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EDITORIAL: THE GORGIAS JOURNEY!



George and Christine (2011), ten years into the life of Gorgias Press

20 years ago, George's professional life took a major downturn. The dot-com bubble—the rise of the stock market caused by excessive speculation of Internet-related companies—burst. Paper millionaires—and George was one of them—lost millions of dollars they never possessed in the first place. Out of the ashes, Gorgias Press was born. Here is the prequel!

George graduated with a Ph.D. in Computational Linguistics from the University of Cambridge in 1996 in the early days of the Internet. While he was given a teaching opportunity at Cambridge, he decided that six years away from his Syriac community was enough. He wanted to go back “home” to Los Angeles. He applied for jobs and ended up at Bell Labs—the most academic-like research corporation—the birthplace of the transistor, the laser, and the satellite. Bell Labs had a Natural Language Group where he would work on speech technology but, most importantly, the company was based in NJ with a vibrant Syriac community.

Meanwhile, Christine was pursuing a career in R&D, working in the pharmaceutical industry at Allergan (makers of botox) before she decided to attend UCLA to pursue her Ph.D. in synthetic organic chemistry.

Christine and George met in California a few weeks before George moved to NJ, just as Christine was starting her doctoral studies. (No details; sorry! What happens in California stays in California.) And, two dozen trips coast-to-coast later, they got married. Christine gave up an interdisciplinary NIH training grant she was awarded as part of her Ph.D. studies at UCLA and transferred to Rutgers. Her advisor told her she was committing career suicide. Christine respectfully disagreed.

Life at Bell Labs was great for George. His Ph.D. dissertation was accepted for publication in a prestigious Cambridge series on Natural Language Processing and he was able to work on any research project that he wanted.

As Christine was pursuing her Ph.D. at Rutgers, George wanted to dedicate his entire time to Syriac. He began to dream of building a Syriac Institute. Christine remembers the moment when George first mentioned it.

The dot-com boom was growing continuously. People in tech start-ups were making millions. After four years at Bell

Labs, George decided to hop on the dot-com start-up wagon to make enough money to endow Beth Mardutho, the Syriac Institute he had informally established with Sebastian Brock back in 1992 when he was in Cambridge. George applied for jobs and received multiple offers. Each offer came with significant stock options.

George joined Nuance Communications, a California-based Silicon Valley startup working on speech technology. They were looking for someone to open an office in New York. They gave George generous stock options with a waiting period of four years. But he could exercise each year one quarter of the options. Within a few months, his stock options split a few times doubling in value with each split. Within six months, he began to see the six zeros that made him a millionaire—well, at least on paper. Beth Mardutho's endowment was within reach. Or so George thought, and Christine believed it to be too good to be true...

Nine months into the job—only three months short of being able to cash one quarter of the stock options—the dot-com bubble burst. Suddenly all of George's stock options were below the pre-set price. All the zeros vanished. The net profit was now negative! And the worst was yet to come.

To cut the story short, Nuance was forced to downsize and George was laid off. Out of all the companies that offered George a job nine months earlier, only one had survived along with Nuance. The prospect of another job did not look good. And there were no Syriac jobs to speak of. Depression followed.

Christine, now in the middle of her Ph.D., was supporting George emotionally. At the same time, they welcomed their first-born, Tabetha, into their family.

Christine always wanted to start a publishing company. George was a book collector, and Christine was an avid reader of literature. But publishing companies require the six zeros to the right of numbers that George had just lost. After some research, they learned about “on-demand” printing. George went excitedly to Christine, “We don't need the six zeros!”

Christine and George used George's severance funds to establish Gorgias Press. They registered the company in May 2001: no attorneys, they did all the paperwork themselves, just as they would do everything for the Press themselves for the next few years. In the early days, they had a lot of problems. They had to teach themselves accounting and negotiating terms. Their first book covers looked blurry and they couldn't figure out why. Then their friend, Thomas Joseph, told them that the dpi was low (75). This is how ignorant of publishing they were back then!

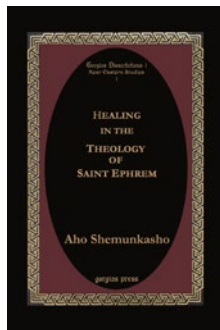
Meanwhile, Christine was still in the middle of her Ph.D. She worked with George after she came back home, sometimes late into the night. As George took over the acquisitions/editorial component, Christine embraced the business and marketing side of things.

Their first typeset book (non-reprint) was Aho

Shimunkasho's work *Healing in the Theology of Saint Ephrem* (2004). George had to convert the file from Multi-Lingual Scholar and format it himself! Well, everything at the time was done by the two of them. It was a steep but rewarding learning curve.

After five years of doing things themselves—and not taking a single penny from the Press; there was nothing to withdraw—George and Christine began to build a team.

Over the years they've worked with some fantastic individuals who have brought their varied skills and personalities to the growing Gorgias family. This has enabled the Press to expand the breadth of its publications and to create opportunities to work with some of the world's leading scholars and—we have no doubt—leading future scholars. We're extremely proud of our team, authors and editors, many of whom have won accolades for their Gorgias titles.



historian Philip Jenkins.

Reflecting on all this, we like to think we've achieved a lot with a little. George and Christine would hope this is due to the flexibility of Gorgias Press as a fully online, digital publisher, plus the fact that we're run for scholars, by scholars, and that we're one of the few presses that publishes rare and understudied topics – after all, our motto is “Publishing for the Sake of Knowledge”. These elements have helped us find a place in a difficult industry, become known for pioneering work in linguistics, religion and Syriac, and enabled us to give back by offering awards to aid young scholars: the Gorgias Book Grant, Peras Gorgias, and Classical Islamic World Book Prize, all the while striving for diversity and inclusion in our publishing.

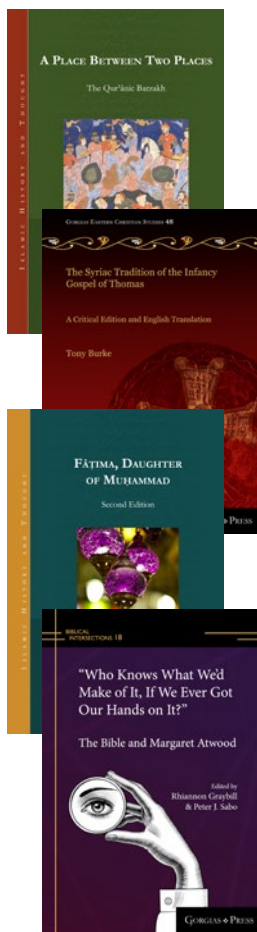
Over the years, Christine's Allergen stocks and her position as Rutgers faculty have infused Gorgias with the cash to survive. The Press made it 5, 10, 15, and now 20 years!

We're really proud of some of our recent and forthcoming projects, including: the provision of our titles as eBooks via our publisher partners at DeGruyter, our single volume New Testament Peshitta, our Author's Voice online lecture series with the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, and our new project with The King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (KFCRIS), which you can learn more about on the following pages.

Although Beth Mardutho is still waiting for a benefactor, the stability of Gorgias Press has allowed George and Christine to work on their own research and teaching. George is now a Senior Research Associate at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, and teaches Syriac at Princeton University. Christine is an Associate Professor, as well as the academic coordinator for the department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology at Rutgers University, New Brunswick. All this is possible because of the Gorgias Family, the excellent team that is really running Gorgias, and whose efforts have enabled the expansion of the Press.

We also couldn't have done any of this without the support of our authors, customers, and friends – so thank you to everyone who has been part of the Gorgias journey so far.

George and Christine Kiraz



George Archer, *A Place Between Two Places*. Winner of the 26th World Award for the Book of the Year of the Islamic Republic of Iran, honoring the best works on Islamic and Iranian Studies (2018)

Tony Burke, *The Syriac Tradition of the Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. Winner of the Frank W. Beare Award which recognizes an outstanding book in the areas of Christian Origins, Post-Biblical Judaism and/or Graeco-Roman Religion (2018)

Christopher Paul Clohessy, *Fátima, Daughter of Muhammad* and *Half of My Heart*. Both books led to Clohessy being named the Distinguished Scholar of Shia Studies in the Islamic Republic of Iran's 28th World Book Awards (2020).

Rhiannon Graybill and Peter J. Sabo (eds.), *Who Knows What We'd Make of It, If We Ever Got Our Hands on It? The Bible and Margaret Atwood*. Winners of the Atwood Society Award for Best Edited Collection (2020)

The Press has featured in two recent prestigious articles discussing vital contributions to scholarship: *Studia Syriaca*, cited multiple Gorgias titles as some of the greatest developments in Syriac Studies over the last two decades, and *The Book Authority's* list of the 94 Best Islamic History Books of All Time included three Gorgias titles.

It's perhaps no surprise then that we've picked up a few famous supporters on our journey. These include the Canadian author Margaret Atwood and the highly respected



Melonie, Tuomas, and Gemma - members of today's team at SBL 2019

Meet the Gorgias Team



LIBRARY OF ARABIC AND ISLAMIC HERITAGE

مكتبة التراث العربي والاسلامي

Gorgias Press and the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (KFCRIS) are collaborating on an important academic book project, the Library of Arabic and Islamic Heritage مكتبة التراث العربي والاسلامي. The first undertaking of this new partnership is the Classical Islamic Texts Series (CITS), which will house ten Arabic-English translations. Specifically, the series will make available the single-volume translations of renowned classical Arabic works, showcasing texts that are of central importance to the fields of Qur'anic studies, Islamic law, Ḥadīth, Theology, History, and Philosophy.

This is a unique project that moves beyond the traditional, yet valuable, translation model, by providing its readers with texts and formats that will cater to multiple levels of reader and use. The basic English-Arabic translation will be accompanied by in-depth studies and annotated notes. The text will be accessible to academics, traditional religious scholars, as teaching materials for students, or to be used by believers for personal devotion.



“We are delighted to be working in partnership with Gorgias Press to launch the Library of Islamic and Arabic Heritage, which is in line with our mission at KFCRIS to disseminate knowledge on Islamic history and culture, and to promote intercultural understanding.”

“Our partnership with Gorgias Press will help us build bridges between researchers, academics, and all those engaged in the study of classical texts from the Islamic era.”

– Mr Turki Alshuwaier, *Secretary General of KFCRIS*

“It gives us great pleasure to launch the Library of Islamic and Arabic Heritage in partnership with the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies. This is an exciting project and will help us to further our commitment to the field of Islamic studies and realise our core motto of ‘Publishing for the Sake of Knowledge.’”

“With the expertise and support of KFCRIS, these books will not only showcase a phenomenal range of texts, but also make them easily accessible to students and lecturers alike. I am certain that these books, once published, will enrich the field of Islamic studies. Now the hard work begins!”

– Dr George Kiraz, *Editor-in-Chief of Gorgias Press*



THE KING FAISAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND ISLAMIC STUDIES (KFCRIS)

The King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (KFCRIS) is an independent, non-governmental research and cultural institution based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Established by the King Faisal Foundation (KFF) in 1983 to preserve the legacy of the late King Faisal, the KFCRIS has continued King Faisal's mission of sharing knowledge and understanding between Saudi Arabia and the rest of the world. Conceived as a platform for original research and Islamic Studies, the KFCRIS brings together researchers, as well as international and Saudi research institutions, through a full program of conferences, workshops, lectures, and seminars, and publishes a wide range of scholarly works, periodicals, and books.

KFCRIS aims to expand the scope of existing literature and research so as to bring to the forefront of scholarly discussions the contributions and roles of Muslim societies in the humanities, the social sciences, literature, and the arts – historically, as well as today. At the heart of the KFCRIS is the King Faisal Library, which houses a rare collection of Islamic manuscripts, together with papers and artefacts relating to the life, times, and cultural legacy of King Faisal.

The primary focus of the KFCRIS is the production of original academic research including strategic studies, special reports, field research, and surveys. The knowledge bank of books and manuscripts, academic periodicals, artefacts, and publications on science, language, and culture at the Center are an invaluable resource for students and researchers. KFCRIS also holds many cooperative agreements and MoUs with leading research centers, universities, and think tanks from around the globe. KFCRIS has established itself as a valued publisher of academic and scholarly books (original titles, translations, and reprints) and periodicals in Saudi Arabia and the wider Arab world.

Underpinning all of its activities today, yesterday, and in the future is the aim of spreading the vision and legacy of the late King Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud: an overriding message of Islamic understanding and interfaith dialogue, which is as important today as it has ever been.

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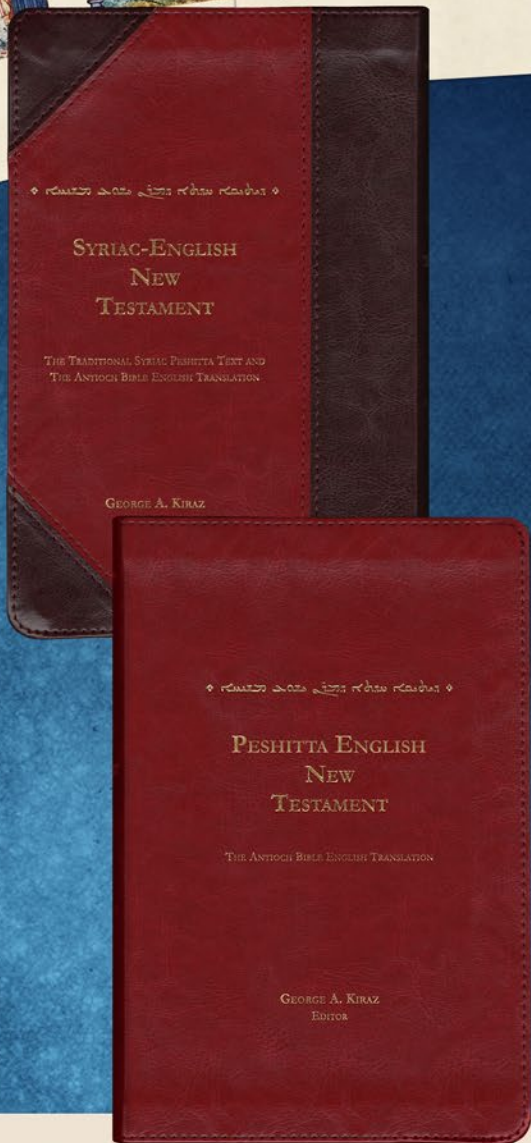
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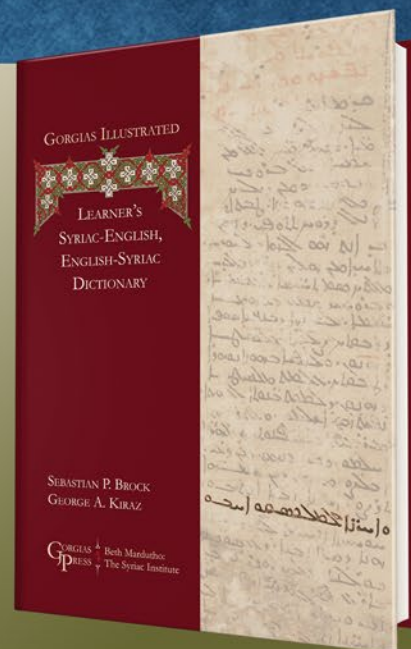


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ILLUMINATING VARIANT READINGS

Luke 6:35, Revised Standard Version:

But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, **expecting nothing in return.**

Most witnesses have, “love your enemies, do good to them, and lend expecting nothing in return” (μηδὲν ἀπελπίζοντες). However, a very few (e.g. W Ξ sys) have a text that supplies a personal object for the verb (μηδένα), thereby requiring a different meaning for the verb, “to disappoint,” or more literally, “to cut off one’s hope.” The Peshitta and the Sinaitic manuscript of the Old Syriac clearly share this distinctive text.

Daniel 11:16, Revised Standard Version:

But he who comes against him shall take the actions he pleases, and no one shall withstand him. He shall take a position in **the beautiful land**, and all of it shall be in his power.

Luke 6:35, Syriac Peshitta:

But love your enemies, do good to them, lend to them, **and do not cut off any person’s hope.**

Daniel 11:16, Syriac Peshitta:

The one who comes against him will do whatever he pleases, and none will stand before him. He will arise in **the land of Israel**, and it will be delivered into his hands.

Where is “the beautiful land?” The apocalyptic prophecy of Daniel 11 is ambiguous in the original Hebrew, but the Syriac version of the text provides a clear answer.



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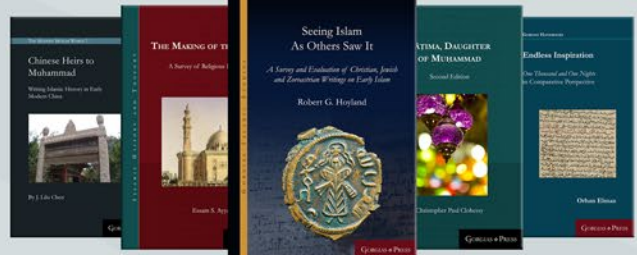
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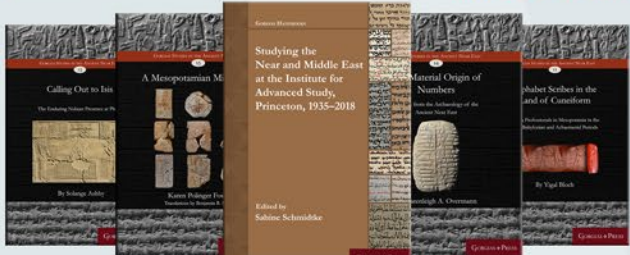
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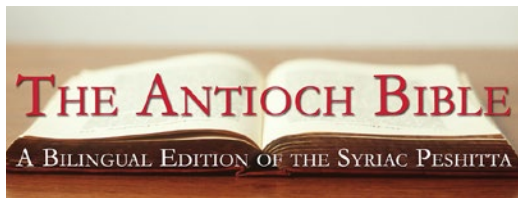


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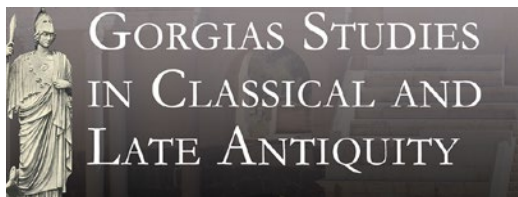
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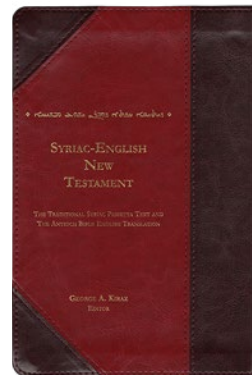
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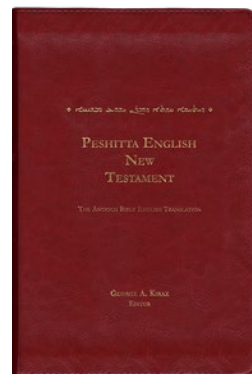
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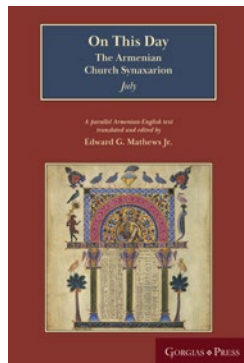
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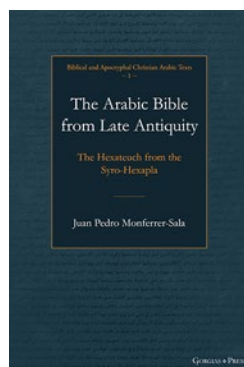
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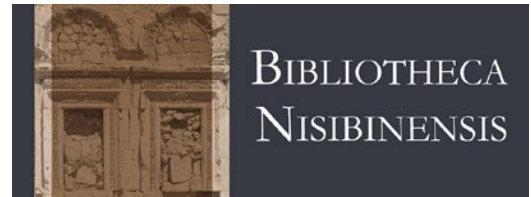


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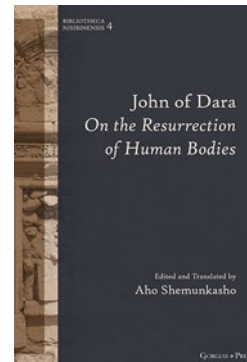
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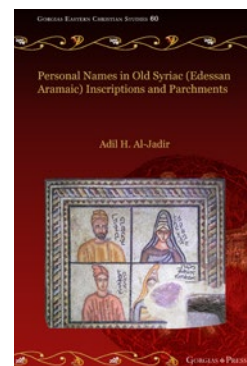
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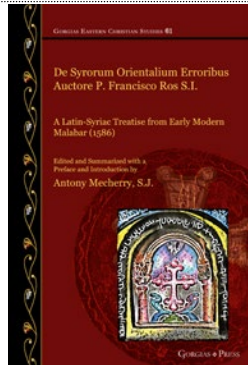
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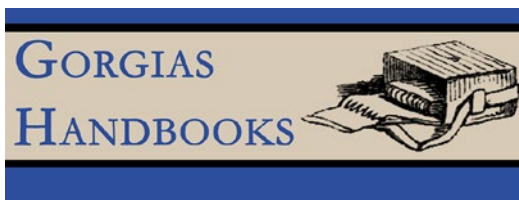
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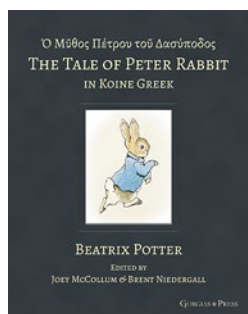
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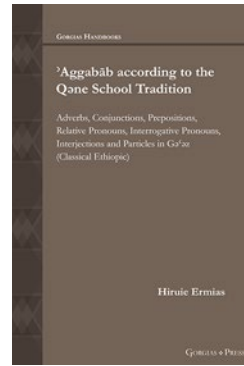


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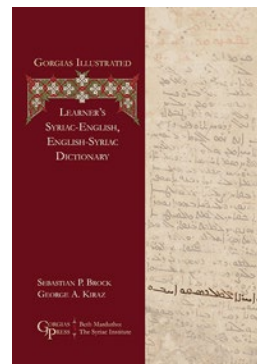


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By Sebastian P. Brock

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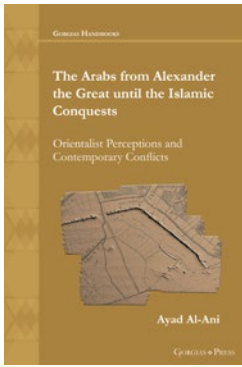


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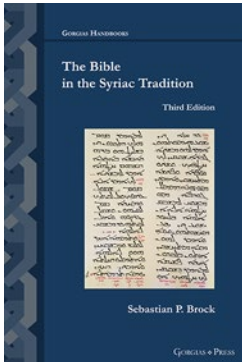


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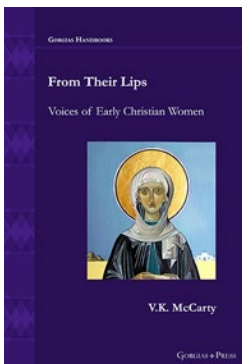


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By Sebastian P. Brock

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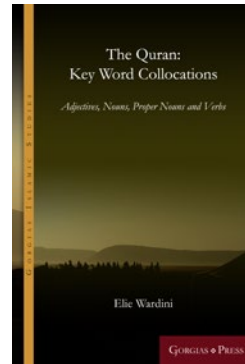
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