

## The Homily by Marutha of Tagrit on the Blessing of the Waters at Epiphany

Two homilies attributed to a Marutha survive : one of these, on New Sunday, was edited by Kmosko<sup>1</sup> and attributed by himself hesitatingly to Marutha of Martyropolis, while the other, on the Epiphany waters (edited below), must belong (provided the attribution is correct) to Marutha of Tagrit<sup>2</sup> (died 649). Kmosko devoted a brief paragraph (pp. 388-9) to the homily on Epiphany, whose *graecizans stilus, tortuosa sermonis prolixitas, termini denique theologici* led him to think that the piece might well be from the pen of Marutha, metropolitan of Tagrit. That the work, at the very earliest, dates from the mid sixth century is made absolutely certain by the discovery that the author quotes both Severus' Homily 85 (on 2 Kings 2:19-22) and Jacob of Serugh's Homily 164 (on Ezekiel 47)<sup>4</sup>. Although the Life of Marutha of Tagrit, by Denha, does not mention the present homily among his writings<sup>5</sup>, it does indicate that he had a special interest in liturgical matters<sup>6</sup>, and there would appear to be no good reasons to doubt that the author of our homily is indeed Marutha of Tagrit : an extract from the homily in the Catena of the monk Severus (completed 861) is specifically attributed to 'Marutha the metropolitan', and it is significant that the version of the patriarch Severus' homilies which our author quotes is the anonymous sixth-century one (sometimes attributed by modern scholars to Paul of Kallinikos), and not Jacob of Edessa's subsequent revision<sup>7</sup>.

1 In OrChr 3 (1903), pp. 384-415.

2 Baumstark, p. 245; I.E. Barsaum, *Al-lu'lu' al-manthur*, 2nd ed., Aleppo, 1956, pp. 349-50 (= pp. 280-1 of first edition, reprinted Baghdad, 1976); I. Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 2nd ed., Rome, 1965, p. 175; F. Nau in *PO* 3, pp. 52-6.

3 *PO* 23, pp. 25-38. Only Jacob of Edessa's revised translation is printed here; this is not, however, the version quoted by our author (see below).

4 Ed. Bedjan, V pp. 430-447.

5 *PO* 3, p. 92; cp Nau's introduction, p. 55.

6 *PO* 3, pp. 74, 77. Since the Church of the East, alone of the oriental traditions, does not have this particular rite, Marutha's interest in it could have been promoted by polemical considerations. Note that Denha specifically mentions that Marutha was particularly concerned with lectionary matters (p. 77).

7 The anonymous sixth-century translation has not been published, but is preserved in Vat. syr. 142 (on which see M. Brière in *PO* 29, pp. 21-6). If this anonymous version is indeed



The contents of the homily, which was clearly delivered at the service of the blessing of the waters on the night of Epiphany, can best be outlined in schematic form :

- 1 *Introduction* : God's reason for employing types in the Old Testament.
- 2-15 *Types in the Law* : the Exodus narrative
  - 2-3 summary of the biblical narrative (crossing of the Red Sea, water of Mara, springs of Elim, Exodus 12 and 15);
  - 4-14 typological exposition, with excursus (7-8) on the devil.
- 16-20 *Types in the Prophets* (i) : Elisha and the water of Jericho (2 Kings 2:19-21)<sup>8</sup>
  - 16 summary of the biblical narrative;
  - 17-20 typological exposition.
- 21-33 *Types in the Prophets* (ii) : the torrent issuing from the Temple (Ezekiel 47)<sup>9</sup>
  - 21 introduction;
  - 22-32 summary and typological exposition;
  - 33 Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 12:3).
- 34 *Paul's words* (Titus 3:4-7).
- 35-39 *Conclusion* : the present rite of blessing the water on the night of Epiphany.

Marutha's homily is of interest from a number of different points of view : its detailed application of traditional typological exegesis, and the way in which it handles its two main sources, Severus and Jacob of Serugh ; the puzzling quotation in 6, which has its roots in an early Jewish midrash associating the cloud of Exodus with that of Isaiah 4:5-6 ; and, last but not least, the evidence which it provides for the lections read at the Blessing of the water on the night of Epiphany, seeing that the homily constitutes an important early witness to the developed form of this rite known to the various eastern Christian Churches to-day.

John Chrysostom already alludes to the blessing of the water on the Eve of Epiphany in his homily on the baptism of Christ<sup>10</sup>, but little is known about the early structure of the rite<sup>11</sup> although some important details about its main prayers and their historical development are given by Jacob

by Paul of Kallinikos, it could be of significance that Marutha spent ten years at the famous monastery of Mar Zakkay, near Kallinikos (*PO* 3, p. 70).

8 For this part Marutha draws heavily on Severus, Homily 85.

9 Here Marutha draws on Jacob of Serugh, Homily 164.

10 *PG* 49, col. 366.

11 See P. de Puniet in *DACL* 2, cols 698-708 ; also E. Theodorou and G.G. Bekatoros in *Θρησκευτική και Ήθική Έγκυκλοπαιδεία* I, cols 223-30.



of Edessa (writing perhaps about half a century later than Marutha) in his Letter to Addai<sup>12</sup>. It is interesting to learn that even in Jacob's day the rite was not yet known in Egypt.

A number of comparatively early manuscripts (tenth century onwards) containing the Syrian Orthodox service for the Blessing of the water at Epiphany survive, and two of these, representing a short and a long recension, were edited by E.A.W. Budge in the collection of (mainly) oriental texts entitled *The Blessing of the Waters on the Eve of the Epiphany*, put together by John, Marquess of Bute (London, 1901)<sup>13</sup>. The short form (Budge, pp. 65-78, taken from British Library Add. 14495) does not give details of the lections employed, but the longer text (Budge, pp. 79-101, from Add. 14499) specifies as Old Testament lections precisely those texts commented upon by Marutha: Ex. 15:22-25, 2 Kings 2:19-22, Ezek. 47:1-12, Is. 11:11-12:6<sup>14</sup>. For the Gospel this same manuscript gives John 4:5-24 (the Samaritan woman at the well), which is specifically alluded to by Marutha in 36 ("just as Christ told the Samaritan woman (in the lection) you have just heard"). Although the longer service in Add. 14499 may represent Jacob of Edessa's revised translation (from Greek) of the service<sup>15</sup>, it is clear from Jacob's letter to Addai that the rite was already by his time long established in Syria, and it thus seems likely that the lections found in Add. 14499 were already in use in Marutha's day.

In his *Monumenta Syriaca ex Romanis Codicibus Collecta* II<sup>16</sup>, Zingerle published two excerpts attributed to Marutha which are to be found in the *Catena Severi* (Vat. syr. 103); as Baumstark already noted<sup>17</sup>, the first of these comes from our homily: the extract represents a somewhat abbreviated quotation of 9-13.

12 Incorporated into the Pontifical of Michael the Syrian (Vat. syr. 51) and translated into Latin by J.M. Vosté, *Pontificale iuxta ritum Ecclesiae Syrorum Occidentaliū id est Antiochiae*, Rome, 1942, pp. 358-60. I use, however, the text in B.L. Add. 14715, ff. 170a-173a; part of the text is given by C. Kayser, *Die Canones Jacob's von Edessa*, Leipzig, 1886, pp. 18-9 (text), 43 (translation), 182-3 (comment), and in A. Vööbus, *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition* I (CSCO Scr.Syri 161-2), texts 46-7.

13 Compare the description of the contents of B.L. Add. 14494 in G. Khouri-Sarkis and A. du Boulay, "La bénédiction de l'eau, la nuit de l'Épiphanie, dans le rite syrien d'Antioche", *OrSyr* 4 (1959), pp. 211-32 (esp. 220-24).

14 The Greek, Coptic and Maronite services all have a different selection (for the Maronite, see the French translation by J. M. Sauget in *OrSyr* 4 (1959), p. 341).

15 See Budge's remarks, p. vii (cp Baumstark, p. 253 n. 3).



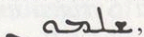
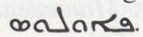
16 Oeniponti, 1878, p. 12 (introduction), p. 32 (text). The second excerpt is on Matt. 26:6-14 and the question of how many times Christ was anointed.

17 Baumstark, p. 245, n. 3.



*The present edition and translation*

Marutha's homily on the blessing of the water at Epiphany is preserved complete in a single manuscript, British Library Add. 17267, (ff. 17b-20a), of the thirteenth century. In the edition below I have corrected the text in a few places, but in every case<sup>18</sup> the reading of the manuscript is given in a footnote; the apparatus also gives the variants of the excerpt quoted in the *Catena Severi* (this contains **9**, **10** (beginning to *nsb*), **11** (beginning to *dlšmy*'), **12**, **13** (beginning to *d'dt'*)).

An individual scribal feature of the manuscript is the frequent use of a short dash to denote a heavy break in the sense (in several cases, but not all, these correspond to the ends of my paragraphs); these have not been reproduced. A few orthographical features may be noted: *seyame* are frequently absent from  and sporadically from a few other forms (e.g. **34**, ); likewise the point above the 3rd fem. sing. suffix is quite often omitted. In all such cases the standard orthography has tacitly been adopted wherever the context rules out the possibility that a true variant is involved. The perfect ending of 3rd fem. plur. is in -y (as normal in West Syrian manuscripts of this period), but in **34** the older form without -y is preserved; on this matter I have reproduced the practice of the manuscript, even though the forms in -y are not likely to go back to Marutha. Abbreviations (rare in the manuscript) have been resolved<sup>19</sup>. Among proper names the following spellings may be noted: , .

In the translation verbal quotations from the Peshitta<sup>20</sup> have been italicized on their first occurrence and double quotation marks are employed for direct citations of Jacob of Serugh<sup>21</sup>. Words added in the translation for the sake of the sense are bracketed.

*Text*, B.L. Add. 17267.

18 With the exception of abbreviations and the orthographic features mentioned in the next paragraph.

19 The reading of the manuscript is only given in the apparatus when there is some uncertainty about the resolution (in **6**, for which see the commentary).

20 All Marutha's quotations are based on the Peshitta.

21 Since the anonymous sixth-century version of Severus' homilies has not been published it has not been possible to do this for the quotations of Severus as well; for their extent, see the commentary.



























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μέν 15, 34.

νόμος 1, 2, 8, 14, 15, 34.

οὐσία 20.

πρόσωπον 6.

τύπος 1, 3-6, 8-10, 12, 14, 17, 18, 24.

(τύπος) ~~ἀντίκτυπος~~ 19.

### Translation

Next, the reason for the blessing of the waters on the night of Epiphany, by the holy Mar Marutha.

1. When God desired to bring us to the faith of baptism, all that was to take place at the end of time was, as it were, pictorially delineated in a type beforehand, lest the great novelty, once it had come undisputably, should prove harmful in (the eyes of) many to the potency of faith. What was this that was (thus) marked out? Baptism was to be illuminated as having great potency, as a great gift that is totally free, one which cleanses away, and which is performed for the sake of salvation (*lit.* life). As it were pictorially there were marked out beforehand those who cleansed the body's (real) wounds and those non-existent impurities which were only supposed to be real because of the Law. For how all these things in the Law were once performed by Moses for Israel we can of necessity see.

2. For once the Israelites had left the land of Egypt and escaped that hard slavery, justly receiving the reward for their labours out of the wealth of the Egyptians<sup>22</sup>, then they crossed the sea as though on dry land, and beheld Pharaoh and his army, who were chasing after them, drowned by the sea along with the horses and chariots<sup>23</sup>. Then, in accordance with the just measures and unknowable judgements of God who thereby punishes wrongdoers at the time He (best) knows, using buffetings appropriate to their sins, He seeks to instruct them by means of a little adversity and bring upon them an educational testing. So they travelled *for three days in the desert without finding water* to drink, and then, burning with fierce thirst, they came upon the bitter waters of Morat (Mara), whereupon they complained to Moses, saying '*What shall we drink?*' Thereupon the Lord showed him a piece of wood, which he threw into the water and it became sweet. There He instructed him in laws and judgements<sup>24</sup>.

22 Ex. 12:35-6.

23 Ex. 14:22-3.

24 Ex. 15:22-5.



3. *Then they came to Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palms; there they set up camp by the water*<sup>25</sup>.

What are we to understand from all this? Everything that took place with reference to these people was a type, as the Apostle confirms when he says *'All this took place and was written down as a type for us, for our education, seeing that the end of time has arrived for us'*<sup>26</sup>.

4. For Egypt, from whose harsh slavery the Israelites were liberated, is a type for sin, from which we have been liberated.

5. Pharaoh (corresponds to) the devil, while the sea, which was divided before them and over which they crossed as if on dry land while Pharaoh and all his troops were drowned, is a type for baptism, which we pass through, as though a sea, while it drowns the devil who is pursuing us like Pharaoh and his troops.

6. Scripture testifies to us when it says<sup>27</sup> *'The cloud, which overshadowed them by day lest their bodies be harmed by the violence of the sun',* is a type of the Holy Spirit whom all the faithful receive from baptism, and who preserves them continually from the violence of the devil's temptations. For we find scripture naming the devil 'the sun' in many places; thus David said<sup>28</sup> *'By day the sun shall not harm you',* and Solomon, impersonating the pure soul of Adam, said in the Song of Songs as follows<sup>29</sup>, *'Do not look upon me for I am black, since the sun has blackened me. I was not (always) thus, but the sun has blackened me'.*

7. Christ confirms these men's words when he said in the parable<sup>30</sup> *'Behold the sower went out to sow his seed, and as he sowed, some fell on rock where there was no moisture, and once it had sprouted a little it quickly withered as a result of the sun shining upon it',* that is to say, temptation from the devil.

8. It was the same with the bitter water of Morat: the fact that the corporeal Israel first of all found it but were unable to assuage the people's thirst serves as a type for the Law which was originally given to mankind as a means of training<sup>31</sup>, as it were, and as a fence<sup>32</sup> standing between God and the

25 Ex. 15:27.

26 I Cor. 10:11.

27 Unidentified; see commentary.

28 Ps. 120(121):6.

29 Cant. 1:6.

30 Luke 8:5-6 (Matt. 13:3-4, Mark 4:3-4).

31 Cp Gal. 3:24.

32 Cp. Eph. 2:14.



sacrifices—in that it (i.e. the Law) could not assuage from the souls of men the cruel and burning thirst brought on by the devil, for Moses was bitter in his ordinances. Paul testifies to this when he says<sup>33</sup> *‘He who transgresses the Law of Moses shall mercilessly die at the word of two or three witnesses’*.

9. Now the wood which was thrown into the bitter water of Morat and made it sweet is a type for Christ, who is light in his nature, yet for our sake accepted our state which drags downwards: when he was baptized in the streams of the Jordan he sweetened, by his baptism, all those who believe in him and are baptized in his name.

10. It is customary for scripture to take wood as a type for Christ. This is what the staff of Moses, by which the sea was divided, was likewise marking out; and so with the wood which Elisha threw into the Jordan and it drew up the heavy iron<sup>34</sup>.

11. Elim, again, is the ascent to heaven which effects within us the fulness of the stature of Christ. For this reason Christ said to his apostles<sup>35</sup> *‘Arise, let us go’*—from these earthly places to those in heaven.

12. The twelve springs which flowed with sweet and delicious water are a type for the twelve apostles who continuously cause sweet water to flow, to provide drink for the spiritual Israel—that is, all the nations. For Christ said<sup>36</sup> *‘Rivers of living water shall flow from the belly of him who shall believe in me’*.

13. The seventy palms are the holy teachers of the holy church.

14. Again, that water which used to cleanse all the impurities mentioned in the Law, something which was ordered to take place at evening<sup>37</sup>—but we have not time to speak of everything—is a type for the baptismal water in which all the impurities of our sins are cleansed. Its happening at evening indicates that baptism has been given to men at the end of time.

15. This is just a little about the things in the Law effected through Moses. Let us from now on speak of similar things to these, which are marked out in the books of the prophets, following the Law.

16. When the divine prophet Elisha once went down to Jericho—that low-lying and troubled town situated below Jerusalem—its inhabitants

33 Heb. 10:28.

34 2 Kings 6:6.

35 Perhaps Matt. 26:45 = Mark 14:42.

36 John 7:38.

37 Lev. 15:5.



approached him and told him *'The situation of this town is excellent, as our lord can see, but its water is bad and so the area is deprived of children'*. Elisha replied *'Bring me a new potter's vessel and throw some salt into it'*. *This they brought to him*, and he took it and they set off for the place whence the water issued. There he poured out *the salt*, with the words *'Thus says the Lord: "I have healed this water; there shall no longer be anyone there deprived of children"'*<sup>38</sup>.

17. Through this we learn that Jericho is a type for this earth where we sojourn: we have come down to it from the heights of Paradise and from the blessed life there, as though (making the descent) from Jerusalem to Jericho. (This earth) was originally good and beautiful—for all that God made was beautiful and most beautiful<sup>39</sup>—but eventually, as a result of the transgression it received the sentence of death and sprouted thorns and tares: from this point on death held sway over mankind up *till the time of the restoration*<sup>40</sup>, when the Word God, the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, united to himself hypostatically flesh, both new and endowed with soul, and, after the likeness of salt, he was cast into the fountain of our race, healing the water at his baptism, and demonstrating it to be no longer lethal, as it had been before, but actually life-giving and capable of giving birth to spiritual children.

18. The potter's vessel is a type for the human body which was fashioned out of the earth; and its small size indicates that the body which was assumed could be contained and was very small in comparison with the divinity which was united to it. Paul testifies that the human body is a vessel of clay fashioned out of mud or earth when he wrote to the Corinthians as follows<sup>41</sup>, *'We have a treasure in a clay vessel'*, where he names the Word God a 'treasure' and the human body 'a vessel of clay'.

19. The mention of the salt is an indication of the divinity: it shows this since, as a type, it accompanied sacrifices<sup>42</sup>; it also indicates openly that those things which mark out the truth beforehand by means of shadows are themselves by no means ordinary or devoid of the divine element which, like salt, causes things to glisten and brings out their strength, while it wipes away the rottenness and sickly-sweetness of sin from those in whom it is truly to be found, filling them instead with the spiritual fragrance of divine light.

38 2 Kings 2:19-21.

39 Cp Gen. 1:31.

40 Heb. 9:10.

41 2 Cor. 4:7.

42 Lev. 2:13.



20. The newness of the jar indicates that, even though the body of the Word belongs to the substance (*ousia*) of our bodies, which derive from Adam who was fashioned out of mud, it is nevertheless holy and without sin, being the body of God, the fountain of life and immortality. This jar, then, went down to the Jordan, (the jar) which is, rather, the Living Water whence flows all sanctification and goodness, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. For it was he who both made sweet the water at Morat and made wholesome the water of Jericho.

21. As the utterance of the prophet Ezekiel has it<sup>43</sup>: us who have hidden the rational icon of the soul in mud and were living a dissipated and bestial life, being consequently named 'dust', us who had become uninhabited land, empty of the divine grace, by means of the water which he saw issuing towards Galilee and descending to the uninhabited land did he renew once again—(by the water) which is none other than the Jordan wherein Christ provided us with the origins of divine baptism, thus quenching the fiery darts of the evil one and blessing (all) springs of water.

22. It is good, my brethren, to consider the revelation of Ezekiel who is so rich in prophecy, for he said 'He showed me *a closed door*<sup>44</sup>, and from beneath its threshold I beheld water issuing from its right hand side, and in this water I beheld *a man holding a measure in his hand, and he measured three times. And after the three times the torrent grew stronger so that no one could cross it*<sup>45</sup>.

23. What are we to understand from this? The closed door from whose threshold the water originated prefigured for us Mary who gave birth, yet she was preserved in her virginity. The man is Christ who measured the entire universe with his Gospel. The fact that at first the water was little in quantity and traversable indicates for us the humanly small measurements of Christ; that the torrent grew strong and no one could traverse it indicates that the true faith has grown strong and no one can control it; just as Christ said to his Church<sup>46</sup> *'The gates of Sheol shall not prevail against it'*.

24. Now the torrent is a type for the Gospel; and as for the water, which does not come from springs or sources, but is gathered in numerous "drops" from the "exalted abodes" on high and so constitutes the torrent, this is a type for the barbarian peoples who, being gathered from all quarters,

43 Ez. 47.

44 Ez. 46:1.

45 Ez. 47:1, 3, 5.

46 Matt. 16:18.



constitute a single perfected *nation which is envious of good works*<sup>46a</sup>. For the teachings of the church derive from heaven above and not from those on earth.

25. Again he says *'I saw on the bank of the torrent exceedingly many trees on either side'*<sup>47</sup>. These many trees are "exalted in beauty and with lovely branches" which bore sweet fruit by means of "hidden symbols".

26. He said that *'It issued from Galilee'*<sup>48</sup>, thereby pointing to Nazareth of Galilee where Christ was brought up.

27. *'And the sweet water fell into the fetid water which then became fresh'*<sup>49</sup>. This water of the torrent further indicates for us the living water of baptism. Scripture names the world a 'sea' in numerous places, "and the fetid water is the race of Adam", for when the devil "spurred" his poison "into the source of the spring", Adam, he ruined the whole of his race. 'The fetid water became sweet': that is, mankind did so in the sweet waters of baptism. For that water issues from the sanctuary; in other words the water is from God and not from men.

28. 'And', he says, 'there shall be *many fish* in this sea'<sup>50</sup>. By the multitude of fish he points to the multitude of those who are going to believe.

29. *'And fishermen shall stand by its side from 'Ain Ged to 'Ain 'Aglin'*<sup>51</sup>. The fishermen are the holy apostles who catch mankind for faith by means of their words.

30. *'But the exits and entrances will not become fresh'*<sup>52</sup>. By this he is hinting about the Jewish people, in that He was seen by them in the flesh and himself said<sup>53</sup> *'I was not sent, except to the sheep which had got lost from the sons of Israel'*,—from them when they renounced Him in the presence of Pilate and crucified Him outside Jerusalem. For the entire world became fresh with Christ, whereas the Jews alone *renounced the grace*<sup>53a</sup> (that had been directed) towards them.

31. And as these (trees) grow by the blessed "stream of baptism", they produce blessed fruit which never comes to an end, seeing that *'the water*

46a Titus 2:14.

47 Ez. 47:7.

48 Ez. 47:8.

49 Ez. 47:8.

50 Ez. 47:10.

51 Ez. 47:10.

52 Ez. 47:11.

53 Matt. 15:24.

53a 2 Tim. 3:2.



*they imbibe issues from the sanctuary*<sup>54</sup>, that is to say, “from the very Essence (*ituta*) of the Father” Most High.

32. ‘And’, he says, ‘*their fruit shall be there to eat, and their leaves for healing*’<sup>55</sup>. By ‘fruits’ he points to faith which is in very truth food which nourishes the soul. By ‘leaves’ (he means) works of teaching which heal souls from the diseases and illnesses of the soul.

33. For when the prophet Isaiah foresaw all this multitude he cried out to the nations<sup>56</sup> ‘All of you, *fill up with water in joy from the spring of salvation*’—which is Christ.

34. So much for what has been said in the prophets. The apostle Paul, following on the things in the Law and the prophets, spoke as follows<sup>57</sup>: ‘*The sweetness and compassion of God has been revealed; not in works, but in his mercy he has revived us in the laver of regeneration and in the renewal of the Holy Spirit whom he has richly poured upon us, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, through whose grace we have been justified, and we shall become heirs in the hope of eternal life*’.

35. Therefore we too, recognizing these things in the Law and prophets and bringing to fulfilment the symbols that have been expounded, following in the steps of our forefathers on this day when Christ was baptized, thereby blessing fountains and rivers, we bless this water at midnight, giving thanks to Christ for all his acts of grace towards us.

36. For this is the living water which bursts forth to eternal life, just as Christ told the Samaritan woman<sup>58</sup> (in the lection) you have just heard.

37. And that this is living water there is the following sure sign: when it is taken away and preserved, it lasts for a long time, and whenever someone looks at it he sees it as though it had just been drawn (*lit.* filled) that moment from a spring. But what happens with other water? Once it has been standing only a little while after being taken from its spring it goes bad, like a dead corpse. Whereas this water, because it possesses the divine power, is living, and it lasts a long time.

38. Having already been illuminated, o children of the font, you should preserve in purity the gift you have received. Extend yourselves to celebrate

54 Ez. 47:12.

55 Ez. 47:12.

56 Is. 12:3.

57 Titus 3:4-7.

58 John 4.



the renewal of (your) souls, put in your hearts (the means of) ascent on high, go forward amid what is good, for you have been freed from sin and have become children of God.

**39.** And when you take this water for drinking or for sprinkling, thereby becoming yourselves cleansed of all your impurities, may you have a new heart and a new spirit which is perpetually counselled by the ordinances of God, to whom is fitting praise, honour and might, now and always and for eternal ages, amen.

### *Commentary*

**1 wounds:** the imagery of sins as wounds is very common in Syriac writers (see notably Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 7)

*because of the Law:* lit. 'in the Law'. Marutha adopts the attitude of the author of the Didascalia concerning the ritual law: it was given as a punishment for the apostasy of the episode of the Golden Calf (*Didascalia* VI.17.1 etc.).

**2** For the typological use of the Exodus narrative in connection with baptism see in general F.J. Dölger, "Der Durchzug durch das Rote Meer als Sinnbild der christlichen Taufe", *Antike und Christentum* 2 (1930), pp. 63-9; P. Lundberg, *La typologie baptismale dans l'ancienne église*, Uppsala, 1942, ch. II; J. Daniélou, *Les figures du Christ dans l'Ancien Testament: Sacramentum Futuri*, Paris, 1950, pp. 144-76. Among the earliest Syriac writers this particular baptismal typology appears to be rare<sup>59</sup>, and it only becomes prominent from the fifth century onwards, no doubt due to the influence of Greek writers. By the time of Marutha the typological equations of the following paragraphs had become commonplace.

**3 of time:** Peshitta 'of the ages'; Marutha may be thinking of Eph. 1:10.

**6 Scripture:** I have not been able to identify the source of this quotation (whose precise extent is not clear); it is not from any canonical book, and none of the biblical references to the cloud speak of it as providing shade from the violence of the sun<sup>60</sup>. This idea is, however, introduced by Targum

59 E.g. *H. de Epiphania* (ed. Beck), I.6, V.7, VII.6, VIII.19. In the genuine writings Ephrem employs other types, while for Aphrahat the crossing of the Red Sea is linked primarily with the Descent (cp. Lundberg, *Typologie*, pp. 121-3).

60 In the Peshitta the cloud is indeed said to provide shade at Ps. 105:39 and Wis. 19:7 (for Is. 4:5-6 see below), and the LXX introduces it at Num. 9:18, 22 and 10:34, while Targum Onkelos and Ps. Jonathan insert *attel* at Num. 10:34. That shading was seen by Syriac writers to be the cloud's main function is suggested by references to its provision of shade in, for example, Ephrem *Comm. Exod.* XIII, Jacob of Serugh, *Homilies against the Jews* (PO 38), V line 197, VI line 25.



Pseudo-Jonathan at both Exodus 12:37 and Numbers 14:14.<sup>61</sup>; in the former passage there are said to be seven clouds of glory, “one of which was above them (sc. the Israelites) lest there come down upon them rain or hail, and lest they be scorched by the heat of the sun”, while in the latter we find the cloud described as “providing shade over them lest the heat and rain harm them”. The idea of the cloud serving as a protection against the sun and cold<sup>62</sup> is also found in Justin, *Dialogue* 131.6 καὶ νεφέλη εἰς σκίαν ἀπὸ κάυματος καὶ φυλακὴν ἀπὸ κρύος εἶπετο<sup>63</sup>. It would appear that we are dealing here with an early midrash whose aim was to connect the cloud of the Exodus narrative with the cloud predicted in Isaiah 4:5-6<sup>64</sup>. Marutha’s immediate source, however, has yet to be identified.

*type of the Holy Spirit*: this became a commonplace in Christian tradition from Origen onwards<sup>65</sup>. Among Syriac writers an early example is provided by *H. de Epiphania* (attributed to Ephrem) I.5, “the cloud overshadowed (*aggnat*)<sup>66</sup> and held back the heat from the camp; it depicted a type of the Holy Spirit who overshadows (*maggnat*) you in the baptismal font”. Note that Marutha still construes *ruḥa* as feminine<sup>67</sup>.

*I was not (always) thus*: the words are probably a direct quotation from Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio 2 in Cant.* (ed. Jaeger, pp. 50-1), for Marutha’s interpretation of Cant. 1:6, with the reference to the parable of the sower juxtaposed, is closely based on this passage of Gregory’s Commentary on the Song of Songs (which would have been available to Marutha in an early translation)<sup>68</sup>.

7 *sun ... temptation*: reminiscences of Gregory of Nyssa’s wording.

9 *sweetened*: the quotation of Marutha in the *Catena Severi* provides as

61 For parallels in Rabbinic literature see L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, V, Philadelphia, 1968, p. 438 (note 241), and E. Levine *apud* A. Diez Macho, *Neophyti I*, III. *Leviticus*, Madrid, 1971, p. 436.

62 Cp J. Luzarraga, *Las tradiciones de la nube en la Biblia y en el Judaismo primitivo* (Analecta Biblica 54, 1973), pp. 123-4, and H. Riesenfeld, *Jésus transfiguré*, Copenhagen, 1947, p. 137.

63 Cp Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Mosis* I.30; *H. de Epiphania* I.5 (quoted below) etc.

64 Note especially LXX and Targum Jonathan here.

65 See especially Theodoret, *Q. in Exod.* 27; other examples in G. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* s.v. νεφέλη, and in J. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Notre Dame, 1966, pp. 91-3.

66 For the significance of this term see my “Passover, Annunciation and Epiclesis: some remarks on the term *aggen* in the Syriac versions of Luke 1:35”, to appear in the Festschrift for J. D. M. Derrett, *Novum Testamentum* 1982.

67 In view of the following feminines, *hay* and *mnattra*, I have resolved the abbreviation *qd* as *qaddiṣta*.

68 For this see C. van den Eynde, *La version syriaque du Commentaire de Grégoire de Nysse sur le Cantique des Cantiques*, Louvain, 1939.



object to this verb, "all the bitterness of the nations (who believed in him him ...)", reminiscent of Ephrem, *C.Exod.* XVI.1, "(the wood is a symbol of the cross) by which all the bitterness of the nations was to be healed".

**10 Elisha:** for the early typological use of 2 Kings 6:6 see J. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Notre Dame, 1966, pp. 108-110; among Syriac writers, *H. de Epiphania* VIII.12.

**11 Elim ... ascent:** thus Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. Luke*, PG 72, 665 Ελημ ἐρμηνεύεται δὲ ἀνάβασις ἢ αὔξησις, perhaps Marutha's source here<sup>69</sup>.

**12 a type for the twelve apostles:** so already Tertullian (*adv. Marc.* IV.13); it also occurs in Marutha (of Maipherqat?), Homily on New Sunday 13 (OrChr 3 (1903), p. 410).

**16-20** Marutha bases his exposition of 2 Kings 2 very closely on Severus' Homily 85, on Epiphany, available to him in the (unpublished) sixth-century translation which he evidently quotes verbally at many points. The correspondences with the published Syriac text of this homily (which represents Jacob of Edessa's subsequent revision of the translation) are as follows: **16** = PO 23, p. 294<sup>8-15</sup>; **17** = p. 295<sup>2-5, 12-13</sup>, 298<sup>3-4</sup>; **18** = p. 298<sup>8-10</sup>, 296<sup>1-2</sup>; **19** = p. 296<sup>2-3, 5-11</sup>; **20** = p. 297<sup>14-15</sup>, 298<sup>1, 2, 4, 14-15</sup>. Jacob of Serugh, in the first half of Homily 116 on Elisha, adopts the same christological interpretation of 2 Kings 2, but Marutha has no clear verbal quotations (though he may well have known the homily).

**16** The paragraph follows Severus very closely, although the biblical quotation has for the most part been adapted to the Peshitta text.

**17** The first half of the paragraph (up to "... most beautiful") paraphrases Severus p. 295.

*Jericho is a type for this earth:* Marutha, following Severus, here alludes to the widespread patristic understanding of the parable of the Good Samaritan, where the wounded man is Adam and the Samaritan Christ. The emphasis that the earth was originally 'good and beautiful' is found in Jacob of Serugh (ed. Bedjan, IV, p. 262<sup>16</sup>) as well as in Severus.

<sup>69</sup> Syriac translation in *CSCO* 70, p. 228 (Homily 60); Cyril quotes Ex. 15:27 in connection with typological correspondence which he sees between the 'seventy' of Luke 10:1 and the 70 palms of Elim; although there is no verbal quotation of Cyril here, the fact that Cyril also quotes Heb. 10:28 in the context of the water of Mara/Morat (p. 227) makes it likely that Marutha is based on Cyril here. The rarity of the interpretation of Elim as 'ascent' provides further confirmation for this: the only other evidence for it to be found in F. Wutz's *Onomastica Sacra* (TU 40.1-2; 1914-5) occurs in an Armenian onomasticon (II, p. 886). Elim as 'ascent' is of course based on a false etymology, 'lym being derived from 'lym ('lh 'go up').



*united to himself hypostatically* : ... : based on Severus, p. 298.

*capable of giving birth* : based on Severus, p. 295<sup>12-13</sup>.

**18** *a type for the human body* : based on Severus, p. 296<sup>1</sup>.

*small size ... united to it* : based on Severus, p. 298, "For the body (of Christ) was small, even though it cannot be said how very small, by comparison with the divinity united to it".

*assumed* : Severus uses the term at p. 295<sup>8</sup>.

*Paul testifies ... clay vessel* : a direct quotation of Severus p. 296<sup>1-2</sup>.

**19** *salt is an indication of the divinity* : compare Severus, p. 296<sup>2-3</sup>, "the salt possesses a type of the essential wisdom of God"; Marutha in fact follows Jacob (ed. Bedjan, IV, p. 263<sup>11</sup>) more closely: "by the salt he delineated the Only Begotten of the Godhead". Among earlier Syriac writers note Ephrem, *H. de Nativ.* I.86, "the sweet salt mentioned by the prophets has to-day become scattered among the peoples ...", and especially Cyrillona (ed. Bickell), II, line 83, "the salt of his divinity".

*accompanied sacrifices ... light* : Marutha here paraphrases Severus, p. 296<sup>5-11</sup>.

**20** *belongs to the ousia ... fountain of life* : based on Severus, p. 297<sup>14</sup>-298<sup>1, 2, 4</sup>.

*This jar ... goodness* : based on Severus, p. 298<sup>14-15</sup>.

**31** For these sections on Ezekiel 47 Marutha turns to Jacob of Serugh's fine homily (no. 164) on the torrent of Ezekiel 47 for his source; there are several verbal quotations (indicated by double quotation marks in the translation). Although Ezekiel 47 is already used in a baptismal context in Ep. Barnabas 11:10, Odes of Solomon 6 (probably) and *H. de Epiphania* (attributed to Ephrem) XI.4, the passage appears not to be specifically linked with the Epiphany waters until the sixth century<sup>70</sup>.

**23** The paragraph is based loosely on Jacob, V p. 436 (Jacob, however, does not quote Matt. 16:18).

*closed door* : Jacob, V p. 436<sup>8, 11</sup>.

*humanly small measurements of Christ* : compare Jacob, V p. 436<sup>17-18</sup>.

**24** *a type for the Gospel* : so Jacob, V p. 439<sup>3</sup>.

*does not come from springs* : based on Jacob, V p. 439<sup>9</sup>.

*drops ... exalted abodes* : verbal quotations of Jacob, V p. 440<sup>10</sup>, 439<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>70</sup> In the Syrian Orthodox *Fenqitho*, Mosul, 1889, III, pp. 65-7, there is a long *sedro* based on Ez. 47 (fourth Sunday after Epiphany). The general lines of Jacob's and Marutha's interpretation clearly became the standard in Syrian Orthodox circles and as such they are reproduced in Dionysius bar Šalibi's Commentary on Ezekiel (Cambridge Add. 1972, ff. 82a-86a).



**25** *exalted ... symbols*: verbal quotations of Jacob, V p. 442<sup>2, 6</sup>.

**26** *from Galilee*: Marutha quoted the biblical text correctly in **21**; Jacob has nothing corresponding to this paragraph.

**27** *sea*: thus Jacob, V p. 443<sup>3</sup>.

*and the fetid water ... spring*: verbal quotations of Jacob, V p. 443<sup>3-4</sup>. Jacob's homily on Elisha and the water of Jericho has a very similar passage, IV p. 262<sup>8</sup>.

**29** *fishermen*: based freely on Jacob, V p. 444.

**30** *Jewish people*: based on Jacob, V p. 443 (end).

*got lost*: *d-`ebad(w)*, against Peshitta *da-ṭ'aw*; Marutha's idiosyncratic interpretation is not in Jacob's homily.

*renounced the grace*: *kapray b-ṭaybuta*, a phrase which occurs, for example, in Sahdona, *Ep.* 3 (ed. de Halleux, IV p. 19<sup>27</sup>) and Cyrus of Edessa (ed. Macomber), p. 85<sup>19</sup>.

**31** *stream of baptism*: a verbal quotation of Jacob, V p. 444<sup>19</sup>. The term 'stream' is derived from a baptismal interpretation of Ps. 1:3.

*from the very essence*: a verbal quotation of Jacob, V p. 445<sup>6</sup>.

**32** *fruits ... faith*: thus Jacob, V p. 446<sup>6</sup>, "their fruits (represent) the faith of the children of light".

*leaves ... works of teaching*: similarly Jacob, V p. 446<sup>14-15</sup>.

**33** *Isaiah*: this too is taken from one of the lections for the Blessing of the Epiphany waters; see Introduction, above.

**34** *of eternal life*: Peshitta "in ...".

**36** *Samaritan woman*: John 4 was the Gospel lection; see Introduction.

**39** *for drinking or for sprinkling*: compare the account, by the pilgrim Antoninus, of the use made of the Jordan water blessed at Epiphany (CSEL 39, p. 167).