

Memra 78: A Chastisement of Priests

Mar Narsai

Translated by Fr. Andrew Younan

* WORKING DRAFT *

Introduction

Mar Narsai (d. 503) writes this *Memra* or metrical homily¹ as a wake-up call to the priests of his time. Before launching into this specific lamentation, Narsai begins by reflecting on the difficulty of the times themselves. The world is confused, lawless, full of rebellion, and Narsai wonders if there has ever been a time as bad as his own (lines 19-20), which is like a living nightmare or lie (9-13). More precisely, the age is one where those with responsibility over the social order are failing in their duties (39-40), which we learn by the end of the *Memra* is the cause, rather than the effect, of the corruption of the time. Priests especially are at fault in this, and are especially corrupt.

Of all the vices of priests (and there are many), Narsai focuses mostly on those of envy, greed, and quarreling (75f). Little mentioned is lust, but this may be a result of Narsai's modesty, or of the mostly-married priesthood of his time and area. The bulk of the *Memra* is filled with couplets that reveal the irony of those responsible for the holiness of others being the least holy of all. Particularly grievous are the conflicts priests have with one another, which are rooted in jealousy and bear the fruit of scandalous public quarrels. Narsai warns of the severe judgment of Christ (105f) awaiting those who turn to evil, especially those given a gift as great as the priesthood. With such shepherds, the sheep are indeed scattered, and worse, learn the vices of those who guide them.

Narsai admonishes priests to remember both the dignity of their station as well as the fact that they are servants, not lords and masters, of their people (183f). Even the angels (in verses 221-2, quoted and adapted in the Chaldean and Assyrian priestly ordination rite) are unable to do what the priest does in his service of the altar, and yet this dignity is disregarded and sold for the relatively worthless things of this world (229f). It is this greed which begets envy between priests – for they forget the value of what they have, seek earthly treasures, and therefore become jealous of what another priest has. This causes division, one form of which is outright heresy. In particular, Narsai targets the monophysite heresy which “mingled” rather than distinguished the Divine and human natures in the one Person of Christ (277f). In general, he is not fond of the *communicatio idiomatum* wherein something belonging to Divinity is predicated of humanity, or vice-versa (e.g., “God died;” see 294f).

Despite the social disorders caused by the faults of priests, however, the rank or station of the priesthood itself remains pristine, and Narsai concludes this *Memra* with a kind of *apologia* clarifying that he is criticizing not the institution of the priesthood itself, but the corruption of individual priests. Indeed, it is ultimately only out of love for the priesthood that Narsai writes, and he holds back whatever else he might wish to say, lest others without such love find an excuse to insult the priests of the Church.

¹ Narsai: *Homiliae et Carmina*, Alphonse Mingana, edit. (Mosul, 1904), vol. 2, 328-339.

Translation

I. The Difficulty of the Current Age

1. An evil time forces me to speak of its evil,
2. and its disorder makes me talk of its confusion.
3. I saw that it troubles the order of its path outside of order,
4. and so my mind ran to consider its confusion.
5. I saw that it went wildly along a wandering path,
6. and was shocked at its lawless rebellion.
7. It has become wild like ravenous animals,
8. and did not lend a hand to man to fight against it.
9. My thoughts wandered to its raging as in a dream,
10. and I thought that perhaps its course was a dream and not a reality.
11. I considered the seasons that were in my day to be like a dream,
12. and not only a dream, but a lie even worse than a dream.
13. Its disorder forced me to call it a delirious dream,
14. and like in a dream, it leads man astray from duty.
15. It drowns the world with its heaviness like in sleep,
16. and no one wants to shake away the heaviness of its evil.
17. The darkness of ignorance is like the darkness of night,
18. and it is so difficult to journey well through its gloom.
19. The time of this time is darker than all times,
20. and it is possible that there has never been a darker time.
21. Its power darkly extends over and within all things,
22. and defeats the light of intelligence with its bitterness.
23. Those who walk pause their journey to the promise of peace,
24. for a time like unto darkness stands before their eyes.
25. Every rank has stopped thinking of noble things,
26. and everyone imprisons his inclinations within himself, like during winter.
27. The intelligent fold up their minds like a robe,
28. and they go in and hide themselves, lest they be crushed by the time's frost.
29. Sloth seizes them like a fever,
30. and they no longer wish to translate secret voices in the hearing of men.
31. Every rank has fallen into the one sickness of ignorance,
32. and there is no one to press the word of truth to the wound of his fellow.
33. The wounds of their deeds are like blistered sores,
34. and no one knows how to bandage them well with faithfulness.
35. The disease in which they fell is worse than any other disease,
36. and there are no medicines that can heal its wounds.
37. The sickness of this time has crept into the inner soul,
38. and it burrows into human nature like a worm.
39. Every rank and station has fallen into its weakness,
40. and the shocking thing is that all are sick and no one knows it.

41. Kings are sick, and feeble the crown upon their heads,
42. and no authority is healthy in station or working in order.

II. The Vices of Priests

43. Priests are sick, weak is the staff of their command,
44. and there is no law that stands on behalf of health of spirit.
45. Priests, who heal souls, are spiritually sick,
46. and in their souls are sown the fevers of bodily passions.
47. Hateful passions of every kind are found within them,
48. and one more than another is weak and rotting in disgraces.
49. Envy bites, pride kicks, pretense stings,
50. and though there are no excuses, excuses are woven and not undone.
51. Wrath shakes, quarrel burns, hatred threatens,
52. and each is zealous to burn his friend as in a fire.
53. Traps in deceit, nets in guile, wiles in secret,
54. and who is able to be rescued from such adversities?
55. Swords polished, arrows sharpened, spears straightened,
56. and soon there will be no remnant left unspoiled.
57. War readied, battle prepared, ranks formed,
58. and the atrocity is: who is fighting with whom.
59. Come and wonder, rational and mute natures,
60. at the harsh battles priests marshal against each other.
61. Come, O spiritual, look and examine intelligently
62. how much our rebellion has increased in this time.
63. Come and mourn, O mortal nature, for yourself,
64. and wail and weep over your lawless evils.
65. Your evils have increased unlawfully, O miserable nature,
66. and you have journeyed the paths of rebellion without order.
67. Your will has insolently assaulted the truth,
68. and behold, the sign of your insolence in the heads of your people.
69. The heads of your people divide the harmony that was placed within you,
70. and they divide you into pieces of every kind.
71. The 'sowers of peace' trouble the peace through their disputes,
72. and they raise a quarrel between the earthly and heavenly.
73. The priests raise an evil quarrel between and among all,
74. and lo, the troubled world fights against itself.
75. They wear evil envy like an armor, one against another,
76. and they launch words like arrows, without forgiveness.
77. The 'educated' launch curses into each other's members,
78. and do not consider whom they harm with their words.
79. Blind jealousy blinds them from clarity,
80. and they do not reflect on whom they hurt with their attacks.

81. Ignorant pride leads them away from clarity,
 82. and they do not distinguish or know what is fitting for their great name.
 83. Love of money binds them to earthly things,
 84. and they do not long for the promise of the life to come.
 85. Greed enflames them with a fire of enticements,
 86. and the world's blessings decrease because of their neediness.
 87. Love of praise entraps them in the trap of praise,
 88. and like birds they fall from the high places of their good works.
 89. Gluttony enters and creeps into their thoughts,
 90. and they gather from all, but the longing in them is not fulfilled.
 91. Those lacking nothing² begin to lack everything,
 92. and while everything is theirs, their grasps fall short of everything.
 93. Those who possess the riches of their work lack what is theirs,
 94. and lo, they beg to ask for alms like beggars.
 95. Their jealousy has made them more lacking than all,
 96. and their disputes have stopped good things from their mouths.
 97. They have torn themselves with ignoble things,
 98. and they have diminished the great rank in which they stand.
 99. They were named 'shepherds of the rational,'
 100. and they left human beings and went out in search of dumb things.
 101. The intelligent loved unintelligent things more than intelligent,
 102. and left the possession of their inheritance to silent things.
 103. In love of the earth, they disregarded study of spiritual things,
 104. and they traded honorable things for contemptible ones.

III. Christ's Punishment of Priests

105. The Bridegroom above invited them to the kingdom above,
 106. and they made a lie of his true words.
 107. The Truth will become a witness in the judgment between himself and them,
 108. and will demand a penalty of them for disgracing his honesty.
 109. He will chastise deceitful priests by a just judgment,
 110. for they disgraced his Gift,³ and dishonored his honorable Mysteries.
 111. He will pronounce a judgment upon the deceit of the deceivers,
 112. for they covered up his richness and did not provide for the needs of man.
 113. He gave them his Word, that in it they may distribute life to men,
 114. and they obscured it in the garments of their deeds.
 115. To them he told the word he said to Simon;
 116. they heard it and were silent about the knowledge hidden in it.
 117. He entrusted them to stand guard for the flock of man,

² 2 Corinthians 6:10: "as having nothing, and yet possessing everything."

³ *Mawhawtha*, usually referring to the Eucharist.

118. and they ate the meat of the fatlings and destroyed the weak.
119. They deserve to be told the word of prophecy:
120. "Oh you priests, stupid and ignorant shepherds!"

IV. Consequences of the Sins of Priests

121. The shepherds tended our nature unnaturally,
122. and they led our lives to a mountain of error unmercifully.
123. Our humanity has become like a sheepfold without a shepherd,
124. and the animals of bad habits have entered and destroyed our race.
125. Rational beings are lost among paths of ignorance,
126. and no one turns their minds toward the Scriptures.
127. The shepherds have abandoned the goal of the fear of Truth,
128. and the sheep have been lost on the road of the falsehood of their deeds.
129. With their deeds they trouble the path of faith,
130. and with their deceits they fill it with improper suspicion.
131. They throw impropriety like rocks before those who walk,
132. suspicion increases, and no one walks truthfully.
133. For miles of "peace," they move and become far from their place,
134. and the place of the sheep of hope and love becomes confused.
135. Minds lay in wait against minds like thieves,
136. and man strips men of good things.
137. The treasury of the faith had been filled with great richness,
138. and man plundered it, not in love but in deceit.
139. Deceit compounds deceivers with the deceiver,
140. and they plunder religion without distinction through their words.
141. The insolent bind up evil secrets about the rebel,
142. and they trouble the peace of the Creator's Name between us and them.
143. Evil priests are participants in impropriety,
144. and they bring up rebellion, that they need not obey the word of peace.
145. The Harbor of Peace⁴ established the word of peace for them,
146. and they persecuted peace away from peace to the war outside.
147. The peace of the Name of the Creator is wandering in the war outside,
148. and there is no place for it to enter and dwell near those who know it.
149. It is cast out from its true dwelling like a poor man,
150. and fraud enters to its inheritance and plunders its goods.
151. Conflict lays hold of peaceful territory and surrounds it;
152. it raises its voice and proudly mocks righteousness.
153. A plain does not fear thieves surrounding it
154. as much as a peaceful legion fears division.
155. Those who dwell on a plain do not fear wild animals

⁴ Christ is here symbolized as the "Harbor of Peace."

156. as much as the friends of love are shaken by the priesthood.

V. Sad Ironies in Priestly Vices

157. There is a great atrocity in our age of bitter bent,
158. that the cause of “peace” has become the cause of all evils.
159. The priesthood exists for the cause of peace among the earthly,
160. but priests have turned the order of peace toward divisions.
161. It has been given to us in the place of light and instead of salt,
162. but its light has darkened, its taste has become bland, and it has overturned the earth.
163. Its Establisher has called it “forgiver of evil”⁵ and “giver of life,”
164. but its evil has increased and the very smell of life in it has grown bland.
165. The divine command has given it the keys to the heights,⁶
166. and it does not enter, nor does it open the door to the repentant.⁷
167. Priests close the door of mercies in the face of man,
168. and they do not want to accept the remorse or the tears of those who plead.
169. Priests hide the Word of life from mortals,
170. and they do not give a hand to those dead in sin to live for free.
171. Without pity they make cutting threats to sinners,
172. and they do not place the Medicine of Life⁸ upon their wounds.
173. They approach the work prepared for them with slothfulness,
174. and they repay the thanksgiving they owe with disgust.
175. The preacher of the Spirit called the station of priests “servant,”⁹
176. and they have turned it to the name of earthly authority.
177. They think that the orders of the Church are earthly things,
178. and they make demands of humanity like besiegers.
179. The priest sits on his porch like a judge,
180. and like a ruler he raises his voice and demands taxes.
181. The name of authority lifts up an idiot over his hearers,
182. and he does not consider that his station is far from authority.

VI. Address to Priests

183. Your station is not authority, you fool. Why are you deceived?
184. You are a slave and a servant to your companions.
185. You have not been stationed for vengeance, O man. Why do you seek it?
186. Mercies have called you to the gate of the King to have mercy for free.
187. The great Treasure entrusted to your hands is not yours.
188. Why are you proud of what is not yours as if it is yours?

⁵ John 20:23.

⁶ Matthew 16:19.

⁷ Matthew 23:13.

⁸ An early term used, significantly by Aphrahat, to indicate the forgiveness of sins by priests.

⁹ Reading ‘awda for ‘wadha. Probably referring to Paul, who regularly refers to himself and others as “servant of Christ.”

189. You are a steward of the King over all, you son of mortals,
 190. do not be arrogant about what you give from the house of your Master.
 191. Your Lord gave you to distribute from his treasury:
 192. see that you do not cheat your companions with hypocrisy.
 193. Hear the voice of your Lord who denounces the evil servant;¹⁰
 194. prepare well, lest you become his companion in condemnation.
 195. The Creator is preparing to examine his servants in a just judgment,
 196. woe to him who hid his Master's money¹¹ from the needy.
 197. The examination of his judgment enters even the passions and powers:
 198. woe to him who did not have pity on his companions lovingly.
 199. With fire he will test servants and words of body and soul,
 200. woe to him who did not build pure works in the building of truth.
 201. He will cast judgment without confusion upon every rank,
 202. and will not be reverent toward the authority of priests and kings.
 203. He sharpens the torture intensely especially for priests,
 204. in proportion to the Gift and the great power they received from him.
 205. Upon them he hardens the doubled scourging without pity,
 206. in proportion to the fact that they had power to absolve, but did not pity or forgive.
 207. He will judge them before angels and men,
 208. in proportion to the fact that they were honored before the eyes of the earthly and heavenly.

VII. The Honor of the Priesthood Dishonored by Priests

209. He honored them before the eyes of the earthly and the heavenly,
 210. and they insulted his honor through inappropriate things.
 211. He honored them above the heavenly assemblies,
 212. and the wretched ones did not distinguish or understand to what level they had risen.
 213. He brought them up to a great station above the watchers,¹²
 214. and they did not consider how much the misery of man had been lifted.
 215. The station they received witnesses to how they had risen above all,
 216. for even the spiritual who are greater than them became beneath them.
 217. The watchers are unable to rise to the level that they received,
 218. and they cannot be sufficient to serve [the altar] themselves.
 219. The assemblies and powers of the heavenly fear,
 220. and when they are compared, they are exceedingly less than, the priesthood.
 221. Gabriel is glorious, and Michael is great, and their names witness this,
 222. but though this is the case, their name is less than the priesthood.
 223. The name of the priesthood is named above all things,
 224. and if there is anything greater than anything, it is under the priesthood.
 225. Priests despise the great station which honors them,

¹⁰ Luke 16:1-13.

¹¹ Matthew 25:14-30.

¹² An Aramaic word referring to angels, who never sleep.

226. and they hate its beauty by the viciousness of their deeds.
227. In every way, they insulted its honorable name,
228. until the miserable derided and laughed at its misery.

VIII. The Greed of Priests

229. For a price, they sold that Gift that cannot be sold,
230. and while the world world is not worth its value, they settled for a price.
231. They traded the station that is unchanging for passing things,
232. and while nothing resembles its name, they gave it an equal.
233. O impudent and irreverent greed,
234. which places a value for something that is impossible to sell.
235. O priesthood which trades its name for despicable things,
236. and while everything is its own, it gives away its own without any gain.¹³
237. It sells its own for what is not its own idiotically,
238. and lo, the buyer laughs at the one who sells.
239. One betrays it when he gives it away for worthless prices;
240. one disrespects it by receiving bland things for it.
241. Its shame increases between buyer and seller,
242. for they do not sense what is the power hidden within it.
243. O you fools who do not learn what is good and bad:
244. why did you sell the height and depth without even knowing?
245. O you haughty, whom ignorant pride has misled:
246. why did you trade heavenly things for miserable dirt?
247. The pearl that cannot be sold, for the ignorant!¹⁴
248. This is the laughingstock: the ignorant have sold the priesthood.
249. Gemstones are found only in the treasuries of kings,
250. but shockingly, the holy of holies is tossed in the marketplace.
251. Worldly stations are not given without some study,
252. but the wisdom of the Truth has no inquirer to admire it.
253. This alone does a priest ask when he gives it away:
254. whether there is gold, and if not, it is not for sale.
255. The priest looks at the gift given, and gives it away,
256. and if it is large, he also will gain and pour it out.
257. The buyer hires it out according to need,
258. and while it is spread thin, he seeks to destroy it in his craftiness.
259. Its work is considered craftiness to its seller,
260. and it is turned to a business by its buyer.
261. There is no bargaining for earthly trades
262. like the bargaining of giving and taking spiritual things.

¹³ Genesis 25:29-34.

¹⁴ Matthew 7:6.

IX. Conflicts between Priests

263. There is no contention over perishing goods
264. like the fights that happen between men over eternal things.
265. There is no battle that one tyrannical king wages against another
266. like priests make against priests savagely.
267. Priests savagely attack the priesthood,
268. and step on each other without pity in their conflicts.
269. In their conflicts, they trouble the world that had been peaceful,
270. and they fight night and day, without end.
271. In their divisions, they tear up the garment of the Faith,
272. and increase on earth different faiths without number.
273. In their envy, they cause schisms between churches,
274. and all men are divided, and no one accepts the word of his fellow.
275. The assembly is one body which Christ has gathered through his passion,
276. and priests divide it into different pieces that cannot be counted.

X. Christological Heresies Preached by Priests

277. One was the Body that became the Sacrifice for the sake of our conscience,
278. and ignorant men wreck it through their mixing one thing with another.
279. One is the Nature that is, and is what it is,
280. and the stupid mix it with a creature that his hands made.
281. The Sacrifice of our life's salvation was perfected through a body and a soul,
282. and the anathematized made him lacking a soul and without a mind.
283. One is the Word, the Son of God, with his Begetter,
284. and the prideful divided that equality without dividing it.¹⁵
285. The Nature of Being is without limit and without visibility,
286. and the rabid confined it in body parts, without confining it.
287. The natures are distinct; in being, one Person,
288. but the hard of heart do not understand the manner in which they are in him.
289. I say they are in him not in nature but in love,
290. and while this is truly the case, one is distinguished from another as something distinct.
291. The Creator is distinct, and not mingled with the work of his hands,
292. for how far is creation from the great Power that created it!
293. Creation is creation, as much as it is expanded by its causes,
294. and Being is Being, as much as he diminishes by an assumed name.¹⁶
295. The Maker diminished by an assumed name only, while he can never diminish.
296. And even this assumed name is [given] by presumption.
297. It is presumption for a man to predicate change of Being,
298. and it is arrogant to say that it diminished even in name.

¹⁵ That is, divided it in their false speech, not in reality.

¹⁶ I.e., the *communicatio idiomatum*.

299. Being cannot ever diminish from what it is,
300. not under assumption, nor in act, nor in any way.

XI. Social Disorders Caused by Priests

301. The inclination of the evil presumes to diminish the Hidden Nature,
302. and no one deserves vengeance for this other than priests.
303. If only priests had solidly built a single religion,
304. they, the ignorant, would not build dwellings in the building of Truth.
305. If only priests had aimed their powers to the right goal,
306. they, the hard of heart, would not throw words of shame.
307. If only priests had loved the dignity of the Flesh of Christ,
308. they would not be fountains of bitter divisions in the churches.
309. If only priests would muse in their minds upon spiritual things,
310. the love of man would not become bored of the things to come.
311. Priests have been for us a cause of life and a cause of death,
312. and if only they had stuck to an orderly life, our race would do the same.
313. Now, the cause of death has taken the upper hand in their deeds,
314. and every man is diligent in killing his friend without pity.
315. From them, men learned to envy one another,
316. and lo, each is clothed with the zeal of wrath against his neighbor.
317. They began with vengeful condemnations,
318. and lo, every man agrees to judge his partner with vengeance.
319. They confused the well-formed order that went on among us,
320. and lo, our civilization is confounded, and we have no order that resembles man.
321. It would have been right for them to educate the innocence of man,
322. and grant good discernment¹⁷ to those without it through their words.
323. It was their duty to journey well to the promise beyond,
324. and to show the path to the Kingdom through their works.
325. The Creator promised the Kingdom above to the human race,
326. and priests closed up the path above, and no one walks it.
327. Travelers have ceased considering beautiful things,
328. and no one walks the path of hope and faith.
329. If there is one who walks, whether out of love or out of natural inclination,
330. may the conflict of priests not discourage him from walking well.
331. The great fear of their battles is cast upon everyone,
332. and there is no one who is faithful, nor anyone whose love is true.
333. Each man is cast among improper divisions,
334. and there is no security for a man among his fellow nor in speech.
335. If there is one who is secure, that security is not security,
336. for they set traps before his security from every side.

¹⁷ Literally "taste;" the formation of desires is a prominent factor in ancient education, for example, in Aristotle.

337. A man entraps another with words as with a trap,
 338. and if only there were quiet and silence rather than conversation.
 339. Speech is the sign of the rationality within our nature,
 340. and what can we do to stop the envy of its operation?
 341. The envy of priests has risen like a savage lion,
 342. and it gnaws at rationality with the fangs of wrath.
 343. The priesthood, which anoints man, has gained the fangs of a beast,
 344. and has begun to gnaw and swallow man without reflection.
 345. The peace of men and spirits was bound in it,
 346. but now angels and men are afraid to go near it.
 347. The great terror of our age, which is filled with faults,
 348. is that from our security springs division and despair.
 349. Our hope and faith were placed upon the priesthood,
 350. and now, it has fallen, and with it has fallen the security of our soul.
 351. It had supported the building of our life like a foundation,
 352. but the winds of desire blew, and it shook and fell.¹⁸

XII. Priesthood Itself Remains Untouched; Narsai's *Apologia*

353. Not that the priesthood itself shook or fell (as I said),
 354. but rather that priests became weak and shook from the sound of the spirit of allurements.
 355. It is not itself diminished in the things I mentioned about its servants,
 356. rather, their consciences diminished and reduced what is proper.
 357. It is not that it troubled the word of peace dwelling in it,
 358. but rather its hand-servants did not want to remain building up its love.
 359. It is not that it despised its honor before outsiders,
 360. but rather the guardians of its treasury spread its secrets through their deeds.
 361. I saw contempt for its mysteries when the mouth of the ignorant spoke,
 362. and wonder seized me: who is reviling whom with impudence?
 363. I wanted revenge for its insult to be made by my words,
 364. against the insolent who attacked its freedom and insulted its station.
 365. I looked at the greatness of its station when the hard of heart mocked it,
 366. and I became so zealous that I may give birth to words of boldness.
 367. It is bold for a man to blame the teaching station,¹⁹
 368. and may what I am blaming not be forgotten, as I blame.
 369. Zeal for priests has forced me to complain about their deeds,
 370. for they abandoned the path of faithfulness and tread [that of] deception.
 371. My speech has complained about their lawless deeds,
 372. and while I complained indeed, I do not insult their Order.
 373. I did not complain about them, insofar as I complained, out of jealousy;

¹⁸ Matthew 7:24-27.

¹⁹ *Rabanutha*.

374. nor did I backbite maliciously about their deeds.
375. Truth testifies that I did not hate them, nor do I now;
376. I hate the evil that is in them, which has sown evil quarreling.
377. They are quite beloved to me, due to the station placed in their hands,
378. and quite hateful to me due to the evil that they sow on earth.
379. I love them because of love and because of the Order,²⁰
380. and I hate them because of evil and hypocrisy.
381. I do not recommend any [priests] be haughty about their station,
382. lest they be despised inasmuch as their deeds are evil.
383. With appropriate love, let us repay them the debt of love,
384. and even if we are not worthy, let us not hold back what is due.
385. Law has placed the greatest of the great upon their station,
386. and it is wrong for us to insult their lawful station.
387. The critic criticizes their unlawful deeds,
388. when they disregard what is right and appropriate to their name.
389. A name honored above all has been placed upon their heads,
390. and it is unjust for us to criticize them as evil men.
391. They hold the keys of the heights in the hands of their minds,
392. and no one can enter that structure without them.
393. Let us then honor them lovingly with this agreement,
394. as ambassadors and guardians of the love of spiritual things.
395. At this point, I also will be silent from their indictment,
396. lest anyone assault and mock their great name.
397. Nor is my indictment an indictment of a backbiter,
398. but rather a sign that is full of love and witnesses to love.
399. Love witnesses that I complained about them lovingly,
400. and it entreated me to judge them according to its laws.
401. I judged the priests of the Church lawfully,
402. for I saw that they departed from lawful canons.
403. My speech walked along the path of [love's] words from the beginning,
404. and I did not wait to speak of it until the end.
405. The company of love has pleased me greatly in everything,
406. and far be it from me to forget, neglect it, or cease from its conversation.

²⁰ *Takhsa* – could refer either to the order of the priesthood, or the order of Mass.