

Amir Harrak, *Jacob of Sarug's Homily on the Partaking of the Holy Mysteries*; Scott F. Johnson, *Jacob of Sarug's Homily on the Sinful Woman*; Edward G. Mathews, *Jacob of Sarug's Homily on the Creation of Adam and the Resurrection of the Dead*; Adam C. McCollum, *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on Jesus' Temptation*; Texts from Christian Late Antiquity 19, 33, 37–38, The Metrical Homilies of Mar Jacob of Sarug, Fascicles 17, 31–33 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013–2014). Pp. vii + 49, x + 128, viii + 66, viii + 144; \$35.00, \$52.91, \$41.60, \$55.64.

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Translations release texts from the domain of specialists, enabling wider access and forging connections across disciplines. Often they become the best known, most cited, and most valued texts in a corpus. They exert a strong influence in scholarship on large and difficult corpora. Hence the importance of these four volumes. They offer accessible translations of homilies with a difficult style that come from one of the largest collections of early Christian sermons. The translators provide introductions and annotations that identify productive avenues of scholarship on Jacob of Sarug. This review considers especially the trajectories of research that these volumes encourage.

Amir Harrak's *Homily on the Partaking of the Mysteries* situates Jacob's work within its liturgical setting.¹ In this homily, Jacob interprets the movements of the clerics and the words of the liturgy, and he exhorts his audience to partake worthily of the Eucharistic feast. It provides a glimpse into the setting in which Jacob delivered his homilies and brings us closer to an understanding of Jacob as a late antique ecclesiastical leader.

Harrak's prior scholarship has shown that this homily is a valuable source for understanding the early Syriac liturgy.² Here he identifies specific phrases that reflect historical and contemporary liturgies. Jacob even uses "an expression not found in the Syriac Orthodox and Catholic liturgy but present in the liturgy of the

¹ Paul Bedjan, ed., *Homiliae selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis* (Paris: Harrassowitz, 1905–1910), vol. 3, 646–63 (no. 95). Bedjan's edition serves as the base text for the homilies in these volumes.

² Amir Harrak, "The Syriac Orthodox Celebration of the Eucharist in Light of Jacob of Serugh's *Mimrō* 95," in *Jacob of Serugh and His Times*, ed. George A. Kiraz (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 91–113.

Church of the East and the Chaldean Church" (p. 3). While Narsai has received substantial attention for the development of the liturgy, a full analysis of Jacob's corpus in this regard awaits scholarly attention. This homily has long been available in English and French translations.³ The translation offered here is mostly reliable, but contains misprints (e.g., pp. 6, 14, 16, 32) and exhibits occasional confusion over Jacob's syntax (e.g., pp. 8, 14, 20). As a whole, the volume lays the groundwork for further research on the early Syriac liturgy in relation to Jacob's homilies.

Scott Johnson's *Homily on the Sinful Woman* provides a window into late antique literary culture.⁴ The homily offers an interpretation of the biblical narrative of the woman who anoints Jesus. Johnson's introduction highlights the imagery of baptism and medicine, among other topics, to compare this homily to a Pseudo-Ephremic homily, an anonymous dialogue poem of the fifth or sixth century, and a *kontakion* of Romanos the Melode. In the epilogue, Romanos's *kontakion* takes center stage, as Johnson considers the possible dependence of Romanos on earlier Syriac sources. These extended discussions reveal the fluidity and freedom of literary borrowings and allusions among Syriac and Greek authors. A picture emerges not of unoriginal copying but of creative repurposing and adaptation.

This volume also locates this homily within broader concerns about cultural interaction in bilingual areas. Johnson has recently published an extended treatment of the use of Greek by Christians in the Eastern Mediterranean, where he discusses the relationship between Greek and Syriac in late antiquity.⁵ Ephrem and Romanos have for some time served as key figures for exploring this relationship, and Jacob has recently received due attention as a transmitter

³ Richard H. Connolly, "A Homily of Mâr Jacob of Sérûgh on the Reception of the Holy Mysteries," *The Downside Review* 8 [27] (1908), 278–87; Johannes P. M. van der Ploeg, "Une homélie de Jacques de Saroug sur la réception de la sainte communion," in *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, vol. 3, *Orient chrétien, deuxième partie*, Studi e Testi 233 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1964), 395–418.

⁴ Bedjan, *Homiliae*, vol. 2, 402–28 (no. 51).

⁵ Scott F. Johnson, "Introduction: The Social Presence of Greek in Eastern Christianity, 200–1200 CE," in *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Greek*, *The Worlds of Eastern Christianity*, 300–1500, vol. 6 ed. Scott F. Johnson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014), 1–122.

of traditions.⁶ The introduction and epilogue frame the homily as a primary source through which one can fruitfully explore themes of bilingualism and literary relationships among Greek and Syriac authors. This volume offers a revision of Johnson's previously published translation of this homily.⁷ Only minor translation errors appear: for example, "the Savior" for "our Savior" (ܡܨܝܗ; p. 70). The introduction and epilogue to this volume offer a focused study on this topic; the translation encourages readers to join this conversation.

Edward Mathews's *Homily on the Creation of Adam and the Resurrection of the Dead* connects Jacob's thought to exegetical traditions.⁸ The opening sections of the homily feature an interpretation of Genesis 1–3. But Jacob quickly turns to the resurrection of Adam. This structure allows for extensive theological development. Jacob's theology of the fall and the creation of humanity has been the focus of previous scholarship. Mathews's translation makes this theology more accessible to an English-reading audience and reasserts this homily's importance for discussing such themes. His translation benefits from a modern critical edition and French translation by Khalil Alwan.⁹ While Matthews opts to use Bedjan's edition, he adds one line to the text and includes an additional twelve-line section in the introduction.

Taeke Jansma's important article on Jacob's *Homily on the Creation of the World*, also known as the *Hexaemeron*,¹⁰ helped place Jacob's exegesis of Genesis within the tradition of hexaemeral

⁶ See, for example, Manolis Papoutsakis, "The Making of a Syriac Fable: From Ephrem to Romanos," *Le Muséon* 120 (2007), 29–75.

⁷ Scott F. Johnson, "The Sinful Woman: A *Memra* by Jacob of Serugh," *Sobornost* 24 (2002), 56–88.

⁸ Bedjan, *Homiliae*, vol. 3, 152–75 (no. 72).

⁹ Khalil Alwan, ed. and trans., *Jacques de Saroug: Quatre homélies métriques sur la création*, CSCO 508–509 / Scrip. Syr. 214–215 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 78–105 (text); 87–113 (trans.).

¹⁰ See the titles given to the homily in the Arabic and Italian translations: Behnam M. Boulos Sony, trans., *Al-maymar 'alā itqān al-barāyā aw maymar al-ayyām al-sittah*, 2 vols. (Rome, 2000); Behnam M. Boulos Sony, ed. and trans., *Esamerone: I sei giorni della creazione* (Rome: Guaraldi, 2011).

literature.¹¹ Mathews, who also has translated two parts of Jacob's *Hexameron* for this series,¹² similarly locates Jacob's *Homily on the Creation of Adam and the Resurrection of the Dead* within a broader exegetical tradition. Drawing on his previous scholarship on early Christian exegesis of Genesis,¹³ Mathews connects this homily to the writings of Greek and Syriac authors. He thus demonstrates Jacob's participation in a wider discussion over the interpretation of this passage that crossed linguistic boundaries. The translation does not always accurately interpret Jacob's syntax (e.g., pp. 14, 22, 26–28). Much work remains to show the value of Jacob's corpus for understanding late antique exegesis. Volumes like Mathews's do much to forward this cause.

Adam McCollum's *Homilies on Jesus' Temptation* locates Jacob's exegesis within a broader exegetical tradition and identifies crucial questions for the future study of Jacob's corpus. McCollum translates two homilies that offer imaginative narrations of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.¹⁴ The survival of two homilies on this topic invites reflection on the major challenges facing scholarship on Jacob's homilies. In the introduction, McCollum considers the ascription of these homilies to Jacob and their manuscript transmission. We will need to understand Jacob's style and tendencies in order to attribute homilies to Jacob with confidence.

¹¹ Taeke Jansma, "L'hexaméron de Jacques de Sarûg," trans. Louis-Marcel Gauthier, *L'Orient Syrien* 4 (1959), 3–42, 129–62, 253–84. This homily appears in Bedjan, *Homiliae*, vol. 3, 1–151 (no. 71).

¹² Edward G. Mathews, *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on the Six Days of Creation: The First Day* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009); *Jacob of Sarug's Homilies on the Six Days of Creation: The Second Day* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, forthcoming).

¹³ Edward G. Matthews and Joseph P. Amar, trans., *Saint Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works*, FC 91 (1994); Edward G. Mathews, ed. and trans., *The Armenian Commentary on Genesis Attributed to Ephrem the Syrian*, CSCO 572–573 (Louvain: Peeters, 1998); Edward G. Mathews, "Isaac of Antioch and the Literature of Adam and Eve," in *Things Revealed: Studies in Early Jewish and Christian Literature in Honor of Michael E. Stone*, Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement 89, eds. Esther G. Chazon, David Satran, and Ruth A. Clements (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 331–344; Edward G. Mathews, "What Manner of Man?: Early Syriac Reflections on Adam," in *Syriac and Antiochian Exegesis and Biblical Theology for the 3rd Millennium*, (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008), 115–149.

¹⁴ Bedjan, *Homiliae*, vol. 3, 335–63 (no. 82); vol. 4, 610–31 (no. 126).

More attention to the complicated transmission of these homilies is also necessary to comprehend how and why they have survived to the present.

McCollum offers several constructive ways of approaching these foundational questions. First, he links these homilies to a wider exegetical tradition by noting common themes among Greek and Syriac works on the temptation. Jacob's relationship to Ephrem and the anonymous Syriac poetic tradition may yield insights not only into the biblical exegesis of this passage in these homilies but also into their ascription to Jacob. Second, he explores Jacob's vocabulary for aggression, humility, and the devil and demons. This enables comparison between the two homilies. Further studies on his language will lead to stronger claims about the authorship of Jacob's homilies. Third, he identifies interpretations common to both homilies. This suggests that the author of one homily at least had familiarity with the exegetical traditions in the other. This volume offers an excellent translation of these two homilies, even though occasional errors in word choice occur: "His" for "Our Lord's" (ܕܗܝ; p. 34); "our Lord" for "Christ" (ܕܡܠܟܐ; p. 78). But the translation offers good readings of the syntax, and the study of Jacob's specialized vocabulary makes the translation particularly lively at points. As a whole, this volume points forwards towards a better, linguistically grounded understanding of Jacob's corpus.

These four volumes highlight four major areas for potential growth in scholarship: liturgy, literature, exegesis, and the integrity of the corpus. In so doing, they reveal the importance of Jacob's homilies for understanding the history of biblical interpretation, late antique Christianity, and the Syriac heritage.