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MŌRĀN ETHŌ

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THE THEOLOGY OF DIVINE NAMES IN THE GENUINE WORKS OF EPHREM

Thomas Koonammakkal

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Baker Hill, Kottayam, 686001
Kerala, India

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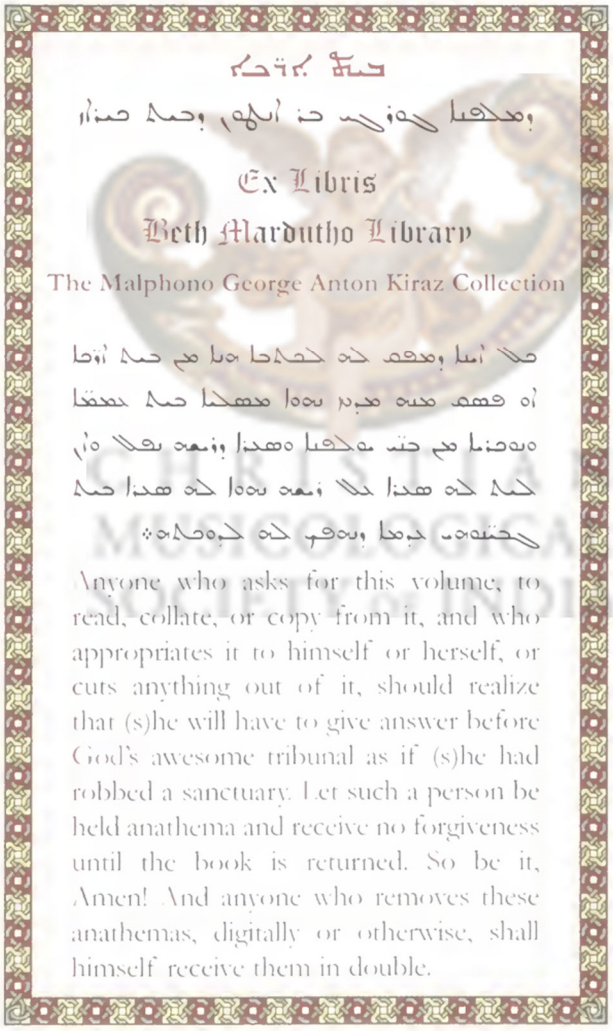

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About this Book

This present volume may well be the first monograph of Ephrem's theology in the English language. And the author has focused on a very important aspect: divinization or *theosis* as the goal envisaged in the process of divine revelation and incarnation. The theology of names is basic to Ephrem's thought and is very much part of his *theosis*. The self-revelation of God is complete only in the divinization of humanity, or theosis. One finds here a close study of over fifty hymns of Ephrem, several of which are entirely dedicated to his theory of names. Koonammakkal basically considers Ephrem's use of 'ontological chasm' and his theology of names. It is a revelation by means of our speech, rather than a case of God's language being given to us. Divine names are *galyâtâ* and the underlying natures, *kasyâtâ*. One of the final chapters of this work discusses the relation of divine names to baptism which further indicates how Ephrem's theories are not esoteric but orthodox and grounded in an ecclesial experience. The Church through the sacraments is the means of sanctification. Koonammakkal considers his own work to be just the beginning. Building on this fine foundation one might hope that the rabbinic traditions which surrounded Ephrem might be carefully scrutinized. In the end it may be said that such was Ephrem's genius, that he defied any systematization in developing his theory of names and transcended all influence. By bringing together the anthropomorphic language of the OT and the human experiences of Jesus, Ephrem seems to allude to the idea of the bodily incarnation of God as the continuation and culmination of God's incarnation into human language. And here Koonammakkal mentions the research of J. Neusner. This stunning conclusion merits further research even in regard to Ephrem. This present research of Koonammakkal really goes to the heart of *theosis* and what it actually means. This will have an enriching impact on the study of *theosis* in these other Syriac writers as well, giving as it were the biblical foundation. The iconic or sacramental character of Ephrem's language about Nature and Scripture allow him to speak beyond his time, place and culture. It puts divine names on a biblical foundation. For those involved in inter-religious dialogue, a better perspective on the discussion of *advaita* in Hinduism will be possible as a result of this research.

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