

Thomas Kollamparampil, *Salvation in Christ according to Jacob of Serugh: An Exegetico-theological Study on the Homilies of Jacob of Serugh on the Feasts of Our Lord* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010). Pp. xx + 535; \$175.00.

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This volume, originally the author's doctoral dissertation at the Augustinianum in Rome, was published in India by Dharmaram Publications in Bangalore in 2001, where the author is currently teaching. It followed Kollamparampil's *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*, which was a joint publication of the Centre for Indian and Inter-religious Studies (CIIS) in Rome and Dharmaram Publications in Bangalore in 1997. This very useful volume, which has been difficult to obtain in the West, is being replaced by fascicles of the Gorgias Press edition of *The Metrical Homilies of Jacob of Serugh*, edited by Sebastian P. Brock and George A. Kiraz. Already ten of these have appeared so that the majority of the seventeen homilies contained in the 1997 volume are in print in North America, which must be glad news for anyone who teaches Theology, Patristics or Church History in areas that lie close to the early Syriac Church. *Salvation in Christ* will be useful for teaching and study and will provide another entry into close engagement with the thought of the Syriac Christian tradition.

This work is dense and detailed. It is divided into three main parts: the first offering an overview of Jacob's life and thought, the second and longest working its way through the various images Jacob uses in his Festal Homilies to describe Jesus Christ and His work, and the third covering the scriptural basis of Jacob's thought and its roots in earlier Syriac writers. A clear and useful 15-page summary concludes the work. I would suggest using the first part (about 100 pages) and the final conclusion of 15 pages as reading for students before they begin working through some of Jacob's work. The very methodical and extensive treatment of the way Jacob frames and expresses his thought will be more useful as a resource to be dipped into rather than as a treatment to be read through in one pass. The very detailed Table of Contents, the full Index and the charts of what Kollamparampil calls Jacob's "typological networks" (13 pages listing his use of Old Testament passages in reference to Jesus Christ) and his list of the Titles of Christ

(6 pages, 194 titles with references for where they appear in the Festal Homilies) will guide the students of Jacob to whatever passages and material they might desire.

Kollamparampil begins by situating Jacob in his place and time, with a description of the range of his writing and of his symbolic thought and his convictions about the nature of revelation and approach to interpreting Scripture. This draws connections between Jacob and his predecessors, mostly Aphrahat and Ephraem, of course, but also points out areas in which Jacob built on their offerings or extended his own thought in uncharted directions. The contrast between Jacob's pacific and pastoral nature and the fraught times in which he lived is well drawn and serves to highlight his purpose in writing. It is refreshing to read such an extended treatment of a Christian thinker from these decades (Jacob lived from 451–521) that approaches him as an expounder of Christian doctrine rather than a theological pugilist. 50 pages of general treatment of his theological method close out the first part of the study.

The second part of the work marches through the material in Jacob's festal homilies, treating it in the order of Christ's gospel life, from Nativity to Ascension. This is followed by two chapters, one treating of soteriology and the second covering theological thought patterns. This is the heart of Kollamparampil's exposition and, while difficult when gulped down whole, will serve as a mine of information and citations for future students of Jacob. Virtually every paragraph in this part of the volume has a reference to a specific passage, and for a paragraph to have ten or more is not unusual. These are centered on the Festal Homilies, of course, but are not limited to them. Students of Jacob will want a copy of this work on their shelves to direct them to passages relevant to their study and to provide them with syntheses that had escaped their notice.

Part Three is more synthetic than analytic and delineates Jacob's thought in its over-all shape, treating his ideas of the meaning and purpose of Incarnation as a part of Divine Self-Revelation and of Jacob's placing of Jesus Christ at the center of the History of Salvation, as well as of the history of Creation itself. These 140 pages provide the reader with the clearest sense of Jacob's religious understanding. They offer food for class discussions on him as a thinker among thinkers and can do much to bring him into the

theological conversation to which students are exposed in seminars or “Early Christianity” classes.

If I were still teaching undergraduates, I might use Kollamparampil’s translation of a homily and parts of this volume to insert Jacob into a class on “The Development of Christian Thought,” which has not hitherto been manageable. He could also find a home in a course on Christology. The pedagogical opportunities that Dr. Kollamparampil has provided us will bring more students into contact with this giant of the Syrian Orthodox tradition as well as help scholars find their way through the ocean of works that Jacob left behind to instruct and bemuse us. I will keep this volume on a shelf close to my desk and expect to refer to it frequently when consulting Jacob or wondering if I ought to consult him. Perhaps Dr. Kollamparampil will someday offer us a handbook on Jacob and his works. The scholarly world is in sore need of that kind of help. Still, he has moved us along the path to easier engagement with Mar Jacob already, for which this reviewer is most grateful.