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# 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

Thomas Kollampampil



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## To my Parents and Teachers

Who guided me, moulded me, and dedicated me  
to the service of the Word.

The prayer of Mar Jacob of Serugh animates all.

ܕܒܠܝܫ ܕܕܒܝܬܐ ܕܕܢܚܘܨܐ  
ܕܡܚܘܕܐ. ܡܥܕ  
ܕܕܢܚܘܨܐ: ܕܒܠܐ ܗܘܥܐ.

ܕܢܚܘܨܐ ܕܢܚܘܨܐ ܕܕܢܚܘܨܐ ܕܢܚܘܨܐ  
ܕܢܚܘܨܐ ܕܢܚܘܨܐ ܕܢܚܘܨܐ ܕܢܚܘܨܐ

*Holy Mar Jacob's Homily 154: The Forth on Sodom*

Open my lips, my Lord, to proclaim the riches of Thy sweetness,  
and let a glorious homily of Thy Divinity issue out through my tongue.  
Grant me that I shall be an assiduous labourer of Thy Word,  
and by which I shall complete the course of my life beautifully.  
Upon Thy teaching I shall slumber and sleep when I depart,  
so that not even in death I shall take rest from Thee as a good escort.

[HS V 117,1–6 (*The Forth Homily on Sodom*)]



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Thomas Kollamparampil CMI

## ABBREVIATIONS

- AAA* Wright, W., ed. *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*. Vols. I & II. London, 1871; Amsterdam, 1968<sup>R</sup>.
- AALM* *Atti dell'Accademia dei Lincei*, Memorie, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, 3 Ser. (Roma, 1883).
- Add: Addition
- AEPHE* *Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études* (Paris).
- AMS* Bedjan, P., ed. *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*. Vols. I–VII. Paris, 1890–1897 [References to these volumes are indicated with the abbreviation *AMS* + Volume no. in Roman numerals + Page(s) + line(s)].
- AnBoll* *Analecta Bollandiana* (Bruxelles).
- Anon.* Anonymous
- arm Scriptores Armeni
- Azym* Beck, E., ed. *Des heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Paschahymnen (De Azymis, De Crucifixione, De Resurrectione)*. CSCO, 248/249 (syri 108/109). Louvain, 1964.
- BAC* *Bibliotecade Autores Cristianos* (Madrid).
- BenM* *Benediktinische Monatschrift zur Pflege religiösen und geistigen Lebens* (Beuron).
- Bess* *Bessarione* (Roma).
- BKV* *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter* (Kempten).
- BL British Library, London.
- BO* Assemani, J. S., ed. *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino Vaticana*. Vols. 1–4. Roma, 1719–1728.
- ByS* *Byzantine Studies* (Arizona).
- CBQ* *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (Washington, D. C.).
- CEC* Leloir, L., ed. *Saint Ephrem, Commentaire de l'Évangile concordant*. CSCO, 145 (arm 137). Louvain, 1953/1954; Text syriaque (Chester Beatty manuscript 709), ed. L. Leloir. Dublin, 1963.
- CF* *Culmine e Fonte* (Roma).

- CH Beck, E., ed. *Des heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Hymnen Contra Haereses*. CSCO, 169/170 (syri 76/77). Louvain, 1957.
- CIS *Cahiers internationaux de symbolisme* (Genève).
- CJul Beck, E., ed. *Des heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Hymnen de Paradiso und Contra Julianum*. CSCO, 174/175 (syri 78/79). Louvain, 1957.
- CL Assemani, J. A., ed. *Codex liturgicus ecclesiae universae*. Vols. 1–13. Paris/Leipzig, 1902.
- CNis Beck, E., ed. *Des heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Carmina Nisibena*. I, CSCO, 218/219 (syri 92/93), and II, CSCO, 240/241 (syri 102/103). Louvain, 1961 and 1963.
- col(s). Column(s)
- CrSt *Cristianesimo nella Storia* (Bologna).
- Crucif Beck, E., ed. *Des heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Paschahymnen (De Azymis, De Crucifixione, De Resurrectione)*. CSCO 248/249 (syri 108/109). Louvain, 1964.
- CSCO Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium (Louvain).
- CTD McCarthy, C., ed. *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron*, ET. Oxford, 1993.
- Dem Demonstrations of Aphrahat.
- DR *Downside Review* (Bath).
- DV Dei Verbum
- ECR *Eastern Churches Review* (Oxford).
- EEC *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*. Vols. I & II. Cambridge, 1992.
- EL *Ephemerides Liturgicae* (Città del Vaticano).
- Ep Olinder, G., ed. *Iacobus Sarugensis, Epistulae quot quot supersunt*. Paris 1937 (CSCO, 110. Louvain, 1965). [All references regarding this source in this dissertation are from CSCO 110; References to this volume are indicated with the abbreviation *Ep* + Number of the letter in Roman numerals + Page(s) + line(s)].
- Epiph Beck, E., ed. *Des heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)*. CSCO 186/187 (syri 82/83). Louvain, 1959.
- esp. especially
- ET English Translation

- ETbL* *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* (Louvain).
- FH* Kollampampil, T. *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*. Rome/Bangalore, 1997.
- FT* French Translation
- GEC* Tonneau, R. M., ed. *Sancti Ephraemi Syri in Genesim et in Exodum commentarii*. CSCO, 152/153 (syri 71/72). Louvain, 1955.
- GOF* *Göttinger Orientforschung* (Wiesbaden).
- gr.* Greek
- GT* German Translation
- Harp* *The Harp* (Kottayam).
- HCJ* Albert, M., ed. *Jacques de Sarug, Homélie contre les juifs*. PO 38, fasc. 1. Turnhout, 1976 [References to this volume are indicated with the abbreviation *HCJ* + Number of the homily in Roman numerals + line(s)].
- HEcc* Beck, E., ed. *Des heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Hymnen De Ecclesia*. CSCO, 198/199 (syri 84/85). Louvain, 1960.
- HeilSt* *Heiligenkreuzer Studien* (Wien).
- HeyJ* *Heythrop Journal* (Oxford).
- HFid* Beck, E., ed. *Des heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide*. CSCO, 154/155 (syri 73/74). Louvain, 1955.
- HNat* Beck, E., ed. *Des heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)*. CSCO 186/187 (syri 82/83). Louvain, 1959.
- HPar* Beck, E., ed. *Des heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Hymnen de Paradiso und Contra Julianum*. CSCO, 174/175 (syri 78/79). Louvain, 1957.
- HS* Bedjan, P., ed. *Homiliae selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*. Vols. I–V. Paris/Leipzig, 1905–1910 [References to these volumes are indicated with the abbreviation *HS* + Volume no. in Roman numerals + Page(s) + line(s)]. The references furnished under *HS* are also valid for the reprint edition of *Homiliae selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis* from Gorgias Press, NJ, USA, 2006.
- HTM* The Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, USA.
- HTR* *Harvard Theological Review* (Cambridge).
- HVir* Beck, E., ed. *Des heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Hymnen de Virginitate*. CSCO, 223/224 (syri 94/95). Louvain, 1962.

- Ieiun* Beck, E., ed. *Des heiligen Ephem des Syrsers Hymnen de Ieiunio*. CSCO, 246/247 (syri 107/108). Louvain, 1964.
- IT Italian Translation
- JÖBG *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* (Wien).
- JSS*t* *Journal of Semitic Studies* (Manchester).
- JThS *Journal of Theological Studies* (Oxford).
- l./ls. line/lines
- Lat *Lateranum* (Roma).
- LG Leber Graduum
- Lit: Literally
- LPub Brock, S. P. "Ephrem's Letter to Publius." *Muséon* 89 (1976).
- LT Latin Translation
- Muséon* *Le Muséon* (Louvain).
- MUSJ *Mélanges de l'université Saint Joseph* (Beyrouth).
- n(s). Footnote(s).
- NAKG *Nederlands(ch) archief voor kerkegeschiedenis* (Leiden).
- NPNF *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series. Vol. XIII, Part II (Reprint). Michigan, 1983.
- NT *Novum Testamentum* (Leiden).
- NT New Testament
- NTh *New Theology* (New York).
- NTS *New Testament Studies* (Washington, D. C.).
- OCA *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* (Roma).
- OCP *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* (Roma).
- Odes *Odes of Solomon*
- OrChr *Oriens Christianus* (Leipzig/Wiesbaden).
- OrSyr *L'Orient Syrien* (Paris) > ParOr.
- OS *Ostkirchliche Studien* (Würzburg).
- OT Old Testament
- ParOr *Parole de l'Orient* (Kasilik).
- PIO Pontificio Instituto Orientale, Rome.
- PO *Patrologia Orientalis* (Paris/Turnhout).
- PrRef Mitchell, C. W. S. *Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan*. Vol. I, The Discourse addressed to Hypatius. London, 1912. Vol. II, The Discourse called "Of Domnus" and Six other Writings, A. A. Bevan and G. F. Burkitt. London, 1921.

<i>PS</i>	<i>Patrologia Syriaca</i> . Vols. I–III. Paris.
<i>QHC</i>	Alwan, Khalil, ed. <i>Jacques de Sarug, Quatre Homélie Métriques sur la Création</i> . CSCO, 508/509. Louvain, 1989 [References to these homilies are indicated with the abbreviation <i>QHC</i> + Number of the homily in Roman numerals+ line(s)].
<i>Resur</i>	Beck, E., ed. <i>Des heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Paschahymnen (De Azymis, De Crucifixione, De Resurrectione)</i> . CSCO, 248/249 (syri 108/109). Louvain, 1964.
<i>ROC</i>	<i>Revue de l'Orient Chrétien</i>
<i>RSE</i>	<i>Revue des sciences ecclésiastiques</i> (Paris).
<i>RTbPh</i>	<i>Revue de théologie et de philosophie</i> (Lausanne).
<i>RTL</i>	<i>Revue théologique de Louvain</i> (Louvain).
<i>SCb</i>	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> (Paris).
<i>SdDN</i>	Beck, E., ed. <i>Des heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Sermo de Domino Nostro</i> . CSCO, 270/271 (syri 116/117). Louvain, 1966.
<i>SdF</i>	Beck, E., ed. <i>Des heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Sermones de Fide</i> . CSCO, 212/213 (syri 88/89). Louvain, 1961.
<i>SHF</i>	Rilliet, Frédéric, ed. <i>Jacques de Sarug, Six Homélie Festales en Prose</i> . PO, 43. Turnhout/Belgique, 1986 [References to these homilies are indicated with the abbreviation <i>SHF</i> + Number of the homily in Roman numerals + Paragraph(s)].
<i>SMS</i>	Bedjan, P., ed. <i>S. Martyrii, qui et Sabdona, quae supersunt omnia</i> , 614–865. Paris, 1902 [References to this volume are indicated with the abbreviation <i>SMS</i> + Page(s) + line(s)].
<i>Sobornost</i>	<i>Sobornost</i> (London) > <i>ECR</i> .
<i>ST</i>	Spanish Translation
<i>StAns</i>	<i>Studia Anselmiana</i> (Roma).
<i>StPatr</i>	<i>Studia Patristica</i> (Oxford).
<i>StT</i>	<i>Studi e Testi</i> (Città del Vaticano).
<i>Sub.</i>	Subsidia
<i>SyCS</i>	<i>The Syrian Churches Series</i> (Kottayam).
<i>Syr.</i>	Syriac
<i>syri</i>	Scriptores syri.
<i>SyrT</i>	Syriac Text.
<i>TbPh</i>	<i>Theologie und Philosophie</i> (Freiburg).
<i>tr.</i>	Translation

<i>TSt</i>	<i>Texts and Studies</i> (Cambridge).
<i>TV</i>	<i>The True Vine</i> (Roslindale, USA).
UDD	Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation.
<i>VigChr</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i> (Amsterdam).
Vr:	Variant reading.
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i> (Leipzig/Wiesbaden).
ZKTh	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i> (Wien).
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> (Berlin, etc.).

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

A remarkable shift of orientation in the studies on Jacob of Serugh<sup>1</sup> is perceived in the recent past.<sup>2</sup> Major parts of the earlier studies on Jacob were concerned with his Christology and the orthodoxy of his teachings<sup>3</sup> in the pattern of heated debates which in the final analysis seem to have yielded no remarkable breakthrough into the legacy of Mar Jacob.<sup>4</sup> Such a state of affairs is mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, the Christology and the orthodoxy of the teachings of Mar Jacob were evaluated with some criteria quite foreign as well as highly incompatible with the thought-patterns and writings of Jacob. Because of this unhealthy approach some earlier studies failed to hit at the focus of Jacob's theological vision. Secondly,

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<sup>1</sup> *Sêruḡh* was a district of ancient Mesopotamia where Jacob was born at *Kurtam* near Edessa on the east of Euphrates. He was brought up at *Hawrā* in the district of *Sêruḡh* where Jacob served as *Chorepiskopos* (Episcopal Vicar/Visitor) and later as *Episkopos* (Bishop) at *Baṭnan*, the chief town of *Sêruḡh*.

<sup>2</sup> There are a few recent studies and translations highlighting the genius in Jacob of Serugh. Editors, translators, and authors, such as, F. Graffin, M. Albert, T. Jansma, S. P. Brock, K. Alwan, T. Bou Mansour, B. P. Sony, S. J. Beggiani, *The Holy Transfiguration Monastery (HTM)*, Brookline, USA, are some mentionable names. See also the bibliography and the translations of the homilies of Jacob, Kollamparampil, T. *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*. Rome/Bangalore, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. The section on 'The Controversial Theological Milieu of Jacob of Serugh', chapter one (section A, 2).

<sup>4</sup> For referring to Jacob of Serugh several appellations are used, such as 'Mar Jacob', 'Jacob', 'our author', 'the author', 'the preacher of *Baṭnan*', as the context seems to suit.

those studies seem to ignore or rather push down to a very secondary level the importance of typological and symbolic thought-patterns that are quite vital to theological reflection, biblical exegesis, catechetical pedagogy, and the liturgical commemorations of the early Syriac Christian tradition, of which Mar Jacob is a rather prominent exponent.

Due to the recent findings in the studies on comparative religion<sup>5</sup> and cultic behaviour of human cultures there are some new philosophical conceptions on the power and functions of symbols and the role of symbolic reflections on matters of religious faith and cultic practices. All such findings demand new orientations and approaches to ancient religious texts, especially in the field of hermeneutics. Hence, there is a quest for entering into the horizon or the proper milieu of each writer in order to perceive the fuller significance of his views. It is also due to this turn of affairs that the worth and abiding influence of the early Syriac Christian writings, which are to a great extent poetic in conception and in form, are being rediscovered. In the light of the above mentioned new currents of thought the writings of Jacob of Serugh demand due recognition and a balanced evaluation with respect to their theological views.

For a better understanding of the person of Jacob of Serugh and his literary activities, an introduction highlighting the two main aspects of his ambience is necessary. The reasons have been, on the one hand, his birth into the Semitic cultural milieu of the early Syriac Christianity and, on the other, his life in the political and religious ambience of the Eastern Roman Empire with its various strong Greek influences. Hence, our author is an heir to two traditions: the one inherited by birth and the other acquired from the epoch in which he lived. These two traditions had profound influences on his life and activities, especially upon his writings. In the first place, the differences in orientation, style and the content of his letters when compared with his other writings clearly project the aspects of his acquired tradition. In the corpus of his correspondence, as a prominent Christian leader of his time, he addresses mainly the socio-religious and theological issues of his

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Eliade, "Crisis and Renewal in History of Religions," 19–38.

period by the thrust of his acquired tradition with its Hellenistic influences. On the other hand, in his other writings, especially in the corpus of his writings that are mainly inspired by the ambience of Semitic Syriac Christian tradition, both in the verse homilies (*mēmre*)<sup>6</sup> and the prose homilies (*turgāme*),<sup>7</sup> he reflects on the biblical episodes and themes of Christian faith out of his inherited Semitic early Syriac Christian tradition with its typological and symbolic thrusts.

### A. THE THEME OF THE STUDY

One of the foundations of Mar Jacob's theological vision is the condescending divine mercy at all levels of the divine economy, namely, creation, the Incarnation and the Resurrection which are various phases of the economy of salvation. This condescending divine mercy became fully tangible and revealed on behalf of humanity in the incarnate Son. The whole of the Old Testament was a preparation for the perfect divine revelation in Christ. The revealed realities in Christ, or in the terminology of Jacob, the actualized factors of the mystery of salvation, are running forward to their realization and consummation by the power of Christ. Hence, Christ stands as the key to the understanding as well as the realization of the whole economy of salvation. For Jacob the understanding of divine realities is not merely a cerebral process but primarily a personal and participative knowledge of the revealed realities. Such revealed realities invite the whole of humanity to respond to the divine initiative as well as encourage all to partake of the divine bliss through the incarnate Son. This

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<sup>6</sup> *mēmre* are Syriac non-stanzaic verse compositions or verse homilies [probably recited rather than sung], consisting of isosyllabic couplets. Jacob generally follows a 12 + 12 syllabic pattern which is called 'Jacob's metre'. Cf. Brock, "An Introduction to Syriac Studies," viii–33 for further descriptions on various Syriac literary forms.

<sup>7</sup> *turgāme* are interpretative or expository sermons in prose form. Mar Jacob's six prose homilies are good examples of such artistic prose with many rhetorical patterns that enhance homiletical preaching. See the ET of the Six Prose Homilies by Kollampampil, T. *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*. Rome/Bangalore, 1997.

participation in divine bliss is made concrete in a sacramental manner, especially, in the liturgical celebrations of the feasts and the related commemorations of the salvific acts of Christ. Mar Jacob's homilies concerning the salvific deeds of Christ commemorated in the feasts and in the various periods of the liturgical year are rich with theological insights, catechetical instructions and homiletical persuasion. The present study furnishes a fruitful appreciation of the main aspects of the economy of salvation in Christ according to the vision of Mar Jacob as presented in his homiletical expositions on the feasts of our Lord.

## **B. THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The present study is to a great extent inspired by the rediscovery and appreciation of the orientations and teachings of the early Syriac Christian writers. Moreover, in the case of Jacob a good number of studies on his Christology and the orthodoxy of his teachings have brought out only a partial and, in some cases, a slightly falsified representation of his views. Hence, it is urgent to rehabilitate him providing a more faithful account of his theological vision as well as enabling the readers of Jacob to gain a balanced picture of his genuine theological views.

A sort of rehabilitation process is envisaged in this study through an exposition of Mar Jacob's theological views from his writings in conformity with his own terms and orientations rather than subjecting his writings to various sets of categories and orientations that are foreign to his writings. Hence, the scope of this study is to furnish a proper appreciation of the theological views of Mar Jacob with regard to his understanding of the economy of salvation in Christ. Such a study will draw a more faithful picture of his theological views. It would also enhance, at least to some extent, the rediscovery of the richness of his theological thought-patterns which attracted so many Christian communities during his life-time and those in the centuries immediately after his death. The large collection of the manuscripts of his writings gives ample evidence to his fame in the past.

Above all Mar Jacob's symbolic mode of theological reflection, based on the biblical thought-patterns, has a freshness, vitality and perennial applicability of its own. His typological biblical exegesis often provides a healthy and synchronic outlook

on the mysteries of Christian faith and practices. They are appealing to all ages. In his treatment of salvation in Christ (Soteriology) Mar Jacob bases his theological vision on a coherent theological anthropology and the mystery of Christ (Christology) reflected through the biblical thought-patterns. In this light the writings of Jacob call for a deeper grounding in the biblical thought-patterns in theological reflections rather than conditioning theological reflection to any particular set of categories of any period or any particular philosophy. Hence, an articulation of the biblically oriented theological reflection of Jacob of Serugh is a basic thrust of this study.

### **C. THE METHOD OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study is to meet Jacob's theological teachings within the horizon of his writings so as to assimilate his theological views through his own theological terminologies and orientations. In order to ascertain Jacob's theological terms and orientations an extensive reading of his writings has been undertaken, and the translation of a select group of his festal homilies has also been furnished. This select group of festal homilies consists of sixteen homilies based on nine feasts/commemorations of the saving activity of Christ and the homily on Pentecost. The English translations of the homilies of Jacob,<sup>8</sup> while serving as a basis for this study, aim also to promote a wider readership of Jacob's works. Apart from the group of select festal homilies references are also made to other homilies that are relevant to the theme of the study and provide important excerpts in translation wherever necessary. Hence, unless otherwise specified, all translations cited in this study are my own. The reading of Jacob enables us to delineate his mode of theological reflection which is highly biblical and Semitic. Hence, his theological method and the special character of his approach to the Scriptures and scriptural exegesis are highlighted as a prelude to the exposition of his theological vision in his homilies.

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<sup>8</sup> Kollamparampil, Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies.

The homilies of Jacob, especially the Dominical Festal Homilies, are for the edification of simple Christian faithful. They provide the necessary homiletical exposition of the scriptural episodes through an exegesis mainly for the purpose of catechesis. Hence, the homiletical expositions are not to analyse and define divine realities, but to describe elements or factors of Christian faith, aimed at the practice of the life of faith. With a persuasive thrust Jacob follows a discursive and exhortative mode of exposition which depends much on biblical typologies and the symbolic allusions they contain. Taking note of this method of Jacob's homiletical exposition the present study generally follows a method of thematic synthesis in order to set out the various aspects of salvation in Christ as envisaged by Mar Jacob.

#### **D. THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY**

The present study concentrates more on Jacob's theological views developed out of the inspiration from the early Syriac Christian tradition which he inherited by birth, and at the same time in turn enriched by his writings. Hence, in order to arrive at a more integrated understanding of the vision of Mar Jacob's ambience and his theological views, the present study is divided into three parts.

The first part of the study (chapter one) intends to give an introduction to the life and theological reflections of Mar Jacob. It acquaints the readers to the foundations of his thought-patterns that are embedded in the symbolic forms of theological reflection and typological biblical exegesis. The first half of the first part while explaining the life and activities of Mar Jacob, attempts to provide the necessary introduction to the double traditions of Jacob of Serugh, i.e., the Semitic early Syriac Christian Tradition and the philosophically oriented theological tradition of the Greek Orient. It provides a brief survey of the socio-political and religious ambience of his life and activities also. This naturally leads to a brief examination of the orientations, attitudes and allegiances of Mar Jacob in the acute Christological controversies of his period. A brief survey of the literary output of our author is also furnished to complement the section on his life and activities. A select group of homilies on the feasts of our Lord, from the corpus of Jacob of Serugh, serves as a basis for the present study.

The second half of part one deals with the foundations of Mar Jacob's symbolic theology and his mode of biblical exegesis. Since one of the principal inspirations of Jacob's theological views is the Scriptures, it is of special importance to review his orientations and approach to the Scriptures. According to Jacob the Scriptures proclaim the story of divine-human relationships. The factors of such relationships can be expressed only in analogical terms by means of symbols, types, figures and sometimes through paradoxes because the human intellect is incapable of any exhaustive comprehension of divine realities. Hence, whatever is revealed is a divine offering to humanity through symbols and types and they should be approached with a symbolic and meditative reflection that can provide spiritual profit to humanity. Therefore, Jacob's symbolic and sacramental conception of the revealed truths naturally presuppose his typological exegesis of the scriptures.

Chapters two and three form part two of the present study. This part examines how Jacob employs his symbolic theological reflection and typological biblical exegesis in his catechetical and homiletical exposition of the mystery of salvation. Based on the factors of symbolic theology and typological exegesis, chapter two presents the theological views of Jacob regarding the divine economy of salvation as described in his festal homilies. There are nine sets of festal homilies under review, based on nine liturgical celebrations, focusing on the salvific acts of the incarnate Son. The main concern is to see how Jacob presents the economy of salvation as a progressive realization in the light of each feast of our Lord. Around each homiletical exposition Jacob's homiletical, catechetical and exegetical devices and skills are also referred to.

Chapter three is an attempt to present a synthesis of Jacob's understanding of the economy of salvation in Christ. Jacob does not propose any systematization of divine truths, but only a discerning understanding for the profit of humanity with a view to realize the divine purpose. In keeping with this approach we bring together in a coherent manner the discursive forms of theological reflections found in Jacob. It has three sections. The first section is a brief survey of the author's theological expressions and vocabulary. The second section traces a few theological thought-patterns of Mar Jacob—he relies, of course, much on the early Syriac tradition in this respect—that can serve as a guideline for a synthesis of his vision of salvation in Christ. The final section

reconstructs the main aspects of Jacob's vision of the economy of salvation in Christ from his writings.

Chapters four and five form the third and last part of this study. It deals with the two important sources of inspiration behind the theological vision of Mar Jacob, i.e., scriptural revelations and the early Syriac Christian tradition respectively. Chapter four opens with a discussion on the need and nature of redemption and salvation in the understanding of Jacob. It is based on the biblical thought-patterns. Jacob's creative employment of the biblical account of creation and the fall for catechesis is evident in his homilies. His treatment of the early chapters of Genesis is central to his theology of redemption and salvation. He explains how divine mercy and divine justice provide the needed pedagogy in the context of human freedom. Jacob's reading of the Genesis account develops his theological anthropology which stands as a basis for his views on the need for and the nature of redemption and salvation. The second section of the fourth chapter explains the acts of divine mercy which became concrete and tangible in an actualized manner in Christ as the source of redemption and salvation. In other words, it is a presentation of Jacob's understanding of Christ-Mystery (Christology) based on the scriptural thought-patterns. The last section of chapter four explains Jacob's vision of Christ, the God-man, as the sign and the Sacrament of salvation for the world.

In the fifth chapter the theme of discussion is Jacob's indebtedness to the early Syriac Christian tradition with regard to his theological views. In order to handle the matter in an organized way a set of three main theological themes are selected: the Adam-Christ complementarity, the road of salvation, and the Christocentric sacramental world-vision. With reference to these theological themes, Jacob's indebtedness to the earlier Syriac writings and writers is discussed. Above all Jacob's indebtedness to Ephrem is set in evidence. In certain aspects Jacob's creative contributions to the mainstream Syriac theology are pointed out.

# **PART ONE**



The first part of this study sets the proper context for a discussion on Jacob of Serugh. The setting of the context involves two aspects or horizons. Firstly the more external and general one is his historical ambience with its social and religious overtones. Secondly the more personal and subjective aspects with regard to Jacob are the foundations of his symbolic theology, his notion of divine revelation as well as his orientation to the Scriptures. Jacob's sacramental approach to the Scriptures and his symbolic understanding of the created world stand as foundations to his mode of biblical exegesis. His theological method is much dependent on his orientation to the scriptures and his typological mode of biblical exegesis.



## CHAPTER ONE: LIFE AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION OF JACOB OF SERUGH

The life and activities of Jacob of Serugh falls during 451–521 AD, a period that witnessed turbulent theological controversies, especially after the council of Chalcedon (451).<sup>1</sup> He was born an heir to the early Syriac Christian tradition. The social and religious milieu in which he grew up interacted very closely, especially due to the overpowering influence of the political situation in the eastern Roman Empire on religious behaviour, ecclesial confessions, and even dogmatic definitions. The council of Chalcedon, rather than solving the long standing controversy, initiated another phase of acrimonious disputes between the so called Chalcedonian and Monophysite groups. Mar Jacob's literary compositions emerged from such a context. The major literary contributions of Mar Jacob are his verse compositions, especially his voluminous output of *mēmre*.<sup>2</sup> The internal evidences from his *mēmre* show no definite signs of his affiliation to any extremist confessional groups of the time. But his letters show signs of sympathy and leanings towards the Miaphysite-Monophysite<sup>3</sup> pole of Christological views. Yet the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature*, 67–72; Duval, *La Littérature syriaque*, 351–54; Chabot, *Littérature syriaque*, 62, 63; Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, 148–58; Fiey, *Histoire de l'Église en Irak*, 113–143; Graffin, “Jacques de Saroug,” cols. 56–60; Tisserant, “Jacques de Saroug,” cols. 300–5; Gribomont, “Jacob of Sarug,” 429.

<sup>2</sup> See footnote n. 6 on *mēmre* in General Introduction.

<sup>3</sup> The term ‘Monophysite’ is often used quite unaware of the confusion it creates, especially in the ecumenical contexts. This term is

internal evidence of his writings as a whole would enrol him as a *diakrinomenoi* (otherwise known as ‘hesitators’<sup>4</sup>) who objected to the final formulation of the council of Chalcedon. Moreover, the predilections of the Syriac tradition and the gentle disposition of Mar Jacob found the then current definitions of theological issues solely under the sway of rational philosophical categories of the time, utterly unbecoming. In discussing theological matters he was more at home in the orientations of the early Syriac tradition of which St. Ephrem was a great exponent.<sup>5</sup> It is important to note the extent to which Mar Jacob accepts Mar Ephrem as a model to

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now used to denote both the position of the Syrian Orthodox (and other oriental Orthodox Churches) and that of Eutyches. The extreme position of Eutyches is rejected by all including the oriental Orthodox groups. When dealing with the theological position of Jacob of Serugh, it is improper to categorize him as a Monophysite. In order to denote the proper dogmatic Christological position of Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabboug, Jacob of Serugh and others in the Cyrilline Christological tradition who were opposed to the dyophysite formula of the Council of Chalcedon, the present tendency is to use the term ‘Miaphysite’ which suites more their Christological position. It denotes their understanding of “a single incarnate nature of God the Word” (*had kyana d-melta alaha da-mbasar/ mia physis to theou logou sesarkomenē*). The stress here is on the coming down of the Word to assume the full humanity and yet remaining the same without being divided. For an insightful discussion on the exact Christological position of Severus, Philoxenus, Jacob of Serugh and others see the diagram furnished by S. P. Brock regarding the spectrum of Antiochene and Alexandrian Christological positions (Brock, S. P. “The Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire up to the Sixth Century and it’s Absence from the Councils in the Roman Empire.” In *Syriac Dialogue: First Non-official Consultation on Dialogue with the Syrian Tradition*, 85. Pro Oriente. Vienna, 1994, where the term ‘Henophysite’ is used to describe ‘Miaphysite’ position in the wider spectrum between Antiochene and Alexandrian poles of Christological views).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Jansma, “Encore le credo de Jacques de Saroug,” 75–88, 193–236, 331–70, 475–510, esp. pp. 77, 350, 355; Brock, “On the Veil of Moses,” 35.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Jansma, “Die Christologie,” 44, 45.

be imitated both in the mode of teaching and living. Mar Jacob writes about Ephrem:

A true worker who laboured diligently from start to finish,  
manifesting in himself both words and actions in a practical  
way,  
he was an architect who built upon the foundation of truth,  
finishing off his edifices with gold and precious stones.  
He was the teacher of truth who both acted and taught, as it is  
written;  
for his disciples he depicted a model for them to imitate.<sup>6</sup>

It was in the theologico-ascetical tradition, embellished by Mar Ephrem, that our author lived and rendered his personal contribution, enriching the indigenous Syriac Christian theological tradition. In addition to that he also had to address the theological disputes of his time. In this respect he seems to align himself, to a certain extent, with the Miaphysite-Monophysite confessional group, of course, with his own moderate views and standpoints. Jacob was a witness to the interactions of the two poles of the early Syriac Christianity, namely, the Semitic and the Hellenic,<sup>7</sup> in the context of the theological disputes and dogmatic quarrels of his period.

### A. SOCIO-POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF JACOB OF SERUGH

The Syrian-Mesopotamian ambient of the second half of the 5th and the initial decades of the 6th centuries is the wider social context of the life and activities of Jacob of Serugh. Precisely, the

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<sup>6</sup> *AMS* III 667,7–11; ET by Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 22; see a critical edition and full ET of Jacob's *memrā* on Ephrem by Amar, J. P. *Metrical Homily on Mar Ephrem*. *PO*, 47 (Fascicule 1 No. 209). Turnhout, 1995, see pp. 30–31 for the quoted text.

<sup>7</sup> For more details see the section on 'The Controversial Theological Milieu of Jacob of Serugh' in this chapter (I,A,2); cf. also Brock, "The Two Poles," 58–62; "From Antagonism to Assimilation," 17–34.

political and social contexts, especially in Syria and Egypt,<sup>8</sup> were filled with a sense of growing nationalism against the Byzantine rule, with resentment towards the imperial policies coupled with an eagerness to have autonomy and self-determination in many aspects of social and political life.<sup>9</sup> Faced by these challenges the emperors of the time shifted their religious policies as the situations demanded in order to safeguard the political unity of the empire. The religious context is dominated by the vehement confrontations between Monophysite and Chalcedonian groups. A thorough analysis of the causes of these confrontations will show that they were predominantly due to the cultural differences and particular political factors rather than due to actual theological issues.

The antecedents of Jacob's theological expressions and biblical exegesis, with their diverse aspects, are best represented by the Edessan context.<sup>10</sup> This context is manifested through the orientations to the Christian faith, methods of catechesis, mode of theologizing, and the study and hermeneutics of the sacred Scriptures as well as the theological disputes of the time. This milieu fashioned the mode of theologizing, biblical exegesis and theological views of Mar Jacob. Moreover, the Syrian-Mesopotamian insistence on the ascetic, encratite world-vision also reflected upon the pattern of Christian life and thinking of such leaders as Mar Jacob.<sup>11</sup>

### **1. The Political Situation and the Religious Policies of the Emperors**

A clear cut documentation of the political and social developments of the said period among the Syrian Christians of Roman Syria is not available. It is mainly because Syria and Mesopotamia were

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 132, 133; Holders of extreme Alexandrian views were irritated by the Chalcedonian condemnation of Monophysitism and the conferring of the rank next to that of the bishop of Rome to the Patriarch of Constantinople. Both evoked social resentment against the imperial rule.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Charanis, *Church and State*, preface page.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Segal, *Edessa, "Blessed City,"* 93ff; 170–3.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, III, 110–22.

regions of buffer zone between the Romans and Parthians, being continually war-torn, resulted in the destruction of many historical evidences and documents.<sup>12</sup> Later, when the Persian Sasanian dynasty came into power in 224, there was a resurgence of nationalistic feeling which was very well expressed in the restoration of Zoroastrianism. This Zoroastrian revival had major repercussions on Persian Christianity but not much on the Byzantine side. The over all resurgence of national feeling contributed also to the rise of Monophysitism, especially in Egypt and Syria-Palestine areas under Byzantine rule.

In 363 the city of Nisibis was captured by Persians. Hence many Christians from Nisibis migrated to the city of Edessa under Roman domain. Ephrem was also among those migrants and he is held to be one of the founders of the School of Edessa, 'the School of the Persians'.<sup>13</sup> That flourishing school suffered fatally from the theological controversies and was finally closed by Emperor Zeno in 489. This socio-political development is the point of departure for our discussion on the theologico-exegetical background of Mar Jacob who was quite active as a teacher and preacher for various Christian communities, including monks, especially after the closure of the school of Edessa.

The reign of Leo I (457–474), Zeno (474–491), Anastasius I (491–518) and of Justin I (518–527) and their religious policies fall within this time span which coincides with the life and writings of Mar Jacob. Emperor Leo I was a pro-Chalcedonian. His follower Zeno desired to unify the warring factions, probably due to his interest in political unity. In this context the *Henoticon*<sup>14</sup> of Zeno<sup>15</sup> and the related political developments leading to the breach of Constantinople from Rome in the name of Acacian Schism (484–519) are to be taken account of when evaluating the leanings of Mar Jacob to Miaphysite-Monophysite views. As regards

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. McCullough, *A Short History of Syriac Christianity*, 53.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Vööbus, *History of the School*, 7–9.

<sup>14</sup> It is the Christological formula put forward in 482 in order to acquire agreement between Monophysites and Chalcedonians.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Charanis, *Church and State*, 14, 15.

Anastasius I (491–518) and his religious policy, his Persian wars<sup>16</sup> and the later change of his policy to support Monophysites were major developments. He started negotiations with pope Hormisdas but as soon as the political situation turned in his favour, he put an end to those negotiations and followed his own policy.<sup>17</sup>

Soon after the death of Anastasius I in 518 Justin I (518–527) came to the throne. He was a pro-Chalcedonian, presumably, due to his concern for political unity. He wanted to reunite the factions widely estranged by the *Henoticon* of Zeno in 482 by enforcing the recognition of Chalcedon throughout the empire. He wanted to pull down the Monophysite hierarchy and build up the Chalcedonian reform and its hierarchy. Hence, on 20th July 518 the Synod of Constantinople was held. It prescribed the recognition of the four councils with an additional imperial order to accept Chalcedon. Severus of Antioch was condemned but took refuge in exile. As a measure of persecution many Miaphysite-Monophysite bishops were also sent in exile.<sup>18</sup>

It seems that the anti-monophysite policies of Justin I were concurrently enforced harshly as well as handled tolerantly at the same time according to the particular interests of the emperor with regard to various matters. Paul of Tella (Constantia) and Mar Jacob were ordained bishops at the beginning of the reign of Justin I (518–527). Justin was tolerant to bishop Paul of Edessa who had been forcefully brought out of the baptistery and sent in exile by Patricius.<sup>19</sup> Paul was called back from exile after forty four days. The letter of Mar Jacob<sup>20</sup> to Paul on that occasion, praising the emperor for this kind gesture, might stand as an added evidence to the subtle religious policies of Justin I.<sup>21</sup> Later having seen the

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<sup>16</sup> The Syriac *Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite* gives a detailed description of these wars and the social situation and religious policies of the time: cf. Wright, *Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*, syr. pp. 5–75, ET pp. 6–64.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 160; Charanis, *Church and State*, 76.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Chronique de Michel*, IV, 266ff; Jedin, *History of the Church*, Vol. II, 433ff.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 233.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Martin, "Letters aux moines du Convent Mar Bassus," 274.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 224, 225, 235.

failure of his tolerant attitude to Paul, Justin ordered the exile of Paul to Euchaita of Pontus in 522.

The political and religious situation of this period is so intertwined with the Byzantine imperial policies so as to precipitate, so to say, the confrontation between Monophysites and Chalcedonians. In the Eastern Roman Empire this infighting served also as an outlet for the resentments against the imperial policies. Hence, the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch often took the lead to stand free from the Roman supremacy. The immediate preoccupations of the emperors were the political unity within the empire and the defense against the nearby Persian enemy rather than any concern for unity in Christian faith. All these factors compelled them to alter their religious policies as seemed convenient to their situations.<sup>22</sup>

## **2. The Controversial Theological Milieu of Jacob of Serugh**

The theological context of the 5th and 6th centuries was a hot-bed of Christological controversies especially in Syria and Mesopotamia.<sup>23</sup> The formula of Ephesus (431) caused much reaction from the Antiochenes, the roots of which could be traced back to the polemical confrontations between Alexandrians and Antiochenes. In the particular historical context under discussion, its roots also could be traced to the split in the theological views in the Edessan school. The formula of union of 433 demanded much moderation from the Cyrillian partisans which generated reactions in the Cyrillian group. But this reaction stood controlled till the death of Cyril of Alexandria in 444. Dioscorus, the successor of Cyril, had sympathies with those who held the extreme Alexandrian Christological position. Cyrillian group had its extreme expression in the Eutychian position. The excommunication of Eutyches by Flavian led to the Synod of 449 as well as to the council of Chalcedon in 451 in which Antiochene Christology won acceptance through the *Tome* of Leo and that of the Alexandrian views through the acceptance of the Cyrillian position. Yet both

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Charanis, *Church and State*, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, 143–254.

sides were discontented. It was in that context the *Henoticon* of Zeno (482) came about. This situation put the ordinary faithful in a state of confusion as regards to whom they should give allegiance. Then came the longer reign of Anastasius I (491–518) during which, by his support and by the active work of Severus of Antioch and Philoxenus of Mabboug (Hierapolis), there emerged a strong Monophysite hierarchy. Mar Jacob, the peace-loving preacher, found the growing Monophysite hierarchy as an instrument of unity among various Christian factions. Only with due considerations to such contexts can the type of Miaphysite-Monophysite views of Mar Jacob and theological outlook be evaluated.

***a. Jacob of Serugh and the Christological Controversies of His Times***

The legacy of Greco-Roman Christian theological tradition is predominantly served by the Greek philosophical traditions. At times it has made evaluations and value judgements on matters of common interest without adequate respect towards other valid Christian traditions and the philosophies underlying them. Due to such Greco-Roman influences the Early Syriac pattern of Christianity became subject to a critical period in history with regard to its future course of development. In the milieu of the then Syriac world, on the one hand there was the vehement influence of the indigenous Syriac mode of theological reflection and on the other the philhellenic trends<sup>24</sup> of Syriac Christians. This fact could be well illustrated from the developments surrounding the Christological controversies of the later 5th and the early decades of the 6th centuries during which Mar Jacob lived and was active. The philhellenic trends of the Syriac world had generated a sort of binary opposition between the Semitic and the Hellenic poles of Syriac Christianity.<sup>25</sup> Mar Jacob was a witness to and a victim of that new development. Precisely in that context the

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<sup>24</sup> It is the love of Hellenic modes of life and thinking. Cf. Brock, "From Antagonism to Assimilation," 17–34; "The Two Poles," 59.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Brock, "Two Poles," 59.

Christological position of Mar Jacob became an enigma which needs a bifocal analysis for a proper understanding. Jacob built his Christological vision influenced by these two poles. Hence, T. Jansma writes, “Die Tatsache, dass er Bürger zweier Welten ist, einer griechischen und einer syrischen, einer kontemporären und einer vergangenen, ....”<sup>26</sup> This sort of personal build up presents an uneasy combination and a hesitant confession of faith, which, if possible, the mentality of Mar Jacob would have avoided. But history dictated otherwise. At the insistence of his contemporaries he had to ‘define’ his Christological position.<sup>27</sup> The background of Mar Jacob’s letters to the Abbot of Mar Bassus monastery explains the situation clearly that Jacob was constrained to pronounce his standpoint and declare his allegiance in the factional disputes over the dogmatic Christology. But it is to be remembered that dogmatic Christology of Jacob is only the bare bottom level of Jacob’s understanding of the profound mystery of Christ, which in his opinion, cannot be subjected to definitions.

(i) *The Dispute over the Christological Position of Jacob of Serugh*

The peace-loving ‘preacher of Batnan’<sup>28</sup> who cared for the progress of the faith looked with horror on the dogmatic disputes and theological acrimony of his times. He was reluctant to commit himself to any camp. This is evident from the background of the request of the Abbot of Mar Bassus monastery to clarify the Christological position of Mar Jacob in the context of the controversy.<sup>29</sup> So Jacob had to give his stance in statement form in his reply to the Abbot of Mar Bassus. But the important question is how one has to evaluate what is stated in the letter of Mar Jacob, and for that matter in the bulk of his correspondence, regarding his real position in the Christological controversy? The exact stance of Mar Jacob with regard to the various aspects of the Miaphysite-Monophysite spectrum of Christological dispute is not clearly

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<sup>26</sup> Jansma, “Die Christologie,” 45.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ibid., 45, 46.

<sup>28</sup> Mar Jacob was *Chorepiscopa* (Episcopal Vicar/Visitor) in the region of *Batnan* for a long time and later became bishop.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *EP XV* 62–63; Jansma, “Christologie,” 24.

established. This becomes all the more problematic when his teachings in verse homilies are taken into account as a whole. Critical editions of his writings and the studies on them are still to be brought out in order to provide a comprehensive analysis.<sup>30</sup> However, there are some indications and approaches that would help us to delineate the mode of analysis to be followed.<sup>31</sup> A comprehensive evaluation of the thrust of the various types of his literary output would inevitably make one land in a position similar to that of the Abbot of Mar Bassus (no doubt, the Abbot's motive was different, namely, to drag Jacob into a more strong Monophysite view point) with regard to the Christological position of Mar Jacob. It was this uncertainty that brought about a puzzling situation during his life-time and afterwards.<sup>32</sup> As more and more writings of Mar Jacob became edited and gained larger readership the problem of uncertainty recurred.

(ii) *A Survey of the Discussion on the 'Orthodoxy' of Mar Jacob*

It is proper to have a survey of the discussions on the question of Jacob's 'orthodoxy' which stimulated the orientalist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The publication of the letters of Mar Jacob to the convent of Mar Bassus by J.-P. P. Martin<sup>33</sup> was quite decisive in pinning down our author as a 'Monophysite'. Following this, many authors like S. Landersdorfer considered Mar Jacob to be a life-long Monophysite.<sup>34</sup> The question on the Christological position of Mar Jacob began to be discussed anew soon after the publication of his homilies by P. Bedjan.<sup>35</sup> It was started by M. Jugie<sup>36</sup> who, in line with the opinion of P. Bedjan,<sup>37</sup> relying on the homily against

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Jansma, "Encore le Credo," 75–6; Alwan, *Anthropologie de Jacques de Saroug*, 243–4.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Jansma, "Die Christologie," 18–46.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Rilliet, "Une victime du tournant des études syriaques," 465–80.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Martin, "Letters aux moines du Convent Mar Bassus," 217–75.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Landersdorfer, "Ausgewählte Schriften," 261.

<sup>35</sup> Bedjan, P., ed. *Homiliae selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*. Vols I–V. Paris/Leipzig, 1905–1910.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Jugie, *Theologia dogmatica*, V, 418 (n. 6).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *HS I*, Introduction, p. vi.

Chalcedon and the letter to the convent of Mar Bassus, branded Mar Jacob a Monophysite. But an Arab author, I. Armalé defended the orthodoxy of Jacob of Serugh.<sup>38</sup>

P. Peeters<sup>39</sup> dealt extensively with the theological position of Mar Jacob. By examining the homilies and the letters he proved Mar Jacob's position to be orthodox. He questions the authenticity of the Monophysitic material in Mar Jacob and considers them to be forgery. According to him, Mar Jacob happened to be reckoned a Monophysite posthumously.<sup>40</sup> B. Altaner,<sup>41</sup> following the opinion of P. Peeters, became convinced of the orthodoxy of Mar Jacob. Yet we find another group of studies made by P. Krüger.<sup>42</sup> He analyzed the texts of the homilies and the letters, taking up particularly the Christological texts and Mar Jacob's attitude to the Church and the Papacy, and found him to be orthodox. But he adds that Mar Jacob often uses Monophysite language. In this respect P. Peeters is of the opinion that the Monophysite materials in Mar Jacob are of later additions and thus questions the authenticity of some of Mar Jacob's letters. P. Krüger while arguing for the orthodoxy of Mar Jacob admits that he uses Monophysite language, but holds the opinion that in his metrical homilies and liturgical hymns he is a Chalcedonian.

The detailed studies by T. Jansma<sup>43</sup> show Mar Jacob to be a moderate Monophysite in the context of the divided Christian community. It is clearly noted that during the reign of Anastasius I (491–518), the golden age of the Monophysites, there were three Christian groups; one, the uncompromising Chalcedonians, and the second, their opponents, the anti-Chalcedonian Monophysites, and

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Krüger, "War Jakob von Serugh Katholik oder Monophysit?," p. 200.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Peeters, "Jacques de Saroug appartient-il à la secte monophysite?," 134–98.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Altaner, *Patrology*, 407.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Krüger, "War Jakob von Serugh Katholik oder Monophysit?," 199–208; for other studies by P. Krüger refer to the select Bibliography.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Jansma, "The Credo of Jacob of Serugh," 18–36; "Encore le credo," 75–88; 193–236; 331–370; 475–510; "Die Christologie," 5–46.

a third group in between these two extremes who were moderate Monophysites who stood for religious peace.<sup>44</sup> Taking these factors into consideration and his expressions in his letters, Jacob seems to align himself as a moderate Monophysite, a Miaphysite,<sup>45</sup> following the Cyrillian Christological position emphasizing the unity in Christ.

***b. The Type of ‘Miaphysite-Monophysite’ views of Jacob of Serugh***

It is quite difficult as well as improper to make a judgement on Jacob’s stand in Christological matters merely from the Hellenic pole of the discussion, especially subjecting his poetic-symbolic language into purely rational analysis, as authors like R. Chesnut and others have tried to furnish to some extent. Since Jacob took on board the Semitic and Hellenic poles in the case of Christological matters, the body of his writings needs to be read and evaluated with a method of its own. It is interesting to note that various authors confront and describe this exigency varyingly and yet provide a common denominator in the sense that Mar Jacob has left texts that are difficult to be classified. Hence, T. Jansma speaks of the fate of Mar Jacob’s personality being portrayed differently.<sup>46</sup> P. Krüger finds a sort of ‘internal Monophysite-Catholic dualism’ in the works known under the name of Jacob of Serugh.<sup>47</sup> Yet another remark by R. Chesnut, after having compared the Monophysite Christologies of Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabboug and Jacob of Serugh, is worth mentioning:

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Charanis, *Church and State*, 17.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. The explanation given in footnote 3 of this chapter.

<sup>46</sup> “Wer alle diese gegensätzlichen Eindrücke ruhig auf sich wirken lässt, stellt sich die Frage: die Porträtmaler haben mir nun, je nach ihren Auffassungen oder Wünschen, verschiedene Personen gezeigt; gibt es jedoch einen, der ihn so, wie er selbst ist, gemalt hat?” (Jansma, “Die Christologie,” 5).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Krüger, “Das Problem der Rechtgläubigkeit,” 242.

... while he (Mar Jacob) actually uses the language of the Monophysite side of the Christological controversy, the Monophysitism to which he holds is incomplete if judged by the standards of both Severus and Philoxenus. ... Further, Jacob does not have an adequate version of the union between God and man in Christ, relying as he does on an unclear notion of the mixture between the two. His theory of the human schema of the Word seems to make the humanity merely modal. All in all, Jacob's position is one which, upon reflection, appears to me to have been rightfully worthy of rejection by both Chalcedonians and such Monophysite theologians as Severus and Philoxenus.<sup>48</sup>

It seems that R. Chesnut failed to take up a proper approach to the symbolic thinking on Semitic lines of thought that is very much in evidence in the early Syriac Christian writers like Mar Jacob of Serugh.<sup>49</sup>

The opinion of T. Jansma while examining the position of Jacob after a critical survey of the study of P. Peeters, has some quite revealing notions:

Seul celui qui ne perd pas de vue en même temps les deux aspects dans leur corrélation mutuelle et qui tient compte de l'appartenance de Jacques à deux mondes, l'un contemporain et l'autre antérieur, pourra variment comprendre son univers mental et sa position dogmatique. Nier cette double appartenance, comme le faisaient ses contemporains fanatiques qui ne pouvaient imaginer autre chose qu'une alternative simpliste, et devons-nous ajouter, comme le feront certains

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<sup>48</sup> Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies*, p. 141; Since Jacob did not commit himself to any fanatic groups the above comment is valid. But I fear whether R. C. Chesnut finds it worthy to consider and appreciate the method of theologizing in Mar Jacob as well as his vision of the mystery of Christ through the symbolic-mystical-silence approach.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. The review articles on R. Chesnut's book, *Three Monophysite Christologies*: A. De Halleux, *TbPh* 52 (1977): 286; J. H. Erickson, *ByS* 4 (1977): 213.

orientalistes jusqu'à nos jours, ne pent en définitive conduire qu'à une méprise.<sup>50</sup>

The above mentioned opinions and conclusions are the results of researches into the texts of Mar Jacob. There is much hesitation with regard to pinning down Mar Jacob definitively to any group. At the same time there is much agreement on Mar Jacob's assimilation of views from two different 'worlds'. According to T. Jansma they are the Syriac, his mental world and the Greek, his dogmatic position.<sup>51</sup>

As a rather prominent figure of his period Mar Jacob had to somehow address the questions and controversies of his times. He had his own approach to the questions.<sup>52</sup> We envisage to explain his views on the mystery of Christ, which is better understood with symbolic reflections and mystical-silence, as he prefers, in the coming chapters. Now our concern is to describe his dogmatic position. It is good to bear in mind that sharp dogmatic precision and definitions are almost impossible and unbecoming to the mentality or rather to the theological position of our author who is a faithful disciple of Ephrem the Syrian.<sup>53</sup> However, he had his own evaluation of the development of matters in the Christological controversies.

A few other aspects also have to be taken into account in distinguishing the Christological position of Mar Jacob. Firstly, there is his Syriac view on the 'unfathomable, inexplicable, inaccessible, indivisible, inscrutable, ineffable' nature of divine mysteries.<sup>54</sup> According to T. Jansma, *docta ignorantia*<sup>55</sup> is the Alpha and Omega of the theology of Mar Jacob.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Jansma, "Encore le Credo," 350.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 350.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Jansma, "Die Christologie," 34; *Ep XVII* 82–87; *XVI* 63–82.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Jansma, "Die Christologie," 38–46.

<sup>54</sup> "The search of the scribes to investigate all has failed; and all the wise were agitated as they sought to explain him, but he was unexplainable. They assaulted to investigate him, but he was uninvestigable. They dared to trace him out, but he was untraceable. This

Secondly, in the development of dogma Mar Jacob accepts only the first two councils in the sense of having achieved some solid dogmatic developments. In his opinion the later councils were the result of mere disputes and hence do not add anything new as a dogmatic development to what had already been stated by the first two councils of Nicaea and Constantinople.<sup>57</sup> Based on a pre-Chalcedonian as well as a 'pre-Nestorian' development of dogma Mar Jacob has a theological position in Christology composed of an Ephremian symbolic-mystical vision of the mystery of Christ and the Cyrillian vision of the unity in Christ.<sup>58</sup>

Thirdly, as a pastor of souls, Jacob was much preoccupied for the avoidance of heresy and the consequent damage to the faith of the Christian communities. In this respect he held that the teachings of the councils of Nicaea (325) and that of Constantinople (381) were enough.<sup>59</sup> The later councils were additions which arose out of theological disputes that do not respect the 'veil of the mystery' often emphasized by our author, and have nothing to do with the progress of the faith. Hence, he does not give much respect to those unnecessary formulations which resulted from scandalous divisions. In this regard in his dogmatic Christology Mar Jacob holds in good faith the Cyrillian Christology poised to defend the unity of Christ against all sorts of divisive tendencies. This preoccupation of Mar Jacob found its clearest expression in his renunciation of 'Antiochene-Nestorian' Christological views and their exponents who, according to him, seemed to assert division in Christ.<sup>60</sup>

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one said thus and that one said thus. They despised themselves by speaking about the inexpressible Word" (*Ep* XIII 55,21–26).

<sup>55</sup> The principle is to become 'ignorant' in order to become 'wise' in the Lord; cf. *Ep* II 15; See also note n. 164.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Ep* XVI 68–70; Jansma, "Christologie," 29–32; "The Credo of Jacob of Serug," 24; "Encore le Credo," 369; Sony, *La doctrine de Jacques de Saroug*, 98–101.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Ep* XVI 68,4–70,20; Jansma, "Die Christologie," 29, 30.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Jansma, "Die Christologie," 45.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Ep* XVI 63–82; Jansma, "Die Christologie," 30.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *Ep* XIV 59,18–60,16; Jansma, "Die Christologie," 24, 25.

Jacob's sensitiveness regarding the unity in the Church and in the social sphere as well as the outcome to the fate of ordinary faithful was considerable. In this respect, the impact of the social and political antecedents of Monophysite movement and the powerful Monophysite hierarchy developed under the able leadership of Severus of Antioch were decisive. In the opinion of Jacob the Severian accomplishments were congenial to wider Christian unity.

Taking mainly the three aspects mentioned above into consideration, the so called 'Monophysite views' to which Mar Jacob arrived are different from those of other protagonists such as Severus of Antioch and Philoxenus of Mabboug. Yet if we search for his dogmatic allegiance, we find that it was to the Severian vision of unity in Christ, which is basically a Cyrillian form of Christology. Based on the 'agnosticism' of Ephrem<sup>61</sup> as well as the principle of "*docta ignorantia*," Mar Jacob counted the additions of the Councils, other than the first two ones and that of the *Henoticon* of Zeno (482), as unnecessary additions out of quarrels. In order to avoid division in the Church which is one, and to evade all damages to the faith, the teachings of the first two councils were held fast to. He held a sort of Cyrillian position in his dogmatic Christology.

Based on the dogmatic development until the council of Constantinople the position of Jacob of Serugh can be pinned down. He is a Cyrillian Monophysite avowed to preserve the unity in Christ. It is out of this conviction that he condemned all extreme groups like Dyophysites and Eutychians. In the context of the Church at Edessa and Antioch he holds the type of Christology proposed by Severus of Antioch, that is basically Cyrillian. He found the powerful hierarchy of Severian Monophysitism more congenial to the unity in the Church. Hence, Mar Jacob's 'Monophysite' views are Severian type, but more moderate which can be called Miophysite.<sup>62</sup> He was concerned more with the social aspects and was deeply hesitant in making dogmatic statements and definitions as well as extremely afraid of theological quarrels and

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. Beck, "Bildtheologie," 239.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. note no. 3 of this chapter.

ecclesiastical scandals that can cause real damage to the faith of the community. Here an interesting comment by T. Jansma is worth noting: “Jakob von Serugh war ebenso katholisch wie Cyrill und ebenso anti-dyophysitisch und nach der Logik seiner monophysitischen Christologie ebenso anti-chalcedonensisich wie Severus.”<sup>63</sup>

As a poet and pastor of the Syriac tradition Jacob of Serugh propounds the mystery of Christ through his symbolic-typological vision that culminates in mystical silence. According to him, in silence, away from disputes and investigations, the Spirit inspires the faithful with the knowledge of the Truth and the resulting praise. In this respect Mar Jacob can be considered as ‘a variant reading’ in the Monophysite fabric of his period, which can be read only with a clear understanding of the proper ingredients of his theological vision. We propose to trace some such important ingredients of Jacob’s theology so as to arrive at a more balanced view of his theological vision and teachings.

## B. A FEW NOTES FOR A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The available sources regarding the birth and early period of Mar Jacob’s life present a more legendary figure than a historical person. The historically reliable data concerning him amounts only to a few references such as to his studies at the school of Edessa between the years 466–473,<sup>64</sup> his appointment as *chorepiscopa* during the year 502/3,<sup>65</sup> his consecration as bishop of Batnan in Serugh at the age of 68 in June 519 (830 gr. year)<sup>66</sup> and his death in the year 520/21.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Jansma, “Die Christologie,” 19.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *Ep XIV* 58–61; *Histoire nestorienne*, p. 121; Barhadbsabba ‘Arbaia, *L’histoire ecclésiastique*, 612.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *Ep XV* 62–63; *Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum*, I, syr. pp. 280–1, *tr.* 206–7; *Chronique de Michel*, t. IV, 268–9, *tr.* t. II, 261–2; Barhebraeus, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, t. I, col. 189–92.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Assemani, *BO*, Vol. I, 286–9; Abbeloos, *De vita et scriptis*, 90.

<sup>67</sup> The date of Mar Jacob’s death assumes importance together with some other reliable dates such as his stay in the School of Edessa, his ordination as bishop at Batnan in Serugh, etc. in determining the dates of other events of his life. *Chronicon ad annum* 724 gives 830 (gr. year) as the

However, there are a number of sources from which it is possible to make a biographical sketch of Mar Jacob.

The life and activities of Mar Jacob can be roughly divided into three periods: His birth at Kurtam in the Early Syriac Christian environment and the early period of his life, the theological formation at the school of Edessa and the early literary activities, and the ministry in the Syriac speaking Church at Chorepiscopal and Episcopal levels during a period of acute Christological disputes.

### 1. Birth and Early Period

The available sources provide only scanty details about the birth and early period of Mar Jacob's life. Several sources have to be brought together to produce a biographical sketch.<sup>68</sup> He was born at Kurtam (present 'Kurtak') on the Euphrates and was brought up at Hawra, a Mesopotamian village quite near to Edessa, in the district of Serugh. There is a reference regarding the sterility of his mother who for that reason offered many prayers for the birth of a child.<sup>69</sup> Hence, the birth of Mar Jacob is considered to be

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year of his death (= 518), which is quite improbable. Ms. Mardin Orthodox Archbishopric 256, and *Chornicon ad annum 819* (p. 8, tr. p. 5) gives the year of his death as 832 (gr. year) which corresponds to 520/1. *Chronicon Pseudo Dionysianum*, II, 5, 26–27, 44 give 833 (gr. year) as the year of his death. Hence, by calculating from the given dates 832/33 (gr. year) the possibilities are: birth in 450/1, ordination as bishop in 518, and death in 520/1. *Vita S. Jacobi Compendium ex Anonymo syro* in Assemani, *BO*, Vol. I, 286–9 (Text+ tr. see Abbeloos, *De Vita et scriptis*, 89–90) gives the year 830 (gr. year) as the year of his episcopal ordination at the age of sixty seven and a half and his death after two and a half years in November 833 (gr. year). This also implies his birth in 451, episcopal ordination in 518/9, and death in 521.

<sup>68</sup> For a rather detailed description, cf. Sony, *La doctrine de Jacques de Sarough*, 45–56.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Jacob of Edessa: in Assemani, *BO* I, 286; Abbeloos, *De Vita et scriptis*, 89; 311.

miraculous,<sup>70</sup> a gift after much prayer and by the intercession of a wonder-working monk (Ms. Mardin Orthodox Archbishopric 256). None of the documents mentions the date of birth of Mar Jacob. Hence, his date of birth is deduced from the date of his death and it is considered to be in 451.<sup>71</sup>

His father was a priest of the village.<sup>72</sup> Regarding the faith of the family there are no clear indications. A legendary report mentions about the inspiration of child Jacob. At the age of three, while in the church, the child got out of the hands of its mother and went up to the altar at the time of the epiclesis when the Holy Spirit descended. At the altar the child was given to drink by an angel. All such legendary notes amount to say perhaps nothing more than the prodigious nature of Mar Jacob that was acknowledged and accepted by his contemporary admirers and later generations seeing the fecundity of his literary carrier. Moreover, they insist that the inspiration of Mar Jacob was from the Holy Spirit rather than from any of the muses as were the cases with pagan writers.

## 2. Theological Formation and Early Literary Activities

Mar Jacob mentions about his studies at Edessa in his letter XIV<sup>73</sup> indicating that he was in the school of Edessa around the year 470 when the writings of Diodore of Tarsus were being translated into Syriac. In the context of bitter controversies in the field of dogmatic Christology, Mar Jacob sided with the Cyrillians and was

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Ms. Vatican Syriac 155; *memrā* on Jacob attributed to his disciple George; cf. Abbeloos, *De vita et scriptis*, 26–84.

<sup>71</sup> The manuscript sources give the date of his death varyingly. Yet researches on the dates bring out his death to be in the year 833 (gr. year) corresponding to 521. As Jacob died at the age of 70, his birth might probably be in the year 451; for a detailed note on these matters refer the section on ‘A few Important Notes for a Biographical Sketch’, and note n. 67 of this chapter.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *memrā* on Jacob attributed to George, in Abbeloos, *De vita et scriptis*, 26–84.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *Ep* XIV 58.

proud of the dominance of Cyrillians.<sup>74</sup> He argued against the ‘Nestorian’ lines<sup>75</sup> and was much preoccupied to refute all dogmatic views that suggest divisions in the person of Christ.

The report of the examination of Mar Jacob by five bishops emerged around this period. The episode is found in a panegyric, Ms. Jerusalem St Mark 156. It amounts actually to an acknowledgement of his talent and capabilities as a teacher of the period. It was in this context Mar Jacob is reported to have written the *mēmṛā* ‘On the Vision of Ezekiel’<sup>76</sup> with which he started his literary activities at the age of 22. This source speaks also about the commentaries on the scriptures, letters, *madrāšē* and *soḡyātā* written by him apart from 763 *mēmṛē*.<sup>77</sup> Regarding the *mēmṛē* of Mar Jacob there are reports concerning the rivalry between himself and Narsai. Both were presented as rivals in composing *mēmṛē* in order to propagate their own opinions.<sup>78</sup> Ms. Mardin Orthodox Archbishopric 256 mentions about a group of scribes who were writing down the dictations of Mar Jacob (fol. 2b). It also speaks about the various forms of his literary output: “There are 763 [*mēmṛē*] apart from commentaries on the scriptures and letters together with *madrāšē* and *soḡyātā*.”<sup>79</sup>

There are several references to the monastic life of Mar Jacob. But the exact nature of it is not clear. In the school of Edessa every student had to follow a mode of life similar to that of monastic prescriptions in the tenor of its pedagogy. Moreover, Jacob was a personality who was much in contact with various monastic groups and could extend spiritual and ascetical help to them as well. A few documents<sup>80</sup> that speak of his priesthood at Hawra and his

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Ep* XX 129.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *Histoire Nestorienne*, PO VII, p. 115; *De patriarchis*, 44; Vööbus, *History of the School*, 65–9.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *HS* IV 543–610.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Barhebraeus, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, I, col. 191.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Barhadbsabba ‘Arbaia, *L’histoire ecclésiastique*, II, 612; Vööbus, *History of the School*, 65–9.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Barhebraeus, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, I, col. 191.

<sup>80</sup> *Chronicon ad annum 846*, pp. 218, 228 (*tr.* 166, 173); *Chronicon Pseudo-Dionysianum*, 280–1 (*tr.* 206–7); *Ep* XV.

appointment as *Chorepiscopa* at Hawra, where he himself grew up, is a clear sign of his talents in preaching and spiritual guidance.

### 3. Ministry of Mar Jacob at Chorepiscopal and Episcopal Levels

The Chorepiscopal status<sup>81</sup> of Mar Jacob has brought forth at least two aspects of his life into the limelight. The first and the most prominent one is his literary contribution, mainly in the form of *mēmre*. The wider theological and spiritual treasures of the *mēmre* will be treated later in this study.<sup>82</sup> It was during his Chorepiscopate at Hawra that he composed the major portion of his *mēmre*. The second aspect is his greater leaning towards the ‘Monophysite’ views and his collaboration with Miaphysite-Monophysite leaders such as Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabboug, and others. As he was raised up in the ecclesiastical hierarchy he was compelled to be involved in theological disputes of the ecclesial constellations of his time, even perhaps against his inner personal instincts. Later Mar Jacob was made bishop of Batnan, a city about 10 Roman miles from Urhai (Edessa), in the district of Serugh (modern *Suruç* in Turkey).

The reasons for the episcopal nomination of Mar Jacob towards the end of his life are still not explained. There are contradictory opinions. Some hold that Mar Jacob, a Monophysite sympathizer, was consecrated bishop of Batnan at the time of Justin I, a persecutor of Monophysites, due to Jacob’s change of mentality;<sup>83</sup> but others are of the opinion that he accepted consecration in order to defend ‘Monophysite’ communities during the exile of other prominent leaders.

As regards the final years of his life, it is said that Mar Jacob himself foresaw his death and besought the Lord that he might live

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<sup>81</sup> *Peryadentā* (or *Chorepiscopa*) is an ecclesiastical office equivalent to that of an Episcopal Visitor, as a helper to the Bishop. Cf. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, Vol. I, 342, col. 2; also p. 1713, col. 1; *BO* I, 870; II, cxix, 50, 83, 99, 255; III, ii, 789; Payne Smith, *Syriac Dictionary*, 460.

<sup>82</sup> See chapters 2–5 of this study.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Krüger, “Die kirchliche Zugehörigkeit Jakobs,” 28.

on after his death through the words of his teachings.<sup>84</sup> It is mentioned that the last *mēmra* he wrote was ‘On Mary and Golgotha’<sup>85</sup> which remains incomplete due to his death. In the letter addressed to Paul of Edessa (*Ep XXXII*) Mar Jacob refers to himself as one who is weak due to sickness and unable to visit his archbishop Paul who returned from the first exile in 520.

The available documents do not agree on the year of his death. It falls between 520/21. But regarding the month, 29th November, all are in agreement. Patriarch Jacob II fixed the year of Mar Jacob’s death at 520/21 AD, at the age of 69. Accordingly all other documents were corrected. Only Ms. Vat. Syr. 155 informs that Jacob was buried with honour at Amid. At the place of the mortal remains of Jacob, a writing is found in Estangela, which can be translated as: “The Syrian Mar Jacob of Serugh, the Doctor of truths and the consolidator of the true Faith. The year 2004.” The commemoration day of Jacob is on different dates in different Churches.<sup>86</sup>

### C. THE WRITINGS OF MAR JACOB OF SERUGH

Mar Jacob stands as one of the great hymnographers of the early Syriac tradition, perhaps second only to Ephrem the Syrian. While imbibing inspiration from the Syriac tradition, his genius was so outstanding as to leave a legacy of his own. Moreover, Mar Jacob by his writings rendered brilliant contributions to the exegetico-theological tradition and spiritual vision of the early Syriac Christianity.

#### 1. The Literary Output of Jacob of Serugh

The writings of Mar Jacob are well known among the Syrian Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, Maronites, Armenians, Copts and Ethiopians. All of them consider him as one of their glorious ancestors. Mar Jacob’s writings are mainly poetic. According to

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. *HS* V 117,6–15.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Mouterde, “Deux Homélie inédites de Jacques de Saroug: Marie et le Golgotha,” 1–36.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Sony, *La doctrine de Jacques de Saroug*, 56.

Bar-Hebraeus he had seventy amanuenses to copy down his metrical homilies which number about 760. “*Habuit autem septuaginta amanuenses ad escribenda ejus carmina quae sunt numero septingenta et sexaginta praeter expositiones, epistolas, odas et hymnos. Postremum recitavit carmen de Maria et Golgotha quod imperfectum reliquit. Ejus etiam est explanatio sex Evagrii centuriarum quam fecit rogatu mar Georgii, gentium episcopi, ejus discipuli.*”<sup>87</sup> According to Jacob of Edessa he had 763 metrical homilies.<sup>88</sup> A good number of homilies are preserved in Syriac and Arabic manuscripts.<sup>89</sup> There are other homilies translated into Arabic, Armenian and Ethiopic. Paul Bedjan has published 212 of these homilies.<sup>90</sup> The liturgical hymns and melodies of Mar Jacob are a common patrimony of the Syrian Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, Melkites and Armenians. They fall under different literary genres of the Syriac verse compositions, such as *mēmra*, *madrāṣā*, *sogitā*, etc.

The diverse forms of Syriac poetry is an outcome of the mentality of the Syrians who are fond of verbal niceties, manifold play on rhythms and accent, rhyme, assonance and acrostic.<sup>91</sup> Often these involve repetitions and prolixity which may be an unwelcome factor to some modern readers especially in the context of rationalistic theology. But it should be borne in mind that most of the Syriac poetic forms are meant to be sung antiphonically, especially, in liturgical assemblies. Added to this, the verse

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<sup>87</sup> Barhebraeus, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, I col. 191 (syr.), LT col. 192; cf. also Assemani, *BO* II, p. 322.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Assemani, *BO*, I, 299.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, pp. 148–158.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Bedjan, P. *Homiliae selectae Mar Jacobi sarugensis (HS)*. I–V vols. Paris/Leipzig, 1905–1910; *S. Martyrii qui et Sabdona quae supersunt omnia (SMS)*. Paris/Leipzig, 1902 (5 homilies); *Acta martyrum et sanctorum (AMS)*. I–VII vols. Paris/Leipzig, 1890–1897; There is a reprint of the edition of Bedjan from Gorgias Press, NJ, USA, 2006, with additional material edited as Volume VI by Sebastian P. Brock; for details see the bibliography. See also the already published Fascicles of the bilingual editions of *The Metrical Homilies of Mar Jacob of Sarug*, under *Texts from Christian Antiquity*, Gorgias Press, NJ, USA, 2008; [www.gorgiaspress.com](http://www.gorgiaspress.com)

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Gabriel, *Syro-Chaldaic Grammar*, 90.

compositions had the function of catechetical teaching and homiletical persuasion. Such were the purposes of several poems that served Christian life in liturgical and sacramental contexts as well as the life of piety in general.

Mar Jacob is considered to be the inventor of ‘*dodecasyllabic*’ metrical hymnody.<sup>92</sup> This particular metre is formed by verses of twelve syllables (three feet of four syllables) mainly used by Mar Jacob. Hence, West Syrians call this particular metre *Nišā d-mār ya’qōb* (Metre of Mar Jacob). East Syrians attribute the same metre to Mar Narsai. The effect of this particular metre enhances liveliness and provides a picturesque character to the poetic discourse. As regards Mar Jacob, this metre helps him to avoid, to a certain extent, repetitions and monotony as well as to furnish a lucid language. His talent is all the more appreciable as he was capable of composing so many verse homilies without entering into or leaving room for dogmatic polemics even when he was composing in the midst of heated Christological controversies.

## 2. The Verse Compositions of Jacob of Serugh

The memorable and voluminous contribution of Mar Jacob, to Syriac Christianity in particular and to Christian literature in general, is his *mēmre*.<sup>93</sup> In addition to this we find a number of *madrāšē*, *sogyātā*, and other genre of verse compositions.

### a. *The mēmre (Metrical Homilies) of Jacob of Serugh*<sup>94</sup>

The substantial output of Mar Jacob’s literary contribution is in his metrical homilies. They earned fame for Jacob and enlightened those who seek to find the Syriac mode of handling biblical texts

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. Khouri-Sarkis, “Les Mètres Poétiques Syriaques,” 63–72.

<sup>93</sup> On *mēmre* and other literary forms of early Syriac literature see ns. 6 & 7 in the General Introduction.

<sup>94</sup> All references to the homilies of Jacob of Serugh edited by P. Bedjan in five volumes are cited with the abbreviation: *HS* + volume number in Roman numerals + page(s) + line(s). Regarding the editions or translations of other homilies the citations are according to the abbreviations or other norms followed in the bibliography.

and the methods of catechesis and homiletical expositions of the past. The testimonies of Barhebraeus and Jacob of Edessa together speak about 763 such homilies written by Mar Jacob.

(i) *The Purpose and Contents of mēmṛē*

*Mēmṛā* forms a special literary genre in which the purpose of the author is the edification of the audience while explaining particular themes in order to teach the assembly of the faithful. These metrical homilies are not usually sung but recited. They belong to the narrative epic class.<sup>95</sup> This particular literary genre which in several aspects remain far apart from the style of Greek and Latin writers, requires a different mode of approach and mentality to admire, appreciate and recognize the values inherent in them. In this respect it is relevant to take note of a comment by S. P. Brock:

I should stress at the outset that it is essential to read Jacob on his own terms, and not approach him with our own western European presuppositions, if we are to appreciate his true originality and profundity. In other words, we must make an effort of the imagination in order to recapture this supra-historical way of thinking.<sup>96</sup>

Hence, the mentality and taste of the people for whom Mar Jacob wrote and that of those who read him are more important and have to be given serious consideration.

The themes of these homilies are always related to the life of faith in the community and other matters that are related to it. They are precisely on the principal events and personages of the Old and the New Testaments, faith, and other virtues, panegyric on apostles, martyrs and the well known saints of the Orient.<sup>97</sup> The handling of the themes varies in their aspects from moral exhortation and spiritual guidance to purely exegetical considerations. Mar Jacob's exposition 'On the Veil of Moses'

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<sup>95</sup> Cf. Gabriel, *Syro-Chaldaic Grammar*, 91.

<sup>96</sup> Brock, "Baptismal Themes," 325–6.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Chabot, *Littérature syriaque*, 63.

Face<sup>98</sup> and that on *Hexameron*<sup>99</sup> are a few mentionable among his exegetical homilies on Old Testament themes.

Moreover, his metrical homilies served well for the enrichment of the liturgical and popular piety and thus became perennial parts of homiletical and liturgical choral books of the Church. This in turn had helped the preservation of much of Mar Jacob's literary output which otherwise would have perished. Some of his homilies are also preserved in Arabic translations made by Abu al-Barakat. But this Arabic author had selected only some homilies that were important from the point of view of theological and dogmatic aspects.<sup>100</sup>

(ii) *The Functions of mēmṛē according to Jacob of Serugh*

As a composer of *mēmṛē* Mar Jacob calls himself a 'harp' on which the fingers of the Spirit play on.<sup>101</sup> *Memṛē* are usually chanted in the church (*HS III* 487,2–11; *V* 481, 775,2–13). But occasionally *mēmṛē* are also chanted in the houses of the faithful, i.e., in connection with marriages, feasts, etc. (*HS V* 873–886). He asks his hearers to follow patiently his way of looking at the Scriptures (*HS III* 652,20–653,12) without stumbling (*HS I* 85,13–16). It is worth hearing the Scriptures as they are inspired by divine grace (*HS III* 363,15–16; *IV* 560,3–4; *V* 596,1–2; 858,11–12; *Ep XXIII* 168,11). Almost all prefaces of his homilies are supplications for illumination to speak profitably for the hearers. He insists that his hearers be attentive and he demands faith (*HS V* 594,18–595,3; *Ep XVI* 74; *XXIV* 204) and love (*HS II* 349,4–350,4/*FH VIII* 33–54; *HS I* 445,14–18/*FH X* 11–15; *HS V* 866,14) as preconditions for a profitable hearing of the *mēmṛē*.

Mar Jacob uses certain poetic images to explain the role and functions of *mēmṛē*. Firstly, the hearing of homily is a "fattening from the scriptures" (*HS I* 552; *IV* 724,16; *V* 551–553). From the

<sup>98</sup> See an ET by Brock, "On the Veil of Moses," 70–85.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Jansma, "L'Hexaméron de Jacques de Saroug," 3–43; 129–62; 253–84.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Vööbus, "Handschriftliche Überlieferung," CSCO, 344 (Sub. 39), p. 21.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. *SMS* 722,20–723,5/*FH I* 57–64; *HS V* 117,14.

reading the soul is illumined and instructed. The homily is a 'table' set for nourishment (*HS I 588,12–13; 589,17–590,13*). The mouth breeds the words and the ears become educated and trained as nourishment that nurtures little children (*HS V 78,8–79,14; 117*). The homily is a 'censer' in which the incense is the fire of love (*HS I 482,12–15*). The poet is a 'farmer' who sows his homily in the field of the hearers (*HS II 78,12–79,12*). The listeners like mirrors hear the word and receive into themselves the image of the Word and conceive it in themselves (*HS III 335,7–16*). The homilist or the commentator is the 'diver' who plunges into the 'sea' of the Scriptures and collects the pearls to sell them to the 'merchants' who are the hearers (*HS I 328,9–329,3; Ep XVI 74–76*) who wear these pearls in their ears.

**b. Other Genre of Verse Compositions of Jacob of Serugh<sup>102</sup>**

(i) *Madrašē*: This literary genre of the Syriac poetry was flourishing from the earliest times through the writings of Bardaisan, Ephrem and others. In fact, Ephrem had written many *madrašē* in order to counteract the teachings of the *madrašē* of Bardaisan. Often they deal with dogmatic, apologetic and philosophical questions. Together with the writings of Ephrem in a manuscript in the British Library there are some *madrašē* of Mar Jacob. In one of the collections there is a *madrašā* 'On the World' and nine others on sin and penance. In another group there are three *madrašē* on the dead.<sup>103</sup> In another group the *madrašē* are on the Virgin Mary, Martyrs, Saints and the Dead. These *madrašē* were written mainly for liturgical purposes and to enrich the cultic life of the faithful. They were transmitted through the choral books and liturgical texts of which the oldest are from the 8th and 9th centuries.<sup>104</sup>

(ii) *Sogitā*: This genre of poetry is purely religious, meant for antiphonal hymn mainly used in liturgical contexts. In an 8th or 9th

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<sup>102</sup> For a detailed description on the various literary forms of the early Syriac Christian Literature, cf. Brock, "An Introduction to Syriac Studies," 5–6.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Vööbus, "Handschriftliche Überlieferung," CSCO, 344 (Sub. 39), p. 23; Baumstarck, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, 149.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Baumstarck, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, 149 (n. 3).

century manuscript (British Library 17,141) a major number of *soḡyātā* are by Mar Jacob while a few were by Ephrem and Isaac of Antioch. Some famous *soḡyātā* are those on the Jesus-Abgar legend, on Jesus and Mary and on the Church and the Synagogue.<sup>105</sup>

(iii) *Bā'ūtā*: They are supplicatory prayers often used in the Breviary. In the West Syrian Breviary found in a manuscript of the late 9th century a good number of *bā'wātā* employed belong to Jacob of Serugh and they exceed those of Ephrem by almost threefold.

(iv) *Tbārtā*, *b'ätte*, *sēbeltā* are some other Syriac poetic forms by which Jacob enriched the wider family of Syriac liturgical traditions.

### 3. The Prose Compositions of Jacob of Serugh

Jacob's extant prose writings consist of his letters,<sup>106</sup> six festal homilies (*turgamē*) on the major liturgical feasts of our Lord,<sup>107</sup> one homily each on Sin<sup>108</sup> and on the Friday of the third week of Fasting,<sup>109</sup> a few funeral orations, an order of Baptism,<sup>110</sup> confirmation formulae,<sup>111</sup> and liturgical *anaphorae*.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Cf. Vööbus, "Handschriftliche Überlieferung," CSCO, 344 (Sub. 39), p. 25.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Olinder, *G. Iacobi sarugensis epistulae quot quot supersunt*. CSCO, 110. Louvain, 1965; Martin, J.-P. P. "Letters de Jacques de Saroug aux moines du Convent de Mar Bassus et à Paul d'Édesse." *ZDMG* 30 (1876): 217–75.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Zingerle, P. *Sechs Homilien des heiligen Jacob von Sarug. Aus syrischen Handschriften*. Bonn, 1867; see a critical edition with a FT by Rilliet, F. *Jacques de Saroug, Six Homélie Festales en Prose*. PO, 43. Turnhout, 1986; References to the Prose Homilies will be as follows: SHF + No. of the homily in Roman numerals + Paragraph. See also Brock, S. P. *Turgamē dāsimin l-qaddīšā mar Ya'qob da-Sarug malpanā*. Monastery of St. Ephrem, Lossier, Holland, 1984, for a Syriac edition with a semi-vocalized text of the Prose Homilies but without translation. See English translations of prose homilies in Kollamparampil, *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Ms. BL. Add. 14,621, Fol. 157b ff. of the year 802; cf. Wright, *Catalogue*, II, 758.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Ms. BL. Add. 12,165, Fol. 98b ff. of the year 1015; cf. Wright, *Catalogue*, II, 844.

#### 4. Critical Editions and Translations of the Works of Mar Jacob

The voluminous corpus of the writings of Mar Jacob are varied in genre both in verse and prose. A complete survey of the various texts themselves is a laborious task since the major part of the material under discussion is still in manuscript form, presumably under a very complicated manuscript tradition. Moreover, manuscripts themselves are in some cases bound together with the writings of other authors such as Ephrem and Severus of Antioch. Hence, the task of identifying and resolving the question of authenticity has to be addressed.<sup>113</sup> With regard to the development of research for the critical editions of the writings of Jacob of Serugh the work of A. Vööbus<sup>114</sup> is rather helpful. However, it is deficient as it carries only the titles of the homilies which by themselves are not clear enough to distinguish various homilies, especially those dealing with the same theme.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. Assemani, *CL*, II, 309–50.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Assemani, *CL*, III, 184–7.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Codrington, *Anaphora syriaca Iacobi Sarugensis*, Vol. II, fasc. I, x, xi, xii, pp. 1–89; Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature*, 68ff.

<sup>113</sup> With regard to the question of authenticity the homily “On the Mysteries, Symbols and Figures of Christ” (*HS III 305–321*) is a specimen to be treated. As far as I understand it is a compilation of relevant pieces from various homilies of Jacob of Serugh. Those who used the homilies of Jacob for various purposes such as liturgical, catechetical, etc. might have made their own editing and compilations. This later development does not directly question the authenticity but shed light upon the complicated manuscript tradition of the extant homilies of Jacob of Serugh.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Vööbus, A. “Handschriftliche Überlieferung.” *CSCO*, 344/345, 421/422 (Sub. 39, 40, 60, 61). Louvain, 1973, 1980.

<sup>115</sup> S. P. Brock points out the deficiency of A. Vööbus’s volumes on the manuscript traditions of the homilies of Mar Jacob by specifying, “a work whose value would have been all the greater had the homilies been identified by incipit rather than by title.” Brock, “The Published Verse Homilies,” 279. Cf. the reprint of the edition of Bedjan from Gorgias

Through various genre, both in verse and prose, Jacob left his distinguished Syriac literary style<sup>116</sup> as well as his symbolic theological reflection. It is mainly through his verse compositions that he served Syriac speaking Christianity and earned himself fame and popularity during his life time and after. Although Jacob is said to have written about 763 verse homilies, only three hundred or so survive. Roughly two-thirds of the surviving ones have been edited and published by Paul Bedjan. But the finding of other manuscripts,<sup>117</sup> not used by Bedjan, call for critical editions of the works of Mar Jacob. On the other hand the vast number of manuscripts of the works of our author illustrates the wider use of his writings in the early centuries and further. With regard to the six prose homilies (*turgāme*), the critical edition with a French translation by Frédéric Rilliet<sup>118</sup> is a substantial contribution. The translations of the select group of festal homilies,<sup>119</sup> as a basis for this study, envisages a wider readership among the English readers of Mar Jacob.

#### **D. THE GROUP OF SELECT FESTAL HOMILIES ON THE FEASTS OF OUR LORD**

From the voluminous writings of Mar Jacob that are extant in various literary genres, his metrical homilies are so overarching against his prose writings so as to define and pronounce his poetic genius in providing biblical exegesis, catechesis, liturgical homilies and above all his symbolic theology through poetic medium. In view of the present study on ‘Salvation in Christ’, a group of verse and prose homilies on the feasts of our Lord are selected as a basis.

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Press, NJ, USA, 2006, with additional material edited as Volume VI by S. P. Brock serves as a good instrument and bibliography.

<sup>116</sup> A few aspects of Mar Jacob’s art of *memrē* compositions are explained by Blum, “Zum Bau von Abschnitten,” 307–21; for a few elements of his rhetoric, cf. Rilliet, “Rhétorique,” 289–95.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Vööbus, A. *Handschriftliche Überlieferung*. 4 Vols. CSCO, 344, 345 (Sub. 39, 40), 421, 422 (Sub. 60, 61). Louvain, 1973, 1980.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. footnote 107 of this chapter on six prose festal homilies of Jacob of Serugh.

<sup>119</sup> Kollamparampil, *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*.

The deep-rootedness of the early Syriac Christian literature in Scriptures is a well attested factor.<sup>120</sup> Being a prominent Syriac Christian writer of the 5/6th century, Mar Jacob has both imbibed as well as contributed towards the explicit biblical moorings of the Syriac writings of the early centuries.

### **1. The Biblically Oriented Theologizing of Jacob of Serugh and the Theme of the Study**

Any casual perusal of the writings of Mar Jacob, especially his homilies, both prose and verse, would be sufficient to notice his extensive use of biblical narratives and texts either by direct references or by allusions. Moreover, a higher percentage of his homilies are on biblical episodes and teachings. There are several reasons for this sort of biblical orientation and exposition in the literary output of Mar Jacob. Primarily, he stands in the early Syriac tradition rich in the perusal of biblical materials. In this respect a remark by Eberhard Nestle is worth mentioning: “No branch of the Early Church has done more for the translation of the Bible into their vernacular than the Syriac-speaking.”<sup>121</sup> These early translations of the Bible are accompanied by other allied forms of biblical literature, such as, commentaries and homilies as well as several other literary genre. In this respect a remark by Van Rompey is quite relevant:

A wider description of the exegetical activity and its literary expression should also take into account other literary genres, such as various sorts of prayers, dispute poems, etc. As Syriac literature is, above all, of a religious nature, no literary genre can be excluded from a study of the Syriac interpretation of the Bible.<sup>122</sup>

Syriac biblical literature is rich with characteristics of Semitic Judeo-Christian literary genres. In many respects, Mar Jacob stands in that milieu in which the sacred Scriptures themselves had their

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<sup>120</sup> Cf. *Dem* XXII 26, Aphrahat calls himself ‘a disciple of the Holy Scriptures’.

<sup>121</sup> ‘Syriac Versions’, *Hasting’s Dictionary of the Bible*, IV, 645.

<sup>122</sup> Van Rompey, “Syriac Tradition of Interpretation,” 641.

origin, and he shares their Semitic vocabulary, structures, figures and, more prominently, their world-view. In his approach to the Bible and in his theological vision there are a few underlying perspectives such as the unity of the Scriptures, unity of the Revelation, unity and correlative progress of the economy of salvation in the Old and the New Testaments, etc. This underlying unity evolves out of a Christocentric view of creation, redemption and salvation.

The second reason for his predominant biblical orientation might be attributed to his ministry as commentator of sacred Scriptures to various Christian communities at Hawra in the District of Serugh,<sup>123</sup> immediately after the closure of the school of Edessa in 489. Those years became instrumental to the emergence of the genius in Mar Jacob and his literary output. Thirdly the profound biblical orientation in his writings is due to his mode of theological reflection. For Mar Jacob sacred Scriptures are the source and norm of theological reflection<sup>124</sup> and his theological synthesis is profoundly biblical and Christological.

As he was a preacher to quite ordinary Christian communities through his service as *Chorepiscopa* (Episcopal Vicar/Visitor) his theological output has some specific notes such as predominance of catechetical and homiletical elements, spiritual persuasion rather than speculative and philosophical analysis, etc. His preaching and expositions have high liturgical overtones as well. For him the *locus theologicus* is the practising Christian communities, the believing Church with its liturgy and catechesis. This has brought about liturgical, homiletical and catechetical dimensions to his theological vision which is expressed more in symbolic terms rather than rationalistic and philosophical categories.<sup>125</sup> His symbolic theology is highly biblical in tune with the Semitic mode of thinking that is well expressed in both Old and New Testaments. In certain respects his writings furnish clarifications to a few biblical modes

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<sup>123</sup> Cf. Abbeleos, *De Vita et Scriptis*, 312; A *memrā* on Jacob in Ms. Paris Syr. 177 (1520/1 AD) fol. 146a–162a; Vööbus, “Handschriftliche Überlieferung,” CSCO, 344 (Sub. 39), p. 2.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 306.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Brock, “On the Veil of Moses,” 70.

of thinking and their interrelations that are often found only implicit in the biblical narratives. Hence, his writings, especially the homilies on biblical themes, bring out insights that are very rarely seen in other early Christian writings of other traditions.<sup>126</sup>

The present study is concerned with Jacob's theological synthesis which is, as already mentioned earlier, highly dependent on his borrowing from the mainstream Syriac tradition as well as on his own insights as fruits of his ministry as a commentator of sacred Scriptures for a longer period. Since the homilies are the predominant literary output of Mar Jacob, they serve as the primary source for understanding the network of his theological views. His homilies could be studied from several angles. In any case one of the keys to understand the theological vision of Mar Jacob is his Christocentric understanding of creation, redemption and salvation or in other words his vision of the economy of salvation in Christ. Basically this depends on his vision of the mystery of Christ as the unifying power in the history of salvation, throughout the Scriptures and as the fulfilment of the whole creation.

In the present study the Christocentric vision is taken up to highlight Mar Jacob's understanding of the economy of salvation in Christ. It is an attempt to study the writings of Jacob in order to learn how Christ, the Saviour, shines out in the economy of salvation and emerges as the sacrament of salvation in the various 'staging posts' (*awāwne*) of the on-going progress of the revelation. Mar Jacob's understanding of the Christocentric economy of salvation is expounded in a more synthesized and comprehensive way in his homilies, both prose and verse, on the feasts of our Lord. Hence they serve as the basis of the present study that aims to construct a thematic synthesis of his vision of the economy of salvation in Christ.

## **2. Select Festal Homilies of Jacob on the Feasts of Our Lord**

The list of the select festal homilies of Jacob of Serugh, that are translated is given below. The order of presentation and the

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<sup>126</sup> Cf. Grill, "Jakob von Sarug als Dichter und Exeget," 17.

numberings given here are the same as in the published English translation of the festal homilies.<sup>127</sup>

FH I = On the Nativity of Our Redeemer According to the Flesh, pp. 37–93 [SMS<sup>128</sup> (No. 6), pp. 720–774].

FH II = The Second Homily on the Nativity, pp. 94–107 [SMS (No. 7), pp. 775–90].

FH III = On the Nativity of Our Lord, pp. 108–27 [SMS (No. 8), pp. 790–808].

FH IV = On the Nativity, pp. 128–37 [SHF<sup>129</sup> I, pp. 539–49].

FH V = On the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple and on the Reception of Him by Simeon, pp. 138–61 [HS<sup>130</sup> V (No. 165), pp. 447–66].

FH VI = On the Baptism of Our Redeemer in Jordan, pp. 162–86 [HS I (No. 8), pp. 167–93].

FH VII = On the Epiphany, pp. 187–200 [SHF II, pp. 550–567].

FH VIII = On the Transfiguration of Our Lord on the Mountain of Tabor and on Moses and Elijah who were talking with Him, pp. 201–30 [HS II (No. 49), pp. 347–75].

FH IX = On the Forty Days' Fasting, pp. 231–245 [SHF III, pp. 568–585].

FH X = On the Sunday of Hosannas, pp. 246–260 [HS I (No. 18), pp. 445–59].

FH XI = On the Sunday of Hosannas, 261–77 [SHF IV, pp. 586–609].

FH XII = On the Friday of the Passion, pp. 278–91 [SHF V, pp. 610–29].

FH XIII = On the Great Sunday of the Resurrection, pp. 292–305 [HS II (No. 54), pp. 611–23].

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<sup>127</sup> Cf. Kollampampil, *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*.

<sup>128</sup> SMS = Bedjan, P., ed. *S. Martyrii qui et Sabdona, que supersunt omnia*. Paris, 1902.

<sup>129</sup> SHF = Rilliet, F., ed. *Jacques de Saroug, Six Homéliees Festales en Prose* (critical edition with FT). PO, 43. Turnhout, 1986.

<sup>130</sup> HS = Bedjan, P., ed. *Homiliae Selectae Mar Jacobi Sarugensis*. Vols. I–V. Paris/Leipzig, 1905–1910.

FH XIV = On the Resurrection of Our Lord, pp. 306–17 [HS II (No. 55), pp. 624–35].

FH XV = On the Sunday of the Resurrection, pp. 318–28 [SHF VI, pp. 630–45].

FH XVI = On the Ascension of Our Lord to Heaven, pp. 329–52 [SMS (No. 9), pp. 808–32].

FH XVII = On the Holy Sunday of the Pentecost and on the Division of Tongues and on the Gifts of the Apostles, pp. 353–69 [HS II (No. 58), pp. 670–89].

### 3. Select Group of Homilies and the Theme of the Study

According to Mar Jacob the whole economy of salvation from the very beginning is centred on the mystery of the Son of God who became tangibly revealed to humanity in his Incarnation. Hence, the words and deeds of the incarnate Son of God are replete with hidden realities and powers. They can be understood only by loving discernment and wonder which inevitably beget praises. The mystery of this type of understanding emphasizes the predominance of the Son of God in the redemptive revelation. The Son who was sent by the Father in his mercy became incarnate in order ‘to mingle’ (*m̄zag, ḥlat*) with humanity in view of redemption. Thus the incarnate Son is the concrete expression of the divine mercy for the sake of humanity. Christ himself envisaged a way which his Father had ordained and he himself has accepted to travel on. By a synchronic vision of the whole of biblical history, Mar Jacob discerningly views the ordering of the road of divine economy for the redemption of humanity. The Son of God takes up this road of divine economy and accomplishes his way. Hence, the words and deeds of the Son of God are empowered as well as beset with the fruits of redemption. The whole journey of the Son of God is sacramental in effect for the redemption of the whole creation. In this frame-work of the divine economy the various ‘staging posts’ (*ʿawāwne*) of the Son on his way are significant. Therefore, primarily the various feasts of our Lord from the Nativity up to the Ascension are pregnant with various aspects of the divine economy of salvation. The homilies by Mar Jacob on those events present a deeper discerning vision of that economy through Christ based on the divine purpose and the particular reasons for the various acts of the incarnate Son. It is because of this fundamental and pre-

eminent factor that the homilies on the feasts of our Lord are selected to serve as the basis of this study.

The second reason for selecting these homilies emerges from the nature of the literary style of Mar Jacob. In his discursive mode of thinking and presentation of themes what dictates his mode of procedure is a synchronic and discursive approach rather than any analytical reflection. In such discursive mode of dealing with matters in the light of a synchronic vision, we may find relevant materials on the economy of salvation in Christ even in certain unexpected corners of his homilies. But in his homilies on the feasts of our Lord we are privileged to find a rather substantial synthesis of his views on the Christocentric vision of the economy of salvation. Hence, those homilies are selected as the basis. Yet in order to do justice to the discursive mode of thinking and presentation of our author, attention is given to homilies other than the selected ones for further elucidation of the mind of Jacob of Serugh. Since the present study is of a theological nature the select festal homilies are taken as the basic reference. As this study aims at a thematic synthesis, as far as possible, other relevant texts are also consulted and wherever necessary citations are furnished in translations in order to bring out a more comprehensive understanding of Jacob's theological vision.

The third reason for selecting a group of homilies as the basis of this study is methodological. Due to the present state of the editions of the writings of Mar Jacob it is not an easy task to bring out a comprehensive and exhaustive synthesis of his theological views, especially his symbolic theological views. It is so mainly due to two reasons: Primarily, our author has a very vast literary output in various literary forms and a good amount of them still remain in the form of manuscripts. Secondly, even a higher percentage of that part of the material already edited are not translated into modern languages. It is to overcome this state of affairs for the present study, at least to a certain extent, that an English translation of the select group of festal homilies is furnished. Hence, those select homilies and translations serve as the basis for the present thematic synthesis of Mar Jacob's vision of the economy of salvation in Christ.

## E. ASPECTS OF THE SYMBOLIC THEOLOGY OF JACOB OF SERUGH

As has already been described, Jacob is an heir to two types of Christian theological traditions.<sup>131</sup> They are the philosophically rational theology, gaining prominence in Antiochene and Alexandrian circles, imbued with philosophical categories of theological reflection, and the more prominent one for Jacob, the early Syriac Christian theology with its Semitic character basing its theological reflections primarily on images and symbols.<sup>132</sup> It is to be noted that images and symbols are basic to all human experiences and they remain prior to any sort of philosophical categorization. Hence, theological visions that are founded on images and symbols have a freshness and vitality of their own. They transcend all historical periods and easily extend their transparency and applicability to every changing human situation. Following the symbolic method of theological reflection Jacob of Serugh has left some very fascinating and insightful theological views for the posterity.

Here the concern is on Jacob's own heritage of the early Syriac Christian theology which is symbolic and imbibes much from the typological exegesis of the early Church.<sup>133</sup> But in handling the typologies the early Syriac theology has a mode of its own.<sup>134</sup> Greek writers also make use of a symbolic approach. But in their approach the primary concern is to clarify and order the

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<sup>131</sup> Cf. The section on 'The Controversial Theological Milieu of Jacob of Serugh' in this chapter (section A,2).

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 40.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Murray, "The Theory of Symbolism," 2.

<sup>134</sup> E. Beck provides the following distinction: "Die Bilder finden sich auch in der griechischen Theologie. Doch hier herrschen nicht sie vor, sondern die Tendenz, mit Hilfe philosophischer Begriffe die geoffenbarten Wahrheiten klar zu fassen um zu ordnen. ... Denn die Griechen wollten auch mit den Bildern einen wenn auch noch so geringen Einblick in das trinitarische Geheimnis gewinnen. Ephräm dagegen findet die Unerklärbarkeit schon im Bild und folgert daraus mit seinem Schluß *a minore ad maius* die totale Unerkennbarkeit des göttlichen Wesens." Beck, "Bildtheologie," 239.

revealed truths with the help of philosophical concepts. Moreover, the tendency is to capture and define the revealed truths. But Ephrem, and other Syriac writers following him, by avoiding the tendency to order and define truths, moved on the lines of a symbolic-contemplative method that brings together biblical typologies and the symbols of nature as two witnesses to the divine realities. In the highly sacramental world-vision of the Syriac fathers both typologies and symbols are mentioned as veiled pointers replete with significance as well as active elements of God's divine self-communication to humanity.<sup>135</sup> This distinctive outlook of the Syriac Christian writers, especially that of Ephrem, as observed by R. Murray,<sup>136</sup> did make an extraordinary anticipation of the basic philosophical position of Paul Ricoeur regarding the meaning and function of symbols.

### **1. The Theory of Symbolism in Early Syriac Christian Writers and in Contemporary Times**

None of the early Syriac writers gave any systematic treatise on their symbolic thinking. Yet from the profuse use of symbols, types and images in the writings of Ephrem, Jacob of Serugh, Narsai, and others, it is possible to glean the pattern of their symbolic reflection. They move within a horizon of their own. According to their vision every symbol presents itself with divergent aspects, namely with a polysemy and a polyvalence of their own. Hence, those aspects set the symbol in its multiple applications in the progressive course of the history of salvation. As S. P. Brock points out, they operate at different levels instilling meaning into everything:

Types and symbols are a means of expressing relationships and connections, of instilling meaning into everything. They operate in several different ways, between the Old Testament and the New, between this world and the heavenly, between the New Testament and the Sacraments, between the

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<sup>135</sup> Cf. Brock, "World and Sacrament," 2.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Murray, "The Theory of Symbolism," 3.

Sacraments and the eschaton. In every case they “reveal” something of what is otherwise “hidden.”<sup>137</sup>

A few examples of Jacob’s use of symbols and typology are found in his handling of the ‘Pierced side of Christ’ in Jn 19:34 (*HS III 299–300*)<sup>138</sup> and Christ’s entry into the three wombs and their baptismal and redemptory symbols (*HS I 153–167*).<sup>139</sup> The pierced side of Christ and ‘the water and blood’ flowing at Golgotha signify the fountain of Paradise, and are symbols of Baptism, Eucharist and the Church, the opening of Paradise and the re-entry of the exiled Adam, etc. Christ on the road of his mighty deeds stayed in the womb of Mary, that of Jordan and that of Sheol in order to walk along the full path of Adam/humanity for bringing redemption.

Regarding the notion of symbol, it is appropriate to note that there is a deeper convergence between the early Syriac writers and contemporary philosophers<sup>140</sup> and hermeneutists.<sup>141</sup> With the developed understanding of symbol by hermeneutists and exegetes, especially in the light of psychology and psychoanalysis, it is affirmed that symbols make provision for the expression of areas of religious experiences that are not accessible to purely conceptual reasoning. Symbols really carry such religious experiences that are otherwise inexpressible yet containing genuine values for the expression of truth.<sup>142</sup> According to Syriac writers a symbol is something that signifies and makes present what it signifies.<sup>143</sup> Hence there is an inherent integral relationship between the signifying and the signified. P. Ricoeur defines a symbol:

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<sup>137</sup> Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 42.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Brock, “The Mysteries Hidden in the side of Christ,” 462–72 (= *Syriac Spirituality*, 62–72).

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Homily “On the Three Baptisms,” ET by S. P. Brock in Finn, T. N., ed. *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate: West and East Syria*, 189–97. Collegeville, 1992.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Bou Mansour, *La Pensee Symbolique*, 3–19.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 131–54.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Fitzmyer, *Interpretation of the Bible*, 89–92.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 27.

I define 'Symbol' as any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first.<sup>144</sup>

He finds a rudimentary natural relation between the signifying and the signified.<sup>145</sup> He calls this relation analogical in view of a clear explanation and considers this analogical bond so real as part of the natural order.<sup>146</sup> Hence, according to him the second sense in a symbol is inexplicable without the first one:

By living in the first meaning I am drawn by it beyond itself: the symbolic meaning is constituted in and through the literal meaning, which brings about the analogy by giving the analogue. Unlike a comparison that we look at from the outside, symbol is the very movement of the primary meaning that makes us share in the latent meaning and thereby assimilates us to the symbolized, without our being able intellectually to dominate the similarity. This is the sense in which symbol "gives"; it gives because it is a primary intentionality that gives the second meaning.<sup>147</sup>

G. Durand calls this relationship a homogeneity of the signifying and the signified as the interior organizer of a dynamism.<sup>148</sup> Thus there is an indissoluble unity between the signifying and the signified. J. Ladriere describes symbol as that which constitutes an analogical natural correspondence between one form that is representative and that which it symbolizes or as the possession of an internal power of representation.<sup>149</sup> H. G. Gadamer even calls this relation 'a metaphysical unity' or 'a

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<sup>144</sup> Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 12.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 290; He clarifies further, "Analogy is a non conclusive reasoning that proceeds through a fourth propositional term."

<sup>147</sup> Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 290; cf. also "Penser," p. 64; "Epistémologie," p. 161.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Durand, "Imaginaire," 25.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Ladriere, *Articulation*, 174.

mutual belongingness' between the visible and the invisible or between the limited and the unlimited.<sup>150</sup>

The above mentioned descriptions of symbol clearly distinguish it from a sign and an allegory. In a sign the interrelationship between the signifying and the signified is arbitrary and in an allegory it is conventional. In both cases the internal relationship is not so strong as in a symbol. Allegory and symbol function in similar manners in the sense that "both words refer to something whose meaning does not consist in its external appearance or sound, but in a significance that lies beyond it. Their common quality is that, in both, one thing stands for another."<sup>151</sup> Allegory belongs to the art of speech and has more of a rhetorical function, in which symbolism works rhetorically and not heuristically.<sup>152</sup> But symbol has meaning in itself; its own sensuous nature has 'meaning':

A symbol manifests as present something that really is present.  
... A symbol not only points to something, but it represents, in that it takes the place of something. But to take the place of something means to make something present that is not present.<sup>153</sup>

A single symbol has several aspects of meanings or it remains polysemic. P. Ricoeur calls this phenomenon 'logic of correspondence.'<sup>154</sup> It is the affinity of senses between different realities. In the recognition of the meanings of a symbol the revealing power of the symbol as well as the role of the perceiving subject are mutually interacting. Hence, the insightful and discerning interpreter reads into the revealing power of the symbol in the process of recognition. According to P. Ricoeur, for the one who perceives the symbol properly, the two senses constitute a unity, and the passage from one to the other remains a single unique moment. Accordingly, he proposes that for anyone who participates in the

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<sup>150</sup> Cf. Gadamer, *Wahrheit*, 69.

<sup>151</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 65.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 134.

<sup>153</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 136.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Ricoeur, "Parole," 155.

symbolic signification there are no two significations, one literal and the other symbolic, but a single movement that transfers us from one level to the other, which assimilates us to the second signification by the help of the literal signification.<sup>155</sup>

## 2. Mar Jacob's Symbolic Mode of Theological Reflection

The modern assertion on the deeper metaphysical relationships between the signifying and the signified in a symbol reveals the profound and insightful handling of biblical symbols by early Syriac writers in general and in our case the particular theological method of Mar Jacob. P. Ricoeur's insistence on the underlying dynamic transference from external or literal signification to the innerly signified symbolic meaning in symbols is quite insightful to comprehend Mar Jacob's mode of theological reflection through the handling of biblical types and other symbols.

In order to describe the mode of theologizing of Mar Jacob, and to decipher his theological views, a few primary notions have to be recognized and explained. The experience of the People of God described and set down in the writings of the Old and New Testaments have a normative character. For Jacob the scriptures are the source and the norm of teachings.<sup>156</sup> Israel's experience of God is described in the Scriptures through various literary forms in compliance with various modes of human communication. Moreover, they use particular modes of language, images, signs, symbols, and symbolic communication. Hence, the divine revelation, as it is there in the scriptures, is a special category of human communication. It is not any collection of well defined rational truths. Jacob explains the undefinable and unboundable nature of divine truths:

And all the wise were agitated as they sought to explain him (Christ), but he was unexplainable. They assaulted to investigate him, but he was uninvestigable. They dared to trace him out, but he was untraceable. This one said thus and that

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<sup>155</sup> Cf. Ricoeur, "Parole," 150.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 306.

one said thus. They despised themselves by speaking about the inarticulable Word. (*Ep XIII 55*)

Behold, how many doctrines have dealt with your story from  
the beginning;  
But as it is never-ceasing, it is not exhausted when spoken.  
(*HS III 235,2–3*)

If the divine realities are definable, as A. Dulles points out, the mode of the theologizing would not be different from Philosophy.<sup>157</sup> Since the contents of the revelation in the scriptures are not mere historical facts, they cannot be handled as mere history either.

The inspired books of the scriptures deal with the hidden and the revealed God (*SMS 721,7–722,11/FH I 23–48*), the immanent and the transcendent God (*SMS 790,5–791,3/FH III 5–14*). In other words, scriptures deal with the mysterious ways of God's dealings with his creatures. Therefore, the religious language of the Bible suggests as well as signifies the spiritual power in the experiences of the people of God rather than giving mere statements of facts and experiences of history. Hence, it is false to transpose the biblical language, imagery, and symbolic expressions into the categories of any given time or systems of philosophy. Jacob describes the folly of human attempt at systematization and definition of divine realities:

Behold, from the days of old how many doctrines turned  
around your story,  
but it is unboundable, undefinable when spoken of.  
How many wise people have thronged about your discourses  
in various ways,  
and it is clear that they could not speak of how it is.  
How many philosophies have sprung up one another on  
account of you  
but they did not suffice to confine him who is infinite.  
How many skilled people have increased their knowledge as  
they supposed;

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<sup>157</sup> Cf. Dulles, "Symbol, Myth and the Biblical Revelation," 39.

yet they did not understand because they did not know that  
 they should not scrutinize.  
 How much it was spoken of abundantly,  
 yet the mystery of his Word is as it is in its mysteriousness.  
 How much they conjectured that they apprehended and  
 arrived at the height of the wisdom,  
 but when they rose up to it, it overthrew them because they  
 went astray in it.

(HS III 235,2–13)<sup>158</sup>

The main obstacles to Christian theological communication come not from the language of the scriptures but from the practice of transposing Christian message into human philosophical categories as A. Dulles points out. He suggests, “a return to biblical language, it is contended, could spark a great revival of Christian faith and devotion.”<sup>159</sup> The study of the teachings of Jacob of Serugh indeed enhances one to return to the biblical language and its categories. The inspired imagery and the symbolic language of the scriptures remain as effective pointers to the mysterious spiritual power contained in those writings. As mysteries they remain ever mysteries:

They multiply the mysteries of the Son by commentaries  
 and how much abundantly one would explain them, they  
 remain as mysteries.

(HS III 234,20–235,1)<sup>160</sup>

But through symbolic deeds and symbolic language the Scriptures depict the mysterious manner in which God made Himself present through historical persons and events. Mar Jacob explains how the Old Testament carried along in its history the image of Christ through the prophecy, both in its acted out and

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<sup>158</sup> Homily “On the Sacrifice of the Two Birds” [*HS III 224–241* (*No. 76*)]; FT by Graffin, “Mimro de Jacques de Saroug sur les deux oiseaux,” 51–66.

<sup>159</sup> Dulles, “Symbol, Myth and the Biblical Revelation,” 41.

<sup>160</sup> The homily “On the Sacrifice of the Two Birds,” FT by Graffin, “Sur les deux Oiseaux,” 61.

spoken out forms. Generations after generations have seen his types. Moreover, the just people of the OT had their existence and functions in view of Christ. One after another they portrayed him according to their capacity and the mandate they carried. Thus the image of Christ was shining out in Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Jesus bar-Nun and others (*HS V 331,3–332,8*).<sup>161</sup> Jacob is always keen to demonstrate how the road of the Saviour with his saving deeds is depicted in the OT. To the prophets those distant events were seen as if near through their discerning vision (*SHF III 26/FH IX 26*). Mar Jacob advocates the same type of discerning vision for a proper exegete and theologian, moreover, as a basis for Christian life in general. Any sort of analysis and rationalization are doomed to fail before the inexplicable, inexorable, unfathomable, and ineffable mystery of the Word (*Ep XIII 55,21–26*).<sup>162</sup> Mar Jacob explains his own views:

Because there are in the world Scribes and wise men  
and interpreters, everyone speaks according to his own  
knowledge.

My knowledge has risen to the stage  
where it knows that the Son of God is ineffable.  
I do not wish to rise to any other stage,  
for I know that, even if I wanted, I should not be able to do  
so...

(*HS III 632,5–10*)<sup>163</sup>

Jacob of Serugh proposes the *docta ignorantia* of Ephrem,<sup>164</sup> based on Mt 11:25, as the proper guide to the attainment of the knowledge of salvation in front of the divine mysteries. The proper

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<sup>161</sup> Cf. *HS V 331–355*, “A Homily on Samson,” ET from HTM, *TV 11* (1992): 51–2.

<sup>162</sup> See the citation in this chapter, note n. 54.

<sup>163</sup> *tr.* by Jansma, “The Credo of Jacob of Serug,” 22.

<sup>164</sup> The principle is to become ‘ignorant’ in order to become ‘wise’ in the Lord: *Ep II 15*; *SMS 792,10–19/FH III 45–54*; *SHF IV 19/FH XI 19*; *SMS 810,7–8/FH XVI 37–38*; *HS III 581–646*; *IV 767–789*; *V 473,5–12*; Jansma, “The Credo of Jacob of Serug,” 22, 23; Sony, *La doctrine de Jacques de Saroug*, 98–101.

response in the presence of the mystery of the Son of God is wonder together with awe, faith and love (*SMS* 735,5–6; 11–20/*FH I* 321–322; 327–336; *SMS* 794,4–17/*FH III* 77–90).<sup>165</sup> It is submission to the mystery that brings into effect the silence of inquiry, disputes and investigations (*SHF I* 29/*FH IV* 29). The submission to the mystery in wonder and love with awe is the submission to the working of the Spirit that guides the believing Christian (*SMS* 722,20–723,5/*FH I*,57–64). In the context of the teachings of Mar Jacob what the Council of Vatican II teaches is worth noting:

“The obedience of faith” (Rom 16:26; 1:5; 2Cor 10:5–6) must be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God, offering “the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals” and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him. If this faith is to be shown, the grace of God and the interior help of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist, moving the heart and turning it to God, opening the eyes of the mind, and giving “joy and ease to everyone in assenting to the truth and believing it.” To bring about an ever deeper understanding of revelation, the same Holy Spirit constantly brings faith to completion by His gifts.<sup>166</sup>

Jacob advocates submission to the mystery because the whole of revelation is a communication in symbols providing a participatory awareness of the mystery. This participatory consciousness essentially introduces one to a new horizon, into a new spiritual world-vision, the acceptance of which demands a

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<sup>165</sup> Cf. Jansma, “The Credo of Jacob of Serug,” 23 (n. 4).

<sup>166</sup> *Dei Verbum*, art. 5; A note given to this article of *DV* in the edition of Walter M. Abbott is worth noting. It says: “Art. 5 describes the response to be made by men to God’s loving invitation. Note the general description of faith, “by which a man commits his whole self”: the council desired to get away from the too intellectualist conception. Christian faith is not merely assent to a set of statements; it is a personal engagement, a continuing act of loyalty and self-commitment, offered by man to God. Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 113 (n. 7).

proper conduct according to the new vision. A main factor of this conduct is the submission in faith to the symbolic truth, the reality behind the symbols. It is in the mystical-silence achieved through submission to the mystery that the Spirit provides the understanding of the truth (*SMS* 722,12–723,3/*FH I* 49–62; *HS II* 348,3–14/*FH VII* 11–22; *HS I* 270,11–20). Such acts of faith give new insights into the mysteries that reason cannot fathom.<sup>167</sup>

Mar Jacob is doubly privileged in his mode of dealing with the mysteries of the Scriptures. Primarily he stands in the same Semitic world-vision that is much present in the Bible. Secondly, he deals with the biblical episodes in a symbolic mode in order to bring out the spiritual power radiant in the experience of the people of God as well as the teaching of salvation they promulgate.

### 3. The Sacramental World-Vision of Jacob of Serugh

According to Jacob creation is an activity of the divine mercy involving various levels such as fashioning out of nothing, sustenance, and the bringing up to perfection:

The Father made the sign, and the Son created and the Spirit  
perfected,  
and the world came up in a Trinitarian way from nothing.  
(*HS III* 13, 15–16)

The divine nod<sup>168</sup> creates and sustains the world (*HS III* 13,17–18). This activity has an ongoing aspect too. Jacob explains this by his views on the ‘continued creation’.<sup>169</sup> Thus Jacob’s vision of creation has two main aspects: the creation from nothing and the continued creation. They form two phases of the same divine mercy (*HS III* 52,6–7; *V* 368,16–17).<sup>170</sup> Like a hen gathering its brood under its wings divine mercy watches over the creation (*HS V* 368,10–17). As the love of the mother for her child, divine mercy is the source of creation and God never abandons his

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 138.

<sup>168</sup> For a detailed study on *remzā* (a nod, a sign) according to Mar Jacob, cf. Alwan, “Le remzō,” 91–106.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 33–45.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 33.

creation, the work of his love (*HS V 368, 18–369,1ff*). Continued creation is a logical sequence of the primary divine act of creation from nothing (*HS V 369,2; III 52,6–1f*). A sort of divine force inhabits in the creatures (*HS IV 553,20*) so as to sustain them as the soul holds up the body (*HS IV 554,1–2, 11–14*). Again through the intellect (*hawnā*) divine power is active in the body. Thus the divinity is immanent and transcendent with regard to the world (*HS II 210,3*). It is out of this dialogical relationship the created realities assume a symbolic power signifying and proclaiming the creative force of the divine Word and hence they remain sacramental.

As this world is sustained by God (*HS V 469,12*), to give glory to the creator (*HS V 368,6–7*) is an essential function of the world (*SHF IV 46/FH XI 46*). All creatures are bound to express this symbolic role by praising the glory of God as attested by Ps 19:1–3. All creatures including the dumb ones render glory to God according to their natures. The silence of the creatures itself is a mode of proclamation (*HS V 778,16*), a language coined without words, yet manifesting the divine power (*HS I 457,14–458,8/FH X 259–274; V 778,18; II 139,19*). Thus the creatures reveal God, the Creator, the Lord of times (*HS I 456,5/FH X 230*) and the all Powerful One (*HS I 269,7,13*) in a symbolic manner. The special status of humanity in the created world is stressed by Jacob in indicating the mode of fashioning of humanity. While God fashioned the creatures by the divine nod, Adam was fashioned by His own hands (*HS V 604,15–16*). Furthermore, Adam is destined to live as the master (*mārā*, *HS III 119,20–21*) of the created world which is a house (*HS III 497,16*), a town and a palace<sup>171</sup> for him and serves as the ‘bridal chamber’ (*gnōnā*, *HS III 86,13–14; 106,10–13*) as well.

The role of the economic Trinity is evident and the fact of creation essentially stands out with an accent on the economy of salvation because the Father in collaboration with the Son created the world and the divinity inhabits in the world as the intellect inhabits in a man (*HS IV 556,4–5; 557,1–2*). Moreover, the Son came to inhabit in our flesh (*HS II 517,19–518,3; Ep XIX 113,12–*

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<sup>171</sup> ‘Palace of the nations’, as the *oikoumene* (*tibel*), cf. *HS I 4,17*.

13). Jacob envisages the role of the Spirit more in the history of salvation as the Spirit sanctifies and perfects the world.<sup>172</sup> This perfective role of the Spirit in the history of salvation is made known through the prophets and the apostles, and it goes forward in the sacraments, especially in Baptism, Eucharist and Priesthood.<sup>173</sup>

The fashioning, supporting and perfecting of the creation by the hidden power is an on-going process in which the economy of salvation renders perfection to those realities which were perverted and spoiled by the ill will of humanity. In Mar Jacob's profound sacramental understanding of the created world, humanity has a privileged position as the 'image' and 'likeness' of God which is reserved to human beings alone (*HS III 111,2ff*). At every step in his theological reflections an underlying belief in the essential distinction between God, the creator, and the created beings is seen. The emphasis on this distinction projects always various aspects of the relation between God and the order of the creatures. All created beings depend on God for their existence, like an infant upon its mother (*HS I 627,13-14*). God, who is essentially merciful, takes the initiative to bridge this wider gap between himself and the creatures, and lovingly sets himself down at the level of the created world (*SMS 723,11,19/FH I 70,78*) through his self-revelation.

#### 4. Symbols of the Scriptures and Nature

The sacramental word-vision of Jacob discerns the pointers both in the Scriptures and Nature towards the divine mysteries in a holistic manner. In this respect Jacob is a disciple of Ephrem the Syrian. The symbolic vision of Ephrem, as interpreted by R. Murray,<sup>174</sup> consists of horizontal and vertical axes. The horizontal axis is that of time and historicity from creation to eschatological kingdom, which is the realm of types and typological developments. The vertical one is the ontological axis between God above and the

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<sup>172</sup> Cf. Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 16.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Murray, "The Theory of Symbolism," 7.

creatures below, which is the realm of natural symbols and the whole created world in its totality. Jacob follows the Syriac terminologies of Ephrem in distinguishing various symbols. They are *rāzā*, *tupsā*, *dmūtā*, etc.

The above mentioned terms of the early Syriac theology, namely, *rāzā*, *tupsā*, *dmūtā*, *yuknā*, etc.,<sup>175</sup> carry similar meanings. Many of these terms are used synonymously by the Syriac writers, especially *rāzā* and *tupsā*. These two words are so interchangeable in their theological applications that in effect their shades of meaning can be understood and appreciated only from the context.<sup>176</sup> But the important fact is that their synonymity do not affect their particularity in the contexts of their usage in the Syriac symbolic thinking.<sup>177</sup> Generally speaking *tupsā* refers to the Scriptural symbols and *rāzā* to the mysteries both of the Scriptures and Nature as the context refers.

As regards the etymological development the three terms 'symbols', 'types' and 'mysteries' are the renderings of the Syriac term *rāzā* denoting a combined sense of divine mysteries, enigmas, and secrets.<sup>178</sup> Etymologically *rāzā* stems from Persian where it means 'royal secret', and it was taken over by imperial Aramaic. This term *rāzā*, as taken over by secular Aramaic, has a wide range of connotations starting from 'divine mysteries', 'human cogitations, decisions', etc. It is used in Qumran texts and in the book of Daniel (Dan 4, 6). Thus, it has been adopted to carry on biblical connotations of 'divine secrets' and mysteries of the divine economy in the book of Daniel.<sup>179</sup>

This Syriac usage of *rāzā* is quite often considered equal to the Greek *mysterion*. But the Greek rendering of *rāzā* by *mysterion* and

<sup>175</sup> For a detailed analysis of these terms and their shades of meanings in Ephrem, cf. Beck, "Bildtheologie," 238–77.

<sup>176</sup> For a detailed analysis from the contexts, cf. Beck, "Bildtheologie," 240–4; Schmidt, "Die Augensymbolik," 278–82; Yousif, "Le Symbolisme de la Croix," 225.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Schmidt, "Die Augensymbolik," 278.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Yousif, "Le Symbolisme de la Croix," 225.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Beck, "Bildtheologie," 240; Murray, "The Theory of Symbolism," 3.

the Syriac synonymy between *rāzā* and *tupsā* have to be specified. While in Syriac *rāzā* and *tupsā* have deeper interrelationships the Greek *mysterion* and *typos* do not have such strong interrelations.<sup>180</sup>

### ***a. The Symbolic Power of the Created World***

The fundamental relation between God and the orders of his creatures is the source of the symbolic and sacramental powers of the created world. All creatures reflect the hidden creative power and they render glory to God according to their nature (*HS II 138,10–11*). Thus the interrelationship between God and the creatures demands praise and recognition of the divinity in various ways. Jacob speaks of the various aspects (*ʿeskimā*) in which the creatures glorify God (*HS I 445,16–458,8/FH X 221–274*). The sky which is compared to a book (*ketābā*, *HS II 144,20*) is called a teacher (*malpānā*, *HS II 145, 2–3*) who according to its nature instructs us about the Creator (*HS I 269,13; V 779,1–2*). The qualification, ‘according to their nature’, points to the symbolic potential of the created Nature capable of signifying the power and the design of the Creator (*HS I 456,1,9/FH X 226,234; 457,1/FH X 246*).

Mar Jacob considers the created nature as a teacher (*malpānā*, *HS V 778,13*) and master (*mārā*, *HS V 778,20*) sufficient and capable of leading humanity to God (*HS II 145,6ff; Rom 1:19–20*). They provide wisdom to recognize the Son of God. The Scriptures came only at a later stage. The sending of the Son would not have been necessary (*HS II 145, 8ff*) if the heart of the world had not been hardened (*HS II 145,8*) and the soul had not been led astray (*HS V 779,3*). The soul became insensible to the true beauty of the created nature and its interpellations (*HS V 779, 13–14; 17–18*). In the hidden plan of God there is a correspondence between the mysteries of the created Nature and those of the Scriptures because

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<sup>180</sup> E. Beck explains the Syriac understanding of the relation between *rāzā* and *tupsā*: “Hier möchte ich als einen Beweis für meine Behauptung, daß das ephrämische *rāzā* viel mehr mit seinem *tupsā* gleichbedeutend wurde als bei den Griechen das *mysterion* mit *typos*, den folgenden sonderfall anführen.” Beck, “Bildtheologie,” 240.

God uses both in his divine pedagogy to lead humanity in a progressive manner towards perfection.

The primary factor of this symbolic power is the constitution of the creatures themselves that is capable of guiding humanity to God. Divine power inhabits in the creatures like the soul in a body (*HS IV 554,1–2*). This underlying factor is not any static reality but a dynamic and subjective mutual presence between the created realities and the human soul. This subjective factor is so dynamic with possibilities of well functioning as well as malfunctioning in proportion to the awareness of the soul. The whole creation stands as a symbolic image replete with meaning and purpose. The two negative conditions into which the soul can fall are the insensibility that refuses to hear and understand the echo of Nature, and idolatry in which God is replaced by creatures.<sup>181</sup> Idolatry darkens the soul. Idols are not God by nature but they cover up the true God. What happens in idolatry is a misunderstanding of the nature of God, the same first error Adam had committed. The beauty of the creatures depend on their capacity to paint (portray, depict) God according to their nature (aspects, *eskimayhon*, *HS III 111,8*). But God had set his ‘image’ only in human beings (*HS III 111, 8–9*), who can represent all creatures by the power of speech and of praise.

*(i) The Binary Structure of Symbolic Images*

The whole creation functions as a sign or symbol of the divine power that activates it internally (*HS IV 553,20; IV 554,1–2; SHF V 26/FH XII 26*). The creation, being finite and at the same time moved by the infinite, assumes a binary structure of finiteness together with an opening to the infinite (*HS II 210,2–7*). Analogically this means the presence of all other characteristics of the principle of binary opposition such as life/death, alienation/reconciliation, presence/absence and so on. All these paradoxes are stages of the returning of the creation to the Creator.<sup>182</sup> In every symbol there are seemingly two opposite poles.

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<sup>181</sup> Cf. Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 60, 61.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 61.

A dialogical tension is characteristic of any symbol. P. Ricoeur explains this tension in symbols as, “entre un commencement et une fin, entre une déchéance et un salut, entre une aliénation et une réappropriation, entre une séparation et une réconciliation.”<sup>183</sup> Because of the inner divine power divinity is immanent in the creation, but divinity is at the same time transcendent, hence hidden as well as revealed; Christ is the symbol par excellence of this mutuality of the divine and human, finite and infinite, and so on (*SMS* 760,3–14/*FH I* 843–854). The primary quest is to find the passage between these two poles.

God, the Father through his mercy bridged this gap in his Son who made himself visible as the symbol of the mystery of Divinity. In the Son the opposite poles are brought together. Aspects of the invisible are made visible so as to manifest that opposite poles exist not in view of perpetuating any opposition. Such poles are seen until humankind realizes the fact that God, the Father has sent his Son out of his mercy as the unifying and reconciling power of the various events of salvation history and the paradoxical elements of the opposite poles of creation. Jacob prefers to expound Christology always in terms of paradoxical expressions<sup>184</sup> that signify the mystery of the Son in the history of salvation. According to Jacob creation, salvation and resurrection form three aspects of the operation of the same divine mercy (*HS III* 162,3ff).<sup>185</sup> When viewed from another angle the presence of the opposite poles are due to the visibility of a few things of the invisible, the manifestation of a few things of the hidden realm, the bringing near of a few things of the far away reality, accessibility to some aspects of the inaccessible reality, and so on. Thus every where the mysteries of the spiritual essence are made tangible to humanity. Through the visible reality the invisible is revealed (*SMS* 758,6–7/*FH I* 803–804; *HS I* 454,15–16/*FH X* 201–202). Hence the true seeker should go beyond what is seen in order to attain the deeper meaning of the spiritual reality. The mystery remains always

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<sup>183</sup> Ricoeur, “Penser,” 74.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. Jansma, “The Credo of Jacob of Serug,” 22, 23; cf. also various references in p. 23 (n. 1) of the said article.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 31.

mystery. But the divine mercy graciously rendered the divine mystery tangible to humanity through symbols and types. Towards such a merciful act one has to be thankful and accept the invitation to participate in it. Hence, it should be concluded that the visible aspects do not fully explain the whole of divine reality but provide only an invitation. The proper response to this merciful invitation combines the attitudes of love and faith together with awe.

*(ii) Polysemic Nature of Symbols and Types*

The binary structure of the symbol presents two aspects that are mutually present and call out reciprocally in an ever present dynamic tension. Acceptance of this factor of symbols suggests the presence of several senses for a symbol that are mutually present in a dynamic relationship. This polysemic nature of symbols in turn necessitates several ways of interpreting a symbol in different situations. In fact the reason behind the polysemy of symbols is the infinite nature of the divinity. There is a movement forward from the One to many and backward from the many to the One. Many symbols are needed to signify the infinite nature of God. So also a single aspect of the divinity signified by a symbol carries a whole wealth of different meanings by the fact that the particular aspect of the divine reality is infinitely rich in itself.<sup>186</sup> Such polysemic symbols of the scriptures are found in various events and episodes. “The word of the Son is not shut up in an explanation, but it is full of light and filled with faces upon all sides” (*HS V 601,16–17*). Mar Jacob holds that in a single word Moses set several meanings (*HS IV 16,15. 88,3–12*). Jacob understands the very person of Moses himself as a symbol of the prophecy that is veiled (*HS III 287,1–12*).<sup>187</sup> Moses is veiled (Ex 34:33–35) to signify the veiled nature of the prophecy. The stammering Moses (Ex 4:10–16) was a type of prophecy that was not fully explained until the time of Christ (*HS III, 297,5–16*). Again the staff of Moses (Ex 4:17) contains a bunch of symbols (*HS II 366,13,14/FH VIII, 403,4*).

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<sup>186</sup> Cf. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 40.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Brock, “On the Veil of Moses,” 69–80.

In Jacob's symbolic package, ROCK symbolizes many realities such as Christ (1Cor 10:4, *HS III 293–297, 305–310*); the Church (*HS III 193–194, 210*), and sin (Gen 29:23, *HS III 210–222*). VINE symbolizes Abraham (*HS IV 754*), Church (*HS V 621–622*) and the soul (*HS I 331–332*). ADAM figures in Saul (*HS II 43,4–47,7*), in the prodigal son who alienated himself from his father (*HS I 267–299*), in Barabbas (*SHF V 32–35/FH XII 32–35; HS II 517*), in the child of the Schunamite woman (2Kings 4:8–37, *HS IV 312,5–314,7*), in the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho (Lk 10:30–37, *HS II 325,13–326,3*), and in the donkey during the entrance of Jesus to Jerusalem (Mt 21:2–3, *HS V 621, 5–8*). 'Leaven' is a very meaningful Christological symbol from nature that can explain the mystery of Incarnation. All these images carry a lot of allusions and significations, and depict various aspects of the history of salvation. The polysemic function of the symbol calls for an apophatic approach to understand the function and meanings of symbols.

### ***b. Functions of Symbols and Types***

The finite humanity can only bear mediated divine revelation. Therefore, symbols and types function as mysteries which became unveiled in Christ, or rather became actualized in Christ, and he stands as the symbol and the sacrament of salvation.

#### *(i) Gnoseological Functions of the Symbol and the Truth*

Revelation is not an unmediated inner experience but a mediated self-communication of God. In this divine communication mediation is a necessity, because the infinite power and illumination of the divinity are unbearable to any finite being. But the description of the type of this mediation through Nature and the Scriptures has put forward several ways of conceiving the mode of divine revelation, of course, each method has its own merits and demerits. Therefore, new models of vision emerge from time to time. The mediated revelation of God is through symbols:

That is to say, through an externally perceived sign that works mysteriously on the human consciousness so as to suggest

more than it can clearly describe or define. Revelatory symbols are those which express and mediate God's self-communication.<sup>188</sup>

There is a clear convergence seen between poets,<sup>189</sup> philosophers and theologians regarding the symbolic communication of divine realities in revelation.<sup>190</sup> This basic symbolic dimension in revelation inspires and propounds symbolic modes of doing theology as well.

Regarding the understanding of revelation P. Ricoeur advocates a return to the sources of theological discourses, or properly to the levels of the confessions of faith where the *lex credendi* is *lex orandi*. The other levels of understanding such as from ecclesial dogmas and the Magisterial doctrines are all derived ones. Israel understood and confessed their God through a few kernel events, or 'history-making events' from which meaning spread out through the whole structure.<sup>191</sup> Hence, P. Ricoeur writes:

I do not intend to deny the specificity of the work of formulating dogma, whether at the ecclesial level or the level of theological investigations. But I do affirm its derived and subordinate character. This is why I am going to endeavour to carry the notion of revelation back to its most originary level, the one which for the sake of brevity, I call the discourse of faith or the confession of faith.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 131.

<sup>189</sup> S. T. Coleridge states: "It is by symbols alone that we can acquire intellectual knowledge of the Divine"; according to W. B. Yeats, "A symbol is indeed the only possible expression of some invisible essence, a transparent lamp about a spiritual flame; while allegory is one of many possible representations of an embodied thing, or familiar principle, and belongs to fancy and not to imagination: the one is revelation and the other an amusement." Both these opinions are quoted from Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 131.

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 131–41.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 73–9.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 74.

Mar Jacob describes that divine realities are always hidden. Even in their revealed stage they preserve their hidden nature:

A mystery is a mystery, if it could be exposed, it is not a  
mystery at all;  
a beloved one is led by it, for it is concealed from rebellious  
ones.

(HS III 234,19–20)

Due to the wide gap between the Creator and the creatures the best access to the divine realities is through symbolic understanding and analogical approach through the symbols and types. Here the mode of knowing is through the principle of gnoseology through analogy, understanding the same from the similar. Accordingly only the Son is in the key position to make us learn something of divine realities. He is with the Father and with us (*SMS 790,5–791,1/FH III 5–12*). He is the mediator and the medium. Only the Son knows the Father and can speak about him as well as represent him visibly. He is the embodiment of the divine mercy, the symbol and sacrament par excellence of the divine self-communication. According to M. Schmidt, in the symbolic medium of divine manifestation three levels of development can be distinguished. The first is the level of the symbols of the Old Testament with their unique historical contexts. As a second stage Christ replaces all types and symbols and the truth starts functioning as realities in the Church. But this realization in the Church carries with it still the symbolic clothing till the third stage. At the third level the total unveiling of the symbolic clothing takes place. It is the stage of the fuller realization in the kingdom of God.<sup>193</sup> The typological vision of Jacob seems quite agreeing with these levels, of course not in any defined form. Hence, at all levels the types and symbols are the standing invitations to the understanding of their actualization in Christ and the realization in the eschatological kingdom.

In the context of an invitation of love only an approach of love would provide the proper response. The image of the Father and his invisibility became visible in the Son. Hence, he is the Road

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<sup>193</sup> Cf. Schmidt, "Die Augensymbolik," 282.

to the hidden One. Christ opens the road to the knowledge of the truth, to the visibility of the invisible. Above all Christ assumes the double dimensions of cognitive and soteriological goals of humanity. Knowing through the Son is a participation and realization of the goal, the truth. The divine essence remains concealed but the salvific activities of Christ translates the divine mercy in its creative and salvific realms. The knowledge of these realities is essentially not an act of domination but one of participation and assimilation.

*(ii) The Orientation of Symbolic Vision to the Salvific Vision*

*Rāzā* is a teacher to humanity. It teaches and leads humanity to the salvific vision. Knowledge of symbols is an intermediary sense that makes us knead ourselves with the clear Christological orientations. This in turn leads us to deeper salvific truths in the person of Christ, the Leaven that transforms all. Divinity clothes itself in images to bring himself down to humanity. In Christ is the perfection of this bringing down. In him is the perfect presence of divinity and humanity, the perfect resemblance of man to God by effecting the union of our human nature to his own in view of saving the mortal nature. In him is the curing, enriching, elevation and glorification of human nature by the beauty and the power of attraction of his image.

Knowledge of the symbols is an unveiling of the symbols providing the road to the person and the activities of Christ, the sign and sacrament of salvation. As one reaches the person and activities of Christ, perfection and fullness are found in him. The inner power of the types and symbols leads to Christ and his activities which open the road to the mystery of the Son, the author of salvation. Symbols and types bind together various aspects of the cognitive knowledge of Christ. This knowledge of symbols leads to the way of the Son who guides all on his way by providing the salvific vision which can distinguish between shadow and the reality, between intermediaries and the goal, and above all the relation between opposites. Thus the knowledge of symbols enables one to travel a long way between opposite poles and the diversities of experiences through the recognition of the mysteries of Christ, the haven of peace (*HIS II 364,9–10*) and the harbour of salvific vision.

*(iii) The Temporary Role of Symbols and Types*

All symbols and types are temporary. They are torches and lamps to guide on the way to Christ. They are to lead humanity to Christ, the ocean and goal of symbols. In him symbols and types find their limit. At the emergence of Christ, the great Sun, the lamps and torches are like unnecessary lamps at midday (*HS III 301,21–305,7*).<sup>194</sup> Through the person and activities of Christ the perfection and accomplishment of all symbols emerge. With him begins the reality, the truth. What is implicitly found in *rāzā* finds its accomplishment in Christ and moves on the road of Christ in the Church until the eschatological kingdom. Everywhere the unifying element is Christ who gives life, inspiration and power to travel on the road of salvation. The truth of Christ precedes invisibly in all levels and functions with a transhistorical power.

*c. Faith and the Understanding of Symbols*

Symbols and types evoke deeper levels of consciousness where the cognition of realities stand beyond the faculties of the intellect. Only faith and its horizon of illumination can integrate such new levels of consciousness.

*(i) The Proper Attitudes and Approach to Symbols and Types*

By the fact that human nature is limited it is totally folly and audacious to scrutinize divine realities. However, there are some aspects of the divine realities that are revealed to humanity on account of the divine mercy. Even those should be approached with love and acceptance which are the proper responses to the merciful self-revealing God. Love is the intermediary between revelation and understanding (*HS III 284,14–15*).<sup>195</sup> It is the initiative of God that provides revelation to humanity according to the level of human capacity to understand divine realities. Hence, humanity has to be aware of several facts: What is made visible of the invisible or what is made approachable from the unapproachable do not fully explain the divine realities. What is

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<sup>194</sup> See ET by Brock, “On the Veil of Moses,” 82–4 (ls. 387–460).

<sup>195</sup> See ET, Brock, “On the Veil of Moses,” 72 (ls. 19–20).

revealed stands as a guide to still higher and unrevealed aspects of the divine realm (*SMS* 758,6–7/*FH I* 803–804; *HS I* 454,15–16/*FH X* 201–202). In response to this self-revealing divine mercy the proper attitude should be love and acceptance in faith on account of the fact that mystery remains mystery at all levels. Towards whatever is graciously revealed and made tangible to humanity one has to be thankful and accept the invitation to relate oneself to the revealing mystery.

(ii) *Symbols and Types in the Christian Tradition  
and their Horizon of Values*

In the history of divine revelation the experience of divine realities is through externally perceived signs which amount to symbols that work mysteriously in the level of human consciousness so as to elicit more than what they can describe and define in words. Symbols are replete with meanings that are evoked at the level of consciousness and experiential levels, rather than conceptual truths defined in dogmatic terms. They carry a multiplicity of associations that cannot be sorted out by the intellect, but are strongly and subtly interrelated and functionally active at the subconscious level in relation to experiential feelings and realization.

The Christian tradition and the faith of the individual dynamically serve the one who lovingly searches divine truths. The awareness regarding the *Sitz im Leben* of the texts and that of their readers play dynamic roles in the understanding of the symbolic meaning of the texts (*SHF IV* 1–11/*FH XI* 1–11). The revealing nature of symbols becomes meaningful and tangible to the seeker only in a horizon of values enlightened by faith and tradition. One gets access to the domain of symbols through this horizon. P. Ricoeur emphasizes the dynamic role of such a horizon:

If exegesis raised a hermeneutic problem, that is, a problem of interpretation, it is because every reading of a text always takes place within a community, a tradition, or a living current of thought, all of which display presuppositions and exigencies

regardless of how closely a reading may be tied to the *quid*, to “that in view of which” the text was written.<sup>196</sup>

The horizon of the text, namely the tradition in which it stands and the values it transmits and the vision out of which it emerges and progresses, should correspond to the horizon of values and traditions in which the believing subject stands. As far as this correspondence grows thus far the understanding of the symbols also progresses. In this horizon of faith and tradition the inner eye of the individual becomes active with discernment. Here the attitude of the individual or, for that matter, the believing community assumes importance. Scrutiny and ‘prying into’ (*aqqeb*) should be avoided. Receptivity and discernment in faith inspired by love provide the proper mode of action on this plain. Any scrutiny is the result of mistrust and lack of faith in the One who mercifully enters our realm to manifest himself for our sake.

*(iii) Symbols and the Inner Eye of Faith*

Symbols activate the inner subjective levels. There, it is the inner eye that works by the illumination of faith inspired by the Spirit. The Word of God is the light for the inner eye. As far as this eye is pure and limpid it can assume that much light from the Word. It functions by seeing the invisible in the visible, and understanding the hidden reality through the revealed. Only through this eye a transformed vision is possible.

The communication through symbols is a particular sort that invites one to inhabit in a particular context of memories, understanding, anxieties and preoccupations or in other words in one’s own horizon of faith. Rather than yielding to the analytical capacity of the intellect, a symbol makes the individual surrender himself to the inner power of the symbol that enables one’s own unintegrated memories, understanding, emotions, experiences and anxieties to get integrated themselves into a wider horizon of meaningful associations and interconnections, which are powerful enough to provide profound self-integration and a unified vision of

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<sup>196</sup> Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, 3.

life. Thus symbolic communication is an engaged participation rather than a detached observation.<sup>197</sup>

The peculiarities of symbolic vision are powerful enough to indicate aspects of divine-human relationships. The observations of A. Dulles<sup>198</sup> are significant. Primarily symbols provide participatory knowledge going beyond speculative aspects. Since this participation is a dynamic process it is not a finished project in symbolic vision. It is capable of accommodating new findings and experiences. In this respect the note of Nathan Mitchel sheds much light:

A symbol is not an object to be manipulated through mime and memory, but an environment to be inhabited. ... every symbol deals with a new discovery and every symbol is an open-ended action, not a closed-off object. By engaging in symbols, by inhabiting their environment, people discover new horizons for life, new values and motivation.<sup>199</sup>

Thus, primarily a heuristic mode of cognition is prominent in symbolic vision. Secondly, symbols have a transforming power effecting a sort of healing and integration. Thirdly, symbols have the power to release hidden energies in association with the new vision and to arouse the will to definitive behaviour patterns. Fourthly, symbols bring in higher levels of awareness that are normally not accessible to dialectical thought process. It is in this connection Tillich expounds, "Symbol opens up levels of reality which otherwise are closed to us. ... and also unlocks dimensions and elements of our soul which correspond to the dimensions and elements of reality."<sup>200</sup>

In the sacramental vision of Ephrem, and the same that is followed by Jacob of Serugh, the fundamental role of symbol originates not from any mere existential outlook on the phenomenon of nature and human experience but primarily

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 133.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 136 ff.

<sup>199</sup> Mitchell, N. "Symbols are Actions, Not Objects." *Living Worship* 13/2 (1977): 1-2.

<sup>200</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 42.

through a theological vision that affirms the inhabitation of the divinity in humanity that is created in the 'image' and 'likeness' of God. On account of this 'image' and 'likeness' in humanity, it can recognize the divine power within itself and in other creatures.<sup>201</sup> Symbols guide the subject into a participatory-knowledge and through it to the higher levels of transformation by leading to healing and integration. This process engenders new powers of action with higher levels of awareness that lead to the evoking of new levels of consciousness and realization.

The revealing power of the symbol enhances the inner eye, especially those of the discerning, to see more clearly and with a wider spectrum the various colours of the salvific activity of Christ (*SHF III 26/FH IX 26*) which is the source and power of all symbols. Ultimately Christ himself is the true interpreter of all symbols. The illumination by Christ is so perfect that there is no shade around him. He sheds his light backwards and forwards on his way. In the past the prophets saw his light and now by the light of him the ongoing apostolic activity by his disciples proclaims him on the road of salvation.

## **F. SCRIPTURAL REVELATION AND THE EXEGETICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS OF MAR JACOB**

Jacob's exegetical presuppositions evolve from his understanding of creation, redemption and salvation as depicted in the scriptures.

### **1. Mar Jacob's Perspectives on the Notion of Revelation**

Syriac Christian writers in general affirm the supreme transcendence and exaltedness of God, the Creator, and the finiteness and the permanent dependency of all creatures on the Creator as well as the harmony between God and the orders of his creation.<sup>202</sup> As a created nature humanity has no measure equal to its creator God. In other words, human powers by themselves are insufficient to comprehend divine realities. Mar Jacob writes:

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<sup>201</sup> Cf. Bou Mansour, *La Pensee Symbolique de saint Éphrem*, 19.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Murray, "The Theory of Symbolism," 2.

Your revelation is exalted above all human words and how is it possible  
 that I who am feeble should narrate the story of your nativity?  
 O Lord, the whole world is not able to narrate your story  
 and how shall I, an unworthy, comprehend your story?  
 Your Father alone knows that how is your birth  
 and it being but dust by what mouth shall the soil speak about  
 you?

(SMS 720,3–8/FH I 3–8)

Hence, any knowledge of God is possible only by a divine initiative, the loving condescension of God. Once God has revealed himself the human intellect can learn about it and follow up as far as the divine revelation manifests itself. To investigate (*bysā*) or to pry into (*uqqeb*) God's nature beyond what is revealed is an arrogant attitude that is abominable (SMS 792,10–793,2/FH III, 41–54).<sup>203</sup> This does not negate any intellectual inquiry at all but only defines and delineates the possible area and sector of intellectual inquiry. R. Murray holds that Ephrem provides the proper intellectual inquiry by his symbolical and analogical approach.<sup>204</sup> The area of intellectual inquiry is the realm of revealed divine realities and further than that the hidden divine realities should not be unduly intruded into.

### ***a. The Mystery of the Hidden and the Revealed God***

God is hidden primarily because the human faculties are incompetent or even because the whole of humanity remains unable to approach and understand him (HS III 284,16–286,21<sup>205</sup>; SMS 810,7–811,10/FH XVI 37–60). Jacob of Serugh explains this unapproachability to the divinity by the image of 'Fire', as of the

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<sup>203</sup> For a more detailed exposition of the syriac terms on the inscrutability of God's nature and the illegitimate 'scrutiny' into the divine nature, cf. Jansma, "Narsai and Ephrem," 60–6.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Murray, "A Hymn of St. Ephrem to Christ," 144, 149.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. The homily "On the Veil on Moses' Face," ET by Brock, S. P. "On the Veil of Moses." *Sobornost/ECR* 3:1 (1981): 70–85; also in *Studies in Syriac Spirituality*, 177–209.

burning sun that is unapproachable to humans (*SMS 790,11–791,5/FH III 11–16*).<sup>206</sup> God reveals himself because of the loving kindness and mercy and it is an act of his loving condescension (*SMS 790,5–791,5/FH III 5–16*). What God has revealed of himself is only in so far as what is needed for humanity to arrive at the knowledge of divine realities and attain salvation. However, the sum total of what is revealed is not sufficient to reconstruct the whole divinity. Mar Jacob explains:

Various forms of sacrifices were extolled by the hands of  
Moses  
so that by all colours your great image should be erect upon  
the altar.

He had no colour which sufficed for him to depict you  
and he mixed all colours yet they were not sufficient for you.

(*HS III 225,21–226,3*)

God has revealed himself for the sake of humanity and yet there are other aspects of the divinity that are still hidden from the perspectives of humanity (*SMS 790,5–791,5/FH III,5–16*). The fact of transcendence and the immanence of God is the basic factor of the hidden and the revealed nature of the divinity (*SMS 740,12–19; 760,13–14/FH I 431–438; 844–854*). God and the divine realities remain mysterious even in revelation. Therefore, in any talk about God, it is extremely important to take note of the hidden and the revealed aspects of the divinity.

Only what is revealed of God can be experienced and understood by human intellect. Yet God in his mercy has given glimpses of his hidden being (*itūtā*) and hidden plan through symbols and types. Only these glimpses can mediate between the infinite unknowable and the finite intelligence. They are not proper *galyātā*, instances of divine manifestation, but pointers to some profound (higher) realities that will one day be revealed in the due course of God's progressive self-revelation. This progressive self-revelation of God itself is again based on God's plan to reveal himself according to the comprehensive capacity of humanity that is in progress (*HS III 285,21–286,7*).

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<sup>206</sup> Cf. Beggiani, *Syriac Theology*, 4.

The hidden and the revealed nature of God provide objective and subjective realms for the human understanding of God.<sup>207</sup> Whatever is revealed can be understood and can be put under human intellectual and scientific inquiry to a certain extent in an objective realm. On the subjective level man can yet further experience some aspects of the hidden God through the signs, symbols and types that are pointers to higher realities. Ephrem and following him Jacob of Serugh also call this realm the area of meditation.<sup>208</sup>

***b. Divine Mercy and the Acts of Creation and Redemption***

The dynamic power behind creation and redemption is the divine mercy and God's love for the 'House of Adam'. Jacob finds creation and salvation in a single plan of God that has an essential unity in itself and remains immutable. It is because the Artisan of creation is the same as that of the redemption. In other words the immutable love of God to humanity brings into effect creation and salvation or the fashioning and the renewal. There is unity out of divine love/plan and multiplicity out of salvific actions.

***c. Divine Mercy and the Progressive Self-revelation of God***

Mar Jacob distinguishes several levels in the progressive self-revelation of God with proper emphasis. The progressive aspect is basically governed by the immutable divine plan which stands as the basis of his synchronic vision and the positive outlook regarding the gradual realization of the same divine plan in the creation. This vision relies on the pedagogical aspects of the divine-human encounters in the history of salvation.

Jacob distinguishes three stages in the progressive mode of divine revelation: (1) The initial 'Path of the Law' which includes the teaching of prophets that functioned till the coming of Christ. (2) The 'Path/Road of Christ', revealed in the salvific acts of Christ, was already portrayed by the Law and the prophets. In fact

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<sup>207</sup> Cf. Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 42–3.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. Ephrem: *HPar* 1:2; 5:4; 6:4,25; Jacob of Serugh: *SMS* 724,9–10/*FHI* 89–90.

the 'Path of Christ' is the actualization of the 'Path of the Law' and the teachings of Prophecy. (3) From the 'Path of Christ' the 'Road of the Apostolate' begins with its preaching of the actualized 'Road of Salvation' in Christ. This road is also at the same time the road of the Church and Sacraments for the realization of salvation in Christ.

## **2. Mar Jacob's Orientation to the Scriptures and His Exegetical Presuppositions**

The attempt here is to highlight the exegetical presuppositions of Mar Jacob in order to read into his mind as well as to bring out a few characteristics of the indigenous Syrian approach reflected in him. Only if one can step into the mind and thought patterns of Mar Jacob can a proper appreciation of his poetic exegesis be had.

### ***a. The Christocentric Sacramental Vision on the Scriptures***

The Scriptures are replete with the figure of the Son of God and the righteous men of the Old Testament have portrayed him:

Thy great image is borne by the books of prophecy,  
Which carry Thee in solemn procession, for the world to see  
how fair Thou art.

From generation to generation Thy type hath peered out like a  
luminary,  
and gladdened with its rising whoever saw Thee and marvelled.  
With the allegories and dark sayings in the Scriptures,  
the Just in sundry places portrayed Thee through their  
revelations.

In their own times and generations they reverently bore Thee up,  
and one handed Thee to the next, to become illustrious in  
Thee.

The righteous Noah<sup>209</sup> received Thee from Seth,<sup>210</sup> the goodly  
man,  
and in the succession of the world he placed Thee with  
Abraham.

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<sup>209</sup> Cf. Gen 6:9.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Gen 5:3.

Isaac received Thee and raised up a likeness of Thee on  
 Golgotha,  
 and Jacob stole Thine image and fled to the land of Aram.<sup>211</sup>  
 Thou didst ordain Thy testimony in Joseph, who shone among  
 the Egyptians,  
 and Moses saw Thee on Mount Sinai with Thy Begetter.  
 Aaron depicted Thee with the blood of sacrifices and oblations,  
 and he sprinkled the entire path of Thy great slaughter with  
 blood.

Jesus bar-Nun, apparelled in Thy comely name,  
 barred the day at will, and suffered it not to move forward.  
 Gideon prefigured Thee with the dew that he brought down  
 when he prayed,<sup>212</sup>  
 and in Thee the conqueror conquered the camp of the  
 Midianites.  
 Jephthah found out the path of Thy sufferings by the slaying  
 of his daughter,<sup>213</sup>  
 and sprinkled it with virgin's blood on Thine account.

(HS V 331,3–332,8).<sup>214</sup>

All prophecies spoke of our Lord and the soul of the whole  
 body of Scriptures is Christ:  
 All who prophesied spoke about our Lord through concealed  
 things,  
 for were it not he, the revealed matters of the truths are void.  
 The Scriptures are like members [of the body] to him and he is  
 the soul to them  
 for they are impelled by him to speak about him abundantly.

(HS III 244,5–8)<sup>215</sup>

The scriptures are an inexhaustible mine. They are unguarded  
 treasures open to anyone who approaches with love and reads  
 them, and can carry away as much as he can. Yet the treasures in

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<sup>211</sup> Cf. Gen 25:29–34; 27:1–45.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. Judg 6:36–40.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. Judg 11:30–40.

<sup>214</sup> *tr.* from HTM, *TV* 3.3 (1992): 51–2; cf. *HS I 49; II 30; IV 322*.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. also *Ep* XXIII 196–197.

them remain inexhaustible (*HS III 414–415*).<sup>216</sup> ‘The divine Scriptures are a mount of gold, dig O needy one, and behold you enrich from their treasures’ (*HS III 454,16–17*). From the manifest things it is easy to learn about the hidden things (*SMS 758,6–7/FH I 803–4; HS I 454,17/FH X 202*).

### ***b. The Authority of the Scriptures***

God lowered himself in divine condescension to the level of humanity in the Scriptures to speak with men. Mar Jacob affirms that the author of the Scriptures is God himself (*HS III 241; V 880–881*). Hence, it does not contain errors (*HS II 794; III 320 + 353–354; V 659 + 843*) and it stands as the basis of the teachings. The authority of the Bible cannot be contested (*HS III 829–830; IV 809–814; SMS 814; Ep II 15*).

### ***c. The Images of ‘the Book’ in the Writings of Mar Jacob***

In fact, all that Christ, the Saviour does for humanity can be made effective through reading the Scriptures with love and faith. The Book illumines ‘the eye of the soul’ and reading is like sunshine on the intelligence, which nourishes discernment. Jacob explains the richness and the divinely illuminative power of the Scriptures through various images. God has established the books like **Lamps** to illumine the world in its darkness (*HS IV 282,4–11*). They teach the road of life to humanity and open the door into the Kingdom by their revelations. As **Light** they dispel the darkness of error from souls (*HS I 410,17–22; HS II 197–198; 382,5*). Again, Scriptures are like a **Fountain** for the thirst of the world. All who thirst can drink from it because the Scriptures remain like blessed **Wells** of living water (*HS V 551,13*). As water is supplied to the body to drink, the Book is for the soul to read and refresh itself. The thirsty soul drinks from the fountain of Scriptures (*HS V 551,11–12; 552,2–3*). Scriptures are **Medicine** for the soul in the world (*HS I 410,17–18; IV 155,14–15*). For one can find in them all types of remedies for all types of diseases. Other prominent

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<sup>216</sup> Cf. Homily “On ‘the Kingdom of Heaven is Like unto Leaven’”, *HS III 411–424 (no. 86)*; ET from HTM, *TV 3* (1989): 48.

images of the Scriptures are **Nutrition** (*HS IV 104,9*), **Ocean** (*HS I 328,9–329,3*), **Rivers** (*HS V 551,15*), **Pearl** (*HS III 80,8–11; 835,1–2*), etc.<sup>217</sup>

#### *d. The Functions of Prophecy and the Prophets*

The role of the prophets according to Jacob is to proclaim the advent of Christ (*SMS 799,1–800,2/FH III 175–198*). Hence, he holds that this proclamation is found in each page and line of the Scriptures (*HS III 208,14–209,2. 243,12–244,8. 566; V 574*). Prophets are household heirs of the mystery of God (*HS II 198,13–18; III 15–17; IV 423*). The Spirit illumines the prophets to see the mysteries of Christ through the *rāzē* with the eye of discernment.<sup>218</sup>

The *mēmra* “On the Veil on Moses’ Face” explains the role and functions of prophecy and the prophets (*Ex 34:33–35, HS III 284,16–291,14*).<sup>219</sup> The whole prophecy is veiled like a bride who is waiting for the Bridegroom. Till the arrival of Christ, prophecy spoke in parables, enigmas and symbols in a way veiling the Son.<sup>220</sup> Only at the arrival of Christ, the Bridegroom, the beauty and meaning of prophecy were unveiled. Moses, who was seen veiled after his encounter with God is a type of prophecy which is also veiled. The stammering Moses (*Ex 4:10*) is another type of prophecy depicting that what the prophets spoke remained unexplained till the arrival of Christ. He came and loosened the tongue of Moses or the speech of the prophets (*HS III 283,1–12*).

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<sup>217</sup> For a more comprehensive list of such images, cf. Sony, *La doctrine de Jacques de Saroug*, 116.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. *HS I* 103, 106, 423, 706–7; *II* 83, 186–7, 198, 241, 362, 468–9, 732; *III* 7–8, 44–6, 249, 273, 280–300, 353, 696–7, 706–7; *IV* 104–5, 115, 119, 145–8, 153, 262, 265, 273, 306, 330, 347, 359–61, 367, 370, 496–8, 574, 583–4, 589–90; *V* 292, 383, 395, 422, 432–4, 472, 478, 588, 880–3; *Ep II* 16; *XXII* 148; *XXIII* 170–173; *XXIV* 212; *HCJ VII* 88–91.

<sup>219</sup> See ET by Brock, “On the Veil of Moses,” 70–85 (= *Syriac Spirituality*, 73–89; 2008ed, 177–209).

<sup>220</sup> Cf. *HS I* 67, 563–6; *II* 40, 186–7, 241, 364, 372, 468–9, 732; *III* 243–4, 249, 273, 280/3, 694/7; *IV* 12–16, 106–8, 265, 312–4, 322, 432, 435–6, 574, 588–90; *V* 292, 300, 331, 395, 432–3, 478, 550, 588.

Prophecy had seen the Son but it speaks of him in a veiled manner through symbols and parables in order to avoid misunderstanding by the ‘undeserving Hebrews’ (*HS III 273,10–17*).<sup>221</sup> The veiling of prophecy has both negative and positive goals. Negatively, it veils itself from the Hebrews who do not want to see and understand the truth (2 Cor 3:7–18). Positively, the veiling protects humanity that is not capable of comprehending the truths (*Ep II 12–14*). Prophecy has its own time, and prophetic words should be read in the proper time (*Ep XXIV 215–216*).<sup>222</sup> Once Christ came prophecy took rest and the proclaimers became silent. Each prophet depicts (paints) the figure of the Son according to his capacity. But what they depict are only shadows in comparison with the reality (*HS IV 113–115*).

Prophets had to follow the road of the Son. They had nothing in themselves to admire. Through the vision provided to them they saw the Lord and tried to prefigure some of the actions of our Lord (*HS IV 141,11–22*).<sup>223</sup> At the arrival of the ‘Sun of Righteousness’ all prophets stepped down. Prophets could not fully explain the sublime divine Word in human words. Hence, they spoke of the mystery in a hidden way till the time fixed by the Lord to reveal it.<sup>224</sup>

Jacob has a number of images with rich allusions that explain the role of prophets. Following the Pauline view of 1 Cor 10:4 Jacob holds that all prophets have drunk the same Spirit and the same mystery (*HS IV 310,2–7; V 713,3–20; Ep XIV 59–60; XXII 148; XXIII 170*). They are all equal because of the reception of the same gift and they have the same Spirit but the measure given to each is according to each one’s capacity (*HS III 16,3–18*).<sup>225</sup> This equality is explained in line with the offering of two copper coins of Lk 21:1–4. As all rivers flow to the same sea all prophets are

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<sup>221</sup> Cf. also *HS I* 67, 460–1; *II* 186–8, 241, 372, 468–9; *III* 243–4, 249, 280–300, 303–4, 308–9, 694–7; *IV* 12–6, 104–8, 113, 312–4, 574, 583–4, 588–90; *V* 395, 432–4; *Ep II* 16, *XXIII* 173–6; *HCJ VII* 88–89.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Sony, *La doctrine de Jacques de Saroug*, 120.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. Sony, *La doctrine de Jacques de Saroug*, 119.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 121.

oriented to the same mystery and they have a unity and equality of their own (*HS III 486,4–487,11*). Any prophet or King who disobeys the orders of God would lose his prophetic/kingly power, eg. Is 6:1 (*HS V 417,5–22*); 2 Sam 11–12 (*HS V 390*).

***e. Prophets and Apostles***

In the language of Mar Jacob ‘prophets and apostles’ often means the combined Scriptures of Old and New Testaments. Mar Jacob explains their interrelationships:

He (*our Lord*) joined those of the company of Simon to the company of Moses;<sup>226</sup>

as to make the New equal with the Old in His proclamation.

He wanted to exchange the stewards and brought them so that the elders may hand over the keys to those who were youngsters.

Those who had laboured with Him well, He wished to honour and He gave to others exaltation and the labour of righteousness.

He gave rest to Moses and set the labour upon John.

He spared Elijah and brought to Simon to loose and to bind.

He wished to ratify His new covenant

and He brought the old servants of His Father to subscribe to it.

He called the apostles and brought the prophets to treat them as equal,

So that He might manifest the single teaching of the truth to the whole world.

He had united the New with the Old so that the world might become conscious of

the fact that He is the Lord, both of the latter and the former.

(*HS II 358,1–14/FH VIII,221–234*)

Prophets pre-announce the coming of Christ and the apostles announce the realization of the same (*HS III 707*). The former group deals with shadow and the latter with the reality. Hence,

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<sup>226</sup> Cf. Mt 17:1–9; Mk 9:2–10; Lk 9:28–36; 2 Pet 1:17–18.

John the Baptist had the roles of both groups and had a special status of his own (*SHF II 4/FH VII 4*). Prophecy is the soul of prophets (*HS III 696,5–697,2*) or it is the speech of the Spirit that activates and inspires humanity to become pneumatic. Christ is the soul and breath of the prophecy (*HS IV 278,9–12; 574,7–12*). Both groups, prophets and apostles, are equal because the same Spirit moves them to speak and announce (*HS III 706,3–707,16*). Hence they are also equal before the Lord (*HS II 364,7–18/FH VIII 355–366*). The true grandeur of the prophecy is the realization of the coming of Christ (*HS IV 495,20–497,8; 583,16–584,18*). The silence of the prophets after the coming of Christ is remarkable as it proves that there is no other Son to come. Moreover, in the coming of Christ prophecy fulfilled its role (1 Cor 13:8).

#### *f. Unity of the Scriptures or the Two Testaments*

Mar Jacob stresses the unity and the organic relationship between the Testaments. He envisages the unity of the Scriptures not in external or textual aspects but in the inner concurrence and mutual accord of the messages they diffuse. The basic reason is the fact that the same Spirit inspires and fills the Scriptures as a whole. Hence, they all give the same teaching (*HS II 357,10–365,2/FH VIII 209–372; 469,8–470,14; III 15–16; 653,1–12; IV 580,5–22; IV 803–817 {esp. 810,19–811,2; 814,13–22}; V 607,3–22*). Through biblical symbolism Jacob explains how one drinks from the four rivers of Eden in the Old Testament and in fact the same four rivers are found in the Evangelists in the New Testament:

Behold, you are hearing from the old rivers  
the four [rivers] which issued from the blessed fountain of  
Eden.<sup>227</sup>

And again in the New the apostles are like the rivers,  
the four [Apostles] who went out to the four regions and you  
drink them.

(HS III 653,9–12)

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<sup>227</sup> Cf. Gen 2:10.

Christ is the impelling force behind the Scriptures and he is the author of both orders, the Law and the Gospel (*HS II 363,14–18/FH VIII 341–44*) as well as the mediator of both (*HS II 362,7–365,2/FH VIII 313–372*). Our author clearly teaches the unity of the two testaments through various images. The following are a few of them: Christ is the focal point of the Scriptures. He is the body and the two covenants are his hands (*HS II 362,11–12/FH VIII 317–318*). The two testaments are like two links of a chain that interlock so perfectly (*HS II 364,1–18/FH VIII 349–366*). Again they are like a house which has a floor (foundation), namely, the Old Testament, and a roof which is the New Testament (*HS III 319,20–321,4*). The intertestamental unity is further clarified through the analogy of body and soul, in which the Scriptures form a single body and Christ is the soul of that body (*HS III 243,18–244,8; Ep XXIII 196–197*). This leads to the Christocentric vision. Hence, through these images he establishes the intimate union (chain) of the Testaments, the realization of the history of salvation (house with a floor and a roof) and the over all Christocentric vision (Christ the soul of the body of Scriptures). The unity of two Testaments is demonstrated at the Paschal event (*HS II 482,19–484,8*) and at Tabor (*HS II 357,10–359,13/FH VIII 209–254*).

### ***g. The Christocentric Vision of Salvation History***

For Jacob the focus of all biblical narratives is Christ. The two hands of Christ symbolize the two testaments by which his powers are exercised. The meanings of all events and narratives of the Scriptures, and for that matter, the whole of salvation history leads to Christ. Our author is so convinced of the central position of Christ in the Bible so as to teach that every line and page of the Scriptures announce the coming of the Son.<sup>228</sup> He affirms that it is given in images and types. It is Christ who inspires and leads the prophets. All prophesies are like lamps that illumine the earth till the coming of Christ, the Sun:

While it was night the prophets set up a torch on earth  
to show the way by which the world might reach daylight.

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<sup>228</sup> Cf. Sony, “La Methode Exegetique de Jacques de Saroug,” 73.

But when the great Sun of righteousness arrived  
 he removed them from a service for which they were no  
 longer fitted.<sup>229</sup>

Jacob uses images and types to explain this reality. According to him prophecies are like veiled betrothed women. Their veil is removed at the coming of Christ, the Bridegroom, by his paschal mystery:

Moses entered in and like a skilled artist, delineated  
 the Bridegroom and the bride, and then covered the great  
 picture with a veil ...  
 And so he painted a picture inside the chamber of the royal  
 bridegroom;  
 he called them 'man and woman', although he knew the truth,  
 that one was Christ and the other the Church, both being  
 veiled, ...  
 I recognize Christ and his Church, the two being one.  
 The veil on Moses' face has now been removed,  
 let everyone come and behold the beauties that never weary;  
 the great mystery that was veiled has now come out into the  
 open.<sup>230</sup>

In another image Jacob compares prophecies with an old man who gives way to the young, i.e. to Christ. Yet in another single image of the flow of rivers to sea he brings out the unity of the Testaments as well as that of the divine plan of salvation history. All prophets and prophecies are like different rivers flowing to the same ocean with their own parts of inspiration.<sup>231</sup> All are led by the same Spirit. Now as the truth is revealed, the apostles are also inspired by the same Spirit to bear witness to that truth. While a prophet is a 'shadow', an apostle is a servant of 'the reality'. What the prophets have proclaimed have become real in the New Testament dispensation.

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<sup>229</sup> *HS III 304,4–7*; ET by Brock, "On the Veil of Moses," 83.

<sup>230</sup> *HS III 283–305*; ET by Brock, "On the Veil of Moses," 74, 75.

<sup>231</sup> Cf. *HS III 486–487*; also Sony, *La doctrine de Jacques de Saroug*, 121.

## G. THE BIBLICAL EXEGESIS OF JACOB OF SERUGH

The biographies of Mar Jacob depict him as one who had the task of interpreting the sacred Scriptures.<sup>232</sup> A *mēmṛā* on Jacob of Serugh describes him as one filled with the Holy Spirit and as providing the Church with the wisdom and commentaries of the sacred Scriptures.<sup>233</sup> In the role of an exegete and teacher (*malpānā*) Jacob served the West Syrian Church especially after the closure of the school of Edessa, and particularly when the Syrian Church was much disturbed due to the Christological controversies. It is for this service he is esteemed together with St. Ephrem as a jewel of the Syrian Church.

### 1. Exigencies of the Times and the Exegetical Influences on Jacob

One of the needs felt by Mar Jacob was the edification of his audience who were simple and medium cultured Christians. Catechetical moral instruction was the felt need of his time. Above all Jacob was a pastor of souls with a rich poetic talent. In his own native Syrian tradition, enriched by Ephrem and influenced by the needs of his own times, he brought out his literary compositions.

Three strands of influences are traced by scholars in the exegetical method of Jacob.<sup>234</sup> The first two are basically the same evolving from the Syrian root, namely the Syrian tradition before Ephrem and that of the developed one of Ephrem with its stress on the Christocentric vision of the whole reality and the history of salvation. The search for the legacies of the indigenous Syrian exegesis can lead one through Ephrem and Aphrahat to

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<sup>232</sup> Cf. Grill, "Jakob von Sarug als Dichter und Exeget," 17–28.

<sup>233</sup> "L'Esprit-Saint lui révéla et expliqua tous les secrets des Saintes Ecritures; ce docteur devint le vase de l'Esprit et remplit la sainte Eglise de sa sagesse en commentant les Saintes Ecritures ..." *Mēmṛā* on Jacob of Serugh, Ms. Paris syriaque 177 (fol. 147a–148b) cited in Sony, *La doctrine de Jacques de Saroug*, 125.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. Jansma, "L'Hexaméron de Jacques de Saroug," 268; Sony, "La Methode exegetique de Jacques de Saroug," 67–103.

Theophilus of Antioch.<sup>235</sup> That earliest form of Syrian tradition was not much Hellenized and it exercised a sort of autonomy<sup>236</sup> and freedom of thinking with its own indigenous outlook on the Scriptures and modes of theological reflection. The third and the less prominent in Mar Jacob is a mixed influence from the major Christian traditions of Antioch, Cappadocia and Alexandria.<sup>237</sup> As regards the exegetical approach of Mar Jacob what has been consolidated is a combination of the views of Ephrem inherited from the school of Edessa with partial influences from other traditions, especially a sort of filtering through the Antiochene views.<sup>238</sup> Above all, Jacob is a pupil of the school of Edessa in matters of exegesis. Hence, the context of the scriptural text is important for him. Often the insights, suggestions and indications that remain hidden and unexplained in the biblical texts are brought into light with his purpose-seeking exegesis (*SHF V 1/FH XII 1*) which brings out the divine teachings that lie hidden in the scriptural episodes.

## 2. The Biblical Text of Mar Jacob

Scrutiny by scholars regarding the biblical texts in the writings of Mar Jacob indicates that he has freely used both Diatessaron and Peshitta. What R. H. Connolly concludes, based on a study by Burkitt, is as follows: "Jacob of Serug used both Peshitta and Diatessaron very freely, in the way no doubt that fourth century writers used Syriac Vulgate<sup>239</sup> and Diatessaron."<sup>240</sup> In another study Matthew Black concludes:

When the evidence for Jacob's text of the Gospels is reviewed as a whole, three main conclusions emerge:

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<sup>235</sup> Cf. Grant, "Theophilus of Antioch to Autolychus," 227–56.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. Simonetti, *Lettera e/o allegoria*, 133.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Jansma, "L'Hexamèron de Jacques de Sarug," 3–42; 129–62; 253–84, (esp. p. 144).

<sup>238</sup> Cf. Jansma, "L'Hexamèron de Jacques de Sarug," 253, 278; cf. also Rilliet, "La louange des pierres," 301.

<sup>239</sup> Syriac Vulgate here means *Peshitta* version.

<sup>240</sup> Connolly, "Jacob of Serug and the Diatessaron," 589–90.

(a) Jacob of Serugh expressly quotes the Diatessaron by name as ‘the Gospel’, and probably gives us, at least once, a sample of the Syriac Harmony. He is also almost certainly drawing on it freely elsewhere. (b) At the same time, there cannot be the least doubt that Jacob’s basic text and his authoritative Version is the Syriac Vulgate; about 60 per cent of the quotations examined agree practically *verbatim* with our Peshitta, ... (c) The residuum of quotations with a mixed Peshitta-Old Syriac text may derive from a form of the Syriac Vulgate containing a number of still unrevised Old Syriac readings...<sup>241</sup>

### 3. The Exegetical Method of Mar Jacob

It is not easy to categorize the method of exegesis in Jacob. As has already been said, different exegetical traditions have influenced upon the Syrian exegetical views of the region of Edessa and in Mar Jacob there is a synthesis. Still the outstanding factor is the Ephremian tradition of symbolic reflection and the Christocentric vision of salvation history with an emphasis on the historical events providing a sacramental view of history.

#### a. Exegetical Activity

The aim of exegetical activity is to bring out the concealed mystery (*rāzā*) into the light. Jacob compares the activity of the exegete to that of a ‘pearl-diver’. The books of the Son are like an ocean full of pearls and the exegete is a diver who seeks after the pearls therein. The intelligence searches for the pearls of the Scriptures and supplies them to the hearers as ornaments to be hung on the ears (*HS II 197,7–14*).<sup>242</sup> Jacob explains in a few couplets the exegetical and homiletical activity as pearl merchandise:

The Scriptures of the Son resemble a sea and within that sea  
a pearl is thrown and it is concealed from the merchants;  
For the commentator is like a pearl-diver going down after it.

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<sup>241</sup> Black, “The Gospel Text of Jacob of Serugh,” 57–63.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. Thekeparampil, “Malkizedeq according to Jacob of Sarug” for a full ET; also Sony, “La Methode exegetique de Jacques de Saroug,” 85; *La doctrine de Jacques de Saroug*, 113–42.

He explores the depths and brings up the pearl with him;  
 when it is brought up, behold, it will be handed over to the  
     merchants,  
 then all of them, indeed, profit from it when they possess it.  
 Like a diver, the mind descends inside the readings  
 in order to make ascend with it the Word of life, the pearl.  
 O hearers, receive the Word like merchants  
 and make profit and abound all of you spiritually from it.  
 Anyone who buys a pearl gives prices;  
 Come, and take freely the Word of life which is full of riches.  
 The intellect descends and dives in the Scriptures, while  
     incompetent,  
 explores and takes hold of the pearl of the divine abode;  
 And behold, the tongue carries it in order to throw it over to  
     the hearers;  
 suspend it upon your ears, O Daughter of Light, and be  
     adorned with it.

(HS I 328,9–329,3)

Exegesis is possible only by the inspiration and grace of the Lord. Jacob even requests the hearers to pray for the grace of understanding at the beginning of his discourses. He carries out his catechetical exegesis in the homilies as a sacramental activity. This is explicit from his usual style at the beginning of the homilies with prayers for its successful completion, and for the fruitfulness of the homily that he begins to deliver for the hearers. Prayer and love for the Word of God (*HS I 445,13–446,1/FH X 13–16*, *HS I 607,11–611,4<sup>243</sup>*; *HS III 284,6–15*; *HS IV 282,6–283,21<sup>244</sup>*; *HS V 161,17–162,2<sup>245</sup>*), and faith (*HS III 3,15–20*; *V 594–596*; *Ep XVI 74*; *XXIV 204*) are the basic requisites for the understanding of the Scriptures. This exegetical activity is a science, like a lamp, that

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<sup>243</sup> Cf. *HS I 606–627*, Homily “On Love”; FT by Khalifé-Hachem, “Homélie sur l’amour,” 281–199.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. *HS IV 282–296*, “The Second Homily on Elissaeus and on the King of Moab”; ET from HTM, *TV 1* (1989): 51–67.

<sup>245</sup> Cf. *HS V 154–180*, “A Homily on Melchizedek”; ET from HTM, *TV 2* (1989): 30–55.

helps one to enter into the Scriptures. According to Jacob the same Spirit works through the writers of the Scriptures, the interpreters, and the readers or hearers of the Scriptures.

***b. Literal and Spiritual Senses of the Scriptures***

Like several Syriac writers, especially in line with the Ephremian teaching, Mar Jacob also holds that the scriptures possess two levels of meaning, an outer historical and an inner spiritual (*HS III 234,15–18*). In the scripture, especially according to the Syriac tradition, the primary object of the search is the inner spiritual reality, the hidden power and not the outer historical truth only. The outer historical truth is important in the sense that it serves as the context that points to the inner spiritual reality. Hence, both these levels of meanings coexist harmoniously as the humanity and divinity coexisting in Jesus. The exegete or commentator should go beyond the outer historical meaning in his search to attain the fuller sense in the realm of spiritual reality, the hidden power.

As S. P. Brock describes, historical and spiritual interpretations operate on different levels with their own separate modes of operations. In the realm of historical exegesis one can speak of ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’, ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ interpretations. But in the case of spiritual interpretation there is no single interpretation which alone is correct to the exclusion of others.<sup>246</sup> Several interpretations can be simultaneously correct as one word of Moses comprises several significations (*HS IV 16,15*). The historical interpretations of Syriac writers are far superseded by well developed modern scholarship. But the spiritual interpretations given by Syriac commentators are still fresh and fluid enough to carry insightful understanding that transcends chronological time limitations. It is interesting to note the affinity between the Syriac handling of the spiritual sense of the Scriptures and the definition of the ‘fuller sense’ (*sensus plenior*) given by modern exegetes.<sup>247</sup> It is through the progress of revelation the fuller sense emerges.

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<sup>246</sup> Cf. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 46–51.

<sup>247</sup> “The fuller sense is defined as a deeper meaning of the text, intended by God but not clearly expressed by the human author. Its existence in the biblical text comes to be known when one studies the text

Moreover, Syriac writers with their deeper acquaintance with the Semitic world-view and the Judeo-Christian background of the Scriptures, provide certain insightful explanations on the historical level also. A typical example of Jacob's insight is depicted in the prose homily 'On the Friday of the Passion'. Jacob explains the cunning devise of the wicked priests in clothing our Lord with the veil of the sanctuary in order to condemn Jesus to death.<sup>248</sup> In this case two scriptural texts (Mt 27:28 and Num 4:15) and their contexts and indications are well explained by Jacob. The historical and spiritual interpretations complement each other. The crucial factor is the proper understanding of the functions of these two interpretations as well as their interrelationships and interactions without confusing their roles.

There are two conditions which would decide the validity of a spiritual interpretation:

- (1) It should be meaningful in a particular context.
- (2) It should provide insight into the world of objective spiritual truth or reality.

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in the light of other biblical texts which utilize it or in its relationship with the internal development of revelation. ... In a word, one may think of the "fuller sense" as another way of indicating the spiritual sense of a biblical text in the case where the spiritual sense is distinct from the literal sense. It has its foundation in the fact that the Holy Spirit, principal author of the Bible, can guide human authors in the choice of expressions in such a way that the latter will express a truth the fullest depths of which the authors themselves do not perceive." Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible*, 83, 84; See also Fitzmyer, *Interpretation of the Bible*, 130–1.

<sup>248</sup> Cf. *SHF V 17–20/FH XII 17–20*. The Law states that the one who touches the holy objects ought to die (Num 4:15). By putting on a piece of the veil of the Sanctuary the wicked priests, following the cunningness of the ancient serpent, made our Lord culpable of death. This reflects Adam's grabbing (touching) the holy object (Divinity) unjustly at a wrong time that made him culpable of death. But Christ was made culpable of death on account of Adam and in his (Adam's) stead died and made Adam/humanity live.

The first criterion speaks of the validity at the subjective level of a person or a group. In other words one interpretation might be valid in one context but not in another or for one person and not to another. Consequently, one interpretation might be valid for a person at one time but not on other occasions. The second criterion links all interpretations into a body of teachings or traditions proper to the Christian community rather than leaving the field of interpretation to the arbitrary choice and pure subjective fantasy of the interpreter. Often the typological networks provided by Mar Jacob in his homilies clearly explain the above mentioned norms of spiritual interpretation on the one hand and on the other provide examples of such spiritual exegesis. Spiritual interpretation works on the subjective level but it is definitively linked with a standardizing body of inner spiritual truths. Here the findings of modern exegetes are worth mentioning as they show convergence to the ancient Syriac views:

The spiritual sense is not to be confused with subjective interpretations stemming from the imagination or intellectual speculation. The spiritual sense results from setting the text in relation to real facts which are not foreign to it: the paschal event, in all its inexhaustible richness, which constitutes the summit of the divine intervention in the history of Israel, to the benefit of all mankind. Spiritual interpretation, whether in community or in private, will discover the authentic spiritual sense only to the extent that it is kept within these perspectives. One then holds together three levels of reality: the biblical text, the paschal mystery and the present circumstances of life in the spirit.<sup>249</sup>

Mar Jacob distinguishes between the carnal sense (*paḡrānāyā*) and the spiritual sense (*ruḥanāyā*) of the written word. The goal is rather the perfect understanding, the phenomenon which he qualifies by the word *su'rānā*. It means actualization of all potentialities of a thing:

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<sup>249</sup> Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible*, 82.

There is another sense (speech) for the word than that which is mentioned in it.

Diverse faculties are needed by the soul to give heed to it.

The profit for the one who hears it is not from its speech; it has something else that it would give to the one who gives heed to it.

(HS III 234,15–18)<sup>250</sup>

### ***c. The Importance of the Written Text and the Historical Sense***

For Jacob the scriptural text is important, its author is God and it is the basis of all doctrines. The Christological sense and the other implications in the Scriptures are real for him. All texts have to be viewed in their historical setting in order to be understood clearly. Hence, he gives the rule to penetrate into the thinking of the writer rather than to hold on to the thinking of the reader. As a pupil of the school of Edessa, Jacob gives much importance to the historical background of the text according to the views of Antiochene hermeneutics.<sup>251</sup> Mar Jacob speaks of the ‘spiritual sense’ in conformity with the Antiochene understanding of *theoria* which recognizes a higher level of meaning that overlies the literal/historical level.<sup>252</sup>

### ***d. Some Exegetical Devices of Jacob of Serugh***

Holding dramatic dialogues by the author with biblical characters (*HS V 453,3–16/FH V 113–126*) and also between the biblical characters (*SMS 747,6–751,15/FH I 573–666; HS V 454,10–456,3/FH V 141–176; HS I 176,11–183,8/FH VI 181–326*) is a prominent exegetical device in Jacob of Serugh. Soliloquies of biblical protagonists also belong to this set of styles and structures

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<sup>250</sup> Cf. *HS III 224–241*, Homily “On the Sacrifice of the Two Birds,” see FT by GRAFFIN, F. “Mimro de Jacques de Saroug sur les deux Oiseaux.” *OS 6* (1961): 51–66.

<sup>251</sup> Cf. Jansma, “The Credo of Jacob of Serug,” 29, (see also n. 3 on the same page).

<sup>252</sup> Cf. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation*, 67.

in the homilies. These devices enable the author to set the biblical characters as his mouthpiece for the purpose of exegetical teachings. What Jacob exposes through those characters are not arbitrary conclusions but detailed clarifications from the background of a synchronic vision of the history of salvation. Often such details are exposed by Jacob's 'purpose seeking' mind from the underlying suggestions, insights and indications in the biblical episodes. The dramatic and lively expositions reset the whole episode alive and are captivating as well as quite persuasive to the reader. Through his apophatic approach Jacob sometimes proposes a litany of questions regarding the biblical facts in order to provide the central meaning of texts (*SMS 754,2–21/FH I 715–734*; *HS V 453,3–454,7/FH V 113–138*). Through various questions the wrong answers are refuted and finally the true meaning comes out self-evidently. Yet another major exegetical design is the litany of typologies (*SMS 750,10–17/FH I 639–646*; *SMS 794,18–796,15/FH III 91–128*; *SHF III 13–25/FH IX 13–25*) that can explain different aspects of the same divine reality. As another method the re-reading of earlier biblical texts in the framework of typologies is well employed by Jacob.<sup>253</sup>

#### 4. The Typology of Mar Jacob

Typological exegesis is a common patrimony of early Christian catechesis.<sup>254</sup> This is firmly rooted in the early Judeo-Christian

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<sup>253</sup> Cf. (1) Num 21:4–9 > Jn 3:14–15 <---> *HS I 49–67*, a re-reading of the episode of the 'Serpent of Bronze' lifted up by Moses in the wilderness and its actualization in the Son of Man lifted upon the Cross. (2) Judg 16:28–31 > Mt 16:18 (Diatessaron, *muklé da šyol*) <---> *HS II 612,3–6/FH XIII 19–22*; *HS II 624,16–17/FH XIV 13–14*; *HS II 632,5–20/FH XIV 167–182*, a re-reading of the episode of Samson pulling down the pillars and the killing of the Philistines which became actualized in Christ's pulling down of 'the bars of Sheol'. (3) Judg 14:14 <---> *HS V 337,11–338,19*, the riddle that Samson composed; "Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet." This riddle which Samson himself did not understand came into effect in Christ who destroyed death and gave his body as sweet food.

<sup>254</sup> Cf. Daniélou, *Gospel Message and the Hellenistic Culture*, 95 ff.

heritage from which the Syriac tradition imbibes much and stands close. Typological reflection in Jacob gives a vision of salvation history which is thoroughly Christocentric.<sup>255</sup> In a catechetical mode Mar Jacob presents a proper Christian theology of history, the history of salvation.

According to Jacob prophecies and types stand together in order to present the NT concealed in the OT. B. P. Sony concludes that for Jacob the spiritual sense is identical with that of the typological one and typology is the proclamation through deeds while prophecy is through words.<sup>256</sup> Identifying the 'spiritual sense' with the 'typological sense' in Jacob, without qualification, as did B. P. Sony, I fear, is distorting the vision of Jacob. The goal of exegesis according to Jacob is to understand the purpose/reason behind the types and prophecies and only that can enable one to understand the divine will and purpose. According to Jacob above the level of the typological meaning and the teachings of the prophecy there is a stage of transference to the level of 'the understanding of the divine will and purpose'. Hence the 'spiritual sense' transcends even the 'typological sense' and the attaining of that level is the goal of exegesis. Jacob's vision is firmly rooted in a Christocentric understanding of history. In this vision all prophecies and types are only signs that serve till the coming of Christ (*HS III 301,21–305,7*). The signs and symbols are given by God for he knows that men are feeble in understanding. Hence, the figures and types are ladders for the ascent of the human mind. Jacob finds more often antitypes of NT signalled in OT unlike Theodore of Mopsuestia and Narsai who were very restricted in distinguishing types in the OT.<sup>257</sup> Moreover, Mar Jacob is closer to

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<sup>255</sup> Cf. ZINGERLE, C. J. "Eine ungedruckte Homilie Jakobus von Sarug." *ZKTb* 11 (1887): 92–108.

<sup>256</sup> "Le sens spirituel selon Jacques est identique au sens typologique. La typologie signifie un événement qui est annoncé par des *faits*, ou par les personnes qui les racontent. La prophétie signifie in événement annoncé par des mots par les textes de l'écrivain sacré." Sony, "Methode exegetique de Jacques de Saroug," 92.

<sup>257</sup> Cf. Van Rompay, "Syriac Tradition of Interpretation," 368–9; Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, 31.

the Pauline thinking in exegesis by distinguishing the spiritual and carnal senses (1Cor 3:1; 14:1–39).

B. P. Sony<sup>258</sup> proposes three patterns of typologies in Jacob.<sup>259</sup> They are the following:

(1) Several types referring to a single antitype: eg. **Adam** is typified by Saul (*HS II 43,4–44,17*), Barabbas (*SHF V 32–34/FH XII 32–34*), the child of the Shunammite woman (2Kings 4:8–37; *HS IV 313,3–8*), the man who descended from Jerusalem to Jericho (Lk 10:30–37; *HS II 325,11–326,9; 331,6–11*) and the colt during the entry into Jerusalem (Mt 21:1–11; *HS V 620,8–621,16*).

(2) Several antitypes referring to a single type: eg. **Rock/Stone** typifying Christ (1Cor 10:4, Dan 2:34; *HS III 295,7–16; 307,2–7. 15–16; 317,22–318,15; SMS 794,20–21/FH III 93–94; SMS 795,15–18/FH III 109–112*), the Church (*HS III 193,13–14*), and Sin (Gen 29:3; *HS III 213,1–214,1; 310,13–14*).

(3) The same action (verb) signifying different types: eg. The descending and ascending of angels in the vision of Jacob (Gen 28:12) signify the descent and ascent of the Son of God (*HS III 310,17–20; SMS 796,12–13/FH III, 125–126*).

In addition to what B. P. Sony has proposed I would add another typological scheme of Jacob: (4) The pyramidal typological pattern: This pattern is effectively employed by Jacob in order to describe the progressive and Christocentric stance of the types. Some examples in this respect would be as follows:

(a) Adam/humanity → Israel → The ‘bride of light’ and the ‘Bridegroom of light’ (Christ): The fall of Adam/humanity and all its effects extend themselves in Israel. The unfaithful behaviour of Israel typified in their idols and idolatry are the best expressions of the continued fall (*HS II 366,3–369,11/FH VIII 393–466; HS I 448,20–450,20/FH X 79–120; SHF IV 21–30/FH XI 21–30*). But the betrothal in view of the marriage feast takes place through various covenants (*HCJ IV 87–176*) and finally the heavenly

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Sony, “La Methode exegetique de Jacques de Saroug,” 94–5.

<sup>259</sup> For a select group of Jacob’s typological visions of the redeeming activities of Christ see the section on ‘The Typological Views of Jacob and the Salvific Activities of Christ’ in chapter four (section B,2,b); Cf. also Sony, *La doctrine de Jacques de Saroug*, 135–42.

Bridegroom himself came down to purify and redeem the defiled bride (*HS I 167,9–168,9/FH VI 1–16*) as well as offered himself as the dowry.

(b) Abel → Isaac → Christ: The salvific acts of Christ are reflected in those OT types in a progressive manner. As Abel is the ‘first born’ of the dead he depicts the mystery of Christ’s slaughter and the road of blood (*HS V 464,17–20*). In Isaac, added to all depictions in Abel, the mystery of the virgin-birth (*SMS 796, 6–7/FH III 119–120*) as well as the suffering of the Only-Begotten are depicted (*HS V 445,7–8. 465,7–8/FH V 159–160. 367–368*), and all such mysteries are actualized in Christ.

(c) Adam-King → The Kingdom of the house of David → Christ, the King of kings: Adam’s failures to exercise the kingly powers (*HS III 108,7–12; 115; 128; QHC IV 60–100*) bestowed on him find salvific progress in the Kingdom of the house of David which actually became a reality only in Christ (*SHF IV 14–16/FH XI 14–16*).

(d) The Commandment given in Paradise → The Law of Moses → The path of the Cross (perfection) brought by Christ upon the path of the Law of Moses: The first breach of the Law took place in Eden where the law was written in the two tablets of hearts (Adam/Eve, *QHC I 132*). That destruction of two tablets was reenacted by Moses (Ex 32:15–20) and again new stone tablets of the Law were given (*QHC I 105–114*). Christ came through that path of the Law and rendered perfection through the path of perfection on the Cross (*SHF II 2–4, 18/FH VII 2–4, 18*).

In view of homiletical catechesis the homilies of Jacob are rich with typological exegesis. For the Christological types Jacob’s *mēmra* “On the Mysteries, Symbols and the Figures of Christ”<sup>260</sup> is an excellent example.

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<sup>260</sup> Cf. *HS III 305–321*, “On the Mysteries, Symbols and Figures of Christ.” A substantial number of typological relations found in this homily are incorporated in chapter four under the title, “The Typological Views of Jacob of Serugh”. This particular homily seems to be a later compilation of relevant portions of various homilies of Jacob of Serugh for catechetical and liturgical purposes.

### 5. The New Testament Exegesis of Mar Jacob

Mar Jacob's NT exegesis is conditioned by his views on salvation history and the relationship between the two Testaments. Some of his NT exegetical presuppositions have to be noted:

- (1) The OT is a preparation, a way and a shadow of the NT. Here the three images of Jacob regarding the unity and interrelationship between the testaments (two Testaments as two hands of Christ, imagery of the floor and the roof of a house, two links of a chain) may be taken into account.<sup>261</sup>
- (2) The whole of prophecies as well as the mysteries given in a hidden form in the OT are fully revealed and actualized in the NT in the person of Christ.<sup>262</sup>
- (3) The road of salvation in Christ is also hidden and revealed as the Son remains hidden and revealed in Christ. In all festal homilies Jacob stresses the need of recognizing the hidden Son and his power revealed in the salvific road of Christ through a discerning vision of the actualization of the divine pedagogy through types and prophecies (*SHF V 27–30/FH XII 27–30*).

Based on these understandings Jacob has a predominant sense of actualization in his New Testament exegesis. We find expositions of the realization of many OT images and types in the NT. The homilies on NT themes are more Christocentric in character based on the typological net-works rooted in the OT. Mar Jacob finds the whole Old Testament replete with the foreshadowings of the New not only in the words of prophecy but also in the various events of God's dealings with Israel in the course of its history. He finds several 'types' in those events by the power of the 'inner eye' assisted by the Holy Spirit. As Jacob firmly

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<sup>261</sup> Cf. The section on 'Unity of the Scriptures or the Two Testaments', see chapter one (section F,2,f).

<sup>262</sup> Cf. The homily "On the Veil on Moses' Face" (*HS III, 283–305*), ET by Brock, S. P. "On the Veil of Moses." *Sobornost/ECR* 3:1 (1981): 70–85; also in *Studies in Syriac Spirituality* (Dharmaram Publications), 177–209.

believes in the actualization of all OT types and mysteries in Christ, in his New Testament exegesis he is keen on tracing all possible typological links behind the scriptural episodes.

Due to the thrust of typological exegesis in Mar Jacob he can be considered, in the light of Mk 13:15, as a 'true Scribe (teacher)' who brings out new and old things from his treasures. By handling the biblical episodes, he thus tries to present a synchronic vision of salvation history in view of catechesis. Two examples may be mentioned here. The first one is Jacob's exegesis of the piercing of the side of Christ in Jn 19:34. Based on this event Jacob weaves a complex net-work of typologies involving Adam, Christ; birth of Eve, birth of the Church and sacraments; closed Paradise guarded with the sword and the opening of Paradise by Christ through the sword that pierced him, etc. All the negative results that emerged from the opening of the side of Adam have been rectified and perfection was set up by the opening of the side of Christ, the Second Adam.<sup>263</sup> The second example is the exegesis of the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11–32).<sup>264</sup> For Jacob the prodigal son is a type of Adam who estranged himself from God and hence is in need of reconciliation. In his exegesis Jacob brings out how the divine economy of salvation progresses in a dynamic way in the context of divine mercy and human free will.<sup>265</sup> 'Love of the world' is the modern version of the temptation of Adam/Eve. Love of gold is the same death-laden fruit Adam/Eve ate. When the prodigal son came to his senses he longed for reconciliation by returning to the house of his father. Jacob finds a type of divine pedagogy in the conversion of the prodigal son; finally, the mercy of the Father triumphs. Jacob evolves a pattern of his own in order to bring out a unified vision of the whole of Scriptures through certain net-works of relationships based on typology. This pattern is always centred on the person and activities of the Son of God in

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<sup>263</sup> See a detailed explanation in chapter three (section C,1,c), n. 55; cf. Brock, "Wedding Feast of Blood on Golgotha," 121–34.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. *HS I* 267–299, "On the Son who Squandered his Riches"; ET from HTM, *TV* 5,4 (1994): 11–37.

<sup>265</sup> See chapter four (section A,3,c) under "Human Free Will and Salvation".

the being of his eternal Sonship as well as in his manifest state which is the sacramental summit of salvation for the whole creation.

## H. CONCLUSION

The brief review of the socio-political and religious ambience of Mar Jacob's life shows how he had his life and activities between the Semitic early Syriac Christian tradition and a more philosophically rationalistic theological tradition of the Greek Orient that was influencing the early Syriac Christianity. In fact within that continuum between Semitic and Hellenic poles of the early Syriac Christian world there were more concrete social and political factors that paved way for partisan groupings and theological controversies. Monophysite and Chalcedonian groups of the period of Mar Jacob were identified outwardly with their theological labels. But the social and political antecedents of those divisions, such as, resentment to the imperial rule and policies, social divisions due to Hellenic influences, etc. were the more immediate causes of social divisions. Among all those vicissitudes of the society, as a committed pastor, Jacob's preoccupation was for the unity in Christian faith. Jacob was a convinced Cyrillian regarding the Christological vision of unity in Christ in dogmatic Christology and can be called a Miaphysite. Together with this his pastoral concern in the midst of disunity prompted him to align himself with the Severian Miaphysite-Monophysite groups in the last decade of the 5th and the initial decades of the 6th centuries, especially in the context of the flourishing 'Monophysite hierarchy' which seemed to promote and sustain a wider Christian unity according to Mar Jacob.

The sort of symbolic theological reflection so much bound with biblical types, the merciful self-revelation of the hidden and the revealed One in the scriptures, the typological biblical exegesis, etc., are some antecedents of Jacob's theological vision and some characteristic factors of the early Syriac tradition that were inherited by Mar Jacob. The deeper correspondence between the handling of symbols and types by the early Syriac authors and the modern philosophical assertions on the meaning and functions of symbols are quite enlightening. The main factor is the convergence among the philosophers and hermeneutists regarding the inherent relationship between the signifying and the signified in a symbol as

has already been seen as a conviction among the early Syriac Christian writers. But, in fact, the Syriac writers go beyond that philosophical level and explain the reason for this sort of relationship in the symbols as the fruits of God's own creating activity by which God infused some divine factors in his creation. Those divine factors are discernible through symbols of Nature and the Scriptures. This belief is the basis of the sacramental world-vision of the early Syriac tradition. Faith is the medium for the functioning of this world-vision and it enables one to understand the creative power and the purpose of the divinity who is fully active in the Nature and in history.

The sacramental world-vision essentially reflects the power of the hidden and the revealed nature of the divinity who manifests himself in creation, redemption and salvation. Hence, the whole history of salvation is seen as a merciful divine initiative that requests proper response and recognition from the part of humanity. Divine scriptures, especially through prophets and apostles, describe the various phases of this divine-human engagement that is in reality the history of divine invitations and human responses. This type of divine-human engagement assumes its fullest extent in the incarnate Son. Mar Jacob envisages all such engagements of the OT as steps of divine pedagogy through divine revelations so as to provide necessary understanding of the divine realities for the salvation. That divine pedagogy follows a progressive path through the Law, the OT types and symbols and finally assumes its actualization and fruits through Christ.

Following the pedagogical aspect of the history of salvation Jacob emphasizes the need to understand the divine teachings in the Scriptures. Hence, the goal of scriptural exegesis is to learn the divine purpose underlying the various events and episodes of the Scriptures. Often they prefigure as types/symbols or mysteries of the salvific acts of God to be actualized in Christ. All types and mysteries of the OT and for that matter, all saving acts of Christ, the incarnate Son, have external and internal aspects. All scriptural episodes pertaining to such events have thus an actualized sense (*su'rānāiit*) and a spiritual sense (*rūḥānā'it*). Therefore, Jacob gives proper importance to both the literal and the spiritual levels in their own respects because they have proper functions for the realization of the divine pedagogy and the goal. In the festal homilies Jacob furnishes an exegesis of the actualization of the OT types/symbols

and mysteries in Christ. What is actualized in Christ has to be recognized with the 'discerning eye of the soul' and accepted through faith so as to effect transformation in the life of Christians. Thus Jacob's biblical exegesis in the festal homilies is thoroughly catechetical and homiletically persuasive so as to attain the fruits/benefits of God's merciful self-revelation in Christ for the salvation.

The extant homilies of Jacob set in evidence his biblically oriented theological reflection. Since the categories of his theological expressions are derived from the Scriptures coupled with his symbolic mode of theological reflection, his theological vision does not lose its relevance and applicability in the life of Christian faith. It was through such types of theological teachings he earned his reputation and handed over his legacy for posterity. The studies regarding his dogmatic Christology and his orthodoxy touch only the periphery of his legacy which is more strongly bound to the early Syriac tradition. This study, based on the select festal homilies, discovers some of the main elements of Jacob's legacy and draws a more just and faithful picture of his theological vision.

## **PART TWO**



The two chapters of this section deal with the homiletico-catechetical exposition of the mystery of salvation in Christ as envisaged in the symbolic theological views of Mar Jacob. The second chapter deals with the symbolico-theological vision of our author in the exposition of the festal homilies under the aspect of the progressive economy of salvation in Christ, the incarnate Son of God. In the third chapter the discussion is on the symbolic vision of Mar Jacob on some important aspects of the economy of salvation. The thrust of the study is on deciphering the major symbols, figures, types and metaphors used by our author for explaining the mysteries of the divine economy of salvation in Christ.



## CHAPTER TWO:

### FESTAL HOMILIES OF JACOB OF SERUGH AND THE CATECHETICAL PREACHING ON THE MYSTERIES OF SALVATION IN CHRIST

The *locus theologicus* for Mar Jacob is the believing community, especially, the one gathered together in praising the mysteries of the divine economy. The divine mercy, the source of the whole of divine economy, manifests itself in various modes. As this divine mercy forms part of the divine essence, its fullest and perfect manifestation, in view of rendering redemption to the world, is found in Christ who is thus the fullest manifestation of the divine mercy to humanity. The tangibility of divine mysteries is made concrete for humanity in the person and activities of the incarnate Son of God. The concreteness and effectiveness of this divine-human relationship are made more and more manifest through the 'road of Christ' on earth with its various staging posts (*'awawnê*) through his mingling (*hlat, mzaq*) with the creation. This starts with the divine Nativity and runs through other events on the 'road of Christ', namely, through the major events of his life. Those saving acts of Christ are liturgically re-enacted on the feasts of the Lord in the believing community that can discern with wonder and love in the light of faith through a right perception of the divine economy for the salvation.

## A. THE NATIVITY: THE WONDER AND THE ‘NEW SIGN’ ON THE ROAD OF HUMILITY

In the synchronic vision of Mar Jacob, that is prominent in the four homilies on the nativity,<sup>1</sup> the aspect of the eternal Son of God, the pre-existent Christ, is the predominant reality. The Son is active from eternity in the divine economy together with his Father. This activity is discernible throughout the OT in glimpses, namely in the prophecies both spoken and acted out. Those glimpses became most tangible and manifest in an actualized form in the incarnate Son of God. Jacob finds a greater wonder in the incarnate Son, in the humble state of a babe, as the new sign that was pre-announced, who conceals in himself the whole power and activity of the eternal Son. Taking implications from Luke 2:12, “And this is a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and laying in a manger,” Jacob develops his theology of the ‘Sign’ aspect as well as ‘the Road of Humility’ of the incarnate Son.

### 1. The Marvellous and Ineffable Revelation in the Nativity of the Son

God in his mercy performed a great wonder in the “New Sign” (*ātā ḥdata*) at the nativity of his Son who came to redeem the world through his feebleness (*ṣ’ōrūtā*). The eternal Son came to a second birth<sup>2</sup> according to the flesh from the Daughter of David. The nativity of the Son is the overflowing of the Father’s compassion (*rahmē*) upon Adam in order to bring him back to Eden<sup>3</sup> which he

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *SMS* 720–774/*FH* I; 775–790/*FH* II; 790–808/*FH* III and *PO* 43, pp. 539–549/*SHF* I/*FH* IV (ET in Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies).

<sup>2</sup> Only the Father knows about the hidden first birth of the Son in eternity. The latter birth according to the flesh from the Daughter of David is made manifest due to the divine compassion (Cf. *SMS* 723,4–724,10/*FH* I 63–90).

<sup>3</sup> Adam was expelled from Eden after the transgression of the commandment as a thief (cf. *QHC* III 1015) who dared to grab divinity in an unworthy manner. But God in his judgement has mercifully mixed his

had lost. So the Word was sent to the womb of the Virgin and from there emerged the revelation full of wonder:

The compassion of the Father that is with Him eternally,  
welled up over Adam so that he should return to Eden which  
he had lost.

And the Father sent His Word to the womb of the virgin  
and it went out with the revelation that is full of wonder to the  
world.

(*SMS 794,14–17/FH III 87–90*)

The words of Isaiah became fulfilled. The plant from the thirsty earth (Is 11:1), Mary, not sown or planted, has shot up. A young girl gave birth in her virginity to the Light, the great Sun of righteousness that has overthrown darkness. The Offspring that has come out openly cannot be explained clearly. He is a ‘Marvel’ (Is 9:6) as Isaiah has called him and nothing beyond that could be said, because everything regarding him is a marvel (*SMS 800,19–801,15/FH III 215–232*). By the fact that the story of Immanuel is a marvel, it is beyond human explanation. His way is above the words of the wise. His revelation is exalted above the senses of the learned. His nativity is above the measures and dimensions of human mind and his economy runs high above the intellect:

The story of Immanuel does not require any explanation  
for, if it could be explained it would not be a marvel, as it was  
called.

All his story is esteemed worthy of wonder and marvel  
for, the prophet too, while wondering about Him called Him a  
‘Marvel’ (Is 9:6).

If you seek an offspring by a virgin in her virginity,  
like Isaiah, call it a ‘Marvel’ and do not venture any further.  
[Human] nature is too weak because the way of the Son of  
God is exalted  
and by [human] nature it is inexplicable and not subject to any  
explanation.

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love as he wished to make Adam return to Eden, his heritage (cf. *QHC III 1015–1080*).

Also, had not Isaiah called it a marvel beforehand?  
 His way is spread out above the words of all wise men.  
 His revelation is exalted above the senses of all learned.  
 His nativity is set above the measure of all minds;  
 the whole of His economy runs high above the intellect  
 (SMS 801,16–802,7/FH III 233–245).

Only loving discernment can understand the fuller significance of this mystery that provides a new vision, fulfilling all promises of the past as well as the yearnings of humanity and the whole of creation. The feeble human beings are unable to narrate his story. Only the Father knows about the first birth of the Son and he alone can speak about it. Even the Cherubim do not know where his abode is. His story is concealed even from ‘the wakeful ones’.<sup>4</sup> Though he is manifest in his nativity, his story is hidden (SMS 720,1–16/FH I 1–16). It is the great wonder of the Nativity of the Son that he redeemed the world by his abasement (SMS 775,1–10/FH II 1–10). Hence, the story of the manifest Son is beyond normal and customary events. Therefore, those who speak of him are troubled and those who would investigate (*byā*) him stumble (SMS 800,19–801,15/FH III 215–232).

## 2. The Sign of Paradox in the Nativity and the Hidden Economy of the Son

The humble state of the Son at the nativity repaid the debt of the pride and arrogance of humanity in Adam. The One clothed in flames and dwelling in the chariot was conceived by a virgin, was born in a cave, and was laid in a manger girded in swaddling clothes. Through his feebleness the Son took back his own

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Wakefulness’ is a characteristic of the angels and heavenly hosts. Hence, they are called *’irē* (wakeful ones). This word can be translated as ‘Watchers’, ‘the Wakeful ones’. Christ is called ‘the Wakeful One’. These meanings are dependent on Dan. 6:23. Syriac spirituality gives greater accent on the ideal of ‘angelic wakefulness’. Quite often *mal’akē* and *’irē* are used synonymously in the early Syriac Christian literature; cf. Cramer, *Die Engelvorstellungen bei Ephrām*, 41, 71; see also McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian*, 229 (n. 36); cf. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 140–1.

possession from the rebellious one (*SMS 776,3–4, 15–16/FH II 19–20, 31–32; SMS 771,2/FH I 1071*). Against the haughtiness of the demons he humbled himself; against the arrogant ones he became a feeble babe in a manger and trampled them down. He took upon himself the body of fallen Adam in order to make him victorious. The ‘New Sign’ in the swaddling clothes dashed the idols of the earth and bound the rebellious tyrant who enslaved the offspring of Eve (*SMS 775,1–777,21/FH II 1–58*).

The young girl carried the Lord of kings and ascended to Ephrathah and as he recognized his own, the town of David, he entered and dwelt in it. The Fashioner of Babes<sup>5</sup> himself was born. The ‘young ewe’<sup>6</sup> gave birth to the Lion’s Whelp<sup>7</sup> (*SMS 759,16/FH I 835*), the young dove gave birth to the young Eagle, and the beloved heifer to the Fatted Ox<sup>8</sup> (*SMS 759,21/FH I 840*) for the sacrifice on behalf of sinners. The Begetter of Babes became begotten corporeally, yet the seal of virginity remained in tact. His birth is a wonder as it is divine and human. He is from the divine

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Fashioner of Babes’ is a symbolic title of Christ that stresses the role of the Son in creation and in the continued creation as well as in the procreation of human beings (cf. *SMS 733,9. 743,7. 759,9/FH I 283, 489, 828; SMS 807,5/FH III 350; HS V 447,16/FH V 3*). For Jacob’s use of this and other titles of Christ in his festal homilies see the section on ‘Titles of Christ, the Saviour’ in chapter four (section B,3,b).

<sup>6</sup> ‘Young ewe’, ‘young dove’, and ‘beloved heifer’ are significant epithets of Mary in the context of her virginal conception of the eternal Son, the heir of the Kingdom of David, the powerful redeemer and the sacrificial offering for the redemption of the world (cf. *SMS 747,8–21/FH I 575–580*).

<sup>7</sup> ‘Lion’s Whelp’ is a title of Christ based on the ‘blessings of Jacob’ (cf. Gen 49:9) referring to the tribe of Judah from which the kingship and the ruler’s staff would not leave, which have their fulfilment in Christ (cf. *SMS 743,13. 745,16. 759,16/FH I 495, 541, 835; HS V 456,12. 463,4/FH V 185, 322; HS I 191,19/FH VI 502; HS II 611,18. 615,6/FH XIII 15, 83*).

<sup>8</sup> ‘Fatted Ox’ is a symbolic title of Christ in the OT background of the sacrifices of expiation in Lev 9. Christ is the ‘Fatted Ox’ offered for the redemption of the whole world.

essence and from humanity, Son of the Majesty and of Mary. The knees of Mary carried the Valiant One, the Bearer of creation.<sup>9</sup> Here is the new scene, the Sun in the manger, the Fire girded round in swaddling clothes, the Flame sucking milk and the virgin Mary carrying the Old Child.<sup>10</sup> The field that gives a heap of corn without any sower is the young girl who gives birth. The mystery of the Son is beyond words and discourses. Amidst all these 'the learned' (*sāprā*) swim as in a sea. In fact one is able neither to be silent nor to speak of this marvel (*SMS 793,3–794,3/FH III 55–76*).

He is hidden in his divine being and revealed in his humanity. But he is uninvestigable. He is upon the Cherubim as well as upon the knees of Mary. He sustains all the races yet he sucks borrowed milk. He is a wonder in all aspects (*SMS 758,18–761,3/FH I 815–864*). There is wonder and amazement all over, milk from a virgin, a birth without marriage, the Heir without conjugal union, the Lord of heaven in a cave, the Fire in the swaddling clothes, the Flame sucking milk, the Coal of Fire<sup>11</sup> embraced against the breast. He is infinite and let him be glorified and adored in silence without investigation (*'uqābā, SHF I 28–29/FH IV 28–29*).

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<sup>9</sup> These are a few symbolic titles of Christ depicting the role of the Son in the creation and in the sustenance (cf. *SMS 793,9/FH III 61*). Jacob calls Christ 'the Power of the Father' in line with 1 Cor 1:24. It is through the Son the Father created the world. See the section on 'Titles of Christ, the Saviour' in chapter four (section B,3,b) above; cf. Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 18–20.

<sup>10</sup> 'Old Child' is a title of Christ with reference to the eternal existence of the Son who is older and younger than Mary. In its symbolic content this title is intimately related to the title of Christ, 'the Ancient of Days' (cf. *HS V 459,11–461,7/FH V 245–282*).

<sup>11</sup> 'Coal of Fire' is a symbolic title of Christ developed with reference to Is 6:6 with its Eucharistic overtones referring to the Eucharistic body of Christ as 'live coal' which the Seraph carried from the altar (cf. *SMS 764,20/FH I 939; SMS 806,10/FH III 334; SHF I 28/FH IV 28; HS V 456,11/FH V 184; HS I 184,2. 189,7/FH VI 341, 448; SHF V 2 /FH XII 2*). Cf. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 103–6.

The Sweet Fruit<sup>12</sup> of Mary is to sweeten the bitter peoples. The Lord of the sheep appeared as a Lamb to become a sacrifice before his Father. The Living Fire from the essence of the Father descended taking up himself a body. Hence, the Image of the Father and the splendour of the divinity are in the swaddling clothes (*SMS 804,9–18/FH III 290–299*), a ‘New Sign’ for the discerning. It is a sign that functions as a sacrament of divine mercy to be active in humanity for the redemption of the world.

### **3. The Prophetic Vision and Picture of the Divine Self-abasement**

The homilist brings together various scriptural episodes and incidents in order to indicate the typological net-work around the mystery of Nativity as well as to demonstrate how all the spoken out and acted out prophecies find fulfilment in Christ.

#### ***a. The Perfection of the Picture of Prophecy***

Prophets were depicting the Son who would come. Now the image has become complete with all colours and the painters<sup>13</sup> ceased working. The horns of prophecy have become silent and all the heralds as well (*SMS 798,11–799,8/FH III, 165–82*). The Child whom the prophecy proclaimed has accomplished his way through his Nativity and the heralds rested (*SMS 779,9–800,18/FH III 183–214*). The oil of prophecy has run out, the Bridegroom himself has come to receive the Bride, the Daughter of Lights (*SMS 799,1–6/FH III 175–80*).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> ‘The Sweet Fruit of Mary’ and ‘the Sweet Bunch of Grapes’ have much symbolic overtones with reference to Christ who is the Grape in the cluster (cf. Is 65:8,9); *Dem XXIII 13 (PS II 40,6–10)*; cf. Murray, *Symbols of the Church and Kingdom*, 113–29.

<sup>13</sup> Mar Jacob calls prophets ‘painters’ since prophecies depict Christ the Redeemer in his various aspects of redemptive activities. As the picture became perfect Christ came in his embodied form and the prophets stopped their painting.

<sup>14</sup> Among the various titles used for the Church by Mar Jacob, this one ‘Daughter of Lights’ designates the elevated status of the Church in relation to Christ, ‘the Bridegroom of Lights’ who betrothed the Church,

All words of prophecy and all types of the hidden mystery of the virginal conception and the birth of Christ in the OT episodes have appeared openly to show themselves. All signs and symbols are seen flowing into Christ, the 'New Sign' (*ātā ḥdata*).<sup>15</sup> The stone hewn without hands (Dan 2:34), the new pitcher of Elisha (2 Kings 2:20), the salt thrown into the fountain by Elisha (2 Kings 2:21), the star of the house of Jacob (Num 24:17), the closed door of which Ezekiel spoke (Ezek 44:2), the cloud that entered into Egypt (Is 19:1), the ass and the ox that knew the manger of its Lord (Is 1:3), the dew in the bowl of Gideon (Judg 6:37–40), the water that issued out of the rock in the desert (Ex 17:6, Num 20:11), the rock that issued forth rivers for the people (Dan 2:34), the one who is called 'Sunrise' in the prophecy (Zech 6:12), the staff that sprouted and issued out from the house of Jesse (Is 11:1), Judah who was acknowledged by his brothers (Gen 49:10), the tree that provided the ram (Gen 22:13), the well that came out in the wilderness (Num 21:16), the light that shone forth from the darkness (Gen 1:3; Mt 4:16; 2 Cor 4:6), the Lord whom Jacob saw as standing upon the ladder (Gen 28:12), the new bread for the hungry of the earth at Bethlehem, the town of the bread, have all become disclosed (*SMS 794,18–796,19/FH III 91–132*).

The one who delivers the dead from the cave-tombs has come into a cave. He whom heaven does not contain has dwelt in a hollow cave. The Wise One sought in the cave that serpent that had bitten Adam. He saw how the serpent entered through the ear of Eve<sup>16</sup> and hence he despoiled its path and went out to capture it.

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'the Bride of Lights'; Cf. *HS II 374,17/FH VIII 577; SMS 822,8/FH XVI 286*; See Brock, S. P. "Bride of Light." *Moran 'Eth'ō 6* (1994): 97–8; See also Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 140–1.

<sup>15</sup> Christ is called a 'New Sign' in the context of the fulfilment of all old signs/types and the fall of idols at his Nativity, (cf. *SMS 778,5/FH II 63*).

<sup>16</sup> Here the allusion is to Eve's hearing without discernment to the serpent that caused the fall. Often the contrasting figure to Eve is Mary who hears with discernment and conceived the Word for the restoration of the fall and the reconstruction of the Way to Paradise (cf. *SMS 730,8–732,4/FH I 219–256*).

He became a child in order to play with the basilisk<sup>17</sup> and to mock at it. The (Ancient) Old Child entered into the shrines of idols and there he seized the serpent and crushed it in his death (*SMS* 796,20–797,11/*FH* III 133–144). The palaces and castles became desolate without redemption but the cave and the manger shone forth full of hope and life for the whole world through redemption (*SMS* 797,12–17/*FH* III 145–150).

***b. The Fulfilment of the Mysteries, Parables  
and the Words of Prophecy***

There is the novel sight of the Flame inside the swaddling clothes (Lk 2:7) to burn up the thorns of the earth (Gen 3:18). Here is Mary who grasped the Fire and the Spirit in the palms of her hands (Prov 30:4) and in swaddling clothes. She is the one who tied up water in a veil (Prov 30:4). She is the young virgin who carried the Living Water in her womb (Jn 4:10; 7:38). The parable of Solomon was explained and the prophecies became fulfilled (*SMS* 797,12–798,11/*FH* III 145–164).

The Shoot has germinated from the stock of Jesse (Is 11:1) as a staff for the world in its old age. Eve spoke with confidence as her fault has been forgiven by the second virgin who repaid her debt through the precious Treasure to which she gave birth. The hand of Cherubim shall swerve from the spear of fire because the Tree<sup>18</sup> need not be guarded while its fruit has been laid in the manger for the human race who by their own free will have

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<sup>17</sup> It is a dominant imagery depicting the victory of the incarnate Son over the adversary through his lowliness, innocence and feebleness.

<sup>18</sup> By the tree of knowledge in Paradise God had set the commandments. But Adam failed to obey and became unjust and unworthy of the Tree of Life. Hence, an angel was appointed to guard it from Adam who was (self)expelled from the garden. Christ by his redemptive activity made Adam possess that same Tree of Life which is Christ himself on the cross, with the fruits of that tree in the ecclesial (Church as the body of Christ) and Eucharistic aspects. For the general Syriac background of this theme, cf. *HPar* 6:7–8; *Liber Graduum* (Homily XXI, 2; *PS* III 589,3–6; See also Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 129.

become like animals. Adam exchanged his garment of leaves for a garment of light<sup>19</sup> by the glory of which he put the serpent to shame. The Lord of Eden has been wrapped in swaddling clothes to exchange glory with shame<sup>20</sup> (*SHF I 16/FH IV 16*) so that Adam might return to his earlier glory. The virgin who conceived without marital union appeared so that Isaiah can declare that here is a virgin who conceived and gave birth as his prophecy has come out openly (Is 7:14; *SHF I 11–18/FH IV 11–18*). The cave has become the nuptial chamber<sup>21</sup> for the celestial Bridegroom who raises the earthly to the heights. The Lord who stood at the summit of the ladder of Jacob<sup>22</sup> has descended to make humanity ascend. The Great Sun has risen from the cave to illumine the lowest abysses. The Sun leaped back twelve degrees in order to magnify

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<sup>19</sup> The exegetical history of Gen. 3:21 has a very deeper salvation historical background. The Hebrew word was read as *'nr* 'light' instead of *'nr* 'skin'. This type of reading was referred to as the pre-fall state of Adam where he was clothed with a 'garment/robe of light' which he lost. Aramaic Targum tradition often translated this as 'garments of honour/glory'. At the turn of the Christian era the early Syriac tradition has taken up these elements from its Jewish backgrounds. Cf. Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 66–72, 226–27.

<sup>20</sup> The swaddling clothes of Christ exchanged the 'garments of shame' (*lbuše d-behattā*) of the fig leaves of Adam and Eve.

<sup>21</sup> In the conception of Jacob possibly every divine engagement with humanity after the fall, especially that at Sinai and at Zion, are all symbolically rendered as betrothals. In the festal homilies of Jacob we find the cave of Bethlehem, Jordan river at the baptism of Christ, the cloud at Tabor and the cave of the tomb at Golgotha as bridal-chambers of the Lord who betrothed the Church, the Bride.

<sup>22</sup> The biblical episodes of the 'ladder of Jacob' (Gen 28:12) and that on the incidents of the night of resurrection are found correlated in the typological vision of Jacob of Serugh who finds the descent and ascent of the Lord for the redemption. In another context the descending and ascending angels on the ladder is a sign of those who fall and resurrect by the coming of the Lord (cf. *HS V 475,11–14*).

the Day of truth<sup>23</sup> that choked the shadows of sin. Without marital union the Child of the Father has been born to us so that the children of marriage might be blessed. Chastity exults and virgins are jubilant because of the One who appeared in the midst of their ranks (*SHF I 19–27/FH IV 19–27*).

#### **4. Blessings of the Self-abasement of the Son in the Nativity**

The Nativity of the Son gave ‘good hope’ to humanity. Out of the fruits of Nativity, joy and exultation, renewal and praise became re-established on earth that was without peace.

##### ***a. Nativity: The New Hope for Humanity***

The descent of the Lord is the source of peace, hope and reconciliation. The earth lacked peace and humanity had lost hope due to the breach of the commandment and the consequent expulsion from Paradise as well as the closure of the way to Paradise, and that necessitated reconciliation. The verdict of curse, the debt of sin and the bond of Eve<sup>24</sup> became the lot of humanity that estranged itself from God. Hence, all were devoid of hope due to the enmity with God.

The Father revealed his eternal mercy by sending his Son to the world. Just as at the invasion of sin the door to the grace also was opened. As grace entered there is good hope (*sabrā ṭabā*) for humanity. All the consequences of the transgression of the commandment were repealed. The verdict was annulled, debts were recompensed, the bond was torn up, Paradise was reopened and the guard (the Cherub) was disbanded. Adam was made to return, Eve was made chaste, the contentious serpent was crushed, Satan, the deceiver, was unmasked, the bow of death against

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<sup>23</sup> Christ is the great Day that choked the shadows of sin (Is 38:8) and expelled the night.

<sup>24</sup> Jacob takes up the Pauline legal imagery of the ‘bond of Eve’ (Col 2:14) with all its legal demands that were set aside and nailed to the cross. He finds the tearing off of this bond by the lance that opened the side of Christ (cf. *SHF I 8/FH IV 8*).

human race was broken. Hence, in truth there is not a little advantage but good hope (*sabrā tabā*)<sup>25</sup> for humanity:

But when the Father wished to reveal unto them his eternal mercy which he has essentially in himself, *he sent his Son into the world and he became [born] from a woman* (Gal 4:4). And with the invasion of sin the door to grace was opened, and the angels perceived this, hence, they said: From henceforward there is *good hope for humanity*. The transgression of the commandment will be blotted out by him (the Son). The verdict will be annulled by him. The debt will be recompensed by him. The bond (Col 2:14) will be torn up by him. Paradise will be opened by him. Cherub, the guard, will be disbanded by him. The expelled Adam will be made to return by him. Eve who was put to shame is made chaste by him. The contentious serpent will be crushed by him. Satan the deceiver will be unmasked by him and the bow of death raised against the human race will be broken by him. Because of all these, it is not a small [advantage], but ‘good hope’ for humanity.

(SHF I 8/FH IV 8)

By dwelling in the cave he pulled down all exalted temples of the idols of error. By his birth in a manger he overthrew all the arrogant from their positions (SMS 777,2–5/FH II 39–42).

The virgin gave birth and the gods were shaken, evil spirits trembled, idols tottered and fell.<sup>26</sup> The flash of Light that shone forth from the house of David in Bethlehem made the demons wail and darkness was dazzled by it (SMS 777,6–15/FH II 43–52). The Living Fire wrapped in swaddling clothes made to flee from

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Köbert, R. “*Sabrā tabā* im Syrischen Lk 2:14.” *Biblica* 42 (1961): 90–1.

<sup>26</sup> The fall of idols is a prominent homiletic theme in Jacob, cf. SMS 777,2–15/FH II 39–52; See the homily “On the Fall of Idols,” FT by Martin, J.-P. P. “Sur la chute des idols.” *ZDMG* 29 (1875): 107–47; cf. Vandenhoff, B. “Die Götterliste des Mar Jakob von Sarug.” *OrChr* NS 5 (1915): 234–62.

him the briars and thorns. The shepherd became a lamb<sup>27</sup> in his own pasture and the wolves fled away at the sight of it (*SMS* 777,20–21/*FH* II 57–58). The new-born removed the idols, unmasked the images and overthrew the crown of the evil one (*bišā*). The new-born child was bound to cease sacrifices, pull down altars, destroy temples, dismiss oracles and set idolatry into insensitivity (*SMS* 785,9–14/*FH* II 217–222).

***b. Nativity: The Day of Joy and Exultation***

By his dwelling among the created the Son made the earth a new heaven. All rejoice because the Son by his nativity came to all. Eve rejoices, for, the serpent has been crushed and mocked. Adam rejoices, for, his heir has come to make him enter into Paradise. Pastors and their flocks rejoice, for, the Lord of the flock has become a Lamb carrying off iniquity (*SMS* 807,17–18/*FH* III 362–363; *SMS* 804,13–14/*FH* III 294–295). The betrothed virgin, the Church, rejoices and praises her Lord. The gatherings of the people and the congregations rejoice in the Son as they are gladdened abundantly on the feast day of the Son (*SMS* 806,18–808,4/*FH* III 342–371). The Lord of Life descended to write down the name of Adam by his birth in the Book of Life<sup>28</sup> and bestow liberation from the enumeration into indebtedness and servitude of the earthly king (*Lk* 2:1; *SMS* 757,16–758,9/*FH* I 791–806).

The One wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger is the ‘Sign’ in a humble state that re-establishes the earth by his meekness. He is the single Mediator who joined the earthly and the heavenly by his nativity in a single song of praise (*SMS* 764,12–765,14/*FH* I 931–954). The band of prophets, David, Isaiah and Zechariah rejoice because their prophecies have come out into reality and they are awakened to give praise (*SMS* 768,5–16/*FH* I 1009–1020).

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<sup>27</sup> It is a powerful metaphor indicating the paradox of the Nativity which is unintelligible to the ‘investigators’.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Being written in the Book of Life’ is a Semitic symbol of eternal life.

***c. Nativity: The Day of Renewal and Praise  
and the Season of Fruits***

On the day of Nativity, Christ, the Master-builder (*ardeklā*), manifested himself as the Painter (*ṣayyārā*) to restore the image of Adam as well as to rebuild the fallen house. The day of Nativity is the day of liberation and consolation for the despised, barren, humiliated, sorrowful and enslaved woman. Zion,<sup>29</sup> the symbol of slavery and idolatry, was despised and the enslaved bride (*kaltā*), the Church, was rescued. The despised, barren and humiliated woman who by her own free will enslaved herself to the demons was exalted. The sorrowful woman exulted and received comfort<sup>30</sup> as her Bridegroom (*hatnā*) came along to take her from among the idols for the 'marriage feast' in view. The enslaved woman bound to idolatry obtained freedom from the imprisonment behind the gates of darkness (*SMS 769,12–770,9/FHI 1037–56*).

The fallen state of humanity is portrayed with the rich symbolism of the corrupted 'image' (*ṣalmā*) of Adam and the fallen 'house of Adam' (*bēt ādām*). The various symbolic titles of Christ, the Painter (*ṣayyārā*), the Master-builder (*ardeklā*), the Shepherd (*rā'yā*), the Mighty One (*ḥasīnā*), the Warrior (*qraḥtānā*), the Physician (*āsyā*), the Doctor (*āsobā*), the Strengtheners (*mḥaylānā*), the Leaven of Life (*ḥmīrā d-ḥayyē*), and the Salt from the Most High (*melḥā mīn 'elāyā*), express the multifaceted state of the fall and the various aspects of the redemptive deeds of Christ:

Today the Painter restored the image of Adam:  
because it had worn out, he mingled with it the pigment that it  
might not get corrupted.  
Today the Master-builder has rebuilt the house that had fallen,  
so that it might not fall, as the support of divinity entered in.  
Today his Lord has reconciled himself with Adam

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<sup>29</sup> Zion is a symbol of the unfaithful Israel, often symbolized in the figure of Jezebel, cf. *HS* II 367,10. 368,12–369,7/*FH* VIII 422, 445–462; *SMS* 769,14/*FH* I 1039; *HS* I 447,15. 450,1/*FH* X 52, 101; *SHF* IV 11/*FH* XI 11.

<sup>30</sup> 'comfort' is a symbol of eternal reward and bliss. It is based on the 'peace' Christ gave to his disciples.

because the Son who shone forth has set peace between the two sides (Eph 2:16).

Today the Shepherd has found the sheep that had gone astray; and upon His shoulders He lifted up (Lk 15:5) and carried it into Paradise.

Today the flock of the peoples has been made returned, because a hidden wolf had disturbed them from the Pastor of all.

Today the outsiders have entered and became inmates (Eph 2:13–22)

and behold, the household members have gone out and parted in anger from the king's palace.

(SMS 770,10–21/FH I 1057–68)

Jacob brings together quite artistically and symbolically the contrasting natures of the fallen humanity and the fruits of the divine mercy in the season and on the day of the Nativity. The poverty and the barren aspects of the winter season, December/January, quite significant for the state of the fallen humanity, has been set against the rich fruits of the Nativity. Thus by a sheaf of mercy that came down, Adam exchanged his 'garment of leaves' with the 'garment of light', the nakedness of the leaders of the people has been clothed and all the debts were blotted out. Against the background of the history of redemption all the former things were renewed on the day of Nativity and the judgement of mercies that sprinkles treasures and fruits were sent to the mortals. The appearance of Christ among impoverished humanity is symbolically expressed by Jacob with recourse to biblical and natural symbols. All the negative results of the fall are seen blotted out by Christ who is depicted by the symbolic titles such as the Fruit of life (*pērā d-ḥayyē*), the Sheaf of Mercy (*ḵapā d-rahmē*), the Rich One (*'atirā*), the Offshoot of the Virgin (*'nāqā btultā*), the Blessed Seed (*ṣar'ā briḵā*), the Treasure (*simtā*), the Great Blessing (*tūbā rabbā*), the Light (*nubrā*), and the Radiance (*sembā*):

Today forgiveness has proceeded from the King's court because on the day of the Nativity of his Only-Begotten, he [the King] has enriched every one.

In this month which is without fruits the Fruit of Life was sent to us, to nourish us with its soundness.

In this month in which the granary is impoverished of crops

the Sheaf of mercy is gathered to satisfy us.  
 In this month in which all the poor are in need,  
 the Rich One has come sprinkling His treasures upon the  
 mendicants.

In this month in which all trees are stripped of leaves;  
 stripped bodies have been adorned with all kinds of recovery.  
 In this month in which the buds on the branches are seared off  
 [by cold]

the Offshoot of the virgin gave fruit from her womb (Is 11:1).  
 In this month that sheds the leaves from the trees  
 the leaves of Adam (Gen 3:7) have been exchanged for the  
 garment of light.

In this month that scorches the seeds by its severe cold  
 the Blessed Seed sprang up from the earth that had not been  
 ploughed.

In this month that comes to strip off all ornaments  
 the nakedness of the leaders of our race has been clothed.

In this month that multiplies bonds of all borrowers  
 the Treasure through which all debts are blotted out, has come  
 to us.

In this month that deprives the earth of luxuries  
 the Great Blessing has been sent to all persons.

(SMS 771,20–772,20/FH I 1089–1110)

The Nativity is the day on which the things of the former times are renewed by the Lord of kings and the judgement of mercies has been sent to the mortals. The New Commandment has proceeded to the earth so that peace might reign and as the watchers make joyful noise on their harps the redeemed people praise with their tongues (SMS 773,16–774,15/FH I 1127–46).

## B. CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE AND SIMEON THE WITNESS AND HERALD

The homily on the presentation of Our Lord in the Temple<sup>31</sup> is based on Lk 2:22–35. It is an extended reading of the said biblical episode by way of bringing out what is unsaid in the biblical narrative through imaginative inference, mainly through the medium of dialogue of biblical characters. The predominant message is brought forward through the spiritual vision and supplication of the discerning Simeon and the inquiries of Mary about Simeon's supplication. Jacob's expository mode of directly questioning the protagonist makes the message of the biblical text more clear. The divine Son is not merely pre-existent but really governs<sup>32</sup> and sustains all. Hence, the story of the manifest Son of God has a deeper meaning beyond whatever is made manifest.

### 1. The Offering of Christ, the High Priest, in the Temple

Wonder is the natural and primary response to the great mystery of Christ, the God-man, clothed in flame and in a body from the Daughter of David, in order to manifest himself. He is actually beyond the order of time, yet he enters into the order of time at his birth (*HS V 448,10/FH V 14*). So he is the 'Ancient of Days'<sup>33</sup> and

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. *HS V 447–466* (ET = *FH V*); There is another homily related to the episode of the Presentation of Our Lord, "This One is appointed for the Fall and Rising of Many" (*HS V 467–480*).

<sup>32</sup> Kingdom and governorship belong to Christ with reference to the Gen 49:8–10. Simeon waits a long time and makes supplication to the governor of all times (cf. *HS V 450,12–15. 459,11–20/FH V 59–62; 245–254*); John the Baptist only keeps the office, but Christ is the true Governor (cf. *HS I 176,17/FH VI 187*).

<sup>33</sup> The theme of Christ, 'the Ancient of Days' is prominent in hymnology, iconography and in the early Christian literature. This theme is highly identified with the vision in Dan. 7:13 as a prefiguration of the Incarnation; the Son of man being in the human nature and the 'Ancient of Days' as the divine. Cf. *HS V 448,13/FH V 17; SMS 807,11/FH III 356; HS I 448,9/FH X 68; HS III 332,11–12*; See also *TV 4* (1990), p. 46.

‘the High Priest’<sup>34</sup> (*HS V 451,10/FH V 78*) who offers himself in the holy temple.

Guided by the enlightenment of the Spirit, Simeon makes a spiritual journey along the road of divine mercy. This road has become tangible and embodied in the Messiah who arrived in the temple with his own offering in a type. This symbolic offering is the fulfilment of all typological engagements of the high priestly and Levitical offerings of the past. Christ fulfils the whole of the law and the ritual obligations of the past in his own person:

The ‘perfect sacrifices’ were offered to you [*the Son*] because you are from eternity,  
and your Father granted propitiation to the ancient sacrifices through you.

(*HS V 454,20–21/FH V 151–152*)

He gave the law to Moses on the mount [*Sinai*] together with his Father (Ex 31:18)  
and he came to fulfil in his own person the order that he himself taught (Lk 2:22,27).

(*HS V 448,19–20/FH V 23–24*)

The Son gave the law to Moses on mount Sinai and later fulfils in his own person the order he himself taught. Hence, he subjects himself to circumcision as he is fully human and brings the ritual offering to manifest that he is not at all a stranger to his own people (*HS V 448,19–22/FH V 23–26*). Effectively, he depicts his own type in the offering of the young birds he himself had created together with his Father. The ritual offering of two young birds is a symbolic depiction of the redemptive self-offering of Christ.

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<sup>34</sup> In the theological vision of Jacob, the whole deposit of Priesthood, Kingship and Holiness were given to Moses by the Father and the Son at Sinai. Christ came to Jordan and through John the Baptist that priesthood turns to Christ himself, the true High Priest (cf. *HS I 191,14–192,5/FH VI 497–508*); Simeon recognizes Christ as the true receiver of all offerings of the priests (cf. *HS V 454,11–455,14/FH V 142–166*). On the Friday of Passions priesthood is seen turning back to the Holy One from the unholy priests and the temple (cf. *SHF V 21/FH XII 21*).

## 2. Simeon, a Sign and a Witness on the Road of Christ

By a bond in life the old Simeon<sup>35</sup> was given the task to bear witness to the Son. Thus the aged one has the right to give witness to the Eldest One<sup>36</sup> who became a child at the fullness of the times. The governorship of the Son was made manifest by the supplication of Simeon for his own release (*HS V 449,13–18/FH V 39–44*) as he was a ‘stone’, a ‘great knot’ and, above all a sign on the road of the One who comes (*HS V 450,8–15/FH V 55–62*). The old man was placed as a sign suspended on hope<sup>37</sup> against death, for the True One, the Lord of all times, the Messiah, who can give rest to him.

Christ, ‘The Guide’<sup>38</sup> of all came to untie his ship that was moored in the harbour of life. Simeon who was clothed as well as guided by the Spirit was impelled to speak true matters. As soon as he received the child in his hands he began to intercede for his release from bondage because he had seen the ‘Great Mercy’ (Lk 2:30) promised to generations. Enlightened by the Spirit and convinced of the progress of the divine economy, Simeon requests his own release from bondage in order to take rest by going to the bosom of Sheol until the day of the resurrection. Inspired by the Spirit Simeon sees hidden things:

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<sup>35</sup> There are various Syriac exegetical views on the age of Simeon, even assuming an age from the time of the Babylonian captivity. However, all views admit an exceptionally older age for Simeon due to some divine prescription. Cf. Coakley, J. F. “The Old Man Simeon (Lk 2:25) in Syriac Tradition.” *OCP* 47 (1981): 189–212 (esp. pp. 197, 205–212).

<sup>36</sup> ‘The Eldest One’ is a symbolic title of Christ depicting his eternal existence and his embodiment in the second birth in the flesh in view of redemption; cf. *HS V 459,11–20/FH V 245–54*.

<sup>37</sup> In Gen 22 Isaac was set as a type of Christ based on the faith and hope against death together with Abraham. Here Jacob alludes to that by his use of the words *pkar* (bind) and *tlā* (suspend). Thus Mar Jacob brings Simeon in the line of the OT witnesses of the Son.

<sup>38</sup> The syriac term *mdabbranā* means ‘Guide’, ‘Governor’, ‘Leader’, etc. Christ, holding the office of the ‘Guide’, is a prominent figure in the early Syriac literature, cf. *CEC* II 17.

By the Spirit with which he was clothed Simeon was moved  
towards the child  
and the truth compelled him to speak true matters.

*(HS V 451,11–12/FH V 79–80)*

He was filled with the Spirit (Lk 2:26–35) and was  
understanding hidden things  
and he was not ashamed to make petition to the Son  
affectionately.

*(HS V 456,16–17/FH V 189–90)*

The homilist himself puts a question directly to Simeon (*HS V 453,3–16/FH V 113–26*) and thus joins the dialogue already in progress between the Holy Spirit and Simeon. Thus the central question about the interpretation of the biblical episode, namely, how to understand the meaning of the supplication of Simeon, is raised to the protagonist himself. Through this direct questioning to Simeon Mar Jacob highlights the fact that the story of the child in swaddling clothes has another meaning that needs a deeper understanding. The Son is from eternity and even the order of time itself had its beginning in him (*HS V 453,14/FH V 124*). Therefore, Simeon is justified as well as bound to make supplication which he did without even a slightest doubt, as he believed that the One in swaddling clothes was the same One who is upon the chariot, the Lord of the heights. Hence, the homilist puts the question to Simeon:

Behold, you make a supplication to the infant affectionately.  
You are old and advanced in age, and why then is this?

*(HS V 453,5–6/FH V 115–116).*

Or is that word of yours not to be understood, as you say?  
Or does the whole of your story seek another meaning?  
Or is your old age younger than that of the infant?  
Or is this child's age higher than that of yours?  
Or does his duration surpass your old age?  
Or has time itself taken its beginning from him?

*(HS V 453,9–14/FH V 119–124)*

### 3. Simeon, the Seer of Spiritual Realities, Recognizing the Receiver of all Sacrifices

The two young birds that were brought as an offering according to the law (Lk 2:22–24; Lev 12:6–7) provided an occasion for Simeon, the seer of spiritual realities, to address the Receiver of all sacrifices. All libations and sacrifices are received from eternity by the Son together with his Father. Holiness is transmitted by him alone, and sanctification is given to the Levites' offerings only through him. Simeon knows that the OT offerings starting with Abel,<sup>39</sup> Noah, Melchizedek,<sup>40</sup> Abraham, Jacob and the Levites were all indeed sanctified by the Son (*HS V 454,12–455,14/FH V 143–66*). Hence, Simeon requests, "Take from your own and it is appropriate for you to accept" (*HS V 455,18/FH V 170*). Thus Christ brings from his own creation the two young birds, and offers them as his type which reaches its consummation in his supreme sacrifice.

Wonder laid hold of Simeon who carried the Son in his arms. It is a paradox and it is difficult to understand how a 'lump of earth' carries the 'Sea', the 'Flood' in the fingers of soil,<sup>41</sup> and a straw carrying the 'Flame', the 'Fiery Coal' on 'an antique wood' and how the 'Lion's Whelp' is being carried by an aged man. In

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. *HS V 1–47*, three homilies on Cain and Abel.

<sup>40</sup> Jacob Refers to the Symbolic meaning of the offering of Melchizedek and it's significance in the economy of salvation in "A homily on Melchizedek, Priest of the Most High God, and on Types of Our Lord," *HS V 154–180*; ET from HTM, *TV 2* (1989), pp. 30–55. See also the homily titled, "On that which David said about Our Lord: "You are Priest forever in the Resemblance of Malkizedeq" (*HS II 197–209*), ET by Thekeparampil, J. "Jacob of Sarug's Homily on Malkizedeq," *Harp* 6.1 (1993), pp. 53–64. Malkizedeq is seen as the best resemblance of Christ among the priests seen in OT. Cf. Thekeparampil, "Malkizedeq According to Jacob of Sarug," 121–33.

<sup>41</sup> With a few paradoxical sets of figures the homilist describes the paradoxical nature of the dwelling of the divine Son among human beings of soil and frailty. It is in contrast with Christ, Simeon is called 'lump of earth', 'fingers of soil', 'straw', 'antique wood', and 'aged man'.

fact, Simeon has become a ‘Cherub of flesh’<sup>42</sup> (*HS V 456,3–15/FH V 176–88*). Filled with the Spirit and having perceived the hidden aspects of the Son, Simeon had also seen the onward journey of the Son for righteousness, the fight with the one who humiliated Adam, and the pulling down of the fortifications that error had built up. To the inner eye of Simeon the sufferings, blood and death of the Son became clear (*HS V 456,16–458,4/FH V 189–218*):

You are devising [how] to build up the downfallen world;  
 But I am aged, I am too weak for your building work.  
 Your way is of slaughter and your face is set in the direction of  
 death.  
 Let me go in peace; let my old age be not sprinkled with blood.  
 The path that you have set begets suffering to those who travel  
 along it.  
 Give rest to me, and then you can pass on to your task.  
 (*HS V 457,11–16/FH V 205–210*)

In reality all those works are wearying and as Simeon is old, he makes the petition for his release from the burden of life.

#### 4. The Mystery of the Eternal Son

Mary’s discerning questions<sup>43</sup> to Simeon with her contemplative wonder on the discourse of Simeon are suggestive of what the author brings into focus regarding the mystery of the person of

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<sup>42</sup> Often Jacob brings in the contrast between the heavenly procession of the Son on the chariot of Cherubim and the humble mode of his journey among the earthly. Here Simeon is pictured as a ‘Cherub of flesh’ as he carried the divine Child, whom the Cherubim carried on their backs.

<sup>43</sup> Mary’s attitude of questioning with discernment is a prominent homiletical theme in Syriac literature. Jacob speaks at length about it. Cf. *SMS* 730,8–732,4/*FH* I 219–56, where the attitude of Mary is contrasted with that of Eve who failed to question the serpent and Zachariah who illegitimately doubted about the divine message at the holy place. As an exegetical technique Jacob makes Mary ask a question and then as a response to that Jacob makes Simeon speak out whatever the exegete wants to explain.

Christ. Simeon finds the eternal Son of God in the babe in swaddling clothes. He sees the activity of the Son together with his Begetter beginning with their equality and togetherness from eternity and in the creation. Simeon in his reply to Mary affirms the eternal existence of the Son, his role in the creation of the worlds and their orders. He has become revealed because he willed it. He became humble in view of imparting what is due to the human nature (*HS V 459,11–460,17/FH V 245–272*):

Here, He is revealed, because of the body He has taken from  
you;

For, aforetime (before all time) He is hidden because He is  
equal to His Father.

Here, He is humble in order to impart that which is due to His  
bodily state,

but above, He is mighty, to show the strength of His  
splendour.

Here we have seen Him because He was willing to become  
human.

In His distant place not even the Cherubim are able to see  
Him.

(*HS V 460,12–17/FH V 267–272*)

The bonds of the life of all beings are in his hands. Hence, Simeon finds it proper to seek release from him, and by doing that he bears witness to the Son:

In his hands are set the bonds of the life of all beings that are  
born,

and, therefore, I pray that he release me, because it was he who  
bound me.

(*HS V 461,6–7/FH V 281–282*)

Mary finds concurrence between what the angel had told her at the annunciation and what Simeon has proclaimed. She requests him earnestly to begin the journey on the road of the apostolate that leads future generations to the 'Luminous One' (*HS V 461,8–462,14/FH V 283–310*). She finds in Simeon the first apostle of Christ among the unbelievers. The author's vision to bring together the episodes of annunciation and the spiritual perception of Simeon as well as to point out Simeon as the first apostle through the speech of Mary are very creative.

### 5. Simeon, the Herald of Good Hope among the Dead

Simeon requests his own release in order to proclaim the good hope<sup>44</sup> among the dead from the Son's self-revelation and redemptive birth. All the past generations, prophets and kings, who yearned for the Son were made to rejoice by him. Simeon wanted to go to Adam and Eve to announce to them that Christ, the Messiah, has opened the door of life by his birth. Abel who depicted the mystery of Christ's suffering by his slaughter found the accomplishment in Christ. Simeon would descend to Seth and all other generations of Adam and Noah, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah and other harps of prophesy to play on them the sweet songs of truths (*HS V 464,1–466,8/FH V 341–388*):

Let me go to whisper to Adam in his ear upon the dust,  
 'Your Lord is coming to raise up the overthrown body of  
 yours?'

There I shall narrate to Eve regarding your birth,  
 'Your daughter has given birth to an Aged Infant who will  
 redeem you?'

I shall console her who was weeping for Abel.  
 When she hears from me about your birth that shall gladden  
 her.

I shall say to Adam, 'Turn towards your inheritance',  
 because Christ (Messiah) has opened the door of life by His  
 birth.

I shall declare to the expelled servants regarding the return  
 and with marvel I shall encourage them to give praise (Heb  
 11:12,13).

*(HS V 464,1–10/FH V 341–350)*

Let me show the firstborn of the dead, the slaughtered Abel  
 (Gen 4:8)  
 that you too are travelling on the road of blood which he trod.

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<sup>44</sup> Through Adam hope was lost, but through Christ the lost hope was regained. The theme of all proclamation is the 'good hope' in Christ.

Let me speak to him about the oppressed blood (Gen 4:10)  
 which will not call out again  
 because the image of the sufferings, which is the mystery of  
 your slaughter, has itself been accomplished.  
 Release me to the lower regions to see in the land the fair Seth  
 (Gen 5:3),  
 and I shall narrate to him about your beauty which was  
 concealed in him.  
 Allow me to descend to the generations of Adam and Noah,  
 and with your great name I shall take away the dust from their  
 eyes.  
 Let me go and be buried with Abraham who was eagerly  
 waiting  
 to see your day, and he saw your mystery (Jn 8:56), and I your  
 birth.  
 I shall proclaim to Isaac, the child who escaped from the knife  
 (Gen 22:9–14),  
 'I have carried that One, in a symbol of whom, your father  
 bound you'.  
 I shall see Jacob, the younger one who became great because  
 of your type (Gen 25:29–33; 27:27–29).  
*(HS V 464,17–465,9/FH V 357–369)*

At the end the author intercedes with Christ, who came to liberate all who were bound, for the release of all grievous knots of strife<sup>45</sup> from the Church and to gladden all in the manner of Simeon with the good hope of his faithfulness/steadfastness.

## **6. Simeon, the Witness and Herald of Christ the High Priest, at the Temple**

In the context of the totality of the economy of salvation the aspects of the High Priestly function and the efficacy of Christ, the High Priest, in the divine economy are highlighted quite picturesquely. From the side of humanity the witnessing role of

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<sup>45</sup> This reference to the knots and strife in the Church might be an indirect reference to the divisions in the Syriac speaking Church with reference to the theological controversies of his times.

Simeon is the optimal response. This role of witnessing is far beyond than that of an observer. It calls for one's own self-definition before the divine mysteries as Simeon does in seeking from the Infant his own release out of the bondage because it is set by the divine economy which his eye of faith recognizes and acknowledges. This makes Simeon a true witness and an advocate among the unbelievers. Through the Spirit Simeon understands the hidden things, namely the efficacy of all sacrifices and priesthood through Christ and the fulfilment of all prophecies in him. The witnessing activity of Simeon transcends the bounds of human order of time and sets its foundation in the divine order of government that ordained the coming of the Son. Therefore, his witnessing eye foresees the road of the Son sprinkled with blood and slaughter. Since he has become a true witness, he is eager to proclaim the truth as a true herald among the older generations in Sheol as well.

### C. THE LORD OF BAPTISM AT THE JORDAN

Apart from the homilies on the Baptism of our Redeemer<sup>46</sup> and that on the Epiphany,<sup>47</sup> there are two more homilies<sup>48</sup> on the theme of baptism by Jacob. Due to his discursive mode of preaching his teachings on baptism are often found in other homilies too. In the total vision of Jacob the washings found in the Law, the baptism of the repentance of John the Baptist, the baptism of our Redeemer in Jordan and the Christian baptism are all intrinsically related. The earlier washings (baptisms) of the Law, which were shadows, and that of John the Baptist did not provide the Holy Spirit (*HS I 160,5–10; 161,8–19*) as did that of Christ. Moreover, the baptism opened by the Son of God gives birth to sons, brothers to the Only-Begotten (*HS I 161,14–15*).

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<sup>46</sup> *HS I 167–193*, “On the Baptism of Our Redeemer in Jordan,” ET = *FH VI*.

<sup>47</sup> Homily “On the Epiphany,” *PO 43*, pp. 550–67, ET = *FH VII*.

<sup>48</sup> *HS I 153–167*, “On the Baptisms of the Law, the Baptism of John and the Baptism which Our Lord Gave to the Apostles”; *HS I 193–211*, “On the Holy Baptism.”

### 1. The Coming of Our Lord to Jordan, the Boundary between the Alliances

Our Lord came to Jordan,<sup>49</sup> the true boundary between the two Alliances. From Moses the path of Law proceeded up to John the Baptist, its perfecter. Afterwards the superior and perfect teaching of Christ<sup>50</sup> shone forth. Through Moses at Sinai ‘the fountain of Milk’, the nurse of the little children, gushed forth for the world. But John weaned the world off ‘the Milk’ and showed forth Christ, ‘the Bread’, food for the powerful and the provision for the full stature of man. Hence, John said that after me comes the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with Fire, which gives rebirth to call God, ‘Our Father’, through the adoptive sonship (*SHF II 1–3/FH VII 1–3*):

Moses made to gush out from the cloud of Sinai (Ex. 19:9,16) the fountain of milk, the nurse of little children, so that the world might suck and grow up in the knowledge which would make it [*the world*] arrive to rise up to the nourishment of the perfect. For, John weaned the world from the milk and showed forth and placed before it [*the bread of truth*], Christ, manifesting him as he [*Christ*] was saying: *I am the bread* (Jn 6:35) appropriate for the full stature of man. The law, that is to say, is the milk, but, *I am the bread*, that is to say, be weaned from the milk of the children and come and live by the bread, the food of the strong (1 Cor 3:2; Heb 5:12–14).

(*SHF II 2/FH VII 2*).

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<sup>49</sup> Jacob of Serugh conceives the embodied journey of the Son in several staging posts. The main ones are those of the ‘Womb of the virgin Mary’, the ‘Womb of Jordan’ and the ‘Womb of Sheol’. “From one staging post to the next did He travel, like a merchant carrying Life to distribute amongst mortals. He resided in the first staging post, which is Mary, and came to birth so that He might visit the world as Man; to the second staging post, which is baptism, He came and resided there, so as to clothe warriors in armour” (*HS I 154,5–10*; ET from an unpublished translation by S. P. Brock).

<sup>50</sup> There are two orders of teachings: one of the Law and the other of righteousness, cf. *HS II 361,14–15/FH VIII 299–300*; *HS I 123–164* [ET from HTM, *TV 9* (1991): 23–5].

## 2. The Ministry of John the Baptist

John was only the ‘voice’<sup>51</sup> of the Word. But the Word is before and after the voice. Voice is only the vehicle of the Word, journeying to the ears of the hearer to proclaim the beauty of the Word. John was chosen to conclude the Law and to inaugurate the Gospel. As a servant of both covenants, John had the office of the prophecy of Moses and the power and the spirit of Elijah. The Holy Spirit was the nurse of John and because John, the voice, was struck by the Spirit, he became the ambassador and apostle of the Word:

Because of this, truly John was chosen to be the one who concludes the Law as well as the one who inaugurates the Gospel. With him concludes the [office of the] prophecy of Moses as well as the power and the spirit of Elijah, the zealous one (Mal 4:5; Mat 17:12), so that he might be able to serve authoritatively to the two covenants. He brought to an end the first so that it might take rest and upheld the other that it might be made pleasing. The Holy Spirit was the nurse of John. For that voice cannot be without [the power of] the Spirit (Is 40:3; Mt 3:3) nourishing it in spirit. The voice was struck by the Spirit that it might become the ambassador to the Word.

(*SHF II 4/FH VII 4*)

Inspired by the Spirit John asked the crowds to wean themselves off ‘the Milk’ in order to take up the solid nourishment (Eph 4:13). He concluded the service to the shadow and proclaimed the arrival of the Great Body (Col 2:17; Heb 10:1), the Sun, who had drawn near to manifest himself (*SHF II 5–7/FH VII*

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<sup>51</sup> Jacob distinguishes between the Word and its ‘voice’, its proclaimers and preachers, eg. John the Baptist claims to be only the ‘voice’ of the Word. This type of distinction is rooted in the Syriac tradition: St. Ephrem’s Commentary on Genesis, Section II, 24 mentions that Adam heard the voice of God soon after he ate the fruit (Gen 3:8). This *voice* is considered to be a prefiguration of John the Baptist, the *voice* that called for repentance (cf. Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 215, 226). ‘Voice’ is the herald between the Bridegroom and the Bride (cf. *HS I 165,1–2*).

5–7). John is sent to bring the adornment and to clothe the bride with sanctity and to preach on the imminent Kingdom of heaven. The Church, the Bride, gathered herself around John in the desert, looking out for the Bridegroom in order to be sanctified by entering with him into the ‘womb of the waters’. John had expected to see his own baptism made perfect through that of Christ (*HS I 171,5–173,5/FH VI 75–114*; *HS I 161,8–15*). He instructed the bride to look ahead to the coming of the Bridegroom (*HS I 170,16–171,4/FH VI 65–74*). He was only the voice, the herald of the Word (*SHF II 8/FH VII 8*).

By a prophetic understanding John believed that he himself had to be baptized by Christ, as Christ is the true Governor and John had only kept the office for him (*HS I 176,17/FH VI 187*). But as an apostle John had to learn from Christ. John argued in the following line: First of all John in his lowly state found himself unfit to approach Christ who is the Flame and Live Coal<sup>52</sup> while he is mere husk, straw and a dry stick (*HS I 179,3–180,9/FH VI 237–264*); secondly, Christ needed neither any armour from the water nor did he lack anything which could be gained from baptism because propitiation, forgiveness, priesthood, kingship and holiness are all in him who is the fullness of divinity. (*HS I 176,11–177,9/FH VI 181–200*); thirdly, John had told the ‘bride of light’ that her Lord would baptize with the Holy Spirit and Fire and that he himself was not worthy even to undo the sandals of her Bridegroom. Hence, if he baptizes Christ, the bride would presume John to be false and Christ, her Bridegroom, to be deficient.

Faithful to his own words John excused himself from baptizing Jesus. John declined to baptize the Holy One who pardons all and purifies and sanctifies all (*SHF II 11–16/FH VII 11–16*). He drew back his hand from baptizing so that Christ, the Bridegroom, might stand back alone separately as the sacrificial

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<sup>52</sup> Here too as at the presentation in the temple, the paradox and contrast of the Son receiving baptism from John is depicted through imagery.

lamb<sup>53</sup> that might go out from the flock (*HS I 173,6–175,10/FH VI 115–160*). But our Lord commanded, “Let it happen” (Mt 3:15). As John humbled himself, our Lord exalted him (Mt 23:12). The right hand of John inclined to lay hold of the sandal but grace lifted it up and set it upon the head of Christ. So John attained a superior dignity than that of a Seraph (*SHF II 27–32/FH VII 27–32*). But in whose name would John baptize the Baptizer of all, who is together with his Father and the Holy Spirit in an undivided harmony (*HS I 181,16–182,22/FH VI 291–318*)? Therefore, John requested the Royal Son to proceed directly on the journey to deliver the captives from the captors (*HS I 179,3–180,9/FH VI 237–264*). John pointed out to the crowd the lamb of God instead of the lamb of Moses. The lamb of God carries away the sins of the world but that of Moses could only prefigure him.

### **3. Christ Demanding Baptism from John for the Recovery of Adam**

Jesus explained that the real lacking for him is the recovery of Adam,<sup>54</sup> ‘the fair image’. The search for Adam who by his own free will perished at the hands of the evil one, has brought Jesus up to Jordan. Adam wanted to enter into his inheritance, but fell and rusted away. The Loving Kindness that called the Son to come to be born has again called him to baptism. If John had prevented Christ from being born from the womb of Mary, he could have prevented him from entering the womb of baptism too. Christ has to perfect the road upon which he has come (*HS I 177,10–179,2/FH VI 201–236*):

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<sup>53</sup> Mar Jacob finds a typological connection between the episode of John’s withdrawal from baptizing Christ (Mt 3:14) and the OT ‘Paschal lamb’ left alone carrying the sins as explained in Lev 16:20–31.

<sup>54</sup> Baptism is the gift of the ‘garment of glory’ to Adam for his recovery and to attain immortal life:

Baptism is the ‘garment of glory’ given to Adam  
that which the serpent had stolen from him among the trees.  
Baptism is the great furnace that is full of fire  
and by it human beings are melted to become immortals.  
(*HS I 197,11–14*)

If you had withheld me from coming to conception while you  
were within your mother,  
it would have been easy for you to hold back so that I would  
not also be baptized, as I was sent.

If you had turned me away from that state of being born,  
come, turn me away from the order of baptism.

If you had removed me from the swaddling-clothes and I had  
not been wrapped round,  
drive away from me the waves of the river so that they do not  
cover me.

If you had blocked me from sucking the mean milk,  
you would have withheld me from the fountain lest I descend  
to it.

If you had withheld me from dwelling in the womb of Mary  
I would also have passed over myself from the womb of  
baptism.

And now I have travelled and come into this road of those  
born,  
unless I have perfected it, how is it possible that I should turn  
away from it?

Therefore it is becoming for me too, in accordance as I was  
sent,  
that the entire way upon which I have come down should be  
fulfilled in me".

*(HS I 178,11–179,2/FH VI 223–236)*

Our Lord demanded baptism from John so that the path set for him might be accomplished for the redemption. His way has been proceeding through the law of Moses. Hence, it was fair for him to accomplish the justice of Moses and then enlighten the world with the perfection of Melchizedek, namely, to conclude the service to the Law and then proceed on the great path of the Cross (*SHF II 17–19/FH VII 17–19; HS III 321–334<sup>55</sup>*). Moreover, Jesus apprised John regarding the purpose that waters actually needed sanctification and his descent was not to take any shield from the

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. The homily "Why Our Lord Abode upon the Earth for Thirty Years," ET in *TV* 4 (1990): 42 (esp. ls. 123–8).

water, but as the Commander,<sup>56</sup> he wanted to institute baptism as an armour for the warriors. Since humanity needs to equip itself with the power of Christ from the waters, Christ himself enters into the ‘furnace of water’ (*keūrā d-mayyā*)<sup>57</sup> to recast humankind and into the ‘tomb of water’ (*qabrā d-mayyā*)<sup>58</sup> to make humanity immortal in the resurrection. All are invited to come to the fountain, the ‘moistened womb’ (*kearsā rjītā*),<sup>59</sup> for a new birth as well as to be stamped spiritually by the coin (stamp) of Christ (*HS I 180,10–181,15/FH VI 265–290*). In a dramatic dialogue Mar Jacob makes Christ speak out:

Be silent, John, you are not making any addition upon me  
waters are in need of sanctification which will be provided by  
me.

I descended to the fountain not to take up a shield for myself  
but to forge mighty armour for warriors.

I am anxious to cleanse humanity in the contest of battle  
so that every one who comes to fight should fight like me.

I am instituting baptism as an armoury;

Unless man has entered and clothed himself from it he will not  
fight.

If I pass over and do not get baptized as you would withhold  
me,

no one will be able to take up the armour from the waters.

As a commander I took up the leadership in the contest

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<sup>56</sup> This imagery of Christ as ‘Commander’ is related to the baptismal type in the ‘tested waters’ of Gideon in Judg 7:1–7. Cf. *HS I 168,2–3/FH VI 9–10*.

<sup>57</sup> The Johannine view of Baptism as a rebirth is depicted in the imagery from metallurgy through the concept of baptism as a furnace of water.

<sup>58</sup> Here the Pauline idea of Baptism as death and resurrection is incorporated through the figure of baptism as a tomb.

<sup>59</sup> This figure of Baptism as ‘the moistened womb’ takes the vision of baptism as a recreation in the model of the first creation where God fashioned humanity from the dust and water. The symbolic and typological significances are brought together in explaining the role of baptism; Cf. *HS I 197,19–198,4; HS I 162,3–6*.

in order to be an example to the forces that are coming after me.

And if I turn aside from the road that I have taken hold of and come,

again those after me too will pass by as they have seen me [doing].

And if they do not equip themselves with my power from the waters

they will not encounter the great battle as diligent ones.

While I do not need the furnace of the waters, behold, I am entering

so that humanity that is worn out should be recast with that seal of mine.

I am stimulating them so that they should come to the fountain like me

in order that with the coin of mine they shall be stamped spiritually.

To the tomb of water I am bringing down humanity, so that I may make them immortal in the resurrection.

I am making them enter into the moist womb, so that it will conceive them

and give them the new birth without birth pangs.

And again it is righteousness that I should be baptized by you, do not delay.

Come, open out the road because the world is expecting to be renewed by me.

*(HS I 180,10–181,15/FH VI 265–290)*

The Son commanded John to suspend all disputations and to place silently his hand upon his head. Again it was clarified that he needed to say nothing as it is the prerogative of the Father to speak about the Son and the Spirit to bear witness (*HS I 183,1–184,15/FH VI 319–354*).

#### **4. Betrothal of the Bridegroom to the Bride, the Church, at Jordan**

John, the faithful servant, showed to the bride who her Lord is and declared that she was from the beginning betrothed to that Bridegroom. Now the Bridegroom himself has come like the lamb who carries away the sin of the world in his sacrifice. David, the

singer of the Spirit, too assures the bride regarding her Lord by explaining the signs that happened and advising her not to waver but to hear him and adore him (*HS I 175,11–176,10/FH VI 161–180*). Zechariah too came and showed the One whose name is ‘Day-spring’ (*denḥā*<sup>60</sup>; Zech 6:12; *HS I 186,21–189,3/FH VI 401–444*).

The verse homily affirms the betrothal of Christ to the Church of the nations.<sup>61</sup> The Bridegroom is not unaware of the persecuted and afflicted Church<sup>62</sup> that became immersed in idolatry by defiling herself. She has to be sent down to the ‘tested waters’.<sup>63</sup> She should be sent down to the mixed-waters<sup>64</sup> to be washed and to brighten her colour that was altered by the incense to the idols.

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<sup>60</sup> Christ is the Day-Light (Day-Star) which springs on the darkness of humanity. This is a special reading of Zech 6:12 in Peshitta.

<sup>61</sup> God’s rejection of Israel, the Nation, and the election of ‘Nations’ in its place is a predominant theme of anti-Jewish polemics in Syriac writers. Hence the ecclesiological figure of the betrothal of Christ, the Bridegroom to the Bride, the Church of the Nations, cf. *HS I 167,9/FH VI 1*; *HS I 458,15–18/FH X 281–284*; *Dem XVI*; Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 41–68.

<sup>62</sup> The Church is prefigured in Israel referring to all incidents of God’s intervention in history as a form of betrothal to the bride, Israel. The unfaithful Israel is often depicted as persecuted, afflicted and barren Church. Cf. *SMS 769,14–770,9/FH I 1039–56*; *HS I 167,13–14. 168,10–11/FH VI 5–6, 17–18*.

<sup>63</sup> The ‘tested waters’ of Gideon in Judg 7:1–7 has a wider diffusion in Syriac writing as a type of Baptism. In both cases there is the test of purification and the selection for the fight.

<sup>64</sup> The concept of ‘mixing’ is a metaphor used by Jacob to indicate the union of divine and human in the history of redemption. Incarnation is often described in these terms. The various sacraments are the off-shoots of the incarnate Son of God, the sacrament of redemption. The baptismal waters are mixed-waters in the sense that it carries sanctificatory powers by the coming down of Christ in the waters of Jordan by which he sanctified all fonts of baptismal waters. On some conventional Christological aspects of ‘mixing’ in Jacob see Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies*, 132–6.

The 'robe of glory' was placed in the womb of baptism<sup>65</sup> and the bride was sent down to clothe herself from the waters (*HS I 167,1–168,10/FH VI 1–16*):

Christ, the Bridegroom prepared the marriage feast (Mt 22:2–14; Lk 14:16–24) for the Church of the nations and the world became aware of the wedding feast He had furnished for her [the Church].

The Son of the Kingdom wished to betroth (Hos 2:19,20; 2 Cor 11:2) the afflicted one and He sent her to go to the fountain to wash away her dust (Zech 13:1).

He saw the persecuted [Church] that was weak, desiccated and wearied, then He mixed waters and sent her to wash herself and then to be betrothed.

He had regard for her beauty that was altered by the incense of idols; and He poured out rushing streams of the river upon her face to brighten her colour.

He sent her down first to the tested waters (Judg 7:4) as He betrothed her, in order to purge away fornication from her by sanctification (holiness).

That smell of the holocausts sacrificed was concentrated in her but He caused to pass unto her the wholesome waters to make her body fragrant.

She was made corrupt by the foulness of the oblations.

He besprinkled sanctity upon her so that she might be cleansed by it from defilement.

In the womb of baptism He placed the robe of glory and He sent the bride to go down to clothe herself from the waters.

(*HS I 167,1–168,10/FH VI 1–16*)

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<sup>65</sup> In the background of Baptism as a regeneration, it is conceived as 'a mother', 'a womb'; cf. *HS I 197,19–198,4*.

As the Holy One reached the waters in order to be baptized, the ordinary water was mingled with the splendour of holiness. The river leaped for joy in the pure womb of baptism as John from the womb of Elizabeth towards his Lord (Lk 1:41). The Living Fire came down and kindled the river in holiness and the ‘Coal of Fire’ (Is 6:6) descended for washing and sprinkled its fieriness of holiness. An amazement and a great wonder struck the whole creation (*HS I 183,1–184,15/FH VI 319–354*).

### **5. The Father and the Holy Spirit Bearing Witness to the Son and John, the Co-witness**

At the descent of our Lord to the Jordan the river exulted and the baptismal water was heated up as the horn<sup>66</sup> of anointing in response to David (1Sam 16:13) or like John in the womb of Elizabeth towards his Lord (Lk 1:41; *HS I 183,16/FH VI 334*). It happened not to render sanctification to the Son, the Holy One, but to sanctify the womb of baptismal waters. About this David also had sung, “Waters saw you, God, the waters saw you and they feared” (Ps 77:16). At the Epiphany of the Son, the Trinity appeared in a threefold manner and John received the mystery that had been concealed for centuries and he became a third witness to the Son together with the Father and the Spirit. The Father revealed himself through the voice and the Son by touch and the Spirit by sight, namely, John heard the Father and touched the Son by his hands and saw the Spirit in the form of a dove. Thus all the three persons were recognized, proclaimed and adored. If there were other persons in the Godhead they too would have manifested themselves. But there were none other than the One Father, the One Son and the One Spirit who manifested themselves (*SHF II 33–37/FH VII 33–37*):

At the Epiphany of the Son, the Trinity appeared at Jordan. In a threefold manner John received the mystery that has been concealed from all ages [*the worlds*] and generations (Col 1:20), and with the three persons he perceived, that he too was made

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<sup>66</sup> The vessel of oil for anointing.

worthy to be a third witness (Jn 1:7,8) together with the Father and the Spirit, for the Son.

(SHF II 34/FH VII 34)

For, the Trinity manifested itself there in three senses: the Father through the voice, the Son by the touch and the Spirit by the sight. The Father was speaking, the Son was baptized and the Spirit was seen.

(SHF II 35/FH VII 35)

The Spirit was there to receive the Son in splendour. The clouds issued forth and stood as veils of the royal palace to construct a bridal chamber<sup>67</sup> for the glorious Bridegroom (*HS I 184,16–185,7/FH VI 355–366*). The marvellous and awesome sign of the descending under the right hand of the son of a barren woman (Lk 1:7) took place and the Father spoke to bear witness to the Only-Begotten. The Father himself, unlike at other times, without any intermediary, spoke from his essence to indicate that his Son there was genuine, as he does not have any other Son (*HS I 189,4–191,13/FH VI 445–497*). The Father rent the sky and raised his voice and said, “Behold, this is my Son; this is truly my Beloved” (Mt 3:17). The Spirit came there not to sanctify the Son but acted as a finger<sup>68</sup> to the Father and pointed out his Beloved. Since the Law too calls for two witnesses (Deut 19:15), the Father and the Spirit together bore witness to the Son (*HS I 185,8–186,20/FH VI 367–400*).

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<sup>67</sup> In the theological vision of Jacob, one of the historical points that depicts the betrothal of Christ and the Church is the Baptism in Jordan. The splendour and glory that issued forth there is described as a bridal chamber constructed by the Father for the Bridegroom.

<sup>68</sup> According to Jacob the Holy Spirit came down at Jordan only to give witness to the Son and not to render the Son holy who is ever holy. This witnessing function of the Spirit was to make manifest to the world, as a finger of the Father, upon whom the Father is well pleased as his Son. Without the presence of the Holy Spirit, Jacob says, none would have understood about whom the Father had spoken, cf. *HS I 185,10–186,10/FH VI 369–390*.

## 6. Priesthood, Kingship and Holiness Flowing to Christ and Proceeding from Him

The Father gave the deposit of everything, Priesthood, Kingdom and Holiness, to Moses on the mountain.<sup>69</sup> The tribe of Levi handed it down. The Lion's Whelp of Judah (Gen 49:9) arose and took it up from John. The Aaronic priesthood then proceeded from our Redeemer through the apostles to the world. As water by nature flows to the sea, what belongs to him naturally came to Christ. From what is originally established by the Father and belonged to Christ, the Son made a renewal of the old things. Hence, the priesthood of Aaron proceeded to Christ, the High Priest, so too the Kingdom of David to the King of kings and Holiness to the Holy One. Thus the bride, the Church, was convinced that he is the true Bridegroom. She fell down before him because he is the Perfect One who came down to render perfection to the imperfect by the waters of the sanctified baptism (*HS I 191,14–193,9/FH VI 498–532*):

This is the reason that called Him to come for baptism;  
 so that the dominion of the priests should be concluded in  
 Him and it should proceed from Him.  
 The Father gave the deposit to Moses on the mountain (Ex  
 29:9; 40:15)  
 and sent His Son who received it from John in the water.  
 It was handed down by the tribe of Levi (Num 16:10),  
 and the Lion's Whelp (Gen 49:9) of the house of Judah arose  
 and carried it from him [John].  
 Holiness overflowed upon mount Sinai from the Exalted One,  
 and through John it overflowed upon our Redeemer.  
 From His very beginning Our Lord took it upon himself to  
 accomplish His course,  
 so as not to join any other path as an alien one.

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<sup>69</sup> At the mount Sinai the whole treasures were given to Moses by the Father together with the Son. According to the divine economy the Son again comes to receive upon himself what was his own and has been given to the people earlier through Moses. Thus Christ made a renewal of all from what he has and his own: cf. *HS I 192,8–9/FH VI 511–512*.

That priesthood which had been handed down from the house  
of Aaron (Ex 28:3; 29:9)

proceeded from our Redeemer through the apostles to the  
world.

Not because He was lacking in the great priesthood of the  
priests

did He receive it at Baptism and then gave it:

It was so as not to confound the path of truth which His  
Father has primed,

from what belonged to Him did He make the renewal of old  
things.

It is not because the ocean is lacking in fullness  
that all streams and rivers flow towards it.

By nature water hurries to the sea while it [*the sea*] did not lack.

But the whole sea is not made to abound more than it already  
is.

It is not because He lacked that Christ received the hand of  
[the priesthood of] Aaron

nor was it because He lacked [something] that He received the  
kingdom from the house of David.

The kingdom proceeded with the priesthood and rested upon  
Him,

while He is the High Priest and the King of kings.

Holiness overflowed and came and fell upon Him

as a brooklet into the full ocean which did not lack anything.

The kingdom came from the house of David and poured out  
upon Him

While His kingdom is much richer than the sea.

(*HS I 191,14–193,1/FH VI 497–524*)

The whole OT history from the fall of human nature, the idolatry of the people, the instructions of the prophets, the unaccomplished institutions of the Kingdom and the Priesthood as well as the unaccomplished prophetic instruction, are all set dramatically and figuratively as the background to the Baptism of our Lord at Jordan. Our Lord's baptism establishes the fountain of perfection and the power against all the failures of OT history and institutions.

## D. THE GREAT SIGN OF THE MEDIATOR OF ALL AT TABOR

It is the love of the Father that delivered the Son to become a sacrifice and again it is love that drew the Son to slaughter and crucifixion through all humiliations and insults (*HS II 349,14–17/FH VIII 43–46*). Again it is the same love of the Son that wished to manifest his glory on the mountain (*HS II 350,1–3/FH VIII 51–53*) at the time of the transfiguration<sup>70</sup> in order to strengthen and confirm his disciples. Love alone is able to speak of the story of the Son as it does not ‘pry into’<sup>71</sup> it.

### 1. Manifestation of the Lord’s Hidden Glory and Power

The journey of the Lord proceeds through sufferings, pains and bloodshed. His earthly life was in humiliation, simplicity and feebleness. Even then he manifested his power through the signs in order to make himself known, who he is. He did all signs, starting at Cana, for his disciples and not for the outsiders, ‘the unworthy dogs’ (Mt 7:6). The unbelieving Jews responded to his miracles with dishonour to make his good deeds void. As the Cross was full of stumbling-blocks and weakness our Lord manifested his glory to the sons of his mystery (*bnay rāzēb*) in order to strengthen and confirm them on the road of his humiliation (*HS II 349,4–354,10/FH VIII 33–146*):

The way of our Lord stretched itself out in the midst of  
sufferings  
and it [*the way*] proceeded through wounds and pains, even  
unto bloodshed.  
And in humiliation and simplicity and feebleness

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<sup>70</sup> *HS II 347–375*; ET = *FH VIII*; FT by Khoury, E. “Mimrō de Jacques de Saroug sur la Transfiguration de Notre-Seigneur.” *ParOr* 15 (1988–1989): 65–90.

<sup>71</sup> According to the conception of Jacob the mode of approaching divinity is through wonder, faith and love. Any sort of ‘prying into’ (*‘aqqeb*) or attempts of inquisitive investigation (*bṣā*) are anathema in the symbolico-mystical-silence type of theological approach of Jacob. Cf. *SMS 792,16–19. 793,3–4/FH III 47–50, 55–56; SHF I 29/FH IV 29*.

our Lord lived on earth when He walked on it.  
 But sometimes He manifested His power through signs  
 so that He might make known to His disciples who He is and  
 whose Son He is.

*(HS II 350,7–12/FH VIII, 57–62)*

To the [eye of the] outsiders He was not desiring to manifest  
 himself,  
 so that he might not give His holy thing to the dogs which are  
 not worthy of it.

*(HS II 351,7–8/FH VIII 79–80)*

He was manifesting to the apostles His marvellous [deeds]  
 so that He might replenish them with the proclamation by a  
 great wonder.

He set His signs for His disciples to counter His dishonour,  
 so that they might not be doubtful about the humiliation and  
 dishonour of His way.

*(HS II 351,11–14/FH VIII 83–86)*

Since glory and light were hidden in him he transfigured  
 himself to be radiant with glory and light before his disciples.  
 Hence, it is written that he was transfigured. While he was without  
 change he became transfigured himself only to the sight of the  
 apostles and not in his own sight. Unlike Moses who shone forth  
 from without, our Lord who is the light of the whole world shone  
 forth from within himself (*HS II 354,11–357,9/FH VIII 147–208*).

In the sight of the apostles He was transfigured  
 while He remained without change as He had been.  
 For, before their eyes, it is written, He became transfigured,  
 not in His own sight,  
 but for them He was transfigured so that they might see,  
 instead of dishonour, the glory.  
 For, He is as He is, the light and the Son  
 splendour and brightness and the great Sun of righteousness.  
 Neither change nor transformation affects Him,  
 because yesterday and today and for ever yet He is the same.

*(HS II 356,9–16/FH VIII 187–194)*

Before his death he gave them consolation. Above all he wanted to show that he willed and desired to be delivered up for suffering (*HS II 353,14–354,4/FH VIII 129–140*):

He willed and they took hold of Him; He desired it and they seized Him; He gave himself up.  
 Because He wished it, behold, concealed is His light and manifest is His dishonour.  
 He by His own will delivered himself up and they seized and bound Him  
 and they stretched Him out and scourged, led Him out and condemned, lifted and crucified Him.  
 Since it pleased Him, He was despised, stripped and hung naked  
 and it is according to His will He suffers pains and not by compulsion.  
 In the case of the one whose might was seen by us on the mountain,  
 it is clear that it was not because He was weak that the people crucified Him.

(*HS II 354,3–10/FH VIII 139–146*)

## **2. The Reason for the Presence of Moses and Elijah, the Servants of the King**

Our Lord wanted to join the Good News with the Law (*Pentateuch*)<sup>72</sup> and to hand over the keys of Moses to John so that the later one too may become a great teacher, as well as to transfer the authority of Elijah<sup>73</sup> to Simon in order to loose and bind (Mt

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<sup>72</sup> The Law (*'urayta*) here means all moral, spiritual and institutional components of the Law, or the whole traditions of the OT that governed the people of Israel, cf. *HS II 359,2. 363,14/FH VIII 243, 341*.

<sup>73</sup> Elijah is believed to be taken up to heaven without encountering death due to his higher form of spiritual life. During his earthly life itself he achieved the immortality promised to all mankind and became a model of the immortal life of humanity. Due to his higher ascetical life he had even exercised extraordinary powers on earth. Cf. *HNat 1:36; 14:16–17*; K. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian*, pp. 68, 144.

16:19) divinely as a steward. He exchanged the stewards and transferred the keys. He gave rest to Moses and set the labour on John and spared Elijah by bringing Simon to loose and bind. He brought the prophets and apostles together to ratify the new covenant and to manifest the single teaching of the truth,<sup>74</sup> because he is the Lord of the latter and the former. He brought Moses, the teacher of the Law, to subscribe to the Gospel which is for both the living and the dead. Mar Jacob explains the union of the Testaments as follows:

He desired to join the two into one and to treat them alike  
so that the Gospel might mingle with the Law and take hold of  
the earth.

The keys of Moses He wished to confer upon John  
in order to give him in the beginning to write spiritually,  
So that instead of the son of Amram (Ex 6:20), there entered  
the son of Zebedee (Mt 4:21; Mk 1:19), that he also  
should become

a great teacher of the hidden mysteries of the divinity.

That authority which was with Elijah,<sup>75</sup> He had given to Simon  
in order to loose and to bind divinely as the steward.

He joined those of the house of Simon to the house of Moses;  
as to make the New equal with the Old in His proclamation.

He wanted to exchange the stewards and brought them  
so that the elders might hand over the keys to those who were  
youngsters.

(*HS II 357,14–358,4 / FH VIII 213–224*)

Through Moses the company of the dead and through Elijah,  
that of the living,<sup>76</sup> were present there. Thus in front of all ages he

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<sup>74</sup> Christ is the key to the mystery of the unity and integrity of the divine revelation. The same truth is made manifest in both testaments and the same Spirit inspires both. It is a strong argument in the anti-Jewish and anti-Gnostic polemics in the early Syriac writings as well.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *HNat* 1:36, ET by McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian*, 68; Martyrius (Sahdona), *Book of Perfection II*, chp. 8,40, ET by Brock, *Syriac Fathers on Prayer*, 219.

revealed his glory to the disciples. Heaven and earth were present there to confirm the disciples as to who he is and whose Son he is. He wanted to show that both the dead and the living obey him. Moses who was prohibited to enter into the promised land (Deut 4:21; 32:48–52), and was buried at mount Nebo (Deut 34:1–6), was brought to enter into the land which his forefathers inherited. Thus Christ has the power to repeal the judgements of his Father and make the expelled enter into their heritage as a sign of how Adam shall enter. Like Moses and the robber (Lk 23:43)<sup>77</sup> all the expelled shall return to their heritage through him (*HS II 357,10–360,13/FH VIII 209–276*). Jacob explains the equality of the Son with the Father in a few couplets:

He brought Moses, that teacher of the Law (*Pentateuch*), to the  
 mountain  
 to show that he was in agreement with the Gospel of the  
 house of John.

(*HS II 359,2–3/FH VIII 243–244*)

One from the earth and another from the air, they presented  
 themselves,  
 so that they might be witnesses to the Son on the mountain  
 that He is the Son of God.

Good News went out from the Father to the living and the  
 dead  
 and the Son gave it to the two classes that they might be  
 gladdened by it.

And He summoned the company of the dead through Moses  
 and it came to Him.

And through Elijah He proclaimed His Good News to all the  
 living.

Through the two men, He brought to Him all ages

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<sup>76</sup> As Elijah was taken up to heaven without facing death, he represents the living generations.

<sup>77</sup> The theme of the robber's entry into paradise is a well known homiletical theme with wider symbolical meanings as it is a type of the re-entry of Adam who was expelled from Eden as a 'robber' who wanted to grab divinity; cf. *QHC III 1015–16*.

so that in front of them He might reveal His glory before His disciples.

*(HS II 359,6–13/FH VIII 247–254)*

And He manifested that He is able to repeal the judgement of the Father as well as to make the expelled return to their heritage as one who commands all.

He brought in Moses to make known how Adam shall enter, because he too had been expelled through the judgement from Paradise (Gen 3:23,24).

Through our Lord all inheritors shall enter to their destined abodes.

Then through Him the expelled shall be made to return to gain possession of their heritage.

Through Him Moses entered into the land into which it had been set that he should not enter.

Through Him the robber too was transferred to within the Paradise (Lk 23:43).

Adam who went out from his inheritance as a rebellious was made to return to become an inheritor through Him, because he had been expelled.

*(HS II 360,2–11/FH VIII 265–274)*

### **3. Prophets and Apostles, the Law and the Gospel, Set in Harmony by the Single Mediator**

Our Lord brought the prophets and apostles into harmony because he is the body and the two covenants are his hands of power<sup>78</sup> (*HS II 362,11–12/FH VIII 317–18*). Moses, the head of the prophecy, and John the beauty of the apostleship came together (*HS II 362,15–16/FH VIII 321–22*). Elijah and Simon came together so that the keys received over the creation might be commissioned. The prophets also were servants of the Lord as they too were given the Spirit. Moses came there to bear witness to the Gospel and to manifest his agreement to the same. Instead of the Law of Moses

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<sup>78</sup> This is a predominant imagery to depict the centrality of Christ in the OT and NT revelations and their economy.

and its justice our Lord granted the grace of the Spirit. The teaching of Moses was concluded by our Lord, the Intermediary, so that Peter might begin the proclamation. While the law entered into rest at the mountain, the Gospel started its proclamation from there. The law was in front of the Gospel like Elizabeth before Mary (Lk 1:41). Like the joy of the Levite, John the Baptist, in the womb of his mother, Elijah too leaped for joy from the OT in front of our Lord. Jacob explains the mediatorship of Christ from scriptural factors:

Then He gathered them together and united them to make  
 them equal  
 so that unanimously the two orders might bring forth His praise.  
 He was the body and the two covenants His hands,  
 and He was using both of them to show His power.  
 He led the apostles and summoned the prophets who  
 preceded them,  
 so that the Father would say with exalted voice who is His Son.  
 He brought along Moses who is the head of prophecy  
 and John who is the splendour of the apostleship.  
 He called Elijah and joined him to Simon, the head of the  
 disciples,  
 so that the keys which he had received over the creation might  
 be commissioned.  
 He sought to manifest before the heralds of the apostolate  
 that He also gave the spirit to the prophets and they were His  
 servants.

*(HS II 362,9–20/FH VIII 315–326)*

At the mountain the Law and the Gospel saw each other and the keys of the old woman<sup>79</sup> were handed over to the maiden [Gospel]. Gospel approached and took up the load of riches from the law. The prophets carried along the treasure and the Apostles took it over from them. The wearied ship of prophecy carrying the mysteries came to the Lord, the peaceful haven, and from there the merchants of the apostolate took up the riches to be distributed in

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<sup>79</sup> The whole OT dispensation with its institutions is often figured as an old woman (cf. *HS II 364,3–4/FH VIII 351–352*).

the regions. In reality both testaments were bound together like a chain with a single head for the single teaching full of truth that runs through prophecy and apostolate. Hence, our Lord made the prophets and the apostles equal and treated them equal (*HS II 362,7–365,2/FH VIII 313–372*):

For our Lord, as the intermediary of the testaments,  
has concluded one and began the other because He was the  
Mediator.

The Law [*Pentateuch*] came through Moses to the mountain so  
that it might rest there  
near that One who was also on the mountain, who gave it  
together with His Father.

And then the Gospel approached to it [*the Law*] that it [*the Gospel*]  
too might begin on the earth  
so that when the former [*law*] ceases, the latter [*the Gospel*]  
should hasten with proclamation.

Then the law [*Pentateuch*] is as Elizabeth before Mary;  
it [*the Law*] eagerly awaited and worshipped the Gospel of the  
house of John.

Elijah leaped for joy from the Old [*Testament*] in front of our  
Lord

rejoicing like the Levite in the womb of his mother (Lk 1:41).

The Son, the Mediator, joined the relatives  
and on that mountain they [*law + Gospel*] saw each other and  
both of them rejoiced.

The old (woman)[*law*] laid aside the keys of the race which she  
was holding

so that the maiden might take them and make them  
prosperous by her deeds.

(*HS II 363,12–364,4/FH VIII 339–352*)

The wearied ship of prophecy carried the mysteries;  
as if to a haven, which is full of peace, it reached our Lord.  
And the merchants of the apostolate entered and carried from  
there

the riches to the peoples and they went out and distributed in  
the regions.

The New [*Testament*] approached the Old [*Testament*] physically  
so that they should be bound to each other like chains.

(*HS II 364,9–14/FH VIII 357–362*)

#### 4. The Story of Crucifixion Spoken out During the Transfiguration

Lest he alone speak of his death, our Lord brought the servants to speak of it to the disciples (*HS II 369,22–370,1/FH VIII 477–478*).<sup>80</sup> In front of the disciples the prophets spoke about the crucifixion and praised the Son for his self-humiliation and for the fulfilment of all mysteries. They saw how Jesus would take up all passions of Adam and through death how the sin of Adam would be slaughtered (*HS II 365,3–366,2/FH VIII 373–392*).

Moses recalled how insulting and ungrateful was the daughter of the Hebrews<sup>81</sup> with her evil deeds. Even after seeing all the signs of wonder and blessings she committed adultery through impious idolatry. Hence, it is concordant for our Lord to suffer on the Cross. He suffers not by compulsion but by his own will as his Father had sent him. Moses encourages the Son to die and redeem the prisoners to make them enter into their place so that Adam who was condemned might be made victorious (*HS II 366,3–368,7/FH VIII 393–440*). The homilist makes Moses speak out:

Your Father sent you and so you came to bear these things.  
Excellent is your will: Perfect your work and do accomplish  
your way.  
Descend, my Lord, and effect the way on account of which  
you have come.  
Bind the sin and liberate Adam by your crucifixion.  
(*HS II 367,17–20/FH VIII 429–432*)

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<sup>80</sup> The Jewish insistence on the validity of two witnesses (cf. Deut 19:15) is alluded here. Moses and Elijah are the two valid witnesses here.

<sup>81</sup> Israel is often designated by different epithets: 'Daughter of the Hebrews', *SMS 788,12/FH II 280; HS II 366,4. 367,2. 369,10/FH VIII 394, 414, 465; HS I 458,18/FH X 284*; Mary is also called 'Daughter of the Hebrews', *SMS 784,13/FH II 201*; 'Daughter of the People', *HS II 358,19/FH VIII 239; HS I 451,21/FH X 143*; 'Daughter of Zion', *HS I 448,15. 450,1/FH X 74, 101; SHF IV 21, 34/FH XI 21, 34*; 'Daughter of the Nation', *HS II 367,5/FH VIII 417*; 'Daughter of Rachel', *SHF IV 23/FH XI 23*.

Behold, in the caves of the tombs all the captives are shut up.  
 Go, enter into it and make return the bereaved to their place.  
 As you will it, thus accomplish, because it is fair for you.  
 Conquer the victorious one and grant victory to Adam who  
 had been condemned.

(*HS II 368,4–7/FH VIII 437–440*)

After the words of Moses, Elijah too confirmed the fact of Zion which had been wicked like Jezebel<sup>82</sup> and the need of the Lord to perform the redemptive action. Like Jezebel, Zion loves idolatry and adultery as she loves darkness:

Zion is wicked, as you also know her.  
 She resembles Jezebel who until she had killed (1 Kings 18:13),  
 was not relieved.  
 Like her [Jezebel] she [Zion] threatened dispute and strife,  
 and gladly she sheds innocent blood on the earth.  
 She has deceitful snares and crafty contrivances.  
 She hates truth and from righteousness her face is averted.  
 Truth is her adversary and falsehood is the light of her  
 countenance;  
 Desolation is her delight and iniquitous blood [she has as] her  
 meal.  
 She quarrelled and she was refreshed, she despised and she was  
 at rest, she killed and she became delighted,  
 because her soul is wicked and on the commerce of iniquity  
 she grazes.  
 Peace grieves her and she hates love and harmony  
 because the companion of idols is accustomed to contentions  
 and murders.  
 She loves to commit adultery, and since you are holy, she flees  
 from you.  
 She loves idols, and since you are God, she hates to see you.

(*HS II 368,12–369,3/FH VIII 445–458*)

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<sup>82</sup> Jezebel is considered to be the typical embodiment of the unfaithful Israel; cf. *HS II 368,13/FH VIII 446; SHF V 13/FH XII 13*.

Elijah too requests the Son, like Moses, to descend and accept the Cross as well as death according to the way it is set for the Son and willed by the Son himself (*HS II 368,8–369,15/FH VIII 441–470*).

### **5. The Betrothal of the Bride of Light to the Bridegroom of Light**

On the mountain, in front of the Son, apostles and prophets, the living and the dead, were all gathered. The Old and the New, the Law and the Gospel, were united by the single Mediator of all. All the symbols and types of the Old were carried up by the Gospel. The Son bore witness corporeally before both, and the Father spoke with his beloved and it was confirmed to all that the Son is the Only-Begotten. The symbols of the prophets and the discourses of the apostles have come together. The light of the Son shone forth first and then the Father showed the cloud of light and all understood that all that the Father has, the Son too has (*HS II 372,9–373,12/FH VIII 529–552*):

Prophets were gathered, apostles were present, generations  
hastened;

Light shines forth, the Father speaks, Son is glorified.

On the exalted mountain the New [things] with the Old  
[things] are joined.

and they heard the Father giving testimony about His Beloved  
One.

The Gospel is treated as equal with the Law, and it is joined to  
it [*the Law*].

Because between both of them stands our Lord as the heir of all.  
The New [covenant] is united with the Old and they are made  
one,

by the unique Mediator for whom and in whom both of them  
exist.

The Old came and it brought down the mysteries that it had  
carried.

Then it approached and carried the Gospel of riches so that it  
might come to the earth.

In front of both of them the Father spoke with His Beloved One  
so that for both of them He might bear witness corporally in  
His Son.

He brought one to an end and awakened another [one] to begin,  
so that through both He may announce about His Son  
abundantly.

(*HS II 372,13–373,6/FH VIII 533–546*)

The Father brought the cloud of light as a bridal chamber (*gnōnā*) for his Son. Hence, one tabernacle alone was made. There the Father betrothed the Daughter of Light,<sup>83</sup> the Church, to his Only-Begotten, the Bridegroom of Light. There the Father gave the command to the Church, the Bride, to hear his Son, her Bridegroom at the betrothal at Tabor:

The Father made the cloud of light as the bridal chamber for  
His Son;  
so that Simon might not make the tabernacle as he had  
requested.

(*HS II 374,7–8/FH VIII 567–568*)

His Father portrayed the bride of light in the cloud of light,  
for she is the only one whom the symbols betrothed  
affectionately to the One [*the Son*].

For the daughter of light the Father set the signet-ring of light  
and He betrothed her to His Son because the Bridegroom as  
well is wholly light.

He designated the Church in the single cloud of great light  
and the Father commanded her to give heed to His Son, to all  
that He says to her.

Through the apostleship and through prophecy one thing was  
manifested:

that One is the blessed Bridegroom because everything has  
been perfected in his mystery.

(*HS II 374,15–375,2/FH VIII 575–582*)

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<sup>83</sup> Church is called the 'Daughter of Light' (*HS II 374,17/FH VIII 577; SMS 822,8/FH XVI 286*) and 'Bride of Light' (*HS I 173,6. 181,18. 186,21/FH VI 115, 293, 401; HS II 374,15/FH VIII 575*) in the context of Christ being the 'Bridegroom of Light'. For the theme of 'Bride of Light', see Brock, S. P. "Bride of Light." *Moran 'Eth'ō 6* (1994): 97–8.

Being the ‘Mediator of all’, the Son brought the dead and the living on the mountain through Moses and Elijah correspondingly; and through prophets and apostles, the two orders of teachings and proclamations. Thus the single teaching filled with truth has been made manifest as running through prophecy and apostolate, both inspired by the same Spirit (*HS II 364,17–18/FH VIII 365–366*). Through the discourses Moses and Elijah had with the Son the unity of the dispensations in the Old and the New alliances, in the Law and the Gospel, as well as the necessity of the sufferings and crucifixion of the Son were made manifest. It is because of the evil ways of the ‘Daughter of Hebrews’ depicted in the figure of Zion and represented by Jezebel (*HS II 368,13/FH VIII 446*). On the way of humiliation, sufferings and crucifixion the Son desired to liberate Adam from slavery and to redeem the Bride of Light. Through that redeeming activity of the Son, ‘the Bridegroom of Light’ betrothed ‘the Bride of Light’ as figured on the mountain of Tabor with the testimony of the Father.

## **E. THE FORTY DAYS’ FASTING:<sup>84</sup>**

### **THE MEDICINE FOR THE ANCIENT ULCER**

Adam-Christ complementarity is well explained through the fasting of Christ, the celestial Adam, in order to heal and redeem the terrestrial Adam/Humanity.

#### **1. Christ, the Celestial Adam, the Healer of the Terrestrial Adam**

Fasting is the medicine for the first ‘grave ulcer’ (*šuhna rabbā*),<sup>85</sup> as the food caused the fall, fasting brought resurrection by repaying the debt. By fasting the celestial Adam became the healer of the terrestrial Adam who ate without discernment (*SHF III 5–7/FH IX 5–9*). Christ took up the combat of Adam in his fasting in order to defeat the murderer (*SHF III 8/FH IX 8*) who out of pride and

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<sup>84</sup> *SHF III (PO 43, pp. 568–585; ET = FH IX)*.

<sup>85</sup> Adam transgressed the commandment and ate from the tree. Hence, poison entered in him causing sickness which is called the first grave ulcer (*šuhna rabbā*).

jealousy induced pride as well as laxity in Adam through food and caused him to fall from the rank of the adopted sons (*SHF III 7–9/FH IX 7–9*). Christ encountered the crafty-one's strategy. His firm manner of life, even in temptation, resisted the 'commander of the left'<sup>86</sup> and repaired the laxity of the family of Adam repaying the debt of gluttony (*SHF III 10–11/FH IX 10,11*). Our Lord paid the debt in the same coin as the evil one caused the debt:

Indeed, when the Lord Christ, who is the celestial Adam, sought to heal the ulcer of the terrestrial Adam by fasting, He began to employ that which Adam did not do when he fell. If he had done it, he too would not have fallen.

*(SHF III 6/FH IX 6)*

## 2. Forty Days' Fasting, the Medicine for the Grave Ulcer

Fasting against the 'grave ulcer' caused by intemperance, and firmness against laxity were instituted as wise healing medicine (*SHF III 11,12/FH IX 11,12*):

And the grave ulcer was cured by this wise medicinal herb. For whereby was it right that intemperance be conquered, unless by fasting? Or what weapon is needed to resist laxity, if not firmness? Adam ate, fell and was conquered. Our Lord came down, did fasting and raised him up. For that one who was smitten in a single moment and that wound became aggravated; he fasted forty days to devise for him a healing.

*(SHF III 12/FH IX 12).*

This healing medicine of fasting depicted in the number of 'forty days' has been seen by the clear-sighted eye of the prophecy<sup>87</sup> (*SHF III 26/FH IX 26*) and became depicted in various ways in the Scriptures: firstly, as punishment in the flood (Gen 7:12; *SHF III 14,15/FH IX 14,15*), legal punishment of scourging (Deut 25:3 >

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<sup>86</sup> 'Left' denotes negativity and Evil; 'Commander of the Left' is an epithet of Satan (Cf. *SHF III 8/FH IX 8*).

<sup>87</sup> Prophecy is a gift of the Spirit that enables one to see distant/hidden things clearly, especially in the context of typological vision of salvation history.

2 Cor 11:24), Noah's waiting for forty days (Gen 8:6; *SHF III 17/FH IX 17*); secondly, as means of purification, in the purificatory rites after forty days of the birth of a child (Lev 12:2–5; *SHF III 20/FH IX 20*); thirdly, as liberation to the Hebrews as shone forth from David against Goliath (2 Sam 17;16ff; *SHF III 22/FH IX 22*); fourthly, as models in OT, such as the fasting of Moses (Ex 24:18; Deut 9:9; Ex 34:28–29), Elijah (1 Kings 19:8,9), that of Nineveh (Jon 3:2–10), and the bearing of the vicarious punishments by Ezekiel (Ezek 4:4ff) for the house of Israel (*SHF III 23–25/FH IX 23–25*).

### 3. Fasting for the Integration and Perfection of Human Nature

What the prophetic eye beheld by the revelation of the Spirit and which was imitated in the OT, has been made perfectly effective through Christ, rendering purification, integration and perfection, to human nature that was fashioned in the beginning out of four elements (*'ēlūs'kēšē*).<sup>88</sup> The divine wisdom out of its creative energy has painted the rational image on humanity. Thus the four elements that seem opposing one another were brought into a single harmony so as to constitute a single image which the Wisdom has painted. Fasting is set for the purification of the defiled four elements:

Our Lord therefore was moderate and set up fasting as on a balance against the human nature, to bring about the purification of the four [elements] through the forty [days] and to offer a perfect pardon to those who had been defiled through the transgression of the commandment, while multiplying ten times with the number four because in this number of ten, which is the crown of numbers, upon which

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<sup>88</sup> Mar Jacob takes up contemporary philosophical categories too—of course by the time of Jacob it was an accepted practice in the patristic tradition—in explaining biblical anthropology. The four elements are: dust (earth), air, fire and water. Plato's *Timaeus* is the underlying influence; cf. Alwan, *Anthropologie*, p. 29 (ns. 59–64); Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 71–6.

they lean and from which they commence, being multiplied four times, the four [elements] shall be perfected and they shall be one without passion, and without admitting aberration.

(*SHF III 30/FH IX 30*)

Satan became jealous of the wise fashion in which Adam was formed and he began cunningly to deceive and allure Adam in order to induce him to sin which would open the door to death that in turn would dissolve the elements, destroy the image, and annul the wisdom seen in Adam. The deceiver destroyed the yoke of harmony<sup>89</sup> (*SHF III 31/FH IX 31*) of the elements that leads to immortality and effected the yoke of slavery leading to disintegration and death:

For, Satan, on account of his jealousy (*Wis 2:24*), devised this while deceiving, alluring and provoking so as to corrupt that image which the [divine] wisdom had set up upon the creation and so that the rational image which the creative energy, following the completion of its works, had cast would be dissolved and be made dust. Indeed, he was jealous of how wisely Adam was fashioned and with what knowledge he was constituted, and how the four [elements] which are against one another have come to a single harmony in order to constitute a single image upon which wisdom was painted (*Wis 16:15ff*). Thus, he acted cunningly to introduce sin, which opened on them the door to death, so that by it they might be separated one from the other and the image might perish so that wisdom might not be seen in it.

(*SHF III 32/FH IX 32*)

Against the introduction of sin, disharmony, and the yoke of slavery by 'the ruler of the world' our Lord took up the combat on himself. By fasting he killed the alien lust that had entered to corrupt the beauty of creation and taught the human nature the

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<sup>89</sup> Jacob often speaks of the integration of the four elements in human body as a 'yoke of harmony' (*SHF III 31/FH IX 31*) against 'the yoke of slavery' which is the result of sin and transgression of commandments.

way to proceed until the end without admitting corruption. Our Lord's fasting was a teaching:

The fasting of our Lord is found to be a teacher for [human] nature, [telling] how it is proper for it [*the human nature*] to remain in endurance even when temptation should meet it; and how much it is proper to remain in endurance in smallness, even if it has by its nature the grandeur to live in the intimacy of God as the nourishing bread.

(*SHF III 39/FH IX 39*)

Our Lord showed how to stand firm even in temptation by refusing to do any wonder at the request of Satan (*SHF III 34–37/FH IX 34–37*). He refused to do any wonder out of pride (Lk 4:1–13), either to show who he was or to make himself known as Son of God by force (*SHF III 37/FH IX 37*). Thus the deceit of Satan was exposed and 'the life without bread' was shone out. Since Adam had eaten and died, our Lord took up fasting in order to make him live. Thus he brought victory to human nature by the invincibility of his person and repaid the debt by fasting (*SHF III 44/FH IX 44*). Thus Adam was shown the way:

Therefore, it would have been proper for Adam to take delight in the intimacy of God rather than in the food of the tree. The sight of the Immortal One was able to make him live more than the nourishing fruit. And because of that our Lord was saying: "Because he has eaten and has died, I am fasting to make him live. I am renewing his combat, I am recompensing his debt and I am performing in myself that which he was under obligation to do but did not do".

(*SHF III 42/FH IX 42*)

## F. THE HUMBLE ROAD OF THE KING OF KINGS AT JERUSALEM

The two homilies on Hosanna, verse<sup>90</sup> and prose,<sup>91</sup> begin with the author's insistence on the needed approach towards the Scriptures.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *HS I 445–459* (ET = *FH X*).

<sup>91</sup> Cf. *PO 43*, pp. 586–609 (ET = *FH XI*).

Only if our soul stands in its natural purity, shedding off all ‘alien love’, will the hidden richness of the economy of Christ (*mdabbrānūtā d-mšibā*) shine out like the light from the teaching of salvation (*yulḫpānā d-bayyē*). Then only, the soul can seek and find what it requires as well as perform the same and speak about it profitably (*SHF IV 1,2/FH XI 1,2*). To the extent of the ‘true love’ that one has for the Scriptures, he can understand and speak about the splendour of (divine) self-abasement (*šuprā d-makkikūtā*) in the Scriptures (*HS I 445,13–446,1/FH X 13–16*). Hence, the homilist himself prays to Christ, the ‘Fountain of life’, who called himself the ‘Life-giving Water’ (Jn 4:10,11; 7:38) and the ‘New Well’ which was hewn with the lance upon Golgotha (Jn 19:34), from which the dead drank and became alive. Since Scriptures are full of the humility of the Son, they should be approached only with humility after removing all pride from the soul (*SHF IV 4/FH XI 4*).

### 1. The Self-Abasement of the Exalted One for Human Redemption

The Son’s love for humanity made him to become like each one of us (*HS I 446,3; 446,22/FH X 18,37*). The ‘King of kings’ was seated on a borrowed colt on ‘his journey in humility’ (*‘urḫēb b-makkikūtā*, *HS I 447,17/FH X 54*) so that by his humility the proud might be despised (*SHF IV 6/FH XI 6*). The contrasting transference from the chariot (Dan 7:9), the place of wheels (Ezek 1:16–20) and the presence (Ex 25:30) to the borrowed colt (Mt 21:15 *et par.*), to the streets of Zion, took place with a view to renewing the ‘kingdom of the house of David’<sup>92</sup> (*mallekūtā d-bet dāvid*, *SHF IV 6/FH XI 6*):

The mighty one came from the house of His Father to visit  
our region  
and by His own will He arrived at the extremity of poverty.  
He who wears a royal crown asked for himself a colt to enter  
Zion (Lk 19:30)

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<sup>92</sup> The kingdom of Christ is an antitype of the kingdom of David; cf. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 241.

so that in His humility He might reprove the might of the rulers.

He destroyed the horse and chariot of the kings of Ephraim  
(Zech 9:10)

and carried and brought peace to Zion which was in enmity.

He treated with contempt and refused adorned conveyances of  
potentates

and mounted on a colt in order to effect his journey in  
humility.

(*HS I 447,10–17/FH X 47–54*)

Seeing the humility of the master a disciple should humble himself to the level of dust to read the story of the master's abasement and still find the Lord of glory even in contempt and in dishonour (*SHF IV 8/FH XI 8*) where the creditor became the debtor to pay for the debt of the pride of humanity<sup>93</sup> (*SHF IV 9/FH XI 9*).

## **2. The Praise due to the Humble King in the Royal City at the Renewal of the Kingdom**

The Kingdom of the Son demands everything it requires to enter the city of the kings with honour proper to it. The path of the Lord was prepared rightly with the mantles, branches and the hosannas of the infants (*SHF IV 18/FH XI 18*) and the road of the King resounded with a new praise (*HS I 448,4–5/FH X 63–64*). But the elders, the experts of the Law, the learned, and cunning ones, were filled with jealousy so as to deny praise to the Lord and hence they incurred the debt.<sup>94</sup> But the guileless innocent infants and simple disciples recompensed by benedictions with wonder and love repaying the debt of the elders (*HS I 447,21–448,1/FH X 58–60; SHF IV 19,20/FH XI 19,20*):

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<sup>93</sup> The first sin was due to the pride of Adam who dared to grab divinity in an inappropriate time and manner through arrogance.

<sup>94</sup> According to Jacob humanity, by nature, has to praise God. Any failure in this is a debt in the human nature which has to be repaid for justification; cf. *SHF IV 46/FH XI 46*.

The elders withheld praise, but the infants recompensed with benedictions. The Lord of the Law was scorned by the experts of the Law, but he was honoured by the infants who have not read the books of Moses: simple voices from sincere mouths with pure minds for the Lord of glory. There was neither envy among the infants nor rage, nor jealousy among the children: untaught disciples and the simple children recompensed the King with his praise. The learned and the cunning are filled with rage and the guileless bless with love.

(SHF IV 19/FH XI 19)

His entrance to the royal city has to be watched with discernment (*puršānā*)<sup>95</sup> because all mighty works are united to the smallness of the Lord; out of his insults his praises, with his contemptibility his power, are all manifested. Thus everywhere his humanity is proclaimed as well as his divinity is believed. Thus he is praised (SHF IV 17/FH XI 17). On the ‘road of the King’ (*urḥeb d-malkā*) a new song of praise resounded. Trees gave branches on the way of the ‘Sweet Fruit’ (*pē’rā ḥalyā*) of the ‘Blessed Vine’<sup>96</sup> (*satā brikā*; HS I 448,7/FH X 66) and the children wove a crown of praise to the ‘Ancient of Days’ (*atiq yānmē*)<sup>97</sup> who became a child (HS I 448,9/FH X 68). The ‘Eldest of the Ages’ (*qašiš ‘almē*) became a youth and the young people were moved to give praise (HS I 448,10–11/FH X 69–70):

The trees bent down to provide branches and prepare His way for it (*the way*) gave to the world the sweet fruit of the Blessed vine.

The children wove a crown of praise when they were rejoicing, for the Ancient of days who became a child among their gatherings.

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<sup>95</sup> ‘Discernment’ is the catch word of Jacob in the process of reading the scriptures and meditating on it. Jacob takes ‘habit’ in contrast to ‘discernment’ (cf. SHF V 1/FH XII 1).

<sup>96</sup> Cf. footnote n. 12 in this chapter.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. footnote n. 33 in this chapter.

The Ancient (Eldest) of the ages came and became a youth in our region and on account of this the young people were moved to give praise.

(*HS I 448,6–11/FH X 65–70*)

Come, watch him while he enters into the royal city, on a humble conveyance and praises with exalted utterances make haste towards him (Mt 21:1ff). Indeed, great deeds are attached to the smallness of our Lord. Out of his insults (dishonours) his praises peered out and with his contemptible state his power is manifested. Wherever he has been proclaimed as a man, it has been believed that he is equally God, and while he is seen as humble, he is recognized as exalted. In the same manner here too his conveyance is contemptible, but powerful is his glory, for they were calling out behind him as well as in front of him: *Hosanna in the heights, blessed is the one who has come in the name of the Lord* (Ps 117:26; Mt 21:9).

(*SHF IV 17/FH XI 17*)

The incorruptible ‘Kingdom of the house of David’ was set erect by the eternal heir of that kingdom (2 Sam 7:5–16) so that neither of the times (ages) may corrupt it or it be handed over to any other (Dan 2:24). All promises to the fathers were accomplished in his manifestation. David, filled with the Holy Spirit, had this consolation (Ps 45:6,7), that the throne is for eternity and it belongs to the Lord primarily and he had no necessity to receive it from anyone else (*SHF IV 12,13/FH XI 12,13*). The promise that the King shall not depart from Judah until he shall come (Gen 49:10) as well as the words of Jacob, the father of the patriarchs, enriched in revelation, that the Kingdom belonged to him [Christ] have been fully revealed:

*The king shall not depart from Judah until he shall come, the one whose it is* (Gen 49:10). For, there is no king whose is the kingdom but the One, who has neither received nor is going to hand it over (Dan 2:44). Since he is king in essence, and about him the father of the patriarchs, Jacob, enriched in revelations, has said: *It belongs to him* (Gen 49:10).

(*SHF IV 14/FH XI 14*)

His kingdom forms part of his essence and he possesses the title of the Ruler<sup>98</sup> and he is the first and the last (Is 44:6; Acts 1:17; *SHF IV 14–16/FH XI 14–16*). He came according to the promise made regarding the Kingdom of the house of David and assumed on his own person the form of a slave.

### 3. The Unfaithful ‘Daughter of the People’, Zion

In the streets of Zion Zechariah proclaimed about the King who is to come and clapped at the doors of Jerusalem to make the daughter of Jerusalem rise up from the sleep (Zech 9:9). Isaiah too called out to awaken her to exult on account of the King (Is 51:9; *HS I 450,11–12/FH X 111–2*). But the despicable and adulterous sleep of impurity with the idols swallowed her up and she refused to be awoken at the arrival of the Bridegroom who came to enter into the bridal chamber (*HS I 448,12–449,2/FH X 71–82; SHF IV 21–23/FH XI 21–23*). Moreover, the ‘Daughter of Rachel’<sup>99</sup> concealed herself and seated above the idols (Gen 31:34) in the darkness of defilement (*SHF IV 23/FH XI 23*):

Isaiah raised his voice while saying: *Awake, Awake, and put on the power of the arm of the Lord* (Is 51:9). The prophets alarmed her by their calls so that she might be awakened from her sleep and exult on account of her King, but she did not want to do. With another one the bride was sleeping and for that reason she was sluggish in being awakened. Although the prophets were arousing her, she was not awakened. In the heavy sleep on account of the idols the mind of the adulterous woman was immersed, and on account of that she did not shine with love

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<sup>98</sup> Christ has several functional titles such as ‘Ruler’, ‘Guide’, ‘Commander’, all deriving from his *mdabbrana* who assumes the power of administration as the eschatological ruler (*sallitā*); cf. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 192.

<sup>99</sup> The title ‘Daughter of Rachel’ is with reference to Rachel’s stealing of the household gods of her father (Gen 31:19) and Israel’s idolatry. Hence, the unfaithful Israel represented by Zion is called the ‘Daughter of Rachel’.

when there came the uproar that the bridegroom is approaching her to enter into the bridal chamber (Mt 25:1ff).

(*SHF IV 22/FH XI 22*)

The unfaithful behaviour and idolatry of the Hebrew nation remain twofold. It is the double debt of the refusal to praise and the silencing of the praisers by casting gloom on them (*HS I 450, 7–8/FH X 107–108; SHF IV 35/FH XI 35*). As the miserable bride was intoxicated and burning with lust she became addicted to her shameful Egyptian idols,<sup>100</sup> such as, her beloved calf (Ex 32:4), adoration to the totem pole and lamentation for Tammuz (Ezek 8:14), worshipping Saturn and Chemosh (1Kings 11:5–7). She became grieved that her Bridegroom had come, and she did not open the gates to the King (*HS I 449,3–450,2/FH X 83–102*), the royal Bridegroom, who betrothed her in her youth from Sinai. He is her heir who gave her the ring from the fire (*'ēzqtā min nurā*) and has come from Sinai<sup>101</sup> (Ex 19:18) with a view to the wedding feast (*blūlā*). She has the wedding gifts of the ornaments of his precepts in her ears, dowry of his laws in the hands, necklace of his priesthood and the garment of his administration (service) upon her body. Hence, she was bound to open the bridal chamber for him (*SHF IV 24/FH XI 24*). Jacob explains the adulterous behaviour of Israel picturesquely:

Zechariah had sung to the Hebrew nation that it might rejoice  
with Him

but the scornful bride did not dance, as it has been read (Mt  
11:17; Lk 7:32).

She was marred and became grieved that the Bridegroom had  
come,

and therefore she did not rejoice when she met Him.

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<sup>100</sup> Taking inspiration from Ezek 16 Jacob exposes the unfaithful behaviour of Israel by means of bridal imagery, adultery and idolatry. Cf. *HCJ VI 65–78; IV 42–64* on idols of Israel.

<sup>101</sup> Moses betrothed the bride to the Bridegroom at Mount Sinai and the bride received as dowry the law, priesthood, etc. Cf. *SHF IV 24/FH XI 24*.

Her heart was captivated by her beloved calf (Ex 32:4) and was held up by it and she did not hear when the prophet said to her, "Rejoice." She became tied up with the shameful four faced idol and she was not able to open the gates to the King who had come.

She was anxious to serve her small idols but for the service of praise to her Lord she was not solicitous.  
(*HS I 448,20-449,8/FH X 79-88*)

Why are your adulterous lovers more dear to you than the royal Bridegroom ? Behold, he who has betrothed you, has come from Sinai ! (Deut 32:2). Rise up, go out to meet him ! Behold, the one who stretched out to you the ring from the fire (Ex 19:18) is desirous of celebrating the wedding ! Cast off the idols from your bosom and raise up yourself, rejoice yourself on account of your wedding feast, his betrothal to you is accepted by His Father; do not turn away your face from the heir (Mt 21:38; Heb 1:2). Here are the ornaments of his precepts upon your ears, the dowry of his laws in your hands, the necklace of his priesthood around your neck, the garment of his ministry upon your body ! Open to him your bridal chamber with love because he is the betrothed of your youth from the desert (Jer 2:2).

(*SHF IV 24/FH XI 24*)

Clearly Christ belonged to the race of Judah<sup>102</sup> and being not alien to the people of Jacob, the reign is his own. He is the star of Jacob by whose brightness the idols were shattered like the mighty men of Moab (Num 24:17). His colt was tied up to the vine issued out of Egypt<sup>103</sup> and the little one of an ass has been led out as his

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<sup>102</sup> Judah is the exalted tribe from which the Messiah is expected by all God-fearing generations. Even then the bride, Zion, refused to recognize him and hence the grave culpability.

<sup>103</sup> 'Vine issued out of Egypt' is a symbolic title of Israel signifying the people whom Yahweh delivered from Egypt as his vineyard. But that vineyard failed to bring out fruits. Hence, it was replaced by another

conveyance from the tribe of Judah by the alliance of Jacob (*SHF IV 28–29/FH XI 28,9*). Even after all these manifestations the question of the bride, ‘Who is this?’, is dishonourable. The ‘adulterous and crucifying woman’<sup>104</sup> has displayed her disgrace in asking the passers by, ‘Who is this?’, even when she knew well who he was (*SHF IV 26/FH XI 26*). She desired to give a letter of divorce (*dulalā*) to him and did not want to recognize him even while knowing well who he was. Her despicable nature is well known from the parable of the vineyard<sup>105</sup> (*Mt 21:33ff; SHF IV 30/FH XI 30*). The entire city of Jerusalem was shaken as the adulterous bride perceived that the holy Bridegroom, her heir, had come to unmask her and to demand his part. She was jealous and had wished to silence those who praised him (*HS I 450,3–6/FH X 103–106*). She knew that the remover of idols<sup>106</sup> and the unveiler of statues (the accuser of deeds) had appeared and the wiles of her misconduct would be unveiled (*SHF IV 25/FH XI 25*).

But the true praisers, both in the heavenly order and the young people on the earth, praised the way of the Son full of wonder. But the Daughter of the People, the Jews, the haters of Light and all good things, was jealous and furious to silence the praisers of the Son (*HS I 452,10–21/FH X 153–164*).

#### 4. The Wonderful Way of the Son for the Discerning

To the discerning the ‘way of the Son’ (*‘urḥeb da-brā*) was a wonder (*HS I 451,1/FH X 123*). Hence, the supernal beings, the legions of Michael, were taken up by wonder seeing the Son on the magnificent throne (*Ezek 1:26*) as well as mounted on an ass (*Mt*

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vineyard. Cf. *Dem V, 21,22 (PS I 225,13–232,2)*; *Crucif 5:9*; Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 96–104.

<sup>104</sup> Here the reference is to the unfaithful Israel and the unbelieving Jewish nation. Cf. *Mt 21:10*.

<sup>105</sup> Jacob refers to the wider symbolic and exegetical significance of the parable of the Vineyard, weaving together a symbolic pattern between Israel’s rejection of Yahweh and the Jewish rejection of Christ.

<sup>106</sup> Christ is the remover of idols by his coming in the body; cf. *HS III 795–823*; FT by Martin, “*Sur la chute des idols*,” 107–47.

21:5) and at the same time being One without division (*HS I 451,11–16/FH X 133–138*).

The ‘Daughter of the people’<sup>107</sup> was jealous and furious when he was praised. The elders of the people became envious of the hosannas of the children, priests murmured, and Pharisees complained about their voices (*HS I 452,6–7/FH X 149–150*). Since the Son of God has gatherings in different orders praising him, it was impossible to silence his praise with which the whole heaven and earth were filled up. At that moment praise was due to the Son of God from human beings or from nature. Hence, it is said that if the children kept silence the stones would call out in praise.<sup>108</sup> Even the nature was stirred up seeing the self-abasement of the Son and was eager to give praise (*HS I 453,7–454,11/FH X 171–96*). The truthfulness of the word of the Son that the stones would have called out praise is made manifest on Golgotha:

At Golgotha the friends fled and the haters remained behind,  
and it was the hour to praise the Son who is crucified. And  
because human being were silent, stones moved to praise so  
that the crucified King might not remain without glory.

*(HS I 455,6–9/FH X 211–214)*

Thus from the manifest things it is easy to learn about the hidden things (*HS I 454,17/FH X 202*). Since the hidden sign (*remzā kasyā*) of the Lord moves the natures, they never fail to praise their Lord in their own ways as David testifies (Ps 148):

The (created) natures never withhold praise to the Lord  
because the whole creation is moved by Him to praise.  
Both from the stones and from the woods it is easy that He  
would be praised,  
because His hidden sign moves the (created) natures to give praise.  
Diverse creatures in their own manners sing praise  
the rational and mute beings in their own various ways.

*(HS I 455,16–456,1/FH X 221–226)*

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. Footnote n. 81 of this chapter.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Rilliet, “La louange des pierres,” 293–304 for an exegetical review of the episode in Jacob of Serugh.

Heaven and earth are filled with his glory as it is written  
 and whatsoever is created, whispers praise to its creator.  
 All His creations with their tongues sing praise  
 but in what manner and how much, you can never hear.  
 The truth gives testimony that all natures praise Him,  
 but how, no one understands so as to speak.  
 Nobody knows with what mouth and with what voice  
 the earth sings praise to its Lord when it is required.

(*HS I 456,12–19/FH X 237–244*)

There are hidden mysteries between God and his creatures (*HS I 457,16–19/FH X 261–264*). They were prepared to praise the new road of his humility (*'urbā ḥdatā d-makkikūtēb*; *HS I 457,20–21/FH X 265–266*). Humanity should necessarily praise so that its service to God should not be replaced by mute beings (*SHF IV 46/FH XI 46*). The whole of nature gives thanks faithfully as it has been renewed. Heaven and earth rejoice. The redeemed gathering of the 'Church of the peoples' (*kenšā d-'ēdat 'ammē*) rejoices as she is freed from the stumbling-blocks of vain idols and was brought back from the captors. While the 'daughter of Arameans'<sup>109</sup> exults the 'daughter of Hebrews' became sad (*HS I 458,9–459,18/FH X 275–304*).

### **5. The Desecrated Temple, Neglected Sanctuary and the Distorted Priesthood**

Our Lord found the temple of his Father converted into a cave of thieves (Mt 21:13). The spirit of Law, worship and sanctity were all lost and brigands got into the offices of the holy ones. Prayers, the dignity of priesthood, divine services and good manners were all neglected as covetousness and greed were introduced (*SHF IV 31/FH XI 31*). Without hearing the prophets and failing to accomplish the will of the Father, the Synagogue failed to engage in the ministry of the house of Moses:

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<sup>109</sup> 'Daughter of Arameans' is a symbolic title of the Church, signifying the 'Church of the Peoples' in contrast with the unfaithful Israel (cf. *HS I 458,17/FH X 283*), which is the 'Church of the People'.

For our Lord entered in the temple of his Father and he found it full of tradesmen of sin (Mt 21:12ff). He saw the worship idle, the sanctuary neglected, the Law despised, the resplendence of the house of Moses was absent, and the fine traditions of Levi as well, but the temple was made a company of brokers, brigands instead of holy ones; there was in it neither any prayer that ascends, nor any supplication that is offered, nor a high-priest in his office, nor priests in their ranks, nor Levites at their service, nor the people maintaining themselves in their good habits, but the priesthood was confused, the priestly office disturbed and modesty expelled; covetousness was introduced and installed, greed performing its desire and the temple resembling to a cave of thieves.

(*SHF IV 31/FH XI 31*)

Having fallen from the status of the free-born woman to that of harlots and a servant of vain gods, she asked the question, “Who is this ?,” refusing to recognize him (*SHF IV 32/FH XI 32*). If she had stayed in her noble status, chaste and faithful as she was betrothed by Moses,<sup>110</sup> she would have rejoiced with jubilation and made the people go out to honour the King. She would have adorned the high priest properly and the reading of the scrolls would have fruitfully continued. The high priest himself would have walked in the presence of the King as David before the Ark (2Sam 6:14). Reading of the prophets failed and the high priest too failed to announce to the people the arrival of the Son even after Jacob and Zechariah had announced in signs that he would enter into the city on a humble conveyance (*SHF IV 33,34/FH XI 33,34*):

But because she was intoxicated with her lust, and her mind was corrupted by her adultery, and she had introduced in the temple impure profits and had driven away the splendour from it; not only did she not exult on account of the King, but she became also downcast at the voice of the praisers.

(*SHF IV 35/FH XI 35*)

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<sup>110</sup> Israel’s failure to stay in the observance of the Law of Moses and her failure to accept the Redeemer are symbolically alluded through the imagery of ‘unfaithful bride’.

The Bridegroom found his bridal chamber converted into a company of money changers. Out of zeal for the house of his Father, he made a whip of chord and cleansed the house of prayer (Jn 2:17). He demanded honour to his sanctuary that became a centre of impious commerce, in the name of the alliance of his Father as it is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer” (Is 56:7; Jer 7:11; Mt 21:13; *SHF IV 36/FH XI 36*). Quoting from the prophets, he properly reprovved the bold ones who rebelled against the Law and failed to hear his Father. They despised Adonai and dishonoured his anointed One too. He blamed the priests, reprimanded those who knew the Law and the abusers of the Sanctuary while establishing the truth by his words from the prophets (*SHF IV 36–39/FH XI 36–39*):

[Reciting] from the prophets, it was proper on his part, as he reprovved the bold [ones] who were bringing false accusations everyday that he was fighting against the Law. He reprovved them because they did not hear his Father and because of that, they did not receive him. He showed them clearly that they despised Adonai and on account of that they dishonoured his anointed One too (Ps 2:2). He reprovved them because, even when they insulted him, yet he was silent (Is 42:14; Mt 27:39ff), patient as his Father. However, he did not resemble to any other apart from the Father who sent him. The Father has said to you through the prophet: *My house shall be called a house of prayer, but, you have made it a cave of robbers* (Is 56:7; Jer 7:11; Mt 21:13). You have neither heard my Father nor received me. Indeed, *the one who receives me, receives the one who sent me* (Jn 13:20).

(*SHF IV 37/FH XI 37*)

They who hated the Father were irritated by the coming of the Son who came in the name of his Father, and out of jealousy they tried to do away with all praise to the Father as well as to the Son. Even though they dared to approach our Lord to make the praisers silent, he demonstrated from the prophecy that his road is made straight by the prophets according to the terms set by his Father and he has to conform to the will of his Father (*SHF IV 40–42/FH XI 40–42*).

## G. THE CONDEMNED SON OF GOD AND THE LIBERATED BARABBAS, ADAM

The author starts the homily “On the Friday of the Passion”<sup>111</sup> in the Syriac way of beginning a commentary seeking the purpose (*‘ēltā*)<sup>112</sup> of the feast, that can stir up discernment (*puršānā*) which should be the driving force behind the actions rather than habit (*yādā*). The purpose is sought with the lucid eye of the soul (*b-‘aynā nabīrtā d-napšā*) that can see distant things as if close at hand (*SHF V 1/FH XII 1*). The homilist surveys the events concerning the passion of our Lord beginning at the house of Caiaphas and moving to the judgement seat of Pilate to the crowning with thorns and the mockery by the soldiers. The discerning vision of the author examines the purpose of all events by explaining them with a deeper intuition into the mysteries surrounding them and the divine economy (*mdabbrānūtā*) governing them.

### 1. Christ, the Reconstructor of the House of Adam, and the Restoration of the Image in Adam

Christ, as the heir to the debts of Adam, repaid the same and tore up the deed of debt which the earlier generations could not repay. Thus the reconstruction of the house of Adam takes place and the corrupt image and resemblance are not abandoned in the mud:

He [*Christ*] said: I am the heir (Mt 21:38; Heb 1:2). I am repaying the debt that has caused the great man to sink and has entangled the swift and chained the strong, as well as devastated whole generations, and has raised up the thresholds of the generations of great men (Gen 11:1–9; Am 9:1), and in front of it neither Enoch, nor Noah, nor Melchizedek, nor Abraham could stand.

(*SHF V 5/FH XII 5*)

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<sup>111</sup> Cf. *SHF V (PO 43, pp. 610–629; ET = FH XII)*.

<sup>112</sup> ‘Seeking the purpose’ is a Syriac way of beginning a commentary or exposition of a biblical text. It is the seeking of deeper meanings in the light of the mysteries it carries.

I am reconstructing the house of Adam and I am repaying as the heir. On account of this my Father has sent me, in order to be the heir to Adam, because He [Father] saw that there was no heir for him [Adam] who was able to repay his debts and reconstruct his ruins. I will not let our image be despised in Sheol.

(SHF V 6/FH XII 6)

Adam was found to be deserving death<sup>113</sup> due to the breach of the commandment as well as the arrogance and the daring step to reach for the fruit. His sin opened the door to death. Hence, all aspects of his person deserved chastisement (SHF V 8/FH XII 8). Enduring the chastisement on behalf of him, our Lord worked out the liberation of Adam and thus the graceful image was drawn out from the bottom of the abyss:

I will swallow the vinegar and I will be plunged into the lake of the dead. And there, I will seek and find that which had been lost from my Father in the garden on account of the deceit of the enemy serpent. I will draw out and make to ascend from the bottom of the abyss the dear image (*salmā rḥimmā*) which has spent six thousand years in the mud without coming up.

(SHF V 9/FH XII 9)

## **2. The Judge of Judges under Judgement and the Acceptance of the Chastisement of Adam**

One who sets all free by his judgement enters before the judgement seat because the sins of the whole world, the sins of Adam, had fallen upon him. Since there was no one in the race of Adam capable of paying back the debt of the deed of Eve,<sup>114</sup> as a heir to

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<sup>113</sup> The first commandment to Adam/humanity was not to eat of the tree, "... for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen 2:17). On that condition at the transgression of the divine commandment Adam/humanity deserved death.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Footnote n. 24 of this chapter.

Adam, the head of the race (*riš gēnsā*),<sup>115</sup> the Mighty One of the centuries, carried the whole burden (*SHF V 2–4/FH XII 2–4*).

Assuming the sins of many, Our Lord stood before Pilate. Yet the blind ones, the enemies of light, did not understand that an innocent one was judged. Satan had divided and assigned the work to each of them. Thus one single evil was prepared by all of them in diverse manners. The Synagogue, the sister of Jezebel, brought forward iniquitous testimonies against Our Lord. As the accusations in connection with the curings on the Sabbath seemed failing, they devised ‘by way of the cleverness of the ancient serpent’, the cunning act of putting on him the veil of sanctuary by which they could declare him to be culpable of death (Num 4:15).<sup>116</sup> This cunningness becomes clear from the questions of the judge and the out-cry of the people (*SHF V 10–18/FH XII 10–18*).

### **3. The Priesthood Returns to Its Lord and the Proper Garments to the Lord of the Sanctuary**

Even though they accused Jesus out of their jealousy it was proper for the Lord of holiness to be vested in the veil of sanctuary on the great feast day. Thus the priests stripped off the altar and clothed our Lord. As the city of holiness was to be destroyed, to the Lord of holiness himself the garments were given. As the priesthood was locked up in impurity it tore off the clothes of the priest and took refuge in its Lord. The priesthood of Levi was abolished to elevate a priest in the likeness of Melchizedek.<sup>117</sup> The veil of the sanctuary

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<sup>115</sup> It is a symbolic title of Adam conveying the sense of corporate personality. Adam is also called ‘Head of the Nations’ (*rišā d-tubme*; Cf. *HS V 716,2*); For various symbolic titles of Adam according to Jacob refer to chapter four (section A,2,a), footnote, n. 5; See also Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 91.

<sup>116</sup> Jacob finds a valid reason for the clothing of Christ in the veil of sanctuary as the true High Priest on the day of the great feast. On the other hand this made Christ culpable of death according to Jewish law. This double reasoning indicated by Jacob is his originality in insightful exegesis.

<sup>117</sup> Priesthood of Melchizedek is a type of the priesthood of Christ; Cf. Thekeparampil, “Malkizedeq According to Jacob of Serugh,” 121–33.

was torn asunder by the Holy Spirit and it departed from therein (*SHF V 21–22/FH XII 21–22*). As the bride desired to separate herself from the betrothed, she threw his clothes back to him and similarly the Synagogue put away worship and the priesthood wrapped up in the veil of the altar, which had been bestowed on her earlier:

When a betrothed woman desires to separate herself from her betrothed, she throws his clothes to him. Thus the synagogue too, because her mind fled away from the Holy One, all the worship and the priesthood which he had donated to her, she threw and wrapped it round upon him in the veil of the altar.

*(SHF V 24/FH XII 24)*

#### **4. The Lord Assumes Everything Belonging to the Kingship**

The artisans of wickedness figured out beforehand the types of things that would happen. They prostrated themselves before him in mockery and said, “Hail, King of Jews”. But to him it was adoration. In fact he received everything that belonged to the kingship. The name of kingship was not taken away from him even when he was crucified (*HS II 576,2–3*). Thus in the garments of mockery and in the crown of thorns the priesthood and kingship were taken away from them. The aspects of the material and colour of the tunic are also symbolic as they depict the colour of the clothes of worship and the colour of bloodshed. The crown of innumerable thorns signifies the death out of innumerable sufferings.

#### **5. The Evil Company Hates the Physician and the Liberator of Barabbas, the Type of Adam**

The sick and wearied people hated the Physician (*SHF V 31/FH XII 31*)<sup>118</sup> and demanded the liberation of a brigand. They asked for Barabbas in a way suggesting unwittingly the liberation of

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<sup>118</sup> ‘Physician’ is a major title of Christ signifying the cure he brought to human nature through his redeeming activity by his sacramental body and through the Church. Cf. *SMS 771,6/FH I 1075*; *SHF V 31/FH XII 31*; *SMS 812,11/FH XVI 81*.

Adam. Barabbas, the then bound one, was the type of Adam and the divine economy (*mdabbrānūtā*) rich in discernment (*puršāne*) brought about all those things:

Prophecy has spoken out by means of foolish men. The truth is sung by the liars. They proclaimed that which was happening, while not knowing what they were saying. For Jesus was crucified instead of Barabbas. And it is for him that he had come, in order to liberate him from the bonds. For why was our Lord bound unless it was to liberate Adam? Or what was this mystery that during that feast a prisoner was liberated, unless the type of Adam who was liberated from his chains on the feast of the Cross?

(*SHF V 32/FH XII 32*)

By his grace the merciful Father made Adam a son, in order that he may become the heir of his possessions and on account of this “*Bar abba*” is Adam. Indeed, when he had acted foolishly, he had been enchained in Sheol, but when the great feast approached in which he was liberated from his chains, a brigand, who also was called Barabbas, was imprisoned by the Hebrews.

(*SHF V 33/FH XII 33*)

Thus through the mystery of the condemnation of the Innocent One and the liberation of the evil-doer, the Crucified One renewed the creation through his passions and restored an incorruptible world by his afflictions.

## 6. The Governing of the Hidden Divine Economy

The discerning ‘eye of the soul’ of Jacob finds the events on the Friday of Passion full of divine government (*mdabbrānūtā*). The dynamics of the events are as follows: “When the Hebrew Nation by its corruption committed iniquity, the divine economy (*mdabbrānūtā*) by its wisdom depicted the mystery” (*rāzū*; *HS II 538, 15–16*).<sup>119</sup> Prophecy has spoken by means of foolish men (*SHF V 32/FH XII 32*) who knew not what they were saying. The

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<sup>119</sup> ‘Homily on the Crucifixion’: part five; “On the Eve of the Friday of Passions” (*HS II, 522–554*, no. 53e).

gathering called out for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus. Caiaphas too prophesied (*HS II 539,13–540,18*) saying, ‘it is better that a man die instead of many’ (*HS II 539,19*) having ‘a sword in his hand and prophecy on his lips; truth in his mouth and falsehood in his mind’ (*HS II 540,9–10*). The custom of liberating a prisoner on the great feast was another mystery looking forward to its reality in the liberation of Barabbas, Adam, on the feast of the Cross (*HS II 538,5–18*). Through mockery everything due to Kingship was given to Christ. Priesthood flees from the unworthy to take refuge in the Holy One, the true High Priest. It is the divine mercy that made the Son embody himself to become a heir to Adam for the restoration of the ‘house of Adam’ through the repayment of the debt incurred in the garden.

Isaiah depicted the Son of God before the judge in the figure of a lamb which dies, while being innocent, for the sins of others (*HS II 541,6–7*). The still and silent Son of God, as he was stripped, is depicted in the still sheep before the shearer, the sign of Christ stripped on behalf of Adam who was seen stripped among the trees (*Is 53:7; HS II 540,19–541,21*). Thus the Son was prefigured in the lamb depicting the sacrifice, and in the sheep for the clothing of Adam who was stripped off (*HS II 541,21*). Christ was pleased to provide the garments to clothe those who went out of Paradise nakedly (*HS II 543,3–4*). The offering of the ‘Red-heifer’ depicted the Crucifixion (*Num 19:2–10; HS II 543,17–18*). “The sin at the tree killed Adam in the beginning and on account of that the Son of God was killed upon the wood” (*HS II 573,20–21*). Thus the author finds interrelationships and infuses meaning and purpose to all events with references to the hidden divine economy working in the history of redemption.

## **H. THE RESURRECTION OF THE VIVIFIER OF ALL: LIFE AND LIGHT TO THE WORLD**

In his homiletical preaching Jacob brings out the Resurrection of the Lord<sup>120</sup> as the greatest turning point in the course of the history

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<sup>120</sup> See *HS II 613–623; 624–635* (ET = *FH XIII; XIV*); *PO 43*, pp. 630–45 (ET = *FH XVI*).

of salvation. The Father delivers the Son as a sacrifice and the Son takes upon himself the path of suffering and death. By his course of action the Son fights a great battle which is prefigured in Jonah (Jon 1:17–2:10) and Ezekiel (Ezek 4:4–8). He destroys the regions and powers of evil embodied in the form of Sheol which is the symbol of all evils, bondages and captivity, once prefigured in the history of the chosen people, that indicate the deeper spiritual bondages and captivity of Adam/humanity. The shattering of Sheol is prefigured by Samson in the history which became actualized in the Resurrection of the Lord. Thus the Resurrection brings in a new mode of existence that is symbolically rendered as the acquisition of a new garment, ‘the garment of glory’ (*naḥtā d-šubḥā*). It is through the Resurrection Adam/humanity is given that ‘garment of glory’ which was lost in the garden.

### 1. The Son Delivered for the Redemption of the World

The omniscient and merciful Father saw the vast iniquity of the whole world and the feebleness of humanity. Rather than sending a feeble prophet, he sent his own mighty Son to carry the heavy burden of the peoples. The mighty Jesus killed the iniquity, bound sin and trod upon death while ascending victorious from perdition (*HS II 630,3–18/FH XIV 123–138*):

The Father saw that the iniquity of the world had grown strong  
and the feeble man was not able to carry its burden.

He did not send anyone of the prophets to take away his  
[*man*’s] iniquity,  
for if he [*prophet*] carried it, it would have subdued him and he  
would not have risen up.

His Son, the Valiant One, was able and He carried the heavy  
burden  
and without corruption He rose up and made those who were  
cast down rise up.

(*HS II 630,3–8/FH XIV 123–128*)

The Omniscient One weighed the sins of the world and the  
death of His Son;  
and set a limit that by how much duration they would be  
destroyed.

For all generations, the Redeemer died for three days;

and the iniquity of all He carried off by His death and set them free.

He bound sin and fastened it with nails and died as well as put it [*sin*] to death.

By His death He killed it [*sin*] and He himself rose up but He left it [*sin*] in Sheol.

(*HS II 629,16–21/FH XIV 115–120*)

The valiant One gave himself up with a view to accept the chastisement of Adam. Hence angels were not seen at the place of the judgement or at the time of the Crucifixion on Golgotha (*SHF VI 27,28/FH XV 27,28; HS II 601,4–602,17*). But on the day of Resurrection angels were seen at the tomb. At Golgotha they were absent lest they obstruct the path of suffering of the Crucified One, because the Father handed over his Son to be a sacrifice. If at Sodom, in response to the outrage done to Lot, the wings of the angels stirred and caused coals of fire to fall (Gen 19:13, 24–25), they could not have endured the outrage done to the Son at Jerusalem. Hence, the Father let the Son reach the completion of the path of outrage inflicted on him and then the angels were allowed to descend in honour of his Son (*SHF VI 26/FH XV 26*).

## **2. Great Saviour and King in the Contest for the Great Image, Adam**

The great Saviour and King enters into the battle and fights against perdition like an Athlete<sup>121</sup> in his death. Like a Merchant from the land of death he brought new life to the whole world. As a Swimmer he descended to the abyss of the dead to raise up the great image that was corrupt. The great King in his battle on Golgotha carried the iniquity and the burden of sufferings. He was smitten and fell down but redeemed all with his power (*HS II 630,19–632,4/FH XIV 139–166*):

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<sup>121</sup> ‘Athlete’, ‘Merchant’, ‘Swimmer’, and ‘King’ are symbolic titles of Christ depicting the various aspects of his redeeming activities. For Jacob’s use of these titles refer chapter four (section B,3,b), ‘The Titles of Christ, the Saviour’.

The Merchant went to the land of death which was dreadful  
and He brought from it [*the land of death*] new life for the whole  
world.

(*HS II 630,19–20/FH XIV 139–140*)

The Athlete in His death held a fight with perdition  
and corruption was not able to take hold of Him when He was  
fighting.

The Swimmer descended to the abyss of the dead [Sheol] and  
raised from it

the great image which was corrupted while He was indeed not  
corrupted.

A troublesome battle fell upon the King on Golgotha;  
and He was smitten and fell down but He redeemed and  
returned with success.

(*HS II 631,2–7/FH XIV 143–148*)

### 3. Jonah and Ezekiel, Types of the Smitten Redeemer

While redeeming the captives our Lord was smitten. The sharpened sword on Golgotha made him sleep heavily. As Jonah proclaimed in the streets of Nineveh (Jon 3:1–5), a prefigured sign of the Lord, so did Christ proclaim in the regions of Sheol (*HS II 626,19/FH XIV 55; HS II 598,8–17; HS III 316,12–13*):

A great struggle fell upon Him and He was struck by the  
captors,

but He withstood with fortitude and suffered afflictions until  
He slept.

And when He had reclined for three days, then He gave rest to  
His burden.

The wearied one woke up uncorrupted by wounds.

He had mounted the cross in order to visit the dead in their  
abodes.

He snatched His conveyance [*the Cross*] and made it enter and  
set it in Sheol.

(*HS II 625,8–13/FH XIV 23–28*)

He plunged into the abyss and the bottom of Sheol and drew  
out Adam

because the well of its [*Sheol's*] mouth had took hold of him  
and choked him.

He [*Christ*] searched in the mud of the dead and sought the  
 pearl  
 which fell down from Him and He carried it and ascended  
 towards His Father.  
 Death devoured Him as did the huge fish to Jonah  
 but while being incorrupt He was made to ascend on the third  
 [day].

(*HS II 599,1–6*)

He drank the cup in crucifixion. Even in death he was not powerless. On the third day he conquered the region of death and drew out Adam, the great image that was sunk down in the bottom of Sheol. In three days our Redeemer subdued his wounds and came out victorious from the place of sufferings (*HS II 626,3–627,7/FH XIV 39–64*).

As a type of the Redeemer, in a symbolic manner, Ezekiel carried the iniquity of the children of Jacob (Ezek 4:4), the iniquity of the house of Judah, the iniquity of a single nation only (*HS II 627,8. 629,10–13/FH XIV 65,109–112*). But our Redeemer carried valiantly the vast iniquity of all nations. Iniquity died in him and he rose up with power but iniquity did not rise up (*HS II 629,4–9/FH XIV 103–108*):

All debts of all peoples everywhere,  
 the Mighty One carried and remained on the cross but He did  
 not become weak.  
 The whole iniquity of the whole world in every place,  
 He carried in His death and was not corrupted when He rose  
 up.  
 The sins of the peoples took flesh in Him and He immolated  
 them.  
 Iniquity died in Him and He rose up with power but iniquity  
 did not rise up.

(*HS II 629,4–9/FH XIV 103–108*)

He mounted on the Cross as a conveyance to visit the dead in their abodes. In death he reached the limits of destruction. After having reclined for three days he woke up uncorrupted (*HS II 625,12–17/FH XIV 27–32*).

#### 4. Samson, Type of the One Who Crushed Sheol

Through death the embalmed One entered the region of death in weakness but he stirred Sheol and crushed its fortifications. Samson slept in order to be bound and mocked but when he woke up he shattered his bonds and destroyed the region and came out victorious against the Philistines (Judg 15:14; 16). He was only a type of our Lord who, when slaughtered and entered Sheol, uprooted it and came out victorious from darkness (*HS II 632,5–633,18/FH XIV 167–200; HS III 316,14–317,5*). Samson prefigured our Lord in his action and set the riddle that was explained in Christ who killed death and provided life-giving food:

From the eater came out food while being incorrupt  
and the sweet honey from the bitter as it is written.  
The riddle of Samson, the son of Hebrews (Judg 14:14) was  
explained by Him  
because bitter is death and sweet honey is Christ to him who  
tastes Him.  
And death is the real eater who ate the generations  
but our Lord became the food to peoples and He satisfied  
them.

(*HS II 599,9–14*)

The Lion's Whelp (*gūryā d-'aryā*)<sup>122</sup> roared and shook the foundations of Sheol. The guards became ashamed and the deceitful calumny of the priests did not stand against the truth of the course of the Son's activity (*HS II 615,6–616,11/FH XIII 83–108*). The guards saw the light and the ladder of light placed between the tomb and heaven as Jacob saw at Bethel (Gen 28:12). But here the Lord was standing not above but below in order to ascend. The terrified guards saw the seals of the tomb in tact. They saw the glory of the Lord and the Holy One coming out incorrupt and the angels of light descending to worship the Commander (*rabb*

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<sup>122</sup> Christ is called 'Lion's Whelp' with reference to Gen 49:9 in which 'the blessing of Jacob', as if in a prophecy, extols the house of Judah from whom the kingship does not depart so as to be assumed by Christ and to destroy all evil powers.

*ḥaylā*)<sup>123</sup> who was returning in victory from the great battle against the enemy (*SHF VI 11,21/FH XV 11,21*).

### 5. The Exchange of the ‘Garments of the Dead’ for the ‘Garments of Glory’

The friends of the Bridegroom (*ḥdōgē*) entered the tomb of the ‘Lord of the marriage feast’ (*mārē ḥlūlā*) and found the ‘garments of the dead’ (*lbušē d-mitē*)<sup>124</sup> left off by him (*HS II 619,11–620,8/FH XIII 169–186*). Resurrection is an entry into the new world and there are ‘garments of glory’ (*naḥtē d-šubḥā*) for the sons of Resurrection. Christ by his Resurrection regains the ‘robe of glory’ for Adam who lost it among the trees of Paradise. Our Lord, the ‘Lord of the marriage feast’ *mārē ḥlūlā*, left the garments of the earth, garments of the dead, the sorrowful veil of the dead, in the abode of Sheol and clothed himself in the ‘garments of glory’.<sup>125</sup> The garments of the earth (*lbušāb d-ar’ā*) were left on the earth. He left the linen clothes in the tomb as a sign for the disciples and an object of fright for death (*HS II 619,11–621,14/FH XIII 169–212*):

He was not agitated when He was going out of the darkness,  
because His linen clothes too He folded up quietly and left  
them.

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<sup>123</sup> ‘Commander’ or ‘Captain’ are symbolic titles of Christ taken from the combat imagery.

<sup>124</sup> ‘Garments of the dead’ is a highly symbolic theological figure indicating the slaughter of death effected by Christ in his body.

<sup>125</sup> ‘Garments of glory’ or ‘Robe of glory/light’ is a popular theme in the early Syriac tradition with ample homiletical and catechetical connotations. It is a theme carried over by Syriac Christianity from the Jewish sources where ‘garments of glory/honour’ is seen related to the exegesis of Gen 3:21, in the context of ‘garments of skin’ which in some Jewish traditions seem to refer to the state of Adam before the fall having the ‘garments of light’. In the context of Syriac Christianity this theme has nothing to do with the Genesis text but has got imbedded in other parts of Peshitta (Ps 8:6; Dan 10:5, 12:17). Cf. Brock, “Clothing Metaphors,” 11–38; See also *Studies in Syriac Christianity* (No. IV), 221–3.

He constituted it as it were an object of fright for death in the garments that He left so that on seeing them it [*death*] might tremble at the Resurrection.

The nail of life He fixed in Sheol and went out from it so that its [*Sheol's*] gates might be shaken everyday at its fall. In the middle of the tomb He left His clothes and went out and departed; so that all who should come and see might believe that He had risen.

He left His garments so that they might be a sign for His disciples that He was raised up and had conquered death and risen up from the tomb.

(*HS II 621,5–14/FH XIII 203–212*)

The Sons of light, the apostles, proclaim the truth of the Resurrection. Simon, the head of the disciples and the steward of the apostolic tradition, ran together with John. Thus the ‘wise’ and the ‘virgin’ bore witness to the truth (*HS II 618,6–619,10/FH XIII 143–168*).

## 6. Resurrection: The Day of Light, Life, Renewal and the New Creation

After the fall it was on the day of Resurrection that the worn out generations were renewed and assumed existence.<sup>126</sup> Life began to be transmitted as the Lion’s Whelp (Gen 49:9) couched over death to release the pray from its den and the ‘bars of Sheol’<sup>127</sup> did not withstand him:

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<sup>126</sup> The transgression of the commandment put Adam into non-existence. In other words he gradually turned to death.

<sup>127</sup> Christ’s descent into Sheol and its destruction by the power of Christ is a widely transmitted homiletic theme in the early Syriac literature. ‘Bars of Sheol’ (*mukle da-šyol*) is a special usage of Diatessaron in Mt 16:18. Scholarly opinion suggests that the usage of ‘bars’ rather than ‘gates’ denotes the defensive nature of Sheol in front of the powerful redeemer. Cf. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 231.

Today Life began to tread under foot the region of death  
and set up mile-stones on the fearful road so that it should not  
fail again.

This is the feast in which the walls of Sheol were uprooted;  
because the slaughtered King entered into it [*Sheol*] and  
subjugated it and forced a passage through them.

(*HS II 612,3–6/FH XIII 19–22*)

His Father by his [*the Son's*] hands planted Eden when he  
planted it,

and he set and filled it with all trees of comely fruits.

By his [*Son's*] hands Adam entered to be within Paradise  
but because he [*Adam*] transgressed the commandment He  
expelled him and he went out.

He opened the garden before the robber who had recognized  
him

and as a Gardener Mary (Magdalene) perceived him when he  
was raised up.

She had asked to him [*Gardener*] regarding the sweet fruit, our  
Lord

so that he might tell her that if he had taken him where he  
placed him.

Behold, the tree of life which was in Paradise  
in the garden of Joseph manifested himself to the blessed  
woman.

They buried the Sweet Fruit for three days in the earth  
but as he was incorrupt he manifested himself when he  
ascended.

He is the Tree, he is the Fruit, and he is the Gardener  
and the onlookers asked about him.

(*HS II 609,1–14*)

The Father did not permit his holy One to see corruption in  
Sheol

and as he was incorrupt he granted the world to be made new  
in him.

(*HS II 609,19–20*)

The Shepherd has risen up and the wolves have fled. Hence, the scattered lambs, the disciples, gathered together in exultation. The Lord of all was seen as the Gardener<sup>128</sup> who makes everything grow because the banner of life began to fly over the region of death as death has been conquered<sup>129</sup>:

Today the ranks trampled Sheol, which was broken through  
and its walls fell and the way for the forces came into being.  
On this day let us ask death, where is your sting? (1 Cor 15:55)  
Or, where is the victory of Sheol that has been conquered?  
(Hos 13:14)

(*HS II 613,3–6/FH XIII 39–42*)

The Sunday of the Resurrection is the beloved day that forgot the fall of Friday and its mourning, grief and timidity. It is the first born of the days that brings fair tidings, comfort, joy and courage. It is a day without evening and a morning without dusk. The wheel of sufferings has been turned. Hence, evil times have changed and passions dissolved. Death has gone down and Life has ascended. Sheol is closed and the baptismal font opened up; the Left<sup>130</sup> is rendered desolate and the right thunders (*SHF VI 3/FH XV 3*). The flock of the smitten shepherd exults as the wolves have run

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<sup>128</sup> ‘Gardener’ is a symbolic title of Christ with wider interconnections between the Paradise story where God is the gardener (Gen 3:8) and the risen Christ apparently seen as ‘Gardener’ by Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:15). Jacob of Serugh refers to Christ, the risen Lord as the ‘Gardener’ making Adam re-enter the garden of Paradise (cf. *HS II 608,18–609,6*).

<sup>129</sup> Jacob uses many epithets to describe Sheol: ‘Region of the Dead’, *HS II 615,7. 622,20/FH XIII 84, 239*; *HS II 632,9/FH XIV 171*; *SMS 813,15/FH XVI 105*; ‘Abyss of the Dead’, *SHF I 7/FH IV 7*; *SHF V 4/FH XII 4*; *HS II 631,4/FH XIV 145*; *SMS 813,7/FH XVI 97*; ‘Babylon of the Dead’, *SHF VI 9/FH XV 9*.

<sup>130</sup> ‘Left’, ‘Sons of the Left’, ‘Assembly of the Left’, etc. are theological expressions very common in the early Syriac literature referring to a group of sinister elements such as ‘evil one’, ‘error’, ‘adversary’, ‘Satan’, etc. It is based in Mt 25:33; cf. *CNis 36:18*; Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 249.

away. The instigators of trouble and the band of wolves<sup>131</sup> have been scattered. The Shepherd speaks to his sheep (*SHF VI 6/FH XV 6*):

The wheel of sufferings has been turned, and it has placed up above all that had been below. The evil times have changed, the dominion of the passions has been dissolved, death has descended and life has ascended. Sheol is closed, and the baptismal font opened up; The Left (Mt 25:41) is left desolate, while the right (Mt 25:34) thunders out.

(*SHF VI 3/FH XV 3*)

The suffering and death of Friday has altered wonderfully and the Dead One came out alive from Sheol giving life to the dead:

The Resurrection of the Son is a new creation to the whole world  
and the world is anew on account of it and hence it [*the world*]  
is beyond sufferings.

From his Resurrection life reigned over the mortals,  
and we have truly stripped off the old order by His death.

(*HS II 613,15–18/FH XIII 52–55*)

Resurrection overthrew the captivity of weakness, iniquity, sin, and death was killed (*HS II 629,18–630,2. 630,15–18. 631,14–17/FH XIV 117–122; 135–138; 155–158*). The Resurrection of the Son dawned and the heights and the depths rejoiced. The devises of the crucifiers were exposed as they devised to hide the Light. On the great day of the Lord's victory he reconciled heaven and earth through his Resurrection and the angels and the disciples were gladdened (*HS II 611,1–8/FH XIII 1–8*). The angels at the tomb proclaimed the truth of the Good News to the disciples and the Truth choked falsehood. Before the Light darkness could not endure.

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<sup>131</sup> 'Wolves': refers to all powers of the adversary, especially active through the enemies of Christ on his road of redemption; cf. *SMS 777,21/FH II 58; SHF V 11/FH XII 11; HS II 612,16/FH XIII 32; HS II 634,3/FH XIV 207; SHF VI 4, 6/FH XV 4, 6*.

## I. ASCENSION OF THE HIGH PRIEST AND THE RECONCILIATION OF HUMANITY

By the introductory words of the homily<sup>132</sup> the author awakens all human beings, harps of eloquent strings, to the duty of praising the Only-Begotten (*SMS 808,1–2/FH XVI 1–2*). It is not proper to search into the way of the Word. But the mouth is empowered for praising the Word (*SMS 810,15/FH XVI 45*).

### 1. The Mystery of the Hidden and the Revealed Word

After rendering redemption through the journey in the embodied form the divine Word ascends to the Father. The Word, which is beyond all confinements and destruction, is ever wakeful<sup>133</sup> and death or Sheol is incapable of making it sleep (*SMS 809,3–8/FH XVI 13–18*). The Word is on the throne and in the womb of Mary. Heaven is his throne and a cave is the bridal chamber for the Word; he is hidden with the Father but revealed to us on account of us. Above he is the Mighty One but below he is the Humble One mingled with the poor everyday (*SMS 809,9–810,6/FH XVI 19–36*):

Wakeful is Your Word and the silence of Sheol will not make it sleep:

Let it [*your Word*] be spoken through me so that the coming generations shall speak it.

Exalted is Your Word even above death, wherever it be, because it is alive with you and the depths of Sheol do not confine it.

Your word, O Lord, is not confined, subject to destruction;

For, it resembles you because regions do not confine you.

You remained upon the throne (Ezek 1:26; Is 6:1) but the womb of Mary was filled by you.

In heaven is Your dwelling but on the earth [is] your birth.

A womb contained you, the manger carried you, knees lifted you up;

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<sup>132</sup> *SMS 808–832 (ET = FH XVI)*.

<sup>133</sup> Christ is 'the Wakeful One'.

Heaven [is] your throne; a cave your bridal chamber, the earth  
your span.

(SMS 809,3–12/FH XVI 13–22)

You are hidden with your Father but you are revealed with us  
on account of us.

For the watchers [there is] your fire, but for humanity your  
humility.

(SMS 809,17–18/FH XVI 27–28)

To speak of the hidden and the revealed mystery of the Word is beyond the competency of man. He is the Son of God and Son of Mary, from the Most High and from below. Hence, he is incomprehensible. Because of this exalted revelation of the Word none is able to investigate him nor search into him. Foolish people investigate (*byā*)<sup>134</sup> the way of the Only-Begotten and end up in the uproar of debates and disputes. But the simple fishermen became brilliant by proclamation (SMS 810,7–811,10/FH XVI 37–60).

## 2. The Road of the Embodied Word

Regarding the Ascension, in the model of the simple fishermen, Mar Jacob proclaims the redeeming way of the Only-Begotten towards his Father. This gives an occasion to make a cursory look at the road of the embodied Son from his Epiphany. The Sun of Righteousness enlightened the whole creation and expelled the shadows of vanity and showed the way to the world that went astray in the error of idols. The healing was set up in Nisan.<sup>135</sup> On the bitter road of the serpent he poured out sweet honey by his steps. In the hole of the Asp he restored the bitten and worn out Adam. By his embodiment he carried away the iniquity of the world in his Crucifixion and liberated the slaves in order to make them sons of his Father. As a Physician he healed the wounds and sicknesses of humanity. He descended as rain on the dead and vivified them. He sprinkled mercy and filled the earth with hope

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<sup>134</sup> ‘To investigate’ or ‘to search into’ the divine mysteries is a blasphemy for Mar Jacob and other Syriac writers; For a general survey, cf. Jansma, “Narsai and Ephrem,” 60–6.

<sup>135</sup> Nisan = March/April, the period of the paschal season.

making peace between the heavenly and the earthly. The strife set up by the serpent came to an end and Adam was reconciled with God. On his Cross he opened the door of the Garden,<sup>136</sup> the beautiful bridal chamber of the expelled bridegrooms. He received in his side the lance<sup>137</sup> that drove away the house of Adam. With his nails he pierced the bond of Eve, repaid her debt and raised her head. Dying he descended to the abyss of the dead that swallowed Adam. He made a speech in the court and demanded the image of Adam, the image of the creative power that became corrupted and worn out in Sheol. He slept near the dead in seeking out the lost ones, contended with death and demanded the image, conquered the tyrant and brought out the booty. As a courageous Diver he brought up the pearl. He liberated the prisoner and bound the captor and returned to ascend to the place of his Father:

He came out as the Sun of Righteousness upon the regions  
 (four quarters);  
 and expelled from them all shadows of vanity.  
 In His going forth He showed the way to the world that had  
 gone astray  
 in the error of idols, and He drew it [*the world*] to come to His  
 Father.

(SMS 811,13–16/FH XVI 63–66)

He entered through the ear, came out from the womb and  
 became a babe  
 and with the Basilisk He played, as it is written.  
 He stretched out His hand to the hole of the Asp, the  
 corrupter;  
 and made return Adam who had been bitten and was worn out  
 there.

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<sup>136</sup> Christ by receiving the lance on his side on the cross has opened the door to the Garden by removing the flaming sword of the angel (Gen 3:24).

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Murray, "The lance which re-opened Paradise," 224–34; Brock, "Mysteries Hidden in the side of Christ," 462–72; idem., "Wedding Feast of Blood on Golgotha," 121–34.

He became embodied that He might become capable of suffering  
and He carried away the iniquity of the world by the sufferings  
of His crucifixion.

He brought freedom for the race of slaves that was enslaved  
and He made them ascend until they became sons of His  
Father.

*(SMS 812,3–10/FH XVI 73–80)*

With His cross He opened the door of the garden, the  
beautiful bridal chamber;  
and He brought in and set in it the lovely bridegrooms who  
had been expelled.

He received on His side the blade of the lance (spear) of that  
guard (Jn 19:34);  
and unbound it to put it away so that it would no longer drive  
away those of the house of Adam.

With His nails He tore into pieces that bond of Eve, our  
mother,  
and repaid her debt as well as raised her head that was bent by  
her.

By His death He descended to the abyss of the dead which  
devoured (swallowed up) Adam.

Like a courageous Diver He brought up the pearl.

*(SMS 813,1–8/FH XVI 91–98)*

The Slaughtered-One effected redemption and sprinkled  
Resurrection upon the departed to comfort them. He called out  
and the walls of Sheol fell down.<sup>138</sup> The captives were guided out  
of perdition. He set his road to return to his Father and the gates  
of Sheol did not withstand before him.<sup>139</sup> The great Sun of  
Righteousness descended and visited all the depths and his light  
gladdened all sorrowful ones while coming back with power to  
return to his Father (*SMS 814,1–16/FH XVI 111–126*).

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<sup>138</sup> Fall of Sheol is typologically denoted in the fall of Babylon (cf. *SHF VI 8/FH XV 8*) and Jericho.

<sup>139</sup> 'Gates of Sheol', see footnote n. 127 of this chapter.

### 3. The Road of Forty Days

The forty days after his Resurrection depict the image of the new world given in the mystery and type of the birth of a male child.<sup>140</sup> The Son of God perfected his apostles in forty days and the road of proclamation became perfect as he breathed in the Holy Spirit<sup>141</sup> to strengthen the Good News. As he ate and drank with his disciples confirming them in his Resurrection he instructed and formed the organs and senses of the Good News in order to lay hold of the world by proclamation (*SMS 814,17–816,8/FH XVI 127–160*):

For, [in] forty days He depicted the images of the new world  
and this is the mystery and type of she who gives birth to a  
male child (Lev 12:2–5).

*(SMS 814,21–815,1/FH XVI 131–132)*

In forty days in which the embryo becomes perfect,  
the Son of God perfected His apostles in faith.  
And as the limbs of the fetus in the womb, He strengthened  
them.

He gathered them, formed them, and perfected them.  
In forty days He perfected the road of His proclamation  
and in the place of the soul He breathed the Holy Spirit into  
His apostles (Jn 20:22).

Then on account of this He remained forty [days] after He was  
raised  
so that in the nerves of faith He might strengthen the Good  
News.

*(SMS 815,6–13/FH XVI 136–144)*

### 4. The Mystery of the Ascension from the Mount of Olives

He gathered the sons of his mystery, the Church, to the mountain of Olives, the symbol of anointing. He supplied the oil for Baptism

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<sup>140</sup> Lev 12:2 gives the details of the legal prescriptions regarding the birth of a male child.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Homily “On Priesthood and the Altar” [cf. Albert, “Mimro inédit de Jacques de Saroug sur le sacerdoce et l’autel,” 57–8 (ls. 49–62)].

and made her see how he is exalted to his place after completing his way and his deed, to set off to send riches to the Bride. He made a contract with the poor, barren and smitten woman, the Church, to send forth the treasures of his Father. She turned away from captivity to become an apostle. He sent the Holy Spirit and gave the garments and the treasures to the poor woman. The sons of his mystery were gathered on the mountain in order to become witnesses to his Ascension as well and thus to become witnesses to the whole of his way:

To the mountain of olives He gathered the Church for which  
 He had died  
 so that she [the Church] might see Him there as he was taken  
 up to His exalted place.  
 The great Saviour effected His way (road) and completed His  
 deed,  
 and He set off to go, to send the riches to the bride whom He  
 had brought [there].

*(SMS 816,17–20/FH XVI 169–172)*

He was exalted not like Elijah who was not able to ascend himself but with a chariot by the power of the Lord. But our Lord needed no conveyance and ascended by his own power unlike the son of sojourners, Elijah.

### **5. The Promise of the Abiding and Sustaining Presence of the Trinity**

On the mountain of Olives the cursed earth became blessed in his blessing and he commended all to his Father to guard them from the evil world. The name of the Father guards them, the peace of Christ remains with them and the Advocate carries riches for the discipleship:

For, the Son said, “I am with you,” (Mt 28:20) and he was not  
 lying  
 and He was with them as He had promised in the sight of  
 many.  
 The Spirit came and He brought riches and He was with them.  
 The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit as it was foretold.  
 The Father who guards, the Son who makes atonement, and  
 the sanctifying Spirit;

the Trinity through which the world came into being from nothing.

At that moment the world learned about the Trinity.

The hidden mysteries were made manifest and they went out to the whole world.

*(SMS 818,11–18/FH XVI 205–212)*

It was through the Trinity the world came into being and now the Father guards and the Son makes atonement and the Spirit sanctifies. He commanded them to baptize the people in the name of the Trinity. Thus from the mount of Olives he gave the Oil for signing and the Trinity for redemption. Thus he equipped them and commanded them to preach.

### **6. Brilliant Ascension of the Mediator, Reconciler and the Redeemer**

Although he was smitten while redeeming and suffered while restoring, he ascended brilliantly. As the thorns were uprooted the earth rejoiced and the heaven too as he was ascending to it. Both places were proud of the single Mediator and Reconciler. Error was condemned, Sheol was overthrown, death was bound and Adam was freed and also the serpent bruised:

The earth rejoiced because He uprooted its thorns (Gen 3:17,18) and then He was exalted.

Heaven rejoiced because the Lord of the heights solemnly came to her.

Both places were proud of the unique mediator who reconciled them,

for He reconciled heaven and earth, which were at enmity.

Error was condemned; sin fell down and Sheol was overthrown,

death was then bound, Adam was then freed, and the asp was bruised (Gen 3:15).

*(SMS 819,16–29/FH XVI 231–236)*

***a. The Course of the Sun Depicts the Course  
of the Sun of Righteousness***

The Day conquered and choked the night of humanity. The Sun ascended and the shadows were destroyed. He descended in the month of *Kanun*<sup>142</sup> and ascended in the month of *Aziran*<sup>143</sup> as the descent and ascent of the natural sun. The Sun of Righteousness was exalted in the month of *Aziran* to illumine the darkened well of the sins of the world (Gen 29:2–3; *HS III* 210–222).

***b. The Ascension of the Son  
to the Exalted Interior Tabernacle***

The Son was not carried by the clouds. On the Way of the Son at all places the legions of the place received him in their own boundaries, the clouds, the babes, children with hosannas, at the tribunal with scarlet robes and on the Cross with their writing, “King”. In Sheol the dead received him. In the tomb the dwellers of the tomb came forth to receive him. The fiery beings, heavenly principalities, the chariot and the Seraphim and the Cherubim, all received him in their realm as he ascended. Above all these the Only-Begotten was exalted, where not even the minds have room to be raised up. To the holy of holies, to the awesome interior tabernacle, only the High Priest, the Son, entered.

**7. Mount Sinai as a Type of the Ascension of the Son beyond  
the Created Orders**

At his Ascension the angels remained outside like the Levites and Christ, the High Priest alone entered. All orders remained in the valley of the heights, like the Hebrews who gathered at Mount Sinai, as he ascended. The people, leaders of the people, the elders and priests were allowed to ascend Mount Sinai only to certain limits. Above all of them where the tabernacle of the Exalted One was, Moses alone entered. So also to the Father our High Priest, the Only-Begotten, alone approached. Legions after legions stayed behind at the Ascension of the Son, yet he ascended to the hidden

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<sup>142</sup> The period of December-January.

<sup>143</sup> It corresponds to the month of June.

place beyond the created order. He alone entered into that holy of holies and none other, not even intellect or thought. The High Priest alone entered with his blood to reconcile humanity with his Father. He is the offering, the High Priest and the libation too. He descended, visited us and ascended redeeming us:

The High Priest has entered into the holy of holies,  
with His own blood He will reconcile His Father with  
humanity.

He is the offering, the High Priest, and the libation too  
and He himself entered so that the whole creation might be  
pardoned through Him.

(SMS 831,17–20/FH XVI 483–486).

## J. CONCLUSION

The festal homilies of Jacob are homiletical commentaries for the edification of the believing community through a catechesis aimed at the practice of faith. The basis of the catechesis is the divine pedagogy or the ‘teaching of salvation’ provided in the Scriptures. Mar Jacob instructs the faithful to see ‘with the lucid eye of the soul’ in order to understand discerningly the divine teachings in the Scriptures. A few exegetical devices used by Jacob for this purpose in the frame-work of his *mēmra* are: (1) Dramatic dialogues by which the biblical characters are made to speak out their sentiments and views in the divine-human encounter referred to in the scriptural episodes under consideration. The method of dramatic dialogue also includes the dialogue between the author and the biblical characters as well as soliloquies of biblical personages by which the context and purpose of some scriptural texts are made clear. Mar Jacob, as an Exegete, often handles biblical characters as his mouth-piece in order to expose the hidden nuances of the scriptural texts. This type of expositions by Mar Jacob are not arbitrary conclusions but an exegesis in consonance with the general pattern of salvation history as well as his own understanding of the ‘divine teaching of salvation’ in the Scriptures. (2) By furnishing typological net-works the unity and integrity of the divine plan is well explained. In the same fashion they demonstrate the unity of revelation and the unified progress of the history of salvation. (3) The discursive mode of exposition in the homilies is an outcome of the author’s synchronic vision on

account of typological exegesis that enables one to find the same divine teaching running through the whole of the Scriptures. This method of Jacob is effective to bring together seemingly unrelated scriptural episodes and events into a more coherent and comprehensible pattern of vision with an awareness of the progressive nature of the history of salvation.

In the homiletical aspect Mar Jacob uses various figures of language and structures. Paradox is often used to denote the aspects of divine fidelity and human frailty and infidelity in the various stages of salvation history. Christ is presented as the answer to those paradoxical situations of human life that needs salvation. Parallelism, both synthetic and antithetic, is another technique to explain the on-going positive as well as negative notes in the course of salvation history. Through typological net-works Jacob demonstrates the correlation between the Paradise story, the history of Israel and the saving acts of Christ. Above all through symbols and images Jacob explains the dynamism involved in the divine-human relationships actualized through the divine invitation and human response to the salvific will of God. Through the method of analogy Jacob uses many poetic and symbolic titles. Picturesque descriptions, dramatic dialogues and personification techniques tune the homilies to be more lively. Moreover, rhetorical questions, anaphora, etc. are other devices employed to enhance the apophatic method of theological reflection by Mar Jacob.

As regards the catechesis the divine descent and 'becoming' for the redemption and salvation is the truth to be understood. The redeeming and saving power of Christ is seen to be active in a meta-historical way especially in the liturgical celebrations. The risen Lord is seen present with his saving power in an 'eternal now' to those who discerningly look at and understand. The attainment of the fruits or benefits of divine revelation and the personal realization of the same through discerning understanding are the goals set in the homilies. Through the homilies Mar Jacob makes what is latent in the biblical episodes perceivable to the reader. It is the discerning perception that provides a coherent catechesis based on the divine pedagogy that is progressively developed in the Scriptures. Hence, the pattern of the theological vision developed by Jacob, although composed of symbolic reflections, is not subjective and piecemeal intellectual speculation but a coherent

view on the actualization and realization of salvation with due recognition to the immutability and eternity of the divine plan and the volatile free will of humankind. How Mar Jacob constructs this type of balanced views on the divine-human engagements through Christ in the history of salvation, by means of images, is the matter of discussion in the next chapter.



## **CHAPTER THREE: ASPECTS OF THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION IN CHRIST**

By a three-fold reflection on the writings of Jacob of Serugh, this chapter aims at a synthesis of his views on salvation. The initial stage is the description of some theological expressions of our author based on his vocabulary. The second stage traces a few basic theological thought-patterns of Mar Jacob—of course he relies much on the early Syriac tradition in this respect—that can serve as guide-lines for a synthesis of his vision of salvation in Christ. Finally, based on the previous steps, a few main aspects of Jacob's vision of the economy of salvation in Christ are reconstructed from his writings through a thematic synthesis.

### **A. ASPECTS OF JACOB'S THEOLOGICAL VOCABULARY**

A brief description of Jacob's theological vocabulary is essential for undertaking a synthesis of his vision of the mystery of redemption and salvation in Christ. The aim is to highlight the underlying factors of the economy of salvation as envisaged by Jacob. Since the divine realities are far exalted above the human mind that tries to systematize them, Jacob does not aim at any systematization in a technical sense. Hence, the theological terminologies of Jacob are not technical terms for building up any theological system. They are expressions of Syriac thought-forms that would describe the mystery of salvation and enhance the understanding of divine purpose and the divine teaching rather than defining divine realities.

In the general mode of Mar Jacob's vision of redemption and salvation the starting point is the biblical view of the human situation after the fall with its various effects on human nature. Thus in the formation of his theological vision Jacob's dependence

is primarily on scriptural episodes and biblical vocabulary with a mode of symbolic reflection. In this respect he imbibes much from the early Syriac Christian tradition with its theological approach that is enriched with symbolic perception of divine realities. Consequently the expositions of theological views were also enriched with symbolic theological expressions that function with their own dynamism at several levels of meaning and connotations.

### 1. Divine Mercy (*ḥnānā*)

According to Jacob of Serugh 'divine mercy', which acts out in the history of salvation in various ways, is the source of the divine economy of creation, redemption and salvation. This divine mercy (*ḥnānā*) is part of the divine essence (*SMS 794, 14–15/FH III 87–88; SHF I 8/IV 8*) and hence it is active immutably and eternally for the salvation of the whole world. (*QHC I 48–50, 276–280; IV 203*). As God is hidden his mercy too is hidden. The various aspects of the 'divine mercy' are conveyed through different terms often used as synonyms but capable of denoting some shades of meanings such as: *ḥnānā* (mercy, pity), *ṭaybūtā* (grace, loving kindness), *raḥmē* (compassion, mercy).<sup>1</sup> Divine mercy, which is hidden, makes itself known through its acts. The first act of this mercy for humanity was the creation of Adam (*SHF V 33/FH XII 33*). It expresses itself further as compassion (*raḥmē*) towards the house of Adam which, in its wider connotation, means compassion towards the whole creation. Jacob describes how the compassion of the Father creates and saves Adam:

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<sup>1</sup> *ḥnānā* is from the root *ḥan* which means, 'to pity', 'to be gracious', 'to have compassion'; *ṭaybūtā* is from the root *ṭwb* which means, 'to be good'; *raḥmē* in its plural sense has the meaning 'mercy', 'compassion', 'affection'. In the vision of Jacob divine mercy (*ḥnānā*) is the source of unity among the diversity of salvific deeds in the history of salvation. The diverse expressions of *ḥnānā* (divine mercy) are described through *ṭaybūtā*, *raḥmē* and *ḥubbā* (love).

Mercy grew fervent in the furnace of compassion which had fashioned Adam and again received him in nativity so that again he shall be renewed by Him.

Hidden was the mercy of that grace<sup>2</sup> which formed Adam and came to wash the lump of earth that had wasted away through [its] wounds.

(SMS 725,15–18/FH I 117–120)

Divine mercy towards Adam welled up to make him return to Eden, which he had lost (SMS 794,14–15/FH III 87–88). This mercy and compassion urged the Son out of his love (*hubbā*) to descend and become a babe and again to descend to be baptized (HS I 178,1–4/FH VI 213–216). Hence, in the incarnate Son the whole creation experiences the loving kindness or grace (*ṭaybūtā*).<sup>3</sup> Jacob describes the deeds of Christ in a couplet, “He walked on the earth and sprinkled mercy and filled it with hope, and he made peace between the earthly and the heavenly beings” (SMS 812,17–18/FH XVI 87–88).

## 2. The Image (*ṣalmā*) and Likeness (*dmūtā*) of God in Humanity

The creation of man in the image (*ṣalmā*) and likeness (*dmūtā*) of God is basic to the theological anthropology of Mar Jacob<sup>4</sup> and quite naturally it is the focus of his vision on the need and nature of redemption and salvation principally based on two biblical texts,

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<sup>2</sup> ‘divine grace’ is considered as the mother of all compassions; cf. HS V 368,6–9; III 52,6–15.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. SMS 723,11 + 723,19/FH I 70, 78; SMS 791,2–3 + 10–11/FH III 13–14, 41–42; SHFI 8/FH IV 8; HS I 178,1–4/FH VI 213–216.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. “The homily on the creation of man in the image and likeness of God and the birth of Christ,” QHC I (CSCO 508, pp. 1–17; FT in CSCO 509, pp. 1–16); for a detailed analysis on ‘the image and likeness of God’ in man according to Jacob, see Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 67–134.

Gen 1:26<sup>5</sup> and Phil 2:7.<sup>6</sup> Jacob specifies the image (*šalmā*) as the reflection of the Father and likeness (*dmūtā*) as the resemblance of the humanity of the Son who would later assume the body from the womb of the virgin (*QHC I 31–34, 52–75*). The ‘image of God’ in humanity reflects the sort of transcendence peculiar to human beings in the created world in the biblical terminology.

God mixed (*blat*, *HS III 153,14; 154,5; 159,15,18; m̄rag*, *HS III 158,18*), the four elements (*estūksē*)<sup>7</sup> to mould (*gbal*, *HS III 113,12.16; 159,15*) Adam, the ‘fair image’ (*šurtā pitā*, *HS III 153,14*). Jacob describes Adam as the image (*šalmā*) of God on clay, called *adamta*. “Towards the earth the divine image has descended, and on the clay it painted its own self, and Adam came into being” (*HS III 110,14–15*). God painted (*šār*) his image on the mud (*ketā*). There are several terms that describe the creation from the dust. They are mud (*ketā*, *HS I 566,12; II 796,15; III 110,12*) or *tinā*, a lump of earth (*qulā’ā*, *HS III 34,8; 376,15; QHC III 964*), clay (*medrā*, *QHC II 139, 173*), and above all dust (*dabiḥā*, *SMS 720,8/FH I 8; HS I 189,21/FH VI 462; QHC I 31, 39, 59, 77, 96* or ‘*apra*, *SHF I 30/FH IV 30; SHF V 7/FH XII 7; QHC I 43, 97, 98, 189, 192, 209*). All these terms signify the same factor in its various aspects enhancing the theological comprehension of the reality behind human existence. The dust mingled with water is quite often seen in Syriac as the human being that was moulded (*gbilā*, *HS III 376,15; 903,11; Ep XXIII 199,4*). God imprinted his image on the dust and water (*Ep XXIII 199,9–10*). Jacob explains the ‘image of God’ in man in two respects. Primarily through the biblical

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *HS II 17,16; III 109,4.11; 110,1; 111,13.20; 112,11; 113,3ff; IV 591,15; QHC I 29, 52, 220, 248; HCJ I 33–36, 50; Ep XXIII 200,10ff.*

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *HS II 195,21; 496,9; 565,2; 594,7; III 591,8; IV 583,13; 815,12; V 163,6–9; Ep XXIII 200,21–22; HCJ I 40; QHC I 61–62.*

<sup>7</sup> The four elements are dust (earth), air, water and fire. Mar Jacob takes recourse to philosophical elements as well—of course by the time of Jacob it was an accepted practice in the patristic tradition in general—in explaining biblical anthropology. Plato’s *Timæus* is the underlying influence. Jacob seems to accept whatever is already accepted in Christian circles; cf. Alwan, *Anthropologie*, 29 (ns. 59–64); Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 71–6.

language of God's imprinting of his image on the dust and secondly with recourse to the philosophical terminology of his times, particularly through the four elements (*'estūke.ve*) that are given, an integrated mingling (*mz̄ag*) in the make up of human nature, and the divine image upon it. Thus God manifests his supreme wisdom and power in the integration of apparently opposing elements of earth, air, water and fire in the human nature which is destined to reach immortality in the course of its existential journey (*SHF III 31/FH IX 31*).

Adam who was created in the 'image (*ṣalmā*) and likeness (*dmūtā*) of God' failed to live up to his honourable status. His fall was due to his pride and daring mind which transgressed the commandment at the instigation of the serpent, the agent of the evil one (*bišā*). The evil one being jealous of Adam, the fair image, sought to bring about corruption and disintegration in the divine image found in human beings. Adam was free to decide his fate. He could either choose life or death, immortality or mortality by his free will (*QHC II 275–308*). By his failure to make a discerning choice he set up enmity between himself and God, between heaven and earth. Moreover, Adam who was the 'divine image' painted on the dust (*'aprā*) began to turn backwards to dust after having corrupted the 'divine image'.

### 3. Divine Pedagogy through Types (*tupsē*) and Mysteries (*rāzē*)

After the fall of Adam, God extended his merciful hand for a second time<sup>8</sup> for salvation. To the hiding human couple God called out: "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9). For Jacob it is a theologically and morally saturated query that provided an invitation and a teaching to repent and return to the road of salvation (*QHC III 703–34*). This merciful hand of God extended for repentance is symbolically discernible in the various covenants of the history of salvation through its various stages, from the time of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Christ (*HCJ IV 145–170*). The divine teaching (*yulpānā*) is dispensed through the created Nature and the

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Is 11:11; *QHC I* 99–100, 111–114, 133–134, 149.

Scriptures. In the earlier covenants God taught through mysteries and types. All those earlier teachings through mysteries (*rāzē*) and types (*tupsē*) were actualized in Christ providing the fullness of revelation to the types and mysteries. Christ is the manifestation of the hidden mystery (*rāzā kasyā*, *SMS 794,19/FH III 92*). The divine pedagogy is finally made effective through the Son's coming down to the level of humanity.

#### 4. Self-abasement (*mūkākā*) and Smallness (*z'orūtā*) of the Son

The creation of humankind in the image and likeness of God itself is the first act of God's mercy coming down to the level of humanity. Again in the Incarnation of the Son, God came down to assume the body of the fallen Adam to redeem him. In order to assume the fallen Adam, in truth, the Son came down to 'smallness' (*z'orūtā*) and the 'humble state' (*makikūtā*) that are proper to the actual state of humanity. Elijah's stretching himself upon a child to revive it (1Kings 17:21, *HS III 316,2-9*) and Elisha's stretching himself on another child to revive it (2Kings 4:34; *HS III 316,10-11*) were all prefigurations of the Son's self-abasement through types. The 'hidden mystery' (*rāzā kasyā*), the Son, came to manifest himself and to travel on the road of humility (*'urbā d-makikūtā*) by assuming the human nature for the purpose of redemption. This journey of the Son along the ways of humanity or on the 'road of humility' is symbolically depicted as betrothal (*mkirūtā*) of the Son, the 'heavenly Bridegroom' to the Bride (*kaltā*), the Church (*HS III 331,1-16*).<sup>9</sup>

The divine mercy which is essentially in the being of the divinity had regard for the image in Adam. Hence mercy came down through self-abasement (*mūkākā*) to the state of the corrupted image in order to redeem it and establish it incorruptible. In this coming down the Son mingled (*hlat, mzag*) himself with the creation in order to redeem the whole world. By his crucifixion and death the Son, the Lord of Life (*mārā d-hayyē*), entered Sheol, the

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Homily "Why our Lord Abode upon the Earth Thirty Years" (*HS III 321-334*); ET from HTM, *TV 2* (1990): 45 (ls. 193-208).

region of death, and bestowed life and immortality. The 'Lord of Life' by his entry into Sheol broke open its walls and the captives of Satan and death were rendered free. Thus the whole of creation was given hope (*sabrā*), consolation (*būy'a*), redemption (*purqānā*) and life (*ḥayyē*) through emancipation/liberation (*ḥrūrā*), or remission/liberation (*šrājā*).

### 5. Incarnation, Mingling (*ḥlaṭ*, *mzag*) of the Son with All

A prevalent analogy of Jacob regarding incarnation is mixing (*ḥlaṭ*), kneading and mingling (*mzag*)<sup>10</sup> or tempering (*ḥlaṭ*, *SMS* 770,11/*FH I* 1058; *SMS* 791,10/*FH III* 21; *SMS* 810,4; 824,15/*FH XVI* 34, 335; *mzag*, *HS I* 183,21/*FH VI* 339). The initial mingling or kneading that God had inaugurated in the creation of humanity in the 'image and likeness of God' in Adam finds its fuller realization in Christ. It is an expression of God's covenant with Adam as well as God's immutable loving kindness (*ṭaybūtā*) and fidelity (*ḥaymānūtā*). This analogy of mingling and tempering in the handling of Jacob assumes deeper significance through the symbol of Leaven. Christ is the 'Leaven of Life' (*ḥmirā d-ḥayyē*) mixed with

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<sup>10</sup> For an exposition of the terms, *mzag* and *ḥlaṭ* in the usage of Jacob of Serugh see Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies*, 132–6. Chesnut deals with these terms in the context of Jacob's Christology with a particular orientation and I wonder if it does full justice to the synchronic vision of Jacob, which takes into account all forms of 'mixing' and 'mingling' in an analogical and symbolical way so as to describe humanity's participation in the divine bliss, starting with creation. God mixed dust and water in moulding Adam and then at the Incarnation God the Father let the Son knead himself and mingle with humanity [cf. *HS III* 411, 415,14–417,15; ET from HTM, *TV* 3 (1989): 45 (ls. 1–4), 48–50 (ls. 79–122)]. At his baptism the Son mixed his holiness with the baptismal waters (cf. *HS I* 183,21–184,3/*FH VI* 339–342). It is a divine reality and process, and hence, the rules and proportions of that mingling are not fully comprehensible to human intellect. Such metaphysical and transcendental realities are described by Jacob through analogy in symbolic terms. It is essential that the symbolic thrust of Jacob's views should be given prominence rather than gauging and inflating his symbolic theological terminologies with rational philosophical overtones.

humanity in order to temper or season (*madek*) human insipidity (*pakibūtā*) for rendering stable taste (*ta'mā*). Christ is also called the 'Salt from the Most High' (*melhā d-'elāyā*, SMS 771,14/FH I 1083) that gives due taste.

### 6. The 'New Road of Humility' (*'urhā ḥdatā d-makikūtā*)

The road of Adam ended up in pride (*rāmūtā*), iniquity (*'awlā*) and the fall (*mapūlṭā*). Hence, Christ, the Heir of Adam (*yārtā d-ādām*), treads upon the road of Adam to rectify the path of Adam who had been led astray by the evil one (*bišā*). Christ took up human nature in truth with all its characteristics of smallness and humility. This new way transforms all aspects of fallen humanity which is a microcosm (*'ālmā z'orā*, HS III 88, V 858,11–861,21) functioning as a bond (*ḥzāqā*, HS III 109,2) between the creator (*barōyā*) and the creation (*brūtā*). By giving good hope, consolation and liberation to humanity, Christ redeems the whole world. The 'New Road of Humility' rectifies and perfects what had gone wrong through pride, arrogance and the daring ways of Adam/humanity.

Christ treads upon the road of humility (*'urhā d-makikūtā*) against the pride (*rāmūtā*) of Adam in order to accomplish righteousness (*zadiqūtā/keñūtā*) against iniquity (*'awlā*) and to effect Resurrection (*qyāmtā*) against the fall (*mapūlṭā*). In order to bring out the effectiveness of his road, Christ took upon himself smallness (*z'orūtā*) and made himself humble (*mūkākā*) to pay back the debt (*ḥawbtā*) of pride (*rāmūtā*). Thus the birth of Christ became a 'New Sign' (*ātā ḥdatā*) of 'Good Hope' (*sabrā ṭābā*) and consolation (*būyā'ā*) for humanity that was devoid of hope as a result of the fall. Moreover, this 'new sign' made all idols (*ptakerē*) fall and set idolatry (*ptakrūtā*) into insensibility.

### 7. Way of Christ, the Great Path of the Cross (*'urhā rabtā da-zqipā*)

Christ, 'the Ancient of Days' (*'attiq yawmē*, SMS 791,12 + 807,11/FH III 23 + 356; HS V 448,13/FH V 17), the Governor (*rišānā*, HS I 176,17–20/FH VI 187–190) and the Bridegroom (*ḥatnā*) came through the road of birth to make himself known to the bride (*kaltā*) for the betrothal (*mkirūtā*). At various staging posts (*awāwnē*) the betrothals took place with a view to entering into the bridal chamber (*gnōnā*). Christ, the King of kings (*malkā d-malkē*)

came to assume the Kingdom to make it incorruptible and eternal. Christ himself is the High Priest (*rabbā d-kumrē*) who came to fulfil all the sacrifices and libations of the old covenant in his self-offering as the priest and the victim. Thus journeying on the way destined by his Father, Christ brought into actualization (*HS V 449,2/FH V 28; SMS 797,12–800,18/FH III 145–214; SMS 831,17–20/FH XVI 481–484*) all prophecies, types (*tupṣē*) and mysteries (*rāzē*) regarding his salvific activities.

As the 'heir' of Adam, Christ came on the road of the fallen Adam in search of the distorted image. On the 'Great Path of the Cross' (*'urhā rabtā da-zgipā*) Christ rendered perfection to Adam/humanity (*SHF II 18/FH VII 18*). On his salvific path of the Cross Christ became the Intermediary or the Mediator (*meṣ'ayā*) of all for the reconciliation (*mṣaynānūtā*) of the whole creation with the Father. As the Heir (*yartā*) of Adam this Intermediary, as a Warrior (*qraftānā*), took up the combat of Adam (*darā d-ādam*). He brought healing (*ḥulmānā*) through the medicinal herb (*'eqārā*) of fasting to the first ulcer (*šuhnā qadmāyā*) introduced by the evil one (*bišā*) through 'the alien lust' (*rēgā nukraytā*) on account of the false nourishment (*'ūklā*). There are witnesses to the way of the Son in the OT in its seers, righteous ones and prophets, and in the NT in the apostles (*šliḥē*). They perceived the economy of Christ as the teaching of salvation (*yulḫānā d-hayyē*).

## 8. The Entry of the 'Vivifier of the Dead' (*maḥē mitē*) into Sheol

Christ on his 'Way of Humility' travelled through all the vicissitudes of humanity because by the transgression of the Law humanity had landed in the region of death and was bound in the reign of Satan. On the way of redemption Christ traced the path on which humanity had been subjugated and imprisoned in Sheol. It was to enter into Sheol through death that the Son, the 'Vivifier of the Dead' (*maḥē mitē*, *HS V 450,9/FH V 56*), came on the road of 'birth and death' of Adam/humanity. Jacob uses various epithets to denote particular aspects of Sheol, such as, 'Region of death' (*'atrēh d-mantā*, *HS II 612,4. 613,1/FH XIII 20, 37*), 'Region of the dead' (*'atrā d-mitē*, *HS II 615,7. 621,4/FH XIII 84, 202*), 'House of the departed' (*bēyt 'anidē*, *HS II 616,8/FH XIII 105*). By his entry into Sheol our Lord subjugated Satan and death for providing consolation, redemption and life to Adam/Humanity. After leaving

the 'garments of the dead' (*lbūšē d-mitē*, HS II 619,18; 620,12/FH XIII 176, 190) in the tomb Christ retained the 'garments of glory' (*naḥtē d-šubbā*, HS II 620,14/FH XIII 192) and offered the same to all who were to be resurrected with him as the children of light in the final resurrection. In the Resurrection of Christ death was defeated, Sheol was uprooted and the 'garments of the dead' were left behind as an object of terror to death and Satan.

### **9. The Ascension of the High Priest (*rabbā d-kumrē*) to the Father**

As a commander Christ subjugated Satan (*sāṭānā*) and death in Sheol and gave liberation and fullness of life to the family of Adam. After having liberated the 'house of Adam' from the subjugation of Sheol, Christ turned his way towards his Father, towards his abode on high. Carrying the redeemed family of Adam he ascended towards the height as the High Priest (*rabbā d-kumrē*) with his own blood to the interior tabernacle (*maškenā*) for the reconciliation (*mšaynanūtā*) of the whole of humanity with the Father. Thus, for humanity, he is the Mediator, the offering, the High Priest and the libation too (*SMS 831,17–832,2/FH XVI 481–486*).

## **B. CHARACTERISTIC THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT-PATTERNS OF MAR JACOB**

In the homiletical exposition of Jacob some recurring theological thought-patterns are discernible. They are basic elements of his theological understanding of creation, redemption and salvation. Jacob gathers his thought-patterns from his understanding of the Scriptures enhanced by the early Syriac tradition.

### **1. The Unity of the Divine Economy of Salvation**

In his catechetical teaching Mar Jacob is always keen on projecting the essential unity between the OT and the NT as well as that between the prophetic and apostolic messages. This aims at preaching a sound teaching of redemption based on the unity of the divine economy of salvation. Such an insistence on the unity of divine economy is for both apologetic and catechetical purposes. As a diligent pastor of Christian communities he had to confront Marcionites and Manichaeans on the one hand, and the Jews on the other. By holding his belief in the unity of the divine economy,

creation out of nothing, the positive value of the created world, and the resurrection of the flesh, Jacob confronted the false teachings of Manichaeans. He demonstrated the unity of the Artisan of creation and redemption for counteracting Marcion's teachings. Moreover, he laid stress on the mystery of the pre-existent Son who is equal to the Father in all respects in the divine realm (*HS V 454,11–456,1. 451,11–461,7/FH V 142–174; 245–282; HS I 182,13–14/FH VI 309–310; HS II 360,2–3/FH VIII 265–266*). Since the divine economy is essentially one, a single teaching runs progressively through the old alliance and the new or, in other words, through the Law and the Gospel, through prophets and the apostles. The divine manifestation on mount Tabor was an enlightening teaching of this reality to the Church, the bride of Christ, gathered there (*HS II 362,7–364,20/FH VIII 313–368, esp. 365–366*).

The Jews who refused to recognize the Messiah are, according to Jacob, a mutilated people (*HCJ IV 134*). They recognized all four alliances, those with Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses. But the fifth and the perfect alliance through Christ is not recognized by them. They possess all senses but one and hence are mutilated. They lack the fifth sense, the sense of light, Christ, that perfects all other senses (*HCJ IV 87–176*). Hence, they are a blind and handicapped people who according to their own laws (*HCJ IV 128–138*) are disqualified for doing priestly service.<sup>11</sup> Since they lack the light of Christ they are incapacitated from rising above the letter of the Scriptures so as to arrive at the spiritual level where the figures, types and symbols exercise their teaching (*HCJ VII 243–244*). Hence, by expounding the instructions of the scriptural texts, Jacob brings out the true teaching and refutes the false ones. Searching through the Scriptures the discerning vision of Jacob finds the divine mercy (*bnānā*), which is part of the divine essence, as the power and the governing force behind all salvific activities starting from creation and going forward through redemption to the final resurrection (*QHC I 45–50; IV 201–208; IV 229–234*).

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<sup>11</sup> The exercise of priestly office by a handicapped person is forbidden by Moses, cf. Lev 21:16–24.

***a. Unity of the Author of Creation and Redemption***

Creation, redemption and resurrection are three acts of the same divine mercy which God has essentially in himself. As these acts emerge from the essence of God they are definitive and immutable and what has been promised in the creation will definitively be realized. Jacob describes the dynamic power of divine mercy:

With mercy He moulded him [*Adam*]; with mercy He has redeemed him from the captivity,  
and again with mercy He will come at the end and would resuscitate him.

In a definitive and immutable plan  
the mercy has appeared three times and then made perfect.  
At first He fashioned his image from the dust  
and in the intermediary time He redeemed him with the blood  
of his Only-Begotten.

For, at the end of times He will call out with a voice and resuscitate him.

Thus by three times he would accomplish restoration and make him perfect.

He inclined on the side of the dust and renewed him  
thus without corruption He set him in the light spiritually.

(*QHC IV 201–210*)

***b. The Immutability of Divine Mercy  
and the Multiplicity of Salvific Actions***

Jacob, a pastor of souls and an edifier of the faithful, does not build up any speculative theology of the grace of God. He preaches the mystery of divine mercy and its deeds out of benevolence upon the 'house of Adam'/humanity. Creation, redemption and resurrection are those deeds. The essential unity in the manifestation and revelation of the mercy of God is due to the essential unity of the authors of creation and redemption (*QHC I 239–44, 275–280, 288–291*).

Creation is not for any fulfillment in God but an expression of his mercy in benevolence towards whatever is created. This perfect benevolence of God is explicit in the creation of man in the 'image and likeness of God'. The Son stirs himself to action not out of any necessity but for the redemption of the world. Jacob delineates the benevolent descent of the divine mercy:

The mercy of God inclined towards the dust  
and gave him His image and fashioned him according to the  
image of His Only-Begotten.

By that love by which the Father sent his Son to the Cross  
by that same [love] He brought himself down to give His  
image when He was creating.

On account of Adam He delivered His Only-Begotten to death  
and, if you consider, there is no innovation in God.

For if He had not given him [*Adam*] His image when He  
created him

then He would not have delivered His Son instead of him  
when He redeemed him.

(*QHCI 31–38*)

It is the same immutable divine mercy that acts in various  
modes at various stages of salvation history, i.e. during the creation,  
redemption and resurrection. They are gifts of the divine mercy  
poured on humanity:

Three are the benevolences Adam has from God.

Two have already come and one will come about at the end of  
the times.

He who is certain without doubt that the two have come about  
is also [certain] regarding that which is coming, like the other  
[two], in its own time.

It is a great benevolence that Adam came into being from  
nothing

and in the like manner that he was redeemed by the blood of  
the Son of God.

Again that he will be resuscitated from the dust too is a  
benevolence.

It is the single mercy that administers the three things.

For, if He had not created him, indeed He would not have  
redeemed him,

and in that he created and redeemed, mercy would seek him  
again to resuscitate him.

(*QHC IV 223–232*)

## 2. Divine Teaching and Human Salvation

The events and realities of the history of salvation are not  
haphazard factors. They are interrelated realities with a purpose

behind them (*SHF V 34/FH XII 34*). Since the exegesis of Jacob is more aimed at catechesis he searches the reason or purpose (*’elta*)<sup>12</sup> behind scriptural realities and events. He finds the purposes of many realities mutually dependent and elucidating one another. The divine providence, rich in discernment (*SHF V 34/FH XII 34*), is the guiding factor behind the divine economy (*mdabbrānūtā, SMS 793,5. 802,7/FH III 57, 245; SHF II 29/FH VII 29; SHF IV 1/FH XI 1*) and it provides the teaching of salvation (*yulpanā d-hayye*).<sup>13</sup> The underlying divine instructions<sup>14</sup> in the scriptural events and realities, governed by the divine economy, have to be understood and put into practice in order to attain salvation (*SHF III 1,2/FH IX 1,2*). From this type of the dynamic functioning of scriptural realities and events Jacob draws rich net-works of typologies. It is the way in which the human authors of the Scriptures themselves viewed the developments in the history of salvation.<sup>15</sup>

The Scripture that is full of divine instructions is “a sweet spring whose draught cheers him who tastes it” (*HS V 154,1–6*).<sup>16</sup> Since Scriptures are the story of the descending love of God (*SMS 794,12–15/FH III 85–88*), it can be approached and fruitfully read only through a corresponding love towards them (*HS IV 282,9–18*).<sup>17</sup> Love is the key to the understanding of the mysteries of

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. *SMS 726,9–10 + 726,19–727,1/FH I 133–134 + 143–146; SMS 775,18 + 776,21 + 778,11 + 780,7/FH II 15 + 37 + 69 + 109; HS V 449,18/FH V 44; HS I 180,9 + 188,21 + 191,14/FH VI 264 + 441 + 497; HS II 369,9/FH VIII 464; SHF IV 30, 40/FH XI 30, 40; SHF V 1, 16/FH XII 1, 16; SHF VI 21/FH XV 21.*

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *SHF IV 1/FH XI 1*.

<sup>14</sup> *yulpana* can be rendered in English as ‘instruction, doctrine, learning’ or ‘teaching’ (cf. Homily “On the Pharisee and the Publican,” *HS I 299–319*; ET from HTM, *TV 9* (1991): 18–34 (esp. ls. 1, 64).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, *Interpretation of the Bible*, p. 129.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. “A Homily on Melchizedek” (*HS V 154–180*); ET from HTM, *TV 2* (1989): 30–55 (esp. p. 33, ls. 1–6).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. “The Second Homily on Elissaeus and on the King of Moab” (*HS IV 282–296*); ET from HTM, *TV 1* (1989): 51–67 (esp. pp. 55–56, ls. 9–18).

creation, incarnation and redemption (*HS I 606–627*).<sup>18</sup> The divine mercy that created the world sent the Son to be offered as a sacrifice so that through his death he might liberate the prisoners of darkness from Sheol (*HS I 610,6–9*).<sup>19</sup> The Scriptures proclaim the story of this love and they are placed in the world like ‘lamps of light’ amidst darkness (*HS IV 282,4–8*). Love for the divine teaching is the greatest virtue because only through it does one attain the virtues of justice and perfection (*HS I 610,14–17*).

The divine mercy instructs humanity according to the latter’s capacity to understand. Jacob’s homily “On the Veil on Moses’ Face”<sup>20</sup> searches the reason for the veil Moses had to wear over his face after the theophany on Mount Sinai (Ex 34:33–5). Jacob finds the veil as a type of the veil placed on the words of prophecy until the coming of Christ because Israelites were not mature enough to grasp the full truth of the divine teachings and hence, the need of instructions through types and symbols in prophecy (*HS III 285,21–287,16*). As a good master God instructs his people step by step so as to bring them to the level of maturity at which they can read the great book (*ketābā rabbā*) where one finds wisdom (*HCJ IV 145–150*). The law was given to Moses as ‘milk’ for little children so as to bring all to the perfect teaching of Christ, that serves as ‘bread’ for the grown up (*SHF II 1,2/FH VII 1,2*). Those who can attain spiritual understanding can find great treasures of the divine teaching of salvation (*yulpānā d-hayyē*) shining out from the Scriptures (*SHF IV 1/FH XI 1*). It is the Spirit that enlightens all with the spiritual understanding of hidden things. It is the same Spirit that enlightened the righteous of the OT and the prophets by enabling them to see the mystery of Christ and to bear witness to him in their own ways. It is again the same Spirit that guides the apostles. That Spirit again enlightens one to see the same teaching

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. “Homily on Love” (*HS I 606–627*); FT by Khalifé-Hachem, E. “Homélie sur l’amour.” *ParOr [Mellio]* 1 (1970): 281–199 (esp. *HS 609,6–611,4 = tr. ls. 55–90*).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. (*HS I 606–627*); FT by Khalifé-Hachem, “Homélie sur l’amour,” 281–199 (esp. pp. 286–7, ls. 75–78).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Homily “On the Veil on Moses’ Face” (*HS III 283–305*); ET by Brock, “On the Veil of Moses,” 70–85 (= *Syriac Spirituality*, 73–89).

running through the prophets and apostles (*HS II 358,11–12/FH VIII 231–232*). Christ is the mediator and the head of the two orders of teachings which shone out in the Old and the New Testaments, in the prophets and the apostles. Thus through all of them a single body of teaching filled with truth shines out (*HS II 364,15–18/FH VIII 363–366*) for the salvation of humanity.

### **3. Historical Outlook and the Synchronic Vision on the Economy of Salvation in Christ**

The theological vision of Jacob is so discerning as to set every event in the history of salvation within a coherent framework. The basis of this coherence is the sort of complementarity and the organic progression of events in the OT and the NT with respect to the realization of the divine economy of salvation. Jacob's discerning understanding of the progressive realization of the divine plan of salvation enables him to find a single teaching running through OT and NT. It is due to his intuitive vision of the divine plan underlying all events of the history of salvation. Jacob describes this through his sacramental world-vision, typological exegesis and symbolic theological reflection. Through a sort of symbolic abstraction from the diachronic levels of history, Jacob arrives at a synchronic vision of the realization of the immutable divine plan of salvation through the divine pedagogy. The historical outlook provided by Jacob in his homilies is based on the indications and suggestions in the biblical texts themselves. Moreover, it provides new insights into, and interrelationships within the typological network latent in the scriptural episodes. Some examples will illustrate the profundity and originality of Jacob's preaching based on these factors.

In the first homily on the Nativity the discerning question of Mary towards the angel during the Annunciation is historically set against the background of Eve's failure to ask such questions to the serpent in Eden (*SMS 730,8–732,4/FH I 219–56*). Mary was cautious so as not to be deceived in contrast with Eve who was deceived by the serpent. The angel's explanation to Mary too is quite dramatic and reminiscent of the earlier failures and consequences starting from the failure of Eve, eg. 'garment of leaves' (*SMS 732,5–735,10. 772,11–12/FH I 257–326; 1101–2*). Adam and Eve who gave heed to the evil one eventually clothed themselves in leaves (Gen 3:7). But Mary by hearing the angel

discerningly enabled Adam/humanity to exchange the 'garment of leaves' for the 'garment of glory' through the Incarnation. The angel's calling of Joseph 'Son of David' is highly reminiscent of the promises to David, and refers to other messianic prophecies (*SMS* 753,21–754,1/*FH I* 713–714).

Another example of a coherent vision is extended through the homilies on Nativity, Transfiguration, and Ascension. On Mount Sinai Moses prepared the people and then God descended. So Mary too prepared herself and God descended to her (*SMS* 740,8–11/*FH I* 427–430). On parallel lines at the time of the Lord's transfiguration on Mount Tabor there was the betrothal of the Church to Christ, the Bridegroom, like the one that took place at Sinai between Yahweh and Israel. On the day of the Resurrection the appearance of Christ as 'the Gardener' (*HS II* 612,20; 614,17/*FH XIII* 36,74) is reminiscent of God in the garden of Eden, who makes all reach the goal through growth by his creative power. In the homily 'On the Ascension of our Lord' Jacob brings into full play the events on Mount Sinai, especially the climbing of Moses to the top of the hill, as a background to depict the Ascension of our Lord as the entrance of 'the High Priest' to the Holy of holies where the Father alone abides (*SMS* 828,10–829,10/*FH XVI* 413–434). Thus the history of all sacrifices and offerings of the past are brought into remembrance and are shown to be perfected as well as made effective in the single offering of Christ who carried the redeemed humanity through his ascension to the abode of the Father.

#### 4. The Abiding Sense of Corporate Personality

In the social matrix of Israel there was a smooth transition between the individual to the society and vice versa.<sup>21</sup> This might have been due to the nomadic nature and covenantal sense of the community. Hence, among the Hebrews any individual and his group are mutually representative.<sup>22</sup> The two major factors that guided this relationship were the blood-tie and the social consciousness of the

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Robinson, *Corporate Personality*, 31.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Cook, *Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. III, 493.

group.<sup>23</sup> The unity and solidarity of the whole of humanity in Adam was so real as to conceive the very constitution of the physical body of Adam as a symbol of the real oneness of humankind in Rabbinic doctrines.<sup>24</sup> Even all human beings are seen as coming from some part of Adam and are physically attached to him.<sup>25</sup> It was the Pauline intuition and synthesis that gave shape to the Christian understanding of the corporate personality,<sup>26</sup> especially the vision of the Church as the mystical body of Christ, where, although all have different functions, the inspiring power is the same Spirit (1Cor 12:12 ff). Paul combined the Rabbinic understanding of the unity and solidarity of humankind in Adam and in the person and activities of Christ, the Redeemer. Thus the Judeo-Christian sense of corporate personality interpreted by Paul remains basic to Christology and Soteriology.

One of the foundations of Mar Jacob's Soteriology is the complementarity and reciprocity between the celestial Adam, Christ, and the terrestrial Adam, the fallen-one. Adam was moulded in the resemblance of the corporeality of the Son and in that resemblance the image of God is constituted. Jacob calls Adam, the head of the race/lineage/generations (*reš gēnsā/tuhmē*).<sup>27</sup> Due to his exalted position and specific role the deeds of Adam had qualitatively affected the whole of humanity. In the creation of Adam the dust was honoured and thus God entered into a covenant with Adam when he moulded him (*QHC I 181–190*). This covenant continues through the lineage of the humankind through Noah, Abraham, Moses and others, until the arrival of Christ as the fulfillment of the covenant made in Adam. Hence, Christ is presented as 'the Heir' of Adam.<sup>28</sup> This heir always had a

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Robinson, *Corporate Personality*, 30.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 57.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Strack & Biller, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, Vol. II, 174.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 36–57.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *SMS* 767,5/*FH* I 987; *SMS* 807,15/*FH* III 360; *SHF* V 4/*FH* XII 4; *QHC* I 184.

<sup>28</sup> Christ, 'the Heir of Adam' is one of the theological presuppositions of Jacob referring to the 'image and likeness' in humanity and the Incarnation in which the Son came to assume a body from

claim for his heritage. Jacob finds the figure of Christ as the Heir in connection with Mt 21:38, the parable of the tenants of the vineyard who killed the heir (*SHF IV 30/FH XI 30*). As the Son is the true heir he takes up his heritage which is actually a huge debt, namely, the fallen body (house) of Adam. Hence, Christ, the Creditor becomes the Debtor for Adam (*SHF IV 1,9,33/FH XI 1,9,33*) in order to pay back the debts and make Adam victorious and a creditor. Christ, the heir of Adam does what Adam failed to do. The roles and titles of Christ as the 'King' and 'High Priest' are also seen extensively through the focus of corporate personality in the light of the Adam-Christ complementarity.

Through this vision of Adam-Christ complementarity and reciprocity, Eve-Mary contrast, Israel-Church transformation, House of Moses-House of Simon continuity, Prophecy-Apostolate unity are also easily seen as complementary and reciprocal in the history of salvation. In reality, Adam became the true heir to the possessions of Paradise only through Christ (*SHF V 33/FH XII 33*).

### **5. The Hidden and the Revealed Son of God**

In describing the person and activities of Christ in the festal homilies Jacob of Serugh is always attentive to give adequate mention to the hidden reality of the Son on par with the revealed realities. In this respect his homiletical exposition is so balanced as to give a fair amount of reflection to both, the hidden and the revealed Son, in the economy of salvation. This insistence on both aspects of the Son becomes all the more imperative on account of Jacob's teachings on the mode of perceiving and understanding divine revelations. The homily on the Nativity speaks of how the divine economy reveals itself through human devices such as the imperial order for the census (Lk 2:1-5). Jacob reads into the biblical text intuitively as follows:

That command of the census was the first,  
as though a novelty that happened to humanity.

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Adam/humanity in order to render perfection and life under the covenant already ratified with Adam/humanity in creation.

Through the revealed things the concealed things too are  
 signified;  
 and through the visible things the hidden things too are  
 proclaimed.

While the enumeration of men came close to servitude,  
 their liberation was again written down by the Exalted One.

(*SMS 758,4–9/FH I 801–806*)

So also in the homily on the Sunday of Hosannas, by mentioning the scriptural episode on the possibility of stones crying out if the children became silent (Lk 19:40), Jacob comments, “that from the manifest things it is easy to learn about the hidden things” (*HS I 454,17/FH X 202*).

From these teachings of Jacob it is easy to infer the necessity of bringing into focus the hidden and the revealed realities of the Son at the same time. It becomes necessary in order to understand the divine economy in a discerning manner. Till the coming of Christ the prophecies, symbols and mysteries were pointing to the Son’s salvific journey on earth. But once the Son became incarnate all the signifying and the signified in the symbols and mysteries have become identified and there remains ‘the Reality’, ‘the Truth’, perfect and effective perennially. In the incarnate Son one aspect becomes revealed and the other remains hidden which have to be discerningly understood and accepted (*SMS 760,3–14/FH I 843–54; SMS 793,5/FH III 57*). It is at this type of discerning vision and understanding of the person and activities of Christ that the festal homilies of Jacob are aiming.

In his nativity the Son has set himself in a ‘small estate’ (*ꝛ’orūtā, SMS 741,6/FH I 446*). But the total reality of his being is still mysterious. He is the hidden mystery (*SMS 805,11/FH III 313*). It is for the sake of humanity that he set his immutable and eternal being in a humble state (*HS II 356,9–16/FH VIII 187–194*). His glory and power were hidden in his corporeality, as the sun in a cloud (*HS III 330,18–19*).<sup>29</sup> Everything belonging to the

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Homily “Why Our Lord Abode upon the Earth for Thirty Years” (*HS III 321–334*); ET from HTM, *TV* 2.4 (1990): 37–49 (esp. p. 45, ls. 189–190).

economy of the Son is exalted and beyond the created Nature (*SMS 793,3–794,3 + 802,4–7/FH III 55–76 + 242–245*). Only faith can understand the paradoxical nature of the aspects of the Son (*SMS 802,14–804,18/FH III 252–299*). The One beyond all times and without a beginning pleased himself to become subject to the beginning and to be within time (*SMS 803,11–12; 17–18/FH III 270–271; 276–277*).

Jacob uses all possible scriptural references to highlight the hidden mystery of the Son (*HS V 453,17–454,7/FH V 127–138*). The discerning vision and talk of Simeon is dramatically depicted alluding to the eternal existence and activity of the Son. He is the receiver of all sacrifices together with the Father (*HS V 455,13–14/FH V 165–166*). With his Father he is the Creator (*HS V 459,15–16/FH V 249–250*). He is also the Governor of all times and their orders (*HS V 459,13–14/FH V 247–248*). He is the Mystery whom all generations awaited (*HS V 463,13–466,8/FH V 331–388*). Hence, Simeon requests his release to go down to Sheol to proclaim ‘good hope’ to all. In the homily on the Transfiguration Jacob explains the hidden aspects of the revealed Son. In order to strengthen the disciples he became transfigured and showed his glory and power that were hidden in him (*HS II 350,7–353,7; 355,6–19/FH VIII 57–122, 163–176*).

From the state of his equality with the Father, the Son assumed a body to become revealed. He became humble in order to impart what is due to human nature. He has become visible because he was willing to become human (*HS V 460,12–461,1/FH V 267–272*). It is improper to search into his being and Jacob explains his mode of approach to the divine realities:

You are the Son of God, you are the Son of Man and you are  
Son of Mary

You are the Son of the Most High and among the beings  
below you are incomprehensible.

You came from the height, shone out from the depth, you  
came from the Father.

You acquired for yourself a mother, you became a babe, and  
who can investigate you ?

Hidden is your fire, revealed is your appearance, exalted is your  
revelation.

Let mouths tremble and do not dare to investigate you.

The mouth is abundantly empowered for the praise of you;  
and it is not easy to search into you, how you are, the Son of  
the Lord of all.

(SMS 810,9–16/FH XVI 39–46)

Jacob finds the incarnate Son fulfilling in himself the prescriptions of the Law and then travelling on the road of the Cross, which is the road of his smallness (*SHF II 18/FH VII 18*) that leads to redemption. Christ, being God and man, is all with all (*HS II 348,17–20/FH VIII 25–28*). There was light and glory in our Lord himself, unlike Moses (*HS II 356,21–357,7/FH VIII 199–206*), as he is the image of the glory and the splendour of the Father. At Tabor he himself shone forth with his own light and glory that was concealed in him (*HS II 355,8–356,2/FH VIII 165–180*). Thus he manifested himself to be the light of the world (*HS II 356,6/FH VIII 184*). Hence, he has both ways, the road of majesty with glory and that of humility. On earth he walked on the road of humility (*HS II 350,7–12/FH VIII 57–62*). The way of the Son is by all means mysterious.

Great deeds were attached to the smallness of the Lord. To the discerning eye, even in his sufferings, his divinity is perceptible, eg. his entry into Jerusalem in a humble manner is quite revealing as to his humble state as a man as well as his power and triumph as the King (*SHF IV 17/FH XI 17*). The King who entered into Jerusalem was humble but in reality his glory was great (*SHF IV 20/FH XI 20*). Our Lord suffered not out of his weakness but out of his desire and willingness to be delivered up for the redemption of mankind (*HS II 354,3–10/FH VIII 139–146*).

## 6. The On-going Role of the Evil One

In the writings of Jacob of Serugh, as in other early Syriac Christian writers, evil is not an abstract principle, but a concrete reality and it is personified as the evil one (*bišā*).<sup>30</sup> The field of activity of this evil

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<sup>30</sup> Jacob of Serugh (following the early Syriac tradition) envisages *bišā* (evil one) as the ‘adversary’ in a real and personified manner. It is clear from his homily “On Our Father” (*HS I 218,15–222,13*). The very calling of ‘our Father’ at the beginning of the prayer is the best armour to

one is often the fields of human imperfections or limitations. In symbolic terms they are darkened roads and shadows. Whenever light shines his activities are toppled and he himself is dazzled. Hence, his existence is dependent on the shadows and darkness of imperfections in the creation. Therefore, wherever light shines or whenever the creation turns to light the evil one is vanquished.<sup>31</sup> Thus the evil one is not a self-existent one who sets himself on equal power with goodness. As the evil one is not able by himself to stand against goodness, he effects his work and attains the goal through cunningness and deceitfulness. He has to wait and take advantage of the deficient and feeble contexts of humanity. His main tactic is leading astray and thus his name *Satan* is derived as explained by Jacob (following earlier Syriac writers) from the verb *šā* which means 'to turn aside' (or lead astray/stumble) from the original path.<sup>32</sup> Since satan leads astray through human feebleness, Christ took upon himself feebleness and satan became confused and thus he was vanquished. The whole company of Satan failed to recognize the identity of Christ both during the temptations and at the passion and suffering death. Based on this vision, the coming of Christ as the perfection of humanity and as the Light that enlightens all, expelling all forms of darkness, constitute a recurrent theme in Jacob of Serugh. Thus all hidden operations of the evil one are exposed and rendered ineffective by Christ, the Light, and the idols fell down (*SMS* 777,2–15/*FH* II 39–52).

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frighten and vanquish the adversary (*HS* I 221,16–222,13). The 'evil one' (*bišā*) is indicated with various appellations: *mārōdā* (rebel), *qatēl nāšā* (slayer of man), *b'eldarā* (enemy), *b'eldbābā* (adversary), *'akel qaršā* (accuser), *ṭarkānā* (calumniator), *bar semalā* (son of the left), *tanninā* (dragon), *ḥenyā rabbā* (the great serpent), *ḥenyā qadmā* (the ancient serpent); there are various ranks among these evil forces as indicated also from the origin of the words *daywe* (demons), *šidē* (devils), etc.

<sup>31</sup> The notion of evil as 'shadow' in the writings of Ephrem is worth notable here, cf. *CH* 28:1; 11:2; Martikainen, *Das Böse und der Teufel*, 43.

<sup>32</sup> The name *saṭānā* comes from the verb *šā* meaning 'to deviate or turn aside'. The *nomina agentis* of this verb is *saṭānā*; cf. *Cave of Treasures* 16:16; Jansma, "L'Hexaméron de Jacques de Saroug," 9.

In the body of the fallen Adam our Lord himself confronts Satan. The combat of Adam has been taken up by Christ and the debt was repaid. Our Lord had to meet with the recurring appearances and machinations of the evil one. At the time of the temptation Christ, by his perfect discernment, sensed the trap of the adversary (*SHF III 38/FH IX 38*). The adversary demanded the fasting Lord to make bread out of stones and thus make a show of his divine power. These two were exactly the temptations of Adam. By eating the first fall took place and by that the first parents wanted to grab divine powers. At the time of temptation our Lord could clearly see from where the adversary derived his technique and immediately he denied any submission to his adversary. Thus our Lord did what Adam failed to do and gave the teaching to the whole of humanity (*SHF III 38/FH IX 38*). So also on the day of the Passion the death sentence was thrust upon Christ on account of Adam. The deceitful priests were the instruments of the evil operations of the 'dragon'. That deceitful serpent of Paradise again plotted against our Lord. The deceitful findings of the priests that anyone who touches holy objects ought to die (Num 4:15) is an echo of the iniquity of Adam who yielded to the temptation to grab and touch divinity before the proper time (Gen 2:16–17). Hence, Adam deserved death and for that reason Christ suffered death. Those priests decked the Lord in the altar veil and made him culpable of death in place of Adam who deserved death by his breach of the commandment as he sought to grab divinity improperly. The deceitful serpent continues its work through its agents. But the Lord turned everything right for the justification and victory of Adam instead of letting himself be turned aside from his path by Satan.

The Hebrew nation had added adultery and idolatry by yielding to the evil one due to her unwillingness to recognize the Messiah.<sup>33</sup> It has a long history of the hidden operations of the evil

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<sup>33</sup> Jacob of Serugh finds the Hebrew nation as a 'deaf' (*HCJ I 29*), 'blind' (*HCJ I 18, 230; II 124, 137, 339; IV 137; VII 246, 403, 489*) and 'mutilated' (*HCJ IV 133–134*) nation because of its hard heartedness and the refusal to recognize Christ as the Son of God. Cf. Albert, *Homélies contre les Juifs*, PO 38, pp. 12–3.

one behind it. The modern forms of idolatry and adultery are ‘love of the world’ and ‘love of gold’ that obstruct the light of the teachings of salvation (*SHF IV 1/FH XI 1*). In other words the modern idols obstruct the Light of Christ and render humanity blind to the way of salvation.<sup>34</sup>

### C. ASPECTS OF THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION IN CHRIST

According to Jacob of Serugh the human mind cannot fully comprehend and exhaust the divine realities. However, God in his mercy has revealed certain divine realities or truths to let humanity understand the way of salvation. Hence, those revealed realities are not at all designed to provide any total manifestation of the divinity. Divine mercy would not do that, on the contrary, if God were to do that, humanity would not be able to withstand the total revelation of God, and human nature would be dazzled by the full vehemence of the splendour of divinity. Hence, the divine mercy has revealed certain truths to humanity as glimpses that are bearable. They are meant for the discerning comprehension that transcends even the rational level by a discerning vision in view of the fuller realization of the divine economy of salvation. Hence, any speech about the divine realities is not to analyze or investigate (*HS III 322,17–20*<sup>35</sup>; *HS III 632,5–10*<sup>36</sup>) the divinity as it is but to understand what God has provided for human salvation through the incarnate Son of God. Jacob brings out his views clearly in the following couplets:

There is no mouth that is able to exhaust [the telling of] you  
 except that of your Father;  
 How then and by what means shall my tongue reach out to  
 your hidden [being]?

(*SMS 720,11–12/FH I 11–12*)

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. *HS I 267–299*, homily “On the Son who Squandered his Riches”; ET from HTM, *TV 5.4* (1994): 11–37 (esp. ls. 93–96, 137–144, 155); Martin, “Sur la chute des idoles,” 126–8 (*tr.* p. 143).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. “Why Our Lord Abode upon the Earth for Thirty Years” (*HS III 321–334*); ET from HTM, *TV 4.2* (1990): 37–49 (esp. p. 38, ls. 25–28).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Jansma, “The Credo of Jacob of Serug,” 22.

Concerning that being of yours, no one is able to speak;  
concerning what you have become, let me speak of you, Lord,  
while I am wondering.

*(SMS 790,5–6/FH III 5,6)*

If you had not descended to our earth we would not have been  
able to speak about you,  
for who is succeeding to speak about you in your place that is  
concealed from all?

About your having come I am seeking, my Lord, to speak,  
for Your compassion has made you subject to words on the  
road you have set.

*(SMS 790,5–6/FH III 11–14)*

From your Father the whole of your story has come close to us  
and love has united you in the lineage with us so that we might  
sing [praises] to you.

You became one of us and behold you are ours while you are  
our Lord

and anyone who seeks to speak of your story is entitled to do  
so.

Immanuel, behold, you are with us in our vicinity (Is 7:14).

Therefore, the tongues that were not worthy of you also spoke  
of you.

*(SMS 792,2–7/FH III 33–38)*

As revealed truths provide insights into the divine mysteries and hence humanity attains only glimpses and aspects of the divine plan of salvation, Jacob presents his views on the economy of salvation through various images and figures in symbolic terms, whose fuller realities became manifest in Christ. But their fuller realization will be in the eschatological kingdom. Relying on the God-given powers of the mind and on the revealed truths in the scriptures, Jacob presents various aspects of his vision of the economy of salvation in Christ through symbolic theological reflection.

### **1. God's Mercy Seeking Adam, the Fallen-one, and the Re-entry of Adam into Paradise**

One of the predominant images by which Jacob depicts the economy and the history of salvation is that of the merciful Father

seeking Adam, the fallen-one.<sup>37</sup> Divine mercy (*bnānā*) is the source of creation, redemption and salvation. Adam himself came into being out of this mercy that would lead him to the goal, the fullness of life. But Adam by his exercise of free will deviated from the divine plan. This was in fact echoed in Adam's behaviour. He estranged and alienated himself from his Creator. It was an alienation from God and the divine environment, which is spoken of in symbolic terms as becoming a 'stranger to the house of the Father' in Paradise (*SHF I 7/FH IV 7*). That alienation from God's plan was not only something external to Adam/humanity, but indeed something clearly personal and internal to Adam/humanity's being. It affected a whole range of the faculties of his personality. Primarily it distorted his relationship with God and hence, he became an enemy of God. The Fall affected his personal status too and it endangered even his own existence as well (*SMS 731,6/FH I 237*). He fell into disintegration that inevitably led to mortality.<sup>38</sup> But the Divinity is essentially and eternally merciful and hence assumed the body of Adam, the fallen-one, in Christ, in order to rectify him according to justice as well as to elevate him to his true goal and fuller status according to the divine promises through grace.

#### **a. The Fallen Adam**

The merciful God had created Adam in a state of righteousness in Paradise. God set everything in the proper order so that Adam might run the course through the discerning exercise of his free will that could lead him to immortality (*SHF III 31/FH IX 31*). But Adam failed to act properly due to his own frailty and his susceptibility to the cunningness of the envious evil one. The jealousy of the evil one stirred up against the wise fashioning and the wisdom found in Adam, as well as the rational image cast on him (*SHF III 32/FH IX 32*). The cunningness of the evil one set a trap and made Adam fall from his dignified status. Hence,

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Gen 3:9; *SMS* 770,16–17/*FH I* 1063–4; *HS I* 177,10–19/*VI* 201–210; *QHC I* 90, 144, 196, 211–216; *III* 691–734; *IV* 195–196.

<sup>38</sup> Ephrem finds *gehannā* as separation from God, cf. *LPub* 22 (Cf. Brock, "Ephrem's Letter to Publius," 292).

disintegration began to rule over him. He began to revert to dust and to the state of animals that are devoid of rational image (*SMS 796,17/FH III 130*). The different aspects of Adam's enmity with God, his self-alienation and disintegration are explained by Jacob quite dramatically and symbolically through the imagery of the expulsion from Paradise,<sup>39</sup> corruption of the divine image, the exchange of the 'garment of glory/light' with the 'garment of leaves/shame' and the 'opening of the door to death' through sin (*SHF III 32/FH IX 32; SHF V 7/FH XII 7*). Jacob develops the figure of the merciful Father seeking Adam from the exegesis of Gen 3:8,9 where God is seen in the garden seeking and calling Adam, "Where are you?"<sup>40</sup>

(i) *Expulsion of Adam from the House of the Father*

Jacob describes how Adam fell from the rank of the adopted son of God and abandoned the familiarity of the divine abode. Thus he became a stranger in the house of the Father, or rather an enemy of God. He was expelled from the heights of Eden to Sheol, the abyss of the dead. This estrangement of Adam from God and the divine plan is depicted as deprivation of 'the table of the King' (*SHF I 7/FH IV 7*). Jacob brings out quite dramatically the fact of alienation from God through sin in the homily on the prodigal son.<sup>41</sup> He demonstrates the nature of free will which is equally given to all. Hence, one can become righteous or iniquitous through one's free will.<sup>42</sup> The younger son's request, "Give me my portion" (Lk 15:12), is same as saying, "Let me do all by my own will" (*HS I 277,21-22*).

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Jacob's Homily "On the Departure of Adam from Paradise," *QHC III* [CSCO 508 (syri 214), pp. 31-77].

<sup>40</sup> Jacob of Serugh makes an exegetical exposition of the question, "Where are you?" in his homily "On the Departure of Adam from Paradise," cf. *QHC III 689-792*; See also *Dem VII 8*.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *HS I 267-299*, "On the Son who Squandered his Riches"; ET from HTM, *TV 5.4* (1994): 11-37 (esp. p. 21, ls. 265-270 = *HS I 280,11-16*).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *HS I 276,12-15; 277,1-4*; "On the Son who Squandered his Riches"; ET from HTM, *TV 5.4* (1994): 11-37 (esp. pp. 18-9).

*(ii) Expulsion of Adam from His own Status*

The two images depicting the fall of Adam from his own status are ‘the corruption of the divine image’<sup>43</sup> in Adam, and the exchange of ‘the garment of glory/light’ with that of the fig leaves, ‘the garment of shame’ (*SHF I/FH IV 7*).<sup>44</sup> Due to the sin and alienation from God Adam fell from his own status. In this respect the prodigal son is a type of the fallen Adam:

‘He [*the prodigal son*] came to himself: Come, hearken and  
marvel, O man of discernment,  
for whoever sins becomes distant also from himself.  
When he came to himself, he spoke thus,  
‘How many hired servants are filled with bread in the house of  
my Father!’  
He came to himself; for he had also been far from himself  
when he went far from God and served iniquity.

(*HS I 284,13–18*)<sup>45</sup>

The divine image in Adam is a combination of several faculties and factors. Adam failed to hold together his faculties in their right perspectives. He became arrogant and tried to snatch away divinity in avarice by misusing his liberty. He revolted against his own nature and hence, the acute fall from his own status.

*(iii) Adam Expelled from His True Existence*

Adam’s deviation from the divine plan endangered his true existence. Disintegration led him to mortality that could fully destroy him. The various elements (*‘estūskešē*) in him did not hold together as corruption entered into him. The force of corruption destroyed the divine image in him and threatened his true existence

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. *SMS* 725,2 + 770,10/*FH I* 104 + 1057; *SHF* III 32/*FH IX* 32; *SHF* IV 6, 9/*FH XI* 6, 9; *HS* II 626,21–627,1 + 631,5/*FH XIV* 57–58 + 146.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *SMS* 722,12/*FH I* 1102; *SHF* I 15/*FH IV* 15.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Homily “On the Son who Squandered his Riches” (*HS* 267–99, no.12); ET from HTM, *TV* 5.4 (1994): 24–5 (*HS I 284,13–18* = ls. 347–352).

(*QHC I 130*). He began to turn into dust, devoid of hope. Through the false nourishment sin entered and the door to death was opened in Paradise (*SHF III 32/FH IX 32*). There happened the breaking of the fence of the law and the fracturing of the yoke of the commandment. Those deeds of Adam dug a deep tomb opening the door to death (*SHF V 7/FH XII 7*) and from then onwards the 'bow of death' was raised against humanity (*SHF I 8/FH IV 8*), leading it into non-existence in mortality.

***b. Christ, the Incarnate Mercy, Searching for Adam***

The eternal divine mercy grew fervent towards the fallen Adam and descended to the level of the fallen one (*SMS 725,15–18/FH I 117–120*) in order to redeem him through justification and to lead him to fuller life through the resurrection. Divine mercy descended to the bottom most level of human frailty, feebleness, lowliness, smallness and humility proper to the fallen nature of Adam/humanity in order to search out the fallen one who had deviated and gone astray from the true path. According to Jacob this searching journey of the incarnate Son is symbolically depicted through several stages of divine descent. It began with the Divinity/divine Word coming down as voice in the inquiry, "Where are you?" (*Gn 3:9*). This seeking voice appeared later through the centuries in the ambassadors and prophets, and finally the Word himself became flesh so as to reach out to the fallen Adam/humanity. This searching is depicted in another respect in the image of Divinity seeking the lost coin (*Lk 15:8–10*), as well as in the image of the shepherd who sought the lost sheep (*Lk 15:4–7; QHC III 703–710; IV 195–196*).<sup>46</sup> The journey of Christ assuming the fallen Adam is depicted as his road of humility because the fall of Adam was a fall from glory to humiliation and shame. His feebleness is the cause of shame and suffering in his degraded state.

Corresponding to all shameful situations and passions of Adam the redeeming activities of the incarnate Son too are depicted through images proper to them. Here we mention a few of them: medical imagery depicts the Fall as the 'first ulcer' and

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Jansma, "L'Hexamèron de Jacques de Saroug," 40.

Christ as the Physician<sup>47</sup> to cure that malady; combat imagery depicts the fall as a fall in the battle with the evil one and the consequent captivity and bondage to which Christ arrives as the Mighty Warrior<sup>48</sup> and the Liberator of the captivity; clothing imagery presents the fallen Adam/humanity as naked yet having a tunic of shame fabricated from fig leaves and Christ as the one who was wrapped in swaddling clothes in exchange of his 'garment of glory'<sup>49</sup> for 'the garment of shame' of Adam/humanity; legal imagery depicts the fall as the deed of Eve/Adam in legal bondage to the evil one and Christ as the Heir<sup>50</sup> who pays the ransom price for the liberation by his suffering and blood. The imagery of coin foundry presents the fallen Adam as the coin that became corrupted and spoiled its proper image in the hands of the evil one. Christ, 'the Fashioner of babes',<sup>51</sup> who through his Incarnation in the furnace of the womb of Mary fashioned an image for Adam in order to rectify the damaged coin. By his Incarnation Christ imprinted his own being on fallen Adam/humanity (*SMS* 733,9–18/*FH I* 283–292) in order to write down Adam in the book of life (*SMS* 757,16/*FH I* 791). These are some of the dynamic, concrete

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Mt 9:12; Mk 2:17; Lk 5:31; Christ, 'the Physician' (*SMS* 771,6/*FH I* 1075; *SHF V* 31/*FH XII* 31; *SMS* 812,11/*FH XVI* 81); Christ, 'the Doctor' (*SMS* 771,8/*FH I* 1077).

<sup>48</sup> Christ, 'the Warrior' (*SMS* 771,4/*FH I* 1073); 'Mighty One of the Generations' (*SMS* 801,15/*FH III* 232; *SHF V* 4/*FH XII* 4); 'Mighty One' (*SMS* 763,5 + 770,5 + 771,2/*FH I* 903 + 1052 + 1071; *HS II* 447,10/*FH X* 47; *HS II* 613,19 + 616,9 + 617,15 + 622,3/*FH XIII* 55 + 106 + 131 + 222; *HS II* 624,16 + 626,3 + 629,5 + 630,15 + 632,3/*FH XIV* 13 + 39 + 104 + 135 + 165; *SMS* 813,20/*FH XVI* 110).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Lk 2:7, 12; 'garment of glory/light' (*SMS* 733,3–4 + 772,12/*FH I* 277–278 + 1102; *SHF I* 15/*FH IV* 15).

<sup>50</sup> Christ, 'the Heir' (*SMS* 767,21/*FH I* 1003; *SMS* 795,6 + 807,16/*FH III* 100 + 361; *SHF I* 28/*FH IV* 28; *HS II* 372,18/*FH VIII* 538; *HS I* 450,2/*FH X* 102; *SHF IV* 24, 30, 33/*FH XI* 24, 30, 33; *SHF V* 4, 5, 6, 20/*FH XII* 4, 5, 6, 20).

<sup>51</sup> Christ, 'Fashioner of babes' (*SMS* 733,9 + 743,7 + 759,9/*FH I* 283 + 489 + 828; *SMS* 807,5/*FH III* 350; *HS V* 447,16/*FH V* 3). In Ephrem also it is a characteristic title of Christ, *HNat* 4:170.

and fluid images which are open to further fruitful symbolic theological reflections and exegetical findings in the context of the mystery of salvation in Christ.

Adam-Christ complementarity in the economy of salvation can be further expanded by picking up images and insights from the homilies of Mar Jacob.<sup>52</sup> But now for the sake of providing a synthesized vision, all those images can be focused through the fact of divine descent and human ascent in the incarnate Son. The transforming and taste-giving leaven provides a vivid and concrete imagery. Christ, who is 'the Leaven of Life'<sup>53</sup> by his descent and union with humanity, effected the transforming redemption and salvation. He became all with all as Immanuel (*HS I 446,20–447,1/FH X 35–38*). The descent for redemption and the ascent carrying the redeemed Adam/humanity are typologically portrayed correspondingly in the ladder that Patriarch Jacob saw at Bethel (Gen 28:12) in his dream and that the guards saw at the tomb of the Lord on the day of Resurrection (*Mt 28:2–4, SHF VI 10/FH XV 10*). The Patriarch Jacob saw the Lord at the top of the ladder ready to descend. But the guards at the tomb of the Lord saw a ladder of light for the ascent of the Redeemer (*SHF VI 10/FH XV 10*). The result of the salvific activity of Christ is again symbolically depicted by Mar Jacob from the prophetic words of Simeon in the temple. Jacob makes an exegetical exposition of the words of holy Simeon, "this one is appointed for the fall and rising of many" (Lk 2:34; *HS V 467–480*). Those who believe in the Son rise up while those who do not believe continue to fall. Humanity reaches its extremity in the humble state of Christ and his Crucifixion. The whole story of the humble estate is 'a sign' (*HS V 473,15–474,14*) that generates disputes, scandals and fear to those who fall, a fall which is due to the lack of faith. Those who have the splendour of faith have the ears of faith (*HS V 477,2*) and the

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. The section on 'Titles of Christ, the Saviour' in chapter four (section B, 3, b).

<sup>53</sup> Christ, 'Leaven of Life' (*SMS 771,12/FH I 1081*); See also the homily, "On 'the Kingdom of Heaven is Like unto Leaven'" (*HS III 411–424*), ET from HTM, *TV 3* (1989) pp. 45–57.

eyes of faith (*HS V 474,1*) by which they rise and ascend to the Father (*HS V 475,14*).

Mar Jacob describes how Christ journeyed on the humble road of Adam and provided him resurrection from every aspect of the fall. This journey of Christ is the road of redemption and a sign effected through pardon, purification, strengthening, justification, sanctification, etc. They are made explicit through various feasts and commemorations of the redeeming activity of Christ. At the Nativity 'good hope' was given to humanity. At the baptism of Christ at Jordan Adam was sought out (*HS I 177,10–19/FH VI 201–210*) for purification and sanctification by which the bride was adorned. Jacob makes Christ speak out:

Our Lord says: "I am not lacking but in one thing,  
the recovery of Adam who was lost from me is being sought  
by me.

Allow me to descend to seek Adam, the fair image (Gen 1:26),  
and when I shall find him the whole of my desire shall be  
fulfilled.

It became a great search for me in his case and on account of  
that I have come,

and it would be a deficiency if I cannot find the lost one.

The recovery of him, that alone is what is lacking with me:

To regain Adam who was willing to perish at the hands of the  
evil one.

In this recovery my desire will come to perfection,

because Adam is needed by me to enter into his inheritance.

Therefore, allow me to descend to cleanse the image that has  
become faded,

lest it too should remain deficient, should you withhold me."

(*HS I 177,10–21/FH VI 201–212*)

At the Transfiguration the bride was given the sign of strengthening (*HS II 350,19–20; 351,13–14/FH VIII 69–70; 85–86*). Through the forty days' fasting, suffering and death at Golgotha the deed of the debts of Adam was repaid and justification brought about. Through the Resurrection Adam was reconciled with the Father and was made victorious as a heir to the glory of Paradise. The goal or the result of the redeeming and saving activity of Christ is depicted in concrete terms by the imagery of the return of Adam/humanity to Paradise. The

incarnate Son sought out the pearl, the fallen Adam, as well as opened the closed Paradise for the return of the expelled Adam to his glory within Paradise as its heir (*SMS* 807,15–16/*FH* III 360–361).

### ***c. The Re-entry of Adam into Paradise***

In the life of the incarnate Son our author finds various typological depictions of the mystery of the re-entry of Adam into Paradise. The birth of Christ and the imperial order for the census, which required the returning of everyone to their own districts to register their names, signify the returning of all expelled ones in Adam (*SMS* 758,16–17/*FH* I 813–814). At Tabor and at Golgotha Adam's re-entry into Paradise was enacted in mysteries. Moses who sinned against God (Deut 4:21; 32:48–52) is a type of Adam expelled from Paradise after the sin (*HS* II 360,4–9/*FH* VIII 267–271). Christ had the power to repeal the orders of the Father. Hence, at the Transfiguration Christ made Moses enter into Tabor, the land into which he was prohibited to enter (Deut 4:21; 32:48–52), and it became a sign of Adam's re-entry (*HS* II 359,21–360,13/*FH* VIII 262–276) into Paradise. Barabbas was liberated as a sign of Adam's liberation (*SHF* V 32–34/*FH* XII 32–34). At Golgotha the robber<sup>54</sup> is a type of Adam who tried to rob divinity prematurely and unjustly (*HS* II 360,9/*FH* VIII 272). The robber's entry into Paradise through Christ was Adam's re-entry (Lk 23:43). Christ, the High Priest, died on Golgotha for the return of those expelled from Eden which was preannounced by the tradition of the liberation and return of prisoners to their own premises at the death of each high priest (Num 35:28; *HS* III 308,11–14). The basic vision behind all these insights is this: "Through the revealed things the concealed things too are signified; and through the visible

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<sup>54</sup> The 'robber' entered Paradise on the sixth day in contrast with the sixth day on which Adam was expelled from Paradise; cf. Jansma, "L'Hexamèron de Jacques de Saroug," 42. Ephrem speaks of the 'robber' in *HFid* 84:1 where the 'robber' is described as seeing the "Tree of Life" on the Cross through his faith and immediately eats from 'the Fruit' in Adam's stead and returns to Paradise.

things the hidden things too are proclaimed" (*SMS* 758,6–7/*FH I* 803–804; cf. *HS I* 454,17/*FH X* 202).

Jacob of Serugh explains the salvific return of Adam through Christ into Paradise by a rich typological net-work of scriptural episodes. The episode of the piercing of the side of Christ (Jn 19:34) stands as a key to interpret the whole net-work. Jacob demonstrates how this returning journey of Adam starts functioning from the moment of the birth of Christ until the last moment of his earthly life at Golgotha where the soldier pierced his side. Adam, who was expelled from Paradise and was written off from the 'book of life', was written again in the 'book of life' at the Nativity of the Son. On the road of his redeeming activity Christ annulled the curses of the fall and brought Adam back into Paradise. The piercing of the side of Christ by a soldier did away with the flaming sword of the Cherub (Gen 3:24) that guarded Paradise and 'the Tree of Life' within. Thus, through Christ by justification, the garden and the Tree of Life became accessible to Adam who had initially wished for the same but in a wrong way at a wrong time. Jacob exposes quite vividly and dramatically how Christ received in his own body the sword that guarded Paradise in order to open the way for Adam's re-entry. This he does with originality and creativity through a typological net-work by picking up insights from the scriptural episodes. Jacob puts it quite dramatically:

The King's Son made a wedding banquet of blood on  
Golgotha,  
and there he betrothed the Daughter of Light so that she  
should be his;  
the royal ring was forged with the nails of his hands  
and the betrothal was given with his holy blood.  
He betrothed her there, because she had shown him love at  
the time of his dishonour;  
he moved her over and placed her at his right hand, so that she  
might be with him.  
He took her off to bring her into the Garden, the bridal  
chamber, which his Father had prepared,  
but the sharp sword which was stationed there met him:  
the guard heard the commotion of someone entering Paradise,

so he brought along the sword, for he was standing alert on watch;  
 as the Bride of Light was entering, the Bridegroom was wounded,  
 those who struck him did not know who it was who was struck.

He received in his side the sword, and seized it from the guard;  
 he let him go off, and opened up the door for all to enter.

The Lord of the Garden was struck with the sword as he opened it up,

it having been carefully guarded ever since Adam.

Instead of the robber [*Adam*] who left it, there entered a thief,  
 while his master was wounded as he opened it up before him,  
 to let him in.

(*HS II 587,18–588,15*)<sup>55</sup>

## 2. The Betrothal and Marriage Feast of the Heavenly Bridegroom and the Earthly Bride

The nuptial imagery is a biblical legacy widely used to demonstrate in analogical, concrete and lively terms the divine-human relationship both in its ideal stage to which humanity is invited as well as in its distorted aspects into which humanity fell. Syriac Christianity makes wider use of this imagery imbibing much inspiration from its OT legalistic and prophetic orientations as well as from its NT symbolic and eschatological connotations. Prophets speak of Israel as a bride in relation to God through the covenant. In the NT Christ calls himself the ‘Bridegroom’ directly (Mt 9:15 *et par.*) and by allusions (Jn 3:39; Mt 25:10).<sup>56</sup> All those who believed in him, and particularly the disciples of Christ, are called ‘Groomsmen’ or ‘friends of the Bridegroom’ (*šušbinē*, Mt 9:15; *SHF II 8/FH VII 8*; *SHF V 26/FH XII 26* or *ḥdogē*, *HS II 619,11/FH XIII 169*). The Syrian ascetical tradition depicts the ascetic’s

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<sup>55</sup> *tr.* Brock, “Wedding Feast of Blood on Golgotha,” 124–5. Ephrem speaks about the death of Christ and the opening of Paradise in an aphorism in *HNat* 8:4.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Engberding, “Die Kirche als Braut,” 5–48; De Vries, “Das innere Wesen der Kirche,” 154–90.

personal union with Christ in terms of the eschatological ‘wedding feast’ (*meštūā*) and the reaching of union with him as entering into the bridal chamber (*gnōnā*). In such a vision virginity in its varying degrees is much extolled as a requisite of divine union.

In Jacob’s vision, the whole economy of salvation and its historical realization are symbolically depicted in terms of ‘betrothal and marriage feast’. The heavenly Bridegroom had prepared the marriage feast for the earthly bride and the world was made aware of this in view of celebrating the marriage feast (*HS I 167,1–2/FH VI 1,2*). The calumniator threw discord into the marriage (*QHC IV 175–176*). In order to spoil the marriage feast in Eden Satan took off the ‘tunic of glory’ of the human couple through the serpent (*QHC IV 184*) and they found themselves nude and unacceptable for the marriage feast. Through the law of Moses and the prophets the bride was adorned by instructions and purifications for her betrothal with Christ, the incarnate Son. According to Jacob God’s plan in Christ was to bring perfect reconciliation and consummation in perfection. This is denoted by the entrance into *gnōnā* (bridal chamber). So Christ had to fight for Adam (for the liberation from slavery), elevate him to his status (Kingship and Priesthood), and make him attain consummation in perfection (entry into *gnōnā* and the marriage feast). The wearied and despicable earthly bride was redeemed by the heavenly Bridegroom himself by his life on earth. Thus through the marvellous deeds of the Son on earth the bride recognized and accepted him with hope and loving expectation for the heavenly marriage feast. This expectant life of the bride, the Church, is the life in the ‘already and not-yet’ of the Kingdom of God with the hope of fuller realization in the eschatological kingdom.

***a. Betrothal and Marriage Feast, Symbols  
of the Eternal Divine Mercy and Divine Fidelity***

The basis of Jacob’s image of ‘betrothal and marriage feast’ is the immutable and steadfast divine mercy. The divine mercy had fashioned and enthroned Adam/humanity in the rank of adopted sons in the divine abode with a view to making him participate in the divine glory which is immutable and eternal. This partaking of the divine realm is a participatory union with the Divinity, or, in scriptural terms, the fuller realization of ‘the image and likeness of God’ installed in Adam/humanity. By his wrong step at a wrong

time Adam tried to snatch away divinity. His arrogant step made him fall and perish as he had violated the order of his existence. As the God-given order had been toppled his own existence and nature suffered damage. But the divine mercy, which is by nature immutable and eternal and whose providence is steadfast, sought the fallen one. In that search it repairs the damages of the fall. Then it governs again and provides for the participation in divine glory. This merciful divine economy is depicted through the imagery of betrothal and marriage feast.

According to Jacob of Serugh, God has instituted marriage as a sign and a pedagogical device with a view to the fuller revelation of the divine-human relationship between Christ and the Church (*HS III 287,17–291,14*<sup>57</sup>; *309,18–310,6*) in the context of redemption. In the general mode of the vision among the early Syriac writers Jacob of Serugh too follows the pattern of Types to Reality and to the Realization/eschatological fulfillment in describing the salvation in Christ through nuptial imagery. Our author sums up this in one of his couplets set in a dialogue form in the homily ‘On the Ascension’ in which the betrothed Church speaks, “With love you sought me, with suffering you betrothed me, with the spear you redeemed me” (*SMS 822,11/FH XVI 289*). In these lines the story of the descending mercy of the Father, which became a reality (*quṣṭā*) tangible to humanity in the redeeming death of the incarnate Son, is summed up in the imagery of betrothal.

***b. The Groomsmen and the Adornments of the Bride for the Betrothal***

Jacob envisages all divine-human encounters in the history of salvation as ‘betrothals’. The divine plan had set everything for the adorning of the bride and the realization of her betrothal with Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom. The mystery of this reality had been progressively set out and revealed through images and types in the OT. Moses himself was given the prophetic eye and the

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<sup>57</sup> Homily “On the Veil on Moses’ Face” (*HS III 283–305*, no. 79); ET by Brock, “On the Veil of Moses,” 74–6 (= *Syriac Spirituality*, pp. 76–9).

spiritual vision to recognize how Christ would betroth the Church on his redeeming journey on earth. The betrothal of the heavenly Bridegroom with the earthly bride came into reality through various staging posts of the incarnate Son. Moses recognized how Christ and the Church would become one through baptism. Hence he gives the law, “a man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife so that the two of them might be one completely”<sup>58</sup> (Gen 2:24) which is interpreted as a type of the union of Christ and the Church in the waters of Jordan. Jacob also mentions how St. Paul had recognized this sign and removed the veil and proclaimed the truth (*HS III 289,4–5*). Jacob puts it:

With the exalted eye of the prophecy Moses saw Christ,  
and how He and His Church would be one in the waters of  
baptism,  
he saw Him putting on her in the virgin womb  
and her putting on Him in the baptismal water:  
Bridegroom and bride are spiritually perfected as one.  
(*HS III 288,7–11*)

The veiled Moses saw Christ and called Him ‘man’,  
He saw the Church too, and called her ‘woman’ as a device.  
(*HS III 288,15–16*)<sup>59</sup>

Jacob of Serugh provides a progressive picture of the image of the betrothal of Christ and the Church. It began in Gen 2:24 describing the union of man and his wife as a type of the future reality. Then it developed through OT types before Moses and those at Egypt at the time of Moses, at Sinai, at Tabor and at Golgotha which demonstrates the Son’s entry into the bridal chamber (*gnōnā*) of the tomb. Corresponding to this progression of

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<sup>58</sup> *HS III 288,3–4*; ET by Brock, “On the Veil of Moses,” 74 (= *Syriac Spirituality*, 77); *HS III 309,20–21*.

<sup>59</sup> *tr.* Brock, “On the veil of Moses,” 74; cf. also *HS III 310,5–6*, same renderings are seen in both homilies according to the edition of P. Bedjan. This fact tells much on the complicated manuscript tradition of the homily “On the Mysteries, Symbols and Figures of Christ” (*HS III 305–321*).

the knowledge of the betrothal there is a progressive recognition of the Bridegroom from the part of the bride as well. Finally on the mount of Olives, at the time of the Ascension, the bride stands burning with love and the desire for union with the Bridegroom who ascended in glory to the holy of holies as the High Priest (*SMS* 830,11–12; 831,17–832,2/*FH XVI* 455–456; 481–486).

Mar Jacob demonstrates that none of the OT types of the Lord could subsist without depicting the mystery of the betrothal between Christ and the Church (*HS III* 218,17–20; *V* 335,15–336,5), especially at his Baptism, depicted in the betrothals at the fountain in the old dispensation.<sup>60</sup> Abraham is the figure of the Father who betrothed his Son to ‘the Church of the nations’ to enable her to inherit his treasures. Abraham sent out his servant Eliezer to arrange the betrothal of his son Isaac with Rebecca (Gen 15:2; 24:2–4).<sup>61</sup> Eliezer is the type of John the Baptist who prepared the betrothal of Christ and the Church at the Jordan. Isaac by all his deeds depicted the Son, and Rebecca who was betrothed to Isaac at the well represented the Church at the Jordan. Hence the Church is also called ‘the Daughter of Rebecca’<sup>62</sup> in figurative terms.

The Patriarch Jacob<sup>63</sup> in all his ways depicted Christ, the Bridegroom, who made himself poor to come down to the poor bride in order to betroth her and make her rich by redeeming her. Jacob in his own person and deeds (Gen 29–31) resembled Christ who came down, was betrothed, waxed rich, and ascended to his Father. Since Jacob carried the mysteries of the heavenly bridegroom he too journeyed in poverty, came down to Laban, toiled for Rachel, the symbol of the Church, became rich and betrothed her (*HS III* 210,2–13). That well which was opened by Jacob was full of life-giving mysteries rather than mere water (Gen

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. *HS III* 209,7–216,2; *Dem IV* 5–7; see also Graffin, “L’église épouse,” 328.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Ms. Vat. syr. 117, fol. 90v–93r; see also Graffin, “L’église épouse,” 323–6; Zingerle, “Eine ungedrückte Homilie Jakobs,” 92–108.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Graffin, “L’église épouse,” 325.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *HS III* 208–223, “A Homily on Our Lord and Jacob”; ET from HTM, *TV* 4.4 (1993): 51–64; cf. *Dem IV* 5,6.

29:2–3,10; *HS III 210,14–15*). The huge stone by which the well remained shut up hindering the grazing sheep was the sin of the world (*HS III 213,1–4*). But the beauty of Rachel, the type of the Church, invigorated Jacob to remove the stone. Since he carried the mystery of the Son (*HS III 213,19–22*), the huge stone which normally many shepherds together could not have removed, was removed by Jacob alone as the shadow of the Great Shepherd rested on him (Gen 29:10). The sheep drank from the well opened by Jacob on account of Rachel's beauty (Gen 29:10; *HS III 213,5–12*). He betrothed Rachel with tears of suffering which denote the betrothal of the Church by Christ through suffering (*HS III 211,19–212,18*). As Rachel was sanctified on account of Jacob, so the Church also was sanctified by the splendour of Christ, the Lord of Jacob (*HS III 209,8–16*). The thorns and thistles Jacob had to encounter in shepherding the flocks are parallels to the thorns, nails and hardships of the Son who shepherded and betrothed the Church with pains and sufferings. As Jacob withstood all hardships on account of his love for Rachel so Christ too suffered everything out of his love for the Church. Jacob was forced to betroth two maidens as the Son too betrothed the Nation and the Nations, signified earlier by Leah and Rachel, the Synagogue and the Church, respectively (*HS III 219,6–9*). The mystery of Christ's betrothal to the Nations through baptism is signified also by the sign of the ewes breeding according to the colour of the rods set by Patriarch Jacob (Gen 30:38–39; *HS III 311,7–12*).

Tamar is a symbol of the Church seeking redemption through Christ. Mar Jacob depicts Tamar as a mirror to the world seeing that she sought deliverance from her state of widowhood. She had to play harlot to raise up an offspring (Gen 38:6–30) and thus deliverance. Here the aspect of resemblance between the type and the antitype is only in the aspect of the deliverance achieved by Tamar and not in the aspect of her harlotry. In the model of Tamar the Church too awaits Christ and betroths him at baptism as an armour of justice in faith for her deliverance.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Graffin, "L'église épouse," 331; Zingerle, "Sermo de Thamar," *HNat* 8–11.

Mar Jacob finds another type of the betrothal of Christ to the Nations in Samson<sup>65</sup> who married a Philistine woman, daughter of an uncircumcised man. Samson resembled our Lord who came down to betroth the Church of the Nations and met death as a mighty foe. He met with a whelp of a lion (Judg 14:5–6), in symbolic terms, with death, whom he subjugated. So also the Lord met death and subjugated it while betrothing ‘the daughter of the pagans’ (*HS V 335,1–14*). The Patriarch Jacob’s betrothal at the well depicts mainly the betrothal of Christ and the Church at Jordan. The story of Samson depicts the betrothal of the Lord to the Church at Golgotha after subjugating death by his own suffering and death.

Not only the types but each prophecy and all prophets were for the adornment of the bride. Zechariah was an instructor and adorer of the bride, who announced and prepared her for the betrothal at Jerusalem (*HS I 170,1–173,1/FH X 71–110; SHF IV 21/FH XI 21*). Mar Jacob calls the false prophets and false teachers of the bride ‘wolves’ and ‘robbers’ who, instead of tending the flocks and adorning the bride, led astray and destroyed them all. They are all agents of the evil one. All true adorners of the bride are ambassadors, heralds and apostles of the Word. In that context, John the Baptist calls himself ‘the voice’ of the Word (*SHF II 9/FH VII 9*). The bride recognizes a true and trustworthy groomsman (*HS I 170,10–13/FH VI 59–62; SHF II 8/FH VII 8*) in John the Baptist who began adorning her by purification and sanctification. He taught her and made her wise to provide clear understanding without doubts (*HS I 170,8–171,4/FH VI 56–74*). With watchful care he guarded her for the Bridegroom (*HS I 175,19/FH VI 169*). David too instructed the bride through his Psalms, together with John the Baptist, to recognize the Bridegroom and give heed to the glorious matters (*HS I 176,1–8/FH VI 171–178*).

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<sup>65</sup> Cf. *HS V 331–355*, “A Homily on Samson”; ET from HTM, *TV 11* (1992): 50–70.

***c. The Betrothal of Christ, the Bridegroom,  
on the Road of His Birth and Death***

In the vision of Mar Jacob, the betrothal of the heavenly Bridegroom to the earthly bride takes place through various 'staging posts' of the incarnate Son. Bringing all earlier shadows and types into reality, the Bridegroom himself came down through the Incarnation and received the bride, the Daughter of Lights. The cave of Bethlehem became a 'nuptial chamber' for the celestial Bridegroom who wished to unite himself to the race of the earthly (*SHF IV 9/FH IV 9*). This profound love of the Bridegroom is explained in depth in the homily on "Why Our Lord Abode upon the Earth for Thirty Years."<sup>66</sup> Our Lord came down to the poor bride and lived with her thirty years in order to make her learn his ways and then betroth her (*HS III 331,7-16*).

One of the early and important staging posts of betrothal is the Epiphany of the Son at his Baptism in Jordan. It was well foreshadowed, as in a type, in the Patriarch Jacob's betrothal to Rachel at the well in several respects. The betrothal that shone forth at Jordan became fully manifest at the Crucifixion. It is the inestimable love for the bride that made the Son embrace death on the Cross and the piercing of his side signifying the birth and the life of the Church, the bride. Betrothals through the water of baptism and the Eucharist are signified in the piercing of the side of Christ.

All OT types and similitudes of betrothal were brought forward into reality by the Son. The huge stone removed by Jacob from the well (Gen 29:10) became a reality at the baptism of Christ, by which the sins are pardoned from the baptismal fountain. The pagan bride was made righteous by the elected bridegroom Jacob, and the Church of the nations became sanctified by Christ's betrothal at his baptism. The types in the two brides of Jacob also have come out clearly in our Lord who betrothed the Church of the Nation and that of the Nations. Jacob's hard labour out of his love for Rachel came out manifestly in Christ who suffered and

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. *HS III 321-334*, "Why Our Lord Abode upon the Earth for Thirty Years"; ET from HTM, *TV 4* (1990): 37-49.

died on the Cross for the Church, his bride. Jacob's tears at the betrothal of Rachel came out in the blood of the suffering Christ, the Bridegroom. At the betrothal the bride is given 'the Robe of Glory' from the water of baptism. This robe is also a wedding robe (*HS I 168*). At baptism the soul is betrothed to the Son of God (*HS I 210*). The slain Bridegroom enters the bridal chamber (*gnōnā*) of the tomb and Sheol from where he liberated all older generations in order to be betrothed for the marriage feast. By this mystery the redemption offered effectively to the past, present and the future is well explained. By the Cross he opened the door of the garden and brought in all bridegrooms<sup>67</sup> who were expelled (*SMS 813,1–2/FH XVI 91–92*). The opening of Adam's side (*Gen 2:22*) for the creation of Eve and its parallel is found in the piercing of the side of Christ on the Cross (*Jn 19:34*) for the birth of the Church which portray simultaneously the institution of baptism and Eucharist as well as the betrothal of Christ and the Church. All these biblical episodes constitute a key net-work of typologies for the understanding of the nuptial imagery. The lance that pierced the side of Christ put away the sword of the angel (*Gen 3:24*) and the re-entry of Adam into Paradise, into the bridal chamber, was made possible.

In the vision of the profound union between Christ and the Church through the imagery of the 'betrothal and marriage feast' the perfect reconciliation between God and Adam/humanity in Christ is reflected (*HS I 186,21–187,1/FH VI 401–402*). This reconciliation is the result of a process of recognition of the Bridegroom from the part of the bride and her own adornment for union with him. John the Baptist had the mandate to adorn the bride with spiritual garments of the divine abode (*HS I 168,10–169,2/FH VI 17–30*). Works of justice and labour for perfection are the adornments for the bride (*HS II 358,6/FH VIII 226*).<sup>68</sup> Isaiah was an instructor and a guide to the bride through his

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<sup>67</sup> Normally in the homilies of Jacob the title 'Bridegroom' is reserved for Christ. The reference here is a particular one in which the redeemed too are called 'bridegrooms' perhaps due to the union achieved with Christ in the heavenly *gnōnā*.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. also Graffin, "L'église épouse," 325; *HS II 358,6/FH VIII 226*.

prophecy. The bride by her understanding had to distinguish between false and true teachers and prophets so as not to go astray as happened in her life in the past (*HS I 169,3–170,7/FH VI 31–56*). But the unfaithful bride at Jerusalem rejected the call of Zechariah (Zech 9:9) and indulged in her idols (*HS I 170,1–173,1/FH X 71–110; SHF IV 21/FH XI 21*). She rejected also the call of Isaiah (Is 51:9) to praise the Bridegroom at Jerusalem (*HS I 450,11–22/FH X 111–122; SHF IV 22/FH XI 22*).

***d. Betrothal and Marriage Feast: A Symbol  
of 'Already and Not-Yet' of the Kingdom of God***

In Mar Jacob's description, by way of signs and symbols, God the Father enlightened the bride through the prophets and instructed her about her own betrothal with his Only-Begotten for the marriage feast. All these earlier steps are, so to say, marriage settlements for the bride. These settlements were betrothals at Egypt, at Sinai, at Tabor and at the Crucifixion. At all these stages divine gifts were provided as dowry (*pernitā* or *zēbdā*). The staff of the Patriarch Jacob, which in fact depicted the Cross of the Son,<sup>69</sup> was indeed the sole possession for a dowry which the Patriarch Jacob could take with him when he crossed over the Jordan (Gen 32:10) to gain the betrothal of Rachel. But, in truth, he had to betroth Leah too. The poor Jacob became rich at the house of Laban and returned with two companies through his two wives and thus resembled our Lord who betrothed the Nation and the Nations. At Sinai the law and other adornments were given (*SHF IV 24/FH XI 24*) as dowry (*pernitā*, *HS II 358,19/FH VIII 239* or *zēbdā*, *SHF IV 24/FH XI 24*). Betrothals take place on the journey of Christ in the flesh, on the road of Adam. Christ, the Rich One, at his Nativity, lived with the poor in the cave which became a 'bridal chamber'. At every step Christ gave his bride 'good hope' (*sabrā tābā*) and a foretaste of divine bliss as dowry. By this foretaste she might turn to him in love and go along in expectation of the

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. The homily "On the Vision of Jacob at Bethel" (*HS III 192–207*); FT by Graffin, "Sur la vision de Jacob à Béthel," 229–30.

marriage feast and the entry into the heavenly 'bridal chamber' (*gnōnā*).

By his Resurrection Christ, the Bridegroom, conferred 'the joy of joys' on his bride. It became a great deliverance, firm hope and consolation to her, which were counted as the assets (*SHF VI 1,2/FH XV 1,2*) of the dowry. In the homily 'On the Ascension of our Lord' Jacob describes the consolation and joy of the 'bride of light' in witnessing the glorious ascension of her Bridegroom and elicits the confession of her conversion and the desire for union with him in the style and language of the 'Song of Songs' (*SMS 821,17–823,15/FH XVI 275–314*). The Church herself acknowledges the gifts of her Bridegroom and takes pride in her relationship with him as explained in a homily of our author, 'On the Scrutineers and the Consecration of the Church'.<sup>70</sup> The said homily envisages how the Church acclaims the gifts of the apostles and preachers as well as the victory over death acquired for her by her Bridegroom as dowry. Moreover, her dowry has been written down by the hands of Christ, precisely through the deeds of Christ. She finds herself inseparably united to her Bridegroom in life and death as Christ himself became intimately united to her by his total self-giving. With this sort of comfort and consolation (*byyyā'ā*) in her life she looks forward with hope to the union with him in the heavenly kingdom. Thus the Church lives in an 'already and not-yet' of the heavenly bliss which cannot be more effectively expounded unless through the imagery of the betrothed woman looking forward to the marriage feast. Jacob even finds the marriage feast already inaugurated at Golgotha with the body of the slain Bridegroom as festal food. In the Homily "On the Veil on Moses' Face" our author asks, "Who has ever seen a corpse placed in the midst of the wedding feast? ... At what wedding, apart from this, did they break the body of the Bridegroom for the guests in place of other food?" (*HS III 290,16–19*).<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Vat. syr. 118, fol. 2r; Graffin, "L'église épouse," 332; see also *H CJ VI 313–344* where the Church confesses her conversion and acceptance of Christ, the Bridegroom, in contrast with the failures of the Synagogue.

<sup>71</sup> *ir.* Brock, "On the Veil of Moses," 75 (= *Syriac Spirituality*, 78).

### 3. Salvation as the Demolition of Idols and Idolatry for the Liberation of Slaves

Jacob of Serugh finds idolatry as an alien love/lust (*rēhmtā nukrāytā/rēgtā nukrāytā*, SHF II 33/FH IX 33; SHF IV 2/FH XI 2) that emerges into existence due to the allurements of the envious evil one and human submissiveness out of free will to those allurements. Eve became the first victim to the allurements of the evil one. Thus came into existence the first act of human infidelity by disobedience to the first commandment, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (Gen 2:16–17). With free will the first parents gave credence to the serpent, an agent of the evil one, who sowed seeds of falsehood of other gods in the ear of Eve (Gen 3:4,5; HCJ IV 29–34). What happened to Eve in the garden is typical of the happenings in human history in the individual and collective realms. The evil one introduced alien lust/love into Eve and made her believe that she could by her own power snatch away divinity from the tree rather than through the God-given order. She was lead astray by false discernment. In fact, it was equal to setting up a creature (a tree) in place of the divinity. Thus Eve was cunningly induced to declare that there is not only one God but many gods, which is precisely the beginning of idols and idolatry. The eating from the forbidden tree was an adulterous act. Jacob finds all idolatrous and adulterous behaviour in the history of OT as a sequel to that first act in Eden by which humanity began to be subjugated by the idols introduced by the evil one. Hence, the children of Eve became enslaved to the adversary (SMS 776,19/FH II 35). The submissiveness of humanity to the cunning allurements of the evil one made all go astray from the true path. It is to rehabilitate such an earth, made captive by the idols of the evil one, that the King sent his Son (SMS 725,19–20/FH I 121–122).

#### *a. Idols/Idolatry, Signs of Alien Love/Lust and False Discernment*

Idolatry is viewed in a wider perspective by Mar Jacob. Anything that hinders and distorts the vision of the richness of the economy of Christ (*mdabbrānūtā da-mšihā*) is an idol and a stumbling block. All such idols hinder the light of the divine ‘teaching of salvation’ (*yulpānā d-ḥayyē*, SHF IV 1/FH XI 1). The image of ‘light and

darkness' is widely used by our author to demonstrate the phenomenon and the effects of idolatry. Idols make humanity blind and lead further into the darkness of estrangement from the divine light. They set all on the darkened roads that lead into iniquity and slavery to the evil one. Hence, Christ manifests himself as 'Day-star' or 'Sun-rise' (*denḥā*; Zech 6:12; SMS 795,19–796,1/FH III 113–114; HS I 189,2–3/FH VI 443–444) in the darkened world. Christ is called 'the Sun of Righteousness' (*šemsā d-ḡaddiqūtā*, Mal 4:2) who enlightens all and gathers all from the darkened roads of vanity and iniquity (SMS 811,11–16/FH XVI 61–66). This 'Sun of Righteousness' had enlightened all in the old dispensation through his light in the law and the prophets. In the new dispensation the Sun of Righteousness was born from the virgin to overthrow darkness from all regions (SMS 800,15–18/FH III 211–214) as well as to expose all idols and make them fall away into insensibility (SMS 776,13–14/FH II 29–30; SMS 785,14/FH II 222).

It is into the weak nature of humanity (SHF III 33/FH IX 33) that the 'deceiving, alluring and provoking' evil one cunningly introduces idols in order to bring in death and dissolution to the divine image engraved within (SHF III 32/FH IX 32). Satan,<sup>72</sup> the evil one, has his name due to his constant activity of deviating humanity from the right path. By nature, he is incapable of direct confrontation with goodness. Hence his devices are cunningness and deceitfulness by which he plays upon people's weak points and thus deviates and distorts all. The jealousy of the evil one introduces alien lust (*rēḡtā nukrāytā*, SHF III 33/FH IX 33) by way of an alien love (*reḥmtā nukrāytā*) into the natural and pure state of human soul (SHF IV 2/FH XI 2). This alien lust, if the free will submits to it, introduces an alien order that displaces the original order set for the running up to the 'meeting point of immortality' (SHF III 31/FH IX 31). Hence, the divine image and the wisdom it exercises would be hampered. This state of affairs distorts the true vision of realities and false discernment takes the upper hand (SHF IV 2/FH XI 2). Wrong discernment leads to the wrong course of action under the sway of alien lust/love, that in effect destroys the

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<sup>72</sup> See the note on *saṭanā* (n. 32 & 30 in this chapter).

‘yoke of harmony’ (*SHF III 31/FH IX 31*). Once the established harmony is lost, disharmony prevails and disintegration rules along. It is the cunningness of the evil one that displaces the divine order conferred on humanity. The evil one sets created things in the place of divinity and leads humanity astray. The final result would be a sort of captivity and slavery to the evil one by way of alien love/lust, and this leads to disintegration and annihilating mortality.

***b. Adultery and Idolatry of ‘the Daughter of Hebrews’  
(bat ‘ebrāyē)***

The divine steadfast love and fidelity towards humanity on the one hand, and human infidelity and wrong doing on the other, form a biblical constant. Idolatry and adultery were the grave errors into which the people of the OT fell. These grave acts of misconduct are due to the underlying human infidelity that goes after other gods in addition to the ingratitude towards the divine fidelity and steadfast love. This rupture of the divine-human relationship is made explicit symbolically and dramatically through the Paradise account and the later OT history of Israel’s idols and idolatry. It is well depicted symbolically in the imagery of the ‘unfaithful bride’ (*HS I 448,20–450,22; 451,21–453,6/FH X 79–122, 143–170; SHF IV 21–35/FH XI 21–35*). Concurrently with human iniquity, the divine mercy, which is eternal and immutable, devises the proper pedagogy and provides the teaching to make humanity abandon idols and idolatry and return to the house of the Father.

In Mar Jacob’s vision, the adversary subjugated the house of Adam and that of Noah by introducing idols. The whole inhabited earth fell under the captivity of the evil one through idolatry. Divine mercy moved out to save the world from idols and idolatry through the calling of Abraham. Error, which stepped in and introduced all sorts of idols of vanity and impiety, caused that grave ‘ulcer’ of idolatry to grow wild. Then, through Moses God gave the law as a ‘medicinal herb’ to cure that ‘ulcer’ (*HCJ III 70–74*) as well as to instruct and procure liberation to the world through the five

alliances (*HCJ IV 87–176*).<sup>73</sup> The fifth alliance is that of Christ, which perfected and concluded all previous covenants. All the alliances together serve like the five senses of man. Christ comes as the Light, enabling and perfecting all the other senses (*HCJ IV 115–144*). This Light enlightens the whole world and destroys all idols and idolatry so as to liberate the captives from darkness.

Mar Jacob in his festal homilies, while presenting Christ as the liberator of the people from idols, brings into the scene the OT history of the idolatry and adultery of Israel. Allusions, suggestions, comparisons and direct references are the techniques used in his homilies. The ‘Hebrew nation’ became a companion of idols and hated God. She became fat at the table of Baal rather than at the table of the Father (*HS II 368,22–369,5/FH VIII 455–460*). At mount Tabor Moses and Elijah recall how ‘the daughter of Hebrews’ engaged herself in iniquitous idolatry and adultery. She purchased idols, moulded them and became their slave (*HS II 366,19–20/FH VIII 409–410*). Her mind was skillful in immersing in idolatry (*SMS 788,19–20/FH II 287–288*). The world became infected by the victims offered to the idols (*HS III 237,12–15*) and the bride became polluted by the incense to the idols (*HS I 167,7–168,9/FH VI 7–16*). Zion is the symbol of the unfaithful Israel and our author compares her with Jezebel<sup>74</sup> who led a wicked and iniquitous life (*HS II 368,12–369,11/FH VIII 445–466*; *SMS 769,14/FH I 1039*; *HS II 367,10/FH VIII 422*; *SHF IV 13/FH XI 13*). By calling Israel, ‘Daughter of Rachel’<sup>75</sup> (*SHF IV 23/FH XI 23*), ‘Daughter of Zion’ (*HS I 449,3–450,4/FH X 83–104*) and ‘Lover of Molten Idols’ (*SHF IV 25/FH XI 25*) a network of OT idolatry and adultery is brought into focus. By other epithets of Israel, ‘Daughter of Hebrews’ (*SMS 788,19–20/FH II 287–288*; *HS*

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<sup>73</sup> The five alliances are those with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Christ. Cf. Albert, *Homélie contre les Juifs*, PO 38, pp. 18–9. For a discussion on the wider context of this vision of Mar Jacob, see Bettolo, “Scuola ed economia divina nella catechesi,” 153–4.

<sup>74</sup> Jezebel who killed the prophets of the Lord is a symbol of the unfaithful Israel; cf. 1 Kings 18:4,13; 19:1–2.

<sup>75</sup> Rachel who stole her father’s (Laban) household gods is a symbol of idolatrous Hebrew nation; cf. Gen 31:19, 32–35.

*II 366,3–368,7/FH VIII 393–440*), ‘Hebrew Nation’ (*HS II 368,22–369,5/FH VIII 455–460*), the ongoing unfaithful nature and the temperament of Israel as reflected in human history are depicted. Thus he calls ‘the Nation’<sup>76</sup> ‘the maid-servant of the demons’ (*SMS 770,6/FH I 1053*), ‘Lover of molten idols’ and ‘Companion of Darkness’ (*SHF IV 25/FH XI 25*). God taught Israel that the nations of the earth would not exchange their gods but his own people exchanged him for vain idols (*HS IV 294,19–20*).<sup>77</sup> The victory of the king of Moab over Israel was not a victory gained by the power of the Moabite gods but a victory granted by Yahweh to teach a lesson to Israel (2 Kings 3:27; *HS IV 294,7–18*).

***c. The Incarnation of the Son and the Fall of Idols  
for the Liberation of ‘the Bride of Light’***

As the culmination and consummation of the divine pedagogy designed by the Father, Christ came to liberate the captives from slavery and idolatry (*HCJ IV 30,61–62*). The four out of the five alliances, i.e., through Adam, Noah, Abraham and Moses, served like instructions to children who were growing up (*HCJ IV 145–169*). Thus God, the Merciful One, prepared the generations, through the divine pedagogy (*HCJ IV 87–176*), for the manifestation of his Only-Begotten in order to show that there are not multiple gods but only one God (*HCJ IV 45–48*). Through Christ the divine pedagogy attained its fullest efficacy and perfection. God the Father knew that humanity needed a tangible God through whom the rupture in relationships could be repaired and reconciliation brought about. It is fulfilled in Christ. Hence, what is offered in Christ is not only an informative knowledge but a transformative teaching of God because Christ came down as

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<sup>76</sup> ‘The Nation’ here signifies ‘the Jewish nation’, whereas ‘the Nations’ signifies nations other than the Jewish one. The world became infected by the victims offered to the idols (*HS III 237,12–15*) and the bride became polluted by the incense to the idols (*HS I 167,15–168,9/FH VI 7–16*). Cf. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 41–68 for a detailed discussion on the Syriac conception of ‘the Nation and the Nations.’

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *HS IV 282–296*, “The Second Homily on Elissaeus and on the King of Moab”; ET from HTM, *TV 1* (1989): 51–67.

'Leaven of Life' and mingled with humanity in order to transform it. This is depicted well through the various images used, such as bridal, combat, dough/baking, etc.<sup>78</sup> All these images of salvation in Christ lay stress upon a participatory knowledge leading to liberation from the idolatrous and iniquitous life. Again this participatory knowledge stirs people to proper discernment and action on the road of salvation.

The grave error of estranging oneself from the true God and going after false gods is effectively described in the Scriptures through the figure of an unfaithful bride. At the arrival of Christ, due to their idolatry and adultery, people were enslaved, persecuted, humiliated, despised, sorrowful and lamenting with the sad fate of an unfaithful bride (*HS I 167,5-6/FH VI 5-6*). Hence, Christ, the Bridegroom, descended to set the imprisoned bride free and take up his own heritage as the Heir who betrothed her at Sinai (*SHF IV 24/FH XI 24*). The rejection of Christ on his entry into Jerusalem is in fact a sequel to the whole OT history of idolatry and adultery. 'The Daughter of Rachel' (*SHF IV 23/FH XI 23*) was found to be still addicted to her beloved idols (Gen 31:34) rather than being diligent to open her doors to her Bridegroom. She manifested herself to be the 'Daughter of Zion' who slept with her idols, proving to be unfaithful (*HS I 449,3-450,4/FH X 83-104; SHF IV 21,22/FH XI 21,22*). Through his Nativity the Bridegroom came down to gather the woman bound to minister to the idols (*SMS 770,2-3/FH I 1049-50*) in the 'house of darkness'. The Light that shone forth from the Sun of Righteousness unmasked the idols (*SMS 770,22-771,1/FH I 1069-70*) and gathered her from the idols for the marriage feast (*SMS 769,12-770,9/FH I 1037-56*). The Bridegroom himself came to the sorrowful and enslaved woman to liberate her from the idols in order to celebrate the marriage feast (*HS I 167,1-168,9/FH VI 1-16*). The Son became incarnate for the true and full enlightenment of 'the lover of idols' (*HCJ IV 45*). From Mary a shoot sprang up as a staff for the world that is aged and bent down because of idolatry (*SMS 767,15-16/FH I 997-998*).

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. Chapter four (section B,e,iii) on 'Imageries of the Salvific Activities of Christ'.

Jacob finds the journey of the incarnate Son on earth as a fight with the evil one for the liberation of 'the maidservant of idols', the 'bride of light'. It was a road of purification and justification leading to the marriage feast of the bride polluted with the incense to the idols (*HS I 167,5–168,7/FH VI 5–14*). In the womb of Mary the eternal Son assumed a body in humility (in a humble estate) to make all idols topple and to despise the arrogant evil one. The new born babe at Bethlehem, the house of David, became a 'New Sign' that frightened the evil one and his companions. The New Light that shone forth expelled all shadows of vanity as well as made all idols fall (*SMS 777,2–17/ FH II 39–54*). In the splendour of the light of Christ the evil one was unmasked and his works were exposed. All peoples began to see the true road and they began to travel on it. Wandering humanity saw the Light and started walking on the proper way (*SMS 779,9–10/FH II 89–90*). Thus Christ came down as the Leaven to render taste, understanding and discernment to the world that had lost the taste of the house of the Father (*HS III 421,2–9*).<sup>79</sup>

At Jordan Christ went down to set the armour in the waters of baptism and showed how one should be armed from 'the waters of baptism' for the fight with the adversary. By the washing in the waters of baptism the bride became purified and assumed the 'robe of glory' by whose splendour she could frighten and put to flight the evil enemy and all his seducing lusts. At the time of his temptations Christ exposed all evil intentions of the adversary. He showed how and why Adam had failed as well as how Adam should have behaved in order to defeat the adversary. Hence, Christ in the fallen body of Adam did what Adam failed to do and made him victorious in the fight against the evil one. This fight became all the more concrete in spirit and body at Jerusalem where he encountered suffering and death. Through death Christ entered Sheol, the house of darkness, in order to liberate the captives. After destroying Sheol Christ ascended to his Father showing to the world the way to return to the Father (*HS III 421,2–10*).

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. Homily "On 'the Kingdom of Heaven is Like unto Leaven'" (*HS III 411–424*); ET from HTM, *TV 3* (1989): 44–57 (esp. p. 54, ls. 193–200).

***d. Adultery/Idolatry, Signs of Fallen Human Nature,  
and Christ, the Source of Resurrection***

Jacob of Serugh has shown the underlying relationship between 'the alien-love', 'alien-lust', 'idols of vanity', 'stumbling blocks', 'love of the world', and 'love of gold'. All these stem from the adversary's cunning calculations to estrange humanity from the right path. All stumbling blocks in Christian life, in whatever form they might be, are idols that allure humanity towards an alien love that alienates it from the true path.<sup>80</sup> This 'alien love' or 'the love of the world' distorts the vision of the economy of Christ and hinders the light from 'the teaching of salvation' (*SHF IV 1/FH XI 1*) leading all to false discernment. The false discernment of Eve was the first failure and the Children of Eve carried it along. The alien desire is an intruder in the internal harmony and destroys the 'yoke of harmony' (*SHF III 31/FH IX 31*) by converting it to a yoke of slavery.

The circumcision introduced through Moses, according to Jacob, was to separate his own people as his possession from the idolatrous world (*HCJ II 107–206*) until the coming of the Cross. God's plan was to lead from this circumcision of the skin to that of the heart. It was to bring back the whole generations to the former state of righteousness (*ke'nūta*) attained by Seth, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek and others (*HCJ II 199–206*) in whom obedience to the law and the love of the Lord were inscribed in their own hearts rather than on tablets. Only through such a development can the new forms of idolatry be avoided. 'Love of riches' is the same death-laden fruit that Eve plucked (*HS I 274,15–18*)<sup>81</sup> and the 'love of gold' enters like the serpent of Paradise and lays waste the way that leads to the Kingdom (*HS I 272,7–10*). Above all, 'the love of the world' grips like a fever and 'the love of gold' grows wild in the soul like a cancer that defies all surgeons (*HS I 271,8–11*).

Jacob of Serugh presents a very versatile understanding of the evils of idolatry. His views are quite fresh and life-bound. They are

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. Martin, "Sur la chute des idoles," 109 (*tr.* p. 130).

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *HS I 267–299*, "On the Son who Squandered his Riches"; ET from HTM, *TV 5.4* (1994): 11–37.

conducive to application in the evolving situations of various human tendencies and cultures. Even during his life time Jacob showed how old forms of idolatry gave way to the new form of idol of 'the love of gold'.<sup>82</sup> His views show the central position of Christ, the Light, who enlightens humanity and rids off the darkness and shadows of all modern forms of idols and idolatry as well.

#### **4. Renewal of the House of Adam, the Kingdom of the House of David and the Priesthood**

In his characteristic vision of the mystery of the hidden and the revealed Son, Jacob finds Christ as the heir of Adam/humanity as Adam was fashioned in the likeness of the Son who would come in the flesh.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Christ is the object of prophecy, the eternal King and the High Priest. Adam enjoyed certain divine powers due to the 'image and likeness' of the divinity conferred on him. These faculties enshrined in Adam/humanity were developed into social institutions of Israel from the time of Moses. Since the house of Adam suffered the fall the posterity of Adam too carried on the distortions of the fall. The incarnate Son through his own person repaired the faults and brought into perfect effectiveness whatever had been hampered in Adam/humanity. As the Heir of Adam whatever had been given to 'the house of Adam' and 'the house of Moses' flew to the incarnate Son with their credits and debts. By assuming them on his own person Christ rendered life to them and set everything dynamically effective to proceed again from him through the Apostles and the Church to the whole world. These developments are made explicit through the festal homilies of Jacob.

##### ***a. Adam, King and Priest in the Garden and His Fall***

Before discussing the renewal of 'the house of Adam' through Christ, Mar Jacob's views on the special status of Adam/humanity have to be briefly stated. The exegesis of Gen 1:26 dealing with the

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<sup>82</sup> Cf. Martin, "Sur la chute des idoles," 122-9 (*tr.* pp. 140-4).

<sup>83</sup> Cf. *QHCI* 181-192.

creation of man in 'the image and likeness of God' and the dominion over the creatures delegated to humanity are major elements in the theological presuppositions of Mar Jacob. The creation of Adam and his fall are quite awesome. Adam/humanity had been installed in Paradise with the necessary wisdom to exercise an intermediary role between the Creator and the created beings. Rather than being a mere creature Adam enjoyed an elevated status with delegated powers on account of the 'rational image' in him. By those powers he was 'king' and 'priest' in the created world. The divine image set upon him on the one hand depicts his exaltedness among the creatures through his wisdom, power of the word, and above all his freedom; but the fall on the other hand depicts how foolish he became and how despicable was his deviation to the state of a beast due to the cunningness of the evil one. Thus through the divine image divinity exalted him and from the same exaltedness the evil one made him fall into the abyss of Sheol (*QHC IV 1-14*). Taking note of these presuppositions the discussion here is concerning the role of Adam as 'king' and 'priest' in the created world.

*(i) The Kingship of Adam*

The creation of Adam was magnificent because in his beauty all other beauties were somehow engraved and the compositions of all other creatures were somehow linked up to him as well (*QHC IV 19-24, 33*). Adam became a 'microcosm' synthesizing in himself the whole world (*HS III 168/9; V 860/2*). He was made of the same elements as the created world, and all of them stood united in him. Upon that unity God painted the divine image. Thus on the one hand the beauty of the spiritual world shined in his person invisibly and on the other the beauty of the corporeal world shined in him visibly. Therefore, he remained as a bond (*ḥẖāqā*) between the two worlds (*HS III 109,2; 154-155*), representing the divine will before the created world and carrying the created world before the Divinity. Adam's elevated status in the created world is explained through several images such as 'king', 'master', 'sovereign of the

world', 'head of the race', etc.<sup>84</sup> Much of Adam's God-given dominion over the created world is depicted in the imagery of the 'kingship of Adam'.

In the homily on the Hexameron Jacob depicts Adam as the soul of the universe. In five days the whole universe was created and was equipped with five senses. Yet it lacked a soul to its body. On the sixth day Adam was created and he took the place of the soul (*HS III 88,15–20*). Adam stands in the ornate city of Paradise as a statue, as a sign of the glory and creative power of the divinity. In the world he became an 'icon' of the great King (*HS III 108,7–12; 115, 128; QHC IV 60–100*). While describing the constitution of Adam on the sixth day of creation Mar Jacob describes Adam's hair as a crown by which the creatures should recognize their king. Above all Adam became a 'vase full of beauties' on account of his invisible soul rather than by his visible body (*HS III 115, 7–10*). Figuratively speaking, Adam was a 'god of clay' among the creatures.<sup>85</sup>

(ii) *The Priesthood of Adam*

Adam's elevated status in the created world had privileges and duties. By the dominion over the creatures he had the power to give names. By the power of the word enshrined in him he had to act as an intermediary between God and the creatures. Mar Jacob in his homily "On the Priesthood and the Altar"<sup>86</sup> describes the original priesthood of Adam. God created him to make him an 'associate' to set him in his service which is spiritual. But the breach of the commandment damaged the priestly order of Adam and it needed reparation.<sup>87</sup> As God had associated him in the creative work he became an 'associate' or 'friend' of God. In another sense,

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<sup>84</sup> For an enumeration of titles of Adam such as these, see chapter four (IV A,1,a) footnote n. 5; see also Sony, *La doctrine de Jacques de Saroug*, 259–64.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Jacob of Serugh: *QHC IV 3; HS III 109,1*; Ephrem: *GEC*, CSCO 152 (syri 71), p. 41.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Albert, M., ed. "Sur le sacerdoce et l'autel." *ParOr* 10 (1981–82): 51–77 (SyrT + FT).

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 54 (esp. ls. 5–6, 11–14).

God had placed him at the summit of the creation as a judge (*HS III 118,9–119,9*). Among the beauties that the creative power had brought into existence, Adam was set at the apex so that through Adam the admirable Architect ought to be praised. Hence, by seeing Adam all other creatures ought to praise God. Due to the divine image in him Adam was recognized and respected by other creatures. Jacob explains the priestly anointing of Adam by the divine breath he had (*Gen 2:7*).<sup>88</sup> Thus Adam was obliged to acknowledge and praise the benevolence of God towards him by praising that creative power. Hence, it was his duty to praise God from himself and on behalf of other creatures (*HS III 108,13–18*). In the homily “On Aaron,” Mar Jacob affirms that Adam was created priest in order to serve the Lord (*HS I 68–70*). In the homily “On Cain and Abel” Mar Jacob makes Adam confess the need of offerings to God and his inability to do the same perfectly on account of his failures (*HS V 3–4*). It is relevant to note that according to Ephrem Adam was set in the outer holy place of Eden after his fall. There he had to be obedient and faithful to the divine ordinance and serve God in his kingly and priestly role before being admitted in due course to the holy of holies where the tree of life gives life to all (*HPar 3:16*).<sup>89</sup>

This priestly duty of Adam/humanity is well brought out by Jacob in his exegesis of *Lk 19:40* (*HS I 453,7–455,15/FH X 171–220; SHF IV 43–46/FH XI 43–46*). At Jerusalem the leaders and elders of the people refused to praise the Son, but the simple children recompensed it. At Golgotha even human beings desisted from praise and dishonoured the Son. Then the mute beings recompensed the praise that was due to the Son. Hence, Mar Jacob states, “Therefore, we shall necessarily praise so that the mute stones may not replace our office towards God” (*SHF IV 46/FH XI 46*). Jacob finds the restitution of the damaged priesthood of Adam by Christ through the apostles. He finds an inherent relationship between God’s breathing into Adam in Paradise (*Gen 2:7*) and the risen Lord’s breathing of Holy Spirit into the apostles

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. Albert, “Sur le sacerdoce et l’autel,” 57 (ls. 49–50).

<sup>89</sup> For more on the Syriac understanding on Adam’s kingly and priestly roles see Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis*, 67–81.

(Jn 20:22, *SMS 815,10–11/FH XVI 141–142*) in the Church, the new Eden.<sup>90</sup> Thus the anointing lost by Adam has been re-established.

***b. Renewal of the House of Adam:  
Human Nature, Humanity and the Creation***

The house of Adam remained disintegrated subject to corruption without any hope of salvation. Until the time of Christ the house remained unsuccessful in finding a Mighty One capable of saving it from the disastrous consequences of the fall (*SHF V 5/FH XII 5*). At that stage it is again the divine mercy that moved down to save humanity from the terrible effects of the fall. At the arrival of Christ humanity (House of Adam) found ‘good hope’ and consolation (*SHF I 8/FH IV 8; HS II 613,12 + 623,8/FH XIII 48 + 247; HS II 633,17/FH XIV 199*). In Christ, the divine mercy came down to the level of the fallen one in order to render good hope as well as to govern (Kingship) and sanctify (Priesthood).

The economy of salvation viewed as ‘the renewal of the house of Adam’ is envisaged according to Mar Jacob in several levels. The major levels being those of human nature (*QHC I 115–118; II 165–178*), the whole of humanity (*QHC I 246*), and the whole creation (*SHF V 35/FH XII 35; HS III 103,6–7; 104,14; 105,5; 106,10–15; 119,21; 128,20*). At all these levels the Adam-Christ complementarity is the renewing power. It is the same mercy of God that creates and saves. By nature this eternal mercy cannot be hateful or jealous. Hence, even when Adam had sinned, that mercy let him feel the shame of sin so as to make him repentant. Therefore, the ‘robe of glory’ was taken away and a cloth of shame was given to him. That was at the same time a merciful punishment and a sign as well as a promise regarding his return to Paradise in due course when he repented. Thus God had mixed his mercy with the punishment out of justice he meted out to Adam (*QHC I 225–228; 235–238*).

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. Albert, “Sur le sacerdoce et l’autel,” 59 (ls. 75–80), 62 (ls. 121–132).

*(i) The Renewal of Human Nature*

The whole economy of salvation is envisaged by our author as a realization of the Adam-Christ complementarity in the aspect of the healing and renewal of the terrestrial Adam by the celestial Adam, Christ (*SHF III 6/FH IX 6*). The law that had been broken was renewed through Moses but the (human) nature that had been damaged was repaired and renewed by Christ, the incarnate Son (*QHC I 125–144*). This renewal and perfection is an essential sequel to the divine ‘image and likeness’ instituted in Adam/humanity. The distorted image and the imperfect likeness in Adam/humanity needed reparation and perfection. Hence, Adam/humanity looked forward to Christ through the spirit of prophecy and expected the actualization of the renewal and perfection to all faculties extended to humanity through the medium of the ‘image and likeness of God’. By the renewal of the law through Moses and with the prophetic enlightenment the Father had prepared the people for the fuller enlightenment and the renewal of human nature through the incarnation of his Son.

There is a wider network of images by which Mar Jacob makes his theological exposition of the meaning of ‘image and likeness of God’ in man.<sup>91</sup> But the discussion here concentrates on the theme ‘renewal of the house of Adam’. In Mar Jacob even this could be viewed with wider ramifications, especially with varying implications due to his symbolical mode of theological vision.<sup>92</sup> In the context of our study on the economy of salvation based on the festal homilies and other related homilies the renewal of the human nature is the theme of discussion.

The resemblance/likeness of the eternal Son in Adam yearned for redemption and reparation through the incarnate Son (*QHC I 197–202*). The fallen human nature/Adam is depicted in symbolic terms based on the two views on the constitution of man. From

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<sup>91</sup> For a brief survey on these imageries and factors, cf. Sony, *La doctrine de Jacques de Saroug*, 248–64; Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 67–134.

<sup>92</sup> An exhaustive survey on the theme ‘the renewal of the house of Adam’ in Mar Jacob is not aimed at here. Only some important features are brought out in order to highlight his theological vision.

the point of view of 'image and likeness upon clay' Adam became 'the damaged coin' (*SMS 733,17–18/FH I 291–292*) in which 'the image' is destroyed (*SMS 770,10–11/FH I 1057–58*). Based on the view of the harmony of the four elements Adam became a tilted equilibrium of elements and the five senses that had lost their proper foundation due to the disintegrating body (*QHC IV 69–96; SHF III 28–31/FH IX 28–31*). On account of the venom of the serpent the whole structure of Adam fell into perdition and turned to mortality. Against this serpentine venom, Christ, 'the Leaven of Life' (*SMS 771,12–13/FH I 1081–82*)<sup>93</sup> pervaded the whole of humanity by his Incarnation. By assuming a body and being born from a virgin, Christ imprinted on Adam/humanity that same image that was damaged by the evil one. To 'the fallen house of Adam' 'the Master-Builder' himself descended in his Nativity to rebuild it. Moreover, the Divinity itself entered in support of the 'house of Adam' so that it should not fall again (*SMS 770,12–13/FH I 1059–60*).

The imagery of 'leaven', with its connotations and allusions to the mystery of the Incarnation, serves as a paradigm for all forms of renewal through Christ. Wherever the 'Leaven of Life' enters disintegration, death and Sheol cannot withstand. The bitten and worn out Adam was restored (*SMS 812,5–6/FH XVI 75–76*) in order that he might be written in 'the Book of Life' (*SMS 757,16–17; 757,20–21; 759,2–3/FH I 791–792; 795–796; 821–822*). Christ, the Leaven of Life, through the assumed body, led astray the evil one and his programmes. This 'Leaven of Life', Christ, on the road of his birth and death renewed everything, choked death and uprooted Sheol. To the four elements that fell into the road of disintegration Christ gave the teaching of fasting as a remedy for the breach of the first commandment (*Gen 2:17; SHF III 33/FH IX 33*) that opened the 'first ulcer' by false nourishment. Fasting and endurance remain as paradigms of remedy for all types of false nourishments and alien desires with their symbolic allusions to all inordinate desires of human existence in body and soul. Against the misguided obedience of Adam in the garden, Christ showed the

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<sup>93</sup> Christ, 'the Leaven of Life'; cf. *HS III 411–424*, "On 'the Kingdom of Heaven is Like unto Leaven'"; ET from HTM, *TV 3* (1989): 44–57.

discerning practice of exposing the traps of the evil one (*SHF III 38,39/FH IX 38,39*). Thus the way to maintain and promote integration of the four elements was taught.

*(ii) Renewal of Humanity*

As ‘the house of Adam’ the whole of humanity is reconciled and restored in Christ. As the intermediary of reconciliation and rebuilding of humanity the activities of Christ are explained figuratively through various images (*SMS 771,2–15/FH I 1071–1084*):

Christ, ‘the Mighty One’	bound the rebellious one for the liberation of the bound ones.
Christ, ‘the Warrior’	bound the captor and made the captivity return home.
Christ, ‘the Physician’	bandaged and healed the wounded and rewarded the healed.
Christ, ‘the Doctor’	bound the fractured and nourished and restored by his care.
Christ, ‘the Leaven of Life’	pervaded the lump of humanity that was unleavened.
Christ, ‘the Salt’	came down from the Most High to give humanity the stable taste.
Christ, ‘the Strengtheners’	came to the infirm to erect and strengthen them by feeding through his diligence.

The Nativity of our Lord was the manifest hope to the human race. The eternal mercy sent his Son (*SHF I 8/FH IV 8*) and there emerged in the cave ‘good hope’ and ‘life’ for the whole world (*SMS 797,17/FH III 150*) as the Staff and Shoot from the house of Jesse (Is 11:1; *SMS 796,2–3/FH III 115–16*). This hope to humanity was given by the opening of the door to Paradise through the Cross for the redeemed to walk on it without fear of the sword’s point (*Gen 3:24; SHF I 32/FH IV 32; SMS 813,1–2/FH XVI 91–92*). Hence, the celestial assembly too sang the tripartite hymn, “glory, peace and hope, in the highest, on earth and for humanity” (Lk 2:14) respectively (*SHF I 3/FH IV 3*). The effects of the Nativity are explained picturesquely by Jacob:

But when the Father wished to reveal unto them his eternal mercy which he has essentially in himself,<sup>94</sup> *he sent his Son into the world and he became [born] from a woman* (Gal 4:4). And with the invasion of sin the door to grace was opened, and the angels perceived this, hence they said: From henceforward there is *good hope for humanity*. The transgression of the commandment will be blotted out by Him (*the Son*). The verdict will be annulled by Him. The debt will be recompensed by Him. The bond (Col 2:14) will be torn up by Him. Paradise will be opened by Him. The Cherub, the guard, will be dismissed by Him. The expelled Adam will be made to return by Him. Eve who was put to shame is made chaste by Him. The contentious serpent will be crushed by Him. Satan the deceiver will be unmasked by Him and the bow of death raised against the human race will be broken by Him. Because of all these, it is not a small [advantage], but *good hope for humanity*.  
 (SHF I 8/FH IV 8)

It was this ‘good hope’ of the Nativity of the Son that holy Simeon wanted to announce to past generations in Sheol. Hence, he requested his own release from the One who would release all from their bondage (*HS V 463,11–466,8/FH V 329–388*). Mar Jacob summarizes the whole redeeming activity of Christ as follows: “He walked on earth and sprinkled mercy and filled it with hope and made peace between the earthly and the heavenly beings” (*SMS 812,17–18/FH XVI 87–88*).

On the road of the saving activity, Christ, the celestial Adam, repaid the debt of the terrestrial Adam by fasting to cure the ‘first ulcer’ (*SHF III 5/FH IX 5*). The serpent had bitten a maiden and another maiden gave the medicinal herb for her cure (*SHF V 5/FH XII 5*). A teaching for the weak human nature has been given in fasting (*SHF III 39/FH IX 39*). Our Lord’s forty days’ fasting showed how the purification, integration and perfection of human nature were achieved through fasting (*SHF III 28–31/FH*

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. also *HS III 423,3–8*, “On ‘the Kingdom of Heaven is Like unto Leaven’” (*HS III 411–424*); ET from HTM, *TV 3* (1989): 44–57 (esp. pp. 55–6).

*IX 28–31*). The mystery behind the number forty enshrined in the OT and NT has been made clear by our Lord (*SHF III 13–27/FH IX 13–27*).

As the Heir to Adam our Lord accepted the debt of sins and the whole heritage of ruin of the house of Adam. In his body Christ repaid the debts and reconstructed the ruins and redeemed the corrupted image from Sheol (*SHF V 5,6/FH XII 5,6*). At the resurrection of the Lord death was defeated and Sheol was uprooted for liberating the captives whom the evil one had unjustly subjugated. By bringing in the episodes of Ezekiel who suffered for the iniquities of the nation of Israel (*Ezek 4:4; HS II 627,8–630,2/FH XIV 65–122*) and of Samson who destroyed the camp of Philistines (*Judg 16; HS II 5–20/FH XIV 167–182*) our author alludes to the deeper mystery of the suffering and death of the Lord and the uprooting of Sheol respectively. Thus the Resurrection is the ‘joy of joys’ and the ‘feast of the feasts’ which the heavenly Bridegroom presented as a bridal gift to the earthly bride (*SHF VI 1/FH XV 1*).

*(iii) Renewal of the Whole Creation*

The error of Adam brought about the curses on himself and on the whole creation. It is the redeeming mercy that descended and mingled with the earthly to give life to the world. By the Nativity of the Son the enmity between Adam and God has been resolved and reconciliation brought about (*SMS 812,17–20/FH XVI 87–90*), the heavenly and the earthly have been reconciled. They began praising in a single hymn (*SMS 764,12–765,10/FH I 931–950*). All the curses on the earth have been revoked by Christ and hence there began to reign peace on earth. The earth and the Garden with its trees exulted as the expelled heir returned (*SMS 767,9–10/FH I 991–992*). The thorns of the earth have been removed by the crown of thorns (*SHF I 32/FH IV 32*) and blessings were showered on the day of the Nativity (*SMS 767,3–4/FH I 985–986*). The Son’s mingling with the earthly made his story and the story of human race mingle with each other. He became Immanuel, the greatest act of divine mercy (*SMS 792,2–7/FH III 33–38*). A staff for the aged world and a shoot to give drink with its wine to the thirsty and harassed world, appeared from the house of David (*SMS 767,15–18/FH I 997–1000; SMS 796,2–3/FH III 115–116*). The negative weather of the cursed earth has been rendered void in

the month and season of the Nativity (*SMS* 772,1–773,15/*FH I* 1091–1126). Earth has been pacified by the Son who dwelt on it (*SHF I* 6/*FH IV* 6). Life began to be transmitted on the day of the Resurrection (*HS II* 611,11–12/*FH XIII* 7–8).

***c. Christ, the King of Kings and the High Priest,  
Renewing Everything from What is His own***

The powers given to Adam, especially his kingly and priestly roles, have developed into social institutions in Israel. But in their developments human pride, greed and lust began to rule, rather than the divine will (*SHF IV* 31–39/*FH XI* 31–39) and hence the need of renewal and redemption. The whole renewal effected by the salvific deeds of Christ is a clear expression of the renewal of all old things by means of what belonged to him (*HS I* 192,9/*FH VI* 512). Christ was king in essence, as was proclaimed by the patriarch Jacob who had been enriched with revelations (Gen 49:10; *SHF IV* 14/*FH XI* 14). Christ emerged from the tribe of Judah, which carried the kingdom and hoped for the renewal to set itself aright in an incorruptible state as David himself had said with consolation in the Holy Spirit (Ps 45:6,7; *SHF IV* 12,13/*FH XI* 12,13). Thus in Christ the promises of the patriarch Jacob, the words of David and the explanation of Daniel (Dan 2:44) regarding the kingdom were fulfilled (*SHF IV* 14/*FH XI* 14). As the kingdom forms part of his essence and belongs to him Christ received it from no one nor did he hand it over to anyone. The kingdom of David continues for eternity through Christ (*SHF IV* 15,16/*FH XI* 15,16).

Christ is the source, mediator and sustainer of the Levitical priesthood. All sacrifices and libations were received by the Father through Christ. It is Christ who conferred holiness on the priests, sanctification to their offerings, and propitiation from the Father to the sacrifices (*HS V* 454,12–21/*FH V* 143–152). All OT sacrifices were made effective only through Christ:

It is to you Abel constructed the altar and offered his sacrifices.

In your name he brought the first-born ones of his flocks and their fatlings (Gen 4:4).

The offering of virtuous Noah too was offered to you (Gen 8:20);

while you received it, the matter concerning you was hidden in your concealed Father.

Melchizedek put on your great image with his offerings (Gen 14:18–20),

and spiritually he had depicted your priesthood through his sacrifices.

Abraham built the altar at the top of the mountain for you, and your mystery redeemed the child, Isaac, from the knife (Gen 22:10–12).

It was to you that Jacob had made the vow when he was fleeing and after you had assisted him he gave to you all his tithes (Gen 28:20–22).

Through your hand holiness descended to the Levites and to you they have brought all the offerings of their tithes.

*(HS V 455,1–12/FH V 153–164)*

Mar Jacob concludes in his homily ‘On the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple’ employing Simeon as his mouth piece, “There is no [time] when the Father is without you and he received all sacrifices through you and with you” (*HS V 455,13–14/FH V 165–66*). But far above the order of the Levitical priesthood Christ wanted to establish his perfect priesthood. That perfection and its higher order in Christ is foreshadowed in Melchizedek. By his offerings to Melchizedek Abraham mingled himself with the dominical priesthood (Heb 7:1–2; *HS V 167,4*). David, through the spirit of prophecy, sought a type to depict the exalted sacrificial offering of Christ (*HS II 208,10–15*). Searching through the offerings of Abel, Noah, Abraham and those of the Levites, David found only Melchizedek as a type of Christ. The offering of Melchizedek was a self-offering of his sufferings instead of the blood of animals. Thus he depicted the offering of Christ. As Christ did not receive his priesthood from anyone nor did he hand it over to anyone, thus Melchizedek also did not receive his priesthood nor did he hand it over to anyone. He was priest for ever.

Christ entered into his royal domain at Ephratha (*SMS 759,2–7/FH I 821–826*) and proceeded from there on the road of his salvific activity. At Jordan at his baptism kingship and priesthood flew to him as waters naturally flow into the sea (*HS I 192,10–193,1/FH VI 513–524*). Christ assumed the Davidic Kingship and

the Priesthood of Aaron, not because he lacked anything, but in reality Kingship and Priesthood belong to him essentially. All orders of priestly ministry gain perfection from Christ.<sup>95</sup> Christ's entry into Jerusalem and the happenings on the Friday of the Passion demonstrate, according to Mar Jacob, the progress of the divine economy of salvation as it is divinely instituted. It is the free will of humanity that decides either to understand it discerningly and participate and co-operate with it, or to reject all divine invitations to understand and accept it.

The renewal that took place in the whole of creation through the person of Christ is envisaged as the renewal of the house of Adam because the whole creation was set up as a palace for Adam. Assuming the sense of corporate personality, in the vision of Jacob too, it is difficult to distinguish the line of separation between the individual and the community. Moreover, by symbolic vision and the use of images to convey theological truths, our author retains a lot of flexibility, dynamism and freshness to deal with divine-human interactions under the aspect of redemption and salvation at the individual and communal levels of human existence.

### **5. Salvation on the Road of Righteousness and on the Road of the Cross**

The depiction of the Christian economy of salvation as a way that leads to eternal life is a biblical legacy. The imagery of journey, way, road, path, etc., are widely used in early Christian literature. The early Syriac literature employs these images extensively with more accent on the economy of salvation.<sup>96</sup> Jacob of Serugh develops his views on the economy of salvation in Christ with the allusions of these images in order to depict the progress and various stages of the salvation in Christ.<sup>97</sup> What is most admirable in Jacob is perhaps the exposition of this legacy in an intuitive and creative manner for the purpose of catechesis. Through Adam the whole of humanity has been set on the road of righteousness to travel on to

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<sup>95</sup> Cf. Carr, "Diaconate in the Ordination Rites," 48–54.

<sup>96</sup> For a brief survey on Ephrem's use of this imagery, see Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 246–9, 299–301.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Rilliet, "La métaphore du chemin," 324–31.

the meeting point of immortality (*SHF III 31/FH IX 31*). But Adam took a wrong turn in his journey on account of his false discernment due to the allurements of the evil one, to which he submitted himself out of his free will. Thus he became iniquitous instead of progressing in righteousness for inheriting eternal life as a gift of grace. He went astray alienating himself from the path set in creation by the Divinity.

The festal homilies of Mar Jacob demonstrate that the way of Christ progresses as it was planned. Christ's way is the will of the Father and he goes accordingly to perfect his work in order to accomplish his way (*HS II 367,17–20/FH VIII 429–432*). The Father set the road of Christ and the road of revelation. Christ goes along those lines conforming his will to that of the Father (*SHF IV 42/FH XI 42*). This can be viewed as the undoing of the breach of the will of the Father in Eden by Adam. In fact, all righteous people in the history of Israel depicted the road of Christ (*HS V 331,3–332,8*)<sup>98</sup>. But at every step the evil one tried to cover up or distort the way of salvation by shadows and darkness as to make humanity go astray. While Christ wants to fulfill the true path Satan wants to introduce an alien path (*HS I 192,2–3/FH VI 505–506*) for leading astray. In treating the imagery of the way of salvation in the festal homilies generally there are three stages. They are the prophetic vision of the road of Christ in types and mysteries, the historical fulfillment of those types and mysteries in the incarnate Son, and the spiritual realization of the same in the individuals and the community of believers in Christ. Hence, we make a brief survey of this imagery of the way of Christ in those three levels. In his own person, precisely through his words and deeds, Christ fulfilled all prophetic teachings and made his apostles and disciples understand his way. He enjoined them to preach his way in the whole world (*SMS 817,16–17/FH XVI 189–190*). This road of salvation proceeds through the path of righteousness or justice to that of perfection as shown and set into effectiveness by Christ on his road of the Cross. The path of Christ in his saving activities opens the closed way to Paradise and makes all the redeemed

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. "A Homily on Samson" (*HS V 331–355*); ET from HTM, *TV* 11 (1992): 50–70 (esp. pp. 51–2, ls. 3–24).

approach and eat of 'the Tree of Life' which is Christ himself, who dwells together with his Father in the holy of holies (*SMS 831,17–20/FH XVI 481–484*).

***a. The Road of Righteousness  
and the Righteous of the Old Testament***

The divine teaching about the way of salvation enlightened the righteous of the old alliance and the prophets. They served as ambassadors and messengers of the Redeemer. The righteous of the OT such as Abel, Enoch, Noah and others depicted the way of the redeemer in their own lives. The prophets were given the Spirit to enlighten the people as if with lamps until the coming of the Sun, Christ. Jacob puts it as follows:

His [*Christ's*] ambassadors resounded to inform the earth  
before His advent,  
so that the Son of the virgin should be announced by His  
messengers.

The ambassadors made an assault on the persecutor but he  
was not terrified.

They shot at him arrows but he did not move away from the  
captives.

The Merciful One saw that the world was wearied and the evil  
one had got the upper hand,  
and he sent his Son to snatch the prey away from the captor.

(*SMS 725,21–726,4/FH I 123–128*)

The road of Christ through birth and death, and his exaltation to the Father has been symbolically depicted in the Scriptures. All those depictions assumed realization on the path of the Lord who came down to restore the image of Adam through the path of the Cross.

The journey of Christ begins with his birth from the virgin. In the context of the Nativity of the Son, after having learned and became convinced of the truth, Mary gives testimonies regarding the road of virgin-birth of the Son from the Nature (*SMS 750,10–19/FH I 639–648*) and the Scriptures (*SMS 750,20–751,3/FH I 649–654*). She points out how the various wombs of Nature gave birth without union of bodies so as to serve as types of the road of the Son. Hence, Mary speaks to Joseph in a dramatic dialogue setting within the structure of a homily:

Mary said: “If you seek testimony for my words  
it is easy for you to hear both from Nature and from the  
Scripture.

Who was united [in marriage] to the virgin earth that gave birth  
to Adam (Gen 2:7),  
and even Adam, with whom was he joined for the birth of Eve  
(Gen 2:20–23)?

Who was united [in marriage] with the tree when it gave birth  
to the lamb (Gen 22:13),  
or who knew the rock when it gave birth to rivers (Ex 17:5–7)?  
By what spirit did the staff sprout forth in an unusual manner<sup>99</sup>  
(Num 17:8; Heb 9:4),  
or by what marital union did a lifeless jawbone bring out water  
(Judg 15:15–19)?

In these wombs who has generated these offsprings,  
for, is this alone, that which happened in me, untrue?”

*(SMS 750,10–19/FH I 639–648)*

Elizabeth, the daughter of Levites, became filled with the Holy Spirit and sang praises to the mysteries that came to pass through Mary, the Daughter of David (*SMS 743,21–745,5/FH I 503–530*). Again the Spirit had called the aged Simeon to give witness to ‘the Elder who became a child at the end of times’ (*HS V 449,14/FH V 40*). Having been filled with the Spirit Simeon understood hidden things (*HS V 456,16–458,4/FH V 189–218*) by an inner vision: in the babe of swaddling clothes he saw ‘God almighty’ before whom Eve is immensely young. Simeon saw the whole road of the Son from the time of creation through the reception of all just offerings of Abel, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Jacob and all the Levites (*HS V 454,20–455,12/FH V 151–164*). Moreover, Simeon saw the onward path of the Son, which is sprinkled with blood, that leads to slaughter for the release of the peoples from captivity (*HS V 456,18–458,2/FH V 191–216*). Hence, Simeon makes petition for his release so as to go to Sheol and announce the good news of the realization of the road of the Son (*HS V 463,11–466,8/FH V 329–388*). In the homily on

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<sup>99</sup> Lit: ‘outside the custom’.

the baptism of Christ our author brings to light how David (*HS I 187,18–19/FH VI 419–420; SHF II 33/FH VII 33*) and Zechariah (*HS I 189,1–3/FH VI 442–44*) had seen the road of Christ in Jordan.

At the time of the Transfiguration Moses and Elijah mention about the road of the Cross that waits for the Son to be fulfilled so as to bring about the liberation of Adam by the Crucifixion and the completion of the way (*HS II 366,3–369,13/FH VIII 393–468*). Our Lord's forty days' fasting was already seen by the clear-sighted eye of prophecy and became revealed in types by earlier prophetic events in the mystery of the number forty seen in the forty days' Flood, the forty days' waiting by Noah, the forty years' stay of Moses in Egypt, Midian and Horeb, his forty days' fasting at Sinai, the purificatory and punitive laws related to the number forty, the forty days' fasting of Elijah, the forty days' repentance of Nineveh, the forty days' sufferings of Ezekiel, and so on (*SHF III 13–26/FH IX 13–26*). In fact it was Christ who enlightened and instructed all on their way (*SHF III 27/FH IX 27*). Zechariah and Isaiah have foretold the journey of the Son in Jerusalem, describing the entry of the Lord into Jerusalem as the King even though in a humble state. Jacob demonstrates how on the passion Friday all the prophecies of Isaiah were fulfilled.

### ***b. The Path of the Law and the Road of the Cross***

The divine mercy that created Adam had initially given the path of the law in Paradise. The first law was, "And the Lord commanded the man, saying: 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die'" (*Gen 2:16–17*). This commandment was given out of love for humanity so that Adam might inherit the blessings of Paradise with merit as a just and righteous man through obedience to God and the divine plan (*QHC III,185–202*). Since the path of the Law was envisaged as a means to make humanity righteous and meritorious or just before God, it is also called the path of righteousness or justice. It was a gracious provision offered to humanity to respond with discernment in freedom (*QHC I 141–42; IV,213*) so as to inherit the riches of Paradise. But Adam failed to live up to the demands and inherited iniquity and death instead of justice/righteousness and life. The road of Law was blocked and Adam became a slave of

the adversary's powers. Thus the first commandment given in Paradise was breached and its evil consequences began to invade the human race.

The divine mercy provides again the commandments through Moses at Sinai. But on seeing the sins of the people, Moses destroyed the God-given tablets upon which the Divinity himself had written the Law (Ex 32:15–20). According to Mar Jacob, that destruction of the God-given tablets became a symbolic re-enactment of the first breach of law (*QHC I 105–114*) in Paradise (Gen 3:11). Then at Sinai the Lord God again instructed Moses to construct new tablets for the Law instead of the destroyed ones (Ex 34:1–4). Thus through Moses the road of law has been rectified by giving the deposits of the law and its sequences such as prophecy, priesthood, etc. This road of the Law runs together with the lights of prophecy till John the Baptist. After John the Baptist the incarnate Son himself leads the way. In a dramatic dialogue Mar Jacob makes Jesus speak out:

Do not turn me aside from the path that is set for me; for I will not myself turn aside but accomplish redemption. It is by the door of the Law I entered the enclosure of the sheep (Jn 10:1–5) and in this way it is right for me to accomplish all the justice of Moses (Mt 3:15; Rom 10:5). Afterwards, I shall begin to enlighten in the world the perfection of Melchizedek (Heb 7:11,17; Ps 110:4), the great priest who prefigured my mysteries; I shall accomplish justice (Mt 3:15) and then I shall show perfection; I shall conclude (seal) the service of the Law, and then I shall begin the great path of the Cross. *Allow it now* (Mt 3:15). Do not announce about my greatness because it is the time of my smallness.

(*SHF II 18/FH VII 18*)

The path of the Law is a path of preparation and instruction for a higher path. Jacob of Serugh envisages five covenants in successive stages through Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Christ, of which the first four were of the Law to make the people reach up to the perfect covenant and the realization of the divine salvific plan in Christ. The successive covenantal instructions are as follows:

To Adam he commanded not to eat from the tree  
and to Noah he instructed to slaughter the flesh and then eat it.

Then to Abraham he gave circumcision, a manifest sign,  
and to Moses he revealed the hidden mysteries of his creation  
and after these he sent his Son to perfect all.

(*HCJ IV 153–157*)

Prophecy has viewed the path of Christ, the path of the Cross, in the light of the Spirit.<sup>100</sup> The path of the Cross of Christ brings in the perfection of all promises of God and renders justification to iniquitous Adam/humanity so that all might achieve perfection. Hence, the path of the Cross is called the path of perfection.

Path of the Law > The perfect teaching of Christ (*SHF II 1/FH VII 1*)

Path of Justice > The Path of perfection (*SHF II 1/FH VII 1*)

Milk of little children > Bread of the full grown (*SHF II 2/FH VII 2*)<sup>101</sup>

OT washings and the Baptism of John > Baptism with the Holy Spirit and the Fire (*SHF II 3/FH VII 3*)

***c. The 'New Road of Humility'  
and the Redemptive Suffering of Christ***

Primarily the 'new road of humility' trodden by Christ is a sequel to the descent of divine mercy in the beginning of creation to make humanity share divine glory by creating Adam in the divine image. Divine mercy that is immutable does not know any hatred or jealousy. Hence, even after the fall of Adam the mercy of the Father by his wisdom envisages and calls Adam to perfection through the salvific activity of the Son. Thus the Father set the way and the Son followed it. On the road of humility Christ accomplished primarily the repayment of the debt of arrogance and haughtiness of the evil one that had damaged the state of Adam. Adam should have acknowledged his humble and dependent state and lived on the road of humility. But he failed, and hence the 'new road of humility'. Secondly, the Son assumed humility in order to do justice to his path of redemption in the assumed humanity. Thirdly, the Son in his being divine and human, at the same time,

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<sup>100</sup> Cf. Carr, "L'esaltazione della croce," 10–13.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Heb 5:12–14.

wanted to vanquish through his humility the evil one who led astray Adam so as to recapture the fallen Adam, the slave and captive, from the captors.

The second act of self-abasement of God is contained in the first act of divine descent in creation. Consequently in Christ the divine mercy has come down perceptibly and concretely to the level of humanity. The Son as he was God and man, Son of the Father and the Son of Mary (*SMS 810,9–14/FH XVI 39–44*), on the new road of his humility, could be at the same time on high and below, in majesty and in feebleness, in the height and in the depth, being Immanuel like us and with his Father like him as well (*HS I 446,20–447,1/FH X 35–38*). Hence, God's mercy chose the road of birth and death through passions and sufferings. This fact is well depicted by Jacob through a set of paradoxical images:

Whither shall the mind tread its way to seek you there,  
and on which path should the word move to recite your  
glories?

Where will you be found, upon the chariot (Ezek 1:26) or with  
Mary;

with your Father, or with Joseph in the land of Judea (Mk 2:1)?  
In the bosom of your Father or indeed in the bosom of Mary;  
with the physical mother or on the throne of crystal (Ezek  
1:22; Rev 4:6)?

Can one find you on the fiery wings of dense feathers (2Sam  
22:11; Ps 18:10),

or are you carried about in the arms of the young mother?

Shall I see you on the backs of the Cherubs (Ezek 1:1ff)

or does your majesty dwell upon the knees of the believing  
woman<sup>102</sup> (Lk 1:45)?

Is your brightness in the legions of sparkling rays of fire

or are you girdled round as a pauper in the swaddling clothes  
in the manger (Lk 2:7)?

Did your essence dwell where there is no breath for the  
watchers,

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<sup>102</sup> Mary, 'the believing woman' (Lk 1:45), stands in contrast with Zechariah who refused to believe the angel (Lk 1:20).

or have you laid hold of the humble breasts together with our  
humanity?

(SMS 721,5–18/FHI 21–34)

The whole story of the birth of Christ according to the flesh and the consequent salvific activities are in reality the journey on the road of Adam who fell and was dragged along on the road of the serpent. By his journey on that road Christ redeemed Adam in order to lead him to salvation:

He walked and came upon the road of the serpent, which was  
bitter  
and poured out and filled it [*the road*] with sweet honey by his  
steps.

(SMS 812,1–2/FH XVI 71–72)

Since Adam was created in the divine image, the coming of Christ on the humble road was not anything alien to Adam/humanity. But in reality Christ is the celestial Adam who fulfills all sorts of insufficiencies in the terrestrial Adam, in the whole human race and in the whole creation. Thus he leads all to salvation which is 'life'.<sup>103</sup> No state of the fallen Adam was left unassumed by Christ (*HS III 325,16—327,8*).<sup>104</sup> This gracious act of divine mercy assuming the fallen Adam too is depicted in paradoxical images. Mar Jacob describes the Nativity of the Son as 'the King's humbling himself among the poor', 'the priest who became a sacrifice on behalf of sinners', 'the Shepherd who descended to become a victim among his flock', 'the Word who became flesh' (*SMS 725,6; 725,9–14/FHI 108, 111–116*), 'the Lord of the flock who became a lamb to bear our iniquity' (*SMS 807,17–18/FH III 363–364*), 'the Living Fire wrapped in swaddling clothes' from whom the 'briars and thorns' flee, and 'the Shepherd of the earth who became a lamb within his own pasture' the sight of

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<sup>103</sup> In the Syriac understanding 'salvation' means 'life'; the verb *hyā* means 'to live', 'be alive', 'to be saved', 'to live again'. Hence, the noun form *hayyē* means 'life or 'salvation'.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. "Why Our Lord Abode upon the Earth for Thirty Years" (*HS III 321–334*); ET from HTM, *TV 4* (1990): 37–49.

which makes the wolves flee in fright (*SMS 777,18–21/FH II 55–58*).

Through Nativity the Son entered the road of creation, causing the demons to go in confusion regarding his identity (*SMS 789,5–6/FH II 293–294*). He thus accomplished the way proclaimed by his heralds (*SMS 800,1–2/FH III 197–198*). The advent of Christ turned the degrading journey of humanity without hope into hopefulness and victory as Mar Jacob describes:

On earth there began to be peace because the curse of the thorns (Gen 3:17,18) has been rooted out by a crown [of thorns]. The hope has increased for humanity because the way to Paradise has been opened in order that the redeemed may walk on it without the fear of the sword's point (Gen 3:24). And from now on, glory to God in the heights, glory to God from the depths, glory to God on earth as in heaven, because through the Nativity everything has been renewed, everything has been blessed and everything has been saved.

*(SHFI 32/FH IV 32)*

Christ's coming in the body was to do justice to the fallen human nature by assuming a humble state which imparted what was due to his bodily state that he assumed on account of Adam (*HS V 460,14/FH V 269*). Hence, through Nativity he started his journey in humility. Against the boldness of the evil one God humbled himself in order to overthrow him (*SMS 776,9–777,1/FH II 25–38*). At every 'staging post' Christ's 'new road of humility' is manifested (*HS I 457,21/FH X 266*). Thus the Scriptures are full of humility in the sense that they narrate the divine descent on account of the love of God towards his creation that needs redemption. Hence the Son comes down and we see his total humility (*SHF IV 7/FH XI 7*). The Master has given the example and the Scriptures narrate his way so that all may recognize it and imitate him so as to gain profit (*SHF IV 3,9/FH XI 3,9*).

#### ***d. The Recognition of the Way of the Son***

In the catechetical preaching of Jacob the recognition and understanding of the way of the Son is a much emphasized factor. Only through understanding him one can believe in the Son. The process of recognition and understanding the way of the Son is central to the economy of salvation. In the festal homilies Jacob

demonstrates quite picturesquely and dramatically how even the nearest associates of the incarnate Son underwent the hard process of understanding his way. In every case we find the author picking up insights from the biblical episodes themselves to compose his catechetical exposition of the scriptural texts. The specific scriptural episodes treated are:

#### **Nativity of our Lord**

Lk 1:26–38 Mary's doubts and her wise questionings (*SMS 727,10–735,10/FH I 155–326*).

Lk 1:39–56 The Holy Spirit provides Elizabeth with understanding (*SMS 743,21–745,5/FH I 503–530*).

Mt 1:18–21 Doubts of Joseph and the angel's words (*SMS 746,9–756,8/FH I 555–762; SMS 805,2–806,17/FH III 304–341*).

#### **Presentation of our Lord in the Temple**

Lk 2:25–35 Simeon's recognition of the Son in the swaddling clothes through the Holy Spirit (*HS V 451,1–453,2; 454,10–456,3; 456,16–458,8; 459,11–461,7; 463,11–466,8/FH V 69–112; 141–176; 189–222; 245–282; 329–388*).

#### **Baptism of our Redeemer**

Mt 3:13–17 John the Baptist's refusal to baptize Jesus and the explanation of Jesus (*HS I 174,19–175,10; 176,11–183,8/FH VI 149–160; 181–326; SHF II 16–21/FH VII 16–21*).

#### **The Transfiguration of our Lord**

Mk 9:5,6; Lk 9:33; Mt 17:4 Simon's misunderstanding and the consequent reproof (*HS II 370,4–372,8/FH VIII 481–528*).

#### **The Forty Days' Fasting**

Mt 4:2–10; Lk 4:2–13 Jesus exposes the cunningness of Satan and shows the true path (*SHF III 34–44/FH IX 34–44*).

#### **Sunday of Hosannas**

Lk 19:39,40; Mt 21:15,16 The priests and elders refused to recognize Christ but the children repay the praise due to him (*HS I 451,21–454,11/FH X 143–196; SHF IV 19–30/FH XI 19–30*).

#### **The Friday of the Passion**

Mt 27:28–31 Everything belonging to Kingship was given to him. His death was acted out in images (*SHF V 27,28/FH XII 27,28*).

Mt 27:17,21 Prophecy spoke out even through foolish men and the truth of Adam's liberation through Christ has been acknowledged (*SHF V 32–34/FH XII 32–34*).

### **The Sunday of the Resurrection**

Jn 20:6–8 The disciples became confirmed concerning the Resurrection (*HS II 620,9–621,14/FH XIII 187–212*).

Mt 28:13–15 The crucifiers turned out to be the witnesses of the resurrection (*SHF VI 19–22/FH XV 19–22*).

Mt 28:5–6 The disciples became confirmed concerning the resurrection from the words of the angels (*SHF VI 26–31/FH XV 26–31*).

### **The Ascension of Our Lord**

Acts 1:3 The forty days are for the confirmation of the Resurrection and the perfection of the road of proclamation (*SMS 814,17–816,8/FH XVI 127–160*).

Acts 1:11 The Church, the bride of Christ, perceives the glorious ascent of the Bridegroom and her consolation in him (*SMS 821,17–824,10/FH XVI 275–330*).

In the first homily on the Nativity Mar Jacob sets the encounter of the angel with Mary in perfect contrast with that between Eve and the serpent in Eden (*SMS 730,8–731,11; 732,13–733,6/FH I 219–242, 265–280*). Thus mentioning the Eve-Mary contrast he alludes to the fall through the foolish hearing of Eve, the loss of ‘the garment of glory’, the weaving of ‘the garment of shame’ as well as the redemption through the wise hearing of Mary and her discerning questions together with her co-operation with understanding are all brought out. Mary who recognized the divine plan, makes the doubtful Joseph learn the divine economy with the help of proofs from Nature and the Scriptures. In the temple the wise Simeon understands the hidden reality of the Son in swaddling clothes by the help of the Holy Spirit and he in turn proclaims the mystery of the Son. At Jordan Jesus himself discloses his path to John the Baptist, explaining why he needs baptism, namely, to sanctify all baptismal waters, to bring all OT washings into perfection, the need to place an armour in the waters for Adam to put on, and so on (*HS I 177,10–179,2; 180,9–181,15/FH VI 201–236, 265–290*). During the days of his fasting and the temptations, without allowing himself to be deviated from his path of redemption, Christ exposed and nullified the machinations of Satan by showing how weaknesses and temptations should be encountered (*SHF III 7–12, 32–39/FH IX 7–12, 32–39*) and how Adam could have won.

At the time of the Transfiguration the Lord prepared his followers to be well strengthened to face all the dishonours of his way with true understanding (*HS II 352,5–353,7; 354,11–355,11/FH VIII 99–122, 147–168*). Through the events from the time of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem onwards, Mar Jacob shows how the road of the Redeemer goes forward as it is set out by the Father, irrespective of the negative or positive attitudes of humanity, towards the way of salvation in Christ (*SHF IV 42/FH XI 42*). It is the divine economy, rich in discernment, that governs the events. All the prophecies were fulfilled through both believers and unbelievers. The divine economy puts prophecy even on the evil tongues of the adversaries (*SHF V 32/FH XII 32*). The untaught and innocent children and disciples gain understanding and recognize the road of Christ, the Saviour.

The way of Christ is a sequel to the initial descent of divine mercy to create Adam. The humble way of Christ in the order of birth and death is the result of the descent of divine mercy to liberate Adam from the bondage of the evil one and from the state of disintegration in the hands of the adversary. Christ came on the road of the serpent that was bitter, and filled it with sweet honey through his steps (*SMS 812,1–2/FH XVI 71–72*). By assuming the fallen body of Adam Christ sought the redemption of the fallen human nature. He travelled the entire road of Adam in order to provide redemption. From the womb of the virgin to that of the baptism and to the womb of Sheol<sup>105</sup> he travelled and finally effected the resurrection of the body. Christ explains to John the Baptist the necessity of travelling on the road designated by the divine mercy (*HS I 178,1–2/FH VI 213–236*):

That loving kindness which summoned me to come to birth  
(Tit 3:4),  
that has again called me to come to baptism too.  
The great mercy has drawn me to descend to become a new  
born babe.

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<sup>105</sup> Christ's 'staging posts' in various wombs: They are the 'womb of Mary', 'womb of Jordan' and 'womb of Sheol'; cf. *HS I 178,1–179,2/FH VI 213–236; HS I 154,5–10; III 593*; Brock, "Baptismal Themes," 326.

It is that [mercy] which drew me to descend to become  
baptized.

*(HS I 178,1–2/FH VI 213–216)*

If you had withheld me from dwelling in the womb of Mary  
I would also have passed over myself from the womb of  
baptism.

And now I have travelled and come into this road of those  
born,

unless I have perfected it, how is it possible that I turn away  
from it?

Therefore it is becoming for me too, in accordance as I was  
sent,

that the entire way upon which I have come down should be  
fulfilled in me.

*(HS I 178,19–179,2/FH VI 231–236)*

Various feasts of the Lord manifest how at all his ‘staging posts’ he introduced divinity as a support to human nature so that it might not fall again (*SMS 770,12–13/FH I 1059–60*) but instead attain salvation. The response of humanity in the context of free will towards the divine invitation to repentance, conversion and faith is a prominent factor. Such a progression of the economy of salvation in Christ is well depicted in the festal homilies of Mar Jacob. His method of presentation is so enlightening as to give a clear picture of how the OT mysteries and types, which actually depict Christ, came to fulfillment and fruitfulness on the road of Christ. His exegesis of NT episodes is so creative as to show how humanity responds to the way of the Redeemer through the exercise of free will that had started its decisive functioning from the first moment of human existence in Paradise. His explanation of the homiletical themes is effectively catechetical so as to elicit human response to the divine realities, in view of effective Christian praxis. Thus the author depicts how the divine economy of salvation progresses on its road as it is set by the Father and attains realization through the understanding and faith of the people in the context of their free will.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Jacob’s apophatic theological approach traces the revealed matters of the mystery of salvation in the Scriptures in order to understand

the divine purpose and its economy. The basic source of this understanding is the divine-human engagements described in the Scriptures with insights into the divine economy that is based on divine mercy, divine purpose and the human free will. The interaction of all these factors involves divine and human realms, infinite and finite factors, etc. which are described through images and symbolic thought-patterns. Thus Jacob assumes much from the Scriptures as theological expressions (vocabulary) and as insights for his theological vision.

Some major theological expressions of Jacob with regard to the mystery of salvation are derived from the biblical vision of theological anthropology. Those expressions are symbolic devices to transcend particular events and factors of the human, existential and finite levels of the history of salvation. By this type of transcendence Mar Jacob envisages certain underlying patterns of salvation history. Such major factors are the unity of the divine economy of salvation, the on-going divine pedagogy for the salvation through divine revelation, etc. These insights into the divine economy enable to construct a synchronic vision of the whole salvation history. By means of this synchronic vision Jacob views Adam's solidarity with the whole of humanity and Christ's solidarity with Adam/humanity as the 'heir of Adam'. As another major factor Jacob finds the hidden and the revealed Son fully active throughout the history of salvation. Again the on-going role of the evil one is a salvation historical constant that can very well explain the failures and imperfections of any individual or human society of any time and place.

After having acquainted with the theological expressions and major thought-patterns of Jacob we have seen Jacob's vision of salvation. Again, as it is mentioned earlier, Jacob does not attempt at definitions but descriptions aiming at providing spiritual benefits and advantages. It is according to this orientation of Jacob that the present study explained some major aspects of the salvation in Christ. The five major aspects of salvation explained in this Chapter portray on the one hand the dichotomy of human existence with respect to the divine and human, the ideal and the actual, the essential and the existential, and on the other Christ, the incarnate Son, as the source of meaning and salvation in all such dichotomous aspects. Divine mercy's creation of Adam, the fall of Adam, the eternal mercy's seeking for Adam, the fallen-one, and

Adam's re-entry into Paradise, are the main factors that set the general frame-work. This symbolic and picturesque vision handles with flexibility the interplay of divine mercy and justice in the context of human free will. Among the other four remaining aspects, the salvation depicted through 'betrothal and marriage feast' and 'the demolition of idols and idolatry' explain the salvation in Christ with more accent on the subjective and moral aspects of the practice of faith in the communitarian and individual levels. But the renewal of 'the house of Adam', 'the Kingdom of the house of David', and the Priesthood represent the salvific transformations with more accent on the institutional life of Christians. Finally, 'the road of salvation' portrays the whole of salvation history with its progressive, actualizing and consummatory thrusts.

## **PART THREE**



The discussion in this part is on two main inspirational factors of Jacob's theological vision on salvation in Christ. They are the Scriptures and the early Syriac Christian tradition. In fact the influences of these two factors are seen well embedded in the exegetico-theological orientations of the early Syriac writers and Mar Jacob is an heir to those orientations. The attempt in chapter four is to describe how deeply the biblical symbols, imagery and thought patterns contribute to the formation and the development of Mar Jacob's theological vision. In chapter five the concern is to examine Jacob's indebtedness to the legacy of the early Syriac Christian tradition.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF MAR JACOB'S VISION OF THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION**

The scriptural episodes stand as a firm foundation or even the main source for Jacob's theological vision. With regard to the mystery of salvation in Christ, Jacob's views bring out the deeper relationship between creation and the redemptive Incarnation or, in other words, between Adam and Christ. Jacob demonstrates the need for, and the nature of, salvation from the biblical view of Adam/humanity and the exigencies of human existence referred to in the scriptural episodes. It is often expounded in symbolic terms through imageries, types and mysteries in the frame-work of an evolving history of salvation. Christ stands as the key and source of this evolution, and finally the risen Lord stands as the great meta-historical reality functioning as the sacrament of salvation to the whole world.

### **A. THE NEED AND THE NATURE OF REDEMPTION AND SALVATION**

The question of redemption and salvation presupposes the need of salvation. In the understanding of Mar Jacob the need of salvation and the road of salvation are based on the biblical vision of divine-human relationship and the conception of the same in the Syriac tradition previous to him. It is based on the biblical vision of humanity and human situations, especially on the rich symbolic exposition of the Paradise story in the early chapters of the book of

Genesis, that serve as a starting point in the discussion on various aspects of the mystery of salvation. Such highly symbolic episodes and texts should be read far above their literal levels in order to find the treasures that lie hidden<sup>1</sup> in them as well as to avoid the errors of dogmatism.<sup>2</sup> In the homilies of Jacob, indeed, there is reading and re-reading of such scriptural texts with a salvation historical outlook in the light of faith and love seeking the spiritual meaning of those texts. In seeking the spiritual treasures Jacob constructs his theological anthropology which is essentially related to his understanding of the mystery of Christ (or Christology) and the economy of salvation (or Soteriology). Thus Jacob's understanding of salvation is a holistic vision essentially blending his views on theological anthropology, the mystery of Christ and the economy of salvation. Hence, a brief survey of his views on theological anthropology is a necessity in order to situate our discussion on the mystery of salvation in Christ.

### **1. The Creation and Humanity**

Regarding creation and humanity, in the context of salvation in Christ, three aspects are quite important for Jacob. They are the divine purpose in the creation of Adam/humanity, the very being or the constitution of Adam, and the relation of Adam/humanity to the Son. Here mention should be made that in the vision of Jacob whatever he affirms regarding the nature and destiny of Adam is equally valid and real to the whole of humanity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *HPar* 1:1–3, CSCO 174 (syri 78), p. 1; see ET by Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 77–8.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Diel, *Symbolism in the Bible*, 91.

<sup>3</sup> Here it is important to bear in mind the amplifications of the titles of Adam, as 'Head of the race', 'Head of the generations', etc.; cf. Jacob's reliance on 'The Abiding Sense of Corporate Personality', in chapter three (section B,4).

### *a. God's Purpose in Adam/Humanity*

Creation was neither out of any need nor for any fulfilment in God.<sup>4</sup> The supreme Love rather than enjoying himself wanted to make his creatures participate in his glory (*HS III 6,12–7,20*). The first great act of this Love is seen in Adam who was created from nothing in God's own image and likeness. The noble rank of Adam and his corresponding responsible role in the created world are stressed by Jacob through an abundance of imageries and titles employed to describe the nature and the goal of Adam.<sup>5</sup> Divine mercy which is consubstantial with the essence of God acted out in

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Jansma, "L'Hexaméron de Jacques de Saroug" 11 (n. 27), 132–3.

<sup>5</sup> Apart from the key expression, **'Image and Likeness of God'** Adam's status before the fall is described by various symbolic titles: Adam, **'King'** (*malkā*, *HS III 115,10*), **'Priest'** (*kābnā*, cf. Albert, "Sur le Sacerdodce et l'Autel," 11,50 (syr. text pp. 67,69; *HS III 108,18*), **'Friend (of God)'** (*ḥabrā*, *HS III 107,12; 118,17; 125,2*), **'Associate (of God)'** (*šawṭapā*, *HS III 119,4*), **'Intermediary'** (*mēs'ayā*, *QHC IV 35*), **'Heir (yartā)** [of Paradise]' (*HS III 105,12; 119,21; 128,2; QHC III 167,170; HS III 876–892*), **'Rational Icon'/'Rational Image'** (*yūqnā mlilā*, *FH IX 32; QHC IV 63*), **'Icon of the King'** (*yūqneh d-malkā*, *HS III 108,12; QHC IV 64*), **'Bond** [of the world]' (*ḥzāqā*, *HS III 109,2*), **'Carnal god'** (*ʿalāh besrā*, *HS III 109,1; 152,6; QHC I 203; IV 3,120*), **'Anointed of the Father'** (*mšīḥeb d-abba*, *HS III 109,1; 117,12; QHC I 283*), **'New Master'** (*marā ḥadīā*, *HS III 109,3*), **'Port of the Repose of the Creative Power'** (*lme'nā d-nawḥā d-ʿabodūtā*, *HS III 109,2*), **'A New Handiwork'** (*ʿbadā ḥadīā*, *HS III 109,5*), **'A Vase full of Beauties'** (*ma'nā da-mlē šuprē*, *HS III 115,8*), **'Judge'** (*dayyanā*, *HS III 119,6*), **'Sovereign'** (*šallīā*, *HS III 119,12*), **'Skilful Scribe/Teacher'** (*sapra mbirā*, *HS III 120,1*), **'Lord/Master'** (*marā*, *HS III 119,19,21; 128,1*), **'The Solitary'** (*iḥidayā*, *HS III 120,14; 125,1*), **'Lamb'** (*emrā*, *QHC III 290*), **'Head of the Race'** (*riš gensā*, *FH III 360; XII 4*), **'Head of the Generations/Nations'** (*rišā d-ṭubmē*, *FH I 987; šarbitā*, *FH III 360*), **'Head of the source'** (*riš mabu'ā*), **'Pearl'** (*margānūtā*, *FH XVI 98; HS III 423,16*), **'Great Image of the Creative Power'** (*šalmā rabbā d-baroyūtā*, *FH XVI 104*), **'Image of the Son'** (*šurtā da-breḥ*, *HS III 109,1; 117,12*), **'The Fair Image'** (*šalmā pa'yā*, *FH VI 203*), **'Adopted Son'** (*simat bnayā*, *FH IV 7; IX 8*), Adam/Eve = **'Doves'** (*yawnē*, *QHC III 296; IV 177*).

the creation of humanity. This self-manifestation of divinity is in fact a coming down to the level of humanity. The divine purpose in creation was to raise Adam to the status of a son of God and as the heir of Paradise (*SHF V 33/FH XII 33; HS III 105,12*):

The Lord created him [*Adam*] not to make him go out of  
Paradise  
but that he might enter and become the heir and governor.  
*(QHC III 169–170)*<sup>6</sup>

The divine wisdom and the creative power adorned Paradise with all its glories and beauties only because of its heir, Adam/humanity (*HS III 105,15–106,14*), because God had no need of the created things for himself. The magnificence of Paradise is symbolically depicted through imageries such as ‘the bridal chamber’, ‘the Table of the King’, ‘the Garden of bliss’, ‘the abode of the Father’, ‘the Holy of holies’ where the ‘Tree of Life’ renders perfect life to all around it (*HS III 104,3–16*). Adam was destined for Paradise as a ‘carnal god’, ‘the anointed of the Father’, ‘the resemblance of the Son’, ‘the bond of the worlds’ and ‘the new master of the world’ (*HS III 109,1–3*). Divinity abased himself to the level of dust in creating humankind in his own image. This self-abasement prefigures the Son’s coming down to redeem the image in Adam/humanity (*HS III 110,14–20; III 161–163*). Adam became the image of God on account of the Son (*HS III 111,15*) and the initial couple had ‘vestments of glory/light’ in the initial Paradise (*HS III 125,15*).

### ***b. The Constitution of Adam/Humanity***

The key theological expression regarding the constitution of Adam is the creation in ‘the image (*ṣalma*) of God’. Jacob gives much emphasis to the biblical note regarding the direct intervention of God in the creation of Adam/humanity (Gen 1:26). While the rest of the creation was brought into existence by the divine nod (*remzūā*, *HS III 109,9–110,3*), Adam/humanity was fashioned by God’s own

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<sup>6</sup> CSCO 508 (syri 214), p. 37.

hands (*HS III 108,12–109,18*).<sup>7</sup> From the part of divinity there was a self-abasement to fashion humankind in the divine image and likeness (*HS III 110,4–111,1f; IV 815,5f; Ep XXIII 193,6–7*). Seen from the side of humanity there is an exaltation of the dust to the rank of the divine image (*HS III 377,15–16; 422,19; V 400,20; Ep XXIII 193,8f*). God fashioned man out of dust and painted the divine image on him providing a dignified status to humanity. Mar Jacob explains the 'image' (*šalmā*) as the reflection of the Father and the 'resemblance' (*dmūtā*) as the relation to the Son.<sup>8</sup> This special status of man in the created world makes him at the same time immanent and transcendent in the world, immanent due to his creatureliness and transcendent due to the divine image in him. Adam became a 'friend' and an 'associate' of God through the exercise of the dominion over the creatures through his sharing in the divine creative power. As a microcosm (*ʿālmā zʿorā*) Adam became a 'mediator' and a 'bond' between God and the creatures.<sup>9</sup> He stands as a 'rational icon' or the 'icon of God' on earth, through whom God governs and the creatures in turn recognize their Creator. This status is on the one hand a sharing in the glory of God and on the other the exercising of certain divine powers in the name of divinity. But all these powers are exercised within the sphere of the free will conferred on him by God.

Jacob finds the free will of Adam as the pivotal element both in his own being, i.e., his constitution which could freely choose either immortality or mortality, and in the active role he ought to play in the created world. This role was symbolically made explicit in the commandment given to him in Eden (Gen 2:16–17) as well. Adam stood in an intermediary state between mortality and immortality. Due to the spiritual elements in him, through the divine image, he was immortal. Due to the dust from which he was

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<sup>7</sup> Creation of humanity by God's own hands is a traditional teaching among various Christian traditions with varying nuances: cf. Jansma, "L'Hexaméron de Jacques de Saroug," 33 (n. 105), 134.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *HS I 684, 13–14; III 109, 154–155; 112,9; 113,2–3. 10–11; IV 815,5–12*; cf. Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 68.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *HS III 88; V 858,11–861,21; QHC IV 329–330*.

formed he was mortal. Thus he was created half-immortal and half-mortal. It was his free will that brought out his choice (*QHC II 147–48, 277–78, 285–86*). Therefore, free will functions as a ‘master’ (*māra*) in man. It decides for good or for evil (*HS I 576, 18–19*), and by consequence to the choice for life or for death.<sup>10</sup> Human liberty has lordship on the acts of human beings and it is not at all constrained to do either good or evil. In order to grow up and to run towards his goal Adam had to travel on a road of equilibrium that does justice to both of his existential aspects. He had to hold together his human and divine elements in the proper way as designed by God. This demanded a constant vigilance (*maṭṭarta*, *QHC II 296*) and a sort of combat (*qraḇā/da’ra*) to maintain himself as well as to make progress on the road of justice/righteousness that leads to the promise of life eternal or the consummation of the divine plan in Adam/humanity (*SHF III 31/FH IX 31*). In that mode Adam should have exercised his prophetic role. In his prophetic life through the exercise of his vigilance and during the combat the most effective weapon was his discernment (*puršāna*) which he had through the gift of the Spirit.

By the light of the Spirit in Adam/humanity, due to the divine image and likeness, he had an understanding/consciousness. Jacob describes this state as the ‘rational image’ (*Eph XII 48, 7–8*) or the ‘rational icon’ (*HS III 155, 5–6*). In other words Adam remained as the ‘created Word of God’ that mediates and governs the world through his word, which is made explicit in his power to name the creatures (*HS II 198, 7–8*). This power of the Word sets Adam above animals yet below the angels. This governing power in itself includes the right and duty of praising the Creator in the name of the mute beings on account of the gift of the power of the Word invested in him. Moreover, Adam had to praise God on his own behalf as well. The power of the word in Adam enjoins the duties of governing and praising or, in symbolic and institutional terms, his kingly and priestly roles. Having received these roles Adam had to remain in his status and fulfil his duties out of his free will with

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. *QHC II* [CSCO 508 (syri 214), pp. 18–30], homily on “Whether Adam was created mortal or immortal?”; Alwan, “L’homme était-il mortel ou immortel,” 5–31.

the understanding or consciousness of the divine purpose and the divine teachings.

***c. Adam/Humanity's Relation to the Son***

Creation and the Incarnation are essentially related due to the divine mercy that governs both. God brings in no novelty nor any addition to his plan. All his plans are eternally set and are immutable. Hence, the entire road of the Son of God has been traced by the Father in the beginning in the house of Adam (*QHC I 57–58*). God the Father pre-announced and instructed humanity regarding the Incarnation of his Son in the words, “Let us make man in our image ...” (*QHC I 29–30*):

Before the created things, the Father sealed the image of his  
Son,  
and formed him and showed how he would shine among the  
earthly beings.

The Father looked at the image of his Son and formed Adam  
that his [Son's] sign shall come on earth beforehand.

Because of this, he said, “Let us make man in our image,”

In this image of the child of Mary, the Only-Begotten.

*(HS IV 591,11–16)*

The instruction given at the time of creation was continued in the book of Moses and other prophets. Moses proclaimed, “The Lord, your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you ...” (Deut 18:15,18; Acts 3:22; 7:37)<sup>11</sup> regarding the coming of the Son for redemption (*QHC I 139*). Isaiah speaks how the Lord would extend his hand a ‘second time’<sup>12</sup> to acquire his people (Is 11:11; Jer 32:17; Deut 4:34; Ps 136:12). All these signify the way of the Son (*QHC I 75–76*). God descended to the level of dust for the creation of Adam in the divine image and thus exalted the ‘two tablets’, Adam and Eve (*QHC I 132*) and the divine

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<sup>11</sup> “Homily On the Prophecy of Moses, ‘the Lord will raise a Prophet like me among you’” (*HS IV 104–116*).

<sup>12</sup> The number ‘two’ means for Jacob ‘whatever is joined to the first’. Hence, it means any ‘perfectionary addition’ or ‘renewal’, (*HS III 140,15*); cf. Jansma, “L’Hexamèron de Jacques de Saroug,” 40.

commandment was written down on them. But they rejected the commandments and deviated themselves, turning away to the point of destroying themselves. Hence, God extended his hand a ‘second time’ and renewed the Law through Moses<sup>13</sup> (*QHC I 133–136*). Moses is again the image of the Son of God (*HCJ I 177–206*) who would by his manifestation search for Adam/humanity to renew the estranged and perishing humanity (*QHC I 137–140*). Jeremiah too portrayed the mystery of the Son’s renewal of human nature by the episode of the potter’s vessel of clay (Jer 18:1–6) where Adam is the damaged vessel of clay (*QHC I 159–170*). The deliverance of Israel from Egypt and Assyria were also works of God’s powerful hand extending a ‘second time’ for their liberation (*QHC I 173–74*).

When Adam was created he was given the resemblance of the corporeality of the Son who would come in the flesh.<sup>14</sup> It was on

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<sup>13</sup> Here it should be mentioned that for Jacob of Serugh the destruction of the first set of laws given to Moses was a symbolic depiction of the transgression of the commandment by Adam and Eve in Eden (*QHC I 105–114*) and the destruction of the two living tablets, Adam and Eve.

<sup>14</sup> Jacob explains his views quite clearly in his homily “On Faith”:

Humanity (man), when it came into being, became in the image of  
God

and God dwelt in the woman in order to redeem his image.

After he had fashioned Eve from the rib of Adam,

he [God] fashioned in her a place to dwell in the end of times.

So on account of that he gave his image to the house of Adam,

so that he should not be dishonoured when he would dwell in his  
image at the end [of times]

He gave the likeness of the Son, the Only-Begotten, to Adam

when he fashioned him, and (then) he took it [*the image*] from him

when he redeemed him.

(*HS III 589,16–590,3*)

When he fashioned him he [God] became related to him because he  
gave him his image

and as one cognate he descended and dwelt in her/him to redeem his  
image.

The Word, that is, the Only-Begotten Son of God,

that corporeality that God imprinted his image. Thus it became God's pact with Adam (*QHC I 185–192*) that he would not be abandoned in destruction on account of that image, but would be saved by the Son. God had exalted the dust in Adam with the resemblance of the Son, raising his servant, Adam, to the level of a 'god' on earth so that the Son might receive from him the body by which he would assume the vicissitudes of the servant Adam (*QHC I 59–64*). Hence the Son was sent to his own (Jn 1:11) in search of the corrupt image for its renewal through suffering and the Crucifixion (*QHC I 185–200*).

## 2. The Fall and the Predicament of Humanity

In the theological anthropology of Mar Jacob, as in other early Christian writers and in the major Christian traditions, human existence is inherently related to free will and its exercise. The fall of Adam/humanity is a failure to respond out of this free will to God's purpose for him. The fashioner of Adam, out of his grace and mercy, fashioned him so skilfully that from whatever has already been formed Adam could decide his course of action with his share of the creative power and the free will. But his free will had taken a course which deviated him from the divine purpose. He took a wrong step and became unjust and iniquitous before God. Adam/humanity thus failed in the exercise of free will which is a 'master' and 'guide' of human existence.

### *a. The Fall of Adam/Humanity*

The fall of Adam/humanity is in the context of the jealousy of the evil one. By his cunningness and deceitfulness the evil one tried

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dwelt in the virgin full of sanctity and he was not dishonoured.  
Because he fashioned them in his image, that is, the house of Adam,  
he became formed in her and he did not hate the creation he had  
made.  
He came to his own, he dwelt in his image, in the daughter of Adam  
who had been fashioned in his image, and on account of that he  
became like him.

*(HS III 590,8–15)*

malignantly to deviate Adam from the path of justice (*QHC III 181–186, 335–338, 815*). Against the evil adversary Adam had to fight and become victorious in order to persevere himself in righteousness. In order to help Adam in his fight divine mercy had given him the commandment as a tutor (*mrabbyānā, QHC III 197–198*) to make him grow up. Hence, Adam was powerful enough to act rightly in his environment, even though he was vulnerable.<sup>15</sup> Within the context of free will Adam had to enter into a combat (*qrābā/da'rā*) without which there is neither victory (*zakkiūtā*) nor crown (*klilā*) for him (*QHC III 185–198*). The commandment was to show him a limit beyond which he should not have dared to step in. There was no death hidden in the tree. In fact it was the voice of the commandment of God that remained in the consciousness

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<sup>15</sup> Jacob of Serugh explains quite dramatically and picturesquely the role of the commandment in Eden, the vulnerability of Adam, and the deceitfulness of the evil one in a few couplets:

And when clearly death did not lie in wait there [*in the tree*],  
it was the voice of the commandment that made him fearful and  
quaking.  
Herein was an occasion for the evil one to fight with him  
because without a precept he was not able to lead Adam astray.  
The greedy wolf [*the evil one*] was instigated by the voice of the  
commandment  
to go down and seize the lamb, Adam, from Paradise.  
The covetous hawk sharpened its claws swiftly  
on the chicks that were set among the trees.  
The deceitful vulture descended and captured  
in order to snatch them from the blessed possession of Eden.  
The accursed viper coiled cruelly  
to suck and devour the simple pair of beloved doves.  
The snake crawled to ascend and to make descend from the tree  
the two birds who were lovely and innocent.  
The pirate hurried and stood there on the road of Eden  
to despoil (strip off) the two merchants who came out there on it.  
He wove nets and hid snares like a hunter  
to entangle the two partridge within his net.

[*QHC III 285–302, CSCO 508 (syri 214), pp. 42–43*]

of Adam that made the execution of the judgement of death. According to Jacob of Serugh, as God had decreed, Adam was effectively dead from the time of the transgression of the commandment (*QHC III 277–282; II 293–294; HCJ VII 314*).

The festal homilies of Jacob of Serugh depict the fall of Adam and its consequences predominantly in terms of different imageries.<sup>16</sup> These imageries enable us to construct a conceptual synthesis. Primarily the fall of Adam is an alienation from the

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<sup>16</sup> Various imageries of the Fall of Adam clearly demonstrate the generic implications of the name 'Adam' and the communal representation it carries. Mar Jacob uses various appellations to denote all those implications of the Fall of Adam. Those appellations could be categorized with reference to (1) the Fall, (2) the fallen Adam, and (3) the fallen Humanity. **(1) THE FALL: 'Iniquity'** (*'awlā, FH III 363; XI 9; XII 13*), **'Garment of shame'** (*lbušā d-ḥesdā, FH I 277*), **'Sins of Adam'** (*ḥtanḥaby d-adam, FH XII 3*), **'Things of the former times'** (*qadmāyātā, FH I 1128*), **'Sin of the world'** (*ḥṭēh d-'almā, FH VI 166; VII 15; XIV 115; XVI 253*). **(2) THE FALLEN ADAM: 'The Lost/Fallen/Perished one'** (*'abidā, QHC I 82, 89, 194*), **'Dust'** (*'aprā, FH IV 7; IV 30; IX 32*), **'Booty'** (*beḡtā, FH XVI 108*), **'Brigand'** (*gaysā, FH XII 33*), **'Debtor'** (*ḥayyābā, FH XII 35*), **'Creditor'** (*marē ḥanbā, FH XI 9*), **'Head of the race'** (*riš gēsā/rišā d-ṭḥme/šarbā, FH I 987; III 360; XII 4*), **'Head of the generations'** (*rišā d-šarbātā, FH III 360*), **'Prey/Booty'** (*beḡtā, FH I 128; XIII 16; XVI 108*), **'Prisoner/Prisoners'** (*'assirē/ḥbišē, FH I 903, 904; V 389; XIV 10; VIII 436; XII 34*), **'Robber'** (*gayyāsā, FH VIII 272*), **'Terrestrial Adam'** (*adam ar'anā, FH IX 6*), **'Thief'** (*ganabā, QHC III 1015*), **'Infant'** (*šabrā, QHC III 24; IV 173*). **(3) THE FALLEN HUMANITY: 'Beings of the dust'** (*'apranē, FH IV 31*), **'Iniquity of the world'** (*'awleh d-'almā, FH XIV 72; XIV 101, 105, 114; XIV 123; XIV 149; XVI 78*), **'Iniquity of the people'** (*'awleh d-'amma, FH XIV 97*), **'Iniquity of the earth'** (*'awlāh d-ar'ā, FH XIV 111*), **'Sins of many'** (*ḥṭabē d-sagghi'ē, FH XII 10*), **'Mortals'** (*māyotē, FH I 1132; III 289; XIII 53*), **'Sins of the world'** (*ḥṭabē d-'almā, FH XII 3*), **'Captives'** (*galūtā, FH I 126; I 905; I 1073; VI 247; VIII 437; XIV 47; XIV 61; XVI 179*), **'Captivity of the peoples'** (*šbitā d-'amme, FH I 1007; VI 256; V 213*), **'Captivity'** (*šbitā, FH I 901; XIV 158; XIV 196; XVI 114; XVI 177*), **'Expelled servants'** (*'abdē ṭridē, FH V 349*), **'Company of the dead'** (*tegmā d-mitē, FH VIII 251*), **'Dead world'** (*'almā mitā, FH III 112*).

divinity and the divine plan. Any sort of such alienation has a negative impact on human existence which is dependent on the divine mercy and the divine purpose. Hence, the fall was a sort of self-annihilation, a going down to non-existence or mortality, which is the secondary dimension of the fall. The self-alienation and the self-annihilation in the fall is primarily due to a deviated and alien allegiance that drew Adam away from the right path. This deviation led him to slavery and captivity to death and the evil one, which is the third dimension of the fall. Thus Jacob envisages the deviation of Adam as a three-fold fall through various imageries.

With regard to the alienation from the divinity Jacob brings in a set of imageries in the form of a spiritual topography. It is a going away from the inhabited land to the uninhabited and desert land. It is also a journey to a far away country. Jacob combines the scriptural episodes of Adam's exit from Paradise (Gen 3:23–24), the prodigal son's going away from his father's house to a far away country (Lk 15:11–32), and Christ's entry into Sheol to uproot it and lead all to the house of the Father (Ps 107:16; Is 45:2). In a distant land one indulges in evil will and passions and becomes a slave to the 'lords' of the land (Lk 15:15). The so called 'lords' of the land are demons and evil spirits who are mistakenly taken to be true 'lords' and 'gods', due to the lack of discernment (*HS I 278,9–281,5*):<sup>17</sup>

The far country whither that sinner journeyed  
is an evil will that is far from God.  
He takes his heart far from God, and then he sins;  
for he journeyed as it were to another country, to sin there.  
(*HS I 278,15–18*)<sup>18</sup>

Deception leads always to indulgence in idols and idolatry. Evil passions and desires are unsatiable and due to them one remains in unsatiable famine (*HS I 282,12–283,19*), which leads to death. Jacob speaks of evil will and sin as the opening of the door

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<sup>17</sup> Homily "On the Son who Squandered his Riches" (*HS I, 267–299*, no. 12), ET from HTM, *TV 5.4* (1994): 19–22.

<sup>18</sup> Homily "On the Son who Squandered his Riches" (*HS I, 267–299*, no. 12), ET from HTM, *TV 5.4* (1994): 20.

to death (*SHF III 32/FH IX 32*) and the entrance into the region of death. It is precisely stepping into the path of self-destruction leading to non-existence in death.

With regard to Adam/humanity's self-annihilation the key imagery is that of the loosing of 'the robe of glory/light' and the 'putting on' of the cloth of shame which will be discussed later in this chapter.<sup>19</sup> As he set himself away from God Adam lost his glorious status and he felt shame and had to live in fear and trembling without hope. But Christ through his nativity brought back the 'robe of glory/light' for Adam as the redemption from his shame and as a provision of good hope.

Adam/humanity's servitude to the evil one is depicted through the imageries of fortification, slavery, captivity and the fate of a booty, which will be dealt with later in this chapter.<sup>20</sup> It is well depicted in humanity's entry into the region of death, darkness or the fall into Sheol. Jacob of Serugh stresses the entrance of the evil from outside human nature. It is the power of the evil one, the adversary of God (*QHC III 242*). The seductive force of the evil one captivated and bewitched the first parents. The jealousy of Satan drew them out of Paradise to throw them into the world of miseries (*HS III 325,8–9*) or into the deeper Sheol (*HS III 157,9–10*). The serpent, the collaborator of Satan, by its bite, transmitted the poison of death to the whole of humanity (*HS I 57,18–19; AMS I 142,4–5*). Thus dispute (*maṣṣūṭā*) and hatred were provoked between God and Adam (*HS I 624,11–12*). This induced stains in human liberty stealing the beauty of the soul and transmitting the communal debt to humankind (*HS II 202,21–22*). Adam too is guilty as he dared to transgress the Law (*QHC III 11ff, 29–30*). Adam was master of his situation as to decide for himself. But when compared with the evil one the first parents were innocent lambs and doves in Paradise. In this respect Adam is considered as 'an infant' or one who lacked experience. Instead of being led by God the first parents allowed themselves to be led by the serpent.

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<sup>19</sup> See the section on 'Clothing Imagery', chapter four (section B,2,e,iii,g).

<sup>20</sup> See the section on 'Captivity/slavery Imagery', chapter four (section B,2,e,iii,c).

This defect in human liberty changed the lot of humanity qualitatively.

The grave sin of Adam consists of, on the one hand, the gross disobedience to the commandment of God, and on the other, the dangerous pride that made him dare to snatch divinity prematurely as counselled by the serpent. Thus the exercise of liberty, within the structure of the 'image of God' in humanity which was devised by divine wisdom and mercy, had led to rebellion against the divinity itself. This initiated the ruining of the 'image' and the disintegration by falling back to dust. Since Adam is the head of the generations or races, his debt became a communal debt and it was carried over to posterity as if a written act of accusation. Thus a broken and injured existence emerged (*HS I 67,17*). Jacob accounts this distorted existence as an outcome of the defective exercise of liberty and as a falling from justice (*zaddiqūtā*, *HS IV 748,6-7*). The divine image in the human nature became corrupted (*HS III 155,7-8; 161,10*). This corruption, disintegration and the falling down signify a turning back to dust or more dramatically, in the view of Jacob, Adam's opening of the door to death through sin and the entrance of corruption (*hbbālā*) into the creation (*SHF V 7/FH XII 7*).

The fall is considered as a disintegration of the created nature of man. Mar Jacob views this disintegration in two modes, namely, disintegration of the image from the harmony of the four elements that have gone into the creation of humanity by 'the Master Artist', and the ruining of the image that was painted on the moulded dust causing Adam to return to the dust. This return to dust is primarily the effect of the false exercise of the free will of man because Adam was able to opt for either immortality or mortality through the exercise of his free will. He was free to give heed to the counsels of God or to those of the adversary. According to Jacob, man who is created in an ambivalent state between mortality and immortality needs 'vigilance' (*maṭṭartā*, *QHC II 296*). It is also in this state of vigilance he is given the power to decide either for immortality or for mortality (*QHC II 147-148; 277-278; 285-286*).

The deviation of Adam was a three-fold fall<sup>21</sup> from the divine purpose. He brought in a change of allegiance. He estranged himself from the divinity and proclaimed his allegiance to the evil one through the serpent. Thus Adam went far away from God, stumbled and slipped off from his status and integrity. He fell further down to become a slave of the evil one. It was the free will of Adam that opted for it. Hence, the distortion has its origin in the very being of Adam/humanity. From Adam, the head of the race, it proceeded as an accursed patrimony to the whole humanity. Hence, Adam/humanity needed a three-fold redemption: he needed liberation from his slavery, recovery (rebuilding) of his status and the reconciliation with God, his Creator.

***b. Symbolic Depictions of the Predicament of Adam/Humanity***

Jacob's orientation to seek spiritual profit from the Scriptures picks up various scriptural images of God's saving deeds. When it comes to the actualization of salvation in Christ many of the New Testament images and symbols with their Old Testament backgrounds are conspicuous in Jacob. He gathers his symbols and metaphors from the Gospels as well as from the interpretations of Pauline and pastoral letters. Jacob finds the Evangelist John as the 'splendour of the Apostleship' (*HS II 362,16/FH VIII 322*) as he is a true witness of Christ (*HS II 613,12. 617,3-8/FH XIII 48, 119-124*). He is the new teacher (son of Zebedee) instead of Moses (son of Amram, Ex 6:20), the old teacher (*HS II 357,16-19/FH VIII 215-218*). St. Paul is the unveiler of the mysteries depicted by Moses so as to explain the profundity of the truths (*HS III 289,4-290,1*).<sup>22</sup> As Jacob holds a healthy pluralistic view, both in exegesis and in his theological vision, he integrates quite creatively the

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. The section on "The Fallen Adam," chapter three (section C,1,a).

<sup>22</sup> Homily "On the Veil on Moses' Face" (*HS III, 283-305, no. 79*), ET by Brock, "On the Veil of Moses," 75 (ls. 113-130 = *Syriac Spirituality*, 77-8).

Johannine and Pauline views on baptism.<sup>23</sup> The pre-existence of Christ emphasized by both John and Paul is a basic theological presupposition of Jacob of Serugh. The Johannine view of the 'sign' aspect of the miracles of Christ is well employed by Jacob in his homily "On the Transfiguration of our Lord on the Mountain of Tabor" (*HS II 350,9–352,4/FH VIII 59–98*). The episode of the 'pierced side of Christ' in Jn 19:34 is a typological nucleus for Jacob.<sup>24</sup>

In the biblical and symbolic theology of Mar Jacob the pattern of complementarity based on Adam-Christ complementarity is the basic frame-work of salvation. The stages of liberation, reconciliation and renewal are the essential stages of redemption that leads to the perfect complementarity in the consummation. This pattern of complementarity in effect brings out the complementarity of the theological anthropology and Christology of Mar Jacob. Adam/humanity deviates into the darkness of the wrong path and Christ is the 'Great Sun of Righteousness', 'the Day', and 'the Sunrise' for the redemption.<sup>25</sup> By the breach of the law Adam/Eve became indebted by a bond of huge debt. Christ is 'the true Heir' able to repay the debt and tear off the 'bond of debt'.<sup>26</sup> 'Captivity/Slavery' is a symbolic constant of Adam/humanity's alienation from God, and Christ effects deliverance, freedom and reconciliation on the salvific road of his Incarnation.<sup>27</sup> Adam was created for the meritorious gaining of the promises by a sort of combat. Adam's failure in combat has been reversed in the

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<sup>23</sup> An example would be Jacob's views of Baptismal waters as a 'furnace' that moulds humanity anew, and as the 'moist womb' that conceives humanity to give new life are Johannine in character. At the same time baptismal waters are also conceived as a 'tomb' that represent death and resurrection as held by Pauline views. Jacob holds all these as various aspects of the same reality (*HS I 181,6–15/FH VI 281–290*), namely, the new life generated in baptism.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Brock, "Mysteries Hidden in the Side of Christ," 462–72; "Wedding Feast of Blood on Golgotha," 121–34.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. 'Light and Darkness Imagery', chapter four (section B,2,e,iii,a).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. 'Legal Imagery', chapter four (section B,2,e,iii,b).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. 'Captivity/Slavery Imagery', chapter four (section B,2,e,iii,c).

victory of Christ, the Second Adam.<sup>28</sup> The breach of the commandment by Adam and his eating caused disorder and disease. Christ is 'the Physician' who gave the 'medicinal herb' for the cure of Adam/humanity.<sup>29</sup> Adam/humanity was destined to grow in the likeness of the Son, but became spoiled and was poisoned by the evil one to incur death. Christ came as the 'Leaven of Life' and the 'Salt from the Most High' as to season humanity and render life.<sup>30</sup> The fall of Adam and his shame and expulsion from Paradise are depriving of his 'robe of glory' in symbolic terms. Christ in his Incarnation brought back the 'robe of glory' lost by Adam and through the Resurrection he restored him fully into his glory.<sup>31</sup> The ups and downs of the whole of divine-human relationships from creation to salvation in resurrection through Christ are depicted by the symbol of 'betrothal and marriage feast'.<sup>32</sup>

### 3. The Divine Mercy and the Economy of Salvation

Mar Jacob describes the manifestation of the great love of God or the divine mercy towards the 'house of Adam' in three steps. They are made tangible to humanity in the divine acts of creation, redemption and resurrection (*QHC I 43–50; IV 201–208*). The same immutable and eternal divine love or mercy is active in all stages because that love belongs to the very nature and essence of God (*SMS 794,14–15/FH III 87–88; QHC I 45–46; SMS 640,8–9, 16–17*). Gleaning through the homilies of Jacob some features of divine mercy can be gathered.

#### *a. The Immutable and Eternal Divine Mercy*

According to Jacob the nature and essence of the divinity is unapproachable to the human mind. But that same divinity made himself tangible to humanity through the divine economy of

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. 'Combat Imagery', chapter four (section B,2,e,iii,d).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. 'Medical Imagery', chapter four (section B,2,e,iii,e).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. 'Dough/Baking Imagery', chapter four (section B,2,e,iii,f).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. 'Clothing Imagery', chapter four (section B,2,e,iii,g).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. 'Nuptial Imagery', chapter four (section B,2,e,iii,h).

salvation. Scriptures are the story of this divine economy and its purpose is made manifest to humanity. Therefore the manifest divine mercy is approachable to those who have the discernment and the hidden understanding of the divine teaching of salvation.

By God's grace (*taybūtā*) the divine mercy overflows into activities which are made manifest to humanity in the creation (*QHC I 31–34, 39–40, 50; SMS 686,3,21*). That loving kindness (*taybūtā*) of the merciful Father created Adam as a son and an heir to all his possessions (*SHF V 33/FH XII 33*). The creation from nothing depicts the unconditionally gratuitous nature of that mercy. The manifestation of the divine purpose through creation is a gift (*mawhabtā*) of God from his treasury. Since divine mercy is the source of divine economy the latter also shares the immutability, eternity and abundance of the divine mercy. Moreover, divine mercy precedes all and even invites humanity to ask for the divine grace (*HS III 563,14*).<sup>33</sup>

The commandment given in the garden was to instruct and to make Adam grow in his power to stand in combat with the evil one in the context of his free will. But Adam failed to attain the proper discerning understanding of the purpose of God's mercy underlying the commandment. The foolish disobedience of Adam enchained him in Sheol. Adam turned away by his own will from the merciful God (*SHF I 14/FH IV 14*). Even when the human response went wrong or was deviated, the divine mercy offered itself from its abundance. Jacob shows how this abundance invited Adam who stumbled and went astray. Adam was called by name and was asked, "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9). It was divine grace becoming a 'tutor' in search of the lost Adam (*QHC III 725–26*). It was an offer to repent and confess the sin; but Adam went on falsely justifying himself, further failing to understand discerningly the purpose of the merciful God. Upon this the necessity of punishment arose. Even the punishment meted out to Adam was an act of mercy in order to chastise him as to bring about justice.

God, instead of directly cursing Adam, cursed the earth in order to make Adam indirectly experience the curse and thus turn

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 109 (n. 220).

to repentance. Jacob compares this as if breaking the flute to make the flautist suffer, or the harp to make the harpist feel sorrow. It is the same as binding the horse to set the rider in amazement, or to break up the ship to deliver the mariner in danger. The bow that was bent to bring death to Adam was broken in order to make it ineffective and collapse on its holder (*QHC III 863–870*). Adam was sent out of Paradise. It was an act of mercy so that he might not again dare in his arrogance to approach the Tree of Life and be condemned to live eternally in rebellion and suffering. Hence God sent them out to the cursed earth to suffer humiliation so as to make them return to Paradise in the proper time. The 'Tree of Life' was guarded to prevent anyone from reaching it improperly (*QHC III 1041–54*). The divine mercy did not want to send them naked out of Paradise, hence a 'tunic of shame' was made to clothe them, which was at the same time an announcement of their return if they were prepared to repent. Jacob describes the nature of the expulsion:

He expelled them like thieves from his house  
and like children he clothed them on account of his mercy.  
They were chastised with a hand from the part of justice  
and by the other hand a vestment with grace was woven.

*(QHC III 1015–18)*

He mixed love with the sentence mercifully,  
for he clothed them and then sent them out and expelled  
them.

*(QHC III 1023–24)*<sup>34</sup>

Thus there is the sentence out of justice to condemn them and the ornament of grace that clothed them (*QHC III 1029–38*). Mar Jacob shows how the divine grace and pardon surpass all bounds through the episode of the intervention of Abraham in favour of Sodom (Gen 18:22–33; *HS V 118,2 ff*). Thus the gratuitous and abundant nature of divine mercy to share its glory stands available at all times.

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<sup>34</sup> CSCO 508 (syri 214), pp. 73–4.

Divine compassion grew fervent in the furnace of Mercy that fashioned Adam and again it welled upon Adam and received him in the nativity to renew him (*SMS* 725,15–16/*FH I* 117–18) as well as to bring him back to Eden (*SMS* 794,14–15/*FH III* 87–88). Thus the Father revealed his eternal mercy through Christ (*SHF I* 8/*FH IV* 8). It is the will of the Father that delivers the Son for the redemption of the world (*HS II* 349,14–350,2; 367,15–368,7/*FH VIII* 43–52; 427–440). The Son descends himself according to the will and plan of the Father and takes up the road of redemption because of the same divine love from the essence of divinity, that fashions and redeems. Hence, the Son comes to be born a second time (*SMS* 825,1–2/*FH XVI* 341–42). As the redemptive activity of the Son comes out of the eternal divine mercy (*SMS* 794,14–15/*FH III* 87–88; *SHF I* 8/*FH IV* 8), the salvific plan also is immutable and continuous providing a unity and progress of its own irrespective of other factors. Mar Jacob insists on the immutability and unity of the salvific plan very specially in order to counteract the teachings of Marcionites who differentiate the Creator God and the saviour God. Moreover, the unity of the divine economy is stressed against the Jews in order to prove the Messiahship of Christ by bringing into focus the first and second Adam typology.

***b. The Descending Divine Mercy  
and the Economy of Salvation***

In the theological anthropology of Mar Jacob divine mercy is the basis of all divine-human relationships. The very reason for the creation of humankind is the abundance of divine mercy that by its provision of descent makes humanity share in the divine glory.<sup>35</sup> The first divine act of descent took place in creation on account of making the world participate in the love and glory of the divinity. The same type of divine descent is repeated in the various phases of the economy of salvation.<sup>36</sup> The condescending love that created

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. *HS* III 110,4ff.

<sup>36</sup> Jacob of Serugh draws a pattern of divine descent in the history of salvation:

The Mercy of God inclined towards dust (Adam)

Adam again compelled itself to come down to save him when he was fallen:

For if it [*love*] had not descended in the beginning  
 it would not have either been compelled to come down at the  
 end.  
 And because he descended to him and showed his love, the  
 love compelled him  
 to descend again, then otherwise Adam would not have  
 ascended.

(*QHCI 83–86*)<sup>37</sup>

Divine mercy saw how Adam had returned to dust corrupting the divine image in him. Law was given through Moses. Yet that could not redeem the people. Hence, the Lord extended his hand a 'second time' (Is 11:11) and renewed human nature through the Epiphany of his Son.<sup>38</sup> Jacob envisages the whole incarnate 'road of Christ' as the 'road of divine mercy':

That loving kindness which summoned me to come to birth  
 (Tit 3:4)  
 that has again called me to come to baptism too.  
 The great mercy has drawn me to descend to become a new  
 born babe.  
 It is that [mercy] which drew me to descend to become  
 baptized.

(*HS I 178,1–4/FH VI 213–216*)

If you had withheld me from dwelling in the womb of Mary  
 I would also have passed over myself from the womb of  
 baptism.

and gave him its image and fashioned the image of his Only-Begotten.  
 By the same love by which the Father delivered his Son to the cross  
 by that he humbled himself to give his image when he created.

[*QHCI 31–34, CSCO 508 (syri 214), pp. 2–3*].

<sup>37</sup> CSCO 508 (syri 214), p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> He showed his mercy while renewing the written law  
 and he renewed also (human) nature through the Epiphany of his Son.  
 [*QHCI 117–118, CSCO 508 (syri 214), p. 7*].

And now that I have travelled and come into this road of those  
 born,  
 unless I have perfected it, how is it possible that I should turn  
 away from it ?  
 Therefore, it is becoming for me too, in accordance as I was  
 sent,  
 that the entire way upon which I have come down should be  
 fulfilled in me.

(*HS I 178,19–179,2/FH VI 231–236*)

The divine plan that created Adam in the divine image and likeness cannot be ruined or altered as divinity is beyond alteration, as if it were loving Adam at a time and hating him at another time (*QHC I 245–246*). Out of his enduring love for Adam the Father revealed himself through his Only-Begotten at Golgotha (*QHC I 249–252*). Therefore, God came down two times, i.e., during the creation and at the time of salvation (*QHC I 281–282*).

### ***c. Human Free Will and Salvation***

Among the created beings humanity alone enjoys free will (*HS I 270,3–10; QHC III 833–834*). As a constituent element of the image of God free will functions as a decisive power (*śulṭānā*) in the exercise of other faculties such as the power of the word, the creative force in man, etc. Jacob calls free will ‘a driver’ or ‘charioteer’ (*bēnyūkā*, *QHC II 145–146*) who drives and guides. Hence liberty is rightly called a Master (*mārā*, *QHC II 299*) and the power of decision that resides within. It can decide for good or for evil and can command both soul and body (*HS I 576,18–577,1*). This free will and the power of decision are given to humanity to attain righteousness that leads to salvation. Hence free will functions with virtue when it avoids iniquity and turns to works of righteousness (*HS I 276,13–277,10*).

Free will is equally given to all human beings in spite of whatever state they might be in, righteous or sinful. In this respect Jacob explains that Satan and Gabriel, Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot (*QHC III 65–68*), the elder and younger sons in the episode of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11–32; *HS I 278,1–12*), were all equal in nature. Jacob is even keen to show in his exegesis that in the parable of the prodigal son God is the Father and the two sons the entire human race consisting of both righteous and sinners (*HS*

*I 277,11–16*). Again what the father divided equally among the two sons was the free will (*HS I 278,1–8*). This free will of humanity is well depicted both in the nature of Adam and in the commandment given to him. Adam was not totally spirit like an angel nor was he totally dust like an animal (*QHC II 185–186*). He was created with access both to righteousness and iniquity, to life and death, to immortality and mortality through the exercise of his free will (*QHC II 129–166*) in the context of the commandment (*Gen 2:16–17*). Just as Adam had immortality and mortality within himself, humanity too has both types of people, the just/righteous and the sinners. Taking into account the just people like Abel, Enoch, Elijah, our author describes that there are living shoots in the tree of Adam/humanity (*QHC II 201–236*).<sup>39</sup> Samson through his successes and failures has become a mirror of the free will in Adam/humanity. Whenever he stood in conformity with the will of God or in the Spirit of prophecy, he succeeded and at other times he fell down like Adam (*HS V 344,14–345,9*).

Another factor of free will is that it is not at all hindered or enforced. If it were hindered or enforced it would not be free will at all (*HS I 276,13–18*). So when the younger son wanted to go away he went away and sinned and again when he desired he came back (*Lk 15:11–32*). Even Satan could not hinder him from coming back (*HS I 289,5–16*). Liberty is the seal with which God painted the image when he created humankind (*Ep XIX 104,26–105,1*). This seal is given to all equally without any exception or discrimination (*HS I 276,17,19–22; 277,5,10*).

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<sup>39</sup> Here Adam is the 'tree' and Enoch is the 'shoot' as it is explained in the following couplets:

The sweet fruit [*Enoch*] condemned the tree [*Adam*] from which it came out  
because the bitterness that was found in him [*Adam*] was out of his own will (*QHC II 211–212*).  
If a single shoot [*Enoch*] that came out from him [*Adam*] is continuing for ever (*Gen 5:21–24*)  
how (ever)lasting would have been that growth through the observance of the law?

[*QHC II 215–216*, CSCO 508 (syri 214), p. 26]

The free will of humanity is designed to attain righteousness through the works of righteousness. By the neutral state in which he was created and also by free will Adam was furnished with a state of vigilance for his travel on the road of righteousness. Above all he had the power of discernment through the Spirit. One of the primary works on this road of righteousness is the rendering of praise due to God through recognizing the divine mercy. With the power of word humanity is called to praise God on behalf of all creatures (*HS III 900,14–15*) and on its own behalf. By doing the will of God all are called to run on the road of righteousness to attain the promise of the gift of eternal life (*SHF III 31/FH IX 31*). It is the exercise of the free will that makes one travel on or fall on the road of righteousness that leads to salvation. Jacob's constant references to the behavioural patterns seen in OT and NT personages and episodes in the festal homilies bring out the role of free will through successes and failures in attaining salvation.

#### ***d. The Universality of Redemption and Salvation***

More than an individual Adam is a representative of the human race. Our author indicates this by calling Adam 'the head of the race/generations'. The sin of Adam is a 'communal debt' and 'the house of Adam' carries this along. But redemption is offered to this house. Jacob regards the progressive self-manifestation of God to the world for the salvation as the divine pedagogy. This takes place through various steps consisting of five covenants (*HCJ IV, 87–176*).<sup>40</sup> The number five is symbolically linked to the five books of Moses and the five senses of humankind. God, the good master, teaches his children stage by stage and in Christ that teaching assumes perfection (*SHF II 1,2/FH VII 1,2; HCJ IV 151–158*). With regard to the provision of Law, it is clear that it was written in the heart in the early times among the righteous of the Old times and later it became the written Law which had to assume the status of the Law written in the heart in the last times as it had been in the beginning. It is an organic development that is consonant with

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. *QHC IV 87–176*; Bettolo, "Scuola ed economia divina nella catechesi," 153–4.

human nature. Hence, our author takes up the Pauline imagery of milk and solid food (1Cor 3:2) in order to describe the Law and the perfect teaching of Christ (*SHF II 2/FH VII, 2*).

The election of Israel and the provision of Law are all for the sake of the redemption of the 'house of Adam'. The three measures of flour leavened by Christ, the Leaven of Life, depict the three races from the Ark of Noah (Mt 13:33; Gen 9:18–19).<sup>41</sup> The promise made to Abraham is real and valid. Through his descendants all peoples shall be blessed (Gen 22:18, *HCJ VI 297–308*). Hence, the election of the Church of the people and the later substitution of the same by the Church of the peoples are suggestive of the universality of redemption and salvation. In the Church of the peoples are the true descendants of Abraham through faith. It is conversion (*ḡunnāyā*) and faith that make the change (*HCJ VI 37*). The unfaithful Israel is symbolically called 'Zion' and 'Synagogue'. Christ is the Sun for the peoples from the people (*SMS 796,11/FH III 124*). The Church of the peoples is the converted and faithful bride of light (*kalat nuhrā*).<sup>42</sup> In symbolic terms Christ, the celestial Bridegroom, enters into various bridal chambers with the earthly bride on the road of his incarnate journey in view of the marriage feast. Thus the betrothal to the Church of the Nations from the early times assumes perfection in Christ and it runs through the Church towards its consummation in the marriage feast of the eschatological Kingdom where all are invited as 'friends of the Bridegroom' (*ḥdōgē*). Christ threw his net (*msidḡā*) to reunite and gather the whole universe into the single bosom of his Good News (*QHC IV 251–252*). Thus Christ, the

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<sup>41</sup> And the Godhead was in the likeness of some discerning woman who seeks a sweet-tasting leaven to prepare dough. She [Godhead] kneaded her Son into the dough of mankind as if He were leaven, and in the Son of God the whole race was sweetened. The Heavenly One descended and was mixed in with the earthly that all the earthly might become like to the heavenly.

[*HS III 416,3–8; tr. TV 3 (1989): 49*]

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *HS I 173,6. 181,19. 186,21/FH VI 115, 293, 401; HS II 374,15/FH VIII 575*.

second Adam, reunites all nations of the earth (*HCJ III 237*) and reconciles the whole creation with the Father (*HCJ III 254*). Jacob's synchronic outlook on salvation history and his typological exegesis bring in a special flavour to his vision of the universality of redemption and salvation in Christ.

## B. THE SOURCE OF REDEMPTION AND SALVATION

After having considered a few characteristic features of the divine mercy in the previous section we now turn to the acts of this mercy as the source of salvation. Jacob finds the same divine mercy active in all the phases of the economy of salvation. It was this mercy that exalted Adam/humanity by providing the divine image. The commandment given in Eden was a gracious provision of the divine mercy for humanity as a means of divine teaching,<sup>43</sup> as a wet-nurse (*maynaqtā*) to grow with (*QHC III 725*) and as a limit (*thōmā*, *QHC III 256*) for Adam/humanity so that they should not through deceit surpass their natural limits and perish. These types of limits were seen in the divine-human encounter in the later phases of salvation history as well, eg. at Horeb (Ex 19:12; Heb 12:20; Ex 34:3) and at Sinai. Everywhere the people had to stay within certain limits so that they might not surpass the given limit and perish (*QHC III 255–272*). Adam/humanity was invited to understand these merciful divine provisions discerningly and live by them prudently.

The proper response to the divine commandment would have instituted Adam/humanity as the heir of the garden of Paradise and the possessor of 'the Tree of Life', namely, eternal life/salvation. Instead of travelling on the righteous and true path Adam himself turned to a deviated path where the ruler is error, with the evil one having the upper hand. He estranged himself from God and became submissive to his laxity (*raḫyūtā*, *QHC III*

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<sup>43</sup> That they might know who is the Lord who exalted them,  
 he [*the Lord*] set the law that they should not eat of the tree.  
 He gave the whole garden to the new children to possess  
 and only a single tree he had set in order to put them to test.

[*QHC IV 171–174*; CSCO 508 (syri 214), p. 87]

458). Thus he conceived iniquity and gave birth to injustice by his revolt (*QHC III 546*). He not only lost his heritage, the life in the garden, and the fruit of the Tree of Life, but even fell down and became a slave and a captive of the evil one. The captivity corrupted his image and subjected him to disintegration that was leading to death. Under the upper hand of the evil one Adam was unable to turn back to the right path. Moreover, since his nature itself suffered disintegration he needed the hand of the fashioner himself for restoration and renewal. Divine mercy that is abundant turns again to restore Adam in both respects, to repair the damage done, as well as to lead him to the goal. This had already been envisaged by the eternal wisdom in the Son who would by his good will assume the fallen Adam and become his Saviour.

### **1. Descent and 'Becoming' of Divine Mercy for Human Salvation**

Even when Adam had fallen the divine mercy, which is abundant and eternal, overflowed upon him. The unconstituted and unlimited divinity descended to the level of Adam/humanity to make him hear by means of the constitution and limits of 'a voice' in order to call him back to repentance and return. Hence, it called out, 'Where are you?' (Gen 3:9). Jacob reflects on the very reason for that question. In fact the omniscient and omnipotent divinity had no difficulty in instantly knowing where Adam was after his fall. Then the inquiry was made solely for the benefit of Adam and it was not any sign of the lack of divine knowledge. Divine mercy became a 'tutor' as well as a loving and searching 'interrogator' (*mša'lānā*) in the garden (*QHC III 721-734*). It was a merciful invitation to Adam and a knocking at the great door of repentance to return with penitence from the wrong path. It amounts to a reminder to Adam, telling him where he had ended up in his journey on the road of righteousness. It was a call to seek justification by repentance and to turn to the road of reconciliation to regain righteousness. Instead of attending to the divine 'voice' and repenting Adam/humanity went along the road of self-justification (Gen 3:12; *QHC III 787-798*), the expression of unwillingness and the failure to recognize the Fall.

All the OT just people, Enoch, Elijah, and others, were faithful to the will of God and thus they became righteous so as to inherit the promises. But they had to wait for the arrival of the Son

in the flesh in order to enter into the inheritance that had been promised by the divine mercy as the perfection of justice (*HS V 463,13–466,8/FH V 331–388*). The Father had chosen a nation through Moses and gave the Law to justify them. That legal system was something that was tuned towards the perfection of grace, that would be established through Christ. This fact has been seen and explained by the prophets on account of the Spirit of prophecy they exercised. Thus Law and Prophecy stand as precursors of Christ, the Light. The giving of the Law to Moses itself is significant of the nature of fallen humanity in Eden as well as of the progress of the divine plan of salvation.

Jacob of Serugh reads into the biblical episodes: he finds typological parallelism between the incident of the breach of the original commandment in Eden (Gen 3:1–7) and the destruction of the first set of the tablets of the Law written by God and given through Moses at the sight of the sins of the people (Ex 32:19). Adam and Eve were the original two tablets upon which God had written the initial commandments. The two destroyed tablets from the hands of Moses are the types of Adam and Eve. Then God instructed Moses to build new tablets for the Law. The renewed tablets of the Law (*QHC I 105–144*) and the justice of Moses have run up to Christ. The last milestone of the justice of Moses was John the Baptist. From Christ and then onwards the higher perfection was established. The Son who has assumed the human estate, fulfilling the Law of Moses at every stage of his life, is very significant and insightful so as to call everybody to a discerning understanding of the divine economy. Christ came to circumcision, offered himself in the temple with the ritual offerings, spent thirty years before his ministry; by his own baptism he fulfilled the baptisms (washings) of the Law and that of John the Baptist and suffered as Adam deserved death according to the Law (Gen 2:16–17). Thus the Lord was always solicitous in instituting his perfection upon the consummation of the legal fulfilments.

Upon the justice of Moses Christ instituted his perfection. The divine instruction and teachings progress from the Law to the perfect teaching and enlightenment in Christ, in whom, both stand in perfect correspondence. Christ assumes the fallen human nature to renew and perfect it. Hence, the incarnate Son walks on all the roads of Adam, from conception till death and even to the captivity

of Sheol. By walking on the road of Adam Christ sprinkled upon it his sweetness (*SMS 812,1–2/FH XVI 71–72*).

## **2. The Descent and ‘Becoming’ of the Son for Redemption and Salvation**

The ‘becoming’ of the Son for the salvation of the world is the concrete expression of the divine economy. This ‘becoming’ of the Son is, in fact, the coming down of the Son in humility. Jacob of Serugh finds the substance of the Scriptures as the story of the divine self-abasement in humility. Since it is the divine will that governs the various stages of the economy of salvation, in the ‘becoming’ of the Son too the divine will is the source, and not any necessity or external compulsion to the divinity (*SMS 725,3–4/FH I 105–106*). In this process the willingness of the Son to come down and his journey on the road of humility are particularly emphasized by our author. How the exalted Son remains in the humble estate is described through paradoxical imageries.<sup>44</sup>

### ***a. The Hidden Mystery of the Son and the Scriptural Revelations***

The very object of prophecy was the redeeming and saving activity of the Only-Begotten. Prophecy employed words and deeds to proclaim the Son. The very *raison d'être* of those prophecies, in words and deeds as well as the types and mysteries of the OT, is their inherent affinity to the salvific deeds of the Son.<sup>45</sup> Jacob's affinity to and affection for the Scriptures remained so high that he saw the depiction of the Son in every reading and every page of it (*HS III 208,11–209,2*).<sup>46</sup> It seems to be a reflection of his strong synchronic vision. Our author tries to set the whole of biblical history under the divine salvific will that acts out with the incarnate

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. “Images of the ‘Becoming of the Son’ for Salvation,” in this chapter (section B,2,d).

<sup>45</sup> One of the homilies against the Jews describes the magnificence and the mystery of the divine pedagogy; cf. *HCJ IV 145–284* (PO 38, pp. 121–131).

<sup>46</sup> “A Homily on Our Lord and Jacob” (*HS III 208–223*, no. 26); ET from HTM, *TV 4.4* (1993): 52.

Son as its focus. Hence, Christ is the Light who enlightens backwards and forwards shedding his light on the types and mysteries as well as on the antitypes or the realities of the mysteries that came into effect, namely, the realized factors on the road of the incarnate Son. It is again the same light of Christ that leads all through the Church and the Sacraments that are leading to the Kingdom.

Jacob's biblical exegesis tries to bring out how all the just people of the OT, the seers and prophets as well as the mysteries, types and the words of prophecy depict the path of the Son. It is in relation to Christ that they had their own existence, functioning power and the realization of their roles. The patriarchs Isaac (*HS III 311,17–312,10*<sup>47</sup>) and Jacob (*HS III 209,17–18; 210,2–11; 222,11–16*<sup>48</sup>) lived and acted on account of Christ; so too Moses (*HS III 306,17–18; 286,4–7*) and others. In fact one after another they all handed down the mystery of Christ to the posterity.<sup>49</sup> All the prophets and seers of OT were small lamps before Christ, the 'Sun of Righteousness' (*HS III 304,4–9*).<sup>50</sup> The just people of OT have seen the person and the road of Christ, the Redeemer, through the Spirit, the 'Revealer of hidden things' (*HS II 199,3–4*). On his incarnate road, although in a hidden mystery, Christ stands as the Light that enlightens all and removes all shadows and darkness.

***b. The Salvific Activities of Christ  
and the Typological Views of Jacob***

In the following sets of typological networks an attempt is made to compile the typological views of Jacob of Serugh with regard to the

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<sup>47</sup> Homily "On the Mysteries, Symbols and Figures of Christ" (*HS III 305–321*, no. 80).

<sup>48</sup> "A Homily on Our Lord and Jacob" (*HS III 208–223*, no. 26); ET from HTM, *TV* 4.4 (1993): 52–64.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *HS V 331,3–332,8*; "A Homily on Samson" (*HS V*, 331–355, no. 160), ET from HTM, *TV* 3.3 (1992): 51–2.

<sup>50</sup> Homily "On the Veil on Moses' Face" (*HS III 283–305*, no. 79); ET by Brock, "On the Veil of Moses," 83 (= *Syriac Spirituality*, 86–7).

salvific activities of Christ, mainly based on his Festal Homilies.<sup>51</sup> It is not a comprehensive list, but attention has been given to gather Jacob's views from other homilies also in order to give coverage to the major staging-posts of the incarnate Son. The staging-posts are described by ordering the type-antitype pairs into various subdivisions. The order followed in the presentation is that of the chronological order of the events in the life of the incarnate Son which suits the order of the celebrations of the liturgical year.

(i) *The Virgin-birth*

Gen 28:12-13	Jacob's vision of the One standing upon the ladder at Betel > the descent of the Son and the Cross that conveys people on to the height.	FH III 125-126; HS III 310, 17-20; HCJ IV 179; FH IV 20.
Num 24:17	The star from the house of Jacob > Christ, the heir of the people.	FH III 99-100
Judg 6:37-40	Gideon with the fleece on the threshing floor and the dew > the advent of the son of God.	HS III 312,11-313,8.
Judg 6:38	The dew in Gideon's bowl > the Son of God and Baptism are depicted.	FH III 107-108; HS III 312,19-20.
Is 11:1	A shoot from the stock of Jesse > our Hope	FH IV 11; III 115-116.

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<sup>51</sup> All references to the Festal Homilies are furnished by *FH+* No. of the Homily [in Roman numerals] + lines/paragraph as enumerated in the translation of T. Kollamparampil, *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*. References to the Syriac Texts can be had from the references to the original Syriac texts furnished in the translation volume.

Gen 4:26	Enosh discerningly called the Son, 'Lord' > Our Lord was depicted.	HS III 320, 2–3.
Deut 18:15	The Lord your God will raise for you a prophet like me {Moses} from the 'midst of you' <sup>52</sup> > Christ.	H CJ I 177–200; HS IV 104–116.
Ex 17:5–7	The Rock that gave birth to rivers > the virgin-birth.	FH I 644
Dan 2:34	The Stone hewn without the hands > Christ born without marital union.	FH III 93–94; HS III 307,4–5.
Dan 2:45	Daniel's dream > Christ, the Stone which was cut out without hands.	HS III 317,21–318,5; 318, 10–15.
2 Kings 2:20	New pitcher/bowl of Elisha > the young Virgin (Mary).	FH III 95–96; H CJ IV 219–220.
2 Kings 2:20–21	Elisha's 'new bowl and the salt' cast into the fountain > the Son who gives taste to the humanity.	HS III 314,21–315,2; FH III 97–98.
Ezek 44:1–2; 46:12	The closed door > the Virgin who remained sealed after her conception.	FH III 101–102; HS III 314,1–2; SMS 795,7–8.
Is 7:14	'A virgin shall conceive ...' > Christ born from the virgin.	HS III 315, 3–4.
Gen 2:7	The virgin earth bore Adam > The Virgin Mary gave birth to the Son in a holy manner.	FH I 641; HS III 320, 10–11.

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. *HS IV 104–116*, homily “On that which Blessed Moses said: The Lord will raise up a Prophet like me from among your brethren.”

Gen 2:7	Virgin earth gave birth to Adam > the Son born of a virgin	FH I 641
Gen 2:20–23	Eve formed from Adam > the virgin birth	FH I 642
Gen 22:13	The tree that provided the ram/lamb > Mary who conceived the Word without marital union.	FH I 643; III 119–120.
Num 17:8; Heb 9:4	The staff of Aaron that sprouted forth > the womb that bore fruit without marital relation.	FH I 645; HS III 314, 13–14.
Judg 15:15–19	The lifeless jawbone that brought out water > the virgin birth	FH I 646.
Gen 5:32	Five hundred years of Noah's virginity > Virgin-birth of the Son of God.	HS III 319,18–19.

(ii) *The Coming of the Son into the World*

Is 19:1	The cloud that entered into Egypt > Mary who carried the Lord	FH III 103–104.
Is 1:3	The ass and the ox knew the manger of the Lord > the world seeing the Lord in the manger.	FH III 105–106
Gen 49:10	Judah acknowledged by his brothers > The tribe that showed forth the Redeemer.	FH III 117–118.
Gen 49:9	Judah, the Lion's Whelp > the incarnate Son of God	FH I 495, 835; VI 502; XIII 15, 83.
Mic 5:1	From Ephrathah comes the King > the 'Bread of Life' came to Bethlehem, the house of bread ( <i>betlehem</i> , Mt 2:6).	FH I 823–824; III 127–132, 248; HCJ IV 236; HS III 315, 15–16.
Mic 5:2	The Ancient of days > the Ruler of Israel > Christ	FH III 23,356; V 17; X 69.

Is 11:8	He became an infant to play with the Basilisk > Christ	FH III 141.
Ps 71:17	The Aged Child whose name was before the sun > Christ	FH III 146

(iii) *The Wonder of the Son born as an Infant*

Is 10:17	The Flame inside the swaddling clothes (Lk 2:7) to burn the thorns (Gen 3:18) > Christ	FH III 151–152.
Prov 30:4	‘Wind in the hand, Water in the veil’ > Mary’s virginal womb that bore life/salvation as fruit.	FH III 153–162; HCJ IV 227–228; HS III 314,15–16.
Prov 30:4	Wind in the cupped hands > Fire and Spirit are received in the hands as sacrament.	HS III 314, 17–18.
Is 7:14	Behold, a Virgin conceives and gives birth > Mary, the Virgin conceived and gave birth to Immanuel (Mt 1:23).	FH III 181–182; FH IV 18; FH I 654; HCJ IV 229–232.
Is 9:6	Wonder, Marvel > A virgin is His mother, so He is a Wonder	FH III 205–206; 221–232.

(iv) *Christ, the Life to the World*

Gen 3:1–5 Lk 1:26–37	Silence of the serpent (lie) > Gabriel’s speech (truth)	FH IV 13.
Gen 3:24	Cherub’s spear falls > Fruit of the Tree of Life is in the manger.	FH IV 14.

Gen 3:7 <u>∟</u> Lk 2:7	Adam's leaves > exchanged for the 'Garment of Light' by the Lord of Eden in swaddling clothes.	FH IV 15, 16.
Ex 17:6 <u>∟</u> Num 20:11	Water issued from the Rock > Christ, the Good News and the Drink <sup>53</sup>	FH III 109–110.
Ex 17:5–7	The Rock that gave birth to rivers and gave water to the people > Christ, the Living Water.	HS III 307, 2–5; FH I 644; III 111–112.
Zech 6:12	Zechariah called Him 'Man' and 'Sunrise' > Christ, the Sun of Righteousness.	FH III 113–114; HS III 315, 7–8.
Num 21:16	The well in the wilderness > the Infant for the thirst of the people.	FH III 121–122.
Mal 4:2	The great Sun of Righteousness > Christ	FH III 211–212.
Is 9:2	The Light shown forth in darkness > Christ, the Sun, who illumined (Mt 4:16) all.	FH III 123–124.
Is 65:8–9	The Sweet Bunch of Grapes > Christ, the Drink that comforted the peoples.	FH III 292–293.
Gen 5:3	Seth the fair one > Christ was depicted in the beauty of Seth.	FH V 361–362.
Gen 5:3	Seth resembled Adam > Son of God is truly like his Father	HS III 320, 6–9.
Gen 42:25; 45:21	Joseph who took provisions > depicted Christ, the Bread of Life.	FH V 371–372.

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. also *HS II 228–244*, Homily “On our Lord recognized in the Scriptures as Food and Drink”.

Zech 9:9	He is humble and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass > Christ	FH X 111–112; XI 21,34; HCJ IV 235.
Job 19:25	Job said, ‘He would be revealed at the end’ > Christ	HS III 319, 14–15; HCJ IV 241–242.
Ex 28:8–12	The stone of the Ephod and the high priest’s girdle > the beauties of the Only-Begotten.	FH III 193; HS III 308,15–16.
Ex 34:33	The ‘Veil on Moses’ Face’ > the veiled words of the prophecy > coming of our Lord in the body.	HS III 309, 14–17.
Gen 25 & 27	Jacob who became great > the type of Christ.	FH V 369.
Gen 31:38–41	Jacob laboring twenty years for Rachel > type of the thirty years life of our Lord in humility.	HS III 331,17–332,10.
Gen 29:15–30	Leah and Rachel, two wives of Jacob > the two assemblies of the Son .	HS III 310, 21–22.
Gen 29:8,10	The well > Baptismal font; the stone > sin.	HS III 311, 1–2.
Gen 30:25–43	Sheep of Jacob > the flock of the nations and the people under the sway of idols.	HS III 311, 3–4.
Gen 30:37–41	The (coloured) rods > the water and the blood at the Cross	HS III 311, 5–6.
Gen 30:38–39	The ewes giving birth gazing at the colours > the Crucified One being gazed and imitated in Baptism.	HS III 311, 7–12.
Gen 30:37–43	Jacob’s sheep of various colours > the mixed peoples including the wicked.	HS III 311, 13–16.
2Sam 23:15	King David’s desire for water > the Son who is the Living Water (Jn 7:37–38; 4:10).	HS III 313, 9–20.

*(v) The Fasting of Our Lord*

Ex 24:18; 34; 28; Deut 9:9	Moses fasting for forty days > type of the cure brought about by Christ in forty days.	FH IX 19.
1 Kings 19:8,9	Fasting of Elijah > Our Lord's fasting for forty days	FH IX 23.
Jon 3:2-10	Forty days' repentance of Nineveh > Our Lord's forty days' fasting.	FH IX 24.
1 Sam 17:49	The fall of the uncircumcised Philistine (Goliath) > Fall of the ruler of the world (Lk 10:18).	FH IX 22.

*(vi) The Passion and Death of Christ*

Gen 49:11	'He dyes even his clothing in blood' > His bread in His blood (wine)	HS III 315, 11-12.
Gen 49:11	'He tied the offspring of an ass to a vine' > Christ's entry into Jerusalem.	HS III 315, 13-14.
Gen 4:8	The blood of the slaughtered Abel > image of the Son's passion and crucifixion.	FH V 357-360; HS III 320, 4-5.
Gen 22:4	Three days Isaac was lost for his father > the Son remained in the tomb for three days and then he slaughtered death and rose up.	HS III 312, 5-8.
Gen 22:6	Isaac carried the wood to the mountain > the Son carried his Cross and went out of Jerusalem.	HS III 312, 9-10.
Gen 22:9	Isaac bound on the mountain > the spot of the Crucifixion at Golgotha; Zion fixed the wood of the Cross where the tree of symbols sprang up.	HS III 311, 21-312,4.
Gen 22:13	Offering of Isaac and the Ram from the tree > the (virgin) birth and death of Christ.	HS III 311, 17-20.

Gen 22:9–14	The bound Isaac > Isaac was bound as the symbol of Christ.	FH V 367–368.
Gen 22:9–14	The sacrifice of Isaac and the Ram from the tree > represent birth and death.	HCJ IV 183–184.
Gen 2:21–22	Adam slept and Eve was taken out from him > death of Christ on the Cross and the birth of Baptism (Jn 19:34).	HS III 320, 14–17; III 121,13–122,4; HCJ I 59–78.
Gen 2:21–22	Adam slept and Eve was taken out of him > birth of the Daughter of Light (the Church).	HS 299,11–300,2.
Gen 2:21–22	Adam’s side gave birth to Eve > a Virgin also gave birth to the Son.	FH I 642; HS III 320,18–19.
Gen 2:21–22	Adam’s side gave birth to Eve > from Christ’s side the Church with Baptism and Eucharist came out.	HCJ I 65–78.
Gen 13:17	Abraham walked the length and breadth of the land > the Cross of Christ imprinted on the land.	HS III 315,17–20; HCJ IV 185–190.
Lev 1:5,11,15	The sacrifices of Moses, killing of the sheep and oxen > Sacrifice of the Son.	HS III 306, 15–16; HCJ IV 191–194.
Num 21:8,9	The bronze serpent <sup>54</sup> > Christ lifted on the Cross	HS III 306,1–4; HCJ IV 197–198.
Num 19:1–19	The sacrifice of the Red Heifer <sup>55</sup> > the sacrifice of Christ	HCJ IV 199–200.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Homily, “On the Serpent of Bronze,” *HS I 49–67*.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Homily, “On the Sacrifice of the Red Heifer,” *HS III 242–259*.

Num 19:2	The Red Heifer selected for sacrifice > colour of the blood of the Only-Begotten.	HS III 307, 16–17.
Num 19:3	The cow burned away from the people > Christ who suffered outside the city for forgiveness.	HS III 308, 3–4.
Num 19:4	Sprinkling of the blood and ashes of the burned cow > the whole offering of the Son.	HS III 308, 1–2.
Num 19:5	The cow burned in the fire > the type of the Bread of the Son of God for forgiveness.	HS III 308, 5–8.
Num 19:6, 9	The burning in a pure place > The Church, the place of propitiation.	HS III 308, 9–10.
Num 19:7,8	The priest who held the sacrifice became unclean > depicted the crucifiers.	HS III 307, 18–19.
Num 19:7–10	The priest washes himself in water and becomes clean > Baptism	HS III 307, 20–21; HCJ IV 201–204.
Num 35: 28	Death of the high priest and the return of the prisoners into their own enclosures > Death of Christ, the High Priest in Golgotha and the liberation of people.	HS III 308, 11–12; HCJ IV 205–208.
Is 53:7	A lamb led to the slaughter, a sheep before the shearer > Christ, the Lamb	HS III 315, 5–6; HCJ IV 233–234.
Ex 12:3–22	The lamb and the handful of hyssop > Christ	HS III 305,15.
Ex 12:22–23	Blood sprinkled on the door > blood of Christ, the Lamb	HS III 305,16.

Lev 14:49–53	The sparrow immolated on the fountain > Baptism	HS III 306, 5–8.
Lev 14:49–53	The bird that was set free and that which was immolated upon the fountain <sup>56</sup> > death and resurrection of Christ	HCJ IV 195–196.
Lev 14:51	Fountain > Baptism; Scarlet thread > Crucifixion	HS III 306, 9–10.
Lev 4:17	The blood sprinkled on the door curtain > the Cup of Life (Eucharist)	HS III 307,8–9.
Lev 4:19	The fat of the sacrifices set aside for whole offerings > the beauty of the soul that is dear to God	HS III 307, 10–11.
Lev 4:3	The unblemished ox offered > Son who is without sin being offered	HS III 307,12–13.
Lev 16:10	The goat sent out to the mighty El (Azazel) > Christ, the Son of the Levites	HS III 308, 17–18.
Lev 16:22	The goat what carries the sins of the camp > Son who took away the wickedness of the whole earth	HS III 308, 19–309,1.
Lev 16:22	The killing of the goat abandoned at Sinai among wild beasts > Christ among the crucifiers	HS III 309, 2–7.
Lev 16:26	The man who sent the goat remains outside till the evening to wash himself and enter > shows that even crucifiers are forgiven if they repent	HS III 309,8–13.
Zech 9:9	‘He rode upon the colt ... came to Zion’ > Christ’s entry into Jerusalem	HS III 315,9–10.
1Sam 5:1	The Ark taken captive from the Hebrews > the Son’s death in crucifixion and his entrance into Sheol	HS III 317,6–17.

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Homily, “On the Sacrifice of the Two Birds,” *HS III 224–242*.

Gen 14:18	The spiritual sacrifice of Melchizedek <sup>57</sup> > the sacrifice of Christ	HS III 319,16–17
Ps 110:4	You are a priest for ever in the resemblance of Melchizedek <sup>58</sup> > Christ, the High Priest	HS II 199, 1–8.
Ezek 4:14	The suffering Ezekiel > type of our Lord's suffering	FH XIV 65– 98.
Ezek 4:14	Ezekiel carried the iniquity of the children of Jacob > Christ carried the iniquity of the whole world	FH XIV 65– 78
Ex 26:36	The purple and scarlet were mixed in the door-cloth of the tent > the passion of the Lord prefigured	FH XII 25,26,28.

(vii) *The Resurrection of the Lord*

Judg 14:8– 9	Samson and the honey form the carcass of the lion > Christ killing death, the eater, and giving life	HCJ IV 223– 224.
Judg 14:18 (14:5)	Samson and the honey form the slain lion > Christ, 'the life giving honey', in his death and resurrection	HS III 316,14–15.
Judg 14:2	Samson married the daughter of an uncircumcised > the Lord betrothing the daughter of pagans	HS III 316,16–19.
Judg 14:12ff	The riddle to the Philistines > Christ is the answer (Eucharist)	HS III 316,20– 317,5.

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Homily, "On Melchizedek," *HS V 154–180*; ET in HTM, *TV 2* (1989): 30–55.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Homily, "You are Priest for ever in the Resemblance of Melchizedek," *HS II 197–209*; ET by Thekeparampil, *Harp 6* (1993): 53–64.

Judg 15:4–5; 14:16	Samson shattering his enemies > Christ who shattered Sheol	FH XIV 173–182.
Ex 14:21–30	Crossing of the Red sea by a stroke of the rod > Son of God renting Sheol	HS III 293,21–294,4.
Josh 6:20	Fall of Jericho under Joshua/Jesus > the voice of Christ that overthrew Sheol	HS III 300,11–16.
1 Kings 17:17–22	Elijah vivifying the dead person > Christ vivifying Adam	HCJ IV 213–216.
1 Kings 17:17–22	Elijah who revived a dead person > the Cross of the Son	HS III 315,21–316,1.
1 Kings 17:21	Elijah stretching himself upon the child > the Lord became small in order to revive Adam.	HS III 316,2–3, 6–9.
2 Kings 4:22–35	Elisha vivifying an infant > Christ vivifying the dead	HCJ IV 217–218.
2 Kings 4:34	Elisha making the dead warm > three days the Living One lay upon the dead Adam to make him warm	HS III 316,4–5,10–11.
Jon 1:9	Jonah, the son of Hebrews > depicted the sign of Christ's death	HS III 316,12–13.
Jon 1:9	Jonah, the Hebrew > the type of Christ	FH XIV 55–56; HCJ IV 221–222.
Dan 7:13,14	The One seen by Daniel as the Son of Man whom the people shall adore > Christ was prefigured	HCJ IV 237–238.
Dan 7:13	Daniel's vision of the Son of Man and the thrones > the Son judging together with the Father.	HS III 318,16–319,11.
Ezek 1:26	Ezekiel's vision on the chariot > Christ, the Son of Man	HS III 319,12–13.

Ezek 1:26	The One in the likeness of a man on the throne > Christ	HCJ IV 239–240.
Ex 15:23–25	The wood cast into the waters of Mara > Cross	HS III 306,21–307,1.
Ps 118:22 ↙ Mt 21:42	The Rock which shattered the idols, the Rock which the builders rejected and failed to accept.	HS III 307,6–7.
Ps 118:22	Stone in Zion > the Stone which the builders rejected (Mt 21:42)	HS III 318,6–9.
Jer 18:16	The potter and the broken vessel of clay > Christ and the renewal of humanity	QHC I 159–170.
Ex 25:30	The 'Bread of the Presence' > bread that is Christ's body	HS III 307,14–15; HCJ IV 209–211.

*(viii) Christ, the Source of Church and Baptism*

Judg 7:4–8	Gideon's tested men by water > the testing waters of Baptism	FH VI 9–10; HCJ IV 225–226; HS III 317,18–21.
Lev 14:12–20	The hands over the scars of the person & the sprinkled blood > Baptism	HS III 306,13–14.
Ex 14:16–21	Crossing over the Red Sea > Baptism	HS III 306,19–20.
Gen 2:24	Man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife > Portrait of the Bridegroom (Christ) and the bride (Church) in the waters of Baptism	HS III 309,20–310,8.
Gen 29:2,3,10	Jacob betrothed two wives > the Son who came and freed the assemblies (people & peoples)	HS III 310,9–10.
Gen 29:10	The well opened to give water to the sheep of his betrothed > Baptism	HS III 310,11–12.

Gen 29:2–10	The huge stone which Jacob took away > Sin taken away by the Son of God in Baptism	HS III 310,13–16; 213, 1–10.
Gen 29:11	Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud > Christ who betrothed the Church with suffering and blood	HS III 211,19– 212,18.
1 Kings 17:14	The bowl and the horn (cruse) in the widow's house > Bread of the presence and anointing [that widow is the Church of the peoples, which is without a head (husband)]	HS III 314,3–8.
1 Kings 17:14	The bowl > Our Lord's body; the horn of oil > Baptism which gives birth to life	HS III 314,9–12.
2 Macc 1:19ff	The fire that came up from the well > the Divinity hidden in the clay of our body	HS III 314,19–20.
Lev 12:2–5	Prescription of the forty day's purification > type of our Lord's forty days after the Resurrection for the perfection of the body of the apostolate	FH XVI 131–160.

(ix) *The Ascension of Our Lord*

Ex 19:16–25	Mount Sinai > type of the Ascension of our Lord	FH XVI 417–428.
Gen 5:24	Fair Enoch taken up to heaven > the just taken to the exalted place by Christ	HS III 319,20–320,1.

(x) *The Upper-Room and the Apostolic Preaching*

Gen 11:6–9	The confusion of the tongues at Babel > the mystery of the Good News to be proclaimed in various tongues	HS II 685,4– 686,16.
Gen 11:7	Babel > type of 'the Upper-Room' where the tongues were divided (Acts 2:3,4)	HS II 678,14– 679,18.

***c. The 'Becoming' of the Son in the Person of Christ***

The speech on the 'becoming of the Son' in Jacob is not an ontological reflection on the very being of the Son.<sup>59</sup> It is an attempt to describe divine realities in analogical terms in so far as the divine self revelation has provided for humanity to understand. It is for this purpose the Word became flesh (Jn 1:14). The divine descent to the level of humanity and the subjection to 'becoming' forms part of the divine economy for the salvation of the world. Hence it is not any analysis of the 'becoming in itself', but a 'becoming for', a becoming for the sake of humanity.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, this becoming is something with respect to humanity and not with respect to the Son in himself:<sup>61</sup>

Concerning that being of yours, no one is able to speak;  
concerning what you have become, let me speak of you, Lord,  
while I am wondering.

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<sup>59</sup> It is relevant to note how the theme of 'becoming' and 'divine economy' are seen by Philoxenus of Mabboug as explained by A. De Halleux. According to De Halleux in the Christological context the terms 'becoming' and 'divine economy' are synonyms. It is through the 'becoming' the 'economy' becomes visible; cf. De Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, 320.

<sup>60</sup> Jacob of Serugh does not give any rational explanation to the 'becoming' of the Son. What Philoxenus of Mabboug provides in his commentary on the Prologue of St. John [cf. De Halleux, A., ed. *Philoxène de Mabbog, Commentaire du prologue johannique*. CSCO 380/381 (syri 165/166)], seems to describe the mystery of the 'becoming' of the Son in consonance with Jacob's reflections. The Son's 'becoming' is explained in line with the Pauline idea of the folly of the faith in the Crucified One (1 Cor 1:18–2:16). The gnoseological principle inherent in analogy is the basis of the knowledge envisaged here. A. De Halleux rightly comments that Philoxenus in his commentary has combined three forms of religious knowledge: reason, faith and mystical experience [cf. De Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog, Commentaire du prologue johannique*, 166].

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *SMS* 790,10–791,5/*FH* III 5–16; *HS* II 356,5–20/*FH* VIII 183–198.

For your sake [concerning you] no one is able to speak, my  
Lord;

for our sake grant me that I may speak about you lovingly.

(*SMS 790,5–8/FH III 5–8*)

The ‘becoming’ (*bmāya*) of the Son for the sake of humanity is in fact a descent into human dimensions. The important factors of this divine reality are the divine will for the ‘becoming’ and the actualization of it in the incarnate Son. So firstly, on account of the divine will compassion welled up and compelled the Son to come down to mingle with the earthly (*SMS 791,6,10; 792,10/FH III 17, 21, 41; SHF I 10/FH IV 10*). Christ came ‘to become Adam’ by grace (*HCJ I 51*). It was through his birth according to flesh, his second birth, that he took up the body of fallen Adam (*SMS 776,7–20/FH II 23–36; HS III 324,5–325,7*). The story of the Son became united with the human lineage as he became one among us, Immanuel (*SMS 792,2–7/FH III 33–38*). Thus the One without beginning or constitution subjected himself to be constituted in a womb (*SMS 733,19–20/FH I 293–294*) and set himself under a beginning (*SMS 803,17–18/FH III 276–277*). Speaking of the Nativity Jacob describes the prominence of the divine compassion in the ‘becoming’ of the Son by nuptial imagery:

Today, the cave became a nuptial chamber for that celestial  
Bridegroom who wished to unite himself to the race of the  
earthly and to uphold them as they ascend from the depth to  
the height.

(*SHF I 19/FH IV 19*)

Secondly, the incarnate Son assumed smallness, feebleness, and humility in order to impart that which is due to his bodily estate (*HS V 460,14/FH V 269*) as the actualization of the divine becoming. In the festal homilies our author is very keen to show how Christ on his road of humility faithfully remains in true humility to give victory to Adam by overcoming all stumbling blocks of the evil one. Thus, unlike fallen Adam, he was discerningly attentive lest he fall and be deviated from the true path destined for him by the Father or introduce an alien path. Hence on the road of his humility a womb contained him; a cave and a manger sufficed for him (*SMS 775,3–4/FH II 3–4; SMS 796,20–797,3/FH III 133–136*). The same loving-kindness that sent him to

birth brought him to baptism too in order to fulfil the entire way on which he came (*HS I 178,1-4; 178,21-179,2/FH VI 213-216; 233-236*). Against the rebellion of the evil one God descended and became human humbly and carried the fallen body of Adam (*SMS 776,5-12/FH II 21-28*). Since his way was humble he was not willing to manifest his majesty and glory (*HS II 350,15-16/FH VIII 65-66*). But his signs (*'āmwāṭā*), such as at Cana and at Tabor, were meant only to teach and strengthen his disciples against his dishonours (*HS II 350,19-351,14/FH VIII 69-86*). The fasting of our Lord for forty days was a teaching to remain in endurance and smallness against all temptations of greediness and pride (*SHF III 39/FH IX 39*). At Jerusalem one finds the clearest self-abasement and the splendour of the Son's humility. From the chariot he came down to be seated on the young one of an ass, the most despicable of all conveyances (*HS I 446,2-19/FH X 17-34*). There by his humility he reproved the proud (*SHF IV 6/FH XI 6*). During his passion the innocent One carried the sins of fallen Adam/world (*SHF V 3/FH XII 3*) and made him victorious.

The 'becoming' of the Son for the salvation of humanity is an ineffable, exalted and marvellous deed. This mystery finds its best description only through symbols and images. In Jacob's own view the whole mystery of the Son is ineffable: before it one can only wonder and give praises. One speaks about this mystery only because he is unable to contain the wonder of the mystery within oneself (*SMS 794,6-9/FH III 79-82*). Moreover one is culpable if he does not speak out and praise the wonder seen in Christ. In this context Jacob often uses paradoxical imageries to describe the redemptive Incarnation and the salvific activities of the Son in his humble estate. In the following section we furnish a group of sharp, concrete and vivid imageries which Jacob uses in his symbolic theology to expound the mystery of divine 'becoming' in analogical terms.

***d. Images of the 'Becoming of the Son' for Salvation***<sup>62</sup>

Through various images Jacob of Serugh describes the paradoxical and ineffable realities of the Incarnation, redemption and salvation in Christ. The language of analogy, metaphor and paradoxes are the means to approach those divine realities insightfully.

Ancient [of Days/of all] > became a Babe (*FH III 23; V 1; X 68–69*).

Celestial Adam > seeking to heal the ulcer of the terrestrial Adam (*FH IX 6*).

Celestial Bridegroom > united himself to the earthly (*FH IV 19*).

Chariot (from the)/ place of wheels > he comes on the young one of an ass (*FH X 17–28*).

Coal of Fire > placed on antique wood [Simeon] (*FH V 184*).

Coal of Fire > taken hold of by the dry stick [John the Baptist] (*FH VI 448*).

Coal of Fire > washing itself among the rushing streams [Baptism] (*FH VI 341*).

Coal of Fire > questioned by the feeble straw [Pilate] (*FH XII 2*).

Creditor > became the debtor (*FH XI 9*).

Depth > collected in the hands of dust [Simeon] (*FH V 180*).

Eagle > dwelt with the little chicks (*HS III 328,8*).

Elder > who became a child (*FH V 40*).

Eldest of all generations > became a Babe (*FH V 71*).

Fashioner of babes > becoming a New-born (*FH V 3*).

Fire > clothed in a body (*FH VII 32*).

Fire > dwelt among the dry twigs (*HS III 328,4*).

Fire and Spirit > in the swaddling clothes (*FH III 154*).

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<sup>62</sup> Together with the imageries gathered here the contrasting picture of the renewal and re-creation effected in the NATIVITY (*SMS 767,3–774,15/FH I 985–1146; SHF I 11–27/FH IV 11–27*) and in the RESURRECTION (*FH XIII, XIV & XV*) have to be taken into account in order to have a full picture of the imageries, both biblical and natural, of Jacob of Serugh, on the 'becoming' of the Son for the redemption and salvation. References to the original Syriac texts can be gathered from the references furnished in Kollamparampil, *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies*.

- Fire standing before the judgement > grass [Pilate] seated on the throne (*FH XII 2*).
- First of the generations > came to carnal birth (*FH V 50*).
- Flame > was scourged with whips (*FH XII 35*).
- Flame > descended to be baptized by John (*FH VI 352*).
- Flame > under a hand fashioned out of clay [John the Baptist] (*FH VI 451–452*).
- Flame embraces the column > husk [the soldiers] scourges it with whips (*FH XII 2*).
- Flame > came down to set fire in the waters [Baptism] (*FH VI 343*).
- Flame > is carried solemnly by a straw [Simeon] (*FH V 183*).
- Flame > did not harm the fleshly hand [John the Baptist] (*FH VI 450*).
- Flame > sucks the milk (*FH III 73; IV 28*).
- Flame-clothed One > became clothed in a body (*FH V 15*).
- Flood > placed in the hands of the aged one [Simeon] (*FH V 181*).
- Flood and the Sea > laid hold of by the brick [John the Baptist] it moulded (*FH VI 453–454*).
- God > becoming human (*FH III 231; V 13*).
- Great Sun > who furnished his dwelling among the poor (*FH III 286*).
- Heir > without conjugal union (*FH IV 28*).
- Hidden One > becoming man by clothing a body (*FH V 7, 16*).
- High Priest > came down to be offered (*FH V 19*).
- Holy One > standing like a lamb before the crucifiers (*FH XII 11*).
- Image of the Father and the splendour of the Divinity > in a cave in swaddling clothes (*FH III 298–299*).
- Innocent One was condemned >< the debtor became victorious (*FH XII 35*).
- Innocent One was imprisoned >< the evil-doer went out free (*FH XII 35*).
- Judge of judges > before the judge (*FH XII 2*).
- King > who humbled himself among the poor (*FH I 108*).
- Liberator of [all/prisoners] > [before the judgement/enters into the prison] (*FH XII 3; XII 34*).
- Living Fire/Flame > wrapped in swaddling clothes (*FH II 55; III 71, 151, 296–297; IV 28*).
- Lord of the seas > carried by the fingers of soil [Simeon] (*FH V 182*).

- Lord of the sheep > who became a lamb among his flock and became a sacrifice [to take away our iniquity] (*FH III 294–295; III 363*).
- Lord of Cherubim > mounted on the young one of an ass (*FH XI 8*).
- Lord of all time > came to the time of birth (*FH V 14*).
- Lord of Eve > becoming a child to redeem the children of Eve, who became slaves (*FH II 35–36*).
- Lord of heaven > in a grotto (*FH IV 28*).
- Lord of the chariot > carried about by a small girl (*FH IV 28*).
- Mighty One > carried the burden and removed the sickness of the evil-doers in his passion (*FH XII 35*).
- Mighty Blaze > among the grass (*HS III 328,6*).
- Mighty One of the generations > came to birth (*FH III 232*).
- One who rides on Cherubs > rode on a colt (*FH X 137*).
- Our Lord was scourged >> Adam was exempted from scourgings (*FH XII 35*).
- Power of the Exalted One > becoming a Babe (*FH I 302*).
- Priest > who became a sacrifice on behalf of sinners (*FH I 112*).
- Rich One > who repaid the debt of the poor and torn up the bill of debt (*FH XII 35*).
- Sea > carried by the hands of a lump of earth [Simeon] (*FH V 179*).
- Shepherd > who became a Lamb within his own pasture (*FH II 57*).
- Shepherd > who descended to become a victim (sacrifice) for his flock (*FH I 114; II 57*).
- Son of the Rich One > who wished to dwell among the poor (*FH III 284*).
- Son of the Most High > who became among the earthly ones (*FH III 282*).
- Son of the Holy One > descending for baptism (*FH VI 354*).
- Sun > walked among the shadows without his rays (*HS III 331,3*).
- Sun > in the manger (*FH III 71*).
- Sun > became concealed in his corporeality (*FH 330,18–20*).
- Sun > embraced the column (*FH XII 35*).
- Sweet Fruit of Mary > that men who are bitter ate and became sweetened (*FH III 290–291*).
- Tree of Life > that stirred from Eden and scattered its fruits on the mortals in the cave (*FH III 288–289*).

Unconstituted One > dwelling in the constitution of the womb of a virgin (FH I 293–294).

Word > that became flesh but was not changed (FH I 116).

***e. The Person and Activities of Christ,  
the Heir to the Fallen Adam***

The salvific activities of Christ are seen by Jacob of Serugh mainly in two respects. Firstly the Son, as the true Heir of Adam, assumes the fallen Adam. It is on account of the primordial relationship that exists between them due to the 'likeness' of the Son in Adam. Secondly, by his journey on the road of Adam, Christ repaid the huge debt of the fallen Adam and provided 'good hope' (*sabrā tābā*) and life (*ḥayyē*) to him who was wearying without hope under the sway of disintegration and death. By assuming the fallen Adam Christ annulled all effects of the Fall and made him righteous to attain the eternal life in Paradise. In all aspects of Adam's failures Christ becomes the complementary source of power and perfection. This saving activity is based on Adam-Christ complementarity as explained well through several imageries of redemption and salvation. The language of images is so powerful as to suggest and effect far more than what can be conceptually and literally pronounced.

*(i) Christ, the Heir to the Fallen Adam*

The merciful Father by his grace had created Adam as a 'son' (*brā*) and an 'heir' (*yārtā*) to his possessions (SHF V 33/FH XII 33). The divine image (*sal mā*) and likeness (*dmūtā*) reflect this heritage (*yārtūtā*) which became realized through Christ. In fact Adam was given the image as a token which had to be submitted to Christ for the attainment of perfection (QHC I 201–202; HS III 589,16–590,3; HCJ I 57–58). In Adam all the mysteries of Christ were depicted (HCJ I 60–78; 85–88; HS III 320,8–19). The whole economy and the entire road of the Son had been delineated by the Father in the house of Adam (QHC I 57–58). Hence the Incarnation is not anything strange but the coming of the Son to his own (HS I 173,17/FH VI 126; SMS 814,16/FH XVI 126). Christ is not at all a stranger to humanity (HS V 448,21–22/FH V 25–26; HCJ I 33–92), but the true heir who from his own perfection makes all others perfect in order to acquire the

inheritance. Only those who have faith and the hidden understanding perceive the Heir of Adam in the incarnate Son.

Jacob perceives the Son as the Heir to Adam in creation and incarnation. In creation there is the promise and bond in the form of the 'likeness' of the Son. In incarnation it has become actualized tangibly to humanity. The bond between the celestial and terrestrial Adams became activated (actualized) and made manifest on the road of Christ through the provision of justification, reconciliation and perfection to Adam/humanity. In fact, Christ took up the heritage of Adam, which was in reality a heritage of ruin, corruption and debts.

At the Nativity this Heir without conjugal union appeared to become the head of the peoples of the earth (*SMS 795,6/FH III 100*). Adam rejoiced in the Heir who shone forth to make him enter into Paradise (*SMS 807,16/FH III 361*). At Jordan the Heir sought the lost Adam and at Tabor he stands in between the OT and NT as the Heir and Mediator of both (*HS II 372,18/FH VIII 538*). The Heir enters into Jerusalem to acquire his betrothed with a view to celebrate the marriage feast. But the unfaithful bride denies him and rejects him (*HS I 450,1-8/FH X 101-108; SHF IV 24,30,33/FH XI 24,30,33*) as it is well depicted in the parable of the tenants of the vineyard (Mt 21:33-46). The Hebrew nation failed to acknowledge and accept the Heir (*SHF IV 33/FH XI 33*). During the Passion the Heir of Adam accepts all chastisements to repay the debt and to raise him as well as to reconstruct the house of Adam (*SHF V 4-6/FH XII 4-6*). As the heritage of Adam was a huge debt, Christ, the Creditor (*mārē ḥawbā*), accepted that huge debt and became the Debtor (*ḥayyābā*) in order to render Adam creditor as well as to make him the true heir (*yārtā*) of the divine promises (*SHF IV 9/FH XI 9*).

*(ii) The Incarnate Son, the 'Good Hope' and the 'Giver of Life' to Humanity*

The incarnate Son on the road of redemption provides justification and perfection to the fallen Adam/humanity. This spiritual reality is explained symbolically through the help of imageries which are treated in the next section, 'Imageries of the Salvific Activities of

Christ'.<sup>63</sup> These imageries on the one hand depict the various aspects of the fall and on the other, the corresponding redemption and salvation achieved in Christ. It is the depiction of the 'hopelessness' in Adam and the 'hopefulness' in Christ. Or it is the story of the annulling of the effects of the sin and the fall in Eden, before the rendering of perfection on the road of Christ.

The eternal Son set himself to come down to the level of humanity and human dimensions. He set himself under our words (*SMS* 791,2–11/*FH* III 13–22). It is this singular 'becoming of the Son' that made us speak about his redeeming activities. Humanity on its journey had turned away from the right path. It turned towards non-existence or mortality. Christ becomes the source of life and existence to the humanity that had turned into disintegration and death. By his birth he wrote down the names of Adam/humanity in the book of life (*SMS* 757,16–758,3/*FH* I 791–800). Good hope and consolation or peace and rest are the gifts offered by the incarnate Son.<sup>64</sup> Christ walked on all the roads of Adam/humanity and left no steps of Adam untraced with a view to finding the fallen Adam and making him resurrect from the fall (*HS* III 325,16–327,12).<sup>65</sup> Christ by walking on the road of Adam repaid the debt and annulled the curses:

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. The next section of this chapter (section B,2,e,iii).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *SMS* 762,15–18/*FH* I 893–896; *SHF* I 6, 8/*FH* IV 6, 8.

<sup>65</sup> Jacob explains in his homily "Why our Lord abode on earth for thirty years," as follows:

He willed to walk the entire path of the sons of men,  
 Even until He entered through the gate of death, in order to loose  
 Adam.  
 With birth he began and with death He completed the journey He had  
 undertaken;  
 In Adam's very footsteps He walked softly,  
 so far, that into the nethermost Sheol, whither Adam had fallen,  
 He entered and fell for his sake, and led him out and brought him  
 forth.

(*HS* III 326,13–18); *tr.* from HTM, *TV* 4 (1990): 41.

But when the Father wished to reveal unto them his eternal mercy which he has essentially in himself,<sup>66</sup> *he sent his Son into the world and he became [born] from a woman* (Gal 4:4). And with the invasion of sin the door to grace was opened, and the angels perceived this, hence they said: “From henceforward there is *good hope for humanity*. The transgression of the commandment will be blotted out by Him (the Son). The verdict will be annulled by Him. The debt will be recompensed by Him. The bond (Col 2:14) will be torn up by Him. Paradise will be opened by Him. Cherub, the guard, will be disbanded by Him. The expelled Adam will be made to return by Him. Eve who was put to shame is made chaste by Him. The contentious serpent will be crushed by Him. Satan the deceiver will be unmasked by Him and the bow of death raised against the human race will be broken by Him. Because of all these, it is not a small [advantage], but *good hope for humanity*.”

(SHF I 8/FH IV 8)

Christ descended to the fallen state of Adam and made him stand up with good hope to attain perfection from his Saviour. Thus from whatever is his own Christ renewed and reconstructed the house of Adam (HS I 192,9/FH VI 512). All these reconstructions and renewals are depicted through various imageries.

*(iii) Imageries of the Salvific Activities of Christ*

Transgression of the commandment was repaired through the Law given to Moses. But the corrupt nature that spoiled the divine image in humanity, needed the hands of the ‘Artisan of creation’ himself who came on the road of Incarnation in order to effect the renewal. The mystery of this renewal and restoration in Christ is explained through various imageries by our author.

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. HS III 423,3–8; Homily “On ‘the Kingdom of Heaven is Like unto Leaven’,” ET from HTM, TV 3 (1989): 55–6.

## (a) 'Light and Darkness' Imagery

The imagery of light and darkness is quite universal and polysemic with many ramifications. But the concern here is to see how it is employed by Jacob to explain Christ as the source and medium of enlightenment or the Light for the salvation of the world. For Jacob the world is a passing element (*'ābōrā*, *HS I 275,16; 703,16; Ep XVIII 92,16–93,20*) with its own cycle of times (*giglā d-ẓabnē*, *HS I 703,7; SHF VI 3/FH XV 3; Ep XVIII 92,24*). But this passing element has a goal under the power and will of the divinity. Since Jacob accords a central role to human free will there arises the question of the rapport between the divine goal and human freedom. It is the proper discernment and understanding of the divine will that provide clear vision of the matters God has designed for the world. Adam/humanity, being a bond and a servant of God in the world, has to behave in consonance with the divine purpose in order to have any progress. Whenever humanity deviates from the divine purpose there emerges dissonance which needs reconciliation. It is a sort of going away from reality because of false or distorted perception. It is an alienation from the light to shadows and to deeper darkness in symbolic terms. In other words, humanity is stumbling and falling down through its deviation from the right path or the divine purpose.

Jacob views the ups and downs of the whole history of salvation through the imagery of light (*nubrā*) and darkness (*bešukā*). The aspects of darkness are wrong discernment, lack of the understanding of divine purpose, idols and idolatry. All of them are leading to errors and paths of iniquity where sufferings and wearing away are the effects. The wrong discernment of Adam made humanity enter upon the path of darkness. Although among the posterity there were just people like Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Moses, who fought against darkness and lived in the light, their existence and functions were due to Christ, the Light that enlightens all. Thus righteous people of the OT lived and acted on account of Christ, and they somehow depicted Christ's own salvific enlightening of the world. Christ stands as the Sun of Righteousness who sheds his light backwards and forwards without

any shadow around him. In the advent of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, the whole Law and the prophets became merged in him and he did away with all small lamps such as the just and the prophets (*HS III 303,4–304,20*).<sup>67</sup> Christ who is called ‘Sunrise’ stands as the Day which has no evening or morning (*SHF VI 2/FH XV 2*).

The salvific activity of Christ expels all types of darkness (*bešnka*) and their scars on humanity and through his light (*nubrā*) he exposes all agents of darkness, i.e., the evil one and his company. Adam/humanity became a prisoner of darkness behind the gates of the house of darkness (*SMS 763,6. 770,9/FH I 904,1056; HS II 624,10/FH XIV 10*). But at the Nativity the Light shone forth from the house of David to dispel darkness (*SMS 777,16/FH II 53*). From the people ‘the Sun for the Peoples’ shone forth in darkness (Lk 1:78; Mt 4:16; 2Cor 4:6; *SMS 796,10–11/FH III 123–124*). The ‘Great Sun’ by dwelling among humanity clothed all with his light and the great Day of truth dawned (*SMS 804,5/FH III 286; SHF I 22/IV 22*), in which all were made sons of the Light. Christ, the Bridegroom of light, appeared as ‘the Day-Star/Sunrise’ (*denbā*, *SMS 768,14/FH I 1018; SMS 795,19/FH III 113; HS I 189,2/FH VI 443*) to betroth the bride of light at Jordan (*HS I 173,6; 181,18; 186,21/FH VI 115, 293, 401*). During the fasting and temptations Christ exposed Satan and his darkened ways of idols and idolatry (*SMS 778,9,19/FH II 67,77*). The great Sun, Christ, (*SMS 804,5/FH III 286*) made his light shine in the place of the dead or Sheol and caused its downfall to make all the mournful and wearying ones rejoice (*HS II 633,15/FH XIV 197*).

The day of the Resurrection is the beginning of the new world (*HS II 612,1–2/FH XIII 17–18*). At the Ascension Christ, the Globe of Light, sent out his rays, the apostles, to the whole creation (*SMS 818,21–819,1/FH XVI 215–216; HS II 688,6–9*). Jacob finds the reflection of spiritual truths in the natural phenomena. As the natural sun is on a descending route in the month of *Kanun* (December/January) when the whole creation confronts darkness, the salvific descent of Christ, the Sun of

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. Homily “On the Veil on Moses’ Face” (*HS III 283–305*); ET by Brock, “On the Veil of Moses,” 83–4 (= *Syriac Spirituality*, 86–7).

Righteousness, illumines all. The redemptive and salutary ascent of Christ illumines the whole creation, which is again symbolized in the ascent of the natural sun in the month of *Aziran* (June) in which Christ too made his ascent to his Father (*SMS 820,1–821,6/FH XVI 237–264*).

(b) Legal Imagery

The road of Law began in Paradise. According to Jacob of Serugh the Law remained as a sign of human limitations and feebleness as well as a reminder of the fact that God is the author and source of the established order (*QHC IV 171–174*). By his commandment, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16–17), God wrote down the first set of Laws on the living tablets of Adam and Eve (*QHC I 123*). In the earlier generations the Law was written in the heart and in consonance with it the just people like Enoch, Noah and others lived before the Lord. For Jacob of Serugh the Genesis episode of the first breach of the commandment of God (Gen 2:16–17; 3:1–7) is the starting point of the discussion on the legal aspects of redemption in Christ. By disobedience Adam and Eve set themselves under a bond which reduced them from the state of the free children of God to that of the slaves. Humanity fell from the status of the adopted sons (Rom 8:14–17; Gal 4:5; *SHF I 7/FH IV 7*; *SHF II 3/FH VII 3*; *SHF III 8/FH IX 8*). Adam/humanity violated the boundaries of the human nature which by creation is limited, humble and feeble. In order to repay the debts of this legal bond (Col 2:14; *SHF I 8/FH IV 8*) and to repair the damages of the house of Adam, the Son became born as a humble and feeble human being (*SHF IV 9/FH XI 9*) in the limited order of time. By his total humility he repaid the debt of arrogance and false pride of Adam.

Christ, as the Heir of Adam, accepted on himself both to fulfil the purpose of the Law and to encounter the chastisement due to the breach of the Law (Col 2:14; Heb 1:2, 9:28; *SHF V 4, 5, 10, 35/FH XII 4, 5, 10, 35*). Eve's fault was forgiven and her debts were repaid through 'the Precious Treasure' given-birth by a second virgin, Mary (*SHF I 12/FH IV 12*). Christ came down as the Treasure to blot out all debts (*SMS 772,18/FH I 1108*). In the face of the demands of justice, as the Heir to Adam/humanity, Christ, the Mighty One of the centuries, carried the sins and iniquity of the world/Adam (*SHF V 4/FH XII 4*). None of the

righteous of the OT like Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek or Abraham succeeded in repaying the debt of the deed of Eve. Before legal justice only Christ succeeded as the true Heir to repay the debt and reconstruct the ruins (*SHF V 5,6/FH XII 5,6*). Jacob is very keen to emphasize how Christ entered into the house of Adam through the door of Law and fulfilled in his own person all legal requirements before instituting the road of perfection above the Law (*SHF II 1/FH VII 1*). He came to the order of circumcision. He respected the legal prescriptions of purificatory days and the requirement of the offering in the temple (*HS V 448,17–449,6/FH V 21–32*). The thirty years before his public ministry is the period of legal prescription for the attainment of maturity for priestly services (Num 4:3–49).<sup>68</sup>

The document of the debt of Adam was read out and according to justice Adam was found deserving death due to his breach of the commandment (*SHF V 7/FH XII 7*). In the OT legalistic interpretation Jacob finds an insightful relationship between Adam who deserved death and Christ who was judged culpable of death. Adam violated the Law and tried to grab divinity and thus deserved death (Gen 2:16–17). Christ, the heir of Adam, was forcefully decked in the veil of sanctuary (Mt 27:28) to make him deserve death according to the Law (Num 4:15) due to the touching of holy objects echoing Adam's daring attempt to grab divinity. In Adam's attempted grabbing of divinity and the condemnation of Christ to death out of the cunningness of the priests, Jacob finds the same deceitful and cunning operations of the evil one working along (*SHF V 17,18/FH XII 17,18*). Through the suffering and the death on the Cross with the nails thrust on to him Christ tore into pieces the bond of Eve and repaid the debt (*SMS 813,5–6/FH XVI 95–96*). Christ was sent down as a pledge of ransom for the captured image in Adam, that was in the captivity of Sheol. But the Mighty One by his own

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<sup>68</sup> In the Jewish tradition no one was selected for the service in the tent before one attained thirty years of age. Jacob mentions how Christ fulfils the thirty years period of maturity; cf. *HS III 327,13–328,3; 330,12–15; 333,20–334,4*, [Homily “Why Our Lord abode upon the Earth for Thirty Years,” ET from HTM, *TV 2.4* (1990): 37–49].

might defeated the captors and brought Adam back to the Father (*HS III 423,6–7*).<sup>69</sup>

(c) Captivity/Slavery Imagery

Jacob makes ample use of the symbolism of hostage-taking, slavery and captivity (*šbitā/gālūtā*), to delineate both the fallen state of Adam/humanity as well as the effective redemption in Christ. Most often our author envisages a spiritual topography to explain in realistic terms the spiritual alienation in Adam and the redemptive liberation with its salvific reconciliation in Christ. In this respect he makes use of the contrasting imageries of the inhabited land and the desert (*HS V 179,13–180,7/FH VI 247–262*). This spiritual topography finds its concrete expression in the exile motif seen through the whole of salvation history. Jacob's catechetical synthesis brings out a net-work of scriptural depictions of captivity and liberation/deliverance of humanity from the sway of the evil one: Adam's alienation from God, the captivity of the people effected out of the deception due to idols and idolatry, exile in Egypt and Assyria, the prodigal son's going away from the house of his father (*HS I 278,15–21; 281,2–282,5*), the imprisoned Barabbas (= *Adam*, *SHF V 32–34/FH XII 32–34*), Christ's entry into Sheol to uproot it, which was foreshadowed in Samson (*HS II 632,5–633,18/FH XIV 167–200*) are all symbolic depictions. Everywhere the Lord extends his hand a 'second time' (Is 11:11) that serves as a sign and source of deliverance.

Captivity/slavery imagery is essentially related to idols and idolatry. The evil one diverts and distorts the vision of Adam/humanity through idols. Once deviated and estranged from the divinity and the divine plan humanity falls into idolatry and slavery which in Jacob's terms is the deepest darkness. It is the total deprivation of the light of the salvific path (*SHF IV 1,2/FH XI 1,2*). The evil one holds the upper hand over humanity by making it captive through idols of vanity. In captivity there is no freedom of the children of God nor the consolation and peace of the promised land. The ambassadors before Christ could not fully liberate the

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<sup>69</sup> Homily "On 'the Kingdom of Heaven is Like unto Leaven'" (*HS III 411–424*, no. 86); ET from HTM, *TV 3* (1989): 44–57.

captives. Hence, the Merciful One sends his own Son to snatch away the prey from the captor (*SMS* 725,19–726,4/*FH I* 121–128). Jacob finds Adam/humanity as the pearl (*margānitā*), that had been stolen away by the captor, the evil one (*SMS* 768,3–4/*FH I* 1007–1008), that needs restoration. Christ through his nativity renewed and engraved anew the damaged image of Adam. Thus the coin damaged in the captivity by the evil one has been renewed and the ransom for the liberation was paid. Moreover, Christ came as the Sun of Righteousness to enlighten the true path as well as to expose the idols and destroy idolatry. In the dazzling light of Christ, the Sun, the evil one has been exposed and all stumbling blocks on the darkened road of humanity have been removed.

On the day of Nativity freedom came to the enslaved woman, the bride of Light (*SMS* 770,2–9/*FH I* 1049–56). The prodigal son (*HS I* 280,21–282,5) and Barabbas are types of the enslaved and imprisoned Adam/humanity for whom Christ was bound and crucified (*SHF V* 33,34/*FH XII* 33,34). Through death Christ entered into the house of slavery, Sheol, where Adam, the pearl, remained a prey. He uprooted Sheol in three days and led out the captives of death and Satan (1Cor 15:55; *HS II* 613,5–6/*FH XII* 41–42; *SHF VI* 7/*FH XV* 7) to the land of freedom and life (*SMS* 813,7–20/*FH XVI* 97–110). Thus from the great exile humanity was liberated and returned to the house of the Father. After completing his fight with the adversary Christ, the Mighty One, returned his bow to come with strength (*SMS* 814,6; 819,15/*FH XVI* 116, 230).<sup>70</sup> He did not bring back the way at his feet (*SMS* 814,16/*FH XVI* 126).<sup>71</sup>

#### (d) Combat Imagery

The symbol of combat is quite dynamically employed by Jacob in his synchronic vision to develop his theological anthropology, the mystery of Christ, and the divine economy of salvation, in a unified

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<sup>70</sup> ‘The bow returning to come with strength’ is a biblical usage indicating total victory (1 Sam 2:4; 2 Sam 22:35); *SMS* 814,6. 819,15/*FH XVI* 116, 230; *HS III* 419,14–15.

<sup>71</sup> ‘To bring back the way at one’s feet’ is a sign of failure; compare with *CEC VIII* 6.

vision. Combat means, for Jacob, a medium for meritorious gaining of the promises of divine mercy through growth in integrity and the virtues of the created human nature. Hence, his anthropology views the creation of Adam/humanity as a setting for a combat which is made complete and victorious by Christ who made humanity attain resurrection into life immortal, i.e., the summit of all divine promises:

When he had created him, he retained him for the combat for  
righteousness.

When he saved him, he gave him deliverance from exile  
and when he resuscitated, he bequeathed the bliss as it was  
promised,

so that Adam might possess everything of his own without any  
alteration.

(QHC IV 213–16)<sup>72</sup>

God in his mercy furnished Paradise and equipped Adam/humanity to run on the road of righteousness to the meeting point of immortality (*SHF III 31/FH IX 31*). Here it is necessary to bear in mind the special status of Adam<sup>73</sup> due to the divine image, especially the freedom he enjoyed, and the enlightenment of the Spirit he had. With discernment and understanding of the glorious state in which he had been created, Adam should have won against the tempting evil one. Thus he could have inherited the inheritance of Paradise. Divine justice has so arranged as to respect Adam and make him attain whatever his free will chooses as his own responsible acquisition, be it for his glorification or for his condemnation through the observance or non-observance of the Law.<sup>74</sup> God's justice is so wise and merciful

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<sup>72</sup> CSCO 508 (syri 214), p. 90.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. The section on 'The constitution of Adam/humanity', chapter three (section A,1,b).

<sup>74</sup> Jacob of Serugh explains the reasons for combat and victory:

And as the law was instituted for Adam among the trees  
that became a sphere for the adversary to make combat with him.  
For without the law sin also would not have come into effect,  
and without combat there is no victory either.

as to set Adam in such a neutral state with the possibilities of choosing immortality with righteousness or mortality with iniquity in foolishness. Adam was given freedom and responsibility as well as the powers of vigilance and discernment to gain meritoriously his inheritance. This sort of tension was a combat situation, in which Adam/humanity had to make progress with vigilance and discernment. But Adam failed in the combat and the adversary gained the upper hand. Thus Adam turned to iniquity and so fell into mortality. As he lost the battle he became a captive and a slave to sin, death and the evil one.

Even the fallen Adam was offered the opening of the door of grace by the merciful and omniscient one (Rom 5:20; *SHF IV 8/FH IV 8*). Divine mercy sent his own Son to snatch away the wearied prey, Adam, from the captors (*SMS 726,3–4/FH I 127–128*). The various titles of Christ the Saviour,<sup>75</sup> such as Mighty One, Warrior, Merchant, Commander, Athlete, Lion's whelp, Swimmer (*HS II 630,19–632,4/FH XIV 139–166*), Hunter (*HS III 326,24–327,2*), are symbolic depictions of Christ's combat with the evil one, the captor of Adam. The Son of the virgin, the Mighty One, subdued the rebellious one in the contest and let the captives go free (*SMS 776,17–18/FH II 33–34*).

From the very first moment of his earthly life the Son assumed the combat of Adam. This became all the more clear and perceptible in his temptation, in the forty days' fasting and at the suffering and death at Golgotha by which he entered into Sheol. In his coming into the world Christ overthrew all idols and destroyed idolatry. The seers and prophets perceived the fight into which Christ was aiming at. Holy Simeon saw the battle into which Christ would enter in order to raise the side of righteousness (*HS V*

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Unless man fights there are neither the conquered nor the victor.  
And if one does not encounter the fight he would not become  
glorious.

Without combat there is no crown for the athlete either;  
and without a battle bravery would not be recognized.

[*QHC III 187–194*, CSCO 508 (syri 214), p. 38]

<sup>75</sup> Cf. The section on 'The Titles of Christ, the Saviour', chapter three (section B,3,b).

456,20–457,18/*FH V 193–212*). At his baptism in Jordan Christ himself enters into the water to equip the whole of humanity for the fight as well as to set an armoury for all to engage in the fight (*HS I 180,10–181,5/FH VI 265–280*).<sup>76</sup> He polished humanity for the fight. At the Transfiguration Moses and Elijah spoke of the road of the fight Christ should get into. During his temptation and the fasting and at Golgotha Christ's fighting with the adversary became evident. What Adam failed to do and preserve, Christ, the Heir of Adam and the smitten Redeemer, did by his mighty deeds and rendered redemption to the fallen Adam by justification. The combat of Christ was foreshadowed in the fight of Samson (*HS II 632,5–20/FH XIV 167–182*),<sup>77</sup> in the sufferings of Ezekiel (*HS II 627,8–630,18/FH XIV 65–138*), and in the episode of Jonah (*HS II 626,19–20/FH XIV 55–56*). Through death Christ entered into Sheol, the great captivity of the generations. There the 'Life-giver' fought and shattered the fortifications of the evil one and let the captives go out to proceed to the Father. Christ killed iniquity and sin, conquered death and uprooted Sheol and rose up victorious (*HS II 624,4–627,7; 628,21–630,18/FH XIV 1–64, 99–138*).

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<sup>76</sup> Baptism is an armoury for the warriors to enter and arm themselves:

I descended to the fountain not to take up a shield for myself  
but to forge mighty armour for warriors.

I am anxious to cleanse (polish) man in the contest of battle  
so that every one who comes to fight should fight like me.

I am instituting baptism as an armoury;

Unless man has entered and clothed himself from it, he will not fight.

If I pass over and do not get baptized as you would withhold me,  
no one will be able to take up the armour from the waters.

As a commander I took up the leadership in the contest  
in order to be an example to the forces that are coming after me.

And if I turn aside from the road that I have taken hold of and come,  
again those after me too will pass by, as they have seen me [doing].

And if they do not equip themselves with my power from the waters  
they will not encounter the great battle as diligent ones.

(*HS I 180,12–181,5/FH VI 267–280*)

<sup>77</sup> "A Homily on Samson" (*HS V 331–355*), ET from HTM, *TV 11* (1992), pp. 50–70.

## (e) Medical Imagery

Adam was deceitfully persuaded by the evil one to take the false nourishment. It became poisonous and thus the first and the grave ulcer (*śūhṇā qadmāyā/rabbā*) developed (*SHF III 5,12/FH IX 5,12*), not only in the person of Adam, the head of the race, but also in reality within the whole of humanity. The eating without discernment led the whole humanity into laxity of life (*rapyūtā*), intemperance (*‘āsōūtā*) and gluttony (*la‘būtā*, *SHF III 10–12/FH IX 10–12*). Through Adam the human race was poisoned at its source and the posterity carried on the sickness. To the wounded and poisoned humanity the Son became the Physician (*‘āsyā*, *SMS 771,6–11/FH I 1075–80*). Adam failed in his fight against the lures of lust (*SMS 771,16–17/FH I 1085–86*) and was wounded and fractured (*SMS 771,8–9/FH I 1077–78*). Christ in his own temptation sought for a cure to the fallen and sick Adam and taught the human race about the wise ‘medicinal herb’ (*‘eqārā*) of forty days’ fasting as a cure to the first grave ulcer.

Fasting was established as a model and device for the purification of the four elements (*SHF III 30/FH IX 30*) that have turned into disintegration due to the false eating of Adam. The celestial Adam cured the ulcer of the terrestrial Adam and repaid the debt of gluttony, intemperance and laxity of life by his abstinence and firmness. Christ devised a healing for Adam/humanity (*SHF III 12/FH IX 12*) as he really became a ‘Physician’ as well as the ‘Medicinal Herb’ to the wounds of Adam/humanity and carried away all pains (*SHF V 31/FH XII 31*). He now stands as the Strengthenener (*mḥayylānā*) to all who are infirm to make them stand erect as well as to feed them by his diligence (*SMS 771,10–11/FH I 1079–80*). Beyond the driving away of sickness, as ‘the vivifier of all’ (*māḥḥe kol*) Christ vivified the dead and gave them new life (*SMS 812,11–16/FH XVI 81–86*). Above all by referring to Adam’s eating without discernment (*purṣānā*), as the ‘false nourishment’, Jacob alludes in a symbolic manner to all forms of false nourishment in human existence, covering the physical, sensorial, mental, spiritual and social realms of human life.

## (f) Dough/Baking Imagery

Dough/Baking imagery in the context of the salvific activities of Christ, brings together a group of imageries dealing with the aspects of formation and transformation, or in other words,

creation and redemptive incarnation. The mixing and mingling of the elements of dust and water in the creation of humanity, the mixing of proper colours to paint the divine image in man, the harmonious mingling of the four elements in Adam/humanity, the ordering and adorning of Paradise for Adam are all symbolically depicted by Dough/Baking imagery in the divine economy of salvation for the humanity and the world. This economy in its progressive stages depicts the advancement of reconciliation in humankind and in the world through the redemptive transformation aiming at the final resurrection. Dough/Baking imageries serve to depict all these progressive stages with many symbols and metaphors.

With regard to the redemptive incarnation, life, suffering, death and resurrection of Christ, the imagery of leaven takes a primary position. The hidden but transforming power of leaven is the key element of this imagery. This natural symbol is widely employed in the Bible and in patristic literature to bring out the negative and positive aspects of the progress in divine-human engagement. By going beyond the fragmentary expositions the Syriac Fathers present a coherent synthesis of theological truths or divine realities through this imagery.<sup>78</sup> We are concerned here only to bring out a single aspect of this imagery, i.e., Christ, 'the Leaven of Life', employed by Jacob of Serugh to explain the salvation in Christ. This imagery is a theological expression that explains the divine economy in creation, Incarnation and Resurrection. Jacob's views could be summarised as follows: The merciful Father bestowed his image upon the dust to make it great, but the evil one snatched it away into captivity in Sheol and made it turn back to dust devoid of glory. Through Adam the creation that was wisely and skilfully moulded became mingled with death. The evil one poisoned the human dough at its source and there was the need of 'the Leaven of Life' to counteract that. The mercy of the Father had concern for his image and he took pity on it giving his Son as the Leaven to season and give taste to the race of Adam (*HS III 422,19–424,18*). The need and the source of redemption for humanity had been envisaged

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<sup>78</sup> See Beck, "Das Bild vom Sauerteig bei Ephräm," 1–19 for a general view of the treatment of the imagery of 'Leaven' in Ephrem.

from the beginning by the omniscient divinity. Hence, the economy of life-giving (or salvation) could be seen ordained from creation through the Incarnation and the Resurrection. Humanity remained unleavened before the advent of Christ and by the Incarnation of Christ, ‘the Leaven of Life’ pervaded the lump of humanity (*SMS 771,12–15/FH I 1081–84*). Thus Christ is the ‘Leaven from the Most High’ (*HS III 418,9*) who brought himself down and kneaded himself into humanity.

The exegesis of the Gospel parable of the Kingdom of Heaven as leaven in the world<sup>79</sup> (Mt 13:33; Lk 13:20–21) serves as a discerning teaching. According to Jacob it gives a holistic vision of the person and activities of the Son of God in the whole economy of salvation. The leaven is our Lord who is the Word, the Son of God. The wise woman who took it is Godhead and the three measures of the flour is the three branches of humanity that proceeded from the Ark of Noah (Gen 9:18–19). Thus the Son of God was hidden in the three nations from the Ark. The death inherited by Adam remained in these nations and hence the need of the ‘Leaven of Life’ (*HS III 415,14–416,8*).<sup>80</sup> In the symbol of the kneading of the Son into humanity as the Leaven Jacob explains a series of theological factors vividly. It includes all divine teachings in the OT regarding the advent of the Son for redemption, his assuming of the body of Adam with all its passions and debts, his hidden life (as the leaven in the dough), his suffering

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<sup>79</sup> Homily “On ‘the Kingdom of Heaven is Like unto Leaven’” (*HS III 411–424*); ET from HTM, *TV 3* (1989): 44–57.

<sup>80</sup> Jacob of Serugh envisages ‘the woman and three measures of flour’ (Mt 13:33) as the Godhead who kneaded the Son into humankind:

And the Godhead was in the likeness of some discerning woman  
 who seeks a sweet-tasting leaven to prepare dough.  
 She kneaded Her Son into the dough of mankind as if He were  
 leaven,  
 and in the Son of God the whole race was sweetened.  
 The heavenly One was descended and was mixed in with the earthly,  
 that all the earthly might become like to the heavenly.

(*HS III 416,3–8*; ET from HTM, *TV 3* (1989): 49)

and death and even his kneading into Sheol<sup>81</sup> of the dead, where the dead assumed life from him in order to enter into the region of life from that of the dead. Kneading of the Son depicts symbolically the divine self-emptying (as the kneading of leaven into the dough), the unification of the peoples from various errors of the idols, the transforming power of Christ and his teachings, the healing and taste-giving role of the Son who elevates all to the status of sons of his Father, as well as the giving of good hope to the living and the dead (*HS III 416,21–420,14*). The dynamic effects of Baptism too are symbolically depicted in the leaven imagery. In place of the poisoned water of Eden the divinity sets the dough of humanity in the sanctified water of baptism together with oil to give good-taste to all (*HS III 416,9–20*).

Christ is also called 'the Salt from the Most High' that descended to season our insipidity (*SMS 771,14–15/FH I 1083–4*). Christ, 'the Salt' has been pre-announced in the salt (2Kings 2:19–22) which Elisha threw into the water (*SMS 795,3–4/FH III 97–98*). Christ is also 'the Sweet Fruit' that sweetened all who were bitter. He is the 'Sweet bunch of Grapes' (Is 65:8) who by his journey on the road of Adam, justified him and poured out perfection to Adam/humanity (*SMS 804,9–12/FH III 290–293*). At his baptism Christ sanctified the ordinary waters by mixing the splendour of his holiness with them (*HS I 183,22/FH VI 339*). As 'the Fountain of Life' Christ remains in human nature to vivify all. The Cross and death were his devices to undergo all the lowly stages of Adam and even to enter into Sheol where the departed awaited their redemption. Sheol could not withstand the power of Christ, 'the Leaven of Life' when he entered into it and caused fermentation in that region of death. It burst out and all were released and redeemed by Christ.

#### (g) Clothing Imagery

Various aspects of the fall of humanity in Adam and the various stages of the salvation history are well depicted through clothing

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<sup>81</sup> Cf. Homily "On 'the Kingdom of Heaven is Like unto Leaven'" (*HS III 419,15–420,10; 421,20–21; 422,5–18; 423,3–424,4*); ET from HTM, *TV 3* (1989): 44–57.

imagery. It is developed with an originality of its own in the early Syriac Christian theology.<sup>82</sup> The inspiration behind this theological expression is from the biblical usages in Gen 3:21 (clothing of Adam/Eve), Heb 5:7; 10:5 (Christ's coming clothed in a body), Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27 (Christians' putting on Christ). The interpretation of Gen 3:21 in terms of 'the Robe of Glory' with which Adam was clothed before the fall is a common heritage of the Jewish and Christian interpretations, and was prominent in the early Syriac tradition. The Targumic traditions speak of the vestments God had provided for Adam and Eve as not of skin but of glory/light which refers to the state before the fall. Early Syriac Christianity, as it stands in closer correspondence with many Judeo-Christian perspectives, took up many Haggadic elements and Rabbinic features in the exegesis of the early chapters of Genesis.<sup>83</sup> Jacob of Serugh too follows the interpretations and the symbolic views developed by Ephrem and others.<sup>84</sup> Our author envisages the

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<sup>82</sup> For a detailed survey see Brock, "Clothing Metaphors," 11–38 (= *Studies in Syriac Christianity*, No. XI, pp. 11–38); Peterson, "Theologie des Kleides," 347–56; Kowalski, "Rivestiti di gloria," 41–60.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis*, 215–24.

<sup>84</sup> Jacob of Serugh employs the acquired insights in his catechetical and homiletical interpretations:

When a man does not fall into sin, he is a son of God,  
 comely, beloved, having a nature filled with the virtues.  
 God saw his creation, that it was very good,  
 and as He is the One who brings forth good, so is he who was  
     brought forth, as long as he did not sin.  
 Fair is his nature, and full of righteousness,  
 and because of his fairness, he is worthy to be a son of God.  
 But once he has fallen into the love of the world and begun to sin,  
 his high and natural beauty is lost to him.  
 And from the height of Sonship he is brought low,  
 for the beauty his nature possessed has been corrupted.

(*HS I 287,12–21*); Homily "On the Son who Squandered his Riches," *tr.* from HTM, *TV 5.4* (1994): 27. for the beauty his nature possessed has been corrupted (*HS I 287,12–21*); Homily "On the Son who Squandered his Riches," *tr.* from HTM, *TV 5.4* (1994): 27.

Incarnation and the redeeming activities of Christ as enabling Adam to regain the robe of glory/light he had lost or rather the serpent took away from him from among the trees of Eden.<sup>85</sup> The so called four stages or scenes of the dramatic development of the history of salvation:<sup>86</sup> Adam before the fall, Adam after the fall, Christ who puts on Adam in the Incarnation and the Christians who put on Christ in the Baptism, as envisaged in the theological expression of the 'garment of glory' frame-work, are explicit in Jacob of Serugh.

The serpent gave deceitful advice to Eve in the garden so as to take away the 'garment of glory' and wove a tunic of iniquity in which the first parents remained naked and they felt shame. The fig leaves came as a clothing of shame. Jacob finds this as a punishment as well as a promise regarding the return of the expelled Adam into Paradise (*QHC III 993–1040*). But the angel Gabriel spoke the truth to Mary and, by contrast, he was not weaving a 'garment of shame' but 'a garment of glory' to clothe the stripped and naked Adam/humanity (*SMS 733,4/FH I 278*). Through the various scriptural episodes starting with the episode of Annunciation till that of Christ's Resurrection in glory, we find the recovery of the garment of glory for Adam/humanity.

In the Incarnation by being robed in swaddling clothes (*SHF I 15,16/FH IV 15,16; SMS 772,12/FH I 1102*) Christ exchanged glory for Adam/humanity's garment of shame. At the baptism of Christ the 'robe of glory' was placed in the waters and the bride was sent down to clothe herself to be adorned (*HS II 168,8–9/FH VI 15–16*). The bride needs to be adorned by the hearing of prophets (the voice of the Word) and the apostles. It is noteworthy that Jacob of Serugh describes John the Baptist, being at the frontier of the testaments, as both, a prophet and an apostle (ambassador of the Word) at the same time (*SHF II 4/FH VII 4*). It is Christ, the Bridegroom, who gives the white garments of the

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<sup>85</sup> In the context of salvation in Christ Jacob speaks of 'the robe of glory' quite often with its strong baptismal implications: Baptism is the 'garment of glory' given to Adam that which the serpent had stolen from him among the trees (*HS I 197,11–12*).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Brock, "Clothing Metaphors," 11–13.

Spirit from the waters of baptism (*HS I 173,19; 174,2/FH VI 128, 132*). This garment is at the same time an armour too to fight against the evil one and his machinations (*HS I 180,12–181,5/FH VI 267–280*). The onward journey of Christ through his sufferings and death is a model for Adam/humanity in the fight against the evil one and death. Finally at the Resurrection Christ assumes the garment of glory and leaves the garment of the dead in the tomb (*HS II 619,17–621,14/FH XIII 175–212*). Then Christ makes all put on the garment of glory of which the thief is the first recipient.<sup>87</sup> Jacob, with his catechetical thrust, lays much emphasis on the putting on of Christ in the form of the ‘garment of glory/spirit’ in baptismal waters.<sup>88</sup>

#### (h) Nuptial Imagery

The nuptial imagery employed by Jacob of Serugh assumes a wider significance so as to embrace the whole economy of salvation. We have already dealt with this factor in chapter three, showing how the restoration of the disrupted marriage feast in Eden has been made possible through Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom.<sup>89</sup> Here the reflection is on how this imagery functions to depict the person and activities of Christ, the Heir of Adam, who gives ‘good hope’ and salvation to all. Nuptial imagery is an effective means to bring into play all dynamic elements of the ‘image and likeness of God’ in humanity with respect to divine-human relationships. By this imagery the success and failures of the human faculties of free will, the spirit which often signifies a sort of reasoning with respect to the human heart and affective senses, the power of the word which often functions as the revealer of the spirit, especially in praise, are

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<sup>87</sup> *HS V 669,9–10*, The words of Christ to the good thief in a homily of Jacob: “I will clothe you with a robe of light in the marriage chamber on high. Take for yourself the key of light and come to the garden of blessings.”

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *HS I 211,4–7; III 288,7–11; V 681,19–20*; Brock, “Baptismal Themes,” 325–47.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. The metaphor of ‘Betrothal and Marriage Feast’, in chapter three (section C,2) for a symbolic depiction of the economy of the salvation in Christ.

metaphorically described. In the same imagery the role of the eternal and immutable divine mercy, the abundance of the divine grace, the omniscience of God whose economy really subdues all hidden operations of the evil one, are also made explicit.

Through the festal homilies Jacob brings into prominence the above mentioned divine and human aspects in the background of the biblical history of salvation. The various feasts of our Lord are the stages of the development. In the Nativity the divine Bridegroom made himself small within the dimensions of humanity<sup>90</sup> so as to enter into the bridal chamber (*gnōnā*) of the cave in Bethlehem (*SMS 775,10/FH II 7*). At Jordan the Bridegroom brings in sanctification and the 'garment of the Spirit', both as an armoury and as an enlightenment. The betrothal that has been initiated and continued in the OT, at the Nativity and at the Baptism in Jordan, reaches its summit in the paschal events. At Golgotha the betrothal becomes consummated with the Bridegroom's total self-giving to the bride as the dowry. The Son passes through various bridal chambers such as the cave of Bethlehem, the river Jordan, at Golgotha, and at the cave-tomb, and in Sheol. Jacob even mentions the commencement of the marriage feast in the bride's partaking of the body and blood of the Bridegroom in the Eucharistic context. The body of the Bridegroom is placed as food for the guests (*HS III 290,16–291,4*).<sup>91</sup> This feast finds its fuller realization in the eschatological kingdom.

Jacob's treatment of the theme and the imagery is quite dramatic. The conversion and recognition of the Bridegroom by the bride is skilfully brought out by Jacob. The reluctant and hesitant bride at the Jordan gradually accepts the adornments from the prophetic words (*HS I 169,3–170,7; 176,1–6/FH VI 31–56, 171–176*). The wavering and unfaithful nature of the bride is forcefully brought out in the homilies on the Sunday of Hosannas (*HS I 448,20–450,22; 451,21–453,6/FH X 79–122, 143–170; SHF*

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. Homily, "Why Our Lord Abode upon the Earth for Thirty Years" (*HS III 325,16–329,2*); ET from HTM, *TV 4* (1990): 40–3.

<sup>91</sup> Homily, "On the Veil on Moses' Face" [*HS III 283–305*, ET by Brock, "On the Veil of Moses," 75–6 (= *Syriac Spirituality*, 78)].

*IV 21–30, 32–35/FH XI 21–30, 32–35*). At the Transfiguration she is strengthened as well as given a fore-taste of her glory. At the suffering, crucifixion and death of the Bridegroom she too suffers with him. But at the Resurrection she exults and rejoices so deeply as to be later persistently longing for her union with him at the scene of the Ascension of her Bridegroom at the Mount of Olives (*SMS 821,17–823,15/FH XVI 275–314*). Thus the nuptial imagery serves as an effective medium to expound the bipolarities in the divine-human relationships in the wider spectrum of the history of salvation.

### 3. Divine Names and the Titles of Christ

The exaltedness of the Son is a predominant theme in the homilies of Jacob of Serugh. But this exalted Son out of his mercy has taken on himself to descend to the level of humanity for the sake of the salvation of humanity. This descent of the Son is the gift of divine grace (*SMS 723,11/FH I 70*) in the form of a call to humanity for a transformative communion that leads to perfection. It is an enhancing invitation that provides also the power to be transformed. The Son set himself under human words by coming down under the human existential order of becoming. As he emptied himself and took up the form of a servant among the servants he became comparable by means of diverse likenesses.<sup>92</sup> It was the perfect channel of communication with humanity in its own modes, ways and languages. It was a loving invitation to humanity to embrace the way of salvation with love and understanding.

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<sup>92</sup> Jacob of Serugh understands the ‘becoming’ of the Son as the medium of his self-revelation:

Had not the Son of God emptied Himself,  
 what likeness had there been in the world to compare Him with?  
 The Son of the free-born took on the form of a servant from within  
 the womb,  
 and because of this, He has become capable of comparison with  
 diverse likenesses.

[*HS V 163,6–9*, “A Homily on Melchizedek,” *tr.* from HTM, *TV 2* (1989): 41]

***a. The Paradoxical 'Becoming' of the Son  
and the Divine Names***

The 'becoming' of the Son is a sequel to that descending and the becoming of the Father into the levels of a 'tutor', an 'interrogator' and a 'voice' in Eden (Gen 3:8–9) through inquiring Adam, "Where are you?" (*QHC III* 721–774). It was an invitation to repentance and to return to the right path of the way of salvation (*QHC III* 689–734). This invitation of the abundant and eternal mercy comes in embodiment in the incarnate Son. He relates with humanity in its own dimensions. It is God's tuning himself to human ears and minds. Thus humanity is enabled to understand and accept the saving will and the deeds of the Son.

Divinity came down to be made understood within the categories of humanity. The theological approach employed in a special way by Syriac writers to explain this reality is provided in their theology of divine names,<sup>93</sup> which explains theological realities by means of several poetic and functional titles, pointing especially to the mystery of Christ. According to Ephrem, God by assuming humanity assumed 'perfect' or 'real' names as well as 'borrowed names'.<sup>94</sup> These sets of 'Divine names' function as 'the garment of names' in which God has clothed himself to make himself tangible and perceptible to humanity through the splendour and magnanimity of his divine self-revelation. Divine names function in analogical terms to make humanity understand the aspects of divine mercy in its activities of creation, redemption and resurrection. Being a disciple of Ephrem, Jacob of Serugh in his understanding of the salvation in Christ bases his theological foundation on the truth of God's 'becoming' in his Son, or the clothing of names for the self-manifestation. Incarnation is the assuming of the state of becoming or the state of birth by the Son who is eternal and immutable. It is the divine mercy that urges the

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<sup>93</sup> For detailed discussion on 'Divine Names', cf. Hausherr, *The Name of Jesus*, 40–52; Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 159–204, 354–63; "Theory of Symbolism," 9–14; Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 60–6; Koonammakkal, "Divine Names and Theological Language in Ephrem," 318–23.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. *HFid* 63:10.

Son to assume the state of becoming by which he could teach and enlighten humanity. He came on the road of Adam/humanity to renew and enlighten all by his teaching and to show the way to the Father.

Jacob explains the mystery of the Son by referring to both the being (*'iyyā/ 'itūtā*) and the 'becoming' (*hwayā*) aspects of the Son. Concerning the being of the Son no one is capable of speaking. But concerning what he has become out of his compassion, one can speak with wonder (*tabrā*, *SMS 790,5–791,5/FH III 5–16*). Christ is both God and man, Lord of heaven and earth. He is above and below, has exaltedness and smallness, majesty and feebleness. He remains with his Father and with us (*HS II 348,15–349,3/FH VIII 23–32; HS I 446,20–447,1/FH X 35–38*). He is hidden with his Father and revealed himself to us on account of us (*SMS 809,17/FH XVI 27*). Hence, the Son has names referring to his hidden and divine aspects that are intangible and ineffable to humanity. At the same time there are names of the revealed and human aspects of the Son that are tangible and perceptible to humanity. Thus the Son is divine and human, hidden and revealed at the same time. He assumed titles or names to make himself understandable to humanity so that humanity might understand the divinity.

***b. The Titles of Christ, the Saviour***<sup>95</sup>

Various titles of Christ describe various aspects of the saving activity of Christ the Saviour in analogical terms. Jacob explains that the Son emptied himself and became a servant. Therefore what he has become is seen. Hence he is comparable with diverse likenesses (*HS V 163,6–9*).

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<sup>95</sup> These titles of Christ, the Saviour, gathered here are only from the *Select Festal Homilies of Jacob of Serugh*. The order of references given here is as follows: Number of the Festal Homily [in Roman Numerals] + the line number/or the paragraph number as given in Kollamparampil, T. *Jacob of Serugh: Select Festal Homilies* (English translation of seventeen festal homilies of Jacob of Serugh). Rome & Bangalore, 1997. References to the original Syriac texts can be had from the indications furnished in the said translation volume.

- Aged Child/Infant (*'ūlā sābā*) I 556; V 12; III 74, 146; V 344.
- Ancient of all (*qaššiš men kol*) V 1.
- Ancient of days (*'attiq yanmē*) III 23, 356; V 17; X 69.
- Ancient of the Ages (*qaššiš 'ālme*) X 69.
- Anointed One (*mšihā*) XI 37.
- Artificer of the universe (*'umān tebēyl*) I 769.
- Athlete (*'atlēytā*) XIV 143.
- Babe (*'ūlā*) I 302, 827, 1016, 1026; II 28,146,199,215, 310; III 246,306; V 1; VI 215.
- Baptizer of all (*ma'med kol*) VI 304.
- Bearer of creation (*t'in beryātā*) III 61.
- Begetter of babes (*mawled 'ūlē*) I 841; III 61.
- Betrothed One (*mkirā*) VI 84, 306; VII 11; XV 1.
- Blaze (*gawzaltā*) I 939; IV 28.
- Blessed Seed (*zar'ā brikā*) I 1104.
- Bread of Life (*ḥaḥmā d-ḥayyē*) III 128; V 372.
- Bridegroom (*ḥatnā*) I 1046; III 179; VI 1, 28, 62, 85, 106, 110, 126, 132,,135, 152, 158, 178, 294, 356, 360, 417, 527; VII 8, 10, 13, 14, 19, 29; VIII 578, 581; X 81; XI 22, 23, 26, 30, 36; XII 26; XIII 155, 169; XVI 123 = SMS 814,21; XVI 275, 277, 301, 305.
- Celestial Adam (*ādām šmayyānā*) IX 6.
- Celestial Bridegroom (*ḥatnā šmayyānā*) IV 19.
- Child (*ṭalyā*) V 40.
- Coal of Fire (*gmūrtā*) VI 242, 341; VII 31.
- Commander (*rab ḥaylā*) VI 275; XV 11.
- Consoler (*mbayyā'nā*) VII 8.
- Creditor (*māre ḥawbā*) XI 9.
- Crucified One (*zqipā*) XV 7; XV 27.
- Day (*'imāmā*) XVI 238.
- Day of truth (*'imāmā da-šrārā*) IV 22.
- Daylight (*'imāmā*) XV 24; XVI 121.
- Day-Star (*denḥā*) VI 443.
- Debtor (*ḥayyābā*) XI 9.
- Doctor (*'āšōbā*) I 1077.
- Drink (*šeqyā*) X 3.
- Eagle (*nešrā*) I 552, 838, 1001; V 324.
- Exalted One (*'ellāyā*) III 326.
- Exalted power (*ḥēyl 'ellāyā*) I 365.
- Fashioner (*sayyārā*) III 345.

- Fashioner of babes (*šā'ar 'ulè*) I 283, 489, 828; III 350; V 3.  
 Fatted Ox (*tāwrā d-peṯmā*) I 840.  
 Fiery coal (*gmūrta*) III 334; V 184; VI 341, 448; VII 31; (*gawzaltā*) XII 2.  
 Fiery one (*nūrānā*) VI 182.  
 Fire (*nūrā*) I 548; III 71; IV 28; VII 16,32; XII 2.  
 First-born (*bukrā*) XIII 23.  
 Flame (*šalbebitā/gawzaltā*) III 73,151; IV 28; V 83; VI 352, 450; VII 32; XII 2,35; XIII 137.  
 Flame-clothed One (*'tīp gawzaltā*) V 15.  
 Flash of Light (*barqā d-nubrā*) II 51, 67, 71; (*z'alliqā*) I 432.  
 Flood (*māmōlā*) V 181.  
 Forgiver of Debts (*šābēq hāwbē*) VI 307.  
 Fountain (*nēb'ā*) X 9.  
 Fountain of Life (*nēb'ā d-hayyē*) X 1.  
 Fruit (*pe'ra*) II 273; V 296.  
 Fruit of Life (*pe'ra d-hayyē*) I 1091.  
 Gardener (*gannānā*) XIII 36, 74.  
 Giver (*yāhōbā*) V 77.  
 Glorious Light (*nubrā ga'yā*) VI 437.  
 Glorious One (*zāhyā*) I 562.  
 Glory and Splendour of the Father (*šalmā d-šubhā w šemḥeb d-abbā*) VIII 177.  
 Great Blessing (*tūbā rabbā*) I 1110.  
 Great Body (*gušmā rabbā*) VII 7.  
 Great Day (*'imāmā rabbā*) XII 10.  
 Great King (*malkā rabbā*) I 838; VIII 469; X 55.  
 Great Mercy (*ḥnānā rabbā*) V 85.  
 Great Sea (*yammā rabbā*) XIV 3.  
 Great Sun (*šemsā rabbā*) III 286; IV 21.  
 Great Sun of righteousness (*šemsā rabbā d-zaddiqūtā*) III 114,211; VIII 192; XVI 63,123, 247.  
 Guide of all (*mdabbār koḷ*) V 69.  
 Haven (*lmē'nā*) VIII 358.  
 Heir (*yārtā*) I 1003; III 100, 361; IV 28; VIII 538; X 102; XI 24, 30, 33; XII 4, 5, 6, 20.  
 Hero (*ganbārā*) XII 35; XV 9.  
 Hidden Mystery (*rāzā kašyā*) III 92, 313.  
 Hidden One (*kašyā*) I 492; VI 470; XVI 344, 476.

- High priest (*rabbā d-kumrē*) V 19, 78, 328; VI 195, 520; XVI 409, 481; (*rab kābnē*) XI 33; XVI 431, 483.
- Holy One (*qaddīšā*) VI 150, 184, 300, 331, 340, 377; XII 21; (*ḥasyā* > XII 11; XV 11).
- Immanuel (*'amanu'ēyl*) I 654, 731, 747, 1014; III 37, 174, 199, 233; V 380; X 37.
- Infant (*yallūdā*) II 136, 258, 270; III 122, 196; (*šabrā* > III 250).
- Innocent One (*zakkayā*) XII 13, 35.
- Intermediary (*mes'āyā*) VIII 339.
- Judge of Judges (*dayyānā d-dayyānē*) XII 2.
- King (*malkā*) I 165, 306, 417, 477, 486, 546, 555, 662, 716, 740, 821, 914, 923; II 238, 255; III 178; V 338; VI 56, 384; VIII 211, 469; X 55, 74, 97, 114; 214, 270; XI 14, 18, 21, 22, 28, 33–35, 43; XII 29, 30; XIII 22, 71, 155; XIV 147; XVI 319, 440.
- King of kings (*mārē malkē*) VI 257; (*mlek malkē*) VI 520.
- Lamb (*'emrā*) I 927; II 57; III 294, 363; VI 165.
- Lamb of God (*'emrēh d-alāhā*) VII 15.
- Leaven of Life (*ḥmirā d-ḥayyē*) I 1081.
- Life (*ḥayyē*) XII 26; XIII 19, 249.
- Life-giver (*mahyānā*) II 139.
- Light (*nubrā*) I 1056, 1122; II 75, 87, 304; III 123, 213; XIII 17, 133; XV 25; XVI 215, 262.
- Lion's Whelp (*guryā d-'aryā*) I 495, 541, 835; V 185, 322; VI 502; XIII 15, 83.
- Live Coal (see 'Coal of Fire').
- Living Fire (*nūrā ḥaytā*) II 55; III 296; VI 336.
- Living One (*ḥayyā*) XV 26.
- Living Water (*mayā ḥayyē*) III 157, X 7.
- Lord (*mārā*) [Since it is a frequently used title no indexing is furnished here].
- Lord of all sacrifices (*mārē d-debhē*) V 21.
- Lord of all times (*mārā d-zābnē*) V 14, 48, 62, 296; X 230.
- Lord of Eden (*mārā da-'dēyn*) IV 16.
- Lord of Eve (*mārāh d-ḥāvā*) II 36.
- Lord of glory (*mārāh d-tešbuhtā*) XI 8, 19.
- Lord of heavens (*mārē rāvmē*) III 135, 349; IV 28.
- Lord of kings (*mārē malkē*) I 463, 741, 823; X 179; (*mārā d-malkē*) I 1128; XI 7.
- Lord of the chariot (*mārāh d-markabtā*) IV 28.
- Lord of the Cherubim (*mārā da-krōbē*) XI 8.

- Lord of the flock (*mārāb d-‘ānā*) I 469; III 363.  
 Lord of the heights (*marē rāwmē*) V 138, 142; XVI 232.  
 Lord of the holy objects (*mārē qudšē*) XII 20.  
 Lord of the Law (*mārēb d-nāmōsā*) XI 19.  
 Lord of the marriage feast (*mārē hlōlā*) XIII 171.  
 Lord of the Sanctuary (*mārēb d-bēt qudšā*) III 331, 333; XII 21, 24.  
 Lord of the seas (*mārē yammē*) V 182.  
 Lord of the sheep (*mārāb d-‘ānā*) III 294.  
 Lord of the world (*mārēb d-‘ālmā*) V 52, 126.  
 Lord of truth (*mārē šrārā*) I 742.  
 Luminary (*nabhirā*) VIII 298.  
 Luminous One (*nabhirā*) V 310.  
 Marvel (*tabrā/ dūmārā*) III 156, 274, 222–241; IV 10; V 9.  
 Master (*rabbā*) XI 7; XV 30.  
 Master-builder (*‘ardeklā*) I 1059.  
 Mediator (*meš‘ayā*) I 950; VIII 349, 540; XVI 233.  
 Medicinal herb (*‘eqārā*) IX 5, 12; XII 5.  
 Merchant (*taggārā*) XIV 139.  
 Merciful One (*rahmānā*) I 677.  
 Messiah (*mšīhā*) I 900; V 38, 64, 348; VI 64, 80; VII 20, 23, 24, 30; IX 27; XI 23; XVI 164, 166, 262.  
 Mighty One (*ganbārā/ ḥassinā/ ‘azziḏā*) I 485; I 903; I 905; I 1052; I 1071; X 147; XII 4; XIII 55; XIII 106; XIII 131; XIII 222; XIV 13; XIV 39, 53; XIV 104, 111; XIV 135; XV 133; XVI 110.  
 Mighty One of the ages (*ganbār ‘ālmē*) XIII 139.  
 Mighty One of the generations (*ganbār ‘ālmē*) III 232.  
 New Well (*bērā ḥadtā*) X 5.  
 Ocean (*yamā rabbā*) XIII 134.  
 Offshoot of the virgin (*‘nāqā btūltā*) I 1100.  
 Offspring of the Divinity (*yaldā d-alabūtā*) VI 468.  
 Only-Begotten (*ihīdāyā*) I 1090; III 174, 270; VI 78., 366, 393, 436, 464, 476, 487; VIII 507, 523, 548, 569, 573; XIII 63; XVI 1, 52, 59, 407, 433.  
 Painter (*ṣayyārā*) I 1057.  
 Pastor (*rā’yā*) I 898; (*rā’yā rabbā*) I 902; (*rā’ē kol*) I 1066).  
 Perfect One (*gmīrā*) VI 529.  
 Physician (*‘āsyā*) I 1075; XII 31; XVI 81.  
 Powerful Lord (*‘azziḏā mārā*) I 184.  
 Powerful of the Ages (*ganbārā d-‘ālmā*) VII 12.

- Powerful One (*'aṣṣiṣā*) I 545, 834, 852; V 186; VI 291.  
 Precious Treasure (*gaṣṣā*) IV 12.  
 Priest (*kumrā*) I 112.  
 Prince (*rešā*) I 720.  
 Radiance (*sembā*) I 304; I 1114.  
 Radiance of the Father (*sembēh d-abbā*) I 467.  
 Redeemer (*parōqā*) I 850, 901, 1124; II 139, 142, 306; III 118; VI 107, 161, 176, 378, 508; VII 24; VIII 163, 278, 385; X 209; XIV 59, 117, 141; XVI 171.  
 Rich One (*'attirā*) I 833, 1096; III 2; XII 35.  
 Rock (*ke'pā*) III 111.  
 Royal Bridegroom (*batnā malkā*) VI 30, 401; XVI 303.  
 Royal Son/Son of the King (*bar malkā*) I 981; VI 3, 136, 247.  
 Sacrificial Lamb (*'emrā d-debhā*) VI 156.  
 Salt (*melbā*) I 1083–84; III 97–98.  
 Sanctifier of Waters (*mḡaddeš mayyā*) VI 311.  
 Saviour/Life-giver (*mahyānā*) II 139.  
 Sheaf of Mercy (*keppā d-rahmē*) I 1094  
 Shepherd (*ra'yā*) I 114, 1063; II 57; X 288; XIII 32; (*ra'yā rabbā* XIII 120); 240 XIII 245; XIV 215; XV 4; XV 6.  
 Shoot (*šabbūqā/nūrbā*) I 997; I 999; III 115; IV 11; V 378.  
 Slaughtered King (*malkā qtilā*) XIII 22; XIV 11.  
 Slaughtered Master [Teacher] (*rabbā qtilā*) XIII 44, 248.  
 Slaughtered One (*qtilā*) XIII 233, 252; XIV 169; XVI 281.  
 Slaughtered Teacher [Master] (*rabbā qtilā*) XIII 44, 248.  
 Son of David (*bar dāviḏ*) I 500; IX 22.  
 Son of God (*bar alābā*) I 1, 308, 488, 744; III 79, 85, 87, 98, 114, 239, 276; V 130, 306, 391; VIII 2, 248, 335, 364, 503, 530, 560, 574; IX 36, 37; X 7, 193; XII 13; XIII 86, 103, 110; XIV 201; XVI 3, 23, 39, 138, 257, 263, 274, 335, 426.  
 Son of Man (*bar 'nāšā*) XVI 39.  
 Son of Mary (*bar maryam*) XVI 39.  
 Son of the Creator (*bar barōyā*) III 351; V 319.  
 Son of the Exalted One/Most High (*bar 'ellāyā*) I 724; III 282, 303.  
 Son of the Good One (*bar ṭabā*) XII 31.  
 Son of the Holy One (*bar qaddiṣā*) VI 354.  
 Son of the King (*bar malkā*) I 410, 531, 981; VI 53, 136, 237, 247, 362, 466.  
 Son of the Kingdom (*bar malkūtā*) I 408; VI 160, 358.  
 Son of the Lord of all (*bar mārē kol*) VIII 24; XVI 46.

- Son of the Majesty (*bar rabbūtā*) I 849.  
 Son of the Mighty One (*bar 'azziḏā*) I 512.  
 Son of the Most High (*bar 'ellāyā*) III 282, 303, 343; XVI 40; (*brēh d-rāmā* XI 5).  
 Son of the Rich One (*bar 'attirā*) II 11; III 2; III 284.  
 Son of the virgin (*brāh da-btultā*) I 126, 493, 693; II 33; V 5; XII 5.  
 Staff (*hutrā*) I 997; III 115, 357; IV 11.  
 Star (*kānkabā*) III 99; XI 28.  
 Stone (*ke'pā*) III 93.  
 Strengtheners (*mḥaylānā*) I 1079.  
 Sun (*šemšā*) I 553; III 71, 124, 218; (*šemšā rabbā*) III 286; IV 21; VII 7; XII 35; XIII 135; XIV 24.  
 Sun for the peoples (*šemšā l-'ammē*) III 124.  
 Sunrise (*denḥā*) I 1018; III 113.  
 Sustainer (*ḏāyōnā*) III 65.  
 Sweet bunch of grapes (*sgūlā rḥimā d-sattā*) III 292.  
 Sweet Fruit (*pe'ra ḥalyā*) III 290, 322; X 66.  
 Sweet fruit of the blessed vine (*pe'ra ḥalyā d-sattā brikā*) X 66.  
 Swimmer/Diver (*sahḥāyā*) XIV 145; XVI 98.  
 Treasure (*simtā*) I 1108; IV 12.  
 Tree of Life (*'ilānā d-ḥayyē*) III 288; IV 14.  
 True One (*šarrirā*) I 673; V 61; VI 92, 374, 394.  
 True Son (*brā šarrirā*) I 847; III 4; VI 486.  
 Truthful One (*šarrirā*) XI 46.  
 Valiant One (*ganbārā*) III 61; XIII 5, 46, 195; XV 11.  
 Vivifier of the dead (*mabḥe mitē*) V 56.  
 Warrior (*qrabtānā*) I 1073.  
 Wise One (*ḥakkimā*) III 138.  
 Word (*meltā*) I 116; III 60.

#### 4. The Apostolic Preaching and the Recognition of the Son of God

The risen Lord who remained forty days on earth is the founder of the 'new world' (*'ālmā ḥaditā*) and the 'road of his proclamation' (*'urḥā d-kārōḏūtēh*). This mystery of the new world is foreshadowed in the forty days' purification period of a woman who gives birth to a son (Lev 12:2–5). In forty days, as the foetus becomes fully formed, the Son of God perfected his apostles in faith on the road of his proclamation. For the new foetus in place of the soul he breathed in the Holy Spirit into his apostles (Jn 20:22). Thus he

fashioned the body of the Apostolate (*šlibūtā*) and gave perfection to the Good News (*šbartā*) with all its organs and senses so as to go out to lay hold of the whole world (*SMS 814,17–816,8/FH XVI 127–160*). This breathing of the Spirit on the apostles is the restoration of that Spirit lost by Adam (Jn 20:22; Gen 2:7).<sup>96</sup>

He gave the apostles his peace (*šlāmā*) so as to be with them and that they might give it to the world. The name of the Father gave them protection and the Advocate (*pāraqlēṭā*) carried the riches of the discipleship (*talmidūtā*, *SMS 817,20–818,18/FH XVI 193–212*). As the sun sends its radiance, Christ, 'the great Light' (*nubrā rabbā*) sent out his apostles to enlighten the whole world (*SMS 818,19–819,1/FH XVI 213–216*). The great sign of the Trinity which does not pass away, and the oil for signing were given to the apostles from the Mount of Olives equipping them to preach (*SMS 819,4–9/FH XVI 219–224*).

Jacob in his homily on the Pentecost<sup>97</sup> brings together a network of scriptural episodes to show how Christ stands as the power and the true Teacher behind the apostolic group. Our author brings together the episode of the mixing of the languages at Babel (Gen 11:6–9) and that of the divided tongues and the gift of the languages conferred in the Upper Room (*‘ellitā*, Acts 2:1–4). The promise of the baptism in Spirit and Fire (Mt 3:11 *et par.*) became fulfilled by providing the apostolic group with the armour of the Spirit (*HS II 679,11–680,3; 687,7–688,5*). The Upper Room became an armoury and a school for the apostles. The confusion at Babel was overcome and the promises at the Jordan too became realized in the Upper Room by the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Fire. The Son is seen acting together with his Father with equal powers at Babel, at the Jordan and in the Upper Room. Through the various tongues the Son himself speaks through the apostles and remains ever as the Teacher, Master and the Lord:

Through their tongues He spoke together with them so that  
they [*the people*] should accept Him,

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. Albert, "Sur le Sacerdoce et l'Autel," (No 57), p. 57.

<sup>97</sup> *HS II 670–689* (ET in *FH XVII*, pp. 353–369).

like the disciples, the skilful Teacher full of wisdom.

*(HS II 684,2–3/FH XVII 285–286).*

But it is evident that they are the same languages

that He divided in Babel from the beginning.

In the language of the people He spoke to them so that it  
would become known

that He himself is the Teacher, Master and the Lord of the  
region.

*(HS II 684,10–13/FH XVII 293–296)*

Jacob finds inherent links between the original Eden and the ‘New world’ fashioned by the Son through his Good News. Jacob explains how the disciples armed themselves with the Spirit and went out of the Upper Room as streams to make the whole earth a new Eden of spiritual trees and rivers.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Jacob of Serugh explains how the disciples in the Upper Room received the Spirit and equipped themselves:

Twelve streams were distributed from the Upper Room

and they made the earth an Eden of spiritual trees.

A boundless fountain descended from the Father,

and they took from it and went out to give drink to the whole world.

The Upper Room became a spring that sheds forth rivers

and it burst forth in strong currents abundantly to all regions (Gen  
2:10–14).

The Upper Room became like an armoury of the great King

and from it all his labourers who were naked clothed themselves.

The Upper Room became the great Babel of all tongues

and all peoples heard from it their own tongues.

The Upper Room became the depth that pours forth all fountains

and it made pools in the regions of dry places.

The Upper Room became a sea of heavenly salt

and sent forth taste to the whole earth which was tasteless.

O Upper Room, you have conquered Babel which was notorious

because your story is more exalted than the affairs of the daughter of  
Chaldeans.

The teaching that is full of life has proceeded from you

for the peoples of the earth whose minds were darkened.

In the divine economy the prophetic revelations and the apostolic preaching are all inspired by the same Spirit who gives the word to both groups. All prophecies concerning the coming of Christ have become actualized. The Kingship and the Priesthood have been assumed by Christ in order to make them proceed from him through the apostles to the world. The object of prophecy was the salvific activities of Christ (*SMS 798,10–11/FH III 163–164*). After the actualization of the salvific activities of Christ, which became consummated in his death and resurrection, it is the risen Lord himself who makes perfect the instruction to the apostolic group in forty days signifying the perfection of divine instructions. From then onwards the divine fidelity is preached by the apostolic group. Hence, from then on what was the object of prophecy has become the subject of apostolic proclamation; namely the salvific Incarnation, death and Resurrection of Christ. While the prophecy has seen the coming things with the eye of the Spirit, the apostles directly saw the salvific activities of Christ that were actualized. They preach and announce the divine mysteries so as to make all see with the lucid eye of the soul (*SHF V 1/FH XII 1*). It is an activity of faith through love. Apostles make all recognize the actualization of salvation through the events on the humble road of the Redeemer. In this respect the festal homilies proclaim the various mysteries lying hidden on the staging posts of the Redeemer. The homilies thus stand as sacramental channels enabling all to recognize the divinity of the Son shining out on the road of his humility.

Jacob finds the voices of the proclamation as an echo of the voice of the Father in the Garden to Adam, 'Where are you?' (Gen 3:9) in order to make him repent and be reconciled (*QHC III 691–778*). The same Father made his Word heard at the Epiphany and

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From the tongues that were distributed in you everyone learned  
that in Babel Our Lord confused all tongues.

He is the same one who is here and there together with his Father.

Blessed is the first One who is [also] the later One and He is not  
changed.

(*HS II 688,6–689,6/FH XVII 371–392*)

at the Transfiguration as well. Prophets and apostles are the bearers of this voice of the Word. They serve as ambassadors and servants of the same Word. It is in this respect John the Baptist, who is considered as a prophet and an apostle (*SHF II 4/FH VII 4*), confessed his status as the voice of the Word (Is 40:3; Mt 3:3; *SHF II 4,5/FH VII 4,5*; *HS I 170,2–7/FH VI 51–56*). In the Syriac tradition the Gospels are called *karōzūtā* (proclamation) that is going on in the Church; as the voice of the Word, this is quite significant to be mentioned here.

### C. CHRIST, THE SIGN AND SACRAMENT OF SALVATION

In Christ all the OT mysteries, types and depictions of salvation are fully proclaimed by removing all veils of mediated revelation as well as bringing them into full actualization. Hence, all his salvific activities are signs and sacraments of salvation.

#### 1. Fulfilment of all Promises and Prophecies in Christ, the Saviour

The whole divine economy that has been delineated in the house of Adam (*QHC I 57–58*) became actualized in Christ. Jacob introduces the episode of Samson, who depicted Christ in several ways, as a typical example to explain the centrality of Christ in the divine economy. The riddle that Samson put to the Philistines (Judg 14:12–18) really depicted Christ. But Samson himself or even those who heard him did not understand that.<sup>99</sup> It needed the

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<sup>99</sup> Jacob of Serugh explains the economy of divine mysteries from the example of the riddle of Samson:

A revelation came upon the Nazirite and gave him light,  
and his path ran forward with allegories and hidden types.  
He seized upon a riddle, that sweet came out of the bitter,  
and except in our Lord, the saying he propounded was not to be  
explained.  
He framed a parable, and of the Philistines he demanded the  
interpretation;  
but the secret was kept, to be explained only in its own time.  
For the riddle filled with mysteries was kept close and stored up

arrival of Christ for its fuller manifestation. After giving the honey taken from the carcass of the lion, Samson said; “Out of the eater came forth something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet” (Judg 14:14). Death is the ‘eater’ who devoured all generations and set all in bitterness. But our Lord came out from his death and his bread is sweet food for the world.<sup>100</sup> The same is the case with the type in ‘the Serpent of Bronze’ that Moses lifted up in the wilderness (Num 21:8). It needed the words of Jesus himself for its fuller revelation (Jn 3:14–15):

Moses wrought a parable in the wilderness in the sight of  
Hebrews,  
and our Lord interpreted it when he taught with uplifted  
voice:

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until the Son of God dawned forth and clarified them all.  
Nor did Samson understand the parable that he fashioned,  
for the time was not yet come for the mystery to be told openly.  
(*HS V 337,11–20*; “A Homily on Samson,” *tr.* from HTM, *TV 11*  
(1992): 57)

<sup>100</sup> Samson depicted the mystery of Christ’s victory over death:  
Samson went down and married the daughter of an uncircumcised  
thus depicting our Lord who betrothed the daughter of pagans in his  
Gospel.

The Son of God stirred from his place and come to our land  
to betroth to himself the Church of the peoples, as we have said;  
Death—the lion who devours all generations, encountered them  
but he slew death, just as Samson slew that lion.  
The riddle which the Hebrew gave to the Philistines  
was not explained to the world until Christ arrived.  
Death is bitter, but our Lord is the sweet honey.  
[The riddle] stood illumined, for the Sweet One had gone forth from  
the bitter.

The devour is death who consumed all generations,  
and from him Christ went forth, Bread for the world to eat.

(*HS III 316,16–317,5*); from the homily “On the Mysteries, Symbols  
and Figures of Christ” (From an unpublished translation by S. P. Brock as  
part of *M. St. in Syriac Studies*, Oxford, 1991–’92).

‘As Moses’, he said, ‘lifted up the serpent in the wilderness for  
the people,  
so shall I be lifted up for the whole world to behold me.’  
(HS I 57,6–9)<sup>101</sup>

It was to this type of fuller revelation in Christ that all the earlier glimpses and signs looked forward. It is in this respect Jacob finds prophecies as betrothed girls (*HCJ III 27–308; HS III 325,3–6*) looking forward to their unveiling in the marriage feast of the Son. Jacob tells how all episodes of the Scriptures or even every page and line of them depict Christ. Hence, our author asks, ‘where is a reading of the scripture that does not proclaim the name of the Son of God?’ (*QHC I 28*). Again he asks:

In all those books, where is the Son of God not depicted?  
Seek, if you canst, what cannot be found at all!  
There is no page in that the Son’s figure does not overshadow,  
Nor any reading which speaks not of Him plainly.  
Every letter in the Scriptures is *written* in the name of the Lord,  
and in every saying, it is He that is to be richly expounded.  
In every time, He was spoken of, that He was coming to the  
earth,  
even till He came and His heralds rested from the good  
tidings.

(HS III 208,14–209,2)<sup>102</sup>

In order to understand the hidden mystery of the Son one needs proper discerning perception. An attempt at such a perception is made by Jacob in his festal homilies through his homiletical exegesis.

The concern of Jacob of Serugh in his festal homilies is to bring out the underlying divine purpose in the various episodes heralding the different phases of the divine economy of salvation. By seeking the divine purpose one can attain the hidden

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<sup>101</sup> Homily “On the Serpent of Bronze” (*HS I 49–67*, no.4); ET from HTM, *TV 6* (1990): 47–8.

<sup>102</sup> Homily “On Our Lord and Jacob” (*HS III 208–223*, no. 75); ET from HTM, *TV 4.4* (1993): 52.

understanding that enables him to approach the hidden mysteries profitably (*SHF IV 3/FH XI 3*). It is the way of discerning vision of hidden realities that enables one to conform to the divine order for attaining immortal life. It is important to remember here that it was Adam/humanity's deviation from the divine order that endangered the goal of humanity. Yet the divine mercy offered the road of redemption and salvation. It was on this road that the righteous people of the OT travelled. It is to this sort of righteousness that all are called and are guided by the divine mercy through the help of the Spirit. Those who look on the events with the help of the divine teaching can attain the hidden understanding of the guiding teaching of salvation (*SHF IV 1/FH XI 1*).

Jacob clearly sees the actualization of the mysteries, types and symbols as well as the prophetic words of the Old Testament in the various staging posts of the incarnate Son. It is a discerning vision in the light of the divine teaching. Here it might be remembered that the tree of knowledge was also a divine teaching by means of which Adam was asked to discern. Jacob finds all previous depictions and teachings regarding the virgin-birth and the redeeming road of the Saviour becoming actualized in Christ. Jacob gives emphasis to the deeper correspondence between the OT events and episodes and those of the incarnate life of Christ.<sup>103</sup> Thus in Christ all the signifying and the signified factors of the history of salvation, or for that matter, all types, mysteries and prophecies have become actualized. Hence, he stands as 'the Reality' or 'the Truth'. The activities of the incarnate Son proclaim and bring into effect what the mysteries proclaimed. Hence, Christ stands as the Sacrament of salvation.

## 2. The Splendour of Divine Self-abasement

The festal homilies of Jacob of Serugh are in a sense praises to the self-abasement of the Son and his journey on the road of humility to make Adam victorious. Through his typological exegesis and catechetical teachings he invites his hearers/readers to look into the

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<sup>103</sup> Cf. The section on 'The Salvific Activities of Christ and the Typological views of Jacob', in this chapter (section B,2,b).

mystery of Christ with a lucid eye of the soul (*b-‘aynā nabhirtā d-napšā*, *SHF V 1/FH XII 1*). Only to such a vision of the soul, full of faith, does the mystery of Christ become tangible and the splendour of the divine self-abasement perceivable.

In the Nativity the Son is seen dwelling in Mary while not departing from his Father. The Son remains hidden and revealed at the same time. Jacob argues on the basis of the scriptural revelation that heaven is the throne of the Son and earth his footstool (Is 66:1), so whither has he migrated (*SMS 726,8/FH I 132*). Jacob describes the mystery of the Son’s Incarnation:

He manifested himself from the Father and Mary was  
illuminated from His fullness.  
The Flash of Light descended but did not cut off His root  
from His emissary.  
He dwelt in the pure woman while remaining glorious in the  
bosom of His Father.  
He had entered into the womb but heaven was filled with His  
glory.  
He shone forth in the young girl but his light was bright over  
the chariot.  
In the womb is His conception but the wings of the watchers  
are set on fire from Him.  
He is totally in Mary and He is fully in His Father and He is in  
all.  
He stirs the Cherubim, He is clothed with the members [of the  
body], He is found with all.

(*SMS 740,12–741,8/FH I 431–148*)

The Son has a second birth from the Daughter of David. ‘The Fashioner of babes’ became born corporeally as an overflow of divine mercy on Adam (*SMS 759,9/FH I 828*; *SMS 725,15–18/FH I 117–120*).

At the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple by the power of the Spirit Simeon perceives the mystery of the Son, especially his road of suffering. As a model of discerning perception Simeon shines out. Simeon’s witnessing role, his supplication to the Son in swaddling clothes, his spiritual perception, Mary’s discerning questions and Simeon’s reply, bring into light the deeper mystery of the Son. Baptismal waters were made powerful for the purification of the bride. The ‘white garment’ (*benwārā*) and the ‘armour’ (*zaynā*)

were provided for the fight. Christ, God-man, by his epiphany and baptism fulfils the Law and renders perfection. By the divine self-abasement divinity made himself tangible to humanity and Christ was recognized as Messiah. He renders perfection to the imperfect humanity on his way. The splendour of his holiness is mixed with the waters to clothe humanity from the water as if buried in 'the tomb of water' (*qabrā d-mayyā*) and resurrected from there to 'the new world'. He makes humanity enter into 'the furnace of water' (*kūrā d-mayyā*) to recast it (*HS I 181,6–13/FH VI 281–288*).

During the Transfiguration Christ made his disciples experience the sacramental power of his incarnate road and strengthened them. All the miracles he did are signs (*'ātmātā*) of his redeeming will and power. Thus he showed his splendour and glory to his disciples so as to reveal his mediatory role in revelation and in the reconciliation of humanity with the Father. Through forty days' fasting Christ brought into actualization all the OT types of punitive, purificatory and sanctification rites connected with the number four and forty. This number 'four' always echoes the four elements that have gone into the formation of Adam/humanity in the creation. These four got disintegrated through corruption and needed reintegration. In forty days Christ made perfect reparation for the fall that was due to Adam's choosing of forbidden nourishment. In forty days the four elements were purified and made perfect so as not to become any more susceptible to the aberrations due to the alien desires that would break the yoke of harmony which was designed to lead to the haven of immortality (*SHF III 30,31/FH IX 30,31*). Through his combat Christ exposed the deceitfulness of the evil one and made Adam victorious.

At his entry into Jerusalem the sacramental power of our Lord's incarnate path is made explicit. All respect due to his divinity is given to him even in his humble state which is a stumbling block to many. The power and truthfulness of his words that even stones would praise, became clearly manifested at his crucifixion. Christ, as the heir to Adam, justified him on the Friday of the Passion by accepting all kinds of chastisements. As Kingship and Priesthood belong to him, Christ accepts them. Thus he suffered for the sins of Adam and redeemed Kingship and Priesthood that were debased and had decayed in the house of Adam.

At his resurrection Christ stripped off the old order by his death (*HS II 613,17–18/FH XIII 54–55*). The garments of the dead he left in Sheol and clothed himself in the garments of glory (*HS II 620,11–14/FH XIII 189–192*). The Lion's Whelp by his might destroyed the old order of slavery to death and captivity in Sheol. Through his resurrection he provided new existence to all generations (*HS II 611,12–13/FH XIII 9–10*) by reconciling humanity with the Father. Ascension is the great entry of the High Priest into the Holy of holies with his sacrifice of reconciliation.

### **3. Christ, the Mediator and the High Priest of the whole Creation**

Christ re-established and perfected the debased status of Adam as the intermediary and bond between God and the creation by renewing the Priesthood of Adam. By his ascent to the abode of the Father Christ has re-established the bond in Adam between the Father and the creation through reconciliation. As the true High Priest, Christ ascends to the Holy of holies, to the abode of the heavenly Father. And so in Christ Adam himself and his status and functions were redeemed and perfected. The risen Lord stands as the single Mediator and the Reconciler between Adam and God. The old enmity from Eden has been removed and Adam has been admitted to the glory of the house of the Father. In Jacob's homilies the High Priestly role of Christ is seen in full spectrum starting with, Adam, the priest, the failure of the priesthood in Adam and in Israel, Christ's coming down as the High Priest in the form of a lamb to be offered, the Priesthood flowing into Christ, the true High Priest at Jordan and at Jerusalem, the self offering of Christ at Golgotha as High Priest and the Lamb. Finally the risen Lord ascends to his Father as the High Priest fulfilling his mediation and priestly office bringing about the perfect reconciliation of the creation with the Father:

The High Priest has entered into the holy of holies,  
with His own blood He will reconcile His Father with  
humanity.

He is the offering, the High Priest, and the libation too  
and He himself entered so that the whole creation might be  
pardoned through Him.

(*SMS 831,17–20/FH XVI 481–184*)

The divine mercy that sustains and leads the whole creation to the goal is a basic theological presupposition of Jacob's vision. With regard to Adam/humanity, it is explicit in the reconciliation process envisaged in the divine-human relationship that began with the divine image and likeness that was set to grow in the context of the free will of humanity. The divine image is at the same time a foundation as well as a dynamic force of transformation. The economy of divine mercy through Adam was to make the whole creation participate in the divine glory. This economy started with divine 'mixing' and 'mingling' in the creation which became most tangible and fully actualized in the incarnate Son, Christ.

Christ, God-man, is the emissary of the Father (*SHF I 8/FH IV 8; SMS 725,19/FH I 121*) for the salvation of Adam/humanity and he remains the Mediator and reconciler of Adam/humanity before the Father. The various aspects of the reconciliation through this incarnate Son are depicted by means of different images because the reconciling activity involves all types of deeds needed for the rectification of humanity, such as, liberation, purification, sanctification, renewal, rebuilding, reconciliation, etc.

In Christ is the actualization of the engagement between the divine mercy and humanity. Therefore, he stands as the source and mediator of the divine power that transforms humanity and the whole creation. What has been failed in Adam, both in his own person and in his responsibilities, as the bond in the created world, has been made victorious in the incarnate Son. The festal homilies explain, especially through figures and symbols, the mediatory and reconciliatory role of Christ, the High Priest. The risen Lord exercises his High-Priestly and mediatory roles in a meta-historical realm where all chronological events in relation with him can assume the mode of an 'eternal-now'. The saving power of Christ is discerningly perceived to be effective in the liturgical commemorations and feasts which re-enact the whole history of salvation in a sacramental way.

Jacob of Serugh makes ample use of figurative and symbolic modes of the biblical speech on creation, fall and redemption. The basic factor is the salvific manifestation of divine mercy that was progressing through the Old Testament history which was leading to Christ, the sign and sacrament of salvation. Through the mystery of Christ, implied in the Old Testament types which became actualized on the road of the incarnate Son, Jacob explains the

whole economy of salvation in a synchronic and coherent manner. In this way Jacob's homiletical expositions and catechetical teachings depict his originality and contributions. Biblical narratives inspire as well as enhance Jacob's mode of theological reflection and amply supply theological vocabulary.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Through the search into the biblical roots of Mar Jacob we have described a prominent sector of his horizon, i.e., his biblically oriented theological approach. This mode of adherence to the biblical vision in Mar Jacob has two main aspects. The primary one is that of his adherence and submission to the divine teachings revealed in the Scriptures. The second aspect is his adoption of the symbolic thought patterns through his discerning vision, and even picking up the vocabulary from the Scriptures in order to employ them as theological expressions. In fact this type of strong adherence to the Scriptures in Jacob is also due to the strong influence of the early Syriac Christian tradition which will be treated in the next chapter. But based on his scriptural moorings our author provides his own theological integration of the basic teachings of the Scriptures on the salvation in Christ.

Jacob makes symbolic abstractions in conformity with the biblical narratives in order to set the foundations of his theological views. He deduces the need of redemption and salvation from the fall of Adam/humanity and the subsequent deviation of humankind from God, as depicted in various ways in the Old Testament. The pattern of redemption and salvation is also described by Jacob from the biblical view of the economy of the descending divine mercy for salvation. The abundant, abiding and immutable divine mercy, which is the source of salvation, grew fervent even on the fallen Adam/humanity in order to accomplish the purpose in creation. The dynamics of the divine economy in the context of human free will is explained by the fact of divine pedagogy rendered through the divine self-manifestation which assumes its culmination on the road of the incarnate Son. Mar Jacob enables the readers/hearers of his homilies to find the incarnate Son as the key to the understanding of the source and consummation of salvation. He brings in this fact through his typological views which propose an integral view. The underlying principle or the truth of this integration, according to him, is the

divine descent and 'becoming' for the salvation. Jacob finds the whole of Scriptures as the story of divine descent. In Christ that descent became fully manifested and tangible with various salvific deeds and their fruits. All those descending acts of God became actualized in Christ and on his road of salvation. Thus in the synchronic vision of Jacob his theological anthropology, Christology and Soteriology are inherently related. The very person of Christ and his deeds are full of significance due to the divine-human encounter that got actualized in the Incarnation. The titles of Christ the Saviour, the imageries of the 'becoming of the Son' and his saving acts explain the divine descent and 'becoming' in an analogical manner. Due to the fruitful actualization of salvation in Christ, the risen Lord stands as the Sacrament of salvation to the whole world.



## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

# **EARLY SYRIAC CHRISTIAN TRADITION AND MAR JACOB'S VISION OF SALVATION IN CHRIST**

Some aspects of the vision of Jacob of Serugh on the economy of salvation are explained in chapter three. Chapter four describes how deeply the biblical symbols, imageries and thought patterns influenced the evolution of the theological vision of Mar Jacob. The remaining factor is an examination of Jacob's indebtedness to the legacy of the early Syriac Christian tradition, one of the inspirational factors of our author, with regard to the formation and development of his vision. Hence, some of the themes that are already treated in chapters two, three and four are now reviewed in the context of major Syriac writings and writers of early Syriac Christianity. The aim is not to make an exhaustive exposition of Jacob's dependence on the early Syriac Christian tradition. The attempt is to bring out, through a synthesis of the views on the economy of salvation in Christ, Mar Jacob's close links with the early Syriac Christian views, both in conception and in the development of his vision.

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The theological vision of Jacob of Serugh is not an isolated development, especially when his thought patterns and theological expressions are taken into consideration.<sup>1</sup> Within the early Syriac

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Beggiani, *Syriac Theology* (with special reference to the Maronite Tradition), for a general survey on early Syriac theological

tradition we find a few prominent theological orientations shared by almost all authors of early Syriac Christian literature.<sup>2</sup> In fact the theological views of early Syriac Christianity were ecclesial and communitarian reflections on faith based on the scriptural revelations. Aphrahat confesses this fact:

I have written these things as I have understood. But if some one shall read these discourses, and find words that do not agree with his way of thinking, it is not proper for him to mock them, because whatever is written in these chapters was written neither according to the thinking of one man, nor for the persuasion of one reader; but according to the thinking of all the Church, and for the persuasion of all the faithful. If he shall read and hear with persuasion, it is excellent; and if not, I have to say that I wrote for those with persuasion and not for mockers.

(*Dem XXII 26*)<sup>3</sup>

Aphrahat testifies to the biblical foundations of his teaching: "... And this one whom I have called Christ (Messiah), the Stone. It was not out of my own thinking I spoke, but the prophets had called him the Stone, and I shall show to you" (*Dem I 2*).<sup>4</sup> Aphrahat calls himself, 'a disciple of the Holy Scriptures' (*Dem XXII 26*). The deeper scriptural moorings of early Syriac thought patterns are explicit in Ephrem through the scriptural types and natural symbols he weaves into his theological expositions. It is an echo of his basic approach to the Scriptures. Regarding the

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thought patterns and their characteristic features as inherited by various authors.

<sup>2</sup> The mentioned theological orientations and the group of early Syriac Christian Literature are considered to be 'a third component of Christian tradition' called Syriac Orient together with the Greek East and the Latin West as S. P. Brock reasonably affirms. Cf. Brock, *Syriac Fathers on Prayer*, xxxiii; "Eusebius, and Syriac Christianity," 212; Drijvers, "Early Syriac Christianity," 159. As validly pointed out by Drijvers the history of this third branch of Christian cultural tradition is not yet basically written.

<sup>3</sup> *PS I* 1044–45.

<sup>4</sup> *PS I* 8.

Scriptures Ephrem admonishes all to attain the inner spiritual meaning for which the historical interpretation is an important stepping stone. The 'spiritual meaning' of the Word is an infinite realm where only the eye of faith can operate, and that a single exegete cannot exhaust that realm. Hence, Ephrem compares the reading of the Scriptures as a thirsty person's drinking and rejoicing from an inexhaustible fountain; as the 'Tree of Life' that provides all sorts of fruits from all its sides; as the 'Rock that was struck in the wilderness' which gives spiritual drink to all on its sides.<sup>5</sup> On similar lines Jacob of Serugh also expresses his views on handling the Scriptures to attain spiritual/theological understanding.<sup>6</sup> According to Jacob the Scriptures are 'precious stones' and their reading is 'digging a golden mount beyond measure', an 'unguarded treasure', where from one can carry as much as one can (*HS III 414,15–415,9*). Jacob explains the enlightening power of the Scriptures:

The Scripture enlightens the eye of the soul with its readings;  
 Read it, O man of discernment, and enabled by love, be filled  
     with light there from.  
 From the divine readings a sun dawns  
 on minds that encounter them with discretion.  
 God has placed the Scriptures in the world like lamps of great  
     light  
 in the midst of darkness, for the world to be enlightened by  
     them;  
 The soul of him that has love receives light from the readings,  
 and he walks through their realms as in a broad daylight.  
 Approach Scriptures with love and behold its fairness,  
 for it will not let thee see its face except for the sake of love.  
 Without love, though thou read, thou wilt not profit,

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *HPar 5:2*; *HFid 67:8*; *CEC I 18–19, VII 22*; for Ephrem's views on the scriptures and exegesis see Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 46–51.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *HS III 414,9–415,9* (Homily "On 'the Kingdom of Heaven is Like unto Leaven,'" *HS III 411–424*); *HS IV 282, 4–15* ("The Second Homily on Elissaeus and on the King of Moab," *HS IV 282–296*).

because love is the door whereby one enters in unto the meaning.

(*HS IV 282,4–15*)<sup>7</sup>

Mar Jacob himself affirms his high esteem and indebtedness to Ephrem in his *memrā* on Ephrem.<sup>8</sup> Jacob finds a new Moses in Ephrem<sup>9</sup> who taught all to sing praises in response to the marvelous deeds of God. In this respect Jacob calls Ephrem a *Nisan* (April)<sup>10</sup> of the blossoms of praises that came into effect. This indebtedness of Jacob of Serugh can be briefly demonstrated by examining a few prominent theological thought patterns and theological expressions that are clearly inherited by Jacob on the one hand and somehow enriched by his own insightful contributions on the other.

Our search for Mar Jacob's deeper links with the early Syriac Christian writers has certain limits mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, due to the fact that among the early Syriac authors many theological views are considered as communal patrimony which are easily inherited without providing much evidence on their more precise origins. In certain cases those views can be traced back to Rabbinical and more ancient Jewish traditions.<sup>11</sup> But in several cases the thought patterns and writings of Ephrem stand as normative and as the inspirational foundation for the rest of early Syriac Christianity as well as for later writers. Secondly, due to the symbolic mode of theological reflection based on scriptural images and symbols, it is difficult to ascertain the exact course of theological developments from one author to another. Moreover, due to the profound symbolic and analogical approaches of early

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<sup>7</sup> "The Second Homily on Elissaeus and on the King of Moab" (*HS IV 282–296*, no. 117); *tr.* from HTM, *TV 1* (1989): 55 (ls. 1–12).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *PO 47, Metrical Homily on Mar Ephrem*, ed. J. P. Amar; see a very relevant passage translated by S. P. Brock quoted with additional references connected to footnote, n. 6 in chapter one.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *PO 47, Metrical Homily on Mar Ephrem*, ed. J. P. Amar, pp. 37, 45, 49, 53.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *PO 47, Metrical Homily on Mar Ephrem*, ed. J. P. Amar, p. 63.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis*, 215–24.

Syriac theology, there is much flexibility and room for imaginative exposition of theological themes. Hence, the early Syriac authors share the common patrimony, and yet develop their particular expositions according to the exigencies of their contexts which might be anti-heretical, polemical, catechetical, pastoral or exhortatory. It is to be noted that in his homilies, both verse and prose, Jacob of Serugh is solicitous of catechetical and pastoral concerns rather than polemical questions.

Considering the above mentioned limitations in general and the vast number of symbolic aspects that could be synchronically computed into each symbolic-typological frame-work of the theological thought patterns of early Syriac theology, we restrict ourselves to three main theological thought patterns that are fundamental to early Syriac theology. They are, (1) Adam-Christ complementarity and the history of salvation, (2) the Road of salvation, and (3) the Christocentric sacramental world-vision. These three theological themes, among other factors, stand as foundations to the early Syriac vision of the economy of salvation in Christ. Rather than embarking on a comprehensive exposition, the proposal is only to highlight Jacob's own indebtedness to the tradition behind him as well as his notable contributions to the common tradition in some aspects, although not as substantial as that of Ephrem.

## **B. ADAM-CHRIST COMPLEMENTARITY AND THE HISTORY OF SALVATION**

In order to appreciate the discussion on Adam-Christ complementarity a few theological themes that were given special emphasis in early Syriac theology have to be brought into focus. The solidarity of humanity in the terrestrial Adam and in Christ, the celestial Adam or the Second Adam, has to be borne in mind (*SHF III 5,6/FH IX 5,6*). It is from this vision that the perfection rendered to humanity by Christ takes on its wider significance and concrete efficacy. Adam had been created in the model of the uncreated Only-Begotten. Among the created beings Adam is older in conception and younger in birth. This view on the creation of

Adam is prominent in Syriac Christianity<sup>12</sup> possibly by a carrying over from Rabbinical traditions.<sup>13</sup> In this respect the tradition of the six thousand years' duration of the world, based on the six days of creation, is worth mentioning. This is based on Psalm 90:4, telling that a thousand years are like a day that has passed in the sight of the Lord. Aphrahat states that the world has been established in six days and it has six thousand years in order to reach the Sabbath of God (*Dem II 14*).<sup>14</sup> Jacob of Serugh mentions how the created light and the natural turn of day and night functions properly as they are destined to run the stipulated time span (*HS III 73,9–76,19*). Christ comes at the end of times and redeems the image in Adam that has fallen into mud and remained there six thousand years (*SHF V 9/FH XII 9; Ep XIX 110,29; XXI 142,16*).<sup>15</sup>

Aphrahat states that Adam was conceived in the mind of God first and then the whole material world was created so as to arrange a marriage feast for Adam. As soon as the material world has been prepared, Adam, who was old in conception, came into birth as the youngest. Hence, in the material world Adam stands as the first as well as the last (*Dem XXII 7*).<sup>16</sup> Ephrem too speaks of Adam's pre-existence in the mind of God, unlike other creatures, before his birth in the world. Thus Adam is oldest in conception and youngest in birth (*CNis 38:8–9; HEcc 47:9–11*). Ephrem is much dependent on the Pauline Col 1:15–20 and the Johannine Prologue in handling Gen 1:26.<sup>17</sup> Jacob is quite clear on how Adam had been honoured with the resemblance of the future corporeality of the celestial Adam conferred on him at the creation. The Father

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Aphrahat, *Dem XVII 7*; Ephrem, *CNis 37:8ff; HEcc 47:11*; see also Pierre, *Aphraate le Sage Persan*, Tome II, 736 (n. 15); Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis*, 48–51.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis*, 48 (ns. 7 & 8).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *PS I 77*; see also Pierre, *Aphraate le Sage Persan*, I, 254 (n. 47).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Jansma, "L'Hexaméron de Jacques de Saroug," 26 (n. 88 for an explanation on the wider belief in this concept of the six thousand years of the world), 277.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *PS I 797*; see also Pierre, *Aphraate le Sage Persan*, II, 736 (n. 15).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jn 1:1–18; Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis*, 47.

contemplated on the incarnate Son and moulded Adam in that resemblance (*QHC I 181–188*).

The very creation of Adam in the image of God is for Ephrem a mysterious revelation of God's First-born who is active in creation and redemption. What God has begun in the creation of man out of his mercy (*HFid 67:19–21*) would reach perfection by justification through the same mercy that forms Adam a second time (*CNis 69:1–7*). The bringing into existence of Adam by the divine mercy is a foreshadowing of the redemptive salvation offered to Adam through the Son who is the incarnate mercy of the Divinity. T. Kronholm explains this typology clearly:

Accordingly, the creative divine love bringing Adam/man into existence is identical with the divine mercy redeeming fallen mankind, and the day on which Adam/man received shape and life is identical with the day on which Christ pre-existently dressed himself in the destroyed image as his crucified Saviour. The Friday of creation is likewise *typos* of the Friday of redemption, as the sixth day in the Beginning is symbolically related to the sixth and the concluding millennium of humanity.<sup>18</sup>

In the vision of Jacob of Serugh Adam-Christ complementarity works mainly at two levels. On the one hand, Christ renders perfection to Adam/humanity in whatever Adam had been destined to attain, yet failed to attain due to his wrong conduct (*SHF III 5–12/FH IX 5–12; SHF V 5,6/FH XII 5,6*). On the other hand, the perfection conferred on humanity by Christ has a more profound and extensive nature that fulfills all divine promises in the creation of the world (*QHC I 181–206*). This divine-human relationship through Christ, as envisaged by early Syriac Christian writers, has both aspects of human becoming and divine transcendence. Firstly, the above mentioned aspects of the perfection rendered by Christ are of special emphasis in the discussion on the primordial and eschatological Paradise in early

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis*, 51.

Syriac Christian writers especially in Ephrem.<sup>19</sup> The image of God in man is not yet a realized reality, but something in the process of realization. It is the human freedom (*hērūtā*) that sets the human counterpart of the mode of progress in salvation history. It was the wrong exercise of this freedom that caused the expulsion of Adam/humanity from the primordial Paradise. In the light of Ephrem's views S. P. Brock explains that the salvific activities of Christ do not bring back the expelled Adam/humanity merely to the primordial Paradise but in reality to the eschatological Paradise. Both primordial and eschatological Paradise belong to sacred time and space.<sup>20</sup> The expulsion of Adam from Paradise represents the transition from sacred to historical time and space where the divine pedagogy provides the teaching. Secondly, due to the sacramental presence of the risen Lord, humanity's tangibility to the ultimate goal remains a meta-historical reality transcending all boundaries of chronological time and space. In this respect the emphasis given by early Syriac writers to Christ's death and his journey to Sheol in order to uproot it and redeem the older generations, assumes greater importance. This prominent theme describes the efficacy of salvation in Christ to all the past, present and future members of humankind. The risen Christ stands as the perennial Saviour of the fallen Adam/humanity.

### 1. The Self-revealing God and Humanity

The early Syriac Christian theological vision affirms primarily the essential difference between the Creator and the created world. Hence, Aphrahat speaks about the human inability to deal with the divine realities. Basically all are children of Adam and human perception is limited. Therefore, any wrong attempt to penetrate into the divine realities would be an erroneous and stumbling way which would prove harmful. Aphrahat puts it plainly:

We are from Adam and hence we perceive very little. We know only this, that God is only one, and his Messiah is only one,

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 31–4, 100–1, 150–3 for a general pattern of this theological theme.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 32.

and one is the Spirit and single is faith, and one is baptism. More than this it is better for us not to speak. And if we wish to speak we will be incompetent; and if we pry into [him] we would be disabled. Many are on wrong ways, having left the path and proceeded on the erroneous way of stumbling blocks. They conceived and meditated discourses of destruction. They prophesied falsehood and deserted God. As they wanted to understand they did not have discernment; [their] minds became darkened, they groped in thick darkness.

(*Dem XXII 60*)<sup>21</sup>

But Aphrahat finds the Scriptures to be an inexhaustible source of the wisdom of God (*Dem X 8*). Hence, he instructs all to read ‘those books which are read in the Church of God’ (*Dem X 9*). They are meant for meditation and the comprehension of the force of the depth of the words (*Dem XXII 26*).

Ephrem’s approaches to divine realities and theological reflections are founded on his deeper consciousness of the essential difference between God and the created world. He demonstrates this by speaking of the ‘chasm’ (*pehṭā*)<sup>22</sup> between the Creator and the creatures. It is described by S. P. Brock as an affirmation of the ‘ontological chasm’ between God and the creatures.<sup>23</sup> No creature can reach its Maker (*HFid 30:2*). The human intellect, being created, cannot fully comprehend God, the Creator, the Incomprehensible One, or define God, the Undefinable One.<sup>24</sup> Hence, Ephrem finds theological definitions as a sort of setting boundaries to the unbound One.<sup>25</sup> As S. P. Brock explains, in the theological view of Ephrem such attempts to provide ‘definitions’ are potentially dangerous and even blasphemous, and something

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<sup>21</sup> *PS* II 123.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *HFid* 15:5; 69:11; 44:4; *PrRef* pp. 96:6, 12, 31–32, 44–45, 47 and pp. 97:9–10; *HPar* 1:12–3; *LPar* 4, 14, 21; *CNis* 10:7–8; 33:9; 55:5; 56:13; cf. Koonammakkal, T. “Ephrem’s Imagery of chasm,” *OCA* 256 (1998): 175–83.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 24–7.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *HFid* 50:1–4; 65:12; *CH* 53:1.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. De Halleux, *Mar Éphrem Théologien*, 42–7.

which amounts to outrageous steps against God's being.<sup>26</sup> Ephrem states it clearly:

Father, Son and Holy Spirit can be reached only by their  
 names;  
 do not look further, to their persons (*qnome*),  
 just meditate on their names.  
 If you investigate the person of God, you will perish,  
 but if you believe in the name, you will live.  
 Let the name of the Father be a boundary to you,  
 do not cross it and investigate His nature;  
 Let the name of the Son be a wall to you,  
 do not cross it and investigate His birth from the Father;  
 let the name of the Spirit be a fence for you,  
 do not enter inside for the purpose of prying into Him.

(*Memra on Faith* 4:129–40)<sup>27</sup>

For Ephrem Nature (*kyānā*) and the Scripture (*ktābā*) are two witnesses for the knowledge of God. Jacob of Serugh follows this thought pattern. It becomes evident in his homily on Nativity where Mary argues out to Joseph the truthfulness of her virgin state from the testimonies of both Nature and the Scriptures (*SMS* 750,10–751,5/*FH* I 639–656). The word of the Lord on the Sunday of Hosannas, that the stones would cry, was proven truthful at Golgotha (*HS* I 454,12–455,15/*FH* X 197–220). Created Nature praises its Lord because there are hidden mysteries between him and his creatures (*HS* I 455,16–458,8/*FH* X 221–274).

Investigation (*'uqqābā*) into divine realities is in fact an attempt to contain the Uncontainable One, to limit the Limitless One. Some of these principal affirmations and convictions of Ephrem are seen well implied and often stand as normative for Jacob of Serugh in the initial prayers and confessions in many of his homilies.<sup>28</sup> For humanity Divinity is incomprehensible and

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 23–4.

<sup>27</sup> *tr.* Ibid., 63.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *SMS* 722,12–723,3/*FH* I 49–62; *HS* I 445,14–446,1/*FH* X 11–16; *SMS* 809,17–18; 810,3–6/*FH* XVI 27–28, 33–36.

unapproachable. But this difficulty is surpassed from the side of Divinity on account of divine mercy. Mar Jacob writes, “Your love compelled you on account of us to come to our place” (*SMS 791,6/FH III 17*). Divinity came down to the level of humanity to manifest itself in creation, redemption and resurrection. For Jacob of Serugh the delivering of the homilies itself is a sacramental activity in which the divine assistance is a primary requisite. Hence, he prays at the beginning of a homily:

Pour mercy upon my lips [enabling them] to speak about you,  
and let my tongue put on the Spirit and let it sing about your  
majesty.

I would speak about you, my Lord, not that I will comprehend  
you, because you are infinite,  
but let me speak about you, how exalted you are above the  
preachers.

The mouth and the ear shall be bedewed by you but you  
remain as you are,  
and while I am speaking of you, remain with me, for you are  
ineffable.

Within the [bounds of] utterance let the homily depict you  
while I am speaking,

but once I have spoken, you are beyond it and within it.

My Lord, let the exaltedness of your story descend to me, until  
I arrive [to it];

and when I have cleaved to it, let it rise up to its summit and  
take its position.

Either descend, O my Lord, to my word and let it speak about  
you,

or raise it up that it may reach out towards you and sing to  
you.

Lower yourself to the homily so that it may speak about you  
on account of your love,

and let the word be exalted with you as a result of you until it  
has spoken of you.

(*HS II 348,1–14/FH VIII 9–22*)

The basic affirmations of the Syriac tradition dictate proper human orientations towards divine revelations and the proper methodology for theological inquiries. These orientations do not altogether deny intellectual inquiry, but define and limit it to its

proper field and sector.<sup>29</sup> In other words, it amounts to saying that God out of his mercy has crossed over from the other side of the ‘ontological chasm’ to the side of humanity to reveal certain matters for the salvation of humanity. Hence, there are revealed matters (*galyātā*)<sup>30</sup> and they are subject to theological inquiry. But to prolong such inquiries beyond the limits of the revealed realities, as if to cross the ‘ontological chasm’ from the side of humanity by human powers alone, is folly and it amounts to a sort of arrogant and daring investigation (*‘uqqābā*) into divine matters, which is doomed to fail, as Aphrahat states in the paragraph quoted earlier (cf. n. 21). Mar Jacob also affirms the same in one of his homilies on the Nativity:

One glorified himself to investigate your birth, and he became  
a mockery,  
because he imagined that he knew, yet he was not aware that  
he did not know you.  
There is the ‘wise’ person who became puffed up with [book-]  
learning  
so as to speak of you, my Lord, but he was driven off because  
he assaulted you.<sup>31</sup>  
There is the ‘ignorant’ who while not knowing how to speak,  
loves you and becomes greater than the ‘wise’ throughout his  
way.  
There is a ‘knowledge’ that has ascended to see how exalted  
you are  
but it burst, fell, and destroyed itself in the great chasm.  
(SMS 792,16–793,2/FH III 47–54)

A basic factor in the Syriac approach to divine matters is the affirmation of an essentially mysterious nature of the Divinity with

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. *HFid* 8:9; 28:3–4.

<sup>30</sup> For a systematic exposition of Ephrem’s understanding and employment of the technical terms *kasūtā* and *galyūtā* [esp. the plural usage, ‘revealed matters’ of *galyātā*], in their objective and subjective planes, see Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 42–5.

<sup>31</sup> Ephrem speaks of the destructive aspects of inquiry into divine matters; cf. *HFid* 84:2; *HVir* 31:1.

respect to humanity. But God out of his mercy has revealed himself to humanity in creation which is destined to attain its perfection through the same divine plan. In Jacob of Serugh three main factors are well affirmed regarding what is revealed about the Divinity. Firstly, whatever is revealed is out of divine mercy, seeing that humanity by itself has no power to approach the Divinity. Hence, all revelations are divine self-manifestations through channels that are perceptible to humanity. Jacob affirms that the Son emptied himself and came to the world of becoming so that he might become comparable to diverse likenesses by which humanity attains the proper understanding (*HS V 163,6–9*). These divine revelations progressively reach their culmination in the Incarnate Son.<sup>32</sup> Divine mercy comes to all levels of Adam/humanity to save all (*HS III 325,14–327,12*).<sup>33</sup> Only a response in love can understand this descending love of God (*SMS 794,12–13/FH III 85–86*). Secondly, what the Divinity has revealed regarding his nature (so to say, the divine economy for humanity) is for the profit (*yutrānā*) of humanity, precisely to give the teaching (*yulpānā*) to attain salvation (*SHF IV 1/FH XI 1*). Hence, the revealed truths are not at all meant to track down the Divinity for conquering and defining, but to enter into a loving relationship. Thirdly, in order to draw profit from the revealed truths a proper response, in the same coin as the revelations which came about out of the divine mercy, is necessary. Precisely, as the Divinity revealed itself out of loving kindness (*rahmē*), only a corresponding loving acceptance of the divine truths with love and faith is the proper response. The understanding with love and the vision through ‘the eye of faith’ stirs one’s power of discernment (*puršānā*) for the proper Christian practice (*SHF V 1/FH XII 1*). Divine revelations through Nature and Scriptures find their culmination and fulfilment in Christ and

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Jacob of Serugh: *SMS 750,10–751,3/FH I 639–654*; *SMS 794,18–796,17/FH III 91–130*; *SMS 797,18–798,11/FH 151–164*; *SMS 800,3–10/FH III 199–206*; *HS III 287,1–16* (“On the Veil on Moses’ Face”); Ephrem: *CN̄s 13*; see also Beggiani, *Syriac Theology*, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *HS III 321–334*, “Why Our Lord Abode upon the Earth for Thirty Years,” ET from HTM, *TV 4* (1990): 40–2.

in him one has to recognize the Divinity by passing from the revealed to the hidden reality, from his humanity to his divinity.

The pre-existence and the equality of the Son with his Father is a factor well emphasized in the early Syriac writers, especially in Ephrem, against Arians and Marcionites. It stands quite central to the teaching of the unity of the God of creation and the God of redemption as well as to the vision of the unity of the salvific plan. It is the love of the Father that generates the Son, and not any necessity (*HFid 6:1*). This love makes for multiplicity and thus the Father is the 'Father of many' (*HFid 52:1*). Ephrem brings out the unity and equality among the persons of the triune God both with respect to their being and to their various functions. According to Ephrem the same will exists in the persons of the Trinity but they have various functions and thus their different names justify the same (*SdF 2:601 ff; HFid 77:21*). This trinitarian unity is modelled analogically on Sun/Fire where light and warmth are distinct functions (*HFid 40; 73*) in the same unity. Another analogy in this respect is the Olive that gives water, milk and oil (*HFid 65:7*). Ephrem has a few symbolic theological expressions to demonstrate the economic aspects of the Father and the Son. The Father-Son relationship is explained with the 'Root-Fruit' analogy (*HFid 13:9*). The Son is the Living-Fruit of the invisible Father (*HEcc 13:22; HFid 60:7*) and the Hidden-Fruit of the Father to humanity (*HFid 55:1*). This 'Root-Fruit' analogy is spoken of sometimes as 'Tree-Fruit' with its sweetness (*HFid 77:12-19*). These imageries are not purely ontological, but analogical descriptions of various aspects of the road of revelation. The Father gives totally without reserve to his Son and loves him totally (*SdF 2:25 ff*). Christ is the Tree of Life, the Blessed Tree (*HVir 8:5*). Tree is set against the Tree and fruit against the Fruit (Gen 2:17 >< *HVir 8:1*) showing complementarity of Christ to the fallen Adam.

Ephrem describes the positive effects of the Incarnation with some symbols. Becoming human, or being clothed in humanity, is a choice of the omniscient Father to reveal himself through the Son. It is an act of condescending humiliation and self-abasement on the part of the Son. He took up terrestrial form (*HEcc 20:9*) and made our body the tent of his invisibility (*HNat 3:7*). Incarnation is explained as the Father grafting his Fruit on our tree (*HNat 3:12*). It is the mixing of the sweet Fruit into our humanity (*HNat 3:17*). It is the Son's sealing himself on humanity (*HNat 1:99*). The two

natures are mixed wisely, like colours in the drawing of an icon (God-man) (*HNat* 8:2).

The festal homilies of Jacob resound with the power of the pre-existent Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God. While the external layer of the homilies directly deals with the salvific activities of Christ, the internal layer of the discourse is always infused with and suggestive of the eternal Son of God who in equality with the Father serves as the visible sign and power of the Father. Mar Jacob effects this type of vision through his salvation historical outlook which he brings in with allusions to the underlying typological and symbolic events in the scriptural episodes. Jacob often invites the reader/hearer to see the power and magnificence of the Son of God on the humble road (*'urbā d-makkikūtā*) of the saving acts of the Son.

Throughout the festal homilies Jacob of Serugh proposes a mode of viewing the divine realities for the profit of humanity. It is a mode of seeing with the eye of the soul (*SHF V 1/FH XII 1*) to attain a discerning understanding of the purpose/reason (*'eltā*) behind the various salvific activities of Christ (*SMS 775,18/FH II 15*). While Ephrem describes the profound union between the Father and the Son through natural images, Jacob of Serugh describes the effective functioning of that deeper relationship on the salvific road of Christ. Jacob is keen to demonstrate how the self-revealing God in Christ is at the same time visible and invisible, divine and human. In the Nativity 'the Begetter of Babes' was begotten corporeally, yet the seal of virginity remained intact. His birth is a wonder as it is divine and human. He is from the divine essence and from humanity; Son of the Majesty and of Mary. He is hidden in his divine being and revealed in his humanity (*SMS 760,3–761,3/FH I 843–864*). The Word is hidden as well as revealed. The Word is on the throne and in the womb of Mary, hidden with the Father but revealed to us on account of us.<sup>34</sup> He is the Son of God and Son of Mary, from the Most High and from below. He is incomprehensible. None is able to investigate or search into the exalted Word (*SMS 809,3–810,14/FH XVI 13–44*).

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. *HS* II 348,19–349,1/*FH* VIII 27–30; *HS* I 446,20–447,1/*FH* X 35–38; *SMS* 809,17–18/*FH* XVI 27–28.

The aged Simeon in the temple, inspired by the Spirit, is a model of discerning vision. He understood hidden matters and he made supplication to ‘the child in swaddling clothes’ in his hands as if to his Lord (*HS V 456,16–17; 458,7–8/FH V 189–190, 221–222*). To the discerning questions of Mary regarding the petition of Simeon to the child, Simeon himself answers declaring the eternal existence and equality of the Son with his Father (*HS V 459,11–461,7/FH V 245–282*). At the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor the glory and light that were hidden in our Lord were made manifest to the disciples in order to strengthen them (*HS II 354,11–355,19/FH VIII 147–176*). As Christ exercises the same powers as those of the Father, the judgement prohibiting Moses’ entry into the promised land (*Deut 4:21; 32:48–52; 34:4*) was repealed and he was allowed to enter into the promised land at Tabor (*HS II 360,2–11/FH VIII 265–274*).

## 2. The Eternal Mercy of God and the Divine Pedagogy

The divine pedagogy towards the attainment of salvation is the outcome of the divine economy. It is constituted of three factors, i.e., the goodness of God, the divine justice, and the free will of humanity. Free will has been conferred on humanity by the goodness of God. Any hindrance or compulsion on that free will is against divine justice. At the same time letting the free will go astray and thus destroy the human destiny as well as the divine plan is against the divine purpose as well. Ephrem explains the interplay of these three factors with an everyday example. According to him humanity stands as if on a weighing-balance, where the free will of man tilts with ups and downs in confrontation with the divine will. But God’s mercy and justice rectifies humanity that is on the balance with his loving kindness and chastising justice (*HFid 12:3–5; HEcc 5:8*). Upon this tripartite functioning the divine economy renders its pedagogy and provides its teachings to win all. Human free will is given the faculty to select the proper colours to perfect the drawing of the divine image within humanity. Ephrem makes this clear:

He, the Good One, behold, labours with these two;  
 He does not want either to constrain our freedom,  
 or on the other be slack that it might go neglected.  
 For, if he had constrained it, its power might be taken off;

and if he let it leave, he deprives its help.  
 He knows that if he constrains he deprives us.  
 He knows that if he slackens he destroys us.  
 He knows that if he teaches us he gains us.  
 He neither constrained nor slackened as the evil one.  
 He taught and instructed (us) as the Good One.

(*Epiph 10:14–15*)<sup>35</sup>

It is quite revealing to note that what Ephrem has put in aphorisms has been set by Jacob as a catechetical theme in an exegetical context:

God has given free will to the sons of men,  
 and with his free will, man acquires righteousness.  
 Free will likewise worketh also iniquity;  
 It is not hindered; were it hindered, it would not be free will.  
 And that the sons of men all possess free will equally,  
 Thou mayest understand from the teaching of the Son of God.

(*HS I 276,13–18*)

God has given equally to the sons of men  
 their organs, constitution, and free will.  
 He that desires to work iniquity has power to do so;  
 and him that worked righteousness, God does not hold back.  
 And that all the sons of men alike possess free will,  
 Thou mayest learn from the parable of the younger son.  
 The Son of God's instruction is filled with light:  
 Ye that be in darkness, be illumined by the Day of  
 Righteousness.  
 In the tale of the younger son that squandered all he had,  
 Thou must learn that free will is in all cases equal.

(*HS I 277,1–10*)<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> CSCO 186 (syri 82), p. 183; It is to be noted that the authorship of the Epiphany Hymns by Ephrem is debated. However, that cycle of hymns originate definitely from the Syriac theological reflection inspired by Ephrem.

<sup>36</sup> *HS I 267–299* (Homily “On the Son Who Squandered His Riches”); *tr.* from HTM, *TV* 20 (1994): 18–9.

Ephrem explains the function of human free will through the imageries of ‘colour’ and ‘image-drawing’. Hence, he writes:

See his kindness! Though he could have made us fair  
by force, without toil, he has toiled in every way  
that we might become fair by our own choice,  
ourselves the artists of our own fairness:  
using the colours our own freedom had gathered.  
If he himself had beautified us we had been but an image  
painted and beautified with the colours of another artist.

(*HFid 31:5*)<sup>37</sup>

In a sense Ephrem and Jacob of Serugh interpret the whole Paradise episode with a pedagogical key. The tree of knowledge was the source of true knowledge which Adam had to acquire at a ripe and proper time. Hence, the commandment was given as a help, as a protective fence, so that Adam should learn with discernment the infallible knowledge and attain immortal life from the Tree of Life.<sup>38</sup> Adam’s breach of the commandment was the result of his lack of discerning understanding. Mar Jacob points out that the divine mercy, which is by nature eternal and immutable, did not abandon ‘the fallen one’. Instead ‘the fallen one’ was sought for and assisted through the ‘voice’ of the Lord, in view of preparing them to make a supplication out of repentance and a confession of their wrong doing (*QHC III 691–806*). Ephrem insists that Adam/Eve did not take advantage of the divine provisions offered to them to repent. The divine Judge delayed his coming to Adam in order to give an opportunity to prepare a plea. Again the Lord ‘caused his silent footsteps to make a noise so that, at the noise, they might prepare themselves to make supplication before him who issued the sound’.<sup>39</sup> Even to this Adam failed to respond. Then the Merciful One went on to employ the sound of

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<sup>37</sup> CSCO 154 (syri 73), p. 106; *tr.* by Murray, “Theory of Symbolism,” 17.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Ephrem: *GEC* II 23 [CSCO 152 (syri 71), p. 39; ET by Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 214].

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Ephrem in Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 40; ET by Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 215.

his lips, just as he had used the sound of his footsteps, saying, “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9). Ephrem finds in that voice of the Lord the prefiguring of the ‘voice in the wilderness’ of John the Baptist.<sup>40</sup>

Jacob of Serugh gives an exegetical exposition of the question of the Lord, “Where are you?” in his homily, *On the Expulsion of Adam from Paradise*,<sup>41</sup> explaining how God became a helping ‘tutor’ and a benevolent ‘interrogator’ to Adam by asking several questions in order to elicit a supplication in repentance. But Adam failed on all those steps to give a discerning response to the divine pedagogy that wanted to make him return to the way of truth. The voice that was made heard to Adam pronouncing death for disobedience (Gen 2:17) was bound by justice to pronounce judgement. Hence, Adam/Humanity was expelled from Paradise to the cursed land in order that Adam might understand his shameful state and thus repent. The Merciful One could not curse Adam. Instead the earth was cursed as a pedagogical strategy to make Adam recognize his foolishness and repent. Hence, the early Syriac writers lay special stress on God’s mercy that is just and his justice that is meted out with mercy. Hence, Ephrem writes:

Praise be to your will that mixed,  
 one with another, the two glorious fountains of profits.<sup>42</sup>  
 Benevolent is your justice and just is your grace (*HEcc* 5:21).  
 ... So that that might also be fulfilled, ‘where the sin excelled,  
 there the grace too excelled much’ ...

(*HEcc* 5:23)<sup>43</sup>

Both Ephrem and Jacob of Serugh explain the expulsion of Adam from Paradise as a gracious act of chastisement so that he might not perchance approach the Tree of Life in rebellion, as he did in the case of the Tree of Knowledge, and live for ever in

<sup>40</sup> ET by Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 215.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *QHC III* 691–778 [CSCO 508 (syri 214) pp. 59–62].

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *HPar* 12:15–17 [CSCO 174 (syri 57) p. 53] for Ephrem’s explanation on the two trees of Paradise as two fountains of Wisdom and Life.

<sup>43</sup> CSCO 198 (syri 84) p. 15; cf. Rom 5:20.

misery, turning the life-giving gift of the Tree of Life into eternal misery in his case. Ephrem considers the punishment of death as a beneficial release from temporal pains as well. Both the punishment of death for sin and the promise of eternal life are irrevocable. Ephrem finds God still holding valid the promise of life and executing the punishment of death in expelling Adam from the Garden.<sup>44</sup> Jacob of Serugh explains the episode as follows:

Then he expelled them so that they should not approach the  
Tree of Life,  
that they might not eternally live rebelliously from its food.  
Rather, he had wished to have pity on them through his grace  
and when their wrong doing would be made known, he would  
let them return.  
He did not allow them to approach the Tree of Life,  
lest they live rebelliously from it eternally.  
He expelled them to the cursed earth to be wearied  
so that when they would be humiliated mercy would come and  
care for them.

*(QHC III,1041–48)*<sup>45</sup>

Ephrem explains that Adam in his foolishness did not understand his honourable state and preferred to become like an animal (*HPar 12:20*; *SHF I 14/FH IV 14*). God sent him out of Paradise to chastise him and make him realize his miserable situation in repentance and make him supplicate for his return to his inheritance.<sup>46</sup> There are many Old Testament examples of such repentant returnings to proper inheritances, such as Samson, Jonah, Joseph and others (*HPar 13:11–16*). Moreover, there are many discerning people, such as Jeremiah, Daniel, Noah, Patriarch Jacob and Moses (*HPar XIV, 3–7*), who serve as models of discerning home-coming to the Father's house. Through them the figure of Adam's returning to the Father's house, Eden, is clear to the discerning. They serve as a paradigm for those with perception

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Ephrem: *GEC II 35* [CSCO 152 (syri 71), pp. 45–46; ET by Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 223].

<sup>45</sup> CSCO 508 (syri 214) p. 75.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Ephrem: *Hpar 13:10*; Jacob of Serugh: *QHC III 1079–80*.

(*HPar 14:7*). All those instances, Ephrem holds, serve as instructions to humanity on how to return from the state of bondage to the city of freedom. Moreover, Ephrem states that the deeds of Christ, such as the rebuking of the demons (Mk 1:25), ‘woe’ to the scribes (Mk 1:43; Mat 23:13; Lk 6:24ff), the drying of the fig tree (Mt 21:19), the herd of swine cast into the sea (Lk 8:32–33; Mt 8:32), are all for the benefit of humanity. They are in fact symbols that serve as pointers to his discerning actions in the history of salvation (*HPar 12:13*). Ephrem sings praise to the divine pedagogy, “Blessed is he who has thus taught us to repent so that we too may return to Paradise” (*HPar 13:6*).<sup>47</sup> According to Ephrem, as a bird is taught to speak by the help of a mirror, we are taught through symbols by God (*HFid 31:6–7*). Thus God uses symbols familiar to us to teach us and guide us to elicit discerning responses in faith and thus to win us.

Mar Jacob while trying to provide a synchronic vision of salvation history, explains the divine pedagogy through a chain of five covenants, which are already explained.<sup>48</sup> He finds the perfection and consummation of all covenants in that covenant of Christ. Hence, Jacob writes:

The coming of our Lord to Jordan is the true boundary between the Ancient and the New [alliances]. In fact, the path of the Law of Moses proceeded until that point (Mt 11:13), but from there and henceforward the perfect teaching of Christ shone forth to manifest its truth. Moses is the initiator of the Law and John the baptist, its perfecter. Since then, after having accomplished the path of Justice (Mat 3:15) at His baptism, the perfection that is above the Law was announced by our Lord.

(*SHF II 1/FH VII 1*)

Jacob of Serugh finds the light from the teaching of salvation (*yulpanā d-ḥayyē*) underlying in the scriptural episodes (*SHF IV 1/FH XI 1*). Mysteries are hidden in the readings (*HS III 197,3*) of the Word of Life as pearls (*HS V 197,7–14*). One has to take the

<sup>47</sup> CSCO 174 (syri 57), p. 56; *tr.* by Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 171.

<sup>48</sup> Jacob’s understanding of five covenants: see chapter three (section C,3,b), footnote 73 and the related paragraph.

teaching/doctrine as the lamp in order to enter into the Scriptures to see the beauty of the hidden things (*HS III 208,9–10*). Only thus can one reach ‘the hidden understanding proper to God’ (*HS V 157,7*) which Melchizedek had as ‘the pure understanding’ (*HS V 156,7*).

From the time of the manifestation of Christ in the Jordan onwards the perfect teaching of Christ above the Law came into practice. Christ brought the bread for the full stature of humanity that had been till then fed on ‘the milk’ which is the teaching of the Law meant for little children (1Cor 3:2; Heb 5:12–14; *SHF II 1,2/FH VII 1,2*). Here mention should be made of the early Syriac view of the immaturity and childlike nature of Adam in Paradise where he was given the Law as a tutor and as a fence in the conception of Jacob (*QHC III 197–198, 255–256*).

Christ performs his teachings equally through his deeds as by his words, such as his baptism in Jordan, forty days’ fasting, suffering, death and resurrection. All those events of the life of Christ have to be considered with the lucid eye of the soul (*‘aynā nabirtā d-napšā*), which can see even the distant things as if close at hand. Only this type of discerning vision can perceive the purpose behind the scriptural episodes and thus attain profit through a deeper intuition into the mysteries of Christ (*SHF V 1/FH XII 1*). Since the Scriptures are the story of the humility of the Son, its beauty is perceptible only to those who find the humility of the Lord shining in the Scriptures (*SHF IV 4,5/FH XI 4,5*).

Forty days’ fasting served as perfect teaching to human nature concerning integration and the practice of moderation in the face of the inordinate lures and desires of life. Christ’s entry into Jerusalem served as teaching on the truthfulness of his words. He said that if the children were to be silent the stones would cry out. This has been manifestly illumined by the events during the Crucifixion. Since at that time all voices of praise were silent, the cry of the tombs and rocks was heard (Lk 19:40; Mt 27:51; *SHF IV 43–45/FH XI 43–45*). All events associated with the passion of our Lord had deeper meanings: He suffered for Adam, received the royal purple of Kingship, liberated Barabbas in order to depict the liberation of Adam, and so on.

Christ and his ambassadors are seen giving specific teachings to individuals who were closely associated with the salvific activities in order to make them, through their own freedom, understand the

divine economy and purpose behind the actions; eg. Mary needed the explanation of the angel to be convinced of the incarnation (*SMS* 727,10–735,10; 738,5–739,19/*FH I* 155–326; 383–418), Joseph too needed a divine messenger to make him understand the divine ways (*SMS* 752,20–756,8/*FH I* 691–762), John the Baptist needed the words of Christ to understand the real purpose of the baptism of Christ (*HS I* 177,10–183,8/*FH VI* 201–326); the apostles were given instruction and confidence through the experience of transfiguration (*HS I* 371,12–372,8/*FH VIII* 511–528).

### **3. Christ, the Saviour of the Fallen Adam/Humanity**

The fall of Adam could be summed up in three aspects; his failure in his discernment, his failure in his fight with the adversary, and the losing of his glorious state in Paradise. Adam-Christ complementarity could be envisaged in the light of these three aspects and the fruits of the salvific activities of Christ can be visualized through images. We examine three sets of imageries. Firstly, the imagery of ‘colour-mixing’ in order to bring out the interplay of the divine gift of discernment, human freedom and the goal promised to Adam/humanity. This imagery depicts well the interaction of human situations in creation, redemption and resurrection for the attainment of salvation. Secondly, in the context of Adam’s failure, the Incarnation and the salvific activities of the Son can be well depicted in Christ’s ‘putting on’ the body of ‘fallen Adam’ and the fight against the adversary. Above all, thirdly, Christ makes Adam reach the paradisiacal glory intended for Adam/humanity by making Adam/humanity clothe the ‘robe of glory’ in his resurrection.

#### ***a. The Imagery of ‘Icon and Colour-Mixing’***

This imagery stands projected against the backdrop of colour-mixing for the painting of icons. The magnificence of the icon depends on the proper colour-mixing. *The Acts of Judas Thomas* speaks about the effects of evil doings as a change of colour complexion.<sup>49</sup> Ephrem uses the metaphor of ‘colour’ mainly to

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. *AAA* (1968<sup>R</sup>), p. 194 (syr.), *tr.* p. 167.

connote human behaviour within the context of free will. Moreover, the gift of free will is considered as the major constituent of 'the image and likeness of God' in humanity. The hymn on Faith no. 31 is quite insightful in this regard (*Hfid* 31:5; 33). Ephrem imagines that God is wearying himself to persuade us, who possess free will, to please him and perfect our image (icon) through the colours our free will chooses. This is a sort of pedagogy. Here the direct reference is to human behaviour patterns and customs by which we imprint the divine image on ourselves (*Hfid* 3:16; *HVir* 2:15; *HEcc* 10:6). Any wrong doing would destroy those colours or soil them and the end result will be the soiling of the divine image in humanity. What happened to Adam is thus signified and symbolically demonstrated. It is through baptism that the redrawing of the spoiled image begins (*HVir* 7:5).

According to Jacob God contemplated the celestial Adam, Christ, and made the terrestrial Adam in the resemblance of the corporeality that the Son would assume (*QHC I* 181–182, 185–186). Thus Christ stands as the origin and the end (*QHC I* 24). The glorious Artist made an icon in the creation of Adam with rich colours and a beautiful appearance. This icon carries the potential within itself for life or for death (*QHC II* 275–278) because Adam/humanity is given freedom to choose life or death. By the breach of the commandment Adam/humanity chose death which is repeatedly reflected in the OT through idolatry and adultery. It is the misuse of freedom that spoiled and corrupted the image. Therefore, Christ at his baptism mixed the waters properly with holiness in order to wash and polish humanity so as to brighten the colour of 'the bride' who polluted herself with idols and the oblations to idols (*HS I* 167,7–168,7/*FH VI* 7–14). Moreover, for Jacob of Serugh the 'black girl' of the Song of Songs 1:5 is a clear type of the Church of the Nations who put on light from the baptismal water. By the oil and myrrh she was perfumed. By the fire and the Spirit in the baptismal waters 'the bride' was purified, sanctified and was liberated (*QHC VI* 323–30).<sup>50</sup> Again Jacob finds each prophet, especially John the Baptist, as an adorer of 'the bride'. This type of progressive development of purification and

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Brock, "Baptismal Themes," 342.

adorning are mentioned in the homilies on the Friday of the Passion and on the Resurrection; and finally at the Ascension the bride stands longing for union with the Bridegroom.

The theme of the four elements of human constitution and the divine image imprinted on their harmony is well treated in the homily *On the Forty Days' Fasting* (SHF III 28–31/FH IX 28–31). God has mixed the colours properly to draw the divine image in humanity in the creation. Free will is the dominant factor of the image of God in humanity. Adam/humanity's failure to maintain that well integrated image in itself ended up in corruption and spoiling, which thus needs restoration. Adam/humanity's misuse of free will and the wrong mixing of colours without discernment is a paradigm of human rejection of the divine will in the history of salvation. The disintegration of the unity of the four elements in the human existence due to the false exercise of free will is a dominant catechetical theme in Mar Jacob, especially in the homily *On the Forty Days' Fasting*. Christ by his fasting reintegrated everything that had ended up in disintegration and death. Thus the image has been restored. The image that had been left polluted for six thousand years has been taken care of by its Heir and Perfecter. The Adam-Christ complementarity in the conception of the divine economy and the manifestation of the same in the history of salvation are well brought out through Adam who is the first and the last in the creation and Christ who is the first and the last in the divine economy.

***b. Christ's 'Putting on' of the Armour (body)  
of Fallen Adam***

The body of Adam served as an armour with which combat had to be made and thus attain the reward of a crown. Adam, being deficient of discernment and falling as a victim to the deceiving adversary, plucked prematurely the fruit that would give sweetness only in due season, but would prove bitter out of season. In fact Adam lost what he had desired and found what he dreaded (*HPar* 12:3,5). But Christ came putting on the same armour and conquered the evil one. Ephrem writes: "He put on his armour and

conquered and was crowned” (*Epiph 10:11*).<sup>51</sup> In this respect Adam-Christ complementarity is set in the context of combat:

There came another Athlete, this time not to be beaten;  
 He put on the same armour in which Adam had been  
     vanquished.  
 When the adversary beheld the armour of conquered Adam,  
 he rejoiced, not perceiving that he was being taken by surprise;  
 He who was within the armour would have terrified him,  
 but His exterior gave him courage.  
 The evil one came to conquer, but he was conquered and  
     could not hold his ground.

(*HPar 12:6*)<sup>52</sup>

It is the fallen body of Adam that Christ has put on in his Incarnation (*SdDN 9*). Ephrem states that the Omniscient One, even though he had foreseen the fall of Adam, created him to make him victorious at the end (*CNis 69:2; SHF I 19/FH IV 19*). God’s plan was to give the fruits of the tree of knowledge and the tree of life as two crowns by merit through a contest. If Adam wanted he could have won. Hence, God enhanced Adam and ardently desired for his victory (*HPar 12:16–18*). But Adam became a leper because the serpent breathed on him. As the living sea throws out any corpse Paradise threw Adam out, the dead one. But the High-Priest saw the expelled Adam and came down to cleanse him with hyssop (*HPar 4:2–4*). The imageries of Christ as Athlete, Commander, Medicine of Life, etc., explain very well the fight of Christ on behalf of Adam as well as the healing of sick Adam who is typified in the healing of the Leper (*Lev 13:46; 14:1–9; HPar 4:3*).

The festal homilies of Jacob of Serugh present Christ as the Heir to Adam. Christ took up the body of the fallen Adam in order to fight on his behalf and deceive the evil one who had deceived Adam. In the second homily ‘On the Nativity’ the company of the evil one was alarmed by being without any knowledge of the origin of the Child in the manger (*SMS 777,2–21/FH II 39–58*). Christ by

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<sup>51</sup> CSCO 186 (syri 82), p. 182; *tr.* by Johnston, E. “Fifteen Hymns for the Feast of the Epiphany.” In *NPNF*, Vol. XIII, 281.

<sup>52</sup> CSCO 174 (syri 57), p. 51; *tr.* Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 162.

his humility overthrew the haughty and arrogant ones (*SMS 776,3–18/FH II 19–34*) and became the ‘New Sign’ that shatters and overthrows all labours of the darkened way of demons by illumining the whole world. By his nativity Christ repealed the verdict given in Paradise and all its negative effects (*SHF I 8–16/FH IV 8–16*).

At the time of his temptations Christ showed in his own body how to fight with the adversary. Christ, the celestial Adam, practiced fasting and employed what the terrestrial Adam had failed to do in order to heal his ulcer. Our Lord took up the combat of Adam by fasting and conquered pride that had been the cause of the Fall. Thus He showed how Adam should have won. ‘The commander of the left’ fought against our Lord with the strategy of the old story of nourishment. As our Lord stood steadfast in the exalted state from where Adam fell, the state of the adopted sons, the enemy failed to conquer him. Knowing that the door to sin was opened through the story of nourishment, the crafty one approached Jesus after forty days when he was hungry. The tempter provoked the fasting one by the question of bread in order to bring about laxity and thus to win as he was accustomed from the time of Adam who ate without discernment. Our Lord remained victorious over the deceiver in order to recompense what Adam ought to have preserved when he was tempted, and he responded, “Man does not live by bread and water alone but by all the word of God” (*SHF III 10/FH IX 10; Mt 4:4*).

By standing firm, keeping away from food and not performing a miracle, our Lord despised the arrogant one who had effected the fall of Adam by laxity. Thus the debt of gluttony was acquitted by abstinence. The grave ulcer caused by laxity and intemperance was cured by firmness in the fasting of our Lord. Thus the fallen one was raised by a device of healing. Through moderation in the fallen body of Adam, our Lord defeated the evil one and achieved the victory for Adam by the forty days’ fasting (*SHF III 6,12,44/FH IX 6,12,44*). At the same time this fasting stands as a ‘medicinal herb’ for all types of ulcers resulting from false nourishments which according to Jacob symbolically include all false nourishments on the material, psychological, and spiritual levels of human experience.

On the Friday of the Passion Christ bore all the chastisements of Adam and liberated him from bondage. Christ is the heir to the

chastisements of Adam and all the sufferings were accepted by our Saviour (*SHF V 9/FH XII 9*). In the cunningness of the wicked priests, by clothing Christ with sanctuary veils, the very cunningness of the serpent of Eden is seen. Barabbas is Adam in captivity who needs liberation. Hence, Christ, the Innocent One, was judged and the culpable one, Adam, gained liberation. Mar Jacob thus, by his insightful exegesis, explains the underlying Adam-Christ complementarity in the salvific acts of Christ.

### *c. The 'Robe of Glory'*

The image of 'putting on and putting off clothing' is widely used by the early Syriac Christian authors, especially Ephrem, in order to depict various stages in the history of salvation, such as, the states of Adam before and after the Fall, the redemptive Incarnation, the salvific mysteries in the life, death and resurrection of Christ and the final resurrection of all.<sup>53</sup> The narrative regarding the first parents finding themselves naked and the sewing of the clothes of fig leaves in Gen 3:7, and that of Lord God making garments of skin to clothe Adam and Eve in Gen 3:21, stand as the inspiring verses for this imagery. Gen 3:21 speaks of 'garments of skin' but early Syriac Christianity acquired much from a Jewish background of *Haggadah* and *Targum* including traditions concerning the theological expression of 'robe of glory', which was understood to refer to the state of Adam before the fall.<sup>54</sup>

In the Syriac tradition the metaphor of 'clothing' is well developed in a consistent way and explains the entire salvation history from the Fall to the redemption in Christ leading to salvation.<sup>55</sup> *Odes of Solomon* 20:7 speaks of the need of being clothed in the grace of the Lord for entering into Paradise. This clothing is also called 'clothing of light' (*Odes* 11:11; 21:3). Aphrahat speaks of

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<sup>53</sup> For a detailed exposition of Ephrem's employment of this imagery, see Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 85–97.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Brock, S. P. "Some Aspects of Greek Words in Syriac." In *Syriac Perspectives*, No. IV, 98–104; "Clothing Metaphors," 14; Kowalski, "Rivestiti di gloria," 41–60; Idem., *Perfezione e Giustizia di Adamo*, 89 (n. 158).

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Brock, "Clothing Metaphors," 11.

the glory that Christ brought as something far greater and more astounding than what Adam had been deprived of (*Dem XXIII 5f*).

Jacob of Serugh in his Festal Homilies stresses Christ's bringing down of the 'robe of glory' to the fallen Adam and offering the same to the baptized through the baptismal waters. Ephrem already has a well developed synthesis of the theological views behind the theological expression of putting on of 'the robe of glory'. S. P. Brock explains the salvation-historical import of this clothing metaphor as consisting of four stages. They are Adam before the fall with the 'robe of glory/light', after the fall without the 'robe of glory', Divinity 'putting on' a body in the Incarnation to re-clothe mankind in the 'robe of glory' and Christ's setting the 'robe of glory' in the baptismal waters for the Christians to regain the 'robe of glory'.<sup>56</sup> *HNat 23:13* is suggested as a fair synthesis of Ephrem in this regard:

All these changes did the Merciful One make,  
stripping off glory and putting on a body;  
for He had devised the way to reclothe Adam  
in that glory which Adam had stripped off.  
Christ was wrapped in swaddling clothes,  
corresponding to Adam's leaves,  
Christ put on clothes, instead of Adam's skins;  
He was baptized for Adam's sin,  
His body was embalmed for Adam's death,  
He rose and raised up Adam in his glory.  
Blessed is who descended, put Adam on and ascended!

(*HNat 23:13*)<sup>57</sup>

Inheriting insights from Ephrem the later writers like Narsai and Jacob of Serugh explain the matter according to their exegetical innovations. Jacob finds baptism as putting on the 'robe of glory' that was lost by Adam/humanity in Paradise. In the homily "*On the Baptism of Our Redeemer in Jordan*" Jacob explains how all OT prophets and seers are adorners of the bride. All those

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Brock, "Clothing Metaphors," 11–13.

<sup>57</sup> CSCO 186 (syri 82), p. 120; tr. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 85; see also "Clothing Metaphors," 13.

adornments are in a sense betrothals in view of the marriage feast (*HS I 167,9–170,7/FH VI 1–56*). He writes, “Baptism gives back to Adam the ‘robe of glory’ which the serpent had stolen from him among the trees” (*HS I 197,11–12*).<sup>58</sup> It is Christ who brings down this robe of glory for Adam in baptism: “Christ came to baptism, he went down and placed in the baptismal water the robe of glory, to be there for Adam, who had lost it” (*HS III 593, 8–9*).<sup>59</sup> In baptism this clothing is prepared by the Trinity: “The Father prepared the robe, the Son wove it, the Spirit cut it [*off the loom*], and you went down and put it on in divine fashion” (*HS I 211,6–7*).<sup>60</sup> According to Mar Jacob all those who repent are given the ‘robe of light’, as in the case of the thief at Golgotha who was promised that he would be clothed in the ‘robe of light’ in the bridal chamber on high (*HS V 669,9*). Those who attain resurrection have the garment of glory to put on. By coming out of the tomb in the robe of glory and leaving behind ‘the garment of the dead’, Christ has re-clothed humanity in the garment of glory (*HS II 619,11–621,14/FH XIII 169–212*).

### C. THE ROAD OF SALVATION

The ‘Salvific Way’ of the son has been discussed in chapter three. There the Christocentric conception of ‘the Road of Redemption on the humble Way of the Son’ has been presented as an aspect of Jacob’s vision of salvation through Christ. The concern here is to see how much Jacob is indebted to the Syriac tradition in general and to Ephrem in particular in this regard.

#### 1. The Road of the Economy of Salvation

In the light of a few general conceptions regarding the history of salvation, Syriac Christianity has something particular to offer through the metaphor of ‘the way’ (*ʿurhā*).<sup>61</sup> Some important

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<sup>58</sup> *tr.* Brock, “Clothing Metaphors,” 27.

<sup>59</sup> *tr.* cf. *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>60</sup> *tr.* cf. *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>61</sup> For a detailed survey on Ephrem’s contributions see Beck, “Das Bild vom Weg,” 1–39.

general factors are: the progressive nature of the divine self-revelation, various stages of the divine teachings through symbols and types, the divine Incarnation, and the progressive levels of human response to the divine mercy in the history of humanity, etc. Taking into account the nature of progressive historical developments and the realization of salvation, the imageries of the way, road, path, and journey are well employed to deal with those realities symbolically. It is to be noted that the imagery of the 'way', precisely the vision of 'two ways' with its ethical and moral aspects, plays a significant role in the New Testament and in early Christian literature. But the early Syriac tradition goes far beyond the 'moral and ethical' concerns and through its symbolic theological approach offers a configuration of views regarding the history of salvation by means of the metaphor of the 'way'.<sup>62</sup>

The Syriac legacy presents the imagery of 'the way' in integration with other imageries such as 'merchants', 'merchandise', 'ship', 'sea', 'milestones' and 'inns', in order to provide an integral vision of the dynamics of divine revelation, the life of faith and the realization of salvation. Herein lies the richness and freshness of the early Syriac symbolic theology of 'the road of salvation'.

As regards the general structure of the imagery of 'the way' the description of Ephrem is the standard one.<sup>63</sup> He works out many of the details in the *Hymns against Heresies* 25–27.<sup>64</sup> *Hymns against Heresies* 26:4 can be taken as a summary statement of Ephrem:

For the sake of the fruit he laid the way  
which [runs] from the Tree right to the Cross;  
it extended from the Wood to the Wood  
and from Eden to Zion,

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. Beck, "Das Bild vom Weg," 1–39 (esp. pp. 2–6, 38–39); Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 299–301.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 246–9 for a synthesis of Ephrem's vision.

<sup>64</sup> For a detailed analysis see Beck, "Das Bild vom Weg," 11–35.

from Zion to Holy Church  
and from the Church to the Kingdom.

(CH 26:4)<sup>65</sup>

The main stages are three as it is clear from the above quotation. They can be viewed in detail as: from Adam to Moses, from Moses to Christ, and then the period of the Church. R. Murray summarizes the whole allegory of ‘the way’ in Ephrem in twelve component elements: ‘The way of life’ was set by the Father, but it became blocked by Adam’s sin. Then the ‘messengers of peace’, ‘the servants of the Lord’, the prophets and apostles, removed the stumbling blocks and cleared the way. There are ‘mile stones’ and ‘inns’ on this way built by truth and love. The milestones are the prophets and the inns the apostles. In the initial two stages of this way, starting from Adam, the people were saved through the types, mysteries and symbols. Then the Son set out on his journey to seek his sheep. Thus the way of the prophets has ended and that of the apostles has been opened up. In the later period the milestones are the names of the holy Trinity, the sacraments and the Scriptures. With the help of these milestones and inns the ‘merchants’ travel on. The way is still beset with stumbling blocks of idols, false teachings, robbers who are waiting to steal the sheep as well as to construct false paths. Yet the way invariably leads to the Kingdom.<sup>66</sup>

The above mentioned frame-work is Ephrem’s basic contribution. Jacob follows the same frame-work. Yet he has his own catechetical and pastoral concerns rather than anti-heretical polemics which was a predominant concern of Ephrem.<sup>67</sup> It is relevant to mention the summary frame-work given by F. Rilliet on Jacob’s use of the metaphor of the ‘way’. He finds Jacob, when compared with Philoxenus and Narsai, standing in a more close reliance on Ephrem in the employment of this metaphor and

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<sup>65</sup> CSCO 169 (syri 76), pp. 104–105; *tr.* Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 247.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 249.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. CH 25–27; Beck, “Das Bild vom Weg,” 11–35.

stresses Jacob's own application of the said metaphor in various soteriological aspects.<sup>68</sup>

Jacob shows some particularities of his own with detailed explanations on certain aspects. Jacob's anti-heretical usage of this metaphor is almost restricted to his letters. The usage of this metaphor in his polemics against the Jews is restricted to his homilies against the Jews. The festal homilies provide examples of his imaginative exposition of the road of the incarnate Son with much pastoral significance. Jacob calls this road by various names such as, 'the Road of Nativity' (*'urhā d-yaldā*, SMS 789,5/FH II 293), 'the Way of the Son of God' (*'urhā d-bar alāhā*, SMS 802,1/FH III 239), 'the Way of proclamation' (*'urhēb d-kārozūtā*, HS V 457,2/FH V 196, SMS 81510/FH XVI 141), 'the Path of Truth' (*šbilā d-quštā*, HS I 192,8/FH VI 511), 'the Path/Road of the Cross' (*'urhēb da-ḡiḡā*, SHF II 18/FH VII 18), 'the New Road of Humility' (*'urhā ḥdattā d-makkikutā*, HS I 457,21/FH X 266), 'the Journey in Humility' (*'urhēb b-makkikutā*, HS I 447,17/FH X 54). The stress is mainly on the 'Road of Humility' of the Son set out by the Father and travelled upon by the Son to its end in spite of all stumbling blocks.

Jacob is indebted to Ephrem in maintaining the basic salvation historical frame-work imposed on the metaphor of 'the way'. But in the exposition of the various stages of the way of salvation, Jacob brings in his own contributions. He does this mainly through two of his concerns. The first one is catechetical. The challenge before him was to present the whole of salvation history in a comprehensive and coherent vision. In this respect he combines the imagery of the road/way (*'urhā*) of salvation and the divine teachings (*yulpanā*) to humanity through the Scriptures. Due to his catechetical thrust this combined vision dominates in his festal homilies. In this respect Jacob finds the starting of the road of Law from the first commandment given to Adam/Eve in Paradise (Gen 2:16,17). There began the divine pedagogy destined to make humanity attain salvation. Jacob presents the interaction of human nature and the divine pedagogy (in terms of divine self-revelation) working smoothly in Paradise. But the disobedience of

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Rilliet, "La métaphore du chemin," 327–30.

Adam/humanity tilted the balance leading to the breach of the Law and the corruption of human nature. Therefore, Jacob finds the renewal of the Law through Moses and of human nature through Christ, the incarnate Son. Hence, Christ fulfills the Law and renews Adam to lead him to his goal.

The second factor of Jacob's specialty is his mode of dealing with various scriptural episodes in his catechetical exegesis. Through a discursive method he is vigilant to find the underlying links which are usually typological, due to the working of the divine economy, between various successive events in the history of salvation. He effects this through dramatic dialogues (*SMS* 750,10–751,3/*FH I* 639–654), direct questionings to the protagonists of the episodes (*SMS* 753,21–754,21/*FH I* 713–734), and above all seeking the reasons and the purpose behind the words and deeds treated in the scriptural episodes (*SMS* 775,14–777,1/*FH II* 11–38). Jacob often makes his explanations in detail and even tries to bring out the hidden nuances of the biblical story as well. In such contexts what is implied in the Scriptures are seen well explained in Jacob. Eg. The angel called Joseph 'son of David' purposefully to make him understand that the King would come from the 'house of David' (*SMS* 753,21–754,9/*FH I* 713–722). On the Friday of Passion the same old cunningness of the serpent worked again through the wicked priests who decked our Lord in the veil of the sanctuary in order to make him culpable of the death penalty (*SHF V* 17–20/*FH XII* 17–20).<sup>69</sup> *Barabbas* (Adam) was liberated and Christ was condemned on the Friday of Passion (*SHF V* 32–35/*FH XII* 32–35).

Another aspect of the imagery of 'the way' in the festal homilies of Jacob is the actualization of the way of salvation in the incarnate Son from the Nativity till the Ascension. Our author is keen to demonstrate how Christ remains faithful on the way the Father had assigned to him in spite of all the stumbling blocks of the adversary. Simultaneously with the progress of the way of Christ the reconciling activity of Christ is made explicit on his way through the faith-vision of the scriptural characters which serves as

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Num 4:15; *HS II* 544,2–3; Ephrem: *Crucif.* 4:3.

a principal mode of catechesis of Jacob. These two concerns of Jacob are treated in the next two sections.

## 2. Actualization of the Road of Salvation

Even with all their anti-Jewish sentiments and controversial writings the early Syriac authors insist on God's choice of Israel and its role in the history of salvation. This history finds its actualization in Christ. It is by this basic vision on the events of salvation history that Christianity in general, and the early Syriac tradition in particular, part with Judaism and evolve their own proper self-definitions. This basic Christian vision is highly dependent on the typological understanding and interpretation of the scriptural episodes. It is again a faith-vision declaring that the choice of Israel is only a starting point from where a progressive development towards the fulfilment evolves effectively. In this development each individual and the whole people with their institutions, both cultic and social, are deeply involved. Therefore, all covenants, the Law and all its prescriptions, were intended to run towards their goal, namely, to their fulfilment in Christ.

In the Old Testament episodes the mysteries (*rūzē*) of God's purposes are seen revealed. But the understanding of those revealed truths is possible only through an eye enlightened by faith. In this regard the Pauline interpretations provide insights to Syriac fathers for furnishing their own typological exegesis. For example, the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham (Gen 17:5), with reference to Rom 4:17 and Col 2:11, is a dominant theme. It is not through circumcision that someone becomes a progeny of Abraham, but through faith. Therefore the new circumcision is baptism where the circumcision of the heart takes place.<sup>70</sup> Through faith in Christ the promises to Abraham became fulfilled. Thus the Nation failed to live up to the call and in its place the Nations receive the promises. The election of gentiles or the nations began at the time of Abraham, in the figure of Melchizedek (Gen 14:17–

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Jer 4:4; Aphrahat: *Dem* XI 11–12/*PS* I 501; XI 10/*PS* I 497; XI 7/*PS* I 481; Ephrem: *CNīs* 72:2, 73:8; *HVir* 7:6; *HFid* 49:4; Jacob of Serugh: *HCJ* II 107–252; see also Duncan, *Baptism in the Demonstrations of Aphraates*, 32–6; Saber, *La Théologie Baptismale*, 38–43.

22; Ps 110:4; Heb 7:1–10), in the betrothals of the Patriarch Jacob to two wives, and the blessing of Judah (Gen 49:9–10). There is a vast mosaic of symbols and types which are interpreted with the key of the mystery of Christ. All Old Testament symbols and types are in fact borrowings from Christ, the source and fountain of the mysteries. As Christ came in person to manifest the truth all ancient borrowings returned to their source. This fact is explained by the imageries of ‘the tree and the grafting of branches’ (*SdDN* 55), and ‘the sea and the flowing of rivers’.<sup>71</sup> The power of the economy of salvation, or rather, of Christ himself, removes all stumbling blocks from the road of his economy.

In their typological thought pattern the early Syriac authors find the actualization of all symbols and mysteries in Christ. Ephrem calls this the state of ‘truth’ (*šrārā*) or ‘reality’ contrasted with all shadows that are depicted through the mysteries and types of the Old Testament. Jacob calls this ‘a coming out into effect or actualization’ (*npaq la-‘bādā*, *SMS* 794,18/*FH* III 91). The process of ‘coming into effect’ faces many stumbling blocks. The divine economy is seen as removing all those stumbling blocks. For the Nativity of the Son the angel was sent to Mary to inform and convince her about the happenings (*SMS* 739,12–740,11/*FH* I 411–430). So also the doubts of Joseph were also removed by the angel (*SMS* 753,3–756,8/*FH* I 695–762). The Child in swaddling clothes brings offerings to the temple so as to fulfill the order he himself taught; similarly, he came to circumcision. All these events were to remove all obstacles and make all convinced that he is no stranger to the human order (*HS* V 448,17–449,6/*FH* V 21–32). The spiritual perception of the holy Simeon is employed as a catechetical and exegetical device to bring out the hidden reality in the Child so as to remove the stumbling block due to the humble state of the Child (*HS* V 456,16–458,8/*FH* V 189–222). In Jordan John’s unwillingness to baptize Christ has been overcome by the instruction of Christ himself by explaining the true path that he is to travel on (*HS* I 177,10–183,8/*FH* VI 201–326; *SHF* II 16–19/*FH* VII 16–19). During the Transfiguration, by showing his

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. Ephrem: *HV’ir* 9:15; Jacob of Serugh: *HS* I 192,10–19/*FH* VI 513–522.

glory and power Christ strengthened his disciples and trained them to surmount all stumbling blocks through the vision of his followers (*HS II 352,5–355,19/FH VIII 99–176*). During the forty days' fasting Christ himself destroyed the stumbling block of Satan's demand to perform a miracle. By the endurance of his fasting our Lord unmasked the deceitfulness of Satan and repaid the debt of Adam incurred through eating without discernment (*SHF III 34–44/FH IX 34–44*). During the entry of Christ to Jerusalem, by allowing the children and disciples to cry out hosannas, the divine economy showed how the road of the Redeemer is made straight to proceed along the lines destined by the Father. Moreover, the words of Christ, "If these here shall be silent, the stones will cry out" (Lk 19:40) showed themselves to be full of truth at the time of his crucifixion (*SHF IV 43–45/FH XI 43–45*).

In this synthesis of select aspects of the economy of salvation in Christ, in chapter three, we dealt with several aspects. The first aspect, divine mercy seeking for Adam, has been already reviewed in the description of the Adam-Christ complementarity in the earlier part of this chapter. The last aspect dealt with in chapter three, i.e., the road of salvation, is the general frame-work of the present review. The remaining three aspects, betrothal and marriage feast, idols and idolatry, renewal of the Kingdom and Priesthood, are to be reviewed in the next sections. In fact 'betrothal and marriage feast', together with 'idols and idolatry', may be considered as the positive and negative aspects of the history of human faithfulness to the divine economy. Hence, they are considered together in our review.

#### ***a. 'Betrothal and Marriage Feast' versus 'Idols and Idolatry'***

The divine-human relationship, exemplified in the relationship of Christ with the Church, which is destined to fuller realization in the eschatological Kingdom, is best described by the imagery of betrothal and marriage feast. This imagery and the typologies that depict it are the best means to give an account of the existential tension between the primordial and the eschatological Paradise. It also takes into account the progressive nature of both the divine revelation and the realization of the divine promises. The promises were given to Adam/humanity in the primordial Paradise. These promises are realized through the divine economy that respects

human free will. This imagery of the divine-human relationship is depicted in concrete form in the life of Israel.

Israel is the betrothed of God. The betrothal took place through the covenant and the Law given on Mount Sinai. From there on the realization of the divine economy with respect to human freedom progresses. This progress with its inherent dynamic tension is best depicted through the history of the faithful and unfaithful behaviour of Israel. On the one hand the betrothal, with a view to the marriage feast, takes place at various levels and on the other hand idols and idolatry set stumbling blocks on the road of the betrothed life of Israel.

According to S. P. Brock the early Syriac tradition underwent a shift in its views on the emergence of the Church as the bride from the Gentiles replacing the old bride, Israel, or as the bride from the nation of People was replaced by that from the Peoples. The earlier model was the formation of the Church both from the Jewish Nation or the People and the gentile Nations or Peoples. Aphrahat is an exponent of this model (*Dem XXI 13*). The later model is that of 'the Church of the Peoples' replacing Israel as the bride of God. The later model became predominant in Ephrem and later writers like Jacob of Serugh.<sup>72</sup>

Ephrem's third hymn on the Resurrection is highlighted by S. P. Brock as a concise framework of an insightful vision of the imagery of betrothal and marriage feast.<sup>73</sup> Ephrem finds the betrothal of Christ, the Bridegroom, to the Church taking place at Jordan (*HVir 5:9; CH 24:6*) and on the Sunday of Hosannas at Jerusalem (*Resur 3:2-5; Crucif 1:1-4*). What Ephrem presents in aphorisms are set out in dialogue settings or in expository patterns in the festal homilies of Mar Jacob. A comparison of Ephrem's *HVir 5:9; CH 24:6* and Jacob's treatment of the same views in *HS I 170,8-171,4/FH VI 57-74; SHF II 8-13/FH VII 8-13* could be quite revealing. Both of them deal with Jn 1:19-23 where John the Baptist averts the misunderstanding of the Jews and declares himself to be only a forerunner of the Messiah. Even though both authors treat the same material, in *HVir 5:9* Ephrem is more

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 116-22.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 116-9.

catechetical but in *CH* 24:6 he is anti-heretical. Mar Jacob is purely catechetical in both cases. Jacob stresses the need and function of all ‘ambassadors’ and ‘preachers’ to become the ‘voice’ of the Word and agents who remove all stumbling blocks of the people of God, ‘the bride’. Another possible comparison is between *Resur* 3:2–5; *Crucif* 1:1–4 and *SHF* IV 21–30/*FH* XI 21–30; *HS* I 448,20–450,22/*FH* X 79–122 where the scriptural episode refers to the question of the people on the entry of Jesus to Jerusalem, “Who is this ?” (*Mt* 21:10 *et par*). Ephrem is very brief in handling the same catechetical theme. But Jacob gives a rather long exposition, perhaps to furnish a catechesis for the ordinary people for whom he preached. By this episode Jacob symbolically alludes to all bleak transgressions of commandments coupled with the idolatrous and adulterous behaviour of Israel in forsaking Yahweh.

The imagery of ‘betrothal and marriage feast’ is a more recurrent theme in Jacob of Serugh by which he attempts to present a wider coverage of the events of salvation history. Jacob makes clear references to the starting of the betrothal and marriage feast in Paradise itself. Eden is the bridal gift and bridal chamber. But the evil one through the serpent had spoiled the marriage feast. Even then the purpose of the merciful Father stands effective and runs to its realization through the purification and adorning of the polluted bride to make her ‘the bride of light’ before ‘the Bridegroom of Light’, Christ. According to Jacob of Serugh the adorning and betrothal of the bride take place at all levels of the divine-human engagements in the course of salvation history: at Sinai by Moses, later by the prophets and at Jordan and at Zion. This process finds its culmination at Golgotha where the betrothal and marriage feast take place simultaneously as the slain Bridegroom gives his own body as food for the guests of the marriage feast. Thus the Eucharist depicts the already initiated heavenly marriage feast (*HS* III 290,12–291,9).<sup>74</sup>

In fact Mar Jacob makes a creative inheritance of Ephrem’s insights and composes imaginative expositions of them in various exegetical contexts, according to his own needs, by reading into the suggestions already seen in the scriptural episodes. Jacob’s

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. The Homily “On the Veil on Moses’ Face” (*HS* III 283–305).

originality in this respect is pointed out by S. P. Brock in connection with the biblical episode of ‘the pierced side of Christ’.<sup>75</sup> Through this single episode Jacob reads the whole salvation history. Christ, the Second Adam, by the piercing of his side reopens Paradise that was closed against the first Adam from whom Eve was born who caused the entry of death. But from the side of Christ, the Second Adam, the Church and the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist were born. The betrothal and marriage feast are seen taking place together at Golgotha because Christ, the Bridegroom, gave his own body and blood as ‘bride-price’ and ‘wedding feast’, which is a foretaste of the eternal wedding feast, simultaneously. Thus the linking between the primordial Paradise, the fall, the betrothal of Christ and his Church, the sacraments, the Eucharistic wedding feast and the wedding feast in the heavenly Kingdom are all effectively brought around a single scriptural episode through rich typological allusions.

***b. The Renewal of the Kingdom and the Priesthood***

By the ‘lucid eye of the soul’ Mar Jacob saw Christ as ‘the King of Kings’ and ‘the High-Priest’ in the scriptural episodes. The Kingship and Priesthood of Christ are well attested theological assumptions of early Syriac Christianity. Aphrahat affirms how Jesus assumes the High-Priesthood of the Jewish nation from John the Baptist. Similarly Christ becomes King of those who believed in him as depicted by David who was king of a single tribe. But unlike David Christ is destined to reign over all at the end (*Dem XXI 13*). John the Baptist had only held the title of Priesthood (*Dem XXIII 20; HS I 176,17/FH VI 187*) which had to come upon Christ by the imposition of the hands of John at Jordan. But unlike all others Christ received the Spirit without limit (*Dem VI 13*).

Ephrem speaks of the flowing of Priesthood from the hands, and the prophecy from the lips, of the aged priest Simeon upon Christ at the temple (*SdDN 53–54*).<sup>76</sup> Ephrem writes:

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. Brock, “Wedding Feast of Blood on Golgotha,” 121–34.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. CSCO 270 (syri 116), pp. 50–51; ET by Johnston, A. E. “Three Homilies” (“On Our Lord” 51–52). In *NPNF*, Vol. XIII, 328–9.

Then Mary received her firstborn and went forth. He was outwardly wrapped in swaddling clothes, but secretly He was clothed with prophecy and priesthood. Whatsoever then was handed down from Moses, was received from Simeon, but continued and was possessed by the Lord of both.

(*SdDN* 54)<sup>77</sup>

The whole deposit was given to Moses, the steward, and it was carried along until Simeon, the treasurer, who handed it over to Christ (*SdDN* 54). At Jordan Christ received baptism from John the Baptist (*SdDN* 55–58).<sup>78</sup> All those powers handed over to Moses and carried along thereafter became barren like the fig tree without fruit (Mt 21:19 *et par.*). Hence, they were cut away and through Christ those powers flourished among the gentiles (*SdDF* 58).<sup>79</sup> In this respect Priesthood came from Simeon to Christ and remained with him, even though Annas exercised it. Baptism came from John the Baptist and the Kingdom of the House of David as well to Christ even though Herod exercised it (*SdDN* 56).<sup>80</sup> As all these gifts remained grafted on bitter trees (evil kings and priests), at the manifestation of Christ all of them came back to the One who gave those powers. In Christ all of them were grafted on to their natural tree (*SdDN* 57)<sup>81</sup> and from there all the gifts flow towards the gentiles (*SdDN* 58).<sup>82</sup>

The festal homilies of Jacob of Serugh introduce the Syriac vision of Christ receiving the Old Testament priesthood that needs perfection and thus the priesthood of Melchizedek is actualized.

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. CSCO 270 (syri 116), p. 51; ET by Johnston, “Three Homilies,” 329.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. CSCO 270 (syri 116), p. 53; ET, by Johnston, “Three Homilies,” 329–30.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. CSCO 270 (syri 116), p. 53; ET, by Johnston, “Three Homilies,” 330.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. CSCO 270 (syri 116), p. 52; ET, by Johnston, “Three Homilies,” 329.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. CSCO 270 (syri 116), pp. 52–53; ET, by Johnston, “Three Homilies,” 329–30.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. CSCO 270 (syri 116), p. 53; ET, by Johnston, “Three Homilies,” 330.

Through the exegetical exposition Jacob shows the complementarity of the two types of priesthood. While the levitical priesthood needed redemption the sacerdotal priesthood of Melchizedek was a type of the goal to be achieved.

### 3. The Reconciliation and Salvation in Christ

Humanity's need of reconciliation and salvation arose out of Adam/humanity's deviation from the path of righteousness and the consequent enmity between Adam and God together with all celestial beings. According to Aphrahat human beings have the duty to know the maker and thus to make Divinity dwell in their minds and thought; otherwise humankind would remain in the level of beasts (*Dem XVII 2*). As Adam sinned there emerged enmity and division by which he deviated from the heavenly Adam (*Dem VI 10; IX 7 & 13–14; XXIII 49*).<sup>83</sup> Hence, there emerged the need of reconciliation. All types, symbols and the prophetic eye looked forward to the sort of reconciliation that would make Adam return to the path of life and communion with the Divinity as it is envisaged for him. Through the fulfilment and actualization of all prophecies, types and symbols in Christ the road of salvation is actualized. This road of salvation that has been discerningly perceived by prophets and seers, and which has been awaited by the types and symbols, is seen to have come into effect (Jacob of Serugh), or come into reality or truth (Ephrem) on the road of Christ. It is none other than the road of humility which he chose to travel on by descending to the level of humanity. Aphrahat explains this as the Son's showing of deep humility by his coming down to our level in which he actually went outside his true nature to associate himself with humanity (*Dem VI 9–10*). Aphrahat confirms that this paradoxical becoming was necessary to make manifest the descending divine mercy that brought about justice (*Dem IX 14*).

*Liber Graduum* brings out the contrasting pictures of Adam's sin and the Son's becoming.<sup>84</sup> Doing exactly the opposite of what

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. Pierre, *Aphraate le Sage Persan*, I, 168 (n. 86).

<sup>84</sup> Cf. A. Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia di Adamo*, pp. 138–141.

Adam did out of his pride, Christ assumed the form of the created Adam and fulfilled the demands of the state of humility and obedience as a true servant in place of Adam and so brought about reconciliation. The author of the *Liber Graduum* gives an exegesis of Phil 2:6–7 elaborating the complementarity seen in the salvific becoming of Christ in assuming the form of a servant (=Adam; *LG XXI 11*).<sup>85</sup> St Ephrem finds power and treasures hidden in Christ, the Giver of all, and on his salvific road all receive from his treasures and become saved (*Azym 16:34*). In the conception of Ephrem it is a renewal of Adam that takes place: “It is yours, O Blessed One, to repeat your mercy once more: let your hand shape Adam anew, let your fingers refashion him” (*CNis 69:6*).<sup>86</sup> This renewal of Adam is the very reason for the Incarnation and Resurrection. Jacob too speaks of the mercy extended ‘a second time’ as a synonym for fulfilment and perfection (*QHC I 127–76; HS III 140,15–141,18*).<sup>87</sup> Ephrem explains the whole salvific economy highlighting the various aspects of the reconciling descent and ascent of Christ in a few lines:

From on high did Power descend to us,  
 from a womb did Hope shine out for us,  
 from the grave Salvation appeared for us,  
 and on the right hand the King sits for us:  
 blessed in His glory!  
 From on high He came down as Lord,  
 from a womb he came forth as a Servant.  
 Death knelt before Him in Sheol,  
 and Life worshipped Him in His resurrection.  
 Blessed is His victory!  
 His birth gives us purification,  
 His baptism gives us forgiveness,

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. *PS III 616–617*; cf. ET, Kitchen & Parmentier, *The Book of Steps*, 242–43; For a detailed analysis of Adam-Christ contrast in sin and the complementarity in salvation in the aspects of arrogance-humility and disobedience-obedience, see Kowalski, *Perfezione e Giustizia di Adamo*, 138.

<sup>86</sup> CSCO 240 (syri 102), p. 111.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Jansma, “L’Hexamèron de Jacques de Saroug,” 40.

His death is life to us,  
 His ascension is our exaltation.  
 How we shall thank Him!

(*Resur* 1:5,8,16)<sup>88</sup>

Jacob of Serugh brings out the reconciling activity of the incarnate Son by laying emphasis on three stages: Nativity, Resurrection and Ascension. Nativity is a great wonder and a great sign of the reconciliation through the single Mediator (*SMS* 764,12–765,10/*FH I* 931–950). As a result there is the return to Paradise signified in the return of all to be inscribed in the census (= inscription in the book of Life) in their own country (Lk 2:1–3; *SMS* 758,8–17/*FH I* 805–814). This return was made possible because God has come down as ‘Warrior’, ‘Physician’, ‘Doctor’, ‘Strengthened’, ‘Leaven of Life’,<sup>89</sup> and so on, to make the renewal, restoration and reconciliation by which humanity has been strengthened so as to abandon all lures and desires that negatively affected Adam (*SMS* 771,2–17/*FH I* 1071–86). Through his paradoxical becoming Christ has become all to all. In this manner the Lord of Adam reconciled himself with Adam/humanity (*SMS* 770,14–15/*FH I* 1061–62). Hence, from then onwards humanity has good hope because the verdict of expulsion from Paradise has been repealed (*SHF I* 7,8/*FH IV* 7,8) and the renewal of the fallen humanity has come into effect (*SHF I* 11–16/*FH IV* 11–16). The reconciled humanity is in a position to mingle with the heavenly beings to sing the same angelic chant of thanks-giving (*SMS* 761,14–762,18/*FH I* 875–896; *SMS* 789,7–14/*FH II* 295–302). Thus the heavenly and the earthly, beings of the dust and the spiritual ones, became united, whereby humanity attained hope and earth regained peace (*SHF I* 30–32/*FH IV* 30–32), in which the punishment and curses of the old were overturned.

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<sup>88</sup> CSCO 248 (syri 108) pp. 79, 81; *tr.* Brock, *The Harp of the Spirit*, 27–29.

<sup>89</sup> See Jacob’s use of these titles in the festal homilies in chapter four (section B,3,b), “The Titles of Christ, the Saviour”.

The forty days' fasting was for the reintegration of human nature composed of four elements.<sup>90</sup> Through fasting our Lord purified the defilement and offered a perfect pardon for the transgression of the commandment. Fasting kills the alien desire that entered into the four elements, that were yoked in harmony to proceed to the pledge of immortality, in order to destroy the integration and to turn away to destructive death (*SHF III 31/FH IX 31*).

In his suffering Christ has paid the debt of Adam as justice was carrying along the deed of accusation of Eve that demanded payment. Our Lord paid the debt and tore up the deed in his own person as the Heir to Adam (*SHF V 5-7/FH XII 5-7*). Jacob of Serugh makes Christ declare; "I will not let our image be despised in Sheol, I will not allow our resemblance to be trampled upon in the mud by the thieves of perdition. I am the Heir. All that Adam owed, I will repay" (*SHF V 6/FH XII 6*). At the Resurrection all generations came into new existence after the fall. Thus the renewal and new creation came into effect (*HS II 611,12-612,4; 613,15-18/FH XIII 9-20; 51-54*). The reconciliation of heaven and earth initiated in the Incarnation finds fuller manifestation in the Resurrection (*HS II 611,11/FH XIII 8*). The embodied Saviour walked on earth to sprinkle mercy and fill it with hope. He made peace (*šaynā*) between the heavenly and the earthly. He put an end to the strife that the serpent had set up and reconciled Adam who was at enmity with God (*SMS 812,17-20/FH XVI 87-91*). The Ascension of the risen Lord is his high priestly entrance into the hidden tabernacle, where he himself is the offering, High Priest and libation, to reconcile humanity with his Father (*SMS 831,17-20/FH XVI 481-484*).

Jacob of Serugh speaks about the reconciliation as an actualized fact in Christ and the realization of the same depends on the individual's response to the mysteries of Christ. We find the virgin Mary, Joseph, holy Simeon, John the Baptist, and the Apostles reconciling themselves with 'the road of salvation' envisaged by Christ through a sort of better understanding of the road of Christ either through the angel (*FH I 167-418; 691-762*) or

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. The section on 'Forty Days' Fasting' in chapter two (section E).

through the Spirit (*FH V 69–82*), or through the instruction of Christ (*FH VI 181–330*). In this reconciliation Christ has not merely brought humanity to the pre-fall state but to the original marriage-feast through the betrothal and entry into the bridal chambers. It is evident that for Jacob the cave of Bethlehem, the Jordan river and the burial tomb are in fact bridal chambers. In a sense the actualization of the betrothal and marriage feast is the apex of reconciliation and from another aspect it is the attainment of salvation. Thus the reconciliation is fulfilled by Christ by his stay in three staging posts (*'wāwne*), in the womb of the virgin, that of Jordan and that of Sheol. Jacob writes:

He completed his whole course by three staging posts:  
 he resided in the virgin and came to birth, though he was God;  
 again baptism received him, and yet he was God;  
 and he descended to Sheol, and the world recognized that he  
 was God.

*(HS III 593, 11–14)*<sup>91</sup>

Mar Jacob in one of his letters writes, “He resided in three staging posts—in the womb of the virgin, on the bank of the Jordan, and in the city of death—for his intention was to enter this third staging post, since it was there that Adam was bound ...” (*Ep XXXVI*).<sup>92</sup>

#### **D. THE CHRISTOCENTRIC SACRAMENTAL WORLD-VISION**

The progressive divine self-revelation reaches its perfection in Christ who is the perfect self-revelation of God’s mercy to humanity. Christ became the road of humanity’s reconciliation and salvation. The Christocentric sacramental world-vision stands as the key to the symbolic theological approach as well as the typological net-work perceived through the discerning vision of the history of salvation by the early Syriac writers.

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<sup>91</sup> *tr.* Brock, “Baptismal Themes,” 326 (n. 4).

<sup>92</sup> CSCO 110 (syri 57), p. 263,18–21; *tr.* Brock, “Baptismal Themes,” 326 (n. 4).

### 1. The Sacramental Presence of Christ in the Types and Mysteries

The symbolic vision of the early Syriac Christian theology is intrinsically related to the typological and sacramental vision of the created world and its history. The basic reason is that the world is the creation of the Divinity and hence God has infused everywhere his signs and symbols in the creation. Ephrem brings out this clearly in one of his *Hymns on Virginity*:

In every place, if you look, his symbol is there,  
and when you read, you will find his types.  
For by him were created all creatures,  
and he engraved his symbols upon his possessions.  
When he created the world,  
he gazed at it and adorned it with his images.  
Streams of his symbols opened, flowed and poured forth  
his symbols on his members.

(*HVir* 20:12)<sup>93</sup>

As humanity forms part of the created world and its history, any knowledge regarding the Creator and his designs is possible only through a participative engagement and reciprocity with the divine realities revealed in the created world.<sup>94</sup> In fact the created world has many things to offer to humanity as means to learn about the Creator and his purpose. Ephrem calls this role of the created world as its witnessing to God. It is a significant factor in Ephrem's theological approach because he sets the witnessing power and the pedagogical role of the created world on par with that of the Scriptures. Hence, he holds that God has given two books, the Nature and the Scripture, for humanity's use. He writes:

In his book Moses described the creation of the natural world,  
so that both Nature and Scripture might bear witness to the  
Creator:  
Nature, through man's use of it, Scripture, through his reading  
of it.

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<sup>93</sup> CSCO 223 (syri 94), p. 70; tr. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian*, 348–9.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 43, 46.

These are the witnesses which reach everywhere,  
 they are to be found at all times, present every hour,  
 confuting the unbeliever who defames the Creator.

(HPar 5:2)<sup>95</sup>

Both Nature and Scripture are replete with mysteries/symbols which the early Syriac fathers call *rāzē*. Generally the mysteries/symbols (*rāzē*) in the Scriptures are called *tupsā* (types). *Rāzē* function to reveal and to make the invisible understood through the visible. Ephrem explains this in one of his *Hymns on Faith*:

He [*God*] painted hidden things on the revealed things  
 so as to make manifest the invisible through the visible;  
 and he engraved his symbols on the trees  
 so as to explain the incomprehensible through the  
 comprehensible.  
 For he interpreted for us even difficult matters  
 through easy matters so that we might understand through  
 them easily;  
 and also the difficult matters through ordinary matters.  
 Behold, he explained to us that we might understand that he is  
 the Son.  
 For then our Lord is also God,  
 the righteous perceived, the unbelieving [perceive] not even his  
 Father.  
 The Scriptures proclaim that the Father is God  
 and the Son [*too*] is God: Godless is the [God]-renouncing  
 people.

(HFid 76:11–16)<sup>96</sup>

From the above quotation it is clear that in the symbols the symbolized is inherent and is fully active. This particular aspect of the symbol confirms that every symbol contains the actual presence of that which it symbolizes.<sup>97</sup> The symbols of the nature stand as

<sup>95</sup> CSCO 174 (syri 78), p. 16; tr. Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, 102–3.

<sup>96</sup> CSCO 154 (syri 73), pp. 233–4.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. E. Beck, “Symbolum-Mysterium,” pp. 29–30; S. P. Brock, *Syriac Spirituality*, p. 55, (also n. 7 of the same article).

pledges of Christ and the scriptural types give interpretations about Christ (*HVir* 21:7). Thus for Ephrem a stream of symbols flow into Christ. He writes in one of his *Hymns on Virginity*:

This stream of symbols was unable to cleave  
 the Sea into which it fell and to flow toward another  
 since the Sea of truth received it.  
 Since it is a wondrous gulf, all creatures  
 cannot fill it. It confines all of them  
 but is not confined by them.  
 The prophets poured into it their glorious symbols.  
 Priests and kings poured into it their wondrous types.  
 All of them poured into all of it.  
 Christ was victorious and rose up. By His explanations for  
 symbols,  
 by His interpretations for similies, He, like the sea,  
 will receive into Himself all the streams.

(*HVir* 9:7–10)<sup>98</sup>

In the history of salvation one symbol carries the Christ-mystery to another and all are becoming perfect in Christ (*HVir* 9:12–15; 21:4). Jacob of Serugh speaks of the carrying of Christ-symbols in his homily on Samson.<sup>99</sup> As Ephrem holds, the symbols of Christ are necessary because no one is saved without the symbols of Christ (*CH* 26:5). All Old Testament symbols, although they feature earlier in their appearance, received their power from Christ who is simultaneously and inwardly active in all his symbols. Jacob finds Christ as the very foundation and the active power behind all mysteries. Hence, he explains:

The wearied ship of prophecy carried the mysteries;  
 as if to a haven which is full of peace, it reached our Lord.  
 And the merchants of the apostolate entered and carried from  
 there

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<sup>98</sup> CSCO 223 (syri 94), p. 32; tr. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian*, 302.

<sup>99</sup> See a relevant passage quoted in chapter one (section F,2,a), under “Jacob’s Orientations to the Scriptures”.

the riches to the people and they went out and distributed in the regions.

(*HS II 364,9–12/FH VIII 357–360*)

The ministry of the apostles starts from Christ, the haven of mysteries and treasures. The apostolic ministry inherited the actualized mysteries and symbols of the prophecy through Christ. It is in effect the risen Lord continuing his work through the apostles. At the Mount of Olives Christ gave his peace to his apostles so that he might be with them. So also they were given the great sign of the Trinity for redemption and the oil for signing (*SMS 818,1–8; 819,4–7/FH XVI 195–202, 219–222*). The gift of tongues given in the Upper Room shows that it is Christ who speaks through his disciples as the skilful teacher (*HS II 684, 2–3*). The two sacraments that are dynamically projected in the history of salvation and are operative in the ministry of the Church and in the life of the individual Christians in this respect are Baptism and Eucharist.

## 2. Christocentric Vision of Salvation History and the Titles of Christ

In the ministries of the teaching, guiding and sanctifying of the apostolate Christ himself is sacramentally present. There are a few titles of Christ that can very well explain this sacramental presence and the efficacy of Christ throughout the history of salvation. They are symbolic titles that highlight the Christocentric vision of salvation history.

### a. *Christ, 'the Sea'*

Behind the depiction of Christ as Sea stands the firm conviction that Christ is the source, meaning, efficacy and the final goal of all salvific symbols of both Nature and the Scripture. Hence, Christ is called 'the Lord of the Symbols', "Praise to the Son, the Lord of symbols, who fulfilled every symbol at his resurrection" (*Azym 3 response*).<sup>100</sup> The whole of the Old Testament with its symbols of the

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<sup>100</sup> CSCO 248 (syri 108), p. 6; *tr.* Brock, *The Harp of the Spirit*, 38.

kings, priests and prophets, was pouring into Christ, the sea of symbols. Ephrem writes:

Therefore, the sea is Christ who is able to receive  
 the sources and springs and rivers and streams  
 that flow forth from within scripture (*HVir 9:12*).  
 For it is Christ who perfects its symbols by his Cross,  
 its types by his body, its adornments by his beauty,  
 and all of it by all of him!

(*HVir 9:15*)<sup>101</sup>

Pearl, Olive tree and Oil (*HVir 4–6*) are a few natural symbols of Christ, the Saviour. Many wombs conceived the Only-Begotten to bring him into manifestation (*HVir 6:8*): the Scriptures by their types and Nature through its symbols and Mary by conceiving him in flesh and providing him limbs. Thus the mysteries sown in the Scripture, Nature and history, which are called ‘sources’, ‘springs’ and ‘streams’ by Ephrem were flowing towards Christ as to the true ‘harbour’ (*HVir 4:4*). All these types and symbols have their existence only because of their roles as witnesses to their Lord. Ephrem writes in one of his *Hymns on Epiphany*:

In Eden and in the world, are parables of our Lord; and what  
 tongue can gather,  
 the similitudes of his mysteries ? For, He is figured all of Him  
 in all things.  
 In the Scriptures he is written of; on Nature He is impressed;  
 His crown is figured in kings, in prophets His truth, His  
 atonement in priests.  
 In the rod was He of Moses, and in the hyssops of Aaron, and  
 in the crown of David:  
 to the prophets [pertains] his similitude, to the Apostles his  
 Gospel.  
 Revelations beheld Thee, proverbs looked for Thee, mysteries  
 expected Thee,  
 similitudes saluted Thee, parables showed types of Thee.

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<sup>101</sup> CSCO 223 (syri 94), p. 33 (for both citations above); *tr.* McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian*, 303.

The covenant of Moses looked forward to the Gospel:  
all things of old time, flew on and alighted thereon, in the new  
Covenant.

Lo! the prophets have poured out on Him, their glorious  
mysteries;

the priests and kings have poured out upon Him, their  
wonderful types:

they all have poured [them] out on all of Him.

Christ overcame and surpassed, by His teachings the mysteries,  
by His interpretations the parables; as the sea into its midst  
receives all streams.

For Christ is the sea, and He can receive the fountains and  
brooks,

the rivers and streams, that flow from the midst of the  
Scriptures.

(*Epiph* 4:18–25)<sup>102</sup>

Jacob of Serugh adopts many of the insights of Ephrem in exegetico-homiletical contexts. In the homily *On the Baptism of Our Redeemer* (*HS I* 167–193/*FH VI*) he visualizes Christ as an ocean (*ūqyānos*) into which all mysteries flow as streams and rivers. As the waters hurry to the sea, yet they do not make the sea abound; the running streams and rivers seem to enrich the sea, but the fact is just the opposite. The sea stands as the source and sustenance of the streams. In the like manner the mysteries ran to Christ (*HS I* 192,2–193,1/*FH VI* 505–524), who is the source and sustenance of all symbols and mysteries. Elsewhere Jacob finds Christ as the peaceful haven into which prophecy carries all mysteries. From Christ, who is the source and mediator of the covenants the riches are being taken up by apostles, the merchants, to distribute among the regions (*HS II* 364,1–18/*FH VIII* 349–366). All mysteries either of the Old or of the New Testament are in fact active solely because of the power of Christ inherent in them. It is in Christ they

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. CSCO 186 (syri 82), p. 157: This portion is an addition to *Epiph* 4:1–17 as found in Ms. J (Ms. Brit. Mus. add. 14506). This addition (*Epiph* 4:18–25) is in fact composed of *HVir* 8:2–6 + 9:2,9,10,12; *tr.* Johnston, *NPNF*, XIII, 272.

have their fuller revelation. This is made clear quite symbolically in the homily, *On the Veil on Moses' Face* (Ex 34:33–35):

That veil of Moses openly cries out to the entire world  
 that the words of Scriptures are likewise veiled:  
 Moses is the model of all that is uttered in prophecy,  
 providing a type for the veiled character of the Old Testament.  
 That veil was only removed with our Lord  
 in whom all secrets were explained to the entire world.

(*HS III 287, 3–8*)<sup>103</sup>

According to Mar Jacob the very stammering of Moses is a symbol of the veiled nature of all Old Testament prophecies and it was through Christ that veil has been removed and again through Christ the stammering tongue of Moses has been released to speak out clearly (*HS III 297, 6–17*).<sup>104</sup>

### ***b. Christ, 'the Fountain'***

The images 'Fountain' and 'Treasury/Treasure' go together. They depict pre-eminently the life-giving power of the Divinity in the incarnate Son and in the Scriptures.<sup>105</sup> With regard to the triune God these images are widely used to depict the abundance of divine mercy, the inexhaustible source of grace, and the eternal source of life.<sup>106</sup> Christ is the manifest source of the divine mercy that is abundant and inexhaustible. In the *Odes of Solomon* (*Odes 30*), *Acts of Judas Thomas*,<sup>107</sup> and in Aphrahat (*Dem XIV 39*) Christ is named as 'the Source of Life' and 'Fountain'. Ephrem calls the incarnate Son 'the Fountain of Life';<sup>108</sup> "Glory to you, who clothed yourself in the body of mortal Adam, thereby making it a fountain

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<sup>103</sup> "On the Veil on Moses' Face"; *tr.* Brock, "On the Veil of Moses," 74 (= *Syriac Spirituality*, 76).

<sup>104</sup> "On the Veil on Moses' Face"; ET by Brock, "On the Veil of Moses," 79 (= *Syriac Spirituality*, 82).

<sup>105</sup> Cf. *CECI* 18–19.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Bou Mansour, *La Pensee Symbolique*, 193–9.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. *AAA* (1968<sup>R</sup>), pp. 178–9; Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas*, 84 (n. 37).

<sup>108</sup> Cf. *HNat* 2:10; *HFid* 32:3; Armenian Hymns 49:8.

of life (salvation) for all mortals” (*SdDN* 9).<sup>109</sup> Christ is the fountain from Mary as explained by Ephrem:

From the thirsty earth gushes forth a Spring  
sufficiently to satisfy the thirst of the peoples.  
From a virgin womb as if from a rock,  
sprouted the Seed from which harvests have come.

(*HNat* 4:84–85)<sup>110</sup>

In Jacob of Serugh the exegesis of the piercing of the side of Christ in Jn 19:34 is based on the imagery of the ‘Fountain’.<sup>111</sup> By the issuing forth of ‘blood and water’ Eucharistic and baptismal symbols are introduced. How Jacob reviews the whole history of salvation from the primordial Paradise to the eschatological Paradise by turning on this single episode as a fulcrum is already seen.<sup>112</sup> The piercing of the side of Christ is reminiscent of all sources of life, such as the birth of Adam from the virgin earth, Eve from the side of Adam, the Church, Baptism and Eucharist from the pierced side of Christ. Baptism is the new Eve, new mother, and the source of the new creation. Church is born from the side of Christ and lives on through Baptism and Eucharist which issue from the Fountain on Golgotha (*HS II* 589; *III* 299,11–300,4; 320,10–19).

### **c. Christ, ‘the Heir’**

The usage of the title ‘the Heir’ for Christ by Jacob is seen as an innovation in the Syriac tradition. By a deeper analysis of early Syriac Christian texts it can be seen that the insight leading to this usage is seen in the Syriac view of the creation of Adam in the resemblance of the future corporeality of the Son and above all in the divine image. From this insight Jacob creatively adopts the title

<sup>109</sup> Cf. CSCO 270 (syri 116), p. 8; ET by Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 88.

<sup>110</sup> CSCO 186 (syri 82), p. 33; tr. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian*, 96.

<sup>111</sup> For a rather comprehensive analysis of this theme, see Brock, “Mysteries Hidden in the side of Christ,” 462–72; Murray, “The lance which re-opened Paradise,” 224–34.

<sup>112</sup> See the section on ‘God’s Mercy Seeking Adam ...’ in chapter three (section C,1).

‘the Heir’ both to develop his catechesis as well as to compose his vision of salvation in Christ and thus enriches the early Syriac Christian tradition. Jacob envisages Christ as the Heir (*yārta*)<sup>113</sup> from the belief that the Son has equality with the Father. The Son together with his Father creates and possesses everything as the Heir of the Father (Heb 1:2). The divine image accorded to Adam/humanity, especially the resemblance of the Son which Adam was carrying, is of focal importance.<sup>114</sup> The Son comes down in search of this image. In this search the ambassadors and servants of the Son are co-workers. The whole question of salvation depends on the discerning understanding of the person of Christ, the Heir of the Father, and his servants. Christ should be recognized as the true Son and Heir. Jacob sets all this against the background of the parable of ‘the wicked tenants of the vineyard’ (Mt 21:33–46 *et par.*), which has a wider salvation historical import. He brings out this allusion quite clearly in the following couplets:

Read in the prophets and truly learn from them  
that there is a Son, the Heir of the Father, but you are  
despising.

All the prophets have prophesied about his coming  
through various types; they pointed him out symbolically,  
that the Heir would come and make the captives return from  
the captivity.

Everything that had been destroyed would be redeemed (Jn  
3:17; 12:47)

with the blood of the Only-Begotten, Son of God;  
the captives were redeemed from the captivity.

He, the Son of the King, extended his hands on Golgotha,  
for the whole creation was enslaved consequent to its debt.

(HCJ III 289–98)<sup>115</sup>

The argument behind this imagery is that all the prodigies worked out in the history of Israel were done by the Son and that

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<sup>113</sup> See Jacob’s use of this title in his festal homilies, chapter four (section B,3,b) “The Titles of Christ”.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. *QHCI 185–206* [CSCO 508 (syri 214), pp. 11–12].

<sup>115</sup> *PO* 38, pp. 105–6.

should be recognized. The Son demands proper wages for all his works and from the part of humanity the apt response and the payment of wages would be the needed recognition (*HCJ III 280–284*). Christ, the incarnate Son, is labouring to acquire his heritage as the Patriarch Jacob did for both of his wives (Gen 29:15–30). But unlike the Patriarch Jacob who was made a son-in-Law by the pagan Laban, Christ is really the Son and the true Heir of the Father (*HCJ III 293–304*). As he is the true Son all peoples of the earth are his heritage and he is given the staff of iron to graze them (Ps 2:7–9). He is also given the key of the house because he is diligent for the peoples of his Father (*HCJ III 303–304*). By failing to recognize this diligence the Jews rejected him (*HCJ V 73–74*). Hence, Jacob of Serugh writes:

He let a spiritual drink flow for it [*the Vine-Shoot from Egypt*]  
 from Mount Sinai (Ex 17:1–6)  
 and he sent forth for it the rivers of the prophets of the Father  
 and following all these spiritual favours  
 the Heir came and tasted its (*her*) grapes, but behold, bitter.  
 He sought wine in it, but found vinegar instead of wine (Mt  
 27:48 *et par*);  
 He drank the vinegar and uprooted the chosen vine that he  
 planted.

(*HCJ V 95–100*)<sup>116</sup>

Through his nativity as the ‘Star of the house of Jacob’ the Heir shone forth and became the head of the peoples of the earth (*SMS 795,5–6/FH III 99–100*). This Heir snatched away his possessions and made Adam enter into Paradise (*SMS 767,19–20/FH I 1001–2; SMS 807,15–16/FH III 360–361*). He is the Heir without conjugal union who manifested himself in the Nativity (*SHF I 28/FH IV 28*). The same Heir stands as the author and intermediary between the Law and the Gospel during the Transfiguration (*HS II 372,17–20/FH VIII 537–540*). But this betrothed Heir from Sinai stands rejected at Zion on account of the idolatry and adultery of the Nation (*HS I 450,1–2/FH X 101–102; SHF IV 24,30,33/FH XI 24,30,33*). Yet the true Heir of the

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<sup>116</sup> *PO* 38, p. 143.

Father by his suffering carried the great burden. Finally the Mighty One of the centuries repaid the debt incurred by the deed of accusation of Eve (*SHF V 4/FH XII 4*), which none of his servants managed to pay back (*SHF V 6/FH XII 6*), and thus he redeemed all.

***d. Christ, ‘the Mediator’***

The title of Christ, ‘Mediator’ (*meṣ‘āyā*) is often seen in early Syriac literature through allusions to his High Priestly role. The mediating role of Christ is seen by Ephrem against the evil mediator who deviated Adam/humanity from God and engendered enmity between them. Hence, Christ comes as the true Mediator who reconciles and justifies all (*CEC XXI 1*).<sup>117</sup> Jacob of Serugh uses this title of Christ directly and by allusions in his festal homilies in order to describe the efficacy of the saving acts of Christ. The frequent usage of this title of Christ by Jacob is with a catechetical thrust and thus he enriches the Syriac tradition by providing the various nuances and applicability of this title of Christ. The title ‘Mediator’ (*meṣ‘āyā*),<sup>118</sup> covers the functional aspects of all his salvific activities both indirectly through his ambassadors/servants and directly in person through his incarnate state. The functions of the Mediator are those of reconciliation through renewal and restoration. These essentially involve redemption that leads to fuller life.

On the day of the Nativity the heavenly and the earthly became mingled in giving praise with the same chants. This provides proof of the reconciliation between heaven and earth through their single Mediator (*SMS 764,12–765,14/FH I 931–954; SHF I 5/FH IV 5*). Through the Nativity the world became a new creation and the enslaved woman, the symbol of the enslaved humanity, became released from the ministry of idolatry (*SMS 769,8–9; 770,2–3/FH I 1033–34; 1049–50*). At the presentation of our Lord in the temple holy Simeon recognized and acknowledged

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<sup>117</sup> For an ET see McCarthy, *Commentary on Diatessaron*, 322–3.

<sup>118</sup> For Jacob’s use of this title, see chapter four (section B,3,b) “The Titles of Christ”.

the mediating role of the Child wrapped in swaddling clothes (*HS V 451,15–454,7/FH V 83–138*). The Transfiguration of our Lord is a sign of his power over the Old and the New Testaments. He is the author and sustainer of both with all their institutions. Hence, Mar Jacob describes how Christ unites the Prophets and Apostles:

Then He gathered them together and united them to make  
 them equal  
 so that unanimously the two orders might bring forth His  
 praise.

He was the body and the two covenants, His hands,  
 and He was using both of them to show His power.  
 He led the apostles and summoned the prophets who  
 preceded them,  
 so that the Father would say with exalted voice who is His  
 Son.

He brought along Moses who is the head of prophecy  
 and John who is the splendour of the apostleship.  
 He called Elijah and joined him to Simon, the head of the  
 disciples,  
 so that the keys which he had received over the creation might  
 be commissioned.

*(HS II 362,9–18/FH VIII 315–324)*

As the Mediator of both covenants Christ exercises the power to repeal the punishments of Moses, an echo of the repealing of the expulsion of Adam from Eden. Through the entry of Moses and that of the robber, Christ worked the sign of the entry of all into Paradise (*HS II 360,2–11/FH VIII 265–274*). Moreover, by bringing along the dead through Moses, and the living through Elijah, there at Tabor he showed his powers over the dead and the living. He has power over the prophets and apostles and he is conferring on both of them the same Spirit and remains as the single Mediator.

Our Lord, as the Mediator, is the plenipotentiary of the Father and performs everything in the name of the Father. This becomes all the more evident in his death and resurrection by which he destroyed death and Sheol (*HS II 611,18–612,8/FH XIII 15–24; HS II 624,4–17; 632,5–20/FH XIV 1–14, 167–182*). In the Resurrection he exchanged the garment of glory with that of the dead effecting the new creation (*HS II 612,1–2; 613,15–16/FH*

XIII 17–18, 51–52). The unique Mediator by his death and resurrection achieved the reconciliation between heaven and earth (*HS II 611,10–11/FH XIII 7–8; SMS 819,10–19/FH XVI 225–234*).

***e. Christ, ‘the King of Kings’ and ‘the High-Priest’***

Christ is called ‘our holy Priest’ in the Acts of Judas Thomas.<sup>119</sup> The Odes of Solomon 20 presents an image of the priest offering in righteousness and purity of heart and lips; whether it refers to Christ or to the Odist himself is difficult to establish. However, the idea of a spiritual priesthood is looming large, echoing the priesthood of Melchizedek. Aphrahat calls Christ Pontiff.<sup>120</sup> Aphrahat also calls Christ *kābnā* (Priest) typically holding the Aaronic office (*Dem XVII 11/PS I/813,11*). Christ as the ‘High Priest’ is designated by *rabbā d-kumrē* by Jacob of Serugh in the Festal Homilies in order to stress the sacerdotal priesthood with the efficacy of the redemptive self-offering of Christ (*HS V 448,15; 451,10; 463,10/FH V 19,78,328; HS I 177,4; 192,17/FH VI 195,520; SMS 828,6; 829,7; 831,17/FH XVI 409,431,481*).

One of the specialities of the Syriac tradition is that it emphasizes Christ’s reception of the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist at Jordan (*Dem VI 289,22; XXI 964,15–17; XXIII 65,4–5*). This transmission is through the Holy Spirit (*Dem XXI 960,24–7*). Ephrem establishes the apostolic succession against the heretics through the uninterrupted succession of priesthood from the Old Testament to Christ and then to the apostles (*CH 22:19*). The Diatessaron Commentary provides an insight describing the happy blending of the reception of Kingship and Priesthood by Christ through his second birth which is according to the lineage of Israel. Christ, being God-man, holds in himself both the spiritual priesthood enlightened in Melchizedek and through his human birth the Aaronic priesthood by inheritance from the family of

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<sup>119</sup> Cf. *AAA* (1968<sup>R</sup>), p. 282.

<sup>120</sup> *mšamšānā qadišā* = the holy minister/priest; cf. *Dem XIV 39/PS I 684,14*; Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 166.

Adam.<sup>121</sup> This could be the insight provided by the following passage:

The Spirit which rested in him during his baptism attested that he was the shepherd, for he had received the prophecy and priesthood through John. He had [already] received the kingdom of the house of David through being born *of the house of David*. He received the priesthood of the house of Levi through a second birth, by the baptism of the son of Aaron. Whoever believes that his second birth was in the world cannot doubt that, through his later birth by John's baptism, [the Lord] received the priesthood of John. Although many were baptized on that day, the Spirit descended and rested on one person only, so that he might be distinguished from everyone else by a sign, he who was indistinguishable in appearance from all other men. Because the Spirit had come down [on him] at his baptism, the Spirit was given through his baptism.

(*CEC IV 3*)<sup>122</sup>

Ephrem mentions Christ's reception of priesthood also from holy Simeon in the temple (*SdDN 53–54; Resur I 1,9,12*) and he provides a more total view of the handing down of the priesthood from Adam to the apostles through Christ (*CH 24:22*). Melchizedek was identified as Shem, son of Noah, according to Ephrem, and thus through Noah Melchizedek is related to Adam who was created a priest.<sup>123</sup>

Jacob of Serugh too, basing himself on the insights of Ephrem, gives a total picture of the tradition of the priesthood from Adam, through the OT, to Christ, the apostles and the Christian faithful. In the festal homilies of Mar Jacob a catechetical understanding of the mystery of Christ's priestly office is explained

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<sup>121</sup> This inheritance of Christ is in a wider sense and it does not prejudice the official cultic priesthood mentioned in Heb 7:16; 8:4.

<sup>122</sup> *tr.* McCarthy, *Commentary on Diatessaron*, 85.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 180 (n. 2). Even though Jacob of Serugh gathers much insights of Ephrem the identification between Melchizedek and Shem does not seem to be held by Jacob.

rather than one based on anti-heretic or anti-Jewish polemics. In many respects Mar Jacob adds flesh to the insights of Ephrem through new exegetical contexts. Hence behind the festal homilies we find a happy blending of the double lineage of the priesthood of Christ, one through his birth in the lineage of Aaron and the other through his being, as the Son of the Father, retaining the perfect priesthood typified in Melchizedek. Thus Christ is seen as fulfilling all the norms of the priesthood of the Law and then bringing in the perfection of the priesthood of Melchizedek. Moreover, Melchizedek is king and priest at the same time. He was king of himself and his offering was his own self typifying the offering of Christ (*HS V 155,15–159,16; II 201,11–202,18*).

### 3. The Sacraments and the Church

Jacob does not give any definition of the Church as it is a factor of the divine-human relationship. He speaks of the Church mainly in terms of apostolate and apostolic preaching, not in juridical and institutional terms but rather in charismatic terms based on the gifts of the Spirit. It is something more experiential on the subjective level, which is far beyond the definable objective level. In a sense the Church is a level of the experiential realization of the divine-human relationship initiated by the divine mercy that reveals itself in the Incarnation, redemption and salvation. This relationship that reaches up to eternal life and bliss is well described through the nuptial imagery. God devises the marriage feast and makes his plan known to the generations (*HS I 167,1–4/FH VI 1–4*). Divine mercy wants to let humanity participate in the divine goodness. Jacob describes how humanity is given to understand this divine plan and the realization of the same. This understanding of humanity, based on the divine solicitude and human response, has been made perfectly tangible and actualized in Christ. Hence, the identity of the Church is well founded on its relationship to the incarnate Son.<sup>124</sup> Humanity has been given to understand the saving acts of Christ depicted in types and symbols in the Old Testament and later in their actualization in the life of

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<sup>124</sup> Cf. Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 159.

Christ. The saving power of the risen Lord is continued through the sacraments, instituted by Christ, as milestones on the road of salvation. Among those sacraments, baptism and Eucharist play prominent roles as they are divine institutions that initiate and nurture divine-human relationship which needs continued renewal and revitalization on the side of humanity.

In Jacob's concept of salvation history the Old Testamental types were leading to Christ and the sacraments instituted by Christ are again 'milestones' on the way to the Kingdom. As the mystery of the Son was behind the types of the Old Testament so also Christ is the source and power behind the sacraments. Hence, they stand as New Testament counterparts to the Old Testament types.<sup>125</sup> Thus Baptism and Eucharist play central roles in the life of the Church and for that matter in the life of the individual Christian. In concise terms according to Jacob, baptism makes one enter into Paradise and Eucharist is the fruit of the Tree of Life, that one eats to acquire life or salvation (*SHF I 14/FH IV 14*). Ephrem too emphasizes the fact that baptism makes one entitled to Eucharist (*HV'ir 7:8*).

### ***a. Baptism and the New Life***

The various themes and aspects of baptism in the Syriac tradition in general are rather well explained through monographs and articles.<sup>126</sup> With regard to Jacob of Serugh's views the synthesis of S. P. Brock is insightful, shedding light on the type of 'supra-historical' way of thinking and the originality therein.<sup>127</sup> The major concern is to see how Jacob's views on baptism elucidate his Christocentric sacramental vision. In a sense, baptism re-enacts the whole of salvation history in three steps: the sacramental functioning of the baptism of Christ, and for that matter, the

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<sup>125</sup> Cf. Beck, "Eucharistie bei Ephräm," 65–6.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Pierce, "Themes in the Odes of Solomon," 35–59; Duncan, *Baptism in the Demonstrations of Aphraates*; Beck, "Baptême chez saint Ephrem"; Saber, *La Théologie Baptismale*; Brock, "Some Important Baptismal Themes."

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Brock, "Baptismal Themes," 325–47 (esp. p. 326); Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 239–78.

shadows of Christian baptism in Old Testament types and symbols; the very institution of baptism in the saving activities of Christ; and the sacrament of baptism in the life of the Church.

There are a lot of OT images, types and symbols of liberation and entry into the promised land that depict baptism. The crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 14:21–31), after the liberation from the slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt which is a symbol of slavery and sin, death and the evil one (*Dem XII 8–10*), is a prominent type of Christian baptism. Another type is the crossing of the river Jordan (Josh 3) in order to enter into the promised land under the leadership of Joshua (*Epihb 1:6; 6:1–6*). The crossing of the Red Sea depicts the negative aspects of the shedding off of slavery, and the crossing of Jordan the positive aspect of the entry into life, grace etc. Aphrahat refers to Christ's baptism at Jordan as well. Aphrahat's types of baptism in the OT are: Jacob's watering of the flocks of Rachel (Gen 28:11 ff; *Dem IV 6/PS I 148–149*), and Jacob's removing of the stone of the well for the free access of the flocks towards water. The institution of baptism is depicted by the washing of feet (Jn 13:6; *Dem XII 10/PS I 529–532*), as our Lord washed the feet and gave his body and blood (Baptism + Eucharist; *Dem XII 6/PS I 517*). Baptism is death and resurrection (Rom 6:3–11; *Dem XII 10/PS I 528–29*) as well as rebirth and regeneration (Jn 3:5; *Dem VI 14/PS I 292–293*).

While Aphrahat and Ephrem stress much on the typology of the crossing of the Red Sea and that of Jordan, Jacob of Serugh has a predilection for some imageries that have more to do with Adam-Christ complementarity seen in Christ's institution of baptism through the baptism in Jordan as well as by his suffering and death on the Cross. The efficacy of baptism through the salvific activities of Christ is brought into focus through various types<sup>128</sup> that are employed in the catechesis of Mar Jacob in his homilies. Primarily one has to note Jacob's distinction between the washings of OT, the baptism of John the Baptist and the baptism in Holy Spirit and Fire (Mt 3:11) established by Christ.<sup>129</sup> Thus Christ brings

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<sup>128</sup> For a detailed exposition of baptismal typologies in Jacob of Serugh see Brock, "Baptismal Themes," 340–3.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Mar Jacob's homily "On the Three Baptisms," *HS I 153–167*.

fulfilment and consummation to all earlier types. What Christ did has been the manifestation of the power that functions in 'sacred time' throughout the history of salvation. It is from Christ that all types and symbols absorb power and efficacy. Thus in the baptism of Christ we find the fuller manifestation of Adam/humanity becoming sons of God, in which, instead of all receiving a soul (Gen 2:7), the Holy Spirit is breathed in so as all might become spiritual children (*HS I 162,7–10*). Baptism is 'a mother', 'a virgin', and 'a womb' that gives birth to all in virginal fashion in order that they may become 'children of the Father' and may all call God 'Our Father' lovingly (*HS I 197,19–198,4*). By the image of this new birth-giving in baptism many things are alluded to: it is a sort of repairing of the damage done by Eve who is the cause of death. Mary, the virgin, gave birth to the Life-Giver, and Adam/humanity become children of God. In this new life-giving in baptism an antithetical parallelism is well explained typologically. It is between the opening of the side of Christ on the Cross (Jn 19:34) which gave birth to the Church, the bride, and baptism that generates living offspring in contrast with the opening of the side of Adam for the creation of Eve who caused the entry of death into humanity.

In the selection of OT types Mar Jacob clearly balances the very institution of baptism at two historical points in the life of Christ: one is that of Christ's baptism in Jordan and the other his suffering death on Golgotha. Related to baptism in the Jordan we find a type in Patriarch Jacob's betrothal to Rachel at the well of Haran, which also signifies Christ's betrothal to the Church of the gentiles (*HS III 213, 310–311*). Again in the same line 'the flocks conceiving before the rod' (Gen 30:39) is a type of baptism (*HCJ I 208*).<sup>130</sup> For Mar Jacob the exodus narratives depict more on God's betrothal to Israel and the later betrothal of Christ to the 'Church of the Nations', rather than the aspects of redemption from slavery which is more prominent in Aphrahat and Ephrem. Gideon too provides two types: 'the bowl full of dew' squeezed out of the fleece (Judg 6:38) is the baptismal font for the nations of the world

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<sup>130</sup> Regarding these types Jacob of Serugh depends much on Ephrem; cf. *CEC XXI 9*; *HV'ir 15:6*; *Epiph 7:1–3*.

(*HS III 312*); Gideon tests his men (Judg 7:1–7) in the waters which represent the tested waters of baptism (*HCJ IV 225–6; HS III 317*).<sup>131</sup> The washing of the priest who offers the sacrifice of the Red-heifer is a prominent type of baptism (Num 19: 7–10; *HCJ IV 203–4; HS III 307*). The black girl of Song of Songs 1:5 is a type of the gentiles betrothed to Christ, because from the Fire and Spirit of the baptismal waters she has changed her former colours and put on light from the divine waters (*HCJ IV 323 ff; HS I 206; SMS 823*). The good Samaritan who pours oil and wine (Lk 10:34) serves as a type of both baptismal anointing and Eucharist (*HS II 327, 17–20*). The pool of Bethzatha (Jn 5:2–9) and the healing of Timeus (Mk 10:46) serve as baptismal types signifying rebirth and the passing from darkness into light (*HS III 472, 2–21*). The woman who kneaded flour and water in the parable of the Kingdom of God (Mt 13:33) is a type of baptism (*HS III 416*). Again the woman who anointed Christ's feet (Lk 7:38 *et par*) by her action too serves as a type of baptism (*HS II 414, 18–21*). But there is also a type in which Mar Jacob finds significance for both the baptism at Jordan and Golgotha; it is the bird killed in an earthen vessel over running water (Lev 14:2–7; *HS III 224–242*) where the death and resurrection in baptism are signified by the killed bird and the new life of resurrection in the living bird that is set free.

With regard to the institution of baptism Jacob of Serugh finds a net-work of scriptural events which infuse meaning into each other. These start with his conception in the womb of the virgin Mary and go on till the coming of the promised Holy Spirit on the apostles on the day of Pentecost where the baptism in Fire and Spirit came into full manifestation. The inspiration behind this typological net-work is Ephrem's *HEcc* 36:2–5. While Ephrem mentions only Mary's womb, Jordan and the tomb, Mar Jacob extends it to the Upper Room as well (*HS II 679,11–680,3; 687,7–688,5*), showing that the promise of 'baptism in fire and Spirit' became fulfilled there. This shows his own originality in handling the inherited tradition. Christ's presence in the womb of Mary served as baptism for her (*SMS 740,10–13/FH I 429–432*). During Mary's visit to Elizabeth, the presence of Christ in the womb of

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<sup>131</sup> Cf. Aphrahat, *Dem* VII 21 (*PS I 348–349*).

Mary near John the Baptist, who is still in the womb, served as baptism for the Baptist (*SMS 743,13–18/FH I 495–500*). Christ's own baptism in Jordan is one of the focal points of Christian baptism where Jacob finds the Holy Spirit building the nest (*genmā*) for brooding over the baptismal waters (*HS I 185,12–13/FH VI 371–372*) through which all are born and are nurtured. The piercing of the side of Christ and the issuing of blood and water are the source for the Church of the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist. By all these instances Christ is the source of the sacramental redemption and salvation.

What has been made manifest in historical time at various stages in the life of the incarnate Son really function altogether effectively in 'sacred time'<sup>132</sup> in the administration of the sacrament of baptism in the Church in each individual case. Christ by his coming into the Jordan waters sanctified all waters of the world in potential. Hence, all baptismal fonts are made equal in power and effect to the waters of Jordan in 'liturgical time' or 'sacred time'. The types have become actualized in the antitype of the baptism of Christ and yet it still works as a mystery that carries along the power of Christ at all places and times in a meta-historical manner.

The presence of Christ in 'sacred' or 'liturgical' time is the key to understand the efficacy and results of baptism in the Church.<sup>133</sup> With this key of interpretation one is able to appreciate the deeper symbolic meaning of Jacob's integration of the Johannine view of baptism as 'a rebirth' and the Pauline view of baptism as 'death and resurrection' with Christ. Hence, Mar Jacob calls baptismal waters 'a furnace' (*kūrā*, *HS I 181,6/FH VI 281*) and 'a tomb' (*qabrā*, *HS I 181,10/FH VI 285*). Within 'sacred time' the baptism of Christ in Jordan and his death and resurrection are all simultaneously present to the one who receives baptism. Mar Jacob speaks of the everlasting presence of Christ with his apostles and disciples in the form of his peace, which is in fact sustenance from the Trinity

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<sup>132</sup> Cf. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 29–30 for an explanation on the implied sense of 'sacred' and 'historical' times in the Syriac writers, especially in Ephrem.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Brock, "Baptismal Themes," 326.

(*SMS 818,1–16/FH XVI 195–210*). Moreover, it is the activity of the Holy Spirit that works out the sanctification.

***b. The Eucharist in the Life of Christians and in the Church***

The sacramental presence of Christ, the incarnate Son, in the Church is well expounded and effectively understood through the Eucharist. The standard Syriac theological expression for Christ's manifestation in the body is his 'clothing of humanity', well attested in Aphrahat and Ephrem.<sup>134</sup> It was through this medium that Christ brought into effect the redemption and salvation. Hence, Aphrahat holds that it is through the body he put on that he liberated us from slavery and resurrected us so as to be with him (*Dem XXIII 50/PS II 97*). R. Murray sums up Ephrem's views on salvation through the Incarnation as the following: "... the whole dispensation of salvation has its source in the human body of Christ; that same body in which he healed men and rose again, he gave us in sacramental form (in 'mystery') to heal us, to incorporate us in him in the Church, and to give us a pledge of his Resurrection."<sup>135</sup>

In the Syriac tradition the bond between Baptism, Eucharist and the Church is viewed more on a charismatic level with much application to the life of the individual and the community. Primarily it is because of the efficacy of the gifts of the person and activities of the incarnate Son typified in the paschal lamb. Aphrahat explains all statutory prescriptions for the eating of the paschal lamb (*Ex 12*) as depictions of the needed purifications and the discipline for the eucharistic celebration.<sup>136</sup> Ephrem too speaks of how the baptized achieve the right to receive the body of Christ (*HVir 7:8; Crucif 4:16; Epiph 7:4, 8:17*).<sup>137</sup> Christ has mingled with us in our body and nourished us, as though a shepherd had become pasture for his sheep (*Epiph 3:17, 22*). Ephrem explains this deeper

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<sup>134</sup> Cf. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 70.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* 70.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. *Dem XII 9 (PS I 528)*.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Yousif, "L'Eucharistie chez Éphrem," 334–6.

mingling in the Incarnation and in the Eucharist in his hymn on Nativity 16<sup>138</sup> where Mary is made to speak out to the child Jesus:

When I see your outward image  
 before my eyes, your hidden image  
 is portrayed in my mind. In your revealed image  
 I saw Adam, but in the hidden one  
 I saw your Father who is united with you.  
 Have you shown your beauty in two images  
 to me alone ? Let bread and the mind  
 portray you. Dwell in bread  
 and those who eat it. In hidden and revealed [form]  
 let your Church see you as [does] the one who bore you.  
 (HNat 16:3–4)

Indeed, Child, your bread is far more honourable  
 than your body. For even the unbelievers  
 saw your body, but they do not see  
 your living bread. The distant ones rejoiced;  
 their portion surpassed that of the near ones.  
 Behold your image is portrayed with the blood of the grapes  
 upon the bread and portrayed upon the heart  
 by the finger of love with the pigments  
 of faith. Blessed is He who made  
 graven images pass away by his true image.  
 (HNat 16:6–7)<sup>139</sup>

Ephrem speaks again regarding the salvific power of Eucharist in his *Hymns on Faith* 10:

See, Fire and Spirit in the womb that bore you!  
 See, Fire and Spirit in the river where you were baptized!  
 Fire and Spirit in our Baptism;  
 in the Bread and the Cup, Fire and Holy Spirit!  
 Your Bread kills the Devourer who had made us his bread,

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<sup>138</sup> Cf. Beck, "Eucharistie bei Ephräm," 62–7.

<sup>139</sup> CSCO 186 (syri 82) pp. 83–4; tr. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian*, 149–50.

your cup destroys death which was swallowing us up.  
 We have eaten you, Lord, we have drunk you,  
 not to exhaust you, but to live by you.

(*HFid 10:17–18*)<sup>140</sup>

The typological connections of the expulsion of Adam from Paradise and the Cherub's sword with the pierced side of Christ for the re-entry of Adam/humanity to Paradise play a significant role in the Syriac understanding of both Baptism and Eucharist. Christ, the second Adam, receives the sword on his side and removes it to make all re-enter Paradise.<sup>141</sup> The blood and water that flowed from the opened side of Christ are symbols of Baptism and Eucharist, through which one enters Paradise and eats of the Fruit of the Tree of Life who is Christ himself. Mar Jacob takes up much vocabulary and imagery of the Eucharist, which have become a communal patrimony in the Syriac Church through Aphrahat and Ephrem. But the catechetical concerns in Mar Jacob put a specific accent on the self-giving of Christ through the Eucharist. Even though he develops his teaching mainly on the lines drawn by Ephrem, it is important to make a synthesis of Jacob's own views. This we do in the background of the history of salvation, in which Eucharist is viewed as the Fruit of Life contrasted with that fruit that caused the death of Adam (*HS II 238,11–20*). Our Lord is the Fruit of Life (*pērā d-ḥayyē*, *HS III 653,13–14*) in contrast to the basilisk (*ḥarmānā*) that killed Adam (*HS III 653,15–16*).

In the Incarnation of the Son 'the Fruit of the Tree of Life' has been set in the manger as nourishment to Adam/humanity (*SHF I 14/FH IV 14*). It is the merciful self-gift of God. Divinity reveals itself in the form of body and blood, typified in the 'Coal of Fire' of Isaiah 6:6 (*HS II 218,7ff*). The one who is by nature Fire presented himself in the form of bread and wine (*HS II 219,7–8*).<sup>142</sup> Humanity is allowed to take and eat this 'Coal of Fire' whereas

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<sup>140</sup> CSCO 154 (syri 73), pp. 51–52; *tr.* Murray, "A Hymn of St. Ephrem to Christ," 144.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Murray, "The Lance which re-opened Paradise," 224–34.

<sup>142</sup> Eucharist as 'Coal of Fire' in the Syriac tradition: cf. *CEC I 5; HNat 6:13–14; HFid 10:8–10*.

angels were not allowed to. Jacob finds the chariot in Ezekiel as the altar and the 'Coal of Fire' as the Eucharist (*HS IV 596,4-5. 8-9; 599,13-14*). The Eucharist is called 'Pearl' (*HS II 221,19-222,4*). The body and blood of the Son are pearls of life (*margānyātā d-ḥayyē*, *HS II 222,1-4*). These riches (*HS IV 597,12-13*) have been given to us in our state of need. In the reception of the Eucharist the Holy Spirit works the spiritual transformation (*HS I 545,16-17; AMS V 623,19-624,1*). Hence Jacob calls the communicants 'terrestrial angels' (*HS IV 607,16*) and the Church 'the heavenly Doctor' (*HS IV 609,8*). The wine poured out by the good Samaritan is a symbol of Eucharist (*HS II 327,17-18*) which Christ has given to the priest to cure the members of the Church (*HS II 328,2-3. 6-7; 329, 3-4. 13-14*).

The nature of God's self-gift in the Eucharist is more stressed in Jacob's treatment of the Old Testament types of the Eucharist: 'Paschal Lamb', 'Manna', 'Red-heifer', 'the bread of the presence' (Ex 25:30) and the bread and wine of Melchizedek.<sup>143</sup> The sprinkling of the blood on the door (Ex 12:21-28) is the cup of life (*HS III 275,3-4*). The earlier generations came into contact with the Father at Sinai and they ate and drank spiritually, but the later generations grasped the Son in Zion and he became food for them (*HS II 235,13-14*). Christ gives 'the bread of the perfect' instead of the 'milk of the Law' meant for the little children (1Cor 3:2; *SHF II 2/FH VII 2*). The burning of the red-heifer in a pure place (Num 19:9) and the sprinkling of its blood and ashes are all types of the Eucharist (*HS III 308,1-10*). In the Old Testament itself we find signs of the development from blood-sacrifices to bloodless self-offering of the bread of the presence and the bread and wine offered by Melchizedek (Gen 14:18). All these find their fulfilment in the self-offering of Christ, signified especially in the fraction of the bread (*HS I 536, 12-19; 537,1ff; 538,6ff*). The words of Jesus at the fraction of the bread begin a new practice by which all older practices were replaced through his body (*HS II 484,15 -485,9*;

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<sup>143</sup> Cf. "Homily on the Types and Symbols," *HS III 305-21*; "On the Red-Heifer," *HS III 242-59*; "On Melchizedek," *HS II 197-209* [ET by Thekeparampil, *Harp* 6 (1993), pp. 53-64]; see also Bou Mansour, *La Théologie de Jacques de Saroug*, Tome I, 287-97.

486,10–11. 16–22). The old paschal lamb gave way to the bread and body of Christ for the fullness of life (*HS II* 482,13–14; 483,9–10. 19–20).

## E. CONCLUSION

Among the early Syriac Christian writers the consciousness of their indebtedness to their communal patrimony is vivid. The inspiring light of the sacred Scriptures, the symbolic pattern of theological reflection and a few specific theological expressions are widely shared determinants of early Syriac theology. Jacob of Serugh sets in evidence his adherence to the tradition through his orientations to the Scriptures, his theological views and above all by his confession regarding his esteem for Ephrem. From another point of view this type of adherence indicates that even in their symbolic theological reflection the early Syriac Christian writers had a recognized pattern based on the scriptural revelation. The literal and historical factors of the Scriptures stand as basis for their reflection and hence, their theological views are not products of pure imagination or mere intellectual speculations, but objective spiritual patterns.

By selecting a few basic thought patterns; the Adam-Christ complementarity (theological anthropology), the road of salvation (soteriology), and the Christocentric sacramental world-vision (Christ-Mystery) we set Jacob's vision of the economy of salvation into three particular focal points. Through these focal points we traced Jacob's dependence on the Syriac tradition before him. Jacob is seen fully inheriting the Syriac consciousness that the Divinity is unapproachable and humanity is deficient. But divine mercy graciously revealed itself and that demands a proper response of recognition in love and the required theological reflection should be without 'investigation' or 'prying into'. This divine-human engagement through love enhances discernment that instills proper Christian living and practices. The spiritual discernment enables to see the invisible through the visible and the divine through the human. Precisely this enables one to see in Christ the power and function of the eternal, pre-existent Son for the salvation of humanity.

Mar Jacob, following Ephrem, took up the vision of divine pedagogy as the key factor between divine purpose (divine

economy) and human free will as well as the dynamic element between divine mercy and justice. Jacob also uses the key of pedagogy, like Ephrem, to explain the Paradise episode, especially the expulsion of Adam/humanity from Paradise and the merciful inquiry, "Where are you?", in order to make the fallen one return through learning. The early Syriac tradition, especially Ephrem, develops a synchronic pattern of vision regarding the return to Paradise by alluding to the repentant home-comings of OT personages. Jacob finds Israel as a whole undergoing divine pedagogy through five covenants. In Christ all covenants find their fulfilment and then the perfect teaching of salvation takes over the provisional 'milk of the Law'. Christ effects his teaching equally through his deeds and words. Moreover, in a sense, just like the prominent personages of the OT, the NT personages are also given timely instruction either by an angel, or through the Spirit, or by Christ himself. The metaphor of the 'robe of glory' depicts Adam-Christ complementarity. In this respect Jacob of Serugh is explicit in explaining the three staging posts, Incarnation, baptism and the resurrection from the tomb, whereby the fallen Adam/humanity has been re clothed with the 'robe of glory'.

Jacob inherits from Ephrem the salvation historical frame work of the metaphor of 'the way'. But in the exposition of it Jacob is more pastoral and catechetical in outlook. He describes the Way/Road as 'the Road of humility of the Son', because through the humility of the Son the arrogance of Adam and its consequences were repealed for justification and consequently Adam was saved. This justification and actualization took place on the road of the Law and in the incarnate Son. On the road of Christ the road of divine economy and the progressive path of divine teaching are meeting. The actualization of the economy through the path of divine teaching is depicted through the imageries of 'betrothal and marriage feast' and the 'renewal of the Kingdom and Priesthood'. Both these imageries are flexible enough to indicate divine-human relations in the history of salvation in their communitarian and individual levels. In Christ the ideal Kingdom, which was only reflected in David, and the actual and imperfect Kingdom met each other. So also in Christ the ideal Priesthood that was reflected in Melchizedek and the Levitical priesthood that needed perfection met each other. Only Christ who is perfect can bring together the ideally perfect and the actually

imperfect states of 'the bride'. In Jacob's catechetical and homiletical exposition the Syriac insistence on the assumption of the ideal and the actual states of the divinely instituted offices of Israel, especially the Kingdom and the Priesthood, by Christ in view of leading them to perfection is quite clear.

Adam's deviation from the path of justice and his enmity with God are prominent themes of Syriac theology. It is in that context the reconciliation achieved through Christ is explained. Through the catechetical exegesis Mar Jacob explains Christ's various staging posts on his incarnate road in order to reconcile, renew and make perfect all who are deviated, tarnished and thus in any way remained imperfect. In the Christocentric sacramental world-vision, Christ stands as the focal point where all types/symbols and the meaning and purpose of the whole divine economy become revealed and perceptible. Thus Christ stands as the symbol and the sacrament of divine-human encounter. This focal position of Christ in the history and the benefits of it are described analogically through the titles of Christ the Saviour, such as, the Sea, the Fountain, the Heir, the Mediator, King of kings, the High Priest, and so on. Just as the types and symbols effectively depicted the power of Christ, the Apostolate and the Church with the Sacraments effectively carry forward the benefits of the salvific acts of Christ, especially in the liturgical contexts. It is out of this aspect the liturgical feasts assume importance. Among the Sacraments Baptism and Eucharist assume importance because Baptism gives birth to new existence and the Eucharist nurtures that new life. Around baptismal typology Jacob is particular about stressing the new life in Christ. With regard to Eucharist Jacob stresses the self-offering of Christ, especially with the rich imagery of 'betrothal and marriage feast' that depicts the foretaste of celestial bliss leading to consummation of the economy of salvation.



## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

The principal concern of this study was to bring out a few main aspects of the economy of salvation in Christ as envisaged by Jacob of Serugh. The study is based on a select group of his festal homilies. Any study on such ancient texts, or for that matter any text of any period, has to consider the tradition in which they are embedded and transmitted. In a wider sense such studies are interpretations with due consideration to the horizon from which the texts had their inspiration and the perspectives with which they were composed. But the crucial question is that of with what norms and perspectives such studies and interpretations are made? Interpretations and value judgements can be made with norms and perspectives foreign to an author or otherwise with those that are evolved from the writings of the author himself. Since our intention was to bring out the theological views of Mar Jacob the attention was to abide by the concerns and orientations of Jacob's homilies. Therefore, we encounter Jacob of Serugh through his own terms and orientations rather than subjecting him to norms and perspectives that are foreign to his thought-patterns and approaches. In view of this goal the study was done in three parts by describing the horizon of the author, the theological teaching, and the factors that inspired and nurtured the theological vision of Jacob.

### **A. THE HORIZON OF THE WRITINGS OF JACOB OF SERUGH**

The social, political and religious ambient of the period of Jacob is beset with the lack of social unity due to political turbulence, social struggles against the imperial Byzantine rule as well as the religious conflicts in the context of Christological controversies. As a conscientious pastor of souls Jacob's primary preoccupation was for the unity of the Christian community which had been gravely

disturbed by diverse partisan tendencies. In pursuit of the unity of Christians, Jacob's first concern was the enhancing of the unity in faith which had been fatally wounded due to the Christological controversies. His letters in general and in some instances his homilies reflect his yearning for the unity at all levels of the Christian population (*HS V 466,9–10/FH V 389–390; HS II 633,19–635,2/FH XIV 201–206*).

Added to his theological convictions it was his ardent desire and the striving for Christian unity that made Jacob hold on to the Cyrilline Christology of unity in Christ and to the councils that taught the same dogma of unity, especially the first two councils (*Ep XVI, XVII*). Jacob could not agree to the formulation of Chalcedon in common with other exponents of the unity in Christ, the God-man. But rather than the dogmatic differences between the various groups of his times, the social and political antecedents of the Monophysite movement have to be given due consideration in order to understand the fuller context of Jacob's sympathies to that group. From the social, communitarian and religious point of view the rise of a separate hierarchy under Severus of Antioch, thanks to Anastasius' religious policy, seemed to Jacob as a prospect for wider Christian unity. Thus the dogmatic and social allegiance of Jacob sided with a type of Severian Christological position that stresses the 'single' incarnate nature of God the Word, which was thoroughly Cyrilline in outlook. Jacob is seen leaning towards this group in the conflicting social and religious situations of his times. This did not in any way align Jacob with any of the extremist views of Monophysitism (Eutychanism). He remained a peace-loving moderate 'Monophysite' in his dogmatic Christology. It is more proper to call him a Miaphysite in the wider spectrum of the then Christological discussion with the Antiochene and Alexandrian poles of the question.

On account of the particularities of his historical milieu Mar Jacob moved between two traditions: the early Syriac Christian tradition which he inherited and the views of the philosophically rational theology of the Greek Orient which he acquired from the milieu of his learning and ministry in the Church. In that context Jacob of Serugh became a witness to and a victim of the polarization in the early Syriac Christianity. Because of the increased Greek influence a cultural tension between the philhellenic attitudes and the Semitic roots of the Syriac

Christianity was visible. The composition of Mar Jacob's literary output was in such an environment. Other predominant factors to be noted regarding Jacob are his poetic talents, his theologically inspired prose and verse compositions, his pastoral solicitude combined with his ministry at the Chorepiscopal and Episcopal levels. The legendary aspects of the biographical tradition surrounding Jacob are the outcome of his fame during his life time and afterwards. The wider circulation and use of his writings are the best proof of his fame. The large collection of the extant manuscripts of his writings testifies all the more to his abiding influence. In such a context the fact that the later Syriac writers like Barhebraeus, Jacob of Edessa, Moses bar-Cepha, refer to Jacob's teachings remains quite notable.

As part of setting out the terms and orientations of Mar Jacob we have made an exposition of the ambience in which Jacob had to compose his homilies. Above all his talents as a preacher and poet are discernible. Those talents were instrumental to his designation as *Chorepiscopa* of the Church of the region of Hawra. It was during that period of ministry he composed a good number of his homilies. His homilies were destined for the simple faithful who needed guidance and edification of faith through homiletical persuasion. Therefore, the homilies of Jacob do not contain any sort of detached analysis or rationalistic philosophical reflections on divine realities but rather serve as invitations and exhortations in order to understand as well as to engage oneself with divine teachings that are aimed at transforming life (*SHF III 1-2/FH IX 1-2*). Jacob finds this type of guidance and teachings as the on-going divine teaching to humanity evolving from the Scriptures and endorsed by the command of Christ to proclaim the good news. In fact Jacob wanted to live on as a 'labourer of the Word', even after his death through the words of his homilies (*HS V 117, 1-6*).

## **B. JACOB'S THEOLOGICAL METHOD AND BIBLICAL EXEGESIS**

Within the purview of the theme of this study there is a closer look at the homiletical literature of Jacob. His theological approach and his mode of biblical exegesis are highlighted in chapter one. Our author clearly inherits the early Syriac Christian theological method, especially that which Ephrem has developed through his literary output. Mention needs to be made of Jacob's stress on the sense of

mystery and the needed mystical approach to religious realities. Moreover, in approaching the Divinity and divine realities Jacob inherited the mode of symbolic reflection that leads to mystical silence, and the significant typological patterns perceivable in the actualization and realization of salvation.

The symbolic mode of theological reflection of Mar Jacob has its roots in the sacramental world-vision of the early Syriac authors. Divine power and purpose are seen behind the created world which is destined to its intended perfection and consummation. Created Nature progresses under divine power through the instrumentality of humankind in relation to humanity's understanding of the divine power and purpose. This divine-human engagement is well depicted in the history of humanity as the history of salvation which is well recorded in the Scriptures. Jacob is eager to find the deeper meaning in the events and factors of the history of salvation which is filled with divine communications through the medium of symbols and types with a deeper sense of mystery. Due to that sense of mystery the symbols give rise to meditative reflection through faith and love. Such symbols scattered along in Nature and the Scriptures are replete with meaning and they are powerful and effective signs signifying the salvific reality of the saving acts of the Son. In the incarnate Son all those symbols and types find their actualization as all rivers flow to the sea, Christ, and they travel further to the realization in the Kingdom of heaven.

Syriac tradition neither gives any philosophical definition of its use of symbols nor do the early Syriac writers provide any pronounced theory of symbolism. But the implied sense in which they treat biblical symbols and types finds correspondence with modern philosophical definitions of symbols and their functions. A few notions of primary correspondence are the following: there is a deeper inner relationship between the signifying and the signified in the symbols. With regard to metaphysical and meta-historical matters, especially religious experiences, the best medium of perception and communication is that of symbols and paradoxes. One of the special marks of this correspondence is the inherent, so as to say, metaphysical relationship between the signifying signs/symbols and the signified reality. Here mention should be made of the Syriac insistence on the power and efficacy of the Son who is working through the OT types and through all

the salvific acts of his incarnate road, and in the Church and sacraments which are leading all people to the Kingdom. The 'eternal now' of the Son of God is discernible in the symbols and types, in the incarnate path of Christ and in the Church. The saving acts of the incarnate Son stand as the most tangible and clear expression of the invisible power of the Son. Such an economy of salvation is set for participative commemoration and realization through the liturgical feasts.

Inspired by the early Syriac tradition Jacob firmly declares the human inability to comprehend Divinity. The possible method of approach is a symbolic sort of discerning reflection and mystical-silence whereby one attains intuitive knowledge through the spirit (*SMS* 722,12–723,3/*FH I* 49–62; *HS II* 348,3–14/*FH VIII* 11–22). Thus the two distinct worlds of the material and spiritual levels are bridged by a mystical approach, which starts with discerning symbolic reflection and passes on to intuitive mystical comprehension. Jacob's approach to divine realities is basically symbolico-theological and not analytical or philosophically rational. This is because of his profoundly biblically-oriented theological reflection. He finds various signs and symbols in the Scriptures not as stray factors, but as various ascending steps and interrelated stages of the divine pedagogy leading to salvation. This insight of his emerges primarily from his biblical understanding of the divine purpose in the creation of the world. Hence, a clear vision of his perspectives on the Scriptures and his mode of exegesis stand as crucial elements for a better comprehension of his theological teachings.

It is Jacob's biblically oriented theological outlook that guides him in his symbolic theology. Even behind the deeper inner relationship of the signifying and the signified, Jacob finds the divine purpose or plan that guides and governs various events of salvation history. It is this divine purpose that accords meaning and function to the signs and symbols which are in Jacob's terms 'types' (*ṭupsē*) and 'mysteries' (*ṛāzē*). It is through these 'types' that the infinite Divinity makes itself known to finite humanity. Moreover, the early chapters of Genesis are a symbolic nucleus of divine-human relationships, depicting divine fidelity and human frailty with its consequent fall. Hence, Jacob deduces much symbolic-theological material from those chapters of Genesis as foundations of his theological anthropology and his vision of human salvation.

Mar Jacob's approach to the Scriptures is sacramental in several respects. Firstly, the Scriptures proclaim the acts of the merciful God towards humanity. God out of his mercy reveals himself and hence those revelations should be approached and accepted with love and faith. As the divinity is hidden and revealed so the divine revelations too remain hidden and revealed as in a mystery. Whatever is revealed can be put under intellectual inquiry for understanding the purpose and the divine teaching therein. Secondly, in view of instructing humanity divine revelation is furnished in the Scriptures in a progressive manner according to the comprehensive capacity of the humankind. At all those progressive stages it is the same Spirit who inspires. Moreover, it is the same divine mercy that works behind creation, redemption and salvation. Thirdly, the progressive self-revelation of God passes through the stage of types and symbols to that of actualization in the incarnate Son on his 'road of salvation'. The whole of prophecy and the prophets announce the advent of Christ. The Apostles proclaim the actualized salvation in Christ. Thus by the power of the divine mercy and due to the same Spirit who inspires the Scriptures there is an underlying unity. Above all the Christocentric thrust of the Scriptures expresses the unity and progress of the divine purpose and teachings.

The divine teaching has been initiated by God in the created world through created Nature and it has become more pronounced in the Scriptures with a definite pattern of its own, namely the progressive pattern of salvation history. This pattern of salvation history is conditioned in its progress by the divine mercy and justice in the context of the free will of humanity. In seeking the divine teaching through the created world and through the Scriptures Jacob proposes a sacramental approach to both. In the Scriptures this divine teaching is set according to the development of human comprehension. Hence it involves images, types and symbols looking forward to their fuller revelation in Christ. Therefore, Christ stands as the key to the understanding and realization of the divine teachings both in the created Nature and in the Scriptures. Hence, the need for symbolic understanding, sacramental vision and the typological exegesis of the Scriptures are self-evident.

Jacob's exegesis of the Scriptures is a creative inheritance of the early Syriac mode of biblical exegesis. Inspired by the early

Syriac tradition Jacob also finds both created Nature and the Scriptures as God's merciful self-revelation to humanity. Jacob is very eager to emphasize that such merciful divine self-communications should be accepted in faith with love and awe. Moreover, such divine acts have special purposes and they are divine teachings to humanity in order that humanity might relate itself to the Divinity who wants to make humanity participate in the divine bliss. Hence, through created Nature and the Scriptures humanity is always invited to understand the divine purpose. Any attempt that falls short of comprehending the divine purpose inherent in Nature and the Scriptures is a failed attempt. The actualization of all OT revelations takes place in Christ and thus he stands as the Sacrament of salvation to the whole world. The purpose-seeking exegesis of Jacob takes up every strand of divine teaching as the light for the 'eye of the soul' to see the 'teaching of salvation'.

In his biblical exegesis Jacob is very much indebted to the Syriac tradition in general and to Ephrem in particular. As Ephrem stresses, Jacob also emphasizes the need to bring out the spiritual sense (*ruhānāi*) of the written word. He arrives at the spiritual sense not by ignoring the literal sense or the actualized state (*su'rānā'it*) of the salvation history, as Jacob would call it, but by traversing through it. This travelling through the written text is explicit in Jacob in the form of re-reading the biblical texts in the context of later biblical episodes [eg. Num 21:9 > Jn 3:14–15; *HS I 49–67, esp. 50,3–51,11; 57,2–13* (“Homily On the Serpent of Bronze”); Judg 14:14 > *HS V 331–355, esp. 337,7–338,19* (“Homily On Samson”)]. Another mode of travelling through the literal and historical aspects of the text is the furnishing of a sort of pyramidal network of typologies that aim at depicting Christ as the focus and summit of all types as well as the key to the understanding and the actualization of both the divine revelations and the divine saving activities. This sort of transcending vision, starting from the created world and its history and leading to the divine will and purpose, often constructs a sort of synchronic vision of the economy of salvation through the typological biblical exegesis. Hence, the unity of the Scriptures, the progressive nature of divine revelations as well as the unity of the history of salvation are basic presuppositions of Jacob's biblical exegesis.

### C. THE THEOLOGICAL VISION OF JACOB OF SERUGH

Jacob's theological views are closely bound to his poetic theological terminology and images. Hence, drawing conclusions in a rationalistic way is like stripping off all supra-rational elements of Jacob's theological expressions. Hence, all attempts to reduce Jacob's thought forms into deductive propositions are quasi futile and constitute an unsympathetic approach that spoils the beauty and profundity of his theological views. For Jacob each homily is a 'spiritual meal' to be enjoyed (*HS I 588,12-13; 589,17-590,13*) and not to be set under analysis which will be a disintegrating process that can easily destroy the picture he draws or perhaps even distort the whole pattern. Therefore, a better appreciation one can have regarding his writings is through an appreciative reading and not through any sort of ordering of his thought-patterns which are all the more poetic and discursive. However, on individual aspects we make some observations rather than ultimate conclusions. This we do in the form of a compatible synthesis of his teachings scattered in his homilies that are in discursive thought-patterns.

Homilies on the feasts of our Lord by Jacob render homiletical exegesis for the catechesis on the actualization of the economy of salvation in Christ. The progressive stages of salvation before the advent of Christ and in the manifestation of Christ are depicted by the images of road, journey, building, reaching to maturity, arriving at perfection, etc. It is the 'teaching of salvation' that inspires humanity to attain progress on the road of salvation. In such a context the unity of the OT and the NT, the prophets and the apostles, the unity of revelation and that of the history of salvation are fundamental. This unity is based on the eternal Son acting in the history. It is made explicit through images, types, and symbols. The truth is visible only to the 'lucid eye of the soul' (*SHF V 1/FH XII 1; HS I 50,13*) that should not be blurred by the 'love of the world', which is 'an alien love', or by idolatry that alienates one from the true path (*SHF V 1-2/FH XI 1-2*) and the divine purpose.

Throughout the festal homilies Jacob describes the descent of divine mercy to the level of the fallen Adam. This descent, according to Jacob, started at creation, and continues even at the time of the Fall and in the on-going history of salvation. This became explicit and concrete in the incarnate Son who travelled on the 'road of Adam' in order to traverse all the fallen stages of

Adam/humanity through various 'staging posts' starting with the conception in the womb of Mary, submitting himself to baptism in the Jordan, and carrying all passions through suffering and death in order to enter into Sheol so as to destroy both death and Sheol for the liberation of humanity. All feasts of our Lord are liturgical moments which proclaim the redeeming and saving power of Christ on the road of salvation with a meta-historical accent. Christ, by staying in all 'staging posts' of Adam, fulfils all promises of prophecies. He repeals the effects of the Fall and leads all on the road of salvation. On his road he provides the fruits of divine power.

The festal homilies are generally set as a sort of catechetical, homiletical exegesis of the scriptural episodes that describe the road of Christ. It is the 'road of salvation' that is furnished with witnesses either as prophets or as apostles. All of them are witnesses to the salvific road of Christ in their own state according to each one's power. This witnessing role is not that of a detached observer but that of a participating witness. So all are called to see and recognize this road by the help of the Spirit (*HS V 451,5–12/FH V 73–80*). Later, Christ himself stands as the Guide who instructs John the Baptist (*HS I 176,11–183,8/FH VI 181–326*), Peter and the apostles on the Mount Tabor (*HS II 352,5–14/FH VIII 99–108*), the people during his entry into Jerusalem (*SHF IV 43–45/FH XI 43–45*), and on the Friday of Passion with regard to the purpose and the course of his incarnate journey (*SHF V 9/FH XII 9*).

The divine pedagogy advances by the power of the Spirit and later in a concrete manner through the incarnate Son in the most tangible form to humanity. In Jacob's understanding the duty of the exegete is to see with the 'eye of the soul' and to recognize and understand the salvific road of the eternal Son in Christ. The typological exegesis and the symbolic reflection of Jacob are to describe the underlying role of the eternal Son who became tangible to humanity on the incarnate road of Christ that renders redemption and salvation. Hence, the various liturgical feasts of our Lord assume importance and they enhance the actualization and realization of salvation. Starting with the Nativity narratives Jacob engages himself in a type of homiletical exegesis. The main element is the seeking of the purpose of each stage of divine revelation. Jacob finds the purpose of the acts of Christ from the

total vision of salvation history and through that he explains the divine teaching of salvation shining out at each 'staging post' of Christ's journey on the road of salvation. This purpose-seeking vision can be roughly described as follows for the purpose of an easy comprehension:

1. *The discerning perception and recognition (exegetically and catechetically) of the eternal Son in the person and acts of Christ.* In the Nativity the Son comes to a second birth, at the temple holy Simeon perceives the eternal Son in swaddling clothes and makes supplication for his release as well as to become a herald of the Good News. At the Jordan the manifestation and baptism of Christ are seen as a sequel to the betrothal to the bride from the beginning by the eternal Son, who is equal to the Father, for the marriage feast. The power and glory of the eternal Son concealed in Christ are made manifest during the Transfiguration at Tabor. The celestial Adam takes up the fight for the victory of the terrestrial Adam in forty days' fasting. He who rode upon the heavenly chariots mounted on a humble conveyance in Jerusalem. The Heir of Adam repays all the debts of Adam by bearing all passions on the Friday of Passion. It is due to the power of the eternal Son that through the assumed body Christ reconciled heaven and earth in his Resurrection. Finally the eternal Son who descended to become human ascended in triumph rendering perfection and consummation to the fallen Adam/humanity.

2. *Understanding the 'Road of humility' of the Son for the salvation of humanity:* In all the festal homilies humanity's failure to understand the 'way of humility' is indicated. But how through an angel (in the case of virgin Mary & Joseph) or by a spiritual vision (for holy Simeon) or by the instruction of Christ (to John the Baptist) the true witnesses of Christ recognized his 'Road of humility', has been made clear in various homilies. In the Nativity the Son assumes humility so as to be faithful to his corporeal state in contrast to Adam who was arrogant. At the presentation in the temple in all humility Christ subjects himself to the Law and fulfils the Law. At his baptism Christ instructs John the Baptist to understand the time of his smallness in humility. At his Transfiguration Christ manifests his hidden glory and power in his humble way so as to confirm all his followers in the truth of his hidden power. The forty days' fasting was his teaching on moderation, the way proper to humanity that has to be humble. The humble road became more

understandable at Jerusalem where the Mighty One moved on the road of humility and yet his mighty works were discernible in all his steps. On the Friday of Passion Christ renewed the Kingship and Priesthood through the steps of his humility. The failures of Adam have been repaired. On the road of humility, that is proper to human nature, Christ slaughtered death and uprooted Sheol through his Resurrection and provided to all those who participate in his Resurrection 'the robe of glory'. Thus throughout the whole of his way Christ remained as the Mediator and Reconciler being the true High Priest who ascended to heaven in order to reconcile the whole creation with the Father.

3. *The profits from the fruits of the 'road of humility of the Son'*: At the Nativity of the Son all mysteries, parables and words of prophecy were actualized. The tripartite hymn that renders praise in the heights, peace on earth and 'good hope' for humanity is the expression of the fruits of the Nativity. Christ came to circumcision and offered himself at the temple in order to fulfil the law and then render the perfection above the Law, especially by his manifestation and baptism in the Jordan. For the recovery of Adam the waters were sanctified in his baptism and an armoury has been set up for the fighters to enter and arm themselves. At the Transfiguration the fruitful mediatorship of Christ has been made manifest. By his fasting for forty days he set a curing and strengthening medicine for the weak human nature. At his entry into Jerusalem the recognition and praise to his way were rendered. His humanity has been proclaimed and at the same time his divinity has been discerningly perceived. On the Friday of Passion the innocent One was judged and culpable Adam was set free through Barabbas. In the Resurrection a new creation came into being following the destruction of death and Sheol. Through the Ascension the great reconciliation and fulfilment were achieved.

Jacob's homiletical exegesis in the festal homilies is to show the actualization of the economy of salvation in Christ. The realization of it for humanity depends on human free will and the participative understanding of the road of Christ. It is to enhance such participative understanding that Jacob provides his homiletical persuasion, catechetical instruction and exegetical insights mainly through typology.

Jacob is keen to set all scriptural episodes into a general framework that gives a synchronic vision of the whole salvation

history. The festal homilies and the NT episodes related to them are explained by Jacob with their typological relationships to the OT. All such relationships originate from the divine purpose and divine pedagogy, and are founded on the mystery of the Son who renders salvation through types and symbols and through the fuller manifestation of the same in his incarnate road. It is the mode of divine economy out of divine mercy. The various aspects of the mystery of salvation can be explained in an analogical way through various images. Some major aspects of this mystery are treated in chapter three with the help of the images that Mar Jacob himself employed. The description of the five aspects of the economy of salvation in chapter three provides a synthesis of Jacob's vision of salvation in Christ. Through all those images and aspects a few general patterns are discernible:

1. A primary pattern is a synchronic vision based on some recurring images that provide meaning to various developments and events in the history of salvation or, in other words, a pattern which describes the purpose for all divine-human engagements based on the divine plan. Divine Mercy's seeking for Adam, Betrothal and Marriage feast, etc. are such recurring images of the history of salvation. The thought-patterns based on such images serve as foundations of rich synchronic visions of the divine salvific acts through the horizontal progression of salvation history. Such thought-patterns have perennial applicability and freshness out of their paradigmatic role.

2. The divine purpose and meaning of the salvific acts of the history are substantially explained through the typological networks discerningly traced out from the related scriptural events. Moses raised a bronze serpent for the people and that type became actualized and was explained only through Christ who was raised on the wood of the Cross. So also the Patriarch Jacob's betrothal to two wives was actualized in Christ who betrothed the Nation and the Nations in his Church. Several examples according to this model can be enumerated from the compilation of the typological networks of Jacob documented in chapter four.

3. Another perceptible general pattern is the underlying divine pedagogy (teaching) and human response, or, in other words, the divine invitation and human response in the context of the free will of humanity which sometimes fails and sometimes succeeds. The whole treatment of idols and idolatry is a specific example of this

reality in the history of salvation. Idols and idolatry started in Paradise itself as Eve falsely believed in the divine power of the tree. Idolatry and adultery remains as a human constant and a negative counterpart to divine fidelity in the history of Israel, and for that matter, in the history of humanity and the Church. Hence, Jacob finds 'love of gold' and 'love of this world' as modern versions of old idolatry.

4. The progressive stages of salvation history that are pedagogically significant are depicted by the images of 'road', 'way', 'building', 'reaching to maturity', 'bringing to perfection', etc. The commandment given in Paradise, the Law given to Moses and its Justice, the perfection signified in Melchizedek but actualized in Christ, the Path of Law and the Path of the Cross, the kingship and priesthood conferred on Adam, the failures of Adam/humanity in the exercise of those powers, Christ's renewal of the Kingdom of the house of David and the Priesthood on his salvific road, etc., are clear typological patterns that depict the progress of salvation history.

5. Christ stands as the key to the understanding and realization of the economy of salvation. Jacob brings out the mystery of the hidden and the revealed Son of the history of salvation who is the cause of unity as well as the source of progressive realization of the purpose of God in creation. Jacob's exegetical findings on 'the image and likeness of God' in humankind is the best example of his vision of Christ as the key to the understanding of the economy of salvation. The spoiling of 'the image' in Paradise, the continued distortion of the same in the history of Israel versus the purification and recasting of the tarnished image of Adam by Christ on his incarnate road, are inspiring theological themes rich with typological contents and symbolic allusions.

Jacob of Serugh finds the 'teaching of salvation' as a basic factor of the Scriptures. They are in fact pedagogical expressions of the divine mercy which is the source of creation, Incarnation and Resurrection. Such expressions proclaim the divine purpose and the divine economy aiming at the attainment of their goal. One who looks with the 'lucid eye of the soul' can find the 'teaching of salvation' in the episodes of the Scriptures. The exegete in Jacob is always in search of the divine purpose in the Scriptures and the divine teaching implied therein.

In a sense Jacob of Serugh explains the whole history of salvation as the descent and the 'becoming' of the divine mercy for the salvation. The initial descent was in the act of the creation of humanity in the divine image. That initial descent is at the same time a foreshadowing of the descent of the Son for redemption and salvation. The need and nature as well as the source of redemption and salvation can be perceived from the scriptural episodes because the history of salvation is the history of divine invitation and human response through the ages. Through various levels of symbolic reflections Jacob describes the mystery of the Word becoming incarnate with a synchronic vision. The foundation of this synchronic vision of divine 'becoming' is the divine descent and 'becoming' from the time of creation onwards through condescension in order to make humanity participate in the divine bliss. This condescension in creation extends itself with its divine faithfulness even towards the fallen state of humanity. In Christ this became most concrete through the Word that became incarnate for the redemption and salvation. Jacob's symbolic reflection on this 'becoming' passes through the steps of types, images of the 'becoming of the Son', and the images of the salvific activities of Christ often expressed through analogical factors from human experience such as 'light and darkness', 'legal bonds', 'captivity/slavery', 'combat', 'sickness and medicine', 'Dough and baking', 'clothing', 'nuptial celebrations', etc. Based on such images, as described in chapter four, Christ the Saviour assumes several functional titles such as 'Day-Star', 'Debtor', 'Hero', 'Athlete', 'Physician', 'Leaven of Life', 'Bridegroom', and so on. Christ, by being God and man, through his enduring acts manifested the actualization of the types and mysteries of the Law and the Prophets as well as provided the fruits of his self-abasement by becoming the Sign and the Sacrament of salvation.

The typological biblical exegesis and the symbolic mode of theological reflection are inherited factors in Jacob of Serugh. But he shows much creativity in the perusal of his heritage. His creativity can be described in three stages: Firstly, Jacob has his own co-ordination of typological networks which are quite often spread along the various stages of salvation history. Secondly, his compilations of typological networks are mainly presented through a homiletical review for the purpose of catechesis. Thirdly, by the blending of typological networks with particular exegetical insights

Jacob provides a synchronic vision of the history of salvation. The foundation and unity of this vision is Christ, the incarnate Son. In such a synchronic vision of Jacob his theological anthropology, Christ-Mystery and Soteriology are seen all the more inherently related. They are all treated and explained in the biblical terms of descending divine mercy that fulfils creation, performs redeeming acts and renders salvation.

The three theological thought-patterns reviewed in chapter five against the background of the early Syriac Christian Tradition set in evidence Jacob's close dependence on the earlier tradition, especially on Ephrem. But Jacob brings in his own creativity in addition to the acquired insights and he makes his own contributions. The Adam-Christ complementarity, the Road of Salvation and the Christocentric sacramental world-vision are in a sense the Syriac way of handling theological anthropology, soteriology and Christ-Mystery (Christology) respectively.

The exegesis of the scriptural episode of the creation of humankind 'in the image and likeness of God' with Christological and Soteriological accents is a dominant factor of Jacob's theological vision. This becomes all the more clear in Jacob's treatment of the Adam-Christ complementarity. He finds the whole history of salvation through the vicissitudes of the 'divine image' in humankind. The symbolic thought-patterns based on 'Icon and colour-mixing', 'Christ's putting on the Armour of the Fallen Adam', and the 'Robe of Glory' are capable of describing the various states of the 'divine image' in humankind according to the various phases of the history of salvation.

Although Jacob inherits from Ephrem the salvation historical framework of the metaphor of 'the Road/way', his exposition of it is more pastoral and catechetical in outlook whereas in Ephrem it has an additional apologetic concern. This metaphor is based on the divine pedagogy in the instructive self-manifestation of the Divinity in history through Nature and the Scriptures. This divine pedagogy with its redemptive concern seeks reconciliation from Adam/humanity that has rendered itself alienated from God. The 'road of salvation' became more concrete in Christ who travelled on the 'road of humility', for repaying the debt of arrogant Adam and to bring about the great reconciliation. This great road of reconciliation is described by Jacob through the images of 'betrothal and marriage feast' and 'the renewal of the Kingdom and

Priesthood'. Although the first marriage feast prepared in Eden had been spoiled by the jealousy of the evil one and the frailty of Adam/humanity, the divine mercy shows the way to attain the goal. This is explained by Jacob through the imagery of 'betrothal and marriage feast'. There are allusions to 'the betrothal' through types and symbols and finally the Bridegroom personally comes down to betroth the bride for the marriage feast. Mar Jacob describes the 'Kingship' and 'Priesthood' enjoyed by Adam in Paradise and his failure to live up to his status as 'king' and 'priest' of his own person and on behalf of the creation. It is in this context that Jacob views the journey of Christ on the 'road of Adam' in order to convert it into the 'great road of reconciliation' which attains its consummation in his Ascension to the Father.

The Christocentric sacramental world-vision is based on the mystery of the merciful self-revealing God who acts out his mercy in Creation. This self-revealing mercy reached its fuller extent in the incarnate Son. This type of a Christological approach is the basis of Mar Jacob's synchronic outlook on the history of salvation. Mar Jacob insists on depicting Christ as the key and meaning of the mysteries and types of the OT as well as the governing power of the NT, especially in the apostolate of the disciples of Christ and in the Church and her Sacraments. Among the various Sacraments the important visible signs of redemption and reconciliation through Christ are made explicit in Baptism and the Eucharist.

Through the Adam-Christ complementarity the divine purpose for the created humanity is made manifest. In order to achieve this purpose God devises his pedagogy which takes up a road, a mode of life in view of the goal, the salvation. The mystery of Christ, the celestial Adam, remains the key to the understanding of the divine purpose and divine pedagogy, as well as to the working out of the salvation of the whole of creation through out the history.

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