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Review

Reviewed Work(s):

Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels: Aligning the Sinaiticus,  
Curetonianus, Peshîttâ and Harklean Versions

by George Anton Kiraz

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*History of the Literature of Adam and Eve* (Early Judaism and Its Literature 3; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992). This apocryphal literature played a significant role in the development of Armenian literature and culture. This publication continues Stone's efforts to make this complex, important, and fascinating corpus available to scholars.

The first volume of the concordance contains a short introduction to the standard lemmatization principles used to establish the concordance as well as a list of homographs. An important feature of the volume is the partial reprinting of the standard edition of the texts indexed, or a revision thereof, with the concordance. This tome contains three Adam texts, each of which is provided with a short introduction, the Armenian text, and the exhaustive concordance. The texts are kept separate, and the concordance for each text is printed following that text.

The first section provides the text basic to all of the Adam narratives, the Armenian biblical text of Genesis 1–4. It is reprinted from the critical edition of A. Zeyt'unyan, *The Book of Genesis* [in Armenian] (Monuments of Ancient Armenian Translations 1; Erevan: Academy of Sciences, 1985), without, alas, the critical apparatus. This is followed by the concordance, which is organized into four columns. Each entry begins with the lexical term, the “‘dictionary’ form of the word,” and an indication of the part of speech (name, adjective, verb, noun, etc.). The occurrences are listed in order of appearance in the Adam text. The second column includes the eighteen characters or so before the occurrence. The third column lists the word searched in the text. The final column includes the words following the searched term, up to about thirty characters.

The second text is *Penitence of Adam*. The text is adapted from Stone's 1981 edition published in the *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*. The critical apparatus is not included in the concordance. The third text is *The Book of Adam*, an Armenian translation of the Greek *Apocalypse of Moses*. The text is that published by Yovsēp'ianc'. Once again, the critical apparatus is not included.

The publication of the texts, with concordance, of the Adam literature is an important contribution for scholars in biblical studies, early Christian literature, and Armenian studies. While one is grateful to have the volumes as they appear, it is somewhat unfortunate that a unified concordance, combining readings from all the Adam texts, is not being published. The decision to omit the critical apparatus of texts may be problematic for some studies of the texts. Still, with the publication of this remarkably error-free volume, scholars have more extensive access to the Armenian Adam literature than ever before.

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*Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels: Aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshittā and Harklean Versions*. Vol. 1, *Matthew*; Vol. 2, *Mark*; Vol. 3, *Luke*; Vol. 4, *John*, ed. George Anton Kiraz. NTTS 21/1–4. Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill, 1996. Pp. xciv + 454 + 7 plates; ii + 257; ii + 514; ii + 376. \$529.25 (set).

Anyone who has worked with multiple textual traditions of the same text quickly realizes that they are best studied in parallel horizontal lines. This is precisely what Adolf Jülicher did with the Old Latin Gospels (*Itala*, 4 vols. [1938–1963]), and what Barbara

Aland is doing with the Epistles in Syriac (*Das neue Testament in syrischer Überlieferung*, 3 vols. to date [1986–]).

The Syriac versions are among the most important witnesses to the text of the Gospels. Three versions are known. The oldest is the Old Syriac, or Vetus Syra. Its text is witnessed in two very important manuscripts (Codex Syrus Sinaiticus [Syr<sup>sin</sup>; fourth cent.—equal in antiquity, then, with Greek codices Sinaiticus (Ⲛ) and Vaticanus (B)] and Syrus Curetonianus [Syr<sup>cur</sup>; fifth cent.]). These two MSS are thought to represent two separate translation attempts, from two Greek *Vorlagen*. Their text has many archaic features and unique passages (e.g., in Luke 23:48, both add “and saying, ‘Woe to us! What hath befallen us? Woe to us from our sins!’”) and has been deeply influenced by Tatian’s Diatessaron. The second version is the Peshîttâ (the Syrian Vulgate), which survives in numerous MSS, and whose ascendancy can be placed in the (probably middle-) fifth century. Finally, there is the Harklean version, a slavish translation from the Greek, made by Thomas of Harkel (in 616 CE; he worked from the now-lost Philoxenian version, which was completed in the early sixth century). Comparing these diverse versions has been difficult, however, because no critical edition has ever been produced which consistently incorporates all of their variants. Now George Kiraz has elegantly filled that gap with this four-volume, 1,500 page set.

Kiraz begins by providing a brief background to his computerized projects on the Syriac NT text (which have resulted in his magnificent *Concordance to the Syriac New Testament*, 6 vols. [1993], and his *Lexical Tools to the Syriac New Testament* [1994]), an introduction to the Syriac versions, and a description of the method of alignment. Kiraz tapped a noted expert on the later Syriac versions, Andreas Juckel, for an excellent “Introduction to the Harklean Text” (pp. xxxi–lxxxii); this comprehensive treatment is probably the most thorough yet published, and deserves notice. Juckel includes a complete listing of readings from the famous “Harklean margin” from MS Vat. Syr. 268 (pp. lii–lxxxii). Seven plates then offer images of manuscripts from each of the versions. This is followed by the text of each of the Gospels, set out, Jülicher-like, in parallel horizontal lines. The top line is the Sinaitic Syriac, the second is the Curetonian, the third is the Peshîttâ (as given in the edition of Pusey and Gwilliam [1901, but Kiraz prints—in brackets—verses omitted in the 1901 edition, and supplied in the 1905 reprint of Pusey and Gwilliam from the 1816 edition of Lee]). The fourth line is the text of the Harklean version, as found in MS Vat. Syr. 268, with reference to MS Vat. Syr. 267 and Bibl. Laurenz. Plut. 1.40 where MS Vat. Syr. 268 is defective.

The result is a lucid, uncluttered presentation of the Syriac versional traditions. Disjunctions leap off the page at once. Omissions (marked with an “x,” à la Jülicher) and lacunae (marked with the dots of an ellipsis [“. . .”]) are instantly distinguishable. What is especially fascinating is how one can see the Syriac tradition developing over time, moving ever closer to the Greek, both in terms of variant readings and diction.

Before these volumes, if one wished to compare the four Syriac versions, at least three volumes were necessary, in two Syriac scripts, and one had to use an apparatus to reconstruct the two Vetus Syra traditions from F. C. Burkitt’s edition. Now, all four versions are effortlessly available, printed in a clear Estrangelo font, and comparisons among them require no more than a glance.

One thing lacking from these volumes, which would have been useful, is an apparatus for the Peshîttâ and Harklean lines—but the omission is understandable. Novices,

however, should not be misled by seeing a single line for these two traditions, for behind each line lie many manuscripts, each with variant readings—some of which are very significant. To see the full complexity of the Peshîttâ, for example, scholars will still have to use Pusey and Gwilliam.

These volumes—appropriately dedicated to Sebastian Brock, of the Oriental Institute at Oxford—are a milestone in the study of the Syriac versions. The firm of Brill is to be congratulated for producing (with the care one has come to expect from this ancient house) a work which is of enduring scholarly significance.

Kiraz has a knack for identifying lacunae in scholars' tools and then filling them efficiently and elegantly. Having already immortalized his name with his *Concordance* to the Syriac NT, he now offers us these magnificent volumes. We are fortunate to live in an age when there is a George Kiraz to provide us with such superb tools.

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*Nag Hammadi Codex VII*, ed. Birger A. Pearson. NHS 30. Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill, 1996. Pp. xxviii + 479. \$134.50.

*Nag Hammadi Codex VII* is the last of the sixteen volumes comprising the "Coptic Gnostic Library" subseries of the "Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies" series published by Brill. This long-awaited volume contains a codicological introduction along with introductions, Coptic transcriptions, English translations, and textual notes to the five tractates contained in Codex VII: *The Paraphrase of Shem*, introduced, edited, and translated with critical notes by Frederik Wisse; *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth*, introduced and translated with critical notes by Gregory Riley; *Apocalypse of Peter*, introduced by Michel Desjardins and translated with critical notes by James Brashler; *The Teachings of Silvanus*, introduced and translated with critical notes by Malcolm L. Peel with the collaboration of the late Jan Zandee on the translation; and *The Three Steles of Seth*, introduced by James E. Goehring, translated by James M. Robinson and James E. Goehring, with critical notes by James E. Goehring. In addition, the volume contains an introduction to Codex VII by Frederik Wisse and an index of Coptic and Greek words by Clayton Jefford. The translations therein represent now a third complete revision of the English translations of these treatises published by Brill first in 1977 and in revised form again in 1988 as *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, with completely new introductions, supplemented by critical notes to the text and translations. The present Coptic text was autographically collated by Frederik Wisse in 1970–1973 and again by Birger Pearson in 1993.

Codex VII is the best preserved of all of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts. It was inscribed in a round uncial script, one of the most legible and regular of all the codices, by the same scribe who wrote NHC XI, 3 and 4. Cartonnage composed of inscribed papyrus found in the leather cover of the codex includes grain receipts dated 341, 346, and 348 CE; other receipts and letters contain personal and place names that suggest a codex produced in a Pachomian monastic scriptorium during the late fourth century. Certain dialectal features distinguish two groups of treatises: one (*Paraphrase of Shem* and *Teachings of Silvanus*) that represents a distinctly southern (Sahidic) dialect with an