

The International Syriac Language Project (ISLP)  
2011 Conference Report

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**Papers Presented with ISLP (International Syriac Language  
Project) at SBL, San Francisco**

Thirteen scholars from around the world presented and discussed papers in four ISLP sessions on Syriac, Greek and Hebrew lexicography at the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) Annual Meeting in San Francisco.

Most of these papers will appear as peer-reviewed articles in a volume already in preparation under the co-editorship of Richard Taylor and Craig Morrison. This volume will also include a few articles presented as papers at ISLP sessions at IOSOT in Helsinki in 2010, a few commissioned articles, and articles arising from SBL Biblical Lexicography sessions and SBL Greek Linguistics sessions held at the San Francisco. Abstracts of all articles intended for this volume are cited below with acknowledgement of their origins.

**New ISLP Series**

Three significant changes to the ISLP were unanimously agreed upon at our annual meeting. The first is that we replace our current series of hardback volumes, *Perspectives on Syriac Linguistics* (PoSL), with a new series that has a more inclusive title. The new series is entitled *Perspectives on Linguistics and Ancient Languages* (PLAL). This change has been welcomed by many, including George Kiraz (ISLP member, our publisher and Director of Gorgias Press), and participants in SBL Biblical Lexicography and SBL Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics. Because of our emphasis on an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach, many scholars from such units were already publishing with us. Others were understandably hesitant because their work in languages other than Syriac would have been presented under a Syriac banner.

**A PoSL volume (Perspectives on Syriac Linguistics in original series) and PLAL volumes (Perspectives on Linguistics and Ancient Languages) near publication, or reaching completion**

Our hope is to launch at least six volumes in 2012. They are:

<b>Editors</b>	<b>Title</b>
<b>PLAL COLLOQUIA</b>	
Kristian Heal & Alison Salvesen, eds.	Colloquia of Ljubljana 2007, Granada 2008, and other contributions
Richard A. Taylor & Craig Morrison, eds.	Colloquia of Helsinki 2010, San Francisco, and other contributions

<b>Author</b>	<b>Title</b>
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#### **PoSL MONOGRAPH**

Margherita Farina	<i>An Outline of Middle Voice in Aramaic</i>
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#### **PLAL MONOGRAPHS**

David Taylor	<i>Anthology of Syriac Lexica</i>
Daniel King	English translation of A. Merx, <i>Historia Artis Grammaticae apud Syros</i>
Mark Robert Meyer	<i>A Comparative Dialectical Study of Genitive Constructions in Aramaic Translations of Exodus</i>

#### **Increased Collaboration with Other Units and Ancient Language Scholars**

The Chair and Co-chair of SBL Biblical Lexicography, James Aitken (Cambridge) and Anne Thompson (Cambridge) are both members of ISLP. They explained that this new series was a boon for their unit as it provided an ideal series in which articles could be published on a regular basis. We will maintain the policy of publishing articles by invitation or that are submitted for publication subject to acceptance by peer reviewers.

#### **The ISLP Group**

The ISLP group consists of colloquia volume editors; a monograph editorial board (James Aitken, Aaron Butts, Terry Falla, and Wido van Peursen); a database template group (Reinier de Blois, Sargon

Hasso, Janet Dyk, George Kiraz, and Wido van Peursen); computing advisor (Sargon Hasso); Minute Secretary (Richard Taylor), our publisher, George Kiraz, director of Gorgias Press; and series editor Terry Falla.

### **Addition to Editorial Board**



Because of the number of monographs we are now publishing, the meeting appointed a new member to our Editorial Board: Aaron Butts, a young scholar at Yale, whose specialty is near eastern languages and civilizations. Ideally, for the ISLP, Aaron specializes in Aramaic (including Syriac), Arabic, Classical Ethiopic, and Northwest Semitic, and more broadly (Hebrew, Ugaritic, Phoenician, etc.). In addition, he has interests in the larger Afro-Asiatic language phylum (especially Egyptian). Our Editorial Board now

consists of James Aitken, Aaron Butts, Terry Falla, and Wido van Peursen. Terry continues as Series Editor.

### **Future Venues of the ISLP**

The ISLP group meets annually at different locations in association with different conferences. The next ISLP meeting will be at the XIth Symposium Syriacum in Malta, 16-18 July, 2012, the one after that at IOSOT in Munich, August 2013, and following that in St Petersburg in 2014 by special invitation of The Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences. The aim of the meeting is to build a bridge between Western and Russian scholarship in ancient-language research, especially in biblical languages. Thirty western scholars from around the globe have committed themselves to this venture.



Sargon Hasso, new ISLP Computing Adviser



New ISLP member lexicographer Anne Thompson with lexicographer Frederick Danker, now 91(the D in BDAG) at ISLP San Francisco

### **Aims of the ISLP**

The ISLP is purposely collaborative, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary and so is constituted of scholars with a range of interests and specialities. The initial aim of the ISLP was to further the knowledge of Syriac by laying the foundations for Syriac lexicography and Syriac-English lexica by:

- Exploring pertinent theoretical and applied issues in research papers.
- Presenting papers for discussion at annual SBL International Meetings.
- Gorgias Press publishing monographs and the annual proceedings and other papers as part of a series.
- Creating a multifunctional modular database for the project.
- Maintaining a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach.

This aim continues, but with the creation of the new series has been broadened to include more intentionally the contributions of the many non-Syriac ancient-language scholars who belong to or are associated with the group.

### **Abstracts**

According to alphabetic sequence of names of authors. Abstracts from ISLP San Francisco to be published in a later volume are also included, but are distinguished with an asterisk (\*). (In their volumes, the articles will be presented according to theme)

### **James K. Aitken, University of Cambridge**

SBL Program Unit: International Syriac Language Project, San Francisco: "Alphabetical versus Root-based Lexicons"

Lexicons organised by roots have been a common feature in Semitic lexicons (including Arabic, Hebrew, and Syriac) and the case has recently been made by some that this principle is advisable for new Semitic lexicons. This paper will examine the origins of this method, noting the differences in what appears to be a uniform method, and then advocate that the prime purpose of lexicons to display meaning requires the lexicons to be alphabetic.

The apparent advantages of root-based lexicons are outweighed by their disadvantages, and the apparent small gains can equally be applied to great effect in alphabetical lexicons, with suitable arrangement and additional sections.

**David J.A. Clines, University of Sheffield**

SBL Program Unit: International Syriac Language Project, San Francisco, 2011: "How my (Lexicographical) Mind Has Changed, or Remained the Same"

Merely weeks after completing the 8-volume *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (1993-2011), I am reflecting, at the invitation of the International Syriac Language Project (ISLP), on how I would do things differently if I were starting again now, and on what I would want to preserve, even in the light of experience (although not all these issues are relevant to a dictionary of the much larger corpus of Syriac literature).

Among the differences would be a more rigorous initial survey of user needs and expectations, a more realistic evaluation of the costs, logistics and time frame of the project, a systematic incorporation of data about semantic domains, more regard for definitions, possible reference to historical periods, re-evaluation of the inclusion of material on the use of words with prepositions, reconsideration of how comparative Semitic data could be incorporated without skewing the presentation of the Hebrew language material.

Among the features that I would want to preserve are the scope of the dictionary as Classical Hebrew, defined as all Hebrew prior to the second century CE, notation of all morphological forms that occur, statistical information about occurrences, a fresh analysis of the data in structuring articles rather than following the lead of prior dictionaries, prioritizing frequency of occurrence over against 'logical' structure in articles, eschewing the use of 'metaphorical', incorporation of secondary literature from the last 100 years, and an English-Hebrew index.

**Marie-Louise Craig, Charles Sturt University**

Commissioned article, 2011: "Take One Hebrew Lexicon, Add Fresh Theology and Mix Well: The Impact of Hutchinson's Theology on Hebrew-English Lexicography"

Lexicons are cultural artifacts and as such are impacted by the society and the ideology from which they are birthed. Lexicographers often wrestle with what should and shouldn't be included in lexical entries and each age answers this question differently. In the mid 1700s a theological movement founded by John Hutchinson inspired the production of a number of Hebrew-English lexicons and these in turn caused other lexicographers to respond in opposition. The lexical entries in all these lexicons tell a fascinating story of a theological discussion carried out through lexicons for nearly 100 years, but they also cause us to ask the question again: What is acceptable material for a dictionary entry?

This article gives a brief history of the Hutchinsonian debate and its impact on Hebrew-English lexicons for the next century, in order to again raise the question of the content of lexical entries in the context of the lexicon's historical milieu

**Frederick W. Danker, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago**

Commissioned article, 2011: "A Linguistic-Cultural Approach to alleged Pauline and Lukan Christological Disparity"

The paper deals with the lexical presentation of lexemes in terms of actual definition in association with formal bilingual equivalence. It examines the problem of contextual consideration in determining the meaning of a term and takes into account the problems generated by endeavour to relate the meaning of an ancient text to the modern interpreter's world.

**Frederick W. Danker, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago**

SBL Program Unit: International Syriac Language Project, San Francisco, 2011: "Syriac Lexicography Problems: Synonymy and Metonymy and Related Issues"

The paper will deal with the lexical presentation of lexemes in terms of actual definition in association with formal bilingual equivalence. It will examine the problem of contextual consideration in determining the meaning of a term. It will explore the need of awareness of the role that synonyms, antonyms, and metonymy play in conveying meaning in a given text. It will take account of problems generated by endeavour to relate the meaning of an ancient text to the modern interpreter's world.

**Reinier de Blois, United Bible Societies**

SBL Program Unit: International Syriac Language Project, San Francisco, 2011<sup>5</sup>: "A Data-base Template for the International Syriac Language Project (ISLP)"

The aim of the International Syriac Language Project (ISLP), which consists of a group of fifteen interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary scholars, is to further the knowledge of Syriac by laying the foundations for Syriac lexicography and Syriac-English lexica by (i) exploring pertinent theoretical and applied issues in research papers; (ii) presenting papers for discussion at annual meetings; (iii) Gorgias Press publishing the annual proceedings and other papers as part of a series; and (iv) creating a multifunctional modular database for the project. The project will not seek to produce one monumental Syriac literature, which is vast, but will proceed on a corpus-by-corpus basis. This paper is devoted to a discussion of a data-base template for the project.

**Janet W. Dyk, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam**

SBL Program Unit: International Syriac Language Project, San Francisco, 2011: "The Hebrew and the Syriac Copula in Kings"

The two verbs כִּי and כִּי are cognates, similar to one another in both form and meaning, yet they do not always correspond to one another in the Masoretic and the Peshitta versions of Kings. In both texts a significant number have no equivalent in the other version; nonetheless, the motivations for the cases without correspondence differ per language. We mention a limited number of syntactic and distributional factors that account for the majority of cases where these copular verbs are not rendered by one another in the other version.

**Erik Eynikel, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen/University of Dallas**

SBL Program Unit: International Syriac Language Project, San Francisco, 2011: "The Use of *δυσμαί* in the Septuagint"

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<sup>5</sup> Reinier de Blois, United Bible Societies and George Kiraz, Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute. The completed article will be in collaboration with Janet Dyk, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, Sargon Hasso, ISLP Computing Adviser, and Wido van Peursen, Leiden University



Δυσμαί (the setting of the sun, the west) occurs 62 times in the LXX most often translating במוא and מערב. Fourteen times, however, δυσμαί renders ערבה or ערבות. A simple misreading of ערב is excluded as an explanation because it occurs too often. In the first four cases, all in Numbers, δυσμαί indicates “west of (Moab)” and translates ערבות (מואב). Probably the Greek translator wanted to indicate that the Israelites camped at the west side of Moab. The stories related in these passages are situated in Transjordan. From their perspective, the plains of the Araba are situated on the Westside of the Jordan.

In other instances, however, no such explanation is possible. For example, in Joshua 5,10 where the MT has ערבות יריחו “in the plains of Jericho”; the LXX situates the Passover (in Gilgal) ἡμέρη δὲ δυσμῶν Ἰεριχώ. This may be explained by a stereotypical translation of ערבות by “west”, taken from the instances in the Pentateuch. These cases can teach us more about the translation techniques of the LXX translators.

**Terry C. Falla, Syriac Language Research Centre, Whitley College, University of Melbourne**

SBL Program Unit: International Syriac Language Project, 2011: "The Universe of Classical Syriac Conjunctions: Their Syntactic, Semantic and Rhetorical Role"

Eliminate conjunctions from a piece of well-written prose and their significance becomes immediately obvious. Syntactically, semantically and rhetorically a conjunction can be pivotal. Syriac conjunctions are no exception. According to the light up to which they are held, they can even be seen as small discourse crystals flashing hues of colour. Yet often they are perceived as the most colourless, the most inconsequential, of all lexemes. Their minor place in the best Syriac lexicons relative to the magnitude of their use and impact is witness to a subject begging further exploration.

This paper takes a fresh look at the place of the conjunction in classical Syriac literature and lexicography. It focuses primarily, though not exclusively, on the syntactic, semantic and rhetorical functions of conjunctions in the Syriac New Testament as a literary translation and thus seeks to provide a point of entry into the study of conjunctions in all Syriac literature, original and translated.

While a selection of conjunctions is discussed, especial attention is given to the ubiquitous particle *Khad*, its various meanings, the manner in which it has different syntactic functions at the same time in the hierarchy of the grammatical structures to which it belongs, and what we can learn about its functions in Syriac as a natural language from its relationship to the Greek that it translates. The study of this fascinating subordinating conjunction has led to a thirty-two column lexical entry. This is in contrast to the three words given to its primary functions (as distinct from its well-established use in idiomatic collocations) in Brockelmann's *Lexicon Syriacum* and Sokoloff's *A Syriac Lexicon*, twenty-four lines in R. Payne Smith's *Thesaurus Syriac*, and ten-line summary in J. Payne Smith's *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*.

**Jan Joosten, University of Strasbourg, France**

SBL Program Unit: Biblical Lexicography, San Francisco, 2011 : "Hebrew thought and Greek thought in the Septuagint, Fifty Years after Barr's Semantics?"

Fifty years after Barr's Semantics of Biblical Language, how do we evaluate Hebrew thought and Greek thought in the Septuagint?

**Daniel King, Cardiff University**

Commissioned article, 2011: "The Genesis and Growth of a Philosophical [or Logical, if you prefer] Lexicon in Syriac"

This paper will explore a selection of aspects of the 'Hellenising' trend within the Syrians' conception of their own language in Late Antiquity and the early Islamic period. A case study will be offered that focuses upon the development of the lexical corpus of Syriac philosophy and of Syriac grammar. This will examine in particular some of the motive forces that drove the growth of these two bodies of technical language and also how they mutually influenced one another. It will then draw these phenomena (which are both socio-intellectual and linguistic) into an integrated view of the invention and development of the so-called Syriac 'Masorah', itself a type of self-conscious 'Hellenising' activity. By considering the different social/political/religious etc. forces acting upon the Syriac schools and their masters, we hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of the growth of the language's lexical corpus the implications of this for the lexicographical task.

**Kristian S. Heal, Brigham Young University**

SBL Program Unit: International Syriac Language Project, San Francisco, 2011: "The Syriac Electronic Corpus and the Future of Syriac Lexicography"

All lexicography is corpus based. However, contemporary lexicographers have the advantage of deploying sophisticated annotated digital corpora in their research, and in the production of new lexica. Nevertheless, little consideration has been given to the potential benefits of basing the ISLP's proposed Comprehensive Syriac-English Lexicon on an annotated digital corpus of Syriac texts. This paper will address this question, with examples drawn from the BYU-Oxford Syriac Electronic Corpus.

**Kristian S. Heal, Brigham Young University**

SBL Program Unit: Syriac Literature and Interpretations of Sacred Texts: "The Syriac Electronic Corpus and the Study of Syriac Literature"<sup>6</sup>

The BYU-Oxford Syriac Electronic Corpus is conceived as an essential component in the digital infrastructure for the field of Syriac Studies. This paper will present some of the first fruits of this project and illustrate how this electronic corpus will impact the study of Syriac literature. Specifically, the paper will illustrate how the Syriac Electronic Corpus can impact 1. Syriac Manuscript Studies; 2. Text Critical Studies; and 3. Literary Studies.

**David Lambert, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**

SBL Program Unit: Biblical Lexicography, San Francisco, 2011: "Refreshing Philology: James Barr and the Semantics of Biblical Language"

In contemporary academic inquiry, fifty years is a long time to be reading a book. Ideally, we would no longer need to read James Barr's *The Semantics of Biblical Language*: his criticisms of theology's use of philology would have been incorporated and submerged within the field, and their author only dimly remembered. But biblical scholars have not yet heard Barr. Many philological discussions today, including updated theological dictionaries, may

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<sup>6</sup> To be combined with the previous entry.

be traced still to Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. As fluency in biblical languages continues to decline, the kinds of abuses that Barr so clearly identified and critiqued only appear to be on the rise; indeed, non-specialists frequently expand upon old or invent new forms when they turn to words to buttress their arguments. As a way of exploring the current state of the field, the first half of the current paper takes up the case of *metanoia*, its meaning and use in the New Testament and related literature. The second half of the paper, however, goes on to consider the ways in which Barr or, at least, a certain reading of Barr may be responsible for the failure of philology—with the exclusion of a number of recent, intriguing studies—to develop apace other forms of inquiry into biblical literature over the past fifty years. Barr's thoroughgoing critique of its specious appropriation for theology has left many justifiably skittish about employing it to any significant effect and has contributed, perhaps, to the sense that ongoing engagement with the original languages of biblical literature is not a necessity and, certainly, not an avenue to creative scholarship. The paper will conclude with a few examples of how we might approach a study of language as a way of arriving at critical insight into the cultural particularities of, among other topics, ancient Israelite thinking about “mind” and “emotions.”

**Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, University of Groningen**

SBL Program Unit: International Syriac Language Project, San Francisco, 2011: "The Greek-Spanish Dictionary of the New Testament (DGENT): Method, Approach and Purposes"

The present paper intends to offer an overview and some practical examples both of the working process and of the achievements of the work in progress of the DGENT (Greek-Spanish Dictionary of the New Testament) by the GASCO (Semantic Analysis Group of the University of Córdoba and La Laguna.[Tenerife]).

The DGENT's main distinctive feature is perhaps the classification of the lexemes according to five semantic categories: *Entity* (the category of beings), *Event* (action, act or activity), *Attribute*, *Relation* (lexemes that establish relationships among lexemes) and *Determination* (category of lexemes that delimit the sense). At the same time, instead of ‘intuitively’ describing the lexeme's different meanings, the DGENT follows both a clear and

solid method of semantic analysis (J. Mateos, *Método de Análisis Semántico Aplicado al Nuevo Testamento*, Córdoba, 1989) and a methodology (J. Peláez, *Metodología del Diccionario Griego-español del Nuevo Testamento*, Córdoba, 1996) that *a priori* establish the work procedure. Owing to its mainly semantic approach to the NT vocabulary, the dictionary intends not only to provide the meaning of a given lexeme in its various contexts, but also to explain how and why this meaning changes. After discussing the method, approach and purposes of the DGENT, my talk shall provide, on the basis of some significant examples, a short overview of how the entry is 'built up'.

### Stephen Levinsohn, SIL International

SBL Program Unit: Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics, San Francisco, 2011: "'Therefore' or 'Wherefore': What's the Difference?"

This paper argues that the inferential connectives of New Testament Greek are best differentiated not 'according to emphasis' (Westfall), but in terms of the unique constraint on interpretation (Blakemore) that each conveys. *Oun* constrains what follows to be interpreted as an advancement of a theme line, whether the current one or an earlier one that is being resumed following intervening material (+Development). This constraint applies even to passages in which some have assigned an adversative 'sense' to *oun*. *Ara* is marked as +Consequence, so *ara oun* is +Consequence +Development. In contrast, *dio* constrains what follows to be interpreted as inferential material that does not advance the theme line (unmarked for development). When *dia touto* is used anaphorically, it constrains what follows to be related inferentially to a specific referent (+Specific). When *hoste* introduces an independent clause or sentence, it constrains it to be interpreted as the conclusion of a section or sub-section (+Conclusion). The differences between *oun*, *dio* and *dia touto* are illustrated with reference to Rom 15. Consideration of 2 Cor 4:16-5:21 then allows contrasts with *ara* and *hoste* to be added. The paper concludes with suggestions as to the constraints associated with other inferential connectives (*toigarnun*, *toinun*, *dioper*, plus *dioti* in Acts 13:35 and 20:26, together with *bothen* in non-locative contexts).

**Timothy Martin Lewis, Whitley College, University of Melbourne**

X<sup>th</sup> Symposium Syriacum, Granada, 2008: "Lexemes with High Risk of Infection: Methodology for Examining Low Frequency Lexemes"

This paper proposes a methodology for examining lexemes of low frequency in the Peshitta New Testament, particularly lexemes in the Gospels with parallel contexts in another Gospel. Several principles are applicable to both Syriac and Greek New Testament lexicography. Many low frequency lexemes require attention. Here the focus is on one example because it raises many interrelated methodological issues: the Peal ܡܠܚܝܬܐ (Mk 9:18,20) in the Gospel episode(s) of the so-called ‘epileptic boy’ (Mt 17:14–20 // Mk 9:14–29 // Lk 9:37–43). The paper identifies and critiques the methodology previously underlying the tendency, both intentionally and unintentionally, to offer convulsive meanings for the Peal ܡܠܚܝܬܐ suggestive of an epileptic perspective. Seven methodological principles emerge that enable a critique of the ‘epileptic’ meanings previously given for the Greek *σεληνιάζομαι* (Mt 17:15) and *σπαράσσω* (Mk 1:26; 9:20,26) and for the Peal ܡܠܚܝܬܐ (Mk 9:18,20). How a contextual meaning has been derived in this case reveals three currently influential but unsound suppositions, namely, that the text intends to portray a medical condition of the boy (that is, epilepsy); that the Greek underlying the Syriac is explicitly an epileptic verb; and that the context in Mk 9:18–26 is the same as in the parallel accounts of Matthew and Luke.

**Jonathon Loopstra, Capital University, Columbus Ohio**

Prepared for but not presented at SBL Program Unit: International Syriac Language Project, San Francisco, 2011: "Lexicographical Observations within the Syriac Corpus of Gregory Nazianzen"

The Syriac translations of Gregory Nazianzen’s works underwent a series of retranslations from the Greek between the fifth to seventh centuries. As Gregory’s works in Syriac became widely studied, a variety of commentaries and small tractates were written to aid students of his writings. In addition to tracts and a separate commentary tradition, a Syriac “masoretic” tradition also arose, in part to deal with problematic words in Gregory’s works. A significant number of these compilations provide glosses to

“difficult words” in Nazianzen’s corpus. Years ago, de Halleux suggested a comprehensive study of this material, but his suggestion has, unfortunately, never been taken up.

This presentation will explore these various tracts and commentaries related to the Gregorian corpus in Syriac with a focus on the glosses provided for problematic Hellenisms, calques, or curiosities of syntax. This study is primarily concerned with evaluating commonalities and differences between these compilations in order to better understand the nature of these observations. In addition, this presentation will discuss possible ways in which these native Syriac glossating traditions might figure in a future lexicographical study of the corpus of Nazianzus or other Greek Fathers in Syriac translation.

### **Mark Meyer, Capital Bible Seminary**

SBL Program Unit: International Syriac Language Project, San Francisco, 2011: "Genitive Constructions in the Peshitta of Exodus"

This paper discusses the use of the genitive construction in Peshitta Exodus. The three primary Aramaic genitive constructions will be presented according to their distribution in translating the construct phrase in Hebrew: the construct phrase, the genitive adjunct phrase with *d-*, and the genitive phrase with *d-* anticipated by a possessive suffix on the head noun. Primary factors influencing the selection of one genitive construction over another will be discussed. Important similarities and differences between five Aramaic dialects in the use of genitive constructions in Exodus will also be presented. The five Aramaic dialects to be discussed are: Targum Onkelos, Syriac Peshitta, three corpora of the Palestinian Targum (Cairo Geniza fragments, Targum Neofiti I, and the Fragment Targums), Samaritan Targum, and Fragments of a Christian Palestinian Aramaic translation of Exodus.

### **Jesús Peláez and GASCO (Cordoba Semantic Analysis Group), University of Cordoba, Spain**

SBL International Meeting, Tartu, Estonia, 2010: "Contextual Factor and Change in Meaning of the Words in the Greek-Spanish New Testament Dictionary"

Bilingual dictionaries in general, and New Testament ones in particular entangle users in a trap as -they do not say what the

words mean, but for each word in the original language give a list of translations (glosses) for it in the target language, or they say what the word means, giving its definition, but do not explain why the words change in meaning when they enter in a different context.

To overcome this difficulty, the *Greek-Spanish Dictionary of the New Testament* (*Diccionario Griego-Español del Nuevo Testamento*) not only gives the definition of the word under every entry and for each of its different senses, when they exist, but at the same time indicates the contextual factors or elements in the context that gives rise to new senses of the word, and thus, to different translations.

To illustrate the importance of the contextual factors in order to explain the different senses of a given word in context, this paper take as an example the entry βαπτίζω showing *grasso modo* how it is treated in other New Testament dictionaries and comparing it with its treatment in the *Greek-Spanish Dictionary of the New Testament*.

### **Steve Runge, Logos Bible Software**

SBL Program Unit: Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics, San Francisco, 2011: "Now and Then: Clarifying the Role of Temporal Adverbs as Discourse Markers"

Conjunctions and temporal adverbs contribute significantly to the shaping of a discourse. Although conjunctions nearly always serve as discourse markers, the same cannot be said of temporal adverbs. Blakemore (2002:178) suggests that only a subset of temporal adverbs function as discourse markers, those which are not part of the propositional form, i.e., which are conceptually separate from the main proposition. However there is a tendency to treat temporal adverbs monolithically, e.g., as though *nun* and *tote* always mark transitions in the discourse. This paper outlines principles for determining whether or not a temporal adverb is functioning as a marker within the discourse. The principles will be applied to *nun* and *tote* and tested using representative examples from the Greek New Testament and Apostolic Fathers.



**Margaret Sim, SIL International**

SBL Program Unit: Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics, San Francisco, 2011: "The Genitive Absolute in Discourse: More Than a Change of Subject"

For generations of scholars the genitive absolute in Classical and Koine Greek has been a well attested literary device parallel to the 'ablative absolute' in Latin. It effects cohesion in discourse and has been viewed as giving background information as well as indicating a change of subject or 'switch reference'. This paper disputes the latter as being the predominant function of this participial construction and discusses its role in the New Testament, Xenophon and the papyri with reference to a modern theory of cognition which claims to give principles for the way in which humans communicate with one another.

**Michael Sokoloff, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel**

SBL Program Unit: International Syriac Language Project, San Francisco, 2011: "The Lexicographical State of Christian Palestinian Aramaic"

Christian Palestinian Aramaic is probably the most neglected of the first millennium CE Aramaic dialects, having attracted a mere handful of interested scholars during the twentieth century. The last dictionary of this dialect, composed by Fr. Schulthess, appeared in 1903, and it is now sorely out of date. Since then, a large number of texts, especially from the Early Period of this dialect (6th-8th cents. CE), have either been published or re-edited, and this has now laid the groundwork for a more comprehensive and accurate description of its vocabulary.

**Anne Thompson, University of Cambridge**

SBL Program Unit: International Syriac Language Project, San Francisco, 2011: "Modern English in our Ancient Language Dictionaries"

Our language is constantly changing and yet we often rely on dictionaries written more than a hundred years ago. A native speaker is able to make some adjustments quite instinctively when it comes to understanding old-fashioned language contained in them, despite the variations in English which exist throughout the world, but other users will have problems. Even the native speaker

can sometimes be misled, since changes in meaning, in particular of some very common words, may not be immediately noticeable. In any case, we might question how representative of the lexical meaning of the ancient language headword some of the definitions were even at the time they were written.

The influence of dictionaries on translations of texts is inevitable, and translations have also been known to influence definitions in a dictionary entry. The presence of out-dated English in either place is likely to result in a lack of sharpness of focus when it comes to comprehension of ancient texts.

The language used for definitions, whether consisting of one word or a phrase, is crucial, since it constitutes the central part of an entry. We may consider how accuracy may be improved, and also whether it is possible to put in some safeguards against the language becoming dated very quickly. There is the question of whether different styles should be adopted for different kinds of dictionary, whether a writer is free to choose from informal, standard or formulaic language to suit the scope and purpose of a particular work.

In a larger dictionary, more than one definition is frequently found within the same section of meaning. In particular, the presentation of several synonyms is quite common. This may serve a legitimate function, but we may ask whether there should be some restrictions.

The language of other parts of a dictionary entry is also to be considered: abbreviations, lexicographic labels, literary and linguistic terms, explanations and so forth. We need to ask whether there are principles to be framed which can be universally applicable for dictionaries of the future.