the life that never dies, to glory incorruptible. Only let us put a good finish to our beginning. Let us abide in poverty, in the condition of strangers, in suffering affliction, in petition to God, knocking importunately at the door. Near as the body is to the soul, the Lord is nearer, to come and open the locked doors of the heart, and to bestow on us the riches of heaven. He is good and kind to man, and his promises cannot lie, if only we continue seeking Him to the end. Glory be to the compassions of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit for ever. Amen.

Appendix D: The Final Document of the Milan Colloquium. April 1982.

I. By encratism we understand self-restraint (*enkrateia*) in its radical form, which goes so far as to repudiate marriage (*gamos*). Marriage is identified from the start with harlotry (*porneia*) and corruption (*phthora*), which entails and presupposes a negative estimation of human existence, including birth and procreation (*genesis*). This position is often accompanied by abstention in matters of food, with specific reference to meat and wine, together with a renunciation of the things of this world. It is usually characterised by a protological motivation, which provides its basis and its justification: the doctrine of the virgin Adam, or of the uncorrupted soul, which excludes sexuality from the original nature of man (or of the soul). This cluster of themes dominates the entire history of the fall and reinstatement of man, and gives the manifestation of the Kingdom its meaning.

This encratism, which makes its appearance also within the Christian history of the early centuries, none the less presupposes, so far as its protological motivation is concerned, a hellenistic and Philonic ancestry; thereby it is connected to some extent with other positions relating to the practice of *enkrateia* (from which it diverges, sometimes profoundly, in other respects no less essential): the Origenist tradition, which continues in the fourth century in the treatises on virginity, and the complex formed by Marcionism and various currents of gnosticism. This divergence is connected also with the fact that the gnostic currents may be distinguished by conceptions relating to differing levels, or clearly differentiated in regard to the problems of sex, which they often transpose to a mystical level as a result of their respective pneumatologies. In other milieux they find expression in themes characteristic of sexual abstentionism, but inspired by the gnostic doctrine of the *pneuma* which must be restored apart from the body. This doctrine is sometimes expressed in accordance with an Adamic protology, which sees in the formation of Eve, that is in the manifestation of the duality of the sexes, the rupture of a primordial pneumatic unity.

a) Encratism, as defined at the beginning of this text, is already present to some degree in the doctrines denounced in the Pastoral epistles, and appears in an explicit and typical fashion in the teaching attributed to Tatian and Julius Cassianus. It is found also in some of the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, and in certain sectors of Aramean Christianity.

b) The tradition of encratism is present in Manicheism. There it is integrated into the doctrine of the two Kingdoms (Light-Darkness). It is formulated in the context of a gnostic cosmology, anthropology and soteriology which provide the basis for its ontological, protological and eschatological motivations. This threefold motivation is expressed both in the Manichean ecclesiology and in the daily behaviour of the community and its members ('elect')

and 'hearers'). It underlies their sexual abstinence and their abstinence in matters of food, as well as the prohibition against doing harm to the 'particles of light'.

II. *Enkrateia*, in so far as it is founded upon a protological motivation, implies a post-lapsarian character of marriage, and more precisely the idea that marriage pre-supposes the fall, an idea associated with the doctrine of 'double-creation' and an 'antecedent fault' the consequence of which is the creation of the world of sexuality.

The historical sources of this protologically motivated *enkrateia* may be sought in the encratite aspirations which already existed in the second century and in the Platonic tradition, both pressed into service in the Biblical exegesis of the Church.

This phenomenology of *enkrateia* in the Fathers of the tradition mentioned above is well founded and significant from the point of view of the history of religions, but it does not render useless the study of the theological, spiritual and ethical influences which may have moved these authors to use as arguments the protological motivations with which we are concerned in this document: the 'double-creation' and 'antecedent fault' providing the reason for the sexual and more generally physiological constitution (*katakeue*) of man. A contributory factor may have been the affirmation that through birth one becomes a son of Adam, and that one is saved only by a new birth.

III. The protological motivation of *enkrateia* with its encratite and hellenic origins is not the only explanation for the Christian doctrine and practice of continence and asceticism. Originally both the doctrine and the practice were motivated by the eschatological perspective of the Kingdom, by the idea of being entirely devoted to the service of the Lord (with undivided heart), by the imitation of Christ, and by the influences of such texts as Matthew 19.12 and 1 Corinthians 7.

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