Gisela Fuchs, *Auflehnung und Fall im syrischen Buch der Stufen (Liber Graduum): eine motiv- und traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012). Pp. 423; €86.00.

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Monographs on the *Liber Graduum* (*Book of Steps*/*Buch der Stufen*) are still rare, although depending upon one's language skills it is still humanly possible to read all the articles and studies on this book. Gisela Fuchs' doctoral dissertation at the University of Bonn has approached this enigmatic early Syriac work by an in-depth study of a recurring cluster of ideas, images and references to the activity of Satan and evil occurring throughout the corpus. Burrowing deep inside the language and imagery of the *Liber Graduum* (*LG*), Fuchs unveils surprising and often unnoticed dimensions in this anonymous collection. The converse of the old adage can be true: by looking very closely at the individual trees, one can better understand the forest.

Indeed, the references to Satan and his rebellion are, pun intended, "legion." At first sight, the anonymous author's language about Satan appears to be part of the biblical vocabulary employed heavily by him, but Fuchs sees at play a more fundamental dynamic for the economy of the *LG*. Concentrating upon four *mēmrē* (Number Seven: "On the Commandments of the Upright"; Fifteen: "On Adam's Marital Desire"; Twenty-One: "On the Tree of Adam"; and Twenty-Three: "On Satan and the Pharaoh and the Israelites") Fuchs identifies the central theme permeating *LG* as the argument and battle with Evil and labels the author's persistent efforts to attain "victory over evil" as the *summa theologica* of the *LG*. The title of this monograph, "Rebellion and Fall," reflects the nature of humanity's struggle with Evil. The return to the lost Paradise of Eden by Adam and the regaining of his original Perfection by means of *apokatastasis*, Fuchs nevertheless insists, is the *Hauptthema* of *LG* which prefigures the attempt of the Perfect (*gmīrē*) of the *LG* community to re-enter Eden.

The typology underlying this narrative is signified by the relationship between Satan and Adam. Satan is the *typos*, the Rebel who fell and was overthrown from heaven, who then becomes the teacher, instructing and tempting Adam to obey him rather than God. Adam becomes the student of Satan and obeys him, becoming the anti-type, for "Adam fell from heaven with that same fall by which the Rebel had slipped and fallen" (*mēmrā* 21, section 18). "He (Adam/human being)," moreover, "obeyed Satan and became Satan" (23.4). Fuchs traces the two variant traditions which state that Adam "fell from heaven" (ܢܦܠ) and "was driven out" (ܢܓܪ) of Paradise, noting that the two other principal characters in the biblical saga – Eve and the Snake – are considered by these traditions as "extras" who were not essential in the ongoing drama. Adam wanted to be like God, and thus was induced by Satan to enjoy eating with no mention of Eve's famous encouragement. Fuchs could have cited here Philoxenos of Mabbug's memorable dictum from his *Discourses* that "the lust of the belly is the beginning of all sin" (*Discourse* 10.60).

The literal and figurative nexus of this falling and eating is the Tree in the Garden of Eden. Fuchs aligns the uses of a "Baumsatanologie" (21.1; cf. Fuchs pp. 165-166) as sources of the fall and expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. They obeyed and learned from Satan, and so Satan is "personified" as the Tree, from which people still eat. The author of the *LG* countered with a "Baumchristologie": people eat from "the Tree of Life, that is our Lord" (20.7); "The good tree, in that world of light invisible to the eyes of flesh, is our Lord Jesus" (21.2); "…the Tree of Life of the Garden of Eden by which people are saved from death, this Tree being the Life-giving Spirit…" (29.19).

Fuchs identifies a passage as a "hymn of the Fall of Adam" (15.7), in which Adam watches the animals and desires to become like them sexually. Hating the celibacy of the angels, he wants to become greater than they are and to be like God, causing the angels great distress. Showing how the "imitation

of the animals" echoes Psalms 49:13 and 8:6, Fuchs then offers an excursus from other sources on this tradition of humans watching the animals in order to learn how to behave sexually.

This activity of animal watching is used several times by the Author to illustrate the straying desires of Adam and Eve for sexuality and lust and their lack of trust in God's providence. They hated celibacy or holiness (*qaddišūta*), so God relented and allowed them to marry. The couple did not realize that God possessed the ability and will to eventually give them children without lust or sexuality. In this vein, the Author recites the surprising tradition that "If all people desire to become holy (i.e., celibate), I (God) would create for them children just as I made a *daughter* for Adam from himself, without marriage and without lust" (25.3; Syriac text, *Patrologia Syriaca* III, 737:26-740:2). This subtle insertion reflects the concept that Adam had in essence given birth to Eve, by the agency of God and without sexuality (Adam's rib), and therefore she was his daughter – which itself is a prefiguration or type of the Virgin Birth.

What the Author has been rehearsing throughout his writings, Fuchs deduces, is a protological anthropology which presents the narrative of the origins of human existence and the emergence and fall of Evil, a predominantly negative and still functioning narrative. She identifies two early works that provide similar tendencies towards such a protological anthropology as background for the Author, the *Apocalypse of Moses* and the *Life of Adam and Eve*. The former work appears to have been translated from Syriac into Armenian and a Greek version is extant as well, and the latter has some of its content in the Syriac *Cave of Treasures*. How much access the Author would have had to these works or knowledge of their traditions remains a question.

Fuchs' analysis and insight into this strong current in the *LG* of the origins and operation of Evil, along with the pairing of Satan and Adam as type and anti-type in the Author's reconstruction of salvation, demonstrate an intellectual curiosity and creativity that invites the reader to look more deeply

into this text. Her perception that these traditions and motifs provide the primary hermeneutic for the entire work has tremendous validity, especially as the practical theology and spiritual direction of the Author towards the implementation of Perfection continue to be deciphered.

A gentle note, nonetheless, about these "trees" which constitute this "forest" is worth mentioning. Fuchs recognizes that the return of Adam and his descendants to Perfection and reentering Eden is the essential movement of this work. The Author expends much time and energy presenting the nature of this return to Perfection and how he believes it should be accomplished in this non-Edenic world. The reason the *LG* is one of the most important texts for early Syriac Christianity lies not so much in its theological construction of the Perfect and Upright way of life, but in our ability to read how this construction and movement was implemented, worked well for a time, and failed perhaps miserably, and anonymously. The unique scenario of the Perfect falling from Perfection, with the lowly Upright rising to near Perfection in the Author's estimation, leaves behind much of the biblical imagery, tradition history, and innumerable motifs employed, especially given the virtual mid-sentence ending of *mēmrā* 30, in which the fate of the Author and his community disappears from history. The "trees" Fuchs has identified and classified tell us a tremendous amount about the character of early Syriac Christianity and the influences at play upon it and especially the *LG*, yet we still are straining to encompass the whole forest of the *LG* in one glance.

Fuchs has provided a rich resource for the nooks and crannies of the discourse in the *LG*. One gains a new appreciation for the depth of learning and sophistication of that anonymous author, comprehending more about his theological mind-set and worldview. Anyone who embarks upon the study of this early Syriac work should find a place for this volume on their desk at the beginning of their journey.