

BOOK REVIEW

Jacob of Serugh, *Select Festal Homilies*, translated from Syriac and introduced by **Thomas Kollamparampil CMI** with a foreword by Sebastian P. Brock, Rome: Centre for Indian and Inter-religious Studies (CIIS), and Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications (DP), 1997, pp.ix+414, Rs.360,—.

Jacob of Serugh is one of the greatest and noblest representatives of the sixth century Syriac Christian theology. His writings are the finest examples of Eastern, especially Syrian, theological reflections, which are highly biblical and based on sound traditions. The present volume by Dr. Thomas Kollamparampil consists of English translation of seventeen Festal Homilies of Jacob of Serugh of the liturgical year of the Church. The translation of the first sixteen homilies are part of his doctoral dissertation, entitled "Select Aspects of the Economy of Salvation in Christ according to Jacob of Serugh", which the author did at the Patristic Institute, Augustinianum, Rome and according to him, "The verse homily 'On the Holy Sunday of the Pentecost' is added as the seventeenth number in this volume so as to give full representation to the major feasts of the liturgical year". Among the seventeen homilies, six are prose homilies on the feasts of Our Lord and the remaining eleven are verse homilies on various liturgical feasts.

Dr. Kollamparampil has selected the best available editions to serve as the basis for this English translation, such as the critical edition prepared by Frederic Rilliet and the texts edited by Paul Bedjan. The translator also consults the Italian translation by Constantino Vona, the German translation by Pius Zingerle and the edition by Sebastian P. Brock.

The extensive introduction (thirty-six pages) by the author of this volume provides the reader with valuable information on the life and works and originality of theological reflection of Jacob of Serugh, and

his methodology of doing theology. The list of the select homilies translated in the volume with reference to their Syriac texts is added merit of this erudite introduction. Translation of each homily is also preceded by a short scholarly introduction. The sub-titles and the numberings provide systematization of Jacob's thinking and an easy apparatus for textual references. The scriptural references and the footnotes are helpful for a better understanding of the vision and theological orientation of Jacob. Apart from the Select Bibliography, an Index of Biblical references and a General Index are added at the end for easy reference, and all these raise the work to the level of international standard.

It is probably for the first time that an English translation of these homilies are made available for readers of Jacob of Serugh, who wrote homilies for the edification of simple Christian faithful, providing them the necessary homiletical exposition of the scriptural events through an exegesis meant for catechesis. Jacob's homilies are superb examples for his mode of handling the scriptures by means of typological exegesis and through symbolic theological reflection.

The translation manifests the author's thorough mastery of Syriac language and his deep understanding of biblical as well as Semitic thought patterns. Dr. Kollamparampil has succeeded to a great extent in retaining the connotations and nuances of various Syriac theological terminologies, phrases and expressions, and thereby he could very eminently expose their scriptural and eastern theological implications. Jacob, however, is not concerned with any abstract and intellectual analysis of supra-normal and supernatural realities, but describes the elements of Christian faith in a simple but convincing style aimed at the practice of Christian message which will result eventually in the redemption of humankind which is the aim of salvation economy. In other words Jacob makes intelligible what is hidden in the biblical episodes, namely, the redeeming and saving power of the Risen Christ transmitted and active through the Holy Spirit in a meta-historical way in the festal liturgical celebrations. By the painstaking efforts of Dr. Kollamparampil the same is translated into English for the spiritual

benefit of the English readers. I am sure, this work would especially be of immense value for students and teachers of Syriac Patrology.

The words of Sebastian Brock from his profound foreword are worth quoting, "For a number of historical reasons Jacob has not received among western scholars the appreciation he deserves, and one lamentable result of this is the paucity of English translations of any of his works. Accordingly it is a particularly valuable service that the Reverend Dr. Thomas Kollampampil CMI, has performed by translating these seventeen festal homilies, for by this means he has provided the wider public with an opportunity to share in the pleasure of reading Mar Jacob, the Teacher, a man to whom (according to one biographical account) 'the Holy Spirit had manifested the full beauty of the faith'".

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