Bar Dayṣān and Mani in Ephraem the Syrian's Heresiography

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Department of Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literatures
School of Arts and Sciences
Of The Catholic University of America
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

By
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Washington, D.C.

2013
Bar Dayṣān and Mani in Ephraem the Syrian's Heresiography

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This project addresses Ephraem’s approach to Bar Dayṣān and Mani in his heresiology. The primary aim is to reveal Ephraem’s conception of the threat that Bar Dayṣānism and Manichaeism posed to Ephraem’s own community and to analyze Ephraem’s response to that threat by expounding on key texts in Ephraem’s polemical writings, the collections of his *Prose Refutations* and *Hymns against Heresies*. The focus is on three particular ways by which Ephraem casts his opponents as heretics. First, it addresses his attacks on the credibility of his opponents as teachers. Second, it deals with Ephraem’s assertion that the apparently pious actions of his opponents are deceptive. Third, it considers how Ephraem is working to create a certain image of these opponents as heretics in the minds of his community.

With these characteristics of Ephraem’s heresiology in mind, the first chapter of this dissertation will provide a historical backdrop of the setting of fourth century northern Mesopotamia, focusing on the socio-religious settings of Nisibis and Edessa, Ephraem’s primary residences. The second chapter will discuss the connection between Ephraem’s conception of the correct approach to theology and his approach to doing heresiology. The third chapter will focus on Ephraem’s claim against the authority of these teachers and their followers to teach, to interpret scriptures, and to perform sacraments. The fourth chapter will look at Ephraem’s depiction of these heretics’ apparent virtue as malicious vice and their rites as fruitless chores. The fifth chapter will offer an exposition of the characterization of these heretics that Ephraem is
aiming to form in the minds of his audience through an evaluation of the imagery he uses throughout his prose and metrical refutations.
This dissertation by Robert Joseph Morehouse fulfills the requirement for the doctoral degree in Christian Near East approved by Sidney H. Griffith, Ph.D., as Director, and by Monica Blanchard, Ph.D. and by Shawqi Talia, Ph.D. as Readers.

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Sidney H. Griffith, Ph.D., Director

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Monica Blanchard, Ph.D., Reader

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Shawqi Talia, Ph.D., Reader
To Katherine, my love,

and Kerala, Caleb, and Savannah, my joys
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ABBREVIATIONS

1Hyp, 2Hyp, 3Hyp, 4Hyp, 5Hyp  The First through Fifth Discourses to Hypatius
BLC  Book of the Laws of Countries
CMC  Cologne Mani Codex
DPH  De Praescriptione Haereticorum of Tertullian
EH  Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius of Caesarea
HcH  Hymns against Heresies
HdEccl  Hymns on the Church
HdF  Hymns on Faith
Kephalaia  The Manichaean Kephalaia, or Chapters
Lieu/Gardner  Manichaean Texts in the Roman Empire
Overbeck  S. Ephraemi Syri, Rabulae Episcopi Edesseni, Balaei aliorumque opera selecta
PG  Patrologia Graeca
PR or Mitchell  Prose Refutations
SdF  Sermons on Faith
TA  The Teaching of Addai, or Doctrina Addai
ThSyr  Thesaurus Syriacus
Sincerest appreciation is held for the Center for the Study of Early Christianity at The Catholic University of America, which supported the early stages of my doctoral studies and research with a Mellon-Helis Fellowship.

Heartfelt thanks are offered to the St Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute in Kottayam, Kerala, India, whose hospitality and generosity during my year in residence made the bulk of the research for this project possible.
Introduction

This dissertation addresses Ephraem’s heresiological approach to Bar Dayšān and Mani. It aims to reveal Ephraem’s conception of the threat that Bar Dayšānism and Manichaeism posed to his own Christian community and to analyze his response to that threat in key texts of his polemical writings, the *Prose Refutations* and *Hymns against Heresies*. In these texts Ephraem casts his opponents as heretics in three particular ways. He attacks their credibility as teachers. He asserts that their apparently pious actions are deceptive. He works to create a certain image of these opponents as heretics in the minds of his own community.

The first chapter of this dissertation outlines the historical background of fourth-century northern Mesopotamia, focusing on the socio-religious settings of Nisibis and Edessa, Ephraem’s primary residences.¹ A discussion of the connection between Ephraem’s conception of the correct approach to theology and his own approach to heresiology is the subject of the second chapter. The third chapter is focused on his rebuttal of the authority of these opponents and their followers to teach, to interpret scriptures, and to administer sacraments. Ephraem’s arguments against any perceived positive image of the practices of Bar Dayšān and Mani are the subject of the fourth chapter. Ephraem’s use of imagery in his prose and metrical refutations to create a negative image of Bar Dayšān, Mani and their followers as heretics is the subject of the fifth and final chapter.

¹. All dates in this dissertation are references to the Common Era unless otherwise noted.
Chapter One

Ephraem of Nisibis, the Roman Near East, and Fourth Century Syriac-Speaking Christianity

This chapter reviews the historical background of Christianity in northern Mesopotamia in the fourth century. Its primary aim is to provide socio-historical context to the polemics of Ephraem of Nisibis against Bar Dayšān and Mani. Its conclusion is that Ephraem’s community was one Christian community among several in competition with one another for followers, for social status, and for the claim to orthodoxy.

The Case of Roman Mesopotamia

Northern Mesopotamia had been a contested region since the fall of the Seleucids to the Romans and the Parthians. The Persian and Roman conflict over the region of Northern Mesopotamia began when Pompey routed the Armenians and dismantled their empire on his way to overcome the Seleucids (66-63 BCE). The Romans were now on the Parthian doorstep and the two empires would vie for dominance in the region until the rise of the Arab conquest under the leadership of Muhammad in the second quarter of the seventh century. Nisibis and Edessa, the cities where Ephraem lived, were each besieged multiple times in late antiquity. The threats


3. Egeria herself gives an account that was relayed to her by the Bishop of Edessa upon her visit to that city wherein he claims that the city deflected the Persian army due to its commitment to Christian faith. During the siege the bishop read the letter from Jesus to King Abgar at the city gate and prayed (M.L. McClure and C. L. Feltoe, ed. and trans. The Pilgrimage of Etheria (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1919), 33-5). In the Syriac Life of Ephraem, Ephraem himself is said to have been partly responsible for the defeat of the Persians at Nisibis in 350CE. See J.P. Amar, The Syriac Vita Tradition of Ephrem the Syrian (Lovani: Peeters, 2011), 20-21. This account parallels the Life of Jacob of Nisibis, bishop of Nisibis at that time. See J.B. Segal, Edessa: The Blessed City (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2005), 87. Ephraem himself remarked that the reason for the exceptional defensive prowess of the city of Nisibis had a good deal to do with the fact that the bishop Jacob of Nisibis was interred there (Segal, Edessa, 173).
of changing political influence, invasion, and persecution were significant factors within the Christian churches, their politics, and their theologies.

In 297 the religion of Manichaeism came under suspicion and persecution from the Roman government. Fears sparked by the presence of Manichaeans in North Africa prompted the Roman emperor Diocletian to issue an edict in 302 against the Manichaeans, who were explicitly identified with the Persian people. Diocletian’s successor Constantine sent a letter to Shapur II (309-379), the King of Persia. In his letter he explained that he was a Christian emperor, that Rome was a Christian empire, and that all Christian citizens, even those under Persian sovereignty, were under his jurisdiction. The Persian king understood this as a threat and concluded that Christians within his empire could be regarded as Roman sympathizers. A long persecution of the Christians in Persia began. It has been suggested that the early Manichaean advances into the Roman Empire came with the march of Shapur I (240-72) to Antioch in 260. That same expedition is often noted as a significant event in the history of the eastern spread of

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4. Things would not improve for the Manichaeans under Diocletian’s persecutions beginning in 303, but the persecutions abated in 313 with the Edict of Toleration of Constantine and Licinius. See Samuel Lieu’s discussion of Diocletian’s response to Manichaeism in his Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 91-95.

5. Eusebius records Constantine’s Letter to Shapur II in his Life of Constantine, IV, 8-13. The persecution of Christians in Persia began in earnest during the reign of Shapur II (309-79). For a good introduction to these persecutions see Sebastian Brock and Susan Ashbrook Harvey, Holy Women of the Syrian Orient (Berkeley: University of California, 1987), 63-7. The persecution of Manichaeans in the Persian Empire began with the execution of Mani in 276 by Bahram I (273-276) and the Zoroastrian priest Kartir, and it spread, fueled by Zoroastrian zeal, to include Christians, Jews and Buddhists. Bahram II’s reign (276-293) brought a return to religious tolerance in Persia that would persist until persecutions were renewed under Shapur II. See Lieu, Manichaeism, 80f.
Christianity because many Greek Christians from the environs of Antioch were resettled by Shapur I in Persian lands.  

Likewise, the Persian campaign of Emperor Julian (361-63) in 363 would have a dramatic impact on the inhabitants of northern Mesopotamia. His military failure and subsequent death left little room for his successor Jovian (363-4) to negotiate with the Persians. In return for the safe return of the troops trapped in Persian territory, Jovian ceded Nisibis along with all Roman possessions east of the Tigris and Roman Armenia to the Persians. The Christian inhabitants of Nisibis were subsequently forced to emigrate, a sign of the Persian political suspicion of Christians in former “Roman” cities.

It was of increasing significance to the Syriac-speaking Christians whether they resided under Roman or Persian influence. Rome and Persia were both politicizing the religions of the other, and there was growing political tension over religious allegiances. The Roman northern Mesopotamian cities of Nisibis and Edessa housed a diverse spectrum of Christian communities, and tensions over religious identity and allegiance existed within those communities as well. Religious communities that identified their own doctrines with the names of Marcion or Bar Dayšān or Mani or Palut, among others, were associated with the Christian tradition and with the

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6. For a review of the significance of Shapur’s deportation of Christians from Roman to Persian territory see Jason BeDuhn, “A War of Words,” in *Frontiers of Faith*, ed. Jason BeDuhn and Paul Mirecki (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 86-7. Surprisingly little is said about the role Roman incursions into Persia during this period may have had in spreading Manichaeism as they brought the Manichaean religion into Roman territory. The Manichaean missionary commission was certainly cause enough for the spread of that tradition.

7. Ammianus Marcellinus, 25.9. Ephraem also mentions the fall of the city as an act of God in his *Hymns against Julian* 2, which expresses relief that he is not exiled into Persia (as had been the fate of the city of Singara; Ammianus Marcellinus, 20.6), but which may have been written before Ephraem knew of the need to vacate the city (Kathleen McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 41n104). See also Warwick Ball, *Rome in the East*, 25-26.
title “Christian.”

The “Ka’bah of Zoroaster” inscription at Naqsh-i Rustam (near Persepolis) bears the names “Nazareans” (N‘CL‘Y, Nāzrāy, from ميرك), who BeDuhn and Mirecki suggest are Syriac-speaking “Nazareans” who adhere to a form of Christianity that did not pass through the environment of the Hellenistic cities of the west; “Christians” (KLSTYD‘N, Kristādān, from Χριζηιανοι, through نازري), whose Greek name implies a western connection; “Purifiers/Baptists” (MKTKY, Maktaky, as Syriac ﻷردا); and “interpreters/ heretics” (ZNDKY, Zandaky), who BeDuhn and Mirecki suggest are the Manichaean.

Nisibis and Edessa

The city of Nisibis was Ephraem’s home for most of his life, and it was likely his birthplace. Ephraem spent roughly the last decade of his life in the city of Edessa. There is more historical data available to analyze from Edessa than from Nisibis, so the influence of Edessa on Ephraem has been more carefully studied.

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8. This was a central thesis of Walter Bauer’s work on early Edessan Christianity in his Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity, 2nd ed., trans. and ed. by Robert A. Kraft, Gerhard Krodel, et. al. (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler, 1971). For a fuller discussion of this topic see Sidney Griffith’s “The Marks of the ‘True Church’ according to Ephraem’s Hymns against Heresies,” in After Bardaisan: Studies on Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity in Honour of Professor Han J.W. Drijvers, ed. G.J. Reinink and A.C. Klugkist (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 125-140. See also Jason BeDuhn and Paul Mirecki, “Placing the Acts of Archelaus,” in Frontiers of Faith, 2.


10. Ibid.

Paul Russell stresses that Nisibis should be the first place we look to find the background of Ephraem’s works. Roman and Persian sources are notably quiet about the city of Nisibis. This cannot be due to a lack of the city’s importance, since both Rome and Persia sought to maintain control of it. Located along the current border of Turkey and Syria in the southeastern Turkish province of Mardin, this ancient Assyrian city was positioned along well-trodden trade routes in the late ancient Near East. It was a valuable city of trade and a formidable fortress of war.

That Ephraem lived in Nisibis while it was under Roman control is significant. The city first submitted to the Romans in 116 during Trajan’s expedition in the region. Within a year, an insurgency led to the execution of the Roman garrisons that were stationed there and Nisibis turned back to Parthian influence. In the 160s there was a resurgence of Roman presence in Mesopotamia, and in 164 Nisibis was again a Roman territory. Nisibis changed hands another time in 238 with the rise of the Sassanid Empire. The city was wrested from Persian control by Diocletian in 297 and was clearly under Roman control in 299, at which time the tetrarchy was negotiating with its eastern neighbors the terms of a treaty to establish the boundaries of Roman and Persian influence. This treaty established Nisibis as the official center for all economic and

14. Theodor Mommsen, 2:76.
15. Maurice Sartre, Middle East, 346 and 544n19.
diplomatic activity between Rome and Persia, ensuring the city’s significance as a social, cultural, political, and religious crossroads.\(^{16}\)

A Jewish community had existed in Nisibis since the Assyrian (721 BCE) and Babylonian (586-39 BCE) resettlements of the Israelites and Judeans.\(^{17}\) It was well-connected to the Jewish community in Palestine.\(^{18}\) This fact shows the strength of connections between religious communities even across shifting political boundaries. Similarly, Sidney Griffith has suggested that Syriac be seen as a unifying force across the border region. He posits that the language created continuity despite military and political division.\(^ {19}\) This adds a layer of cultural-linguistic continuity to the religious ties that bound various communities within the region.

We do not know when the first Christian passed through Nisibis, nor whether the first Christians to live in the city were immigrants or local converts.\(^ {20}\) Two sources suggest that Christianity had been introduced to the city by 215.\(^ {21}\) The first is the tomb inscription of Abercius (d. ca. 200), bishop of Phrygian Hierapolis, which mentions that he visited Nisibis. The second is the Nisibene tomb inscription of one Alexander (d. 215), whose stone was modeled after that of Abercius.\(^ {22}\) While these sources may give us evidence of a Christian community in

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17. Sartre, 332.
22. For a discussion of this artifact and its significance to our understanding of early Syriac-speaking Christianity see David Bundy, “The Life of Abercius: Its Significance for Early Syriac Christianity,” in *Doctrinal*
Nisibis at the turn of the third century, they do not distinguish the religious denomination except by the term “Christian.” It is unclear whether it might be Valentinian, Marcionite, Dayšānitē, proto-orthodox or of some other persuasion. The works of Ephraem remain our best witness for the religious climate of Nisibis in late antiquity. They suggest that the cosmopolitan nature of the city was reflected in the diversity of its Christian communities. We should imagine the co-existence of Marcionites, Dayšānites, and Manichaeans, and most likely of Arians and various Neo-Arians as well.

The most notable church leader of fourth-century Nisibis was Jacob, the bishop of that city who is reputed to have attended the Council of Nicea. Ephraem served under Jacob as a deacon. He may have travelled with Jacob to Nicea. Jacob’s participation in the council certainly secured the place of the council’s dictums within the Nisibene community and had its impact on the young deacon; Ephraem became a zealous proponent of Nicean orthodoxy. Jacob of Nisibis served the church from 303 until his death in 338. Jacob was succeeded by Volegeses (346-61) and Abraham (361-3). The line of the bishops in Nisibis ends abruptly here, because it

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23. Likewise, we have scant evidence concerning the influence of paganism, Zoroastrianism, or Buddhism in the area.


26. Jacob’s name is on the list of attendees, but the extant lists are swarmed with historical problems.
was in 363 that Jovian ceded Nisibis over to the Sasanian Persians and the Christians of that city were forced to flee into the Roman interior. It was at this time that Ephraem moved to Edessa.

Edessa

The historical record and archeological remains of Edessa have been better preserved than those of Nisibis. There are many Syriac texts believed to be of Edessan provenance. Many inscriptions and mosaics also have been found during surveys and excavations. 27 One can find dozens of studies about Edessa in the late antique period, 28 but there are only a handful of studies that devote any serious time to discussing Nisibis. 29 For this reason it is much easier to speak about the setting of the last decade of Ephraem’s life than it is to talk about the city where he spent more than fifty years.

Edessa was a cosmopolitan city. Standing, much like Nisibis, at the crossroads of the Roman and Persian empires, and positioned along the north-south and east-west trade routes, Edessa saw significant traffic, bringing merchants, missionaries and militaries from around the region through its city gates. Seleucus I Nicator, the city’s founder, named the city “Edessa” after the capital of Macedonia (312-281 BCE), and the evidence of Hellenistic influence in the city is


28. Chief among these are J.B. Segal’s Edessa, which looks at the history of the city from its founding through the Crusades; Steven Ross’s Roman Edessa, itself focusing on the pre-Christian era of the Roman city; and Walter Bauer’s “Edessa,” (the first chapter in his Orthodoxy and Heresy, 1-43) which has the early history of Christianity in the city as its subject.

29. The most recent and most comprehensive of these is Paul Russell’s “Nisibis,” op. cit. Otherwise see notes in previous section for further references.
undeniable. However, the city is in the heart of the Aramaic-speaking world. Edessa is considered to be the birthplace of classical Syriac, the local dialect of Aramaic. Ephrem and Bar Daysān, whose works have not survived, were that city’s most famous writers. Mani also saw Edessa as a significant city, to which he composed a letter, no longer extant, in Syriac.

The cosmopolitan nature of Edessa is exemplified by an inscription in Syriac script that includes a Parthian title written on one of the two Greek-style columns known as the “Throne of Nimrod” on the “Citadel” of Edessa. Edward Gibbon’s comments on Edessa can be cited here:

The inhabitants, since the time of Alexander, were a mixed race of Greeks, Arabs, Syrians, and Armenians. The feeble sovereigns of Osrhoene, placed on the dangerous verge of two contending empires, were attached from inclination to the Parthian cause; but the superior power of Rome exacted from them a reluctant homage.

Edessa, farther to the west than Nisibis, was more securely under Roman control from the middle of the second century onward. It would continue as a Roman client kingdom throughout the remainder of that century and into the next. Steven Ross suggests that pre-Christian Edessa’s

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32. It is recorded in the CMC 64.1-65.22; See Ron Cameron & Arthur J. Dewey (eds.), The Cologne Mani Codex (P. Colon. Inv. Nr: 4780): ‘Concerning the Origin of his Body’ (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), 42-44. Al-Nadim also refers to this text in his Fihrist, calling it “to-ar-Ruḥā,” the Arabic name for the city.

33. The title Nimrud’s throne refers to two Greco-Roman columns that sit upon the “Citadel” in the city of Edessa. See Segal (Edessa, 19, 26-27) and Ross (Roman Edessa, 115, 177 n35). See J. B. Segal’s discussion of the cultural heritage of the city in his Edessa, 29-35.

culture was at its most vibrant at this time, particularly during the reign of King Abgar VIII, the Great (178/9-211). He also suggests that the city was securely Roman during the Severan period (190-225). However, the frontier nature of life in Edessa continued under Roman suzerainty, and the city would be forced to resist the Persian army on a number of occasions.

The evidence for Edessa and Nisibis suggests strong socio-religious and cultural similarities between them. Both cities were major centers of trade between the Roman and Persian empires during the time that Ephraem lived in them. Both cities were highly coveted by the Western and Eastern empires. Multiple religious traditions were represented in both cities; these religious groups included residents and transients. Both cities had Christian bishops.

Early Christianity in Northern Mesopotamia

The story of earliest Christianity in northern Mesopotamia is one that is neither well documented nor monological. Sidney Griffith has written, “One no longer knows for sure when or exactly how Christianity first came to the Syriac-speaking communities.” There are two competing propositions. The first suggests that it was through the Jewish communities to the northwest of Nisibis in Adiabene that Christianity first emerged in the region. The second looks to the traditional trade route between Antioch and Edessa for the early spread of the religion into northern Mesopotamia. Regardless of the path that it took, Christianity was certainly present in the region before the end of the second century.

35. Ross, _Roman Edessa_, 29.
By Ephraem’s time, Nicean orthodox Christians in Edessa were telling their own history in the narrative of the legend of King Abgar and Jesus. As the story goes, King Abgar V, Ukama (“the Black”), ruler of Edessa (4BCE – 7CE; 13-50CE) was ill and he became interested in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. He sent a delegation to the rabbi bearing a letter that invited Jesus to come to the king’s court. Jesus declined the invitation, but he did promise that he would appoint someone to make the visit for him. This person was Addai, one of the seventy disciples, who was sent by Judas Thomas to go to the king of Osrhoene. Addai came to Edessa, healed the king, converted the royal family, and Osrhoene became a Christian nation. Addai continued teaching the people of the region, and as he breathed his last breath he passed on his ministry to his disciple Aggai.

This story is preserved in two fourth century accounts, one in Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Ecclesiastical History* and the other in Egeria’s travel memoirs. It is also preserved in the fifth century *Teaching of Addai (TA)*. Eusebius claims to have received a copy of the letter of Jesus from the archives in Edessa, and Egeria claims to have seen a copy of the same letter at the archives of Edessa that is a fuller version of one she had at home. The *TA* concludes with a

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section that recounts the connection of the Edessan bishop, Palut, to the apostolic succession. It includes praise of the record-keeping efforts in Edessa that made this knowledge possible. The archival prowess of Edessa is a recurring theme in each of these versions of the Abgar legend, suggesting that this element of the story was central to the original narrative. It also shows that there was motivation to demonstrate the validity of the narrative explicitly.

The TA uses the legend to emphasize a connection between the Nicean-orthodox church in Edessa and Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples. The first Christian bishop mentioned in the Chronicle of Edessa is Qune (d. 313). However, tradition holds that three bishops preceded Qune: Palut, Abshelama, and Bar Samya. The importance of these three bishops to the narrative of Edessan Christianity in the fifth century is clarified by the TA: they connect the line of apostolic succession from Aggai down to Qune. The TA notes that Palut was Aggai’s successor. However, Aggai, because his death was sudden and quick, was unable to lay his hands on, that is ordain, Palut himself. Therefore, Palut journeyed to Antioch to receive ordination through the laying on of hands from the bishop there.

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42. TA 104, 106 (Syriac); 105, 107 (English); EH 1.13; in Egeria’s Travels she is provided with a copy of the letters. This suggests that not only were they maintained in an archive, but an active record reproduction program was in effect, making such records available to visitors or other interested parties.

43. Qune is also recorded in the Martyrdom of Habib (W. Cureton, Ancient Syriac Documents (London: Williams and Norgate, 1864), 72). A fuller discussion of the significance of this text for an understanding of early Edessan Christianity can be found in the following section of this chapter.

44. Bauer, 17.

45. See TA. For a detailed discussion of the historical difficulties of the TA’s account see Bauer (17-18), Segal (81), and Sidney Griffith’s “The Doctrina Addai as a Paradigm of Christian Thought in Edessa in the Fifth Century,” Hugoye 6, no. 2 (July 2003), pars. 27-28, http://www.bethmardutho.org/index.php/hugoye/volume-index/152.html (accessed April, 24, 2013).
The importance of Palut to Edessan Christianity in the third and fourth centuries is difficult to overstate, though also difficult to clearly outline. The significance of his place within the church’s history cannot be better emphasized than to note that in Ephraem’s own day, the Nicean Christians of Edessa were being referred to and even referred to themselves as Palutians.⁴⁶ Palut’s importance to the proto-orthodox Edessan Christians must have been enough that a significant number of them accepted his name as a referent for their community. The variety of Christian communities functioning within the city under different names—Marcionites, Dayṣānites, Manichaeans, etc.—are also the earliest Christian communities to be mentioned in the *Chronicle of Edessa*.⁴⁷

**The Chronicle of Edessa**

The *Chronicle of Edessa*, a sixth century record of the city,⁴⁸ mentions some significant early church leaders and events: Marcion’s departure from the church (138); Bar Dayṣān’s birth (154); a flood that destroyed the sanctuary of the “church of the Christians” (202); Mani’s birth (240);⁴⁹ Bishop Qune’s setting of the foundation of a church in 313; the council at Nicea (325);

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⁴⁶. See *HcH* XXII.5-6.

⁴⁷. One cannot be certain of the accuracy of Bauer’s (22-24) thesis that “Christian” was a title already taken by a community before a proto-orthodox group emerged in Edessa. It is clear that the title was contested, that it did not have simply one referent in the days of Ephraem. However, the evidence of Christianity in Edessa prior to that time is so scant that one ought not to speculate further.


⁴⁹. As is noted below (n. 65) this date is not of Mani’s birth, but is likely confused with the beginning of Mani’s ministry, which is generally accepted to have been in 242. The date of 240 may come from the rise to power of Shapur I as co-sovereign, as this shah was a patron of Mani.
the expansion of the great church (328); the death of Jacob of Nisibis (338); and Ephraem’s own
death (373).  

There is a community of Christians in Edessa in the second century. The information from Julius Africanus, that Bar Daysân was a royal courtier and from the Chronicle, that the Christian church had a visible place within the city demonstrates that the religion was at very least tolerated. In the fourth century the church in Edessa was aware of the imperial attitude towards Christianity. This can be seen in the timing of Bishop Qune’s church building project, as it comes on the heels of the Edict of Milan, and the Chronicle’s record of the Council of Nicea.

There is a distinction between references to second and third-century Christianity and those to fourth-century Christianity. None of the second or third-century Christians is given a title (i.e. “bishop”). Marcion, Bar Daysân, and Mani are teachers who were known as heretics or sectarians in Ephraem’s time, and certainly by the time the Chronicle was compiled.

Careful reading of the Chronicle suggests that in the fourth century an organized authority structure emerges within the proto-orthodox church. These bishops were keenly aware of the imperial position regarding Christianity; they were involved in the life of the church throughout the empire; and they were intent on building an even stronger place for the church within the region. The Chronicle demonstrates a strong recognition of the imperial toleration (313) and endorsement (325) of Christianity and the emergence of a centralized church authority structure in Edessa. A consistent theme in the Chronicle’s display of Christianities in Edessa from the second through the fourth centuries is that the favor of political leadership was significant. As long as the Abgarids of the Ayur dynasty tolerated Christianity it flourished in

50. Guidi, 3.
many forms (Marcionite, Dayṣānīte, Manichaean), and with the imperial endorsement of the religion came an imperial church.

The legend of Abgar and Jesus and the Chronicle of Edessa provide us with clear acknowledgements of the significance of political power to the post-Nicean northern Mesopotamian church in Edessa. The Chronicle, indicates that pre-Nicean Edessan Christianity’s most notable leaders came from a variety of persuasions, none of which are recognizably proto-orthodox. As a means to clarifying some of this variety, the following sections address the significance of notable Syriac-speaking Christian writers of the first four centuries in Mesopotamia.

**Tatian**

Tatian (c. 110-180) was an Assyrian who traveled to Rome and was there converted to Christianity by Justin Martyr. As Sidney Griffith points out, Tatian may be the first Syriac-speaking Christian we know by name. While in Rome he compiled his Diatessaron, which weaves the four gospels into one account and was highly influential in the Syriac-speaking world into the fifth century. Around 172 Tatian returned to his home in northern Mesopotamia, though its exact location remains a mystery.

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51. A discussion of whether Bar Dayṣān himself is a proto-orthodox teacher can be found in the section about him in this chapter.

52. “Christianity in Edessa,” 8.

53. Ephraem himself writes a commentary on this text, and it seems that the Manichaeans, if not Mani himself, used the text. See William Lawerence Petersen, *Tatian’s Diatessaron: It’s Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 1-2n5, 344f., and 398-403.
Bar Dayšān of Edessa

Born 11 July 154 Bar Dayšān was a Christian teacher, a philosopher, an astronomer, an author, and a courtier to King Abgar VIII (177-212) in Edessa. From what we know of his biography, we can conclude that he was well known, well respected, and well educated. We learn from Julius Africanus that Bar Dayšān was at the court of King Abgar VIII when Julius’ Roman envoy paid the ruler a diplomatic visit. In his first Hymn against Heresies Ephraem of Nisibis acknowledges Bar Dayšān’s social position when he mocks his fine dress. Ephraem also refers to him as the “Aramaean Philosopher.” In the writings of one of his own students, Bar Dayšān is identified as a former astronomer, and his knowledge of the Chaldean science was not lost on later writers. Bar Dayšān is best known for his place in the history of Christianity as a teacher. Centuries after his death heresiologists were still including him in the standard lists of heretics, and more importantly some in the Middle and Near East seem genuinely concerned about the lasting influence of his teachings in their communities.


56. I.12.

57. Ephraem calls Bar Dayšān the “Aramaean Philosopher” and the “Philosopher of the Aramaeans” (PR, II, 225, l. 25; and 8, l. 1, respectively).

58. See BLC, 26f.; and HcH LI.4

59. Bar Dayšān is a controversial figure. Han Drijvers (Bardaisan of Edessa) synthesizes the story of Bar Dayšān. However, in his Natur, lot en vrijheid: Bardesanes, de filosoof der Arameërs en zijn images (Wageningen: Veenman, 1969) Taeke Jansma argues that only images of Bar Dayšān can be teased from the evidence that remains about him and so we must speak of glimpses of Bar Dayšān. Ilaria Ramelli has published a study of Bar Dayšān and the evidence available about him through the centuries (Bardaisan of Edessa: A Reassessment of the Evidence and a New Interpretation (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2009), in which she argues not only that a reliable depiction of him is
None of Bar Daysan’s writings are extant. In fact, our only knowledge of his compositions comes from secondary accounts. The Book of the Laws of Countries (BLC), which is well known as our best source for insights into the thoughts of Bar Daysan’s school, was composed by one of his disciples in the form of a Platonic dialogue.61 In the BLC, Bar Daysan clearly identifies himself as a Christian.62 He is portrayed there as defending the faith from false teachings. Likewise, Eusebius tells us that Bar Daysan authored polemics against Marcion,63 a Roman Christian whose teachings had spread to northern Mesopotamia in the second century, and who also appears as a significant teacher of false doctrines in Ephraem of Nisibis’s polemics. Bar Daysan also wrote against astral determinism, a fact reflected in the BLC.64 Bar Daysan is an essential figure for understanding the religious, and more specifically Christian, landscape of Edessa and northern Mesopotamia in late antiquity. Furthermore, as his teachings and his followers were among Ephraem’s most pressing concerns, he is a crucial figure in this study.

possible, but that Bar Daysan is only tragically recorded as a heretic, and that his fate and legacy should be viewed more like that of Origen, with whom he shared many more theological perspectives, than that of Valentinos, with whom he had little, if anything, in common. Ute Possekel’s “Bardaisan and Origen on Fate and the Power of the Stars” (Journal of Early Christian Studies 20, no. 4 (2012): 515-41) supports Ramelli’s thesis.

60. He is in the lists of Epiphanius, Theodoret, Theodore Bar Konai, Theodore Abû Qurra, among others; and Rabbula of Edessa (d. 435) is supposed to have “converted” all of the Daysanites to orthodoxy, but Jacob of Edessa (633-708) is still concerned about the Daysanites in the city. See Segal, Edessa, 105, 107.

61. For the Syriac text with an English translation see Han Drijvers, The Book of the Laws of Countries: Dialogue on Fate of Bardaisan of Edessa. (1964; repr., Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2007). All references to this text (commonly abbreviated BLC below) are to this volume.

62. BLC, 58f.

63. EH 4.30. See also Han J. W. Drijvers’ Bardaisan of Edessa ((Assen: Van Gorcum, 1966), 169-70) for a discussion of the text and a translation.

64. 26; 27.
Mani the Babylonian

Mani was born in 216 near the Persian capital, Seleucia-Ctesipon, and he died in 276 by the order of the Persian Shah Bahram I (273-6). Mani had been a member of a baptizing sect known as the Elchasaites. He began teaching his own views within this community during the co-reign of Ardashir (224-42) and Shapur I (240-72).\(^{65}\) He claimed that his message was given to him by his divine twin, his syzygos (σύζυγος),\(^{66}\) and believed himself to be the Paraclete promised by Jesus to his disciples in John 14.\(^{67}\) Mani’s message had great success and he, like Bar Dayšān, gained favor with the ruler of his native land, the Persian Shahanshah (King of Kings) Shapur I (240-72).\(^{68}\) Mani was known as a painter, a teacher, a physician, and the founder of Manichaeism.\(^{69}\)

Mani understood his movement to be a way to reestablish true religion. Manichaeism claimed to be the ultimate world religion.\(^{70}\) Mani claimed that his teaching was the culmination

\(^{65}\) According to Al-Nadim (Gustav Flügel, *Kitab al-Fihrist* (Beirut: Khayats, 1964), 149; corrected in Theodor Nöldeke, *Geschichte Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 412). The *Chronicle of Edessa* has 240 as the year for Mani’s birth, but this is likely due to confusion with the year that he began his religious career. See Lutz Richter-Bernburg (“Mani’s Dodecads and Sasanian Chronology: Kephalaia, Shāpūragān, and Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 95 (1993): 71-80) for a discussion of the tendencies for the biographers of Mani to link significant events in Mani’s life to major developments in Sasanid politics. For example, here there is potentially a link being made between the beginning of his ministry and the inauguration of the reign of Shapur I in 240.

\(^{66}\) He had been visited by his syzygos as a child, but was not told to share his message until he was twenty-four. See *CMC* and 17.8-18.15. For a thorough comparative discussion of the narratives of Mani’s early life and career within Manichaean literature see Richter-Bernburg, “Mani’s Dodecads.”

\(^{67}\) Ephrem refers to this claim in *HcH* XXII.14.

\(^{68}\) See Gardner and Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 6-7, 75-79; from here forward this text will be referred to as Gardiner/Lieu. See also the Manichaean *Homilies*, 48, ll. 7-9; and the *Kephalaia*, 76, p. 183, ll. 27-9.

\(^{69}\) Mani attributes this title to himself in an account from the *CMC* (122).

\(^{70}\) Mani’s own views on this point are most clearly retained in the Šābūhragān; cf. Gardiner/Lieu, 109.
of all of the prophets that had come before him, bringing together the wisdom of the Greeks, the Jews, the Buddhists, the Zoroastrians and the Christians.\(^{71}\) His own ministry included trips throughout Persia and into India, China, Khorsan, Assyria and Babylon.\(^{72}\) Mani taught his followers to spread his message throughout the world.\(^{73}\) There are several accounts of early Manichaean missionary efforts, and also of the reactions of the Church and government officials within the Roman Empire to this new faith.\(^{74}\)

Mani’s early success was dependent on the favor of Shapur I. Mani even translated his ideas from his native Syriac into Middle Persian for the Shahanshah in his Šābuhragān.\(^{75}\) Imperial support for, or at least toleration of Mani, seems to have continued under Hormizd I, Shapur’s successor. However, his reign lasted only a year, and Mani’s ambition would subsequently be curbed by Bahram I (273-76). The new Shahanshah favored the resurgent Zoroastrian zeal. Kartir, a Zoroastrian priest who caught the ear of the King of Kings, demanded that the threat of Manichaeism be addressed. Bahram I imprisoned and executed Mani (d. 276). This was the beginning of the Persian persecution of the Manichaens.\(^{76}\)

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\(^{71}\) Sidney Griffith suggests that Bar Dayšān and Mani’s syncretisms were apt responses to the unique environment of Mesopotamia at this time ("Christianity in Edessa,” 10).

\(^{72}\) For his recounting of his own missionary journeys, successful and unsuccessful alike see Kephalaiοn 76 (187f.); English in Gardiner/Lieu (78).

\(^{73}\) This is recounted in the CMC (124).

\(^{74}\) See Gardiner/Lieu, 5, 77.

\(^{75}\) See Nicholas Baker-Brian, Manichaeism: An Ancient Faith Rediscovered (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 76-77.

\(^{76}\) This Persian persecution is recorded in the Homilies, 74-78. See also Lieu, Manichaeism, 106-15.
Mani guided his community in person, but also by recording his teachings for posterity and for the assurance of the integrity of the tradition. He was confident that his genuine teachings were incorruptible because unlike previous prophets he wrote his own scriptures.\textsuperscript{77} The corpus of Manichaean scriptures is not firm. Mani did not himself dictate what texts should compose a set canon, and so we cannot speak of any such exclusive corpus. There are, however, lists from within the first generation after the death of Mani. \textit{Homily} 25.1-6 preserves such a list:

\begin{quote}
The Gospel and the Treasury of the Life, The Treatise and The Book of the Mysteries, The Book of the Giants and the Epistles, The Psalms and the Prayers of my Lord, his Picture(-Book) and his apo(caly)pses, his parables and his mysteries\ldots
\end{quote}

Interestingly, Mani’s \textit{Šābuhragān} is not among these. Although Mani composed many works, none are extant, apart from fragments and excerpts in other texts.\textsuperscript{79} Instead, scholars study texts from subsequent generations of Manichaeans as well as polemical literature to gain insight into his teachings. These corpora include teachings of Mani collected by his followers, hymns maintained by the Manichaean community, and works by heresiologists who used sayings of Mani and his followers as foils for their own teachings. Ephraem’s polemics represent some of the earliest texts that deal with Mani and Manichaeism. They are also the most extensive anti-Manichaean polemics extant in Syriac literature. They contain many reliable references to Manichaean literature, as the

\begin{quote}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{77} Mani was conscious of this being a unique contribution to his community and was proud of this fact. He gave this as a point of assurance of the success of his faith to Shapur I in attempting to convince him to embrace the religion for its truth and even its potential political potency; cf. \textit{Kephalaion} 151:20 (English in Gardiner/Lieu, 266).
\textsuperscript{78} Translation from Gardiner/Lieu, 152. 81. For a note on the continuing work of publishing these pieces, see Gardiner/Lieu, 153n2.
\textsuperscript{79} For a note on the continuing work of publishing these pieces, see Gardiner/Lieu, 153n2.
\end{quote}
work of John Reeves has shown about the *Prose Refutations*, and to Manichaean practice, as is clear from Jason BeDuhn’s *Manichaean Body* and from the fourth chapter of the dissertation.

There is no evidence that Mani ever sojourned in Nisibis or Edessa. Regardless of whether or not he had visited these towns, we can be certain that a Manichaean community existed in Edessa within Mani’s lifetime. This is known from a letter Mani composed to the community there, known simply as the *Letter to Edessa*. The extant excerpts of this letter reveal no significant data about the community in the city at that time, however Samuel Lieu has suggested that Edessa may have even become the hub of Manichaean missions in the region after the fall of Palmyra had shifted tradition East-West trade routes northward from that city to Edessa and Nisibis. In his *Second Discourse to Hypatius* Ephraem claims that the Manichaens in the region were boasting of their great numbers.

Mani had made his movement a missionizing community. The missionary responsible for bringing Manichaeism to the Roman Empire was one Mar Adda. BeDuhn and Mirecki have suggested that Addai, the hero of the *TA*, is actually Mar Adda, recast by the work as an orthodox version of the true Manichaean Christian missionary. Again, we have no explicit reference to Adda travelling to Edessa, but we do have records of him being in Palmyra and in

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82. Mitchell, *PR* 1, xxxvii; 18-19.

83. “Placing,” 2.
Alexandria.\textsuperscript{84} Perhaps, as Lieu intimates, Adda followed the commerce north from Palmyra to Edessa when the former finally became a Roman possession in 273.\textsuperscript{85}

\textbf{Ephraem of Nisibis}

Ephraem of Nisibis was born around the year 306, just after the reign of Diocletian. He knew of the effects of the persecutions that the emperor had launched in 303. Ephraem himself refers to the martyrdoms of Shmona, Guria and Habib in Edessa during the first quarter of the fourth century.\textsuperscript{86} Moreover, Ephraem was aware, and proud, of the political triumph of the church, and was not ashamed of the imperial role to this end.\textsuperscript{87} He celebrated Constantine’s rise to power.\textsuperscript{88} He was proud of the bishops that he served under, and of their service within the imperial church.\textsuperscript{89} He was aware of the importance of the emperor’s preferences to the religious

\textsuperscript{84} We know of his arriving as far as Alexandria from fragments M2, MM II, 301-2. See English translation in Jes P. Asmussen, \textit{Manichaean Literature} (Delmar, NY: Scholars’ Facsimiles and Reprints, 1975), 21; and So. 18220 (=T.M. 389a), KG §3.2 (360-95), 36-41; and an English translation by Samuel Lieu in Gardiner/Lieu, 112. As for his sojourn in Palmyra see So 18223 (=T.M. 389c) and So 18222 (T.M. 389c) KG §3.3 (441-515), 41-45; and an English translation by Samuel Lieu in Gardiner/Lieu, 113-4.

\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Manichaeism}, 75.

\textsuperscript{86} See the thorough yet succinct discussion of the historicity of these accounts in Fergus Millar’s \textit{Roman Near East}, 486-7. See Sebastian Brock’s “Eusebius,” 212-34, especially 223-24, for reference to these three figures as martyrs in Ephraem’s \textit{Carmina Nisibena} 33:13, and in a 411 Edessan martyr calendar.

\textsuperscript{87} See Sebastian Brock, “Eusebius;” and Sidney Griffith’s “Ephraem.”

\textsuperscript{88} This is seen especially in his praise of Constantine’s holding of the Council of Nicea. See for example \textit{HcH} XXII.20.

\textsuperscript{89} Ephraem recounts the admirable characteristics of the Nisibene bishops under which he had served the church in his collection of \textit{Carmina Nisibena} 13-21.
climate of the empire at large.\textsuperscript{90} He was certainly informed about the events at Nicea and was a proponent of the church it represented, a Nicene orthodox church.\textsuperscript{91}

Ephraem served the church of Nisibis under the leadership of its bishop, Jacob, who attended the council at Nicea. This connection to the centralized authority of the church may have been an impetus for Ephraem’s composition of the polemical works. However, as previously mentioned, there is strong evidence that, much like elsewhere in the empire, the Christian communities of northern Mesopotamia were working to define their identities, and debates between these communities ensued long before council mandates established any standards for orthodoxy. Bar Dayšān had vied with Marcionism. Mani had attacked Bar Dayšān’s teachings, and their followers had been disputing one another for decades before Ephraem was even born. Ephraem notes his exposure to a variety of religious options in \textit{HcH} XXVI.10:

\begin{quote}
I was born in the way of the truth,  
even if my youth did not perceive.  
In the crucible I attained it, when I did perceive.  
The confused paths that lay before me,  
my faith contemned.  
\end{quote}

Ephraem’s attacks against these heretics show him to be fighting a pro-Nicene theological battle.\textsuperscript{92} While Nisibis and Edessa are far from the centralized authority base of the

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\textsuperscript{90} Ephraem comments on the neo-Arian leanings of Constantius and Valens, forgiving the emperors for being misled by heretical bishops. See Sidney Griffith’s “Ephraem.”
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{91} Note Sidney Griffith’s argument that Ephraem of Nisibis was not only aware of the findings of the council at Nicea, but he worked hard to represent the teachings as they were set forth by that council in Syriac ("‘Faith Seeking Understanding’ in the Thought of Ephraem the Syrian," in \textit{Faith Seeking Understanding: Learning and the Catholic Tradition}, ed. George C. Berthold (Manchester, New Hampshire: Saint Anselm College Press, 1991), 35-55).
\end{flushright}
empire and the church, Ephraem was grappling with the same issues as his colleagues farther west. Although this work only addresses Ephraem’s treatment of Bar Dayşân, Mani, and their followers, known as outsider adversaries, Ephraem was also concerned that his community might be infected from within by the heresy of Arius, an insider adversary.

Heresiology was not Ephraem’s only contribution to his community. He served as a deacon in the church. He conducted choirs and composed songs about various aspects of theology and faith. He composed both prose and metrical compositions and he was perhaps the greatest poet theologian. He is even reputed to have helped those suffering from the effects of the great famine in 372. It was likely in this line of service that he died on June 9 of 373 in Edessa. Ephraem’s efforts were not enough to eradicate heresy from the Syriac-speaking milieu, but he played an important role in helping to solidify the Nicene Christian community in the region.

Christian communities in northern Mesopotamia continued to struggle for power long after his death. Bishop Rabula of Edessa (d. 435) attempted to officially stamp out all vestiges of

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92. See Sidney Griffith’s *Faith Adoring the Mystery: Reading the Bible with Ephraem the Syrian* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1997), 8, where Griffith demonstrates that Ephraem is really simply articulating Nicene Christianity in his own local milieu.

93. The terminology of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ comes from *HcH* III.9, available in the appendix.

94. See Paul Russell’s study of the similarities between how Gregory of Nazianzus and Ephraem do Post-Nicene theology (*St. Ephraem the Syrian and St. Gregory the Theologian Confront the Arians, Moran ‘Eth’o 5* (Kottayam, India: St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, 1994)). See also Christine Shepardson’s work on Ephraem’s anti-Jewish and anti-Arian polemics and his connections to John Chrysostom and Athanasius (*Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem’s Hymns in Fourth Century Syria* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008)).

Daysānīm and Manichaeism from the city, but centuries later, Jacob of Sarug (d. 708) was still struggling with the influences of these communities.\textsuperscript{96}
Chapter Two

Ephraem’s Symbolic Epistemology, Theology, and Polemic

Ephraem worked diligently to project images of truth throughout the contested and complicated Christian milieu of northern Mesopotamian. Ephraem captured the imagination of his audiences by weaving elaborate tapestries of related themes throughout his works. It is the theological epistemology and methodology behind these artful pieces and how the two relate to one another that is the subject of the present chapter.

This chapter will outline Ephraem’s theological approach, how Ephraem believes one ought to go about determining and conveying what the church ought to believe. It will include an exposition of what some have called his typological or symbolic theology, juxtaposed by a discussion of Ephraem’s critique of his adversaries’ theological methodology. These are intended to serve as a backdrop for discussing Ephraem’s polemical methodology, which utilizes a subtly different construct while delineating what one ought not to believe, or how one ought not to live. Ephraem’s polemical approach is similar in significant ways to his symbolic approach to theology. This chapter concludes with a brief excursus on the strong thematic, linguistic and theological similarities between Ephraem’s polemical writings against Marcion, Bar Dayṣān and Mani and the polemical remarks made by Bar Dayṣān’s persona in the Book of the Laws of Countries (BLC). There is a strong literary parallel between the openings of Ephraem’s First Discourse to Hypatius and the BLC. These similarities occur where each text has as its topic the proper personal approach to theological discourse. This may help to provide insight into a specific example of Ephraem’s polemical rhetorical style in relation to our central topic here, and
may also aid in contextualizing his thinking on the topic of the appropriate approach to doing theology.

**Doing Theology**

Ephraem’s writings are rarely discursive. He is much more a purveyor of images and metaphors than of syllogisms. These points have been both praised and maligned by scholars studying his works. This methodology is linked to his religious epistemology. Thus, in order to understand why Ephraem approaches theology in the way that he does, one must have an understanding of his idea of how to ensure theological veracity. One must consider four key factors: his understanding of the human condition in relationship to the divine, his conception of the role of revelation, his opinion of the function of human reasoning, and his appreciation for the importance of the continuity and authority of the true church, as he sees it. Once these points have been reviewed, it will be possible to provide a summary of Ephraem’s theological method.

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97. For recent surveys of the history of the scholarly treatment of these themes see Ute Possekel’s introductory remarks on the history of the interpretation of Ephraem’s interaction with Hellenic Greek philosophy (*Evidence of Greek Philosophical Concepts in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian* (Louvain: Secrétariat du CSCO, 1999), 1-8) and Kees den Biesen’s introduction and first chapter which discuss the road taken, even within Ephraem studies, to a greater appreciation of Ephraem’s symbolic approach to theology (*Simple and Bold: Ephrem’s Art of Symbolic Thought* (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2006), 3-46).
The Chasm (ܦܛܰܐ): Divine Nature and the Human Condition

Ephraem believed that there exists an ontological chasm (ܡܫܚܫܐ) that divides the human from God. The human intellect is not capable of crossing this gorge and, therefore, Ephraem opposes approaching knowledge about the divine through deductive means: “As for ‘Deity,’ what man can search it out? There is a chasm between him and the Creator.” His statements are so strong to this effect that, at points, Ephraem appears to be suggesting that theology is itself impossible due to the insurmountable chasm. He says:

Let us not allow ourselves to go astray and to study God.
Let us take the measure of our mind, and gauge our thinking.
And as for our knowledge, let us know how small it is, and
Too contemptible to scrutinize the Knower of all

Tell me, how will you have pictured in your mind that birth,
So far removed from the range of your inquiry?
Do you think there is just a short gap in the interval
Between you and searching it out?

Seal your mouth with silence; let your tongue not act rashly.
Know yourself, a creature made, son of one so fashioned,
That there is a great chasm without bottom
Between you and the Son, at the edge of scrutiny.

From this perspective, Ephraem clearly thinks that the human, left to his/her own devices, is not capable of doing theology. A sober, measured approach must be garnered, one that is cognizant of just how great God is and how far removed is humankind. Such a realization compels humans to be silent, out of respect for just how little they know. When Ephraem speaks simply

100. Possekel (Evidence, 44) refers to Ephraem’s suggestion that a degree of measure, which Possekel links to the Aristotelian mean, is essential in one’s theological methodology.
of the human condition in relation to knowing God through reason, there is no doubt that the practice of theology is futile.

Theology is not impossible, however. Ephraem simply believes that humanity could not hope to know anything about God on its own. The beautiful thing, to Ephraem, is that humanity is not stuck without recourse on this side of an insurmountable ontological divide. While humans cannot cross this chasm, God can, and has. Ephraem sees nature, the scriptures, and the person of Jesus Christ as God’s efforts to reveal himself to humankind and so also as avenues to knowledge about God. These divine revelations not only make it possible for humans to aspire to learn something about God, they make it impossible to remain silent.101

The Function of Revelation

While stressing the deep divide between God and humankind, Ephraem also cautions against allowing the fear that this gap can generate to become debilitating. Using the pericopes of Peter’s attempt to walk on water alongside Jesus102 and of the Pharisee and publican praying side by side in the temple,103 Ephraem points out that the fear of both Peter and the tax collector are appropriate responses in their situations. However, he urges that one must move beyond fear to faith. In each of these stories fear is overcome in a vocal act of crying out to God for salvation, an act of faith.104

102. Matt 14:22-33 and parallels.
Ephraem sees these pericopes as types of the human condition in regards to doing theology. Just as Jesus’ hand reached down to pull Peter up above the waves, God has reached down across the abyss and given humanity access to knowledge about the divine through revelation: in nature, in the Bible, and, ultimately, in the person of Jesus, the incarnate Son of God. By Ephraem’s reckoning, only through these means can any person hope to come to an understanding of God. Furthermore, the way that these forms of revelation speak of God is not directly, but through imagery, through symbols or types (ܡܥܕܐ, ����, or ����).105 For Ephraem, human language is insufficient to speak of the divine precisely. It is a sign of God’s great grace that God has permitted himself106 to be reflected in the words of scripture and in nature so that humanity might know something of God, and have a way to express thoughts regarding God.

In this way nature and scripture help to make gaining insight into God’s nature possible for Ephraem. These are not the highest forms of revelation in Ephraem’s view however. It is most truly the incarnation of the Son of God, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth that makes God readily available to humankind. Indeed, to Ephraem, it is the incarnation that reveals the mysteries of the divine, hidden in nature and the scriptures. Thomas Koonamackal observes:

Nature and Scripture are two treasuries of the self-revealing God who put on human language for our sake. These treasuries are full of types, symbols and metaphors. But the key to open these and interpret the mysteries is the Incarnate Son.107

105. Ephraem uses several different words to refer to the symbolic of typological nature of revelation. Among them is the Greek ὑστος (ܡܥܕܐ as it appears in Syriac). The spellings ���� and ���� are found interchangeably in the manuscripts.

106. The masculine pronoun is used as it mirrors Ephraem’s use of the masculine to refer to God, and is so translated, hopefully encouraging continuity and readability.

Ephraem believed that we would even be incapable of forming proper names for God had they not been revealed to us. Relating how the scriptures provide humanity with the language with which to discuss the divine, Ephraem says:

Let us give thanks to God who clothed Himself in the names of the body’s various parts:
Scripture refers to His ‘ears,’ to teach us that He listens to us;
It speaks of His ‘eyes,’ to show us that He sees us.
It was just the names of such things that He put on,
And, although in His true Being there is not wrath, or regret,
Yet He put on these names too because of our weakness.

We should realize that, had He not put on the names of such things,
It would not have been possible for Him to speak with us humans.
By means of what belongs to us did He draw close to us:
He clothed Himself in our language, so that He might clothe us in His mode of life.  

God does not reveal himself in didactic explanations of the inner workings of his ontology.

Instead, Ephraem thinks, God uses names, as analogies and metaphors. In the quote above Ephraem draws on a favorite image of his: that just as Jesus was the incarnate Son of God, the scriptures are a verbal incarnation of God. The Son put on Jesus, and God put on the words of scripture themselves.  

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*Faith Adoring the Mystery* (19f.) where he outlines his understanding of the role of nature, scripture and the incarnation much along the lines that Koonamackal follows.


109. This image is particularly provocative because the chasm that we have discussed was not a concern for humanity in paradise; it is a post-lapsarian concern of humankind, and a major event at the fall of humanity from paradise was God’s stripping the ‘robe of glory’ from Adam and Eve and clothing them with animal skins. For Ephraem, neither humanity, nor God is bearing their true self. For a further discussion of the “robe of glory” see Sebastian Brock, *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1990), 66-72. For more on the words of scripture as God’s garments or manifestation see Phil Botha, “God in the Garment of Words: The Metaphor of Metaphorical Language in Ephrem the Syrian’s hymn ‘On Faith’ XXXI,” *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 3 (1992): 63-79; Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 60-66; ibid., *Hymns on Paradise*, 45-49; and Griffith, *Faith*, 23-24.
Moreover, because the revelation of God is not propositional and direct, Ephraem is not particularly interested in the literal meaning of the scriptures. He is much more focused on revealing the spiritual meaning of the text. The literal meaning, in his view, is not likely to reveal much about who God is, but the spiritual is bound to uncover treasuries of wisdom for the one who explores it.\textsuperscript{110}

Thus, for Ephraem, revelation makes theology possible: only through the types and symbols in nature, scripture and in the Messiah can humans hope to even find words to use in reflecting upon the divine.\textsuperscript{111} These acts of grace on the part of God make reliable terminology about God available; humans are not relegated to silence when it comes to the divine. Furthermore, Ephraem believes that revelation demands a response. Ephraem saw both silence and speech as necessary responses to the divine and believed that the measure for determining which response was most appropriate was revelation: humans may reflect in vocal (if textual) adoration upon what is revealed (ܓܡܝܐ), but must reflect in silence about what is left hidden (ܚܫܝܐ) as mystery (ܡܪܐ).\textsuperscript{112}

How does the theologian respond to revelation? Ephraem suggests that there is a great deal of work to be done by the human mind in its pursuit of correctly portraying the divine in its

\textsuperscript{110} For further discussion of Ephraem’s emphasis on the spiritual meanings of scripture see Brock, \textit{Luminous}, 46-51.

\textsuperscript{111} For a discussion of these sources of revelation as a means to finding the language with which to speak about God see Griffith, \textit{Faith}, 19-24.

\textsuperscript{112} For an excellent introduction to Ephraem’s thinking regarding the role of the polarity between “hidden” (ܚܫܝܐ) and “revealed” (ܓܡܝܐ), see Brock, \textit{Luminous}, 27-29. Biesen discusses Ephraem’s use of the analogy of the “hidden and the visible sun” in Ephraem’s \textit{Hymns on the Church} 9 (Simple, 109-46). Ephraem uses this analogy to illustrate that it is perfectly natural for us to encounter things that maintain a tension between being visible and hidden, and thus which we are able to speak about, but which we must also remain silent about in certain respects.
worshipful response to his revelation. Ephraem’s own theological compositions certainly demonstrate a considerable mental effort. What then is his understanding of the proper function of human reasoning in relation to knowledge about God?

The Function of Human Reasoning

Simply from observing Ephraem’s life’s work, there can be no doubt that he believed that the Christian mind must be actively engaged in reasoning its faith. However, he worked hard to reveal that the theological endeavors of some of his predecessors and contemporaries were wanton and detrimental to the Christian community. While Ephraem is keen to use propositional logic and deduction to disprove his opponents’ arguments, by Ephraem’s reckoning it is these heretics’ application of these methods of reasoning to the mysteries of God that has lead them into error.

Since Ephraem’s remarks on the subject are more readily found in his critiques of wayward approaches than in exposition of the correct one, most commonly this topic has been addressed from the negative point of view. One particular area of focus in scholarship has been on Ephraem’s theological method vis-à-vis Greek philosophy. It has often been stated that Ephraem does not engage in, nor condone, the logic of Greek philosophy for exploring matters of faith. Ute Possekel has rightly noted however that the context for this disavowal is actually within Ephraem’s responses to heretical assaults on orthodoxy. It is not found in the

113. See Russell, *St. Ephraem*, and Christina Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism*. Remarkable about each of these studies is that they make great headway contextualizing Ephraem within fourth century Christianity outside of the Syriac-speaking milieu, if still within Roman Empire.

114. For an excellent discussion of the history of this scholarly dialogue see Possekel, *Evidence*, 1-8.
context of expositions on the place of philosophical constructs or tools within theological
dialogue.  

As Ephraem believes certain truths cannot be discovered by the human mind but can only
be revealed to it, theological inquiry in the vein of deductive logic is both pointless and
dangerous.  

Philosophical approaches that see God as an object to be comprehended are flawed
epistemologically, in Ephraem’s view, because they assume things about the nature of the human
mind and the nature of the divine that are untenable. Ephraem does see a way forward for the
theologian, however:

Because we do not have an eye that is able to look upon his splendor, a mind was
given to us that is able to contemplate his beauty.

This contemplation of God’s beauty is an exercise not in philosophical logic, but in wonder or
adoration.

Ephraem envisions a sort of chain reaction taking place. Awe inspires love, and out of
love comes both prayer and faith.  

Ephraem acknowledges again that an overcoming of fear is
necessary:


116. The use of the term ‘logical’ here refers to the philosophical concept of logic as a system of reckoning
truth statements. It is not the more colloquial conception regarding whether or not an idea is “logical,” i.e. rational or
reasonable.


118. See Brock, *Luminous*, 69.

119. Ibid, 78-79. Also see Biesen’s discussions of Ephraem’s understanding of the role of love in moving
someone from silence to speaking in faith, *Simple*, 111-146. Biesen has also demonstrated that for Ephraem, prayer
is silent reflection and faith is crying out to God (ibid., 187-94).
I stood in fear, having become aware of you;
I grew because I magnified you.
Whereas you do not thereby grow,
The person who increases praise of your majesty
Grows in you a great deal.\textsuperscript{120}

This worship engages the mind, which ought to aim to know all that God has chosen to reveal. With right faith the eye of the mind is clear, the luminous eye (\textit{ܥܝܧܐ ܭܧܝܐ}),\textsuperscript{121} and can see, or contemplate, that which the physical eye cannot. Ephraem is not suggesting that the mind can comprehend God with the use of nature, the scriptures, or even the person of Christ. As this quotation suggests, even these revelations leave the mind contemplating the types that have been provided, which are themselves mere reflections of their subject. In Ephraem’s view, the human mind can only hope to act as a mirror for the symbols found in revelation.\textsuperscript{122}

Ute Possekel notes that Ephraem’s distinct symbolic “boundary” between human reason and the divine realm are the revealed names, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{123} These names are given within scripture, and contemplating them as an act of adoration is commendable, but any effort to get beyond them is deviant. Within these bounds, however, Ephraem is not against the exploration of all that can be studied.\textsuperscript{124}

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\textsuperscript{120}HdF XXXII.5; for English see Brock, \textit{Luminous}, 78.
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\textsuperscript{121}That this phrase can also mean a clear spring, or a clear eye, or a luminous spring is significant as Ephraem plays on the flexibility of this imagery throughout his works.
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\textsuperscript{123}Evidence, 45-46.
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\textsuperscript{124}Brock, \textit{Hymns on Paradise}, 41-45.
\end{flushright}
In Ephraem’s first *Hymn on Faith* he reveals the tension between the great potential to use human reasoning to know more about God and the abuse of it to pry into matters that are not accessible:

Now whoever wishes to magnify and extol God because He is great in His nature, the one who magnifies, becomes great on account of it; Restrain debate which is not fitting for him! And obtain silence which becomes him!

Grant me, Lord, that I may use both discerningly. May I neither debate presumptuously, nor be silent indiscreetly, but may I learn speech that is an aid (ܥܘܕܪܦܐ) and obtain silence that is discerning.¹²⁵

To respond to God’s revelation properly one must choose to hold back on dialectic and move forward toward silence. Sebastian Brock emphasizes that, for Ephraem, vocal praise is subordinate to silent praise, and he traces Ephraem’s conception of the trajectory of the human encounter with God in relation to vocality: “There is thus a twofold movement from the silence of ingratitude to vocal praises, and then on to a different form of silence, the silence of silent praise.” He notes that for Ephraem this silent praise is akin to that of the angels, a more refined form of the vocal praise instigated by the initial awe of faith.¹²⁶

The second stanza of the quote above suggests that even for the believer who has realized the higher form of silent praise there is an appropriate place for both dialectic and speech. The reciter of Ephraem’s hymn calls out to the Lord for help with the ability to discern between the

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¹²⁵ *HdF* I.18-19.

¹²⁶ In regards to Ephraem’s connection of silence with the praise of angels Brock points to *HdF* IV:1 (*Luminous*, 79).
right moments in which to use each. Ephraem elaborates on the concept of “helpful speech” in his twenty-sixth madrāšā On the Church:

The discerning person acts in a discerning way, because he draws comparisons that are words of life: he discerns [well] and keeps silent in order to pay honor, he teaches with comparisons in order to offer help (ܥܘܕܪܦܐ). God is honored by the discerning believer’s silence. The same believer offers help (ܥܘܕܪܦܐ) to others by teaching them “comparisons that are words of life.” What are these comparisons (ܦܘܚܤܐ) for Ephraem other than the symbolic approach with which Ephraem conducts his exegesis? Thus, it is Ephraem’s prayer that what he says is only helpful and that he is given the wisdom to know when he ought to keep silent.

If reason is a tool that the believer engages in order to reflect on what has been revealed about the mysteries of the divine, then exegesis is the role of the theologian. Since the revelation is not primarily literal, but typological or symbolic, so too must the exegesis be. Sidney Griffith has pointed out that this spiritual interpretation may resemble the theoria (θεωρία) of the Antiochene school, but that it is not the same. He emphasizes that while the spiritual component of Antiochene exegesis was part of a system of exegesis, for Ephraem “the role of symbols,

127. On the concept of discernment (ܥܝܫܪܐ) within Ephraem’s understanding of the proper approach to theology see Brock, Luminous, 47-48, 68; and Biesen, Simple, esp. 176-77.


129. See Biesen’s discussion of this text, including the helpful-word—silence binomial (Simple, 175-186).

130. For a more in depth analysis of the dialectic that Ephraem develops between the concepts of a helpful word and silence see Biesen, Simple, 180-87.

types, names and titles… are the very idiom of human thought in general, and of what we call ‘theology’ in particular.”

Ephraem’s approach to theology is what is often called symbolic theology. The nature of this typological mode of expression is often found in polarities. Based largely on the fact that he believes humanity’s only recourse for theological discourse is revelation, in which there exists considerable paradoxical tension, Ephraem sees antitheses as the appropriate mode of expressing truths about the divine. He addresses this issue explicitly in his third Sermon on Faith:

For you must not stray when you hear texts which seem to be at variance. There is a text which decrees offerings and one in which their savor is despised. There is a text in which these foods are clean and a text which says ‘mingle and eat.’ There is a text which does away with festivals, a text which profanes festivals, while there is a text which sanctifies the day, and a text which despises the Sabbath. There is a text: ‘Circumcise the male’ and a text which despises circumcision. All of these, when you hear them, place both sides under examination.

The scriptures contain paradox and Ephraem imitates the mode of antitheses and paradox that he finds in the scriptures for his own exploration of theology.

Sidney Griffith points out that “The fact that so much of Ephraem’s writing had a pastoral setting, a good portion of it even being produced as choral responses to the scripture lessons in the liturgy, reminds one of the centrality of the Bible in all of his work.” It is significant that more than simply the content, the social and liturgical context of Ephraem’s


133. This term is found throughout the analyses of Philip Botha. For his fullest treatment of this concept in his analyses of Ephraem’s works see “The Structure and Function of Paradox in the Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian,” Ekklesiastikos Pharos, N.S. 73, no. 2 (1991): 50-62. Kees den Biesen opts for the term ‘binomial,’ Simple, 52.


works were themselves exegetical. Ephraem was composing for the orthodox Christian community, as he saw it, and the Bible was a primary authority to his audience.

Despite Ephraem’s best efforts to encourage orthodoxy, he finds his own congregation is far too familiar with heretical teachings, and too aware of alternate “churches.” It is the mind of his own community that Ephraem is intent on peppering with his typological idiom in order to aid them in their efforts to contemplate God and live within the true church. With this setting for his compositions in mind, it is appropriate to consider the role the church played in Ephraem’s conception of the proper theological methodology.

The Function of the Church

Ephraem views the church as the preserver of the true orthodox faith. This concept is not novel and that is emphatically the point for Ephraem. To him the church guards the apostolic truth of Christ and manifests this through its life and teachings. In this way, an individual teaching can be judged by its harmony with the teaching of the church, and, similarly, any congregation claiming to belong to the true church can be judged by its adherence to the apostolic tradition. Sidney Griffith outlined Ephraem’s understanding of the features of the true church: 1) maintaining the name of Christ as the group’s key identifier; 2) apostolic succession; and 3) possessing the “constitutive features of orthodox church life:” the use of the complete body of the scriptures; appropriate rites; respect for ordination; maintaining Nicene orthodoxy. These are the standards by which Ephraem believed any congregation could be measured. As stated earlier in reference to Ephraem’s understanding of the truths revealed about God in

136. For reference to the importance of these in the HcH see Sidney Griffith, “Marks,” 125-40.
scripture, Ephraem does not think that there is one right interpretation of scripture and so his conception of orthodox teaching is relatively open. However, these four criteria, broad as they are, cannot be circumvented if a community hopes to remain true to the apostolic truth of the Messiah.

As these particular distinctions are most effective in delineating true and false teaching, or true and false practice for that matter, and thus true and false teachers, the significance of these aspects of Ephraem’s thought will be reserved for a discussion of Ephraem’s polemic later in this chapter. Suffice it to say here that Ephraem sees the church as having an essential function in the life of the theologian and in the soteriological economy. Membership is essential to right faith and practice, and ultimately to salvation. Likewise, any teaching that is issued by any teacher can be measured by the tradition of the church, and thereby confirmed or rejected. This is the primary function of these canons in Ephraem’s works. The function of the church is as a measure or standard: work within it and be guarded by it; work outside of it and be destined for failure.

137. For discussions of Ephraem’s flexibility in the interpretation of the scriptures see Brock, Luminous, 46-51; and Griffith, Faith, 32-37.
Ephraem believes that all theology must be done on a foundation of faith, faith in the mysteries (ܡܙܐ) of revelation, in nature, in scriptures, and in the incarnate Son of God. For Ephraem, theological endeavors not grounded in the Bible as a standard of religious truth and in faith in Jesus as the Messiah are destined to be fruitless. Thus, when Ephraem discusses the divine, his approach begins with revelation. He starts with the images of God in scripture, in the person of Jesus, and in nature and uses these to muse on the nature of God. As the true nature of God is veiled in human language in the form of types and symbols, so theology, in Ephraem’s mind, is an exploration of the meanings and implications of these symbols, names, and metaphors. These images become threads in elaborate tapestries that commonly intertwine scriptural observations from the Old and New Testaments in displays of Ephraem’s conception of God’s nature and God’s story of salvation.

Ephraem does not write discursively about what has been revealed in symbols. His poetic approach wholly embraces the nature of symbol rather than trying to overcome it. Ephraem glorifies the types, names, and images. Ephraem develops these themes in polarities: antithetical, associative, dissociative, etc. In Ephraem’s view this methodology best represents the unity of the truths within revelation. Philip Botha urges the reader of Ephraem’s polarities not to conclude that Ephraem believed that the world was riddled with contradictions. He points to Ephraem’s “ability to see the symbolism of practically every word in Scripture and every detail

138. This method fits O’Keefe and Reno’s description of their “general theory of patristic interpretation” and their description of “total reading” wherein the church fathers read scripture, specifically through the lens of the incarnated Christ as the Bible’s hypothesis, seeking to interpret each passage into a unified understanding of the person of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, Sanctified Vision (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2005), especially 25, 33-50.
of creation” as evidence that “for Ephraem every conceivable aspect of reality is interconnected to form one complete and meaningful whole.” By recasting the layers of revelation’s symbolism within his carefully crafted system of polarities, Ephraem aids the hearer, or reader, in comprehending the truths of revelation through his poetic eloquence.

As vocal as Ephraem is about the wonders of creation, scripture, and what can be known of God, he is also clearly compelled to voice his opposition to those who were approaching theology incorrectly, and misleading others in the process. The limits of revelation placed no restraints on Ephraem’s tongue, or pen, when it came to addressing the errors of his opponents.

Doing Heresy

For Ephraem, any theological efforts that are not done with the right method and the right intent are doomed to failure. Much worse, they are bound to mislead theologians and those they teach. Ephraem does not write about this topic directly, but his views on the matter can be culled from his critiques of his adversaries. There are four main themes to which Ephraem repeatedly turns to when he criticizes the methodology of the adversaries: arrogance in regards to the human condition in relationship to the divine; a false understanding of the role of revelation; a false understanding of the role of human reasoning in exploring theological matters; a corrupted, or absent, sense of the role of tradition, or authority resulting in inconsistency, incoherence, and futility. As each of these four negates one of Ephraem’s positive principles for doing theology, what follows is a demonstration that Ephraem believed that the adversaries of the true church

generally, including Bar Daysān and Mani, violated the principles of proper theology and, therefore, were heretical in their very approaches to the subject.

What Chasm?

Ephraem is convinced that the theological methods of his opponents are fraught with pitfalls because they presume much about humanity’s ability to discover knowledge about the divine:

Whoever is capable of investigating (ܡܨܐ) becomes the container of what he investigates;
A knowledge which is capable of containing the Omniscient is greater than Him,
For it has proved capable of measuring the whole of Him.
A person who investigates the Father and Son is thus greater than them!
Far be it, then, and something anathema, that Father and Son should be investigated
while dust and ashes exalts itself!\textsuperscript{140}

Ephraem suggests that his opponents do not acknowledge their state in relation to God, whether due to ignorance or sheer audacity. Ephraem believes that it is pride that allows someone to believe that through their own intellectual efforts they can come to know more about God than has been made plain in revelation, whether in nature, the scriptures, or the incarnate Christ.

For Ephraem, as we have suggested, a paramount virtue for a theologian is intellectual humility; one must know what they can and what they cannot know. In his First Discourse to Hypatius he says:

For whoever thinks that he can know everything falls short of the knowledge of everything. For by his knowledge he gained ignorance. But he who knows that he

\textsuperscript{140} Hdf IX:16. For English see Brock, Luminous, 26-27.
is unable to know (everything), for him knowledge is brought forth from ignorance.\textsuperscript{141}

This is an area in which Ephraem considers his opponents errant. They believe that based on what knowledge they have they can reason to deeper insights about God. Ephraem suggests that this is an insult to God and exceedingly arrogant. He is also very concerned that this approach tends to lead to a misuse, even mistreatment, of the scriptures, as a central source of revelation.

Abuse of Revelation

In Ephraem’s mind there is no greater evidence of heretics’ lack of respect for the unity of scripture than when opponents of the true church carve them up, selecting only what passages they would like to use. He addresses this tendency among his outsider adversaries in particular, saying:

\begin{quote}
But the sons of error see the two testaments, that they are united and put together, and they are the body of the truth. From them they have cut and taken out, and then bound and made books. They have cut and taken out genealogies which are convenient. And this is the disgrace: that they want, a complete body, to put together from that cutting of the members.\textsuperscript{142}
\end{quote}

This does not necessarily only refer to efforts like that of Marcion, where certain sections of the scriptures were actually excised. Ephraem is just as adamant about improper uses of proof-texts. He argued at length against the inappropriate uses of certain passages by the adversaries of the

\textsuperscript{141} Overbeck, 42-43. For English see Possekel, \textit{Evidence}, 43.

\textsuperscript{142} \textit{HeCH} II.19.
true church. For Ephraem the scriptures must be whole: both testaments must be present in the
discussion, and no single verse ought to outweigh others in interpretation.\(^\text{143}\)

Coupled with the false teachers’ arrogance, this disrespect for the scriptures culminates in
a theological approach that Ephraem abhors. Whether he calls it inquiry (\(\text{ܒBuscar}\)), debate (\(\text{ܕܪܫܐ}\)),
controversy (\(\text{ܚܪܝܢܐ}\)), or what have you, Ephraem is adamantly against theological approaches that
lack the awe, the fear, the faith and the silence that were noted above. These false approaches do
not acknowledge the chasm, nor do they see God’s revelation as a glorious end in itself, but
rather as a starting point to their philosophical inquiries. Instead of responding to revelation with
awe and fear, then speech, and silence, these wayward theologians see the revelation as a means
to their dialectical aims, another tool in the arsenal they employ in their attempts to comprehend
God.\(^\text{144}\) A brief introduction will serve as a means of completing the outline of Ephraem’s
opposition to corrupting modes of theological endeavor.

Ephraem’s view that not every scripture can be interpreted literally is significant here
because he believed that some of his opponents’ difficulties with the text were based in their
unwillingness, or inability perhaps, to accept or see the spiritual meaning of the text. While
neither a complete discussion of Ephraem’s or his opponents’ exegetical principles is in order
here, it is worth noting here that Ephraem depends on his understanding that both the Bar
Dayšānites and the Manichaens believed their teachings were literal in his arguments against
them. In the nature of the arguments that Ephraem formulates against these false teachers, his
primary mode of recourse is to test their teachings against nature and common experience, a

\(^\text{143}\) See Griffith (“Marks,” 136-39) for further discussion of this particular point within the \(\text{HcH}\).

\(^\text{144}\) Cf. \(\text{HdF}\) IX:16.
tactic that would have no weight were the meanings of their teachings spiritual, or metaphorical, rather than literal. For Ephraem the ability to read scripture spiritually is essential, and his opponents’ failure to employ this methodology is a significant weakness within their systems. They miss the point of much of the scriptures, and they are left with readings and interpretations which are useless.

Perhaps the heretic’s worst crime is when they generate their own revelation. This competing corpus is an affront to the Bible. Ephraem wonders at their audacity:

They are truly not ashamed nor embarrassed that in the name of humans they write their scriptures. And there is no book that remains and calls thus saying, “the Lord of hosts” but thus saying, “Marcion the mad.” And Mani and Bar Dayšān their names are sufficient for the disgrace of their congregations.145

From these remarks, it is hard to imagine that Ephraem had any hope for these theologians. From his perspective, their audacity at disregarding the chasm and their superior attitude to the scriptures demonstrates an approach that is certainly bereft of the most essential components of orthodox faith. If they dishonor these most basic tenets of orthodox theology, then what must their theological methodology look like?

Inquiry: The Wrong Intellectual Approach

Ephraem argues specifically against a theological approach that is devoted to investigation into matters that remain mysteries within revelation. He attacks the Arians, Marcionites, Bar Dayšānites, and Manichaeans (among others) for not trying to gain an

145. HcH LVI.4.
appreciation of the extent of the truths of revelation, but instead prying into what is revealed about the divine, attempting to determine what more can be predicated about their subject. They take select scriptures and attempt to determine the truths that must lie behind them. In this way they investigate what is hidden (ݏܦܙܐ) rather than contemplate the truths which are apparent (ܓܡܝܐ):

He who dares to investigate (ݏܦܙܐ) becomes an ally to the deniers; he stands at death’s door and presumes. For he has stripped off his faith through his debating (ܬܒܕܪܗ), in order to descend and investigate (ݏܦܙܐ) the sea of hidden things.¹⁴⁶

Such treatments of the boundaries of theological discourse are inappropriate in Ephraem’s view. While similar methods may work for human philosophy, they are ineffective and misleading when applied to theology. In Ephraem’s estimation any such theological method is a direct reflection of human impudence and pride, not the proper outpouring of praise in response to the wonder of the truths of revelation. The audacity and the arrogance of such approaches to knowledge about God discredit the work of these false teachers. What is more, they do not have the due degree of deference for the authority of the church. Ephraem takes issue with religious teachers who threaten the true church in their efforts to propagate their own ill-gained ideologies.

Disrespecting the Church from Within and Without

Ephraem also notes that his opponents also fail to have a proper conception of and appreciation for the church. They do not respect its traditions, its authority, its history, and its

¹⁴⁶ Hdf XXIII.2; thanks to Jeffrey Wickes for his suggestions on this translation.
continuity. In his view, his opponents both within and without the church demonstrate a failure
to fully comprehend the import of the continuity of the church’s teachings and systems of
authority. For those within the church, presumably Neo-Arians, Ephraem is bothered by how
they have abandoned its teachings while maintaining so many of the church’s traditions:

They were heads within the churches
and there are priests and deacons,
others, scribes and readers,
and there was one who was from the covenant.
And from the church they have stolen the order
of various forms of service:
ordaining and baptizing,
and celebrating the Eucharist and teaching
that our Lord came, and again he will come.\textsuperscript{147}

These insider adversaries are said to have hijacked the church’s traditions. They were ordained
within the church and they are continuing its practices, only accompanied by false teachings.
They are now using them as a veneer to hide their heresy. The outsider adversaries receive a
slightly different criticism. They may have bishops and presbyters and deacons, but Ephraem
attacks the ordination of these leaders:

Let them be questioned discerningly.
From whom did they receive ordination?\textsuperscript{148}
If they received [it] from us and refused [it],
this is sufficient for our truth.
But if they ordained priests and were presumptuous,
this is sufficient to rebuke [them];
This is more than enough for their shame:
that anyone is a priest if he is willing
to lay his hand on his head.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{147} HcH XXII.21.

\textsuperscript{148} The phrase \textit{ܩܿܒܡܘ ܐܝܕܐ} literally means “receive the hand,” and most likely refers to the imposition of
the hand of ordination.

\textsuperscript{149} HcH XXII.18.
For those who were ordained within the church, but have now left it, Ephraem sees no need for further explanation of their loss of authority. At greater fault still are those who claim the authority of a position that only comes with ordination though they certainly did not receive any from the church. Did they ordain themselves? Ephraem questions the integrity of a model that allows each person to serve as a bishop for their own ordination.

This disregard for the authority of the church, in Ephraem’s mind, is itself heresy, and it breeds false teaching. For him, a failure to recognize the import of the continuity of the church’s doctrines and its authority plays a significant role in the breakdown of the theological method. There are four main manifestations of this breakdown that Ephraem claims to have witnessed in his opponents’ communities: the failure to maintain the title “Christian,” to venerate both the Old and the New Testaments, to maintain the sacraments, and to respect apostolic succession and the ordination of the church. Any of these offenses are a sign that a teacher is not from the true church, and they are also clear marks that these communities have not properly placed themselves under the authority, nor within the tradition, of the teachings of the true church.
Ephraem’s Own Inquiry

There is foreign inquiry (ܒܨܬܐ ܦܘܟܬܝܰܐ) within the church. Investigation (ܒܥܰܐ)¹⁵⁰ is for what is revealed. It was not intended for inquiring (ܬܒܨܐ) into hidden things.¹⁵¹

It is clear from a reading of Ephraem’s polemics that he is not against the dialectical or propositional analysis of theological points. He is particularly keen on it when engaging in philosophical discourse in order to dismantle false teachings. He is willing to pry into the implications of their teachings in order to test the coherence of their theological systems and thereby reveal their heresies. This is a significant acknowledgement in order to avoid the misconception that Ephraem is against analytical, discursive thinking. He is neither incapable nor unwilling to engage in these forms of discourse. He simply does not see them as fitting approaches to be applied to the mysteries that lie outside of what God has revealed. Ephraem does not hesitate to hold theological propositions within the range of revelation and his opponents’ teachings to the tests of logic and coherence.

For the sake of argument, Ephraem repeatedly grants heretical tenets validity simply for the purpose of determining whether the system could indeed stand if its premises were true. For example he grants the validity of Manichaean cosmological teachings in order to test Manichaean soteriological doctrine which is so intricately bound up in them. An excellent example of this is in Ephraem’s Second Discourse to Hypatius where he suggests that the

¹⁵⁰ The term ܒܥܰܐ may well be chosen intentionally to be used for the positive sense of ‘investigation,’ because it comes from Matthew 7:7-8: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek (ܡܟܒܪܐ) and you will find (ܡܩܠܐ); knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks (ܕܒܥܐ) finds (ܡܛܟܐ); and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened”

¹⁵¹ Hdf VIII.9; thanks to Jeffrey Wickes for his suggestions on this translation.
Manichaean cosmology and soteriology conflict with nature and with one another in their understanding of the function of the moon. Ephraem questions the suggestion that the moon is the Manichaean Ship of Light that ferries the light from this world to the realm of light above. Granting that premise for the sake of his argument, he points out that the moon’s patterns of light have been consistent since creation. From his perspective, this is inconsistent with a literal interpretation of Manichaean soteriology and cosmology; if the light in the moon is the light of the light particles that have been released from the earthly realm and are on their way to the Realm of Light above, then the moon should not have a consistent pattern of lighting.\(^{152}\)

Likewise, if the moon is really a ship, Ephraem asks, why does it change its dimensions at all rather than functioning like a proper ship which is a vessel of consistent proportions used for moving objects from one place to another.\(^{153}\) Generally, a pattern can be discerned in his approach here, wherein he allows the opponent’s premise in order to judge it according to generally held knowledge about nature, scripture, or common experience.\(^{154}\)

Logical tests of their doctrines are not Ephraem’s only recourse in attacking his opponents. Ephraem is interested in more than just evaluating the validity, soundness or coherence of their teachings. Ephraem is also interested in making an impression on his audience. He wants them to feel, see, taste, and smell that the heretics are wrong as they learn why they are wrong.\(^{155}\) Ephraem employs his mastery of symbolism in his polemical writings.

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155. Botha also talks about the emotive force of Ephraem’s poetry (“Argument and Art,” \textit{Acta Patristica et Byzantina} 7 (1996): 21-36). However, I cannot agree with his position that Ephraem is not concerned with
against the outsider adversaries Bar Dayšān and Mani, leaving indelible images of arch-heretics in the minds of his audience. It is on this symbolic element within his polemics that our project now focuses.

Symbolic Polemics

Alongside of Ephraem’s efforts to turn his opponents’ teachings against themselves, Ephraem employs much the same typological method that he utilizes in response to revelation to respond to these heretics. He does not simply work to pry into their teachings to prove them wrong. He uses their own teachings and actions as symbolic ‘revelation’ about their true character. With these sources he uses much the same method as when he is working to understand what God has revealed about God to clarify what Bar Dayšān has revealed about Bar Dayšān and what Mani has revealed about Mani, the Bar Dayšānites about themselves, and the Manichaeans about themselves.156

When Ephraem writes against the outsider adversaries Bar Dayšān and Mani he does so by crafting a carefully designed effigy of these figures in the minds of his audience. He strives to

theological formulation. He writes: “Since polarity is basic to the whole structure of Ephrem’s thought, his antitheses relating to the person of Christ should not be understood as Christological pronouncements. Like many other fathers of the Church, he was concerned with the well-being of the Church rather than with exact theological formulation,” (“Christology and Apology,” Hervormde Teologiese Studies 45, no. 1 (1989): 28). That statement implies that “exact theological formulation” is a good that Ephraem might have aspired to but does not. Whereas Ephraem’s neglect of this “exact theological formulation” is actually epistemic, which Botha seems to acknowledge. The very word ‘exact’ would be irksome to Ephraem in this context. David Bundy says regarding Ephraem’s epistemology generally, “that which one knows is a series of images and words which are stored in the mind. One does not possess reality itself” (“Language and the Knowledge of God in Ephrem Syrus,” Patristic and Byzantine Review 5 (1986): 98). What would an “exact theological formulation” sound like within that epistemic framework?

156. While others have remarked on the use of polarity within Ephraem’s polemical works, the suggestion that Ephraem treats the works of his opponents as a source of revelation about them and their thinking, from which to draw further polarities, is one of this study’s unique contributions to the study of Ephraem’s corpus.
render an image that embodies heresy in his verses depicting these false teachers. He is continuously returning to his master work of detailing, with each line, the contours of the epitome of heretical behavior and teaching and associating his opponents with this image. Ephraem’s constructive exegesis resembles Irenaeus’ piecing together a mosaic of Jesus Christ the King. In his deconstructive exegesis of his opponents Ephraem fashions the image of an arch-heretic as the model or archetype for each of his outsider adversaries.157

In a fashion similar to his symbolic theology, Ephraem interprets his opponents within the biblical narrative. As one would expect, their antecedents are not the great patriarchs and champions of the Old Testament. Rather, they find their heritage in the likes of the arch-adversary, Satan. Much like Jesus is the new Adam, and Mary the new Eve, Bar Dayšān and Mani are the new serpents in the garden. Ephraem’s association of these heretics with Satan and the serpent in the garden will be dealt with in much greater detail in the next chapter. Here it is enough to note that Ephraem still employs his distinctive symbolic approach, simply supplementing the revelatory content from which he draws.

However, with the false teachers much more is fair game. There is no chasm between Ephraem and the Realm of Light, the Luminaries, or the Stranger. When dealing with the neo-Arians Ephraem was limited in his polemical approach. Since the controversy was over the person of Christ, about whom much remains a mystery (ܡܐܪܫܐ) to humanity, Ephraem confines himself to symbols. When he approaches the outsider adversaries, the founders and communities he believes to be outside of the true church, whose gods are not real, whose teachings are not based in the scriptures, and who believe in the literal truth of their myths, Ephraem demonstrates

157. For a discussion of Irenaeus’ exegetical methodology see O’Keefe and Reno, Sanctified, 33-42.
much more flexibility in his approach. Ephraem still employs his symbolic approach, but its force and focus are more pointed.

There is continuity in Ephraem’s corpus. Whether theological or heresiological, he treats the material in much the same way for his audience. His prose refutations reveal a strong interest in the clear logical analysis of theories or teachings. In his metrical refutations he is much more focused on leaving an indelible picture or inescapable thought or feeling with his audience. This is not to say that these methods and the genres they are more readily associated with are mutually exclusive. Ephraem does employ his typological polemical style in his prose writings. Likewise, theological doctrines are delineated and logical fallacies of his opponents are exposed in his metrical heresiology. In all, the reader’s general sense of Ephraem’s compositions is one of continuity, of style and method, whether the aim is theologically formative or polemical.

Strange Bedfellows: Similarities between the Approach to Theology of Bar Dayšān in the Book of the Laws of Countries and in Ephraem’s First Discourse to Hypatius

As an insight into Ephraem’s polemical prose and an exploration into the early Syriac Christian heritage of his theological epistemology, this case study explores the strong similarities between the sayings of Bar Dayšān in the Book of the Laws of Countries (BLC) and Ephraem’s remarks about the same subject in the First Discourse to Hypatius. This comparison is particularly interesting for our discussion. It is provocative to find an antecedent in a Syriac text

158. This section of this chapter was presented at the North American Syriac Symposium at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina on June 27, 2011 under the title “A Common Enemy: Theological Deviance in Bar Daysan’s Book of the Laws of Countries and Ephraem’s Hymns against Heresies and Prose Refutations.”
that purports to contain the teachings of Bar Daysan, whose sect and teachings are the object of Ephraem’s polemic. This is compounded by the fact that nearly every polemical theme in the BLC can be shown to have parallels within Ephraem’s polemical works.

The author of the BLC has Bar Daysān arguing for an approach to theology that is similar to that which Ephraem espouses in his polemics.159 Many of the themes that are held in common between the BLC and Ephraem’s refutations might be explained by other similarities between the two. Several shared elements might be anticipated in texts that both have an anti-Marcionite aim. For instance, it should not be surprising that two texts addressing Marcionite dualism and its teachings concerning the problem of evil would take a positive stance on free will. It is slightly more compelling that they use similar arguments to bolster their defense of free will.160 Ephraem repeatedly mentions that free will must exist in order for wicked deeds to be worthy of punishment and good deeds worthy of praise.161 The BLC also makes this particular point.162 Likewise, it is no surprise that both the BLC and Ephraem’s polemical works would defend creation itself and the created human nature. However, it is even more telling that one can find in Ephraem and in the BLC the teaching that it is distinctly humanity’s dominion over the created

159. Regrettably, our source for Bar Daysān is a text believed to be generated by Bar Daysān’s own student Philipus, not himself, and its form does not provide for a comparison between Bar Daysān’s and Ephraem’s poetic style.

160. See for example Drijvers, 10, 11 and HcH XI.

161. See HcH 5.8, 13 for example.

162. Drijvers, 12, 13.
world that is the “image of god,” and the subsequent suggestion that the creation exists distinctly for the service of humankind.\footnote{163}{Drijvers, 12, 13; CGen (Edward G. Matthews Jr. and Joseph P. Amar trans., St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works, ed. Kathleen McVey (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 94); and HcH V.7.}

There are further similarities in how Ephraem and the \textit{BLC} refer to heretics. In Ephraem’s metrical and prose refutations, he repeatedly refers to his opponents as tares.\footnote{164}{Against Mani (PR II, cvii; 228); HcH I.10, II.1, 8, XXII.2, 7, 17; XXIII.1, 4, 9; XXIV.2, 8, 19, 20.} The \textit{BLC} also uses this appellation for evildoers.\footnote{165}{Drijvers, 18, 19. For more on this theme in early Syriac Literature, especially Ephraem, see Robert Murray, Symbols of Church and Kingdom (1977; repr., Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2004), 195-99.} This of course could easily be explained by the Christian, biblical context of both compositions. Moreover, other similarities may come from a standard cache of arguments accessible to any Syrian with some rhetorical training. Ephraem and the \textit{BLC} each suggest of opponents that their teachings are often concocted solely to bolster other false doctrinal claims. Bar Dayšān says this of the Chaldean teaching about the seven climates and their ruling stars;\footnote{166}{Drijvers, 54, 55.} Ephraem says this of the teachings of Marcion, Bar Dayšān and Mani.\footnote{167}{4Hyp, PR I, 100-101; lxxxiv, lxxvii-ix; Against Mani, PR II, 221-2 and 226-7; cv, cvii, respectively. These are a few examples. This theme in Ephraem will be dealt with in more depth when we come to our discussion of Ephraem’s symbolic polemic against Bar Dayšān and Mani.} Such an argument is not so creative or original that one need assume any link between the authors based on its presence alone.\footnote{168}{For instance such an argument can be found in Tertullian, DPH 42.7-10.}

While many of these parallels could easily be explained as coming from similarities in the milieu out of which these works all came, taken together they are telling. Ephraem and the author of the \textit{BLC} came out of a similar culture, were both Syriac-speaking Christians, and both
lived in Edessa, but so too were many of the followers of Marcion and Mani that Ephraem is arguing against. The fact that Ephraem’s polemics and the BLC are both concerned with dualist heresies further adds to the shared context of these works and may explain still more of their similarities. These explanations may abate the force of the noted parallels between Ephraem’s heresiographical works and the BLC, but they also reinforce the underlying argument that there is much to commend a view that Ephraem’s polemical works, and especially his First Discourse to Hypatius, have strong ties to the BLC.

The parallels just noted are not the only related passages however. Each of the connections between these texts noted above is limited. They refer to a common use of a term, or a commonly held theological position. While they may be forceful taken together, each could be explained without coming to the conclusion of a literary connection existing between Ephraem and the author of the BLC. However, another example is a bit harder to escape. At the outset of both the BLC and Ephraem’s First Discourse to Hypatius are passages that deal specifically with the theme of the proper approach to theology, that is, faith seeking understanding, or adoring the mystery.169 These passages not only share the same teachings, but they use the same language in the exposition of these teachings. This is a strong link that warrants a fuller demonstration and is the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

169. The phrase “faith seeking understanding” is more commonly associated with western Christian Fathers such as Tertullian and Augustine. This is something more akin to fides quaerens intellectum or even credo ut intelligam, where faith is the doorway to knowledge and understanding. Following Robert Murray (Symbols, 89) Ephraem studies has adopted the phrase “faith adoring the mystery” for Ephraem’s approach to theology. There is a decidedly less analytical nature to the latter. This is intentional. We are thinking more about worship in the context of Ephraem and less about philosophical theology. Ephraem’s model is more focused on engaging revelation in a manner of adoration and so we end up with something more like fides adorans mysterium. Of course, Sidney Griffith’s Faith Adoring the Mystery is an excellent place to explore this theme more fully.
While polemics are not explicit in the *BLC*, and there is certainly no opponent mentioned, Bar Dayṣān does take a polemical tone on a number of occasions, specifically when dialoguing with the student Awida.\(^{170}\) Throughout the work, Awida posits questions that allow Bar Dayṣān to attack particular theological issues. In their initial exchange, Awida asks Bar Dayṣān why God did not make humankind so that people would not sin. Interestingly, Bar Dayṣān does not immediately answer the question. Instead, he turns aside and talks to the whole audience of students. He tells them that Awida’s question reveals a simple problem, his lack of faith. Awida chooses not to believe and is in a cycle of constructing and destructing (محمّد محدّث) arguments, which leaves him with no foundation upon which to build any reliable beliefs.\(^{171}\)

The idea that one must possess faith in order to do theology is nothing unique in early Christian thought.\(^{172}\) It is certainly a theme that several scholars have highlighted in Ephraem’s

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170. The name Awida is also used for an interlocutor in the *Teaching of Addai*, where the character is an Edessene noble at the court of King Abgar when Addai, or Thaddeus, the apostle arrives. Addai is said to be sent by Thomas to fulfill the promise of Jesus to have a disciple come heal the king. Awida is one of two nobles (the other is one Bar Kalba) who, upon hearing the preaching of Addai, does not believe until after they have had a chance to question Addai about the logic of the incarnation. Upon hearing his satisfactory answer, they joined the believers. See Howard, *TA*, 37, 67. Likewise see Alberto Camplani’s article “Traditions of Christian Foundation in Edessa: Between Myth and History” (*Studi Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 75, no. 1 (2009): 251-78), especially pages 264-68 where he discusses the relationship of the significance of Awida among the nobles at Abgar’s court in both the *Acts of Sharbel* and the *Testimony of Barsamya* to the Awida in the *BLC* and in the *TA*.

171. Drijvers, *BLC*, 8, 9. This is reminiscent of Aphrahat’s house of faith in his first demonstration (1.2) where the incarnate son of God is the foundation of the structure of faith. Aphrahat actually says that “faith is placed on the stone [our Lord Jesus Christ], and on faith the whole building rises up until it is completed.” (Adam Lehto, *The Demonstrations of Aphrahat, the Persian Sage* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2010), 68).

172. Eric Osborn (*Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 280) has recently talked about Clement of Alexandria’s “fusion of faith with Plato’s search for the best reason;” Tertullian makes the point that faith must be the starting point if any worthwhile end is hoped for in the seventh chapter of his *De praescriptione haereticorum*. Augustine also started sermon “On the Words of the Gospel, John 5:19, ‘The Son Can Do Nothing of Himself, but What He Seeth the Father Doing’” with the words “The mysteries and secrets of the kingdom of God first seek for believing men, that they may make them understanding. For faith is understanding’s step; and understanding faith’s attainment.” This is immediately followed by his citing Isaiah 7:9, “as the prophet said, ‘Unless you believe, you shall not understand.’” (R.G. MacMullen trans., *Augustine: Sermon on the Mount, Harmony of the Gospels, Homilies on the Gospels*, vol. 6 of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1888) under “Sermon 76 on the New Testament,” revised and
own teachings over the last few decades, as we noted above, and which has been pointed out in studies of the *BLC* as well.\(^{173}\) It is likewise no surprise to find a religious teacher talking about those who ask difficult questions as devious or aberrant, suggesting that they are a threat to right belief, or simply faithless.

What is more interesting is the fact that in his *First Discourse to Hypatius* Ephraem uses the same word pair as Bar Daysān does to illustrate the concept of a questioning-but-never-believing interlocutor. Such an inquisitive person is said to be ever “building up and tearing down” (ܒܧܝܐ ܘܩܰܪܐ).\(^{174}\) Moreover, Bar Daysān and Ephraem both expound on these terms by further developing the imagery of construction, speaking of the lack of foundation (ܭܰܐܩܰܐ) to build on if one takes this approach.\(^{175}\)

A cursory reading of these separate passages might suggest that these authors are talking about two different things. Ephraem is exploring the polarity between “ignorance” (ܗܕܝܘܠܘܬܐ and ܠܐ ܐܝܕܥܐ) and “investigation” (ܒܥܰܐ or ܒܨܬܐ), while Bar Daysān is addressing

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\(^{174}\) Ute Possekel (*Evidence*, 42, n. 45) has already noted a similarity between the use of this phrase by Ephraem and that by Bar Daysān’s contemporary Tertullian (struendi et destruendi), in his *DPH* 7.6. Interestingly this remark is made against the influence of Aristotle, in Tertullian’s famous chapter on the negative influences of philosophy in theological discourse. In this chapter Tertullian argues that the Christian needs neither “inquisitiveness” nor “inquiry” (*curiositas… nec inquisitione*). A closer look needs to be taken at the connections between the polemics of Bar Daysān, as we see him in the *BLC*, Tertullian, and Ephraem.

“faithlessness” (ܣܰܠ ܕܗܝܤܧܘܬܐ ܠܝܰ ܒܗܘܢ). However, Bar Daysan is explicit that this faithlessness leads to ignorance: “because faith is not in them… they lack all knowledge of truth.” Thus, the philological connection between the passages is not weakened by this initial, apparent deviation. Both Bar Daysan and Ephraem warn about the futility of those who do not maintain faith as a base from which to explore the depths of theological knowledge. Each recommends a proper balance of fear (ܕܚܡܐ). They both suggest that there are a healthy and an unhealthy fear in doing theology. Bar Daysan suggests that because those who perpetually question are afraid of having faith in God, they are afraid of coming to any firm conclusion, and so they never do:

For he who lacks the fear of God (ܕܚܡܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ) is the prey of every fear. For not even the sort who do not believe are certain (ܝܫܥ), since they do not believe well (ܥܢܫ). Unless they are casting lots (ܚܫܡ) with their ideas, they are not found to stand (ܫܦܝܪ). Those who are bound by fear are uncertain (ܬܝܬ), and restless (ܠܤܪܥ ܠܐ ܣܟܛܝܨ), except for when they are debating, or trying out, their opinions. Bar Daysan critiques the theological approach that is afraid to simply believe something on faith, but instead must press on, “casting lots” to test new ideas and, therefore, never settle on any sound (ܫܦܝܪ) belief.

Fear (ܕܫܡ) is also an essential component in Ephraem’s theological methodology.

Ephraem chooses two biblical passages to demonstrate the point that fear is necessary, but can be detrimental if not coupled with love and overcome by faith. First, he uses the story of Peter’s attempt to join Jesus walking on water and Peter’s fearing the waves on the sea (of Galilee; Matt

176. Drijvers, BLC, 8, 9: ܣܡܪܒܐ ܠܐ ܡܠܐ ܣܟܛܝܨ ܒܚܬܒܝܨ ܣܨ ܟܘܠܗ ܝܕܥܐ ܕܬܪܐ.

177. Drijvers 8, 9.
14:22-33) as an example of how fear can grip and cripple a person. Ephraem suggests that this story should act as a warning to every believer. Admonishing any who might see this as a trite illustration to let this analogy (ܪܐܙܐ) be their teacher (سܡܧܐ), Ephraem specifically warns those with an unsettled, questioning mind:

If… Peter was afraid (ܕܚܢ) of the waves, though the Lord of the waves was holding his hand, how much more should weak ones fear waves of controversy (ܪܭܐ), which are stronger than the waves of the sea! For in the waves of the sea bodies are drowned, but in the waves of investigation (ܒܥܰܐ) minds sink or are rescued.\footnote{178}

Here Peter’s fear is a positive example. Ephraem suggests that his fear was perfectly reasonable. However, just as no ordinary human ought to find walking on water natural, or safe, nor should investigating the divine nature beyond what God has revealed seem ordinary, or acceptable. For Ephraem, the difference for those who pry into the mysteries of faith is one of extent. They are not going to drown physically, but they are likely to find themselves drowning in hopeless uncertainty unless they follow Peter’s example and call upon the Lord in faith.

Furthering an exploration of the polarity between fear and faith, Ephraem turns to the tale of the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in the temple (Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisee thanks God that he is not like the tax collector standing beside him, noting his own fasting and tithing. Meanwhile, the tax collector, eyes downcast, beating his breast, calls out to God for mercy. Ephraem uses this passage as evidence that there is a healthy fear of one’s condition in relation to God, but also that this fear must again be paired with love and transcended by faith.\footnote{179} While Ephraem praises the bold faith that humble love brought to the tax collector, he is quick to warn

\footnote{178. Overbeck, 27-8; following translation of Mitchell, vi.}

\footnote{179. Mitchell, vi; Overbeck, 28-9.}
that fear is necessary to bridle the human capacity for impudence. In each of Ephraem’s examples of fear and how to properly subdue it, fear is good and the appropriate response to it is calling out to God. In this way we see the close connection again between the common antitheses of silence and word and fear and faith. Fear might inspire silence, as it ought, but faith overcomes fear and allows the person to call out to God. \(^{180}\)

Likewise both Ephraem and Bar Dayšān use the imagery of taste to emphasize the negative outcome for those who approach theological inquiry without proper fear. Both authors suggest that the perpetual searching of those without faith leaves the fruit of their efforts flavorless. Bar Dayšān suggests that “the taste (ܐܝܥܘܬܐ) of their reflections is without flavor (ܦܟܗ) in their mouths, and at all times they are fearful (ܡܠܡܐ), frantic (ܒܗܝܒܐ) and brazen (ܐܠܗܡܐ).” \(^{181}\)

Ephraem too elaborates on the theme of the taste (ܐܝܥܘܬܐ) and flavor (ܦܟܗ) of the fruit of the intellectual endeavors of the fearless. He suggests that they will end up with either no conclusions, thus unripe fruit, or they will end up with overworked conclusions, over-ripe fruit, the taste of either being unwelcome. He says:

For fine flour cannot be made from the best wheat if it does not shed much bran; for unripe fruit is not palatable (ܠܐ ܝܥܝܥ) and what is over-ripe loses flavor (ܦܟܗ), otherwise its taste (ܐܝܥܟܗ) is pungent, or absent. \(^{182}\)

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\(^{180}\) Biesen focuses on the binomial of fear and love rather than fear and faith, and “love” (ܚܘܒܐ) is the dominant term in the passage, playing a significant role in Ephraem’s discussions of each of these pericopes. About this, see his discussion of this passage, *Simple*, 218-23. However, the distinction between the role of love and that of faith is unclear in Ephraem, as well as in Biesen, and deserves still closer consideration. Likewise, though “faith” (ܗܝܒܘܬܐ) does not appear per se but once in this passage, it must be noted that the acts of crying out to God are acts of faith, something Biesen notes specifically in his discussion of prayer and faith (*Simple*, 187f.).

\(^{181}\) Adapted from Drijvers, 8, 9.

\(^{182}\) Overbeck, 29; adapted from Mitchell, vii.
Similarly, echoing Bar Dayšān’s earlier statement that the inability of fearful theologians to have faith prevents them from settling on any matter of doctrine, Ephraem continues:

For if we refine things much beyond what is proper, even the fine and the pure are also rejected. For it is not right for us to cultivate ignorance (ܗܕܝܘܝܘܬܐ), or deep investigation (ܒܥܰܐ), but discernment (ܦܘܪܭܧܐ) between these two extremes, sound and true. For by means of the two former a man surely misses his advantage (ܗܕܝܘܝܘܬܐ).\footnote{This same term that is translated both “aid,” and “help” above.} For by means of ignorance a man cannot understand (ܦܪܘܡ) knowledge and by deep investigation (ܒܨܬܐ) a man cannot build on a sound foundation (ܭܰܐܩܰܐ). For ignorance is a veil which does not permit one to see, and investigation (ܒܥܰܐ), which is continually building and destroying (ܓܝܓܘܚܡܧܐ), is a changeful wheel (ܓܝܓܘܚܡܧܐ), not knowing how to stand (ܣܪܥ) and be at rest; when it passes over true things in its investigation (ܒܥܰܐ), it cannot stay near them; for it has disturbed movements (ܓܝܓܘܚܡܧܐ).\footnote{The use of ܣܕܡ here by Ephraem recalls the same root used in the BLC for those that would only stop to cast lots and Ephraem’s references to the ‘changeling wheel’ and the ‘disturbed movements’ of investigation.}

Here we see again Ephraem’s characterization of investigation as constructing and destroying arguments. Ephraem continues by illustrating the frantic nature of investigation with the image of a changeful wheel (ܓܝܓܘܚܡܧܐ) never settling in one place, which has disturbed movements (ܓܝܓܘܚܡܧܐ), echoing Bar Dayšān’s calling such fearful theologians perpetually frantic (ܪܗܒ).\footnote{Overbeck, 29-30; adapted from Mitchell, vii.}

Moreover, just as Bar Dayšān commented on the brazen (ܣܬܚ) nature of such disputants, Ephraem too suggests that those who question the great mysteries dare to attempt to surmount the great knowledge of God:

And while he is higher than all in his knowledge, the ignorant dare (ܡܚܳܣܳܡ) to attack the height of his knowledge. For if we are continually striving to comprehend things, by our strife we desire to fence in the way of truth and to stir
up by our controversy (ܕܪܭܐ) things that are clear\textsuperscript{186}... our weakness is stirred up by reason of the great things, for we are not able to completely apprehend their greatness.\textsuperscript{187}

It is audacity to Ephraem, just like Bar Dayšān, for someone to think that they might comprehend the divine, and both refer to anyone who would dare do such a thing as ignorant.

Thus, Ephraem and Bar Dayšān not only agree that one needs faith and a healthy fear in order to embark on theological endeavors, but they also express this belief in nearly the exact same terminology and imagery. This facet, compounded by the various other parallels, suggests quite strongly that there is indeed a strong connection between the polemical approach of Bar Dayšān as it is represented in the \textit{BLC} and Ephraem’s own polemical approach, one deeper than can be accounted for by simply sharing a similar milieu. It seems reasonable to postulate some literary connection between these texts, on the grounds of our example from the opening portions of the \textit{BLC} and Ephraem’s \textit{First Discourse to Hypatius}. The nature of this connection cannot be determined here, but if neither Ephraem nor the author of the \textit{BLC} is borrowing from the other than we must propose that there was a common source used by each.\textsuperscript{188}

Regardless of the fact that both Bar Dayšān and Ephraem insist on faith as a foundation for theological endeavors, Ephraem’s epistemology is reinforced in this text more clearly than anywhere else in his corpus. His introductory remarks in the \textit{First Discourse to Hypatius} are a

\textsuperscript{186} The idea of stirring up what otherwise would be clear implications to disturbing of the \textit{ܪܭܐ ܭܧܝܐ} again.

\textsuperscript{187} Overbeck, 30; adapted from Mitchell, viii.

\textsuperscript{188} See Poirier ("Foi," 329-42) for connections drawn between the \textit{BLC} and the Nag Hammadi treatises \textit{The Interpretation of Gnosis} and \textit{Treatise on the Resurrection}, as well as Tertullian, Aristotle, and Simplicius. Augustine is implicated as an inheritor of this tradition, though likely through Tertullian rather than the other examples.
vehement defense of his thoroughgoing insistence that theology is *fides adorans mysterium* rather than *curiositas semper quaerens.* In Ephraem’s opinion, the Christian ought to be a believer worshiping the mysteries of God rather than an inquisitor seeking to construct and deconstruct new arguments.

**Conclusion**

The focus of this chapter has been to understand the theological epistemology and methodology of Ephraem’s compositions. Ephraem composes works of symbolic theology and symbolic polemic with varying strains of polarity running through them because he cannot conceive of discussing theology in any other way. God’s story is of primary importance, but there is an ontological chasm that separates us from the divine realm, and all we know of God is what has been revealed to us by him. Ephraem writes in symbols, antitheses and paradoxes because that is the nature of revelation. For Ephraem, theological writ, whether catechetical, liturgical, apologetic, or polemical, must be symbolic if it is to be true. The remainder of this dissertation will focus on how Ephraem approaches the heretics Bar Dayṣān and Mani and their teachings, with particular attention being paid to the implementation of his symbolic epistemology within his polemic.

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189. I am suggesting this phrase as an ample description of Bar Dayṣān (per *BLC*), Tertullian and Ephraem’s characterization of the unbeliever or the heretic, never settling in one place, not believing any one thing, “speculative inquiry always seeking.”
Chapter Three

Ephraem’s Polemic of Lineage

In Ephraem’s polemics against Bar Daysān and Mani he casts his opponents as polar opposites of genuine Christian leaders who derive their authority largely from their ordination, in apostolic succession leading back to Christ. In addition, he counters existing images of his adversaries as Christian teachers, philosophers, prophets, and even the Paraclete. Ephraem contrasts their claims to authority with his own proclamation of the true heritage of these false teachers. First he suggests that these heretics are simply fighting amongst themselves, trying to outdo one another, each stealing from the other to try to make the most of his own mission. Then Ephraem posits the serpent in the garden and Satan himself as the appropriate predecessors and mentors of these heretics. Ultimately, Ephraem sketches caricatures of Bar Daysān and Mani that clearly place them on the side of error in the essential battle between truth and error, between Christ and Satan, between orthodox and heterodox Christians.

As was noted in the previous chapter, Ephraem’s rhetorical style embraces this sort of polarity, often for the sake of association and disassociation. Ephraem wants his audience to associate positively with certain poles of the antitheses within his symbolism and to disassociate with those he casts as negative. Simply put, he wants them to feel drawn closer to his orthodox community and its thinking and to repel the heterodox fray. In his polemic of lineage this feature of his rhetoric is overt. When dealing with the heritage of Bar Daysān and Mani, Ephraem is
dealing with the founders of communities that are still active and identifiable. So, Ephraem’s argument must be realistic.

Ephraem follows heresiological norms in the construction of lineages of heterodox teachers as a means of branding his opponents. Ephraem marks these figures and their disciples as heretics, associating them with one another to discredit the bunch as a whole and with other more famous heretics in order to reveal more obvious faults. As we have already noted, Ephraem understands and communicates religious truths through types and symbols. Therefore, when dealing with the real lineages of his opponents and with their own narratives of their heritages, Ephraem illustrates the deeper, spiritual truths involved in this discussion. What we receive from Ephraem then is a spiritual exegesis of the heritage of his opponents. Ephraem incorporates what appear to him to be real aspects of lineage into his symbolic, polemical

190. In several passages Ephraem remarks in allusion about the practices of his opponents, suggesting that his audience is familiar enough with his opponents that they will recognize these subtleties. Likewise, Ephraem employs clever puns not simply on the names of his opponents (See Sidney Griffith, “The Thorn among the Tares: Mani and Manichaeism in the Works of St. Ephrem the Syrian,” Studia Patristica 35 (2001): 412) but also with key terms within Manichaean teaching. Examples of his remarks regarding his opponents’ practices can be found in the next chapter. Examples related to their teaching are noted throughout the present chapter.

191. In fact Ephraem is not embarking on a novel approach in creating a lineage for the adversaries of the true church. Irenaeus (Adversus Haereses 3. Preface), and perhaps Justin before him, used lineages to shame opponents. In Irenaeus’ work, Simon Magus, rather than Marcion or Satan, was the first of the line. In Ephraem’s own day, Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechesis 16. 10. PG 33.931) used a similar tactic to attack heretics, including Manichaean; so too Didymus the Blind (De Trinitate Liber 3.42; PG 39.989). Hegemonius (Acta Archelai 62.1-65.9), writing the earliest Christian anti-Manichaean work that is extant, employed this motif specifically against Mani. Spät suggests that creating such genealogies and seeing them as analogous to Satan’s first sin is a commonplace in early heresiography. Spät adds that the Acta account is unique in positing that Mani began his career as a heretic when he stole a book of one Scythianus and edited it for his own purposes. However, Spät says nothing of making Satan and the serpent in the garden part of the lineage, nor does he address Ephraem. Eszter Spät, “The ‘Teachers’ of Mani in the Acta Archelai and Simon Magus,” Vigiliae Christianae 58 (2004): 1-23. For the English text of the Acts see Mark Vermes, Hegemonius, Acta Archelai (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001); for the Greek: Acta Disputationis Archelai (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1906).
rhetoric. He associates his opponents with the side of error through its types. Sidney Griffith has called this Ephraem’s “typology of error.”

As Ephraem sees the world, all heretics belong to the side of error. They share this with the serpent in paradise, who turned Eve and Adam from the truth. They also share it with Satan, the original member of that realm, and the force behind all error. This typology of error must be understood, however, as the antithesis of Ephraem’s typology of truth. These are the only options in Ephraem’s world: truth or error, orthodoxy or heresy, Christ or Satan. His polemic of lineage against Bar Daysâän and Mani follows this paradigm with consistent precision. Ephraem repeatedly associates his opponents with error and ascribes to them its characteristics.

**Apparent Associations and their Symbolic Value**

For Ephraem, symbolism and poetry are preferred vehicles for theological communication. However, his symbols point toward realities, either apparent or hidden. Within his formative and polemical compositions Ephraem is intertwining mysteries and apparent realities into his symbolic idiom, generating a coherent typological system. Thus, in reading his remarks on Bar Daysâän and Mani we find references to details about their lives, teachings, and practices as Ephraem understood them. However, to fully grasp the significance of those details the reader must be conscious of the symbolic framework within which they exist. This chapter begins with Ephraem’s remarks about his opponents that pay little or no homage to their own typological significance. The remainder of the discussion moves progressively deeper into the significance of the symbolic superstructure of Ephraem’s polemic of lineage, or pedigree.

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One way that Ephraem links Bar Dayšān and Mani is through a vehicle that each used to spread their teaching. Both of them were composers of madrāšê. Ephraem may even have believed that Mani learned the composition of madrāšê from Bar Dayšān’s school. The use of madrāšê is very dear to Ephraem. This is the literary form he prefers for his theological discourse and part of his polemical mission is actually to displace his opponents’ madrāšê with his own. One of Ephraem’s more direct statements about the relationship between Bar Dayšān and Mani is that Bar Dayšān was Mani’s master or teacher (ܡܪܐ). While ideological connections had sparked many other late antique authors to suggest that there was a strong connection

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195. “St. Ephraem,” 460-63. The depth of the importance of a poetic even lyrical nature of the idiom for theological discourse in early northern Mesopotamian Christianity is furthered by two other factors. First, Drijvers has argued that the thirty-eighth of the *Odes of Solomon* is the earliest anti-Manichaean text. (“Die Oden Salomos und die Polemik mit den Markioniten im syrischen Christentum,” in *Symposium Syriacum 1976*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 205 (Rome: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1978), 39-55. Second, there is a hint in Ephraem’s madrāšê against Heresies 40.14 that Marcionites were also using songs to advance their thought. The madrāšā, which focuses on the antithesis between Moses’ account of creation and Marcion’s interpretation, ends with:

> He (Marcion) sang in catena (ܡܡܥܢܐ, which also invokes Cana) at the wedding feast, renowned tunes about the creator.
> He changed the catena so that you hear the silence of that new lyre (Mani) who composed, and exchanged the proper strings so that when we would sing we might empty (ܠܥܙܢ) full vessels
> Blessed is the learned one who sings with the lyre of the true one who sent him

This juxtaposition of Marcion and Mani as sharing in their dualistic cosmogony echoes throughout this madrāšā. See stanza’s 2 and 4.

196. For the flexibility of the meaning of this term see Payne Smith, *ThSyr*, vol. 1, 3783f.
between the two communities, none of those authors ever suggested that Mani was actually a student in Bar Daysân’s school. Ephraem is certainly not mentioning this relationship to imply such. Ephraem begins his Second Discourse to Hypatius with a discussion of what he understood to be internal contradictions in Mani’s teaching. He interrupts his demonstration of the illogical nature of Mani’s ideas regarding the binding of the soul within the body with a parallel attack on Bar Daysân: “Now on this matter Bar Daysân, that teacher of Mani, is found to speak subtly.” This statement introduces a brief discussion of Bar Daysân’s teaching concerning the composite nature of the soul.

The remark about Bar Daysân’s role as master itself, however, is made in passing, as an anecdotal fact. Ephraem’s own words suggest that the inclusion of Bar Daysân was a mere tangent. After his explanation of Bar Daysân’s error regarding the soul, Ephraem continues, “However, it is not the filth of Bardaisan we have come to stir up now; for the decay of Mani is enough.” The inclusion of Bar Daysân at this point in a discourse devoted to disproving Mani is a matter of showing doctrinal precedence and of creating an association between the two for his audience.

Ephraem again indicates the precedent set for Mani by Bar Daysân in his Fourth Discourse to Hypatius. He says in one place, “Because Mani was unable to find another way out,

197. See Han Drijvers, “Mani und Bardaisan;” idem, Bardaisan of Edessa; Barbara Aland, “Mani und Bardesanes: zur Entstehung des manichäischen Systems,” in Albert Dietrich, ed. Synkretismus im syrisch-persischen Kulturgebeit (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1975), 123-43; See also Ramelli, Bardaisan, esp. 53-54.

198. PR I, 8, xxxii. Translation adapted from Mitchell. Ephraem’s polemic regarding the illogical ideologies of his opponents is discussed further in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.

199. PR I, 9, xxxiii.
he entered, though unwillingly, by the door which Bar Dayšān opened;”²⁰⁰ and later, “Since Mani saw then that he was not able to find a river crossing at another spot, he was forced to come and cross from where Bar Dayšān had crossed.”²⁰¹ These two quotations imply a hint of reluctance on Mani's part, a relationship of expedience more than anything else. Ephraem’s portrayal of their association here should dispel the thought that any master-disciple relationship might have been intended by Ephraem. Bar Dayšān is Mani’s teacher in that his teachings showed Mani the way forward in some difficult corners of heretical speculation. Mani takes on the persona of an opportunist more than that of a disciple.

Mani and Bar Dayšān are not alone in Ephraem’s polemic of association. Marcion figures in prominently. The second-century Christian teacher and infamous heretic, whose followers had made such a place for themselves within Edessa that Marcion finds his way into the Chronicle of Edessa,²⁰² is often teamed with Bar Dayšān and Mani in Ephraem’s polemics of association. The construction of this trio is based largely on Ephraem’s perception of the similarities between the teachings of the three and the fact that they are all outsider adversaries in Ephraem’s view.

Ephraem’s first contention with their claims to religious authority is that they are ‘outsiders.’ Ephraem does not trust that any of these three has a legitimate claim to lead a congregation on account of proper ordination. Ephraem suggests they have either stolen their

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²⁰⁰. Adapted from Mitchell. PR I, 122; xc.

²⁰¹. Ibid.

ordinations from the true church or they have simply fabricated their own. In his twenty-second

*Hymn against Heresies* he says:

> Let them be questioned discerningly.  
> From whom did they receive ordination?203  
> If they received [it] from us and refused [it],  
> this is sufficient for our truth.  
> But if they ordained priests and were presumptuous,  
> this is sufficient to rebuke [them];  
> This is more than enough for their shame:  
> that anyone is a priest if he is willing  
> to lay his hand on his head.

The exalted one inclined to Mount Sinai  
and laid his hand on Moses.  
Moses placed it on Aaron,  
and it stretched to John.  
Therefore, our Lord said to him,  
“It is righteousness that I be baptized by you.”204  
so that the order would not perish at him [John],  
Our Lord gave it to his apostles,  
and behold within our church is its succession.  
Blessed is the one who committed his order to us.205

These stanzas place the succession between Marcion, Bar Dayṣān and Mani alongside  
and in direct contrast to that of the church. For Ephraem, there is only one true ordination, tied  
into apostolic succession and remaining within the true church. The appearance here of Christ's  
spiritual lineage serves to emphasize the antiquity and the continuity of the church's authority. A  
similar passage occurs in *Hymns against Heresies* XXIV where the priestly line in which Christ

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203. The phrase מַצְמַע מַדַע literally means “receive the hand,” and most likely refers to the imposition of the hand of ordination.

204. Matthew 3:15.

is the nexus is shown to originate in Eden with Adam. More importantly Marcion, Bar Dayšān, and Mani are shown to have no place in this line of authority at all:

He had brought the church of the nations
And then ruined the temple of the nation.
When he uprooted the temple of the nation206
A church was constructed there.
Marcion did not minister in it,
So that there had not been any memory of him until now.
Neither did Arius enter it,
Nor Mani nor Bar Dayšān.
The prophets agree with the apostles.
Blessed is He, the Lord of the orders!

He handed down207 from Adam to Noah
He extended from Noah to Abraham,
And from Abraham to Moses
And from Moses to David,
And from David also to the captivity,
And from Babylon to our Savior.
The nation was scattered and cut off.
And all its transmissions ceased.
Now the hand of the apostles transmitted
Blessed is the Lord of their transmissions.208

Yet again, Ephraem’s mode in his polemic is to alienate the adversaries by contrasting their features with those of the true church. He is denying them any claim to authority based on apostolic succession through ordination. Any authority that they execute is not vested in them from the true church. Instead, they only have power because they have either stolen it or

206. For a discussion of the terms ‘nation’ and ‘nations’ applying to the Jews and the Gentiles respectively, see Murray, Symbols, 41-68. For notes on Ephraem’s biblical, agrarian symbolism that may help to clarify his use of ‘uprooted’ (ܥܪܬ) here, see the final section of this chapter.

207. ܝܒܢ indicates transmission, but it is also the root for the concept of succession, as in Apostolic succession. ThSyr, 1, 1538f.

208. XXIV.21-22.
generated it themselves. As much is said by Ephraem about how they came about their congregations:

The crafty Bar Dayśān stole one.
And they [each] made it like a flock that is inside.
Marcion had abandoned his sheep;
Mani fell upon and captured them from him,
One rabid man was biting another rabid man.
They [each] called a flock by their own names.
Blessed is the one who threw them out of his house.  

Ephraem represents our troika as competing, even thieving shepherds. Ephraem is trying to exploit connections between these groups. In doing this he unites their works for two primary purposes. First, when any one of them is found guilty of faulty teaching, the others are equally shamed through their association.  
Second, their disputes with one another become the defining element of their tradition. Thus, Ephraem links them through their contrast as well as their similarity. The polarity that Ephraem generates between their shared lineage and their incessant infighting and fabrication is intended to heighten the sense of chaos that Ephraem would like to attach to his audience’s perception of these three. To build this tension, Ephraem comments on the similarities between Marcion, Bar Dayśān, and Mani; the discontinuities between the three; and the idea that discord is the constant that proves a shared tradition. 

In his Fifth Discourse to Hypatius Ephraem shows that Bar Dayśān and Mani share a heritage of critical syncretism; they take what they want from those who preceded them and they add to it as they see fit. In his discussion of the nature of God's relationship to space in the


teachings of the three, Ephraem says, “But as for Mani and Marcion, the one before, the other after, with Bar Dayšān in the middle, one inquiry is spread over against the three of them.” He addresses himself to Marcion first, on account of the fact that he came first. Bar Dayšān, who came second, is shown to be a revisionist. From Marcion's teachings he “chose one and rejected another.” Finally, Mani, the most recent of the three, appears as a fabricator as he “yet again makes many things.” The image that Ephraem is casting of these three is not the perpetuation of a certain school of thinking from teacher to disciple. Instead, Marcion's ideas are picked over by Bar Dayšān, whose innovation is then further developed by Mani. Ephraem here presents a progression, however realistic, of adaption and modification. He concludes his review of the developments of their thoughts in this section with the remark:

So this proves concerning their teaching that it is the elaborate arrangement of men…. And as children who play on a wide staircase, when one sits on the lowest step, his companion, in order to anger him, sits on the middle step, and in order to resist both, another sits on the upper step, even such are the heralds of error.

Here Ephraem portrays his opponents as childhood playmates who cannot resist the urge to try to outdo one another. He suggests that their actions are based in the response of each one to his predecessor’s work rather than on true conviction regarding their own ministry.

Later in the same discourse, Ephraem more explicitly emphasizes the point that these three actually subjected their teachings to this competitive one-upmanship:

211. *PR* I, 134, xcvi.
212. *PR* I, 135, xcvi.
214. *PR* I, 138-40, xcvi-xix. Following Mitchell’s translation. See also *HcH* XLIX.1 where a similar progression is present.
And because Mani saw that before him his two elder brothers, namely Marcion and Bar Daysān, that one has said, ‘below’ and the other ‘above’—because he saw that if he said ‘below,’ that had been said; and if he said ‘above,’ he saw that it was prior, not knowing how he should represent the two entities which he introduced (ܐܥܢ), when he saw that ‘above’ and ‘below’ [were] taken, he represented them one opposite the other on a level (ܕܣܘܪܐ).  

For Ephraem, the teachings of his opponents are not based in revelation or in maintaining the continuity and integrity of the doctrines of the church, but in competition and contention.

Reinforcing the theme of modification within the succession he is describing, Ephraem notes that Marcion “added deceit,” Bar Daysān “embellished his deceit,” and Mani “changed everything.”

Ephraem even defends against a potential counter-argument that these three did not come from a common lineage. He says:

Let them be questioned about their ages,
Who is older than his friend?
Might Mani seize the right of the first-born?
Bar Daysān was prior to him
And might Bar Daysān be declared the eldest?
Younger is his age than the prior ones.
Marcion, the prior thorn,
the first-born of the thicket of sin,
the tare which was the first and germinated:
May the upright one trample his growth!

215. Mitchell has “not new” and adds “(lit. ancient)” here.
216. PR I, 140, xcix. Adapted from Mitchell.
217. HcH XXII.2.
218. See Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses, III.3.4 where he quotes Polycarp who, when asked by Marcion if he knows him, calls the latter “the first-born of Satan.”
This stanza implies that the disciples of Marcion, Bar Daysān, and Mani were prone to arguing for the authority of their traditions based on their antiquity. Ephraem argues that only one of them has the right to this claim. However, Marcion, who is granted the dubious honor of being named the first among the trio, is not permitted to wear his status as the earliest among the three as a badge of honor. In this stanza, Ephraem subverts the perceived deference to antiquity. Being first is not actually to be coveted. While each of these wanted to claim their antiquity not in relation to one another, but as to who had the deepest, richest pedigree, by naming Marcion as the first-born, Ephraem prevents any of them from claiming ancient lines of inheritance.  

It is clear from Ephraem’s inclusion of a specific example regarding Mani’s own pedigree that Ephraem’s arguments against the continuity and antiquity of his opponents’ heritage are, at least in part, a reaction to their own claims. In Ephraem’s Against Mani he opposes the Manichaean suggestion that Mani’s philosophy could be found in more ancient times in the likes of Hermes and Plato, and moreover, in the teachings of Jesus. Ephraem’s response to this claim is logical. If the teachings of all of these thinkers agreed, Ephraem admits, the Manichaean claim would have merit. However, Ephraem notes that astrologers, Magians, geometers, and doctors, as well as the disciples of Plato and Jesus have faithfully maintained the teachings of their founders. Although these traditions have each been well maintained, they do not agree with one another. Therefore, they do not form any part of an ancient Manichaean tradition. Ephraem denies Mani’s narrative concerning the antiquity of his traditions by pointing

220. For commentary on the use of the terms ‘thorns’ and ‘tares’ in Ephraem’s polemic see the section on biblical, agrarian symbolism in this chapter.

221. PR II, 208-212, xcii-c.
out that neither Hermes, Plato, nor their disciples were ever in agreement with each other, let alone with Jesus.\textsuperscript{222} He says:

\begin{quote}
If they also with Hermes and Plato and Jesus and others from the beginning were proclaiming a refining in succession,\textsuperscript{223} as Mani says, how is it their disciples are not proclaiming their teaching in Egypt and in Greece and in Judaea like that which Mani teaches? For how is what Jesus teaches like what Mani teaches?\textsuperscript{224}
\end{quote}

Within the arena of deception Ephraem escalates Mani when he suggests him as a counter-type for Christ. In his twenty-second madrāšâ against Heresies, Ephraem singles out Mani saying:

\begin{quote}
May he (Mani) be called the Messiah of fraud.
He breathes a spirit of falsehood into his prophets,
and he broke his body for his disciples.
and divided the earth for his heralds,
in the name of our Lord, against our Lord!
And when he judged that he was not being received;
openly, among many
he named himself an ‘apostle,’
the ‘Paraclete,’ who shot up (ܦܒܥ) yesterday.
Blessed is the one who stayed and then caught him.\textsuperscript{225}
\end{quote}

A pretender to the role of Messiah, Mani is said to inspire his prophets, much as Jesus inspired the prophets of Israel and Judah who proclaimed his coming. The phrase “spirit of

\textsuperscript{222} PR II, 211, xcix. On Mani’s claims to the antiquity of his message see Brian-Baker, \textit{Manichaeism}, 27-28. Consider also the many links we have already seen between Ephraem’s polemics against the dualists Mani and Marcion and those of Tertullian, who, much like Ephraem again, attests to Christians who are too focused on harmonizing their Christianity with Greek philosophy. See \textit{DPH} 7.

\textsuperscript{223} Lit. “and are coming.”

\textsuperscript{224} PR II, 209-10, xcix. Following Mitchell.

\textsuperscript{225} \textit{HcH} XXII.14. The phrase “who sprung up just yesterday,” appears in \textit{HcH} XXIV.19 as well. Ephraem claims that Mani proclaimed his status as the Paraclete after 300 years had passed \textit{PR} II, 209; xcviii-ix. It is clear that Ephraem is trying to emphasize his perception of this claim as an obviously false anachronism. The verb (ܡܚܕ) is used again of the impetus for Marcion’s teaching about the origin of the world in Ephraem’s \textit{Third Discourse to Hypatius} (\textit{PR I}, 70, l. 6).
falsehood” (ܪܘܚ ܡܘܩܬܐ) mocks the Manichaean claim that Mani was the Paraclete, or promised “spirit of truth” (ܪܘܚܐ ܕܬܪܐ) of John 15:26 and 16:13. Likewise, the connection of “falsehood” to Mani’s prophets ties this claim into the discussion of false prophets (ܦܒܝܐ ܕܓܡܐ) in Matthew 7:15-20. He “broke his body” as Jesus did at the Last Supper. He sent out apostles, just as Jesus is said to have done. Likewise, Ephraem suggests that it is only after Mani was not accepted as a messiah figure that he downgrades himself to apostle and Paraclete. The reactive nature of Mani’s actions continues the theme that false teachers belong to a tradition of change and modification as opposed to one of continuity and consistency.

With the concept of the truth (orthodoxy) of the true one (Christ) residing with the true ones (Nicene Orthodox Christians) in the true church as his starting point, each reference Ephraem makes to a teacher as deceptive, fraudulent, or misleading is intended to automatically initiate a reaction of disavowal within Ephraem’s audience. Through such repetition, Ephraem is attempting to etch these word associations into the minds of his congregants, driving a mental wedge between their orthodoxy and the teaching of these opponents. Are they to be members of the true church of the true one, Christ, or are they to join the side of the “sons of error” who serve the master of error, Satan?

226. For the Peshitta, I have used the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon’s online edition at http://cal.huc.edu/.

227. Matthew 26:26 and parallels, including 1 Corinthians 11:24.


229. For Ephraem’s dichotomous depiction of religious history between the poles of truth and error, see Griffith, “Thorn,” 402. Philip Botha emphasizes Ephraem’s use of certain language to create polarities to encourage his audience to have a personal sense of antithesis toward a particular pole in Ephraem’s antitheses, “Christology,” 21; see also “Textual,” 80.
Combating Satan’s Legacy

While the focus so far has been on Ephraem’s remarks about Bar Dayšān and Mani as heroes of their own upstart, broken, and corrupt traditions, Ephraem does introduce another champion: Satan—the patriarch of the legacy of error, which does not bolster authority, but tears it down. Marcion, Bar Dayšān and Mani have not fallen out of the picture, they are recast in this dramatic symbolism as Satan’s pawns in this ancient battle between truth and error. In this section we first look at Satan as the instigator of the deeds of the enemies of the church in Ephraem’s heresiography. It is evident that the lineage of error and the lineage of Satan are one and the same. Furthermore, Ephraem constructs a familial structure wherein Satan is the patriarch of the family of error, in which the heterodox trio are sons together.

Satan as Catalyst for Error

In his Hymns against Heresies, Ephraem suggests that Satan is working vicariously through Marcion, Bar Dayšān and Mani, guiding their deceitful actions:

Indeed how zealous the Evil one has become in the body of Bar Dayšān! With his mouth he cut off the hope he was pronouncing to his sect. He drew his tongue and denied his own resurrection. But he (Evil one) drove Marcion rabid and he maddened him, And he (Marcion) attacked his maker and insulted his creator. With Mani (ܡܥܕܕܐ) as with his own clothes (ܡܥܕܕܐ) he (Evil one) dressed himself up and spoke through him.\textsuperscript{230}

In this stanza Ephraem portrays the Evil one using Bar Dayšān’s body as his agent. The irony in this is that it is through Bar Dayšān’s body that, Ephraem says, the Evil one directs Bar Dayšān

\textsuperscript{230} HcH 1.9.
to deny bodily resurrection. Satan also tampers with Marcion’s mind leading him to publish blasphemous things about the God of creation. Embodying himself in Mani, Satan speaks through him. In all, Ephraem condemns Satan as the kernel for the fallacies of each of these adversaries.

In another madrâšâ against Heresies Ephraem utilizes military terminology to demonstrate Satan’s operative role in the propagation of error. In this instance, Satan does not maneuver within his hosts, but rather gives them the appropriate tools with which to wage war on the truth:

He arms them all with every evil;

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231. Ephraem was convinced that Bar Dayṣān did not believe in the resurrection of the body. See Carmina Nisibina (Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Carmina Nisibina, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, vols. 92-3/102-3 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CSCO, 1961-3), see especially XLVI and LI; See also Drijvers, Bardaisan, 152-53; Ramelli (Bardaisan, 217-31) argues that Ephraem misunderstood Bar Dayṣān’s understanding of the resurrection of the body, which she suggests has a spiritual more than physical focus and is thus akin to that of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. Ute Possekel has drawn strong lines of comparison between Origen and Bar Dayṣān in regards to their thoughts on the role of astral bodies in regards to determining events. See her “Bardaisan and Origen.”

232. Elsewhere Ephraem more specifically refers to Marcion’s “stranger.” There are many examples, but the most explicit is perhaps HcH XLVIII.1: “Marcion, who authored, ‘the stranger,’ he declared estranged (or excommunicated).”

233. Ephraem mocks Mani’s claim that his inspiration was given to him by his divine twin, Greek σώζον, particularly highlighted in the Cologne Mani Codex (P. Colon. inv. nr. 4780) “Concerning the Origins of his Body,” eds. and trans. by Ron Cameron and Arthur J. Dewey (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979). Ephraem is making a pun off of Mani’s name. The evil one is ‘in Mani’ (ܐܢܢ) just as one might be “in their own clothes” (ܐܢܢ). This mockery is based in Ephraem’s use of the term manâ (ܡܢܢ), which can mean, ‘instrument,’ ‘vessel,’ or ‘garment.’ What is particularly interesting about this pun for our purposes is that Ephraem utilizes the image of the heretics being mere garb for Satan in his own acts of deception, whether it is dealing with Mani or not. Perhaps, Ephraem simply found a coincidence ripe for the exploitation when applying this trope to Mani. For further discussion of this particular play on Mani’s name see Griffith, “Thorn,” 412. It is also worthwhile to consider Andrew Palmer’s article “‘A Lyre without a Voice:’ The Poetics and Politics of Ephraem the Syrian,” which deals with the positive imagery of biblical heroes and even Ephraem as a lyre played by Christ. See ARAM 5 (1993): 371-99. In HcH XL Ephraem contrasts the lyre of Moses to that of Marcion and Mani.
Marcion with Blasphemy, Bar Dayšān with error; the dregs which are left over are emptied into Mani.\textsuperscript{234}

In this stanza, Marcion and Bar Dayšān are being outfitted by Satan.

This imagery of Satan utilizing and empowering these opponents of the church is very similar to Ephraem’s interpretation of the relationship between Satan and the serpent in the garden. The serpent is merely the medium that God permitted Satan to utilize in carrying out his testing of Adam and Eve.\textsuperscript{235} In Ephraem’s \textit{Commentary on Genesis}, Satan speaks through the serpent in such a way that Eve does not even recognize him. She even denies that it was Satan who deceived her.\textsuperscript{236} In this way Ephraem’s adversaries are like serpents being assumed by Satan in his effort to deceive and corrupt. The serpent, Satan’s original dupe, is their ancient ancestor, the first in a primal lineage of error.

\textbf{The Ancient Family of Error}

In his first \textit{madrāšâ} written against the enemies of the true church, Ephraem associates Marcion, Bar Dayšān, and Mani with the serpent explicitly:

\begin{quote}
And the sons of the serpent begin to creep in the earth
so that they might lead astray the ignorant and lead away captive the innocent
head of the race like the former serpent.
He saw Eve in the time of ignorance.
He pacified her and she trusted; he counseled her and she rejoiced;
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{234. HcH 1.12.}

\textsuperscript{235. CGen II.32. Sebastian Brock (\textit{Hymns on Paradise}, 226) directs us to the \textit{Wisdom of Solomon} 2.24 for further insight into Satan as the “secret instigator.”}

\textsuperscript{236. CGen. II.16, 18. This also relates very closely to the portion of the tale of Job where Satan asks for permission to try Job’s faith. See Ephraem’s \textit{Hymns on Paradise}, XII.11. For how the \textit{Commentary on Genesis} is likely intended as a refutation of Bar Dayšān, Marcion and Mani, see Edward G. Matthews Jr. and Joseph P. Amar, \textit{St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works}, edited by Kathleen McVey (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 61-62, and 64.}
He sprang upon her and she repented; and he struck her and she mourned.\textsuperscript{237}

In Ephraem’s symbolic interpretation of the careers of this trio, these outsider adversaries are tied directly into the initial act of deception. In their lineage is that deceit which brought about the first sin. This is their family. They are ‘sons of error’—\textsuperscript{238}—sons of the original author of error, of Satan himself.

In his \textit{Third Discourse to Hypatius} Ephraem addresses Satan’s ancestral role in the lineage of our troika. First, he alludes to the nature of the relationship between the three as cancers which pervert the teaching(s) of one another and then spread their new aberrations. Ephraem’s caricature of his adversaries is one of infestation and mutation. In the following passage, however, Ephraem names the originator of the consistently deviant behavior of these “sons of error.” It is their father, Satan. Ephraem says:

\begin{quote}
And see how they are like, one to the other, perverse (ܦܰܝܡܐ) cancers (ܩܬܝܧܐ),\textsuperscript{239} since each of them distorts (ܒܕܚ) and metastasizes, not in order to draw nearer to the scripture, but in order to turn away (ܩܞܐ) from it. And doubtless, Satan (ܩܞܧܐ).
\end{quote}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{237} HcH I.13.

\textsuperscript{238} Cf. HcH XIV.7; they are called ‘sons of fraud’ in the following stanza (8).

\textsuperscript{239} Ephraem seems to be aware of either Tertullian’s use of the imagery of a spreading cancer, or a common or intermediary source exists, for Tertullian says in his section against Aristotelian dialectic: \textit{Hinc illae fabulae et genealogiae interminabiles et quaestiones infructuosae et sermones serpentes uelut cancer…} [From here (that dialectic art) those endless fables and genealogies and fruitless questions and conversations are creeping like a cancer]. Both \textit{sartanē} and \textit{cancer} can be translated either as a crab or as the disease cancer. Each term was used for the sign in the zodiac. Indeed, each instance could be read as referring to the crawling of a crab. Interestingly, \textit{sartanē} has excellent potential for mocking the name of Satan, \textit{ܩܞܧܐ}, and Tertullian’s participle \textit{serpentes} can also be the nomen agentis meaning ‘serpents.’ For Ephraem’s play on the names of his opponents see Griffith (“Thorn,” 412-3) where he discusses how Ephraem plays on the names of the adversaries in \textit{HcH} II.1 as well. Tertullian \textit{De praescriptione haereticorum} 7; Greenslade, \textit{Early Latin Theology} (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956), 35. Mitchell misread this passage:

\begin{quote}
And see how like the perverse crabs are to one another each one of whom takes a devious course and goes forth, not to come to the Scriptures, but to turn aside from the Scriptures! And, perhaps, Satan, their father, took a somewhat devious course, because he is a native in Error—that is because they are foreigners from foreigners, who do not blaspheme at all.
\end{quote}
their father, swift is his distorting (Δηλητής), because he is a native of error. Since they are foreigners among foreigners (the most foreign), they blaspheme endlessly.\textsuperscript{240}

This quote emerges in the \textit{Third Discourse to Hypatius} amidst a discussion of the initial incident that caused the darkness and the light, good and evil, or matter and soul to intermingle.\textsuperscript{241} Satan is also portrayed as an indigenous resident in the realm of error. On account of the fact that he is their father, by birthright Marcion, Bar Daysān, and Mani are also citizens within that realm. In this territory their ancestry could not be more illustrious. They are descended not only from the original medium of deception, the serpent, but they are indeed heirs of the one who secretly worked through him and them, Satan.

\textbf{Ephraem’s Biblical, Agrarian Symbolism of Error}

Throughout Ephraem’s polemic against Bar Daysān and Mani runs a symbolic theme of agrarian society. Ephraem talks about thorn bushes and tares, sheepfolds and pastures, wolves, and springs. The use of this natural imagery in Ephraem’s polemic of lineage is the focus of this section. Let us begin with a quote we have looked at already in this chapter, one that is clearly dealing with the heritage of our duo:

\begin{flushright}
\textit{For it is right for us to lift ourselves from between the two serpents in order that they might fight with one another.}\medskip
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{240} \textit{PR} I, 70, cf. \textit{PR} I, lxiii, Mitchell’s translation. Ephraem notes the link between Satan’s relationship to the adversaries and their inclination toward infighting in \textit{4Hyp} where he calls Mani and Bar Daysān serpents saying, “For it is right for us to lift ourselves from between the two serpents in order that they might fight with one another.” (\textit{PR} I, 122, xc). The nature of the relationship is not clear. However, Ephraem’s perception of interaction between the communities is certain.

\textsuperscript{241} The section immediately preceding this quotation, in which Ephraem was apparently laying out his perception of the positions of Marcion, Bar Daysān, and Mani regarding the cause of the initial encounter between their respective dualist principles, is ridden with lacunae. On Bar Daysān’s cosmology according to Ephraem see Drijvers, \textit{Bardaisan}, 130-43. For a summary of Manichaean cosmogony and cosmology see Baker-Brian, \textit{Manichaeism}, 110-18.
Let them be questioned about their ages,
Who is older than his friend?
Might Mani seize the right of the first-born?
Bar Daysān was prior to him
And might Bar Daysān be declared the eldest?
Younger is his age than the prior ones.
Marcion, the prior thorn,
the first-born of the thicket of sin, 242
the tare which was the first and germinated:
May the upright one trample his growth! 243

As we noted above, Ephraem’s point in this stanza is to rob these heretics both of their ability to claim that any one of their lineages is ancient, or that they are not closely associated one with another. To do this Marcion is declared the first, suggesting that their heritage begins with him in the second century. Likewise, his being the first is also suggestive that these others came along in succession.

The agrarian imagery appears when Ephraem explicitly qualifies in just what way Marcion is primogenitor. Specifically, he is the first thorn “of the thicket of sin.” Alternately, he is also named the first weed to sprout. In these images we begin to see something of Ephraem’s biblical-agricultural symbolism of lineage or pedigree. The uses of the terms “thorn” (ܟܘܒܐ) and “tare” (ܙܝܙܦܐ) function here as allusions to the parables of the sower and of the tares in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. 244

In the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:3-23), a farmer casts seeds in such a fashion that they fall on various surfaces. Some of the seed will grow well, in good soil, with little or no

242. See note 218 above.

243. HcH XXII.17. For a discussion of the thorn, thicket, tare images see the section on biblical, agrarian symbolism within Ephraem’s polemic in this chapter.

244. Cf. Matthew 13:3-23 and 24-30, 36-43 respectively and their parallels.
disturbance; some will fall on rock and not grow at all; some with grow but will be choked out by thorns (ܟܘܒܐ) that grow along with it. In this allusion, Ephraem is inserting these false teachers as the thorns that choke the young plants and suffocate orthodoxy.

In the parable of the tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43), a landowner sows wheat in a field only to have his servants tell him later that someone else has come along and sown tares (ܙܝܙܦܐ). The final course of action ordered by the master is to allow the weeds to remain among the wheat and only separate it out once the wheat has had a chance to grow, rather than any action that might cause some of the wheat to fail to grow.

Jesus’ own interpretation of this parable in Matthew 13.37b-39a reflects its formative role in Ephraem’s symbolic thought here:

He who sows the good seed is the Son of man. The field is the world; the good seed are the sons of the kingdom; the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy is the one who sowed them. 245

Likewise, for Ephraem, the wheat are the members of the church and the tares are false religious traditions. The tares’ status as sons of the evil one reinforces the links between these heterodox teachers and Satan that were discussed in the previous section of this chapter. Ephraem’s use of this imagery places Bar Dayšān and Mani as shoots that have grown within the thorny thicket of Marcion. When reading Ephraem, as a modern or ancient audience, references to thorns and tares must conjure up images from the parables in Matthew 13. Moreover, Jesus’ explanation of the latter parable in Matthew 13:37-43 is a rubric for Ephraem’s use of the terms ‘tares’ and ‘thorns’

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within his polemic. This reading of Ephraem is reflected in the first stanza of the twenty-third of his *Hymns against Heresies*:

The apostles were the twelve plowmen of the whole world.
And there was not a place nor a region
that was called by their names
until the tares appeared,
after the plowmen departed.
And the tares called the wheat
by the their (the tares’) own names.
On the day of the harvest they will be uprooted.
Blessed is the one whose harvest has come about!

Ephraem simply adopts Jesus’ antitheses into his own typology.

To further understand the force of the polarizing nature of these remarks for Ephraem’s community, one must consider his parallel use of biblical-agricultural imagery to highlight the continuity and strength of his own tradition. Much as he uses the symbols of a briar patch and sprouting weeds to describe his opponents, Ephraem speaks of Christ as the vine of truth of John 15. Ephraem joins other early Christians in interpreting this passage of scripture along communal lines. Commenting on a passage from the hymns *On the Crucifixion* (V.9) Robert Murray says, “the whole image once again emphasizes the vital continuity, through grafting, of the new shoot (Christ) and its abundant growth (the church) with the former vine [Judaism]....”

Indeed, Ephraem’s use of agricultural imagery is pervasive. Ephraem sees each person metaphorically as having a particular horticultural pedigree. The next chapter addresses Ephraem’s use of Matthew 7:15-20 (and its parallels) and 12:33-37 in response to the actions and words of his adversaries, and his interpretation of those passages over against his opponents.

246. *Symbols*, 102. Insertions in parentheses are from Murray’s commentary; that in brackets is mine.
There Ephraem’s terminology expands into trees, their roots, their fruit, and whether that fruit is bitter or sweet. This biblical, agrarian imagery is simply another layer of symbolism in Ephraem’s polemic. The fact that some of it already embodies antithetical interpretations makes it particularly appealing for Ephraem’s polemical aims. While encountering Ephraem’s symbolic idiom, the reader must realize that it is universal: every reference to a branch, root, tree, fruit, bitterness, sweetness, vine, grape, fig, thorn, tare, thicket, etc. must be recognized as part of this biblical, agricultural typology. Each of these is either on the side of Christ, the true vine and the vineyard of truth, or of the evil one, the thorn and the thicket.\(^{247}\)

For Ephraem, the antithesis of the vine and the thicket juxtaposes two alternative models of heritage and tradition. Just as Marcion was the first of a thicket of sin, Christ is the first shoot of the vineyard of truth.\(^{248}\) The latter is grafted into the vineyard of Israel which has despaired and will otherwise die. Thus, the vine of the Jews was rejected, and through Christ a fresh vine was grafted in, the Gentile church. In contrast, the traditions of Mani and Bar Dayšān are those of a thicket attempting to choke out the truth as it grows or of tares which have “sprung up,” crowding the true wheat.\(^{249}\)

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\(^{247}\) See Murray’s entire chapter, “The vineyard, the Grape and the Tree of Life,” (95-130) in order to get a broader perspective on the role of some of this agricultural imagery in early Syriac Christian literature.

\(^{248}\) John 15.

\(^{249}\) In Ephraem’s *Hymns against Julian* we find the term ‘tare’ used in an association with pagans (1.4). The reference to thorns is present as well (II.10) where it is said of Julian, “the thorns, the people of his kindred, and the brambles, his kindred.” In the same stanza, Julian is also said to be a direct threat to the orthodox church; he might, “cover them up with the thorny tangle of his paganism.” For the English translation see Judith M. Lieu, “Translation,” in *The Emperor Julian: Panegyric and Polemic*, ed. Samuel N.C. Lieu (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1986) 112.
Ephraem employs the imagery of a sprouting weed to show a lack of heritage in his opponents. As opposed to the church which was grafted into a deep tradition, Marcion simply “sprang up” (ܐܦܬܥ). Similar language is also used of Mani:

And when he judged that he was not being received; openly, among many he named himself an ‘apostle,’ the ‘Paraclete,’ who shot up (ܡܝܚ) yesterday.
Blessed is the one who stayed and then caught him.  

Here, Ephraem portrays Mani’s claim to be an apostle and a Paraclete as Mani’s attempt to graft himself into the vine of Christ. However, Ephraem’s suggestion that Mani “shot up just yesterday” argues that Mani’s claim is anachronistic and invalid. Mani is a furtive weed, planted after the fact. He, like Marcion, has no true roots of which to speak.

This agricultural imagery is also used in associations of heretics with the evil one and his agency within them:

He (Evil one) gave to Bar Daysān a storehouse of tares.
He (Bar Daysān) covered and suffocated wheat with his thorns and tares.
He (Evil one) girded him (Bar Daysān) with a bundle of tares.
Naked wolves he (Evil one) gave to Marcion
The clothes of lambs he (Marcion) stole so that on the outside he might cover them.
As for Mani, he is like a wild boar always stirring up its mud.

Again Satan endows Marcion and Bar Daysān with tools fit for participants in a subversive mission against the church while Mani, on the other hand, is engulfed in filth. Ephraem is

251. Recall that the introduction of the Paraclete (John 15:26-27) comes on the heels of Jesus’ explanation of the vine and the branches in John 15:1-17.
252. HcH I.10. There is likely a reference to 2 Peter 2:22 in the final line here, where, referring to false prophets and teachers it says “Of them the proverbs are true… ‘A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud’” (NIV).
securing for Bar Daysān a place as the sower of the tares (heterodox believers) that will crowd the wheat (orthodox believers) of the true church and will not be able to be sorted out until later. This is yet another place where it seems as though Ephraem is revealing that there are those in his congregation who he views as Marcionites, Bar Daysānites and Manichaeans. Bar Daysān is also cast as the sower of thorn bushes which will try to choke out the faith of orthodox believers. The fact that Ephraem is suggesting that Bar Daysān is both the origin of weeds which will crowd in the church and thorns that will attack is enhanced by the remark that the evil one will also bundle him up in tares, presumably to hide the thorns.²⁵³

Accusations of hiding one’s true vicious intent behind a less ominous façade are common in polemical discourse. Ephraem slots Marcion as the agent who dressed wolves with sheep’s clothing. The term I have translated as “naked” (ܭܡܝܛܐ) here could also be read as “apostles.” The play on words here is fully intended. Ephraem is suggesting that Marcion’s emissaries are wolves in sheep’s clothing. His apostles are naked wolves, ready to don their ovine disguises.²⁵⁴ This image is strong enough on its own. Its literal connotations are very meaningful for Ephraem’s context; his opponents appear to be safe by all appearances, but what lies beneath is deadly. This image alludes to Matthew 7:15 where false prophets are referred to by Jesus as “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” Particularly significant about this reference, however, is that to Mani, and to Marcion as well, Luke 6:43-45 (Matthew 7:16-20 is its parallel) was a very

²⁵³. In XXI.2 Ephraem calls Mani “a sheaf of thorns and tares.”

²⁵⁴. The double entendre here is utilized by Ephraem in a similar way in Ḥdf LXXIV, where it is a true apostle who is naked and being clothed in the warmth of the spirit. The image of one’s true essence being covered over by an alternate exterior is common in Ephraem’s symbolic thought, whether formative or polemical. One can find it dealing with the garment of words with which we know God, but not fully; the robes of glory upon the initial human couple in Paradise; the body of Jesus; the serpent which Satan wore; wolves in sheep’s clothing; and so on. See Brock, Luminous, 86, 88, 95; Murray, Symbols, 80.
important exegetical proof text for dualism. For Ephraem, among the implications of the phrase “wolves in sheep’s clothing” is a demonstration of the faulty exegesis of this gospel pericope by his opponents. In keeping with Ephraem’s symbolic polemic, the power of this association does not stop with its vulgar negative connotations, nor with its exegetical allusion. Ephraem is also drawing an analogy between wolves in sheep’s clothing and Satan in heretics’ bodies.

The association of Mani with dregs, filth and waste in so many of the passages we have examined is further evidence that he is the one adversary Ephraem is most concerned with discrediting. This is seen in a similar line found in his *Fifth Discourse to Hypatius* which reads, “And because this is the teaching which comes from the party of Marcion and Valentinus and Bar Dayṣān and he (i.e. Mani) is the last of all, that is to say, the dregs, lower than that above him, so this one (Mani) is more abominable than those before him.”

He again uses the imagery of filth, dregs, or muck portraying Mani’s teachings as sediment that is muddying the waters of the spring of the true Christian faith. This agrarian imagery of the spring or watering hole is central to the pastoral symbolism of Ephraem’s theology. Indeed Ephraem sees the aim of his teaching as a means to clear the sediment from the

255. Notably, Tertullian begins his *Adversus Marcionem* (2) by addressing the Marcionite interpretation of this pericope. It is also worth noting that though a tale of a wolf in sheep’s clothing does appear in later editions of *Aesop’s Fables*, no evidence exists for its presence in that collection by the time of Ephraem.


257. Ephraem’s referring to Mani in particular as filth, sewage, muck, dregs, etc. is undoubtedly motivated by the cosmological and ritual language of matter in Manichaeism. See *CMC* 84.6 where the reference is to human refuse; throughout the *Kephalaia* are references to waste that settles to the ground or is swept into the abyss in the working out of cosmic salvation (see the *Dictionary of Manichaean Texts*, vol. 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 132; for the data on the use of similar terms in Persian texts see *Dictionary of Manichaean Texts*, vol. 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 208.
well of Christian doctrine.\footnote{258} He envisions the troika as disturbed silt that is polluting the church. Furthering the imagery of filth, Ephraem now describes Marcion and Bar Daysān alongside Mani in their efforts to muddy the pool of truth in the church. Ephraem’s final \textit{Hymn against Heresies} captures well how his use of these types is directly connected to his vision of his heresiographical ministry:

\begin{quote}
Truly also in all the mouths of the church is the straining of my pool \(ܪܣܰܝ\) from that mud and filth of the house of the rabid Marcion; and my clearing from the dregs and the ungodliness of the house of Mani; and my purifying from the dirt of the wiles of Bar Daysān, and from the stink of the stinking Jews.\footnote{259}

Your horn exalts your Lord, believing church!\footnote{260}
For there is not in you the book of that rabid Marcion, nor even a book of that raving Mani, Nor the Book of Mysteries, the thorns of Bar Daysān.\footnote{261}

Two covenants of the king and the son of the king\end{quote}

\footnote{258. The concept of a clear pool calls to mind Sebastian Brock’s discussion of the image of the ‘luminous eye’ in his work by the same title (\textit{Luminous}, 71f.). \(ܥܝܧܐ ܭܧܝܐ\), the Syriac for ‘luminous eye,’ can also be read ‘clear well.’ Ephraem is often found playing on this phrase intending one or both of these images.}

\footnote{259. This inclusion of the Jews as a tagline at the end of a polemical statement against Marcion, Bar Daysān and Mani occurs in a few places. For example, see the conclusion of the \textit{Fifth Discourse to Hypatius} (\textit{PR I}, 185, cxix), a passage that figures significantly into our next chapter. However, it is not nearly as common as when Ephraem is addressing neo-Arians. For more on the role that the Jews play in Ephraem’s polemic against the Arians see Shepardson, \textit{Anti-Judaism}.}

\footnote{260. For Ephraem’s use of ‘horn’ \(ܩܬܦܐ\) to indicate the church’s teaching see \textit{HcH XXV.4}; Murray, \textit{Symbols}, 174. Murray also notes the potential for the contemporary use of the trumpet (or \textit{shofar}) in the liturgy of the Syriac-speaking church, ibid., n.6.}

\footnote{261. This claim that the true church does not contain a specific book of Bar Daysān is particularly interesting. It is also mentioned in \textit{HcH I.14}, where Ephraem also mentions a \textit{Book of Thunder} and a \textit{Book of Hosts}. Is it possible that not all of Bar Daysān’s writings were understood to be objectionable by Ephraem? That Ephraem explicitly rejects any of Bar Daysān’s writings does further intrigue the reader in light of our exploration of the similarities between the \textit{BLC} and Ephraem’s polemic in the last chapter’s excursus. For discussion of the \textit{Book of Mysteries}, see Drijvers, \textit{Bardaisan}, 163; Ramelli, \textit{Bardaisan}, 59 and 224n393, where she suggests that the role of “mysteries” \(ܪܐܙܐ\) in the title may reflect a symbolic nature of this text, perhaps further linking Ephraem to Bar Daysān. Mani also seems to have written a work by this name, polemicizing against Bar Daysān’s homonymous composition. See Michel Tardieu, \textit{Manichaeism}, trans. M.B, DeBevoise (Urbana, Il: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 38. For a discussion of this work from the Manichaean perspective see Baker-Brian, \textit{Manichaeism}, 84-85.}
are set down in your Ark.\textsuperscript{262}

Let not, my Lord, the labors of your pastor be cheated
So that I have not troubled your sheep, except what was appropriate.
I have kept the wolves from it and built, as far as I could,
enclosures (一如既) of madrāšê for the lambs of your pasture.\textsuperscript{263}

Here Ephraem’s madrāšê are offered, first, as the clarifying agent for the church. The type of the clear pool here recalls Ephraem’s emphasis on the eye of faith, the clear eye, wherein it is the goal of the believer to clear the mind’s eye to be able to discern the truth.\textsuperscript{264} He is cleaning up the mess made by those who have fabricated doctrines from the erroneous teachings of their predecessors as well as from their own misappropriations of the scriptures and traditions of the true church.

On the other hand, in the final stanza Ephraem portrays himself as defending the church as a shepherd would his flock, penning them in with his madrāšê. Note that he is explicit here that his work is pastoral and apologetic, particularly in his madrāšê. Ephraem also viewed the efforts of his adversaries as pastoral and apologetic. This may be most clear in the first stanza of the twenty-third of his \textit{Hymns against Heresies}:

\begin{quote}
The apostles were the twelve plowmen of the whole world.
And there was not a place nor a region
that was called by their names
until the tares appeared,
after the plowmen departed.
And the tares called the wheat
by the their (the tares’) own names.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{262} A connection between the Ark of the Covenant, right teaching, and Scripture is also established in \textit{Hymns on Paradise}, VI.1 (Sebastian P. Brock, \textit{Hymns on Paradise} (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1990), 108 f.).

\textsuperscript{263} HcH LVI, 8-10.

\textsuperscript{264} See n.258 above.
On the day of the harvest they will be uprooted.
Blessed is the one whose harvest has come about!

Interestingly, in his Second Discourse to Hypatius Ephraem accuses the Manichaean god of being inept because it did not prepare defenses for itself when it ought to have known the dark was coming against it. Among the metaphors that he uses for this type of protective wall, he suggests a hedge for his vineyard and an enclosure for his flock. Ephraem is using the very images with which he discusses defending his own proto-orthodox community and attacking weakness in his opponent’s mythology, even their deities.

Ephraem inserts himself and his own writings into his polarity. He installs himself as an orthodox composer of madrāšê against the scriptures of Marcion, Bar Dayšân, and Mani. Sidney Griffith demonstrates well that this is indeed a conscious illustration and motivation in Ephraem’s psyche.\(^{265}\) His use of the imagery of the shepherd protecting his flock from sheep alludes once again to Matthew 7:15.\(^{266}\) The extent of the function of this pericope in Ephraem’s polemics may be further emphasized by the fact that it bookends both the collection of his Hymns against Heresies or his Discourses to Hypatius.\(^{267}\) Even Jesus is portrayed as a good shepherd guiding his wayward flock toward reconciliation:

\[
\text{May the good one in his love turn them} \\
\text{from wandering to within his pasture.} \\
\text{Blessed is he who cares about the evil ones.}\]

\(^{265}\) See his “St. Ephraem.”
\(^{266}\) See the discussion of Ephraem’s utilization of this allusion on pages 88, 91-92 and 95, above. Note that it will also feature significantly in our discussion of the actions of these heretics in chapter four.
\(^{267}\) HcH I.10 and LVI.10, as well as the closing remarks in both the first and the final Discourses to Hypatius at very least allude to Matthew 7:15-20.
\(^{268}\) HcH XXII.2.
Conclusion

When Ephraem refers to Bar Dayšān as Mani’s master he has an ideological lineage in mind. Whatever he thought about the historical possibility of a master-disciple relationship between these two, Ephraem uses the links he can show between Marcion, Bar Dayšān and Mani to develop the idea of a succession of error. Mani borrowed from and added to the erroneous teachings of Bar Dayšān who had done the same with Marcion’s philosophy. Having established this progressive relationship between these three, Ephraem ventures to reveal the progenitors of their legacy. Here he ties these three to the most despicable of characters—Satan and the serpent in the garden. Indeed, Ephraem posits a legacy from the work of Satan through the serpent down to his work in these religious leaders. By showing their true roots to be in the deceptive works of Satan, Ephraem is able to discredit any claims to true teaching or revelation that his opponents had made. Thus, Ephraem’s notice of Mani’s dependence on Bar Dayšān is part of a much larger project to show that Mani’s teachings and practices are not the faithful representation of ancient antecedents. He is not the disseminator of some aged tradition. On the contrary, his pronouncements are either corruptions of previous teachings or complete fabrications, which are not brought to him by a divine emissary, but rather by Satan himself.

In this way Ephraem directly opposes the legacy of Mani as it is found in Marcion and Bar Dayšān to that which Ephraem himself has in the church. Within this antithesis, Ephraem portrays the church’s legacy as rooted in God’s revelation to Adam and passed down by the laying on of hands all the way to John the Baptist’s baptism of the Christ. It is Christ’s commissioning of the apostles, which passed on this succession to the church, an unbroken
lineage, that Ephraem himself participates in and it is for him the chief assurance of spiritual authority. Ostracizing our three outsider adversaries, Ephraem was not simply looking to marginalize them, but to demonstrate their belonging to another ‘church,’ that of error. Their marks were not those of solidarity, but of disjunction. They were the tares and thorns that ruin the harvest and the muck that pollutes the pure spring of truth. Their champion was not Christ, but Satan. They were not the redeemed sons of Adam, but the cursed children of the serpent.
Chapter Four

Ephraem’s Polemic against his Opponents’ Practices

The greatest difficulty for Ephraem’s polemical program is that even though he is able to show that the theology and logic of Bar Dayšān and Mani are flawed he cannot help but acknowledge that their behavior is outwardly acceptable. His work to thwart the efforts of the adversaries of the true church and right teaching are threatened by the simple fact that the deeds of his opponents appear to be commendable. Moreover, it is particularly difficult to attack another community’s practices when they appear to be so much like one’s own. Within this setting, it is not surprising that Ephraem focuses on the teachings of the adversaries more than on their actions, and more on their teachings about their practices than the practices themselves. Thus, Ephraem’s arguments suggest that their good deeds have wicked intentions and their rites are ineffective, even foolish. First, he attacks the reasoning and motivation behind his opponents’ practices. Second, he demonstrates that they are not suited to accomplish what is required of them within the Manichaean myth.

This chapter approaches Ephraem’s polemic against the practices of Bar Dayšān and Mani in three primary ways. First, it examines the socio-historical implications of Ephraem’s attack, especially the fact that his own community was interacting with an actively proselytizing Manichaeism. This section also addresses the implications of the relative dearth of Ephraem’s references to the actions of Bar Dayšānites. Second, this chapter looks at Ephraem’s interpretation of the piety of his adversaries as an act of deception. This section expands on the discussion of Ephraem’s biblical agrarian polemic, focusing on how Ephraem applies it to his opponents’ practices. Much like the section in the last chapter that was focused on Matthew 13
and its parallels, this section will focus primarily on Matthew 7 and its parallels. Third, this chapter considers Ephraem’s demonstration of the futility of Manichaean practices based on that community’s own teachings.

**Encountering their Opponents**

In his *Second Discourse to Hypatius* Ephraem alludes to the strength of the Manichaean community. Mani had instilled his community with a missionary agenda, sending out emissaries to spread his message. Mani believed that his religion would uniquely appeal to every person of every race, even “to the ends of the earth” and into the Roman Empire. Based on Ephraem’s descriptions of Manichaeans, it seems that he and his community found them readily observable in their towns. This section of this chapter addresses the social aspects of Ephraem’s remarks about Manichaean conduct. What emerges is the description of an

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269. Ephraem talks about how Manichaean teaching abounds in his day, *PR* I, 18; xxxvii.

270. See Lieu (*Manichaean Texts*, 111f.) where it is clear that there was a very intentional early Manichaean mission. For a summary of Mani’s role in initiating and commissioning this enterprise see Tardieu, *Manichaeism*, 19-25.

271. See Lieu (*Manichaeism*, 109) for a discussion of Mani’s sense of the universal appeal of his own tradition.

272. We know that Manichaeism spread as far east as China and as far west as Rome. See Lieu, *Manichaeism* (78-85 and 178-201), for the expansion of Manichaeism into Asia; and for the religion’s forays into the Roman Empire see Peter Brown’s “The Diffusion of Manichaeism in the Roman Empire” (*Journal of Roman Studies* 59, no. 1/2 (1969): 92-103) and Lieu, *Manichaeism*, 85-90.

273. Bar Daysānites’ behavior would be examined more closely were Ephraem to single it out. However, it is shown below that Ephraem does not attack the practices of the Bar Daysānite community. This is either because Ephraem did not know enough about them, (this proposal is highly unlikely) or the Bar Daysānites did not have practices that rendered it distinct from orthodox Christianity. The latter solution is preferred. Note also the suggestions of Drijvers (*Bardaisan*, 149, 162) and Ramelli (*Bardaisan*, 159, 165) that many Bar Daysānites had gone over either to those leaning toward, at least outwardly, Nicean orthodoxy or to those adhering to Manichaeism by Ephraem’s day. Drijvers (*Bardaisan*, 140-41) also stresses that Ephraem is clearly relating a distinction between Bar Daysān and his followers and between Marcion and Mani and theirs. He suggests that this confirms a remaining distinct Bar Daysānite community. Ramelli (*Bardaisan*, 157) argues too for the point that Ephraem clearly
active missionizing community that sought to spread knowledge about itself through songs, public preaching and debating, books, and service efforts. The Manichaean missionary program included an educational component. The Manichaeans that Ephraem was disputing were trained debaters. Within this setting, Ephraem’s congregation had encountered Manichaeans and had some familiarity with Manichaean practices. They had likely met preachers, artists, ascetics, and doctors who they knew as Manichaeans. Ephraem himself is clearly aware of such noble social roles within the Manichaean community of northern Mesopotamia.

We know that Mani sent his disciples out to spread his message. Ephraem refers to them as heralds and prophets. We are also aware that Mani told his apostles to take his

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274. The *Book of Prayer and Confession* (Turfan Text M801) notes specifically the positions of teacher, bishop, valiant scribe, and singer of melodious hymns alongside the title of prayer leader. See Klimkeit, *Gnosis*, 137. See also Baker-Brian, 128. The hierarchical structure of the community was like a pyramid with Mani, and later his successors, at the top with 12 teachers, 72 bishops, and 360 presbyters below him in that order. See Tardieu, *Manichaeism*, 57-62. Ephraem claims that the heretics stole the form of church hierarchy and practices for themselves in *HcH* XXII.21.

275. For insights into the training and preparation that Manichaean missionaries, particularly debaters, underwent, see Richard Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 88-92.

276. As Ephraem portrays the Manichaean community in his region they must at least have been participating in public proselytizing, book production (if not composition), and healing or medical work. Ephraem refers to Mani’s painting in *5Hyp, PR I*, 126-27; xciii. He also refers to their medical roles in society in his *HcH* I.15. The ascetic practices of the group are a major point of discussion and their role as preachers is also a focus in this chapter. Ephraem alludes to Bar Daysān, or perhaps Bar Daysānites, having a role as a physician in his *Against Bar Daysān* 86, *PR II*, Ixxvii-viii; 165-66. This text is likely intended metaphorically, however, positing Jesus the physician who healed Lazarus, bringing him back into his body, against Bar Daysān the physician who, Ephraem claims, denies the resurrection of the body. Ephraem refers to the method of Jesus as issuing a command against sin and death in contradistinction to Bar Daysān’s method, which he relates to “drugs” (חַרְפָּנָה, sammānē). With Ephraem’s references to the Eucharist as the medicine of life, the contrast between the two fades. See Brock, *Luminous*, 99-114, especially 99-103; and Aho Shemunkasho, *Healing in the Theology of Saint Ephrem* (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2002), especially pages 431-36.

277. See note 270 above.
writings along with them as aids. Early Manichaean missionary accounts also suggest that this helped to ensure their success. Even the Antitheses of Marcion of Sinope was a text utilized by the Manichaeans in northern Mesopotamia where the issue of the usefulness of the Hebrew Scriptures was quite a popular discussion topic. Ephraem himself talks about the Manichaean production of scriptures and their rejection of the Hebrew Bible.

We also know that as Manichaeism spread, those preaching their kerygma were at times confronted publically. These confrontations also led to debates, or disputes. Ephraem himself may refer to this when he suggests that they “learn[ed] to construct discourses (ܣܡܐ)”. One wonders whether some of these discourses were madrāšē. Ephraem acknowledges that Mani composed madrāšē. While we are already aware of the liturgical function madrāšē could have, it is possible that some of Ephraem’s compositions, especially some of these teaching songs,

278. See for example HcH XXII.14. “Heralds” (ܪܡܐ) is a term usually used to refer to the apostles. In this way, Ephraem portrays Mani as trying to mimic Jesus.

279. See Lieu, Manichaeism, 54-90, for a discussion of early Manichaean missionary activity.

280. Lim, Public, 75.

281. See Lieu, Manichaeism, 38-40 on Marcion’s text and Adda’s use of it, and 64-65 on Adda’s early missionary work, its utilization of texts, including his own work modeled on the Antitheses. Lim identified this work as the Modion, 238f. However, in his Biblical Argument in Manichaean Missionary Practice: The Case of Adimantus and Augustine, Jacob Albert van den Berg suggests that it is Adimantus’ Disputationes, and not the Modion, which may not belong to Adimantus, that borrows so closely from the Antitheses, 140-41, 150-60. On the link between the names Addas, Adda(i) and Adimantus see van den Berg, 19-21.


284. Lim, Public, 76.

285. 4Hyp, PR I, lxxxiv; 111.

286. HcH 1.16.
were intended for public disputation, or at least public delivery. There is good reason to believe that in Ephraem’s day it would not require that a madrāšā be performed publicly in order for it to be heard by a Manichaean. Ephraem’s own congregation may have consisted in part of people participating in Manichaean activities in some way. Some of his congregants may even have identified with the title “Manichaean” as a more specific descriptor of the type of Christian they were.

Ephraem mentions medical activities on the part of the Manichaeans, implying that there were Manichaean physicians in northern Mesopotamia. The image of Mani and his followers as doctors is common in late antiquity. Ephraem saw their efforts at healing people much as he saw their piety, insidious:

One whose body is healthy, they sicken his mind.
And whoever is sick they heal; so when he regains health he will die.
Whoever is broken they bind up, that he may run into their traps.
When they are muttering incantations over a child who was stung,
the scorpion has struck without; the incantation strikes within.
Between the two deaths, the fool casts himself.

They are making the body well so they can corrupt the mind. Ephraem refers specifically to them helping with serpent bites and scorpion stings. Their power to do so is actually a trap from Satan, who “allows himself to be trapped in order to trap.” He subdues the serpent and the scorpion

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287. We know of the image of Mani as a doctor from many sources. See Coyle, “Healing and the Physician’ in Manichaeism,” in his Manichaeism, 101-121; and BeDuhn, “A Regimen for Salvation: Medical Models in Manichaean Asceticism,” Semeia 58 (1992): 109-34. Ramsay MacMullen has made the case for the significant role of the miraculous in late antique conversion to Christianity (Christianizing the Roman Empire (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 25f.). Richard Lim has connected acts of healing through supernatural power to conversion in confrontations between Christians and Manichaeans where Christians failed in debate with the Manichaean where Christians failed in debate with the Manichaeans but were ultimately victorious in the encounter through a demonstration of supernatural power, Public, 79-88.


289. 4Hyp, PR I, lxxviii-ix; 118-121.
to enhance the appeal of the mission of those through whom he is working in the world, the adversaries.

Ephraem also warns his community against Manichaean missionizing groups and he aims to offer alternatives to the more attractive of Manichaean efforts at proselytism. His own madrāšē were intended to displace those of the Dayšānites and the Manichaeans. Ephraem offers Jesus Christ as the medicine of life over against the Manichaeans’ claims to healing. He argues that Manichaean writings have stolen the status of scripture from the true scriptures and have no place within the orthodox church. He also argues that their preachers speak lies. Even the healings that they perform bring spiritual death.

290. On this issue see Sidney Griffith, “St. Ephraem,” 462-63. Though Griffith’s article is focused on Bar Dayšān rather than Mani, Griffith acknowledges (467) the potential place of Manichaean hymnody in the fray. It seems quite likely, between the early role of hymns within Manichaeism and Ephraem’s own reference to their madrāšē, that Ephraem was looking to displace these as well. Griffith elaborates further on the madrāšē as the battleground between Ephraem and Marcionites, Bar Dayšānites and Manichaeans in his “Thorn,” 406-408. That Marcionites in the region may well have been singing the teachings of their founder is reflected in HcH XL.14, which reads “He (Marcion) sang (ܙܣܬ) catena (or ‘in Cana’) within the wedding feast, renowned tunes about the creator.” See also Drijvers, “Die Oden Salomos.”

291. The phrase medicine of life is also in use within Manichaean literature. See Charles Robert Cecil Allberry and Hugo Jbscher, A Manichaean Psalm-Book, Part II (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1938), (MMBCB, 2), 152.22-23: “Be not far from me, o physician that hast the medicines of life.” For the use of this phrase in Ephraem see Brock, Luminous, 99-114, especially 99-103; and Shemunkasho, Healing, 431-36. Note also that Epiphanius entitled his contemporary heresiological work Panarion, which is Greek (Πανάριον) for “medicine chest.”

292. See HcH LVI.4:
   They are truly not ashamed nor embarrassed that in the name of humans they write their scriptures. And there is no scribe who gets up and reads “Thus says the Lord of hosts” but “Thus says Marcion the mad” and “Mani” and “Bar Dayšān.” Their names are sufficient for the disgrace of their congregations.

293. Ephraem refers to Bar Dayšān and Mani themselves as “heralds of error,” in his 5Hyp, PR I, xcix; 139-40; likewise, in HcH XXII.14 Ephraem says that Mani “breathed falsehood into his prophets”. See also, note 278 above.

294. HcH 1.15. See page 101 above.
The sincerity of Ephraem’s acceptance of the success of Mani and his followers at healing the sick is bolstered by his holding Bar Dayšān accountable for not performing any such deeds. In what is apparently a response to the Dayšānite claim that Bar Dayšān had received some of his knowledge through direct revelation, Ephraem asks a single pointed question: why did Bar Dayšān not do any miracles to convince us of his status as a prophet or apostle? Ephraem asks:

If he revealed to Bar Dayšān who was unable to prevent the dew that dropped upon his bed; let them give us the signs and wonders which he did, that by means of the revealing signs the secrets which he taught may be believed. But if the prophets and apostles who did many signs and wonders did not say one of the things which Bar Dayšān contrived by himself, and if Bar Dayšān, who contrived many things which are foreign to the teaching of the prophets and the apostles, did not do any of the signs which they did, is it not clear and evident to anyone who wishes to see clearly that there is a great gulf between his error and their true knowledge?

This is a very provocative passage for a number of reasons. First, it acknowledges that the teachings of the prophets and the apostles were revolutionary. Second, it suggests that these teachings were accepted in large part due to the fact that the teachers themselves did wonders that convinced the audience of their authority, rather than winning over converts through persuasive speech. Third, it portrays Bar Dayšān as being in a similar context as the prophets and apostles. It allows that he might be on par with these figures, save for the fact that he did no


296. 3Hyp, PR 1, lvii; 57; adapted from Mitchell’s translation.

297. This is borne out by the gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the letters of Paul, apocryphal acts, and hagiographical literature. Even if each tale is not true, the miraculous is clearly an integral aspect of the collective perception of memory of early Christianity among the Christians of the first few centuries of the movement.
miracles. Fourth, by not leveling such a claim against Mani, it suggests that Mani was renowned for doing such wonders.

In all, the interaction between Ephraem’s community and those of the followers of Bar Dayšān and Mani has significant effects on Ephraem’s polemic. Ephraem hints at the fact that at least some individuals from within these communities were respected by some within his own congregation. This respect influences Ephraem’s approach to his opponents’ actions and their character. This chapter discusses their actions, and his remarks about their character are analyzed in the final chapter. In Ephraem’s view the proselytizing deeds of his adversaries are simply attempts to trick people into converting.

**Deceptive Righteousness**

The theme of the perfidious nature of the actions of the Dayšānites and Manichaean stretches beyond their approach to converting the local community. For Ephraem, every good deed that a Dayšānite or Manichaean does is deceptive just like the serpent in the garden who claimed to be offering help. Ephraem portrays the piety of his opponents as a façade to further their proselytism. To this end he again incorporates a biblical agrarian polemical exegesis into his heresiology. Much like his exegesis of Matthew 13 functions as a muse for his polemical terminology, when he discusses his opponents’ good actions he turns to Matthew 7:15-20:

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad

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298. See the section “Ephraem’s Biblical, Agrarian Symbolism of Error” in the previous chapter.
Both of Ephraem’s major heresiological collections are bookended with references to this same pericope. Ephraem uses his exegesis of this passage to reaffirm his claim that his opponents are like wolves in sheep’s clothing and the wool that covers these wolves is made up of their devout routines.

Ephraem best describes the complications he faces in discussing the actions of his opponents in his *Fifth Discourse to Hypatius*. He says:

For their works are like our works as their fast is like our fast, but their faith is not like our faith. And, therefore, rather than being known by the fruit of their works they are distinguished by the fruit of their words. For their work is able to lead astray and appear as fine, for its bitterness is invisible; but their words cannot lead astray, for their blasphemies are evident. And just as one who worships idols does not worship wood or stone, but devils, so one who prays with the Manichaeans prays with Satan, and one who prays with the Marcionites, prays with Legion, and one who prays with the followers of Bar Dayšān, with Beelzebub and one who prays with the Jews, with Barabbas, the robber.

Ephraem’s admission in the first half of this quote is strong. These heretics appear to be good Christians. They behave in admirable ways. Ephraem is conceding their piety. His audience must be aware of the discipline of the Manichaeans, Bar Dayšānites and Marcionites; otherwise he

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299. NRSV. It translates what is found in the Peshitta and Diatessaron well. The differences in the Old Syriac are negligible. It reads:

Drive away from yourselves false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. For grapes are not gathered from thorns, nor figs from thistles. Every good tree bears good fruit, and an evil tree bears evil fruit. A good tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can an evil tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits.

300. References can be found in both the first and final *HcH* (I.10 and LVI.10) as well as in both the first and last of the *Discourses to Hypatius*. For the references in the discourses see Overbeck, 55 and *PR* I, 184 respectively for Syriac and *PR* I, xxvi and cxix respectively for Mitchell’s translations.

301. *PR* I, cxix; Overbeck, 55. Following Mitchell’s translation here.
would have no need of capitulating. Encounters with adherents of these groups have revealed to Ephraem’s community that these are good people. They fast and pray just like other Christians. Their actions, at least outwardly, are a vigorous attack against the claim that they are heretics, that they are “Other.” Ephraem is working to stave off this attack.

Ephraem is thus somewhat limited as to how he can approach the topic of the discipline or behavior of Bar Dayšānites and Manichaeans. If these communities behave in ways that Christians esteem, then it is ill-advised to attack their behavior directly. To assault the actions of these heretics would be to assail Christian disciplines as well. Ephraem is leery of making rhetorical advances against the practices of these opponents outright. Instead, he devotes his efforts to refuting the teachings that undergird their practices. However, proving the falsity of the rationale behind the practice does not completely remove the admiration and respect that devout asceticism can muster. The rhetorical turn that Ephraem employs to subvert the piety of his opponents is simple; he suggests that their righteous deeds are merely a smokescreen masking their noxious teachings.

Ephraem returns to the theme of these adversaries putting on the appearance of true sheep in *Hymns against Heresies* XXII.13:

Fraud clothes itself with truth,
so that, with borrowed beauty, it might lead astray (דומא). And the faithless one, if he professes, because he is in the clothing of the lamb, he will be believed. Judas to our savior said “greetings Rabbi. (חלה ואסתי)" But by his ranks he was exposed.

302. This phrase is found only in Matthew 26:49. Mark 14:45 also has Judas say “Rabbi,” but not “greetings.”
Just as Mani by his actions since he established a sect with his own disciples.

Here the sons of error disguise themselves with the truth. Ephraem portrays the lamb costume as the inevitable garb of the heretic. Judas is given as the prime example of a wolf in sheep’s clothing, he had gone about among the disciples as if one of them. Only when his true comrades come with him to arrest Jesus, is he found out. Mani is also exposed by means of his social associations. However, his ranks are a separate elite sect of Christians that he has established. This schismatic approach is something Ephraem abhors even when it is done by someone whose teachings are much more congruent with Nicean Orthodoxy than those of Mani.  

Therefore, Mani’s case is particularly deplorable.

The theme of the mere semblance of genuine piety among heretics is again addressed in HcH XXIV.5:

The fraudulent teachers 
are like groomsmen of fraud, 
who have been sent like honest ones, 
but have been perverted like deceitful ones. 
For they have married themselves to the fiancées of the Messiah. 
They have imitated the beauty of the bridegroom 
So that by means of his beauty they might capture the bride. 
They clothed themselves with his, against his. 
Blessed is the One in whose furnace they will be exposed.

303. Sedra (ܩܕܪܐ) can refer to military ranks, lines, etc. and should likely be understood to reference the ranks of people who accompanied Judas to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. The band of soldiers (ܐܩܝܬܐ) mentioned in this gospel pericope in both John 18.3 and the Diatessaron highlights the military sense of the term more particularly.

304. See Sidney Griffith’s discussion of Ephraem’s thoughts on factions within Christianity in his “Marks.”
Drawing on the marital imagery used in the scriptures of Jesus, the bridegroom, and his church, the bride, Ephraem claims that his opponents have pretended to be apostles and have imitated the appeal of the Christian message and of Christ himself. The central point is that they are not genuine teachers, but fraudulent ones. He claims that they are using what belongs to the Messiah to steal away his own flock.

One wonders if the use of the image of the bridegroom here, did not have a second purpose. Manichaean elect were not permitted to marry, and Mani taught that marriage was, generally speaking, an evil that perpetuated the binding of matter and light. In this way the image of the marriage of Christ to the church presents itself as a particularly pointed rhetorical device. The Manichaeans who were trying to woo converts to their form of Christianity fit well as a bridegroom, and the image of marriage has its benefits as being seen as detrimental within the Manichaean community.

Moreover, the image of the bridegroom demonstrates the continued effort on Ephraem’s part to draw his polemical imagery from both scripture and from Manichaean teaching. This continues still further in his effort to dismantle the effects of the positive visage of his opponents’ piety. Drawing from a scriptural passage that clearly addresses false teaching, Ephraem cites Matthew 7:16a/20, “you will know them by their fruits.” This passage figures significantly into Ephraem’s polemics for two primary reasons: it comes from a polemical biblical context,

305. Examples include Matthew 9:15 and parallels, and Ephesians 5:22-33.

and it is a central text in Manichaean exegesis, and thus also in late-antique anti-Manichaean polemic. The Manichaeans used this pericope primarily to support two of their teachings. First, that there are two primal entities, one good and one evil. Second, that it is the presence of these in a person that determines whether they do good or evil. Ephraem’s focus is on the idea, which he claims can be found in Manichaeism, that something other than free will is to

307. Nicholas Baker-Brian has gone so far to say that it is “one of the most important sayings of Jesus for the Manichaean community…,” which was understood to maintain the exclusive origins and forms of the two natures and their patterns of influence,” and adds that it is, “arguably their most important biblical text,” noting that Adimantus saw it as poor form for Christians to maintain both Amos 3:3-6 and Matthew 7:17 together, when the latter clearly reproved the former; “…quaedam disputationes Adimanti” (Rer. I.xxii.1): Reading the Manichaean Biblical Discourse in Augustine’s Contra Adimantium,” Augustinian Studies 34 (2003): 184. See also Victoria Arnold-Döben who noted that the tree, along with its roots, branches and fruits, was central to Manichaean symbolism, “Die Symbolik des Baumes im Manichäismus,” Symbolon 5 (1980):10. Coyle gives an excellent survey of the use of the gospel pericope in his “Good Tree, Bad Tree: The Matthaean/Lukan Paradigm in Manichaeism and Its Opponents,” in Manichaeism, 73-74. This text was also central to Marcionite apologetic exegesis. Note Tertullian’s attack of this passage in his Against Marcion 1.2.1, 4.17, and his many allusions to sweetness and bitterness, the quality of the fruit of these trees.

308. On the Manichaean and anti-Manichaean treatment of this theme, see Coyle, Manichaeism, 68-87. Coyle (65 n.4) explicitly claims that while Ephraem alludes to the ‘root’ image, he never does to the ‘trees.’ While Ephraem clearly does use references to the roots, fruits, and their sweet or bitter quality more often than the tree, it should be understood that in these allusions Ephraem is absolutely thinking of these gospel passages about the two trees. Ephraem may not use the term tree to allude to these passages, but he does quote directly from Luke 6:43, “And how the word of the true one who says ‘there is no good tree which yields evil fruit,’ convicts!” in his IHyp. Not only does Ephraem use, or quote, the term ‘tree,’ as we have just seen, but one must be cognizant of the elaborate analogical context of Ephraem’s symbolic theology which intends an allusion to the tree by each reference to its branches, fruit, roots, etc., and for that matter in references to false prophets and wolves in sheep’s clothing. See Richard B. Hayes, Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 23-33, for an excellent explanation of the way in which scriptural allusions function to draw attention to larger units of scripture and not simply individual verses. In this light, certainly for Ephraem, references to the tree of knowledge and the tree of life are relevant to this discussion, because all of these types are interrelated. Coyle’s assessment is weakened by not including them. In that way his work does not embrace the analogical method of this style of interpretation. Based on his own summary of the use of this imagery in Manichaean literature (73-74), it seems that he may be underestimating this significance in the Manichaean approach as well.

309. See Kephalaion 3, Gardner, Kephalaia, 26. See also Coyle, Manichaeism, 54-55. For the Manichaeans this was commonly the discussion of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Death (as noted in Severus of Antioch, Homily 123.104-5).

310. Whether this is an explicit doctrine within Manichaean literature. However, the anti-Manichaean works of Didymus the Blind, Titus of Bostra, Epiphanius, and Augustine all join Ephraem in asserting that this was the Manichaean position. See Coyle, Manichaeism, 75, 79f.
blame for evil. Through his interpretation of the Manichaean exegesis of this text, Ephraem aims to bolster his argument for the incoherence of Manichaean philosophy.

Ephraem’s first allusion to Matthew 7:15-20 comes in his *First Discourses to Hypatius* where he takes aim at the Manichaean conception of free will. Ephraem remarks at the amazing aspect of the nature of the human will that it can have two volitions. He says:

This will is a *root* and a parent; it is both one and many. This will brings forth sweet and bitter *fruit*. O free *root* with power over its *fruit*! For if it wills it makes its *fruits* bitter, and if it wills it makes its products sweet. For God to whom nothing is difficult has created in us something which is difficult to explain, and that is free will. And though this is one, yet there are two opinions in it, that of willing and that of unwilling; so that when half of it struggles with and conquers the other half, then the whole of it is crowned by the whole of it.  

In this allusion to our pericope, Ephraem highlights the fact that it is the will that determines whether someone’s actions are good or evil. Indeed, he firmly asserts, “an evil will… is the root of evil things.” Throughout his polemic against Manichaeism Ephraem carries forward the metaphor of the tree, its roots, and its fruit in order to assert his teaching concerning free will’s role in determining whether or not one’s actions will be good or evil. One finds this same expansion of the metaphor not only in the gospel pericope, but also in the Manichaean exegesis of it.

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311. *IHyp*, Overbeck 35, l.5f.; see Mitchell, I, xi for translation.

312. This clearly ethical interpretation of the tree and their fruit may well be the first. Coyle, *Manichaeism* (79-80) who does not recognize that Ephraem is referencing this pericope anywhere within his polemic, suggests that Titus of Bostra is our first witness to this type of interpretation. It ought to be explored whether or not Ephraem may have influenced Titus, or Titus Ephraem, in this regard. Epiphanius will follow suit shortly, Coyle, 80-81.

313. *IHyp*, Overbeck 37, l.23f.; *PR*, I, xiii.

314. Note primarily *Kephalaion 2*. 
Ephraem challenges Manichaean cosmogonical, cosmological, and eschatological teachings as part of this effort, but the overarching theme in his utilization of Matthew 7:15-20 is that the Manichaean system breaks down when it tries to address human nature. For Ephraem, Manichaean myth does not adequately explain why evil and good occur, nor why the same person might be inclined to both. Ephraem portrays Manichaean teaching on the good and evil actions of people as a sort of fatalism or cosmological determinism.

According to Ephraem, Manichaeism taught that the world began out of the intermingling of the realms of light and dark when the realm of dark assaulted the light because of an intense passion it had for the light. The ultimate result was that the world was composed of elements of both. The cosmic roots of the universe, in turn, become the roots of good and evil in the individual. The Manichaean defense of both the cosmic and anthropological role of these roots relied on Luke 6:43-45, a close parallel to Matthew 7:16-20.

Ephraem maintains that Manichaeans claim to believe that the will of a person is the root of good or evil behavior, but contends that they also teach that the root of evil and good are the constituent dark and light particles within the individual. Within the latter scenario it is a clear dominance of one, light or dark, over the other that determines the action taken by the person. He claims they teach that “constituents of good and evil are mingled together in us, and [that] ‘these constituents conquer one another and are conquered by one another.’”

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315. 5Hyp, PR I, cxv; 177.
316. See its role in the Kephalaia for example, particularly in Kephalaion 2.
317. 1Hyp, Overbeck 49, l.8f.; Mitchell, I, xxi.
318. 1Hyp, Overbeck 43, ll.15-17; Mitchell, I, xvii. Similarly 1Hyp, Overbeck 47, ll.10ff.; Mitchell, I, xx.
that, if the Manichaens are correct, it is the presence of ontological good and evil in a person that influences their behavior and that it is the greater presence of one or the other that determines which actions a person takes, good or bad. Then Ephraem wonders why they would think that there is any way of changing this. If a person is acting from the force of the good root, because it has a greater presence in his body, then he should always act that way. Likewise, if a person sins because the evil in them is greater than the good, then there is no reason to presume that any amount of effort, discipline or piety might make a difference. There is likewise no room for the will to affect a particular choice.

Ephraem marvels at the fact that Manichaens claim that humans have a free will. How could roots warring within a person and free will be conceivable within the same system? For Ephraem a will is not truly free if it is being constrained to one choice by another force. A major concern for Ephraem is the soteriological implications of such a teaching. If a truly free will were not the source of evil and good actions, it would not be right for God to pass judgment on any human deeds.319

These concerns link directly to Ephraem’s contentions with Manichaean anthropology. It is in this context that he first cites Luke 6:43a. Discussing the relationship between the soul and the body as it pertains to a person’s good and evil actions, Ephraem remarks that, based on the Manichaean teaching that the soul is from the good and the body from evil, whether one does something good or evil both the good and evil portions of the individual are complicit in that

319. IHyp, Overbeck 43, ll.15-17.; PR, I, xx.
Ephraem stresses that this is incongruent with the Manichaean interpretation of Luke 6:43-45. The verses read:

No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.\(^\text{321}\)

Ephraem clearly directs attention to this pericope when he quotes a portion of it, saying:

And how the word of the true one who says “there is no good tree which yields evil fruit,” convicts! For if the soul is a good thing from a good nature, how does it bear the bitter fruit of the “deadly body?” And how does the body, which they say is from an evil nature, bear good discipline like good fruit?\(^\text{322}\)

If it is true that a good tree only produces good fruit, then it must be true that the good soul only produces good deeds. However, as Ephraem is clear to stress, Manichaeans believe that the human soul is indeed good, but that humans still do evil things. Ephraem portrays this as a contradiction. Likewise, Ephraem points out that Manichaeans teach that though human bodies are inherently evil, humans still do good things, and thus, for Ephraem, they clearly embrace another blatant contradiction. Ephraem, on the other hand, suggests that it is through the will alone that a human leans toward good or evil. The root, or tree, from which one’s actions stem is the will, which he stresses is free to choose evil or good.\(^\text{323}\)

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\(^{320}\) Ephraem himself taught that the body was pure, faultless, and that the soul, the residence of the will, ought to be judged based on the moral choices of the individual. See *3Hyp, PR, I*, 86, xvii.

\(^{321}\) NRSV. It translates well what is found in the Peshitta, Old Syriac, and Diatessaron.

\(^{322}\) *1Hyp*, Overbeck 55, ll.20-25; Translation adapted from Mitchell’s, *PR, I*, xxvi.

\(^{323}\) *4Hyp, PR, I*, 101-3, lxxix-lxxx.
In his *Fifth Discourse to Hypatius* Ephraem returns to Matthew 7. Here, however, his interpretation of this passage links the judgment of the teacher to that of the teachings. Making this shift quite clear is the following passage:

O, therefore, let not the heretics teach, for teaching is futile. For if the teacher does not err, how does the teaching err, seeing that they are both clothed with bodies? And if the teacher and teaching are from one root and both are covered with the flesh, how is one bitter and another pleasant, one go astray, and another teach, one wander and another guide?  

Here Ephraem suggests that the contradiction between Manichaean cosmology and anthropology applies to his opponents themselves. How are they able to overcome the nature of the root of their body if the soul in others is not able to do so? Moreover, how is it that the teacher may be able to overcome the evil body and yet the hearer is not? If there is no difference, then why should their teaching be trusted as anything other than evil?

Ephraem continues along the same vein of thinking and asks more broadly why it is that not all humans behave the same if they all have an evil body and a righteous soul. And since Manichaean cosmological and anthropological teaching assert that the soul within a person is from the righteous root, of light, it only seems fitting that the soul would always will good. If it indeed does always will good things, Ephraem asks, how is it defeated in some bodies and victorious in others? More confounding to Ephraem is the fact that in those where the soul is victorious over the body, it is not continuously so. The soul is said by Manichaeans to have come from the good tree, or root; that is the light. In the human body it is the root of action. However,

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324. *5Hyp, PR*, I, 160; translation adapted from Mitchell’s, cviii.

325. For Ephraem’s discussion of the tension in Manichaean teaching between the ability of the teacher to overcome the evil body and the failure of the hearer to accomplish the same feat see *5Hyp*, Mitchell, I, 161, cix.
considering the Manichaean view of the soul and body as fixed roots, Ephraem posits that the soul fails to be consistent to its own root, the good, since “it is found that even this root, the taste of its nature does not always dwell in it, because its fruit are bitter and sweet.”\textsuperscript{326}

Ephraem questions whether a genuinely free will could exist within the Manichaean system. Since all things come from either a good or evil nature, the free will would have to be able to act against its own nature in making one choice or another. If the answer is “yes,” Ephraem believes the Manichaean system falls apart, in that nothing is bound to its nature and their dualistic teaching has no real meaning. Of course, if the answer is “no,” Ephraem suggests that the will is not truly free. In all, Ephraem is confident that he has demonstrated that fixed natures of good and evil and free will cannot mutually determine the course of action taken by an individual.

Ephraem makes another simple observation about human nature. Humans do indeed commit sins. So he asks, “How is their will capable of being divided against their root?”\textsuperscript{327} If it is as the Manichaeans taught, Ephraem wonders, that the free will comes from the soul, which is the good, do not any evil actions taken by a person prove that either Manichaean dualistic cosmology or its dualistic anthropology are false? Ephraem continues, pointing out “that in the divided fruit which come from it, its self-contradictory character is indicated!”\textsuperscript{328} He questions how the soul could be of one nature and yet still allow sin in the body, embarrassing Manichaean cosmogony and cosmology. The fruit are still the actions of the individual. The problem is that if

\textsuperscript{326} 5Hyp, PR, I, cxii. Adapted from Mitchell’s translation, 168.

\textsuperscript{327} 5Hyp, PR, I, 169. Translation adapted from Mitchell, I, cxii.

\textsuperscript{328} 5Hyp, PR, I, 169-70. Translation from Mitchell, I, cxii.
the will of an individual comes from one root, the good, it would seem that it ought to behave in accordance with that root. However, an observation of human behavior reveals that no one is that consistent: the soul and its will are supposed to be good, but people do evil.

The fact that humans do both good and evil proves, for Ephraem, that the Manichaean interpretation of “there is no good tree which bears evil fruit,” is untenable. Moreover, it secures his argument that their entire dualistic philosophy is flawed.

Along the same line of thinking, Ephraem continues:

But if they say that, while the fountain is clear (of dregs), its will is troubled on account of its free nature, then with neither evil nor Satan, out of it or in it, free will is able by its own power to produce many evils. And they acknowledge the truth unwillingly that free will has power to change its wishes, since its wishes are not bound up in a good or evil essence. For if it were bound up in a good nature or an evil root, its wishes would be powerless, they would simply be capillaries through which bitterness and sweetness travel along from the roots in which it is bound.\textsuperscript{329}

Ephraem simply argues that free will cannot exist if it is not truly free, if its nature is bound or must act a certain way. Ephraem demands that a will cannot have a fixed nature and be free. To reveal incongruence between Manichaean anthropology and the Manichaean exegesis of Luke 6:43, Ephraem attempts to demonstrate that free will of the Manichaean kind cannot exist within their literal dualist anthropology.\textsuperscript{330}

\textsuperscript{329} \textit{5Hyp, PR}, I, 182. Adapted from Mitchell’s translation, cxviii.

\textsuperscript{330} Ephraem explicitly states this point in his \textit{Against Mani, PR} II, 210; xcix. See also John Reeves (“Citations,” 231-32 and 273, n.34) who discusses this text. Mani and his followers seem to have held to the literal truth of their myths. Augustine also claimed that Manichaens declared the literal truth of Mani’s teachings, “And they say that no teacher will come from God after him precisely for the reason that Mani said nothing in figures and allegories.” \textit{Answer to the Letter of Mani Called The Foundation} 23.25; Roland J. Teske, et al. ed. and trans., \textit{The Manichean Debate} (New York: New City Press, 2006), 250-51.
In doing so Ephraem adamantly defends his view of free will and his understanding of it as the lynchpin for properly exegeting Luke 6:43-45 or Matthew 7:15-20. Ephraem uses the Manichaean exegesis of Luke 6:43 as it relates to their cosmological and anthropological teachings, including their attempt to address the problem of evil, as a tool to dismantle their entire system, from creation to redemption but especially their teaching about free will.

It is at the conclusion of his *Fifth Discourse to Hypatius* that Ephraem returns to our passage a second time. On this occasion he quotes Matthew 7.16/20: “you will know them by their fruits,” applying this to his opponents directly. We return here to the quote with which we began this section:

> who fast according to error… which says that ‘you will know them by their fruits’… that from their words we will recognize them. For their works are like our works as their fast is like our fast, but their faith is not like our faith. And, therefore, rather than being known by the fruit of their works they are distinguished by the fruit of their words. For their work is able to lead astray and to appear as clear (ܚܐܝܐ), for its bitterness is hidden (ܡܚܐ); but their words cannot lead astray, for their blasphemies are evident (ܚܠܐ). And just as one who worships idols does not worship wood or stone, but devils, so one who prays with the Manichaeans prays with Satan, and one who prays with the Marcionites, prays with Legion, and one who prays with the Dayṣānites, with Beelzebub and one who prays with the Jews, with Barabbas, the robber.  

Ephraem suggests that the “fruits” of his opponents are their teachings (words) rather than their deeds, since their deeds are a deceptively innocent façade that hide their bitterness, while their teachings are obviously erroneous. In this way, his opponents are made to sound like the “false

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331. This phrase is the same in the Peshitta, Old Syriac and Diatessaron.

332. *5Hyp, PR*, I, 184-85. Translation is adapted from Mitchell, cxix. Note that the ellipses in this quotation reflect both lacunae in the original text and portions that would confuse the sense of the reading.
prophets” of Matthew 7:15, “who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”

Interestingly, the terms that Ephraem uses for the “hidden” and “evident” natures of the Manichaeans’ actions and words are the same that he uses for our knowledge of God. Ephraem claims, that just as people cannot see the true nature of God, it is not possible to see the nature of the Manichaean from their actions. However, just as people can see the work of God, in nature and revelation, they can see the true nature of Manichaeans reflected in their words.

Further confirming Ephraem’s vision of biblical agrarian themes as part of his broader symbolic polemic see *HcH* XXIV.17:

The name of wolves they have spread over the sheep,
And doves have donned the name of hawks.
The wheat have relinquished their good name
And are called by the name of the briars.

Ephraem is referring again to the names of these communities not being that of Christ. Note, however, what he inserts for the names here. They are wolves, hawks, and briars. They are the predators of the true church, whose adherents Ephraem often refers to as sheep, doves, and wheat. The wolves (〚ܒܐ〛) and the briars (〚ܒܐ〛) are clear allusions to Matthew 7:15 and 7:16 (Luke 6:44, *Thomas* 45). As mentioned in chapter three, Ephraem has used these biblical agrarian symbols as a framework within which he categorizes and analyzes his opponents.

There is also a likely allusion here to Matthew 12:33-37 where the Pharisees claim that Jesus’ power comes from Beelzebub and part of Jesus’ response to the accusation includes a

333. For more on this theme in Ephraem see Sidney Griffith, “Marks,” 126-32.
reference to the good and bad tree and their fruit in kind: “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.”(12:33) In this iteration of the good and bad tree, Jesus makes it clear that the fruit in question are the words of his opponents that clearly reveal their true roots. This connection is reinforced by the fact that Luke 6:43-45, the parallel to Matthew 7:16-20, concludes with a parallel to Matthew 12:34b: “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

The parallels between Ephraem’s and Jesus’ implementation of this metaphor are strengthened when one considers the numerous times in the gospels that Jesus refers specifically to the hypocrisy of the words or deeds of the Pharisees. That Ephraem had the Jews of Jesus’ time in mind is reinforced by his reference to the “one who prays with the Jews,” praying “with Barabbas, the robber.” Ephraem links the hypocrisy of his opponents directly to that of some of the worst spiritual offenders of the gospels: Satan, Legion, Beelzebub, and the Jews who chose Barabbas, a thief, over Jesus, the Messiah.

In both cases where Ephraem employs an exegetical argument referencing part of Matthew 7:15-20, he emphasizes the connection of the passage to the human condition. In the second he alludes to the Matthean association of false prophets to this pericope (Matthew 7:15)

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334. This quote from the RSV, translates well the Curetonian, Sinaic and Peshitta forms of this Matthaen passage. Likewise, the Lukan parallels in Syriac also agree. Note also that there is a parallel in Gospel of Thomas 45. The Diatessaron includes each of these passages intertwined with one another.

335. Excellent examples abound. Consider Matthew 6:1-18 where the deeds of the Pharisees appear fine, but are only done for personal gain; Matthew 15:1-20, where in arguing that it is the heart that is the test of someone’s true nature not whether or not they eat with washed hands, Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules” (15:8-9 NIV); and Matthew 23, where the entire chapter is devoted to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who “do not practice what they preach” (23:3 NIV).

336. Satan and Beelzebub are often held to be synonymous in New Testament studies. Legion is clearly a reference to the demons driven out of the possessed man, or men, in Luke 8:26-39 and parallels (Matthew 8:28-34 and Mark 5:1-20). Note that it is only in Mark and Luke that Jesus has the exchange where the demons give their name as “Legion.”
and the Pharisaic hypocrisy that led to Jesus’ crucifixion. This addresses a pressing problem within Ephraem’s polemic—the piety of a heterodox Christian.

When Ephraem approaches the practices of his opponents he cannot do so directly, and he certainly cannot claim that the actions themselves are improper. This is because, as he admits, their actions are just as commendable, at least in form, as his are. If Ephraem were to attack the piety of his adversaries, he would be attacking the piety he calls for in his own community. Instead, Ephraem acknowledges the apparent fitness of the pious deeds of heretics, but argues that they are duplicitous, utilizing allusions to the key Manichaean proof-text of Luke 6:43-45 and its Matthean parallels (7:15-20 and 12:33-37). Ephraem continues the biblical agrarian polemic to show that Bar Dayšān, Mani and their followers are thorns, brambles, hawks, and wolves in sheep’s clothing. In this way, Ephraem casts them as enemies that Jesus himself warned against.

**Ritual Futility**

As deceptive as Ephraem believes Manichaean piety can be, the problems with their practices are only compounded by the fact that their rites are soteriologically ineffective. Ephraem finds Manichaean mythology unrealistic and incoherent, rendering the rites functioning within it lacking in efficacy and meaning. He suggests that even if one accepts the Manichaean myth outright, the rites still do not make sense. Ephraem’s claim is that Manichaean practices and rituals do not solve the problems posited within the cosmogonical and cosmological myths of Manichaeism.
Ephraem’s remarks about the rites of the Manichaeans are scattered through his prose and metrical refutations against them. There are four primary areas of focus within his attack. These are the commandments given to the elect and to the hearers, the Manichaean ritual meal, the alms, and the forgiveness of sins. Ephraem appears to have directly encountered either these Manichaean practices or, at least, accurate literary references to them, as his comments are rather insightful and compare well to what we know about Manichaean practice at the time.

Laws and Commandments

One of the aspects of Manichaean teaching and life of which Ephraem is clearly aware are the commandments given to each level of the Manichaean community. These commandments were connected to daily purity and the Manichaean ritual meal, and both the elect and the hearer had their own set of commandments to follow. By keeping the commandments and providing food to the elect, the hearers participate in the process of salvation, and they may, through excellence in these matters join the elect in escaping transmigration, the process whereby, after one’s death, the soul rejoins the aggregate light, presently encumbered by darkness.\(^\text{337}\) In turn, the elect maintain their eligibility to act as ritual eaters by following their own guidelines. Al-Nadim, a tenth century Muslim scholar, is the only source that has been identified as having a complete list of the ten commandments proscribed for the Manichaean elect: “renouncing the worship of idols; renouncing the telling of lies; renouncing the
determination to commit a lie; renouncing the taking of a life; renouncing the theft of goods; renouncing the violation of another’s rights; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s vineyard or garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream or lake; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; renouncing the taking of any milk from another’s cow; renouncing the taking of any wool from another’s sheep; renouncing the taking of any oil from another’s olive tree; renouncing the taking of any wood from another’s forest; renouncing the taking of any fruit from another’s tree; renouncing the taking of any flower from another’s garden; renouncing the taking of any fish from another’s stream; renouncing the taking of any honey from another’s beehive; 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renouncing avarice; renouncing killing; renouncing adultery; renouncing stealing; the teaching of defects; magic; the holding of two opinions about the faith; neglect and lassitude in action.”

Ephraem’s commenting on these commandments demonstrates the presence of some form of this Manichaean teaching in the region in the fourth century.

Ephraem never attacks the Manichaean requirement to follow set laws and commandments. Instead, he attempts to demonstrate their contribution to the futility of Manichaean religious life. In his *Fifth Discourse to Hypatius* he argues that they are part of a system that tries to save the world by furtively freeing light (good) from darkness (evil), rather than more logically trying to conquer darkness with light. He says:

> But consider how foolish is the wisdom of the Teaching, nor do they know how to hide their falsehood. But how is Falsehood able to hide from the face of Truth? For instead of that which they assert, (namely), “lo, the Good is refined, and goes up,” it would be right that the Evil should consume away and be removed little by little and cast into another place. For in this way there would have been advantage to both sides. For that Evil which was removed hence (?) would not be able to conquer on account of its defeat, and that Evil which was left behind could have been easily conquered on account of its smallness. For in proportion as the Particles of the Evil were plucked up from day to day and removed, so the Particles of the Good would have been strengthened from hour to hour, and would have conquered.

…. As for those, therefore, who say that Evil and Good are mixed together, and that these Constituents conquer, and are conquered, it is not right for them to weaken the Evil by Laws and Commandments. For in this way the Evil is not weakened. But they should make for themselves measures and weights, and

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338. BeDuhn, *Manichaean*, 54. As this is the only list of these ten, BeDuhn questions whether this teaching was maintained throughout the vast expanse of the Manichaean communities.

339. Ephraem is referring specifically to Manichaean statutes when he uses the phrase “laws and commandments.” This is further confirmed by a similar remark in his *IHyp (PR I, xxii; Overbeck, 50)*: “…how can ‘Commandments and Laws’ separate that mighty and powerful Evil which is mixed in Souls?”

340. See *IHyp (PR I, xxii-xxiii; Overbeck, 49-51)* and *HcH XXVIII.5* where the weights and measures language is directly applied by Ephraem to his theory that Manichaeism ought to be intent on eradicating the “poison,” darkness, in the person rather than freeing the light.
wherever they see that the evil Constituent is great in a man, let them rather pour
into him two measures of Good in order that the Constituent may outweigh the
other. For thus experience in mixings teaches.⁴¹

Ephraem raises what he sees as a very practical issue: rituals will do nothing to help good defeat
evil if their main objective is to remove the light from the world and send it to another realm,
rather than to introduce more light into the world.

Further pushing the significance of free will, Ephraem also argues that Manichaean
gnosis is not the solution. Even if the knowledge of the laws and commandments did give
guidelines to actions that would allow for the physical overthrow of evil, it is hopeless without
free will, because sin remains despite the knowledge of the laws and commandments.⁴² Later in
his Fifth Discourse to Hypatius he says:

And those things which intoxicate us also take away our memory, so that the
drunken ones who go astray are not blamed; for they do not know that they are
assuredly going astray. But the Evil One who makes the Soul drunk with the
pleasurable (things), cannot take from it the Recollection of the Commandments
and Laws. For consider those who do the Commandment when they know the
Commandment, and those who rebel against the Law (and) who are acquainted
with the Law; not from lack of knowledge do Souls sin, but on account of the
arrogance, either of their Nature, as the false Teachers say, or of their Freewill as
the true ones teach. For, though they know what righteousness is, they do evil;
and though they know uprightness, they commit follies; and though they know the
truth, they become defiled; and though they are aware of purity, they are made
impure; and though an evil name is hateful to them, they take pleasure in the work
of the Evil One; and though they confess the Good One, they are far from Good
works. How, therefore, did the Evil One make them drunk as they say, seeing that
they exist in all this perception? And if they did not know then they would not be
blameworthy; but it is a very bad thing that, though they know they do not do, and
though they are aware they do not practice.⁴³

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⁴¹ PR I, 163-64; cix-x. Following Mitchell’s translation.

⁴² Ephraem makes a similar point regarding the “Law of God” in 1Hyp (PR I, 35-37/xi-xii; and 43-45/xvii-xix).

⁴³ PR I, 177-78; cxv-vi. Following Mitchell’s translation.
Ephraem emphasizes that the Manichaean belief in a fixed nature negates the value of the laws and commandments, since people fail to abide by them. Once again he is petitioning for the significance of free will because it has the potential of choosing good over evil.

Capping his treatise on the superiority of the theory of free will, over against the Manichaean teaching of a fixed nature, Ephraem concludes his *Fifth Discourse to Hypatius* with the words I have quoted already within this chapter:

‘you will know them by their fruits’… that is, by their words we will recognize them, for their works are like our works as their fast is like our fast, but their faith is not like our faith. And, therefore, rather than being known by the fruit of their works they are distinguished by the fruit of their words. For their work is able to lead astray and to appear as clear, for its bitterness is hidden; but their words cannot lead astray, for their blasphemies are evident.

In light of the discussion of the laws and commandments, clearly linked to prayer and fasting, Ephraem embraces the Manichaean laws and commandments as being similar to his own. The difference between Ephraem’s and Mani’s communities is not the commandments they were trying to obey, but the underpinning teachings regarding free will that determine the efficacy of their practices. In Ephraem’s view, the Manichaean teaching is so deceptive as to leave its acolytes working against themselves, serving evil rather than good. He says:

Just as one who worships idols does not worship wood or stone, but devils, so one who prays with the Manichaens prays with Satan, and one who prays with the Marcionites, prays with Legion, and one who prays with the Daysānites— with Beelzebub, and one who prays with the Jews, with Barabbas, the robber.

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344. Ephraem also contrasts the Manichaean belief in fixed natures and his own view of free will in *First Hyp*, and that treatise is also concluded with a reference to the laws and commandments (*PR* I, xxvii-viii, Overbeck, 58). Likewise, in *HcH* XI.4, he praises God on account of his commandments, “by which freedom is crowned” (ܕܒܗܘܢ ܚܐܪܘܬܐ ܬܬܟܡܢ).

345. *PR* I, 184; cxix. Translation is adapted from Mitchell.

346. *PR* I, 184-5; cxix. Translation is adapted from Mitchell.
For Ephraem, wrong belief can indeed negate right action. He draws an analogy between paganism and heterodoxy: the piety of the Manichaean and the Dayšānite are as empty as that of a pagan, who worships a man-made idol, and that of the Jew, who rejected the Messiah in favor of a thief.

The Manichaean Meal

Ephraem’s most elaborate criticism of specific Manichaean practices comes in his remarks regarding their daily, ritual meal. He shows familiarity with the practice and demonstrates a considerable knowledge of the central role of the practice in the soteriological economy of the Manichaean myth. In Ephraem’s view the meal is an illogical solution for the problem presented in the Manichaean cosmogonical and cosmological myths.

As Ephraem understands it, the goal of the Manichaean meal is for the bodies of the righteous ones (ܙܕܝܪܐ) to sort out the light from the dark through their digestion, syphoning out the light from the dark. Ephraem posits that this is accomplished when the Manichaean belches the extracted light particles back out so that they might ascend to the moon, the sun, and ultimately the realm of light.\(^\text{347}\) The word Ephraem uses for the action that allows the light to be released (ܓܪܝܐ) is translated by Mitchell as “disgorgings:” “… disgustings! For by these

\(^{347}\) The path that the soul travels on its way to the realm of light is discussed in Kephalaion 71. An inverted path downward is described for the descent of Jesus in Kephalaion 8. For a thorough discussion of the descent of the soul in antiquity and the underpinning of the early Christian conceptions about the matter, see also David Reis, "The Journey of the Soul: Its Expressions in Early Christianity." The Claremont Graduate University, 1999, in PROQUESTMS ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text, http://search.proquest.com/docview/304498910?accountid=9940.
(disgorgings) the light is refined if it is refined.”\textsuperscript{348} This translation is problematic as it suggests vomiting specifically. There is a natural flexibility in the term \textit{ܓܪܐ}.\textsuperscript{349} However, it is clear that Ephraem intends belching from the remark that it is by “the force and violence of the wind” that the refining is sent up.\textsuperscript{350}

Mitchell’s translation presents further confusion when he employs “disgorge” as a translation for a verb (ܬܘܒ) that has the more exclusive sense of vomiting. The distinction is essential. Ephraem claims that if one accepts the Manichaean myth belching is the only way for the light particles to actually be released from the body, as light has real physical properties. Ephraem uses the term for vomiting in order to mock the Manichaeans, because vomiting would show that the matter and the light, the good and the evil, were still intermingled, and would obviously complicate their rite. Ephraem never expected his reader to believe that regurgitation was the actual refining method that the Manichaeans taught, even less what they actually practiced.

Ephraem is honest that Manichaeans did not claim that belching was the effective portion of their ritual. He suggests that Manichaeans claim that prayer is the effective part of the refining process, “For by [belches] the light is refined, if it is refined. For there is no evidence that it is refined by prayer as they say.”\textsuperscript{351} It seems most likely that he is referring to prayers that

\textsuperscript{348} 2Hyp, PR I, xlii; 28.

\textsuperscript{349} See R. Payne, \textit{ThSyr}, vol. 1, 758. Ephraem also utilized \textit{ܕܘܒ} in instances where he wanted to indicate vomiting specifically. See also \textit{HcH} I.11 where the verb \textit{ܓܪܐ} is employed in regards to Mani’s teaching. This stanza is discussed further in chapter five.

\textsuperscript{350} 2Hyp, PR I, xlii; 28. Mitchell’s translation.

\textsuperscript{351} 2Hyp, PR I, 28; Mitchell’s translation, xlii. See BeDuhn, \textit{Manichaean}, 166-87, for an overview of our understanding of the rationale of the Manichaean meal. Interestingly, Augustine also suggests belching as the means
bookended their ritual meal. While he is fair in noting that Manichaeans do not claim belching to be the effective part of the ritual meal, Ephraem’s arguments based on the taste of the food strongly implies that he believed that belching ought to be if it was not indeed part of the ceremony. Ephraem notes that Manichaeans refer to the pleasant taste in food being from the Light saying, “if, as they say, ‘that sweet taste that is in foods belongs to the Light mixed in them,’ then it is right that just as the mouth senses the sweetness of the Light when it enters, it also ought to sense it again when it is going out.” Building on this point, Ephraem suggests that in the refining there must be a more pure and pleasant taste returning to the elect as the Light is sent up. Since, according to Manichaean myth, all things are made from Light and Dark, food is also made of both. As the Light gives food its pleasant taste, the elect must taste it again when it comes out. It follows that, because there is no taste to prayer, the pleasant taste is either contained in the portion of the food that is from the Dark, or prayer is not actually the event by which the Light is sent up. Such a taste is the thing of belching, or vomiting, and not of prayers. If the Manichaean were to argue that the Light is tasteless, then the pleasant taste that the elect experienced during the meal must have come from the Darkness in the food and not the Light.

Ephraem then responds to the potential Manichaean claim that the Light indeed has been refined to the point that the taste is no longer present. His response draws again on the literal

by which the light is released even though he too seems to be well aware that the Manichaean teaching was actually that this occurred through prayer. See his Contra Faustum 2.5 and 20.13 for his suggestion that it is belching that is occurring. See his Confessions 3.10.18 for his reference to prayer in this role.

352. Jason BeDuhn’s survey of the evidence on the meal from this region (including the evidence of Ephraem’s remarks) suggests that, much like the ancient Zoroastrian practice still in existence today, the Manichaean ritual meal had its own standard benedictory prayers, Manichaean, 144-45.

353. PR I, 31.

354. PR I, xlv; 31-32.
interpretation of the Manichaean myth that even the Darkness, in its assault on the Light is said to have felt, touched, ate, sucked, tasted, and swallowed the light.\textsuperscript{355} If the Light had flavor, texture and all of these physical qualities before it was ever bound up in the Darkness and thus matter, it cannot be taught that it does not have all of these properties when it is returned to that state. Moreover, if it is essentially intangible, how did the material Darkness ever grasp it to imprison it?\textsuperscript{356}

Having made his point that Light is a physical entity in Manichaean teaching, Ephraem stresses that some physical expulsion needs to take place, and so words, in the form of prayer or otherwise, are not sufficient. Ephraem elaborates on this physical need by referring to regurgitation. He focuses on the concept of belching. He claims that because of the need to belch the elect sometimes must induce this through the eating of certain foods. Moreover, the efforts taken to ensure belching at times cause them to vomit.\textsuperscript{357} Ephraem suggests that in the event of vomiting, measures must be taken in order to save the ritual and to preserve the hope that the light may ascend, that is, re-swallowing their vomit. He stresses the necessity of this response by the illustration that if a dog were to consume it instead, the light that was being processed in the elect one’s stomach would now be trapped in and transmigratorially passed on through the descendants of this dog:\textsuperscript{358}

\textsuperscript{355} PR I, xlv; 32.

\textsuperscript{356} PR I, xlv; 33-34.

\textsuperscript{357} Ephraem notes the radish in particular, which Charles Mitchell (PR I, xliii, n. 1) points out was known in Arabic traditions to produce disagreeable belches. He directs the reader to Lisan al-ʿArab, xiv.29.19.

\textsuperscript{358} PR I, xlii; 32. This is a clever piece of mockery in that it alludes to both the biblical use of the phrase “a dog returns to its vomit,” employed in Proverbs 26:11 and 2 Peter 2:22, and the Manichaean claim that some of the light exists in all of creation, including animals such as the dog. Ephraem notes the Manichaean teaching that
And whenever a Manichaean actually vomits (ܣܰܝܒܝܨ) because they have not yet digested their food, they know that their refining has not yet ascended and are compelled to say that their light is still mixed in their vomit and it would be right for them to turn and swallow it again so that the light buried within it would not live in corruption. Moreover, if a dog comes and swallows it, consider that light which has gone out in vomit from inside of a Manichaean called a righteous one (ܙܕܝܪܐ), it has entered and become imprisoned in the filthy stomach of a dog, [hear that, instead,] if that Manichaean had turned and swallowed his vomit immediately, there would have been an ascent to the height for the imprisoned Light that it might flee and ascend to the house of its father. And that Manichaean ought to be punished instead of it (the light), because he knew, but still that Light entered and was imprisoned in the belly of the dog, and from there is passed in transmigration through the dog’s progeny and that light is transmitted in the race of mad and biting ones; and the necessity of their bites madden and their bites bite repeatedly. It is also right, that it (the light) should bite and tear to pieces that Manichaean who vomited it up and did not turn and devour it; since he was the cause of this madness. And if they say that it is even refined by a dog, then dogs are better at refining than they are, and it is right that they should be fed more than [a righteous one].

In these lines, Ephraem mocks the Manichaean claim that the Light was in all things.

Implicit here is the question as to how the world will be refined if the light can be trapped in animals whose digestion is useless and the meat of which the elect refrain from eating. Meanwhile he is hinting at the fact that Manichaeans teach that the light is trapped further as it is passed on through procreation. Ephraem is questioning why only the elect can execute the refining process when they eat. In a similar fashion, elsewhere, Ephraem questions the Manichaean hope of salvation asking about what great numbers they would need for the meal to be effective ultimately. He doubts that they will ever have enough

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359. PR I, 29-31; xliii. Following Mitchell’s translation here.
converts. Ephraem continues ridiculing his opponents by arguing that either the elect, or righteous one (ܙܕܝܪܐ), who spat up food and did not save it from the dog has done further damage. The only alternative is to posit that the dog is as good a refiner as the elect. Ephraem suggests that if this is the case dogs ought to be used all the more for this purpose.

After attacking the means of refining, Ephraem also insults the logic behind the Manichaean conception of the light’s ascent back to its home after it has been refined. The Manichaeans taught that the moon and the sun were vessels within which the light traveled on its journey back to the realm of light. Ephraem has trouble seeing how this is observable in nature. He asks why the light must wait for the moon to be emptied for fifteen days. Could the light not travel to the moon while it was being emptied? He also does not understand why the moon would not go from full to empty (new) every day. Could it not simply deposit all of the light at once and then continue receiving new light? He is curious why the shape of the moon changes at all, considering that vessels typically have a consistent shape of their own in which they hold another substance.

Each of these inquiries is, yet again, an effort on Ephraem’s part to hold the Manichaean myth to its own claim and standard of literalism. The Manichaean meal is no different than the

360. Against Mani, PR II, xcvii; 204-5.
361. See Kephalaion 71 and note 347 above.
362. PR I, xliv; 32-33.
363. 2Hyp, PR I, xxxvif.; 15f.
364. Ibid., xli; 26.
other Manichaean practices. Ephraem never claims that the ritual is impious or unethical. However, it does not achieve what it is purported to; Ephraem argues that this rite is observed in vain.

Alms: The Bribery of Bellies

The practice of almsgiving in Manichaeism is tied directly to the Manichaean meal. The foodstuffs that the elect eat during the meal must be given to them because to harvest or prepare the food themselves would damage the elect ones’ own purity. It thus falls to the hearers to supply the food for the meal. This is their primary act of service within the community. Like the elect, they have commandments. Ephraem mocks these ideas. He argues the absurdity of the idea that harvesting and preparing food could not be done by the elect or they would be sinning by harming the light in those objects. He contends that if this is so, the elect harm the light in the food even more so when they eat it and trap it in their stomachs. Turning his focus on the role of the hearers, Ephraem suggests that they are putting false hope in the benefits of almsgiving. Apart from following their distinct set of commandments, Ephraem suggests that the hearers are motivated by the potential of having their sins forgiven, a result that they believed was dependent on almsgiving. So as Ephraem understood it, just as almsgiving is necessary for the elect to be able to conduct the ritual meal, it is also necessary for the hearer to have their sins absolved.

365. While Jason BeDuhn’s (Manichaean, 130-32) description of the Alms-service does not include any intra-Manichaean citations to support such a teaching, he does note that Augustine, Pap. Rylands 469, and Hegemonius’ Acts of Archelaus both attest to this.

366. See pages 122-26 above.

367. On the contradiction over not harvesting food to prevent from harming the light, but still chewing it see his 2Hyp, PR 1, xxxi; 4-5. See also BeDuhn, Manichaean, 189, where he notes the same idea in Hegemonius (Acts of Archelaus 10) and Augustine (Contra Faustum 6.8).
Ephraem states these links explicitly in the second of his *Hymns against Heresies* when he says regarding the elect:

> And now Mani’s dogs set upon every person.  
> They fawn over everyone they find for the sake of today’s bread.  
> They are feeble dogs, who are not capable of breaking bread.  
> They are actually forgiving sins and debts.  
> In this way they are mad, and they ought to be beaten,  
> since one alone is able to forgive sins to sinners.\(^{368}\)

This claim that they assail (ܩܒܟ) and are fawning (ܚܬܟܯ) over everyone is provocative. It implies that anyone is an eligible donor to the Manichaean cause, that the role of the hearer can be carried out by persons not initiated in any way into the community. It also suggests that there is not a sufficient population of initiated hearers to make these donations, be it that they have resorted to begging. On the surface this text seems to indicate that Ephraem was encountering Manichaeans who were not relying solely on intra-communal contributions for the substance of their daily, ritual meal and that they were in turn offering forgiveness to any passer-by.

It seems more likely, however, that Ephraem is mocking the role of the elect as dependent on the community for support and possibly referring to Manichaean efforts to secure converts, and thereby more donations. Ephraem is thus suggesting that the purpose of proselytism, at least from the elect’s point of view, was so that daily food donations would increase. Of course, from the Manichaean perspective, more donations mean more refining and increased freeing of light from darkness. The Manichaean claim implied by Ephraem’s remarks is that there is salvific value to be earned by the hearer through participating in almsgiving. Ephraem refers to a “forgiveness of sins.”

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\(^{368}\) *HcH* II.2.
Whether the Manichaean elect of Ephraem’s day were collecting alms from anyone who would give them or they were seeking to make converts who would continue to meet the needs of the elect is of no consequence to Ephraem’s argument. He is more concerned with the fact that the hearer or donor is taking part in the action because they believe they will have their sins forgiven. Within this context, he equates the elect ones’ seeking of alms donations as a wanton attempt to abuse their presumed right to forgive sins for their own gain. Referring to the alms given to the elect as “the bribery of bellies,” Ephraem reduces the ritual to a spiritual business transaction; food is traded for forgiveness of sins.

Forgiveness of Sins

In Ephraem’s view only the apostles were given the power to forgive sins. They were given this power by Jesus, the Christ, and this was to be done through baptism. To Ephraem, the Manichaean claim to forgive sins is faulty, both because its methods are illogical and corrupt, and because it lacks the power and authority to do so:

According to their will they have stretched the word of the true one who authorized his disciples only once to absolve through water humankind’s sins, and who appointed them to loose and also to bind, so that the one who was bound might pray before him who forgives all who is truly the absolver of all, absolving us through our contrition.

For it is right that he be mistreated, that one who was at rest and sinned

372. Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; Colossians 2:13.
373. Likely refers to the ‘rest’ of the elect who are inactive in order to avoid harming the light.
And if that absolver of all absolves us through our contrition,
It is a joke that for morsels of bread they would absolve us.
The prophet, Buzi’s son, teaches you.
Morsels, the fee of diviners, had they given to harlots. 374
And repentance is abolished by the bribery of bellies!

You should not trust, child, that they will not still strike you.
For a broken reed 375 is their forgiveness. This
sin increases upon the wanton person whom it enchants.
That scheme is a way of the filthy one!
And truly there was never a person who went into hell
about whom I am content that their way was without effort. 376

Ephraem emphasizes the role of Jesus in instituting baptism as part of the process of the true
Christian believer’s being forgiven of sins and stresses that it is God’s will, not the believer’s,
that absolves. The believer’s role is simply to be repentant. Thus the idea that sins might be
forgiven almost contractually in response to an offering, as if the hearer and the elect are making
a transaction, is repulsive to Ephraem. In recounting the people’s seeking for pagan wisdom,
Ezekiel refers to women who were giving false prophecies for food. 377 Ephraem draws an
analogy between the Manichaean requirement for the donation of food from the hearer and the
failures on the part of the people of Israel and Judah to return to God even after being warned by
Ezekiel, son of Buzi. 378 Ephraem punctuates his point that good deeds like giving food to the

374. Ezekiel 13:19. The word I have translated morsels, ܩܨܐ, is that found in the Peshitta of Ezekiel. The
word I have translated harlots, ܝܐܣܰܐ, refers to unclean things, but is also used to refer to harlots, which I have
chosen because the false prophets in Ezekiel were women.

375. The phrase ‘broken reed’ (ܩܒܪܝܰܐ ܐܪܥܝܐ) appears in 2 Kings 18:21 and Isaiah 36:6, where it refers to
Egypt, which is a “broken reed” that pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it, suggesting an idolatrous trust in a
power other than God’s.

376. HeH II.3-5.


elect are not bound to improve one’s spiritual standing by stating in short that many people have done good deeds on their way to hell. In this way he is attacking not only the idea of donations being required for the forgiveness of sins, but also the efficacy of the Manichaean laws and commandments that needed to be followed in order to participate fully within the community.

Conclusion

Heretics can behave well, even admirably, and this is a difficulty for the heresiologist. That is not to say that the polemicist is without ready tools with which to respond. In his typological exegetical worldview, those who do good deeds with evil intentions are already defined for him by Matthew 7:15-20. They are “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” This allusion is even more powerful for Ephraem because his opponents were already themselves touting this portion of scripture as part of their scriptural defense of their dualism. This imagery ties into the biblical agrarian exegetical polemic that Ephraem employs against those whom he sees as opposing the mission of the truth of the Nicean orthodox church. Drawing primarily from Matthew 7, 12, and 13, he offers images of the orchard, the vineyard, the wheat field, and the pasture, including thorns, tares, brambles, bad trees, and wolves in sheep’s clothing as representations of heretics and their teachings. Ephraem uses these images because they fit well into the dichotomy he is developing between truth and error, good and evil, orthodoxy and heresy. Within Ephraem’s biblical symbolic theology his opponents are false prophets and deceivers akin to the serpent in the garden and to Satan himself. As we saw in the previous and current chapters the characteristics of these adversaries are typologically patterned in Ephraem’s
speech. They embody the characteristics of their biblical antecedents. Their roots are shallow like the weed, but still they are unrelenting nuisances, like brambles.

For Ephraem there are only two sides in the battle for right faith, truth and error. Whether discussing the roots of his opponents’ authority, their practices, or their character, Ephraem’s approach is consistent: he works to demonstrate that he and his community are on the side of truth and that his opponents are on the side of error. This chapter has demonstrated that for Ephraem the practices of his adversaries are the most acceptable thing about them, because they are pious and devout: they fast; they pray; they take care of the needy; they help to maintain their ascetics. Ephraem’s primary response to piety of heretics is to argue that it is part of their programs of deception. Ephraem also works to prove that these practices are ineffective to achieve the ends required by their mythology.

Ephraem wants to leave no doubt in the mind of his audience that the Bar Dayṣānites and the Manichaeans are heretics no matter how pious or benevolent they may seem. Their teachings are false; their good deeds lead to a spiritual death; and their rites are confused and powerless to save anyone. The piety of his opponents does not change his message, but it does change how that message is phrased. This is true not only of his discussions of these adversaries’ actions, but also of their character. The final chapter of the present volume examines Ephraem’s remarks about the character of Bar Dayṣān and Mani.
Chapter Five

Personal Attacks in Ephraem’s Polemic

Introduction

Ever seeking to form the image of the heretic clearly in the mind of his hearers, Ephraem calls them idiots, drunkards, and madmen in order to reinforce a negative impression in the imagination of his congregants. It is important in this respect to keep in mind the positive public image of these opponents’ piety that was discussed in the previous chapter. Ephraem’s hearers have seen the Manichaean, dressed in white, sullen from fasting, ever praying, healing the sick, curing snake bites and scorpion stings. They may even have given “alms” to these holy men from time to time, supporting their ascetic piety, in exchange for the forgiveness of their sins. He even admits that the ascetic practices of his own community were no different than those of the Bar Dayšānite and the Manichaean. Labeling these heretics with gross misconduct was not an option. His approach was more subtle.

This chapter outlines the different derogatory statements that Ephraem makes about Bar Dayšān, Mani and their followers. Ephraem is casting negative images of these teachers, their followers, and their teachings. Ephraem’s idiom for illustrating the deceptive nature of the work of his opponents has already been explored in chapters three and four. It will be revisited here briefly in order to present a complete picture of Ephraem’s personal attacks against his opponents.
The foundational claim that Ephraem makes about the character of his opponents is that they are arrogant. This is not simply an accusation about their personalities. Ephraem believes that their pride is much more insidious than simply being stuck up. It is blasphemous. These adversaries of the truth have ventured into theological speculation, stolen many away from the true church, and even been daring enough to call their own communities by a name other than that of Christ. Pride functions as the catalyst, even the root cause, of their deviance in Ephraem’s conception of these heretics’ lives.

As is discussed in chapter two, as far as Ephraem is concerned, because heretics have not humbly accepted the limits of human knowledge, their efforts are doomed to failure. Moreover, Ephraem is convinced that they are not even aware that they are wrong. Instead, he thinks that they are certain that they have discovered something truly worthwhile:

But if they talk foolishly (ܩܬܒܝܨ) against these things, fittingly (ܘܠܝܰܐ) they debate (ܕܪܭܝܨ) against everything, so that only these improper (ܘܠܝܨ) things are proclaimed. And if they are puffed up (ܚܰܝܬܝܨ) in this way while erring, (ܝܥܰܝܐ) as if they had discovered something true (ܬܝܬ), indeed it has escaped (ܝܥܰܬܐ) the Heretics (ܠܚܐ) that they have discovered (only) error (ܠܚܬܐ). 379

If the prime arrogance of his opponents is to dare to speak about aspects of the divine that have not been revealed, Ephraem has also provided an alternative to speculative theology. He proposes that there be an investment in measure, or proper moderation. If one does everything within its just measure, there will be no room for error. Ephraem says as much in the opening of his Against Bar Dayşän’s “Domnum” where he cautions that the “arrogance” (ܩܝܘܡ) that

379. 2Hyp; PR 1, xlviii; 39-40. Translation adapted from Mitchell.
ignores “measure” (ܣܘܚܰܐ) runs the risk of “injuries” (ܩܘܓܧܝܨ). He suggests that even the most
dangerous topics can be approached safely, if done in moderation (ܣܘܚܰܐ).

The real threat of pride is detailed a little later in the same treatise. It allows someone to
confidently undertake a task for which they are not properly suited. Ephraem specifically
mentions ‘investigation,’ ܒܥܰܐ, the primary sin of his heretical adversaries. They do not know
the limits of human knowledge, but are arrogant about their ability to know the divine and so
they are proven incompetent:

But any craftsman who makes a promise about any craft which has not been learnt
by him is reproved when he approaches the work which belongs to that craft. But
if a craft is able to reprove him who does not know how to deal with it,
investigation (ܒܥܰܐ) is not too feeble to reprove also by its silence (ܣܒܗ) the
ignorant man (ܠܐ ܝܕܘܥܐ) who desires to approach it (i.e. investigation) as one who
knows. For wise men, perfect and righteous, have humbled (ܣܟܟܘ) themselves
that they might be as though they were ignorant men even in that which they
knew—not that they wished to destroy their knowledge, but that by making
themselves needy the fullness which is enough to fill up all our needs might
incline towards them. If therefore such just men as knew were not arrogant (ܠܐ
ܐܭܰܒܗܪܘ), how shall we sinful ones be arrogant in such matters as we do not
know? For whoever comes forward humbly as a learner (ܝܡܘܨܐ), that humility of
his places him under the weakness of confessing that he does not know; but
whoever comes forward with arrogance as one who knows, he is one who has
exalted himself above (the limit of) moderation (ܣܘܚܰܐ), because arrogance
knows not how to be subject to moderation. For if arrogance allowed itself to be
subject to moderation, it would not be arrogance at all.

Here, Ephraem emphasizes two different terms, arrogance and humility. Arrogance is associated
with those who investigate and speak about what they do not know, humility with those who
humbly acknowledge their need to be taught. Ephraem’s remarks are not simply meant to

380. PR 2, i; 1.

381. PR 2, ii; 2-3. Following Mitchell’s translation.
condemn Bar Dayšān’s teachings. They are formative. He instructs his audience concerning what
behavior is to be avoided, but also what conduct becomes one who has humility. His description
highlights the polarity between the theological method of his opponents and that of his own
church’s theological methods, which are discussed in chapter two above. In the first of the
Hymns against Heresies Ephraem links pride to disputation and dissension. In fact, it is not the
false teachers themselves, but their puppeteer who is said to be prideful. Satan, the father of
pride, is ready to trap anyone with his contentious ways:

A volume of loss (ܚܘܩܬܦܐ) he pours continually.
His disputing (ܕܪܘ) is from his boastfulness (ܬܘܒܗܪܐ), ruffled by contentiousness
(ܚܬܝܧܐ).

Here Ephraem describes the evil one being led into quarreling and discord by his own pride. As
Ephraem understands the universe, the evil one is always eager to share his ambition with others.
Ephraem also suggests that the evil one dutifully instills these two with contentious pride,
equipping Bar Dayšān and Mani for their heretical careers. In the second of the Hymns against
Heresies he can be found instilling these regrettable qualities in his adversaries once again:

The evil one made them proud (ܐܚܪ), filling them with his boastfulness
(ܬܘܒܗܪܐ).
He cast them and stamped (ܝܒܥ) them with a seal (ܝܒܥܐ) of controversy (ܚܫܬܝܧܐ).
He twisted and formed (ܨܪ) them into the form (ܨܘܪܬܐ) of contention
(ܣܨܘܪܬܐ).
And since he saw that they were hungry, he cut off (ܦܪܫ) and gave

382. For the pride of Satan being his downfall see the Life of Adam and Eve 12.1f. For commentary that
relates this tale to Ephraem’s own conceptions of Satan, see Gary Anderson, “The Fall of Satan in the Thought of
Ephrem and John Milton,” Hugoye 3, no. 1 (January 2000),


384. See discussion of Satan’s role in guiding heretics in chapter 3.
stolen words (ܣܡܐ ܓܧܝܒܐ), and they were blinded and did not investigate (ܥܪܒ) so that they might recognize their companions by their amputated (ܦܪܝܪܐ) limbs.385

Because the evil one knew they craved it, he fed one to the other, letting them feed off one another’s impudence. In this stanza there is no doubt where Ephraem believes the heretic gets her/his drive for confrontation.

Ephraem artfully describes Satan’s efforts to lead away the prideful to heresy by means of deception in the twenty-second of his Hymns against Heresies:

Fraud (ܙܐܦܐ) clothes itself with truth,
so that, with borrowed beauty, it might lead astray (ܠܡܐ). And the faithless one, if he professes,
because he is in the clothing of the lamb, he will be believed.
Judas to our savior said “greetings Rabbi. (ܥܠܡ ܐܒ_ne)”386
But by his ranks he was exposed.
Just as Mani by his actions
since he established a sect with his own disciples.
Blessed is the one who endured his arrogance (ܡܠܚܥ).387

In this madrāšā Ephraem points out that the false teacher, be it Mani or the evil one himself, wears elements of truth as a costume to deceive his audience, comparing this act to Judas who appeared to be a genuine disciple. The analogy between Mani and Judas persists in that they were both would-be pious Christians. The deception of both was discovered by the company that they kept: Judas had his armed guard; Mani his own disciples. Continuing in this same line of

385. HcH II.9. The reference to amputated limbs is likely intended to mock the Manichaeans who referred to the five sons of the Primal Man as his arms, or limbs; See Tardieu, Manichaeism, 76; Brian-Baker, Manichaeism, 110-11.

386. This phrase is found only in Matthew 26:49. Mark 14:45 also has Judas say “Rabbi,” but not “greetings.”

387. XXII.13.
thinking, Ephraem remarks in the twenty-fourth of his *Hymns against Heresies* that just as forming one’s own community is arrogant, so too is calling your group by your own name:

And against the name of the Lord and God
behold the infidels are acting arrogantly (مِهِبَّةَ دُلُومِ),
who put their name onto people?
Blessed is he who put his name on us! 388

Ephraem’s complaints about his opponents’ use of distinct names for their communities is discussed more fully in chapter two of this dissertation and has already been a feature of an article by Sidney Griffith.389 Suffice it here to point out that the theme of pride is one that is linked very specifically to Ephraem’s opponents where it refers to their actions that run counter to the mission of the true church. This motif of pride is not ascribed to Ephraem’s opponents flippantly for its negative connotations. Rather, it refers to specific actions that demonstrate a usurpation of authority, right, and honor. In Ephraem’s mind, these are genuinely prideful acts that countermand the primacy of the church as he understands it.

**Teachings Concocted (مِهِبَّةَ دُلُومِ)**

The fact that their pride affords his opponents a levity with which to approach theology as an experiment is the most essential theological problem from Ephraem’s perspective. This exploratory approach to theology is not only heretical, but it is inefficient. Ephraem portrays these heretics as having to constantly reconstruct or concoct new teachings in order to maintain their arguments. A key claim of Ephraem’s is that the teachings of his opponents are illogical.

388. XXIV.15.
Tied into this claim are several attempts at explaining why rational beings might believe such teachings. Included within this explanation are references to the malleable nature of the teachings that were coming from the teachers themselves. This section discusses Ephraem’s claims that the teachings of his opponents were concoctions, amended as often as it suited their founders.

Ephraem calls Mani a liar, suggesting that he would have said anything to preserve the illusion of a coherent teaching. As Ephraem picks apart Manichaean cosmogony in his *Fourth Discourse to Hypatius*, he keys in on the apparent contradiction between the “chasms” (ܟܪܘܦܐ) that separates the two eternal realms of light and dark, good and evil, and the fact that the dark attacked the light. Ephraem begins to propose possible solutions to the problem rhetorically, not paying any attention to the value of any of them, since he is confident that the Manichaean response will be a concoction: “For those to whom it is easy to speak falsely (ܟܕܒ) in everything, it is not difficult to lie (ܕܓܢ).” Ephraem points out a difficult passage in Mani’s teaching and proposes that the Manichaean response to resolve the problem will not come from their original teaching but from a lie concocted to resolve the matter.

Ephraem also suggests that this willingness to create new teachings simply for the sake of avoiding the errors in his original teachings led to many inconsistencies in the Manichaean system. Moreover, in his *Fourth Discourse to Hypatius* Ephraem portrays the Manichaean community as continuing in this fashion:

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390. Interestingly, the “gulf,” which Mani apparently taught separated the realms of light and dark, is the same term that Ephraem uses to refer to our separation from the divine which inhibits us from commenting on anything beyond what is revealed.

O what of a teaching whose failures (ܐܚܘܒܐ) are more than its artifices ( �����)! For as often as they need an argument (ܣܡܐ), they bring forward (ܣܝܝܨ) such proofs (ܬܚܘܝܐ) as these, and as often as an allegory (ܣܠܐ) suits (ܥܗܢ) them they concoct (ܣܬܟܒܝܨ) such tales (ܭܘܥܝܐ) as these. For Mani did not know that his deceit (ܙܐܦܐ) would enter the furnace of truth. 392

Ephraem is again pointing to what he sees as an inconsistency in the Manichaean system—that the one light is said to be both created and eternal. Ephraem is not just concerned about the poor logic of Mani’s philosophy here. The focus of the passage, however, is that the Manichaean approach is reactive rather than consistent, lies concocted to cover up other lies. When difficulty appears, the Manichaeans do what suits (ܥܗܢ) them to avoid the problem. Their resource is their own arrogant wit—they concoct more of their own tales and generate proofs, not the sources of revelation and the teachings of the church.

Ephraem’s attack has two edges: attacking the Manichaeans’ character for being that which would simply fabricate a string of teachings in order to maintain a semblance of authority; and suggesting that Mani was such a poor teacher that he would end up in this position and would leave his followers there also. As we have seen, Ephraem does not think very highly of Mani’s abilities. Now he is suggesting that Mani’s lack of talent, or foresight, has also required him and his followers to be weak in their ethics.

Ephraem levels the same claim in remarks about Bar Dayšān. In his Against Mani.

Ephraem says:

But that you might know that as far as the use of things gives Bar Dayšān a hand, thus he draws (ܦܓܕ) them after his will. And where he loses (ܐܒܕ) them and they are hidden (ܐܬܚܝ) from him, he sails off (ܝܨ), wandering (ܟܕ ܦܗܐ). 393

392. PR I, 100; lxxviii.

393. PR II, 221; cv.
These remarks precede an example of one of Bar Dayṣān’s incomplete arguments, an argument about the significance of the names of the months, which does not even apply to the entire calendar.

Moving into a discussion of Bar Dayṣān’s understanding of the elements as perceivable with the senses, Ephraem suggests of some of Bar Dayṣān’s teachings that “these (notions) are stolen by him from the Greeks.” While this reinforces the idea that Bar Dayṣān has developed much of his thought by taking from others where he saw fit, this association has farther reaching implications because the term “Greek” implies pagan as well for Ephraem.

Ephraem employs the term “sail off” (�̱ܐܦ) in a passage where Bar Dayṣān is portrayed as unprincipled in his pursuit of avenues by which to win converts.

He said, “Everything that exists has its own power and its own color and its own aspect, and the rest of whatever belongs to it.” Let him declare to us therefore what is the texture of light, and what is the taste of wind, and what is the smell of fire, that you may know that here also with the natures he goes into them as far as he does go, as in the names of the months, and he showed from them as far as he did, so as to show his philosophy. And when other sides sank (ܥܤܕܘ) away from him and were hidden (ܐܬܚܧܝܘ), he began sailing off (�̱ܐܦ); and because he sank and descended, he did not establish (ܩܥ) himself upon them, he paid no attention (ܐܗܣܝ) to them, and he passed over (ܥܒܬ) and began with something else; and he beguiled (ܓܧܒ) his hearers to suppose (ܦܪܒܬܘܢ) that those strange things also that had not been spoken of he knew all about like these familiar things which had been spoken of.

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Ephraem’s perception of the arbitrary nature of Bar Dayšān’s approach seems to come into view more clearly in this case. Bar Dayšān appears as a man of the times, drawing on fashionable teachings to craft his own ideas. Ephraem suggests that when this did not work for Bar Dayšān, he would then drop the traditions of those philosophies and chart a new course. Ephraem’s final statement is perhaps the most telling of his attack on Bar Dayšān. He suggests that Bar Dayšān’s directionless “sailing off” was due to his attempt to investigate a matter beyond his ken. Bar Dayšān because he tried to reach into the invisible, he had to change course so many times, and failed.

Ephraem levels the accusation of concoction at Bar Dayšān’s followers as well. In particular, Bar Dayšān’s son is given as a good example of the inconsistency in the legacy of Bar Dayšān’s teaching, because his own son did not teach the same things as Bar Dayšān did about the allegory of the months. Ephraem reinforces the conception of the heritage of a heretic as one of corruption and fabrication for convenience’s sake. Not even Bar Dayšān’s own followers had enough faith in his ideas to continue teaching them unchanged. Ephraem presents his opponents as quintessential opposites of the Nicean orthodox teacher, who teaches the doctrines of the church as they were handed down to him from a line stretching all the way back to Jesus himself.

Ephraem furthers the concept of an ongoing construction of ideas by suggesting that there was an active Bar Dayšānite school of philosophy, or at least that people were claiming such.

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397. PR II, cv. See theme in chapter three as well. Ephraem’s awareness that Bar Dayšān’s son taught differently than his father, and the fact that he states so here explicitly is an indicator that Ephraem believed that some of Bar Dayšān’s successors deviated from his original teachings. This suggests that where Ephraem claims that something was taught by Bar Dayšān himself, Ephraem believes it to be original to Bar Dayšān’s own teaching. For a further discussion of how well Ephraem understands the differences between Bar Dayšān and his followers and of the actual differences between their teachings, see Ramelli, Bardaisan, 157f.
“And therefore they are convicted, and unable to continue composing as from the School of Bar Dayṣān.” 398 The term “school of,” ܒܝܰ may well simply indicate those who follow Bar Dayṣān’s tradition, 399 however, there is no reason to doubt that the school that appears to be active in the Book of the Laws of Countries persists in Ephraem’s day. The active nature of the community is implied by the phrase “go on inventing” (ܐܠܟܝܕܐ ܠܫܝܲܐ ܗܬܘܲܒ). To Ephraem these schools were not settled in their teaching. He saw their attempts to develop their philosophy in order to respond to new criticisms as fabrication or invention rather than clarification.

Continuing the idea that these heretical teachers were actively pursuing their corruption as if it was an acquired skill within their ministry, Ephraem says in his, Fourth Discourse to Hypatius:

But consider also that so long as it suits (ܚܟܟ) their cause they learn to construct (ܒܚܡܛ) discourses (ܡܠܐ), but because they are constructed (ܓܫܡܚܠܐ) they are undone (ܡܡܠܐ), and because they are decked out (ܓܫܡܚܠܐ) they are refuted (ܓܟܪܪܨ), and because they are powerless (ܕܠܐ ܚܝܡܐ) they are not able to stand (ܠܒܥܡܠܐ ܣܨܝܐ) in a contest (ܐܓܘܦܐ).

The fabricated nature of the teaching of his opponents is part of the reason that their arguments are so easily dismantled. This piecing together of parts to make a hole (ܓܫܡܚܠܐ), is countered by the idea of dismantling (ܓܟܪܪܨ). Likewise, the concept of decorating or embellishing a building (ܓܫܡܚܠܐ), is opposed by the idea of breaking things into pieces in order to dismantle them (ܓܟܪ琨ܠܐ).

398. PR II, 227; cvii.
399. See ThSyr 478f.
400. PR I, 111; lxxxiv. Translation adapted from Mitchell. See pags 99-101 of chapter four to see a brief discussion of the roll of composition and public discourse delivery in the Manichaean missionary program.
Finally, Ephraem turns to a different image. He directs his audience to the concept of an athletic contest (ܐܓܘܦܐ, Greek αγων) wherein Ephraem juxtaposes powerlessness (ܕܠܐ ܚܝܡܐ) and the strength (ܣܨܝܐ) to stand. 401 This statement highlights the very real environment of conflict within which Ephraem and Mani are operating. It is a contest and the competition is Mani’s and Bar Dayšān’s motivation to be clever or sly. They are contending for the survival of their movements.

Ephraem emphasizes the fanciful nature of these teachings by returning again to the idea that these arguments are generated according to situational needs. As has already been noted within this chapter, their arguments are made as it “suits,” them. In Ephraem’s depiction, the Manichaean mission has generated teachings as it has had need of them. The employment of construction imagery related to the weakness of the arguments of Ephraem’s opponents is continued in his statement that “there is no true foundation (ܭܰܐܩܰܐ) among the errant (ܝܥܝܐ), and, on account of that, something that is built (ܣܰܒܧܐ) with effort afterwards collapses (ܣܧܘܠܰܐ) effortlessly.” 402

The storyline about his opponents that Ephraem relates is one in which they begin to recognize the shortcomings of what they (or their predecessors) have been teaching. In this regard he posits that Bar Dayšān was rather clever in his avoidance of some of the pitfalls of Marcion. Likewise, he suggests that Mani himself was also inventive, drawing from the most

401. ܐܓܘܦܐ appears as the sole word utilized in the Peshitta to render the references to athletic competition, Greek αγων, in Pauline literature. See 1 Corinthians 9:25, Philippians 1:30, Colossians 2:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:2, 1 Timothy 6:12, and 2 Timothy 4:7. The term also appears in Hebrews 12:1.

402. PR I, cxiii; 171. Adapted from Mitchell.
useful parts of his predecessors’ ideas. Not only have they taken from various traditions and added their own embellishments; Ephraem also claims that Bar Dayšān, Mani and their followers have done all of this poorly.

Nevertheless they are trapped by the truth of Ephraem’s arguments:

But falsehood (ܟܕܒܘܬܐ), which the truth (ܭܬܝܬܬܐ) easily exposes (ܝܫܘܝܬܐ), easily lies (ܒܠܬܐ). But if the false (teachers, ܗܪܩܝܘܬܐ) continually prepare (ܦܰܝܒܘܢ) other escapes (ܭܬܝܐ) for themselves, other bonds (ܦܟܬܐ) are continually prepared for them. For even if that darkness is great in that it covers all places, yet the light is greater than it in that it drives it from every place.

Ephraem depicts Bar Dayšānite and Manichaean traditions as fabricating ideas irresponsibly. These heretics are ever working to free themselves (ܭܬܝܐ) from the bonds of their own teachings, but their new lies become fetters (ܦܟܬܐ) that further entrap them. Here Ephraem establishes the polarity between falsehood and truth as a parallel alongside that of freedom and bondage.

Ephraem sees the fabricated nature of his opponents’ teachings as a strong advantage for his own heresiological efforts. Fabrication is portrayed as being easy to identify and manipulate. Ephraem claims that it eases his efforts to demonstrate the faults in his opponents’ teachings, because they are not maintaining an ancient tradition, Christian or otherwise, but rather are creating new elements and stealing from a variety of sources. Ephraem’s claim that his opponents take a reactionary approach to forming their theology buttresses the idea that his opponents are upstarts, conmen, and opportunists. These statements further fortify Ephraem’s claims that these teachers do not belong to the apostolic church of Nicean orthodoxy, but to their

404. XL, *PR* I, 166; cxi. Adapted from Mitchell’s translation.
own congregations, begun in their own lifetimes, by borrowing the practices and teachings, and stealing the congregants of the true churches.405

**Fools and Simpletons (ܗܕܝܘܝܐ, ܩܟܡܐ, ܦܮܝܞܐ, ܭܒܬܐ)**

Another common epithet that Ephraem ascribes to Bar Dayšānites and Manichaeans is foolishness, or simplemindedness. Ephraem suggests that it is because of their lack of intelligence, or experience, that they were initially duped by the teachings of Bar Dayšān and Mani. According to Ephraem, anyone who has the least bit of common sense would see the obvious contradictions in these teachings. Thus, he goes so far as to say that the followers of Bar Dayšān and Mani, who accept such obviously false teachings, must be intellectually incompetent.

In Ephraem’s treatise *On Domnus* he says, “For it is not a little loss (ܒܬܐ) that entered through Bar Dayšān; so that childlike people (ܒܬܐ) who have heard have suffered loss (ܐܬܟܘ); from the merchandise (ܕܓܘܪܬܐ) of their lives.”406 The term ܒܬܐ refers specifically to an infant or child and thus also to the naiveté, foolishness, or ignorance of youth.

The use of the terms “merchandise” and “loss” here draw this statement into a much broader Ephremian metaphor. The imagery of the Christian as a merchant (ܕܓܬܐ) who must manage his spiritual account wisely and avoid loss and maximize gain is a favorite of Ephraem.407 Here this type is employed to recast the effects of Bar Dayšān’s teaching on his

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405. On lineage in Ephraem’s polemic see chapter two.
406. Against Bar Dayšān, PR II, 153; lxxi. Adapted from Mitchell.
407. See Murray, *Symbols*, 174-76, particularly 175, n. 1; significant within his soteriology.
disciples. They have erred in the worst possible way. They suffer the loss of “the merchandise of their lives.” Ephraem’s main concern for his community, as shown in his attacks on the Dayšānites and the Manichaeans, is soteriological. He is worried about the spiritual status of the members of his congregation. He sees his ministry as an effort to guard them from making foolish mistakes.

Following immediately on the heels of these remarks, Ephraem addresses his concerns about Bar Dayšān’s attack on the resurrection of the body. According to Ephraem, Bar Dayšān counters the teaching of Paul in Romans 5—that Christ was the second Adam, and that just as Adam died the first death that cursed all, so too Christ would conquer death, the first victory for all. Ephraem implies that Bar Dayšān had taught against Paul in emphasizing the fact that Abel had died before Adam. Ephraem’s response is to defend Paul by pointing out that Adam died at the moment that he first sinned. More significant for the present discussion is not Ephraem’s argument per se, but that he bookended it with the sayings, “Therefore, so that ignorant (ܗܕܝܘܝܐ, from ἠδιώτης) people do not go astray (ܦܧܗܘܢ)…” and “May there not be even one occasion for you to hinder the childlike (ܒܬܐ).” Again, Ephraem contends that it is the simpleminded among whom Bar Dayšān’s teachings are appealing, or at least that those are the only ones who are at risk of being fooled into believing his teaching.

408. For example note this emphasis in his discussion of the Manichaean meal in chapter four.
409. He says as much in HcH LVI. See the discussion of Ephraem’s pastoral focus within his polemics in chapter two.
410. PR II, 153; lxxi.
411. PR II, 154; lxxi.
Ephraem levels a similar polemic against Mani. He questions concerning the Manichaeans as to how Mani’s teachings could have found a place of rest in their minds. He asks, “And how do they, who do not distinguish between a sound (ܬܩܧܰܐ) and contrary (ܗܦܟܝܰܐ) matter, praise these things, which are obvious both to simpletons (ܩܟܡܐ) and even to madmen (ܭܧܝܐ), when they hear them?” Here the follower of Mani is portrayed as one not qualified, or not willing, to determine whether an argument has merit, but who proceeds with praise for foolish teachings regardless.

Likewise, Ephraem asserts that Mani’s teaching is not recognized by the uneducated as dangerous. He says:

But the substance of this teaching, while appearing small (ܙܥܘܪ) and insignificant (ܒܪܐ) to those simple ones (ܬܦܮܝܞܐ) who are not acquainted (ܕܠܐ ܣܧܪܝܨ) with it, is like the hole which the blessed Ezekiel saw in the wall. For though that hole was insignificant and small, great evils and numerous abominations and the secret things of shame were inside it.

The allusion here is to Ezekiel chapter 8. In this passage Ezekiel is taken in a vision to a realm between the physical and spiritual worlds where he is able to see the spiritual realities of the people of Judah. In this vision he is shown a hole in a wall and is commanded to broaden the hole. This reveals a door and upon passing through that door Ezekiel encounters one revelation after another that demonstrate to him the many hidden sins of idolatry that are to be found among

412. *PR* I, 81; lxviii-ix.

413. The phrase could also be read “those upright ones who are not persuaded by it.” This does not bear out the sense of the contrast between the appearing small and insignificant and actually being a door to great evil.

the Jewish people. Thus, Ephraem would like to describe Mani’s teaching as a small hole that leads to great evil for those who pass through it.

What Ephraem wants his audience to understand as so dangerous about the teaching is implicit in the line, “appearing small and insignificant to those simple ones who are not acquainted with it.” This phrase demonstrates that Manichaean teaching is causing no anxiety in the heart of the average person. They are comfortable with it and do not see it as a potential problem. What the common person in Ephraem’s community knows about the intricacies of Manichaeism does not leave them feeling concerned that it might present any threat. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Ephraem is concerned that his congregation knows the outward actions and deeds of the Manichaens, which appear harmless, but not the dangerous teachings on which they are founded. Ephraem’s aim is to present these teachings as so obviously incoherent that anyone in their right mind and with a modicum of common sense would identify them as errant. He wants to make his community aware of this threat, to ensure that Syriac-speaking Christians know that the teachings of Bar Dayšān and Mani will lead them into blasphemy and idolatry. In a sense, Ephraem is shaming those in his community who might be tempted to join up with the Bar Dayšānites or Manichaens. He suggests they have fallen into traps, like sheep fallen prey to wolves, doves to hawks, and wheat to briars. They are innocent, childlike, and naïve enough to be easily misled.

The typological weight of the reference to ignorance is best represented in *HcH* I.13:

415. See the references to these biblical agrarian types within Ephraem’s polemic in chapters four and five.
And the sons of the serpent began to creep in the earth so that they might lead astray the ignorant (ܒܬܝܬܘܬܐ) and lead away captive the innocent (ܝܚܘܩܐ) head of the race like the former serpent.
He saw Eve in the time of ignorance (ܝܚܘܩܐ).
He pacified her and she trusted; he counseled her and she rejoiced;
He overtook her and she repented; and he struck her and she mourned.

The identification of the object of Bar Dayšānite or Manichaean proselytism as a person with childlike naivety is in this passage related directly to the original victim of deception, Eve. There could be no type more compelling type than Eve for the simpleminded Christian believer who is being deceived by outsiders. The fourth century Nicaean Christian, Dayšānite, Manichaean, and Jew were all aware of just what role she played in the fall of humankind from paradise. Both ܝܚܘܩܐ and ܝܚܘܩܐ carry the sense of childlikeness and naivety. In this way the foolishness that Ephraem suggests is present in his audience is not so much a dim wit as a lack of awareness of or common sense in regards to deeper theological matters. It is naivety, not stupidity, that he is pointing out. ⁴¹⁶

In each of the above referenced passages where Ephraem is relating his audience to innocent ones that might be led astray by false teachers, he references stories from the Jewish Scriptures that highlight the depravity of humankind. In the first, which is concerned with Bar Dayšān’s teachings concerning the resurrection, the discussion deals with Genesis 3 and 4, specifically the fall of humankind and the first man to die. In the second example, directed against the false teachings of Mani, Ephraem relates them to the false worship of the Jews as described in a vision belonging to Ezekiel, found in Ezekiel 8. In our third example, a broader

⁴¹⁶ For see ThSyr 621, where it notes that ܝܚܘܩܐ is used as a synonym at this very point, and for ܠܒܬܐ itself see ThSyr 4044-45.
approach is taken to heretics’ ability to mislead those who are inexperienced or ignorant in scriptural and theological matters. It relates the deceptive approach of Bar Dayṣān and Mani to that of the serpent in the Garden in Genesis 3.

The use of stories from the Jewish Scriptures and specifically stories of the failings of the Jews to avoid false teachings is an effective implement in fourth century Christianity. Jews were common antagonists for Christians by this time. By linking both of these opponents, Jews and heterodox Christians, Ephraem can demonstrate that they each have failed in their theological endeavors. The use of the ascription of Judaism to these opponents is addressed at the end of this chapter.

Mani the Madman (ܡܢܝܢ / ܡܢܝܢܐ)

In a number of places Ephraem refers to Mani as being insane. While there are obvious reasons that a polemical work might utilize such an appellation, Ephraem may simply have adopted from Greek anti-Manichaean literature a play on the Greek adjective for “mad” (μανεῖς) and the teacher’s name in Greek (Μανῆς). The linguistic similarity in the Greek is not paralleled in the Syriac language, but the accusations remain. Ephraem juxtaposes Mani’s teaching to received Christian truths in hopes of bolstering the sense of polarity.

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417. Several scenarios are possible as to where this similarity between Syriac and Greek polemical rhetoric about Mani originated. Within those hypotheses must be maintained the possibilities that: 1) Ephraem knew enough Greek to make the connection between the name Mani, Μανῆς or Μανηὰς, and Greek words for madness μανᾶς, μανηα; 2) Ephraem knew, whether through reading or hearing, the Greek use of this polemic second hand; and 3) the rhetorical use of the term is suitable to Syriac, without the homonymic correlation in Greek being relevant. For examples of the use of this play on words in Greek anti-Manichaean literature see Lieu, “Some Themes in Later Roman Anti-Manichaean Polemics: I,” Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library 60, no. 1 (1986): 440-41.
Responding to the Manichaean teaching that the light was mingled with darkness in an event that eventually led to the creation of the universe, Ephraem emphasizes that the Manichaeans are indeed mad, but that even they, among the mad, stand out:

And if fire was mixed with fire, and water with water and wind with wind, it necessarily follows that light also, with light. Now that these natures are akin one to another all reasonable beings (ܡܫܗܘܦܐ) know, apart from madmen (ܭܧܝܐ), but perhaps even madmen apart from the Manichaeans.

Ephraem is again emphasizing the literal interpretation of Manichaean myth. Here his statement reflects what Ephraem sees as a simple scientific critique of the Manichaean teaching. In nature, Ephraem argues, we do not see contradictory substances mixing. He suggests that this is so obvious that someone would have to be insane to not notice it.

One should note, at this point, that Ephraem is attacking the teaching and the believer at the same time. The teaching is incoherent and so the believer is crazy for believing it. This pattern is carried out in many of the uses of the theme of madness to attack Manichaeans. In his Second Discourse to Hypatius, Ephraem states the implication of the one by the other, and vice versa, explicitly:

This, that is the teaching of madmen (ܭܧܝܐ), proclaims an existence (ܚܝܘܬܐ) which is deficient (ܚܪܝܬܐ) in everything, so that its deficiency (ܚܪܝܬܘܬܐ) refutes those who proclaim it.

Ephraem goes on to suggest that what the Manichaeans teach is simply and obviously inconsistent, incorporating numerous polemical motifs to solidify the impression.

418. For a summary of these events see Tardieu, Manichaeism, 76-81, or Baker-Brian, Manichaeism, 110-14.

419. Against Mani, PR II, 212; c. Following Mitchell’s translation.

420. PR I, 9-10; xxxiii. Adapted from Mitchell’s translation.
For they fabricated (ܥܪܟܒ) two roots preposterously (ܕܘܡܐܚܐܡܐ), but they are undone (ܒܘܫܡܐܢ) thoroughly. For if something is said without knowledge (ܗܦܘܒܐܝ), it is corrected (ܛܘܟܢ) by sound knowledge; and whoever puts on (ܠܒܝ) contentiousness (ܚܬܝܐ) is stripped (ܣܠܛ) by the persuasion (ܦܝܪܐ) of truth (ܩܘܐ). For they set forth (ܡܒܗܒ) two roots pretentiously, though upon investigation (ܠܒܨܬܐ) many are found.\textsuperscript{421}

The use of ܥܪܟܒ and ܭܬܐ here reinforces the madness of believing in Manichaeism by drawing attention to the fabricated nature of the teaching. This is amplified by the accusation that Mani’s teaching was proposed from a place of ignorance (ܭܒܬܐ). Moreover, Ephraem returns to the motif of a puppet heretic with the use of ܠܒܝ.\textsuperscript{422}

Ephraem’s suggestion that the Manichaeans are the most insane of all heretics appears again in his \textit{Third Discourse to Hypatius}. He is addressing the Manichaean teaching that the body is darkness and the soul light; and that the sons of light were used as bait for the sons of darkness. He says:

And how do they, who do not distinguish a matter between sound (ܬܩܐ) and contrary (ܗܦܟܝܐ), praise these things, which are obvious both to simpletons (ܩܟܡܐ) and even to madmen (ܭܝܐ), when they hear them?\textsuperscript{423}

In his \textit{First Discourse to Hypatius}, Ephraem again stresses the degree to which the Manichaeans are mad. He associates “madness” with any person who accepts Mani’s teaching, especially where it regards the origin of the world and of evil. If Ephraem sees Manichaean cosmogony as the primary point of Manichaean teaching that proves their madness, the forgiveness of sins is such in regards to their practices:

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{421} \textit{PR} I, 10; xxxiii. Translated with an eye to Mitchell.
\item \textsuperscript{422} See chapter two.
\item \textsuperscript{423} \textit{PR} I, 81; lxviii-ix.
\end{enumerate}
Those, therefore, for whom it is incumbent that they should empty the evil out of humankind through a visible act, now, through invisible forgiveness, behold they are absolving the debts of humankind. But when their debts are not taken away \((ܣܮܧܝܨ\)\) from them, their sins increase seven times against the absolvers. For on their neck is hung the debt of sins, the forgiveness of which they deceitfully guaranteed. Likewise, madness \((ܦܪܬܘܬܐ\)\), since it is not taken away \((ܣܮܧܝܨ\)\) from a dog that has gone mad \((ܐܡܗ\)\), possesses those whom have been bitten by the dog seven times over.\(^{424}\)

Ephraem argues that instead of freeing people from their sins, the Manichaean who claims to be able to forgive sins is actually sinning and bringing the sins of others on her/him.\(^{425}\) He associates this action with a rabid dog that bites someone and spreads its madness to others. The underlying concern is the literal interpretation of the Manichaean myth. Ephraem contrasts the fact that the elect do not break bread because they are not supposed to harm the light in the bread with the forgiveness of invisible, or immaterial, sins. In his view the light either is, or is not physical, but it cannot be both. Ephraem portrays this contrast as illogical, the teaching of mad dogs.

He employs the metaphor of a wild dog in regards to forgiveness of sins again in *HcH II.2*:

> And now Mani’s dogs set upon every person.  
> They fawn over everyone they find for the sake of today’s bread.  
> They are feeble \((ܢܡܐ\)\) dogs, who are not capable of breaking bread.  
> They are actually forgiving sins and debts.  
> In this way they are mad \((ܐܡܗ\)\), and they ought to be beaten.  
> Since one alone is able to forgive sins to sinners.

Ephraem mocks the Manichaean elect as feeble and rabid, feeble because they are not able to prepare their own meals and rabid, this time, because they purport to be able to forgive sins.  

\(^{424}\) Overbeck, 51; *PR I*, xxiii.  
\(^{425}\) For a discussion of the forgiveness of sins within Ephraem’s broader polemic, see chapter four.
Ephraem’s preoccupation with whether Manichaean soteriology is based in the material or immaterial realm is connected to the image of a dog in remarks Ephraem makes about the Manichaean meal again in his *Fourth Discourse to Hypatius*. Chapter four discusses Ephraem’s polemic against the Manichaean meal in detail. Referencing the same text, here focus is more precisely on the use of the image of the mad dog. Ephraem posits that the Manichaean claim that prayer is the effective force in the release of light during the meal is contrary to the very material nature of Manichaean cosmogony. For Ephraem, the productive aspect of the meal must be physical. He suggests that it is indeed belching. Since burping does not occur naturally during every meal, Ephraem suggests that the elect must work to instigate the expulsion of gas. He argues that if this causes vomiting, the worst possible result is not that the light that was supposed to be released from matter instead remains trapped in it. It would be far worse if a dog came and ate the vomit, thereby trapping it within its own transmigratorial cycle. He sees only one way to proceed: the elect need to now consume the vomit. He says:

> And whenever a Manichaean actually vomits (ܬܘܒ) because they have not yet digested their food, they know that their refining has not yet ascended and are compelled to say that their light is still mixed in their vomit and it would be right for them to turn and swallow it again so that the light buried within it would not live in corruption. Moreover, if a dog comes and Swallows it, consider that light which has gone out in vomit from inside of a Manichaean called a righteous one (ܙܕܝܪܐ), it has entered and become imprisoned in the filthy stomach of a dog, [hear that, instead.] if that Manichaean had turned and swallowed his vomit immediately, there would have been an ascent to the height for the imprisoned Light that it might flee and ascend to the house of its father. And that Manichaean ought to be punished instead of it (the light), because he knew, but still that Light entered and was imprisoned in the belly of the dog, and from there is passed in transmigration through the dog’s progeny and that light is transmitted in the race of mad (ܦܪܬܐ) and biting ones; and the necessity of their bites madden (ܦܪܬܘܬܐ) and their bites bite repeatedly. It is also right, that it (the light) should bite and tear to pieces that Manichaean who vomited it up and did not turn and devour it; since he was the cause of this madness (ܡܫܚܒܐ). And if they say that it is even refined by
a dog, then dogs are better at refining than they are, and it is right that they should be fed more than [a righteous one].\textsuperscript{426}

Ephraem once again relates the Manichaean elect’s actions to foster salvation with the actions of dogs. The difference is subtle. The Manichaean elect is mocked as to whether their actions are truly more effective than if a dog were to perform them.

Another great example of Ephraem’s claims of Manichaean “madness” comes in his Fifth Discourse to Hypatius where he is again discussing the literal interpretation of the Manichaean teaching about how the world will be saved through the refining and releasing of the light from the world. He says:

But what insult is greater than this: that the heretics are saying, see now, “the good is refined little by little and goes up”? O the unspeakable madness (ܭܧܝܘܬܐ)! For it would be right that some other good should be added to the first in order that the evil constituent might be weaker so that it might not prevail over it and drown the world. But they are like fruits whose exterior, when they are dry, deceives those who see them. But when they are squeezed between two hard things, then the dryness within them is convincingly revealed. These (men) also are set between two true words so that all their long fabrication (ܪܘܟܒܐ) is dissolved (ܦܮܰܪܐ) briefly.\textsuperscript{427}

Ephraem expresses in a few different places the inability to see the logic in teaching that the light, which was overpowered by the darkness, is going to be saved gradually by a system that continually weakens its presence in this world. Ephraem mocks the Manichaean teaching not only as madness, but also as a teaching that took a long time to think up, but a very brief time to be disproven. Continuing on a similar line of attack later in the same discourse, Ephraem writes:

And see the sun in their blindness they actually worship it, and the moon—such is their madness (ܪܒܘܬܐ)—they greatly magnify and call it “the Ship of Light

\textsuperscript{426} PR I, 29-31; xliii. Following Mitchell’s translation here.

\textsuperscript{427} 5Hyp, PR I, 143-44; ci. Adapted from Mitchell.
which”—as they say—“bears away the burden of their refinings to the House of Life,” and these shining ones who bear burdens, did they not bear (and) bring victorious weapons to the souls which failed in the war.

Now Ephraem is not only mocking the idea of refining from a broader theoretical stand point, but is attacking the logic of the functions within that system. In particular Ephraem turns his focus to the moon, whose role in Manichaean mythology he sees as the least tenable. He questions the worship of the sun and the moon as machines of salvation that were unable to be useful in overcoming darkness in the great war.

Licentiousness

Ephraem also references a licentious aspect to his opponents’ character. Ephraem suggests that sexual promiscuity existed among Bar Daysān and his followers, but not Mani or his. The reason for this may be that Mani taught against marriage and sexual intercourse, while Bar Daysān supported them. We even know from Al-Biruni that Mani wrote against Bar Daysān’s acceptance of marriage and reproduction as beneficial. While Ephraem’s awareness of this dispute is by no means certain from his polemics, the fact that he keeps Bar Daysān and Mani quite separate in this regard is telling of some awareness of the difference in their teachings on the matter if not the debate between the two communities. To whatever degree he is familiar with it, Ephraem exploits this divergence within the teachings of the two communities by hyperbolizing Bar Daysān’s more favorable teaching concerning reproduction.

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428. 5Hyp, PR 1, cxvi; 178-9. Adapted from Mitchell.

One example of this sort of ascription to Bar Dayšān is HcH I.11, where Ephraem calls Bar Dayšān an adulterer in juxtaposition to calling Marcion a whore. Predictably, Mani is not referred to in any sexually derogatory way here. Instead we once again find Mani lapping up vomit.

The speech of Bar Dayšān, publicly (ܒܓܡܝܐ) was very sober (ܣܓܨ). In secret (ܒܚܡܠܐ) it rages (ܪܙܐ) in the sacrament (ܪܐܙܐ) of blasphemy. He is a sly woman (ܐܦܬܐ ܣܓܒܐ), a bedroom adulteress (ܓܝܬܬ ܒܘܦܐ). Marcion is a whore who contemned (ܐܣܘܪܬܬ). Mani, who earnestly licked up the vomit (ܬܝܘܒܐ) of the double (serpent), vomits up (ܓܪܐ) bitterness to his sons, wormwood to his disciples.

Here Ephraem is honest about the apparent contradiction between his claim and the outward appearances of Bar Dayšān. The terms rendered ‘publicly’ (ܒܓܡܝܐ) and ‘in secret’ (ܒܚܩܪܝܐ) are the very same as those Ephraem uses to refer to that which has been revealed about God and that which remains hidden, respectively.⁴³⁰ He suggests that Bar Dayšān’s words may appear to be modest and proper, but that they are actually simply masquerading as such, when in reality they are sneakily blasphemous and adulterous.

In the seventeenth stanza of the same madrāšâ, Ephraem attacks Bar Dayšān’s songs specifically:

In the dens of Bar Dayšān are melodies and songs. Since he saw youth (ܝܡܝܘܬܐ), that it longs for sweetness (ܚܡܝܘܬܐ), with the harmony of his chants he excited (ܬܚ) the young (ܒܬܘܬܐ).

Ephraem portrays Bar Dayšān’s actions as calculated: he intentionally appealed to the desires of the youthful. The term that I have rendered “excited,” ܬܚ, means to provoke lust and excite

⁴³⁰ Ephraem’s understanding of revelation is discussed in chapter two.
passion. The sense is certainly sensual.⁴³¹ That Ephraem suggests that Bar Dayṣān is directing these efforts at the youth aligns perfectly with his claims in stanza 13 of this same madrāšā where the sons of the serpent were mimicking the actions of the serpent in the garden who tried to “lead astray the ignorant (ܒܬܝܬܘܬܐ) and lead away captive the innocent (ܭܒܬܘܬܐ) head of the race.” Indeed the root ܐܬ in the term ܪܒܬܘܬܐ is the same as is noted in several of the examples in the section on Ephraem’s portrayal of his opponents as fools and simpletons above, where it was more commonly translated as inexperience or simplemindedness. As the term is the very same one that Ephraem used to refer to Eve’s state when she was deceived by the serpent in the garden, with Bar Dayṣān clearly being noted as the mouthpiece of Satan and thus a type of the serpent throughout ḤcIH, the parallel between his efforts to excite the youth here and the serpent’s efforts to do the same to Eve is strong in this madrāšā.⁴³²

The use of terms relaying a sense of loose sexual morals to Bar Dayṣān and Daysānites flies in the face of the strong remarks Ephraem makes about their pious character. None of these remarks about licentiousness, however, are even remotely literal. Instead, these comments are much like the allegory of Israel as the adulterous wife, or playing the harlot, in the Jewish scriptures.⁴³³ With the added context of the metaphor of virginity for orthodoxy and adultery for

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⁴³¹ TḥSyr 4328-30.

⁴³² The reading of Eve’s deception as sensual is nothing new. For examples of this line of interpretation see Irenaeus’ rejection of this teaching and its presence in the Gospel of Philip.

heterodoxy common in the fourth century Christian polemic, these remarks surrender any literal social claims.\footnote{434}

**Drunkards ($ܪܘܝܐ$)**

Throughout Ephraem’s polemic against Mani and Manichaeans he accuses his opponents of drunkenness. At face value these accusations seem like basic claims of irresponsible, licentious misconduct. However, in each instance Ephraem is making analogical reference to Manichaean teaching or to broader concepts about orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Not one of these references is meant to suggest Mani or his cohorts as actual drunkards. Ephraem is much more interested in demonstrating the erroneous nature of Mani’s teaching and in discrediting the faith of Mani’s successors than in giving them the reputation of lushes.

In his *Fifth Discourse to Hypatius* Ephraem takes aim at Mani himself. He makes reference to a Manichaean saying that supposedly taught that their teacher “‘having been intoxicated ($ܣܬܘܐ$) is truly drunk ($ܪܘܐ$).’ For he fights as if drunk ($ܩܡܐ$); wherever he turns, that is where he falls.”\footnote{435} The fact that Ephraem attributes the drunkenness of Mani to a saying belonging to the Manichaeans should caution against a vulgar understanding of this phrase. The only reference to Manichaeans referring to Mani as drunk that I have been able to find is in Mary Boyce’s *A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian*. The reference is not to actual

\footnote{434. For more insight into the function of the analogies between virginity and orthodoxy and between adultery, or harlotry, and heterodoxy, see Virginia Burrus, “The Heretical Woman as Symbol in Alexander, Athanasius, Epiphanius, and Jerome,” *Harvard Theological Review* 84, no. 3 (July 1991): 229-48.}

\footnote{435. PR I, cxv; 175-76. See also *HcH* I.18 where Marcion is said to stagger ($ܡܥܐ$) and totter ($ܦܕ$) through creation, possibly also a reference to drunkenness. Another reference to fighting while drunk can be found in *HcH* II.8 where the heretics are depicted as drinking, the very dregs no less, and then firing arrows at the church.}
drunkenness, but to Mani’s being corporeal. It refers to this as the “sleep of drunkenness,”\(^{436}\) or the “sleep of unawareness,” that indicates the initial imprisoning of some of the light within darkness.\(^{437}\) Therefore, the intoxication was not at all meant by the Manichaeans to indicate insobriety. In fact, Ephraem provides further evidence of the Manichaean teaching that darkness intoxicated the light in itself. Ephraem’s understanding of such a phrase becomes clearer a few sentences further in his *Fifth Discourse to Hypatius*, where he says:

> For suppose that the evil one really intoxicated (ܣܬܘܝܘ ܐܪܘܝ) the souls who went astray (ܝܥܝܨ), is it not clear then that the thing which intoxicates (ܣܬܘܐ) our nature is akin to our nature, neither can our nature be greedily captivated and become intoxicated (ܦܬܘܐ) by means of anything except because it pleases it exceedingly? For excess in drinking (ܣܮܰܝܐ) proves to us the pleasantness of wine, for because it is very pleasant it has been drunk (ܭܪܝܐ) in great quantities, and because he mixed much drink (ܪܰܝܐ) the drinker (ܭܰܝܐ) became much perturbed in mind. For if we are given wine to drink (ܭܪܝܐ), or strong liquor, or anything which is pleasant to us, it intoxicates (ܣܬܘܐ) us. Likewise, too, the evil one, and Satan intoxicates (ܣܬܘܐ) the soul by means of those things which are pleasant to the soul, that is to say, by falsehood and by pride, and by arrogance, together with all hateful things. And how were things which are foreign to its nature acceptable to the soul? For if drunkards (ܞܝܐ̇̈) are captivated by means of wine which is akin to our nature, the souls would not be captivated by something which is the opposite of their nature.\(^{438}\)

When discussing the Manichaean teaching that the primordial darkness swallowed the primordial light, Ephraem marvels at how foolish such a teaching is when in the world that resulted from the

\(^{436}\) Boyce (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 7, provides a brief introduction to the concept of the sleep of drunkenness within the Manichaean view of individual salvation; and 108 for the Persian text (mstyft kw xwft) and Boyce’s note (1) for the translation “when he spoke to his own self: “Great (is) the drunkenness in which (lit. where) you sleep.”

\(^{437}\) Boyce, *Reader*, 5 and 145, n. 5. Also Geo Widengren notes the concept of the sleep of the body in matter within both Manichaean and Mandaean thought. See his chapter on “The Dialogue between the Messenger and the Primal Man,” in his *Mesopotamian Elements in Manichaism* (*King and Saviour II*) (Leipzig: Otto Harrasowitz, 1946): 74-78. Widengren (79-81) goes on to relate the connection between a corporeal nature and the idea of sleep to Tammuz liturgy.

\(^{438}\) *PR I*, 176-77, cxv. Following Mitchell’s translation.
dark’s assault on the light, it is light that swallows darkness. Ephraem wonders how Mani’s audience was not immediately put off by such a natural contradiction.\textsuperscript{439} He suggests an explanation for their being so gullible in regard to this matter—they must have been drunk. In fact, Ephraem goes so far as to accuse Mani of getting them drunk. He says, “For it seems that he gave to them to drink first, and then he narrated to them. For he had feared the reality of nature, that it might refute him.”\textsuperscript{440} The use of “seems” (ܕܣܐܝܐ) here alleviates the suggestion that Ephraem is claiming to have any evidence of actual drunkenness. Instead, he poses this as the only possible solution to the problem of their belief in such an obviously false teaching.\textsuperscript{441}

Also in the \textit{Fifth Discourse to Hypatius}, Ephraem draws a connection between the intoxication of wine and that of erroneous teaching. He says, “But if a quantity of wine intoxicates (ܣܬܘܐ) and leads astray (ܣܞܥܝܐ), how much more will a quantity of error (ܩܓܘܬܗܕܝܘܥܝܝ) intoxicate (ܬܪܘܐ) and lead astray (ܬܝܥܐ)?”\textsuperscript{442} With this line Ephraem opens a discussion of what he sees as illogical teaching within Manichaeism. To him, the suggestion that by slowly releasing light from this world all of the light will eventually be saved is ludicrous. Since within the Manichaean myth the light was conquered in a very real way by the darkness, it makes no sense that gradually reducing the amount of light in the world would be a reasonable solution, because the remaining light will be ever more greatly outnumbered. Ephraem argues that what

\textsuperscript{439} Ephraem alludes to this observation from nature in \textit{HcH} XI.2.

\textsuperscript{440} \textit{PR} I, 79; lxvii.

\textsuperscript{441} The suggestion that people would have to be drunk to believe a certain teaching is not a new rhetorical turn.

\textsuperscript{442} \textit{PR} I, 162; cix. Following Mitchell’s translation. Careful consideration must be given to the prominent role of the theme of intoxication in \textit{5Hyp}. 
would actually make sense within the Manichaean system is to posit that the darkness was
removed gradually from the world, weakening it and giving light an ever increasing advantage.
The mention of intoxication or drunkenness here is simply a point of analogy. Just as wine
intoxicates, so too does false teaching. The use of the theme of intoxication is also relevant
because the passage that it introduces relates to overcoming the “sleep of drunkenness.” This is a
prime example of how Ephraem’s typological idiom emerges in his polemical rhetoric.

A very interesting passage is found in *HcH* II.10, which portrays the evil one as noticing
that Bar Dayšān and Mani were drunk with the love of the truth. It is not clear how “truth”
should be understood here, true Christian knowledge or doctrine, or perhaps even Christ himself.
Regardless of which it is, it is clear that Ephraem understood Bar Dayšān and Mani to have some
degree of affinity for true Christianity:

> And he knew that he was not able to bind them to himself,
> Since, as the truth revealed its face and showed the integrity of its words,
> [the evil one] saw his captives that they were drunk (ܪܘܝܣ) on the love of that truth
> (ܩܘܭܰܐ)
> From the book of life he cut out and took away
> words for the deceitful comfort of his disciples,
> so that through them he might collect captives within his wells.

When Ephraem uses terms related to drunkenness (ܪܘܐ) to describe his opponents, they are more
associations than they are accusations. Ephraem’s remarks are indirect, symbolic. Moreover,
Ephraem continues to expand the typology of his heresiology, here drawing on not only natural,
social associations with drunkenness, but also a symbolic exegesis of Manichaean teachings. He
confidently assaults his opponents’ positions, and even employs their own idiom to do so.
Dregs (ܬܝܬܐ)

The theme of dregs comes up several times in Ephraem’s polemics against Bar Dayšān and Mani. As the base elements that settle to the bottom, these are naturally not desirable. In the bottle of wine, this portion was not served to guests and was usually discarded. However, the Manichaeans, who teach that matter is low and base and that in the refining process the darkness that is severed from the light through digestion is the dregs that settles back to the earth, is particularly not fond of such an analogy. Ephraem subverts the use of “dregs” in the Manichaeans’ idiom in HcH I.12. Speaking as he does in this madrāsā about the role of the evil one in promoting his opponents’ heresies, Ephraem says:

He armed each of them with every evil:
Marcion with blasphemy, Bar Daysan with error
The dregs that remained and were left behind he poured out within Mani.

Mani is portrayed as the culmination of a trajectory of heresy. He is not its apogee, however, but its sewer, collecting all of the filthy runoff of previous systems. The term ܬܝܬܐ can refer to dregs in wine, sediment in a body of water, or refuse generally. The use of the term is more clearly intended to refer to the dregs in wine in HcH II.8, where he says:

They possess, all of them do, the bows (ܩܰܬܐ) of deceit (ܡܰܐ̇ܦܟܝ). They have drunk the same dregs (ܬܝܬܐ), one after another they filled and poured.

443. For the use of this expression in regards to the digestive process of the elect see CMC 84.6.
444. ThSyr 4426.
445. ܩܰܬܐ refers to the hunting bow.
446. The idea of drinking wine to the dregs, or even actually drinking the dregs, implies draining the cup, even the bottle. Thus, it suggests wanton consumption and drunkenness. It is used in this way in Psalm 75:8 and Isaiah 51:17, to refer to the actions of the wicked and those of rebellious Israel respectively.
Ephraem emphasizes that his opponents, especially Marcion, Bar Dayšān, and Mani, all participate in the grand scheme of deception.

In the same stanza, the evil one is said to be actively working to “clog the ears of his tares” because “he is fearful” that the voice of the church might “slip into their ears.” Ephraem may be making a play on words here by referring to dregs and the clogging of ears together, since תֵּתוֹת was also used to refer to earwax, which was thought to be the dregs of the brain.447

The broadest statement of the theme of filth in the madrāšē comes at LVI.8:

Truly also in all the mouths of the church is the clarity of my pool from that mud (ܩܝܧܐ) and filth (ܦܘܠܧܡܐ) of the house of the rabid Marcion. And it becomes cleared from the dregs (ܬܝܬܐ) and the ungodliness of the house of Mani; and purifies from the dirt (ܨܐܬܐ) of the frauds (ܙܐܦܘܗܝ) of Bar Dayšān and from the stink (ܙܗܣܘܬܐ) of the stinking (ܙܦܬܐ) Jews.

Here in the third to last stanza of the entire collection of his HcH, Ephraem lumps Marcion, Mani and Bar Dayšān together with the Jews much like he does at the conclusion of his final, Fifth Discourse to Hypatius. His statements in HcH LVI are largely promotional in the sense that he repeatedly clarifies and endorses his own agenda and mission. The theme of filth, dregs, and stench is employed in this stanza in a description of Ephraem’s own ministry, which is specifically to clear the pool (or eye,ܐܝܧܐ) of the church from the sediment that is making it murky and odorous.

447. See ThSyr 4426.
Wild Animals and Pernicious Plants

Many of the epithets for Bar Daysān and Mani within Ephraem’s refutations bare typological significance. The majority of his references to the two as wild animals (serpents, wolves) or dangerous plants (tares, thorns) are clear references to biblical agrarian polemics. However, Ephraem makes extra-biblical allusions to Bar Daysān and Mani as animals as well. That Mani “brayed (ܡܝܠ)” is an interesting example. It is this act—“bellowing,” “roaring,” or the like—that is said to have been the cause for Mani’s execution: “Since Mani had brayed abundantly, the sons of the East flayed him.” Ephraem is mocking Mani’s preaching as the sound of the cry of a wild animal.

As discussed earlier in this very chapter, Mani’s followers are also referred to as “mad dogs.” This reference may be more cultural than biblical. Certainly there is no secret about the status of dogs in Near Eastern culture, and we have already addressed the analogy that Ephraem wishes to make based on the fact that Manichaeans taught that both humans and dogs contained light within them. While there are negative references to dogs throughout the Christian scriptures, none of them fit Ephraem’s reference to “mad dogs,” so a biblical motif is an unlikely inspiration in this case.

Bar Daysān’s pack is cast as wild beasts who congregated in “dens (ܦܪܥܐ).” It is not clear whether the reference to their meeting places as dens is literal and the ascription of them as

449. HcH II.2.
450. See pages 129-31, especially note 358, above.
wild beasts elsewhere is thus easily tacked on, or the reference to their churches as dens is merely an elaboration of the metaphor of Dayšānites as beasts.

**Low and Filthy**

Another theme that is commonly found in Ephraem’s portrayal of Mani, particularly in the madrāšē, is that of baseness and squalor. Ephraem portrays Mani as a pig, or the dregs settled in the wine, or the metallurgist’s dross. It is certain that the portrayal of Mani as materially base is intended to associate him with the very matter that his teaching denigrates. As discussed in chapter four above, Mani taught that matter is evil and that ultimate salvation was freedom from this evil, physical world. Thus Ephraem’s association of Mani with some of the very lowest, filthiest forms of matter is particularly meaningful. In Ephraem’s own system the filth of his opponents is part of what muddies the waters and clouds the eyes. In his *Second Discourse to Hypatius* he addresses both of them in terms of baseness, saying “However, it is not the filth of Bar Dayšān we have come to stir up now; for the decay of Mani is enough.”

In the first of the *Hymns against Heresies* Ephraem portrays Marcion, Bar Dayšān and Mani as pawns being played by the evil one, in his games against the true church. The theme of the role of Satan in the work of these three has been examined in chapter three. Here it is worthwhile to recall that Marcion, Bar Dayšān and Mani are portrayed as Satan’s children, his disciples, and his puppets. Ephraem’s main use of this theme is to demonstrate that the root of the traditions of the teachings of these religious leaders is indeed Satanic deception rather than

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452. *PR* I, 9, xxxiii.
divine revelation. That is their pedigree. In *HcH* I.10, Ephraem says of Mani specifically, “With Mani, as with a hog, he (Satan) was continually stirring up his mud.”

If an animal playing in its own filth were not a graphic enough image to counter a tradition that taught that matter was the basest part of the world corrupting the purest forms, then the idea of a dog consuming vomit should suffice. On two different occasions Ephraem claims that Manichaeans either do, or at least ought to, consume vomit.\(^{453}\) The suggestion would obviously be highly offensive to anyone. However, Ephraem goes so far as to say in one place that eating one’s own vomit must be a duty for the Manichaean elect, because otherwise they may be hindering the salvation of light particles.\(^{454}\) Moreover, Ephraem elsewhere suggests that Mani’s teaching was vomit to his disciples.\(^{455}\) Ephraem characterizes this vomit as bitterness and wormwood, emblematic of the role of Satan in assisting Mani in forming his distasteful heresy.

**Like Jews**

Since the second century the concept of Judaizing, or being like the Jews, was a potential mark of heresy.\(^{456}\) Famously elaborated in Justin Martyr’s second-century work *Dialogue with Trypho*, the Jew is seen as one who will neither accept the revelation of the message of Jesus Christ nor the Christian Scriptures. Focusing on Ephraem’s attacks on Neo-Arians, Christine

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454. See the discussion of Ephraem’s treatment of the relation between the practice of the Manichaean meal and their teaching regarding salvation in chapter four.

455. See section on wild animals below.

Shephardson has shown that the idea of the Judaizing Christian or of the Jew was used by Ephraem himself to cast his opponents in a questionable light. Shephardson focuses her work on Ephraem’s portrayal of Arius and Neo-Arians as Jews or Judaizers as a means of discrediting them. This motif is less common in Ephraem’s writings against Marcion, Bar Dayšān and Mani. It is not clear why such an appellation would not work just as well for a Nicean orthodox Christian audience against these particular teachers. Perhaps, it is because the false teachers, in this case, rejected the Old Testament, and so claims of Judaizing and Jewishness would seem much less plausible. It may be for just that reason that Ephraem does not actually claim that Bar Dayšān or Mani are Jews or that they are Judaizing, but rather that their actions resemble those of Jews, or that the effects of their actions are as detrimental.

The allusion to Ezekiel’s apocalyptic concerning the nations of Israel and Judah in Ezekiel 8 is discussed already above. Ephraem also relates the Manichaean adherents to the Jews in Genesis who apostatized in the desert while Moses was upon the mountain meeting with God. In his Second Discourse to Hypatius he says:

But when that fraud (ܙܐܦܐ) is shattered (ܣܮܰܚܫ) by the questions of the truth (ܬܪܐ) all his system has been exposed (ܐܬܓܡܝ) and laid bare (ܐܬܦܬܩܝ). For as the question of Moses shattered the molten calf, so the power of the truth shatters the fabricated (ܫܬܟܒܐ) teaching. But I know that although the calf was shattered the Jews did not flee from the worship of it, so also the teaching of the Manichaean has been well exposed, but the Manichaean do not revile the worship of the sun and the moon. For they are like one another in their blasphemies, even if they are not alike in their scriptures. For as the Jews blaspheme against the New Testament, they blaspheme against the Old Testament.

457. Anti-Judaism, particularly pages 21-68.
459. PR I, 43; xlix-l. Adapted from Mitchell.
Ephraem makes four fundamental claims in this passage. The first is that Mani is a fraud. The second is that the Manichaean philosophical system has been categorically refuted. It stands “shattered” (ܣܮܰܚܫ), “exposed and laid bare” (ܐܬܦܬܩܝ ܐܬܓܡܝ). The third is that Mani’s teaching is fabricated, just like Aaron’s calf. The fourth claim is that the Manichaeans are as misguided as the Jews who continued to fail to see God’s true teaching despite the correctives throughout their history. This passage is followed by an application of Jesus’ parable about the old and new wineskins (Matthew 9:17 and parallels) as an interpretation of why the Jews reject the New Testament and the Manichaeans the Old.

Continuing with allusions to the New Testament, Ephraem refers to some of the worst criminals of the gospels when he equates the worship of idols with the prayers of Bar Dayšānites, Manichaeans and Jews. He says:

And just as one who worships idols does not worship wood or stone, but devils, so one who prays with the Manichaeans prays with Satan, and one who prays with the Marcionites, prays with Legion, and one who prays with the followers of Bar Dayšān, with Beelzebub and one who prays with the Jews, with Barabbas, the robber.

What associations could be more poignant? Beelzebub is another name for Satan in the New Testament. Indeed it is the name used when Jesus is accused of only having the power to cast out

461. PR I, 43-44; 1.
462. 5Hyp, PR I, 184-85; cxix. Following Mitchell’s translation here.
demons because he is possessed by a demon. And Barabbas is the one whom the Jews chose over against Jesus of Nazareth when given the choice by Pontius Pilate.

What must also be acknowledged is that Jews too were a threat to the Christian community. Ephraem’s relating the Dayšānites and Manichaeans to Jews is potentially as damaging to Jews as it is to either of the former. We should not presume that Judaism was not a viable religious option in fourth century northern Mesopotamia, and that Jews were no ideological threat to Christians. In fact, the effectiveness of the associations that Ephraem draws between his opponents is that they are so thoroughly connected to a broader symbolic network; they enable him to link several heretics together as an evil aggregate, thereby rendering association with any member of its group as negative. Effectively, the churchgoer considering participation or even already dabbling in any of these other faith traditions have now been told quite publicly that their alter-ecclesial associations are reckless. These associations also allow Ephraem to highlight the fact that his rejection of these traditions is not arbitrary but based on certain principles. Jews and Arians are both to be rejected for denying the divinity of Christ. Marcionites, Bar Dayšānites, Manichaeans and Jews are all to be rejected for abandoning the worship of the true God and denying the authority of part of scripture, albeit that they rejected different parts of scripture.


Conclusion

For all that Ephraem says against his opponents, all of the innuendo and jibes, he does not create the elaborate horror stories found in some accounts of heretics. There are later heresiographies that accuse Manichaeans of sacrificing children and eating human flesh as part of their religion. Ephraem does not employ any such accusations in his writings against his opponents. Rather than belittling their actions at every opportunity, he speaks fairly highly of their behavior. As we have discussed in detail in chapter four, when interpreting Matthew 7.16/20 which says that “you will know [false prophets] by their fruits,” he argues that the “fruits” of these false prophets are their “words” rather than their deeds, because their deeds are like his own and “appear as fine.” Ephraem attacks his opponents on the matter of integrity. He suggests that their good behavior and piety are evident, but fraudulent. As the last three chapters have illustrated, Ephraem spends a great deal of time demonstrating that things are not as they appear with Bar Dayšān, Mani and their followers. It is my conclusion that the reputation of the Dayšānites and Manichaeans explains the relative lack of character assassination in Ephraem’s works against Bar Dayšān and Mani. Because his own disciples could see the pious discipline of the Dayšānites and the Manichaeans, Ephraem could not attack them heavily on the grounds of their actions. So, instead, he focused on their teachings and the duplicitous nature of their pious appearance.


466. PR I, cxix.
Moreover, the images Ephraem utilizes when maligning Bar Dayšān, Mani and their followers are typological, not literal. The heretic is ignorant of what s/he is teaching, not intentionally teaching harmful and illogical things. Ephraem’s opponents are not really drunks, but with this term, which recalls their own anthropological language, Ephraem mockingly explains their failure to notice the incoherence of their teachings. Likewise, Ephraem does not claim that these adversaries are actually insane as much as he offers that diagnosis as a tongue-in-cheek explanation for their proposing and believing foolish teaching.
Conclusion

The threat of heterodoxy is very real to Ephraem. He is genuinely concerned that the teachings and communities of Bar Dayṣānites and Manichaeans are infecting his own. His polemics are not a simple foray into the genre of heresiography. Instead, we find a carefully plotted course for developing a very real and very practical defense against movements that Ephraem sees as divisive and detrimental. Therefore, many of the classical heresiographical marks are missing from Ephraem’s work. There is no gross misrepresentation, though his reading of his opponents’ teachings is rarely generous and would not likely be accepted by those within the Dayṣānite and Manichaean communities. He does not take liberties with the biographies of his opponents, nor does he slander them. While he mocks them, he is careful to stay close to their texts and their practices. It appears clear that Ephraem takes his particular heresiological stance because the members of his congregation are interacting favorably with those of Dayṣānite and Manichaean traditions. Indeed, he even praises the piety of his opponents, demonstrating, literally, a sincere concern that their piety itself may be enough to lead some of his own community away. Ephraem’s polemics are those of a church leader in a time of Christian diversity where the alternative Christianities that he encounters are seen by many as very viable, even quite appealing options. It may well be that local Christians saw no problem at all in maintaining participation in the activities of more than one of these communities at a time.

Ephraem seeks to direct his community in how it should respond to these other Christian traditions. He wants his community to think of them as either ‘for’ or ‘against’ the true Church, as he sees it. This is certainly a contested category, and Ephraem lays out clear markers for communities that ought to be regarded as participating in the genuine Christian tradition. Most broadly put, for Ephraem the true Church is the Nicene orthodox church that maintains faithfully
the scriptures and theological and liturgical traditions of the apostolic ministry of Jesus Christ. The focus of this project has been the exploration of Ephraem’s approach to two particular adversaries of Nicene orthodoxy, Bar Dayṣān and Mani. In dealing with these two opponents of true orthodoxy Ephraem employs his symbolic approach to theology in what Sidney Griffith has called his ‘typology of error.’ It is the elucidation of the application of this typology to the likes of the Dayṣānite and Manichaean communities’ teachings and practices that is the main contribution of this dissertation.

In Ephraem’s positive typology he draws from the three sources of revelation—scripture, nature, and the person of Jesus Christ—developing a theological tapestry of elaborately interwoven symbols. In his polemical typology, Ephraem continues to draw from these sources of authoritative knowledge about God, but incorporates into his data revelation about the Dayṣānite and Manichaean communities from their texts and observations about their practices. The two typological tracks, one of truth, one of error, are juxtaposed within Ephraem’s thought and writing. The former reveals the faults of the latter. One keen example of this is Ephraem’s handling of the topic of the authority that a teacher derives from her/his lineage, or succession. True apostolic succession is juxtaposed to the succession of the church’s adversaries, which is symbolically shown to be modeled on the career of Satan and the serpent in the garden, as opposed to that of the prophets, the apostles and Christ.

Beyond dismantling the authority claims of his opponents, Ephraem also felt compelled to address their apparent piety. While he also works to show that their practices, however noble, are inconsistent with their mythologies and thus ineffective to achieve their intended aims, Ephraem’s typological approach focuses more on the disingenuous nature of their behavior.
Ephraem finds a symbolic idiom for this discussion ready for him in the scriptures. Drawing on the language of Jesus in regards to true believing communities and mislead, or misleading, religious traditions, Ephraem casts his opponents as the thorns that choke the wheat and the weeds that hide among it from Matthew 13. Further he portrays them as the false prophets, the wolves in sheep’s clothing of Matthew 7. For Ephraem Jesus has already illustrated the type of the deceptively pious religious leader in the gospels. Ephraem simply weaves these images into his own polemic. This is all the more poignant because he is drawing on texts that the Dayšânite and Manichaean communities also hold as authoritative and which they are also exegeting. Ephraem is engaging in an exegetical battle for the right to claim the status of the types of wheat and sheep for his community. There is an evident interest in securing control of the biblical agrarian polemic of the gospels.

While Ephraem refrains from gross misrepresentation, because his opponents are too well known and well respected for such an approach, this does not mean that Ephraem does not attack his opponents personally, or on the grounds of their conduct. It simply means that he uses another tactic. Instead of fabricating embarrassing stories or details about these communities, Ephraem culls his derisive remarks from their own literature and practices, exegeting his types from information internal to those communities. In this way, Ephraem’s personal attacks about the filth, licentiousness, drunkenness and depravity of his opponents come from their own teachings and behavior. He does not even feign a literal intent for these remarks. Instead, through developing the shameful symbolism available to him in their own sources, Ephraem demonstrates the weakness of both their ideology and their ethical program.
Fourth century northern Mesopotamia knows many claimants to the position of one true church. Ephraem of Nisibis operates within a context of contested Christian identity and religious authority. Two of his primary concerns are the threats of the Dayšānite and Manichaean communities and their continuing influence within his own community. In this variegated Christian milieu, Ephraem navigates the complex heterodoxical terrain by typologically exegeting both what he recognizes as the authoritative revelation of truth about God and what he knows of the teachings and practices of the followers of Bar Dayšān and Mani.
Appendix

This appendix is composed of the Syriac text and English translation of *madrāšê*, I, II, III, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, and LVI from Ephraem’s *Hymns against Heresies*. The translations are my own. The Syriac text is reproduced from Edmund Beck’s edition, unless otherwise noted.
According to the tune of the judgement of the tribes

Error in the infidels is the fount of injuries.
And love wishes to be a physician with harsh measures.
Inflicting pain without anger; causing suffering without rage.
There is no physician who cuts in hatred.
And while his love is very becoming, his iron, terrifying and hard.
Sweet with his remedies; bitter\textsuperscript{467} with his medicines.

Response: Blessed is the one who exposed the plots of the left hand.

Envy was exceedingly mad and bit people.
His bitterness was moving him, and he was hurting everyone he found.
Rage within his heart, a curse within his mouth.
He was a spring and root of bitterness!
Adorned and deceptive to you was the fruit that he was holding out to you.
Within Sodom was his kind of reckoning.

A volume of loss he pours continually.
His disputing is from pride, ruffled by contention.
His snare is laid and becoming: it seems to be a house of refuge.
His reckoning is a black cloud!
While he releases death into the clear, cloudless sky,
his storehouse is full of hail-stones, which he is continually forging.

Within, dishonest and gloomy; without, cheerful and lovable;
Gladly he deceives you; peacefully he discards you.
It is as if he is entirely on your side; but he is entirely against you.
He is a weaver of every loom continually!
He laughs while deceiving you; kisses while biting you.
He is sweet while choking you; beginning and ending in you.

\textsuperscript{467} The root \textit{šəm} can refer to both bitterness and poison.
The lion often remains in the country
and the serpent within the house; dwelling but not harming.
Jealousy, within and without, doing evil without stopping.
Likewise the tower of flesh in the east:
His height, willingly, he bows for a man.
The mount peaceful; the rider prideful.

If you see a snake, you should not be very afraid.
And should a demon oppose you, despise him and do not back down.
If jealousy accosts you, cross yourself and flee.
If envy attacks you, you should not stay.
Leave, go call on Job, see yourself in his sufferings.
For he [envy] exhales death, he breathes out to corrupt you.

If a woman loves you, your lot is that of Joseph.\(^{469}\)
If a woman hates you, your burden is that of Elijah.\(^{470}\)
If your brother should spite you, get Jacob’s wings.\(^{471}\)
Abel brought out for you a taste.\(^{472}\)
But if, regardless of all of this, you are pursuing envy,
Look at our Lord, and rehearse: “When he was hung, he was innocent!”

It was not envy, against whom his sword was drawn
and through blood quenched the thirst of his own reckoning!
The physician opened and produced iron instruments of healing.
Love itself cut pains as a remedy
Whether they were cured or not, they were convicted as far as they did wrong.
The cured were gladdening him, because they were guarded by his cautions.

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\(^{468}\) Beck has the verb pointed to represent the Pa’el participle, לֶאַבְשָׁנ, but the sense of the P’al infinitive, לֶאָבְשָׁנ, makes much better sense.

\(^{469}\) Genesis 39.

\(^{470}\) 1 Kings 19.

\(^{471}\) Genesis 27:41-43.

\(^{472}\) Genesis 4.
How truly envious the evil one became of the body of Bar Daysān
With his mouth he cut down his hope; he was reviling his half.
He drew his tongue and denied his own resurrection.
Now Marcion he made rabid and maddened.
He studied his maker and insulted his creator.
Also Mani, as with his own garment, he donned him and spoke through him.

He gave Bar Daysān a hoard of tares.
He buried and smothered the wheat with his thorns and tares.
Into a bundle, he tied him, among the tares.
He gave wolves as apostles to Marcion.
He steals the clothes of lambs to conceal them on the outside.
With Mani, as with a hog, he was continually stirring up his mud. 473

The speech of Bar Daysān, publicly was very sober
In secret it rages in the sacrament of blasphemy.
He is a sly woman, a bedroom adulteress.
Marcion is a whore who contemned.
Mani, who earnestly licked up the vomit of the double (serpent),
vomits up bitterness to his sons, wormwood to his disciples.

With vestments and beryls, he adorned Bar Daysān;
Marcion he clothed in sack-cloth to darken the sons of light.
He dyed Mani with paleness so that he might lead astray through him.
He armed each of them with every evil:
Marcion with blasphemy, Bar Daysān with error
The dregs that remained and were left behind he poured out within Mani.

473. See 2 Peter 2:22.

474. This expression is found in Matthew 13:30.

475. This expression is found in Matthew 7:15.
And the sons of the serpent began to creep in the earth
so that they might lead astray the ignorant and lead away captive the innocent
head of the race like the former serpent.
He saw Eve in the time of ignorance.\textsuperscript{476}
He pacified her and she trusted; he counseled her and she rejoiced;
He overtook her and she repented; and he struck her and she mourned.

The twitching of limbs\textsuperscript{477} and the augury of seasons;
One book records thunderings, another book mysteries;
one records the [lunar] phases,\textsuperscript{478} arranged opposite the signs of the zodiac.
And instead of the business of the church,
a sheep who ruminates on the books of the Holy One,
these are covering themselves\textsuperscript{479} with books of loss.

One whose body is healthy, they sicken his mind.
And whoever is sick they heal; so when he regains health he will die.
Whoever is broken they bind up, that he may run into their traps.
When they are muttering incantations over a child who was stung,
the scorpion has struck without; the incantation strikes within.
Between the two deaths, the fool casts himself.

\textsuperscript{476} Genesis 3.

\textsuperscript{477} Pseudo-Justin’s \textit{Quaestiones et responsiones ad orthodoxos} (29), likely a fifth-century Syrian text, refers to twitching limbs of divination.

\textsuperscript{478} Beck (vol. 170, page 5, n. 26) takes this to mean troop, or band, as of military, or of demons. He makes reference to the Romance of Julian and to Isaac of Antioch where such a book is described. However, Ephraem uses this for the phases of the moon as they wane from the full moon. See \textit{ThSyr} I, 1481, where both meanings are addressed. Phil Botha follows Beck, “The Textual Strategy of Ephrem the Syrian’s Hymn Contra Haereses I,” \textit{Acta Patristica et Byzantina} 15 (2004): 60, 73 n.33.

\textsuperscript{479} \textit{ܡܠܐ} can also have the sense of “study,” “rehearse,” or “practice.”

\textsuperscript{480} Same book is referred to in LVI.9.
Jezebel overcame Ahab; his ring, for his condemnation, sealed the letter.\(^{481}\) And error, for Bar Daysān, published with his own tongue the script for his indictment. Even Marcion put his hand (signed) to a record of his debts. Mani, in his madrāṣe, published that, to his companion, he sold his freedom.

In the dens of Bar Daysān are melodies and songs. Since he saw youth, that it longs for sweetness, By the harmony of his chants he excited the young. Marcion, who was like the snake, had fasted. He magnified and threw out words of the snake, in his hearing. Mani let his mouth flow and he flooded it with promises.

The enclosure, suddenly they tore down, of Bar Daysān. For he had not read in it the prophets, the sons of the truth. It was the books of the signs of the zodiac he read and interpreted in it. Marcion, who also had denied his creator, creation was menacing him, (leaving him) trembling and staggering through it. Since Mani brayed abundantly the children of the east flayed him.\(^{482}\) The End

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\(^{481}\) 1 Kings 21:8.

\(^{482}\) Mani’s execution is also brought up in 2Hyp, PR 1, 15; xxxvi.
According to the same tune
Now whoever, with the name of the Dayšān, nicknamed Bar Dayšān?
He drowned in Bar Dayšān more than the Dayšān has!
His word flooded bringing along thistles and tares.
He polished Marcion so much that he tarnished him.
He hammered him until he had blunted his mind with blasphemy.
Mani became a garment to wear away his clothes.

Response: Your furnace will lay bare, O Lord, the fraud of Bar Dayšān.

And now Mani’s dogs set upon every person.
They fawn over everyone they find for the sake of today’s bread.
They are feeble dogs, who are not capable of breaking bread.
They are actually forgiving sins and debts.
In this way they are mad, and they ought to be beaten.
Since one alone is able to forgive sins to sinners.

According to their will they have stretched the word of the true one
who authorized his disciples only once
to absolve through water humankind’s sins,
and who appointed them to loose and also to bind,
so that the one who was bound might pray before him who forgives all
who is truly the absolver of all, absolving us through our contrition.

483. סǖ is the verb used for the action of the thorns to choke out the good seed in Matthew 13:7.
484. סǖ is very close to סǖ, which refers to a flood. Ephraem is intertwining the imageries of the flooding river and the overwhelming choking of weeds and thorns. He is related the teaching of Bar Dayšān to both.
485. וס could refer here to either a crucible or a bushel, of wheat for example. This ambiguity is likely utilized intentionally by Ephraem here.
486. Ephraem also discusses the prohibition against breaking bread in 2Hyp, PR 1, 4; xxx.
489. Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; Colossians 2:13.
For it is right that he be mistreated, that one who was at rest and sinned⁴⁹⁰
And if that absolver of all absolves us through our contrition,
It is a joke that for morsels of bread they would absolve us.
The prophet, Buzi’s son, teaches you.
Morsels, the fee of diviners, had they given to harlots.⁴⁹¹
And repentance is abolished by the bribery of bellies!

You should not trust, child, that they will not still strike you.
For a broken reed⁴⁹² is their forgiveness. This
sin increases upon the wanton person whom it enchants.
That scheme is a way of the filthy one!
And truly there was never a person who went into hell
about whom I am content that their way was without effort.

A woman subjugated the Sabbatarians, whose heads
They bow before the hand of her, upon the throne which is on the Bema.
She harangues their ears; insults their beards.
Indeed nature does not rebuke or revere her.
Quq too, for the Quqites, was a type through his name.
For he made them pitchers, emptied by his teaching.

This is a wonder that while equal they are divided.
The evil one made them like flutes.
And he plays on them melodies discordant through quarreling.
This is the lyre whose strings
are quarrelling between their tones, contrary to each
song of harmony, whose composer is accursed.

⁴⁹⁰. This is most likely a reference to the ascetic “rest” of the elect within Manichaeism. Notice Epistle of Barnabas 4.13, “asleep in our sins.” This is also possibly a reference to the heresy of Sabbatarianism, resting on seventh day, but still being in sin. Sabbatarians are called out by name in the sixth stanza.

⁴⁹¹. Ezekiel 13:19. The word I have translated morsels, ܒܡܡܐ, is that found in the Peshitta of Ezekiel. The word I have translated harlots, ܕܥܒܕܐ, refers to unclean things, but is also used to refer to harlots, which I have chosen because the false prophets in Ezekiel were women.

⁴⁹². The phrase ‘broken reed’ (ܐܪܥܝܥܐ) appears in 2 Kings 18:21 and Isaiah 36:6, where it refers to Egypt, which is a “broken reed” that pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it.
They possess, all of them do, the bows\textsuperscript{493} of deceit.
They have drunk the same dregs, one after another they filled and poured.
The church called them; the evil one fears her;
Seeing the modest ones within her and he was shaken.
He stops up with controversy the ears of his tares.
Fearing lest her voice should flow into their ears.

The evil one made them proud, filling them with his boastfulness.
He cast them and stamped them with a seal of controversy.
He twisted and formed them into the form of contention.
And since he saw that they were hungry, he cut off and gave stolen words, and they were blinded and did not investigate so that they might recognize their companions by their amputated limbs.

And he knew that he was not able to bind them to himself, since, as the truth revealed its face and showed the integrity of its words, he saw his captives that they were drunk on the love of that truth.
From the book of life he cut out and took away words for the deceitful comfort of his disciples, so that through them he might collect captives within his wells.

Because falsehood is not capable of being seen through its vices; its fraud was becoming like that seal of truth, since it dons its forms, and leads astray by its likenesses.
And because from the truth it is stolen, neither did he falsify it nor did he affirm it entirely.
His thefts suffice for his charges, without dispute!

And even the leaven\textsuperscript{494} of life, which he stole and seized from us, he hid within his words; he feared lest it should spread, that power of its vitality, into the soul of his hearers.
The words which he stole, he changed their power,

\textsuperscript{493} נדוח refers to the hunting bow.

\textsuperscript{494} Matthew 13:33.
so that he might provide a foundation of sand\textsuperscript{495} for his builders; they labored and built falsehood; it was a tower for falling.

Altogether the church did not acknowledge their books. When they do call as witnesses the books written in her, since they acknowledge that Moses existed, they denounced themselves. As they all renounce each other, they falsify their scriptures and give, unawares, the crown to the true one, who acknowledged his heralds.

When they thought that they found something extremely important, truth artfully triumphed, since all the while his words were adjudicating. He took them hostage and made them witnesses for his sayings. And while they were refuting one another, truth was like Gideon; since as the fools were killing one another with their swords,\textsuperscript{496} they succumbed and crowned him.

All the sons of error acknowledge that the truth exists. Mani emphatically denied it and was caught promptly. When they erred and thought that the truth did not exist, soon there was someone who would recall that they did not know. They accused themselves. They cut up and damaged the books, and alienated expressions whose intent is the same.

Now if a man dared to cut off a limb, the company of limbs petition and beseech him. Even the limb’s own place calls out. And while a passage which has been cut out is living and enlivens all, it is dead for its thief. But when it was fastened in its place it was enlivening whenever it was read.

\textsuperscript{495} Matthew 7:26-27.

\textsuperscript{496} Judges 7:22.
This is the body of the truth which rabid, erring men have cut up for its passages, as a type of members. And because it is spiritual, it is found to be wholly complete. With the incomplete ones, who cut it up, there it is incomplete, and they are not fulfilled by it. Within the church of the truth, perfect is the one who perfects it.

The church of the great, true one, whose bosom is great, is sufficient for the fullness of two testaments. For broken cisterns are shamed since they are not able to receive downpours within them. Old wineskins crack from the freshness of the wine whose acerbity softens in new ones.

But the sons of error see the two testaments, that they are united and put together, and they are the body of the truth. From them they cut and taken out, and then bound and made books. They have cut and taken out genealogies which are convenient. And this is the disgrace: that they want, a complete body, to put together from that cutting of the members.

There is no beginning to the book that they read. How did they make a body that has no head, and no hands, the two testaments? Who conceives of a disfigured body that has neither hands, nor feet? Such a body’s fashioners are blind and contentious.

An eye in the place of an ear they were fashioning even prattlers. The left hand they had cut off and removed. Fools! Opposite it they fastened another left foot. Their arrangement testifies how much they injured. In place of that body, magnificent of passages have they jumbled and made into a book, troubling in its readings.

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For you, O Church, this body of the truth is gladdening, ordered in its members, complete in its passages, faithful in its promises, crowned in its victories. The truth was its uplifted head. And the two covenants, its extended hands. The apostles were its senses; the prophets its members.  

The End
According to the same tune
Let us rebuke the infidels in the type of the thieves.
The wealth they stole cries out against them because it has been given speech.
They stole names and donned something which is not.
For they have always donned the name of God,
the idols which were honored. And thus with his appellations
entities that are not were adored and renowned.

Response: Blessed is he who by his scriptures rebuked the sons of error

For not from entities, the son is the entity for all,
since there is no essence that has come to be made.
Since the entity is also the name for that lord of the entities
and his name is upon him from everlasting, not divided.
Into effectible entities, they divided and portioned his name
Between five powers they divided his essence.

Even is the name of the entities, because it is not among those
of the old or the young, and therefore also not among those
of the strong or the weak. For the name is even.
Behold it makes everything even with everything,
since either all of them are good or all of them are just
and it is impossible that they would be made and maker

But Bar Daysân was bound by the hand of Marcion but was loosed
because it is surely not possible that there would be two gods
because of that appellation, “God’s substance is one.”
And he erred, who by his own weapons was conquered
Since if there are no gods, he is conquered because there are no entities
Because of that appellation, “The substance of a being is one.”
If one proclaims “God is one,” one must proclaim “the entity is one.”
Since God is only one also the entity is one;
One is in them both, entity and God.
And in the one name it is all comprehended
That he did not set up another god beside God
Foolish is the one who would set up five substances alongside him [God].

Because of the six zones he numbered six entities
He set up four entities corresponding to four zones
One he set up within the deep and another in the height
Marcion numbered two gods;
the entities and the gods were rebuked by one force
since they would curtail his divinity and divide his substance.

The error of the Greeks spread in Bar Daysān.
For he taught that from the entities he [God] created all and formed all.
It prevailed in Mani also, the lying which is from [the East]
as he retained two forces that make war.
Marcion names three roots also.
They multiplied gods since they are godless.

They were rebuked because it is from one the sons of error have stolen
names which they have endued
upon something which does not exist.
In his son they were mixing his names without distinction.
Marcion and Bar Daysān testify
that when, behold, they are made distinct they are equal with his generation
Since they confess that he is god and do not deny that he is the son.

499. Ephraem discusses Bar Daysān’s five substances in Against Mani, PR 2, 214-15; ci-cii; and 3Hyp, PR 1, 52-53; liv-lv.

500. The term here is actually ܚܦܕܘ, but can be understood simply to mean “the East.” This phrase “the lying which is from India” should be understood to refer to what Mani teaches and not Mani himself, the former being defined by “as he retained two forces that make war.”
Who is it who is not trembling at this son of truth:
an abundance of tares, behold, are proclaiming his birth.
It was advanced by unbelievers who did not deny his generation.
Who is this that does not weep nor regret:
seeing the outer ones, who without inquiring, believed;\(^5\)
gazing at the inner ones, who were unsatisfied, since they were displaced.\(^6\)

And also the Jew did not inquire about the secret things
when well within his books clear things were buried for him?
The dispute is whether by his suffering it blinded him with its smoke.
He confesses the holy spirit without debate.
But if it was required he denied and when he was well beaten, he blasphemed.
For their crown is death and their armor is the mutilation of hope.

But when he denied the son, the buried ones from their tombs
went out and reproved him there. And now if it is he who is denying
the spirit, that “it is not.” The scriptures are disturbing to him
because the spirit is the spirit of the mouth of the Lord\(^7\)
And his spirit is against him, and whether there was a time
that existed without the spirit let them demonstrate without controversy.

And instead of “it was beautiful that he would create by the hand of his son”
They demonstrated that when he created, indeed she [spirit] created with him
She who fashioned with him the heavens and the creatures,\(^8\)
[they] who went mad and denied the son and were angry [with] him.
Concerning the other maker, they are proud who are helping him.
And since they sent and hurled the truth, they met with shame.

\(^5\) Marcion/Bar Dayšān/Mani vis a vis Gentiles.
\(^6\) Arians vis a vis Jews.
\(^7\) Psalm 33:6.
\(^8\) Proverbs 8:27.
I learned and I had faith in you that you are one in your essence
I heard and I assert that you are the father on account of your only begotten
I was baptized thrice on account of the name of your holy spirit
I learned the truths of all of them
That when your opulence was scattered, your treasury was not investigated
Praises to you from everyone who is aware that s/he is a human
The End
According to the tune of “the infants were killed”
Like the body of the alphabet, which is complete in its members; and there is no removing a letter, nor adding another, thus is the truth that is written in the holy gospel, with the letters of the alphabet, the perfect measure which does not accept less or more.

Response: Blessed is your image that is in the alphabet!

Because Marcion added fraud the church rejected and expelled him; Valentinus, because he deviated; and, likewise, the ‘Potter’ [because he] polluted. Bar Daysăn enhanced his fraud. Mani went completely mad. A bundle of thorns and tares! May the good one in his love turn them from wandering to within his pasture. Blessed is he who cares about the evil ones.

Valentinus stole a flock from the church and called it by his name. The Quqite gave one his own name. The crafty Bar Daysăn stole one. And they [each] made it like a flock that is inside.506 Marcion had abandoned his sheep; Mani fell upon and captured them from him, One rabid man was biting another rabid man.

They [each] called a flock by their own names. Blessed is the one who threw them out of his house.

506. As though within the church.
Since they erred and went astray the Arians,  
And the Aetians, since they were subtle,  
And the Paulinians, since they were perverse,  
And the Sabellians, since they were cunning,  
And the Photinians, since they were fraudulent,  
And the Borborians, since they were defiled,  
And the Qathari, since they were purified,  
And the Audians, since they were ensnared,  
And the Messalians, since they were lavish.  
May the good one will turn them to his fold.

Behold, their hands lost hold of it all  
and there are no handles to grab onto.  
But they turned and called us Palutians  
and this we eluded and rejected.  
May a curse be on anyone  
who is called by Palut’s name,  
instead of by Christ’s name.  
The crucible of the anathema lays bare those  
who do not want to curse.  
Blessed is the one by whose anathema they are laid bare.

It is also not what Palut had wanted  
that people would be called by his name.  
And if he were alive, with all anathemas,  
on account of this, he would have anathematized.  
Since he was a disciple of the apostle,  
who donned suffering and was embittered  
against the Corinthians who abandoned  
the name of Christ and were called  
by the names of men.  
Blessed is the one who possesses the true [name].

507. The root of the name Qathari is the Greek καθαρός, which means “pure.” ThSyr, II, 3778.

508. Each of these words is playing on the name “Palut.”

509. 1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:4f.; See also XXII.10; XXIV.4, 10, 13, 17 and 20; LVI.5.
And a teacher who does not add anything foul or hateful to the teaching of the Messiah, his disciples are Messiahites. And if he adds a little fraud, he abandons the name “Messiah,” and by his own name, “tare,” even his disciples are called, Since the fraud does not agree with the truth. Blessed is the one who established us in his truth.

The way is clear for the simple ones, since it is the faith that offered the lodgings and the milestones from paradise to paradise that by the hand of Adam, expulsion and by the thief, restitution. And investigations like deviations cast out those who investigate from the clear [way] to rough place. Blessed is the one who guards the innocent ones!

The brothers saw that the image of the king strikes all coinage But the greatest general was not able to stamp a small coin with his image And when he stamps the image of the king, he who secretly stamps either is burned or is cut How much indeed that one dared who stamped his own image instead of our lord’s. Blessed is the one who stamps us with his name!

510. *Shapya* clear from sin, dregs; level; use in *ayna shapya*, etc. idea of clear thoughts, spring.
Gold is very despised to our king, who does not stamp his image on money. It is on humankind, on the greatest of all, that our savior stamps his beauty. Whoever believes in the name of God receives the stamp of God. And if one is called by the name of human, He receives a human stamp, which is despicable to the living name. Blessed is the one who chose us by his names.

Judas though he had stolen, was named a disciple. And he who was the head of the left hand our Lord called him ‘friend’ and taught that although the disciple was insolent, so long as he was not causing a schism he was a disciple. But once he rebelled and caused a schism, he became a friend of the adversary. Now behold his type in Iscariot! To You be praise out of my weakness.

It is written, "Who is it among the kings who about to instigate battle with another king, his comrade, …" It calls them ‘comrades’, not because they agree, but because they are equal in the titles of kingship. Now on account of this the jealous one was moved and did not permit the Corinthians

512. Matthew 26:50.
513. מכתיב literally means “he writes.”
to be called by the name of a human.\footnote{1 Corinthians 1:12; See also HcH XXII.6, XXIVIV.4, 10, 13, 17, and 20; LVI.5.} The appeal of a king against rebels.

Fraud clothes itself with truth, so that, with borrowed beauty, it might lead astray. And the faithless one, if he professes, because he is in the clothing of the lamb, he will be believed. Judas to our savior said “greetings Rabbi.”\footnote{This phrase is found only in Matthew 26:49. Mark 14:45 also has Judas say “Rabbi,” but not “greetings.”} But by his ranks\footnote{Sedra (ܩܕܪܐ) can refer to military ranks, lines, etc. and should likely be understood to reference the ranks of people who followed him to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. The band of soldiers (ܓܒܐ ܒܰܠܸܤ) mentioned in this pericope in both John 18.3 and the Diatessaron highlights the military sense of the term more particularly.} he was exposed. Just as Mani by his actions since he established a sect with his own disciples. Blessed is the one who endured his arrogance.

May he (Mani) be called the Messiah of fraud. He breathes a spirit of falsehood into his prophets, and he broke his body for his disciples, and divided the earth for his heralds, in the name of our Lord, against our Lord! And when he judged that he was not being received; openly, among many he named himself an ‘apostle,’ the ‘Paraclete,’ who shot up yesterday. Blessed is the one who stayed and then caught him.

\footnote{515. 1 Corinthians 1:12; See also HcH XXII.6, XXIVIV.4, 10, 13, 17, and 20; LVI.5.} 516. This phrase is found only in Matthew 26:49. Mark 14:45 also has Judas say “Rabbi,” but not “greetings.” 517. Sedra (ܩܕܪܐ) can refer to military ranks, lines, etc. and should likely be understood to reference the ranks of people who followed him to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. The band of soldiers (ܓܒܐ ܒܰܠܸܒ) mentioned in this pericope in both John 18.3 and the Diatessaron highlights the military sense of the term more particularly.
We should know that these are trivial
to one who is rash, and it is less to him
whose mouth pours out blasphemy,
and whose tongue he sharpened for the falsehood
that even the soul, "which is in a dog
is from the nature of the divinity," 518
Indeed it is not difficult for him if he
made himself God  519
to have made God abide in a dog.
Blessed is the just one who is not incensed!

All the rebellious ones testify
that one is the yoke upon them;
one is the spirit which breathes in them;
one is the error which twitters in them.
They have schemed and written teachings,
accursed, vile, and abhorrent,
which are not from the apostles and the prophets.
And who is able to wash away, my brothers,
the filth from within their books?
May the merciful one clean them!

Let them be questioned about their ages,
Who is older than his friend?
Might Mani seize the right of the first-born?
Bar Daysān was prior to him
And might Bar Daysān be declared the eldest?
Younger is his age than the prior ones.
Marcion, the prior thorn,
the first-born of the thicket of sin,

518. Taking ܐ to be a marker of a quote, this is a reference to the Manichaean teaching that the Light Soul is in all creatures, even dogs.

519. Reference to Mani’s declaration that he was the Paraclete.

520. In his notes Beck shows ܪܘܕܐ attested in one manuscript. Adolf Rücker preferred this reading, Des Heiligen Ephräms des Syrerys Hymnen gegen
die Irrlehren, aus dem Syrischen übers (Bibliothek der Kirchenväter, 61, München : Kösel & Pustet, 1928). Neither term is clearly preferable.
the tare which was the first and germinated:
May the upright one trample his growth!

Let them be questioned discerningly.
From whom did they receive the hand?521
If they received [it] from us and refused [it],
this is sufficient for our truth.
But if they ordained priests and were presumptuous,
this is sufficient to rebuke [them];
This is more than enough for their shame:
that anyone is a priest if he is willing
to lay his hand on his head.
The confusion that cuts off hope!

The exalted one inclined to Mount Sinai
and laid his hand on Moses.522
Moses placed it on Aaron,
and it stretched to John.
Therefore, our Lord said to him,
“IT is righteousness that I be baptized by you.”523
so that the order would not perish at him [John],
Our Lord gave it to his apostles,
and behold within our church is its succession.
Blessed is the one who committed his order to us.

The voice of our Lord besieged them
and their tents were carried off,
the Aetians and Arians;
the Sabellians and Qathari;
the Photinians and Audians.
From our church they received ordination
and some of them even signed

521. The phrase ܩܒܡܘ ܐܝܕܐ most likely refers to the imposition of the hand of ordination.
523. Matthew 3:15.
the faith that was recorded
at the glorious synod.\footnote{Nicea.}
May the king who assembled them be memorialized!

They were heads within the churches
and there are priests and deacons,
others, scribes and readers,
and there was one who was from the covenant.
And from the church they have stolen the order
of various forms of service:
ordaining and baptizing,
and celebrating the Eucharist and teaching
that our Lord came, and again he will come.
Blessed is the one who enveloped all with his truth.

They stirred up and became ensnared since they also mixed
the poison of death into their teachings.
There was investigation and inquiry.
Some mixed revelations;
and others acts.\footnote{This is a reference to Bar Daysan, who Ephraem elsewhere (Against Bar Daysan’s “Domnus”), and the BLC also, refer to Bar Daysan’s affinity (if former) for astrology.}
Some … Chaldean [knowledge];\footnote{Marcion, who posited “the Stranger” as the creator god, is being alluded to here.}
others strangeness.\footnote{Beck shows a lacuna here. A verb would make the most sense in this place. No verb with a final \( \nu \) seems to fit. It is unlikely, though possible, that it was a verb ending with the single second person personal pronoun.}

But Mani dared to don
every evil entirely.
Blessed is the one who restrains us from these things!

\footnote{\( \nu \) refers to the genre, such as the Acts of the Apostles, or of Paul and Thecla, etc. Ephraem is accusing heretics of composing (“mixing”) their own.}
There are those who dare say that “the prophets did not declare concerning our Lord.”
From his future coming they are rebuked concerning that (coming) which has happened.
The prophets declared the first,
just as the apostles also declared to us that future one.
Learn the one coming through the [other] coming:
the first one though that future one.
Blessed is he who revealed them both.

The End
According to the same tune
The apostles were the twelve
plowmen of the whole world.
And there was not a place nor a region
that was called by their names
until the tares appeared,
after the plowmen departed.
And the tares called the wheat
by the their (the tares’) own names.
On the day of the harvest they will be uprooted.
Blessed is the one whose harvest has come about!

Response: Glory to you from the true ones

These taught me that they are stores
of secret scriptures which they wrote.
Like a man who would cover his blemish;
They conceal them that they might not be revealed.
The church shows her comeliness;
openly her beauty is praised.
There is on her no mark that she need conceal,
Nor is there a blemish to cover.
For like the light, her (church’s) teaching is uncovered.
Blessed is he who has shone in his truth!

Joab had conquered the city
that was the royal city.
And since it was not named with his name,
when Joab, the general, conquered it,
he sent [word] to David, who hurried
that he might enter it as the king,
and assumed the title of one who also conquered it!
Joab labored like a servant,

530. 2 Samuel 12:26-30.
and the name of the king is named.
Glory to you from the true ones.

Apostles and prophets were
princes and generals too.
They labored and toiled; they discipled and taught.
They conquered fortified cities and towns.
The prophets and apostles labored,
but the name of God is named.
Our Lord toiled and labored and taught,
but the name of the tares is being named,
so that men are being called by their names.
Blessed is the one by whose name they will be revealed.

May the sons of Bar Daysān be questioned
“how?” and “why?”
are they called by the name of Bar Daysān?
And, what is the cause for the denomination?
Whether it is because they were born of him,
like the Hebrews from Eber,531
or [because] they were made disciples by him,
the denomination of his name is rebuked,
because he composed an evil teaching.
Blessed is the one who revealed their frauds.

Now not everyone who makes disciples
calls his disciples by his own name.
The apostle532 discipled the nations,
and he did not name anyone with his own name.
That name533 in which he discipled them;
in it, in the name, he baptized them.
That name in which he baptized them;

533. That is the name of the Messiah. See above XXII.7 and LVI.6.
to it, the same one, did he make them worship.
to it, the name, he was conceding all.
Blessed is he to whose name all is due.

One is the demon among the Greeks.
When he began, namely “to go awhoring,”
He had pretended to one woman after another
in anything that was becoming to her.
And today in various ways
he has led astray simple women.
Some he catches for her with the fast,
and some with sackcloth and dry vegetables,
and some he captures for her with words.
Blessed is the one who put an end to his schemes.

For detestable deceit is not able
to be adorned without truth.
Nor does falsehood proceed
without the footprints of truth.
They betroth the bride with his beauty.
This convinces that they are detestable.
And when they betroth her, it is for themselves that they take her,
who is [already] veiled, because they are dishonest.
Who will not flee from them?
Blessed is the one in whom all take refuge!

Let us extend for loud prayers,
so that even the deaf will hear us.
I make you the intermediary!
You choose, O hearer!
Which is great and glorious:
that you be named a Messiahite
or that you be called a Marcionite;
That they call you a Christian,
or a Daysānīte tare?
Blessed is the one whom all crave.

And to when Bar Daysān was still to come,
and Marcion was still to be named,
let us take ourselves to the ancients,
who were older than Marcion.
Let us see how the ancient churches
were named.
And by that name we should be called
And we should doff and throw away the denominations
of the names that followed.
Blessed is the one who has been transmitted through his names!
   The End.
According to the same tune
The infidels dared to erase
the scriptures so that they might not to be rebuked.
But by the one they left they are revealed.
This is sufficient, and exceedingly so.
Our Lord preserved it in his scripture,
and they have not erased it like its friends.
And perhaps now they are erasing it?
Our Lord will preserve it and also me,
that I might not become the cause for this.
Blessed is he who preserves my faith!

The true one commanded and admonished
that they should not have a master on earth.\(^{534}\)
The apostle who feared urged
that the sheep should not proclaim in his name.
That which the apostle was afraid of,
on account of it the tares were choked.
Their cause is position,
for which everyone competes,
in order to sit on that throne.
Blessed is the one whose cross admonishes us.

The master withheld thrones,
in his knowledge, from the sons of Zebedee,\(^{535}\)
so that we would not preposterously take
this principle from there.
He redirected them with his questions,
from aspiration to humility.
That through them he might restrain our pride.
Instead of glory he gives suffering.

the rebuker of our pride.
Blessed is the exalted one who stood in court. 536

O the true suitors,
who were not turned against the bridegroom.
When the flock was saying, I am
of Kephas, of Paul, or of Apollos 537
O the flock that inscribed 538 itself
with the names of its companions!
The good servants feared and took
their names away from the flock
And with the inscription of the Lord it inscribed itself.
Blessed is he who inscribed it through his apostles.

But the fraudulent teachers
are like the grooms of fraud
who have been sent like the true ones
But they turned, like deceitful people.
They married themselves
to the fiancées of the Messiah.
With the beauty of the bridegroom they have imitated
that with his beauty they might capture the bride.
In what is his they armed themselves against him.
Blessed is the one in whose crucible they will be revealed.

Also John, a groomsman
who saw the bride of his Lord,
upon whom he looked at as his Lord. 539

537. 1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:4f. See also XXII.6, 10; XXIVIV.10, 13, 17, and 20; LVI.5. ܟܐܦܐ (Kephas) being the Syriac for the Greek Πεηρος (Peter), thus for Simon Peter.
538. The term ܡܠܝ can also mean "signed" as in signing oneself with the sign of the cross.
The servant had revealed that he was a servant; He demonstrated his mortal nature; He demonstrated his inferior station.\footnote{540} To her he demonstrated honor and humility, that “he was not (even) worthy to loosen the strap of the sandal” of the bridegroom.\footnote{541} Blessed is he who taught him to instruct her.

The fraudulent teachers brandished a borrowed beauty: the subtlenity of their words, in that whoever wants to harm the fiancée of his honored Lord polishes and adorns himself. Behold! They are detestable, although adorned. Because the humiliation of Jesus is more becoming than the beauty of creatures. Blessed is the one who even his scorn is praise.

The Greeks saw his majesty, and the Persians and the Egyptians too! Their mouth denied their idols\footnote{542} and the names of their gods. The corrupt ones repented and denied the names of their masters. They affirmed the master of the truth. Still the tares, behold, are denominated by the names of men who have strayed. Blessed is he who restores the strays.

\footnote{540}{John 3:30-31.}

\footnote{541}{Luke 3:16 and John 1:27. Mark 1:7 adds אֲשֶׁר, and Matthew 3:11 has דַּעַת instead of הָעַשֶּׂה, which all the other gospels have.}

\footnote{542}{אַשְׁרָה comes from Sanskrit, likely via Persian, a foreign word for foreign idols.}
They defiled the fiancée of the Son among the Greeks, whose disciples were also denominated by the names of their masters. The fiancée, whose love is debauched, donned the names of the servants. The strong groomsmen burned with jealousy, that she might not be debauched, nor depraved, so he cut off the names. Blessed is the one who handed over the jealous ones to her!

And if the apostle was corporeal today, he would erase the memories of the fraudulent ones, like Amalek. Because, if he would not permit Simon’s name to be named over the flock, how much more would he erase the names of thieves who cut off, lead it away and call it by their names. Blessed is the one who fastened it with his worshipped name.

The Marcionite, was blaspheming first, so that he was unable to flee from his name. The name proceeds from his sect, and the denomination from his faction. And even the thief does not wish that, according to his action, she called it. But by necessity he was named thief like his action. Actions acquire names for us. Blessed is he whose name envelopes us!


544. 1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:4f. See also XXII.6, 10; XXIV IV.4, 13, 17, and 20.
But the holy church is fleeing
from the names of men, my brothers,
“Sabellians” and “Arians,”
along with the rest of those who separated
because they were not wishing to be denominated
by the names of their masters.
That they might be pleasing to her, they schemed;
they who perceived her love, why it is
that she is completely depends on the Messiah.
Blessed is the one on which she depends.

Have they not read, in the apostle, instructing
one who says, “I am of Kephas,”
and others, “of Paul” or “Apollo”?545
This a terrible event has multiplied, my brothers!
That they would read and still dare to put
their names on the flock.
And have not the readers been ashamed;
and have not the hearers blushed,
that by the name of a man they have been denominated?
Blessed is the name with which we are named!

Come and see with whom there is
that teaching of the apostles:
they who did not call the bride of the son
by their names.
The teacher who puts, therefore,
his name on the sheep, distant is
his teaching from the apostles’.
And whoever calls her with the name of her Lord,
with him truth remains.
Blessed is he who made known with whom it is.

545. 1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:4f. See also XXII.6, 10; XXIVIV.4, 10, 17, and 20; LVI.5.

546. In Beck’s text he has حبأٍ, but he suggests this reading in his notes.
And also the wise Greeks,
every one among them is by his own name
denominated; also denominated are
their disciples, my friends!
People are subjected to people,
and are denominated by their names.
And against the name of the Lord and God,
behold the infidels are acting arrogantly,
who put their name onto humankind?
Blessed is he who put his name on us!

But one defiled teaching
they called by the name of the abhorrent dog.547
And unashamed are the madmen
who are denominated with the name of the dog.
How is it that not even the Audians
blush at the name ―Owl?‖
The Arians548 and the Quqites549 ought,
even their names, my friends,
al of them to be abhorred one by the other.
Blessed is the name with which we are adorned!

The name of wolves they stretched over the sheep,
and the doves donned the name of hawks.
The wheat deserted their good name
and are denominated by the name of the briars.
The apostle rebuked the Corinthians

547. Possibly referring to cynics (κυνικος), coming from the Greek term for dog, κυων. Lucian of Samosata attests to the strength of Cynics in Syria at least in the second century. The work of Julian clearly marks their presence in the empire in the fourth; see his sixth and seventh Oration, ‘to the uneducated Cynics’ and ‘to the Cynic Heraclios.’ See Gregory of Nazianzus’ “Oration in Praise of a Philosopher Hero,” for a fourth century Christian reference, though positive, to a personified as a dog. See also Donald Reynolds Dudley, A History of Cynicism from Diogenes to the 6th Century A.D. (London: Methuen, 1937) on the third through sixth centuries see 202f.

548. also indicates lions and lepers.

549. also means potters.
because their Lord was crucified for their sake,\textsuperscript{550} and by the name of servants they are being denominated, “of Kephas” and “of Paul,” the bright ones.\textsuperscript{551} How much indeed the infidels provoke anger! Blessed is the name we profess.

They proclaim many messiahs:
one who came in the years of Mani, another in the days of Bar Daysān and [with] Marcion still another. And another Messiah who came in the days of the apostles. But the messiahs since they praised contending, and if there is one who is at schismatic among them, in their mouth he contends with himself. Blessed is he who is in agreement with his own existence.

It is truly an abhorrent time my brothers in which these tares have sprung up. For behold their times are confused and their teachings are alien. But now, if they received [them] from the apostles, who precisely had received from them? Arius, who is today? Or Mani, who sprang up yesterday? Or Qamsu,\textsuperscript{552} whom the earth vomited up? Blessed is he who laughs in heaven!\textsuperscript{553}

\textsuperscript{550} 1 Corinthians 1:13.
\textsuperscript{551} 1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:4f. See also XXII.6, 10; XXIVIV.4, 10, 13, and 20; LVI.5.
\textsuperscript{552} Cf. \textit{HcH} II.6. Jacob of Edessa comments on her as well. See William Wright’s text, “Two Epistles of Mār Jacob, Bishop of Edessa,” \textit{Journal of Sacred Literature and Biblical Record} 10, no. 20 (1867): \textsuperscript{[448]}.\textsuperscript{553} 553. Psalm 2:4.
The apostles had proclaimed for years
and others also after them.
There had not yet been any tares.
Those who came about afterwards;
should tell us by whose name
that teaching is denominated,
the first one that Simon taught?
It was not denominated by the name Kephas.
Paul and Apollo testify.554
Blessed is the one by whose testimonies they are rebuked.

He brought the church of the nations
and then he destroyed the temple of the nation.
And when he uprooted the temple of the nation,555
a church was built there.
Marcion did not minister in it,
because there has not yet been a commemoration of him.
Arius, likewise, did not enter it,
nor Mani nor Bar Daysān.
The prophets handed down to the apostles.
Blessed is the lord of the orders!

He handed down556 from Adam to Noah.
He extended from Noah to Abraham;
and from Abraham to Moses;
and from Moses to David;
and from David also to the captivity;
and from Babylon to our Savior.
The nation was scattered and cut off,
and all its transmissions ceased.

554. 1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:4f.; See also XXII.6 and 10; XXIV.4, 10, 13, and 17; LVI.5.

555. For a discussion of the terms nation and nations applying to the Jews and the Gentiles respectively, see Murray, Symbols, 41-68. For notes on Ephraem’s biblical, agrarian symbolism that may help to clarify his use of ‘uprooted’ (ܥܪܬ) here, see the final section of this chapter.

556. ܫܝܚ indicates transmission, but it is also the root for the concept of succession, as in Apostolic succession. See ThSyr, vol. 1, 1538f.
Now the hand of the apostles transmitted.
Blessed is the Lord of their transmissions.

He who commissioned [Noah’s] ark,
is he who built the temple of the nation.
He who caused the profit of these things to pass;
He set up the church of holiness.
He who orders the successions
of natures and creatures,
he also orders the successions
of the prophets and the apostles,
from eternity to eternity.
Blessed is he who begins and ends.

The end
According to the same tune
The herd of Bar Dayšân with his name he engraved and he called it;
and after the name of Mani also is named his herd.
As the stolen lambs with that hated sign
were engraved “thieves.” After the name of our savior
are his sheep named. The Messiah is he who gathers to himself
Messiahite sheep

RESPONSE: Praise your grace!

Mani and Bar Dayšân violated the congregations
with the mystery of fornicating ones, and they introduced their names
instead of the beautiful name of its bridegroom by whose name
bridegrooms, apostles, and sons of truth called her;
It resembles his father whose congregation by his name
they called it, the house of Moses.557

Moses who shone558 shames the wayward ones
that each ought not speak in his own name, but in the name of his lord.
The prophets who also spoke, spoke in the name of the lord
and in the name of God, and there is not among them one who dared
to speak in his own name. In the name of the lord, the prophets [spoke];
the apostles [spoke], in the name of Jesus.

They are truly not ashamed nor embarrassed that in the name of humans
they write their scriptures. And there is no book that remains
and calls thus saying, “the Lord of hosts”
but thus saying, “Marcion the mad.”
And Mani and Bar Dayšân their names are sufficient
for the disgrace of their congregations.

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557. Possibly an allusion to Exodus 5:1.
558. Exodus 34:29.
Surely they did not fear that the apostle would fault whoever said “I who am of Kephapha.” And even if in the name of Kepha,
they were not called sheep, when he was the master of the apostles,
and he had possessed the keys and was tending the flocks. Woe to him who dared that the sheep who were not his own
he called them by his name!

Let them go out and come, that is the sheep, the lambs and the ewes
stolen by the wayward ones; and they ought to renounce their sign
and the name of thieves; and come and be engraved with the name,
the glorious one of God; and be called Messiahites,
who by the sign and the name will be in everything
the flock of the Messiah.

No one is able to baptize in the name of a human,
so he should not be denominated after the name of a human.
Now if denominated, it is necessary that one also be baptized
in the name of a human. Either they are baptized in the name of a human
and called by the name of a human, or they are baptized in the name of Jesus
and are called by the name of Jesus.

Truly also in all the mouths of the church is the clarity
of my pool from that mud and filth
of the house of the rabid Marcion. And it becomes clear from dregs
and the ungodliness of the house of Mani; and purifying from the dirt
of the wiles of Bar Daysân and from the stink
of the stinking Jews.

559. 1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:4f.; See also XXII.6 and 10; XXIV.4, 10, 13, 17, and 20.

560. Matthew 10:2 lists Simon first among the apostles. It is also possible that Peter is Master in that he is the teacher, or master, of his fellow disciples
when he calls Jesus the Messiah in Matthew 16:16. The allusion to that pericope in the immediately following line of the stanza commends this interpretation.


Your horn exalts your Lord, believing church! For there is not in you the book of that rabid Marcion, nor even a book of that raving Mani, Nor the Book of Mysteries, the thorns of Bar Dayšān. Two covenants of the king and the son of the king are set down in your Ark.

Let not, my Lord, the labors of your pastor be cheated So that I have not troubled your sheep, except what was appropriate. I have kept the wolves from it and built, as far as I could, enclosures of madrāšê for the lambs of your pasture. Pains are troubling me; Loves are supporting me. They are justified by your grace.

I have made the boorish and the idiot a disciple and I earnestly seized: the staff of shepherds; the medicine of [wound] dressers; the weapons of debaters; and the silence of the innocent ones. The vessel filled and overflowed. I confess that I am completely feeble, by your grace, the abundance of your favor.

Here end the madrāšê “against the errant teachings and against the Chaldeans” by the blessed Mar Ephraem which in number are fifty and six

563. Possible allusion to Luke 1:69. For Ephraem’s use of ‘horn’ to indicate the church’s teaching see HcH XXV.4; Murray, Symbols, 174. Murray also notes the potential for the contemporary use of the trumpet (or shofar) in the liturgy of the Syriac-speaking Church, ibid., n.6.

564. This claim that the true church does not contain a specific book of Bar Dayšān is particularly interesting. It is also mentioned in HcH I.14, where Ephraem also mentions a Book of Thunder and a Book of Hosts.

565. A connection between the Ark of the Covenant, right teaching, and Scripture is also established in Hymns on Paradise VI.1 (Brock, 108 f.).
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