BOOK REVIEWS

Alessandro Mengozzi, ed., *Religious Poetry in Vernacular Syriac from Northern Iraq (17th–20th Centuries). An Anthology*, CSCO 627–628 / Syr. 240–241 (Louvain: Peeters, 2011). Pp. xx + 129, €65; pp. xxiv + 163; €60.

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The two volumes under review contain editions and English translations of seven poems dating from the early seventeenth to the late twentieth century. The poems are written in what the editor terms 'Vernacular Syriac' (or 'Sureth', from Classical Syriac *surāʾiṯ* 'in Syriac'), which encompasses a variety of North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects that were spoken, and occasionally written, by East-Syriac authors, whether Church of the East or Chaldean, in Northern Iraq. All of the poems belong to the *dorekṯa* genre, which is generally characterized by stanzas of 3, 4, or 6 metered, rhyming lines. The poems in the volumes expand the scope of the editor's earlier collection of seventeenth-century *dorekṯa* poems by Israel of Alqosh and Joseph of Telkepe, which appeared in the same series.[1]

Each of the seven poems is presented in a critical edition in East-Syriac script (the denotation of vowels follows the manuscripts) and English translation along with an introduction. The poems are arranged in chronological order. The earliest poem in the collection, and possibly the earliest dated example of the *dorekṯa* genre extant, is *On Repentance*. In two of the three manuscripts, it is attributed to a certain Hormizd of Alqosh, who may tentatively be identified as the son of the well-known Israel of Alqosh. The text stands in the tradition of East-Syriac penitential hymns, and it contains numerous *exempla* drawn from the Old and New Testaments. The introduction and translation of this poem were prepared by Rita Saccagno (based on her thesis for the Master of Arts degree at the University of Turin); the edition is the joint work of Saccagno and Mengozzi.

The second and third poems represent the *dorekṯa* genre in the nineteenth century: *On the Torments of Hell* (1855) and *On the Delights*

[1] Alessandro Mengozzi, *Israel of Alqosh and Joseph of Telkepe: A Story in a Truthful Language. Religious Poems in Vernacular Syriac (North Iraq, 17th Century)*, CSCO 589-590 / Syr. 230-231 (Louvain: Peeters, 2002).

of the Kingdom (1856) by Damyanos of Alqosh. These diptych poems draw extensively on works by seventeenth-century Italian orators, such as Father Paolo Segneri (1624–1694) and Father Giovanni Pietro Pinamonti (1632–1703). S. Destefanis, who produced the introduction, translation, and edition of these poems, has done an admirable job of highlighting parallels between these poems and Italian Baroque sermons.

The last four poems in these volumes were composed in the twentieth century. The first is *On a Famine in the Year 1898* by Anne of Telkepe, who was still alive in 1914 when Father Rhétoré was writing his *La versification en Soureth*. This poem is more loosely structured than other *dorek̲ta* poems and does not make as frequent use of anaphora and anadiplosis as other poems in the genre. Mengozzi, who produced the introduction, translation, and edition of the poem, characterizes it as "religious folk poetry" that gives "a rather rustic impression." It should be noted that this poem may well be the first text authored by a woman to appear in the CSCO series. The second representative of twentieth-century *dorek̲ta* poetry is *On the Hermit Barmalka* by Joseph ʿAbbaya of Alqosh. This poem narrates the story of a young man who leaves behind his wealth to become a solitary, is then tempted by Khatun the wife of the local king (in a sequence of events reminiscent of the Joseph narrative), and is ultimately rescued by an angel. The large amount of direct speech and dialogue reminds one of the Classical Syriac *soḡi̲tā* genre. The entertaining tale is brought to life by the translator E. Braida, who also produced the edition and wrote the introduction to the poem. In addition to the poem by Joseph ʿAbbaya, Braida contributed a poem entitled *On an Attack by the Mongols at Karamlish* by Thomas Ḥanna of Karamlish. This poem, composed in 1930, laments the Mongol invasion of the plain of Mosul in 1236. It explicitly acknowledges making use of works by Bar ʿEbroyo (d. 1236) and by Gewargis Warda. Among its many interesting historical aspects, the poem provides a detailed description of the architecture of Karamlish. The most recent poem in the volumes is *On Exile*, which was composed in 1970 by Yoḥannan Cholāḡ of Alqosh (1935–2006). The poem is a moving lament of the Christian emigration from Iraq. In both the introduction and translation, its editor Sh. Talia captures the pathos of this tragic reality that continues to affect Syriac Christians throughout much of the Middle East as well as in the diasporas.

In addition to the seven texts, the volumes contain various indices (General, Biblical, Non-Biblical Texts) as well as an introduction by Mengozzi dealing with manuscript history and developments in the language. Mengozzi also provides an invaluable history of religious poetry in 'Vernacular Syriac' from Northern Iraq. This history, which runs to almost twenty-five pages and accounts for both published and unpublished works, is the most comprehensive survey currently available. Unlike Mengozzi's earlier volumes on *Israel of Alqosh and Joseph of Telkepe* (CSCO 589–590 / Syr. 230–231), the volumes under review do not contain a glossary. Thus, the reader must turn to other resources for lexical help.

The chronological distribution of the volumes from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century provides an important diachronic perspective to the study of East-Syriac Christians from this time period. Reading through the volumes, one can, for instance, notice a changing relationship between the Syriac poets and Catholicism. The poems from the earliest period, such as those by Israel of Alqosh and Joseph of Telkepe, do not generally show signs of Catholic influence, even though they were ultimately transmitted by the Chaldean community. The seventeenth-century poem *On Repentance* even ends with a doxology that describes Christ as one "who *dressed in* our human nature (ܠܒܝܫܠܗ ܟܝܢܐ ܕܐܢܫܘܬܢ) in the latter days" (157), which would certainly be more at home in a Church of the East Christological context than in a Catholic one. The nineteenth-century diptych poems by Damyanos, in contrast, are replete with imagery drawn from Jesuit sources. Similarly, the poem by Anne of Telkepe is dominated by intercession to the Virgin Mary, which, as Mengozzi points out, "shows to what extent Catholic culture had permeated the traditional religious lore of the Chaldeans of the plain of Mosul by the end of the 19th century" (vol. 2, xxi).

The volumes also shed light on the history of the Aramaic language. It is well known that there is a significant chasm in documentation from the Aramaic dialects of Late Antiquity, such as Syriac, to the Neo-Aramaic dialects attested almost exclusively in the modern period. The texts edited here, along with Mengozzi's earlier volumes (CSCO 589–590 / Syr. 230–231), provide the earliest attestations of Christian North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic, dating from the early seventeenth century when a *koine* based on

the dialect of Alqosh (and possibly also of Telkepe) was developed. These texts, thus, move the attestation of Christian Neo-Aramaic back several centuries from the present day as well as document developments during the intervening period. The texts edited here also provide a Christian counterpart to the Jewish North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects from roughly the same area and time period, which are attested in the Neo-Aramaic targumim published by Y. Sabar.[2]

In the end, these volumes make available an important collection of primary sources for the study of East-Syriac Christians in the last several centuries. The editor and contributors are to be thanked for this significant contribution.

[2] See, for instance, Y. Sabar, *A Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dictionary: Dialects of Amidya, Dihok, Nerwa and Zakho, Northwestern Iraq,* Semitica Viva 28 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), where references to many publications can be found.

Amir Harrak, *Catalogue of Syriac and Garshuni Manuscripts: Manuscripts Owned by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and Heritage*, CSCO 639 / Subs. 126 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011). Pp. xl + 149 including 7 plates; €75.

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The forty-three Syriac-script manuscripts of the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and Heritage form a miscellaneous collection. Most (29) are East Syriac; fewer are Western (12) and Melkite (2); and there is an admixture of texts in Garshuni Arabic, Kurdish and neo-Aramaic. One or two manuscripts are old (mss. 30520, no later than 1379; and 27098, Melkite, perhaps ca. 1500); the rest are from the 17th–20th centuries. The variety of the manuscripts, the fact that they had not been listed or noticed before (they carry numbers but no other information about their acquisition), and the limited time that Amir Harrak had to examine them, made his catalogue a challenge to produce. He has, however, made a definitive record of the collection that offers much interesting historical material along the way.

About half the manuscripts are liturgical books from the Church of the East. To judge by their accession numbers (30518–30543 with 4 gaps) they were all acquired at one time. Their colophons, as far as they are preserved, link them to Hakkari (mostly Lower Tiari and Ṭhoma), not Iran or Mosul from where most surviving East Syriac manuscripts come. One of the books (no. 30529) was written near Dohuk by a Ṭhoma scribe in 1927 and purchased from him by another Ṭhoma man in 1931. (The purchaser's note mentions wistfully it seems the village church of Mazraʿa.) Perhaps all the manuscripts were there then; and may one imagine that the villagers were so attached to these souvenirs of their old home church that they did not offer them for sale to Mingana who was otherwise sweeping up such manuscripts in 1924–9?

The contents of these manuscripts from the Church of the East are generally well known, since, as Harrak observes, they belong to the usual set of service books of village churches. Even so, they witness to some less common observances including the *Baʿuta* of the Virgins (ms. 30522; 'observed in some places by girls' according to A. J. Maclean in 1894); the rite of augmenting *ṭaybuta* (a kind of holy oil; in the *Ṭaksa* ms. 30528); and the memorial of

the repentant thief (*gayyasa*, Matt 27:44) on Easter Monday (ms. 30532). Some less well-known saints also appear: Mar Zayʿa the local saint of Jilu (ms. 30519); Mar Isaac Rabolanaya (ms. 30541; rendered by Harrak 'of (De)rabun' but he seems to be unidentified) and the curious Mar Ṭlaye of Mazraʿa in Tḥoma (mss. 30543 and 30518, in the latter of which the name is written with *seyame* and apparently construed as a plural ('children')). Also noteworthy is a leaf inserted in ms. 30518 containing the colophon from a lost *Ḥudra*. This *Ḥudra* was written in 1712 by a member of the Šekwana family of scribes from Alqoš for the village of Beth Ra'ole (spelled in other ways in other manuscripts) in Tiari. In his colophon this Catholic scribe shows that he knew the language of his Old-Church clients, invoking the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 'Mother of our Lord, Christ'.

Harrak pays particular attention to the elaborate colophons of these East Syriac manuscripts mainly because they demonstrate, as he says (p. xxix), the persistence of classical Syriac learning into modern times. He gives extensive excerpts from them, with careful translations. I noticed only occasional problems. The word ܒܝܬܐ is one such, sometimes translated 'church', sometimes 'monastery', and sometimes 'monastery' in quotes as if to denote uncertainty. I think 'church' is to be preferred everywhere at this period. Another arises with the names of the patriarchs Mar Shimun. Colophons typically praise Mar Shimun—sometimes absurdly, as in ms. 30541, 'a star that shines and flashes in the sky of the church' etc.—but they only very rarely specify his given name. Harrak confidently supplies this information on the basis of a list of patriarchs drawn up by W. A. Wigram, but this is a very doubtful authority for the period before 1840. Ms. 30522 dated 1753 actually claims to have been partly written by Mar Shimun; but whether (p. 60) this was really Muktaṣ Shimun, who, if he was patriarch at all, is of quite uncertain date, had better be left undecided.

Behind these manuscripts in importance, but still of interest, are books with western or western-influenced Catholic texts, mostly West Syrian except notably two works by the Chaldean (Diyarbakir) patriarch Joseph II (mss. 1840, 3319). These West Syrian texts include a translation of the Latin commentary on the Gospels by Cornelius à Lapide (ms. 107, in Garshuni); several catechisms and liturgical books of apparently semi-western genre; and a long encyclical letter (ms. 41912 dated 1812, in Garshuni)

from the Melkite Patriarch promoting confession and western Marian devotions.

Other more or less noteworthy manuscripts in the collection are a short West Syriac manual of medicine and divination (ms. 41404); an unstudied text known as the *Ladder of the Christian* (ms. 41550, in Garshuni; a manuscript in the west is Manchester Syr. 62); a Melkite *Triodion* in Syriac and Arabic (ms. 27098); a Kurdish grammar in Syriac by Ablaḥad of Alqoš (ms. 18078 dated 1888); a document probably by the same author recording wars and epidemics in the years 1760/1–1879 (ms. 170); and a collection of *durikyata* (ms. 22933), hymns in neo-Aramaic.

The organization of the catalogue is a little infelicitous: the different texts are discussed in some detail in the introduction, and then for each manuscript all the rubrics are quoted before a section of 'comments' goes back and takes up points of interest. I would have found it clearer if all the data and discussion had been grouped together under each text in each manuscript, in the way familiar in other catalogues. Part of the difficulty is that the contents of the manuscripts are not always set out completely with beginning and ending folio-numbers; but this is doubtless a consequence of the conditions under which they had to be read, and is excusable. In passing, I may also remark that the printers Peeters ought not to use such tight letter-spacing in their estrangela font that *seyame*-s and vowel-points collide with neighbouring letters.

A catalogue of a collection of manuscripts like this one, exhibiting several languages, obscure proper names, and ecclesiastical terms specific to different churches, has to have been a long and difficult labour; but Amir Harrak (who, to be sure, gives credit to several expert helpers with the more esoteric material) handles the codicology, languages and terminology with assurance. We can concur with his hope (p. xxxii) that the catalogue 'will surely contribute to our understanding of the long and rich history of Syriac literature.'

Stephen J. Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muhammad's Life and the Beginnings of Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012). Pp. 408; $75.

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In his recent book, *The Death of a Prophet*, Stephen Shoemaker explores the intriguing evidence found in both Islamic and non-Islamic sources that contradicts the traditional account of the death of Muhammad and the earliest decades of the Muslim community. The book seeks to make a contribution to current scholarship concerning the life of Muhammad and the origins of the Qur'an by taking up a number of suggestions that have been largely ignored by mainstream scholars, and draws attention to some very important questions that remain to be answered. In particular, Shoemaker takes a fresh look at the implications of scholarship by Casanova in the early 20th century, and Crone and Cook nearly forty years ago which suggested that Muhammad was first and foremost an eschatological prophet who led his followers into Syro-Palestine with the expectation that the Final Hour would come before his own death. His unexpected demise, however, caused the young Muslim community to rework his teachings to accommodate the empire it was rapidly acquiring, and ultimately to shift the center of Islamic sacred geography from Jerusalem to the Hijaz.

The book is divided into four chapters, the first two examining the data indicating that Muhammad was still alive at the time of the Syro-Palestinian invasions and may even have led the armies himself. Chapter three reevaluates evidence in the Qur'an and *Hadith* that Muhammad's preaching of an imminent apocalypse centered on Jerusalem was reworked by his followers when the end did not come before his death, while chapter four attempts to explain the apparent radical revision of the movement into a thoroughly Abrahamic and Arabic religion focused on Mecca and Medina. A brief conclusion argues that such a comprehensive revisioning is not impossible seen in light of what is now known about the early development of Christianity.

Shoemaker's approach to adjudicating the historical value of the sources places an emphasis on evidence that the canonical version of Muhammad's life and the rise of Islam represent a later reworking of the material. Nonetheless, traces of an alternative

narrative can be found in both Islamic and non-Islamic sources. Especially important here are several apparently non-polemical references to Muhammad's presence in Syro-Palestine after 632 (his traditional death date) and contradictory reports of the circumstances of his death and burial. The author contends that these remarks reflect a more ancient account of the events that was mostly obscured with the construction of a narrative in line with the needs of the Umayyad Empire. Such reworking of the material does not require duplicity on the part of those who compiled the authoritative accounts of Muhammad's life, such as the *Sira* of Ibn Hisham, or those who collected the *Hadith*. These chroniclers were simply trying to make sense of Muhammad's teachings in light of the events that actually occurred—Muhammad died before his prophetic expectation was fulfilled, while the stunning success of the Muslim armies had brought a vast empire of ancient civilizations under their control.

Chapter one analyzes Christian, Jewish and Samaritan documents (most of which have been collected in Hoyland's seminal book, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 1997) reporting the appearance of a Saracen prophet. The texts are in a multitude of languages – Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Armenian and Latin. Especially important here are the Syriac Common Source, as well as a number of shorter Syriac chronicles, which Shoemaker carefully compares to the canonical account of Muhammad's life. Surprisingly, these reports independently describe Muhammad as leading the invading armies into Syro-Palestine after 634, several years after the traditional date given for his death in Medina. The *Zuqnin Chronicle* (ca. 775), on the other hand, unmistakably records Muhammad as the Arab king and prophet who led his armies to conquer Palestine in 621. In spite of the mistaken date given for this event, however, the account is remarkably consistent with the details of beliefs of Muhammad's followers and his presence in Palestine, calling into question the tradition that Muhammad died in Medina.

The various non-Islamic accounts also give strong indications of a widespread Jewish hope during this time that Muhammad might drive the Persians and Byzantines from the Holy Land, ushering in a new age of freedom, a hope quickly dashed. Although there is some discrepancy among the various dates given by the texts, it is difficult to explain this expectation if Muhammad was already dead and buried in Medina. Shoemaker notes that recent

study of the correspondence between ʿUmar II and Leo III (early eighth century) appears to confirm this evidence less directly, further raising serious questions about the reliability of the traditional accounts.

In the second chapter, Shoemaker examines the earliest sources for the life of Muhammad as transmitted by Ibn Hisham (d. 833) and al-Tabari (d. 923). It has long been recognized by both Islamic and Western scholars that these late biographies, although containing earlier traditions, are historically unreliable. Much of this chapter is concerned with tracing the course of *Hadith*, *Sira* and *isnad* criticism, leading to Shoemaker's conclusion that the very nature of these sources makes them untrustworthy for accurate information about the earliest period of Islam. Among the suspicious aspects of the descriptions of Muhammad's life and death are the blatant parallels drawn between the periods of the prophet's life and that of Moses, most obviously in the use of numerologically significant time-spans. Another strangely contradictory story of ʿUmar's reaction to the news of Muhammad's death linked to the transmitter al-Zuhri (d. 741) seems to retain an earlier, non-canonical version. In the report (which Shoemaker takes up more extensively in the following chapter), ʿUmar refuses to believe that Muhammad is dead, and must be convinced by Abu Bakr, who produces a "revelation" previously known only to himself predicting that the Prophet would die like all previous prophets. The implication is that ʿUmar had anticipated a different course of events, and did not expect he would witness the Prophet's death. The report includes a number of unusual details, including the comment that the situation became dire when the decomposing body began to stink and required burial, a repugnant point that later tradition takes pains to deny.

In light of these challenges to the authoritative *Sira* and *Hadith*, chapter three proposes a picture of Muhammad that accounts for both the material found in the Qur'an and the apparent anomalies in the traditional version—that of the eschatological prophet. In short, Shoemaker argues that the Qur'an presents Muhammad not so much as the "social reformer" advanced by Western scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a prophet who has come to bring the news of the Hour of Final Judgment and to call the people to monotheistic worship and submission to God's divine laws in preparation for the end times. Indeed, monotheism and the

impending Hour are the two most prominent themes in the Qur'an, easily found on nearly every page of the *textus receptus*. Shoemaker's proposal is quite compelling; somewhat surprisingly he does not include the designation of Muhammad as a "warner" (*nadhir*) common in the Qur'an and tradition as further support for his theory.

The real question that Shoemaker brings to the forefront here is why the (somewhat obvious) evidence contradicting the canonical version of the rise of Islam has been almost completely ignored by scholars. He traces the origin of the problem to the home that Islamic scholarship found in philology and especially in Old Testament studies. Because of the particular concerns of these fields of study, the Qur'an and *Sira* have not been subjected to the same critical methods as the New Testament, and instead have been treated as complete and coherent texts. Furthermore, the system of classification of *suras* into 'Meccan' and 'Medinan' by Nöldeke and Bell that both assumes and supports the canonical version has remained virtually unchallenged for a century and a half. This lack of critical scrutiny means that the confidence of both Western and Islamic scholarship in the traditional account of Muhammad's life and the formation of the early community as historically reliable is unwarranted. On the contrary, a multitude of examples can be found in which serious scholars have noted anomalies and contradictions, but dismissed them because they did not cohere with what was "known" to be the correct version.

In the final chapter, Shoemaker attempts to account for the apparent shift of Islamic sacred geography from Jerusalem to the Hijaz in the eighth century. This shift included suppressing the memory of Muhammad as an eschatological prophet who died in Syro-Palestine in favor of that of an Abrahamic prophet with a unique message in Arabic who reconsecrated Mecca and was buried where he died in Medina. Here Shoemaker makes use of the recent book of Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2010) which suggests that the earliest of Muhammad's followers were an ecumenical community of monotheists concerned with piety who called themselves "Believers" and embraced Jews and Christians. Donner's thesis, along with conclusions reached by Cook, Crone, Hawting and others, leads Shoemaker to propose an early community of Believers focused on "the land of eschatological

promise, Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Only when the expected immanent destruction failed to arrive did the early Muslims find a need to re-remember the landscape of the Hijāz as the sacred cradle of Islam." (p. 251) In this reorientation of sacred geography, eighth-century Muslims began to emphasize the distinctiveness of Muhammad's teachings from Judaism and Christianity, the importance of Mecca and Medina, and the sacred language of Arabic, in essence creating Islam as it is known today.

This book has many strengths; chief among them is Shoemaker's willingness to reevaluate the plausibility of a multitude of suggestions previously rejected in favor of the "orthodox" account and to put them into a coherent framework. Within the short space of 260 pages, he draws attention to an astounding number of anomalies in the extant material and, I believe, forces serious scholars to move beyond the canonical texts of Islam in order to answer the troubling questions he has raised. Certainly the identity of Muhammad as an eschatological prophet has great merit. The case for this may even be stronger than Shoemaker suggests when one takes into account the Qur'anic evidence (which he largely ignores in this book). Nonetheless, I am not convinced by the concluding chapter, which ultimately seems to reject the entire canonical version of the life and teachings of Muhammad in favor of a hypothetical religious community that bears no resemblance to its offspring a century later.

Particularly disturbing to Shoemaker, Donner and others is the apparent presence of Jews and a Jewish perspective in the oldest accounts of Muhammad and his teachings, a presence clearly evident in the "Constitution of Medina" purportedly written by Muhammad himself. This murky relationship between Muhammad and these Jewish followers has been the subject of speculation since the earliest Qur'anic exegesis and remains so today. Donner's attempt, however, to accommodate these non-Arab monotheists by positing a primitive inter-confessional community of Believers led by Muhammad is not convincing. In my opinion, it is Shoemaker's acceptance of this proposal that sets his project off in the wrong direction—the notion that Islam began as an almost liberal Protestant movement focused on the restoration of Jerusalem, only to be suppressed and replaced with a fiction more convenient for political gain sometime after ʿAbd al-Malik (685–705) strains the evidence. Some obvious questions can be put to this scheme. Why

would those who revised the material feel the need to tie the religion of their emerging empire to someone who was apparently a failed prophet? Furthermore, how was it possible to gain broad acceptance in such a short time for the new version of Muhammad's life and teachings? If Muhammad was an obscure figure, why make him into the prophet-hero he became; if he was widely revered, how could accounts of him be so effectively obliterated? Surely there were Believers committed enough to remain faithful to his original teachings, yet evidence of them has not materialized. It is more likely that Muhammad's semi-tribal monotheistic movement attracted random Jewish (and perhaps Christian) adherents when it appeared that he might be successful in taking possession of the Holy Land. Rather than being an 'open society', this early movement seems to have been characterized by acknowledgement of Muhammad's leadership through the payment of tribute, as well as nominal monotheism and perhaps common worship, requirements that some Jews and Christians were willing to accept.

Many, many more objections to this current trajectory in Islamic studies could be raised, but the use of the 'argument of silence' is particularly problematic. Shoemaker, *et al.* claim that lack of evidence from pre-Islamic Arabia indicates the traditional version cannot be considered accurate. Yet, such a conclusion neglects the fact that limitations on archeological work in the Arabian Peninsula (as well as the lack of early Islamic art and inscriptions from the Hijaz) has severely hindered study in this field. Future archeology may well alter our understanding radically, but at this point conclusions based on the silence of the historical record are inappropriate. A related problem is our very limited knowledge of Judaism and Christianity in the Hijaz. Following Donner, Shoemaker hypothesizes a coherence within the presumed community of Believers that remains unproven. If one concludes that the tradition is not trustworthy, any reconstruction of an alternative in the absence of corroborating evidence remains just an exercise in speculation.

All in all, this is a very interesting book that skids off onto thin ice and then open water in the final pages. Shoemaker is to be commended for his courage, but the value of his proposal remains to be seen.

Robert E. Winn, *Eusebius of Emesa: Church and Theology in the Mid-Fourth Century* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011). Pp. xii + 277; $69.95.

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Eusebius of Emesa (modern Homs in Syria) lived primarily in the first half of the fourth century (ca. 300–ca. 359), making him a slightly earlier contemporary of Ephrem the Syrian, as well as of some of the great theologians of the Greek Church. He was born in Edessa but, unlike Ephrem, received a Greek education, studying in the great centers of the time: Caesarea, Antioch and Alexandria. Soon after he reached the age of forty—having already evaded appointment to the see of Alexandria, and perhaps Antioch too—he was named bishop of Emesa. He was the author of a number of sermons and biblical commentaries, as well as several lost polemical tracts (according to Jerome, Epiphanius and Theodoret). Unfortunately, due at least in part to his having been variously associated with Arianism, Sabellianism and astral cults, none of the Greek originals of his works has survived apart from some fragments in later *Catenae*. His *Commentary on the Octateuch* was recently discovered complete in a single Armenian manuscript (attributed to Cyril of Alexandria), with fragments of the original surviving in later *Catenae* and in the commentaries of Išôdad of Merw (see review of F. Petit, *et al.*, in *Hugoye* 15.1 [2012]).

The sermons of Eusebius have come down to us only in Latin and Armenian translations, though only a few actually survive in both. In the early 1950's Eligius M. Buytaert published critical editions of all twenty-nine of the extant Latin sermons of Eusebius, and just five years later Fr. Nersēs Akinian of the Mekhitarist Brotherhood in Vienna completed his edition of the eight sermons that have survived in Armenian translation. Nearly all subsequent study has concentrated on the questions of authorship and transmission of these two corpora; what little study has been directed to the theology of this corpus has been almost entirely based on a small selection of the Latin sermons. These two factors alone make the volume under review here all the more welcome. Winn has provided us with the first systematic study of the contents of the complete corpus of Eusebius' extant sermons.

Winn opens with a chapter situating Eusebius in the context of his times, describing the various places he spent time and the influence they seem to have had on him: Edessa, Antioch, Alexandria and Emesa (ch. 1). Next he combs these sermons to highlight that Eusebius, like many of his contemporaries, was manifestly well trained in the rhetorical arts (ch. 2). In the next four chapters, Winn explicates the main theological themes that he finds in Eusebius' sermons; he does so under four main headings (ch. 3–6): 1. the nature of the world and of humanity; 2. the nature of God; 3. the humanity and divinity of Christ; and 4. the church and asceticism.

And, as Winn argues very persuasively, these are not simply four themes subjectively selected from these sermons as favorite or even prominent, but in fact they constitute the four most fundamental components of the primary aim of Eusebius' sermons: to lay out for his flock those identifying characteristics that distinguish a member of the fourth-century Christian church from members of the other religious groups, not only in cosmopolitan Emesa but in the wider Late Antique Roman world. Winn does not presume that this agenda is unique to Eusebius, but he does a very nice job of demonstrating just how Eusebius goes about it, replete with numerous illustrative quotations from the sermons.

Winn begins by culling those elements of the sermons that demonstrate how Eusebius sets out a clear hierarchy of creation that moves from inert rocks and minerals at the bottom, to plants, animals, humans, angels and, finally, to God himself, from senseless corporeal objects to the incorporeal God, showing that incorporeal is much better than corporeal and is that which distinguishes the Christian God from all other gods. This incorporeality was of such fundamental importance for Eusebius that he went so far as to eschew all the 'corporeal' analogies for the Trinity of which his contemporaries were so fond; for Eusebius these analogies were illegitimate right from the start: nothing material can explain the immaterial. On the basis of this shared incorporeality Eusebius, unlike nearly all his contemporaries, had no trouble in boldly maintaining the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

This incorporeality then chose to become more directly involved in the world, even 'becoming flesh' in the person of Jesus Christ, though Eusebius goes on at great length to argue that this

does not mean that the Godhood turned into flesh but that, alluding to John 1:14, it 'tented' in the body of Jesus, though not in the way later to be associated with the East Syrian (formerly known as Nestorian) Church. Winn here discusses the short Armenian sermon *De cruce passionis*, in which Eusebius best develops his *logos-sarx* christology in strong opposition to that of Paul of Samosata. Eusebius is here, of course, representative of the pre-Chalcedonian 'fluid' description of the nature of Christ, as were several of his contemporaries, including—perhaps, especially—Ephrem.

But, of necessity for Eusebius, what distinguishes a Christian from everyone else is not simply beliefs about the nature of the divinity, but also the manner in which the Christian conducts his life. In his sermons, Eusebius vigorously tries to promote the *angelikos bios*—gaining not a little opposition in the process—constantly urging his flock to live out their lives in a rigorous ascetical, if not virginal, manner. To live a life of radical, manifest virtue will also serve to demarcate his congregation from Jews, pagans, and heretics.

As I have with other such books, I might here venture to express the hope that Winn might also some day provide a complete translation of this corpus of Eusebius' sermons—he already provides generous samples of quotations. While I do indeed harbor such a hope there are, alas, just enough questionable and/or erroneously translated phrases (though nothing significant enough to alter his general thesis) to caution me from expressing such a wish here. Just two quick examples: in his introduction (p. 22), Winn adduces a passage from one of the Armenian sermons to suggest that Eusebius likely had knowledge of the famous story of the King Abgar Ukkama, translating the phrase "because [God] revives kings." As the text in his footnote makes clear the verb here is a future, and should actually be translated, "because [God] will revive [i.e., resurrect] kings"; the full passage is clearly alluding to the final resurrection, not to any past figure. In the final chapter, in discussing the asceticism required to endure persecution, he brings forth a line from another homily that he translates "although incredible, Christians remain faithful even at the very point of death" (p. 230). While perhaps defensible, the phrase "although incredible" is probably better rendered by "on behalf of / for the sake of *the faith*"; the preposition in question can be rendered either way depending on context, but the presence of

the article on *hawatots'* suggests Eusebius is speaking of the specific faith Christians hold, not just a general and vague "belief." A less stringent use of "was" and "were" in favor of a past progressive tense in English would also help make less stilted many of his translations from both Armenian and Latin. But fortunately such instances are not that numerous.

While Winn did not provide us with a complete translation, he did publish a very significant study that sets out clearly the essential elements of a very important, and heretofore relatively unexplored corpus of sermons (especially those in Armenian); Winn has done much to help bring Eusebius back from an obscurity he never deserved and has helped to restore him to a more prominent position in the church of the fourth century. So much so that he has also laid some important groundwork, in the opinion of this reviewer, for a reassessment of the nascent (so-called) School of Antioch. That Eusebius played a not insignificant role in the development of Antiochian christology is beyond doubt; that he was largely influenced by his teachers Origen and Eusebius of Caesarea is also beyond doubt. Scholars have long been uneasy with the terminology of Antiochian and Alexandrian schools, terms that are less helpful the more black and white they are painted. Eusebius then might be a key to unraveling the threads that Frances Young and others have recently noted of Antiochian allegory and of Alexandrian literalism. But again, this was not the purpose of Winn's monograph, rather it is a possible next step based on such a sound and fundamental study.

George Anton Kiraz, ed., *Jacob of Serugh and His Times: Studies in Sixth-Century Syriac Christianity*. Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies 8 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010). Pp. xi + 252; $145.

CRAIG E. MORRISON, PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL INSTITUTE, ROME

Jacob of Serugh, known as the "Flute of the Holy Spirit" and the "Harp of the Church" is famous for his *mêmrê* in 12-syllable metre, of which nearly 400 survive. This volume, which celebrates the life and works of Jacob, gathers the papers given on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of St. Mark's Syriac Orthodox Cathedral in Teaneck, New Jersey.

Three contributions come from Sebastian Brock: "A Prayer Song by St Jacob of Serugh Recovered"; "Jacob's Forgotten *Sughyotho*"; and "Jacob of Serugh: A Select Bibliographical Guide." In his first article, Brock describes an alphabetical poem by Jacob that appears in an abbreviated form in medieval liturgical manuscripts. He then presents the Syriac text followed by a translation with notes. In his second contribution, after reviewing the difficulties in discriminating between Jacob's *mêmrê* and his *sughyotho*, Brock provides a list of features that distinguish the two genres. *Sughyotho* are popular poems, often written in a dialogue form, and frequently employ a 7+7, 7+7 metre. He then describes the early manuscripts that contain stanzaic poems attributed to Jacob and lists the four dialogue poems thought to be his compositions. Scholars working on Jacob's writings will want to thank Sebastian Brock for his third contribution: a bibliographical guide to the research on Jacob. Brock's bibliographies have been instrumental in creating a milieu in which Syriac scholars can learn from each other. His dedication to these bibliographies has significantly advanced the field.

Iskandar Bcheiry's contribution, titled "Repentance and Fasting from an Ascetical Perspective: A Comparative Reading of Jacob of Serugh and an Unpublished Shortened Version of a Collection of Homilies by Severus Of Antioch," focuses on: (1) Jacob's *mêmrâ* (122) about Jonah, which tells the story of Jonah and the repentance of the people of Nineveh, and (2) on an unpublished version of four homilies of St. Severus of Antioch. Bcheiry then presents relevant sections (in Syriac with English translation) of Jacob's *mêmrâ* to illustrate how "the description of the fast and repentance which were ordered by the king of Nineveh

expresses an ascetical and monastic tone" (p. 6). St. Severus of Antioch presents fasting as a struggle against evil spirits by which we purify ourselves and die with Christ to be glorified with Christ. In an appendix Bcheiry presents the Syriac text (with English translation) of an unpublished shortened version of a Collection of Homilies by Severus of Antioch.

Khalid Dinno considers Jacob the man in his article titled, "Jacob of Serugh, The Man behind the Mimre." He describes Jacob's writings as weaving "exegetical comment, imaginative and dramatic dialogue in order to unfold an event" (p. 52). Jacob's *mêmrê* also focus on the economy of salvation. Dinno then outlines specific themes of Jacob's writings, which he illustrates with examples from the *mêmrê*: (1) his feeling of inadequacy; (2) his assertiveness and confidence; (3) his supplication; (4) his understanding of faith and salvation; (5) his being open and transparent with his audience; and finally (6) his likening himself to a child. These themes illustrate that Jacob, a genuine person, was ready to reveal to his audience his "inner feelings of anxiety, inadequacy and self reproach; he was never aloof" (p. 69).

Sydney Griffith, in his article titled, "Mar Jacob of Serugh on Monks and Monasticism: Readings in his Metrical Homilies 'On the Singles'," suggests that Jacob's audience for these *mêmrê* was a congregation of *îḥîdōyê*, who, according to Jacob, were hermits, who lived as "singles" in God's service. Griffith then focuses on *mêmrâ* 137, which exhorts the *îḥîdōyê* to avoid attachment to the world and anxiety about money, and *mêmrâ* 138, which, echoing *De Oratione* by Evagrius of Pontus, is "virtually a manual of ascetical and mystical theology" (p. 81). During Jacob's life, the classics of Egyptian monasticism and other Greek authors, such as Gregory of Nyssa, were appearing in Syriac. In Jacob's *mêmrê* we can discover "an expression, in the ordinary monastic milieu in Syria, of the early enthusiasm for the mystical thought that would come to full flower not long after his time in the classic texts of Syrian asceticism and mysticism." (p. 89).

The Eucharistic celebration at the time of Jacob of Serugh was slightly different from the current rite in the Syriac Orthodox Church. Jacob's *mêmrâ* 95, which offers a window into Jacob's Eucharistic celebration, is studied by Amir Harrak in his article titled, "The Syriac Orthodox Celebration of the Eucharist in Light of Jacob of Serugh's *Mimrō* 95." Jacob calls the Eucharist *pōṯūrō*

("table") as well as *qurbōnō* ("sacrifice") and *debeḥtō* ("oblation"). Harrak then describes *mêmrâ* 95 in which Jacob refers to each stage of the Eucharistic celebration. The service included readings from the Bible (including the Old Testament). Jacob highlights the dismissal of the catechumens before the anaphora. There is no mention of the recitation of the Creed. This fascinating article is a must-read for liturgists and church historians.

The question of Jacob's audience is a difficult one that Susan Ashbrook Harvey tackles in her article, "To Whom Did Jacob Preach?" An awareness of his audience is important for appreciating his homilies, since they were written with a particular group in mind. Harvey searches the homilies for evidence of Jacob's audience. Some remarks were directed at parishioners, who arrived late and were not attentive to the liturgy and were dismissive of his concerns about urban life. His homilies also reveal that his church included the intermingling of the lay, clerical and monastic vocations: "each person is a necessary part in order for the body to be whole" (p. 125). Particularly important is the participation of women; Jacob insisted "on the congregation's all-inclusive constitution" (p. 129).

Though Jacob of Serugh wrote as many as 763 *mêmrê*, only 381 have been located. Edward G. Matthews, in his article titled, "Jacob of Serugh, Homily on Good Friday and other Armenian Treasures: First Glances," tells the story of how he discovered in Armenian translation a lost homily of Jacob. He then describes the homily, offering a preliminary translation of some portions and listing other Armenian works attributed to Jacob. The colophon of this homily suggests that the translation was ordered by Gregory, the Catholicos of the Armenians, whom Matthews identifies as Gregory III Pahlawuni (1113–1166). Though the translator did not maintain the poetic lines or the syllable count, Matthews is certain that this homily is a genuine composition of Jacob. The final section of the article lists seventeen homilies in Armenian that Matthews divides between those that have a surviving Syriac witness and those that do not. This evidence reveals that Jacob's works were translated into Armenian and were esteemed by the medieval Armenian Church.

Aho Shemunkasho in his article titled "Jacob of Serugh and his Influence on John of Dara as Exemplified by the Use of Two Verse-Homilies," traces how John of Dara (Metropolitan of Dara

in 825) in two of his treatises uses Jacob's *mêmrê*. After a review of the manuscripts that witness to John of Dara's works, Shemunkasho identifies seven of Jacob's *mêmrê* in these works. He provides a list of the ways John of Dara refers to Jacob of Serugh and then provides examples (the Syriac text with English translation) of how John of Dara incorporated Jacob's homilies into his works. John can cite Jacob accurately and can also summarize Jacob's teaching.

Lucas Van Rompay, in his article, "Humanity's Sin in Paradise: Ephrem, Jacob of Sarug, and Narsai in Conversation," traces the reception of Genesis 1–3 in early Syriac authors, with a focus on the question: "How easy would it have been for Adam and Eve not to sin?" (p. 199). According to Ephrem, had Adam and Eve obeyed God, they would have enjoyed immortality. Jacob supports Ephrem's argument that Adam and Eve were not immature in paradise and hence less responsible for their sin. As to whether Adam was created mortal or immortal, Jacob argues that Adam consisted of both a living nature (*kyono ḥayyo*) and dead clay (*medhro mitho*). Because of their freewill, they ate of the tree and became aware of their new mortal status. Narsai, following Theodore, considers humanity mortal at its creation. He agrees with Jacob that with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden, God established a plan for salvation culminating in Christ, but "[f]or Jacob…the process is a restoration; for Narsai, the focus is on gradual perfection" (p. 212). Van Rompay's comparison of the exegesis of Narsai and Jacob suggests that the School of Edessa was not always filled with conflict between the "Theodoreans" and "Cyrillians," but that creative minds continued to enjoy fruitful interaction into the fifth century. Van Rompay's illuminating synthesis of these Syriac authors makes this article a must-read for anyone interested in the reception history of Genesis.

The final article in this volume by Mary Hansbury, titled "A Reflection on the Occasion of the Blessing of an Icon of Mar Jacob of Serug," discusses the art from Mossul that was put on display by Amir Harrak during the symposium. She traces the discussion about iconography in Syriac literature beginning with early Syriac authors up to the current Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I and then discusses the icon of Jacob that was blessed during the conference. This icon is based upon a prototype found in St. Mark's in Jerusalem.

Otto Jastrow, *Lehrbuch der Ṭuroyo-Sprache* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011). Pp. xvi + 215; €39.

Naʿama Pat-El, The University of Texas at Austin / The Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies, Uppsala

The book under review is a reprint of Jastrow's 1992 grammar. The original book itself is a culmination of Jastrow's work on Central Neo-Aramaic dialects, including Mlaḥsô, the grammar of which he published in 1994 (*Der neuaramäische Dialekt von Mlaḥsô*). While Mlaḥsô was a discovery of Jastrow, Ṭuroyo was already known to the scholarly community. The original work on Ṭuroyo was conducted by Hellmut Ritter, whose massive five-volume work was published under the title *Ṭūrōyo; die Volkssprache der syrischen Christen des Ṭūr ʿAbdîn* (1967–1990). Ritter's work, however, is not easily accessible to students and those with only passing interest in the language. Jastrow himself also published a grammar of the Central Neo-Aramaic dialects in 1985 (*Laut- und Formenlehre des neuaramäischen Dialekts von Mīdin im Ṭūr ʿAbdīn*). Therefore, Jastrow's textbook has always been a welcome and much needed addition to the growing library of Neo-Aramaic dialects.

The book opens with a description of the area of Midən (or Midin) and its inhabitants. Beyond details about their lives and religion, Jastrow also briefly discusses their language in the context of other Aramaic dialects of the region. Finally, Jastrow suggests some further scholarly reading for the learner. Handbooks do not typically have bibliographies, but I suspect one would have been in order here, since so much has been published since the 1992 publication of this book. Jastrow's linguistic writing tends to be clear and accessible, and I think a short bibliographical list of relevant works could have made this volume more up-to-date.

Each chapter contains detailed grammatical descriptions, including clear and helpful paradigms and examples. It concludes with a list of new vocabulary, a number of sentences for practice translation, and a long original text from which the list of vocabulary is extracted. Each text is accompanied by textual notes to help with tricky phrases and nonstandard forms. The book concludes with a glossary and a key, with full translations of both drills and texts in the back of the handbook.

This method of learning while reading from the very beginning is common in the German system (which is also used outside Germany), but less so in the US, where such long texts are only introduced when students have mastered the essentials of the grammar. Having been educated in both systems, I see pros and cons for each. The system adopted by Jastrow will help an average student become accustomed to reading foreign texts, which is a reasonable expectation for most Semitic languages. The problem is that Ṭuroyo is not a written language. All the written texts we have were transliterated and parsed by Ritter and Jastrow. Thus students should rather become accustomed to the spoken language, if they wish to study it. This means more speaking and listening drills rather than reading and translating. Of course, Jastrow's grammar and textbook provide all the information needed, and I encourage interested students to work with both, but there is still a difference between knowing about emphatic sonorants or assimilation across morphemes and hearing them and being able to parse them on one's own.

Jastrow's continuous work and publication about grammatical aspects of Central Neo-Aramaic is essential to Aramaic studies and particularly to the study of the dialectology of this branch. Most of the scholarly attention is directed towards the Northeastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) dialects, but the Central group is fascinating and deserves to be carefully studied for a number of reasons. This group, for example, developed a fully functional definite article based on the demonstrative (Jastrow 1990; 2005; 2011:20, 25). This is particularly interesting because none of the NENA dialects has such an entrenched article, although in several of them the beginning of a system can be traced (Khan 2008). The development of a definite article in Central Neo-Aramaic has led to the movement of the attributive demonstrative to post-position, i.e., after its head noun, which is another feature distinguishing this dialect group from both Western and Eastern modern dialects.

However, scholarly interest in the Central dialects stems primarily from their relative grammatical conservatism. Jastrow previously noted that unlike NENA dialects, the Central dialects preserve internal passive, which are reflexes of passive or passive-reflexive participles in the pre-modern dialects (Jastrow 1996; 2011:133ff.).

While it is true that the Central dialects are conservative, Mlaḥsô seems more conservative than Ṭuroyo. Ṭuroyo deviates from Mlaḥsô in some very interesting features. One such feature is the marking of the genitive relation. As is well know, Middle and Late Aramaic dialects increasingly use the relative particle *də-* to mark nominal dependency instead of the construct which was more common, but not exclusive, in Old Aramaic. Additionally, we find such analytic genitives with a proleptic pronoun on the head noun in both eastern and western dialects, for example *b-ḥasd-eh d-mār-an* 'by the grace of our lord' (Christian Palestinian Aramaic). In the Central dialects one can find a clear descendent of this structure with a suffixed *-e* on the head noun, a reflex of the third masculine singular *-eh*. In Mlaḥsô, a pattern with this suffix still carries definite function. Since this suffix is not a pronoun anymore in Mlaḥsô, this function is probably a leftover from its predecessor.

em-e *də-kalo*
mother.fs-E rel-bride.fs
'the mother of the bride' (Mlaḥsô)

Ṭuroyo has a similar pattern, but there the suffix is just a relic with no particular function. For definite genitives, there is need for an overt definite article (Jastrow 2011:42):

layl-e *d-u-'ed̲o*
night-E rel-def.ms-festival
'the eve of the holiday' (Ṭuroyo)

In Ṭuroyo, nouns with external signs of definiteness, like a demonstrative or a possessive suffix, must also take the definite article (Jastrow 2011:58). In earlier Aramaic, of course, nouns with possessive suffixes were barred from taking the definite article, as was the case for other Central Semitic languages. Mlaḥsô allows for this pattern, but it is not obligatory and therefore less common than in Ṭuroyo (Pat-El 2012):

u-bayt-ayd̲e
def-house-his
'our house' (Ṭuroyo)

(*ə-*)*brat-ezav*
(def-)daughter-his
'Our clothes' (Mlaḥsô)

This language has much to offer, particularly to scholars and students of Aramaic, but also to students of folklore and Middle Eastern religious minorities. Since most of the users of this book will likely be individuals with some background in pre-modern Aramaic, an index with grammatical terms would have been a great addition. Nevertheless, this book is highly recommended for scholars of Aramaic interested in the diverse, complicated and fascinating history of the Aramaic branch.

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Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Song and Memory: Biblical Women in Syriac Tradition* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010). Pp. 92; $15.

UTE POSSEKEL, GORDON COLLEGE

This volume contains the published version of the 2010 Père Marquette Lecture in Theology, in which the author explores the function within early Syriac Christianity of female choirs and of liturgical poetry featuring female biblical characters. The first section sets the stage, introducing the reader to the various ways in which early Syriac authors reflected on and highlighted biblical women. It also notes at the outset the unique contributions of the Syriac tradition. First, compared with Latin and Greek Christianity, Syriac-speaking Christians gave greater attention to biblical women and usually portrayed them in positive ways. Second, Syriac authors availed themselves of genres, such as dialogue poems, that allowed them to give lively, imagined voices to the female biblical characters. Third, the choirs of women that featured prominently—and still do—in Syriac liturgies, gave "gendered voices" to these biblical women, thereby edifying and instructing the congregation.

The second section of this volume sketches in broad strokes the late antique historical context of the Syriac liturgy. In an environment of rival religious claims and of civic entertainments competing with ecclesiastical meetings, the church's liturgy had to be engaging to the audience. The author paints a vivid picture of how the various ritual components of the liturgy, and their proponents (clergy, choirs, congregation), interacted. Consideration of the liturgical context in which the female choirs were active, and in which the stories of biblical women were told and re-told, is essential, Harvey argues, for it "enhanced the meaning and heightened the importance of every word performed" (25).

The third chapter explores in more detail the main genres of Syriac poetry in which biblical women feature prominently (*madrasha*, *sogita*, and *memra*) and the liturgical setting in which they were performed. Harvey emphasizes the role played by women's choirs in the Syriac tradition. Whereas the female choirs (consisting mostly of nuns) in the Greek and Latin Christian world played a more marginal role, in the Syriac churches women's choirs performed regularly in the liturgies of town and village churches,

and church leaders and ecclesiastical canons regularly stressed their importance. By intoning *madrashe*, doctrinal teaching hymns, women in the Syriac churches were granted a kind of teaching role.

In the fourth and longest section, entitled "Teaching Bible with Women's Voice," the author gives illustrative examples of how biblical women featured in Syriac liturgical poetry, drawing on the *madrashe* of Ephrem, Jacob of Sarug's *memre*, and anonymous *sogyata*. Harvey stresses that the way in which the (usually male) authors cast biblical women in powerful roles does not reflect the social perception of women, but rather serves "the moral edification of the civic community" (45); nevertheless her careful analysis of the texts allows us occasional glimpses into the social reality. As choirs of consecrated virgins sing the words given to Mary in Ephrem's *Nativity Hymns*, it becomes clear how Ephrem's defense of Mary's virginity has implications for the choirs of virgins themselves, whose relatively novel status of consecrated celibacy was not, by the mid-fourth-century, universally appreciated. Harvey then turns to Jacob of Sarug's presentations of Mary, who in his writings becomes a formidable disputant in dialogues with the Angel Gabriel or Joseph. Perhaps the most intriguing section is that on lamenting women. Although in Syriac literature only one lament of Mary is known, lament nevertheless was an important component of liturgical poetry. It served a parenetic role, guiding the audience from mourning to penitence (68). Several examples illustrate the dynamics of lament in Syriac poetry. In Jacob of Sarug's *memre*, Eve grieves not only for Abel, but for both of her sons, thereby articulating an experience of sadness and sorrow which would have resonated which many church members. Other instances of lamenting women include Joseph's sister, Dinah, and Abraham's wife, Sarah, who often appears as the truly faithful heroine in Syriac hymns and homilies on Genesis 22. In the final section, Harvey outlines how biblical women in Syriac liturgical poetry often carried titles such as the Barren Woman, the Humiliated Woman, or the Lamenting Woman, representing various types intended to "instruct the congregation in multiple ways" (87). Ultimately, Harvey argues, these biblical women and the female choirs who sang their stories and intoned their imagined words constituted "a continual enactment of the work of salvation for humankind" (92).

Despite one or two minor editorial oversights, this slim volume has much to recommend it: beautifully written and accessible to the non-specialist, it draws on the author's long scholarly study of the subject to illuminate some of the manifold ways in which biblical women functioned in Syriac liturgical poetry. Harvey masterfully situates the Syriac tradition within the larger Mediterranean context, noting both shared traditions and the unique contribution of Syriac poets to early Christian discourse. At times such a shared heritage is merely stated rather than documented, as for example when we read about Syriac presentation of biblical figures: "Plotlines as well as character types followed similar patterns that appeared in Greek and Roman novels, the Christian apocryphal acts, and Jewish and Christian extracanonical narratives, in addition to mimes and pantomimes performed in late antique theaters" (43). Moreover, it is not always clear exactly how the repeatedly emphasized moral impetus of the biblical women is to be understood. But surely, these omissions are due to the brevity required for this publication, and they make the reader eagerly anticipate Harvey's forthcoming monograph on the subject (7).

Robin Darling Young and Monica J. Blanchard, eds., *To Train His Soul in Books: Syriac Asceticism in Early Christianity* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011). Pp. xix + 217; $34.95.

Paul S. Russell, St. Joseph of Arimathea Anglican Theological College

The eclectic contents of this volume, offered in appreciation and thanks for the work and writing of Sidney H. Griffith, match the breadth of topic and technique of the recipient's own work. The nine page introduction by Robin Darling Young, with which the volume opens, recounts in brief the life of Sidney Griffith and makes the Bibliography with which the book concludes easier to understand and appreciate. The resurgence in Syriac and Oriental Christian Studies that has taken place in the last 50 years has been made possible by the work of a few important and prolific scholars located at central points in the academic web. Sidney Griffith has certainly been one of these in the areas of Syriac and Christian Arabic Studies and a volume like this makes a fitting tribute as well as a spur to more labor by his friends, students and admirers.

Joseph Amar begins the process by offering an appropriately beautiful and evocative set of poetic responses to the Psalms for "the feast of the Announcement to the Bearer of God, Mary, which is the second of the Sundays of the Season of the Announcement, the West-Syriac equivalent of Advent" (5). These lines, which have, as Amar says, followed the "characteristic feature of Syriac strophic compositions to overwhelm, and in some cases to displace, the biblical passages and related texts they were intended to accompany" (6), now stand alone as an extended meditation on this pivotal gospel scene.

Francisco Javier Martínez begins his article by recalling how, while he was in Jerusalem, he learned of Sydney Griffith through Kathleen E. McVey. He describes his time with Griffith at the Catholic University of America as among the greatest gifts the Lord has done for him in his life. After thanking Fr. Griffith for introducing him to St. Ephrem, he takes up Ephrem's hymns *De Virginitate* I–III and reviews the manuscripts and editions in which they appear and then describes their strophic structure. Often these hymns have not been understood within their historical context, a problem, Martínez notes, that Griffith has addressed. Martínez

then summarizes Griffith's research on this question. These hymns witness to Ephrem's concern that the churches of Nisibis and Edessa should be in communion with the wider church, what Martínez calls the "Iglesia del imperio." (32) Ephrem wanted to correct Gnostic and encratic notions of marriage with the idea that virginity is a divine gift. Martínez compares Ephrem's notion of virginity with Aphrahat's and suggests that these hymns may have been some of Ephrem's earliest writings. According to Ephrem, virginity is not a "withdrawal to the desert" or an adherence to a particular rule, as if these could guarantee one's "virginity" (34). For Ephrem, the life of a virgin should be a reflection and image of the Lord. Martínez then provides a Spanish translation of *De Virginitate* I–III with detailed and explanatory notes. (I am grateful to Craig Morrison, O.Carm., of the Pontifical Biblical Institute for reading Martínez's Spanish article for me and offering this report.)

Gary Anderson examines the words of the prophet Daniel to King Nebuchadnezzar at Daniel 4:24: "Redeem your sins through almsgiving and your faults through generosity toward the poor." Noting that this has been a bone of contention between Catholic and Protestant exegetes over the years, Anderson examines the verse in light of parallels in Proverbs and the Psalter. The change in "the metaphor of sin as burden…to that of sin as debt" (61) takes place around the close of the First Temple period, Anderson suggests, which makes this way of speaking seem more expected. Pointing out that Syriac-speaking Christianity mirrors this usage and that it finds its way into the Lord's Prayer and some parables of Jesus that describe sinners as debtors, Anderson argues that this is evidence of its roots in "Aramaic idiom" (61, note 9) rather than any characteristic of Judaism, as such.

Alexander Golitzin argues for a monastic milieu, influenced by Evagrius of Pontus, as the likely *locus* for the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel*. The yearning of the monastic for the world to come and the fact that "the nature of the monk's calling is less simply to stand in attendance of the eschaton than it is…to seek to embody it" (94) place the *Apocalypse* within the self-understanding of the monastery, he suggests. The fact that it is found in a volume more than two thirds taken up by the works of John of Dalyatha gives Golitzin further confidence that he has found the best explanation for the repeated discussion of the attainment of heavenly things while still in the body. Such passages seem to turn the focus of the work

toward addressing those engaged in living in the world we know rather than those looking toward the world to come.

Michael Hollerich considers the Syriac *Life of Athanasius* that survives in four complete or partial copies. Noting that it is of little value for our knowledge of Athanasius' life, he suggests that examining it may lead us to understand better "the reputation and influence of Athanasius in the Syrian Orient" (100). Pointing out that the work draws mainly on the histories of Socrates and Theodoret, both of which we still have partially in Syriac, Hollerich suggests that Syriac is the most likely language of composition. The interest in fortitude in persecution seems to shed light on the interests of the author and of the purpose of the work. He compares both Byzantine hagiographies and Barḥadbešabba's *History* to the *Syriac Life* and discovers them to be parallel to it in various ways. Hollerich ends with a suggestion of a lesson for the Christians of our own, divided, days: The Syriac *Life of Athanasius* "is thus seen to be embedded in a larger tradition of Athanasian biography, which was fertile and versatile enough to cross linguistic, geographical and confessional lines, being found in Byzantine, Monophysite (Severus of Antioch), and Nestorian (Barḥadbešabba) sources. The tradition's broad and diversified attestation may serve as a reminder of those deeper unities which, despite confessional strife, still linked the separated Christian churches of the Middle East" (121).

Sebastian Brock considers the ascetic term *msarrqûtâ*, especially as found in the *Liber Graduum*, John of Apamea, Philoxenus, and Isaac of Nineveh. The generality of the term allowed it to be used in a "two-stage model" in a commentary on the *Asceticon* of Abba Isaiah, encompassing both *msarrqûtâ* "from possessions, and from evil thoughts" as well as a three-stage model in Dadisho Qatraya as *msarrqûtâ* "from possessions," "from the senses" and "from the passions" (130). Brock ends by pointing out that the use of the same verbal root to translate Philippians 2:7, the famous "he emptied himself" phrase, made all these kinds of renunciations explicitly imitations of Christ by those who undertook them. The added power these practices would gain by the connection is quite clear.

Susan Ashbrook Harvey considers images of housekeeping as metaphors for spiritual practice, especially due to a shift during the fourth century, in some circles at least, "away from a rhetoric

concerned with the cultic conditions of purity and pollution, and a turn instead towards a stress on moral psychology through the ordering (cleaning) of the passions" (135). This mode of expression allowed writers to stress the unending and laborious nature of the ascetical project. She reports: "Most often, I have found housekeeping to be part of a complex of images that serves to strengthen commitment to the continual discipline of ascetic practice." (152) Even more than maintenance cleaning, the image could describe "a thorough, harsh cleaning" that would have "scrubbed the ascetic back to a fit and proper dwelling for divine habitation" (152). The description by Jacob of Sarug of Mary preparing herself to carry the Savior in her womb is a pointed and powerful example of this strain of expression.

Robin Darling Young examines the influence of Evagrius of Pontus on Philoxenus of Mabbug, especially with regard to his treatment of the monastic life as the imitation of Christ. She emphasizes that Evagrius includes both interior and exterior aspects of religious life. Also, the fact that teaching took place in the monastic community kept this endeavor from becoming a purely individualistic project. Indeed, the question of who was fit to offer instruction as a *gnostikos* illuminates this corporate aspect since the teacher served as "a sign of Christ himself by becoming his living image" (163). Philoxenus holds out as the goal of his teaching about ascetical practice the attainment of a state in which "Christ is said to be in [the Christian], and he is said to be in Christ" (166). So, while the ascetic may begin with the exterior level, he hopes to end with his attention on the interior. She ends by discussing Philoxenus' *Letter to Patricius* as a way to consider how he would try to rein in a monastic who seemed in danger of going off the rails of orthodox thought and practice and concludes with the fact that Philoxenus was able to combine a Cyrillian sense of a "taking on of Christ's own nature" (175) and imitating His own development as portrayed in the Gospels with the more interior Evagrian approach to the acquisition of holiness, though he was careful to redirect it toward following "the law of Christ" (173) rather than a too free dependence on grace. Serious spirituality was willing to seek enlightenment from wherever it might be found.

Monica Blanchard discusses six discourses of Beh Isho' Kamulaya, whom Blanchard suggests might be Abba Bishoi, "one of the legendary founders of the Egyptian Wadi Natrun" (198) or

be connected to the village "Mar Bishu…some 40 km. due west of Urmia, and due east of the site of the Old Monastery of Kamul" (179). These treatises survive in a manuscript from "between the late ninth and early twelfth centuries" (177) at Catholic University and in a modern copy (completed November 20, 1900) in the library of the Church of the East in Trichur, Kerala, India. There may also be some of this material in modern codices copied near Urmia in northern Iran. Blanchard provides eight pages of translated selections from this manuscript. The selection from the Fifth Discourse, with its provocative comments on the relationship between the Trinity and the incarnate Son, was particularly intriguing. I hope that Blanchard will publish an edition with translation so we may all see this new entry into the all too thin catalogue of surviving Syriac Christian works.

The volume ends with a *soġītā*, "Ode to Joy," that was written by Shawqi Talia in the Neo-Aramaic dialect of Alkosh, north of Mosul in Iraq. The poem was first read publicly at the closing banquet at the Fourth North American Syriac Symposium in Princeton in July 2003 on the occasion of the recognition of Sidney Griffith's 65th birthday. In this volume, we have the full Neo-Aramaic text with an English translation. The 31st couplet seems a fitting conclusion to this review:

> "Your virtuous work is a grace, for us you are righteousness shining,
> May the Holy Spirit guard you, hour unto hour, and upon you the promised land be granting." (201)

This volume, in its quality and breadth, is a fitting gift for its recipient, which is high praise, indeed.

Hans Arneson, Emanuel Fiano, Christine Luckritz Marquis, Kyle Richard Smith, eds. and trans., *The History of the Great Deeds of Bishop Paul of Qenṭos and Priest John of Edessa*. Texts from Christian Late Antiquity 29 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010). Pp. 81; $35.

JEANNE-NICOLE SAINT-LAURENT, ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE, VT

The publication of the Syriac text and English translation of *The History of the Great Deeds of Bishop Paul of Qentos and Priest John of Edessa* is a welcome addition for students and scholars of Christian asceticism, late antique piety, and Syriac Christianity. Scholars of hagiography in particular will enjoy the links of this lively and unique text to other Syriac narratives that memorialized heroes of Edessan Christianity, like the *Man of God* and the *Life of Rabbula.*

The book's text and translation by Emanuel Fiano, Kyle Smith, Christine Luckritz Marquis, and Hans Arneson is the product of a graduate seminar taught by Prof. L. Van Rompay in the Department of Religion at Duke University. The volume is a translation based on three manuscripts from the British Library: BL Add. 14,597 (568 C.E.), Add. 12,160 (6th cent.), and Add. 14,646 (6th cent.). The authors provide an informative explanation about the manuscript tradition and the methodology of their translation. As Smith notes in the introduction, the *Great Deeds of Paul and John* has been largely neglected in Syriac hagiographical studies (6), apart from an article by Sebastian Brock on Syriac monks and manuscripts and their link with Sinai.[1]

The story, set in fifth-century Edessa, is particularly vivid in its depiction of the friendships that developed among late ancient Christians who sought the ascetic life. Paul, a bishop of Italy, leaves his see for Edessa to pursue a life of humble anonymity as a day laborer. Having reached Edessa, Paul gives his money to the poor and supports the men and women of Edessa's *xenodocheion.* Paul then meets the other hero of the text who will become his companion: John, an Edessan priest who also desired the ascetic life. A common longing to pursue a life of holiness brings the two men together, and the seal and complexity of that bond is a major theme of the hagiography. Paul works during the day for John, and

[1] "Syriac on Sinai: The Main Connections," in: *Eukosmia: Studi Miscellanei per il 75° di Vincenzo Poggi, S.J.*, ed. V. Ruggieri and L. Pieralli (Soveria Mannelli [Catanzaro]: Rubbettino, 2003), 103-117.

at night Paul escapes to a cave to pray. John and Paul encounter twelve blessed men in a cave near Edessa, but, as the editors note, this section of the hagiography is "rather obscure" (4). Paul and John, bound to each other by an oath, divide their time between visiting their blessed friends of the cave and working at John's house in Edessa in the winter. The two men are joined in friendship to each other and live a life of prayer and work. The text mingles hagiographic fantasy with the mundane components of everyday life: visits to monks in caves are balanced with caring for the poor and the needs of the civic church.

The story also features a cameo appearance of the Himyarite tribe from Yemen, and the hagiography's representation of this group raises provocative questions about religious identity, ethnicity, and social boundaries as imagined or idealized in legend. Paul and John meet the Himyarites on a pilgrimage to Sinai where they are captured by an Arabic tribe. Through a series of wondrous events, however, the entire tribe converts to Christianity. Like many missionary legends, the conversion of the tribe culminates in the conversion of the king. The editors highlight the importance of this narrative sequence and its links with other stories: "What is perhaps most interesting about this episode is that it is probably the source for the stories about the spread of Christianity in Yemen found in the extensive *History of the Prophets and Kings* of the Persian historian al-Tabari (d. 923 C.E.)" (9). The editors indicate fascinating parallels between the story of Paul and John and that of Tabari's "Faymiyun and Salih" and "their respective roles in the legends about the origins of Christianity in Yemen" (9).

The *Great Deeds of Paul and John* offers further evidence of the diversity and imaginative forms of ascetic devotion that were practiced in the Syriac-speaking milieu. After Paul and John's pilgrimage to Sinai, while on their homeward journey to Edessa, they befriend a dendrite monk standing in a tree, and then they break bread with monks known as "mountain men." The abbot of the mountain men recognizes Paul's true episcopal identity, and Paul, for his part, then identifies a hidden female, in the garb of a eunuch, who is living undercover with the male mountain monks. The story is rich in its depiction of hidden identities and relationally complex ascetic families. Later Paul cures a woman who then leaves her husband and children to join a monastery. Her husband

and children, however, follow her example and also pursue the monastic life.

Eventually Paul breaks his bond with John and escapes to Nisibis from Edessa. John, saddened to lose his friend, searches for him in vain. He returns to the blessed ones in the cave and dies within that year. The ending of this story is not disclosed in the manuscripts that the translators used in their edition: "Whether he [Paul] continues his work in Nisibis or moves from city to city is not revealed in any of the manuscripts consulted for this edition. The one manuscript that does tell what happened to Paul is a ninth- or tenth-century manuscript from Deir al-Surian… According to this manuscript, not long after John's death, Paul died, too, and was buried at a monastery within walking distance of Nisibis called Bet Qarman" (15–16). Smith notes that the editors were unable to access this manuscript from the Monastery of the Syrians, but Prof. Van Rompay provided them with a transcription of this variant ending (12, note 30).

What makes this hagiography a gem is the way in which it does not idealize the social issues that troubled late ancient Christians. Rather, it presents a narrative rife with human pathos. This volume, with its felicitous Syriac text alongside the English translation, would be a brilliant source for students or scholars of late antiquity or Syriac Christianity interested in the complex relationships that developed among Christians trying to discover the way to God, be it through the consecrated life, through service as a bishop or priest, through familial devotions, pilgrimage, care of the poor, or missionary activity.

This text also will amuse fans of Syriac hagiography on account of its colorful characters: monks standing in trees, imaginary cave dwellers, transvestite ascetics, and families transformed into monastic communities. The *Great Deeds of Paul and John* sets these themes against the backdrop of the Syriac city and the roads wandered by ascetics on pilgrimage, and the text invites readers to envision the difficulties and poverty of city life, the challenges of the episcopacy and priesthood, and the landscape of Northern Mesopotamia with its unconventional *loci* for communion with the divine. The book presents insights into the narrative imagination of the fifth-century Edessan Christians, and the story also shows inter-textual relationships with other canonized texts of that milieu, like the *Man of God* and *Life of Rabbula*. The editors and translators

of the *Great Deeds of Paul and John* have with their preparation of the Syriac edition and English translation of this text made a welcome addition to the body of Syriac hagiography.

Elena Narinskaya, *Ephrem, a 'Jewish' Sage: A Comparison of the Exegetical Writings of St. Ephrem the Syrian and Jewish Traditions*. Studia Traditionis Theologiae 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010). Pp. xix + 357; €70.

J. Edward Walters, Princeton Theological Seminary

In the present volume, Elena Narinskaya offers a comparative study of exegetical and hermeneutical techniques found in the writings of Ephrem the Syrian with those of various Rabbinic texts. Although scholars have long noted similarities in the interpretive strategies of the Rabbis with those of early Syriac patristic authors, there have been remarkably few studies that have offered the kind of close textual analysis that the author undertakes in this work. In this regard, this book highlights an important and understudied area of research for both Syriac patristics and Rabbinic studies. Unfortunately, however, there are some significant problems with this work that detract from what could otherwise be an important scholarly contribution to the field.

Throughout the book, the author seeks to develop a two-pronged thesis about the fourth-century Syriac author, Ephrem the Syrian, and his relationship to Judaism. First, Narinskaya argues that some of Ephrem's writings—specifically his commentary on Exodus—include exegetical techniques and hermeneutical conclusions similar to those found in exegetical Rabbinic works, which leads the author to the conclusion that Ephrem was aware of these interpretive traditions and consciously incorporated them into his own writings. Based on this conclusion, Narinskaya then challenges prior scholarship on Ephrem that identifies him as 'anti-Semitic' or 'anti-Jewish'. This latter portion of the author's argument is based upon the presupposition that Ephrem would not 'borrow' interpretations from Jews if he were 'anti-Jewish'. The author states this presupposition explicitly: "If he was [sic] anti-Judaic, Ephrem would have to reject Judaism entirely along with its theology; instead Ephrem embraces Jewish concepts and methods. This makes Ephrem a pro-Judaic writer working within the framework of the Semitic mindset" (45). This statement reveals a crucial, yet unstated assumption that undergirds the whole argument: the author has completely re-defined the concept of being 'anti-Judaic' to the extent that virtually any patristic author traditionally regarded as 'anti-Judaic' could be considered 'pro-

Judaic' under these terms. In other words, for Narinskaya, 'anti-Judaism' is not defined by the negative things that an author says about Jews (and Ephrem certainly does not shy away from very negative rhetoric); rather, it is defined as an author being aware of Jewish exegetical traditions and rejecting them.

Likewise, Narinskaya also offers an odd account of *adversus Judaeos* rhetoric, which the author claims Ephrem employs as a "literary device, and not as his theological viewpoint" (46). This claim provides another example of the author 'proving' the argument by providing an idiosyncratic definition of an established concept. The reader must pause to ask how Ephrem's "theological viewpoint" can be separated from the rhetoric with which he expresses his theology. This argument about *adversus Judaeos* rhetoric also brings up the author's interaction with prior scholarship on this topic. First, the author engages the work of Christine Shepardson, the only other recent scholar to have treated the topic of Ephrem's anti-Judaism extensively. Yet Narinskaya only relies on two of Shepardson's articles, published in 2001 and 2002, but not her monograph on the topic, which was published in 2008, despite the present work having been published in 2010. This could merely be the result of a long publication process, but it is unfortunate that Shepardson's more in-depth argument is missing. However, the larger problem is that the author rejects Shepardson's argument simply because the author disagrees with the concept of anti-Judaism that provides the foundation of Shepardson's work: that anti-Jewish rhetoric is a crucial feature of Ephrem's task of Christian identity formation. According to Narinskaya, Ephrem's "main goal was not to mock Jews, but to alarm Christians into a greater self-awareness to strengthen their unique identity" (46). What the author fails to mention, however, is that Ephrem's primary method for forming this "unique identity" was using Jews as a negative example for what *not* to do. Moreover, although the author engages the topic of anti-Judaism and Christian identity, Miriam Taylor's monograph on the topic[1]—perhaps the single most important work on this very subject—is apparently unknown to the author, as it appears neither in the footnotes of the book nor in the bibliography. In the opinion of the present reviewer, this is a

[1] Miriam S. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Scholarly Consensus* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

grave omission, as it is clear that the author's concept of "anti-Judaism" fails to take into account the rhetoric of self-definition as the primary vehicle for anti-Judaism among early Christian authors.

To offer one final critique, the author also offers a comparison of Ephrem's exegetical techniques with those of his near contemporary Theodoret of Cyrus which is supposed to show how Ephrem's 'pro-Judaic' standpoint emerges in contrast with a near contemporary author from a similar tradition. However, the data presented in this chapter does not succeed at proving this point. Throughout chapter 3, the author provides summaries—not the actual texts for comparisons, just summaries—of both Ephrem and Theodoret's exegetical treatments of various passages from Exodus. Then, following these comparisons, the author provides conclusions like "Ephrem relies heavily on the Jewish tradition of Bible exegesis, while Theodoret is indifferent to it" (104). There are multiple problems with both the concept and the execution of this comparison. First, the substitution of the actual texts for the author's summaries of those texts does not allow the reader to see how the author arrived at those conclusions—the reader must take the author's word for it. Thus, for an argument constructed upon the concept of close textual analysis, the reader is reliant upon a secondary interpretation of primary materials. Moreover, the author's arguments rely on unfounded assumptions about Ephrem's motivations for his exegetical techniques, which the author then interprets as his 'positive' use of Jewish tradition. For example, in the illustration of Exod 19:5-6, the author claims that Ephrem "changes the reading of the Peshitta," (103) and bases the entire argument for this illustration on this change, without ever acknowledging the problem of assuming a stable Peshitta text in the fourth century. The author also constructs interpretive distinctions between the two authors that are then used as 'proof' into the pro-/anti-Jewish difference, such as the claim that Theodoret "sees typology of Christ in Moses," while Ephrem "sees Christian symbolism in Moses, but does not restrict his exegesis to it" (103). This is, simply put, a false dichotomy that does not say anything about the different traditions that stand behind the two authors' exegesis or their opinion of Judaism.

The heart of the author's comparative work between Ephrem and the Rabbis appears in chapters 4-6, and the arguments and textual comparisons in these chapters are much stronger than those

of the previous three chapters. The author correctly focuses on "interpretive themes" that appear in the exegetical writings of Ephrem and the Rabbis rather than trying to construct an argument on verbal correspondence alone. And there are very helpful textual comparisons in this chapter that show the development of hermeneutical traditions in Aramaic and Syriac. However, even here the author's conclusions are frequently too vague and broad (such as: "there is a strong likelihood that Ephrem may be perceived as an inheritor of the Jewish tradition of exegesis" [175]). Moreover, the author sets aside differences between Ephrem and the Rabbis by claiming that Ephrem "deliberately ignores" (176) Jewish exegetical tradition when it suits him. However, it is just as likely that Ephrem was simply unaware of the interpretive traditions he supposedly ignores. Indeed, Ephrem may have been relying on interpretive traditions he inherited *from other Christians*, which could also explain some of these supposedly deliberate omissions. Likewise, the author goes to great lengths to explain why Ephrem uses the number seventy in his commentary on Exod 1:5 in accordance with the Masoretic text rather than seventy-five like the Septuagint. The Peshitta follows the Masoretic text and also reads "seventy," but the author argues that Ephrem consciously "chooses" the Masoretic reading over the Septuagint reading because of his reliance on Jewish tradition. Again, this claim simply cannot be substantiated, and it appears that the author's own presuppositions about Ephrem have caused an over-interpretation of a very simple observation: Ephrem uses "seventy" in his commentary because that is the reading of his text of Exodus.

There are other, smaller problems with this book as well, such as a few typos throughout and a few lines of completely illegible Greek text (197), but these problems are truly minor in comparison with those outlined above. As stated at the outset of this review, Narinskaya has ventured into an important and interesting scholarly question. However, the significant problems in both concept and execution throughout this work render it ultimately unsuccessful in its aims. Scholars who work primarily with Ephrem, Rabbinic texts, and early Jewish/Christian hermeneutics will find some engaging material here, but they will also find many problematic arguments and conclusions.