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The following review of George M. Lamsa's Holy Bible from the Peshitta is taken from the March-April 1962 issue of the CHURCH QUARTERLY REVIEW, published by Princeton University.

THE SYRIAC BIBLE

THE HOLY BIBLE FROM THE PESHITTA. By GEORGE M. LAMSA. Collins.
45s.

This work is a translation into English of the Peshitta, the authorized version of the Bible of the Syriac speaking churches. It should be of interest to those who wish to read that version of the Bible and note such readings as differ from our own. But Mr Lamsa's claims that these readings are the original text are totally unacceptable. Such claims flout all the canons of textual criticism. Its very high price will probably place the book outside the reach of the general reader which is perhaps, not entirely a bad thing because this book cannot but give a misleading impression. It is not what it claims to be, the Bible of the East. It is the Old and New Testaments of the Protestant canon translated from Syriac manuscripts with the books printed in the order of the Protestant canon. But Mr Lamsa himself, in his introduction states that the Peshitta canon contains the books of the Apocrypha and it is a commonplace of scholarship that the Peshitta canon of the New Testament omitted 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and the Apocalypse. Where these books are found in Syriac they are later than the Peshitta. Again this book claims to be a translation "from ancient Eastern Manuscripts". Yet, for instance, the standard Syriac New Testament published by the British and Foreign Bible Society notes that Acts 8. 37, 15. 34, and 28. 29 are never found in any Syriac manuscript but were added to the text for the first time in sixteenth-century printed editions. Mr Lamsa prints each of these verses in its place without comment. Lastly, the translation reads like an adaptation of the English authorized version rather than an independent translation; and random checks did not make for confidence in the accuracy of the translation. It seemed much more a paraphrase. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 13 Mr Lamsa translates, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love in my heart, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling symbol." The one difference here which might indicate a different textual tradition is "in my heart" for which phrase the underlying Syriac is "bi". The book is beautifully printed and bound but for all that hardly good value at forty-five shillings.

J. ROBINSON

written a book which will be both informative and helpful for the laity.

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FREE BIBLE

The Holy Bible from Ancient Eastern Manuscripts, Containing the Old and New Testaments Translated from the Peshitta, The Authorized Bible of the Church of the East. By GEORGE M. LAMSA. Philadelphia: A. J. Llanman Company, 1957. xix + 1243 pages. \$12.50.

This translation, in modified KJV phraseology, is hardly a significant monument in the history of Bible translations. The uninformed reader who cannot check the translation against the "original" Syriac might have been more impressed had the author omitted his Introduction. Despite a superficial flavor of learning, the Introduction contains numerous scholarly absurdities. The publishers' readers should have caught the author's error in affirming that the style of Shakespeare, who died in 1616, could not have been what it was without the beauty of the King James Version. The author credits the Assyrians, who invented neither the alphabet nor the cuneiform script, which was not alphabetic, with the invention of the alphabet. Among his many incredible assumptions is that Aramaic was the language of the Patriarchs, that the word "Hebrew" has an Aramaic etymology, that such names as Manasseh, Ephraim, Bar-Nun (sic!), and Miriam are of Aramaic origin, that the Gospels and Epistles were originally written in Aramaic, that Jesus and his disciples never heard Greek spoken, that the Qumran Commentary on Habakkuk (in Hebrew!) proves that "Aramaic has been in use from earliest times to the present day," and that "all the Peshitta texts in Aramaic agree."

The author avoids the commonly accepted term Syriac to designate the language of the Peshitta, intent on minimizing the differences

between Western and Eastern Aramaic. He ignores the fact that the Syriac text did not and could not have originated in Palestine, for it is different from the Palestinian Aramaic now much better known to us from the Qumran scrolls (although not from the Commentary on Habakkuk!). Contrary to Lamsa, the word "Peshitta" does not mean "the original," but rather the simple, common, popular version; it is parallel in meaning to "Vulgate" (Latin *vulgata*, common, public). At times Lamsa seems to presume that the translators of the English Bible used a Syriac text from which to translate (see the section "Words Resembling One Another"), and even to presume the chronological priority of the Syriac texts over the Hebrew O.T. text. His suggestion that in Isa. 14:12 the "Aramaic" *ailal*, to howl, is confused with the Hebrew *helel*, light, is too absurd to deserve comment.

The translation itself leaves much to be desired, despite the recommendations of such persons as Norman Vincent Peale and Daniel Poling, who hardly qualify as experts in Syriac. One outstanding biblical scholar who is at home in the field has found more than 60 incorrect renderings in three chapters, arbitrarily chosen. The reviewer has spot-checked the translation against the Urmia text of the Peshitta. It would appear that Lamsa, in using the KJV as his literary pattern, at times follows the KJV to the extent that he renders not the Syriac but the Hebrew. For instance, in Ps. 90:9 KJV reads: "For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told." Lamsa reads: "For all our days are passed away in thy wrath; we spend our years in emptiness." By contrast, the Urmia edition of the Peshitta is to be translated: "For all our days are spent (*gmruw*) in thy wrath, and our years are spent (*gmruw*) as a whisper." Unlike the Peshitta, the Hebrew text uses two different verbs and the second is first person plural, as reflected in the KJV rendering. The reviewer has not checked

Codex Ambrosianus, but Lamsa argues the agreement of the Peshitta texts. Note also Amos 8:3, KJV "and every one mourn that dwelleth therein," Lamsa "and every one mourn who dwells in it," but the Urmia Peshitta "and all its inhabitants shall sit in mourning." In the same verse the Peshitta reads "its end," but Lamsa "the end." In Hos. 7:5 Lamsa reads: "The day they start to give counsel, the princes begin . . ." but the reviewer finds in the Urmia Peshitta "The day of our kings, the princes begin . . ."

These examples are sufficient to indicate that the translation is not trustworthy as an indication of variants between the Hebrew text and any "original" text in Syriac. Of course Lamsa's translation does more often than not reflect such variants, but the reader cannot be sure in any particular instance that it does so. Above all the reader should be warned against the impression given by Lamsa that this translation, or even the Syriac texts on which it is based, necessarily gets him closer to the original form of the biblical text. Particularly in the light of recent manuscript discoveries, the Hebrew and Greek texts are our primary sources. Despite their value, the Syriac texts, Lamsa's "Aramaic" texts, are only secondary sources.

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Biblical Research. By The Chicago Society of Biblical Research. Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1962. Vol. I, 47 pages. Vol. II, 44 pages. \$2.50 each.

The Society of Biblical Research, which was organized in 1891, has included, and still includes, some of America's most distinguished scholars. All of these papers are of excellent quality. Vol. I contains a paper by Reginald H. Fuller on "The Virgin Birth: Historical Fact or Kerygmatic Truth?" 7 pages, and an article by Ralph Marcus on

(1 page)

A Translation of an Ancient Version

W. D. McHardy

Of every translation of the Scriptures there are two main questions to be asked: First, what text lies behind the translation? and, secondly, how faithfully does the translation represent that text? Usually the former is easily answered. A translation of the Greek New Testament would indicate the manuscript or edition it follows, and, where it deviates, it would indicate the variant reading. A translation of the Old Testament ought to warn the reader, as Moffatt does not, when the Hebrew text is forsaken in favour of version or conjecture. The question is not so simple, however, when the translation under review is such as George M. Lamsa's *The New Testament according to the Eastern Text, translated from Original Aramaic Sources* (A. J. Holman Company, Philadelphia, 1940), or his earlier edition of the Gospels only, which bears on its dust-cover the title, *A New and Enlightening Translation of the Gospels according to the Eastern Version, translated from the Aramaic, the Language Jesus Spoke*. This appeared in 1933.¹ Here obviously some definition of the terms used must first be attempted. In particular, it must be made clear what the "original Aramaic sources" were, and what this "Eastern Text" is and is not. Only then can the value of Mr. Lamsa's book for other workers in the field of Biblical translation be assessed.²

The version which Mr. Lamsa has rendered into English is, of course, the Peshitta, sometimes referred to as the Syriac Vulgate. In producing such a translation he has had several predecessors. Before me lie *A Literal Translation of the Four Gospels from the Peshito*, by J. W. Etheridge in his work entitled *The Syrian Churches* (London, 1846); *A Translation, in English Daily Used, of the Seventeen Letters forming Part of the Peshito-Syriac Books of the New Covenant Writings*, by William Norton (London, 1890); and *The Syriac New Testament translated into English from the Peshitto Version*, by James Murdock

¹ It appears from a cursory examination that the earlier translation of the Gospels is reprinted without change in his complete New Testament. The later edition like the earlier has chapter numbers at the top of each page throughout the Gospels, but the practice is not carried into the rest of the New Testament. Small errors, such as wrong verse divisions or the wrong chapter numbering at page 66, are taken over into the later edition. Both volumes contain the same two maps; they are dated 1904 and 1914.

² As the present study is not intended to be a review, certain features of Mr. Lamsa's book which would normally call for attention are here passed over. Thus, no account is taken of more general questions of scholarship such as are raised by the very first sentence of the Introduction: "Owing to church controversies which began in the fifth century A.D. with the rise of Islam...". Nor are we concerned to deal with such blemishes as "the sound took place" (Acts 2:6). Words such as 'right here' in the sentence "Give me right here on a tray the head of John the Baptist" (Matthew 14:8) and 'down' in the phrase "two years old and down" (Matthew 2:16) are presumably Americanisms, which also fall outside the scope of the present examination. Probably one might also overlook here as merely awkward English such a sentence as: "they laid the sick in the streets, and begged him even to touch the edge of his robe, where a clearer sense is got by a more literal translation: "...that they might touch even the edge...". In a modern translation one would have expected 'divers' (Mark 1:34) to have disappeared.

(Boston, 1915, Ninth Edition).³ But these works are rare and difficult to procure, and Mr. Lamsa has done a service by making available to English readers his rendering of an ancient version.

It is unfortunate, however, that in his Introduction Mr. Lamsa has seen fit to make for this version certain claims which will not bear scrutiny. The Peshitta he terms "the original⁴ Eastern text" (page v), and he describes it as "an ancient and the only authoritative document of the New Testament in use among the Syriac Aramaic speaking people of Palestine, Syria, Mount Lebanon, Mesopotamia, Persia and Malabar (South India) from the first century A.D. to the present day" (page v). Later he says: "Peshitta, being the first and only text of the Scriptures preceding all other Christian literature, is claimed and highly revered by all ancient churches in the East" (page vii). Mr. Lamsa refers to versions of the Syriac produced later than the Peshitta,⁵ but he does not mention the Old Syriac version, exemplified in the Sinaitic and Curetonian manuscripts, of which Mr. Lamsa's compatriot, Professor Vööbus, has written: "We now know that the Peshitta is not a translation, but a revision of an Old Syriac version".⁶ Another American scholar, Dr. H. B. Downs, has put it: "The strongest argument for the dependence of the Peshitto upon the Evangelion da-Mepharreshe is a careful comparative reading of the two versions. No two translators could have arrived separately at the unanimity of expression found in the two. They are basically the same text with variants rather than two individual texts with points of contact".⁷ Account should surely be taken, when seeking for "the original Eastern text", of the version on which the Peshitta is based.

Mr. Lamsa writes: "Peshitta is the authorized text of the Scriptures and had its origin in the lands from which Christianity sprang and it is written in the language in which Our Blessed Lord, His disciples and the early Christians spoke and wrote. These facts are known to all Biblical scholars" (page vi). Mr. Lamsa can equate the language in which the Peshitta is written with the language spoken by Jesus only by denying any distinction between the terms 'Syriac' and 'Aramaic'.

³ Etheridge's *Horae Aramaicae*, which contains translations of St. Matthew's Gospel and the Epistle to the Hebrews, I have not seen. The same author was announced as preparing *The Apostolical Acts and Epistles from the Peshito*.

⁴ In support of the 'originality' of the Peshitta New Testament Mr. Lamsa writes: "Aphraates quoted it; St. Ephraim, about 360, wrote a commentary on it; and the doctrine of Addai, placed it at the apostolic times" (page x). This recalls words written by W. Wright in his *Syriac Literature* (London, 1894), page 9: "Aphraates quoted it; Ephraim wrote a commentary upon it; the Doctrine of Addai or Addaeus (in its present shape a work of the latter half of the 4th century) transfers it to the apostolic times". But Wright said this of the Diatessaron.

⁵ Mr. Lamsa writes: "The three manuscripts from which this translation was made antedate the Philoxenian version by not less than three hundred years" (page vi). It is not clear what he means to indicate by the words "this translation", but if he refers to the work under review one would be glad to know on what authority he bases the dates of his documents.

⁶ *Studies in the History of the Gospel Text in Syriac* (Louvain, 1951), page 46. See also pages 54ff.

⁷ *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. lxiii, part II (1944), pages 151ff.

Syriac", he says, "is a western term for Aramaic" (page xv), and again, "The terms Aramaic and Syriac are interchangeable in English" (pp. vf.). at this is a loose and unscientific use of language, and the confusion of symbols does not imply the identity of the realities. Aramaic is the older term. It may be divided into (i) Eastern Aramaic, in which is included Syriac along with Mandaic and the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud, and (ii) Western Aramaic in which is included Palestinian Aramaic along with various other forms of Aramaic, such as that in the collections of documents recently published by G. R. Driver and by E. G. Kraeling.⁸ All Syriac is Aramaic, but this does not imply that our Lord spoke Syriac. Of Cureton's theory that the Old Syriac manuscript discovered by him was directly descended from the lost Aramaic original of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, a theory regarded as something of a curiosity in Biblical Criticism, Dr. M. Black has written: "... it is a sufficient refutation of it to point out, as Burkitt did, that Edessene Syriac, the language of the Curetonian version, is a quite different branch of Aramaic from the Palestinian Jewish dialect which the Apostles spoke and in which any writings of theirs would presumably have been composed".⁹ The argument applies with even more force to the later, Edessene Peshitta.

The last point chosen from the Introduction for comment here is the claim advanced on behalf of Aramaic as the original language of the New Testament writings. Mr. Lamsa says: "It was natural for the disciples and their converts to record the teaching of their Master in their own Aramaic dialect for the use of the people in Galilee and Syria where Jesus had lived and started his preaching. There was no reason to write the Gospels in a dialect other than their own Galilean dialect" (page xiv), and of St. Paul's letters: "Very early the Epistles were translated into Greek for the use of converts who spoke Greek. Later they were translated into all tongues" (page xii). It is also said that "the Peshitta New Testament text varies considerably from the Greek and Latin versions which were made later for the use of new converts to Christianity" (page x). It is sufficient here to draw attention to the cautious conclusions drawn by Dr. Black in his *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, a book which is widely recognized to be the best modern guide to the problem of the Aramaic antecedents of the Gospels and Acts. Dr. Black writes: "A survey of the results of this study in this connexion yields one conclusion only which can be regarded as in any degree established, that an Aramaic sayings-source or tradition lies behind the Synoptic Gospels... Whether that source was written or oral, it is not possible from the evidence to decide" (page 206), and of the Fourth Gospel: "John is thus doing much the same as the other Evangelists, incorporating into a Greek Gospel a logia source or logia sources, but with probably this difference, that not all his longer speeches

of Jesus are derived from his Aramaic tradition" (page 209). Mr. Lamsa's views on the Aramaic originals of the New Testament go beyond anything suggested by any serious modern scholar.

It is to be regretted that Mr. Lamsa has prefixed this thoroughly misleading and unscholarly Introduction to his translation of the Peshitta. Fortunately, anyone with any knowledge of the history of the text of the New Testament will treat this Introduction as it deserves to be treated: the danger is rather that prejudice may be roused by it against the translation itself.

When we turn to consider our second basic question, which deals with the faithfulness of the translation to its original, we may say that on the whole this is quite a good representation of the text of the Peshitta New Testament.¹⁰ Those who cannot read the original may get from this work a general idea of the differences between their Greek text and the Syriac. Those who are beginning the study of Syriac will, no doubt, lean heavily on the help Mr. Lamsa affords, though it would be unwise of them to discard the assistance offered by the Latin rendering of the Gospels in Pusey and Gwilliam's *Tetraeuangelium Sanctum*. It is when Mr. Lamsa's book is considered as a translators' aid that the need for caution in its use is seen.

Like most translators Mr. Lamsa has felt free in translating to make certain explanatory additions. This, it must be emphasized, is not in itself a fault in Mr. Lamsa's work, but those who use his translation without having access to the original may be glad to have warning of the presence of such additions. Thus, to select a few examples, Matthew 1:3 there is added 'his wife'; Matthew 1:6 'the king'; Matthew 2:5 'the book of', cf. 12:5, Acts 8:28, 30; Matthew 5:46 'only'; Matthew 6:19 'buried'; Matthew 8:4 'first'; Matthew 9:6 'then'; Matthew 14:23 'still'; Mark 7:8 'other'; Mark 10:5 'particular'; Acts 5:21 'the people'; Acts 7:43 'therefore'; Acts 13:17 'of Israel'; Acts 13:41 'great'; James 2:26 'for'; Matthew 10:29 'without your Father' (Authorised Version) becomes 'without your Father's will'.

Under the same head may be put the addition of proper names or the making explicit of personal pronouns, whether expressed or implied, for example Matthew 14:5 'Herod'; Mark 9:20 'Jesus'; Acts 7:1 'Stephen'; Acts 7:8 'God'... 'Abraham'; Acts 7:10 'Pharaoh'; Acts 8:31 'the Ethiopian'; Acts 10:4 'the angel'; Acts 13:42 'Paul and Barnabas', cf. 13:43, 14:1; Acts 11:27 'to Antioch' for 'there'.

A few places may be noted where the addition is less defensible, for example Matthew 3:11 'just'; Matthew 9:38 'more'; Matthew 10:10

⁸ G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford, 1954); E. G. Kraeling, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri* (Yale University Press, 1953). For an historical table of the Semitic languages, see G. R. Driver in A. S. Peake (ed.), *The People and the Book* (Oxford, 1925), page 80.

⁹ *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 2nd ed., (Oxford, 1954), pages 183ff.

¹⁰ Mr. Lamsa claims to have based his translation on ancient manuscripts, and it may be that the text in them differs in some points from the printed editions used in the present study. In an attempt to avoid criticism based on a text which differs from that before Mr. Lamsa, recourse has been had to several different editions, though the chief texts used have been *The New Testament in Syriac*, (British and Foreign Bible Society, 1905-20) and, for the Gospels, Pusey and Gwilliam, *Tetraeuangelium Sanctum* (Oxford, 1901), which cites over forty manuscripts.

The text of the four Minor Catholic Epistles — II Peter, II and III John, and Jude — and Revelation has been taken from printed editions. In Revelation Mr. Lamsa translates not the Crawford MS. edited by Gwynn and printed in the British and Foreign Bible Society edition, *The New Testament in Syriac*, but the text first printed by de Dieu.

east: ~~Mark~~ 10:23 'converting'; Matthew 22:32 'yet'; Mark 7:4 'the bedding of dead men' (Syriac 'beds' only); Mark 11:22 'if'; Luke 1:22 'with his eyes'; Acts 3:24 'yea... as many as... have likewise foretold'; Acts 4:27 'together with'.

Only occasionally are there omissions in the translation, for example at Mark 6:3-7:19 'all' is omitted; Mark 11:25 'also'; Mark 13:36 'lest'; Acts 2:13 'and are intoxicated'; Acts 4:27 'whom thou hast announced'.

Like many translators Mr. Lamsa has not aimed at consistency in his renderings. Again, though this is not a flaw, those who use his work may be glad to have the presence of such inconsistencies brought to their notice. A few examples must suffice: Matthew 4:1, 25:41 'adversary'; Acts 13:10, Revelation 2:10 'devil'; Matthew 3:4 'waist', Mark 1:6 'loins'; Matthew 6:7, 10:5 'pagan', Matthew 18:17, Mark 7:26 'heathen'; Matthew 8:16 'badly afflicted', Mark 1:32 'seriously sick'; Matthew 13:3 'parables', Matthew 13:13 'figures'; Matthew 14:24 'miles'; John 6:19 'furlongs'; Matthew 9:10 'guests', Matthew 26:7 'reclining'; Matthew 27:52 'were sleeping in death', Acts 7:60 'he passed away' (Syriac 'slept'); Mark 13:34, 14:34 'awake', Mark 13:35, 37 'alert'. One word is translated 'cent' at Matthew 5:26, 'farthing' at Mark 12:42, and 'penny' at Luke 12:59; a second is rendered 'cent' at Matthew 13:28 and 'penny' at Mark 6:37, John 6:7, Revelation 6:6; 'penny' is used for a third term at Matthew 10:29, Luke 12:6.

Finally, there remain to be noted too many places where Mr. Lamsa's deviation from his original seems to be due to mistranslation, errors or defective renderings. Again only a selection of examples can be given. At Matthew 1:18 'acquired for a price' (Authorised Version 'espoused') represents a meaning, and a more original meaning, of the verb, but there is no need to be limited to this, for the idea of betrothal or espousal is well attested, as Mr. Lamsa acknowledges in his translation of II Corinthians 11:2, 'I have espoused you to a husband'.

At Matthew 2:11 Mr. Lamsa deserts the Peshitta (and Old Syriac) order: 'gold and myrrh and frankincense' for that of the Authorised Version. Possibly at Acts 9:1, 'with anger and with threats of murder' is only an error in word order for 'threat and murderous fury' but perhaps there is here a confusion of similar Syriac words. So also at James 3:14 'and do not be against the truth' (= Authorised Version) should be '... against the truth and do not lie'.

At Matthew 2:18 'they could not be brought back' for 'they are not' (Authorised Version) seems to rest on a confusion of two Syriac words. The translation of 'Raca'¹¹ as 'I spit on you' (Matthew 5:22) may also be explained in this way, but, whatever the root, Mr. Lamsa's translation is impossible. The rendering 'warm' (Matthew 12:44) instead of 'swept' (Authorised Version) goes back to a confusion of two roots which are identical in form in Syriac, though Arabic distinguishes them. At Mark 9:20 'seized' for 'saw' (Authorised Version) suggests a confusion of two Semitic roots. Mr. Lamsa's 'maidservant' at Mark 10:30 is a valiant but unnecessary attempt to get round Julian the Apostate's

¹¹ Mr. Lamsa follows the transliteration of the Authorised Version.

charge of the promise of a hundred wives to the faithful: the consonants of the Syriac words for 'maidservants' and 'mothers' are the same, though the vowels are different.

Occasionally the translation of a passage appears to be a misinterpretation. Thus at Matthew 5:3 'Blessed are the poor in pride' seems to point to an unusual meaning of the common word for 'spirit', as if it were *spiritus*, but perhaps the rendering is based on a different root, meaning 'to be enlarged'. At Matthew 8:12 the rendering 'the sons... will be put out' (Syriac 'will go out') may reflect the influence of the Authorised Version. At Matthew 9:16 'so as not to weaken the garment' is rendered in Mrs. Margoliouth's *Syriac Dictionary* 'lest the patch tear away from the garment'. At Matthew 9:27 'he was delayed by two blind men' might be dropped in favour of the Authorised Version 'two blind men followed him'. Similarly at Matthew 10:9 'accumulate' is much too strong for a verb which means 'get'.

The sign of the refuse of desolation' at Matthew 24:15 makes little sense and ignores the grammar; literally it is 'the abominable sign of desolation'. At Matthew 25:17 'the second one' would be more literally 'he of the two', 'talents' being understood. The Authorised Version 'because they knew him' agrees perfectly with the Syriac at Mark 1:34, where Mr. Lamsa has 'because some of them were his acquaintances'. At Matthew 17:17 and Mark 15:29 the interjection 'Oh!' is more correct than the vocative 'O'. At Acts 5:6 'and moved his body aside' is an interpretation of the Syriac 'and gathered him'.

Grammatical slips occur only occasionally, as at Matthew 7:5 where 'hypocrites' should be singular, or Acts 8:34 where 'this' translates a feminine demonstrative and so 'this prophet speak' must be altered to 'the prophet speak this'. The interrogative particle is wrongly translated 'why' at Matthew 7:9, 10, 16; 8:4; 25:9; 26:22; Mark 1:44; 2:19; 14:19; Acts 7:42.

It is always a temptation to a translator to rewrite the ideas of his source in modern terms. Sometimes, of course, this is quite legitimate, but the attempt can lead astray badly. Mr. Lamsa comes to grief when dealing with the New Testament conceptions of mental illness. A person in whom there is a demon is said to be 'demented' (Matthew 9:32), 'crazy' (Matthew 11:18) or 'insane' (Mark 1:34), and the cure of those so afflicted is referred to as 'casting out demons' (Mark 3:22) or 'casting out devils' (Mark 3:15). At Mark 1:34 Mr. Lamsa forsakes the literal 'he cast out many demons' for 'he restored many who were insane', but then he continues 'he did not allow the insane to speak', which is a mistranslation of the Syriac 'he did not allow the demons to speak', an idea which does not suit so well Mr. Lamsa's continuation of the verse: 'because some of them were his acquaintances'.

A second word for 'demon' receives similar treatment. The person with the demon is referred to as a 'lunatic' (Mark 5:12) or as 'afflicted with insanity' (Matthew 15:22). At Matthew 8:31 Mr. Lamsa makes the lunatics address Jesus whereas in the Syriac it is the demons who do so; this is brought out clearly if instead of Mr. Lamsa's 'If you are going to heal us' we translate literally: 'If thou cast us out' (Authorised

Version). The word translated 'heal' is, in verse 31, rendered 'left'. At the parallel passage, Mark 5:12, the word for 'demons' is again mistranslated 'lunatics', and at verse 13 'lunatics' is used for a different term, 'unclean spirits' (Authorised Version).

The wrong interpretation of this word for 'demon' leads Mr. Lamsa astray in his translation of Mark 9:26. He has: 'And the epileptic cried out much, and was tortured, and the spirit went out'. Instead of this the Syriac runs: 'And the demon cried out greatly and crushed him and went out'. Mr. Lamsa has had to drop a pronoun and insert a subject because of his mistranslation of the word for 'demon'.

Finally, Mr. Lamsa's version of the last part of Matthew 5:22 is most intriguing: 'and whoever says to his brother, you are a nurse maid, is condemned to hell fire'. The root translated 'nurse maid' normally is translated 'foolish', and at I Corinthians 3:19 Mr. Lamsa does not venture 'nursemaidship'. In Payne Smith's *Thesaurus Syriacus* ii, 1950 there is a similar late Syriac word meaning 'custos, tutor'. Whether or not this is behind the rendering in Matthew 5:22, 'nurse maid' seems rather unhappy in this context.

Enough evidence has been adduced, perhaps, to show the dangers of using this translation in translation work or in any serious New Testament study. If a new edition of Mr. Lamsa's book is ever called for, we hope he will drop his Introduction and revise his translation, for, we assure him, a reliable rendering of the Peshitta would be welcomed widely.

The Revision of the Amharic New Testament

A. F. Matthew

The Semitic language Giiz, known in the west as Ethiopic, was brought to Ethiopia by invaders from Southern Arabia who were ruling the northern part of the country at the time of the entry of Christianity about 330 A.D., the traditional date. During the next two and a half centuries the Bible was translated into this language, and it remained the only known version until 1840, in spite of the fact that Giiz had become obsolete as a spoken language, being used for ecclesiastical and literary purposes only. Its place as the vernacular was taken by Amharic, a mixture of the Semitic tongue of the ruling class and the Hamitic language of the people of the country.

An Amharic version was made in Cairo by a monk, Abba Rumi, from the Arabic. After earlier publication by the British and Foreign Bible Society of the New Testament and Pentateuch, the complete Bible was published by them in 1840, edited by Thomas Pell Platt. A revision was made by J. L. Krapf and published in the sixties, and a further revision by J. M. Flad, published in 1886, has continued in production down to the present day.

A further translation of the Bible, from Ethiopic into Amharic, was made by Ethiopian scholars at the instance of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, and was ready for printing just before the Italian invasion in 1936. This is known as the Emperor's Bible. The Ethiopic and Amharic

versions were written in parallel columns on parchment and made a colossal book; this was taken to England when Addis Ababa was occupied by the Italians and produced by photo-offset in four folio volumes. Owing to the occupation of Ethiopia very few copies of this Bible got into circulation, and the remaining stocks with the plates were destroyed in an air raid on London. But a copy was made of the New Testament and reproduced in U.S.A. by photo-offset, so that that portion at least of the Bible has had some circulation. But neither of these two versions is satisfactory. That of the British and Foreign Bible Society is not good Amharic, while the Ethiopic text from which the other was made is not correct and the translation in many places is very free.

In 1946 the Reverend Donald G. Barnhouse visited Addis Ababa and on the 14th June had an interview with His Imperial Majesty. During the interview Dr. Barnhouse expressed regret that there should be two versions of the Bible instead of one generally approved. His Imperial Majesty sharing this regret took steps to remedy the situation. He approached the British and Foreign Bible Society to obtain their co-operation in "the appointment of a committee to co-ordinate and revise these two versions" so that there should be one standard version. He proposed to appoint a member who would act as chairman of the Revision Committee and invited the British and Foreign Bible Society to nominate a member, these two to select others to work with them. The object would be the production of the whole Bible "in good modern Amharic and faithful to the original texts of the Holy Scriptures".

His Imperial Majesty appointed H. E. Bilatta Marse Hazan, Vice-Minister of Justice in the Imperial Ethiopian Government. The British and Foreign Bible Society agreeing to co-operate nominated the writer of this article as their representative on the Committee. It was agreed that there should be two sub-committees, for the Old and New Testaments respectively, and Ethiopians and foreign missionaries were invited to serve on these. A meeting of the whole Committee was held on the 7th March, 1947, and work was begun at once. After some time, one of the missionaries, the Reverend Andrew Graham (Sudan Interior Mission), was set free from Mission work to give his whole time to the Revision, while Ato Araya Selassie was released by the Ministry of Education to become a whole-time worker. This enabled the Old Testament sub-committee almost to complete their work in five years, by the date Mr. Graham was due to leave for U.S.A. (He took with him the translation of the Major Prophets for a final reading on the voyage.) But the New Testament sub-committee could not get on so fast. Two afternoons a week was all that was possible, and by the time Mr. Graham was ready to leave, the first draft of the book of Revelation still remained to be completed. However, at Easter 1952, the Committee was received in audience by His Imperial Majesty and presented to him the book so far as completed.

There still remained to be done a final revision of the New Testament. The completion of the work was interrupted by sickness, but by May 1954 the sub-committee's final revision had been done. His Imperial Majesty had already given the order to start printing at his expense,

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Greek, Hebrew Aramaic, or Syriac?

*A Critique of the Claims of G. M. Lamsa
for the Syriac Peshitta*

Edwin M. Yamauchi

As many laymen may have heard, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with the exception of a few passages in Ezra and in Daniel written in Aramaic, and the New Testament was written in Greek. Most are probably aware that Jesus spoke Aramaic, a Semitic language which is kindred to Hebrew.

Recent discoveries of inscriptions in Palestine, especially from Qumran and Murabba'at, have shed some valuable light on the use of Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic in Palestine in the first and early second century A.D. (Latin was used by the Romans in Palestine.)

THE LANGUAGE OF PALESTINE

GREEK

Since the New Testament was written in Greek, one might assume that the early Christians were fluent in Greek. As this has been denied, for example, by G. Lamsa whose arguments we shall examine in detail below, it is necessary to list the evidence for the use of Greek in the Palestine of Jesus' day.

The evidence from the Greek inscriptions and literary sources indicate, according to Fitzmyer, "that many Palestinian Jews, not only those in Hellenistic towns, but farmers and craftsmen of less obviously Hellenized areas used Greek, at least as a second language."¹ Fragments of the Septuagint found at Qumran suggest that the Essenes were reading the Old Testament in Greek as well as in

1 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, XXXII (October, 1970), 531.

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Hebrew. More than half of the citations of the Old Testament found in the New Testament are from the Greek Septuagint.

Of the inscriptions found on ossuaries discovered on Mount Olivet and dated before A.D. 70, seven are in Hebrew, eleven in Aramaic, and eleven in Greek. From this evidence of a trilingual "language milieu," Gundry suggests that some of the sayings of Jesus may have been uttered by Him in Greek.²

Even Gustaf Dalman, the great authority who emphasized the use of Aramaic by Jesus, stressed that when Christ's words came to be formulated in Greek, as James Barr notes and summarizes: "This was done in a circle which precisely in its knowledge of the then universal language [i.e., Greek] was nevertheless in close contact with Jesus himself and his original disciples."³ The *Ἑλληνιστῶν* of Acts 6:1 were probably Jewish Christians who habitually spoke Greek.⁴

Evidence from Murabba'at and other caves nearby indicate that even the fiercely nationalistic rebels in Bar Kochba's camp around A.D. 132-35 wrote in Greek as well as in Hebrew and in Aramaic. The inscriptions from the famous rabbinical necropolis at Beth Shearim are predominantly Greek. "Of the 168 (inscriptions published in Frey's *Corpus inscriptionum iudaicarum*), 5 are illegible, 32 are in Hebrew or Aramaic or both, 17 are in a Semitic language and Greek, and 114 are in Greek only."⁵

In the Diaspora the preference for Greek is clearly indicated by the inscriptions from the Jewish catacombs at Rome, which date to the early Christian era. Of 534 inscriptions catalogued by Leon, there was one Aramaic and Greek bilingual, one Greek and Latin bilingual, one Aramaic, three Hebrew, one hundred twenty-three Latin, and four hundred five Greek inscriptions.⁶

HEBREW

In the centuries before the Christian era Hebrew was replaced as the vernacular in Palestine by Aramaic. The evidence from the

2 Robert H. Gundry, "The Language Milieu of First-Century Palestine," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXXIII (December, 1964), 408.

3 James Barr, "Which Language Did Jesus Speak? — Some Remarks of a Semitist," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, LIII (Autumn, 1970), 10, citing Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus - Jeshua* (London, 1929) pp. 6. f.

4 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Jewish Christianity in Acts in the Light of the Qumran Scrolls," in his *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London, 1971), pp. 277-79.

5 Morton Smith, "Aramaic Studies and the Study of the New Testament," *Journal of Bible and Religion*, XXVI (October, 1958), 310.

development of the Targums, paraphrases in Aramaic of the Hebrew Old Testament, proves that many could understand the Scriptures more readily in Aramaic than in Hebrew.

On the other hand, M. H. Segal maintained that the Hebrew of the Mishnah, the compilation of the oral laws c. A.D. 200, grew out of a living vernacular and was not simply an archaic literary language.⁷ The fact that the majority of the Dead Sea Scrolls are in Hebrew rather than in Aramaic might seem to confirm this view.

Strictly speaking, however, the fact that documents such as the Copper Scroll were composed in a dialect akin to Mishnaic Hebrew does not prove that members of the Qumran sect and others spoke Hebrew as a vernacular. Even if the Qumran sectarians did use Hebrew, this would not necessarily hold true for other Jews.⁸

Some scholars have argued that a dialect of Hebrew, close to Mishnaic Hebrew, was used by Jesus and other Jews rather than Aramaic.⁹ Their arguments, however, have not been convincing. One of the main arguments is the practice of Greek writers who refer to the language used by the Jews as Ἑβραϊστί, or Ἑβραῖς διάλεκτος. For example, Papias asserted that Matthew had composed his Gospel in Ἑβραῖδι διαλεκτῷ. But as Dalman pointed out, words such as Γαββαθῶ in John 19:13 which are described as Ἑβραϊστί are actually Aramaic. The Greek phrase calls the dialect "Hebrew" only in the sense that Hebrews or Jews were using it, just as the reference in Daniel 1:4 to the "tongue of the Chaldeans" does not refer to the native Semitic language of the Chaldeans but to Aramaic which they had adopted (cf. Dan. 2:4).

While the extreme view that the main language which Jesus used was Hebrew cannot be sustained,¹⁰ there is a growing awareness of the possibility that more Hebrew was being used than had been assumed. Matthew Black, a leading exponent of "the Aramaic approach" to the gospels concedes:

It is also possible, however, as Segal argues, that Hebrew did continue as a spoken tongue; it seems unlikely, however, that this

6 Harry J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome* (Philadelphia, 1960), p. 76.

7 Moses H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (London, 1927).

8 John A. Emerton, "Did Jesus Speak Hebrew?" *Journal of Theological Studies*, XII (October, 1961), 195.

9 Harris Birkeland, "The Language of Jesus," *Avhandlingar Utgitt av Utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi*, I (Oslo, 1954); Jehoshua M. Grintz, "Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXIX (March, 1960), 32-47.

was outside the circles of the learned or the educated, i.e., learned Pharisaic, priestly or Essene circles. We must nevertheless allow possibly more than has been done before for the use of Hebrew in addition to (or instead of) Aramaic by Jesus Himself, especially on solemn festive occasions. There is a high degree of probability that Jesus began his career as a Galilaean rabbi who would be well versed in the Scriptures, and able to compose (or converse) as freely in Hebrew as in Aramaic.¹⁰

ARAMAIC

Aramaic is a Semitic language, originally of the Aramaeans of Syria, a territory which extends from Damascus to the western Euphrates in northwest Mesopotamia.¹¹ Aramaic, which was written in a variety of alphabetic scripts which were more efficient than the Akkadian or Persian cuneiform scripts, became widely used in the first millennium B.C.

The various Aramaic dialects are temporally and territorially classified as follows:

1. Old Aramaic (925 — 700 B.C.):

Inscriptions from north Syria with Canaanite features.

2. Official Aramaic (700 — 300 B.C.):

Under the Assyrian and Persian Empires, Aramaic was used for official purposes from Asia Minor to Afghanistan. The Elephantine Letters, for example, and the Aramaic of Ezra belong to this period.

3. Middle Aramaic (300 B.C. — A.D. 200):

This category would include the Aramaic of the New Testament, the Aramaic of Qumran and Murabba'at, Nabataean, Palmyrene.

4. Late Aramaic (A.D. 200 — 700):

a. Western: Syro-Palestinian Christian Aramaic, Samaritan, Palestinian Jewish Aramaic.

b. Eastern: Syriac, Babylonian Talmudic Aramaic, Mandaic.

5. Modern Aramaic:

Aramaic is spoken in isolated villages in the Anti-Lebanon

10 Matthew Black, "Aramaic Studies and the Language of Jesus," *In Memoriam Paul Kahle*, ed. by Matthew Black and George Fohrer (Berlin, 1968), p. 28.

11 For the Aramaeans see: Raymond A. Bowman, "Arameans, Aramaic, and the Bible," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, VII (April, 1948), 65-90; Merrill F. Unger, *Israel and the Aramaeans of Damascus* (London, 1957); Benjamin Mazar, "The Aramean Empire and Its Relations with Israel," *Biblical Archaeologist*, XXV (1962), 98-120.

range of Syria, in Kurdistan and Azerbaijan, and north of Mosul in Iraq.¹²

Ever since the definitive studies of Gustaf Dalman,¹³ there has been little doubt that whatever other languages Jesus may have known and used, His main tongue was Aramaic. When Jesus spoke to the deaf man (Mark 7:34) and cried "Εφφαθά," He was saying the Aramaic *ʾipattah* "open yourself." When He bade the dead damsel "Ταλιθα κουμ" (Mark 5:41), He was saying the Aramaic *talveta quim*, the Hebrew word for damsel would have been *תלפזל*. When Jesus cried out on the cross (Mark 15:34) "Ελωϊ ελωϊ λεμι σαβαχθάνι," He was uttering the Aramaic *Elahi, Elahi, l'ma sh'baqtani* rather than the Hebrew *אלי אלי לעזבוני*.

A large number of names and expressions found in the New Testament are transliterations of Aramaic: Peter's name Cephas is from *kepha* "rock"; Thomas is from *toma* "twin"; Matthew is from *Mattay, bar*, the Aramaic word for son, is found in such names as Bartholomew, Bar-Jonas, Barsabbas, Barabbas; Golgotha is from *golgotha* "skull"; Akeldama from *haqel dema* "bloody ground"; Martha from *mareta*; the expression of "Maranatha" (1 Cor. 16:22) is from *Maran* "Our Lord" and *eta* "come."

There have been various ingenious attempts to reconstruct the hypothetical Aramaic originals of the gospels by scholars, Charles F. Burney in *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford, 1922) maintained that the Gospel of John was based on an Aramaic original. In 1933 Charles Cutler Torrey in *The Four Gospels, a New Translation* went further in claiming that Aramaic originals were at the base of all four gospels. Their arguments were based on Semitisms and alleged mistranslations of the Aramaic. Most scholars were sceptical.

[G. R.] Driver was particularly unimpressed with the argument from mistranslation and urged that serious errors would not have been possible during the scant thirty to forty years between the composition of the gospel and the alleged translation, especially since

12 This classification follows Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I* (Rome, 1966), pp. 19-20. For a further detailed discussion of the dialects see: Franz Rosenthal, *Die aramaistische Forschung seit Theodor Noldeke's Veröffentlichungen* (Leiden, 1939); C. Brockelmann, "Das Aramaische, einschliesslich des Syrischen," *Handbuch der Orientalistik III*, ed. by H. Spuler (Leiden, 1954), pp. 135-62.

13 Gustaf Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, trans. by D. M. Kay (Edinburgh, 1902); Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, trans. by Paul P. Leventoff (London, 1929).

both Greek and Aramaic were living languages throughout this period.¹⁴

The most recent scholarly attempt to analyze the New Testament from its Aramaic background has been by Matthew Black, who first published his work, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, in 1946. A second edition appeared in 1954, and a third edition in 1967. Black used as comparative Aramaic material the Palestinian Targum, the Samaritan Targum, and Christian Palestinian Aramaic. Though he refers to the new evidence of the Targum Neofiti I and the Aramaic materials from Qumran, Black has been criticized for failing to incorporate this new evidence in his third revision.

THE CLAIMS OF G. M. LAMSA

Where more expert scholars have failed to establish a case for Aramaic originals, G. M. Lamsa, a layman from the east in apparent innocence makes the astonishing claim of being the sole competent interpreter of Scriptures:

Moreover, the author was educated under the care of learned priests of the Church of the East who knew no other language but Aramaic, and highly educated Englishmen, graduates of Oxford, Cambridge and other famous English schools. The author, through God's grace, is the only one with the knowledge of Aramaic, the Bible customs and idioms, and the knowledge of the English language who has ever translated the Holy Bible from the original Aramaic texts into English and written commentaries on it, and his translation is now in pleasingly wide use.¹⁵

His *magnum opus* is a translation from the Syriac Peshitta, *The Holy Bible from Ancient Eastern Manuscripts*.¹⁶

HIS CLAIM THAT THE NEW TESTAMENT WAS NOT WRITTEN IN GREEK

According to Lamsa not only were the gospels originally in Aramaic, but so were the Epistles of Paul. "The Epistles were

14 Schuyler Brown, "From Burney to Black: The Fourth Gospel and the Aramaic Question," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, XXVI (April, 1964), 329.

15 George M. Lamsa, *More Light on the Gospel* (Garden City, NY, 1968), pp. xxviii-xxix. Of the nearly score of works which Lamsa has written, we may note the following: *Old Testament Light* (1964); *Gems of Wisdom* (1966); *Kingdom on Earth* (1966).

16 George M. Lamsa, *The Holy Bible* (Philadelphia, 1957). All subsequent citations will be taken from the preface and introduction to this translation and will be cited as "Lamsa."

translated into Greek for the use of converts who spoke Greek."¹⁷ Lamsa, who seems to be ignorant of the inscriptional evidence, is under the delusion that "Greek was never the language of Palestine."¹⁸ How does he reach this extraordinary conclusion?

Lamsa writes, "Josephus states that even though a number of Jews had tried to learn the language of the Greeks, hardly any of them succeeded."¹⁹ But this is hardly the proper conclusion to be derived from Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* xx.12.1, quoted by Lamsa. What Josephus wrote was that he had failed to attain precision in the pronunciation of Greek.

Lamsa also notes: "Indeed, the teaching of Greek was forbidden by Jewish rabbis. It was said that it was better for a man to give his child meat of swine than to teach him the language of the Greeks."²⁰ This is based on a misunderstanding of statements in the Mishnah, the Talmud and the Tosefta, which ban the teaching of Greek. The correct interpretation is supplied by Lieberman:

In all the above-mentioned sources there is no hint of a ban on the study of Greek Wisdom or the Greek language; the injunction involves only the *teaching of children*. The fear that the teaching of Greek may produce or give aid to future informers could be entertained only with regard to children whose development was not yet certain, but not to mature people who seek self-instruction.²¹

As a matter of fact, Rabban Gamaliel at the beginning of the second century A.D. had one thousand students, of whom half studied the Torah and half Greek wisdom. The large number of Greek loan-words numbering about fifteen hundred in Talmudic literature is further evidence of the knowledge of Greek among rabbis.

HIS CLAIM AS TO THE SUPERIORITY OF THE SYRIAC PESHITTA

Lamsa's use of the Peshitta version as the basis of his translation of the Bible is buttressed by a letter from Mar Eshai Shimun, Catholicos Patriarch of the East, which declares:

17 Lamsa, p. xii.

18 *Ibid.*, p. ix.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*, p. x.

21 Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1962), pp. 101-102. As Lieberman has amply demonstrated there were many Jews, including rabbis, who knew the Greek language and literature very well.

... we wish to state, that the Church of the East received the scriptures from the hands of the blessed Apostles themselves in the Aramaic original, the language spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and that the Peshitta is the text of the Church of the East which has come down from the Biblical times without any change or revision.²²

It is in fact Lamsa's faith in the dogma of the Assyrian Church of Iraq which he grandiosely calls "The Church of the East" which serves as the basis of his conviction in the superiority of the Syriac Peshitta Version. Lamsa's "Church of the East" was a small minority group of two hundred thousand in what was to become Iraq in 1920. With Iraq's independence Muslim compatriots slaughtered thousands of the Assyrian Christians so that only about seventy thousand survived as refugees.²³

LAMSA'S CLAIMS REFUTED

THE ORIGINS OF THE SYRIAN CHURCH

The Syriac of the Peshitta is not the language of coastal Syria around Antioch, which was evangelized in the first century A.D., but of the area in the interior around Edessa, one hundred fifty miles from the coast, which was evangelized between A.D. 116 and 216.²⁴ There is to be sure, the legendary Doctrine of Addai which purports to relate correspondence between Jesus and King Abgar V of Edessa.²⁵ No one but an unquestioning adherent of "The Church of the East" would subscribe to the legendary account of the apostolic roots of the Edessene church.

In the light of the claims advanced by Lamsa for Syriac, it should be underlined that Syriac is an eastern and not a western dialect of Aramaic, and indeed that it is "a form of Aramaic that

22 Lamsa, p. 11.

23 Nicolas Zernov, *Eastern Christendom* (New York, 1961), p. 209.

24 For the history of the origins of the Syrian church see: John C. L. Gibson, "From Qumran to Edessa," *The Annual of the Leeds University Oriental Society*, V (1963-65), 24-39; H. J. W. Drijvers, "Edessa und das jüdische Christentum," *Vigiliae Christianae*, XXIV (March, 1970), 4-33; Judah B. Segal, *Edessa: "The Blessed City"* (Oxford, 1970); Jacob Neusner, "Christianity East of the Euphrates," *A History of the Jews in Babylonia I: The Parthian Period* (Leiden, 1969), pp. 166-69.

25 Alberta, F. J. Klijn, "The Beginnings of Christianity in Edessa," *The Acts of Thomas* (Leiden, 1962), pp. 30-33; Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha I*, trans. by Robert M. L. Wilson (Philadelphia, 1963), pp. 437-44.

emerges toward the beginning of the third century A.D."²⁶ As such it is one of the least suitable of the Aramaic dialects to use for a reconstruction of the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic used by Jesus.

THE PESHITTA

As the basis of his translation Lamsa uses the Peshitta Version of the Old and the New Testaments, which serves as the "authorized version" for the Syrian Orthodox Church. The Peshitta was accepted as the official version before the split of the Syrian Church into the West Jacobite and the East Nestorian branches in the fifth century. The Peshitta Canon omitted 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation, which Lamsa therefore translates from unidentified "later Aramaic texts."²⁷

It has been suggested that the Peshitta Old Testament was originally a Jewish translation made from the Hebrew text and then adopted by the Christians before the third century A.D.²⁸ In the hands of a textual critic its readings therefore are of some value.²⁹ 29 E. Wurthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 60-61. Lamsa, who used the important Ambrosianus text in Milan, pays little attention to variant readings as he assured the publisher that "comparisons show no differences in text between these various manuscripts. . . ."³⁰ Nor is the Peshitta superior to the Greek Septuagint Version. Lamsa's contention that the Septuagint "was never officially read by the Jews in Palestine who spoke Aramaic and read Hebrew,"³¹ is flatly contradicted by the discovery of Septuagint fragments at Qumran and the quotations from the Septuagint in the New Testament which are even more numerous than quotations from the Masoretic type texts. The suggestion of Lamsa that one can revise the Old Testament text on the basis of the ambiguities in either the

26 Fitzmyer, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, XXXII, 525. Cf. Arthur Jeffery, "Aramaic," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, I (1962), 189; Charles F. Pfeiffer (ed.), *The Biblical World* (Grand Rapids, 1966), p. 56; Carl Brockelman, *Syrische Grammatik* (Berlin, 1899).

27 *The New Testament in Syriac* (London, 1955) supplies the Syriac text of these four books from the Philoxenian Version.

28 Ira Maurice Price, *The Ancestry of Our English Bible* (3rd ed.; Philadelphia, 1909), pp. 185 ff.

30 The greatest need in Peshitta studies is a critical edition with variant readings from the various manuscripts. See Moshe H. Goshen-Gottstein, "Prolegomena to a Critical Edition of the Peshitta," *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, VIII (1961), 26-67. E. J. Brill of Leiden has begun publishing the fascicles of an international Peshitta committee.

31 Lamsa, p. ix.

consonants or vocalization of the Syriac Peshitta text is pure fantasy.³²

The value of the Peshitta for the text of the New Testament is quite minimal. Lamsa willfully disregards the view of scholars that Sinaitic-Curetonian Syriac texts of the New Testament are older than and superior to the Peshitta New Testament.³³ Lamsa explicitly states:

Modern scholarship believes that as happened in other parts of the Church, the earliest copies of the sacred books in Syriac were revised again and again to bring them closer to the standard of the Hebrew and Greek texts from which they were drawn; this view, too, is not accepted by the Church of the East.³⁴ [Italics mine.]

Since Lamsa quotes from Kenyon's (*Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*),³⁵ he cannot be ignorant of the evaluation of the Peshitta by scholars but has chosen to deliberately disregard their views.

In contrast to Lamsa, all reputable scholars hold the Peshitta New Testament to be based on translations from Greek texts — and from relatively late and inferior Greek texts at that. According to Metzger:

In the Gospels it is closer to the Byzantine type of text than in Acts, where it presents many striking agreements with the Western text.³⁶

LAMSA'S TRANSLATION

In spite of Lamsa's outrageous and mischievous claims for the Peshitta, he might have done a service by offering a usable English translation of the Peshitta. Instead, his translation is defective in many respects. In some cases, Lamsa has slavishly copied the King James Version even where the Syriac could be rendered differently. For example, in Philippians 2:6-7 we have the nearly identical renderings in the King James Version and in Lamsa's translation:

KJV: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery

Lamsa: "Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it

32 *Ibid.*, pp. xiv-xvi.

33 Frederic G. Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (2nd ed., London, 1912), pp. 158-64.

34 Lamsa, p. i.

35 *Ibid.*, p. vi.

36 Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (2nd ed.; New York, 1968), p. 70.

KJV: to be equal with God; But made himself of no reputation,
 Lamsa: robbery to be equal with God; But made himself of no
 reputation

KJV: and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made
 Lamsa: and took upon himself the form of a servant and was
 KJV: in the likeness of men."

Lamsa: in the likeness of men."

Where Lamsa does offer an original rendering, it is at times
 a misleading translation, as "Caesar's court" in Philippians 1:13
 for the Syriac *Pretorin*, which is simply the transliteration of the
 Latin *praetorium*, the emperor's praetorian guard.³⁷

PROSPECTUS

Though it is impossible to lend any credence to the fantastic
 claims of Lamsa, there are sources of Aramaic which can be used
 with caution. In contrast to Lamsa, who minimizes the dialectical
 differences between late, eastern Syriac and early, western
 Aramaic, Fitzmyer warns us:

We should be suspicious of philological arguments about the
 Aramaic substratum when they depend on texts and dialects of
 Aramaic that come from a later date (e.g., from the third century
 A.D. or later), precisely because a new phase of the language begins
 about that time with clear geographical distinctions.³⁸

Dalman had used the Aramaic of the Targum of Onkelos to the
 Pentateuch and the Targum of Jonathan to the Prophets. P. Kahle
 believed that Onkelos existed before A.D. 259 and that parts of
 Jonathan may be pre-Christian in origin, but his views have been
 disputed. Until about twenty-five years ago there was almost a
 complete lack of actual Aramaic texts from Palestine in the New
 Testament times.

Then in 1947 the famous Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered at
 Qumran. Among the discoveries are Aramaic texts which include
 the Genesis Apocryphon, the Prayer of Nabonidus, parts of the
 Testament of Levi and Enoch. Among the most important Aramaic
 documents is a Targum of Job from Cave XI, the most ancient

37. Cf. J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford, 1903),
 p. 460. Cf. William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and
 Thessalonians* (Philadelphia, 1959), pp. 25-26.

38. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Review of Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach
 to the Gospels and Acts*," in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, XXX (1968),
 419.

Targum known.³⁹ There are also a number of Aramaic documents
 from Murabbat and nearby caves dating from the revolt of Bar
 Kochba (A.D. 132-35) and earlier periods.

In 1949 A. Diez Macho noticed a sixteenth-century manuscript
 from the Cairo Geniza owned by the Vatican Library called Neofiti
 I. In 1956 he identified it as a copy of the Palestinian Targum, which
 he and Matthew Black would date to the first century A.D.⁴⁰ On the
 other hand, Fitzmyer believes that the large number of Greek words
 in the Palestinian Targum Aramaic points to a date after A.D. 200.⁴¹

Though undoubtedly contemporary, even the Aramaic docu-
 ments from Qumran must be analyzed with caution in attempting to
 reconstruct the Aramaic of Jesus, according to Jonas Greenfield:

This reviewer's opinion is that the Qumran material is written
 in Standard Literary Aramaic; that although it contains Palestinian
 traits it does *not* mirror the *spoken* Aramaic of Palestine during this
 period, and surely not the Galilean dialect, and therefore must be
 used with utmost care in ferreting out Aramaisms.⁴²

How far removed is the cautious circumspection of Aramaic
 scholars from the reckless speculations of G. M. Lamsa!

39. J. P. M. van der Ploeg and A. S. van der Woude, *Le Targum de Job de la
 Grotte XI de Qumran* (Leiden, 1971).

40. Matthew Black, "The Recovery of the language of Jesus," *New Testament
 Studies*, III (July, 1957), 305-13. Cf. Martin McNamara, *The New Testament
 and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (Rome, 1966); Martin Mc-
 Namara, *Targum and Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1972).

41. Fitzmyer, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, XXXII, 524 ff.

42. Jonas C. Greenfield, "Review of Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach
 to the Gospels and Acts*," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, XXXI (January,
 1972), 60.

12. Raphael Loewe, "The Mediaeval Christian Hebraists of England," 205-252. A long and very learned article containing an excellent study of the Latin-Hebrew Psalters used by a surprisingly large number of Catholic scholars in mediaeval England. Most of these bi-lingual Psalters were of Norman provenance and show certain Rabbinical influence.

13. Samuel Atlas, "Solomon Maimon's Philosophy of Language Critically Examined," 253-288. A keen analysis of the epistemology and metaphysics of Solomon Maimon (1754-1800), an independent disciple of Kant.

14. Jacob B. Agus, "The Prophet in Modern Hebrew literature," 289-324. Though hardly giving an adequate account of OT prophetism, A. does give a good description of the chief characteristics of the prophetic spirit in this very well-written and interesting essay. For him the best representative of a true prophetic personality in modern times is Moses Hayyim Luzzato (1707-1747). The spiritual spark struck by Luzzato enkindled the Hasidic movement in the East, and the Haskalah and Reform movements in the West. A. finds but little of the prophetic spirit left in modern Hebrew literature. While Abad Ha'am had it in part, Bialik merely used its trappings to clothe his essentially nationalistic spirit. A. has the courage to say of most of the Zionist writers that they "endeavor to substitute resurgent nationalism for the ancient faith," and that Zionism itself is essentially "romantic nationalism, that Satanic counterpart of prophetism."

15. Ezra Spicehandler, "*Mikt'be Y'hōšaa' H'ešēl Sor l'Bārūk Felsenthal*," *1-*26. S. has here published for the first time a collection of twenty-six Hebrew letters written at various times between 1875 and 1890 by Joshua Heschel Schorr of Brody, Galicia, to Rabbi Bernard Felsenthal of Chicago. Schorr was the editor of the liberal periodical *Heḥālūs*, and Felsenthal was one of the founders of Reformed Judaism in America. These letters, therefore, which speak of several of the leading Hebrew writers of the time, are of value to those interested in the literary, political and religious history of the Jews in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

LOUIS F. HARTMAN, C.Ss.R.

✓ *The Holy Bible from Ancient Eastern Manuscripts*, containing the Old and New Testaments, translated from the Peshitta, the Authorized Bible of the Church of the East, by GEORGE M. LAMSA (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman, 1957). \$7.50.

*Initium verborum ejus stultitia,
et novissimum oris illius error pessimus.*

(Eccl 10,11)

Were it not for the fact that a number of people have recently been trying to collect well over a million dollars for a NT Peshitta manuscript (cf. *CBQ* 18 [1956], pp. 151 *sqq.*) there would be little need to say more of this "translation" than is contained in the above citation from Qoheleth. However, in view of the

circumstances, it might be well to illustrate, by means of this book, the quality of some of the "scholarship" of those who are presently trying to popularize the Peshitta as the original, verbatim tradition of the apostles in their own language.¹

In the translator's introduction L. outlines all the myths and fantasies for which he and the *Aramaic Bible Foundation* gained recent notoriety in the public press. All this the review will pass over. How shall one begin to show the error of one for whom biblical Hebrew and "Aramaic" were, if not really one and the same language, mutually comprehensible: "how could the people of Nineveh have understood Jonah, a Hebrew prophet, had the biblical Hebrew tongue been different from Aramaic," (introduction, vi) and who states that "while in Egypt, living by themselves, they [the Jews] continued to use names of Aramaic derivation such as Manasseh, Ephraim, Bar-Nun [sic! for Bin-Nūn, Nm. 27,18 *et al.*] . . . (ibid.)" and goes on to prove that Aramaic "has been in constant use from early times to the present day" on the basis of the discovery of the Habacuc scroll at Qumrān (ibid.)?²

As for L.'s work, it cannot by any standards be considered a translation of any version of the Bible. The publisher remarks in his preface (p. i) that it

¹ Preceding the "translator's" introduction, there is a short "Preface" at the outset of which the publisher gives a very brief sketch of the opinions universally and unanimously held by scholars concerning the relations of the various Aramaic dialects and the formation of the Peshitta NT (p. i). However, he continues that this "view, too, is not accepted by the Church of the East," and goes on to quote a letter from the Nestorian Patriarch, Mār Eshai Shimun, who resides in Modesto, California, to the effect that "the Church of the East received the scriptures from the hands of the blessed Apostles themselves in the Aramaic original . . . and the Peshitta . . . has come down from the Biblical times without any change or revision" (p. ii). The Patriarch, like L., is evidently able to abstract from the fact that neither St. Ephrem nor Aphraates, the two great fathers of the Syrian church, know anything whatsoever of the Peshitta NT, but on the contrary cite an older text which antedates the revision, later known as the Peshitta, which became the Syrian vulgate.

² The complete detachment with which L. is able to disburden himself of any obligation to the most obvious facts of historical evidence is truly overwhelming. At the end of his preface he has a section entitled "Words resembling one another," in which he cites a number of cases in which the translators of the Authorized Version erred in their readings of "the Aramaic"—at least this is the implication, for they seem, according to L., to be making mistakes in Syriac! A number of the cases which he gives represent the rather frequent occurrence in the Syriac of the correct consonants with the wrong vowels, e.g., (Eccl 2,4) 'bd' for Hebrew *ma'sē* which is traditionally vocalized in the Peshitta as 'abdē (slaves) rather than 'ebādē (works). One of his examples, however, is so ridiculous that I cannot refrain from quoting it. At Dt 27,16 for MT *ārūr maqlē abiv u'immo* the Authorized Version has translated: "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. . . ." Now according to L. the translators of this version misread Syriac *simhā* (radiance, splendor) for Syriac *n'sakhē* (to revile).

is appropriate that, alongside of those of LXX and the Vulgate there should be a complete translation of the Peshitta; this is true. However, this work of L. is not a translation of the Peshitta but rather a slavish paraphrase of the Authorized Version which, in some of the cases of their disagreement, has been emended (and not always correctly) in an attempt to bring it into some kind of conformity with the Syrian version.

A few examples will suffice to show this. Rather than take a large number of scattered texts, I shall review only a small number of short, connected passages; thus the thoroughness with which the "translator's" hopeless incompetence has permeated the text will be the more apparent. From OT, one example will serve: Ps 78,1-29.

78,1: L.'s rendering, following verbatim the Authorized Version, drops *wept* of the Peshitta.

78,2-3 follow AV with a single change in the wording and the alteration of "parable" to "parables" according to the vocalization of the Syriac.

78,4: following the AV ("we will not hide . . . showing . . .") the "translator" ignores both the *dêlê* and *allê* of the Syriac which reads: "that we should not hide . . . but should relate. . ."

78,5: here again the "translator" follows AV against the Peshitta and reads "a testimony," "a law" where the Syriac text has *sâhdûteh* and *nâmûseh* (his witness, his law).

78,6 follows AV verbatim.

78,7 follows AV "that they might set their hope" against Syriac *d'nebrê sabrêhôn* (that their hope might be).

78,8 follows AV verbatim.

78,9: here the "translator" departs from AV and manages to render Syriac *waraw b'qetâ* (and they shot [arrows] with the bow) by "throwing forth bows."

78,10 follows AV verbatim.

78,11: here L. follows the Peshitta against AV.

78,12: again he prefers to follow AV, "marvelous things did he . . ." than to render Syriac *dâ'ebad tedmôrâtê* (that he did wonders).

78,13: he departs from AV to change "as a heap" to "as in skins" following Syriac *âk b'zeqqê*.

78,14f follow AV with the single change of "cave" to "cleaved."

78,16: L. follows AV "and caused waters to run down" against Syriac *waraw mayyâ* (and the waters ran forth).

78,17 follows Syriac against AV.

78,19: L. modernizes the wording of AV.

78,20: again follows AV against the Syriac as in v.16 above and then continues to do so by ignoring Syriac *lan* in *l'mettêl lan* in favor of AV "to give also . . ." but at the same time manages to change AV "flesh" to "food" with the Peshitta.

From NT I shall cite several more examples of L.'s work.³ Generally, as in

³ L.'s "translation" of NT is not new, but simply, it would seem, an unaltered reprint of his *New Testament according to the Eastern Text* which was published

OT he follows AV only to depart from it when he feels that it is not a correct rendering of the "Aramaic" or to modernize the language. In the Gospels, it must be said, he at least has consulted the Peshitta somewhat more frequently than in the rest of the book. Thus in Jn 1,3 we read that "Everything came to be by his hand" (Syr. *bideh*) which is certainly a literal rendering of the Syriac, but hardly correct. In Jn 1,14 (*et passim*) L. translates Syriac *ihidayyā* by "first born." In 1,15 he renders by "... He is coming after me, and yet he is ahead of me, because he was before me," which (ignoring the problem of the sense) fails completely to render the time sequence of the Syriac *wahwū leh q'dāmay mefūl d'qadmay hū men*, while failing to make any real attempt to show the distinction between the meaning of the two phrases. He likewise gets the time wrong in Jn 1,9, rendering, "he was the true light which lighted . . ." (Syr. *d'manhar*, Gk. *o photizei*). In 2,4, following, no doubt, some "Aramaic idiom" he renders: "Jesus said to her, What is it to me and to you, woman? My turn has not yet come."!

Now in Acts, where the text is not so simple as it is in the Gospels, we find typically the following: Acts 4,13: "Now when they had heard the speech of Simon Peter [this last word is not in the text] and John . . . and perceived . . . they marveled." The Peshitta, however, phrases "When they had heard the speech of Simon and John, they perceived . . . and marveled." (AV: "... and perceived . . . , they marveled."). Again in the same verse the Syriac *methapp'kin 'am* . . . would seem to me stronger than simply "they had been with (Jesus)" which L. has with AV and the Greek. It is noteworthy that in the epistles L. is able generally to recognize many subordinations and distinctions which are apparent enough in the Greek texts (and AV) but which cannot be made in Syriac, as his rendering (Acts 4,14) "And because they saw . . ." for Syriac *w'hāzēn hwaru*. This is perhaps more evident in the following verse which he renders, "But when they had commanded them to be taken aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves saying . . ." The Syriac simply reads "Thereupon they ordered that they lead them out of their council, while saying to one another . . ." The passive "to be taken" is a justifiable rendering of Syriac *d'napp'qōn 'ennōn men kenš'hōn*; however, one wonders just how, from this Syrian verb (especially when L. denies that

by the same publisher in 1940. The reader may refer to a rather thorough review of this work by Prof. W. D. McHardy of the University of London in *The Bible Translator* (1956); my remarks here will be brief. There are two other translations of the Peshitta NT in English of which the reviewer knows, viz., that of J. W. Etheridge (London, 1846-9, two vols.) and that of James Murdock (New York, 1851). Both of these are restricted to the Syrian canon which omits 2-3 Jn, Jude, and Ap, all of which L. includes in his "translation" noting in the preface that "the Peshitta canon was set before the discovery of these books," (Introduction, viii); L.'s canon, alas, is that of AV and not that of the Syrian churches (cf. his remarks about the "apocryphal" books of the Peshitta [*ibid*]), whence his attempt to adjust the Syrian canon to that of the reformers.

the book is a translation from Greek!) that L. can find all the connotations of the Greek *exō apellthein*. Further he drops the pronominal suffix from *ken's'hôn* and at the same time reconstructs (according to the understanding of the translators of AV) the Greek *synēballon*, which is paraphrased out of the Syriac text. (For this verse AV reads "But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying . . .").

In Rom 7,8 we find him translating Syriac *gemrat* by "provoked" and at Rom 7,10, *weš't'kah li pūrqânâ* by "I found [the commandment]," the former wrong and the latter inadequate at best. Rom 7,11, paraphrasing AV he translates, "for sin finding occasion by the commandment" against the Peshitta which reads "for sin, by means of the occasion which it found . . ."

1 Cor 1,21 L. either could not understand or simply decided to paraphrase, and so attempts to translate (the Syriac?, which follows the Greek literally), "Because all the wisdom which God had given was not sufficient for the world to know God, it pleased God to save those who believe by the simple Gospel." After this he gives an equally inept paraphrase of 1,30 omitting the *minch* (Gk. *ex autoû*).

Such examples of unadulterated incompetence could be multiplied for anyone who will take the trouble to compare L.'s so-called translation with the text of the Peshitta; these cited here were chosen purely at random. Against such simple failures, either to follow the Syriac text or to understand it, there are a large number of fanciful and fantastic interpretations of the "Aramaic"; e.g., *l'mânâ š'baqtân* (Mt 27,46, Mk 15,34) he renders "for this was I spared" and then, as if this were not bad enough, compounds it, by glossing in a note (cd Mt 27,46): "This was my destiny." He never informs the reader just how he could possibly justify this sense from these words, but only says (introduction, xi) that this is the reading of the Peshitta. The very same words in Ps 22,2 he translates, "why hast thou let me live."⁴

Finally, to round things out, I shall cite a few of L.'s footnotes; they show the same hopeless ineptitude and ignorance as does the rest of the book and no comment is needed. Concerning the words of Our Lord to Nicodemus

⁴ This deliberate falsification of the words of Our Lord is blasphemous. L., if he feels that Western Christendom (not to mention the Greeks) with its Greek and Latin versions of the Gospels is persecuting him might do well to glance at some of the medieval Syrian scholia and commentaries on the passage; e.g., the *Mêmre 'al 'alâhûtâ w'al nâšûtâ w'al paršôpâ wah'dâyûtâ* of the Nestorian, Babai (one of the greatest Nestorian theologians, tc. A.D. 627/8, [cf. Baumstark, *GSL*, 137 sqq.]; v. Babai Magni, *Liber de Unione*, ed. A. Vaschalde [CSCO, 79; Paris, 1915], pp. 173 sqq., tr. Vaschalde [CSCO, 80; Rome/Paris, 1915], pp. 140 sqq.) or at the Gospel commentaries of Dionysius Bar Šalibi (a Monophysite, † A.D. 1171 [Baumstark, *op. cit.*, 295]; v. Dionysius Bar Šalibi, *Commentarii in Evangelia*, ed. Vaschalde [CSCO, 95; Paris, 1931] II (1), pp. 133 sqq., tr. Vaschalde [CSCO, 98; Louvain, 1933] II (1), pp. 106 sqq.). A few other such distortions of the text can be found, carefully listed, in the "translator's" introduction.

(Jn 3,3), "if a man is not born again . . ." he notes: "Born again in northern Aramaic means to change one's thoughts and habits. Nicodemus spoke southern Aramaic and hence did not understand Jesus." At Jn 6,70, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is Satan?" L. notes: "The Aramaic *satana* (Satan) is derived from *stā* [s'ṭā-Heb. *šāṭā*, to turn aside, etc.—reviewer] which means to slide, slip, or miss the mark, and applies to one who causes these results." Again, at Mt 18,8 "If your hand or foot offends you, cut it off and cast it away from you," L. notes: Aramaic idioms: foot offends, *stop trespassing*; cast away: *stop it*" [italics are those of L.]. Finally, to Mk 5,15 "And they came to Jesus and saw the lunatic," he notes: "Mark here refers to one lunatic who conversed with Jesus and then he mentions lunatics in ver. 12. There were doubtless many."

If the publisher speaks honestly in saying that he hopes "that this translation will be of aid to Bible readers and students in obtaining a more thorough and complete understanding of the Scriptures" (Publisher's Preface, ii), it is certainly our hope that he will take cognizance of the nature of L.'s work and remove the book from the market, for in circulating this book, he is doing a distinct disservice to any uninformed person who should be so unfortunate as to acquire a copy.

RICHARD M. FRANK

JOHN H. MARKS-VIRGIL M. ROGERS, *A Beginner's Handbook to Biblical Hebrew* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958). Pp. xiv, 174. \$4.50.

This book contains a rather thorough treatment of Hebrew morphology, good paradigms, and a very meager discussion of syntax with but few examples, although a number of references, mostly to Gn are given. Its purpose, as stated by the authors, is to provide in a form suitable even for self-instruction "the minimal requirements for reading Biblical Hebrew" (pp. vii f.) and further to serve as "a handbook for ready reference" (*ibid.*). It is certainly not a book for those who must eventually gain a precise, scientific control of the language and is, I assume, not intended to be such.

Now admittedly, no one who finds himself teaching the elements of a language on the graduate level, to the knowledge of the reviewer, is ever really satisfied with any elementary grammar, unless it be of his own composition and so tailored to his individual desires. Nevertheless, even allowing for such differences of preference, I find serious questions as to the usefulness of this work. Among the minimal requirements of a basic introduction to biblical Hebrew (or to any other Semitic language, for that matter) I should consider that a more thorough, though not necessarily extensive treatment of syntax (with examples) is of far greater importance, from the beginning, than is the exposition of the intricate detail which is needed to explain and justify all of the Masoretic system of vocalization (which M. and R. have not always given with desirable clarity and conciseness); even the most simple prose, if it is to be