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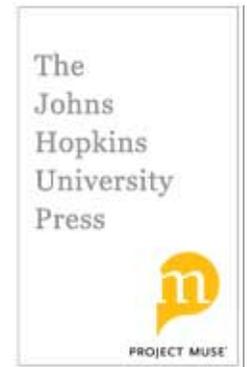
The Cave of Treasures on Swearing by Abel's Blood and  
Expulsion from Paradise: Two Exceptional Motifs in Context

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# The Cave of Treasures on *Swearing by Abel's Blood and Expulsion from Paradise: Two Exegetical Motifs in Context*

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SERGE RUZER

In this essay, the version found in *The Cave of Treasures* (CT) of the expulsion from Eden and the story of Cain and Abel is analyzed. A peculiar combination of two exegetical motifs, discerned in this Syriac composition, is outlined: the canceling of the immediate effects of Adam's fall and the introduction of the salvific swearing by Abel's blood. While suggestions concerning possible points of contact with other—both Jewish and Christian—exegetical trends are raised, the peculiarities and the polemical overtones of the CT stance are duly emphasized. It is suggested that these peculiarities should be taken into consideration in the discussion on CT's provenance.

KINBOTE: *What we term Original Sin can never grow obsolete.*

SHADE: *I know nothing about that. In fact when I was small I thought it meant Cain killing Abel.*

V. Nabokov, *Pale Fire*

## I

In late antiquity the story of Cain and Abel drew the attention of both Jewish and Christian writers. Motifs and themes attested in Greek and Syriac texts have recently been studied in detail by J. B. Glenthoj,<sup>1</sup> whose work has provided very useful data for further comparative study. On the

1. J. B. Glenthoj, *Cain and Abel in Syriac and Greek Writers (4th–6th centuries)* (Louvain: Peeters, 1997).

Syriac side we have, in addition to a number of relevant fragments in biblical commentaries and homilies (e.g., by Ephrem and by Jacob of Serugh), also a *Syriac Life of Abel* published by Sebastian Brock<sup>2</sup> and a (later) composition published by A. Levene.<sup>3</sup>

This study deals with *The Cave of Treasures* (CT), another original Syriac work that addresses the story of Cain and Abel. CT retells the history of salvation—from the days of the Creation and Adam's fall, all the way to Jesus' death, resurrection, and the Pentecost. There seems to be a scholarly consensus that CT was originally composed in Syriac; the text has been presented by Ri as extant in two recensions, West-Syriac and East-Syriac (R. Oc. and R. Or., respectively).<sup>4</sup> The fourth century has often been seen as a time of compilation of an earlier version of the text; Ri in his new edition of CT proposes the first half of the third century. In any case it is quite probable that much earlier traditions also found their way into CT. A later (final?) redaction in the beginning of the sixth century by an East-Syrian scholar is usually assumed.<sup>5</sup>

CT addresses the story of Cain and Abel and its repercussions at considerable length; in fact, that story is one of the central themes of the composition's first part. This study discusses a number of unique features attested in CT's presentation of the theme. It demonstrates that the CT version is characterized by a peculiar combination of two trends: on the one hand, it plays down the negative effects of Adam's sin and the expulsion from Paradise; on the other hand, it presents the ritual swearing by Abel's innocent blood as a self-sufficient salvific act. These peculiar motifs are backed in CT by references to certain oddities in the biblical text itself. CT seems to be aware of both the exegetical problems posed by the biblical source and a range of existing exegetical solutions. The unique trends attested in CT are outlined vis-à-vis relevant traditions in both Christian and Jewish exegesis of late antiquity, and the question of possible points of contact and influence is discussed. Finally, this analysis attempts to promote a better appreciation of the polemical stance of the cult-oriented community that CT supposedly addresses.

2. Brock suggested a late fifth- or early sixth-century date for its composition. See S. P. Brock, "A Syriac Life of Abel," *Mus* 87 (1974): 467–92.

3. A. Levene, *The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis* (London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1951).

4. Su-Min Ri, ed., *La Caverne des Tresors: Les deux recensions Syriaces*, CSCO (Louvain: Peeters, 1987).

5. For a recent discussion of the *status quaestionis* and new suggestions see C. Leonhard, "Observations on the Date of the Syriac Cave of Treasures" (*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series, forthcoming).

## II

As pointed out by Philip R. Davies,<sup>6</sup> the biblical account of Cain's crime and punishment might itself have functioned as a reiteration of sorts both of Adam's original sin and of his expulsion from Paradise. No wonder then that, according to some early Jewish traditions, the primordial disaster to the human race had to do not so much with the expulsion from Paradise but with Cain's crime (or, alternatively, his hideous nature).<sup>7</sup> Traditions of this kind were further developed in a number of Gnostic sources from late antiquity.<sup>8</sup> However, the motif is found neither in *Jubilees*, a book on which *CT* is clearly dependent, nor in the *Testament of Adam*, another pseudepigraphic composition that seems also to be literarily linked with *CT*.<sup>9</sup> This motif is also absent from the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve*.

On the other hand, another, related emphasis—namely, that on expelled Adam's proximity to Paradise—is strongly present in the *Life of Adam and Eve*. This motif is also attested—in different modifications—in the Syrian tradition. The Syriac tradition adopted the notion according to which Paradise was situated on the top of the highest mountain,<sup>10</sup> and, beginning with Ephrem, if not earlier, attempts were made to somehow alleviate the shock of the expulsion from Paradise by having Adam dwell even after the expulsion in the vicinity of Paradise. Ephrem in his *Hymns on Paradise*, however, is not consistent. On the one hand, he speaks of casting Adam out “in the region of wild beasts . . . in the wilderness,” and then of Adam's returning—after he repents—“to his former abode and kingship” (*Hymns* 13.6).<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, Ephrem suggests that

6. “Sons of Cain,” in *A Word in Season: The William McKane Volume*, ed. J. D. Martin and P. R. Davies, JSOT Supplement Series 42 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), 35–56.

7. E.g., attested in Philo (*Questions on Genesis* 60; *On the Posterity and Exile of Cain* 2–4) and Targums (e.g., *Tg. Ps.-J.* to Gen 6.4).

8. See B. A. Pearson, “Cain and Cainites,” in idem, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 95–107, esp. 103.

9. S.-M. Ri, “Le Testament d'Adam et la Caverne de Tresors,” in *V Symposium Syriacum, 1988, Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, 29–31 août 1988*, ed. René Lavenant, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 236 (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1990), 111–22.

10. For discussion of the cosmic mountain theme in relation to descriptions of Paradise see G. Anderson, “The Cosmic Mountain: Eden and Its Early Interpreters in Syriac Christianity,” in *Genesis 1–3 in the History of Exegesis: Intrigue in the Garden*, ed. G. A. Robbins (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1988), 187–223.

11. (Intro. and tr.) S. Brock, Saint Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1990) (hereafter *Hymns on Paradise* will signify the introduction and commentary by Brock while *Hymns* will signify his translation of the hymns proper).

Adam was settled—by God’s grace—“in the valley below the foothills of Paradise,” and only later “when mankind even there continued to sin they were blotted out . . . there [then?] the families of the two brothers had separated” (*Hymns* 1.10).<sup>12</sup> That “valley below the foothills of Paradise” becomes in another context a higher ground on the slopes of the mountain.<sup>13</sup> There is a particular reason that the proximity of the repentant Adam’s dwelling to his original abode in Paradise is so important for Ephrem. Paradise is seen by the Syrian father as a type of future human condition; according to Ephrem, sinners “who have done wrong out of ignorance, once they have been punished and paid their debt” must be allowed “to dwell in some remote corner of Paradise” (*Hymns* 1.16).<sup>14</sup>

### III

Even if one bears in mind the existence of these exegetical tendencies, the stance of *The Cave of Treasures* on the issue still presents itself as somewhat extraordinary. First of all, *CT* does everything to turn the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise into an orderly and peaceful exodus. Of course, it has to report Adam’s sorrow about leaving the Garden of Eden, but it presents God himself as calming the first couple and explaining to them that in fact not much is going to change:

R. Or.

ⲉⲃⲣ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ  
ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ  
ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ

(R.Or.: ⲁⲩ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ  
ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲉ . . .) (*CT* 5.3–4)<sup>15</sup>

Do not be saddened, Adam (R.Or.: + because of the verdict that you are to exit Paradise), I am sending you to your inheritance, and see how merciful am I towards you: I cursed the land for your sake, but I did not curse you.

12. That horizontal rather than vertical segregation is attested also in Levene, *Early Syrian Fathers*, 56. Cf. Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 1.1–2), who distinguishes between the two expulsions: first God removed Adam and Eve out of the garden into “another place,” and later Cain—again together with his wife—was cast “out of that land.”

13. *Hymns on Paradise*, Introduction, 55–57, note on p. 189. See also *Hymn* 1.12.

14. See also 10.14–15; 8.11. Elsewhere in the *Hymns* Ephrem goes even further, making a claim for Paradise being in proximity to Gehenna, so that the terrible cries of the wicked mingle with the praise of the good in the Garden of Eden (*Hymns* 7.29). I shall return to this motif later.

15. Ri, *Caverne des Tresors*, 36–39.

As some scholars see a literary connection between *CT* and the *Testament of Adam* (*TA*)—a pseudepigraphic composition compiled, probably originally in Syriac, before the fifth century C.E.<sup>16</sup>—a comparison is in place here. In both texts God is said to have comforted Adam in view of his imminent expulsion from Paradise. Yet the difference is rather telling: while in *TA* the words of consolation relate exclusively to a distant future (“after a space of many years”), to the salvation in Christ, God-incarnate, who will bring about the deification of Adam himself,<sup>17</sup> the consolation in *CT* relates to the immediate future—that is, to the continuation of Adam’s existence outside Paradise. It is also worth noting that, unlike the *Testament of Adam*, our text takes care to provide an exegetical link to the Bible, presenting its version of events as an interpretation of Genesis 3.17 (“cursed is the ground because of you”).

In fact, in *CT* God provides for Adam a *second Paradise*; thus the Cave of Treasures is situated not “in the valley” (where Adam dwelled after the expulsion—according to, *inter alii*, Ephrem), but on the top of the holy mountain in closest proximity of Paradise (*CT* 5.10). It seems that God managed to persuade Adam that his loss was not too significant: when addressing his sons, Adam concentrates exclusively on the future. At this point in the narrative, extensively used by pseudepigraphic expansions of the story for emphasizing Adam’s repentance and grief about Paradise lost,<sup>18</sup> *CT* is completely silent about Adam’s “change of heart.”<sup>19</sup> If, in the emphasis on God’s mercy (grace) in his dealing with Adam, one may see a continuation of Ephrem’s exegetical thought,<sup>20</sup> this basic closeness (indebtedness?) to Ephrem makes the peculiarity of the *CT* exegesis even

16. See note 9, above.

17. *Testament of Adam* 3.2. For an English translation see S. E. Robinson, “Testament of Adam,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. J. H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:993–95.

18. See, for example, *The Life of Adam and Eve* 6–9. In some versions of the text the story begins with the “penitence narrative.” See G. A. Anderson, “The Garments of Skin in Apocryphal Narrative and Biblical Commentary” (forthcoming).

19. Cf. *Syriac Life of Abel* 7, where Abel speaks of the tremendous loss his parents suffered.

20. The motif of God’s grace toward Adam (and of its interaction with God’s justice) might have been known to Ephrem from, *inter alia*, midrashic sources, where its presence was significant. In contradistinction to Ephrem, however, the emphasis in the midrash is on God’s grace as the decisive factor in the creation of Adam, not in God’s dealing with him in Paradise and after the Fall. See *Gen. Rab.* 8. See also A. Kofsky and S. Ruzer, “Justice, Free Will and Divine Mercy in Ephrem’s Commentary on Genesis 2–3,” *Mus* 113 (2000): 315–32.

more stunning: in our text Adam's repentance is not mentioned at all!<sup>21</sup> Later we will have more than one opportunity to observe that the absence of the motif of repentance, as well as the fact that Adam's existence outside Paradise is presented as completely harmonious and that he is therefore in no need of salvation, are among the most peculiar features of CT's narrative.

#### IV

Having related to God's consolation to Adam, formulated in general terms: "Do not be saddened, Adam, I am sending you to your inheritance, and see how merciful am I towards you," let us turn now to some particularities of this inheritance. In Paradise, according to CT, Adam enjoyed the status of king, prophet, and high priest (4.1). It is clear that CT borrowed this motif from an existing tradition that most probably originated in Jewish sources.<sup>22</sup> Ephrem also was aware of this "three crowns" motif. He emphasized the kingly vocation of Adam as fully developed but claimed that the crowns of priesthood and (prophetic) knowledge/wisdom were Adam's only potentially—he would have received them had he managed to resist the temptation.<sup>23</sup> In the meantime, access to the Holy of Holies was blocked by the Tree of Knowledge.<sup>24</sup> The emphasis this tradition gets in our text is, however, quite different. Unlike Ephrem, having mentioned the three vocations traditionally assigned to

21. As opposed to such exegetes as Eusebius of Emesa, who would claim that Adam's dwelling in the vicinity of Paradise was supposed to evoke his repentance and put him in a constantly penitential mood. See L. van Rompay, "Memories of Paradise: The Greek 'Life of Adam and Eve' and Early Syriac Tradition," *Aram* 5.1–2 (1993): 562 and n. 30 there.

22. See *m. Abot* 4; Philo, *De vita Mosi* 2.3, 187, 292. See also D. Flusser, "Jewish Messianic Beliefs and Their Reflections in Early Christianity," in *Messianism and Eschatology* (Jerusalem: Z. Shazar Press, 1984) (Hebrew), 119–20; *Hymns on Paradise*, note to 3.14 (p. 191). As the book of *Jubilees* (3.27) testifies, the notion of Adam's priestly vocation had already taken hold in the 2nd century B.C.E.

23. See Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis* 2.23, English translation by E. G. Matthews, Jr. and J. P. Amar in *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works*, ed. K. McVey, FC 91 (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994); *Hymns on Paradise* 12.17.

24. There are a number of studies on Ephrem's concept of the inner structure of Paradise as Sanctuary. See I. Ortiz de Urbina, "Le paradis eschatologique d'après Saint Ephrem," *OCP* 21 (1956): 467–72; N. Séd, "Les Hymnes sur le Paradis de Saint Ephrem et les traditions juives," *Mus* 81 (1968): 455–501; T. Kronholm, "The Trees of Paradise in the Hymns of Ephraem Syrus," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 11 (1977/78): 48–56; *Hymns on Paradise*, pp. 52–53.

Adam, *CT* immediately forgets about two of them. It never bothers to explain what kingship and prophecy stand for, instead concentrating exclusively on Adam's priestly function. According to *CT*, the priestly function was Adam's ultimate calling in Paradise, paired with the duty of abstaining from the forbidden fruit:

And as Adam was the priest, the king, and the prophet, God brought him into Paradise so that he might worship inside the Garden of Eden as a priest in the Church. And the blessed Moses bears witness to this saying, "to toil it" (ܐܘܪܘܟܘܢܐ) (Gen 2.15)—meaning by priestly worship in glory, and "to keep it" (ܐܘܪܘܟܘܢܐ) (ibid.)—meaning the commandment. . . . (*CT* 4.1)<sup>25</sup>

According to *CT* this priestly vocation continues uninterrupted after the exodus from Paradise. Adam's first act outside the Garden of Eden—right before consummating his marriage with Eve—would be to consecrate the Cave of Treasures, which would serve as the Sanctuary for Adam and his descendants (5.17–18). As Lucas van Rompay has demonstrated, traditions claiming that "after his expulsion man stayed for some time in the neighborhood of Paradise" describe man's basic emotion as "longing . . . for the regaining of his former state." Only later did this emotion come to be accompanied by a gradually developed awareness that re-entering Paradise "during this life would not be possible" and that the hopes should be set "on restoration in the hereafter."<sup>26</sup> The fact that *CT* adopts this traditional motif of longing only further highlights the peculiarity of the text under discussion: it is not Paradise itself any more but the Cave of Treasures that is the true object of longing. To return to the blessed Cave, not to leave the Cave for the sake of regaining the paradisiacal state, is at the core of *CT* nostalgia. Further on in the text the loss of the Cave, that "second Paradise," would be lamented in the same breath as the loss of the first one. At the time of Adam's "second expulsion," when his body was removed from the Cave, Adam's descendants "raised their eyes and fixed them on Paradise and cried and lamented in sadness saying" (17.8):<sup>27</sup>

25. The difference from Ephrem's approach is noteworthy: in his *Commentary on Genesis* Ephrem concentrates (the dependence on rabbinical exegesis is clear here) on the same verbs (ܐܘܪܘܟܘܢܐ ܐܘܪܘܟܘܢܐ) but avoids mentioning the priestly function: with him both verbs relate to (different aspects of) observing the commandment not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge (*Com. Gen.* 2.7).

26. See van Rompay, "Memories of Paradise," 565, 567.

27. For the motif of second expulsion see also *CT* 12.18–20, where God did not allow the descendants of Adam—after they had mingled with Cain's tribe—to climb the Holy Mountain; the stones under their feet "became fire" (an emulation of the *cherubim* theme?); and see 13.8, where Yared is said to have been the first to depart



Abel given the appellation “ܠܘܝܬ ܠܘܚܐ” (“first priests”).<sup>29</sup> There is no place for such misgivings in our text: according to *CT*, Adam’s priestly vocation was not only fully realized in Paradise<sup>30</sup> but continued uninterrupted after the expulsion and the transition to the Cave of Treasures, and was passed on in an orderly fashion to Adam’s descendants.

*CT* claims an uninterrupted chain for the high priestly tradition. This chain begins not with Melchizedek but with Adam himself, the first “ܠܘܝܬ-ܠܘܚܐ.” Thus, *CT* cannot accept the tradition, propagated by the Epistle to the Hebrews (e.g., Heb 6.20), which sees Melchizedek as the prototype of the true high priesthood. *CT* can neither accept the (habitual?) interpretation of the statement that Melchizedek “did not have either father or mother” (Heb 7.3),<sup>31</sup> but somehow has to incorporate Melchizedek into the chain and, for that end, provides him with a genealogy (*CT* 16.22; 20.8). This emphasis on the genealogy of Melchizedek is not surprising at all as, according to *CT*, proof of a sound priestly (and kingly) genealogy is crucial even for the Messiah himself.<sup>32</sup>

According to *CT* the high priesthood of ancient times—up to the end of the Flood—had been centered on (the altar of) Adam’s body and (swearing by) Abel’s blood<sup>33</sup>—a point that will be discussed later. These elements are presented in *CT* as sufficient for salvation as such and not simply as types of Christ’s body and blood. Thus, according to the viewpoint presented in *CT*, Melchizedek is merely a middle link in the chain. In no way does he inaugurate the true worship of God; he only renews it after a period of neglect.<sup>34</sup>

## V

Given that the high priesthood is presented in our text as having a salvific function, let me summarize a number of important ideas characteristic of

29. For the text see Brock, “Syriac Life,” 472. See also there commentary on p. 486.

30. In contradistinction to the *Syriac Life of Abel*, in *CT* Adam is the first priest, “ܠܘܝܬ ܠܘܚܐ” (5.27).

31. In *CT* those who do accept that claim are branded as “ܠܘܝܬܝܬ” (illiterate simpletons). See *CT* 30.17.

32. See *CT* 32.11–16; 33.5–16. For a discussion of Christian traditions concerning Jesus’ Aharonite descent, see W. Adler, “Exodus 6:23 and the High Priest from the Tribe of Judah,” *JTS* n.s. 48 (1997): 24–47.

33. See, for instance, *CT* 7.11–14, 19–20; 9.5–8; 10.8; 13.6–7; 16.14, 19–20, et al.

34. For example, *CT* 28.11. There is even an attempt to play down the importance of the bread-and-wine offering introduced by Melchizedek, presenting these elements as nothing but a provision intended to sustain Shem and Melchizedek on their journey from the vicinity of the Ark to the “middle of the earth.” See *CT* 22.4.

the *CT* stance on the issue of salvation. According to *CT*'s overall outline, Adam's fall caused both the expulsion from Eden and a simultaneous outpouring of God's mercy (grace), so that the grace essentially nullified the effects of the Fall—all this without even mentioning Adam's repentance (or Eve's, for that matter). To be sure, the motif of future salvation in Christ as an (additional?) reason for Adam not to be saddened is also present in *CT*.<sup>35</sup> In due time God will send his Son to bring salvation to humankind (5.7–9). However, as was already hinted above, in *CT* the need for salvation seems to be related not to Adam himself, nor to his immediate progeny—as far as they continued to dwell, alive or dead, in the vicinity of the Cave—but to Adam's later descendants, who would move to the “cursed land”:

Exit [Paradise] and do not be saddened, as when the times for your dwelling in the cursed land according to my decree are fulfilled I will send my Son. Order . . . that after your death they embalm . . . your body and put it in this Cave where now I put you to dwell. [You will remain here] until your descendants' exit from the vicinity of Paradise to that evil land. (5.6–10)

Those people who dwell “in the cursed land” are said to be in need of salvation. However, those, who worship in the Cave of Treasures and participate—on par with angels—in the heavenly choir praising the Lord, and, even outside Paradise proper, continue to be nourished by nothing apart from its delightful fruits,<sup>36</sup> are already saved. As *CT* states again and again, they are not prisoners of their own fallen nature but spend their days in peace and harmony.<sup>37</sup> In short, the Adam of *CT* who is expelled from Paradise is not yet the Adam of Paul.<sup>38</sup>

35. Not unlike the *Testament of Adam*. See the discussion above.

36. “ .

 See *CT* 7.7. Cf. *The Life of Adam and Eve* 1–5. See Anderson, “Garments of Skin.”

37. For example, *CT* 6.2, 22; 7.1–4.

38. See F. H. Borsch, “Further Reflections on ‘The Son of Man’: The Origins and Development of the Title,” in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 137. Borsch discusses there a common interest of important strands of the baptizing sectarianism of the beginning of the common era and of later Gnosticism “in Adamic lore—associated with a more general conception with a long and varied history, of the first man as a royal figure.” In other brands of Gnosticism it is Adam's son Seth who takes center stage. See, for example, A. F. J. Klijn, *Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature*, Supplementum Novum Testamentum 46 (Leiden: Brill, 1977); G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed* (Leiden: Brill, 1984); Borsch, “Further Reflections,” 139. Rather tellingly, in *CT* it is Adam, not Seth, who remains the key figure—one more indication that Adam is not seen there as a failure?

## VI

It may be remarked that this peculiar cancellation of the effects of the Fall fits the *CT*'s concept of Adam's basic nature. Like Ephrem in his *Commentary on Genesis*, *CT* discusses the question of Adam's nature in connection with Genesis 1.26–27. Like Ephrem, *CT* states that the plural form of “Let us create man in our image and in our likeness” relates to God's hypostases<sup>39</sup> or (the) Persons of the Holy Trinity. However, here also the basic closeness to Ephrem highlights even more the *CT* peculiarities.

First, *CT* suggests a complementing (an alternative?) interpretation for the plural form of the verb “**נַבְרָה**” (let us make), namely, that it relates to the heavenly host of angels. This exegesis had been current in rabbinic circles long before Ephrem; among Christians it seems to have had the reputation of a “Jewish folly.”<sup>40</sup> Unlike the Syrian father, who ignores this exegetical option in his *Commentary*, *CT* combines it with the “hypostatical” interpretation. The adoption of this “angelic host” exegetical option clearly serves *CT*'s general outline of the Paradise story, where—again in contradistinction to Ephrem's *Commentary*—angels play such a crucial role. On the one hand, there are angels in *CT* who belong to Satan's *thegma* and on account of their envy of Adam do everything to bring about his fall. On the other hand, there are angels who belong to a completely different *thegma* and with whom Adam joins in a heavenly choir to praise the Lord.

Second, Ephrem interprets the problematic “likeness of image” in a restricting way. He claims it pertains exclusively to the dominion given to Adam over the rest of God's creatures. This dominion-centered interpretation was known in Ephrem's time to both Jewish and Christian exegetes, and according to the Syrian father, it is only in this functional sense that Adam is “like God.”<sup>41</sup> *CT*, however, interprets the “likeness” literally: in our text the created Adam is not only lord of the cosmos but also a man in whom the awesome image of God (Holy Trinity?) is revealed to the world:

(R.Or.) “Let us make (**נַבְרָה**) Man (**אָדָם**) in our image, as our likeness (**כְּצֶלְמֵנוּ וְכִדְמוּתֵנוּ**)”—making known by this [using] of *nun* instead of *alaph* the [inclusion of the] blessed Persons of the Son and the Spirit. And

39. Different modifications of this exegesis had been known to both Jewish and Christian exegetes long before Ephrem. See, for example, Philo, *De opificio mundi* 69; Tatian, *Address to the Greeks* 7. See also *Gen. Rab.* 8.

40. See, for example, Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 62.1.

41. See *Com. Gen.* 1.29.

when the angels heard that being said, they became full of awe and told one another: the great wonder is going to be shown to us today—[we are going to see] the very image of God our Creator. (*CT* 2.3–4)

Further on, the western recension is even more specific, describing Adam's body as that of the cosmic man, *Adam Kadmon* of the Jewish midrash:<sup>42</sup>

And when the angels saw the image and the glorious sight of Adam, they trembled (were shocked) because of the beauty of it. They saw the sight of Adam's face, which was glowing with glorious light like the face of the sun, and the light of his eyes was like the rays of the sun, while his body was like the glorious shining of crystal. (*CT* 2.13–14)

Again, as opposed to Ephrem's *Commentary*, wherein the glory of Adam comes from the Robe of Glory that covered and hid the (shameful? threatening?) sight of Adam's bodily parts,<sup>43</sup> in *CT* the first man's body is itself a glorious one (an image of God?). To be sure, the traditional motif of the Robe is present here as well, but in our text the Robe is described as a kingly one (“*ܟܘܢܘܢܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ*”);<sup>44</sup> by no means is it tailored to compensate for Adam's being inadequate in his own right.

To sum up: while in Ephrem's *Commentary* Adam is presented in all his human weakness, upon which his eventual fall is predicated,<sup>45</sup> in *CT* we are dealing with a figure of cosmic proportions.<sup>46</sup> Unlike some apocalyptic and Gnostic or semi-Gnostic schemes, where this cosmic figure undergoes a fall that is also of cosmic proportions, in *CT*'s exegesis the basically glorious nature of the first man somehow remains intact. In contradistinction to rabbinic traditions, which speak of the cosmic dimensions of the first man,<sup>47</sup> *CT* does not mention Adam's body being diminished in size as the result of his sin. I suggest that this peculiarity complements the trend

42. See *b. Hag.* 12a; *Gen. Rab.* 8; *Lev. Rab.* 14.

43. See *Com. Gen.* 2.21.

44. Only the crown placed on Adam's head does *CT* call “the crown of glory” (“*ܟܘܢܘܢܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ*”) (2.17).

45. Accordingly, God's mercy/grace was to be unceasingly employed to improve Adam's odds of succeeding in his test. Moreover, from Ephrem's point of view, every step of the test was especially designed not to be too difficult, not to overwhelm Adam, but to help him win. This issue is discussed in Kofsky and Ruzer, “Justice, Free Will, and Divine Mercy.”

46. On the communities putting emphasis on Adamic lore as opposed to those taking more interest in Enoch and the generation of Genesis 6 see M. E. Stone, “The Axis of History at Qumran,” in *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives* (see note 27, above), 133–49.

47. See, for example, *b. Hag.* 12a; *Gen. Rab.* 8; *Lev. Rab.* 14.

in the *CT* narrative discussed above—namely, ignoring the immediate effects of Adam’s fall and a complete lack of interest in Adam’s repentance.

## VII

From here on the discussion will focus on the second act of the drama. The cancellation of the effects of Adam’s fall seems to be logically connected with presenting, instead, the Cain-Abel affair as the real trigger for the fatal expulsion—not from Paradise itself but from its vicinity or, more specifically, according to *CT*, from the Cave of Treasures. In *CT*, however, this second and really fatal expulsion of the sons of Seth occurred not immediately after Cain’s fratricide (and even not as its immediate result!) but a number of generations later, after Seth’s sons became involved with the daughters of Cain. This second expulsion is presented in *CT* as a preemptive strike before the Flood.<sup>48</sup> Before that the sons of Seth had been pure and holy—that is why, so claims *CT*, they were called “sons of God” (Gen 6.2). Here *CT* follows an earlier tradition;<sup>49</sup> but as we shall see there is a peculiar twist to the *CT*’s exegesis: the delay of the expulsion—from Abel’s murder until the days of Yared—is presented in our text as connected with, or rather secured by, a ritual swearing by Abel’s innocent blood performed by the leader of every successive generation.

Let me first review a number of important exegetical trends from late antiquity, connected with the story of Abel’s murder. In Genesis 4.10 God says to Cain the murderer: “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.” The verse constituted a problem for early Jewish and Christian exegesis. The midrash sees here mainly two problematic points: 1) Why does the Hebrew text use the plural דָּמָי (*deme*, literally *bloods*)? and 2) How should one understand the biblical metaphor of the “crying blood”; that is to say, what does blood’s

48. It is worth noting that the motif of the second expulsion as a preemptive strike is conspicuously absent from *Jubilees* and the *Testament of Adam*, as well as from Ephrem’s *Commentary on Genesis*. According to the Syrian father, it was Cain himself who decided to leave his native land: “because Cain sought to escape from reproach. . . . Those who would find him were the sons of Seth, who were compelled to seek revenge for the blood of Abel, their uncle. They cut themselves off from Cain and did not intermarry with him because of their fear of him; but they did not dare to kill him because of his sign. After Cain received the punishment and the sign had been added to it . . . Cain separated himself from his parents and his kin because he saw that they would not intermarry with him . . . [and went to the land of Nod] (*Com. Gen.* 3.10–11).

49. See, for example, *Gen. Rab.* 26.5; Ephrem, *Com. Gen.* 6.3. Cf. *Jubilees* 5.1; Philo, *Questions on Genesis* 92.

voice represent here? The first question was irrelevant for most Greek and Syrian authors—in the translations of Genesis they used, the plural form had long since been turned into singular;<sup>50</sup> but in the midrash the plural form of *deme* was usually explained as pointing to Abel's future descendants, who were, in a sense, murdered together with him. This tradition, attested in the Targums<sup>51</sup> and Mishnah,<sup>52</sup> and later incorporated into *Genesis Rabbah*, fits an important development in rabbinic thought where the value of every human life was greatly emphasized.<sup>53</sup> A particular subdevelopment may be discerned here; thus in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*<sup>54</sup> the “bloods” represent not Abel's potential descendants in general but specifically the just ones among them. This midrashic pattern is also present in traditions about God's decision—in spite of reservations expressed both by the angels and by God himself—to create a man. One decisive argument in favor of the creation seemed to be that among Adam's future descendants there would be some righteous people as well.<sup>55</sup> The motif of murder and the plural form “bloods” have no function in this last tradition, as here, unlike in the case of Abel, the midrash is talking about Adam's actual descendants, those who will eventually be born.

The second peculiarity—namely, the metaphor of the “blood crying out”—was explained already in *Jubilees* as a demand for God's intervention and vengeance: “And he killed him in the field, and his blood cried out *from the earth to heaven*, making accusation.”<sup>56</sup> Philo, with his emphasis on incorporeal life as the real one, avoids mentioning both vengeance and Abel's blood:

(Gen. 4.10) What is the meaning of the words “The voice of thy brother calls me from the earth”? This is most exemplary, for the Deity hears the deserving even though they are dead, knowing that they live an incorporeal life. (QG 70)<sup>57</sup>

50. LXX: “φωνή αίματος τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου βοᾷ πρὸς με ἐκ τῆς γῆς”; Peshitta: “ܠܘ ܠܝܢܝܢ ܡܢ ܗܝܘܠܐ ܠܘܠܝܢܝܢ ܘܠܘܠܝܢܝܢ.” See, for example, Ephrem's *Com. Gen.* 4.6–7: “What then would you say, Cain? Should Justice take vengeance for the blood (sing.!) which cried out or not?”

51. See *Tg. Onq.* to Gen 4.10.

52. *m. Sanh.* 5.

53. See, for example, the continuation of the discussion in *m. Sanh.* 5.

54. See *Tg. Ps.-J.* and *Tg. Neof.* to Gen 4.10. See Glenthoj, *Cain and Abel*, 11.

55. The discussion of different types of Adam's progeny may be found in *Gen. Rab.* 8.

56. *Jub.* 4.2–3. The English translation is by O. S. Wintermute in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (see note 17, above), vol. 2.

57. The English translation quoted here is by R. Marcus. See Philo, *Supplement I, Questions and Answers on Genesis*, LCL (London: Harvard University Press, 1953), 42. Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 55–57) avoids the issue altogether.

The motif of vengeance, however, survives in rabbinic midrash, where it is attributed to a famous second-century sage and expressed in a rather forceful fashion:

R. Simeon b. Yohai said: It is difficult to say this thing, and the mouth cannot utter it plainly. Think of two athletes wrestling before the king; had the king wished, he could have separated them. But he did not so desire, and one overcame the other and killed him, he [the victim] crying out [before he died], “Let my cause be pleaded before the king!” Even so, *The voice of thy brother’s blood cries out against Me*.<sup>58</sup> (*Gen. Rab.* 22.9)<sup>59</sup>

Although “the mouth cannot utter it,” the midrash manages to articulate the almost inconceivable thought: Abel condemns God himself for not sparing him; and since God did not intervene then, did not prevent the murder, the pure blood spilled should urge him to wreak the vengeance speedily. This tendency to see a pure martyr’s death as a “trigger” for God’s vengeful intervention and speedy visitation of his wrath on the evil ones was further developed in later Jewish sources.<sup>60</sup>

## VIII

It is illuminating to see how the different submotifs reviewed above are conflated (and modified in the process) in the *logion* found in Matthew and Luke:

Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, “I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,” that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be required from this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechari’ah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it shall be required from this generation. (Luke 11.49–51, RSV)<sup>61</sup>

On the one hand, we see that, according to the New Testament, the pure blood shed is not only Abel’s but also, as in Targums *Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Neofiti*, that of the righteous men of God—here, the prophets of future generations. On the other hand, these are not the righteous ones who “died in Abel” but—in line with midrashic expositions on

58. אֵלַי (*elay*, “to Me”) is read here as אַלַּי (*‘alay*, “against Me”). Cf. *Tanh. Ber.* 1.9.

59. The English translation here is by H. Freedman from the Soncino Press edition of the *Midrash Rabbah*, 3rd edition (London/New York, 1983).

60. See I. Yuval, “*Ha-nakam we-ha-qelala, ha-dam we-ha-alila—me-alilot qedoshim le-alilat dam*” (“Vengeance and Curse: From Sanctification of the Name to Blood Libel”), *Zion* 58 (1993): 33–90.

61. Cf. Matt 23.33–35.

Adam's progeny—those who were actually born (sons of Seth) and carried on Abel's vocation. The motif of vengeance is central to the Gospel pericope exactly as it is central to the midrashic exegesis. Moreover, the blood shed is clearly presented here as a trigger for God's wreaking vengeance.

The motif of vengeance continues to be central in the later Christian—both Greek and Syriac—exegesis of Genesis 4.10. Thus John Chrysostom explains Abel's blood "crying out" as follows: the "voice" of the blood flies up, ascends to heaven, and there "rushes through the heaven of heaven" in order to lament the murder and bring accusation (before the heavenly court).<sup>62</sup>

The same line is taken up a century later by Jacob of Serugh: "The blood which was shed provoked the high place against the murderer; Abel was alive and his blood spoke like thunder among the angels."<sup>63</sup> The difficulty in giving blood a voice is also fully recognized in the *Syriac Life of Abel*: "*The sound of your brother's blood groans out towards me from the earth. Who is it who has given a voice to the blood, for blood has no voice, blood has no ability to differentiate, having no intelligence?*" (13) It is worth noting that the word ܪܘܒܐ (voice) is used abundantly throughout the text and by different speakers—e.g., Abel while still alive (20) and Eve lamenting Abel (21, 23). This fact may point to an alternative (vis-à-vis the call for vengeance) exegetical solution. In any case, the examples of Jacob of Serugh and the *Syriac Life of Abel* bear witness to the awareness of Syriac writers (from the period close to the final redaction of CT) of the exegetical problem existing in Genesis 4.10: the expression "the voice of your brother's blood" calls for an explanation.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is another New Testament text where Abel's death features prominently:

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts; he died, but through his faith he is still speaking. (Heb 11.4, RSV)

We see that the Epistle adopts the same exegesis as is attested elsewhere in pre-Christian Jewish sources<sup>64</sup>—an exegesis according to which the expression "[Abel's] blood cries out" hints at the continuation of per-

62. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 161. See Glenthoj, *Cain and Abel*, 172.

63. Jacob of Serugh, *Homilies 147–50 on Cain and Abel* 26–27, cf. *ibid.*, 20. See Glenthoj, *Cain and Abel*, 174. See also S. Brock, "Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources" (London: Variorum, 1992, first published in *JJS* 30 [1979]: 212–32, esp. 226–27).

64. See the discussion on Philo's position and note 55, above.

sonal existence after physical death. According to the Epistle, it is Abel's faith that allows him to overcome death. The exegesis here, as in Philo, seems to be centered on spiritual existence as a means to "survive death," so, in fact, it has no use for "blood." Speaking of the first hero of faith in human history, the Epistle—exactly like Philo in *QG*<sup>65</sup>—avoids mentioning Abel's blood; it is Abel himself and not his blood that goes on "speaking out" even after his death.

On the other hand, Abel's blood does feature prominently in Hebrews 12, where not so much faith, but rather vengeance, the punishment for apostasy, is the key theme:

For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and a sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given . . . . Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels . . . and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that *speaks more powerfully* (κρεῖττον λαλοῦντι, RSV: more graciously) *than the blood of Abel*. See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. *For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.* (Heb 12.18–25, RSV)

The fragment contains the strongest possible warning against leaving the newly acquired faith, and the vengeful character of this admonition is quite obvious.<sup>66</sup> However, another motif is combined with that of vengeance in Hebrews 12.24: the blood of revenge turns out to be at the same time the blood of a new covenant that in the context of Hebrews stands for remission of sins and salvation.

65. See note 57, above.

66. Cf. Heb 12.15–17. There have been a number of different suggestions regarding the nature of the community to which the admonition was addressed: Gentile Christians, ex-Essenes, members of Jewish priestly families from Jerusalem converted to Christianity. See M. Bourke, "The Epistle to the Hebrews: Introduction," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer, and R. E. Murphy (Herndon: Geoffrey Chapman Press, 1997), 920–21. Cf. the interpretation by Cyril of Alexandria discussed by Glenthoj (*Cain and Abel*, 175). According to Cyril, while Abel's blood cried out against Cain, the blood of Christ cries out against the cruelty and ingratitude of the Jews. This interpretation may be seen as highly partisan, and it hardly fits the context of Hebrews, although it is certainly true to the vengeful spirit of the Epistle.

## IX

It has already been noted that, as opposed to the authors of the midrash and the New Testament, exegetes who were disconnected from the Hebrew-speaking milieu were generally not concerned with the plural of *deme* (bloods) of the Hebrew text of Genesis 4.10; for in both the Greek and the Syriac translations the singular form had been substituted for the plural one.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, we have seen among all exegetes a recognition of the other peculiarity of Genesis 4.10—namely, the description of Abel’s blood as having a voice and “speaking out” after being shed by Cain. We have also seen that the motif of vengeance was central to most exegeses: the pure blood was supposed to expedite God’s vengeance. This last motif was partly but not completely mitigated in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It stands to reason that at least some of the questions raised by the exegetes and some of the solutions offered by them were known to the *CT*’s compiler(s), who had so great an interest in the story of Cain and Abel. The Epistle to the Hebrews was definitely known to the transmitters of the *CT* tradition: our text quotes the Epistle several times; Ephrem’s writings undoubtedly exercised considerable influence on *CT*; Jacob of Serugh as well as the author of the *Syriac Life of Abel* might have been contemporaries of the *CT*’s final redaction; and the compilers/transmitters of the *CT* material are generally believed to have had access to rabbinic traditions of the time.<sup>68</sup>

Now, with the exegetic expositions reviewed above forming a background of sorts, the *CT* treatment of the problem may be better appreciated. In line with other exegeses, *CT* finds it necessary to provide an explanation for Abel’s blood “speaking” after Abel’s death; but in our text the blood’s “crying out to heaven from earth” represents the solemn oath instituted by Seth before he died:

ܘܢܘܢ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ  
ܘܢܘܢ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ  
ܘܢܘܢ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ

67. See note 50, above.

68. See G. Sternberger, “Exegetical Contacts between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire,” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 1, part 1, ed. M. Sæbo (Göttingen: Vandenhöck and Ruprecht, 1996), 585. G. Sternberger called *CT* “certainly the richest source for Jewish traditions.” S. Brock (“Jewish Traditions,” 228) discussed an interesting case of possible connection between *CT* and rabbinic exegesis. It is noteworthy that the example he chose was also connected with the story of Cain and Abel.

ܐܘܢ ܕܘܪܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ  
ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ

I put you under oath by the pure blood of Abel that no one of you will descend from this sacred mountain. Do not allow anyone of your descendants to go down to the sons of Cain, the murderer, as you all know what an enmity there is between us and him since the day when he killed Abel. (7.18)

First, it is worth noting that the description of the relations between the sons of Seth and the sons of Cain (“what an enmity [ܐܘܢܐܘܪܐܘܢܐ] there is between us and him”) is reminiscent of the biblical description of the relations between the humans and the serpent.<sup>69</sup> That fits the tendency already observed in *CT*—namely, to see Cain’s crime, not Adam’s fall, as the primordial fatality. It may also be noted that, although in *CT* the exegetical problem—the first martyr’s blood having a voice—is not mentioned explicitly,<sup>70</sup> swearing by Abel’s pure blood clearly stands here for the blood’s “speaking out,” thus providing a solution to the problem. In comparison to Hebrews, the motif of vengeance is further subdued, the emphasis here being on the salvific quality of Abel’s blood.<sup>71</sup> It comes as no surprise that, according to *CT*, this will be true also regarding Jesus’ blood. Swearing by Abel’s blood, however, is presented in our text as *sufficient* for the salvation of the sons of Seth; those who dwell—thanks to swearing by Abel’s blood—on the holy mountain do not need any further salvation. The subsequent salvation through Christ pertains only to later generations, who broke the oath.

I have discussed *CT*’s exegetical exposition on Abel’s blood “crying out.” But there is yet another element in the *CT* exegesis: the reenactment of swearing (“Abel’s blood speaking out”) in every successive generation of the sons of Seth.<sup>72</sup> Thanks to this reenactment the sons of Seth remain *pure and holy*, up to the days of Yared, when the men of Seth’s tribe fail to keep the oath, go down to Cain’s daughters, and are prevented from returning.<sup>73</sup> It is likely that this emphasis on “multiplying” Abel’s blood

69. See Gen 3.15: “I will put enmity (Syr.: ܐܘܢܐܘܪܐܘܢܐ) . . . between your seed and her seed.”

70. Unlike in the *Syriac Life of Abel*—see the discussion above.

71. Thus, the emphasis is put on Abel’s own death and not on his animal offering being accepted by God. For this other exegetical motif attested also in Syriac literature, see S. P. Brock, “Fire from Heaven: From Abel’s Sacrifice to the Eucharist. A Theme in Syriac Christianity,” *SP* 25 (1993): 229–43.

72. See *CT* 7.19; 8.13; 9.5, et al.

73. See *CT* 10.14; 12.18–20. They tried also to resume swearing by Abel’s blood, but this time in vain.

“crying out” and its connection with the righteous ones of successive generations points to another exegetical problem, one that is imbedded in the Hebrew version of Genesis 4.10 with its plural form of *deme* (“bloods”). As observed, this exegetical motif is found in neither Greek nor Syriac Christian expositions during the relevant period. Thus it might bear witness to a contemporary exegetical contact with rabbinic tradition.

## CONCLUSION

The discussion in this paper centered on the *CT* version of the expulsion from Eden and the story of Cain and Abel. This version was analyzed vis-à-vis other relevant traditions—both Jewish and Christian—that might have been known to the *CT* compilers/redactors. It was observed that *CT*'s treatment of the issue is characterized, *inter alia*, by a strong exegetical trend: both the canceling (or, at least, softening) of the effects of Adam's fall and the introduction of the salvific swearing by Abel's blood are backed by references to certain peculiarities in the biblical texts. In most instances *CT* seems to be aware of both the exegetical problems posed by the text and a range of existing exegetical solutions. *CT* adopts some of those solutions, transforming them to suit its particular needs. I have suggested that at least one exegetical move performed in our text—the story of swearing by Abel's blood by the righteous ones of successive generations—although it appears in *CT* with obviously Christian connotations, may bear witness to an exegetical contact with rabbinic tradition.

When did the supposed contacts with rabbinic tradition occur? What stage in the development of the *CT* text do the exegetical trends discussed in this paper represent? The final redaction or, maybe, earlier phases in *CT*'s textual (oral?) history? There are other questions as well, the most fascinating of them being that of the *CT* milieu. *CT* speaks in terms of the Golden Age of righteous forefathers, who knew the secret of true worship of God and lived—together with their wives and children—in a blessed state on the holy mountain. The traditional motif of “second expulsion” is developed here in a rather peculiar fashion: the life of the dwellers on the holy mountain is presented as life in Paradise. Their cult also was perfect, it even included the sacred elements of body (Adam's) and blood (Abel's), which had in themselves (and not only as a prefiguration of Jesus' body and blood!) a sufficient salvific force so that the need for salvation through Christ pertained only to those who eventually left the mountain. What kind of cult-oriented community does *CT* address? It seems to be a community characterized by a peculiar polemical emphasis

on an independent (alternative?) “non-Christian,” or maybe “pre-Christian” path to salvation. What kind of polemic is the community involved in? What kind of polemic are the exegetical trends discussed in this paper, e.g., *CT*’s highly idiosyncratic reinterpretation of Hebrews 7.3, tailored to serve? How are these polemical trends related to the polemical stance taken by *CT* elsewhere (e.g., 24.10–11; 45.4–15; 53.21–26) vis-à-vis (in addition to the Jews, those “usual suspects”) Greek- and Latin-speaking Christianity?

The present study is mainly descriptive in character, but these are the questions that it should eventually lead us to ask. Any attempt to answer them would necessitate widening the scope of investigation, addressing additional exegetical trends attested in *CT*. It is to be hoped that an effort of this kind will be made.

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