

- [6] Because Davis has produced such a rich study of the Thecla cult in two distinct regions, the book begs for more. Evidence for devotion to Thecla in Syriac tradition, for example, if less extensive archaeologically than what remains in Egypt, is no less significant in the issues it raises (see the article in the present issue of *Hugoye* by Burris and Van Rompay). Moreover, one would like to see how Davis' model might be addressed to the cults of other saints. Such explorations lie beyond the scope of this book, but not beyond the scope of its readers! Davis has done a great service with this study. May others respond in kind.

Susan A. Harvey, Brown University

E. JAN WILSON

The Old Syriac Gospels: Studies and Comparative Translations

with Syriac Transcriptions by George A. Kiraz

Eastern Christian Studies: 1-2

Louaize, Lebanon: Notre Dame University & Piscataway, NJ:

Gorgias Press, 2002

Pp. lxxv + 850

ISBN 1-931956-17-0 (Volume 1, Hardback),

ISBN 1-931956-18-9 (Volume 2, Hardback).

- [1] These volumes are the first in a new series for which we can have high expectations and Gorgias Press is to be congratulated on the high quality of physical production of these books. They contain the fine text of the Old Syriac produced by George Kiraz and it is to be hoped that this publication will encourage further study of these important documents. To the texts supplied by Kiraz, the author has added fifty three pages of Introduction and Notes, a translation, and a number of footnotes.
- [2] It is argued in the Introduction and Notes at the beginning of the first volume, that the Old Syriac Gospels were not translated from our current Greek Gospels, but are original productions in Aramaic. The chief support for this is sought in the wording of Old Testament quotations found in the Old Syriac Gospels, which the author gives the impression of listing completely, though a number of important quotations are not considered (Matthew 3.3, 9.13, Mark 1.2–3, 4.12). The author argues that similarities between the Old Syriac and the Masoretic Text must indicate direct dependence

of the Old Syriac on the Masoretic Text. However, Wilson fails to consider the possibility that Old Syriac quotations have been influenced by the Old Testament Peshitta. He does not consider this because 'The OT of P[eshitta] was clearly written later' (p. xxxix). But this appeal to the self-evident runs counter to the overwhelming weight of published scholarship on the issue and the author offers no justification for his claim. Since his premise is baseless none of his conclusions need follow.

[3] Unfortunately, Wilson has introduced some errors to the Syriac text he received from Kiraz. For instance Luke 15.13 Curetonianus is missing the last word. I casually noted further in the Syriac texts of Matthew 3.10, 19.25, 21.31, 25.22, and Luke 15.13, though I made no systematic attempt to check his text.

[4] The translation contains a number of different types of errors.

(a) A large number of mistakes result simply from misreading Syriac letters. The following sample is merely illustrative. In Matthew 3.7 ܪܒܝܐ is mistranslated as 'Perdition' (i.e. reading ܪܒܝܐ); in Matthew 9.15 ܐܬܝܕ is mistranslated as 'eating' (i.e. reading ܐܬܝܕ); in Luke 1.49 ܡܚܒܐ is mistranslated as 'capable' (i.e. reading ܡܚܒܐ). In both Luke 4.27 and 17.16 the word ܪܒܝܐ 'leper' is taken to be ܪܒܝܐ 'man'. In Matthew 17.20 the translation 'because of the blindness of your faith' seems wrongly to connect the first word in ܡܠܚܬܐܢܐ ܕܝܐܢܐ 'your little faith' with the root ܝܠܐ 'blind'. In Matthew 14.30, 'take hold of me' seems to misunderstand ܡܠܚܬܐܢܐ as connected with the root ܡܠܚܬܐ. In Luke 14.32, 'letters' misreads ܐܬܝܕܐܢܐ 'ambassador' as ܐܬܝܕܐܢܐ. In John 18.25 ܥܡܝܐ 'keeping warm' is misread as the proper name 'Hannan'. Often, unfortunately, the author's failure to grasp the sense is not limited to mere misreading of individual words, but covers a whole construction. In Luke 3.3 (Sinaiticus) ܡܠܚܬܐܢܐ ܕܝܐܢܐ ܡܠܚܬܐܢܐ is translated 'and everywhere John went' instead of 'in all the region around the Jordan'. The author seems to have misread 'Jordan' as 'John' and construed the phrase to make sense round that supposition. In Luke 9.57 (Sinaiticus) ܕܝܐܢܐ ܕܝܐܢܐ ܕܝܐܢܐ ܕܝܐܢܐ ܕܝܐܢܐ ܕܝܐܢܐ should be understood as 'And when they were

nonsense (and) put it over his head' (Matthew 27.37 in Sinaiticus, though it is better translated in the parallel in Mark 15.26), 'if you had the faith of a grain of mustard' (Luke 17.6); 'Father, if you can, take this cup from me' (Luke 22.42 in Curetonianus, mistaking a feminine participle as referring to God); 'The Lord truly stood and appeared to Simon' (Luke 24.34, taking **ܡܕ** as 'stood' rather than 'arose', despite the surrounding resurrection context); 'But he was something that was' (John 1.3 in Curetonianus); 'but you seek to kill me because my word proceeds into you' (Jesus speaking in John 8.37 in Sinaiticus, a problem partly caused by the omission of a negative); 'I rejoice for your sakes that you may believe that I was not there' (John 11.15 in Sinaiticus).

- [8] (c) There are at least forty omissions, including Mark 6.56 where twelve words are left untranslated.
- [9] (d) The translation is quite irregular. Important details are ignored, and unimportant ones are made a centre of focus. Thus in Luke 19.13 and throughout the parable that follows, the word 'mina' is translated 'talent'. Meanwhile the author carefully distinguishes whether Sinaiticus or Curetonianus have **ܐܡܝܢ** 'now' or **ܐܘܪ** 'and' at the beginning of a verse (Luke 20.5).
- [10] (e) As well as the mistakes in translation there are also many typos, some of the more heinous sort: p. 'hermaneutics' (p. xvii), 'emporer' (p. xxi), 'the forth century' (p. xxiv), 'site' for 'cite' (p. lviii), 'council' for 'counsel' (p. 98), 'Hale, king of the Jews!' (p. 372). Some words are consistently misused: 'rather then' for 'rather than' (p. lx) and 'more then' for 'more than' (p. 552), 'it's' as a possessive (pp. 58 and 290), 'greated him' for 'greeted him' (p. 456, twice). Sometimes the author does not write in proper sentences, and commas are often used to join sentences. The author also misspells words in German, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac.
- [11] The footnotes do not fare much better than the translation. They are usually banal, and very often incorrect. For instance, on p. 330 a five line footnote considers the implications of the fact that whereas the Greek has a feminine, the Syriac 'is clearly masculin' [sic]. Yet it is feminine!
- [12] Despite the cataloguing of error necessary to make readers aware of the deficiencies of the work, the news is not all bad. The method used to produce these books means that print runs are

small and corrections can easily be introduced. Although the volumes would need an enormous amount of work to make the translations reliable, there is still a niche in the market for a good English translation of the Old Syriac Gospels. The author should therefore rise to the challenge of acquiring the proper knowledge of the language(s) and of meticulously revising these translations for a future edition.

P.J. Williams, Tyndale House

RESPONSE TO J.F. COAKLEY'S REVIEW OF JOHN JOSEPH

*The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East: Encounters with Western
Christian Missions, Archaeologists, and Colonial Powers*

(Studies in Christian Mission, 26)

Leiden: Brill, 2000

Pp. xii, + 292; 2 maps

ISBN 90 04 11641 9.

- [1] I would like to start with a critical observation made by Chip Coakley that especially puzzled me; let me quote his remarks: "With matters religious, ecclesiastical and missionary, Joseph is less comfortable. The reader who is told that 'after the Council of Ephesus, those who adhered to the teachings of Nestorius organized their own church' which was subsequently 'forced to move in the direction of Mesopotamia and Persia' (p. 41, a statement admittedly at variance with most of the rest of the chapter) will naturally be somewhat wary of the treatment of ecclesiastical matters later on in the book."
- [2] The citation above combines two of my sentences into one and omits a part of each sentence, creating some unintended but troublesome distortions. The omitted parts of my remarks are placed within brackets: "After the Council of Ephesus, those who adhered to the teachings of Nestorius organized their own church, [establishing themselves first in Edessa. They were driven out of there soon after the Council of Chalcedon], forced to move further east in the direction of Mesopotamia and Persia."
- [3] Since I could not see any discrepancy between the citation and "the rest of the chapter" and because Coakley did not explain the contradiction that was apparent to him, I reluctantly wrote and asked him to explain what was "at variance" between his citation and what followed, noting that I would comment on his