Rainer Jakobi, *Asterius. Liber ad Renatum monachum*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, Berlin - New York: De Gruyter, 2011, pp. XII + 41, ISBN 978-3-11-020948-8.

The *opusculum* edited in this volume of the series *Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana* is a fifth-century polemic treatise on the different aspects of being a monk. Since the work is very little known to patristic scholars, I take the liberty to address its content first. The *Liber ad Renatum monachum* approaches its subject under three dimensions: the conceptual definition of *monachus* is followed by its practical realization and its corrupted occurrences in the mentality of the epoch. Its author, Asterius, treats each dimension with the experience of a vehement polemicist and skilled rhetorician. His definition is filtered through an original interpretation of the creation narrative (III.8 – IV.11): the status of a monk is not bestowed upon a person through his/her professing to be a monk, but has to do with leading a solitary life, self-sufficient in earthly matters (IV.11), just as Adam, the first monk (IV.11.15), was created "sibi… sufficientem, nullo egentem subsidio" (III.8.19). Therefore, humility and the avoidance of social contact are essential prerequisites for the veritable monastic life (IV.11.19-21). Alas, such monk was a *rara avis* in the environment of Asterius, who took upon himself the task to expose the many forms of pseudo-monasticism (XIII.25 – XXX.53). His climactically structured discourse culminates in a lengthy critique of the practice of *syneisaktism* (XXVII.48 – XXX.53), probably Asterius' true target. A Hieronymian epigone, Asterius' condemning tirade against this practice, seen as a veritable plague (cf. XXX.52.8, "agapetarum pestifera vocabula") is designed to be a vivid *satyra*, sprinkled at times with more detail than necessary.

The *Liber ad Renatum monachum* represents thus an all the more precious source as it is one of the very few (surviving) Latin texts that deal with *syneisaktism*. Yet, it somehow eluded the attention of the scholars studying this phenomenon, and one must concede that its editorial history might carry at least part of the blame for such neglect. Shortly after Salvatore Gennaro published the *editio princeps* (in *Corpus Christianorum, Ser. Lat*; LXXXV: *Scriptores Illyrici Minores*, Turnhout 1972), the scrutiny of philologists promptly revealed major insufficiencies in Gennaro's editorial choices, which often invited emendations. One by one, his failure to use conventional editorial markers, his list of Scriptural citations and references to ancient authors (not always the best terms of comparison) have been criticized up to the point that Isabella Gualandri, after collating the manuscript herself,

called Gennaro's edition "un inutile apografo che sarebbe meglio eliminare" ("Asteriana", *Scripta Philologa* II, 1980, 149-57, here 149).

In these circumstances, before any translation venture, any content-wise, or even theological analysis of Asterius' *opusculum* could be undertaken, a new critical edition became a necessity. To this need, Rainer Jakobi's work in the present volume answers in a responsible and pertinent way. One can see the improvements from the outset: the short preface contains two very important additions. On one hand, in his discussion of the transmission history of Asterius' *opusculum* (p. VI-VII), Jakobi integrates a second (now lost) manuscript witness, first identified by Silvia Rizzo ("Nota sulla scoperta del *Liber ad Renatum monachum* di Asterio", *RFIC* 102, 1974, 439-441). On the other hand, Jakobi's examination of the manuscript revealed a more complex writing dynamics than Gennaro had let it be seen. Jakobi in fact distinguishes two sets of textual interventions, one by the copyist correcting himself, and one by a later hand (p. VIII). The first set is certainly the most important, as it reveals the copyist's difficulties in reading his model, and, therefore, enables a better reconstruction of the text. At this point, although in a very limited way, one can, at least, speak about 'the archetype' (cf. the stemma on p. VII, and Jakobi's observations on the archetype's title on p. VII and VIII).

The edition and its critical apparatus are elaborated in dialogue, both with the different hands of the manuscript, and with previous critics. Thus, when the manuscript evidence requires it, Jakobi signals the instances when Pellegrini sixteenth century copyist, corrects himself (with $V^{a.c.}$ the corrected item and $V^{p.c.}$ the correction), as well as the interventions of a later hand (V^2). As far as the emendations are concerned, it is safe to say that the text offered in this volume resulted from the editor's excellent discernment of the many clarifications that philologists had brought to the *Liber ad Renatum monachum*. All the proposed emendations, be they accepted or not, are credited in the apparatus to their respective author (including those penned by Jakobi himself), with the afferent bibliographic data. Such faithfulness in referencing the source of textual corrections has another advantage besides accuracy: it enables the reader to retrace the argumentation behind the proposed emendation, something that is not possible in the limited space of a critical edition. The expert use of editorial markers clearly highlights additions, missing text (I.1.15, XXV.44.3, and the end), and uncertain passages (I.5.1, IV.12.22, V.13.10-11, XIII.25.6-7, III.9.6, XIV.27.8, and XXIV.43.1). The latter are often completed in the critical apparatus with the various suggestions, if any available, retrieved from secondary literature (exceptions are XIV.27.8 and XXIV.43.1, corruptions identified by Jakobi, thus not present in the literature).

That this new edition reduced the number of problematic passages to the few listed above denotes Jakobi's careful evaluation and mature reflection on the material at his disposal, and this is the greatest asset of the volume under

review. The *Subsidia interpretationis* would form the second greatest asset, were it not for the fact that they are relegated to the end. Certainly the decision to place them after the edition must have been informed by practical reasons: Jakobi very usefully quotes the relevant passages in full, so as to facilitate understanding; inserting these not seldom long quotations in the apparatus of sources apparatus would have overloaded it, risking to undermine the clear structure observed by the edition. Yet placing them at the end, without any mark in the text or in the apparatus to draw attention to them, leaves the reader with the task of constantly checking whether there is some *subsidium* to a given passage, or not. Some warning, perhaps in the apparatus of sources, would have been commendable in this case. However, this is a minor setback in an otherwise remarkable work. Jakobi's correctitude in documenting the source of his information extends to the *Subsidia* as well: whenever a passage has already been employed by a scholar to enlighten Asterius' text, he mentions the respective bibliographic details. Moreover, when examining the parallelisms with ancient writers, which Jakobi listed under the *Subsidia interpretationis*, one finds an almost entirely different list than in Gennaro's edition. There is a modicum of quotations common to both editors, most of them from the works of Jerome (ten in total; the other references in common are a quotation from Tacitus and two from Virgil). Jakobi eliminated most of Gennaro's citations and brought instead an entirely new string of occurrences. A quick look at them gives away almost immediately the main sources which served as inspiration for Asterius. Among these, the great revelation is Jerome's *Ep.* 100, quoted only once in Gennaro, but whose influence on Asterius was demonstrated already by Alberto Grilli ("Il proemio d'Asterio *Ad Renatum monachum*", *Scripta Philologa* II, 1980, 131-48, here 133 and 141-4).

The indices of Scriptural quotations and of ancient authors are compiled in separate sets for the edition and for the *Subsidia*. The two passages from Latin poets quoted by Asterius are referenced *in situ*, and they form the Index of Authors for the edition; as the other passages are treated in the *Subsidia*, they are indexed in the afferent section on Authors – yet another reason for which placing the *Subsidia* at the end is unfortunate.

From the Scriptural index to Asterius' *Liber ad Renatum monachum*, four references listed *in situ* are missing: Mc 9, 42 and Lc 17, 1 (I.3.4-5, p.2); and Mc 8, 35 and Lc 9, 24 (VI.15,11-13, p.7). All the four instances are parallels to a main citation that is included in the index. A very important feature of the scriptural apparatus is that for all the passages whose text differs from the Vulgate, the source (the Septuagint or Vetus Latina) is provided in brackets. Similarly to his treatment of the references to the ancient authors, Jakobi omitted large parts from Gennaro's extensive Scriptural apparatus and index. His choice in both cases is hardly a point of critique, given the doubts expressed repeatedly in the secondary literature with regard to the selection

criteria governing the first edition. Nine citations overlooked by Gennaro are given here their due place (Gn 2, 18; Sir 25, 33; 1Tim 6, 7; 2Cor 12, 9; Act 17, 21; Ps 58, 8; Mt 15, 14; Iob 26, 13; and Mt 13, 25.39).

Overall, this new edition does credit to the prestigious series in which it appeared. It not only rectified the errors of the previous published version, but it armed the reader with a set of useful tools facilitating the understanding of this most interesting *libellum*. From a philological point of view, it is the best work that could be done on this text. That it was not accompanied by an extended introduction to discuss more in depth the author, his work, and the circumstances of its composition, is only regrettable. It must, however, be excused on account of the conventions used by the *Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana*, as the series' prime interest is the philological introduction, rather than the historical one. In this respect, Gennaro's introduction still remains to be surpassed. However, the present edition ensures that all conditions for a successful research in that area are fulfilled.

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