

---

Bas ter Haar Romeny, ed. *The Peshitta: Its Use in Literature and Liturgy. Papers Read at the Third Peshitta Symposium* (Monographs of the Peshitta Institute Leiden, 15; Leiden: Brill, 2006). Pp. xxiv + 412. Cloth, \$188.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-15658-6

**EDWARD G. MATHEWS, JR. ST. NERSESS ARMENIAN SEMINARY, NEW ROCHELLE, NY, 10804, USA**

The Leiden Peshitta Institute was founded nearly a half century ago. Its first members were primarily biblical scholars who set out to produce a critical text of the Syriac Old Testament “that would satisfy the needs of students of biblical exegesis and textual criticism.” This task is nearly completed but the Institute, now made up of primarily Syriac scholars, is also now realizing the importance of non-biblical texts for the history of Syriac biblical versions. This volume, the proceedings of a conference held in August 2001, contains twenty-four papers that are intended “to gain a fuller picture of the *textual history* of the Peshitta, . . . and to provide a *context* for this textual history.”

Three keynote addresses, from the top scholars in the respective areas, give a sweeping overview of the entire corpus of literature addressed in this volume. Brock discusses the biblical text as found in liturgical texts. The papers of Van Rompay and Petersen then address the issue of the reception of the Syriac Old Testament and New Testament, respectively. All three sound a strong warning that while these texts can be utilized in reconstructing the biblical text one must do so only with the greatest of caution, even with a text that is clearly a commentary on a biblical book.

Brock (pp. 3–25) opens the volume with a brief outline of five stages of liturgical lections that he has identified in biblical texts. He then examines three words and one phrase, prominent already in biblical texts and found in Eucharistic anaphoras. Brock demonstrates that while the anaphoras might actually preserve older—even so-called Diatessaronic—readings, they also betray an already sophisticated reflection on biblical themes and have thus altered or adopted vocabulary to make thematic connections more explicit. This phenomenon is also found by Shemunkasho (pp. 351–363) in his study of the Syrian Orthodox Breviary, and by Varghese (pp. 379–389) who demonstrates that biblical readings in

the Anaphora of St. James still reflect an underlying Greek text not the Peshitta; later Syriac Anaphoras reflect the Peshitta more closely, but also reveal significant theological reworking.

Surveying the New Testament materials, Petersen (pp. 53–74) argues vigorously for biblical scholars not to neglect the Syriac version of the New Testament, which often preserves older readings no longer available in extant Greek manuscripts. He then also cautions researchers about the differences between the Syriac OT and NT: OT was translated from its sister tongue, Hebrew, whereas NT was translated from Greek; the text and canon of the Hebrew OT were more or less set by the time of translation, while NT was barely out of its developmental stage. Petersen further delineates three major problems in dealing with early Syriac exegesis and the unique way that Syriac commentators handled them.

Morrison (pp. 186–205) discovers that, contrary to Diatessaron scholars, of two NT citations in the Syriac *Acts of Judas Thomas* one reflects the *Vetus Syra*, the other possibly even a *Vetus Latina* tradition. Lange (pp. 159–175) uncovers two layers of *Commentary on the Diatessaron*, one of Ephrem who knew the *Vetus Syra* and another of his students/redactors who knew of an emerging Peshitta text and cited the *Vetus Syra* as “Greek.” Joosten (pp. 99–106) studies the OT citations found in the various Syriac NT versions and concludes that early translators generally followed the Peshitta, whereas later versions tended to correct the text to accord with the Greek.

But the bulk of this volume is taken up with the reception of Old Testament books. Van Rompay’s keynote address (pp. 27–51), illustrated by a comparison of Ephrem and Theodore of Mopsuestia, the two major commentators in Western and Eastern Syriac tradition, insists that one must first determine the general purpose, style and editorial technique of the commentary before any question of biblical text can be broached; even commentators edited the text for their own purposes. He also notes that the pervasive practice of citing Hebrew and Greek versions is “firmly rooted in the worldview of the Syrian Christians. By all sorts of references, commentators created awareness that the Peshitta had its place in the broader stream of the tradition of the biblical text.”

A number of papers address a single biblical book in a single author or work. Van Peursen (pp. 243–258) examines four citations of Sirach in the *Discourses* of Philoxenus and finds that all four reflect the Peshitta text. Ryan’s study of *The Commentary on the Psalms* by Dionysius Bar Salibi (pp. 327–338) and Hayman’s

examination of the biblical texts cited in Sergius the Stylite's *Disputation with a Jew* (pp. 77–86) both also demonstrate that their authors cited only from the Peshitta. Owens (pp. 223–241) too, though somewhat against the grain, finds that Aphrahat's citations from Proverbs reflect a majority Peshitta text, while van Rooy (pp. 311–325) concludes that the translator of Athanasius's *Commentary on the Psalms* used a text midway between the Peshitta and the Syro-Hexapla. Van der Kooij (pp. 123–129) investigates an exegetical gloss in Peshitta Dan 7 and discovers that Aphrahat may have been familiar with the work of Porphyry.

Others cast a slightly wider net. Koster (pp. 131–141) examines Aphrahat's use of the OT, predominantly typological, and sets out new guidelines of his use of typology. Lane (pp. 143–158), the volume's honoree, examines the use of Leviticus in several different literary genres, vehemently warning against including patristic citations in an edition of the Peshitta. Heal (pp. 87–98) demonstrates, from five dramatic dialogue poems on Joseph, the unique creativity and imagination of Syrian exegetes in resolving conundrums in the biblical text.

A final group of papers do not address the text directly but nonetheless contribute greatly to the question of the "context" of the Peshitta. Lund (pp. 177–186) shows that despite a plethora of citations, Isho'dad of Merv (fl. 850) knew Hebrew only second-hand through other sources and what he labels "Hebrew" was not a textual reading but rather data derived from Jewish tradition. Phillips (pp. 259–295) argues that the East Syrian Church had accepted the book of Chronicles as canonical at least by the time of 'Abdisho of Nisibis (XIII century). Haar Romeny (pp. 297–310), by examining exegetical excerpts from what he calls the *London Collection*, shows that even in West Syrian tradition the Peshitta was not eclipsed by any Greek version. Even Syrian readers had certain difficulties with some textual readings, as Salvesen (pp. 339–349) shows in her study of a list of obscure words in the books of Samuel found in the *Scholion* of Theodore bar Koni. Taylor (pp. 365–378) outlines the tradition of the almost ignored Psalm headings found in Syriac manuscripts, especially as found in the *Commentary* of Daniel of Salah. Juckel (pp. 107–121) argues "the Syriac Masora," a large eighth- or ninth-century compilation of philological and grammatical materials, reflects the work of Jacob of Edessa who standardized a previously disordered Syriac orthography. Finally, Muto (pp. 207–222) compares the methodology of Greek and Syriac exegesis, with a primary focus on John Chrysostom and Ephrem.

Such a brief resume cannot possibly do justice to the breadth, depth and detail of the studies published in this volume. In varying degrees, nearly all the papers echo the warning of the keynote addresses about the extreme caution required for work with Syriac literature—even the commentaries. And, of necessity in a single volume such as this, there remains much that is unaddressed, yet these papers all combine to provide a detailed study—and a surprisingly coherent one!—of both the textual history of the Peshitta and its context. This volume also sets down basic guidelines and parameters for further study of the question and will thus long serve as a veritable *vade mecum* for future students and scholars of the history and reception of the Peshitta in Syriac literature. It is a reference tool that no Peshitta scholar, despite the high price, should be without.

### KEYNOTE LECTURES

The Use of the Syriac Versions in the Liturgy  
Sebastian P. Brock

Between the School and the Monk's Cell: The Syriac Old Testament Commentary Tradition  
Lucas Van Rompay

Problems in the Syriac New Testament and How Syrian Exegetes Solved Them  
William L. Petersen

### PAPERS

The Biblical Text in the *Disputation* of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew  
A. Peter Hayman

Reworking the Biblical Text in the Dramatic Dialogue Poems on the Old Testament Patriarch Joseph  
Kristian Heal

The Old Testament in the New: The Syriac Versions of the New Testament as a Witness to the Text of the Old Testament Peshitta  
Jan Joosten

The 'Syriac Masora' and the New Testament Peshitta  
Andreas Juckel

The Four Kingdoms in Peshitta Daniel 7 in the Light of the Early  
History of Interpretation  
Arie van der Kooij

Aphrahat's Use of his Old Testament  
Marinus D. Koster

'There is No Need of Turtle-Doves or Young Pigeons . . .' (Jacob  
of Sarug). Quotations and Non-Quotations of Leviticus in Selected  
Syriac Writers  
David J. Lane

Ephrem, his School, and the *Yawnaya*: Some Remarks on the Early  
Syriac Versions of the New Testament  
Christian Lange

Isho'dad's Knowledge of Hebrew as Evidenced from his  
Treatment of Peshitta Ezekiel  
Jerome A. Lund

The Text of the New Testament in the *Acts of Judas Thomas*  
Craig E. Morrison, O.Carm.  
Interpretation in the Greek Antiochenes and the Syriac Fathers  
Shinichi Muto

The Book of Proverbs in Aphrahat's *Demonstrations*  
Robert J. Owens

Sirach Quotations in the *Discourses* of Philoxenus of Mabbug: Text  
and Context  
Wido van Peursen

The Reception of Peshitta Chronicles: Some Elements for  
Investigation  
David Phillips

The Greek vs. the Peshitta in a West Syrian Exegetical Collection  
(BL Add. 12168)  
Bas ter Haar Romeny

The Peshitta and Biblical Quotations in the Longer Syriac Version of the Commentary of Athanasius on the Psalms (BL Add. 14568), with special attention to Psalm 23 (24) and 102 (103)

Harry F. van Rooy

The Reception of the Peshitta Psalter in Bar Salibi's *Commentary on the Psalms*

Stephen D. Ryan, O.P.

Obscure Words in the Peshitta of Samuel, according to Theodore bar Koni

Alison Salvesen

New Testament Quotations in the Breviary of the Syrian Orthodox Church. Example: The Annunciation (Luke 1:26–38)

Aho Shemunkasho

The Psalm Headings in the West Syrian Tradition

David G.K. Taylor

Peshitta New Testament Quotations in the West Syrian Anaphoras: Some General Observations

Baby Varghese