The Old Syriac Versions of the Gospels.
A Status Quaestionis (From 1842 to the Present Day)

by

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The Old Syriac versions of the Gospels[1] were transmitted by three manuscripts, namely the MSS. London, British Library, Add. 14451, Sinai, Syriac 30, and Sinai, New Finds Syriac 37 + 39. Their text is related to and precedes that of the Peshitta. The first version, the Curetonian (C or syr^c), is named after its first editor, William Cureton; the second version, the Sinaiticus (S or syr^s), after the name of the monastery where it was discovered, while S. Brock has attributed the siglum NF (New Finds) to the third version.

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[1] In the direct tradition, no vestige of the Old Syriac version(s) has been preserved for the Acts and for the Pauline Epistles. However, there are some traces in the Patristic tradition: for the Acts, in a commentary of Ephrem († 373) known from an Armenian chain (a text close to D.05) and for Paul, from quotations of around 15 authors including Ephrem (an Armenian translation of a commentary of Paul; a text close to the *Boernerianus*). Given that the Catholic Epistles and the Apocalypse took time to occupy their place in the Syriac churches, it is natural that they left no trace in the Old Syriac versions.

1. Manuscripts and Editions

1.1. The Old Syriac Curetonian Version (C or syr^c)

Among the manuscripts from the monastery of the Virgo Deipara of Deir es-Surian (Egypt), acquired in 1842 by the archdeacon Tattam, were fragments of similar size (about 30 cm. x 24 cm.) originating from a manuscript that contained the four Gospels. These fragments were bound with some others to form a fake collection of the Gospels. After the manuscript made its way to the British Museum on 1st March 1843, the fragments belonging to the same manuscript of the Gospels were separated from the others and then bound in turn to form the actual manuscript Add. 14451[2]. In 1848, William Cureton, assistant curator at the British Library, prepared a limited edition meant for private circulation among specialists[3]. Ten years later, in 1858, his *editio princeps* containing a first analysis of the principal variants in relation to the text of the Peshitta appeared[4]. In his catalogue of 1870, William Wright[5] gave a first complete codicological description of it. Shortly afterwards, three additional folios of the manuscript were discovered in Berlin: Staatsbibliothek MS. Orient. Quart. 528 (fol. 1, 128, 129)[6]. They were first edited by Roediger in 1872[7] and later on by W. Wright[8]. In 1904, Burkitt[9] edited all that was known until then. His edition remained the standard reference edition for a long time, until the discovery of a final folio of the manuscript (containing Lk 16:13-17:1) at the same monastery of Deir es-Surian in 1987 by McConaughy[10].

The fake collection contains, in fol. 88r, a note indicating that the manuscripts belonging to the convent of the church of the *Deipara* of the Syrians were repaired in the year 1533 of the Greeks i.e., in 1221/1222[11]. We therefore know the date when the fragments were put together to constitute the fake collection. Another note, in fol. 1r, in a cursive handwriting of the 10th century, indicates that the manuscript belonged to a monk by the name of Ḥabibai who donated it to the monastery[12]. These are the only chronological indications present in the manuscript. However, based on the opinions of scholars who have studied the manuscript, the writing dates from the 5th century. But when it comes to precision, divergence regarding its

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[2] The other fragments were added to the manuscripts to which they originally belonged.

[3] CURETON 1848; the variants are discussed in p. vi-lxiii.

[4] CURETON 1858.

[5] WRIGHT 1870, Part I, p. 73-75 (cod. CXIX).

[6] See http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht

[7] ROEDIGER 1872.

[8] WRIGHT undated.

[9] BURKITT 1904a.

[10] MCCONAUGHY 1987; it is folio 2 of the 17th quire. See BROCK, VAN ROMPAY 2014, p. 379 (fragment 9).

[11] ܐܬܚܕܬܘ ܟܬܒܐ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܕܝܪܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܝܠܕܬ ܐܠܗܐ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܟܬܒܐ etc.

[12] ܐܝܬܘܗܝ, ܟܬܒܐ ܗܢܐ ܕܝܠܗ ܕܐܚܐ ܕܚܒܝܒܝ ܗܢܐ ܕܝܗܒܗ ܠܕܝܪܐ ܩܕܝܫܬܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܝܠܕܬ ܐܠܗܐ etc.

date becomes apparent: Burkitt[13] dates it to the beginning of the 5th century, Cureton[14] toward the middle and Wright[15] toward the end.

The manuscript contains 88 folios written in Estrangelo in two columns (from 22 to 26 lines). Folios following the fol. 38, 40, 51, 52, 53 and 72 are missing. The folios 12-15 and 88 are later additions (dating from the 12th and 13th centuries), which complete, based on the Peshitta, the passages missing from Mt (8:23-10:31) and Lk (24:44-53) respectively; the final folio (88) is a palimpsest[16]. The quires were signed in Syriac letters (so in fol. 43r). The original number of folios is estimated to be 180, divided into 18 quires[17]. It is therefore a little less than the half of the text of the Gospels that has been preserved. They are arranged in an unusual order: Mt – Mk – Jn – Lk with the following contents:

Matthew: 1:1 – 8:22; 10:32 – 23:25a
Mark: 16:17b-20 immediately followed by
John: 1:1-42; 3:5b – 8:19a; 14:10b-12a, 15b-19a, 21b-24a, 26b-29a
Luke: 2:48b – 3:16a; 7:33b – 24:44a

The title of the entire set has fortunately been preserved at the top of the Gospel of Matthew.[18] Indeed, in fol. 1v, we find the words ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܕܡܦܪܫܐ ܡܬܝ, namely "Gospel of the separate (books). Matthew"[19]. The Gospel of the separate books as opposed to the "Gospel of the mixed books" (ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܕܡܚܠܛܐ), namely the *Diatessaron*.

1.2. The Old Syriac Sinaiticus Version (S or syr^S)

The manuscript Sinai, Syriac 30 is a palimpsest from St. Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai containing in *scriptio inferior* the text of the four Gospels (with the lacuna, see further below). It was spotted for the first time by Agnes Smith Lewis and her sister Margaret Gibson who took some photos of it in 1892. During a new trip in 1893, some more photos were taken, whereas Bensly, Rendel Harris, and Burkitt transcribed the text on the spot with the aid of reagents. Their edition appeared in 1894[20]. The same year, A. Smith Lewis gave a rather succinct description of the manuscript in her catalogue of Syriac manuscripts from Mount Si-

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[13] Burkitt 1904a, vol. 2, p. 13.

[14] Cureton 1858, p. iv.

[15] Wright 1870, p. 73.

[16] The inferior text of the palimpsest contains Lk 1:65-80 in its Peshitta form.

[17] For details on the division into quires and folios, see Burkitt 1904a, p. 9-12.

[18] The running headings, explicits, and incipits, when they are preserved, read either "Gospel of" or simply "of" followed by the name of the evangelist.

[19] The fact that the word ܕܡܦܪܫܐ seems to have been written without the plural marker *seyome* and that the manuscript happens to be slightly damaged at a place just ahead of the name of the evangelist had prompted Cureton (Cureton 1858, p. vi) to translate the words by "The Distinct Gospel of Matthew" (he restored a ܕ before ܡܬܝ), which he interpreted as referring to a repartition of the Gospel of Matthew based on the annual liturgical cycle. This hypothesis was quickly discarded as the manuscript does not possess any liturgical features. Moreover, Burkitt 1904a, p. 33, has pointed out that the *seyome* are found not over *riš*, but over *mim* (one of the two dots is still visible).

[20] Bensly, Rendel Harris, Burkitt 1894. It is upon this edition that Albert Bonus based his comparison of the two Old Syriac versions, see Bonus 1896.

nai[21], along with an English translation[22]. Between 1895 and 1906, A. Smith Lewis returned multiple times to Mount Sinai to complete and improve her previous readings, thanks to new reagents; these revisions led to new publications[23]. Finally, in 1910, her definitive edition appeared[24], which became the standard reference edition[25]. For a comprehensive overview, it should be mentioned that in 1930, A. Hjelt published a photographic edition of the manuscript[26]. Today, it is not anymore possible to verify readings of the text as the reagents have irredeemably damaged the manuscript[27].

The superior text of the manuscript is dated (fol. 181v) to the year 1009 of the Greeks i.e., to 697/698 of the Common Era according to A. Smith Lewis, or to the year 1090 of the Greeks i.e. 778/779 of the Common Era according to Harris and Burkitt[28]. It was written by John the Recluse "at the monastery of Maʿarrat Mesren in the district of Antioch". It contains ܟܬܒܐ ܕܬܫܥܝܬܐ ܕܥܠ ܢܫܐ ܩܕܝܫܬܐ ("Selected Stories about Holy Women"). To do this, John the Recluse used parts of five older manuscripts including 142 folios from an *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe*[29] which, based on the palaeography, dates from the beginning of the 5th century, more probably from the end of the 4th century.

The current 142 folios are what remains of the 166 folios of the original manuscript. They are divided into 17 quires comprising of 8 to 10 folios[30] with a text written in two columns. Here is what has been preserved from the text of the Gospels (in the order Mt – Mk – Lk – Jn)[31] :

Matthew: 1:1 – 6:10a; 8:3b – 12:4a ; (12:4b-6a); 12:6b-25a; (12:25b-30a); 12:30b – 16:15a; 17:11b – 20:24; 21:20b – 25:15a; (25:15b-17a); 25:17b-20a; (25:20b-25a) ; 25:25b-26a; (25:26b-31); 25:32-33a; (25:33b-37); 25:38 – 28:7a.
Mark: 1:12b-44a; 2:21b – 4:17a; 4:41b – 5:26a; 6:5b – 16:8 [omission of 16:9-20].
Luke: 1:1-16a; 1:38b – 5:28a; 6:12b – 24:52.
John: 1:25b-47a; 2:16 – 4:37; 5:6b-25a; 5:46b – 18:31a; 19: 40b – 21:25.

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[21] SMITH LEWIS 1894a, p. 43-47.

[22] SMITH LEWIS 1894b.

[23] SMITH LEWIS 1896 and 1897.

[24] SMITH LEWIS 1910.

[25] It replaces the edition of BURKITT 1904a, which did not benefit from the subsequent corrections by Smith Lewis.

[26] HJELT 1930.

[27] However, some new techniques implemented in the library of the St. Catherine's Monastery (see www.sinaipalimpsests.org) enables us to recover certain readings.

[28] There is in fact a lacuna at the end of the line after the word ܬܫܥ "9". Harris and Burkitt think that the word should be completed and read ܬܫܥܝܢ "90", even though Smith Lewis (SMITH LEWIS 1910, p. x) has put forward the hypothesis (accepted by HATCH 1946, p. 97) that the word ended with a flourish (they occur frequently in the manuscript).

[29] To this are added 4 folios containing fragments of the Gospel of John in Greek uncials from the 4th or 5th century, 20 folios containing the *Acts of Thomas* in Syriac from the 5th century, 4 folios of a Syriac *Transitus Mariae* from the 5th or 6th century, and 12 folios containing Syriac fragments of unidentified Greek homilies dating from the 6th century. See BURKITT 1904a, vol. I, p. 22.

[30] BURKITT 1904a, II, p. 23-27.

[31] The passages in parentheses are partly illegible.

The colophon of the manuscript has been preserved (fol. 139v). Only the first words have been retained here (before the usual plea for forgiveness on the part of the copyist): ܥܠܡ ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ ܕܡܦܪܫܐ ܐܪܒܥܐ ܩܛܝ. ܥܒܕܐ ܐܠܗܐ ܠܐܠܗܐ ܘܠܡܫܝܚܗ ܘܠܪܘܚܗ ܩܕܝܫܬܐ. Once again "Gospel of the separate (books)" as opposed to the *Diatessaron*. We should also notice the unusual form of the Doxology: "Glory to God and his Messiah and to his Holy Spirit", with the Holy Spirit in feminine. This unconventional formulation suggests that the copying was done prior to the major controversies that had shaken the Syriac Church in the 5th century. Both the palaeography and the colophon thus indicate that the manuscript of the Old Syriac Sinaiticus version was produced no later than the beginning of the 5th century.

There are some remarkable features of the text of the Gospels in the Sinaiticus version. The longer ending of Mark (Mk 16:9-20) is absent, as is the pericope of the adulterous woman in Jn 7:53 – 8:11, as well as the words of Jesus on the cross "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" in Lk 23:34a. In Jn 18:13-24, a pericope that recounts the appearance of Jesus before Annas and the denial of Peter, the order of the verses is jumbled up (13, 24, 14, 15, 19-23, 16-18) and presents the events in a more satisfactory order from a logical point of view. Still in Jn, the verse 5:4, which mentions the presence of the angel at the pool in Bethesda, could be absent in the Sinaiticus[32]. We will allude to these differences once again while discussing the links between the witnesses of the Old Syriac and between these ones and the *Diatessaron*.

Finally, it should be noted that the Sinaiticus and the Curetonian were reedited in 2002 by Kiraz under a synoptic form line by line; their text is compared with that of the Peshitta and the Harklean[33]. The same year, Wilson reedited these two texts and provided an English translation[34]. There is also a Syriac concordance for these texts[35].

1.3. The Manuscripts from the New Finds

In a very recent preliminary article, S. Brock[36] mentions that he was able to identify the inferior text of two palimpsest manuscripts as fragments of the same manuscript of the Old Syriac version. The MS Sinai, NF syr. 37, dating from the 8th century, is constituted of 6 folios transmitting in its superior text the Syriac translation of the *Sentences* of Evagrius on prayer[37]. The inferior text containing fragments of the Old Syriac can be dated to the 6th century.[38] The second manuscript, Sinai, NF syr. 39, dating from the 10th century[39], includes seventeen and a

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[32] The folio is lacking in the Sinaiticus, but it is possible to calculate that there is not enough room for copying v. 4. It is, however, absent in the Curetonian. The Sinaiticus as a witness in support of the absence of this verse is no longer mentioned in NESTLE, ALAND[26] (see NESTLE, ALAND[28]).

[33] KIRAZ 2002.

[34] WILSON 2002. However, it should be noted that the English translation of the Lord's Prayer which he provides does not follow the Syriac text of the Curetonian (the only Old Syriac version attested there) but paradoxically, the Greek text or the Peshitta: "your will" (singular), "our daily bread", "as we also forgive", "do not bring us" (see below). In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31), his translation of the Curetonian corresponds to the text of the Peshitta at v. 24. Therefore, we will not rely entirely on this translation.

[35] LUND 2004.

[36] BROCK 2016.

[37] The text will be published by P. Géhin, but see already GÉHIN 2009.

[38] PHILOTHÉE 2008, p. 405, seems too optimistic as she suggests a dating to the 3rd or 4th century.

[39] According to GÉHIN 2009, p. 82.

half folios and contains the Syriac translation of the *Chapters on Perfection* of Diodochos of Photiki (a Syriac text otherwise unknown, with the exception of a few quotations). The inferior text with fragments of the Old Syriac is written in the same hand as in NF syr. 37. It is certain that the two witnesses belonged to the same manuscript as shown by the exact connections between the two texts. Their contents are as follows:

Matthew: 15:4 – 16:20; 19:28 – 21:21; 27:35-64.
Mark: 1:32 – 2:14; 6:3 – 6:52; 10:47 – 11:22.
Luke: 1:50-80; 6:23-48; 7:21-43; 9:47 – 10:31; 12:27 – 14:25; 18:31 – 19:47; 23:8-36.
John: 1, 39 – 2:12; 9:8-32; 13:2-30.

Most of these passages are found in the Sinaiticus or in the Curetonian or in both. However, there are two new sections: Mk 1:44 – 2:14 and Jn 1:47 – 2:12a. Brock has edited them. He also provides an English translation and comments on some of the variants[40].

2. The Curetonian (C), The Sinaiticus (S) and the Fragments from the New Finds (NF), Witnesses to the Old Syriac Version of the Gospels

These different witnesses from the 4th/5th century or from the 6th century, despite their divergences which will be discussed later, present a Syriac text that has much in common[41]. Since Zahn[42], we have agreed that they reflect a single and unique translation which must have been produced toward the beginning of the 3rd century (details further below). Bewer is the only one to have contested this affirmation by providing the details of his arguments[43]. In fact, Bewer has listed a number of grammatical, lexicographical, and phraseological divergences between S and C, and according to him, it is not possible to explain all of them as dialectical differences. In C, Greek words are occasionally used in transcription[44]; whereas in S, we find the appropriate Syriac term. The omissions and the additions – in S with respect to C[45] or in both with respect to the Greek – are in many cases supported by Greek witnesses, particularly by the witnesses to the "Western" text[46]. We cannot exclude the possible use of a

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[40] BROCK 2016, p 13-19.

[41] To verify this, it will suffice to go through the synoptic edition of KIRAZ 2002. On the syntactical and lexical differences between the Sinaiticus and the Curetonian, see WILSON 2002, p. xxxi-xxxviii. BROCK 2016, p. 10-12, analyses a series of variants showing that the third witness (NF) is indeed a manuscript of the Old Syriac, and not a manuscript of the Peshitta having preserved some readings from the Old Syriac. The information given here in the following pages will mainly concern the Sinaiticus and the Curetonian. We have to await the edition of the fragments of the New Finds, which Brock is currently preparing in collaboration with D. Taylor, for complete information on this subject.

[42] ZAHN 1895, col. 17; HOLZEY 1896, p. 10; BONUS 1896, p. III ; BURKITT 1904a, p. 164 ; LAGRANGE 1920, p. 332-333. More recently, METZGER 1977, p. 39-44.

[43] BEWER 1900, p. 66-78.

[44] Thus μόδιος (Mt 5:15), τέτραρχος (Mt 14:1), στολή (Mt 14:36), ἀνάγκη (Mt 18:7), πρόσωπον (Mt 18:10), αἱρέσεις (Lk 23:25).

[45] Here is a list of passages absent in S but present in C: Mt 1:8b; 4:24b; 5:25, 30, 47; 6:5; 8:5*; 23:14; Mk 16:9-20; Lk 8:43; 9:55, 56; 12:38b; 22:43, 44; 23:12-14, 34; Jn 5:12; 14:10, 11. The additions in S with respect to C are fewer in number: Lk 11:36; 14:13; 19:32; 23:20; Jn 6:13; these include a few words in each case (not entire verses).

[46] The details can be found in BEWER 1900, p. 73-75. Some examples of omissions: Mt 1:25* (with *k*); 4:24 (Ss only); 5:30 (with D.05); 5:47 (with *k*); 6, 5 (Ss only); 9:34 (with D.05 *a k* and Hilary of Poitiers); 10:13* (with D.05); etc. He obviously does not repeat what is unnecessary for a Syriac, namely the explanations given

different Greek model[47]. All of these observations by Bewer are correct, but the conclusion which he draws from them has been criticised, namely the fact that he regards them as two translations of the Greek totally independent of each other where the similarities can be explained by the fact that their authors were trained in the same school of translation. For Hjelt[48], who follows Lewis, it is like not being able to see the wood for the trees! Indeed, large portions of the Gospel text are identical in S and C: word for word, line for line. As a proof of this, he refers to the wording of the entire chapter in Lk 23 where, except for a few words, the two texts correspond to each other. They are indeed two recensions of the same text. The differences can be explained by the fact that between the archetype of the Old Syriac version (beginning of the 3rd century) and the two witnesses that have been transmitted to us, two centuries had elapsed[49]. There have probably been other copies that are now lost. In the course of the gradual transmission of the text, changes occurred. Therefore, there is nothing surprising about the fact that there are grammatical, lexicographical, and phraseological divergences between S and C (against Bewer's 1st argument). It is also possible to explain that at a given moment in the evolution of the translation of the Old Syriac version, the need for the translation to better correspond to the Greek was felt (against Bewer's 2nd argument). Bewer's 3rd argument does not hold either: the two translations of Lc 23 in S and C are ultimately based on the same Greek text. The differences between the two can be explained by the revisions that S and C would have undergone compared to the archetype of the Old Syriac version, as Joosten also has pointed out more recently[50].

J. Joosten[51], in his study on Mt, has analysed passages where S and C share readings that result from a misunderstanding of the Greek. These two texts are therefore closely related. Since these variants are not found in any other witnesses of Mt (or in the Synoptic parallels), he concludes from this that they spring from the archetype of the Old Syriac version.

- Mt 2:18: "Rachel *weeps* for her children". In Greek, the participle (κλαίουσα) functions as a predicate in the sentence, which S and C did not understand: they have rendered it by a participle (ܕܒܟܝܐ), which they linked to the word "voice", which they added ("a voice is heard in Rama … *the voice* of Rachel that weeps for her children). This isolated reading goes back to the archetype of the Old Syriac version.

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for Greek readers: Mt 4:18 (τὸν λεγόμενον Πέτρον); 27:33 (ὅ ἐστιν Κρανίου Τόπος); 27:46 (τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν Θεέ μου, θεέ μου, ἵνα τί με ἐγκατέλιπες). See also Mk 3:17; 7:34; 15:34; Jn 1:38, 41; 4:25; 9:7; 11:16; 20:16, 24; 21:2. Two such glosses have somehow been included: Mt 1:23 ("Emmanuel, which is interpreted as God with us") and Jn 1:42 ("Cephas, which means rock"). Among the additions, which are much fewer in number, we should mention especially Mt 10:23 (+ "and if they persecute you in another (city), flee to another (city)" with D.05 VL and some other witnesses) and Lk 23:37 ("hail, king of the Jews!" instead of "if you are the king of the Jews", + "crowning him also with a crown of thorns" with D.05 and *c*), which carry some weight; the others are less significant. See also Lagrange 1920, p. 333-334.

[47] Bewer mentions in particular Mt 5:2 (καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων) where C corresponds to the Greek, but S presumes a reading of the following type: καὶ ἤρξατο λέγειν αὐτοῖς. The variant is mentioned in the synopsis of Nestle, Aland[9] (1976), but it is absent from the critical apparatus of the edition of the Greek text of Nestle, Aland[28] (2012).

[48] Hjelt 1903, p. 83-95.

[49] This chronological distance had already been underlined by Baethgen 1885, p. 9-11, who was familiar with C only.

[50] Joosten 1995, p. 29-30.

[51] Joosten 1995, p. 6-10.

- Mt 5:32: "whoever divorces his wife … *except on the ground of fornication*": the παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας is rendered as ܪ̈ܝܐ ܡܠܬ ܐܘܬܐܟܪ ܐܕܝ "without speaking about adultery with regard to her", an isolated translation, which assumes an identical source, namely the archetype of the Old Syriac version of Mt.

- Mt 8:9: "thus, I am under an authority with soldiers under my command" (καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν, ἔχων ὑπ᾿ ἐμαυτὸν στρατιώτας): the text of S (ܐܦ ܐܢܐ ܓܒܪ ,ܐܝܬ ܐܬܘܬ ܐܝܬ ܩܣܛܘܢܪ̈ܐ ܠ ܬܚܝܬ ܐܝܕܝ) springs from a misunderstanding of the Greek: ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν was linked to ἔχων "I have soldiers under my authority". C reproduces S word by word but introduces a few additions, which tend to correspond better to the Greek.

- Mt 15:22: "and behold, a Canaanite woman, coming out of this territory (of Tyre and Sidon), began to cry": S and C understood that the Canaanite woman came on purpose from Tyre and Sidon to meet Jesus (ܘܗܐ ܐܢܬܬܐ ܟܢܥܢܝܬܐ ܢܦܩܬ ܡܢ ܬܚܘܡܐ ܗܢܘܢ ܡܢ ܨܘܪ ܘܨܝܕܢ). This interpretation, possible in Greek if we read only the verse but impossible based on the context and based on the // of Mk 7:25s, has its origin in the archetype of the Old Syriac version.

- Other minor variants (Mt 1:21; 2:2; 12:34, 35b; 18:29; 20:11, 21, 23; 21:30; 23:5, 8) show that S and C derive from a single and unique prior version of the Old Syriac. These variants are brought about neither by the Greek of Mt nor by the parallel passages in the Synoptics, and they are not found in the parallel passages in S or in C (nor in P). Even though we cannot state with certainty the reason behind these variants, it seems likely that most of them derive from the Old Syriac version.

But, out of S and C, which one is the oldest? A consensus has been established around this question: S is older, because of the freer nature of its translation; C is more recent, because it has been observed, among things, that it has undergone a revision based on the Greek in many places. Thus, in Lk 22, the mention of the presence of an angel in Gethsemane (v. 43) and that of sweat of blood (v. 44), absent in S, were restored in C; similarly, the words "Jesus spoke and said: Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" in Lk 23:34 were restored in C[52]. But the most striking example is the absence of the longer ending of Mk (16:9-20) in S and its presence in C. There are still other examples (Mt 3:3 [quotation of Is 40], 4 [honey from the *mountains*]; 4:9; 18:20; Jn 6:10-13 [feeding the multitude], etc.).

We can compare Mt 1:18-25[53] (all the variants are underlined):

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[52] They are also present in the *Diatessaron*, based on Ephrem's commentary, which quotes these words in three instances: see LELOIR 1966, p 192, 375-376 and 384.

[53] "[18]Now the nativity of the Messiah was thus. Mary, her mother, was betrothed to Joseph. But, before they could live with one another, she happened to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. [19]Joseph, her husband, since he was righteous (C: Joseph, for he was a righteous man), did not want to defame Mary and decided to (C: was resolved to) repudiate her in secret. [20]While he decided on this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a vision (C: + nocturnal) and said to him: Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take (home) Mary, your wife (C: your betrothed), for he who will be born of her comes from the Holy Spirit, [21]she will bear you a son and you shall call him (C: and he shall be called) by the name Jesus, for it is he who will save his people (C: the world) from their errors; [22]all this happened so that what was pronounced (C: said) by the Lord by the (C: by the mouth of) prophet Isaiah might be accomplished: [23]Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, they shall call him (C: he shall be called) by the name Emmanuel, which is translated 'Our Lord with us'. [24]When Joseph woke up from his vision, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him: he took (home) his wife (C: Mary), [25]and she

	Sinaiticus	Curetonian
18	ܣܝܪܝܐ	ܣܝܪܝܐ
19	ܣܝܪܝܐ	ܣܝܪܝܐ
20	ܣܝܪܝܐ	ܣܝܪܝܐ
21	ܣܝܪܝܐ	ܣܝܪܝܐ
22	ܣܝܪܝܐ	ܣܝܪܝܐ
23	ܣܝܪܝܐ	ܣܝܪܝܐ
24	ܣܝܪܝܐ	ܣܝܪܝܐ
25	ܣܝܪܝܐ	ܣܝܪܝܐ

Setting aside the minor orthographical or lexical variants indicated in the translation, we can observe that C avoids mentioning that Joseph and Mary were husband and wife and that they had a sexual relation, particularly in v. 19 where C modifies "Joseph, her husband (ܒܥܠܗ), for he was righteous" to "Joseph, because he was a righteous man (ܓܒܪܐ)", in v. 20 where C changes "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife" into "do not be afraid to take Mary as your betrothed", in v. 24 where C replaces "he took (home) his wife" with "he took (home) Mary". The most obvious intervention appears in v. 25 where C adds "he lived with her in purity"[54].

Hjelt is the only one to have raised the question of a possible plurality of translators for S[55]. Would it not be possible for the different Gospels to have been translated by different persons and at different periods? Hjelt studies parallel passages from the Synoptic Gospels, in particular the parallels between Mt and Mk[56].

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bore him a son whom he called by the name Jesus (C: [25]and he lived with her in purity until she bore him a son whom she called by the name Jesus)."

[54] Words borrowed from the *Diatessaron*, since they are attested in Ephrem's commentary on the *Diatessaron*, see LELOIR 1966, p. 65-68. Much ink has been spilled about the passage since FARRAR 1895 (who refers to Conybeare) down to LENZI 2006b, p. 137-143, who has resumed the discussion.

[55] HJELT 1903, p. 95-101.

[56] The table that follows lists all the examples mentioned by Hjelt (except those of Mt 20:23 // Mk 10:40 and of Mt 27:46 // Mk 15:34 containing the translation of ἀλλ᾽ οἷς ἡτοίμασται and of ἠλεί ἠλεί because the divergences can be explained by a Greek variant, respectively ἄλλοις and ἐλωί ἐλωί). The critique by LAGRANGE 1920, p. 333 ("Hjelt has only showed that a single word is not always translated in the same way. But this freedom is one of the features of the translation") does not provide an exhaustive answer to the question.

Mt 4:17; Mk 1:15	ἤγγικεν		
Mt 4:18; Mk 1:16	ἁλεεῖς		
Mt 4:21; Mk 1:19	καὶ προβάς		
Mt 8:31s; Mk 5:11, 13	ἀγέλη		
Mt 8:33; Mk 5:14	οἱ βόσκοντες		
Mt 12:16; Mk 3:12	ἵνα μὴ φανερὸν αὐτὸν ποιήσωσιν		[57]
Mt 13:4; Mk 4:4	τὰ πετεινά		
idem	κατέφαγεν αὐτά		
Mt 13:7; Mk 4:7	καὶ ἀνέβησαν		
Mt 14:19; Mk 6:39	χόρτος		
Mt 14:26; Mk 6:19	ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης		
Mt 14:32; Mk 6:51	ἐκόπασεν		
Mt 15:6; Mk 7:13	ἠκυρώσατε		
Mt 15:16s; Mk 7:18	καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀσύνετοι ἐστε; οὐ νοεῖτε		
Mt 15:17; Mk 7:19	εἰς τὸν ἀφεδρῶνα ἐκβάλλεται		[58]
Mt 15:26; Mk 7:27	οὐκ ἔστιν καλόν		
idem	λαβεῖν τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων καὶ βαλεῖν τοῖς κυναρίοις[59]		
Mt 17:19; Mk 9:28	ἐκβαλεῖν αὐτό		
Mt 19:7; Mk 10:4	βιβλίον ἀποστασίου		
Mt 19:22; Mk 10:22	ἦν γὰρ ἔχων κτήματα πολλά		
Mt 20:23; Mk 10:40	οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμὸν δοῦναι		
Mt 21:33; Mk 12:1	καὶ ἐξέδετο αὐτόν		
idem	ἀπεδήμησεν		
Mt 22:16; Mk 12:14	ἐν (ἐπʹ) ἀληθείᾳ		
Mt 22:23; Mk 12:18	ἀνάστασιν	[60]	
Mt 23:6; Mk 12:39	πρωτοκαθεδρίας		
Mt 24:24; Mk 13:22	ψευδοπροφῆται		
Mt 24:29; Mk 13:24	καὶ ἡ σελήνη οὐ δώσει τὸ φέγγος αὐτῆς		
Mt 24:31; Mk 13:27	ἀπʹ ἄκρων (ἄκρου)		
Mt 26:10; Mk 14:6	τί κόπους παρέχετε		
Mt 26:24; Mk 14:21	ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται		
Mt 26:27; Mk 14:23	εὐχαριστήσας		
Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25	ἐκ τοῦ γενήματος τῆς ἀμπέλου		
Mt 26:37; Mk 14:33	ἀδημονεῖν		
Mt 26:39; Mk 14:35	καὶ προελθὼν μικρόν		
Mt 26:47; Mk 14:43	μετὰ μαχαιρῶν		[61]
Mt 26:58; Mk 14:54	ἕως τῆς αὐλῆς τοῦ ἀρχιερέως		
Mt 27:26; Mk 15:15	φραγελλόω		

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[57] The translator of Mk ("so that they do not make him known") attaches to the Greek text that which the translator of Mt does not do ("so that they do not say this to anyone").

[58] The translator of Mk did not translate εἰς τὸν ἀφεδρῶνα ("into the sewer"), probably because he found the expression shocking. In Mt, the word ܬܕܟܝܬܐ signifies purification but also excrement.

[59] The word order varies in Mk.

[60] This puzzling expression ("life of the dead") for rendering the word "resurrection" occurs again in Mt 22:30 but is absent in the other Gospels.

[61] The word ܣܡܦܐܪܐ for translating "sword" is a calque of the Greek σαμψήρα which, in turn, reproduces the Persian šamšer.

Mt 27:35; Mk 15:24	βάλλοντες κλῆρον	ܩܦܣܘ ܥܠܝܗܘܢ	ܘܐܪܡܝܘ ܥܠܝܗܘܢ ܦܨܐ
Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34	ἐβόησεν/ἀνεβόησεν	ܩܥܐ	ܘܩܥܐ
Mt 27:48; Mk 15:36	περιθεὶς καλάμῳ ἐπότιζεν αὐτόν	ܘܡܠܐ ܐܣܦܘܓܐ ܘܣܡ ܥܠ ܩܢܝܐ	ܣܡ ܘܡܠܐ ܐܣܦܘܓܐ ܘܐܫܩܝܗ
Mt 27:51; Mk 15:38	καὶ (ἰδοὺ) τὸ κατα-πέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ εσχίσθη (ἀπ´) ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω εἰς δύο	ܘܗܘ ܐܦܝ ܬܪܥܐ ܕܗܝܟܠܐ ܐܨܛܪܝ ܡܢ ܥܠ ܠܬܚܬ ܠܬܪܝܢ	ܘܐܦܝ ܬܪܥܐ ܕܗܝܟܠܐ ܐܨܛܪܝ ܡܢ ܠܥܠ ܘܥܕܡܐ ܠܬܚܬ

Although there are passages where Mt and Mk are identical (Mt 19:4 // Mk 10:14), the variants are so numerous that it is even necessary to exclude the possibility, says Hjelt, that the translator of Mk knew and used the translation of Mt. The freedom of translation of Mt confirms its antiquity. We should particularly note the accuracy of the translator of Mt regarding Jewish customs. Thus, Mt 9:18 renders "rulers" as ܪܒ ܟܢܘܫܬܗܘܢ "the head of their synagogue"; in Mt 23:5, "they widen their tephillin" is rendered as ܡܦܬܝܢ ܥܪܩܐ ܕܬܦܠܝܗܘܢ "they widen the straps of their tephillin" (the translator is not only familiar with tephillin but he also knows that the arrogance of the Pharisees is manifested in the width of the straps of the tephillin); in the same verse, "the fringes of their clothes" is rendered as ܬܟܠܬܐ ܕܡܪܛܘܛܝܗܘܢ "the blue-purple (edges) of their coats" (he knows the colour of the fringes!); in Mt 18:17, "community" is rendered as ܟܢܘܫܬܐ (a technical term for the Jewish synagogue); Mt 22:24 "without having children" is rendered as ܘܒܠܝ ܠܗ ܟܕ ܠܐ ܒܢܝܢ which corresponds to Dt 25:5; Mt 14:19 "grass" is rendered as ܥܡܝܪܐ "fresh green grass" (he knows the seasons). It is thus probable that the translator was a Jewish-Christian (perhaps from Palestine), which is consistent with the fact that the oldest community in Edessa was Jewish-Christian with links with Palestine as well as with the tradition that advocates that Matthew's Gospel was written for Jews and Jewish-Christians of Palestine[62].

Hjelt then[63] makes a comparison between Mt and Lk and concludes that the translator of Lk is not identical to that of Mt. It is beyond doubt, according to him, that translation of Mt is older than that of Lk. He also gives 22 examples, which show that the translators of Lk and Mk are different, and the translator of Lk seems more recent than that of Mk. A few examples will be sufficient to illustrate this.

		Mt	Lk
Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16	ἰσχυρότερός μου	ܕܚܝܠ ܡܢܝ	ܕܚܝܠ ܣܓܝ ܡܢܝ
Mt 4:5; Lk 4:9	τὸ πτερύγιον τοῦ ἱεροῦ	ܩܪܢܐ ܕܗܝܟܠܐ	ܟܢܦܐ ܕܗܝܟܠܐ
Mt 8:5, 8; Lk 7:2, 6	ἑκατοντάρχης	ܩܢܛܪܘܢܐ	ܩܢܛܪܘܢܐ
Mt 8:9; Lk 7:8[64]	καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν (τασσό-μενος), ἔχων ὑπ´ ἐμαυτὸν στρατιώτας	ܐܦ ܐܢܐ ܓܝܪ ܓܒܪܐ ܐܢܐ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܝ ܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܘܐܝܬ ܬܚܝܬ ܐܝܕܝ	ܐܦ ܐܢܐ ܓܝܪ ܓܒܪܐ ܐܢܐ ܕܡܫܥܒܕ ܬܚܝܬ ܫܘܠܛܢܐ ܘܐܝܬ ܬܚܝܬ ܐܝܕܝ
Mt 14:1; Lk 9:7	τετραάρχης	ܪܫܐ ܕܪܒܥܐ	ܛܛܪܟܐ
Mt 21:42; Lk 20:17	εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας	ܠܪܫ ܙܘܝܬܐ	ܠܪܫ ܙܘܝܬܐ

The question then arises as to whether the later translator of Luke used the translations of Mt and Mk. On the whole, the features of the translation of Lk tend more toward a positive response. There are more agreements between Mt and Lk than between Mk and Lk, which cannot be explained in any other way than by a direct dependence.

Where does the Gospel of John stand in this regard? As there are few parallels with the Synoptics, the response is less clear. There are, however, a few lexicographical particularities

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[62] Hjelt refers to ZAHN 1899, II, p. 262, 267ss, 289, 296ss.

[63] HJELT 1903, p. 102-104.

[64] Example studied above.

that help us reach a conclusion. Thus, in Jn, δαιμόνιον is always rendered as ܪܐܘܢ (more regularly as ܫܐܕܐ in the Synoptics), πάσχα as ܦܨܚܐ (as ܦܣܚܐ in the Synoptics), etc. Thus, it seems more likely that John was translated by another person. But the freer character of his translation, especially his rendering of the expressions concerning the Passover[65], indicates that the translation was produced at an older date; the translator was not the latest. He also uses rare and original expressions: σημεῖα rendered as ܐܬܘܐ; ὑγιής as ܚܠܝܡ; ὄχλος as ܟܢܫܐ "crowd" ; τὰ ἐγκαίνια as ܥܐܕܐ ܕܡܬܩܪܐ ܚܘܕܬܐ ܕܫܘܒܚܐ "the feast called Glory of the Sanctuary" ("glory" here corresponds to the Hebrew *hanukkah*); συνέδριον as ܐܪܙܐ "plot, stratagem, meeting" which probably corresponds to συμβούλιον; in Jn, we read 35 times ܡܪܝ instead of ܪܒܝ (this translation is more or less regular till the beginning of chapter 6, after which it is only occasional; this signifies that at the beginning, the translator made use of ܡܪܝ, the traditional title in the Church, and that afterwards, he conformed to the usage of his predecessors in the translation of the Gospels without, however, being consistent). A similar phenomenon is attested in Mt: ܡܪܝ is used 19 times in the place of ܪܒܝ, and regularly in chapters 8 and 9, and more occasionally in chapters 10 and 11. In Lk, we find only one occurrence (8:40), and none in Mk.

At the end of his demonstration, Hjelt proposes the following chronological order for the translation of the Gospels in the Sinaiticus: Mt, Mk, Jn, and then Lk. He observes that this is the precise order of the books in the Curetonian (but not in the Sinaiticus). For the translation of the different books, the Curetonian would thus have preserved the original chronological order[66]. Hjelt was not followed: scholars explain these variations based simply on the freedom of the translators.

3. Date and Milieu of Origin of the Old Syriac Version

Let us now turn to the much-debated issue of the date and milieu of origin of the Old Syriac version. We shall present four types of argument that have been put forward, starting with historical arguments, followed by Gospel quotations, then the study of the relationship between the two witnesses of the Old Syriac version and the other versions, particularly the Old Testament Peshitta and especially the Diatessaron, and finally, an analysis of the language especially the 'linguistic anomalies' of the Old Syriac version. The arguments are often inextricably linked, which adds to the difficulty of this enterprise.

3.1. Historical Arguments

Burkitt[67] proposed a historical explanation and at the same time, was the first to recognize its hypothetical character. He supposes that the introduction of the four Gospels into the Syriac Church in a separate form must have been an event of considerable significance, especially in a community where there was an already existing and hitherto uncontested rival, namely the *Diatessaron*. He attempts to find in the history of the Syriac Church traces of a rupture that could be a sign of the inauguration of a new order of things. According to him, in the

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[65] Hjelt 1903, p. 105-106.

[66] Hjelt 1903, p 107.

[67] Burkitt 1904a, p. 206-210. This is how he introduces his research: "In offering now a conjecture concerning the historical circumstances which gave birth to that version of the Gospels I am well aware of its precarious nature in the present state of knowledge" (p. 206).

Church in Edessa, with the line of succession of its first bishops being known[68], a real break occurred with Paluṭ (around 200), successor of Aggai, himself successor of Addai. Paluṭ could not be ordained by Aggai because the latter was the victim of a persecution. He was ordained by Serapion, bishop of Antioch from 190 to 203. This is how Burkitt presents the history of the evangelization of Edessa: a first mission is led by Addai-Aggai in the middle of the 2nd century, a mission that succeeded initially but was later crushed by persecution; this was followed by Tatian's mission in the last quarter of the 2nd century during which the Diatessaron makes its appearance; thirdly, there is a depiction of a new beginning under Paluṭ around 200 who receives his mission from the hands of Serapion of Antioch who, as we know, was actively involved in promoting the use of the separate Gospels[69]. The origins of the separate Gospels are linked with Serapion's politics and Paluṭ's mission around 200.

Lagrange[70] attempted to situate the appearance of the separate Gospels no longer in Syria, but in Egypt. This explains the little influence of the Old Syriac version on the Syrian world simply based on its inexistence prior to the time of Eusebius of Caesarea († 339). In his *Epistula ad Carpianum*, Eusebius reproached the latter for having ruined the natural order of the Gospels by creating a synopsis, a document related to the harmony of the Gospels. The separate Gospels are part of this same movement involving a reaction against the harmonies. The relative modernity of the Old Syriac version is also indicated by its similarities with Origen, teacher of Eusebius. For Lagrange, the Old Syriac version must have originated in the first half of the 4th century in the outskirts of the Syrian world, in some monastery in Egypt during the time of Eusebius, perhaps even under his influence which, in turn, depended on Origen. The Egyptian rooting is confirmed, according to Lagrange, by the links with the codex of Freer (W.032), witness to the diffusion of the "Western" text in Egypt[71].

3.2. Quotations

Historical arguments are based essentially on plausibility arguments. We are perhaps on a surer ground with an analysis of the quotations. Furthermore, Burkitt showed that in the great prayer of Thomas in prison toward the end of the *Acts of Thomas*, nos. 144-146 could provide valuable clues for dating the Old Syriac versions[72]. There is indeed a series of allusions to the Gospel parables, particularly to the parable of the pounds (Mt 25:14-30 // Lk 19:11-28) and to that of the great banquet (Mt 22:1-10 // Lk 14:15-24).

"Thy Silver that Thou gavest me I have cast upon Thy table; exact it and give it to me with its usury, as Thou hast promised (Mt 25:27; Lk 19:23). With Thy Pound I have gained ten; let it be added unto what is mine, as Thou hast engaged (Lk 19:16,24). To my debtors I have forgiven the Pound; let not that be requited at my hand which I have forgiven (Mt 18:23ss). To the Supper I have been bidden and have come quickly, and from field and from plough and from wife I have excused myself; let me not be rejected from it and with oaths not taste it (Lk

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[68] He refers to TIXERONT 1888, p. 140ss, 149, 151.

[69] I do not know where Burkitt retrieves this information from. Certainly not from Eusebius of Caesarea, *HE* VI 12, who only informs us that Serapion had refuted the allegations of the *Gospel of Peter*, particularly honoured by some Christians from the Church of Rossos.

[70] LAGRANGE 1920-1921.

[71] See further below the section dealing with the type of Greek text transmitted by the Old Syriac version.

[72] BURKITT 1904a, II, p. 101-106.

14:17-20.24). To the Wedding I have been bidden and with white garments I am clad; may I be worthy of it, and may they not fasten my hands and my feet, and to the outer darkness may I not go forth (Mt 22: 11,8,12-13). My Lamp, gay with His light, hath its Lord preserved; until He withdraweth from the Wedding-feast and I receive Him (Lk 12:35-36), may I not see it smouldering from its oil (cf Mt 12:20)" (146:2-3)[73].

We are not sure of the exact wording of the *Diatessaron* text, but we are sure of its arrangement of the Gospel pericopes. We indeed know that in the *Diatessaron*, the parable of the pounds (Lk 19) and the talents (Mt 25) were placed in different places, whereas those of the marriage feast (Mt 22) and the great banquet (Lk 14) were fused together. A *Diatessaron* user would follow such an orientation. This is precisely what Aphrahat does[74]. Indeed, we may observe that in Aphrahat, the references to the parable of the pounds/talents in Lk 19 and Mt 25 are separated by allusions to the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Mt 21:33-46 // Mk 12:1-12 // Lk 20:9-19). But when he deals with the clothing of the banquet guests, something that is found only in Mt 22:12-13, Aphrahat merges there two elements borrowed from Lk 14, especially the notion of excuse (Lk 14:18-19: "excuse me, I pray" occurs twice) and the expression "taste my dinner" (Lk 14:24). What about the quotation from the *Acts of Thomas*? First, it is observed that the parable of the marriage feast (Mt 22) and the great banquet (Lk 14) are not fused together, but remain clearly distinct, as in the separate Gospels[75]. In line with the separate Gospels, and contrary to the *Diatessaron*, the excuses of the guests (field and wife) are linked with the banquet (Lk 14) in the same way as the curse of the offended host (Lk 14:24). On the other hand, the episode of the clothing and the rejected guest are retained in connection with the wedding (Mt 22:12-13). We can conclude from this that the *Acts of Thomas* does not follow the *Diatessaron*. But not the Peshitta either, as Burkitt will show in the process.

Having indicated that the *Acts of Thomas* does not follow the *Diatessaron*, Burkitt in fact turns to the quotation from the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:9-13) that appears in *Acts of Thomas* 144:1. This is actually a quotation *in extenso* and its text agrees with that of the Curetonian[76] and that of the *Diatessaron*[77], but not with that of the Peshitta, as shown in the following table.

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[73] BURKITT 1904a, II, p. 102-103. See also POIRIER & TISSOT 1997, p. 1454. I have added, with Burkitt, the biblical references.

[74] BURKITT 1904a, II, p. 101-102.

[75] Contrary to what is affirmed by LAGRANGE 1920, p 338. But similar to SMITH LEWIS 1904, II, p 236-237, Lagrange does not distinguish between the banquet and the wedding: both are rendered as banquet and thus do not make visible the distinction made between the two Gospel narratives.

[76] The Sinaiticus is attested only for v. 9 and the first word of v. 10, where there is no divergence between the texts. See KIRAZ 2002, *ad loc*. Ephrem's commentary does not quote the Lord's Prayer except for the first few words ("Our Father who art in heaven", LELOIR 1966, p. 392).

[77] ORTIZ DE URBINA 1967, *ad loc*.

C + *Diat.*	*Acts of Thomas*	P
ܐܒܘܢ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ	ܐܒܘܢ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ	ܐܒܘܢ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ
ܢܬܩܕܫ ܫܡܟ	ܢܬܩܕܫ ܫܡܟ	ܢܬܩܕܫ ܫܡܟ
ܬܐܬܐ ܡܠܟܘܬܟ	ܬܐܬܐ ܡܠܟܘܬܟ	ܬܐܬܐ ܡܠܟܘܬܟ
ܢܗܘܘܢ ܨܒܝܢܝܟ [78]	ܢܗܘܘܢ ܨܒܝܢܝܟ	ܢܗܘܐ ܨܒܝܢܟ
ܐܝܟ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܐܦ ܒܐܪܥܐ	ܐܝܟ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܗܟܢܐ ܒܐܪܥܐ	ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܐܦ ܒܐܪܥܐ
ܘܗܒ ܠܢ ܣܘܢܩܢܢ [79]	ܗܒ ܠܢ ܠܚܡܐ ܐܡܝܢܐ ܕܝܘܡܐ	ܗܒ ܠܢ ܣܘܢܩܢ
ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܐܦ ܚܢܢ ܢܫܒܘܩ ܠܚܝܒܝܢ [80]	ܕܐܦ ܚܢܢ ܢܫܒܘܩ ܠܚܝܒܝܢ	ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܐܦ ܚܢܢ ܫܒܩܢ ܠܚܝܒܝܢ
ܘܠܐ ܬܥܠܢ ܠܢܣܝܘܢܐ	ܘܠܐ ܬܥܠܢ ܠܢܣܝܘܢܐ	ܘܠܐ ܬܥܠܢ ܠܢܣܝܘܢܐ
ܐܠܐ ܦܨܢ ܡܢ ܒܝܫܐ	ܐܠܐ ܦܨܢ ܡܢ ܒܝܫܐ	ܐܠܐ ܦܨܢ ܡܢ ܒܝܫܐ
ܡܛܠ ܕܕܝܠܟ ܗܝ		ܡܛܠ ܕܕܝܠܟ ܗܝ
ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܘܬܫܒܘܚܬܐ		ܡܠܟܘܬܐ ܘܚܝܠܐ ܘܬܫܒܘܚܬܐ
ܠܥܠܡ ܥܠܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ		ܠܥܠܡ ܥܠܡܝܢ

The following expressions should be particularly highlighted:

- "may your wills be done" (ܢܗܘܘܢ ܨܒܝܢܝܟ) instead of "may your will be done" (ܢܗܘܐ ܨܒܝܢܟ)

- "on earth as it is in heaven" instead of "as in heaven, so also on earth"

- "the sustainable (ܐܡܝܢܐ)[81] bread of the day, give it to us" instead of "give us the bread of our necessity (ܣܘܢܩܢܢ)"

- "as we also will forgive (ܐܝܟ ܕܐܦ ܚܢܢ ܢܫܒܘܩ) our debtors" instead of "as we also have forgiven (ܐܝܟ ܕܐܦ ܚܢܢ ܫܒܩܢ) our debtors"

- "do not bring us (ܘܠܐ ܬܥܠܢ) into temptation" instead of "do not make us enter (ܘܠܐ ܬܥܠܢ) into temptation".

If, as Burkitt has shown, the *Acts of Thomas* does not follow the *Diatessaron*, it can follow only the Curetonian (even though the two texts, *Diatessaron* and Curetonian, are identical). The argument is rather subtle, but the hypothesis is confirmed by three other remarkable points of contact: the use of ܢܫܪܐ in Lk 12:36 ("when he leaves the wedding") corresponds to S and C instead of ܢܗܦܘܟ ("when he will return from the wedding" in P); likewise, when *Acts of Thomas* 59:3 refers to ποικίλαις νόσοις from Mt 4:24, it uses the expression "painful/chronic diseases" (ܟܐܒܐ ܚܢܝܓܐ) as in S and C whereas the Peshitta uses "various diseases" (ܟܐܒܐ ܡܫܚܠܦܐ); finally, last example, the list of the apostles mentioned at the beginning of the *Acts of Thomas* (n° 1) corresponds to that of S in Mt 10:2-4 and to that one alone[82]. The *Acts of Thomas*, which has survived in Syriac (its original language) and in Greek, had been "composed probably in Edessa during the first half of the 3rd century"[83]. We therefore know that

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[78] According to Ephrem's commentary, the *Diatessaron* has ܢܗܘܘܢ ܨܒܝܢܝܟ ܐܝܟ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܐܦ ܒܐܪܥܐ (LELOIR 1990, p. 70).

[79] *Diatessaron*: ܘܗܒ ܠܢ ܠܚܡܐ ܐܡܝܢܐ ܕܣܘܢܩܢܢ (LELOIR 1990, p 70).

[80] *Diatessaron*: ܘܫܒܘܩ ܠܢ ܚܘܒܝܢ ܐܝܟܢܐ ܕܐܦ ܚܢܢ ܠܚܝܒܝܢ (LELOIR 1990, p 72). V. 13 does not display any divergence with C.

[81] This expression will still occur in the works of Ephrem and even in those of Jacob of Sarug, see BURKITT 1904a, II, p 117-118.

[82] BURKITT 1904a, II, p. 104; POIRIER & TISSOT 1997, p 1331 (in notes).

[83] POIRIER, TISSOT 1997, p. 1324.

the Old Syriac versions were known at the beginning of the 3rd century. This is the hypothesis that prevails today.

3.3. Relationship with Other Versions

A third attempt to date the Old Syriac version involves two other versions, namely the Old Testament Peshitta and especially the *Diatessaron*.

3.3.1. The Old Testament Peshitta

Burkitt is the first to have showed that the separate Gospels depend on the Syriac Old Testament[84]. This dependence is visible particularly in the genealogies, where the names appear in their correct Semitic form, and not in their Greek form[85] (the genealogies are absent from the *Diatessaron*), but also in the Old Testament quotations[86]. The Old Testament Peshitta being essentially a direct translation from the Hebrew produced by Jewish experts and accepted, perhaps after a light revision based on the LXX, by the earliest Christian community of Edessa toward the end of the 2nd century, the Old Syriac, which follows it for the genealogies and for the Old Testament quotations in the Gospels, should be posterior to it.

3.3.2. The Diatessaron

Before discussing the *Diatessaron*, a preliminary remark seems necessary. At the time when most of the studies were carried out on the relationship between the Old Syriac version and the *Diatessaron*, knowledge of the latter was much less advanced than it is today. The *Diatessaron* was known through a Latin translation of the Armenian version of Ephrem's commentary[87], and through the Arabic version of the *Diatessaron* in Ciasca's edition, itself accompanied by a Latin translation. The works of Leloir, from the 1950s, have rendered obsolete many observations made by these predecessors[88].

With the *Diatessaron,* the composition of which by Tatian can be situated around 170 of the Common Era, we have a clear historical landmark. The question is whether the Old Syriac version precedes or follows the *Diatessaron*. On this difficult question, which began to be addressed as soon as the Curetonian was published, three theories are in existence: either the Old Syriac version precedes the *Diatessaron*, or the Old Syriac version is later, or, one of these two witnesses, the Sinaiticus, precedes the *Diatessaron*, while the other, the Curetonian, follows it.

One way of presenting here the problematic would have been to review chronologically the authors with their arguments[89]. The presentation would have been a tedious one given the

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[84] Burkitt 1904a, II, p. 201-206.

[85] Schwen 1911; Burkitt 1911-1912.

[86] See also Joosten 1990; Joosten 1995, p. 25-27 and Wilson 2002, p. xxxviii-xlvii. The examples for arguments to the contrary pit forward by Wildeboer 1880, p 34-35 et Baethgen 1885, p. 31, are too tenuous to be convincing (see above).

[87] Aucher, Moesinger 1876; Ciasca 1888.

[88] See already the notes above that I have added to Burkitt's analysis of the Lord's Prayer.

[89] Similar to what has been done by Lenzi 1998, for whom the research developed in three major phases. The first phase of the debate takes place between 1858 and 1888, after the publication of the Curetonian, and opposes Zahn and Baethgen in particular. It leads to the affirmation of the precedence of the *Diatessaron* over the Cu-

many inevitable repetitions in this type of presentations. I have preferred to opt for a systematic exposition of the main arguments advanced in favour of the various hypotheses.

The first argument is one based on textual criticism. It consists of analysing a series of textual variants from the Old Syriac version and from the *Diatessaron* with the aim of highlighting the relative chronology of the two text types. Zahn and Baethgen, following Cureton, made extensive use of it in their evaluation of the Curetonian, the only witness to the Old Syriac version that they knew of. Burkitt and Smith Lewis did the same for the Sinaiticus or for both.

It is impossible here to go into the details of the variants. Let us focus on just a few of the massive differences that have been underlined. The verse attesting the presence of the angel at the pool of Bethesda in Jn 5:4 is absent from the Old Syriac version and present in the *Diatessaron*. It is difficult to imagine that the episode was deliberately suppressed by the author of the Old Syriac version; the latter should therefore predate the *Diatessaron*. In the Sinaiticus, the order of the verses in Jn 18:13-24 (that narrate Jesus' appearance before Annas the high priest) is better than the one in the Greek manuscripts; the author of the Old Syriac version could not have taken it from the *Diatessaron* which, therefore, should be posterior. The words of Jesus on the cross in Lk 23:34a ("Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing") are absent from the Sinaiticus but present in the *Diatessaron*. Why would the author of the Old Syriac version remove this admirable saying if he had read it in the *Diatessaron*? The same observation can be made regarding the mention of blood sweat in Lk 22:43-44, two verses absent from the Sinaiticus but attested in the *Diatessaron*. The longer ending of Mk (16:9-20) is absent from the Sinaiticus, but not from the *Diatessaron*[90]. Why would the author of the Old Syriac version remove it if he had found it in the *Diatessaron*?

We can make some observations on this study that begins with textual criticism.

1. Zahn[91] chose about fifty textual variants to prove the anteriority of the Old Syriac version over the *Diatessaron*. Baethgen[92] demolished each of Zahn's observations, chose different textual variants, and arrived at the opposite conclusion that the *Diatessaron* predates the Old Syriac version. Even though Zahn was ultimately convinced by Baethgen's arguments, it can be seen that the method does not lead to a definitive conclusion. In the same vein, we can oppose more recent studies by Joosten and Wilson. The first, as we have seen above, based on a series of textual variants, shows that the Sinaiticus and the Curetonian have some readings in common, which can only be explained by a misunderstanding of the Greek. The second, based on another series of textual variants, intends to show that the author of the Old Syriac version did not use a Greek model, but an Aramaic one[93]. The authors can be blamed for their

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retonian. The discovery of the Sinaiticus relaunched the debate. Then, from 1895 onward, a new phase began that would last for about a century and would oppose especially Burkitt, Bewer, Hjelt, Lewis, Torrey, Kahle, Vogels, Vööbus and Black. It led to the current consensus in favour of the precedence of the *Diatessaron* over the Old Syriac. The works of Bertrand and Howard in 1980 inaugurated the third phase that would undermine the certainties concerning the *Diatessaron* by showing that other harmonies were in existence before that of Tatian. For a quick presentation of the relationship between the Old Syriac versions and the *Diatessaron*, see METZGER 1977, p. 45-48.

[90] As we can see it, says BURKITT 1904a, II, p. 194, from the allusions in Aphrahat and the *Doctrine of Addai*.

[91] ZAHN 1881, p. 225-232.

[92] BAETHGEN 1885, p. 72-95.

[93] WILSON 2002, p. liii-lxii.

choice of textual variants, more precisely for having chosen the textual variants based on a preconceived hypothesis. From a methodological point of view, the method used in 1994 by Lyon is better[94]. Instead of choosing a series of variants from across the four Gospels, he analyses entire pericopes from each of the four Gospels (Mt 18:1-20; Mk 7:31-37; 10:17-25; Lk 16:19-31 and Jn 3:1-15). All the data (the *Diatessaron*, the Old Syriac versions, and the Peshitta) are then taken into account, in whichever direction they lead. He thus avoids being accused of subjectivity. Contrary to the current consensus, he even arrives at the conclusion that the Old Syriac version precedes the *Diatessaron*[95]. Subjectivity is involved not only in the choice of variants, but also in the analysis. Such a translation seems to be the oldest for one author, whereas for another author, such an expression carries a more pronounced Semitic flavour and thus thought to be older. Such vague formulations could be multiplied.

2. It has been recognised, already since Burkitt, that the two witnesses, namely the Sinaiticus and the Curetonian, were not pure representatives of the Old Syriac version. Indeed, between the time when the Old Syriac version was produced and the copy of the two witnesses that have survived, two centuries had elapsed: sufficient time during which there could have been contamination between these witnesses and the *Diatessaron*. It is indeed admitted that in the Sinaiticus and especially in the Curetonian, Diatessaronic readings have been introduced over time.

3. Some of these observations[96] are sometimes made considering only two forms of the Syriac, without taking sufficiently into account the multiplicity of variants and Greek text types, a multiplicity that often tends to cloud the issue.

There is, however, one type of variants that deserve all our attention. These are the harmonizing readings. Already Cureton had noted the presence of such readings in the Curetonian, mainly in Lk, but also in Mt, and even in Jn[97]. Zahn and Baethgen provided other examples[98]. Bewer was among the first to have identified some of them in the Sinaiticus[99]. Vogels was the only one to have carried out a systematic analysis of these readings[100]; he recorded 1605 instances (546 in Mt, 466 in Mk, 550 in Lk, and 43 in Jn) in the Sinaiticus and the Curetonian. More recently, Howard and Joosten have examined some of these harmonizing readings from the Sinaiticus and the Curetonian (Joosten having drawn his examples from Mt[101]). Here are some examples of these harmonizing readings in Lk 8.

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[94] Lyon 1994.

[95] Williams 2004, p. 12-13, also adjudicates, but with caution, in favour of the precedence of the Old Syriac versions over the *Diatessaron*.

[96] Particularly those that Smith Lewis has made concerning Jn 5:4; Lk 23:34a and the longer ending of Mk.

[97] Cureton 1858, p. lxvi-lxvii, enumerates the additions that appear in the following passages from the Curetonian: Lk 8:10,13,18,19,27,33,39,43,45,52; 9:17,29,40; 11:17,47,51; 12:29; 17:23; 18:19,30; 22:34,38; 23:37; Mt 4:11,24; 10:33; 19:29; 21:9,13; Jn 4:50; 5:8; 6:10. Or still the use in Lk of a term borrowed from another: Lk 7:35; 8:2,10,13,30,50; 9:12,27,35,38; 11:17,36,46,47; 22:42; 23:46. It should be remembered that in Mk, the Curetonian is attested only from 16:17 onward.

[98] Zahn 1881, p. 225ss; Baethgen 1885, p. 73-76.

[99] Bewer 1900, p. 87-88.

[100] Vogels 1911, p. 71-140.

[101] Howard, 1980; Joosten 1995, p. 13-15.

- Lk 8:10 S and C: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to those from outside *it is not given to know, for this reason* (= Mt 13:11) it was said to them in parables".

- Lk 8:18 C: "Take heed therefore how you hear. For whosoever has, to him it shall be given, *and he shall have more abundance* (= Mt 13:12)".

- Lk 8:19 C: "Then came to him his mother and his brothers *and they stood outside* (= Mt 12:46), but they could not see him because of the crowd".

- Lk 8:27 C: "As he stepped out on land, there came to meet him a man of the city who had demons. For a long time, he had worn no clothes and he did not live in a house but in the tombs *howling and bruising himself* (= Mk 5:5)".

- Lk 8:43 C: "Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years; she had spent all she had on physicians and no one could cure her; *she said to herself: if only I could touch the clothes of Jesus, I will be made well* (= Mk 5:28)".

While we expect to find harmonizing lessons in Tatian, in principle, they are not supposed to occur in the separate Gospels. If they are found, they must spring from the *Diatessaron*, which should therefore predate the Old Syriac versions[102]. On this issue, Vogels developed an original hypothesis[103]. For him, the fact that the Sinaiticus and the Curetonian contain harmonizing lessons in varying quantities and in different places is the sign that these lessons were already in the Old Syriac version and that they were gradually eliminated. The Curetonian containing more of these harmonizing readings than the Sinaiticus, and the Curetonian being, in his opinion, older than the Sinaiticus, Vogels regards the history of the text of the Old Syriac version as a process of gradual elimination of Tatianisms[104]. However, some voices were raised to emphasize that the harmonizing readings do not necessarily have to spring from the *Diatessaron*. They actually flow from the pen of the copyists. The phenomenon is attested in the Greek tradition. It is not necessary to attribute them to the author of the Old Syriac version: they may have been the work of its later copyists, especially those who gave birth to the witnesses we know[105]. And those that can be detected in the original work of the first translator may eventually spring from the Greek model used. Despite these objections, already formulated in the past[106], the argument involving the harmonizing readings have convinced generations of critics. Some doubts about the strength of the argument, however, began to appear with the works of Bertrand and Howard published in 1980[107]. They have indeed shown that the idea of a harmony of the Gospels was in the air during the 2nd century. Bertrand formulated the hypothesis that a harmony of the Gospels existed already before Tatian, the *Gospel of the Ebionites* composed in the first half of the 2nd century. Howard studied the harmonizing readings in the Old Syriac versions and made some distinctions. He classified the harmonizing readings into three groups: those attested in the *Diatessaron*, those absent from the *Dia-*

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[102] Unless it is, as HOLZHEY 1896, p. 36-47 thinks, a retro-influence of the *Diatessaron*. Holzley indeed supports the anteriority of the Sinaiticus, but thinks that in the course of the transmission of the Old Syriac version, the Diatessaronic readings were introduced.

[103] VOGELS 1911.

[104] VOGELS 1911, p. 142.

[105] BEWER 1900, p. 86-89; WEIR 1969, p. xxii-xxiii.

[106] Thus, BURKITT in *The Guardian* of 30th October 1884.

[107] BERTRAND 1980; HOWARD 1980.

tessaron, and those present in the *Diatessaron*, but already attested in the works of Justin and other Church Fathers. It is therefore possible, for Howard, that the *Mepharreshe* have borrowed certain harmonizing formulations from an earlier tradition of harmonization prior to the *Diatessaron*. The chronological pivot that was thought to be so solid, namely the date of composition of the *Diatessaron* around 170, has finally proved to be less solid than previously thought.

Zahn had initially opted for the anteriority of the Curetonian over the *Diatessaron* grounding himself in the following argument: it is impossible to use the *Diatessaron* as a point of departure for reconstructing the separate Gospels[108]. Certainly, he said, whole pericopes from Mt and Jn can be taken as they are, but this is not possible for Lk. We also find the argument in some current reference works[109]. It is, however, not difficult to counter this argument: why should we presume that the author of the Old Syriac version used only the *Diatessaron*? He had to make use of some Greek models. But being accustomed to reading and hearing the text of the *Diatessaron* in the liturgy, it is the wording of the latter than came quite naturally under his pen.

Baethgen, for confirming his hypothesis that the Curetonian postdates the *Diatessaron*, appeals to theology[110]. He in fact detects a number of readings with a dogmatic character, which are grounded in the Encratite tendencies of Tatian: we find in particular from either side formulations that tend to preserve the virginity of the mother of Jesus. The Old Syriac version would have borrowed these formulations from the *Diatessaron*. The most striking example is Mt 1:16: Ἰακὼβ δὲ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰωσὴφ τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας ("Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary") ܚܒܩ ܐܘܠܕ ܠܝܘܣܦ ܗܘ ܕܡܟܝܪܐ ܗܘܬ ܠܗ ܡܪܝܡ ܒܬܘܠܬܐ ("Jacob begat Joseph *to whom was promised the virgin Mary*").

Along these lines, Bewer, who also knew the Sinaiticus, specifies the relationship between the witnesses to the Old Syriac version and the *Diatessaron*, supposing that the Sinaiticus predates the *Diatessaron* and the Curetonian postdates the latter[111]. He demonstrates that the arguments in favour of the anteriority of the Sinaiticus are not valid for the Curetonian. And specifically, in the passages where the dogmatic choices intervene, (Mt 1:19-25), the Curetonian is so close to the *Diatessaron* that the only possible conclusion is the following: the Curetonian is based on the *Diatessaron*. It contains, among others, the longer ending of Mark as well as the episode on blood sweat in Lk 22:43-44, as in the *Diatessaron*. For him, the chronological order is therefore as follows: Sinaiticus – *Diatessaron* – Curetonian – Peshitta.

Also grounding himself in theological arguments, Lenzi arrived at an original position. For him, the Old Syriac versions and the *Diatessaron* are works totally independent of each other. Regarding the issue of the virgin birth of Jesus and the legal paternity of Joseph, the two works have opposing views; likewise, on the issue of Encratism: this position is found in the *Diatessaron*, but not in the Old Syriac versions[112].

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[108] ZAHN 1881, p. 225-232; see also BEWER 1900, p. 82.

[109] See METZGER 1977, p. 46.

[110] BAETHGEN 1885, p. 93-95; see also BEWER 1900, p. 83-84.

[111] BEWER 1900, p. 90.

[112] The passage from Lk 2:36 has been widely used, where the Sinaiticus affirms that Anna lived only seven days (instead of seven years according to the Greek) with her husband after her virginity, for detecting there some Encratite tendencies. LENZI 2006a, p. 142, sees there not an exhortation to virginity, but rather a sign of compassion toward this woman who lived only seven days with her husband before becoming a widow.

Scholars have also relied on the profound rootedness of the *Diatessaron* in the Syriac Church for affirming its anteriority. How indeed could the *Diatessaron* have enjoyed such prominence and diffusion in the Syriac Church if it had not been the earliest form of the Gospels used among the Syriacs? If it appeared later, how can one explain that it completely ousted the separate Gospels[113]? Bewer[114] nevertheless notes that there is no evidence to show that the separate Gospels ceased to be used. The works of Vööbus seem to prove him right: Vööbus has indeed discovered traces of the use of the Old Syriac versions until the time of the Arab conquest[115]. Moreover, a harmony has many practical advantages, particularly in the liturgy, and that alone can explain its wider diffusion. Finally, as Vööbus again points out, is it likely that the earliest Syriac Christian community had to wait until the third quarter of the 2nd century to have a Gospel text? If we think that one Gospel text[116] existed prior to the *Diatessaron*, we still have to wonder about its form. Was it necessarily a tetraevangelium, as Bewer, Hjelt, and Torrey think[117]? Vööbus is not convinced[118]. In other Christian communities, he says, only one book was used: the Gospel of the Egyptians in Egypt (according to Clement of Alexandria)[119], a revised version of Matthew in Palestine (according to Irenaeus)[120], the Gospel of John in some communities in Asia Minor (according to the Muratorian canon)[121]. Marcion accepted only Luke, and Valentine only John. It should also be remembered that Irenaeus[122] had the greatest difficulty to impose the use of the four Gospels. Vööbus thinks that the first Christians of Mesopotamia and Persia used the Gospel of the Hebrews known by Hegesippus, Eusebius, and Jerome, and not a tetraevangelium, the *Mepharreshe*.

3.4. Linguistic Features of the Old Syriac Version

Lyon was the last to emphasize the archaic character of the language of the Old Syriac version and particularly that of the Sinaiticus[123]. But Cureton and Burkitt had already noted that the Old Syriac versions use certain words and constructions that are absent from the standard literary Syriac (at best represented by Aphrahat, for example). Schulthess, Torrey, Kahle, Beyer, Black, and Joosten have discussed this phenomenon, but have not arrived at same con-

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[113] As it is affirmed by BURKITT 1904a II, p. 165.

[114] BEWER 1900, p. 81-82.

[115] VÖÖBUS 1951, p. 37-43. BLACK 1972, p. 132, points out that when Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus (between 423 and 457), demanded that all copies of the *Diatessaron* be removed and be replaced by a tetraevangelium, there is nothing to indicate that this new text was the Peshitta; it would rather be a text "almost certainly identical to the type of text and of translation of the separate Gospels of which two copies have survived in the Sinaiticus and the Curetonian".

[116] And not only a set of pericopes used in the liturgy, as suggested by HAASE 1920, thus p. 270: "I therefore consider it highly probable that the first missionaries of Edessa had produced the Syriac translations for liturgical use, and that the Diatessaron does not, therefore, represent the first Syriac translation of the Gospels".

[117] BEWER 1900, p. 90-91, 353-356; HJELT 1903, p. 157ss; TORREY 1936, p. 277.

[118] VÖÖBUS 1951, p. 16-17, where references to the patristic writers are found. See also VÖÖBUS 1951a.

[119] CLEM. ALEX., *Stromata* (ed. O. STÄHLIN 1907, p. 225, 238).

[120] IRENAEUS, *Heresies* I, 26; III, 11.

[121] *Florilegium Patristicum*, (ed. G. RAUSCHEN 1905, t. III, p. 24s).

[122] IRENAEUS, *Heresies* III, 11.

[123] LYON 1994. His observations are summarised in p. 197-200.

clusions[124]. For some (Burkitt), the 'linguistic anomalies' of the Sinaiticus are vestiges of an older form of Syriac. For others (Torrey, Black), some of these linguistic features, which seem to be attested only in Palestinian Aramaic, argue in favour of a Palestinian origin of the author(s) of the Old Syriac version[125]. Beyer has shown that there are at least two types of anomalies in the Old Syriac version: those that originate from an older form of Aramaic (Imperial Aramaic)[126] and a smaller number that seem to be Western. Still, for some others (Joosten), the anomalies come from Tatian who had incorporated in his work Jewish Aramaic texts, which were then taken up by the Old Syriac versions.

Joosten lists especially seventeen items that he considers to be of Western Aramaic origin. Some of them indeed are, as Lyon points out[127] : ܐܒܐ *'abba* for "my Father", the equivalence "live – be saved" (ܚܝܐ *ḥaya*)[128], the use of ܢܣܐ *niso* instead of ܐܬܐ *'oto* for "miracle", the use of Jewish Christian loan words, which are ܫܠܝܚܐ *šeliḥo* "apostle", ܬܠܡܝܕܐ *talmido* "disciple", ܓܢܬ ܥܕܢ *gannat 'eden* "paradise". But others are certainly not Palestinian: ܠܝܬ *layt* + separate personal pronoun equivalent of the negative copula "I am not"[129], or ܫܠܚ *šelaḥ* in the sense of "sending someone"[130]. Some of these Palestinianisms probably come from Palestine; either they were preserved in the oral kerygma used in the earliest Aramaic-speaking assemblies, or they were borrowed from Jewish Christian texts written in Jewish Aramaic (Eastern or Western). Tatian seems to have, at times, translated literally from such documents and we cannot exclude the possibility that Jewish Aramaic *logia* circulated in the Euphrates valley.

Lyon also indicated the presence of elements that are neither Edessan, nor Palestinian, nor vestiges of Imperial Aramaic[131]. The most telling example, but not the only one[132], is the adverb ܐܝܠܟܐ *'aylᵉko* "where", used twenty times in the Sinaiticus and nowhere else. The Curetonian and the Peshitta replace it each time. This dialectal form is rooted in the language of the earliest translator of the Syriac Gospels, namely in an Aramaic dialect very close to the dialect of Edessa, without being identical to it.

For Lyon, we have no Syriac text that could equal the archaic character of the Sinaiticus. A comparison with the quotations from the *Diatessaron* shows, according to him, that the language of the Sinaiticus is even more archaic than the one found in the biblical quotations in all the Syriac Fathers. The many archaisms in the spelling, the unusual forms of the suffixes in the Sinaiticus that we find rarely in Aphrahat (died in 344), cannot be contemporary to or later than the latter. Lyon illustrates this with the help of the independent personal pronoun of

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[124] Schulthess 1905-1906; Schulthess 1922; Torrey 1936, p. 245-270; Kahle 1959²; Kahle 1960; Beyer 1966; Black 1972; Joosten 1991; Joosten 1992; Joosten 1994.

[125] Torrey 1936, p. 245.

[126] The fact that it seems to be vestiges of the Imperial Aramaic has nothing surprising about it in the case of texts written before the dialect of Edessa had become a literary language.

[127] Lyon 1994, p. 198-199.

[128] See already Torrey 1936, p. 264 (who refers to Dalman 1905, p. 353). On the other hand, for Lenzi 2006a, this use is rooted more widely in NorthWest Semitic.

[129] See Nöldeke §302.

[130] Aphrahat uses it three times on a single page, see *Patrologia Syriaca* II, col. 100, l. 8, 16 and 25.

[131] Lyon 1994, p. 199-200.

[132] See also the use of ܡܢ ܝܬܝܪ *men yattir* in Mk 7:37, the reflexive use of ܠܒܫ *lebaš* in Lk 16:19, as well as the peculiar spelling of many words listed in Burkitt.

the 1st person plural. It appears under three forms: ܐܢܚܢܢ < *^{e}nah*>*nan*, ܚܢ <*h^e*>*nan*, and ܢ <-*nan*> directly attached to a participle. The first one corresponds to the Old Aramaic spelling, the second one to that of the Syriac of Edessa, while the third one is also accepted in the language of Edessa but less common in the Bible even though it occurs frequently in the works of the 5th century writers. The following frequency table has been drawn up by Lyon[133] :

	ܐܢܚܢܢ	ܚܢ	ܢ-
Sinaiticus	85	3	0
Curetonian	35	14	0
Peshitta	6	72	19
[*Diatessaron*	9	22	6]

The longest form of the pronoun is found only in the oldest manuscripts. The vocalization in the Peshitta indicates an identical pronunciation for the three forms (as indicated above), but it reflects in this a much later practice. The three forms are found in the 4th century in the works of Aphrahat and Ephrem, in their biblical quotations as well as in their original writings. The Sinaiticus spelling, in all likelihood, had not been standardized as it fluctuates on other points. Moreover, the Sinaiticus already manifests signs of a later revision based on Syriac standards. Therefore, the complete absence of the third form and the rare occurrences of the second point toward a date of composition when only the first was employed and perhaps, still pronounced. The wider use of the longest form and the absence of the shortest one cannot be explained by a date of composition reaching back to the 4th century, or even to the 3rd century, but by a still earlier date. Following others, Lyon argues in favour of a Jewish origin of the translator. This is not surprising, he says, since Christianity arrived in the Euphrates valley thanks to Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians, perhaps first via Adiabene (according to Kahle and Segal)[134] or directly from Palestine (as the Syriac tradition affirms).

Brock, in his preliminary article to the edition of the fragments of the new Finds, also indicates the presence of archaic features in these fragments[135]. Most of them are found in the other two witnesses, but in different places. He highlights especially the word *nesse* "signs, miracles", the demonstrative *halok*, the particle *'ud*, the retaining of the initial *olaph* in the imperative of the verbs *'ezal* and *'eto*, the spelling *mḥ'wt'* with internal *olaph*, and the exceptional attestation of the *plene* forms *kwl* and *mṭwl*.

4. The Old Syriac and the Greek text of the Gospels

4.1. Merits of a Retroversion into Greek

Since the Old Syriac version is a translation of the Greek[136], some authors have thought it possible to find behind the formulations of the Old Syriac version the Greek wording, or even to reconstitute it entirely.

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[133] *Diatessaron* figures are mentioned only for comparison, as they reflect the practice of multiple authors, even over centuries.

[134] KAHLE 1959, p. 277-278; SEGAL 1970. Adiabene is the region of Mesopotamia between the Great Zab and the Little Zab, two tributaries of the Tigris surrounding Arbela.

[135] BROCK 2016, p. 12-13.

[136] WILSON 2002, p. liii-lxii, rather thinks of an Aramaic original.

Baethgen[137] thus committed himself to a retroversion into Greek from the Curetonian[138]. For his part, Merx[139] wrote a commentary on the Gospels based exclusively on the Sinaiticus, which he regarded as "the oldest known text of the canonical Gospels", the Sinaiticus being a witness even older than the oldest Greek manuscripts, because it was based on a Greek text from the 2nd century. Merx also believed that the Sinaiticus was *verbatim* translation of the Greek, whereas Baethgen had clearly showed that this was not the case. Being more cautious than Merx, Baethgen begins with a long introduction aiming to justify his choices by grounding himself in a detailed analysis of how the Syriac translator approached his Greek model. Long before Joosten's purely descriptive analysis of the translation techniques of the Old Syriac versions and the Peshitta of Mt[140], Baethgen was thus the first to have described systematically the translational features of the Old Syriac versions. Although he worked only on the Curetonian, the only version he knew at the time, his remarks were valuable to a large extent for the Sinaiticus and they have lost none of their relevance. He arrived at the conclusion that the translation was carried out at a time when the meaning was more important than the letter. He in fact criticizes his predecessors, Crowfoot, Wildeboer et Tregelles, either for failing to recognize that the translator was guided more by the genius of his own language rather than his fidelity to the Greek text, or for being limited to incomplete observations.[141]. After listing the spelling variations[142] that are not of much interest, Baethgen enters into the details of his observations[143]. I shall summarize here the outlines of his approach with a few of his examples. Baethgen's observations will be easily supplemented by those of Joosten for Mt and those of Carrega for Lk[144].

1. In general, translating a text as simple as that of the Gospel should not cause major difficulties. The meaning of the Gospel text was thus conveyed well. There are, however, some passages that the translator did not understand, those that he did not divide or accentuate correctly.

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[137] Baethgen 1885.

[138] Cureton 1848, p. xciii, considered that, for the Gospel of Mt, the Syriac text represented "the identical terms and expressions which the Apostle himself employed", an optimism soon squashed by Burkitt 1904a II, p. 16, who had already noticed that the Syriac dialect of Edessa was different from Palestinian Aramaic.

[139] Merx 1897-1911 (the first volume is devoted to a German translation of the Sinaiticus, the next three to the commentary on the Gospels).

[140] Joosten 1995.

[141] For him, the work of Crowfoot (Crowfoot 1870) has no value from a critical perspective. His opinion of Wildeboer (Wildeboer 1880), who analyzed the discrepancies of the Curetonian with respect to the Peshitta, is more nuanced. Wildeboer classifies the discrepancies under the following categories: discrepancies simply resulting from errors, linguistic variations, exegetical variations, additions, omissions, dogmatic modifications, discrepancies in the Old Testament quotations, relationship with some Greek manuscripts, and some random discrepancies. The observations are far from being exhaustive. This is also the objection that he makes to the work of Tregelles (Tregelles 1857) who included in his edition of the New Testament some variants from the Curetonian. Not only has he just mentioned a few of the variants (for which he never provided the restitution in Greek; for the difficult cases, he provided only a Latin translation), but also among these he has considered as variants a certain number that are not really variants at all. Moreover, his insufficient knowledge of Syriac is visible more than once (examples in Baethgen 1885, p. 3).

[142] See also Wilson 2002, p. xxix-xxxi.

[143] Baethgen 1885, p. 11-32.

[144] Joosten 1995; Carrega 2013.

- Lk 12:58 δὸς ἐργασίαν] ܗ‍ܒ ܠܗ ܣܘܚ‍ܐ "give him advantage": the Latinism (*operam dare*) has not been understood ("make effort to have settled the matter with him").

- Lk 14:18 ἀπὸ μιᾶς] ܚ‍ܕܐ ("immediately"): the meaning is "unanimously".

- Lk 19:44 τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς σου] ܪܒܘܬܟ "of your greatness" instead of "of your visit" (ܣܘܥܪܢܟ); the word has been understood in the sense of "office, function, dignity"[145].

- Lk 23:9 ἐν λόγοις ἱκανοῖς] ܒܚܟ‍ܡܬܐ "with wise words" instead of "in many words"; the translator does not know the meaning of ἱκανός here.

- Mt 4:24 τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας ποικίλαις νόσοις] the translator has rendered the expression "various diseases" by "chronic diseases" (ܟ‍ܐܒ‍ܐ). The example has already been mentioned above.

- Jn 4:38 has not been divided correctly: he has read ἀλλ᾽ οἵ κεκοπιάκασιν (ܐܠܐ ܐܝ‍ܠܝ‍ܢ ܕܠܐܝܘ, "but those who have toiled") instead of ἄλλοι κεκοπιάκασιν ("others have toiled").

- Jn 6:63[146] ἡ σὰρξ οὐκ ὠφελεῖ] instead of the article ἡ he has read the conjunction ἤ, hence his translation: ܐܘ ܦ‍ܓ‍ܪܐ ܠܐ ܡ‍ܕ‍ܡ ܐܘܡ‍ܪ ("or the flesh is useless").

2. Not aiming at a literal translation, the translator has often rendered the same Greek word by various Syriac words:

- ποιέω is usually rendered by ܥ‍ܒܕ, but also by ܣ‍ܥܪ or ܗܘ‍ܐ. We can compare the translation of Jn 5:19 (ὁ υἱὸς ὁμοίως ποιεῖ "the Son does likewise") in the freer Curetonian (ܒ‍ܪܐ ܗ‍ܘ ܕܐܡܬ‍ܠܗ "the Son resembles him") and the more slavish Peshitta (ܒ‍ܪܐ ܐ‍ܟܘܬܗ ܥ‍ܒܕ).

- σάρξ is sometimes rendered by ܒ‍ܣ‍ܪܐ and sometimes by ܦ‍ܓ‍ܪܐ, θέλω by ܨ‍ܒ‍ܐ or by ܒ‍ܥ‍ܐ ܠܗ (Mt 18:30), ἔνδυμα by ܠ‍ܒܘ‍ܫ‍ܐ or ܢ‍ܚ‍ܬܐ. We could multiply the examples. The Peshitta is more consistent on this point.

3. We can find many examples where the translation of the Curetonian contains a stronger Semitic flavour compared to that of the Peshitta.

- Mt 1:25 καὶ οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν αὐτὴν ("but he did not know her")] ܘܒ‍ܩ‍ܕ‍ܝ‍ܫܘܬ‍ܐ ܫ‍ܪܐ ܗܘ‍ܐ ܥܡ‍ܗ ("he lived with her in purity"), P: ܘܠܐ ܚ‍ܟ‍ܡ‍ܗ.

- Mt 5:32 παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας ("except on the ground of fornication")] ܕܠܐ ܐܬ‍ܐܡ‍ܪ ܥ‍ܠ‍ܝ‍ܗ ܓܘ‍ܪܐ ("without speaking about adultery with regard to her"), P: ܠ‍ܒ‍ܪ ܡ‍ܢ ܡ‍ܠ‍ܬ‍ܐ ܕܙ‍ܢ‍ܝܘܬ‍ܐ.

- Lk 10:17 ἐξ οἰκίας εἰς οἰκίαν ("[do not go] from house to house")] ܡ‍ܢ ܒ‍ܝ‍ܬ‍ܐ ܠ‍ܒ‍ܝ‍ܬܗ ("from one house to its neighbouring one"), P: ܡ‍ܢ ܒ‍ܝ‍ܬ‍ܐ ܠ‍ܒ‍ܝ‍ܬ‍ܐ.

4. Often a Greek word is translated by two Syriac words to better render all the nuances of the Greek. This is especially the case for Greek compound verbs.

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[145] There is no need to presume a connection with the episcopal office concerning the translator, as affirm CURETON 1858, p lix and WILDEBOER 1880, p 23.

[146] "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless".

- Lk 20:16 μὴ γένοιτο ("may this not be" in the sense of "never in life!")] ܗܘ ܘܠܐ ܢܗܘܐ ("God forbid! May this never happen!").

- Lk 24:15 ἐγγίσας ("drawing near")] ܐܬܐ...ܘܩܪ ("He came and drew near").

- Jn 7:26 λαλεῖ ("Behold him who speaks openly")] ܘܡܡܠܠ. We could translate as "he begins to speak"[147].

- Mt 15:17 ἐκβάλλεται ("is cast out")] ܡܢ ܬܡܢ ܡܬܕܒܐ ("is cast out from there").

- Lk 10:39 παρακαθεσθεῖσα ("Mary sitting at the feet of the Lord")] ܘܐܬܬ ܝܬܒܬ ("… she came and sat …").

5. The translator frequently adds words that are absent from the Greek with the purpose of clarification. There is no need to look for a Greek variant in such cases.

- Mk 16:20 τοῦ κυρίου συνεργοῦντος ("the Lord working with them")] ܟܕ ܡܪܢ ܥܡܗܘܢ ܒܟܠ ("whereas the Lord was with them *in all things*").

- Mt 3:12 τὸ πτύον ἐν τῇ χειρί ("the winnowing shovel [is] in his hand")] ܗܘ ܕܐܚܝܕ ܪܦܫܐ ܒܐܝܕܗ ("*he who holds* the winnowing shovel in his hand").

- Mt 6:18 τῷ πατρί σου τῷ ἐν τῷ κρυφαίῳ ("your Father who is in secret")] ܠܐܒܘܟ ܕܝܕܥ ܒܟܣܝܐ ("your Father who *knows* that which is hidden").

- Lk 2:52 προέκοπτεν σοφίᾳ καὶ ἡλικίᾳ καὶ χάριτι ("He increased in wisdom, in stature, and in grace")] ܪܒܐ ܗܘܐ ܒܩܘܡܬܐ ܘܡܢ ܒܚܟܡܬܐ ܘܒܛܝܒܘܬܐ ("He grew in stature and *increased* in wisdom and in grace").

6. In some cases, the translator specifies a Greek verb with a general meaning with the help of a complement. It is useless to presume the existence of this complement in the Greek model, something that Cureton does too often.

- Mt 1:20 τὸ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ γεννηθὲν ἐκ πνεύματος ἐστιν ἁγίου ("that which is begotten in her comes from the Holy Spirit")] ܗܘ ܓܝܪ ܕܐܬܝܠܕ ܒܗ ܡܢ ܪܘܚܐ ܗܘ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ ܐܬܒܛܢ ("that which is begotten in her *has been conceived* of the Holy Ghost"): the addition of the verb "has been conceived" in Syriac does not presume the presence another similar verb in Greek.

- Mt 2:20 οἱ ζητοῦντες τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ παιδίου ("those who were seeking the child's life") ܕܒܥܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܢܦܫܗ ܕܛܠܝܐ ܠܡܩܛܠܗ ("those who were seeking the child's life *to kill him*").

7. Often a subject or an object not expressed or expressed only by means of a pronoun is clearly identified.

- Mt 1:19 μὴ θέλων αὐτὴν δειγματίσαι ("not willing to denounce her publicly")] ܠܐ ܟܝ ܨܒܐ ܗܘܐ ܕܢܦܪܣܝܗ ܠܡܪܝܡ ("not willing to denounce *Mary* publicly").

- Mt 1:20 ἄγγελος κυρίου κατ᾽ ὄναρ ἐφάνη αὐτῷ ("the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream")] ܐܬܚܙܝ, ܠܗ ܠܝܘܣܦ ܡܠܐܟܐ ܕܡܪܝܐ ܒܚܙܘܐ ("the Angel of the Lord appeared *to Joseph* in a vision").

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[147] Giving the verb ܡܠܠ an inchoative meaning.

- Mt 14:5 ὅτι ὡς προφήτην αὐτὸν εἶχον ("for they took him for a prophet")] ܕܐܝܟ ܢܒܝܐ
ܐܚܝܕܝܢ ܗܘܘ ܠܗ ܠܝܘܚܢܢ ("for they regarded *John* as a prophet). We could multiply the examples[148].

8. A word in apposition often explains either a proper noun or a substantive:

- Mt 2:15, 19: "*the king* Herod" instead of "Herod".

- Mt 3:5; 4:15: "*the river* Jordan" instead of "Jordan".

- Mt 8:2: "a leprous *man*" (ܓܒܪܐ ܚܕ ܓܪܒܐ) instead of "a leper".

- Mt 2:18 φωνὴ ἐν Ῥαμὰ ἠκούσθη...Ῥαχὴλ κλαίουσα τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς ("In Rama a voice is heard … it is Rachel weeping for her children")] ܩܠܐ ܐܫܬܡܥ ܒܪܡܬܐ...ܘܐܠܠܝܐ ܣܓܝܐܐ ܕܩܠܗ ܕܪܚܝܠ ܗܘܐ ܒܟܝܐ ("In Rama a voice is heard … it is *the voice of* Rachel etc."). It is not necessary to presume the existence of a variant ἡ φωνὴ τῆς Ῥαχήλ as Crowfoot does[149].

9. We should also take note of several additions of personal, possessive, and demonstrative pronouns. These seem to simply correspond to an article in Greek.

- Thus, in Jn 1:1, ܗܘ ܡܠܬܐ for ὁ λόγος.

10. ܟܠ is sometimes added without having to presume a πᾶς in Greek[150].

- Jn 6:47; 7:38 ὁ πιστεύων ("he who believes")] ܟܠ ܡܢ ܕܡܗܝܡܢ ("*whoever* believes").

- Lk 11:10 ὁ ζητῶν εὑρίσκει καὶ τῷ κρούοντι ἀνοιγήσεται ("he who seeks finds and to him who knocks it shall be opened"] ܟܠ ܓܝܪ ܕܒܥܐ ܡܫܟܚ ܘܟܠ ܕܢܩܫ ܡܬܦܬܚ ("*whoever* seeks … to *anyone* who knocks …").

11. There are also many passages where the text is abridged, often out of a concern for brevity.

- Mt 14:28; Jn 1:26; 3:27; 4:10 etc.: the expressions ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν ou ἀπεκρίθη λέγων are rendered by a simple ܐܡܪ ("he says").

- Mt 2:10 ἐχάρησαν χαρὰν μεγάλην σφόδρα ("they *greatly* rejoiced with great joy")] ܚܕܝܘ ܚܕܘܬܐ ܪܒܬܐ ("they rejoiced with great joy"): the adverb σφόδρα is not rendered as it is superfluous.

- Mt 15:29 ἀναβὰς εἰς τὸ ὄρος ἐκάθητο ἐκεῖ ("after having climbed the mountain, he sat *there*")] ܣܠܩ ܝܬܒ ܥܠ ܗܘ ܛܘܪܐ ("he climbed (and) sat down on the mountain", the English equivalent being "he climbed to sit down on the mountain").

12. We can now analyse the translation of the conjunctions and particles.

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[148] The addition has been preserved in the Peshitta in more than one place.

[149] It should be compared to what JOOSTEN 1995 says about this passage (see above, under 2.).

[150] This section of Baethgen is not relevant. There is indeed no other way in Syriac to render the Greek except making use of the expression *kul man d*.

- καί, a simple coordinating conjunction is rendered by ܘ, except when it signifies "al-so": it is then rendered by ܘܐܦ. But it often happens that a ܘ is attested even when there is no καί in Greek; it is therefore equivalent to a single comma.

- δέ is rendered by ܕܝܢ but it is very frequently omitted or rendered by ܘ. When it has an adversative nuance, it is translated by ܐܠܐ. But the ܐܠܐ sometimes appears without an ἀλλά corresponding to it.

- οὖν is usually translated by ܗܟܝܠ when it indicates a real consequence. This same ܗܟܝܠ sometimes renders a μᾶλλον. But where the οὖν functions as a simple conjunction (as is frequently the case in Jn), it is either omitted or rendered by a simple ܘ.

- ὅτι is rendered by ܕ, but we frequently find ܕ where there is no ὅτι, particularly when introducing a direct speech (Mt 15:11; 19:5; 21:25, etc.), which is normal in Syriac.

- γάρ is translated by ܓܝܪ, but also by ܡܛܠ. Sometimes ܓܝܪ has no corresponding parti-cle in Greek (Mt 10:39; 11:5; Jn 3, 29:30, 31, etc.).

- ἰδού is usually rendered by ܗܐ (Mt 1:23; 2:1; 3:16, etc.), but it is sometimes replaced by a verbal form, thus in Mt 2:9 καὶ ἰδοὺ ὁ ἀστήρ ὅν εἶδον ("and behold, the star that they had seen …")] ܘܐܬܚܘܝ ܠܗܘܢ ܟܘܟܒܐ ("and unto them appeared the star …"). See also in Mt 3:17; 17:5; Lk 13:11; 22:47, etc. It also appears that we find a ܗܐ without a corre-sponding ἰδού in Greek (Mt 3:11; 11:5; 19:20, etc.).

- The adverb ܬܘܒ sometimes renders πάλιν and sometimes ἔτι, but sometimes it is add-ed without a correspondence in Greek (Mt 19:25; Lk 8:37; 9:37).

- ἤδη is sometimes not translated (Mt 5:28; Jn 3:18, etc.) and sometimes translated by a circumlocution, thus in Lk 21:30 ὅταν προβάλωσιν ἤδη ("as soon as they sprout")] ܕܡܐ ܕܡܦܪܥܝܢ ܘܫܪܝܢ ("as soon as they *begin to* sprout").

13. With regard to the translation of verbal forms and the use of verbs by the Syriac trans-lator, we can make the following general observations. The aorist and the perfect in Greek are usually rendered by the perfect in Syriac. The Greek present corresponds to a participle in Syriac usually accompanied by a pronoun. The Greek imperfect is mostly translated by a par-ticiple followed by the verb ܗܘܐ. The Greek future tense is rendered by a Syriac imperfect. The Syriac perfect is often accompanied by the verb ܗܘܐ, which strengthens it and gives it the nuance of a past perfect (Mt 2,9 ὁ ἀστήρ ὅν εἶδον, see below] ܟܘܟܒܐ ܗܘ ܕܚܙܘ ܗܘܘ "the star that they had seen"; the Peshitta removes the ܗܘܘ.), but it happens that it is added without necessity[151] (Mt 1:19 ἐβουλήθη λάθρᾳ ἀπολῦσαι αὐτήν "he wanted to repudiate her in secret" ܐܬܪܥܝ ܗܘܐ ܕܡܛܫܝܐܝܬ ܢܫܪܝܗ). We can also find infinitive absolutes carrying an emphatic nu-ance (Mt 6:16 ὅπως φανῶσιν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις νηστεύοντες "[they disfigure their faces] to show men that they are fasting"] ܕܢܬܚܙܘܢ ܠܒܢܝ ܐܢܫܐ ܕܨܝܡܝܢ "…that they are fasting in-deed"[152]; see also Mt 6:18; Jn 7:47; Lk 8:50, etc.). These general observations, however, have many exceptions.

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[151] It would, however, be a real variant: "he was wanting" (durative) instead of "he wanted".

[152] The Peshitta removes these infinitives.

- A Greek present is from time to time rendered by a perfective followed or not by ܗܘܐ, thus in Jn 4:7 ("A Samaritan woman came to draw water") where ἔρχεται is rendered by ܐܬܬ ܗܘܬ. A participle with ܗܘܐ also sometimes corresponds to it, thus in Jn 1:5 ("the light shines in the darkness") where φαίνει is rendered by ܡܢܗܪ ܗܘܐ.

- Conversely, the Syriac participle often renders an aorist; this is particularly the case with the verb εἶπον rendered by ܐܡܪܝܢ: it is not necessary to presume a variant λέγουσιν. Verbs such as ἕστηκα, ἤλπικα, οἶδα, ἔγνωκα are frequently rendered by a participle (Jn 5:45; Lk 8:46).

- A Greek present happens to correspond to an imperfective, thus in Lk 12:40 "it is at the hour that you ignore that the Son of man will come (lit. comes)" where ἔρχεται is rendered by ܐܬܐ (the Peshitta reads ܐܬܐ).

- The participle is also employed to express a general truth where the Greek would use the future tense. The participle in Syriac can indeed imply future sense (in Mt 6:34 "do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will worry about itself" μεριμνήσει is rendered by ܢܦܗ, as in P).

To correctly interpret the nuance of the Greek, the translator is sometimes compelled to take recourse to using a circumlocution.

- Thus, in Lk 8:42, to better express the imperfect *de conatu*[153] αὐτὴ ἀπέθνῃσκεν ("she was dying")] ܩܪܝܒܐ ܗܘܬ ܠܡܡܬ ("she was about to die").

- Or in Lk 9:53 ὅτι τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἦν πορευόμενον εἰς Ἰερουσαλήμ ("because he was on his way to Jerusalem", lit. "his face was set toward Jerusalem] ܕܐܦܘܗܝ ܣܡ ("because he had directed his face toward Jerusalem *to go there*").

The translator prefers an active turn before a passive formulation in Greek.

- Mt 2:17 τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Ἰερεμίου ("that which was spoken by Jeremiah")] ܡܠܬܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܪܡܝܐ "the word that Jeremiah spoke"[154].

- Mt 3:6 ἐβαπτίζοντο ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ὑπ´ αὐτοῦ ("they were baptized by him in Jordan")] ܡܥܡܕ ܗܘܐ ܠܗܘܢ ܒܝܘܪܕܢܢ ("he baptized them in Jordan").

- Jn 14:21 ὁ δὲ ἀγαπῶν με ἀγαπηθήσεται ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρός μου ("he who loves me shall be loved by my Father")] ܢܪܚܡܝܘܗܝ ܐܒܝ ... ("… my Father shall love him").

14. It is not rare for a subordinate proposition introduced by ἵνα, ὅτι, ὅπου, etc. to be rendered by a simple coordinate proposition.

- Lk 3:10 (D.05) τί οὖν ποιήσωμεν ἵνα σωθῶμεν ("what must we do then to be saved?")] ܡܢܐ ܢܥܒܕ ܘܢܚܐ (lit. "what should we do *and* we will live?").

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[153] BLASS, DEBRUNNER, REHKOPF, 2001, § 326.

[154] The Peshitta retains the passive turn: ܡܕܡ ܕܐܬܐܡܪ ܒܝܕ ܐܪܡܝܐ.

- Mt 2:23 ὅπως πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ("that it might be fulfilled what was spoken [by the prophets: he shall be called a Nazarene")] ܘܐܬܡܠܠܬ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܐܡܝܪ̈ܐ ܕܒܢܒܝܐ ܕܢܬܩܪܐ ܢܨܪܝܐ ("*and* the word spoken by the prophet is accomplished, etc."). We cannot rely on this translation to support the existence of a variant καὶ ἐπληρώθη.

15. The contrary is also attested: a coordinate proposition with καί is rendered by a subordinate introduced by ܕ.

- Mt 4:6 καὶ ἐπὶ χειρῶν ἀροῦσίν σε ("[he shall give orders to his angels] and they shall bear you up on their hands)] ܕܥܠ ܕܪ̈ܥܝܗܘܢ ܢܩܠܘܢܟ ("... *so that* they bear you up on their hands") (quotation from Ps 91:11-12).

- Mt 12:18 καὶ κρίσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἀπαγγελεῖ ("[I shall put my spirit upon him] and he shall proclaim justice to the nations"] ܕܢܕܝܢ ܠܥܡ̈ܡܐ ("... *so that* they proclaim, etc.") (in a quotation from Is 42:1-4).

16. The freedom of the translator is also evident from the word order: contrary to the Peshitta, there is no exact correspondence with the Greek. Examples are found in almost every verse.

17. The quotations from the Old Testament correspond mainly with the text of the Old Testament Peshitta (Mt 2:15; 10:36; 11:10, etc.)[155], but there are some rare cases that are reminiscences of the LXX text. The example put forward by Baethgen here is not convincing[156].

- Mt 2:18 κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὀδυρμὸς πολύς ("[In Rama a voice is heard], wailing and a long lamentation")] ܐܠܐ ܘܒܟܬܐ ܘܐܘܠܝܬܐ ܣܓܝܐܬܐ ("a lamentation, weeping, and many sighs", with three terms as in the LXX in Jr 38 (MT 31):15. The example is a tenuous one.

18. There are some cases of dogmatic modifications on the part of the translator[157].

- In Mt 1:20 ("Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take unto you Mary, your wife"), he did not translate τὴν γυναῖκά σου by ܐܢܬܬܟ, but by ܡܟܝܪܬܟ "your betrothed".

- In Mt 16:22 ("Peter, taking him aside, began to rebuke him, saying, etc."), the verb "to rebuke" was moved to v. 23; as a result, it is no longer Peter who rebukes Jesus, but Jesus who rebukes Peter ("Jesus, turning around, rebuked Simon, etc."); the translator thus safeguards the authority of Jesus.

- In Mt 1:21 ("you shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins"), the formulation must have seemed too restrictive to the translator who replaced "his people" by "the world" (ܗܘ ܓܝܪ ܢܚܐ ܠܥܠܡܐ ܡܢ ܚܛܗ̈ܝܗܘܢ).

We obviously do not attempt anymore to reconstruct the Greek model, even though the readings of the Old Syriac versions are from time to time noted in the critical apparatus of the editions of the Greek New Testament. But under what conditions are we entitled to do so?

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[155] We have seen this above.

[156] Wildeboer 1880, p. 34-35, cites some other examples, also equally unconvincing. The observations made by Wilson 2002, p. xxxviii-xlvii, lead to the conclusion that these quotations are not based on the LXX text.

[157] Wildeboer 1880, p. 31-33.

Brock has very pertinently warned the textualists about it[158] and Lyon has made Brock's observations even more specific[159]. Williams has formulated a series of simple rules that ensure a correct use of the readings of the Old Syriac versions for textual criticism of the New Testament[160]. The 27th edition of Nestle-Aland frequently refers to the Old Syriac version. Williams has analyzed these references and has arrived at the conclusion that these references are flawed because the translation techniques of the Old Syriac version have not been taken into account. Along the same lines and more recently, Carrega has analyzed about 300 passages from the Gospel of Luke which reveals the remarkable freedom of the translator of the Old Syriac version. It is therefore with caution that this version should be used in the context of the textual criticism of the Greek New Testament.

- We can safely cite the Old Syriac versions in the case of long additions or omissions. The short omissions and additions should be examined by taking into consideration their occurrences elsewhere in order to affirm that they support a Greek reading.

- In contrast, the Old Syriac versions should *generally* not be cited in the following cases[161]:

  - presence or absence of Greek particles and conjunctions,
  - presence or absence of articles and possessive and demonstrative pronouns,
  - singular or plural of demonstratives, non-specific relatives or their equivalent,
  - use of tense in the Greek,
  - word order,
  - distinction of Greek synonyms.

4.2. The Old Syriac Versions and the Greek Text Types of the Gospels

Having thus shed light the freedom of the translator[162], what can we say about his Greek model? For the Gospels, it is traditionally believed that there are four text types: the so-called "Western" text (transmitted mainly by D.05 W.032 [in part] and the Old Latin versions), the Caesarean text (transmitted mainly by Θ.038 W.032 [in part] 28 f^1 f^{13}, when all of these witnesses contain readings that do not correspond to other text types, to which are added the Armenian and Georgian versions), the Alexandrian text (transmitted mainly by p^{75} ℵ.01 B.03 W.032 [in part] and the Coptic versions), and the Byzantine text (transmitted first by A.02, then by most of the Greek minuscules; this is the *textus receptus*). The Alexandrian text represents an Egyptian recension from about 200, the Caesarean text should date from the middle of the 3rd century, and the Byzantine text does not appear before the 4th century. The so-called "Western" text is problematic, but its oldest witnesses are the Old Latin versions with their first traces appearing in North Africa around 200. These are the generally accepted chronological markers.

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[158] BROCK 1976; BROCK 1977.

[159] LYON 1994.

[160] WILLIAMS 2004. He thus distinguishes three levels: that of the *Vorlage*, that of the translation, and that of the transmission. Applied to the Old Syriac version, this leads us to examine first the Greek model (the so-called "Western" text), the translation techniques (free or mirror), and the differences between the Sinaiticus and the Curetonian as two vectors of the transmission of the text. It is important to distinguish well the levels.

[161] This list completes that of BROCK 1977.

[162] See also BROCK 1998.

We can say straight away that no typical Byzantine reading is found in the Old Syriac versions. Already Cureton[163] had noted that whole sentences, found only in the *textus receptus*, are not found in the Curetonian, and that for these typical readings, the Curetonian is supported by other witnesses, particularly by B.03, and especially by D.05 and the Old Latin witnesses, the Old Syriac versions being very close to these latter ones[164], according to him. It appears, however, that the Curetonian deviates from D.05; in this case, it corresponds to the text of Justin, the Clementines, Irenaeus, Origen or that of Cyprian. Burkitt[165] has analysed the Greek text of the two witnesses of the Old Syriac version. He confirms the lack of affinity between the Old Syriac version and the *textus receptus*. He then notes that there are some remarkable agreements between it and the Alexandrine text (ℵ.01 and B.03), and the Caesarean text. He then investigates if the "Western Non-Interpolations" happen to be present in the Old Syriac version. In general, the so-called Western text is characterised by a longer text that the Alexandrian text. There are, however, passages where it has preserved a shorter text: these are the "Western Non-Interpolations"[166]. We can suspect that it is actually the Alexandrine text that was interpolated. Like the Old Latin, the Old Syriac version is relatively free from these interpolations. We still find them in some of their two witnesses, but more so in the Curetonian than in the Sinaiticus, where there are introduced, according to Burkitt, based on some Greek manuscripts of the Byzantine text type. But it is with the so-called Western text that the Old Syriac version exhibits the most affinity. For Burkitt, this fact is explained by the influence of the *Diatessaron* on the Old Syriac version and by this influence alone:

> "The Diatessaron itself was made in Rome, or at least was the work of one who had lived there many years; it is not surprising therefore to find that the text of the Diatessaron is predominantly Western. And when it is acknowledged that much of the text of the Old Syriac is direct adaptation of the Diatessaron an easy explanation of the origin of the Western elements at once offers itself: the Western readings do not necessarily represent the text of the Four Gospels as read in Antioch about 170, but the text of the Diatessaron; and the text of the Diatessaron in turn represents the Four Gospels as read in Rome about 170 AD. In such passages, and they are very many, we cannot take the agreement of East and West as instantly decisive. It is almost safer to regard the Eastern text in these passages as non-existent, and to treat the Old Syriac evidence as one element in a group belonging to the West" (p. 234-235).

The purely Diatessaronic origin of the Western readings attested by the Old Syriac version, as defended by Burkitt, soon proved to be untenable from the moment when other Greek and Coptic witnesses were discovered – witnesses that attest the so-called Western text as well, especially the Freer Codex in Greek (W.032 or *Washingtonensis* from 4th/5th century) or the Glazier Codex G 67 in Coptic for the Acts of the Apostles. These witnesses prove the grounding of the so-called Western text in the East, and it is this so-called Greek Western text that may have influenced the Old Syriac versions. Sanders, the first editor of the Freer Codex in

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[163] Cureton 1858, p. lxvii-lxviii.

[164] Chase 1895 does not hesitate to speak of the Syro-Latin text whose origin he places in the first half of the 2nd century, see p. 132-134.

[165] Burkitt 1904a, p. 223-254 (on the so-called Western text, see p. 234-244).

[166] The list is found in Westcott, Hort 1881-1882, Introduction §§ 240 and 383. See Black 1972, p 130-131.

1918, and Lagrange[167] were also the first to show the close contacts existing between the Old Syriac version and the Freer Codex (for Mk 1:1 – 5:30). Scholars agree today[168] that the text of these two witnesses, the Curetonian and the Sinaiticus, is partly representative of the so-called Western text (based on the numerous agreements with D.05 and the *Vetus Latina*); it, however, contains other readings (thus, Mt 10:3 where the Sinaiticus does not mention, among the disciples of Jesus, neither Thaddeus nor Lebbaeus, but Judas son of James, see Lk 6:15), some agreements with the Alexandrian text (omission of the longer ending of Mk in the Sinaiticus, omission of Mt 16:2-3 and 17:21 in the Sinaiticus and the Curetonian, and that of Mt 18:21 in the Sinaiticus), and some readings of the Caesarean text type (Mt 27:16-17: Jesus Barabbas). But this is another issue that essentially concerns textual criticism of the Greek New Testament. It should suffice here to indicate that the Old Syriac version is also in part one of the witnesses of the so-called Western text and that its readings of the Western text type do not spring from the *Diatessaron*.

ABSTRACT

After having presented the manuscripts of the Old Syriac version of the Gospels and the editions of the witnesses (Sinaiticus, Curetonian, and the newly discovered Sinaitic palimpsests), this article demonstrates in what respect all these witnesses are reflections of a single translation. It then goes on to deal with the thorny question of its date and its milieu of origin, going through the various arguments that have been made: the historical arguments, the analysis of quotations of the Old Syriac, the study of the relationship with the other versions (Old Testament Peshitta and the *Diatessaron*) and the analysis of its language and its "linguistic anomalies." The last part of the article is devoted to the relationship between the Old Syriac and the Greek text of the Gospels. Although today most scholars agree that it is hazardous to try and provide a retroversion into Greek, it is however possible, under certain conditions, to identify the Greek text type which served as a model. Despite its proper readings and its contacts with the Alexandrian and Caesarean texts, the Old Syriac is in part a witness to the Western text type.

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[167] SANDERS 1918, p 69-70; LAGRANGE 1920-1921. SANDERS 1918, p 64-73, underlines how narrow the contacts are in W.032 between Mk 1:1 – 5:30 and the Old Latin versions on the one hand and the Sinaiticus on the other (the only Old Syriac element attested in Mk).

[168] AMPHOUX 2014, p 103.

ABBREVIATIONS

C: Old Syriac Curetonian (also syr^c)
S: Old Syriac Sinaiticus (also syr^s)
NF: New Finds from Sinai
P: Peshitta

Greek Manuscripts of the Gospels:

28: Paris, Bibl. nat. de France, Gr. 379 (11th century)
A.02: London, Brit. Libr., Royal 1 D. VIII (5th century) or *Ale-xandrinus*
B.03: Città del Vaticano, Bibl. Vatic., Vat. gr. 1209 (4th century) or *Vaticanus*
D.05: Cambridge, Univ. Libr., Nn. 2. 41 (5th century) or Codex Bezae, one of the main witnesses to the Greek text type known as the "Western" text of the Gospels
f^1: the manuscripts of the family 1
f^{13}: the manuscripts of the family 13
p^{45}: papyrus 45: Dublin, Chester Beatty Libr., P. Chester Beatty I + Vienna, Österreischische Nationalbibl., Pap. G. 31974
W.032: Washington, Smithsoniam Inst., Freer Gall. of Art, 06.274 (4th/5th century) or *Washingtonensis* or Freer Codex.
Θ.038: Tbilisi, Georgian National Center of Manuscripts, Gr. 28 (9th century)
א.01 : London, Brit. Libr., Add.43725 (4th century) or *Sinaiticus*

Old Latin (italics) and Vulgate (roman) Manuscripts:

a: Vercelli, Bibl. Capitolare (unnumbered) (4th century) or *Vercellensis*.
c: Paris, Bibl. nat. de France, lat. 254 (12th/13th century) or *Colbertinus*.
k: Turin, Bibl. Naz., G. VII. 15 (4th/5th century) or *Bobiensis* (from Bobbio)
s: Milan, Bibl. Ambros., O. 210 sup. (6th/7th century)

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