Manolis Papoutsakis, *Vicarious Kingship: A Theme in Syriac Political Theology in Late Antiquity* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 100; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017). Pp. X + 227; €79.

KRISTIAN S. HEAL, BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

Papoutsakis offers as a starting point for this book the examination of a technical term in six lines of the verse homily *On Tamar* by Jacob of Serugh. "Why," he asks, "should this fifth/sixth-century homilist dwell upon the creation of Adam specifically as a 'vicarious king' (*nāṭar dukktā*) in a composition on a distinctly messianic theme?" (7) The answer to this question is worked out over the next 190 pages and requires a journey along a winding path, with numerous connected and interesting byways being explored along the way. The argument is dense, and the author assumes an extensive familiarity with primary and secondary sources.

The argument is built up through the process of teasing out and tracing literary culture and influence in the early Syriac tradition. Within the context of Syriac Christian literary culture, intellectual and aesthetic funding comes from the Bible, and thus a large part of the book involves establishing and tracing exegetical motifs to demonstrate influence (e.g. Gen 1:26–27 at 139ff.). It also often requires peeling back layers of interpretation, such as the layering of Jer 33:14–26 on Gen 49:10a-b (21), or the layering of the Davidic dynasty upon the Constantinids (4, 89fn55, 112, 119, 192). This kind of meticulous work will be familiar to anyone who has read Papoutsakis's recent articles, especially, "The Making of a Syriac Fable: From Ephrem to Romanos." (*Le Muséon* 120 [2007]: 29–75); "United in the Strife That Divided Them: Narsai and Jacob of Serugh on the Ascension of Christ," (*Δελτίο Βιβλικῶν Μελετῶν* 32 [2017]: 45–77;

"Is He the Rider of the Quadriga? Ephrem the Syrian on Julian's Apotheosis." (*Adamantius* 24 [2018]: 398–415).

Papoutsakis is also interested in tracing literary influence, with particular attention being given to tracing influences from Aphrahat to Ephrem and then to Jacob of Serugh. This requires him to correct the prevailing assumption that Aphrahat did not exert influence on the Syriac literary tradition. Papoutsakis instead insists upon and demonstrates Ephrem's knowledge of, and use of, the writings of Aphrahat: "Ephrem meticulously adapted motifs and phraseology which Aphrahat, writing in a Sasanian milieu and addressing different problems, had crafted one generation earlier" (36). This changes the way that we need to study Ephrem, as does Papoutsakis's claim that Ephrem was much more familiar with Greek literature than has previously been argued (e.g. 135–37).

The central purpose of the book is to uncover an eschatologically inflected Syriac political theology. The theological argument runs as follows: Christ is the true and promised king of Genesis 49:10b, who will come at some future point and assume his kingship from a vicarious king who stands in his place. The first vicarious king was Adam (139ff.). This kingship was later promised to Judah's heirs in Genesis 49:9-10a, referring specifically to the Davidic line. However, although this promise appeared to be everlasting, the Davidic line failed. This failure of the Davidic line forced the exegetical tradition to make space for failure in the succession of the vicarious kings, drawing "a sharp contrast between Davidic kings and Christ the King" (13). Although a dynasty, such as the Davidic line, or the Constantinids, who were one of the successors to vicarious kingship, may be chosen as the vicarious kings, that promise of kingship was conditional. The success or failure of the vicarious king was a function of their fidelity (93ff.). This theological vision lay behind Aphrahat's defense of the Constantinid

empire against the Sasanian (36ff.) and Ephrem the Syrian's denunciation of Julian for infidelity or apostasy (119ff.).

This summary only hints at the richness of *Vicarious Kingship*. The book is filled with hundreds of new details about early Syriac literature. Every page brims with insight. This is the kind of work that can only be produced by sustained close reading of primary sources in their original languages. As a result, *Vicarious Kingship* has the same density as the best commentaries in the classical and biblical tradition, and so requires time and patience to digest. In fact, one section is written as a commentary (36–69), offering a rare model for how detailed commentaries could be written for early Syriac texts.

The book does demand a different sort of reading though. This is a book to think with, to digest slowly, and to return to again and again. Every serious scholar of early Syriac literature will want to take the time to carefully study this book.