

This hymn presents an array of testimonies by the kings, priests prophets to Jesus' messianic office (str. 1). Ephrem begins with some of the citations that even within the New Testament had been claimed as messianic prophecies by David and Solomon as well as Isaiah, Micah, Balaam and Zechariah (str. 2-9). The worm provides an intimation of the world of nature of the wonders of the incarnation and virgin birth also anticipated by the creation of Adam and Eve and the sprouting of Aaron's staff (str. 10-19). Using an argument known in rabbinic sources that Ruth was guided in her behavior by the anticipation of the Messiah (str. 13), he applies it to Tamar as well (str. 12). Then he applies it to a list of personages from the Old Testament, beginning with Seth and his descendants and reaching to Elijah (str. 20-38). He reiterates the idea that the righteous of the Old Testament "saw" the Messiah, recapitulating with a line from Adam, Abel and Eve, through Noah, Enoch, Abraham and Isaac (str. 39-60). The angelic Watchers provide a transition to the theme of watchfulness, keeping vigil—on the one hand, urging its importance (str. 61-75), on the other, arguing the greater necessity of moral rectitude (str. 76-81). The final strophes (82-99), a series of moral exhortations explicitly related to the liturgical theme, show that the hymn was composed for the vigil of Christmas-Epiphany.

To the melody, "The confessors."¹

1 My Lord, this day gladdens kings, priests and prophets,
for on it were fulfilled and realized all their words.

1. Although the melodies to which these hymns were sung are no longer known, the manuscript tradition identified each tune by the first few words of what was evidently a well-known hymn. Further, cf. Beck, CSCO 186 (scr. syr. 82), xx-xxii.

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Refrain: Glory to You, Son of our Creator!

- 2 Since today the Virgin has given birth to Emmanuel² in Bethlehem, the word Isaiah spoke was accomplished today.
- 3 He Who registers the peoples³ was born there; the psalm that David sang has been fulfilled today.
- 4 The word that Micah spoke was realized today, for a shepherd went out from Ephrata, and his staff herded souls.⁴
- 5 "Behold, a star shone forth from Jacob, and a prince arose from Israel."⁵
The prophecy that Balaam spoke found its meaning today.
- 6 The hidden light descended, and its beauty shone forth from a body;
the dawn of which Zechariah spoke lights up Bethlehem today.⁶
- 7 The light of kingship glorifies him in Ephrata, the city of kings; the blessing that Jacob pronounced found its fulfillment today.⁷
- 8 "The tree of life brings hope" to the dying;⁸
the hidden saying of Solomon found its explanation today.
- 9 Today a child was born, and he was called "wonder,"⁹
for it is a wonder that God reveals Himself as an infant.
- 10 The Spirit spoke a parable in the worm, for it reproduces without sexual union;
the type the Holy Spirit fashioned receives its meaning today.¹⁰

2. Isa. 7.14.

3. Ps. 87.6. In the Peshitta this verse reads, "The Lord registers the peoples; this one was born there." By changing almost nothing except the word order, Ephrem gives the verse a Christian interpretation.

4. Mic. 5.2 (5.1 Pes.).

5. Num. 24.17 (Pes.).

6. Zech. 2.5 The dawn, *dnb'*, and the corresponding symbolism of light shining out of darkness, are important to Ephrem's notion of the Nativity. Light symbolism is inextricably tied to Epiphany since the same word, *dnb'*, means epiphany, manifestation. Further, cf. H. Usener, *Das Weihnachtfest, Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Bonn, 1911; rep. Hildesheim, 1972), 202-8.

7. Gen. 49.8-12.

8. Prov. 12.13 (Pes.). The tree of life is an important symbol for Ephrem, cf. Yousif, *Croix*, esp. 42ff.; Kronholm, *Motifs*, 73f. For Ephrem's use of the image in the context of other Syriac authors and earlier Near Eastern traditions, cf. Murray, *Symbols*, 114-30, 320-24 et passim.

9. Isa. 9.6.

10. Ephrem sees the unusual reproductive system of the worm (*twt'*), as foreshadowing the virginal conception of Christ. In the anti-Arian HdF 41.1.4 Ephrem cites the "solitary" reproduction of the same animal (*yhyd'yt nb'*) as analogous to the Father's begetting of the Son. "Type" here translates Syriac *tups'*, which is approximately equivalent to Greek τύπος from which it derives; further, cf. Beck, *Bildtheologie*, 240-44.

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- 11 He rose up like a shoot before Him, a shoot from the parched earth;¹¹
something spoken secretly occurred openly today.
- 12 Since the King was hidden in Judah, Tamar stole Him from his loins;
today shone forth the splendor of the beauty whose hidden form shined.¹²
- 13 Ruth lay down with Boaz because she saw hidden in him the medicine of life;¹³
today her vow is fulfilled since from her seed arose the Giver of all life.¹⁴
- 14 Man imposed corruption on woman when she came forth from him;
today she has repaid him—she who bore for him the Savior.¹⁵
- 15 He gave birth to the Mother, Eve—he, the man who never was born;
how worthy of faith is the daughter of Eve, who without a man bore a child!¹⁶
- 16 The virgin earth gave birth to that Adam, head of the earth;
the Virgin today gave birth to [second] Adam, head of heaven.
- 17 The staff of Aaron sprouted, and the dry wood brought forth;
his symbol has been explained today—it is the virgin womb that gave birth.¹⁷
- 18 Put to shame is the people that holds the prophets to be true,
for if our Savior had not come, their words would have become lies.¹⁸

11. Isa. 53.2 (Pes.).

12. Gen. 38.12-19; Matt. 1.3.

13. Cf. Ruth 3.7; Matt. 1.5. For a rabbinic parallel, cf. Kronholm, *Motifs*, 153, n.6; for the same argument with regard to the Matthean genealogy, cf. Nat. 9.7-16.

14. Cf. Ruth 1.16f., 4.17.

15. Cf. Gen. 1.12. Here and in the following two verses it is important to note that "Adam" is the same Syriac word as "man" and it may be used in a generic sense. Also, *twtb'* is used in two distinct senses here, "corruption" and "recompense." For discussion of this passage, cf. Murray, *Symbols*, 145.

16. For Eve, mother of the living, cf. Gen. 3.20. Ephrem is fond of the paradox elaborated here and in the following verse; cf. Nat. 2.12 and Kronholm, *Motifs*, 54-56.

17. Cf. Num. 17.23. "Symbol" (*r'z'*), sometimes better rendered in English as "mystery," is a technical term central to Ephrem's symbolic theology and generally equivalent to *tups'*; cf. Beck, *Bildtheologie*, 240-44.

18. "The people" (*mm'*) is Ephrem's usual term for the Jewish people over against "the peoples," the Gentiles. Ephrem clearly states here the polemical aspect of Christian typological interpretation of the Jewish scripture: if Jews do not accept Christian interpretation of the

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- 19 Blessed is the True One Who comes from the True Father.¹⁹
He fulfilled the words²⁰ of the true [prophets], and they are
complete in their truth.
- 20 From Your treasury, my Lord, let us fetch from the treasures of
Your scriptures
the names of the just men of old who said they saw Your coming.
- 21 That Seth who took the place of Abel resembled the murdered son
to dull the sword that Cain brought into the creation.²¹
- 22 Noah saw the sons of God, the holy ones, who were suddenly made
wanton,
and he anticipated the Holy Son by Whom fornicators would be
made chaste.²²
- 23 The two brothers who hid Noah looked for the Only-Begotten of
God
to come and hide the nakedness of man,²³ intoxicated with pride.
- 24 Shem and Japheth, as compassionate [men] anticipated the
compassionate Son
Who would come and free Canaan from the servitude of sin.
- 25 Melchizedek anticipated Him; he the vicar was watching
to see priesthood's Lord Whose hyssop cleanses creation.²⁴

prophets (and typological interpretation of even the Torah), their own scripture is invalidated. Of course, Ephrem ignores the possibility that the messianic prophecies would be fulfilled at a later date.

19. Or "Father of Truth." Ephrem often uses *ḥr*, "truth" or "reality" rather than the roughly synonymous *qwt* to denote the fulfillment of the types or symbols, both scriptural and natural. The term Father of Truth also occurs in Marcionite and Valentinian Gnostic texts. Ephrem may have deliberately chosen their term here with ironic intent since he stresses the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies by the Son of the Father of Truth.

20. A pun in Syriac, *wmly ml*.

21. Gen. 4.25 states that Seth took the place of Abel since he had been killed by Cain. Both in Jewish legends and in certain forms of Gnosticism Seth was considered to be the ancestor of the Messiah and to resemble Adam or God in a particular way; cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, I, 121, n.52, V, 149; Robinson, *NHL* s.v. "Seth." Ephrem shares these notions, but for him they, not the angels, are the "sons of God" of Gen. 6.1-4, who are degraded by intercourse with the daughters of Cain, cf. str. 22 and 48 below, and Kronholm, *Motifs*, 154, 163-71, 220-23.

22. On chastity as righteousness, cf. *ibid.* 159.

23. "man" = *'dm* = Adam; cf. Gen. 9.23.

24. Cf. Gen. 14.18-20. Melchizedek's offering of bread and wine was commonly seen by early Christian writers as a type of the Eucharist. Although Ephrem uses his sacrifice as a type of the Eucharist, cf. *Azym* 2.8, Melchizedek is less important to his eucharistic doctrine than to his baptismal theology (for his more important eucharistic types, cf. *Graffin*, *Eucharistie*). He frequently alludes to the hyssop of Melchizedek, the symbol of the cleansing and forgiving power of the priesthood, which other writers normally associate with Aaron or the levitical priesthood. He seems deliberately to emphasize Melchizedek as a priest who antedates the

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- 26 Lot saw the Sodomites who perverted nature;
he looked for the Lord of natures Who gave chastity beyond
nature.²⁵
- 27 Aaron anticipated Him—he who saw that if his staff swallowed
reptiles,
His cross would swallow the Reptile that swallowed Adam and
Eve.²⁶
- 28 Moses saw the fixed serpent that healed the stings of basilisks,
and he anticipated he would see the Healer of the first Serpent's
wound.²⁷
- 29 Moses saw that he alone received the brightness of God,
and he anticipated the One to come—by His teaching, the
Multiplier of the godlike.²⁸
- 30 Kaleb, the scout, came carrying the cluster on a pole;
he anticipated seeing the Grape Whose wine would console
creation.²⁹
- 31 Joshua bar Nun anticipated Him—he who represents the power of
His name;³⁰

Mosaic covenant. He thus anticipates the sacrament of baptism as well as the Eucharist; cf. *Saber*, *Typologie*, esp. 87-89.

25. Cf. Gen. 19. Chastity (*qdbwt*) might also be translated as "holiness." For Ephrem, as for other early Syriac authors, however, the term acquired a technical significance specifying chastity within marriage. Throughout the present translation this word and related words on the root *qdb* are rendered in this encratite sense.

26. On Aaron's staff, cf. Exod. 7.8-13. The word rendered "reptile" (*ḥryn*), used in *Pes. Exod.* 7.11f., may also mean dragon, as in the *Pes. supplements to Daniel*; i.e., *Bel and the Dragon*. The latter sense is more appropriate for the creature that "swallowed" Adam and Eve. Further, cf. *Nat.* 4.117f. and 8.3. On the reference to Eve, cf. *Yousif*, *Croix*, 44.

27. Cf. *Num.* 21.4-9.

28. Cf. Exod. 34.29-35. This passage was of considerable interest to Greek Christians of a Platonic bent; cf. *Greg. Nys. vit. Mos.* For Ephrem, light and fire are especially associated with the presence of the Holy Spirit and hence play a role in both baptism and the Eucharist; cf. *Nat.* 4.88.

29. Cf. *Num.* 13.23f. The cluster (*sgwl*) and the Grape (*ḥwt*), also a cluster, but smaller than the *sgwl* are important Christological symbols in both Ephrem and Aphrahat. They are closely associated with the True Vine and the Tree of Life, cf. *Murray*, *Symbols*, 95-130. On this specific passage and its relation to iconography, cf. *ibid.* 119, nn. 3f.

30. Joshua and Jesus are identical names in Syriac, as in Hebrew. Ephrem assumes that both proper names and the designations of objects in the natural world may have innate symbolic significance. A more complex example of Ephrem's association of Joshua and Jesus is in his polemic against astrology in *CH* 4.18, where Josh. 10.12-15 is invoked typologically to show Christ's power over the heavenly bodies. Further on the name of Jesus, cf. *HdF* 6.17 and the discussion in *Hausherr*, *Noms*, 64-72. On the relation of language to Ephrem's general theory of symbolism, cf. *Murray*, *Theory*, 9-14; on the relation of name to nature or substance, cf. *Noujaim*, *Essai*, esp. 30f.

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- if by His name he is thus magnified, how much more would he be exalted by His birth!
- 32 That Joshua who also plucked and carried with him some of the fruits anticipated the Tree of Life Who would give His all life-giving fruit to taste.³¹
- 33 Rahab beheld Him; for if the scarlet thread saved her by a symbol from [divine] wrath, by a symbol she tasted the truth.³²
- 34 Elijah yearned for Him and without having seen the Son on earth, he believed and increased his prayers that he might ascend and see Him in heaven.³³
- 35 Moses and Elijah looked for Him; the humble one³⁴ ascended from the depth, and the zealous one came down from the height, and they saw the Son in the middle.³⁵
- 36 They represented a symbol of His coming: Moses was a type for the dead, and Elijah a type for the living who will fly to meet Him when He comes.
- 37 Because the dead have tasted death, He will repair them first, but those not yet buried will be snatched up to meet Him at the end.³⁶
- 38 Who will bring me to the end of enumerating the just men who anticipated the Son, whose number cannot be encompassed by our weak mouth?
- 39 Pray for me, my friends, that I may be strengthened once more to set forth their qualities again in another account as much as I am able.
- 40 Who is able to glorify the true Son Who rises for us, Whom just men yearned to see in their lifetimes?

31. Cf. Num. 13. 1-24; Deut. 1.22-25.

32. Josh. 2.18-21, 6. 17-25.

33. 2 Kgs. 2.1-18.

34. I.e., Moses, cf. Num. 12.3.

35. At the transfiguration, Mark 9.2-8 et par., Moses comes up from Sheol while Elijah descends from on high to meet Jesus "in the middle," i.e., on the mountain on earth, cf. Teixidor, *Muerte*, 98f.

36. 1 Thess. 4.16f. (Pes. 4.17).

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- 41 Adam anticipated Him Who is the Lord of the Cherubim³⁷ and was able to have him enter and dwell near the boughs of the Tree of Life.
- 42 Abel yearned for him to come in his days, so that instead of the lamb he sacrificed, he might see the Lamb of God.³⁸
- 43 Eve looked for Him, for the shame of women was great; but He would be able to clothe them not in leaves but rather in the glory they had shed.³⁹
- 44 The symbol of the tower that many built envisages One Who would come down and build upon the earth a Tower that goes up to heaven.⁴⁰
- 45 Even the type of the ark of animals envisages our Lord, Who would build the holy church in which souls take refuge.⁴¹
- 46 In the days of Peleg the earth was divided into seventy tongues;⁴² he anticipated that One Who would divide the earth by tongues for His apostles.⁴³
- 47 The earth that the Flood drowned called her Lord silently; He came down and opened baptism by which people were drawn out to heaven.
- 48 Seth and Enosh and Kenan were named sons of God;⁴⁴ they anticipated the Son of God, for they were brothers to Him in mercy.
- 49 Slightly less than one thousand years Methuselah lived; he anticipated the Son Who gives eternal life as an inheritance.⁴⁵

37. The Cherubim posted at the gate of Eden to keep Adam from the Tree of Life, Gen. 3.24, is subject to Christ. Further on this theme, cf. Graffin, *Cherubim*.

38. Cf. Gen. 4.4. Abel provides a eucharistic type as one who sacrifices a lamb. Elsewhere, *Cruc.* 2.8.9, he is a double type since he is also a victim, cf. Graffin, *Eucharistic*, 97f.

39. The Syriac word "shame" (*ḥwry*) also means "nakedness." The fig leaves are a garment of shame woven by Eve; cf. Gen. 3.7. Only the new garment woven by Mary, i.e., the body of Jesus, will be adequate; cf. *HdP* 2.7, 4.5, *Nat.* 4.187f.

40. Cf. Gen. 11.1-9, *Virg* 40.11-13, Murray, *Symbols*, 222ff. and Kronholm, *Motifs*, 210-14.

41. Cf. *HdF* 49.4; Christ builds the church of which Noah's ark is the type; the dove and olive branch are symbols of baptism. For Noah as a type of Christ, cf. Kronholm, *Motifs*, 172-214.

42. Cf. Gen. 10.25. In Syriac as in Hebrew the root *plg* means "to divide."

43. Cf. Acts 2.

44. Cf. Gen. 5.6-14.

45. Gen. 5.27. Literally the Syriac has "unceasing life from everlasting" here rendered "eternal life."

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- 50 For their sake by a hidden symbol, grace was asking
their Lord to come in their lifetimes to fill their needs.
- 51 For it is the Holy Spirit, Who for their sake by quiet contemplation
in them
stirs them up to see by Her the Savior for whom they yearned.⁴⁶
- 52 The soul of just men perceived the Son, the Medicine of life,
and she⁴⁷ eagerly desired that in her days He would come and she
would taste His sweetness.
- 53 Enoch yearned for Him, and without having seen the Son on earth,
he increased his faith and was made righteous so that he ascended to
see Him in heaven.⁴⁸
- 54 Who will refuse grace? For this gift that the ancients
did not acquire [even] with great effort has come freely to the people
of today.
- 55 Even Lamech looked for the Compassionate One to come and
console him
from his labor and the work of his hands and from the earth that the
Just One cursed.⁴⁹
- 56 But Lamech saw his son Noah in whom the symbols of the Son are
portrayed;
instead of this distant Lord the nearby symbol consoled him.
- 57 Even Noah yearned to see Him, for he tasted of his benefits:
if [even] His type preserved the animals, how much [more] does He
save souls.⁵⁰
- 58 Noah anticipated Him—Noah who surmised that by Him the ark
stood still;
if His type saved in this way, how much more will He save in His
reality.⁵¹

46. Cf. Rom. 8.26. Based on the grammatical convention that "spirit" (*rwš*) is feminine in Syriac, early Syriac Christian literature developed a rich feminine imagery for the Holy Spirit. Glimpses of this tradition survive in Ephrem; cf. Murray, *Symbols*, 312–20.

47. I.e., the soul.

48. Gen. 5.24.

49. Gen. 5.29.

50. Ephrem's interpretative technique here, typified by the phrase "how much more" is analogous to the Rabbinic method of "*qal w boher*"—from light to heavy—an argument proceeding from a lesser to a greater example; cf. H. L. Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Philadelphia, 1945), 93–98.

51. Cf. Gen. 8.4. The word here rendered "reality" (*qntwm*) may be used to render the Greek ὑπόστασις. It is used by Ephrem as a technical term with several different senses; cf.

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- 59 By the Spirit Abraham perceived that the birth of the Son was
distant;
for his own sake he eagerly desired even in his day to see Him.⁵²
- 60 Isaac who tasted of His salvation yearned to see Him;
if His sign is saved in this way, how much more will He be saved in
His truth.⁵³
- 61 Today the Watchers⁵⁴ were rejoicing that the Awakener came to
awaken us;
who will go to sleep on this night on which all Creation is awake?
- 62 Since by sins Adam let the sleep of death enter Creation,⁵⁵
the Awakener came down to awaken us from the slumber of sin.
- 63 Let us keep vigil as do the greedy who contemplate money lent on
interest,
who stay awake often at night to calculate principal and interest.
- 64 Awake and thinking is the thief who dug a hiding place in the
ground for his sleep;⁵⁶
his wakefulness is all [for] this: to increase lamentation for those who
sleep.
- 65 Keeping vigil also is the glutton in order to eat more and to suffer
agony;
his vigil was torment for him since he did not eat with moderation.
- 66 Keeping vigil also is the merchant; at night he wearies his fingers
to calculate how much [interest] came [in on] his mina and whether
he doubled and tripled his obol.
- 67 Keeping vigil also is the rich [man] whose sleep mammon pursues;
his dogs are sleeping, but he is keeping his treasure from thieves.
- 68 Keeping vigil also is the worrier whose sleep has been swallowed up
by his worries,

Beck, *Theologie*, 13–18; idem, *Reden*, 4–8; and Noujaim, "Essai." In this instance it is simply synonymous with *b-šrr*, "in truth, in reality."

52. Cf. John 8.56. The Syriac reads "even if" rather than "even."

53. Here rather than "type" and "reality" (*twpš* and *qntwym*) as in strophe 58, Ephrem uses "sign" and "truth" (*nyš* and *šrr*) with essentially the same meaning. On *nyš*, cf. Beck, *Bildtheologie*, esp. 256–60.

54. I.e., the angels, cf. CJ1.8 and note ad loc.

55. Beck retains the plural, "sins," with the earlier mss. and interprets this as an indication of Ephrem's undeveloped notion of Original Sin. Further on Ephrem's doctrine of the Fall, cf. Saber, *Theologie*, 111–31.

56. Cf. Matt. 25.18.

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- whose death stands at his pillows, and he watches, worried, for years.
- 69 It is Satan who teaches, my brothers, wakefulness for the sake of wakefulness,
so that we might be asleep to virtues, vigilant and wakeful to vices.
- 70 Even Judas Iscariot kept vigil an entire night,⁵⁷
and he sold the blood of the Just One Who purchased the entire creation.
- 71 The sons of darkness, who stripped off and shed the Shining One,
put on darkness,⁵⁸
and with silver the thief sold the Creator of silver.
- 72 Even the Pharisees, sons of darkness, were awake an entire night;
the dark ones kept vigil to conceal the incomprehensible Light.⁵⁹
- 73 Keep vigil as bright ones on this bright night;
for even if its color is black, still it is splendid in its power.
- 74 One who splendidly watches and prays in the darkness
is wrapped in hidden brilliance in the midst of this visible darkness.
- 75 The way of life of the hateful one who stands in the daylight is the
way of a son of darkness,
so that even if clothed by light without, he would be girt by
darkness within.
- 76 Indeed, my friends, let us not forget in our wakefulness:
illicit is the vigil of one who does not watch as he should.
- 77 Deep sleep is the vigil of one who watches unworthily;
its opposite, too, is the vigil of one who watches unchastely.
- 78 The vigil of a jealous man is an abundance full of emptiness,
and his watch is a matter full of scorn and disgrace.
- 79 If an angry man keeps watch, his vigil is disturbed by anger,
and his watch itself becomes full of wrath and curses.
- 80 If a garrulous man keeps vigil, his mouth becomes a thoroughfare
useful for the destroying [spirits] but wearisome for prayers.
- 81 If a discerning man keeps vigil, he chooses one of two:
either he sleeps sweetly, or he keeps vigil righteously.

57. The night of his betrayal of Jesus? Cf. Mark 14.32-52 et par.

58. Garment imagery is frequent in Syriac, cf. Brock, *Clothing*.

59. The trial before the Sanhedrin is apparently meant, cf. Mark 14.53-65 et par.

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- 82 Serene⁶⁰ is the night on which shines forth the Serene One Who
came to give us serenity.
Do not allow anything that might disturb it to enter upon our
watch.
- 83 Let the path of the ear be cleared; let the sight of the eye be
chastened;
let the contemplation of the heart be sanctified; let the speech of the
mouth be purified.
- 84 Mary today has hidden in us the leaven from the house of
Abraham;⁶¹
let us, therefore, love the poor as Abraham [loved] the needy.
- 85 Today she has cast rennet into us from the house of David, the
compassionate one;
let man have mercy on his persecutor as the son of Jesse on Saul.⁶²
- 86 The sweet salt of the prophets today is scattered among the peoples;
let us acquire by it a new taste by which the former people would
lose its flavor.⁶³
- 87 On this day of redemption let us speak a speech of interpretation;
let us not speak superfluous words, lest we be superfluous to [the
day].
- 88 This is the night of reconciliation; let us be neither wrathful nor
gloomy on it.
On this all-peaceful night let us be neither menacing nor boisterous.
- 89 This is the night of the Sweet One; let us be on it neither bitter nor
harsh.
On this night of the Humble One, let us be neither proud nor
haughty.
- 90 On this day of forgiveness let us not avenge offenses.
On this day of rejoicings let us not share sorrows.
- 91 On this sweet day let us not be vehement.
On this calm day let us not be quick-tempered.
- 92 On this day on which God came into the presence of sinners,

60. *šy*, here rendered "serene," may mean either calm or clear. Ephrem plays on the various senses of this root in this and the following strophes.

61. Cf. Matt. 13.33 (Pes.)

62. For David's mercy on Saul, cf. 1 Sam 26. In cheesemaking rennet separates the curds from the whey; here it separates the merciful from those who lack mercy.

63. The apostles are the salt of the earth sent out over all the earth; cf. Mark 9.50 et par. and HdP 6.21 and the comments of Beck and Graffin in CSCO and SC editions.

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- let not the just man exalt himself in his mind over the sinner.
- 93 On this day on which the Lord of all came among servants,
let the lords also bow down to their servants lovingly.
- 94 On this day when the Rich One was made poor for our sake,
let the rich man also make the poor man a sharer at his table.
- 95 On this day a gift came out to us without our asking for it;
let us then give alms to those who cry out and beg from us.
- 96 This is the day when the high gate opened to us for our prayers;
let us also open the gates to the seekers who have stayed but sought
[forgiveness].
- 97 This Lord of natures today was transformed contrary to His
nature;⁶⁴
it is not too difficult for us also to overthrow our evil will.
- 98 Bound is the body by its nature for it cannot grow larger or smaller;
but powerful is the will for it may grow to all sizes.⁶⁵
- 99 Today the Deity imprinted itself on humanity,
so that humanity might also be cut into the seal of Deity.⁶⁶

64. Here Ephrem states one of his central theological themes, the miraculous transformation (*ἡωβήρ*) in the incarnation of the Creator, who is by nature unchangeable. The One becomes many for the sake of self-revelation to the creatures God loves. Cf. de Halleux, *Mar Ephrem*, 45-47. Also *Virg* 4.5-6, 25.12, 28.11.

65. Freedom of the will is important to Ephrem and enters often into his polemics against other beliefs; cf. T. B. Mansour, "La défense éphrémienne de la liberté contre les doctrines marcionite, bardesanite et manichéenne," *OCP* 50 (1984), 331-46.

66. The verb here rendered "imprinted" (*ἑβή*) belongs to the context of coinage, seals and signets. Hence *ἑβή*, usually rendered "decorate" or "embellish," is here translated "cut into" since *ἑβή* is a denominative verb from *ἑβήσθαι*, "ornament or embellishment," but also "carved work, gem of a ring," i.e., intaglio; cf. Margoliouth 473a; *gemma annuli*, Payne Smith 3360. The language of seals and sealing (*σφραγίς*, *σφραγίζω*) is frequently used in Greek Christian literature, especially in relation to the sacrament of baptism; Ephrem has that use as well, cf. *Virg* 4-7. But here his meaning is that the incarnation has divinized human nature in a way similar to Athanasius' statement, "[The Word of God] became human that we might become divine." *Ath. de inc.* 54. Further on Ephrem's use of *ἑβή* and its derivatives, cf. Beck, *Bildtheologie*, esp. 254-58.

2

In this hymn Ephrem delineates an Old Testament basis for the Christian claim that Jesus is the Messiah, apparently in response to Jewish objections. He begins with a tripartite claim for Jesus as inheritor of the threefold leadership of the Old Testament people of God: He has inherited the lyre of the prophets, the hyssop of the priests and the diadem of the kings (str. 2). Most important here, however, is the kingship (str. 3-23). Like all kings, Jesus is recognized by cities, and like Solomon, he is offered a crown by his mother (str. 3-5), but his royal dignity is as the Son of the Ruler of all Creation (str. 6). The great exaltation of his mother is the result of his choice of her (str. 7-9). Ephrem is on the defensive with respect to the virgin birth (str. 11), sustaining his view in part by claiming that in the guise of an old man the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary while she was at prayer (str. 17-20). Yet the theological justification of Mary's virginity rests on typology: Christ is the second Adam; she is the second Eve (str. 7, 12). Finally, the claim to Davidic kingship is an historical assertion. It rests on Micah's messianic prophecy related to Bethlehem (Ephrata) and the divergent claims of Matthew and Luke that Mary and Joseph, respectively, were from Davidic stock. Ephrem defends a double Davidic heritage for Jesus; the one in the flesh, through Mary; the other, for the sake of the name, through Joseph (str. 13-16). He portrays the incarnation as a divine pedagogical device (str. 21). In the last strophes he takes the offensive, claiming that the Davidic kingship is extinct in Israel as a divine punishment, presumably for disbelief in Jesus the Messiah (str. 22-23).

2

To the melody "Heavenly hosts"

1 In the heavenly host sent for praise,