

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Aramaic New Testament, Estrangelo Script, Based on the Peshitta and Harklean Versions.* Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1983. xxi + 524 pp. \$24.95.

The unique feature of this new edition of the Syriac NT is that it has been produced with the help of a computer. It is printed in a very beautiful, newly designed Estrangela script, whose appearance is qualitatively identical to typeset Syriac texts from major publishers.

The volume begins with a preface (pp. vii-viii), followed by a two-page introduction in English (pp. ix-x), and its translation into German, French, and Spanish (pp. xi-xxi). The Syriac text occupies the remainder of the book, 524 pages.

The purpose of the publication is stated in the preface by V. P. Wierville: "to make available this Peshitta version of the Aramaic Bible as an aid to Biblical research scholarship in reconstructing the original of God's revelation, the Scriptures" (p. vii). After relating his long-time cooperation with G. Lamsa, Wierville states that "his [Lamsa's] knowledge of textual history plus the findings of other twentieth-century scholars indicated that Aramaic rather than Greek was the original language of the New Testament. Aramaic was the native language spoken by Jesus Christ and his apostles. It was the lingua franca of the ancient Near East. Yet the dominating influence of Greek in the West has obscured the importance and vitality of the ancient Aramaic texts until recently. Because of the immense importance of this printed edition of the Aramaic text in Estrangelo characters, we trust it will be an aid in the advancement of Biblical scholarship. The concordance and lexicon which are forthcoming will be further steps in elucidating this ancient text and helping us to recover the original message of God's Word" (pp. vii-viii). Thus, we can see that this edition is intended to give new fuel to the discussion of the Aramaic origin of the NT. The present review limits itself to finding out whether or not this edition is a capable tool to help us reach a decision in this matter.

From the unfortunately too-short introduction we learn that the editors catalogued 600 Aramaic manuscripts. It is not clear whether they all are NT manuscripts. Whatever the case may be, only four British-Museum manuscripts form the basis of the Peshitta portion of the edition: Add. 14,453 for Matt 6:25 to end of John; Add. 14,470 for Matt 1:1-6:25, Acts 10:21-12:4, Rom 1:1-1:18; Add. 14,473 for Acts 1:1-10:21, 12:4 to end,

James, 1 Peter, 1 John; Add. 14,475 for Rom 1:19 to end, 1 Corinthians through Hebrews.

No criteria are given why these particular manuscripts have been chosen from among other possible manuscript alternatives. It seems that the preference of the unnamed editors was for early (i.e., fifth-sixth-century) manuscripts. It is unstated why some earlier chapters of Romans and nearly the entire book of Hebrews were selected from the tenth-century portion of manuscript Add. 14,475 (the dating is that given by W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, part 1 [1870], p. 87), and not from other earlier manuscripts at our disposal.

The introduction also mentions that the Harklean version has been used for the remainder of the NT books—2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude according to John Gwynn, *Remnants of the Later Syriac Versions of the Bible* (1909); and Revelation from John Gwynn, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (1897), citing the Crawford manuscript.

The decisive feature of this edition is the lamentable absence of a critical apparatus. In this regard, it shares the place with other presently available Syriac Bible editions such as the one by Samuel Lee, the Urmia and Mosul editions, and the NT in Syriac by the British and Foreign Bible Society prepared by G. H. Gwilliam. For the Gospel portion, Gwilliam made use of the text he established in his critical edition of the Gospels, *Tetraeuangelium Sanctum* (1901). The difference as compared to these editions is that the present edition follows specific manuscripts which are readily available on microfilm. At least, we need not guess as to the manuscript background. From the introduction, it appears that the text printed in any given portion is that of *one single* manuscript, except where it is defective.

The printed text has some peculiarities. Apart from the dots differentiating Rēsh and Dālath and the plural dots, there is no other diacritical point or accent/punctuation mark in the entire NT. Why these have been left out can only be guessed. Possibly no rules were formulated as to what to include or to exclude, and the shifts in manuscripts would have made evident the manuscripts' varying pointing preferences and given the edition an uneven appearance. Or, it may have been decided to give the text an older, "pre-diacritical" appearance by leaving the diacritics and punctuation marks out. The net result is the same ambiguity which has troubled the ancient native Syrian writers and which has led to the creation of these reading helps. To leave out the accents and diacritics means that we deprive ourselves of the particular understanding of the Syriac text as perceived by writer and/or copyist. Further, it makes some aspects of the Syriac verbal system more difficult to discern and to evaluate (along the lines of F. Rundgren, "Das altsyrische Verbalsystem," *Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift* 11 [1960]: 49-75) when no differentiation between the homographs p<sup>cc</sup>al pt sg m and p<sup>cc</sup>al pf sg 3m is indicated. For comparison, it should be noted that the Peshitta Institute in Leiden, The Netherlands, has allowed

for their Syriac OT the practical minimum of homograph differentiation: a dot above the word in the case of demonstratives which can be confused with independent personal pronouns, p<sup>ca</sup>l pt sg m, the pronominal suffix sg 3f ם, and when needed for the intensive conjugations and for other homographs whose meaning from the context is not clear. Punctuation is reduced to a single dot. This or a similar procedure, even if not perfectly ideal, would do more justice to the scriptural heritage of the Syrian church. For unvowelled reading training, however, this present edition is an excellent tool.

The reviewer has checked the work in a few passages in Revelation (1:10, 7:2-9, 13:8). The Crawford manuscript printed in Gwynn's edition of the Apocalypse has been used (the same as used by the editors). In addition, manuscript Mardin Orth. 35, published by A. Vööbus, *The Apocalypse in the Harklean Version* (1978) has been collated. Both manuscripts come from approximately the same period (twelfth-thirteenth century). Only the most important variants are quoted to illustrate the point, the remainder being merely summarized. The following sigla are used in the review: "A" for the printed text of the edition reviewed, "C" for the Crawford manuscript underlying the edition in Revelation, "M" for the manuscript Mardin Orth. 35. Additional qualifiers following "C" and "M" denote whereon my observations are based: "(facs)" when using the photographic reproductions in the books, "(print)" when using the typeset text in Gwynn's edition, "(text)" when referring to the reading in the text of "M," "(marg)" when referring to the marginal reading of "M" varying from the reading of the text of "M."

The following findings emerged:

1) Differences exhibited by "C" and "M"

Rev. 1:10	C(print) A	ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܗܝܘܠܘܬܐ ܕܝܘܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ	"on the first day of the week"
	M(facs, text)	ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܝܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ	"on the Lord's day"
	M(facs, marg) (sic)	ܩܘܪܝܢܐ	"on the first day of the week"
Rev. 7:2	C(facs) A	ܫܘܠܬܐ	"seal"
	M(facs)	ܠܒܬܐ	"seal" } synonyms were used
	C(facs) A	ܩܘܠܐ	"raised"/"loud" (voice)
	M		omitted
Rev. 7:4	C(facs) A	ܩܘܠܠܐ ܕܗܘܢܐ ܩܘܠܠܐ ܕܗܘܢܐ	"the number of the sealed ones"
	M(facs)	ܩܘܠܠܐ ܕܗܘܢܐ ܩܘܠܠܐ ܕܗܘܢܐ	"the number of those who have been sealed"

The substantivated passive participle in C has been expressed by a demonstrative followed by a relative clause in M.



presently available editions of the Syriac NT. Most of the variants quoted above illustrate the futility of an edition without a critical apparatus. The whole spectrum of Syriac biblical text transmission can only be observed through a critical edition involving all manuscripts up to at least the twelfth-thirteenth century. Manuscripts after that date exhibit predominantly inner-Syriac variants, but there are exceptions to that rule. Without a fully reliable variant documentation, studies in manuscript relationship and translation techniques cannot easily be made. Nor is it possible to discuss meaningfully an Aramaic *Vorlage* of the NT, as the editors look forward to doing.

I would suggest that as a matter of high priority a list of NT Syriac manuscripts be published, similar to what has been done by the Peshitta Institute in Leiden, for the OT manuscripts. Also, textual reasons should be given for an inclusion or exclusion of particular manuscripts, for age alone is not the determining factor for the authority of a manuscript, neither is its script.

In conclusion, it may be said that the computer is a welcome tool in any undertaking of a critical edition in order to manipulate the myriads of details, also to make print in non-Latin alphabets available at affordable prices in combination with a pleasant aesthetic appearance. The team can be congratulated for that. However, in serious research, especially when involving controversial issues, we must use all known and accessible data. This text edition unfortunately gives less data in those portions of the NT where critical editions exist. As compared to these, the present work is a leap backward. When it comes to the portions of the NT for which there are no critical editions, the microfilms of the manuscripts used in this edition will give more information. The greatest desideratum in Syriac NT studies is an up-to-date critical edition covering the entire NT. Let us concentrate time, talents, and funds on that.

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Cassidy, Richard J., and Scharper, Philip J., eds. *Political Issues in Luke-Acts*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983. ix + 180 pp. \$16.95/\$9.95.

Encouraged by the interest in, and the positive response to, the publication *Jesus, Politics, and Society*, its author, Richard Cassidy, and Philip Scharper from Orbis Books planned the present volume. *Political*