

Daniel King, *The Syriac Versions of the Writings of Cyril of Alexandria: A Study in Translation Technique*, CSCO 626 / Sub. 123 (Louvain: Peeters, 2008). Pp. xxviii + 614; €120.

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Translations from Greek have endowed Syriac literature with a plethora of texts from different genres in which translators plied their varying methods of rendering a text in one language into another. The New Testament itself, the Gospels in particular, are a showcase in these different methods because we often have one text in more than one version translated at different times and with apparently different goals in mind, and in addition to biblical texts, there are translated works in philosophy and theology, again sometimes with more than one version extant. The materials for investigating Syriac translation technique from Greek are not newly available. Editions of the Gospels have been around, unsurprisingly, for centuries, and other texts came into scholars' hands especially beginning in the nineteenth century, thanks to Lagarde, Land, and other editors. In some cases, we know the names of the translators, such as Sergius of Reš'aynā (d. 536), known for his translations of Galen, the Dionysian corpus, and the *De Mundo*, but often they are anonymous. Hitherto, much discussion of Greek-Syriac translation technique has centered on the Bible, due both to the long available texts in more than one version and to the expected interest in the Bible because it is the Bible, and the working scheme for Greek-Syriac translation technique has especially, but not exclusively, been based on studies of Syriac biblical texts. Following in the next steps, Daniel King has now added a detailed study to the growing number of investigations of extrabiblical Syriac works translated from Greek, his material being the corpus of Cyril of Alexandria.

The book under review began life as a dissertation written at Cardiff under the supervision of John Watt. It is divided into four parts, which are followed by two appendices. Part I (pp. 1–33), divided into two chapters, lays out for the reader some groundwork on translation, particularly of patristic Greek exegetical works into Syriac, and more specifically, the works of Cyril. Here we also find a clear statement of the author's task in the book (pp. 25–26):

We shall attempt to analyse the variety of techniques used in these texts and to describe them as fully as possible.

From this, we then hope to be able to relate them to each

other on a typological scale. It may further be possible to calibrate this scale, or spectrum, against the historical background, largely by means of bringing in for comparison other texts of known date and provenance, both other translations from the Greek, and indigenous Syriac writings.

Readers not previously versed in the textual witnesses and historical background of Greek-Syriac translations, or in the works of Cyril with the theological interest surrounding them, find ample initiation in these two chapters.

Part II (pp. 35–62), also divided into two chapters, covers external evidence of the history of Cyril's christological works in Syriac. This amounts to a presentation of data on the manuscripts of these works, divided into three categories ("main witnesses" [BL Add. 12156 and 14557], other witnesses, and citations in florilegia) and also evidence from citations of Cyril in writings of Philoxenus and in another florilegium. The main works of Cyril included are the following:

De Recta Fide

Quod Unus sit Christus

Scholia de Incarnatione Unigeniti

Explanatio Duodecim Capitulorum

Epistles 39, 40, 44, 45, 46, 50, 55

Apologia Duodecim Capitulorum contra Theodoretum

Apologia Duodecim Capitulorum contra Orientales

Responsiones ad Tiberium Diaconum

The well-known *Commentary on Luke*, available in Greek only fragmentarily but long known in Syriac translation, was excluded, except for the question of biblical citations, due to insufficient space to treat "this difficult text" (p. 35).

Part III ranges across six chapters and logically follows part II by treating internal evidence of the aforementioned works of Cyril. Not surprisingly, this part spans the greatest bulk of the book (pp. 63–360), and it contains the meat of the analysis. The superficial opposition of literal vs. free (or loose) naturally falls flat in so detailed an investigation as this one, and King expands on earlier studies of translation technique, chiefly those of Sebastian Brock and James Barr, to allow for a more precise probe into these translated texts. The means of that examination, that is, the particular phenomena of translation studied, consists of the following: editing techniques, larger translation units ("sentences and upwards"),

smaller translation units ("below the level of the sentence" but greater than "individual lexical units"), word order, formal equivalence of verbal constructions, formal equivalence of other syntactical constructions, the lexical unit, lexical equivalence, loanwords, neologisms. Full descriptions of these cannot be given here, but even from this list we can see a sophistication that much improves any basic distinction of literal and free. King's investigation of these phenomena, which span from individual lexical units to longer units of discourse, across these texts, his examples generally given in Greek and Syriac with English translations, serves not only his own purpose that focuses on Cyril, but also provides much material for other scholars studying Greek-Syriac translations, and the future of studies in this field, where there are many more textual analyses to be completed, looks the brighter for it.

Part IV (pp. 361–388) offers the study's conclusions along the scheme of "motivations and models." As throughout the book, King shows thorough familiarity with previous work on translation technique, the most well-known of which for Greek-Syriac are Brock's series of articles on the subject, but here he also turns for comparison to other areas of translation activity, namely translations into Latin and Old English, and he employs these side-looks fruitfully to question further what the reasons were that the Greek-Syriac translation movement played out as it did. (In addition to Latin and Old English, another productive arena of comparison might be that of translations into Armenian, which are mentioned only briefly.) King finds the potential analogies with Latin and Old English translation activity ultimately not so similar to Greek-Syriac translation activity, but in the next section, on models of translation, he finds an appropriate parallel in "the world of official documents, military inscriptions, and law-school texts, with their distinctive treatment of specific and technical jargon" (p. 386), where translators with a certain theological vision were able to find some success in textually carrying out that vision.

Adding to the bulk of the book are two appendices, the latter of which is almost 150 pages long. The first is a statistical look at and presentation of how this or that Greek phenomenon is rendered in a particular text, the results given in graph form. Rather than making up a major part of the book, this approach is here cast merely as an experiment. The second appendix, the long one, called "The evidence of the Scriptural citations," is the data on which a

section of Part III is based, and readers, especially those interested in Syriac biblical translations, will appreciate such a full offering of the data in question, both Greek and Syriac (with Hebrew in addition for the Old Testament citations). The texts here are not only juxtaposed in this appendix: the author has also offered several remarks on their interpretation from the point of view of translation technique. The book ends with *indices nominum et rerum*, Greek terms, Syriac terms, and biblical and other texts (pp. 587–614).

I noted only a few errors: p. 10, n. 33, *The Desert City* should be *The Desert a City*; n. 42 on p. 33 is missing; the Latin quote from Gregory on p. 366 has been garbled; and on p. 371, “Mastoc” should be Maštoc’ or the like.

The dimensions of translation technique may include features of lexicon, possibilities of rendering morphosyntactic categories, etc., but what is the value of studying translation technique? For those who love philology, the value is intrinsic. Linguists may find in a study of translation technique certain features worthy of their attention from the perspective of, among others, language contact, translations being a kind of lab-book for experiments in language contact. Further, once some idea of how the translator of a particular text works has been established, textual critics have a greater likelihood of making sound textual observations on the basis of a translation, something of undisputed value in the case of translated texts that bear witness to a text the original of which is unavailable. In the case of Cyril’s theological œuvre in Syriac, theologically-minded researchers garner another specific benefit, that of now having at their disposal a more sophisticated lens through which to evaluate not only certain theologically significant terms, but even the whole scene of theological discussion in Syriac from the fifth century onward. King’s book thus will find a welcome audience among students and scholars of literary translation in Late Antiquity (whatever the languages with which they are concerned), Syriac philologists, and at least some theologians who study the period concerned.