

Kees den Biesen, *Bibliography of St. Ephrem the Syrian* Giove in Umbria 2002, 383 pp. Available from Ephrem_bibliography@hotmail.com

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The field of Syriac studies, which is undergoing such a period of growth at present, is much less highly developed than the general field of the study of Christianity in Late Antiquity. When one recalls that Patristics, itself, is much less highly developed than Classical Studies (a fully mature discipline), one realizes that students of Syriac have a very long way to go before they can enjoy the pleasure of turning to a shelf full of dependable resources covering the entire range of their interests. Much has been learned, but obtaining access to the fruits of this scholarship continues to be a major stumbling-block to the interested reader. Without the scholarly equipment enjoyed by those involved in other areas, students of Syriac must embark on arduous searches if they are to locate (or establish the absence of) earlier work on a topic that has engaged their attention. There is no standard source comprehensive enough to provide answers for common questions that arise with great regularity.

Sebastian Brock has done yeoman service in collecting bibliographical information on Syriac Studies, from which we have all benefited, but he can hardly be expected to perform all this labor on his own, and the increase of activity in Syriac Studies continues to make this burden heavier. Several new journals have been founded to publish studies relating to Syriac materials, theological and historical journals are showing an increased level of interest (still insufficient interest, to my mind) in including articles relating to Syriac subjects, and the publication of a number of books and monographs has made the field more widely recognized. Scholarly work involving Syriac, meanwhile, continues to be published around the world, often in sources that are difficult for many to obtain.

The bibliographical difficulties connected with the study of Ephraem are perhaps the most acute of those attached to any writer of Syriac. Ephraem the Syrian is the most widely known

Syriac figure among scholars of related fields. Because of this, his works have drawn attention from a broad range of people, and so have begun to be studied by them in conjunction with other authors from other language traditions, as well as for their usefulness for scholars in related disciplines. This is a very desirable thing for which Syriac scholars have striven for many decades, but it means that articles relating to Ephraem appear now in journals where they would never before have been considered. Progress and increased recognition have meant that Ephraem Studies have become more difficult to follow.

Kees den Biesen has stepped into this difficult situation and offered a volume which will certainly become a standard on the shelf and in the hands of every student of Ephraem the Syrian. Over the course of a number of years, at the cost of a great deal of labor, he has gathered information on the publication of editions of Ephraem in Syriac, on the ancient language translations, on the translations into modern languages, and on secondary works: articles and chapters in books, as well as scholarly monographs. The wealth of information contained in this book will make the study of Ephraem, and obtaining knowledge of what other scholars have done, much easier in the future.

The study of Ephraem the Syrian has a long and active history and the size of this volume reflects that. den Biesen lists no fewer than 1800 titles of various sorts in the main body of this work. In the first part of the volume, these 1800 titles have been organized by kind and topically into seven sections. The first section offers references to treatments of Ephraem in the introductions to Patristic and Christian Theology, in encyclopedias, lexica and dictionaries, in manuals of Patrology, Theology and in the other earlier bibliographies. The second section in the numbering contains sources on Ephraem's life, the texts and translations of them, as well as studies and biographies of the author. The third section includes a listing of editions of Ephraem's works in Syriac in the main editions. Works of Ephraem in anthologies are also included. The fourth section covers the ancient language traditions. The fifth section deals with text editions, translations and studies of the various works of Ephraem. These subdivide into *Madrašē*, *Mēmre*, Commentaries on the Old Testament, Commentaries on the New Testament, prose works, Ephraem Graecus and Ephraem Latinus. The sixth section deals with secondary studies of the works of Ephraem arranged by topics. These topics include, but are not limited to: general studies of Ephraem, studies of his symbolic theology, theological hermeneutics, his poetry, his treatment of the Diatessaron

and the text of the Bible, his exegesis of scripture, his Christology and Trinitarian doctrine, his theology of Paradise, his ideas of Christian life, his Mariology, his relations with the other religions of his time, and so on. (This choice of topics clearly reflects the trends in activity in the field.) The seventh section relates to translations of Ephraem's works into modern languages. Some of these are: Arabic, Armenian, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Russian, and Swedish.

The second and major part of the book contains the references themselves, listed alphabetically by author or editor. This part is also subdivided into sections: the first section deals with the editions of Ephraem, the second with "titles exclusively dealing with Ephrem", the third with "titles partly dealing with Ephrem", and the fourth with "titles incidentally dealing with Ephrem". Six appendices list the contents of the various volumes in older, published editions of Ephraem's works. These include Assemani's great Roman edition, Overbeck's volume of Rabbula, Ephraem and Balai, and Lamy's edition of Ephraem hymns and sermons, as well as others not so well known. These will be particularly useful for those of us who must order most of our material from libraries at other institutions.

den Biesen's arrangement of his information allows the reader to search for works by the name of a particular scholar or by the topic the piece treats. For example, one can look for an edition of a particular hymn of Ephraem or to see what editions a particular scholar has produced. One can also begin from the catalogue of Ephraem's work and find, in the list of his collected or single works, mention of the various printed editions, of modern translations of the work and of secondary studies dealing with it.

One of the most useful elements in den Biesen's work is that he has noted not only the translations of Ephraem published in separate volumes or collections of translated patristic works, but also in journal articles (including even partial translations of works). This greatly increases the usefulness of this work and the accessibility of Ephraem for teachers and students. It is now possible to discover, for example, if a particular one of the *Hymns on Fasting* has been translated and where that translation may be found. This is certain to make more young students and scholars innocent of Syriac able to include Ephraem in their work and reading. For an example chosen at random: on page 34, in reference to the "Hymns on Mary", the volume lists Syriac texts edited by Brock, Lamy, Mingana and Rahmani; a Latin translation by Lamy; modern translations by Rahmani, Beck, Brock, Caraza, Ricciotti, Amann,

Ortiz de Urbina and Starowiejski; and studies by Vona and Ortiz de Urbina, each with the title number it carries in the main listing. (It is difficult to explain these categories to those who have not seen the volume, but the system is briefly explained by den Biesen on pages 17 and 18 and anyone with the volume in hand will quickly find his way through the arrangement.) Truly this is a mine of information!

This is not the sort of book one reads, but I have made use of this volume over the several months since it came into my hands. I have found it to be, thus far, accurate and dependable in all the details of the entries I have used. Of course, a work like this is never finished, as the forward by Sebastian Brock reminds us, and the author has condemned himself to being the recipient of reminders and notices of works by Ephraem scholars for the rest of his life. Students of the work of Ephraem can only hope that his willingness to perform this labor for us has not been extinguished by the great effort involved in producing the volume and that he will continue to collect the notices, include them in his categories, and issue revised volumes periodically into the foreseeable future.

I do not think that any serious theological library, whether of an undergraduate college, university or seminary can allow this volume to be left out of its collection. Its usefulness is certain for students of Ephraem. I can only hope that specialists in the study of other Syriac authors will feel the challenge this volume silently offers and set themselves to work on producing companions to it, dedicated to other figures from the Syriac-speaking Church.