BOOK REVIEWS

J. F. Coakley, *Robinson's Paradigms and Exercises in Syriac Grammar*, 6th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Pp. 179; $43.95.

SCOTT FITZGERALD JOHNSON, UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

Theodore Robinson's *Paradigms and Exercises in Syriac Grammar* has remained a touchstone for all English-speaking learners of Syriac during the past century. This year marks the 100th anniversary of its first edition in 1915. It is now in its sixth edition, and for the past two editions Dr. J. F. Coakley has been the editor in charge of revising and refining this established textbook. To Coakley's great credit, he continues to find ways to improve the book for a new generation of students without drastically changing its tried and tested format.

One virtue of Robinson's grammar has always been its typography, which is clear and historically authentic. No other modern grammar compares in this regard. One of the most important changes to the sixth edition is that Coakley has further improved on the typography, using a modified version of the Beth Mardutho "Serto Qezhayya" font. Coakley has himself written a history of Syriac printing and he maintains an independent press, the Jericho Press, under which imprint he publishes books using Syriac metal type.[1] He purchased the type from Oxford University Press in the 1980s when the Press was selling off its letterpress equipment in the midst of the desktop publishing revolution.[2] Coakley is thus the ideal editor to maintain and extend the success of Robinson's grammar typographically. This more legible textbook improves the experience of learning Syriac even in comparison to the fifth edition.

Complementing the improved typography is the enlarged trim size of the volume. The fourth edition paperback reprint (1981 [1962]) measured approximately 4.9 x 7.3 x 0.5 inches, and Coakley's fifth edition (2002) was similar at 4.65 by 7.3 x 0.6 inches.

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[1] J. F. Coakley, *The Typography of Syriac: A Historical Catalogue of Printing Types, 1537–1958* (New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll, 2006). Jericho Press catalogue of letterpress books online: http://www.jericho-press.com.

[2] J. F. Coakley, "Some Syriac Types at Oxford and Cambridge," *Matrix* 10 (1990), 181–191.

The sixth edition, though still pocketable, comes in a larger and much more comfortable trim size at 5.5 x 8.5 x 0.5 inches. This may seem like a minor change, but it effects daily interaction with the grammar and is more conducive to study. The pages feel less cramped, and the beautiful typography of the book is even crisper on the page. Moreover, despite the increased trim size, the price of the paperback version has dropped significantly, from around 75 USD for the fifth edition to 40 USD for the sixth, making the book more accessible to students in every way. Typography, size, and cost may be low-hanging fruit in terms of revisions, but these changes are fundamental for students and, as such, are very welcome.

The question for teachers of Syriac, of course, is whether Robinson's method of focusing on morphology, over linguistics or syntax, is the appropriate way to teach Syriac in a pedagogical climate that de-emphasizes memorization and paradigms. In that regard, the book has not changed much since the first edition, and the sixth edition does not apologize for the method. Nevertheless, the grammar is systematic and thorough, covering the most important topics for reading introductory texts of Syriac. In my own experience of teaching beginning Syriac from Coakley's sixth edition, we were able to complete the textbook in one semester, freeing us to jump straight into Syriac texts in the second. If the goal is to give students the ability to explore the language for themselves as quickly as possible, then Coakley's Robinson is still the ideal tool. There is very little morphology that students will encounter that the textbook has not already covered. This is not the case with syntax, of course, for which Nöldeke, Duval, and other reference grammars remain indispensable.

On the subject of reading, however, one desperately wishes for real Syriac to be used in the exercises or, at least, for short passages from Syriac texts to be added to the end of the exercises. This would bring it in line with standard morphologically-based textbooks from the discipline of Classics (such as Hansen and Quinn for Greek and Wheelock for Latin), as well as Bentley Layton's *Coptic in Twenty Lessons* (Leuven, 2006). This remains, as I think Coakley would acknowledge, the weakness of the book. Nevertheless, the book remains conservative precisely because it has been successful, and these manufactured Syriac exercises, designed to

target the morphology and vocabulary of the chapter, have been one of the book's calling cards from the beginning.

The order of chapters in the sixth edition is unchanged from the fifth, so there is no need to go into detail here, except to emphasize that the fifth and sixth editions represent a dramatic improvement over the fourth edition. The fifth edition introduced a section on writing the script (pp. 4–9), and the sixth edition's new trim size really helps with reading the diagrams of, for instance, the *kaph* and the *shin*. In both the fifth and sixth editions the participle is given its own chapter (pp. 45–49), and morphological categories are dealt with in a much more logical sequence. Between the fifth and the sixth, there are numerous minor differences, but even teachers familiar with the fifth edition would be hard pressed to identify them. Words and phrases are substituted in examples throughout, and several tables of forms have been cleaned up. All the misprints that Coakley found in the fifth edition have been corrected.

Nevertheless, some obstacles in the presentation remain. Occasional grammatical topics are dealt with in oblique ways, often not in the chapter that makes the most linguistic sense. As a result, morphology has a domineering effect on the grammar, encouraging students to associate false linguistic friends with one another only because their forms are similar. For instance, p. 42: "It is convenient to deal here with another set of feminine nouns which look similar, although strictly speaking they have 'invariable' vowels." Likewise, why does the objective pronominal suffix as indirect object show up at the end of Chapter 23 (p. 132), even though two chapters devoted to suffixes appeared earlier (pp. 84–94)? No justification is given, except that the late chapter deals with "pronominal suffixes attached to *lamad-yod* verbs". Similarly, the book's discussion of passive participles in an active sense is merely tacked on to the end of Chapter 21 (p. 101). Presumably, this location was chosen because it is only in this chapter on *pe-alaph* verbs that the student is equipped to encounter the verb *eḥad* ("to seize"), one of the principal verbs to exhibit this use of the passive participle. Yet this is less help to the student who dimly remembers the book's discussion of this grammatical concept and is looking for a refresher.

One further example of linguistics submitting to morphology appears on p. 46: "*Active participles as nouns and adjectives.* The active

participle is formally a kind of *nomen agentis* ('agent-noun'; in English: kill*er*). It is not, however, the usual one, which in *peʿal* is ...مُهِنْلا The participle is more often found in such phrases as: ..." Thus, the sentence begins with the linguistic relationship between the participle and the *nomen agentis*, the latter is then introduced obliquely, and only subsequently do we learn the purpose and syntax of the participle. This is an improvement over the fourth edition, which avoided the participle almost entirely, but it is confusing for the student who is learning about participles, not the *nomen agentis*. Conversely, if you are interested in constructing the *nomen agentis*, how would you go about finding it when it appears as a parenthesis in the participle chapter? To be fair, Coakley's Robinson is not meant to be a reference grammar, but the indirectness of some points adds more complexity than assistance. This occasional obscurity could perhaps be offset by a comprehensive index, which would benefit the student who uses the book for reference in the second semester or second year of Syriac.

A basic set of full paradigms for the strong and the weak verb, both with and without suffixes, would increase the book's utility. I remember photocopying such paradigms from Nöldeke when I was first learning and folding them into my copy of Robinson's fourth edition. It surprises that this crude stopgap is still necessary for what is otherwise an elegant and complete introductory grammar.

Qushaya and *rukaka* signs are only marked in cases "when pronunciation is unexpected or might be in doubt" (p. 12). This is understandable in the sense that Syriac manuscripts do not all employ "the dot" or employ it consistently.[3] But in practice it is confusing for the beginning student who struggles with where dots belong and, even, why they are used in the first place. This method introduces unnecessary complexity, despite the very helpful appendix on rules for *bgdkpt* letters. Artificial as this suggestion may seem to paleographers, it may be better to mark all *qushaya* and *rukaka* signs throughout the book in an effort to reinforce proper pronunciation. This would parallel the universal presence of vocalization despite the fact that students are destined to meet unvocalized texts early in their studies. And artificiality is not a problem in a textbook as long as it does not instill bad habits (e.g., many older textbooks

[3] See now George A. Kiraz, *The Syriac Dot: A Short History* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2015).

of beginning Greek eschew accents, to the detriment of the student). Consider the following artifice that is completely justified on both historical and practical grounds: Coakley's Robinson uses the West Syriac script and vowels but vocalizes and transliterates Syriac throughout in the East Syriac tradition (p. 12, with n. 4 and Appendix C).

Despite these quibbles, Coakley's sixth edition of *Robinson's Paradigms and Exercises in Syriac Grammar* remains the textbook to beat. Coakley has shown reverence for the format of the grammar's traditional presentation while also significantly improving it. Some changes are obvious, like the enlarged trim size, but some are subtle, such as the many small corrections and adjustments throughout. If you own the fifth edition and wonder whether to buy the sixth edition, this reviewer offers an unqualified yes, and if you are still using the fourth edition, then run, do not walk, to buy Coakley's sixth edition! The grammar has reached, in many ways, the perfection of the form that Robinson inaugurated in 1915.

As a consequence of its refinement, if the grammar is going to be improved upon in the future the editor will now be forced to rethink certain constituent elements of the book that have been a part of it since the beginning. Chief among these is the question of using passages from Syriac literature in the exercises. I would advocate either employing authentic sentences from texts (and adjusting the vocabularies accordingly), or, keeping the original exercises while introducing reading selections taken from the Bible or from simple prose and verse in idiomatic Syriac (with appropriate glosses). This would further improve what is already an excellent grammar. Instead of a key to the exercises as they stand—a desideratum often requested by students—what is in order for the seventh edition is a thorough rethinking of the exercises. That said, Coakley's sixth edition is a venerable and compelling textbook and should have a place in every university library as well as on the shelf of every Syriacist.

Annette Merz and Teun Tieleman, eds., *The Letter of Mara bar Sarapion in Context: Proceedings of the Symposium Held at Utrecht University 10–12 December 2009*, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 58 (Leiden: Brill, 2012). Pp. xiv + 245; €117.

KATHLEEN E. MCVEY, PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

This collection of conference papers[1] constitutes a fairly diverse array of approaches and opinions about an intriguing little document that is among the earliest Syriac compositions. The *Letter of Mara bar Sarapion* purports to be a father's letter of advice to his young son, in which he encourages him to pursue wisdom, learning, and virtue, and to avoid anxiety over possessions. A few allusions to siege, captivity, and exile have tempted scholars to seek a precise historical setting. A vague reference to a "wise king" of the Jews has added to the interest. Published in 1855 by William Cureton in his *Spicilegium Syriacum*, it received a modicum of attention from Syriac scholars in the following decades. Since Samosata and Seleucia are mentioned in the *Letter*, Cureton briefly considered whether the first-century Roman conquest of Commagene (and its capital, Samosata) might provide its historical context but found a late second-century date more plausible. In a review of Cureton's initial publication of Mara's text, Ewald returned to the discussion of the late first century and specifically to Josephus' account (BJ 7.1–3) of the Roman capture of Samosata as an anchor for dating Mara's *Letter* in the late 70's CE.[2] Schulthess, on the other hand, accepted Cureton's general chronological framework and situated Mara more broadly in a Stoic context.[3] Nearly a century later I placed Mara's *Letter* into the context of Greco-Roman literature of consolation, and I argued that the trope of "persecution of the wise" emerged from Greco-Roman philosophical arguments on providence to be adapted and adopted into early Christian apologetic literature; on this basis I argued the *Letter* should be seen as a literary construct and that the implicit anti-Judaic argument of

[1] See Ilaria Ramelli's report on the conference in *Hugoye* 13 (2010), 81–85.

[2] H. Ewald, "Review of Cureton, *Spicilegium Syriacum*," in *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 1 (1856), 649–66.

[3] F. Schulthess, "Der Brief des Mara bar Sarapion," *ZDMG* 51 (1897), 381–91.

the passage on the "wise king" of the Jews pointed to a Christian author, probably of the fourth century. [4]

After fifteen years of silence, vigorous discussion of the date and nature of the document as well as the convictions of its author ensued; in recent decades some New Testament scholars have accepted it as a first-century, non-Christian, Stoic testimony to Jesus.[5] That is the view held by the editors of the volume under review, and it is generally treated as the *consensus ante symposium* and thus the starting point for many of the essays within. The collection begins with a "General Introduction" by the editors, Annette Merz and Teun Tieleman: a brief overview of the *Letter*'s content, of the famous manuscript (BL Add 14658) in which it is preserved, of the scholarship on the *Letter*, and of the essays presented in this volume.

Four essays endeavor to situate the *Letter* in the context of first-century Commagene, a kingdom that emerged in about the mid second century BCE as the Seleucid Empire frayed, a domain eventually absorbed as a Roman province over the course of the first century CE. Its cultural footprint has often been discerned from the monumental royal cult site of Nemrud Dağ, designed by Antiochos I (70–36 BCE) to combine Persian and Greek religious traditions. These informative and stimulating essays provide a rich discussion of the history, monuments, epigraphic and numismatic evidence before turning to Mara's *Letter*. Yet each concedes that situating Mara's *Letter* in this Commagenian context poses as many difficulties as it solves.

In "Making use of History beyond the Euphrates: Political Views, Cultural Traditions, and Historical Contexts in the Letter of Mara bar Sarapion," Michael A. Speidel poses the question whether "the enigmatic scraps of information in this text" can be reconciled with "a known historical setting and with the cultural setting" the

[4] K. E. McVey, "A Fresh Look at the Letter of Mara bar Sarapion," in René Lavenant, ed., *V Symposium Syriacum Leuven 1988*, OCA 236 (1990), 257–72.

[5] For an overview of this discussion see K. E. McVey, "The *Letter of Mara bar Serapion to his Son* and the Second Sophistic: Palamedes and the 'Wise King of the Jews'," *Syriac Encounters: Papers from the Sixth North American Syriac Symposium, Duke University, 26–29 June 2011*, ed. M. Doerfler, E. Fiano, and K. Smith, Eastern Christian Studies 20 (Louvain: Peeters, 2015), 305–26, esp. 305–311.

Letter seems to presuppose (12). After an extensive consideration of Mara's *Letter* both in relation to the first-century historical sources and alongside the earliest Syriac literature, he concludes that it "should be read with two major historical contexts in mind": "The *Letter* with its references to Samosata and to 'His Majesty' clearly presents a first-century Commagenian context… On the other hand, the *Letter*, as a literary composition,…probably tells us…how certain Osrhoenians tried to cope with Roman occupation and the early stages of direct Roman rule in their country." (41)

In "Cultural Responses from Kingdom to Province: The Romanisation of Commagene, Local Identities and the Mara bar Sarapion Letter" Miguel John Versluys seeks to evaluate a claim made earlier by Merz and Tieleman: that Mara's *Letter* attests the disappointment of the Commagenian ruling elite in the religious reforms represented by the cultic site of Nemrud Dağ.[6] He approaches his subject in three stages. In the first, he examines the archeological and historical evidence for a distinctive Commagenian identity in the century preceding the Roman "annexation" in 72/73; he concludes "that there is little, if any, unambiguous evidence for the existence of a distinct local or religious Commagenian identity in the Imperial era." (58) In the second, he considers the case of cosmopolitan ruling elites from parts of the Roman Empire remote from Commagene – the Icenians and the Batavians; his result here strengthens the earlier conclusion: "the Romans actively used what we could call 'invented ethnicities' for their own political and strategic reasons." Scholars have been influenced by nineteenth-century colonialism and by the Roman Jewish War to look for similar phenomena elsewhere in the Roman Empire's subjugated "peoples." Finally, looking at Mara's *Letter*, he finds insufficient historical detail to place it with confidence in the Commagenian context in 72/73.

In "Religious Life of Commagene in the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman Period" Michael Blömer begins with Mara's apparent allusion to ancestral gods and the assumption that "Samosata, the Commagenian capital" is his "hometown." He examines the evi-

[6] Annette Merz and Teun Tieleman, "The Letter of Mara bar Sarapion: Some Comments on its Philosophical and Historical Context," in *Empsychoi Logoi – Religious Innovations in Antiquity: Studies in Honour of Pieter Willem van der Horst*, ed. Alberdina Houtman, Albert de Jong, and Magda Misset-van de Weg (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 107–33, esp. 122–23, 133.

dence for (and against) the common assumption that Commagene was a center for Iranian-Greek religious syncretism. Rather than the ruler cult of the Hellenistic elites at Nemrud Dağ, he seeks a connection to popular religion. This quest is impeded by the loss of Samosata as an archaeological site with the building of the Atatürk reservoir; what has been salvaged there points more to Greek culture among the elite (99–101). Looking more broadly at Commagene, he finds evidence of continuity of religious sites from the Iron Age and continuity with Syro-Hittite iconographic traditions—attesting a "pantheon in Hittite tradition with some Aramaic influence" which "correlates to what is known from neighboring Syro-Hittite kingdoms in North Syria." (103) For example, at Arsameia on the Euphrates, at Ancoz (Eskitaş), Boybeypınarı (and Çaputlu Ağaç), the Damlıca caves, and the sanctuary in the Dülük Baba Tepesi mountains near Doliche. He concludes: "We find continuity from the Iron Age to the Roman period, a continuity most discernible in the fields of landscape archaeology, religion, funerary rites and language. However, only occasionally do we catch a glimpse of the Luwian and Aramaic remnants under their Hellenised cloak." (128) The reader must infer how this broad background relates to Mara's *Letter*; perhaps it is a glimpse of the Aramaic past.

Two essays attempt to situate the ideas in Mara's *Letter* in religious or philosophical systems other than those proposed in the past (popular Greek philosophy, mainly Stoicism, Greco-Roman rhetoric). Albert de Jong, "Mara's God(s) and Time" makes a compelling case that students of Near Eastern culture in the first centuries CE should give serious and precise attention to the possibility of Parthian cultural influence; here he mentions the *Hymn of the Pearl* in the *Acts of Thomas* and Josephus' account of the conversion of Adiabene. Since the *Letter* seems an apt candidate for this kind of study, he sets out to explore connections suggested earlier by Merz and Tieleman[7] and by Rensberger.[8] He concludes, however, that, "not only does the text seem…to be of purely

[7] Ibid., 113–14.

[8] David Rensberger, "Reconsidering the *Letter* of Mara bar Serapion," in *Aramaic in Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Eric M. Meyers and Paul V.M. Flesher (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 3–21, esp. 14–18.

Greek derivation, it actually contains a few statements that go *against* some of the most important Parthian institutions." Examples given are the esteem for written literature vs. professional singers, and the apparent surprise at the custom of fostering one another's children—a practice common among Parthian nobility. Comparison of Zurvan with the concept of time (*zabna*) in Mara is also inconclusive since the "discussion of Zurvanism in general must be reopened and…as long as the subject has not really found a balanced treatment, it will be difficult to use it for the interpretation of Mara's *Letter*." (152)

In "Where is Wisdom to be Found? A Plea in Favor of Semitic Influences in the *Letter* of Mara bar Sarapion," Pancratius C. Beentjes follows up on Rensberger's suggestion that Near Eastern wisdom traditions be utilized to widen the *Letter*'s intellectual context beyond Stoicism and other Hellenistic Greek philosophic traditions.[9] In Proverbs, the Wisdom of ben Sira, and Qoheleth, for example, he notes themes shared with Mara, such as the pursuit of wisdom, the transience of wealth, the importance of friendship, the praise of virtue, and the help of God.

Margherita Facella in "Languages, Cultural Identities and Elites in the Land of Mara bar Sarapion" explores the epigraphic and numismatic evidence from Commagene in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Although Greek inscriptions and coins attest the use of Greek among the royalty and other elites in the Hellenistic period, no evidence has been found to substantiate the presumption that Aramaic or any other languages were used by a broader swath of the populace. Mara's *Letter* itself and Lucian of Samosata's writings may provide evidence of the use of Aramaic/Syriac combined with Greek learning. Facella ends with the parallel between Jesus and Socrates implied by Mara and explicit in Lucian's *Peregrinus*; here she notes that if Mara's *Letter* dates to the first century, it would be first to draw this parallel, before even Justin Martyr; this she finds implausible.

Two more essays give particular attention to Mara's apparent allusion to the teaching and death of Jesus. In "Jesus as the Ever-Living Lawgiver in the *Letter* of Mara bar Sarapion," Petr Pokorny proposes that this is "not a historically authentic document but rather a parenetic text intended to address the young

[9] Ibid., 7, 19.

Syrian generation in the first decades of Roman rule." (133) He argues that the writing resonates with Matthean theology and may have roots in earlier *logia*; thus, it constitutes "an intriguing echo of Jesus' teaching and life story in second-century Syria among people who were not educated in biblical traditions." (138–39)

In "The Death(s) of Plato" Anna Ntinti seeks to set into broader context Mara's alignment of the deaths of Socrates, Pythagoras, and the "wise king" of the Jews. Death is, she observes, an important focal point in ancient biography in general and particularly in the lives of philosophers. After noting the Socratic origin of this trope, she turns to the varied traditions pertaining to Plato's death for a more detailed discussion. This is presented more as general background to Mara's *Letter* rather than as directly pertinent to its details or to previous scholarly discussion.

Two essays continue the effort to set Mara's *Letter* into a broader Greco-Roman literary and philosophical context. In his essay, "Mara bar Sarapion and Greek Philosophy," David Blank briefly revisits questions of literary genre before embarking upon a close comparison of Mara with the Stoics on a few interrelated issues: the unbridled pursuit of wealth and eradication of the passions, wandering in error, the importance of reputation, and providence and the suffering of wise men. Despite many similarities, he concludes that "a reader versed in Stoic philosophy may find Mara's letter rather a dog's dinner, that is, a confused jumble" (182). It is a "vision based on a fundamentally Socratic world-view, [a view which] …was given its clearest form and its most comprehensive conceptualisation by the Stoics. But what Mara tells his son does not include any of this conceptualisation, nor is it restricted to Stoic doctrines. His advice is based rather upon his experience and general culture, filtered through a good general understanding of philosophy, some of which is Stoic." (180).

Pieter W. van der Horst begins his "Consolation from Prison: Mara bar Sarapion and Boethius" with a few ancient examples of letters from prison—Paul, Ignatius, the spurious seventh epistle of Socrates—but he finds the closest parallel to Mara in Boethius. Further consideration leads him to conclude that the *Letter* is more likely a third or fourth-century work mainly due to the implicit anti-Judaism of the famous "wise king" passage.[10]

[10] For the same reasons argued in McVey, "A Fresh Look," 266–69.

Finally, Ilaria L. E. Ramelli in "Mara bar Sarapion: Comments on the Syriac Edition, Translation, and Notes by David Rensberger" discusses many questions of textual, literary, and historical significance; it will be more feasible to address them when Rensberger's annotated translation appears (expected in the Mohr-Siebeck SAPERE series).

On the whole, these are stimulating and informative essays. Yet many of them have little to say directly about Mara's *Letter*; in those that discuss this text in detail the reader is hampered by the absence of the new translation on which they are based (especially Blank and Ramelli). Finally, it is worth noting that all seem to have begun with the presumption that the *Letter* should be seen as a straightforward historical witness to life in first-century Commagene, but many conclude that it is more probably a rhetorical construct with dense yet imperfect parallels to Greco-Roman literature and philosophy, and that it is likely to have originated in second to fourth-century Osrhoene. A full engagement with the earlier scholarship on these matters remains a *desideratum*. Nonetheless, students of the earliest Syriac literature will find this a very engaging collection.

Jeffrey T. Wickes, transl., *St. Ephrem the Syrian: The Hymns on Faith*, The Fathers of the Church 130 (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015). Pp. xxi + 424; $39.95. E-book $39.95.

ANDREW PALMER, INSTITUTE OF EASTERN CHRISTIAN STUDIES, NIJMEGEN

The fourth-century Nisibene deacon Ephrem's Syriac *Teaching-Songs on Faith* (*TSF*, or, in quotations from the book under review, *HF* = *Hymns on Faith*) contain his most difficult poetry and some of his best.[1] Under the invented title '*Sermones polemici adversus scrutatores*',[2] they were first edited in 1743 by the Lebanese Maronite scholar as-Simʿānī (whose name is Latinised as Stephanus Evodius Assemanus) from two manuscripts at Rome (b11).[3] These manuscripts can now be examined online at www.mss.vatlib.it > catalogo manoscritti > manoscritti digitalizzati. The first, Vaticano siriaco (Vat. sir.) 111, dated 522, is one of the codices which the catalogue of the Vatican Library describes as *e limoso Nili fluminis imo extractos* 'extracted from the muddy bottom of the Nile', into which river it fell during its transportation to Rome. For this reason, the *TSF* are partly illegible there, on folia 51–94. The second manuscript, Vat. sir. 113, judging by the script, may be of about 550.

[1] Jeffrey Wickes, in the book under review, goes back to the term 'Hymns', 'because it is recognizable' (n. 57 on pp. 13f.), although he is aware of Michael Lattke's reservations about this and any other English term for the genre, including 'teaching-song', which Wickes credits to Kees den Biesen.

[2] The *TSF* are not 'polemical *homilies* against the inquisitive'. They are cast in the form of liturgical *songs* addressed half to God and half to a congregation, with a prayerful refrain to be sung between the verses. Incidentally, the second and third teaching-songs in this collection have verses and a refrain and so are not '[t]echnically…*mêmrê* rather than *madrāšê*' (*pace* Wickes, on p. 13 and in n. 1 on p. 63).

[3] 'b11' = No. 11 in the second edition of the *Annotated Bibliography of Ephrem the Syrian* by Kees den Biesen, privately published in 2011. From here on, I refer to publications on Ephrem as they are listed in Den Biesen. In Appendix 3 on pp. 441–7 of his *Annotated Bibliography*, Den Biesen lists the contents of the *ER*; the title at the bottom of p. 444 makes it appear that Petrus Benedictus was the editor of the *TSF*—indeed Henry Burgess (b460) assumed that he was. Wickes (p. xiii) refers only to J. S. Assemanus, the general editor.

Originally, its contents were the complete *TSF*; unfortunately, many of its leaves are now lost. Where a passage illegible in the former is lacking or damaged in the latter, the editor had recourse to conjecture. He also emended the text where he encountered obvious errors. Unfortunately, he did not indicate which words were editorial in origin. This edition is known as the *Editio Romana* (*ER*).

In 1955, Dom Edmund Beck, O. S. B., of the Abbey of Metten, in Bavaria, based his new edition (b18) of the 'Hymnen *de fide*' on folia 2–31 of the London manuscript, British Library (BL) Add. 12,176, of the fifth or the sixth century (to which he gave the siglum A). In his apparatus he notes variants from Assemanus' sources, Vat. syr. 111 and 113 (to which he gave the sigla B and C) and from BL Add. 14,571, of 519,[4] to which he gave the siglum D, and which contains, on folia 60–7, *TSF* 10–12, 14, 21 and 23, and (on folia 69f.) *TSF* 32. Beck does not emend even obvious errors in the paradosis (the transmission of the text, reduced to essentials).

The translations of the entire text begin with the Latin version facing Assemanus' text, which is a little free, perhaps, but generally true to the gist of the Syriac. In 1847 the *TSF* were translated into English (b991) by the Reverend John Brande Morris, Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, under the title *The Rhythms of St. Ephrem the Syrian*. Excerpts from this cycle (see Table 1 for the teaching-songs in question) were translated into English by Henry Burgess (b460, 1853), into German by Pius Zingerle (b1431, 1830–7) and into French by Camille Ferry (b615, 1877). All these were made from the eighteenth-century *ER*. Although this edition has its drawbacks, it is very often accurate in essentials, so that the early translations—particularly those by Burgess, available online—can still be consulted with profit.

Since the appearance of Beck's transparently edited text, which was accompanied by a German translation (b18), many scholars have translated parts of the cycle, notably Paolo Benetton (b328, 2011), whose Italian translation omits only the last seven teaching-songs. The others include Phil Botha (English, b357, 1996), Sebastian Brock (English, b392, 1975; b397, 1983; b400, 1986; b401, 1987; b435, 2006; b1556, 1987; b1561, 1989), Sebastian Brock &

[4] Twice on p. 17 and once on p. 18 Wickes refers to this manuscript as 'Add. 1457'.

George Kiraz (English, b437, 2006), Kees den Biesen (Dutch, b567, 2012), Paul Féghali (French [Arabic by 'CERO'], b435, 2006), François Graffin (French, b639, 1967; b641, 1973), Sidney Griffith (English, b665, 2003), Joseph Longton (French, b895, 1992), Javier Martínez Fernández (Spanish, b924, 1991; b930, 1999), Edward Mathews (English, b935, 1994), Robert Murray (English, b1002, 1970–1; b1003, 1975–6), Manel Nin (Catalan, b1031, 1997; Italian, b416, 1999), Andrew Palmer (English, b1072, 1993; b1073, 1993; b1074, 1995; b1075, 1995; b1077, 1998; b1081, 2003; b1084, 2005; b1085, 2006), Didier Rance (French, b407, 1991), Alphons Rodrigues Pereira (English, b2167, 1997); Paul Russell (English, b1174, 1997; b1181, 2004; b1185, *TSF* 1–80, announced 2009), Christine Shepardson (English, b1251, 2002), Sara Tanoğlu (Turkish, b1290, 2006), Emidio Vergani (Italian, b1349, 2005) and Pierre Yousif (English, b1397, 1978). See Table 1 for the teaching-songs in question. Of post-1954 translators, only Beck and Geevarghese Chediath (Malayalam, b500, 2008) have published translations of the whole cycle, until now.

The translation which has now been published by Jeffrey Wickes, assistant professor of Early Christianity at Saint Louis University, Missouri, refers to only five of these publications (marked with an asterisk in Table 1) and takes proper notice of none. Yet why would anyone publish a translation containing errors—or not containing insights—which he might have discovered by studying earlier translations, including the translations of excerpts from the *TSF* which are scattered throughout the literature? This literature is far more extensive than would appear from Wickes' footnotes.[5] Fortunately, Den Biesen has made it easy for us to find the neglected titles. Only a small part of the valuable work of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century translators needs to be revised in the light of Beck's edition. It is unjustifiable to dismiss all translations made before 1955 as not worth consulting, just because they are based on an outdated edition.

[5] The select bibliography does not claim to be comprehensive. Wickes refers in n. 26 on p. 8 to the anonymous Edessan chronicle of 540 in Hallier's edition of 1892, ignoring Guidi's of 1903. There are a few typographical errors in the bibliography: Nicomidie, for Nicomédie (see Editions, Renoux); Tounneau, for Tonneau (see Editions); 1990, for 1990–1991 (see Secondary Sources, Botha, 'Structure').

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In his introduction Wickes briefly contextualizes Ephrem (pp. 3–5), before devoting about ten pages (5–14) to his life and works. Three mistakes caught my eye. The baptistery of Nisibis, with its Greek inscription dated 359/60, is not 'a baptismal font' (n. 8 on p. 4). The notice on A. G. 609 in the anonymous Edessene chronicle of 506 (cf. Trombley & Watts, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite* [Liverpool, 2000], p. 8) is the source which says Nisibis was ceded to the Persians for 120 years, not Ch. 9 of Bk 25 of Ammianus Marcellinus' *Histories*, to which Wickes refers for this information in n. 21 on p. 7; nor does this Roman historian support, as he claims, his statement that 'the city's Christian inhabitants [were granted] peaceful travel to Amid', though the Syriac *Life of Ephrem* says he went from Nisibis to that city, from which his mother hailed. And the Syriac word *ṭalyā* means 'boy', or 'young man', up to about 25 years of age: see Barhebraeus' *Chronography*, 9.1 (ed. Bedjan, p. 87), where the dying Justin reproaches his wife Sophia, as follows: 'You are depriving him (*sc.* Tiberius, the regent) of his wife when he is a young man (*ṭalyā*) and his body cannot endure chastity'. Evidently *ṭalyā* is not to be translated as 'child' as Wickes does on p. 8f. (with n. 30). To be fair, this misconception is widespread.

There follows a short section (pp. 15–19) devoted to the collection which Wickes has selected for translation. Although he admits that '[w]e know very little about how Ephrem wrote his hymn cycles' (p. 15), he answers the question 'whether Ephrem wrote the *HF* as a single, coherent, and intentionally sequenced hymn cycle' with a confident 'clearly, he did not' (p. 16). It should be pointed out, in this connection, that the *Verse-Homilies on Faith* (which Wickes, again following the established Latin terminology, refers to as the 'sermons') begin by developing the theme of the Father and the Son before introducing, half-way through, the Holy Spirit. The same strategy is followed in the *TSF*, as Wickes himself points out in n. 163 on p. 40: 'While we cannot assume that the hymns' ordering represents the order in which they were composed, it is interesting that most of the more explicit references to the Holy Spirit's divinity come in the later hymns.' It is only proper for me to pass over the rest of this section, since a review is not the place to defend one's own theories.

The fourth and by far the longest section of the introduction (pp. 19–43) is on the audience and context of the work.[6] On the basis of comparative theology, Wickes paints 'a complex picture: aspects of the *HF* betray a "homoian" or "homoiousian" position, and suggest a date in the 350s. Others—the apparently anti-Eunomian language and the language affirming the Spirit's divinity—suggest an anti-Eunomian position in the late 360s' (p. 43). This is an interesting thesis; but it does not invalidate Griffith's argument from *TSF* 87,[7] that this cycle was brought to a conclusion in the early 370s, while the emperor Valens was persecuting the Trinitarians. In order to undermine this argument, Wickes casts suspicion on the authenticity of *TSF* 87 (from which Griffith argues), suggesting that the 'anti-Jewish language' of this teaching-song and its 'ecclesio-political references' set it apart from the rest of the collection (n. 120 on p. 27). Actually, anti-Jewish language is used in *TSF* 18, 23, 44, 54, 83 and other poems. As for religious persecution of dissident Christians by the emperor, in 53:2 Ephrem says he has seen priests killed by their rulers.[8] The cycle ends (*TSF* 87:23) with a passionate indirect appeal to the emperor, presented as a prayer to God: 'Pacify, Master of us (all), the priests and the rulers, and, in one (undivided) Church, let the priests pray for their rulers and let

[6] Wickes actually forgets to discuss the *Sitz im Leben* of the cycle, whether these teaching-songs were designed to be performed during the liturgy, as their literary form suggests, or to be read, in smaller circles, exclusively by the educated class, as their extreme difficulty and sustained argumentation seems to prove, the liturgical form being a rhetorical device by which the poet attempted to shift the grounds of the dispute from its rational content—where his opponents' position was strong—to an *ad hominem* argument, which claimed that the approach of the Arians (if I may loosely call them by the name they are given in the Edessan chronicle of 540) was incompatible with the reverence and fear appropriate in the presence of the Divinity.

[7] S. H. Griffith, "Ephraem, the Deacon of Edessa, and the Church of the Empire," in *Diakonia: Studies in Honor of Robert T. Meyer*, ed. by Thomas P. Halton and Joseph P. Williman (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 22–52.

[8] For more evidence, see Palmer, "The Prophet and the King: Mar Afrem's Message to the Eastern Roman Emperor," in *After Bardaisan. Studies in Continuity and Change in Syriac Christianity in Honour of Professor Han J. W. Drijvers*, ed. by Gerrit J. Reinink and Alexander C. Klugkist. OLA 89 (Louvain: Peeters, 1999), 213–36.

the rulers spare their walled cities! And let internal peace, (restored) through you, be to us an external wall!' This suggests a date right at the end of Ephrem's life (he died on 9 June 373), for later that year, according to the Edessan chronicle of 540, the cathedral of Edessa was seized by 'the Arians' (the emperor's party), who drove out those who shared the faith of Ephrem.

The introduction ends with a section entitled 'The language of investigation and Ephrem's theological voice' (pp. 43–52) and a note on translation (pp. 52f.). The former begins with a discussion of two Syriac verbs, both of which Wickes translates as 'investigate', even though, on his own admission, one is used negatively by Ephrem, the other positively (pp. 47f.). He also undertakes to flag up, in a footnote, any translation which departs significantly from the literal sense of the Syriac' (ibid.) and says his intention is 'to represent Ephrem's Syriac accurately, while still producing a readable English translation' (ibid.).

To test Wickes' translation transparently for accuracy and readability, we may compare the three published English translations of the conclusion of Teaching-Song 1 (stanzas 16–19). I give Beck's text with Assemanus' variants in the margin; then the versions of Morris (b991), Burgess (b461) and Wickes. I print the translation of each separate couplet on a new line, regardless of the original format (Morris, in spite of the title, is printed in continuous prose, Burgess in half-couplets with the stanzas pleasantly set out, Wickes in couplets, often running over, with the stanzas crowded together).

16 ܐ ܒܗ ܡܚܝܠ ܪܚܝܡܐ ܒܗ ܠܐ ܒܗ ܡܚܝܠ ܪܚܝܡܐ ܒܗ ܠܐ
ܕܐ ܕܚܝܡܐ ܒܗ ܠܐ ܒܗ ܕܐ ܕܚܝܡܐ ܒܗ ܠܐ ܒܗ ܕܐ ܕܚܝܡܐ
ܚܝܠ ܠܐ ܒܗ ܕܐ ܕܚܝܡܐ ܒܗ ܠܐ ܒܗ ܕܐ ܕܚܝܡܐ ❖ ܚܝܠ ܠܐ ܒܗ ܕܐ ܕܚܝܡܐ ❖ ܚܝܠ ܠܐ ܒܗ ܕܐ ܕܚܝܡܐ ❖

17 ܚܝܠ ܕܐ ܕܚܝ ܕܐ ܚܝܠ ܪܚܝܡܐ ܒܗ ܕܐ ܕܚܝ ܕܐ ܚܝܠ ܪܚܝܡܐ
ܚܝܠ ܪܚܝ ܕܐ ܚܝܠ ܪܚܝ ܕܐ ܚܝܠ ܪܚܝ ܕܐ ܚܝܠ ܪܚܝ ❖ ❖ ❖

18 ܐ ܒܗ ܡܚܝܠ ܪܚܝ ܕܐ ܚܝܠ ܪܚܝ ܕܐ ܚܝܠ ܪܚܝ ܕܐ ܚܝܠ ܪܚܝ
ܕܐ ܚܝܠ ܪܚܝ ܕܐ ܚܝܠ ܪܚܝ ❖ ❖ ❖

19 ܐ ܒܗ ܡܚܝܠ ܪܚܝ ܕܐ ܚܝܠ ܪܚܝ ❖ ❖ ❖

Morris

16 If then our knowledge knows not how to know itself,
How shall it dare to raise difficulties about the Generation of Him that knoweth all things?
The thing made that knoweth not itself, how should it seek into its Maker?

17 The mighty Nature, that never was not, is spoken of by all mouths.
The mouth that willeth to speak of That which is unspeakable,
Bringeth Him to littleness, in that it sufficeth not for His greatness.

18 Every one then that wisheth to magnify God exceedingly,
As He is great in His own Nature, himself in magnifying Him is magnified in Him.
Restrain searching, which sufficeth not [to reach] Him, and gain silence, which is becoming of Him.

19 Give me, Lord, to use both discerningly,
that I may neither search rashly, nor be silent carelessly.
Teach me words of edification, and make me gain the silence of discernment.

Burgess

16 Since then our intellectual faculty / Knoweth not how to know itself,
How shall it dare to meditate / On the generation of Him who knoweth all things?
The thing made which knoweth not itself, / How shall it know its Maker?

17 There is a mighty nature, / Ineffable by all lips!
The mouth that will speak / Of Him who is unutterable,
Brings Him to degradation, / Being inadequate to His greatness.

18 Whoever therefore is desirous / Greatly to magnify God,
(He being great in His nature / Will make him great who magnifies Him!)
Let him restrain disputation, which is unequal to Him, / And possess silence, which is worthy of Him!

19 Grant, Lord, that I may use / Both of these prudently;
That I may not search presumptuously / Nor be silent slothfully.
Teach me the speech which is profitable, / And impart to me the

silence which is prudent!

Wickes

16 If, moreover, our knowledge knows that it does not know itself,
How do you presume to meditate upon the birth of that Knower-of-all?
How does a thing-made, which does not know itself, investigate its Maker?

17 Great is the nature that has never been spoken of by any mouths!
The mouth which wishes to speak about him who (or: 'that which') is unspeakable,
Makes him (or: 'it') small, for it (or: 'he') is insufficient to his (or: 'its') greatness.

18 All who wish to extol and magnify God,
[God], being majestic in his nature, magnifies the one who magnifies him.
Refrain from debating, which cannot comprehend him, and acquire silence, which befits him.

19 Enable me, my Lord, to use both of these discerningly:
May I not debate presumptuously; may I not be silent impudently.
May I learn beneficial speech ('speech of benefit'); may I acquire discerning silence ('silence of discernment').

Of the three English interpreters, Burgess (B) conveys the sense most accurately and in the most elegant style. Morris (M) mistranslates a couple of words in stanza 16 and misunderstands the first line of stanza 17, but translates the rest correctly, if woodenly. Wickes (W) has the most errors.[9] He, too, has trouble with the first line of stanza 17, where he construes the second word of the first line as though it were a predicate—a basic error, since it would then be in the absolute state. In English, it seems impossible to translate this stanza well without inverting the order of the first and second lines, as follows:

The mouth which seeks to speak about the one who is not to be put into words—
(that) great nature which has never been put into words by any mouth—

[9] I also made a close study of Wickes' translation of the relatively straightforward *TSF* 2 and found errors—some of them quite serious—in sixteen out of the twenty-four stanzas.

is going to bring him (down) to (its) littleness, since it does not have the capacity for his greatness.

Burgess takes notice of the translations offered by his predecessors; but even in those rare cases where Wickes notices that a certain teaching-song has been separately translated, there is no note discussing a difference of interpretation. One would expect such a footnote to the last line of *TSF* 1, for instance, where Wickes is the only English translator to read the verbs as first-person singular forms of the imperfect ('May I learn'), rather than imperatives ('Teach [me]').

The new translation has the air of a preliminary draft, which has been insufficiently revised. The volume has all the right components—bibliography, introduction, footnotes, indices—and is a splendid work so far as paper and typography are concerned (these words are borrowed from Henry Burgess); but it is not up to the usual standard of this series. This passionate, brilliant, dense and often satirical cycle deserves better. To make it easy for the reader to check Wickes' translation not only against those of Morris and Beck, but also against partial translations, I have drawn up as complete a list as I can, based mainly on the second edition of Kees den Biesen's *Annotated Bibliography of Ephrem the Syrian*, privately published via Lulu in 2011 (Table 1).

APPENDIX

Table 1. Substantial or complete translations of individual teaching-songs in the *TSF*.

HF	b-number: Author (language if not English) N.B. 'b' refers to Kees den Biesen, *Annotated Bibliography*, 2nd ed., 2011.
1	b460: Burgess; b328: Benetton (Italian)
2	b1174: Russell; b328: Benetton (Italian)
3	b328: Benetton (Italian)
4	b1431: Zingerle (German); b1084: Palmer; b328: Benetton (Italian)
5	b1084: Palmer; b328: Benetton (Italian)
6	b328: Benetton (Italian); b567: Den Biesen (Dutch)
7	b1431: Zingerle (German); b1074: Palmer; b328: Benetton (Italian)

8	b400f. & b1561: Brock; b328: Benetton (Italian)
9	b328: Benetton (Italian)
10	b1431: Zingerle (German); b1002: Murray*; b641: Graffin (French); b1561: Brock*; b1031: Nin (Catalan); b807: Koonammakkal; b437: Brock & Kiraz; b328: Benetton (Italian)
11	(Stanzas 1–10) b1075: Palmer; b328: Benetton (Italian)
12	b328: Benetton (Italian)
13	b1431: Zingerle (German); b328: Benetton (Italian)
14	b397: Brock; b407: Rance (French); b1031: Nin (Catalan); b437: Brock & Kiraz; b328: Benetton (Italian); (stanzas 1–5, 9, 10) b930: Martínez Fernández (www.arzobispodegranada.es/pdfs/40.pdf, pp. 42f.)
15	b1431: Zingerle (German); b328: Benetton (Italian)
16	b1431: Zingerle (German); b328: Benetton (Italian)
17	b1431: Zingerle (German); b328: Benetton (Italian)
18	b641: Graffin (French); b1397: Yousif; b1290: Tanoğlu (Turkish); b328: Benetton (Italian)
19	b1431: Zingerle (German); b328: Benetton (Italian)
20	b1431: Zingerle (German); b1003: Murray; b1556 & b1561: Brock; b1512: Bettiolo (Italian); b1072 & b1342: Palmer; b1031: Nin (Catalan); b1360: Vleugels; b328: Benetton (Italian)
21	b1073: Palmer; b328: Benetton (Italian); b930: Martínez Fernández (*ibid.*, pp. 44–6)
22	b328: Benetton (Italian); b930: Martínez Fernández (*ibid.*, pp. 46–9)
23	b1431: Zingerle (German); b460: Burgess; b328: Benetton (Italian); b930: Martínez Fernández (*ibid.*, pp. 49–51)
24	b328: Benetton (Italian)
25	b328: Benetton (Italian); b567: Den Biesen (Dutch)
26	b328: Benetton (Italian)
27	b328: Benetton (Italian)
28	b328: Benetton (Italian)
29	b1431: Zingerle (German); b460: Burgess; b328: Benetton (Italian)
30	b328: Benetton (Italian)

31	b1561: Brock; b351: Botha; b435: Brock/Féghali/CERO (English/French/Arabic); b437: Brock & Kiraz*; b328: Benetton (Italian); b567: Den Biesen (Dutch)
32	b1431: Zingerle (German); b328: Benetton (Italian)
33	b1075: Palmer; b328: Benetton (Italian)
34	b328: Benetton (Italian)
35	b328: Benetton (Italian)
36	b328: Benetton (Italian)
37	b1431: Zingerle (German); b328: Benetton (Italian)
38	b1431: Zingerle (German); b1075: Palmer; b328: Benetton (Italian); b561: Den Biesen
39	b328: Benetton (Italian)
40	b1561: Brock; b328: Benetton (Italian)
41	b328: Benetton (Italian)
42	b460: Burgess; b328: Benetton (Italian); b567: Den Biesen (Dutch)
43	b1431: Zingerle (German); b328: Benetton (Italian)
44	b328: Benetton (Italian)
45	b1077: Palmer*; b328: Benetton (Italian)
46	b1431: Zingerle (German); b328: Benetton (Italian)
47	b328: Benetton (Italian)
48	b328: Benetton (Italian)
49	b1561: Brock; b1072: Palmer; b435: Brock/Féghali/CERO (English/French/Arabic); b437: Brock & Kiraz; b328: Benetton (Italian); b567: Den Biesen (Dutch)
50	b328: Benetton (Italian)
51	b1431: Zingerle (German); b328: Benetton (Italian)
52	b328: Benetton (Italian)
53	b328: Benetton (Italian)
54	b1431: Zingerle (German); b328: Benetton (Italian)

55	b328: Benetton (Italian)
56	b328: Benetton (Italian)
57	b328: Benetton (Italian)
58	b328: Benetton (Italian)
59	b328: Benetton (Italian)
60	b328: Benetton (Italian)
61	b328: Benetton (Italian)
62	b328: Benetton (Italian)
63	b328: Benetton (Italian)
64	b328: Benetton (Italian)
65	b328: Benetton (Italian)
66	b328: Benetton (Italian)
67	b460: Burgess; b328: Benetton (Italian)
68	b1431: Zingerle (German); b1081/b1085: Palmer; b328: Benetton (Italian)
69	b1431: Zingerle (German); b328: Benetton (Italian)
70	b328: Benetton (Italian)
71	b328: Benetton (Italian)
72	b1431: Zingerle (German); b328: Benetton (Italian); (Stanzas 1–7) b1075: Palmer
73	b397: Brock; b407: Rance (French); b415: Nin (Italian); b328: Benetton (Italian)
74	b1431: Zingerle (German); b665: Griffith; b328: Benetton (Italian)
75	b328: Benetton (Italian)
76	b328: Benetton (Italian)
77	b1181: Russell; b328: Benetton (Italian)
78	b357: Botha; b1181: Russell; b328: Benetton (Italian)
79	b1181: Russell; b328: Benetton (Italian)
80	b1431: Zingerle (German); b328: Benetton (Italian)

81	b639: Graffin (French); b1561: Brock; b895: Longton (French); b924: Martínez Fernández (Spanish); b1072: Palmer; b935: Mathews; b1031: Nin (Catalan); b2167: Rodrigues Pereira; b1349: Vergani (Italian); b567: Den Biesen (Dutch)
82	b639: Graffin (French); b397: Brock; b407: Rance (French); b924: Martínez Fernández (Spanish); b895: Longton (French); b935: Mathews; b1031: Nin (Catalan); b2167: Rodrigues Pereira; b1349: Vergani (Italian); b437: Brock & Kiraz
83	b615: Ferry (French); b639: Graffin (French); b924: Martínez Fernández (Spanish); b895: Longton (French); b1072: Palmer; b935: Mathews; b1031: Nin (Catalan); b2167: Rodrigues Pereira; b1349: Vergani (Italian)
84	b639: Graffin (French); b924: Martínez Fernández (Spanish); b895: Longton (French); b935: Mathews; b1031: Nin (Catalan); b2167: Rodrigues Pereira; b1349: Vergani (Italian)
85	b639: Graffin (French); b924: Martínez Fernández (Spanish); b895: Longton (French); b935: Mathews; b1031: Nin (Catalan); b2167: Rodrigues Pereira; b1349: Vergani (Italian)
86	None published
87	b1077: Palmer; b1251: Shepardson*

Thomas Kremer, *Mundus Primus. Die Geschichte der Welt und des Menschen von Adam bis Noach im Genesiskommentar Ephräms des Syrers*, CSCO 641 / Subsidia 128 (Louvain: Peeters, 2012). Pp. lvi + 534; €120.

LUCAS VAN ROMPAY, DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES, DUKE UNIVERSITY

According to Ephrem and other early Syriac authors, the world we presently inhabit is the "second world," which was inaugurated by God's covenant with Noah (narrated in Gen. 9:1–17). Distinct from it in time and place is the "first world" (*ʿālmā qadmāyā, mundus primus*), which existed until the flood and the departure of Noah and his family from the region surrounding Paradise. The author argues that in Ephrem's view the biblical narrative about the "first world" constitutes a more or less independent unit deserving separate treatment (see esp. his comments on pp. 406–11). The first half of Ephrem's *Commentary on Genesis* (ed. R. M. Tonneau) deals with the "first world" (63 pages in the edition, out of a total of 121) and discusses the creation, humanity's sin in Paradise, the expulsion from Paradise, and the life of the antediluvian generations. It is this part of the *Commentary* that is the subject of this very substantial, richly documented, and well-written monograph.

The core of the book is Chapter III (pp. 171–411), which offers a detailed analysis of the successive episodes and the main themes of Ephrem's *Commentary*, consisting of a discussion of Ephrem's views, the provenance of these views, and parallel passages in Syriac and Greek authors. Chapter I (pp. 1–95) first introduces Ephrem's theological opponents (Marcion, Bardaisan, and Mani) and then gives an overview of the most relevant works dealing with Genesis, in Syriac and Greek, prior to ca. 400 AD, followed by brief presentations of the Targumim, *Midrash Genesis Rabba*, and *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*. Chapter II (pp. 97–170) provides a general introduction to the *Commentary*, including historical questions, the state of research, formal and structural aspects, and leading themes. Chapter IV (pp. 413–491) deals with questions of hermeneutics and reception history. A useful summary at the end, presented in the form of ten statements (pp. 493–500), brings together the main findings.

While it is impossible to do full justice to this voluminous and extremely rich work, the focus of my review will be on its most

innovative aspects as well as on some issues that, despite the thorough discussion in the book, in my view still need some further reflection. It should first be noted that a full German translation of Ephrem's *Commentary*, by the same author, is forthcoming in the series *SOPHIA – Quellen östlicher Theologie* (Trier). This will turn out to be a necessary companion volume to the present book, in which the author does not provide many quotations (either in Syriac or in German). Chapter III, the author's 250-page commentary on Ephrem's (much more concise!) *Commentary*, does not primarily follow the Syriac text, but is organized around themes and topics, whereby selections are made, certain passages are foregrounded and others passed over in silence. While fully respecting the author's organizational decisions, one has the impression that Ephrem's *Commentary* itself somewhat recedes behind the author's erudition.

In Chapter I, one may at first sight be surprised to find, among Ephrem's opponents, such a lengthy discussion of Bardaisan (pp. 18–66), whereas Marcion and Mani only receive a few pages each. The author argues that much of Ephrem's understanding of the creation is a polemical response to Bardaisan. In this he follows the lead of earlier scholars, among whom T. Jansma should be singled out. In the ongoing scholarly debate about the measure of Bardaisan's Hellenism, however, he claims that the Edessene philosopher should be seen primarily as a representative of the Parthian, or "Median-Persian" world of thought, whereby "Greek Hellenistic thought" constitutes only the "external conceptual framework" (p. 44: "äusseres Rahmenkonzept"). Elsewhere in the volume he asserts that it is precisely these "Iranian" aspects of Bardaisan's cosmology and anthropology that are the target of Ephrem's comments or attacks. Ephrem himself, therefore, should be seen as interacting with the Persian world to a greater extent than recent scholarship has acknowledged, since in the author's view most scholars have been inclined to overemphasize Ephrem's involvement in the Greco-Roman world (on p. 151 he, unfairly, blames U. Possekel for forcing Ephrem into the "corset" of Stoic philosophy which "distorts the contours of his own position"; see also p. 9). Examples of themes and arguments in Ephrem that should be understood as addressing Iranian aspects of Bardaisan's thought include the discussion of space (pp. 46, 60, 165), the role of the wind in creation (pp. 53, 159, 184), the de-emphasizing

("Depotenzierung" and "Degradierung") of light and darkness (p. 188–89), the polemic against dualism (pp. 60, 207–8, 494–95), and the insistence on free will against Bardaisan's doctrine of fate (pp. 60–61, 495). Partly grounded in observations by earlier scholars (such as G. Widengren), the author's insistence on Bardaisan's and Ephrem's Persian contexts adds a valuable insight to our understanding of early Syriac Christianity. Rather than a paradigm shift, however, I would like to see this as a shift of emphasis, as any study of "originär edessenische Philosophie" (p. 41) will have to take into account the proximity of, and the interaction with, both the Greco-Roman and the Persian worlds.

One of the striking characteristics of Ephrem's *Commentary* is the scarcity of typologies and references to the New Testament, as compared to their abundance in Ephrem's poetry. Throughout the present study the author adopts a holistic approach to Ephrem and uses Ephrem's poetry to illuminate the *Commentary*. He plays down the contrast between the prose *Commentary* and the poetry, and reduces it to a question of tactics, as "the christological perspective is present in the *Commentary* as well, even though it is only rarely exploited, in order to allow it to be even more efficiently deployed in the context of his entire theology" (p. 460)—or, put differently, it is a matter of "exegetical and rhetorical method in the sense of *reculer pour mieux sauter*" (p. 459). This seems a rather superficial solution, which ignores the real problem and eschews the issue of different functions and different audiences for the poetry and the prose *Commentary*, topics the author treats in a different context (e.g., p. 102).

If one sees Ephrem's narration of the "first world" as a separate unit within the *Commentary*, deserving to be read in its own right, the question arises as to how in Ephrem's view the two human catastrophes—the sin of Paradise followed by the first couple's expulsion and the sin of the pre-flood generations followed by their destruction and the transfer of the remnant of humanity to our present world—relate to each other. Both are acts of human free will committed in stubbornness against God's will. Is the second misfortune (discussed by Ephrem in so much detail) a repetition and confirmation of the first? Does this repetition put the original sin in a different perspective, adding justification to God's decision first to expel humanity from Paradise and then to remove humans from the paradisiac region altogether—as if the

first sin itself had still not definitively sealed humanity's fate? More than the author seems to be willing to do, I would suggest that Ephrem's creative use of the interplay of divine justice and grace forces us to read the history between the expulsion from Paradise and the flood, despite the grave impact of sin, as a period of continued blessing for humanity living "at the foothills" of Paradise. Humanity's physical proximity to Paradise still had its salvific effect, which came to an end only with the removal of Noah and his family to a different world. But even then God ensured that the blessings of Paradise would not become extinct completely. Through the ingenious design of subterranean channels God extended the course of the rivers of Paradise into our inhabited world. In addition, God bestowed his blessings on Noah, the founding father of the "second world." These blessings passed to Noah's son Shem, known as Melchizedek (an identification discussed at length in the *Commentary*), and to Abraham (Gen. 14:18–20). The author thinks that Ephrem's discussion of the rivers of Paradise and of the subterranean channels to our world (nearly one full page of Syriac text!) is inconsequential (p. 328, with note 643), and he does not even mention Melchizedek's blessing of Abraham. He, therefore, seems to have missed these notes which Ephrem injects as positive and indelible signs of hope and blessing into the narrative of human history, which is otherwise marked by human inability (p. 328: "Geringfügigkeit") and need of salvation (p. 331: "Erlösungsbedürftigkeit").

This brings us to the author's view of the sin of Paradise in Ephrem's understanding, which he discusses in great detail and with much insight (esp. pp. 279–320). One part of his description, however, I would be reluctant to accept. On p. 270 he explains that the human couple's sin resulted not only in their mortality (from an earlier state between immortality and mortality), but also in the loss of the robe of glory and the image of God ("… den Verlust seines Ehrenkleides und seiner Gottebenbildlichkeit"); see also pp. 308, 317, 328, 330, even though on p. 307 the image of God is not included among the losses caused by sin. I do not think that any of the passages to which he refers, from the *Commentary* or the *mēmrē* and *madrāshē*, specifically mentions the loss of humanity's image of God as a result of sin. It is true that according to Ephrem the image of God was presented to man as a dynamic project to be realized in full in the future (e.g., *Hymns on Paradise* 12.18), in the process of

"obtaining divinity in (their) humanity" (*Commentary* II, 23, ed. p. 39,11–12), but the image of God, implanted in human nature at its creation and consisting, in a technical sense, in his free will and in his dominion over the earth (*Commentary* I, 29, ed. p. 23,24–30), was *not* lost through sin. God did not disavow his image! Rather than man's "Sehnsucht nach seiner Gottebenbildlichkeit" (p. 326–27), it is the "Gottebenbildlichkeit" itself that was preserved in post-paradisiac humanity. Here again, therefore, Ephrem's anthropology may be slightly more optimistic than would appear from the author's analysis.

In his effort to illuminate the literary, religious, and cultural contexts of Ephrem's *Commentary*, the author uses a great number of ancient sources and parallel texts. His comments on Jewish sources are very valuable and, by paying attention to both content and hermeneutical approach, this work moves beyond comparisons and contrasts laid out by previous scholars (among whom S. Hidal and T. Kronholm should be singled out) and allows for the possibility that Ephrem and other Syriac authors developed their own *haggadot*, thus creating a Christian counterpart to Jewish midrash (pp. 360 and 494). The author's references to pre-Rabbinic midrashic procedure (e.g., p. 427, note 51), however, would justify a closer look into such works as *Genesis Apocryphon* and the *Life of Adam and Eve*, which are not included in the bibliography. Particularly intriguing are the relatively high number of references to Philo of Alexandria, some of which (such as the concept of "God being his own space") suggest that Ephrem was familiar with some Philonic interpretative trajectories, mediated perhaps by Theophilus of Antioch (pp. 174–75, see also pp. 9–10). As for the Greek sources, it is unfortunate that some outdated editions have been used, such as the *Patrologia Graeca* edition for the fragments of Theodore of Mopsuestia and J. Deconinck's edition for the fragments of Diodore of Tarsus. The recent editions of the Catena on Genesis and *Collectio Coisliniana* by F. Petit should have been used instead. Eusebius of Emesa does not receive the attention he deserves and the author's claim that Eusebius did not have a lasting impact on the exegetical tradition (p. 185) is infelicitous.

Throughout the monograph Ephrem's *Commentary on Genesis* emerges as a unique literary work, reflecting the creative power of its author as well as the complex cultural world of early Syriac Christianity. The author successfully explores Ephrem's proximity

to the Persian world and his indebtedness to Jewish tradition. He focuses on Ephrem's powerful defense of the unity of the Christian God as revealed in both the Old and New Testaments, of human free will against any type of fatalistic doctrine, and of the ideals of asceticism (as an effective means to combat evil) which he reads into biblical history. Ephrem's work will always evoke many more questions than we will be able to answer, but Thomas Kremer has given us a remarkable study that will further inform and nourish our interest in, and fascination with, the *Commentary*. He deserves our profound gratitude.

Paul-Hubert Poirier, Agathe Roman, Thomas Schmidt, Eric Crégheur, and José H. Declerck, eds., *Contra Manichaeos Libri IV: Graece et Syriace; cum excerptis e Sacris Parallelis Iohanni Damasceno attributis Titus Bostrensis,* Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca, 82 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013). Pp. clv + 427; €350.00.

ILARIA L.E. RAMELLI, ANGELICUM – CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY – OXFORD UNIVERSITY

Titus of Basra, or Bostra, was active during the reigns of Julian and Valens (361–378), but the information available about him is rather scanty. Titus' masterpiece, a treatise *Against the Manichaeans* in four books, probably stems from 363 CE and is the only work by Titus preserved in its integrity. He wrote also "some other volumes" (Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 102: *fortes adversum Manichaeos libros et nonnulla volumina alia*), but only some fragments of his exegetical works survive, especially on Luke. These show that he adhered to the Antiochene style of exegesis, which does not surprise in a follower of Diodore of Tarsus, the head of the so-called Antiochene school. Titus indeed knew and used Diodore's exegetical works. His commentaries on Scripture reveal that his secular learning was as high as his knowledge of Scripture (Jerome, *Letter* 70 [84]). Even though much is lost of his works, these earned him such a high reputation that Sozomen mentions him, alongside Cyril of Jerusalem and a few others, among the most important writers (*HE* 3.14).

Book 4 and a part of Book 3 of this treatise *Against the Manichaeans* are extant only in a Syriac translation,[1] which explains why this volume of the Corpus Christianorum, albeit belonging to the Greek series, is largely filled with—typographically clear and beautiful—Syriac script. The Greek, where extant (namely in Books 1–2 and in part of Book 3, comprising about two thirds of the work), is printed on the right pages, with Syriac facing on the left. The Syriac is more prolix than the Greek. Both the Syriac and the Greek editions feature a critical apparatus and an *apparatus fontium* at the bottom of each page. This volume thus offers the available Greek text in a critical edition by Agathe Roman and Thomas Schmidt, the Syriac translation of the entire work in a critical edition by

[1] Cf. Paul-Hubert Poirier, "Une première étude du *Contra Manichaeos* de Titus de Bostra," *Laval* 61 (2005), 355–362; Nils A. Pedersen, "Titus of Bostra in Syriac Literature," *Laval* 62 (2006), 359–367.

Paul-Hubert Poirier and Éric Crégheur, and the Greek excerpts preserved in the *Sacra parallela*, ascribed to John of Damascus, critically edited by José Declerck. The present edition represents a significant advancement vis-à-vis the previous edition by Paul de Lagarde, *Titi Bostreni Contra Manichaeos libri quattuor syriace* (Berlin, 1859).

The Greek edition prints Titus' direct quotations of Manichaean sources in spaced characters, so as to make them conspicuous. In the Syriac version—which identifies more Manichaean quotations than the Greek—there is no typographic highlighting of the Manichaean citations, but these are easy to spot since they are regularly introduced by the quotation particle ܠܡ. An index also lists all the occurrences of this quotation marker. This highlighting of the Manichaean quotations, both in Greek and in Syriac, as well as a planned complete inventory of the Manichaean materials in Titus' work,[2] will likely prove very valuable for scholars, especially those working on Manichaeism. I expect that a systematic comparison between the Manichaean quotations in Titus and those, slightly later, in Augustine may yield interesting results.[3]

The general structure of the work is helpfully outlined on pp. LXXXIX–XCVIII of the introductory essay (pp. XI–CVII), written principally by Poirier, the main editor. In the first two books, Titus refutes Manichaean tenets such as the two first principles, equal and opposed to each other, and addresses subjects including matter, the origin of evil, human free will, divine providence, and the different conditions of rational creatures in the

[2] This will be compiled by Poirier and Timothy Pettipiece and will appear in the series Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia (Turnhout: Brepols). For a preliminary study of Titus' Manichaean quotations, see Paul-Hubert Poirier, "L'identification des citations et matériaux manichéens dans le *Contra Manichæos* de Titus de Bostra," *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 153.4 (2009), 1657–1688.

[3] Augustine as a source on Manichaeism constitutes the focus of recent research by Johannes van Oort and Jason David BeDuhn, among others. See, e.g., J. van Oort, "Augustine and the Books of the Manichaeans," in *A Companion to Augustine*, ed. Mark Vessey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 188–199; J. BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma*, 1–2 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009–2013).

world.[4] Titus reasons here virtually without recourse to Scripture, but only by means of rational argument based on common notions (ancient philosophy's κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι). The last two books, on the other hand, specifically refute Manichaean exegesis of Scripture, arguing from the Old Testament in Book 3, and from the New Testament in Book 4.

Notably, in 3.68 Titus compares Mani's aversion to the Old Testament to the attitudes of Marcion, Basilides, and Valentinus, who also posited a discord between Old and New Testaments. As Titus knew well, Origen had spent his whole life polemicizing against Marcionites and 'Gnostics,' especially Valentinians, and arguing for the harmony and unity between Old and New Testaments, which he maintained formed one and the same body, that of Christ. Origen, indeed, comes explicitly to the fore in Titus' refutation of Mani in 4.12. Here Titus remarks that Mani presented himself as an apostle, sent by Christ to improve the Gospel, but he could not have been sent by Christ, because he was too late, posterior to emperor Decius. Titus supports this claim by reference to the fact that Origen (ܐܘܪܝܓܢܝܣ, 4.12.20; p. 342, l. 20), who denounced and combated all the heresies of his day, never mentioned or refuted Mani. According to Photius, *Bibl.* 85, Titus attacked not the writings of Mani himself, but those of his follower Adda. I also think that a systematic, comparative study of both Titus' and Augustine's engagement with Manichaean biblical exegesis is highly desirable and promises to be fruitful.[5] A recent study of Manichaean biblical exegesis by Alexander Böhlig,[6] which could not be cited by Poirier and the others, for instance, examines the Manichaean interpretation of Gen 1:1–2 by Felix, as reported by Augustine, *C.Fel.* 1.17. This is close to the Manichaean interpretation of Gen 1:2 as reported by Titus, 4.111. This is one of the many convergences

[4] On Titus's anti-Manichaean theodicy see Nils Arne Pedersen, *Demonstrative Proof in Defence of God. A Study of Titus of Bostra's* Contra Manichæos (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

[5] On Augustine, see Jacob Albert van den Berg, *Biblical Argument in Manichaean Missionary Practice. The Case of Adimantus and Augustine* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[6] A. Böhlig, *Die Bibel bei den Manichäern* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 37.

"between Latin Manichaeism and the Manichaeism of Titus' environment."[7]

The introduction also addresses some points concerning Titus and his works and tries to explain the relatively limited diffusion of Titus' work by pointing to its poor style (analyzed on pp. LII–LXXIII) and its polemical nature, which rendered it much less attractive once Manichaeism ceased to represent a threat to Christian 'orthodoxy' (p. XX). The same, indeed, was the case with the 25 books *Adversus Manichaeos* of Titus' inspirer, Diodore, known from the detailed résumé provided by Photius, *Bibl.* 85—which is nevertheless enough to study fruitfully its clear derivations from Bardaisan in its anti-deterministic and anti-fatalistic arguments.[8]

Most of the introduction is devoted to strictly philological matters, as becomes a volume that supplies a critical edition. The manuscript tradition is almost entirely direct: one Syriac manuscript and seven Greek manuscripts. The indirect tradition is represented by the above-mentioned *Sacra parallela*, from which the relevant passages are collected in an appendix (pp. CXXVII–CXXXVII), by the testimonies from Gobar, on whom see below, and by some Greek anthologies. Poirier's *stemma codicum* (p. LI) traces five 16th-17th-century Greek manuscripts to a single Geneva manuscript from the 11th century. Another, independent 11th-century manuscript is Greek Athonensis Vatopedinus 236. The Syriac manuscript containing the full translation, British Library Add. 12150 (written in Edessa in 411 CE), is much more ancient than all the Greek manuscripts, being even the most ancient dated Syriac manuscript preserved, at least to our knowledge. Since this manuscript is a copy of a previous Syriac manuscript, the Syriac translation—which appears accurate—must have been prepared almost immediately after the composition of the Greek original. The Syriac version depends on the Greek sub-archetype α, from which the Greek excerpts of the *Sacra parallela* were drawn. (Titus'

[7] Nils Arne Pedersen, review of Böhlig, *Die Bibel*, in *Vigiliae Christianae* 68 (2014), 572–577: 575.

[8] Analysis in my *Bardaiṣan of Edessa: A Reassessment of the Evidence and a New Interpretation*, Eastern Christian Studies 22 (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2009),142–161. On Diodore's treatise see also Giulio Malavasi, "Diodore of Tarsus' Treatise against the Manichaeans: A New Fragment," *VChr* 69 (2015), 296–304.

work was also translated into Latin in the Catholic Counterreformation, but these late versions are not included in the present edition.)

An appendix on the *Sacra parallela* by Declerck complements the introduction (pp. CIX–CXXXVII). To the seven extracts already known, Declerck has added two more that he has found. The redactor of the *Sacra parallela* is likely to have been one of the very last ancient authors who could still access the whole of Titus' *Adversus Manichaeos,* as Poirier observes on p. XX. A bibliography completes the introduction (pp. CXXXIX–CLV), and indices conclude the book (pp. 415–424). The present critical edition will be usefully supplemented by a French translation, being prepared by Paul-Hubert Poirier, Agathe Roman, and Thomas Schmidt, which will appear in the twin series, Corpus Christianorum in Translation (Brepols).

A careful comparison between the very ancient Syriac translation and the extant Greek text, preserved in more recent manuscripts, could prove highly interesting not only from the literary, linguistic, and philological point of view, but also from the perspective of Christian theology. Given that Titus seems to have been a supporter of the doctrine of *apokatastasis*, like his inspirers Origen and Diodore,[9] as is attested by Gobar (Phot. *Bibl.* 232.291b) and is indicated by passages of his very treatise against the Manichaeans,[10] it is worth checking whether the Syriac version and the extant Greek show doctrinal differences with respect to this theory. For the Syriac translation is based on a very ancient Greek *Vorlage*, preceding the so-called condemnation of *apokatastasis* in the time of

[9] That Diodore, like his disciple Theodore, supported this doctrine is demonstrated in my *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 521–548. See also the reviews by Anthony Meredith, *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 8.2 (2014), 255–257; Mark Edwards, *Journal of Theological Studies* 65 (2014), 718–724; Johannes van Oort, *Vigiliae Christianae* 64 (2014), 352–353; Steven Nemes, *Journal of Analytic Theology* 3 (2015), 226–233.

[10] Like Origen and Diodore, he deemed otherworldly punishments corrective and purifying, and therefore not eternal: hell consists of places of torment and education aimed at the correction of those who have sinned (1.32). This is in line with his anti-Manichaean interpretation of Genesis: the protoplasts' fall testifies to God's Providence, not to God's ignorance of what would happen.

Justinian. It would be interesting to determine whether the extant Greek has undergone any strategic changes in this respect, such as the elimination of allusions to the restoration theory.

A parallel situation occurs in the case of the *Dialogue of Adamantius* and the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*. As for the *Dialogue*, I have adduced arguments for the anteriority, and priority, of Rufinus' version over the extant Greek, which appears to be much later and features Byzantinisms.[11] Rufinus—active shortly after Titus—translated faithfully his Greek *Vorlage*, including the references that it contained to the doctrine of *apokatastasis*. Later, after the 'condemnation' of this doctrine, the passages that alluded to it were dropped from the Greek, and the result is the extant, late Greek text. The same seems to be the case with the *Historia monachorum*, which was composed in Greek around 395 CE and was translated into Latin by Rufinus. It recounts the story of seven monks from Rufinus' monastery in Jerusalem, who travelled to Egypt and met several ascetics.[12] After their return to Jerusalem, one of their circle composed this work,[13] and Rufinus translated it probably around 403–404.[14] While it commonly has been assumed that the translation differs from the extant Greek because Rufinus altered his *Vorlage* in order to describe the Egyptian monks as followers of Origen, now, based on comparisons with Sozomen and the Syriac recensions,[15] it is clear that Rufinus translated faithfully the original

[11] In "Preexistence of Souls? The ἀρχή and τέλος of Rational Creatures in Origen and Some Origenians," in *Studia Patristica LVI*, vol. 4, ed. Markus Vinzent (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 167–226.

[12] Georgia Frank, "The *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* and Ancient Travel Writing," in *Studia Patristica* 30 (1997), 191–195; William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 290–298.

[13] Andrew Cain, "The Greek *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* and Athanasius' *Life of Antony*," *Vigiliae Christianae* 67 (2013), 349–363.

[14] So Adalbert De Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité*, 3, *Jérôme, Augustin et Rufin au tournant du siècle* (Paris, 1996), 317–320.

[15] Sozomen knows passages that are present in Rufinus but absent from the extant Greek text, which indicates that they were present in Rufinus' *Vorlage* and not invented by Rufinus. See C. P. Bammel, "Problems of the *Historia Monachorum*," *JThS* 47 (1996), 92–104. The Syriac recensions confirm the anteriority of Rufinus to the extant Greek accord-

Greek *Historia*, while the extant Greek text reveals alterations, deletions, and additions. The passages that have disappeared in the later Greek are all related to Origenism.[16] It would be very interesting to see whether similar strategic changes occurred in the Greek tradition of Titus' *Adversus Manichaeos* as well. In this connection, it is notable that also Titus' inspirer, Diodore, both upheld *apokatastasis* and wrote extensively against the Manichaeans. And even Augustine, shortly after Diodore, embraced *apokatastasis* precisely in his works against the Manichaeans, using Origen's monism against Manichaean dualism.[17] The interrelation between anti-Manichaean metaphysical arguments and the doctrine of *apokatastasis*, evident in Titus, Diodore, and Augustine, is worth exploring further.

In sum, this is an important edition, which also opens up new, and potentially very fruitful, avenues for scholarship.

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ing to Peter Tóth, "Lost in Translation. An Evagrian Term in the Different Versions of the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*," in *Origeniana IX*, ed. Gyorgy Heidl and Robert Somos (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 613–621.

[16] This is why Bammel concluded that "the Greek has undergone a clumsy and incompetent revision as a result of fear of Origenism" ("Problems", 99). See also Philippe Luisier, "Un fenomeno della Tarda Antichità: la nascita del monachesimo cristiano", *Chaos e Kosmos* 14 (2013) [www.chaosekosmos.it], esp. 4–5.

[17] I. L. E. Ramelli, "Origen in Augustine: A Paradoxical Reception," *Numen* 60 (2013), 280–307.

André Binggeli, ed., *L'hagiographie syriaque*, Études syriaques 9 (Paris: Geuthner, 2012). Pp. 304; €45.

RALPH BARCZOK, RESEARCH CENTRE OF ARAMAEAN STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF CONSTANCE[1]

L'hagiographie syriaque is the ninth volume of the *Études syriaques* series of the French *Société d'études syriaques* whose president is Alain Desreumaux. The editor of this volume is André Binggeli. Once again, the *Société* has gathered several noted scholars to dedicate a volume to an important field of Syriac Studies, in this case hagiography. Besides the literary legacy of Syriac hagiography, this book is also concerned with the iconographic aspect of the hagiographic tradition, and several illustrations are included at the end of the book. As in the previous volumes, a bibliography is included, both general and for individual saints. An index of the saints mentioned in the book is provided, which further enhances its usefulness for the interested scholar.

In his general introduction, André Binggeli summarizes the history of the academic study of Syriac hagiography. He draws attention to the difficulties of defining "Syriac hagiography," given that the genre of hagiography in general tends to cross boundaries of language and community. So it is not always easy to determine whether a text belongs to the corpus of Syriac hagiography or not, in addition to the issues of defining "hagiographic literature" altogether. Therefore, the *Société* has decided to discuss "Syriac hagiography" in a broader sense and to include iconographic, liturgical, and historiographic perspectives on hagiography.

The first article is by Muriel Debié. In her essay "*'Marcher dans leurs traces': Les discours de l'hagiographie et de l'histoire*" she undertakes the task of outlining the relationship between Syriac hagiography and historiography. The categorical difference made between hagiography and historiography as genres of premodern literature is the product of modern scholarship. This discussion had an ideological background, as the recent scholarly literature on Western and Byzantine hagiography quoted by Debié shows. Hagiography with its miracles and champions of faith was disqualified as a source without historical value. It is important to note that this distinction

[1] I thank Eleanor Coghill and the *Hugoye* editors for proofreading my English text.

between hagiography and historiography was drawn in a different way in premodern times. To outline this relationship, Debié divides her essay into three parts: (i) the production of Syriac hagiography in its historical context, (ii) the attitudes of ancient historians towards hagiographic traditions and literature, and (iii) the attitudes of modern scholars towards hagiographic literature. In the first part, she points out that the production of hagiographic literature mostly dates from periods of struggle for and crisis of group identity, citing several examples of how hagiography can unify or separate, depending on the author's aims. In the second part Debié explores hagiographic elements in Syriac historiographic literature. Here, the difference between modern and premodern perceptions is most apparent. Syriac historiographers commonly quote hagiographic texts as legitimate historical sources. Therefore many hagiographic accounts can be found in the works of Syriac historians such as Michael the Syrian.

In the final section, Debié returns to the question of modern scholarship and hagiographic literature. She criticizes the positivistic view of hagiography expressed by 19th-century scholars and emphasizes the possibilities that a scientific approach to hagiography can yield, especially in the field of social and cultural studies. In particular she highlights that groups often neglected by other sources, such as women and children, receive more attention in hagiographic literature. Debié's article makes the case that hagiographic literature is significant for both ancient and modern historiography. As a result she addresses both the ancient and modern conceptions of historical facts, showing how Syriac hagiography can be a fruitful source for modern historical scholarship. Debié's essay is an important contribution to the research on Syriac hagiography since she collects insights from scholarly discussions of Latin and Byzantine hagiography and applies them to Syriac hagiography.

The next article, "*Les collections de Vies de saints dans les manuscrits syriaques*," is by the editor of the volume, André Binggeli. He deals with an interesting, yet neglected subject: the order of hagiographic stories in medieval Syriac manuscripts. He starts with the arrangement of hagiographic stories of different origin in Syriac manuscripts, presenting several criteria used by scribes to arrange and order hagiographic legends, such as by topic or geography. Next, he discusses collections of saints' lives that were designed as such, such as the *Historia Lausiaca* of Palladius or the *Book of Governors* by

Thomas of Marga, where the arrangement is determined by the author not by the scribe. Another subject Binggeli explores is the transdenominational use of manuscripts. He outlines two types: manuscripts with hagiographic accounts of saints coming from different Syriac denominational backgrounds, and manuscripts with marginal annotations with denominational content, often polemical. His essay concludes with discussing for whom hagiographic literature was written and by whom these texts were read. He finds no evidence for a liturgical use, but comes to the conclusion that the hagiographic texts were written for monks who would read these works for edification in their cells, although lay people might have read them also.

The role of the saints in the liturgical tradition is the subject of David Taylor's essay "*Hagiographie et liturgie syriaque*." He agrees with Binggeli that Syriac *vitae* were read by monks as literature for edification outside the church, and not read out loud in the liturgy. In his essay, therefore, Taylor explores the liturgical tradition of commemorating the saints. In doing so, he aims to demonstrate the value of this aspect of liturgy for those interested in the development of the Syriac cult of saints and in local hagiographic traditions. With this in mind, he provides a very useful survey of liturgical sources for hagiographic research in the diverse Syriac traditions. He does this in two steps. First, he gives a short overview of the transmitted liturgical calendars of each Syriac tradition, with focus on the commemoration of the saints. He starts with the oldest one, contained in the famous manuscript British Library Add. 12,150, which dates back to 411 CE, before the great schism of Eastern Christianity. Second, he casts light on the diverse Syriac traditions (Church of the East, Syriac Orthodox, Melkite, and Maronite), giving a valuable account of available sources. The many similarities between the different Syriac traditions demonstrate how interwoven they are, although many regional differences are observable. Following this overview of the liturgical background of hagiographic material in Syriac besides the *vitae*, he gives a more detailed description of their content. Again he gives special attention to the differences and similarities between the traditions. Finally he sums up the benefits scholars of hagiography can derive from liturgical material. Altogether, this essay is a very helpful overview, giving scholars very good insight into the existing material and

into the many possibilities liturgical traditions offer for hagiographic studies.

The fourth article, "*L'hagiographie versifiée*," is by the doyen of Syriac Studies, Sebastian P. Brock, who offers the reader a typology of the Syriac hagiographic poetic tradition. He starts by giving a short introduction to the different lyrical forms that contain hagiographic themes. He outlines four types of *memre* (narrative *memre*, homilies in verse, panegyrical *memre* and *memre* on the model of Greek *encomia*) and three types of *madrashe* (standard *madrashe*, narrative *sogyata* and dialogue *sogyata*). His main interest in examining these kinds of texts is the question of original information about the saint given in the text. Thus his examples are mainly from the early period of Syriac literature. All in all, this article is a useful supplement to Brock's article about Syriac hagiography in Volume I of the *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*.[2]

In her essay "*Les* Actes des martyrs perses*: transmettre l'histoire*" Christelle Jullien gives an overview of the *status quo* of scholarship concerning the tradition of the Persian martyrs, i.e., the martyrs of the persecution of Christianity in Persia between the late 3rd and the early 7th centuries. She starts with a very short summary of the existing text editions, then goes straight to the analysis: First she discusses the two main categories by which the texts in question are classified in modern scholarship, i.e., either by the time of the events in the text, or by the time of composition of the *Acts*, insofar as this can be assessed. Jullien also discusses early translations of the *Acts* into Greek and Armenian and thus emphasizes their widespread reception in Christianity. Finally, she mentions possible authors of the *Acts* (Marutha of Maipherqat, Aḥḥa, and Abgar), and briefly outlines the scholarly discussion concerning their authorship. Following this literary approach, Jullien turns her attention to the contextual frame of the *Acts*. She points to the importance of the contemporary persecution in Persia, as mentioned above, and puts the texts firmly in this context. At the end of her essay, she explores the many possibilities that these *Acts* offer for historical scholarship, especially concerning Sasanian Persia. On the whole this essay gives a very good introduction to the present state of study of the Persian martyr traditions.

[2] S. P. Brock, "Syriac Hagiography," in: S. Efthymiadis, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, *Volume I*: *Periods and Places* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 259–283.

In the sixth essay of this volume, "*Figures de l'hagiographie syriaque dans la tradition arménienne ancienne (Šałita, Jacques de Nisibe, Maruta de Mayperqat)*," Valentina Calzolari explores the influence that Syriac hagiography had on the Armenian tradition. After a short introduction to the general relationship between early Syriac Christianity and Armenia, she looks at Syriac saints in original Classical Armenian texts. She demonstrates how these traditions about Syriac saints were increasingly "Armenianized" over the course of time, while still preserving original Syriac material. She demonstrates this through a diachronic analysis of the Armenian traditions of the three saints mentioned in the title. Based on her case studies, the author comes to the conclusion that the Syriac influence is preeminent in the early tradition, but that later a tendency to harmonize these Syriac traditions with the competing and similarly strong Greek influences in Armenia can be observed. As a result, a specifically Armenian tradition emerges. This is an illuminating essay that highlights the importance for Syriac studies to engage with the Armenian tradition.

The next essay, "*Saints populaires d'Édesse*" by Lutz Greisinger, offers an excellent summary of the most important saints of the Edessene tradition. He starts with the earliest hagiographic literature of Edessa, namely the *Doctrina Addai*, the Tradition of Thomas, and the *Finding of the Cross* by Protonike. These stories were written in order to emphasize the early—even apostolic—origins of Edessene Christianity. The author continues with the traditions around the ecclesiastical Fathers Ephrem and Rabbula, followed by ascetic figures such as the Man of God (in western traditions "Alexis") and Sophie and her daughter. Finally, he looks at the Acts of Sharbel and other martyrs. In his description he demonstrates that all these accounts have an anti-Roman tendency. For example, Edessene paganism is viewed in more benevolent terms than Roman paganism. He also demonstrates how the Edessene hagiographic tradition encompasses all social groups of the city, thus giving them a collective local identity. Overall Greisinger offers an excellent introduction to the hagiographic tradition of Edessa and its value as a source for scholars.

In her essay "*Images des femmes dans l'hagiographie syriaque*," Jeanne-Nicole Saint-Laurent provides a fine description of the different types of female saints in the Syriac tradition. She depicts them as Daughters of the Covenant, missionaries, nobles, and

ascetics who hold fast to their faith and their duties against all odds. Furthermore, she emphasizes their importance in diverse hagiographic works as mothers of holy men and companions of their brothers in their ascetic calling. Saint-Laurent puts special emphasis on the legend of Febronia of Nisibis, whose tradition crossed boundaries of linguistic and denominational traditions and is even found in modern Sicily.

Jack Tannous explores in his essay "*L'hagiographie syro-occidentale à la période islamique*" the Syriac Orthodox hagiographic tradition about saints who lived in the Islamic period. He briefly surveys hagiographic traditions in liturgical calendars and historiography, before examining the few Syriac Orthodox *vitae* about these saints. He identifies five *vitae*: Gabriel of Qartmin, Marutha of Tagrit, Theodute of Amid, Simeon of the Olives, and John of Mardin, though only three of these lived exclusively in the Islamic period. Tannous is interested in historical information about the daily life of Christians in this period, and in particular the relationship between Christianity and Islam and their influence on one another. He also looks at the very interesting interdenominational aspects of these hagiographic texts. At the end of the article, Tannous draws attention to a field of hagiographic literature that has been largely neglected in scholarship so far: hagiographic traditions that were written in medieval times depicting the lives of earlier saints. He gives several examples of these, but there may be many more, as the question of the date of composition is often not yet solved satisfactorily. Indeed, further scholarship on this literature is desirable.

In her essay "*L'art au service de l'hagiographie: la représentation des saints dans la tradition syro-occidentale*," Rima Smine provides an overview of the illumination of saints in Syriac Orthodox manuscripts and mural paintings from the 11th to 13th centuries, although she also looks beyond this time span and this particular Christian tradition. She orders the saints according to the following typology: Apostles and Evangelists, Bishops and Church Fathers, military saints and martyrs, ascetics and monks, female saints, and "holy lay people" (Constantine and Helena are the only examples here)—giving for each category a short description of the relevant mural paintings as well as of the illuminations available to scholars. Some of the depictions are also given as illustrations at the end of the book. Her descriptions of the mural paintings and analysis of their layout in the churches are of particular interest. With respect to the

illuminations, I recommend having a copy of Leroy's collection of Syriac illuminations[3] at hand while reading this article since she often refers to his work and his tables. Her descriptions are all the more valuable because the exact locations of the illuminations and paintings in the manuscripts or in the literature are given. Unfortunately her descriptions are sometimes rather sketchy and her analyses are not easy to follow, so the interested scholar has to look to the source of her statements. Thus, for instance, she is mistaken when she does not take into account the direction of Syriac reading, in analyzing the placement of the depiction of the Evangelists in manuscript illuminations (p. 254). When opening the manuscript Vat.sir. 559,[4] one will find the depiction of Matthew at the same place as on fol. 2r of Paris BnF syr. 356: at the upper left side, but this time in an illumination that was designed for two pages (Vat.sir. 559) instead of only one (Paris BnF syr. 356). But disregarding these flaws, this essay remains a valuable introduction to the iconographic depiction of the saints in Syriac tradition.

In the final article, "*Art et hagiographie: la construction d'une communauté à Mar Behnam*," Bas Snelders deepens the general information Smine has given in the previous article. He gives a short overview of the medieval art in the then Syriac Orthodox Mar Behnam monastery south-east of Mosul,[5] summarizing part of his fascinating thesis published in 2010.[6] He starts with the legend of Mar Behnam, which became fixed in the 12th century, approximately at the same time as the building of the monastery was completed. He demonstrates how the literary as well as the sculptural evidence points to an attempt to create a regional identity, thereby creating a common history of the Syriac Orthodox monasteries of Mar Behnam, Mar Daniel, Mar Matti, and Mar Abraham the Great. This unifying purpose of the art in the monastery was achieved by emphasizing not only the connection between the patron saints of

[3] J. Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures. Conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1964).

[4] For the illumination see http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.sir.559/0005. It is indeed fortunate that this and various other manuscripts of the Vatican Library are now in the public domain on the internet.

[5] In modern times, it used to be Syriac Catholic until it was partly destroyed by the Da'ish in 2015.

[6] B. Snelders, *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction. Medieval Art of the Syrian Orthodox from the Mosul Area* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010).

the above-mentioned monasteries, but also the opposition to the rival Church of the East, for example by depicting a martyr (Sahdona) who was killed in the doctrinal quarrels of the late 5th century. Snelders demonstrates that ecclesiastical art is an important instrument for strengthening group identity in the same manner as hagiographic and historiographic literature. The main difference is that mural paintings in monasteries and churches are also perceived and understood by illiterate people, for whose allegiance the members of the different denominations competed.

Overall this book gives a good overview of the state of scholarship on Syriac hagiography. While scholars of hagiography usually focus on the literary heritage, this volume also includes adjacent areas of hagiographic research by giving liturgical and iconographic perspectives on the topic as well as the presentation of hagiographic texts in manuscripts. The tradition of the Syriac Orthodox Church, however, is represented more than the other Syriac Christian traditions. A little odd is the fact that the editors had the original English articles translated into French, which will surely reduce the circle of people who can profit from these essays, but this is only a minor flaw in another fine volume of the *Études syriaques* series.

Dietmar W. Winkler, ed., *Syriac Christianity in the Middle East and India: Contributions and Challenges*, Pro Oriente: Studies in Syriac Tradition 2 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013). Pp. xiii + 168; hardcover, $165.49.

ROBERT J. MOREHOUSE, SAINT LEO UNIVERSITY

Pro Oriente is an organization founded in 1964, under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Vienna, to improve relations between the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches. To this end the foundation has held several unofficial dialogues with leaders of the Syriac churches which have made significant contributions to the official positions of these churches. The title reviewed here is the second in the *Pro Oriente Studies in Syriac Tradition* series published by Gorgias Press and is comprised of work presented at Pro Oriente's second Colloquium Syriacum, held in Vienna, Austria on November 4–6, 2009.[1] The present volume is divided into four parts, addressing the contributions of Syriac-speaking Christian communities to society in India and the Middle East, the challenges facing those communities, the subject of emigration, and the visit of Pope Benedict to the Holy Land.

Baby Varghese devotes his chapter to the contributions of the Syriac communities in Kerala in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, focusing on the areas of education, print culture, politics, and the economy. Varghese describes a vibrant community increasingly able to contribute to its society. His review of the political activity of Christians in the early twentieth century contrasts with the traditional presentations of their place within Indian society. The classic narrative highlights the tolerance of Indian culture and stresses the Christians' high status due to the fact that the earliest converts were Brahmans, an approach exemplified later in this volume in the essays of Philip Nelpuraparambil and Mar Theophilose

[1] The first volume of the series was entitled *Syriac Churches Encountering Islam* and was based on the first Colloquium Syriacum, held November 14–16, 2007. A third colloquium took place on November 9–11, 2011 to discuss the special Synod for the Middle East which took place in Rome in October of 2010, and a fourth was held September 19–22, 2013, considering the theme "Towards a Culture of Co-Existence in Pluralistic Societies in the Middle East and in India." The papers from the last two colloquia have yet to be published.

Kuriakose. However, Varghese tells the story of a disenfranchised community contending for equality.

Herman Teule's essay focuses on the experience of Syriac communities in post-Saddam Iraq. After an overview of the different Christian communities active within Iraq, he addresses the issues of political clout, security, and the potential of Kurdish cooperation. He notes strong signs of interest in cooperation among the various Syriac communities in the country, portraying a vivid image of communities responding to an Iraq that provides greater potential for political participation yet where security is uncertain. Teule also addresses divergent opinions within these communities regarding whether they ought to assert, or even perceive, themselves as ethnic or national entities.

Philip Nelpuraparambil discusses Syriac Christianity in light of Indian religious tolerance. He opens with a description of the Indian constitution, effective since January 1950, as it relates to religious freedom and education, highlighting the role of Christians in the formation of the constitution and the educational systems. He then offers a survey of the history of Christian education in India. His overall positive outlook is tempered only by noting recent developments of "hate campaigns" against minorities within the country, efforts by atheists to modify the curriculum, and a decline both in the overall Christian population and in the number of those assuming religious vocations.

Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim considers the challenges facing Syriac-speaking Christians in Syria and Turkey. Building on a brief survey of relations between non-Muslim communities and the state up to the Treaty of Lausanne (July 1923), the author first turns to Turkey. Focusing primarily on legal status and the effects of Turkey's ambition to be admitted into the European Union, Mar Gregorios' tone regarding Turkey is hopeful. He is still more positive when he turns to his homeland, Syria, where his emphasis on legal status continues, particularly regarding education and family law. Though published in 2013, this paper was delivered in 2009, preceding the tensions that erupted in 2011. It is deeply saddening that Mar Gregorios' positive outlook on the situation in his country and the "full liberty" for Christians there of which he speaks (67) has been overrun by civil strife, into which even he himself has been caught up. Mar Gregorios was abducted along with Greek Orthodox Bishop Boulos Yazigi on April 22, 2013. As of the

composition of this review, they remain missing. This author shares the earnest hope for their swift release.

Mar Paul Matar addresses the case of Lebanon. Considering Islamo-Christian dialogue, he examines the common "dialogue of life" that is embodied in people's daily lives, over against the formal dialogue of specialists. He focuses first on religious liberty, lauding Lebanese society for allowing both freedom of worship (practice) and freedom of belief (affiliation), unlike some of its neighbors who only permit the former. He stresses the value of Lebanon's system of political representation, which guarantees representation to minorities.

Mar Theophilose Kuriakose takes up the situation of Syriac Christians emigrating from India. He opens with a brief overview of the history of Syriac Christianity in southern India. Focusing solely on his own Syrian Orthodox community, which he suggests is a representative sample, he addresses major causes of emigration over the past two centuries, breaking down the particularities of the experiences of emigrants and their families by major destination regions: Europe, the US, and the Gulf.

Dietmar Winkler surveys the demographics of Syriac Christianity in the Middle East. Winkler begins with a look at the effects of the Arab conquest on the Christian population, drawing largely on Philippe Fargues' work to show how the Christian majority slowly dwindled because of intermarriage and conversion.[2] Next Winkler addresses the causes for the thriving of the Christian population under the Ottoman Empire and the reasons for the reverse of these gains in the wake of World War I, before concluding with demographic data for Christianity in the Near East, by country.

Martin Tamcke shows that Syriac Christian emigration from the Middle East began largely due to politico-economic factors in the nineteenth century. His account contains several personal stories of migration that reveal the struggles of migrants, and the

[2] Winkler refers to Youssef Courbage and Philippe Fargues, *Chrétiens et Juifs dans l'Islam arabe et turc* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1992) and Philippe Fargues, "The Arab Christians in the Middle East: A Demographic Perspective," in *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East: The Challenge of the Future*, ed. Andrea Pacini (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 48–66.

differences in the ex-patriot experience from one generation to the next.

Frans Bouwen discusses the shift from a state of general disapproval of Pope Benedict XVI visiting the Holy Land, evident before the visit was planned, to a state of welcome and even approval once the trip was announced and undertaken in 2009. The majority of the chapter focuses on the pope's agenda and its potential legacy. Bouwen also illuminates the personal struggle of the Syriac Christians in their efforts to participate in the pope's visit.

It seems worth noting that the second of the three appendices, a final report on the Second Colloquium Syriacum from which the papers for this volume came, reveals that there were two presenters at the meeting whose papers are not included in the present volume. These are Karam Rizk, who presented a paper entitled "Cultural, Social and Educational Contributions of Syriac Christianity in Syria and Lebanon," and Anthony O'Mahony, who read "The Church-State Relations in Modern Iraq."

While this book is certainly of interest to academics who work in Syriac-speaking Christianity, the volume will appeal to anyone working on the intersections of religion and society, especially minority religions in colonial and post-colonial contexts. Many of these essays are reports more than scholarly articles, hence the paucity of citations in a number of places. Of course, this is partly due to the fact that several of the authors were reporting on contemporary events for which there were limited references, indeed an aspect of the value of their work. Therefore, readers will often have to figure out on their own where to look for further insight or documentation. Regardless, the chapters presented in this volume are valuable contributions to our understanding of the Syriac Church(es) and fertile ground for further inquiry.