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## Introduction

The eastern churches have preserved a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Syriac. The Syriac language was the Aramaic dialect of Edessa (today's Urfa, in south-east Turkey) and of its province Osrhoene; and it was the medium by which Christianity spread from Edessa over Mesopotamia and the Iranian plateau. Yet internal evidence leaves no doubt that the translation was made from a Hebrew text, rather than from the Greek Bible, which had official status in the early church.<sup>1</sup> The translation thus has links both with early eastern Christianity and with Judaism, and the nature of those links is a question central to the origin of the version. In discussing it, we shall have to take care not to treat 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' as two simple homogeneous entities, given the variety which the archaeological discoveries of this century have revealed in either religion.

The Syriac version is not, of course, the only known case of a translation made from a Hebrew original but preserved by the church. An earlier instance was the Old Greek version, commonly called the Septuagint (or LXX). In the case of LXX, however, the general religious context is clear. First, the version is simply too early to be Christian. Moreover, a Jewish origin, at least for the version of the Torah, is acknowledged in such Jewish sources as the letter of Aristeas and the Talmud.<sup>2</sup> The reason for its abandonment by the Jews is also evident, namely its adoption by the church. For the Syriac version, by contrast, the evidence of date would admit Christian as well as Jewish origin. Furthermore, there is no reference to this version in Jewish sources, or rather not until the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> Its religious context is thus obscure, and in particular the silence of the Jewish sources, given that the translation was made from the Hebrew, demands explanation.

The place of origin is identified by many as Edessa, where the Syriac dialect is already attested at the turn of the era. Also popular, however, is the theory that the version originated further east, in Adiabene, whose king Izates converted to Judaism during Claudius' reign (41–54 CE). This theory, and the general question of the location of the Syriac version, are further discussed in later chapters.

<sup>1</sup> The theory that the Syriac version goes back to the Hebrew not directly but through a Jewish Aramaic translation is examined – and rejected – in chapter 3 below.

<sup>2</sup> See TB Meg. 9a and parallels (which shares the story of 72 translators placed by "Ptolemy" in separate cells), and Soferim 1:7 (which instead mentions just five translators, whose version of the Torah was as disastrous as the Golden Calf). On these rabbinic traditions, see most recently G. Veltri, *Eine Torah für den König Talmi*, Tübingen 1994.

<sup>3</sup> On the Jewish references to P from the Middle Ages, and allegedly earlier, see pp. 160–2 below.

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The theory that the translation was made by or for the converts in Adiabene would imply a date in the first century CE. Even aside from that theory, the translation must pre-date the fourth-century Syriac fathers Aphrahat and Ephrem, who cite it extensively. It can in fact hardly be later than about 200 CE, since it uses a particle that Ephrem no longer understood.<sup>4</sup> Around the end of the fourth century, we are told that nothing was remembered of the translators' identity or circumstances,<sup>5</sup> and this fact likewise suggests a date hardly if at all later than 200 CE.

That the whole translation is of a single date should not be taken for granted, since differences in translation technique emerge between the different books. Native tradition too speaks of a number of different translators (though not necessarily in different eras). Thus the unity of the translation, as well as its date, place and religious background, all merit discussion.

Quite apart from its own interest, the translation has an important bearing on both earlier and later writings. In relation to the Hebrew text of the Bible, this is the earliest translation of the whole canon into another Semitic language. It is thus potentially an important witness to the biblical text, and at the very least shows how the Hebrew text was understood at a particular (if as yet unidentified) time and place. In subsequent centuries also, the translation assumes new importance as the basis of the rich literature of Syriac-speaking Christianity, while the history of its text reflects the history of the constituent churches.<sup>6</sup>

### The name of the translation

The translation has long been known by the name Peshitta (Syriac: ܦܫܝܬܬܐ). Here the abbreviation P will be used to indicate the translation, or sometimes the translator.

The name Peshitta is first found in two works by Moses bar Kepa (c. 813–903): his *Hexaemeron*<sup>7</sup> and his introduction to the *Psalms*.<sup>8</sup> The form is a passive participle from the root ܦܫܬ, whose primary meaning is “stretch out”. The gender is feminine, to agree with the noun ܩܘܡܘܨܐ “version” understood. The etymological sequence of different dentals /t/ in the name is not tolerated in pronunciation, which would be either Pshita or Pshitta in the east and Pshito in the west.<sup>9</sup>

In Syriac, as in Jewish Aramaic, the meaning of the participle ܦܫܝܬܬܐ sometimes developed from “stretched out” to “straight, straightforward, simple, obvious”. Its

<sup>4</sup> This is the particle ܘ in Gen. 1:1. See p. 253 below, as well as G. Goldenberg, “Bible Translations and Syriac Idiom” in MPI 8, pp. 25–39, especially pp. 28–9.

<sup>5</sup> See the references cited on p. 146 in the commentary on the Twelve Prophets by Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350–428).

<sup>6</sup> See the chapter entitled “Text and Context” in D.J. Lane, *The Peshitta of Leviticus* [=MPI 6], Leiden 1994, pp. 157–72.

<sup>7</sup> Syriac text with French translation cited in J.P.P. Martin, *Introduction à la Critique Textuelle du Nouveau Testament: Partie Théorique*, Paris [1883], p. 100. German translation in L. Schlimme, *Der Hexaemeronkommentar des Moses bar Kepha*, Wiesbaden 1977, vol. 1, p. 172.

<sup>8</sup> G. Diettrich, *Eine jakobitische Einleitung in den Psalter* (=BZAW 5), Giessen 1901, p. 115. Moses bar Kepha's authorship was demonstrated by J.-M. Vosté, “L'introduction de Mose bar Kepha aux Psaumes de David”, *Revue Biblique* 38 (1929), pp. 214–28.

<sup>9</sup> E. Nestle, “Zum Namen der syrischen Bibelübersetzung Peschittâ” in *ZDMG* 47 (1893), pp. 157–9 argued for simple /t/; the spelling in the title was etymological only. E. König argued for a doubled /t/, in “Zum Namen der syrischen Bibelübersetzung Peschittâ” *ZDMG* 47 (1893), pp. 316–19. In the west, consonants are no longer doubled.

counterpart פשוט in Mishnaic Hebrew likewise came to mean “straightforward”. The related Hebrew noun פשוט is used from the eleventh century onward of biblical interpretation, and denotes the “simple” meaning, as opposed to homiletics read into the text. The name Peshitta may likewise mean “the simple (version)”.<sup>10</sup>

An alternative explanation for the name Peshitta is that the participle instead developed from ‘stretched out’ to mean ‘widespread’. On that view, the name Peshitta would be analogous to *Vulgata* “common text”.<sup>11</sup> No analogy, however, can be found for such usage in Syriac, and so the meaning ‘simple’ may be preferred.

The simplicity, according to Barhebraeus, lies in P’s “rejection of ornate language” (ترك البلاغة).<sup>12</sup> Moses bar Kepa contrasts the Peshitta with the Syrohexapla version (based on LXX) produced in 615–17 CE; by comparison, P is indeed simple. It is unlikely, however, that the name is actually a translation of Greek ἀπλᾶ, to contrast with ἐξαπλᾶ.<sup>13</sup> First, only in Greek would this contrast be recognised; moreover, the term Peshitta is also used for the standard text of the New Testament, where no Hexapla existed, and the contrast is rather with the more literal Harklean version, likewise produced in the seventh century.<sup>14</sup>

### The framework of Peshitta research

The extant texts of P are separated from the other extant forms of the Hebrew Bible by many removes. When we study the relationship of P to these other textual witnesses, all the different stages have to be taken into account. The more we attribute to one such stage, the less can be attributed to the others: for example, in relation to the discrepancies between P and MT, the more are ascribed to translation technique, the fewer can be ascribed to a difference in the Hebrew *Vorlage*.

The various stages that must be considered are summarised in fig. 1. Here, some of the vertical lines represent descent by copying, while others represent mental processes, as indicated in the figure. Genealogies of this sort in studies of the biblical text are inevitably over-simplified and therefore unfashionable. In this case, for example, no account is taken of variations within MT, nor of possible variations in the genealogy between one book and another. Moreover, it sometimes happened that a scribe copying one manuscript also consulted a second manuscript from a different family, and so blurred together different lines of descent. Even so, it is important to have the basic underlying relations clearly in mind. To deny the legitimacy of any such scheme outright is in effect to affirm that readings circulated at random, which would misrepresent matters far more seriously.

In any biblical book, the Hebrew texts that now survive and the Hebrew source (technically termed the *Vorlage*) used by the translator of P are of common origin. This is

<sup>10</sup> The verb פשוט and the noun פשוט are already applied in the Talmud to biblical exegesis, but there seem primarily to denote interpretation recognised as obviously authoritative rather than simple interpretation *per se*. See R. Loewe, “The ‘Plain’ Meaning of Scripture in Early Jewish Exegesis”, *Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies London*, ed. J.G. Weiss, Jerusalem 1964, pp. 140–85, especially p. 181.

<sup>11</sup> So e.g. R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, Oxford 1897–1901, col. 3319 (‘versio vulgata, communis, popularis’). <sup>12</sup> Arabic text cited in N. Wiseman, *Horae Syriacae*, Rome 1828, p. 92.

<sup>13</sup> F. Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum Quae Supersunt . . . Fragmenta*, Oxford 1875, vol. 1, p. ix, n. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Nestle, “Zum Namen”, p. 159.

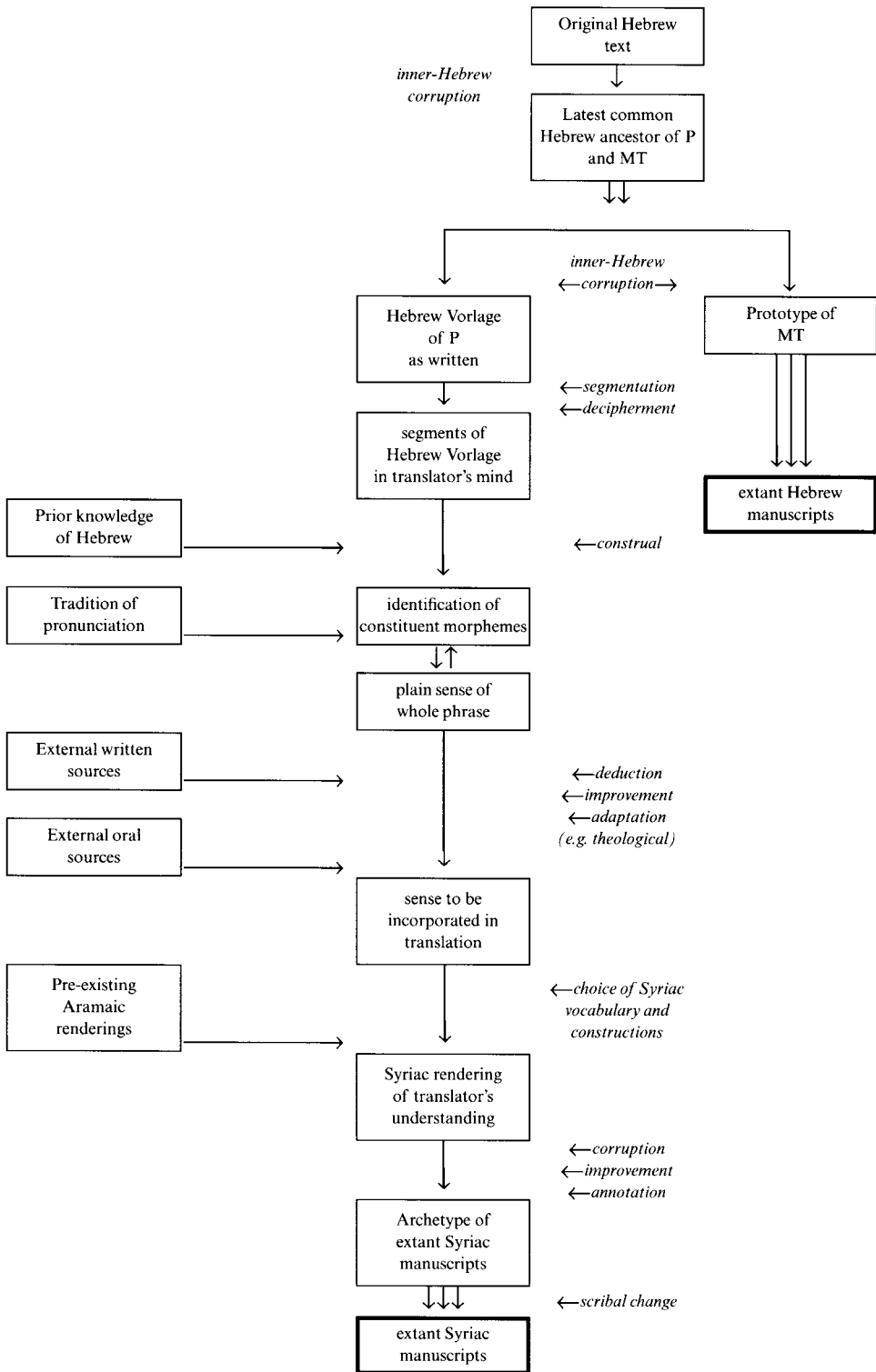


Fig.1. The relationship between the extant Hebrew and Syriac texts

not merely because both go back ultimately to the lost original text of the Bible. The lines of transmission leading down to MT on the one hand, and to the *Vorlage* of P on the other, had much in common, since MT and P share various inferior readings of which some other extant forms of the text – such as 4QSam<sup>a</sup> and LXX in Samuel – are free. In these cases, where an erroneous reading stands in MT and P but not in all witnesses, it is a fair conclusion that that inferior reading already stood in the latest common ancestor of both MT and the *Vorlage* of P. How many generations of copies lay between that latest common ancestor and the original Hebrew text, we cannot tell.

Further errors may have arisen in the transmission of the Hebrew between that latest common ancestor and MT. In principle, these should not be present in the alternative line of transmission leading to the *Vorlage* of P, nor in more distantly related authorities such as LXX. Conversely, errors may have arisen in the transmission of the Hebrew between the latest common ancestor and the *Vorlage* of P. We may expect these to have given rise to errors confined to P and absent both from MT and from LXX (and other more distantly related witnesses). It may prove difficult, however, to distinguish such errors in P's Hebrew *Vorlage* from errors made in the translation process itself.

Between the written Hebrew text which lay before the translator and the Hebrew text which he attempted to put into Syriac, various stages intervene. The former text may be thought of as two-dimensional: the text as set out upon the page. The latter is instead linear: the text as divided into segments, which the translator processes one by one. These segments of the Hebrew *Vorlage*, as will be shown below, normally contained more than one word. No doubt the translator made every effort to convert the written text into a linear sequence of segments accurately, but on occasion he may inadvertently have failed. A particular difficulty was that he constantly had to read a segment in the Hebrew *Vorlage*, write down a Syriac translation in his own book, and then to return to the next segment in the Hebrew *Vorlage*. Fatigue or carelessness could have caused him to return to the wrong point, and thus to omit a particular segment, or perhaps to render it twice.

Once the translator had begun to work on a given segment, he had to read all its letters; and here too he may have encountered difficulty. In some such passages, his decipherment of any doubtful letters may have been false. There may also have been places where he could not decipher anything at all; such passages had to be treated by the same expedients as were applied to texts that could be read but not understood, as considered in detail below.

After the segment had been delimited and its letters read, the translator next had to understand it. Here the first step was to identify what morphemes (i.e. elements of vocabulary and grammar) were present. Like any other reader of an unpointed text, the translator would examine the words in turn, picking up any "pattern clues" of morphological form within the word under scrutiny and any "syntactic clues" in neighbouring words.<sup>15</sup>

What other sources the translators might have had, beyond the consonantal Hebrew text, and what authority they might have attached to these, will need to be discussed. One possibility to investigate is that they had a reading tradition, which indicated the

<sup>15</sup> H. Rosén, *A Textbook of Israeli Hebrew*, Chicago 1962, p. vii.

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pronunciation of the Hebrew text, at least in some passages. It is also possible that they had access to LXX or to some other written form of the Greek Bible. Yet another suggestion is that they had manuscripts of one or other of the Jewish Aramaic versions, or alternatively that they drew upon orally transmitted Aramaic renderings for particular phrases in the text. However, a consonantal Hebrew text was the translators' primary source, as will become clear below.

Upon first scanning a segment of text, the translator may have found one (or more) of the Hebrew words to be patient of more than one identification. He would then check these alternatives against the resulting overall sense implied by each for the whole phrase. He may have gone through this process of re-appraisal more than once. Thus the final understanding proceeds phrase by phrase, rather than word by word.<sup>16</sup>

The normal outcome was that the translator found only one set of identifications of the morphemes to be viable. These would have led to the plain sense of the whole segment, without ambiguity, at least in the translator's own mind. The translator's success here would have depended on his prior knowledge of Hebrew, and his skill in applying that knowledge to the Hebrew *Vorlage*.

Having identified the plain sense uniquely, the translator usually wished to convey it precisely; but this was not always so. On occasion, he may instead have wished to improve it either on grounds internal to the text (e.g. by resolving a logical contradiction) or on external grounds (e.g. by removing an element which had become theologically objectionable, such as a reference to God changing his purpose).

It did not always happen, however, that the translator arrived at a unique plain sense. An alternative possibility is that he hesitated between two different but viable possibilities; in that case he may have chosen just one, but with some misgivings, or he may even have preserved both alternatives in a doublet translation. At the other extreme, he may have found the Hebrew so obscure as to yield no plain sense for the whole segment at all, even though he may have identified various morphemes within it. In such cases, the translator would have had recourse to special techniques or supplementary sources, since he was still expected to produce some form of translation. As special techniques, he might stretch the sense of the morphemes identified, or tacitly emend the Hebrew text in order to obtain clear sense, or guess from the context. Supplementary sources might have been other scriptural passages, other biblical versions or exegetical traditions; the possibilities are considered in detail in chapter 2.

A distinction may be drawn at this point between construal and interpretation. The construal of a segment may be defined as the derivation of its plain sense, so far as is possible. The normal outcome, as stated above, is that the whole segment yields plain sense without ambiguity. Where, however, more than one possibility for the plain sense is found, construal is the derivation of the alternative meanings; and where no plain sense for the segment can be derived at all, construal means identifying whatever morphemes one can. Interpretation is then the gap between the results of construal and the sense which the translator actually tries to express. It need not occur at every point in the text; and where it does, it can take different forms. In cases where construal yielded a unique plain sense, interpretation may modify it, e.g. in order to remove a perceived

<sup>16</sup> J. Barr, *The Typology of Literalism*, Göttingen 1979, pp. 296–7.



logical or theological difficulty. In cases where construal yielded two or more alternative meanings, interpretation consists of choosing between these; and where construal gave no satisfactory sense, techniques such as guesswork to which the translators resorted constitute yet another type of interpretation.

The translators' understanding of the text, once reached, had to be conveyed through an appropriate choice of words and constructions in Syriac. This was another side of the translators' skill, quite apart from the understanding of the text. How far they may have drawn here upon pre-existing renderings in Aramaic, either in written or in fixed oral form, is a question to be discussed below.

The Syriac mss extant today are separated from the translators' original work by some generations of copying. All canonical books survive in the seventh-century manuscript 7a1 in Milan, but for most books we already have copies from the sixth century and for a few books from the fifth. These last include the oldest dated biblical ms in any language.<sup>17</sup> There are also citations of particular passages in the fourth-century fathers Aphrahat and Ephrem, but even these are at least a century later than the translation itself.

Even where the extant witnesses agree, they do not necessarily preserve the text that left the hand of the translator. A number of changes – both involuntary corruptions and deliberate 'improvements' or annotations – entered the text so early that no extant ms is free of them. These readings can all be termed errors, in the sense that they depart from the original text, although some were introduced deliberately. We may suppose that, in any given biblical book, all the extant witnesses to the Syriac text derive from a lost ancestor which already had these errors. This latest common ancestor (technically termed the archetype) of all the extant mss was thus itself a copy, distinct from and perhaps some generations removed from the original translation. The only hope of removing these changes lies in conjectural emendation.

Finally, although the extant Syriac biblical mss show an impressive degree of uniformity, they are not identical. An important part of our task, therefore, is to choose between the rival readings where the Syriac mss disagree. This will in turn require criteria which will inform the choice, and will also carry implications for the history of the text.

However over-simplified, the above survey suffices to highlight a major difficulty in the study of P. Of the many stages in the history and development of the text as traced in fig.1, we can observe only two: the extant mss of MT in Hebrew, and of P in Syriac.<sup>18</sup> Hence it is not always possible to identify which of the many factors considered in fig. 1 have determined the relationship between these two forms of the text in any given passage. For example, where the translator seems aware of the sense of a rare Hebrew word, did he have prior linguistic knowledge or make a clever deduction from the context? Where P agrees with another version against the plain sense of MT, should we suppose that the two versions had a different *Vorlage* from MT, or that one version has

<sup>17</sup> This is the palimpsest 5ph1, dated to 771 of the Seleucid era, i.e. 459/60 CE. Manuscript 5b1 on the Pentateuch is dated to 775 of that era, i.e. 463/4 CE.

<sup>18</sup> The authorities excluded from fig.1 may be helpful here and there, but not on a regular basis, either because they belong to families which branched off too early (e.g. LXX and various Qumran texts) or because they are translations from a text of the same type preserved in the original language in MT (e.g. Aquila, the Targums).

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influenced the other, or that the two translators arrived at similar results independently in the face of the same difficulties in the Hebrew text? We shall constantly be weighing the probabilities of alternative explanations, without necessarily having any certain basis for a decision.

**Existing research on the Peshitta**

It is not necessary to present here a summary of existing research on the Peshitta, since that task has already been discharged admirably in two book-length works: the compendium (in German) prepared by Haefeli<sup>19</sup> and the new survey (in Italian) by Dirksen.<sup>20</sup> Briefer surveys have been provided by van Puyvelde,<sup>21</sup> Brock,<sup>22</sup> de Boer,<sup>23</sup> Goshen-Gottstein<sup>24</sup> and Joosten.<sup>25</sup> Another important tool provided by Dirksen is his very full classified and annotated bibliography, published in 1989 and updated in 1992.<sup>26</sup> Altogether, therefore, it is only necessary here to trace the main contours of Peshitta research.

First in logic, though only latterly accomplished, is the collation of the manuscripts. The earliest text of the Peshitta of the Old Testament to circulate among western scholars was prepared by the Maronite scholar Gabriel Sionita for the Paris polyglot of 1645. That text was based largely on the almost contemporary Paris manuscript “Syriaques 6” (Leiden siglum: 17a5), and suffered badly from errors accumulated over the centuries. Yet it formed the main basis for subsequent editions until the turn of the twentieth century. The London polyglot of 1657 added some variant readings from two mss, which, however, were again no earlier than the seventeenth century.<sup>27</sup> It is true that Lee’s edition of 1823, often reprinted and until recently the most accessible text, claimed to draw upon earlier manuscripts; but Lee did not specify his sources, nor how he had used them, and his text offers very few corrections to that of the polyglots.<sup>28</sup>

In 1869, Ceriani drew attention to the existence of far older mss of P.<sup>29</sup> These

<sup>19</sup> L. Haefeli, *Die Peschitta des Alten Testaments, mit Rücksicht auf ihre textkritische Bearbeitung und ihre Herausgabe* [=Alttestamentliche Abhandlungen XI.1], Münster 1927.

<sup>20</sup> P.B. Dirksen, *La Peshitta dell’ Antico Testamento*, tr. P.G. Borbone [=Studi Biblici 103], Brescia 1993.

<sup>21</sup> Cl. Van Puyvelde, “Versions Syriaques”, in *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Sup. 6, Paris 1960, cols. 834–84 (Peshitta: 835–55).

<sup>22</sup> S.P. Brock, “Bibelübersetzungen, I.4: Die Übersetzungen ins Syrische, 4.1.1. Peschitta”, in G. Krause and G. Müller (eds.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Berlin 1977–, vol. 6 (1980), pp. 182–5.

<sup>23</sup> “Towards an Edition of the Syriac Version of the Old Testament”, *VT* 31 (1981), pp. 346–57 [= PIC 16].

<sup>24</sup> M.H. Goshen-Gottstein, *תרגומים סוריים, אנציקלופדיה מקראית*, edited by the Bialik Institute, vol. 8, Jerusalem 1982, cols. 847–54.

<sup>25</sup> J. Joosten, “La Peshitta de l’Ancien Testament dans la recherche récente”, *Revue d’Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 76 (1996), pp. 385–95.

<sup>26</sup> P.B. Dirksen, *An Annotated Bibliography of the Peshitta of the Old Testament* [=MPI 5], Leiden 1989. This was updated by Dirksen in P.B. Dirksen and A. van der Kooij (eds.), *The Peshitta as a Translation* [=MPI 8], Leiden 1995, pp. 221–36; and further updates are expected.

<sup>27</sup> On the history of the printed editions, see W.E. Barnes, “The Printed Editions of the Peshitta of the Old Testament”, *Expository Times* 9 (1897/8), pp. 560–2. A detailed study of a particular book is provided by J.A. Emerton, “The Printed Editions of the S. of S. in the Peshitta version”, *VT* 17 (1967), pp. 416–29. See further the works of Ceriani, Barnes and Emerton cited below.

<sup>28</sup> S. Lee (ed.), *Vetus Testamentum Syriace*, London 1823.

<sup>29</sup> A.M. Ceriani, *Le edizioni e i manoscritti delle versioni siriane del Vecchio Testamento*. A summary was published, under the same title, in the series *Reale Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere: Rendiconti*. Serie II, Volume II, Parte I. Milan 1869, pp. 12–14, 267–8, 291–3.



included a ms in Milan which he inclined to date to the sixth century, and which covered nearly the whole Old Testament (now known as 7a1).<sup>30</sup> He also noted the fine collection of mss recently acquired by the British Museum, including a ms of the Pentateuch dated to 463/4 CE (i.e. 5b1).<sup>31</sup> The exploitation of these resources was begun almost immediately in studies of individual books: Chronicles,<sup>32</sup> Psalms<sup>33</sup> and Isaiah.<sup>34</sup> Not until 1956, however, was a project launched to prepare a new edition on the basis of the manuscript evidence, following the meeting of the International Organisation for the Study of the Old Testament in Strasbourg. The work was entrusted to an international team and co-ordinated by the newly founded Peshitta Institute in Leiden.

The first achievement of the Peshitta Institute was a worldwide list of mss of the Peshitta Old Testament.<sup>35</sup> Its ultimate aim was a new edition of P, which began to appear in 1972 and is now almost complete.<sup>36</sup> The new edition provides full collations of all the biblical mss up to and including the twelfth century, though the earliest volumes (published before 1977) also reported the readings of mss right up to the nineteenth.

A critical edition in the strict sense aims to restore the original text, and this in principle entails three tasks: to collate all the mss, to select the best reading where these disagree, and to emend the text by conjecture where none of the extant witnesses offers a satisfactory reading. The Leiden edition was designed for the first stage only, and rightly so, given the state of knowledge and opinion when it was launched.<sup>37</sup> The next stage, of choosing between rival readings, presupposes agreed criteria for the choice; but these did not yet exist. This point is illustrated by the scholar who berated the Leiden editors for refraining from indicating their preferred readings and thus for “leaving half the work undone”:<sup>38</sup> his own trenchant review of a fundamental work on the textual criticism of P<sup>39</sup> showed how far scholarship still remained from consensus on the criteria for assessing rival readings, even in 1980, long after full publication of the textual materials.<sup>40</sup> Even today the necessary consensus is only gradually emerging.

Although the Leiden edition does not in principle go beyond the collation of the mss,

<sup>30</sup> Another outstanding contribution by Ceriani to Peshitta research was the publication of a facsimile edition of this ms, in 1876–83.

<sup>31</sup> This ms reached the British Museum in March 1843. See W. Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, London 1870–2, vol. 3, p. xiii.

<sup>32</sup> W.E. Barnes, *An Apparatus Criticus to Chronicles in the Peshitta Version with a Discussion of the Value of the Codex Ambrosianus*, Cambridge 1897.

<sup>33</sup> Id., *The Peshitta Psalter according to the West Syrian Text, Edited with an Apparatus Criticus*, Cambridge 1904.

<sup>34</sup> G. Diettrich, *Ein Apparatus criticus zur Pešitto zum Propheten Jesaja* [= BZAW 8], Giessen 1905.

<sup>35</sup> *List of Old Testament Peshitta Manuscripts (Preliminary Issue)*, edited by the Peshitta Institute, Leiden University, Leiden 1961. Updates to this list have been published in VT, as “Peshitta Institute Communications”. A revised edition of the *List* is being prepared by Dr Jenner.

<sup>36</sup> *Vetus Testamentum Syriace*, Leiden 1972–.

<sup>37</sup> The reading shown in the text was not necessarily that preferred by the editors. Instead it was determined by formal rules; see pp. 288, 307–8 below.

<sup>38</sup> M.H. Goshen-Gottstein, “Prolegomena to a Critical Edition of the Peshitta”, in C. Rabin (ed.), *Studies in the Bible* [= *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 8], Jerusalem 1961, pp. 26–67; see p. 63n.

<sup>39</sup> M.D. Koster, *The Peshitta of Exodus. The Development of its Text in the Course of Fifteen Centuries*, Assen/Amsterdam 1977.

<sup>40</sup> M.H. Goshen-Gottstein, “The Peshitta and its Manuscripts: A Review”, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 37 (1980), pp. 13–16.

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the editors of two particular biblical books have provided important monographs on the historical inter-relations between the mss, and the problems of choice between rival readings.<sup>41</sup> Two more – Gelston and Lane – have produced valuable studies which deal more briefly with those topics and also examine the translation technique.<sup>42</sup>

Studies of the translation technique in fact began to appear long before the new edition was conceived. Nearly every book of the Hebrew Bible in the P version has been subjected to a detailed comparison with MT and other known textual authorities. Most of these investigations were produced around the turn of the twentieth century, often as doctoral theses. They consist largely of a verse-by-verse running commentary, with a brief summary arranged by topic; details will be found in Dirksen's bibliography. Many of the authors checked the printed editions then available against the facsimile of the Milan codex (7a1). Although the Leiden edition has since revealed many further readings of importance, major discrepancies are rare, so that these studies retain much value, especially in their detailed comments on difficult passages in P.

Gelston's work on the Twelve Prophets stands apart from these earlier studies in being securely based on full manuscript collations. Arranged by topic, it provides a penetrating analysis of the relationship which P bears to the extant forms of the Hebrew and to the other textual witnesses. More recently, studies of P in Daniel<sup>43</sup> and Job<sup>44</sup> have also appeared.

Outside the Pentateuch, the only books of the Hebrew Bible on which no running commentary exists are Judges and Jeremiah. The Pentateuch is exceptional, in that investigations have been organised by topic, rather than in commentary form. Thus Hirzel in 1825 provided an overview of the translation technique of the Peshitta Pentateuch, and also examined the evidence for its original background. Hirzel argued for a Christian context, mainly on the basis of the version's supposed negligence in ritual matters.<sup>45</sup> This conclusion was attacked in the seminal study by Joseph Perles, who pointed out many parallels in the Pentateuch between P and Jewish Targums or rabbinic sources, and showed that many of P's renderings there presupposed knowledge of Jewish exegesis. On a smaller scale, Perles also pointed out parallels between P and Jewish sources outside the Pentateuch. In addition, he made some perceptive suggestions on the general background of P, though constraints of space sometimes forced him to leave arguments incomplete.<sup>46</sup> In later study of P in the Pentateuch, attention later focused on parallels (real and alleged) with the Jewish Targums – notably Onkelos and the Palestinian Targums discovered in the Cairo Geniza.<sup>47</sup> More

<sup>41</sup> P.B. Dirksen, *The Transmission of the Text in the Peshitta Manuscripts of the Book of Judges* [=MPI 1], Leiden 1972; and Koster, op. cit.

<sup>42</sup> A. Gelston, *The Peshitta of the Twelve Prophets*, Oxford 1987. D.J. Lane, *The Peshitta of Leviticus* [=MPI 6], Leiden 1994.

<sup>43</sup> R.A. Taylor, *The Peshitta of Daniel* [=MPI 7], Leiden 1994. This is written primarily in commentary form, with detailed comparison of the Syriac, Hebrew and Greek forms of the text, cautiously evaluated.

<sup>44</sup> H.M. Szpek, *Translation Technique in the Peshitta to Job* [=SBL Dissertation Series 137], Atlanta 1992. On this, see *JTS* 47 (1996), pp. 584–7.

<sup>45</sup> L. Hirzel, *De Pentateuchi Versionis Syriacae Quam Peschito Vocant Indole Commentatio Critico-Exegetica*, Leipzig 1825.

<sup>46</sup> J. Perles, *Meletemata Peschitthoniana*, Breslau 1859.

<sup>47</sup> The course of this discussion is traced in detail by P.B. Dirksen, "The Old Testament Peshitta", in M.J. Mulder et al. (eds.), *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, Assen/Maastricht and Philadelphia 1988, pp. 255–98. See further chapter 3 below.