

Jacob of Edessa's Discourse on the Myron

by

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Among the sacraments of the Syrian Orthodox Church, as of the Greek, the Myron plays an important role¹. Until about the thirteenth century it was consecrated by bishops on Holy Thursday and made up out of olive oil and balsamon², but since that time its consecration has been reserved for the Patriarch, and its confection a matter of considerable elaborateness.

Already in the late fifth or early sixth century the unknown author of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus included in his liturgical commentary, known as the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, a section on the consecration of the Myron³, and ever since then West Syrian liturgical commentators have regularly included discourses on the consecration of the Myron alongside those on Baptism and the Eucharist; thus we have short treatises on the Myron by the Patriarch John of the Sedre (†648)⁴, Jacob of Edessa (†708) (published here), George bishop of the Arabs (†724)⁵, Antony of Tagrit (9th century)⁶,

¹ See W. de Vries, *Sakramententheologie bei den syrischen Monophysiten* (OrChrAn 125; 1940), 45-54, 125-35; E.-P. Siman, *L'expérience de l'Esprit par l'Eglise d'après la tradition syrienne d'Antioche*, Paris, 1971, 87-104. A Latin translation of the rite for the consecration of the Myron (from Vat. syr. 51 of 1171/2) is given in H. Denzinger, *Ritus Orientalium* II, 526-51 (on pp. 543-7 is an anonymous homily in the form of an exposition of the service). A description of the service is given in C. Kayser, *Die Canones Jacob's von Edessa*, Leipzig, 1886, 10-12 (Syriac text).

² Hence earlier writers frequently compare its composition (*rukkābā*) with the 'composition' of the divine and human natures in Christ, following Severus' christology.

³ The two Syriac translations of this section (*Eccl. Hier.* IV) have been edited by W. Strothmann, *Das Sakrament der Myron-Weihe in der Schrift de Ecclesiastica Hierarchia des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in syrischen Übersetzungen und Kommentaren* (Göttinger Orientforschungen. I. Reihe: Syriaca, Band 15,1; 1977).

⁴ Preserved in Vat. syr. 253, London Add. 12165 and 17267, Chicago A 12008. I use Add. 12165 (ff. 258b-62b) for the references to this work below. According to the *Chronicle of Seert* (POR 13, p. 634) John also wrote a *tekso* for the consecration of the Myron.

⁵ George wrote a longer and a shorter poem on the Myron. V. Ryssel translated both poems in his *Georgs des Araberbischofs Gedichte und Briefe*, Leipzig, 1891, 9-36, and edited the longer one (sometimes wrongly attributed to Jacob of Serugh) in *Atti della R. Accademia dei Lincei* IV.9, 1892.

⁶ Preserved in London Add. 14726; cp R. Messling, "Die Schrift des Anton von Tagrit 'Über das Myron'", in *Paul de Lagarde und die syrische Kirchengeschichte*, Göttingen, 1968, 150-61.

Moshe bar Kepha (†903)⁷, Dionysius bar Šalibi (†1171)⁸, Barhebraeus (†1286)⁹, and others.

Jacob of Edessa's Discourse on the Myron is in fact put in the form of a homily to be delivered on Holy Thursday, and in this he follows the example of the patriarch John; by way of contrast, the later discourses on the topic do not (with the exception of George's shorter poem) have a liturgical setting.

Jacob draws on both his predecessors in the course of his discourse: the pseudo-Dionysian Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is quoted extensively in §§ 11, 12, 15 and 16, and there would seem to be sufficient evidence to show that he knew of the discourse by John. His quotation of Ps. Dionysius turns out to be of considerable interest, for he quite definitely quotes the revised translation made by Phokas of Edessa, whose work must accordingly antedate Jacob's discourse. Phokas' introduction to his translation¹⁰ actually mentions "Athanasius patriarch of Antioch and Jacob bishop of Edessa" as men who have improved translation technique since the days of Sergius of Resh'aina, the original translator of the pseudo-Dionysian corpus; as a result scholars have assumed that Phokas was working in the early eighth century at the earliest¹¹. Phokas' words, however, do not preclude the possibility that Athanasius and Jacob were still living at the time of his writing, and indeed the qualification of Jacob as "*bishop* of Edessa", rather than the usual "Jacob of Edessa", might well imply that Phokas was writing during Jacob's brief episcopate (684-8) and before the death of Athanasius (686), in other words between 684 and 686.

We may go yet further and suggest that, since Jacob's discourse has a liturgical setting, it is likely that he will have pronounced it while he was still bishop of Edessa; this will mean that the work will date from only a year or two after Phokas had completed his translation. If this is correct, it is almost certain that Phokas and Jacob, as fellow citizens of Edessa, will have known each other, in which case it may well be that Jacob's quotation of Phokas' revised translation was intended as a compliment to him on the completion of his understaking.

⁷ Edited by W. Strothmann, *Moses bar Kepha, Myron-Weihe* (Göttinger Orientforschungen. I. Reihe: Syriaca, Band 7; 1973).

⁸ Preserved in Vat. syr. 159, Mingana syr. 215, 225 (Carshuni) and 342.

⁹ In the Candelabra of the Sanctuary; the relevant section was edited and translated by R. Kohlhaas, *Jakobitische Sakramententheologie im 13. Jahrhundert* (LQF 36, 1959), 29-32, 65-70, 93-6.

¹⁰ Printed in G. Wiessner, *Zur Handschriftenüberlieferung der syrischen Fassung des Corpus Dionysiacum* (Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, phil.-hist. Kl. 1972, 3), 198-9.

¹¹ Wiessner, *op. cit.*, 168, 199.

Subsequent authors (at least those whose works have been published) appear not to have made much direct use of Jacob's discourse, although it seems likely that Moshe bar Kephā is quoting it on at least one occasion.

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Jacob of Edessa's Discourse on the Myron is preserved in three homiliaries, *Damascus* 12/19, ff. 285b-88a, of the tenth or eleventh century, *Damascus* 12/20, ff. 384a-86b, of November AD 1000, and London Add. 12165, ff. 249a-51b, of June AD 1015. The colophon of *Damascus* 12/19 is unfortunately lost, but that of 12/20, closely related to 12/19 as far as the contents are concerned¹², is to be found on f. 503a; this states that the manuscript was written in the monastery of St Sergius and St Bacchus, called the "Sargisiyah"¹³, in AG 1312, at the full moon of Teshri II on a Friday; this was "in the days of our lord Athanasius¹⁴ and Mar Philoxenus¹⁵ and Mar Iwannis metropolitan of Melitene"¹⁶. The manuscript is stated to have been copied from one belonging to Rabban Ioḥannan¹⁷ by Abraham and (apparently) Mar Philoxenus himself.

Add. 12165 also has a surviving colophon, and according to this¹⁸ the manuscript was written by Ṣaliba for Athanasius bishop of Ḥisn Petros¹⁹ (i.e. Ḥisn Keph, on the Tigris to the north of Ṭur 'Abdin), and was completed on 28 June AG 1326.

The variation between the three manuscripts is minimal, and the attribution to "Mar Jacob of Edessa" is found in all three; there is no reason to doubt its correctness. The following edition is based primarily on *Damascus* 12/19²⁰, and I record all the variants of the other two manuscripts.

¹² Since an analysis of these two manuscripts has been promised by J.M. Sauget, further details on this subject are unnecessary here: see his "Une découverte inespérée: l'homélie 2 de Sévère d'Antioche", in (ed.) R.H. Fischer, *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus*, Chicago, 1977, 57 with note 14.

¹³ A famous monastery in the region of Gubbos (NE of Melitene), built in the time of the patriarch Dionysios III (958-61); Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* XIII.3 (ed. Chabot III, 124-6 = IV, 551-3) has an extract from the Chronicle of Lazarus on the location of the monastery and its origins; cp also E. Honigmann, *Le Couvent de Barsauma et le patriarcat jacobite d'Antioche et de Syrie* (CSCO 146, Subs. 7; 1954), 54, 125.

¹⁴ I.e. the patriarch Athanasius V (986-1003); cp Michael, *Chronicle* Appx III.30.

¹⁵ Probably the abbot of the monastery.

¹⁶ Cp Michael, *Chronicle* XIII.5.

¹⁷ Perhaps Mar Ioḥannan the nazirite from the Mountain of Edessa, a scholar who was attracted to the monastery shortly after its foundation: see Michael, *Chronicle* XIII.3 (ed. Chabot III, 125 = IV, 552).

¹⁸ Printed in W. Wright, *Catalogue*, 850-1.

¹⁹ Not mentioned in the lists of Michael's *Chronicle*.

²⁰ I take the opportunity to express my warm thanks to His Holiness Mar Ignatius Yacoub III who graciously allowed me to work in his library and to photograph these texts during a visit to Damascus in May 1978.

Sigla

A = Damascus Patriarchate 12/19, of 10th/11th century, ff. 285b-88a.

B = Damascus Patriarchate 12/20, of AD 1000, ff. 384a-86b.

C = London British Library Add. 12165, of AD 1015, ff. 249a-51b.

உறவு உடனடியாக, இவ்வுறவு உறவு உறவு
21

[illegible]

A 286a

[illegible]

B 384b

3, מ יל ליעל חסד ורחמים : ויחם נא
לעם וכך²⁶ אללה : כתיב, חסד וחסד
ויהי ויקרא להם. מן גמ' לעל מן מנהג
אלה חסדי²⁷ ויחם ויחם על חסד :

²¹ C + $\kappa_{\text{L}} \kappa_{\text{R}} \kappa_{\text{L}} \kappa_{\text{R}}$

22 B כח.

23 C.م.

24 B *om.*

25 A Kumay.

26 C קטורה

27 *Cr.*

A 287a

[illegible]

C 250b

[illegible]

11 අප දින මගේ මගේ : 38 නිකිනි නිකිනි : 38
නිකිනි නිකිනි : 38 නිකිනි නිකිනි : 38
නිකිනි නිකිනි : 38 නිකිනි නිකිනි : 38
නිකිනි නිකිනි : 38 නිකිනි නිකිනි : 38

[illegible][illegible]

³⁸ C തമ്മിലുള്ള സംസാരം.

39 C + 2.1.

⁴⁰ B + *sey.*

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Discourse composed by the holy Mar Jacob of Edessa on the consecration of the Myron.

1 One can learn about the symbols and types of this holy oil, and about the composition of the divine myron, from the Old Testament, albeit dimly: how from time to time it was depicted and delineated by the ancients, although not openly or clearly, as in the New, seeing that the New Testament, which is the truth and fulfilment of the Old, had not yet been given. For the Old is the type, but the New the truth; the former is the shadow⁵⁰, the latter the light; the former is the similitude, the latter the reality; in the former are words, but in the latter actions; in the former the mysteries are depicted, but in the latter the mysteries are explained; in the former is prophecy, but in the latter the Lord of prophecy.

2 In the former we had explained to us about the oil of the patriarch Jacob, how he poured it on to a single stone which he set up as a pillar to the Lord, calling it the House of God⁵¹; the latter, on the other hand, showed us this holy oil openly, how, instead of a single stone, it anoints many rational pillars, and instead of (a single) Bethel, it perfects and consecrates (*lit.* completes) houses of God, namely churches; and instead of a single patriarch, there are holy bishops (*lit.* arch-priests) and holy fathers who consecrate it⁵².

3 For the Old Testament gave us as a type the composite oil of anointing,

⁵⁰ Similarly John of the Sedre (Add. 12165, f. 259b.1).

⁵¹ Gen 28:18-19, referred to by John (f. 260a.2), George (tr. Ryssel, 21) and Moshe bar Kepha (prologue).

⁵² I take as a calque on ἱερόω. The Syriac could mean "who are made priests by it", but it is doubtful whether Myron ever featured in the ordination of priests: see de Vries, *op. cit.* [note 1], 237-8, and compare also Jacob of Edessa's answer to John the Stylite in Synodicon (ed. Vööbus) I, 234, where he tells of a bishop who had to consecrate Myron *ad hoc* "in order to anoint an altar with it ... and afterwards ordain him (a deacon; *šamlī*) priest; it is not clear whether Jacob means that the Myron was required for both, or just for the first; cp also Denzinger, *Ritus Orientalium* II, 83, 544 and 550.

which used to anoint the "Tent of time"⁵³ and all the vessels, through the agency of the great Moses, the chief of the prophets. But the New Testament has shown us clearly this holy oil which consecrates churches instead of the Tent, the altar instead of the table; and instead of being consecrated by the single Moses, it is consecrated through the agency of all the Apostles.

4 Formerly a single horn used to anoint prophets⁵⁴, designate⁵⁵ priests, and proclaim kings⁵⁶, but here we have an anointing from the Holy One which perfects us all as priests and head disciples of the Apostles, to stand before the Lord God of Israel as a holy people, a redeemed assembly, a royal priesthood, a choice and sweet-scented nation⁵⁷, and one resplendent in an invisible garment.

5 Formerly Moses was told that whoever counterfeited its composition, that person (*lit.* soul) would perish from among his people⁵⁸. Here, however, the opposite happens: every soul which is not anointed and protected⁵⁹ by this oil is handed over to utter destruction among the gentiles.

6 In the Old Testament, again, the horn (of oil) which poured forth at the prophet Elijah's hands protected the widow against famine⁶⁰; in the New, however, this anointing, which we have been given by Elijah's very Lord, protects both widows and married women — and indeed all categories in

⁵³ Exod 40:9 ("Tent of time" is the normal Peshitta term for the *'ohel mo'ed*); John (f. 260a.1) makes the same allusion. For the identification of the "oil of anointing" with Myron, see the Letter of the Patriarch Sergius I († 561), ed. van Roey, *Parole de l'Orient* 6/7 (1975/6), 222: "you are aware that Myron is what the Syrians call 'oil of anointing'".

⁵⁴ Cp I Kings 19:16.

⁵⁵ *ršm*. It is interesting that Jacob uses this term in view of the fact that one of the conceptual models behind the Old Syriac pre-baptismal *rušmā* seems to have been the Old Testament anointing of priests on the forehead: see my "The Syriac Baptismal Ordines with special reference to the Anointings", *Studia Liturgica* 17 (1977) 177-83, and (in more detail) "The transition to a post-baptismal anointing in the Antiochene rite", to appear in the *Festschrift* for A.H. Couratin.

⁵⁶ 1 Sam 16:13, I Kings 1:39 etc. John likewise speaks of "priests, high priests, prophets and kings being anointed" (f. 260a.2); similarly Moshe bar Kepha, prologue.

⁵⁷ Based on 1 Pet 2:9, but in a different order; Jacob uses elements from both Peshitta (= P) and Harklean (= H):

P: *šarbtā gbītā da-mkahnā l-malkūtā, 'ammā qaddišā, kenšā priqā*

H: *gensā gabyā, kuhhānā malkāyā, 'ammā qaddišā, 'ammā l-šuzzābā*

Jacob: *'umtā gbītā* (4) = H (3) *'ammā qaddišā*, (1) = P (2).

John also quotes the second and third phrases of this verse (f. 261b.2) but for the second he employs a different translation, *malkūtā kāhnāytā*.

⁵⁸ Exod 30:38, also referred to by John (f. 260a.1) and Moshe bar Kepha (prologue).

⁵⁹ Lit. "armed". The phraseology reflects the formula accompanying the pre-baptismal anointings in the Syrian Orthodox formulary attributed to Severus: see my "Studies in the early history of the Syrian Orthodox baptismal liturgy", *JThSt* ns 23 (1972), 29-33. For Jacob's transference of motifs originally associated with the *rušmā* to the post-baptismal anointing with Myron, see the references in note 55.

⁶⁰ 1 Kings 17:8-16.

the churches — against spiritual famine which consists, not in lack of bread and water, but in famine from hearing the word of the Lord⁶¹.

7 Formerly, when the Bride saw the Bridegroom in symbol and gained knowledge of him by means of small sparks⁶² of light, she compared him to scented oil, saying: "Your name is oil of myron emptied out; for this reason the young girls have loved you. Let us run to the fragrance of your scent; bring me in to your chamber, O King"⁶³. Here, however, the Church sees openly and clearly, with a pure face, God the Word who became man and betrothed her to himself in a holy and spiritual betrothal. She compares him to oil because he anointed and united with his eternal Godhead our temporal humanity⁶⁴. "Emptied out", because, being full and overflowing, he emptied himself into our human form⁶⁵, and made our wretched and feeble race full, and no longer deficient. "The girls" who were enamoured with love for him⁶⁶ and swallowed up in desire for him are the pure and holy souls⁶⁷ who yearned for him and ran after him. "His scent", again, is divine knowledge of all sorts, and the variety of glorious understanding concerning him, with which he makes fragrant all those who have shared in his glory, making them fellows and sharers in the Mysteries⁶⁸; and he orders the entry into his bridal chamber — that is, the kingdom of heaven⁶⁹ — in accordance with the prayer made to him by the holy Church.

8 Therefore the divine David, recognizing him in prophecy which beholds mysteries, said: "He is more beautiful in his aspect than other men, and

⁶¹ Amos 8:11.

⁶² John (f. 260b.1) uses the same word (*zalgē*) in the same context: this is perhaps the clearest of Jacob's allusions to John's work. Barhebraeus' *Ktābā d-Zalgē*, or "Book of Rays", uses the term in the same sense.

⁶³ Apart from the first phrase Jacob follows the Peshitta (with some re-ordering of the words), rather than the Syrohexapla; likewise also John (f. 260b.1). The first phrase (*mešhā d-mūrūn msappqā*, cp LXX) is, however, neither from Peshitta nor Syrohexapla: it is found already in John (and later in Moshe bar Kepha §§ 5, 41), and the wording will go back to the Syriac translation of Gregory of Nyssa's Commentary on the Song of Songs, whence it was excerpted in the Catena Severi (Vat. syr. 103, printed in Moesinger, *Monumenta Syriaca* II, 10; for the identification of the source of the Catena Severi here, see C. van den Eynde, *La version syriaque du Commentaire de Gregoire de Nysse sur le Cantique des Cantiques*, Louvain, 1939, 49-60).

⁶⁴ Compare George (tr. Ryssel, 12) and Moshe bar Kepha (prologue).

⁶⁵ Cp Phil 2:7 (Jacob combines elements from both Peshitta and Harklean).

⁶⁶ Jacob now paraphrases Cant 1:3.

⁶⁷ So John (f. 260b.1), who is more cautious ("maybe it speaks of the holy souls"). The interpretation goes back to Origen and Gregory of Nyssa.

⁶⁸ Cp 1 Cor 4:1.

⁶⁹ Similarly Procopius *ad loc* (PG 87, 1552), attributed to "Gregory", but in fact Gregory of Nyssa has a different explanation (PG 44, 784-5). For the most part I have been unable to find precise parallels for Jacob's exegesis of Cant 1:3 and Ps 45.

mercy is poured over his lips"⁷⁰. (Here) he is calling his purity and splendour "beauty"⁷¹. "Mercy", because he is merciful in his law, and he did not threaten⁷² sinners with death, like Moses. "For this reason God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of joy beyond thy fellows — myrrh, cassia and stakte, which make fragrant thy clothing"⁷³. The prophecy names the Father as "his God" in view of his becoming flesh and becoming the second Adam on our behalf, so that he might renew the first Adam by his taking⁷⁴ (flesh). The "oil" with which he was anointed is the human body which he united to himself; he described it as "(oil) of joy" because he voluntarily united it to his divinity in the hypostatic union, and not as the result of compulsion⁷⁵. The "fellows", than whom he received a greater anointing, are what he calls the prophets and kings who were anointed of old, in that he was not born, as they were, after intercourse, but from a virgin and in a manner that defies description, of which only he is cognizant.

9 The "myrrh, cassia and stakte", which he associates with his union, is to indicate that he took on a mortal body, and voluntarily received mortality on behalf of our mortal race, so that when the holy Church beheld this — the Church which had been entrusted with the great storehouses of knowledge and had learnt about the glorious things to come — by means of a revelation of mysteries from heaven she took, with the hands of Mary, the vase of precious nard and poured it upon his holy head, whereupon the house was filled with a sweet scent, just as John told us⁷⁶. For by the oil his compassion towards us is shown, in that he was willing to receive suffering, death and burial on our behalf. The words "the house was filled with a sweet scent" indicate the Church, which is called "the house of the Lord"⁷⁷ and "the city of our God"⁷⁸, wherein we have become a sweet scent in Christ, as Paul says⁷⁹, by means of the anointing with this holy oil.

⁷⁰ Ps 45:3 (Peshitta, with slight adaptation).

⁷¹ Compare Syrohexapla here: *pā'ē b-šuprā*.

⁷² 'yz. Brockelmann lists 'wz as a rare bye form of 'zz; the *pa'el*, however, appears not to be recorded.

⁷³ Ps 45:8-9 (Peshitta, with slight adaptation at the end), also quoted by George (tr. Ryssel, 22).

⁷⁴ *nsibūtā*. Although the word is characteristic of writers in the Antiochene tradition of christology, it is occasionally found in West Syrian writers: see, for example, Philoxenus, *Commentary on the Prologue of John* (ed. de Halleux) § 11 (p. 29); Philoxenus was perhaps led to accept it on the basis of the "Philoxenian" reading of Heb 2:16 (contrast Peshitta!).

⁷⁵ The christological interpretation of this verse is a commonplace, but I have found no very close parallel; compare, perhaps, Severus *Philalethes* (ed. Hespel), p. 311.

⁷⁶ John 12:3-4; cp George (tr. Ryssel, 29). The linking of this passage with Cant 1 and Ps 45 is traditional.

⁷⁷ Ps 118:26 etc.

⁷⁸ Ps 46:4 (Peshitta).

⁷⁹ 2 Cor 2:15; cp George (tr. Ryssel, 10), Moshe bar Kepha § 50 (also his *Commentary on the baptismal service* § 18).

10 This oil, then, is the beginning of the heavenly path, the ladder that leads up to heaven⁸⁰, the armour against the hostile powers⁸¹, the indissoluble imprint of the king⁸², the sign which delivers from the fire⁸³, the guardian of the faithful, driving off the demons⁸⁴; it gives joy to angels⁸⁵, it is both living and life-giving, full of great things entrusted, of wondrous mysteries.

11 The service by which it is made holy is also performed in a mystery that lies beyond words. It was named "myron" by the all-wise *teachers*, as though one was speaking of a divine *initiation into the mysteries*⁸⁶.

12 There are two ways of looking at it: on the one hand, *it is consecrated, as is humanly befitting*⁸⁷; on the other, it consecrates and perfects everything, as is divinely fitting⁸⁸. *Its composition is a form of bringing together of sweet-scented substances* which possess a natural quality of fragrance; and, *in accordance with the measure of the specific quantity of the association*, it makes sweet those who are associated with it⁸⁹. Thus, by means of a comparison with what cannot (really) be compared, it portrays for us Jesus, the simple one who came to composition⁹⁰, (Jesus) who is the overflowing fountain-head of divine fragrance, *filling the intellect with divine assignments*⁹¹, as a result of the wonderful quality of the scent of knowledge.

⁸⁰ Gen 28:12.

⁸¹ Similarly 23; compare the Anonymous Commentary on Baptism (éd. Brock, OrChrP 1979) § 6: "oil is the invincible armour against the adversary" (most of this commentary is taken over by the later commentators on the baptismal rite). Jacob here ascribes to the Myron (used in the post-baptismal anointing) many of the protective and cathartic attributes which had come to be associated with the pre-baptismal anointings: see my *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition* (Syrian Churches Series 9; 1979), chapter V (2), and the articles referred to in note 55.

⁸² Compare the Anonymous Commentary § 7: oil is "the imprint of the heavenly king"; similarly Ephrem, *H. adv. Haer.* XXII.9.5; Theodoret PG 81,60 σφραγίδα τινά βασιλικήν.

⁸³ "Sign" derives ultimately from Exod 12:13, "fire" from Dan 3: both are important baptismal texts.

⁸⁴ Similarly Moshe bar Kepha § 49 (but using *daywe*, not *šede*) in an analogous list of benefits of the Myron.

⁸⁵ Cp Luke 15:10 (used in the context of oil at baptism by Ephrem, *H. Virg.* VII.8).

⁸⁶ Based on Ps. Dionysius *Eccl. Hier.* IV. 1 (Phokas' translation). Direct citations of Phokas' version in the following sections are italicized.

⁸⁷ *Eccl. Hier.* IV.iii.10-12.

⁸⁸ I.e. θεοπρεπώς, not found in this section of *Eccl. Hier.*, but compare John f. 261a.1. Dionysius bar Šalibi's scholion on *Eccl. Hier.* IV.iii.12, which also uses the word in a similar context, may well be quoting Jacob here.

⁸⁹ *Eccl. Hier.* IV.iii.4. Of the small variations from Ps. Dionysius, note Jacob's *kyana'it* "naturally" for *'attira'it* "richly" of Sergius, Phokas and the Greek.

⁹⁰ Although *rukkābā* is characteristic of Severus' christological terminology, Jacob here is reflecting Philoxenus, who several times speaks of Christ as *pšītā haw d-ettrakkab* (e.g. *Tractatus tres de Trinitate et Incarnatione* (ed. Vaschalde), 192¹⁷⁻¹⁸, 255¹¹; *Ep. ad mon. Senun* (ed. de Halleux), 65²⁵⁻⁶; *Comm. Prol. John* (ed. de Halleux), 62¹⁰).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*; *pullage* curiously renders ἀντιλήψεις.

13 This oil also, as a result of its purity and fragrance, provides us with a type of the pure teaching of the holy Church, in that it alone is the true oil, both in name and in what it effects: for the other unguents, such as those made from nuts, terebiths and lilies — and all the others which are manufactured for medical use — are a type of the false teachings of destructive heresies, for these possess only the name of “oil”, but they are far removed from the genuine thing.

14 The scent of this holy oil never fades from those who are anointed with it. Christ himself put it as follows: “Everyone who eats my body and drinks of my blood will remain in me and I in him; and I will raise him up on the last day”⁹².

15 At its consecration this oil is *hidden by twelve* “wings”⁹³ or fans, and by these we understand the hiddenness of Jesus (who is) God from the seraphs⁹⁴, concerning whose sixfold wings Isaiah the seer of mysteries indicated to us⁹⁵: “With two wings they covered their faces” — in that they shrunk back from beholding his eternal Godhead; “with two, the feet” — in that they also quaked and trembled at the manner of his manhood, which is incomprehensible; “with the remaining two middle ones” they indicate that they have a partial and intermediary knowledge concerning him⁹⁶, in that he had undertaken a union that mediated between his divinity and humanity, seeing that he was both God and man, being comprehended and understood as one nature and person.

16 *The Hebrew word*⁹⁷ etymologically designates *the holy substances* of the *Seraphim* as hot and *burning*, since it derives from “fieriness” and “great warmth” that exists in divine life. Thus, in both the covering up and the warmth that (are feature of the consecration) of this holy oil, divine and exalted images are depicted in it.

17 In the twelve censers⁹⁸ which give off a single fragrance is indicated the fact that, although (the oil) is single, yet it makes many fragrant, and it is with many in many parts.

⁹² John 6:54, 56.

⁹³ *Eccl. Hier.* IV.ii (but Ps. Dionysius does not go on to speak of the Seraphim until later, IV.iii). Sergius', but not Phokas', translation speaks of “fans”. George (tr. Ryssel, 24) gives a different explanation of the “12 wings”; compare also, for this and the following sections, the anonymous homily incorporated into the Service of the Consecration of the Myron (Denzinger, *Ritus Orientalium* II, 546-7).

⁹⁴ Cp Moshe bar Kepha §§ 12,1 and 17 (on fans and Seraphim).

⁹⁵ Isaiah 6:2.

⁹⁶ Moshe bar Kepha § 17 quotes Jacob verbatim at this point.

⁹⁷ This section is based on *Eccl. Hier.* IV.iii.9-10.

⁹⁸ Not mentioned in *Eccl. Hier.*, but referred to by George (tr. Ryssel, 24) and Moshe bar Kepha § 18 (with different explanations).

18 The twelve lights⁹⁹ carried in front of it denote the band of divine Apostles, with reference to whom (Christ) cried out¹⁰⁰ "You are the light of the world".

19 The white vestments¹⁰¹ used for the ceremony denote the purity and spotlessness of the head priests (bishops) at whose hands it is made sacred.

20 The elevation¹⁰² above the entire people indicates that the divine mystery is most exalted, and those who consecrate it raised far above everything material.

21 The customary time¹⁰³ for consecrating it was fixed by the orthodox and God-clothed teachers during the week of the Passion for two reasons: one, so that it should be close in time to the passion¹⁰⁴ and death of our Saviour; and secondly, because people were baptized on the feast of the Resurrection, and it had to be consecrated in order to be available in time for the baptisms.

22 It takes place on the Thursday seeing that it is the beginning and foundation of all the divine mysteries that were entrusted to the Apostles. (Christ) transmitted to them this consecration, as well as the other mysteries, symbolically when he said¹⁰⁵: "I have a mystery, I have a mystery, and so have the children of my household"; that is, let them preserve carefully the mysteries which were uttered to them this day.

23 Seeing that this holy oil is consecrated with such glorious mysteries (*or* symbols), let us too be found to be pure and holy on the day of its consecration¹⁰⁶, and worthy¹⁰⁷ of the splendour of its mystery; and let us all equally request Christ who gives it that he may appoint it¹⁰⁸ as mighty and invincible armour¹⁰⁹ against every working of demons and evil men; and that those who are imprinted with it may be liberated from sin and

⁹⁹ Referred to by George (*loc. cit.*) and Moshe bar Kepha § 19.

¹⁰⁰ Matt 5:14 (Moshe bar Kepha prefers to quote John 8:12 in this context!).

¹⁰¹ Compare Moshe bar Kepha § 29.

¹⁰² Compare Moshe bar Kepha § 31.

¹⁰³ Jacob discussed the occasion for the consecration of the Myron in a Reply to John the Stylite (*Synodicon* (ed. Vööbus) I, 234-5, reproduced in abbreviated form in Kayser, *Die Canones* 9, and *Nomocanon* (ed. Bedjan), 28-9). The discussion in Moshe bar Kepha §§ 25-6 does not use Jacob, but the Homily in Denzinger II, 547, perhaps quotes Jacob § 22.

¹⁰⁴ Jacob uses identical words in his reply to John the Stylite (*Synodicon* I, 235).

¹⁰⁵ Isaiah 24:16 (the last phrase, which Jacob quotes as if it was part of the biblical text here, does not belong).

¹⁰⁶ John (f. 261a.2) makes a similar exhortation.

¹⁰⁷ Similarly Moshe bar Kepha § 30 in a final exhortation.

¹⁰⁸ For "appoint" (Greek ἀναδείκνυμι) as a technical term for "consecrate", see my "The Epiklesis in the Antiochene baptismal ordines", *OrChrA* 197 (1974), 189,201; it probably goes back to Jewish Aramaic usage.

¹⁰⁹ See note 81.

numbered in the divine flocks¹¹⁰; that it may perfect churches as houses of Christ, and appoint altars holy and divine; that it may make all of us into temples of the Trinity which is rightly confessed in three holy persons, Father Son and Holy Spirit, for eternal ages, amen.

¹¹⁰ Jacob may reflect a baptismal prayer here: similar wording is found in a baptismal sedro in Vat. syr. 31 (Assemani, *Codex Liturgicus* II, 268).