

ROBERT R. PHENIX

The Sermons
on Joseph of Balai
of Qenneshrin

*Studien und Texte zu
Antike und Christentum*

50

Mohr Siebeck

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Robert R. Phenix

The Sermons on Joseph of Balai of Qenneshrin

Rhetoric and Interpretation
in Fifth-Century Syriac Literature

Mohr Siebeck

ROBERT PHENIX, born 1973; 2005 Ph.D. in Languages and Literatures of the Christian Orient, Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen; currently assistant professor in the Department of Theological Studies, Saint Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri, USA.

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*This Work is Dedicated to Professor Doctor Kenneth L. Rogers
Department of Classical and Modern Languages, University of Rhode Island*

Preface

If you were anything like me, you wouldn't be reading this page. If you are using this book the way I might, then you are working on a book yourself, and have a footnote or two that you want to fill in. You have no intention to read through most of the body of the text, let alone the front matter, with all those irrelevant names, the sentimentality, the personal history. You've got work to do. However, if you are like me, then you will get bored searching through the library to fill in the footnotes of your latest publication, so you can get it to the editor, move the line on your CV up from the works "in progress" to those that are "forthcoming," and move on to the next Big Idea. You start to flip through the books around you, flailing helplessly among the dry academic tomes, looking for a good read. You know that to satisfy your craving you have to walk to where languages and literatures are shelved (the "P" section in the Library of Congress system) but you are probably right now in the religion section, or "B" section in a typical US academic library, which will involve a long walk to another floor, dragging all those other books and perhaps a laptop, or a child (though maybe this work has been catalogued with Syriac grammars and lexica in the "P" section, in which case you would have stopped reading here long ago). So you are fishing around for something that talks about sex in the Bible, or eternal happiness for just twenty minutes twice a day, or reading some fascinating work on the modern application of *halakha*. You might just be looking for some pictures, some pretty Buddhist mandala, some photographs of Ethiopian Christians celebrating *Temqet*, something that radiates in all the wavelengths of the visible spectrum and with curvature, in order to stimulate your visual cortex deadened by an endless stream of parallel black and white lines.

I cannot promise you a good read here, and there is not one picture in this work. It is slightly sentimental. There are lists of personal names, and these lists mean nothing to anyone but me, but how I managed to complete this study, an earlier version of which was my PhD thesis, and how I even had the opportunity to begin this work, might be of interest. I promise there are no footnotes here. So be patient, and indulge me the biographical narrative in which that story is set. Find an empty bit of shelf on which to lean your elbow, and take a break from the academic rat race for a minute or two.

Comfortable?

Alrighty then.

We begin in August, 2001. Following a fancy-free wedding in Washington, D.C., my Cornelia and I moved to St. Paul, Minnesota because she had taken a tenure-track job at the University of St. Thomas. At the time we moved I was not even close to completing my Semitics degree at Catholic University. From 2001 until 2004 I was virtually unemployed, renovating the attic of the small turn-of-the-century house we had mortgaged on the West Side, working on several translation projects (the translation of the *Rabbula Corpus*, which is to appear soon with the Society for Biblical Literature's *Writings from the Greco-Roman World* series, was completed in this period), and hustling to find a place to complete my degree. In this respect, I guess the minimalist historian of Ancient Israel, Thomas Thompson of the University of Copenhagen, who also invested his time away from the academy in the real estate racket in Minnesota, might be one who could sympathize with my plight.

During this time I was hanging around the Theological Studies department at St. Thomas, causing trouble, being naughty, as a relatively non-destructive outlet for my frustration. As they say, obnoxious weasel is the one who gets to go into town, and eventually I was hired there in January 2003 to teach one course in Eastern Christianity (my students were mostly enrolled at the Roman Catholic minor seminary of the Archdiocese of St. Paul-Minneapolis) and another in Syriac. I also engaged in tutoring Classical Arabic: the US had just invaded Iraq, and so there was some interest in the language at that time, though not enough to convince the university to hire someone for Arabic full time, and nowhere near enough demand for me to make a business out of it. When most students realized how difficult Classical Arabic is, they decided "The heck with this."

Take note: philology is ascetic study about a world of sensuality, an ancient writer's snare set for the marauding scholar.

In 2003, Prof. Michael Weigl from the University of Vienna had accepted a position at St. Thomas in Old Testament. I approached him about the possibility of finishing my degree at Vienna in Assyriology. He knew Profs. Joser and Selz, and they were amenable to this possibility. However, the residency requirement of the program as well as administrative matters made this option impossible. When one of the PhD candidates, the now Dr. Friedrich Schipper, came to visit Prof. Weigl in St. Paul, the three of us discussed the possibility of enrolling me for a degree in Catholic Theology at Vienna, with a specialization in Old Testament. Despite our best efforts, after some weeks it became clear that there were insurmountable problems, and the plan was dropped.

In the Fall of 2003 Cornelia encouraged me to contact Prof. Theodor Seidl of the University of Würzburg. Understanding now that any degree in Old Testament would require completing a theology degree, which meant a residency requirement, we agreed that I should approach Prof. Seidl and see whether I would be able to complete a PhD thesis here because of the proximity of the university to Cornelia's in-laws. He graciously welcomed my application

and I arranged to study there for the 2004 Summer Semester. In preparation for this, I had begun to work on a dissertation on Ezra-Nehemiah, having waded through much of the secondary literature. This text remained an *idée fixe* of mine for several years to come.

Right after Easter 2004 I flew to stay with my in-laws, Christa and Albert, while Cornelia prepared for the move from St. Paul to St. Louis. She had taken another offer at Saint Louis University, and was to begin her work in August 2004. Although the outgoing Dekan of the Theology department, Prof. Karlheinz Müller, the incoming Dekan, Prof. Stephen Ernst, and the Studien-dekan, Prof. Franz Dünzl made every effort, there was no getting around the regulations: I would have to study on site for two more years before being promoted to the rank of PhD candidate.

In June 2004 Cornelia had arranged an appointment with Prof. Stephen Gerö of the Oriental Seminar at the University of Tübingen to discuss with him some of her recent work in Syriac Christianity and early Islam. Tübingen is a two-hour drive from Steinbach, Cornelia's home village, and she didn't want to make the trip alone. I declined her invitation; being preoccupied with the upcoming move in August and the fact that the house in St. Paul wasn't selling. She persisted for a few days, and finally at the last minute I agreed. So, we met with Prof. Gerö in his office, which was then in the Alta Aula, the original building of the university, overlooking the Neckar, in the early evening. I sat while the two of them discussed, among other matters, the book review of Luxenberg that she and I had written in 2001.

Finally, Prof. Gerö turned to me and said, "So Rob, where are you in your studies?" With a look of dejection, I explained to him my plight, the work that I had been doing in St. Paul on Syriac and Armenian sources from the fifth century, and the fact that there was little chance for me to continue my work. He immediately invited me to submit a letter of application for the PhD at Tübingen. In brief, two weeks later I received a letter that stated the faculty had unanimously accepted me to write a dissertation at the Oriental Institute.

As Prof. Gerö had reassured me in our June meeting, by August I would be "Thinking about my dissertation on Ephraem the Syrian while boxing up my books." The original plan was to write a dissertation on creation accounts in Ephraem the Syrian and possible traces of this influence in the Qur'ān. Upon inspection of the work that had been done by Hidal, Kronholm, Séd, Speyer, and many others, I realized this area was quite well established. As I searched for an alternative, Cornelia suggested that I consider the collection of twelve sermons on Joseph attributed to Balai. No one had worked on this material in over seventy years, and the study of Näf, pioneering as it was, was in need of updating. After an email exchange with Prof. Gerö, we agreed in this text could be found a worthwhile topic for a dissertation.

I contacted Prof. Sebastian Brock to see whether he knew of any recent activity on this manuscript. He wrote back and mentioned that he did not know

of any work being done specifically on this text. With that information, I began to translate the *Sermons on Joseph* into English in late September 2004. However, Prof. Brock had mentioned that Kristian Heal of Brigham Young University was working on Syriac Joseph material. It took me some time to reach him (I waited until February of 2005, a bit late, I know) but Kristian assured me that his area of interest was not these sermons *per se*, but rather the Joseph stories of Narsai and Pseudo-Basil.

Prof. J. J. Mueller, who was the acting chair of the Theological Studies Department at Saint Louis University, hired me in an adjunct capacity to teach primarily the undergraduate introductions to Hebrew Bible and New Testament. More importantly, though, he had arranged with the Syriac scholar and expert on early Christology, Prof. Frederick McLeod, to let me use his office as I wrote my dissertation. I was very fortunate, being the only adjunct faculty with my own office. Prof. McLeod, who was in phased retirement, worked at home, and would sheepishly stick his head in only on Tuesdays when a department meeting was taking place, in order to drop off his jacket and soft blue hat. The two subsequent chairs, Prof. Wayne Hellmann and Prof. John Renard agreed to continue my position as an adjunct for the next two years.

On Thanksgiving Day, 2004, I had finished the translation of the *Sermons on Joseph*, and I began to plan the study. Over the winter intersession, I collected the data on rhetoric and themes that formed the basis of two of the largest chapters of the dissertation. From January until April I worked, studying classical rhetoric, Christian and Islamic Joseph literature, and above all writing constantly. By March the draft of the dissertation was coming together. I presented a section of this work to the Early Church Colloquium, which was directed that semester by Prof. Kenneth Steinhauser. By early April I was able to report to Prof. Gerö that the manuscript would be complete by the end of the month. This was the deadline to which I had agreed, on account of the fact that Prof. Gerö was taking a sabbatical leave in the Fall 2005 semester, which meant that I would have to wait one year before I could take the final oral examination and receive my degree.

I recall Cornelia printing out the four copies of the dissertation to be submitted to the faculty in Tübingen. The office secretaries, Ms. Mary Boles and the fabulous Ms. Elizabeth Ingenthron, throughout this entire six-month period, were of significant assistance. This was the last Friday in April, and the meeting to decide on the final examinations for the doctoral candidates at the Oriental Institute would take place early the following week. Cornelia finished the printing around 4:30 PM. I raced to get the copies to the FedEx office before it closed at 5. Having just made it, the drive back to the office was a little easier, perhaps in part because I was now a hundred dollars lighter.

I began to prepare my final notes for the oral examination. I was delayed in doing so by a gunshot wound that I sustained as Cornelia and I were getting

into our car that was parked a few blocks from the Theology Department in the last hours of April 30th, 2005. The thieves didn't get the car, but one of them did send me to the hospital following abdominal surgery in the early hours of May 1st. For the four days in the hospital I was not able to do much preparation for the oral examination, but I did manage to move forward with my share of the work on two articles on Eastern Christianity for a special volume of the *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies*, edited by Avril Makhoulouf, a colleague and friend who died before the volume was printed. Somewhere in this revised dissertation, as in the two articles mentioned above, is the trace of the gunman and his bullet.

After passing the oral exam on July 15th, in scraps of time over the next two and a half years the present revised version took shape. My daughter, Katharina Jane, was born Jan. 18th, 2006, and so this work had to be prioritized with being a father and husband (in an all new way), with my other research projects, and with classroom activity. Throughout this period, there were many who provided me with valuable assistance in this process of creating a monograph from a dissertation, which resulted in a rebuilding of most of my original thesis. Prof. Andrea Schmidt of the Catholic University of Louvain, Prof. Sebastian Brock of the Oriental Institute at Oxford, and Prof. Ian Henderson of McGill University each provided helpful comments and corrections. Prof. Pierluigi Piovanelli of the Université d'Ottawa invited me to present a paper at the Canadian and North American Apocrypha Workshop, for which I developed some of the source critical ideas on Syriac Joseph literature that I had not theretofore explored.

In June 2007 I submitted a proposal for the publication of this work to Dr. Henning Ziebritzki at Mohr-Siebeck. In September, 2007 Dr. Ziebritzki informed me that Prof. Christoph Marksches, the Chancellor of the Humboldt University in Berlin, had recommended that the work be accepted for publication. A formal agreement was reached in 2007 in San Diego at the Society for Biblical Literature meeting, and the typesetting work began on January 31st, 2008.

Cornelia Horn, my lover, accomplice, spouse, and one of my teachers, and Prof. Stephen Gerö, the chair of Oriental Christian Studies in Tübingen, were the catalysts that made my work on the *Sermons on Joseph* and the completion of my PhD possible. Their unwavering commitment to my work was the force that saw me through the writing process, and inspired me to continue my research and development of this work over the last four years.

Ms. Inta Ivanovska, a dear friend, helped me chase down the books and references for the last footnotes in the dissertation draft, but more importantly was a muse, helping to keep me connected with the verse and melody of existence. The support from my friend Prof. James A. Kelhoffer, a colleague in the Theological Studies department at Saint Louis University, also deserves special mention, as does my buddy the Rev. Marc Boulos, who knew me

when my interest in Syriac Christianity was just beginning, and my other buddy Prof. Joe Fortier S.J., whose scientific and spiritual fascination with insects and biology is a fountain of life. Edip Aydın, now the Rev. Dr. Polycarp Aydın, the Syrian Orthodox Bishop of Western Europe, was my first Syriac teacher when we were still students together. My parents, Jane and Robert, and my sister Danielle, as well as the members of the Theology Department at Saint Louis University not mentioned here by name, all have left in some way their mark on this work. Certainly the work of Mr. Matthias Spitzner, who shepherded me through the process of producing the camera ready copy, is greatly appreciated.

This monograph is dedicated to Prof. Kenneth Rogers, Department of Modern and Classical Languages at the University of Rhode Island, who was my first mentor in linguistics. For four years he spent untold hours patiently instructing this pesky and hyperactive undergraduate who would flop down in his old blue armchair and rattle off half-baked theories of phonology like it was the fifth rail of the evening. For Prof. Rogers, these hours must have looked like his feeding walnuts to the squirrels outside of Edwards Hall from his windowsill: sustaining, nurturing, fruitful, but from outside looking in, a pointless waste of time. I cannot speak for the fat, frolicking squirrels of Edwards Hall, but for myself I can say that this precious time was not only foundational for my work, but also influenced how I teach, and how I interact with my own students.

Flic-en-Flac, Mauritius, January 7th, 2008

Robert Phenix

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Chapter 1

Manuscripts and Editions of the *Sermons On Joseph*

1. The Manuscripts

There are thirteen manuscripts that witness to the *Sermons on Joseph* (*SonJ*). A discussion of their evidence may be divided according to those manuscripts preserved in collections kept in libraries in the Western world and those to be found in Eastern collections.

1.1 Manuscripts in Western Collections

1.1.1 MS BL 742 (Add 12,166)

There are in all seven manuscripts in Western collections that contain some or most of the *SonJ*. The oldest manuscript attesting to the *SonJ*, MS BL 742 (Add 12,166), which was obtained in 1841 by the British Museum from the Monastery of St. Mary Deipara in the Nitrian Desert, contains *SonJ* One and Eight.¹ William Wright dated it to the sixth century² and J. Joseph Overbeck, in his edition of this manuscript, dated it to the sixth or seventh century.³ Fashioned out of two older codices,⁴ it is a quarto arranged in geminate columns and written with an Edessene hand in Estrangēlā script.⁵ The colophon of MS BL Add 12,166 states that the codex contained three sermons of the *SonJ*, in addition to other texts. The colophon does not provide the numbers of the three sermons and the text of one of these three sermons in this manuscript

¹ J. Joseph Overbeck, *S. Ephraemi Syri Rabulae episcopi edesseni Balaei aliorumque opera selecta e codicibus syriacis manuscriptis in museo britannico et bibliotheca bodleiana asservatis primus edidit* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1865), 270–293 (Sermon One: folios 103–111v); 294–330 (Sermon Eight: folios 111v–123v).

² William Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 3 vols. (London: British Museum, 1870, 1871, 1872), vol. 2, 674–676, here 675, col. 2; Anton Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur mit Ausschluß der christlich-palästinensischen Texte* (Bonn: A. Marcus und E. Webers Verlag Dr. jur. Albert Ahn, 1922), 63, note 1 (§108g).

³ Overbeck, *S. Ephraemi Syri ... opera selecta*, xxi; see also Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 2, 674.

⁴ Overbeck, *S. Ephraemi Syri ... opera selecta*, xxi.

⁵ Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 2, 674.

has been lost, along with other material.⁶ There is no information in any manuscript or scholarly source to determine the number of this lost third sermon.

Despite the fact that MS BL Add 12,166 now contains just two sermons, this manuscript is important because these two sermons make up a significant portion of the *SonJ*: Sermons One and Eight contain just over thirty percent of the text of the twelve *SonJ*. Furthermore, although the selection of the *SonJ* that MS BL Add 12,166 presents is limited in size, the selection is important because it provides many variants when compared against more ample manuscript witnesses. Another reason for the significance of BL Add 12,166 is that it is the only manuscript that attributes the *SonJ* to Balai. Following the apparatus of Thomas Joseph Lamy's edition of the *SonJ*, the present discussion refers to BL Add 12,166 by the *siglum* O.⁷

1.1.2 MS BL 777 (Add 14,590)

The second manuscript, MS BL 777 (Add. 14,590), which the British Museum obtained from St. Mary's in Nitria some time after the collection that contained BL Add 12,166, dates to the eighth or ninth century.⁸ It is also a codex written in Estrangēlā script.⁹ Folios 61–68 offer the text of *SonJ* Two. The superscription of this manuscript does not attribute *SonJ* Two to any author. Lamy assigned to this witness the *siglum* A.¹⁰

1.1.3 MS BL Or 4078

A third manuscript in Western collections is MS BL Or 4078, dated to the 19th century. BL Or 4078 contains the *SonJ* and no other text on 141 pages in 8^o format.¹¹ This manuscript has not been collated in any edition of the *SonJ*. The notice of this manuscript in G. Margoliouth's catalogue does not provide any information as to the extent of the *SonJ* it contains, but the format and length of the manuscript suggest that it contains a considerable portion of the text. This manuscript has not been reviewed for the present study.

⁶ Overbeck, *S. Ephraemi Syri ... opera selecta*, xxi.

⁷ Thomas Joseph Lamy, *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones* (Mechliniae: H. Dessain, Summi Pontificis, S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide et Archiepiscopatus Mechliniensis typographus, 1889), vol. 3, col. 260.

⁸ Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, §108g, 63, note 1; see also Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 2, 752–754, here 753.

⁹ Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 2, 752.

¹⁰ Lamy, *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones*, vol. 3, col. 260.

¹¹ Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, §108g, 63, note 1; G. Margoliouth, *Descriptive List of Syriac and Karshuni Mss. in the British Museum Acquired since 1873* (reprinted Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2002), 24.

1.1.4 Two Manuscripts from Rome

Each of the remaining three manuscripts in Western collections contains *SonJ* One through 10.17, that is, approximately eighty percent of the *SonJ*. Two of these will be discussed in the present paragraph, the third in the subsequent section. The first of these manuscripts was last in the possession of the Maronite College in Rome.¹² Lamy did not provide a catalogue number for this manuscript. His report indicated that the manuscript stated that it contained twelve of the *SonJ*, although it has only eight numbered sermons. However, the content of these eight sermons is identical to the content of the copy of the *SonJ* that is found in the second important Western manuscript, located in the Vatican Library.¹³ In the preparation of his edition Lamy had both of these manuscripts copied out for him by the Maronite monk Augustine Schebabi.¹⁴ In his edition Lamy does not provide any identifying number of the Vatican manuscript. This manuscript is quite likely MS Vat Syr 469 that Baumstark mentioned.¹⁵ Neither Baumstark, nor Lamy, nor Bedjan provided a date for the *Vorlage* of these two manuscripts. Lamy thought, incorrectly, that *SonJ* Eight and Nine in this collection each combined two sermons that were originally separate, thus giving the twelve sermons mentioned in the title of the Maronite College manuscript.¹⁶ In fact, both the Maronite College manuscript and the Vatican manuscript omit the last third of *SonJ* Ten (section *SonJ* 10.18–25) and all of *SonJ* Eleven and Twelve.¹⁷ Lamy assigned to the Maronite College manuscript and Vatican manuscript the *sigla* M and V, respectively.

¹² Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, §108g, 63, note 1. This manuscript seems to have been in the possession of the Maronite College in Rome. Napoléon Bonaparte closed the Maronite College in 1798, and its holdings were liquidated in 1808. Re-established in 1891, it was closed in 1939, until being reopened in 2000. The present location of this manuscript is uncertain.

¹³ So Paul Bedjan, *Histoire complète de Joseph par Saint Ephrem, poème en douze livres* (Paris & Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1891), ix. Lamy omits this detail from his *monitum*.

¹⁴ Lamy, *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones*, vol. 3, col. 249. Schebabi copied from a manuscript dated Saturday, 25 Nisan (March), 2115 (AD 1804).

¹⁵ Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, 357, (addendum to 63, note 1). See M. Ugolini, “Supplementum ad catalogum codicum orientalium Bibliothecae Vaticanae” (unpublished manuscript, Vatican Library, no date), 109–126, superceded by Arnold van Lantschoot, *Inventaire des manuscrits syriaques des fonds Vatican (490–631): Barberini oriental. et Neofiti* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1965), 8; see also Alain Desreumaux and Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet, *Répertoire des bibliothèques et des catalogues de manuscrits syriaques* (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1991), 253.

¹⁶ Lamy, *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones*, vol. 3, col. 259.

¹⁷ Ending with *SonJ* 10.17; Lamy, *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones*, vol. 3, col. 639.

1.1.5 MS Cambridge Add 2817

A sixth manuscript in the Western collections is MS Cambridge Add 2817, located in the Cambridge University library. This manuscript was copied in 1883 by the Chaldean Catholic deacon Francis of Beth Mēre from a manuscript in Tell Kēphē. Manuscript Cmr Add 2817 states that the *SonJ* is by Ephraem of Nisibis.¹⁸ No edition of the *SonJ* collated this manuscript and both Paul Bedjan and Thomas Lamy seem to have been unaware of its existence, although it is possible that this manuscript is similar to a second manuscript from Tell Kēphē, described below. MS Cmr Add 2817 preserves *SonJ* One through 10.17. Evidence points to a substantial scribal error in this manuscript. A subscription at the end of the ninth sermon reads, “The Tenth Sermon has ended.” The beginning of the tenth discourse reads “Eleventh Sermon.”¹⁹ Judging from the number of pages of sermons Nine (161b–174b) and Ten (174b–191a) in MS Cmr Add 2817. This manuscript could not be consulted for the present study. However, the length of the sermons labeled “ten” and “eleven” in this manuscript seems to agree with the relative lengths of *SonJ* Nine and Ten in other manuscripts. If this is true, then this manuscript does not witness to *SonJ* Eleven and Twelve.

1.1.6 BN Syr 389

A seventh manuscript attesting to the *SonJ* is one that is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, BN Syr 389.²⁰ Briquel-Chatonnet dated this manuscript to the 11th–12th centuries. It contains in the first part of the manuscript a short fragment of the beginning of *SonJ* 9, corresponding to columns 581–583 in Lamy.²¹ This manuscript was not collated with the editions of Lamy and Bedjan.

¹⁸ Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, 63; William Wright, *A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), vol. 2, 660–662 (note that Baumstark gives incorrect page numbers).

¹⁹ Wright, *A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, vol. 2, 661, 662.

²⁰ Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet, *Manuscrits syriaques de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France (n^{os} 356–435, entrés depuis 1911), de la bibliothèque Méjanes d’Aix-en-Provence, de la bibliothèque municipale de Lyon et de la Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg*. Catalogue (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1997), 91.

²¹ Briquel-Chatonnet, *Manuscrits syriaques de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, 91.

1.2 Manuscripts in Eastern Collections

1.2.1 Diyarbakir 76

Eastern collections contain the other six known manuscripts of the *SonJ*. The first to be considered under this heading is the one that Bedjan employed as the base manuscript for his first and second editions of the *SonJ*.²² This manuscript was in the possession of ‘Abdīšo’ Khayyāt, the Chaldean Catholic archbishop of Amida. Bedjan did not provide any identifying label for this manuscript, but Baumstark identified it as MS Diyarbakir 76, dated to A.D. 1545–1546.²³ This manuscript covers the same extent of the text of the *SonJ* as manuscripts M and V, that is, it omits the last third of *SonJ* Ten (*SonJ* 10.18–25) as well as *SonJ* Eleven and Twelve. This manuscript was also collated by Lamy for his edition, to which he assigned the *siglum* B, presumably for “Bedjan.”²⁴ Manuscript B, like all of the later manuscripts, attributes the *SonJ* to Ephraem. One distinguishing characteristic of MS Diyarbakir 76 is that it contains many *lacunae* in *SonJ* Nine and Ten.²⁵

1.2.2 MS Tell Kēphē

Only after Lamy’s edition appeared, did Bedjan acquire two manuscripts that contain the entire text of the *SonJ*. The first of these is a manuscript from Tell Kēphē, a village in the Plain of Mosul, which bears the date June 10th, 1890.²⁶ No further information concerning its *Vorlage* is available. The copyist was Mechīl ‘Azaryā, a schoolteacher in the village of Tell Kēphē.²⁷ It is written in fully pointed Eastern, i.e. Nasturnāyā script and attributes the *SonJ* to Ephraem the Syrian. In addition to the *SonJ*, the Tell Kēphē manuscript also contains an additional sermon that narrates the translation of the bones of Joseph to Constantinople.²⁸ This manuscript was the basis of Bedjan’s edition of *SonJ* 10.18 through Twelve.²⁹ The Tell Kēphē manuscript was supplied by the Chaldean Patriarch Elias XIV Abolyonan (1878–1894, residence in Mosul).³⁰ Lamy’s edition of this section of the *SonJ* is simply a copy of

²² Paul Bedjan, *Histoire de Joseph par Saint Ephrem. Poème inédit en dix livres* (Paris: no publisher [Maisonneuve?], 1887).

²³ Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, §108g, 63, note 1.

²⁴ Lamy, *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones*, vol. 3, cols. 259–260.

²⁵ Bedjan, *Histoire complète de Joseph*, x.

²⁶ Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, §108g, p. 63, n. 1.

²⁷ Bedjan, *Histoire complète de Joseph*, 368.

²⁸ See Robert Phenix, “A Sermon on the Translation of the Bones of Joseph to Constantinople,” unpublished manuscript.

²⁹ Bedjan, *Histoire complète de Joseph*, x. The assignments of some variants that are not noted in Lamy’s version can be inferred by comparison with Bedjan.

³⁰ Bedjan, *Histoire complète de Joseph*, x.

Bedjan's edition. In the present study, the *siglum* that designates the Tell Kēphē manuscript is the letter T.

1.2.3 MS Notre Dame des Sémences (Alqosh) 101

The other manuscript in Eastern collections that presents a complete copy of the *SonJ* is Manuscript 101 in the collection of the Chaldean Catholic convent of Notre-Dame des Sémences near Alqosh in Iraq. It is dated 1877 and was copied by Deacon Maṣṣūr Kādō.³¹ The manuscripts of Notre Dame des Sémences at Alqosh have been transferred to the Chaldean Patriarchate in Baghdad. The manuscript in question here contains several *lacunae*³² and ascribes the *SonJ* to Ephraem the Syrian. Bedjan acquired this manuscript for his second edition from the superior of the convent in Alqosh, Samuel Djēmīl.³³ In the present study, the Alqosh manuscript is designated with the *siglum* Q.

1.2.4 MS Mosul 67 and Two Unknown MSS

At least three other manuscripts exist in Eastern collections. The first is MS Mosul 67, fol. 68f. (dated to 1896), which contains *SonJ* Two.³⁴ In the preface to his first edition of the *SonJ*, reprinted in his second edition, Bedjan mentioned that there is a manuscript containing *SonJ* Two in Mosul to which

³¹ Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, §108g, 63, note 1; Jacques Vosté, *Catalogue de la bibliothèque syro-chaldéenne du couvent de Notre-Dame des Sémences* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1929), 81, assigned a story on Joseph to MS 213 (Rabban Hormizd monastery, 1868), no. 11: "Histoire de Joseph, fils de Jacob," fol. 14 (p. 1) to fol. 18 (p. 3). MS Hormizd 213 is MS 623 in the Library of the Chaldean Monastery, Baghdad. See Butrus Haddad and Jāk Ishaq, *Al-Maktūtāt al-Suryaniyyah wa-al-'Arabiyyah fī Khizānat al-Rahbaniyyah al-Kaldāniyyah fī Baghdād* [The Syriac and Arabic Manuscripts in the Archives of the Chaldean Monastery in Baghdad], *Matbū'āt al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī, Fahārīs al-Makhtūtāt al-Suryaniyyah fī al-'Irāq, al-juz' al-thālith* [Journal of the Iraqi Academy of Sciences, Catalogues of Syriac Manuscripts in Iraq 3] (Baghdād: al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī, 1988), 288–290, folio 1 of quire 14 to folio 3 of quire 18, over 40 folios. In Vosté's catalogue (p. 41), MS 101 contains the *Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles* and is dated to Nov. 10th, 1886. See also I. Aphrem Barsoum, *The Scattered Pearls. A History of Syriac Literature and Science*, tr. Matti Musa (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003), 244, note 5.

³² Bedjan, *Histoire complète de Joseph*, xi.

³³ Bedjan, *Histoire complète de Joseph*, x.

³⁴ Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, §108g, 63, note 1. See also Addai Scher, "Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques conservés dans la bibliothèque du patriarchat chaldéen de Mossoul," *Revue de bibliothèques* 17 (1907), 227–260. In the introduction to the Maisonneuve edition the editor, whose name is not given but who is almost certainly Bedjan, states, "And I have heard that [a manuscript containing *SonJ*] Sermon Two is kept in Mossul, but I have not seen it." See Anonymous, *Histoire de Joseph par Saint Éphrem* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1887), iii.

he did not have access.³⁵ It is probable that the manuscript in Mosul to which Bedjan referred is this same MS Mosul 67. This manuscript may be among those that were moved to the Chaldean Patriarchate in Baghdad.³⁶ Baumstark did not reveal which sections of the *SonJ* occur in these manuscript witnesses. Neither Lamy nor Bedjan collated this manuscript in their editions.

The other two manuscripts that Bedjan mentioned have not yet been recovered. One manuscript was in the possession of Ignatius Ephraem II Raḥmānī, the Patriarch of the Syrian Catholic Church (in office, 1898–1929). Bedjan did not mention this manuscript anywhere else in his editions of the *SonJ*. The other manuscript, located in Iran, is known only through Bedjan's statement that he had heard a report of such a manuscript, which he had seen twenty-eight years before he issued his third edition of the *SonJ*.³⁷ Bedjan did not provide information concerning the source of that report or any other clues that may help to identify its location or its content.

2. Editions of the *Sermons on Joseph*

To date there have appeared five editions of the *SonJ*: that of Overbeck,³⁸ three by Bedjan (one of which was issued anonymously), and one by Lamy, which appeared in two parts.³⁹ Each of these three scholars have through their editions provided the basis for undertaking any substantial philological work on the *Sermons on Joseph*, but none of these three editions are critical editions that were executed with the goal of providing a reconstruction of the original text.

³⁵ Bedjan, *Histoire complète de Joseph*, iii.

³⁶ See William F. Macomber, "New Finds of Syriac Manuscripts in the Middle East," in *XVII. Deutscher Orientalistentag von 21. bis 27. Juli 1968 in Würzburg. Vorträge, Teil 2, Sektion 4*, ed. Wolfgang Voigt, ZDMG Suppl. I, Teil 2 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1969), 473–482, here 475–476, cited from Desreumaux and Briquel-Chatonnet, *Répertoire des bibliothèques et des catalogues de manuscrits syriaques*, 80.

³⁷ Bedjan was a Chaldean Catholic from Persia; the last detail is mentioned in the notice (*mawda 'tā*) at the end of Bedjan's second "named" edition: "and [who is] by nationality Persian." See Bedjan, *Histoire complète de Joseph*, (2nd ed.), 367. For a biography of Paul Bedjan, see Heleen Murre-van den Berg, "Paul Bedjan, Missionary for Life (1839–1920)," in *Homilies of Mar Jacob of Sarug* ed. Paul Bedjan, with Additional Material by Sebastian P. Brock (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006), vol. 6, 339–369. This biography does not discuss Bedjan's editions of the *SonJ*. Nevertheless, two of the three editions are listed in the bibliography on page 368.

³⁸ Overbeck, *S. Ephraemi Syri ... opera selecta*, 270–330.

³⁹ Lamy, *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones*, vol. 3, 250–640; Thomas Joseph Lamy, *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones*, vol. 4, (Mechliniae: H. Dessain, Summi Pontificis, S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide et Archiepiscopatus Mechliniensis typographus, 1902), 791–844

2.1 Overbeck's Edition of BL Add 12,166

Overbeck edited the *SonJ* found in BL Add 12,166 in the context of working on editions of the manuscript witnesses bearing the names of Syriac authors of the fourth and fifth centuries held at the time in the British Museum, at the Bodleian in Oxford, and in Cambridge. He was the first to provide philological information concerning these manuscripts, predating Wright's catalogue of Syriac manuscripts in the British Museum by several years, as well as Wright's catalogue of the Oxford manuscripts by more than a generation. In his edition, Overbeck made no mention of the existence of other witnesses to the *SonJ*. He rarely offered corrections for typographical errors that may be found in the Syriac manuscripts he reprinted. In addition, this edition transmits relatively few typographical errors originating with the publication process.⁴⁰ Besides offering access to manuscript BL Add 12,166, which as mentioned above is valuable because of the variants it presents, Overbeck's edition is important for determining the origins of variants printed without *sigla* in Bedjan's edition.

2.2 Bedjan's First Two Editions and the First Part of Lamy's Edition

The first attempt to provide a complete edition of the *SonJ* was in the form of an anonymous publication that appeared in 1887,⁴¹ "a N. congregationis Missionis sacerdote."⁴² The basic manuscript for this edition was the one in the possession of 'Abdisho' Khayyat, Chaldean Catholic Metropolitan⁴³ of Diyarbakir: MS Diyarbakir 76, that is MS B. The anonymous author of this edition also stated that Lamy had graciously given him access to MSS V and M.⁴⁴ Lamy must have granted this request even before his own edition was in print. It is clear that the "sacerdos" mentioned in the *approbatio* is none other than Paul Bedjan. This is confirmed by the fact that the *approbrium* of the anonymous Maisonneuve edition was signed in Paris by A. Fiat, the superior general of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission (Lazarists), of which Bedjan was a member.⁴⁵ The Syriac introductions of the anonymous

⁴⁰ For further information on Overbeck's edition, see Cornelia Horn and Robert Phenix, *The Rabbula Corpus*, Writings from the Greco-Roman World (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, forthcoming).

⁴¹ Anonymous, *Histoire de Joseph par Saint Ephrem* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1887).

⁴² Anonymous, *Histoire de Joseph par Saint Ephrem*, ii.

⁴³ Upon the death of Chaldean Patriarch Elias XIV Abolyonan in 1894, this metropolitan served as Patriarch 'Abdīsho' V Khayyat until 1899.

⁴⁴ Anonymous, *Histoire de Joseph par Saint Ephrem*, iii.

⁴⁵ The notice (*mawda' nūtā*) at the end of Bedjan's second "named" edition of the *SonJ* mentions that the work was written out for "Father Paul Bedjan, who is from the order of the Lazarists (*d'men 'ūmrā lāzārāyā*).” See Bedjan, *Histoire complète de Joseph*, (2nd ed.), 367.

Maisonneuve edition and of Bedjan's first edition, including the apparatus, are identical. Each of these editions provides variants in the footer of each page, but Bedjan did not provide an apparatus and he did not indicate in which manuscript(s) a given variant occurs.

2.3 Bedjan's Third Edition and the Second Part of Lamy's Edition

Following the appearance of these two works in 1887, Lamy issued a critical edition of the *SonJ* as part of his five-volume edition of the works of Ephraem the Syrian.⁴⁶ Lamy took MS M as the base for his edition, although he did not provide any reason for this choice. In addition, Lamy collated MSS V, A, and B. From Lamy's introduction it is unclear whether he obtained MS B from Bedjan or had access to this manuscript through Bedjan's edition. Just as with the 1887 edition of Bedjan, the first part of Lamy's edition ends at *SonJ* 10.17.

After Lamy's edition came to print, Bedjan issued a new edition that presented the complete collection of the *SonJ*, followed by the *Sermon on the Translation of the Bones of Joseph*.⁴⁷ Bedjan revised and corrected his base MS B on the basis of MS T and he noted the variants of MS B that he replaced with readings from MS T in the footnotes. It does not seem that Bedjan employed MS Q other than to complete the missing sections of the *SonJ*. Like Bedjan's earlier edition of the *SonJ*, there is no apparatus indicating the manuscripts from which a variant is cited for *SonJ* One through 10.17; an apparatus being unnecessary for *SonJ* 10.18 through Twelve because there are only two witnesses. Following the appearance of Bedjan's second edition Lamy printed a critical edition with apparatus of *SonJ* 10.18 to Twelve in volume four of his edition of the works of Ephraem the Syrian,⁴⁸ and relied entirely on Bedjan's edition, adopting Bedjan's base manuscript and faithfully reproducing Bedjan's apparatus. Lamy's contribution was a Latin translation printed in facing columns to the Syriac text.

Lamy provided the first and only edition of the *SonJ* that contains an apparatus identifying the sources of variants to a base manuscript through the use of *sigla*. With his edition, Lamy intended to provide a critical edition as well as a Latin translation. His goal was not to examine Bedjan's work critically, as Lamy himself indicated.⁴⁹ A comparison of Lamy's footnotes to those of Bedjan's last edition of the *SonJ* indicates that Lamy noted only seven to ten percent of the manuscript variants present in his manuscript witnesses to *SonJ* One through 10.17. Some of the variants from Overbeck's edition that Lamy left aside consist of differences in conjunctions that are of little or

⁴⁶ See note 39.

⁴⁷ Bedjan, *Histoire complète de Joseph*, 345–366.

⁴⁸ See Lamy, *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones*, vol. 4, cols. 791–844.

⁴⁹ Lamy, *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones*, vol. 4, cols. 791–792.

no semantic difference, and provide little information for an investigation of the literary character or biblical interpretation of the *SonJ*. Other omissions are of greater importance, including substitutions of a single word or phrase, changes of word order, and omissions (or additions, depending on the base manuscript).

Lamy's edition is eclectic. Although he adopted relatively few variant readings to M from his other witnesses, and of these V was by far the most common source of substitutions, Lamy did not provide any justification for his substitution of variants to M. The near complete exclusion of any critical consideration of the text of O, the oldest and most deviant manuscript witness, reduced considerably the value of Lamy's edition of *SonJ* One and Eight. Lamy's criterion for selecting variants to be noted in the apparatus of his edition seems to have been based on the meaning of the variant. It appears that Lamy considered only verbal and nominal variants to be semantically important. Thus, variants between witnesses that consisted of conjunctions and particles were left aside. However, Lamy also omitted from his apparatus some omissions (respectively additions) of sections of text ranging from a half-line to two lines of verse. Bedjan also omitted some variants in his edition, but these are of such a small percentage of the total of variants he noted that one may safely conclude that these are involuntary omissions. Bedjan has also made undocumented emendations to his second "named" edition, probably based on MS T. Another factor that helps to account for the difference in variants between these two editions is that Bedjan collated for his last edition two manuscripts witnessing to *SonJ* One through 10.17. Lamy had access to these manuscripts after his edition of *SonJ* One through 10.17 had been issued.

Lamy's edition contains several typographical errors in the Syriac text. For example, there are many instances in which Lamy has printed *dālat* for *zay*. Such errors are fewer in the text of *SonJ* 10.18 to Twelve of Lamy's edition because this text, appearing in Lamy's fourth volume, is a copy of Bedjan's printed Syriac text and its attendant critical apparatus. There are relatively fewer typographical errors in Bedjan's third edition.

The greatest problem with Bedjan's third edition is the lack of an apparatus for his rich citation of variants. Bedjan's other two editions are also eclectic, and he seems to have preferred T to B in his second edition, though he gives no reason for this preference. Like Lamy, Bedjan did not provide any justification for his adoption of a base text and inexplicably ignored the variants of O in considering his text. However, in his second edition Bedjan deviated from his base text more frequently than does Lamy, due in part to his additional witnesses T and Q.

The editions of Lamy and Bedjan present several obstacles to the reconstruction of a critical text of the *SonJ*. The deficiencies in the citation of variants, the lack of any critical framework for assembling the text, the scant in-

formation concerning the provenance of the manuscripts themselves, and the omission of at least one potentially important witness (MS Cmbr Add 2178) make it nearly impossible to reconstruct from the editions of Bedjan and Lamy a critical text. Bedjan's edition of the *Sermon on the Translation of the Bones of Joseph* seems to have been included for the sake of helping students learn Syriac; a chief concern of his was to provide a book for Roman Catholics that did not present an alternative theological point of view. As he stated, the purpose was to present "un livre classique qui puisse être mis sans danger dans les mains de la jeunesse."⁵⁰ Bedjan's choice is not all that pure; the end of the *Sermon on the Translation of the Bones of Joseph* offers reflections in a *postscriptum* that openly condemns the two Roman Emperor Theodosius II for their persecution of Nestorius and of the anti-Ephesian faithful.⁵¹

2.4 The Edition of the Sermons on Joseph Used in the Present Study

The present study takes the quasi-critical edition of Lamy as the basis for its citations. Where appropriate, the variants of a citation or part of a citation are provided from Lamy's apparatus, unless only Bedjan's second edition supplies the variant. Typographical errors in Lamy's edition in the present study have been corrected with reference to Bedjan's edition but have not been noted. Lamy's edition has the distinct advantage of providing numbered sections within each sermon. References to the Syriac in subsequent discussions in this study are references to Lamy's edition, with the sermon and section numbers followed by the column and line numbers. It should be noted, that since Lamy printed the Syriac and Latin translation on facing columns, all references to the Syriac in the present study are to odd numbered pages; those to the Latin translation are even numbered.

⁵⁰ Bedjan, *Histoire complète de Joseph*, ix.

⁵¹ After a *lacuna* of some length, Bedjan, *Histoire complète de Joseph*, 364–365, has the Syriac text for the following passage: "Under Arcadius (emperor, 395–408 CE), those who were not valiant in the truth, drove the bones of Joseph [i.e.] the righteous John [Chrysostom] and his company out of the church, and they died horrible deaths, but he did not corrupt his faith, because there was no corruption in his time when the heroic deed [Chrysostom's expulsion] took place. When the persecution of the righteous took place [referring to those who rejected the Council of Ephesus, 431], the son of [Arcadius] became corrupted [referring to Theodosius II, emperor May 408–Jul. 28th, 450, the eldest son of Arcadius] in his faith and in his deeds He was blinded by Cyril [archbishop of Alexandria; Syr. misprint: *keurînōs*] from the knowledge of the truth. Then [Theodosius II], because he had abandoned the truth, expelled from the church the priests [agreeing] with Nestorius and they fled ..."