

A PARALLEL NEW TESTAMENT

Comparing Three Popular
Translations
in Parallel Columns
3 John



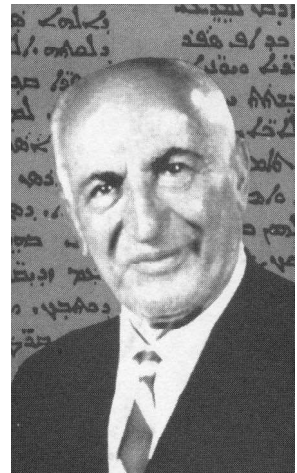
**J. W.
Etheridge**

English
Translation
of the
Peschito



**James
Murdock**

New Testament
Translation from
The Syriac Peshito
Version



**George
M. Lamsa**

New Testament
according
to the
Eastern Text

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New Testament
3 John**

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J.W. Etheridge -- English Translation of the Peshito

James Murdock -- New Testament from the Syriac Peshito Version

George M. Lamsa -- New Testament according to the Eastern Text

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A Note to the Reader

The Parallel New Testament compares three popular English translations. The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning and content of the original text as accurately as possible to the contemporary reader. The three translations that you have in front of you, J.W. Etheridge's *English Translation of the Peshito*, James Murdoch's *New Translation from the Syriac Peshito Version* and George Lamsa's *New Testament according to the Eastern Text* are very different translations with different aims and objectives. Each translator comes from a very different background, both culturally and linguistically, but the one thing that united them was the importance and relevance of the Syriac Biblical text in the life of the Christian. Each man in his translation sought to bring a fresh perspective to the text of Scripture. My hope is that this parallel translation will infuse your understanding of the text with wisdom and knowledge. Each of these translations has strengths and weaknesses but just as Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, "... a threefold cord is not quickly broken" and Proverbs 11:14 says, "in the multitude of counselors there is safety", I pray that you find strength and safety in this threefold Syriac scriptural cord.

The Editor

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Preface

The field of Syriac studies is a monument to the independent spirit in the Biblical tradition. Each of these three translations reflects that independence. Etheridge and Murdock pursued the study of Syriac informally and in their private time. There is some evidence that a number of courses in Syriac were offered at the undergraduate level both in Europe and in the United States during this time (early to mid 19th century), there isn't evidence that any of them benefited from those courses. Etheridge vigorously pursued his Syriac studies while working as a full-time Methodist minister and published his translation in three parts over a period of nine years. He only had time to complete his translation during an extended time of convalescence in Europe. Murdock started his study of Syriac and his translation after completing a full career in ministry and academia. He finished his translation in what we would consider today retirement. He has reached the advanced age of 74. Lamsa was the only one to attempt to pursue a full-time career in Syriac studies. This was frustrated often by lack of interest institutionally and a general skepticism regarding some of his claims. Much of the time, he was dependent on private wealthy donors. Many of the large academic institutions were reticent to sponsor a controversial figure like Lamsa. All three translators benefited from formal education but when it came to the field of Syriac, they were all self-taught.

Each of these three translations is based on some form of Aramaic/Syriac text, whether printed or manuscript. Etheridge and Murdock used the popular 17, 18, and 19th century printed Syriac texts which naturally included all 27 books of the western canon. Lamsa's base text is rooted in the older Syriac language manuscripts. He supplemented his base text with later Syriac texts for the five disputed books (2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation). The desire of each translator was to reach a popular audience. Their intention was to translate for a western audience. It is my hope and desire along with the three translators to reach a wide audience with this Parallel New Testament.

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Biography of J.W. Etheridge



ETHERIDGE, JOHN WESLEY (Feb 24, 1804- May 24, 1866), an English Methodist, a Wesleyan minister and nonconformist divine, was born to John and Alley (Gray) Etheridge in Youngwoods near Newport, in the Isle of Wight, England on the 24th of February 1804. He was the third of seven children. He received most of his early education from his father who was master of an academy of Portsea. Though he never attended any university he acquired ultimately a thorough knowledge of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Syriac, French and German. In 1824 he was placed on the Wesleyan Methodist plan as a local preacher. In 1827 his offer to enter the ministry was accepted, and after the usual probationary trial he was received into full connexion at the conference of 1831. He married Eliza Middleton in that same year. For two years after this he remained at Brighton, and in 1833 he removed to Cornwall, being stationed successively at the Truro and Falmouth circuits. From Falmouth he removed to Darlaston, where in 1838 his health gave way. For a good many years he was a supernumerary, and lived for a while at Caen and Paris, where in the public libraries he found great facilities for prosecuting his favorite subject which was Oriental studies. His health having considerably improved, he became, in 1843, pastor of the Methodist church at Boulogne. He returned to England in 1847, and was appointed successively to the circuits of Islington, Bristol, Leeds, Penzance, Penryn, Truro and St Austell in east Cornwall. Shortly after his return to England he received the degree of Ph.D. from the university of Heidelberg. He was a patient, modest, hard-working and accurate scholar. He died at Camborne, England on May, 24 1866.

His principal works are *Horae Aramaicae* (1843); *History, Liturgies and Literature of the Syrian Churches* (1846); *The Apostolic Acts and Epistles, from the Peshito or Ancient Syriac* (1849); *Jerusalem and Tiberias, a Survey of the Religious and Scholastic Learning of the Jews* (1856); *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel* (1st vol. in 1862, 2nd in 1865).

ETHERIDGE

THE SYRIAN CHURCHES: THEIR EARLY HISTORY, LITURGIES, AND LITERATURE. WITH A LITERAL TRASLATION OF THE FOUR GOSPELS, FROM THE PESCHITO, OR CANON OF HOLY SCRIPTURE IN USE AMONG THE ORIENTAL CHRISTIANS FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES.

TO THE READER.

IT did not occur to me till the following sheets had been committed to the press, that the present translation of the Gospels may possibly be considered in some quarters as an attempt to impugn the excellence of our authorized English version. Should such be the case, I would hereby earnestly disclaim any intention of the kind. My sole wish has been to offer in our own language an accurate representation of the evangelic canon, as read from the primeval days by the Christians of the East. The invaluable English version in ordinary use among us having been made from the Greek, and the following translation from a text extant in a tongue altogether different, a comparison like that now deprecated can only be instituted by a departure from the common principles of reason and equity.

At the same time I would suggest, that a collation of the one text with the other, for the purpose of ascertaining the verbal sameness or disagreement of the gospel testimony as given by two witnesses so perfectly impartial and independent, will form a profitable study to the Christian, and impart a profound conviction of the immutable integrity of the New Testament record.

I have retained the titles of the sections for public reading, merely as illustrative of some points referred to in the preceding sketches of the Syrian communions.* On every other account they would have been omitted; not only because, in certain instances, they betray a relationship to superstitions which are unworthy of the Christian name, but because they interfere with the continuity of the sacred discourse, and in some minds may tend to weaken the perception of that divine authority which reigns alone, and for ever, through the entire compass of the inspired writings.

LONDON,
September, 1846.

PREFACE

THE FOUR GOSPELS AFTER THE PESCHITO SYRIAC.

VERITATI PRORSUS EST CONSENTANEUM, INTRA IPSA ECCLESIAE CHRISTI INITIA, VEL AB APOSTOLIS IPSIS, VEL AB EORUM DISCIPULIS, VERSIONEM SYRIACAM PROPECTAM.
EM. TREMELLIUS.

*** THIS translation of the Four Gospels has been made directly from the Syriac. The text chiefly followed is that of Gutbir, 1664, compared with the editions of Paris, G. F. Boderiani, 1584, Walton in the London Polyglot, and Schaaf's of 1709. The rubrics for the lessons are from Walton. The object of the translator having been to offer in English an accurate representation of these venerable eastern scriptures, the version is as literal as the structure of the two languages seems to admit. From a desire to preserve the air and manner, as well as meaning, of the original, he has retained the Syrian orthography of the proper names, and has left some of the peculiar denominatives of the gospel narrative untranslated. Such are the titles of Pharisee, the Pharisees, Zadukoyee, the Sadducees, Sophree, the Scribes, Malphona, Doctor, &c. The name of the Divine Being, ALOHA, (the אֱלֹהִים of the Hebrew revelation,) is also left unaltered. In the expression of these names the method of the Nestorians has been followed rather than that used by the Western Syrians, because in the former the pronunciation more fully accords with the orthography.

* The "titles of the sections for public reading" have been omitted from the text.

PREFACE TO THE APOSTOLICAL ACTS AND EPISTLES FROM THE PESCHITO SYRIAC.

THE work here submitted completes the translation of the Syriac New Testament, begun in a former volume.* We may now compare the sacred text, as read in the Eastern churches for sixteen or seventeen centuries, with that which, during the same lapse of time, has been received in the West. The comparison of these independent witnesses will demonstrate the essential integrity and incorrupt preservation of the inspired documents of the Christian dispensation.

For the seeming delay which has attended the publication of the volume, an apology is due to those friends who have inquired, from time to time, for its advertised appearance. But the minute attention required by the nature of the work itself, and the circumstance, that the only time in general which could be spared for the prosecution of it has been that of uncertain intervals in the course of regular professional duties, will sufficiently account for the slowness of its progress. The former volume, on the Gospels, was prepared during a residence on the Continent, when the greater part of his time was at the translator's own disposal; but nearly all the present work has been accomplished amid the daily toils of the Christian ministry in London, and in hours which might, in some respects, have been advantageously spent in mental or bodily recreation, or repose.

At the tribunal of biblical criticism the writer respectfully prays for a kind, but impartial, judgment on the correctness or incorrectness of the translation. It is very proper for him to attest his own belief, that, through the adorable grace of God, he has been enabled to give a version in all essential respects a faithful representation of the Syriac Scriptures; did he not believe so, he would not presume to offer it: but that class of readers who, though intelligent students of the Bible, have not directed their attention to this branch of inquiry, will naturally look for a corroborative testimony to the correctness of such an estimate, that their confidence in the translation may be warranted by some competent authority. It is on this account, as well as with a view to the thankful adoption of any improvement which may be pointed out, that he would solicit this adjudication.

For the sake of rendering the work as complete as possible, there is added a translation of the Epistles and Book of Revelation, wanting in the Peschito Canon, from the more modern Syriac texts first edited by Dr. Pococke and Louis De Dieu, so as to comprise all the holy books which we receive as inspired New-Testament Scripture.

With regard to the Acts and Epistles, the edition which the translator has followed has been that of Schaaf, on account of its having long been a sort of *textus receptus* of the Syriac Testament throughout the theological world. This has been collated with others, as occasionally indicated in the margin. Notwithstanding the labours of learned men in this department since the time of Schaaf, we are yet in want of a critical edition of the Peschito text both of the Old and New Testaments; as likewise a uniform collection of the books of the Hexaplar Syriac, and an edition of the Harkleian New Testament, with such remains of the Philoxenian as may exist in the MSS. brought home by the late Mr. Rich, or among those with which the treasures of the British Museum have been amplified through the diligence of Archdeacon Tattam. On this subject much interest has been awakened by the preface of the Rev. Mr. Cureton's edition of the Syrian Ignatius.

In this volume we have omitted the Rubrics of the oriental lessons from the body of the text, and given them in a separate collection or index at the end. Interspersed among the Scripture itself, as in the translation of the Gospels, such matters are confessedly out of place. This first index is followed by another, which is intended to facilitate the collation of any particular portion of the Eastern and Western Testaments. (These have been omitted from the text.)

For the prologues which introduce the translation little need be said. They will be received for what they are worth. The first part condenses a variety of information which would have been very acceptable to the writer himself several years ago, and which he presumes will be welcome to some who are now at the outset of their inquiries. In the second part we enter a more elevated and more spiritual region. It is good to be there! Perhaps this section would not be useless in Bible classes and family readings, as well as in the cabinet of the solitary Christian.

January 1st, 1849.

* The Syrian Churches; their early History, Liturgies, and Literature. With a literal Translation of the Four Gospels, from the Peschito, or Canon of holy Scripture in use among the oriental Christians from the earliest Times. London. Longmans. 1846.

FROM THE PROLEGOMENA THE APOSTOLICAL ACTS AND EPISTLES FROM THE
PESCHITO SYRIAC.

INTRODUCTION

As with the Gospels already published, the following version of the Acts and Epistles has been made directly from the Syriac. We have Latin translations of the Peschito, by Sionita, De la Boderie, and Schaaf; but they have not obtained the entire approval of the learned. The Latin translations in the Polyglots are not to be fully depended on. Dr. Pococke, who, as an Arabic scholar, Golius has said, was second to no man, has pronounced the condemnation of the Latin rendering of the Arabic scriptures in those great works; and with respect to that of the Peschito, Michaelis affirms, that the author, Sionita, had "executed it with the greatest inaccuracy; as almost every page betrays either hurry or ignorance, and not seldom both qualities united;" while of the translation of Schaaf it may be observed, that, though not liable to this sweeping charge of inaccuracy, it is not sufficiently idiomatic to be a true representation of the Syrian Testament. It is with the utmost diffidence that I offer this effort in our own language. Should it assist any of my fellow-disciples in their inquiry into the meaning of the divine oracles, the solitary toil of some years will not have been in vain. I have endeavoured to render the Syriac as literally as the structure of the two languages would allow; having been desirous, not merely of translating, in the general sense of the term, but of giving, as faithfully as possible, a delineation of the peculiar cast of expression which the inspired writings possess in this venerable text of the oriental church.

On this account, as I have observed before, the ordinary choice enjoyed by a translator between the literal and the free method of rendering his subject could not be exercised; since the translation here, to be of any specific utility to the biblical student unacquainted with Aramaic, must, of necessity, be given ad verbum. It should be such a version as that defined by a great master in the science of interpretation: "An exact image of the original; in which image nothing should be drawn either greater or less, better or worse, than the original; but, so composed, that it might be acknowledged as another original itself. It follows, that a translator should use those words, and those only, which clearly express all the meaning of the author, and in the same manner as the author."* And this has been humbly but strenuously attempted in the present undertaking, both with regard to the grammatical signification of words, and, as far as possible, their collocated order. It need not be remarked, that such a plan would not admit of an artificial elegance of style; after the manner, for example, of Castellio's Latin Testament. Had the individual now writing been ambitious of any thing of this kind, he must have sought for some more appropriate document on which to make the essay; for the task, which it has been his sacred solace as well as labour to fulfil, prohibited even a paraphrastic expression; and demanded that verbal faithfulness to the original, that scrupulous parsimony and careful pondering of words, that *tenacitas verborum cum perspicuitate sententiae*, which St. Augustine so commends in the unpolished Italic version; † that determination, in short, to translate literally, not diffusively; to employ such words, and those all in meaning, number, and collocation, as would best portray a true copy of the original; and, following the principle laid down by Morus, so to exhibit the author's thoughts in our own language, as to make it apparent, that, had he himself used our language, he would have expressed himself just as the translator has done.‡ But, when we apply such a principle to the rendering of the TRUE SAYINGS OF GOD, we may well say, with the profoundest awe, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

* ERNESTI.

† AUGUSTINUS *De Doctrina Christiana*, lib. xi.

‡ MORUS, *Dissert. De Discrimine Sensus et Significationis in Interpretando*.

ETHERIDGE
INTRODUCTION

THE REMAINING EPISTLES AND THE APOCALYPSE; FROM A SYRIAC TEXT LATER THAN
THE PESCHITO.

THOUGH the Second Epistle of Peter, the Second and Third of John, the Epistle of Jude, and the Book of Revelation are not found in the New-Testament canon of the Syrian churches, the circumstance in no way seriously interferes with the plain authenticity of those productions, as integral parts of the inspired volume. The Peschito translation, in which they do not occur, was probably effected before the Second of St. Peter had travelled far beyond the region for which it had been immediately destined; before the church had pronounced any definite judgment on the limits of the canon itself; and, possibly, before the Apocalypse of St. John had been committed to writing, or the copies so multiplied as to be extensively read out of Asia Minor. I shall not occupy any of the little space which remains in the present volume by a detail of the formal evidences by which the authenticity of these particular books is established: they may be found in the prefaces of our best commentators, or in the more elaborate treatises of Jones and Lardner.¹

In relation to the present bearing of the subject, it is enough to remark, that the Syrian church itself has never denied the divinity of those books. They are quoted by its leading divines as holy scripture. Thus the Apocalypse is cited by Jacob of Edessa, though in a version different from the Syrian one now extant, and with the origin or fate of which I am not acquainted; and by Ephrem, in the fourth century; a hundred years earlier, by Hippolytus, a Bishop of Aden, who formally maintained its authority against the objections of Caius, and earlier still, in the second century, Theophilus of Antioch, in his controversy with Hermogenes, appealed to it as an inspired book.² All these authors wrote in Syriac; and the references they make to the Revelation strongly indicate the existence, so far back as the earliest of them, of a version of the book in that language. In like manner St. Ephrem quotes the Second of Peter, and the Third of John, and the whole of the Epistle of Jude. We admit that it cannot be demonstrated that there was a Syriac version of these books then extant; but as the fact of such quotations in the works of Syrian writers must be considered a presumption in the affirmative, so the manner in which they are cited leaves no doubt as to the supreme estimate of their authority entertained by the writers themselves.

It is barely possible that the text now translated into English might be identical with that made by Polycarp, the coadjutor of Philoxenus. (See Proleg. p. 33.) In this case it is evident that Thomas of Harkleia must have effected greater changes in the work which he professedly revised, than we have generally supposed; and, in fact, created a new version, rather than emended a former one. The greater likelihood, however, is, that the work before us is later than either that by Polycarp or by Thomas; though he who performed it undoubtedly laboured with the latter outspread before him; as the same principle of translation reigns through each, and instances occur in which the very same phrase is employed by both. But neither the one nor the other could approach the excellence of the Peschito. Compared with that, the version of the four epistles and that of the Apocalypse are very inferior productions. To use the language of Professor Hug, with whom every man will concur who has read the works in question, "They do not come near the Peschito either in the mode of rendering an original writing into a foreign tongue, or in the other ideas of the author. They are forced, and laboriously adapted to the letter of the text, without regard to purity of diction, and, in some instances, without a happy notion of the sense of the original." Yet an important circumstance is certain, they were made directly from the Greek; as, from a scrupulous resolution to be as literal as possible, the translator has sometimes appended the terminations of the cases of Greek nouns to those which had been incorporated into his own language, which knows nothing of such distinctions, and has supplied the want of a separate definite article in Syriac by rendering the Greek one by the demonstrative pronouns, *hono*, "this," *hau*, "that," *hoben*, "these," *ailen*, "those;" a usage productive, in many passages, of a barbarous and unpleasant effect. Nevertheless, the determined adherence of this translator to the very letter of his original, serves to give us increased confidence in the value of the work, as an exact representation of the wording of

¹Also in HUG'S *Einleitung ins N. T. th.* 2: EICHHORN'S ditto, *dritter bd.*; NIETZSCHE, *Epistola Petri posterior Auctori suo contra Grotium vindicata atque asserta. Lips.* 1735. For the genuineness of the Apocalypse we have a good summary of arguments in STORR'S *Biblical Theology*, book i. sect. 3.

²EUSEB. *Eccles. Hist.* iv. 24.

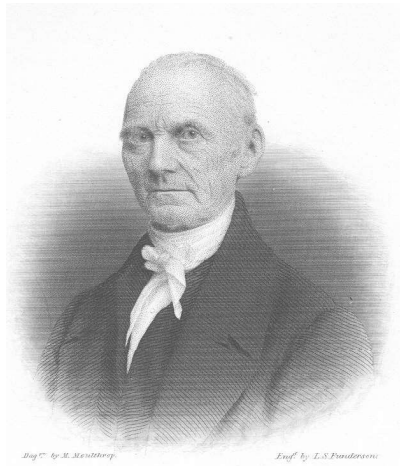
a class of manuscripts older, perhaps, than any now in being.

The version of the four catholic epistles was first brought to light in Europe by Dr. Pococke, who discovered it among the manuscript treasures of the Bodleian library at Oxford, and published it with the Greek text, and a Latin version, in a small quarto, in 1630.

It has been reprinted in the Polyglots and subsequent editions of the Syriac Testament.

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Biography of James Murdock



James Murdock (Feb 16, 1776 - Aug 10, 1856) was born, Feb. 16th, 1776 at Westbrook, Connecticut. He was son of Protestant Scotch-Irish descent. He was an orphan from the age of fourteen months, till the age of fifteen, when his uncle, Rev. Jonathan Murdock helped him prepare to enter college. He was admitted to Yale College in 1793, at the age of seventeen and graduated in 1797. He won the Berkeleian Premium, which was given to the best scholar in the class, and to the one whose exams in Latin and Greek are exemplary. After graduation, he became Preceptor of the Hopkins Grammar School in New Haven, Connecticut. In 1799, he took charge, for one year, of Hamilton Oneida Academy, now Hamilton College, at Clinton, New York. He married Rebecca Lydia (born Atwater) Murdock on October of 1799 and they had 10 children. He was licensed as a Congregational minister in January, 1801. In February, 1802, he received a call to settle in Princeton County Massachusetts, and was ordained there. In 1815, he resigned his pastoral charge and was appointed Professor of the learned languages in the University of Vermont. He moved to Burlington, Vermont where he was Professor of the learned languages and Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. In 1818, he became Professor of Languages. In the spring of 1819, being appointed Brown Professor of Sacred Rhetoric and Ecclesiastical History in the Theological Seminary at Andover, he left Vermont and returned to Massachusetts. In the autumn of that year, Harvard University conferred on him the honorary degree of S.T.D. (Doctor of Sacred Theology). Difficulties soon afterwards arose between him and the other Professors, respecting his course of duties in the Seminary which continued several years, until in 1828 when he decided to leave the Institution. He moved to New Haven in 1829, where he continued to reside. He retired from public life, and devoted himself to private studies and especially to Ecclesiastical History. For a few years he preached and delivered lectures in different places, but of late seldom appeared as a public speaker. He was made an honorary member of the New York Historical Society several. He was also Vice President, and recently President, of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences. He served as Vice President of the Philological Society of Connecticut, of which he was one of the original founders. He was also one of the founders and corporate members of the American Oriental Society, and a regular contributor to its learned Journal. This was an Association of Oriental Scholars, so select and exclusive that it had no honorary members in America, only three in England, a few on the continent of Europe, and a few in Asia. In the Autumn of 1855, Dr. Murdock went to Columbus, Mississippi, where he spent a winter in the family of his son, visiting various portions of the Southern country, and anticipating a return to New Haven in the ensuing Spring but his strength gave way, and he died on August 10, 1856.

To extend his own long cherished but scanty knowledge of the Syriac language, the writer commenced reading the Peshitto Syriac New Testament in January, 1845, and in every step he found increasing delight. The artless simplicity, directness, and transparency of the style,—the propriety and beauty of the conceptions of Christ and his followers, as expressed in a Shemitish dialect very nearly identical with their vernacular tongue,—the pleasing thought that the words were, probably, in great part, the very terms which the Saviour and his apostles actually uttered in their discourses and conversations,—and especially the full comprehension which the Syriac translator seemed to have of the force and meaning of the inspired original, served to chain attention and hold the mind spell-bound to the book. Such exquisite pleasure the writer longed to have others share with him; but as few persons, even among the clergy, have either leisure or facilities for acquiring the Syriac language, he soon came to the conclusion, that he could do nothing better than first read the book carefully through, and then give a literal and exact translation of it. Accordingly he furnished himself with several of the best editions of the book, and the best Syriac Lexicons and Grammars, and commenced his translation early in August, 1845, and completed it on the 16th of June, 1846. This is briefly the history of the work here presented to the public.

The Syriac text followed in the first part of this translation, was that of the beautiful edition printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society London, 1816, 4to., which was prepared for the press, as far as the Acts of the Apostles, by the late Rev. Claudius Buchanan, D.D., Author of “Christian Researches,” “Star in the East,” &c., and the remainder by the Rev. Samuel Lee, D.D., Professor of Arabic in the University of Cambridge, England. The latter part of the translation was made from the second edition of the same Bible Society, London, 1826, 4to.; but the text of Leusden and Schaaf’s edition, Leyden, 1717, was everywhere consulted, and much use was made of their Latin translation of it. The pocket edition of Gutbir, Hamburgh, 1664, 12mo., was also generally consulted. The Lexicons constantly used throughout, were the Lexicon Syriacum Concordantiale in Nov. Testamentum of Charles Schaaf, Leyden, 1717, 4to.; the Lexicon Syriacum of Edmund Castell, revised and enlarged by J. D. Michaelis, Gottingen, 1788, 4to.; and the small Lexicon Syriacum in Nov. Testamentum of Giles Gutbir, bound up with his Syriac New Testament. The Grammars relied upon were, the elaborate Grammaticae Syriacae Libri iii. of Andr. Theoph. Hoffmann, Philos. et Theol. Doctor, Halle, 1827, 4to.; and the Elementarlehre der syrischen Sprache, by Prof. Fred. Uhlemann, Berlin, 1829, 8vo.

In this translation, the Books of the New Testament are divided into Paragraphs, according to the sense; just as in Campbell’s translation of the Four Gospels, and in the Greek Testaments of Bengel, Griesbach, Knapp, and others. The common divisions into Chapters and Verses are noted in the margin, and the Verses are also put in parentheses in the middle of the lines. For the benefit of those who have some knowledge of the Syriac language, the more important words are frequently placed in the side margin, with references to the corresponding words in the translation. Deviations of the Syriac text from the Greek, and also the susceptibilities of the Syriac words, or phrases, of a different rendering from that in the text, are likewise indicated in the side margin. The foot margin is reserved for occasional comments and critical observations.

The principles adopted in this translation, were:

(1) To translate, as literally as possible, in consistence with idiomatic and perspicuous English.
 (2) To use Saxon phraseology in preference to Latin, as better according with the spirit of the Peshitto original.

(3) To adopt the obsolescent and solemn style of the English Bible, e.g. thou speakest, he speaketh, ye speak, instead of you speak, he speaks, &c, as more seemly for this holy Book.

(4) To write the proper names of persons and places, which are mentioned in the Old Testament, as they are written in our English Old Testament; and those which occur only in the New Testament, as they are written in our English New Testament. This is the rule adopted by Dr. Campbell in his translation of the

Four Gospels. Yet **ܡܫܝܗܐ** (Meshihha) has been translated Messiah, and not Christ; and **ܫܡܥܘܢ** (Shemun) has been translated Simon, and not Peter.

(5) In general, to avoid using technical theological terms, when good substitutes could be found, in order to call away attention from the word to the thing thus **ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (an Apostle) is rendered Legate; and **ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (Saviour) is rendered Vivifier, as being more literal, for the verb **ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (especially in the Conjug. Aphel, **ܡܠܬܝܬܐ**) properly signifies to make alive, to vivify; and its derivatives **ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** and **ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** properly signify life, and life-giver, or vivifier. These are the usual terms of the Syriac version, denoting that salvation which Christ bestows on fallen men, who are represented as “dead in trespasses and sin.” The terms **ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (liberator, deliverer) and **ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (deliverance) are indeed sometimes used of this salvation, but less frequently.—Yet there is one family of Syriac technicals, which have been rendered by the English technicals for the same ideas, to the neglect of their primary meaning. They are **ܡܠܬܝܬܐ**, (properly, intransitive, to stand up, to stand firm,) which is translated, to be baptized:—**ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (literally, transitive, to cause another to stand to establish), translated, to baptize:—**ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (an establisher, one who makes others to stand), translated, a baptizer:—**ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** and **ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (a standing up), translated, baptism.

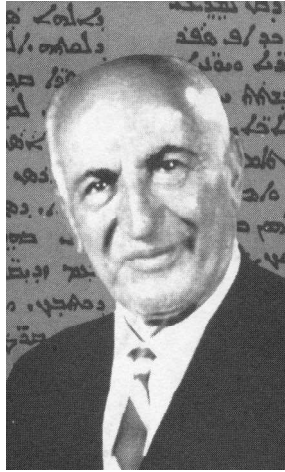
(6) To translate idiomatic phrases not fully naturalized in the English language, by equivalent English phrases, and not to transfer them in their foreign costume. Thus **ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (a feeder on detraction), an epithet of Satan, is translated a calumniator:—**ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (lord of enmity) is translated an enemy:—**ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (major-domus) is rendered, a steward:—**ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (mastership of the house) is rendered stewardship:—**ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (accepting faces) is rendered, having respect of persons, or partiality:—**ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (assumers of faces) is rendered hypocrites:—**ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (letting out breath), apologizing, or defending one’s self: and **ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (holding the Breath), being patient, or long suffering:—**ܡܠܬܝܬܐ** (living away from roofs, roaming in fields) are lunatics. So also many compounds of **ܡܠܬܝܬܐ**, a son, and of **ܡܠܬܝܬܐ**, a house or home, are paraphrased; e.g. son of his city, rendered, his fellow-citizen:—son of my yoke, rendered, my yoke-fellow, or colleague:—son of forty years, rendered, forty years old:—son of their trade, rendered, one of their occupation:—son of a man, rendered, a man:—sons of men, rendered men; &c. And house of the prisoners, translated, a prison:—house (home) of the dead, translated, a grave, or sepulchre:—house of gatherings, translated, a garner, or store-house:—house of the publicans, translated, a custom house:—house (home) of olives, translated, an olive yard:—house (home) of the eyes, translated, the forehead; &c.

When the translator had finished his work, he supposed that he had produced the only English translation of the New Testament ever made from the Peshitto; but after about three months, the London press issued a book, entitled, “A Literal Translation of the Four Gospels from the Peshitto, by J. W. Etheridge;” and announced, as in preparation, by the same author, “The Apostolical Acts and Epistles, from the Peshitto.” The Gospels of Mr. Etheridge were speedily procured; but, on comparing them with this version, the plan and aims of Mr. Etheridge were found to be so diverse from his own, that the translator had no hesitation in going forward with his work. Accordingly, he continued to revise and correct it; and, for the sake of improving it, as he found opportunity, he pursued the study of the Syriac language and literature, for more than four years. The result he now presents to the Christian public, hoping it may prove both interesting and useful to all such as are anxious to perfect themselves in the knowledge of the holy Scriptures of the New Testament.

JAMES MURDOCK.

New-Haven, July 23, 1851

Biography of George M. Lamsa



George M. Lamsa (August 5, 1892 - September 22, 1975) was born in a small village called Marbishu (Mar Behishu) which was located in the Kurdish mountains at the corner of southeast Turkey. His village was a few miles from the Iran and Iraq borders. He was the son of Jindo and Sarah. He had two sisters. The family last name was not known. His elementary education was at a small Presbyterian School and his secondary and post secondary education was at the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to Assyrian Christians school. He distinguished himself through his excellent work and good grades and as a result was able to get a job as a teacher. After a few years of teaching, he moved to a new school in Van (Turkey). He had to move around a number of times in response to the persecution of the Armenians which led up to the impending collapse of the Ottoman empire and the start of World War One. Finally in 1913, he had to flee local authorities in Istanbul who were sent to the University where he was employed. He traveled to Bulgaria and Italy and finally ended up in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In 1917, he earned enough money to emigrated to New York City. In 1919, he earned a scholarship to the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia, where he studied for three years. He then moved to Washington D.C., where, he assisted the Archbishop of Canterbury raise funds for the reconstruction of war-damaged schools in Turkey. In 1923, Lamsa was able to print his first book "The Secret of the Near East" this helped to promote his work with the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission in Turkey. His second book, "The Oldest Christian People" which was co-authored by William Chauncey Emhardt was published in 1926. William Chauncey Emhardt was the head of the Missions Committee of the Episcopal Church in the United States. Lamsa traveled and spoke promoting the cause of the Christians in the East through the Association Assyrian St. Ephram which was a group organized to raise money for the Christian refugees as a result of World War One. It was supported by the American Protestant Episcopal Church and various private donors, between 1927 and 1930 and was able to publish his third book, entitled "My Neighbor Jesus". He finished and published the four Gospels in 1933. It was published by the A.J Holman Publishing Company of Philadelphia. Lamsa continued to lecture at various churches and finished and published the entire New Testament in 1940. In the autumn of 1940, he began to translation the Old Testament. Lamsa was a student at Dropsie College of Hebrew and Cognate Learning between 1944-1945 but never received a degree. In 1957, when the entire Bible was published, his lecturing schedule greatly increased. He soon was spending much of his time giving radio interviews, speaking and traveling. Lamsa believed in the ecumenical Christian Church and accepted any and all invitations. He also tried to promote greater cooperation and understanding between Christians, Jews and Moslems. He died on September 22, 1975.



This symbol is the Aramaic character to designate Deity (Three Persons in One) and appears on most ancient Syriac manuscripts.

INTRODUCTION

When the King James Version was made, Europe was just emerging out of dark clouds. The political and religious situation was still chaotic. Nation after nation was eagerly striving for freedom. The ecclesiastical structure and its hierarchy were weakening under the impact of scientific and religious research. The time was ripe for a spiritual revival in all lands. There was also an eager demand for the Scriptures, and this was promptly met by devout scholars who offered translations.

These changes were largely stimulated by the industrial and commercial activities, which greatly incited hopes for a better understanding of the Orient and the world at large. Hitherto the East was practically unknown. Since the rise of Islam and the growth of the Turkish power, the East was isolated from Europe. It was this isolation which prompted Columbus to make his notable voyage in search of a way to the Orient and which resulted in the discovery of America. Indeed, there were but few adventurers who had crossed unknown seas and lands in search of fame and fortune. In those days travel was hazardous and expensive, and transportation was beset with severe difficulties. The world was uncharted and a few good roads were found only in some regions. The races of the Near East were, moreover, hostile to the peoples of Europe, due doubtless to the devastations caused by the Crusades in the name of Christ. Indeed, when a man undertook a long journey he was hardly expected to return alive. It took Marco Polo an Italian adventurer, twenty years to visit the great Khan in the Far East and return home. The delay was no doubt caused by wars, revolutions, lack of caravans, severe winters in the several countries through which he passed. While he was learning the Asiatic languages he forgot his own mother tongue.

It was only after the conquest of India by Great Britain and the rise of British power that any worthwhile contributions came from the Orient. In this particular period European nations were more interested in the search for gold and in acquiring new lands than in investigating the wisdom and religions of the East.

Under these circumstances, it is apparent how Eastern manners and customs continued to be as mysterious to the Occident, as those of the latter were to the Orient. Indeed, this strange misunderstanding still prevails. This is because Christianity is an Eastern religion and the Bible an Oriental book. This is why early and mediaeval artists portrayed Jesus and his disciples at the Last Supper, sitting on chairs at a luxurious table in the Western style; instead of sitting on the floor with their legs folded under them, their hats on their heads, their shoes removed, and a large tray containing two dishes, a few spoons and a jar of wine in front of them. These artists and authors of books were not aware that many things which were in good taste in the Occident were in bad form and even repulsive in the Orient. For instance, in the West men help and honor their wives; in the East wives are virtually the servants of their husbands, and never sit at a common meal with them. The Oriental retains his hat and removes his shoes when entering a house; this order is altogether reversed among Occidentals. In the East it would be scandalous to play music during the Church or Mosque services; the absence of music is almost inconceivable in Western services. If an Occidental observes an Oriental praying five times a day he would conclude that he is lazy or crazy; on the other hand, an Oriental is puzzled when the Occidental has to be urged to pray. Moreover, in some Eastern countries women are still purchased or acquired. Men often marry girls who are under age, but by an oral pledge the men do not take them as their wives until the age of maturity is reached. Wives are often driven out of their homes by their husbands with or without cause. All

this is totally different in Western lands where women are respected and have more to say than their husbands.

Indeed customs constituted a great barrier between the East and the West; to this was added the barrier of distance. This is one reason why so much misunderstanding exists between the Orient and the Occident. This is why some of the things in the Bible are magnified. For instance, the little lake in Galilee looks as if it was an enormous body of water, and the tiny boats appear as large ships. Tiny states of only a few square miles are regarded as kingdoms. Joshua conquered thirty-one kingdoms east of the Jordan, which had a territory of not more than a few hundred square miles, whose inhabitants were mostly shepherds and farmers (Joshua 12:24). Travellers are often disappointed when they see holy lands, which are so different to what they had pictured.

These and like differences illustrate the difficulties of Occidentals in understanding the languages and customs of Orientals. All the greater is our indebtedness to those translators of the Scriptures, who, in the face of unsurmountable difficulties, have given us versions which stand as monuments to their scholarship, zeal and devotion; and who challenge us to follow in their steps.

Prior to and since the Reformation many attempts have been made to translate the Holy Scriptures and to explain their message, which in the original language was simple and lucid; and to throw light on some obscure passages which have lost their original meaning when interpreted in terms of modern civilization and European customs. In spite of these numerous undertakings, the Bible still continues to perplex people. This fact explains why new translations of the Bible have continued to appear from time to time.

During all the centuries of scholarly endeavor and controversy the East has practically been silent. Hardly anything has been said for or against what the West has done with the Scriptures. This silence has been maintained from the days of Tatian, Ephraim SJyrus, and Narsis, Assyrian writers who were noteworthy commentators. The reason for this was not lack of interest in what constitutes the basic principles of religion and thought. It was rather due to certain unavoidable circumstances.

Eastern Christianity was prosecuting its work with vigorous enthusiasm, in the assured confidence that Christianity would soon become the universal religion in the East and the West. In those early days the Persian Empire alone had seven metropolitan provinces and eighty bishoprics, all the way from Armenia to India. Moreover, Christianity was winning favor in the eyes of the Persian Court. There was no thought that any reverses might interfere with the spread of the gospel message.

The horizon was then suddenly darkened by a cloud which appeared in South-west Arabia. The claims of Christianity and of the victorious Roman Empire were strenuously challenged. What at first appeared to the Christians as a despised heresy, espoused by a nomadic chief, assumed big proportions and vanquished the Christian forces in the East. Schools of Christian learning were closed, monasteries were deserted, churches were converted into mosques, books which did not agree with Moslem doctrines were burned, and writers of new books were punished. Christian scholars were conscripted to translate works of Greek and Syriac authors into Arabic, for propagating the new and militant faith of Islam, which was steadily ousting Christianity. Writers of commentaries, which even incidentally or unwittingly disagreed with the Koran, were promptly exiled or put to death. Christian authorship was under a severe ban. These unhappy events, accompanied with constant persecutions, put an end to any further attempts to throw light on the Holy Scriptures. In sheer destitution the Christians were ready to relinquish everything for the alternative of a restricted freedom to worship Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Although deprived of schools and learning, the teachings of Jesus were largely preserved by customs and practices, which Islam could not displace, and by copies of the Scriptures, which escaped destruction.

The providence of God, however, wrought an extraordinary miracle. Other Christian literature suffered, but the Gospels of Jesus stood unchallenged. Even though the Koran became the revered book of the Moslems, Mohammed (570-632 A.D.) accepted the Gospels as the veritable word of God, as also did his successors, and all Moslems throughout the world. However, the version of the Gospels, honored by Mohammedans, is not the Vulgate of the Western world, which they repudiate as second-hand and as an unreliable

translation. But it was the Eastern version of the Gospels, the Peshitta, which means clear, straight and popularly accepted. This name is justified by its clarity of style, directness of expression and simplicity of language. This was the version which the people of this region knew and used before they became Mohammedans. This is, moreover, the authentic and official version of what once constituted the original Eastern Church, the Mother Church of Christendom.

Years later when other peoples accepted Christianity, translations of the Peshitta were made into Greek, Armenian, Arabic, Persian, and other languages. Even the Christians of Malabar, India, who are known as the Christians of St. Thomas one of the apostles of our Lord, adopted the Peshitta from the earliest centuries. Indeed, it was the universally accepted version among all Christians in the East. And it has so continued down to the present day. Furthermore, the Eastern Christians never used the Vulgate Latin translation. It appeared in the East only after the coming of Western missionaries to the East a few decades ago, and it has been used by their converts.

The Eastern Version originally consisted of twenty-two books of the New Testament. The Revelation and the four Epistles of II Peter, II John, III John and Jude were not included. The Revelation was accepted after the Council of Nicaea, 325 A. D., but many of the Eastern bishops in Persia rejected it. The argument for priority on the basis of fewer books might be illustrated from the amendments to the Constitution of the United States. Suppose a thousand years hence two texts of this instrument were discovered, one containing the twelve early amendments and the other with twenty amendments, and these two texts were not dated. Surely the one with fewer amendments, even though a later copy of the original, would be accepted as the older, even though the other text with the twenty amendments was an earlier copy. Another argument for priority is that copies of the Eastern version, used for the training of the clergy, would suffer the loss of the first and last pages of the book by their careless handling and constant use of the book, and the date of their writing would become unknown. In the East when documents and books are worn out they are copied exactly and the originals are burned. This is due to the belief of the Eastern people that it is a sin to allow a book to fall to pieces. Then again, the dating of documents was unknown to earlier writers. Even if authors wished to date their writings, they would have hesitated because of the prejudice against dating them in the years of persecuting emperors, and because the teachings of Christianity were regarded as hostile to the Roman Empire. In such circumstances, even the authors of the Four Gospels omitted their names for fear of reprisals. Thus dates were not important. Furthermore, the originality of a document is not determined by the year but by the native context, the customs, the structure of the sentences, and the clarity of thought. That is to say, by internal and not external evidence.

It would seem that the appearance of other Aramaic versions, which differed from the Eastern Version, was due to the defeat of Rome and the treaty made by the Emperor Jovian with the Persian King Sapor (363 A.D.). By this pact Rome ceded five provinces in the Euphrates valley to Persia. The Christians of these provinces had hitherto been under Rome and subject to the ecclesiastical authority of Antioch. After the treaty they automatically came under the jurisdiction of the Eastern patriarch, whose See was at Seleucia, the imperial capital of the Persian Kings of the Sassanian dynasty. The patriarch of the East and his associates not only welcomed these Christian refugees, but also permitted them to use their own versions. These versions included portions of the New Testament not found in the Peshitta. This was doubtless due to the fact that such parts originated in the Eastern Roman Empire after the compilation of the Peshitta, and could not be sent to Persia because of the conflict which began soon after the death of Constantine and lasted for many years. It is unfortunate that these later versions, and the versions which the Jacobite Christians made in the fifth century, should be confused with the ancient Peshitta text, which was used in the native church of Persia, centuries before, and was quoted by Eastern writers of the second and third centuries.

Some illustrations of difficulties in translating the Aramaic text into Greek may interest the modern reader. These difficulties also prove the originality of the Eastern version.

(1) The Aramaic word for seed is *zara*, and the word for sower is *zarua*. The differences in the Aramaic formation of these words is so slight that the Greek translators overlooked and confused the word

“seed” with the word sower (Matt. 13:18). It reads “the parable of the seed” according to the Eastern version, and not “the parable of the sower,” according to the Western text. Such mistakes are unavoidable in a language like the Aramaic, where a word has many meanings and a dot misplaced altogether changes the meaning. This was especially true before vowel points were introduced, and when punctuation was not observed, and there was no uniformity in writing and copying.

(2) The Aramaic word *gamla* is the same word for “camel” and “a large rope.” Matt. 19:24 should read, “It is easier for a rope to go through a needle’s eye, etc.”

(3) The Aramaic word for a certain large piece of money called *Kakra*, talent, is like the word used for province. The difference is distinguished by a single dot, according to the letter over which it is placed. Thus ܕܠܕܐ means coin, and ܕܠܕܐ means province. The confusion is seen in the parable of the nobleman, who rewarded his servants not with coins but with cities, which is improbable (Luke 19:13,17,24). This error was no doubt due to a copyist who placed the dot over the wrong letter. Such an error could not have occurred in the Greek version if it was the original, because the Greek has two different words for coin and for city. Thus if the Peshitta was a translation from the Greek, the word would have been *medinata*, which means cities. In the case of the parable of the seed, likewise, it would have been “the parable of the sower.” This further proves that the Peshitta is consistent in its report of the teachings of Jesus, which harmonized with contemporary customs.

It is also of interest to note the differences between versions. In the Greek version of St. John 12:40, we read:

“He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart; and be converted, and I should heal them.”

The Eastern Version reads:

“Their eyes have become blind and their heart darkened, so that they cannot see with their eyes nor understand with their heart, let them return and I will heal them.”

The Aramaic word *avarō* means have become blind. The grammatical differences between “He made them blind” or “had become blind” is indicated by the final letter o which is the third person plural.

Furthermore, some Aramaic words were not translated into Greek because they were not clearly understood. Such words are *rakah*, to spit; *mammon*, wealth; *ethpatakh*, be opened. In other places Aramaic phrases are retained in their original form. Some Aramaic words, again, are translated to agree with the usage of the languages into which they were put. For instance, the Aramaic *tova*, means envied, expressing emulation, but it is translated “blessed” in the Beatitudes, for which the Aramaic is *brekha*. This word “blessed” and a few others are retained by me in this translation because there are no equivalents to express their meanings. On the other hand, some of the Aramaic colloquial and idiomatic expressions could hardly be translated into other languages without the loss of thought.

It is a well known fact that languages undergo changes. Many words become obsolete and lose their meaning, especially when translated into other languages expressing different cultures. These original meanings could often be obtained by examining the phraseology and thought conveyed by the words. For instance, medical terms were unknown in the East, and even today they are little known. Indeed, the people still use ancient terms when describing various diseases. An insane man is called *dewana*, which literally means that he is possessed of a devil, or has become wild. Mark 1:34, according to the King James Version, reads that Jesus “suffered not the devils to speak because they knew him”; the Aramaic is that “he did not allow the insane to speak,” after he had healed them, “because some of these were his acquaintances,” and he did not want them to praise him. Mark 9:17 states that the boy had “a dumb spirit”; it means that this particular disease had

caused dumbness in the boy and not that the spirit was dumb. Luke 11:14, in the King James Version, states that Jesus “was casting out a devil and it was dumb”; the Eastern version, which reflects the Aramaic style of speech, states that Jesus “was casting out a demon from a dumb man.” In Luke 4:41, in the King James Version, “the devils came out of many, crying out and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God”; the translation from the Aramaic is, “demons also came out of many, who cried out saying, You are the, Christ the Son of God”; the sick did this after they were healed. It is hardly credible that the devils, who were cast out, would acknowledge Jesus as the Christ.

It is interesting to know that Eastern people still believe that every sickness is caused and controlled by demons. This crude belief is no doubt due to the fact that the actual causes of diseases were not known. Such beliefs, in demonology are found not only among Semites but among all peoples living even today under primitive conditions, in Asia as well as in Europe and the United States. We are, however, grateful to science and truth for demonstrating that diseases are due to physical and nervous causes, delusions and fears, and have nothing to do with demons and evil spirits.

There are other instances which cause confusion when taken literally. The Aramaic *al* means “enter into,” “attack,” “chase”; but it has been exclusively translated “enter into,” so as to imply, as in Matthew 8:31, that the demons entered into the swine. According to the context and the style of Aramaic speech, the word *al* here means that, not the demons but the lunatics attacked the swine. These lunatics were Syrians or Gadarenes, whose people kept swine, which were an abomination to the Jews. Jesus was a Jewish prophet. As a mark of appreciation of what Jesus was doing for them and as a proof of their conversion, these lunatics were willing to destroy the herd of swine which belonged to their people. This was doubtless one reason why the owners of the swine got into a panic and urged Jesus to leave their land, lest their business be completely destroyed by more conversions to the Jewish faith. On the other hand, the demons did not need the permission of Jesus to enter into the swine any more than they needed any permission to enter into the lunatics.

This word *al* is still used when it is said that “the oxen are entering into each other,” or, “the men are entering into each other,” where the reference is to their attacking one another in a fight. So also when a wolf attacks a fold, it is still said that “the wolf has entered into the sheep.”

There are similar difficulties in the matter of colloquialisms. “He breathed on them,” means that he stimulated their courage (John 20:22). “The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up” means the zeal for your house has made me courageous (John 2:17). Such difficulties are also evident in American colloquialisms, which could hardly be translated into Eastern languages. In English the word fire has several meanings, such as “to set fire to a house,” “to fire a gun,” “to fire a worker.” In the last instance, an Eastern, unfamiliar with American customs, would understand that the worker was either burned or shot instead of being dismissed.

A comparison between the Aramaic and Greek texts, in the light of the above illustrations, cannot but lead to the conclusion in favor of the Aramaic origin of the Gospels. The strongest argument, however, offering indisputable evidence, is that our Lord and his disciples spoke Aramaic. It was also the language of the Church in Jerusalem, Syria, and Mesopotamia. The “Hebrew tongue” means Aramaic, in which St. Paul spoke to the people of Jerusalem, and in which the ascended Jesus spoke to Saul on his way to Damascus (Acts 21:40; 22:2; 26:14). Indeed, this was the Apostle’s mother tongue in which he prayed and expressed his deepest emotions. Compare Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6; I Corinthians 16:22, where occur such Aramaic words as *abba*, father, and *marana tha*, O Lord come.

Even so far back as the seventh century B. C., Aramaic was the language of communication for commerce and diplomacy between the nations in Mesopotamia, Asia Minor and Palestine (cf. 2 Kings 18:26). The Greeks referred to this language as Syriac, because they confused Syria which is in the north of Palestine, with Assyria which is a totally different country between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, east of Syria. This confusion exists even today in the United States. It is moreover a historical fact that Aramaic was the colloquial and literary language of Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, from the fourth century B. C. to the ninth century A. D. After the Assyrian and Babylonian exile, Hebrew ceased to be spoken and gave way to

Aramaic, which became the widely prevalent popular language. Jewish writers, from the days of Nehemiah and Ezra, wrote in Aramaic. This is further seen in the books of Daniel, the Psalter, and in the composition of other Old Testament books. Attempts were made to restore Hebrew by some Jewish scholars, who warned the people that the angels do not understand prayers offered in Aramaic and would therefore be handicapped in acting as their mediators with God. Other Jewish scholars defended Aramaic against such criticisms, adding that God himself spoke to Adam in Aramaic, and that Abraham was an Aramaean. Jacob's children were born and raised in Assyria, and later sojourned in Canaan, after which they migrated with him to Egypt.

During the reigns of the Achaemenian dynasty in Persia, beginning with Cyrus, 528 B. C., Aramaic was used as the official language for correspondence between the kings and their provincial governors as far as Egypt. As a matter of fact, Jewish literature after Christ was written mainly in Aramaic, and works in Hebrew were translated into Aramaic. Josephus, the Jewish historian, used Hebrew and Aramaic words indiscriminately. This is because Hebrew was an Aramaic dialect, and the differences between them were largely in matters of pronunciation rather than of meaning. After the destruction of the second Temple, the Jews became wholly an Aramaic-speaking people, and Hebrew became the language of the scholars.

Greek was seldom spoken except by the cultured few and by government officials. Indeed, the Jews obstinately resisted every attempt at Hellenization, as the Maccabean struggle clearly indicates. The brief Greek rule over Syria and Mesopotamia might be compared with British rule in India, Mesopotamia and Palestine. British officers, governors and soldiers invariably acquire the native languages, but only a few natives know English. Some natives who do not speak English nevertheless adopt English names, such as George, Smith, Victoria, Henry. Their purpose in doing so is to win favor with their rulers. The same was true during the Greek conquest. Jews and Syrians adopted Greek names without necessarily implying that they used the Greek language in daily intercourse. The same course was followed by the Jews during the Babylonian exile. The Jews adopted Babylonian names. This custom is no doubt confusing to the Western mind, unfamiliar with the characteristic temperament of the Oriental. The Assyrians, for many centuries, have been ruled by Turkey, but they still speak and write their own language. A few Assyrians speak Turkish when dealing with officials of the government.

It is furthermore significant that the Aramaic text contains not a single reference to the Greek people. The Greek text of St. John's Gospel mentions that some "Greeks" desired to see Jesus (12:20). The word in the Eastern Version is *ammey* people, and the reference is to Gentile Idumaeans and Syrians. The woman of Zarepath was a Syrian, according to the Eastern version, and not a Greek (Luke 4:26). These changes were probably made by the Greek translators, who wished to introduce some references to their own people in the Gospels. The Aramaic word for Greek is *Yonaye* (Cf. Ionian), but it never occurs in the Gospels, except in the single reference to the Greek language in the inscription on the Cross. Nor is there any mention of Greek culture, philosophy or customs, proving that they did not influence Jesus and his disciples, nor the early Christians.

The first Greek text of any importance was introduced by Erasmus to the Western world in 1516. In the preparation of this edition he had only ten manuscripts, the oldest of which belonged to the twelfth century. He did not know Aramaic nor had he access to any other than the above Greek manuscripts. Indeed, at this time the East was practically unknown. It thus happened that Greek became known in Europe as the original language in which the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament were written. As much is implied by the translators of the King James version in their little known Preface, which sets forth the circumstances that induced their undertaking. But facts hitherto unknown and now uncovered lead to a totally different conclusion.

It is important to know that the Eastern version, the first compilation of the New Testament scriptures, was made in Edessa. This was the capital of the buffer state of Ur-Hai, near Harran, where Aramaic was the spoken language. This state exchanged hands during the conflicts between the Roman and Persian Empires. From the fourth century, however, it had a type of Christianity, which was independent of Western influence. But Christianity was established here long before that time. The Church in Edessa was founded by Addai or

Thaddeus, one of the Twelve who was sent to that city as a missionary; and St. Thomas, another of the apostles of our Lord, later went through that region. This city moreover was the center of Syriac learning and literature from earliest times, so that it justifiably won the title of the "Athens of Syria." In course of time it became the seat of Christian scholarship under the leadership of St. Ephraim, who there founded a school or university. But even before his day the Gospels were well known in Mesopotamia and Persia, according to the testimony of Eusebius, who made quotations from the Aramaic writings of Hegesippus the defender of Christianity against Gnosticism. This is furthermore substantiated by the edition of the Gospels called the Diatessaron, prepared by Tatian an Assyrian, who lived in Mesopotamia about 172" A. D. But this compilation by Tatian was repudiated and copies burned.

Unfortunately those who associate the Aramaic text of the Peshitta with Rabbulas, bishop of Edessa in 435 A. D., overlook the fact that there were many bishops of this flourishing church at Edessa and Persia before he was born. How could these men have been elevated to the Episcopal See without written gospels, and how could Christianity have been propagated and survived throughout the East without the Scriptures? Rabbulas furthermore was an anti-Nestorian. If he had translated the gospels from the Greek, he would surely have included the Revelation, and the four omitted epistles of II Peter, II and III John, and Jude, and made the Eastern version to correspond with the Vulgate. But such was not the case. The version which existed before his day is known in some places as the Old Syriac. This is another name for the Peshitta because at this time Peshitta had already become old. Its origin is lost in obscurity, and references to this ancient version have doubtless been confused with another version called the *Damparshey*, derived from the Aramaic *parash* to select, and which was used as a lectionary. The existence of the Edessene Church from apostolic times and the venerable age of its Scriptures leads to the conclusion that the Aramaic version was a spontaneous growth, and that Edessa was the logical place for this growth. It might be said that this is merely tradition. But is not tradition another word for history? It is the living voice of the past conserving the values of its wisdom and experience, especially as during persecutions books were destroyed and burned. If we discount this voice then the past becomes a closed door, and we have no key to open it in the East or the West.

The original language of the Gospels therefore is the native Galilean Aramaic, the vernacular of northern Palestine, and not the Chaldean Aramaic which was spoken in southern Palestine. It was the same language that was spoken by the Assyrians, who were brought to the cities of Samaria and Galilee by the Assyrian kings after the ten tribes were carried into captivity (II Kings, 17:24 ff.). The manner of speech, the phraseology, the idioms, the orientation in the Gospels are vividly and distinctively northern Aramaic. Parables and allegories are all derived from Semitic customs, and there is no reference to incidents from alien sources. The constant repetitions are characteristic of Oriental usage. Such phrases as, "*Amen Amen amar na Lkhon*," "Truly, truly, I say unto you," "In those days," "And it came to pass," "And he said to them," are peculiarly Aramaic. Then again the original has fewer words because the thought is conceived in the native tongue and easily expressed to the people of the same language. This is not the case with a translation which of necessity must use more words to convey the meaning. Consider the first clause of our Lord's Prayer. The Aramaic uses two words, *Avon dvashmaya*; the Greek uses six words, *Pater hemon ho en tois ouranois*, as also does the English, "Our Father who art in heaven." If the Eastern text was a translation from the Greek, more words would have been used in the Aramaic, and the translation would have had obscure and confusing phrases. This is not the case with the Peshitta, which consistently sustains its title as "clear." A translation frequently misses the real meaning of the original and often has to use synonyms to bring out shades of meaning. This is obvious to me because for years I have translated letters and documents for the United States Government and for several institutions. It is therefore easy from constant practice to say whether a writing is a translation or written in the original, especially in the case of my mother tongue the Aramaic.

It is also worth noting that the Eastern version retains all the Semitic names in their original form and pronunciation, which correspond with the Hebrew names. Compare the names in Matthew, Ch. 1 and Luke Ch. 3 in the original Aramaic text. Another interesting fact is that the Eastern version in referring to Peter always

speaks of him as Simon and at times as Simon Kepa, (Stone). It was natural for the Greek translators to use only the Greek term, thus translating the Aramaic word *Kepa* into the Greek word *Petrus*. Contemporary issues moreover are not considered in detail as they were not raised at the time. Our Gospels are only an outline of the teaching of Jesus. If they were written outside the Semitic atmosphere and its related situations, the writers would doubtless have furnished explanations, and the gospel narratives would have been much longer. But such a course was superfluous. A Greek writer would have made comparisons between Semitic and Greek culture and customs, thus making them clearer to Greek readers.

The Gospels were written much earlier than they are supposed to have been. If they were of a late date the writers would not have been able to make direct and accurate quotations, as is done in the Sermon on the Mount and other sayings of Jesus. The nearest and shortest way to trace the authorship of the Gospels and the place they were written is to rely upon internal evidence.

The writers must have been Jews for they are familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures and with customs and manners, such as the passover and other festivals, as well as with the topography of Palestine. The authors wrote to their contemporaries. This is why they did not stress the general issues because the public knew them. Had the Gospels been written at a later date, the writers would have undoubtedly explained some of the issues, such as head-tax, Messianic expectations, etc., and the documents would have been much longer than they are. The opening sentences in St. Luke's gospel clearly implies that there were many other gospels written on scrolls and extensively circulated, and that they were the work of eye-witnesses who knew Jesus and who were associated with him. The place where these writings were produced must have been either Palestine or Edessa, the two great centers where Aramaic was spoken. On the other hand, there is no reason why these Aramaic speaking countries should have their sacred scriptures written in a language which was alien to them. The evidence therefore is convincing and conclusive for an Aramaic original, and this is none other than the Peshitta.

My present translation is not intended to depreciate the noble work of European and American scholars, whom I hold in the highest esteem. My purpose is to present the thought and accuracy of the Eastern version while retaining its simplicity and directness, and reproducing as nearly as possible the shades of meaning in the original. Another purpose is to present the Eastern understanding of Jesus, as it is enshrined in the accepted version of the Four Gospels. It is moreover endorsed by the traditions and history of a people, distinguished by the sacrificial blood of martyrdoms, which date back to apostolic times and flows even to the present day. Though poor and reduced in numbers by incessant privations, these people once constituted what was recognized as the Mother Church. Today they are the only pure Semitic people in the Christian fold. They still speak the Aramaic language of our blessed Lord and Saviour with only a few inevitable changes, and they have retained the ancient and original version of the Holy Scriptures, without the change of revision. This has been endorsed by recent archaeological discoveries. With such a rich legacy they surely have the right to speak for themselves.

It is therefore a sacred privilege which has induced me, who belongs to this people, humbly to submit this translation to the fair judgment of Western people. I am happy to say that this is the first translation into English made from the Eastern version by a native, who was born and raised in a land where Aramaic continues to be spoken, as in the days of the first Christian century. The gratifying reception given my book, *My Neighbor Jesus*, encouraged me to believe that this translation of the Four Gospels would make the fair figure of Jesus more attractive and his teachings more acceptable.

My thanks are due to the Rev. Oscar L. Joseph, Litt. D., an American scholar and author whose literary counsel is valued by leading publishers. He has helped in the choice of English so as to make it exact and lucid.

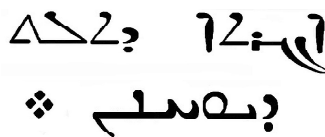
It is with filial gratitude I hereby acknowledge my indebtedness to the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission College in Urumiah, Persia, and to the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, from both of which I graduated. Words are inadequate to express my deep appreciation of many American friends who

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George M. Lamsa.

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THE THIRD EPISTLE OF
JUHANON.

The Third Epistle of John.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF
JOHN

THE presbyter unto Gaios my beloved, whom I love in truth. Our beloved, in all things I pray for thee, that thou mayest prosper and be healthful, even as thy soul prospereth. For I have rejoiced greatly when the brethren have come, and have testified concerning thy integrity, even as in the truth thou walkest. And greater joy than this I have not (than) when I hear that my sons walk in the truth.

Our beloved, in faithfulness thou performest what thou doest unto the brethren, and especially to those who are strangers, who have testified of thy charity, before all the church, to whom thou hast done well according to that which is worthy of Aloha. For after his name they went forth, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may be helpers of the truth.

I would have written to the church; but he who loveth to be foremost¹ of you, Diotrapas, receiveth us not. On account of this, if I come, I will remember the works which he doeth, who words of evil maketh concerning us; and these not satisfying him, he hath not received the brethren, and those who receive he forbiddeth, and also expelleth from the church. Our beloved, be not imitative of the evil, but of the good. He who doeth good

THE Elder,^a to my beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. (2) Our beloved; in all things, I pray for thee that thou mayest prosper and be in health, as thy soul doth prosper. (3) For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified concerning thy integrity, even as thou walkest in the truth. (4) And I have no greater joy, than to hear that my children walk in the truth. (5) Our beloved, thou doest in faith, what thou performest towards the brethren; and especially towards strangers, (6) who have borne testimony to thy charity before the whole church, to whom thou doest good, as is pleasing to God. (7) For they went forth in behalf of his name, taking nothing of the Gentiles. (8) We therefore ought to receive such persons, that we may be aiders of the truth.

9. I was desirous of writing to the church; but he who loveth to be foremost among them, Diotrephes, receiveth us not. (10) Therefore, if he come, remember those his doings, that he treated us with malignant words; and this not sufficing him, he received not the brethren; and those who would receive [them], he prohibited, and even ejected them from the church. (11) Our beloved, be not a follower^b of what is evil, but of what is good. He that doeth good, is of

THE elder, to the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Our beloved, I pray above all things, that you may prosper and be in good health, even as your soul prospers. 3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified concerning the truth that is in you, even as you live a true life. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children follow the truth. 5 Our beloved, you do faithfully that which you do to the brethren, especially to those who are strangers; 6 Who have borne witness concerning your love before the whole church: for the good things which you have done for them by supplying their needs, as is pleasing to God, 7 Because they have gone forth for his name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. 8 We, therefore, ought to welcome such, so that we may be fellow helpers to the truth.

9 ¶ I wrote to the church, that Diot're-phes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, would not receive us. 10 Therefore, if I come, I will mention his deeds which he did, gossiping against us with malicious words: and not content, with this, he not only did not receive the brethren, but also forbade those who would like to receive them, and cast them out of the church. 11 Our beloved, do not follow that which is evil, but that which is good. He who does good

¹Kadmoyo.^aSy. ܐܠܗܐ^bor, imitator.

ETHERIDGE

is of Aloha, and he who doeth evil hath not seen Aloha.

Concerning Demetrios is a testimony from every man, and from the church, and from the truth itself. But we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.

I have many things which I would write to thee, but I will not with ink and reed write to thee. But I hope that soon I shall see thee, and mouth to mouth we will speak. Peace be with thee. The friends ask thy peace. Ask the peace of the friends each by his name.

Finished is the Third Epistle of Juhanon.

MURDOCK

God; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.—(12) Of Demetrius, there is good testimony from every one, and from the church, and from the truth itself: and we also bear [him] testimony, and ye know that our testimony is true.

13. I had many things to write to thee; but I will not write [them] to thee with ink and pen.^c (14) But I hope soon to see thee, and to converse mouth to mouth. Peace be with thee.— The friends salute thee. Salute the friends, severally, by name.

End of the third Epistle of John the Legate.

LAMSA

is of God: but he who does evil has not seen God. 12 De-me'tri-us has good report of all men, and of the church, and of the truth itself: yea, we also testify for him; and we know that our testimony is true.

13 ¶ I had many things to I write, but I do not want to write them to you with ink and pen: 14 But I trust I shall shortly see you, and we shall speak face to face. 15 Peace be to you. Our friends salute you. Salute the friends every one by his name.

The Second and Third Epistles of John are not included in the text which is called Peshitta, but are included in other old texts.

^cSy. *reed*.