

admitted and what he told them to write down—an extra liability (besides his own embezzlements) which mattered nothing to him, because he was ruined in any case, whatever the amount of his defalcations. To them his proposal looked like a handsome and advantageous offer, dictated by magnanimously friendly feeling on his part. They naturally did not refuse that relief, and so falling in with his proposal (which the word ‘quickly’ suggests that he rather hurried them into, without giving them time for reflexion) they wrote out their accounts, falsely understating their debts.

The full significance of his conduct comes out when we examine the position he had thus created. He had induced all the debtors to write out and sign false and fraudulent accounts. They had thus put themselves into his power, and he could use his power to serve his own ends, that is, he could blackmail them. If they should try to resist his demands, he could hand them up to the lord for false and fraudulent acts, and not only would they be liable to be punished criminally, but also their characters would be blasted. They had all joined in a wholesale scheme of fraud and involved

themselves in his defalcations. He could thus live upon them thenceforward. He could oblige them to receive him into their houses and support him. He had turned his own ruin into a means of deliverance for himself. By conduct that seemed so generous on his part and so advantageous to them he had inveigled them into a position that was disastrous for them and beneficial to himself.

His lord came to know somehow or other what he had done. ‘And his lord commended (praised) the unrighteous steward because he had done wisely (astutely).’ He praised the steward’s astuteness, and no wonder, for the scheme was an extraordinarily clever piece of rascality, a masterpiece ‘of unrighteousness.’ One cannot but admire the steward’s amazing ingenuity, while reprobating his utter villainy. Certainly ‘the sons of this world (those who live only for this world or age) are for (or towards) their own generation wiser (more astute) than the sons of light’—because they are bound by no scruples. They not only possess all intellectual faculties equally with the sons of light, but they can also use their faculties in unprincipled ways wherein the latter cannot compete with them.

A New Edition of the Syriac New Testament.¹

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THE issue of the first complete critical edition of the New Testament in Syriac is an important event in the history of Biblical scholarship. The Peshitta, it is true, can no longer be described, as it was by Westcott, as ‘the earliest monument of Catholic Christianity,’ while as an aid to the textual criticism of the Gospels it must now give first place to the ‘Old Syriac,’ as represented by the famous codex from Mt. Sinai and the somewhat later Curetonian manuscript. Still, the Peshitta, or Syriac Vulgate, remains an important historical witness to the text of the New Testament as read by all branches of the Syrian Church, and is the gateway through which the student must pass to the study of the older version, and indeed of the whole body of Syriac literature.

To appreciate the importance and value of the

¹ *The New Testament in Syriac*. 7s. 6d. London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1905–1920.

new edition it is necessary to recall briefly the history of the more outstanding previous issues of the Syriac New Testament. The *editio princeps*, as is well known, was prepared by the scholar and statesman, J. A. Widmanstadt, Vienna, 1555, from a MS. brought from the East by a priest, Moses of Mardin.² Of the fairly numerous editions that followed, the Syriac part of the Paris Polyglot (1645) is noteworthy both as the *editio princeps* of the Old Testament Peshitta, and as giving for the first time certain of the New Testament books which are lacking in the Canon of the Peshitta, viz. the Apocalypse and the four minor Catholic Epistles, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude. These had been published a few years previously at Leiden by Le Dieu and Pococke respectively.

² A detailed account—probably from the pen of Dr. Gwynn—of the preparation of this edition was given in the *Church Quarterly Review*, for July 1888, pp. 262 ff.

The Paris text of the whole New Testament was reproduced in the more familiar London polyglot of Brian Walton (1657). Since Walton's day the more important issues have been the highly prized edition of Leusden & Schaaf (Leiden, 1708), reckoned by the latter in his preface as the thirteenth edition of the Syriac New Testament, the British and Foreign Bible Society's edition of 1816, edited by Dr. Samuel Lee, and the handy Nestorian edition of the American Society (New York, 1886). The feature common to all these editions is the fact that their text is based on a very few MSS. of the Peshitta, and these on the whole not the oldest.¹

This brings us to the first edition of any part of the Peshitta to be prepared by a well-equipped scholar, familiar with the best existing MSS., the *Tetraeuangelium Sanctum juxta simplicem Syrorum Versionem*, edited by the late Rev. G. H. Gwilliam in 1901 for the delegates of the Clarendon Press. The great advance over all previous editions is evident from the fact that it is based on a collation of no fewer than forty-two manuscripts of the Peshitta, some of them dating from the fifth and sixth centuries.² It contained, in addition to a carefully punctuated text and a select critical apparatus, a Latin translation, really a revision of Schaaf's rendering. Its appearance was greeted by scholars at home and abroad as making an epoch in the study of the Peshitta.

This brief retrospect would be incomplete without a reference to two valuable publications of the erudite Syriac scholar, the late Rev. John Gwynn, D.D., of Dublin University. These are (1) a new edition of the Apocalypse (1898) from a MS. now in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, which was proved to contain the later version known as the Philoxenian, and (2) an edition of the same version of the four minor Catholic Epistles, based on a score of MSS. (Text and Translation Society, London, 1909).

Coming now to the new edition issued by the Bible Society under the direction of its accomplished Editorial Superintendent, the Rev.

¹ It is only fair to add that the text has been transmitted with extraordinary care. The variants in the existing MSS. are few and unimportant compared with those in MSS. of the Greek text.

² It may be noted here that, mainly as the result of the researches of Professor Burkitt, scholars are now generally agreed in connecting the Peshitta version of the N.T. with the activity of Rabbula, bishop of Edessa, 411-435 A.D.

Robert Kilgour, D.D., we find that, like Cæsar's Gaul, it may be said to consist of three parts. The first is a reprint of *The Fourfold Gospel* issued by the Society in 1905, which in its turn—by permission of the delegates of the Oxford Press—was a reprint of Gwilliam's text without the critical apparatus and other notes. The acknowledged excellence of this text of the Gospels has been already emphasized. The third part is also a reprint, containing Gwynn's critical text of the four minor Catholic Epistles, and of the Revelation as given in the two works referred to above. The second part, therefore, comprising the rest of the New Testament books—Acts, James, 1 Peter, 1 John, and the Pauline Epistles, including Hebrews—alone is new. The text of these, according to Dr. Kilgour's preface, 'follows a critical revision of the Peshitta originally undertaken by Mr. Gwilliam, for the Clarendon Press, as a completion of his edition of the Gospels (1901) and prepared on similar lines.'

After Mr. Gwilliam's death in 1913 the task of collating the MSS.—some of which were additional to those consulted for the Gospels—was completed by a brilliant pupil of the present writer, the Rev. John Pinkerton, B.D., who, to the great loss of Biblical scholarship, was killed in action near the Struma on 1st October 1916. The work, as has been indicated, has been done on the lines laid down by Mr. Gwilliam; the prominent features of his text of the Gospels, such as the marks for the hard and soft 'begadkephath' letters, are retained, and of course the text only is given. It is to be hoped, however, that the Clarendon Press may be able to utilize Gwilliam's and Pinkerton's collations for a future companion volume to the former's *Tetraeuangelium*.

It is a matter of legitimate pride that the first absolutely reliable text of 'The Queen of Versions' should be given to the world by the premier British Bible Society. And not only New Testament scholars are in the Society's debt, for every branch of the Syrian Church in the Near East and in India—Nestorian, Jacobite, Maronite, and the rest—has now at its service a cheap and convenient text of the 'New Covenant of our Lord Jesus Christ,' to give the Syriac title of this new edition.

It only remains for the Society to complete its revised edition of the Peshitta Old Testament, of which the Pentateuch appeared in 1914 under the editorship of Professor Emery Barnes, 'adjuvanti-bus Carolo W. Mitchell, Iohanne Pinkerton.'