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Jacob of Serugh, known as the "Flute of the Holy Spirit" and the "Harp of the Church" is famous for his *mêmrê* in 12-syllable metre, of which nearly 400 survive. This volume, which celebrates the life and works of Jacob, gathers the papers given on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of St. Mark's Syriac Orthodox Cathedral in Teaneck, New Jersey.

Three contributions come from Sebastian Brock: "A Prayer Song by St Jacob of Serugh Recovered"; "Jacob's Forgotten *Sughyotho*"; and "Jacob of Serugh: A Select Bibliographical Guide." In his first article, Brock describes an alphabetical poem by Jacob that appears in an abbreviated form in medieval liturgical manuscripts. He then presents the Syriac text followed by a translation with notes. In his second contribution, after reviewing the difficulties in discriminating between Jacob's *mêmrê* and his *sughyotho*, Brock provides a list of features that distinguish the two genres. *Sughyotho* are popular poems, often written in a dialogue form, and frequently employ a 7+7, 7+7 metre. He then describes the early manuscripts that contain stanzaic poems attributed to Jacob and lists the four dialogue poems thought to be his compositions. Scholars working on Jacob's writings will want to thank Sebastian Brock for his third contribution: a bibliographical guide to the research on Jacob. Brock's bibliographies have been instrumental in creating a milieu in which Syriac scholars can learn from each other. His dedication to these bibliographies has significantly advanced the field.

Iskandar Bcheiry's contribution, titled "Repentance and Fasting from an Ascetical Perspective: A Comparative Reading of Jacob of Serugh and an Unpublished Shortened Version of a Collection of Homilies by Severus Of Antioch," focuses on: (1) Jacob's *mêmrâ* (122) about Jonah, which tells the story of Jonah and the repentance of the people of Nineveh, and (2) on an unpublished version of four homilies of St. Severus of Antioch. Bcheiry then presents relevant sections (in Syriac with English translation) of Jacob's *mêmrâ* to illustrate how "the description of the fast and repentance which were ordered by the king of Nineveh

expresses an ascetical and monastic tone" (p. 6). St. Severus of Antioch presents fasting as a struggle against evil spirits by which we purify ourselves and die with Christ to be glorified with Christ. In an appendix Bcheiry presents the Syriac text (with English translation) of an unpublished shortened version of a Collection of Homilies by Severus of Antioch.

Khalid Dinno considers Jacob the man in his article titled, "Jacob of Serugh, The Man behind the Mimre." He describes Jacob's writings as weaving "exegetical comment, imaginative and dramatic dialogue in order to unfold an event" (p. 52). Jacob's *mêmrê* also focus on the economy of salvation. Dinno then outlines specific themes of Jacob's writings, which he illustrates with examples from the *mêmrê*: (1) his feeling of inadequacy; (2) his assertiveness and confidence; (3) his supplication; (4) his understanding of faith and salvation; (5) his being open and transparent with his audience; and finally (6) his likening himself to a child. These themes illustrate that Jacob, a genuine person, was ready to reveal to his audience his "inner feelings of anxiety, inadequacy and self reproach; he was never aloof" (p. 69).

Sydney Griffith, in his article titled, "Mar Jacob of Serugh on Monks and Monasticism: Readings in his Metrical Homilies 'On the Singles'," suggests that Jacob's audience for these *mêmrê* was a congregation of *îḥîdōyê*, who, according to Jacob, were hermits, who lived as "singles" in God's service. Griffith then focuses on *mêmrâ* 137, which exhorts the *îḥîdōyê* to avoid attachment to the world and anxiety about money, and *mêmrâ* 138, which, echoing *De Oratione* by Evagrius of Pontus, is "virtually a manual of ascetical and mystical theology" (p. 81). During Jacob's life, the classics of Egyptian monasticism and other Greek authors, such as Gregory of Nyssa, were appearing in Syriac. In Jacob's *mêmrê* we can discover "an expression, in the ordinary monastic milieu in Syria, of the early enthusiasm for the mystical thought that would come to full flower not long after his time in the classic texts of Syrian asceticism and mysticism." (p. 89).

The Eucharistic celebration at the time of Jacob of Serugh was slightly different from the current rite in the Syriac Orthodox Church. Jacob's *mêmrâ* 95, which offers a window into Jacob's Eucharistic celebration, is studied by Amir Harrak in his article titled, "The Syriac Orthodox Celebration of the Eucharist in Light of Jacob of Serugh's *Mimrō* 95." Jacob calls the Eucharist *pōṯūrō*

("table") as well as *qurbōnō* ("sacrifice") and *debeḥtō* ("oblation"). Harrak then describes *mêmrâ* 95 in which Jacob refers to each stage of the Eucharistic celebration. The service included readings from the Bible (including the Old Testament). Jacob highlights the dismissal of the catechumens before the anaphora. There is no mention of the recitation of the Creed. This fascinating article is a must-read for liturgists and church historians.

The question of Jacob's audience is a difficult one that Susan Ashbrook Harvey tackles in her article, "To Whom Did Jacob Preach?" An awareness of his audience is important for appreciating his homilies, since they were written with a particular group in mind. Harvey searches the homilies for evidence of Jacob's audience. Some remarks were directed at parishioners, who arrived late and were not attentive to the liturgy and were dismissive of his concerns about urban life. His homilies also reveal that his church included the intermingling of the lay, clerical and monastic vocations: "each person is a necessary part in order for the body to be whole" (p. 125). Particularly important is the participation of women; Jacob insisted "on the congregation's all-inclusive constitution" (p. 129).

Though Jacob of Serugh wrote as many as 763 *mêmrê*, only 381 have been located. Edward G. Matthews, in his article titled, "Jacob of Serugh, Homily on Good Friday and other Armenian Treasures: First Glances," tells the story of how he discovered in Armenian translation a lost homily of Jacob. He then describes the homily, offering a preliminary translation of some portions and listing other Armenian works attributed to Jacob. The colophon of this homily suggests that the translation was ordered by Gregory, the Catholicos of the Armenians, whom Matthews identifies as Gregory III Pahlawuni (1113–1166). Though the translator did not maintain the poetic lines or the syllable count, Matthews is certain that this homily is a genuine composition of Jacob. The final section of the article lists seventeen homilies in Armenian that Matthews divides between those that have a surviving Syriac witness and those that do not. This evidence reveals that Jacob's works were translated into Armenian and were esteemed by the medieval Armenian Church.

Aho Shemunkasho in his article titled "Jacob of Serugh and his Influence on John of Dara as Exemplified by the Use of Two Verse-Homilies," traces how John of Dara (Metropolitan of Dara

in 825) in two of his treatises uses Jacob's *mêmrê*. After a review of the manuscripts that witness to John of Dara's works, Shemunkasho identifies seven of Jacob's *mêmrê* in these works. He provides a list of the ways John of Dara refers to Jacob of Serugh and then provides examples (the Syriac text with English translation) of how John of Dara incorporated Jacob's homilies into his works. John can cite Jacob accurately and can also summarize Jacob's teaching.

Lucas Van Rompay, in his article, "Humanity's Sin in Paradise: Ephrem, Jacob of Sarug, and Narsai in Conversation," traces the reception of Genesis 1–3 in early Syriac authors, with a focus on the question: "How easy would it have been for Adam and Eve not to sin?" (p. 199). According to Ephrem, had Adam and Eve obeyed God, they would have enjoyed immortality. Jacob supports Ephrem's argument that Adam and Eve were not immature in paradise and hence less responsible for their sin. As to whether Adam was created mortal or immortal, Jacob argues that Adam consisted of both a living nature (*kyono ḥayyo*) and dead clay (*medhro mitho*). Because of their freewill, they ate of the tree and became aware of their new mortal status. Narsai, following Theodore, considers humanity mortal at its creation. He agrees with Jacob that with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden, God established a plan for salvation culminating in Christ, but "[f]or Jacob…the process is a restoration; for Narsai, the focus is on gradual perfection" (p. 212). Van Rompay's comparison of the exegesis of Narsai and Jacob suggests that the School of Edessa was not always filled with conflict between the "Theodoreans" and "Cyrillians," but that creative minds continued to enjoy fruitful interaction into the fifth century. Van Rompay's illuminating synthesis of these Syriac authors makes this article a must-read for anyone interested in the reception history of Genesis.

The final article in this volume by Mary Hansbury, titled "A Reflection on the Occasion of the Blessing of an Icon of Mar Jacob of Serug," discusses the art from Mossul that was put on display by Amir Harrak during the symposium. She traces the discussion about iconography in Syriac literature beginning with early Syriac authors up to the current Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I and then discusses the icon of Jacob that was blessed during the conference. This icon is based upon a prototype found in St. Mark's in Jerusalem.