

syriac
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A TRANSLATION
OF THE
FOUR GOSPELS
FROM THE
SYRIAC OF THE SINAITIC PALIMPSEST

BY

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"A CATALOGUE OF THE SYRIAC MSS. IN THE CONVENT OF ST. KATHARINE
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	ix
GOSPEL OF MATTHEW	1
GOSPEL OF MARK	59
GOSPEL OF LUKE	95
GOSPEL OF JOHN	165
APPENDIX I.	209
APPENDIX II.	231

*“Jesus said, Let not your heart be troubled ; believe in God,
and in me ye are believing.”—John xiv. 1.*

INTRODUCTION.

THE text of the lately-discovered Codex of Old Syriac Gospels is now before the public, and as a translation into English has not been appended to it, the time seems to have come when students of the Bible, who are not Syriac scholars, should be made acquainted with the contents and characteristics of this ancient document. We think that the cause of truth will be best served by placing a translation of the whole text before our readers, and not merely isolated passages, which are apt to be misconstrued when detached from their surroundings. And in order that they may be the better able to form an opinion as to the value of the text, we shall introduce it with—firstly, a short narrative of how the manuscript was discovered and transcribed; secondly, the relation which it is supposed to hold to other Syriac versions; thirdly, a description of the manuscript itself; and fourthly, what appears to us, at first sight, to be a few of its leading features.

I. HOW THE MANUSCRIPT WAS DISCOVERED AND TRANSCRIBED.

The convent of St. Katharine on Mount Sinai stands on the barren granite rocks of a narrow desert valley 4500 feet above the level of the Red Sea, and some 2800 feet below the summit of Jebel Mousa, on whose precipitous side it rests. A community of monks dwelt there from a very early period, keeping alive the traditions which cluster around the spot:

traditions of Moses watering sheep at the well of Jethro ; of the rock which gushed with water at the touch of his rod ; of the burning bush which flamed on a spot now covered by the apse of the convent church ; and of the cave, a thousand feet higher, where Elijah was fed by ravens, and where he heard the still small voice. Several other monasteries flourished in the rocky valleys of that wonderful block of pink granite mountains, of which the lower part is called Horeb, and the upper part Sinai ; and numberless are the caves of hermits, chiefly Egyptian, who in those early days burrowed like rabbits amongst the sandstone or limestone cliffs of the desert peninsula. The convent of St. Katharine was in the sixth century turned into a fortress by Justinian, who surrounded it with a massive wall ; and we may well imagine that as the smaller convents fell into decay, or were threatened by turbulent or fanatic Bedawin, not only their monks but their manuscripts were transferred to it as to a place of safety.

This may account for the wealth of literary treasures which have been accumulated within these ancient walls, where indeed there is little accommodation for their due keeping. The Greek MSS. catalogued by Gardhausen are about 1223 in number ; the Arabic MSS., according to the list published by my sister, Mrs. Gibson, number about 629 ; the Syriac MSS. 267 ; and the Iberian MSS. perhaps 100. Some of these are neatly arranged on book-shelves, but the greater part are stored in chests, and are therefore inaccessible to any traveller who cannot make his wants known to the monks, and inspire them with confidence in his own integrity.

Books which have lost their bindings are kept in large baskets, and from one of these probably Tischendorf extracted

in 1844 the famous *Codex Sinaiticus*, which, containing as it does a Greek text of nearly the whole Bible, has been of such inestimable value in textual revision. It has been a cause of irritation to the monks that they did not succeed in keeping this treasure in their possession. Partly to this, and partly to the fact that Western scholars are usually ignorant of modern Greek, we may attribute the fact that a chest containing ancient Syriac MSS. has lain there undisturbed for centuries. Professor Palmer saw its contents in 1868, and thus refers to them :

“Amongst a pile of patristic and other works of no great age or interest, are some curious old Syriac books, and *one or two palimpsests*. My hurried visit prevented me from examining these with any great care ; but they would no doubt well repay investigation.”—*The Desert of the Exodus*, Vol. I. p. 70.

The first real examination of these books was reserved for Mr. Rendel Harris, who in 1889, after a stay of fifteen days at the convent, contrived to disarm all prejudices, and to obtain access to these hidden treasures. How he then found the Syriac text of the *Apology* of Aristides has been told elsewhere, and I refer to it only because it awakened in both Mr. Harris' mind and in my own the conviction that there was something more in the convent, a conviction which induced me and my twin sister, Mrs. James Y. Gibson, to fulfil a long-cherished wish by visiting Sinai in February 1892.

Amongst the ancient volumes which were produced for our inspection by the late Hegoumenos and Librarian, Father Galakteon, was a thick volume, whose leaves had evidently been unturned for centuries, as they could be separated only by manipulation with the fingers ; and in the case of ff. 65, 66,

by the steam of a kettle. A single glance told me that the book was a palimpsest, and I soon ascertained that the upper writing was a very entertaining account of the lives of women saints, and that its date was, as I then read it, a thousand and nine years after Alexander, that is A.D. 697. After the word "nine" there is a small hole in the vellum, which, as Mr. Rendel Harris believes, occupies the place of the syllable corresponding to the "ty" of "ninety," and the date is thus probably A.D. 778.

I then examined the more ancient writing which lay beneath this. It is in two columns, one of which is always projected on to the margin, and it is written in the same Estrangelo character, but in a much smaller hand than the later writing which covers it. It was also slightly reddish in colour. As I glanced down the margin for over 280 pages, every word that I could decipher was from the Gospels; and so were the lines which at the top or bottom of several pages were free of the later writing. And few indeed were the pages which had not a distinct title, such as "Evangelium," "da Mathai," "da Marcus," or "da Luca." My sister could not at that time read a single letter of Syriac, although she has since acquired enough to give me very material help in the preparation of this volume. I however succeeded in impressing these facts on her mind, and obtained her assistance in photographing the whole of the volume, and I also made an index to it by copying the top lines of each page in the later writing.

Our photographs, though they were the work of novices in the art, were fairly successful; and after we had ourselves developed them, they were shewn to more than one Semitic

scholar. Most of our learned friends, however, had not sufficiently keen eyes, nor indeed sufficient time to read what we assured them was a copy of the Gospels written not later than the fifth century. At last they were shewn to Mr. F. C. Burkitt, and he took them to the late Professor Bensly, who was then engaged on a critical edition of the Curetonian Gospels, and to whom the Old Syriac text was therefore most familiar. The decipherment by him and by Mr. Burkitt of a page was sufficient to enable him to pronounce that we had discovered a text of the same type as the Curetonian. But as the whole of it could not be transcribed from my photographs, we at once organized a second expedition, which took place in the early part of 1893.

On this second expedition, Professor Bensly, Lecturer in Aramaic to the University of Cambridge, Mr. J. Rendel Harris, University Lecturer in Palæography, and Mr. F. C. Burkitt went for the purpose of transcribing the text of the Gospels directly from the manuscript, Mr. Burkitt having already copied some thirty pages from my photographs. Two of these gentlemen were accompanied by their wives, whilst my sister and I went in order to ensure their getting access to the volume, as well as to continue our researches.

The monks received us with great cordiality, especially Father Galakteon, who at once entrusted the palimpsest to my keeping. I had already divided my photographs amongst the three transcribers—the first 104 pages to Mr. Rendel Harris, pp. 105 to 200 to Mr. Burkitt, and pp. 201 to 284 to Professor Bensly. This division determined the arrangement of their work, which they accomplished in forty days. None of them could have published his results separately, the four

Gospels having been all interleaved with each other when the vellum was used for the Martyrology. Mr. Burkitt compared what he had already copied with the original, whilst I brought up a great deal of the faded writing by the application of a chemical re-agent—hydro-sulphide of ammonia—recommended to me by Mr. Scott, of the British Museum.

Our return home was saddened by the unexpected death of Professor Bensly. He had seemed to thrive on the hardships of the desert journey, but his health had long been precarious; and the careful nursing of his devoted wife could not ward off the attack of the insidious disease which carried him off only three days after his return to Cambridge.

As some of the pages which had fallen to his lot and to that of Mr. Burkitt were still undeciphered, I placed fresh photographs, representing these, at Mr. Burkitt's disposal after our return home, with the result that a good many *lacunae* in the text were filled up by him.

II. RELATION OF OUR CODEX TO OTHER SYRIAC VERSIONS.

Syriac, or more properly Christian Aramaic, was the first language into which the New Testament was translated: and as the Greek text itself was written by men who habitually thought in Syriac, the early versions in this tongue have a closer affinity with the original text than those of any other can possibly have, not excepting the old Latin. Aramaic was once popularly supposed to be a corrupt form of Hebrew; but that is a mistake. It is a language quite as regularly formed, and with a grammar quite as distinct, as either Hebrew or Arabic. Almost our first record of its use is from

the lips of Laban. In Gen. xxxi. 47 we read that when Laban and Jacob set up a heap of stones as a witness of the covenant between them, Jacob called it, in good Hebrew, Galeed ; and Laban, in equally good Aramaic, Jegar-sahadutha. We therefore conclude that Aramaic was the vernacular of Mesopotamia, the cradle of Abraham's family.

That it was also the vernacular of Palestine in our Lord's time, the language spoken by Him and in which He addressed the multitude, there can be no doubt. Not only the proper names of persons and the names of places which occur in the Four Gospels tell us this, but various Aramaic phrases embodied in the Greek text, such as "Epphatha," "Talitha cumi," and the last despairing cry of our Lord on the cross, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," are not translated in this Old Syriac version, for the good reason that they are part of the text itself.

There are also other indications. Semitic peoples delight in puns, and in assonances or jingles of words. We need not go far to prove this. The Quran derives much of its supposed sanctity from this cause alone. Babylonian royal decrees and Arabic law documents are all enlivened by it. And in the Syriac version of our Lord's discourses it seems as if one word had sometimes suggested another. For instance, John viii. 34 : "He who committeth sin is the slave of sin." Here the word for "commit" and the word for "slave" are both regular forms of the triliteral verb *'bad*. There is a similar play on the same word in Luke vii. 8, "I say to my slave, do this, and he doeth it."

Another, which has been detected by my sister, Matt. x. 30 : "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." The

word for "hairs" is *mene*, and the word for "number" is *mna*, both probably from the same root.

Also Matt. xxvii. 6, *dmaya ennōn da dīmā*—"the price of blood."

In Matthew x. 13 we have, "And when ye come into an house give peace to it [that is, salute it], and if the house be worthy, your peace shall rest upon it, and if not, your peace shall return unto you." In the Greek text *ἀσπάσασθε* ("salute") has no verbal relation to *εἰρήνη* ("peace"). We therefore conclude that our Lord gave this direction in a Semitic tongue, and used either the Hebrew *shalum* or the Syriac *shulma*.

The alliteration *memuth tamōth* of Mark vii. 10 can be reproduced in an English idiom, "die the death," though it is absent from the Greek.

In John xii. 32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me," the word "lifted up" has the secondary sense of "be crucified."

In John xx. 10 there is in the Greek text an expression, *ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς . . . πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς*, which is not classical, and may perhaps be a translation of the Syriac *ezal lahūn*.

And in John xx. 19 the curious grammar of *τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων* is at once explained by the Syriac *had beshaba*. These last two examples may have sprung from the Evangelist's thoughts being habitually in Syriac.

St. Paul must have been thinking in Aramaic when he wrote to the Romans (xiii. 8): *wa lenash medem la tehubun, ella had lehad lemuhābbu*—"Owe no man anything, but to love one another." Here the word *hāb* ("owe") is not the same as *habb* ("love"), but the sound is very similar: as in the case of

dmaya and *dmā*. Our Lord himself may also have made a play on the same words in the story of the two debtors, as recorded in Luke vii. 41, 42. And in the Palestinian Syriac, the words addressed by the risen Saviour to Mary Magdalene are so rhythmical, that we feel as if they must be the very accents which fell from His lips: *Attatha, ma at bakia, leman at bu'ia*—"Woman, why weepest thou, whom seekest thou?"

The Aramaic Christians adopted the name of Syrians, bestowed on them by the Greeks, because they, the Aramaia, did not wish to be confounded with Armaia (the heathen), and the country of Aram was henceforth known as Syria.

The first specimen of literature they possessed was probably a translation of the Old Testament, which was read in their synagogues. The next was a version of the New Testament (if we may not count the original of Matthew's Gospel), and after that, translations of the early Fathers, and of the works of Greek philosophers. Some of these have come down to us in a Syriac dress only. Syriac literature can shew no work of original genius, and it is prized chiefly for the light which it throws upon the history of the New Testament.

One of its most valuable products was the *Diatessaron*, or Harmony of the Four Gospels, composed by a Syrian named Tatian, in the second century. Whether he made use of a Syriac or of a Greek text is not yet ascertained. But this Harmony was so highly valued, that for three centuries it supplanted every other book in the worship of the Syrian churches. At some period between A.D. 411 and A.D. 435 Bishop Rabbula, of Edessa, promulgated an edict that it must be replaced by the Separate Gospels. From that time copies of Tatian's work began to disappear, and its text is known

to us only from quotations in an Armenian version of Mar Ephraim's *Commentary*, and in an Arabic translation, of which two copies exist in the Vatican Library. These have been edited by Ciasca.

The Pēshittā, or "simple" version, which seems to have replaced the *Diatessaron*, is one which underwent successive revisions in order to bring it into harmony with the Greek codices ; and it is, in fact, the Syrian Vulgate.

Quotations in some of the Fathers had suggested to Griesbach, Hug, and others, the existence of a version older than the Peshitta before the happy discovery by Canon Cureton in 1842 of the British Museum MS., which is now numbered Add. 14,451. This was one of a number of MSS. which had been brought to the Museum from the convent of St. Mary Deipara, in the Nitrian Desert, Egypt, by Archdeacon Tattam. It is written in a clear, distinct hand, only one leaf being palimpsest; and it did not therefore present the same difficulties to a transcriber which our Sinai codex did. But it has been seriously mutilated, and the sum of its contents is as follows :

Matthew i. 1—viii. 22 ; x. 32—xxiii. 25 ;

Mark xvi. 17—20 ;

John i. 1—42 ; iii. 5—viii. 19 ; xiv. 10—12 ; 15—19 ;
21—23 ; 26—29 ;

Luke ii. 48—iii. 16 ; vii. 33—xvi. 12 ; xvii. 1—xxiv. 44.

and from some of these verses a few words are missing.

Other Syriac versions are :

The Philoxenian, made by Philoxenus, bishop of Mabbōgh, about A.D. 508. (A revision of this, made by Thomas of Harkel a century later, is called the Harklensian.)

The Palestinian Syriac version, whose origin is attributed by Noldeke to the fourth or fifth century, and which is now extant only in the form of a Lectionary. Till our visit to Sinai in 1892, only one copy of this was known to exist, that in the Vatican Library, which has been edited by Count Erizzo-Miniscalchi and by Paul de Lagarde. Its date is about A.D. 1029. The copy discovered by me at Sinai in 1892 is dated A.D. 1104, and that which Mr. Rendel Harris found in 1893 A.D. 1118. The translation is from a Greek manuscript quite independent of any that are now extant; yet it agrees in the main with the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus. A fresh edition is in course of preparation.

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE MANUSCRIPT.

The manuscript is numbered 30 in the convent library, and is a complete book so far as the later writing is concerned. Its material is a strong vellum, the outer pages only being disposed to crumble. Here we find in sober fact what happened only metaphorically in the middle ages—the Word of God completely obscured by the legends of the saints. John the Recluse, of Beth-Mari, Kaddish, being in want of vellum, pulled to pieces a copy of the Old Syriac Gospels, and wrote above them his Select Narratives of Holy Women, viz.: Thecla, Eugenia, Pelagia, Mary or Marinus, Euphrosyne, Onesima, Drusis, Barbara, Mary, Irene, Euphemia, Sophia, Theodosia, Theodota, a short Creed, Susanna, Cyprian and Justa, and some verses of a metrical Homily of Mar Ephraim, about Paradise.

The text of the Gospels underlies about 284 pages on 142 leaves of this Martyrology. But it did not suffice for the

wants of John the Recluse. To obtain a further supply of vellum for his stories he made use of four leaves from a fourth-century Greek MS. of the Gospels ; many leaves from a volume of Syriac Apocrypha containing the Acts of Thomas and the Repose of Mary, and more leaves from another Greek MS. which has not yet been identified.

The stories in the Martyrology are of a very racy character, and throw a curious light on the monastic life at its prime. They have apparently been well read, perhaps by generations of Sinai monks, if we may judge from the thumb-stained margins. Iberian monks have certainly at one period handled the volume, for they have re-numbered its quires in their own tongue. To complete our description of this interesting volume we must state that Mr. Rendel Harris detected the existence of a still more ancient writing beneath that of the Gospels, in this the very oldest specimen of a palimpsest which has as yet come to light.

IV. A FEW OF ITS LEADING CHARACTERISTICS.

Of the titles to the four Gospels two only have been deciphered,—those to Luke and John, with the colophons to Mark, Luke, and John. The spaces between the end of one Gospel and beginning of another were pronounced to be blank, but at Mr. Harris' suggestion I applied my re-agent to them, and they came up in a rich reddish-brown colour. One result of this is that we have their title at the very end. It reads thus :

“Here endeth the Gospel of the *Mēpharrēshē* four books :
Glory to God and to his Christ, and to his Holy Spirit.
Let every one who reads, and hears, and keeps, and does,

pray for the sinner who wrote it. May God in his tender mercy forgive him his sins in both worlds. Amen and Amen."

The epithet "*mēpharrēshē*" is applied to the Gospels both in Cureton's MS. and in the Sinai one. In our text it bears unmistakeably the two dots which denote the plural. It is therefore a term to be applied to all the four Gospels, just as *εὐαγγέλιον* in the colophon of our text means "Gospel" generally in the old patristic sense. The question now is, What meaning are we to attach to it?

Cureton applied to Bernstein, who suggested "*Evangelium per anni circulum dispositum*," a copy of the Gospels divided into lections, or portions appointed to be read throughout the year, and referred to Assemani's *Bibliotheca Orient. Clemen. Vat.*, vol. II. p. 230. Cureton made the obvious objection that there are no indications whatever of such lections in the MS. written at the same period as its title. His judgment is confirmed by the fact that there are also none in our MS.

Another explanation is that *mēpharrēshē* means "separate," as distinct from "mixed" *mēhallētē*. In favour of this it has been urged that the canons of Bishop Rabbula of Edessa (A.D. 412—435) ordain that in all churches a gospel of the separated *Evangelion da Mēpharrēshē* should be kept and read, obviously that it might supplement the *Diatessarōn* of Tatian, which seems to have been in general use before that period. This is a very strong point.

The difficulty is (1) that the term *mēpharrēshē* runs through the whole of Syriac literature, and is applied to the Pēshittā, probably by inheritance, as well as to the Curetonian; (2) that it is applied to the Psalms as well as to the Gospels.

In Dr. Wright's catalogue of the Syriac MSS. in the British Museum, we find that No. CLXVIII. contains the Psalms according to the Peshitta version, with the title, *katba : da-tashbüchte : da-david : da-měpharrěshē*.

In a note to this, Dr. Wright says : "The word *da-měpharrěshē* seems here really to mean 'of the interpreters, or of the translators.' The strange thing is that such titles should be prefixed to the ordinary Peshittā version, and that, too, in a MS. dated A.D. 600."

The meaning "of the interpreters or translators" is corroborated by the title to No. CLXIX. (A.D. 14, 436), to which Dr. Wright draws attention. It runs :

"By the power of the Lord Jesus we begin to write (the Psalms) of David, of the *mepharreshe*, which we bring out of the Palestinian tongue to the Hebrew, and from the Hebrew to the Greek, and from the Greek to the Syriac."

It is generally allowed that the word כּרש sometimes means "to transcribe" in Hebrew. Here are two cases in which it apparently means the same in Syriac; and in a Targum on Isaiah viii. 1, the epithet מפרש is applied to writing in the sense of "clear," "distinct." We must therefore leave the question to further discussion on the part of critics. There is, however, not much hope of their judgment being final until we have the Syriac text of the *Diatessarōn* in our hands. Then the great problem may be solved. Was the *Diatessarōn* compiled in the second century from the version contained in the Curetonian and in the Sinai codices? or did that version come into existence only in the fourth century, when the use of the *Diatessarōn* was discontinued?

Let us now see what our Codex says about the Gospel of Matthew. In chap. i. v. 8 the name of Joram is followed immediately

by that of Uzziah; and the three kings, Ahazia, Joash, and Amuzia, who came betwixt them in Cureton's MS., are absent.

In *v.* 16 we come to the most startling variation in our Codex. Although none of the surviving Syriac students, except the transcriber, who were present at Sinai in 1893, knew of this strange reading until months after our return home, and although Professor Bensly has not appended his initials to the foot of the page, we shall not venture to doubt the accuracy of the transcription, which, however, rests upon the evidence of one pair of eyes only. We ask our readers to consider carefully the whole passage, from *v.* 16 to the end of the chapter.

It is hardly possible to find a consistent narrative in this self-contradictory recital. Had *v.* 16 stood alone we might have suspected a clerical error, but the occurrence of the word *lek* ("to thee") in *v.* 21, and *leh* ("to him") in *v.* 25, with the omission of the words, *καὶ οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν αὐτήν, ἕως οὗ*, makes it almost certain that the statement in *v.* 16 is an intentional one. Our Codex stands alone in its peculiar readings of these three verses, and doubtless some critics will be inclined to set its authority against that of all the oldest Greek MSS. of all the versions, and of its own sister manuscript, the Curetonian. If so, we hope they will be consistent, and make its text the touch-stone of accuracy everywhere else, not forgetting its reading of *v.* 18, "when they had not come near one to another, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost."

In the meantime, there are some considerations bearing on this subject which we shall do well to keep in mind.

We have in Matthew's narrative, and in Luke's, two genealogies, both of Joseph only. Possibly the one was on the father's

side, the other on the mother's side, and both are probably copied from an official register, the last clause of which was perhaps added at the time of the Presentation in the Temple, and was modified by the Evangelist when he became fully acquainted with the story of Mary. It is possible that we have here a partly modified form; but even here Mary is called the Virgin—a title which no one unacquainted with the miraculous birth of her first-born would naturally have given her.

The fact that Joseph was troubled about Mary's condition is simply inexplicable if he were the father of Jesus. And it is difficult to reconcile the idea of his being a just man with that of his wishing to put her away. These circumstances the scribe of our Codex, if he were a heretic, has not been bold enough to suppress.

We have no genealogy of Mary. This is only natural. Our Lord's social position and civil rights were determined by the relation in which He stood to one who was both His reputed father and his foster-father. His disciples were eager that He should claim the throne of David and drive out the Romans, and they therefore laid great stress upon Joseph's ancestry. Even after our Lord's Ascension, as they were disappointed in their expectation that His second coming would take place in their own life-time, they took care that there should be a permanent record of this. We can easily imagine that Mary would make known her wonderful secret to a few only, and that it was not at once published abroad to a nation who would have received it with scornful incredulity. But from the few it was doubtless communicated to many of the disciples, and we can hardly believe

that they did not investigate the truth of a statement which most of them sealed with suffering and with death. The seclusion in which Eastern women are kept, not indeed in their houses, but from social intercourse with all members of the other sex who are not of kin to them, and their own gregarious habits, make it highly improbable that Mary could be guilty of a lapse from virtue without the knowledge of some female companion. St. Luke states, chap. i. v. 3, that he had investigated all these things from the beginning, and it is much to be regretted that Luke i. v. 35 occurs on a lost page of our manuscript.

Meanwhile, it is important to remember that we have not ascertained all the facts which may throw light upon the history of this Sinai Codex. In particular, we have not the initial title,—a title whose actual existence has been detected from my photographs by Mr. Rendel Harris. It is on the recto of the page which contains Matthew i. 1—17, and it may yet tell us both the name of the scribe, and the place where the MS. was written.

The various readings in this Codex afford much food for discussion. Those of our readers who are deeply interested in the subject will find many of these for themselves, but we shall point out some which appear to throw fresh light upon the sacred narrative, and some which in our humble opinion indicate an older form of the Old Syriac version than Cureton's manuscript.

In Matthew xix. 29, and in Mark x. 29, our Codex agrees with the judgment of the Revisers by omitting the word "wife" from those whom it is meritorious to leave for our Lord's sake. In Matthew xix. 29 the word "father" is also omitted.

In Matthew xx. 12 we have "the burden of the day in the heat," which seems a natural expression.

Matthew xxiii. 13 gives us a graphic picture of priestly pretensions. "Ye hold the key of the kingdom of heaven before men: for ye neither enter in yourselves, nor those that are coming do ye suffer them to enter."

Matthew xviii. 20 gives us a reading similar to that of Codex Bezae, "For there are not two or three gathered together in my name and I not amongst them." We could believe that the Syriac translator had confounded the Greek words *ou* and *ov*, were it not that he has given us a perfectly idiomatic expression.

In Matthew xxvi. 25, and in Mark xiv. 19, the question of the disciples, "Is it I, Lord?" is put in a somewhat stronger and more interesting form. It begins with a word which in Syriac corresponds partly to the Latin *ne . . . forte*, and to the Greek *μήπως*. This suggests that the question was a deprecatory one, and as it cannot be rendered in English, we have had recourse to the idiom which would probably rise to the lips of one of our own countrymen in a similar case, "Not I, surely, Lord?"

In Matthew xxvii. 56 the companion of Mary Magdalene is called Mary the daughter of James and mother of Joseph. This is repeated in Mark xv. 40. Mary is called the daughter of James also in the two Palestinian Syriac Lectionaries which were found by Mr. Rendel Harris and myself in the Sinai Convent. It is difficult to trace her family connections, but amongst other suggestions one of Mrs. Gibson's may be noted, that perhaps we may link her with the genealogy in Matthew, and that possibly she was the mother-in-law of the Virgin Mary.

If so, she very naturally appears both near the cross and at the sepulchre (see Matthew i. 15, 16).

In Mark x. 50 we are told that blind Timai, son of Timai, put on his garment before he rose and came to Jesus. This, to anyone who has watched Eastern habits, seems a more natural action than if he had cast it away.

The most remarkable feature in our text of Mark is the omission of twelve verses, chap. xvi. 9—20. This occurs in other ancient codices, notably in both the Sinaiticus and the Vaticanus. But in these it is open to question if their absence is not due to cancelling by a later hand. In ours there can be no doubt that they never existed. This is made abundantly clear by the frontispiece to this volume, which represents the page on which St. Mark ends and St. Luke begins. The space betwixt the two is on the left hand column, that is the second column, on the page, for our readers must remember that Syriac is read from right to left; the intervening space is filled up by the words written with red ink, "Here endeth the Gospel of Mark." Then comes a line of ornamental dots, and then, "The Gospel of Luke," also in red.

The subject is too perplexing to enter on here, but it is worthy of remark, that in the Greek codices where these twelve verses do occur, the word *τελος* ("end") is always found after verse 8 and also after verse 20. What is very strange is that these verses must exist in Cureton's manuscript, for all that is there preserved to us of Mark's Gospel is xvi. 17, 18, 19, 20. The testimony of the Old Syriac version to their being part of the sacred record is therefore equivocal. We may hope that fresh light will be thrown on this subject through the investigations which have been prompted by

Mr. F. C. Conybeare's remarkable discovery of the signature, *Ariston Erizou* ("Ariston the Presbyter's") to the last twelve verses of Mark xvi. in an Armenian MS. of the tenth century. Our readers will find this interesting subject fully discussed in the *Expositor* for September 1894.

In Luke i. 63, 64 we have the statement, "and they marvelled all" transferred to its natural place, so that it becomes an effect produced by the string of Zacharias' tongue being suddenly loosened, and not simply by his writing the name of John.

In Luke iv. 17 a beautifully characteristic touch is restored to the narrative of our Lord's conduct in the synagogue of Nazareth. Before He stood up to read, He waited modestly until the book of Isaiah the prophet was put into His hand.

In Luke x. 41 our Lord's praise of Mary is accompanied by no reproach to Martha.

In Luke xv. 30 we seem to hear the angry tone of the elder brother as he says, "Thou hast killed for him that fattened calf."

In Luke xvi. 20 we learn that Lazarus was a poor man, but possibly not a beggar.

In Luke xxii. we have a fresh arrangement of the narrative from v. 17 to v. 21.

In Luke xxiii. 37 we are told that the crown of thorns was placed on our Lord's head whilst He was suspended on the cross.

In Luke xxiv. 47 we have the distinct assertion from His own lips of His divinity, and of His being the Messiah, "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in my name."

In John iv. 36 we are told that the reaper straightway receiveth wages. This, we may safely affirm, agrees with the experience of every earnest worker in the Lord's harvest-field.

In John vi. 59, "These things said he in the synagogue as he taught in Capernaum," becomes "These things said he in Capernaum, in the synagogue, as he taught." This reading would lead us to suspect that our English version of the Gospels shew a misunderstanding of the Greek text—*ταῦτα εἶπεν ἐν συναγωγῇ διδύσκων ἐν Καπερναούμ*. Here *διδύσκων* probably refers rather to *συναγωγῇ* which precedes it, than to *ἐν Καπερναούμ* which follows.

In John vii. 48 we read, "For who of the chief men or of the Pharisees has believed on him? only this mob, which knoweth not the law."

In John viii. 57 the question, "And hath Abraham seen thee?" follows more naturally on our Lord's previous statement, than the usual reading, "And hast thou seen Abraham?"

In John ix. 35 we observe that our Lord calls Himself Son of man instead of Son of God. All passages in this Codex bearing on the assertion of His divinity must have a special interest, and we therefore note in connection with it the question of the demons in Luke viii. 28, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God Most High?"

If this assertion is weakened by the statement in our Lord's prayer, as recorded in John xvii. 5, "And now also give me the glory, my Father, from beside thyself, from that which thou gavest me when the world was not yet," instead of "The glory that I had with thee before the world was," we notice that this is only in agreement with the words of *v. 24*. The assertion of His divinity is as clear and strong as ever in

John xx. 31. And we perceive from John xvii. 5, 6, that some part of this glory at least, is "the men which thou gavest me out of the world."

In John xi. 38 we are told that the grave of Lazarus was an artificial one, hewn out of the rock, like a cave. We can see a vivid picture also of how Martha was startled, when she saw the bystanders obeying our Lord's command, from her exclamation, "Lord, why are they taking away the stone?"

From John xii. 3 we learn that Mary began her loving ministrations to our Lord by pouring the ointment first on His head.

In John xiii. 34 a change in the punctuation shews us that our Lord said, "And now a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

In John xiii. 37 a similar change shews us that Peter said, "I will lay down my life now for thy sake."

In John xvii. 11 we have an addition to one of our Lord's prayers for His people, "O my holy Father, take, keep them in thy name."

The effect of the transposition of the narrative in John xviii. is to shew that Caiaphas, not Annas, was the high priest who questioned our Lord, and to make the story of Peter's denial an unbroken narrative. It seems as if we had now the episode in something like its original form.

In John xx. 8 Peter shares with John the credit of having been first to see and believe in our Lord's resurrection.

The interpolations in our Codex are not numerous. That which will attract most attention is already known from Codex Bezae in Luke xxiii. 48, "Woe unto us, what hath befallen us? woe unto us, for our sins!"

Another occurs in John xx. 16. Here we are told that Mary Magdalene, when she recognised our Lord by the sound of her own name, "ran towards him, that she might touch him."

In John vi. 63 we are told that it is the Spirit that quickeneth the body; and in John iii. 6 that God is a living Spirit.

Some of these readings, as we have already said, indicate a greater antiquity for the Sinai manuscript than for Cureton's. But on the other hand, there are a few expressions which may point to a later origin.

The chief of these is, as it seems to us, the persistent use of the title, Our Lord, instead of the name Jesus throughout the narrative of all the Evangelists. Also the pleonastic phrase, "He was troubled in his soul, and was disturbed in his spirit," of John xi. 33. This is somewhat puzzling, as one characteristic of our MS., as compared with other early texts, is its conciseness. I believe that the transcribers are willing to assign it to the beginning of the fifth century, that is to an earlier period than Cureton's, or any other Syriac MS. in the British Museum. Their opinion is founded partly upon its orthography. The *facsimiles* of several pages which are now before the world, will enable other scholars to form an independent judgment. We observe from the final colophon, that the MS. must have been written at a period when prayer for departed saints had become a recognised custom.

The Curetonian Gospels have been of inestimable value in the work of New Testament revision. It is a matter of congratulation that the Sinai manuscript, discovered fifty years later, makes the text of the Old Syriac version nearly complete.

Yet the two do not perfectly coincide, as any one who will place this translation beside Cureton's may easily ascertain. Dr. Nestle, of Ulm, and Mr. Rendel Harris have both expressed the opinion that it represents, not a duplicate of the Curetonian, but the very first attempt at rendering the Gospel into Syriac, of which Tatian and the Curetonian are both revisions.

We have endeavoured, by means of the marginal notes, to indicate those variations from our English Authorised Version, which have their equivalents either in the Revised Version, as substantially representing the testimony of the most ancient Greek manuscripts, in Cureton's MS., or in Codex Bezae as the chief representative of the Old Latin.

We have referred to other manuscripts only in the case of remarkable variants, which are justified by none of these three texts. Beyond all these, a number of readings will be observed for which our Codex alone is responsible. And we have added, in an Appendix, a list of Greek words and phrases from the *Textus Receptus* for which the Syriac of our manuscript presents no equivalent.

We would point those of our readers to whom the subject of "various readings" in the text of a divinely inspired book may be new or startling, to the weighty and well-considered statement of the late Dr. Hort, in his *Introduction to the Text of the New Testament in the Original Greek*, the joint work of himself and Dr. Westcott :

"With regard to the great bulk of the words of the New Testament, as of most other ancient writings, there is no variation or other ground of doubt, and therefore no room for textual criticism ; and here therefore an editor is merely a

transcriber. The same may be said with substantial truth respecting those various readings which have never been received, and in all probability never will be received, into any printed text. The proportion of words virtually accepted on all hands as raised above doubt is very great, not less, on a rough computation, than seven-eighths of the whole. The remaining eighth, therefore, formed in great part by changes of order and other comparative trivialities, constitutes the whole area of criticism. If the principles followed in the present edition are sound, this area may be very greatly reduced. Recognising to the full the duty of abstinence from peremptory decision in cases where the evidence leaves the judgment in suspense between two or more readings, we find that, setting aside differences of orthography, the words in our opinion still subject to doubt only make up one sixtieth of the whole New Testament. In this second estimate the proportion of comparatively trivial variations is beyond measure larger than in the former; so that the amount of what can in any sense be called substantial variation is but a small fraction of the whole residuary variation, and can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text."

Our study of this ancient Syriac version has convinced us that it is not the work of an heretic, and that its peculiar reading of Matthew i. 16 must be explained by some other hypothesis. No man, who entertained the slightest doubt of our Lord's Divinity, would have left John xiv. 1 in its present very interesting form. And Luke surely gives us a strong confirmation of the view that both genealogies are modified copies of an official register, when he prefaces his own account with "Jesus . . . as he was called, the son of Joseph." We would entreat our readers not to decide this matter from the consideration of a single passage, but from that of the text as a whole.

In conclusion, I have to thank my sister, Mrs. James Y. Gibson, for her careful revision of my proof-sheets; Mr. J. Rendel Harris for several valuable suggestions; and Dr. Eberhard Nestle, of Ulm, for the solution of some important idiomatic difficulties, also for the marginal references to Luke i. 3, xi. 54, xvi. 25; John viii. 47, xi. 18, and for the changes of punctuation in John xiv. 1, 2, xvii. 24, 25.

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