

21 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; and he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Paradise, and by providence the second Adam crushed the head of the dragon in the river Jordan.⁴⁹⁵ During liturgical enactment of the rite of baptism, the following words are recited in an allusion to Psalm 74:13-14: “Thou also didst hallow the Jordan’s currents, sending from Heaven the Holy Spirit. And thou didst bruise the head of the serpent that lurketh therein.”⁴⁹⁶ Moreover, in the Jordan, “the Divine Word who ‘put on the body,’ deposits humanity’s lost Robe of Glory... and at each Christian baptism it is received in potential from the Font (often described both as the Jordan and as a womb...); finally, at the Last Judgment, it becomes the clothing of the Righteous in reality.”⁴⁹⁷ Of the “drama of baptism,” Anderson writes: “When Satan hears of the pending enrollment of the *catechumen*,⁴⁹⁸ he shows the same hostility he had formerly shown towards the exaltation of Adam and the resurrection of Christ... [Theodore writes that Satan ‘]tries and endeavors to bring us to the judgment hall as if we had no right to be outside his ownership. He pleads that from ancient times and from the creation of the head of our race we belong to him by right[...]. Having pledged to resist Satan, the candidates were urged to ‘stand with outstretched arms in the posture of one who prays, and look downwards and remain in that state in order to move the judge to mercy.’”⁴⁹⁹ In some contexts, the candidates “stood [barefoot] on animal skins while they prayed, symbolizing the taking off of the garments of skin they had inherited from Adam”⁵⁰⁰ as well as figuratively enacting the putting off the serpent, the representative of death and sin, under one’s heel.⁵⁰¹ Thus the serpent, his head crushed by the heel of the penitent relying on the mercies of Christ’s atonement, is by a single act renounced, defeated, and banished.⁵⁰²

The *Midrash ha Ne’elam* records the valuable instruction that “the serpent can slay a man only through the heel when he transgresses and tramples God’s commandments under his heel... The Evil Inclination slays man by inducing him to trample the commandments.”⁵⁰³ Thus, using the same Hebrew term, Cain’s downfall is portrayed as his failure to quickly crush Satan, who craves to wound him.⁵⁰⁴ Similarly, the same imagery is employed in Genesis 25:26, where Jacob’s seizing of the ineffectual Esau’s heel is a portent that he will ultimately prevail in his ongoing rivalry with his elder brother.⁵⁰⁵

495 V. Nersessian, *Treasures*, p. 71. See *Commentary* 1:1-b, p. 42.

496 V. Nersessian, *Treasures*, p. 71. See *Commentary* 2:2-c, p. 96.

497 Ephrem the Syrian, *Poems*, p. 51 n. 3.

498 = candidate for baptism.

499 G. A. Anderson, *Perfection*, pp. 183-184.

500 *Ibid.*, p. 184. See *Gospel of Thomas* (H. Koester, et al., *Thomas*, 37, p. 130); J. Z. Smith, cited in J. Dart, *Decoding*, pp. 104-105. Anderson adds: “By stripping themselves of this mortal skin, they were preparing to put on those heavenly garments with which humanity was first clothed.”

501 G. A. Anderson, *Perfection*, p. 131. See *Commentary* 1:20-a, p. 57; 1:24-a, p. 59; 4:31-a, p. 280; 5:23-c, p. 374.

502 For additional discussion, see V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, pp. 197-200. See also *Commentary* 2:2-c, p. 96 and *Excursus 52: Washing, Anointing, and Clothing Among Early Christians*, p. 661.

503 Cited in R. M. Zlotowitz, et al., *Bereishis*, p. 129; cf. Matthew 7:6; 1 Nephi 19:7; Mosiah 29:21-22; Alma 5:53, 60:33; Helaman 4:21-22, 6:31, 12:2; 3 Nephi 14:6, 28:35; D&C 3:15.

504 See *Commentary* 5:23-c, p. 374 and 4:22-c, p. 268.

505 “Since Esau was drawn after that serpent, Jacob dealt with him tortuously like a serpent... laying his hand on that heel to subdue it” (D. C. Matt, *Zohar* 2, Toledot 1:138a, p. 269; cf. H. Sperl, et al., *Zohar*, Mishpatim, Saba (The Old Sage), 3:309-316).