
 THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

GABRIEL RABO:

Dionysius Bar Šalibi. Syrischer Kommentar zum Römerbrief. Einleitung, Edition und Übersetzung, mit einem Verzeichnis der syrischen Handschriften zu seinen sämtlichen Werken.

(Göttinger Orientforschungen. 1. Reihe: Syriaca, Band 56.) xxii, 504 pp. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019. €98. ISBN 978 3 447 11223 9. doi:10.1017/S0041977X21000094

Already in the late seventeenth century, at a time when Syriac studies in Europe were in their infancy, the Commentary on the whole Bible by Dionysius bar Šalibi (d. 1171) had caught the attention of Dudley Loftus who published, in 1672, a translation of Dionysius' Commentary on Mark, with some selections from that on Matthew in a later publication (1695). Several further passages from the Commentaries are to be found in the second volume (1721) of J.S. Assemani's splendid *Bibliotheca Orientalis*. It was not, however, until the twentieth century that the task of editing different parts of the Commentary began to be undertaken. An excellent start was made by J. Sedláček, later joined by J.-B. Chabot, in editing the commentaries on the first three Gospels, Acts and the Catholic Epistles in the *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*. His commentaries on other parts of the Bible have fared less well: a certain number of those on Old Testament books were the subject of various doctoral dissertations, and a good edition of that on Psalms 73–82 was published by S.D. Ryan in 2004. For the remaining books of the New Testament, the Commentary of John was published in a rather curious (and difficult of access) edition by R. Lejoly (1975); this left only the Pauline Epistles uncovered. It is accordingly most welcome that Gabriel Rabo has now provided a careful critical edition of the Commentary on Romans, based on six manuscripts (the oldest dated to between 1222 and 1234), selected out of the 21 known to exist; these are all described in detail. A careful German translation follows the edition, and in the annotation special attention is paid to Dionysius' use of the earlier Commentary by Mushe bar Kipho (d. 903), excellently edited by J. Reller (1994).

Rabo's book offers the reader considerably more than just the edition and translation of Dionysius' Commentary on Romans: the preliminary chapters provide much the best available survey covering both Dionysius' life and his writings. Concerning his life, Rabo has been able to resolve the disputed question of the date of Dionysius' consecration as bishop (1148, rather than 1145 or 1156), and he has uncovered evidence that Dionysius was the teacher of Patriarch Michael the Great, author of the famous Chronicle. In the following chapter on Dionysius' writings Rabo has brought to light some hitherto unknown works, among the most notable being a commentary on the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus. These new discoveries have been made possible thanks to Rabo's extensive knowledge of the manuscript tradition of Dionysius' works, a knowledge which he shares with readers in the first of several appendices; this runs to nearly 150 pages and lists, work by work, all the known manuscripts, many belonging to small church collections in the Middle East. This meticulous collection of information, for which all scholars with an interest in Dionysius will be grateful, will prove invaluable for all future scholarship on this prolific author.

Among the other appendices is an edition of Dionysius' Confession of Faith, which is of considerable interest from the point of view of ecumenical relations both in the twelfth century and today. A series of illustrations provides images of

samples from most of the manuscripts used for the edition, followed by some of the Cathedral in Amid (Diyarbakir) and of Dionysius' tomb there.

Three small observations may be offered. The apparatus criticus, which is presented in an admirably clear way, includes many purely orthographical variants; although these are not too obtrusive here in view of the absence of any large number of variants which do have bearing on the sense, it is usually more satisfactory to treat purely orthographic variants all together in the introduction, for it is only when seen panoptically that their potential significance for the wider history of orthography in Syriac becomes clear. A second observation concerns the Prooimion which, as Rabo notes following on from Reller, has connections with the so-called Euthalian material; most of this is derived by Dionysius from Mushe bar Kipho – but not everything: an unfortunate small slip in the translation on p. 219 obscures the evidence that Dionysius must also have had a direct link with the Syriac translation of the Euthalian Prologue to Paul's Epistles and the accompanying *Martyrion* of Paul. Dionysius gives the date of Paul's martyrdom as "year 36 of the Passion of Christ, a Thursday, 29th July according to the computation of the era of Alexander, and according to that of the Syrians and Greeks, the 29th June" (but "19th" in the German translation). This, of course, makes no sense, since the eras of Alexander, the Syrians, and the Greeks are all the same – namely the Seleucid era. Mushe bar Kipho only gives the first date. The explanation behind Dionysius' additional date is to be found if one consults the Greek *Martyrion Paulou* which follows the Euthalian Prologue to the Pauline Epistles: Dionysius' second date *either* belongs to the apparent date of the *Martyrion* itself, given a few lines further on, *or* to a correction of the first date (29 July) to 29 June (which is the Greek date of the Martyrdom). Whichever of these is correct, it would seem that Dionysius should be included in future in the already complicated discussion of the dates in Euthalius' prologue and the *Martyrion*. Finally, it might be noted that, according to the recent edition of Dionysius' *Against the Jews*, by Ebied, Wickham and Malatius (2020), Rabo's Disputationen nr. 15 (p. 417) is now Mardin 351.

Gabriel Rabo, who belongs to the small but growing number of Diaspora Syrian Orthodox scholars with a serious academic interest in Syriac literature, has produced a most worthwhile contribution to the study of one of the most prominent figures, alongside Barhebraeus, from the period of the Syriac "Renaissance".

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EMILIE SAVAGE-SMITH, SIMON SWAIN and GEERT JAN VAN GELDER (eds) with IGNACIO SÁNCHEZ, N. PETER JOOSSE, ALASDAIR WATSON, BRUCE INKSETTER and FRANAK HILLOOWALA:

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Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah's *'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, "The Best Accounts of the Classes of Physicians", has long been an inexhaustible source of information