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SCRIPTORES SYRI
TOMUS 225

ISAAC OF NINEVEH
(ISAAC THE SYRIAN)

'THE SECOND PART', CHAPTERS IV-XLI

TRANSLATED BY

SEBASTIAN BROCK

LOVANI
IN AEDIBUS PEETERS

1995

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PREFACE

As will be seen from the Introduction, a few of the new texts by Isaac of Nineveh which are edited here have been known for a long time, but it was not until April 1983 that a complete manuscript of the text was identified in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Most of the work on editing, translating and annotating was done during my tenure of a British Academy Marc Fitch Research Readership, 1988/9 and 1989/90, but subsequent heavy teaching and administrative duties prevented final completion until the opportunity came for some sabbatical leave in 1994/5. I take the opportunity here to record my great gratitude to the British Academy for the award of the Research Readership, and to the late Dr Marc Fitch, F. B. A., through whose generosity this award had in the first place been made possible. I am also most grateful to the authorities of the various libraries on whose manuscripts I have worked in the course of preparing this edition.

My special thanks go to four colleagues in particular for their generosity and kindness in providing invaluable assistance in one way or another: to Madame Micheline Albert, who made available to me a xerox text of the relevant section of Baghdad, Chaldean Monastery, syr. 680; to Paolo Bettolo, who provided me with his draft description of the main manuscripts, and a microfilm copy of the Tehran manuscripts (the manuscripts were photographed by Michel van Esbroeck, S. J.); to Fr. Gabriel Bunge, who lent me a microfilm of the Paris manuscript over a very long period; and to Dana Miller, who sent me his draft translations of a number of chapters, and let me have a xerox copy made from a microfilm of the Paris manuscript.

This pair of volumes is dedicated to the memory of André de Halleux, O. F. M.

Oxford, 2nd February 1995

Sebastian BROCK

ABBREVIATIONS

AB = *Analecta Bollandiana*.

Abba Isaiah = R. DRAGUET, *Les cinq recensions de l'Asceticon syriaque d'Abba Isaïe* (CSCO 289-90, 293-4, Scr. Syri 120-23; 1968); cited by Discourse and section number.

'Abdisho' = texts by 'Abdisho' (Joseph the Seer) in MINGANA, *Early Christian Mystics*, 262-82; cited by page and column (a, b) of MINGANA's edition.

Abraham of Nathpar = texts by Abraham of Nathpar in British Library Or. 6714; cited by folio number.

AKGWG = *Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, phil. -hist. Klasse*.

Ammonius = M. KMOŠKO, *Anmonii eremitae epistulae* (PO 10, 6; 1914); cited by page.

AMS = P. BEDJAN, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum Syriace*, I-VII (Paris/Leipzig, 1890-1897; reprinted Hildesheim, 1968); cited by volume and page.

Anon. *C. Abls.* = R. DRAGUET, *Commentaire anonyme du livre d'abba Isaïe* (CSCO 336-7, Scr. Syri 150-1; 1973); cited by page of the text volume.

Aphrahat, *Dem.* = I. PARISOT, *Aphraatis Sapientis Persae Demonstrationes* (Patrologia Syriaca 1-2; 1894-1907); cited by Demonstration and section.

Apophthegmata = Apophthegmata in AMS VII, 442-894 (translation in BUDGE, *Wit and Wisdom*); cited by number (see also under *Par.*).

A. Thomas = Acts of Thomas, in W. WRIGHT, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*. Vol. I, *Syriac Texts* (London 1871); cited by page.

Babai *C. Evag.* = Babai the Great, Commentary on Evagrius' Centuries, in FRANKENBERG, *Evagrius Ponticus*, 8-471; cited by folio number of Vat. Syr. 178 (given in the margin of the edition).

Babai, *L. de Unione* = A. VASCHALDE, *Babai Magni Liber de Unione* (CSCO 79-80, Scr. Syri 34-5; 1915, repr. 1953); cited by page of text volume.

Babai of Nisibis = Babai of Nisibis, Letter to Cyriacus, in BROCK, *Malpānūtā*, 93-114 (for identity of the author see p. XX-XXI); cited by section.

Barhebraeus, *Ethicon* = H. TEULE, *Gregory Barhebraeus, Ethicon. Memra 1* (CSCO 534-5, Scr. Syri 218-9; 1993).

Basil *Ep. Greg.* = Basil of Caesarea, Letter 2, to Gregory, in BL 17192; cited by folio number.

Basil *Pr.* = Basil of Caesarea, Proemion, in BL. Add. 17183; cited by folio number.

Basil *Quest.* = Basil of Caesarea, Questions, in BL Add. 14544; cited by folio number.

Basil SA = Basil of Caesarea, *Sermo Asceticus*, in BL Add. 17183; cited by folio number.

BEDJAN, *Mar Isaacus Ninivita* = P. BEDJAN, *Mar Isaacus Ninivita, de Perfectione Religiosa* (Paris/Leipzig, 1909).

- BETTILOLO, "'Avec la charité comme but'" = P. BETTILOLO, "'Avec la charité comme but'" : Dieu et création dans la méditation d'Isaac de Ninive', *Irénikon* 63 (1990), 323-45.
- BETTILOLO, *Discorsi Spirituali* = P. BETTILOLO, *Isacco di Ninive. Discorsi Spirituali* (Edizioni Qiqajon, Comunità di Bose, Magnano, 1985; 2nd, expanded, edition, 1990).
- BETTILOLO, 'Povertà e conoscenza' = P. BETTILOLO, 'Povertà e conoscenza. Appunti sulle Centurie gnostiche della tradizione evagriana in Siria', *PdO* 15 (1988/9), 107-25.
- BL = British Library.
- BROCK, 'Isaac le Syrien' = S.P. BROCK, 'Isaac le Syrien', in P. RANSON and C.G. CONTICELLO (eds), *La théologie byzantine* (Paris/Lausanne, forthcoming).
- BROCK, 'Maggnanuta' = S.P. BROCK, 'Maggnanuta: a technical term in East Syrian spirituality and its background', in *Mélanges Antoine Guillaumont. Contributions à l'étude des christianismes orientaux* (Cahiers d'Orientalisme 20; Geneva, 1988), 121-9.
- BROCK, *Malpānūtā* = S.P. BROCK, *Malpānūtā d-abāhātā suryāyē d-'al šlōtā* (Monastery of St Ephrem, Holland, 1988).
- BROCK, *Syriac Fathers* = S.P. BROCK, *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (Cistercian Studies Series 101; Kalamazoo, 1989).
- BUDGE, *Wit and Wisdom* = E.A.W. BUDGE, *The Wit and Wisdom of the Christian Fathers of Egypt* (London, 1934).
- Cod. Syr. Sec.* = W. STROTHMANN, *Codex Syriacus Secundus* (GOFS 13; 1977); cited by folio.
- CPG = M. GEERARD, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, I-V (Turnhout, 1983-7).
- CSCO = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* (Louvain).
- Dadisho' *C. Abls.* = R. DRAGUET, *Commentaire du livre d'Abba Isaïe (logoi I-XV) par Dadišo Qatraya (VIIe s.)* (CSCO 326-7; Scr. Syri 144-5; 1972); cited by Discourse and section number.
- Dadisho' *C. Par.* = Dadisho', *Commentary on the Paradise of the Fathers*, in P. BEDJAN, *AMS VII*, 895-986; cited by page number.
- Dadisho' *Shel.* = Dadisho', *On Stillness (shelyā)*; partial edition in BEDJAN, *Mar Isaac Ninivita*, 601-28; complete edition in MINGANA, *Early Christian Mystics* (WS VII, 1934), 201-247 (ET 76-143); cited from BEDJAN (where available) by page, and from MINGANA by page and column (a, b).
- DEPPE, *Die Λόγοι ἀσκητικοί* = K. DEPPE, 'Die Λόγοι ἀσκητικοί des Isaak von Ninive', in *Göttinger Arbeitskreis für syrische Kirchengeschichte, Paulus de Lagarde und die syrische Kirchengeschichte* (Göttingen, 1968), 35-57.
- DRAGUET, *Formes syriaques* = R. DRAGUET, *Les formes syriaques de la matière de l'histoire lausiaque*, I (CSCO 389, Scr. Syri 169; 1978).
- D. Spir.* = *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*.
- ES = East Syrian.
- ET = English translation.
- Evagrius Add. 14578 = texts by Evagrius in British Library Add. 14578 (listed on p. XXIII-XXVI); cited by folio number.

- Evagrius *Antirrh.* = Evagrius, *Antirrhētikos*, in FRANKENBERG, *Evagrius Ponticus*, 472-545; cited by folio of BL Add. 14578 (given in the margin of the edition).
- Evagrius *Cap. Cog.* = Evagrius, *Capita cognoscitiva*, ed. J. MUYLDERMANS, 'Évagre le Pontique: les Capita cognoscitiva dans les versions syriaque et arménienne', *Le Muséon* 47 (1934), 73-106; cited by page.
- Evagrius *Epp.* = Evagrius, Letters, in FRANKENBERG, *Evagrius Ponticus*, 554-634; cited by folio number of Add. 14578 and 17167 (given in the margin of the edition).
- Evagrius, *Ev. Syr.* = texts in J. MUYLDERMANS, *Evagriana Syriaca*; cited by page.
- Evagrius *Gnos.* = Evagrius, *Gnostikos*, in FRANKENBERG, *Evagrius Ponticus*, 546-53; cited by number of saying.
- Evagrius *Keph.* = Evagrius, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, edited by A. GUILLAUMONT, *Les six Centuries des "Kephalaia Gnostica" d'Évagre le Pontique* (PO 28, 1; 1958); cited by Century and number.
- Evagrius *Keph. Suppl.* = Evagrius, Supplement to *Kephalaia Gnostica*, in FRANKENBERG, *Evagrius Ponticus*, 422-70; cited by number.
- Evagrius *Mart.* = Evagrius, *Martyānūtā*, in J. Y. ÇIÇEK, *Martyānūtā d-abāhātā qaddīšē d-'īdtā* (Monastery of St Ephrem, Holland, 1985), 43-6; cited by page.
- Evagrius *Mel.* = Evagrius, Letter to Melania, second part, in G. VITESTAM, *Seconde partie du traité qui passe sous le nom de 'La grande lettre d'Évagre le Pontique à Mélanie l'ancienne, publiée et traduite d'après le manuscrit du BM Add. 17192* (Scripta Minora Regiae Societatis Humanarum Litterarum Lundensis 1963/4, no. 3); cited by page.
- Evagrius *Pr.* = Evagrius, Century on Prayer, in I. HAUSHERR, 'Le *De Oratione* d'Évagre le Pontique en syriaque et en arabe', *OCP* 5 (1939), 7-71; cited by number.
- FRANKENBERG, *Evagrius Ponticus* = W. FRANKENBERG, *Evagrius Ponticus* (AKGWG nF 13, 2; 1912).
- FT = French translation.
- GOFs = Göttinger Orientforschungen, 1. Reihe, Syriaca.
- Gregory of Cyprus = I. HAUSHERR (ed.), *Gregorii Monachi Cyprii De Theoria Sancta* (OCA 110, 1937); cited by page.
- Gregory of Cyprus Add. 17192 = texts by Gregory of Cyprus in BL Add. 17192; cited by folio.
- GRIBOMONT, *Histoire du texte* = J. GRIBOMONT, *Histoire du texte des Ascétiques de S. Basile* (Bibliothèque du Muséon 32, 1953).
- Hierotheos = F. S. MARSH, *The Book of the Holy Hierotheos* (London/Oxford, 1927); cited by page.
- Hist. Laus.* = R. DRAGUET, *Les formes syriaques de la matière de l'histoire lausiaque* (CSCO 389-90, 398-9, Scr. Syri 169-79, 173-4; 1978) cited by page of the text volumes.
- Hist. Monach.* = *Historia Monachorum*, in P. BEDJAN, *AMS* VII, 329-442; cited by page.
- Ḥudra* = T. DARMO (ed.), *Ḥudra* I-III (Trichur, 1960-62); cited by volume and page.

- Isaac of Antioch = P. BEDJAN, *Homiliae S. Isaaci Syri Antiocheni* (Paris/Leipzig, 1903); cited by page.
- Isho'yahb, *Epp.* = R. DUVAL, *Iso'yahb Patriarchae III, Liber Epistularum* (CSCO 11-12, Scr. Syri 11-12; 1904-5, repr. 1962); cited by page of text volume.
- Jacob of Serugh = P. BEDJAN, *Homiliae Selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis I-V* (Paris/Leipzig, 1905-10); cited by volume and page.
- John Sol. Add. 17170 = John the Solitary, unpublished texts in BL Add. 17170 (listed on p. XXX); cited by folio number.
- John Sol. *C. Qoh.* = John the Solitary, Commentary on Qohelet, edited by W. STROTHMANN, *Kohelet-Kommentar des Johannes von Apamea* (GOFS 30; 1988); cited by Discourse and line number.
- John Sol. *Epp.* = John the Solitary, L.G. RIGNELL, *Briefe von Johannes dem Einsiedler* (Lund, 1941); cited by page.
- John Sol. *Hes.* = John the Solitary, Letter to Hesychius, in BROCK, *Malpānūtā*, 30-44; cited by section number.
- John Sol. *Keph.* = John the Solitary, Kephalaia, in J.Y. ÇIÇEK, *Martyānūtā d-abāhātā qaddīšē d-'īdtā* (Monastery of St Ephrem, Holland, 1985), 99-101; cited by page.
- John Sol. *Pr.* = S.P. BROCK, 'John the Solitary, On Prayer', *Journal of Theological Studies* ns 30 (1979), 84-101.
- John Sol. *Quest.* = John the Solitary, Questions, in BL Add. 14606; cited by folio.
- John Sol. *Soul* = John the Solitary, Dialogue on the Soul, in S. DEDERING (ed.), *Johannes von Lykopolis. Ein Dialog über die Seele und die Affekte des Menschen* (Uppsala, 1936); cited by page.
- John Sol. *Thaum.* = John the Solitary, Dialogues with Thaumasio, in W. STROTHMANN, *Johannes von Apamea* (Patristische Texte und Studien 11, 1972); cited by Dialogue and line number.
- John Sol. *Tr.* = John the Solitary, Tractates, in L.G. RIGNELL, *Drei Traktate von Johannes dem Einsiedler* (Lunds Universitets Årsskrift N. F. Avd. 1, Bd 54, Nr. 4; 1960); cited by page.
- Joseph Hazzaya = P. HARB and F. GRAFFIN, *Joseph Hazzaya, Lettre sur les trois étapes de la vie monastique*, PO 45, 2 (1992).
- JSS* = *Journal of Semitic Studies*.
- Keph.* = Isaac of Nineveh, Kephalaia gnostica (*rīšē d-īda'tā*) in 'Part II' (Oxford, Bodl. syr. e. 7), ed. P. BETTILOLO, CSCO Scr. Syri; cited by Century and number.
- Liber Graduum* = M. KMOŠKO, *Liber Graduum* (Patrologia Syriaca 3; 1926); cited by discourse and section.
- Liber Heraclididis* = P. BEDJAN, *Nestorius. Le Livre d'Héraclide de Damas* (Paris, 1910); cited by page.
- Macarius = W. STROTHMANN, *Die syrische Überlieferung der Schriften des Makarios*, Teil 1, *Syrischer Text* (GOFS 21, 1981); cited by page of edition.
- Marcian = A. VAN ROEY, *Le moine saint Marcien* (Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense 36; 1968), cited by page.

- Mark the Monk Add. 12175 = texts by Mark the Monk in BL Add. 12175 (listed on p. XXXII); cited by folio number.
- Mark the Monk Add. 17192 = texts by Mark the Monk in BL Add. 17192. (Listed on p. XXXII; cited by folio number).
- [MILLER], *Ascetical Homilies* = [D. MILLER], *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, translated by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Boston, 1984). [Translated from Greek].
- MINGANA, *Early Christian Mystics* = A. MINGANA, *Early Christian Mystics* (WS VII, 1934).
- MUYLDERMANS, *Evagriana Syriaca* = J. MUYLDERMANS, *Evagriana Syriaca. Textes inédits du British Museum et de la Vaticane édités et traduits* (Bibliothèque du Muséon 31, 1952).
- Narsai F = J. FRISHMAN, *The Ways and Means of the Divine Economy. An Edition, Translation and Study of Six Biblical Homilies by Narsai* (Diss. Leiden, 1992); cited by homily number and line.
- Narsai G = P. GIGNOUX, *Homélies de Narsai sur la création*, PO 34, 3-4 (1968); cited by homily number and line.
- Narsai M = A. MINGANA, *Narsai Doctoris Syri Homiliae et Carmina* I-II (Mosul, 1905); cited by volume and page.
- Narsai McL = F.G. McLEOD, *Narsai's Metrical Homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension*, PO 40, 1(1979); cited by homily number and line.
- Narsai PP = *Homilies of Mar Narsai*, published by the Patriarchal Press I-II (San Francisco, 1970); cited by volume and page.
- Narsai S = E.P. SIMAN, *Narsai. Cinq homélies sur les paraboles évangéliques* (Paris, 1984); cited by homily number and couplet number.
- Nilus = P. BETTILO, *Gli scritti siriaci di Nilo il Solitario* (Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain 30; 1983); cited by page.
- OC = *Oriens Christianus*.
- OCA = *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*.
- OCP = *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*.
- OIRSI = Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, India.
- OLP = *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*.
- Par. = 'Enanisho', Paradise of the Fathers (Apophthegmata), in P. BEDJAN, *AMS* VII, 442-894; cited by page.
- Part I = Part I of Isaac's works, in BEDJAN, *Mar Isaacus Ninivita*, 1-581; cited by page number.
- Philokalia* = *The Philokalia*, tr. G.E.H. PALMER, P. SHERRARD, KALLISTOS WARE, I (London, 1979).
- Philoxenus, *Disc.* = E.A.W. BUDGE, *The Discourses of Philoxenus* I (London, 1894); cited by page.
- Philoxenus *Patr.* = R. LAVENANT, *La lettre à Patricius de Philoxène de Mabboug*, PO 30, 5 (1963); cited by paragraph.
- PdO = *Parole de l'Orient*.
- PO = *Patrologia Orientalis*.
- Ps. Dionysius = Syriac translation by Sergius of Resh'aina, preserved in Sinai syr. 52; cited by folio number.

- Ps. Dionysius *EH* = Ps. Dionysius Areopagita, Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, ch. on Myron, ed. W. STROTHMANN, *Das Sakrament der Myron-Weihe in der Schrift de Ecclesiastica Hierarchia des Pseudo-Dionysios Areopagita in syrischen Übersetzungen und Kommentaren* (GOFS 15, 1; 1977); cited by page number (Sergios' translation).
- Ps. Dionysius *MT* = Ps. Dionysius Areopagita, Mystical Theology, ch. 1, ed. J-M. HORNUS, 'Le Corpus dionysien en syriaque' *PdO* 1 (1970), 69-93; cited by page number (Sergios' translation).
- ROC* = *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien*.
- Sahdona = A. DE HALLEUX (ed.), *Martyrius (Sahdona). Oeuvres spirituelles* (CSCO 200-201, 214-5, 252-5, Scr. Syri 86-7, 90-91, 110-13; 1960-65); cited by text volume and page.
- SC* = Sources chrétiennes.
- Sergius = P. SHERWOOD, 'Mimro de Serge de Reshayna sur la vie spirituelle', *L'Orient Syrien* 5 (1960), 433-59; 6 (1961), 95-115, 121-56; cited by section number.
- Sextus = Sentences of Sextus, in P. DE LAGARDE, *Analecta Syriaca* (Berlin, 1958; repr. Osnabruck, 1967), 2-31; cited by page.
- Shem'on d-Ṭaybuteh = texts by Shem'on d-Ṭaybuteh in MINGANA, *Early Christian Mystics*, 282-320; cited by page and column.
- Shubḥalmaran = texts by Shubḥalmaran in *British Library Or.* 6714; cited by folio number.
- Theodore of Mopsuestia *C. John* = J-M. VOSTÉ, *Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in Evangelium Iohannis Apostoli* (CSCO 115-6, Scr. Syri IV, 3; 1940); cited by page of text volume.
- Theodore of Mopsuestia *C. Pss.* = L. VAN ROMPAY, *Théodore de Mopsueste. Fragments syriaques du Commentaire des Psaumes (Psaume 118 et Psaumes 138-148)* (CSCO 435-6, Scr. Syri 189-90; 1982); cited by page of text volume.
- Theodore of Mopsuestia *C. Qoh.* = W. STROTHMANN, *Das syrische Fragment des Ecclesiastes-Kommentars von Theodor von Mopsuestia* (GOFS 28, 1988); cited by A(uszug) or Chapter, and line number.
- Theodore of Mopsuestia *WS V* = A. MINGANA, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed* (*WS V*, 1932); cited by page.
- Theodore of Mopsuestia *WS VI* = A. MINGANA, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist* (*WS VI*, 1933); cited by page.
- Titus of Bostra = P. DE LAGARDE, *Titus Bostrenus syriace et graece* (1859; repr. Osnabruck, 1967); cited by book and section, and by page.
- TOURAILLE, *Isaac le Syrien* = J. TOURAILLE, *Isaac le Syrien. Oeuvres spirituelles* (Paris, 1981). [Translated from Greek].
- V. Ant.* = R. DRAGUET, *La vie primitive de s. Antoine* (CSCO 417-8, Scr. Syri 183-4; 1980); cited by page of the text volume.
- WENSINCK, *Mystic Treatises* = A.J. WENSINCK, *Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Nineveh* (Amsterdam, 1923; repr. Wiesbaden, 1969).
- WRIGHT, *Catalogue* = W. WRIGHT, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, I-III (London, 1872).

WS = *Woodbrooke Studies*.

ZDMG = *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*.

ZNW = *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde des alten Christentum*.

SIGLA

Manuscripts

- B = Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms syr. e.7 (10th/11th cent.)
H = Harvard University, Cambridge Mass. (Houghton Library), syr. 57 (13th/14th cent.)
K = British Library, Add. 14632 (for XVI-XVII) (10th cent.)
L = British Library, Add. 14633 (for XVI-XVII) (c. 11th cent.)
M = Mingana syr. 86 (for XIV. 11-13, XX. 25, XXV, XXV) (c. 1300)
N = BEDJAN's edition of ch. 54-55 of Part I (= XVI-XVII of Part II) (Based on ms of 1235)
P = Paris syr. 298 (11th/12th cent.)
Q = Baghdad, Chaldean Monastery, syr. 680 (*olim* Alqosh 237) (for VII, IX, XV. 1-6, 11, XVIII. 18-22, XXXII, XXXIV-XXXVI) (1288/9)
s = Mingana syr. 601 (copied from Q) (1932)
T = Tehran, Mar Issayi Collection, ms 5 (for XXV) (1900)
t = Tehran, Mar Issayi Collection, ms 4 (copied from B) (1895)
U = BEDJAN's edition of lost Urmiah manuscript (for V.5, 22-26, 29-30 and XI).
- B* = original reading of manuscript before correction *
B^{c.1} = correction by original scribe
B^{c.2} = correction by contemporary corrector
constr. = construct
emph. = emphatic
neg. = negative
pl. = plural
sg., sing. = singular
() = words which have been added in the translation in order to clarify the sense
[] = lacuna in the manuscript

INTRODUCTION

In the preface to his edition of the 'First Part' of St Isaac of Nineveh's works Fr. Paul BEDJAN mentions a manuscript of 255 pages from Urmi (Urmiah, Rezaiyeh) containing further homilies by Isaac, and he comments 'J'aurais publié ce manuscrit comme un second volume faisant suite à ce premier, si j'avais pu le collationner avec un autre manuscrit. Mais cette ressource m'a manqué. Je l'ai regretté, car il s'y trouve de fort belles pages'¹. Instead, BEDJAN confined himself to giving three extracts at the end of his edition (pp. 582-600). This Urmiah manuscript has left no trace, and must be presumed lost, no doubt a victim, along with many other Syriac manuscripts in Urmi, of the ravages of the First World War. The loss of this manuscript left Paris syr. 298 as the only known surviving witness to the text of the 'Second Part' of Isaac's works, but unfortunately this manuscript was incomplete at both beginning and end². In April 1983 I had the good fortune to identify a manuscript in the Bodleian Library (syr. e. 7), Oxford, as containing virtually the complete text of the Second Part³. The manuscript, which had been acquired by the Bodleian Library in 1898 from the Revd. Yaroo Neesan (a member of the staff of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission)⁴, is plausibly dated to the 10th/11th century in the Library's card index of Syriac manuscripts acquired at a date subsequent to the publication of the printed catalogue by PAYNE SMITH.

As BEDJAN had already noted, the Second Part contained four Centuries (Kephalaia) on spiritual knowledge, and these were translated into Italian and published, with admirable promptness, in 1985 by P. BETTILOLO⁵, who

¹ BEDJAN, *Mar Isaacus Ninivita*, xvi.

² Described by CHABOT in *Journal Asiatique* IX. 8 (1896), 242-5.

³ Announced at the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies, September 1983: 'Lost and found: Part II of the works of St Isaac of Nineveh', *Studia Patristica* XVIII. 4 (1990), 230-33; cf also my 'St Isaac of Nineveh: some newly-discovered works', *Sobornost/Eastern Churches Review* 8:1 (1986), 28-33, reprinted in *Studies in Syriac Spirituality* (The Syrian Churches Series 13, 1988), 109-13.

⁴ See J. F. COAKLEY, *The Church of the East and the Church of England. A History of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission* (Oxford, 1992), 118-20; also G.S. REED (ed. J.-M. HORNUS), *La mission de l'Archevêque de Cantorbéry auprès des Assyriens* (Cahiers d'études chrétiennes orientales 6; 1967), 33-35.

⁵ P. BETTILOLO, *Isacco di Ninive. Discorsi Spirituali* (Edizione Qiqajon, Comunità di Bose, 1985; expanded second edition, 1990); see also his 'Povertà e conoscenza'.

is also the editor of these (and the preceding two sections) in CSCO, Scr. Syri. In the present volume the remaining chapters (IV-XLI) of the Second Part are translated.

In the process of editing the Oxford manuscript (= B) a number of other incomplete witnesses to Part II, besides Paris syr. 298 (= P; eleventh cent. or slightly later), emerged, namely Harvard syr. 57 (= H; thirteenth/fourteenth cent.), and Tehran, Mar Issayi collection 4 (= t; 1895); the last of these, however, has proved to be of virtually no value for the present edition, since it turns out to have been copied from B while the latter was still in the Urmi region. Excerpts from chapters IV-XLI of Part II have also been identified among some anonymous texts in two medieval monastic anthologies, Chaldean Monastery (Baghdad) syr. 680 (East Syrian, *olim* Alqosh, Notre Dame des Semences 237; dated A. D. 1288/9) and Mingana syr. 68 (West Syrian; c. 1300). The former manuscript is the source of three modern copies, two of which are now in western libraries, Vatican syr. 509 (dated 1928) and Mingana syr. 601 (dated 1932)⁶.

Although there is evidence of the existence of an Arabic translation of⁷ Part II, it appears that this part, in contrast to Part I, was never translated into Greek. Nonetheless, among Syriac readers, Part II seems to have been quite widely read. The great East Syriac mystic Joseph the Seer (eighth century), writing under the name of his brother 'Abdisho', quotes from Keph. I. 9, specifically ascribing it to 'the glorious among the saints, Mar Isaac'⁸. That the Kephalaia in Part II were also known and read in Chalcedonian (Melkite) circles is shown by the inclusion of Keph. IV. 21-23 (mid) at the end of a collection of excerpts from 'Mar Isaac of Nineveh' in a manuscript written in A. D. 882 in a monastery near Beirut⁹. Syrian Orthodox monks were likewise aware of Part II, for Barhebraeus quotes several times from it in his *Ethicon*¹⁰, and

⁶ For details see the Introduction to the text volume. It was from Mingana syr. 601 that MINGANA took the texts which he translated in *Early Christian Mystics* (WS VII, 1934).

⁷ For the Arabic versions of Isaac's works see, provisionally, E. KHALIFÉ HACHEM, in *D. Spir.* 7 (1971), 2051-4, with literature; A major study by him on the subject is in preparation.

⁸ Ed. MINGANA, *Early Christian Mystics*, tr. p. 157, text p. 268. The quotation was already noted by BETTOLO, *Discorsi Spirituali*, 89. For a couple of instances where Joseph the Seer (Ḥazzaya) picks up distinctive phraseology from Isaac's Second Part, see pp. 111-12 below.

⁹ See below at note 21.

¹⁰ *Keph.* II. 39 is quoted in *Memra* IV. 2. 2; *Keph.* II. 44 in *Memra* I. 7. 4; and, from the chapters edited in the present volume, XV. 2, 5 are quoted in *Memra* I. 1. 4, and XVIII. 12-13 in *Memra* I. 4. 3. All the passages are specifically attributed to 'Mar Isaac'.

excerpts are included in the West Syrian monastic anthology in Mingana syr. 86.

*The present translation*¹¹

The translation aims to keep reasonably close to the Syriac original, even though this sometimes results in a rather awkward English style, seeing that Isaac is prone to making use of long and involved sentences (on occasion, however, it has proved necessary to break these up). On the whole Isaac's Syriac is reasonably straightforward, but there are nevertheless quite a number of passages whose complex syntax baffles me, and in order to alert the reader to the resultant uncertainty of my translation, attention is drawn to these passages in the annotation.

Isaac draws on the very varied terminology of earlier writers, and since he himself clearly had no desire to provide his readers with a systematic guide to the inner life, this means that there is considerable fluidity in his use of technical terms. Thus, to take a single example, 'intellect' (*hawnā*), 'mind' (*mad'ā*, *re'yānā*) and 'heart' (*lebbā*) are used more or less interchangeably. In some cases (including these three) I have nevertheless tried to represent a single Syriac term by a single English term; thus 'contemplation' for *theoria*, 'converse' for '*enyānā*', 'insight' for *sukkālā*, 'meditation' for *hergā*, 'reflection' for *renyā*; in other cases this has proved impracticable and several different English renderings have been employed, e. g. 'ministry', 'work' and 'service' for *pullhānā*, 'impulse', 'stirring' and 'emotion' for *zaw'ā* etc. (Indication of the main renderings of technical terms is given in the Index to the annotation).

The annotation

In the annotation I have concentrated on giving parallels to Isaac's characteristic monastic phraseology and terminology with a view to providing materials to help identify more precisely the various streams of monastic tradition upon which he chiefly drew¹². Since there is no

¹¹ A few chapters have already been published in English translation: thus V is translated in my 'The Prayers of St Isaac', *Sobornost/Eastern Churches Review* 16 (1994), 20-31, (Prayers no. 1, 3, 5-7, 13-14, 19, 22-24, 29-30 appeared earlier in my *Syriac Fathers*, 349-54); XIV-XV are translated in *Syriac Fathers*, 271-292, and XVI in my 'Maggnanuta'. An Italian translation of IV, V, XXXII, XXXV and XXXIX, as well as of the Kephalaia, is given by BETTILO in the expanded second edition of his *Discorsi Spirituali*, 199-239.

¹² Some general indications can be found in WENSINCK's introduction to his English translation, *Mystic Treatises*, E. KHALIFE-HACHEM in *D. Spir.* 7 (1971), 2050-51,

evidence that Isaac knew or read Greek, the literature cited is confined to native Syriac writers and Greek writers available in Syriac translation. For both categories the selection of writers which I have read for this purpose was in large part guided by the names which Isaac cites explicitly at various points in both Part I and Part II.

On the Syriac side, while Aphrahat, Ephrem and the Liber Graduum have not been ignored, especially attention has been given to John the Solitary (John of Apamea; first half of fifth century)¹³, whose writings clearly exerted a profound influence on virtually all later Syriac authors who wrote on the spiritual life. Since it is also of considerable interest to discover Isaac's relationship to contemporary, or slightly earlier¹⁴, East Syrian writers on the subject, a representative selection of works, published and unpublished, have been read (Babai the Great, Babai of Nisibis, Abraham of Nathpar, Shubḥalmaran, Sahdona (Martyrius), Shem'on d-Ṭaybuteh and Dadisho'). Although it would have been interesting to discern the influence of Isaac's own phraseology and terminology on later East Syrian writers such as Joseph the Seer, John the Elder (John of Dalyatha) and others, it has not proved possible to include this material here, and references to Syriac writers later than Isaac are only made in exceptional cases.

Although it is unlikely that Isaac read Syriac authors outside the East Syrian tradition, for purposes of comparison some use has been made on occasion of some West Syriac authors of the fifth/sixth century, Jacob of Serugh, 'Isaac of Antioch', Sergius of Resh'aina, 'Hierotheos' and especially Philoxenus's main ascetical writings, the Discourses and the Letter to Patricius.

On the Greek side the Syriac translations of select works by the following authors have been read for this purpose: Life of Antony, Basil,

R. BEULAY, *La Lumière sans forme. Introduction à l'étude de la mystique chrétienne syro-orientale* (Chevetogne, 1987), G. BLUM, *Mysticism in the Syriac Tradition* (St Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, Correspondence Course 7 [1990]), my 'St Isaac of Nineveh and Syriac spirituality', *Sobornost* 7:2 (1975), 79-89, reprinted in *Studies in Syriac Spirituality*, 99-108, and 'S. Isaac le Syrien'. For the influence of Evagrius on the Syriac tradition, see especially A. GUILLAUMONT, *Les 'Kephalaia Gnostica' d'Évagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'origénisme chez les grecs et chez les syriens* (Patristica Sorbonensia 5, 1962), BETTILOLO, 'Povertà e conoscenza' and "'Avec la charité comme but'".

¹³ The problem of his identity (identities) and date(s) is not of concern here; on this see R. LAVENANT, 'Le problème de Jean d'Apamée', *OCP* 46 (1980), 367-90, and A. DE HALLEUX, 'Le milieu historique de Jean le Solitaire', *III Symposium Syriacum* (OCA 221, 1983), 299-305.

¹⁴ Thus use has also been made of Narsai, since Isaac quotes him (not by name) on one occasion (XI. 15).

Evagrius, the Macarian Homilies, Ammonius, Lausiac History, *Historia Monachorum*, Apophthegmata, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nilus, Mark the Solitary, Abba Isaiah and Ps. Dionysius. (For details of specific works and editions see below).

In order to provide a reasonably systematic presentation of parallels attention has been for the most part limited to certain frequently occurring terms, notably *dubbārā* ('ascetic conduct' etc), *zaw'ā* ('stirring'), *ḥuššābā* ('thought'), *ḥaššā* ('passion'), *īda'tā* ('knowledge'), *lebbā* ('heart'), *nuhrā* ('light'), *sukkālā* ('insight'), *'uhdānā* ('recollection'), *pulḥānā* ('ministry'), *ṣlōtā* ('prayer'), *te'oryā* (*theōria*, 'contemplation'). With these (and the other selected terms)¹⁵ attention has been focussed on three different syntactic constructions: (a) the term followed by an adjective; (b) the term followed by (in terms of Indo-European grammar) a genitive; and (c) the term as a dependent genitive, governed by a preceding noun.

Only exact parallels to a particular phrase are given, introduced by 'cf'; these parallels are cited in the sequence: parallels in Isaac Part II (first those in the chapters edited here, then those in the chapters edited by BETTILO)¹⁶, in Part I, in other writers (in approximate chronological order). For the main terms (listed above) the material adduced should be reasonably complete as far as the literature read is concerned, and absence of parallels will mean (except in the case of banale phrases) that the usage is apparently confined to Isaac (though wider reading will no doubt often show this not to be the case)¹⁷.

Main texts adduced in the annotation.

In the case of published texts the standard (often the only) editions are employed; specification of these will be found in the Abbreviations, and no special comment is required here. Some clarification is, however, necessary in the case of the following (listed in alphabetical order):

¹⁵ For (')*rāzā*, *gelyānā*, *hergā*, *'amlā*, *'enyānā* and *renyā* my materials may not be as complete as for the terms listed above. For *theōria* see my 'Some uses of the term *theōria* in the writings of Isaac of Nineveh', *PdO* (forthcoming).

¹⁶ For III, containing the four centuries of Kephalaia, I have given the number of the century ('*Keph.*'), and the number within the century; while for I-II the folio number of B is provided.

¹⁷ Here it should also be remembered that a large number of relevant texts have not come down to us. I regret not having had the time available to include some samples from Gregory of Nazianzus and John Chrysostom, both of whom Isaac certainly knew in Syriac translation (for the earlier translation of Gregory of Nazianzus see A. VAN ROEY and H. MOORS, 'Les discours de saint Grégoire de Nazianze dans la littérature syriaque, I', *OLP* 4 (1973), 121-33.

Abraham of Nathpar (late sixth cent.)

A considerable number of monastic works are ascribed to Abraham of Nathpar, but in a number of cases the attribution is totally incorrect. In the absence of any edition use has been made of a comparatively early manuscript containing a collection of works under his name, BL Or. 6714, ff. 73v-101v, of ninth/tenth century. (A short description of the manuscript is given by F. NAU in PO 9, 5 (1913), 494-5). Cited as Abraham of Nathpar + folio number.

Ammonius

Ammonas, or Ammonius (Syriac does not distinguish the two) is known in Syriac from a collection of 14 Letters, edited by M. K MOSKO (with Latin translation) in *Ammonii Eremitae Epistolae* (PO 10,6; 1914); these are cited as Ammonius + page number in PO 10.

Anonymous, Commentary on Abba Isaiah

The extant fragments of the East Syriac commentary on Abba Isaiah's Asceticon are edited by R. DRAGUET, *Commentaire anonyme du Livre d'abba Isaïe* (CSCO 336, Scr. Syri 150; 1973). DRAGUET dates the composition of the work to c. 750.¹⁸

Babai the Great (d. 628)

Although occasional reference has been made to his christological work, the *Liber de Unione* (ed. A. VASCHALDE, CSCO 79, Scr. Syri 34; 1953), cited by page, consistent use has been confined to his Commentary on Evagrius' Centuries, edited by FRANKENBERG, from Vatican syr. 178 in his *Evagrius Ponticus*, 8-471. Cited as Babai C. *Evag.* + folio number (since FRANKENBERG gives the folio numbers of the manuscript in the margin, reference is made to these smaller units, rather than to the page numbers).

Babai of Nisibis (fl. early 7th cent.)

A Letter to Cyriacus, attributed by the manuscripts (all West Syrian) to 'the holy Mar Babai whom the wicked Barsauma slew' (i. e. the Catholicus Baboi of the late fifth century), is in fact by the East Syrian

¹⁸ DRAGUET, CSCO 337, Scr. Syri 151 (trad.), xxvi.

Babai of Nisibis, as is made evident by a quotation from the Letter, under Babai of Nisibis' name, made by Dadisho' in his Commentary on Abba Isaiah's Asceticon¹⁹. A provisional edition is given in BROCK, *Malpānūtā*, 93-114, with a translation in *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer*, 138-62 (both published before I learnt of the true author from Dadisho'). Cited as Babai of Nisibis + section number of my edition.

Basil

Since very little of the Syriac translations (often early) of various works by Basil has been published, use has been made of the following texts in manuscripts in the British Library:

- (a) Letter 2, to Gregory (CPG 2900). This Letter is preserved in a number of Syriac manuscripts, in a shorter and a longer form; the shorter form concludes where the Greek does, while the longer form (from which Isaac quotes) adds, without break, a supplement of unknown provenance. This longer form, which only occurs in manuscripts of the ninth century or later (and to which Isaac is thus the earliest witness), is cited from BL Add. 17192 (WRIGHT, *Catalogue*, no 789, pp. 778-81; 9th cent.); in this manuscript, as in Isaac, the Gregory is identified, not as Gregory of Nazianzus, but as his brother, i. e. Gregory of Nyssa²⁰. Cited as Basil *Ep. Greg.* + folio number of Add. 17192.
- (b) Proemion to the *Regulae fusius tractatae* (CPG 2881) in BL Add. 17183, ff. 94v-99r (WRIGHT, *Catalogue*, no 812, pp. 819-23; 10th cent.). Cited as Basil *Pr.* + folio number.

¹⁹ DRAGUET, *Commentaire* (CSCO 326, Scr. Syri 144), 197 (XIII. 18, quoting section 52 of the Letter, with the introductory 'the blessed Mar Babai bar Nsibnaye says'; see also my 'Notulae Syriacae', *Le Muséon* 108 (1995), 69-78.

²⁰ The shorter form is the one found in the earliest manuscripts, BL Add. 12175 of AD 534, Add. 12166 of the sixth century, Add. 17144, also of the sixth century, and Add. 14617 of the seventh/eighth century. The longer form features in Add. 17192 of the ninth century, Add. 18814, also of the ninth century, and Add. 17185 of the tenth/eleventh century. The supplement at the end of the text of Basil's Letter 2 begins 'Be careful, then, in your strenuous way of life, in your true utterances, and in your godly labours...' (Add. 17192, f. 189r). The number of surviving manuscripts indicates that the work was widely read. The Arabic version of the letter, which has recently been published by J. GRAND'HENRY, in *Le Muséon* 102 (1989), 321-59, does not contain the supplement found in the later Syriac manuscripts. An edition of the Syriac translation is in preparation. BETTILOLO, 'Povertà e conoscenza', 121 note 68 and 122 note 70, rightly speaks of Isaac's quotation in XXXV. 7 as being from 'Pseudo-Basilio'.

- (c) Questions. This is the title given in the early Syriac version to the 'Small Asceticon' (CPG 2876), which only survives in Rufinus' Latin and in Syriac. The Syriac text tradition has been studied by GRIBOMONT, *Histoire du texte*, ch. XIII (pp. 108-48), where he prints the text of several excerpts. For the purpose of the annotation I have used BL Add. 14544 (WRIGHT, *Catalogue*, no 552, pp. 421-2; 5th/6th cent., GRIBOMONT, p. 108, prefers 6th cent.). Cited as Basil *Quest.* + folio number.
- (d) *Sermo Asceticus* (CPG 2883) in BL Add. 17183, ff. 99r-103r. Cited as Basil *SA* + folio number.

Codex Syriacus Secundus

This Melkite manuscript²¹, written near Beirut in 882, has been published in facsimile by W. STROTHMANN, *Codex Syriacus Secundus* (GOFS 13, 1977). Among its very varied and interesting contents are, on ff. 37r-39r, a number of excerpts from Isaac's works; the final excerpts can be identified as coming from Keph. IV 21-23, and another is from Part I;²² what remains is, it seems, from neither Part I or Part II, and it is these extracts that are cited as *Cod. Syr. Sec.* + folio number.

Dadisho'

Dadisho' was evidently more or less an exact contemporary of Isaac, and like him, also in origin from Qatar; yet another link between the two men is their common connection with the monastery of Rabban Shabur²³. The following works by Dadisho' are cited:

- (a) Commentary on the Asceticon of Abba Isaiah, edited by R. DRAGUET, *Commentaire du livre d'abba Isaïe (logoi I-XV) par Dadiso Qatraya (VIIe siècle)* (CSC0 326, Scr. Syri 144; 1972). Cited as Dadisho' *C.Abls.* + chapter and section number of DRAGUET's edition.

²¹ Now in the Library of the Cincinnati Historical Society, USA (for details, see *OCP* 46 (1980), 21).

²² On 37r, from Part I, 564-5.

²³ Note especially *C. Ab. Is.* XIII. 5. On this monastery see J-M. FIEY, 'L'Elam, la première des métropoles ecclésiastiques syriennes orientales', *Melto* 5 (1869), 247-8, reprinted in his *Communautés syriaques en Iran et Irak des origines à 1552* (London, 1979), ch. IIIa. On Dadisho' see also P. BETTILOLO, 'Esegesi e purezza di cuore. La testimonianza di Dadišo' Qatraya (VII sec), nestoriano e solitario', *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 3 (1986), 201-13.

- (b) Commentary on the Paradise of the Fathers. The collection of Syriac translations of Egyptian monastic texts made in the seventh century by 'Enanisho' was evidently soon commented on by Dadisho', as is evident from BL. Add. 17263 where the author of the *nūhhārē* (scholia) on the Paradise is given as '[] Qatraya' (WRIGHT, *Catalogue*, p. 1079, uncharacteristically misread this as Baqtraya)²⁴, with the name unfortunately erased by an overzealous Syrian Orthodox reader. The manuscript tradition of both the Paradise itself (see below) and this commentary is clearly very complex and still requires further elucidation²⁵; nevertheless, the first seventy of the anonymous collection of 125 Questions which feature as ch. 23-4 in Part III of the Paradise of the Fathers as edited by BEDJAN in *AMS VII*, to be found on pp. 895-963, constitute an epitome of the Commentary by Dadisho' (many phraseological links with other works by Dadisho' support the identification)²⁶. Cited as Dadisho' *C. Par.* + page number in BEDJAN, *AMS VII*.
- (c) Discourse on stillness (*šelyā*). At the end of his *Mar Isaacus Ninivita* BEDJAN printed (pp. 601-628) part of a text on *šelyā* which the Mosul manuscript of 1898 he was using attributed to Isaac. That the true author was in fact Dadisho' became clear when MINGANA published the complete text of the work in his *Early Christian Mystics* (pp. 201-47; ET 70-143); although MINGANA used Mingana syr. 601, copied in 1932, the contents of this manuscript had been derived from the Alqosh manuscript (*olim* 237, now Chaldean Monastery, Baghdad, syr. 680), dated 1288/9, which also contains excerpts from Isaac Part II (= Q in the present edition). The work is cited as Dadisho' *Shel.* + page number of BEDJAN's partial edition, or page and column number (a, b) of MINGANA's complete edition.

²⁴ That Dadisho' is the author was seen by BAUMSTARK, *GSL*, 226 n. 7, and by DRAGUET, *Commentaire anonyme* (tr.) (CSCO 337, Scr. Syri 151), 11-12, note.

²⁵ I am most grateful to Dr N. SIMS-WILLIAMS for sharing his findings, made in connection with his identification of a Sogdian fragment of the work; see now his 'Dadišo' Qatraya's Commentary on the Paradise of the Fathers', *AB* 112 (1994), 33-64.

²⁶ This section is designated as S** in W. BOUSSET, *Apophtegmata* (Tübingen, 1923). Examples of phraseology in common with Dadisho's other works include the particularly distinctive *stūryā d-ḥuššābē*, which is found both in *C. Par.* 912, 945, 963, and in *Shel.* 615, *C.Abt.* I.16, VII.3, XIV.17, XV.2, 34. For some other examples, see the annotation to X. 9 (*ḥuššābay ḥuššē*), XVII.1 (*šurray mettzi'ānūtā*), XXXI.1 (*āmray b-šelyā*). It might be noted that in the short extracts from the full form of the Commentary by Dadisho' which SIMS-WILLIAMS prints, both *stūryā d-ḥuššābē* and *šurray mettzi'ānūtā* occur (pp. 48, 46 respectively).

Dionysius, Pseudo-

The early Syriac translation of the Dionysian corpus, by Sergios of Resh'aina, survives in a single manuscript, Sinai syr. 52, an edition of which (along with Phokas' revision)²⁷ is being prepared by G. WIESSNER. In the mean time two excerpts are available in print, (a) the first chapter of the *Mystical Theology*, edited by J-M. HORNUS, 'Le Corpus dionysien en syriaque', *PdO* 1 (1970), 69-93; and (b) ch. on the Myron, of the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, edited by W. STROTHMANN, *Das Sakrament der Myron-Weihe in der Schrift de Ecclesiastica Hierarchia des Pseudo-Dionysios Areopagita in syrischen Übersetzungen und Kommentaren* (GOFS 15, 1977). Ps. Dionysius is normally cited from a microfilm of Sinai syr. 52, with folio number; in some cases, where a text is available in print, the name of the editor, with page number, has also been given.

Ephrem

Ephrem is cited from the standard editions by E. BECK in CSCO, by hymn cycle, number of hymn and stanza.

Evagrius

For Isaac, and for almost all other Syriac monastic writers, Evagrius ranked among the most highly revered authorities on the spiritual life, and a large number of his works were available in Syriac translation (including many for which the Greek original is now lost). In the annotation use has been made of the following:

- (a) BL Add. 14578 (WRIGHT, *Catalogue* no 567, pp. 445-9; 6th/7th cent.). This is one of the earliest and most important of the many manuscripts containing Evagrius' works; although several texts from this manuscript have been published by FRANKENBERG and MUYLDERMANS, others have not, and it is these that are cited as Add. 14578 + folio number. The identity of the various texts involved can be discovered from the following table of contents (titles are those of the manuscript; texts are identified by CPG number, and those whose Syriac text has been published are indicated):²⁸

²⁷ Although Phokas' revision was made during his lifetime (see *OC* 63 (1979), 21 for a date c. 684/6), Isaac will only have known the earlier translation attributed to Sergius of Resh'aina.

²⁸ My list is based on that given by MUYLDERMANS, *Evagriana Syriaca*, 6-9.

1. f. 1r Life of Evagrius.
2. f. 2v Praktikos (CPG 2430)²⁹.
f. 11v Gnostikos (CPG 2431), ed. FRANKENBERG, *Evagrius Ponticus*, 546-553
3. f. 16v Discourses addressed to Eulogius (CPG 2447).
4. f. 34v On the eight evil thoughts/Antirrhetikos (CPG 2434), ed. FRANKENBERG, 472-545.
5. f. 77r On the eight evil passions (CPG 2451).
6. f. 82r On the thoughts that are opposed to a pious life (CPG 2450).
7. f. 92r On the distinctions of the thoughts (Greek ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Le Muséon* 44 (1931), 378).
8. f. 93r On the determinations of the thoughts (Greek ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Le Muséon* 44 (1931), 380).
9. f. 93r Hortatory discourse to brethren dwelling together (CPG 2435).
10. f. 97r On the monastic life (CPG 2441).
11. f. 102r On the Just and the Perfect (CPG 2465), ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Evagriana Syriaca*, 105-9. This piece is in fact ch. XIV of the *Liber Graduum*.
12. f. 103r On the aims by which the peace of the monastic life is established (Greek fragment, PG LXXIX, 1224).
13. f. 104r On the passions.
14. f. 104v On humility (CPG 2466), ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Evagriana Syriaca*, 109-14.
15. f. 107r Admonition (CPG 2454).
16. f. 107v Admonition (Greek ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Le Muséon* 51 (1938), 201).
17. f. 109r Untitled (CPG 2467), ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Evagriana Syriaca*, 115-17.
18. f. 110r Admonition (CPG 2472), ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Evagriana Syriaca*, 125-8.
19. f. 110v Interpretation of the metaphorical expressions in the Proverbs of Solomon (CPG 2457), ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Evagriana Syriaca*, 133-4.

²⁹ For the Syriac translations (S1-3) of the Praktikos see A. GUILLAUMONT, *Évagre le Pontique, Traité Pratique ou Le Moine I* (SC 170, 1971), 319-34. Add. 14578 belongs to the standard version, S1, found in the majority of manuscripts and this is the version evidently used by Isaac in his explicit quotation from Praktikos 80 (in XVIII.21). (S2 features in Add. 14616 and 17165, and S3 in Add. 14650 and 17166).

20. f. 111r Definitions of the passions of the soul (CPG 2442).
21. f. 112r On Prayer (CPG 2452), ed. HAUSHERR, *OCP* 5 (1939), 11-16.
22. f. 113v Admonition.
23. f. 114v Discourse addressed to teachers and disciples.
24. f. 115v Dialogue between a teacher and pupil (CPG 2470), ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Evagriana Syriaca*, 123-4.
25. f. 116r Maxims (PG LXXIX, 1249).
26. f. 117r By what things the intellect is impressed and by what not (CPG 2450).
27. f. 117v On unclean thoughts (CPG 2450).
28. f. 118r On the Philistine demons (CPG 2450).
29. f. 118r On the Seraphim (CPG 2459), ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Le Muséon* 59 (1946), 370.
30. f. 118v On the Cherubim (CPG 2460), ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Le Muséon* 59 (1946), 371.
31. f. 119r Six Centuries (CPG 2432), ed. FRANKENBERG, 8-471, and A. GUILLAUMONT, *Les Six Centuries des "Kephalaia Gnostica" d'Évagre le Pontique*, PO 28, 1 (1985).
32. f. 144r Heads of knowledge; 146r-147r ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Le Muséon* 47 (1934), 89-91.
33. f. 147r On perfection (CPG 2476), ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Le Muséon* 47 (1934), 99-102.
34. f. 148r Admonition to those whose walk is with God (CPG 2471), ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Evagriana Syriaca*, 124-5.
35. f. 148v Admonition to the intellect (CPG 2473), ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Evagriana Syriaca*, 128.
36. f. 148v Fourteen untitled sentences (part of Supplement to Six Centuries), ed. FRANKENBERG, 460 (no. 44).
37. f. 149r On silence (CPG 2468), ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Evagriana Syriaca*, 118-9.
38. f. 150v Three sections on prayer (CPG 2453), ed. HAUSHERR, 'De Doctrina Spirituali Christianorum Orientalium', *Orientalia Christiana* 30 (1933), 149-51.
39. f. 150v Proverbs and interpretations (CPG 2477), ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Evagriana Syriaca*, 135-8.
40. f. 152r Letter to Anatolius (CPG 2430).
41. f. 153v Exhortation (CPG 2440(1)), ed. FRANKENBERG, 554-6.
42. f. 155v Exhortation (CPG 2440(2)), ed. FRANKENBERG, 558-62 (an English translation is available in my *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer*, 66-73).

43. f. 158v Letter to a virgin (CPG (CPG 2436), ed. FRANKENBERG, 562.
 44. f. 160r Sixty two letters (CPG 2437), ed. FRANKENBERG, 564-610.
 There is a German translation, with good introduction and notes, by G. BUNGE, *Evagrius Pontikos, Briefe aus der Wüste* (Sophia 24, Trier, 1986); this includes the Letter to Melania).
 45. f. 187r Letter to Melania (CPG 2438), ed. FRANKENBERG, 612-18
 (for the second part, taken from a different manuscript. see below, under Evagrius, (j) Letter to Melania).

Texts in Add. 14578 which are not yet published are cited as Add. 14578 + folio number.

- (b) Antirrhethikos, ed. FRANKENBERG, 472-545 (cf above, b(4)). Cited as Evagrius *Antirrh.*, with the folio number of Add. 14578, given in the margin if FRANKENBERG's edition.
- (c) *Capita Cognoscitiva*, ed. MUYLDERMANS, *Le Muséon* 47 (1934), 99-102, cf above (b) 32-33; cited as Evagrius *Cap. Cog.*, with page number.
- (d) Texts in MUYLDERMANS' *Evagriana Syriaca*; these are:
- pp. 105-9: I. *de justis et perfectis* [= *Liber Graduum XIV*] = (b) 11 above
 109-14: II. *de humilitate* = (b) 14 above
 115-17 III.A *de jejunio* = (b) 17 above
 117 III.B *de jejunio*, from Add. 12170
 118-9 IV *de silentio* = (b) 37 above
 120-2 V *admonitio de signis quietis*, from Vat. syr. 126
 123-4 VI *Colloquium magistri cum discipulo suo* = (b) 24 above
 124-5 VII *de tutelis ejus qui a deo ducitur* = (b) 34 above
 125-8 VIII *admonitio paraenetica* = (b) 18 above
 128 IX *paraenesis mentis* = (b) 35 above
 129 XA,B *doctrina*, from Add. 14621 and Add. 7190 (Rich)
 130-3 XI *paraenesis*, from Add. 17192
 133-4 XII *expositio in parabolis et in proverbia Salamonis* = (b) 19 above
 135-8 XIII *de proverbiis et eorundem expositionibus* = (b) 39 above
 139-40 XIV *professio fidei*, from Add. 17167
 141-2 XVA-D *excerpta*, from Add. 12155, 12175, 17178 and 21580.

Cited as *Evag. Syr.* + page.

- (e) Gnostikos, ed. FRANKENBERG, 546-53 = (b) 2 above. The sayings are numbered following on those of the Praktikos in a single sequence; for a concordance with the numbers of GUILLAUMONT's edition, see his *Évagre le Pontique: le Gnostique* (SC 356, 1989), 195. In the introduction to his edition (pp. 52-62) GUILLAUMONT identifies three Syriac translations. Add. 14578 (i. e. FRANKENBERG's edition), along with the majority of extant manuscripts, belongs to S1. S2 is found in Add. 17165 and 14616, while S3, a revision of S1, is found in Add. 17167. Cited as Evagrius *Gnos.* + number of the saying (in FRANKENBERG's edition).
- (f) Kephalaia Gnostica. Instead of FRANKENBERG's edition (= (b) 31 above), that of GUILLAUMONT, in PO 28, 1 (1985) is used. Isaac knows the standard version, S1. Cited as Evagrius *Keph.* + century number and number within the century.
- (g) Supplements to the Kephalaia Gnostica, ed. FRANKENBERG, *Evagrius Ponticus*, 422-70. Cited as Evagrius *Keph. Supp.* + number of the saying.
- (h) Letters, ed. FRANKENBERG, *Evagrius Ponticus*, 554-635 (taken from Add. 14578 = b (44-5) above, and Add. 17167. Cited as Evagrius *Epp.* + folio number of the manuscript in question, given in the margin of FRANKENBERG's edition.
- (i) *Martyanuta* ('Admonition'), ed. J.Y. ÇIÇEK, *Martyānūtā d-abāhātā qaddīšē d-'idtā* (Monastery of St Ephrem, Glane, Holland, 1985), 43-6. The whole of this volume is derived from a monastic anthology in a manuscript written in 'the mountain of Edessa' in 1117. (There are two other extracts from Evagrius: pp. 33-43, which can be identified as coming from the Discourse addressed to Eulogius, CPG 2447; and pp. 46-8, which is from On the monastic life, CPG 2441 [these correspond to (b) 3 and (b) 10 above]). The excerpt on pp. 43-6 is cited as Evagrius *Mart.* + page number.
- (j) Letter to Melania (second half), ed. G. VITESTAM, *Seconde partie du traité qui passe sous le nom de 'La grande lettre d'Évagre le Pontique à Melania l'ancienne* (Scripta Minora Regiae Societatis Humanarum Litterarum Lundensis 1963/4, no 3), taken from Add. 17192. The first part of the Letter is included in FRANKENBERG's edition, pp. 612-18. There is an English translation of both parts by M. PARMENTIER, 'Evagrius of Pontus' Letter to Melania', *Bijdragen, Tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie* 46 (1985), 2-38. Cited as Evagrius *Mel.* + page number of VITESTAM's edition.

- (k) On Prayer, ed. I. HAUSHERR, 'Le De Oratione d'Évagre le Pontique en syriaque et en arabe', *OCP* 5 (1939), 7-71; corresponds to (b) 21 above. Only 35 sections of the Syriac translation survive. Cited as Evagrius *Pr.* with section number³⁰.

Gregory of Cyprus (seventh cent.)

Thanks to HAUSHERR's work³¹ it is now clear that Gregory of Cyprus belongs to the seventh and not to the fourth century. Of his Discourses only the Seventh, on 'Holy Contemplation' has been published: I. HAUSHERR, *Gregorii monachi Cyprii de Theoria Sancta* (OCA 110, 1937), and this is cited as Gregory of Cyprus + page number. In order to provide slightly wider coverage of this important writer, use has also been made of BL Add. 17192, 160v-184v, containing Discourse VIII (for this manuscript, see under Basil(a)); cited as Gregory of Cyprus Add. 17192 + folio number.

Hierotheos

Although it is not at all likely that Isaac knew 'The Book of the Holy Hierotheos', edited by F.S. MARSH (London/Oxford, 1927), this work has been occasionally cited as a representative of the Dionysian tradition, seeing that so little of the first Syriac translation of the Dionysian Corpus is as yet available in print. Cited as Hierotheos + page number.

Ḥudra

Instead of BEDJAN's edition of the Chaldean Breviary I have used the fuller text of T. DARMO's edition (3 volumes, Trichur [Kerala], 1960-2), whose arrangement remains truer to the East Syrian liturgical tradition. According to his preface his two main sources were a Ḥudra completed on 28 April in the year 1909 of the Seleucid era (= A.D. 1598) and another completed on 11 June 1992 of the Seleucid era (= A.D. 1681)³².

³⁰ The Syriac numbering differs slightly from that of the Greek.

³¹ See also J. KIRCHMEYER in *D. Spir.* 6 (1967), 920-22.

³² On DARMO see the biography by Mar APREM, *Mar Thoma Darmo, a biography* (Trichur, 1974). A study of part of the manuscript tradition can be found in J. MOOLAN, *The Period of Annunciation-Nativity in the East Syrian Calendar* (OIRSI 90; Kottayam, 1985), and in P. KURUTHUKULANGARA, *The Feast of the Nativity of our Lord in the Chaldean and Malabar Liturgical Year. A Study of the Sources* (OIRSI 127; Kottayam, 1989).

The first of these is no. 29 in W.F. MACOMBER, 'A list of the known manuscripts of the Chaldean Hudra', *OCP* 36 (1970), 128. Cited as *Hudra* + volume and page number.

Isaac of Antioch

It is likely that at least two, if not three Isaacs, are represented in the pages of BEDJAN's *Homiliae Sancti Isaaci Antiocheni* (Paris/Leipzig, 1903)³³. Only sporadic use has been made of these homilies, which were probably not known to Isaac of Nineveh. Cited as Isaac of Antioch + page number of BEDJAN's edition (which is much fuller than that of BICKELL).

Isaac of Nineveh

Part I of Isaac's works are cited by page number of BEDJAN's edition (given in the margin of WENSINCK's translation). A concordance, giving the equivalences between the page numbers and the Syriac homily numbers, and the correspondences with the different numbering of the homilies in the printed edition of the Greek translation (and hence of the French translation, from Greek, by J. TOURAILLE), and with that of D. MILLER's English translation, from the Greek, but using early manuscripts and the Syriac, will be found in the Appendix to the Introduction. The three chapters of Part II being edited by BETTILOLO are denoted by folio number of B for chapters I-II, and by Century number + section for the Kephalaia (designated *Keph.*). No use is made of the unpublished Book of Grace, whose attribution to Isaac is disputed: see G. BUNGE, 'Mar Isaak von Nineveh und sein "Buch der Gnade"', *Ostkirchliche Studien* 34 (1985), 3-22, and [D. MILLER], *The Ascetical Homilies*, lxxxi-lxxxv, 397-426 (with some extended extracts in translation).

John the Solitary (John of Apamea)

Since the writings under the name of John the Solitary (*iḥīdāyā*) clearly exerted an influence as great as that of Evagrius on the East

³³ For the problem of the two/three Isaacs who were authors of verse homilies see the brief overview by F. GRAFFIN in *D. Spir.* 7 (1971), 2010-11. The edition by BEDJAN is based on a fairly late manuscript, containing the same collection of homilies as Vat. syr. 119 (of AD 1210), but in a different order. This collection does not include the considerable number of verse homilies ascribed to Isaac which survive in earlier manuscripts. A collection of 24 verse homilies by 'Isaac of Antioch' circulated in East Syrian circles under the name of Isaac of Nineveh (all feature in BEDJAN's edition of Isaac of Antioch).

Syrian monastic tradition, a fairly wide selection of texts, both published and unpublished, have been cited in the annotation; these are:

- (a) Unpublished texts in BL Add. 17170 (WRIGHT, *Catalogue*, no. 573, pp. 454-8; dated A.D. 774/5). The texts concerned can be identified from the following table of contents, where the items are provided with the numbers given to John's works by STROTHMANN³⁴, and indication is given of any editions available.
1. f. 1v End of Second Discourse on the New World, STROTHMANN 1.3.3.1.2.
 2. f. 1v Discourse on the fulfilment of the future promises, STROTHMANN 1.3.4.1.
 3. f. 10v Questions and answers, STROTHMANN 3.9.³⁵
 4. f. 14r Discourses on the Beatitudes, STROTHMANN 1.3.1.3,6,5.
 5. f. 43v Discourse on Romans 8:18, STROTHMANN 2.1.5.
 6. f. 46v Discourse on Ephesians 6:11, STROTHMANN 2.1.6.
 7. f. 48v Exhortation to love, STROTHMANN 2.4.1.
 8. f. 49v Rules and orders, STROTHMANN 2.4.2.
 9. f. 51r Exhortation to virtue, STROTHMANN 2.4.3.
 10. f. 52v Consolatory address to those persecuted for Christ's sake, STROTHMANN 2.4.4.
 11. f. 54r Letter to Marcianus, STROTHMANN 2.2.1.
 12. f. 59r Letter to Hesychius, STROTHMANN 1.3.2.1; ed. BROCK (see under (e) below).
 13. f. 64v Letter of Thaumasio to John, STROTHMANN 1.2.3; ed. STROTHMANN, *Johannes von Apamea*, 90-93 (text VIII).
 14. f. 65v Three discourses on the mystery of the dispensation of Christ, addressed to Thaumasio, STROTHMANN 1.2.4.1-3; ed. STROTHMANN, *Johannes von Apamea*, 94-141 (texts IX-XI).
 15. f. 84r Letter of John to Thaumasio, STROTHMANN 1.2.2; ed. STROTHMANN, *Johannes von Apamea*, 82-90 (text VII).
 16. f. 87v Beatitudes, STROTHMANN 1.3.1.3.

³⁴ W. STROTHMANN, *Johannes von Apamea* (Patristische Texte und Studien 11, 1972), 5-44.

³⁵ STROTHMANN, *Johannes von Apamea*, 38, identifies this text as coming from 'Eranisho's' collection of Apophthegmata, *AMS* VII, 964-74; this text follows the section in *AMS* VII which is to be identified as a form of Dadisho's *C. Par.* (see above, under Dadisho' (b)). A fragment also survives in Sogdian, for which see N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *The Christian Sogdian Manuscript C*, (Berliner Turfantexte 12, 1985), 124-35 (Text 8, f. 61).

Unpublished texts are cited as John Sol. Add. 17170 + folio number.

- (b) Commentary on Qohelet (Ecclesiastes), ed. W. STROTHMANN, *Kohelet-Kommentar des Johannes von Apamea* (GOFS 30, 1988); this has been cited as *C. Qoh* + section and line number of STROTHMANN's edition.
- (c) Kephalaia. A short collection of Kephalaia attributed to John is published in J.Y. ÇIÇEK, *Martyānūtā d-abāhātā qaddīše*, 99-101 (for the provenance of this anthology see under Evagrius (i) above). Cited as John Sol. *Keph.* + page number.
- (d) Letters, ed. L.G. RIGNELL, *Briefe von Johannes dem Einsiedler* (Lund, 1941); cited as John Sol. *Epp.* + page.
- (e) Letter to Hesychius, ed. S.P. BROCK, *Malpānūtā d-abāhātā suryāyē d-'al šlōtā* (Monastery of St Ephrem, Glane, Holland, 1988), 33-44 (based on Add. 14609 and 17166, both of sixth century; a critical edition is in preparation). An English translation is to be found in BROCK, *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer*, 81-98. Cited as John Sol. *Hes.* + section number of my edition.
- (f) On Prayer, ed. S.P. BROCK, 'John the Solitary, On Prayer', *Journal of Theological Studies* ns 30 (1979), 84-101; cited as John Sol. *Pr.* + section number of my edition.
- (g) Questions, in Add. 14606, ff. 61v-85v (WRIGHT, *Catalogue*, no 772, pp. 744-5), STROTHMANN I. 3. 6. Cited as John Sol. *Quest.* + folio number.
- (h) Dialogue on the Soul, ed. S. DEDERING, *Johannes von Lykopolis. Ein Dialog über die Seele und die Affekte des Menschen* (Uppsala, 1936). There is a French translation by I. HAUSHERR, *Jean le Solitaire (Pseudo-Jean de Lykopolis). Dialogue sur l'âme et les passions des hommes* (OCA 120, 1939); an English translation, by M. HANSBURY, is in preparation. Cited as John Sol. *Soul* + page number of DEDERING's edition.
- (i) Dialogues with Thaumasio, ed. W. STROTHMANN, *Johannes von Apamea* (Patristische Texte und Studien 11, 1972); French translation by R. LAVENANT, *Jean d'Apamée, Dialogues et traités* (Sources chrétiennes 311, 1984). Cited as John Sol. *Thaum.* with Dialogue + line number of STROTHMANN's edition.

- (j) Tractates, ed. L.G. RIGNELL, *Drei Traktate von Johannes dem Einsiedler* (Lunds Universitets Årsskrift N. F. Avd. 1, Bd 54, Nr. 4; 1960. There is an English translation of the first tractate in [D. MILLER], *The Ascetical Homilies*, 461-6. Cited as John Sol. Tr. + page number of RIGNELL's edition.

Macarius

The Syriac translation(s) of the Macarian Homilies are cited from W. STROTHMANN, *Die syrische Überlieferung der Schriften des Makarios*, Teil 1, Syrischer Text (GOFS 21, 1981). The correspondences with the Greek collections are indicated in Teil 2, *Übersetzung*. Cited as Macarius + page number of STROTHMANN's edition.

Mark the Monk (Mark the Solitary)

Unpublished Syriac translations are available for most of Mark's works; for the purposes of the annotation I have used (1) BL Add. 12175 (WRIGHT, *Catalogue*, no 727, pp. 633-8; A. D. 533/4), containing (a) ff. 145v-149r, The Spiritual Law (CPG 6090), and (b) ff. 149v-155v, On those who think they can be justified by works (CPG 6091); and (2) Add. 17192 (WRIGHT, *Catalogue*, no 789; pp. 778-81; 9th cent.), containing (a) ff. 82v-106v, On Baptism (CPG 6093); (b) ff. 106v-116v, On Repentance (CPG 6092); (c) ff. 116v-133r, Disputation with a lawyer (CPG 6097); and (d) ff. 133r-160v, The Spiritual Law (two discourses). There is an English translation of The Spiritual Law and On those who think ... in *The Philokalia* I, 110-46, and a French translation of all Mark's works in C.-A. ZIRNHELD, *Marc le moine. Traités spirituels et théologiques* (Spiritualité Orientale 41, 1985). Cited as Mark the Monk Add. 12175 or 17192 + folio number.

Narsai

The standard edition of Narsai's works by A. MINGANA, *Narsai Doctoris Syri Homiliae et Carmina* (2 vols; Mosul, 1905) contains 47 homilies, whereas his list of all the surviving homilies (vol. I, pp. 26-31) runs to 81. MINGANA's edition is cited as Narsai M + volume + page number. For those homilies not included in MINGANA's edition (or, in the case of (a) below, available in a more accessible place) I have used the following:

- (a) Homilies on creation, ed. P. GIGNOUX, *Homélie de Narsai sur la création*, PO 34, 3-4 (1968); cited as Narsai G + homily number + line.
- (b) Homilies ed. F.G. McLEOD, *Narsai's metrical homilies on the Nativity, Epiphany, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension*, PO 40, 1 (1979); cited as Narsai McL + homily number + line.
- (c) Homilies not in MINGANA or in (a) - (b) are cited from the photographic two-volume edition entitled *Homilies of Mar Narsai*, published by the Patriarchal Press (San Francisco, 1970)³⁶ and based on a rather poor manuscript copied in 1901³⁷; cited as Narsai PP + volume + page.
- (d) Homilies edited by E.P. SIMAN, *Narsai. Cinq homélie sur les paraboles évangéliques* (Paris, 1984). Only the third homily, on the Workers in the Vineyard, is cited from this edition, since it alone is absent from (a) and (c); cited as Narsai S + couplet number (the numbering is given only in the facing French translation).
- (e) Homilies edited by J. FRISHMAN, *The Ways and Means of the Divine Economy. An Edition, Translation and Study of Six Biblical Homilies by Narsai* (Diss. Leiden, 1992)³⁸. Homily V is an edition of the Homily on the Tabernacle, quoted by Isaac in XI.15. Cited as Narsai F + homily number + line.

Nilus

The Syriac translations of works under the name of Nilus are cited (by page number) from P. BETTILOLO, *Gli scritti siriaci di Nilo il Solitario* (Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain 30, 1983). This contains:

- pp. 10-32 I, 'Pearls.'
 75-124 II, 'On the monastic way of life'.
 184-203 IIIA, 'Admonition'.

³⁶ I am most grateful to His Grace Mar Ashur Bawai for obtaining a copy of this useful edition for me.

³⁷ Not one of the 26 manuscripts listed by W.F. MACOMBER, 'The manuscripts of the metrical homilies of Narsai', *OCP* 39 (1973), 275-306.

³⁸ I am most grateful to Dr Frishman for giving me a copy of her dissertation. Some information on the contents of Homily 57, on the Tabernacle, from which Isaac quotes, can be found in her 'Type and reality in the exegetical homilies of Mar Narsai', *Studia Patristica* 20, (1989), 173-4.

used BEDJAN's edition in *AMS VII* (except for the *Historia Lausiaca*, where DRAGUET's has been cited); BEDJAN's volume contains:

- pp. 1-193 Part I, i. e. Palladius, *Lausiaca History*.
 193-329 Part II, *Lives of the Solitaries* (also attributed to Palladius).
 329-442 'The Part of Hieronymos', i. e. the *Historia Monachorum*.
 442-894 Part III 'Discourse of the holy Fathers', i. e. *Apophthegmata*, arranged by topic.
 895-990 Questions and Answers of the Elders. This probably represents a form of Dadisho's Commentary on the Paradise (see under Dadisho').

In the annotation the 'Part of Hieronymos' is cited as *Hist. Mon.* + page number of *AMS VII*, while the *Apophthegmata* are cited as *Par.* + page number.

Philoxenus (d. 523)

Use has been made, for comparative purposes, of (a) E. A. W. BUDGE, *The Discourses of Philoxenus* (2 vols; London, 1894)⁴⁴, cited as *Philoxenus Disc.* + page of the edition (in vol. 1); and (b), Letter to Patricius, ed. R. LAVENANT, *La lettre à Patricius de Philoxène de Mabboug*, PO 30, 5 (1963), cited as *Philoxenus Patr.* + section number⁴⁵.

Shem'on d-Ṭaybuteh (seventh cent.)

Various works by Shem'on d-Ṭaybuteh ('the Graceful')⁴⁶ were included by A. MINGANA in his *Early Christian Mystics*, tr. pp. 10-69, text pp. 281-320. MINGANA provides a photographic reproduction of Mingana syr. 601, copied in 1932 from *olim* Alqosh 237, Q of the present edition, dated 1288/9. Cited as Shem'on d-Ṭaybuteh + page and column (a, b) of MINGANA's edition.

⁴⁴ It should be noted that Discourse 9 is also transmitted in an abbreviated form in BL. Add. 17192, ff. 268v-278r, where it is attributed to Gregory of Nyssa; the true identity of this text is pointed out by M. PARMENTIER in an article forthcoming in *Aram* 5.

⁴⁵ For the Letter on the Three Stages of the Monastic Life, wrongly attributed to Philoxenus (and probably by Joseph the Seer), see now P. HARB and F. GRAFFIN, *Lettre sur les trois étapes de la vie monastique*, PO 45, 2 (1992).

⁴⁶ An Italian translation of several of Shem'on's works (including several for which the Syriac text remains unpublished) is given by P. BETTILOLO, *Simone di Taibuteh. Violenza e grazia; la coltura del cuore* (Rome, 1992).

Shubḥalmaran (fl. early seventh cent.)

Shubḥalmaran's Book of Gifts is preserved in a unique manuscript, BL Or. 6714, ff. 1-73v (+ f. 2 of Paris BN ar. 6725)⁴⁷, of the 9th/10th cent., an edition of which is being prepared by D.J. LANE (to appear in the CSCO).⁴⁸ Cited as Shubḥalmaran + folio number.

Theodore of Mopsuestia

Theodore's *De perfectione regiminis* (CPG 3855), which would be his work of greatest relevance here, is unfortunately lost. Accordingly, for the purpose of the annotation I have made use of the following:

- (a) The Commentary on the Nicene Creed (CPG 3852), ed., with English translation, by A. MINGANA, in *Woodbrooke Studies V* (Cambridge, 1932).
- (b) The Commentary on the Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, ed., with English translation, by A. MINGANA, in *Woodbrooke Studies VI* (Cambridge, 1933). Both these are cited as *WS* + volume + page.
- (c) The Commentary on the Gospel of John (CPG 3843), ed., with Latin translation, by J-M. VOSTÉ, *Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in Evangelium Iohannis Apostoli*, CSCO 115-6, Scr. Syri IV. iii (1940). Cited as *C. John* + page of the text volume.
- (d) The extant Syriac fragments of the Commentary on the Psalms (CPG 3833), ed., with French translation, by L. VAN ROMPAY, *Théodore de Mopsueste. Fragments syriaques du Commentaire des Psaumes* (Psaume 118 et Psaumes 138-148), CSCO 435-6, Scr. Syri 189-90 (1982). Cited as *C. Pss.* + page of the text volume.
- (e) The extant fragments of the Commentary on Qohelet (Ecclesiastes) (CPG 3836), ed. W. STROTHMANN, *Das syrische Fragment des*

⁴⁷ The Paris fragment was published by F. NAU, 'À propos d'un feuillet d'un manuscrit arabe', *Le Muséon* 43 (1930), 85-116; cf also G. TROUPEAU, 'Une page retrouvée du "Livre des Parties" de Subḥalmaran', *Symposium Syriacum* 1976 (OCA 205, 1978), 57-61. Another loose folio belonging to Or. 6714 is to be found in the Mingana Collection, Birmingham, as Mingana syr. 631; see the Appendix, 'Mingana Syriac fragments from Sinai', in my 'Mingana Syriac 628: a folio from a revision of the Peshitta Song of Songs', *JSS* 40 (1995), 51-3.

⁴⁸ On Shubḥalmaran, see LANE's articles 'Mar Shubḥalmaran's Book of Gifts as an example of a Syriac literary genre', *IV Symposium Syriacum* (OCA 229, 1987), 411-17, and 'A Nestorian creed: the creed of Shubḥalmaran', *V Symposium Syriacum* (OCA 236, 1990), 155-62.

Ecclesiastes-Kommentars von Theodor von Mopsuestia (GOFS 28; 1988). Cited as *C. Qoh.* +A(uszug)/Chapter + line number.

Some initial findings

The present volume is not the place for a detailed discussion of the light that the annotation can throw on identifying the various strands of earlier monastic literature that have influenced Isaac's writings. Here a few preliminary observations must suffice in order to illustrate some of the things that can be learnt from the annotation.

In the first place it is of interest to note the many striking correspondences in phraseology between Part I and Part II; in the following list references are to the appropriate place in the annotation, and items with an asterisk are either very rare, or absent from the literature consulted for the annotation (the items are listed in the order of the Syriac alphabet):

ammīnūt mernūthōn (X.9)*; *ammīnūt renyā* (VIII.7)*; *gelyānā d-sukkālē* (VIII.4)*; *gelyānā d-'ālmā ḥadtā* (VIII.4)*; *gušmeh d-'ālmā* (V.30); *dubbār šelyā* (VIII.18); *dubbārā d-bātar qyāmtā* (VIII.6); *dubbārā d-barnāšā ḥadtā* (VIII.11); *dwāyūt kyānā* (XL.10)*; *haymānūtā d-lebbeh* (VIII.25); *hannī'ūtā d-'enyānā* (XXIX.3); *zaw'ē nahhīrē* (XVIII.15)*; *zaw'ē napsānāyē* (XXXII.14)*; *zaw'ā pārōšā* (XVIII.18)*; *zaw'ē špayyā* (IX.11)*; *zaw'ē d-re'yānā* (XXIV.2); *ḥuššābā d-īda'tā* (XXIV.5); *ḥuššā da-šlōtā* (XL.12)*; *īda'tā mtōmāyā* (XXXIX. 19)*; *kasyātā d-rāzē* (V.16); *sukkālē rāmē* (XXI.7)*; *sukkālē thīrē* (XIV. 46)*; *'ālmā d-zaddīqē* (XXV.9); *'enyānā d-īda'tā* (X.33); *'enyānā da-ktābē* (XXIX.1); *'uhdānā d-rabbūteh d-alāhā* (XVIII.2)*; *'uhdānā d-ṭābūtā da-'īdān* (XVIII.9); *pulḥānā kasyā* (XXIV.1); *pulḥānā d-mad'ā* (XXIV. title)*; *pulḥānā šapyā* (X.1); *tarbūtā d-dubbārē* (XXIII.2)*; *renyā d-mad'ā* (X. 14); *šabrūt tar'ītā* (XXXIX.2); *šapyūtā d-zaw'ē* (XXXVI.1); *šelyūtā gawwāyā* (XVIII.3); *te'ōryā d-re'yānā* (XI.32).

Isaac's phraseology and terminology owes a great debt to two writers in particular, John the Solitary and Evagrius. The following are some clear cases of this sort of general influence on Isaac:

(a) John the Solitary

(')*rāzē ruḥānē* (VIII.1); (')*rāzē da-šrārā* (XX.22); *atrā d-* (phrases with, V.1); *bussāmā ruḥānā* (XIV.5); *gušmeh d-'ālmā* (V.30); *dubbārā d-barnāšā gawwāyā* (VIII.1); *dubbārā d-barnāšā ḥadtā* (VIII.11); *dubbārā d-bātar qyāmtā/nulḥāmā* (VIII.6); *dubbārā d-ḥayyē ḥadtē* (XXXVIII tit.); *dubbārā d-'ālmā ḥadtā* (XIV.39); *dubbārā d-ruḥ* (VII.2); *haddāmē gawwāyē* (V. 20); *hergā šappirā* (VII.1); *zaw'ē d-ḥuššābē* (XX.10-11); *zaw'ē da-šlōtā* (V pref.); *ṭeksā d-ḥīrūtā* (XX.26); *nbl* (X.9); *nahhīrūtā d-ḥuššābē* (VIII.25); *sabrā da-'īd* (XXIX.11); *'ālmā ḥadtā* (V.5); *tarbūtā d-barnāšā gawwāyā* (XIII tit.);

tarbītā gawwānāytā (XXX.3); *tarbītā d-ḥayyē* (X.1); *tarbītā d-re'yānā* (XXXIV.3); *margšānūtā d-īda'tā* (VIII.1); *'enyānā d-alāhā* (XXX.1); *ešt̄bī* (X.30).

(b) Evagrius

ḥzātā d-re'yānā (XIII.2); *ḥuṣṣābay ḥaššē* (X.9); *īda'tā da-kyānē* (XXXV.8); *īda'tā qaddīštā* (XVII.11); *nuhrā alāhāyā* (XI.29); *nuhrā qaddīšā* (IX.7, also John); *sukkālē alāhāyē* (IX.11); *sukkālē d-su'rānē* (XXX.9); *sukkālē ruḥānāyē* (VIII.14); *'ālmā gšimā* (VIII.15); *'ālmā metragšānā* (V.15); *pulḥānā d-ruḥ* (XXX.11); *šīdāl/daywā d-rāmūtā* (XIV.18); *mšuḥtā d-dubbhārē* (XX.5); *te'ōryā d-dīnā* (XXXIX.23); *te'ōryā d-ruḥ* (XXXV.4) *te'ōryā ruḥānāytā* (VII.1).

The influence of Ps. Dionysius upon Isaac's vocabulary was less strong, but can be seen, for example, in the following phrases:

(*'*)*rāzā d-pulḥānā* (XXIII tit.); *zaw'ā ruḥānā* (XXXII.6); *zaw'ā d-ḥirūtā* (XXXV.11); *sukkālā ḥattūtā* (XXXI.1); *te'ōryā alāhāytā* (XIX.5); *te'ōryā gnīzītā* (XXXVI.1).

John the Solitary was by no means the only Syriac writer to have had an influence on Isaac's terminology. Two terms, in particular, go back to the Syriac New Testament (Peshitta), New Life (*ḥayyē ḥadtē*, X.19) and New World (*'ālmā ḥadtā*, V.5). Phrases like (*'*)*rāzē ksayyā* (XXXIX.7), (*'*)*rāzē šbīḥē* (XXXV.5), *'urḥā da-šrārā* (XXX.14), *ḥaylā kasyā* (X.41) and *nuhrā kasyā* (V.2) all go back to fourth-century or earlier Syriac literature, and the possible influence of Ephrem can be seen in a number of places (see annotation to V. 5; X.23,32; XIII.1; XIX.11; XXIX.7 and XXXIII.2). Among East Syriac writers Isaac directly quotes Narsai at one point (XI.15), but not by name. The possible influence of Narsai's phraseology can be seen at a number of other places (see e. g. annotation to XIV.23; XXI.10 and XXXIV.4). Of the late sixth- and the seventh-century Syriac monastic writers, it is very likely that Isaac was familiar with Babai the Great's Commentary on Evagrius' Centuries, which may be the source for distinctive phrases such as *znayyā d-ḥuṣ-šābē* (XIV.6), *'ālmā ḥāšōšā* (XIV.14), *pulḥānā napsānāyā* (XX.10), and *te'ōryā da-ktābē* (XV.8). A small number of phrases in common with Sahdona can also be found (see, for example, the annotation to XVIII.5, 7,8 and XLI.1).

There are a number of quite striking links in phraseology with Dadisho', for which see the annotation to XI. 17; XIV.7; XV.9; XVII.3; XX.23; XXV. tit., XXIX.7 and XXXIX.13). This is of particular interest since, not only were Isaac and Dadisho' contemporaries, but both origi-

nated from Qatar and had associations with the monastery of Rabban Shabur, and so it seems very likely that they will have known one another. Parallels with Shem'on d-Taybuteh, another contemporary, are also to be found (see, for example, annotation to XIV.4 and XVII.11). A study of the extent and nature of the interrelationship between these three major writers is a desideratum for the future; such a study, of course, would need to take into account, not only the First Part of Isaac's writings, and the Kephalaia from the Second Part, but also the many works of Dadisho' and Shem'on that remain unpublished.

The influence of Isaac's own terminology — often quite distinctive — on later East Syriac monastic writers lies beyond the scope of the annotation, though attention has been drawn there to two cases where Joseph Hazzaya has taken over from Isaac a particularly striking phrase (XX.20,22).

Needless to say, all this is an area where there is opportunity for a great deal of further exploration in the future.

CONCORDANCE TO HOMILY NUMBERS IN THE 'FIRST PART'

Note: WENSINCK's English translation of the Syriac also gives the page numbers of BEDJAN's edition in the margin; the numbering of the chapters in the French translation by TOURAILLE is that of the printed Greek text (the ordering of the chapters is considerably different in the oldest Greek manuscripts). Further concordances can be found in DEPPE, 'Die Λογοὶ ἀσκητικοὶ des Isaak von Ninive', 48-57, [MILLER], *The Ascetical Homilies*, cxiii-cxv, and BROCK, 'S. Isaac le Syrien'.

(a) SYRIAC - GREEK

| ed. BEDJAN | | Greek | | English translation [MILLER] |
|------------|---------|---------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| ch. | pages | Ancient | ed. THEOTOKIS | homily |
| 1 | 1-10 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 11-20 | 2 | 30 | 2 |
| 3 | 20-40 | 3-4 | 82-83, 44-45 | 3 |
| 4 | 40-60 | 5 | 23 | 4 |
| 5 | 60-80 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| 6 | 81-99 | 7 | 56 | 6 |
| 7 | 99-104 | 15 | 22 | 7 |
| 8 | 104-110 | 8 | 21 | 8 |
| 9 | 110-114 | 9 | 41 | 9 |
| 10 | 115-119 | 10 | 70 | 10 |
| 11 | 119-121 | 11 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | 121-123 | 14 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 124-125 | 12 | 14 | 13 |
| 14 | 125-127 | 13 | 15 | 14 |
| 15 | 127-130 | 19 | 9 | 18 |
| 16 | 130-133 | 20 | 13 | 19 |
| 17 | 134-139 | 21 | 29 | 20 |
| 18 | 139-154 | 22 | 75-79 | 21 |
| 19 | 154-161 | — | — | 22 |
| 20 | 161-162 | — | — | 22 |
| 21 | 162-163 | — | — | — |
| 22 | 163-175 | 23 | 31-32 | 23 |
| 23 | 175-177 | — | — | 24 |
| 24 | 177-182 | — | — | 25 |
| 25 | 182-188 | 26 | 67 | 26 |
| 26 | 189-194 | — | — | 27 |

| ed. BEDJAN | | Greek | | English translation [MILLER] |
|------------|---------|---------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| ch. | pages | Ancient | ed. THEOTOKIS | homily |
| 27 | 195-202 | 27 | 84 | 28 |
| 28 | 202-205 | 28 | 74 | 29 |
| 29 | 205-208 | — | — | 30 |
| 30 | 208-215 | 24 | 42, 55 | 32 |
| 31 | 215 | — | — | 33 |
| 32 | 216-218 | 30 | 68 | 34 |
| 33 | 218-221 | 31 | 24 | 35 |
| 34 | 221-224 | 32 | 16 | 36 |
| 35 | 224-269 | 33-34 | 85, 47 | 37-38 |
| 36 | 269-281 | 25 | 51-54 | 39 |
| 37 | 281-290 | 35 | 26 | 40 |
| 38 | 291-296 | 36 | 27 | 41 |
| 39 | 296-303 | 37 | 46 | 42 |
| 40 | 303-307 | 38 | 17 | 43 |
| 41 | 307-313 | 39 | Epistle 1 | 44 |
| 42 | 313-314 | 40 | Epistle 2 | 45 |
| 43 | 315-318 | 41 | 72 | 46 |
| 44 | 318-321 | 42 | 18 | 47 |
| 45 | 321-330 | 43 | 73 | 48 |
| 46 | 330-335 | 43 | 73 | 48 |
| 47 | 335-338 | 44 | 39-40 | 49 |
| 48 | 339-341 | 46 | 57 | 50 |
| 49 | 341-343 | — | — | Appendix A, I |
| 50 | 343-359 | 47-48 | 58, 60 | 51 |
| 51 | 360-377 | 49 | 62-65 | 52 |
| 52 | 377-379 | 53 | 66 | 53 |
| 53 | 379-390 | 54-55 | 33, 3 | 54 |
| 54 | 390-392 | — | — | — |
| 55 | 392-395 | 56 | 61 | 55 |
| 56 | 396-399 | — | — | Appendix A, II |
| 57 | 399-406 | 58 | 25 | 56 |
| 58 | 407-414 | 59 | 37 | 57 |
| 59 | 414-419 | 60 | 4 | 59 |
| 60 | 419-427 | 61 | 36 | 60 |
| 61 | 427-429 | 62 | 48 | 61 |
| 62 | 429-437 | 63 | 38 | 62 |
| 63 | 437-441 | 64 | 35 | 63 |
| 64 | 441-442 | 57 | 59 | 58 |
| 65 | 443-464 | 65 | 34 | 64 |
| 66 | 465-72 | 66 | Epistle 3 | 65 |
| 67 | 472-474 | 67 | 69 | 66 |
| 68 | 474-478 | 67 | 69 | 66 |
| 69 | 479-483 | 68 | 12 | 67 |

| ed. BEDJAN | | Greek | | English translation [MILLER] |
|------------|---------|---------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| ch. | pages | Ancient | ed. THEOTOKIS | homily |
| 70 | 483-488 | 69 | 8 | 68 |
| 71 | 489-494 | — | — | Appendix A, III |
| 72 | 494-501 | 70 | 49 | 69 |
| 73 | 502-506 | 71 | 50 | 70 |
| 74 | 507-518 | 72 | 81 | 71 |
| 75 | 519-520 | — | — | Appendix A, IV |
| 76 | 521-524 | — | — | Appendix A, V |
| 77 | 524-536 | 73 | 19 | 72 |
| 78 | 536-538 | 74 | 6 | 73 |
| 79 | 538-45 | 75 | 71 | 74 |
| 80 | 546-565 | 76 | 28 | 75 |
| 81 | 566-574 | 78, 79 | 86, Epistle 4 | 76 |
| 82 | 574-581 | 77 | 20 | 77 |

(b) GREEK (ed. THEOTOKIS) - SYRIAC

| Greek | Syriac | tr. MILLER | Greek | Syriac | tr. MILLER |
|-------|--------|------------|-------|--------|------------|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 26 | 37-38 | 40 |
| 2 | — | 16 | 27 | 38 | 41 |
| 3 | 53b | 54 | 28 | 80a | 75 |
| 4 | 59 | 59 | 29 | 17 | 20 |
| 5 | 5 | 5 | 30 | 2 | 2 |
| 6 | 78 | 73 | 31 | 22 | 23 |
| 7 | — | 17 | 32 | 22 | 23 |
| 8 | 70 | 68 | 33 | 53a | 54 |
| 9 | 15 | 18 | 34 | 65b | 64 |
| 10 | 11 | 11 | 35 | 63 | 63 |
| 11 | 12 | 12 | 36 | 60 | 60 |
| 12 | 69 | 67 | 37 | 58 | 57 |
| 13 | 16 | 19 | 38 | 62 | 62 |
| 14 | 13 | 13 | 39 | 47 | 49 |
| 15 | 14 | 14 | 40 | 47 | 49 |
| 16 | 34 | 36 | 41 | 9 | 9 |
| 17 | 40 | 43 | 42 | 30a | 32 |
| 18 | 44 | 47 | 43 | — | 15 |
| 19 | 77 | 72 | 44 | 3c | 3 |
| 20 | 82 | 77 | 45 | 3d | 3 |
| 21 | 8 | 8 | 46 | 39 | 42 |
| 22 | 7 | 7 | 47 | 35d | 38 |
| 23 | 4 | 4 | 48 | 61 | 61 |
| 24 | 33b | 35 | 49 | 72 | 69 |
| 25 | 57 | 56 | 50 | 73 | 70 |

| Greek | Syriac | tr. MILLER | Greek | Syriac | tr. MILLER |
|-------|--------|------------|-----------|--------|--|
| 51 | 36 | 39 | 71 | 79 | 74 |
| 52 | 36 | 39 | 72 | 43 | 46 |
| 53 | 36 | 39 | 73 | 45-46 | 48 |
| 54 | 36 | 39 | 74 | 28 | 29 |
| 55 | 30 | 32 | 75 | 18 | 21 |
| 56 | 6 | 6 | 76 | 18 | 21 |
| 57 | 48 | 50 | 77 | 18 | 21 |
| 58 | 50a | 51 | 78 | 18 | 21 |
| 59 | 64 | 58 | 79 | 18 | 21 |
| 60 | 50b | 51 | 80 | — | 31 |
| 61 | 55 | 55 | 81 | 74 | 71 |
| 62 | 51 | 52 | 82 | 3 | 3 |
| 63 | 51 | 52 | 83 | 3 | 3 |
| 64 | 51 | 52 | 84 | 27 | 28 |
| 65 | 51 | 52 | 85 | 35a-c | 37 |
| 66 | 52 | 53 | 86 | 81 | 76 |
| 67 | 25 | 26 | Epistle 1 | 41 | 44 |
| 68 | 32 | 34 | Epistle 2 | 42 | 45 |
| 69 | 67-68 | 66 | Epistle 3 | 66 | 65 |
| 70 | 10 | 10 | Epistle 4 | — | Appendix B = Letter to Abba Simeon ⁴⁹ |

⁴⁹ Epistle 4, which is an abbreviated version of Philoxenus *Patr.*, in fact also incorporates Syriac ch. 81 of Isaac, inserted between sections 19 and 47 of the Letter to Patricius (= pp. 371-6 of SPETSIERIS's reprint of the edition by THEOTOKIS). Greek ch. 86 of Isaac opens with Philoxenus *Patr.* sections 27, 41-2, 45-6, but then continues with the end of the same Syriac ch. 81 of Isaac (corresponding to pp. 572-4 of BEDJAN's edition).

IV.

By the same Mar Isaac: other matters which were composed by him after the Chapters on Knowledge (to serve as) clarificatory indications of our honourable labour which is (performed) in stillness.

1. Now that, through the grace of God¹ our Saviour, we have completed these Chapters on Knowledge, wherein great power is stored up — seeing that it was clearly grace which set them in order, for my conscience bears witness to me that they contain an operative power which does not belong to our own human strength, seeing that we are so deficient in the ascetic life and lack a knowledge which would allow us to be raised up to such a height of the mysteries which are stored in this writing — having reached this point following those chapters which were written down with the help of our Lord, our intention is to set out the (forms of) the converse of hidden prayer², grouped separately under the different headings (designated by) the letters (of the alphabet)³.

2. This too you should realize, my brother, that a mind which has (once) been illumined has no need of the varied wording of (different) prayers: just the single door to prayer suffices to enfold the mind within prayer, allowing it to mingle with God¹.

IV.1 ¹ the grace of God: cf XXXIV.1,2,3,9,10; at XVI.3 and XXXIX.23 Isaac uses *tayhūtā alāhāyā*.

² forms of converse (*'enyānē*) of hidden prayer: for *'enyānē da-šlōtā*, cf I f.19r and V preface; the sing. *'enyānā da-šlōtā* occurs in John Sol. *Soul* 1, Philoxenus, *Disc.* 319, Babai *C.Evag.* 186r, Shem'on d-Ṭaybutēh 299b, 309ab, 310a (MINGANA translates 'communion of prayer'). For 'hidden prayer', cf V preface, XXII.6, Part I 469, 470; this adjectival phrase (already found in Ephrem *H. de Fide* 20:10) is characteristic of the seventh-century ES monastic writers, cf Babai *C.Evag.* 81r, 150v, 151r, 217r, 221r, Shubḥalmaran 54r, Sahdona I 45, III 14, 27, 47, 103, 131, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* I.4, XII.6, *C.Par.* 912, 927, 952. Shem'on d-Ṭaybutēh 309b, 310a.

³ letters (of the alphabet): Isaac refers to the prayers in Section V, numbered *alaph* to *lamadh* (1-30).

² ¹ allowing it to mingle with God (*mḥallet leh b-alāhā*): compare V.18, X.16, XIV.48 where *ḥll* is again used for mystical union with God (similarly Part I 414 etc.); likewise *ḥultānā* at VII.3, XIX.6, XXXV title. Similar phraseology is already found in the Peshitta NT (Heb. 3:14, *ethallat(w) ... 'am mšīhā mētoxoī toū xristoū*) A.Thomas 231 (eucharistic context), Ephrem *H. c.Haer.* 32:8 (and often), and is encountered throughout Syriac tradition. In general, see G.G. BLUM, 'Vereinigung und Vermischung. Zwei Grundmotive christlich-orientalischer Mystik', *OC* 63 (1979), 41-60. See also on VII.3.

3. Varieties of (different) prayers indeed greatly help a mind which is harassed by distraction¹: from them, and by means of the strength resulting from them, the mind feels compunction and (so) acquires sweet prayer, prolonged kneeling, intercession for creation², and extended supplications which are set into motion from within. This happens to him because, with each single word which he encounters in these (prayers), he is like someone who is awoken out of sleep: he encounters in them astounding insights³ all the time, seeing that these very words are the result of the gift of grace and (so) possess a hidden power. Thus he is continually assisted through being occupied by them and through reading them.

4. During periods of grace when you enjoy this prayer of delight¹ and those prolonged kneelings, there is no great necessity for you to stand by the canonical (Hours) or to worry yourself over the matter of the number of (prayers) that remain (to be recited), for such prayer has encompassed (within itself) prayers (which are recited) according to fixed number and it has made the canons (governing such prayers) subordinate to you. Is it not clear from the fact that you are lying prostrated on your face before the Cross² for most of the day — (a form of prayer) which encompasses all partial prayer³ and the Office within itself — that (this prayer) has made the canons subordinate to you? ‘At the time of some great work, do not turn to one that is lesser.’⁴

5. The blessed Mark¹ said this with hidden intent, for he knew that not everyone attains to pure prayer², whereas those who do attain (to it)

3 ¹ a mind which is harassed by distraction (*l-re'yānā da-šlīq men pehyā*) compare *pehyā d-re'yānā* in I f.15r and Part I 332; the phrase already occurs in Basil *Quest.*36v and John Sol. *Hes.* 9. For ‘distraction’ in Part II see especially XV, and notes to V.7, VIII.3.

² intercession for creation: thus B (c.2); B* may have read ‘heartfelt intercession’.

³ astounding insights (*sukkāle mathrānē*): compare Part I 6-7 *b-sukkālē d-matmhīn napšā*.

4 ¹ prayer of delight (*šlōtā hannī'tā*): compare XIV.7, and *hannī'ūtā da-šlōtā* in Part I 164.

² prostrated before the Cross: compare IV.9, XIV.24, 46, Part I 58.

³ partial prayer: compare *Keph.* I.59 *šlōtā da-mnātā*. The adjective *mnātānāyā* occurs in the Syriac translation of Mark the Monk (Add.17192 111b, 121a), probably of the sixth century, but does not seem to be used by native Syriac writers before the seventh century (e.g. Išo'yahb III, *Epp.*40); Isaac employs it a number of times, XIV.27, Part I 89, 163, 186, 336, 473.

⁴ ‘At the time..one that is lesser’: Isaac is quoting from Mark the Monk, *Spiritual Law* (Add.17192 154r; ET in *Philokalia* I, p.124 [no. 200], FT p.27 [no.201]).

5 ¹ Mark: Mark the Monk; see previous note.

² pure prayer: although the phrase does not occur in the Greek Bible it does in the Peshitta, at I Chron.16:42 (compare Job 16:17, *šlōt(y) dakyā*). Elsewhere Isaac uses it at

are instructed by its delight that there is no work greater than it. When it so happens that you are deprived of this, then it is a good thing that one does not neglect the canonical rule. If you partially possess it, then be concerned to keep the canonical rule for the other part, right down to the (matter of) breathing; for you will be illumined once again as a result of concern for the canonical rules, and you will progress to (the pure prayer) which is continuous.

6. Every son there is at first works in servitude to his father, but then (later) he is given authority over his treasures — just as the blessed Paul said: *'As long as the heir is a child, he is no different from the servants; he is under guardians and stewards until he reaches the time appointed by his father'*¹. Let the divine laws and the fair canons of your holy way of life² be the guardians and stewards who guide you during the time of your (spiritual) childhood, for they will bring you to the measure of a *perfect man*³ in Christ.

7. For what advantage is there in laws and rules apart from the illumination which is born¹ from them in the soul? Their purpose is so that someone can right himself with their help every time he finds himself in the dark and goes astray — that is, with (the help of) the appointed prayer of the Hours and of the Office. Just as when someone has lost his way he goes back to the beginning of the road and taking his start from there he continues on his journey to wherever he wants to go, so too rules and laws set on the right path the person who finds himself in the

I f. 16r, *Keph.* I.97, IV.35, 64-6, VI.7, XV title, 2, 3, 7, XXI.7 (plur.) XXXII.1 (plur.), 4, Part I 165, 167-8, 354, 447, 453. It is found e.g. in Basil *Ep. Greg.* Add.17192 190v, Evagrius (*Epp.* 161r, *Antirrh.* 71v, Add.14578 25r, 80v etc.), Macarius (23, 163) and Ps. Dionysius (90r); in pagan Greek writers, note Porphyry, *ad Marcellam* 24. Among early Syriac writers it already occurs in Aphrahat, *Dem.* I.4, IV.1, 4, 18, 19. In the seventh-century ES writers it is especially favoured by Dadisho'. For 'purity of prayer' see note to XIV.2.

6 ¹ Gal. 4:1-2 slightly abbreviated, and with the wording altered at the end (Pe. *'dammā l-zabnā d-sām abūh(hy)*, but Isaac *'dammā d-māṭē l-partuzmyā d-abūh(hy)*, using the legal term *προθεσμία*, for which see for example E. SACHAU, *Syrische Rechtsbücher* I (Berlin, 1907), p.74 line 17, p.88 line 26); it features in Narsai a number of times, e.g. M I 51, 52, 115.

² holy way of life (*dubbārā qaddīšā*): plur. at XVI.6, Ephrem *H. de Epiph.* 8:18.

³ Eph. 4:13.

7 ¹ illumination which is born (*nahlīrūtā .. d-metyaldā*): Isaac, like Ephrem and John the Solitary, is particularly fond of the imagery of birthgiving; compare VIII.11 and X.15 (*īda'ītā*); VIII.17 (*bekyā*); X.3 and 39 (*šlōtā*; plur. in *Keph.* II.15); XI.16 (*basyūtā*); XVIII.3 (*ḥaylā meddem*); XXIV.2 (*'āqā aw ḥadūtā*); XXIX title (*tābūtā rawrbūtā*); XXIX.9 (*ḥrānyātā*); XXXIV.2 (*rwīḥūt lebbā*); XXXIV.4 (*ma'īnūtā*).

dark as he goes astray, but when that person approaches those rules again, they set him back on the path from which he had strayed. Now what the law of children is which brings a person up in freedom and gives him light, and what is the law of servants which does not allow progress, and whereby a person is educated in a way befitting young children — all this we intend to show in the proper place.

8. We should also realize this: as long as someone has the times of the day divided up, in part for the Office, in part for reading (Scripture), in part for prayer, and in part for other works, once the time for paying dues has arrived, he is obliged of necessity to pay the dues to the time allocated: it is not possible for him to pass it over, leaving behind a debt to it, for it is necessary to fulfil the obligation to each of the canonical rules in its proper place and at its proper time.

9. In the case of someone who is clinging to God unceasingly in the continual outpouring that takes place in prayer, constantly stretched out on the ground in supplication to Him, his soul swallowed up with yearning as he lies fallen before the Cross, this person is not subject to any law or canonical rules, nor do times and specific appointed periods have any authority over him; rather, he is from that point on above them, being with God without any limitation.

10. But now let us leave off and draw to a conclusion. Let us approach (instead) and take delight in conversation with God, through meditating on the prayers¹ which we are about to set down, for by these we shall receive the gift of sanctification and the heavenly power which reveals mysteries in the soul.

¹⁰ ¹ meditating on the prayers (*hergā da-šlawwātā*): cf *Keph.* II.28 (scholion), and compare V preface *hergā da-šlōtā ksītā*.

V.

[Preface].

The converse of hidden prayer, by Mar Isaac¹, which he drew up, arranged and composed with words of feeling and supplication, making, out of limbs joined together, a single body which will be useful for the meditation of hidden prayer: a person can be occupied with these (words) while standing up or sitting down, while working or while walking inside his cell, while he is going to sleep, until the point when sleep takes over, while he is indoors or while he is travelling on a journey, secretly occupying himself with them within his heart; (likewise), while he is constantly kneeling on the ground, (or) wherever he happens to be standing, even if it is not in front of the Cross, and he will mingle the humility of his body with the stirrings of his prayer², for by these he will find benefit, as well as from those which he has laid down³ as (his) rule and (from) the place set aside, with the beneficial advantages which occur from it for him in the face of his changing state of mind and the (times of) peace and of vexations which come upon him. Thus, by making use of these (prayers) which have been appropriately composed so that he may find comfort, his soul will receive sanctification by them, and will be filled with the grace of the Spirit.

Prayer(s)

1. As my soul bows down to the ground I offer to You with all my bones and with all my heart the worship that befits You. O glorious God who dwells in ineffable silence. You have built for my renewal¹ a tabernacle of love on earth² where it is Your good pleasure to rest, a temple

V preface ¹ H + 'prayers'.

² stirrings of his prayer (*zaw'ē da-šlōteh*): cf *Keph.* II.76, III.11, 13 (sing.), XIV.37, XXX.8 (sing.), XXXII.4 (sing.); in other writers, John Sol. *Prayer* 1, Abraham of Naphar 81v.

³ he has laid down: or 'are appointed for him'.

1 ¹ my renewal (*huddātā dil(y)*): compare *huddātā* at V.7, and VIII.16, X.19. 'Renewal' is a term characteristic of John the Solitary (e.g. *Thaum.* X 252, *Prayer* 6), and is subsequently commonly found, especially in ES writers. For *huddātā d-re'yānā* see on V.8.

² H + 'O God'.

(made) of flesh³ and fashioned with the most holy sanctuary oil⁴. Then You filled it with Your holy presence so that all worship might be fulfilled in it, indicating the worship of the eternal persons of Your Trinity and revealing to the worlds which You had created in Your grace an ineffable mystery, a power which cannot be felt or grasped by any part of Your creation that has come into being. In wonder at it angelic beings are submerged in silence⁵, awed at the *dark cloud*⁶ of this eternal mystery and at the flood of glory which issues from within this source of wonder, for it receives worship in the sphere of silence⁷ from every intelligence that has been sanctified and made worthy of you.

2. I prostrate myself, Lord, *at the footstool of Your feet*¹ and at Your holy right hand which has fashioned and made me a human being capable of becoming aware of You. But I have sinned and done wrong, both in myself and before you, for I have abandoned holy converse² with You and given over my days to converse with the lusts³. I beg of You, Lord, do not set up against me *the sins of my youth*⁴, the ignorance of my old age and the frailty of my nature which is too strong for me and has caused me to sink into reflection on things that are hateful. Rather, turn my heart towards You, away from the troublesome distraction of the lusts; cause to dwell in me a hidden light⁵. Your acts of goodness towards me always anticipate any kind of volition on my part to do well and any readiness for virtue on the part of my heart. You have never held back Your care in order to test my freewill; rather, as with the care

³ temple of flesh (*hayklā d-besrā*): compare Narsai M II 3 (and often) *haykal besrā* (based on John 2:21, a passage of central importance for ES christology); more frequent is *haykal pagrā* (e.g. Sahdona 104).

⁴ oil: a reference to baptismal anointing; based on Ps.89:21.

⁵ angelic beings...in silence (*kyānē d-ṭirē b-ṣetqā*): for the silent worship of the angels (lit. Watchers) compare Ephrem *H. de Fide* 3:9 and 4:1).

⁶ dark cloud: Exodus 20:21; see on X.17.

⁷ sphere of silence (*atrā d-ṣetqā*): phrases with *atrā d-*, several of which are already to be found in John the Solitary, are often found in the ES monastic writers; for the present one, compare Sahdona IV I *atrā d-ṣelyūtā*.

² ¹ footstool of your feet: Ps.99:5, 132:7.

² holy converse: cf Part I 135.

³ converse with the lusts (*'enyānē da-rḡīgātā*): for the sing. *'enyānā da-rḡīgātā*, cf Macarius 26, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIII.4.

⁴ sins of my youth: Ps. 25:7.

⁵ hidden light (*nūhrā kasyā*): cf Part I 530 (compare VI.3); the phrase is already found in *A.Thomas* 250, Ephrem (*H. de Ecclesia* 27:7, *H. de Virginitate* 51:12, 52:5) and in John the Solitary (*Tr.* 39, *Epp.*7); also Narsai M I 72 and Ps.Dionysius 22v. It occurs in several other seventh-century ES writers, Babai *C.Evag.* 16r, Sahdona III 27, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* VII.14.

of a father⁶ towards his young son, so has Your care (for me) run after me; Your fatherly graciousness has visited my frailty and has had no intention of making test of my will, (for) You knew all the time that, even less than a child, I do not know whither I am travelling.

3. I beseech You, O God, send me help from Your highest heavens so that I may keep afar from my heart every evil intention and every carnal wish. Do not cast me, Lord, from Your protection lest my adversary find me and trample upon me just as he desires, destroying me utterly. It is You who grants repentance and a sorrowing heart¹ to the sinner who repents; in this way You ease his heart of the weight of sin that is laid upon it, thanks to the comfort which comes from sorrowing and from the gift of tears².

4. At the door of Your compassion¹ do I knock, Lord; send aid to (my) scattered impulses which are intoxicated² with the multitude of the passions³ and the power of darkness. You can see my sores (hidden) within me: stir up contrition — though not corresponding to the weight of my sins, for if I receive full awareness of the extent of my sins, Lord, my soul would be consumed by the bitter pain from them. Assist my feeble stirrings⁴ (on the path) to true repentance, and may I find alleviation from the vehemence of sins through the contrition that comes of Your gift, for without the power of Your grace⁵ I am quite unable to enter within myself, become aware of my stains, and so, at the sight of them, be able to be still from great distraction.

⁶ care of a father (*hīlūteh d-abbā*): compare *hīlūtā abāhāyā* in Part I 361, 524, and *purnāsā abāhāyā* XXXIX.16. See also on VIII.25.

³ ¹ a sorrowing heart (*lebbā abilā*): cf Shubhālmāran 23r.

² gift (*šukkānā*) of tears: see note to XIV.25.

⁴ ¹ door of your compassion (*tar'ā da-ḥnānāk*): cf Narsai M I 134, 280, II 122, 148, *Hudra* III 312; and compare *tar'ā d-rahmē* at V.21 and Part I 315, another liturgical phrase found e.g. in the initial prayer for Šapra; compare Ephrem *H. de Ecclesia* 5:3 *tra' rahmē*. Isaac is fond of phrases with 'door/gate', thus 'of the eyes' (Part I 133), 'of grace' (XX.4), 'of heaven' (Part I 114, 416 etc.), 'of insights' (VIII.7), 'of life' (VI.9), 'of our Lord' (XXVII.5), 'of the mind' (XXX.7), 'of mysteries' (Part I 315, 544), 'of the New World' (Part I 256, 437), 'of peace' (Part I 516), 'of the place of visions' (V.6), 'of prayer' (IV.2), 'of purity of prayer' (XIV.6), 'of sinners' (XI.27).

² intoxicated (*da-rwēn*): Isaac more frequently employs both the verb *rwā* and the noun *rawwāyūtā* of spiritual inebriation (V.21, for which see note to X.35); for the present usage compare Part I 212, 477 (noun).

³ multitude of the passions (*sug'ā d-ḥaššē*): cf Macarius 187, Nilus 94.

⁴ my feeble stirrings (*zaw'ay ḥallāšē*): cf Nilus 231.

⁵ the power of your grace (*ḥaylā d-ṭaybūtāk*): cf John Sol. *Epp.* 9, 88, 115 etc.

5. O name of Jesus¹, key to all gifts², open up for me the *great door*³ to Your treasure-house so that I may enter and praise You with the praise that comes from the heart in return for Your mercies which I have experienced in latter days; for You came and renewed me with an awareness of the New World⁴.

6. I give praise to Your holy Nature, Lord, for You have made my nature a sanctuary for Your hiddenness and a tabernacle for Your Mysteries, a place where You can dwell, and a holy temple for Your divinity, (namely for) Him who holds the sceptre of Your Kingdom, who governs all You have brought into being, the glorious Tabernacle of Your eternal Being, the source of renewal for the ranks of fire which minister to You, the Way to knowledge of You¹, the Door² to vision of You, the summation of Your power and great wisdom — Jesus Christ the *Only-Begotten* from Your bosom³, and *remnant*⁴ gathered in from Your creation, both visible and spiritual⁵.

7. O Mystery exalted beyond every word and beyond silence, who became human in order to renew us by means of voluntary union¹ with the flesh, reveal to me the path by which I may be raised up to Your mysteries, travelling along a course that is clear and tranquil, free from the illusions of this world. Gather my mind into the silence of

5 ¹ name of Jesus: perhaps Isaac has in mind Ephrem, *H.de Fide* VI.17 or *H.de Nativ.*27, on the name of Jesus.

² key to all gifts (*qlidā d-kull mawhbān*): compare Part I 330 *qlidā d-šukkānē alāhāyē*.

³ the great door: cf XIV.6 and Part I 114; based on I Cor.16:9.

⁴ New World: cf VII.2, VIII.4, 5, 7, XIV.39, XV.8 (scholion), XVI.6, XX.6, XXXVIII title, XLI.2; also often in *Keph.* and in Part I (125, 169, 170, 231, 256, 540). The phrase, which derives from Peshitta Mt.18:28 (Greek *καλιγγενεσία*), already occurs in the Odes of Solomon (33:12) and Aphrahat *Dem.* 12:2, and is especially common in John the Solitary. It is also found on occasion in Evagrius (*Keph.*VI 39, 81 [S 1]; he prefers *'almā da-'īd*, on which see note to V.9) and Theodore of Mopsuestia (*WS* V 119, *C.John* 61). Most seventh-century ES monastic writers use both *'almā ḥadtā* and *'ālmā da-'īd*.

6 ¹ the Way to knowledge of You (*'urḥā d-īda'īāk*): for *'urḥā d-īda'tā* cf *Keph.* II.14 (constr.) and XIV.34. The phrase occurs in both Evagrius *Keph.* II.79 (S 1) and John Sol. *Tr.* 40.

² Door: John 10:9.

³ Your bosom: John 1:18.

⁴ remnant (*srīdā*): Is.1:9 = Rom.9:29.

⁵ creation both visible and spiritual (*metḡad'ānītā*): the terminology is Evagrian; for '(in)visible', cf Isaac II f.20a, *Keph.* III.72 (neg.), Part I 377; Evagrius *Mel.* 11; in seventh-century ES writers e.g. Babai *C.Evag.* 92a (plur.), Sahdona I 3 (neg.); for 'spiritual', Evagrius *Epp.* 188b, 189a.

7 ¹ voluntary union: a characteristic phrase in ES christology, e.g. *Liher Heracleidis* 264, Babai *L. de Unione* 91.

prayer², so that wandering thoughts³ may be silenced within me during that illumined converse of supplication and mystery-filled wonder.

8. I prostrate myself, Lord, at the throne of Your Majesty, I who am *dust and ashes*¹ and the dregs² of humanity. A thousand upon thousands³ of angels and countless legions of seraphim offer You, the holy Nature⁴ hidden from the senses and knowledge of all created beings, spiritual worship in the hiddenness of their natures with their fiery praises and their holy impulses; for You are close at hand, Lord, with Your assistance to everyone at all times of need, and Your door is open *in season and out of season*⁵ for the entreaties of all. You do not abhor sinners nor does Your Majesty feel loathing for the souls which are stained with all kinds of sins; rather, You draw up everyone from endless evils, including me, Lord, who am utterly defiled, seeing that You have held me worthy to fall down before You on my face and make bold to pronounce Your holy name with my mouth, even though I am a vessel full of uncleanness and not worthy to be numbered among the children of Adam. Grant me, Lord, that I may be made holy by praising You, and be made pure by the remembrance⁶ of You; renew my life with a transformation of mind and with beneficial thoughts⁷ which You, in Your grace, stir within me. Be a

² silence of prayer (*šetqā da-šlōtā*): compare *šelyūtā da-šlōtā* at VI.4 and *šelyā da-šlōtā* in Sahdona III 26. The converse, *šlōtā d-šetqā*, already occurs in Aphrahat *Dem* 4:8.

³ wandering thoughts (*huššābay pehyā*): cf Dadisho' *C.Par.* 949. H, adding *syame*, has *huššābay pahhāyē*, for which cf Basil *Ep.Greg.* Add.17192 191v, John Sol. *Tr.* 4, Ammonius 638, Abraham of Nathpar 82v (quoting John), Sahdona I 105, IV 2. *Huššābē d-pehyā* (found in Part I 271) is Evagrian (*Ev.Syr.* 126, 127 [sing.]), and also occurs in Dadisho' (*C.Abls.* XV.38, *C.Par.* 913). The converse, *pehyā d-huššābē*, found in *Keph.* I.87, IV.34 and Part I 129, 213, 272, 465, is attested in Evagrius *Ev.Syr.* 116, Macarius 30, John Sol. *Epp.* 4, Abba Isaiah XII.10, Shubḥalmaran 20r, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIII.4 and XV.40.

8 ¹ dust and ashes: Gen. 18:27 (Abraham).

² dregs (*šeḥlā*): probably a reminiscence of Ignatius Rom. 9, where the Greek has ἔκτρομα, as in I Cor. 15:8 (Pes. *yahṭā*): the Syriac (short recension) has nothing corresponding, but perhaps Isaac knows the phrase through some mediary. Similar probable reminiscences of Ignatius, using *šeḥlā*, are to be found in Sahdona III 115, IV 79. In Philoxenus *Patricius* 51, *šeḥlā* has been transferred to I Cor. 15:8, thus providing a pun, *šeḥlā da-šlōtā*.

³ thousands upon thousands...: modelled on the ante Sanctus (itself using Dan. 7.10), though Isaac does not follow any of the three ES anaphoras exactly.

⁴ holy Nature: compare note to VIII.4.

⁵ in season and out of season: 2 Tim.4:2.

⁶ remembrance: so the corrector in B, with H; B* 'help' (same error in B* at VIII.14). For 'remembrance', or 'recollection of God', see note to XXX.4.

⁷ beneficial thoughts (*huššābē m'addrānē*): cf John Sol. *Soul* 29, *Epp.* 72, Mark the Monk *Baptism* Add.17192 101v, Dadisho' *C.Par.* 937.

guide to my mind in my meditations on You, and make me forget my stumbling conduct through a renewal of mind⁸ which You instil in me. Stir up within me requests that are beneficial, with my will in accordance with Your will, for it is You who give prayer to those who pray⁹. Imprint in me a single will, one which gazes towards You at all times, and a deliberation which is never weakened in its hope of You by continual deaths for Your sake. Grant, Lord, that I do not pray before You with unfeeling words (just uttered) with the lips, but may I be spread prostrate on the ground in hidden humility of heart¹⁰ and repentance of mind¹¹.

9. O God, who in Your forbearing at my sins grant me life in this world, do not deprive me of the life of the world to come¹ which is awaited with hope by those who supplicate You here in wretchedness.

10. O Christ the love of whom has set apart the saints from family, kin, and humanity's life of ease, and in them the strength of the natural passions¹ has become silent in the face of the sweetness of this love², do You, Lord, grant me to renounce my life out of desire for You, and may I be found to be dead during my lifetime to all things that give pleasure³ in this world; and through Your might, O Lord, may the storms which are kindled in my limbs be silenced, and may Your love separate me from the world and from converse with it. Portray in my mind an image

⁸ renewal of mind (*ḥuddātā d-re'yānā*): cf XL.9, Macarius 198, 203, Sahdona IV 59. Compare *ḥuddātā d-mad'ā* in *Keph.* IV.54, Part I 469, and Shem'on d-Ṭaybuteh 300a. See also note to V.1.

⁹ Compare I Sam.2:9 (LXX only).

¹⁰ humility of heart (*mukkākā ..d-lebbā*): cf XVIII.5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 16, *Keph.* II. 21, 94, Part I 291, 302, 367, Macarius 75, Sahdona III 4, IV.15. Compare *makkikūtā d-lebbā* XVIII.6, Part I 105, Shubḥalmaran 45r, Dadisho' C.*AbIs.* XV.40, Sahdona I 57, III 26 and 93 (all constr.).

¹¹ repentance of mind (*tyābūtā d-re'yānā*): cf Dadisho' C.*Par.* 978.

9 ¹ world to come (*'ālmā da-'tūd*): Heb. 2:5, 6:5; cf V.15, XI.13, XIII.2, XXIX.11, XXXVI.1, XXXIX.8, 21, XL.14, and often in *Keph.* and Part I. This is Evagrius' preferred form (often in *Keph.Gnostica*). Isaac also uses *'ālmā ḥadātā*, for which see on V.5.

10 ¹ natural passions (*ḥaššē kyānāyē*): cf Part I 113, 485; Theodore of Mopsuestia WS VI 128, Nilus 200, Abraham of Nathpar 79r, Babai C.*Evag* 210r, Sahdona IV 44.

² sweetness of this (lit. his) love (*ḥalyūtā d-ḥubbeh*): for the 'sweetness' of divine love, compare X.36, XVIII.5, Part I 431; Ephrem H. *de Ecclesia* Appendix a, Narsai M I 234, 241, 243, Abba Isaiah XIV.3, Nilus 190, Dadisho' C.*AbIs* I.33. 'Divine sweetness' is a phrase characteristic of Ammonius (571, 577, 607).

³ give pleasure (*mḥaddyānāteh*): H 'are visible' (*methazyānyāteh*).

which cannot be seen, by which the impulse of all the sweetness of recollections of the temporal world⁴ and its images may be overcome.

11. I kneel before Your Majesty and prostrate myself on the ground before You, O God, for without my having requested You or even having existed, You brought me into existence; and before You fashioned me in the womb¹ You knew that (I would live) a life (full of) tumult and backsliding, yet You did not refrain from creating me and granting me all the attributes with which You have honoured (human) nature, even though You knew beforehand my evils. You are aware of my requests even before they become known to me, and of my prayers even before they have been prayed before You: grant to me, O my God, at this hour whatever You are aware that my wretched nature needs in its present peril. You are aware of my soul's affliction, and in Your hands lies its healing.

12. O Power whereby the Fathers of old overcame the mighty and fearsome attacks of the rebellious one¹ — men who, though sharing in human nature which is subject to many needs, were like those without need, manifesting on earth a likeness of things to come, while You made human tombs, caves and crevices the tabernacle of Your revelations to them: pour into my heart the fervour of their thoughts², so that by it I may become valiant and trample on natural desire and on the fear of all that opposes (human nature); sow in me a knowledge of humility and an unrestrainable impetus for the acute journey towards You. O Refuge of the weak, Straight Path for those who are held back by wandering astray, Place of escape for all who are caught in storms, lay low the adversary's boast over me, subdue the strength of his cunning actions against me, bring low his exalted pride, make smooth Your hidden paths before my thoughts, and be for me a comfort in the time of my anguish and a guide in the place of peril.

⁴ sweetness of the recollections of the temporal world: Isaac normally uses *ḥalyūtā* in a positive sense (see above, and on XVIII.6), but for the present negative usage compare Part I 59 ('of sin'). For 'recollection (*uḥdānā*) of the world', cf XXIX.7, *Keph.* IV.34; John Sol. *Soul* 92. Contrast 'recollections of the world to come', for which see on VIII.15. For 'temporal world', cf *Keph.* I.86 (constr.); Narsai MI 254, II 1, 2, 342, Babai *C.Evag.* 3r.

11 ¹ fashioned me in the womb: based on Isaiah 44:2, 49:5.

12 ¹ rebellious one (*mārōdā*): a very common term for Satan in ES liturgical texts.

² fervour (*ḥammīmūtā*) of their thoughts: compare *ḥuṣṣābē ḥammīmē* in Part I 128, 274; Nilus 239.

³ make smooth (*šappā*): based on Isaiah 45:13.

13. O Sun of righteousness¹ by which the righteous² have beheld their own selves and become a mirror for their generations, open up within me the gate to awareness of You³; grant me a joyful mind, one which sails above the rocks of error, until I may reach that serene abode, as did our Fathers of old who pleased You with their discerning lives⁴.

14. Sanctify me by Your Mysteries, illumine my mind with knowledge of You, make Your hope to shine out in my heart, hold me worthy to supplicate for it, O God my Father and Lord of my life; illumine Your lamp within me, place in me what belongs to You so that I may forget what belongs to myself. Cast upon me the constraint of wonder at You, so that the constraint of nature may be overpowered by it. Stir up within me the vision of Your Mysteries so that I may become aware of what was placed in me at holy baptism. You have placed within me a Guide: may He show me Your glory at all times. You made me to be light and salt¹ for the world: may I not prove a stumbling-block for my companions. Seeing that I have left the world, may I never again look back to it and to the things which I renounced when I made my promise to You. Cast reins of delight upon my heart, so that my senses may not gaze beyond the paths of Your law. Rig together my impulses for the ship of repentance², so that in it I may exult as I travel over the world's sea³ until I reach the haven of Your hope⁴. When I am tempted, may my mind take courage from the recollection of You. Illumine before me the path that is dark by means of the brilliance of awareness of You⁵.

13 ¹ Sun of righteousness: Mal. 3:20.

² righteous: H 'saints'.

³ gate to awareness of You (*tar'ā d-īda'tāk*): cf *Hudra* III 387 and compare XXXV.5 *tar'ā d-īda'tā da-šrārā*; also Hierotheos *tar'ā qadmāyā d-īda'tā*, *Sahdona* I 30 *tar'ē d-īda'tā*. For other phrases with *tar'ā*, see on IV.4.

⁴ discerning lives (*puršānē d-dubbārayhōn*): cf Part I 527, Evagrius *Keph.* II.76 (S 1), and compare Babai *C.Evag.* 86v, *puršānā d-dubbārē*.

14 ¹ light and salt: Matt. 5:13-14.

² ship of repentance (*elpā da-tyābūtā*): cf Part I 317, 318 for nautical imagery with repentance and compare *Keph.* IV.31 'harbour of repentance'; *Sahdona* III 31, IV.50 'oars of repentance'. For ship imagery see also on VII.3.

³ world's sea (*yammeh d-ālmā*): cf Part I 46, 154 (similarly 317, 544). This commonplace is found in many writers, both Greek and Syriac, e.g. Ephrem *H. c. Haereses* 25:10, *Serm.* IV.i.315, IV.ii.361, *C.Diat.*V.18, Evagrius *Epp.* 185r, Macarius 69, Nilus 245, Jacob of Serugh IV 862, Abraham of Nathpar 84v, Babai *C.Evag.* 191v, *Sahdona* I 84, *Hudra* III 304, 355 etc. For other phrases with *yammā* see on IX.13.

⁴ recollection of You: so the corrector in B, with H (B* 'help'). For the same error in B* see on V.8.

⁵ brilliance of awareness of You (*zahrā d-īda'tāk*): cf *Keph.* III.63.

15. O God, hold me worthy of insight into the mystery of Your love¹ which is depicted in Your dispensation for the perceptible world², in the works of Your creation, and in the mystery of the killing³ of Your beloved (Son).

16. Our Creator who are aware of the sick state¹ of my nature, hold back² from me the violence of the adversary; beat off from my limbs the upsurge of sin; cause its heat to abate from my heart, proffer the hand of healing to my soul's prostrate state³; bind up my inner senses⁴ with the bandage of the Cross; increase in me abundance of the love for You that comes from insight into the Crucified One; draw my mind inwards with the hidden things of the mysteries⁵ which (the Cross) bears; fix within me a remembrance of the humility⁶ of Your beloved (Son); increase within me wonder at Your dispensation for me.

17. O God, who, even before You had brought reconciliation to the world You gave to it Your Only-Begotten, and after You had brought reconciliation You caused it to inherit the throne of Your divinity, do not abandon me to go to the grave without hope, and may I not sit with the fetters of my sins *in darkness like one who is dead for ever*¹.

18. We give thanks to You, O God, for Your gift to the world, (a gift) whose richness created beings are not capable of describing; seeing that I too am part of that (world), may I not begrudge my portion of thanksgiving which I owe to You. For this reason I will praise You and confess Your name. You have given Your entire treasure to the world: if You gave the *Only-Begotten* from Your *bosom*¹ and from the throne of Your

15 ¹ insight into the mystery of Your love (*sukkāl rāzeh d-ḥubhāk*): compare *sukkālā/sukkālē d-rāzē* at XX.20 (sing.), XXX.7 (plur.), *Keph.* IV.13 (sing.), John Sol. *Soul* 19 (sing.), Tr. 6 (sing.), Babai *C.Evag.* 149r (plur.). For 'mystery of your love' cf *Keph.* IV.78, Narsai M I 76, Sahdona II 37 ('mysteries').

² perceptible world (*'ālmā metragšānā*): cf *Keph.* IV.3 (neg.) and Part I 49. The phrase is Evagrius (*Keph.* II.88, V.12 [both S 2, so unlikely to be Isaac's source], *Keph.Suppl.* 42); among seventh-century ES writers it occurs in Babai *C.Evag.* 24v, 224v, 227r.

³ mystery of the killing (*rāzā d-qeṭleh*): cf Narsai M I 65.

16 ¹ sick state: Rom. 5:6, Heb. 4:15.

² hold back (*tkws*): H 'rebuke' (*tk*s).

³ prostrate state (*rmāyūtāh*): or 'fraudulence'. This is H's reading; B has the meaningless *rmyhth*.

⁴ my inner senses: cf Part I 29, 374, Babai *C.Evag.* 87v.

⁵ hidden things (*kasyātā*) of the mysteries: cf Part I 471.

⁶ remembrance of the humility (*'uhdān mukkākeh*): cf *'uhdānā d-mukkākā* at XVIII.6 and *Keph.* IV.74.

17 ¹ in darkness...: Ps.142(143):3.

18 ¹ from your bosom: John 1:18.

Being for the benefit of all, what further do you have which You have not given to Your creation? The world has become mingled with God, and creation and Creator have become one! Praise to You for Your inscrutable purpose: truly this mystery is vast. Glory to You for Your mysteries which are hidden from us. Make me worthy, Lord, to taste of this great mystery² which is hidden and concealed, (a mystery) of which the world is not yet worthy of perceiving. Maybe You indicated something of it to Your saints who live in the body above the world and who are at all times above the impulses of the flesh.

19. The flood of Christ's mysteries¹ presses upon my mind like the waves of the sea. I wanted to be silent before them, and not speak, but they proved to be like burning fire that was kindled in my bones. My mind rebukes me revealing to me my sins. Your mystery stupefies me, but urges me on to behold it: in silence it indicates to me, 'Do not be slow to approach because you are afraid of your sins, O sinner, for it is by meditating upon this that the mud of sin will be shaken off your mind'.

20. O Unbinder¹ of our nature², unbind from me the hidden bonds which have been cast around my interior limbs³, and (undo) from my outer senses the manifest restraints, so that I may run to enter the Paradise of Your mysteries and eat of the Tree of Life⁴ from which Adam was not allowed to eat.

21. O my Saviour, preserve me from the delusion of the demons; O my God, keep far from me laxity of purpose; O my Hope, pour into my heart the inebriation¹ which consists in the hope of You. O Jesus Christ, the resurrection and light of all worlds, place the crown of knowledge of You upon my soul's head; open up of a sudden before me the door of

² great mystery (*rāzā rabbā*): based on Eph.5:32; cf XXXVIII.2 and Part I 68; Ephrem *H.de Fide* 75:15, *C.Nisibena* 69:21 etc., Narsai M I 17, 141, Sahdona IV 33, 56, 79.

19 ¹ Christ's mysteries (*rāzaw(hy) da-mšihā*): cf *Keph.* II.92, IV.86. The sing. *rāzeh da-mšihā* is characteristic of John the Solitary (*Soul* 22, 56, 63, *Epp.* 96).

20 ¹ Unbinder (*šārōyū*): the word could also be read as *šarwāyā* 'firstling' (perhaps a variation on *hukrā* or *rēšitā*), but the play on words with ensuing *šrī* 'unbind, loosen' points to *šārōyā* as being what Isaac intended.

² our nature: H 'my nature'.

³ my interior limbs (*haddāmay gawwāyē*): cf XVIII.14; John Sol. *Soul* 49 (compare 83), Sahdona III 92. Compare X.41 'our hidden limbs', and Part I 53 *haddāmē nap-šānāyē*, 'limbs of the soul'; also *haddāmē d-lebbā* Philoxenus *Disc.* 34, and *haddāmē d-ruḥ* Sergius 64.

⁴ Tree of Life: Gen. 3:22.

21 ¹ inebriation: see on X.35.

mercies; cause the rays of Your grace² to shine out in my heart; be a guide to the feet of my thoughts³, until I reach Sion. Your holy mountain⁴. Make me worthy of that holy city which the saints have entered at the end of their journey.

My Creator and my Hope, the Anchor⁵ of my life in the midst of storms, the Staff for my feeble condition, the Honour of my dishonourable state⁶, who raises my head which is bent down to the ground, do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversary⁷; do not provide an opportunity for his shamelessness. Place a great chasm⁸ in front of him to prevent him crossing over to me and perturbing me. Hold me worthy to complete my short and fleeting life in the service of You; may I be found close to You at the end of my days, may I be found in Your vineyard at the sunset of my life⁹. Make me worthy, before the time of crossing over¹⁰, of the embossed coin¹¹ which You vouchsafed to the labourers¹². Out of grace, Lord, and not because of my service, hold me worthy even at the eleventh hour of my life to be found diligently in Your service. May the world not captivate me with its harmful occupations, and may it not confine me in the cage of its cares¹³.

22. O Christ who are covered with light as though with a garment¹, who for my sake stood naked in front of Pilate, clothe me with that might² which You caused to overshadow³ the saints, whereby they

² rays of Your grace (*zalliqē d-taybūtāk*): cf Part I 237, Sahdona III 18 (constr.).

³ feet of my thoughts (*reglē d-huṣṣābay*): cf *Hudra* I 577 (Elia of Resh'aina), and *reglā d-huṣṣābeh* in Sahdona III 133; compare Isaac Part I 490 *reglāh d-napṣā*; Gregory Thaumaturgos (ed. PITRA, *Analecra Sacra* IV, 128) *reglē d-tar'itan*; Narsai PP II, 605 *reglē d-havnā*. This curious metaphor may go back to John the Solitary *C.Qoh.V.1-4*, where he interprets the 'foot' of *Qoh.5:1* as the *tar'itā*.

⁴ Your holy mountain: perhaps based on Ps.43:3.

⁵ Anchor: compare Heb. 6:19, and Narsai M I, 119 where Christ's name is an 'anchor'. In Part I 105 Isaac describes prayer as 'a saving anchor amidst the waves'.

⁶ dishonourable state (*šyṣṣwty*): H 'folly' (*šyṣṣwty*).

⁷ adversary: perhaps alluding to Ps.27:6,12.

⁸ chasm: based on Luke 16:26.

⁹ vineyard...sunset of my life: based on Matt.20:8; compare Part I 144 'evening of old age'.

¹⁰ crossing over: see on XXXV.5.

¹¹ embossed coin: lit 'image of the denarios'.

¹² labourers: Matt. 20:9-10.

¹³ cage of its cares: perhaps 'cage' (*nāmartā*) was suggested by an anagogical reading of Ezek. 19:9 where the Peshitta has this word.

22 ¹ garment: Ps.104:2.

² clothe me with that might: based on Luke 24:49.

³ overshadow: for the use of *aggen* and its derivative *maggnānūtā* see my 'Maggnānūtā'. The main biblical starting points are Luke 1:35 and John 1:14.

conquered this world of struggle. May Your divinity, Lord, take pleasure in me, and lead me above the world to be with You.

23. O Christ, upon whom the many-eyed cherubim are unable to look because of the glory of Your countenance, yet out of Your love You received spit upon Your face: remove the shame from my face and grant an open face before You at the time of prayer.

24. O Christ, because of our nature's sin You went out into the wilderness¹ and vanquished the ruler of darkness², taking from him the victory after five thousand years³; force to flee from me him who at all times forces the human race to sin.

25. May the Cross of shame which You mounted for my sake become a bridge¹ to that peaceful abode; may the crown of thorns² with which Your head was crowned, become for me *the helmet of salvation*³ on the heated day of battle; may the spit⁴ which Your face received prepare me to have an open face before the tribunal at Your advent; may Your holy body which was exposed on the Cross crucify me to this world and its lusts⁵ by means of love for You; may Your clothing for which lots were cast⁶ tear asunder before my eyes the garment of darkness⁷ with which I am inwardly clothed; may the water and blood⁸ which came forth from You become for me a document granting liberty⁹ from the ancient state of servitude; may Your Body and Your Blood which have been mingled with my body remain within me as a pledge that I will not be deprived of the constant sight of You in that realm which has no end; may the mysteries of the faith¹⁰ which I have

24 ¹ Matthew 4:1 and parallels.

² ruler of darkness: based on Eph. 6:12.

³ five thousand years: Isaac follows the chronology, standard among the Greek and Syriac Fathers (e.g. Ephrem H. *de Fide* 6:17), which regarded the Incarnation as having taken place at the end of the fifth millennium. For a similar reference see Dadisho' *C.Ablis* XV.18.

25 ¹ bridge: for the cross as a bridge, compare Ephrem, *Sermo de Domino Nostro* 4, Isaac of Antioch 740, 786.

² crown of thorns: Matt. 27: 29 and parallels.

³ helmet of salvation: Eph. 6:17.

⁴ spit: Matt. 26:67, 27:30.

⁵ its lusts: Gal.5:24.

⁶ lots were cast: Matt. 27:35.

⁷ garment of darkness (*naḥtā d-ḥeškā*): compare *lbūšā d-ḥeškā* Part I 469.

⁸ water and blood...: John 19:34. Isaac has reversed the biblical sequence (for the frequent occurrence of this see my 'Baptismal themes in the writings of Jacob of Serugh', *Symposium Syriacum II* (OCA 205, 1978), 329-30).

⁹ liberty: based on Rom.8:21.

¹⁰ mysteries of the faith: cf XI.32 (sing. at XI.19 and XXXIX.1, as at I Tim. 3:5); Narsai PP II, 600.

preserved uncorrupted in myself preserve for me something to glory about on that day when the world is made ready to receive Your advent, and may they replace there the inadequacy of my ascetic conduct¹¹.

26. May there be remembered, Lord, on Your holy altar at the fearful moment when Your Body and Your Blood are sacrificed for the salvation of the world¹, all the fathers and brethren who are on mountains, in caves², in ravines, cliffs, rugged and desolate places, who are hidden from the world and it is only known to You where they are — those who have died and those still living and ministering before You in body and soul, You the Holy One who dwell in the holy ones³ in whom Your divinity finds rest; those who have abandoned the temporal world and have already become dead to its life in that they have gone out in search of You, seeking You with yearning amidst the afflictions of their weary state. O King of all worlds and of all the orthodox Fathers who, for the sake of the truth of the faith, have endured exile and afflictions at their hands of persecutors, who in monasteries, convents, deserts and the habitations of the world, everywhere and in every place, have made it their care to please You with labours for the sake of virtue: accompany them with Your assistance, Lord, and be a helmet for them always, send them continual comfort in secret, and bind their minds close to You in all their struggles; may the power of Your Trinity dwell in them, and may they minister to You right up to the end of their lives with a good conscience and with a good manner of life⁴. Hold them worthy while they are still in the body of the harbour of rest⁵. And to those who are encountering hard battles with the demons, whether openly or in secret, send succour, Lord, and overshadow them with the cloud of Your grace⁶; place on their mind's head the helmet of

¹¹ inadequacy of my ascetic conduct (*bṣirūtā d-dubbāray*): cf V.30, Part I 498; compare *buṣṣārē d-dubbārē qadmāyē*, Part I 436.

26 ¹ world: H 'worlds'.

² caves: partly based on Heb 11:38.

³ who dwell in the holy ones: based ultimately on Isaiah 57:15 LXX, a passage frequently quoted by Greek writers; Isaac will have taken the passage from a Syriac translation of one of these.

⁴ good manner of life (*dubbārē tābē*): cf *Keph.* IV.84, Part I 355; *Liber Graduum* IV.1; Evagrius *Gnost.* 151, John Sol. *C.Qoh.* III 128 and often, Macarius 330 (sing.), *Hist.Monach.* 412, Sextus 6, 29, Abba Isaiah I.4a, Nilus 250, *Par.* 677, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* I.30, XI.17, XV.22. H adds 'which is worthy of You'.

⁵ harbour of rest: see on VII.2.

⁶ cloud of your grace: based on Exod. 13:21 etc.; compare 'cloud of the glory of the Lord' in Part I 222; and 'cloud of the Spirit' in Sahdona I 100 (plur.) and Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIV.6. In Part I 124 Isaac speaks of 'a cloud of passions'.

salvation⁷, bring low the power of the enemy before them, and may the might of Your right hand support them at all times lest they grow weak in their thoughts (failing) to gaze continually towards You; clothe them in the armour of humility⁸, that a sweet scent may waft from them at all times giving pleasure to Your will.

27. May those who suffer from dire sicknesses and grievous illnesses of the body also be remembered before You; send to them an angel of compassion and assuage their souls which are so tormented by their bodies' terrible afflictions. Have pity, too, Lord, on those who are subjected to the hands of evil, wicked and godless men; send to them speedily an angel of compassion, and save them from their plight. O my Lord and my God, send comfort to all those who are constrained by whatever kind of hardship¹.

28. Lord, overshadow Your holy church which has been redeemed by Your Blood¹; cause to dwell in it Your true peace which You gave to Your holy apostles; bind her children in holy bonds of indissoluble love²; may the rebel not have power over her, and keep far from her persecution, tumult, and wars, both from those within and from those without; and may kings and priests be bound together in great peace and love, their minds always filled with gazing towards You; and may the holy faith be a wall for Your flock. And hold me too, a sinner, worthy through their prayers of being preserved always under the mighty protection of Your holy arm — which is Your providential care that encompasses all, amen.

29. I beg and beseech You, Lord, grant to all who have gone astray a true knowledge of You, so that each and every one may come to know Your glory.

30. In the case of all who have passed from this world lacking a virtuous life and having had no faith, be an advocate for them, Lord, for the sake of the body which You took from them, so that from the single united body of the world¹ we may offer up praise to Father, Son and

⁷ helmet of salvation: Eph. 6:17.

⁸ armour of humility: cf Narsai PP II, 584 (referring to the patriarch Joseph).

27 ¹ hardship: H 'grievous things'.

28 ¹ redeemed by your blood (*prīqat ha-dmāk*): the phrase occurs especially in liturgical texts.

² holy bonds of...love: H 'bonds of holy love'. For 'bonds of love' cf Sahdona IV 29; compare 'bonds of stillness (*šelyā*)' Shem'on d-Ṭaybutēh 299a.

30 ¹ body of the world (*gušmeh d-'ālmā*): cf Part I 18, 78, John the Solitary *Epp.* 45, 46; compare *gšimūt 'ālmā* Part I 5, and *gšimūteh d-'ālmā* in Shem'on d-Ṭaybutēh 295a, 306b. See also note to VIII.15.

Holy Spirit in the kingdom of heaven, an unending source of eternal delight.

31. Those who wait expectantly to receive in their inner person¹ the grace of the Holy Spirit² should engage continually in meditations and supplicatory converse (such as) these: by such converse they will become sanctified, and with an intent such as this they will be held worthy of a gift from on high.

32. We should pray with suffering, and we should make supplication to God for all these things with pain. And this is the attitude we should have towards all human beings: we should pray for them with suffering, as for ourselves, for in this way the Divinity will come and rest in us¹, and cause His will to reside in us 'as in heaven, so on earth'².

33. You too, our brother, should have this aim in prayer¹ and meditation all your days, (both) when you are kneeling on the ground, and during the rest of the other hours (of the day) in a hidden way within your heart. Even though you may not (want to use) the same sequence and order of words, the aim in prayer should certainly be the same all the time, (namely) that we may be held worthy through this intent and meditation of the gift which was received by our fathers whose bodies and souls had become temples for the Holy Spirit².

31 ¹ their inner person (*barnāshōn gawwāyā*): cf VIII.16, XXXI.1, Part I 244, 575-6; based on Rom. 7:22, 2 Cor. 4:16 and Eph.3:16 *barnāšā dal-gaw* (which is also used by Isaac, Part I 125, 483). The adjectival form, which already occurs in Aphrahat *Dem.* 6:1 and Ephrem *H.c.Haer.* 32:12, reflects the preferred usage of John the Solitary (*Soul* 7, 8, 23, 39, 41, 91, *Tr.* 21, *Epp.* 41, 65, *Hes.* 28); it also occurs frequently in Macarius (e.g. 9, 12, 66) and occasionally in Evagrius (*Gnos.* 116, *Epp.* 104v, *Keph.* VI.39 [S 2, hence unlikely to be known to Isaac], *Keph.Suppl.* 50); also *Hist.Laus.* 92, Ammonius 637. For 'new person' in Isaac see on VIII.11.

² grace of the Holy Spirit: the phrase is characteristic of Theodore of Mopsuestia in particular and of ES liturgical tradition in general.

32 ¹ will come and rest in us: for these verbs in liturgical invocations see my 'The Epiklesis in the Antiochene baptismal ordines', in [I] *Symposium Syriacum* (OCA 197, 1974), 194-5.

² as in heaven so on earth: deliberately reflecting the Lord's Prayer.

33 ¹ the aim in prayer (*nīšā du-šlōtā*): cf XIV.43, XXXII.4, *Keph.* III.14, Part I 33, 106, 382, 547.

² temples for the Holy Spirit: based on 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19.

VI.

By the same Mar Isaac. The indications and signs of life, and the genuine forms of attachment to God which appear in the soul.

1. I will give you two genuine signs, my brother, and at the time when God holds you worthy to be illumined inwardly, you will be aware thanks to them of the light of your soul¹. They are the following, (and) are sufficient to indicate to you the truth which has begun to shine out in your soul.

2. When, through the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, that illumination of mind¹ of which the Fathers speak has begun to shine out in you, there are two signs which will give you confirmation concerning this, and whenever you fail to find these in yourself — even if you fully imagine that you are doing well — recognize that you are still far distant from them.

3. Now one of the signs is this: once this hidden light starts shining out in your soul you will have this sign, that whenever you leave off reading (Scripture) or prayer, the mind will be caught up with certain verses or with the content of these, and it will meditate on, examine and probe of its own accord into their spiritual significance; it will be so bound up with them that it will not depart from them and be distracted by anything else in creation. This will be so even though you may not, for your own part, have any great concern for the matter; this is because this happens to the mind of its own accord — not quite completely or totally so, but certainly for the most part.

4. The second sign, which is as precise as the first, is the following: when the soul leaves the darkness and becomes light from within, then

VI.1 ¹ light of your soul (*nuhrā d-napšāk*): cf Part I 379, 557, Narsai M I 94. 'Light of the soul' is defined by Evagrius as *apatheia* (*Keph.* I.81), and by Mark the Monk as 'knowledge of truth' (Add.12175 148r.2, quoted by Dadisho' *C.Ahls* XIII.20 and Shem'on d-Ṭaybutch 309a). See also on X.24.

2 ¹ illumination of the mind (*nahhīrūtā d-re'yānā*) of which the Fathers speak: the precise source is unclear; for the phrase (which may well not be an exact quotation) cf VI.4, Part I 448; many earlier texts speak of the mind being illumined, using the verb, e.g. Evagrius *Ant.* 65v (quoting 'John the Seer of Thebes') *re'yānā d-metnahhar ba-ṣlōtā*. Isaac also talks of 'illumination' of *hawnā* (XX.8), of *zav'ē* (Part I 184), of *huššābē* (VIII.25, XIV.29, XX.3), of *mud'ā* (XXXI.4, *Keph.* III.58, 60 (construct)), of *lebbā* (Part I 134), of *napšā* (*Keph.* III.13, Part I 485), and of *sukkālē* (XIV.28, XXXI.3).

prolonged kneelings are granted to the solitary, and tarrying in them will prove so delightful that he may be three days kneeling on the ground in prayer, without his knowing any fatigue as a result of the delight; nor will he want to stand up because of it, with the consequence that whenever he does raise his head and seek to stand up, as a result of that protracted delight⁴ in his heart he again falls on his face, and prayer continually becomes just a small thing for him, because the moment prayer has passed into his heart he becomes so aware of (divine) assistance, and the delightfulness of (prayer) has become so strong in him, that his tongue stands still and his heart becomes silent. In this way a delightful stillness takes hold of his heart and his limbs to such an extent that he does not even conceive, one might say, of the Kingdom of heaven as being comparable in its delightfulness to this stillness in prayer as he lies there prostrate on his face completely still night and day. Accordingly, in measure with the manner and extent to which someone enters illumination of mind, so will he be held worthy of delight in kneeling.

5. I am writing this down, my brother, for those who are constant in stillness⁵, and not for those to whom these divine matters, performed between God and the saints in an ineffable mystery, appear as worthy of laughter.

6. What further need, my brother, is there for me to tell you about something of which there are no means to tell of it, seeing that it is ineffable? Give yourself over to the labour of prayer⁶, and you will discover that which you cannot hear from another person.

7. I (went to) see one of the fathers, and he was telling me, 'I can never bend my knees in prayer without immediately, the moment I set prayer into motion, silence falling on my heart, and if I am the whole day kneeling in prayer, I am unable to say anything; instead, I am just still, it having nothing to do with my own will. I discovered this', he said, 'only after many labours, and I acquired it as a result of stillness'⁷.

4 ¹ protracted (*da-ngīdā*) delight: possibly this should be corrected to *da-gnīzā* 'hidden'.

5 ¹ constant in stillness (*dab-šelyā amminīn*): cf *Keph.* II.50, Part I 483; compare *amminūtā d-šelyā* in Part I 559, John Sol. *Tr.* 4 and Dadisho' *C.Par.* 956; also *šelyā amminā Keph.* I.79, IV.41, 43, Part I 139, John Sol. *Soul* 78, *Tr.* 9, Dadisho' *Shel.* 216a, *C.Abls* I.14, 18.

6 ¹ labour of prayer (*'amlā da-šlōtā*): cf X.6, *Keph.* II.80, IV.47 (*da-šlawwātā*), Part I 57; *V.Antony* 44, Macarius 34, Abba Isaiah VI.5E, Babai of Nisibis 34, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* I.14, *C.Par.* 902 (Dadisho' has the plur. *'amlē* at *C.Abls.* I.16, XIII.1, XV.40, 41, 43).

7 ¹ as a result of stillness: the phrase could also be translated 'all of a sudden'.

It is only from this old man that I have heard of this, and I have not encountered anyone else like him who had acquired these things in such a precise way, or who spoke authoritatively about them as he did. But because not everyone is capable of listening to or reaching this grace of pure prayer and the power that lies within it, even those who out of mercy have discovered such things will keep them to themselves, giving thanks to God who gave them such consolation as a remedy for their anguish.

8. My brother, the person who writes these things down writes from experience, and through the mercy of Christ he is to a small extent aware of them in his own person and has received confirmation concerning them. The other things which are greater and more exalted than his state have been revealed, out of grace, in his mind, while he has as witnesses and guides the writings of well-attested people of old. And every time he was bereaved of this matter which forms the topic of what has been spoken of above, he was bereaved of the effects and no longer saw in his soul those two signs. Thus you too should feel assured concerning them, and look for these signs within yourself. Whenever kneeling is difficult for you, and any tarrying in it proves laborious to you, or, when you leave the divine words (of Scripture) and prayer, your mind is wandering, without fruit or recollection of the things in them, then recognize that a great darkness has accumulated there within you.

9. As long as you experience despondency¹ in prayer and in the Office, I do not recognize the door to life² as having been opened within you. But the remedy for this darkness is born out of the very labour that exists in prayer, when you struggle and prolong it all the while persisting in it; then you will quickly and in a short time become aware of the assistance that comes from prayer, provided that there does not exist within you any cause of worry which comes from outside, or (worry) over someone.

9 ¹ despondency (*quṭṭā'ā*): or 'listlessness'; see on XXI.14.

² door to life (*tar'ā d-ḥayyē*): cf Narsai M I 60, Macarius 300. For other phrases with *tar'ā*, see on V.4.

VII.

By the same. Whence spiritual perception¹ is born in the soul, and how far its condition is raised up².

1. There is a spiritual perception¹ which is born out of meditation; this gives delight, joy and exultation to the soul. There is (also) another kind which falls upon a person spontaneously. At the beginning (stages) of this awareness which comes into being as a result of meditation — the result of a love of (sound) doctrine² and the exercise of devout conduct — the mind is continually occupied as it meditates on something or other; every now and then, as a result of this excellent meditation³ concerning the love of God and reflection on the things of God, the person who is occupied in such things out of love of (spiritual) exercise aimed at establishing his personal ministry (to God), finds there is steadily born in him a faculty of spiritual vision of things. Once his soul has been purified a little in devout ministry⁴ and alertness, then that spiritual contemplation⁵ of sight will every now and then fall upon the soul without any concern on its part: at every moment this person will encounter in his mind some insight, and all of a sudden the mind will stand motionless as though in some divine dark cloud which stuns and silences (the mind).

2. It can also happen that from time to time a certain stillness, without any insights, can fall upon a person, and the mind is gathered

VII title ¹ spiritual perception (*margšānūtā ruhānāytā*): cf *Keph.* IV.11.

² raised up: perhaps read *mtgl'*, 'is revealed', for *mt'l'*.

1 ¹ spiritual perception (*margšānūtā d-ruh*): cf *Keph.* III.14.

² love of (sound) doctrine (*rehmat yulpānā*): cf Part I 4, John Sol. *Epp.*71; among seventh-century ES writers it is used by Shem'on d-Ṭaybutēh 298a, 301b, 320b. Compare Part I 54 *rāhmūtā d-yulpānā ruhānāyā*.

³ excellent meditation (*hergā šappīrā*): cf Part I 138, 435; John Sol. *Soul* 90, Gregory of Cyprus Add.17192 184r.

⁴ devout ministry (*pulhānā d-dehlat alāhā*): cf Part I 320, III Macc.6:1, Sergius 34, 60, *Paradise* 533, Abraham of Nathpar 93v (plur.).

⁵ spiritual contemplation (*te'ōryā ruhānāytā*): cf Part I 528 (and plur. at 522); Evagrius Add. 14578 89v, *Keph.* I.34, III.26, V.40 (and S 2 only at III.24, IV.30, V.16, 74, VI.2, 65), Philoxenus *Disc.* 625, Sergius 44, Babai *C.Evaq.* 12r, 96v, 124r etc., Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XI.17, XIII.2, Shem'on d-Ṭaybutēh 285a. In his Kephalaia Isaac uses several other Evagrian adjectives with *theoria*. In Part I 128 he provides a definition of *theoria*: 'ammīqūt hzātā napšānāytā, 'profundity of the soul's vision'; for other definitions see Part I 216. See also on XXXV.4 for *t. d-ruh*.

in¹ and dives² within itself in ineffable stupefaction; this is the harbour full of rest of which our Fathers speak³ in their writings, (describing) how on occasion (human) nature enters there, when it has drawn close to the entrance point of a spiritual mode of existence⁴. This (stage) is the beginning of the entry into the third high point⁵, namely the spiritual mode of being⁶. It is with his eyes set on this harbour that the solitary, from the time of his discipleship until he reaches the grave, undertakes all the labour of body and of soul, allowing himself to be buffeted about by all the vicissitudes which these involve. Once the solitary has come near this entrance point, henceforth he will make straight for the harbour as he draws close to the spiritual mode of being; from this point onwards astonishing things take place for him and he receives the pledge of the New World.

3. At this point let whoever reads this understand it (in connection) with the collectedness of mind¹ which was spoken of towards the end of the Fourth Memra² of Chapters on (spiritual) knowledge. It is after this that the course of the diligent is to reach this harbour. This is the ministry of mature solitaires³, so that by it their course may be completed

2 ¹ gathered in: HQ 'weakened'.

2 dives ('*āmed*): in the background will be the sense of '*mad*' ('be baptized'). For a similar use of the verb see X.16, 17, XXI.1, 15, and Part I 12, 174.

3 harbour full of rest (*nawḥā*) of which our Fathers speak: perhaps Isaac refers to Macarius 49 *Imēnā d-nawḥā* (thus Isaac at V.26). 'Abdisho 272b evidently alludes to the same passage. Compare *Imēnā nīḥā Par.* 749, Babai *C.Evag.* 235r, and *Imēnā da-nyāḥā Shubbālmāran* 45v. For *nawḥā* in Isaac compare XX.20, *Keph.* IV.49 (*nawḥā ammīnā dh-alāḥā*), Part I 203 (*nawḥā mšallmānā* on the 'true Sabbath when everyone keeps Sabbath [*mašbet*] there').

4 entrance point of a spiritual mode of existence (*wa'dā d-dubbārā d-ruḥ*): for *wa'dā d-dubbārā* cf *Keph.* IV.47; and for *dubbārā d-ruḥ* cf XX.6, 19, XXXII.4, *Keph.* IV.12, Part I 472, John Sol. Add.17170 11v, Babai *C.Evag.* 14v, Dadisho' *C.Par.* 964-5.

5 high point (*uqme*): see note to XXII.2.

6 the spiritual mode of being (*dubbārā ruḥānā*): cf X.2, XX.2 (*ruḥānāyā*), 5, 6, 10, *Keph.* 1.28, 36 (-*āyā*), 37, III.14, 46 (-*āyā*), IV.12, 13, 15, 16, 47, 92, Part I 303, 368 (-*āyā*), 376 (plur.). The phrase, not uncommon in seventh-century ES monastic writers, goes back to John the Solitary (*Soul* 12, 17, 24, 60, 64, 66, *Epp.* 19, 40) and Macarius (191). See also on XX.5.

3 ¹ collectedness of mind (*kunnāšā d-re'yānā*): cf XV.6, XXI.8, *Keph.* IV.72, 92-3 (to which he is alluding; see next note), Part I 446. For the construct see on XIV.10.

2 Fourth Memra: i.e. *Keph.* IV.92-93.

3 ministry of mature solitaires (*pulḥānā d-iḥīdāyē gmīrē*): 'mature' could also be translated 'perfect'. For *dubbārā d-iḥīdāyē* cf *Keph.* IV.25; *Paradise* 599. Compare XXIX.8; also *pulḥānē d-iḥīdāyā Keph.* II.94, and *pulḥānā d-iḥīdāyūtā Keph.* IV.92, Nilus 75, *Paradise* 675, Dadisho' *C.Par.* 956.

and the weary ship of their ascetic conduct⁴ may reach this point, so that they may be held worthy henceforth of the love of Jesus Christ our Lord and from time to time have a dim glimpse of the glory of His nature, for such is the crown of the perfect, and there will be fulfilled in them the words 'You, my Father, are in me, and I in them, so that they too may be one in us'⁵. For by their perfect mingling with God⁶ the saints symbolically typify the union of Christ⁷ in the Trinity. Our 'Firstfruit'⁸, through His coming, has brought us close to this, and such is the fulfilment which His teaching bears in those who believe. So until a person comes to a stillness, (away) from (other) people, and turns to reflection on himself⁹, the good which is hidden within himself will not be revealed.

⁴ ship... (*elpā...d-dubbārayhōn*): cf AMS III 474 (Life of Awgen). For ship imagery in Isaac see also V.14 ('ship of repentance'), XX.21, *Keph.* IV.44 ('ship of the mind', *d-re'yānā*, based on a hymn attributed to Narsai in *Hudra* I 106 = Brev.Chald. I 36; also Narsai PP II 611, *Sahdona* II 9), Part I 112, 179, 326, 461, 544; compare 'ships of souls' Ephrem *H.de Virginitate* 39:2, John Sol. *Epp.* 50 (sing.). Such imagery is quite frequent in other seventh-century ES writers, e.g. Abraham of Nathpar 91r, 100r, Gregory of Cyprus 60-62, *Sahdona* I 117.

⁵ You, my Father,...: John 17:21, altering 'in you' to 'in them' in accordance with verse 23.

⁶ their perfect mingling with God (*b-ḥuṭṭānhōn gmīrā db-alāhā*): cf XIX.6, XXXV title, based on Evagrius *Keph. Supp.* 43 (= Babai *C.Evag.* 223v) *lwāt ḥuṭṭānā gmīrā d-alāhā*. See also on IV.2.

⁷ Christ: So B' H; Christ here denotes the 'assumed Man', united to the Trinity through union with the Word. B*Q have '(the union) which is in Christ'.

⁸ Firstfruit: cf Acts 26:23, I Cor. 15:20. 23. Q substitutes with 'Christ'.

⁹ reflection on himself (*venyā d-napšeh*): cf Part I 152.

VIII.

On¹ what are the different aspects of the (topics just) mentioned: when someone travels to his own mind², and in the stillness things come out into the open, how they are perceived and recognized, and what they are.

1. The revelation of the good¹ that is hidden within us is the apperception of knowledge of truth²: 'The Kingdom of heaven is mystically within you'³. Knowledge of truth is a taste of the Kingdom of heaven. But concerning the fact that what is true in this world is not (really) true, listen: we call 'truth' the right reflection on God⁴ which (stems) from Him, upon which someone stumbles in (their) mind, in a kind of state of wonder: amazing thoughts occur in the soul at the spiritual stirrings⁵ concerning hidden matters — a wonder at spiritual mysteries⁶, the bringing to perfection of the fruits of the inner person's ascetic conduct⁷.

2. The ascetic conduct of the inner person is a symbol of existence after the resurrection: this does not make use of bodily actions¹, but is

VIII title ¹ H prefaces the title with 'By the same'.

² mind (*mad'eh*): H 'meeting point' (*wa'delh*).

1 ¹ revelation of the good (*gelyānā d-ṭābtā*): H has *g. d-ṭābtā*, for which cf Shem'on d-Ṭaybutēh 285b.

² apperception of knowledge of truth (*margšānūtā d-īdā'tā da-šrārā*): for *m. d-īdā'tā* cf I f.18r, *Keph.* 1.98 (neg.), Part I 221; John Sol. *Epp.* 8. For *īdā'tā da-šrārā* cf I Tim. 2:4; elsewhere in Isaac Part II, cf IX title, 2, 4, X.15, 16, XIII.1, XIV.34, 44, XXV title, XXXV.5, XXXVII 3, 4, *Keph.* III.52, 92; it is especially common in Evagrius (*Keph.* I.14, 52, 89 etc., *Epp.* 168v, 176v, 177rv etc.); also in Ephrem *H. de Fide* 28:16.

³ The Kingdom of heaven...: based on Luke 17:21, where the biblical text in both Greek and Syriac has 'Kingdom of God', but in quotations this has often been altered to 'of heaven' (see *The New Testament in Greek. The Gospel according to St Luke*, Part II (Oxford 1987), ad loc.).

⁴ right reflection on God (*renyā kīnā d-'al alāhā*): for *renyā kīnā* cf XXIV.5, Part I 411, and for *renyā d-'al alāhā* see on X.38.

⁵ spiritual stirrings (*b-zaw'ē d-ruḥ*): cf XX.19 (sing.), and compare XX.10 *zaw'ē dab-ruḥ*, and Sahdona I 51 *zaw'ay ruḥā*. For *zaw'ā ruḥānā* see on XXXII.6.

⁶ spiritual mysteries (*rāzē ruḥānē*): cf XXXV.8, Part I 374; John Sol. *Soul* 55, 91, Philoxenus *Disc.* 298.

⁷ fruits of the inner person's ascetic conduct (*pīrē d-dubbārā d-barnāšā gawwāyā*): compare Sahdona I 6 *pīrē d-dubbārāyḥōn*. For *dubbārā d-barnāšā gawwāyā* cf VIII.2, *Keph.* IV.60; John Sol. *Soul* 7, 8, 92, *Epp.* 41, 65.

2 ¹ bodily actions (*su'rānē gušmānāyē*): cf Narsai F VI 360.

brought about and perceived by the stirrings of the mind². Here (on earth), however, because it is still a symbol of that true (existence), it is accomplished by means of numerous reflections. For yonder, it being the summation of all things, it involves a single reflection — if it is right to call it that, for it is, rather, delightful gaze and vision without distraction.

3. Purity of soul is the stripping off of fleshly cares and the concern of bodily thoughts¹.

4. Wonder at the divine Nature¹ is a revelation of the New World².

5. Revelations of the New World are wondrous stirrings concerning God. With these mysteries all rational nature will be stirred in that future existence, in that heavenly abode.

6. The holy powers exist now by means of these impulses: this is the mode of life of the angels¹, so that they are astonished at this mystery all the time, due to revelations that come upon them in various ways during these stirrings concerning the divine Nature. This is the (exalted) position which life after the resurrection² holds.

7. The revelations of the New World are quite different from revelations about the New World. The former concern the glorious nature of the (divine) Majesty; the latter concern the wondrous transforma-

² stirrings of the mind (*b-zaw'aw(hy) d-mad'ā*): cf XXXVI.2, *Keph.* IV.7, Part I 31 (all constr.), and compare Ps.Dionysius 84r *zaw'ā d-mad'an*, and Gregory of Cyprus 114 *zaw'ē d-mad'ayhōn*. Isaac employs a number of phrases with *zaw'ē d-*: *hawṇā* (XXXVI.2), *ḥuṣṣābē* (XX.12), *īdā'tā* (XX.1), *tebbā* (Part I 546), *napsā* (XIV.24), *ruh* (VIII.1), *re'yānā* (XXIV.2), and *tar'itā* (*Keph.* III.92, Part I 50, 170).

3 ¹ bodily thoughts (*ḥuṣṣābē pagrānāyē*): cf VIII.16, *Keph.* III.27, IV.32, Part I 396; *Hist.Monach.* 342, Jacob of Serugh III 654, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XV.9; compare Marcian 194 *ḥuṣṣābē pagrānē*. For *ḥuṣṣābē napsānāyē* see on XVI.5.

4 ¹ the divine Nature (*kyānā alāhāyā*): cf XI.35, XIV.42, XXXVIII title, 4, XXXIX.22, XL title, *Keph.* II.19, Part I 570; Isaac probably derives the phrase from Theodore of Mopsuestia (e.g. *WS* V 161; VI 150), rather than 2 Pet 1:4 (not part of the ES canon); the phrase also occurs e.g. in the *Anaphora of Theodore* (Urmia edition, 35, 38) and in Evagrius (*Epp.* 191r).

² revelation of the New World (*gelyānā d-'ālmā ḥadṭā*): cf VIII.5, 7 (both plur.), XL.2 (*d-'al*), *Keph.* III.49. For 'New World' see on V.5. Isaac has a number of phrases with *gelyānāyē* which appear to be unparalleled, e.g. *d-hawṇā* (see on XV.7), *d-ḥaylē d-alāhā* (XI.5), *d-tābtā d-kasyā b-gawwan* (VIII.1), *d-sukkālē* (VIII.7, 25, Part I 162, 352).

6 ¹ mode of life of the angels (*dubbārḥōn d-mal'akē*): cf *Keph.* III.78, Part I 266 (plur.); *Hist.Laus.* 367, John Sol. *Epp.* 11, Sahdona II.89 (plur.), Dadisho' *C.Par.* 899, 932 (plur.), *Hudra* III 264. The ascetic life as an imitation of the life of angels was of course a commonplace in late antiquity, see S. FRANK, Ἀγγελικὸς Βίος (Münster, 1964).

² life after the resurrection (*dubbārā d-bātar qyāmtā*): cf Part I 254; John Sol. *Soul* 56, Abraham of Nathpar 86v, 100r. Compare *huppākā d-bātar qyāmtā* in Part I 304-5, and *dubbārā d-bātar nuḥḥāmā* in Part I 550, John Sol. *Soul* 89.

tions¹ which creation will experience, and concern each aspect of the future state as it is made known to the intellect through the revelation of (various) insights², (which in turn are) the result of continual reflection³ on them and illumination.

8. A sound mentality and one vigorous with stirrings is one that has acquired a sound care for matters divine.

9. An infantile mentality and one sickly in stirrings is one that entertains feeble conceptions of things divine, having human ideas¹ about them that are inappropriate to God's majesty.

10. The true resurrection of the body is when it receives that ineffable transformation in that future state, at the stripping off of all fleshly refuse¹ and what belongs to it. The symbolic resurrection² of the body is when it rises from all the sin to which it was attached in (its) activity, and applies itself to the excellent practice of service (to God)³.

11. The beginning of the way of life of the New Person¹ consists in continuous exultation in the love and joy that exists in God², this joy

⁷ ¹ wondrous transformations (*ṣuḥlāpē thirē*): cf XXIV.2 (sing.), and compare *ṣuḥlāpā tmihā* VIII.15 and *Keph.* IV.57. Other comparable uses of *ṣuḥlāpā* occur at VIII.10, XXIII.2 (both with *la metmāllāna*), XXIV.3 (*alāhāyē*), XXXIII title (*tābē*). The term *ṣuḥlāpā* in this sense is already used by John the Solitary (*Soul* 80).

² revelation of (various) insights (*gelyānā d-sukkālē*): see on VIII.4

³ continual reflection (*ammīnūt renyā*): cf XX.14, XXIV.1, *Keph.* IV.15, Part I 353. The emphatic appears in Abraham of Nathpar 75r.

⁹ ¹ human ideas (*ḥuṣṣābē 'nāṣāyē*): cf Evagrius *Antirrh.* 54r, Thodore of Mopsuestia *C.John* 17, 70, 88, 136, 344, and in seventh-century ES authors Babai *C.Evag.* 217a, Saḥdona I 113, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XV.6. Evagrius Add.14578 86r has the singular.

¹⁰ ¹ refuse (*apousia*): In Syriac ἀπουσία is usually used in connection with food (e.g. Jacob of Serugh V 879, at the messianic wedding feast 'there will be no *apousia*'); for other examples, sometimes with the sense of 'excrement' see E. RIAD, *Studies in the Syriac Preface* (*Studia Semitica Upsaliensia* 11, 1988), 145-8). In Part I 190 Isaac uses *apousia* of waste from iron (a sense found in Greek), a usage he may have borrowed from John the Solitary (*Tr.* 20).

² symbolic resurrection (*qyāmtā 'rāzānāyā*): compare *qyāmtā meryad'ānitā* in Part I 167, 374.

³ excellent practice of service (to God) (*myattrūtā d-pullhānā*): cf *Keph.* III.54 (constr.), Part I 408-9; Nilus 192, Shubḥalmaran 40r, Dadisho' *Shel.* 609. Compare *myattrūtā d-pullhānā* Evagrius *Cap.Coğ.* 90.

¹¹ ¹ way of life of the New Person (*dubbārā d-barnāšā ḥadā*): cf XX.10 and Part I 545. The phrase is derived from John the Solitary (*Soul* 6, 60, *Epp.* 36, 56, 57, 61, *Tr.* 40 [plur.]). Elsewhere in seventh-century ES writers only rarely found (Dadisho' *C.Par.* 964). 'New Person' (Eph. 4:24) is used by Isaac at XX.10, *Keph.* I.90 and Part I 174, 246, 521, 545; along with 'inner' (see on V.31) and 'hidden person' (cf *Keph.* I.77) this is especially characteristic of John the Solitary's writings.

² joy that exists in God (*ḥadūtā db-alāhā*): cf XX.15, Part I 368 etc. Such language is typical of Isaac.

being born in the soul as a result of a sound knowledge³ concerning Him.

12. The soul's freedom, depicted in type, portrayed in that existence of future freedom¹ which will be ours, occurs when the soul, no longer bound up any of the body's concerns, is not subjected by any of its stirrings to fear of something in this world — (a fear which) results from dread of the adversities to be met with in the world, and which hinders the soul from its desire for a single one of these divine things.

13. Just as a change of place¹ for the body effects an alteration in the (balance of) its constitution to correspond to the (new) localities, so too a mental change effects alterations in the strength of the (mind's) stirrings.

14. Spiritual insights¹ which arise concerning matters of this world are quite different in their power from the luminous reflection on things to come², for by gazing at such things the mind is changed into a state of wonder.

15. The mind accepts thought concerning the future world more luminously, and in an unfettered way, than it does in the case of insights concerning the material world¹; for in the case of the latter the process needs special purity and great soundness of mind, whereas the former requires a little care, and then the mind quickly receives a wonderful transformation, and is easily made luminous along with the reflection. In the case of the latter, again, even if a person is excellently occupied, often enough many bonds spring up for him, holding him back from a luminous state², with the result that the mind's journey by means of

³ sound knowledge (*īda'tā hlīmā*): cf Part I 160, Anon *C.Abls.* 24.

12 ¹ existence of future freedom (*dubbārā d-hīrūtā da-'ūdā*): for *dubbārā d-hīrūtā* cf XX.26, XXI title; Theodore of Mopsuestia *WS* VI 131, John Sol. *Thaum.* I 185, *C.Qoh.* V 400, and compare Ephrem *C.Diat.* VII.8 *dubbāreh d-hīrūtā*. For *hīrūtā da-'ūdā* cf XI.30 and compare *hīrūtā d-hayyē dlā māyōtūtā* in Part I 304 and John the Solitary's frequent use of phrases such as *hīr. d-hayyē ḥadtē* (*Epp.* 15, *Hes.* 29) and *hīr. d-hayyē d-bātar nuḥhāmā* (*Soul* 91).

13 ¹ change of place (*šunnāyā atrānāyā*): cf Part I 12. I have not noticed any earlier attestation of the adjective (Isaac uses it again in Part I 86).

14 ¹ spiritual insights (*sukkālē ruḥānāyē*): cf XVIII.4, *Keph.* II.55 (sing.), Part I 161, 162 (*ruḥānē*). The phrase is Evagrius (*Epp.* 176r [sing.], Add.14578 90r) and also occurs in *Hist.Laus.* 2 (sing.), 10, 56 (sing.), and Ps.Dionysius 16v, 76v (both sing.); it is common in Babai, Gregory of Cyprus and Dadisho'.

² luminous reflection on things to come (*renyā šapyā da-'ūdātā*): for *renyā šapyā* cf X.38, Part I 400, Isaac of Antioch 501; and for *renyā da-'ūdātā* cf VIII.16, Part I 398.

15 ¹ material world (*'ālmā gšīmā*): cf XXI.15, XXXV.13, *Keph.* I.84, IV.86. The terminology is Evagrius (*Epp.* 171r, 172r). Compare note to V.30.

² luminous state (*šapyūtā*): the noun (in contrast to the adjective) is not found in the Peshitta apart from 4 Esdras 6:32 and Apoc.Baruch 66:1. It has nevertheless already become an important term in Ephrem, both with reference to God (e.g. *H. de Fide* 52:14)

these (insights) does not proceed in a pure way. But this is not so in the case of the former, for (human) nature attaches itself without any hindrance to concern for them, and it is drawn up above the passions so as to be in a state of meditation on those things — provided there is a little care on our part — bringing to the mind a constant remembrance³ of them, diverted by them, and reflecting on them. For the mind accepts this (kind of) occupation without effort, receiving easily the feeling of help, while the feeling(s) of the passions¹ quickly disappear from it. Well did the blessed Evagrius say⁵, 'Recollection of the world to come is a baptism of absolution for the soul'.

16. The beginning of the renewal of the inner person consists, then, in the meditation and constant reflection¹ on things to come. By this means a person is little by little purified of customary distraction on earthly things: he becomes like a snake² which has sloughed off its old skin, and is renewed and rejuvenated. Similarly, inasmuch as bodily thoughts, and concern for these, diminish in the mind, accordingly reflection on things heavenly³, and the gazing on things to come, increasingly springs up in the soul. Delight in the ministry of these things overcomes and proves stronger than the pleasure of bodily thoughts⁴.

17. Continual weeping¹ which is born out of reflection on (spiritual) knowledge² is the indication of a soul which has become aware of the

and to human beings (e.g. *C.Gen.* VI.13, Noah's *šapyūtā d-lebbā*). In Isaac *šapyūtā* is the original state of the soul, a concept he derives from John the Solitary (e.g. Add.17170 41v on the recovery of *šapyūtā da-kyānān*); compare I f.7r *atrā kyānāyā d-hī (h)ī šapyūtā*. For use with 'mind' etc., see note to XXI.7.

³ constant remembrance (*'uhdānā amminā*): cf XXIX.7, XXX.4, 13, Part I 78, 321, 353, 508; Macarius 25. The phrase (which occurs in Pe. Phil.1:3) features in most ES writers of the seventh century, but is especially common in Dadisho'. Compare *ammīnūtā d-'uhdāneh* XXIX.2.

⁴ the feeling(s) of the passions (*rgeštā d-ħaššē*): cf Part I 471.

⁵ Evagrius: the quotation is from the *Cap.Cog.* 99. For *'uhdānā d-'ālmā da-'īd*, cf I f.11v, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XV.27, and compare Part I 443 *'uhdān ħayyē d-'ālmā da-'īd*.

16 ¹ constant reflection (*renyā amminā*): cf I f.9r, 10v XXIX.12, XLI.1, Part I 134, 353, 399, 461; Basil *Quest.* 97v, Philoxenus *Disc.* 394, Abraham of Nathpar 78v.

² like a snake: compare John Sol. *Soul* 41, which Isaac may well have had in mind here.

³ reflection on things heavenly (*renyā da-šmayyānyātā*): cf Philoxenus *Disc.* 6, and compare *renyā d-ar'ānyūtā* in Part I 56, 163.

⁴ pleasure of bodily thoughts (*ħannī'ūtā d-ħuššābē pagrānāyē*): compare Part I 93 *ħannī'ūtā d-ħuššābē ħadīē*, and Dadisho' *C.Abls.* III.2 *ħann. d-'am ħuššābē*. *ħannī'ūtā* is a favourite word of Isaac's (18 occurrences in Part II sections IV-XLI). For 'bodily thoughts' see on VIII.3.

17 ¹ continual weeping (*ħekyā amminā*): cf XVIII.4, 17, *Keph.* III.33, Part I 120, John Sol. *Epp.* 77. Compare XVIII.15.

² reflection on (spiritual) knowledge (*renyā d-īdā'ūtā*): cf XXIV.1, Philoxenus *Disc.* 539.

object of its hope — not as a result of reading or from hearsay, but by itself it has become aware of the hope (which is the basis) of its ministry³. For once the door of insights has been opened before the heart, it is no longer possible for the pupil of the eye to be held back from weeping, owing to the feeling of pleasure which the soul receives — sometimes from compunction and humility, and sometimes from joy which wells up in a person. From this point on he gradually approaches the (state of) wonder thanks to some awesome reflection which from time to time dominates the soul.

18. These are the good things which are hidden within us, and which shine out from within us by means of the ascetic life lived in stillness¹. Whoever perseveres in it without despairing or doubting or losing hope because of the duration of his struggle, will certainly receive the consolation of his hope².

19. Do not try to make your course run more quickly than the divine will wishes; do not be in such a hurry that you try to get ahead of the providence which guides you — not that I am saying that you should not be eager.

20. The person who has committed himself to God in faith and prayer will no longer be tormented by concern for himself.

21. For someone to entrust himself to God means that, from that point onwards, he will no longer be swallowed up in anguish or fear over anything, (or) be tormented again by a thought such as when he imagines that he has no one to look after him. Once a person has fallen away in his mind from this confidence, he starts falling into myriads of temptations in his thoughts, just as the blessed Interpreter¹ says in the Volume on Matthew the Evangelist: Satan's entire concern is this, to persuade a person that God has no concern for him. For he knows (very

³ hope...of its ministry: cf Part I 524.

18 ¹ ascetic life lived in stillness (*dubbārē dab-šelyā*): cf Part I 163, 381, 567 (all sing.), Basil *Pr.* 98v, Dadisho' *Shel.* 604, 610 etc., Shem'on d-Taybuteh 311a. Compare *dubbārē d-šelyā* in Part I 162, and *dubbārā d-šelyā* in *Keph.* II.11 (scholion), IV.71, Part I 154, 479, 566, 573; the latter is already found in John the Solitary (*Tr.* 8), but in seventh-century ES writers outside Isaac it is only used by Dadisho' *C.Abls.* III.1, *C.Par.* 897 and *Shel.* 216ab, 218a, 224ab, 225a. The construct *dubbār šelyā* occurs at XXXI.1 and Part I 154. Compare *dubbārā d-šelyūtā* in Part I 479.

² consolation of his hope (*buyyā'ā d-sabreh*): cf XX.20, *Keph.* III.73, and Part I 352.

21 ¹ Interpreter: Theodore of Mopsuestia's *Commentary on Matthew* (CPG 3840) does not survive, apart from quotations. The present passage is not to be found among the Greek fragments collected by J. Reuss in *Texte und Untersuchungen* 61 (1957) or among the Syriac ones; the extent of the quotation is not clear.

well) that as long as we recognize this (concern) clearly, and (an awareness of it) is fixed in us, our souls will abide in complete peace, and we will, furthermore, acquire love towards (God) and a concern for all the things that please Him; it is this thought that (Satan) endeavours to snatch away from us.

22. Without faith a person cannot approach freedom of thoughts¹.

23. Freedom consists in an authority over thought¹ which comes from God; it does not allow dread of anything at all to come near to the heart, or any disturbing stirring² which might darken it. This is because of the great confidence which faith grants to the faithful conscience.

24. The prayer of faith¹, when it is being prayed to God, does not make a separate request 'what will You give me', for the freeborn soul is confident that God does not need such a thing; rather, it seeks of Him in prayer something greater, that is, 'Preserve for me in my heart that great treasure, which is faith, so that it will not be snatched away from me and I fall into the tempests of (anxious) thoughts' — though in fact God does not even need this.

25. Until someone loses the faith which is in his heart — by this I mean the certain knowledge¹ of this divine care² which (will prevent) him from falling into darkness of mind, from which comes anxiety and anguish — for otherwise his soul is filled all the time with light and joy, and it exults continually — that person dwells as though in heaven in the illumination of his thoughts³ which the faith of his heart⁴ instils in him; and from this point on he is also held worthy of the revelation of insights⁵.

22 ¹ freedom of thoughts (*ḥīrūtā d-ḥuṣṣābē*): cf XX.5, 10, 11, Dadisho' *C.Par.* 952. The reverse, *ḥuṣṣābē d-ḥīrūtā*, occurs in *Par.* 446 and Sahdona IV 16 (sing.).

23 ¹ authority over thought (*mšallḥut ḥuṣṣābā*): compare Part I 137 *mšallḥutā d-'al ḥuṣṣābē*.

² disturbing stirring (= *aw'ā šāgōšā*): compare *zaw'ē šgīšē* in Part I 375, John Sol. *Soul* 73, 79.

24 ¹ prayer of faith (*šlōtā d-haymānūtā*): cf Part I 106, Sahdona III 13 (= 88).

25 ¹ certain knowledge (*ḥattūtūt īda'ītā*): cf *Keph.* I.2 (scholion), II.84, IV.2, Part I 160 and 414 (both emph. + *d-*), John Sol. *C.Qoh.* VII 436 (emph. + *d-*), Babai *C.Evag.* 15v, Sahdona III 140, IV 19 (emph. + *d-*).

² divine care (*ḥīlūtā alāḥāyā*): cf XVII.4, XIX.8, Part I 248, 301, 339, 360, 370, 399, 418, 489; Evagrius *Ev.Syr.* 140. At VIII.26, XVII.6, 8 Isaac uses *b. d-alāḥā* (as Part I 65, 103, 262, 304, 337, 422, 489-90, 498), which is also Evagriian (*Keph.* VI.43, 59 [S 2], 75), and is preferred by John the Solitary (*Thaum.* IV.122, VI.6) and Theodore of Mopsuestia (ed. JANSMA, *Le Muséon* 1962, 68, 69). See also on V.2.

³ illumination of his thoughts (*nahḥīrūtā d-ḥuṣṣābhaw(hy)*): cf I f.11v (constr.), XIV.29, XX.3, John Sol. *Soul* 87. See also note to VI.2.

⁴ faith of his heart (*haymānūtā d-lebbēh*): cf XIX.4 and Part I 99, 455, 528.

⁵ The sentence structure of this paragraph is obscure.

26. But once someone has doubted God's care for him, he immediately falls into myriad anxieties.

27. God does not even neglect sinners — not to speak of those whose concern is for what is fitting, who yearn to draw near to knowledge and love of Him. Anyone who has discovered in himself this consideration will abide continually in peace and delight.

IX.

On the confidence in God which is born from knowledge of truth and from true faith; and on the pleasing sort of zeal on the soul's part; and how, when the soul acts out¹ its zeal according to its (true) nature, no impulse concerning the body's nature can remain with a person.

1. Anyone who fears sin will not fear Satan. And all who yearn for (God's) gift will have no dread of temptations. Anyone who believes firmly that the Will¹ of the Creator controls His entire creation will not be perturbed by anything.

2. Knowledge of truth fills the heart with peace, establishing a person in joy and confidence. Many and astonishing are its counsels; they are assured and *give light to the eyes*¹.

3. (This knowledge) counsels a person saying, 'Do not be disturbed, for creation has not been abandoned to chance, nor does creation travel by its own will: it has a Guide who *neither slumbers nor sleeps*¹; nothing at all in it escapes his notice'.

4. Vain thoughts¹ and ignorance make a person like an (irrational) animal, emptying him of faith and upsetting his intellect, filling it with the fantasies of vapid thoughts. For absence of faith empties a person of any knowledge of the truth concerning God, and of the confidence that one should rightly have in Him at all times.

5. During periods of these temptations, when someone is darkened in this way, he ought to fall on his face in prayer, and not rise up until power come to him from heaven and a light which will support his heart in a faith that has no doubts. He by whom the course of life and the soul's breath is restrained does not lack (such) small power for this person to perceive and enjoy! How much to be revered is He who stirs us up, by the variety of His activity, to knowledge of Him, so that we may have wisdom concerning Him in prosperity and adversity.

IX. title ¹ acts out: Q 'stirs up'.

1 ¹ will (*renzā*): see on IX.6.

2 ¹ give light to the eyes: Ps.19:8(9).

3 ¹ neither slumbers nor sleeps: Ps.121:4.

4 ¹ vain thoughts (*juššābē srīqē*): cf XV.4, *Keph.* IV.27, Part I 372, Evagrius *Antirrh.*57v, John Sol. *Tr.*4, *C.Qoh.* II 142, V 158, VIII 42, Macarius 252, 330, Philoxenus *Disc.*131, *Par.* 761, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XV.9.

6. Once the hidden and almighty Will¹ has stirred up in a person the holy impulse to faith — something which shines out from within him all of a sudden at the time when that person is standing in peril — immediately it seems to him, so to speak, as if a thousand armed men surrounded him, guarding him²; for immediately ten thousand testimonies are stirred up within him in the form of wondrous upright thoughts³ which bear witness to God's assistance to humanity, (testifying) how closely attached it is to Him night and day, so that he should not fear man or demons, wild animal or reptile any longer. For when we are attached to God by a proper love, all these minister to our benefit, and not to our hurt in any way; rather, in our presence they behave in complete peacefulness, as ministers of God's will.

7. Again, when a person becomes dark as a result of some neglectfulness and this holy light¹ disappears from him, immediately all these (good things) flee from him and are hidden. Such a person becomes foolish again and lacking in sense over his thoughts; the following saying will apply to him: '*the light of my eyes was not with me*'², and '*they silenced my life in the pit, and cast stones at me*'³.

8. Maybe that holy overshadowing¹ effects this in a providential way, so that a person will not become puffed up in his thinking, and so that he may realize that this peace and serenity are not his own. While (this overshadowing) may on occasion leave him so that he becomes weak and feeble, it will again support and encourage him. It is not as though this (overshadowing) had actually removed itself from him during the periods when this change occurs with him; rather, without abandoning him at all, it actually contracts itself, thus preventing these holy stirrings² of assistance and comfort from being set in motion. The moment this happens the soul is brought low and suffers torment. But then again it

6 ¹ hidden..will (*remzā kasyā*): cf Part I 322. The phrase, already found in Ephrem (*H. de Ecclesia* 48:3) is very common in Narsai.

² guarding him: perhaps compare 2 Kings 6:17.

³ wondrous upright thoughts (*huššābē tmihē wa-triṣē*): for *h. triṣē* cf Part I 197, Sahdona I 11.

7 ¹ holy light (*nubrā qaddišā*): cf Evagrius *Epp.* 172v, 185r, *Antirr.* 57v, 65r, John Sol.*Thaum.* IX 213. In the seventh-century ES writers it is especially common in Dadisho' (*C.Abls.* VI.16, VII.6,14, XIII.6, XIV.14, 26, *Shel.* 615, *C.Par.* 910).

² the light...: Ps 38:10.

³ they silenced...: Lam. 3:53 (Peshitta omits 'and').

8 ¹ overshadowing (*maggnānūtā*): for this term and its background see note to V.22; in Part II it occurs again several times in XVI (which duplicates Part I, Homily 54).

² holy stirrings (*zaw'ē qaddiṣē*): cf I f.16v, V.8 (referring to angels), Nilus 244.

manifests itself to the soul in a hidden way, and the soul is fortified, rejoices and receives courage.

9. By this uneven (course) the blessed soul which is guided under divine providence receives training.

10. These varied states occur with a person in order that he may continually stand in humility.

11. Thus in this way the variation between assistance and feebleness takes place for a person at all times and at all stages in the ascetic life¹: it may be in the battles arranged against chastity, or in the varied states of joy and of gloom; for sometimes there are luminous and joyous stirrings², but then again all at once there is darkness and cloud. Likewise with things revealed in certain mystical and divine insights³ concerning truth: the same variation is experienced by the person who serves (God), with the apperception of the assistance of divine power⁴ which suddenly attaches itself to the intellect — or it may be (the apperception) of the opposite, where the intention is that he should receive awareness of the weakness⁵ of (human) nature, (and realize) what his own nature is, and how weak, feeble, stupid and childish it is — and then, in a single moment, to what heights he is raised in his knowledge, and in the glorious and wonderful things which he perceives in himself!

12. These are the workings of God, and these are the forms of assistance employed by His Will towards humanity. But it can be the case, when we cleave to some sin in our minds or actions, that He will bid one of those inquisitors of His, mentioned above¹, concerning us — those

¹ stages in the ascetic life (*teksīn d-dubbārā*): compare XX.3 *teksā napšānāyā d-dubbārē*, and Part I 86 *teksā d-dubbārēh*; also Ephrem *H de Fide* 28:7, Narsai M I 124, and *Hist. Monach.* 417 *teksā d-dubbārāw(hy)*, Gregory of Cyprus *Add.* 17192 165r *tekses d-dubbāran qaddīšā*.

² luminous and joyous stirrings (*zaw'ē špayyā wa-pšihē*): for *z. špayyā* cf XIV.25, XVIII.3 (sing.), Part I 399, and compare *šupyūtā d-zaw'ē* (for which see on XXXVI.1).

³ mystical and divine insights (*sukkālē meddem 'rāzānāyē w-alāhāyē*): for *s. 'rāzānāyē* cf XVIII.4, XX.19, XXXVI.2 (sing.), *Keph.* IV.44, Ps.Dionysius 81v (sing.); and for *s. alāhāyē* cf Evagrius *Epp.* 174r, Ps.Dionysius 33v, 62r, 105r, Dadisho' *Shel.* 245a.

⁴ divine power (*huylā alāhāyā*): cf XI.11, 13, XXXI.7, XXXV.13, *Keph.* IV.46, Part I 489, 553. The phrase occurs in many of the early writers, e.g. John Sol *Tr.* 22, Macarius 47, 80, and especially Ammonius 571-2 etc.

⁵ awareness of the weakness.. (*īdā'tā da-mhīlūteh..*): cf Part I 108, 321, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* IX.3 (*da-mhīlūtan*).

¹ inquisitors (*qestōnārē*)..mentioned above: the reference is evidently to Homily 58 (Part I 410), which appears to be the only other passage where Isaac mentions *qestōnārē* (κουιστιωνάριοι).

who, as long as we travelled in an orderly way with (our) will completely (directed) towards virtue, ministered to our benefit — and they will flog us harshly, so that by one means or another we will not become lost far away from God.

13. Now, however, with the assistance that comes from grace, let us conclude these matters and approach the riches of (God's) nature and the ocean of his creative power¹ and the waves and resplendence of his Being^{2, 3}.

13 ¹ ocean of his creative power (*yammā d-hārōyūteh*): cf X.19. Isaac is fond of phrases with *yammā*: compare X.23 (y. *d-šaynā da-kyāneh*), X.26 (y. *d-īda'tā*), XI.24 (y. *d-rāzē*, as Part I 5), XIX.11 (y. *d-taybūteh*), XXXI.1 (y. *d-šelyūtā*, as Part I 469), XXXIV.5 (y. *d-šelyā*, as Shubhālmāran 20v), Part I 282 (y. *d-re'yānā*), 315 (y. *d-hay-mānūtā*). *Bārōyūtā* is a term used by Theodore of Mopsuestia (e.g. *WS VI* 169).

² waves and resplendence of his Being (*gallē w-ziwā d-ītūteh*): compare Ephrem *H. de Fide* 81:12 *gallaw(hy) da-Brā mlēn 'udrānē*.

³ At the end of the section Q adds 'To whom be glory and upon us his mercies for eternal ages, amen'.

X.

On the rank of meditation, and the distinctions within it; and what is its principal constituent; and concerning the luminous service of the mind; and how someone may approach the excellent rank of love towards God; and what are the distinctions of the principal constituent.

1. There are four different kinds of reflection on salvation¹, with which the intellect works to irrigate its knowledge, for the increase of life² in the stadium of uprightness³:

- on knowledge of work involving the body;
- on knowledge of work which is concentrated and unified;
- on knowledge of the hidden struggles against these;
- on knowledge of the luminous service⁴ which is in God, which takes place on its own with God.

2. This (last) is also divided up into three distinct (parts): it is not immediately luminous, but at the beginning it is opaque, but then it (becomes) luminous. Just as with certain species of trees, sweetness comes upon them as a result of the sun, likewise, when the Spirit shines out in our hearts, then the movements of our meditation — which is called 'spiritual conduct'¹ — are brought close to luminosity²; then our intellect, not through any act of will on its part, is drawn up, by means of some kind of reflection, in wonder towards God.

3. Furthermore, prayer is not a separate element on its own, standing apart from these things; rather, it is mixed in with them, sometimes giving birth to them, at other times being born from them.

X.1 ¹ salvation (*ḥayyē*): or 'life'.

² increase of life (*tarḥyat ḥayyē*): compare John Sol. *Epp.*9 *tarḥitā d-ḥayyē ḥadtē*. For other phrases with *tarḥitā* evidently also derived from John the Solitary see on XIII title, XXX.3 and XXXIV.3.

³ stadium of uprightness (*estadyōn d-kīnūtā*): compare 'stadium of righteousness (*-zaddīqūtā*)' in the *Life of Rabbula* (ed. OVERBECK, 159). Isaac uses 'stadium' (based on 1 Cor. 9:24) again in X.40 and Part I 506. Babai (*C.Evag.* 49r) and Sahdona (IV 25) both use the phrase 'spiritual stadium', perhaps derived from Narsai M I 366.

⁴ luminous service (*pulḥānā šapyā*): cf Part I f.11r, *Keph.* IV.26.

2 ¹ spiritual conduct (*dubbārā ruḥānā*): see on VI.2

² brought close to luminosity (*metqarḥin l-šapyūtā*): compare Part I 95 *l-šapyūtā mqrḥin*.

4. Everyone, then, will find illumination in that meditation into which he throws himself, and in the reflection in which he is assiduous in his mind in examining: he will gain wisdom by it, and will concentrate the more on it if, in reflecting on the ministry of righteousness¹, he ponders on the actions of righteousness, (and) he will be illumined.

5. That is, how he can please God in those who are close to Him; and what it is that can harm service of Him¹; or by (discovering) what things he should excel in even more in this reflection in order to be illumined.

6. And if, again, he reflects on the ministry of virtue¹, how he can please God in the purity of his body, the toil of prayer², the clarifying of his body through fasting, the recitation of psalmody³, and the struggle against all the things that hinder (these); and (if he reflects) on how many different forms virtue divides itself up into, and through which of its constituent parts he finds illumination and advances — while persevering in that in particular — and what is standing in opposition against each one of these, (then) he will thereby grow deep in wisdom.

7. But if he meditates on the passions, on thoughts and their struggles, how thoughts attach themselves to one another, and which passion is attached to which, and what is the beginning of the first and what is its end; and what potency each of the passions possesses; and by what it is mitigated, and whence it receives potency — (such a person just) concentrates on matters of the passions, exercising his intellect (on them).

4 ¹ reflecting on the ministry of righteousness (*renyā d-pulhān zaddiqūtā*): compare *renyā d-pulhānā* Part I 373; and for *pulhān zaddiqūtā* cf Sahdona I 53, 85, 122, IV.15. More common is the emphatic *pulhānā d-zaddiqūtā*, found in Part I 203, 387, 520, Basil *Quest.* 55v, Evagrius Add. 14578 28v, 77v, Narsai M I 130, Philoxenus *Disc.* 132, Abraham of Nathpar 93v (plur.), Sahdona I 53, 104, III 130, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* II.6,7, IX.1, XIV.5 (and often).

5 ¹ in those...service of Him: or, 'among those (living) close to him, and what it is that can harm his ministry'.

6 ¹ ministry of virtue (*pulhānā da-myatrātā*): cf *Keph.* II.43 (constr.), IV.15. Part I 30, 304, 409, Evagrius Add. 14578 28v, John Sol. *C.Qoh.* VII 367, *Hist. Laus.* 290, Nilus 192, Sergius 60, 61, *Par.* 476, 675, 751, Babai *C.Evag.* 6v, 26v (and often), Shubhālmāran 40r, Sahdona I 97 (constr.), 134, IV 5, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* IX.2, 3, XIV.6, XV.29 (quoting Mark the Monk), *Shel.* 609, 231a. Compare *p. da-myatrātā* in Isaac I f.6r, Evagrius Add. 14578 87r, and in most of the seventh-century ES writers (especially common in Gregory of Cyprus).

² toil of prayer: see on VI.6.

³ recitation of psalmody (*tenyā d-zummārā*): for *tenyā* cf XXI.1, 8, XXII.1, XXIX.10. and compare *tenyā d-mazmūrē* Evagrius *Epp.* 157v, Abba Isaiah V.6 (Sa), Babai of Nisibis 19, 22, 39, 40, Abraham of Nathpar 78rv, 82r, 89r, Sahdona I 102, 110, Gregory of Cyprus Add. 17192 183r, Shem'on d-Taybutēh 291b.

8. But if he meditates on God, and (allows his mind) to wander on the things that belong to Him, searching God out single-mindedly, (then) he will be illumined, and he will here encompass these former matters as well.

9. Those (former) matters are fine, but they involve contests, and reflection and knowledge of soul¹ and body should not stay at all with them; nor does reflection that only (consists) in opposing the passions — (even when it) extends to beauty of service and a knowledge of the contests² and struggles — constitute the goal of the hope that has been preached to us, (nor is it) what the Apostle said about ‘attaining, with all the saints, to what is the height and depth, length and breadth’³, or ‘Let (a person) excel in every kind of wisdom, and in every kind of spiritual insight’⁴. How can he grow wise and become aware of these things if he remains night and day just with release (from) and arguments with passionate thoughts⁵ and continual concern for them⁶?

10. Nevertheless many people exercise themselves and concentrate on these — and their service is fine and arduous, but they are not in the slightest concerned with this other aspect.

11. Thus, in the case of these other matters, whether it concerns work involving the body, or is concentrated on the passions and virtue, as long as someone is constantly meditating on them, letting his mind wander on them night and day, this person will win victories, and then be defeated; he will fall, and then rise up, (his) thought will be purified, and (then) become defiled; now he will be immersed in falling, now he will be strengthened by repentance. To put it shortly, he is engaged in (constant) contest.

12. But once the intellect is engaged in meditating on God, it is raised above contest. It is not that it actually vanquishes the thoughts, stirrings and passions, but it reigns over them, and they vanish away. They are

¹ knowledge of soul (*ida’rā d-napšā*): cf XXXII.4, Part I 169, 366, 374, Ephrem *H. de Fide* 9:7, Evagrius *Epp.* 172r, John Sol. *Epp.* 93, *Tr.* 10, Abba Isaiah XVI.15, Dadisho’ *C.Abls.* XV.12, Shem’on d-Taybuteh 297a, 305a.

² knowledge of contests (*ida’rā d-agōnē*): cf Philoxenus *Disc.* 469, Dadisho’ *C.Par.* 941, Sogdian homily on Three Periods (tr. N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *OCP* 47 (1981), 444).

³ Eph. 3:18.

⁴ Eph. 1:8 (Isaac has added ‘spiritual’ (*d-ruḥī*), from Col.1:9; this is a reading which has found its way into some editions of the Peshitta NT, e.g. Lee).

⁵ passionate thoughts (*ḥuṣṣābay ḥaṣṣē*): lit. ‘thoughts of the passions’; cf XXX.7; Evagrius *Epp.* 163r, 170r, 175v, 177r, 185r, Nilus 22, Dadisho’ *C.Abls.* IV.4, VII.2 (sing.), XIII.19, XIV.16, 17, XV.40, *C.Par.* 912, 941.

⁶ continual concern for them (*ammīnūt mernīthōn*): cf Part I 370.

not actually defeated, for no victory is involved there: (rather), the passions, memories and all that they induce, are no (longer there), for that person has actually been raised from the world, leaving behind below, where they belong, all reflection (upon it), (its) affairs in all their various kinds, and knowledge of them, while the intellect is taken from their midst. But if virtue should (be thought to) consist in (control of) the passions and in virtuous (deeds) and so forth, then by all means the mind will wander on earth!

13. But once someone meditates on God and on the riches of the waves¹ of everything that belongs to Him and applies to Him, then he has departed from the world, and the door is held closed on all memories (of it), the passions remaining idle in their own places, while that person has actually been raised up from where they are. For there is no virtue without having yoked to it continual struggle.

14. There is one kind of knowledge, with its own strength, when this knowledge is occupied with virtue; but there is another kind of knowledge when this consists in the mind's reflection¹ on God, just as the blessed Mark the Solitary said²:

15. 'There is one kind of knowledge which is concerned with objects¹, and another which is a knowledge of truth. Just as the sun is superior to the moon, so the second kind (of knowledge) is superior to and more advantageous than the first'. He calls 'knowledge concerned with objects' knowledge which is born from service and contests with the passions². As for these things corresponding to the commandments that are laid down, a person will become wise as far as the law is concerned in meditating and using them³.

16. Knowledge of truth, on the other hand, is knowledge which shines out into (knowledge) resulting from the raising up of the intellect

13 ¹ riches of the waves (*b-utrā d-gallē*): perhaps a reminiscence of John Sol. *Soul* 69; compare XXXIV.5 *'utray yammā*, and Part I 365 *yammā 'attir b-gallaw(hy)*.

14 ¹ mind's reflection (*renyā d-mad'ā*): cf Part I 373, 375, 439.

² Mark the Solitary: the following quotation is from the treatise *On those who think they are made righteous by works* (Add. 12175 152v.2. FT p.55 [no.135]). Isaac probably alludes to the same passage in Part I 373.

15 ¹ knowledge concerned with objects (*īda'tā d-su'rānē*): Mark derives the phrase from Evagrius (*Keph.* II.32 [S 1], V 76 [S 2]). In Isaac it occurs again at XXXV.5 (constr.) and Part I 373; cf also John Sol. *C.Qoh.* IX 112.

² contests with the passions (*agōnay ḥaššē*): compare *agōn ḥaššē* in Narsai M I 19, 27, 126, II 137, 315, 327; *agōnā d-luqhal ḥaššē* Part I 368, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* III.13, 16, IV.4, XV.18, *C.Par.* 910, and *agōnā d-'am ḥaššē* XL.17, Sahdona II.86, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* I.14, IV.3, XI.16, XIV.17, 29, XV.34 (and elsewhere).

³ syntax obscure.

above everything, and (from) continual meditation on God¹, and by hope alone (the intellect) is raised through reflection to God. It is not the case that (this knowledge) teaches or shows us knowledge of the passions² and of service; rather, it plunges³ us out of contests and reflection on them, and mingles us with our stirrings with God.

17. How then shall it be raised up to this kind of reflection, and what is the beginning of (this) meditating on God? How can I find a place to ascend towards Him? Whence can I make a beginning on the things that belong to Him? Who will show the mind the place (whence) to ascend and to be plunged in God? As a result of the practical discovery of the things that belong to Him a person is raised up in his thoughts to the contemplation of Him; this constitutes the true vision² of Him, not of His nature, but of the dark cloud of His glory³. And from these things (once) explained, meditating upon Him first of all stirs in a person, and then gradually the meditating encompasses his intellect little by little, and it brings (the intellect) in and makes it stand in the dark cloud of His glory, and in that Fountain of Life⁴ whence life bursts forth at all times without break for (the benefit) of all intellects, (both) those above and those below — of those whose labour is set in the heights above the

16 ¹ continual meditation on God (*hergā ammīnā db-alāhā*): cf XXIX.9, *Keph.* I.77. For *hergā db-alāhā* cf X.17, 38, 39, *Keph.* II.84, and *Sahdona* IV 24, and compare *hergā d-alāhā* Basil *Ep. Greg.* Add. 17192 189r, *Par.* 480. For *hergā ammīnā* cf I f.12v, 19r, XVIII.3, XX.27, *Keph.* IV.47, Part I 125, 379; Nilus 84, 90, Sergius 12, 14, 21, Cyrus Ed. 157, Babai *C.Evag.* 221r, *Sahdona* II 36, 67, III 17, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIII.4, Shem'on d-Taybuteh 303b.

² knowledge of the passions: cf John Sol. *Soul* 74, Macarius 63, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIV.26, *Shel.* 218a, 230b.

³ plunges: or 'baptizes'; see on VII.2.

17 ¹ How can I find...: the presence of *lam* indicates that this is a quotation (though perhaps only a rhetorical one).

² true vision: cf XIV.29, Part I 183; Evagrius Add.14578 89v, John Sol. *Soul* 61, Add.17170 3v, Gregory of Cyprus 102.

³ dark cloud of his glory (*'arpellā d-šubḥeh*): cf X.24, based on Ex. 20:21 (Peshitta *'arpellā*). Probably derived from Ps.Dionysius (see *Parole de l'Orient* I (1970), 87), rather than Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*, which does not seem to have been translated into Syriac (see M. PARMENTIER 'Syriac translations of Gregory of Nyssa' OLP 20 (1989), 143-93, esp. 173 [excerpt only]). Compare *'arpellā d-tešbuḥteh* below in this section, and VII.1 'as though in some divine cloud'. Elsewhere Isaac speaks of 'in the cloud (*'arp.*) of the Holy of Holies' (I f.16v), and 'cloud (*'arp.*) of the Shekhina' (Part I 517, also *Sahdona* I 114).

⁴ Fountain of Life: cf X.26, 41 (Christ), XIV.14, XXXVI.2, *Keph.* I.91, II.55. The phrase (from Ps.36:9) is Evagrian (*Keph.* V.67 [S 1]), as indeed is some of the ensuing language. The construct *mabbo' ḥayyē* occurs several times in Ephrem, e.g. *H. de Fide* 12:10, 80:6, *C.Nisibena* 58:11.

body, and of those whose (labour) is on earth and dies; of those whose movements are *burning fire*⁵, and of those whose movements are limited by (their) gross (nature).

18. What that invisible Being is like, who is without any beginning in His nature, unique in Himself, who is by nature beyond the knowledge, intellect and feel of created beings, who is beyond time and space, being the Creator of these, who at the beginning of time was learnt about through hints and was made known as it were through (His) mark by means of the establishing of the fulness of creation, who made (His) voice heard in connection with his handiwork and so the Being of His Lordship was made known, the fountainhead of innumerable natures — this (Being) is hidden, for as He dwelt in His Being for aeons without number or limit or beginning, it pleased His graciousness and He made a beginning of time, bringing the worlds and created beings into existence.

19. Let us consider then, how rich in its wealth is the ocean¹ of His creative act, and how many created things belong to God, and how in His compassion He carries everything, acting providentially as He guides (creation); and how with a love that cannot be measured He arrived at the establishment of the world² and the beginning of creation; and how compassionate God is, and how patient; and how He loves creation, and how He carries it, gently enduring its importunity, the various sins and wickednesses, the terrible blasphemies of demons and evil men. Then, once someone has stood amazed, and filled his intellect with the majesty of God, (amazed) at all these things He has done and is doing, then he wonders in astonishment at His mercifulness, how, after all these things, (God) has prepared for them another world³ that has no end, whose glory is not even revealed to the angels, even though they (are involved) in His activities insofar as is possible in the life of the spirit, in accordance with the gift with which their nature has been endowed. (That person wonders) too at how excelling is that glory, and how

⁵ burning fire: Ps. 104:4.

19 ¹ ocean.: see on IX.13

² establishment of the world (*tuqqāneh d-ʿālmā*): cf XL.3, 14, *Keph.* IV.89; the phrase goes back to John Sol. (e.g. *Soul* 35, 37) and Narsai (e.g. M II 102).

³ another world: cf X.28, 30, *Keph.* II.65, III.77, Part I 257. The term 'the other world' is Evagrian (*Keph.* V.12 [S 2]), but Isaac no doubt derives it from John the Solitary, where it occurs frequently (*Soul* 7, 18, 23, 24, 55, 56, 69, *Epp.* 27, *Hes.* 57); it is also used earlier by Ephrem *C.Nisihena* 46:17 and by Basil *Ep.Greg.* Add.12175 253r (a passage reflected by John Sol. *Hes.* 57), Theodore of Mopsuestia *C.John* 319, and Jacob of Serugh IV 824, 826. In seventh-century ES writers, Babai *C.Evag.* 126.

exalted is the manner of existence at that time; and how insignificant is the present life⁴ compared to what is reserved for creation in the New Life⁵; and how, in order that (the soul's life) will not be deprived of that blessed state because of misusing the freewill it has received, He has devised in His mercifulness a second gift, which is repentance, so that by it (the soul's life) might acquire renewal every day and thereby every time be put aright⁶. Moreover, He appointed this without it involving times, limits and fatigue which were beyond (human) strength; rather, it involves the mind, the will, and the conscience, as well as a heart which suffers and feels compunction, so that it might be easy for everyone to acquire benefit from it, both quickly and at any time.

20. It is not a case of their inheriting the glory to come by compulsion or against a person's will, without any (repentance) being involved; rather, it so pleased His wisdom that they should choose the good out of the volition of their own free will¹, and thus have a way of coming to Him.

21. This is so that they might consider they were receiving it as though out of right — whereas it is entirely a matter of grace — and they would see it as something within the reach of their abilities. For this difficulty too (in attaining all this), which He has interposed — has in itself an aspect of the mystery of His wisdom — in order that they should be under its sway as far as possible¹. And if I speak from the human standpoint, at least it is possible to speak in this way of how things are; not that He was unaware of the end of the course of each one of us. But the

⁴ present life (*ḥayyē napšānāyē*): *napšānāyā*, lit. 'appertaining to the soul' corresponds to Greek ψυχικός in the negative sense. Cf Part I 397 (to which the present passage is very close in places).

⁵ New Life: cf XIII.2, XXXVIII title, I f.15v, 18r, *Keph.* I.87, III.62, and often in Part I (including 397). The term, which derives from Rom.6:4 (Peshitta; Greek 'newness of life') is characteristic of both Theodore of Mopsuestia (e.g. *WS* V 120, 174-5, 183-4, 187) and John the Solitary (e.g. *Soul* 8, 10, 56, 62, 91, *Epp.* 3, 6-10, 13, 17-19 etc.); it also occurs a number of times in the *Anaphora of Addai and Mari*, as well as in *A.Thomas* 303, 305, 307, Ephrem, *C.Nisibena* 50:10, 71:7, *H. de Ecclesia* 11:1. *C.Diat.* XXI.25; it is frequently encountered in ES liturgical texts in the Ḥudra as well as in the other seventh-century ES writers.

⁶ put aright: lit. 'justified'.

20 ¹ volition of their own free will (*b-ṣebyānā d-ḥirūthōn*): cf Ephrem *H. de Ecclesia* 13:5 (*ṣebyān ḥirūtān*), Narsai *M* I 150, 162 (constr.), Ps.Dionysius 96r, Philoxenus *Disc.* 333, 340, 499, Babai *C.Evag.* 61v; compare *ḥirūtā d-ṣebyānā* in *Keph.* IV.15 and Part I 89, deriving from Evagrius (*Keph.* VI.43) or Mark the Monk (Add 17192 84r, 85r etc.), and found in several seventh-century ES writers, e.g. Babai *C.Evag.* 190v, Gregory of Cyprus 84, 90.

21 ¹ The passage is obscure and the translation uncertain.

reason why for the existence of the matter under discussion, and why the provision of repentance is necessary if we are to be raised up to His way of thinking and to that of His foreknowledge², and what will be born out of either of these — all this is hidden from the knowledge of all.

22. Nor can I possibly say that He took some experience of them, and that He will effect the outcome of (different) recompenses on the basis of this (experience): it is not His practice to take from creation the starting point for His thoughts — which have no starting point, for all His thoughts are essential entities, just as He is. And as for the knowledge of the outcome of His actions, I state (that) the (divine) Nature is too exalted for one to speak of ‘thought’ or ‘intention’ in connection with it, or for it to be the subject of (human) thought, intellect or contemplation. And in the matter of the things which are to come afterwards, He knows how to determine (His) will in every matter in ways that are appropriate for created beings; and He has no need for anything outside Himself in knowledge — not that ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ can be predicated with respect to Him.

23. Nor do any stirrings, or the slightest movements of any sort, affect the Nature of Him who out of His natural ineffable goodness arrived at the establishment of the world. It was not for some reason that originated with us that He has devised such benefit for us; nor is the smoothness of the ocean of the peace of His Nature¹ perturbed by any contrariness on our part. (For) that blessed Nature is exalted, lofty and glorious, perfect and complete in His knowledge, and complete in His love. There is no question of time ‘when’, and He is eternal in all that belongs and pertains to Him.

24. He it is who dwells in the light of His Nature¹, who wished creation to approach the dark cloud of His eternal glory; who has given the crown of His (own) everlastingness to the creation which He has made; who disregarded the honour of His own authority and took care of

² foreknowledge (*mqaddmūt īda’tā*): cf XI.29. Thus the Peshitta’s rendering of πρόγνωσις at Acts 2:23; in XXXIX.1 Isaac employs *qdīmūt īda’tā*, which is the more common term in some of the Syriac translations of Theodore of Mopsuestia (e.g. *C. John*).

23 ¹ smoothness of the ocean of the peace of His Nature (*šapyūt yammā d-šaynā da-kyāneh*): possibly Isaac has in mind Ephrem *H. contra Haereses* 29:4 *kyānā d-šapyūteh* (God’s), or *H. de Virginitate* 15:3, where Christ is *yammā šapyā*; for ocean, see above, on IX.13.

24 ¹ light of His nature (*b-nuhrā da-kyāneh*): cf Sahdona III 2. Elsewhere Isaac speaks of the soul’s natural light: Part I 372 (same phrase as here), and 156 (*nuhrā kyānāyā*, as Dadisho’ *C. Abts.* VII.14, XIII.12). See also on VI.1.

everything that concerns us, coming down to our own level; who has caused the fulness of what He has established to participate in the everlastingness of His Kingdom, essential Lord², exalted beyond (any) secondary³ notion; whose will is the fountainhead of (all other) natures, with the worlds, creating beings and natures flowing from Him as though from a source, without number or limit; and as for the wondrous natures of angels, endowed with reason and intelligence, He effected their creation out of nothing all of a sudden: worlds on high without number, limitless powers, legions of seraphs of fire, fearful and swift, wondrous and mighty, which have the power to carry out the will of the almighty design, the uncompounded⁴ spirits which are luminous and incorporeal, which speak without (needing) a mouth, which see without (needing) any eyes, which hear without (needing) any ears, which fly, without (needing) any wings, which perform without needing hands all the activities of the (various) limbs — without having any limbs: they do not tire or grow feeble, they are swift in movements, never delaying in any action, fearful to look upon, whose ministry is wondrous, who are rich in revelations, exalted in contemplation, who peer into the place of the Shekhina⁵ of Invisibleness, glorious and holy essences who are arranged in ninefold order⁶ by the Wisdom which has created all; the sound of whose cries of 'Holy' the hearing of those *clothed in flesh*⁷ cannot sustain: '*The threshold of the Sanctuary quaked at the sound of their cries of holy*', says the Prophet⁸. They are fiery in (their) movements, acute in intellect, wondrous in knowledge, resembling God insofar as that is possible.

25. These are small tit-bits of the beginning of 'practical'¹ meditation on the divine Nature, using the mental faculties. Revered and glorious (is He) in His nature, good in all that belongs to Him, compassionate, merciful and kind, mighty and strong (at the same time), wise, having knowledge that suffices for everything, encompassing everything within

² essential Lord (*ityā māryā*): lit. Being, Lord.

³ secondary: lit. 'introduced'.

⁴ uncompounded: lit. 'simple'.

⁵ Shekhina: the term is already found in several early Syriac writers, and is not uncommon in liturgical texts; in Part I 517 Isaac speaks of 'the cloud of His Shekhina'. See further the note to XI.5.

⁶ ninefold order: based on Ps. Dionysius, *De coelesti hierarchia* VI.

⁷ clothed in flesh: Heb. 13:3 (Peshitta).

⁸ the threshold..: Is. 6:4 (adapted).

25 ¹ practical (*su'rānāyā*): i.e. the Evagrian *praktikē*.

the bounds of His knowledge², who holds the limit of the entire creation, who is close at hand to everyone, yet ineffably removed from everyone, who is in every place and in no place, who encompasses all, and everywhere is within His compass; who controls with His will creation which is so vast and packed with such a multitude of different things. None of the (created) natures, or anything in (creation) can stir or move about, or vibrate or murmur, without the indication of His will.

26. Why have we abandoned this Fountainhead of life and Ocean of knowledge¹, wandering off on earth (engaged) in our own affairs and the things that involve us, (with the result) that we are thrown night and day into struggles, contests and fights with the thoughts, the passions², memories and their provocations, while we have the means to cause (all) these things to dry up without a struggle simply by turning to the Lord?

27. We cannot cope with the strength of the(se) struggles, for, however much we may be wise about the devices that the thoughts have, we can still be defeated and vanquished¹ (by them). We will never get away from their struggles, seeing that the end of one (simply) invites the intellect to begin on another struggle; and even if we excel in this task, and at the same time if we are very diligent and alert, nonetheless we will never be cleansed of the rust of the passions² and the impurity of the thoughts³, even though we may (every now and then) have victories (over them).

28. Let us disregard for a little reflection and distraction that belongs below, my brethren, and let us acknowledge that we are weak in the face of thoughts and demons; and let us take refuge in the Lord, and ascend a little to the place where thoughts dry up and stirrings vanish, (where) memories fade away and the passions die, (where human) nature becomes serene and is transformed as it stands in the other world.

² the bounds of His knowledge (*thōmā d-īda'teh*): compare Part I 361, 365 (both plur.), Gregory of Cyprus 128 and Sahdona IV 84, in all of which, however, the bounds are of human knowledge.

26 ¹ Ocean of knowledge (*yammā d-īda'tā*): cf Ephrem *H. de Ecclesia* 27:5 (Jesus).

² contests..with the thoughts, the passions: for 'contests (*agōnē*) with the thoughts' cf *Keph.* IV.15, 49, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIV.17; for 'with the passions' see on X.15.

27 ¹ vanquished: so B^c; 'corrupted' B*; 'confined' H.

² rust of the passions (*šūhtā d-ḥuṣṣē*): cf Narsai M I 341, which Isaac may well have in mind here.

³ impurity of the thoughts (*ṣā'tā d-ḥuṣṣābē*): compare *ṣe'ūtā d-ḥuṣṣābē* in Evagrius Add. 14578 101r, Sahdona II 73, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* V.23, VII.13.

29. I am amazed if there is anyone in whom these stirrings concerning that (divine) Nature do not bubble up¹ who (nonetheless) claims to know what the love of God is. If you are desirous of tasting the love of God², my brother, ponder and meditate with understanding on the things that belong to Him, and which have to do with Him and His holy Nature: meditate and ponder mentally, cause your intellect to wander (on this) all your time, and from this you will become aware how all the parts of your soul³ become enflamed with love, as a burning flame alights on your heart, and desire for God excels in you; and out of the love of God, you will arrive at perfect love of (your fellow) human beings⁴.

30. By means of converse such as this, my brother, a person is raised up, through himself, from earthly things, and he is captivated¹ (and led) towards the love of God; he is like one who forgets his own nature, for nothing from the world draws him on, or comes to his mind. Rather, he becomes aware of the other world: he believes firmly, and he knows that there is something else outside of flesh and blood.

31. Everyone cultivates excellence; but excelling reflection¹, combined with glorious converse² with God is something which only a few are found to have acquired, having done so through the luminosity of their thoughts³, and thanks to the grace of Christ. When this kind of reflection excels in someone, and he wanders captivated in his mind by the glorious things which are above the world and by God, once the mind is released from there and dwells (again) with the world, mindfulness of which (involves) human affairs, that person sees himself as though a foreigner to the world, to the sight of it, to its talk, and to all the things that customarily go on in it.

29 ¹ stirrings ...bubble up (*zaw'ē...nābhīn*): cf XX.2, 10,15,19. The verb *nbi* with *zaw'ē* is common in John the Solitary (e.g. *Soul* 85, *Thaum.*VII 33, XI 64-5).

² tasting the love of God: see note to XVIII.7; compare X.36.

³ the parts of your soul: for the soul's constituent parts, see note to XVII.1.

⁴ love of ..human beings: cf X.33, 35, 36, Part I 511 (compare 570-1).

30 ¹ captivated: compare X.41, XXII.6, XXXV.5, XXXVIII.2, Part I 27, 520; the phraseology derives from John the Solitary, e.g. *Soul* 42, Add.14606 f.68r (*meštē b-hubbā*).

31 ¹ excelling reflection (*renyā myattrā*): cf XIV.39 and Part I 513 (both plur.).

² glorious converse (*'enyānē šbiḥē*): cf Macarius 65 (sing.; with Trinity).

³ luminosity of their thoughts (*šapyūtā d-ḥuššābayhōn*): cf XXI.8, XXXI.4 (constr.), *Keph.* III.29 (constr.), *Philoxenus Disc.* 611, Abraham of Nathpar 91r, *Sahdona* I 12 (constr.), III 130. *Ḥuššābā šapyā* already occurs in Ephrem, *Letter to Hypatius* (ed. OVERBECK, 22). Compare *šapyūtā d-maḥšābtā* in Part I 547.

32. Many people consider such things as these to be just idle reflection. They are like someone gripped by fever's flame, and when people remind such a person of sweet food and choice dishes, his sensibility finds them revolting and upsetting¹. Here it is not the food itself which will cause this, but his sensibility which is sick and filled with illness and the disturbance caused by the bile; all he desires is sour and salty things.

33. A person who has stillness and the converse of knowledge¹ will easily and quickly arrive at the love of God, and with the love of God he will draw close to perfect love of fellow human beings.

34. No one has ever been able to draw close to this luminous love¹ of humanity without having first been held worthy of the wonderful and inebriating love of God.

35. To come from the toil and struggle with the thoughts to the luminous love of humanity, and from this, to be raised up to the love of God — for someone to complete such a course in this life, even up to the time he departs from the world, is impossible, however much he struggles. Because of the commandments and (out of) discernment it is possible for someone to compel his thoughts and to purify his sensibility with respect to them¹, (and) he can even perform good towards them. But for him to attain to a luminous love of humanity by means of struggle, I am not persuaded to admit (as possible): there is no one who has so attained, and none who will attain it by this path in this life. Without wine no one will get drunk, nor will his heart leap² with joy; and without inebriation in God³, no one will obtain by the natural course of events a virtue that does not belong to him, nor will it remain in him serenely and without compulsion.

Now there is one who is serene in his nature and compassionate, and he loves everyone with ease, having compassion on every (created)

32 ¹ revolting and upsetting: compare Ephrem *H. de Ecclesia* 2:22.

33 ¹ converse of knowledge (*'enyānā d-īda'tā*): cf Part I 216, 217.

34 ¹ luminous love (*ḥubbā šapyā*): cf X.35, 36; John Sol. Add.17170 32v, Macarius 23, 184, Narsai M I 291, *Par.* 786, Jacob of Serugh III 489, Shubḥalmaran 54v.

35 ¹ them: i.e. others (?).

² leap: see on XXXIV.2.

³ inebriation in God (*rawwīyūtā db-alāhā*): for similar references to divine 'inebriation' see V.21, and Part I 2, 59, 77, 174, 256, 454; and for the verb in similar contexts, X.41, XIV.30, XVIII.2, XXX.8, *Keph.*IV.25, Part I 220, 333, 542, 550, 555. Ephrem already uses the phrase *rwē b-ḥubbā* (sc. of God) in *H. de Fide* 83:1, *C.Nisibena* 70:13, and similarly John Sol *Mart.* 101. In seventh-century ES writers e.g. Sahdona I 70, Dadisho' *C.Par.* 894, Shem'on d-Ṭaybutēh 309a, 310b.

nature⁴ — not just human beings, but domestic animals, birds and wild animals and so on as well: there do exist such souls, but there are times when they are perturbed too, if certain causes of anguish pass by them, originating from someone (else).

36. In the case of the person who has been held worthy to taste of divine love¹, that person customarily forgets everything (else) by (reason of) its sweetness, (for) it is something at whose taste all visible things seem despicable: such a person's soul gladly draws near to a luminous love of humanity, without distinguishing (between good and bad); he is never overcome by the weaknesses to be found in people, nor is he perturbed. He is just as the blessed Apostles were as well: people who in the midst of all the bad things they endured from others, were (nonetheless) utterly incapable of hating them or of being fed up with showing love for them. This was manifested in actual deed, for after all the other things they even accepted death in order that these people might be retrieved. These were men who only a little previously had begged Christ² that fire might descend from heaven upon the Samaritans just because they had not received them into their village! But once they had received the gift and tasted the love of God, they were made perfect even in love for wicked men: enduring all kinds of evils in order to retrieve them, they could not possibly hate them.

So you see that perfect love of fellow human beings cannot be found just as a result of (keeping) the commandments.

37. I am not saying that we should abandon things which take place amidst struggle and toil, or not approach them. Rather, while toiling with them for a period and in a particular place, we should leave the open space of struggles¹ and give ourselves over to stillness. And once we have learnt, even there, some partial knowledge of experiences² with the thoughts, we should leave again and (return) to the spiritual region³ of struggles. Being thus engaged, we should continually hold in our intel-

⁴ having compassion on every (created) nature: compare the famous passage in Part I 508.

36 ¹ divine love (*ḥubbā alāhāyā*): cf XIV.7, XX.5, Part I 55, 215, 217, 475, 567. The phrase is especially characteristic of John the Solitary (e.g. *Soul* 19, 89, *Epp.* 4, 81). Compare *ḥubbā d-alāhā* at X.29, 30, XVIII.2,5,7,14,16, XXIX.5, Part I 36, 253, 261, 279; likewise often in John the Solitary (e.g. *Soul* 19, *Tr.* 30, *Epp.* 116, *Hes.* 20 etc.).

² begged Christ: see Luke 9:54.

37 ¹ open space of struggles (*atrā ḡalyā d-taktōšē*): for *atrā d-taktōšē* cf *Keph.* IV.57, Part I 506 (sing.), and compare above V.12 *atrā d-qundinos*.

² knowledge of experiences (*ida'ā d-nesyānē*): cf Part I 45 (sing.).

³ spiritual region: *atrā metyad'ānā*, i.e. corresponding to Greek νοητός. Isaac uses the plural in Part I 369, 521.

lect the recollection of wonderful things, with the continual assistance of prayer¹. Thus we will progress day by day, our soul exulting as we are (gradually) brought to completion in God.

38. Luminous meditation on God¹ is the goal of prayer; or rather, it is the fountainhead of prayers², in that prayer itself ends up in reflection on God³.

39. There are times when a person is transported from prayer to a wondrous meditation on God. And there are times when prayer is born out of meditating on God.

40. All these are different stages in the course run, in divine fashion, by the intellect *in the stadium* of this world, each person having his gaze fixed on his crown¹. The crown of the solitary is spiritual enjoyment² of Christ our Lord. Whoever has found this, has received a pledge from this world of those things which are to come³.

41. O Christ, Fountainhead of life, make me worthy to taste of You, so that my eyes may grow light¹; O Compassion and Mercy who have been sent to the world, O Hope of creation, cause me to taste of the delight of Your hope, so that I may be blind as far as the world is concerned but be illumined in spirit; and through Your love may my life become inebriated, so as to forget the world and its affairs.

May we be captivated (and led) to You through our minds, as we hold converse with Your great splendour. Do not let the world captivate us through harmful converse with it. Rather, make us worthy to serve before You with attentiveness², in accordance with Your will; and may we praise You in an untroubled fashion, in great peace, at all times.

¹ assistance of prayer (*m'addrānūtā da-šlōtā*): compare *ta'dirā da-šlōtā* Sahdona II 85, *suyyā'ā da-šlōtā* Sahdona I 123, and *'udrān šlōtā* Dadisho' *C.Abls.* VII.4.

38 ¹ Luminous meditation on God (*hergā šapyā db-alāhā*): see note to X.16.

² fountainhead of prayers (*mabbō'ā da-šlawwātā*): compare *mabbō'ā da-šlōtā* XXIX.5, XXX.8 and Part I 447.

³ reflection on God (*renyā db-alāhā*): cf XXIX 12, *Keph.* II.11 (scholion), I f.10b, 12b. The phrase, which already occurs in Philoxenus *Disc.* 101, is common in Dadisho' *C.Abls.* I.15, II.10., etc., but occurs only once in Sahdona III 14. Compare *renyā d-'al alāhā* at VIII.1 and XV.18; and *renyā d-alāhā* in Part I 353, which is found in Basil *Ep.Greg.* Add.17192 186v, Evagrius (*Ev.Syr.* 116, 125, *Epp.* 157v, 171r) and John the Solitary (*Epp.* 67, *Quest.* 66v, 73v, 81v).

40 ¹ stadium...crown: based on I Cor. 9:24-5.

² spiritual enjoyment (*bussāmā metyad'ānā*): cf *Keph* II.14.

³ pledge...of those things which are to come (*rahbōnā d-hennēn 'ūdātā*): compare Narsai M I 338 *rahbōnā da-'ūdātā*.

41 ¹ grow light: a reminiscence of I Sam. 14:27. Nilus 188 'the honeycomb of knowledge' is probably also based on this passage.

² attentiveness (*zhyrwt*): HP 'resplendence' (*zhyrwt*).

Grant us, Lord, a mouth filled with the praise of You, and a mind too which bears suffering. Make our understanding resplendent with a purity that cleanses the emotions, so that we may be *an acceptable sacrifice*³ for You, and one without blemish, at (all) the times of our prayers.

Cause Your hidden power⁴ to dwell in us, so that the senses of our souls⁵ may be strengthened, in order that our soul may mystically strike up a song filled with wonder. And thus may we sing praise at every moment with the halleluiahs of the Watchers on high in honour of the might of Your Being. And, as though in heaven, may we bear on our hidden limbs⁶ the sanctification of Your divinity. May we give thanks with all Your saints and worship Your great name without ever being sated, O Father, Son and Holy Spirit, glorious in nature, for ages of ages, Amen.

³ acceptable sacrifice: Phil. 4:18.

⁴ hidden power: cf XL title. The term, already found in the *A. Thomas* 301 (Greek ἄορατος δύναμις), is characteristic of Ephrem (e.g. *H. de Azym.* 20:7, *H. de Nativ.* 4:112 etc), and occurs frequently in subsequent writers, especially the poets Narsai (e.g. M I 66, 351; McL II 449) and Jacob of Serugh (e.g I 243, III 28 etc).

⁵ senses of our soul (*regšay napšan*): cf *Keph.* II.59, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XI.2,3; compare Macarius 24 *regšeyh d-napšā*, and similarly Narsai M I 365.

⁶ our hidden limbs (*haddānayn ksayyā*): see note to V.20.

XI.

On the contemplation of the mystery¹ of the Cross; and on what power it conveys in an invisible way in its visible form, and on the vast mysteries of God's governance which were performed in the ancients, and the summing up of this in Christ our Lord; (and how) the all-powerful Cross conveys the sum of this.

1. In what sense, and whose type is it that the image of the Cross depicts for us — this (image) which is held in great honour by us, and which is gladly venerated by us with love and insatiable desire; whose story is known to and repeated by, as it were, the whole world?

2. How the divine power mysteriously resides in it — just as God is wont to do in every generation as an indication of the wonderful (character) of His power¹, in that He places His honoured name in an awesome way upon corporeal objects in every generation, manifesting in them wondrous and magnificent things to the world, granting by their means great benefits to humanity — (all this) we will describe, as far as possible, in simple words, concerning the glorious eternal power which is in the Cross, so that it may be realized that it is God who carries out and performs everything, in everything, amongst those of old, and amongst those of latter times, and for ever.

3. We do not speak of a power in the Cross that is any different from that (power) through which the worlds came into being, (a power) which is eternal and without beginning, and which guides creation all the time without any break, in a divine way and beyond the understanding of all, in accordance with the will of His divinity.

XI ¹ The text of this chapter was published from the now lost Urmia manuscript by BEDJAN, at the end of his edition of Part I (pp. 589-600); a Latin translation was subsequently provided by J. VAN DER PLOEG, 'Un traité nestorien du culte de la Croix', *Le Muséon* 56 (1943), 115-27, reprinted in H.G. THÜMMEL, *Die Frühgeschichte der ostkirchlichen Bildenlehre* (TU 139, 1992), 333-7.

title ¹ contemplation of the mystery (*te'ōryā d-rāzeh*): the phrase is from Ps. Dionysius (e.g. 80v, 98v (plur.); also Hierotheos 72), and not from Evagrius; it is absent from Isaac's contemporaries. Compare XXXI.1, XL title, *te'ōryā d-rāzē alāhāyē*, and XLI.2 *te'ōryā d-rāzaw(hy) d-pārōqan*.

2 ¹ wonderful (character of) his power: compare Part I 461 *thirūt hayleh*.

4. What then? The limitless power of God dwells in the Cross, just as it resided in an incomprehensible way in the Ark¹ which was venerated amidst great honour and awe by the (Jewish) People, performing by it miracles and awesome signs in the midst of those who were not ashamed to call it 'God'², that is, they would gaze upon it in awe as though upon God, because of the glory³ of God's honoured name which was upon it. This (Ark) was not only honoured with this name by the (Jewish) People, but by foreign peoples, their enemies: 'Woe to us, for the God of the People has *come to the camp* today'⁴.

That power which existed in the Ark (of old) is believed by us to exist in this revered form of the Cross, which is held in honour by us in great awareness concerning God.

5. What then was in the Ark to make it so awesome and filled with all manner of power and signs, apart from the Jar of Manna and the Tablets of the Law which Moses wrote, and Aaron's staff which sprouted¹? Did not Moses and the People prostrate before the Ark in great awe and trembling? Did not Joshua son of Nun² lie stretched out on his face before it from morning until evening? Were not God's fearful revelations³ manifested there as if to (provide) honour for the object, seeing that the Shekhina of God was residing in it⁴? This (Shekhina), which now resides in the Cross, has departed from there (sc. the Ark) and has resided mysteriously in the Cross.

6. The power of this Shekhina manifests itself in the Cross in no lesser a way by means of mighty signs than at that time there — indeed

4 ¹ Ark (*qībōtā*): i.e. of the Covenant (Ex. 25:14 etc.).

² 'God': see Num. 10:35-6, where Moses appears to address the Ark as 'Lord'.

³ glory (*iqārā*): *iqārā* perhaps has more the Jewish Aramaic sense of '(divine) glory', rather than 'honour', here (the Targum tradition introduces the phrase *iqārā da-skintā* several times in Num. 10:33-6, but Isaac cannot have known this directly).

⁴ 'Woe to us...': a free adaptation of I Sam. 4:7.

5 ¹ Jar of Manna....: Ex.16:33; 'tablets', Deut. 10:5; 'staff', Num. 17:8.

² Joshua...: Josh.7:6.

³ fearful revelations (*gelyānē dhīlē*): cf Part I 173 (sing.), a passage also concerned with the Ark of the Covenant.

⁴ Shekhina of God was residing (*šaryā*) in it: Isaac again uses targumic phraseology (compare the Palestinian Targum tradition at Num. 10:34, 36; French translation in Sources chrétiennes 261, pp.100-1). Though such phraseology occurs in the Peshitta of Chronicles, it is absent from the Peshitta of Numbers, and Isaac's source for it here remains unclear. Attention is drawn to this passage by N. SED, 'La Shekhinta et ses amis "araméens"', in *Mélanges A. Guillaumont. Contributions à l'étude des christianismes orientaux* (Cahiers d'Orientalisme 20, 1988), 239. Macarius 176 uses the phrase *škintā d-rabbūtā* 'Shekhina of the (divine) Majesty'.

(they occur) even more so here. Were not all the things described in Acts¹ as having occurred through the hands of the Apostles greater than those of old? Anyone who does not accept the latter will not believe the former either.

7. Through the power of the Cross many have restrained wild animals, have acted boldly in the face of fire, have walked on lakes, have raised the dead, have held back plagues, have caused springs to flow in parched and wild terrain, have laid a boundary to the seas, have commanded the surge of mighty rivers to flow after them¹, have reversed the course of water².

8. Why do I speak of these things? Satan himself and all his tyranny is in terror of the form of the Cross, when it is depicted by us against him. And listen to what is greater than all these things: in that ministry (of the Old Testament), for all the signs and wonders that took place in their presence, they were unable to eradicate even the smallest kind of sin, whereas in the ministry that takes place with the Cross, sin has become like a spider's web on which a heavy object is hung¹ and it no (longer) succeeds in standing up. And as for death, which had been so fearful for (human) nature, now even women and children can hold up their heads against it. Death which reigns over all has now proved easier, not only for believers, but also for pagans as well: fear of it has been greatly diminished from what had been the case previously.

9. Revered is He who altered His decree against us by means of the reconciliation which He himself effected on our behalf¹. Blessed is He who willed to manifest openly, at this time, the eternal love² which He has for creation.

10. In front of that wooden construction in which it is said that God's Shekhina existed¹, adoration filled with awe was offered up continuously to God by Moses and all the People.

11. How was it that God said in the Law to the People through Moses, '*Do not worship the work of human hands or any image or*

6 ¹ Acts 3:1-10, 9:40 etc.

7 ¹ flow after them: P 'and they stood still' (perhaps correctly); U 'flowed backwards'.

² ..water: the paragraph is modelled to some extent on Heb.11:33ff.

8 ¹ hung: P 'weighed'.

9 ¹ reconciliation...on our behalf: compare Rom.5:10-11, 2 Cor. 5:18-19.

² eternal love (*ḥubbā mtōmāyā*): cf *Hudra* III 410.

10 ¹ it is said that God's Shekhina existed: see note to XI.5; the term Shekhina is absent from the Peshitta Pentateuch.

*likeness*¹, yet the Ark was built with the hands of carpenters and the Tablets were hewn by Moses's hands from the mountain and inscribed by his own fingers²? Was it not because they applied the name of idols to the former things that they received punishments, whereas in the case of the latter objects the power of God was manifested in them openly, seeing that the glorious and revered name of God was set upon them. (Thus) they received benefit and salvation through them, and fearful supernatural signs were performed in them.

12. Here too, in the case of the Cross, the moment this form of the Cross is depicted on a wall¹ or on a board, or is fashioned out of some kind of gold or silver and the like, or carved out of wood, immediately it puts on, and is filled with, the divine power which was residing there at the time, and (so) it becomes a place of God's Shekhina², even more so than in the Ark. Just as the ministry of the New Covenant is more honourable before God than the things which took place in the Old Covenant, just as there is a difference between Moses and Christ, just as the ministry which Jesus received is more excellent³ than the one which was given through Moses, and just as the honour of a human person is greater and more excellent in His creation⁴ than (that of) dumb objects — so is this form of (the Cross), which now exists, much more honourable because of the honour of the Man whom the Divinity took from us for His abode⁵; and because this divine good pleasure⁶ which is in this Man who completely became its temple⁷ is different from the metaphorical good pleasure which of old was in those dumb objects in which was the shadow⁸ of these things to come in Christ.

13. In similar fashion, if we attributed any other name to an artefact of this shape, when we worshipped it we would have received punishment as did of old those who exchanged the worship of God for (that of) idols. But now, it is because it is in the name of that Man in whom the Divinity dwells, of whom things are spoken continuously in the Old

11 ¹ Do not worship...: compare Ex.20:4-5 (not an exact quotation).

² ..fingers: assumed from Ex. 34: 28 (contrast 31:18).

12 ¹ Cross depicted on a wall: compare Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIII.3.

² place of..Shekhina: similarly Sahdona I 109.

³ ministry..more excellent: reflecting Heb.8:6.

⁴ creation: H 'creative activity'.

⁵ abode: the christological language is typically East Syrian in this paragraph and the next.

⁶ good pleasure: based on Mark 1:11 etc.

⁷ temple: based on John 2:19.

⁸ the shadow...: Heb. 10:1.

Testament, whom *the twelve tribes, holding to this hope, hope to reach by means of assiduous prayers day and night*¹. All these things we understand: whenever we gaze upon this image in the time of prayer, or when we show reverence to it, because that Man was crucified upon it, we receive through it divine power, and we are held worthy of assistance, salvation and ineffable good in this world and in the world to come — that is to say, in the Cross.

14. Even in the case of the metal leaf¹ which was placed above the Ark there, which was fashioned out of gold, and in which the power of God was openly manifested, whenever the priest entered there he did not dare raise his eyes and examine it, in that the awesome Shekhina of the Divinity was in it, and (so) its appearance was more fearful and held in greater honour than any of the other objects which formed part of that ministry.

15. Now the orthodox Fathers¹ say that that leaf depicted the symbol of our Lord's humanity. If then the type is so awesome, how much more the explanation of the types, and the very archetype to whom

13 ¹ the twelve tribes..day and night: Acts 26:7.

14 ¹ metal leaf (*ṭassā*): although the plural *ṭassē* occurs in the Peshitta at Ex. 39:3 and Num. 16:38-9, it is clear that Isaac here has in mind Ex.25:17, 21-2 (description of the Ark), where the Peshitta has *ḥussāyā*. This usage is already known to Narsai who comments (F V 165-8) 'with the leaf of gold (*b-ṭassā d-dahbā*) whose name is interpreted 'forgiveness' (*ḥussāyā*) is the forgiveness of sins (*ḥussay ḥawbē*) that (exists) in our Saviour interpreted. That leaf was called by the name 'forgiveness', not because it can give forgiveness, but because it is a symbol of Him who forgives (*da-mḥassayānā*)'. Underlying *ṭassā* will be Greek πέταλον; the LXX however here has λαοστήριον, but 'gold petalon' features at Ex.28:36 (32). It would seem that the equation of the *ṭassā* and the *ḥussāyā* was made by Syriac writers on the basis of Evag. *Keph.* IV.52 where he comments 'the spiritual *ṭassā* is the true knowledge of the holy Trinity'; although Evagrius no doubt referred to Ex.28:36, Babai in his Commentary to the Kephalaia (*ad loc.*) assumes that the reference is to Ex.25, for he comments 'That gold leaf which took the name of *ḥussāyā* and was placed above the Ark, (was the place) from which and in which God spoke, teaching the people what was appropriate in order to turn them away from error to knowledge of Himself...'. Narsai had probably made a similar deduction on the basis of this passage in Evagrius. Isaac has the same passage of Exodus 25 in mind, using *ṭassā*, in Part I 173. For the equation of *ṭassā* with *ḥussāyā* in West Syrian tradition, see Dionysius bar Ṣalibi, *C.Gospels* (ed. VASCHALDE) II, 231 line 6 (quoting Moshe bar Kepha).

15 ¹ orthodox Fathers: Isaac has the same homily of Narsai in mind: F V 183-4: 'With the term *ṭassā* (Scripture) tells of the humanity (*paḡrānūteh* — as in Isaac) of our Lord, and with the *ḥussāyā* (it tells of) the Being (*īūtā*) who has dwelling in him.' Isho'dad of Merv follows the same interpretation in his commentary on Exodus 25 (ed. VAN DEN EYNDE, *Scr.Syri* 80, p.47): 'He commanded that there be placed in the interior part (sc. of the Tabernacle) the Ark, symbol of the divinity, and the leaf of gold, symbol of the humanity of our Lord'; see also *Ḥudra* III, 572.

belong (all) symbols and types². But there, in that ministry, severity and great fear made their demands³; here, by contrast, there is gentleness. For there, anyone who made bold to act carelessly towards those symbols, types and figures, would immediately incur punishment — as happened with those who were burnt up by the fire of their censers⁴.

16. But (because) here grace without measure has been poured out, and severity has been swallowed up by gentleness, and familiarity of speech¹ has entered in and a (kind) of carelessness has been born — not that it is real carelessness, far from it!, but rather an abundance of familiarity of speech. (And) familiarity of speech is in the habit of chasing away fear, thanks to the abundant kindness² of God which has come upon us at this time.

17. For true believers the sight of the Cross¹ is no small thing, for all symbols are understood² to be contained in it. But whenever they raise their eyes and gaze on it, it is as though they were contemplating the face of Christ, and accordingly they are full of reverence for it: the sight of it is precious and fearful to them, and at the same time, beloved. And because they are children, they have all the more familiarity of speech towards Him — just as (ordinary) children customarily have familiarity of speech with their parents, as a result of confidence in (their) love.

18. And whenever we approach the Cross, it is as though we are brought close to the body of Christ¹: this is what it seems to us in our faith in Him.

² And the very archetype...types: the passage is lost through homoeoteleuton in BEDJAN's edition.

³ made their demands: H 'which were demanded by Providence'.

⁴ censers: Num. 16:35.

16 ¹ familiarity of speech (*parrēsia*): on this theme in the ES catechetical tradition see R. COQUIN, 'Le thème de Parrhesia et ses expressions symboliques dans les rites d'initiation à Antioche', *Proche Orient Chrétien* 20 (1970), 3-19.

² abundant kindness: Tit.3:4.

17 ¹ sight of the Cross (*ḥzāteh da-šlibā*): cf Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIII.3.

² are understood: U 'we understand'.

18 ¹ the body of Christ: compare Dadisho' *Shel.* 243a 'Rise from your kneeling, greet and kiss our Lord on his cross; make ten further prostrations, firmly believing what I tell you: just as your sight is aware of the sun's light and your lips of its warmth when the sun shines on the cross and you want to kiss it — even though the sun is in heaven and the cross is on the wall — in a similar way, and even more so, while the Man of our Lord Christ in the flesh is sitting in heaven on the throne of Majesty, as the blessed Paul preaches, nevertheless his power, glory, activity and authority are in the cross, and it is our Lord Jesus Christ you are kissing and embracing in love'.

19. And through our drawing near to Him, and at our gaze towards Him, straightaway we travel¹ in our intellects to heaven, mystically. As though at some sight that cannot be seen or sensed², and out of honour for our Lord's humanity, our hidden vision³ is swallowed up through a certain contemplation on the mystery of faith.

20. As a result we are not ashamed to call Him both Lord, Saviour and God as well, it being our duty to offer our prayer to Him as Creator.

21. All this do we believe to belong to that Man whose (Cross) is revered and honoured by us in His name and because of Him. And (likewise with) all the things which are attributed to Him: just as we do not hesitate to call the humanity of our Lord — He being truly Man — 'God', and 'Creator' and 'Lord'; or to apply to Him in divine fashion the statement that 'By His hands *the worlds were established*¹ and everything was created'. For He to whom all these things apply willingly dwelt in Him, giving Him the honour of His divinity and authority over all, because of the benefits which creation was about to receive through Him, whose beginning occurred on the Cross for it. He even bade the angels worship Him, according to the words of the blessed Paul²: *introducing the Firstborn into the world, he said 'Him shall all the angels of God worship'*. He granted to Him that He should be worshipped with Him indistinguishably, with a single act of worship for the Man who became Lord and for the Divinity equally, while the (two) natures are preserved with their properties³, without there being any difference of honour.

22. For we believe that all that applies to (the Man) is raised up to (the Word) who accepts it for Himself, having willed to make Him share in this honour. All this is made known to us in the Cross, and through

19 ¹ travel: 'are enflamed' P(text; mg = B).

² sight that cannot be ... sensed (*h̄zātā ..lā metraḡṣānitā*: cf Gregory of Cyprus 116 (without neg.).

³ hidden vision (*h̄zātā ksītā*): cf Theodore of Mopsuestia *C. John* 159, *Hist. Laus.* 124, Philoxenus *Disc.* 57, Babai *C. Evag.* 35v, 195a, Shem'on d-Taybutch 306a, 312b, 315b.

21 ¹ the worlds were established.: Heb. 11:3.

² Paul: Heb. 1:6.

³ (two) natures ..with their properties: among the ES synods only those of 554 and 612 refer to the properties (the former perhaps deliberately reflecting the Chalcedonian definition); texts in J.-B. CHABOT, *Synodicon Orientale* (Paris, 1902), 97-8, 564-7, English tr. in S.P. BROCK, 'The Christology of the Church of the East in the synods of the fifth to early seventh centuries', in G. DRAGAS (ed.), *Aksun-Thyateira: a Festschrift for Archbishop Methodios* (London/Athens, 1985), 135, 140-1, reprinted in *Studies in Syriac Christianity*, Aldershot, 1992), ch.XII.

this affair which unbelievers consider so contemptible¹, we have acquired an accurate knowledge² of the Creator.

23. In Christ all rational beings have truly been deemed worthy of the Creator's love and of love for one another — (this applies) equally to angels and human beings, for (the purpose of) the single confession of the one God, Lord of all.

24. For the Cross is Christ's garment just as the humanity of Christ is the garment of the divinity¹. Thus (the Cross today) serves as a type, awaiting the time when the true prototype will be revealed: then those things will not be required (any longer). For the Divinity dwells inseparably in the Humanity, without any end, and for ever; in other words, boundlessly. For this reason we look on the Cross as the place belonging to the Shekhina of the Most High, the Lord's sanctuary, the ocean of the symbols (or, mysteries) of God's economy.

25. This form of the Cross manifests to us, by means of the eye of faith¹, the symbol belonging to the two Testaments, as has been shown above² in due place. Moreover, it is the (final) seal of the economy of our Saviour.

26. Whenever we gaze on the Cross in a composed way, with our emotions steadied, the recollection of our Lord's¹ entire economy gathers together and stands before our interior eyes.

27. He, in whom the entire fulness of the Divinity dwells in bodily form¹, goes around as an ordinary human being to the door of sinners²,

22 ¹ contemptible: an allusion to 1 Cor. 1:23.

² accurate knowledge (*ida'tā ḥattitā*): cf XVIII.6, Part I 60. The phrase occurs in Evagrius (*Gnos.* 126) and especially in Theodore of Mopsuestia (*WS* V 145, *C.Pss.* 52, *C.Qoh.*75, *C.John* 245, 294, 308, 327) and Ps.Dionysius (55v, 56r, 60v etc.); likewise Sergius 71, 95, 102.

24 ¹ humanity of Christ is the garment (*lbūšā*) of the divinity: for Christ's humanity as a 'garment' cf Ephrem *H. de Fide* 19:2, *H. de Nativitate* 3:20; this kind of language was subsequently dropped in the West Syrian tradition (though an occasional example survives in the Fenqitho, e.g. III 231a), and so is preserved almost exclusively in ES texts, e.g. Part I 575 'the robe woven by the Will [*remzā*] from the Virgin's womb' (*Hudra* I 147 is very similar); Narsai (ed. MINGANA) II 161 *estlā* [στολή] *d-pagrāmūteh*, II 242 *naḥtā d-hesrā zqar* (suggested by Ephrem *H. de Nativitate* 4:188, where Mary weaves it), *Synodicon Orientale* (ed. СИАВОТ) 113 (Synod of Ezekiel, 576) *estlā d-nāšūteh*, Babai *L. de Unione* 274 (*lbūšeh*).

25 ¹ eye of faith: cf XVI.7, Part I 167, 361 (plur.), 512; the commonplace is already found in Ephrem *H. de Ecclesia* 24:3, and is especially frequent in Philoxenus *Disc.*

² shown above: i.e. earlier in this chapter.

26 ¹ our Lord's: H 'our Saviour's'.

27 ¹ in whom...form: Col.2:9.

² door of sinners: compare Luke 5:30, 7:36ff.

'despised and most lowly of people, having no (outer) splendour or appearance'³, as the prophet⁴ Isaiah says.

28. O wonder! The Creator (clothed) in a human being enters the house of tax collectors and prostitutes¹, and when they turn towards Him — through His own action — He was urging them, providing them, by means of His teaching, with assurance of reconciliation with Him. And He sealed² the word of truth with true testimonies, consisting in miracles and signs. (Thus) the entire universe, through the beauty of the sight of Him, was drawn by His love (or, in love of Him) to the single confession of God, the Lord of all, and (so) knowledge of the one Creator was sown in everyone.

29. And finally, those who received His teaching were confirmed in the hope that He gave them, thanks to His sealing His words to them with His very own blood. Through His death and resurrection He confirmed the twelve men who had been chosen, through the foreknowledge of God, out of the entire race of Adam¹ for this ministry. Then, amid ineffable splendour (the Father) raised Him to Himself to heaven, to that place which no created being had trod, but whither He had, through His own (action), invited all rational beings, angels and human beings, to that blessed Entry², in order to delight in the divine light³ in which was clothed that Man who is filled with all that is holy, who is now with God in ineffable honour and splendour.

30. These are the mysteries¹ which the holy form of the Cross bears; it is the cause of the miracles which the Creator performs through it in the entire world. Such is (the form of the Cross) which is joyfully revered and held in honour by us, while the reason for it was eternally marked out in the mind of the Creator, for His intention was to give to all, by means of this form, knowledge of His glory², and the liberation which He was going to take, through its means, for all humanity.

³ despised...: Is. 53:3, 2 (a free quotation).

⁴ the prophet: om. U.

28 ¹ the house of...: Matt.21:31-2.

² sealed (*mḥtm*): H Pmg 'defined' (*mḥm*).

29 ¹ race of Adam (*gensā ādāmāyā*): cf Narsai M II 55, 351, Babai *C.Evag.*138r, *L. de Unione* 91.

² Entry: P 'Kingdom'.

³ divine light (*muhrā alāhāyā*): cf Part I 156, 474. The phrase is Evagrian (*Epp.*167v), and also occurs in Ps.Dionysius 60v, 70r etc. and in Hierotheos 37; it is taken up by some other seventh-century ES writers, Sahdona IV.21, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIII.12, *C.Par.* 903, 910.

30 ¹ mysteries: or 'symbols'.

² knowledge of his glory (*īdā'tā d-šubḥeh*): cf *Keph.* II.55, I f.19r.

31. Blessed is God who uses corporeal objects continually to draw us close in a symbolic way to a knowledge of His invisible (nature), sowing and marking out in our minds the recollection of His care for us which has been in operation throughout all generations (thus) binding our minds with love for His hidden Being by means of shapes that are visible.

32. Let our hearts rejoice in the mysteries of the faith which we hold; let us exult in God who is so concerned with us. Let us enter, in our mind's contemplation¹, into this amazing action He has taken for us. Let us rejoice in the hope that has been revealed to us, the children of Christ, in the Mystery of the New Covenant which we have received at His hand.

33. (How much) to be worshipped is the God who, for our salvation, has done everything in the world to bring us close to Him, before (the time when) what has been prepared will be revealed, (namely the place) where we shall receive the good things that are appropriate for the children of God.

34. (How much) to be worshipped is the symbol of the power of the Cross, seeing that it has given to us all these things, and through it we have been deemed worthy of the knowledge of angels¹ — (that is), through the power by which all created things, both visible and invisible, were created.

35. Worthy of all manner of praise, exaltation and glory is the divine Nature which created us and which has given us all these things — and is going to give us (others): to Him be worship, honour, and exaltation for eternal ages, amen.

32 ¹ our mind's contemplation (*te'ōryā d-re'yānan*): cf Part I 126.

34 ¹ knowledge of angels (*īda'tā d-mal'akē*): cf Philoxenus *Disc.* 288; compare *Keph.* III.47 *īda'tā d-tegmē ruḥānē* (itself perhaps reflecting Evagrius *Keph.* II.72 [S 1] *īda'tā d-ruḥānē*), Ephrem *H. de Fide* 5:1 *īda'tā d-īrē*.

XII.

On the way of life of contemplation¹, and how beneficial stillness and the solitary state are for this goal of spiritual knowledge².

1. In the case of a person who has attained to this converse of contemplation in his ascetic way of life, no one (else) at all should pass the night in his dwelling place or cell. (For) during the time of the night, more than at any other time, he should be cut off from everyone and left solitary, in order that stillness may be added to stillness in his soul. For our Saviour too, during the night times, chose deserted places¹; besides, He honoured and loved stillness at all times, saying 'Let us go *to the wilderness to rest by ourselves*'²; and 'He sat down in a boat and went to a deserted region with his disciples'³, etc. It was especially at these times that He drew Himself away from people and remained in stillness. Not that He had any need to do this, seeing that He is capable in every place of everything, but even so He nevertheless did not spend the nights at all in inhabited places. 'He went up to a mountain alone to pray, and when it grew dark He was there alone'⁴. For the instruction of the children of light⁵ who would travel afterwards in His footsteps following this new mode of life⁶, He carried out this solitary converse⁷ with God. This (converse) which the heavenly ranks alone possess, was also made known to human beings in the Son of God who came down to their abode and indicated to them concerning the ministry of invisible beings⁸,

XII title ¹ way of life of contemplation (*dubbārā d-te'ōryā*): cf Sergius 69 (plur.).

² spiritual knowledge (*īdā'ā d-ruh*): cf XVIII.16, XXXIX.18, *Keph.* II.75, 85, Part I 475, 527. The term already occurs in Ephrem *H. de Fide* 5:2, and is common in Evagrius (*Keph.* I.72, 81, II.20 etc), as well as in later writers.

¹ chose deserted places: see Matt. 14:23 etc.

² let us go...: Mark 6:31 (free quotation).

³ he sat down...: Matt. 14:13, Mark 6:32 (free quotation).

⁴ he went up...: Matt. 14:23.

⁵ children of light (*bnay muhrā*): cf Eph. 5:8. 1 Thess. 5:5 (emphatic, with *d-*, at Luke 16:8, 12:36).

⁶ this new mode of life (*dubbārā hānā ḥadtā*): cf Theodore of Mopsuestia *WS* V 183 (plur.), Abraham of Nathpar 100r, Sahdona II 65, Dadisho' *C.Par.* 964.

⁷ solitary converse (*'enyānā lhōdāyā*): cf *Keph.* II.44, Part I 572.

⁸ ministry of invisible beings (*pulhānā d-lā methu:yanē*): compare *pulhānā d-mal'akē* in *Liber Graduum* 25:8, Evagrius *Ev.Syr.* 122, Add.14578 104v, *Par.* 671, Babai of Nisibis I, Sahdona I 51 (constr.).

whose task is that they should be stirred by⁹ praises of God in that great stillness¹⁰ which is spread over their world, so that, resulting from these (praises) they might be raised up in contemplation towards that glorious Nature of the Trinity¹¹, and remain in wonder at the vision of the majesty of that ineffable glory.

2. It is in this mode of life that the entire nature of humanity is to exist at the general resurrection. May we be made worthy, as though in pledge, of delight at the good things which are to come¹ henceforth through the grace of Christ²; to whom, and to His Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory and honour for eternal ages, amen.

⁹ by: or 'with'.

¹⁰ stillness...wonder (*šelyā...temhā*): for the close relationship between stillness and wonder see especially *Keph.* IV.95 where he points out that at Gen. 2:21 and 15:12 the Greek (which he knows through Theodore's *Commentary*) has *temhā* (i.e. ἔκστασις) whereas the Peshitta has *šelyā*. See also note to XIII.2.

¹¹ contemplation...Trinity: it is noticeable that Isaac never uses the common Evagrian phrase 'contemplation of the holy Trinity' apart from in a direct quotation from Evagrius in *Keph.* III.57 (among other seventh-century ES writers it occurs only in Babai in his *Commentary on Evagrius' Kephalaia*).

2 ¹ delight at the good things which are to come (*bussāmā d-tābātā da-'īdān*): the phrase derives from Theodore of Mopsuestia (*WS* V 226, 234, 240); among the seventh-century ES writers it occurs in Dadisho' *C.Abls.* III.14. Compare XXXIX.8 *bussāmā d-tābātā*, also from Theodore (*WS* V 238), and found in Sahdona I 79.

² Christ: H + 'our Lord'.

XIII.

*On the nurturing of the inner person*¹.

1. Insofar as a person draws near to knowledge of truth, he becomes less (under the influence) of the activity of the senses and he continually leans towards the silence of discernment¹. And insofar as he draws near to the conduct of this world² in his ministry, he acquires the vehemence and wakefulness of the senses.

2. The mode of conduct of this (present) life provides (an opening) for the functioning of the senses, while the mode (of the life) to come¹ (leads to) spiritual activation². Whenever a person is held worthy of that knowledge, his limbs all of a sudden cease (to function) and there falls upon him a stillness³ and silence; for in the conduct of the New Life⁴ all use of the senses falls idle. Because even in this world the senses cannot endure to encounter that mystery — even though as it were in some kind of sleep they cease from their activity at a time of repentance, though it is not they which make the encounter but the interior person — ‘may God grant you to know *the power of the world to come*’⁵, and you will cease henceforth from all engagement with this present life.

XIII title ¹ nurturing of the inner person (*tarbītā d-barnāšā gawwāyā*): cf XXXI.1, John Sol. *Epp.* 41. John also has *tarbītā d-barnāšā kasyā* (*Epp.*7).

1 ¹ silence of discernment (*šetqā d-puršānā*): cf Ephrem *H. de Fide* 1:19, 22:11, *C.Nisibena* 43:11, John Sol. *Keph.*100.

² conduct of this world (*dubbārā d-’ālmā hānā*): cf Part I 436, John Sol. *Epp.* 10, 23, 32, *Soul* 61. *Liber Graduum* 13:6 already has *dubbārā d-’ālmā*.

2 ¹ mode of life to come (*dubbārā da-’īd*): cf *Keph.* III.46, I f.10v, Part I 260, 304, 558, John Sol. *Mart.* 101, Abraham of Nathpar 100v, Dadisho’ *C.Par.* 894, 964.

² spiritual activation (*ma’hdānūtā ruḥānāytā*): cf *Keph.* II.76, Part I 13, 155, 168, Theodore of Mopsuestia *WS* V 239.

³ falls upon him a stillness: the phraseology is based on Gen.15:12 (Abraham’s experience): see on XII.1 and compare VII.2.

⁴ conduct (*huppākā*) of the New Life: compare *dubbārā d-ḥayyē ḥadtē* (see note to XXXVIII title).

⁵ the power of the world to come: Heb. 6:5. The preceding phraseology is borrowed from Eph. 1:17-18.

XIV.¹

By the same Mar Isaac, Chapters on prayer and its outward forms.

1. In summary the topic of this discourse concerns the following: — That it is not right for us to be idle, with empty minds, from the bodily labours¹ and reverent postures that are appropriate for prayer, even if we should be raised to the heights in our way of life. What I have in mind here is the appointed period of standing during the Office and the visible prostration of the body, etc.

2. — From what great evils the Office of the Psalms delivers us.

— On how we should consider, on those occasions when we are held worthy of this gift, that purity of prayer¹ and the mind's vision² that belongs to it, consisting in spiritual insights, constitute the fulfilment of the Office and the entire ordering of (our monastic) rule.

3. — On the misfortunes that will overtake, as a result of abandonment by God, those who despise the reverent outward forms, along with¹ the awe and reverence that should properly be shown during prayer.

— And some other topics.

4. [1]¹ There are four kinds of change of activity applicable to all persons, at whatever stage they are. One can change one's activity as a result of a wise and laudable discernment, and following the divine purpose. Or change can occur as a result of a corrupted mind and a lax and

XIV ¹ A preliminary translation of this chapter appeared in my *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (Kalamazoo, 1989), 271-92; the opportunity has been taken to revise this in some points of detail.

1 ¹ bodily labours (*'amlē pagrānāyē*): cf *Keph.* I.28, III.86, I f.6r, 8v, Part I 40, 42, 91, 331, 344. The term is found in both Abba Isaiah (VI.50c, XI.109, 112) and Mark the Monk (Add. 17192 f.89v); in seventh-century ES writers it is especially common in Dadisho' (*C.Abls.* XI. 11, 14, 17, 18 etc.).

2 ¹ purity of prayer (*dakyūt šlōtā*): cf XIV.7, 24, 27, 47, XV.2, 5, 7, *Keph.* IV.32. Compare *dakyūtā da-šlōtā Keph.* IV.73 and Part I 165, 379, 519, which is Evagrian (*Epp.* 162v); Isaac also has *dakyūtā dba-šlōtā (Keph.* IV.72). For 'pure prayer' see note to IV.5.

2 mind's vision (*h̄zātā d-re'yānā*): cf Part I 49, Evagrius *Epp.* 157v, Babai *C.Evag.* 115r, 164v, 216v, Sahdona I 64, II 36, Shem'on d-Taybuteh 306a. Compare *h̄zātā d-hawnā* in XVIII.4 (also found in Narsai M I 324 and Babai *C.Evag.* 98v).

3 ¹ along with: P + 'the knowledge and'.

4 ¹ numbers in square brackets are those found in the manuscript (the others are those of the present edition).

foolish purpose. Or it can happen under the constraint of compelling reasons and unavoidable circumstances². It can also happen as a result of the activity of divine compassion.

5. This also applies to the case of the wonderful mode of life of solitaries¹: any change in this way of life that occurs to anyone can be recognized by that person as belonging to one of these four varieties of which I have spoken: either it comes about through the wisdom of the love of God, when someone sets his purpose on some excellent goal; or it may be the result of a corrupted purpose and a laxity which has got the better of someone, when he exchanges the ministry of his former customary and laudable way of life for one that is inferior; or there is the case where, under the constraint of the spiritual delight² in God which he glimpses, thanks to divine working, the customary labouring after virtue is altered by grace and rejuvenated, so as to become a more exalted kind of toil: then, as a result of the wonderful taste and discovery of a more exalted knowledge, his former course of labour is rebuked when he glimpses something sweeter in taste and more glorious than the labour at which he was previously toiling. And sometimes the mind is enriched by the stirring of the things with which it is occupied, and it becomes interiorized from the outward labour involving the senses, according to the recognized norm of all ascetics. This occurs in accordance with the measure, time and strength of one's way of life. There is also the case where change results from the constraint of (demonic) attack, or the inroads of sickness and weakness.

6. Accordingly, my brethren, whenever some change is to be seen in our way of life, we should immediately rush off to see its cause, and find out from what quarter the altered custom is peering out, and whence comes that novelty that does not resemble the normal course of solitaries or their common (monastic) rule. Then either our joy will increase, or we will fittingly be put to confusion when we do not act well. In this we can always be in a state of awareness concerning our

² unavoidable circumstances (*gedšē ananqāyē*): compare Shem'on d-Ṭaybutēh 308a *peg'ē ananqāyē*.

¹ wonderful mode of life of solitaries (*dubbārā thīrā d-iḥidāyē*): for *dubbārā thīrā* cf Shubḥalmaran 1v (plur.), and compare *dubbārē mīhē* in *Liber Graduum* preface 2, Sahdona IV 58. For *dubbārā d-iḥidāyē* cf *Keph.* II.64 (plur.), IV.23, 72, 74, Part I 119, 148, Evagrius *Ev.Syr* 109, *Hist. Laus.* 98, *Hist. Monach.* 414 (plur.), Dadisho' *C.Ahls.* XI.2, 17, XIII.3, XV.42, Sahdona IV.40.

² spiritual delight (*bussāmā ruhānā*): cf *Keph.* IV.48 (-āyā), Part I 13 (-āyā), 557. The term goes back to John the Solitary (*Soul* 91).

way of life¹, being above that understanding which looks in a corporeal fashion at both the outward aspects of the thoughts², and at words and actions; rather, we can gain wisdom, (discovering) at once, right at the start, whose offspring these all are.

7. [2] The following is a bad sign when it appears: that someone should neglect the duty of the Hours of the Office without any pressing reasons¹. But if it is prayer which has drawn someone to neglect these Hours, and if it is the compulsion and weighty experience² of long drawn out prayer which has led him to desist from them, or if the delay brought about by prayer's overpowering delight causes him to neglect the time of Office, then this person has chanced upon a splendid piece of merchandise³, as a result of the change brought about by the enviable object which has fallen into his hands. As it is written⁴, *The lines have fallen for him in excellent places.* (All is well) provided he does not neglect the time of the Office as a result of empty ideas or a contemptuous attitude, but rather the sweet delight found in prayer⁵ has held him fast, as a result of the constraint of divine love — for this, after all, is the fulfilment of our ministry⁶ and is not constrained by, or subject to, any rule. And if such things occur to someone continually — and they are a sign of divine charisms and a mighty opening to purity of prayer —, and especially if he manifests a reverential outward posture and profound reverence during his prayer, then that person is quickly raised to the rank of the perfected.

8. But if someone decides to abandon what belongs first of all, without yet having found what comes afterwards, then it is clear that he is

¹ state of awareness concerning our way of life (*īda'tā d-dubbārān*): this is based on phraseology used by John the Solitary, e.g. *īd. d-dubbārā d-'almā ḥadtā* (Epp.14), *īd. d-dubbārā d-ḥayyē ḥadtē* (Epp. 70). Compare *īda'tā d-dubbārē* Part I 411.

² aspects of our thoughts (*ḥnayyā..d-ḥuṣṣābayn*): compare *znay ḥuṣṣābē* Narsai M II 19, Babai *C.Evag.* 64r, 68r, 98v. For *znay* B^{ca} has *rny*, 'reflections'.

³ pressing reasons (*'ellātā ananqāyātā*): cf Part I 130 (compare 145, sing., as Dadisho' *C.Abls.* V.2).

⁴ weighty experience (*ḥaṣṣā yaqqīrā*): cf Sahdona I 82.

⁵ merchandise (*tēgurtā*): Isaac uses similar imagery (suggested by I Tim.6:6) in XXXIV.6 (in prayer), and Part I 9, 96, 177, 216, 297, 355, 408. It is common in Syriac monastic writers, e.g. John Sol. *Soul* 90, Sahdona I 92 etc., as well as in earlier authors (A.Thomas, Ephrem); in Greek writers, e.g. Basil *Quest.* 33r, Evagrius *Epp.* 99r.

⁶ written: Ps.16:6.

⁷ delight found in prayer (*ḥannī'ūtā dba-ṣlōtā*): compare Part I 164 *ḥannī'ūtā da-ṣlōtā*. See also on VIII.16.

⁸ fulfilment of our ministry (*ṣumlayā d-pulḥānān*): cf Dadisho' *C.Abls.* I.36, and compare *Keph.* II.57 *ṣumlay pulḥānā* (Evagrius *Antirrh.* 77r has *ṣullāmā d-pulḥān puqdānē*).

being mocked by the demons, and through their agency he is going to fall away completely from his life; from this point onwards the beginning of his downward path gets the better of him.

9. We should be aware of this too: the search for these discoveries is superfluous for beginners, even though such people may be well trained in doctrine. This also applies to those who wish to become aware of these things in themselves without possessing strict vigilance and the awareness that comes from stillness¹.

10. [3] There cannot be recollection of mind¹ and purity in prayer without much vigilance over speech and action, as well as a guard over the senses²; nor can the awareness that is given by grace come about unless a person has acquired much discernment by means of stillness.

11. [4] It is in proportion to the honour which someone shows in his person to God during the time of prayer, both with his body and with the mind, that the door to assistance will be opened for him, leading to the purifying of the impulses¹ and to illumination in prayer.

12. [5] Someone who shows a reverential posture during prayer, by stretching out his hands to heaven as he stands in modesty, or by falling on his face to the ground, will be accounted worthy of much grace from on high (as a result of these lowly actions).

Anyone who continuously adorns his prayer with such outward postures will swiftly and quickly be accounted worthy of the activity of the Holy Spirit¹, for the Lord is accounted great in his eyes, thanks to the honour he shows in the sacrifices which he presents before (the Lord) at those times which have been set apart for him by the law of freewill².

13. [6] You should realize, my brethren, that in all our¹ service God very much wants outward postures, specific kinds of honour, and visible forms of prayer — not for His own sake, but for our benefit. He Himself is not profited by such things, nor does He lose anything when they are

9 ¹ awareness that comes from stillness (*īda'īā d-šelyā*): cf *Keph.* IV.71.

10 ¹ recollection of mind (*kunnāš re'yānā*): cf XV.5, 9, XXI.7; Abraham of Nathpar 93r. For the emphatic see on VII.3

² guard over the senses: compare XXIX.7 'guard over the heart'.

11 ¹ purifying of the impulses (*dakyūt zaw'ē*): cf *Keph.* III.46.

12 ¹ activity of the Holy Spirit (*ma'bdānūtā d-ruḥā d-quḏsā*): cf XVI.3, XVIII.3, XXII.9, XXIII.2, XXXII.4, *Keph.* I.98, II.14, 54, III.54, Part I 13, 260. The phrase, common in the seventh-century ES writers, probably goes back to Macarius (9 etc.).

² law of freewill (*nāmōsā d-ḥirūtā*): cf XIV.32, 34, 35, Mark the Monk Add. 17192 83v, 84r, 135r, Sahdona II 81.

13 ¹ our: P 'His'.

neglected; rather, they are for the sake of our feeble nature. Had such things not been requisite, He himself would not have adopted such outward postures for Himself during His incarnation — thus speaking with us in the Holy Scriptures.

He cannot be dishonoured by anything, seeing that honour belongs to Him by His very nature. But we, as a result of slovenly habits and various outward actions which lack reverence, have acquired an attitude of mind that shows contempt towards Him. Consequently we fall from grace of our own volition, seeing that we are subject to backsliding: then we are assailed by incessant attacks and continual deception from the demons, as we acquire a nature that loves comfort, and is easily swayed to evil actions.

14. [7] Many people have despised these (outward postures) in their thoughts and supposed that prayer of the heart¹ suffices by itself for God, claiming, as they lie on their backs or are sitting is a disrespectful manner, that there should only be an interior recollection (of God); they are not concerned at all with adorning the visible side of their worship² with prolonged standing, corresponding to their body's strength, or with making the venerable sign of the cross over their organs of the senses. Nor are they concerned, as they kneel on the ground, to act like those about to draw near to a flame, and to take upon themselves, both inwardly and outwardly, a reverential posture, or to accord especial honour to the Lord, honouring Him with all their limbs and with reverence on their faces. This is because they have not perceived the might of the Adversary they have, and as a result they are handed over to the workings of falsehood, not having understood that they are still mortal and liable to be stirred by their soul, which is subject to backsliding; they do not realize that they have not yet reached the state of spiritual beings, or that the resurrection has not yet taken place and they have not yet achieved a state of immutability³. During the body's life, when human nature is in need of labour and training in new things all the time, they

14 ¹ prayer of the heart (*šlōtā d-lehbā*): cf XXII.3, Part I 190, 304, 546, *Liber Graduum* 12:1, *Sahdona* III 131. Compare XIV.22 below. In general see my 'The prayer of the heart in Syriac tradition', *Sobornost/Eastern Churches Review* 4:2 (1982), 131-42 (repr. in *Studies in Syriac Spirituality* (Syrian Churches Series 13, 1988), 41-52) and 'The spirituality of the heart in Syriac tradition', *The Harp* (Kottayam) 1:2/3 (1988), 93-115.

² visible side of their worship (*galyūt pulhānhōn*): cf *Keph.*1.36.

³ immutability (*lā meštahlpānūtā*): Isaac and other seventh-century ES writers (notably Babai) probably derive the term from Theodore of Mopsuestia (e.g. *WS* V 166-8, 172 etc.).

have wanted to lead their lives in a purely spiritual state, without being involved in those things which necessarily daily constrain the world which is subject to the passions⁴. *Imagining in themselves that they are wise, they have acted with disrespect*⁵, in that the sign of pride and disrespect for God has appeared in them. As a result they have doubled their perdition by means of prayer — which is properly the fountainhead of all life; this is because they supposed they could offer disrespect to that Honourable One, who is not to be disrespected, and who is to be honoured by all created beings.

15. [8] We do not force the sick or the infirm to abide by the rule, nor do we say that we should subject someone¹ to impossibilities. Everything that takes place with reverence and trembling, and as a result of the exigency of the occasion, is seen by God as a choice offering, even if it lies outside the norm of the rule. Not only does He attach no blame to the person who so acts, but He accepts the paltry and insignificant things done with a good will for His sake along with mighty and perfect actions. And even if they are blameworthy, they are borne with mercy, and are forgiven their authors², without any blame, by the omniscient God to whom all things are revealed before they happen, and who was aware of the constraints of our (human) nature before He created us. For God, who is good and compassionate, is not in the habit of judging the infirmities of (human) nature or actions brought about by necessity — even though they may be reprehensible; but He does judge actions that are possible³, which are nonetheless scorned. He does not judge (human) nature's inclination towards anything — even if it were to result in some great and voluntary sin on taking effect: rather, it is the eventual action⁴ that He judges, making exaction with justice, wherever He knows that it will be followed by compunction and mental suffering and some small turning towards making amends — even though the same things may be repeated ten thousand times!

⁴ the world which is subject to the passions (*'ālmā ḥāsōsā*): cf Babai *C.Evag.* 141v.

⁵ Imagining themselves..disrespect: Rom.1:22.

15 ¹ we should subject someone: H 'someone should be subjected'.

² their authors: P 'by their Maker'.

³ actions that are possible: H 'inclinations'.

⁴ B and P add the following gloss in the text (H provides it slightly later): 'An eventual action does not apply to one which (just) occurs once, but when no continuous control over it exists: even though (such) things may happen a thousand times, (an action of this sort) will be called an eventual one'.

16. This all the more the case when someone does not give himself wholly over to perdition: suffering affects him as he gazes at the plight of his enslavement that leads nowhere; he despises himself and is eager to make amends, as he grieves over his shortcomings or over his lapses.

17. Not only is such a person not rejected by the Will which performs all things, but without any doubt he is actually close to mercy.

Though we have said all this, we nevertheless reprove those who upset the order of prayer¹ out of their own wilfulness, whose foolish mind feigns perfection, and with a false knowledge² they contrive to create³ one thing or another by themselves.

18. [9]¹ The heart acquires greater freedom of speech (with God) during prayer than it does during the Office. But complete neglect of the Office causes pride, and it is out of pride that one falls away from God. You see, the very fact that someone forces himself to be subjected to a rule — when he is quite free in his way of life — keeps the soul humble, and offers no opportunity for the demon of pride² to dangle before him some evil thought³. By continually considering himself as insignificant and not capable of freedom, he humbles and brings low any pride of thought. There is no more effective bridle than this⁴ to place in the mouth of the mind that exalts itself.

19. This is why the holy Fathers — even though they possessed continual prayer, being filled with the Spirit and never ceasing for a moment from prayer — used to observe, not only in the matter of the Office, but also in that of prayer as well, all that was ordained in the matter of times set apart, and the specifically fixed numbers (of prayers), involving the visible participation of the body, and performed with kneelings; all this they did following the aim of the rule which they had decreed for themselves.

17 ¹ order of prayer (*teksā da-šlōtā*): cf XXX.9, XXXII.4; compare Part I 170 *teksin da-šlōtā*; Narsai M I 126 *teksā da-šlawwātā*.

² a false knowledge (*īdā'tā daggālā*): cf 1 Tim. 6:20 (Pe.); also an Evagrian phrase (*Gnos.* 145, *Antirrh.* 76v, Add. 14578 94r, 96v).

³ create (*mbr*): H 'feign' (*mbd*).

18 ¹ H + 'There is no healing for a mind sick with pride'.

² the demon of pride (*šidā d-rāmūtā*): cf *Keph.* III.89, Part I 108, 490, 573 (quoting Evagrius), Evagrius Add.14578 82r, Abba Isaiah XVI.20. Compare XXI.2 *daywā d-rāmūtā*, as Evagrius Add.14578 33v.

³ evil thought (*huššāhā hīsā*): cf Part I 5, 450; the term is found in Evagrius (e.g. *Epp.* 168r, *Keph.* VI.53), John the Solitary (e.g. *Soul* 78), *Hist.Monach.* 353, Macarius 333 and most subsequent writers. The plural, found at XXIV.1 *Keph.* 1.20, II.56, 60, Part I 2, 82, 123, 215, 353, 355 is considerably more common.

⁴ than this: H 'than humility'.

20. [10] It was not to no purpose that these Fathers imposed upon themselves, in some cases one hundred, in others fifty or sixty, etc., (prayers) — even though they had already entirely become an altar of prayer¹. Why were fixed numbers so necessary, when they never ceased from prayer?

21. It is said that Evagrius had one hundred, the blessed Macarius sixty, and Moses the Black, the Ethiopian, had fifty, whereas a certain great solitary, Paul, had three hundred¹; and so on.

22. The reason why these blessed Fathers compelled themselves, like servants¹, to keep such rules was fear of pride. They carried out these fixed numbers of prayers² accompanied by labour of the body, involving specific acts of worship, with prostrations in front of the Cross. It was not the case, as detractors say, that these fixed numbers of prayers related concerning them were prayers which just took place in the heart; this is what people with Messalian opinions³ proclaim concerning them, those who say that outward forms of worship are unnecessary.

23. Far be it that such a thing should be said of the holy Fathers! We are not concerned here to rebuke or censure the faults of others, this is not our habit — indeed we spurn¹ those who do this — but seeing that we are about to speak of and to transmit the truth, unless falsehood is first openly rebuked, one cannot have assurance of the truth, or cultivate it with a clearly defined attitude of love², or be wary³ of its opposite. And even those who travel on a straight path walk all the more confidently upon it once the road that leads astray has been openly pointed out.

20 ¹ an altar of prayer (*madbhā da-šlōtā*): the phrase derives from Nilus 10. In XXI.4 Isaac speaks of prayer being 'sacrificed' (*metdabhā šlōtā*). Isaac may well also have in mind the theme of the heart as altar, found in Part I 167, based on *Liber Graduum* 12:2 (Evagrius describes the intellect as an altar at *Ev.Syr.* 130, while John the Solitary speaks of the soul as a 'hidden altar', *Soul* 88, and Macarius 344 talks of an 'interior altar'). Compare Sahdona III 24 *debhā da-šlōtā*, and for the theme of the internal offering of prayer, see my 'The spirituality of the heart in Syrian tradition', *The Harp* 1:2/3 (1988), 93-115.

21 ¹ *Apophthegmata = Par.* 823-4 (no 350), ET in BUDGE, *The Wit and Wisdom*, 295 (no 355).

22 ¹ like servants (*'hdn'yr*): B*(vid) and P 'irascibly' (*kbdn'yr*); H 'in harnessed fashion' (*kdyn'yr*).

² fixed numbers of prayers (*thōmē da-šlōtā*): lit. 'boundaries of prayer', cf Gregory of Cyprus 128 and Sahdona III 26 (both sing.).

³ Messalian opinions: Isaac polemicalises against the Messalians on several occasions: XIV.47, *Keph.* IV.31, 34, Part I 171, 495; similarly Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XI.13.

23 ¹ we spurn: P 'do we not spurn'.

² love: P 'vision'.

³ to be wary: P 'to instruct'.

24. These Fathers' acts of worship were very real, and in particular, by their means the soul was kept humble. They carried them all out, taking care to stand up from their places as they did so — provided they were not prevented by physical weakness — with great reverence and deep lowliness of both mind and body¹, lying prostrate on their faces before the Cross. These acts of worship were quite separate from those which took place in the heart. Nevertheless, each time they stood up, they performed many acts of worship, their body assisting them as the occasion might allow, kissing the Cross five or maybe ten times, reckoning each act of worship and kiss as a single prayer. During such acts all of a sudden someone might sometimes discover a pearl² which in a single prayer would encompass the number of all the others. Sometimes a person would be standing on his feet, or kneeling, his mind seized by the wonder of prayer³ — a state not under the control of the will of flesh and blood⁴ and the soul's impulses⁵. Or he might be in one of those states of purity of prayer which we will elucidate later.

25. In this manner the Fathers used to carry out those large numbers of prayers, just as I have described. It was not, as many people suppose, and as others also claim, that they distinguished a separate time of standing for each prayer individually — for the wretched body is not capable of such numbers, standing up separately for each separate prayer. On this reckoning all the prayers would never be achieved, if someone wanted to stand up from his place a hundred times in a day, or fifty, or sixty times — not to mention three hundred or more, as was the custom of some of the saints; otherwise there would not have been any room for reading or any of the other requirements. Nor would there have been any opportunity for prolonging prayer, should it happen that the gift of tears¹

24 ¹ deep lowliness...of body: P 'lowliness of body'.

² a pearl: compare XXXIV.4,6,7,8, Part I 63, 98, 179f, 326f, 467, 543.

³ wonder of prayer (*tehrā da-šlōtā*): cf *Par.* 782.

⁴ will of flesh and blood: based on John 1:13 (without 'and blood').

⁵ soul's impulses (*zaw'ē d-napšā*): cf Part I 243, 372, 447, and compare *zaw'ay napšā* in *Keph.* I.87, III.46, Part I 455, 483 (already in Ephrem *H. de Fide* 79:6). The emphatic form is found in Basil *Quest.* 19v, 37r, 54v, Evagrius *Keph.* IV.22, while both forms are found in John the Solitary (e.g. constr. *Soul* 65; emph. *Soul* 92, *Epp.* 7, 61) as well as in subsequent ES writers (including Narsai, [e.g. M I 19, 20, 35, 355, 368], and liturgical texts [e.g. *Hudra* II 125, 186, 195]). Compare *napšā b-zaw'eh*, Isaac XVIII.2, and for *zaw'ē napšānāyē* see on XXXII.4.

25 ¹ gift of tears (*mawhabtā d-dem'ē*): cf XIV.46, XVIII.11, Part I 244, 446, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XV.40; compare V.3 *šukkānā d-dem'ē*. For the 'gift of tears' in Isaac see D.A. LICHTER, 'Tears and contemplation in Isaac of Nineveh', *Diakonia* 11 (1976), 239-58, and P.T. MASCIA, 'The gift of tears in Isaac of Nineveh', *Diakonia* 14 (1979), 255-65.

were granted² by grace during someone's prayer, or the limpid stirrings to draw out one's prayer, as is the case with those who have been counted worthy of one of these kinds of grace³ at such times. Instead, such a person's Office would be turbulent, and he would be filled with turmoil in all his ministry.

26. If someone does not believe this, let him experiment on himself and see whether he can get up tranquilly¹ from his place fifty times during a day — let alone a hundred or two hundred times —, being undisturbed in himself and his prayer remaining peaceful, fulfilling his Office as well, and the appointed scriptural reading — which constitutes a large part of prayer — still unperturbed: will he manage to do this for a (whole) week — let alone all the days of his life?

27. [11]¹ Sometimes charisms that are partial occur during prayer, such as a profusion of tears, or a delight at the words of the prayer welling up in the heart, resembling honey from a honeycomb, or a bubbling up of thanksgiving, all of which silence the tongue with the humbleness of the joy; or it may be a sudden stirring of hope during prayer, or some insight into divine providence², such as is wont to burst forth from prayer itself or from the recollection of what one has read (in Scripture) just before it; this sort of insight lingers on many hours, as a person lies prostrate on his face³, overcome by one of those altered states which belong to the gift of purity of prayer with its concomitant delight. Or sometimes this occurs when a person is standing, or when he is kneeling. Such things are reckoned by the Fathers as purity of prayer, and not as rapture⁴ of the intellect. This latter is a gift which is all inclusive, the sum of (divine) workings, which is accorded to the perfect. Now these partial gifts are granted to those at an intermediate stage as well as to the advanced during the remainder of their time of prayer. They belong to the natural world and are given in accordance with diligence and vigilance, whereas the other gift is supernatural.

² granted: P 'not granted'.

³ grace: HP + 'of prayer'.

26 ¹ tranquilly: H 'completely'.

27 ¹ Bmg and Hmg + 'The difference (between) purity of prayer and the kinds of gift in it'.

² some insight into divine providence (*sukkālā meddem da-mdabhrānūtā*): cf Evagrius *Keph.* II.38 (S 1), John Sol. *Epp.* 21, Babai *C.Evag.* 79v, 214v.

³ face: H + 'and again if someone is assisted by God'.

⁴ rapture (*h̄typwt*): HP(text) 'eagerness' (*h̄pytwt*).

28. Gifts, such as illumination of insights¹ and a precise understanding of the verses (of Scripture) etc. act for the intellect of the saints during prayer and the Office as a rope by which the emptied intellect² is held back from distraction and brought close to God. Without them there is no other laudable way for the intellect to cease from external thoughts³ and recollect itself during the Office and in prayer — unless of course one follows those who teach⁴ that we should abandon divine reflection⁵ and the exact enquiry into the senses of the verses, while they cause their minds (instead) to wander with imaginings⁶, as though they possessed a capability for this which excelled that of secular people.

29. But what occasions illumination of the thoughts during prayer, as a result of some stirring during the divine Mysteries, is a thing which most people lack, and which is to be found only with a few, being something which requires tranquillity and great wariness and purity of mind. Imaginings of the mind, (on the other hand), and the voluntary binding of the thought¹ to some image or phantasy, is something within the grasp of a secular person as well: it does not require purity or stillness, or living in the desert. If these people were right, what would then be the purpose of all the trouble of the solitary life and of purity from 'the world' or the illumination of thoughts resulting from the time of prayer? We would be enduring all this to no purpose, and our labours would be in vain, if the object of our hope only extended to that which a secular person, despite being involved in the world and tied to a wife and children, is capable of achieving whenever he likes.

30. [12] The true vision of Jesus Christ our Lord¹ consists in our realizing the meaning of His dispensation for our sakes, and becoming inebriated with love of Him as a result of the insights into the many wondrous elements contained in that vision.

28 ¹ illumination of insights (*nahhīrūtā d-sukkālē*): cf XXXI.3; see also on VI.2

² emptied intellect (*hawnā spīqā*): compare 'naked intellect' *Keph* I.37, Part I 31 (compare 303 'nakedness of intellect'), based on Evagrius *Keph.* III.6 etc.

³ external thoughts: compare 'interior thoughts' in Part I 347.

⁴ those who teach.: Isaac probably has Mesallians in mind, with their neglect of the outward forms of worship.

⁵ divine reflection (*renyā alāhāyā*): cf *Keph.* II.35, Part I 369, *Hist. Laus.* 225, Philoxenus *Disc.* 564, Sahdona III 14. See also note to X.38.

⁶ imaginings (*hgg*): P 'meditations' (*hrg*).

29 ¹ the thought: H 'his mind'.

30 ¹ vision of Jesus Christ our Lord: compare *hẓāteh d-māran*, characteristic of Dadisho' (*C.Abls.* I.16, 17, 29, XIV.17, XV.15, *C.Par.* 918).

31. [13] The Office of psalmody is a rule which subjects the soul to a lowliness that belongs to servitude.

32. [14] In this rule there is liberty, and in liberty there is a rule. Some people are tested and excel as a result of the rule, others as a result of the liberty which comes from it.

33. [15] In freedom someone makes more progress than when subject to a rule. Nevertheless often enough out of freedom there spring up many paths leading to error; in freedom there lurk many varieties of downfall. Whereas with a rule no one ever goes astray; those who persevere under the yoke of some rule will only be driven to some downfall once they have abandoned that rule and disregarded it. For this reason the saints of old who completed their course without going astray, governed themselves by means of some rule. Many people, however, having left behind the requirements of their rule, and by labouring far beyond what was laid down, have added to their diligence; nevertheless their extra labour¹ has not prevented them from falling into the hands of demons once they had left their rule. No one is able to gainsay this, for the narratives concerning these men shine forth like the rays of the sun for our enlightenment.

34. [16] There is a rule involving liberty and there is a rule for slaves: a rule that enslaves says 'I will recite such and such psalms during each Office, and every time I pray I will say the same fixed number'. Such a person is inalterably bound by obligation, without the possibility of change, to these same psalms all his days — all because he is tied to the obligation, in prayer and in the Office, to follow the details of the number, length, and fixed character of their quantity¹ which he has decreed and fixed for himself. All this is utterly alien to the path of true knowledge, for such a person does not bear in mind either (divine) activity or the feebleness of nature, or the hazard of frequent battles: in the first case grace may be given so that he carries beyond what his will has decreed; in the second case (human) nature may prove too weak to fulfil the rule, under the constraint of (the demons) by whom it is attacked — (demons) who are specifically provided for the subduing of pride.

35. [17] The rule of liberty¹ consists in one's unfailing observance of the seven Offices, ordained for our chaste mode of life by the holy

33 ¹ extra labour (*yatīrūt 'amlā*): cf Sextus 9 (*yat. 'amlē*).

34 ¹ quantity (*mnywthwn*): HP 'parts' (*mnywthwn*).

35 ¹ rule of liberty (*nāmōsa d-ḥirūtā*): see on XIV.12.

Church at the hands of the Fathers who were assembled by the Holy Spirit for the ecumenical synod (of Nicaea)². Far be it from us solitaries that we should not be subject to the Church or her leaders or laws. This is precisely the reason why we observe the ordinance of the seven Hours of the Office, in conformity with what the Church has laid down for us, as her children. This does not mean, however, that for each Office I should perform the same particular fixed number of psalms; nor does one fix each day a particular number of prayers to be said between these Offices, during both night and day. And one does not set a time limit for each of these prayers, nor does one decide upon specific words to use. Rather, one spends as long on each prayer as grace provides the strength, asking whatever the pressing need of the moment may require, using whatever prayer one is stirred to use. And while such a person prays he is all the more recollected and undistracted in view of the delight of this kind of prayer. During such prayers a person measures his request in conformity with the strength of (human) nature and the wisdom that the Lord accords to him.

36. [18] If someone says that we should recite the prayer uttered by our Saviour in all our prayers using the same wording and keeping the exact order of the words, rather than their sense, such a person is very deficient in his understanding of our Saviour's purpose in uttering this prayer, nor has he ever drawn close to the thinking of the blessed Interpreter¹. Our Lord did not teach us a particular sequence of words here; rather, the teaching He provided in this prayer consists in showing us what we should be focussing our minds on during the entire course of this life. It was the sense that He gave us, and not the precise sequence of words to be recited by our lips.

37. Thus, whenever we set this prayer before our minds as something to aim at, we will pray following its sense, and we will direct the movements of our own prayer in accordance with it, as we ask for *the Kingdom and righteousness*¹, or, as may sometimes be the case, for escape from temptations; and at times we may be asking for the needs of our

² synod: similarly Dadisho' *Shel.* 244a, *C.Abls.* V.6. The reference is to Canon 54 of the '73 Canons of Nicaea', in A.VÖÖBUS, *The Canons ascribed to Mārūtā of Maipherqaṭ* (CSCO 439-40, Scr.Syri 191-2,; 1982), 98 (text), 82 (tr.): 'the service...shall be accomplished at seven times during the day' (listed as Şapra, Third, Sixth and Ninth Hour, 'Table', Ramsha and Lilya).

36 ¹ Interpreter: Isaac will have in mind Theodore's homily on the Lord's Prayer, in the *Catechetical Homilies XI*.

37 ¹ an allusion to Matt.6:33.

(human) nature, that is, for sustenance for the day; likewise with all the other things, in accordance with the aims with which He provided us, telling us what we should pray for. So our prayer should be inspired by its sense, and we should set aright our lives in strict accordance with it as we pray this prayer which our Lord has taught us.

38. This is the way those who are illumined and endowed in insight¹ understand this tradition handed down by our Lord in the form of a prayer²; they are not concerned with the sequence and order of words. Nor indeed was our Lord concerned here with the precise order of words when He provided teaching suited to the wording of a prayer, instilling insight into the disciples. Rather, He was instructing us not to intermingle into prayer, as do the pagans³, all sorts of other things which are contrary to His commandments.

39. It is a childish mentality which investigates and is concerned with the exact sequence of words, rather than setting its sight on their sense, out of which spring forth prayers, requests and reflections excellently suited to the conduct of the New World¹. Altering the outward form of the words of the prayer which our Lord handed down makes no difference provided our prayer stems from its sense, and that the mind follows that sense.

40. [19] I am anxious that whoever loves instruction should be preserved from all harm — that is to say, that anyone who is concerned with discovering the true meaning of the Scriptures should not stumble in anything and reckon advantageous things to be harmful, or understand anything solely on the basis of its simple outer form.

41. When you hear stories about certain of the solitaries, how so-and-so was harmed by continuous prayer¹, or how some of them were led

38 ¹ endowed with insight (*yād'ay sukkālā*): cf Macarius 5, Babai *C.Evag.* 80r, Gregory of Cyprus Add.17192 165r, all based on Dan. 2:21 (Pe.).

² in the form of a prayer (*b-eskīm šlōtā*): cf XVI.5, and compare XIV.43, XXXII.3, Theodore of Mopsuestia WS VI 136 (*eskīmā da-šlōtā*).

³ cf Matt. 6:7.

39 ¹ conduct of the New World (*dubbārā d-'ālmā ḥadā*): the phrase derives from John the Solitary (*Epp.* 4, 9, 14, 23), and also occurs in Sahdona II 85 and Shem'on d-Ṭaybuteh 302a.

41 ¹ continuous prayer (*ammīnūtā da-šlōtā*): cf XIV.42, *Keph.* IV.34, Part I 15, 107, 259, 557, Evagrius *Epp.* 162v, Theodore of Mopsuestia WS VI 125, Macarius 28, Babai of Nisibis 19, Sahdona III 101, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* 1.14, 31, *C.Par.* 952 (constr.), 985, Shem'on d-Ṭaybuteh 312b. Compare the frequent *šlōtā ammīnūtā* (sing. and plur.) in *Keph.* II.97, I f.7v, Part I 304, 441-2, 544, and often in other writers, e.g. Basil *Ep.Greg.* Add. 17192 189b, Evagrius Add. 14578 29r, John Sol. *Keph.* 100, *Hist.Laus.* 11, 282. Both phrases are based on NT passages such as Acts 1:14, Eph.6:18, I Tim. 5:5. Isaac

astray by demons because they despised the psalms or did nothing else except pray continually, and afterwards many of them came to harm or were mocked by delusions, etc., do not be perturbed or upset here as a result of superficial external report; and do not fall into doubt over things that are beneficial in the process of setting right all our corrupt state.

42. It is not continual prayer which is the cause of going astray, nor the omission of some psalms — provided there is an appropriate reason for this; nor do we go on to account prayer, the source of life¹, and the labour involved in it, as something which leads to error. Rather, error came when certain people abandoned the prayer's venerable outwards forms, turning instead to their own rules and special customs which they had laid down for themselves according to their own whim, and when they completely deprived themselves of the Holy Mysteries, instead despising and scorning them; when they deprived themselves furthermore of the light of the divine Scriptures², and failed to study the teaching of the words of the Fathers which give instructions about strategems against the demons; and when they gave up the various acts of lowliness, prostrations, continual falling upon the ground, a suffering heart, and the submissive postures appropriate to prayer, modest standing, hands clasped in submissive fashion, or stretched out to heaven, the senses respectful during prayer. Instead, they seized upon various forms of pride, as a result mingling with their prayer insult towards God; they accompanied their prayer with haughty outward postures, forgetting how exalted is the Divine Nature and how their own nature is but dust. Yet in all this the words of their prayer were no different from those of the psalms.

43. Most prayers, in fact, consist of words chosen from psalms containing ideas and sentiments of grief and supplication, or of thanksgiving and praise, etc. Thus sometimes when someone is kneeling with his face bowed, or has his fingers and gaze raised to heaven, he will add (his own) feeling to the words and repeat them slowly. On occasion the suffering and pain of his heart¹ will cause all sorts of deeply-felt words of

also uses *ammīnūtā d-ba-šlōtā* (Part I 120; cf Macarius 28) and *šlōtā d-ammīnūtā* (Part I 288).

¹ source of life (*m'inā d-ḥayyē*): cf Part I 524; compare note to X.17.

² light of the ..Scriptures (*nuhrā da-ktābē*): cf Sahdona III 16.

43 ¹ suffering and pain of his heart (*ḥaššā w-kibā d-lebbē*): for *ḥaššā d-lebbā* cf *Keph.* I.36, Part I 342, Ammonius 597, Abba Isaiah XXII.24b, XXVI.7 (plur.), Sahdona II 75, III 7, 29, 43, Gregory of Cyprus 126, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* I.15, XV.33 and for *kī'bā d-lebbā* cf I f.9r, *Keph.* I.85, Part I 342, Abba Isaiah XXV.43.

prayer to spring up, or joy may burst forth in response to something, stirring that person to alter his prayer to praises owing to the delight his mind feels. The same applies to the other stirrings comprised in prayer which the Holy Spirit sets in motion² in the saints, in whose utterances are ineffable mysteries and insights. And when the outward form of prayer provides some sign of the insight they contain³, this is an indication of the mysteries⁴ and the perfect knowledge⁵ which the saints receive mingled into (their prayers), through the wisdom of the Spirit.

44. A person either draws near to God or he falls away from truth; this depends on the direction towards which his mind is aimed, and not on the external features of what is performed or neglected. Many of the early Fathers — I refer to some of the great solitaries — did not even know the psalms, yet their prayers ascended to God like fire¹, as a result of their excellent ways and the lowliness of mind which they had acquired. Their words chased away demons like flies² which buzzed off as they approached. Many people, however, have used prayer as an excuse for slackness and pride: failing to grasp *the better part*³, they also lost the part they had. Though they held nothing in their hands, they

² sets in motion (*mzī'ā*): Isaac here treats the Holy Spirit as grammatically feminine, following standard practice in texts prior to c.400, after which masc. became the norm, though isolated examples of fem., as here, continue to be found; see my 'Come compassionate Mother,...come, Holy Spirit: a forgotten aspect of early Eastern Christian imagery', *Aram* 3 (1991), 249-57, esp.254.

³ sign of the insight they contain (*māšā d-sukkālhen*): cf XXXVI.1, I f.17r, Evagrius *Keph.Suppl.* 17.

⁴ indication of the mysteries (*buddāqā (h)ū d-rāzē*): compare *huddāq rāzē* in Narsai M I 352, II 270.

⁵ perfect knowledge (*īdā'ā gmīrtā*): cf XXX.14, XXXI.10, *Keph.*I title, II.64. The phrase, already found in Theodore of Mopsuestia *C.John* 194, 224, 264, is very common in Babai (*C.Evag.* 11r, 16r etc.), but is apparently not Evagrian; it also occurs in Ps. Dionysius 118v, Sergius 71 and Hierotheos 73.

44 ¹ prayer ascended to God like fire: cf *Par.* 482 (no 112; ET in BUDGE, *The Wit and Wisdom*, 33) where Abba Isaiah speaks, 'I know a brother whose prayer ascends to God like fire'. Compare also *Par.* 488 (no 129; ET BUDGE, *The Wit and Wisdom*, 39; no 135), 552 (no 197; ET BUDGE, *The Wit and Wisdom*, 88; no 303); Evagrius *Pr.* 111 'prayer of fire', Mark the Monk Add. 17192 89r 'divine fire consumes the intellect's offerings'; also Arsenios, whose body during prayer was seen to be like fire, *Par.* 685 (no 618; ET BUDGE, *The Wit and Wisdom*, 190; no 625), an example cited by Isaac in Part I 563. See in general my 'Fire from heaven: from Abel's sacrifice to the Eucharist. A theme in Syriac Christianity', *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993), 229-43.

² demons like flies (*dbāhē*): compare *Par.* 739 (no 108) where demons are seen by an Elder as surrounding people like bees (*deburyātā*). ET in BUDGE, *The Wit and Wisdom*, 232 (no 105).

³ better part: Luke 10:42.

imagined that they stood in (a state of) perfection. Others, merely on the basis of the educational training which they have had, have supposed that this would be sufficient to enable them to discover knowledge of truth: relying on secular culture and ordinary reading, they fell away from truth, and failed to humble themselves so as to stand up again.

45. [20] If prayer is fulfilled together with its outward forms, then this is the fulfilment, not only of psalmody, but also of all the virtues. To prevent us just listening to this statement as something ordinary, let us examine and learn the truth by means of precise enquiry.

46. Tell me, my brother, suppose there is someone who, for three nights and days, more or less, will lie prostrate before the Cross, as did some of the Fathers; or he may receive the gift of tears during the Office — something which the majority of right-minded brethren experience — tears which so compel that brother with their quantity that he is unable to complete the Office, even though he struggles greatly to do so: instead, he has to abandon the Office because of abundant weeping, and he is like someone aroused from the depths, his whole body becoming, so to say, a fountain of weeping¹, stemming from the groaning of heart produced by the grace that has been stirred within him; he is drenched in tears; or his tongue being silenced because of some particular joy, in his stillness tears burst forth and soak his face, owing to the wondrous insights² he has, while his soul exults and is filled with an indescribable hope.

47. Do you, my brother, consider as idleness this abandonment of the Office, this excellent altered state, along with the various other things that happen to the solitaries as they are in prayer during the Office, not all of which is it permitted to relate? What I have described applies to holy psalmody when it is swallowed up by¹ purity of prayer; it does not apply when this happens as a result of a corrupted Messalian mentality, or out of lassitude and sloth. Such an Office (as I have just described) should be considered by us as a completed work, for in it we have been brought close to the succour that comes from grace.

48. May God make us worthy of a taste of His grace at all times, for by it we approach the wonder that surrounds Him, thanks to an

46 ¹ a fountain of weeping (*mabbō'ā d-bektā*): cf Sahdona III 27, 29; compare XXXV.1, and *mabbō'ā d-dem'ē* in Part I 93, Evagrius *Pr.*6, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XV.33; also *mabbō'ā d-dem'ā* Sahdona III 48, IV 21 (based on Jer. 9:1 *mabbō'ā d-dem'ā*).

² wondrous insights (*sukkālē thirē*): cf *Keph.* IV.16, Part I 20.

47 ¹ swallowed up by: P 'sung in'.

awareness, during our Offices and prayers, of His great majesty. May He grant us the wisdom of His mysteries, for by this we shall be separated from the world and mingled in His love; through the prayer of our Fathers who have travelled along this road and pleased Him, ministering well before Him, amen.

XV.¹

By the same Mar Isaac², a section which nicely indicates and clearly explains what is pure and undistracted prayer.

1. A wise man, if he sets his face upon running off to find something that is both requisite and needful, for whose acquisition he is pleased to yearn for longingly, should not proceed relying just on a superficial report, or rush off to find it without any further investigation, or without having first learnt how and what it is. Otherwise, when the acquisition of it is actually within his grasp, he may easily let it slip away through having failed to recognize it. Rather, he needs carefully to gain a knowledge and understanding of the matter in hand — the sort of knowledge that is not mistaken; then, once he knows what it is like, he will know how to take care over its acquisition: exactly what it is he is running after, and what to expect. Otherwise, his expectations may be set upon things that are impossible, rather than upon the reality of the matter in hand, which is quite possible to attain.

2. Purity of prayer, O disciple of truth, and the recollection of mind that exists in it, consist in the exact reflection on virtue in which we carefully engage at the time of prayer. Just as purity of heart¹, concerning which the Fathers² diligently exhort, is not a matter of someone being totally without thought or reflection or stirring, but rather it consists in the heart being purified of all evil, and in gazing favourably on everything, and considering it from God's point of view, so it is the same with pure and undistracted prayer. This does not mean that the mind is entirely devoid of any thought or wandering of any kind, but that it does not wander about on empty subjects during the time of prayer. It is not the case that the mind is outside purity of prayer unless it wanders

XV ¹ A preliminary translation of this chapter appeared in *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer*, 293-7; again some slight revisions have been made.

² By..Isaac: om HPQ.

2 ¹ purity of heart (*dakyūt lebhā*) cf *Keph.* IV.33, 49, 52, Part I 29, *Aphrahat Dem.* 4:1, *Hist. Laus.* 369, *V. Antony* 54, 150, *Macarius* 191. In the seventh-century ES writers it is often found in *Sahdona* and *Dadisho'*. Compare also note to XX.22. Extracts from XV.2 and XV.5 are quoted by *Barhebraeus Ethicon* Ii.4 (ed. TEULE, 14; tr., 12).

² the Fathers: the allusion is too vague to identify; perhaps Isaac has in mind *Aphrahat Dem.* 4.1 and other such passages.

about on something specifically good; but it may also ponder on things that are appropriate and think thoughts pleasing³ to God during the time of prayer. Nor is it required of someone that empty recollections⁴ should not come at all when he prays, but that he should not occupy himself with them and be distracted by them.

3. For there is a good kind of wandering and a bad kind of wandering. When you are in prayer, do not seek to be entirely free of mental wandering, which is impossible, but seek to wander following something that is good. For even pure prayer consists in a wandering which follows something — but this wandering is excellent, seeing that the search for something good is excellent.

4. Wandering is bad when someone is distracted by empty thoughts or by reflecting on something bad¹, and so he thinks evil thoughts when he is praying before God.

5. Wandering is good when the mind wanders on God during the entire extent of its prayer, on His glory and majesty, stemming from a recollection of the Scriptures¹, and at insights into the divine utterances² and holy words of the Spirit. In the case of someone who struggles to tie down his thought from wandering on such things, or his mind from wandering of its own accord on them during prayer, he is of unparalleled stupidity if he thinks that this kind of wandering is alien to, and outside the limits of, pure prayer. For we do not consider as alien to purity of prayer and as detrimental to collectedness of thoughts³ in prayer⁴ any profitable recollections⁵ that may spring up in the mind from the Writings of the Spirit⁶, resulting in

³ thoughts pleasing (*tr'yt' y'yt*): P 'mentally' (*tr'ytn'yt*).

⁴ empty recollections (*'uhdānē srīqē*): cf Part I 20.

4 ¹ reflecting on something bad (*renyā d-'awlā*): cf Part I 449.

5 ¹ recollection of the Scriptures (*'uhdānā da-ktābē*): compare *Keph. II.45 'uhdānā d-men ktābē*, and Narsai M I 127 *'uhdān sefrē*.

² insights into...utterances (*sukkālē d-petgāmē*): cf Part I 4-5, 550, and compare 52 *sukkāl petgāmē*. The phrase already occurs in Theodore of Mopsuestia *C.John* 36 etc.

³ collectedness of thoughts (*kunnāš ḥuṣṣābē*): the emph. occurs in Part I 19-20 and Shem'on d-Taybuteh 292b. Compare *knišūt(ā d-)ḥuṣṣābē* Part I 447 (constr.), Shubḥalmaran 45r, Sahdona III I (constr.); *kenšā d-ḥuṣṣābē* Part I 477, Ephrem *H de Fide* 27:6; *knušyā d-ḥuṣṣābē Keph. IV.31*, Evagrius Add.14578 16v, Nilus 188; and *knuštā d-ḥuṣṣābē* Nilus 244.

⁴ in prayer: om MP.

⁵ profitable recollections (*'uhdānē mawtrānē*): cf Part I 191, 379, 555.

⁶ the Writings of the Spirit (*ktābay ruḥā*): cf Part I 187, Macarius 58, Babai *C.Evag.* 65r, Sahdona I.36, II 4. More common is the phrase (of Jewish origin) *ktābay quḏšā*, found in Part I 125, Aphrahat *Dem.* 14:47, Ephrem *H. de Fide* 75:2, Evagrius *Antirrh.* 35r, 36r, 50v, 77r, *Epp.* 97v, Nilus 297, Jacob of Serugh V 624, Dadisho' *C.Ahls.* I.23, X.4, XI.3.

insights and spiritual understanding of the divine world during the time of prayer. For someone to examine and think in a recollected manner about the object of his supplication and the request of his prayer, is an excellent kind of prayer, provided it is consonant with the intention of our Lord's commandments. This kind of collectedness of mind is very good.

6. If the mind is released from this prayer and becomes diffused in things divine, or if some excellent reflection occurs to it, arising out of Scripture's insights¹ on God, insights that are either individual to the person or belong to the (whole) community, insights into God's dispensations and acts of providence, whether they be those belonging to each successive day, or universal ones — all things by which the depth of the heart² is stirred towards the praise of God³, or to thanksgiving and joy at the immensity and exalted nature of His compassion and love towards us; (if this happens), this kind of wandering is even better than prayer! However exalted and pure someone's supplication may be, this is the culmination of every kind of collectedness of mind and of excellence of prayer.

7. When the mind is entirely without any kind of reflection, this is silence of the mind and not purity of prayer. It is one thing to pray purely, and quite another for the mind to be silent from any wandering at all or insight into the words of prayer, and to remain without any stirrings. No one is so stupid as to want to find this by means of struggle and the strength of his own will; for this is the gift of the revelation of the intellect¹, and it is not within the reach of pure prayer, or a matter of the will².

8. Apart from this, the mind is able to wander in prayer in the two ways we spoke of, either in reflection on its requests, or in contemplation on the Scriptures¹ and a sage² reflection on God, the Lord of all, carried out in a sensible way³.

6 ¹ Scripture's insights (*sukkālay ktābē*): compare *sukkālē da-ktābē* Part I 123, Sergius 58, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIV.26; *sukkālā da-ktābē* occurs in John Sol. *Epp.* 114, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIII.4,6 and Shem'on d-Ṭaybutēh 287b, 292b.

² depth of the heart (*'umqā d-lebbā*): cf XXIX.9, XXXII.1.

³ praise of God: P 'service of our God'.

7 ¹ revelation of the intellect (*gelyānā d-hawnā*): cf *Keph.* I.80 (plur.) and Part I 161; compare *gelyānē d-mad'ā* Part I 338, and *gelyānē d-hawnē* in Ps.Dionysius 75v.

² the will: H 'nature'.

8 ¹ contemplation on the Scriptures (*te'ōryā da-ktābē*): cf *Keph.* I.41, Part I 127, 164. Evidently derived from Babai *C.Evag.*, where it occurs frequently (21r, 31v, 34v etc.); it is also found in Shem'on d-Ṭaybutēh 290b, 310b. Compare Part I 53 *te'ōryā d-men ktābē*.

² sage: P 'beloved'.

³ sensible way: in the text there follows the following scholion (*nuhhārā*): We (should?) realize this as well: when reflection arising out of the Scriptures, or some (other) meditation occurs to someone at the time of prayer, then, if it is not in the form of

9. If anyone thinks otherwise with respect to purity of thoughts¹ and collectedness of mind, supposing that there is some other means of finding them, then he is infirm in his ignorance and he is impeded by a boorish mind.

10. You are wise enough not to require of the mind motionlessness — as do the fools; for this cannot be asked of (human) nature. Rather, strive to discover stirrings that are good during the time of prayer, as the wise do. These consist in: reflection on the Spirit's insights, and a sagacious purpose which considers during the time of prayer how to please the will of the Maker of all¹: this is the final end of all virtue and of all prayer.

11. When in these matters you receive the power which stems from grace to be bound firmly to their continual stirrings¹, you will become *a man of God*² and will be close to spiritual things; close, too, to finding that for which you yearn without your being aware of it, namely, the apperception of God³, the wonderment of mind that is free of all images, and the spiritual silence of which the Fathers speak⁴. Blessed will you be, and held worthy of the great joy and gladness which exists in our Lord — to whom be praise and honour. And may He perfect us with knowledge of His mysteries⁵, for ever and ever, amen.

some recollection that befits the New World and dying to the passions, but rather, its concern is with the love of learning and desire for (intellectual) training, (then that reflection) is truly devoid of (real) prayer.

9 ¹ purity of thoughts (*dakyūt huššābē*): cf Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XI.15, XIV.17, *Shel.* 218b. Isaac and Dadisho' will have derived the phrase from the *Anaphora of Addai and Mari* (it also features in some other ES liturgical texts). Compare *dakyūtā d-huššābē* in Philoxenus *Disc.* 93, Sahdona I 56, IV 76; at XXXII.4 Isaac uses *huššābē dkayyā*.

10 ¹ Maker of all: cf XXXIX.9; the title is Evagrian (*Epp.* 105v, 165v, *Mel.* 26).

11 ¹ continual stirrings (*zaw'ē amminē*): cf Sahdona II 37 (sing.).

² man of God: I Tim. 6:11, 2 Tim.3:17 (cf Part I 68).

³ apperception of God (*margšānūtā db-alāhā*): cf *Keph.* IV.48.

⁴ the Fathers speak: unidentified, though reference to 'free of all images' suggests Evagrius *Pr.* 67, 114, 117 as possibilities.

⁵ knowledge of His mysteries (*yed'at rāzaw(hy)*): cf Sahdona II 32; for the emphatic see under XXXV.8.

XVI.¹

By the same, on 'overshadowing'.

1. Even though we have spoken about this elsewhere earlier on when a suitable opportunity presented itself, we will not mind illuminating the topic to a greater extent here.

2. 'Overshadowing' is a term indicating help and protection, and also the receiving of a heavenly gift; for example, '*The Holy Spirit shall come and the Power of the Most High shall overshadow you*'¹. The former kind is involved in '*Cause your right hand, Lord, to overshadow me*'², which is a request for help; this is like '*I will overshadow this town and deliver it*'³.

3. Thus we understand two kinds of action in the 'overshadowing' over human beings that comes from God: one is mysterious¹ and spiritual², the other practical. The former consists in the sanctification which is received through divine grace; in other words, when, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, someone is sanctified in his body and soul, as was the case with Elisabeth³, John the Baptist and the holy Mary⁴, blessed among women — although in her case it was unique, going beyond the case of other created beings.

4. But let us turn to the partial 'overshadowing' which occurs with other holy men and women — like limbs in the body.

5. The mysterious variety of overshadowing such as takes place with any holy person, is an active force which overshadows the intellect, and when someone is held worthy of this overshadowing, the intellect is seized and dilated with a sense of wonder¹, in a kind of

XVI ¹ This chapter is also found in Part I (ch.54); it is omitted by P. The present translation revises on some small points the one published in my '*Maggnanuta*'.

² ¹ Luke 1:35.

² Ps. 138 (137):7-8.

³ 2 Kings 19:34 = Is.38:6; 'and I will deliver it', of Kings, is not found in the earlier manuscripts of Peshitta Isaiah, being attested there first in ninth-century manuscripts.

³ ¹ mysterious: or 'sacramental'.

² spiritual: or 'noetic'.

³ Elisabeth: KLN 'Elisha'.

⁴ Mary: Kmg Lmg + 'the God-bearer'.

⁵ ¹ the intellect is seized..wonder (*byud temhā methḥep hawnā*): compare XXII.6. In Part I 48 Isaac speaks of being 'swallowed up' in wonder.

divine revelation². As long as this (divine) activity overshadows the intellect, that person is raised above the movement of the thoughts of his soul³, thanks to the participation of the Holy Spirit. This is what the Apostle speaks of, in the form of a prayer, (in his letter) to the Ephesians, wanting to indicate this mystery to them, saying, 'May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, grant to you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, and may the eyes of your heart be illumined'⁴. And what is the aim of this? 'So that you may realize what the hope of His calling is, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance among the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His might in us who believe'⁵.

6. This is one mysterious kind of overshadowing: when this power overshadows a person, he is held worthy of the glory of the New World by means of revelation. This is the partial (overshadowing) which has been the lot of the *saints in light*¹, as the blessed Paul said, of which those are held worthy who have received from the Spirit sanctification² of the intellect through their holy and excellent way of life³.

7. The other overshadowing, whose working is recognized in practical terms, is a spiritual power which protects and hovers over someone continuously, driving from him anything harmful which may happen to approach his body or soul. This is something which is perceived invisibly by the illumined intellect that has knowledge by means of the eye of faith, and it has been (thus) recognized often by the saints. As it is written, 'An encampment of the angels of the

² divine revelation (*gelyānā alāhāyā*): cf Part I 161 (the plur. also occurs: 371, 545, 549f). For the sing. cf Theodore of Mopsuestia *WS* VI 239, John Sol. *Soul* 61, Narsai M I 3, 46, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XV.2, *C.Par.* 903, 968 (elsewhere Dadisho' uses the plural: *C.Abls.* I.5, 29, IV.3, VII.14; so too Sahdona I 110-11).

³ thoughts of his soul (*huššabē napsānāyē*): cf XXXII.4, *Keph.* III.31, Part I 21, 155 (sing.), 169, 527. The term goes back to Basil (*Ep.Greg.* Add.17192 191r) and John the Solitary (*Soul* 17); in seventh-century ES writers, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XV.23.

⁴ Eph. 1:17-18.

⁵ Eph. 1:18-19.

⁶ ¹ saints in light: based on Col. 1:2

² sanctification: based on 2 Thess.2:13.

³ holy and excellent way of life (*dubbārē qaddīšē wa-myattrē*): for *dubbārē qaddīšē* see on IV.6; *dubbārē myattrē* occurs in Basil *Pr.* 94v (sing. and pl.), Evagrius Add.14578 78v (sing. in *Ev.Syr.* 128), Theodore of Mopsuestia *C.Qoh.* A 68, *Hist. Laus.* 1, 2 (and often), *Hist. Monach.* 335 (and often), John Sol. *Epp.* 54, Mark the Monk Add 17192 95r, Philoxenus *Disc.* 47, 243, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XV.10 (sing. at XIV.17).

*Lord surrounds and He delivers those who fear him*¹, and *'Many are the testings of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them from them all'*².

¹ Ps 34:8 (in the Peshitta it is the 'encampment' which is the subject of 'delivers').

² Ps. 34:20, but Isaac has altered 'misfortunes' of the Peshitta to 'testings', and has changed the 'righteous' from sing. to plur.

XVII.¹

By the same Mar Isaac², by what means hidden wakefulness is preserved in the soul, and from what (source) sleep and coldness enter the mind, extinguishing from the soul holy warmth, deadening (its) fervour³ in God for spiritual and heavenly delights.

1. There is no possibility for the opposing party (sc. the Devil) to hinder those who desire what is good unless some occasion be found for the exercise of his crafty wickedness that is provided on the part of those same lovers of the good. The matter is like this: every stirring of desire for the good is accompanied, at the very beginning of the impulse¹, by a certain zeal which resembles, in its warmth, coals of fire. This (zeal) has the habit of surrounding that stirring of desire as though it were (with a) wall, driving away from it any obstacle or hindrance there may be — for it possesses great strength and an ineffable power, fortifying the entire soul so that it does not grow feeble or get shaken by the onslaughts of all kinds of difficulties.

That first (stirring) consists in the power of the holy desire that is implanted in the soul's nature, that is to say, (it is) an impulse set in motion by the 'irascible' faculty² that exists by nature in the soul, that

XVII. ¹ This chapter too duplicates one in Part I (ch.55); it is omitted by P.

² By...Isaac: om KLN.

³ fervour: KLN 'desire'.

1 ¹ very beginning of the impulse (*šurray mettzī'ānūtā*): cf Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XV.43, *C.Par.* 912, *Shel.* 234a.

² 'irascible' faculty (*haylāh d-ḥemtā*): Isaac follows the standard division of the soul into three parts or powers (going back to Plato *Republic* IV.14 = 439d-440e, τὸ λογιστικόν, τὸ θυμοειδές, τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν. This tripartite division will have been familiar to Isaac primarily through Evagrius (e.g. *Gnos.* 14, *Prakt.* 22, and especially 89), but also through earlier Syriac writers, notably John the Solitary (*Soul* 26) and Babai. Τὸ λογιστικόν is regularly associated with the mind (*mad'ā*) or intellect (*hawnā*; Dadisho' *C.Abls.* IX.2 specifically states that 'the Greeks' use the term *hawnā* where the Syrians use *mad'ā*); compare also Babai *C.Evag.* 223r, who adds *ḥuṣṣābā*). Isaac's term *mlilūtā* corresponds to the *haylā mlilā* of Evagrius *Keph.* I.25 [S 1] (compare Babai *C.Evag.* 32v, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* III.17 *haylā mallālā*); contrast Part I 15 where he speaks of the *mnātā mestaklānūtā* (cf Babai *C.Evag.* 38r, 100r). *Ḥemtā* is regularly the term used for the characteristic of τὸ θυμοειδές or the *mnātā ḥāšōštā* (as Isaac calls in in Part I 15), cf Evagrius *Epp.* 172v, John Sol. *Soul* 26. The further link, with 'zeal', that Isaac makes here is also to be found in Part I 15. The third part, τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν or the *mnātā regtānūtā* (Part I 15, following Evagrius *Epp.* 163v), is associated here with *reḥmtā*, rather

has been placed there in us naturally by God in order to safeguard the boundaries of nature and so that it may employ the strength of its forcefulness to fulfil the soul's natural desire, that is to say, virtue; without it, virtue cannot be cultivated. Now this is named 'zeal'.

2. This is what lends zeal to the soul¹, stirring it, enflaming it, and making it strong on occasion so that (a person) shuns the body in (the course of) afflictions and fearsome temptations that befall (him), so that he confidently hands himself over to death and confronts the powers of the Rebel, (all) for the sake of fulfilling what the soul most especially loves.

3. Someone¹ who is clothed in Christ somewhere in his writings called this zeal 'a dog'² and the 'guardian of the law of God', which is virtue. Virtue is the fulfilling of God's laws.

4. Now this zealous power takes on strength, is aroused and enflamed so as to guard the house for two reasons; and again, it grows weak, dozes off and becomes neglectful for two other¹ reasons. The first reason for its heat and arousal (occurs) when some fearfulness arises in a person, because he is afraid concerning the virtue he has either acquired or is going to acquire, lest it be snatched away or be destroyed as a result of some concomitant event. This is set in motion by divine providence in all true cultivators of virtue, resulting in the wakefulness and constant zeal of the soul, lest it doze off.

5. Now when this fearfulness is set in motion in (human) nature — this 'dog' of which they speak¹ — it will night and day be (full of) ardour, like a blazing furnace, spurring on (human) nature. Like the Cherub², it is awake and peering out all around it continually. One could

than the more frequent *reggtā* (Part I 23f [where Bedjan's text is wrong; for *reggtā* see *PdO* 12 (1984-5), 205 note], Evagrius *Epp.* 172v, Babai *C.Evag.* 63r, 209r, 223r, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* III.17, IX.2); in his choice of *rehmtā* Isaac is evidently following John the Solitary *Soul* 26. See in general E. KHALIFÉ HACHEM, 'L'âme et les passions des hommes d'après un texte d'Isaac de Ninive', *PdO* 12 (1984-5), 201-18 (with a French tr. of Isaac Part I 20-31). Compare also XIX.1-6.

2 ¹ the soul: KLN 'a person'.

3 ¹ Someone: a late hand in the margin of K rightly identifies the source as Evagrius (see next note).

2 'a dog': here, as in Part I 343, Isaac alludes to Evagrius *Keph.Suppl.* 10 'the observant intellect is the dog (guarding) God's law, chasing away evil thoughts through the stirring up of zeal'. Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIII.19 and Anon. *C.Abls.* 63 likewise refer to the passage, both explicitly naming Evagrius.

4 ¹ other: H 'alien'.

5 ¹ they speak: KLN 'we spoke'.

2 Cherub: Gen. 3:24, where the Pesitta has a single cherub (against the plural of the Hebrew and LXX).

say that if a bird passed by in its vicinity, it would be aroused to bark with an indescribably piercing violence.

6. When, (however), this fearfulness is for the sake of the body, it is Satanic (in origin), seeing that such a person has doubted in his faith concerning God's providential care: he has forgotten how God is concerned for those who care for virtue, taking care of their affairs at every moment.

7. As the Holy Spirit said through the mouth of the Prophet, '*The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and his ears are (ready) to hear them*'¹, and '*the mind of the Lord is upon those who fear him*'². And in another place, as though speaking in the person of (God) to those who cultivate virtue, '*Evil shall not approach (or, touch) you, nor shall any scourge come near your dwelling place, for He will give his angels charge over you to guard you, and they shall carry you on their arms*'³, along with the rest of the verses written (there).

8. Therefore when this fearfulness is for the soul's sake, concerning the accidents that can occur to virtue, lest it be snatched away or harmed by some cause or other, then this is a thought of divine origin¹, and an excellent reflection: this distress and fearfulness in the soul — the dread which torments the mind with its worry — stem from God's providential care.

9. The second cause of the strength and the enflaming of 'the dog' results from a growing desire for virtue in the soul. The greater the desire in the soul for the object of its love — which is a divinely (instilled) thought — the more does the natural zeal (for virtue) become enflamed on its behalf.

10. As for the causes of its abating and dozing off, the first is when the desire (for virtue) becomes blunted and diminished in the soul. The second is when some confident thought enters and takes up residence in the soul, and (as a result) that person will as often as not confidently imagine that he need have no fear of anything that can cause him harm. At this very point he throws away from himself the armour of zeal and he becomes like an unguarded house where the dog is asleep, having abandoned his watch.

7 ¹ Ps. 34:15.

2 Ps.25:14.

3 Ps.91:10-12 (slightly abbreviated).

8 ¹ thought of divine origin (*huṣṣābā alāhāyā*): cf XVII.9, Part I 394-5, *Hist. Laus.* 221, Dadisho' *C.Par.* 942, *Shel.* 220b (plur.).XVII.9.

11. It is as a result of such a thought as that that the majority of these spiritual 'houses'¹ meet with despoiling: this occurs when the luminosity of the flame of holy knowledge² that is in the soul becomes darkened. As a result of what does it become darkened? Either some subtil thought³ of (empty) imagination creeps into the soul; or a person is inclined to paying too great concern for the things of the body; or he has frequent meetings with 'the world'⁴.

12. Whenever the (ascetic) combatant¹ consents to meetings with the world, immediately the soul becomes weakened. This is particularly the case (if he meets with) a woman; likewise if many people turn up (as visitors): at their appearance the soul is necessarily harassed by (thoughts of) vainglory. In short, whenever the helmsman intellect² encounters the world, it resembles a steersman³ who was sailing calmly on the sea, with a gentle following wind blowing him towards harbour, when all of a sudden he finds himself on a reef.

11¹ spiritual 'houses': for the soul as a 'house', compare 'the house of the mind' in Part I 478, and 'the house of the heart' in Shem'on d-Taybuteh 175a, 178a, 185b.

² holy knowledge: cf XXXIX.19, Evagrius *Epp.* 165r, *Keph.* II.34, III.72, VI.27, *Antirrh.* 51v, Ps.Dionysius 15v, 82v, 111v, Hierotheos 78, Shubhalmaran 31r, Gregory of Cyprus 92, Shem'on d-Taybuteh 300a.

³ subtil thought (*huššābā qattinā*): cf Part I 530 (plur.).

⁴ L adds 'O belly, gall of evils!'

12¹ combatant (*ἀγωνιστής*): K 'person'.

² the helmsman intellect (*hawwā šānōzā*): or 'charioteer' (as e.g. *Ap.Const.* VIII.34.6). Titus of Bostra II.7 (p.37 lines 22-23) already uses *šānōzā* of the *mad'ā* (compare also III.13).

³ intellect...steersman (*qubernitā*): for the intellect as κυβερνήτης cf Titus of Bostra III.13 (p.88 line 23), Evagrius *Epp.* 180r, Add. 14578 83r (probably the passage Isaac has in mind here), Macarius 155, Nilus 199, 222, Gregory of Cyprus Add.17192 163r. John the Solitary likewise speaks of the mind (*mad'ā*) as 'steersman' (*Hes.* 7).

XVIII.

Again, by Mar Isaac¹, questions on particular topics.

1. *On the peace and tranquillity of mind (and) when a person will begin to become aware of them¹.*

The soul receives limpidity after experiences (consisting) in struggles. Even though the soul is darkened during the times of conflict, nevertheless once these conflicts have passed from it the intellect becomes like the sun in the resplendence of knowledge²: once it has been battered for the sake of our Lord by temptations from the passions and from the demons, it is like the annual fruits which are battered by the full force of the (sun's) rays and then acquire sweetness and become of use (as a source) of delight.

2. *On the love of God: what it is, how it is acquired, and when.*

Love of God is not a sort of impulse which springs up without a person's knowing or indiscriminately; nor can it be stirred up¹ in someone solely as a result of knowledge of the Scriptures²; nor can anyone love God by forcing himself. What is possible is for the mind to receive, from the reading and recounting of Scripture and knowledge of it, a sense of reverence which stems from a recollection of the majesty of God³, and to feel awe at Him in a discerning way, whether it be the awe that children feel, or the awe of servants. (The mind) can thus be aroused with an incentive to virtue and a fervent desire for what is good. But if anyone acknowledges, imagines in himself, or teaches along these lines, that a person can effect that the love of God be depicted in himself as a result of vigilance over what is laid down in laws and such like, or as a result of compulsion or struggle on his part, or as a result of any human practice or means — then this person does not know what he is saying.

XVIII title ¹ By Mar Isaac: om HP.

¹ ¹ a person...of them: P 'it begins to become aware of the saints'.

² the resplendence (*mbarrāqūtāh*) of knowledge: the Syriac could also be read as a verb, *mbarrāqūtāh* 'as knowledge becomes resplendent'.

² ¹ stirred up: P 'known'.

² knowledge of the Scriptures (*īda'tā da-ktābē*): cf *Keph.* IV.72, Evagrius Add.14578 117r (constr.), *Hist. Laus.* 23-4, *Hist.Monach.* 360, Mark the Monk Add. 17192 133v, Sahdona III 16, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* X.2, *C.Par.*901.

³ recollection of the majesty of God (*'uhdānā d-rabbūteh d-alāhā*): cf Part I 39, and compare I f.16v *'uhdānā d-rabbūteh*.

Not even as a result of the law, or commandment which He gives⁴ concerning love, is it possible to love God: from the law there comes a sense of awe, but not one of desire. For until a person receives the Spirit of revelations⁵ and (his) soul, with its impulses⁶, is united to that wisdom⁷ which is above the world and he becomes aware in his own person of God's lofty attributes, it is not possible for him to come close to this glorious savour (of love). Someone who has not actually drunk wine will not become inebriated as a result of being told about wine; and someone who has not been himself held worthy⁸ of a knowledge of the lofty things of God cannot become inebriated with love for him.

3. *On the sequence of ways by which the mind is steered¹ towards the glorious things pertaining to God.*

As a result of the mind's constant meditation and pondering² on matters pertaining to the divine Nature, and (as a result of) the batterings and the discipline (effected) by spiritual struggles and conflicts, a certain power accompanying the mind is perceptibly born. And this power (in turn) gives birth in the mind to joy at all times, and by means of joy a person will approach that purity of the thoughts³ which is called 'the pure sphere of the natural state'⁴. Then, by means of purity, this person is held worthy of the operation of the Holy Spirit: once he is first purified, then he is sanctified. On occasion this may happen in the middle of reflection on whatever he is occupied with, by means of some luminous stirring that transcends the flesh, when he acquires an inner stillness⁵ in God, a semblance of the future state (which consists) in a continual and ineffable rest in God.

⁴ which he gave: John 13:34.

⁵ Spirit of revelations (*ruhā d-gelyānē*): cf Part I 579 (Paraclete), Narsai M I 2 (constr.), Shem'on d-Ṭaybutēh 316a (constr.); based on Eph. 1:17 *ruhā d-ḥiekmūtā wad-gelyānā*.

⁶ soul with its impulses: see on XIV.24.

⁷ wisdom: P + 'of God'.

⁸ held worthy: there is a deliberate word play on *ešū* 'drunk' and *ešwī* 'held worthy'.

3 ¹ steered (*mīdr*): lit. 'led by the arm'; PAYNE SMITH, *Thesaurus* 953, lists the pa''el, but BROCKELMANN, *Lexicon* 168, only the af'el. H 'advanced' (*mīdrg*).

² pondering: lit. 'wandering' (*pehyā*, here in a good sense).

³ purity of the thoughts (*naqdūtā d-ḥuššābē*): cf Abraham of Nathpar 96v (sing.). Compare *knikūtā d-ḥuššābē* Part I 551.

⁴ pure sphere of the natural state (*atrā dakyā da-kyānā*): Isaac refers to Mark the Monk *On those who think they can be justified by works*, Add.12175 153r.2, where this phrase occurs. Compare *Keph.* IV.59 *atrā šelyā da-kyānā*.

⁵ inner stillness (*šelyūtā gawwāyā*): cf Part I 44.

4. *Whence continual weeping is born — a state related concerning one or two of the saints who never ceased from weeping.*

A flow of constant tears may occur in someone for three (different) reasons: (firstly,) as a result of wonder at the insights full of mysteries that are revealed all the time to the intellect (it can happen that) tears involuntarily flow in abundance without that person feeling any sorrow; this is because he is gazing on these (insights) with the vision of the intellect¹, all the while held in astonishment at the knowledge (imparted) by the things that are revealed spiritually to the intellect in (the form of) insights; tears then flow of their own accord, without (any feeling of) fatigue from the strength of the sweetness which takes hold of the intellect from within (its) vision of all this. These (insights) the Fathers used to call 'a type of the manna which the Children of Israel ate'², and 'the drink from the rock — which is Christ'³ — in other words, mystical and spiritual insights.

5. Or (tears may come) from a fervent love¹ of God which enflames the soul, when someone cannot endure (any longer) without weeping continually as a result of its sweetness and delight.

6. Or (tears may come) from an abundant lowliness of heart¹. Now humility of heart can occur in someone for two (different) reasons: either as a result of a precise knowledge of one's sins; or as a result of recollecting the lowliness of our Lord² — or rather, as a result of recollecting the greatness of God: to what extent the greatness of the Lord of all lowered itself in order to speak to and instruct (us) humans in different ways — abasing Himself to such an extent that He even took a body from humanity; how much did our Lord's body³ endure, what did it have to go through, how despised did He appear to the world, when all the time He possessed ineffable glory on high with God the Father, with the angels trembling at the sight of Him as the glory of His countenance

4 ¹ vision of the intellect: see on XIV.2.

² type of the manna...: unidentified; perhaps Isaac has in mind passages such as Ephrem *H. de Fide* 9:12, Macarius 206 (*mannā da-šrārā, mannā ruḥānā*) or Philoxenus *Disc.*288 (*mannā ruḥānā*); Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIV.7 also speaks of the *mannā da-šrārā*.

³ the drink from the rock — which is Christ: cf 1 Cor. 10:4.

5 ¹ fervent love (*ḥubbā ḥammimā*): cf Sahdona II 52, III 93, IV 52. Compare *hammimā d-ḥubbā* in Narsai M II 35.

6 ¹ lowliness/humility of heart: see on V.8.

² recollecting the lowliness of our Lord (*men 'uhdānā d-mukkākeh d-māran*): cf XVIII.9 (constr.), *Keph.* IV.74.

³ our Lord's body (*pagrā mārānāyā*): for this adjectival phrase cf Sahdona II 87, IV 9, 28.

blazed out among their ranks! Whereas in our case He was to be seen in such an appearance of lowliness that (human beings) could, because of the ordinariness of His appearance, seize hold of Him as He spoke with them and hang Him on the wood (of the Cross).

7. Thus in the case of the person who possesses no flow of tears, it is not just that he has no tears; rather, he is bereft of the things which cause tears and he does not possess in his soul those roots which give birth to them. In other words, he has never been aware of the taste of the love¹ of God; reflection on the divine mysteries has never stirred within him as a result of his continuance in God's presence; nor does he possess lowliness of heart, even though he may imagine that he possesses humility.

8. Do not adduce for me as an example those who are humble by nature, saying that there are many such people whose very nature testifies that they are humble, yet they do not have tears. Do not introduce (human) nature here, for (in this case) it is extinguished stirrings which are acquired, ones that are inert and burnt out, lacking any fierce heat: they do not possess this discerning lowliness¹ which consists in lowly thoughts, discerning and painstaking reflection, the insignificance with which a person regards himself, his heart broken, and the flow of tears stemming from suffering of mind² and discernment of the will.

9. If you want, ask them. (You will find) that they have none of these, no meditation that causes them real suffering, no (real) concern over (their) consciences. They do not meditate and recollect the lowliness of our Lord, they are not pierced by the sharp pain that comes² from a knowledge of their sins, there is no burning fervour which inflames their hearts at the recollection of the good things that are to come³, they have none of the other advantageous thoughts that are normally stirred up in the heart as a result of the mind's wakefulness.

7 ¹ taste of the love (*t'āmtā d-ḥubbā*): cf XXXV.5, XLI.1, *Keph.*IV.75, *Sahdona* II 39; compare also X.29, 36 above.

8 ¹ discerning lowliness (*mukkākā d-puršānē*): cf Part I 444.

² suffering of mind (*ḥašša d-tar'itā*): cf *Sahdona* III 52 (plur.); compare *ḥašša d-re'yānā* in *Keph.* II.38, 44, 60, Part I 344, *John Sol. Soul* 18, *Dadisho' Shel.* 621; and *ḥašša d-renyā* at XX.10.

9 ¹ these: P + 'thoughts'.

² they... that comes: lit. 'nor (do they have) the sharp pain that strikes as a result' (for 'strikes' B mg m.I and H have 'reels').

³ recollection of the good things that are to come (*'uhdān ṭābātā da-'īdān*): cf Part I 230, 550 (both with *d-*); compare *'uhdānā d-ṭābātā* *Macarius* 23, *Gregory of Cyprus* 90.

10. (If you include these) then you should also allocate to the rank of the humble babies (still) sucking milk (at the breast), for they live in (this) world without having any thought at all! If, however, you consider those who are by nature serene or placid as belonging to the rank of those who are humble through knowledge and their own will, then you must also call 'virgins' eunuchs who have been in this state from their mother's womb, and allocate them to the grade of the virgins and the consecrated¹, even though it was not their own volition, but nature, which has prevented them from getting married and has placed them in the state of virginity. It is exactly the same with those who are mild and humble by nature: it is nature which has moderated their impulses, and not strength of will.

11. These people neither taste nor are they in the slightest aware of the sweetness of the charisms and consolations of which those who are humble for our Lord's sake taste. This is why they do not receive the wondrous gift of continual tears that bring consolation — those (tears) which are taken by the Fathers to be figure for the Land of Promise. 'Once you have entered there, you will no longer fear wars'¹. Consolation is promised to those afflicted of heart². (But) those who have no expectation of it as they mourn, will not have consolation sent to them, and those who do not thirst with yearning will not find themselves assuaged by spiritual drink.

12. If, however, along with what they possess by nature, these people also have the discernment of (their own) will, then account such people as blessed, for they have been accounted worthy to find an ally for their excellence of will in (their own) nature, with the result that they complete their virtuous life without a conflict. This is why they also receive the consolation that follows on good (use of the) will.

13. But if their qualities are purely nature's gift, then do not envy them any more than you would praise irrational (animals) and call them blessed.

14. In your own case, then, if you do not possess lowliness of heart, or the sweet and burning suffering¹ that (comes with) the love of God,

10 ¹ the consecrated (*qaddiṣē*): Isaac here uses *qaddiṣā* in the technical sense (married people who refrain from sexual intercourse) found in early Syriac writers (notable Aphrahat).

11 ¹ Once you have entered...: *Apophthegmata* = *Par.* 492 (no.142), ET BUDGE, *The Wit and Wisdom*, 42 (no 148); also Evagrius *Add.*14578 115v.

² afflicted of heart: based on Ps.51:17.

12-13 are freely quoted by Barhebraeus, *Ethicon* I.iv.3 (ed. TEULE, 57-8; tr., 49).

14 ¹ sweet...suffering (*ḥašṣā ḥalyā*): cf *Keph.* 1.44; compare *ḥalyūt ḥašṣē*, Ephrem (attr.), *Sermones* IV.i.249, and *ḥašṣā haw bassīmā* at XXIV.2, below.

things which are the root for those tears which pour forth delectable consolation in the heart, then do not take refuge in (the excuse of) any lameness on nature's part, or people whose heart is naturally torpid, and whose interior members² — which should put into motion in the soul the healthy power of rationality — are impaired. Do not use these as an excuse for not even feeling a little suffering over your own deficiencies.

15. In the case of those who have acquired, along with possessing a natural innocence and serenity, stirrings that are both illumined¹ and discerning, it is clear that they too will have tears, since where there is lowliness of heart coupled with discernment, then it is not possible for that person to hold himself back from weeping, even though he does not want to. This is because the heart involuntarily surges forth with a fountain of weeping continually, due to the burning (feeling of) suffering that is uncontrollably in it, and the contrition of heart².

16. These three (causes of tears) a person acquires from stillness: whether it be love for God, or whether it be wonder at his mysteries¹, or whether it be lowliness of heart. There is no suffering more burning than the love of God. O Lord, hold me worthy to taste of this fountain! Therefore, if someone does not have stillness, he will not come to know any one of these things, even though he may have many (other) virtues. (But) he cannot know what the love of God is like, nor will he ever acquire spiritual knowledge or true humility² (that comes) from the heart.

17. Anyone who does not know these three excellent things — or rather, glorious gifts — will be amazed when he hears about people who possess continual weeping, for he will imagine that the weeping comes from their own volition, or that they are forcing themselves in this matter. For this reason, the matter will seem incredible to him.

18. *Concerning the discerning stirring¹ which is set in motion all of a sudden at wonder at our coming into being and creation by God; and the moment it is set in motion in a person, he is reduced to silence in wonder and remains filled with delight from head to*

² interior members: see note to V.20.

15 ¹ stirrings...illumined (*zaw'ē nahhīrē*): cf *Keph.* I.58, Part I 48, 281.

² contrition of heart (*thārā d-lehbā*): cf Part I 108 (constr.), 349, Sahdona III 29; based on Ps.69:20.

16 ¹ wonder at his mysteries (*temhā d-rāzaw(hy)*): cf XXXVIII.2, and compare *temhā dab-rāzē ruhānē* VIII.1, and *tehrā d-r.* *Keph.* I.88, IV.13.

² true humility (*makkikūtā šarrīrtā*): cf Part I 224, John Sol. *Soul* 67, Abba Isaiah I.3b, *Hist.Laus.* 324, Sextus 5, Mark the Monk Add 17192 129r, Shubḥalmaran 4v, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* I.25.

18 ¹ discerning stirring (*zaw'ā pārōšā*): cf Part I 228.

*toes*². Anyone who has been aware of such joy-filled moments will understand.

Praise to Your grace, O God; praise to Your grace, O God; praise to Your grace, O God, who brought us into existence when we did not exist, granted us an unending being, providing us too with life, sense perception, reason, freewill and authority, five incomparably great gifts. For Your love did not just cause us to exist, but to be capable of reason, so that we might become aware of and enjoy the delight of intelligence and the pleasure of the vast gift of insight³. And because it was not possible that we should be like You without beginning, You granted that we should be without end, like You. Praise to You for the pleasure Your gift gives!

19. The blessed Fathers¹ of holy memory say that these moments which cause wonder at the insights they bring as a result of setting into motion of illumined stirrings (arise) from the proximity of the angels. On occasion during such times it is as if all that person's limbs had become running streams of tears, as a result of joy and wonder. Those upon whom these mercies (have been poured) will recognize these indications. For a long while after these occurrences, such a person is seen to be in a sort of serenity and stillness. After such insights, who will not laud you, O stillness, that harbour of mercies?

20. This is how you should understand me with respect to all the insights which occur through grace — (insights) which do not (come) as a result of a person's investigation or will, but occur to (human) nature all of a sudden, at the bidding of God for a person's consolation, through the mediation of the holy angels who are sent¹ in a continual ministry to those who are going to inherit life, in accordance with the word of the blessed Paul.

21. *Indications from the Fathers concerning these times.*

During these moments the person for whom these things take place should remember the word of Evagrius¹, admirable among the saints,

² toes: lit. '(toe) nails'.

³ vast gift of insight (*rabbūt mawhabtā d-sukkālā*): compare *Keph.* IV.78 *mawhabtā d-sukkālā*.

19 ¹ Fathers: 'Abdisho' (*WS* VII 259b = 260a) seems to have the same passage in mind when he speaks of 'the proximity of the angel of care' (*metqarbānūtā d-mal'akā da-b'fīlūtā*). In Part I 497 Isaac quotes Evagrius as saying 'when the holy angels are close to us they fill us with a spiritual vision...'. Probably the source of all these passages should be identified as Evagrius *Pr.* 32 (Greek 30), where the Syriac has 'when an angel approaches us all those who are troubling us depart, and the intellect is to be found at great ease, praying in a healthy way'.

20 ¹ who are sent...: Heb.1:14. 'Holy' is a regular epithet for angels in Evagrius.

21 ¹ Evagrius: For the following quotation see Evagrius, *Praktikos* 24 and especially 80.

(namely) the discernment (necessary) between thoughts (coming) from demons and those (coming) from angels, lest someone mistake the one for the other:

22. 'Following thoughts that (originate) from those accursed (demons) the soul is in a state of commotion, that is, it is immediately stirred by the passions, by anger, or lust etc., or haughtiness or pride¹, or vainglory. But following thoughts that (originate) from the angels, the soul receives peace and ineffable tranquility for a long while, and great lowliness — but also fervour and joy, and continual tears and contempt for the world'.

22 ¹ or pride: om MP.

XIX.

By Mar Isaac¹. What are the natural properties by which (human) nature endowed with intelligence receives divine knowledge, and what are those (properties) which are constituted on its path way.

1. Every rational nature that has been constituted to receive divine teaching has been established in its own particular way out of three basic¹ parts by the wisdom of the glorious Creator: these are, desire, zeal and reason². Now it is necessary to know what are the things that each one of these has been constituted (as being capable) of receiving.

2. To the first part there belong: yearning, and the incitement of all that is beautiful and excellent, things which instruct the rational mind, (directing it) towards the divine laws, lowliness, gentleness, self-abasement, great compassion, and the rest. These are the things we are constituted (as being capable) of receiving by means of the first part when we are stirred by it. And when this part of the faculty predominates in the soul, then these things make their appearance in the rational nature.

3. To the second part there belong: alertness and diligence, along with a valiant perseverance (in the face) of afflictions and all sorts of misfortunes that are likely to turn up, (borne) for the sake of things divine; also a strong disposition¹, courage and valour of heart², fortitude against all that causes harm and fright, whether it be from demons, human beings, reptiles or wild animals; or (from) hunger, drudgery, penury, illnesses and other such things that can occur in an adverse way to this common (human) nature (of ours) — all for the sake of the name of God — or death itself.

4. To the third part there belong: the heart's luminous faith¹, free (control) of the emotions, hope, and unceasing musing on divine wisdom.

XIX title ¹ By Mar Isaac: om P.

1 ¹ basic: lit. 'simple'.

2 desire, zeal, reason (*rehmtā, inānā, mlilūtā*): see note to XVII.1.

3 ¹ disposition (*yesrā*): the term usually has negative connotations in Syriac due to Peshitta Gen. 6:15, 8:21.

2 valour of heart (*ga(n)hārūtā d-lebbā*): cf Part I 517.

4 ¹ luminous faith (*šapyut haymānūtā*): cf Philoxenus *Disc.* 323 (emph. + *d-*).

5. These first (two) parts are collectively called the active part of the soul, whereas this other (part) is (called) divine contemplation¹, that is, the good use to which the part endowed with intelligence — that is, the mind — is put.

6. And when we show endurance in that active part — this consists in continual musing on the kind of virtue that can be perceived¹ by means of the body — (then) this contemplative portion², which is the quality of the faculty of reason, brings the mind close to complete mingling with God, causing it to peer into His divine mysteries which (exist) in a luminous state above the world.

7. When the course (of events) takes place according to nature, then this path is likely to accompany the course of both pupils and instructors¹. When we desire to deny nature itself, then nature is likely to overstep in the direction of all the things that are the opposite of these, preparing the activation of its faculties which are in the body for acts of a contrary (kind), inciting the part endowed with intelligence and reason to discoveries of all kinds of evil ideas.

8. But accompanying the upright path that belongs to (the soul's) nature is a divine care in (the form) of unceasing beneficial events, consolations and divine joys. Whereas (accompanying) the other (path), the wrong one, are chastisements in (the form) of constant meeting with hopeless misfortunes, abandonment in all kinds of danger and temptation that (could) lead to the perception of correction.

9. When of our own will we desire toilsome activities, and we separate ourselves off to remain with them out of concern for a God-fearing (life), with the help of God¹ we will then be continually aware of joys of the mind. But when, out of laxity on the body's part, we run away from these like a child running away from school wanting a life of leisure, then of necessity divine mercy brings us, against our will, to those toilsome things. Disorderliness of the rational nature greatly grieves *the*

5 ¹ divine contemplation (*te'ōryā alāhāyā*): cf *Keph.IV.48*, Part I 23, 31, 161, 198, 571. The phrase appears (surprisingly) not to be Evagrian, but is found in *Hist.Laus.* 330, Ps.Dionysius 70r, 82r, and is very common in Sergius (27, 76, 78, 81, 88-9, 99, 119). In seventh-century ES writers, Babai *C.Evag.* 130v, Gregory of Cyprus 46, 68, 72, 98, 102.

6 ¹ kind of virtue that can be perceived (*myattrūtā metragšānītā*): compare *myattrūtā metragšānyātā* Part I 217.

2 contemplative portion (*mnāt te'ōryā*): cf Part I 571 (emph. with *d-*).

7 ¹ instructors: P glosses with 'guides' (*nāgōdē*).

9 ¹ with the help of God: om P.

*Father of spirits*², even more than the disorderliness of children grieves their fathers according to the flesh.

10. And if there is no way at all of escaping from toilsome and wearisome (activities), let us bear them willingly, like wise people who hold themselves in respect, in order that we may be held worthy of honour and delight, and not have to be brought to them with straps and fetters.

11. But if we fall short of (doing these things) willingly, let us persevere in them with thanksgiving — even in the violence that comes from Satan¹, for in that case even that will end up with² a good outcome. Afterwards — how wonderful is the compassion of God! — who can measure the ocean of his grace³?

² Father of spirits: Heb. 12:9.

11 ¹ that comes from Satan: lit. 'from the left' (based on Matt.25:41), a frequent term in Syriac denoting Satan's rule from Ephrem onwards.

² with (*thōr*): this form of the preposition (normally *thēt*) is very rare outside the Peshitta Psalms; elsewhere in seventh-century writers it occurs in Sahdona I 24, 116, 137.

³ measure the ocean of his grace: cf Ephrem *H. de Ecclesia* 5:17. P (and perhaps H) have '(who can) discover the loftiness of his grace'.

XX.

*By Mar Isaac*¹. Another topic which neatly distinguishes the reflection that moves about in the mind in accordance with the level of a (particular) way of life and the measure of knowledge to which a person has attained.

1. We will begin by distinguishing the stirrings of human knowledge¹, both the level below the nature of the soul, and the upsurges which are supernatural.

2. Now when the faculty of reason begins to become illumined in us, fear of death is completely scorned, and that person is continually stirred by expectation of the resurrection, the excellence of the soul's nature having begun to show itself through the indication (given by) its thoughts: concern over divine judgement is strong in that person, and he begins to examine night and day his manner of life, his words and his thoughts; and if he conducts himself in all sorts of good and fine manners¹ of labours, (then) this concern and recollection is never far removed from him. For that natural stirring² of the rational soul (consists) in this reflection and thought. But you should know that those who, before they reach love, do not entertain this thought so much, are lacking in knowledge, in that they rely on their conduct. Now if they had no need to rely on their conduct, (that means that) they are either existing in a spiritual manner, or in laxity of conduct³: on these two levels

XX title ¹ By Mar Isaac: om H; P 'By the same'.

² measure of knowledge (*mšūḥtā d-īda'itā*): cf XX.15, Part I 373, John Sol. *Epp.* 4, Ps.Dionysius 99v, Sergius 53.

¹ stirrings of ..knowledge (*zaw'ē d-īda'itā*): cf XX.11, Part I 358f, John Sol. *Soul* 85, Hierotheos 10.

² ¹ good and fine manners (*dubbārē šappīrē w-taḡnē*): for *dubbārē šappīrē* cf *Kepl.* III.50, IV.71, Part I 436, Evagrius *Ev.Syr.* 120, 140, Add. 14578 104r, *Hist. Laus.* 28, 332, *Hist. Monach.* 330, 345, 354, 431, Theodore of Mopsuestia *WS VI* 142, John Sol. *Tr.* 4, 6, 16, *Epp.* 74 (and elsewhere), Sextus 7, Abba Isaiah I.4a, and not infrequent in seventh-century ES writers. For *dubbārē taḡnē* cf Part I 265, 266, 291, 430, Evagrius *Antirr.* 59r, 72r, 75r, Macarius 185, 189, 191, *Par.* 568; in seventh-century ES writers it occurs in Babai *C.Evag.* 65v, 143v, 226v, Dadisho' *C.Ahls.* XIII.5.

² natural stirring (*zaw'ā kyānāyā*): cf Ps.Dionysius 75r, Gregory of Cyprus 72, 102, 114, Dadisho' *C.Par.* 968. The plural, which Isaac uses in *Kepl.* III.85, IV.11, is Evagrian (Add.14578 92v).

³ laxity of conduct (*rapyūtā d-dubbārē*): cf Abraham of Nathpar 85r (constr.); also *Hudra* I 294.

there cannot be any fear of judgement; either they belong to the wild animals which are deprived of rationality and any thought concerning the resurrection, or they are among the angels who exist with a different sort of knowledge, and who are not brought down to reflections such as these, seeing that the stirrings which arise in them are quite other, and their musing is on mysteries exalted above reflection on judgement. For the rest, this reflection slumbers in them as a result of lack of alertness, and from darkness of soul.

3. In the case of those who live on the level of the soul¹ in their way of life, this reflection occurs quite correctly, seeing that the fair nature is being motivated in the right way by its natural (faculty) of discernment. Such people exist in (a state of) illumination of (their) natural thoughts², in conjunction with the grace which accompanies them.

4. But (in the case of) the person whose understanding is not darkened by contempt, as he travels in perfection (accompanied) by all kinds of virtuous conduct, (his) conscience does not consent to rest or to be quiet from this movement.

5. But I will show when it so happens that concern over this thought does rightly cease, and in truth. Once he has attained to divine love, he has been raised above this reflection; he exists in freedom of thoughts¹. Now divine love does not arise at all as a result of the soul's conduct² or the soul's natural movement in the cultivation of virtue — to this measure of conduct³ awe is attached: it is completely impossible to become aware of divine⁴ love; this is not in the soul's power⁵ and does not belong to (its) natural path which gives rise to

³ ¹ level of the soul (*teksā napšānāyā*): see on IX.11.

² natural thoughts (*ḥuṣṣābē kyānāyē*): cf Part I 189, Evagrius *Epp.* 182r, Macarius 160, Theodore of Mopsuestia *C. John* 15, Nilus 194, 198, 200, 234, Babai *C. Evag.* 160r, 204r, 209rv, 212r, 235r, Gregory of Cyprus Add. 17192 163r.

⁵ ¹ freedom of thoughts: perhaps the sense here is 'freedom from thoughts', as evidently at XX.10.

² soul's conduct (*dubbārā napšānāyā*): cf XXXV.5, Part I 331, Babai *C. Evag.* 155v, Dadisho' *C. Par.* 931. Contrast *dubbārā pagrānāyā* in Part I 19, 303, 331, which also occurs in other seventh-century ES writers, Babai *C. Evag.* 155v, Dadisho' *C. Par.* 926, 931 (in earlier writers only *dubbārē pagrānē* seems to be attested, Nilus 282); and for *dubbārā ruḥāna(ya)* see on VI.2.

³ measure of conduct (*mṣuḥtā d-dubbārē*): cf Part I 19, 492, Evagrius *Gnost.* 142, *Par.* 528, 751, Dadisho' *C. Abts.* XI.17, XIII.11, *C. Par.* 908; the sing. occurs at XX.17, for which cf Sahdona IV 76.

⁴ divine: om P.

⁵ soul's power (*ḥaylā napšānāyā*): cf Part I 219.

this way of life⁶. Divine love, on the other hand, belongs to the spiritual mode of life.

6. Virtue, you see, is the natural way¹; it consists in humility, labours, almsgiving, integrity of conscience, the mouth's² sacrifices and prayers, and compassion. In the New World, however, none of these things is required: the spiritual mode of life consists in a different kind of knowledge; its ministry is not put into motion by, and does not consist in, the labours of the body and of the soul³. To those ministering in these (latter) modes of life⁴ there indeed belongs reflection, whereas the mode of life of the spirit is without reflection and without thought, and without any slightest stirring. Thoughts are put into motion on the level of the soul, whereas on the level of the spirit there is no thought, in that the intellect has been raised above the forms of this world and it operates with a different kind of knowledge. The knowledge of those (on the level of the soul) is described in verbal fashion, as is current among us; in the case of those (others, their) knowledge is not even described in the mode of the intellect's existence there. The knowledge that belongs here certainly involves the pulsation of thoughts, but that (spiritual) mode of life is exalted above all these things: it represents the mode of our existence at the resurrection from the dead, when we are with the holy angels — a mode of life in which the angels already are, at the present. For, unless they are sent by God⁵ on some ministry to our world, they do not depart from this kind of (faculty of) vision (which operates) in their intellect's situation.

7. If someone says, 'Well then, how is it possible they can be in a state of continual wonder at God¹, — these (angels) who exist continu-

⁶ path..this way of life ('*urhā ... d-dubbārē*): cf Part I 39, *Hist.Laus.* 331, Narsai M II 265, Philoxenus *Disc.* 71; compare sing. (*d-dubbārā/dubbārēh* etc) at XXXV.1, *Keph.* 1.83), Part I 152, 413, Evagrius *Antirrh.* 59r, Shubhālmāran 42r, Sahdona III.16, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* II.13.

¹ natural way ('*urhā da-kyānā*): cf Part I 189, 294, 321, Basil *Quest.* 81r, Philoxenus *Disc.* 71, 191, Sahdona I 91, Gregory of Cyprus 84. Compare XX.5 '*urhā kyānāytā*.

² the mouth's: om P.

³ labours of the body and of the soul ('*amlē d-pagrā wad-napšā*): for 'labours of the body' cf XXV title, *Keph.* IV.94, Part I 40, 82, 303, 352 (constr.), *Par.* 768, Babai *C.Evag.* 154v, Sahdona I 34 (constr.) and frequently in Dadisho' (e.g. *C.Abls.* XIV.6,10); sing. 'labour' in *Keph.* IV.15, John Sol. *Soul* 19, Mark the Monk Add. 12175 149r.1, *Par.* 481. For 'labours of the soul' cf *Keph.* III.86, Part I 41, 42, Narsai PP II 580, *Par.* 927, Babai *C.Evag.* 154v.

⁴ ministering...modes of life: om P.

⁵ sent by God: alluding to Heb.1:14 (cf XVIII.20).

⁷ ¹ continual wonder at God (*tehrā ammīnā da-lwāt alāhā*): for *tehrā ammīnā*, cf I f.10v, Part I 305; and for *tehrā da-lwāt alāhā* cf Gregory of Cyprus 50, 116, and compare

ally and without change, and (yet at the same time) are given orders concerning the elements and are with each individual human being? And how is it possible that they are not hindered in this continual condition (of wonder) as a result of that fact?’

8. Such a person is thinking of those swift and subtil natures from a very human standpoint, (for) they are unhindered by bodies and actions because of the swiftness and illumination of their intellect. Nor do they grow tired through change of activity, (nor) do they toil or require space and time in all that they perform, (by all of which) they might be hindered from their ministry. For they complete everything in a swift and instantaneous manner, corresponding to the faculty and wondrous ability with which their nature has been endowed. In them the Being, the Creator who is above all things, constituted a resemblance in everything — as far as is possible — to Himself.

9. But let us leave these spiritual natures behind and come back again to our topic, to the things that belong to our world, and let us pick up the sequence of our discourse from where we left off.

10. So, once a person has been raised above the ministry (on the level) of the soul¹ in his reflection and understanding — which consists in excellence of deeds and of conscience in the process of (his) being raised up to the mode of life of the spirit, (excellence, that is,) to the fullest measure attainable here by human nature — immediately a state of wonder at God² attaches itself to him, and he becomes serene and tranquil after the stirrings of (his) former thoughts³, as his entire mind vibrates with spiritual stirrings, accompanied by love. In this state of understanding, fear is removed from a person, and after the manner of that New World, the mind is stirred with freedom from thoughts

tehrā db-alāhā (see under XX.10). *Tehrā* is already an important term in Ephrem (e.g. *H. de Fide* 72:1).

¹ ministry (on the level) of the soul (*puḥānā napšānāyā*): cf *Keph.* II.44, Part I 40-1, 304, 331, Babai *C. Evag.* 81r.

² wonder at God (*tehrā db-alāhā*): cf I f.10v, XX.11, XXI.7, *Keph.* I.36, 47, II.55, Part I 304, 305, 376, 492, Abraham of Nathpar 78rv, Dadisho' *C. Abl.* II.10, *C. Par.* 929, Shem'on d-Taybuteh 314b. Compare *tehrā d-alāhā* John Sol. *Soul* 87-8; *tehrā d-'al alāhā* Evagrius *Ev. Syr.* 129, John Sol. *Add.* 14606 77r; *tehrā da-lwāt alāhā* (for which see under XX.7). According to Isaac Part I 304 the phrase corresponds to the Evagrian *ida'ū ihādāyā* (*Keph.* II.3, III.22, a term also found in Babai *C. Evag.* 99v, 168r, and in Isaac *Keph.* III.57).

³ stirrings of ..thoughts (*zaw'ē d-ḥusšābē*): cf XX.12 (constr.), Part I 530, Ephrem *C. Nisibena* 47:3, John Sol. *Epp.* 66, *Hes.* 65, Nilus 242 (constr.), Narsai M I 162, Philoxenus *Disc.* 269, Babai *C. Evag.* 101v, Sahdona I 113, III 65.

concerning any fear or suffering (incurred) in reflection: this is because he has been held worthy, thanks to the grace of Christ which belongs to the way of life of the New Person, of the stirrings which arise naturally then, in the Kingdom of heaven.

11. And when, again, he departs from these things, he is in a state of joy of soul, and in his reflection and thoughts he is (quite) unlike those who belong to this world, for he exists henceforth in freedom from thoughts, (a freedom) which is filled with stirrings of knowledge¹ and wonder at God. And because he exists in a (state of) understanding which is more lofty than the soul, and exalted above fear, he is in a state of joy at God in the stirring of his thoughts² at all times — as befits the rank of children.

12. The following are the stirrings of the thoughts on those three levels, and the (level of) understanding of their stirrings.

13. Thus the person who in his understanding is on the level of the body cannot be above fear of death in his thoughts; rather, he is continually terrified at the recollection of it. Because he is on the level of the body, he thinks of the things of the body. Therefore there is always in him some doubt about the resurrection.

14. In the person who is on the level of the soul there vibrates a fear of soul. He does not think of the things belonging to the body — its death, affliction, or its welfare and misfortunes. Rather, he readily accepts these for the sake of what is to come, seeing that he is in truth endowed with reason. (But) he only possesses the (level of) the soul, which consists in continual reflection on what pertains to the resurrection from the dead.

15. As for the person who is on the level of the spirit, neither of these (other descriptions) is applicable: rather, he stands in the knowledge and joy which is in God, seeing that he has become a son and sharer in the mystery of God.

16. A person will understand from these (descriptions) the measure of his (own) understanding and of his mode of life: (he can judge) from the stirrings which spring up in him all the time where he stands in his way of life and in his understanding during the short time of his present abode.

11 ¹ stirrings of knowledge (*zaw'ē d-īda'īā*): cf John Sol. *Soul* 85, Philoxenus, *Disc.* 353.

² stirring of his thoughts (*h-metzi'ānūtā d-ḥuṣṣābaw(hy)*): cf *Keph.* IV.50, Part I 92, 189, John Sol. *Epp.* 68, *Par.* 578, Philoxenus *Disc.* 407, Dadisho' *C.Par.* 917, 918.

17. There is also the case where someone has in his manner of life and in his understanding left the level of the body, but who has not yet fully entered the level of the soul, which consists in complete repentance and the perfection of the religious life. As a result thoughts spring up in him coming from both sides.

18. There are a few individuals who have been held worthy of the level of the soul in its fulness: this consists in the summit of repentance. This is the manner of life which our mother, the Catholicos¹, possesses.

19. Again, there is the person who has reached perfection on the level of the soul, but who has not yet entered the mode of life of the spirit: only a little of it has begun to stir in him. While he is fully in the mode of life of the soul, every now and then it happens that some stirrings of the spirit arise indistinctly in him, and he begins to perceive in his soul a hidden joy and consolation: like lightning flashes and by way of example, particular mystical insights arise and are set in motion in his mind. At this his heart at once bursts out with joy. Even if (his heart) becomes covered over¹ again, and is blocked off from this, yet it is evident that his mind is nonetheless filled with hope.

20. I know a person¹ (living) in the vicinity who experiences these lightning flashes. But even though insight into mysteries momentarily passes through his mind and then departs, nevertheless the outbursting of joy at the experience lasts a long time, and the serenity which results from it is poured over the mind for a considerable period after it goes. Furthermore, the condition of the body and the limbs becomes one of peace, and they feel great rest, while the enjoyment of the sweetness of its wondrous character is marked at the supreme moment on the mind's palate². By means of these things it is easily possible to spurn the temporal world and for the consolation of hope to come to the stranger (to the world) in his weary state. This suffices to serve as a (first) glimpse for him, so that he does not go astray in wayward living, seeing that henceforth he is someone who has no other hope besides this.

18 ¹ our mother, the Catholicos: I know of no parallel to this surprising designation. Isaac quite often uses the term 'mother', but of virtues etc. (e.g. Part I 218, 221, 291, 301). Since the accompanying verb is feminine, perhaps *qtwlyqy* (not *-qws*) is meant, i.e. 'Catholic (Church)'.

19 ¹ covered over: B glosses by 'perishes'.

20 ¹ I know a person: The use of this Pauline phraseology (2 Cor. 12:2, but with *gabrā*, not *barnāšā* as here) perhaps means that Isaac is alluding to himself; the same may also apply to XXX.11.

² mind's palate: picked up by Joseph Hazzaya PO 45, 109, 124, 136-7, 145; WS VII 263a; compare 'soul's palate' in Babai *C.Evag.* 114r.

21. Many ships have gone astray in this ocean. For while ears may hear and the mouth may read, they have not tasted the potency of the awareness of this hope¹ even with the tip of the little finger. Because of this, despite the wearisome and laborious toils² of their steersmen, and the astonishing nature of their knowledge, they have been unable, in their goal, to spurn this world — which involves a mortified heart³, consisting in humility and no thought about oneself.

22. We should not imagine that our Lord's gift is contained in this small portion (of it) that we have spoken of¹. There are people who taste of the mysteries of truth², not only in this lightning-like fashion, but in the firmament of whose heart³ the very *Sun of righteousness*⁴ begins to shine out with an outpouring of his rays: 'In the pure heart is the New Heaven imprinted'. Its appearance is light, and the place it occupies is spiritual⁵.

23. It is clear that if the heart can be worthy to become the location of heaven for the Lord, (then) it has been held worthy of the sum of all contemplation¹, with the vision of revelation². Thus this takes place, not momentarily and suggestively, as is the case with those other experiences, but it lasts for hours on end — and not just hours, but for days³. One can find support for this in the narratives written concerning the Fathers.

21 ¹ awareness of this hope (*īda'ā d-hānā sabrā*): cf John Sol. *Epp.* 89.

² wearisome and laborious toils (*'amlayhōn šhīqē wa-'mīlē*): for *'amlē šhīqē* cf Narsai M I 255, II 13, Sahdona I 20, III 51 (sing.), Dadisho' *C.Par.* 920, *Hudra* III 371; for *'amlē 'mīlē* cf Part I 471, 549, Narsai M I 130, PP II 612, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* III.9, XIII.5, XV.43 (singular at XIV.17, 24), *Hudra* III 330.

³ a mortified heart (*lebbā mītā*): cf Part I 300, 544, *V.Antony* 40; compare *mītūtā d-lebbā* Part I 332, John Sol. *Soul* 17 (constr., referring to Mark 3:5 Old Syriac).

22 ¹ we have spoken of (*d'mrnn*): so HP; B erroneously has 'they speak' (*d'mryū*).

² mysteries of truth: cf *A.Thomas* 207, John Sol. *Soul* 64, 86. Isaac uses the sing. at XXIX.7, for which cf John Sol. *Soul* 65, 69, 91, 119.

³ firmament of whose heart: this striking image is taken up by Abdisho'/Joseph Hazzaya, *WS* VII 275b and *PO* 45, 138.

⁴ Sun of righteousness: *Mal.* 3:20.

⁵ In the pure heart...: Isaac quotes Evagrius *Epp.* 176r; he cites the same passage in Part I 522-3. Sahdona III 19 may also allude to Evagrius, 'your mind (*tar'itāk*) becomes the heaven'. The idea is taken up in the *Hudra* III 315 'let my soul be for you like the heaven, and do you dwell in it'. 'Pure heart' (from *Ps.* 51:10, also I *Tim.* 1:5) is especially common in Macarius. For 'purity of heart' see on XV.2.

23 ¹ sum of all contemplation (*sākā d-kullāh te'ōryā*): compare *šullāmā d-te'ōryā Keph.* I.72, *šumlāyā d-te'ōryā* Evagrius *Epp.* 185r, *thōmā d-te'ōryā* Gregory of Cyprus 118.

² vision of revelation: cf Part I 252, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* VIII.1, XV.23.

³ for days: compare Part I 260-1, based on *V.Antony* 65.

24. As for me whose sores have turned foul and become putrid, please, Lord, grant to me to take up the semblance of repentance in my soul, so that, as my hands are stretched out in the direction of (Your) mercy, and as I sit at the gate of grace, I may be held worthy of that hope which true penitents have received from You.

25. Hold Your servant worthy, Lord, to scour away the mud of his actions from his soul by means of the tears of his eyes: by continually taking up Your help in the face of the infirmity of his thoughts¹, may he receive, through grace, an entry into life, amen.

26. Now, through the grace of our Lord — this being something we have learnt from the Fathers — we will go on to indicate in the discourses before us the sort of toil required by a person who begins to approach the mode of life and rank of freedom¹; and how it does not belong to everyone to live in this mode of life, but it is right that he should be (there) for a specific time. We will also show when his time is, and on what level he should conduct himself, and when it is appropriate for someone to be conducting himself under the banner of this world.

27. What is clear is that when the vigour of the body has diminished and fallen from its former impetuosity, (then) for this mode of life continual meditation should assiduously¹ accompany such people. The kind of labours it involves we will show in the proper place, along with other things appropriate for this level, one at a time.

25 ¹ infirmity of his thoughts (*mḥilūtā d-ḥuṣṣābaw(hy)*): cf Nilus 75, Sergius 69 (sing.).

26 ¹ mode of life and rank of freedom (*dubbārā w-ṭeksā d-ḥirūtā*): for *dubbārā d-ḥirūtā* see on VIII.12; for *ṭeksā d-ḥirūtā* cf XLI.1, John Sol. *Thaum.* X 18.

27 ¹ assiduously: P 'continuously'.

XXI.

On how the soul will be advantaged and make progress once it has ceased from the first vehemence of labours, and how it will approach, with just a little torment of body, to the way of life of freedom through heavenly assistance; and with what aim it will then be toiling.

1. Once you have grown feeble and already become weary as a result of the labour of psalmody which takes the form of the assiduous recitation that is customary, and you are no longer able to toil at this as you did before as a result of old age, or of great infirmity of body, (then) toil instead at supplication and intercession, and things like these. Offer up your supplication at length and earnestly; make your requests with care, and toil on your supplication with the toil of the heart¹. Be importunate, extend (your prayer) and hold out until the door is opened to you.

2. For our Lord is merciful and He will receive you — not on the basis of your labour, but in accordance with the direction of your mind. (Then) your soul will become illumined as you extend your supplication, and your thoughts will be enflamed with love of Him. In this way you will receive assistance from God in the meagre labours that your weak body undertakes, without, as far as possible, your completely abandoning your curtailed Offices — so that you do not appear to be like someone who is unwilling to be subjected to the (monastic) rule, for that would result in the demon of pride¹ assaulting you, as (happens) with the person who imagines that he no longer needs such things; or you will gradually end up in a state of voluntary lassitude.

3. I am not imposing any necessary time (limit): rather, I am speaking of what can happen and take place.

4. Nor would there be anything blameworthy if, in accordance with the time that corresponds with (our) strength¹ — and it does not even need to correspond — we are standing or sitting, seeing that great awe and wakefulness accompanies us, thus preventing any contempt of God

XXI.1 ¹ toil of the heart (*'amlā d-lehbā*): cf *Keph.* I.70 (plur.), II.44, IV.94, Part I 304, Ammonius 587, 589, Mark the Monk Add.17192 142r, 143r, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XII.1.

2 ¹ demon of pride (*daywā d-rāmūtā*): cf Evagrius Add.14578 33v; elsewhere Isaac uses *šidā d-rāmūtā*, for which see on XIV.18.

4 ¹ strength: P 'weakness'.

entering us at the time when His Office is being performed by us, or when the sacrifice of prayer is being made² before Him.

5. Rather, it is a matter of understanding and discernment, and not of fixed limits and confusion, without your being too greatly concerned with quantity — for this often enough proves to be the cause of (inner) turbulence. Instead, our aim should be to find a way that our heart can draw near to God in the Office and in prayer: this is the purpose of your being subject to the law that appertains to children.

6. But even more than psalmody, add these (other things) and make especial use of them, sometimes standing on your feet, sometimes kneeling, sometimes, again, seated.

7. Nor is there anything to prevent you from taking the fulness of these very things from the psalms, and making use of them. Furthermore, the wondrous words set out in the Odes¹ which are appointed in the holy Church, along with all sorts of other lofty words set out by the Spirit in harmonious chants, (all these) can fulfil the place of perfect prayer in someone: by being meditated upon, they give birth within us to pure prayers and exalted insights², thus bringing us close to luminosity of mind³ and wonder at God, as well as to all the other things with which the Lord will enlighten you with wisdom in their due time, as you select those verses which are appropriate and offer them up to your Lord with supplication as (your) intention, repeating them at length and serenely.

8. Psalmody too, (performed) with this intention, profits a person more than does the orderly recitation following the Hours¹. This is something which applies to people at an (advanced) stage, who have entered the mode of life where, at their supplication, they are held worthy

² sacrifice of prayer is being made: lit. 'prayer is being sacrificed', see on XIV.20.

⁷ ¹ Odes (*teshḥātā*): these might either be the Canticles, or the hymns attributed to Ephrem, Babai, Yazdīn and others, regularly used in the ES liturgy.

² exalted insights (*sukkālē rāmē*): cf Part I 159, 281.

³ luminosity of mind (*šapyūtā d-mad'ā*): cf Part I 128 (constr.), Sahdona III 46, Dadisho' *C.Par.* 930 (constr.). Compare *šapyūtā d-hawnā* Sahdona I 17 (constr.), 24; *š. d-lebbā* John Sol. Add. 17170 39r, Narsai M I 64, II 117 (both construct); *š. d-napšā* Part I 167, John Sol. *Soul* 6-8 (and often), Sahdona I 17, 56 (constr.), Dadisho' *C.Ahls.* IV.5 (and elsewhere); *šapyūt re'yānā* *Keph.* IV.72, Part I 113, 527, Macarius 199, Philoxenus *Disc.* 117, Sahdona I 12 (for the emph. see *Keph.* II.32, John Sol. Add. 17170 37v, 40r, Sextus 6, Philoxenus *Disc.* 115); *šapyūt tar'ūtā* *Keph.* IV.33, Part I 526 (emph.), *V.Antony* 39, Sahdona I 93.

⁸ ¹ recitation following the Hours (*tenyā 'eddānāyā*): P 'according to custom' (*'yādānāyā*), perhaps correctly, as Part I 382 *tenyā 'yādānāyā*; in Part II Isaac uses *'yādānāyā* at XIV.5 and 6.

of charisms from God. And because of the recollected state of their mind, they make great progress in (supplication and) the soul leans towards great virtue during these labours and is continually held worthy of help from on high. Often enough it will even receive some kind of luminosity of thoughts as it travels, in the midst of its extended supplications.

9. But we should not ask for this straight away, for not many people discover it, but only a few individuals. This is because such things do not occur in accordance with (a person's) labours, but in accordance with God's purpose and knowledge, for He knows to whom it is appropriate to give. But we for our part should not cease from expectation in our mode of life during the whole extent of our lives.

10. Should this be found, however, we must not be proud or imagine that we have been held worthy of it because of the high quality of our mode of life. Nor, if it is delayed for us, should we be grieved or downcast, like people who work for God for a reward: that is the opinion of those who are not trained in the labour of humility¹ and in (earnest) longing for God. For we realize that, as I have said, God does not grant things of this sort to a person as a result of many labours — nor does He hold them back because of a lack of such labours — but (He gives them) to those for whom He knows it will be beneficial.

11. With respect to these things, it is not a case of worthiness or unworthiness; rather, it accords with the will which a person shows towards God: how much he is letting go of the world from his mind, (and this) in a luminous way, out of love of God.

12. But let us lay down as our sign, (to show) that we are making progress, the following: whatever passion we observe growing less in our soul day by day, the more will we be drawing nearer towards God, and we will be held worthy — without our being aware of it — of immense gifts that come from Him.

13. We should consider the labour of reading¹ (Scripture) to be something extremely elevated, whose importance cannot be exaggerated. For it serves as the gate² by which the intellect enters into the divine mysteries and takes strength for (attaining) luminosity in prayer: it bathes with enjoyment as it wanders over the acts of God's dispensation which have

10 ¹ labour of humility ('*amlā d-makkikūtā*): cf Narsai PP II 588.

13 ¹ labour of reading ('*amlā d-qeryānā*): cf Part I 52; Babai *C.Evag.*122v (plur.), 175v, Sahdonā III 16, 17. Compare XXII.2 '*āmel b-qeryānā*, XXII.6 *qeryānā w-'amlā*, XXIX.1 '*mīl b-qeryānā*, XXIX.10 *le'ūtā dab-qeryānā*.

² gate: P 'great gate'.

taken place for (the benefit of) humanity — acts which make us stand continually in wonder, and from which meditation too takes strength, this being the firstfruits of this mode of life about which we are talking; (from these acts) prayer is illumined and strengthened — whether it be that they are taken from the spiritual Scriptures, or from things written by the great teachers in the Church on the topic of the (divine) dispensation; or among those who teach the mysteries of (the ascetic) life³.

14. These two kinds of reading are useful for the man of the spirit. For the rest, any kind of reading that there may be will actually cause him loss and darken his mind, (obscuring) its goal, which lies with God. (These other kinds of reading) will bring upon him darkness and listlessness¹ during the time of the Office and of prayer.

15. Without reading (Scripture) the intellect has no means of drawing near to God: (Scripture) draws the mind up and sets it at every moment in the direction of God; it baptizes it from this corporeal world with its insights and causes it to be above the body continually. There is no other toil by which someone can make better progress. Provided that person is reading (Scripture) for the sake of the truth, these are the sorts of things he will discover from it.

16. There are also people for whom not even reading about (God's) acts of dispensation will profit, and they get no benefit thereby. For the most part they may actually become the more darkened, because they are much more in need of some reading on (the topic of) putting the passions aright. Everyone gets benefit, and progresses, as a result of the reading (appropriate) to the stage he has reached.

17. But as far as this stage of (the ascetic) life¹ (that we are talking about) is concerned, reading about (God's) dispensation is greatly beneficial, likewise the long and luminous discourse on it, and the books which were written on this topic with (great) care by divine and illumined writers. With such things in mind, the soul greatly rejoices and is stripped of the passions².

³ mysteries of the (ascetic) life (*rāzē d-dubbārā*): compare *rāzā d-dubbārā* *Keph.* II.103, *Dadisho' C.Abls.* X.6.

14 ¹ darkness and listlessness (*amṭānā w-quṭṭā'ā*): reverse order in XXXIII.1. For *quṭṭā'ā* in Isaac see VI.9, XXXIV.2-4, Part I 181, 213, 217, 258, 284, 299, 302, 305, 328, 340, 342, 383, 385, 455, 466, 468, 475, 485, 549, 555, 565. He does not use the Evagrian *quṭṭā' re'yānā* (e.g. Evagrius *Add.* 14578 19r, 34v etc.); also occurs earlier in Ephrem *C.Nisibena* 41:8 and Basil *Quest.* 48r).

17 ¹ stage of the (ascetic) life: see on XX.5.

² stripped of the passions (*meṣtalhā .. men haššē*): compare John Sol. *Soul* 85 *šullāhā d-haššē*. For Isaac's use of 'strip off' compare VIII.3, 10 etc.

XXII.

On the alteration of way of life¹: how one way is exchanged for another by divine purpose; and how, and in what way, excellent people change from one way of life to another higher one; and to what extent they make an exchange for it, and to what extent they (still) use it; together with other topics.

1. This too one should realize: the manner and aim of (spiritual) labour is not the same for the initial stage as for the intermediary one or for the concluding stage. The initial stage involves labouring with a great deal of recitation, and just the treading out¹ of the body by means of laborious fasting.

2. The intermediary culminating point¹ lessens the amount of (all) these, exchanging persistence in these for persistence in other things, labouring on (spiritual) reading and especially on kneeling².

3. The culminating point of the third (stage) lessens persistence along the lines of the previous stage, labouring (instead) on meditation and on prayer of the heart.

4. It is not that each of these culminating points completely leaves behind the labours (characteristic) of the previous stage; rather they make an alteration in the aim and manner (in which they are performed), measuring persistence in them against the kinds of discernment they produce, (where the discernment) belongs to their inherent quality as they progress from the straightforwardness of their external (practice, moving) inwards from them.

5. Take the following example: to the middle stage there belongs (recitation of) the Psalms and the labour of fasting; but this is not (done) without discernment or in an impetuous way, as happens at the initial level.

XXII title ¹ alteration of way of life (*ḥullāpā d-dubbārē*): compare *Keph.* 1.27 *ṣuḥlāpā d-dubbārē*.

1 ¹ treading out: the imagery is taken from the treading of grapes for wine making.

2 ¹ culminating point (ἀκμῆ): Isaac speaks of the three ἀκμῆι in *Keph.* IV.42 and especially in IV.92f. The term is already used by John the Solitary *Soul* 23 (first ἀκμῆ); cf also Part I 48, Babai *C.Evag.* 111v (*aqmē d-pārōšūtā*), 131r and 169v (both *aqmē d-tarbītā*).

² especially on kneeling: P 'on kneeling continuously'.

5 ¹ labour of fasting (*'amlā d-ṣawmā*): cf Part I 29, 137, 238, *Hist. Laus.* 152, 318, John Sol. *Tr.* 38, *Epp.* 65, *Sahdona* II 89, III 101 (both plur.), *Dadisho' C.Par.* 915, 933.

6. Likewise, even with the perfect culminating point, there is reading and the labour of kneeling and of psalmody — but more important than them is persistent meditation¹ on God's providence together with hidden prayer, seeing that there is no (longer) any need for a great quantity of the former, since after only being occupied with them for a short while, (a person) is seized by, and remains in, wonder. Accordingly, a small amount of Scripture and of the Office psalms is sufficient. Such people do not toil much over these, because the moment they have begun on the psalms, or on prayer, they are captivated in the direction of other things which are exalted above the knowledge of this (world): their intellect is not left to tarry a long while with these.

7. These are the alterations and changes which are mentioned by the holy Fathers¹ as existing on the path of virtue.

8. By 'changes' they mean the aims of (spiritual) labours, where the aims change with (the growth of spiritual) knowledge, as has been shown above.

9. By 'alterations' (they mean) the (different) kinds of warfare, and the assistance of grace¹, which occur at all times with solitaries on the course of (their life led) in stillness; also, the alteration in the workings of the Holy Spirit, and the various consolations which are administered by God for the saints.

6 ¹ persistent meditation (*hergā tkibā*): cf *Keph.* III.99, Evagrius *Gnos.* 147 (Greek 45, προσεχῆς μελέτη, quoting Basil; for the possible identity of the quotation see GUILLAUMONT's note in *Sources chrétiennes* 356, p.181), Ps.Dionysius (*PdO* 1, 89), Babai *C.Evag.* 9r (quoting from Basil), Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XI.17, Shem'on d-Ṭaybutch 309a.

7 ¹ Fathers: Abba Isaiah XXIV.1; Isaac quotes the same passage in Part I 112.

9 ¹ assistance of grace (*'udrānā d-taybūtā*): cf Part I 496, 499, 500 (plur.), 501, Evagrius *Mart.* 34, Theodore of Mopsuestia *WS* V 174, Sahdona I 110, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIV.17, *Shel.* 222a, *Hudra* III 363.

XXIII.

On the symbol of the ministry¹ of the saints that is to be seen in the natural world.

1. An illustration of what is hidden in seedlings can be seen through the labours which the saints and (other) godly persons endure in themselves for the sake of God. For under the ordinary appearance of (seeds) at the time when the land is tilled April's own transformation keeps hidden the abundance of ineffable transformations and the beauty of the glorious variegated¹ colours which it will (in due course) bring out and display, as a wonderful vesture and adornment² for the earth that had been nurturing the (seeds) within herself.

2. This symbolic significance which can be recognized in tiny seeds holy people engrave spiritually in their minds at times when their ministry is depressing and darkened, as a demonstration that the Creator's power will be made known in them, and they wait expectantly to see in themselves, as a result of the strength of these ordinary labours, an ineffable transformation which will become perceptible as a result of (or, after) them, through the working of the Holy Spirit which they will receive subsequently in accordance with the progress of their ascetic conduct¹.

XXIII title ¹ symbol of the ministry (*rāzā d-pullhānā*): cf Ps.Dionysius 80v = ed. STROTHMANN, 2.

I ¹ glorious variegated: om P.

² adornment (*ḡbt*): B and P both have *ḡpt*, 'solicitude for' (this corruption is not uncommon, e.g. 7a1 at Isaiah 3:20).

2 ¹ progress of their ascetic conduct (*tarbītā d-dubbārāyhon*): cf Part I 6, 453 (sing.).

XXIV.

That there is no advantage in labours of the body which take place without the ministry of the mind¹; (that is), if someone attaches entirely to them the confidence of the path (he is travelling), and limits the course of thought² in his ministry and reflection to them alone.

1. The ministry of the body¹, when accompanied by idleness of mind, is empty and without any advantage if the words of the blessed Mark² are true: 'There are many who toil at righteousness, but through evil thoughts they destroy fine works'. In any case he whose mind is idle from any hidden ministry³ or continual reflection on (spiritual) knowledge and meditation, has his thoughts free for all sorts of empty things.

2. In the ministry of the mind, the body is not without labour either, even though it may be very weak, seeing that the labour of the mind dries up and emaciates the body, making it like dry wood. For sufficient for the body is the warmth that comes from the flame of joy that continually takes hold of it, and through that sweet suffering¹ that takes place in the mind for the sake of God at the life-restoring sorrow of which the Apostle spoke² the following are born in the mind in accordance with the various (directions its) meditating (takes): grief for the sake of God, or joy at Him, and a heart that is diffused with the hope for which it is continually peering out. With their sharp warmth (this) suffering and joy burns and scorches the body, drying it up at the seething infusion of blood which provides heat and spreads through the veins; for the

XXIV title ¹ ministry of the mind (*pulhānā d-mad'ā*): cf XXIV.2, *Keph.* III.52, Part I 15, 478. Compare *p. d-hawnā* Abba Isaiah XIII.27; *p. d-lebbā* Part I 355; *p. d-re'yānā* XXXV title, I f.4b, *Dadisho' C.Abls.* 1.3,4.

² course of thought (*reḥteh d-ḥuṣṣābā*): compare Narsai G V 201, *Sahdona* III 46 *reḥā d-ḥuṣṣābē*.

1 ¹ ministry of the body (*pulhānā d-pagrā*): cf *Keph.* III.52, Babai of Nisibis 31 Compare *pulhānāy pagrā* XXIX.1.

² Mark: Isaac quotes from *The Spiritual Law* 170 (FT p. 24; ET p.121 [no. 169])

³ hidden ministry (*pulhānā kasyā*): cf XXIV.2, XXIX.1, 5, I f.4a, Part I 245, 331, 389, Philoxenus *Disc.*180, Gregory of Cyprus 114, 116, *Sahdona* IV 15, 80, *Dadisho' C.Abls.* 1.3,4, XI.2, XV.40 (plur.).

2 ¹ sweet suffering (*ḥaṣṣa bussimā*): compare *bussāmā d-ḥuṣṣē* Part I 522, and see note to XVIII.14.

² Apostle spoke: 2 Cor. 7:10

flame³ of the mind's stirrings⁴ as a result of the fervour of the hidden ministry heats up the (body's) constitution. (This hidden ministry) causes to burst forth all the time a wondrous sort of transformation which either gives joy to both soul and body, or anguishes it with a sharp suffering⁵. (It also produces) a vigilant concern, night and day, for salvation, and assiduous supplication, with arduous entreaties for this being offered to God, with the heart aflame⁶ and a stirring that is not diverted⁷.

3. At such transformations¹ what body is so much of iron that it does not burn away and vanish like some shadow, owing to its frailty? To the same extent that the body dries up and grows feeble at these divine transformations, so the soul is renewed day by day and flourishes through progress towards God in its spiritual knowledge.

4. Those who have spent all the days of their lives in this ministry will be aware of the wonderful character, so valuable, of this pleasant labour.

5. The constant limitation of hope which (is a feature) of merely an outward ministry belongs to the immature and Jewish way of thinking (of) those who boast of their fasts, their tithes and the length of their prayers, as our Lord says¹, not possessing inwardly any thought of (spiritual) awareness² or right reflection on God to adorn their interior state³ with an increase of hope.

³ flame: P 'thought'.

⁴ mind's stirrings (*zaw'ē d-re'yānā*): cf XXIX.3, *Keph.* II.45, Part I 281, Narsai M I 350. Compare *zaw'ē re'yānāyē* Part I 87, and *re'yānā 'attir zaw'ē* Part I 228.

⁵ a sharp suffering (*ḥašša ḥrīpā*): compare *ḥrīpūt ḥašša* Part I 139, 177.

⁶ heart aflame (*yeqdānā d-lebbā*): cf Part I 507; suggested by Luke 24:32 (Peshitta however has *yaqqir* < **yaqqid*).

⁷ a stirring that is not diverted (*zaw'ā lā meṣṭalyānā*): contrast Part I 375 *zaw'ē meṣṭalyānē*, which is found in Narsai M I 364..

³ ¹ transformations: P 'divine transformations'.

⁵ ¹ cf Matt. 6:16, 23:13, 23.

² thought of...awareness (*ḥuṣṣābā d-īda'tā*): cf Part I 524.

³ their interior state (*dgwywthwn*): P 'their created state' (*dgbylwthwn*).

XXV.

On how, in the event of accidental occurrences which cause pain, provided a person seeks for knowledge of truth in himself, it will set his mind in peace and serenity, without any turbulence, when they occur. But when a person is upset with foolish thoughts¹, he will all the more madly grumble at such occurrences, thereby increasing the fire of his pain. Knowledge, however, consoles a person, and he is comforted; and God easily effects a way out of his vexation, in that he accepts (as being) from Him the toil of his mind².

1. Provided a person remembers that it is through the will of God that (all times of) respite and of vexation take place for a person — when God bids it, he has respite, and through His will he is allowed to be afflicted by whatever it may be — however much he has to struggle, he will be continuously without anger or vexation in his mind all his life, through all the changes that press upon him, through providence, in body or in mind. With this knowledge his heart will exult¹ in serenity, and he will gaze in great peace, in hope, towards God, giving thanks for His providence towards humanity — a providence which He dispenses continually in accordance with what is fitting for them. (Such a person) does not blame the demons in his vexation, or (his fellow) human beings, or the body — for it is from these three (immediate sources) that all vexations that exist derive — since he is aware that it is God who sets these things into motion: it is not through the will of any of these (three) that his respite or vexation takes place, but rather it is (through the will of) Him who sets them into motion. For not a single restful thought is put into motion in us except as a gift that comes from (God). And down to the smallest kindness that someone does to us, that person is moved to do this by (God), and this (action) is needed for the setting aright of our lives.

XXV title ¹ foolish thoughts (*huššābē saktē*): cf John Sol. *C.Qoh.* X 229, *Sextus* 3.

² toil of his mind (*'amlā d-re'yāneh*): cf *Keph.* IV.15, *Dadisho' C.Abls.* XII.1, XV.29, *Shel.* 219a. The plural, *'amlē d-re'yānā*, is a phrase characteristic of *Dadisho'*: *C.Abls.* II.2, IV.6, V.7, XIV.6, *C.Par.* 940, 945 (constr.), 953, *Shel.* 216a, 216b (constr.), 219b.

1 ¹ will exult: P 'being'.

2. O knowledge, how full you are of restfulness, what great benefit is to be found in you, deriving from God! Blessed is that person who has not been upset in his affairs through over-hasty action when they take place.

XXVI.

By the same blessed Mar Isaac¹, concerning the reason why, even though trials that afflict us are allowed to come upon us by God, the compassionate Lord consents to this, so that by various adverse ways vexations are prepared for us so that we are afflicted and tormented by them.

1. If¹ (our) mentality did not spoil and impede what has been prepared in the way of the respite and consolations which are being held in readiness by God to reach us continually, we would unchangingly be revelling all our days in respite and delights. As it is, (our) foolish mentality, which continually needs the lash in order to be kept on the right path, all the time prepares for us affliction instead of respite, chastisement instead of assistance.

2. Accordingly, blame your mentality for being stupid¹, whenever you are afflicted by some onset of misfortunes and vexations. For it is your mentality which continually goes off and grabs hold of trials which it then brings upon you.

3. (This it does) either because of the foolish opinions it holds concerning God, or as a result of that person's conception of himself, or because of the accusations of blame which you hurl at your neighbour over some matter, or because you are looking for some kind of honour from (other) people — as though this were your right to expect from them!

4. The medicine of humility will heal and set aright all these things in an all-embracing way.

5. Had humility been wandering freely in our mentality, then there would have been no place for all these other things to tarry there.

6. Truly, no bad event has a worse repayment than in the case of a foolish mind which is not willing to rebuke and blame itself, or to desist

XXVI title ¹ By...Isaac: om P.

1 ¹ If: in the margin B provides the following note: '(Our) mentality's need for trial (P laws) is well known; this occurs with it for the sake of training, so that through them (sc. trials) it may approach the knowledge that is greatest of all (PQ the knowledge that is greater than that by reason of remaining without trials)'. P and Q insert this passage into the text after 'on the right path'.

2 ¹ stupid (*šāṭōrā*): a characteristic word in Isaac: compare XXXI.10, Part I 81 (*šāṭōrūtā d-hawnā*), 445 (*šāṭōr b-hawneh*).

from getting overwhelmed in a stupid way on (various) pretexts that may occur — like the person who (claims) to have reached the certain conclusion that God no longer exists for him, when it is God from whom (all) these things take place.

7. Draw near a little to God in your trials, o (fellow) human being, by means of your mentality. Are you really aware against whom you are thundering away? You would immediately find relief if you have the wisdom to remember the hidden providence of this (very same God).

XXVII.

A query on the matter of interior humility.

1. But you say, 'What shall I do, because I do not know how to acquire humility of mentality? This is not within my power, (and) the understanding of it is far too exalted for me to discover'. I too realize that you are too weak to discover this, but what is impossible with humanity can very well happen with God¹. Instead of making your prayer on the topic of this thing or another, or concerning that matter or another, abandon all these, and rely on a single (prayer), saying,

2. 'O God, grant me humility so that I may be freed from the lash, so that with (humility) I may draw near even to those delights of the mind of which I am unaware — however much I may desire to know them — before (I acquire) this (humility)'. And (God) will (then) give you the gift of his Spirit, a gift concerning which you are incapable of saying or conceiving how great it is, for by it you will be made humble in a hidden way, provided He sees that you are unwilling to go away or cease completely from asking for this tirelessly, and (provided) you have not grown tired of making this your prayer without variation¹.

3. My brother, believe that humility is a power which cannot be described by the tongue, nor can it be acquired by human power; rather, it is given in prayer to whomsoever it may be given, and it is received amidst vigils consisting of supplications and fervent entreaties.

4. Listen to this, too, from our Fathers¹, if you so desire this (gift): Interior humility² is not received unless a person meditate in reflection on it in prayer while he is alone.

XXVII.1 ¹ impossible...God: based on Matt.19:26 and parallels.

2 ¹ B adds the following gloss (*muhhārā*) in the text here: 'Gloss: Continual prayer for some matter is continual reflexion on it, whence a person will acquire alertness and become illumined in prayer (P in the matter), if God knows that this will be beneficial to him'. P adds this at the end of XXVII.1.

4 ¹ Fathers: the quotation in XXVII.5 remains unidentified. Although it looks as if the passage might come from the *Apophthegmata* I have been unable to trace it in BEDJAN's edition in AMS VII. The combination of *makkikūtā* and *niḥūtā* is found in Macarius 26, 188, and Abba Isaiah I. 2b, 3c etc.

² interior humility (*makkikūtā gawwāytā*): compare *mukkākā gawwāyā* Dadisho' C.Par. 966.

5. 'He has not got humility, because he did not ask for it. Nor did he force himself in this (direction). He has not got restfulness, because he did not keep vigil at the gate of our Lord, asking and entreating with tears and suffering that this might be given him'.

XXVIII.

An apologia on this topic, (in the form) of an admonition, concerning these chapters on trials and on humility, why they were written in this order.

I know that you are annoyed with me because I have abandoned the sequence of that topic of sweetness of conduct, of joy, and of the different charisms, having brought you instead to sections dealing with advantageous medicines which prove life-giving in time of danger. But I am not so completely foolish as to feed you just on honey, without any variety, with you (left) entirely unaware that you are clothed in temperaments which are easily subjected to illnesses. Who would fail to laugh at you if, at the time when you were undergoing affliction, you did not know of a single way of deliverance, or the cause of the sicknesses?

XXIX.

By the same¹, on the great benefits that are born from converse with the Scriptures² and from the hidden ministry and the meditation and constant searching out it involves, and (from) the search for the subject of what it teaches. And against people who find fault with those who diligently apply themselves to this wondrous and divine labour; also a eulogy of those who have been made worthy to pass their days in this world in profitable meditation and toil³.

1. I wonder too at people who, when they see someone labouring at reading the Holy Scriptures, assiduously searching out the insights contained in them, always engaged in these and suchlike meditations on this subject of the hidden ministry, address him with some truly crass words that possess no perception or understanding, (such as), 'However much you read or toil away, (your) labour is useless'. Even more so in the case of people who speak along the following lines, 'What is the point of your searching out, and what advantage do you get by making yourselves idle as you hunt for spiritual meanings and the such like? (Active) work is what is required. If we do what we know about, we do not need any immense labour over the Scriptures or things of that sort'.

2. (Such people) do not realize what they are saying, and they are unaware that this very thing — (namely) that a person's intellect be filled with (the thought of) the divine economy and the continual recollection¹ of that, (which stems) from the wondrous reflection sown in the intellect by the reading (of Scripture) and the search for hidden things — constitutes the complete performance and sum of our Lord's commandments.

3. For someone to fulfil works which are performed just with the body is the way and norm of secular people. But he whose recollection is continually bound in with our Lord by means of the reading (of Scripture), prayer, the search to this end involving the stirrings of the mind, consolation and hope of what lies hidden: who, by means of these,

XXIX title ¹ By the same: om P.

² converse with the Scriptures (*'enyānā da-ktābē*): cf XXXIV.2, I f.8a (sing.), Part I 29, 254 [the latter passage is incorporated into Dadisho' C.Par.937], *Hist.Laus.* 257. Compare *'enyānā d-qeryānā* in Part I 135, 218.

³ profitable...toil: P 'assiduous meditation and profitable toil'.

2 ¹ continual recollection (*ammīnūtā d-'uhdānāh*): cf Part I 135, 216 (both constr.).

harnesses his intellect, preventing it from wandering among the passions; by means, too, of the delight that comes from converse with God¹ — such a person has fixed in himself all the works of excellence; he has brought (them) to complete fulfilment, with nothing lacking. Whereas all those other people who labour at various stages in all kinds of excellent things, are below this person on the road of the commandments².

4. Let us rejoice, then, and give thanks to God that we have been held worthy, even for a small moment, to be able to escape from chatter and talk with the passions¹, and even though we may be occupied with them under the guise of struggle — for we are, albeit just for one moment, through converse with some excellent meditation², above struggles and meditating on the fight with, and images of, the passions. And this cannot be acquired without the continual reading (of Scripture) in stillness and the reflective search for things hidden, and prayer.

5. The reading (of Scripture) manifestly is the fountainhead that gives birth to prayer — and by these (two things) we are transported in the direction of the love of God whose sweetness is poured out continually in our hearts like honey or a honeycomb, and our souls exult at the taste which the hidden ministry (of prayer) and the reading (of Scripture) pour into our hearts.

6. Who has ever known that flame which takes hold in the heart as a result of these?

7. If the guarding of the heart¹ is the most important thing of all — this being something which cannot at all take place (just) by means of struggle and stratagems (on our part), but only through converse with God². Accordingly blessed are those who have been held worthy of this, (people) who through their being bound up with our Lord in the reflection of the heart³ and the intellect's being filled with the continual

³ ¹ delight that comes from converse with God (*hanni'ūtā d-'enyāneh d-alāhā*): compare Part I 254 *mettol hannī'ūtā rabbtā d-'enyānā*. For *hanni'ūtā* see also on VIII.16.

² road of the commandments (*'urhā d-puqdānē*): Ps.119:27 etc.; cf Part I 69, Mark the Monk Add.17192 88r, Philoxenus *Disc.*10, Abraham of Nathpar 85r, Shubḥalmaran 46r, Sahdona I 80, III 135.

⁴ ¹ talk with the passions (*mamlā d-'am ḥaššē*): cf XXIX.7, XXX.7.

² converse..meditation (*'enyānā d-hergā*): compare *'enyānā dab-hergā* XXXIV.4.

⁷ ¹ guarding of the heart (*nūrta d-lebbā*): cf Dadisho' *C.Abls.* IV.6, Shem'on d-Ṭaybutēh 288a, 290b; compare *nūr(ū)ta d-hawnā* (probably based on Evagrius *Pr.* 70) *Par.* 277, Sahdona I 64, III 1, Dadisho' *C.Par.* 907, *C.Abls.* I.4 (constr.), XI.15, XII.1.

² converse with God: see on XXX.1

³ reflection of the heart (*renyā d-lebbā*): cf Part I 150, Ephrem *H. de Nativitate* 1:83, Macarius 262, Abraham of Nathpar 84v, based on Ps. 19:14, 49:3.

recollection⁴ of Him, have been held worthy to escape from converse and talk with the passions, through being raised up in desire for converse with God. The continual reading (of Scripture), involving reflection on what is excellent and seeking and searching out the mysteries⁵, — these constitute the excellent converse which (leads) to God; whosoever is constant in these will be guided in the entire gamut of the body's ministries.

What often (happens) as a result of these [sc. prayer and reading] (is this): not even the recollection of the images of the world⁶ goes up into the mind; this especially (applies to) those who read and meditate in this manner, so that their intellect causes a particular symbol of Truth to blossom out, as a result of the continual delight⁷ of the momentous words with which such people labour night and day.

8. The finest task of a solitary and his choicest ministry consists in this: that he should be bound up in his reflection and recollection with our Lord, even though but in part. Where this state is found, what further task is demanded at our hands by these 'wise' people (who in fact leave) their intellects idle and are without discipline!

9. Blessed is that intellect which has been held worthy to be enfolded in continual meditating on God, and in reflective wandering on his mysteries (or, symbols). In his case the words¹, *O Lord, you have given your joy in my heart*, find fulfilment at every moment — and what more is greater than this, than that someone should be continually rejoicing in God, praising him at every moment with a *new song of praise*² which springs forth as a result of wonder from the heart that rejoices — together with other such things as are born from this source, (such as) that prayer which springs forth all of a sudden, continuously and involuntarily, from the depths of the heart which has become a searcher out of spiritual meanings.

10. Weariness in reading in reality rebukes him who reads about it and it is something which belongs to the portion of the idle; it scares

⁴ continual recollection: see on VIII.5 and on XXX.4.

⁵ mysteries: or 'symbols'. For the phrase cf Narsai M I 1.

⁶ recollection of the images of the world (*'uhdānā d-šalmay 'ālmā*): compare Part I 5, *'uhdānē mqīmay šalmē*, and Part I 84 *hezway 'ālmā*. Isaac probably has in mind Evagrius *Epp.* 165v 'unless we completely banish from our mind (*re'yānan*) the passions and the images of the world (*šalmay 'ālmā*)'.

⁷ continual delight (*bussāmā ammīnā*): cf XXX.7, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIV.27.

9 ¹ words: Ps.4:7.

2 a new song of praise: Ps.33:3, 40:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9, 149:1.

away from us any reflection on God, and converse with it makes our intellect sprout out with (the distraction of) the world, with human illusions and affairs, with controversy, and the rest. Or (it may be that) those who read just for the sake of recitation (do so) in order to receive from the (Scriptures) material for human glory, or a sharpening of the mind.

11. But the person who is occupied with the Scriptures for the sake of truth has his mind dwelling continually in heaven, making conversation with God at every moment, with his thoughts wandering in yearning for the world to come. This world continually appears to his eyes as something to be disdained, as his mind meditates on the hope to come¹, and throughout all his life he chooses no other task or labour or ministry that is greater than this one.

12. What is comparable to this, that someone should resemble the angels (while still) in this world, as his reflection is continually upon God and upon things divine. Such a person, even though — since he is someone clothed in the nature of flesh — there remains fixed in him a certain (liability to) passion every now and then, being a human being, this (nevertheless) quickly passes from him, unable to effect any harm in him. And should it happen that he acts in the way that (human) nature bound in the flesh (acts), he is healed without any delay, in that he immediately turns away from (that action) and returns again to his habitual reflections, (namely) those with which his heart on its own is continually occupied: he is (thus) drawn up to the lofty level of their converse, without any trace or whiff of that 'passion' remaining over in him at all.

11 ¹ the hope to come (*sabrā haw 'īdā*): compare *sabrā da-'īd Keph.* I.38, 84, II.17, I f.6r, Part I 418, 430, 438, 508. The phrase derives from John the Solitary (*Soul* 73, *Epp.* 21, 29, 35, 51, 101). Compare also *sabrā da-'īdāta Keph.* I.87, III.20, I f.14r.

XXX.

On the glorious and select paths to God in stillness.

1. Just as there is nothing which resembles God, so there is no ministry or work which resembles converse with God¹ in stillness.

2. What is conversation with God? This meditation and converse (directed) towards God has many paths, each person (taking) the path for which his understanding is capable and on which he (can) make progress, drawing closer to God on it as a result of daily experience. A person will travel on any one of these paths in accordance with his measure, so that thereby he may find joy with God, and be filled in his intellect and in his meditation with the recollection of Him at all times¹.

3. Thus, as I have said, there are many paths for this converse which exists with God in stillness, and everyone, insofar as he approaches His presence with understanding, will accordingly choose the path suitable to his measure. Not every path will prove successful for everyone, but for everyone, in that (he shares) in the interior upbringing¹ of the (ascetic) way of life, conscience will indicate (which path to take) — without any instruction from anyone else, through the grace which stirs up in him testimony from within; it will instruct him by indicating its hidden path. Thus everyone in accordance with his measure will choose his own labour in (the course of) which (he can attain) advantageous converse² and wonder at the Lord.

4. One person may spend the entire day in prayer and in reading (Scripture), giving over only a small part to standing in (the recitation

XXX.1 ¹ converse with God (*'enyānā d-'am alāhā*): cf XXX.3, 12, *Keph.* IV.23, *A.Thomas* 254, *Basil Ep.Greg.* Add.17192 191v, *Hist. Laus.* 105, 367, *John Sol.* Add. 17170 llv, (compare Part I 440); in other seventh-century ES writers cf *Shubhālmāran* 54v, *Gregory of Cyprus* 128, *Sahdona I* 18, *Dadisho' C.Par.* 953, 965, *Shem'on d-Taybuteh* 305a, 309a, 314a). *Isaac* also uses (1) *'enyānā d-alāhā* (*Keph.* II.45, Part I 548), which goes back to *Basil Ep.Greg.* Add. 17192 189v and *John the Solitary* (*Soul* 7, *Epp.* 47), and which is found in *Sahdona I* 111, *Dadisho' C.Par.* 933; (2) *'enyānā db-alāhā* (XXIX.7, Part I 331), and *'enyānā da-lwāt alāhā* (XXIX.7, I f.19v, Part I 471), which occurs in *Macarius* 26, *Par.* 483, *Sahdona III* 122.

2 ¹ P inserts a gloss into the text here: 'Try out each one of these things in your soul (or, self), O feeble man: before you arise from your sleep, in just a little, morning will come'.

3 ¹ interior upbringing (*tarhītā gawwāytā*): cf Part I 206, *John Sol. Soul* 23.

2 ² advantageous converse (*'enyānā mawtrānā*): cf I f.1v.

of) the Psalter, in this way (best) increasing in himself the continual recollection of God¹.

5. Another person may be occupied the whole day solely in psalmody, without specifically being aware at all of prayer. Yet another may occupy himself night and day just in frequent kneelings, incorporating the distinctive limits of the Hours and (Office) prayers within his frequent kneelings¹, without marking them off. This is a person who has truly crucified the world² within himself, and who has been crucified over against the world, having suspended himself on the cross through abandonment of everything.

6. Therefore, as I have said, having attained this to a boundless extent in his soul, by means of body and intellect being crucified¹, he spends his days in life with Christ. And occasionally, standing up from there for a while, at peace² in his heart, he will turn himself for a little to meditating on Scripture³.

7. Yet another person may occupy the entire day in reading (Scripture), his aim being to forget this transient world¹, and to be dead in his mind to the recollection of its transient affairs², and (to) discourse with

4 ¹ continual recollection of God (*'uhdānā ammīnā d-alāhā*): cf I f.12v, Part I 258, Basil *Ep.Greg.* Add.12175 254r.1, Macarius 42, Shubhalmaran 23a, Dadisho' *Shel.* 614 (quoting 'John of Thebes'); compare *dukrānā ammīnā d-alāhā* Basil *Quest.* 46v, which is rare in Syriac writers, among whom the most common phrase is *'uhdānā d-alāhā* (without *ammīnā*), which occurs in Isaac at *Keph.IV.74*, Part I 57, 136, 153, 260, 262, 322, 493, 512, and is found earlier in Basil *Ep.Greg.* Add.17192 188v, Evagrius Add.14578 18v, 20r, 28r, 33v, 86r, 88v, 91v, *Ev.Syr.* 126, *Keph.* IV.73 (S 2), John Sol. *Pr.* 3, Macarius 11, 23, 87, Mark the Monk Add.12175 146r.1, 146v.1-2, 148r.2, 152v.1, Sextus 5, 6, 12, 21, and in most of the seventh-century ES monastic writers.

5 ¹ frequent kneelings (*sbīsūt syām burkē*): compare *syām burkē sbīsē* Part I 57, Dadisho' *Shel.* 613.

² crucified the world: compare Gal.5:24.

6 ¹ body and intellect being crucified: cf Part I 16, 238 (crucifying the body), 223 (the intellect). For the intellect ascending the Cross cf Abba Isaiah XXVI.4, and the discussion in Y. DE ANDIA, 'Hesychia et contemplation chez Isaac le Syrien', *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 53 (1991), 20-48, esp.28ff. Ephrem *H. de Ecclesia* 29:8 already speaks of 'the heart crucified daily'.

² at peace in: P 'urging'.

³ meditating on the Scripture (*hergā dba-ktābā*): cf Part I 379, *Hist.Laus.* 12, Shem'on d-Taybuteh 296b; compare *hergā ... dba-ktābā d-ruh* Part I 122, and *hergā daktābē* *Hist.Laus.* 369, *Par.* 649, Sahdona III 15, Shem'on d-Taybuteh 299b, *Kalilah and Dimnah* (ed. WRIGHT) 331.

7 ¹ this transient world (*'ālmā hānā 'ābōrā*): cf *Keph.* II.55, Macarius 219, Nilus 102, *Hudra* III 400 etc.

² recollection of its...affairs (*'uhdānā d-ṣebwāteh*): cf I f.7r (constr.), Part I 92, 145, 373, 526, Evagrius Add.14578 82v, John Sol. *Soul* 87, Babai *C.Evag.* 235r, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIII.33, Shem'on d-Taybuteh 305a.

the passions' thoughts — for these persistently make themselves felt through what the mind sees and through its imaginings, this being the sum of (all) contests. Therefore, using this stratagem of understanding, he blocks the door of his mind³ against the world by means of the continual delight provided by reading (Scripture), (thus) smoothing his path as he travels towards God without any darkness in his mind. And so, delighting in the insights of (divine) mysteries⁴ and in wonder at (God's) dispensation⁵ at every moment, he will give himself over for a little to standing in prayer and psalmody. But the portion of his reading is greater than that of prayer.

8. I said 'prayer' (just now): that refers to (a period of) standing or a particular act of worship; (for) while (engaged) in his reading, he is never for one moment devoid of the upsurges of prayer. For no reading (of Scripture) which has engaged in this spiritual concern will be empty of the fountain of prayer¹, seeing that for the most part this person will be inebriated by the mysteries he encounters. Profound prayers will appear unawares in him in a wondrous way, without his having prepared or willed them. And why do I call 'prayer' his frequently being inebriated by some insight, seeing that no place is to be found there (any longer) for the stirring and recollection of prayer? This is something much more excellent — insofar as this can be said — even than the level of prayer².

9. Prayer, however, is lower in rank than being stirred in spirit: on this there is no dispute, for prayer is inferior to this mystery. Frequently, when the intellect is stirred by some insight (produced) by events¹ either in the natural world or in the Scriptures (as it perceives) their spiritual intention and (then) peers, with the help of the grace which accompanies it, into the Holy of Holies of their mysteries, then there is not even the strength to pray, or any thought left remaining

³ door of his mind (*tar'ā d-re'yāneh*): cf John Sol. *Hes.* 1.

⁴ insights of (divine) mysteries (*sukkālē d-rāzē*): see on V.15.

⁵ wonder at (God's) dispensation (*tehrā da-mdabbrānūteh*): cf *Keph.* IV.47.

⁸ ¹ fountain of prayer: see note to X.38.

² more excellent ...than the level of prayer: for the stage beyond prayer, where prayer is 'cut off', see Part I ch.22, discussed by I. HAUSHERR, 'Par delà l'oraison pure, grâce à une coquille. À propos d'un texte d'Évagre', *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* 13 (1932), 184-88 = *Hésychasme et Prière* (OCA 176; 1966), 8-12, E. KHALIFE-HACHEM, 'La prière pure selon Isaac de Ninive', in *Mémorial G. Khouri-Sarkis* (Louvain, 1969), 157-72, and R. BEULAY, *L'enseignement spirituel de Jean de Dalyatha* (Théologie Historique 83; 1990), 216-21. See also below, XXXII

⁹ ¹ some insight produced by events (*sukkālā medem d-su'rānē*): cf Dadisho' *C.Par.* 902; the phraseology is Evagrian (*Keph.* V.40 [S 2] *sukkālā d-su'rānē tahtāye*).

there, in that this person has been made silent in his body, along with his soul.

10. For every event, natural being and utterance in this creation there is a Sanctuary and a Holy of Holies. When the intellect is given permission and accorded the strength to enter therein, no strength or movement or activity is left remaining in the senses during these periods.

11. There is someone from among those who are gathered here who has always (experienced) these things: I know that his heart immediately leaps up when he encounters this kind of reading which comes from the experience and from indications of the things just mentioned. But seeing that (we are still concerned) with the lesser parts of spiritual ministry¹, I will be silent about the more important part.

12. So these are the different kinds of paths which discerning solitaries follow, and (thus) find delight in converse with God in stillness.

13. Do you then, O (fellow) human being, choose one of these paths that suits your measure and your understanding. Travel along it, and do not look at (other) people: rather, turn your entire gaze away from the world, from people and from human affairs. Show your entire aim to be directed towards God alone, and travel on the path that leads to Him. As far as you are able, be in continual recollection of Him, (and the path will go) easily and without a break, as you beseech him continuously,

14. *Lord, show me Your paths, and make known to me in spirit¹ Your ways so many and so ineffable; lead me on the course of truth and teach me² the perfect knowledge of You which is to be found within the saints who have abandoned the world. O Christ, Goal of the path of the saints³, show me the path of truth⁴ in my heart, by means of the sweetness of reflection on You, so that I may travel and go on (this path) towards You until I see Your face.*

11 ¹ spiritual ministry (*pulhānā d-ruh*): cf Part I 244, 374, Evagrius *Keph.* I.13, Babai *C.Evag.* 21v, 26v, 28r, 45v, 48r; compare *pulhānā d-ruhā Liber Graduum* 19:15, Ephrem *H. de Virginitate* 7:1, Macarius 341, and *pulhān ruhā* in Narsai M I 83, II 32. For *pulhānā ruhānāyā* see on XXXV.5.

14 ¹ in spirit (*brwḥ*): P 'O my Creator' (*brwyy*).

² Lord,... teach me: Ps.25:4, expanded.

³ path of the saints (*'urhā d-qaddīšē*): from Heb.9:8, cf Part I 135 (plur.), 204, Evagrius *Antirrh.* 37r.

⁴ path of truth: the phrase is widely found, e.g. *Odes of Solomon* 11:3, *Acts of Thomas* 250, 283, Ephrem *Sermones* IV.iii (p.41), Basil *Quest.* 25v, Evagrius Add.14578 108v, *Antirrh.* 43 (variant), Macarius 13, 55, 193, Abba Isaiah VII.14, *Par.* 621, 624, 760, Ps.Dionysius 57v, Babai *C.Evag.* 53v, Abraham of Nathpar 90v, Gregory of Cyprus 104, Dadisho' *C.Par.* 897.

XXXI.

An explanatory comment on what has (just) been said, along with necessary cautions appropriate to the subject of the journey towards God.

1. This too it is necessary to realize: even though there are all these distinct paths (available) in this quiet and lovely ministry of stillness¹, nevertheless at the very outset, when people begin on the (ascetic) life of stillness², they do not start out by selecting one of these distinctive paths to travel in; rather, the start of the path and the beginning of the journey is one and the same for everyone. This is one that everyone knows, because of the single way in which this ministry manifests itself: that is to say, incessant toil³ involving psalmody, along with manifest and visible fasting; and if there is someone with the ability, the reading (of Scripture) too, though this person cannot, and is not permitted at all to, perceive the (full) sense of what he is reading, even though he may be very learned and highly educated in the habit of ordinary reading and in the exact rendering of the words. As for the exact meaning⁴, corresponding to the spiritual significance, this is something which, in accordance with the growth of the inner person⁵ in the ascetic life and (his) hidden progress, the divine power will cause him to taste — that power which acts as a guide to him on the great and extensive ocean of stillness⁶.

2. And so, as I said above, at the start and beginning of the journey, there is a single path and a single beginning for all who travel in stillness¹.

3. But afterwards, once one has entered on the ascetic life, and on the width and breadth of the path, then all these (different) paths and ways

XXXI.1 ¹ ministry of stillness (*pulḥānā d-šelyā*): cf Part I 146 (construct), 573 (and compare 148, 572 *pulḥānā dab-šelyā*).

² (ascetic) life of stillness (*dubbār šelyā*): see on VIII.18.

³ incessant toil (*amlā tkihā*): cf Isaac apud *Codex Syriacus Secundus* 38v.

⁴ the exact meaning (*sukkālā ḥattitā*): cf Ps. Dionysius 104v, 105v, 111v, 117r; plural in Part I 53, *Keph.* I.4, 53.

⁵ growth...person: P 'inner growth'.

⁶ ocean of stillness (*yaninā...d-šelyūtā*): cf Part I 467, and compare *yammā d-šelyā* XXXIV.5 Shubḥalmaran 20v.

2 ¹ travel in stillness (*rādyay b-šelyā*): contrast *'amray b-šelyā* 'who dwell in stillness' in Dadisho' *Shel.* 603, 615, 627, *C.Par.* 958-9; and *'amray šelyā* in Shubḥalmaran 21r.

which we have clearly described above in the present discourse, start dividing up. So let us hold the same opinion of the different kinds of paths described in this discourse as we held in the section on changes¹ in ascetic practices, the different kinds of which were indicated a little earlier, even though the present (discourse) may differ in certain things from the other in the clarity of what is expressed.

4. For everyone to a lesser or a greater extent has some part in all the labours of the ascetic life¹, nevertheless each individual amongst them engages in and makes especial use of one in particular of these labours, in that he perceives that he makes the better progress through performing it, and by its especial practice he draws nearer to luminosity of thoughts and illumination of mind than is the case with the practice of others; (so,) being especially assiduous in this labour, he effects it that he becomes better versed in it than in anything else.

5. This does not (come) amid the impetuosity¹ of the body², and the habitual (struggle) against it, but rather, through long experience and the discernment of which he tastes, he then grasps the wonderful benefit of the toil, and the fruits of knowledge³ and the treasury which he is storing up within himself as a result of the practice of his ministry.

6. (This may consist) either in reading, or in psalmody, or meditation, or prayers, or the toil of kneeling, or in what is prayed in a hidden way in the heart. This (corresponds) to what was said, *On the upright the law is not imposed*¹. This is because², in all that they do, they lay down as their aim to draw near to the Lord using that portion which proves quickest, and (choosing) whichever portion of the law whereby the love of the Lord may best shine out in them. They are not concerned whether this (portion) belongs to the community's (monastic) rule, or whether it is separate in aim from the custom of others; for they are not enslaved by custom or by the fine points of the series of the community's rules,

3 ¹ section (*pasōqā*) on changes: i.e. XXII above.

4 ¹ labours of the (ascetic) life (*'amlē ...d-dubbārā*): compare *'amlā d-dubbārā Keph.* IV.42, Part I 304, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIV.24, *C.Par.* 963; *'amlā d-dubbārē V.Antony* 77, Evagrius *Antirr.* 72r, *Hist.Laus.* 12, Macarius 16, Abba Isaiah XI.98, Nilus 87; and *'amlē d-dubbārē Hist. Monach.* 333, 340, Narsai M I 130, II 25.

5 ¹ impetuosity (*bh'p*): P 'change' (*bh'wlp*).

² the body (*gwšm*): so B*: B^{ms c2} P have *šgm* 'occupation'.

³ fruits of knowledge (*pi'rē d-ida'tā*): cf Shem'on d-Ṭaybutēh 281b, and compare Nilus 250 *pi'ray ida'tā* (of Tree of Life); sing. Narsai M II 107, G III 222.

6 ¹ On the upright... I Tim. I:9.

² B adds in the margin, and P in the text, here: 'There is a law for children, and there is (another) law for servants'.

which were laid down for the undisciplined. Often enough their ministry will (take them) either to the left or to the right [sc. of the common rules] (for) they are like people who have approached freedom in their understanding, because of (their) readiness of will to please their Lord³: they are eager solely⁴ to reach as quickly as possible knowledge and perception of the Lord, not looking at anyone, or at human opinions⁵ or custom.

7. Therefore in everything where they begin their journey they are helped in their progress because of this one thing in particular. That is, in everything they begin on, they do it with diligence and a sense of awe¹, and not in a contemptuous way. As a result of this they are all the more assisted by divine power, in that this one thing which we have spoken of effects² their ministry.

8. Even though they conduct their way of life with such liberty with themselves, being above any law because of the truth they have acquired within themselves — namely, divine love —, when they come to other people and to the (monastic) community, then they conduct themselves exactly as the others do, following in everything the practices which the (community) uses, alongside them, and with them in all their rules, abandoning entirely their own customary practice. For this reason everything is required of them, and they are held worthy by God of grace¹, seeing that humility accompanies them everywhere, and awe of God, and reverence before Him. And when they are on their own, He accompanies them in their freedom in all their ministry, for they feel a reverential sense of shame before God whenever they approach prayer to Him and His ministry in a slovenly or lax manner. Even when (their) body is weak, they fulfil this, though sometimes it may be done in a shortened and abbreviated form, being filled (nevertheless) with a sense of reverence and awe in all their thoughts, as well as with a sobriety before the Lord which is an indication that the body possesses an alertness over all its senses at these times; and with a composure of gaze and limbs which are all set in readiness before God for whatever is suitable for the particular moment: this consists of outpouring of heart² and the limbs all

³ to please their Lord (*la-nyāhī mārḥōn*): perhaps based on Isaiah 28:12 (cf Aphrahat *Dem.* 4:14).

⁴ solely: P 'therefore'.

⁵ human opinions (*renyē 'nāšāyē*): cf Part I 155 (sing.).

⁷ ¹ sense of awe: P 'joy'.

² effects (*mpq*): P 'is connected with' (*maq*).

⁸ ¹ grace: P '(divine) care'.

² outpouring of heart (*ašīdūtā d-lebbā*): compare XXIV.2 *lebbā d-met'ešed*.

prepared. And even though they may be walking in a state of love, yet they do not show a freedom of speech which comes from laxity; rather, their freedom of speech stems from respect.

9. It is a matter for great fear to approach God in a lax way under the guise of freedom of speech, or on the pretext of liberty: for maybe all of a sudden some punishment may meet us at that very point.

10. Are you aware, O slack man, before whom you are approaching in order to offer sacrifice of the stirrings of your ministry? You have not yet experienced the sternness of the Lord, when He changes from His right hand, full of kindness, to His left hand, exacting His due from those who abuse Him — how angry He burns, and how filled He is with zeal at the time when this has been aroused! He will not turn back, even though you beg Him at length, once He has been aroused to this; rather, He burns *like a furnace*¹ in His anger. Should we have the audacity to (act) laxly in our prayer to Him and in the other actions of ministry to Him? Should we approach and complete this with slackness of body? We should look at ourselves with regard to (our) sacrifice (of prayer): who is it we are approaching in order to fulfil it? Otherwise under the pretext of a senseless kind of liberty we will receive perdition for ourselves, while abusing the Lord's honour; and when we die², or our mind is taken from us, they will remove us from there — just as has happened to many, who have received stripes such as these at the time of prayer. May God in His grace grant in us perfect understanding, so that we may conduct ourselves before Him as befits His majesty all our days, amen.

10 ¹ burns like a furnace: cf Mal.3:19 (but with a different verb).

² die: B^mg m² 'are disturbed'; P 'are coveted' (!).

XXXII.

By the same blessed Mar Isaac¹, on the transformation (resulting) from holy stirrings and the smooth course that are granted to us by our Lord's compassion at the time of prayer.

1. When it sometimes happens that a person is held worthy of prayer of fervour¹ as a result of the surging of grace, then he experiences countless densely-packed stirrings in this prayer: prayers press on each other in a forceful way, (prayers) that are both pure and hot, like coals of fire. In the (midst of these) stirrings a mighty gasp² ascends from the depths of the heart: this is mingled with a lowliness which comes from the power of joy. And from (the source) whence these things come, he receives a hidden assistance in his stirrings at these times from the prayer itself, and a burning fire is set in motion in the soul as a result of his joy — until that person is lowered to the abysses in his thoughts.

Thus these stirrings issue forth for him³ in his prayer (in the form of) pure and forceful prayers, densely-packed and gushing forth⁴ in their impetus: they are in the inmost part of the heart, and are accompanied by an unswerving gaze directed towards our Lord. It seems to that person that it is in his very body that he is approaching our Lord at that time, because of the sincerity of the prayer's thoughts⁵ which rise up for him.

2. When¹ he is held worthy of the prayer of understanding², the moment he encounters the smallest word of the prayer immediately the prayer dries up on his mouth and he is completely still of all movements, ending up in motionless silence in both his soul and in his body.

XXXII title ¹ By...Isaac: om PQ.

1 ¹ prayer of fervour (*šlōtā d-reḥā*): although this phrase seems to be without parallel, 'fervour' is a common theme in Isaac, e.g. *Keph.* II.69 (of love); III.48 (fiery), Part I 54, 127f, 138, 272, 555.

² a mighty gasp: Heb. 5:7.

³ issue forth for him (*nḡyyn lh*): PQ 'are linked with him' (*nḡyyn lh*).

⁴ gushing forth: PQ 'lowly'.

⁵ sincerity of the prayer's thoughts (*ḥattūtūtā d-ḥuṣṣābay šlōtā*): for *ḥatt. d-ḥuṣṣābē* cf Part I 194.

2 ¹ B adds in the margin: It is an activity which is far removed from the forms of anything'.

² prayer of understanding (*šlōtā d-īda'ītā*): cf I f.19r, *Keph.* I.34.

3. A person who has experienced journeying on this path will understand the indications of these two forms of prayer which have been mentioned.

4. Or maybe there is someone who imagines that the level and the stirring of spiritual prayer¹ consists in one of these things. The person who thinks this should understand that all these things, and countless others like them, (belong) to the level of pure prayer, pure thoughts² on the level of the soul, which arise in a person under the title of prayer³. In the life of the spirit, on the other hand, there is no (longer any) prayer. Every kind of prayer that exists (consists of) beautiful thoughts⁴, and these are stirrings on the level of the soul⁵. On the level and in the life of the spirit, there are no thoughts, no stirring; no, not even any sensation or the slightest movement of the soul concerning anything, for (human) nature completely departs from these things and from all that belongs to itself. (Instead) it remains in a certain ineffable and inexplicable silence, for the working of the Holy Spirit stirs in it, it being raised above the realm of the soul's understanding.

5. What then shall we say? Where thoughts do not exist, how can one speak any longer of prayer — or of anything else?

6. Concerning this level, if there is anyone who desires to hear in detail, let him read the large discourse which we made¹ on prayer of the spirit; from there he will learn clearly the whole purpose of this concept of the life of prayer, and the things which are associated with (prayer's) purity, and lack of purity; (he will learn) what is (this) spiritual stirring², and why this raising up above³ the stirrings of the level of the soul is called 'prayer', even though there is no prayer on this level of the spirit. All these things have been dealt with clearly by us there.

4 ¹ spiritual prayer (*šlōtā d-ruh*): cf XXXII.6, *Par.* 766, *Sahdona* III.21, *Dadisho' C.Abls.* I.15, XV.40 (quoting Mark). Compare *šlōtā ruhānāyā*, which is preferred in other seventh-century ES writers (in Isaac, Part I 168, 170, 175, 519), and which goes back to John the Solitary (*Soul* 90, *Pr.* 1).

² pure thoughts (*huššābē dkayyā*): cf John Sol. *Soul* 88, *Macarius* 56, *Sahdona* I 107 (sing.), *Dadisho' C.Abls.* XIII.20. Compare *dakyūt huššābē* (see on XV.9).

³ no (longer any) prayer: see above on XXX.8

⁴ beautiful thoughts (*huššābē šappirē*): cf *Par.* 695.

⁵ stirrings on the level of the soul (*zaw'ē napšānāyē*): cf *Keph.* I.22, IV.15, Part I 166, 260. Compare *zaw'ē d-napšā* (see on XIV.24).

6 ¹ B adds in the margin: 'That discourse was written in the First Half'. The discourse in question is no.22 (Part I 163-75).

² spiritual stirring (*zaw'ā ruhānā*): cf *Keph.* IV.15, *Ps.Dionysius* 42r, 107r, *Dadisho' C.Abls.* XII.1 (-āyā), *Shel.* 216b (-āyā). The plural occurs in Part I 376, *Ps.Dionysius* 37r, *Gregory of Cyprus* 66, *Shubhālmāran* 32r.

³ above: P 'which renders inactive'.

XXXIII.

By the same¹. On the good and bad changes which we receive from the changes in (our) perspective on the Scriptures.

1. This too do I call to your mind, O fellow human being who travel in stillness: place some sign on it, and you will find it with true experience. For in accordance with (the manner of) choosing (it), reading alleviates depression and darkness from a brother during the time spent in his cell, and he (begins) to rejoice and exult in God; the weight of his labours becomes lighter for him, and he finds consolation and receives a conviction of hope and of awareness in his mind. And (again), corresponding to the perspective and manner of the reading upon which that brother ponders, he grows dark and gloomy; his thoughts are darkened, and the world becomes small in his eyes.

2. Do not adduce (in reply) to me: 'There are times when (a brother) is abandoned with these things through providence, without any (obvious) cause, as a way of effecting training and lowliness'. I myself do not intend to set aside things that are impossible (for human beings), and matters which belong to (divine) economy — such things do not escape me. (No,) I am not contradicting the providential Will¹; (rather), in the case of these things there can for the most part be some cause for their occurrence which originates from ourselves. I refer to happiness, gloominess, to a sense of heaviness and lassitude, to a fervent warmth and the heart's leaping in joy — and the quenching of these: even though many times, having imagined that we are abandoned, out of providence, to darkness and to commotion, we have approached, for whatever reason, words such as these — and then, the moment we approach them, joy and happiness meet us out of Scripture, and we realize that our own disturbed state is the cause, and that (our darkness) stems from our lack of care over discerning converse (with God).

3. I myself have had many experiences of these things, and what I have discovered is along the lines of what I have indicated here as a

XXXIII title ¹ om P.

2 ¹ providential will (*remzā mdabbrānā*): compare XXXIX.5 *mdabbrā lan yaṣṣīpūtā d-remzeh*; the phraseology was perhaps suggested by Ephrem H. *de Fide* 26:1, 54:2 *b-remzā mdabbar (h)wā*. For *remzā kasyā* see on IX.6.

reminder, out of brotherly love, since many, I think¹, are benefited by these experiences, and they make progress as they come to realize that in half the cases of a sense of heaviness during stillness, this is dissolved by some form of scriptural reading; in some cases, by means of the discernment they taste as a result of the illumination² provided by the wisdom that lies in the words.

³ ¹ think: say P.

² illumination: weight P.

XXXIV.

By the same blessed Mar Isaac¹, on the consolations which are granted by God's compassion to those who remain in stillness for the sake of God.

1. Who can reach to the (full) height of God's grace, and who can measure the vast depth¹ of His compassion? For He holds worthy of great consolation those who work in His presence out of a sense of obligation, and not as though for any wages. People who work as though for wages are ones who do not rejoice when they (have to) bear afflictions, adversities and other such grievous things for our Lord's sake; rather, when, after having worked for a little time, they are not consoled or comforted in accordance with their expectation, they end up in lassitude, complaining, and faint-heartedness. This is because they do not have set in their mind that affliction for God's sake is (really) a great festival for us — even if this should continue for us without any consolation or interruption, until the end of our lives. A person who does not accept with this understanding and persevere in these things (which are) of God, (will find that) neither will God amass and collect together for him in accordance with what is His; nor will he find within himself any place for perseverance. Truly, *Those who sow in tears*, with unbounded thought like children, will *reap in joy*², beyond the expectation of their mind.

2. There are times when a person sits in a stillness that is guarded and wakeful, and there is no entry or exit for him. But after much converse with the Scriptures, continuous supplication and thanksgiving at his feeble state, with his gaze extended unceasingly towards God's grace, following on after great dejectedness in the stillness, and from that starting point little by little some spaciousness of heart¹ is born, and a germination (takes place) which gives birth to joy² from within, even though that (joy) has no origin from that person himself, by some kind of initiating (process of) thought. He is aware that his heart is

XXXIV title ¹ om PQ.

1 ¹ height ...depth: the wording here and below deliberately reflects Eph.3:18.

² those who sow...: Ps.125(126):5.

2 ¹ spaciousness of heart: cf I f.5v.

² which gives birth to joy: of a certain joy PQ.

rejoicing, but he does not know the reason why. For a certain exultation takes hold in the soul, at the enjoyment of which everything that exists and is seen is disregarded, and the mind sees³, through its power, whence comes the foundation of that rapture of thought⁴ — but why (it occurs) he does not comprehend. He sees that the mind is raised up from association with everything else, is lifted up and finds itself above the world in its upsurge, and (above) the memories which came into being below it, it (now) spurns and removes the whole world of time away, far away from itself; but it does not discern (any) extension of intellect at (this) leaping of the heart⁵, or (at) the drawing out of the mind during its vexation⁶.

3. There is no one who can grasp the nature of these things which occur with him as a result of God's grace. All one can say is, How blessed is the person who, out of hope for God's grace, has endured the dejectedness which is a hidden trial of the mind's virtue¹ and growth². It is like winter's gloom which (nevertheless) causes the hidden seed to grow as it disintegrates, under the ground, at the harsh changes of the blustery weather. With the same expectation of fruit in the end, by placing this expectation over an extended time, a person will push dejectedness away from himself, with the result that he will not cause the eye of his soul³ to become dark, as a result of the practice of meditating on the things on which his soul's gaze is carefully fixed; for from these there are likely to spring up in (the soul) its joy, and excellence of mind. These he should await at a distance, not (considering) them to be close at hand. For when he has not received consolation in the short term at his labours, he may end up in despair, like the hired labourer who has been cheated of the wage for which he has worked.

It may also be the case that someone will, with a cunning wisdom, craftily set for himself some expectation for the near future, so that he may cut away dejection from the soul through some such promises — and so get relief for his soul. For the soul readily accepts thoughts that

³ sees: rejoices PQ.

⁴ rapture of thought (*hūpūt huṣṣābā*): compare 2 Cor.12:2, and Part 1 171 *meḥtep hawnā*; 'eagerness (*hūpitut*) of thought' PQ.

⁵ leaping of the heart (*ba-šwār lebbā*): compare X.35, XXXI.11 and XXX.2 of the verb *šwār* with 'heart' as subject.

⁶ ...its vexation: the passage is obscure, but this seems to be the sense

3 ¹ mind's virtue (*myatrūt re'yānā*): cf XXXIX.15.

² mind's...growth (*tarbītā d-re'yānā*): cf John Sol. *Soul* 23. For other phrases with *tarbītā* derived from John the Solitary see on XIII title and XXX.3.

³ eye of his soul: this commonplace, which goes back to Plato, is already found in early Syriac writers, e.g. Ephrem *H. de Fide* 5:18. See also on XXXV.3, below.

concern hope, and very frequently it changes from grief to alleviation through expectation.

4. If there were no struggle, then there would be no need for warnings. There are many people who think that warnings such as these are superfluous, as though nothing went on inside a person at all! If that had been the case, everyone equally would receive these blessings, and equally meet with these beautiful things of the soul: he would not know of anyone slothful, or anyone wakeful and eager — or everyone would turn out evil! But this I know: such a thought is the very making of sloth, which is born of slackness in the face of dejectedness — (a slackness) which gives birth to this very thought; for neither diligence nor wakefulness, prayer or supplication would any longer be anything (of value): let everyone henceforth lie down and not stir himself! If the diver² found a pearl in every oyster, then everyone would quickly become rich! And if he brought one up the moment he dived, without the waves beating against him, without any sharks encountering him, without having to hold his breath until he almost expires, without being deprived of the clear air³ which is granted to everyone, and having to descend to the abyss — (if all this were the case), pearls would come more thick and fast than lightning flashes⁴!

5. It is in this way you should understand me. And let those who dive into the sea of stillness¹ act as teachers, those who alight on the riches of the sea, (descending to) the heart of the earth. Let us consider as oysters² the prayers upon which the intellect alights, the contemplative insights, divine knowledge, wisdom, joy in spirit.

6. In the case of divers, they will very often go down and find oysters consisting of just ordinary flesh; only once in a while will there be a pearl in it. Their experience is also ours in the commerce which consists in prayer: barely a single one occurs through us wherein there is consolation for our weariness.

4 ¹ B and P add 'In this section there is a symbol(ic meaning) for the enlightened, but for the neglectful the endeavour (consists) in fervour and awe of God. He who understands in silence will be astounded. Thus (P here) the symbol is too great for the feeble in mind'.

² the diver: Isaac came from Qatar and so was no doubt very familiar with pearl diving; compare Part I 326. For the dangers of diving cf Ephrem *H. de Fide* 81:11, John Sol. *Soul* 69. For spiritual pearls cf Part I 179, 326, 467.

³ clear air (*ā'ēr šapyā*): cf Part I 540, Narsai M I 264, II 122.

⁴ lightning flashes (*barqē*): 'pebbles' (*bezqē*) PQ.

5 ¹ sea of stillness (*yammā d-šelyā*): cf Shubḥalmaran 20v, and compare Part I 467 *yammā 'asqā d-šelyūtā*.

² oysters: compare Part I 327 and Sahdona III 25.

7. Those who are skilled in the craft, who possess (the experience of) age and long (practice) in this labour, also know how to make their (body's) movements dive down to deep places where they can find superb and incomparable pearls of great price. Similarly, this happens corresponding to the ability of the mind which swims about in such places during the time of prayer, — places where it is not easy for everyone to swim.

8. In the case of our feeble selves, whose swimming takes place close to dry land, it is only these (following) small pearls which come up for us — that is, when they do come up at all. And these do so when we dive eagerly, many times over, holding the breath of thoughts of this world during our prayers and Offices — which constitute a little respite from tears.

9. For (they consist of) a warm sensation coming from God's grace falling upon us, through which we will receive forgiveness of our sins; a sweet and peaceful fervour, a joy and sense of unexpected lightness; and, occasionally, the testimony of assurance concerning our firm hope¹, and specific insights concerning God's care and compassion for us.

10. Who has not sometime experienced these things in stillness, each one of them in due time? Will he deny it and say that he is cheated of the grace of God which accompanies him?

11. If, while we are still in a state of infancy, and being captivated by desire to see the riches which our preeminent Fathers brought up — and (still) bring up —, we importunately make for the profoundly deep places in the sea where they have swum, then we will be drowned in the sea.

12. And if, because our (pearls) seem to our eyes easily come by and small by comparison with theirs, or if we hold back from the fatigues of the sea, and cease entirely from our eagerness, then we will never learn about the swimming which is involved in prayer; nor will we attain to the intellect's skill which belongs to wisdom of spirit; nor will we descend to the depths which bear riches. And maybe our daily bread will not even be provided for the sustaining of our short lives, and we will end up in destitution, remaining always in a state of need. For the hand of the Lord which taught our Fathers about the spiritual swimming¹ that

⁹ ¹ firm hope (*sabran šarrīdā*): cf I f.16r, Part I 551. The phrase probably derives from Mark the Monk (Add.12175 152r.1, 153r.1).

¹² ¹ spiritual swimming.. (*saḥwā metyad'ānā dab-hawnā*): the source remains unidentified, though possibly it is a loose allusion to Basil SA 99r (*mashūtā* in a similar

takes place in the intellect and about confidence in the sea-journey so full of riches, is not too small to grant us too, in His own time, strong arms which will reach out over the waves of the fearful sea in order to reach those places from which (our Fathers) brought up spiritual treasures.

context). For the general idea, compare Ephrem *H. de Fide* 25:8-9, Part 1 27 and 'Abdisho' 279a ('the light of the intellect is not distinguished from the sea in which it swims').

XXXV.

On the topic of the exalted ministry of the mind¹, which is the sum of the entire (ascetic) way of life performed through the bodily senses, by which a person continually enters into a perfect mingling with God.

1. When someone reaches insights into creation¹ on the path of his ascetic life, then he is raised up above having prayer set for him within a boundary: for it is superfluous from then onwards for him to put a boundary to prayer by means of (fixed) times or the Hours; his situation has gone beyond its being a case of his praying and giving praise when he (so) wants. From here onwards he finds the senses continuously stilled and the thoughts bound fast with the bonds of wonder; he is continually filled with a vision replete with the praise that takes place without the tongue's movement. Sometimes, again, while prayer remains for its part, the intellect is taken away from it as if into heaven, and tears fall like fountains of water, involuntarily soaking the whole face. All this time such a person is serene, still, and filled with a wonder-filled vision. Very often he will not be allowed even to pray: this in truth is the (state of) cessation above prayer when he remains continually in amazement at God's work of creation — like people who are crazed by wine, (for) this is 'the wine which causes a person's heart to rejoice'².

2. But let us be on our guard lest there be someone who, out of idle thoughts¹, neglects prayer and psalmody when he hears of such things as these, imagining that the silence of which we have spoken comes from (our own) will. Rather, anyone who happens on these discourses should realize that an occurrence such as this does not come about from the human side, and that it is not a matter of the will. For those who, at the times of prayer, or it may be at other times, are stirred by an intellect which yearns for God, are reduced to a state of silence and dismay by the spiritual vision and by the mysteries (they behold). But it is

XXXV title ¹ ministry of the mind: see on XXIV title.

1 ¹ insights into creation (*sukkālē d-beryūtā*): cf Part I 23, Evagrius *Keph.* I.19 (S 2), 62, 74, II.35, III.21 (all S 1), John Sol. *Thaum.* IV 279, Babai *C.Evag.* 21r, 73a, 98r, 141r, 163r, Shem'on d-Taybuteh 305a.

² wine...rejoice: Ps 104:15.

2 ¹ idle thoughts (*huššābē baṭṭilē*): cf Macarius 353, Sextus 3.

especially at the time of prayer that apperceptions such as these occur, because of the especial attentiveness that accompanies a person (then).

3. By prayer I do not mean only the fixed Hours, the Hullale¹ of the psalter and the liturgical hymns. A person who has attained to this understanding (just described) abounds in prayer more than in all the other excellent things. (This prayer) is occasioned by insights, and again is awed by (further) insights and (so) turns to silence. The person who has been (thus) illumined looks into all God's creation with the eye of the mind² and (sees there) God's providence accompanying all things at all times; (he sees) the supernal care, filled with compassion, which visits creation unceasingly, sometimes under the aspect of adverse events, at others under the aspect of good. And the grace of God reveals to this person the various kinds of events which are hidden from many people, events which the Creator employs as a wondrous means of assistance in each natural being, whether rational or not possessing a soul; (it reveals too) the unseen reasons behind (all) these vicissitudes which take place for everything as a result of the provision of love appropriate for each, and that creating and guiding power which guides creation with a care that is utterly astonishing.

4. When someone receives all the time an awareness of these mysteries, by means of that interior eye¹ which is called spiritual contemplation², which consists in a (mode of) vision provided by grace, then the moment he becomes aware of one of these mysteries, (his) heart is at once rendered serene with a kind of wonder. Not only do the lips cease from the flow of prayer and become still, but the heart too dries up from (all) thoughts, due to the amazement that alights upon it; and it receives from grace the sweetness of the mysteries of God's wisdom³ and love,

3 ¹ Hullale: the ES Psalter is divided into 20 *hullālē* (see J. MATEOS, *Lilya Sapra. Essai d'interprétation des matines chaldéennes* (OCA 156; 1959), 29, also 316 for possible Jerusalem origin). Isaac again mentions *hullālē* (and their constituent smaller groups of Psalms, the *marmyātā*) at Part I 547.

² eye of the mind (*re'yānā*): cf Part I 230, 305 (pl.); the phrase goes back to Ephrem(?) *H. de Abraham Qidunaya* 3:3. *H. de Epiphania* 8:21.

4 ¹ interior eye (*'aynā gawwāyā*): plural in Ephrem *S. de Domino Nostro* 32.

² spiritual contemplation (*te'ōryā d-ruh*): cf *Keph.* II.10, Part I 217, 303, 570, Evagrius *Keph.* II.13, 61, III.24, IV.47, V.16, 74, VI 63, 65, Ps.Dionysius 98v = ed. STROTHMANN 6, Hierotheos 34, 73, 75, Sergius 78, 81 (and often), and in most seventh-century ES writers (especially common in Babai). See also on VII.1 for *te'ōryā ruhānāyā*.

³ sweetness of the mysteries of God's wisdom (*halyūtā hāy d-rāzē d-hekmtēh.*): compare *haylūt hekmtā* Nilus 223, and *halyūteh d-rāzā* in Narsai McL III 180; and for *rāzē d-hekmtā* cf John Sol. *Soul* II (sing.), *Epp.* 26, 31, Sahdona II 12 (sing.), and compare *rāzay hekmtā* Evagrius *Epp.* 175r, Babai *C.Evag.* 177r.

by means of the (mode of) vision which has knowledge of events and natural beings.

5. This is the consummation of the (ascetic) life in the body (that takes place) on the level of the soul, and the boundary of the spiritual ministry¹ which is perfected in the intellect. Anyone who wishes to attain to a taste of our Lord's love² should ask Him that this door be opened to him. I shall be surprised if, in the case of those who have not approached Him for this (purpose) and who have not become aware of the perception (brought by this mode) of the vision of created things and the workings of providence among them, (if) it is possible for them ever to be aware of that love which captivates the souls of those on whom (this) has alighted.

These are the things which open up for us the door to that knowledge of truth which is exalted above all (other knowledge), which provides the intellect with a passage across³ to the glorious mysteries of the divine and revered Nature⁴.

6. It is a matter for even more astonishment in the case of those who, being outside stillness and great deprivation, have had the boldness to speak and write concerning this mystery of the divine glory in created things¹. Blessed is the person who has entered this door in the experience of his own soul, for all the power of ink, letters and phrases is too feeble to indicate the delight of this mystery.

7. Many simple people imagine that the philosophers' form of meditation is a (fore)taste of this converse that conveys the beauties of all of God's mysteries¹. The blessed bishop Basil speaks of this in a letter of his brother², where he makes a distinction between this perception of

5 ¹ spiritual ministry (*pulhānā ruḥānāyā*): cf *Hist.Laus.* 371, Narsai M I 216, PP II 589, *Par.* 820, Abraham of Nathpar 93r, Babai *C.Evag.* 158r, 209b, Sahdona I 30, 137, IV 4-5, 7, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* III.1.5, *C.Par.* 939-40, 943, *Shel.*217; based on Evagrius' *pulhānā ruḥānā* (*Keph.* IV.40 [S 1], Add. 14578 16v), for which cf Gregory of Cyprus 46, 112, 142. Compare *pulhānā d-ruḥ*, on which see XXX.11.

² taste of...love (*t'āntā d-ḥubbā*): see note to XVIII.7.

³ passage across (*ma'bartā*): cf V.21, XXXV.11, XXXIX.4, Part I 126, 331. The term derives from the 'passage across' the Jordan, interpreted anagogically (as e.g. Nilus 295). Among seventh-century ES writers, e.g. Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XV.6.

⁴ glorious mysteries of the divine..Nature (*rāzē šbiḥē da-kyānā alāhāyā*): compare Part I 72 *rāzē ksayyā da-kyānā d-rabbūteh*. For *rāzē šbiḥē* cf already A.Thomas 192, 283, Ephrem *H. de Virginitate* 24:9, and Narsai M I 270.

6 ¹ in created things (*dbḥwy*): 'in the intellect' (*dbḥwn*) PQ.

7 ¹ beauties of all of God's mysteries (*šuprē d-kullhōn rāzaw(hy) d-alāhā*): cf John Sol. *Epp.* 61, Narsai F III 271. 'Mysteries of God' derives from I Cor.4:1, and is used both by Evagrius (*Cap.Cog.* 89), and John the Solitary (e.g. *Soul* 84, *Tr.* 39); it occurs in Part I 83.

² Basil, *Letter 2*; Syriac translation in Add.17192 190r (in the supplement added after the end of the letter; this is absent from the sixth-century manuscripts Add.12175 and

creation which the saints receive — that is, the ladder of the intellect³ of which the blessed Evagrius spoke, and the being raised up above all ordinary vision — and (the perception) of the philosophers.

8. 'There is', he says, 'a converse which opens up the door so that we can peer down into knowledge of created beings¹, and not up into spiritual mysteries'. He is calling the philosophers' (knowledge) 'downwards knowledge', for, he says, even those who are subject to the passions can know this (kind of knowledge); this perception which the saints receive through their intellect as a result of grace, however, he calls 'knowledge of the spiritual mysteries² above'.

9. Thus a person who is held worthy of this¹ is in this condition night and day, like someone who has departed from the body and is already living in that world of the righteous².

10. And this is the divine sweetness of which the pure-souled and wonderful Ammonius spoke¹: 'It is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb' — but not many solitaries and virgins [masc.] have known it.

11. This is the entry into divine rest, of which the Fathers¹ spoke, and the crossing over from the regions of the passions to luminosity and to the stirrings of freedom².

Add.12166). (For the Arabic translation of this letter see now J. GRAND'HENRY, *Le Muséon* 102 (1989), 321-59). Isaac perhaps refers to the same passage in Part I 23, as does Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XI.17 (p.155 top).

³ 'ladder of the intellect': Isaac probably has in mind Evagrius *Keph.* IV.43 (or *Keph.Supp.* 43, *Cap.Cog.* 89), on Jacob's ladder, though this precise phrase does not occur there. Isaac alludes to the passage (but without naming Evagrius) in *Keph.* IV.31. Compare Ammonius 582, Sahdona I 102, Shem'on d-Ṭaybuteh 292a.

8 ¹ knowledge of created beings (*īda'tā da-kyānē*): lit. 'of natures'. The terminology is Evagrian (*Keph.* I.32, 71, V.76 [all S 1], *Gnos.* 151); also John the Solitary *Tr.* 3, and Sergius 71, 76, 81, 99, 111, 115.

² knowledge of the ...mysteries (*īda'tā d-rāzē*): cf XV.11 (constr.), *Keph.* IV.2, Part I 48, 265, 544; the terminology also occurs in Evagrius (*Keph.* IV.66 [S 2]), Theodore of Mopsuestia (*WS V* 118), John the Solitary (*Soul* 64, *Epp.* 60, 86, *Tr.* 38), and Ps. Dionysius (86v).

9 ¹ P adds 'Gloss: a certain taste of [] from heaven of preeminence of mode of life'.

² world of the righteous (*'ālmā d-zaddiqē*): cf Part I 97, 231, 402, Aphrahat *Dem.* 23:18, Sahdona I 79. PQ have '...of saints'.

10 ¹ Ammonius: *Letter* 2 (PO 10, 571), based on Ps.19:19.

11 ¹ Fathers: unidentified; Isaac may have in mind the same source as in VII.2 (q.v.), though he uses *nawhā* there, but *nyāhtā* (as at XXXVII.2) here. Possibly the reference is to a passage further on in Ammonius' *Letter* 2 (572), where Ammonius speaks of 'the (divine) power which acts as a guide for a person so that he may enter the rest (*nyāhtā*)'. Compare also Is.66:1 = Acts 7:49, and Heb.4:1 etc. (where the Peshitta also uses *nyāhtā*).

² stirrings of freedom (*zaw'ē d-hīrūtā*): cf *Keph.* II.49, Ps. Dionysius 27r; compare Sergius 73 *zaw'ā d-hīrūteh*.

12. And this is what Evagrius, recipient of boundless spiritual revelations¹, names² 'the hundred-fold reward which our Lord promised in his Gospel'³. In his wonder at the greatness of this delight he did well to call it 'the key to the Kingdom of heaven'⁴.

13. I say in truth, as before God, that the body's limbs are incapable of holding up before this delight, and the heart is incapable of receiving it because of the magnitude of its pleasure. What more is there to say, seeing that the saints name it 'the apperception of the Kingdom of heaven'¹. For it is a symbol of that future wonder² at God: not by means of the insight of the corporeal world³ and (its) events does the pleasure of the righteous exist there in the Kingdom of heaven; rather, by means of things in the (world) the intellect is raised up, as though on a ladder, to Him who is the Kingdom of the saints, and it abides in wonder. Well has this apperception been called 'the mystery (or, symbol) of the Kingdom of heaven'⁴, for we are, during these mysteries, in a (state of) knowledge of Him who is the true Kingdom of all. (This is so) whenever the intellect is stirred by them, thanks to the gift of the divine Power.

12 ¹ spiritual revelations (*gelyānē ruhānē*): cf John Sol. *Soul* 10, 67, 68, Narsai F II 54, 123, 376, Philoxenus *Disc.* 301, 590.

² the hundred-fold reward...: Evagrius *Keph.* IV.42.

³ Gospel: Matt.19:29.

⁴ the key...: Evagrius *Keph.* IV.40.

13 ¹ the apperception...: unidentified; compare Matt. 13:11.

² symbol of that future wonder: similarly *Keph.*IV.95.

³ insight of the corporeal world (*sukkālā d-'ālmā gšīmā*); for 'ālmā gšīmā see note to VIII.155; compare *Keph.* IV.14 *sukkālē d-'ālmā d-gušme*. The phraseology is Evagrian, cf *Epp.* 162r *sukkālāy šebwātā gšīmātā* (so Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIII.20), *Epp.* 186v *sukkālē d-šebwātā mgaššmātā*; similarly *Keph.Suppl.* 17 *sukkālē d-'ālmā hānā* (constr. in *Epp.* 177r).

⁴ 'the mystery ... of heaven': cf John Sol. *Epp.* 119.

XXXVI.

By the same¹, on other topics of knowledge, and the reason for the mixing of dissimilar changes (of state) in the sequence of the discourse, with the goal of their intention.

1. Because we are not always left with the same goal of meditation, due to the ease with which distraction can take place, and concomitant reasons, seeing that of necessity (our human) nature seeks for change (in the form) of occupation and exercise with something else, we are (as a result) unable to stay with a single goal of meditation in the process of writing our discourses: it may be completely elevated in meaning (directed) towards things heavenly, or our words may persevere in (their) aim, (concerned) only with the world to come, or it may be entirely on the level of the soul, or be entirely directed towards instruction concerning the body., But (human) nature forces us to set down various topics, since sometimes it wanders in heaven, at others it does so on earth in suffering, and sometimes again it is raised up towards the Creator, and sometimes it stays with creation in (a state of) wonder; sometimes, too, it wanders, in the (course of) meditation on hidden spiritual meanings¹, on things to come; and sometimes it (is turned in) the direction of the governance of times. For this reason let no one be confused² by us, imagining that these things are set out in a disordered way. Rather, he should realize that with insight and great understanding (human) nature has taught us, by its changeability, to provide the spiritual meaning of our words³ along with the fortuitous things which accompany the mind's stirrings. For at a single moment variations multiply in a providential way, and (so) of necessity there is need for a variation of words depending on their sense⁴: this will depend on a person's present situation, on the luminosity of (his) stirrings⁵, or (his)

XXXVI title ¹ om PQ.

¹ meditation on hidden spiritual meanings (*hergā d-te'ōryās gnīzātā*): cf *hergā d-te'ōryās* Part I 492, and *te'ōryās gnīzātā* Hierotheos 21; sing. Ps.Dionysius 96v, 103v.

² be confused (*nštgn*): 'act arrogantly' (*nšt'l*) P.

³ spiritual meaning of our words (*te'ōryā d-mellayn*): cf Babai *C.Evag.* 216r (*d-mellē*), 235v (*d-mellteh*).

⁴ sense: translation uncertain.

⁵ luminosity of (his) stirrings (*šapyūtā d-zaw'ē*): cf *Keph.II.87* (constr.), Part I 209. Compare *zaw'ē špayyā* (for which see on IX.11).

dullness, or (his) passions, or (other) circumstances. Thus the intellect seeks for the nourishment of words which corresponds to its sick or healthy condition: these words constitute the materials for contemplation — like a bee⁶ which alights on different trees, and takes provision from them and fashions a honeycomb.

2. Now when the intellect has been illumined, even just a little, then it does not greatly need the provision of perceptible words for contemplation, for the natures of created things, and the various divine dispositions in them can serve for the mind instead of writing. Frequently it will cross over beyond these visible natures and be stirred by insight concerning hidden essences. It can also happen that (the intellect) is raised up by these (essences) and receives the ability to be stirred in its contemplation¹ concerning the revered Creator; this comes through the compassion issuing from that fountain of life which suddenly approaches the intellect's stirrings², and it peers inside the divine Holy of Holies, in so far as this is permitted to created beings: (this involves) a kind of mystical insight into it, an assured knowledge³ of the glorious nature of (God's) Majesty, an apperception of the reality⁴ of things which the written word does not dare take down. There are cases where their recording cannot be attempted, for this is not permitted, due to their mystical character; and there are cases where, because they are not written down, they cannot be spoken of either.

⁶ bee: the simile is common, e.g. Evagrius *Epp.* 105v, Nilus 232, Babai *C.Evag.* 113v.

² ¹ its contemplation (*b-te'oryehi*): or 'of him'. The suffixed form is infrequent, but also occurs in Part I 198, 255, 474, Shem'on d-Taybuteh 307a.

² intellect's stirrings (*zaw'ay hawnā*): cf *Keph.* IV.48, Ps.Dionysius 15r (*d-hawnē*), Gregory of Cyprus 82 (emph.); compare Evagrius *Gnos.* 120. For *zaw'ē d-mad'ā* see on VIII.2, and for *z. d-re'yānā* see on XXI.2.

³ assured knowledge (*īda'tā šarrirtā*): cf *Keph.* II.44 (scholion), IV.3, Part I 384, Theodore of Mopsuestia *WS V* 130-1, *C.John* 302, John Sol. *Epp.* 22, Add.17170 6v, Macarius 66, Mark the Monk Add.17192 115v, Ps.Dionysius 14r, 108v, 112r, Philoxenus *Disc.* 174, Babai *C.Evag.* 10r, 51v, Gregory of Cyprus 64, 118, 124, 142.

⁴ apperception of the reality (*marḡšānūtā da-šrārā*): cf *Keph.* I.5, Part I 49. Compare VIII.1 *m. d-īda'tā da-šrārā*.

XXXVII.

What are the indications of humility that a person feels in his soul; and on thanksgiving in temptations; and how it is possible for someone to incur these without complaining.

1. The continual reprimands of the conscience are a sign of humility. The lack of these in any undertaking is (a sign) of hardness of heart¹: it is an indication that a person is in the habit of justifying himself, blaming his neighbour instead — or, even worse, (blaming) the wise provision of God. (Conversely), a person cannot leave the boundaries of humility unless he first sees himself as being without blame, blaming instead the events and occasions which have been provided for him by God.

2. For when, as a result of a strict conscience, he observes himself subject to events, then a person will recognize that his condition is one of a profound degree of humility¹. This will be recognized by the fact that he is in a state of peace and tranquillity at all that happens to him; for he proves to be imperturbed — and this is the restful state which belongs to humility, and is the fruit of maturity. Whoever has entered this (will find that) in every temptation his (feeling of) rest will be greater than his (feeling of) vexation.

3. But unless someone has found knowledge of truth, he cannot see as good the rod of God which causes pain; nor will he cease from complaining about God's providential care for him in every aspect — all the things which are variously provided for him by God's wisdom under the guise of various multifaceted forms of unpleasantness — now it may come from a neighbour who suddenly meets him with a harsh word over a matter in which he is displeased; or it may come in the form of damage to something he possesses, and the vexations and chastisements that come through this; or now it may be through sickness, or some deficiency or other connected with the body; now, again, it may be through the importunity of the demons, or the destruction of his property. The faint-hearted person does not see the (divine) will acting in these events,

XXXVII.1 ¹ hardness of heart (*qašyūt lebba*): cf XL.12, Part I 76, 291; elsewhere e.g. *Par.* 490, Abba Isaiah XIV.53, Sahdona III 34.

2 ¹ degree of humility (*mšuhā...d-makkūtā*): cf Part I 580.

but instead he jumps up, aggrieved and upset at outward appearances of the causes (of the misfortune). O senseless child, why do you give judgement on (your) fellow human being, or on some demon, or on events visible close at hand? Look instead to the distant causes which are hidden and belong to these (events). Stop getting disturbed at God's actions through persons who effect them, and at the outward aspect of events: then you will discover in (all) this a knowledge of truth, humility, and other blessings.

4. When you sometimes examine events which cause pain to hidden wounds, and you enter in within yourself and scrutinize what lies hidden in yourself, and you reflect in yourself that God, who suddenly brings misfortune upon someone, is not evil, then you will quickly find relief from your temptations, and consolation in your vexed state, and you will attain to knowledge of truth through the process of growth that takes place by means of your temptations.

5. If, at the time of vexatious events you only look at their outwardly apparent aspect, and fail to examine and look at your hidden ulcers which stirred these events into action, (then) the more you complain, the more oppressive your misfortune will become and you will increase your miseries that you have brought upon yourself all the more: you will be carried from one to another like the waves of the sea which meet one another and hand over from one to another.

XXXVIII.

By the same, the blessed Mar Isaac¹, on the mystical topics of the contemplation which once befell him (as he meditated) on the magnificence of the New World, and on matters concerning the divine Nature, and the order that is to come; and, in summary, the thought that befell him concerning the conduct of the New Life².

1. What profundity of richness¹, what mind and exalted wisdom is God's! What compassionate kindness and abundant goodness belongs to the Creator! With what purpose and with what love did He create this world and bring it into existence! What a mystery does the coming into being of this creation look towards! To what a state is (our) common nature invited! What love served to initiate the creation of the world! This same love which initiated the act of creation prepared beforehand by another dispensation the things appropriate to adorn (the world's) majesty which sprung forth as a result of the might of His love².

2. In love did He bring the world into existence; in love does He guide it during this its temporal existence; in love is He going to bring it to that wondrous transformed state, and in love will the world be swallowed up in the great mystery of Him who has performed all these things; in love will the whole course of the governance of creation be finally comprised. And since in the New World the Creator's love rules over all rational nature, the wonder at His mysteries that will be revealed (then) will captivate to itself the intellect of (all) rational beings whom He has created so that they might have delight in Him, whether they be evil or whether they be just. With this design did He bring them into existence, even though they among themselves have made, after their coming into being, this distinction between the just and the wicked. Even though this is so, nevertheless in the Creator's design there is none, from among all who were created and who have come into being — (that is,) every rational nature — who is to the front or to the back of (God's) love. Rather, He has a single equal love which covers the whole

XXXVIII title ¹ om P.

² conduct of the New Life (*dubbārā d-ḥayyē ḥadīṭē*): cf John Sol. *Soul* 8, 62.

¹ ¹ profundity...: based on Rom. 11:33

² The translation of this sentence is uncertain.

extent of rational creation, all things whether visible or invisible: there is no first place or last place with Him in (this) love for any single one of them, as I have said.

3. And just as there is not a single nature who is in the first place or last place in creation in the Creator's knowledge — (I refer here to this knowledge) which was set in His purpose eternally, that He would bring them into being: it was not the case of His knowing one before or after another, but all of them equally without any before or after, in a twinkling of an eye — similarly there is no before or after in His love towards them: no greater or lesser amount (of love) is to be found with Him at all. Rather, just like the continual equality of His knowledge, so too is the continual equality of His love; for He knew them (all) before they (ever) became just or sinners. The Creator and His love did not change because they underwent change after He had brought them into being, nor does His purpose which exists eternally (change). And if it were otherwise, He would be subject to change just as created beings are — a shocking idea.

4. My brethren, if there is anyone to whom these things are difficult to believe, he should be careful lest, by running away from one (element in the argument) he fall into blasphemy at another: imagining that he is spurning the words of a fellow human being, he may find himself arming himself against what concerns the divine Nature, being forced (by the logic of his case) to reduce the glorious Nature of his Creator to weakness and change.

5. But we know that everyone is agreed on this, that there is no change, or any earlier and later intentions, with the Creator: there is no hatred or resentment in His nature, no greater or lesser (place) in His love, no before or after in His knowledge. For if it is believed by everyone that the creation came into existence as a result of the Creator's goodness and love, (then) we know that this (original) cause does not ever diminish or change in the Creator's nature as a result of the disordered course of creation.

XXXIX.

Contemplation on the topic of Gehenna, in so far as grace can be granted to human nature to hold opinions on these mysteries.

1. Among the blessed David's utterances let us make use of the following passage and cry out in wonder *How magnificent* are the workings of Your providence, Lord; *Your thoughts are profound indeed*¹, adding (as well) *Your judgements are like the great abyss*², and, along with Paul, *No one has searched out His judgements, and His ways cannot be fathomed*³. Rather, as David (says), *All His works are by faith, glorious and magnificent are His works*⁴. How unattainable is the unfathomable purpose of the Lord! Such is the inalterable kindness that is for ever, such is the love, such is the outpoured compassion of His nature, and, with all this, the foreknowledge of His creative activity — so what is the reason for the establishing of this difficult⁵ matter of Gehenna⁶? All who have knowledge of truth are full of wonder and amazement at this mystery: since the contemplation of this escapes all enquiry, all rational beings endowed with (the faculty of) knowledge and who are conversant with the spiritual meaning of the divine mysteries⁷ retire and have recourse to silence, and they (fall down) in worship before the mysteries of the wisdom of Him who should be worshipped in silence, for all His actions are to be wondered at in adoration.

2. That we should imagine that anger, wrath, jealousy or the such like have anything to do with the divine Nature is something utterly abhorrent for us: no one in their right mind, no one who has any understanding (at all) can possibly come to such madness as to think anything of the sort about God. Nor again can we possibly say that He acts thus out

XXXIX.1 ¹ How magnificent...: Ps. 92:5.

² Your judgements...: Ps. 36:6.

³ No one...: Rom.11:33.

⁴ Ps.33:4 and 111:3.

⁵ difficult: 'deep' P.

⁶ Gehenna: adumbrations of Isaac's views on Gehenna in this chapter can be found in Part I 189, 201-2. BEDJAN, *Mar Isaacus Ninivita*, xi-xii supposes that these were among the three points of Isaac's teaching which 'were not accepted by many', according to Isho'dnah, *Liber Castitatis* 124.

⁷ spiritual meaning of the ...mysteries (*te'ōryā d-rāzē*): cf XL title, XLI.2; see on XI title.

of retribution, even though the Scriptures may on the outer surface posit this. Even to think this of God and to suppose that retribution for evil acts is to be found with Him is abominable. By implying that He makes use of such a great and difficult thing out of retribution we are attributing a weakness to the (divine) Nature. We cannot even believe such a thing can be found in those human beings who live a virtuous and upright life and whose thoughts are entirely in accord with the divine will — let alone (believe it) of God, that He has done something out of retribution for anticipated evil acts in connection with those whose nature He had brought into being with honour and great love. Knowing them and all their conduct, the flow of His grace did not dry up from them: not even after they (started) living amid many evil deeds did He withhold His care for them, even for a moment.

If someone says that He has put up with them here (on earth) in order that His patience may be known — with the idea that He would punish them there mercilessly, such a person thinks in an unspeakably blasphemous way about God, due to his infantile way of thinking¹: he is removing from God His kindness, goodness and compassion, (all) the things because of which He truly bears with sinners and wicked men. Such a person is attributing to (God) enslavement to passion, (supposing) that He has not consented to their being chastised here, seeing that He has prepared them for a much greater misfortune, in exchange for a short-lived patience. Not only does such a person fail to attribute something praiseworthy to God, but he also calumniates Him.

3. A right way of thinking about God would be the following: the kind Lord, who in everything He does looks to ways of assisting rational beings, directs thought concerning judgement to the advantage of those who accept this difficult matter. For it would be most odious and utterly blasphemous to think that hate or resentment exists with God, even against demonic beings; or to imagine any other weakness, or passibility, or whatever else might be involved in the course of retribution of good or bad as applying, in a retributive way, to that glorious (divine) Nature. Rather, He acts towards us in ways He knows will be advantageous to us, whether by way of things that cause suffering, or by way of things that cause relief, whether they cause joy or grief, whether they are insignificant or glorious: all are directed towards the single eternal good, whether each receives judgement or something of glory from Him — not

2 ¹ infantile way of thinking (*śabrūt tar'itā*): cf Part I 529.

by way of retribution, far from it! — but with a view to the advantage that is going to come from all these things.

4. Just as He decreed death, under the appearance of a sentence, for Adam because of sin, and just as He showed that (the sin) existed by means of the punishment — even though this (punishment) was not His (real) aim: He showed it as though it was something which (Adam) would receive as a repayment for his wrong, but He hid its true mystery, and under the guise of something to be feared, He concealed His eternal intention concerning death and what His wisdom was aiming at: even though this matter might be grievous, ignominious and hard at first, nevertheless in truth it would be the means of transporting us to that wonderful and glorious world. Without it, there would be no way of crossing over from this world and being there.

By (thus showing) the existence (of sin), the Creator did not say ‘This [sc. death] will turn out for you to be the cause of good things (to come) and a life more glorious than this’. Rather, He showed it as something which would bring our misfortune and dissolution.

Again, when He expelled Adam and Eve from Paradise, He expelled them under the (outward) aspect of anger: ‘Because you have transgressed the commandment, you have found yourselves outside (Paradise)’¹ — as though dwelling in Paradise had been taken away from them because they were unworthy. But inside all this stood (the divine) plan, fulfilling and guiding everything towards the Creator’s original intention from the beginning. It was not disobedience which introduced death to the house of Adam, nor did transgression remove them from Paradise, for it is clear that (God) did not create Adam and Eve to be in Paradise, (just) a small portion of the earth; rather, they were going to subjugate the entire earth². For this reason we do not even say that He removed them because of the commandment which had been transgressed; for it is not the case that, had they not transgressed the commandment, they would have been left in Paradise for ever.

5. (So) you should see that, while God’s caring is guiding us (all the time) to what He wishes (for us), as things outwardly appear it is from us that He takes the occasion (for providing things), (His aim) being to carry out by every means what He has intended for our advantage. All this is because He knew beforehand our inclination towards all sorts of

¹ compare Gen. 3:24.

² cf Gen.1:28.

wickedness¹, (and so) He cunningly made the harmful consequences which would result from this into a means of entry to the (future) good and the setting right of our corrupted state. These are things which are known only to Him. But after we have been exercised and assisted little by little as a result of these (consequences) after they have occurred, we realize and perceive that it could not turn out otherwise than in accordance with what has been foreseen by Him.

This is how everything works with Him, even though things may seem otherwise to us: with Him it is not a matter of retribution, but He is (always) looking (beyond) to the advantage that will come from His dealings with (humanity). And one such thing is this matter of Gehenna.

6. I am of the opinion that He is going to manifest some wonderful outcome, a matter of immense and ineffable compassion on the part of the glorious Creator, with respect to the ordering of this difficult matter of (Gehenna's) torment: out of it the wealth of His love and power and wisdom will become known all the more — and so will the insistent might of the waves of His goodness¹.

It is not (the way of) the compassionate Maker to create rational beings in order to deliver them over mercilessly to unending affliction (in punishment) for things of which He knew even before they were fashioned, (aware) how they would turn out when He created them — and whom (nonetheless) He created. All the more since the foreplanning of evil and the taking of vengeance are characteristics of the passions of created beings, and do not belong to the Creator. For all this (characterizes) people who do not know or who are unaware of what they are doing or thinking when something has happened with us (human beings), for as a result of some matter that has occurred unexpectedly to them they are incited by the vehemence of anger to take vengeance. Such action does not belong to the Creator who, even before the cycle of the depiction of creation had been portrayed, knew of all that was before and all that was after in connection with the actions and intentions of rational beings.

7. Lest any of those who zealously imagine that they are being zealous for the cause of truth should imagine that we are introducing something novel of our own accord, things of which our former orthodox Fathers never spoke, as though we were bursting out with an opinion

5 ¹ inclination..wickedness (*meṣṭalyānūtan d-pānyā l-kull bišān*): the phraseology is derived from Theodore, e.g. WS V 173 (*meṣṭ. da-lwāt bišā*), 222 (*meṣṭ. da-lwāt bišā*).

6 ¹ goodness (*ṭbwth*): 'grace' (*ṭbwth*) P.

which did not accord with truth, anyone who likes can turn to the writings of the blessed Interpreter¹, a man who had his sufficient fill of the gifts of grace, who was entrusted with the hidden mysteries² of the Scriptures, (enabling him) to instruct on the path to truth the whole community of the Church; who, above all, has illumined us orientals³ with wisdom — nor is our mind's vision capable enough (to bear) the brilliancy of his compositions, inspired by the divine Spirit.

For we are not rejecting his words — far from it! Rather, we accept (him) like one of the apostles, and anyone who opposes his words, introduces doubt into his interpretations, or shows hesitation at his words, (such a person) we hold to be alien to the community of the Church and someone who is erring from the truth. Therefore, although we could demonstrate (our point) from many passages in a great number of his volumes, nevertheless he makes the point especially clearly at the end of the first volume which he composed against those who say that sin is present by nature.

8. From the blessed Theodore, the Interpreter¹. After other luminous statements he says:

In the world to come, those who have chosen here what is good, will receive the felicity of good things along with praise; whereas the wicked, who all their life have turned aside to evil deeds, once they have been set in order in their minds by punishments and the fear of them, choose the good, having come to learn how much they have sinned, and that they have persevered in doing evil things and not good; by means of all this they receive a knowledge of religion's excellent teaching, and are educated so as to hold on to it with a good will, (and so eventually)

7 ¹ Interpreter: Theodore of Mopsuestia.

² hidden mysteries (*rāzē ksayyā*): cf Part I 72, A. Thomas 179, 193, 208, 329, Ephrem *H. de Resurrectione* 4:15, C. Nisibena 60:21, H. de Ecclesia 42:6 (sg at 9:4 and *H. de Virginitate* 18:8), Evagrius *Epp.* 187r, Theodore of Mopsuestia *WS V* 117, John Sol. *Epp.* 86, Narsai *M I* 75, 82, Philoxenus *Disc.* 64, Hierotheos 14, Babai *C. Evag.* 147v, 204v, 224r, Sahdona *II* 32, Shem'on d-Taybuteh 289b, 303a, 308b. Compare V.18 above.

³ orientals: referring specifically to the Church of the East.

8 ¹ Theodore: Against those who say that sin is ingrained by nature (*CPG* 3860). The passage is also cited by Solomon of Bosra, *Book of the Bee* (ed. BUDGE), ch.60; Solomon has evidently quoted the passage from Isaac, since he also quotes Isaac's ensuing words at the beginning of XXXIX.9. Solomon also prefaces the quotation from Theodore with three quotations from Isaac, of which the first is from Part I 201 (ch.27) and the second from Part I 359 (ch.50), while the third, reading 'In the world which is to come Grace will be the judge, not Uprightness', I have failed to identify; (the first two passages were already identified by H-G. WEIS, 'Diodor von Tarsus, Περὶ προνοίας, in *Paul de Lagarde und die syrische Kirchengeschichte* (Göttingen, 1968), 229, note 33).

they are held worthy of the felicity of divine munificence. For (Christ) would never have said 'Until you pay the last farthing'² unless it had been possible for us to be freed from our sins once we had recompensed for them through punishments. Nor would He have said 'He will be beaten with many stripes' and 'He will be beaten with few stripes'³ if it were not (the case) that the punishments, measured out in correspondence to the sins, were finally going to have an end.

9. These words, and others similar to them are what the blessed Theodore has handed down in his books, clearly and without concealment¹, openly using straightforward words that are not obscure for (the benefit of) the understanding and instruction of lovers of truth, (showing) what opinions it is appropriate that we should hold concerning God, the Creator of all, and concerning His chastisements and concerning the judgement to come.

10. Since, according to our Lord's (own) words, the testimony¹ of two men is true — and especially so in the case of people who are wondrously and divinely illumined, let us confirm what we have said with the help of another witness who is trustworthy like (our) first witness, (someone) from whose fountain the clear-sounding Theodore himself drank, a person of high intelligence, (namely) Diodore, the great Teacher of the Church.

11. *By the holy Diodore, bishop of Tarsus.*

The blessed Diodore, wonderful among teachers and instructor of (Theodore) concurs with (this) opinion, and he sets it out in an authoritative way in Discourse V of (his) book on Providence, saying as follows¹:

² Until you pay...: Matt.5:26, Luke 12:59.

³ He will be beaten...: Luke 12:47-48.

9 ¹ clearly and without concealment: Solomon of Bosra quotes these words of Isaac exactly, but then abbreviates the rest of this paragraph.

10 ¹ The testimony...: John 8:17.

11 ¹ Discourse V on Providence: *CPG* 3820(b); the passage is freely quoted by Solomon of Bosra, *Book of the Bee*, ch.60 (discussed by WEIS, 'Diodor von Tarsus', 217-30; also R. ABRAMOWSKI, 'Der theologische Nachlass des Diodor von Tarsus', *ZNW* 42 (1949), 59-61, and M. BRIERE, 'Quelques fragments syriaques de Diodore, évêque de Tarse (378-394?)', *ROC* 30 (1946), 278-9). It is now clear from the passage in Isaac that Solomon has paraphrased the passages from Diodore (BUDGE's translation is unsatisfactory). The same passage from Diodore is evidently also quoted disapprovingly (without attribution and from a different Syriac translation) by George of the Arabs in his supplement to Jacob of Edessa's *Commentary on the Hexaemeron* (ed. CHABOT; *CSCO Scr.Syri* 44), 352. Dadisho' *C.Abls.* VII.1 also has a (different) citation from Diodore. *On Providence*.

'A reward for labours² is reserved for the good, one that is worthy of the righteousness of the Maker, but stripes for the wicked are not for eternity. Thus, not even in their case is the future condition of immortality³ of no profit: if they are tormented as they deserve just for a short time, commensurate with their evil and their wickedness, receiving reward in accordance with the measure of their actions, experiencing suffering during a short while, nevertheless (for them) delight in immortality is for ever'.

He comes back to what he is saying (here) with greater precision, as follows: 'If the reward for labours is so great, how much greater is the time of immortality than the time of contests, that is, than this world; whereas the punishments are (far) less than the magnitude and number of sins. The resurrection from the dead should not be considered as belonging only to the good, but it also takes place for the wicked (as well). For God's goodness is greatly to be held in honour: it chastises sparingly'.

12. These are the words and the opinion of the blessed Diodore¹. But later on he also says in Discourse VI as follows:

'For God, by means of good rewards, conceals the measure of labours; but in the greatness of grace He diminishes the punishment of those who are chastised and He shortens its length. But He does not let the torment go on for as much time as the time of wrongdoings warrants. Although He requites them with less than they deserve — just as with the good He extends their felicity beyond (its due) measure and time, seeing that the reward has no end — it cannot be known, as I have already said, if God's goodness will always endure retaining the evils (consequent) on guiltiness and causing hurt to those at fault'.²

13. Then, reiterating his words, he says¹, 'The decree of judgement and of torment is not to the same extent as the felicity of the Kingdom² which will obtain then'. And (he has) other similar words with the same opinion and expressing the same view. He also introduces into

² A reward for labours (*aqrā d-'amlē*): cf Narsai M I 35, II 44, *Par.* 786, Dadisho' *Shel.* 610. Evagrius *Keph.* II.14 uses *pur'ānā d-'amlē* (followed by Babai, in his *C.Evag.*).

³ future condition of immortality (*dubbārā dlā māyōūtā*): cf Cyrus Ed. 59; compare *Keph.* II.47 *dubbārā d-māyōūtā* (plur. in Shem'on d-Ṭaybuteh 295a).

12 ¹ Discourse VI: Solomon of Bosra again paraphrases the passage.

² The Syriac is obscure here.

13 ¹ he says: again paraphrased by Solomon of Bosra; since Solomon appears to continue the quotation from Diodore a little further this means that he must have derived the passages from another source, not Isaac (in contrast to the passage from Theodore).

² the felicity of the Kingdom (*bussāmā d-malkūtā*): cf Part I 528, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XIX.27.

discussion the case of the demons and their great inclination to evil, saying that 'not even their immense wickedness can overcome the measure of God's goodness'.

14. These and similar astonishing insights and opinions, leading (us) on to love of, and wonder at, the Creator, belong to these very pillars of the Church: dealing with (God's) dispensation and the divine judgement to come, they concern the immensity of God's mercy, which in its abundance passes beyond and overcomes the evils done by created beings. Such opinions will cast out from our way of thinking the childish opinion of God expressed by those who introduce evil and passibility into His nature, saying that He is changed by circumstances and times. At the same time these opinions (of Theodore and Diodore) will teach us about (the nature of) His chastisements and punishments, whether here or there, (instructing us) concerning what sort of compassionate intentions and purpose He has in allowing (these) to come upon us, what are the excellent outcomes resulting from them, how it is not a matter of our being destroyed by them or enduring the same for eternity, how He allows them to come in a fatherly way, and not vengefully — which would be a sign of hatred. (Their purpose was) that, by thinking in this way we might (come to) know about God, and wonder at Him would draw us on to love of Him, and as a result of that (love) we might feel ashamed at ourselves and set aright the conduct of our lives here¹.

15. For our part, let us now return to our topic and join up with our earlier discussion, being assured of this, that our good God, who is all-wise, effects everything for us in order to set us on the upright path: it is not the case that He is bringing us to perdition and disaster; (being assured too) that there is an end to the painful things He allows, but not for the good things He gives, for He allows the former to come in order that we might accept a change (in our way of life) and so make use of what leads to the good (and thus He brings us) to the latter in order that we may remain in it.

Accordingly all kinds and manner of chastisements and punishments that come from Him are not brought about in order to requite past actions, but for the sake of the subsequent gain to be gotten in them. He does not bring to mind the existence of things that are past except in order that they may instil in us hatred of sin.

14 ¹ conduct of our lives here (*dubhārā d-ḥayyayn da-tnān*): cf John Sol. *Epp.*11. Narsai M I 253.

This is what the Scriptures bring (to our attention) and remind us of, as has frequently been shown by us in sound expositions above, namely, that God is not one who requites evil, but He sets aright evil: the former is the characteristic of evil people, while the latter is characteristic of a father. (Scripture) shows Him as if He is bringing good and evil by way of requital, whereas His purpose is not in fact this, but to instil in us love and awe, so that by the latter we might make our conduct chaste, while, by means of love, we might grow in excellency of understanding¹.

16. If this were not the case, what resemblance does Christ's coming have with the deeds of the generations which were prior to it? Does this immense compassion seem to you to be a retribution for those evil deeds? Tell me, if God is someone who requites (evil), and He does what He does by means of requital, what commensurate requital do you see here, O man? Show me.

17. So then, let us not attribute to God's actions and His dealings with us any idea of requital. Rather, (we should speak of) fatherly provision, a wise dispensation, a perfect will which is concerned with our good, and complete love¹. If it is a case of love, then it is not one of requital; and if it is a case of requital, then it is not one of love. Love, when it operates, is not concerned with the requiting of former things by means of its own good deeds or correction; rather, it looks to what is most advantageous in the future: it examines what is to come, and not things that are past.

If we think otherwise than this, then according to the resulting childish view the Creator will prove to be weak — I speak as a human being² — for after what He had established had become corrupted against His will, He devised some other plan, preparing ills in return for its corruption. Such are the feeble ways of understanding the Creator!

18. If we consider that there is in truth some kind of providence hidden within the course which creation takes, and (if) we examine the divine judgments which convey a certain mystery — for these terms and their usage are inappropriate when we approach the nature of the Creator in contemplation, seeing that they do not correspond to the knowledge

15 ¹ excellency of understanding: same phrase in XXXIV.3.

17 ¹ complete love (*ḥubbā gmīrā*): cf X.29, 33, 36 (all 'of human beings'), XL.3, Part I 261, Theodore of Mopsuestia *WS* VI 136, *C.Pss.* 39, *C.John* 81, John Sol. *Hes.* 67, Add. 14606 84v, Narsai M II 12, Mark the Monk Add. 17192 96r, 97r, Ps.Dionysius 84r; in seventh-century ES writers it is especially favoured by Sahdona and Dadisho'. See also on XL.4, *gmīrūtā d-ḥubbā*.

² Isaac reflects I Cor. 9:8.

and properties of that (divine) Nature when compared with (ordinary) actions — (then) come, let us cry out to God with the blessed David, saying 'Your judgements are like the great deep'¹. Truly, this is an understanding which has become aware, through the gift of spiritual knowledge, of what is above the body, and what is more interior than (outward) phrases and corporeal images.

19. Just because (the terms) wrath, anger, hatred, and the rest are used of the Creator, we should not imagine that He (actually) does anything in anger or hatred or zeal¹. Many figurative terms are employed in the Scriptures of God, terms which are far removed from His (true) nature. And just as (our) rational nature has (already) become gradually more illumined and wise in a holy understanding of the mysteries which are hidden in (Scripture's) discourse about God — that we should not understand everything (literally) as it is written, but rather that we should see, (concealed) inside the bodily exterior of the narratives, the hidden providence and eternal knowledge² which guides all — so too we shall in the future come to know and be aware of many things for which our present understanding will be seen as contrary to what it will be then; and the whole ordering of things yonder will undo any precise opinion we possess now in (our) supposition about Truth. For there are many, indeed endless, things which do not even enter our minds here, not even as promises of any kind.

20. Accordingly we say that, even in the matter of the afflictions and sentence of Gehenna, there is some (hidden) mystery, whereby the wise Maker has taken as a starting point for its future outcome the wickedness of our actions and wilfulness, using it as a way of bringing to perfection His dispensation wherein lies the teaching which makes wise, and the advantage beyond description, hidden from both angels and human beings, (hidden) too from those who are being chastised, whether they be demons or human beings, (hidden) for as long as the ordained period of time holds sway.

21. If the world to come is entirely (the domain) of grace, love, mercy and goodness, and because the resurrection from the dead is also a demonstration of the mercifulness of God and of the overflowing abundance of His love which cannot be repaid, how (can one think of) a dispensation in which are included requitals for our own good or evil

18 ¹ Your judgements ...: Ps.36:6(7).

19 ¹ we should not imagine..or zeal: cf Ephrem, *C.Gen. V.7. H. de Fide* 31 etc.

² eternal knowledge (*īda'tā ntōmāytā*): cf Part I 194.

(actions)? For one speaks of requital when he who is the requiter is gradually instructed about the requital (needed) as a result of, and corresponding to, the good and bad actions that take place: along with actions which differ from day to day, he acquires a different knowledge, and his (consequent) thoughts are subject to (outside) causes and take their origin from temporal circumstances.

22. If the Kingdom and Gehenna had not been foreseen in the purpose of our good God, as a result of the coming into being of good and evil actions, (then God's) thoughts concerning these would not be eternal¹; but righteousness and sin were known by Him before they revealed themselves. Accordingly the Kingdom and Gehenna are matters belonging to mercy, which were conceived of in their essence by God as a result of His eternal goodness. It was not a matter of requiting, even though He gave them the name of requital.

That we should further say or think that the matter is not full of love and mingled with compassion would be an opinion full of blasphemy and insult to our Lord God. (By saying) that He will even hand us over to burning for the sake of sufferings, torment and all sorts of ills, we are attributing to the divine Nature an enmity towards the very rational beings which He created through grace; (the same is true if we say) that He acts or thinks with spite and with a vengeful purpose, as though He was avenging Himself.

Among all His actions there is none which is not entirely a matter of mercy, love and compassion: this constitutes the beginning and the end of His dealings² with us.

As far as He is concerned, there is no beginning to the setting in motion of the actions which He foresees with regard to us; but as far as we are concerned the initiative is understood as being within time and as having a beginning.

How much to be worshipped is our Lord God's gentle compassion and His immeasurable munificence: He makes many threats, but He makes the punishment small out of grace, all in order to increase love for Him in ourselves. May His name be blessed! Amen.

23. Ended is the discourse which, in accordance with the divine purpose, was made concerning the spiritual understanding of the great

22 ¹ ..would not be eternal: the translation of the whole sentence is uncertain; the above seems to be the most satisfactory way of taking it.

² beginning...of his dealings (*šurrāy zaw'el*): for the same phrase in a different sense cf Part I 227, 337. Evagrius uses the emphatic *šurrāyā d-z*. (*Cap.Cog.* 90, *Keph.Suppl.* 58). Compare *šurrāy zaw'ē* in Isaac *Keph.* III.83.

judgement¹ which is to come, in so far as it has been granted by divine grace for our weak condition to hold opinions concerning the supremely exalted purpose of the Life-giver of all, God, the Father of all.

23 ¹ spiritual understanding of the great judgement (*te'ōryā d-dīnā rabbā*): probably based on Evagrius *Keph.*V.23 (S 1) *te'ōryā d-dīneh d-alāhā*; compare also *te'ōryā d-dīnā wda-bīlūtā* in Evagrius *Keph.* I.27, *Ev.Syr.* 139, a phrase used by Isaac in *Keph.* I.51, II.102, and by Babai *C.Evag.* 33v. In Part I 192 Isaac has *teo'ryā d-dīnē*.

XL.

Again, on spiritual understanding. A discourse by which the things concerning the contemplation of the divine mysteries are confirmed and made more precise by means of the hidden and mysterious power with which it is infused in the name of Christ our Lord, from whom flows the fountain of knowledge of salvation¹ to all rational beings. The subject of the discourse is the constancy, harmony, and love of the divine Nature at both the beginning and at the end of creation.

1. That God has been eternally the same in all that belongs to Him in His nature, that He does not change as a result of what happens within creation — these are points on which I imagine that no one endowed with reason will oppose in his thinking. It is evident to everyone who has rational intelligence that, even if with us (human beings) there exists change when we look in our mind at the difference in mode of life with each and every rational being, nevertheless in the mind of the Creator there exists a single even intention with respect to all rational beings, and there exists with Him a single love and compassion which is spread out over all creation, (a love) which is without alteration, timeless and everlasting.

2. Nor are we able to say that the love of the Creator is diminished towards those rational beings who have become demons as a result of their demonic action, (and is any less) than the fulness of love which He has towards those who remain in the angelic state; or (that it is less) for sinners than for those who are justly named the righteous. This is because (the divine) Nature is not affected by what happens¹ and by opposition, nor does there spring up within it any causal stirring which takes its origin from creation, and which is not to be found with Him from eternity; nor does He have a (kind of) love which originates as a result of events which take place in time.

XL title ¹ fountain of knowledge of salvation (*mabbō'ā d-īda'tā d-ḥayyē*): or 'of life'. For *mabbō'ā d-īda'tā* cf *Keph.* IV.68, Evagrius *Gnos.* 119 (and much earlier in *Apocalypse of Baruch* 59:7), Babai *C.Evag.* 20r. For *īda'tā d-ḥayyē* cf Part I 42, 89, 137, John Sol. *Epp.* 8, 18, 22, 40, Narsai M II 113, G IV 423, McL III 89.

2 ¹ is not affected by what happens (*lā mḡabblānā d-ḡedšē*): in contrast to human nature which Isaac describes as *mḡabblānā d-ḡedšē* in Part I 70, 503.

3. Rather, everyone has a single place in His purpose in the ranking of love, corresponding to the form He beheld in them before He created them and all the rest of created things, (that is,) at the time before the eternal purpose¹ for the delineation of the world was put into effect. For it was not with an adventitious love that He had, without any beginning, the stirring that initiated the establishment of the world. He has a single ranking of complete and impassible love towards everyone, and He has a single caring concern for those who have fallen, just as much as for those who have not fallen.

4. And it is clear that He does not abandon them the moment they fall, and that demons will not remain in their demonic state, and sinners (will not remain) in their sins; rather, He is going to bring them to a single equal state of perfection in relationship to His own Being — in a (state) in which the holy angels are now, in perfection of love¹ and a passionless mind. He is going to bring them into that excellency of will, where it will not be as though they were curbed and not <free>², or having stirrings from the Opponent then; rather, (they will be) in a (state of) excelling knowledge³, with a mind made mature in the stirrings which partake of the divine outpouring which the blessed Creator is preparing⁴ in His grace; they will be perfected in love for Him, with a perfect mind which is above any aberration in all its stirrings.

5. Maybe (they will be raised) to a perfection even greater than that in which the angels now exist; for all are going to exist in a single love, a single purpose, a single will, and a single perfect state of knowledge¹; they will gaze towards God with the desire of insatiable love, even if some (divine) dispensation [sc. Gehenna] may in the meantime be effected for reasons known to God alone, lasting for a fixed period, decreed by Him in accordance with the will of His wisdom.

³ ¹ eternal purpose (*tar'itā mtōmāytā*): cf Part I 193, 315.

⁴ ¹ perfection of love (*gmīrūtā d-ḥubbā*): cf Basil *Quest.* 59r, John Sol. *Epp.* 63, Add.17170 2v, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* 1.20, *C.Par.* 913 (citing Evagrius). Compare *ḥubbā gmīrā* (see on XXXIX.17).

² <free>: some such word must have fallen out of the text.

³ excelling knowledge (*myatrūtā d-īda'tā*): cf Evagrius *Keph.* IV.43 (S 1), Add. 14578 90v, *Gnos.* 150, John Sol. *Epp.* 69, Babai *C.Evag.* 223v.

⁴ preparing (*m'īd*): conjectured reading; B has [*m*]t'dr (t has *m'īdr*), 'is assisted', which makes no sense; B's reading is ringed in red as erroneous, but the correction in the margin has been lost.

⁵ ¹ perfect state of knowledge (*gmīrūtā d-īda'tā*): cf *Keph.* III.72, IV.72, II f.20r, Part I 160, Theodore of Mopsuestia WS V 130, John Sol. *Epp.* 62, Mark the Monk Add. 17192 120v (constr.), Ps.Dionysius 104v (*d-yed'ātā*), Babai *C.Evag.* 14v, 84r (and often).

6. Who can say or imagine that the Creator's love is not prior to the ordering of this matter which He carries out because of the advantage that comes from it, something which is known to Him alone, but which subsequently He will make known to all?

7. No part belonging to any single one of (all) rational beings will be lost, as far as God is concerned, in the preparation of that supernal Kingdom which is prepared for all worlds. Because of that goodness of His nature by which He brought the universe into being (and then) bears, guides and provides for the worlds and (all) created things in His immeasurable compassion, He has devised the establishment of the Kingdom of heaven for the entire community of rational beings — even though an intervening time is reserved for the general raising (of all) to the same level. (And we say this) in order that we too may concur with the magisterial teaching of Scripture. Nevertheless (Gehenna) is grievous, even if it is thus limited in its extent: who can (possibly) bear it? For this reason the angels in heaven rejoice at a single sinner who repents¹.

8. Because God knew with that compassionate knowledge¹ of His that if a genuine righteousness were required of human beings, then only one in ten thousand would be found who could enter the Kingdom of heaven, accordingly He provided them instead with a medicine² suitable for everyone, namely repentance, so that every day and at every moment there would be available to them an opportunity for them easily to be put in the right by means of the strength of this medicine: through compunction (they would be able) to wash away from themselves at any time every stain that they might incur; (they would be able) to be renewed each day through repentance.

9. How great is this means with which our compassionate Maker has, in the wisdom of His divinity, provided us for the sake of our everlasting life, for it is His wish that each day we should be renewed and start up again with a virtuous change of will, and with a renewal of mind.

10. This is what (is meant when) it is said that 'He does not wish a sinner to perish from him'¹. For this reason He devised for us an easy

7 ¹ single sinner.: cf Luke 15:7,10.

8 ¹ compassionate knowledge (*īda'tā da-mraḥḥmānūtā*): cf Mark the Monk Add. 12175 152r.1.

² medicine (*sammā*)..repentance: for repentance as a medicine cf above all Aphrahat *Dem.* VII.3-4; similarly John Sol *Epp.* 45. Among seventh-century ES writers, Abraham of Nathpar 94r, Sahdona III 27, 28, 41, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* III.9, Shem'on d-Taybuteh 296b (title). The phrase *sammā da-tyāhūtā* occurs in the *Hudra* III 366.

10 ¹ He does not wish.: compare Ezek. 33:11, Matt. 18:14, John 6:39, I Tim. 1:15.

means by which we might be put in the right, without any labour. This, all because He does not wish human beings to perish from Him as a result of sins. (His aim is) that, whenever it should happen, either from weakness or the wretchedness of the nature² with which (humans) are clothed, or from the concomitant battles, or from whatever cause naturally planted in them, making them susceptible to fortuitous events which lead to sin, and (as a result) they succumb and are vanquished by one sin or another, in thoughts, in words, or in deeds, and (then) in suffering and agony repent of it, He will immediately and without any hesitation forgive them.

11. (How) wise is this resource devised by our Creator who, because He is good by His nature, wishes to save everyone by (all sorts of) means.

12. By this device of grace the majority of humankind will enter the Kingdom of heaven without the experience of Gehenna. But (this is) apart from those who, because of their hardness of heart and utter abandonment to wickedness and the lusts, fail to show remorse in suffering for their faults and their sins, (and) because these people have not been disciplined at all. For (God's) holy Nature is so good and compassionate that it is always seeking to find some small means of putting us in the right, how He can forgive human beings their sins — like the case of the tax collector¹ who was put in the right by the intensity of (his) prayer², or like the case of the woman³ with two small coins, or the man⁴ who received forgiveness on the cross. For (God) wishes for our salvation, and not for reasons to torment us.

13. Seeing that His face is set all the time towards forgiveness, by insignificant and tiny means, (so small) they hardly exist, time and time again, by what seem to be chance and unpremeditated occasions, He pours over us (His) immense grace that, like the ocean, knows no measure.

14. To anyone who shows just a little suffering and the will to compunction for what has occurred, to such a person immediately, at once,

² wretchedness of the nature (*dwāyūt kyānā*): cf Part I 500.

12 ¹ the tax collector: see Luke 18:14.

² intensity of (his) prayer (*haššā da-šlōtā*): lit. 'suffering of..'. Cf *Keph.* I.28, 60, Part I 14, 468, 558, and compare Macarius 176 *haššē da-šlōtā*. Isaac has several related phrases: *haššīšūtā amīntā dha-šlōtā* Part I 380; *šlōtā d-haššā* Part I 79, 106, 122, 176; *šlōtā haššīštā* *Keph.* I.63, II.15 (plur.), Part I 108, 548.

³ the woman: see Mark 12:42-43, Luke 21:2-3.

⁴ the man...: see Luke 23:40-43.

without any delay, He will grant forgiveness of their sins. Who (will not wonder) on seeing (all) these things which took place in Christ our Lord and were carried out with respect to the world — (the same Christ) who, when the entire extent of creation had abandoned and forgotten God and had perfected themselves in every kind of wickedness, of His own will and without any supplication or request (from elsewhere) came down to their abode and lived among them in their body just as one of them, and with a love exalted beyond knowledge or description by any created being, He begged them to turn back to Himself, showing them concerning the glorious establishment of the world to come, having intended before (all) worlds to introduce felicity such as this for creation: He informed them of its existence and forgave them all the sins which they had previously committed, and confirmed this goodwill by means of authoritative signs and wonders, and the revelations to them of His Mysteries¹; and finally He has stooped down to such an extent that He is willing to be called 'Father' of sinful (human) nature, dust from the earth, despicable human beings, flesh and blood: can these things be performed without great love?

15. Who, on seeing and hearing these things, will be stirred by recollection of his sins¹, which will throw doubt in his (mind): 'Will God forgive me, if I ask Him, these things by which I am pained and by whose memory I am tormented? Things by which, though I abhor them, I go on backsliding, but after they have taken place the pain they give me is even more than that of a scorpion's sting; though I abhor them², I am still right in the middle of them, and when I repent of them with suffering, I return to them again in a wretched way'³.

16. This is how many God-fearing people think, people who foster virtue and are pricked with the suffering (of compunction), who mourn over sin, yet (human) propensity compels them to bear up with the backsliding which results from it: they live between sin and repentance all the time.

14 ¹ revelations ...of His Mysteries (*gelyānē d-rāzaw(hy)*): cf *Keph.* I.37, III.57 (*gelyānā*), IV.14 (constr.); both sing. and plur. are to be found in Evagrius (*Cap.Cog.* 89, *Keph.Suppl.* 43) and John Sol. (*Soul* 7, 56); plural in Ps.Dionysius 74v.

15 ¹ recollection of his sins (*'uhdān ḥṭāhaw(hy)*): cf (for emphatic) I f.13r, Abba Isaiah XXIII.4, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* I.15, III.14, IV.5, V.1, XIII.5, 6, XV.28, 40, 41, *Shet.* 217a, 230b (in *C.Abls.* I.24 and VII.8 he uses *'uhdānā da-ḥṭītā*).

² abhor them: the phraseology here deliberately reflects Rom. 7:15.

³ in a wretched way: reflecting Rom. 7:24 (Peshitta).

17. Let us not be in doubt, O (fellow) humanity, concerning the hope of our salvation¹, seeing that He who bore sufferings for our sakes is very concerned for our salvation; His mercifulness is far more extensive than we can conceive, His grace is greater than what we ask for. For the right hand of our Lord is stretched out night and day, while He is on the look out to support, comfort and encourage everyone — especially (to see) if He can find any who endure even just a little suffering and grief [so that] their sins [may be forgiven]² — people who are grieved over the portion [of their righteous]ness which is snatched away from them from time to time during the contest with the passions³ and with sin. Using even such small starting points as these, His aim is to make them heirs of the Kingdom of heaven, and to bring them, without any hindrance, into His joy.

18. For to God our Saviour (belongs) glory, in Christ Jesus our hope, along with adoration and honour, in the two worlds which He created for our training and for our delight, for eternal ages, amen.

17 ¹ hope of our salvation: cf I Thess. 5:8 (but the Peshitta has *hayyē*, not *pur-qānan*); compare also for the general idea Rom.8:23-4.

² text damaged.

³ contest with the passions: see on X.15.

XLI.

Again, by the same. An exhortation together with admonitions necessary and appropriate to the topic.

I. Let us beware in ourselves, my beloved, and realize that even if Gehenna is subject to a limit, the taste of its experience is most terrible, and the extent of its bounds escapes¹ our very understanding. Let us strive all the more to partake of the taste of God's love for the sake of perpetual reflection on Him, and let us not (have) experience of Gehenna through neglect. Let us beware of diffuseness over many things, and (let us beware) of idleness in our recollectedness, so that by escaping from empty occupations² in secret and from idleness in public, we may receive a perception of those mercies in ourselves. On the subject of riches it is good that a rich man should speak, and on the position of freedom (it is good) that someone who enjoys it should speak; (similarly), on the subject of God, it is necessary that (only) someone worthy of God because of his virtue should speak. But for anyone who has his actions as accusers and whose conscience reproves him, it is odious for him even to speak about the good — all the more so when his purpose is not reprimand of the soul, but as if he had the confidence of the upright! It is fine and in order to tell of the magnitude of God's goodness³, of the mysteries of His mercies which His actions indicate, hidden though they are, as a result of their external appearance⁴, from the world; but for the lax and guilty it is a matter of shame to make bold even [to speak] on all these topics too. [] for everyone well when he speaks. The beauty of truth befits a mouth that is beautiful. A holy thing befits the holy, in their harmony; fire awaits fire, and it is for a holy heart to keep holy the beauties of God. But as for us who are so lax, how can we make bold with any confidence (to speak) about the

XLI.1 ¹ escapes: I take *nrd'* as f.sg. part. *nrd*, with *kmāyūtā* as subject; it would be just as possible to suppose that *nrd'* is m.sg. *af'el* part *rd'*, with *nesyānā*, 'experience', as subject, i.e. '(whose experience) disciplines our understanding as to the extent of its bounds', but this seems less satisfactory in the context.

² empty occupations (*'enyānē spīqē*): cf *Keph.IV.65* (sing.).

³ magnitude of...goodness (*rabbūt jābūtehi*): cf Part I 323, Sahdona III 36, 123, 131.

⁴ external appearance (*barrānāyūt eskīmē*): compare *barrānāyūt ḥzātā* Part I 331 (the noun *barrānāyūtā* is very rare).

converse which belongs to the rank of children? Even though, when we are filled by mercy, insight may approach our heart that has sinned, nevertheless shame is also (there). The fire of the Sanctuary could not endure those who did not belong to the band of the priests⁵.

2. Adorn yourself with virtue, O feeble human being, so that you may have the authority to act as priest to God in the House of Mysteries, and so that you may be anointed by the Spirit for sanctification as a result of the exceeding purity with which you are adorned in the ministry of your limbs without, and of your heart in secret (within). Depict in your soul the form of the allegorical Tent¹, outside and inside. Collect together in your senses the assemblies of virtue, and in your heart act as priest² to God (offering up) a pure sacrifice; make propitiation for the sins of those outside, because of (their) proximity to things by which they (are liable to) fall into fault. And instead of the 'metal plate'³ there above the Ark, place on (your) heart the contemplation of the mysteries of our Saviour, for by this God will be revealed to you in wondrous revelations⁴, even more so than was the case with that ('plate') which bears the symbol of the present mysteries⁵. For there [sc. in the Old Testament] it manifested a revelation to the high priest by sound and sight, and the subject of its revelation was things present and past. Here, however, in a silent form of revelation and in visionless insights there is revealed to this abode [sc. the body], in the inner sanctuary of the heart⁶, (a revelation) concerning the mystery of [knowledge of] Him⁷; and revelation concerning the New World⁸ stirs up awareness [] concerning which to doubt. Thus the beauty [] pondering on the mysteries so that we are not put to shame by our conscience when we speak about these

⁵ band of priests: see Lev. 10:1-2, Num.3:4, 16:35.

² ¹ allegorical Tent (*mašknā pel'etānāyā*): Isaac probably alludes to Evagrius *Epp.* 183r (*maškanzabnā pel'etānāyā*).

² act as priest: compare 1 Pet. 2:5,9, and especially *Liber Graduum* 12.2 'the heart acts as priest inwardly'. For the theme of the interior liturgy see my 'The spirituality of the heart in Syrian tradition', *The Harp* 1:2/3 (1988), 93-115.

³ metal plate (*tassā*): see on XI.14.

⁴ wondrous revelations (*gelyānāw(hy) thirē*): cf Isaac ap. *Cod.Syr.Sec.* 38v, Babai *C.Evag.* 35v, Dadisho' *C.Abls.* XV.18 (sing.).

⁵ symbol of the...mysteries (*pel'etā d-rāzē*): cf Evagrius *Gnos.* 120, Sahdona II 30 (sing.).

⁶ inner sanctuary of the heart (*hēt quḏṣā gawwāyā d-lebbā*): compare Mark the Monk *Add.* 17192 95r *hayklā kasyā d-lebbeh*; see also on XIV.20.

⁷ mystery of knowledge of Him (*rāza [d-ida]teh*): cf Evagrius *Add.* 14578 91v, Shem'on d-Taybuteh 288b, 302a, 308a, 309b.

⁸ revelation concerning the New World (*gelyānā d-'al 'ālmā ḥadā*): see on VIII.4.

things [] may we be worthy of the confidence of children, through the grace of [our Saviour, our Lord] Jesus Christ, to whom be glory along with [His] Father and the Holy [Spirit], now and always and for eternal ages [amen].

- Mal.*
- 3:19 XXXI.10
3:20 V.13; XX.22
- Dan.*
- 2:21 XIV.38
7:10 V.8
- 4 Esdr.*
- 6:32 VIII.15
- Ap.Bar.*
- 66:1 VIII.15
- Matt.*
- 4:1ff V.24
5:13-14 V.14
5:26 XXXIX.8
6:7 XIV.38
6:16 XXIV.5
6:33 XIV.37
13:11 XXXV.13
14:13,23 XII.1
18:14 XL.10
19:26 XXVII.1; XXXV.12
19:29 XXXV.12
20:9-10 V.21
21:31-32 XI.28
23:13,23 XXIV.5
26:67 V.25
27:29,30 V.25
27:35 V.25
- Mark*
- 1:11 XI.12
6:31-32 XII.1
12:42-43 XL.12
- Luke*
- 1:35 XVI.2
5:30 XI.27
7:36ff XI.27
9:54 X.36
10:42 XIV.44
12:47-48 XXXIX.8
12:59 XXXIX.8
15:7,10 XL.7
17:21 VIII.1
18:14 XL.12
21:2 XL.12
23:40-43 XL.12
24:49 V.22
- John*
- 1:13 XIV.24
1:18 V.6, 18
2:21 V.1
6:39 XL.10
8:17 XXXIX.10
10:7 V.6
13:34 XVIII.2
17:21 VII.3
- Acts*
- 1:14 XIV.41
3:1-10 XI.6
9:40 XI.6
26:7 XI.13
26:23 VII.3
- Rom.*
- 1:22 XIV.14
5:6 V.16
5:10-11 XI.9
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7:15,24 XL.15
7:22 V.31
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- 8:23-24 XL.17
9:26 V.6
9:29 V.6
11:33 XXXVIII.1; XXXIX.1
- 1 Cor.*
- 1:23 XI.22
3:16 V.33
4:1 XXXV.7
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10:4 XVIII.4
15:20,23 VII.3
16:9 V.5
- 2 Cor.*
- 4:16 V.31
5:18-19 XI.9
7:10 XXIV.2
12:2 XXXIV.2
- Gal.*
- 4:1-2 IV.6
5:24 V.25; XXX.5
- Eph.*
- 1:8 X.9
1:17-19 XVI.5, XVIII.2
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3:18 X.9; XXXIV.1
4:13 IV.6
5:8 XII.1
6:12 V.24
6:17 V.25, 26
6:18 XIV.41
- Phil.*
- 1:3 VIII.15
4:18 X.41

- Col.*
 1:2 XVI.6
 1:9 X.9
 2:9 XI.27
- 1 Thess.*
 5:5 XII.1
 5:8 XL.17
- 2 Thess.*
 2:13 XVI.6
- 1 Tim.*
 1:5 XX.22
 1:9 XXXI.6
- 1:15 XL.10
 5:5 XIV.41
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 6:20 XIV.17
- 2 Tim.*
 3:17 XV.11
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- Tit.*
 3:4 XI.16
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 6:5 V.9; XIII.2
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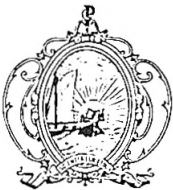
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