



Review

Reviewed Work(s): Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels, aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshitta and Harklean Versions (New Testament Tools and Studies 21/1-4) by George A. Kiraz

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Source: *Hermathena*, No. 168 (Summer 2000), pp. 106-108

Published by: Trinity College Dublin

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23041266>

Accessed: 25-05-2020 15:09 UTC

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*Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels, aligning the
Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshitta and Harklean Versions*

GEORGE A. KIRAZ.

Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1996.

(New Testament Tools and Studies 21/1-4), 4 vols.

ISBN 90 04 10419 4 (set).

While it has long been possible to find Latin versional evidence in a single place (Jülicher's *Itala*, the Beuron *Vetus Latina*, Wordsworth and White), consultation of the Syriac evidence for a passage in the Gospels has remained a more complicated business - Burkitt's *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe* and/or the Lewis Old Syriac Gospels (both of course lacking the leaf of the Curetonian published by McConaughy), the Pusey and Gwilliam Peshitta, and whatever of the Harklean one could glean, have had to be found and consulted. It is the valuable achievement of Dr Kiraz to have made this process redundant. He has placed together the Gospel texts of the two Old Syriac manuscripts Sinaiticus (S) and Curetonianus (C), the Peshitta (P), and the Harklean (H). The last of these is a new edition, prepared by Dr Andreas Juckel of the Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung. It is to this, after a general account of the edition, that most of the attention of this review will be devoted.

So far as this reviewer is concerned, Kiraz is right in his reasons (in the Preface, p. xi) for limiting the edition to these four (S C P H). There are no surviving MSS of the Philoxenian; the Christian Palestinian Aramaic version is not strictly Syriac; and the Diatessaron neither is extant nor was ever a text of the separate Gospels.

The edition is presented in four volumes, one for each Gospel (in the order Matthew-Mark-Luke-John), with the introduction in the first. The list of sigla and abbreviations is repeated at the beginning of each volume. The Introduction gives an account of the project, from its inception to the preparation of camera-ready copy. After the entering of the texts on computer, first proofreading and aligning, the texts were proofread a second time by volunteers who had responded to a call on the internet. This is potentially problematic. We are not told of any process of screening the volunteers or of checking their work (I do not write in criticism of any individual). Nor are we told whether every volunteer read the whole thing, or whether the work was divided between them. There is a brief history of the Syriac versions (pp. xx-xxi) - too brief, because anybody who needed to use the volumes would already know more than it contains - followed by a rather more detailed description of S and C. By contrast, there is a very full explanation of the process of computerised aligning of the text (pp. xxv-xxx). The remainder and bulk of the Introduction, by Juckel, is devoted to the Harklean (pp. xxxi-lxxxii). There is also a shorter introduction in Syriac (pp. lxxxvii-xci). A page providing one *erratum* refers the reader to the Internet for an updated *errata* list - a very useful interaction of printed and electronic materials. Finally on the *Prolegomena*,

there are seven plates: two each of S C; two also of BL Add. 14459, one of each part of this Peshitta MS, whose Luke and John are the earliest dated Syriac Gospel MS; and one of the Harklean witness Vat. Syr. 268, showing the long marginal note at Mt 20.28.

I turn now to the edition itself. The texts are given in blocks of four lines, one below the other, each giving one of the four texts. The material is carefully aligned to make comparison as easy as possible, and where a word is lacking in or more of the lines, a large x marks the spot. The Syriac font used is a clear Estrangela. A new chapter always begins on a lefthand page. The text of the Sinaitic manuscript is that printed by Lewis (1910), that of the Curetonian Burkitt's in *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe* (1904), and that of the Peshitta Pusey and Gwilliam (1901). These are not absolutely exact transcriptions; the types of alteration are described on p. xxv: P is more fully vocalised than in Pusey and Gwilliam, and several errors have been silently corrected. The indicators of paragraphs in the Old Syriac MSS have been standardised, and a general caveat about punctuation in them (including presence or absence of seyame in S) is given. Page, column and line breaks in S are indicated by various sigla. Verse division follows Pusey and Gwilliam.

There are some footnotes to the text, which refer to particular problems in reading S and C (e.g. in the Matthew volume, pp. 333, 368, 385); these include first hand corrections (as Jn 13.16); notes on difficulties (as Luke 8.52 on C, 'there is a fault in the skin in Cod.') and confirmations of mistakes in a MS (as S at Jn 20.1); differences from other editors are also given (as Mark 14.14, 'underlined L[ewis]'. and again a note on Lewis at Matt 25.17. Another feature not described in the Introduction, though it is given in the sigla, is use of square brackets in P to indicate 'non-Peshitta readings'.

So to the Harklean. The *editio princeps* of White (1778) has long been known to be unsatisfactory, and Juckel explores this in some detail, arguing that the MS on which it was based represents a revision of the revision by Dionysius bar Salībî in the twelfth century. What he presents instead is an interim measure: 'The long-term task will be to establish the original Gospel text from the oldest manuscripts by means of a critical edition. The short-term task, however, is to make available the text of an old Harklean Gospel manuscript as a preliminary step towards the original text and to escape from the dominance of White's edition' (p. xxxif). The MS which he has adopted is Vat. Syr. 268 (already used by the International Greek New Testament Project for its published Luke and its ongoing John), supplemented where necessary – there is some damage – by Vat. Syr. 267, and by Ms. Plut. 1.40 of the Laurentian Library in Jn 19.9-21.25 (where Vat. Syr. 267 also fails). In addition, the ninth-century Chester Beatty Syr. 3 was used as a check on the marginalia. Part of the interest of Vat. Syr. 267 is its variation from Vat. Syr. 268.: 'V267 has a reliable text, too, but collating it with V268 indicates that a considerable number of variant readings in text and margin have to be quoted in a critical edition. They are not mere scribal errors but true variants: what

one manuscript reads in the margin is given by the other in the text (and vice versa), marginal readings are missing, and the use of critical signs is not the same' (p. xlix). There are notes recording such differences.

The edition separates the marginalia from the text. The former, for all four Gospels, are listed in the Introduction, pp. iii-lxxxii. It must be noted that only the *Syriac* marginalia and not the Greek are recorded. This limits the value of the edition for the purposes of studying the Greek text on which Thomas based his work. This Juckel would perhaps justify: 'To understand the complex character of this version and its revisional alterations in the course of the centuries is, at the moment, of greater importance than studying its background... Harklean research on the Gospels neglected to study their inner-Syriac aspect and was attracted too much by their Greek appearance and possible support for the text of the *Greek New Testament*' (p. xxxii). However, the Greek marginalia are also a part on the inner character of the version, and their absence is a pity.

There is not necessarily a marker in the text to indicate that there is a marginal note, unless the MS(S) contain(s) a critical symbol.

How much does this edition differ from White's? The most striking difference is that White's MS included Jn 7.53-8.11. But this is absent in V268. Thus H now agrees with S C P in omitting the passage. The total number of marginalia is 605; there are 143 in Matthew, averaging out at about one for every three pages of text; 128 for Mark, or one every two pages; 216 for Luke, one every two and a half pages; and 118 for John, with the same average as Matthew. The list is clearly laid out, although the alignment slips on p. xix (having also prepared camera ready copy, also for the NTTS series, I can sympathise with the editor).

This edition undoubtedly represents an advance on White. In placing all the texts together, it has the general merit of making reference to the Syriac versions easier. It is no criticism of the edition to say that it does not make the separate editions redundant: the Sinaitic palimpsest is too hard to read for one to neglect any of the various attempts to decipher it.

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