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Qyāmā before Aphrahat

The Development of the Idea of Covenant in Some Early Syriac Documents

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In Syriac speaking areas, the word *qyāmā* appears as a special religious term associated with the ascetic group called “sons and daughters of the covenant” in the writings of Syriac Christian author Aphrahat who lived and wrote outside the Roman Empire, in Mesopotamia, during the first part of the 4th century. *Qyāmā*, a regular Syriac equivalent for the Hebrew *קִרְבָּן* in the Old Testament, is related to the root *qām*, “to rise, stand”. The exact identity of the “sons and daughters of the covenant” – “*bnay*” or “*bnāt qyāmā*” in Syriac – and the theological meaning of the Syriac word “*qyāmā*”, conventionally translated as “covenant”, has been the subject of prolonged discussion to which such renowned scholars as Arent Wensinck¹, Hugo Koch², Gerhard Kittel³, Alfred Adam⁴, Edmund Beck⁵, Arthur Vööbus⁶, Peter Nagel⁷, Robert Murray⁸, Sydney Griffith⁹ and others¹⁰ made their contributions.

¹ A.J. WENSINCK, *Qejāmā* und *Benai Qejāmā* in der älteren Syrischen Literatur, ZDMG 64, 1910, 561–564, 812.

² H. KOCH, Taufe und Askese in der alten ostsyrischen Kirche, ZNW 12, 1911, 37–69.

³ G. KITTEL, Eine synagogale Parallele zu den *Bⁿai Q^ejāmā*, ZNW 15, 1915, 235–236.

⁴ A. ADAM, Grundbegriffe des Mönchtums in sprachlicher Sicht, ZKG 65, 1953/54, 226–228.

⁵ E. BECK, Ein Beitrag zur Terminologie des ältesten syrischen Mönchtums, in: B. STEIDLE (HRSG.), *Antonius Magnus Eremita 356-1956. Studia ad antiquum monachismum spectantia*, StAns 38, Romae 1956, 254–261.

⁶ A. VÖÖBUS, The Institution of the *benai qeiamā* and *benat qeiamā* in the Ancient Syrian Church, ChH 30, 1961, 19–27.

⁷ P. NAGEL, Zum Problem der „Bundessöhne“ bei Aphrahat, FuF 36, 1962, 152–154.

⁸ R. MURRAY, The Exhortation to Candidates for Ascetical Vows at Baptism in the Ancient Syriac Church, NTS 21, 1975, 59–80 and id., “Circumcision of Heart” and the Origins of the *qyāmā*, in: G.J. REININK, A.C. KLUGKIST (eds), *After Bardaisan. Studies on Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity in Honour of H.J.W. Drijvers*, OLA 89, Leuven 1999, 201–211.

Without summarizing or discussing the observations made in these works, I would like to start by indicating a point which to date has not received the attention it deserves. It is widely recognized that in addition to the name “sons and daughters of the covenant”, in the writings of Aphrahat the same group is called *ihidayē*, that is “the single ones”.¹¹ This term, derived from the root “had” (one), is more or less equivalent with the Greek *μοναχός*, which likewise designates someone being alone or single¹². The question is now how the “sons and daughters of the covenant” can remain part of a *qyāmā* (covenant) while at the same time being the single ones? The importance of this question increases if one considers that Aphrahat also seems to use the word *qyāmā* to describe the whole Church¹³: does this imply that Aphrahat understood the Church as consisting of solitary monads lacking any mutual relationship? As we shall see, trying to elucidate this terminological difficulty will provide us with some insights into early protomonastic and monastic settings in Syria.

Because the available material authored by Aphrahat does not seem sufficient to solve the problem indicated above, we must turn to other early Christian sources¹⁴ in which either *qyāmā* or “the single ones” (*ihidayē*) are

⁹ S.H. GRIFFITH, ‘Singles’ in God’s Service; Thought’s on the *Ihidade* from the Works of Aphrahat and Ephraem the Syrian, *The Harp* 4, 1991, 145–159, ID., ‘Singles’ and the ‘Sons of the Covenant’. Reflections on Syriac ascetic Terminology, *StAns* 110, 1993, 141–160, ID., Asceticism in the Church of Syria: The Hermeneutics of Early Syrian Monasticism, in: V.L. WIMBUSH, R. VALANTASIS (eds), *Asceticism*, New York/Oxford 1995, 223–229.

¹⁰ Cf. also e.g. M. MAUDE, Who were the *b’nai q’yāmā*?, *JThS* 36, 1935, 13–21, J. JARGY, Les «fils et filles du pacte» dans la littérature monastique syriaque, *OCP* 17, 1951, 304–320 and M. BREYDY, Les laïcs et les *bnay qyomo* dans l’ancienne tradition de l’église syrienne, *Kanon* 3, 1977, 51–75. We do not mention here a great number of publications where the *bnay qyāmā* are only touched upon.

¹¹ Cf. e.g. G. NEDUNGATT, The Covenanters of the Early Syriac-Speaking Church, *OCP* 39, 1973, 210–211.

¹² For the meaning of the unusual complex Syriac term see S. Brock, The Luminous Eye. The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem, *CistSS* 124, Kalamazoo 1992, 136: “There would appear to be three basic ideas behind the term *ihidaya*: singular, individual, unique; single-minded, not divided in heart; and single in the sense of unmarried, celibate. In the Syriac New Testament *Ihidaya* is above all a title of Christ, translating Greek *Monogenes*, Only-Begotten”. About the interrelations between *ihidayā* and *μοναχός* cf. F.-E. MORARD, *Monachos*, Moine. Histoire du terme grec jusqu’au 4e siècle. Influences bibliques et gnostiques, *FZPhTh* 20, 1973, 332–411, D. BUMAZHNOV, Einige Beobachtungen zur Geschichte des Begriffs *MONAXOS* (Mönch), *StPatr* 39, 2006, 293–299 and D. BUMAZHNOV, Zur Bedeutung der Targume bei der Herausbildung des *MONAXOS*-Konzeptes in den Nag Hammadi-Texten, *ZAC* 10, 2006, 252–259.

¹³ Cf. G. NEDUNGATT, The Covenanters (cf. n. 11), 196–199.

¹⁴ As I argued elsewhere (D. BUMAZHNOV, Zur Bedeutung der Targume (cf. n. 12)), the Christian usage of *ihidayā* / *μοναχός* in the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Dialogue of*

used. Those sources are few. Among them the pride of place goes to the most famous Nag Hammadi finding, the *Gospel of Thomas*, which, though transmitted in Coptic and in some Greek fragments, reflects an Aramaic or Syriac milieu¹⁵. It is generally agreed that the three logia of the *Gospel of Thomas* where we find, in the Coptic text, the Greek loan word *MONAXOC* (<*μοναχός*) would have had *ihidayā* in their Semitic Vorlage¹⁶. Two more instances of *ihidayā* / *MONAXOC* are to be found in another Nag Hammadi writing, the *Dialogue of the Saviour*, which is later than the *Gospel of Thomas*, whose influence is apparent in a number of details¹⁷. Because the writings of Aphrahat, the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Dialogue of the Saviour* demonstrate a strong interrelation in their understanding of the single ones¹⁸, we could expect to find some traces of the covenant (*qyāmā*) in these related traditions. This assumption proves to be only partially correct.

the Saviour depends on Palestinian targums. In the targums, however, we find scarcely any developed theology of the covenant in connection with the single ones. Though this is at least thinkable by implication for Israel being “a unique (יִחִידִית) nation on earth” according to TPsJ Dtn 26:18, in this text no covenant terminology related or not related to *qyāmā* is recognisable. Things change drastically if we turn our attention to the two Nag Hammadi writings discussed below.

¹⁵ Cf. A. GUILLAUMONT, Sémitismes dans les logia de Jésus retrouvés à Nag-Hamâdi, *JA* 246, 1958, 113–123, N. PERRIN, The Aramaic Origins of the *Gospel of Thomas* – Revised, in: J. FREY, E.E. POPKES, J. SCHRÖTER (eds), *Das Thomasevangelium*, BZNV 157, Berlin/New York 2008, 50–59. Not all cases of the so-called Aramaic or Syriac substratum observed in the *Gospel of Thomas* remain undisputed, cf. e.g. A. BÖHLIG, Das Problem aramäischer Elemente in den Texten von Nag Hammadi, in: ID., *Gnosis und Synkretismus. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur spätantiken Religionsgeschichte*, 2. Teil, WUNT 48, Tübingen 1989, 414–453.

¹⁶ *ihidayā* is the singular form of *ihidayē*. The logia in question are 16, 49 and 75. Cf. F.E. MORARD, *Monachos: une importation sémitique en Egypte? Quelques aperçus nouveaux*, in: *StPatr* 12 = TU 115, 1974, 242–246, F. MORARD, Encore quelques réflexions sur *monachos*, *VigChr* 34, 1980, 394–401 and A. GUILLAUMONT, Les sémitismes dans l’évangile selon Thomas. Essai de classement, in: R. VAN DEN BROEK, M.J. VERMASEREN (eds), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, EPRO 91, Leiden 1981, 202–203.

¹⁷ Cf. F. MORARD, Quelques réflexions (cf. n. 16).

¹⁸ See about it e.g. G. QUIPPEL, L’évangile selon Thomas et les origines de l’ascèse chrétienne, in: ID., *Gnostic Studies II*, Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te İstanbul 1975, 98–112, first published in: *Aspects du Judéochristianisme (colloque de Strasbourg, 1964)*, Paris 1965, 35–51, P.-H. POIRIER, L’Évangile selon Thomas (log. 16 et 23) et Aphraate (Dém. XVIII, 10–11), *Mélanges A. Guillaumont. Contributions à l’étude des christianismes orientaux. Avec une bibliographie de dédicataire*, CO 20, Genève 1988, 15–18 and R. URO, Is *Thomas* an encratite Gospel?, in: ID. (ed.), *Thomas at the Crossroads. Essays on the Gospel of Thomas*, *Studies of the New Testament and Its World*, Edinburgh 1998, 156–160.

Though neither the *Gospel of Thomas* nor the *Dialogue of the Saviour* speak clearly about a covenant of the NMONAXOC or OYA OYWT ¹⁹, in a considerable number of cases, these texts depict them as “standing”. So in saying 23 from the *Gospel of Thomas* we read²⁰:

Jesus said, “I shall choose you, one out of a thousand, and two out of ten thousand, and they shall *stand* as a single one (OYA OYWT).”

Cf. also EvThom 16²¹:

Jesus said: “Men think, perhaps, that it is peace which I have come to cast upon the world. They do not know that it is dissension which I have come to cast upon the earth: fire, sword, and war. For there will be five in a house: three will be against two, and two against three, the father against the son, and the son against the father. And they will *stand* being the solitary ($\text{AYW CENAWZE EPATOY EYO NMONAXOC}$)”

and EvThom 75²²:

Jesus said, “Many are *standing* at the door, but it is the solitary (NMONAXOC) who will enter the bridal chamber.”

It was Robert Murray who, in the mid 1970’s, suggested that “standing” in the *Gospel of Thomas* may be somehow connected with *qyāmā*²³ and

¹⁹ Though some scholars expressed doubts as to the exact equivalence of the both terms NMONAXOC and OYA OYWT in the *Gospel of Thomas* (cf. e.g. F.-E. MORARD, *Monachos, Moine* (cf. n. 12), 365–372), at least their interchangeability in this text cannot be questioned; see about it R. CHARRON, À propos des OYA OYWT et de la solitude divine dans les textes de Nag Hammadi, in: L. PAINCHAUD, P.-H. POIRIER (eds), *Coptica – Gnostica – Manichaica. Mélanges offerts à W.-P. Funk*, BCNH Section «Études» 7, Louvain/Paris 2006, 131–133. The problem is discussed in detail in the Exkurs “Das Verhältnis der Begriffe MONAXOC und OYA bzw. OYA OYWT als eine *crux interpretum* des Thomasevangeliums” by E.E. POPKES, *Das Menschenbild des Thomasevangeliums. Untersuchungen zu seiner religionsgeschichtlichen und chronologischen Einordnung*, WUNT 206, Tübingen 2007, 169–172.

²⁰ EvThom 23 (NHS 20, 64,3–4 Layton): $\text{ΠΕΧΕ ΙϚ ΧΕ ΨΝΑϚΕΤΠ ΤΗΝΕ ΟΥΑ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝ ΨΟ ΑΥΩ ΣΝΑΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΝ ΤΒΑ ΑΥΩ ΣΕΝΑΩΖΕ ΕΡΑΤΟΥ ΕΥΟ ΟΥΑ ΟΥΩΤ}$. Translation according to B. LAYTON, *The Gospel according to Thomas*, in: Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7 together with XIII,2*, Brit. Lib. Or.4926(1), and P.Oxy 1, 654, 655 ed. by B. LAYTON, Vol. I, NHS 20, Leiden et al. 1989, 65. If not indicated otherwise, the translation is mine.

²¹ EvThom 16 (NHS 20, 60,31–5 Layton): $\text{ΠΕΧΕ ΙϚ ΧΕ ΤΑΧΑ ΕΥΜΕΕΥΕ ΝΒΙ ΡΡΩΜΕ ΧΕ ΝΤΑΕΙΕΙ ΕΝΟΥΧΕ ΝΟΥΕΙΡΗΝΗ ΕΧΜ ΠΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΑΥΩ ΣΕΣΟΟΥΝ ΑΝ ΧΕ ΝΤΑΕΙΕΙ ΑΝΟΥΧΕ ΝΖΝΠΩΡΧ ΕΧΜ ΠΚΑΖ ΟΥΚΩΖΤ ΟΥΧΗΦΕ ΟΥΠΟΛΕΜΟΣ ΟΥΝ ΨΟΥ ΓΑΡ ΝΑΨΩΠΕ ΖΝ ΟΥΝΕΙ ΟΥΝ ΨΟΜΤ ΝΑΨΩΠΕ ΕΧΝ ΣΝΑΥ ΑΥΩ ΣΝΑΥ ΕΧΝ ΨΟΜΤ ΠΕΙΩΤ ΕΧΜ ΠΩΗΡΕ ΑΥΩ ΠΩΗΡΕ ΕΧΜ ΠΕΙΩΤ ΑΥΩ ΣΕΝΑΩΖΕ ΕΡΑΤΟΥ ΕΥΟ ΝΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ}$ Translation according to B. LAYTON, *The Gospel* (cf. n. 20), 61.

²² EvThom 75 (NHS 20, 80,11–13 Layton): $\text{ΠΕΧΕ ΙϚ ΟΥΝ ΖΑΖ ΑΖΕΡΑΤΟΥ ΖΨΜ ΠΡΟ ΑΛΛΑ ΝΜΟΝΑΧΟΣ ΝΕΤΝΑΒΟΚ ΕΖΟΥΝ ΕΠΜ ΝΨΕΛΕΕΤ}$ Translation according to B. LAYTON, *The Gospel* (cf. n. 20), 81.

stressed the baptismal context of the latter term²⁴. Subsequently we shall try to develop further some of Murray’s ideas while introducing a number of new pieces of evidence for *qyāmā* in the early Syriac texts.

First, we have to stress that in the *Gospel of Thomas* standing is a characteristic of the single ones (NMONAXOC or OYA OYWT). Less clear is the case with the *Dialogue of the Saviour*, which opens with the following words of the Saviour to his disciples²⁵:

The Saviour said to his disciples: “Already the time has come, brothers, for us to abandon our labour and *stand* at rest. For whoever *stands* at rest will rest forever.”

On the same page, a few lines below, after a lacuna the Saviour says²⁶:

But when I came, I opened the path and I taught them about the passage which they will traverse, the elect and solitary (NMONOXOC , sic).

Though it is likely that the disciples and the solitary ones belong to the same group, we cannot be absolutely certain about this because of the damaged lines in between the two statements. Supposing that “standing at rest” in the opening part of the *Dialogue* has to do with the single ones mentioned on the same page of the codex, it is worth noting the eschatological character of this standing and its everlasting duration.

Standing before God is described in a similar way in the Syriac Apology of Pseudo-Meliton. This text was probably written in Syriac near Mabbug in the early 3rd century AD and insofar as this is true, it provides a valuable link between the second century Nag Hammadi writings and those of Aphrahat²⁷. To understand this evidence properly, we need, however, a thorough analysis. Let us start with chapter 9²⁸.

²³ R. MURRAY, *The Exhortation* (cf. n. 8), 70. As stated above, *qyāmā* is derived from the root *qām* “to rise, stand”.

²⁴ R. MURRAY, *The Exhortation* (cf. n. 8), 78: “Did the word (i.e. *qyāmā*, D.B.) perhaps connote not only the ‘establishment’ that one joined, but also the thing that one *did* at baptism? A new member ‘took his stand’ for Christ and in the name of Christ <...>”

²⁵ Dial 120,2–8 (NHS 26, 40,2–8 Emmel): $\text{ΠϚΗΡ ΠΕΧΑΦ ΝΝΕΦ ΜΑΘΗΤΗΣ ΧΕΝΔΗ ΑΠΕΟΥΟΕΚΥ ΨΩΠΕ ΝΕ ΣΗΝΟΥ ΧΕΚΑΑΣ ΕΝΑΚΩ ΝΨΩΝ ΨΠΕΝΖΙϚΕ ΝΤΝΑΖΕ ΕΡΑΤΝ ΖΝ ΤΑΝΑΠΑΥϚΙϚ ΠΕΤΝΑΩΖΕ ΓΑΡ ΕΡΑΤΦ ΖΝΤΑΝΑΠΑΥϚΙϚ ΦΝΑΜΤΟΝ ΝΜΟΦ ΝΨΑΕΝΕΖ}$ Translation according to S. EMMEL (ed., tr.), *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5. The Dialogue of the Saviour*, NHS 26, Leiden 1984, 41.

²⁶ Dial 120,23–26 (NHS 26, 40,23–26 Emmel): $\text{ΑΛΛΑ ΑΝΟΚ ΝΤΕΡΙΕΙ ΑΕΙΟΥΩΝ ΕΤΕΖΗ ΑΕΙΤΣΑΒΟΥ ΕΤΔΙΑΒΑϚΙϚ ΕΤΕΥΝΑΧΩΒΕ ΜΜΟΣ ΝΒΙΝΨΩΤΠ ΜΝΝΜΟΝΟΧΟΣ}$ Translation according to S. EMMEL (cf. n. 25), 41.

²⁷ The 19th century discussion about the authorship of the Syriac Apology is summarized by TH. ULBRICH, *Die pseudo-melitonische Apologie*, KGA 4, 1906, 72–77. The author’s first hand knowledge of Mabbug and the extended information he possesses about Syriac deities (see *ibid.*, 74) remain, in my opinion, decisive factors that challenge the claim that the text could be by St. Meliton. I base the following on the conclusion of Ulbrich: “Die Schrift rührt nicht von Melito her und ist nicht vor 200 entstanden; sie ist

Chapter 6: serving – standing forever / knowledge / life

Chapter 9: serving with all heart – knowledge – life

Chapter 12: being mindful of God (≈ serving God with all heart) – standing forever (before God) – seeing God (≈ knowledge) – life

Having stated these similarities, we have to ask about the meaning of “standing” in chapters 6 and 12. First, we can observe that “standing” both in chapter 6 and 12 is set in relation to God’s unchanging and unmovable nature. In both cases “standing” is accompanied by another activity on the part of human beings which is correlated with God’s stability. The consequence of these activities for the human kind is, secondly, in chapter 6, knowledge and life, and in chapter 12, seeing God and being safe from the flood of fire.

Chapter 6:

Characteristics of God: “He is the living God for all times”, He “who never can be moved”, “He is forever”

Characteristics of Man: “Put off what is visible and perishable”, “stand <...> forever before Him”

Goal: Knowledge and life

Chapter 12:

Characteristics of God: He “who is unchangeable”

Characteristics of Man: “Who are mindful (ܩܝܡܝܢܝܢ) <of Him> and are in the unchangeable *qyāmā*”

Goal: Seeing God, being safe from the flood of fire

As we suggested above, “being mindful” of God in chapter 12 corresponds to “serving Him with all one’s heart” in chapter 9. Both expressions presuppose having in mind only God without being distracted by worldly affairs. Now it seems reasonable to assume that “putting off what is visible and perishable” in chapter 6 is to be understood in the same sense. If we are right in this assumption, then “standing forever before Him” (chapter 6) and “being in the unchangeable *qyāmā*” (chapter 12) seem to stress the continuing character of this single-mindedness. In chapter 12, it entails a visible experience of God; in chapter 6, knowledge and life are the promised rewards.

If this analysis is correct, two important consequences should be emphasized. First, while speaking about “serving [God] with all one’s heart” (chapter 9) and “being mindful” of God (chapter 12), the author of the Apology touches upon themes which are relevant to the concept of

ṭḥīdayē³². Secondly, though “putting off what is visible and perishable” in chapter 6 is, by itself, open to other interpretations, the context of chapters 9 and 12 compels us to understand it as related neither to an eschatological future nor to the life *post mortem*, but to the life in this world.

We can conclude, therefore, that according to this interpretation the “unchangeable *qyāmā*” in chapter 12 of the Apology of Pseudo-Meliton designates the attitude of lasting concentration on God alone which proceeds from serving Him³³. Though a certain proximity of “standing” to the concept of ṭḥīdayē as it is developed in the targums³⁴ and in the early Syriac literature can be observed, we do not find this term explicitly in the Apology. Lastly, *qyāmā* in chapter 12 of the Apology does not seem to have directly anything to do with “covenant”.

The evidence from the Apology of Pseudo-Meliton would remain somewhat obscure example of the usage of *qyāmā* in early Syriac literature, if there were not a text which develops the same traditions in an illuminating fashion. The text in question is the beginning of Mēmṛā (= Discourse) 19 from the Syriac Book of Steps, a work which was written in the second part of the 4th century, probably in Mesopotamia³⁵. In the following we will first demonstrate the relationships between three cited passages from the Apology by Pseudo-Meliton and the Book of Steps. This will serve as a starting-point for discussing the notion of *qyāmā* in both texts.

The passages from Mēmṛā 19 that we are interested in are scattered across the first two chapters of the Mēmṛā, which fill three and a half columns in Kmosko’s edition of the Syriac text. The Mēmṛā starts with the following admonition:

Give me now your full attention, O one who wishes to become a solitary (ṭḥīdayā) <...>³⁶

³² See above, n. 12.

³³ Cf. 1 Reg 17:1 where the prophet Elijah characterises his relationship to God as “the LORD the God of Israel <...> before whom I stand” יהוה יהלא לארשי רשא יתדמע וינפל, cf. also 1 Reg 18:15 and Sir 46:3. In Dan 7:10 the prophet saw in a vision “ten thousand times ten thousand” who “stood before” the Ancient One in heavenly court, נומקי יהומק, נומקי יהומק. However, neither of these instances stresses any visual or mental experience of seeing God or knowing Him.

³⁴ Cf. D. BUMAZHNOV, Zur Bedeutung der Targume (cf. n. 12).

³⁵ See about the dating I. HAUSHERR, Quanam aetate prodierit “Liber Graduum”?, OCP 1, 1935, 502 and R.A. KITCHEN, M.F.G. PARMENTIER, Introduction, in: The Book of Steps: The Syriac *Liber Graduum*. Translated, with an Introduction and Notes by R.A. KITCHEN AND M.F.G. PARMENTIER, Kalamazoo 2004, LI–LII.

³⁶ See the Syriac text in LG 19:1 (PS I,3, 445,1–2 Kmosko). Literally: “Give me the ears of your mind”. Translation according to The Book of Steps: The Syriac *Liber Graduum*. Translated, with an Introduction and Notes by R.A. KITCHEN AND M.F.G. PARMENTIER, Kalamazoo 2004, 183.

Thus, from the outset, the recipients of the Mēm̄rā are identified as the solitary (ḥīdayē) so that the rest of chapters 1 and 2 is to be seen in this light. The author of the Mēm̄rā goes on to describe the road leading to the city of the Lord Jesus. At the end of chapter 1, he mentions the paths deviating from that road. Chapter 2 focuses on these dangerous paths³⁷:

These paths, veering from the Perfect road, which leads to that place in which our Lord is visible face to face, are not despicable <...>

The final goal of the perfect road is, thus, the vision of Christ which is to be compared with Apology of Pseudo-Meliton 12: "But those who are mindful <of Him> and are in the unchangeable qyāmā do see God as far as they are able to see Him."

The text of the Book of Steps continues with the description of the perfect road³⁸:

Because the steps that confront a person on that road leading to that city are difficult, straight, and narrow <...> If you lean to one side it will be fire, and if you lean to that other [side] it will be full of water; and if a person falls underneath he will be crushed and if one enters the fire he will be burnt; and if one falls into the water he will be drowned.

To be compared with this passage are the five concluding verses from the text of chapter 12 of the Apology:

5. But those who are mindful <of Him> and are in the unchangeable qyāmā do see God as far as they are able to see Him. 6. These are those who will be able not to be burned up when the flood of fire will come on the whole world. 7. Since there was once flood of wind and <certain> men chosen <for that> were exterminated through the strong north-wind <...> 8. Again, at another time, there was a flood of water and all people and animals perished through the multitude of water <...> 9. And thus it is prepared for the last time that it shall be a flood of fire.

³⁷ See the Syriac text in LG 19:2 (PS I,3, 449,4–7 Kmosko). Translation according to R.A. KITCHEN, M.F.G. PARMENTIER, (cf. n. 35), 184.

³⁸ See the Syriac text in LG 19:2 (PS I,3, 449,9–17 Kmosko). Translation according to R.A. KITCHEN AND M.F.G. PARMENTIER, (cf. n. 35), 184.

³⁹ See n. 31 above.

The Apology refers to three floods: those of wind⁴⁰, water and fire. People dwelling in the unchangeable qyāmā will not be burned in the last flood on Doomsday. The Mēm̄rā 19:2 speaks about dangers lurking for the solitary ascending the spiritual steps, these being fire, water, and falling down. The perspectives of the two texts are different: the floods are surely understood as the real events in history, which is not the case with the three types of danger in Mēm̄rā 19:2. But both the threefold structure and the two kinds of danger in this text (fire and water) remind one of Apology 12. Later on we will see that the resemblance between the two texts is deeper than it might seem at first glance.

Significantly, the author of the Book of Steps feels compelled to comment on this passage of the chapter 2 quoted above⁴¹:

I will explain to you these parables of the difficult steps, which [are] of fire and water and great depth.

The first part of his comments reads as follows⁴²:

If you believe the words of Jesus and have established a covenant⁴³ to obey His words and keep His great commandments, from that hour, whether in the body or in the spirit, you will come to this road of the commandments and enter these steps. If you desire to ascend them in order to confirm your covenant (qyāmāk) with Jesus and see Him and receive from Him what he promised you <...>

This passage provides a number of important clarifications. According to it, the road to the city of Christ is the "road of the commandments" which one ascends in order to confirm his or her covenant with the Lord. Ascending the steps of this road, which is equal with the keeping of the

⁴⁰ W. Cureton in his notes on Ps.-Meliton (in Spicilegium syriacum containing remains of Bardesan, Meliton, Ambrose and Mara bar Serapion. Now first edited, with an English Translation and notes by W. CURETON, London 1855, 94) remarks that the same tradition is also known to the author of the Cave of Treasure 26:11–12 according to the modern division of the chapters. ANDREAS SU-MIN RI, Commentaire de la Caverne des trésors. Étude sur l'histoire du texte et de ses sources, CSCO 581, Subs. 103, Lovanii 2000, 316 suggests that the Christian idea of the flood of wind goes back to the Jewish apocryphal tradition about the destruction of the tower of Babel by the winds sent by God and refers to Oracula Sisyllina 3:101–103, the Book of Jubilees 10:26 and Flavius Josephus Ant. 1:118. See, in addition to this, evidences collected by J. GEFFCKEN, Die Oracula Sibyllina, GCS 8, Leipzig 1902, 53 and W. CURETON, op. cit., 94–95. However, neither the Apology of Pseudo-Meliton nor the Cave of Treasure 26:11–12 mention the tower of Babel, whereas the idea of the flood of wind is lacking in the Jewish sources.

⁴¹ See the Syriac text in LG 19:2 (PS I,3, 449,24–452,2 Kmosko). Translation according to R.A. KITCHEN AND M.F.G. PARMENTIER, (cf. n. 35), 184–185.

⁴² See the Syriac text in LG 19:2 (PS I,3, 452,2–10 Kmosko). Translation according to R.A. KITCHEN AND M.F.G. PARMENTIER, (cf. n. 35), 185 slightly modified.

⁴³ ܩܝܡܐ ܥܡ ܕܥܝܫܘܥܐ, LG 19:2 (PS I,3, 452,3 Kmosko).

commandments of Christ, is, at the same time, the fulfilment of the covenant⁴⁴. This ascent is also the way to a visual experience of the Lord⁴⁵.

Thus, to remain on the road means to remain in the covenant. That is why the Book of Steps admonishes not to deviate from the road, avoiding fire, water and falling down. Seen in this light, the danger of fire is far from those who stand firm in the covenant. We find the same idea in the Apology of Pseudo-Meliton 12: for those being in qyāmā will be spared the flood of fire:

5. But those who are mindful <of Him> and are in the unchangeable qyāmā do see God as far as they are able to see Him. 6. These are those who will be able not to be burned up when the flood of fire will come on the whole world.

Another common point between the Apology and the Book of Steps is, once again, the seeing of God or Christ, respectively, which, in both cases, is described as a final step on the spiritual way.

In the second part of his comment on three dangers the author of the Book of Steps provides an interpretation of each of them⁴⁶:

If you turn back from your covenant (qyāmāk), you will fall into the great deep that takes [you] down to Sheol; and if you transgress His commandments you will go to Gehenna, which is the fire; and if you renounce Him, you will be drowned⁴⁷ like Iscariot in the stifling hidden waters which are the teaching of the evil one.

If the term is appropriated, one could say that the author gives an allegorical explanation for falling down, fire and water. Probably, it indicates that he deals here with traditions whose exact meaning is not properly understandable to him any more. His source is certainly not chapter 12 from the Apology by Pseudo-Meliton. The common points which these two texts share are being in (unchangeable) qyāmā, seeing God or Christ as the final goal of the spiritual way and motifs connected with water and fire. Additionally, one can mention that the Apology 12 uses the concept of single-mindedness which is close to the term ḫīdayā. For its part, the Mēmrā 19, as we stated above, from its very outset has in view the single ones (ḫīdayē). It is they who are ascending the dangerous path and keeping the covenant (qyāmā) with Christ.

If we now look on the whole bulk of traditions in connection with qyāmā analysed so far, the following lines of development can be drawn.

⁴⁴ Cf. „If you <...> have established a covenant to obey His words and keep His great commandments, <...> you will come to this road of the commandments and enter these steps.“

⁴⁵ Cf. „If you desire to ascend them in order to confirm your covenant (qyāmāk) with Jesus and see Him <...>“

⁴⁶ See the Syriac text in LG 19:2 (PS I,3, 452,16–22 Kmosko). Translation according to R.A. KITCHEN AND M.F.G. PARMENTIER, (cf. n. 35), 185 slightly modified.

⁴⁷ Literally: you are suffocated.

1. Though the understanding of ḫīdayā in the targums of Neofiti, Jonathan and Pseudo-Jonathan has several details in common with the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Dialogue of the Saviour* and the targums most probably influenced these Christian texts⁴⁸, the targumic evidence known to us so far does not contain any recognizable references to religiously motivated standing. At the present stage of research we must therefore conclude that the connection of the ḫīdayā concept with the idea of standing was a Christian invention.

2. Our first witnesses to this connection are the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Dialogue of the Saviour* (2nd century). In sayings 12 and 23 of the *Gospel of Thomas* the single ones (ΝΜΟΝΑΧΟC or ΟΥΑ ΟΥΩΤ) are represented as standing without any further details mentioned. In saying 75, standing is still less specific: the single ones (ΜΜΟΝΑΧΟC) stand among others in front of the bridal chamber whereas the stress is not laid upon their standing but on their entering the chamber. The later *Dialogue of the Saviour* provides a more elaborate conception of standing. If in Dial 120,2–8 and Dial 120,23–26 the same group of the single ones is spoken to⁴⁹, they are recommended to “stand at rest” which shall last “forever”.

3. In the third century Apology by Pseudo-Meliton standing (qyāmā) before God means the attitude of lasting concentration on God alone, which proceeds from serving Him. Though the single ones are not mentioned in this text explicitly, a comparison of the Apology with the Book of Steps has shown that the material found in the Apology is strongly related to the ḫīdayā tradition. Significantly, the term qyāmā in Pseudo-Melito does not seem to designate the covenant.

4. This last development is to be observed in the 4th century Book of Steps. Using traditions akin to Pseudo-Meliton's Apology, the Book of Steps speaks about being faithful to the covenant (qyāmā) with Christ in the context where Pseudo-Meliton spoke about standing (qyāmā) unmovable before God.

5. Like the Book of Steps and unlike the Apology by Pseudo-Meliton, Aphrahat does not use qyāmā in the sense “standing”. As Edmund Beck observed, in the expression “sons and daughters of qyāmā” in Aphrahat, qyāmā oscillates between covenant, institution and order⁵⁰.

How exactly the meaning of qyāmā developed between the Apology of Pseudo-Meliton and Aphrahat is a very complicated question due to an

⁴⁸ Cf. D. BUMAZHNOV, Zur Bedeutung der Targume (cf. n. 12).

⁴⁹ For the texts see above.

⁵⁰ E. BECK, Ein Beitrag zur Terminologie des ältesten syrischen Mönchtums, in: B. STEIDLE (ed.), Antonius Magnus Eremita 356-1956. Studia ad antiquum monachismum spectantia, StAns 38, Romae 1956, 261.

almost complete lack of direct evidence. Here we can only indicate two possible approaches to this problem.

First, it can be suggested that the writings of Aphrahat himself contain some hints concerning possible connections between the early tradition about the standing of ḫīdayē and their later name “bnay” or “bnāt qyāmā”. For instance, in the section of the Demonstration 7 which Arthus Vööbus suggested to be “parts taken from the ancient liturgy for baptism”⁵¹ we find a passage reminiscent of the Apology of Pseudo-Meliton 12. The group which the author has in view are those preparing themselves to take the celibacy vow and to be baptized afterwards⁵²:

Therefore it is right that the trumpeters, the heralds of the Church, should call and exhort the whole Covenant (qyāmeḥ) of God before baptism, those who have offered themselves for virginity and consecration, young men and virgins and consecrated ones.

In the following exhortation of the heralds, the danger of turning back to the worldly affairs after the vow has been taken is vigorously stressed: in the sixteen short lines of the Parisot’s edition the verb *h²pak* (to return) is used seven times. We reproduce here the whole passage⁵³:

And whoever fears this choice of battle, let him turn back (*nehpūk*) <...>
And whosoever loves possessions, let him turn back (*nehpūk*) from war service, lest when battle overpowers him he remember his possessions and turn back (*nehpūk*) to them.

Whoever turns back (*hāpek*) from the contest is disgraced.

Whoever did not offer himself or put on arms,

is not reproached if he turns back (*hāpek*);

but whoever did offer himself and put on arms,

if he turns back (*hāpek*) from the contest, is disgraced.

The main concern of this exhortation is, thus, to prevent one from becoming unfaithful in spiritual warfare. Only those belonging to the “covenant of God” are admonished not to return⁵⁴. Worldly affairs are seen as impediment to ascetical combat⁵⁵. Most significantly, the remembrance of them can, in itself,

⁵¹ A. VÖÖBUS, *Celibacy, a Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church*, Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile 1, Stockholm 1951, 54. The section in question is 7,18ff. We touched this text briefly above.

⁵² See the Syriac text in Aphrahat, Dem. 7:20 (PS I,1, 345,6–10 Parisot). Translation according to R. MURRAY, *The Exhortation* (cf. n. 8), 62.

⁵³ See the Syriac text in Aphrahat, Dem. 7:20 (PS I,1, 345,14–19 Par.). Translation according to R. MURRAY, *The Exhortation* (cf. n. 8), 62.

⁵⁴ Cf.: Whoever did not offer himself or put on arms, is not reproached if he turns back.

⁵⁵ Cf.: “And whosoever loves possessions, let him turn back from war service, lest when battle overpowers him he remember his possessions and turn back to them” and Dem. 7:20 (PS I,1, 345,11–14 Parisot) where the distraction of marriage is dealt with.

provoke the breakdown of the ascetic⁵⁶. The final sentence we are interested in reads as follows⁵⁷:

The battle is fitting for one who strips himself because he do not remember anything which is <left> behind nor return (*hāpek*) to it.

According to Edmund Beck, “to strip himself” in this passage means renouncing the earthly possessions mentioned above⁵⁸, including marriage, it seems. Thus, not remembering anything of the world left behind, and not turning back, are the two most important preconditions for being part of the covenant.

Two passages from the Apology of Pseudo-Meliton are comparable with the above passage. Cf. Apology 6:

Know therefore that, if you will be serving Him who never can be moved, <then> as He is forever, you also, putting off what is visible and perishable, shall stand living and knowing forever before Him.

and Apology 12:

But those who are mindful <of Him> and are in the unchangeable qyāmā do see God as far as they are able to see Him.

The stage preceding the standing before God in Apology 6 and 12 is “putting off what is visible and perishable” (chapter 6) and “being mindful of God” (chapter 12). In Aphrahat 7:20, this corresponds to “not remembering anything which is <left> behind”⁵⁹. To “standing living and knowing forever before” God (Apology 6) and to “the unchangeable qyāmā” (Apology 12) corresponds “not returning back” in Demonstration 7:20 whereas “qyāmā” in Demonstration 7:20 is the designation of the whole institution of the ascetics⁶⁰.

The general impression is that Pseudo-Meliton and Aphrahat think about the single-mindedness of the faithful ones along similar lines, stressing their renouncement of the world and stability in their orientation towards God. This

⁵⁶ Cf.: And whosoever loves possessions, let him turn back from war service, lest when battle overpowers him he remember (*netz²kar*) his possessions and turn back to them.

⁵⁷ See the Syriac text in Aphrahat, Dem. 7:20 (PS I,1, 345,24–26 Par.).

⁵⁸ P.E. BECK, *Asketentum und Mönchtum bei Ephraem*, in: *Il monachesimo orientale. Atti del convegno di studi orientali che sul predetto tema si tenne a Roma, sotto la direzione del Pontificio Istituto Orientale, nei giorni 9, 10, 11 e 12 aprile 1958*, OCA 153, Roma 1958, 349.

⁵⁹ “Mindful” (Apology 12, ܩܝܡܐܢܐ) and “remember” (Demonstration 7:20, ܩܝܡܐܢܐ) are participial forms from the same root d²kar (remember).

⁶⁰ Cf.: Therefore it is right that the trumpeters, the heralds of the Church, should call and exhort the whole Covenant (qyāmeḥ) of God before baptism, those who have offered themselves for virginity and consecration, young men and virgins and consecrated ones.

last idea is expressed in Pseudo-Meliton by means of the term *qyāmā*; Aphrahat uses the same term as a designation for the whole ascetic community.

If we ask about the reasons for this difference, one of the most obvious would be the baptismal context of the Demonstration 7 which is lacking in Pseudo-Meliton. Our second approach to the problem of the development of the term *qyāmā* between Pseudo-Meliton and Aphrahat has to do with this context. As in the first case, only a faint link can be traced.

A text which may illustrate our thesis has, at first glance, surprisingly little to do with the baptism⁶¹. In the Manichaean Psalm to Jesus 272 we read⁶²:

1. Jesus Christ in whom I have believed, show [thyself to me quickly and save me.

O merciful and good (ἀγαθός), full of mercy upon ...

O First-born, Jesus, whom I have loved, do not forsake me

5. in my tribulations.

Since my youth unto thee have I given thanks (εὐχαριστεῦν);

I forsook the universe, I believed in thee, I stood

in thy name, O only-begotten (μονογενής). Do not.

In the context of our investigation, of particular interest are the lines 7 and 8 which seem to be free of any specific Manichaean imagery and, therefore open to a reading in the context of the early Syriac tradition⁶³. In verse 7,

⁶¹ About *qyāmā* and baptism see R. MURRAY, *The Exhortation* (cf. n. 8), 76–78, where the Manichaean psalm 272 is quoted.

⁶² Quoted according to C.R.C. ALLBERRY, *A Manichaean Psalm-Book, Part II, Manichaean Manuscripts in the Chester Beatty Collection 2*, Stuttgart 1938, 91, for the Coptic text see *ibid.* About the Coptic Manichaean psalm book in general see M. KRAUSE, *Zum Aufbau des koptisch-manichäischen Psalmenbuches*, in: A. VAN TONGERLOO, S. GIVERSEN (eds), *Manichaica selecta. Studies presented to Prof. J. Ries on the occasion of his seventieth birthday*, Manichaean Studies 1, Lovanii 1991, 177–190. About the Manichaean Psalms to Jesus see P. NAGEL, *Der ursprüngliche Titel der manichäischen »Jesuspsalmen«*, in: H. PREIBLER, H. SEIWERT (eds), *Gnosisforschung und Religionsgeschichte. Festschrift für K. Rudolph zum 65. Geburtstag*, Marburg 1994, 209–216. Nagel dates the Psalms to Jesus in the first part of the 4th century, cf. *op. cit.*, 210.

⁶³ As far as I know, the problem of the original language and geographical provenience of the Manichaean Psalms to Jesus has not yet been dealt with. According to the oral communication of Prof. Peter Nagel, the Psalms seem to be translated from Greek. I would like to express my warmest thanks to Prof. Nagel for his kind consultation about this question. The possibility of a Semitic Vorlage of the hypothetical Greek text cannot, however, be excluded, given the Syriac roots of the religion of Mani. About of the Coptic Manichaean writings being influenced by the Syriac *ḫīdayā* conception see W.-P. FUNK, „Einer aus tausend, zwei aus zehntausend“: Zitate aus dem Thomasevangelium in den koptischen manichaica, in: H.-G. BETHGE u.a. (eds), *For the Children, Perfect Instruction*, FS H.-M. Schenke, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 54, Leiden/Boston 2002, 91.

the belief in Jesus is connected with the abandonment of the world. The other side of this process is standing firm in the name of the Only-Begotten One (v. 8)⁶⁴. As one can see, the ideas presented in Pseudo-Meliton, of turning away one's attention from the world to God and of being consequent in this decision⁶⁵ are, in this text, enriched by a new aspect – standing firm *in the name of the Only-Begotten* (v. 8). This development is significant in more than one respect.

First, in relation to the texts of Pseudo-Meliton, we can observe that the accent is moved from God to Christ. Standing for God is replaced by standing in the name of the Only-Begotten. Second, standing in the name of the Only-Begotten is very likely to presuppose the assuming of this very name by the faithful, which is only thinkable if we suppose that *μονογενής* in this text goes back to the Syriac or Aramaic *ḫīdayā*⁶⁶. Third, we can suppose baptism to be the locus where this transformation takes place.

The further development which led to the emergence of *bnay* or *bnāt* *qyāmā* evidenced in the 7th Demonstration of Aphrahat, where *qyāmā* means the whole congregation of the ascetic *ḫīdayā*, can probably be seen as a result of the connection of standing/*qyāmā* with baptism, which in the early Church was a much more collective action than today. An individual “taking his stand” for Christ becomes, thus, a characteristic mark of the whole community. This interpretation explains why, in the time of Aphrahat, being in the standing/covenant (*qyāmā*) and being the single one (*ḫīdayā*) was essentially the same: the decisive element was the permanent personal relation to the Only-Begotten Son of God.

⁶⁴ The Coptic text reads as follows ΔΙΤΩΚ ΑΡΕΤ ΖΗΤΗΡΕΝ ΠΜΟΝΟΓΕΝΗΣ, cf. PsJes 272.23–24 (91.23–24 Allberry).

⁶⁵ Described as standing.

⁶⁶ About various meanings of *ḫīdayā* see n. 12 above. A. ADAM, *Grundbegriffe* (cf. n. 4), 218–221 suggested that the earliest Syriac ascetics accepted the title of Christ *ḫīdayā* (= *μονογενής*) as their self-designation. Some evidence in support of this thesis was proposed in D. F. BUMAZHNOV, *Some Further Observations Concerning the Early History of the Term MONAXOΣ (Monk) StPatr 45*, 2010, 21–26.