

Kees den Biesen, *Annotated Bibliography of Ephrem the Syrian* (library edition¹⁵). Lulu, 2011. 454 pp. \$65.60.

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Ten years after the completion of the first edition of this bibliography, Kees den Biesen has provided the world of Syriac scholarship with a new, improved and larger edition. His own reckoning is that this includes around 850 new entries. (The second edition is about 70 pages longer than the first. The page size of this edition matches that of the first.)

This expansion has been accompanied by a fuller treatment of the Syriac texts of Ephrem, now including notations on the manuscripts and on the authenticity (or inauthenticity) of the texts included. This last change ought to be particularly welcome for those who are working from photographic reproductions of manuscripts and those who are searching through known Syriac manuscripts for works that may have been overlooked or misattributed in the past. Individual works that have been connected with Ephrem but are not part of the traditionally established collections are listed individually with listings including their *incipit*, except for the listings of the individual *madrāshē*.

A review of the general organization of the volume will be useful for those who have never used a copy. The main body of the work is divided into eight parts: the first part is called “General Bibliography,” the second “Ephrem’s Life: Sources, both Historical and Legendary,” the third “The Editions of Ephrem’s Works in Syriac,” the fourth “The Ancient Translations,” the fifth “The Single Works: Text Editions, Translations and Studies,” the seventh “Translations of Ephrem’s Works,” and the eighth “The Titles,” which is divided into four parts: “Editions,” “Titles Exclusively Dealing with Ephrem,” “Titles Partly Dealing with Ephrem” and “Titles Incidentally Dealing with Ephrem.” (Instructors should note that this arrangement will allow a student to examine a list of all translations of Ephrem into English or to look at a list of his works with the English translations noted under

¹⁵ Available from lulu.com in a “student edition” in paperback (8 ½ x 11 inches) and as a pdf. file e-book. This review was written based on an examination of the “library edition.”

the name of the individual collection or piece. Thus, a student who discovers a mention of a work of Ephrem can see whether it exists in English form or a student interested in Ephrem or Syriac Christianity can discover what works are available. As the number of readers who approach Ephrem only in translation grows, this capability grows ever more useful. I have directed students toward Ephrem using this method with real success.)

Information about the works of Ephrem is contained in the third through seventh parts. The reader may refer to one of the sections in order to examine, for example, the works of Ephrem as present in the Georgian tradition. This subsection, found on page 18, begins with a brief paragraph discussing the two major collections of Ephrem in Georgian and is followed by a listing of references to the various texts and a separate listing of the studies related to these works. One half page of the volume, therefore, would allow the student who reads Georgian to search out the different works of Ephrem available and would allow the student who must come at Georgian works through translation to search among the studies for translations of these into other languages or for modern studies treating of them in other languages. (This is a useful example since the reviewer is completely innocent of Georgian.) However, a few minutes with this volume directed me to a number of places to read discussions of the works of Ephrem surviving in Georgian and even discussions of the manuscripts and their history, not to mention a discussion of the early development of the Georgian homiletic tradition. The usefulness of this volume is demonstrated by the fact that 10 or 15 minutes spent in its company can provide enough raw material for an interested reader to pursue a number of promising alleyways that would have been closed to him without its help. In my experience, this is exactly the purpose for which a resource like this is most often used.

The eighth section of the work, "The Titles," forms the bulk of the material. This part, consisting of four sections arranged alphabetically by author's name, allows the user of the volume to flip through a listing of the secondary material looking for authors of interest. Since much of the searching out of scholarship that I have done has begun in footnotes of articles or books that I have been reading, this section seems particularly useful because it allows the interested reader a quick look at other studies produced by a particular author who has been mentioned in a note. The

scattering of scholarly work in Syriac studies over a broad array of scholarly venues, setting aside the difficulties inherent in the fact that many works are published in hard to reach places by small and sometimes defunct publishers, has meant that many works of great interest and usefulness have not been as widely noticed and mined as they have deserved. If this volume is made widely available, the under-utilization of Syriac scholarship may be lessened in the future.

The six appendices with which the volume closes are also likely to prove useful for Syriac scholars working beyond the bounds of the study of Ephrem. The editions of Vossius (Rome 1589-1598), Thwaites (Oxford 1709), Assemani (Rome 1732-1746), Overbeck (Oxford 1865), Lamy (Mecheln 1882-1902) and the Venice edition (1836) of the works of Ephrem in Armenian are all of interest to a broader range of students of early Syriac-speaking Christianity since they reflect the ideas of different periods about what works ought to be connected to the name of St. Ephrem. There are, thus, modern printed editions of a number of works that are no longer considered to be from the pen of Ephrem. Since these appendices list the individual works contained in these earlier editions by volume and page number, they make it much easier for modern scholars to identify particular printed texts before they search for electronic copies or request interlibrary loans. Since most of these large printed editions are not allowed (quite properly) out of the careful hands of librarians, it has often been necessary to travel physically to libraries that contain them before one can examine the individual works they contain. This practical difficulty may be much reduced by a judicious use of the appendices of this volume.

Another point arises out of the foregoing paragraph. In the central listing of the titles, den Biesen has made note of Internet locations for such works as he has been able to find in electronic form. This is the category of information that is likely to grow most quickly as more things become available online and as den Biesen, with the help of his readers, is able to discover more of these electronic offerings. Since I reside 3000 miles from the library of the institution at which I teach and since I find it difficult to tear myself away from the daily business of life to visit the libraries of institutions in the vicinity, I, myself, will find these notations of electronic offerings particularly time-saving and helpful. I do not think that I am alone in this.

Since the first edition of *An Annotated Bibliography of Ephrem the Syrian* appeared, Syriac scholars have been gladdened by the production by Hidemi Takahashi of *Barbebraeus: A Bio-Bibliography* (Gorgias Press 2005), and Bas ter Haar Romeny (ed.), *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Day* (Brill 2008), which includes Dirk Kruisheer's "A Bibliographical Clavis to the Works of Jacob of Edessa (Revised and Expanded)". David Michelson's "A Bibliographic Clavis to the Works of Philoxenos of Mabbug" appeared in *Hugoye* 13.2 (2010). Perhaps the ongoing publication by Gorgias Press of the modern printed texts of the works of Jacob of Serugh, with facing English translation, will encourage some scholar to undertake a parallel work dealing with that giant in Syriac culture. After that, we might hope for something similar on Isaac of Nineveh, or others. The broader interest in these writers, among others, that seems to be growing would be nurtured by easier access to materials of all kinds to aid inquirers. The usefulness and flexibility of this work, now happily appearing in a new and improved edition, only makes the lack of similar materials for other major authors more painful. All readers and lovers of Ephrem the Syrian must feel gratitude to Kees den Biesen for his continuing help to them.