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Appendix. Bibliogr.

I. épiphanie. II. Hymnes syriaques — Traductions anglaises.

PER L1183 / FT36795P

AN ANONYMOUS HYMN FOR EPIPHANY

BY
S.P. BROCK

A great number of early anonymous Syriac hymns, often (like the one published here) of great beauty, lie hidden in medieval manuscripts of the West Syrian Fenqitho. Some of these, indeed, feature in the seven-volume Syrian Catholic edition of 1886-96 (where they are indiscriminately attributed to Ephrem), but in most cases the poems have been either drastically abbreviated, or rearranged there - a fate which also applies to our present hymn; only by searching through the fuller manuscripts of the Fenqitho belonging to the eleventh to thirteenth centuries will one be rewarded by the discovery of the text in what appears to be its complete and original form.

The hymn published below, a *soghitha*¹ in the 7+7: 7+7 syllable metre, is likely to be early seeing that it is known to the East as well as to the West Syrian liturgical tradition; both on these grounds, and on grounds of the choice of imagery used, I would be inclined to allocate it to the fifth century, and probably near the end of that century, rather than earlier (the evidence in favour of this dating is discussed in detail, following the commentary). In general spirit, the hymn has many affinities with the poetry of Jacob of Serugh (several striking parallels are adduced in the commentary), but it is probably unwise to suppose that he might be the actual author.

The text of the hymn is taken from Harvard syr. 31, a Fenqitho of c. 12th century, where it rightly belongs to Epiphany². Seven stanzas (1, 2, 5, 13, 15, 21, 25) are to be found in the Syrian Catholic Fenqitho at Enkainia (*Huddōt*

1) No acrostic is present. The poem is called a *madrasha* in F and in two Berlin manuscripts (see note 3).

2) See below for the liturgical setting.

‘*īdtō*), vol. II, p. 38, but the stanzas are in a different order, and with one further verse interpolated (denoted here by an asterisk *): 1, 25, 5, *, 15, 2, 13, 21. The process of abbreviation was already at work in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for Harvard syr. 140 (f. 8a), which belongs to that period, already has an even shorter selection of verses (1, 13, 16, 21, 24). A different witness to this process of abbreviation is to be found in Mingana syr. 545, a modern manuscript based on much earlier sources: here we have stanzas 1, 2, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 4, 24, 25, 5; these, however, are followed by 21 further stanzas which can hardly be part of the original poem (see appendix). Verse 15 also turns up incorporated into a *bō‘ūtō* in Fenqitho II, p. 44.

The poem is also known to the East Syrian liturgical tradition, for a number of stanzas occur in the Ḥudra for the Second Sunday of *Quddāš ‘īdtā* (ed. Bedjan, III, p. 411; ed. Darmo (Trichur), III, p. 586); there we find stanzas 1-3, *, 13, 15.

The liturgical setting of the poem in the printed texts of the Fenqitho and Ḥudra is Enkainia - *Ḥuddōt ‘īdtō*, at the beginning of the West Syriac liturgical year, in the former, and *Quddāš ‘īdtā*, at the end of the East Syriac liturgical year, in the latter; in both cases the period immediately precedes that of *Subbārā*, Annunciation (corresponding to western Advent). In contrast, the liturgical context given by the manuscript tradition³ is unanimously given as Epiphany, and on internal grounds, given the hymn's central theme of the Baptism of the Church/Bride of Christ, this must be the original setting. The transfer to *Ḥuddōt ‘īdtō/Quddāš ‘īdtā* in the printed editions is readily understandable, seeing that the theme of the Church as Bride of Christ is so prominent in the other liturgical texts for that season⁴.

3) This applies not only to H, h and M, but also to various manuscripts of the Fenqitho (all, it seems, of thirteenth/fourteenth century) in the Berlin collection: Sachau 350, f. 72a; Sachau 323, f. 72b; Or. fol. 1633, f. 16b (see E. SACHAU, *Verzeichniss der syrischen Handschriften* I, pp. 54, 64, 78). The first and third of these manuscripts give the hymn as a *madrasha*, as does F. [I have not found the hymn in any of the manuscripts of the Fenqitho in the British Library (London) or Bodleian Library (Oxford)].

4) See H. ENGBERDING, «Die Kirche als Braut in der ostsyrischen Liturgie», *OCP* 3 (1937), 5-48 (who quotes from the Chaldaean Breviary's text of our hymn on p. 16); F. GRAFFIN, «Recherches sur le thème de l'Église-Épouse dans les liturgies et la littérature de langue syriaque», *L'Orient Syrien* 3 (1958), 313-36 (the hymn is quoted on p. 318). It might be noted here that several other verse texts are common to both the Fenqitho and the Ḥudra for the period of *Ḥuddōt/Quddāsh ‘īdtā*. Thus, for example, the first four stanzas of F II, p. 16a, are the same as

The text below is basically that of Harvard syr. 31, ff. 21a. 1-21b.²⁵: only in the case of a few errors, mostly orthographic, have I departed from this manuscript. For the sake of illustration I give the variants of Harvard syr. 140, Mingana syr. 545, the printed Fenqitho, and the printed Ḥudra⁶, using the following sigla:

- E = East Syrian Ḥudra, ed. Bedjan III, P. 411 (= E^B) and ed. Darmo III, p. 586 (= E^D); if both texts are the same they are cited as E.
 F = Fenqitho II (Mosul, 1886), p. 38
 H = Harvard syr. 31, ff. 21a-b (text)
 h = Harvard syr. 140, f. 8a.
 M = Mingana syr. 545, ff. 17a-18b.

As is often the case, the different witnesses provide several different responses:

H	כתיב אלה מוצי' לה צבא ליהודי בתי'	לה' המלך לה' אלה ה' המלך אלה
F	צבא אלה מוצי' לה לה' המלך אלה	לה' המלך אלה מוצי' לה' המלך אלה
M	לה' המלך אלה מוצי' לה' המלך אלה	לה' המלך אלה מוצי' לה' המלך אלה

BEDJAN III, p. 421 = DARMO III, p. 597; the last stanza on F II, p. 17a, is the found in BEDJAN III, p. 433 = DARMO III, p. 613 (the first stanza in F (II, p. 16b) is taken from Ephrem, *H. Res.* 3:2); F II, p. 50, is found in BEDJAN III, p. 393 (cp 412) = DARMO III, p. 565 (cp 588) - in this last piece, stylistically late, the West Syriac text ends with a reference to «Peter, Paul, Ephrem and Cyril», while the East Syriac has «Peter, Paul, Theodore and Nestorius» (Bedjan has altered the last two names to «John and Andrew»).

5) M. GOSHEN-GOTTSTEIN, *Syriac Manuscripts in the Harvard College Library. A Catalogue* (Harvard Semitic Studies 23, 1979), p. 49. There seem to have been two scribes: on f. 1a and 61a the name Romanos is given, but on f. 121a and 196a (colophon) QSYM the «stranger» (*aksenāyā*) features. The manuscript was evidently written for a certain priest YNQ (Ioannikios?), see ff. 11a, 51a, 192b; and according to the headings on f. 140b/141a and 150b/151a «Bishop Dionysios participated» in it.

6) For the extra verses in E, F and M, see Appendix.

Text :

אמור ביהוה לזכור
 חסדך משה ויהי רחמיך עליהם :
 סבתי את ביהוה
 אלמתי צבתי בסוד :
 ביהוה יתקן חסדך
 חסדך וחסדך ביהוה :
 חסדך וחסדך ביהוה
 חסדך וחסדך ביהוה :
 חסדך וחסדך ביהוה
 חסדך וחסדך ביהוה :
 חסדך וחסדך ביהוה
 חסדך וחסדך ביהוה :
 חסדך וחסדך ביהוה
 חסדך וחסדך ביהוה :
 חסדך וחסדך ביהוה
 חסדך וחסדך ביהוה :
 חסדך וחסדך ביהוה
 חסדך וחסדך ביהוה :

1 אלהי משה לזכור
 חסדך משה לזכור
 2 חסדך משה לזכור
 חסדך משה לזכור
 3 חסדך משה לזכור
 חסדך משה לזכור
 4 חסדך משה לזכור
 חסדך משה לזכור
 5 חסדך משה לזכור
 חסדך משה לזכור
 6 חסדך משה לזכור
 חסדך משה לזכור
 7 חסדך משה לזכור
 חסדך משה לזכור
 8 חסדך משה לזכור
 חסדך משה לזכור
 9 חסדך משה לזכור
 חסדך משה לזכור
 10 חסדך משה לזכור
 חסדך משה לזכור
 11 חסדך משה לזכור
 חסדך משה לזכור

1a חסדך משה E^D.

b חסדך משה = EFhM; חסדך משה H.

2a חסדך משה | חסדך משה E. EM.

b חסדך משה M.

3a חסדך משה E.

b חסדך משה בסודך חסדך E.

c חסדך משה E.

5c חסדך משה F.

d חסדך משה F; חסדך משה M.

12 מִיָּד מִיָּד לְפָנֶיךָ
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 כְּפִיךָ מִן הַיָּם לְבָרֵךְ
 אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַמְּשִׁיחַ הַיָּם בְּיָד
 הַיָּם הַיָּם הַיָּם הַיָּם
 הַיָּם הַיָּם הַיָּם הַיָּם
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים

12 מִיָּד מִיָּד לְפָנֶיךָ
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 13 כְּפִיךָ מִן הַיָּם לְבָרֵךְ
 אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַמְּשִׁיחַ הַיָּם בְּיָד
 14 הַיָּם הַיָּם הַיָּם הַיָּם
 הַיָּם הַיָּם הַיָּם הַיָּם
 15 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 16 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 17 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 18 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 19 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 20 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 21 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 22 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים

13a E. כְּפִיךָ
 c h. חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים | E. חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים | d E. חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים | FM; H: חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 15 d EM. חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 16 c h. חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 18 b M. חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 d M. חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 21 a F. חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים
 d FM. חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים חַיִּים

סלסול מן חבטתה ללא
 חלקודה הכוז כלל :
 חטולתה חטולתה חטולתה
 חטולתה חטולתה חטולתה :
 חטולתה חטולתה חטולתה
 חטולתה חטולתה חטולתה :
 חטולתה חטולתה חטולתה
 חטולתה חטולתה חטולתה :

23 חטולתה חטולתה חטולתה
 חטולתה חטולתה חטולתה
 24 חטולתה חטולתה חטולתה
 חטולתה חטולתה חטולתה
 25 חטולתה חטולתה חטולתה
 חטולתה חטולתה חטולתה
 26 חטולתה חטולתה חטולתה
 חטולתה חטולתה חטולתה

TRANSLATION

Response:

- H Brethren, come let us sing praise to Him who has twined together a diadem for the Church of the Peoples, mingling in her His living Blood.
- F Praise to You, O Lord, for to you do heaven and earth and all created beings adore on the day of the memorial of your betrothed, the Church, the glorious bride.
- M Blessed is He who has renewed us in the water from the defilement of sin.
- 1. God has summoned me to His marriage feast, says the Church to the invited guests, to enter with Him into the Bridal Chamber. O peoples, rejoice with me for I have been saved.
- 2. I have come up from the street (full) of idols and been baptized in the living water; in Fire and Spirit have I been made to shine, and I am joined to the glorious Bridegroom.

24 a חטולתה hM.

d חטולתה M (!).

25

d חטולתה F; חטולתה M.

Orthographic:

1 c חטולתה h.

3 d חטולתה H.

4 b חטולתה H.

22 c חטולתה H.

26 a חטולתה H.

3. I was in captivity and distraught
among the mountains and the hills,
but He treated my wound with oil and with wine
and with the comfort He gave me I forgot all that had caused me to
stumble.
4. I am like the pearl
that was born under the water;
the Holy Spirit descended and drew me up
to place me on the King's diadem.
5. The Bridegroom alighted from His Father's house
to prepare the wedding feast for the Bride.
In the womb of the font
did He crown and make her resplendent and pure.
6. Baptism, the daughter of light,
is the entry into God's presence;
he who does not enter by it
cannot behold the Most High.
7. A rock in the wilderness provided
water for the recalcitrant People,
designating for us the font
which has given life to mortals.
8. The thirst of the People in Ashimon
lasted until this rock, and then it was brought to an end;
likewise the death of our human race
reached as far as the Cross, and then was finished off.
9. Mary became the head of the Way
by which He went down to become dead Himself,
while for us the font is the head
of the way which raises (me) up to heaven.

10. He fashioned Adam out of dust
and he became corrupted by sin.
But in the water of baptism
he returned to his former state.

11. Because the serpent had stolen the clothes
of Adam, that fair image,
the royal Son brought them back
to reclothe Adam in his adornment.

12. The serpent led Eve astray
and stole away from her her crown,
but the Virgin's Son trampled down the serpent
and from the water gave back to Eve her crown.

13. His fragrant unguent has made my head shine,
with His living Cup He has inebriated my heart.
His mercies are better than wine.
Love Him, all you who are upright, for He has taken delight in me.

14. I was blackened in my sins
as a result of sacrificial burnt offerings.
The daughter of Jerusalem has become jealous of me
for I am glorious now that I have been made to shine.

15. Jesus is mine and I am His.
He has desired me: He has clothed Himself in me, and I am clothed in
Him.
With the kisses of His mouth has He kissed me
and brought me to His Bridal Chamber on high.

16. I went out after Him and sought Him,
but the guards of the night frightened me -
the demons who keep watch in the dark:
they despoiled me because I loved Him.

17. His appearance is fairer than anyone's else,
His lips distil mercy,
He resembles the grain-pile of life
from which creation takes its fill.

18. He made me His Bride from the water;
He gave me freedom from the water,
He showed me His Father's riches,
and look, His Kingdom awaits me.

19. In the womb of the Virgin He betrothed me
and He received me in pure union (of marriage);
He mingled me with His exalted nature
and made me an heir of Life.

20. From the womb Jesus is mine
and I am His from the water.
A pure Virgin has given Him to me,
and baptism has given me to Him.

21. He has cast in me the fire of His love:
from the water it caught alight in me.
With love of salvation I burn,
to behold the Bridegroom I thirst.

22. With holy oil am I marked,
with living water am I baptized,
with the Spirit's circumcision am I circumcised,
to the Kingdom am I invited.

23. Like the coin out of the lake
have I come up from the font;
with Fire and Spirit have I been forged.
I have entered the flock of the Son.

- 24.** With garments of glory am I clothed,
with raiment of light am I wrapped.
From the water I have become a virgin,
and behold, angels are rejoicing at me.
- 25.** On my head has the Bridegroom placed His hand,
and look, his right arm embraces me.
Through the touch of His hand have I been reborn
from the baptismal womb.
- 26.** May I worship You, Lord, for You have saved me.
Let my children give thanks, because You have brought me to Life.
Let my mouth praise You, for in You does my heart rejoice:
blessed are You, the source of peace to her who was desolate!

VARIANT READINGS

- 1a** God: Jesus my Lord E.
b says: said H.
d with me: at me H.
2a street: streets EM.
b living: new M.
3a in captivity: abandoned E.
b and the King's Son in his love delivered me E.
c wine: water.
5d make her resplendent: adorn her F; depict her M.
13a with his fragrant oil he has... E
d love him... upright: upright life E (i.e. his mercies constitute (?))
18b from the water: in baptism M.
d His Kingdom awaits (lit. gazes at: in His Kingdom he awaits M).
25d womb: waters F.

Commentary

Preliminary note: references to Ephrem are to Beck's editions in *CSCO*, unless otherwise stated; «Baptismal themes» = S.P. Brock, «Baptismal themes in the writings of Jacob of Serugh», *Symposium Syriacum II (OCA*

205, 1978), pp. 325-47; H. Epiph. = Hymns on Epiphany attributed to Ephrem (*CSCO* Scr. Syri 82); HSSBT = S. Brock, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition* (Syrian Churches Series 9, 1979); JS = Jacob of Serugh, Verse Homilies ed. P. Bedjan (cited by volume, page and line); JS (S) = Jacob, Verse Homilies ed. Bedjan apud *Sancti Martyrii qui et Sahdona quae supersunt omnia* (Paris, 1902); JS (J) = Jacob, Homilies against the Jews (ed. M. Albert, *PO* 38:1; quoted by Homily and line); M = supplementary stanzas in Mingana syr. 545 (for text and translation, see appendix); Murray = R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom, A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge, 1975); Sog. = Soghyatha ed. Beck in *CSCO* Scr. Syri 82; Sog. Ed. = Jacob of Serugh, Sogitha on Edessa, ed. Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents*, 107-8 (tr. 106-7).

1. *marriage feast* (ḥlūleh): this is the term used in the Peshitta at Matt. 25:10 (parable of the Virgins), whereas the Old Syriac has *meštūtā*. Cp also verse 5. The term *ḥlūlā* is very common in Jacob of Serugh in the context of baptism, e.g. JS I, p. 168 (opening of Hom. 8), p. 185 line 7 etc.

bridal chamber (gnōnā, also in v. 15): Although not found in any of the extant Syriac biblical versions at Matt. 25:10, this term features in many early quotations of, and allusions to, the verse, e.g. Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 6:1, 6; Ephrem, *Hymns on Faith* 11:8; *Sermones* II. iv, lines 308, 328, 446. For *gnōnā* in the context of Christ's baptism see *H. Epiph.* 3:15, 4:22, 10:3; Jacob of Serugh, JS I, p. 154 (end), p. 185 line 1, etc; at Christian baptism: *Sog.* 6:3. At JS III, p. 299 line 9 *ḥlūlā* and *gnōnā* occur together in a baptismal context, as they do in the Maronite baptismal rite attributed to Jacob of Serugh (Assemani, *Codex Liturgicus* II, 326 (*ḥlūlā* and *meštūtā*), 332 (*gnōnā*). The catena on the Song of Songs⁷ based on the Syriac translation of Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary uses the term *gnōnā* with reference to Cant. 1:4 (Peshitta *qīṭōnā*; see on stanza 15; cp also Sog. Ed., p. 107 line 19).

2. *street full of idols* (ṣalme): cp Jacob's Homilies against the Jews, JS (J) VI line 331 «He raised me up from the place of idols (*bēt ṣalme*)», where the Church is speaking. For the «street» (*ṣūqa*) see commentary to stanza 24 (the

7) In Vatican syr. 103 of AD 861, ed. G. MÖSINGER, *Monumenta Syriaca* II (1878), p. 10. This Catena is closely based on the Syriac translation of Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary; see C. VAN DEN EYNDE, *La version syriaque du Commentaire de Grégoire de Nyse sur le Cantique des Cantiques* (Bibliothèque du Muséon 10; 1939).

word may have been suggested by Cant. 3:2 where it occurs); cp also Sog. Ed., p. 107 line 18.

living water: here based on John 4:10 (the phrase also occurs, for example, in Cant. 4:15); similarly JS I, p. 195 line 1, II p. 240 (end), M 12 and 29.

in fire and spirit: fire imagery is extremely common in the context of baptism (e.g. *H. Epiph.* 4:19); a close parallel here is provided by JS (J) VI 323.

the glorious Bridegroom: thus *Sog.* 5:1 and 2, JS I p. 185 line 1; JS (S), p. 821 line 17.

made to shine: the root *mrq* (again used in stanzas 5 and 14) is commonly found in a baptismal context (especially in Jacob): JS I, p. 163 line 9, p. 168 line 3, p. 170 line 9; JS (J) VI 320, 330 etc.

3. mountains and hills: perhaps suggested by Cant. 2:8 and 4:6 (though there they refer to the Bridegroom).

treated my wound...: based on Luke 10:34, where the Peshitta likewise has ^c*šb*.

all that had caused me to stumble (*tuqlāt* (y)): cp JS I, p. 180 line 5.

comfort (*nyāḥawhy*): perhaps an allusion to Matt. 11:29, «you shall find *nyāḥā* for yourselves» (for this verse in a baptismal context in early Syriac and Armenian tradition, see G. Winkler in *Le Muséon* 96 (1983), pp. 267-326).

4. pearl: according to popular belief the pearl was born in the oyster through its being struck by lightning. This image of the conjunction of fire and water gave rise to rich typological developments in early Syriac literature, and the pearl may serve as a type of Christ, born in the «watery womb of Mary» (cp *HSSBT*, p. 125f), the Church (as here), Adam/humanity, the soul, etc. The lightning normally symbolizes the action of the Holy Spirit. For the pearl in a baptismal context (often representing Adam in Sheol), cp *H. Epiph.* 7:18; JS II, p. 599, III, pp. 423, 642; JS (S) p. 813. In general see F. Graffin, «Hymnes de S. Ephrem sur la Perle», *L'Orient Syrien* 12 (1967), pp. 129-50, and «Le thème de la perle chez Jacques de Saroug», *L'Orient Syrien* 12 (1967), 355-70. An anthology of translations of Syriac texts on the Pearl, by B.E. Colless, is in preparation (to appear in *Cistercian Studies*).

drew me up: in this stanza the poet clearly has in mind Ephrem's famous

cycle of *madrashe* on the Pearl and its symbols; the verb used here (*šlā*) provides an allusion to Ephrem, *H. on Faith* 85:6 (where the verb is ultimately based on biblical phraseology «he drew me up from many waters», 2 Sam 22:17 = Ps 18:16, Ps 143:7. Jacob, who also uses the image of the pearl in a similar context⁸, employs different verbs.

diadem (*tāgeh*): again the poet alludes to Ephrem; compare especially *H. on Faith* 82:5, 7 (cp 83:5, 8, 9; 84:15; 85:4, 12). Whereas *klīlā* «crown» is commonly found in the Syrian baptismal rites, *tāgā* occurs only once, in a passage common to the Syrian Orthodox (Ḥoms edition, p. 48) and Maronite rite (Assemani, *Codex Liturgicus* III, p. 185), «(Christ) has twined together for you a diadem from the river Jordan».

5. alighted (*dāl*): although not found in the Peshitta New Testament, this verb is frequently used in early Syriac poetry to describe the descent of the Word, e.g. Ephrem, *Hymns on Faith* 4:2; JS I, p. 153 line 7, JS (S) p. 620 line 10. The verb is used of the Spirit's action at Christ's baptism in *H. Epiph.* 6:1.

bride: the use of the term (which of course also occurs in Cant. 4:8 etc.) in the context of baptism seems to be only in texts subsequent to Ephrem⁹, e.g. *H. on Epiphany* 2:7; *Sog.* 5:1.

womb of the font (also in **25**): the imagery is very common in early Syriac literature, e.g. Ephrem, *Hymns on the Crucifixion* 3:8 («womb of the [baptismal] water»; «womb of the font» occurs in *H. Epiph.* (13:2, 14) and several times in Jacob of Serugh, e.g. JS I, p. 168 line 8, p. 178 (end), p. 183 line 15; IV, p. 702 line 15. For its use in the various Syriac baptismal services see *HSSBT*, pp. 84-6. Narsai also uses the term (ed. Mingana, I, p.346, lines 10-11, but he prefers «womb of water» (I, p. 345 line 5 etc.), which also occurs in the anonymous Homily II on Epiphany, (*Patrologia Orientalis* 38, p. 700).

6. Baptism, the daughter of light: baptism is called the «daughter of luminaries» (*bat nahhīre*) in *H. Epiph.* 13:4, JS III, p. 655 (end); the same phrase as here occurs in the Pampakuda edition of the *Fenqitho* (I, p. 339), «see, living fire is in the Daughter of Light». Jacob calls baptism the «daughter of day» (I, p. 196 line 11, where the Font is the bride), and the

8) See the references given immediately above.

9) For a single passage in Ephrem, see below p. 188.

Jordan is the «sea of light» (I, p. 186 line 18). Compare the similar terms used by Jacob of the Church, e.g. «daughter of the Luminary», II, p. 374 («d. of the luminaries», I, p. 165 line 15; JS (S) p. 822 line 8), or «bride of light», I, p. 173 line 6, II, p. 588 line 8, III, p. 549 line 1 etc.

7. *rock in the wilderness*: cp Exodus 17:6, Numbers 20:8 - a recurrent type (cp I Cor. 10:4), e.g. *H. Epiph.* 5:12-14. Cp Murray, p. 208f...

designating for us the font: Jacob of Serugh uses Exodus 17:6 (Moses striking the rock) in a baptismal context e.g. in *Bedjan* II, p. 589, III, pp. 295, 307.

8. *Ashimon*: the allusion will be to the Ode Deut. 32:10, which speaks of «the wilderness of Ashimon»; cp also Ps. 68:7, 78:40, 106:14, 107:4. Jacob of Serugh likewise uses the term on a number of occasions, e.g. JS II, p.239 line 15, p. 535 line 13.

9. *Mary... head of the Way*: the «Way» is not here an allusion to Acts 24:14 etc., where «the way» is the «way of discipleship» (i.e. the Christian life); rather, the author is alluding to the theme, frequent in early Syriac literature, of Christ «treading out (*drs*) the way from Death to Life», thus making it available, through baptism, to humanity. Cp Murray, pp. 246-9, 299-301. A close parallel to the hymn is provided by Jacob, JS I, p.153 line 10 (Christ) «made the head of his Way» from the Virgin's womb.

10. *Adam*: as frequently in early Syriac literature, Adam is used to represent both humanity in general and the individual human being.

11. *stolen the clothes of Adam*: according to a tradition (of Jewish origin) which is widely known in Syriac literature, Adam and Eve were clothed in «a robe of glory» in Paradise; at the Fall this robe was lost and the main aim of the Incarnation is to make this «robe of glory» available once again to humanity: Christ deposited it in the River Jordan at his baptism, in readiness for the individual Christian to put it on at his or her baptism. See in general my «Clothing metaphors as a means of theological expression in Syriac tradition», in M. Schmidt (ed.), *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter* (Eichstätter Beiträge 4, 1982), pp. 11-40, and *The Luminous Eye: the Spiritual World Vision of St Ephrem* (Rome, 1985), ch. 5. Jacob of Serugh also describes the serpent as having «stolen» the clothes of Adam and Eve in Paradise: «Baptism gives back to

Adam the robe of glory which the serpent had stolen from him among the trees» (JS I, p. 197 line 12); «He (Christ) gave to Eve the robe of glory that she had been clothed in, but which the serpent had stolen from her among the trees (JS II, p. 196 line 12); similarly JS I, p. 209 line 13; III, p. 423 line 18.

fair image: an allusion to Genesis 1:26. Compare Jacob who speaks of Christ seeking Adam «the fair image (*šalmā pa'yā*), JS I, p. 177 line 12.

royal Son (lit. King's Son): a frequent title of Christ, already found in Aphrahat and Ephrem, e.g. Aphrahat, *Dem.* 6.10; Ephrem, *H. de Fide* 51:9, *H. de Virginitate* 28:7 etc.

12. *stole away from her her crown*: compare *H. Epiph.* 12:2, «the bridal couple were adorned in Eden but the serpent stole their crowns».

trampled down: the verb *ršš*, used here, is not the one employed in the Peshitta at Gen. 3:15 (*dwsš*); the author probably intends to incorporate a further resonance, to Ps. 74:14, «you have trampled (*ršš*) the heads of Leviathan»; Jacob I, p. 154 line 4, uses the same verb in a similar context, but with *gārsā*, not *hewyā* as object (so too *Sog.* 1:3), thus providing another Psalm resonance, Ps 91:13.

water: i.e. of baptism.

13. *fragrant unguent* (*mešḥeh mbassmā*): Cant. 1:3. The wording goes against the Peshitta which has *mešḥā d-mūrā*, and may perhaps be based on the paraphrastic rendering of the Septuagint's *μύρον ἐκκενωθὲν ὄνομά σου* to be found in the Syriac translation of Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary on the Song of Songs (probably late fifth century), *mešḥā mbassmā*¹⁰, although the absence in our hymn of any reference to «poured out», distinctive to the LXX, might suggest that *mbassmā* should just be taken as representing the rare term *mūrā*; support for this might be sought in Jacob's wording when he alludes to the same verse, JS, (S) p.822 (end), «may your name be to me oil of myrrh that delights me/makes me fragrant» (... *mešḥā d-mūrā da-mbassem lī*); and again JS (J) VI 328 «as with oil of myrrh I am fragrant (*besmet*) with the name of the Bridegroom» (the Church speaks).

made my head shine: based on Ps. 23:5; the same combination of Cant.

10) The passage is discussed in the translator's preface, ed. VAN DEN EYNDE, p. 73.

1:3 and Ps 23:5 occurs in the *Memra* on the Myron, attributed variously to Jacob or to George of the Arabs (ed. Guidi)¹¹, lines 3-4 «He is fragrant oil (*mešḥa mbassmā*, as in the hymn) poured over humanity; in You may my head shine...» (cp lines 515, 576).

cup... inebriated: based on Ps. 23:5.

better than wine: Cant. 1:2, Jacob uses very similar phraseology at JS (S), p.823 line 1, «Your mercies are better even than wine»; cp also Sog. Ed., p. 108 lines 5-6.

upright: cp Cant. 1:4

14. blackened (lit. black): based on Cant. 1:5-6. Jacob uses these verses on a number of occasions (see my «Baptismal themes», p. 342; cp also Sog. Ed.), but particularly close to the whole of stanza **14** is JS (J) VI 313-331 (esp. 313-20):

313. «I am black and I am beautiful, O Hebrew girls;
do not mock me for being dark, because the Light has betrothed me.
315. The sun was the cause that made me black¹², when I worshipped it:
from the smoke of burnt sacrifices which lay heavily¹³
my whole appearance was discoloured by the soot of sacrifices;
I became black from the smoke, and all ugly.
O daughters of Jerusalem, come and look how resplendent I am,
320. for the Bridegroom has made me shine and I have become whiter than
snow and the light.
The Bridegroom took me while I was still ugly and black,
He did not abhor me as he made me bright from my impurity.
Fire and the Spirit did He bring down and place in the font for me,
and from within the waters he made my face bright:

11) GUIDI attributed the poem to George on the basis of Paris syr. 198 and 196 (cp ASSEMANI, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* I, p. 332); the other manuscript he used (Vat. syr. 117), however, gives Jacob as the author, and the poem also appears under his name in Damascus Patr. 12/14 and 12/15. The matter requires further investigation.

12) The earliest manuscript containing this *memra* is British Library Add. 17190 (AD 983), not used by M. ALBERT in her edition in *Patrologia Orientalis* 38; although the text of this manuscript (henceforth «A») is generally close to the printed text, it has a few superior readings, among which is *w'wkmī* here (cp also note 13).

13) A has *dkr* (= *d-kār*), for V's *dqr* and P's *dkd*. This is clearly correct, for *kr* is used in this context elsewhere by Jacob, e.g. I, p.164, lines 18-19, (he washed her) *men tennānā da-'lawwātā d-kār* (*h*)*wā b-appeyh*, and elsewhere; the verb likewise features in the extra verse in E.

325. the ugly colour which I formerly had was changed,
for I put on Light from the divine water;
I had been harmed and become wretched from the smoke of burnt offerings,
but as though with the oil of myrrh I have become fragrant.
He baptized and sanctified me, he cleansed me and caused me to shine,
330. He called to me and raised me up from the house of idols, for I had become corrupted,
He brought me in and gave me his Father's house in which I might become glorious.

sacrificial burnt offering: cp especially JS (J) VI 317, 327.

daughter of Jerusalem: Cant. 1:5 (plural); the plural of the biblical text (kept by Jacob, JS (J) VI 319) has deliberately been altered here to singular, to provide the contrast between the Church/Bride, who belongs to the «Peoples» (Gentiles) and the daughter of Jerusalem (i.e. the Synagogue).

15. *is mine*: based on Cant. 2:16.

clothed Himself: the poet will have in mind the characteristic early Syriac terminology for the Incarnation, where the Word «put on the body» (*lbeš pagrā*); see the references in the commentary to stanza 11.

I am clothed: i.e. at baptism. For the double use of *lbeš* compare Ephrem *H. Nativ.* 16:11 «He put on his mother's robe - her body - while I (= Mary) have put on his glory»; Fenqitho III, p. 274a «He put us on and we put Him on», VII, p. 261a «Thanksgiving to the Holy Spirit, for He put me on, and I have put Him on»; see also M 19, below, and further examples can be found in the Pampakuda edition of the Fenqitho for Epiphany, I, pp. 325, 337.

kisses: based on Cant. 1:2; the past tense of the verb here corresponds to the Peshitta, whereas the Septuagint has the future; this is a point that the Syriac translator of Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary on the Song discusses in his preface¹⁴, where he explains to his readers that he has had to reproduce the tense of the LXX here, even though this may puzzle his readers familiar with the Peshitta, since Gregory's Commentary presupposes the tense of the Greek... Jacob in his Sog. Ed. already uses the imperfect.

14) Ed. VAN DEN EYNDE, p. 73.

bridal chamber (gnōnā): see on stanza 1; Cant. 1:4 uses *qīṭōnā* (from Greek *koitōn*).

16. *I went out... sought him*: based on Cant. 3:1, cp 5:7.

guards...: based on Cant. 3:3, 5:7.

despoiled (bzḥ): the Peshitta at Cant. 5:7 uses different verbs; the poet no doubt has in mind the Passion narrative where the Peshitta uses this verb (Matt. 27:31, Mark 15:20).

17. *His appearance* (ḥezweh): a contrastive allusion to Isaiah 53:3 Septuagint (not Peshitta); the Greek wording of the passage will have reached the author through a quotation of some work translated from Greek into Syriac. Cp also Cant. 1:16 (where, however, *ḥezwā* does not appear). It is striking that Jacob uses similar phraseology in a passage likewise based on the Song of Songs, JS(S), p.823 line 9 «fair in his appearance (*šappīr b-ḥezweh*) is he above (other) human beings...»

lips distil: based on Cant. 5:13.

grain pile of life: based on Cant. 7:3, where the Peshitta has *ʿrmt' dḥt'*; the author has deftly altered *ḥt'* to *ḥy'*, and applied the phrase to the Bridegroom, rather than the Bride.

18. *Bride from the water*: i.e. of baptism. The Church as «bride» at Christ's baptism is a recurrent theme in Jacob (whereas in Ephrem «the bride» is associated instead with the Entry to Jerusalem). E.g. JS I, p. 195 line 5 «Who is this Bride who has gone up from amidst the water?»

freedom: for this theme in connection with baptism (not very common), cp Ephrem, *H. Virg.* 7:12 (liberation of those enslaved to sin), *H. Epiph.* 4:7, 14:38, Jacob, JS (J) VI 330 «he made me free» (the Church speaks).

19. *betrothed me*: the verb *mkar* is common in Jacob's baptismal homilies, e.g. JS I, pp. 167-8, 170-1, 175-6.

mingled (ḥlt): the verb often occurs in baptismal contexts, e.g. *H. Epiph.* 4:1 and 6, 5:1, 13:5 («in His light»)¹⁵.

15) Ephrem, *H. Nativ.* 8:2 uses the verb to describe the incarnation, *ḥlat allāhūtā ʿam nāšūtā*, «he mingled divinity with humanity».

heir: the theme of the Church as «heir» is especially prominent in the anonymous dialogue between Church and Synagogue (*Soghyātā mgabbyātā*, ed. Brock, p. 83, stanzas 3 and 6); cp also JS (J) VI 215 ff.

20. *is mine*: see on verse 15.

21. *the fire of his love*: the same phrase occurs in Jacob, JS I, p.173 line 5.

Fire... caught alight (sepat): according to an early tradition already attested in the second century the Jordan was set alight at Christ's baptism; allusion to this is frequent in early Syriac poetry (see *HSSBT*, pp. 11-14 and for Jacob of Serugh, «Baptismal themes», p. 327; for Jacob's use of the verb sap in this context, cp JS I, p. 174 line 11, p. 183 line 13...).

I burn (šgīrā nā): similarly Jacob, JS I, p.155 line 13 (John the Baptist incites the Bride to burn (šgr) with love for the Bridegroom).

22. *with holy oil... with living water*: the sequence perhaps points to the early Syriac pattern of the baptismal rite, with no post-baptismal anointing; for Jacob's evidence see «Baptismal themes», pp. 339-40.

I am marked (ršīmā): the baptismal rite is frequently referred to simply as the *rushmā*, «mark»; the term properly belongs to the pre-baptismal anointing: see in general *HSSBT*, chapter 4. For its use in Jacob of Serugh, see my «Baptismal themes...», pp. 338-9.

circumcision: christian baptism was seen as taking place of Jewish circumcision, hence references to metaphorical circumcision are commonly found (cp Col. 2:11), e.g. Odes of Solomon 11:2 «The Most High has circumcised me with His Holy Spirit»; Ephrem, *H. Virg.* 9:1 «hidden circumcision»; *H. Epiph.* 3:4, 24.

23. *coin out of the lake*: Matt. 17:27. The passage is already given baptismal overtones in Ephrem, *C. Nisib.* 46:5, but it does not appear to be so used in Jacob.

forged (eṭḥāšlet): the active is sometimes found in a baptismal context (usually associated with the idea of the font as a furnace), e.g. JS II, p. 677 line 12 (= Fenqitho VI, p. 203) «The Spirit and Fire forged armour for the disciples» (at Pentecost, which is seen by Jacob as the disciples» baptism, p. 679 lines 11-12). For the passive, cp M 29.

flock of the Son: standard imagery in the baptismal *ordines* (especially

common in the Maronite rite, attributed to Jacob of Serugh; in Jacob e.g. JS (S), p.823 line 3, «number me in your flock»). The same play on *gzārā* «flock» and *gzūrtā* «circumcision» occurs in *H. Epiph.* 3:25 and JS II, pp. 137-8 (referring to Abraham).

24. garments of glory: this refers both to the actual white garments of the newly baptized, and to the «robe of glory/light» recovered at baptism (see on stanza 11).

raiment of light (*naḥte d-nūhrā*): the same phrase occurs in Jacob, JS I, p. 195 line 4.

become a virgin: Jacob expresses the same idea, JS II, p.236 lines 8 and 18, «Having betrothed the harlot among the Nations He made her into a virgin», and «Having taken the harlot from the street (*šūqa*-cp stanza 2) He made her a virgin». The idea of baptism as conferring (interior) virginity is prominent in two homilies under the name of Isaac of Antioch¹⁶, ed. Bedjan, p.452 (*Hom.* 35) «The unclean are reborn [in baptism] and become pure virgins, without any spot», and p. 676 (*Hom.* 57), «Christ by his baptism makes virgins out of old men... Come, descend [to the font] and receive in his fountains your renovation and your virginity». The theme already occurs in *H. Epiph.* 8:15 «The Holy Spirit hovered over the font and gave birth... to virgins».

rejoicing at me: an allusion to Luke 15:7, joy (*ḥadūtā*) in heaven at the sinner who repents; clearer references to Luke 15:7 in a baptismal context are found e.g. at *Sog.* 6:16 and *H. Epiph.* 6:7-8.

25. On my head...: based on Cant. 2:6, 8:3. Jacob uses the same passage in JS (J) VI 329.

reborn: the Johannine view of baptism as rebirth (in contrast to the Pauline view of it as death and resurrection) is predominant in early Syriac literature.

baptismal womb: see on stanza 5.

*

16) See my *Spirituality in the Syriac Tradition* (Moran Etho 2 [Kottayam], 1989), pp. 89-93.

Evidence for the date of the poem

The attribution to Ephrem in the Fenqitho (and in M) cannot be taken seriously: two factors in particular militate against a fourth-century date:

(1) Although Ephrem does indeed use bridal imagery of the Church, he normally associates this with the Entry to Jerusalem; only once does he use the term «bride» in connection with the Baptism of Christ (*H. Haer.* 24:6). It is only in subsequent hymnography that the theme of the Church as the Bride of Christ at his Baptism becomes at all frequent: it is found, for example, in the opening stanzas of *Sog.* 5, a dialogue poem with John and Christ as the speakers, and in *H. Epiph.* 1:7, while in Jacob's writings it is very prominent.

(2) The linking of the theme of the Church as Bride with imagery borrowed from the Song of Songs is not yet to be found in Ephrem's genuine hymns¹⁷. It is in fact Jacob of Serugh who is the first datable Syriac author who draws on the Song of Songs in this connection (see for example the passage cited in the commentary to stanza 14).

Just as a fourth-century dating is to be ruled out on internal grounds, so too, in all probability, must a date much after c. AD 500 be excluded. At stanza 22 the sequence «oil... water» points to a time when the original structure of the Syrian baptismal rite was still in use; in this rite, the anointing (*rushmā*) preceded the baptism in water, and there was no post-baptismal anointing with myron. Although a post-baptismal anointing in Syria is first attested in the Apostolic Constitutions from the very end of the fourth century, there is evidence to suggest that the old pattern also continued in use in some places - no doubt outside the large towns - to the end of the fifth century¹⁸.

The above-mentioned considerations point fairly definitely to a fifth-century date for the poem. Can the period be narrowed down further? While the use of the hymn in both East and West Syriac liturgical tradition might be thought to point to a time prior to the ecclesiastical divisions brought about

17) The only possible allusion to the Song of Songs seems to be *H. Nativ.* 16:15. A clear allusion to Cant. 2:7 can be found in *H. Epiph.* 7:28.

18) See my «The transition to a post-baptismal anointing in the Antiochene rite», in *The Sacrifice of Praise: Studies in Honour of A.H. Couratin* (Eph. Lit. Subsidia 19, 1981), pp. 215-25.

by the Christological controversies that followed the Council of Ephesus (431), this is by no means necessarily so, as can be seen from the fact that the opening of one of Jacob of Serugh's Prose Homilies (which must date at the earliest from the end of the fifth century) turns up in the East Syriac *Ḥudra* for the Feast of the Resurrection¹⁹.

There are in fact two pieces of evidence which suggest that the poem is likely to come from nearer the end of the century, rather than the beginning:

(1) Although the author probably did not draw on the Syriac translation of Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary on the Song of Songs (see on stanza **13**), it is quite likely that the appearance of this translation provided an incentive to Syriac poets to make use of its imagery, hitherto neglected. The translation is unfortunately anonymous and not dated, but van den Eynde²⁰ has very plausibly placed it somewhere between the end of the fifth century and the beginning of the sixth.

(2) By far the closest parallels that can be adduced to distinctive phraseology in the poem are from Jacob of Serugh's writings; especially striking examples will be found in the commentary to stanzas **11** (stealing of Adam's clothes), **14** (use of imagery from the Song of Songs; similarly st. **17**), and **21** (fire imagery).

Since Jacob is known to have written *soghyāthā* as well as *mēmre*, could he himself have been the author? This is perhaps possible, but the poem contains certain features which suggest that such an authorship is unlikely; thus on several occasions the author of the poem employs slightly different terms from those which are characteristic of Jacob (see commentary to stanzas **2**, **6**, **11**, **15**, **23**). Furthermore, the poem includes a few terms or themes which are untypical of Jacob, notable in stanzas **4** (*šlā*, «draw up», alluding to a passage in Ephrem), **23** (the coin of Matt. 17:27), and **24** (virginity as a product of baptism).

All things considered, it would seem reasonable to suggest that the author was a contemporary of Jacob, and that he was also familiar with at least some of that poet's writings.

19) See my «An extract from Jacob of Serugh in the East Syrian *Ḥudra*», *OCP* 55 (1989), 339-43.

20) VAN DEN EYNDE (see note 7), p.64.

APPENDIX: *The extra verses in E, F and M.*

E and F each provides a single extra verse, as follows:

E	מִן הַחֹמֶת הַזֹּאת הִנֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם : מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם	הַשָּׁמַיִם הַזֵּה הִנֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם
F	מִי יִשְׁמַע : מִי יִשְׁמַע	הַשָּׁמַיִם הַזֵּה הִנֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם

E The smoke of burn sacrifices had sunk right into me
and I had become foul-smelling,
but He has filled me with His fragrant scent
and now His saints embrace me.

F Who can encompass his constituents
or how many unguents His oil contains?
He is like the Paradise of Eden,
His table is full of every delight.

The extra stanza in E has a remarkable parallel with Jacob of Serugh, for the opening line is very close to JS (J) VI 316 (translated above, in commentary to stanza 14), and to JS I, p. 164 lines 18-19. This similarity might suggest that the stanza is indeed part of the original poem, lost in H; if so, a position after stanza 14 would be appropriate.

M provides an additional 21 stanzas; although these could well be old (the language and style could point to a fifth/sixth century date; see especially note to M's stanza 23), it is not likely that they are part of the original poem, seeing that in the poem (as preserved by H) the Church speaks in the first person, whereas in M's additional stanzas she is referred to in the third person, and in the later stanzas the interest has shifted altogether, to the baptized. M's extra stanzas read as follows (M 1-11 = H 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 4, 24, 25, 5):

כבודא סבורטא נפח סבורטא נפחא צפונא כח נבורה סבורטא סבורטא נפחא סבורטא נפחא סבורטא נפחא סבורטא נפחא סבורטא נפחא סבורטא נפחא סבורטא נפחא	אפ אפוסא נפחא סבורטא נפחא סבורטא נפחא סבורטא נפחא סבורטא נפחא סבורטא נפחא סבורטא נפחא סבורטא נפחא סבורטא נפחא סבורטא נפחא	26 27 28 29 30 31 32
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TRANSLATION²¹

M: 12. In the fountain of living water
 he has opened up for her a fair gate:
 she has entered in and put on, in baptism,
 a robe of light from the water.

13. The hand of God has bent down
 and the image that had become corrupted has been repaired;
 (God's hand) has polished it up with the living water
 so that it has acquired its former beauty.

21) Hence I provide only minimal annotation. Illustrations to most of the themes it introduces can be found in *HSSBT*.

14. The demons had seized hold of humanity
and removed its beauty by means of idols,
but in baptism (humanity) has been restored
and become fair once again, and stood upright.

15. That wise Creator
has kindled fire in the midst of the water
and as though in a furnace he has recast
human beings who had become corrupted.

16. He has mixed together the baptismal water for (Adam)
so that in it the fair (image) might be renewed,
putting on the fine garments
that he had taken off among the trees.

17. See, baptism has been opened up
so that the nations and peoples might come along
and in its pure womb become
beloved children to God.

18. From the womb of baptism
mortal beings have put on Christ,
acquiring in him new life
so that they may vanquish death during life.

19. He put us on from the (Virgin's) womb,
and we have put him on from the water;
He gave life and received death -
in order to give us life while he died.

20. He further desired to raise us to heaven,
so in our path he placed baptism,
in order that, from it, those below
might commence on the path that circles up to the heights.

21. With the armour of Life he has clothed us
spiritually from the waters,
just as he was given armour from the womb
of the virgin, in bodily form.
22. With the Holy Spirit he has baptized us,
with living fire he has purified us,
bringing us to become children.
Blessed is he who has renewed us in rebirth!
23. The waters have seen you, O God,
the waters have seen you and been afraid²²,
for with the might of the Holy Spirit
you have stirred²³ them and they were sanctified.
24. Your might has alighted upon the springs
and through your hovering they have been made resplendent:
now that they are sanctified (the waters) give birth
to children, so that we²⁴ may be to his glory.
25. Fire and Spirit in the midst of the waters
forge fair children
to become brothers to Christ
who is the Only-Begotten in his Being.
26. So too the wise craftsman
casts by means of fire and breath,
fashioning the gold with his hands,
making a beautiful image.

22) Psalm 77:16.

23) The verb alludes to the «stirring» of the waters of the pool of Bethesda (John 5:2). That episode was given baptismal overtones in a number of Syriac texts dating from c. 500 (notably Jacob), and the passage is designated to be read at baptisms by several early Syriac Gospel manuscripts (see F.C. BURKITT, «The early Syriac Lectionary system», *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1923, p.334); later on, this baptismal interpretation seems to have been dropped. Cp my «The epiklesis in the Antiochene baptismal ordines», in *Symposium Syriacum [I]* (OCA 197, 1974), 193, 208-9, and *HSSBT*, pp. 87-8.

24) Or (by a small correction) «they».

27. It is God who has put his fire
into the womb of the baptismal font,
with the Holy Spirit he has heated it up
and then recast Adam, who is (thus) renewed.
28. The image had grown old and tattered,
sinking right down into corruption,
but with Fire and Spirit (God) has reforged it,
so that it has rediscovered its former beauty.
29. See, a very furnace²⁵ in the living water
in which Fire and Spirit are mingled:
in it humanity is reforged
to become the crown of the Kingdom.
30. See, a sacrifice²⁶ in the baptismal font,
see, fire resides on the water,
see, the Trinity resides in (the baptized)
so that they may become brothers to Christ.
31. Human beings have become gods²⁷
as a result of the waters of baptism,
and they address God as «our Father»²⁸,
since they have become his children as a result of the water.
32. See how perfect and beautiful,
how glorious and holy they are,
clothed in him to his glory
like mighty luminaries.

25) Cp *HSSBT*, pp. 85-7.

26) This unusual image was no doubt suggested by the theme of familiar theme of fire on the baptismal water, for fire from heaven also designates the acceptance of a sacrifice (for the internalized «sacrifice of the heart» and the descent of the fire of the Spirit, see my «The spirituality of the heart in Syrian tradition», *The Harp* [Kerala] 1:2-3 (1988), pp. 93-115, esp. 108ff.

27) Cp Ephrem, *H. de Fide* 29:1 «God in his mercies called mortals «gods» through grace»; for the theme of divinization see my *The Luminous Eye* (Rome, 1985), pp.123-8, and *HSSBT*, pp. 64-5.

28) Cp *HSSBT*, pp. 53-5.