

Anna M. Silvas, *Basil of Caesarea. Questions of the Brothers: Syriac Text and English Translation*, Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2014). Pp. xi + 365; €114.

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In the third volume of Brill's impressive new series "Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity," Anna M. Silvas continues her scholarly exploration of Basil of Caesarea, turning now to the Syriac tradition of one of Basil's texts. The text in question is known in the Greek and Latin traditions as Basil's *Small Asketikon*—an early version of Basil's later full *Asketikon*—but it circulated in Syriac under the title ܩܘܥܝܢܐ ܕܩܕܝܫܐ — *Questions of the Brothers*.¹ Unfortunately, the Greek text of the *Small Asketikon* does not survive (with the exception of a few fragments); thus, the Syriac text (along with the Latin version) provides an important witness. According to Silvas, Jean Gribomont prepared a collation of the text but did not publish it (2); thus, Silvas' volume represents the first published edition and translation of the Syriac text of *QF*.

In the Introduction to the volume, Silvas provides a wealth of information that will be of interest to scholars of Syriac manuscripts, Greek-to-Syriac translation technique, and historical Syriac orthography. But scholars who would like a more detailed introduction to the content of the text itself will have to look elsewhere. First, Silvas gives a detailed overview of the five manuscripts used in the creation of this critical edition, including important bibliographic details on the manuscripts that are often overlooked in such introductions. The five manuscripts used in the edition are:

Brit. Lib. Oriental Collection Add. 14,544	A	5 th /6 th c.
Brit. Lib. Oriental Collection Add. 14,545	B	6 th c.
Vatican Library, Sir. 122	C	769 CE
Vatican Library, Sir. 126.II	D	1226 CE
Milano Biblioteca Ambrosiana S/P. 126,	E	8 th /9 th c.
No. 38 (fragmentary)		

Following this overview of the manuscripts, Silvas discusses various aspects of the textual history of *QF* as displayed by these manuscripts, including the identification of two text families and copious observations on the orthographic features exhibited in the

¹ Silvas refers to the text as *QF*, an abbreviation of the Latin title *Quaestiones Fratrum*, so I have adopted this abbreviation for this review.

manuscripts. The critical edition of the text presented in this volume is a diplomatic text, though manuscript A (Brit. Lib. Oriental Add. 14,544) is given prominence in assessing the text because of its antiquity (late 5th/early 6th c.). Silvas also includes a detailed explanation of her approach to creating the critical apparatus, including the orthographic variations that are omitted.

The author's overview of translation technique in the Syriac *QF* (pp. 21-37) is an important contribution to the growing scholarship on Greek-to-Syriac translation technique. Thus, this detailed overview deserves consideration among an audience broader than those interested in Basil, the *QF*, or Syriac monasticism. Indeed, Silvas' introduction contains information that will be instructive for scholars of various aspects of Syriac studies. In its level of detail and appeal to a broader audience, Silvas' introduction is exemplary for critical editions and translations.

There is one issue in the Introduction, though, that some readers may find less than convincing. Silvas spends several pages describing the "character" of the translator as discerned from the translator's additions to the text. Following this, Silvas attempts to identify the translator by combining historical circumstance with this character sketch. Based on the evidence provided, Silvas tentatively proposes that Eusebius of Samosata could have been responsible for the Syriac translation of *QF*. To reach this conclusion, the author considers the epistolary contact between Basil and Eusebius and compares various elements of that exchange with the "character" of the translator as reconstructed from the textual emendations evident in the Syriac text.

It is entirely plausible that Eusebius of Samosata was responsible for the translation of Basil's *Small Asketikon* into Syriac, but the methodology that is employed to reach this conclusion is suspect. Granted, Silvas emphasizes the tentative nature of the conclusion, but it seems that a great deal of effort was expended to reach a tentative conclusion based on questionable methodology, especially given that the point in no way affects the status or condition of this text. The author could simply have suggested Eusebius of Samosata as a potential translator without attempting to prove this case through appeals to verbal and conceptual echoes in the Basil-Eusebius epistolary exchange. The conclusion would have been no more or less tentative without this excursus.

The presentation of the text, translation, and critical apparatus is excellent. In the footnotes, Silvas provides a good balance of important information—including comparisons with the Latin and Greek traditions—without overwhelming the reader with unnecessary notes. The translation style is lucid and consistent, and Silvas strikes an excellent balance in the translation between faithfulness to the Syriac text and smooth rendering into English. The result is a translated text that is a pleasure to read—not an easy task to accomplish.

For scholars interested specifically in the text of *QF* and the other traditions of the *Asketikon*, Silvas includes two appendices that will be of some interest. The first provides text, translation, and brief analysis of three additional questions and answers found in manuscript D (Vatican Library, Sir. 126.II) that are not preserved in the other Syriac witnesses to the *QF*. The second appendix provides a comparative table of the questions included in each recension of the *QF/Small Asketikon*. Finally, Silvas concludes the volume with a helpful index of scriptural citations and allusions.

Aside from the very minor quibble regarding an issue in the Introduction (discussed above), this is an excellent volume. Primarily, this book will be useful and interesting for scholars working on asceticism and monasticism in the Syriac tradition, and particularly for the task of tracing the ways that Greek texts in translation influenced (and were influenced by) the Syriac monastic milieu. Moreover, this text will also be of relevance to patristic scholars more broadly, particularly those who focus on Basil and the Cappadocians. Finally, as detailed above, the wealth of information found in the volume's introduction will also be of interest to scholars of Syriac manuscripts, historical orthography, and Greek-to-Syriac translation technique.